

Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Health and Safety Committee Update: October 2025 to December 2025 (Quarter 3)

Purpose of report

1. To provide a Health and Safety update on activities and items of significance.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the following issues be noted:

- (i) **The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives;**
- (ii) **Health and Safety performance information recorded during October – December (Quarter 3); and**
- (iii) **Workforce Health & Wellbeing performance (Quarter 3).**

Introduction and Background

2. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) aim to ensure the safety and well-being of its employees and reduce and prevent accidents and injuries at work, as outlined in the People Strategy 2025-30.
3. The Health and Safety Committee is established to provide effective arrangements for the liaison and review of matters of common interest concerning Health and Safety (H&S). The Committee provides the opportunity for the Service to discuss general H&S issues and consult with the workforce via employee representatives. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and last met on 3rd March 2026.
4. The Committee has the facility to task work to the H&S Working Group, which sits beneath it and is chaired by the Group Commander responsible for Health and Safety. The group meets as and when required.

Health & Safety Initiatives Update

HWFRS Local Activities

5. A new digital Fire Risk Assessment form was introduced in October through the ROIL portal. This updated form includes a revised reporting process for creating, recording, and managing all required remedial actions. The new approach strengthens the consistency and accuracy of fire safety management and supports ongoing compliance with fire safety regulations across all service premises.

6. There are 25 H&S Policies in date and published.
7. A total of 315 risk assessments were reviewed in Quarter 3, as shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1 – Risk Assessments

	Quarter 4 (24/25)		Quarter 1 (25/26)		Quarter 2 (25/26)		Quarter 3 (25/26)	
Location	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA
North District	8	133	9	139	17	189	3	110
South District	7	85	13	97	17	121	5	90
West District	12	84	9	75	17	134	4	65
Training Centre	0	6	0	1	0	17	0	11
Others	1	26	3	27	3	28	2	25
Total	28	334	34	339	54	489	14	301

(PARA – Pre-Activity Risk Assessment TERA – Training Environment Risk Assessment)

Quarter 3 Performance Report

8. Appendix 1 provides details relating to all safety events reported and investigated during Quarter 3 of the 2025-26 reporting year (October to December).
9. The total number of safety events reported in Quarter 3 (45) has increased by 3 compared to the previous quarter (42) driven by an increase of near misses reported. Personal injuries have fallen in this recent quarter.
10. Two events have been reported to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) regulations, due to a loss of working days or potentially dangerous occurrences. The events are as follows:
 - 2 x manual handling injuries requiring time off work over 7 days.
 - A manual handling injury occurred during a training session on station while practising knot-tying. The incident resulted in 82 days of absence from work by the end of Q3, the member of staff returned to work on the 04/01/2026. The event was investigated and the firefighter sought medical assistance. Despite examination, the medical expert was unable to determine precisely how the injury had occurred.
 - A manual handling injury occurred while lifting a gazebo for a Prevention event, leading to 65 days of absence from work at the end of Q3, the member of staff returned to work on the 29/01/26. The incident was investigated by the

Line Manager. Findings indicated that the firefighter had a pre-existing condition, which was aggravated during the lifting task, resulting in a lower back injury.

11. Four Specialist Investigations were carried out in Q3.

- 3 x BA malfunction.

The investigations into the three potential BA malfunctions found that one incident was the result of operator error, where the correct BA donning procedure was not followed. The remaining two incidents related to minor equipment faults. In both cases the BA sets were removed from service and sent to the manufacturer for further examination and a formal report back to HWFRS.

- 1 x fire appliance minor collision.

No investigations identified any significant issues or causes for concern.

Workforce Health & Wellbeing Update

Performance Overview – Quarter 3 2025-2026

HWFRS Sickness data and activity Quarter 3 2025-2026

12. Appendix 2 (Performance Overview) provides data relating to all sickness absence by workforce group and the main causes of sickness absence in Quarter 3 2025-2026.
13. Overall absence due to staff sickness has increased from 2.15 lost per person in Quarter 2 2025-2026 to 2.52 in Quarter 3 2025-2026. 2.85 days lost per person was reported in Quarter 3 2024-2025.
14. Wholetime sickness rates increased from 2.25 days lost per person in Quarter 2 2025-26 to 2.41 in Quarter 3 2025-26. Fire Control staff sickness rates increased from 1.66 days lost in Quarter 2 2025-26 to 4.12 in Quarter 3 2025-26. This rise is largely attributed to a higher number of absences related to Cold/Cough/Influenza during this period. Sickness rates for Support staff increased from 2.06 days lost in Quarter 2 2025-26 to 2.37 in Quarter 3 2025-26. Regarding the nature of the absences, long-term absence accounted for 64% of all staff sickness absence in this quarter.
15. The top 3 causes of sickness absence for the reporting period are Musculo Skeletal - Lower Limb (17%), Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza (14%), and Musculo Skeletal - Back (13%).
16. The Service continues to monitor and review attendance levels in line with the Attendance Management policy and supports managers in the timely resolution of absence cases. These figures and trends are also monitored by the Health and Safety Committee who meet on a quarterly basis.

Musculo Skeletal - Lower Limb

17. There were 174 days/shifts lost to Musculo Skeletal - Lower Limb absences. The absences were due to ankle and knee injuries or pain which were not reported as work-related. 4 individuals were absent for short term periods in the reporting Quarter as well as 4 long term sickness cases. 4 individuals have returned to work. None of the absences were reported as a work-related injury. Individuals are encouraged to seek early support via The Fire Fighter's Charity or Occupational Health (OH) Physiotherapy for any Musculo Skeletal issues they may be experiencing.

Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza

18. There were 148.5 days/shifts lost due to Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza, predominantly due to flu or flu type symptoms. In total, 49 individuals were absent for short term periods in the Quarter, which is consistent with seasonal trends for this time of year. There were no long-term sickness cases, and all individuals have now returned to work. The Service regularly reminds employees to maintain infection control measures in the workplace to minimise Respiratory infections, In Quarter 3, the Service encouraged staff to book flu vaccinations (which can be claimed through the expenses process) to further support health and wellbeing during the winter period.

Musculo Skeletal - Back

19. There were 141 days/shifts lost due to Musculo Skeletal – Back. The absences were due to back injury or pain, with 3 absences reported as work-related. 7 individuals were absent for short term periods in the reporting Quarter as well as 4 long term sickness cases. 8 individuals have returned to work. Managers can refer staff to Occupational Health (OH) for Physiotherapy for any Musculo Skeletal issues employees may be experiencing.

Health Management data and activity

20. Appendix 2 (Health Management) provides data relating to management referrals to Occupational Health (OH) in Quarter 3. There were 34 new management referrals in Quarter 3, compared to 24 new management referrals made in Quarter 2. This reflects a recurring pattern, as 34 referrals were also recorded in Quarter 3 of 2024–2025. In this Quarter, there was an increase in referrals related to Musculoskeletal Disorders, Mental Health, and Heart & Circulatory conditions when compared with Quarter 2. This rise may be attributed to proactive actions ahead of scheduled fitness testing or seasonal factors commonly observed at this time of year.
21. The top reasons for referrals to OH related to Musculo Skeletal Disorders (14 referrals) and Mental Health (6 referrals).
22. Referrals for long term sickness absence cases may be reflected within the previous quarter; however review appointments are carried out throughout the absence.

Routine Medical Assessment Compliance and Outcomes

23. Appendix 2 (Routine Medical Assessment) provides medical and fitness data from the Service's Operational Assurance Report for Quarter 3 2025-2026.
24. There are 21 operational employees who have an out-of-date 3-yearly medical assessment, of which 15 are unavailable (career break, long term sickness etc.) and 6 are scheduled into a forthcoming clinic date.

Routine Fitness Assessment Compliance and Outcomes

25. The fitness compliance rate of operational employees who are required to have an annual fitness test has increased in Quarter 3 (95%) compared to the previous Quarter (90%). There are 28 employees out of date for their fitness date (5%), of which 18 are unavailable and 10 are booked into forthcoming fitness sessions.
26. As of 1 January 2026, 520 (99%) of employees are in the "Green zone". 0.5% of currently tested staff are in the "Amber zone" (3 individuals), which is a slight decrease from Quarter 2 (1%). These employees are currently unavailable for testing. 0.5% of currently tested staff are in the "Red zone" (2 individuals), both of which are currently being managed in line with Service procedure.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Contained within H&S budgets and departmental capacity.
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	Corporate Strategy: ensuring firefighter safety. In addition, develop and train in the People Strategy; and Community first and Leadership of the CCoE.
Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)	Supports productivity and efficiency, in line with the People Strategy.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Reduces the overall impact for H&S management in the areas identified and safeguards the Services legal requirements.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Representative bodies attend H&S Committee and are fully consulted on H&S matters.

Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	All personal data has been removed from the reports contained within Appendix 1 & 2.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Quarter 3 (October 2025 – December 2025) Event Reporting and Summary

Appendix 2: Quarter 3 (October 2025 – December 2025) HR Data Reporting