

Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring October to December 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.

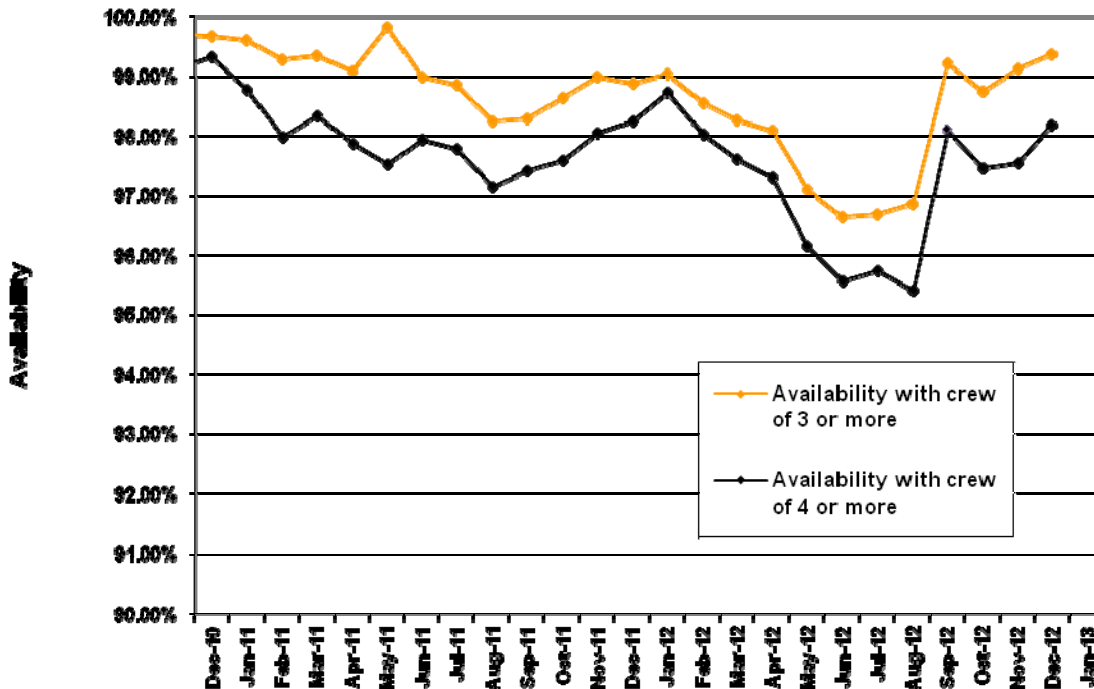
3 Background

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

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 98% (see Graph 1 overleaf), with a small increase during the last quarter. Graph 1 shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes 2 based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 19 are available for 98% 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 remains available 100% of the time during these hours.

**SHROPSHIRE'S
RETAINED APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY**



Graph 1
SFRS 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. The upward trend in availability has continued since October 2012. 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 and these have been summarised in previous reports.

6 Background Station Specific Performance

There are now four fire stations, whose performance over the past 12 months falls below the 98% to 100% achieved by the remaining stations. An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report. Ludlow has now been removed from this group due to recent improved performance.

7 Recruitment Campaign

Ongoing analysis of overall RDS availability has identified those stations with insufficient staff that we need to target for recruitment. Over the last 9 months the Service has run a successful recruitment campaign, which has provided 10 new recruits for those stations identified as a priority due to reduced staffing.

The latest RDS recruits course commenced on 11 February 2013 with 9 candidates. The majority of the delegates are targeted at priority stations

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

By taking advantage of our local authority stakeholders we now also communicate RDS requirements via the Shropshire Association of Local Councils' newsletter in South Shropshire.

8 Retained Support Officer Cover – Quarter 3

Table 1 indicates those fire stations that have required the highest level of support for reasons detailed earlier in this report during the first three quarters of 2012/13. These seven stations account for **2,142.95** hours. This equates to 83% of Retained Support Officer (RSO) cover from **2,569.70** hours provided. The deployment of RSOs has improved performance at all stations with availability issues.

	2011/12	2012/13				
Stations	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Albrighton	618.00	223.50	157.5	68		
Cleobury Mortimer	689.75	92.75	95.75	186.75		
Ludlow	671.75	98.20	213	84.75		
Minsterley			123	68		
Much Wenlock	795.00	61.50	58.5	55.5		
Newport			52	43		
Oswestry 16 (P4)	561.00	244.75	134.5	82		
Totals	3335.50	720.70	834.25	588		2142.95
Total RSO hours	4057.50	843.95	987	738.75		2569.70

Table 1
Retained Support Officer Cover

9 Flexible Cover

The Service has instigated work to develop an option for cover outside of the current full and three-quarter cover levels that operate at present. The intention is to provide more flexibility for people, who are available in areas where the Service struggles to provide cover at certain times, for example during the day, but who may only be able to provide limited cover.

Officers are aware of possible recruits, who work during the day near our RDS stations and are willing to provide cover but who live too far away to provide cover at other times. They are, therefore, unable to provide cover up to even three-quarter level. In several station areas, as the analysis in the appendix shows, it is difficult to provide cover during the day. By allowing some flexibility in the amount of time they are available, the Service should be able to improve its availability levels further. This proposal has been put to the representative bodies and officers will continue to consult with them as the project progresses.

10 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

12 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.

13 Appendix

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

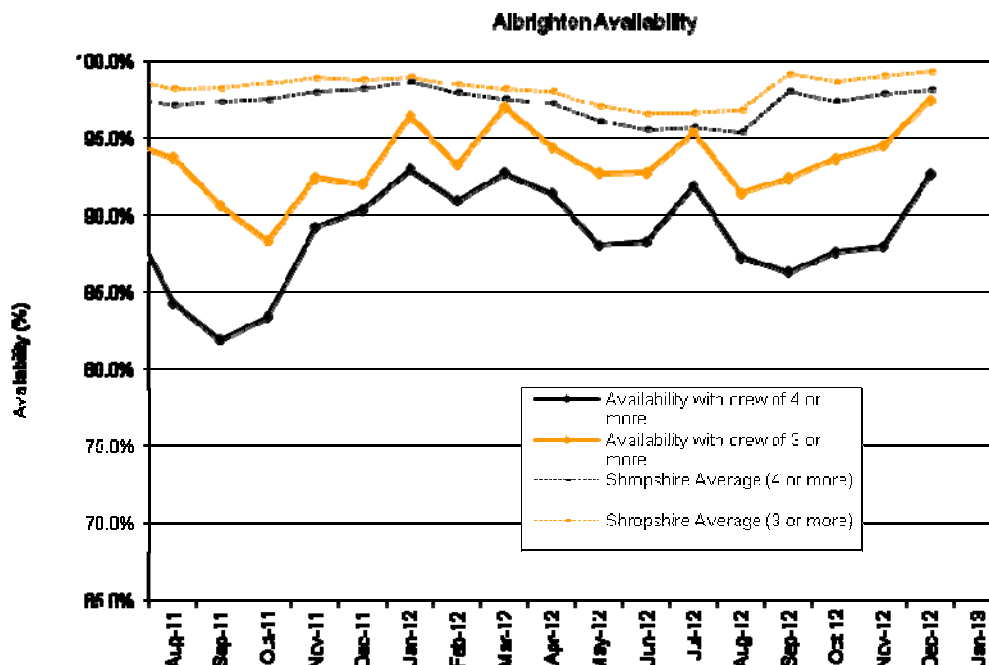
14 Background Papers

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

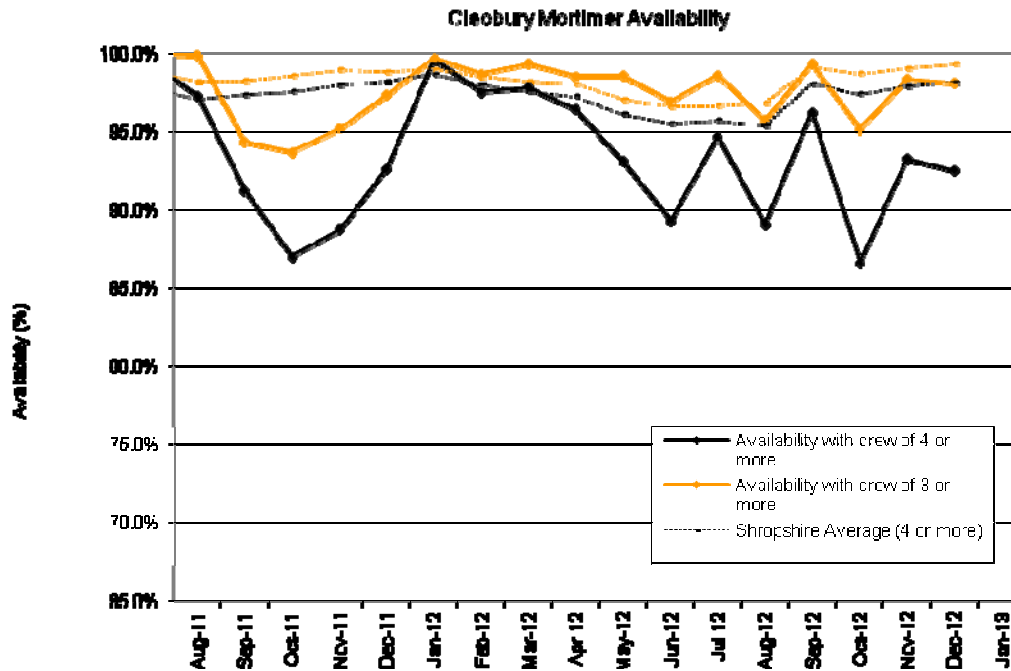
Albrighton Fire Station



Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
14 units (11 available)	Lack of officer cover leading to the station being off the run for periods	Development Watch Manager and two Development Crew Managers in post
Historically extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area		One new recruit went on the run in February
Daytime crewing difficult to achieve	Work patterns of personnel changing, affecting availability	Recruitment campaign focussed on providing daytime cover. Area Command researching half-cover rates contract. One further recruit commenced training on 11 February 2013.

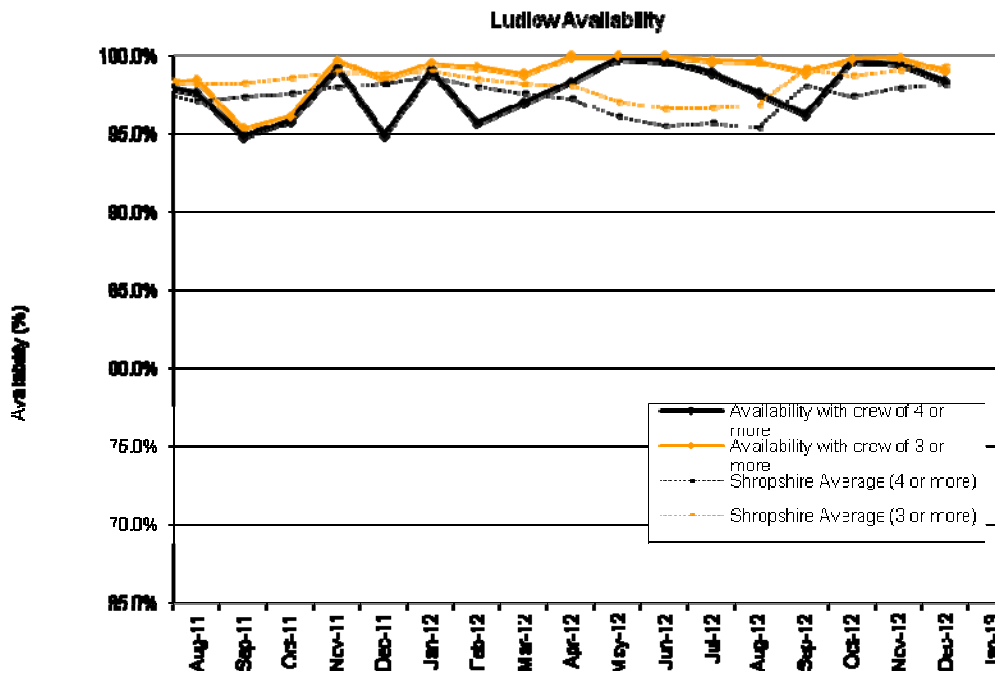
NB: One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Cleobury Mortimer Fire Station



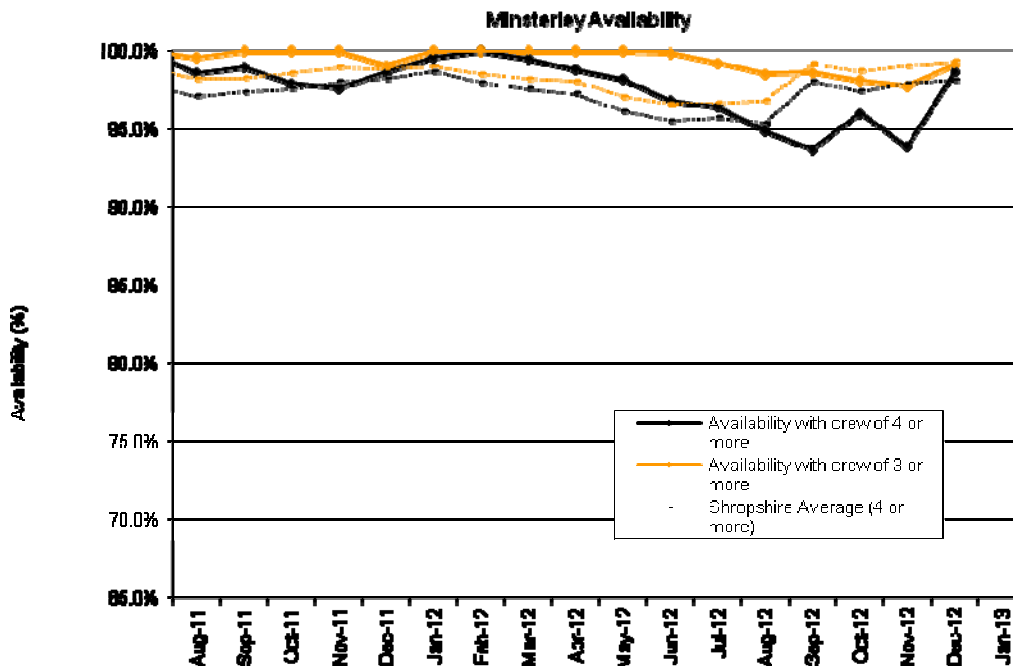
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10 units are currently on station	Difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area	2 recruits completed training in February 2013 and are now available.
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Latest applicants have failed medical or job tests	Ongoing recruitment campaign focussed on providing additional daytime cover. Area Command researching half-cover rates contract. Two candidates in system awaiting medical re- assessment

Ludlow Fire Station



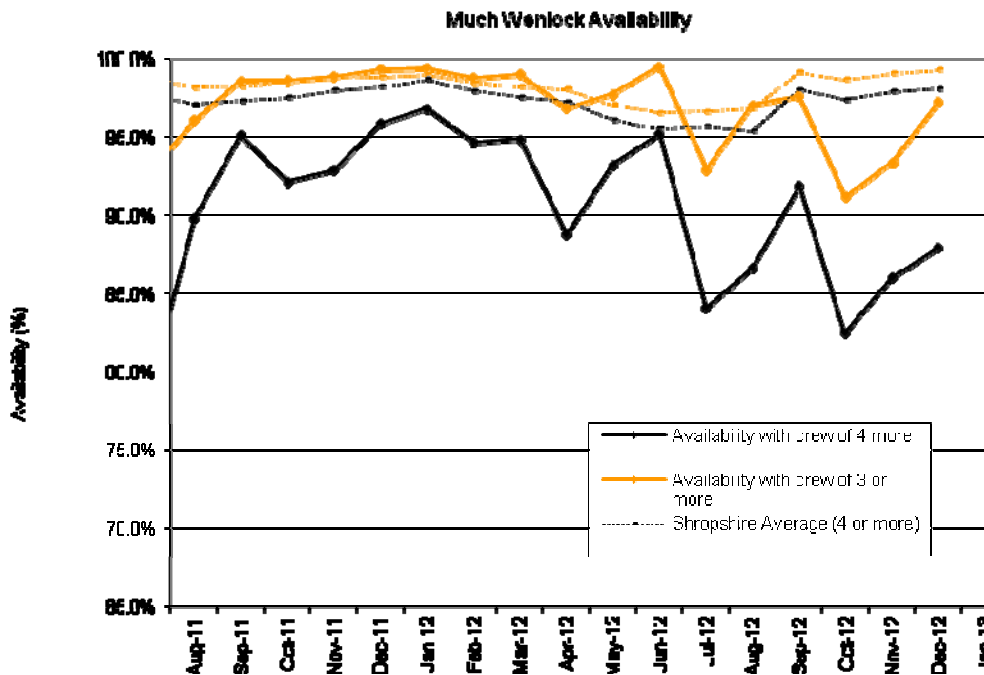
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 13.5 units are currently on station.	4 leavers in last 12 months due to work and family issues	Command and driver training has been prioritised in order to ease the situation.
Daytime crewing presenting 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 completed training in February 2013 and is now available for operational incidents. Slight reduction in availability in November and December 2012 but this has now improved, although dates outside the scope of this report.

Minsterley Fire Station



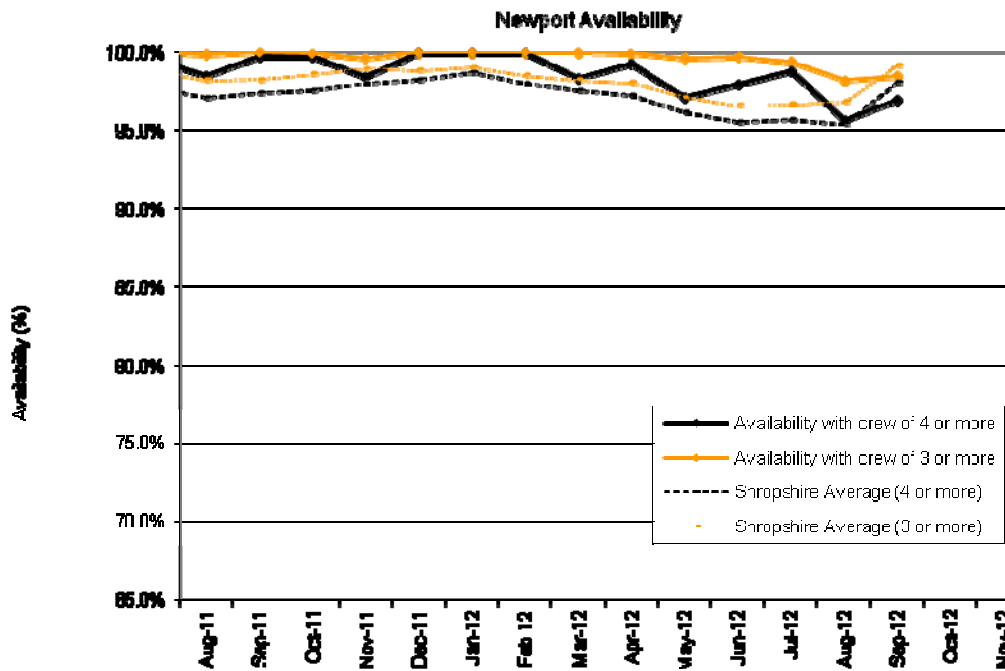
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 15 units are budgeted for, only 9.5 units are currently on Station.	Several retirements and resignations in previous six months	1 new recruit on the run during October 2012
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.	2 new recruits completed training in February 2013 and are now available for operational incidents. One further recruit commenced training on 11 February 2013.

Much Wenlock Fire Station



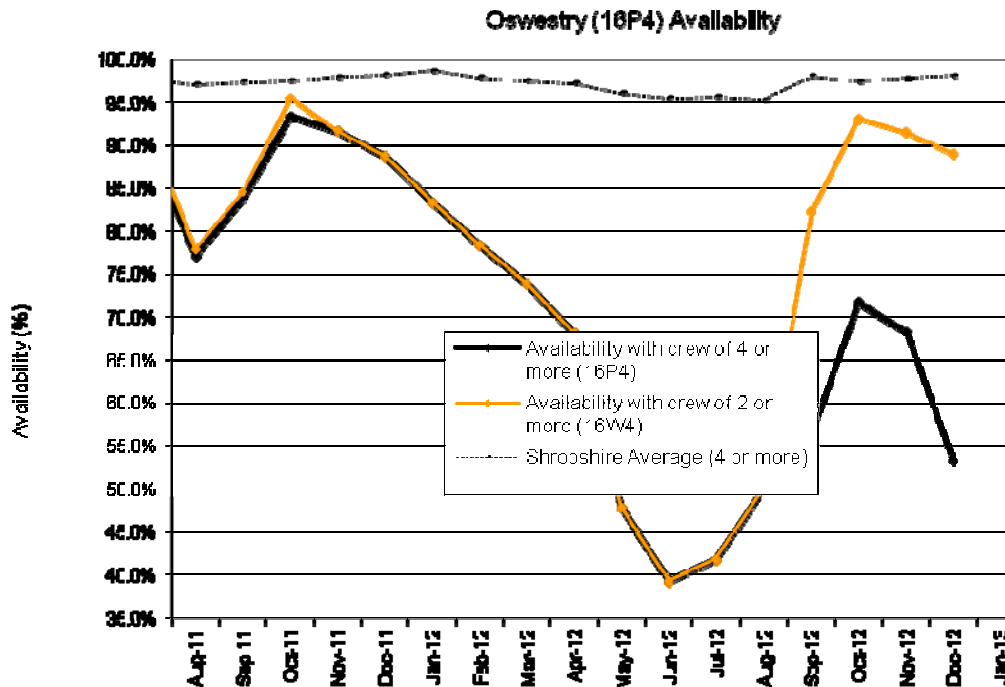
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 8.75 units are currently on station.	Much Wenlock has managed to maintain over 90% since September 2011 through recruitment of new staff.	Recruitment campaign in progress
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Difficult to recruit from local population, because of high number working outside Much Wenlock Upward trend in availability since July 2012	Recruitment campaign is geared towards recruiting for daytime crewing. 1 new recruit commenced training but failed to complete the course. Focused recruitment drive commenced January 2013 with local home and business leaflet drop and poster campaign. Area Command currently researching half-cover rates contract with a view to potential weekday only cover

Newport Fire Station



Station profile	Reason 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	1 new recruit completed training in February 2013 and available to attend operational incidents. Interest received from two Wholetime personnel being pursued by Station management. One candidate scheduled to attend June 2013 course.

Oswestry Fire Station



From September 2012 Oswestry's second appliance shows availability with crew of 4 or more (WrT 16P4 & WC 16W4) and availability with crew of 2 or more (WC 16W4). The upward trend in the bold black line up to October was promising - an 18% improvement, where the vehicle has been available as a second major pumping appliance but this trend failed to continue due to a short-term injury in December. As a recent recruit has been placed on the run and two candidates are in training, rapid improvement is anticipated with the potential of achieving 80% within the next six to nine months. The yellow line shows that the vehicle is available as a water carrier (its secondary function), which has dropped slightly since the last report.

Station profile	Reason for Availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 14.5 units are currently on station. This is Oswestry's second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.	<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 focus on daytime cover.</p> <p>1 recruit completed training in February 2013 and is now available for operational incidents.</p> <p>One further recruit failed to complete BA course and will attend BA module in current course along with two further recruits.</p>