

Reasonable Adjustments update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an overview of the reasonable adjustments made to support employees in their work roles

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

3 Background

The Equality Act 2010 requires Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees who have a disability to carry out their work.

This report provides Members with an overview of the number and types of adjustments the Service has made to support employees who have a disability in the past year, and the associated costs.

4 Reasonable adjustments – caseload

SFRS has supported 188 employees to date and currently has 46 live reasonable adjustment cases, most of which are for employees who are neurodiverse or have medical conditions. The duration of these cases varies according to each employee's needs, with support lasting from a few months to the whole of employment.

Cases will be closed when all support has been provided but then can be reopened if the individual's circumstances change, for example if they get a promotion or move to a different type of role.

5 Reasonable adjustments – process

Depending on their needs, employees are referred to an appropriate expert for advice on adjustments to their work processes, and equipment may be provided to enable them to carry out their work role.

Initial referrals may include Occupational Health and Access to Work for specialist advice and/or potential funding for workplace support and equipment. Dyslexia accounts for the majority of our cases, and employees who self-refer or are referred to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team are assessed by a professional psychologist who diagnoses whether they are dyslexic and if so, the probable level and the type of support and equipment they need.

Other reasonable adjustment cases have included back, neck and wrist problems, hearing and visual impairments, foot support. These involve the provision of workplace equipment.

When an assessment is received the employee meets with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Officer and a manager to discuss and agree an action plan. Only those recommendations agreed as necessary are put in place and may include combinations of equipment, tuition, training, support, mentoring and training.

The Service are continuing to promote the 'Workplace Adjustments Passport' which can travel with an employee during their employment and have seen an increase in the last 12 months of employees requesting these.

6 Types of Adjustments

Read and Write software has now been in place for over 12 months for all employees to use, with a particular focus for our neurodiverse employees.

The need for adjustments depends on individual circumstances. Among the more common are:

Employees who are Neurodiverse

In addition to our dyslexic employees we have also seen an increase in the numbers of referrals for ADHD support.

- The service is currently recruiting a new ADHD/Autism Voices reps to support our employees.
- ADHD employees given support with concentration, time management and ways of learning.
- Created a specific area on our employee intranet to support employees to use the Read and Write Software.
- One to one coaching with a member of SFRS.
- Providing training presentations or notes in advance.
- Allowing extra time to discuss and clarify training on an individual basis.
- Specialist external dyslexia strategy training to help with areas such as spelling, grammar, organisation skills, and memory techniques (mind mapping).
- Adapting teaching styles to suit employees' needs – the training and development teams are notified in advance.
- Software such as Grammarly to help with spelling grammar and with writing long documents.
- Specialist noise cancelling headsets.
- Different coloured paper, notepads, overlays and highlighter pens.
- We have a dyslexia Voices rep to support our employees.

Employees who require other adjustments:

- We have recently used an organisation to undertake chair assessments for employees who require a specialist chair.
- High/low desk, to enable individual to work standing up.
- Computer equipment, such as a specialist keyboards and mouse.
- Specialised chairs and seat inserts (eg heat pads).
- Changes in rest times and/or working hours.
- Noise cancelling headsets and earplug loops.
- Desk fans

7. Costs

Every assessed employee is asked to contact Access to Work (ATW) to see if they can provide funding. ATW will only contribute towards tuition and a percentage of equipment or software costs but the Service has to pay for the majority of these, they do not support the cost of professional assessments. ATW currently have a long waiting list for assessments and so this has meant in urgent cases providing support before funding is obtained.

From 1 March 2024 to the 29 February 2025 SFRS has spent £9,642.47 on reasonable adjustments for employees. The Service also reclaims a proportion of these costs from ATW, particularly for the strategy training.

Year-on-year total costs of Reasonable Adjustment programme (excluding ATW funding)

Year	Cost
2008 - 09	£555.62
2009 – 10	£3,146.33
2010 – 11	£5,528.69
2011- 12	£6,612.94
2012 – 13	£7,984.64
2013 – 14	£9,088.73
2014 – 15 (up to 28 Feb)	£11,233.28
	£12,254.50 (annualised)
2015-16 (up to 29 Feb)	£19,637.72
2016-17 (up to 16 Feb)	£9,431.37
2017-18 (up to 28 Feb)	£5,613.00
2018-2019 (up to 28 Feb)	£2,517.50
2019-2020 (up to 13 Feb)	£5,949.75
2020-2021 (up to 24 Feb)	£2,390.43
2021-2022 (end of Feb)	£8,832.73
2022-2023 (end of Feb)	£11,089.21
2023-2024 (end of Feb)	£10,654.69
2024-2025 (end of Feb)	£9,642.47

In addition to these year on year costs the Service have now purchased a site licence for read and write.

7 Conclusions

The Service has a slight decrease in spend over the last year, with an overall reduction in software purchases and an increase in strategy training and specialist equipment for employees such as chairs.

8 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

The Service has shared its practices and policies in this area with a number of UK fire services.

9 Financial Implications

All financial implications have been considered as part of the Business Planning process. Any new actions will be considered at the time and either absorbed into current workloads or included within next year's Business Plans.

The costs for year 2024 – 2025 are slightly lower than last year.

Should ATW funding be withdrawn in future, costs of meeting the Authority's statutory obligations will increase. There may also be an increase in costs due to the length of time employees are waiting for assessments.

10 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11 Equality Impact Assessment

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

All the actions contained in this report provide a positive impact to employees and the Service

12 ICT

The Service has now purchased a licence to network software to support employees in the Service.

13 Public Value / Service Delivery

Positive impact to Service delivery as our employees are able to be more confident and efficient.

The Service also promotes the work around Dyslexia to our communities and other organisations which helps education around this subject.

14 Reputation

The work around reasonable adjustments, particularly with Dyslexia provides a positive image and the Service continue to be contacted by many other Services for our good practice.

The Service won 'most supportive employer' category at the National

Celebrating Diversity Awards.

15 Training

The service provide dyslexia awareness training to our managers and relevant employees.

16 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

17 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.