

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 172 employees to date and currently has 36 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.

6 Types of Adjustments

To support our Neurodiverse employees but also available to all employees the Service has now purchased a Service wide licence for Read and Write. This means the Service will no longer have to purchase individual licences and this software will be kept more up to date and easily available.

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

Employees who are Dyslexic

- A service wide licence has been purchased for Read and Write Software and is available to all employees.
- 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 and Dragon to help with spelling grammar and with writing long documents.
- Specialist noise cancelling headsets.

- Different coloured paper, notepads, overlays and highlighter pens.
- We also hold dyslexia networking evenings to support our employees.

Employees who require other adjustments

- High/low desk, to enable individual to work standing up.
- Computer equipment, such as a specialist keyboards and mouse.
- Specialised chairs and seat inserts (e.g. heat pads).
- Changes in rest times and/or working hours.
- Noise cancelling headsets.
- Specialist insoles for boots.
- 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.

From 1 March 2023 to the 29 February 2024 SFRS has spent £10,654.69 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	

In addition to these year on year costs the Service have now purchased a site licence for read and write so will not purchase individual licences, which has contributed to reducing these costs.

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 and standing desks.

The Service has been recognised again for supporting our Neurodiverse employees, particularly those with dyslexia, and was shortlisted and in the final for the 'most inclusive employer' at the Dyslexia Awards in 2023.

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 2023 – 2024 are slightly lower than last year, less individual purchases for read and write with an increase to some specialist and large pieces of equipment.

Should ATW funding be withdrawn in future, costs of meeting the Authority's statutory obligations will rise further.

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 provides 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.