

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 disabled employees to carry out their work.

This report provides Members with an overview of the number and types of adjustments that are made to support our disabled employees in the past year, and the associated costs.

4 Reasonable adjustments - caseload

SFRS has supported 108 employees to date and currently has 15 reasonable adjustment cases, the majority of which are for employees with dyslexia. 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.

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 majority of our cases, and employees who self-refer or are referred to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion 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. 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.

6 Adjustments

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

Dyslexic employees

- Large PC monitor screens
- Changing text size and colour
- Changing the colour of the computer screen background to make it easier to read
- Using coloured paper instead of white
- Software such as Read and Write Gold and Claro-reader, to help with spelling and grammar and with writing long documents.
- Specialist dyslexia tuition to help with subjects including spelling, grammar, organisation skills, and memory techniques (mind mapping)
- 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
- Documents such as training presentations provided in advance
- Adapting teaching styles to suit employees' needs
- Livescribe Echo pen
- Easy read books on loan
- We also hold dyslexia networking evenings to support our employees

Employees with hearing impairments:

- Specialist headsets
- Hearing equipment

Employees with other impairments:

- 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.

In the eleven months from 1 March 2018 to end of February 2019 SFRS has spent £2517.50 on reasonable adjustments for employees. SFRS will be able to reclaim a proportion of this 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	
2017-18 (up to 28 Feb)	£5,613.00	
2018-2019 (up to 28 Feb)	£2,517.50	

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 in to 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.