

Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring July to September 2012

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding the ongoing performance and management of the Retained Duty System in Shropshire.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

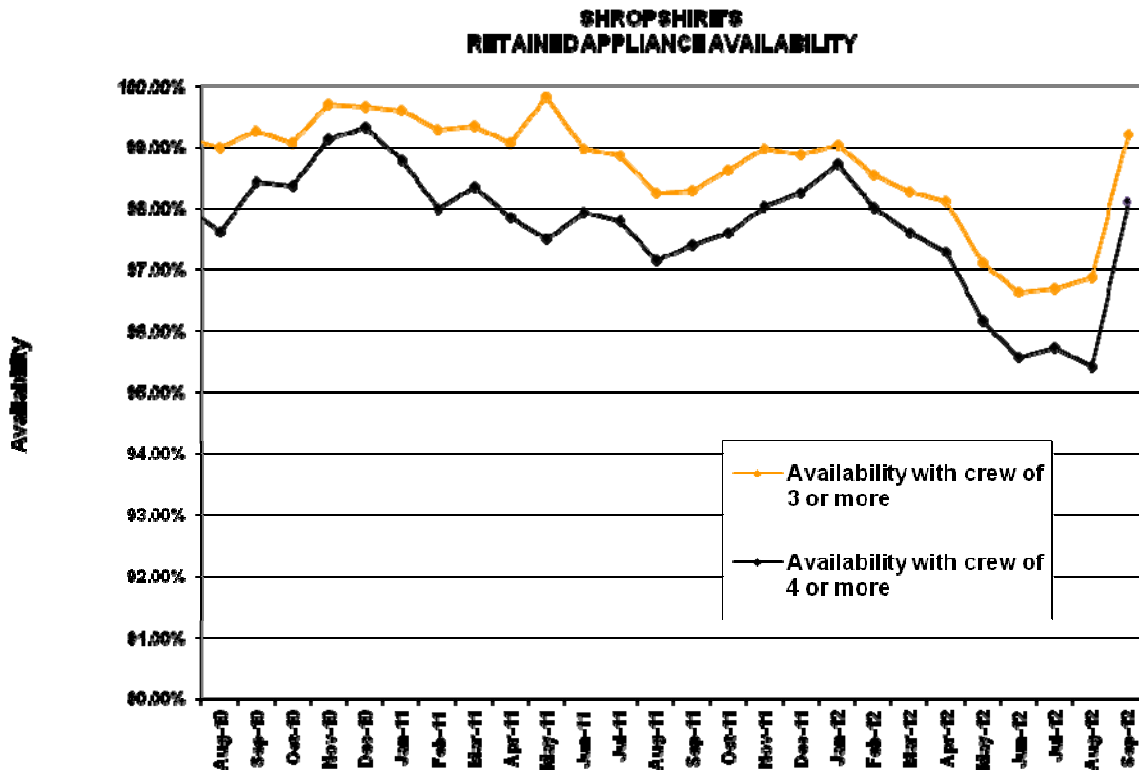
3 Background

Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel are fundamental in providing fire cover for the major part of Shropshire. The 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.

The overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 98% (see Graph 1 overleaf). Graph 1 shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 20 are available for 96% to 100% of the time, an outstanding performance. The Fire Authority's target is, however, always for 100% availability for all of its fire engines.

Night time cover is excellent with almost 100% availability between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00 am across all stations.

The exception to this is an occasional shortfall with the 'second' fire engine at Oswestry, which, whilst not ideal, is tolerated, as the remaining 'primary' fire engine at Oswestry remains available 100% of the time during these hours.



Graph 1
Retained Duty System Crew Availability

4 Improving Performance

Graph 1 reveals a gradual downward trend in availability arising from previously documented staffing issues. The upward movement in availability since August 2012 is a result of the manner in which the second Oswestry appliance is recorded. This is explained at the Appendix to this report.

To improve performance the Service is focusing attention on those fire engines / stations that are currently providing reduced availability. An outline of the factors affecting availability and the actions to improve performance is provided below.

5 Factors Influencing Availability

In recent years it has become increasingly challenging to ensure that all 23 fire appliances, crewed by RDS personnel, are available '24 / 7'.

There have been a number of legal, economic and societal changes in recent years that have affected the RDS, namely:

- The introduction of specific requirements of the Part-Time Workers Legislation for RDS firefighters, which has increased the costs of employing staff on the RDS system
- Full recognition by the Fire Authority of the Drivers Hours Regulations has resulted in an inability to employ RDS staff, who are professional drivers. This is because the actual or potential interruption of required rest periods would be in breach of the Regulations.
- The reduction in economic activity has meant people travelling further to find work, taking Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service staff outside of their callout areas during the day. Furthermore, a significant number of RDS staff are self-employed and are now having to work away from their home areas.
- Reductions in the number of fire calls, resulting in less likelihood of being mobilised and reducing take home pay. It is, however, recognised that many RDS staff are not motivated primarily by money.
- Increasing concerns regarding the ability of operational staff, including those on the RDS, to meet the health and safety requirements and expectations of both the organisation and of third parties

6 Recruitment Campaign

The recent high-profile recruitment campaign, focusing on the 5 Stations where availability levels have fallen to below 97% in the last 12 months, has resulted in the receipt of approximately 160 applications. Significantly, these have included a number of candidates for each of these priority Stations. The percentage of application forms received in relation to those requested via the website and other Service contact points is 32%, with 51 received.

The RDS recruits course, which commenced on 29 October 2012, has 12 recruits, 10 of whom will be attached to the 5 priority stations mentioned above. Pending completion of the course in March 2013, Area Command will gauge the impact on availability.

In addition to the October 2012 course, there are a number of successful candidates, scheduled to attend the first course of 2013.

All aspects of the campaign, including the Service's decision to venture into social networking as a method of engagement, have been hugely successful and, therefore, similar recruitment tactics will be utilised in the future.

By working with our local authority stakeholders we now also communicate RDS requirements via, for example, the Shropshire Association of Local Council's newsletter in South Shropshire.

7 Retained Support Officer Cover – Quarter 2

Table 1 indicates those fire stations that have required the highest level of support during the first two quarters of 2012/13. These seven stations account for 1,554.95 hours. This equates to 85% of Retained Support Officer (RSO) cover from 1,830.95 hours provided. The deployment of RSOs has improved performance at all the stations with availability issues.

	2011/12	2012/13				
Stations	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Albrighton	618.00	223.50	157.5			
Cleobury Mortimer	689.75	92.75	95.75			
Ludlow	671.75	98.20	213			
Minsterley			123			
Much Wenlock	795.00	61.50	58.5			
Newport			52			
Oswestry 16 (P4)	561.00	244.75	134.5			
Totals	3335.50	720.70	834.25			1554.95
Total RSO hours	4057.50	843.95	987			1830.95

Table 1
Retained Support Officer Cover

8 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

11 Appendix

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

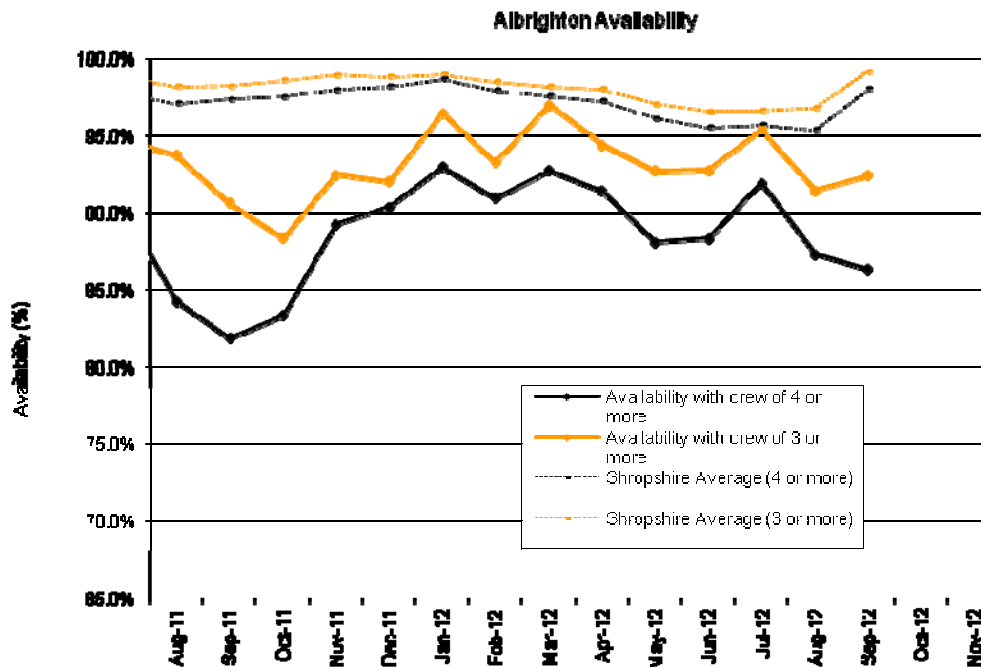
12 Background Papers

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:

<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Audit-and-Performance-Management>

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

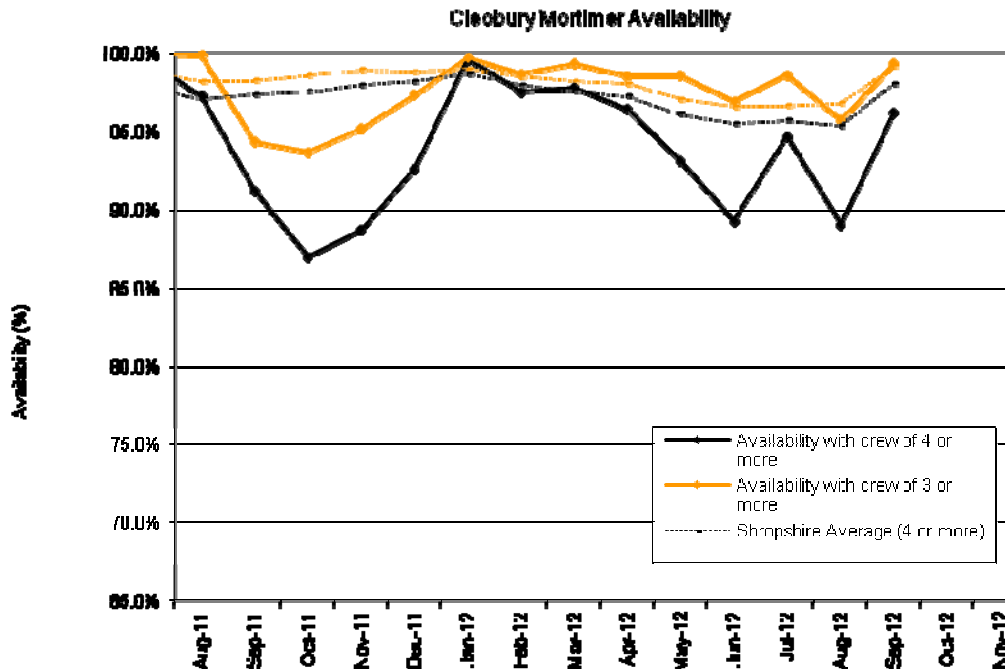
Albrighton Fire Station



Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
14 units (see NB below) (11 available)	Lack of supervisory officer cover leading to the station being off the run for periods	Development Crew Manager in post
Historically extremely difficult to recruit in Albrighton area		New recruit commenced training 29 October 2012
Daytime crewing difficult to achieve	Work patterns of personnel changing, affecting availability	Recruitment campaign focussed on providing daytime cover and two further recruits available for early course 2013

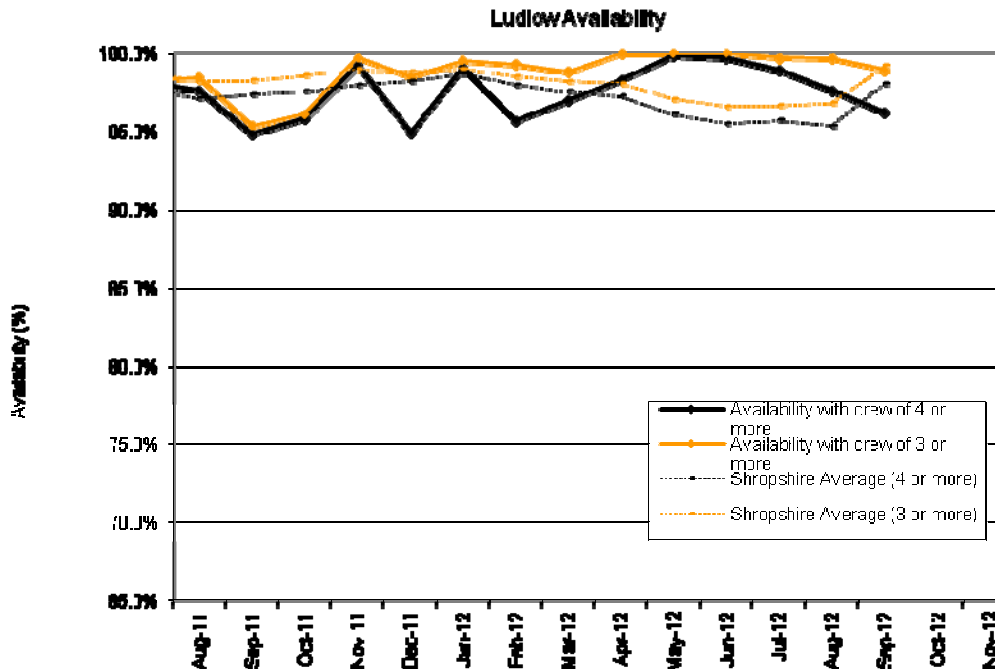
NB: One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Cleobury Mortimer Fire Station



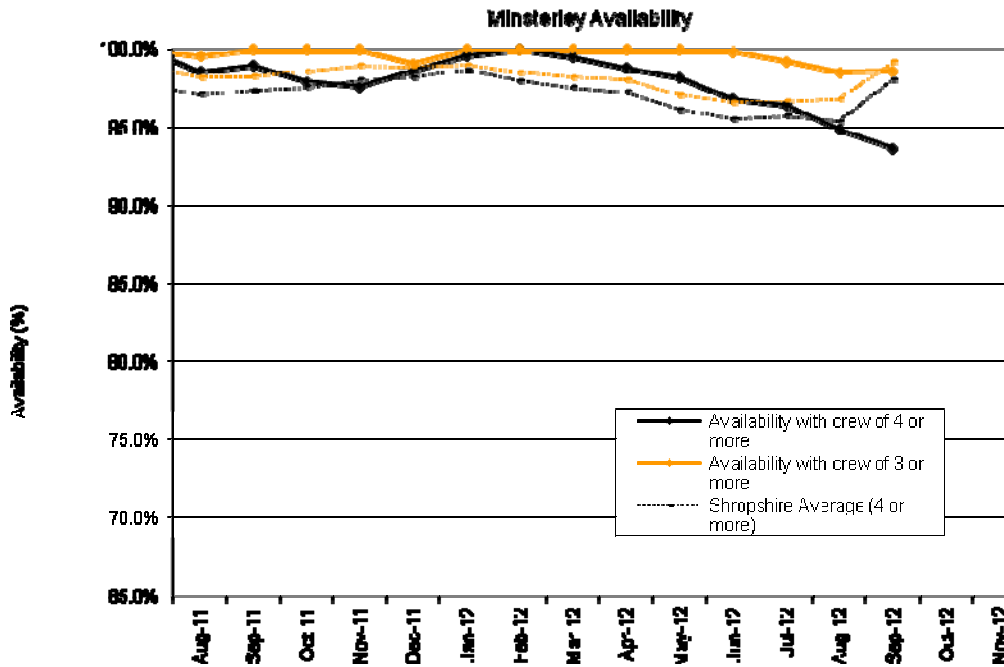
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10.25 units are currently on station	Difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area	2 recruits commenced training 29 October 2012 Increased by over 6% since previous report
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Latest applicants have failed medical or job tests	Ongoing recruitment campaign focussed on providing additional daytime cover. One potential recruit in system, likely to be available to attend the next course

Ludlow Fire Station



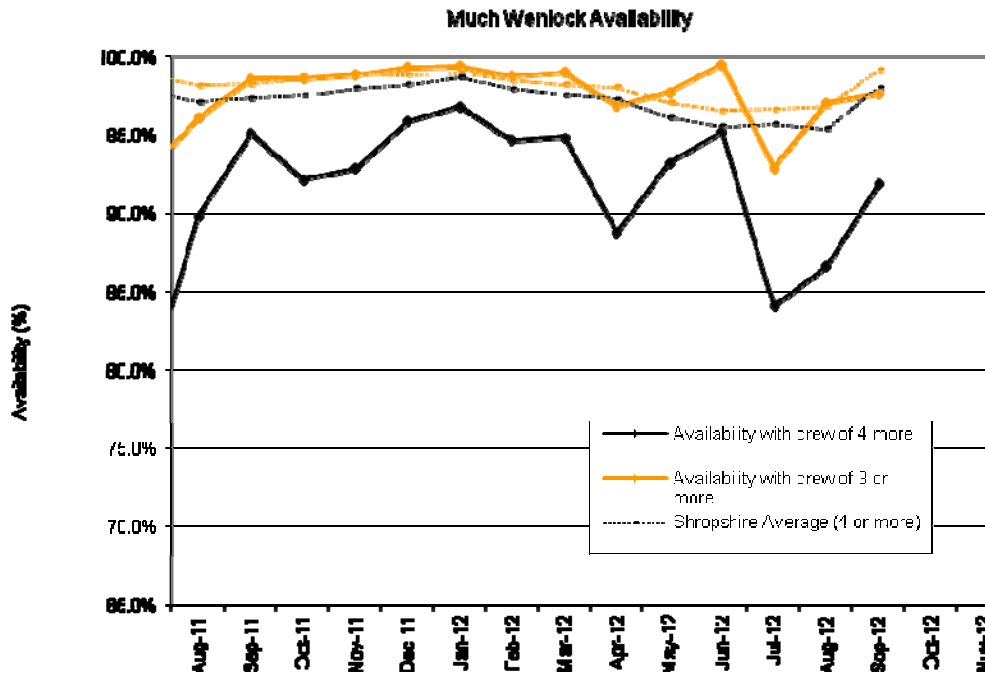
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 11.75 units are currently on station	4 leavers in last 12 months due to work and family issues	Command and driver training has been prioritised in order to ease the situation.
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	A number of staff are employed as wholtime firefighters at Hereford and Worcester, West Midlands and Shropshire and the knock-on effect is linked to station deficiencies at key periods.	Ongoing recruitment campaign focussed on providing additional daytime cover. 1 new recruit commenced training on 29 October 2012.

Minsterley Fire Station



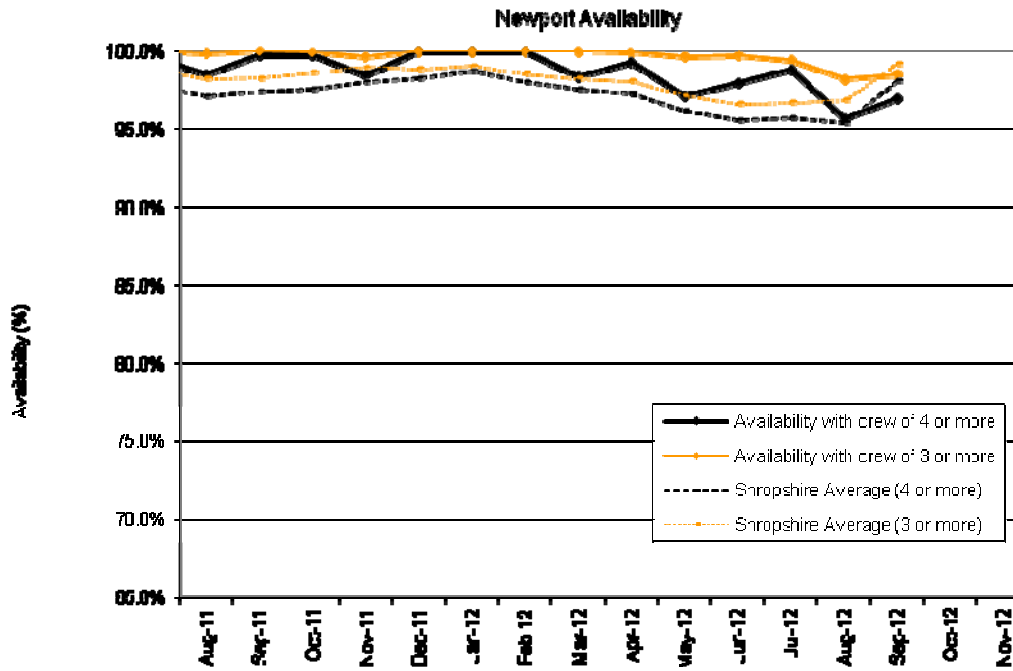
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 15 units are budgeted for only 9.5 units are currently on station.	Several retirements and resignations in previous six months.	1 new recruit on the run in the last month
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.	2 new recruits commenced training on 29 October 2012. Will be 'on the run' early 2013.

Much Wenlock Fire Station



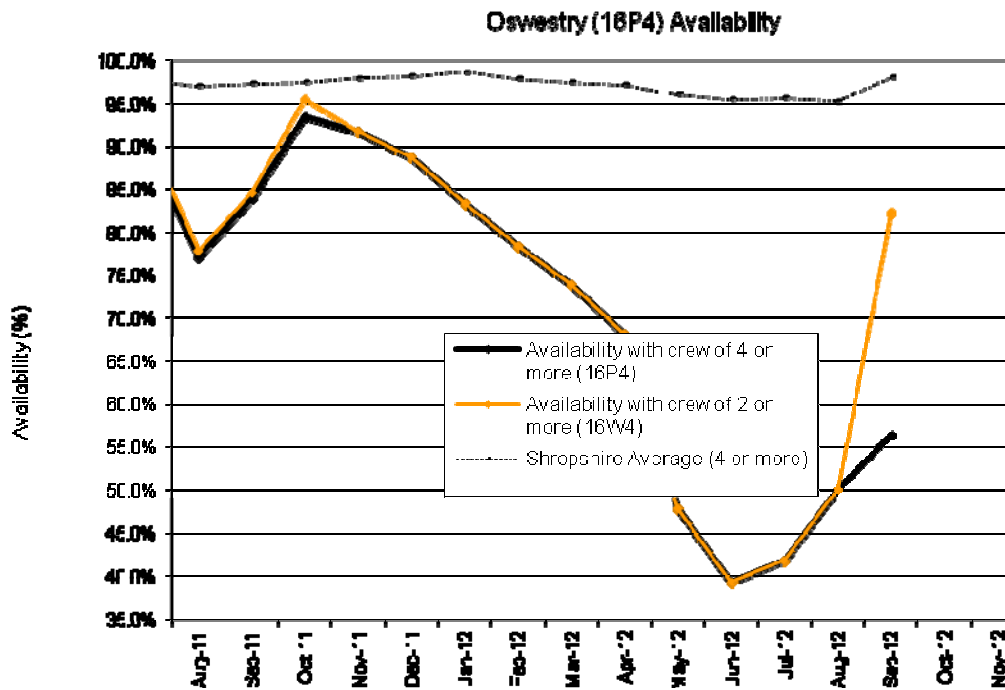
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 8.75 units are currently on station	Much Wenlock has managed to maintain over 90% since September 2011 through recruitment of new staff	Recruitment campaign in progress
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Difficult to recruit from local population, because of high number working outside Much Wenlock. Upward trend in availability since July 2013.	Recruitment campaign is geared towards recruiting for daytime crewing. 1 new recruit commenced training on 29 October 2012

Newport Fire Station



Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 12 units are currently on Station.	7 retirements and leavers in last 12 months.	2 new recruits commenced training on 29 October 2012
		Improved availability by approx 2 percent since last report

Oswestry Fire Station



As of September 2012 Oswestry's second appliance report shows availability with crew of 4 or more and with crew of 2 or more

The upward trend in the bold black line shows an increased availability of 18%, where the vehicle has been available as a second major pumping appliance. Despite being much lower than the Brigade average, this increase is a dramatic improvement on the previous nine months' availability. With recent recruitment it is anticipated that this trend will continue and potentially reach 80% within the next six to nine months. The yellow line shows that the vehicle is available as a water carrier (which is its secondary function) and this is increasing steadily to the levels achieved when first introduced.

Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 14.5 units are currently on station.</p> <p>This is Oswestry's second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p>	<p>First pump at Oswestry currently has 98% availability</p> <p>Second pump availability has recently increased to 53% after a period below 40% due to 5 retirements and resignations during the last 12 months and two personnel on long-term sickness absence.</p>	<p>Recruitment focussing on daytime cover</p> <p>2 new recruits commenced training on 29 October 2012</p> <p>One further recruit awaiting first course of 2013 and several applicants received in recent weeks.</p>