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: 08 November 2024

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on key human resources metrics for Quarter 4 of the financial year 2023/24 plus Quarters 1 and 2 of financial year 2024/25.

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. The committee also receives equalities monitoring information on a six-monthly basis, so this aspect of the report will cover the period April-September of this year.

1.2 HR update reports are on a quarterly basis and allow the Human Resources Committee to keep informed of ongoing issues and offer their guidance and scrutiny.

1.3 Due to meeting sequencing, and the cancellation of a previous Human Resources Committee, this report sets out HR metrics from January 2024 – September 2024 to provide up to date reporting for Members.

2. REPORT

STAFFING NUMBERS

2.1 During the period 1 January to 30 September 2024, 82 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels as of 30 September 2024 are indicated below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	431 (431fte)	429 (428.6fte)	-2 (-2.4fte)
On-Call	192 units	242 persons (130 units) (includes 69 dual contracts)	-62 units
Support	165 (158.62fte)	166 (151.93fte)	+1 (-6.69fte)

2.2 There have been 61 leavers and 82 starters during this period. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 837 (this includes 69 dual contractors). Leavers are broken down as follows: 17 Wholetime, 21 On-Call and 23 Support roles.

2.3 12 Wholetime and 1 On-Call transferees commenced employment during this period.

2.4 As at 30 September 2024, Wholetime strength stood at 429 operational personnel (428.6 fte) employees against an establishment of 431 posts.

2.5   During the period, the Service has appointed to 34 Wholetime, 26 On-Call and 22 Support roles.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

2.6   The review period covers the following quarters:

Quarter 4 2023/24: 1 January and 31 March 2024
Quarter 1 2024/25: 1 April and 30 June 2024
Quarter 2 2024/25: 1 July 2024 and 30 September 2024

2.7   Target absence figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 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).

2.8   For the purposes of reporting, On-Call absence analysis is shown separately to other workgroups due to the nature of their working arrangements.

2.9   A summary of the reasons for absence by workgroup is attached within Appendix C (C1, C2 and C3). Absence trends across the last three years are shown in the table set out in Appendix A.

Workforce (excluding On-Call) Q4 2023/2024

2.10   Total absence across the workforce (excluding On-Call) decreased by 144.5 days (8%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.97 days lost per employee.

2.11   This represents an increase compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 250.5 days (+17%).

2.12   Long term absence equated to 54% of sickness absence. This breaks down to 65% for the operational workforce and 50% for support employees.

2.13   Absence due to work related injury accounted for 232 days, or 14% of all sickness absence. The main reason for absence related to work was mental health / musculo skeletal issues.

Workforce (excluding On-Call) Q1 2024/2025

2.14   Total absence across the workforce (excluding On-Call) decreased by 215 days (13%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.56 days lost per employee.

2.15   This represents an increase compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 242 days (+20%).

2.16   Long term absence equated to 65% of sickness absence. This breaks down to 63% for the operational workforce and 68% for support employees.

2.17   Absence due to work related injury accounted for 128 days, or 11.5% of all sickness absence. The main reason for absence related to work was musculo skeletal / hospitalisation.

Workforce (excluding On-Call) Q2 2024/2025

2.18   Total absence across the workforce (excluding On-Call) decreased by 41 days (3%) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.46 days lost per employee.

2.19   This represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 100.5 days (-7%).

2.20   Long term absence equated to 57% of sickness absence. This breaks down to 31% for the operational workforce and 69% for support employees.

2.21   Absence due to work related injury accounted for 47 days, or 3% of all sickness absence. The main reason for absence related to work was musculo skeletal.

On-Call Workforce Q4 2023/2024

2.22   Absence figures decreased by 289 days (-25%) during the review period compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 3.6 days per employee.

2.23   This represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 126 days (-13%).

2.24   Long term absence equated to 67% of total sickness absence.

On-Call Workforce Q1 2024/2025

2.25   Absence figures slightly increased by 45 days (5%) during the review period compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 3.8 days per employee.

2.26   This represents an increase compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 162 days (22%).

2.27   Long term absence equated to 86% of total sickness absence.

On-Call Workforce Q2 2024/2025

2.28   Absence figures slightly increased by 70 days (8%) during the review period compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 4.09 days per employee.

2.29   This represents a decrease compared to the same quarter of 2022-23 of 52 days (5%).

2.30   Long term absence equated to 75% of total sickness absence.

National Absence Trends Q4 2023/2024

2.31   The Service contributes to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) sickness absence survey, which is undertaken quarterly, reported cumulatively, and allows for comparison between contributing fire and rescue services.

2.32   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.

2.33   Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Quarter 4. 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.

2.34   For Wholetime staff, NFRS has an average of 9.71 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 18 out of the 37 Services included in the survey. This figure continued to be below the sector sickness average of 11.43 days per employee. The lowest average was 4.12 days and the highest 17.30 days.

2.35   For On-Call staff, NFRS has an average of 15.66 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 14 out of 22 Services included in the survey. This figure is slightly below the sector sickness average of 15.99 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.56 days and the highest 33.38 days.

2.36   For Support staff (Green Book) the Service has an average of 15.32 days lost per employee which ranks as 37 out of the 37 Services included in the survey. This figure is above the sector sickness average of 9.77 days per employee. The lowest average was 2.75 days and NFRS at the highest.

National Absence Trends Q1 2024/25

2.37   Reasons for sickness absence at NFRS broadly mirror the national trends with Musculo skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups.

2.38   Appendix B reflects the national absence trends for Quarter 1. 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.

2.39   For Wholetime staff, NFRS has an average of 2.34 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 17 out of the 35 Services included in the survey. This figure continued to be below the sector sickness average of 2.54 days per employee. The lowest average was 1.03 days and the highest 8.48 days.

2.40   For On-Call staff, NFRS has an average of 3.98 days lost per employee which ranks the Service as 11 out of 22 Services included in the survey. This figure is slightly below the sector sickness average of 4.13 days per employee. The lowest average was 0.31 days and the highest 10.68 days.

2.41   For Support staff (Green Book) the Service has an average of 3.2 days lost per employee which ranks as 29 out of the 36 Services included in the survey. This figure is slightly above the sector sickness average of 2.36 days per employee. The lowest average was 1.13 days and 4.97 at the highest.

OTHER WORKFORCE METRICS

2.42   This section reviews the following activities: disciplinary cases, grievances raised, harassment cases raised, dismissals, appeals and active employment tribunal cases.

2.43   During the review period, one disciplinary hearing resulted in a dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct. There were seven further disciplinary investigations undertaken. Three grievances were raised, two were not upheld, one was partially upheld. Two firefighter apprentices did not pass their probationary assessment and were dismissed on capability grounds. There was one employment tribunal case.

Equalities Monitoring

2.44   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 2024.

Workforce Profile

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

Workforce	Female employees (whole 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 Sept 2024 Headcount 837	17.44% (146)	11.3% (47 out of 415 roles)	7.3% (61)	7.9% (34)	4.3% (36)	4.54% (38)
31 March 2024 Headcount 830	16.9% (140)	10.4% (42 out of 405 roles)	5.8% (48)	6.2% (26)	3.9% (32)	4.6% (38)

Support Employees	Men	Women	Disability	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff	LGB
Grades 2-4 (plus Apprentice)	23	34	7	7	7
Grades 5-7	47	44	8	11	3
Grades 8-SLSM	8	9	1	1	0
Total	**78**	**87**	**16**	**19**	**10**

Sex/Gender

2.46　Women currently constitute 17.44% (140) of the total workforce. The gender split in Support staff roles (total 166) is 48% male and 52% female. This is largely reflective in different grade bands although there is a slightly larger percentage of women occupying more junior positions (Grades 2-4 & apprenticeships).

2.47　In terms of operational/uniformed middle and senior managers, there are just two women of 37 positions.

Ethnic Background

2.48　11.52% of Support staff positions are occupied by staff from ethnic minority backgrounds; an increase on the previous reporting period.

2.49　Employees from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute 7.3% of the workforce. 2021 Census data shows the working age (18-64) population from ethnic minority backgrounds for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire combined is 21.9% demonstrating that the Service has much more to do to reflect the community it serves.

Sexual Orientation

2.50　Employees who identify as being Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) constitute 4.3% 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

2.51　Disability declaration is at 4.54% of the workforce. However, this increases to 9.7% of employees in Support roles. Census data shows 20% of the population of Nottinghamshire identify as having a disability.

Starters And Leavers

2.52　There have been 44 starters and 31 leavers during the review period. The table below shows details of these starters and leavers by protected characteristic:

	Starters			Leavers		
	On-Call	Wholetime	Support	On-Call	Wholetime	Support
Women	4	2	7	0	0	4
Men	9	15	7	10	7	10
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	0	2	1	0	0	0
LGB	1	2	1	0	0	1
Disability	0	1	1	0	0	1

<Leaver on secondment and CFA's not included in the figures>

RECRUITMENT

Wholetime

2.53   A Wholetime firefighter recruitment process took place last year and the initial training course, comprising 20 trainees started in April 2024 with successful trainees completing the course in July. Of the 20 trainees, four were women and six were from a racially minoritised community.

On-Call

2.54   An On-Call recruitment campaign closed during April 2024. 15% of the 85 applicants were women with 25% (three) successful at interview.

Support Roles

2.55   In the review period the Service received 353 applicants in total for 19 vacancies. The breakdown of applicants, those shortlisted for interview and appointed are shown in the table below:

	Female	Male	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Disabled	LGBT
Applicants	194 (54.96%)	159 (45.04%)	105 (29.33%)	34 (9.5%)	34 (9.5%)
Shortlisted	57 (59.38%)	39 (40.63%)	16 (16.49%)	3 (3.09%)	10 (10.31%)
Appointed	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	0	1 (10%)

Please note that five applicants did not declare their gender

Conclusion

2.56   The monitoring data shows that the workforce profile is not representative of the local population, but it does show that there have been some small, but positive, changes since the last report.

2.57   The Service continues to use positive action to promote the fire service as a career during firefighter recruitment campaigns for 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 of those eligible to apply.

2.58   From the data presented above, it can be noted that the 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. The next six-monthly report will provide the information on workforce equality breakdown.

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.
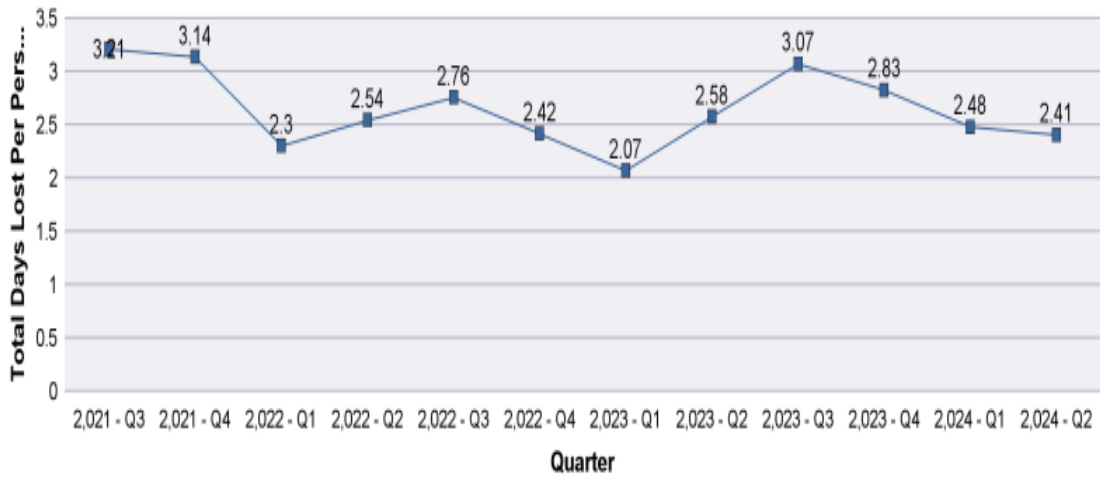
10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

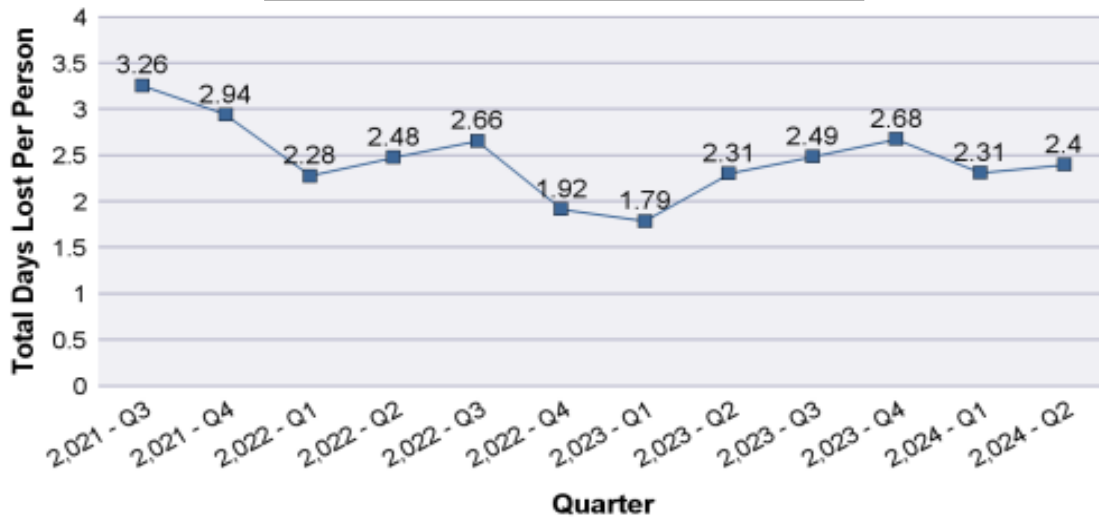## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A

Whole Period Summary - All
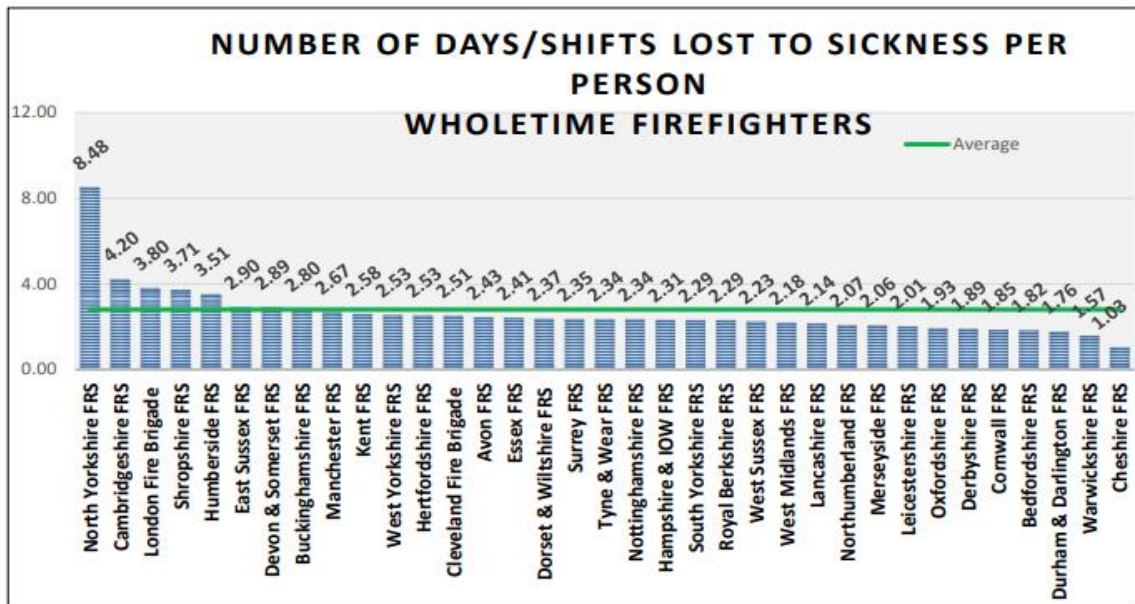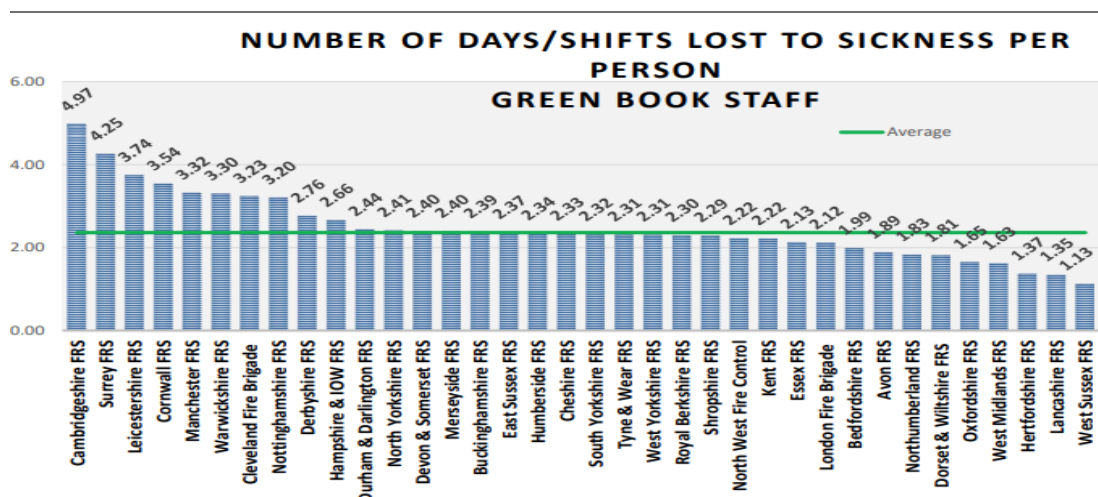

Whole Period Summary - Wholetime

Whole Period Summary - Non Uniformed

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

National Absence Survey

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

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

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

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

NUMBER OF DAYS/SHIFTS LOST TO SICKNESS PER PERSON GREEN BOOK STAFF
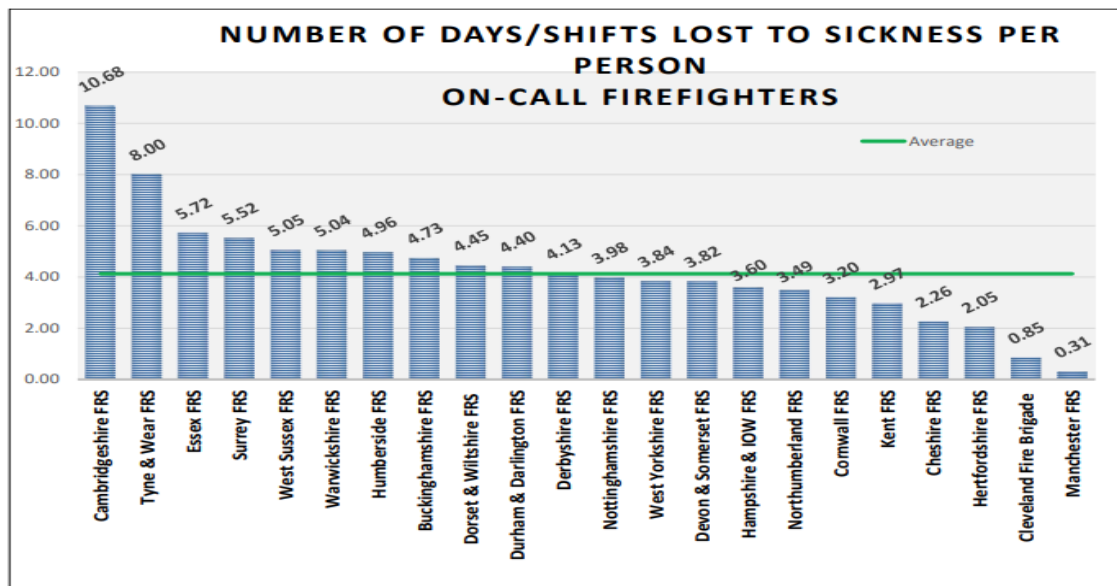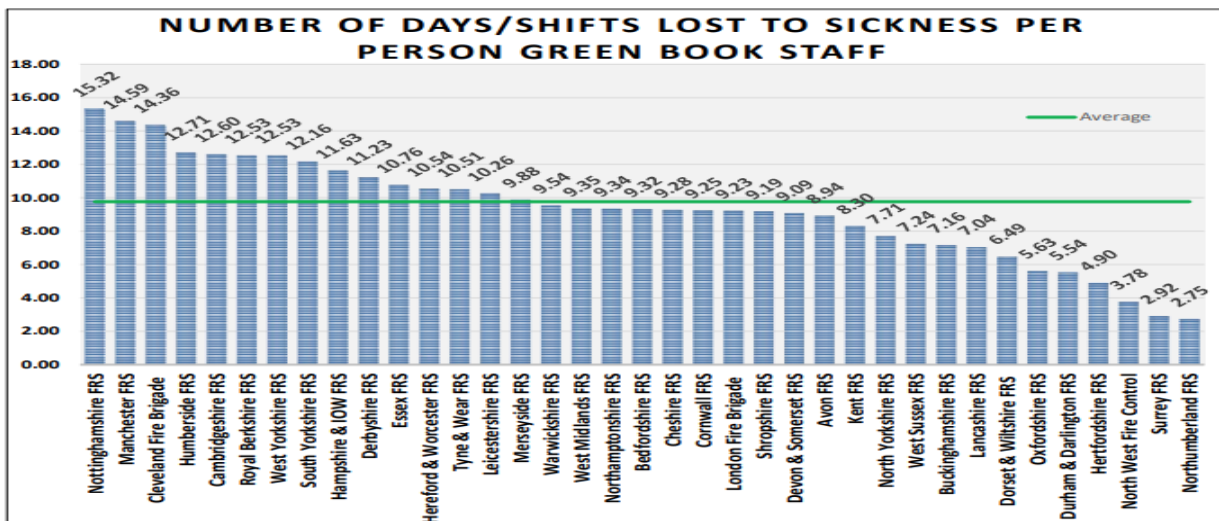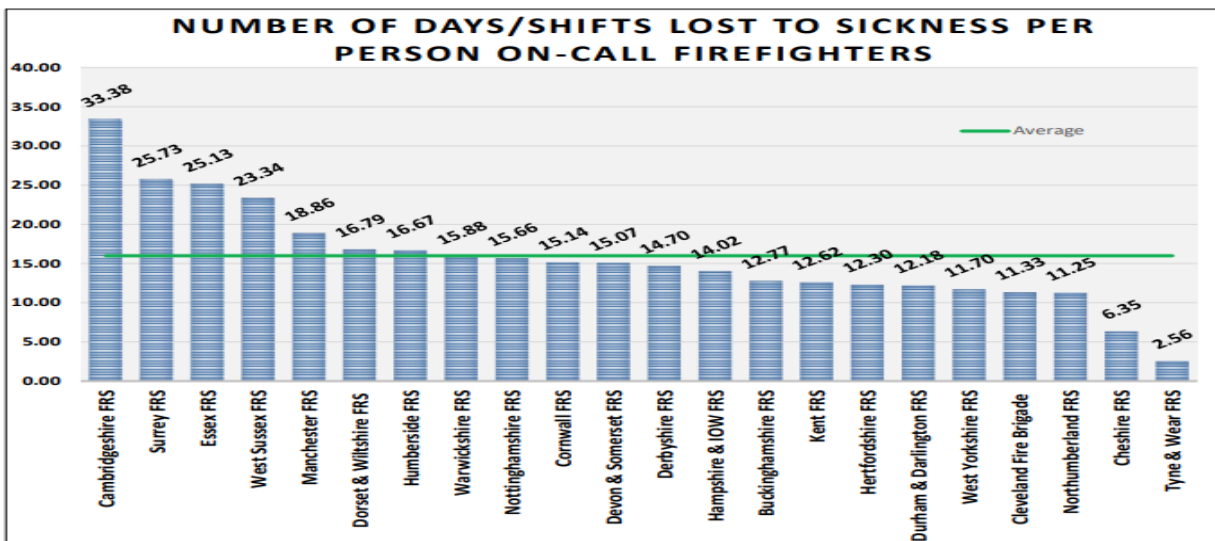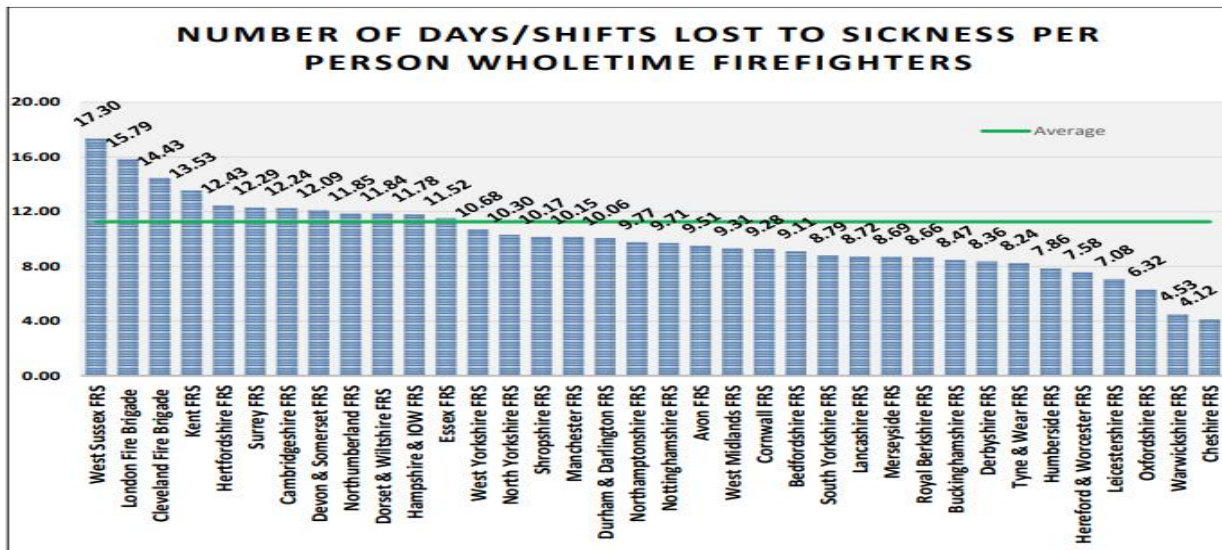
Wholetime Absence Q4 2023/24

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	34	416
Hospital/Post Operative	8	162
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	27	123
Mental Health - Other	7	103
Gastro-Intestinal	22	95
Cancer and Tumours	1	65
Ear, Nose, Throat	8	43
Virus/Infectious Diseases	11	40
Other	5	20
Respiratory - Chest Infection	5	20

On-Call Absence Q4 2023/24

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	13	395
Mental Health	5	173
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	8	62
Mental Health - Other	3	51
Virus/Infectious Diseases	8	46
Ear, Nose, Throat	1	41
Hospital/Post Operative	3	38
Other	2	19
Gastro-Intestinal	4	16
Respiratory - Chest Infection	2	14

Support Staff Absence Q4 2023/24

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	6	105
Musculo Skeletal	3	92
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	23	87
Hospital/Post Operative	5	75
Cancer and Tumours	1	65
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	4	50
COVID-19 Isolating - Tested Positive	3	26
Mental Health - Other	4	13
Gastro-Intestinal	5	8.5
Respiratory - Chest Infection	1	5

Wholetime Absence Q1 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	34	389
Hospital/Post Operative	13	162
Mental Health - Other	5	152
Gastro-Intestinal	20	71
Mental Health	2	67
Virus/Infectious Diseases	9	42
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	10	32
Ear, Nose, Throat	6	30
Respiratory - Chest Infection	6	22
Other	3	9

On-Call Absence Q1 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	11	443
Mental Health	3	135
Hospital/Post Operative	4	95
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	1	75
Mental Health - Other	1	74
Respiratory - Chest Infection	4	43
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	2	22
Virus/Infectious Diseases	3	10
Other	2	8
Allergy	1	1
Respiratory - Other	1	1

Support Staff Absence Q1 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Absence Count	Days Lost
Hospital/Post Operative	9	211
Musculo Skeletal	4	102
Mental Health	4	62
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	9	26.5
Cancer and Tumours	1	24
Skin Condition	1	16
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	6	12
Gastro-Intestinal	5	8
Other	2	7
Respiratory - Chest Infection	2	7

Wholetime Absence Q2 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	43	493
Mental Health - Other	6	118
Hospital/Post Operative	9	117
Gastro-Intestinal	28	96
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	16	63
Virus/Infectious Diseases	10	31
Nervous System Disorder	2	26
Skin Condition	1	24
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	3	12
Mental Health	1	12

On-Call Absence Q2 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Musculo Skeletal	20	519
Hospital/Post Operative	5	255
Respiratory - Other	2	95
FSR Absence	1	30
Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	4	20
Virus/Infectious Diseases	5	20
Gastro-Intestinal	6	19
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	2	12
Heart, Cardiac and Circulatory Problems	1	6
Mental Health	1	1

Support Staff Absence Q2 2024/25

Absence Reason - Grouped	Unique Absence Count	Days Lost
Mental Health	5	128
Headache/Migraine/Neurological	9	86
Hospital/Post Operative	5	69
Musculo Skeletal	4	51
Genitourinary/Gynecological/Reproductive	4	22

Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (COVID related)	8	22
Gastro-Intestinal	8	13.5
Ear, Nose, Throat	2	5
Virus/Infectious Diseases	2	3
Dental	1	1
Other known causes (not specified in list)	1	1