

# DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



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| <b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>       | <b>HRMDC/09/6</b>   |
| <b>MEETING</b>                    | <b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>   |
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>            | <b>15 APRIL 2009</b>  |
| <b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>          | <b>ABSENCE MANAGEMENT</b>   |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER</b>               | <b>Head of Human Resources Management and Development</b>   |
| <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>            | <i>That the report be noted.</i>  |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>          | The progress with Absence Management has been included as a standing item within the HRMD agenda. This report includes an update of the Service performance for absence levels and also the long term absence levels. |
| <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>      | As identified within the paper.   |
| <b>EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> |   |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>                 | A. Sickness Absence Management Policy   |
| <b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>  |   |

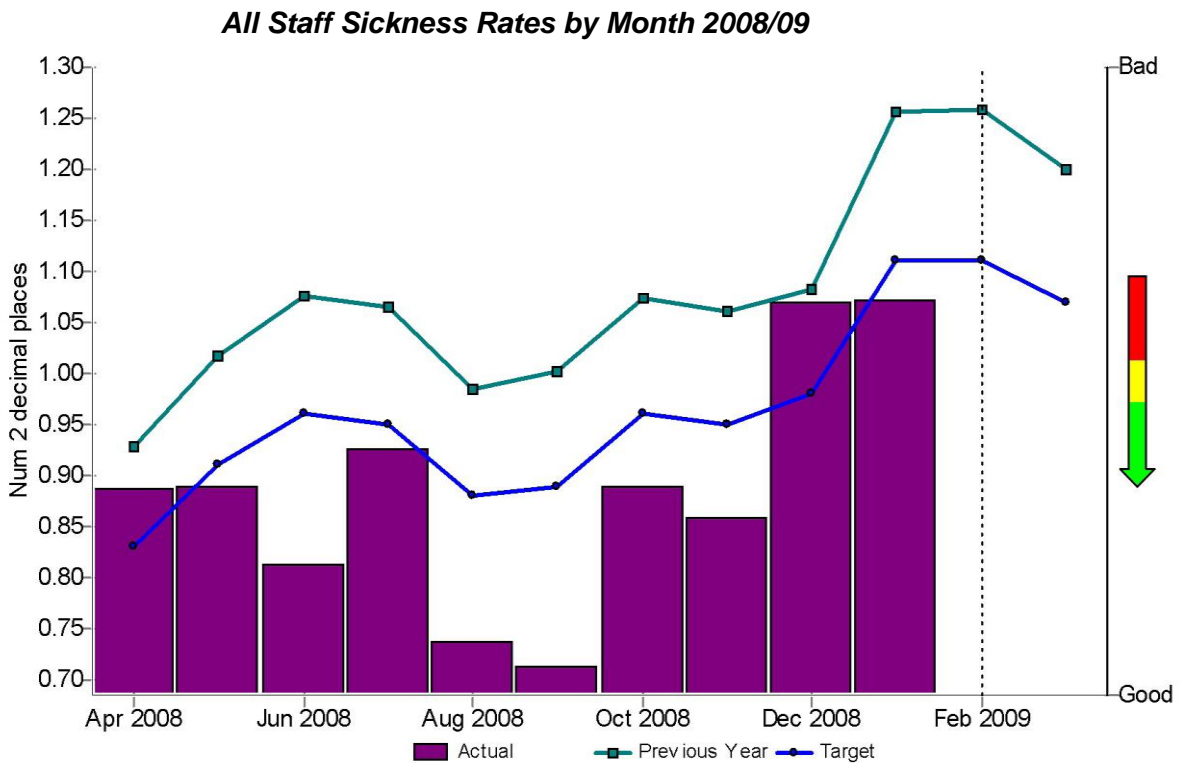
1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Throughout the financial the HRMD Committee have received a regular update on progress with absence management. This item remains within the Service target level as part of the Service Performance Reporting. Sickness Absence had previously been identified as part of the Service exception reporting of our performance and therefore this has continued to be an area of particular Service focus. The Service has also developed a new harmonised policy on Absence Management which will support the continued improvement in reducing sickness absence levels.

2. **CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

2.1 The Service has a corporate target to reduce the levels of sickness absence to the regional average rate of 9.0 days/shifts lost per person by 2010/11. The target for 2008/9 is 11.6 days per person.

2.2 The target absence level was not achieved in 2007/8 but the overall improvement through to January 2008/9 has been maintained in which we have seen a 16% decrease in absence when compared with the same period last year. At this point in time, the previous year was an average of 10.55 days absence per person compared with our actual level for 2008/9 of 8.86 days. This is 6% better than our target of level 9.42 days. During September, October and November the Service performed better than our target levels but this was pulled back in December to 9.1% above target before dropping to 9.6% below target in January.



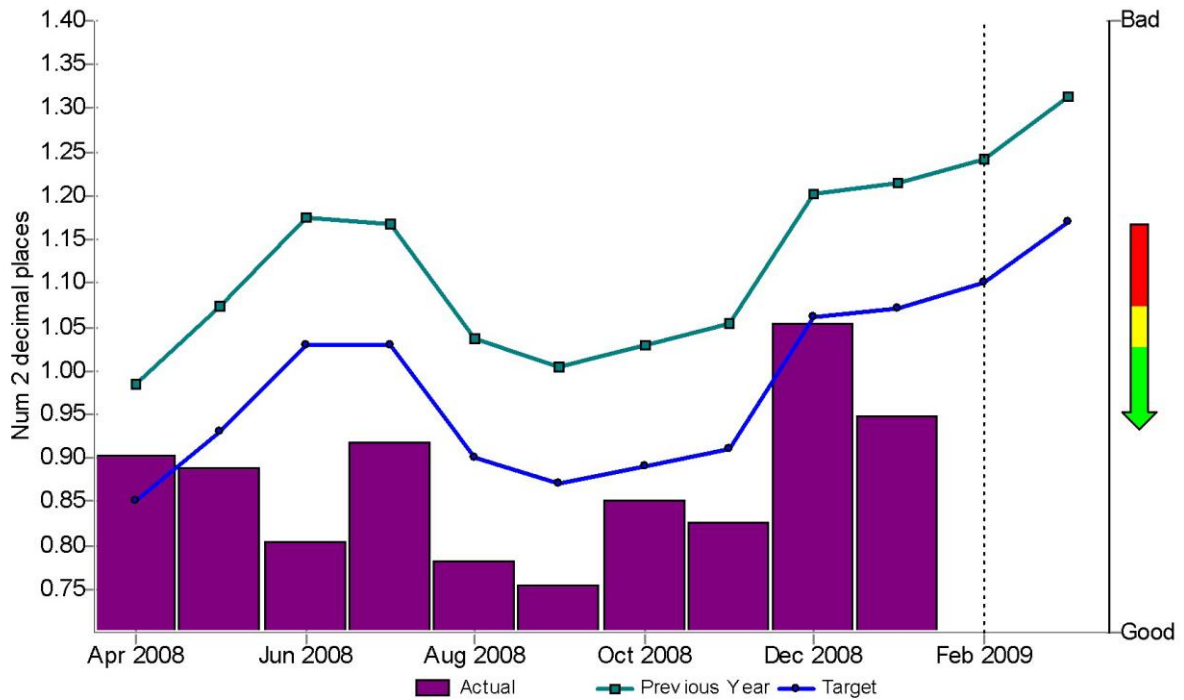
**All Staff – Sickness Rates per Person – by Month**

|            | <b>Actual<br/>08/09</b> | <b>Previous Year<br/>07/08</b> | <b>% variance on<br/>previous year</b> |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Apr 2008   | 0.89                    | 0.93                           | -4.4%                                  |
| May 2008   | 0.89                    | 1.02                           | -12.5%                                 |
| Jun 2008   | 0.81                    | 1.08                           | -24.3%                                 |
| Jul 2008   | 0.93                    | 1.07                           | -13.1%                                 |
| Aug 2008   | 0.74                    | 0.98                           | -25.0%                                 |
| Sept 2008  | 0.71                    | 1.00                           | -28.9%                                 |
| Oct 2008   | 0.89                    | 1.07                           | -17.3%                                 |
| Nov 2008   | 0.86                    | 1.06                           | -19.0%                                 |
| Dec 2008   | 1.07                    | 1.08                           | -1.3%                                  |
| Jan 2009   | 1.07                    | 1.26                           | -14.6%                                 |
| <b>YTD</b> | <b>8.86</b>             | <b>10.55</b>                   | <b>-16.0%</b>                          |

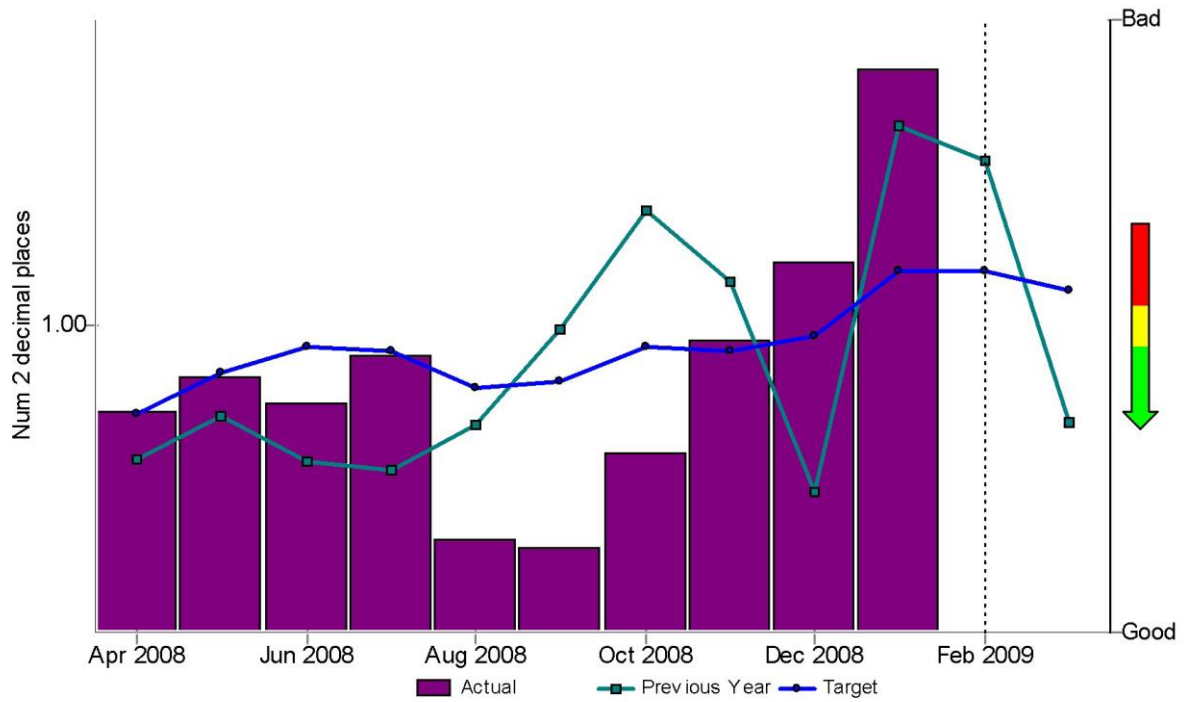
2.3

As usual, we can then break down the figures by staff category and the rates for uniformed, control and non-uniformed are shown below. The uniformed levels saw an increase in December before dropping back in January to 22% below the previous year and 11% below target. For non-uniformed staff Members had requested that the all-staff target level was included as well as the previous year. The results are mixed with a good middle year but falling below target in December and January. The Control Rooms have conversely been below target all year but have seen a remarkable improvement reflecting a reduction in long-term sickness and management intervention on short-term sickness.

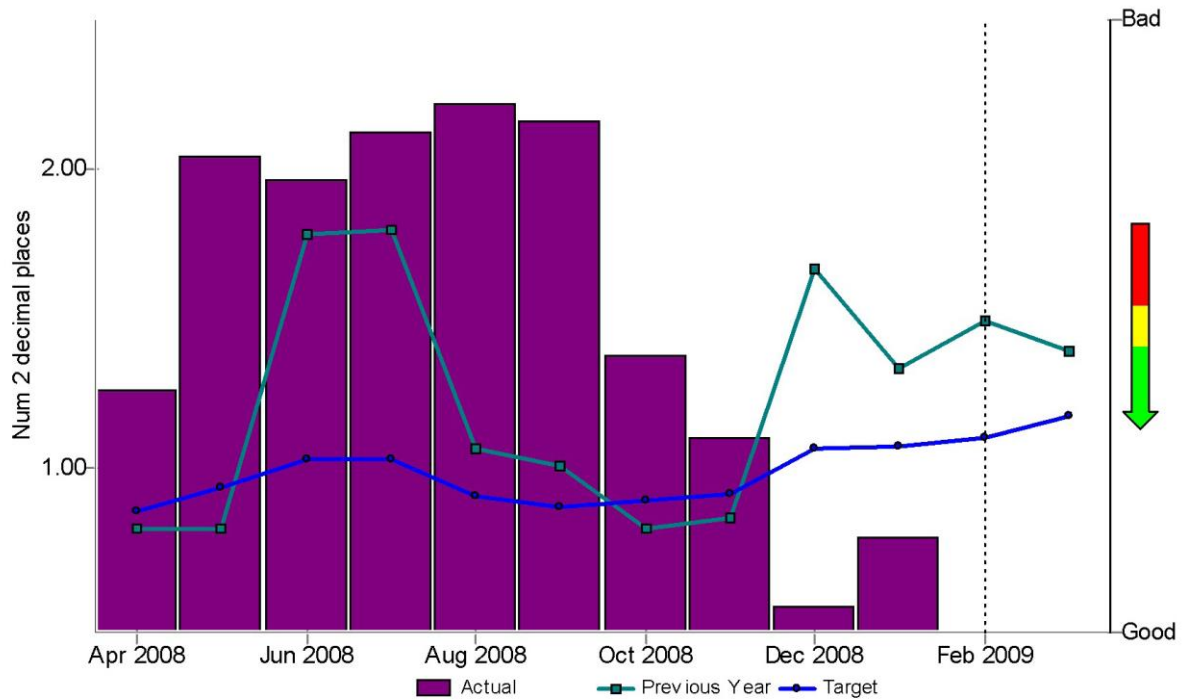
**Uniformed Staff Sickness Rates by Month 2008/09**



**Non-uniformed Staff Sickiness Rates by Month 2008/09**



**Control Staff Sickiness Rates by Month 2008/09**



### 3. **COST OF ABSENCE**

3.1 The cost of absence is part of the provided data although it is recognised that the Service has a ridership factor applied at station level to account for absences including annual leave, training and sickness. So, when a member of station based staff is absent, it does not necessarily mean that a further cost have been incurred.

3.2 The costs that have been calculated relate to direct salary costs only and do not take into account any indirect costs or allowances such as flexi duty.

| Period | Salary Cost |
|--------|-------------|
| Q1     | £351,894    |
| Q2     | £329,383    |
| Q3     | £397,000    |

Of the total:

- 66% of this cost is due to long-term sickness
- 11.5% of this cost is due to certified sickness
- 22.5% of this cost is due to uncertified sickness

### 4. **DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF LONG TERM SICKNESS**

4.1 The monitoring of long term sickness ie those over 28 days is reported on a monthly basis and includes those who are long term sick and those on restricted duties. The number of long term sick over the last 13 months has been as follows:

| No. of staff  | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Uniformed     | 27  | 28  | 23  | 23  | 19  | 19  | 20  | 23   | 17  | 20  | 18  | 16  | 18  |
| Retained      | 14  | 17  | 10  | 10  | 8   | 10  | 8   | 9    | 12  | 14  | 20  | 20  | 20  |
| Non-uniformed | 3   | 6   | 6   | 7   | 6   | 2   | 4   | 2    | 3   | 6   | 5   | 3   | 5   |
| Total         | 44  | 51  | 39  | 40  | 33  | 31  | 32  | 34   | 32  | 40  | 43  | 39  | 43  |

### 5. **PROGRESS WITH ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

5.1 The Absence Management Policy has been completed and is attached with this report as Appendix A for information (as requested at the previous meeting of the Committee). The policy is also available on the intranet. The original consultation exercise on this policy was extended from 7 November 2008 to enable additional time for the trade unions to respond. There were also meetings with the trade unions and the FBU and FOA have taken part in working party meetings. The policy is now being publicised within the Service and managers are receiving briefings in its implementation and use.

### 6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 The Service continues to see a significant improvement over the previous year at a level better than targeted for 2008/9. The work on the Absence Management Policy is at the final consultation stage before being implemented.

**JANE SHERLOCK**

Head of Human Resources Management and Development