

Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring July to September 2015

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 (SFRS) 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

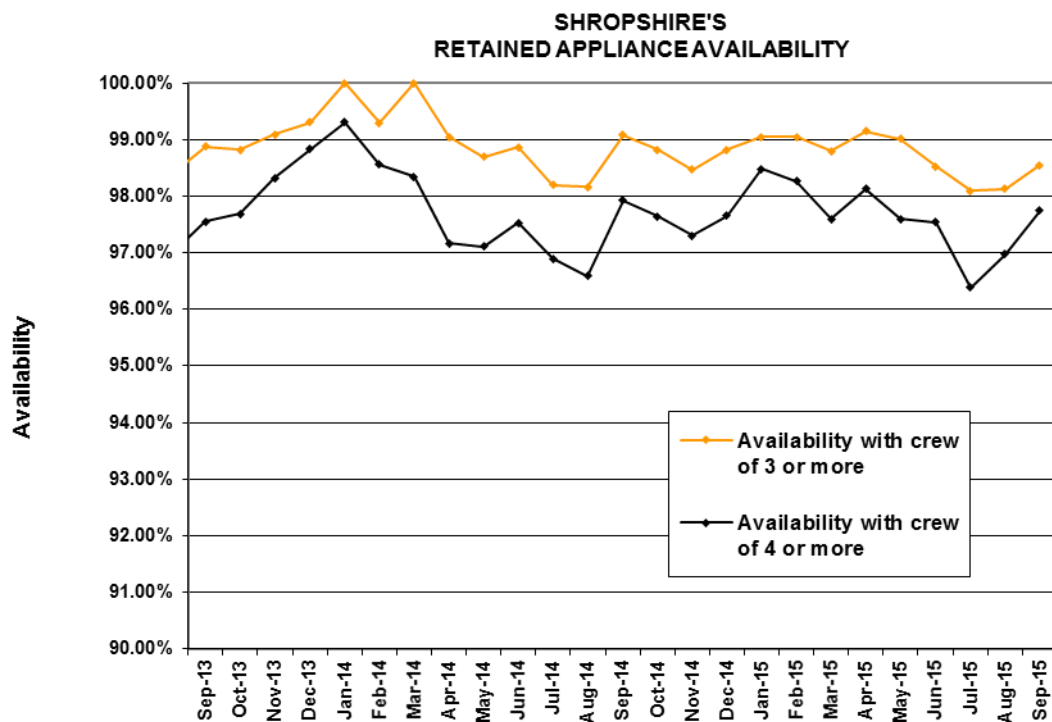
Whilst there is no graphical illustration regarding the availability of the wholetime appliances, officers can confirm that following a 3-month period without strike action wholetime appliance availability remained at 100%. Correspondence from the Fire Brigades Union has indicated that there will be no further industrial action in pursuit of the Pensions Claim until at least 2017 when the current legal challenge will be heard.

Wholetime crews provide an increased level of resilience across the specialist operational areas of the service, including breathing apparatus guidelines, enhanced water rescue, aerial ladder platform (ALP) / rescue tender (RT) and the Firefighter Assistance and Safety Team (FAST).

Retained Availability

Overall availability of RDS fire engines remains high at 97.74% (see Graph 1 below). This graph shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 18 are available for between 98% and 100% of the time, which is an outstanding level of performance. The Fire Authority’s target is, however, always 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 the occasional shortfall with the ‘second’ fire engine at Oswestry, which, whilst not ideal, is tolerated, as the remaining ‘primary’ fire engine is available 100% of the time during these hours. The appendix to this report shows extremely positive results for the second appliance over the last 2 years, with a steady increase in availability during that period. Since April this year performance has been maintained at over 90%, peaking at 96% in June. This level of availability at the only two appliance station in the County is a testament to the commitment of the team at Oswestry.



Graph 1 – Retained Duty System Crew Availability

5 Performance

Graph 1 reveals an overall upward trend in availability during 2013 until January 2014. Performance saw a gradual decline until November but has since improved, fluctuating between 96 and 98%.

6 Factors Influencing Availability

Feedback from a recent RDS survey has been analysed and the results have enabled officers to gauge progress following the review conducted in 2006. The Senior Management Team (SMT) approved the establishment of a working group to identify, prioritise and drive forward improvement initiatives falling out of the light review. The inaugural meeting, held in June 2015, identified four broad priorities and a lead officer was allocated for each.

Initial research on payment, attraction of personnel, engagement with employers, training options and communication generated further discussion at the subsequent meeting, held in October 2015. Officers are currently investigating several proposals and will provide updates to the Committee in due course. The next meeting will be held in January 2016.

7 Background Station Specific Performance

There are currently only five fire stations, whose performance during the last quarter falls below the mean of 98% achieved by the remaining stations (13 achieve over 99% availability). An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report. This includes the Oswestry second appliance, Albrighton, Minsterley, Cleobury Mortimer, and Much Wenlock. With the exception of Albrighton and Minsterley, at 86.3% and 81.7% respectively, all currently achieve over 96% availability.

8 Recruitment Campaign

Positive action taster days have been scheduled for the next three years, an initiative driven by our Equality and Diversity (E&D) Team and Steering Group. Based on the results of similar events during 2014 where a significant number of women have engaged with the Service, officers anticipate a positive response.

The second course of 2015 recently concluded and provided one female candidate for Much Wenlock bringing the total of female firefighters in the service to 20.

The Celebration of Success event held at Theatre Severn in early November saw three women receive their certificates amongst a total of 23 recruits.

Recruitment is a constant work stream for Area Command teams but a number of stations, including Minsterley, Albrighton, Much Wenlock, Bishop's Castle and Prees, are currently engaging with the local community with specific recruitment initiatives. Please see the appendix to this report for details.

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

Joint West Mercia Police / Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) / Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) Venture

The project to trial the use of Police Community Support Officers as RDS firefighters is progressing well with 4 from Shropshire being planned to undertake their training in early 2016. The project has already identified several benefits including better local liaison and intelligence gathering. However unanticipated hurdles such as the physical requirements of the firefighter role have proved challenging in some instances.

An additional benefit has been the opportunity to further standardise training between HWFRS and SFRS in a move to produce a modularised course that will allow both services to train each other's RDS. This is good use of resources and provides much more flexibility for the trainees. This approach has already benefitted one candidate from Cleobury Mortimer who, rather than facing a 4 month wait until the scheduled course in March 2016 will be able to undertake the mixed course in January 2016.

9 Retained Support Officer (RSO) Cover – Quarter 2

Table 1 overleaf shows those fire stations that have required the highest level of support (for reasons detailed earlier in this report) during the last three years and the first half of 2015/16. These stations accounted for **85.4%** of all RSO cover during 2012/13, **85.3%** during 2013/14 and **89%** last year.

The deployment of RSOs during the first half of 2015/16 was significant in supporting performance at Albrighton and Minsterley in particular, with **73%** of all RSO cover. Albrighton and Minsterley are currently the focus of specific recruitment activity, as seen in the appendix to this report.

Stations	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16				Total
	Total	Total	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Albrighton	472.00	276.50	895.75	236.25	276.5			
Bishop's Castle			164.75	18.25	24.75			
Bridgnorth		203.25	191.5	140.25				
Cleobury Mortimer	565.25	902.50	373.25	168	98			
Craven Arms			46					
Clun					42.5			
Ellesmere					29.75			
Ludlow	419.70	156.25	64.25					
Market Drayton	240.75	88.50	25.75					
Minsterley	371.50	449.25	1410.25	427.5	737			
Much Wenlock	194.75	226.25	107.75	22.75	44.5			
Oswestry 16 (P4)	532.75	460.00	222		15.75			
Newport					31.5			
Wellington			39.25					
Totals	2,796.70	2,762.25	3,540.50	1,013.00	1300.25			
Total RSO hours	3,275.95	3,239.75	3,980.25	1,083.50	1,392.50			

Table 1 – Retained Support Officer Cover

10 Retained Availability System

The Service has now undertaken a full review of the current status of the SEED RDS Availability System. The review identified that while progress had been made against many of the elements of the original specification, and some significant benefit had been seen at station level, there were still several elements of the specification that had not yet been delivered.

After a full and robust discussion on the findings of the report, SMT decided that the most appropriate way to move forward is to accept the SEED system as being the substantive one, rather than it being an interim solution, and to commit the resources to ensure that the outstanding elements of the original specification are delivered as a priority. This decision was based on the recent acceptable progress towards meeting the specification, the level of investment so far and the potential cost of change.

The system is now providing more flexibility and access to the RDS firefighters who are now able to use mobile devices to book on and off. The system also provides a service map, available to officers through the portal, which shows a 'live' picture of appliance availability. Where the system continues to fall short is in the area of management controls and reports; but there has been assurance provided to SMT that these issues will be addressed.

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

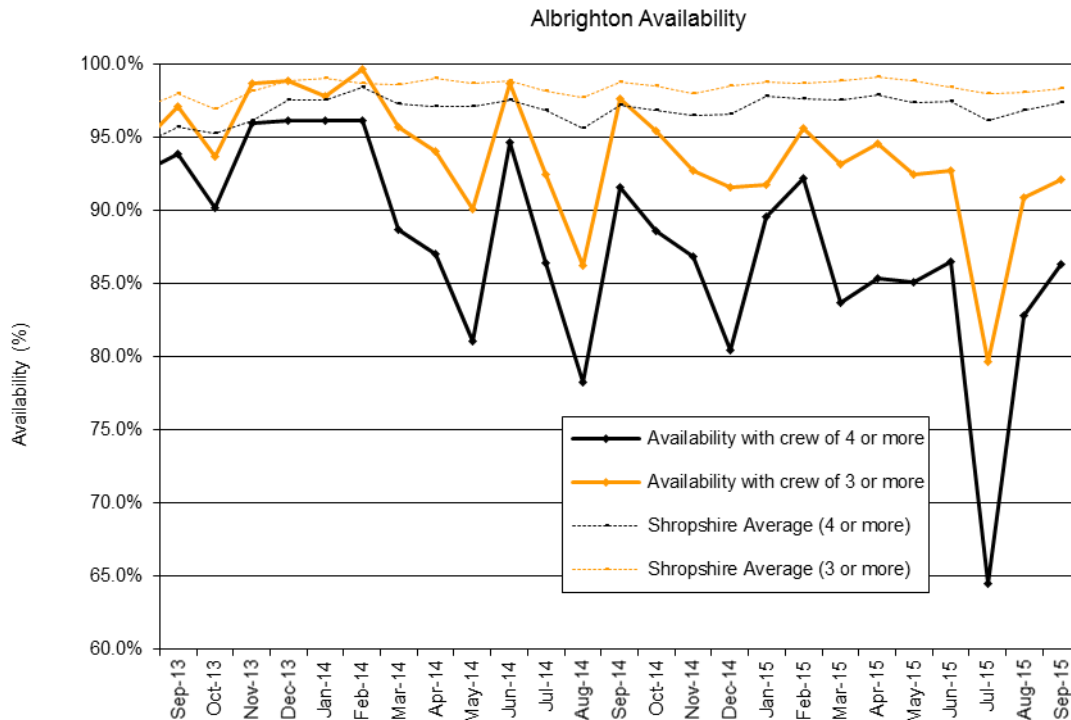
A quarterly RDS performance review summary is presented to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. Previous reports can be accessed via the following link:

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

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

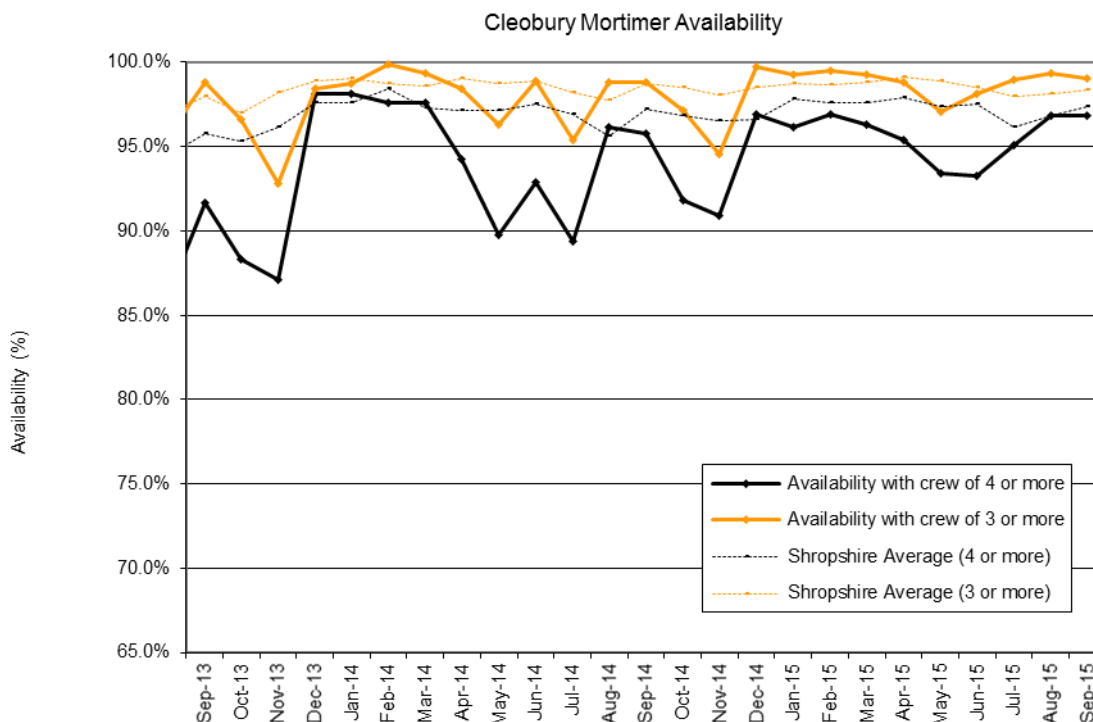
NB: One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Albrighton



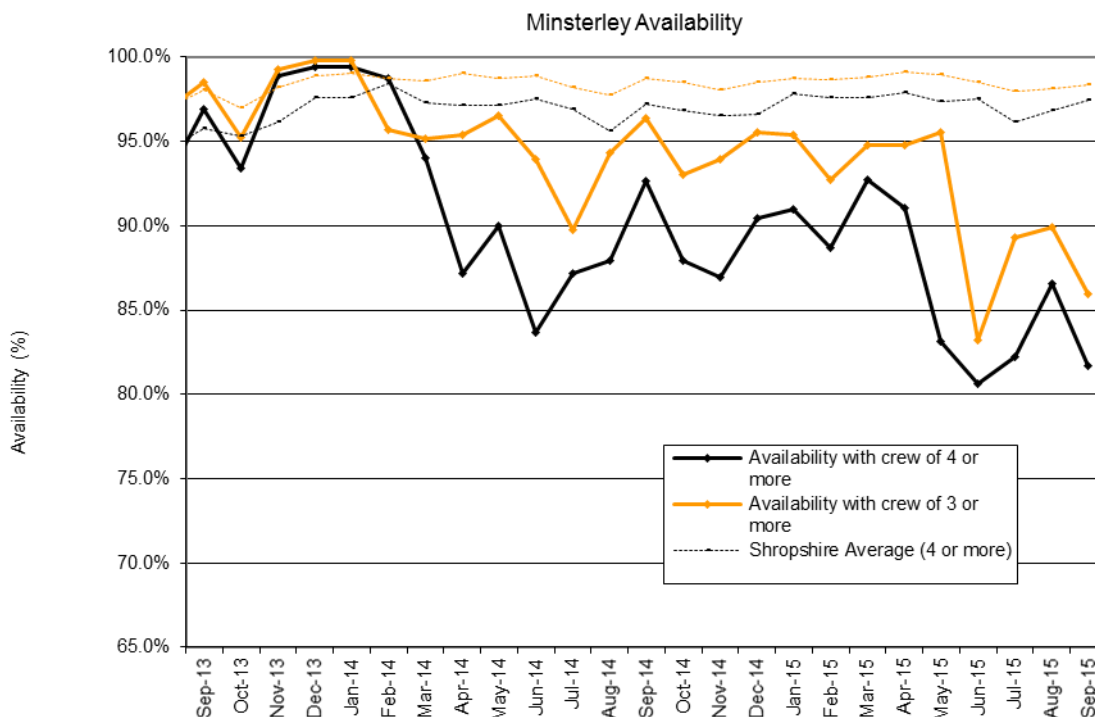
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>13 units (8.75 units available = 10 personnel)</p> <p>Historically, it has been extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area, with daytime cover the key problem.</p>	<p>Recent long-term absences and retirement and the likelihood of further deficiencies are driving a renewed recruitment campaign. Currently 4 personnel are unavailable.</p>	<p>The station is due a refit later this year. A recruitment session is scheduled to coincide with an open day when the refit has been completed. Leaflets have been circulated to households within the 5-minute area and an advert placed in the local parish magazine but there have been no recent applications. The Assistant Group Commander for South District has been asked by the Chief Fire Officer to arrange a meeting to discuss looking at targeting Cosford in the near future. Cosford Gym has already been identified as a potential source and canvassing is taking place. Recruitment posters are now displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot.</p>

Cleobury Mortimer



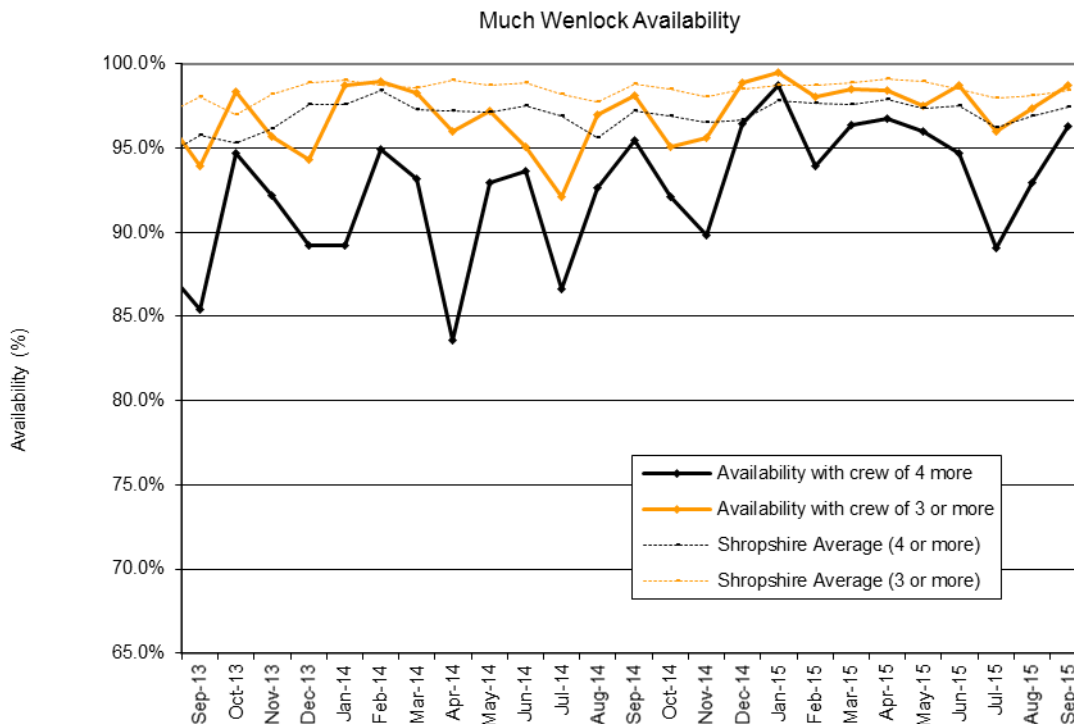
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 9.5 units = 11 personnel are currently on station strength.</p>	<p>It remains difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area.</p>	<p>An ongoing recruitment campaign has focussed on providing additional daytime cover.</p> <p>One recruit completed initial training in February and one in June and both are now attending incidents and providing daytime cover. One applicant is currently being processed, who has agreed to attend the pilot Police Community Support Officer initiative, detailed in section 8 of the report. Training will commence during January and February 2016 with a view to recruits being available for cover in March.</p> <p>Recruitment posters are now displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot and the Service now has advertising space in the local press.</p>

Minsterley



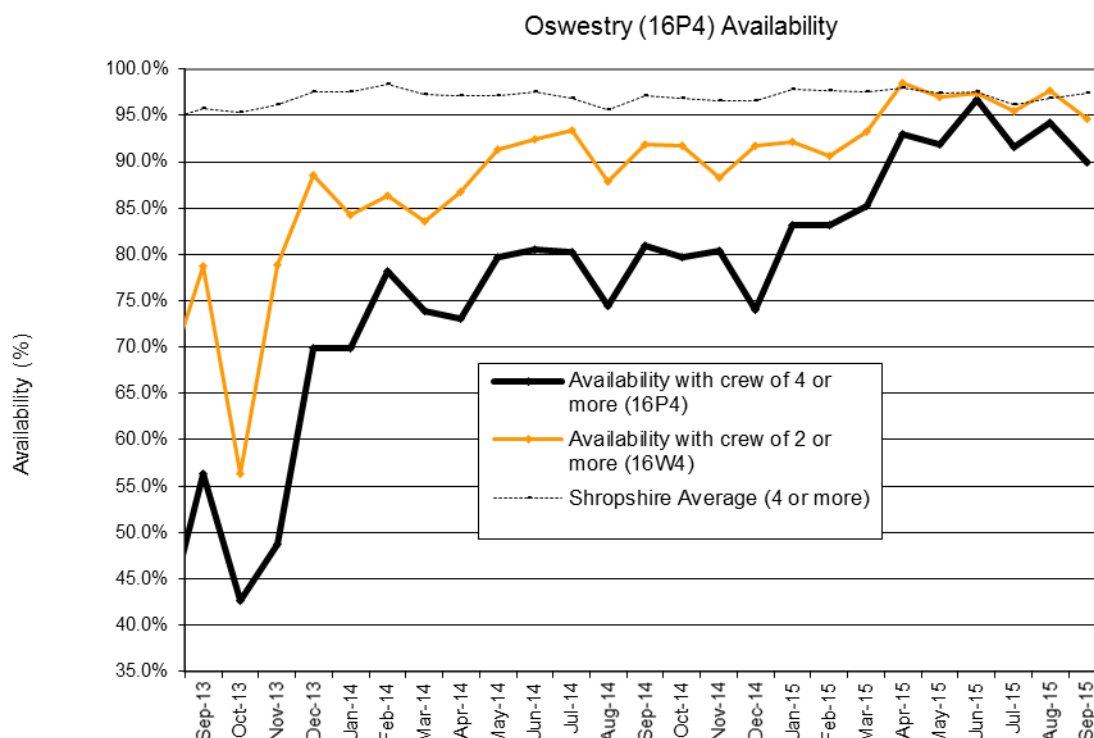
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 7.25 units = 9 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>A reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.</p>	<p>Performance dropped significantly during 2014 and a new recruitment campaign was started in April 2014 by the Group Support Team. The Assistant Group Commander, in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Team, has arranged a positive action day (Women’s taster session late November) with a view to attracting more female recruits. This will also facilitate a general recruitment session during the afternoon.</p> <p>One potential candidate, working for a local employer, who has historically allowed staff to attend incidents during working hours, is now progressing through the system with a view to joining the March 2016 course.</p> <p>Group Support Team personnel have promoted the Service at local focal points in conjunction with a comprehensive leaflet drop. Recruitment posters are now displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot.</p>

Much Wenlock



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, 10.75 units = 12 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>Two recruits completed their course in June last year and are now attending operational calls and performance has improved considerably. Two female recruits completed initial training during the last year and are available for operational calls.</p> <p>Much Wenlock performed remarkably well for a number of years with only eight personnel. Now with 12 crew the team delivers a high-level of availability, whilst managing increased resources to improve the work/life balance of serving members.</p> <p>Recruitment posters are now displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot, and there are also adverts in the local press.</p> <p>Three of the Service's 20 female firefighters serve at Much Wenlock.</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 over the last three years, reflecting several personnel changes, as communicated at earlier Committee meetings. Recruitment at Oswestry has remained a priority, which is reflected in the latest data, showing availability rise to a high of 96.7% in June 2015 and remaining above 90% since April.

Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, 17.25 units = 20 personnel are currently on station.</p>	<p>The first pump at Oswestry currently has 100% availability. Availability of the second appliance has fluctuated continually since June 2012. This second appliance has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p> <p>However, since October 2013 the upward trend has been largely maintained. Second appliance availability has remained stable at between 75% and 80% for the last year and now increased to 96% - an excellent performance from the team.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the current level of recruitment and greater retention of staff will be sufficient to maintain and potentially improve on recent performance. Four new recruits have completed training during 2015 and are now available for calls. Retention at OS is the issue rather than recruitment. Retention will no doubt improve with sufficient personnel to allow effective management of workload.</p>