

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 148 employees to date and currently has 31 reasonable adjustment cases, the majority of which are for employees with dyslexia, others include ADHD, arthritis, bad backs, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. The duration of cases varies according to 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 and Inclusion (EDI) 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 and foot support. These involve the provision of workplace equipment.

When an assessment is received the employee meets with the EDI 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.

The Service has recently updated its 'Supporting Individuals with Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace' Brigade Order and introduced a new 'Workplace Adjustments Passport' which can travel with employees during their employment.

6 Types of Adjustments

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

Employees who are 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 and Claro-reader, to help with spelling, grammar and with writing long documents
- Specialist noise cancelling headsets
- Changing the colour of the computer screen background to make it easier to read
- Dictation machines to help with memory and organisational skills
- Different coloured paper, notepads and highlighter pens
- Coloured overlays to help with reading

- Audio documents and headphones
- Livescribe Echo pen
- We also hold dyslexia networking evenings to support our employees

Employees with a hearing impairment:

- Specialist headsets
- Hearing equipment

Employees who require other adjustments:

- High/low desk, to enable individual 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)
- 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 25 February 2021 to 28 February 2022 SFRS has spent £8,83273 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)

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
	£5,613.00
2017-18 (up to 28 Feb)	£5,613.00
	£2,517.50
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

8 Conclusions

The Service has an increase in spend over the last year, however this is largely due to the backlog that was created during Covid, and the catch up of assessments and support provided.

The Service has been recognised again for supporting its Neurodiverse employees, particularly those with dyslexia, and has been nominated for the 'most inclusive employer' at the Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards 2022.

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 2021-2022 are higher than previous years due to the backlog created by COVID-19.

Should ATW funding be withdrawn in future, costs of meeting the Authority's statutory obligations will rise further. In addition, as the programme attracts more employees, costs are likely to rise.

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.

12 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

13 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.