DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	**HRMDC/14/2**
MEETING	**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**
DATE OF MEETING	**22 JANUARY 2014**
SUBJECT OF REPORT	**ABSENCE MANAGEMENT & HEALTH OF THE ORGANISATION**
LEAD OFFICER	**Director of People and Commercial Services**
RECOMMENDATIONS	***That the report be noted.***
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	One of the key internal measures reported as part of the Service's assessment of performance is that of sickness absence rates. The Authority's Human Resources Management and Development (HRMD) Committee has requested that they are sighted on this area of Service performance.
	It has previously been agreed that a 6 monthly light touch report would be submitted to the Committee and then a detailed review would be undertaken at the year end. The Service has also previously in 2013 reported on the priorities in this area and a further update is included within this report.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	None apparent.
EQUALITY RISK & BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	The Absence Management policy has had an equality impact assessment.
APPENDICES	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

1.1 At the HRMD Committee in June 2012 (Minute *HRMDC/5 refers), it was agreed that the detailed measures for the 'Health of the Organisation' would be submitted on an annual basis but with an additional half yearly review. The format for these half-yearly reviews are as per the quarterly performance report so that the Committee could maximise the utilisation of the available data. The Service is seeking to achieve year-on-year improvements in this measure.

2. <u>2013/14 APRIL TO SEPTEMBER ABSENCE PERFORMANCE</u>

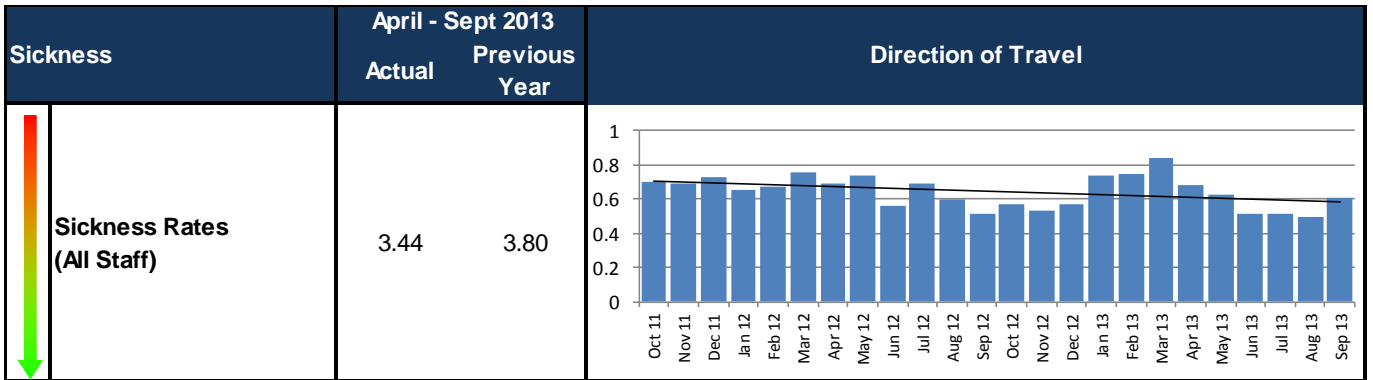| Sickness	April - Sept 2013		Direction of Travel
	Actual	Previous Year	
Sickness Rates (All Staff)	3.44	3.80	

Fig 1: Sickness Direction of Travel

2.1 The graph above shows the monthly sickness rates for the last 2 years. With monthly peaks and troughs in sickness it is difficult to see the on-going improvement in the rates over this period. Figure 2 below shows a rolling sickness rate and shows a much clearer downward trend in the first two years following combination. This increased slightly during 2011 and 2012 and it is good to see during the last 10 months that the 12 month rolling rate has dropped below 8 days per person per year.
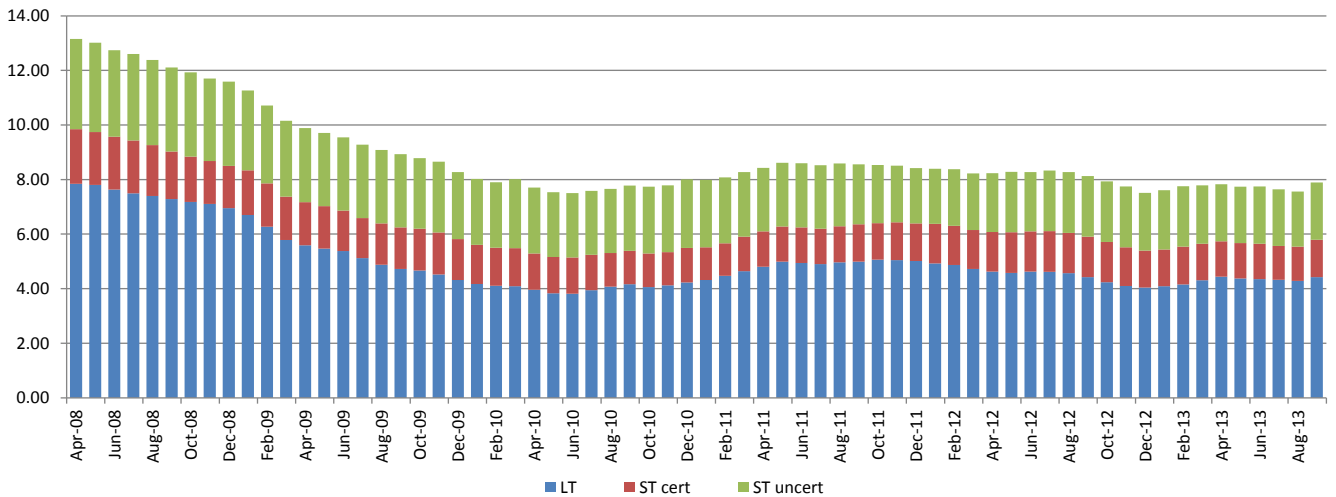

Fig 2: 12 Month Rolling Sickness Rate

2.2   The graph below shows an overall downward trend in annual sickness rates since combination in 2007.
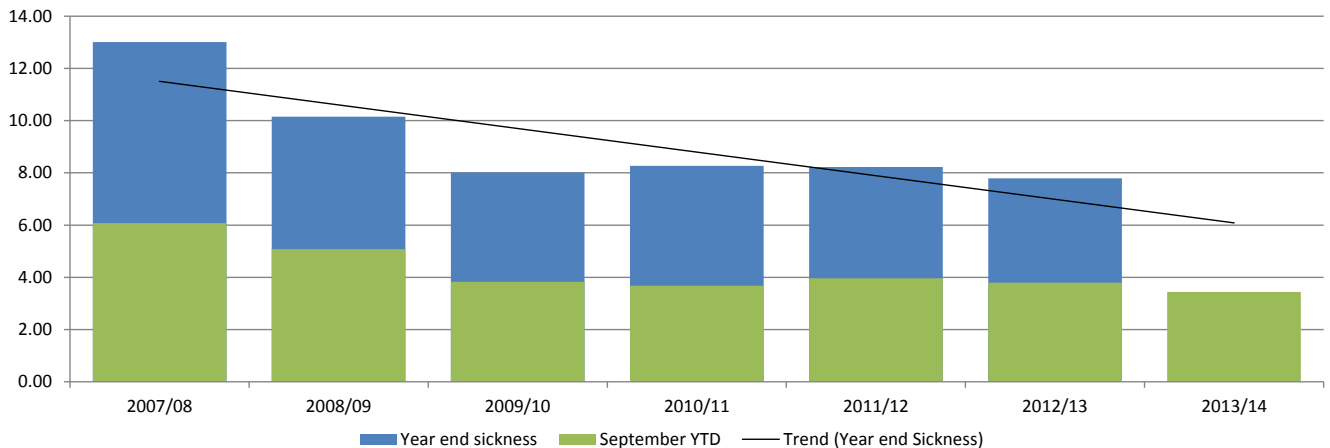

Fig 3: Service level Sickness Rate per Person

2.3   The Service then considers the breakdown of sickness rates between the different contract types as well as the length of sickness. There are 4 contract types that are considered:

- Wholetime Station based staff
- Wholetime non station based staff
- Control Staff
- Support Staff

The length of sickness is considered under 3 categories:

- Short-term sickness – uncertified ie periods of sickness up to 7 days
- Short-term sickness – certified ie periods of sickness over 7 days for which a GP certificate is required
- Long-term sickness – for periods of over 28 days

2.4   The breakdown on the sickness rates is set out within Figures 4 and 5 below.

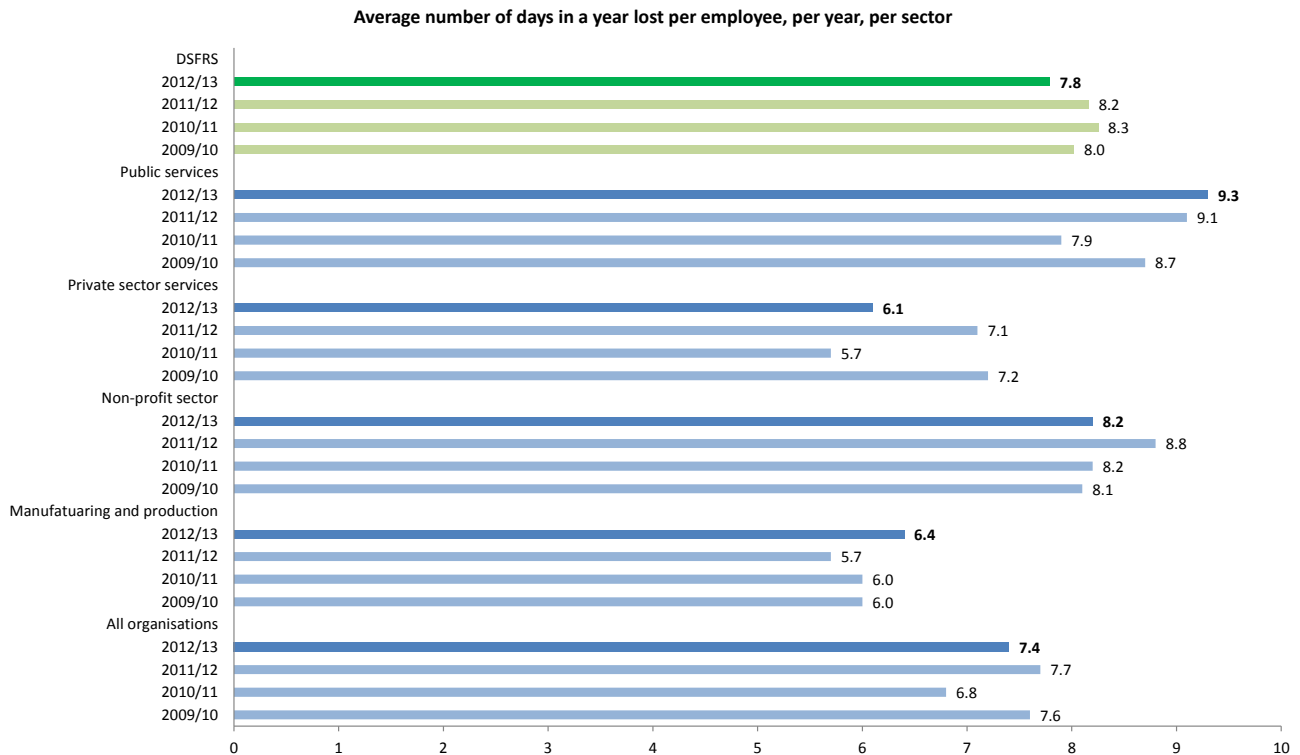| Sickness Rates by post type April - September	Wholetime Station based staff			Wholetime Non Station staff *(inc SHQ, STC, group support teams etc)*		
	Actual	**Previous Year**	**% Variance**	**Actual**	**Previous Year**	**% Variance**
Overall Sickness Rate	2.79	3.64	**-23.4%**	4.60	4.45	**3.2%**
Total # Days/shifts lost	1320	1806	**-26.9%**	924	892	**3.6%**
Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)	1.46	2.29	**-36.4%**	3.74	3.32	**12.7%**
# Days/shifts lost LT	690	1136	**-39.3%**	752	665	**13.1%**
Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)	0.56	0.54	**2.8%**	0.49	0.57	**-15.1%**
# Days/shifts lost STcert	265	270	**-1.9%**	98	115	**-14.8%**
Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calender days)	0.77	0.81	**-4.4%**	0.37	0.56	**-34.2%**
# Days/shifts lost STuncert	365	400	**-8.8%**	74	112	**-33.9%**

Fig 4: Sickness rates by post type – Wholetime station based staff and non-station based staff

Sickness Rates by post type April - September	Control			Support staff		
	Actual	Previous Year	% Variance	Actual	Previous Year	% Variance
Overall Sickness Rate	6.61	6.37	**3.8%**	3.28	3.17	**3.3%**
Total # Days/shifts lost	251	269	**-6.7%**	852	831	**2.5%**
Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)	4.32	3.34	**29.4%**	1.66	1.13	**46.5%**
# Days/shifts lost LT	164	141	**16.3%**	432	297	**45.5%**
Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)	0.79	1.28	**-38.2%**	0.62	0.66	**-6.3%**
# Days/shifts lost STcert	30	54	**-44.4%**	160	172	**-7.0%**
Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calender days)	1.50	1.75	**-14.3%**	1.00	1.38	**-27.6%**
# Days/shifts lost STuncert	57	74	**-23.0%**	260	362	**-28.2%**

Fig 5: Sickness rates by post type – Control & Support staff

- Wholetime station based staff is showing decreases in long term and short-term uncertified sickness, however, short-term certified sickness rates are up by 2.8%. The overall sickness rate is down by 23.4% compared with this time last year.

- Wholetime non-station based staff has had an increase in long term sickness of 12.7%. Short-term certified and short-term uncertified are both down by 15.1% and 34.2% respectively. However, the impact of the increase in long-term sickness rate has resulted in a small increase of 3.2% of the overall rate compared to this time last year.

- Control has seen a large decrease in all short-term sickness, however, with a significant increase in long-term sickness. The overall rate shows an increase of 3.8%. It is worth noting that even with this decrease in short term sickness, control staff has the highest sickness rates in all 3 sickness categories.

- Support staff has seen a large increase in long term sickness with a 46.5% increase on last yearwhich has contributed to an overall increase in the sickness rate by 3.3%, however the overall rate remains below Control and Wholetime Non-Station based. Short term sickness is down.

3.   SICKNESS ABSENCE – INDUSTRY BENCHMARKING

Average number of days in a year lost per employee, per year, per sector

Sector / Year	Days
DSFRS	
2012/13	**7.8**
2011/12	8.2
2010/11	8.3
2009/10	8.0
Public services	
2012/13	**9.3**
2011/12	9.1
2010/11	7.9
2009/10	8.7
Private sector services	
2012/13	**6.1**
2011/12	7.1
2010/11	5.7
2009/10	7.2
Non-profit sector	
2012/13	**8.2**
2011/12	8.8
2010/11	8.2
2009/10	8.1
Manufatuaring and production	
2012/13	**6.4**
2011/12	5.7
2010/11	6.0
2009/10	6.0
All organisations	
2012/13	**7.4**
2011/12	7.7
2010/11	6.8
2009/10	7.6

3.1   The information set out within the table above shows that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS is performing better than the average public services sickness rate, with 7.8 days lost per employee in 2012/13 compared with 9.3 days. The Service is also outperforming the non-profit sector; however the manufacturing and production and private sector services are at a lower rate.

3.2   It is encouraging to see a year on year decrease in sickness rates over the past 3 years for the Service, which is seeing DSFRS move more in line with the all organisations rate of 7.4 days per employee, per year in 2012/13. When looking at our year to date sickness rate for 2013/14 the Service is on course to continue that downward trend.

4   PROGRESS TOWARDS CURRENT PRIORITIES

4.1   The Service has previously reported on the changes made in support of Absence Management and these are updated below.

The previously completed objectives were:

- Working Group to produce a new Absence Management Policy

- Develop administration systems to support policy & procedures

- Performance Management information through PIMS

- New Occupational Health (OH) Provider – having previously tendered for the OH provision, Capita Health Solutions were appointed. The contract was then novated to IMASS and following a new tender process in 2012, Devon County Council (wellbeing@work) were appointed as the Service's Occupational Health Provider

- Introduction of Counselling & Physiotherapy Services

- Payment for private specialist referrals

The Service has then set new objectives which have been progressed:

- Fitness testing combined with 3 yearly medical - completed

- Access by managers to electronic absence records – Employee online self-service and Manager Access modules have been purchased and have been rolled-out initially to SHQ. These will be extended across the whole Service

- Introduction of a capability procedure – discussions with Trade Unions have been undertaken but the policy has not yet been completed

- Stress Management training for managers - completed

- Electronic Personal Record Files – this project has been put on hold whilst other Service priorities are completed.

- Electronic time sheets for uniformed Day Duty Staff - completed

- Rollout of Gartan Wholetime system - completed

4.2   A further objective has been the introduction of a workflow system for reporting sickness. This makes sickness absence management easier, more efficient and use less resources. The Service is implementing an electronic solution for this process using Middleware. The Middleware system will enable the exchange of data between existing business systems including HR Workforce. This will avoid data duplication and inconsistencies, and provide access to accurate, complete, consistent and up-to-date data. This system also automatically uploads sickness absence data into the HR Workforce system those reducing the administration time involved.

5.   CONCLUSION

5.1   For the first half of 2013/14, the Service absence levels were lower than the previous year and our performance is considerably better than other public sector organisations. We are also getting closer to the average levels across all organisations. The Service has also progressed well with the priorities that we have previously set ourselves.

JANE SHERLOCK
Director of People and Commercial Services