

Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring July to September 2014

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding the ongoing performance and management in terms of the availability of wholetime and Retained Duty System (RDS) appliances in Shropshire.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has 23 fire stations, 19 of which are solely crewed by RDS staff, and a further 3 stations have both a wholetime and RDS complement. Only Telford Central Fire Station is solely crewed by wholetime firefighters.

4 Wholetime Availability Update

Whilst there is no graphical illustration regarding the availability of the wholetime appliances, officers can confirm that strike action and action short of strike continue to have an impact.

Between 1 July and 31 September 2014 strike action resulted in all wholetime appliances being unavailable for a period of 54 hours, accumulated following 26 separate periods of strike.

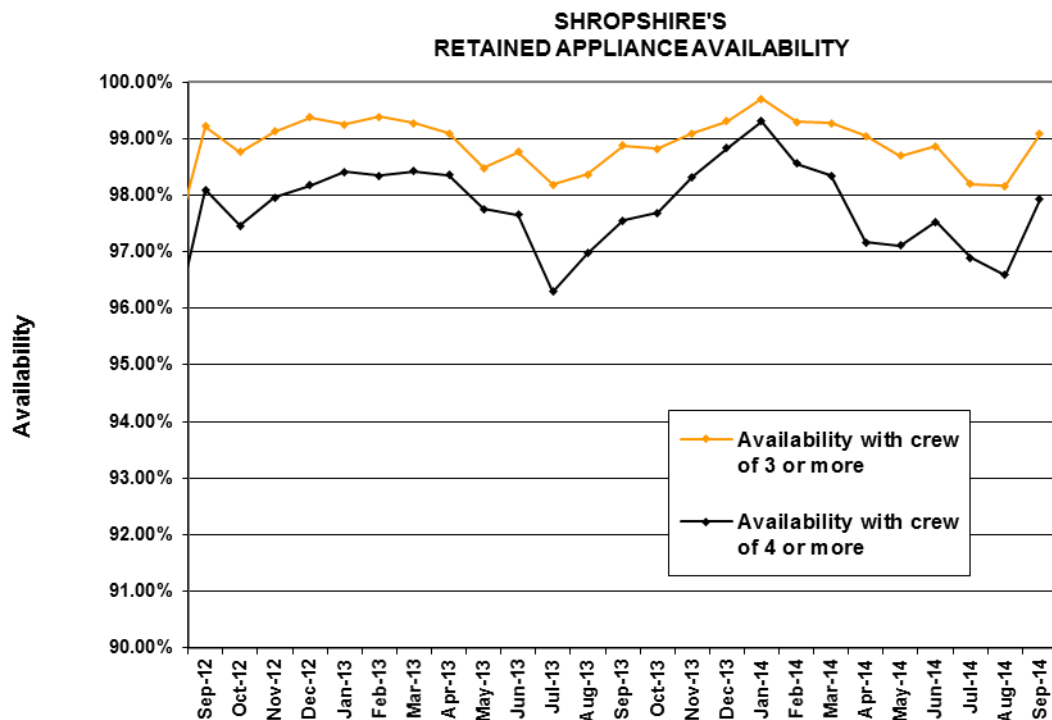
Action short of strike introduced on 21 July 2014 has resulted in the Telford second appliance being unavailable across 49 shifts. On these occasions the Service has operated with four wholetime appliances.

Whilst continuing to crew five wholetime appliances, the Service has been unable to deploy one wholetime appliance at Tweedale between 9.00 pm and 8.00 am on 43 occasions.

Retained Availability

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at 98% (see Graph 1 overleaf). Graph 1 shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 14 are available for 98% to 100% of the time, which is an outstanding level of performance. The Fire Authority's target is, however, always for 100% availability for all of its fire engines.

Night-time cover remains at almost 100% availability between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00 am across all stations. The exception to this is an occasional shortfall with the 'second' fire engine at Oswestry, which, whilst not ideal, is tolerated, as the remaining 'primary' fire engine remains available 100% of the time during these hours. Please see the appendix to the report for maintenance of over 70% performance since December 2013, increasing to 80% in recent months.



Graph 1 – Retained Duty System Crew Availability

5 Performance

Graph 1 reveals an overall upward trend in availability during 2013 until January this year. Performance has seen a decline since then to just below 97%, increasing slightly in September 2014 to marginally below 98%.

Notably, at the time of the previous report three stations, where recruitment has been difficult for a number of years, had fallen below 90% availability. These have now improved considerably, all achieving between 91% and 95% availability.

To improve on overall level of performance, the Service is focusing attention on those fire engines / stations that are currently failing to meet the Service average. An outline of the factors affecting availability and the actions to improve performance is provided below.

6 Factors Influencing Availability

In order to understand better the factors affecting availability the Service is undertaking an RDS survey. It was released on 13 October 2014 and will remain accessible to personnel until the end of October. The results will enable officers to identify progress subsequent to the review conducted in 2006, along with an opportunity to deliver further improvements in recruitment, retention, operational competence and staff satisfaction.

7 Background Station Specific Performance

There are currently nine fire stations, whose performance during this quarter falls below the mean of 98% to 100% achieved by the remaining stations. An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report. This includes the Oswestry second appliance and Tweedale, Bishop's Castle, Baschurch and Prees, each currently achieving between 94.1% and 96.5%. Availability will continue to be closely monitored over the next quarter.

8 Recruitment Campaign

There are nine candidates scheduled to attend the October course and, whilst Area Command are confident that the course will have a full complement of recruits, key stations, such as Oswestry, Cleobury Mortimer, Bishop's Castle and Clun are already represented.

All aspects of the recruitment campaign, including the Service's decision to venture into social networking as a method of engagement, have been hugely successful. Similar recruitment tactics will, therefore, be employed in the future along with engagement with local employers and seeking support from local councilors and elected Members to raise the profile of "on call" teams.

9 Retained Support Officer (RSO) Cover – Quarter 2

Table 1 below shows those fire stations that have required the highest level of support (for reasons detailed earlier in this report) during 2012/13 and 2013/14. These stations accounted for **85.4%** of all RSO cover during 2012/13 and **85.3%** of available RSO hours during 2013/14.

The deployment of RSOs during the second quarter of 2014/15 has been significant in supporting performance at Albrighton and Minsterley in particular and the table below accounts for 79.7% of all RSO activity during that period.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15				
Stations	Total	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Albrighton	472.00	276.50	197.00	174.50			
Bridgnorth		203.25	77.50	52.00			
Cleobury Mortimer	565.25	902.50	89.00	69.00			
Ludlow	419.70	156.25	39.75	24.50			
Market Drayton	240.75	88.50	20.75	5.00			
Minsterley	371.50	449.25	395.75	280.00			
Much Wenlock	194.75	226.25	52.00	17.25			
Oswestry 16 (P4)	532.75	460.00	35.00	53.00			
Totals	2,796.70	2,762.25	906.75	675.25			
Total RSO hours	3,275.95	3,239.75	1,008	847.50			

Table 1 – Retained Support Officer Cover

10 Retained Availability System

The Service has initiated work to develop an option for cover outside the full and three-quarter cover levels that operate at present. The intention is to provide more flexibility for people, who are available in areas where the Service struggles to provide cover at certain times. To support increased flexibility, Area Command are working to introduce an electronic availability system, which allows for remote web based access.

To support Area Command, the Information and Communications Technology Department is currently engaged in a programme to install the application at all RDS stations and officers anticipate that the roll out will be completed by 18 November. To date 14 stations are operating on the new system.

A progress report will be provided to the Committee at its meeting in January 2015.

11 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

12 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

13 Initial Impact Assessment

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

14 Appendix

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

15 Background Papers

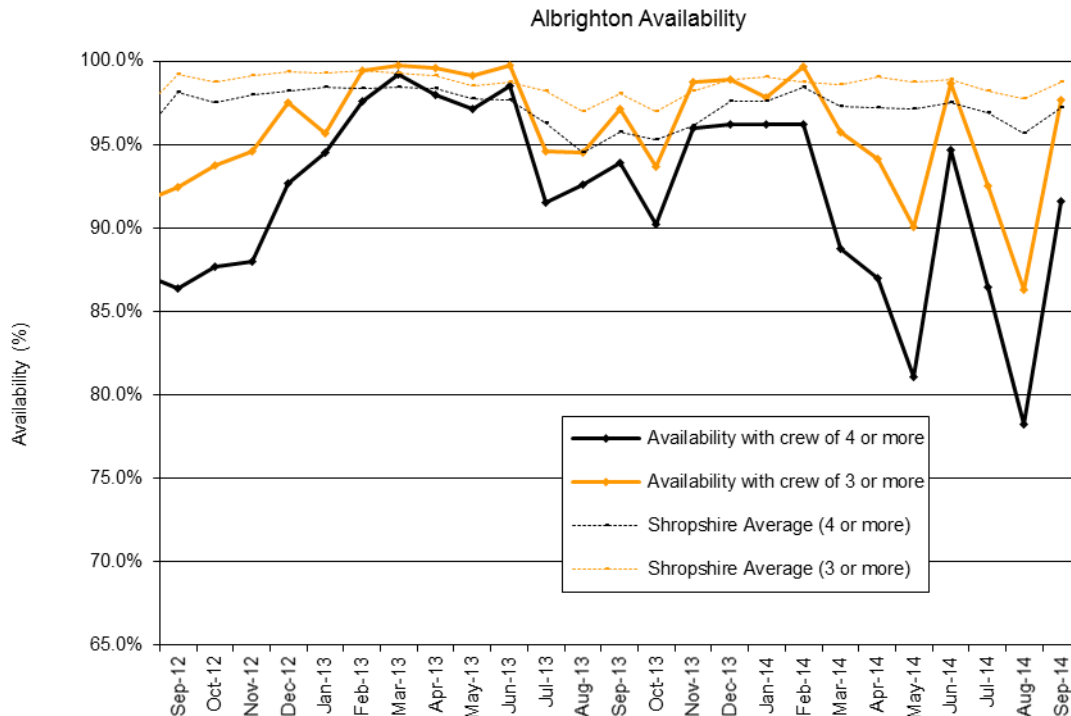
A quarterly RDS performance review summary is presented to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. Previous reports can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-service/fra/meetings>

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

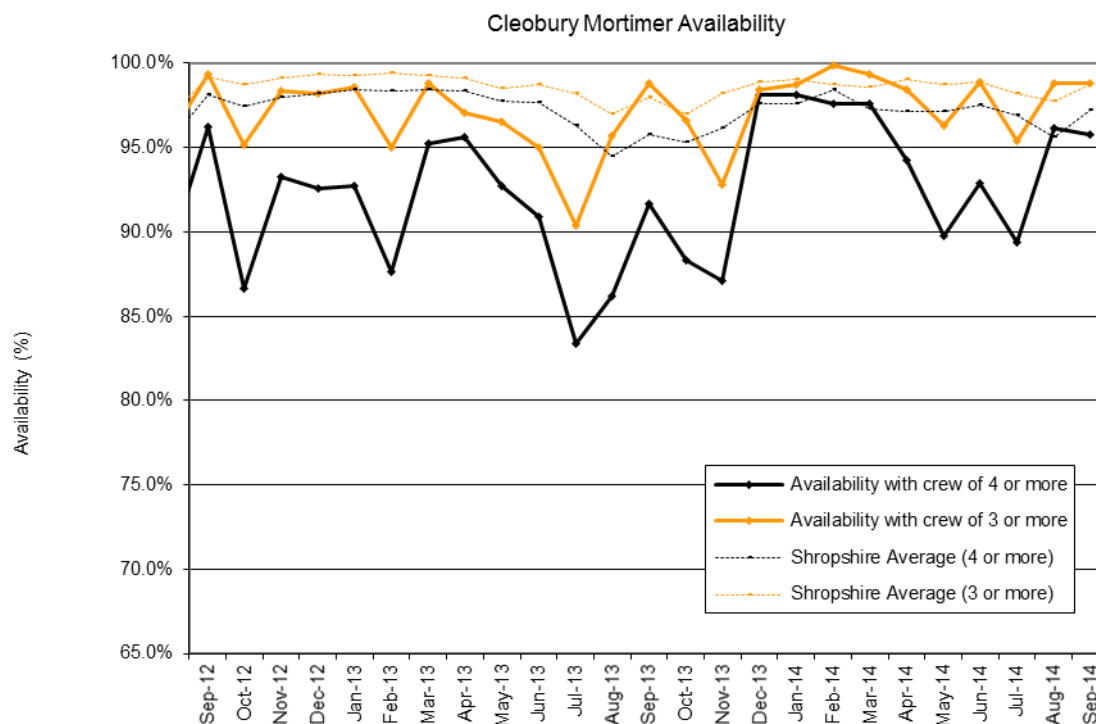
NB: One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Albrighton



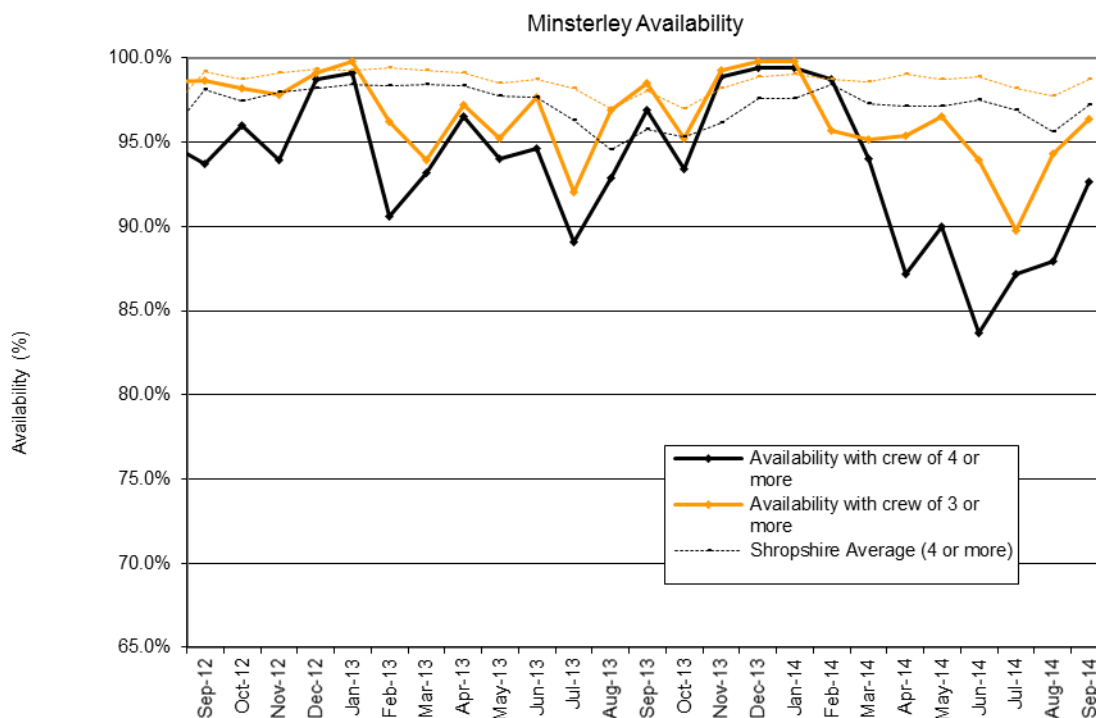
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>13 units (10.75 units available = 12 personnel)</p> <p>Historically, it has been extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area, with daytime cover the key problem.</p>	<p>Recent medium-term absences and the likelihood of two further resignations for employment and family reasons are driving a renewed recruitment campaign.</p>	<p>New recruitment banners have been erected. The Service's outreach vehicle attended a "party in the park" event in June to promote recruitment and community safety. The Group Support Team will engage with the local traders association to increase the profile and understanding of the "on call" service.</p> <p>A leaflet drop recently covered all properties within a 5 minute radius of the station. There have not yet been any successes because of applicants' home base and travel distance to the Station. The Albrighton team will attempt to engage with a recently opened gymnasium at Cosford.</p>

Cleobury Mortimer



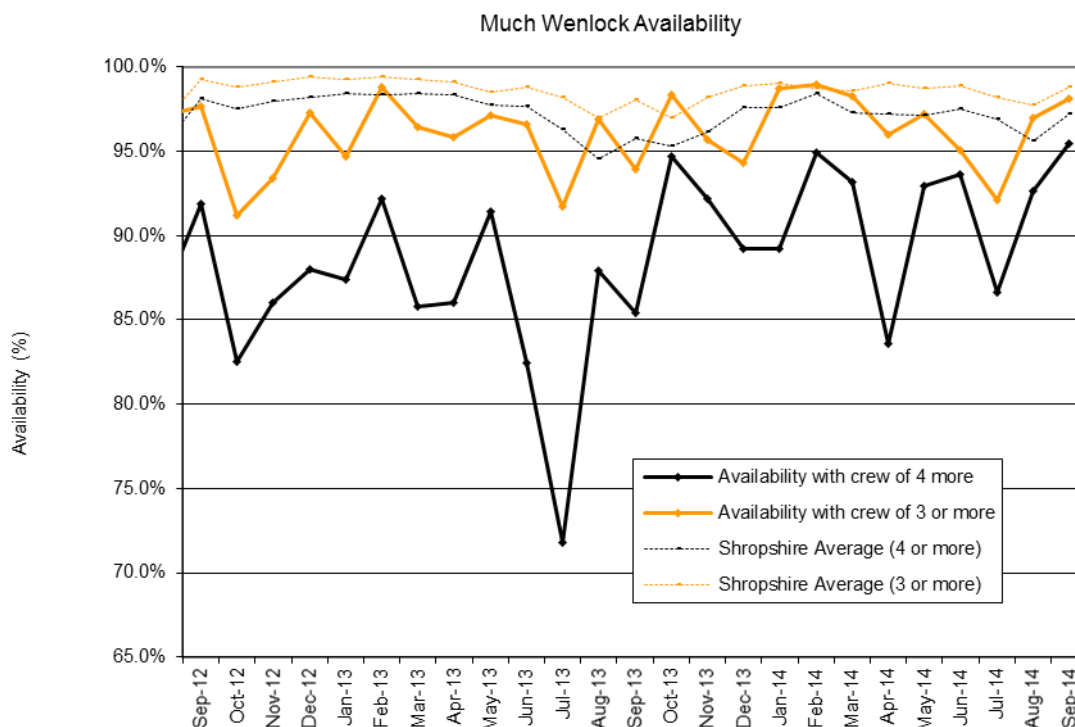
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 10.75 units = 11 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>It is difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area.</p>	<p>An ongoing recruitment campaign has focussed on providing additional daytime cover. Some work with the local council, councillors and trading network in conjunction with employer initiatives are underway.</p> <p>One recruit completed initial training in February 2014 and is now attending incidents. A further recruit is attending the October 2014 course.</p>

Minsterley



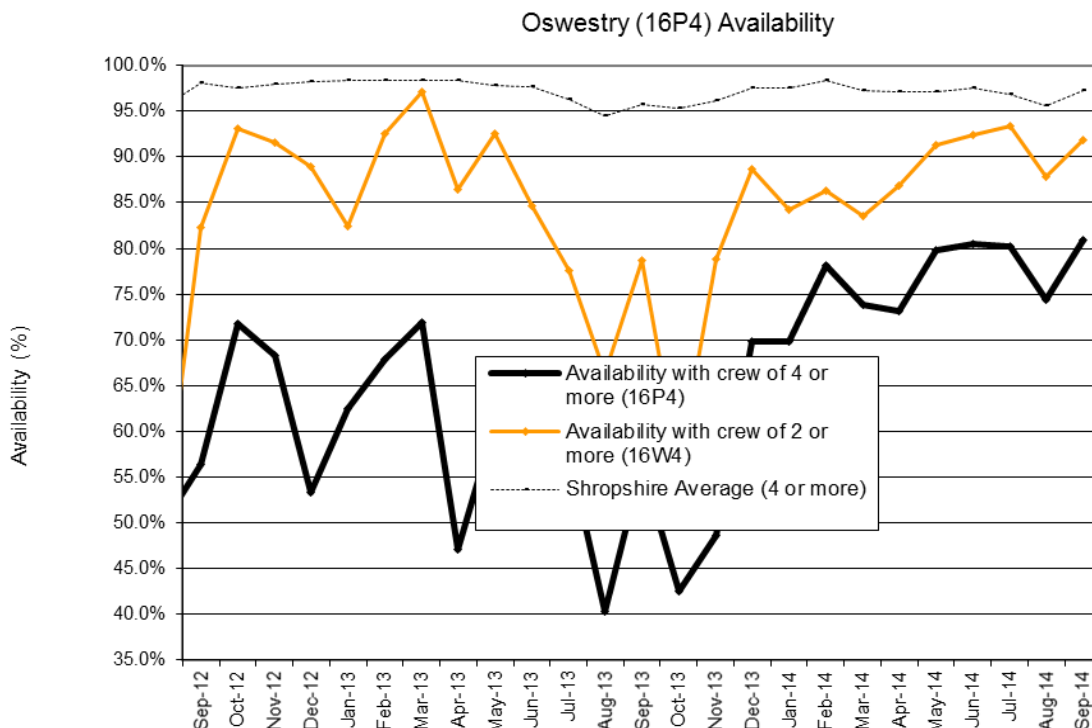
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10.5 units = 13 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>During 2012 and early 2013 there have been several retirements and resignations.</p> <p>A reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.</p>	<p>One recruit completed training in June and is now available for operational calls. Performance has dropped significantly during 2014 and a new recruitment campaign was started in April 2014 by the Group Support Team. A new recruit would have been available for operational cover in late September 2014 but unfortunately is having to undergo a period of further development.</p>

Much Wenlock



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 9.25 units = 10 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing still remains the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>It is difficult to recruit from the local population, because of the high number working outside Much Wenlock.</p>	<p>One new recruit commenced training but failed to complete the course. A focussed recruitment drive commenced in January 2013 with a local home and business leaflet drop, poster campaign and two open days in March and April.</p> <p>Two recruits commenced training on 10 February 2014 and are now available for operational calls. Performance has already improved and, moving into the third quarter, greater gains are anticipated.</p>

Oswestry



As of September 2012 Oswestry’s second appliance report shows availability with crew of 4 or more and availability with crew of 2 or more. The second appliance availability has fluctuated considerably over the last 18 months, reflecting several personnel changes as communicated at earlier Committee meetings. Significantly, there are positive signs for the future with recruitment at Oswestry remaining a priority and a number of personnel currently in the system as indicated below. The latest data demonstrates the commitment of the team, who have been able to increase availability of the second pump to over 80%.

Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 14 units = 16 personnel are currently on station.</p> <p>This is Oswestry’s second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p>	<p>The first pump at Oswestry currently has 100% availability. Availability of the second appliance has fluctuated continually since June 2012, because of difficulties with retention of personnel as a result of the level of commitment required. However, since October 2013 the upward trend has been maintained except for a slight decrease in August 2014. Second appliance availability now stands at the highest level for many years.</p>	<p>Three recruits were scheduled to attend the October 2014 course at the time of the last committee meeting. One candidate has now dropped out of the process for personal reasons. It is hoped that the current level of recruitment and greater retention of staff will be sufficient to maintain and potentially improve on recent performance.</p>