

## Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring January to March 2015

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Chief Fire Officer, John Redmond, on 01743 260201 or John Das-Gupta, Area Manager, Service Delivery on 01743 260284.

### 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 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.

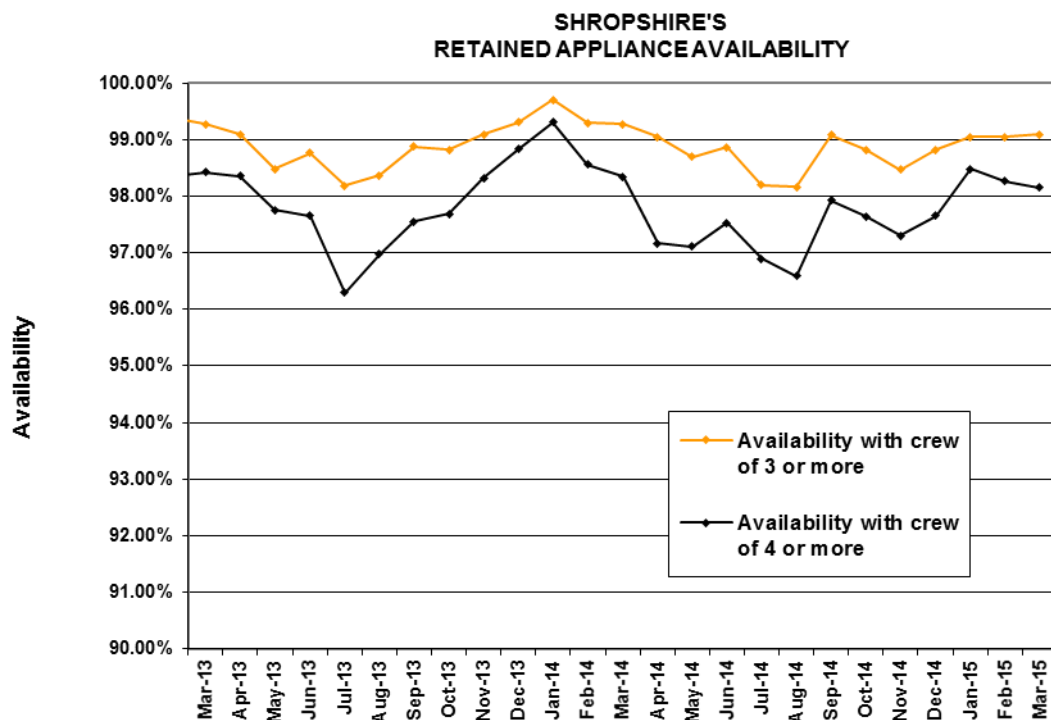
### 4 Wholetime Availability Update

Between 1 January and 31 March 2015 wholetime availability was predominantly at 100%. The only caveat during this period was in February during a 24-hour strike conducted by Fire Brigades Union members. This strike resulted in 5 wholetime appliance being unavailable during the day, i.e. 9.00 am to 6.00 pm, reducing to 4 appliances unavailable between 6.00 pm and 9.00 am. A single wholetime appliance was crewed throughout the night shift by firefighters, who did not take industrial action.

## Retained Availability

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 98% (see Graph 1). This graph shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes 2 based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 17 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 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 the 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. The Appendix to this report shows extremely positive results for the second appliance over the last 18 months, with the crew maintaining between 70% and 80% performance since May 2014, increasing to fractionally over 85% in March 2015.



**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 to just above 98%. Notably, Albrighton and Minsterley Fire Stations where recruitment has proved challenging in recent years have been largely responsible for the decline in performance. Conversely, Much Wenlock and Cleobury Mortimer who have consistently experienced similar recruitment difficulties have each significantly improved performance to around 97%.

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 has recently completed an RDS survey. Feedback has been analysed and the results have enabled officers to gauge progress following the review conducted in 2006. The Service Management Team has approved the establishment of a working group to identify, prioritise and drive forward improvement initiatives falling out of the light review. The inaugural meeting was held on 17 June 2015 and four broad priorities were identified and allocated a lead officer. The priorities for further investigation are:

- Payment;
- Attraction of personnel and engagement with employers;
- Training options; and
- Communication.

The second meeting will be held in late September or early October 2015, after which, updates will be provided to the Committee.

## **7 Background Station Specific Performance**

There are currently 6 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, Albrighton, Minsterley, Cleobury Mortimer, Much Wenlock and Tweedale, with the exception of Albrighton and Minsterley at 83.7% and 92.7% respectively, currently achieving over 96%.

## **8 Recruitment Campaign**

The first course of 2015 had a full complement of recruits, (10) and key stations, such as Oswestry, Cleobury Mortimer, and Tweedale were represented.

Positive action taster days have been scheduled for the next three years, an initiative driven by our Equality and Diversity 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 last course of 2014 included two female firefighters and the first course of 2015 has provided a further female candidate, who is assigned to one of the priority stations. The second course of 2015 is currently underway, with a female representative from Prees Fire Station.

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 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 councillors and elected Members to raise the profile of "on call" teams.

## 9 Retained Support Officer (RSO) Cover

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, 2013/14 and 2014/15. These stations accounted for **85.4%** of all RSO cover during 2012/13 and **85.3%** during 2013/14.

The deployment of RSOs during the fourth quarter of 2014/15 was significant in supporting performance at Albrighton, Bishop's Castle and Minsterley in particular with **93%** of all RSO cover. These three stations are currently the focus of specific recruitment activity, as seen in the Appendix to this report.

The year-end results demonstrate that the priority stations accounted for 89% of all RSO cover for 2014/15. Total RSO cover increased by approximately 20% on previous years.

Stations	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15				2014/15 Total
	Total	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Albrighton	472.00	276.50	197.00	174.50	318.00	206.25	<b>895.75</b>
Bishop's Castle					39.00	125.75	<b>164.75</b>
Bridgnorth		203.25	77.50	52.00		62.00	<b>191.50</b>
Cleobury Mortimer	565.25	902.50	89.00	69.00	149.25	66.00	<b>373.25</b>
Craven Arms					46.00		<b>46.00</b>
Ludlow	419.70	156.25	39.75	24.50			<b>64.25</b>
Market Drayton	240.75	88.50	20.75	5.00			<b>25.75</b>
Minsterley	371.50	449.25	395.75	280.00	345.75	388.75	<b>1,410.25</b>
Much Wenlock	194.75	226.25	52.00	17.25		38.50	<b>107.75</b>
Oswestry 16 (P4)	532.75	460.00	35.00	53.00	72.50	61.50	<b>222.00</b>
Wellington					39.25		<b>39.25</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,796.70</b>	<b>2,762.50</b>	<b>906.75</b>	<b>675.25</b>	<b>1,009.75</b>	<b>948.75</b>	<b>3,540.50</b>
<b>Total RSO hours</b>	3,275.95	3,239.75	1,008.00	847.50	1,103.75	1,021.00	3,980.25

**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 improve an electronic availability system, which allows for remote, web-based access.

The Information and Communications Technology Department is currently engaged in a programme to refine the application at all RDS stations following initial roll out last September.

## **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**

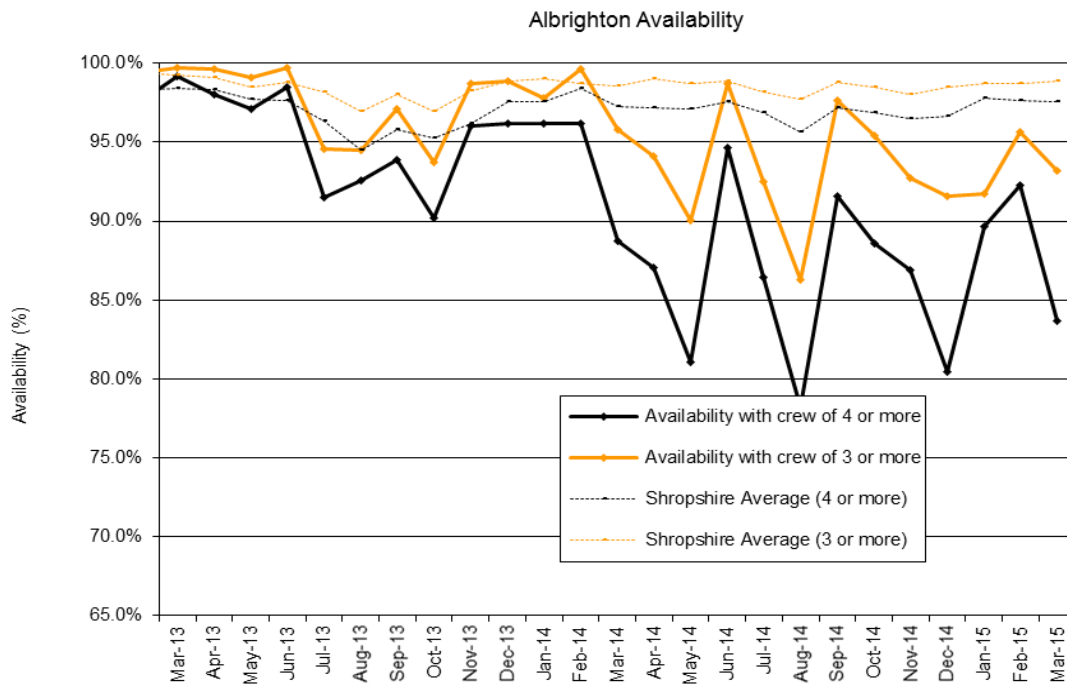
A quarterly RDS performance review summary is presented to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. Previous reports can be accessed via the following link:

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

## Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

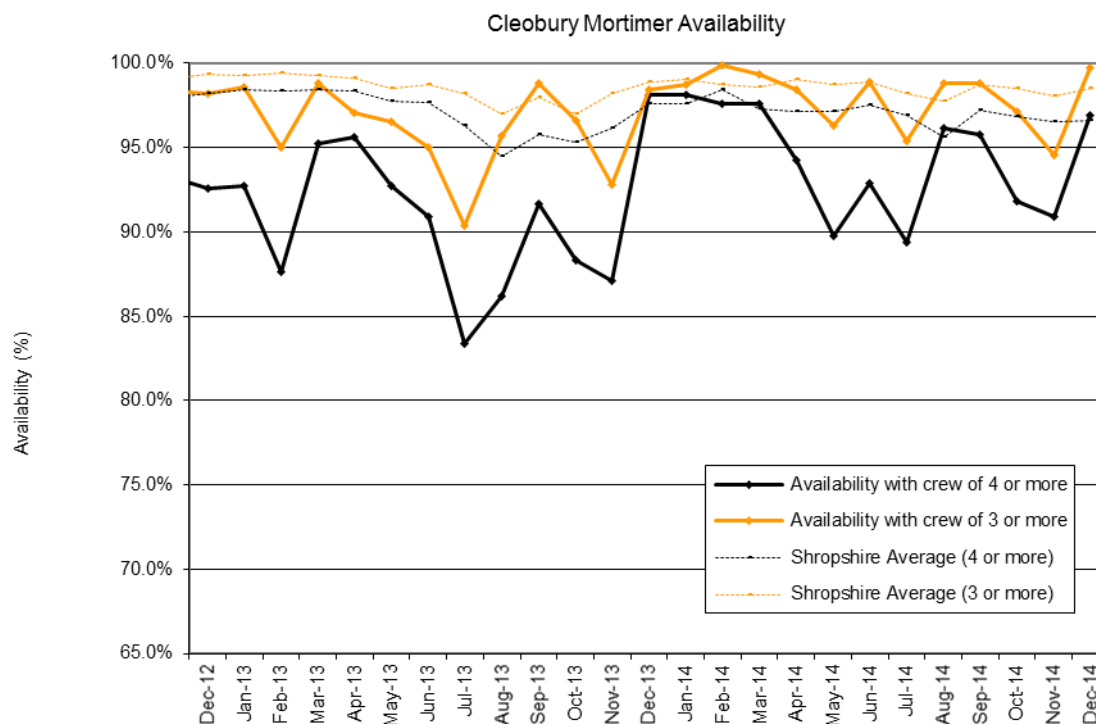
**NB:** One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

### Albrighton



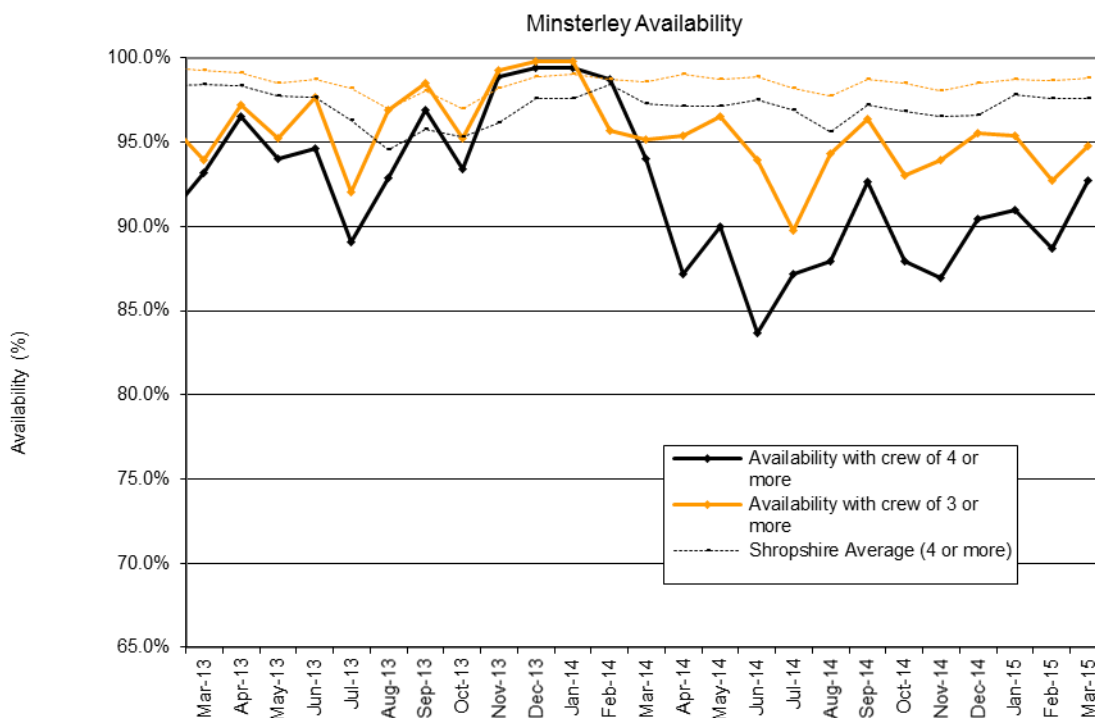
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>13 units (10.25 units available = 12 personnel)</p> <p>Historically, it has been extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area, with daytime cover the key problem.</p>	<p>Recent medium-term absences and the likelihood of further resignations are driving a renewed recruitment campaign. Currently 5 personnel are unavailable.</p>	<p>The Group Support Team is engaging with the local traders association to raise the profile and understanding of the “on call” service. Following interviews 2 female applicants have been put forward for tests. Both could provide daytime cover. The Station is due a refit later this year and a recruitment session is scheduled to coincide with an open day once the works are complete.</p> <p>A recent leaflet drop covered all properties within a 5 minute radius of the station. Flyers and posters have been placed at the gymnasium at Cosford. Recruitment details for Albrighton are being added to the Albrighton Traders website. Recruitment posters will soon be displayed on appliance lockers, as part of an initial pilot, whilst we also now have adverts in the local press.</p>

# Cleobury Mortimer



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 11.25 units = 13 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</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 last month and is now attending incidents and providing daytime cover.</p> <p>Recruitment posters will soon be displayed on appliance lockers, as part of an initial pilot and the Service now has advertising space in the local press.</p>

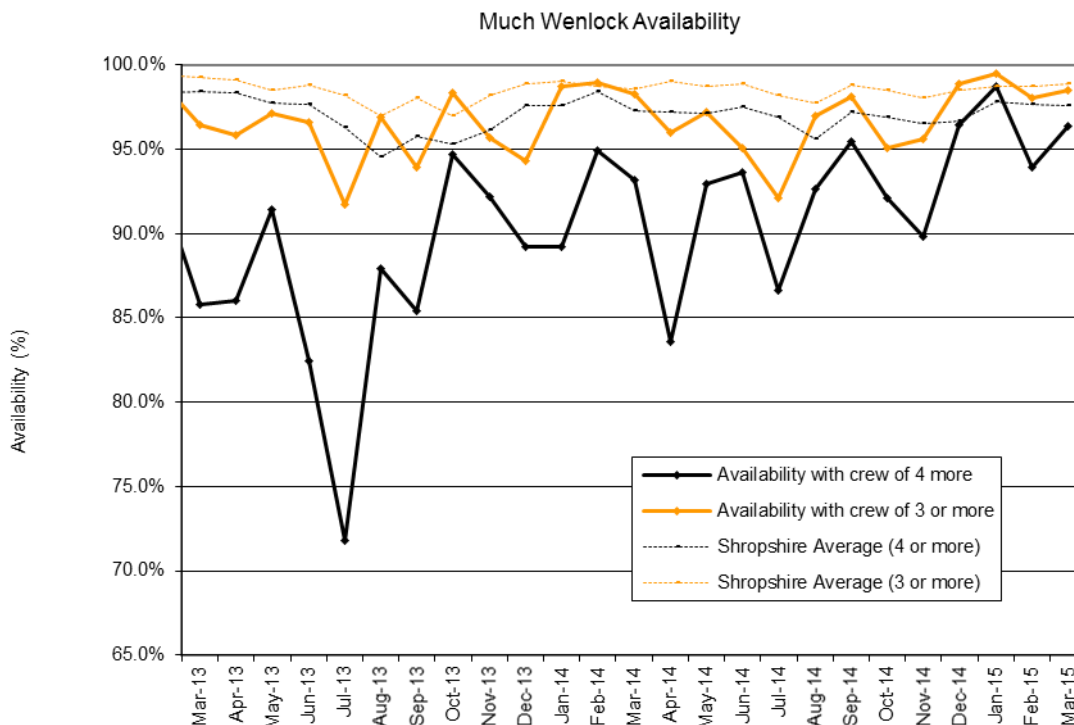
# Minsterley



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10.75 units = 13 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. A recruit, who had been undergoing a period of additional development, is now attending operational calls. Further work is being done and the Assistant Group Commander is working toward positive action sessions in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Team with a view to attracting more female recruits. The need for daytime cover is driving an initiative with the main local employer, who has historically released personnel during working hours. Group Support team personnel are currently setting up recruitment stands at local focal points for face-to-face promotion of the Service. Recruitment posters will soon be displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot.</p>

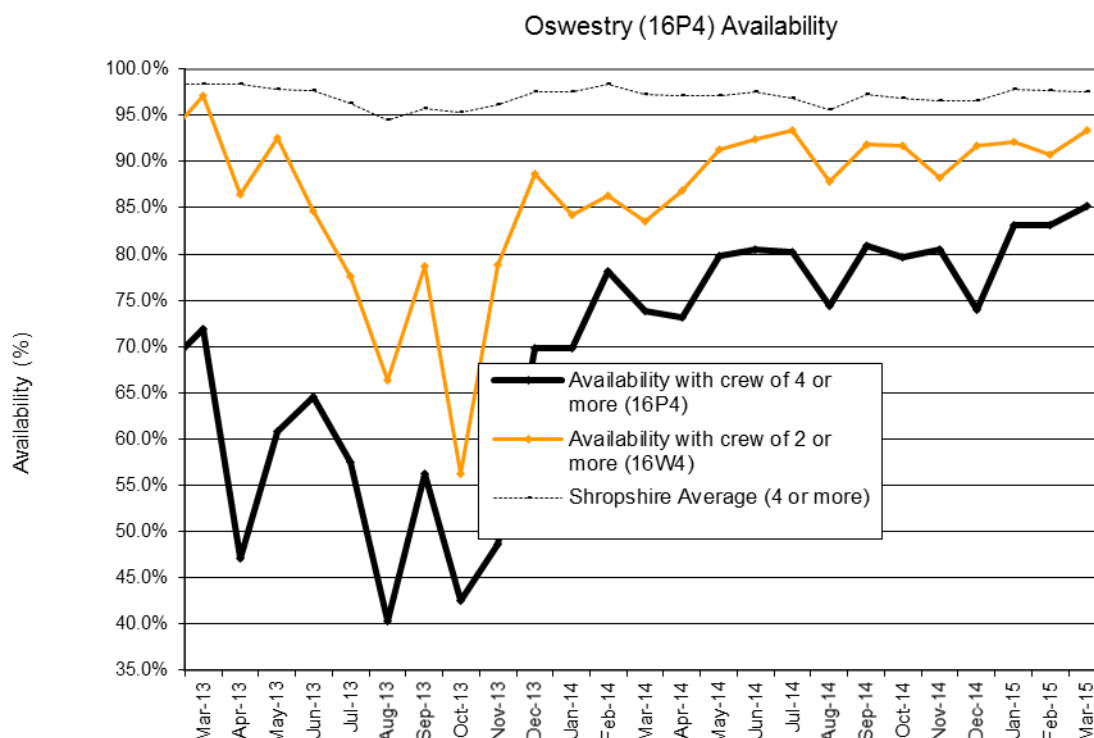


# Much Wenlock



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 10 units = 11 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. A further recruit has just completed initial training and is now available for operational calls. One female applicant has now passed the job-related tests and, subject to medical, may attend the June 2015 course (not confirmed at time of writing this report).</p> <p>A Station open day in the summer is planned, which will include recruitment activity.</p> <p>Recruitment posters will soon be displayed on appliance lockers as part of an initial pilot, whilst the Service now has adverts in local press.</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. 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 maintain between 75% and 80% availability for the second appliance since May 2014.

Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, 16 units = 19 personnel are currently on station.	<p>The first pump at Oswestry currently has 100% availability. Availability of the second appliance has fluctuated continually since June 2012. This is Oswestry’s second appliance, which 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 - now increased to 85%.</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. One recruit completed training in February and two more recruits, having completed the recent course, are now available for operational calls. A further recruit commenced training in June. Retention is the issue, rather than recruitment. Retention will no doubt improve with sufficient personnel to allow effective management of workload.</p>