

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 24 MAY 2022

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.

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 35, "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 2021/22 (so from 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2022). 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:

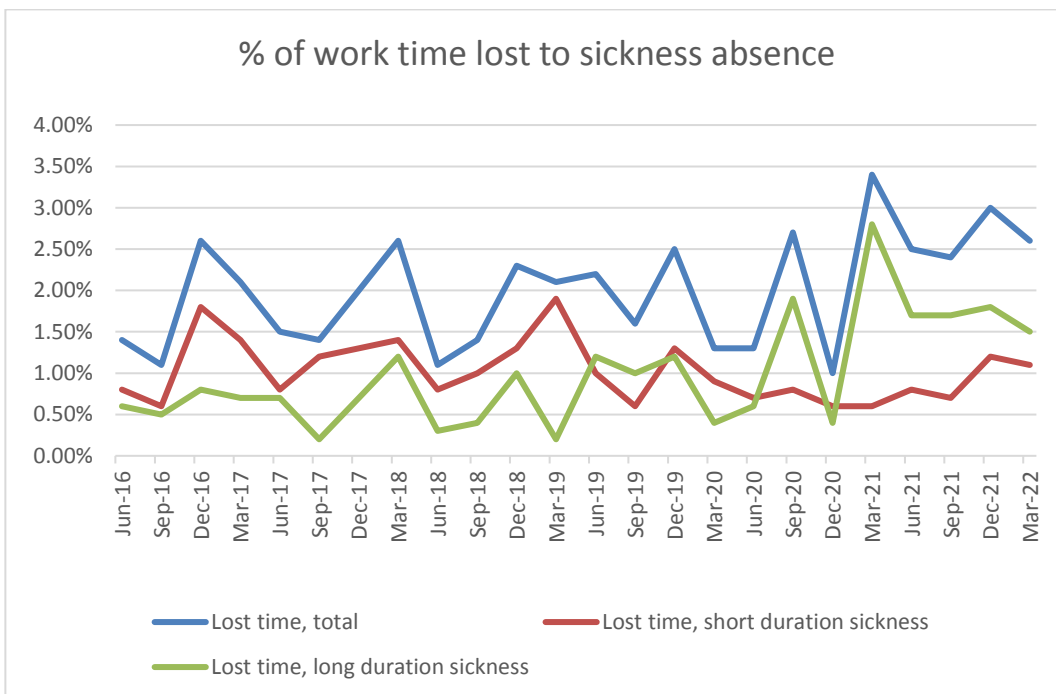
- (i) Number of staff in post as at 31 March 2022 (Full-Time Equivalent)
- (ii) The total number of days lost due to sickness within the reporting period
- (iii) The total number of working days available within the reporting period

- (iv) Each Directorate's lost time rate, being the percentage of lost days compared with the number of days available, is calculated as follows: -

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

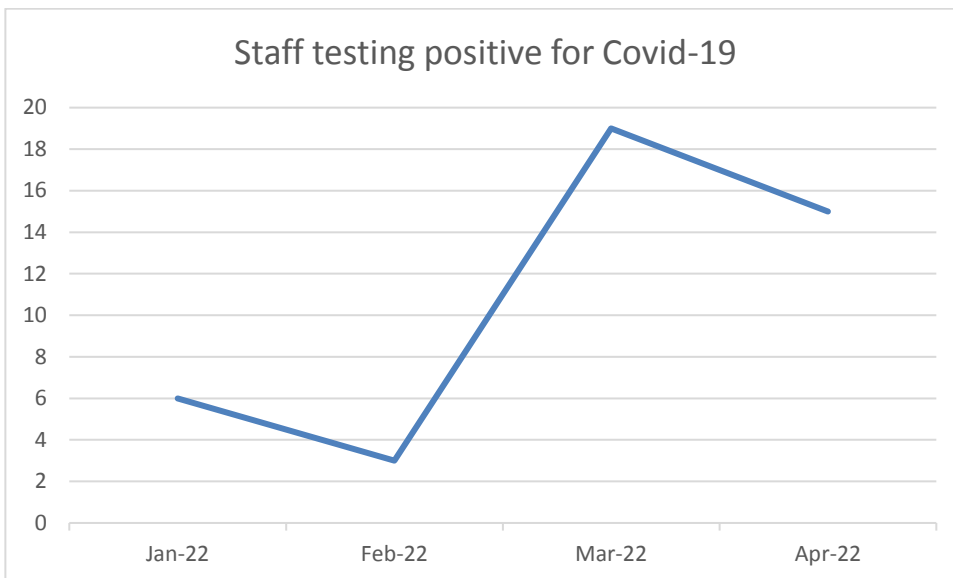
6. The Authority's lost time rate for the quarter ending 31 March 2022 was **2.6%**. The rate for the previous quarter to 31 December 2021 was **3.0%**. Also provided within the Appendix are details of the quarterly lost time rates over the last five years.

7. Looking at lost time trends over the past few years, it's clear that we are still in a period of recording relatively high figures. But separating these out into longer periods of sickness (those lasting more than 10 days) and shorter periods demonstrates that the incidence of short duration sickness (the red line on the graph, below) remains low, but that the overall result is heavily influenced by a small number of instances of long term sickness (for March 2022, comprising sickness periods for just two officers).



8. We will be reviewing our Sickness Absence policy during the coming year, including with a view to understanding what options there might be to help us to manage down longer term absences.

9. But current short duration sickness levels still compare favourably with earlier years, even though the last few months have seen by far the highest levels of Covid-19 infection since the pandemic began. The graph (below) illustrates this point, and whilst it correlates with an increase in short term sickness compared to the start of the pandemic, the overall impact is lower than might have been expected, with many of the officers affected continuing to work from home during their illness. Incidentally, there is no evidence of any systematic transmission of Covid-19 within the workplace, most cases being traceable to contacts outside work (including childcare); the pattern is similar to the national picture for Covid infections in 2022.



Performance Indicator results

10. 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 days' 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

11. The situation as at the end of the fourth quarter (ending 31 March 2022) using the Performance Indicator methodology (as opposed to the 'lost time rate', percentage-based approach) yields a figure of **1.5 days per FTE** for that quarter. The cumulative total is **5.8 days per FTE**.

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

12. 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 as additional information becomes available.

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
16/17	7.4	4.8	5.2	7.8	3.6	4.4	9.4	3.8	3	4	5.5	7.8	8.2	4.7	4
17/18	12.2	6.4	4.9	7.8	3.4	5.2	10.7	7	4	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	?	8	7.2	7.9	?	9.2	?	4.9	3.3	?	8.5	11.5	3.1	4.3
20/21	2.1	?	3.1	1.7	5.3	?	?	?	2.4	1.4	3.9	2.1	3.3	2.9	4.6
5 year av.	7.2	5.6	5.0	7.3	5.4	4.7	9.8	5.2	3.5	3.4	5.0	6.1	7.4	3.6	4

Caszandra Peterson
Senior Administrative Officer
4 May 2022

SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS – 1 JANUARY – 31 MARCH 2022

DIRECTORATE	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT IN POST as at 31.3.22	TOTAL NO. OF DAYS LOST	TOTAL DAYS AVAILABLE	LOST TIME %
Corporate Services	25.66	86.27	1385.64	6.2
Conservation & Community	50.42	45.46	2722.68	1.7
Park Services	59.26	69.07	3200.04	2.1
TOTAL	135.34	200.8	7608.36	2.6

NOTES

1. Of the 86.27 days lost in Corporate Services, 63 days relate to 1 member of staff, who remains on long-term sick leave.
2. Of the 45.46 days lost in Conservation & Community 19 days relate to 1 member of staff, who has since returned to work.
3. Taking out the periods of long-term sickness absence (defined here as any instance lasting for more than ten working days), the Authority's lost time rate would be **1.5%** and the days of absence per FTE would be **0.9** days.

ANALYSIS OF SICKNESS LEVELS (LOST TIME RATE) AT QUARTERLY INTERVALS FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2017 TO 31 DECEMBER 2021.

1 April 2017 – 30 June 2017 1.5%	1 July 2017 – 30 September 2017 1.4%	1 October 2017 – 31 December 2017 2.0%	1 January 2018 – 31 March 2018 2.6%
1 April 2018 – 30 June 2018 1.1%	1 July 2018 – 30 September 2018 1.4%	1 October 2018 – 31 December 2018 2.3%	1 January 2019 – 31 March 2019 2.1%
1 April 2019 – 30 June 2019 2.2%	1 July 2019 – 30 September 2019 1.6%	1 October 2019 – 31 December 2019 2.5%	1 January 2020 – 31 March 2020 1.3%
1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020 1.3%	1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020 2.7%	1 October 2020 – 31 December 2020 1.0%	1 January 2021 – 31 March 2021 3.4%
1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021 2.5%	1 July 2021 – 30 September 2021 2.4%	1 October 2021 – 31 December 2021 3.0%	1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022 2.6%