



Review of the Managing Attendance Policy

Meeting	Date
Resources Committee	12 January 2018

Report by	Document Number
Interim Head of Human Resource Management	FEP 2810

Summary

In July 2015, the Appointments and Urgency Committee (FEP 2490) adopted a new managing attendance policy based on a model used by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The objective of the new policy was to have a non punitive means of managing absence, with a view to improving attendance overall. The Commissioner was given delegated authority to vary this policy where this was agreed with the Authority Joint Committee (AJC) trade unions (i.e. FBU, FOA, GMB, UNISON) (FEP 2490). This AUC meeting also gave delegated authority to the Commissioner to implement managerial guidance for this policy (the 'Managing Attendance Handbook') following consultation with the AJC trade unions. The policy includes a provision that it will be reviewed within 24 months after its publication date or sooner if required due to a business change.

This report provides a summary of the review that has been conducted by the HRM department in recent months in consultation with stakeholders. As the new Managing Attendance policy (PN889) has been in place for a relatively short period of time, the review recommends that no fundamental changes are made. The review does however recommend a number of amendments and additions to the policy, the guidance, and the systems and managerial resources in place to support the policy, with a view to improving the effectiveness of the policy and efficiencies in the way the policy is operated and understood. Officers are currently in the process of working with the AJC trade unions to reach agreement on the proposed changes deriving from the recommendations of the review. Final changes will be approved by the Commissioner in accordance with her delegated authority to vary the policy (FEP 2490)

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Notes the outcome of the review of the Managing Attendance Policy; and
2. Notes the proposed changes to the Policy and Handbook, and that following consultation and agreement with the AJC trade unions, final changes will be approved by the Commissioner in accordance with her delegated authority (FEP 2490).

Introduction

1. The review of the Managing Attendance Policy undertaken by the HRM department made the following recommendations:
2. That the current Managing Attendance policy (PN 889) remains in place, being amended and supplemented in accordance with recommendations 4(a) to 4(f) below; and that a further review of the policy is carried out within 2 years, by January 2020;
3. That a familiarisation training programme on the Managing Attendance policy is developed in conjunction with Babcock, where possible and rolled out to managers as soon as practicable, and within the next 6-12 months (see para 41);
4. That the following changes/additions to the Managing Attendance policy and supporting guidance and processes are sought:
 - (a) The process in relation to Attendance Support Meetings (ASMs) is amended, to reduce the volume and frequency of these meetings (see para. 29);
 - (b) The current separate monitoring processes on StARS for long-term and short-term sickness is simplified and made more user-friendly for managers (see paras. 32-33);
 - (c) Further clarification is provided within the policy/guidance on the management of light duties and phased returns to work (see paras. 35 and 36);
 - (d) Consideration is given to Station Managers having access to the sickness section of relevant e-PRFs, to ensure they have the required information to manage sickness absence cases in their area of responsibility (see para. 37);
 - (e) New capability Redeployment and Reasonable Adjustments guidance is developed to support the Managing Attendance policy. The reasonable adjustments guidance would not be confined to attendance management. (see paras. 10 and 38 and 39);
 - (f) Officers undertake a review of all template documents which support the Managing Attendance policy, to ensure they are fit for purpose (see para. 43);
5. That consultation commences with the recognised trade unions with a view to seeking agreement on these changes, noting that where this entails changes to the policy, the agreement of the trade unions will be required for this to be implemented by officers.
6. Final changes will be approved by the Commissioner in accordance with her delegated authority to vary the policy (FEP 2490)

Background

1. Resources Committee on 18 September 2014 (FEP 2316), in considering the Attendance Update report, instructed officers to undertake a comprehensive review of the Authority's attendance management policy and procedures (PN 712). The comprehensive review was to make substantial changes to the attendance policy which supported employees in their return to work; using a procedure distinct from the Authority's disciplinary procedure so that it was not a punitive measure.
2. Following extensive negotiations between officers and the trade unions, the Appointments and Urgency Committee on 22 July 2015, adopted a new Managing Attendance policy based on a model used by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) (FEP 2490). This followed the adoption by Resources Committee, on 17 June 2015, of a new sickness capability process,

also based on the SFRS model. In line with best practice, the Managing Attendance policy sought to:

- Support staff in returning to work at the earliest opportunity, when fit to do so.
 - Ensure ongoing good health of the workforce.
 - Minimise disruption to the Brigade's day to day operations by reducing absence levels.
 - Ensure the policy supported and promoted good relationships between staff and their line managers, during periods of absence.
 - To quantify the level of sickness absence and if appropriate take steps to reduce it.
3. Further, it was an express objective of Authority members that the new Attendance Policy would not be 'punitive'.
 4. The Commissioner was given delegated authority to vary the policy where this was agreed with the AJC trade unions (FEP 2490).
 5. Before the introduction of the new Managing Attendance Policy (PN889) in April 2016, the previous Absence Management Policy (PN 712) had been in use for approximately 8 years. PN712 was very prescriptive with regards to triggers for management action, using a system called the 'Attendance Factor' (AF) which was based on the 'Bradford Factor' widely used by employers to tackle frequent short term absence across a range of sectors. The AF was calculated taking sickness absence from the previous 12 month period, multiplying the frequency of sickness absences by itself, then by the total number of days absence, to provide a score that determined if and what action should be taken by local management.
 6. Formal management action in respect of managing attendance was dealt with under the Brigade's disciplinary process (PN 392a/b) which replicated the Grey Book disciplinary procedure. In line with the ACAS Code of practice, this followed an informal first stage with escalating stages if absence did not improve. For lengthy periods of long term absence (normally more than six months), the discipline/capability process commenced at Stage 2 of the process where a final written warning could be issued, while the third stage could lead to dismissal. Using a disciplinary process to manage absence cases was deemed by some to be punitive and non-supportive to employees who were genuinely unwell.
 7. The 22 July 2015 AUC meeting, in adopting the Managing Attendance Policy, also gave delegated authority to the Commissioner to implement managerial guidance for the policy (the 'Managing Attendance Handbook') following consultation with the AJC trade unions.

Purpose of the review

8. Managing attendance effectively is of significant importance to the LFB as high levels of sickness absence affect organisational productivity for Operational, Control and FRS staff.
9. The Managing Attendance policy includes a provision that it will be reviewed within 24 months of its publication date (April 2016) or sooner if required due to a business change.

10. The Managing Attendance policy has been in operation for approximately twenty months. There are a range of views on the policy and its effectiveness, and this is a reasonable period to review how sickness has been managed under the policy through what would normally constitute a whole cycle of long term absence. A long term sickness cycle runs from initial absence, the employee receiving support from line managers through contact, attendance support meetings (ASMs) and from the Brigade's Occupational Health provider, and through the steps of the new capability process, which when exhausted can lead to ill health retirement or dismissal on the grounds of capability. The Sickness capability process (PN873) was not within the scope of this review. However during the review, a gap was identified in respect of line managers' understanding of how to manage long term sickness cases, particularly where the employee is deemed to be disabled, see paras. 38 and 39 below. It is therefore proposed that new redeployment and reasonable adjustments guidance is developed, which will assist managers in supporting staff with disabilities (n.b. the reasonable adjustments guidance would not be confined to attendance management).

Scope and objectives of the review

11. The purpose of the review was to determine whether the Managing Attendance Policy is 'fit for purpose' and is being applied effectively and consistently, delivering fair and consistent outcomes for all. The following fell within the scope of this review:

- The roles and responsibilities of managers and employees, together with an assessment of their understanding of the policy and guidance.
- A review of attendance system reports, and action taken against system suggestions, exploring reasons for management compliance or non-compliance in these circumstances.
- The management of both short-term and long-term absence, looking at the distinctions between the approach to, and the correlation between, the different types of absence and their monitoring.
- The systems (hard copy and electronic), including StARS which support the policy.
- The processes, including Attendance Support Meetings and Monitoring Periods.
- Support for employees returning to work - e.g. phased returns to work, disability related absence and capability redeployment.

12. The areas which fell outside the scope of the review included:

- The Sickness capability process (PN 873)
- The Classification of Due to Service Sickness Absence Guidance (this was recently subject to a separate review, the outcome of which is currently under discussion with the trade unions).

Methodology

13. The approach taken during the review prioritised stakeholder engagement. To engage with staff directly, meetings took place across staff groups and grades within the Brigade.

Meetings were held with managers and employees who were either applying the Managing Attendance Policy or being managed in accordance with it. Opinion was actively sought via attendance at a DAC Ops meeting; this generated further feedback and follow-up interviews. The Area Light Duty Pool managers, and a member of staff on light duties in each of the area pools, were also interviewed. Heads of Service were asked to forward a questionnaire to their staff seeking any further comment.

14. Over the course of the review, meetings were held with all of the Brigade's recognised Trade Unions in one-to-one discussions. The review was also discussed at the Equalities Support Groups Joint meeting, and follow up feedback was invited from representatives and their members. Further interviews took place to explore ideas raised, or where additional information was requested.
15. The table below sets out those staff directly feeding into the review, by location, and by staff group and role/grade. The feedback received was used as the basis for the findings in the review. After interviews were completed, the feedback was collated into common themes on areas which worked well and those areas which would benefit from improvement, e.g. through a training intervention. The themes highlighted are set out under different headings in this report.

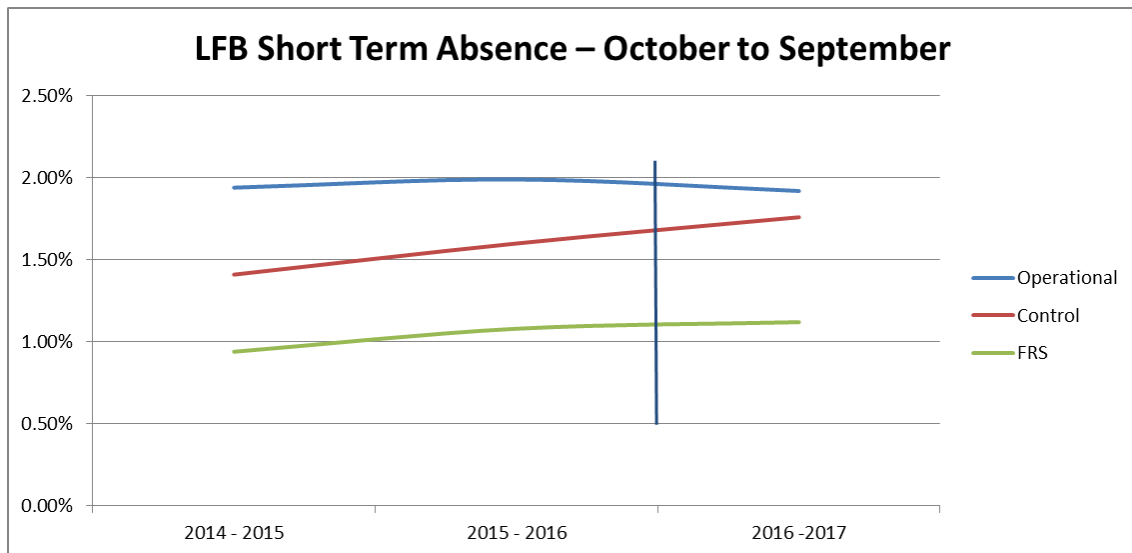
Location		Control		Operational		FRS	
Control	5	AOM	3	FF	4	FRS C	4
HQ	18	POM	1	CM	1	FRS D	3
SE	9	SOM	1	WM	7	FRS E	10
NE	8	OM	1	SM	4	FRS F	4
NW	7			GM	3	FRS G	2
SW	7			DAC	6		
Total	54	Total	6	Total	25	Total	23

Analysis of absence data

16. In determining whether the Managing Attendance Policy is 'fit for purpose', the levels of sickness absence, and the impact of the new policy, are important considerations.

Short term sickness absence

17. Under the Managing Attendance policy, short term sickness absence is classified as an episode of sickness of 1-27 days duration. Triggers for any management action are 3 periods of sickness or 6 days sickness in 6 months; 5 periods of sickness or 8 days sickness in 12 months. Once a staff member has met one of these criteria, this will trigger an automated prompt to the manager requesting they arrange an Attendance Support Meeting (ASM).
18. The chart below sets out the rolling 12 month trend in short term absence over the last three years. The blue vertical line illustrates when the Managing Attendance policy was introduced.

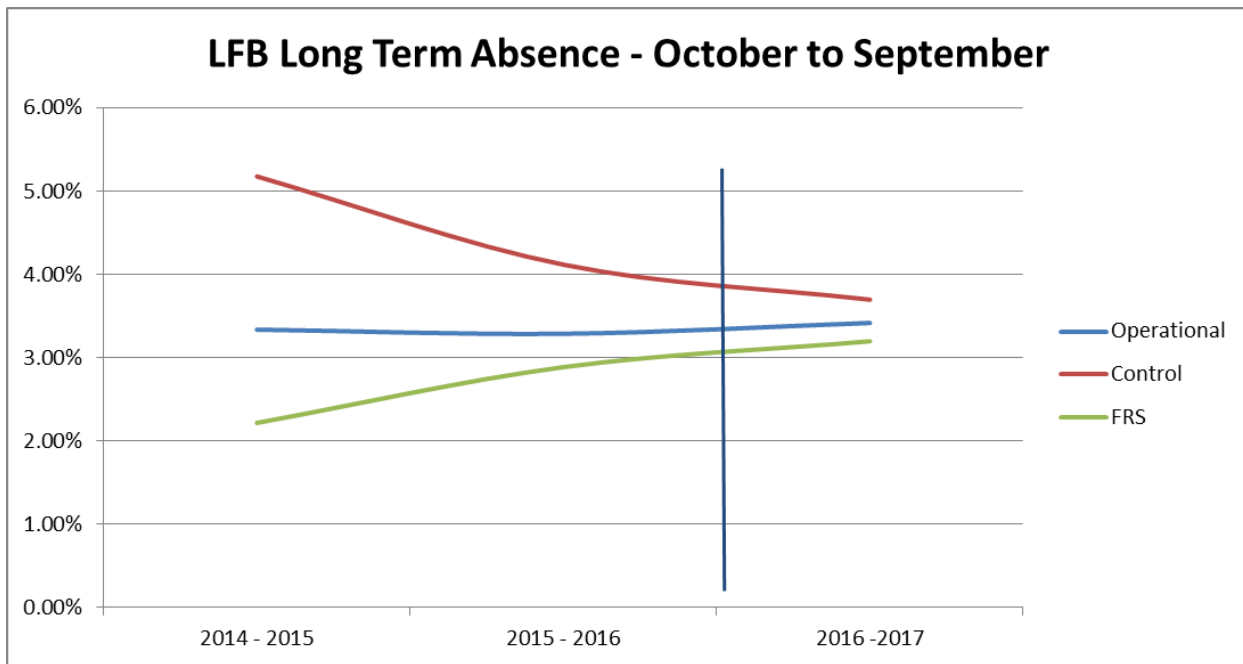


19. The trend in days lost to short term absence has generally been upwards and this has continued under the Managing Absence policy. Feedback to the review indicates that the likely reasons for this are that the policy is still in its infancy; managers are not confident in applying it; and therefore short term absence may not be being managed as robustly as it was under PN 712.

Long Term sickness Absence

20. Sickness absences of 28 days or more are classified as long term sickness absence. This figure was previously 21 days under PN 712. Once a staff member has been off for 28 days or more, this will trigger an automated prompt to the manager requesting they arrange an Attendance Support Meeting (ASM).

21. The chart below details comparative figures by occupational group for the last 3 years. The blue vertical line illustrates where the Managing Attendance policy was introduced. This shows figures are improved for Control and FRS staff since the policy was introduced, but not for operational staff.



22. Control staff have seen a marked decrease in long term absence since the policy was implemented. This is the smallest staff group (119 FTE) , but has historically had higher levels of sickness and a static workforce. In the last 5 years the turnover rate in this group has on average exceeded 10 per cent, and new staff joining has coincided with a reduction in sickness absence. The HR Advisers for Control have been working very closely with managers to assist in developing their understanding and confidence in the application of the Managing Attendance policy and this appears to be reflected in the reduction in sickness absence.
23. The rolling 12 month sickness figures for all occupational groups going back to April 2013 is attached as Appendix A.
24. For the purpose of this review it is important to look at the impact of the new policy on the headline sickness figures. The rising 12 month rolling trend in FRS and Control short-term sickness since April 2016 is a cause for concern, however this has been offset by a reduction in long-term sickness for these groups. Nevertheless sickness amongst these groups has still not reached target levels. The other major cause for concern is there has been no reduction, and indeed a small overall increase, in operational sickness, which was already at historically high levels when the new Managing attendance policy was introduced. Benchmarking data recently received from the CFOA Occupational Health network shows that LFB is the worst performing FRS, out of 33 surveyed, for operational sickness for the 6 month period April-September 2017 (LFB operational sickness is 5.51%, the median is 4.13%, and the best performing metropolitan FRS [Merseyside] is 3.41%).
25. Officers have been closely monitoring the impact on sickness/attendance levels following the Grenfell Tower incident. Across the Brigade, no significant pattern or increase in absence levels have emerged and there is little difference between the rolling 12 month figure for Operational Staff in October 2017 (5.33%), compared to the same figure for year ending October 2016 (5.30%).
26. The increase in sickness levels amongst operational staff, and the fact that sickness amongst Control and FRS staff is still above target levels, indicates that the policy is not yet fully

effective in managing sickness absence. However, the Managing Attendance policy is still relatively new, it is still being embedded, and feedback to the review indicated managers have not been sufficiently trained on its application. These suggestions were provided during the review by interviewees as possible reasons for LFB's relatively high sickness levels.

Attendance Support Meetings (ASM) and Monitoring Periods

27. Attendance Support Meetings (ASMs) were a new process introduced in the Managing Attendance policy. The Managing Attendance Handbook describes the main purpose of ASMs as *'to maintain a positive line of communication between the manager and the employee; encourage the employee to accept and take responsibility for attending work when fit to do so and keeping their absences to the minimum that is achievable; ensure absences are not treated casually; determine whether there is an underlying health problem, offer assistance and appropriate support; discuss and agree potential solutions and set targets and timescales for improvement where appropriate'*. The views of those interviewed were that ASMs largely achieve these aims and demonstrate the Brigade's non-punitive approach to managing absence.
28. ASMs are triggered in different ways in long term and short term absence. When an individual reaches the relevant long term or short term trigger the line manager is prompted to convene an ASM. After the first ASM, any subsequent ASM is determined by when triggers are hit and the duration of any agreed monitoring period.
29. From October 2016 to September 2017, 2868 ASMs were held across the Brigade for all staff groups. It is considered by interviewees that ASMs provide an important link between managers and employees. They support employees by promoting wellbeing, help to avoid perceptions of employees being 'forgotten' by their manager and build confidence. Given the ASM's centrality to the operation of the policy, the review looked at whether they are effective, and whether they are supportive and non-punitive, with the information available. However, the volume and frequency of ASMs was also highlighted as an issue, particularly those to close monitoring periods and those in between each stage of the capability process. Analysis concluded that ASMs at these stages are not necessary. The capability process sets clear targets for improvement. If that target is not met, under the extant policy, the employee will be invited to a further ASM, and the manager will determine whether to progress to the next stage of the capability process. It is evident from speaking with stakeholders that if clear targets are set at a capability stage, with sufficient support during that period and up to date medical advice prior to holding the next stage of the capability process, the interim ASM can be removed from the process. Similarly with the ASM to close a monitoring period (where attendance targets have been met) provided the employee is informed that the monitoring period is closed (which could occur by sending an email) there is no benefit holding an ASM for this purpose.

Monitoring periods

30. Monitoring periods are set at ASMs in the first instance, where a line manager sets a reasonable, but specific target for the employee during which they will review the employee's absence, with a timescale for improvement, factoring in any disability or due to service considerations as necessary. Monitoring periods are not compulsory, however taking into account the intention of a monitoring period, namely to give the employee the chance to improve their attendance levels, it can be implied within the policy that only in exceptional

cases should monitoring periods not be set up once a trigger has been reached. This might include where an employee has had no/limited sickness absence during the previous few years, but then experiences an episode of poor health. Looking at monitoring periods set up within the Brigade, taking a snapshot as at 30 September 2017, managers had implemented 1496 monitoring periods across all staff groups; 135 for long term absence, and 1361 for short term absence.

31. With long term and short sickness there may be a range of reasons why monitoring has not been set up, or why it has only been set for a limited period of time. This may be because the employee's absence is due to service or disability related. The reason for not setting up a monitoring period is not captured on StARS. Managers are entitled not to implement what the system suggests based on individual circumstances, however the Brigade also expects managers to apply the policy fairly and consistently. Although some staff interviewed perceived monitoring periods to be punitive, this was mainly due to a misconception of what a monitoring period is. Overall, the general consensus during the review was that monitoring periods should be kept and that managers should continue to have discretion on when and how this is applied.
32. Monitoring short term and long term sickness over the same case causes confusion with some managers. The system is set up so that at the end of a long term sickness absence, the individual should be put on a short term monitoring period which is usually 12 months (as they are back at work, but have met a sickness trigger). A common problem encountered by the HR helpdesk is where managers enter a long term sickness monitoring period (usually 3 months) when the employee has returned to work, instead of entering a short term monitoring period. This error can lead to periods of sickness not counting towards triggers, and hence ASMs not being set up as intended. At present, the only way to correct this error is to create a new monitoring period which has the effect of discounting sickness prior to the monitoring period. This is because once the monitoring period is set up, previous absence no longer counts towards triggers, as the system looks forward and not back.
33. On other occasions, an employee may trigger the targets set at an ASM. However, instead of invoking the capability process, a manager may wish to exercise their discretion to extend the set monitoring period. In that event, the manager has to end the current period and create a new monitoring period, which again 'wipes the slate clean'. It is recommended that HRM seeks to simplify the current separate monitoring processes on StARS for long-term and short-term sickness, and to make the overall process more user-friendly for managers.

Alternative/Light duties following a period of long term sickness

34. According to the Managing Attendance Handbook, alternative/light duties are considered as a support mechanism that helps employees transition back into the routine of attending work, and are a time limited workplace adjustment prior to resuming full duties. The provisions within the Managing Attendance policy covering light duties are not prescriptive and provide a degree of flexibility for the management of cases. However, the light duties have to be meaningful and justifiable.
35. The phased return to work guidance in the Managing Attendance policy is not sufficiently clear on how this works in practice. A phased return should normally last 1-2 weeks but no longer than six weeks unless a manager with 'appropriate authority' (in practice a Deputy Assistant Commissioner or equivalent) approves an extended period. An employee receives

their full salary during a phased return to work. In some cases it was found that employees were permitted to work reduced hours and/or days for extended periods of time whilst receiving their full time salary. In the previous attendance policy, there were provisions for paying the employee in line with the actual hours worked, where the phased return extended beyond the six week period. It is recommended that the Managing Attendance policy is revised to include similar provisions and to be concise on the type of work which can be facilitated (particularly for operational staff) whilst on light duties and during a phased return.

36. The policy provisions on light duties outline that usually no more than 2 tours should be undertaken at the base station on return from sickness on light duty, as there is a limited amount of useful work an employee on light duties can undertake on station. For longer periods staff should undertake light duties on a full time day duty pattern in their Area team where they generally undertake CFS activities. The employee continues to receive full pay whilst on light duties. The stated amount of time provided for light duty arrangements is as short a period as possible, and in general no longer than six months unless an appropriate manager authorises an extension of the light duties period. The review found there were some staff who exceeded the six month maximum, but these cases were exceptional e.g. where the employee was awaiting an operation, and where the long term prognosis was known. Staff on light duties are still subject to ASMs, and should be managed similarly to long term sick cases whilst in the light duty pool, i.e. with ASMs being held between 1-3 months with consideration of moving through the Sickness capability process. However, neither the Managing Attendance policy nor the Handbook explicitly states this. There was an explicit provision within the old policy which stated what may happen if the employee was unable to return to their substantive role following the (6-month) light duty period i.e. the light duty arrangement would be terminated, the employee would need to report sick, and their absence would then be managed accordingly. Whilst this may be implicit in the new Managing Attendance policy, it is recommended that the policy is revised to make this explicit, so that provisions on managing light duties cases are included in the policy, in line with current practice.
37. Absence management of an employee in an area light duty pool ordinarily falls to the Station Manager of the employee's former station, although in some areas the Area Admin team leader undertakes these tasks. In practice there can be a great variation in the numbers of staff in each area following light duties at any one time. It is recommended that clear guidance is given on who conducts management meetings, with the default position that the base Station Manager is responsible. An important point to note is that Station Managers do not currently have routine access to their employees' e-PRFs, which hinders their ability to gather the information to prepare for an ASM and ultimately a meeting under the capability process. The reason given for this is that the large number of Station Manager moves would make it time-consuming to continually update Station Manager e-PRF permissions. It is recommended that consideration be given to Station Managers having access to their staff's e-PRFs, to ensure they have all of the relevant information to manage sickness absence cases, and methods are explored to minimise the knock-on administrative work this may entail.

Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

38. Managing the attendance of staff with disabilities is referenced in the Managing Attendance policy. However the guidance within the policy is not as extensive as it could be. The feedback from the disability groups with regard to how disabled colleagues are managed was positive. However, it was recognised that when it came to providing reasonable adjustments, management found it difficult to understand what was required of them. There were also issues in the handover process of managing reasonable adjustments when there was a change in line management. It is recommended that new reasonable adjustments guidance be developed to assist staff and managers in their understanding of how to support staff with disabilities, and for this to have general applicability, i.e. it would not be confined to addressing attendance management issues.

Redeployment

39. The Managing Attendance policy states that *where the Occupational Health service advises that an employee is unfit to carry out their current role but is not permanently unfit, suitable redeployment opportunities in relation to the relevant role map/job description should be considered*. Aside from this paragraph the Managing Attendance policy is silent on how capability redeployment operates in practice. It is recommended that new capability redeployment guidance is drafted to support the Managing Attendance policy.

Systems supporting the Managing Attendance policy

StARS

40. The Managing Attendance Policy is supported principally by the StARS system which records staff attendance, and generates appropriate instructions in light of their absence. Elements of this are dependent upon other systems which feed it information such as Cyborg, Health and Safety's SERD system, and there is also a link to Station Diary. StARS and the managing attendance elements, as with Station Diary, has been developed for the LFB by Moore Stephens and all subsequent maintenance and system upgrades are made by them.
41. Feedback received indicated that there was a lack of understanding and awareness amongst line managers in regard to the Managing Attendance policy and its application, particularly around how the StARS system works in support of the policy. It is proposed that managers receive training on the policy and that this training is delivered in two parts, firstly through a computer based training (CBT) programme which will focus on knowledge and systems, and secondly through follow up familiarisation briefing sessions to be delivered by the HR advisers, which will focus on the practical application of the policy. It is envisaged that the CBT programme could be designed and delivered by Babcock, where possible, within a 6-12 month period, at a cost of £9000.
42. Since the policy's introduction there has been a significant number of changes to the system to support attendance management. If the recommendations in this report are accepted, StARS will need to be upgraded to support some changes. This work is in the process of being costed.

Documents supporting the Managing Attendance policy

43. There are a suite of template documents which support the Managing Attendance policy, e.g. letters, checklists and forms. The general feedback was that the templates need to be re-considered and re-drafted to match the more frequently encountered types of scenarios, to provide management with the tools to manage attendance without so much reliance upon HR Advisers. It is recommended that the template documents are reviewed and redrafted as appropriate.

Conclusion

44. In instructing officers to introduce a new Managing Attendance Policy, the direction from Members was to provide a non-punitive means of managing attendance.
45. The intention of the new policy is to avoid a 'punitive' approach and to be supportive. In adopting the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service model, repeated or prolonged sickness is now dealt with under a distinct sickness capability process (PN873) separate from discipline, and management action now has a more stepped approach for progression. The general consensus from the review is that the new policy is not punitive and that it is supportive. Staff contending with chronic conditions classified as disabilities have been positive in their feedback, especially comparing their current experience of support set against instances under the old policy. ASMs are premised on extending further support to staff and asking what can be done to help them.
46. The policy has not so far been successful in reducing absence levels amongst operational staff, and whilst sickness amongst FRS and Control staff has reduced since its implementation, sickness remains above target for all occupational groups. The current policy is less prescriptive than its predecessor in terms of taking formal sickness capability action, and is more reliant on local decision making. It does therefore result in more variable outcomes. However, it is reasonable to expect a new policy to require time for managers and staff to adjust to it.
47. In terms of how the policy supports and promotes relations between staff and line managers, there have been examples where staff members are dissatisfied with the outcome of their interactions with managers, whereas others were satisfied. The ASMs were viewed positively and "encourage open dialogue between staff and management". It is contended that good relations have therefore been maintained or fostered by the policy.
48. In terms of how easy the policy is to apply, the experience of those implementing it is the most effective way to evaluate. Opinions on this differed, but some areas did attract a broad consensus. Specifically the ease of applying the policy where there are systems-based prompts are popular: the e-mails helped line managers know what was appropriate under the policy and when action should be taken, and was considered by many to be user-friendly. Other elements of support are available in the form of the Managing Attendance handbook, template letters, the HR Helpdesk and HR Advisers, although the template letters were said to need too much 'freehand text'. However, it was noted that more training is essential for the policy to be more effective in the future.
49. Some fed back that they liked the discretion given under the new policy to manage absence as appropriate for the particular cases, whereas other fed back that they preferred the

previous prescriptive approach. The consensus is the policy has created additional work, and for Operations, much of this falls on Watch and Station Managers. There is also accompanying paperwork for each meeting, and the need to upload it on to the employees e-PRF at the end.

50. Overall the conclusion of the review, is that the policy does enable a more supportive approach to managing staff absence. More consistent application of the policy, supported by further training, system improvements and some changes to the policy itself will support improved effectiveness of the Managing Attendance policy and this will be kept under review.

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments

51. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed this report and has no comments to make.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

52. This report presents the outcome of a review of the Managing Attendance policy. The proposes that a new computer based training programme is developed, where possible, to deliver training on the policy at a cost of £9k. This cost will spread over the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years and will be contained within existing budgets.
53. The report also notes that if proposals are accepted by the trade unions, StARS will need to be upgraded to support some of these changes. The cost of this work is still being assessed and will be included as part of the budget process for future years if required.

Sustainable development implications

54. There are no sustainable development implications.

Staff Side consultations undertaken

55. Staff side are currently being consulted on the recommended changes to the Managing Attendance policy and supporting guidance. Any update on progress will be reported to Resources Committee as appropriate.

Equalities implications

56. An important aspect of the review was to consider the implications for staff with disabilities, see paras. 38-39.

List of Appendices to this report:

1. Sickness – average lost days 2013-2017 and 12 month rolling sickness, by occupational group, on a monthly basis, 2013-17
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
List of background documents <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. FEPs 2490 and 23162. Managing Attendance Policy and Handbook
Proper officer Interim Head of Human Resource Management
Contact officer Tracey Dennison Telephone 020 8555 1200 Ext. 30451 Email Tracey.dennison@london-fire.gov.uk