



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: 10 November 2023

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on key human resources metrics for the period 1 July to 30 September 2023, with the exception of absence data which is for the reporting period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. This includes equalities monitoring data for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name:	Candida Brudenell Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Tel:	0115 8388100
Email:	candida.brudenell@notts-fire.gov.uk
Media Enquiries Contact:	Corporate Communications Team 0115 8388100 corporatecomms@notts-fire.gov.uk

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 June 2023 to 30 September 2023, 41 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels as of 30 September 2023 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	431	417 (416.6fte)	-14 (-14.4fte)
On-call	192 units	245 persons (131.5 units) (includes 72 dual contracts)	-60.5 units
Support	163 (157.15 fte)	162 (150.3fte)	-1 (6.85 fte)

- 2.2 There have been 25 leavers and 41 starters since the last report. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 824 (this includes 72 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: 11 wholetime, 7 on-call and 7 support roles.
- 2.3 As at 30 September 2023, wholetime strength stood at 417 operational personnel (416.6 fte) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.
- 2.4 During the period, the Service has appointed to 16 wholetime, 13 on-call and 12 support roles.

SICKNESS ABSENCE – Quarter 1 and Quarter 2

- 2.5 Due to the timing of the previous committee meeting, the review period covers both Quarter One (April-June) and Quarter Two (July-September).

2.6 Target absence figures for 2023/24 are:

Wholetime:	9.05 days per person
Support:	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).

2.7 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)

2.8 In Quarter One (Q1), total absence across the workforce (excluding on-call) decreased by 222 days (-15.3%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.23 days lost per employee. In Quarter Two (Q2), total absence across the workforce increased by 278.16 days (+22.5%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.69 days lost per employee.

2.9 This represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of Q1 of 142.6 days (-10.4%) and a decrease of 45.1 days (-2.9%) in Q2.

2.10 In Q1 absence related to Covid accounted for 57 working days lost, or 4.6% of total absence, and 87 working days, or 5.8% of total absence in Q2.

2.11 In Q1, long term absence equated to 57.3% of sickness absence and for 59.1% in Q2.

2.12 Absence due to work related injury accounted for 167 days, or 13.5% of all sickness absence in Q1 and for 222 days, or 14.7% of sickness absence, in Q2. The main reason for absence in both quarters were mental health issues.

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

On-call Workforce

2.14 In Q1, absence figures decreased by 244 days (-24.7%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 3.12 days per employee. In Q2, absence increased by 263 days (+35%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 4.2 days lost per employee.

2.15 This represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 237 days (-24.1%) in Q1 and an increase of 117 days (+13%) in Q2.

2.16 In Q1 absence related to Covid accounted for 29 working days lost, or 3.9% of total absence, and 26 working days, or 2.6% of total absence, in Q2.

2.17 Long term absence equated to 72.6% of sickness absence in Q1 and 66.5% of sickness absence in Q2.

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

NATIONAL ABSENCE TRENDS

- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 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.
- 2.21 Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Q1. 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.
- 2.22 For wholetime staff, NFRS has an average of 1.89 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 10 out of the 34 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 2.54 days per employee. The lowest average was 0.75 days and the highest 4.18 days.
- 2.23 For on-call staff, NFRS has an average of 3.12 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 7 out of 21 Services included in the survey. This figure is below the sector sickness average of 3.61 days per employee. The lowest average was 0 days and the highest 11.6 days.
- 2.24 For support staff the Service has an average of 3.16 days lost per employee which ranks as 32 out of the 34 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 2.12 days per employee. The lowest average was 0.87 days and the highest 4.13 days.

OTHER WORKFORCE METRICS

- 2.25 This section reviews the following activities: disciplinary cases, grievances raised, harassment cases raised, dismissals, appeals and active employment tribunal cases.
- 2.26 Over the period, there were three disciplinary investigations resulting in a hearing, no grievance or harassment claims were raised. One appeal was raised against a grievance outcome, which will be heard in October. There were no dismissals, or employment tribunal cases lodged.

EQUALITIES MONITORING

- 2.27 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 April – 30 September 2023.

Workforce Profile

2.28 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)
30 September 2023 Headcount 824	10.6% (44 out of 414 roles)	5.6% (46)	6.2% (26)	4.13% (34)	4.4% (36)
31 March 2023 Headcount 812	9.76% (40 out of 410 roles)	5.42% (44)	5.88% (24)	2.95% (24)	3.94 % (32)

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

Whole Workforce

- Women currently constitute 16.4% (135) of the total workforce. Of these, 42.22% (57) women are employed in operational roles. Women represent 10.8% of operational roles undertaken. 4.7% (10 of 212) of supervisory managers and 3.7% (1) of middle operational managers are women. There are five 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 5.6% (46) 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 4.13% (34) 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 4.4% (36) of the workforce. However, this increases to 9.8% (16) 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 10.79% (45) of operational roles. Of these, 5.93% (8 out of 135) are supervisory roles (Crew or Watch Manager) and 3.7% (1 out of 27) are middle manager roles (Station or Group manager). 22.2% (2 out of 9) women in a strategic operational role (Brigade Manager).
- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 6.24% (26) of wholetime operational roles. Of these, 5.93% (8 of 135) 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 4.9% (12) of operational roles. Of these, 2.6% (2 out of 77) are employed in supervisory roles.
- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 2% (5) of operational roles. Of these, 1.3% (1 out of 77) are employed in supervisory roles.

Support Roles

- For support roles, women are employed in 48.8% (79) of roles. Of these, 46% (40 out of 87) are employed in supervisory roles and 37.5% (6 out of 16) are employed in senior or strategic roles.
- Employees from BAME backgrounds represent 9.26% (15) of roles. Of these, 12.6% (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)	26	33	6	4	7
Grades 5-7	47	40	10	11	2
Grades 8-SLSM	10	6			
Total	83	79	16	15	9

STARTERS AND LEAVERS

2.30 There have been 55 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	2	8	5	1	1	8
Men	11	19	10	8	14	3
BAME	1	1	0	1	1	0
LGB	3	7	1	2	0	0
Disability	0	1	1	0	0	0

2.3
1
Of the 55 starters, 27.2%

(15 were women. Two courses of wholetime trainee firefighters have taken place during the reporting period and one On-call trainee firefighter course.

While within both wholetime and on-call, the diversity split continues to be male dominated, figures for wholetime show 29.6% (8) of wholetime new starters and 15.4% (2) of on-call new starters were women. It can be observed that 23.1% of on-call and 25.9% of wholetime starters identify as LGB, which is positive.

- 2.32 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

- 2.33 During the review period, the Service has opened a Wholetime Apprentice Firefighter recruitment campaign. This has been preceded by positive action to encourage a diverse range of candidates to apply, particularly from under-represented groups within the operational workforce. The campaign will conclude in February 2024, with the first cohort of recruits commencing their apprenticeship in April.

On-call

- 2.34 There have been no On-call recruitment campaigns within the period of this report.

Promotions

- 2.35 A Group Manager process has taken place during the reporting period, and the vacancy was advertised both externally and internally. There were 11 male applicants, all defined their ethnic origin as White British. Of these, 5 were interviewed and 3 were appointed. This response reflects the difficulty of improving the diversity of senior management roles within the sector.

Support Roles

- 2.36 In the review period the Service received 197 applicants in total for 12 vacancies. It should be noted that three these vacancies were not filled within the review period. However, three of the vacancies had multiple appointments. The breakdown of applicants, those shortlisted for interview and appointed are shown in the table below:

	Female	Male	BAME	Disabled	LGBT
Applicants	78 (39.6%)	119 (60.4%)	35 (17.8%)	13 (6.6%)	10 (5.1%)
Shortlisted	19 (34.5%)	36 (65.5%)	5 (9.1%)	2 (3.6%)	2 (3.6%)
Appointed	5 (35.7%)	9 (64.2%)	0	0	1 (7.14%)

- 2.37 It can be observed that there were more male (60.4%) than female (39.6%) applicants, and the outcomes are broadly in line with these figures. The number of applications from under-represented groups remains positive, however it is noted the lack of successful applicants from BAME backgrounds and those who identify as disabled.

CONCLUSION

- 2.38 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 particularly marked in operational roles.
- 2.39 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.
- 2.40 Using a range of awareness events, mentoring and fitness/strength development activities prior to wholetime recruitment has helped to lead to positive diversity figures.
- 2.41 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 AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As this review does not impact upon policy or service delivery, no equality impact assessment has been undertaken. However, the report contains equalities monitoring information for the period April to September 2023,

which provides an overview of progress in terms of increasing the diversity of the workforce and which indicates an improvement in diversity during the review period, most notably for female firefighters, black, Asian and minority ethnic employees, lesbian, gay and bisexual employees and employees identifying as disabled.

5.2 There are no ethical implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability 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

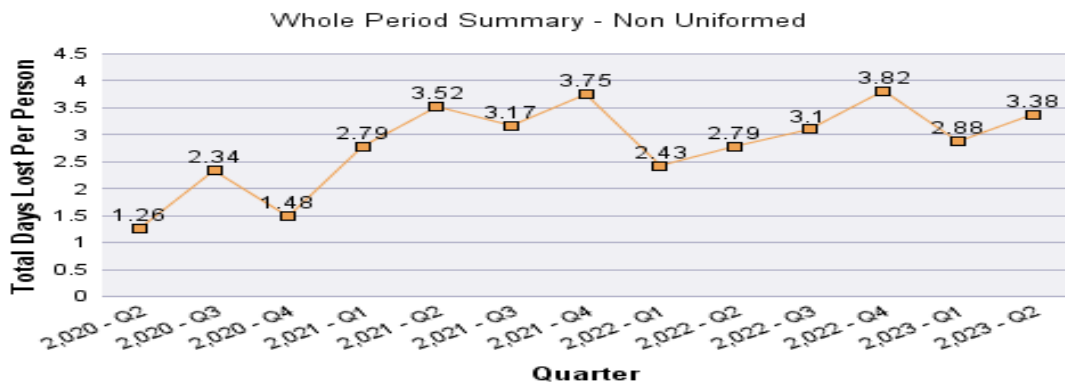
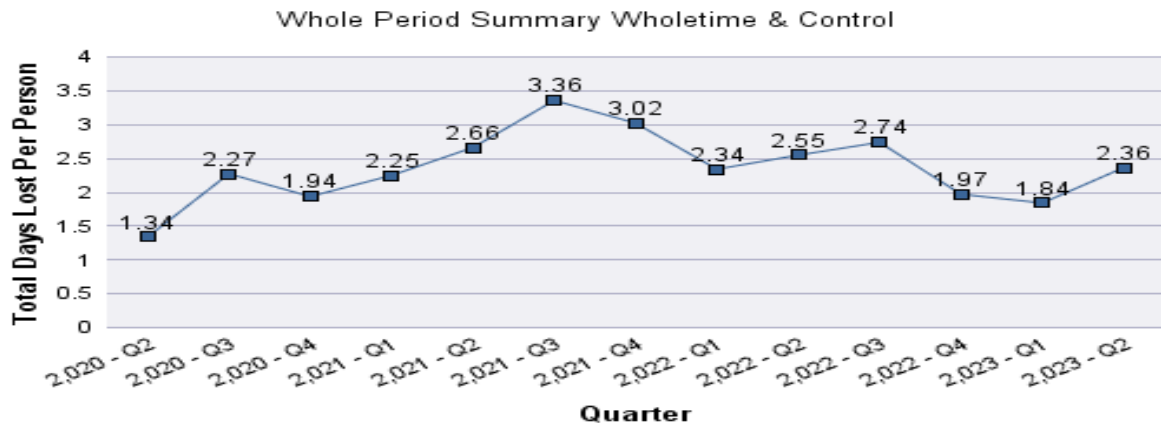
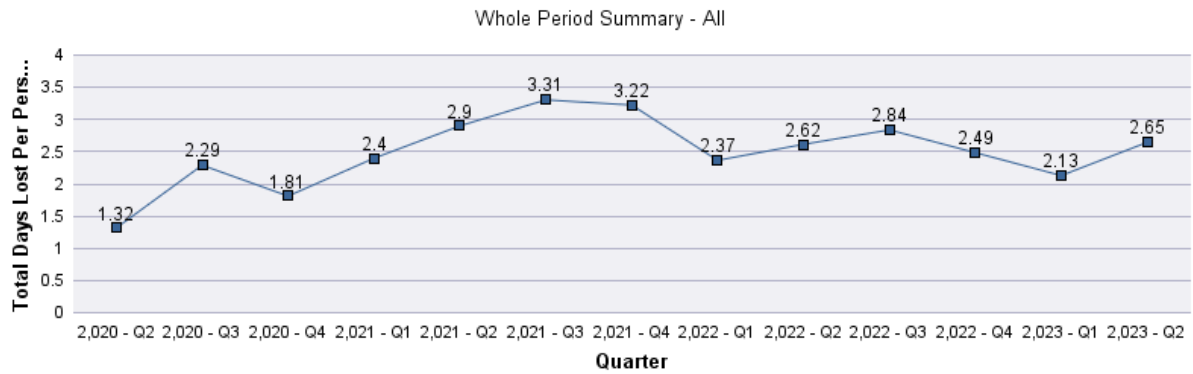
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11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

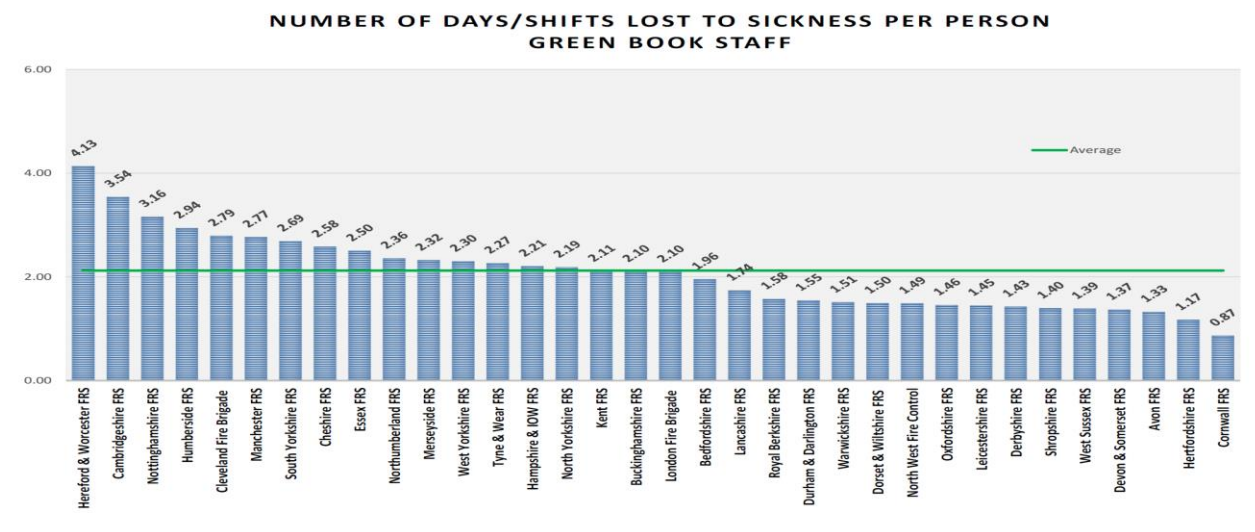
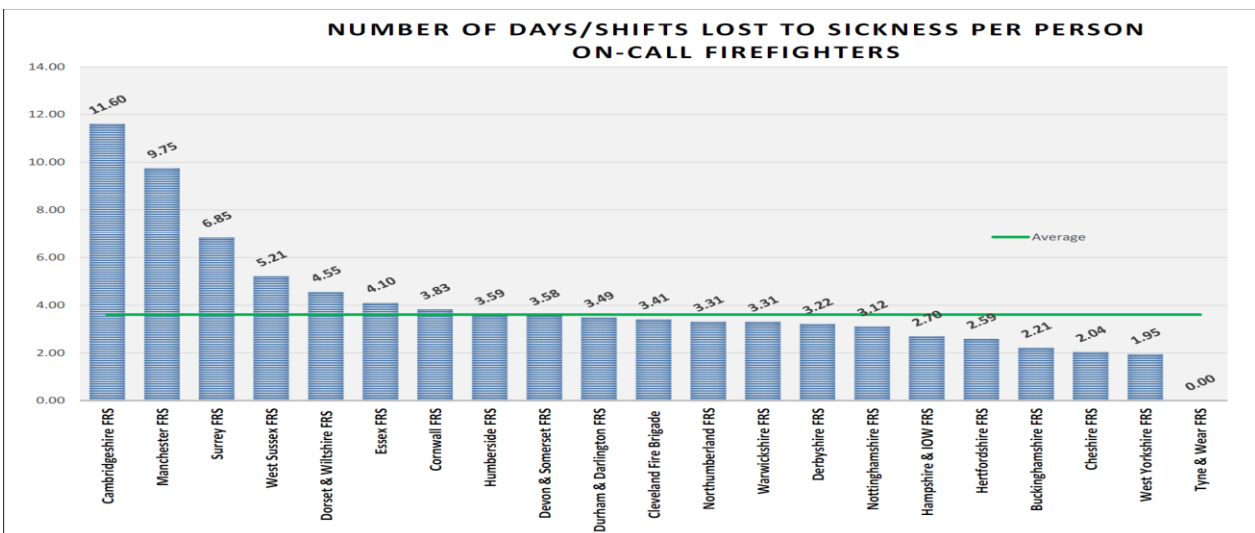
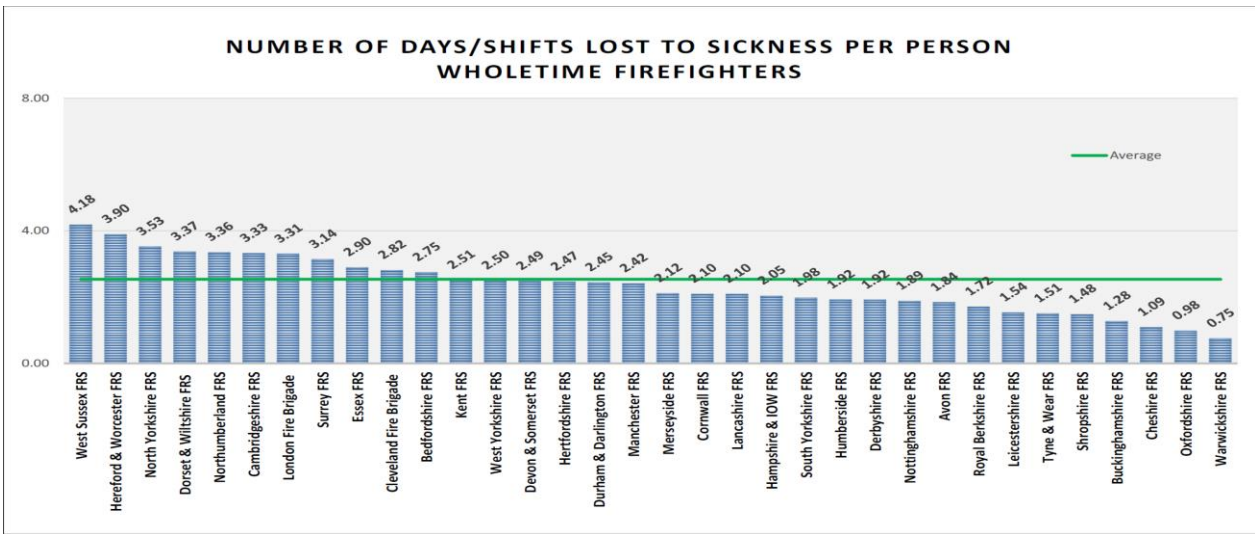
None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A



NATIONAL ABSENCE SURVEY



Q1 and Q2 2023/24 – Wholetime Absence**Q1**

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	27	218
Mental Health	9	214
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	2	58
Mental Health - Other	5	50
Hospital/Post Operative	3	37
Other known causes (not specified in list)	4	33
Gastro-Intestinal	12	31
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	8	30
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	21
Cause Known, but not specified	3	19

Q2

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	36	301
Mental Health	12	193
Hospital/Post Operative	7	133
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	15	53
Cancer and Tumours	1	44
Gastro-Intestinal	17	44
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	30
Allergy	2	26
Eye Problems	2	25
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	23

Q1 and Q2 2023/24 - On Call Absence

Q1

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	10	275
Mental Health - Other	2	152
Hospital/Post Operative	3	106
Mental Health	4	66
Respiratory - Other	2	66
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	5	29
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	2	19
Unknown causes, not specified	2	14
Cause Known, but not specified	1	5
Gastro-Intestinal	2	5

Q2

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	18	449
Mental Health	5	216
Skin Condition	3	81
Gastro-Intestinal	10	79
Mental Health - Other	1	75
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	4	26
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	5	26
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	2	21
Respiratory - Chest Infection	2	13
Ear, Nose, Throat	1	7

Q1 and Q2 2023/24 – Support Staff Absence

Q1

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	5	160
Musculo Skeletal	5	68
Hospital/Post Operative	5	49
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	3	48
Cancer and Tumours	1	41
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	6	27
Mental Health - Other	1	26
Gastro-Intestinal	7	20
Ear, Nose, Throat	1	14
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	7	12

Q2

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	4	207
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	4	74
Cancer and Tumours	1	65
Musculo Skeletal	3	53
Hospital/Post Operative	7	47.5
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza	10	40
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	8	31
Gastro-Intestinal	6	12
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	5
Respiratory - Chest Infection	1	3