

Ambulance Service has worst sickness rate in NHS

Sickness absence rates at a Midlands Ambulance Service are the worst in the NHS, according to latest figures.

Bosses yesterday pledged to take measures to improve the statistics that showed in September last year more than seven per cent of staff were off sick.

The ambulance service that covers Northamptonshire said the main factors were injuries caused by lifting patients and stress.

The latter is often a cause for sickness in paramedics and is one of the reasons why ambulance services are routinely among the worst NHS trusts for absences.

Phil Milligan, EMAS chief executive, said: "We are conscious that we have a higher than usual sickness rate and some reasons for that include musculo-skeletal injuries or stress due to the nature of the calls we respond to.

"We are reviewing our Occupational Health service to ensure that we are providing the right support, help and advice and that we can get staff back to work quickly."

EMAS has a sickness absence target of five per cent, but has not achieved that for the past three years.

Between July and September it had an average sickness absence rate of just over seven per cent – or about 220 staff – compared with the NHS national average of just under four per cent

It has about 3,200 staff in more than 70 locations and covers Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

Northampton General Hospital had a 4.05 per cent absence rate.

Northamptonshire Teaching PCT, otherwise known as NHS Northamptonshire, had a 3.67 per cent rate and Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS, the mental health trust, had a 4.39 per cent rate.

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