



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: 30 January 2015

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on Human Resources issues within the Service

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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, health and safety, employment tribunal cases and staffing numbers. These issues are known 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

HR METRICS - SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 2.1 The following represents absence figures for Quarter 2: 1 July to 30 September 2014. The format of the report has been amended to better reflect absence within specific work groups so that issues relevant to these groups can be more clearly identified and analysed. As a result of enhanced reporting arrangements, absence figures for control and retained duty system employees can now be included in the figures.
- 2.2 Previously the report has shown comparative figures against the same quarter of the previous year. In the future this comparison will be made at the end of the annual reporting period (Quarter 4) as a more representative comparison of absence over a whole year period, rather than a snapshot in time, and are therefore not included in this review.

Target absence figures for 2014/15 are:

Wholetime & Control: 6 days per person

Non-Uniformed: 7 days per person

Whole Workforce: 6.25 days* per person

(* the average is affected by the numbers of employees in each work group)

Total Workforce

Absence	Quarter 2 1 Jul – 30 Sept 2014	Compared with previous quarter	Cumulative total days lost for 14/15	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Total workforce (154 employees have been absent during Q2, excluding retained*)	1480 days lost 2 days per employee	1404.5 days lost 1.94 days per employee 5.37% increase (+75.5 days)	2884.5 days lost 3.94 days per employee	7.14 days per employee

(*Due to the on-call nature of the Retained Duty System which does not reflect whole days of absence)

- 2.3 Absence rates have increased by 5.37% (+75.5 days) across the workforce as a whole during Quarter 2 compared to Quarter 1. The average absence for the period was 2.05 days per employee, which is above the target of 1.56 days. This is accounted for by an increase in uniformed sickness absence.
- 2.4 Overall, average absence for 2014-15 is 3.99 days per employee which is above our target level of 3.25 days at the 6 month point.
- 2.5 Cumulative absence figures over the past 12 months are also slightly higher than our average of 6.25 days per employee. However it should be noted that this is still below the public sector average of 8.7 days and the private sector average of 7.2 days. (*Source: Absence management 2013 annual survey report of the CIPD and Simply Health*).

Wholetime Employees

Absence	Quarter 2 1 Jul – 30 Sept 2014	Compared with previous quarter	Cumulative total days lost for 14/15	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Wholetime (99 employees have been absent during Q2)	1100 days lost 2.1 days per employee	839 days lost 1.57 days per employee 31.1% increase (+261 days)	1939 days lost 3.67 days per employee	6.55 days per employee

- 2.6 In reviewing the reason for this increase for uniformed employees, 68.7% (756 days) of absence was long-term in nature i.e. for a period of longer than 28 days, and related to significant medical issues. As an indication of the types of conditions recorded, 495 days were lost due to musculo-skeletal conditions (42 instances), 250 days due to anxiety/depression (8 instances).
- 2.7 The Occupational Health team has been working with operational employees with long-term conditions to provide support and access to treatment. Many of these employees have now returned to work, some being placed on modified duties in some instances to assist their recovery. There were seven individuals on modified duties during the period.
- 2.8 Over the next year, particular emphasis will be placed on managing musculo-skeletal conditions and mental health issues across the Service, with the aim of reducing the instances and length of absence in these areas.

Retained Employees

Absence	Quarter 2 1 Jul – 30 Sept 2014	Compared with previous quarter	Cumulative non availability (days) during 14/15	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Retained (28 employees have been absent during Q2) excluding retained	455 days lost 1.76 days lost per employee	486 days lost 1.9 days per employee 6.4% decrease (-31 days)	941 days lost 3.66 days lost per employee	Not available

2.9 Due to the on-call nature of the retained duty system, absence levels reflect non availability rather than total working/shift days lost.

2.10 During Q2, absence levels have decreased (-31 days) compared to Q1 and reflect an average of 1.74 days per person, which is slightly above the target of 1.5 days for operational employees. Long-term absence (more than 28 days) accounts for 51.6% of this absence.

2.11 The main reasons for absence are recorded as musculo-skeletal in nature (Shoulder, upper limb, back).

Control Employees

Absence	Quarter 2 1 Jul – 30 Sept 2014	Compared with previous quarter	Cumulative total days lost for 14/15	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Control (3 employees have been absent during Q2) excluding retained	6 days lost 0.2 days per employee	40 days lost 1.45 days per employee 85% decrease (-34 days)	46 days lost 1.47 days per employee	6.35 days per employee

2.12 Absence levels for Control employees has shown a significant decrease over the past year. In Q2 only six days of absence have been recorded, at an average of 0.2 days.

2.13 There were no instances of long-term absence.

Support Employees

Absence	Quarter 2 1 Jul – 30 Sept 2014	Compared with previous quarter	Cumulative total days lost for 14/15	Cumulative average over last 12 months
Non uniformed (52 employees have been absent during Q2)	374.5 days lost 2.1 days per employee	525.5 days lost 3.19 days per employee 28.7% decrease (-151 days)	900 days lost 5.29 days per employee	9.14 days per employee

- 2.14 It is encouraging to report a reduction in non-uniformed absence levels after increases in recent quarters, with a number of employees who had been absent with long-term conditions having now returned to work.
- 2.15 In Q2 there was a reduction of 28.7% (-151 days) compared to the previous quarter, at an average of 2.1 days per employee. This is above the target of 1.75 days.
- 2.16 The main reasons for absence were conditions recorded as Post Hospitalisation or Other Senses.

Whole Workforce - Long Term Absence and Medically Certified Absence

		Instances	Shifts lost
Long term sickness (defined as 28 days or more)	Total Workforce	48	1202
	Whole-time employees	32	756
	Retained employees	5	235
	Control employees	0	0
	Non Uniformed	11	211

- 2.17 Long term absence (of more than 28 days in duration) accounts for 62% of all sickness absence in Q2. The most prevalent reason for absence during Q2 (in terms of working time lost) was certified as due to musculo-skeletal conditions or anxiety and depression (uniformed), and post-hospitalisation or Other senses (non- uniformed).
- 2.18 There were 75 separate periods of medically certified absence in Quarter 2. Of these, 57 employees have subsequently returned to work or left the service. The graphs attached as Appendix 1 give a clearer idea of how absence has been affected over a longer period of time and sets out a more representative view of absence over the year.

Reasons for Absence – Comparison with National Trends

- 2.19 The national Absence Survey undertaken by the Chief Fire Officers Association for the first half of 2014/15 shows that musculo-skeletal and back conditions were the main causes of sickness absence for all uniformed employees, with mental health issues identified as the primary cause of absence for non-uniformed staff.
- 2.20 As set out earlier in the report, sickness absence for operational employees at NFRS reflects the national trend for absence due to musculo-skeletal injury. However the trend for non-uniformed employees is different at NFRS, with post operative conditions rather than mental health issues representing the main reason for sickness absence.

DISCIPLINE, GRIEVANCES ETC

2.21 Over the period 1 July 2014 – 30 September 2014:

- Disciplinary: 0
- Grievances: 0
- Harassment and Bullying: 0
- Formal Management Sickness Absence Policy: 0
- Dismissals including ill health retirements: 1
- Redundancy: 1
- Redeployment: 0
- Employment Tribunal cases: 0
- IDRP appeals: 1

STAFFING NUMBERS

2.22 During the period 1 July 2014 to 30 September 2014, 23 employees commenced employment. Establishment levels at 30 September 2014 are highlighted below:

	Approved	Actual	Variance
Wholetime	531	529 (528.5 full time equivalents)	-2
Retained	204 units	262 persons (137.5 units) (includes 58 dual contracts)	- 66.5 units
Non-Uniformed	176 (162.31 fte)	171 <i>Established Post – 161 (137.5 fte)</i> <i>Fixed Term Non-Established Post –3</i> <i>Fixed Term in Established Post - 8</i> <i>Agency staff – 2</i>	-5
Fire Control	26	30 (28 FTE)	+4 (2 FTE)

- 2.23 There have been 17 leavers and 18 starters since the last report which has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 992 employees. Leavers are broken down as follows: 3 whole-time, 7 retained, and 7 non-uniformed employees.
- 2.24 Additionally, the Service currently employs 2 Apprentices on one year fixed-term contracts, and 36 Contingency Crew Operatives on zero hour contracts.
- 2.25 As at 30 September 2014 whole-time establishment stood at -2 FTE (528.5 FTE) employees against an establishment of 531 posts. The recent Crew Manager selection process has seen the promotion of ten Firefighters, which has addressed the previously reported short-fall of supervisory managers at this level.
- 2.26 The Control section has seen a temporary increase in posts due to the need to provide additional support whilst permanent employees are engaged with the implementation of the new mobilising system. These appointments have been made on a one-year fixed term basis.
- 2.27 It should be noted that the outcome of the operational cover proposals will lead to a reduction in whole-time established posts from 531 to 511 from early 2015, due to the loss of an appliance at Highfields station. This has led to the transfer of employees from Highfields to other locations within the county.
- 2.28 The closure of the retained section at Mansfield will lead to the redeployment of 6 employees into Whole-time roles in January, with 5 dual employment employees (who provide both whole-time and retained cover) made redundant from their retained roles. and one employee transferred to another RDS section. This will lead to a short-term over provision of Fire-fighters, which will be addressed through anticipated retirements during the remainder of 2015/16.
- 2.29 During the period the Service has appointed to 13 retained positions (including 2 dual contracts), 3 Control and 5 support roles (non uniformed posts).

ILL HEALTH RETIREMENTS

- 2.30 There was one whole-time retirement on the grounds of permanent ill-health during Q2 of 2014-15. This brings the total number of ill-health retirements to three for the year, and means that the Authority has exceeded its target of 1 ill-health retirement per year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There is a direct relationship between numbers of staff employed and pay costs. As can be seen from the table, the numbers of wholetime and support

employees are currently close to establishment, although this hasn't been the case throughout the whole year. The financial implications of this are reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

- 3.2 The higher than usual number of ill health retirements this year has resulted in a predicted overspend of £90k. This has been reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources implications are set out in the report, and there are no learning and development implications.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

As this review does not impact upon policy or service function, no equality impact 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 HR ensures that the Service and the Authority are aware of any developing workforce issues.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members endorse the report.

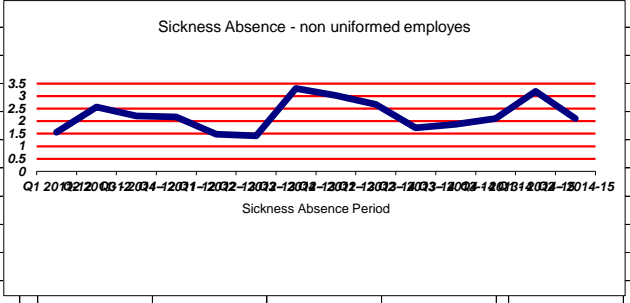
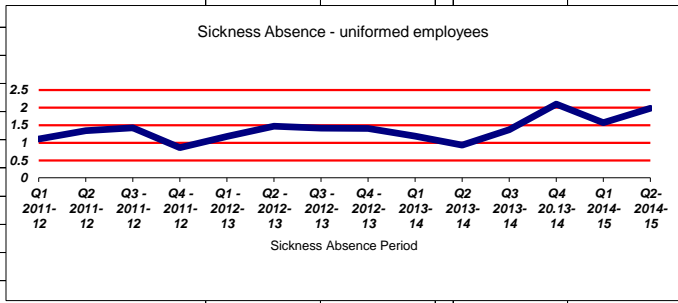
10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

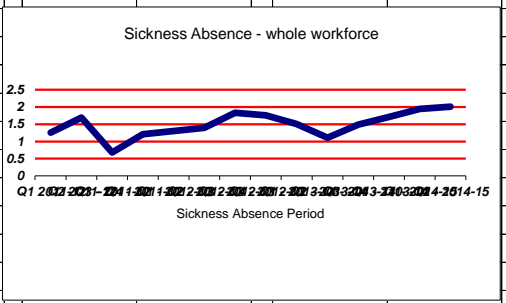
BREAKDOWN OF ABSENCE Q2 (Jul - Sept 14)

WORK GROUP	Jul		Aug		Sept		SUMMARY OF QUARTER 2			
	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Average (days per person)	Total work days lost	Previous quarter days lost	% difference
UNIFORMED (inc Control)	0.69	384	0.69	383	0.61	339	1.95	1106	878	-25.97
NON UNIFORMED	0.57	104.5	0.44	80	1.07	190	2.24	374.5	525.5	28.73
TOTAL WORKFORCE	0.66	488.5	0.63	463	0.72	529	2.01	1480.5	1403.5	-5.49



UNIFORMED ABSENCE

NON UNIFORMED ABSENCE



TOTAL ABSENCE