

## Reasonable Adjustments Update

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260204 or Natalie Parkinson, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer on 01743 260236.

#### 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 116 employees to date and currently has 16 reasonable adjustment cases, the majority of which are for employees with dyslexia, others include dyspraxia and bad backs. The duration of cases varies according an employee's needs, with support lasting from a few months to the whole of somebody's 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 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 that are agreed as necessary are put in place, and may include combinations of equipment, tuition, training, support, mentoring and training.

It is also best practice to obtain research from other Services who have experienced more cases, for example with dyspraxia and knee replacements.

## 6 Adjustments

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

### Employees with Dyslexic

- One to one tuition 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 dyslexia tuition to help with subjects including 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
- Using specific coloured paper for the individual instead of white
- Software such as Read and Write Gold and Claro-reader, to help with spelling and grammar and with writing long documents.
- Changing text size and colour
- Changing the colour of the computer screen background to make it easier to read
- Dictation machines to help with memory and organisational skills
- Highlighter pens for important information
- Notebooks to write down key words and definitions

- Coloured overlays to help with reading
- Audio documents and headphones
- Livescribe Echo pen
- We also hold dyslexia networking evenings to support our employees

The Service is also investigating other adjustments such as recording training sessions to aid process and short-term memory.

#### **Employees with a hearing impairment:**

- Specialist headsets
- Hearing equipment

#### **Employees who require other adjustments:**

- High/low desk – to work standing up
- Computer equipment, such as a specialist mouse
- Specialised chairs and seat inserts
- Specialist desk or vari desk (which sits on top of a desk)
- Additional equipment such as document holders
- Changes in rest times and/or working hours.

## **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 2019 to the middle of February 2020 SFRS has spent £5949.75 on reasonable adjustments for employees. The Service will be able to reclaim a proportion of these costs from ATW.

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>Cost</b>	
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

## **8 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 above analysis of year-on-year costs for the Reasonable Adjustments programme suggests that as the programme attracts more employees' costs are likely to rise. Should ATW funding be withdrawn in future, costs of meeting the Authority's statutory obligations will rise further.

## **9 Legal Comment**

This is a summary of action taken and does not require legal comment.

## **10 Initial Impact Assessment**

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

## **11 Equality Impact Assessment**

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

## **12 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **13 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.