



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: 21 April 2023

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2023, with the exception of absence data which is for the reporting period October to 31 December 2022. This includes equalities monitoring data for the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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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 January 2023 to 31 March 2023, 24 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels as of 1 March 2023 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	431 (431 fte)	409 (407.3fte)	-23 (-23.7fte)
On-Call	192 Units	244 persons (includes 75 dual contracts)	-61 units
Support	161 (156.5 fte)	159 (147.8 fte)	-2 (-8.7fte)

- 2.2 There have been 17 leavers and 25 starters since the last report. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 812 (this includes 75 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: eight wholetime, seven on-call and two support roles.
- 2.3 As at 31 March 2023, wholetime strength stood at 409 operational personnel (407.3 fte) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.
- 2.4 During the period, the Service has appointed to 5 wholetime, 14 on-call roles and 6 support roles.

Whole Year Overview

- 2.5 As this is the final reporting period for the financial year 2022-23, an overview of workforce movements shows that overall workforce numbers have reduced by 30 between April 2022 and April 2023, mainly as a result of vacancies on the wholetime and support establishment during the course of the year. This

formed part of the management of the salary budget pending confirmation of the budget settlement.

2.6 The outcomes from the wholetime recruitment campaign, which concluded in December 2022, will see 24 new apprentice firefighters commence their training in April and September 2023 which will bring the wholetime numbers back up to establishment levels. The Service also appointed two transferees from other Services and three on-call employees to wholetime roles from this process.

2.7 During 2022-23, the number of starters and leavers were as follows:

	Starters	Leavers
Wholetime	2	27
On-Call	33	26
Support	26 (21.42fte)	36
Total	61 (56.52fte)	89

2.8 During the course of the year, the Service employed two transferees from other Services and nine on-call employees through a separate migration process to wholetime roles. Whilst transferees are counted within the above figures, those who migrate from on-call to wholetime roles are not counted as new starters since they are already in employment with the Service. If these are counted, then this takes the number of new starters into wholetime positions to eleven.

2.9 In addition, several promotion processes have been undertaken to fill vacancies at supervisory, middle manager and strategic level as employees have retired or left the Service for other reasons.

2.10 The number of leavers for wholetime and on-call roles has remained within planning forecasts. However, the number of leavers from support roles was higher than predicted, with 36 leavers compared to a 12-month forecast of 26 leavers. This reflects the history of turnover within this employee group over the last two years. However, it should be noted that this includes the completion of eight fixed-term appointments and four retirements.

2.11 Whilst the turnover rate for support roles has been identified as a potential area of concern for the Service, it is noticeable that turnover rates have markedly decreased in the latter half of the year with 25 leavers between April 2022 and September 2022 compared to 11 leavers between October 22 and April 23 – a 44% reduction in turnover. As previously reported, a review has been undertaken to address recruitment and retention issues.

2.12 A revised Workforce Plan is currently being developed for the period 2023-25 and will be reported to Committee at its next meeting.

SICKNESS ABSENCE – Q3

2.13 The review period covers the three-month period between 1 October and 31 December 2022.

2.14 Target absence figures for 2022/23 are:

Wholetime:	9.05 days per person
Non-Uniformed:	9.35 days per person
On-Call Workforce:	13.2 days per person

(The average is affected by the numbers of employees in each work group and the average work shift and reflects national sector averages in 2021-22).

2.15 For the purposes of reporting, on-call absence analysis is shown separately to other workgroups due to the nature of their working arrangements. Absence related to Covid has been included in the total absence figures.

Workforce (excluding On-Call)

2.16 Total absence across the workforce increased by 102 days (+6.54%) in Quarter Three compared to the previous quarter.

2.17 However, this represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2021-22 of 349 days (-17.3%).

2.18 Absence related to Covid represents 153 working days lost, which accounts for 9.2% of total absence, compared to 17.2% in Q2.

2.19 Long term absence equated to 57.84% of sickness absence in Q3.

2.20 Absence trends across the last three years are shown in the table set out in Appendix A.

On-Call Workforce

2.21 For on-call staff, absence figures in Q3 increased by 299 days (+33.5%) compared to the previous quarter.

2.22 However, this represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2021-22 of 143 days (-10.7%).

2.23 Absence related to Covid represents 107 working days lost, which accounts for 9% of total absence.

2.24 Long term absence equated to 56.5% of sickness absence in Q3.

2.25 A summary of the reasons for absence by workgroup are attached at Appendix C.

NATIONAL ABSENCE TRENDS

- 2.26 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.
- 2.27 Reasons for sickness absence at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) broadly mirror the national trends with musculo-skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups.
- 2.28 Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Quarter 3. The three charts reflect wholetime, support staff (green book) and on-call the average of duty days/shifts lost per person for those fire and rescue services who contribute to the survey.
- 2.29 For wholetime staff, NFRS has an average of 7.69 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 17 out of the 34 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 8.83 days per employee. The lowest average was 3.59 days and the highest 19.42 days.
- 2.30 For on-call staff, NFRS has an average of 13.05 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 15 out of 21 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 13.61 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.2 days and the highest 29.26 days.
- 2.31 For support staff (green book) the Service has an average of 8.98 days lost per employee which ranks as 28 out of the 35 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 7.25 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.06 days and the highest 12.53 days.

OTHER WORKFORCE METRICS

- 2.32 This section reviews the following activities: disciplinary cases, grievances raised, harassment cases raised, dismissals, appeals and active employment tribunal cases.
- 2.33 Over the period, there were no grievance, disciplinary or harassment investigations undertaken. As previously reported, it should be noted that a discrimination claim has previously been lodged with the employment tribunal office and will be heard in March 2024.
- 2.34 Two redundancies arising from the Workforce Review (Futures 25) were agreed by the Fire Authority with effect from 31 March 2023.

EQUALITIES MONITORING

- 2.35 A review of key equalities metrics is undertaken every six months to establish any patterns or changes. The following equalities monitoring information is provided for the period of 1 October – 31 March 2023.

Workforce Profile

2.36 The table below sets out a snapshot of key equalities metrics:

Workforce	Female firefighters (Wholetime and On-call)	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees (whole workforce)	BAME employees in wholetime roles	Lesbian, gay or bisexual (whole workforce)	Disabled (whole workforce)
31 March 2023 Headcount 812	9.76% (40 out of 410 roles)	5.42% (44)	5.88% (24)	2.95% (24)	3.94% (32)
30 Sept 2022 Headcount 809	9.41% (40 out of 425 roles)	5.19% (42)	5.8% (24)	2.85% (23)	4.08 % (33)

2.37 When considered by workgroup, the monitoring data shows that:

Whole Workforce

- Women currently constitute 16.26% (132) of the total workforce. Of these, 37.12% (49) women are employed in operational roles (including management roles). Women represent 7.52% of operational roles undertaken. 2.44% (5 of 205) of supervisory managers and 3.44% are (1) of middle operational managers are women. There are four women in strategic operational roles (Area Manager and Assistant Chief Fire Officer) and who are members of the Strategic Leadership Team.
- Employees from BAME backgrounds constitute 5.42% of the workforce. Current census figures show the BAME population of Nottinghamshire as 14.61%.
- Employees who identify as being Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) constitute 2.95% of the workforce. Current census figures demonstrate an LGB population of Nottinghamshire of 2.68% (however the prefer not to say level was 6% within the last census, suggesting Nottinghamshire's LGB population could be higher).
- Disability declaration is at 3.94% of the workforce. However, this increases to 9.62% of employees in support roles. Census data shows 11.9% of the population of Nottinghamshire identify as having a disability.

Operational Roles

- For wholetime roles, women are employed in 9.3% (38) of operational roles. Of these, 3.8% (5 out of 131) are supervisory roles (Crew or Watch Manager)

and 3.4% (1 out of 29) are middle manager roles (Station or Group manager). There is 1 (1 out of 8) woman in a strategic operational role (Brigade Manager).

- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 5.88% (24) of operational roles. Of these, 5.97% (8 of 134) are supervisory roles (Crew or Watch Manager). There are no BAME employees in middle or senior manager roles.

On-Call Roles

- For on-call roles, women are employed in 4.5% (11) of operational roles. Of these, 2.74% (2 out of 73) are employed in supervisory roles.
- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 2% (5) of operational roles. Of these, 1.4% (1 out of 73) are employed in supervisory roles.

Support Roles

- For support roles, women are employed in 49.7% (80) of roles. Of these, 47.7% (42 out of 88) are employed in supervisory roles and 23.6% (4 out of 17) are employed in senior or strategic roles.
- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 9.3% (15) of roles. Of these, 73.3% (11) are employed in supervisory roles.
- The table below, shows the breakdown of the support workforce by protected characteristic and grade.

Support Employees	Men	Women	Disability	BAME	LGB
Grades 1-4 (plus Apprentice)	22	34	7	4	6
Grades 5-7	46	42	8	11	2
Grades 8-SLSM	13	4			
Total	81	80	15	15	8

STARTERS AND LEAVERS

2.38 There have been 33 starters and 36 leavers. The table below shows details of these starters and leavers by protected characteristic:

	Starters			Leavers		
	On-Call	Wholetime	Support	On-Call	Wholetime	Support
Women	0	1 (50%)	7 (44%)	2 (17%)	0	4 (40%)
Men	15 (100%)	1 (50%)	9 (46%)	10 (83%)	14 (100%)	6 (60%)
BAME	0	0	0	0	0	0
LGB	0	1 (50%)	2 (13%)	1 (8%)	0	0
Disability	0	1 (50%)	0	0	1 (7%)	1 (10%)

2.39 Of the 33 starters, 24% (eight) were women. This was mainly related to the fact that all new on-call trainees (15) were men. Figures for wholetime and support roles reflect a good mix of male and female appointments. It is disappointing that there were no applications received from BAME applicants.

2.40 In terms of leavers, the figures do not indicate any particular issues related to protected characteristics and reflect the workforce profile of each employee group.

RECRUITMENT

Wholetime

2.41 Details of the recent wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign is attached as a separate report on the agenda.

On-Call

2.42 Another on-call recruitment campaign has opened during the reporting period, which has attracted 78 applicants, including 12 women, 5 from BAME backgrounds and 9 identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. It is positive to see this level of diversity in applicant figures and it is hoped that this will translate into trainee appointments.

Support Roles

2.43 In the review period the Service received 96 applicants in total for eight vacancies. It should be noted that two of these vacancies were not filled within the review period. The breakdown of applicants, those shortlisted for interview and appointed are shown in the table below:

	Female	Male	BAME	Disabled	LGBT
Applicants	20 (21%)	76 (79%)	24 (25%)	3 (3%)	4 (4%)
Shortlisted	4 (36%)	31 (40.8%)	11 (45.8%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (25%)
Appointed	0	6 (100%)	1 (17%)	0	1 (17%)

2.44 The number of women and men shortlisted is broadly similar, although more men were successful at interview. The number of applications from those with protected characteristics is quite high and does not indicate that there is bias in the shortlisting process.

CONCLUSION

2.45 The monitoring data shows that the workforce profile is not representative of the local population in terms of employees from BAME backgrounds, Disability and people who identify as LGB. This is particular marked in operational roles.

- 2.46 The Service continues to use positive action to promote the fire service as a career during firefighter recruitment campaigns both wholetime and on-call, it does also promote support staff vacancies through targeted advertising. It should be noted most vacancies are for on-call roles, and these are specific to location, which can reduce the impact on diversity. Positive action is also taken to address underrepresentation in management roles.
- 2.47 Using a range of awareness events, mentoring and fitness/strength development activities prior to wholetime recruitment has helped to lead to positive diversity figures.
- 2.48 From the data presented above, it can be noted workforce is becoming gradually more representative.

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

The human resources and learning and development implications are set out in the report.

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

A regular reporting system on the management of human resources ensures that the Service and the Authority are aware of any developing workforce issues.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

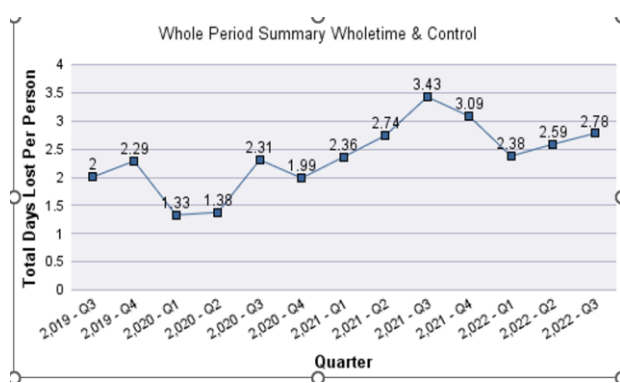
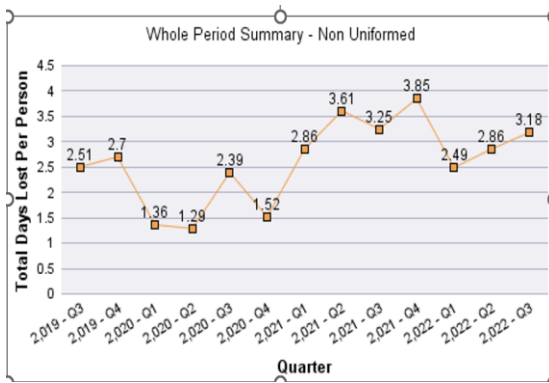
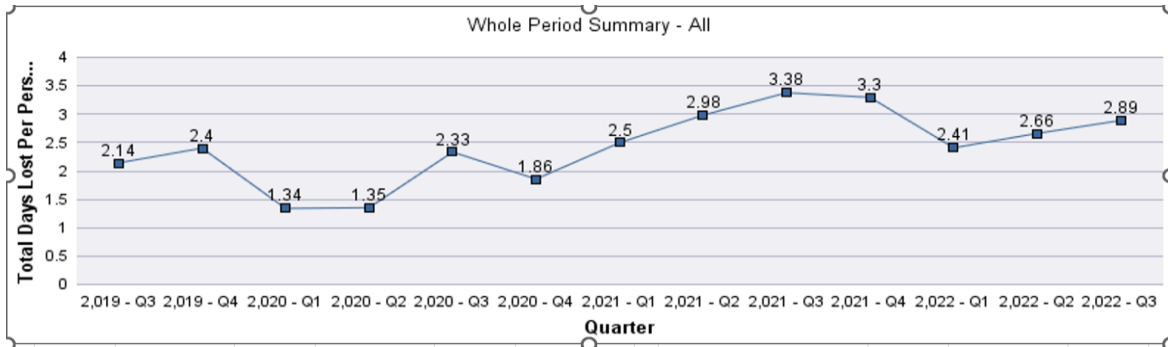
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11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

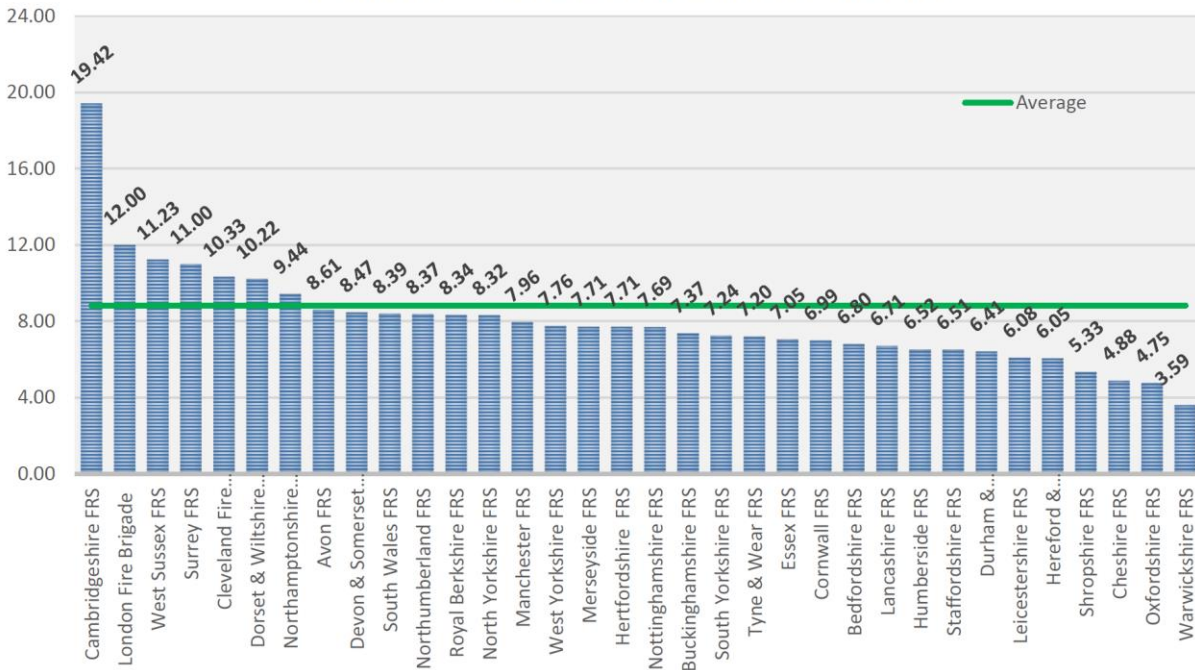
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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A

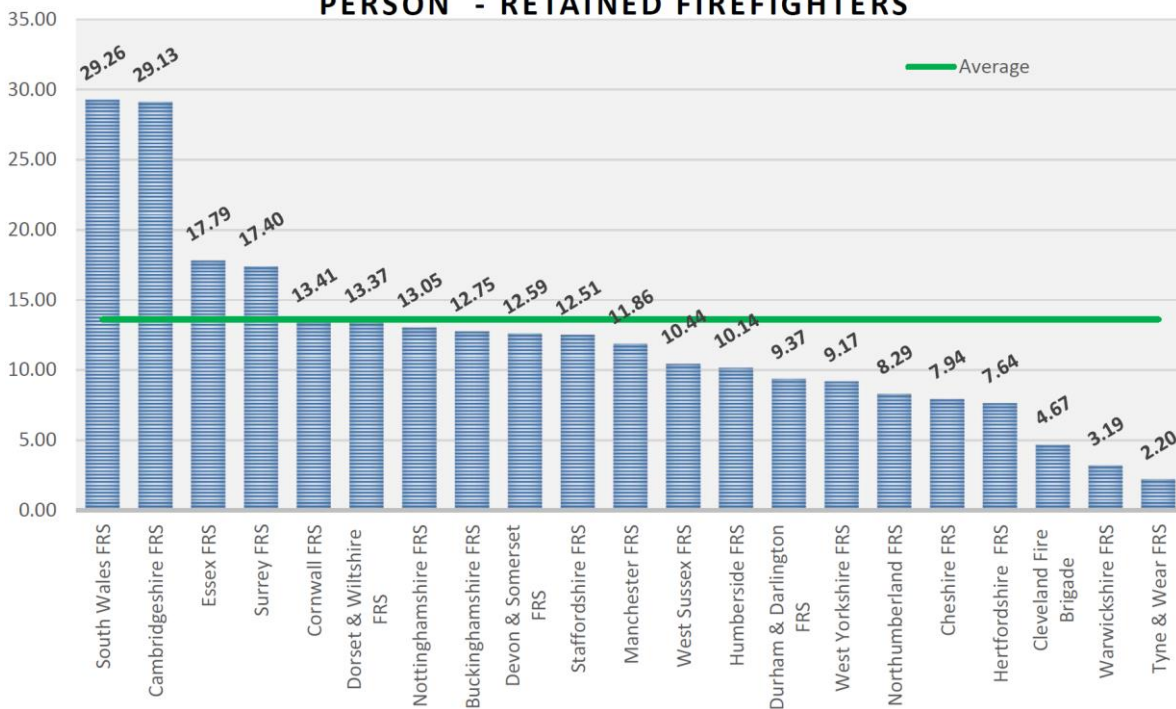


National Absence Survey

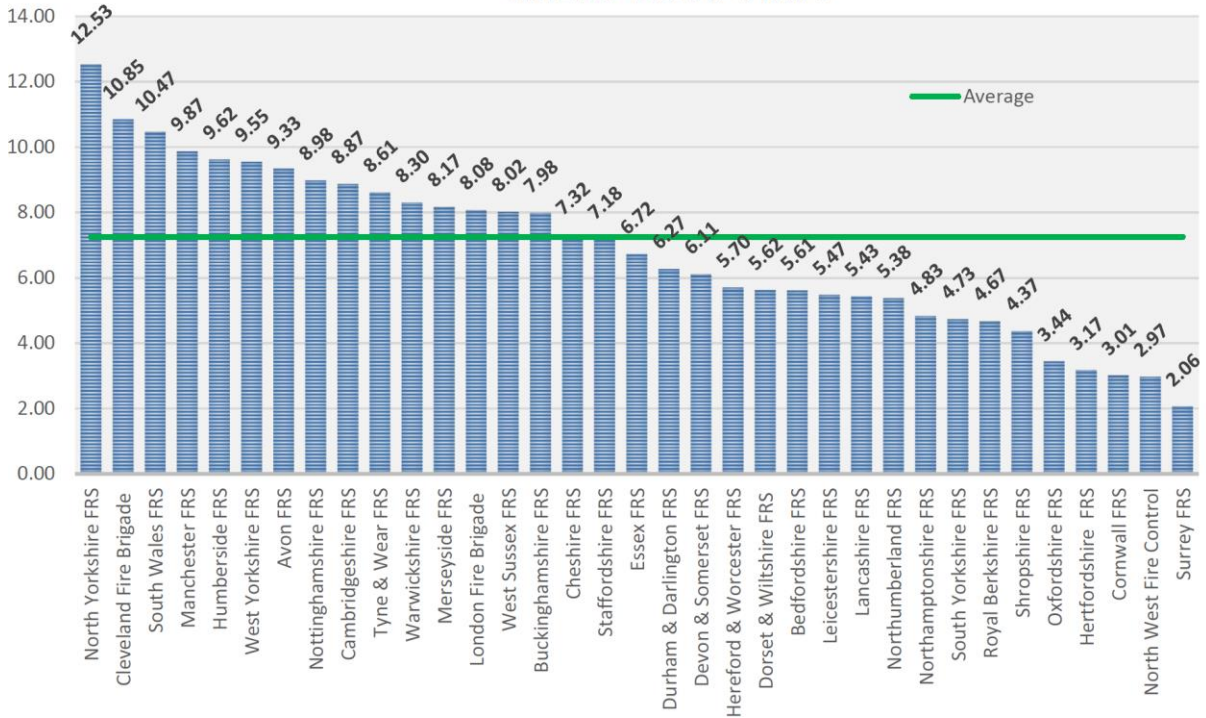
NUMBER OF DAYS/SHIFTS LOST TO SICKNESS PER PERSON - WHOLETIME FIREFIGHTERS



NUMBER OF DAYS/SHIFTS LOST TO SICKNESS PER PERSON - RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS



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



APPENDIX C

Q3 2022/23 - Wholetime

Wholetime

			<u>Short Term Absences</u>			<u>Long Term</u>		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	6	274	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	28	118	Mental Health	5	270
Musculo Skeletal	24	247	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	39	112	Musculo Skeletal	5	164
Hospital/Post Operative	9	165	Musculo Skeletal	19	83	Hospital/Post Operative	6	145
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	28	118	Unknown causes, not specified	17	52	Respiratory - Other	1	45
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	39	112	Gastro-Intestinal	17	34	Virus/Infectious Diseases	1	16
Unknown causes, not specified	17	52	Hospital/Post Operative	3	20	Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	13
Respiratory - Other	1	45	Respiratory - Chest Infection	5	15			
Gastro-Intestinal	17	34	Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	12			
Virus/Infectious Diseases	4	24	Eye Problems	2	10			
Other known causes (not specified in list)	5	20	Virus/Infectious Diseases	3	8			

Q3 2022/23 - On Call absence

Retained

			<u>Short Term Absences</u>			<u>Long Term Absences</u>		
Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	14	308	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	15	107	Musculo Skeletal	4	215
Hospital/Post Operative	4	193	Musculo Skeletal	10	93	Hospital/Post Operative	2	152
Unknown causes, not specified	8	110	Other known causes (not specified in list)	3	45	Mental Health - Other	1	92
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	15	107	Hospital/Post Operative	2	41	Respiratory - Other	1	92
Mental Health - Other	2	99	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	37	Unknown causes, not specified	2	73
Respiratory - Other	1	92	Unknown causes, not specified	6	37	Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	29
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	2	50	Genitourinary/Gynecological/Reproductive	2	30	Mental Health	1	20
Mental Health	3	50	Mental Health	2	30			
Other known causes (not specified in list)	3	45	Virus/Infectious Diseases	3	30			
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	37	Gastro-Intestinal	9	29			

Q3 2022/23 – Support staff absence

Non Uniformed

Short Term Absences

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost	Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	6	116	Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	22	79
Other known causes (not specified in list)	4	85	COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	9	34
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	22	79	Other known causes (not specified in list)	3	20
Mental Health	1	42	Musculo Skeletal	4	18
Mental Health - Other	2	41	Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	18
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	9	34	Unknown causes, not specified	5	14
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	27	Gastro-Intestinal	4	12
Hospital/Post Operative	2	25	Mental Health - Other	1	6
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	18	Respiratory - Chest Infection	1	4
Unknown causes, not specified	5	14	COVID-19 Adverse Reaction to Covid Vaccine	1	1
			Ear, Nose, Throat	1	1
			Hospital/Post Operative	1	1

Long Term Absences

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	2	98
Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	65
Mental Health	1	42
Mental Health - Other	1	35
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	27
Hospital/Post Operative	1	24