

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 25 May 2021

Report: SICKNESS ABSENCE

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Members of the current level of sickness absence within the National Park Authority staffing establishment, and to provide an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on sickness levels.

Recommendation

2. That the report be noted.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information contained in this report is consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and approved strategic planning framework, and in particular Corporate Plan Objective 34, "Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources".

Scope of this Report

4. Analysis has been undertaken of sickness absence data covering all staff employed by the Authority during the fourth quarter of 2020/21 (so from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021). The data has been categorised by individual Directorates and is attached as an **Appendix** to this report. Information is provided both in terms of the percentage of time lost and then what this means in actual days lost, to illustrate the proportionate and absolute size of sickness absence.

Method of Calculation

5. As with previous reports, the Appendix presents data for all staff based on a five day working week, taking into account vacant posts, bank holidays, and an average annual leave and flexi leave entitlement, to give 'actual' working days available for both full and part-time staff. The following data is provided:

- (i) Number of staff in post as at 31 March 2021 (Full-Time Equivalent)
- (ii) The total number of days lost due to sickness within the reporting period
- (iii) The total number of working days available within the reporting period
- (iv) Each Directorate's lost time rate, being the percentage of lost days compared with the number of days available, is calculated as follows:-

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Days Lost}}{\text{Total Number of Days Available}} \times 100$$

6. The Authority’s lost time rate for the quarter ending 31 March 2021 was **3.4%**. The rate for the previous quarter to 31 December 2020 was **1.0%**. Also provided within the Appendix are details of the quarterly lost time rates over the last five years.

Performance Indicator results

7. The Authority uses a Performance Indicator to report the proportion of working days lost due to sickness absence. Rather than reporting the annual lost time rate, sickness absence for Performance Indicator purposes is calculated and expressed as the number of day’s absence per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) member of staff, as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Aggregate of lost working days}}{\text{Average number of FTE staff}} = \text{X days per FTE}$$

Calculated by reference to the start and end of the financial year

8. The situation as at the end of the fourth quarter (ending 31 March 2021) using the Performance Indicator methodology (as opposed to the ‘lost time rate’, percentage-based approach) yields a figure of **1.8 days per FTE** for that quarter. The cumulative figure is **4.6 days per FTE**.

Number of working days lost due to sickness per FTE – comparative data

9. The following table shows the Authority’s performance relating to sickness (as measured by the Performance Indicator calculation) over the past five years, where available. These results will be updated for the next edition of this quarterly report.

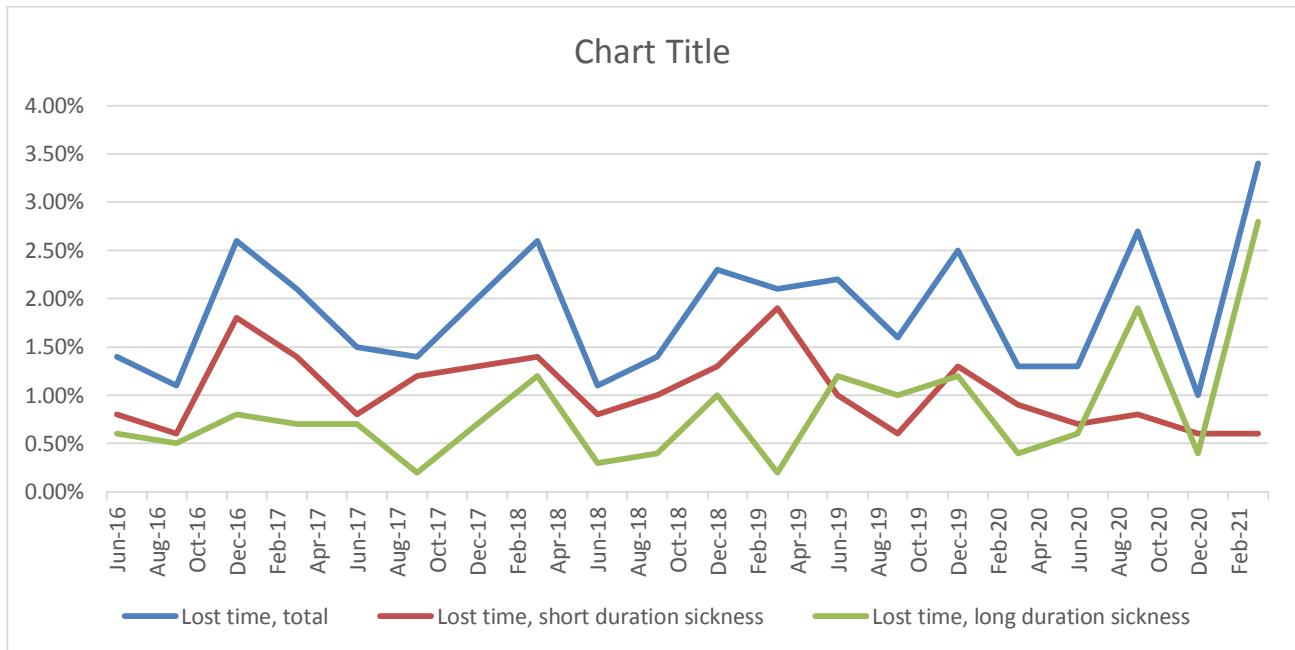
Year	Brecon Beacons	Broads	Cairngorms	Dartmoor	Exmoor	Lake District	Loch Lomond	New Forest	Northumberland	North York Moors	Peak District	Pembrokeshire	Snowdonia	South Downs	Yorkshire Dales
15/16	7.9	4.9	5.5	9.8	6.2	7.3	7.2	3.6	2.2	4.2	5.3	-	7.2	4.5	2.2
16/17	7.4	4.8	5.2	7.8	3.6	4.4	9.4	3.8	3.0	4.0	5.5	7.8	8.2	4.7	4.0
17/18	12.2	6.4	4.9	7.8	3.4	5.2	10.7	7.0	4.0	4.6	5.1	5.8	5.2	4.3	4.1
18/19	7.3	?	4	12.2	6.8	4.6	?	4.9	3.2	3.8	5.3	?	8.9	3	3
19/20	7.01	?	7.96	7.16	7.9	?	9.2	?	4.89	3.3	?	8.5	11.5	3.06	4.3
5 year av.	8.4	7.54	5.5	8.9	5.6	7.54	9.1	7.48	3.5	4.0	7.53	7.4	8.2	3.9	3.5

Impact of COVID-19 and long-term sickness incidences

10. To date, very little time has been lost to COVID-related sickness, as reported to this committee in February 2021. However, there has been a considerable worsening in our sickness record compared to the February report - which covered the period to 31 December 2020 – which is directly attributable to a significant increase in the ‘long term sickness’ rate (sickness periods with a duration of 10 days or more and which typically relate to serious medical conditions).

11. In the three months to 31 March 2021, 191 days of such sick leave were recorded for 8 staff (as against a total of 42 days recorded amongst the remaining 158 officers). This long-term sick leave total was the highest we have recorded in any three-month period over the past five years. Of the 8 staff concerned, six have now returned to normal working.

12. In contrast, the underlying 'short term' sick leave rate remains at a very low level. The relationship between long term, short term, and total sick leave can best be demonstrated graphically (below). Long term sick leave is both unpredictable and difficult to manage, and is the main cause of significant variations in total sick leave; the relationship between the March 2021 long term sick leave peak and the total sick leave peak is clear.



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Senior Administrative Officer
 10th May 2021

SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS – 1 JANUARY to 31 MARCH 2021

DIRECTORATE	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT IN POST as at 31.3.21	TOTAL NO. OF DAYS LOST	TOTAL DAYS AVAILABLE	LOST TIME %
Corporate Services	23.88	6.19	1289.52	0.5
Conservation & Community	43.99	133.44	2375.46	5.6
Park Services	59.46	93.52	3210.84	2.9
TOTAL	127.33	233.15	6875.82	3.4

NOTES

1. Of the 93.52 days lost in Park Services, 64.1 days relate to two members of staff, one of whom has since returned to work.
2. Of the 133.44 days lost in Conservation & Community, 126.91 days relate to six members of staff, five of which have since returned to work. One member of staff remains on long-term sick.
3. Taking out the long-term sickness (defined here as any instance lasting for more than ten working days), the Authority's lost time rate would be **0.6%** and the days absence per FTE would be **0.3** days.

ANALYSIS OF SICKNESS LEVELS (LOST TIME RATE) AT QUARTERLY INTERVALS FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020.

1 April 2016 – 30 June 2016	1 July 2016 – 30 September 2016	1 October 2016 – 31 December 2016	1 January 2017 – 31 March 2017
1.4%	1.1%	2.6%	2.1%

1 April 2017 – 30 June 2017	1 July 2017 – 30 September 2017	1 October 2017 – 31 December 2017	1 January 2018 – 31 March 2018
1.5%	1.4%	2.0%	2.6%

1 April 2018 – 30 June 2018	1 July 2018 – 30 September 2018	1 October 2018 – 31 December 2018	1 January 2019 – 31 March 2019
1.1%	1.4%	2.3%	2.1%

1 April 2019 – 30 June 2019	1 July 2019 – 30 September 2019	1 October 2019 – 31 December 2019	1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020
2.2%	1.6%	2.5%	1.3%

1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020	1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020	1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020	1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021
1.3%	2.7%	1.0%	3.4%