

Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Health and Safety Committee Update: April to June 2025 (Quarter 1)

Purpose of report

1. To provide a Health and Safety update on activities and items of significance.
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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 April–June (Quarter 1)**
- (iii) **Workforce Health & Wellbeing performance (Quarter 1)**

Introduction and Background

2. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) aims 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 2022-2025.
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 4th September 2025.
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. The Health and Safety Team has begun using the Comms Hub to share updates and publish short articles related to health and safety matters and has an ongoing campaign concerning carbonaceous contaminants and promoting improved and cleaner working practices among operational staff. This platform has improved the information flow and staff engagement across the service.
6. The Station Assurance Audit for 2024/25 achieved an impressive 96% overall assurance rating across the service. This result reflects a strong and consistent understanding of the Resilience, Organisational Intelligence & Learning (ROIL) H&S reporting system.
7. A new instructional video has been developed to help staff navigate the ROIL portal. This resource will be made available on the LMS (Learning Management System). The official launch date will be announced shortly
8. The Training Needs Analysis for 2025 has been completed, ensuring alignment with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Health and Safety Training Framework. This will support continued compliance and development across the Service.
9. There are 25 H&S Policies in date and published.
10. A total of 373 risk assessments were reviewed in Quarter 1, as shown in figure 1 below, demonstrating an ongoing commitment by staff to routinely assess for safety the activities they are undertaking on a daily basis:

Figure 1 – Risk Assessments

	Quarter 2 (24/25)		Quarter 3 (24/25)		Quarter 4 (24/25)		Quarter 1 (25/26)	
Location	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA	PARA	TERA
North District	20	171	29	312	8	133	9	139
South District	19	112	27	191	7	85	13	97
West District	22	145	25	233	12	84	9	75
Training Centre	0	28	0	32	0	6	0	1
Others	2	21	4	38	1	26	3	27
Total	63	477	85	806	28	334	34	339

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

Quarter 1 Performance Report

11. Appendix 1 provides details relating to all safety events reported and investigated during Quarter 1 of the 2025-26 reporting year (April to June).
12. The total number of safety events reported in Quarter 1 (54) has decreased by 5 compared to the previous quarter (59) driven by less injury events.
13. Three 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/potentially dangerous occurrences. One of which also had a specialist investigation. The events were impact and muscle injuries during routine training or activity. All members of staff have now returned to work.
14. Four Specialist Investigations were carried out in Q1, relating to Breathing Apparatus issues and a muscle injury. None of the investigations identified any significant issues or concerns.

Workforce Health & Wellbeing Update

Performance Overview – Quarter 1 2025-2026

HWFRS Sickness Data and Activity Quarter 1 2025-2026

15. Appendix 2 (Performance Overview) provides data relating to all sickness absence by workforce group and the main causes of sickness absence in Quarter 1 2025-2026.
16. Overall absence due to staff sickness has decreased from 2.75 days lost per person in Quarter 4 2024-2025 to 2.05 in Quarter 1 2025-2026. 2.47 days lost per person was reported in Quarter 1 2024-2025.
17. Across all staff groups, there was a decrease in sickness rates in Quarter 1 2025-26 compared to Quarter 4 2024-2025. Wholtime sickness rates decreased from 2.75 days lost per person in Quarter 4 2024-25 to 2.44 in Quarter 1 2025-26. Fire Control staff sickness rates decreased from 2.00 days lost in Quarter 4 2024-25 to 1.69 in Quarter 1 2025-26. Sickness rates for Support staff decreased from 2.08 days lost in Quarter 4 2024-25 to 1.47 in Quarter 1 2025-26. Regarding the nature of the absences, long-term absence accounted for 60% of all staff sickness absence in this quarter.
18. The top 3 causes of sickness absence for the reporting period are Musculo Skeletal - Lower Limb (19%), Hospital/Post Operative (15%) and Mental Health – Stress (12%).

19. 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

20. There were 166 days/shifts lost to Musculo Skeletal - Lower Limb absences. Some of the absences were due to ankle and knee injuries. Nine individuals were absent for short term periods in the reporting Quarter as well as five long term sickness cases, of which three individuals have now returned to work. Two of the absences were due to 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.

Hospital/Post Operative

21. There were 129 days/shifts lost due to Hospital/Post Operative, mainly due to planned procedures for Musculo Skeletal reasons. Four individuals were absent for short term periods in the Quarter and three long term sickness cases, of which one individual has returned to work. The Service encourages individuals on long-term sickness absence to seek early support via the Welfare Support team and/or the Fire Fighter's Charity.

Mental Health - Stress

22. There were 105 days/shifts lost due to Mental Health – Stress, mainly due to personal factors such as bereavement or domestic circumstances. Overall, there were three long term sickness cases within this category (all within the Support staff workgroup), and two short term absences. Three of the individuals have now returned to work.

Health Management data and activity

23. Appendix 2 (Health Management) provides data relating to management referrals to Occupational Health (OH) in Quarter 1. There were 34 new management referrals in Quarter 1 2025-26, compared to 48 new management referrals made in Quarter 4 2024-25. This quarter's figures for new referrals are more in line with previous quarters and are of no cause for concern.
24. The top reasons for referrals to OH related to Musculo Skeletal disorders (10 referrals) and Mental Health (9 referrals).

25. Referrals take place for all long-term sickness absence cases, and review appointments are carried out throughout the absence.

Routine Medical Assessment Compliance and Outcomes

26. Appendix 2 (Routine Medical Assessment) provides medical and fitness data from the Service's Operational Assurance Report for Quarter 1 2025-2026.
27. Medical compliance for 3 yearly medical assessments for operational employees has increased from 92% in Quarter 4 2024-25 to 94% in Quarter 1 2025-2026. There are 31 employees who have an out-of-date medical assessment. Of those, 10 are unavailable, 17 are booked in for their medical in Quarter 2 2025-2026 and 4 are being scheduled into forthcoming clinic dates.

Routine Fitness Assessment Compliance and Outcomes

28. The fitness compliance rate of operational employees, who are required to have an annual fitness test, has increased in Quarter 1 (93%) compared to the previous Quarter (89%). There are 19 individuals that require up to date fitness tests, however 16 individuals are unavailable to undertake a fitness assessment due to long term absence from the workplace e.g. long-term sickness, career breaks, modified duties. The remaining 3 members of staff are all are booked in for assessments in Quarter 2 2025-2026.
29. 98% of currently tested staff are in the "Green zone". 1% of currently tested staff are in the "Amber zone", which has remained the same as Quarter 4 (1%). These employees are currently unavailable for testing due long-term absence. 1% of currently tested staff are in the "Red zone" (4 individuals). Of these, all individuals are on the Trainer Journey programme with the University of Worcester and are being managed in line with the Fitness policy.
30. Since the formal implementation of the new Fitness Policy on 1st October 2024, 25 individuals on the Trainer Journey have improved their overall levels of health and fitness and successfully progressed to Green zone status. In accordance with the policy, employees who remain in the Amber or Red zones upon their re-test, are temporarily removed from operational duties.
31. Overall, fitness assessment compliance data has improved in Quarter 1 2025-2026 compared to Quarter 1 2024-2025. For Station Commanders and above, all employees with an in-date fitness test are in the Green Zone category. For Firefighters to Watch Commanders, 99% of employees with an in-date fitness test are in the Green Zone category, which is a 10% increase from Quarter 1 2024-2025.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>Contained within H&S budgets and departmental capacity.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy: ensuring firefighter safety. In addition, develop and train in the People Strategy; and Community first and Leadership of the CCoE.</p>
<p>Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)</p>	<p>Supports productivity and efficiency, in line with the People Strategy.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>Reduces the overall impact for H&S management in the areas identified and safeguards the Services legal requirements.</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Representative bodies attend H&S Committee and are fully consulted on H&S matters.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>All personal data has been removed from the reports contained within Appendix 1 & 2.</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Quarter 1 (April 2025 – June 2025) Event Reporting and Summary

Appendix 2: Quarter 1 (April 2025 – June 2025) HR Data Reporting