

**M. Pearson  
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY**

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**To: The Chair and Members of the  
Human Resources Management and  
Development Committee  
(see below)**

**SERVICE HEADQUARTERS  
THE KNOWLE  
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**HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

**Wednesday 26 November 2014**

A meeting of the Human Resources Management and Development Committee will be held on the above date, **commencing at 14:00 hours in Conference Room B in Somerset House, Service Headquarters** to consider the following matters.

M. Pearson  
Clerk to the Authority

**AGENDA**

***PLEASE REFER TO THE NOTES AT THE END OF THE AGENDA LISTING SHEETS***

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 19 September 2014 attached (Page 4).
3. **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

Items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

**PART 1 – OPEN COMMITTEE**

4. **Absence Management and Health of the Organisation**

Report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/12) attached (page 7).

5. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RECOMMENDATION** that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act, namely:

For item 6:

- paragraph 1 - information relating to any individual;
- paragraph 2 – information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual;
- paragraph 3 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Authority and other companies;
- paragraph 4 – information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and its employees.

For item 7:

- paragraph 4 – information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and its employees.

**PART 2 – ITEMS WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

6. **Employee Relations Issues - Further Considerations**

Report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/13) attached (page 13).

7. **Consultation on Amendments to the Fire & Rescue National Framework – Firefighter Fitness Standards and Assessment**

Report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/14) attached (page 16).

**MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO SIGN THE ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

Membership:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Brooksbank, Burrige-Clayton, Chugg, Horsfall, Knight and Smith



| <b>NOTES</b> |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>1.</b>    | <p><b><u>Access to Information</u></b><br/> Any person wishing to inspect any minutes, reports or lists of background papers relating to any item on this agenda should contact the person listed in the "Please ask for" section at the top of this agenda.</p>   |
| <b>2.</b>    | <p><b><u>Reporting of Meetings</u></b><br/> Any person attending a meeting may report (film, photograph or make an audio recording) on any part of the meeting which is open to the public – unless there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman - and use any communication method, including the internet and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), to publish, post or otherwise share the report. The Authority accepts no liability for the content or accuracy of any such report, which should not be construed as representing the official, Authority record of the meeting. Similarly, any views expressed in such reports should not be interpreted as representing the views of the Authority. Flash photography is not permitted and any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Democratic Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.</p> |
| <b>3.</b>    | <p><b><u>Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (Authority Members only)</u></b><br/> If you have any disclosable pecuniary interests (as defined by Regulations) in any item(s) to be considered at this meeting then, unless you have previously obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Monitoring Officer, you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) disclose any such interest at the time of commencement of consideration of the item in which you have the interest or, if later, as soon as it becomes apparent to you that you have such an interest;</li> <li>(b) leave the meeting room during consideration of the item in which you have such an interest, taking no part in any discussion or decision thereon; and</li> <li>(c) not seek to influence improperly any decision on the matter in which you have such an interest.</li> </ul> <p>If the interest is sensitive (as agreed with the Monitoring Officer), you need not disclose the nature of the interest but merely that you have a disclosable pecuniary interest of a sensitive nature. You must still follow (b) and (c) above.</p>  |
| <b>4.</b>    | <p><b><u>Part 2 Reports</u></b><br/> Members are reminded that any Part 2 reports as circulated with the agenda for this meeting contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). Members are also reminded of the need to dispose of such reports carefully and are therefore invited to return them to the Committee Secretary at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.</p>   |
| <b>5.</b>    | <p><b><u>Substitute Members (Committee Meetings only)</u></b><br/> Members are reminded that, in accordance with Standing Order 35, the Clerk (or his representative) must be advised of any substitution prior to the start of the meeting. Members are also reminded that substitutions are not permitted for full Authority meetings.</p>   |

## **HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

19 September 2014

### Present:-

Councillors Bown (Chair), Brooksbank, Chugg, Healey (vice Smith), Knight, Prior Sankey (vice Horsfall) and Woodman (vice Burrige-Clayton).

### Apologies:-

Councillors Burrige-Clayton, Horsfall and Smith.

NB. Councillor Dyke was also in attendance in his capacity as Chairman of the Resources Committee (and in accordance with Standing Order 36(1)).

### **\*HRMDC/10. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2014 be signed as a correct record.

### **\*HRMDC/11. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act, namely:

- Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual;
- Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual;
- Paragraph 4 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and its employees.

### **\*HRMDC/12. Retirement/Re-Employment**

(An item considered in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during which the press and public were excluded from the meeting).

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/9) that set out information in respect of the Authority's position in relation to retirement and re-employment in accordance with the Pay Policy Statement (PPS) for the 2014-15 financial year and as approved by the Authority at its meeting on 24 February 2014 (Minute DSFRA/48 refers). The report also set out details of the expressions of interest that had been submitted by operational staff for retirement/re-employment for consideration by the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the requests for uniformed retirements and re-employment as identified within report HRMDC/14/9 be approved.

**\*HRMDC/13. Working with Trade Unions - Supplementary Report**

(An item considered in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during which the press and public were excluded from the meeting).

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/10) that set out additional information that had been requested by the Committee at its previous meeting on 23 July 2014 (Minute HRMDC/9 refers). This was to enable the Committee to determine the appropriate employment relations machinery that should be operated within Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in the future. The report also detailed the additional costs associated with the operation of the existing employment relations machinery for Representative Bodies, including the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU), Fire Officers' Association (FOA) and the Retained Firefighters' Union (RFU) together with 3 potential options for the way forward.

Following a lengthy debate, Councillor Knight **MOVED** with Councillor Chugg seconding that:

- (a) the current arrangement allowing for paid release for two, full-time Fire Brigades Union (FBU) officials be terminated, and;
- (b) employment relations arrangements going forward be on the basis of facilities to allow for the reasonable release of officials of unions recognised by the Service for trade union duties only and not trade union activities, with delegated authority for the Chief Fire Officer to agree this on a case-by-case basis;
- (c) operation of these revised arrangements be reported to future meetings of this Committee to facilitate ongoing review of their efficiency and effectiveness;
- (d) the previously agreed principle of any regional release being subject to cost neutrality for the Service be re-affirmed, with any release so agreed being subject to review as appropriate by the Service, and;
- (e) the existing arrangements for "check-off" be maintained.

This was put to the vote (and carried unanimously), whereupon it was:

**RESOLVED**

- (a) That the current arrangement allowing for paid release for two, full-time Fire Brigades Union (FBU) officials be terminated, and;
- (b) that employment relations arrangements going forward be on the basis of facilities to allow for the reasonable release of officials of unions recognised by the Service for trade union duties only and not trade union activities, with delegated authority for the Chief Fire Officer to agree this on a case-by-case basis;
- (c) That operation of these revised arrangements be reported to future meetings of this Committee to facilitate ongoing review of their efficiency and effectiveness;
- (d) That the previously-agreed principle of any regional release being subject to cost neutrality for the Service be re-affirmed, with any release so agreed being subject to review as appropriate by the Service, and;

(e) That the existing arrangements for “check-off” be maintained.

**\*HRMDC/14. Draft Response to the Government Review on Terms and Conditions of Service for Operational Staff**

(An item considered in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during which the press and public were excluded from the meeting).

The Committee considered a report of the Director of People and Commercial Services (HRMDC/14/11) that set out the background to the independent review of the terms and conditions of service for operational fire and rescue service staff that had been launched recently together with a proposed response to the consultation exercise.

The Human Resources Manager advised the Committee that the deadline date for responses to the consultation had been extended now to 17 October 2014. As a result, he suggested that the Committee may wish to approve a response in principle subject to the Executive Board giving further consideration to the responses to the questionnaires with the Chief Fire Officer authorised, following consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to approve the final response for submission on behalf of the Authority.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that, subject to incorporation of the views of the Committee on the responses to questions 28 and 29 of the Conditions of Service questionnaire, the draft responses to the independent review of the terms and conditions of service for operational staff be approved in principle;
- (b) that, in light of the extension of the deadline for submitting responses to 17 October 2014, the Executive Board be asked to review the response, with the Chief Fire Officer authorised, following consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to approve a final response for submission on behalf of the Authority.

**\* DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 12.05hours.

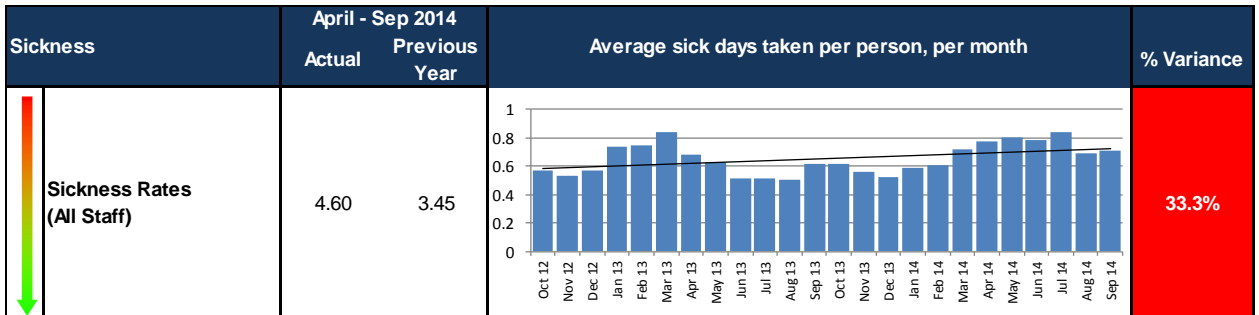
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>                           | <b>HRMDC/14/12</b>  |
| <b>MEETING</b>  | <b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT &amp; DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>   |
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>                                | <b>26 NOVEMBER 2014</b>   |
| <b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>                              | <b>ABSENCE MANAGEMENT &amp; HEALTH OF THE ORGANISATION</b>  |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER</b>                                   | <b>Director of People and Commercial Services</b>   |
| <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>                                | <i><b>That the report be noted.</b></i>   |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                              | <p>A key internal measure for the Devon &amp; Somerset Fire &amp; Rescue Service (the Service) is sickness absence rates. This Committee has requested to be kept informed of performance against this measure and the success of the Service's sickness absence management policy and has agreed that this should be in the form of a 6 month "light touch" report, with a detailed review presented at the year end.</p> <p>This report now sets out the position for the first six months of the current (2014-15) financial year.</p> |
| <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>                          | Nationally negotiated terms and conditions of service govern the payment of sickness absence, which is managed in accordance with Service policies in order to minimise the impact of this.   |
| <b>EQUALITY RISK &amp; BENEFITS ASSESSMENT (ERBA)</b> | The Absence Management policy has had an equality impact assessment.  |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>                                     | None.   |
| <b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>                      | None  |



1. **INTRODUCTION**

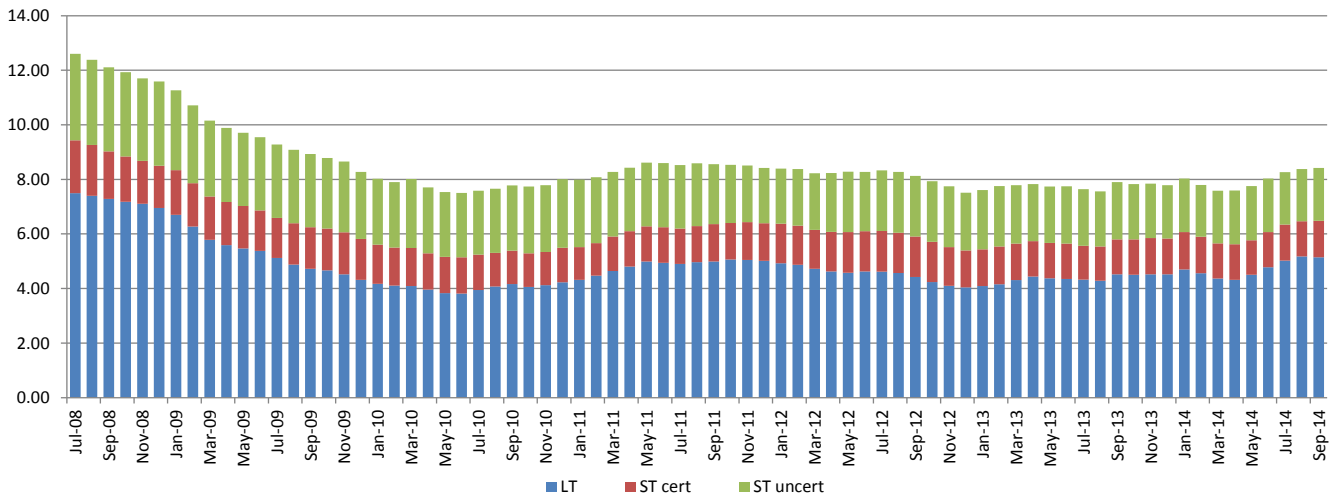
1.1 At its meeting on 25 June, the Committee resolved to consider detailed measures for the ‘Health of the Organisation’ on an annual basis but with an additional, “light-touch”, half yearly review (Minute \*HRMDC/5 refers). The format for the data reporting within these half-yearly reviews is as per the Service quarterly performance report. The Service target is to achieve year-on-year improvements in its sickness measure. From the year-to-date results, the forecasts are that the Service not achieve an improvement for this financial year.

2. **2014/15 APRIL TO SEPTEMBER (HALF YEAR) ABSENCE PERFORMANCE**



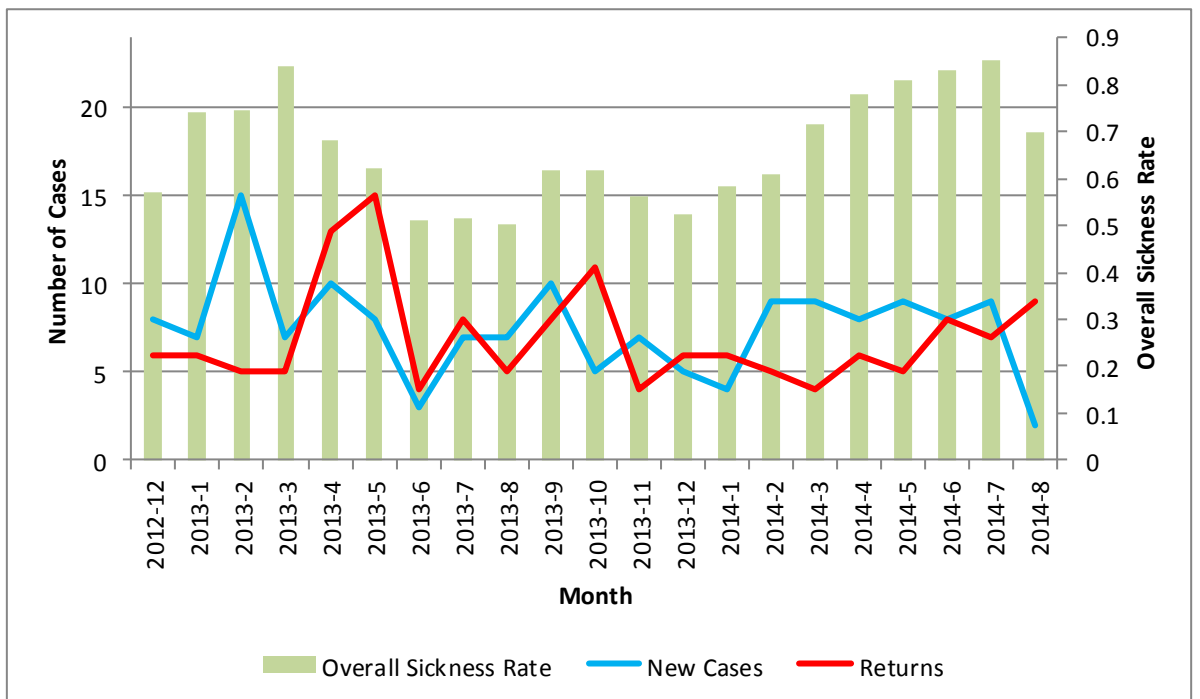
**Fig 1: Sickness Direction of Travel**

- 2.1 The graph above shows the monthly sickness rates for the last 2 years. On average, Service employees have taken 4.6 days of sick leave in Q1 and Q2 of 2014/15. This is an increase of 33.3% (1.2 days) when compared to the same period last year. The graph above shows an upward trend on a month-by-month basis. Whilst August and September 2014 saw lower sickness levels than in the first four months, they are still higher than in August and September last year.
- 2.2 With monthly peaks and troughs in sickness it is difficult to see the on-going longer term change in the rates over this period. The graph figure 2 below shows a rolling sickness rate and shows a much clearer view. It can be seen that the 12-month rolling sickness rate as measured at the end of each month is climbing and has consistently increased since April 2014.
- 2.3 There are 3 categories of sickness:
- **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



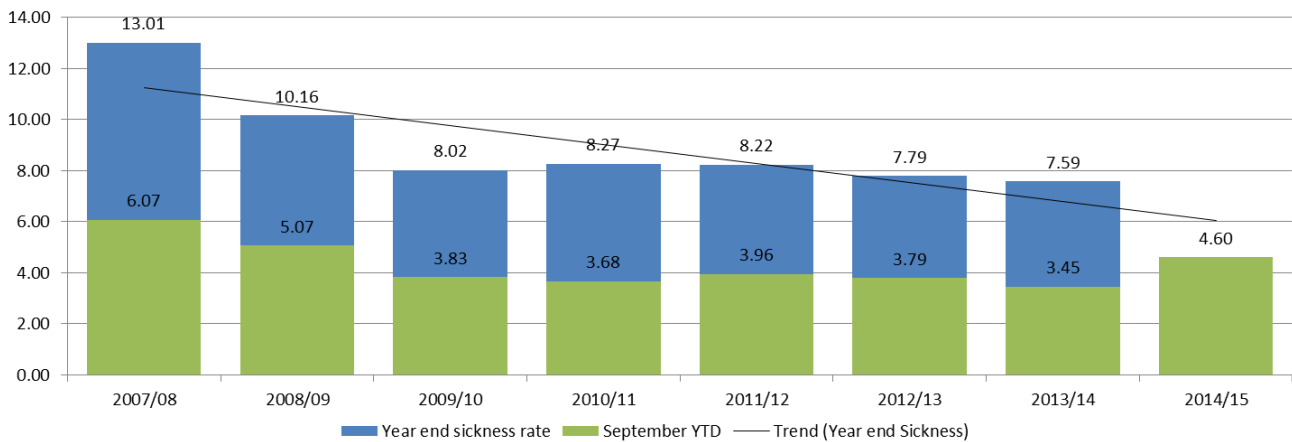
**Fig 2: 12 Month Rolling Sickness Rate**

- 2.4 Examining the categories off sickness in figure 2, while rates of uncertified and certified short-term sickness have been fairly consistent, there has been considerable variation in the long-term sickness pattern. Long-term sickness therefore clearly has a significant effect on the overall rate of absence and has been the biggest factor in the rise in overall sickness levels during 2014.
- 2.5 Figure 3 compares new cases of long-term sickness with those long-term sick employees who are returning to work with the overall sickness absence rate for the Service. What can be seen is that when new cases of long-term sickness outstrips returners, the overall level of sickness absence tends to rise. Similarly, for those months when the number of returners is greater than the number of new cases of long-term sickness, the sickness absence levels tend to decrease.



**Fig 3: Long Term Sickness New Cases and Returners**

2.6 Annual sickness rates since 2007/8 are still showing a downward trend as seen on the graph below but the figure of 4.6 days per person this year so far is the highest since 2008/09.



**Fig 4: Service level Sickness Rate per Person**

2.7 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

2.8 The Service has seen increases in the sickness rate across each of these contract types, but most consistently within Control staff which has seen an overall increase in sickness of 77.2%. There has been an overall increase in sickness rates of 33.8% for support staff, largely due to the increase (62.2%) in long-term sickness rates. Short-term certified sickness rates have decreased by 10.4%. (See Figure 5 below)

| Sickness Rates by post type                               | Control |               | Support staff |        |               |            |
|---|---------|---------------|---------------|--------|---------------|------------|
|   | Actual  | Previous Year | % Variance    | Actual | Previous Year | % Variance |
| <b>Overall Sickness Rate</b>                              | 11.71   | 6.61          | 77.2%         | 4.37   | 3.27          | 33.8%      |
| Total # Days/shifts lost                                  | 491     | 251           | 95.6%         | 1054   | 850           | 24.0%      |
| <b>Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)</b> | 8.45    | 4.66          | 81.2%         | 2.85   | 1.76          | 62.2%      |
| # Days/shifts lost LT                                     | 354     | 177           | 100.0%        | 687    | 457           | 50.3%      |
| <b>Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)</b>    | 1.10    | 0.45          | 145.1%        | 0.47   | 0.52          | -10.4%     |
| # Days/shifts lost STcert                                 | 46      | 17            | 170.6%        | 113    | 136           | -16.9%     |
| <b>Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calendar days)</b> | 2.17    | 1.50          | 44.6%         | 1.05   | 0.99          | 6.6%       |
| # Days/shifts lost STuncert                               | 91      | 57            | 59.6%         | 254    | 257           | -1.2%      |

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

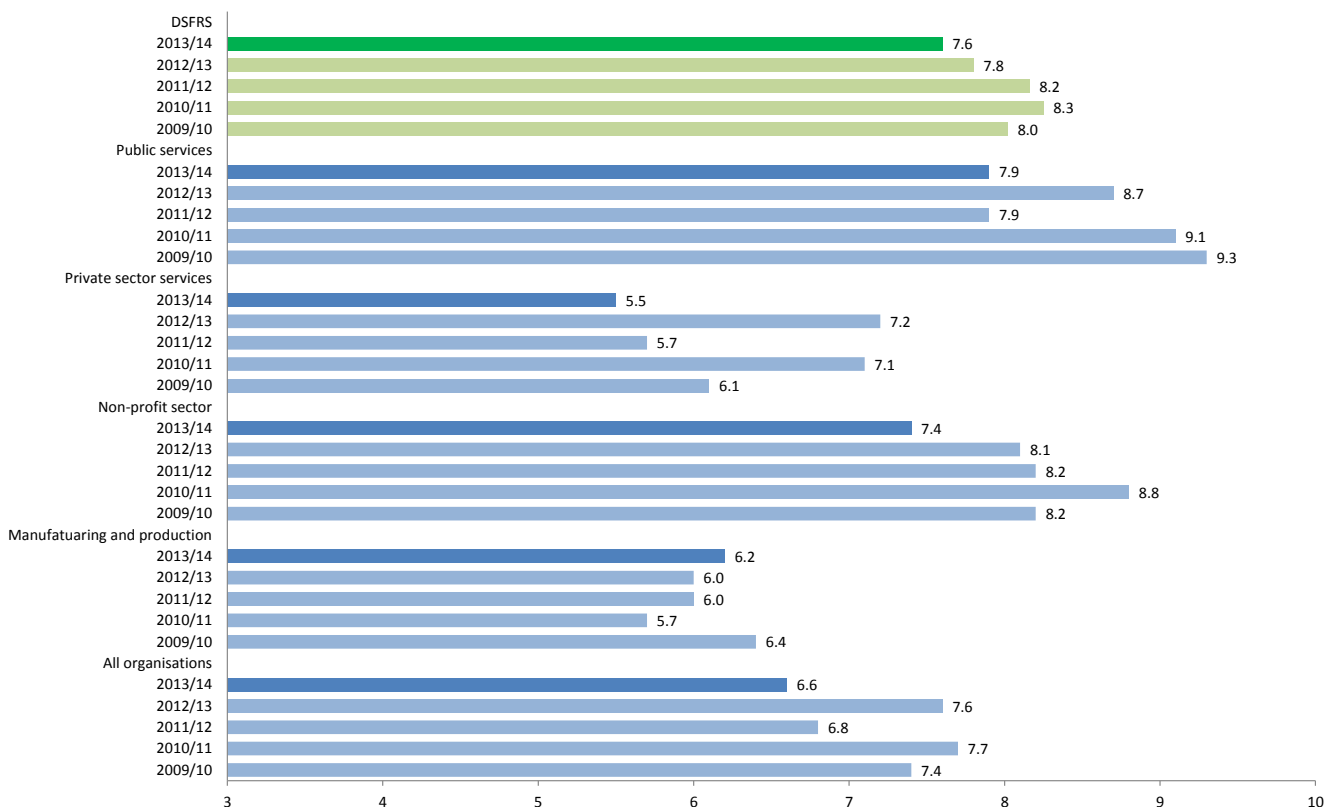
2.9 The overall sickness rate of Wholetime station-based staff has increased by 56.3% with increases in all sickness types. The biggest increase was in long-term sickness (83.8%). Wholetime non-station based staff have, however, seen decreases in all sickness types, with the biggest improvement being in short-term uncertified sickness where the rate fell by 24.3%. The overall sickness rate for wholetime non-station staff was down 17.6%. (See Figure 6 overleaf).

| Sickness Rates by post type April - September                                     |   | Wholetime Station based staff |               |              | Wholetime Non Station staff<br><i>(inc SHQ, STC, group support teams etc)</i> |               |               |
|---|---|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---|---------------|---------------|
|   |   | Actual                        | Previous Year | % Variance   | Actual  | Previous Year | % Variance    |
|  | <b>Overall Sickness Rate</b>                              | <b>4.35</b>                   | <b>2.78</b>   | <b>56.3%</b> | <b>3.85</b>   | <b>4.67</b>   | <b>-17.6%</b> |
|   | Total # Days/shifts lost                                  | 1686                          | 1318          | 27.9%        | 740   | 939           | -21.2%        |
|   | <b>Sickness Rates - Long Term (over 28 calendar days)</b> | <b>2.83</b>                   | <b>1.54</b>   | <b>83.8%</b> | <b>3.13</b>   | <b>3.81</b>   | <b>-17.8%</b> |
|   | # Days/shifts lost LT                                     | 1098                          | 730           | 50.4%        | 601   | 765           | -21.4%        |
|   | <b>Sickness Rates - ST Cert (8 - 28 calendar days)</b>    | <b>0.67</b>                   | <b>0.48</b>   | <b>41.7%</b> | <b>0.44</b>   | <b>0.49</b>   | <b>-10.4%</b> |
|   | # Days/shifts lost STcert                                 | 261                           | 225           | 16.0%        | 84  | 98            | -14.3%        |
|   | <b>Sickness Rates - ST Uncert (up to 7 calendar days)</b> | <b>0.84</b>                   | <b>0.77</b>   | <b>10.1%</b> | <b>0.29</b>   | <b>0.38</b>   | <b>-24.3%</b> |
|   | # Days/shifts lost STuncert                               | 327                           | 363           | -9.9%        | 55  | 76            | -27.6%        |

**Fig 6: Sickness rates by post type – Wholetime station based staff and non-station based staff**

### 3. SICKNESS ABSENCE – SECTOR BENCHMARKING

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



**Fig 7: Average number of days sickness per year per sector**

3.1 The graph above shows the year end industry data (taken from the 2014 Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) annual survey report) as compared to the Service. For the third year running in 2013/14, the Service had sickness rates below the public services average. However, when compared to other sectors, the Service is experiencing higher rates of sickness.

#### **4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

- 4.1 The Service has undertaken more detailed analysis of the absence levels using tolerances based on standard deviations so that it can be determined whether the fluctuations in sickness are within acceptable tolerances. Over the last 5 years, the Service has found that sickness levels have been generally within statistical control however the recent increase in absence over the first half of 2014 is statistically significant.
- 4.2 Much of this rise in absence can be put down to a rise in long-term absence across all types of staff. This period represents the longest continuous run of months where new cases of long term absence has out-stripped returners from long term absence. Whether this increase in long-term sickness is as a result of a “special cause” is not clear.
- 4.3 Additionally, this recent rise comes at a time when rates of short-term uncertified sickness have been falling. This, for some staff groups, suggests a change in system conditions, which could be the changes in recording of sickness or alternatively could be due to the financial/political climate affecting the Service, with staff remaining at work when previously they may have reported sick.
- 4.4 Also of concern is that the new sickness reporting portal is still at version 1. To date, the Service has not been able to devote sufficient system development time to incorporate required improvements for version 2. This has resulted, anecdotally, in staff being booked as returning to work on a particular date rather than the actual end of the sickness period, thereby potentially adding additional days to a period of sickness. Additionally, the requirement to stipulate an absence reason is not, at present, mandatory and is sometimes left blank by the line manager. This can result in inadequate reporting data making it more difficult for the Service track trends in the future.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The results as set out in this report for sickness absence and trends are somewhat disappointing, particularly when compared to the results secured in the previous (2013-14) year. The Service has, however, seen a reduction in sickness levels over the last two months of this quarter and by rigorous application of its absence management strategy will endeavour to see this reducing pattern continue.

**JANE SHERLOCK**  
**Director of People and Commercial Services**