



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Human Resources Committee

# HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 01 July 2022

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 April to 31 May 2022.

**Recommendations:**

That Members note the contents of the report and support the amended absence targets.

## CONTACT OFFICER

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of its remit, the Human Resources Committee of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority receives regular updates on Human Resources (HR) issues within the Service. This includes issues such as sickness absence, formal discipline, grievance, employment tribunal cases and staffing numbers. These issues are collectively referred to as HR metrics.
- 1.2 Reports are on a quarterly basis and allow the Human Resources Committee to keep informed of ongoing issues and offer their guidance and scrutiny.

## 2. REPORT

### STAFFING NUMBERS

- 2.1 During the period 1 April 2022 to 31 May 2022, 12 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels at 31 May 2022 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
<b>Wholetime</b>	431 (431 FTE)	417 (414.3 FTE)	-14 (-16.7 FTE)
<b>On-Call</b>	168 Units	243 persons (includes 69 Dual Contracts)	- 53.5units (Please refer to Para 2.9)
<b>Support</b>	152 (147.55) FTE)	160 (151.13 FTE)	+8 (+3.58fte)

- 2.2 There have been 34 leavers and 12 starters since the last report. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 820 (this includes 69 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: 11 x Wholetime, 8 x On-call and 15 x Support roles.
- 2.3 As at 31 May 20221 Wholetime strength stood at 417 operational personnel (414.3 FTE) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.
- 2.4 During the period, the Service has appointed to 10 On-call and 2 support roles.
- 2.5 Turnover rates are higher than forecast and reflect a high level of leavers in early April as a result of retirements and the completion of fixed-term contracts. In total 11 employees retired from the Service and 8 completed their fixed term periods of employment. Resignations accounted for 13 leavers and 2 operational employees transferred to other Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.6 As reported in the previous review, this reflects the national picture of turnover where employment vacancy rates have increased significantly during 2021-22.

This has been identified as a potential area of concern for the Service and is referenced in the Services' risk register. A review of recruitment and retention is currently underway to identify and address issues which may be impacting upon recruitment and retention levels.

- 2.7 As a result of recruitment campaigns undertaken earlier in the year, ten On-call trainees commenced their training in April and a further 11 will commence training in July. There is also an ongoing recruitment campaign for a course start date in January 2023.
- 2.8 A Wholetime recruitment campaign will commence in the summer and will conclude at the end of the year for a course start date in April 2023. The Service may also introduce other measures, such as migration and transfers, to address operational workforce shortfalls during 2022-23.
- 2.9 The recent introduction of the On-call trial at Bingham and Stapleford fire stations, whereby available hours are calculated as opposed to units of cover, has affected the variance figure set out in the table at 2.1. This now reflects the position of the fourteen stations not involved in the trial period.

## **SICKNESS ABSENCE**

- 2.10 An analysis of sickness absence figures for Q4 (Jan-Mar 2022) was set out in a report to committee on 28 April. Due to the cycle of committee dates, the Q1 analysis for the period 2022-2 analysis, which ends on 30 June, cannot be completed for this meeting and will be reported to the next committee.
- 2.11 The sickness absence data previously reported showed that average sickness absence for 2021-22 was 11.99 days (excluding On-call absence) including Covid-related absence and 9.18 days if Covid-related absence was not included. This is above the target figure of 6.5 days per employee. The report set out a detailed breakdown of these figures, including the main reasons for sickness absence, and the actions being undertaken to address this as part of an in-depth review.
- 2.12 As part of this review, sickness absence targets have been revised to reflect the national sector average and provide a benchmark against other Fire and Rescue Services. Averages for each workgroup have been amended to reflect sector averages in 2019-20 so that the main impact of Covid related absence is removed. The revised averages are as follow:
  - Wholetime: 9.05 days
  - On Call: 13.2 days
  - Support: 9.35 days
- 2.13 The Service provides significant support to employees through its Occupational and Health and Fitness team, Employee Assistance Programme and membership of the BUPA Cash-Back scheme, both to promote well-being and therefore to prevent sickness or injury arising, and to support employees during any period of sickness or injury. This includes a focus on mental health and musculo-skeletal injury, which are the two primary reasons for sickness

absence. This support includes access to counselling, physiotherapy, fitness advisor, an Occupational Health Physician and on-site gyms.

- 2.14 Work will be undertaken during 2022-23 to reduce the levels of sickness absence across all work groups.

## **NATIONAL ABSENCE TRENDS**

- 2.15 The Service contributes to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) sickness absence survey, which is undertaken quarterly and allows for comparison between contributing Fire and Rescue Services. It should be noted that some services have not included Covid related absence in their figures, however these figures were included in the NFRS returns.
- 2.16 Reasons for sickness absence at NFRS broadly mirror the national trends with musculo-skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups.
- 2.17 Appendix A reflects the national absence trends including Quarter 4, which is a whole year analysis. The three charts reflect Wholetime, Support (Green book) and On-call employees by the average of duty days / shifts lost per person for those Fire and Rescue Services who contribute to the survey.
- 2.18 For Wholetime personnel NFRS has an average of 11.71 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 30<sup>th</sup> out of the 37 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 11.08 days per employee. The lowest average was 3.37 and the highest 17.18.
- 2.19 For On-call staff, NFRS has an average of 18.52 days lost per employee which ranks the Service 18 out of the 23 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 13.64 days per employee. The lowest average was 3.55 and the highest 38.94.
- 2.20 For Support Staff (Green Book) the Service has an average of 12.75 days lost per employee which ranks the Service 33 out of the 38 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 9.28 days per employee. The lowest average was 1.29 days and the highest 15.82 days.

## **OTHER WORKFORCE METRICS**

- 2.21 This section reviews the following activities: disciplinary cases, grievances raised, harassment cases raised, dismissals, appeals and active employment tribunal cases.
- 2.22 Over the period, one grievance has been heard and one harassment complaint received. This grievance related to a management. The harassment complaint is currently under investigation.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Authority's pay budgets cover the cost of the workforce, and these include budgets for overtime to cover sickness absence where operational cover is affected. The actual numbers of employees in post compared to the establishment can cause budgetary variances and these are reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.
- 3.2 Any increase in absence has a direct impact upon the Service's operational pay budget as gaps in the ridership can lead to an increase in overtime pay to cover for long-term absence.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A review of sickness absence is being undertaken to identify and address sickness absence issues, with the aim of reducing both short and long term sickness levels. This review will report into the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.
- 4.2 The impact of turnover on staffing numbers and issues related to both recruitment and retention levels will be undertaken. This review will report into the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

As this review does not impact upon policy or service delivery, no equality impact assessment has been undertaken.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 A regular reporting system on the management of human resources ensures that the Service and the Authority are aware of any developing workforce issues.
- 8.2 Workforce Issues identified as potential risks to the service relate specifically to recruitment, retention and levels of sickness absence. This risk will be addressed through a comprehensive review undertaken by the Head of

People and Organisational Development, and led by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

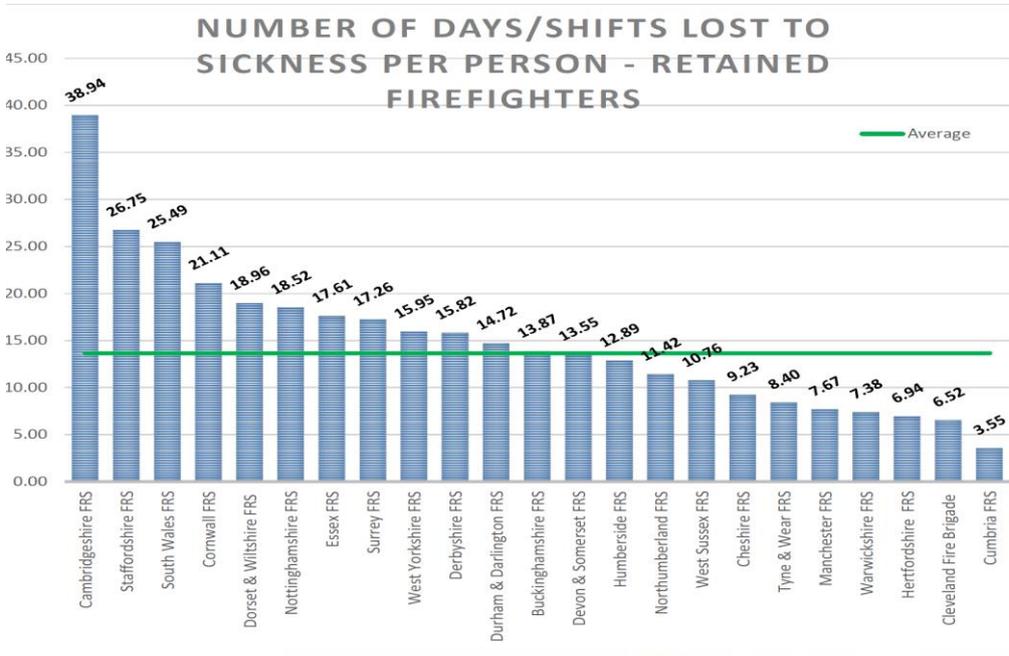
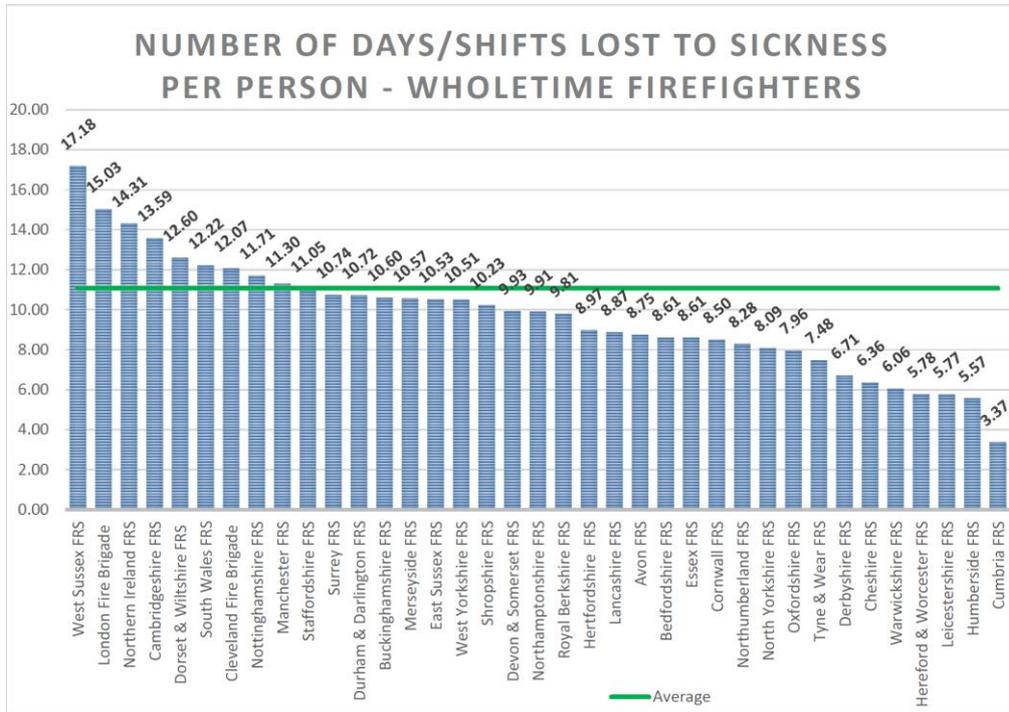
That Members note the contents of the report and support the amended absence targets.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

Craig Parkin  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

## APPENDIX A



# NUMBER OF DAYS/SHIFTS LOST TO SICKNESS PER PERSON GREEN BOOK STAFF

