

Staff and Pension Committee

13 September 2021

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2020-21

Recommendation

That the Staff and Pensions Committee notes and comments upon the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This is the annual Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report for the year ending March 2021. The report covers performance against several key Health, Safety and Wellbeing indicators and measures and identifies any emerging themes.
- 1.2. Warwickshire County Council as the Fire Authority has a statutory duty to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees so far as is reasonably practicable. A breach of these duties can result in fines for the Authority and with recent changes to legislation the Health and Safety Sentencing Guidelines include the ultimate sanction of custodial sentences for responsible individuals.
- 1.3. In December 2020 the dedicated WFRS Senior Health and Safety Advisor took flexible retirement and reduced their working hours to three days a week. The Watch Manager (operational) was successfully promoted to Station Manager and has taken over the Health and Safety Team management function. A health and safety apprentice was appointed in January. This is the first time the team has taken up the opportunity to employ an apprentice as a productive way to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and quality work force and promoting the health and safety culture throughout the Service.
- 1.4. The team provide competent guidance, advice and support to all teams and managers within WFRS; this reflects the unique and high-risk activity of the Service. The advice provided by the team ensures the service is legally compliant and that managers at all levels are aware of their corporate and individual responsibilities, along with any potential areas of vulnerability.
- 1.5. WFRS continue to very work closely with their five regional fire partners to share learning and best practice to improve health, safety and wellbeing standards across the region. Also, as part of the 'Three Shires Partnership' WFRS liaise with Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services.

1.6. The main requirements which the Service must meet are set out in several complementary pieces of legislation and guidance which include:-

1.6.1. The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004

The Act states that Fire Authorities must make provision for dealing with fires, road traffic accidents and other emergencies and identifies the need for adequately trained and equipped personnel.

1.6.2. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Reviewed in May 2018, this framework places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to take into account the health, safety and wellbeing principles set out by the National Fire Chiefs Council. The framework identifies that Fire and Rescue Authorities have an important role in helping to ensure their firefighters remain fit and are supported in remaining in employment.

1.6.3. The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

This applies to the Fire Authority as to any other employer, but it is more complex in its application to an emergency service. In addition, the Service is expected to comply with best practice operational guidance, or demonstrate good reason why it is acceptable to not comply. The guidance covers virtually every aspect of fire and rescue operations from firefighting and breathing apparatus operations through to water rescue, incident command and multi-agency response to terrorist incidents. This guidance includes:

1.6.4. National Operational Guidance (NOG)

NOG continues to be an essential guide to the safe systems of work needed at an incident and is aimed at policy writers in each fire and rescue service, to support them in producing local guidance, policy and procedures. The guidance provides details of specific hazards and effective control measures, which will support a fire and rescue service to deliver an effective, assertive and safe incident command structure.

WFRS has established a small team, working in close co-operation with training staff, to adopt and incorporate NOG guidance into the service. This involves reviewing all our existing policies and, wherever possible, bringing the service into line with national guidance. At the end of 2019 a member of this team was appointed to a secondment to join the national NOG team, to provide input and influence the national guidance content.

It is important to note that NOG applies equally to all fire and rescue services, ranging from the large metropolitans to smaller shires. Each Service is required to assess how best and to what extent the national guidance can be applied locally with the resources available. Whilst WFRS always strives to align itself with national guidance this is not always possible; in such cases the WFRS NOG policy team will record the reasons for divergence and they will be agreed at an appropriate level within the Service.

1.6.5. The Health and Safety Framework for the Operational Environment

This Framework which was produced by DCLG in June 2013 continues to assist Fire and Rescue Authorities in balancing risks, specifically in their wider role to protect the public and property, while meeting health and safety at work

duties to protect their staff and others. The Framework also focuses on the operational and training environments that are unique to firefighters and does not replace or replicate other health and safety guidance that applies to more routine activities.

1.6.6. Striking the Balance between Operational and Health and Safety Duties in the Fire and Rescue Service

This HSE publication is intended to clarify how the Fire and Rescue Service should comply with health and safety at work duties within their operational work. The statement and subsequent guidance is intended to assist Fire and Rescue Authorities in balancing risks, particularly in their wider role to protect the public and property, while meeting health and safety at work duties to protect and others. HSE recognises that firefighters and managers face difficult moral dilemmas and have to make decisions in what are sometimes extremely hazardous, emotionally charged and fast-moving situations. HSE initiated joint work with Fire and Rescue Service leaders to clarify how Fire and Rescue Authorities can strike the balance between their operational and health and safety duties.

1.7. The Operational Environment and the need for Realistic Training

For the purposes of the legislation, the incident ground is the “workplace” for Fire and Rescue, and we are responsible for the safety of our personnel and anybody else on the incident ground once we are on scene and in charge. It is also worth highlighting that any action taken in these circumstances normally involves accepting a level of risk that would not be seen as “reasonable” in a normal workplace.

The combination of limited information and the expectation to act quickly in a dynamic, hazardous environment explains why the Service puts such emphasis on realistic operational training and the broader “safe person concept” promoted within a good health and safety culture.

As part of the development of the WFRS distributed training model, the Service is pleased to report that building work has started on the Kingsbury site. This 36-week project is on target to be finished in October 2021. The completion of this site will provide WFRS with extensive, enhanced training facilities to carry out Working at Height, Confined Space, Large Animal Rescue and Road Traffic Collision training.

Negotiations are currently underway in relation an enhanced site for Breathing Apparatus Training. In the interim this training is carried out at Oldbury Station training facility, part of West Midlands Fire Service.

The work required on what was the West Midlands Ambulance Service site at Stratford Fire Station is now complete and able to facilitate Incident Command training, which ensures Officers at all levels are confident and competent in this area.

Water Rescue Training continues to be carried out at Llangollen in North Wales.

2. Purpose and Scope of this Report

2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Staff and Pensions Committee with an annual position statement of the management and performance of Health, Safety and Wellbeing within WFRS. It summarises the key Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) activities from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021.

2.2. In WFRS, the Health and Safety and Occupational Health functions are two separate teams each with their own manager. The overall strategic management is provided by the Area Manager responsible for Continuous Improvement and Change.

3. Background

3.1. The information within the report relates to WFRS employees and activities for which we have statutory HSW responsibilities only. The report does not include any information or data related to the rest of Warwickshire County Council (WCC).

3.2. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Communication and Consultation

3.2.1. WFRS Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) information is presented and communicated routinely at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee Meeting held every 8 weeks. This statutory meeting is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. Members of the recognised representative bodies (FBU, FOA, FRSA and UNISON) are invited to attend. This allows timely sharing and discussion of HSW related information and encourages early positive action to be taken in response to identified concerns by all parties.

3.2.2. Since the start of COVID, regular meetings have been held with all the representative bodies, to ensure effective communications and discussions take place, while additional activities are being carried out by WFRS personnel.

3.3. Fee for Intervention (FFI)

3.3.1. Under the Health and Safety (Fees) Regulations 2012, those who break health and safety law are liable for the recovery of the HSE's related costs (separate to any other Legal liabilities that there may be). The current fee is charged at £129.00 per hour if the HSE deem an employer to be in 'material breach' of Health and Safety legislation. It is positive to be able to report that WFRS have not received any FFI charges.

3.4. National Fire and Rescue Service Significant Adverse Events

3.4.1. There are two incidents to reference. One involving a neighbouring Fire and Rescue Service, in 2019 where a firefighter was left with 'life-

changing' injuries is still under investigation.

3.4.2. A second occurring further afield in September resulted in the death of a firefighter during a water rescue training exercise and remains under criminal investigation. The Marine Accident Investigation Team have produced their comprehensive investigation report into this incident, which was shared with all Fire and Rescue Services. As with all reports of this kind, WFRS carried out a gap analysis on the findings and recommendations to identify any improvements required. An action plan has been produced and is monitored through the HSW Committee; the identified actions required are progressing well.

3.5. Legislation Updates / Regulatory Intervention

3.5.1. The RIDDOR Regulations which were temporarily amended at the start of the COVID Pandemic remain in place to include the reporting procedures for COVID-19. To date WFRS have not been required to report any incidents under these amendments.

3.6. HSE

3.6.1. The HSE have recently visited a number of fire stations to undertake a COVID compliance inspection. Inspectors stated they were impressed with the control measures implemented at Nuneaton, Atherstone and Henley stations. Whilst no formal feedback was provided, particular praise was given for the production and provision of an electronic COVID Portal which provides effective communication e.g. guidance, reporting processes/procedures, risk assessments and mental wellbeing support and signposting. Another area highly praised was the implementation of a COVID Manager, whose role it is to oversee with the assistance of BCCT the people manager and support aspect of COVID.

4. Key Areas of Health and Safety Improvement in WFRS

4.1. It is very encouraging to report that health and safety continues to be integrated into all WFRS activities. During 2020/21 the areas include:

4.1.1. WFRS 'Hospital to Home' Service

This service has played a critical part in supporting the NHS during these unprecedented times. The Health and Safety Team worked closely with the WFRS Prevention Team to assist with the planning and delivery of this service to ensure the additional controls required were implemented to protect staff and clients.

4.1.2. Control of Post Fire Contaminants

4.1.2.1. This subject continues to be high on the NFCC Agenda.

4.1.2.2. WFRS have and are continuing to implement good working practices, awareness and education in this area.

4.1.2.3. The 'Clean Cab' policy which was produced by the Health and Safety Manager is in the process of being implemented as well as the 'Post Fire Hygiene; Lecture Package, both of which will support the Service in reducing the risk of potential fire contaminants.

4.1.2.4. An independent report from the University of Central Lancashire, commissioned by the FBU was published in November 2020. As a best practice report, it aims to help protect firefighters' health by highlighting some of the risks and common sources of contaminants. It provides suggestions for preventative measures for minimising exposure to contaminants and best practice for the decontamination of FRS personnel and firefighting equipment after exposure to toxic fire effluent. It also provides background information, statistics, resources and actions vital for improving firefighters' health and well-being, keeping them safe and preventing the contamination which otherwise could lead to potential serious health conditions resulting in either life-changing problems and/or premature death.

4.1.2.5. A gap analysis was carried out on the report and current activity. An action plan has been produced as a result and work has started on the recommendations which the WFRS HSW Committee have identified as reasonable and practicable.

4.1.2.6. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are in the process of finalising their report on the issue, which will be subject to the same process on receipt.

4.1.2.7. On a practical level, an autoclave (BA Washing Machine) was procured last year. This is the most effective control measure used as part of the decontamination process and has been of significant benefit.

4.1.3. Health and Safety Training

4.1.3.1. Apart from the IOSH Course for Senior Executives which was undertaken by the Fire Leadership Team, there have been no other IOSH or NEBOSH courses run this year due to COVID.

4.1.3.2. Despite this and to ensure operational personnel remain competent in role, risk critical areas of training have however continued this year. This has ensured WFRS could meet its statutory duties under the Fire Services Act. The training undertaken includes:

- Incident Command
- Emergency Response Driving
- Breathing Apparatus
- New Recruits
- First Responder Emergency Course

4.1.3.3. The Health and Safety Team supported the Training and Development Team in carrying out Covid Risk Assessments for the

training courses.

4.1.3.4. Refresher health and safety training has been carried out by personnel utilising the WFRS Lecture Package Delivery System.

4.1.4. Health and Safety Inspections/Audits

4.1.4.1. The risk-based programme of inspections has slowed this year due to the COVID pandemic, although the inspections have continued on workplaces with a 'sleeping risk'. All workplaces have been subject to a COVID compliant risk assessment. These have been regularly reviewed and updated in line with the Government alert levels and additional control measures implemented e.g. lateral flow tests and more currently the vaccinations roll out.

4.1.5. Regional Health and Safety Peer Review Audits

4.1.5.1. As part of the West Midlands Regional Health and Safety Business Plan, peer review audits are carried out every three years. The last inspection at WFRS took place November 2019 and the areas which were audited were:

- Working at Height
- Slips, trips and falls
- Breathing Apparatus

4.1.5.2. The identified recommendations were monitored by the HSW Committee and have now all been implemented.

4.1.5.3. The next review was planned to take place at the end of April 2020 at Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, the audit was being led by the WFRS Senior Health and Safety Advisor. However, due to COVID-19 this audit has been postponed and rearranged for September 2021.

4.1.5.4. This peer review audit process is extremely useful and allows for the sharing of good health and safety practice within the West Midlands Region.

4.2. HMICFRS Inspections

4.2.1. COVID-19 Inspection - August 2020

4.2.1.1. The Health and Safety Team supported teams to ensure additional activities which were being undertaken to support the communities of Warwickshire, were risk assessed and suitable control measures implemented where required.

4.2.1.2. Extract from the report stated: -

'In summary, we were impressed with how Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service maintained its statutory functions and made good use of its staff to carry out additional duties to support the

community during the pandemic. It primarily used its wholetime firefighters to respond to emergencies. The Service used the increased availability of its on-call workforce beyond their normal operational commitment to help support those most vulnerable in the community'.

4.2.2. Full Inspection

4.2.2.1. This inspection started with a four-week desktop discovery phase in March 2021. Although outside the reporting period for this report, the inspection progressed during April to the formal stage, which included engagement with managers and staff from across the Service. As part of the inspection phase the Senior Health and Safety Advisor was interviewed. Initial feedback was given to the Fire Leadership Team in the final week of the inspection, which included a number of positives and some areas they felt we could improve in. The full report is expected in the Autumn.

4.3. WFRS Health and Safety Practitioners Group

4.3.1. This group continues to work effectively, the members include both uniformed and non-uniformed managers who are NEBOSH qualified and represent of the Service. The group is chaired and managed by the Health and Safety Manager. The Practitioners' roles and responsibilities support the Service and their individual teams as well as promoting good/best health and safety practices throughout the Service.

4.3.2. Although the work carried out this year has decreased, due to COVID, it is anticipated that work carried out by the group including new initiatives will move forward this year.

5. Performance against last year's Health and Safety Team Plan

5.1. The Health and Safety Team has continued to make every effort to carry out the work streams included in the team plan. However, the priorities have changed due to COVID pandemic.

The Health and Safety Team continues to prioritise their work to ensure we meet the ongoing demands arising from COVID by providing a robust service as we protect and support the health, safety and wellbeing of all WFRS personnel.

5.2. The Health and Safety Manager continues to be a key member to support the Business Continuity Co-ordination Team (BCCT) and the WFRS Recovery Team who are responsible for the work required to ensure WFRS can carry out their statutory duties set out in the Fire Services Act.

5.3. The Health and Safety Manager played a key role in the setting up of the Mass Testing Sites, by supporting WCC in producing the risk assessments required for the five allocated sites throughout Warwickshire. The robust

control measures required were discussed with and provided by WCC Facilities Management in addition to the assessments being regularly reviewed.

- 5.4. At the end of last year and as part of the work carried out by BCCT, a quality assurance programme has been set up. This effective process monitors, identifies and confirms that the risk assessments which have been produced and regularly reviewed in line with the changes in National Alert Levels, are adequate and being worked to.
- 5.5. As part of the Tripartite agreement with the Fire Brigade Union (FBU), the team have carried out work in consultation with the FBU to complete the risk assessments for the additional activities which may have to be carried out by Union members e.g. body recovery, supporting the Ambulance Service, the NHS and Funeral Directors, all of which will support the communities of Warwickshire.
- 5.6. As work progressed, a decision was taken at national level to end the Tripartite agreement and move to a new set of National Risk Assessments, these assessments will be adopted and adapted to include the control measures which WFRS can implement.
- 5.7. The overarching COVID risk assessment aligning to the Government alert levels which was produced by the Health and Safety team has also been reviewed. This overarching document sets out clear strategic guidance for managers ensuring risk critical functions and activities can be switched back on safely when safe to do so ensuring no breaches in health and safety legislation are encountered.
- 5.8. Business Impact Assessments (BIAs) for all teams have been produced and are regularly reviewed in line with the Government roadmap and guidance. Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) are also in place along with new and existing risk assessments which are monitored and regularly reviewed.
- 5.9. The health and safety team have supported the 1-2-1 wellbeing process, which will give individuals the opportunity to spend quality time with their line manager to have a conversation and identify if they are having any issues/concerns. There are many variables, and we know that any return to the workplace will be challenging. The process identified will assist with the transition.
- 5.10. Whilst individuals may experience different levels of concern due to personal risk factors, this two-way process will identify and assist in the production of personal risk assessments, to ensure we implement effective agreed control measures. This process is paramount and will support employees ensuring that we respond to individuals with empathy and clarity. and fostering a supportive and caring employment relationship.

6. Recovery

6.1. The Service has set up, encouraged and promoted lateral flow testing for all staff attending a workplace or interacting with colleagues and members of the public.

6.2. As we move forward in line with the Government 'Road Map', WFRS will align with the County Council reinstatement plan where all premises will be reviewed with the emphasis on ventilation and occupancy levels. Whilst we have carried out similar work previously, this review is based on the latest understanding and will grade rooms on suitability for activities and managers have been advised that changes may be required as a result of these reviews. WFRS are liaising with the WCC team prioritising the Service requirements, as we already have key staff working in our premises and carrying out critical services. The WFRS Health and Safety Manager will be working closely with Facilities Support to carry out the accommodation reviews.

<https://warwickshiregovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/Coronavirus/SitePages/WCC-Reinstatement-toolkit.aspx>

7. Health and Safety Monitoring/Performance Data Accidents/Incidents (Adverse Events) Statistics - Trend Analysis

Type of Adverse Event	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Dangerous Occurrence	0	1	2
Major Injuries	0	0	1
RIDDOR Injuries (over 7 days)	2	2	1
Near Misses	49	46	93
Personnel Injury	30	33	21
Vehicle Incident	23	32	23
Violence and Aggression	7	7	8

7.1. It is encouraging and positive to report the number of personal injuries has decreased this year. All incidents have been investigated and where required improvements made. There were no significant trends identified.

7.2. This positive decrease is the same for the number of vehicle incidents reported.

7.3. There has been a small increase in the number of violence and aggression incidents, these incidents of verbal abuse affect Fire Control Operators and Operational Crews. The incidents which occurred during operational incidents, are generally from members of the public under the influence of alcohol. Crews and Control Operators have undertaken diffuser training and are able to manage the situation. During the operational incidents police are also notified and will attend if deemed necessary. The Service has set up a working group to look at the procurement and use of body worn cameras (BWC) following a proof of concept BWC initiative in 2019/20.

7.4. As with all adverse events the aim is to have zero reporting, with the exception of near miss reporting. We have during this reporting period seen an increase in this area. However, an effective health and safety management system, which in turn leads to a positive health and safety culture, includes the identifying and frequency of reporting near misses. As a service it is positive that personnel proactively recognise what constitutes a near miss which needs to be reported and subsequently investigated

8. The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR)

8.1. Two Dangerous Occurrences were reported this year, these involved two separate incidents on the same training course where Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets were reported going into free flow (constant flow of air into the facemask). It was identified following a robust investigation that there was a small amount of debris in the lung demand valve (LDV) which caused one set to go into free flow. The second incident was caused by too much tolerance in a spring within the LDV of the set. As a result of the above findings, all personnel were reminded of the correct cleaning and stowage of BA set facemasks and all training sets were inspected for the fault found and are now subject to a test twice a year.

8.2. A 'major injury' occurred in July this year, this is the first incident of this type for three years.

8.3. The injury occurred during a Dedicated Retained Application Support Process (DRASP) where an applicant stumbled and fell during the initial warmup, as they fell they put their hands out to break their fall and in doing so fractured their left wrist.

8.4. A full investigation took place which identified the control measures in the risk assessment had been followed, including the wearing of PPE, which were sized before the event and an inspection of the drill yard prior to use. These events which are held regularly are facilitated by competent instructors and this particular activity was overseen by the WFRS Personal Training Instructor.

8.5. The investigation concluded that the injured person simply stumbled and fell, despite all reasonable and practicable controls being taken.

8.6. There was a decrease in the number of 'Over 7 Day' injuries. The one event reported resulted in an injury to a hydrant technician who works for the WFRS Water Team. While carrying out an inspection on an underground water tank, they injured their back whilst lifting the hydrant lid. The technician who had undertaken Manual Handling Training was taken to hospital where it was confirmed they had sustained a back-strain injury, which resulted in eight working days lost.

8.7. The inspection of underground water tanks has been suspended and

therefore the lifting of the covers will no longer take place. The requirement for the tanks to be inspected in the future is currently being looked into and mechanical options considered to replace the two person lift of the larger covers.

9. Common Identified Causes

Causes	2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Half Year	Year End	Half Year	Year End	Half Year	Year End
Personal Injury	13	30	20	33	11	21
Manual Handling	1	2	6	6	1	3
Slips, Trips & Falls	0	6	2	6	4	9
Hit by moving, flying or falling object	4	4	6	6	1	1
Hit something fixed or stationary	3	3	3	6	5	7
Burns - Operational	0	0	0	1	0	0
Burns - Training	1	3	1	1	0	0
RIDDOR Major Accidents	0	0	0	0	0	1
RIDDOR Over 7 Day Accidents	1	2	2	2	1	1
RIDDOR Dangerous Occurrences	0	0	0	1	0	2
Near Misses/Hits	41	49	19	46	44	93
Acts of aggression to Operational Staff	5	6	5	7	3	6
Acts of aggression to Non-Operational Staff	0	1	0	0	0	2
No. Employees	458	426	458	435	429	441

9.1. The decrease in the number of manual handling injuries is encouraging.

9.2. The team are currently in the process of producing a poster campaign to raise the awareness of injuries which are caused by slips, trips and falls. This should assist and help to reduce the numbers moving forward.

10. Occupational Health Team Update 2020/2021

10.1. Counselling and Psychotherapy Activity – 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

10.1.1. During the above period there were 32 new referrals, 10 of which were returning clients with new presenting issues. In total, 574 formally contracted counselling/psychotherapy sessions have been provided, this is an increase of 161 session for the same period year-end 2019/20. This figure does not include one off appointments, or people who just needed a safe and neutral space to talk through a current issue without therapeutic intervention.

10.1.2. The Client Profile for the above-mentioned period

10.1.3. Total of 49 Clients – 36 Uniformed and 13 Non-Uniformed
Male – 32 and Female – 17

Presenting Issue	Total No. of cases	Work Related	Personal	Combination	Comments
Anxiety and OCD	9	2	3	4	
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	8	4	2	2	EMDR Therapy provided
Depression	7		2	5	Clinically assessed
Relationships/Divorce	6		5	1	
Health/Terminal Illness	5		5		
Addiction	3		3		
Covid-19 Impact	3		1	2	Impact on health and isolation
Bereavement	2		2		
Low Mood	2			2	
Suicide Risk/Ideation	2		2		One high risk with clear intent.
Phobia	2		2		EMDR Therapy provided
Totals	49	6	27	16	

10.1.4. **Client Profile and Presenting Issues as of 31 March 2021**
Total of 27 ongoing clients - 19 Uniformed and 8 Non-Uniformed

Male - 16 and Female - 11

Presenting Issue	Total No. of cases	Work Related	Personal	Combination	Comments

Anxiety	7	1	2	4	
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	5	2	2	1	EMDR Therapy provided
Relationships/Divorce	4		3	1	
Covid-19 Impact	3		1	2	Impact on health and isolation
Depression	3			3	Clinically assessed
Health/Terminal Illness	2		2		
Addiction	1		1		
Low Mood	1			1	
Suicidal Risk/Ideation	1		1		1 High risk with clear intent
Totals	27	3	12	12	

Notes:

In order to continue psychological support services during the COVID pandemic services have been delivered using a range of remote platforms, including Teams, Zoom, FaceTime and telephone. However, client preference and a number of high-risk clients have returned to having their sessions face to face with appropriate risk assessments and control measures in place. The transition to on-line working has been challenging for the OHWM, due to the increased level of fatigue and screen time.

10.1.5. **Statistics for period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**

Service Medical Advisor Activity

Type of Appointment	Number Undertaken	Comments
Clinical Reviews	90	Face to Face and Telephone To monitor progress and phased return to work plans
Referrals	19	A range of issues concerning physical wellbeing with a majority being Muscular Skeletal
LGV Medicals	21	100% pass rate

Asbestos Screenings	5	H.S.E guidance does not allow us to undertake Spirometry testing – lung function as a routine, these were particular circumstances which needed to be addressed.
New Recruit Medicals (On-call and W/T)	27	No issues to note
Case Conferences	4	To review long-term absences and 2 Ill Health Retirements.

Occupational Health Advisor

Type of Appointment	Number Undertaken	Comments
3 Yearly Medicals	118	Paper based with specific issues followed up with the individual.
Referrals and sickness absence reviews	25	Monthly meeting with HR now established to monitor and update all absences,
LGV Medicals	21	100% pass rate
BAI Medicals	5	H.S.E guidance does not allow us to undertake Spirometry testing – lung function
New Recruit Medicals (RDS and WT)	27	No issues to note
Post Covid-19 Review	2	To ensure individual was fit to resume operational duties following Covid-19 a spirometry was undertaken for exceptional circumstances

Failed to Attend Appointments

Person with whom appointment was missed	Number of missed appointments
Service Medical Advisor	2
Occupational Health Advisor	0

Private Treatment Referrals and Flu Vaccinations

Type of Appointment	Number Undertaken	Cost to WFRS	Comments
Physiotherapy	58	£2900	Combination of upper and lower limb disorders 2 Cases required surgery A majority remained at work or on light duties
Private Scans (MRI, CT etc.)	0	0	

External Counselling/Mentoring	6	£360	Conflict of interest for OHWM, therefore not ethical.
Eye Protection	14	£1610	Provision of safety glasses and BA inserts where appropriate
Other Consultants	0	0	
Podiatry Assessments	1	£48	When PPE is causing issues for wearer
Dyslexia Assessments	0	0	
Ill Health Retirement IQMP Assessments and Reports	2	£1100	

10.1.6. Annual Fitness Testing

In line with previous years, the fitness testing is completed with 14 people unable to take the annual test due to injury or long-term sickness. Overall, 325 have been completed and passed, which equates to a 100% pass rate for those able to undertake the test.

10.1.7. General update and new activities during this period

In order to respond to the COVID pandemic, we have been adjusting how we work and deliver our services. On the whole this has been successful, and we have endeavoured not to impact on our core services as much as possible. This has been achieved by moving to provision of services remotely and using technology to good effect. There has however been an impact on the team by way of isolation and increased fatigue levels associated with working online for long periods of time. The provision of psychotherapy is a good example of this, because in essence you are missing over 50% of the usual cues including body-language and the non-verbal communication.

During the last 12 months we have undertaken a number of initiatives to support our staff and the work of Occupational Health as follows:

- Provision of mental health and suicide prevention training for WCC Foster Carers on 20 and 21 October 2021.
- Wellbeing packs sent to all new green book employees, which provides information of all wellbeing services available to them.
- Wellbeing Noticeboards and information folder available on all stations and teams.
- Regular Occupational Health newsletters, covering relevant topics and COVID.
- Input of information to the COVID Portal.
- Contacting staff who are isolating or having to shield.

10.1.8. Forthcoming initiatives

- Development of information in respect of 'Long-COVID', for both the physical and psychological impacts.

- We will be writing to all personnel who have had COVID personally to provide information about long-COVID and inviting them for a health screening or psychological support appointment with the relevant member of the Occupational Health team.
- Expansion of the Wellbeing Ambassadors team, training of new team members will commence in June 2021.
- Development of the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Portal – we will have all of our information in one location, including health promotions, wellbeing advice, forms and policies.

Orders have been placed for flu vaccinations, we plan to run clinics in both the North and South of the county during September.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1. This year has been very challenging for both the Health and Safety and Occupational Health Teams, due to the additional workloads which were imposed on the teams, due to COVID. The H&S team was stretched for capacity, as the Health and Safety Manager played a critical role in the BCCT, to ensure COVID compliance in workplaces, by producing an overarching risk assessment, workplace and personal risk assessments, as the majority of WFRS personnel remained in the workplace, to provide statutory emergency response.
- 11.2. The Occupational Health Manager has continued to provide necessary counselling services. The sessions were revised to ensure effective support online and in some cases, face to face appointments were essential, these were also assessed to ensure COVID compliance.
- 11.3. Considerable work has been undertaken to reduce the risk of isolation mainly due to many 'green book' (non-operational) staff working from home. We have produced regular wellbeing newsletters, which have focussed on both psychological and physical wellbeing.
- 11.4. It is encouraging to be able to report the number of adverse events and personal injuries have reduced this year.
- 11.5. Overall, both teams have continued to work effectively and prioritise their work to ensure we meet the ongoing demands arising from COVID, by providing a robust service as we protect and support the health, safety and wellbeing of all WFRS personnel and provide a professional service to ensure the Fire Authority meets its statutory and moral duties.
- 11.6. The Occupational Health, and Wellbeing and Health and Safety Teams will continue to prioritise their work to ensure we meet the ongoing demands arising from COVID, aligning with the County Council reinstatement plan with the focus being people and mental wellbeing. The WFRS Health and Safety Manager will be working closely with Facilities Support to carry out the

accommodation reviews to support the plan and the health, safety and wellbeing of all WFRS personnel.

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