



ORIGINTOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO. AP13/14

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
30 APRIL 2013**

SUBJECT: HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

SUMMARY:

1. This report provides an update on the Constabulary's sickness performance for the full financial year 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, and provides an overview of establishment and strength figures and recruitment activity.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

1. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- 1.1. Paragraphs 1.2 through to 1.8 set out the national context for sickness based on the latest Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Absence Survey for 2012. This survey is based on responses from 667 organisations across the public and private sector within the UK. The findings of this survey are based on data returns received in June 2012.
- 1.2. The survey results highlight that public sector absence has fallen to the lowest level since CIPD began recording absence levels by sector in 2002. On average, public and non-profit employees have approximately two days more absence per year than their private sector counterparts. The survey also highlights the possibility that this is caused by an increase in presenteeism.
- 1.3. Across all sectors two-thirds of working time lost to absence is accounted for by short term absences of up to seven days. A fifth is attributed to long term absences (four weeks or more) although this proportion is higher in the public sector. In Suffolk 44% of working time lost is down to short term absence and 40% of working time lost is down to long term absence.
- 1.4. Minor illnesses (such as colds, flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines) are by far the most common cause of short-term absence. This trend is mirrored in Suffolk absence categories with respiratory illness, digestive disorders and headaches/migraines being the most prevalent in short term absence cases.
- 1.5. The most common causes of long term absence are stress, acute medical conditions (for example stroke, heart attack and cancer), mental ill health, musculoskeletal injuries and back pain. This trend is mirrored in Suffolk absence categories with psychological disorder, musculo skeletal conditions and cancer related cases being the most prevalent in long term absence cases.
- 1.6. Two-fifths of employers across all sectors (52% in the public sector) report that stress-related absence has increased over the past year. The most common cause of stress, as in previous years, is workload. This year, however, it appears to be even more of an issue. This trend is not mirrored in Suffolk, where there is a declining trend in hours lost due to psychological illness.
- 1.7. Considerable organisational change/restructuring and job insecurity are more commonly ranks in the top causes of stress in the public sector than in the private. The CIPD emphasises the importance of developing wellbeing strategies and interventions to address health and absence issues and this is consistent with work currently being done by the HR department to develop a more proactive Occupational Health and Wellbeing service.
- 1.8. The survey identifies the rates of employee absence within the manufacturing and production sector as 2.6%, within the private sector as 2.5%, within the public sector as 3.5% and within non-profit organisations as 3.6%. In comparison Suffolk Constabulary rates of employee absence are 3.7%.
- 1.9. Sickness absence levels within Suffolk Constabulary are routinely monitored. Force targets for the percentage of hours lost has been set at 3.40% for police officers and 3.80% for police staff, with a target for combined absence of 3.80%. These targets are lower than the prevailing national average for the police service of 3.90% for police officers and 3.92% for police staff.
- 1.10. The latest figures available are for the full financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 and are set out as Appendix 1. The overall combined sickness absence came in

under target at 3.76% against the target of 3.80%. Police officer absence for financial year came in over target at 3.73% against the target of 3.40%. Police staff absence for the financial year came in on target at 3.80% against the target of 3.80%. There has been a decrease in both police officer and police staff sickness during March 2013.

- 1.11. There were 24 Long Term sickness cases recorded in March 2013 compared to 26 cases recorded in February 2013.
- 1.12. The compliance of Return to Work interviews for March 2013 was 79% compared with 78% in February and the quality of interviews for March 2013 was 31% compared with 27% in February.
- 1.13. Attendance Support Meetings compliance has dropped for March 2013 with 29% compared to 43% in February. The quality of these meetings has remained consistent with 83% in March and 83% in February.
- 1.14. The number of Restricted and Recuperative officers has increased from 135 cases in February 2013 to 147 cases in March 2013. This includes 2 pregnancy related cases. There have been an unusually high number of individuals who have returned to work from long term sickness during March 2013 which has resulted in a spike in the number of officers in the recuperative categories.
- 1.15. The last report on Human Resources issues to the Panel on 28 February 2013 highlighted plans to commission an external 'critical friend' review of sickness in Suffolk. This has now been completed. The review consisted of three stages as follows:-
 - 1.15.1. Desktop review of policies, sickness data, notes of meetings and training material for managers;
 - 1.15.2. Site visit consisting of focus groups with supervisors and interviews with staff associations, HR staff, occupational health advisors, and senior managers;
 - 1.15.3. Analysis, report and recommendations.
- 1.16. In summary the review found that the right policies and procedures are in place to address sickness issues, and these are largely operating well. The review found evidence of much good practice and concluded that managers appeared to understand their responsibilities to manage sickness.
- 1.17. The review report states that Suffolk is still performing well in respect of sickness management. However; the following recommendations were made to assist the constabulary in continuing to manage performance in this area. These recommendations include :-
 - 1.17.1. A review of the sickness reporting hotline;
 - 1.17.2. A review of the data produced relating to sickness to ensure that it is proportionate, and accessible to local commanders;
 - 1.17.3. Continuous improvement of Occupational Health including appointment to the vacant managers post;
 - 1.17.4. Adopting a less risk adverse approach to dealing with problematic cases, including consideration of ill health retirement in more cases;

- 1.17.5. Development of an employee engagement strategy;
- 1.17.6. Redirecting HR resources away from monitoring compliance regarding Attendance Support Meetings and Return to Work Interviews, towards progressing difficult cases and providing more intensive support for service areas performing less well;
- 1.17.7. More emphasis on communicating to staff (not just managers) their responsibilities under the policy.
- 1.18. Work has commenced on assessing and implementing these recommendations. In terms of the resolution of difficult cases, an assessment has been made of the potential costs to the Constabulary of taking a harder line regarding twelve problematic cases, which could entail pursuit of ill health retirement or formal action under the Police (Performance) Regulations 2012. Retirement on ill health grounds carries a cost to the constabulary of twice the average annual pensionable pay of the officer concerned. If ill health retirement was secured for all of the twelve cases referred to above, the total cost to the force would be £910,974.
- 1.19. Robust application of the Police (Performance) Regulations 2012 carries a risk of discrimination claims by officers at Employment Tribunal, with associated legal fees and potential awards. Annual statistics for 2011/12 for Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeal Tribunals show an average award for successful disability discrimination claims of £22,183, although each case is different. Legal costs for preparation and attending hearings are equally difficult to predict as they vary from case to case, but can be between £3,000 and £10,000 for preparation and £20,000 to £35,000 for a week long hearing.
- 1.20. There is further work to be done on assessing risk and options for each of the twelve cases mentioned and this will be done in consultation with the Police Federation.
- 1.21. Appendix 2 sets out the update for 31 March 2013 regarding establishment and strength levels for officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and special constables, and an update on recruitment. Key points to note include the increase in strength for police officers which can be attributed to the recent intake of 16 officers in March 2013. It should be noted that from the 1 April 2013 the agreed officer establishment is 1200 FTE. The reduction in the number of special constables during March 2013 is in part due to 8 joining as student officers. In addition specials data has also been cleansed during March with a view to identifying officers who have not performed any active duties over recent months.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 2.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with this update.

3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

- 3.1. There are no identifiable risks arising from this update.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	Yes
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	N/A
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	N/A
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	N/A
In relation to the above, have all relevant issues been highlighted in the 'other implications and risks' section of the submission?	N/A