

Public Document Pack



To: Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor Al-Samarai, Vice-Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost; and Councillors Boulton, Clark, Macdonald, McLeod and Thomson.

Trade Union Advisers: Zemeta Chefeke and Carole Thorpe (EIS); Kevin Masson and David Willis (GMB); Jason Currie and 1 vacancy (SSTA); Mark Musk and Alison Robertson (UNISON); Joe Craig and Mishelle Gray (UNITE); Fiona Sales (UCATT) and Rob Stephen and 1 vacancy (VOICE).

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 12 April 2024

STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Members of the **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in **Committee Room 2 - Town House on MONDAY, 22 APRIL 2024 at 10.00am**. This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website. <https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

JENNI LAWSON
CHIEF OFFICER – GOVERNANCE

B U S I N E S S

NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS

1.1. There are no items at this time

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

2.1. Members are requested to determine that any exempt business be considered with the press and public excluded

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

3.1. Members are requested to declare any interests

DEPUTATIONS

- 4.1. None at this time

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 5.1. Minute of Previous Meeting of 22 January 2024 - for approval (Pages 5 - 8)

COMMITTEE PLANNER

- 6.1. Committee Business Planner (Pages 9 - 12)

NOTICES OF MOTION

- 7.1. None at this time

REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

- 8.1. None at this time

WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

- 9.1. Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles - CORS/24/107 (Pages 13 - 44)

COUNCIL POLICIES AFFECTING STAFF

- 10.1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy - CORS/24/102 (Pages 45 - 76)

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING OF STAFF

- 11.1. Zero Tolerance Update and Action Plan - CORS/24/111 (Pages 77 - 92)
- 11.2. EAS Annual Progress Update Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update January 2023 –December 2023 - CORS/24/114 (Pages 93 - 118)
- 11.3. Corporate Health and Safety – October– December 2023 - CORS/24/110 (Pages 119 - 140)

Integrated Impact Assessments related to reports on this agenda can be viewed [here](#)

To access the Service Updates for this Committee please click [here](#)

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STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 22 January 2024. Minute of Meeting of the STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor Al-Samarai, Vice-Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost; and Councillors Blake (as substitute for Councillor Thomson), Boulton, Davidson, Fairfull, Hutchison (as substitute for Councillor MacGregor), Macdonald, Massey, McLeod and Tissera (as substitute for Councillor Ali).

Trade Union Advisers:- Zemeta Chefeke and Carole Thorpe (EIS); Kevin Masson and Neil Watson (GMB); Brenda Massie and Mark Musk (UNISON); Joe Craig (UNITE) and Fiona Sales (UCATT).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be viewed [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. There were no declarations of interest nor transparency statements made.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 13 NOVEMBER 2023

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 13 November 2023 for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

3. The Committee had before it the planner of Committee business as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance (Legal).

The Committee resolved:-

to note the planner.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE POLICY - CUS/24/021

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which presented the updated Managing Performance Policy for approval. The report advised that feedback on the policy had been sought and had identified that the matters which required to be addressed related to the process and guidance which accompanied the policy, rather than the policy itself. It was noted that work was underway with focus

STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

22 January 2024

groups, including Trade Union colleagues, to update those documents, with work expected to be completed by the end of February 2024.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) approve the updated policy document;
- (b) instruct the Interim Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to ensure that a full review be undertaken of the process and guidance in consultation with the Trade Unions and managers; and
- (c) instruct the Interim Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to ensure that the policy document and all supporting process and guidance documents were easily accessible to all staff and managers and that managers were supported in the fair and consistent application of the policy and process through appropriate training.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT - UPDATE - CUS/24/023

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which provided an update on progress and activity in relation to the Council's approach to Internal Communications and Employee Engagement, including how this was applied to support employees through organisational change.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the continuing progress made on the Council's approach to internal communications and employee engagement to support all employees through organisational change.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in respect of analysing the performance of current methods of internal communication to staff, to note that officers would report back to Committee on activity data from staff accessing SharePoint and Open Forum, taking into consideration the recent public consultations which had also been promoted to staff; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendation.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE - CUS/24/022

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which provided an update on mental health and wellbeing across the organisation.

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The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the data from the Employee Wellbeing Pulse Check and the support and initiatives currently available to staff;
- (b) instruct the Interim Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to ensure that the Wellbeing Pulse Check was repeated in the Spring of 2024 to allow the impact of interventions to be assessed; and
- (c) note that a recommendation would be taken to the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) on whether the Council should explore utilising the services of Salary Finance as an additional support for employees.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers had undertaken to review the graph axis in future reports to ensure that the data was clear;
- (ii) to note that officers would provide a gender breakdown of the data to Members outwith the meeting;
- (iii) to note that officers would liaise with Ms Thorpe outwith the meeting about the Education Support charity highlighted;
- (iv) to note that the outcomes of the Spring 2024 Wellbeing Pulse Check in relation to sustainability would be reviewed as part of the Staff Travel Plan report which was due to a future meeting of the appropriate Committee; and
- (v) to approve the recommendations.

VALEDICTORY

7. The Convener advised that this was the last meeting of Staff Governance Committee to be attended by Kirsten Foley, Employee Relations and Wellbeing Manager, prior to her retirement at the end of March.

The Convener, the Depute Provost and Councillors Boulton, Macdonald and McLeod all paid tribute to Mrs Foley, thanking her for her valuable assistance, advice and contributions over the years, noting that she would be missed greatly.

- COUNCILLOR NEIL COPLAND, Convener

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER								
	The Business Planner details the reports which have been instructed by the Committee as well as reports which the Functions expect to be submitting for the calendar year.								
2	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
3	22 April 2024								
4	EAS Annual Progress Update Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update	To present an annual report for the EAS/OH & Sickness Absence figures		Sharon Robb	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.7		
5	Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles	To set out the approach to workforce planning, in the context of challenges in building our workforce capacity		Lesley Strachan	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2		
6	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 31 December 2023		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
7	Zero Tolerance Update and Action Plan	To update Committee on the work in relation to the zero tolerance pledge, including an action plan for approval		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
8	Equality and Diversity Policy	To report back on the revised policy		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.6		
9	24 June 2024								
10	Family Friendly Policies	SGC 04/09/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development and Customer Experience to report back to Staff Governance Committee in June 2024 with updated policies and documentation for approval		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
11	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 31 March 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
12	Sickness Absence - Operations	Net Zero, Environment & Transport Cttee 270324 - in light of the high sickness absence within the Environmental, Roads and Waste services, agree to instruct the Chief Officers – Operations and People and Citizen Services to bring back a report to the June Staff Governance Committee on why sickness absence is so high within those services and what the Council is doing to reduce such absence; and for future updates to be incorporated into the relevant sickness absence report to Staff Governance Committee		Mark Reilly / Isla Newcombe	Operations / People & Citizen Services	City Regeneration and Environment / Corporate Services	3.2		

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2									
13	Special Leave Policy	To seek approval of the policy It was agreed at Staff Governance Committee in September 2023 that the Special Leave Policy would be delayed to June 2024 to allow all such policies to be aligned with the overall report on the Family Friendly Policies and to avoid duplication of effort		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
14	Cluster Risk Register	To present the annual risk register update		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	GD 8.4		
15	People Policy Data	SGC 26/06/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to report disciplinary, grievance and dignity and respect at work data to the Staff Governance Committee on an annual basis		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2		
16	Developing the Young Workforce Apprenticeship / Internship Update	To present an update	June 2024 (based on reporting date in 2023)	Lesley Strachan	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.2		
17	Employee Mental Health Action Plan Annual Progress Update	To provide an update in relation to the employee mental health action plan		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	3.2 iii		
18	9 September 2024								
19	Interim Communication - Staff	SGC 22/01/24 - in respect of analysing the performance of current methods of internal communication to staff, to note that officers would report back to Committee on activity data from staff accessing Sharepoint and Open Forum, taking into consideration the recent public consultations which had also been promoted to staff;		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.4		
20	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 30 June 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
21	18 November 2024								
22	Staff Governance Committee Effectiveness Report	To present the annual effectiveness report		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	8.5		

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2	Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy	To seek approval of the policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
23	Leadership and Management Development Update	SGC 03/10/22 - to agree that an annual update on the refreshed approach to leadership and management development be presented to Committee		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.4		
24	Managing Substance Misuse Policy	The revised policy was approved at Committee in November 2023 - to be reviewed annually (report will not be required if no changes are to be made)		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
25	Corporate Health & Safety Policy	To present the revised Health & Safety Policy, subject to approval being required		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	2.5		
26	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 30 September 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
27									
28	2024 - Reporting dates to be confirmed								
29	Employee Code of Conduct	To present an update on the Employee Code of Conduct		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
30	Staff Travel Plan & Policy	For noting		Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
31	People development policy / guidance	To seek approval of the policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

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	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan	SGC 13/03/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to provide an update to Staff Governance Committee at a future meeting of the Committee on any impact this report has on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan as well as any changes, updates or new areas of focus based on the data and analysis SGC 26/06/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development to report to Staff Governance Committee on progress to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan on an annual basis which will either be as part of Mainstreaming or Progress Report updates or as an independent report in years where there is not a Mainstreaming or Progress Report		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services			
32									
33	2025								
34	Equality and Diversity Staffing Outcomes / 2025 Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan	SGC 26/06/23 - to instruct the Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to report to Staff Governance Committee in advance of the next Mainstreaming Report being presented to Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee in March 2025 (dates to be confirmed) with an update on proposed staffing-related content and Outcomes. This will include the annual update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan		Darren Buck	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	TBC		
35	Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure	The revised policy was approved at Committee in November 2023 - due for review November 2025		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
36	2026								
37	Managing Performance Policy and Procedure	The revised policy was approved at Committee in January 2024 - due for review January 2026		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance
DATE	22 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/107
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Lindsay MacInnes
REPORT AUTHOR	Lesley Strachan and Sandie Scott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report describes our approach to workforce planning, in the context of challenges in building our workforce capacity. This includes setting out the wider actions and innovative practices being taken to address current challenges through attracting, recruiting and moving talent, developing future workforce capacity, and mitigating risks in relation to service delivery.
- 1.2 This report also provides Committee with details of the current job roles which are classed as ‘hard to fill’ and are proving a challenge to recruit to and sets out the actions being undertaken to mitigate these challenges.

2 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

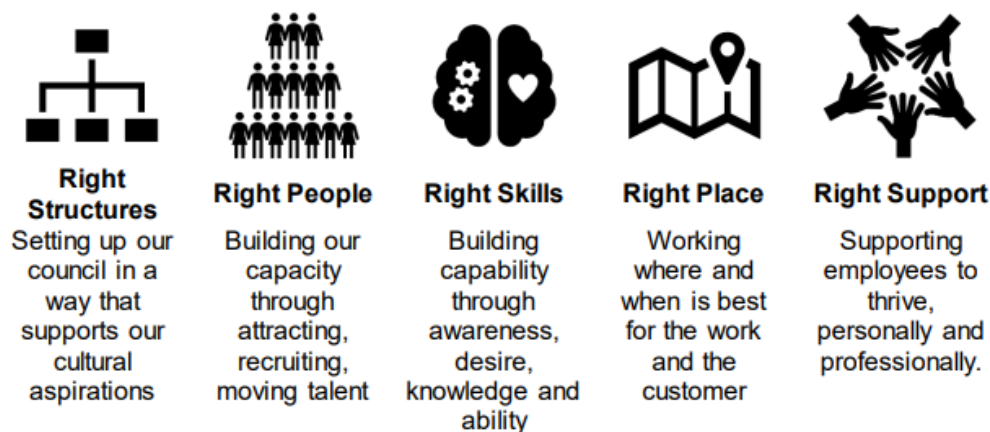
- 2.1 note the actions contained in the report being taken to address our workforce capacity challenges, including in respect of our ‘hard to fill’ roles.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Background and Context

- 3.1.1 In August 2017, Council approved the ‘Building a Council of the Future’ report which set out our ambitious transformation programme.
- 3.1.2 At this time, ‘workforce capacity and organisational resilience’ was added to the corporate risk register to account for the impact of the required financial savings and associated workforce reduction on our capacity and ability to deliver critical services. It has since been updated and reviewed on an annual basis to take account of further known and unknown risks, such as the pandemic, BREXIT, local and national political and economic changes, as well as further internal transformation.

- 3.1.3 In August 2022, Council approved the next phase and path for our transformation programme, with workforce strategy as a key element.
- 3.1.4 In January 2023, our Workforce Delivery Plan was approved by Staff Governance Committee, which set out the detail for delivery of the workforce strategy aspect of the transformation programme.
- 3.1.5 The Workforce Delivery Plan identified five key levers that needed to be addressed in order to meet local and national challenges and deliver our workforce transformation.



- 3.1.6 The first lever, **Right Structures**, has been the focus of extensive engagement with employees, leaders and Trade Union colleagues over the last year and has culminated in the [Organisational Structure Update](#), approved by Council February 2024.
- 3.1.7 This report acts as a checkpoint on the theme of '**Right People**' – where we review actions being taken to address challenges faced in building our capacity through attracting, recruiting and moving talent, deep dive evidence on progress made – and consider whether we need to refocus our resources to meet evolving challenges and capacity.
- 3.1.8 Within the Workforce Delivery Plan is recognition of the need to continue to adapt our workforce strategy over the next five years in response to the changing external and internal environment and any key government policy drivers and upcoming legislative changes. A further report will be brought to Staff Governance Committee with a similar deep dive on the other three levers, **Right Skills**, **Right Place** and **Right Support**.
- 3.1.9 In March 2024, the Council Delivery Plan 2024-25 was approved by Council, setting out the Council's key priorities for the year ahead through Commissioning Intentions and Service Standards, which reflect current performance, and the resource available to each Cluster.
- 3.1.10 Within these three strategic plans, it can be seen that workforce planning is a key priority for Aberdeen City Council, with clear cognisance of – and practical action plans to mitigate against – the challenges we face in recruiting to hard-

to-fill posts; and a holistic, strategic approach to finding, recruiting and retaining talent in these roles.

- 3.1.11 Alongside this, we work closely with our partners to ensure collective alignment of workforce planning activity across the group. The Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) Workforce Plan 2022-2025 was approved by the Aberdeen City IJB in November 2022 and has three priority workstreams, one of which focuses on recruitment and retention. In order to deliver the priority actions, the ACHSCP has a Workforce Oversight Group which has membership from the People & Organisational Development team within Aberdeen City Council, as a constituent employer of the ACHSCP, to provide support and to ensure that the plan aligns with the Council's Workforce Delivery Plan. In addition, workforce is identified as a risk on the IJB's Strategic Risk Register and is monitored and reported regularly through the IJB and its Risk and Audit Performance Committee.
- 3.1.12 Workforce capacity and recruitment related risks are reviewed and regularly monitored via the Council's governance structures. The Council's Corporate Level Workforce Risk (appended) is regularly reviewed by officers and is presented to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.
- 3.1.13 The Council's ALEO Assurance Hub reviews the risk registers belonging to the Council's Arm's Length External Organisations (ALEOs) within its annual workplan. The Hub reviews ALEO risk registers in accordance with the workplan and is provided with assurance that workforce related risks identified by each ALEO are mitigated effectively through; succession planning, strategic planning of current and future resource requirements and staff development programmes to facilitate recruitment and retention of staff. Assurance of these risk management arrangements is provided to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.

Progress Update 2022 to present

3.2 Movement of Internal Talent

- 3.2.1 Since 2019, we have focused on our internal workforce as one key mechanism to achieve our current workforce goals and prepare for the future. Our approach to internal movement and recruitment of internal staff is to retain skills and experience within the organisation, whilst upskilling and developing our workforce to move to service critical roles as they arise. This approach gives us agility and flexibility in our workforce, enabling us to meet periods of increased demand and, crucially, enabling us to fill our hard-to-fill posts by reskilling and retaining our internal talent.
- 3.2.2 Internal-only recruitment has been a priority for the majority of vacancies that arise, and through our Establishment Control Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Corporate Services and including the Chief Officer – People & Organisational Development and Chief Officer – Finance, vacancies will either be given approval to recruit internally, or managers will have to conclude any internal processes, or provide specific justification to recruit externally.

3.2.3 Having an internal-focused approach to recruitment and selection provides our existing workforce with opportunities for promotion, development and career transition and therefore supports retention of our committed and skilled employees. By tapping into the transferable skills, experience and knowledge of existing employees, the organisation also minimises the need to go to external market.

3.2.4 Perceptions of 'internal-only' recruitment are actively being challenged. Managers are encouraged to consider our internal workforce first, and where a required qualification is not essential from day one, to consider how an internal candidate may be able to develop on the job and be supported through learning and development and to work towards the qualification.

3.2.5 Initially, an internal process known as Re.Cr.Uit was used for this which allowed employees to be aligned to roles across the organisation and encouraged managers to consider internal employees on a priority basis:

- Priority 1 – employees who are currently displaced and on redeployment.
- Priority 2 – employees who are at risk of displacement or whose apprenticeship is due to end.
- Priority 3 – any other employees
- Priority 4 – agency and relief workers

3.2.6 The Talent Team fully support recruiting managers and offer discussions and advice on how best to develop internal employees on the job.

3.2.7 In addition, following feedback and engagement with recruiting managers, employees and trade union colleagues, further improvements to internal recruitment and selection have been made to simplify and quicken the process, including:

- embedding the vacancy approval process into TalentLink, our digital recruitment management system, rather than having a manual process.
- enabling recruiting managers to access applications ahead of the closing date to speed up the time required for shortlisting.
- Simplifying the preferred candidate stage by removing the need for references or unnecessary checks where information is already held.

3.3 Talent Pipelines / Our Future Workforce

3.3.1 A talent pipeline is a proactive and strategic approach to recruiting and developing employees for current and future roles within an organisation. It involves identifying, attracting, engaging, and nurturing potential candidates who have the skills, competencies, and values that align with the organisation's goals and culture. A talent pipeline can help an organisation fill critical positions quickly, reduce hiring costs, improve retention, and foster diversity and inclusion.

- 3.3.2 We are therefore building talent pipelines throughout Aberdeen City Council to support internal career progression and developing bespoke grow-our-own traineeships for professional roles which are hard to fill.
- 3.3.3 With an ageing workforce, in pockets of the organisation, it is critical that we attract, recruit, retain and develop young people so that we do not further impact our hard-to-fill posts in the future by failing to anticipate retirement of key post holders.
- 3.3.4 We are therefore committed to Developing our Young Workforce and connecting young people to a range of opportunities and supporting and developing them in their roles, including maintaining Young Person's Guarantee employer status, so that we meet our current and future organisational challenges, including our demographic challenges. The Developing our Young Workforce activity closely aligns to our hard to fill roles identified in the Deep Dive section below and specifically our approach to apprenticeships and internships has provided a solution to some of our current and future workforce capacity challenges in developing a pool of talent to fill our roles.

Apprenticeships

- 3.3.5 As part of our Developing the Young Workforce commitments, and our future workforce plans, we have developed a successful apprenticeship programme, which has resulted in a significant number of young people aged 16-24 entering our workforce, and in many cases filling some of our hardest to fill roles.
- 3.3.6 In 2019, our established and successful trade and traditional modern apprenticeship programme which included Joiner, Plumber, Electrician, Gardener, Mechanic etc, was expanded to include an offering organisation-wide. The programme now covers a wide range of modern apprenticeships including Business Administration, Customer Services, Adult Social Care, Pensions, Accounting, Building Standards and Early Learning and Childcare. The impact of this expanded approach to apprenticeships has led to an increase in the number of Modern Apprentices in post from 80 in 2018 to 121 in 2024.

Modern Apprenticeships

- 3.3.7 Modern Apprenticeships offer young people aged 16-24 an opportunity to undertake an apprenticeship which combines learning with on-the-job experience, whilst earning a salary
- 3.3.8 We offer Modern Apprenticeships across a number of roles, linking to our hard to fill areas. We also continue to expand our Modern Apprenticeship offering as vacancies arise. In the last 12 months we have introduced Modern Apprenticeships in three additional areas where we have workforce capacity issues: Pensions, Roads, School Administration and Building Standards (see detail in Workforce Deep dive below) and are currently working on a new

apprenticeship offering for our Payroll team.

3.3.9 The Establishment Control Board reviews all request for recruitment and as part of that process the Board strongly encourages managers to consider Modern Apprenticeships. If there are roles that the Board feel could potentially be considered for a Modern Apprenticeship, the request is held until this is discussed further with recruiting manager. A recent example of this is School Support Assistant role, where Modern Apprenticeships have been developed for this role.

Graduate Apprenticeships

3.3.10 Graduate Apprenticeships offer individuals of any age, the opportunity to undertake an undergraduate degree whilst retaining their existing employment. We offer Graduate Apprenticeships to our existing staff (not restricted to the age 16-24 category) as a development and succession planning offering, where employees have an opportunity to undertake an undergraduate degree whilst working. The cost of the degree programme is funded by Skills Development Scotland through the apprenticeship levy.

3.3.11 Since we started offering Graduate Apprenticeships in 2018, 33 employees have taken up the opportunity to undertake these apprenticeships. Of this, six have completed a 4-year undergraduate degree programme with one of these graduates going onto graduate from a 1-year MSc in Cyber Security. There are a further twenty-six employees working their way through degree programmes currently. These are in a range of subjects as follows:

- Business Management
- Construction in the Built Environment
- Construction in the Built Environment - Quantity Surveyor
- Data Science
- Accountancy
- Software Development
- Civil Engineering

3.3.12 These Graduate Apprenticeships allow us to move employees with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours into areas of the organisation where we have the most need.

Internships

3.3.13 Following the success of the Kickstart Internship Scheme, reported to Staff Governance Committee in November 2022, where the Council employed 83 young people aged 16-24, at risk of long-term unemployment, on 6-month Internships, the Talent Team continue to work with the Employability Team, to create job and career opportunities for our young people, targeted at our hard to fill vacancies across the Council.

3.3.14 In 2023/24, we developed paid internships for Care Experienced Young People as part of our commitment as Corporate Parents and in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan where one of our aims is to sustain positive

destinations on leaving school for children in our priority localities, and another is to support care experienced young people into paid employment through public-sector funded employability programmes.

3.3.15 The Employability team secured funding for this pilot project and the Internships are fully funded at Grade G4, Living Wage. The Internships are 12 weeks in duration, with the number of hours per week increasing incrementally throughout the period to ease the young people into work, depending on their needs.

3.3.16 The team worked with the Youth Team in Children's Social Work to identify care experienced or looked after young people who they are supporting, who they believe would benefit from this opportunity.

3.3.17 In addition to the normal line management support, Interns are registered on employability programmes and have a dedicated employability keyworker, as well as a mentor/buddy, who is either a current or recent Apprentice / Intern, where this was possible.

3.3.18 In accordance with our commitments to care experienced young people, they are eligible for a guaranteed interview for any vacancies / apprenticeship opportunities within the Council at the end of their internship. We are also offering support in cv/application writing and interview skills to prepare them for recruitment and selection processes.

3.3.19 We have run a first tranche of this pilot and at the time of writing this report are about to commence a second tranche. In our first tranche, twenty-three young people expressed an interest in the programme and were matched with a job area that they wish to be considered for. Supported selection processes were developed, as many of these young people have never applied for jobs or attended interviews before. 14 young people were successful in gaining and completing an internship with the Council across a range of services, including early years, adult social care and roads.

Job Families and Capability Framework

3.3.20 In 2023 we introduced 'Job Families' to Aberdeen City Council. Job Families provide a way of grouping jobs together that share similar characteristics and means that we can provide a capability framework, development programme and communication and engagement plan that better meets the needs of our complex and diverse workforce. All our employees, in over one thousand different job roles at Aberdeen City Council, have now been mapped to a Job Family:



- 3.3.21 With the Job Family Capability Framework now a key feature of our appraisal process, Continuous Review and Development, we look forward to developing career pathways within each of the Job Families, which will help us to tackle hard to fill posts is by creating talent pipelines for specific job families that have high turnover or low supply of qualified candidates.
- 3.3.22 Having clear and transparent capabilities for each Job Family will allow employees to identify roles which they may be interested in, and which may be a good 'fit'. It will be clear what is required for each role, and employees can see any gaps they may have in their capabilities, and can work on developing those with learning, training and skills development.
- 3.3.23 Future development may include the creation of digital methods for employees to assess themselves, or be assessed against, the capabilities and behaviours required for each Job Family. This would allow employees to be 'aligned' to Job Families which are most closely related to their capabilities and behaviours, and which they may not otherwise have considered pursuing.
- 3.3.24 Being clear and transparent on the capabilities required for each Job Family allows for more consistent and bespoke recruitment and selection tools to be used. As part of our approach, the intention is to design a toolbox for People Managers of each of the Job Families to use so that their selection tools align with the Job Families. This will ensure that any development that employees undertake to meet gaps, directly aligns with how they will be assessed as part of recruitment and selection processes.

Aspiring Leaders and Accelerator Schemes

- 3.3.25 Our Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Report 2017-2021 identifies that Aberdeen City Council's senior leadership team consists of fourteen members, of which seven are male and seven are female. Currently, including interim arrangements and also the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership, the Council has twenty-two employees employed at Chief Officer level or above, eleven of whom are male and 11 of whom are female. Both of these sources show a gender balance of 50%, which is higher than the national average of 37% for senior managers in local government. However, the report also acknowledges that there is room for improvement in terms of other aspects of diversity, such as ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion or belief.
- 3.3.26 Diversity in senior leadership is important for several reasons. First, it reflects the diversity of our citizens, communities, and stakeholders, and enables us to better understand and respond to their needs and expectations. Second, it fosters a culture of inclusion and belonging, where different perspectives, backgrounds, and identities are valued and respected. Third, it enhances our innovation and creativity, as diverse teams can generate more ideas, challenge assumptions, and solve problems more effectively. Fourth, it improves our performance and reputation, as diverse leaders can inspire and motivate others, attract and retain talent, and build trust and credibility with internal and external partners.
- 3.3.27 We are committed to increasing the diversity of our senior leadership team and ensuring that they represent the full spectrum of our workforce and society. To achieve this, we are creating talent pipelines to identify and develop potential leaders from underrepresented groups and provide them with opportunities for career advancement and personal growth.
- 3.3.28 Our Aspiring Leaders programme 2023 focused on Chief Officers as a hard-to-fill post and provided a year-long programme of intensive development for fourteen candidates, who were supported by their own Chief Officers as part of their own succession planning. The programme was promoted to our various employee network groups, including our Equality Ambassadors Network. So far, three candidates have successfully progressed onto Chief Officer level roles within Aberdeen City Council and the Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership and the People Development team continue to support the other candidates on the programme to achieve their ambitions, and provide a pool of ready-talent for any future senior posts that become available.
- 3.3.29 The 2024 programme will recruit and develop candidates who are looking to make their first step into leadership and management, so that we are taking a grassroots approach to leadership development. This programme will launch in June 2024, and will have development themed around our core People Manager capabilities over a period of 9 months. We are introducing an Accelerator Scheme as part of this programme, which has been developed with input from diverse employees across the Council. The purpose of the scheme is to provide additional support to and remove barriers for individuals

who are currently underrepresented at leadership level in the organisation which includes women, disabled people, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and young people. The scheme will provide individuals on it with an internal coach and one-to-one People Development support as well as assurances that reasonable adjustments will be made to the wider development programme so they can fully participate.

3.3.30 In accordance with the decision on the Organisational Structure report from Council on 7 February 2024, the Chief Executive was instructed to bring a report to Council by July 2024 providing further detail on the activity which has been undertaken to improve diversity in recruitment, including leadership and management roles.

3.4 Workforce Planning

3.4.1 A further exercise that has been taken to tackle challenges with hard-to-fill posts is to support clusters with workforce planning.

3.4.2 In November 2021, a new approach to managing the organisation's training budgets was implemented to ensure effective prioritisation based on need. This involved Senior Management Teams completing 'Cluster People Development Plans.' These plans captured the development needs of each Cluster in areas such as statutory training needs, diversity training needs and digital and technological development needs.

3.4.3 Since this time, Chief Officers and their Service Managers (SMTs) now complete a template on an annual basis, this asks them to 'horizon scan' the development needs, risks, legislative changes, and hard-to-fill posts within their cluster and update their Cluster People Development Plan to set out what continuous professional development, support and budget they require from People & Organisational Development to meet their workforce needs.

3.4.4 To support with the completion of Cluster People Development Plans, each Cluster is assigned People and OD Advisors to help advise and guide on best practice and courses of action to address development needs. The Advisor also supports the Cluster throughout the year, monitoring their spend and helping maximise the training budgets to meet their needs. The Advisor also ensures that there is a flexible approach to using the training budgets so that Clusters can meet any unexpected demand.

3.4.5 The Cluster People Development Plan requires Senior Management Teams to identify potential roles which are hard to fill or which where they need support with succession planning. This enables the People Development team to allocate additional budget to assist with innovative recruitment practices, for example:

- £10,000 for Residential Social Work Qualifications (PG Cert). This was to meet the need for additional Residential Practitioners within our Children's Residential Services.
- £4296 for BA Social Work qualifications to help grow our own Social Workers in Children's Social Work.

- £13,420 for LGV Training to increase the number of Drivers within Waste and Recycling Services.

3.4.6 Cluster People Development Plans are collated and analysed, with trends and themes identified which informs the corporate training offering but also allows for the achievement of economies of scale when it comes to the procurement and purchasing of training.

3.5 **Attraction of New Talent**

3.5.1 It is acknowledged that for some roles in the Council, there is a requirement to address workforce needs by recruiting externally, either because of specific qualification or skill requirements, or where there is simply no internal talent pool to match the job requirements for the role.

Employer of Choice

3.5.2 At the heart of our approach to hard-to-fill posts is ensuring that Aberdeen City Council is seen and promoted as an **employer of choice** that attracts a diverse workforce where everyone feels valued. There are a number of key strands within this that acts as evidence of progress made towards delivery of the workforce plan.

3.5.3 Being an 'employer of choice' means that Aberdeen City Council has a positive reputation and image in the labour market, and attracts and retains high-quality employees who are committed, productive and engaged. It also means that the council offers a competitive reward package, provides opportunities for career development and learning, fosters a healthy and inclusive work environment, and values employee feedback and participation.

3.5.4 One of the ways Aberdeen City Council is working towards being an 'employer of choice' is by showcasing its work, including culture and values, on social media platforms. For example, the council has active accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, where it regularly posts about job vacancies, employee stories, awards and recognition, key pieces of work and strategies, events and initiatives, and other relevant information. In doing so, the Council is demonstrating its work, its ethos and its strategic priorities which may align with the interests and values of prospective employees.

3.5.5 Another way the council is increasing its visibility and attractiveness as an employer is by interacting with the local community and schools, colleges and universities, raising awareness of the different career paths and opportunities available. Furthermore, the council supports various initiatives and campaigns that align with its values and goals, such as the Living Wage, Fair Work, and the Scottish Business Pledge. These activities help the council to build a positive reputation and relationship with the community, and to attract and develop talent for the future.

3.5.6 Another way we are increasing our reach as an employer to increase our talent pool is through our approaches to hybrid and flexible working, developing staff digital skills and use of technology.

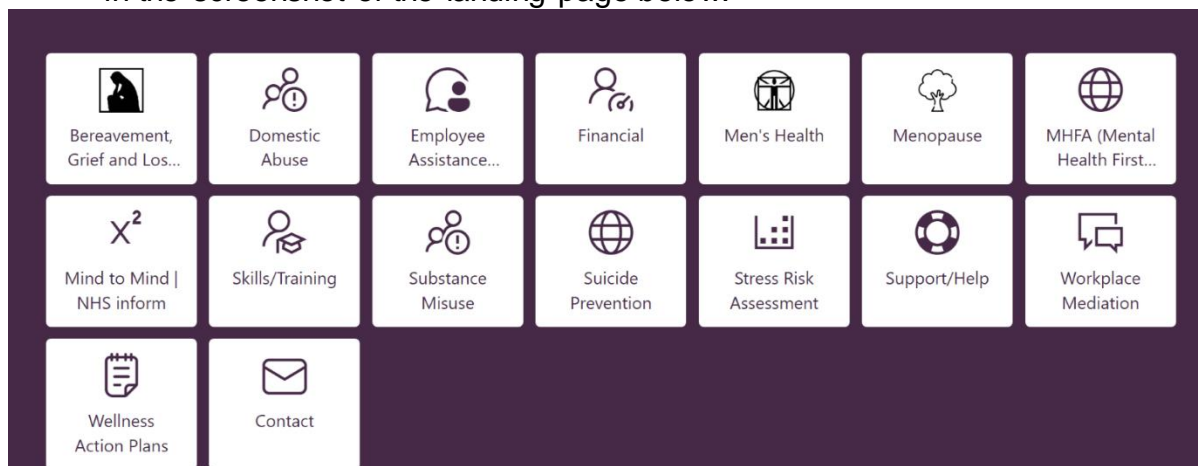
- 3.5.7 By promoting our approach to hybrid working, we can demonstrate that we are a modern, progressive, and flexible employer that cares about its employees and the community. This can help us to attract and retain talent from diverse backgrounds, locations, and sectors, and to enhance our reputation and competitiveness in the market.
- 3.5.8 One of the benefits of our approach to hybrid working is that it allows us to offer more flexibility and choice to our current and potential employees. By enabling people to work from home, from the office, or from other locations, different preferences, needs, and lifestyles, can be accommodated, and we can improve the work-life balance and wellbeing of our staff. This can also help us to reduce our environmental impact and operational costs, as well as to increase productivity and innovation.
- 3.5.9 We can use our approach to hybrid working to increase our attractiveness as an employer by showcasing our commitment to employee empowerment, trust, and autonomy. We can highlight how we support our staff to work in the ways that suit them best, and how we provide them with the necessary tools, training, and guidance to work effectively and collaboratively in a hybrid environment. We can also emphasise how we foster a culture of inclusion, diversity, and belonging, where everyone can feel valued and respected regardless of where they work from. We can communicate these messages through various channels, such as our website, social media, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, and events. We can also share success stories and testimonials from our staff who have benefited from hybrid working and invite feedback and suggestions from our stakeholders on how to improve our practices and policies.
- 3.5.10 Attracting diverse talent is also a priority to ensure that we maximise capacity in the workforce and also ensure that we are representative of our community, including at leadership level. One of our existing [Equality Outcomes](#) focuses on improving the diversity of our workforce and addressing any areas of under-representation and the Council has a number of employee working groups which are undertaking work and activities which support this. This includes achieving and maintaining accreditations such as Disability Confident, signing and promoting pledges such as the Menopause Workplace Pledge, developing, supporting and attending events such as Grampian Pride and Black History Month events, and also creating diversity packs for our recruitment adverts. Further and continued work is required and employee working groups are focusing on this. More detail will be included in the aforementioned report to Council by July 2024.

3.6 **Absence Improvement**

- 3.6.1 Sickness absence has a significant impact on an organisation's resource capacity. As a result, work is underway to increase and improve our workforce capacity through taking steps to maximise employee attendance at work and reduce sickness absence.

3.6.2 Absence data is being analysed through deep dives by Cluster SMTs with each Cluster having a dedicated People & OD Advisor to work with them on identifying areas of concern and the interventions and support that could be put in place to assist employees to remain at or return to work.

3.6.3 A wide range of health and wellbeing supports and sign posting are available to staff via the online Health and Wellbeing pages on SharePoint, as detailed in the screenshot of the landing page below:



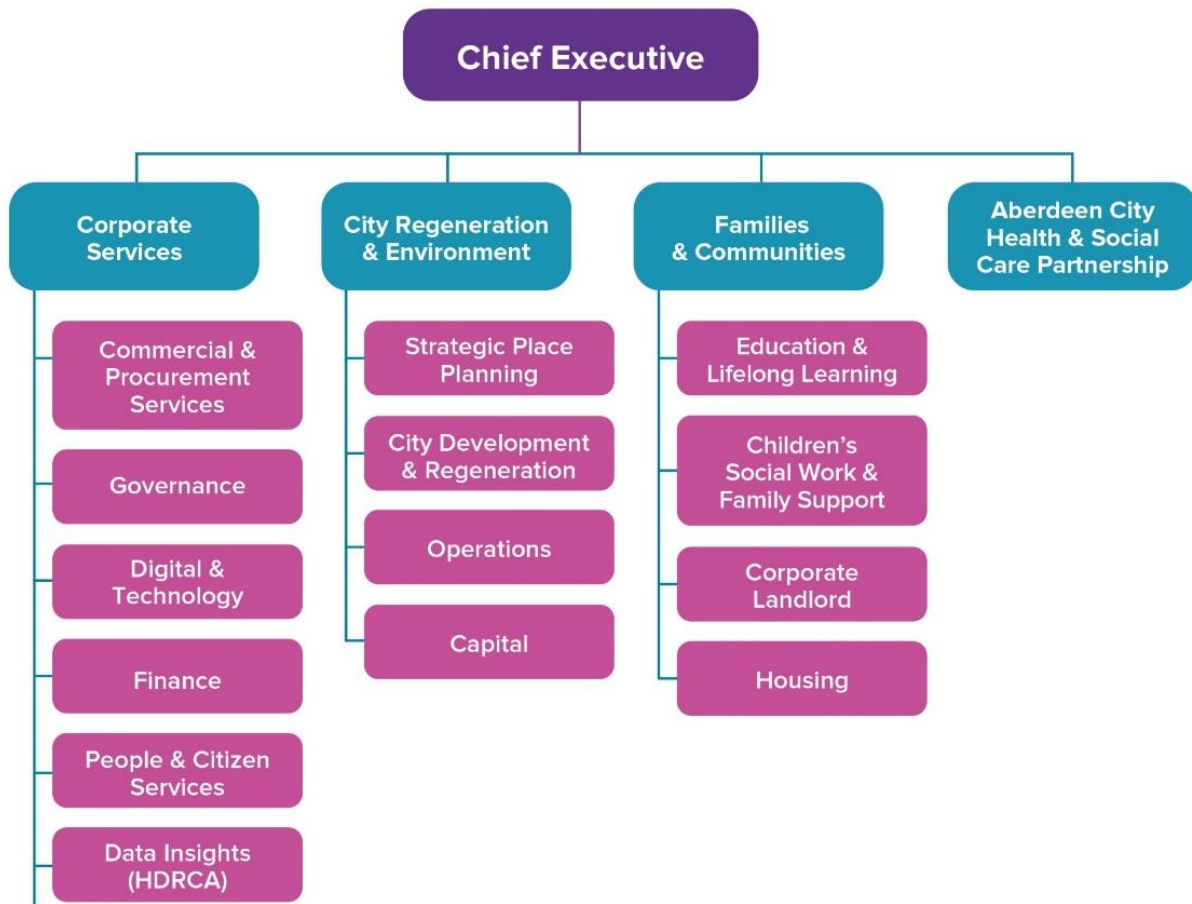
3.6.4 The Council has recently signed up to two pledges which illustrate the Council's commitment to supporting employees who are facing challenging health issues, namely the Menopause Pledge and Pregnancy Loss Pledge.

3.6.5 An ongoing challenge is ensuring that all staff are able to access the support resources that are available. To assist with this, front line roadshows have been run for staff in Waste Services and Children's Services, with more planned for other front-line staff. At these events, staff are supported to sign up to the employee benefits site, which gives them full access to the Employee Assistance Programme, and leaflets are handed out which provide a QR code which staff can use to access the Health and Wellbeing support pages.

3.6.6 The Council also has a team of fully trained Mental Health First Aiders who staff can access for support.

3.7 Workforce Deep Dive: Hard to Fill Roles

3.7.1 For the purposes of this report, a summary of the main hard to fill roles by function and cluster have been included with a summary of the issues and the actions taken to try to improve the ability to recruit / retain employees into these roles.



3.8 Corporate Services

3.8.1 Governance

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Solicitors Recruiting and retaining solicitors is a challenge for public sector organisations because we are competing with private practices, which can offer higher and more bespoke performance related salaries and other non-financial benefits. There may also be a perception of greater autonomy and flexibility in private practice work, and a perception of more bureaucracy and political constraints within the public sector.</p>	<p>Aberdeen City Council has a well-established trainee scheme, where employees with a law degree are able to undertake their traineeship in order to achieve full accreditation and progress to become full solicitors with the council. To retain, develop and motivate solicitors we invest heavily in their continuous professional development.</p>
<p>Environmental Health Officers Recruitment of Environmental Health Officers is a challenge due to the qualification requirements for this position (a degree accredited by REHIS) and the challenge with finding or supporting candidates with this qualification. The only current provider of a REHIS-approved qualification in Scotland is the University of the West of Scotland. Alternative qualifications may be considered by REHIS if they are in a relevant subject and accompany experience in environmental health related work). However, there is still an application and approval process to achieve this. Therefore, it is a very niche talent pool with local authorities most likely “poaching” from one-another.</p>	<p>The People & Citizen Services Team are working closely with the EHO Managers to look at creative ways to fill these very hard to fill roles. A Regulatory Modern Apprenticeship is currently being developed at a national level with anticipated launch in summer 2024. This framework is more suited to Pest Control roles, and it is unclear at this stage how this Apprenticeship will be recognised and support Environmental Health progression due to REHIS requirements.</p> <p>Work is ongoing with the service to review pathways for Trainee Authorised Officers and Trainee Environmental Health Officers.</p>
<p>Trading Standards Officers Trading Standards Officers also need specific qualifications and require a combination of technical, legal and interpersonal skills that are not easily found in the labour market. Trading Standards Officers must have a good knowledge of consumer protection laws and regulations, as well as the ability to enforce them in a fair and effective manner. Unlike other public sector roles, such as teachers or nurses, trading standards does not have a high profile or a clear career path. Many people may not be aware of what trading standards officers do, what qualifications they need or what benefits they offer. This may result in a lack of interest or awareness</p>	<p>A Regulatory Modern Apprenticeship is currently being developed at a national level with anticipated launch in summer 2024. Work is ongoing to see how this could fit into a potential career pathway upon completion of the apprenticeship, as further qualifications would be required to qualify as a Trading Standards Officer.</p>

among potential applicants, especially among younger generations who may not see trading standards as a relevant or attractive career option.

3.8.2 *Digital and Technology Roles*

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>There is currently a digital skills gap across Scotland caused by a combination of factors, such as the rapid pace of technological change, the low uptake of digital education and training, the supply of digital skills not keeping pace with the demand and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Roles such as Data Engineers, 365 Developers and Azure Specialists are particularly challenging to source candidates.</p>	<p>The provision of hybrid or in some cases remote working since the pandemic has helped some of the digital and technology hard to fill roles. The team continues to promote hybrid working in recruitment adverts. In addition, the team are working closely with the team within People & Citizen Services to develop creative recruitment advertising campaigns using social media platforms, and to promote our vacancies on university jobs boards to try to appeal to new graduates seeking their first role.</p> <p>The Service has also supported employability initiatives such as the long-term unemployed scheme, offering internships, which led to one of the Interns successfully being appointed to a fixed term hard to fill role. These programmes are ongoing.</p>

3.8.3 *Finance*

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Pensions</p> <p>There are challenges with an ageing workforce as well as challenges attracting applicants perhaps due a perception of what working in Pensions would be like and the specialist nature of the roles.</p>	<p>In the last 12 months, a Modern Apprenticeship pathway has been introduced in the Pensions team. Two Modern Apprentices have been recruited, undertaking the Business Administration Framework. This is the first time the team have considered Modern Apprenticeships as a resourcing solution. This approach has been very successful to date, and the team have been very positive about bringing young people into the team to support their succession planning.</p>
<p>Accountants</p>	<p>Our approach to finding a solution to the challenges in recruiting qualified accountants has been to 'grow our own'.</p> <p>The Accountant Career Progression scheme was introduced in 2020, expanding</p>

Recruiting qualified accountants is challenging both historically and currently, as it can be difficult to compete with the private sector and oil & gas industry locally.

on the successful Graduate Trainee Scheme. Offering a Career Progression Scheme to 'grow our own' accountants provides succession planning benefits to the organisation and for postholders and is an important blend in the resourcing of the team. The Scheme provides a structured career path for postholders employed in the Accounting team who are undertaking professional qualifications with the support of the Council. From entry level to qualified Accountant level is an approximate 5-year journey of experience and study and there are a number of routes by which to achieve this including the Graduate Apprenticeship.

The Scheme is an effective way to attract people to these vacancies and supports progression and retention within the service.

3.9 City Regeneration and Environment

3.9.1 Operations

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Mechanics</p> <p>The Oil & Gas / Renewables industry continues to attract qualified Mechanics potential applicants for other technical roles, away from the motor industry, which provides a challenge within the Council and to other local maintenance employers. The private sector pay structure indicates the rates of pay vary from £17.80 to £20 per hour, compared to our current pay scale of £16.80 per hour. This is further compounded as some private sector organisations add bonuses to these rates dependent upon additional duties/skillsets. This is particularly the case with attracting candidates which have MOT specialist knowledge.</p>	<p>The People & Citizen Services Team have been working with the Fleet Services Team to develop their grow your own apprenticeship route and currently have three Modern Apprenticeship roles being used to support the difficulty in being able to recruit qualified Mechanics. Recruitment for 2 Apprentice Mechanics will start early April 2024.</p> <p>In addition, the team have taken Foundation Apprentice students on work placement. This provides an opportunity to showcase the Council as a future Employer of Choice and potential applicants for the upcoming Modern Apprenticeships.</p> <p>The Fleet team are also supporting the ABZ Campus work experience programme offering work taster placements to secondary pupils interested to find out more about this career pathway.</p>

<p>Drivers – LGV LGV drivers are difficult to recruit to, given the job market. Many of those with the relevant driving licence work in the private sector due to higher rates of pay, particularly within haulage and long-distance driving. This also makes retention difficult.</p>	<p>The People & Citizen Services Team have been working with the Waste and Recycling Team to support with the challenges in sourcing LGV qualified candidates. This has included offering internal development opportunities to Refuse Loaders to obtain their LGV licence. In addition, we participated in an initiative to partner with a local charitable employability organisation to employ individuals as Refuse Loaders whilst obtaining their funded LGV licence, which was funded by the partner organisation. We have also undertaken some creative advertising with the team, including social media campaigns and producing flyers with details about the role and the employee benefits, which were handed out at Truck Stops to attract long-distance and haulage drivers.</p> <p>£13,420 allocated from the Corporate Training Budget in 2023/24 for LGV Training to increase the number of Drivers within Waste and Recycling Services.</p>
<p>Trades Recruiting to qualified trade roles in Building Services has become more challenging in recent years. This is a national issue but is exacerbated in the Aberdeen area as a result of the Oil & Gas industry which has been more appealing in terms of remuneration.</p>	<p>Our approach to our recruitment challenges in this area has been to build an apprenticeship programme to ensure a regular and ongoing source of talent on an annual basis. Building Services have a long-established modern apprenticeship programme which has seen an annual recruitment exercise resulting in the appointment of 12-15 modern apprentices across the various trade roles. Apprentices are well supported through their apprenticeship both in terms of formal line management and dedicated mentors and the programme has resulted in a number of apprentices go on to win national awards.</p>
<p>Roads Operatives There are challenges around an ageing workforce as well as challenges around recruiting HGV Drivers. This is because the role is hybrid in as much as the postholders are being required to do more than just driving.</p>	<p>The Roads Team participated in the Internship scheme for Care Experienced Young People, funded through the Employability Team within City Development and Regeneration. This has been highly successful and has led to the development of a Modern Apprenticeship role for the Team, and two of these Interns have been successful in securing these two Modern Apprenticeships.</p>
<p>Building Standards Officers</p>	<p>During 2020/2021 the Scottish Government along with Local Authority Building Standards Scotland developed a workforce strategy to address national issues in attracting, recruiting and retaining staff within Building Standards, in particular the younger demographic, to support succession planning. One key element of this has been the development of an apprenticeship route. In August 2022, a pilot of a new Modern Apprenticeship was introduced, and we participated in this pilot</p>

recruiting a Modern Apprenticeship to our Building Standards team in September 2022 for a 2-year apprenticeship. The team is very supportive of this new Modern Apprenticeship and aims to support future cohorts.

3.10 Families & Communities

3.10.1 Corporate Landlord

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Estate Surveyors This role is particularly challenging to fill and is both a local and a national problem across local government. Surveyors are highly skilled professionals who can command high wages and opportunities for career progression in the market, especially in fields such as estate or asbestos surveying that require specific qualifications and experience. The public sector may have budget constraints or pay scales that limit its ability to attract and retain surveyors. Another possible reason is that the public sector may have a negative image or reputation among surveyors.</p>	<p>Work is ongoing with the service with People & Citizen Services, to review potential pathways, minimum qualification requirements and linking with RGU and the Open University to explore how they could support this.</p>
<p>Asbestos Surveyors Asbestos surveyors need to have specialised training to safely identify, inspect, and manage asbestos-containing materials in buildings and structures. There is a shortage of qualified and experienced asbestos surveyors in the market, as many people are not interested in working with such a dangerous substance. Moreover, asbestos surveying is a demanding field that requires constant updating of knowledge and skills, as well as dealing with complex and challenging situations.</p>	<p>Work is ongoing with the service with People & Citizen Services, to review potential pathways, minimum qualification requirements and linking with RGU and the Open University to explore how they could support this.</p>

3.10.2 Education & Lifelong Learning

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Early Years Practitioner (EYP)</p>	<p>A bespoke EYP Traineeship was developed in 2018 and 3 cohorts have been undertaken, the opportunity being offered on a secondment basis to internal</p>

<p>In 2019, as a result of the early years expansion programme, there was a need to substantially increase our workforce in this area, both in terms of Early Years Practitioners and Senior Early Years Practitioners. Whilst Early Years Practitioners is not currently hard to fill as a result of our career pathways, we continue to have a career path in place to ensure a continual supply of talent for this workforce.</p>	<p>employees who were seeking a role career change. This resulted in sixty-three fully qualified EYPs.</p> <p>In terms of our ongoing workforce and succession planning approach, we support Foundation Apprenticeship students to undertake their work placements in our Early Years settings. This provides an opportunity for young people to experience what it is like to work in a nursery setting and consider the council as a future employer and potentially apply either for an entry level role as Support Worker or for a Modern Apprenticeship.</p> <p>As part of the Early Years expansion programme, in 2021, 37 Modern Apprentices were recruited to support our workforce resourcing shortage at that time. Since 2021, the Service has continued to recruit Modern Apprentices year on year, and we currently have 33 Modern Apprentices in Early Years.</p> <p>This Apprenticeship Programme provides a pathway to Early Years Practitioner roles.</p>
<p>Senior Early Years Practitioner (SEYP)</p> <p>Senior Early Years Practitioner roles remain a challenge to recruit to, both internally and externally, as we have offered the leadership development programme to all of our internal employees who are ready to step up to this role.</p>	<p>In response to our challenges in recruiting SEYPs, in 2020 an in-house 'stepping into leadership' programme was developed, which has achieved great success. The programme was designed to empower, upskill and support internal EYPs to apply for the role of SEYP, with a focus on leadership and management themes. The programme has run over two cohorts and to date 38 SEYPs have been appointed.</p> <p>The team continue to offer short-term acting arrangements for aspiring EYPs to provide cover for SEYPs where these opportunities arise, and this gives employees the opportunity to experience the more senior role and the additional responsibility it requires.</p>
<p>Teachers</p> <p>Specific secondary subject teacher roles are hard to fill posts. These include STEM subjects, and in particular, Maths, Physics, and Design & Technology, English and Home Economics posts would also fall into this category. This is both a local and a national issue across Scotland.</p>	<p>We continue to work closely with our university partners, offering placements to students as they undertake their degree programmes and providing them with a positive employer of choice experience. We have an established probationer programme and do our best to offer our probationers the opportunity to note interest and be considered for vacancies ahead of external applicants.</p> <p>We also promote teaching as a career at all our recruitment and careers events.</p>

Gaelic Medium Education

Recruiting Gaelic speakers to work within our Gaelic provision at Gilcomstoun school is very challenging. We continue to try and recruit a vacant Teacher position. Despite a number of advertising campaigns using a range of advertising media, there have been no applicants. This is not unique to Aberdeen city and is a national issue. Aberdeen has also struggled to attract applicants due to the geographical location of the city, as most Gaelic Teachers and recent graduates reside in the Highlands, Islands and West Coast of Scotland. This creates an additional challenge due to the relocation considerations for future applicants.

Advertising campaigns have been used to promote the city itself as well as the surrounding areas as a place to live and thrive.

3.10.3 Children's Social Work & Family Support**Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge****Residential Practitioners / Trainee Residential Practitioners**

Residential Practitioners can be difficult to recruit to because they require specific qualifications which include a Social Work, Social Care or Education qualification plus a Residential Care SVQ. There are also Trainee Residential Practitioners who do not yet hold the Residential Care SVQ and who can be supported by Aberdeen City Council to complete this and become qualified Residential Practitioners. The role comes with significant challenges given the nature of the work and there are weekend, evening and night-time shift requirements as it is a 24/7 service. Those in the social work or social care profession prefer the flexibility and working environment that comes with field work and will not seek employment in Residential Care.

Mitigating Actions

The People & Citizen Services Team work closely with the Social Work Team to support this hard to fill area. We have run social media recruitment campaigns, promoting vacancies on university job boards to try and promote service and any vacancies.

In addition, we have amended the selection process to include open days, visits to our establishments, so that candidates can get an opportunity to see what the role involves.

£10,000 was allocated from the Corporate Training Budget in 2023/24 for Residential Social Work Qualifications (PG Cert). This was to meet the need for additional Residential Practitioners within our Children's Residential Services.

Social Workers

Children & Families Social Work continue to find challenge in filling arising vacancies. This is both a local and a national issue. It is widely recognised that statutory children's social work, with its focus on the care and protection of vulnerable children and their families, is one of the most

The Children's Social Work team work closely with People & Citizen Services to find solutions to these challenges. A Trainee Social Work scheme has been developed where the opportunity to undertake a degree in social work was offered to workers undertaking support worker roles within children's social work and in other related areas of the council. This initiative, funded

complex areas of social work. This challenge is particularly hard felt in operational fieldwork posts as well as in residential services. Workers regularly cite a need to work many more than contracted hours and a lack of work-life balance when asked why they are leaving their posts. Workers also are noted to sometimes opt to work in other areas of social work, such as care management, adult and justice social work as an alternative to children’s social work.

A further challenge is our difficulty in the ability to recruit experienced social workers especially when they do not live in the local area, with some citing the geography and costs of relocating home as a precluding factor.

Whilst there are a small but significant proportion of staff who have accrued a number of years of service within children’s social work, this pool of staff is ageing out, with new recruits now tending to remain in posts for shorter periods of time.

by vacant social work posts, has allowed existing employees, the opportunity to undertake the qualification on a distance learning basis. To date, six employees have taken up this opportunity with the first one due to graduate next year.

Through close working with the Robert Gordon University, we take the opportunity to align on training opportunities and share thinking on practice trends, holding recruitment workshops and careers events together, to encourage newly qualified members of staff to apply for vacant posts. The Children’s Social Work team also deliver guest lectures at RGU. We also support placements for Social Work Students in Training, who may be interested to continue their social work career with Aberdeen City Council on graduation.

£4296 allocated in 2023/24 from Corporate Training Budget for BA Social Work qualifications to help grow our own Social Workers in Children’s Social Work.

3.11 Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership

Hard to Fill Posts and summary of challenge	Mitigating Actions
<p>Social Workers Social Workers are hard to fill roles both locally and nationally. Currently, Adult Social Work report that they are successfully filling roles with newly qualified social workers (NQSW), however there are challenges in retention, sometimes related to geography, with NQSWs making decisions to relocate away from Aberdeen nearer families.</p> <p>In addition, there are challenges in recruiting experienced Social Workers to</p>	<p>Similar to Children’s Social Work, The Adult Social Work team work closely with People & Citizen Services to find solutions to these challenges. A Trainee Social Work scheme has been developed where the opportunity to undertake a degree in social work was offered to workers undertaking support roles across the teams. This initiative, funded by vacant social work posts, has allowed existing employees, the opportunity to undertake the qualification on a distance learning basis. To date, four employees have taken up this opportunity and this forms part of a rolling programme.</p>

<p>cover vacancies as they arise who are able to manage a caseload and complex cases.</p> <p>A further challenge is our difficulty in the ability to recruit experienced social workers especially when they do not live in the local area, with some citing the geography and costs of relocating home as a precluding factor.</p>	<p>Through close working with the Robert Gordon University, we take the opportunity to align on training opportunities and share thinking on practice trends, holding recruitment workshops and careers events together, to encourage newly qualified members of staff to apply for vacant posts. The Adult Social Work team also deliver guest lectures at RGU. We also support placements for Social Work Students in Training, who may be interested to continue their social work career with Aberdeen City Council on graduation.</p>
<p>Support Workers Recruiting front line Support Workers for our in-house Adult Learning Disability service is a significant challenge. This is both a local and national issue. The shortages in the adult social care workforce are a high-profile national issue, highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>We have a number of approaches in place to try to mitigate the challenges in recruiting to these roles.</p> <p>The first is our 'grow our own' scheme. Since 2019, we have recruited 11 Modern Apprentices in Adult Social Care, and this programme will continue year on year. In addition, the service support Foundation Apprenticeship students to undertake their work placement providing an opportunity for the student to experience working in social care and for considering the Council an Employer of Choice in the future.</p> <p>The Service has also supported a number of employability programmes including the Kickstart Scheme and Care Experienced Young People Internships which has had some successful outcomes for both the service and the young people.</p> <p>We are working on a national basis with colleagues in COSLA and SPDS to promote social care as a career and some great content has been produced and available on the myjobscotland website.</p>

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Failure to meet strategic objectives due to lack of capacity.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to deliver our strategic objectives.	L	Yes
Compliance	Failure to meet statutory requirements due to lack of capacity.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to deliver our statutory requirements.	L	Yes
Operational	Failure to meet operational service delivery requirements due to lack of capacity.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to deliver our operational service delivery requirements.	L	Yes

Financial	Inability to move employees across the organisation to meet capacity needs, therefore relying on additional headcount or other additional staffing costs.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that there is an appropriate level of internal movement and workforce talent pipelining.	L	Yes
Reputational	Inability to attract and retain employees through not being an employer of choice.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that Aberdeen City Council remains an attractive employer for prospective and existing employees.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Inability to meet climate and environmental goals due to lack of capacity.	The activities outlined in this report are assurance that work is undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to deliver our climate and environmental goals.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The work outlined in this report supports the below taken from the Council's Policy Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the city's universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and

	<p>apprenticeships. - Promote the number of apprenticeships on offer through the council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems. • Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train and support its staff.
<p>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The work outlined in this report supports the below Stretch Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four hundred unemployed Aberdeen City residents supported into Fair Work by 2026 • Five hundred Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The work outlined in this report supports the below Stretch Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026 • 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2), will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. • 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/ Disabilities will experience a positive destination by 2026.
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p>	<p>The work outlined in this report will support the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Delivery Plan – January 2023

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	An Integrated Impact Assessment for Recruitment and Selection has been created and referred to for this report: Individual incentives would have their own assessments as required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	n/a

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Workforce Delivery Plan – January 2023](#)
- 10.2 [Council Delivery Plan 2024/25](#)
- 10.3 [Edinburgh City Council - Workforce Deep Dive June 2023](#)

11. APPENDICES

- A **Workforce Delivery Plan – January 2023** - extract to show Strategic Objectives and mitigating actions relating to ‘Right People’.
- B **Council Delivery Plan 2024/25** – extract to show Commissioning Intentions and Service Standards relating to workforce planning.
- C **Risk Register – Assurance Map: Cluster –People & Organisational Development** – extract to show mitigating actions relating to workforce capacity risks.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix A: Workforce Delivery Plan: Right People - Building our capacity through attracting, recruiting, moving talent.

Strategic Objectives and mitigating actions	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26+
Aberdeen City Council is seen and promoted as an employer of choice that attracts a diverse workforce where everyone feels valued.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility of jobs through social media and community interaction including schools • Development of broader partnerships with third sector and others for employability within diverse groups 	X	X	
The movement or recruitment of talent is intelligence-led, planned as talent-pipelines and connected to shifting demands that aligns to our LOIP outcomes relating to employability. It is also linked to our approaches for workforce planning and internal career progression and is tailored by job family; and addresses areas of occupational segregation and underrepresentation, including in leadership positions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in further employability schemes • Relief pools • Workforce plans enable talent pipeline planning on an annual basis • Flexible job roles • Use of community volunteers 	X X	X X	X X
Our approach to recruitment and selection is best practice, streamlined, understood and transparent and it utilises a range of assessment tools together with competency-based interview techniques. It is inclusive, addresses unconscious bias and barriers and includes positive action initiatives where they are most needed	X	X	X
Career Pathways are clear, structured, visible, inclusive and available and attract and support young people entering our workforce, our data shows sustained improvement in demographics; proactively enabling employees to progress their careers with ACC.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand re.cruit scheme to enable the career progression scheme element and increased use of alternative duties • Commence ABZ Campus Employability Pathways Programme –with work experience placements with key hard to fill areas • Increased number of Foundation Apprentices work placements over broader range of frameworks and increased range of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities • Develop bespoke grow-our-own traineeships for professional roles which are hard-to-fill 	X	X X X	X X
Workforce Planning is in place for all clusters that clearly defines areas of focus based on data.		X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilises traineeships, apprenticeships and grow your own schemes for key hard-to-fill roles • Targets areas of occupational segregation 			

- Supports groups of underrepresented staff to be able to progress within the organisation

Employees feel valued and committed to Aberdeen City Council via a Strategic Reward and Recognition approach

Roles in the organisation will be grouped according to their typical demands and workstyles as 'job families'

x

x

x

Appendix B: Council Delivery Plan – Commissioning Intentions and Service Standards

Commissioning Intentions	ACC Capacity
Develop talent pipelines to support internal career progression and development.	Subject to demands on the service
Use job families and worker styles to provide more tailored development and appropriate mandatory training	Sufficient internal resource
Build on our approaches to hybrid and flexible working through developing staff digital skills and use of technology.	Subject to demands on the service
Service Standards	Last Actuals
Continue our workforce commitment to connecting young people to a range of opportunities and supporting and developing them in their roles, including maintaining Young Person's Guarantee employer status.	100%
We will deliver annual workforce planning meetings for each Cluster	100%

Appendix C: Risk Register

Risk Title	Risk Description	Risk Lead	Control Actions	Last Reviewed	% complete	Target Complete
Workforce Capacity and Organisational Resilience	<p>Risk that changes to and within the workforce, caused by external factors and pressures e.g. budgetary restrictions, population reduction and changes including availability of required skills significantly impact on our capacity and ability to deliver services and on the resilience of our workforce.</p> <p>Risk that this impacts as follows: dips in individual performance, increase in staff absences, increase in number of conduct investigations, fewer managers and staff to conduct staff investigations, strain on labour relations,</p>	Lindsay MacInnes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery of year one workforce capacity aspects of the transformation programme, including Workforce Strategy and Workforce Delivery Plan - by 31st March 2024. 2. Completion of VSER process 23/24 including capture of knowledge and requirements of each role being removed, including mandatory training, approvals and delegations attached to these roles, in order to mitigate internal control failures resulting from loss of key staff –by 31st March 2024 3. Agree and implement an escalation process for services to identify gaps in service delivery –to be owned by ECMT - by 30th April 2024 4. Redesign of teams around Organisational Design Principles to ensure teams are resilient to any reduction in capacity and loss of capability - 31st March 2024 5. Revise Council Delivery Plan, specifically Commissioning Intentions and Service Standards to recognise the increasing demand on a reduced workforce in order to manage expectations as to what we can deliver–31st March 2024 7. Review of statutory service provision to identify opportunities for transfer or legislative reform. –31st March 2024 8. Delivery of actions contained within the Mental Health Action Plan and ongoing review of the Plan through the PDSA model for improvement cycle. –31st March 2024 9. Continued roll out of Mental Health First Aider Training -- 31st March 2024 10. Continued roll out of Health and Wellbeing Roadshows for frontline staff –31st March 2024 11. Early engagement with Trade Unions via Director/Union Engagement weekly meetings, informal weekly meetings 	26/01/24	65%	29/06/24

Risk Title	Risk Description	Risk Lead	Control Actions	Last Reviewed	% complete	Target Complete
	deterioration in mental wellbeing and reduced goodwill of employees which in turn impacts on service delivery		<p>between Employee Relations and Wellbeing Manager and Trade Unions- ongoing</p> <p>12. Continued and expanded use of temporary movement of staff process to cover risks to our capacity for emergency response due to reduced/compressed operational teams. - ongoing</p> <p>13. Continued implementation of the workstreams within the Absence Improvement Project -- 31st March 2024</p> <p>14. Monitoring and management of workflow peaks via the Establishment Control Board and enabling creative and sustainable use of resource as appropriate- ongoing.</p> <p>15. Monitoring of Workforce data to allow trends and hotspot areas to be highlighted for interventions ongoing.</p> <p>16. Continued use of external communications campaigns and expectation-setting with citizens in terms of financial situation, any areas of reduction in line with this, and promotion of positive, proactive activity - ongoing.</p> <p>17. Work alongside employability team in engaging young workforce (schools, colleges, universities) and other untapped pools around our opportunities (foundation/modern apprenticeships, placements, ABZ campus etc) in particular around our shortage occupations – ongoing.</p> <p>18. Utilising digital technology to support flexible and agile working, reduce travel costs and emissions, enhance collaboration and communication, and improve service delivery and customer satisfaction - ongoing</p> <p>19. Developing digital skills and confidence across the workforce through training, coaching, mentoring, peer support, and online resources - ongoing</p>			

Risk Title	Risk Description	Risk Lead	Control Actions	Last Reviewed	% complete	Target Complete
			<p>20. Implementing digital solutions that enable automation of manual activities, integration, and innovation of business processes and systems to release capacity- ongoing</p> <p>21. Engaging with internal and external stakeholders to identify and prioritise digital opportunities, challenges, and needs, and to co-design and co-deliver digital solutions that meet service outcomes and user expectations - ongoing</p>			
People & Citizen Services Service Delivery	Risk to delivery of key services in the event of failures of systems, processes or capabilities		Continuous review of robust Business Continuity Plan; Cluster demand analysis and upstream early intervention measures; all members of staff reminded to take equipment home to enable working from home; Cluster development plan and cluster workforce and succession planning including talent programme enabled	15/6/22	70	31/3/24

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	22 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/102
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald, Executive Director – Corporate Services
CHIEF OFFICER	Lindsay MacInnes, Interim Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services
REPORT AUTHOR	Sandie Scott, People Development Manager
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Committee for implementing the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, replacing the existing Diversity and Equality Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 approves the implementation of the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services to ensure that the Policy document and all supporting process and guidance documents are easily accessible to all staff and managers and that managers are supported in the fair and consistent application of the policy and process through appropriate training;
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services to publish the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy on the Council's external website; and
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services to update the mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for employees to reflect the newly updated policy and guidance.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Why do we need a policy?

- 3.1.1 An equality, diversity and inclusion policy sets out the organisation's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of protected

characteristics, such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 3.1.2 An equality, diversity and inclusion policy can help the organisation to comply with relevant legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and to foster a positive and inclusive culture where everyone can contribute and thrive.
- 3.1.3 An equality, diversity and inclusion policy creates clarity for all employees and elected members on best-practice equality and inclusion initiatives.
- 3.1.4 An equality, diversity and inclusion policy highlights the Council's commitment to upholding the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and ensures that due regard is given to the diverse needs of our citizens and communities in all Council activities.

3.2 Current Equality Outcomes and Statutory Duties

3.2.1 The Council has a [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) under the Equality Act 2010 which means that the Council must strive to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.2.2 Under the [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#), public sector organisations in Scotland must also:

- report on mainstreaming the equality duty.
- publish equality outcomes and report progress.
- assess and review the equality impact of policies and practices.
- gather, use and publish employee information.
- Use information on the characteristics of members or board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers.
- publish gender pay gap information.
- publish equal pay statements.
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement.
- publish in a manner that is accessible.

3.2.3 The Council has ten Equality Outcomes that were set in 2021 and will be renewed and refreshed in 2025. These ten outcomes can be found [here](#). The outcomes set the Council's ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusion as a service provider and employer. Extensive consultation and engagement with community groups and employees is undertaken when renewing these outcomes.

3.3 The Existing Policy

- 3.3.1 The existing Diversity and Equality Policy was implemented in June 2012.
- 3.3.2 Since June 2012, our understanding of and approach to equality, diversity and inclusion has changed, as have the expectations of citizens. As such, there is a requirement to revise the policy to reflect changes in legislation and approach and additional improvements.
- 3.3.3 The existing policy has an internal, employment-related focus and does not encompass the breadth and depth of equality, diversity and inclusion work at Aberdeen City Council.
- 3.3.4 A refresh is required to ensure a holistic, joined up and transparent approach to equality, diversity and inclusion work that is published on our public website and well promoted through our internal communications channels to ensure employees are clear on their duties and responsibilities – and our citizens and communities know what to expect and what their rights are when engaging with Aberdeen City Council.

3.4 Legislative Changes

- 3.4.1 Since the policy was last written, the Fairer Scotland Duty came into force on 1 April 2018, enacting part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 in Scotland. It places a duty on certain public bodies in Scotland to consider how to actively reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.
- 3.4.2 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Gender Representation on Public Board (Scotland) Act 2018, and Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 have taken effect since the last update on the Policy.
- 3.4.3 Additionally, the Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 came into place, introducing relevant provisions to the amended Act.
- 3.4.4 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill incorporates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the law in Scotland. The Bill was approved on 07 December 2023 and became an Act on 16 January 2024. It is due to come into force in July 2024.
- 3.4.5 The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 came into force on 1st April 2024. This legislation does not add additional duties onto the council as an organisation but may have implications for local authority employees. For example, employees should be aware that:
- They could be liable for an aggravated offence if they commit any criminal act that is motivated by malice and ill-will towards a person or a group of people based on their protected characteristic, either in the course of their work or outside of it.
 - They could also be liable for an aggravated offence if they participate in or associate with a group of people who commit any criminal act that is

motivated by malice and ill-will towards a person or a group of people based on their protected characteristic, either in the course of their work or outside of it.

- They have a duty to report any incidents or allegations of aggravated offences that they witness or become aware of in the workplace, either by their colleagues, managers, customers, clients, partners, or any other third parties.
- They have a responsibility to uphold the values and policies of a local authority, which include promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and preventing and tackling discrimination, harassment and hate crime.

3.4.6 This policy acknowledges takes account of this new legislation and aims to ensure that all people who face hate crimes based on their identity or perceived identity are recognised and supported by our services. The proposed upcoming changes to our mandatory training course on Equality & Diversity will also reflect these changes and ensure are employees are aware of their responsibilities.

3.5 Engagement with Stakeholders

3.5.1 To ensure that this policy suited the needs of our varied citizens and stakeholders, engagement activity and input was sought from:

External Stakeholders:

- Equality Participation Network (supported by Grampian Regional Equality Council)
- Tenants and Residents Group
- Parent Councils

Internal (employee) Stakeholders:

- Equality Ambassadors Network
- Employee Equality Network Groups (age, disability, LGBT+, race and sex)
- Public Sector Equalities Working Group
- Attendees at the Council's Black History Month event
- Employees through internal survey

3.5.2 The feedback from these groups has been instrumental in the development of the ethos of the policy. Key themes from the feedback included:

- A need to add more reference to wider corporate and service-specific legislation, documentation and processes, including those specific to education.
- A need to reduce the feeling of 'distance' between decision-makers such as senior Council officers and Elected Members, and diverse communities and citizens. This includes more visibility and accessibility, more direct and two-way communication and more "human" interaction.
- A need to focus on active listening and involving and consulting with diverse groups at the earliest possible opportunity when decisions may affect them or when planning services.
- A need to ensure that the voices of diverse communities are heard and that their lives and experiences are fully understood.

3.5.3 This feedback has been used to refresh the new policy.

3.5.4 Due to the nature of equality, diversity and inclusion, a number of teams across the Council are involved in this work. Therefore, different teams contributed to the creation of the policy including:

- People and Organisational Development, including Equalities
- Education
- Children’s Social Work
- Legal
- Customer Experience
- City Growth
- Governance

3.6 Equally Safe at Work Requirements

3.6.1 Aberdeen City Council has its Equally Safe at Work accreditation with Close the Gap and as part of this, there are requirements to include certain statements and information within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. These are:

Equally Safe at Work requirement	How this is met in the policy
You should already have in place a policy which sets out your commitment to equality and diversity.	The policy itself meets this requirement.
Your equality policy should include a statement on the importance the Council places on equality and diversity, and how this will be put into practice. It should also set out the behaviour you expect of your staff; the kind of behaviour that is unacceptable; and what staff can expect of you as an employer. Your equality policy could also describe the type of working environment you want to create.	This is all encompassed in sections 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the policy.
The policy should also set out: • who is responsible for the policy; and • how you will monitor the policy and when you will review it.	The policy includes policy author and approval. Section 8 outlines how policy performance will be measured
You should have in place a clear policy commitment to identifying and addressing patterns of occupational segregation in the Council, including a recognition that women with multiple identities, such as BME women and disabled women, are particularly affected by occupational segregation. You should make clear in your policy the link between horizontal and	This is interwoven throughout the policy, see specifically sections 3.3, 5.5, 5.11 of the policy

vertical occupational segregation and your gender pay gap.	
This should include a definition of Violence Against Women (VAW), a statement of commitment to work towards preventing and ending VAW. You should make clear that the council has a culture of zero-tolerance policy on all forms of VAW, including domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, stalking, sexual harassment and 'honour-based violence', and demonstrate a robust and transparent confidential reporting process.	This is interwoven throughout the policy, see specifically sections 5.11, 5.16 and 13.13 of the policy
This should include a description of sexism and examples of how it may manifest in the workplace. You should make clear what standards of behaviour are unacceptable and provide assurance to staff that reports will be taken seriously under your reporting process.	This is interwoven throughout the policy, see specifically sections 4.10, 4.11, 5.16 and 13.19 of the policy
You should include information on the link between women's labour market inequality, VAW and wider gender inequality.	This is addressed in section 5.11 of the policy
You should set out your responsibilities as an employer, and the responsibilities of individual employees in this area. This includes providing information on the Council's zero-tolerance approach to all forms of VAW, the reporting procedures you have in place, and how victim-survivors will be supported at work.	This is interwoven throughout the policy, see specifically sections 4.10, 4.11 and 5.16 in the policy
Your equality policy should include a statement which recognises that your employees' experiences of employment are shaped by their multiple identities, and that women and men are not homogenous groups in themselves.	This is addressed in section 5.5 of the policy
You should have a commitment to work towards an intersectional analysis of your employee data and progress an intersectional approach to equalities work.	This is addressed in section 5.20 of the policy

3.7 Key Changes and Additions in the New Policy

- 3.7.1 The new policy simplifies the language and terminology, making it more inclusive and aligned with Aberdeen City Council's Equality Outcomes and our progressive equality, diversity and inclusion ambitions.

- 3.7.2 The policy has been written to ensure that there is inclusion of equality, diversity and inclusion work from across the whole organisation and that the organisation meets its requirements as a service provider and employer.
- 3.7.3 The policy factors in changes to legislation, additional requirements as a result of accreditations, pledges, internal documentation and commitments.
- 3.7.4 The policy factors in lessons learned from legal reviews and budget-setting and consultation processes.
- 3.7.5 There is an enhanced focus within the policy on visibility, engagement, consultation and co-creation with communities on service design and on decisions which affect them.
- 3.7.6 The policy highlights the work and support available on our new and improved Integrated Impact Assessments.

3.8 Measuring Policy Performance

- 3.8.1 Measures to determine the effectiveness of the policy will include compliance with the public sector general and specific equality duties and the progress made towards the Council's Equality Outcomes.
- 3.8.2 A variety of employee-related equality data is gathered as part of the specific equality duties. This data is used to demonstrate progress made with performing the general equality duty under the Equality Act (2010). The Council will work towards an intersectional analysis of this data.
- 3.8.3 Consultation and engagement with employees, trade unions and citizens will provide an indication of whether the organisation is meeting its equality, diversity and inclusion objectives in relation to employment. Any complaints received in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion from employees or citizens will also be monitored.
- 3.8.4 Performance information will be included in the Council's statutory Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report produced every two years as part of its Public Sector Equality Duties, which is also submitted to Committee. The report will include details in respect of employees and citizens and give an indication of how the organisation is progressing towards meeting the general and specific equality duties, including the Council's Equality Outcomes.

3.9 Next Steps

- 3.9.1 This policy will be published internally and externally along with relevant promotional material.
- 3.9.2 An easy-read summary and BSL version will also be made available internally and externally.
- 3.9.3 The Council's mandatory training on equality, diversity and inclusion is due for a refresh and will be reviewed in line with the new policy.

- 3.9.4 The Council's next Equality Mainstreaming report is due to Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee in March 2025. This will include details of work done to date and information that is relevant to the performance of this policy.
- 3.9.5 Regular progress updates are provided to Staff Governance Committee on employment-related equality, diversity and inclusion work. This will include an update prior to the 2025 Mainstreaming Report with the employment-related content.
- 3.9.6 In addition to the above, as part of our statutory duties, a new British Sign Language Plan (2024 -2030) will come into effect on 6th May 2024. The Council's second Gaelic Language Plan (2023-2028) will also be presented to the Bòrd na Gàidhlig in October 2025. Service Updates covering both of these statutory obligations will be presented.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1.1 Financial risks should be mitigated by the policy, as it will help ensure that claims against the Council of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation by employees, citizens, or others, do not occur, saving on potential costs of that type.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 The policy will help ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, including its responsibilities in respect of the public sector equality duties under the Equality Act (2010). This will reduce the risk of any statutory non-compliance and challenges, for example, decisions being judicially reviewed.
- 5.1.2 This policy mitigates against the risk that the Council does not meet the needs of its diverse employees and citizens and mitigates against making any inequalities worse or contributing to inequalities in the City.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The policy and its provisions for integrated impact assessments may contribute towards protecting and improving the environment, with studies showing that people in more equal societies tend to consume less, produce less waste, and emit less carbon on average. If there is equality for employees, citizens and communities, this may help to ensure that individuals have more resources, support, and information to make changes in their lives to contribute to combatting the climate and nature crisis.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not meeting needs of diverse employees and citizens.	This policy mitigates against any risk that the Council does not meet the needs of its diverse employees and citizens and mitigates against making any inequalities worse or contributing to inequalities in the City.	L	Yes
Compliance	Risk of not meeting legislative obligations.	The policy will help ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.	L	Yes
Operational	<p>Risk of not retaining diverse employees and losing skills and benefits they bring.</p> <p>Risk of time and people resource being spent on legal processes or judicial reviews.</p>	<p>This policy mitigates against any risk that the Council does not meet the needs of its diverse employees and citizens and mitigates against making any inequalities worse or contributing to inequalities in the City.</p> <p>This policy also ensures that the Council is seen as an employer of choice.</p>	L	Yes
Financial	Risk of non-compliance with legislation including cases of	Financial risks should be mitigated by the policy, as it will help ensure that claims against the Council of unlawful	L	Yes

	discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This brings risk of financial penalties.	discrimination, harassment or victimisation by employees, citizens, or others, do not occur, saving on potential costs of that type.		
Reputational	Risk of being seen as not inclusive or discriminatory. Risk of not being seen as an employer of choice.	This policy mitigates against any risk that the Council does not meet the needs of its diverse employees and citizens and mitigates against making any inequalities worse or contributing to inequalities in the City. This policy also ensures that the Council is seen as an employer of choice.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Risk of negative environmental / climate impacts.	The policy may indirectly contribute towards protecting and improving the environment, with studies showing that people in more equal societies tend to consume less, produce less waste, and emit less carbon on average.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy will support the below statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to ensure that every school community provides a safe and respectful environment for young people and staff. • Seek to make Aberdeen a UNICEF Child Friendly City. • Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for

	<p>looked after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a view to ensuring safe pedestrianised areas in our city, we will effectively engage with the Disability Equity Partnership, public transport providers, city centre businesses and others over the future of central Union Street and Broad Street, to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities and limited mobility and commit to maintaining bus and taxi access to Central Union Street until that is achieved. • Support greater personalisation of care and consider whether it would be possible to implement policies to maintain quality of life of disabled citizens in our community and support the health and well-being of carers by providing support and respite. • Recognise that citizens and communities – rather than the City Council - are best placed to say what services they require and how these are provided and seek to give greater control over appropriate services and facilities to local communities. • Consult citizens, community councils and other partners on the work of the City Council, including carrying out a public engagement and consultation as part of the annual budget setting process.
<p>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy supports the below stretch outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026 • 400 unemployed Aberdeen City residents supported into Fair Work by 2026
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy supports the below stretch outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of all children will reach their expected developmental milestones by their 27-30 month review by 2026 • 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all of the time by 2026. • By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of our care experienced children and young people they will have the

	<p>same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2) will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. • 100% of our children with Additional Support Needs/disabilities will experience a positive destination. • Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will support the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Plan • Children's Services Plan

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report, Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee, 8th March 2023, CUS/23/051](#)

10.2 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report, 2021-2023](#)

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 is a copy of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

**Approved by Staff Governance Committee on
22nd April 2024 with an implementation date of 22nd April 2024**

Document Control

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1 Why does the Council need this Policy?

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the Council's commitment to upholding the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion and to put the consideration and due regard of the needs of our diverse citizens and employees, at the centre of the Council's strategies, policies, decision-making and activities.

1.2 This policy demonstrates a commitment to tackle any unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other prohibited conduct in accordance with its legislative duties.

1.3 The policy will help ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector (or General) Equality Duty, Specific Duties and Fairer Scotland Duty.

1.4 The policy will help ensure that the Council complies with the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended, which places specific duties on local authorities to ensure that children and young people with additional needs are given the support they require to reach their full potential.

1.5 This policy will help ensure that the Council complies with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which places corporate parenting responsibilities on the Council to work together to uphold the rights and support the needs and wellbeing of looked after and care experienced children, young people and care leavers across Scotland.

1.6 This policy was developed in consideration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 which places a 'compatibility duty' on public bodies and local authorities not to act in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements. In consideration of the Act, this policy has been developed to assist children and young people in realising their rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), specifically with regards the 'General Principle of 'Non-Discrimination' (Article 2).

1.7 The policy will aid compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the fundamental rights that everyone in the UK is entitled to and are considered as part of Integrated Impact Assessments.

1.8 The main risk the policy is designed to mitigate against is that of legal non-compliance, which also links to financial, operational, and reputational risks, covered under 6.1 below.

2 Application and Scope Statement

2.1 This policy applies to all employees¹ in any work activities and in any interactions with citizens², community groups, job applicants, trade unions, partners, suppliers, funders and sponsors relevant parties. It also applies to elected members and links to the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the Member Officer Relations Protocol.

2.2 This policy is primarily concerned with ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation for anyone in their dealings with Aberdeen City Council, based on the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

2.3 It is important to note that claims may be brought against employees who are responsible for discrimination, victimisation, prejudice or harassment in the course of their employment.

2.4 Under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021, which came into force on 1st April 2024, employees should be aware that they may be prosecuted as individuals in regard to instances of racially aggravated harassment as well as aggravated prejudice or stirring up hatred against people in relation to the below characteristics:

- age
- disability
- race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins.
- religion or, in the case of a social or cultural group, perceived religious affiliation.
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity
- variations in sex characteristics

2.4.1 Employees could be liable for an aggravated offence if they:

- Commit any criminal act that is motivated by malice and ill-will towards a person or a group of people based on their protected characteristic, either in the course of their work or outside of it.
- Participate in or associate with a group of people who commit any criminal act that is motivated by malice and ill-will towards a person or a group of people based on their protected characteristic, either in the course of their work or outside of it.

¹ "Employees" in this policy refers to anybody engaged in work for Aberdeen City Council, including relief / casual workers, agency temps, interns, apprentices and volunteers. Employees of the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership will also use documentation approved by the Integrated Joint Board (IJB)

² "Citizens" in this policy refers to anyone who engages with council services; but it is acknowledged that some areas of the council use different terms including 'service user', 'patient' and 'client'.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 The Council will adhere to all its statutory responsibilities and duties under the Equality Act 2010.

3.2 Elected members are responsible for:

- Providing leadership and encouraging organisational compliance with the policy.
- Being visible and accessible to our diverse citizens and community groups to engage and listen proactively with them on issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Having due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when decision making and scrutinising applicable reports and any applicable Integrated Impact Assessments that identify equality implications and mitigations.

3.3 Chief Officers and Directors are responsible for:

- Applying this policy within their service delivery remit to help embed a culture of progressive equality, diversity, and inclusion in the organisation.
- Ensuring that equality, diversity, and inclusion is taken account of in service planning and activity.
- Being accessible and visible to diverse citizens and communities, and ensuring they are actively listened to, learned from, and proactively consulted and engaged with in relation to service design and decisions that could affect them.
- Ensuring that there is equitable access to and awareness of Council goods, services and information within their service delivery remit.
- Ensuring that Integrated Impact Assessments are undertaken and completed properly as required.
- Taking reasonable action to address any areas of under-representation in their Cluster's workforce, seeking to remove barriers to employment and to create inclusive workspaces.

3.4 Specifically, the Chief Officer – Governance and Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services has overall responsibility for the production and monitoring of the Council's statutory Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Report and Progress Report.

3.5 Specifically, the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services has overall responsibility for the analysis and publication of statutory employment data and performance indicators relating to equality and diversity.

3.6 People Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their employees are aware of and adhere to their responsibilities under the policy.

- Taking a customer-centred approach to designing services, actively engaging and communicating with internal and external stakeholders to understand their needs and lived experiences, ensuring that services are accessible, and citizens are empowered.
- Ensuring that Integrated Impact Assessments are undertaken and completed properly in line with guidance and information available to ensure that decisions on service delivery give due regard to the needs of our diverse communities.
- Undertaking equality, diversity and inclusion-related training, monitoring and managing their employees' completion of mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training, and encouraging their employees to undertake any further, relevant training.
- Ensuring that they do not unfairly or unlawfully discriminate when acting on behalf of the Council, including during recruitment and selection processes or other employment-related activity.
- Actively challenging employee behaviour which may amount to unfair or unlawful discriminatory practice, or where this may have an impact on an employee's sense of inclusion and belonging, and taking appropriate action where required.
- Taking appropriate and proactive measures to protect employees from harassment and intimidation from citizens or others.
- Ensuring no one is victimised for raising issues of alleged unfair or discriminatory practice.
- Taking responsibility for embedding equality and diversity across their service and fostering inclusive environments for their team and others, making reasonable adjustments for employees where required.

3.7 All employees have responsibility for:

- Upholding the values and policies of a local authority, which include promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and preventing and tackling discrimination, harassment and hate crime.
- Ensuring that no unlawful discriminatory practices are applied or tolerated when acting on behalf of the Council in relation to working with citizens, employees, or any others.
- Demonstrating in all and any work-related activities (including any work-related social events) that they support a culture which values equality, diversity and inclusion, as outlined in the Council's Guiding Principles, Capability Framework and Equality Outcomes.
- Undertaking equality-related training as required by the organisation.
- Informing their manager, a senior leader, or an employee within Employee Relations, if they become aware of an instance of discriminatory practice or inappropriate behaviour contrary to this policy.
- Reporting any incidents or allegations of aggravated offences that they witness or become aware of in the workplace, either by their colleagues, managers, customers, clients, partners, or any other third parties.

3.8 Any breach or misuse of this policy may result in disciplinary procedures.

4 Supporting Procedures and Documentation

4.1 An [Equality Mainstreaming Report](#) is published every two years and details the progress made by Aberdeen City Council in our duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4.2 [Equality Outcomes](#) are published every 4 years and reported on every 2 years in the Equality Mainstreaming Report. Equality outcomes highlight our targeted aims to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with intended outcomes that result in the specific and identifiable improvements in people's life chances. The Equality Outcomes are reviewed and developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

4.3 The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan** sets out Aberdeen City Council's responsibilities and activities as an employer. The purpose of this is to engage with employees with protected characteristics to agree actions the Council will undertake to deliver its equality outcomes.

4.4 An [Integrated Impact assessment](#) (IIA) is a document that needs to be completed by council officers to ensure that the impact of business proposals, policies or decisions on different groups of people within our community or workforce is understood and any negative impact is mitigated against where possible. Council officers must collect and present evidence in their IIA that they have consulted with people who may be impacted by their proposals and / or persons, groups and organisations which represent them.

4.5 The [We CARE Charter and Commitments](#) is Aberdeen City Council's pledge to citizens about what they can expect when interacting with the Council. In particular, the two commitments of "accessible" and "empowered" are supported by this policy.

4.6 The [Guiding Principles](#) are Aberdeen City Council's guidelines for employees on the expected behaviours of all employees in how they work. To ensure all employees understand their responsibilities in supporting a culture that values equality, diversity and inclusion – one of the Guiding Principles is 'we value each other' which provides suggested behaviours of what this looks like (but also what it doesn't look like) in practice.

4.7 [The Aberdeen City Council Capability Framework](#) is a practical tool that supports the Guiding Principles by defining the skills and knowledge needed by all employees to meet the current and future needs of our customers and city. It is a key part of the appraisal process, and all employees are measured against this on an annual basis. This enables Aberdeen City Council to report annually on progress made towards achieving a culture that supports equality, diversity and inclusion and also to target communication and training to areas of the workforce where there is underperformance.

4.8 The [Budget Protocol](#) outlines the Council's budget processes and outlines the steps required to ensure that Integrated Impact Assessments are completed appropriately, that elected members comply with the Equality Act 2010, and that due regard is given to the impacts of budget options on those with protected characteristics and those living in socio-economic disadvantage.

4.9 The [British Sign Language Plan](#) and the [Gaelic Language Plan](#) are also relevant to the policy.

4.10 The policy links to the **Gender-Based Violence Policy and Guidance**. These documents outline the reporting process for gender-based violence and violence against women in the workplace.

4.11 For reporting gender-based violence and violence against women and girls in the community, Police Scotland can be contacted on 101 in the first instance. In an emergency call 999 if it is believed that someone is at immediate risk of harm. Local specialist services can also support to report and can be accessed on the [Domestic Abuse Support Database](#).

4.12 The policy also links to the following, which are on the Council's Intranet or, where available externally, linked below:

- Dignity and Respect at Work policy and accompanying procedure/guidance
- Managing Grievances policy and accompanying procedure/guidance
- Managing Discipline policy and accompanying procedure/guidance
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and Selection guidance
- Special Leave policy
- Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy
- Family Friendly policy and associated guidance including – Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Shared Parental Leave and IVF guidance documents.
- Smarter Working guidance
- Disability in the Workplace guidance
- Member Officer Relations Protocol
- [ACC Education Settings Anti-Bullying Policy 2023](#)
- [The Accessibility Strategy](#)
- Supporting Pupils: [Minimising Exclusion policy](#) and [guidance](#)
- Engagement Policy
- [Supporting Carers in the Workplace](#)
- [Transgender Equality and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance](#)
- [Disability Leave Guidance](#)
- [Faith, Religion and Belief \(Spirituality\) Policy](#)
- [Equal Pay Policy](#)

5 About this Policy

5.1 The policy does not create any specific regulations or requirements other than what is stated under Core Principles below.

Policy Core Principles

5.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 the Council will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

5.3 Furthermore, in line with the Equality Act 2010, to ensure there is due regard for advancing equality of opportunity, the Council will:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

5.4 The Council will comply with its specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

5.5 The Council will comply with its duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 which provides the legal framework for supporting children and young people in their school education, and their families.

5.6 The Council will give due regard to the Supporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended) Code of Practice (Third Edition) 2017 when carrying out its Education functions.

5.7 The Council will ensure that it is compatible with Section 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 which states,

- “(1) It is unlawful (subject to subsection (4)) for a public authority to act, or fail to act, in connection with a relevant function in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements.”

5.8 It is recognised that the concept of equality and inclusion goes beyond the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010 and also includes other types of lived experience such as care experience, socio-economic background and veteran status. These groups, and other similar groups, should be taken into consideration along with the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010, particularly in consideration of the Fairer Scotland Duty which places a legal responsibility on public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

5.9 It is recognised that people with multiple or intersectional identities may face particular barriers and challenges and that protected characteristics should not just be considered themselves but also as combinations which can affect an individual's life experiences and needs.

5.10 Individual differences, preferences, needs and contributions will be understood, valued and celebrated with awareness and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion communicated and promoted through training, guidance and targeted campaigns.

5.11 We will ensure that our policies, procedures and practices are fair, that they do not disadvantage or exclude any group or individual and that barriers to accessing and participating in services are removed. Integrated Impact Assessments will be undertaken where required for this purpose and will be published and accessible on the Council's external website.

5.12 Due regard to the needs of different citizens will be considered to ensure that people with protected characteristics are empowered, engaged, and involved in consultations and discussions in relation to decisions that could affect them, at the earliest possible opportunity. The views, input and feedback from citizens will be taken seriously with resultant decisions and outcomes communicated transparently.

5.13 Senior leadership teams and decision-makers at the Council will be accessible and visible to diverse citizens and communities and will undertake regular listening, engagement and two-way dialogue activities with them to better understand their cultures, needs and requirements.

5.14 It is recognised that having a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment makes strong business sense and leads to improved organisational performance and better outcomes for citizens.

5.16 It is recognised that occupational segregation and labour inequality have an impact on pay gaps such as gender pay gap, disability pay gap and ethnicity pay gap, as well as a wider impact on equality issues such as violence against women and girls. Therefore, patterns of occupational segregation and areas of underrepresentation or inequality, including at leadership level, will be identified and proactively addressed.

5.17 Decisions concerning job applicants and employees will be based on ability and merit, though positive action will be taken and encouraged where required to lessen disadvantages, remove barriers and support individuals into employment and into promoted roles. Positive discrimination will not be permitted unless there are exemptions allowing for this under the Equality Act 2010.

5.18 Reasonable adjustments will be made in line with legislative requirements to enable individuals to overcome barriers to accessing and maintaining Council employment and development opportunities.

5.19 An inclusive, flexible and supportive work environment will be maintained that proactively seeks to eradicate all forms of unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation, challenge stereotypes, and promote dignity and respect for all.

5.20 The Council will work towards preventing and eradicating sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls in all its forms and addressing the underlying attitudes and systems that perpetuate it.

5.21 Procurement process, external funding, sponsorship and partnership arrangements are operated to ensure that others commissioned to provide services on behalf of the Council have similar policies covering equality, diversity and inclusion.

5.22 Discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation, or any form of prejudicial behaviour from those falling within scope of this policy, such as racist and sexist behaviour (including any form of violence against women and gender-based violence), will not be tolerated.

5.23 Complaints of unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation whether against employees or citizens, or other relevant parties, will be taken seriously, and appropriately addressed through Council procedures, including the Unacceptable Actions Procedure, with employees and citizens supported throughout.

5.24 Employees accused of the aforementioned behaviour will be managed under relevant Council procedures. Due to the seriousness in which Aberdeen City Council takes these accusations, this behaviour may be considered as potential gross misconduct which could result in dismissal. Accusations against Elected Members would be handled under the Member Officer Relations Protocol or could be subject to a referral to the Ethical Standards Commissioner.

5.25 Any complaints handled under the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure which relate to discrimination are categorised as such and shared with the Equalities Team to enable monitoring. Any lessons identified are shared more widely, as appropriate, to ensure organisational learning from the feedback. If a citizen remains dissatisfied with the complaint decision, then they can escalate the matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to undertake an independent review. Employees or citizens who wish to

report a hate crime may do so directly through Police Scotland or may use a [third party reporting centre](#), which includes Aberdeen City Council itself.

5.26 The Equality Act 2010 provides the right to make a claim (appeal) to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland in respect of disability discrimination relating to pupils in school education. Claims may be made by the parent, the young person or the child (where the child has the capacity to make the claim).

5.27 Equality and diversity data analysis and monitoring will be continuously undertaken to identify areas of the organisation that require targeted interventions and actions. An intersectional approach to data analysis will also be taken.

6 Risk

6.1 The following identified risks will be mitigated against through having this policy in place.

- The policy will help ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, including its responsibilities in respect of the public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010. This will reduce the risk of any statutory non-compliance and challenges, for example, decisions being judicially reviewed by interested parties.
- This policy mitigates against any risk that the Council does not meet the needs of its diverse employees and citizens and mitigates against making any inequalities worse or contributing to inequalities in the City.
- Financial risks should be mitigated by the policy, as it will help ensure that claims against the Council of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation by employees, citizens, or others, do not occur, saving on potential costs of that type.
- Reputational risks should also be mitigated by the policy, as if the organisation is legally compliant, applying positive and progressive equality, diversity and inclusion practices in relation to employees, citizens, and others, this will help avoid complaints and any negative publicity that could otherwise arise if this were not the case.

6.2 The risks identified will be managed and mitigated through application of the policy across the Council and through appropriate training. This will be undertaken by ensuring the policy is readily available to employees and elected members, and that support is provided from the Equalities team specifically, and the People and Citizen Services cluster more generally, in the interpretation of the policy where required. Learning resources on equality, diversity and inclusion will be made available for employees with separate training for elected members. Equality, diversity and inclusion will also be a part of induction training, recruitment and selection training and other promotional events.

6.3 The production of bi-annual mainstreaming and progress reports, alongside the production and analysis of statutory performance data, will aid the monitoring and management of identified risks.

6.4 Monitoring will be undertaken of any feedback from stakeholders or others in relation to the identified risks and appropriate action taken if any concerns arise.

6.5 The policy will also support the organisation's "PREVENT³" obligations as part of the CONTEST framework by helping ensure that employees, citizens and others are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, so that a relationship of trust is built with all. This should indirectly assist with wellbeing and reduce vulnerability, helping to make people less susceptible to radicalisation and being drawn into terrorist organisations.

7 Environmental Considerations

7.1 The policy may indirectly contribute towards protecting and improving the environment, with studies showing that people in more equal societies tend to consume less, produce less waste, and emit less carbon on average. If there is equality for employees, citizens and communities, this may help to ensure that individuals have more resources, support, and information to make changes in their lives to contribute to combatting the climate and nature crises.

7.2 The climate and nature emergencies can exacerbate existing inequalities. Reducing inequality within and among countries is the aim of Goal 10, one of the United Nations 17 global Sustainable Development Goals. This policy may lead towards increased fairness and a just approach in contributing to combatting the climate and nature crises.

8 Policy Performance

8.1 Measures to determine the effectiveness of the policy will include compliance with the public sector general and specific equality duties and the progress made towards the Council's equality outcomes.

8.2 A variety of employee related equality data is gathered as part of the specific equality duties. This includes information on the composition of employees, recruitment, development, and retention with respect to the number and relevant protected characteristics of employees. This data is used to demonstrate progress made with performing the general equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Council will work towards an intersectional analysis of this data.

8.3 Feedback from and ongoing listening to employees, trade unions and citizens will provide an indication of whether the organisation is meeting its equality, diversity and

³ PREVENT is a national programme that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It works to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are offered appropriate interventions, and communities are protected against radicalising influences.

inclusion objectives in relation to employment. Any complaints received in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion from employees or citizens will also be monitored.

8.4 Performance information will be included in the Council's statutory Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report produced every two years as part of its public sector equality duties, which is also submitted to Committee. The report will include details in respect of employees and citizens and give an indication of how the organisation is progressing towards meeting the general and specific equality duties, including the Council's equality outcomes.

9 Design and Delivery

9.1 The policy links to the 'Workforce' design principle in our current transformation programme, in that it is concerned with organisational culture and the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It also links to the 'Partnerships and Alliances' design principle, being concerned with how the organisation collaborates with external organisations to achieve successful outcomes, which encompasses some of the Council's equality outcomes.

9.2 The policy links to the 'Prosperous People' theme in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), which mentions people being entitled to live in a way they feel safe, supported, and fully included in life in the City, having an equal right to enjoy these aspirations. In addition, it indicates an ambition to support every child irrespective of circumstances to grow, develop and reach their full potential, where there is equality of opportunity for all. The policy also links to the 'Prosperous Place' theme in the LOIP, where all can prosper, reflecting the organisation's desire to help people, families, and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect, regardless of their background or circumstances.

9.3 The policy directly supports delivery of the Council's statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity as referenced under 1.2, 2.2 and 2.4 above.

10 Housekeeping and Maintenance

10.1 The policy replaces the existing Diversity and Equality policy and will be reviewed annually with any necessary updates made to it.

11 Communication and Distribution

11.1 The policy will be shared directly with the Extended Corporate Management Team to enable communication and distribution in accordance with responsibilities set out in section 3.

11.2 The policy will also be communicated through the Council's intranet and will be placed on the relevant page(s) for all employees to view.

11.3 It will also be available to citizens and third parties via the Council's website.

11.4 Information will be made available in suitable formats to meet the needs of any individual requiring access to this information.

11.5 The principles of this policy and its expectations of employees will be communicated to employees through the mandatory training course on equality, diversity and inclusion and compliance monitored by managers accordingly.

12 Information Management

12.1 Information generated by the application of this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and Supporting Procedures.

13 Definitions and Understanding this Policy

13.1 **Equality** – refers to providing equal opportunities to everyone and protecting people from being discriminated against. It is essentially about fairness and ensuring that everyone has the best possible chance to succeed in life, whatever their background or identity.

13.2 **Diversity** - refers to recognising and respecting and valuing differences in people. It is acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making. In the case of employment, it is about having a workforce that is representative of an organisation's customers or service users.

13.3 **Inclusion** - refers to an individual's experience within society and the workplace, and the extent to which they are valued and included. Inclusion is where people's differences are acknowledged and used to enable everyone to thrive. An inclusive environment is one in which everyone belongs without having to conform, that their contribution matters, and they can reach their full potential, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances.

13.4 **Equality Act 2010** - The Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and provides a modern, single legal framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination. Under the Act it is unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise someone because they have or are perceived to have a protected characteristic or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. The nine protected characteristics covered by the Act are:

- **Age** - A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

- **Disability** - A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender Reassignment** - Where a person undergoes, or proposes to undergo, a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership** - Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex and different sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** - Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **Race** - A race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.
- **Religion or Belief** - Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sex** - A man or a woman.
- **Sexual Orientation** - Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

13.5 Direct discrimination – Is where a person has been treated less favourably than others on grounds of a protected characteristic. It can also occur by association or perception.

13.6 Indirect discrimination – Indirect discrimination occurs where a policy, practice, or rule that applies in the same way for everybody, disadvantages a group of people who share a protected characteristic. The organisation applying the policy, practice, or rule must show that there is a good reason for it.

13.7 Harassment – Is unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics which has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for the victim.

13.8 Victimisation – Is where a person is treated badly or subject to disadvantage because they have complained about discrimination, or they have helped someone who has been the victim of discrimination.

13.9 The Public Sector Equality Duty is set out in sections 149–157 and schedules 18 and 19 of the Equality Act 2010. Aberdeen City Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

13.10 **The Specific Duties** are listed in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as amended. They require Aberdeen City Council to publish relevant information, showing compliance with the General Equality Duty, to help them in their performance of that duty. Each authority is required to report on mainstreaming the equality duty, publish equality outcomes and report on progress, assess and review policies and practices, gather and use employee information, publish gender pay gap information and statements on equal pay.

13.11 **Equality Outcomes** – Are the results a public authority aims to achieve to further one or more of the needs in the General Equality Duty. They are intended to achieve specific and identifiable improvements and are the changes that result for individuals and communities because of the action an authority has taken. There is a duty to publish equality outcomes and report on progress, publishing a fresh set every four years, with involvement of relevant parties in their compilation.

13.12 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)** – Is a tool used to assess the impact of applying a proposed new or revised policy or practice, in relation to disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, against the needs of the general equality duty and the Human Rights Act. It also takes into consideration the ‘Fairer Scotland Duty,’ Children’s Rights and climate and environmental impacts. In developing a policy or practice, the organisation must take account of and publish the results of the assessment, with actions taken to remove or mitigate any identified adverse impacts. A copy of the template IIA form is available on the Council’s Intranet.

13.13 **Gender Based Violence / Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** - includes domestic abuse, sexual harassment, stalking, sexual assault, and rape, and so-called “honour based” violence. VAWG is specifically any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women or girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

13.14 **Intersectionality** - means the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, disability, and sex as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. For example, a

disabled woman's experience will differ from a black woman's experience based on the different intersections of disability and sex or race and sex.

13.15 Occupational Segregation – is the term used to describe when certain occupations or work groups have a higher proportion of a certain group than others. For example, some job roles or services may have a higher proportion of male workers compared to female workers. This can be described as 'horizontal occupational segregation', meaning different services or job roles, or 'vertical occupational segregation', meaning underrepresentation at different seniority or pay levels of the organisation.

13.16 Reasonable Adjustments - are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. Reasonable adjustments are specific to an individual person. Employers must make reasonable adjustments by law. Employers should consider if proposed reasonable adjustments:

- will remove or reduce the disadvantage.
- are practical to make.
- are affordable.
- could harm the health and safety of others.

13.17 Positive Action - allows employers to take action that may involve treating one group that shares a protected characteristic more favourably than others, where this is a proportionate way to enable or encourage members of that group to:

- overcome or minimise a disadvantage.
- have their different needs met.
- participate in a particular activity.

13.18 Positive Discrimination – means when an action gives more favourable treatment to members of a disadvantaged or underrepresented protected group of people and causes detriment to another protected group. For example, introducing quotas for recruitment or allowing job applications from certain protected groups only. Positive discrimination is against the law unless there is:

- a disability exception.
- an occupational requirement.

13.19 Sexism - Sexism is discrimination or bias against individuals based on their sex. In the workplace it manifests as unequal treatment, gender-based harassment and ingrained stereotypes that hinder the progress and fair representation of a particular gender, frequently disadvantaging women.

13.20 Misogyny - Misogyny is a way of thinking that upholds the primary status of men and a sense of male entitlement, while subordinating women and limiting their power and freedom.

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	22 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Zero Tolerance Update and Action Plan
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/111
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Lindsay MacInnes & Lucy McKenzie (Interim Chief Officers - People & Citizen Services)
REPORT AUTHOR	Sandie Scott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to provide an update to Staff Governance Committee around progress and activities in relation to development of a Zero Tolerance approach of violent, aggressive and/or abusive behaviour towards staff.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 note the content of the report and the progress made to date, including staff development and the overall action plan developed;
- 2.2 note the discrete activity being progressed by the Education Service in collaboration with Trade Unions to formulate an Action Plan to be presented at Education and Children's Services Committee in April 2024;
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to combine the three closely linked policies, procedures and approaches relating to Zero Tolerance, Violence and Aggression, and Unacceptable Actions into a single policy. This is with the exception of pupil behaviour in schools as this is governed by national policy and guidance, and report back to Committee for approval of the final policy; and
- 2.4 approve the described approach in forming a pledge to encompass the spirit of mutual respect.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Aberdeen City Council's vision is for Aberdeen as a place where all people can prosper. This means all people being able to access our services,

regardless of their background and circumstances, so that we help all people, families, businesses and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect.

3.1.2 The We CARE charter sets out what all citizens can expect when they engage with us as a council.

THE WE CARE CHARTER AND COMMITMENTS TO OUR CUSTOMERS



CONNECTED

- We will support and encourage you to use our online services
- We will connect you with other services and groups across the city who can also help you and offer the best support



ACCESSIBLE

- We will make sure our communication with you is easy to understand and recognise that sometimes people need information provided in different ways
- We will always be approachable, empathetic and keen to listen and understand your needs



RESPONSIVE

- We will be open and honest with you about what we can and can't do, and the reasons for this
- We will aim to deliver the best services possible and support our most vulnerable customers



EMPOWERED

- We will involve you in helping us to design and test the ways we deliver our services
- We will listen and act upon your feedback, whether it's a complaint, comment or a compliment

3.1.3 We have Equality Outcomes as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty that commits us as a Service Provider, Employer and Education Authority to improve safety and belonging for all our employees and citizens.

3.1.4 It is therefore important that we provide clarity and reassurance for citizens, employees and Elected Members on how we handle violent, aggressive and/or abusive behaviour from anyone making verbal, written or physical contact with Aberdeen City Council.

3.1.5 There are currently three corporate documents which provide guidance and support for employees on violent, aggressive and/or abusive behaviour from citizens:

- **Zero Tolerance** – encourages employees to take immediate action when they are made to feel threatened or uncomfortable.
- **Violence and Aggression**– handling unacceptable physical or verbal abuse from citizens.
- **Unacceptable Actions** – managing contact from citizens after experiencing unreasonable or unacceptable behaviour.

3.1.6 Additionally, there is the Corporate Voice Recording Policy, approved by Committee in 2008, to support employees within the Customer Contact Centre to maintain excellent customer service and ensure they are supported in managing challenging citizen behaviour effectively. This Policy has recently

been updated and refreshed, with the approval and support of Chief Officer – Governance and Trade Union colleagues under delegated powers, to reflect the implementation of a new Contact Centre call handling system. It now incorporates guidance around the legal right of the citizen to record calls they make to Aberdeen City Council, when made for personal use only, and how employees can respond as this happens on occasion. This policy will signpost to the proposed new single policy and guidance set out in this report, when it becomes available, for any instances of challenging behaviour from citizens during calls.

3.1.7 Video and face to face recording without knowledge between members of staff and citizens has been highlighted as a concern. This is not specifically included in the Corporate Voice Recording Policy and will be explored further.

3.1.8 New guidance was recently published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman with the Unacceptable Actions Policy being replaced with an Engagement Policy and a focus on promoting positive interactions.

3.2 Summary of Proposed Changes

3.2.1 It is proposed to introduce a new single policy which incorporates guidance previously provided within the three separate policies. This new policy will incorporate the new Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) guidance and bring a focus on encouraging positive relationships with citizens.

3.2.2 The aim of combining all existing guidance into one policy is to make it easier for employees to find information relating to challenging behaviour and set clear expectations for citizens when they make verbal, written or physical contact with the Council.

3.2.3 The new policy will also incorporate guidance for Elected Members in similar circumstances and sets out clear expectations for those using our services.

3.2.4 It is also proposed to develop a holistic action plan for preventing violence, aggression and/or abuse against employees, including introducing a bespoke pledge for Aberdeen City Council. The pledge seeks to further engage with employees and citizens to consider the language best to express this e.g. Zero Tolerance, Mutual Respect, 'It's not ok,' etc. It also aims to build an awareness raising campaign so that citizens are clear on the consequences of showing violent, aggressive or abusive behaviour toward employees.

3.3 Consultation and Engagement to date on the proposed approach

3.3.1 Initial engagement undertaken with employees who had experienced violence and aggression in the workplace highlighted a need for improvement in three key areas:

- *Reactive Support*: how we support employees when incidents occur, how incidents are reported, and how behaviour is addressed.

- *Proactive Support*: how we prevent incidents occurring and focus on cultures and environments.
- *Management* – this relates to development of leadership and management skills so that managers and colleagues are equipped to deal with incidents in the most effective way possible.

3.3.2 During engagement with Trade Union Colleagues, it was proposed to combine the Zero Tolerance, Violence and Aggression, and Engagement Policies into one procedure rather than a policy. This draft was presented to Trade Unions who were supportive of the combined approach and requested maintaining a policy approach as opposed to changing to procedures.

3.3.3 Trade Union colleagues also raised concerns in relation to how this policy connects to pupil behaviour in schools and requested further clarity around guidance in that area. This feedback is being taken forward through the development of a shared Action Plan which has been co-created by the Education Service in collaboration with Trade Unions.

3.3.4 It is hoped that the Action Plan will take account of the National Behaviour Plan (anticipated in the coming weeks) which will clarify updated national policy. There may be a need for further changes to be made to the Action Plan should the National Plan not be published in advance of the Committee meeting in April. Given that the content of the National Plan is currently unknown, the proposals within this report exclude pupil behaviour in schools at present.

3.4 **Tackling violence and aggression: an action plan**

3.4.1 To address the issues identified by employees during initial engagement, it is proposed to follow our change management approach to drive culture change so that we:

- *Proactive Support*: Create an environment that promotes positive interactions and relationships between citizens and employees, and clarify for citizens what boundaries are in place to protect employees and what steps will be taken if they exhibit behaviours that make employees feel threatened or are violent or aggressive.
- *Reactive Support*: Ensure that employees are confident and competent in handling potentially challenging situations, are able to access support and resources for their development and wellbeing when they need it.
- *Management*: equip our managers with the clarity, skills and resources to support their employees when incidents occur.

3.4.2 The ACC Approach to Change Management provides a structured action plan to follow to achieve culture change. Our action plan for tackling violence and aggression is presented under each of these seven pillars.

 Executive Sponsorship	 Communications	 Training	 Voice	 Empowering Managers	 Co-creation	 Measurement
Create active and visible executive engagement	Communicate the business reasons of the change and how the change will impact employees	People feel knowledgeable, capable and confident to transition to the future state	People share their views and ideas through established reliable channels, digital and face-to-face	Engage managers and supervisors to guide employees through changes, reinforce and role model behaviours at a local level	People are collectively designing solutions to issues or challenges	Measuring if our changes are having the desired impact towards solving problems and achieving our business objectives

3.5 Executive Sponsorship

- 3.5.1 Executive sponsorship of a campaign is important because it shows that leaders support and are committed to its objectives. Executive sponsorship also helps to align the campaign with the organisation's vision, values, and strategic priorities, and to secure the necessary resources and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, executive sponsorship can enhance the credibility and visibility of the campaign and motivate and inspire employees to participate and adhere to the campaign's principles and practices.
- 3.5.2 The rationale for a pledge relating to this policy is to visibly demonstrate the organisation's commitment to creating a safe and respectful work environment for all employees, and to communicate its expectations of appropriate behaviour from citizens and stakeholders. A pledge can serve as a reminder of the support and resources available to employees who experience or witness violence and aggression, and the consequences for those who violate the policy. A pledge can encourage employees to report and address any incidents they encounter and give reassurance that their report will be listened to and acted upon.
- 3.5.3 It is therefore proposed to facilitate executive sponsorship on our commitment to protecting our employees from violence and aggression by introducing a "Zero Tolerance" (or similar) Pledge.
- 3.5.4 There are a number of general 'Zero Tolerance'-type pledges that already exist externally to Aberdeen City Council. It is worth noting that many of these pledges have broad statements and are not necessarily suited to a Local Government context.
- 3.5.5 It is critical that any pledge achieves its intended aims and that we consider any unintended consequences. Language around 'zero tolerance' can be problematic within a local authority context for several reasons.
- 3.5.6 Firstly, it may imply that the Council is unwilling or unable to accommodate the needs and circumstances of its citizens, especially those who are vulnerable or facing challenges in their lives. Some citizens may be unable to communicate or behave appropriately. A 'zero tolerance' approach may alienate or stigmatize these citizens and prevent them from accessing the services they need.

- 3.5.7 Second, it may undermine the trust and confidence that the public has in the Council as a democratic and accountable institution and damage its reputation and relationships with its stakeholders.
- 3.5.8 Third, a 'zero tolerance' pledge may suggest that the Council is intolerant of dissent, criticism, or feedback, and that it does not value the diversity and inclusion of its communities. Therefore, it is important to use language that reflects the Council's commitment to creating a safe and respectful work environment for its staff; encourages positive interactions; and also acknowledges the complexity and diversity of its citizens and their needs. More appropriate language could be *'it's not ok, 'mutual respect,'* or *'help us to do our best for you'*, *'what are our boundaries?'* *'we are committed to creating an environment of safety and belonging for all'*, *'be kind'* etc.
- 3.5.9 It should be noted that by adopting a zero tolerance approach and implementing restrictions of contact with citizens who have been aggressive or violent towards staff, that this does not prevent citizens from accessing essential services that the Council provide.
- 3.5.10 See 'Voice' (section 3.8) for suggestions on how we progress this and gain employee and citizen buy in.

3.6 **Communications**

- 3.6.1 A poster campaign is a useful way to inform and educate citizens about the Council's expectations and standards of behaviour when interacting with employees, the consequences of breaching them, and the impact it has on employee well-being and service delivery. It also serves to remind employees of their rights to work in a safe and respectful environment, and the support available if they experience violence or aggression, and reinforce that the Council is committed to preventing and addressing violence and aggression in the workplace.
- 3.6.2 It is therefore proposed to increase roll-out of a poster campaign. A 'Zero Tolerance' poster is currently in use in Council public facing buildings, such as the Customer Service Centre, Community Hubs and libraries, and has been refreshed to promote positive interactions between staff and citizens. The updated example poster is provided in Appendix A.
- 3.6.3 It is proposed to increase visibility of the policy and pledge through our digital platforms - externally, via social media and the website; and internally via the intranet and our internal employee networks to ensure frontline employees are aware of support and reporting mechanisms.

3.7 **Training**

- 3.7.1 We have over three hundred employees in our Frontline Customer Services job family – these employees provide frontline customer services for the public, which typically involves a high level of direct interaction with citizens on a day-to-day basis. This means they are often more at risk of encountering violence and aggression in the workplace.

3.7.2 Training for these employees is important in preventing violence and aggression. It teaches employees how to de-escalate possible disputes, empathise with the trauma behind difficult behaviour, communicate effectively, manage their own emotions, follow relevant policies and procedures, and keep themselves and others safe.

3.7.3 By providing training for staff, the Council can ensure that they have the skills and confidence to handle challenging citizen interactions, reduce the risk of injury and distress, and improve the quality-of-service delivery.

3.7.4 There are a range of courses already available:

- Violence and Aggression - Phone Rage
- Conflict Management
- Level 2 Conflict Management
- Trauma Informed

3.7.4.1 Spotlight on: Trauma and Challenging Behaviours

Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing or life-threatening event that overwhelms a person's ability to cope. Trauma can have lasting effects on a person's mental, physical, and emotional health, such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain, and more. This can present in our citizens as:

- Difficulty trusting others, especially authority figures, and may perceive the Council as threatening or hostile.
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or following instructions, and may miss appointments, deadlines, or payments.
- Being easily triggered by loud noises, certain words, or specific locations, and may react with fear, anger, or panic.
- Avoiding or withdrawing from contact with the Council, or conversely, seeking excessive reassurance or support from the Council staff.
- Acting impulsively, aggressively, or self-destructively, and not complying with the Council's rules or regulations.

These behaviours are not intentional or malicious, but rather adaptive responses to cope with the trauma they have endured. Therefore, it is important for employees to be trauma informed and skilled, and to respond to these behaviours with empathy, respect, and understanding.

Aberdeen City Council are using training resources from the National Trauma Training programme to create trauma informed and skilled practice within the organisation. NHS Education for Scotland (NES) created this programme to be used by every member of the Scottish Workforce so that they can understand the role they play in responding to people affected by trauma.

3.7.5 Bespoke training interventions are also available where required and are often more effective at meeting the unique needs of a service or the service users who may pose a higher level of risk to employees. For example, Public Office Training has been delivered by Police Scotland to meet training requirements for employees operating from the Customer Service Centre. Training has also been provided by GREC and coordinated via the Scottish Refugee Council for supporting Ukrainian refugees. See Appendix B.

3.8 Voice and Co-Creation

3.9 It is proposed that additional engagement and consultation be conducted to gather feedback on the proposed campaign. This will help evaluate its effectiveness, increase employee awareness and understanding, and create a dialogue between employees and managers.

3.9.1 Additional employee engagement is also required to assess the visibility, accessibility and effectiveness of current reporting tools for violent, abusive or aggressive behaviour.

3.9.2 Citizen feedback on the campaign would also help us understand how the campaign affects their perception and experience of our services, and to assess its relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

3.10 Empowering Managers

3.10.1 Managers play a vital role in supporting employees after incidents of violence and aggression. They can help employees cope with the emotional impact of such incidents, create a safe work environment, prevent escalation of violence, and foster a culture of learning and improvement.

3.10.2 Managers play a key role in ensuring that any incidents of unacceptable actions, violence, aggression or challenging behaviour are reported into the Health & Safety System, and that Service Managers and Chief Officers are monitoring and managing incidents in their area.

3.10.3 There is a requirement for risk assessments to be undertaken across all service areas where employees may experience challenging behaviour. It is important that these are carried out consistently, results recorded, and action taken.

3.10.4 It is therefore proposed that we engage our Leadership Forum of over six hundred leaders and managers in the Council to raise awareness of the campaign and their responsibilities and signpost them to resources and training so that they can better support their employees with the behavioural skills required for dealing with difficult situations.

3.11 Measurement

3.11.1 It is proposed that we centrally monitor incidents of violence and aggression to identify trends and hotspots that need further investigation to see what additional mitigating actions can be taken to reduce incidents. And also, that we measure frequency of incidents over time to see whether the proposed campaign is making an impact. It is proposed that we continue to report the results of this to Staff Governance Committee.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Any costs associated with additional training required would be covered by the Corporate Training Budget.

4.2 Any costs associated with a promotional campaign would be covered by People and Citizen Services.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Incidents of aggressive, violent or abusive behaviour can give rise to criminal or civil legal action.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	If we do not promote a safe environment for our staff and citizens, then there is risk that we do not meet our strategic objectives.	The risk is mitigated through robust processes and procedures such as risk assessments, management of unacceptable actions and proactive communication around zero tolerance approach when interacting with the Council.	Low	No- in this instance we want to avoid risks in this area rather than tolerate.
Compliance	As employers, The Council has duties under Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Although not specifically identified, there is a requirement to ensure the safety of employees in respect of harm caused by violent or aggressive behaviour from service users.	Assessments are carried out to identify any risks to the safety of employees and mitigating actions are put in place to sufficiently reduce the risk of unacceptable actions towards employees whilst at work. This includes providing training to employees on dealing with unacceptable behaviours,	Low	Yes

		sharing information on service users where required to reduce the risk to employees, making reasonable adjustments to working practices where necessary and provide debriefing and support after an incident occurs.		
Operational	The effects of unacceptable actions in the workplace can impact considerably both on staff and other citizens. If unaddressed, this can potentially lead to poor morale, increased staff turnover, absence and litigation, making it more difficult to recruit.	There are robust supporting policies in place, which are easily accessible to provide guidance to managers and staff around how to manage challenging behaviours. Debriefing, and support is provided to impacted individuals where necessary, after an incident occurs.	Low	No- as above
Financial	Without clear processes in place, there is a risk of injury and claims being made to/against the organisation. Should inadequate policy provision be in place this could be detrimental when considering such claims.	The risk is mitigated through robust processes and procedures such as risk assessments and the combined policy itself provides the clarity to citizens and staff as to what is acceptable.	Low	Yes
Reputational	If unacceptable actions are unchallenged this can lead to a poor	There are robust supporting policies in place, which are easily	Low	No - averse to risk in this area

	image for the organisation.	accessible to provide guidance to managers and staff around how to manage challenging behaviours.		and so want to exceed this RAS in this area.
Environment / Climate	There are no associated environment/climate related risks.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025</u>	
	Impact of Report
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the Prosperous Place Theme within the LOIP. Aberdeen City Council's vision is for Aberdeen as a place where all people can prosper. This means all people being able to access our services, regardless of their background and circumstances, so that we help all people, families, businesses and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

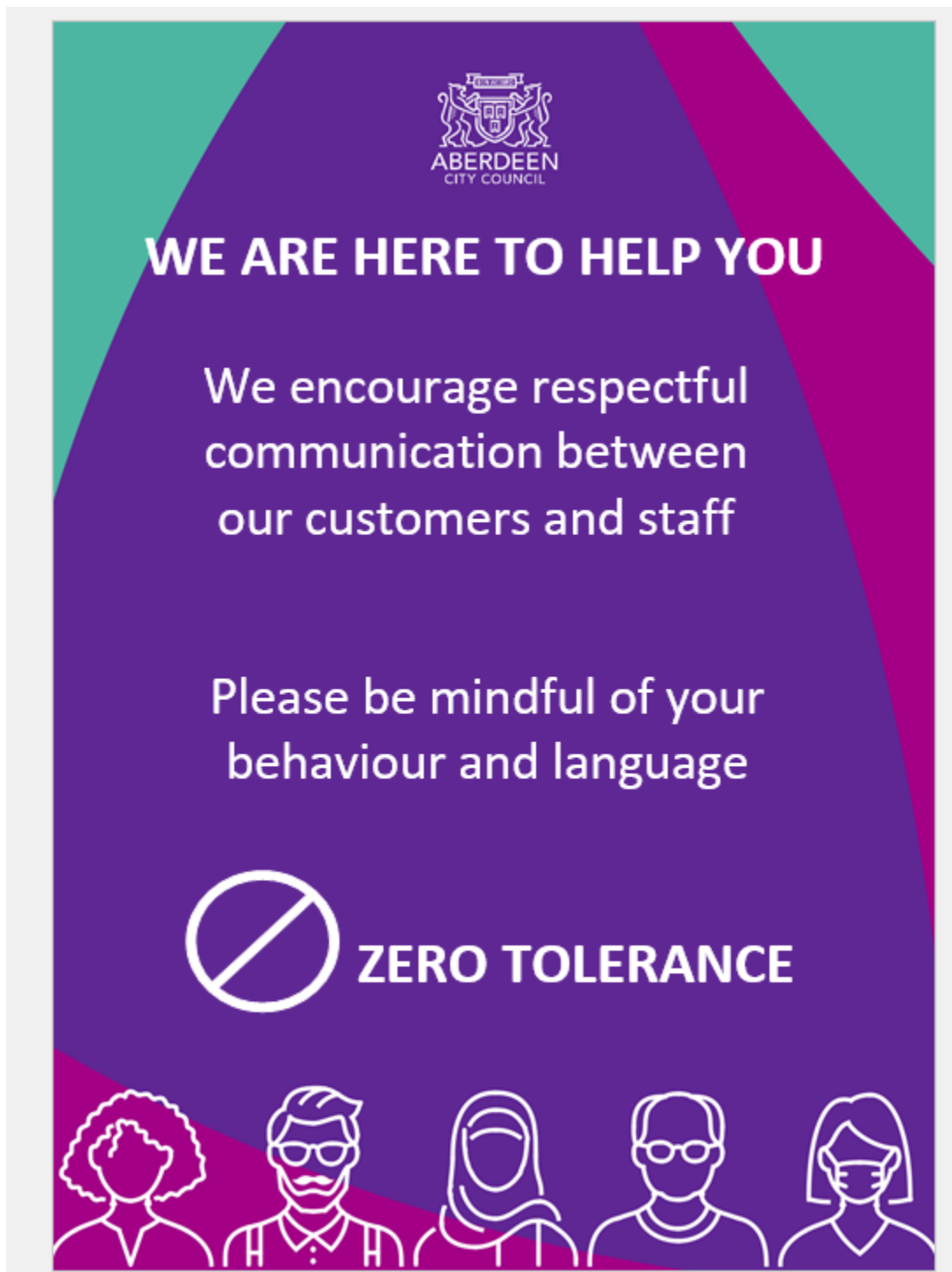
- 10.1 Violence and aggression procedure - replaced the Violence and Abuse Towards Employees Policy
- 10.2 Unacceptable Actions Guidance
- 10.3 Corporate Voice Recording Policy

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A – Zero Tolerance poster
- Appendix B – Bespoke Training Intervention to support Ukrainian Resettlement

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix B – Bespoke Training Intervention to support Ukrainian Resettlement

A specific and tailored example of a training intervention to foster an environment of safety, belonging and inclusion is the development of training for staff assisting Ukrainian resettlement in March 2023. In partnership with Grampian Regional Equality Council and the Scottish Refugee Council, we sourced training provided by two Ukrainian lawyers and mediators. The trainers had a deep understanding of the Ukrainian context, particularly the impacts of the war and displacement on mental health and social adjustment.

The training program was designed to assist staff involved in supporting refugees and focused on the culture, behaviours and emotional awareness. It consisted of education sessions, divided into modules with the following themes:

- The theory of conflicts (understanding of conflict's nature, the evolution of conflict, how to work with interests and needs, using a negotiation approach in situations with potential for conflict)
- Emotional awareness (understanding own and other's emotions, self-regulation, empathetic approach, social intelligence)
- Non-violent communication (dealing with toxic communication)
- Cultural differences (strategies of behaviour in Ukrainian and Scottish communities, working with Ukrainians who have war trauma)

These would in turn provide attendees with practical skills on how to:

- Identify and cope with their own and others' emotions and needs
- Increase emotional awareness and stress resilience
- Work on the prevention of conflicts
- Build peaceful communication.

The participants were from the Housing and Resettlement teams within ACC, who work directly to provide accommodation and support services.

The workshop achieved its objectives of enhancing the participants' knowledge and skills on the following topics:

- Emotional intelligence: the participants learned how to recognize, understand, and manage their own and others' emotions, especially in stressful and conflict situations. They also learned how to use empathy and active listening to build rapport and trust with the refugees.
- Conflict resolution: the participants learned how to identify the sources, types, and stages of conflict, and how to apply different strategies and techniques to resolve them peacefully and effectively. They also learned how to use the WINA model (What, Interests, Needs, Agreement) to structure a constructive dialogue and reach a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Cultural differences: the participants learned how to appreciate and respect the cultural diversity and similarities between the UK and Ukraine, and how to avoid stereotypes and prejudices. They also learned how to use non-violent communication to express their feelings and needs, and to request and offer feedback.
- Effect of trauma: the participants learned how to recognize and understand the signs and symptoms of trauma, and how to support the refugees who have experienced trauma as a result of the war and displacement. They also learned how to practice self-care and seek professional help when needed.

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance
DATE	22 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	EAS Annual Progress Update Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update January 2023 – December 2023
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/114
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Lindsay MacInnes – Interim Chief Officer People & Citizen Services
REPORT AUTHOR	Sharon Robb
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.7

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on utilisation of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provided by VIVUP during the last 12 month period January 2023 – December 2023 and provides a 12 monthly update on the Occupational Health and Absence period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

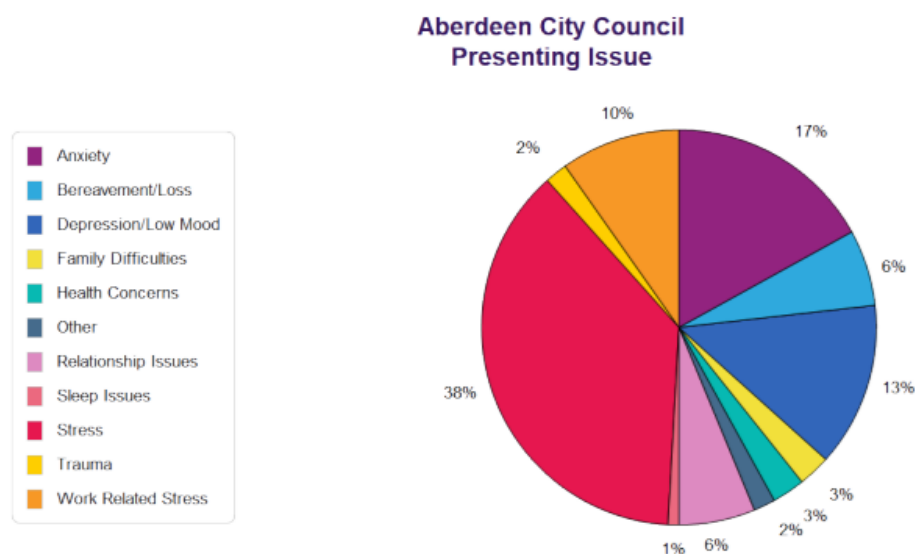
- 2.1 considers the contents of the report; and
 2.2 notes the progress made in relation to the Attendance Improvement Project; the continuing drive to raise awareness of frontline staff support initiatives; and re-introduction of the Workplace Therapist Service

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Employee Assistance Services

- 3.1.1 The [UK EAP Association](#) says for every £1 invested organisations see on average 10 times return on investment through things like reduced absence, presenteeism and lost management time.
- 3.1.2 For the period January 2023 – December 2023 the Employee Assistance Programme provided to Aberdeen City Council was delivered by Vivup.
- 3.1.3 Psychological absences remain the top cause of recorded absences at Aberdeen City Council with Stress (38%), Anxiety (17%) and Depression (13%) being the top 3 reasons for referrals made to our [Employee Assistance Programme through Vivup](#) in the period from January to December 2023. The

table below provides a breakdown of the usage of the Vivup service during the period January 2023 to December 2023, showing the reason for the referral.



Presenting Issue	Percentage
Stress	38%
Anxiety	17%
Depression/Low Mood	13%
Work Related Stress	10%
Bereavement/Loss	6%
Relationship Issues	6%
Family Difficulties	3%
Health Concerns	3%
Other	2%
Trauma	2%
Sleep Issues	1%

(please note that the figures above total 101%, which is a result of rounding)

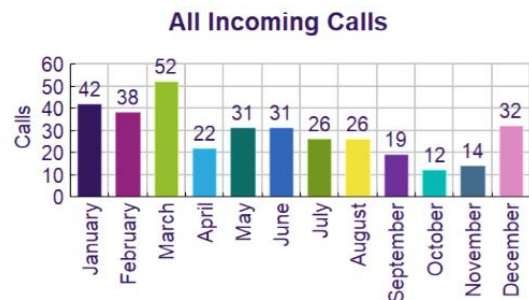
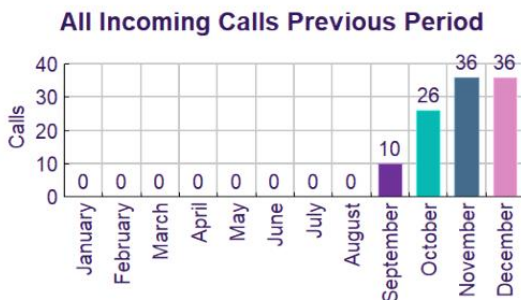
- 3.1.4 The breakdown of usage during the period of January 2023 to December 2023 for Aberdeen City Council was compared with other organisations who signed up to the Vivup Employee Assistance Programme during this period and shows a comparable trend with these other external organisations. It is important to recognise that in most cases, mental wellbeing issues arise due to a combination of issues rather than a single issue. As such, work related issues will often be compounded by issues arising from outwith the workplace and vice versa.

TOP 5 presenting issues for all organisations in this period

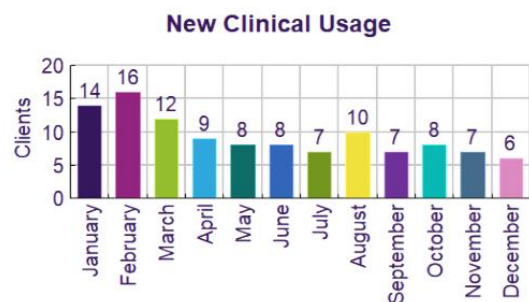
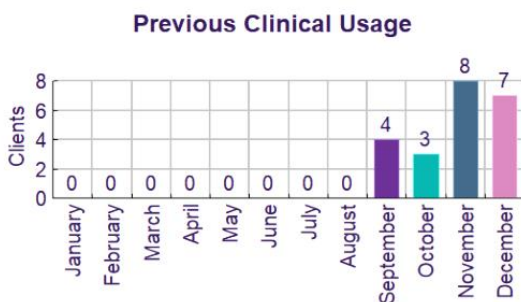


3.1.5 Vivup EAP provides an initial telephone assessment and triage process. All clients undertake an initial risk assessment and are provided with access to in the moment telephone support where required. Clients requiring access to telephone or face to face counselling are booked in for a telephone assessment with a counsellor. This includes assessment of risk, medication and presenting issues. Clients who presented with risk were triaged appropriately within the service and signposted/managed to ensure they received appropriate case management in this reporting period.

Calls	Jan – Dec 2023	Sep to Dec 2022
All Incoming Calls	345	108
New Clinical Usage	112	22



During this reporting period 112 clients entered the Counselling service via the 24/7 helpline :



3.1.6 Usage is up slightly during 2023 when compared to the pro-rata use in the last quarter of 2022. This could be attributed to various roadshows and communication campaigns being delivered to highlight and encourage proactive use of the service across the organisation.

3.1.7 A variety of awareness raising campaigns are sent out across the organisation using different platforms ranging from Vivup’s own digital platform, through SMS text messages, emails and include a range of articles, interactive healthy campaigns and informative podcasts. The Annual Communication Plan below

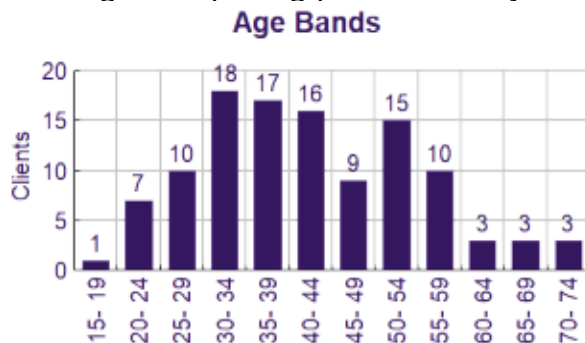
shows the variety of different topics that have been sent out during the reporting period January 2023 to December 2023 and the method these communications have been delivered by.

Annual Communication Plan

This table highlights mental health calendar dates as well as themes to be used each month.

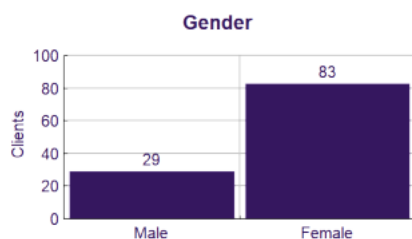
B2C EAP Communications Plan 2023									
Month	Awareness Days	Date	Themes	Intranet	Ehots	SMS	IM	Blog	Podcasts
January	Dry January Blue Monday	January 16 January	Dry January - The Impact of Substance Misuse Self Care & Healthy Habits Blue Monday - What's it all about?	1	1	1	1	1	1
February	Time to Talk Day Eating Disorders Awareness Week	02 February 24 February - 02 March	Start the Conversation Using Food to Manage Feelings		1	1	1	1	1
March	Parental Mental Health Week World Sleep Day	06 - 12 March 17 March	No Parent is 'Perfect' - It's OK to struggle How to Sleep Better		1	1	1	1	1
April	Stress Awareness Month World Health Day	April 07 April	Tips and Ideas to Combat Stress / Resilience Building Taking Your Thoughts to Court		1	1	1	1	1
May	UK Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week Mental Health Awareness Week	02 - 08 May 15 - 21 May	Mental Health Stigma Managing a New Born and Relationships	1	1	1	1	1	1
June	Men's Health Week Loneliness Awareness Week	12 - 18 June 13 - 17 June	It's OK not to be OK Young Workers Lonely at Work		1	1	1	1	1
July			Adult ADHD Debunking OCD Myths & Managing the Disorder		1	1	1	1	1
August			Healthy Body, Healthy Mind Maintaining Body Positivity During Summer		1	1	1	1	1
September	World Suicide Prevention Day	10 September	Let's Talk Suicide Approaching Difficult Conversations Successfully	1	1	1	1	1	1
October	World Mental Health Day World Menopause Day	10 October 18 October	Managing Anger TBC		1	1	1	1	1
November	National Stress Awareness Day	01 November	Stress Awareness Simple Tips for Managing Stress		1	1	1	1	1
December	Grief Awareness Week	02 - 08 December	Recovery Relapse Awareness Coping with Loss and Bereavement at Christmas		1	1	1	1	1

3.1.8 The following charts show the age demographic of staff utilising the EAP service during the reporting period January 2023 to December 2023.



3.1.9 The next chart gives a breakdown on the gender of staff accessing the EAP service. National statistics indicate that women with common mental disorders

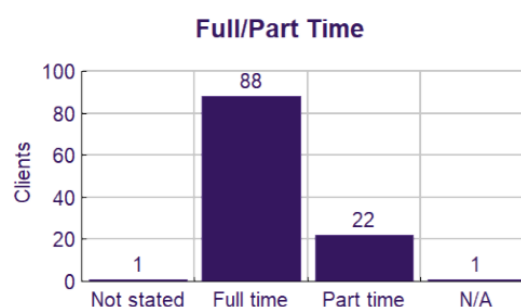
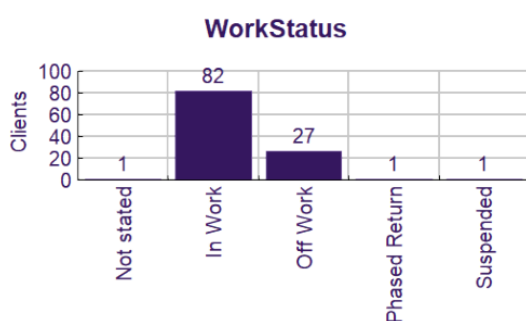
are more likely to seek some form of help than men. It is common in many organisations for men to access support services less than female employees. National research indicates that there is evidence that men are considerably more likely than women to strongly oppose the idea of counselling for anything other than serious mental health problems. Ensuring that the EAP service is highlighted to all employees irrespective of gender will support access.



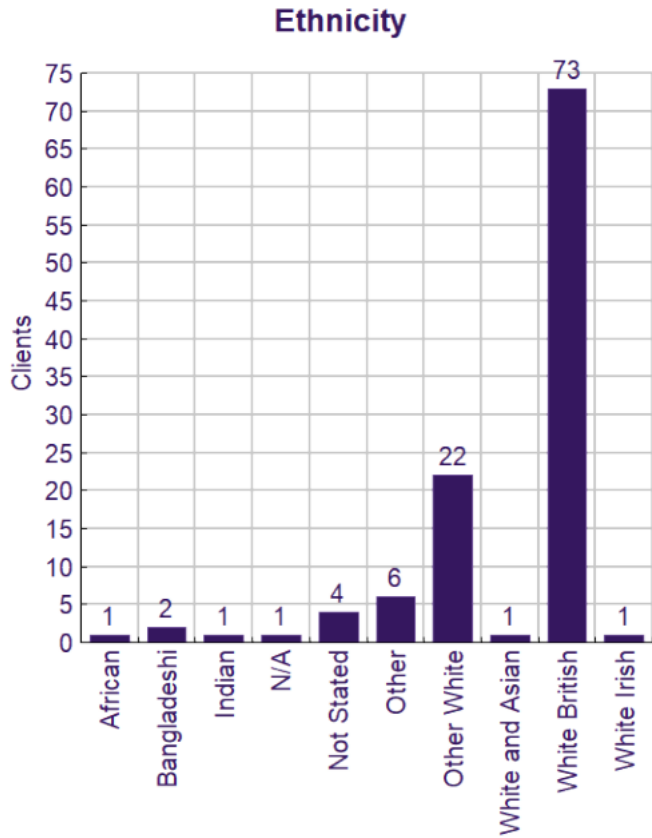
3.1.10 We ran a series of roadshows specifically targeting areas of the organisation where the workforce is predominantly male to encourage uptake of the EAP service among this group of staff. The figures this year show a slight increase in uptake by men compared with the previous period. The figures in the table below, show a slight increase in the number of men accessing the counselling service since the last reporting period.

Demographic/Period	Male	Female	Non Binary
Gender 2023	29 (25.89%) ↑	83 (74.11%)	
Gender 2022	23 (20.54%)	87 (77.68%)	2 (1.78%)

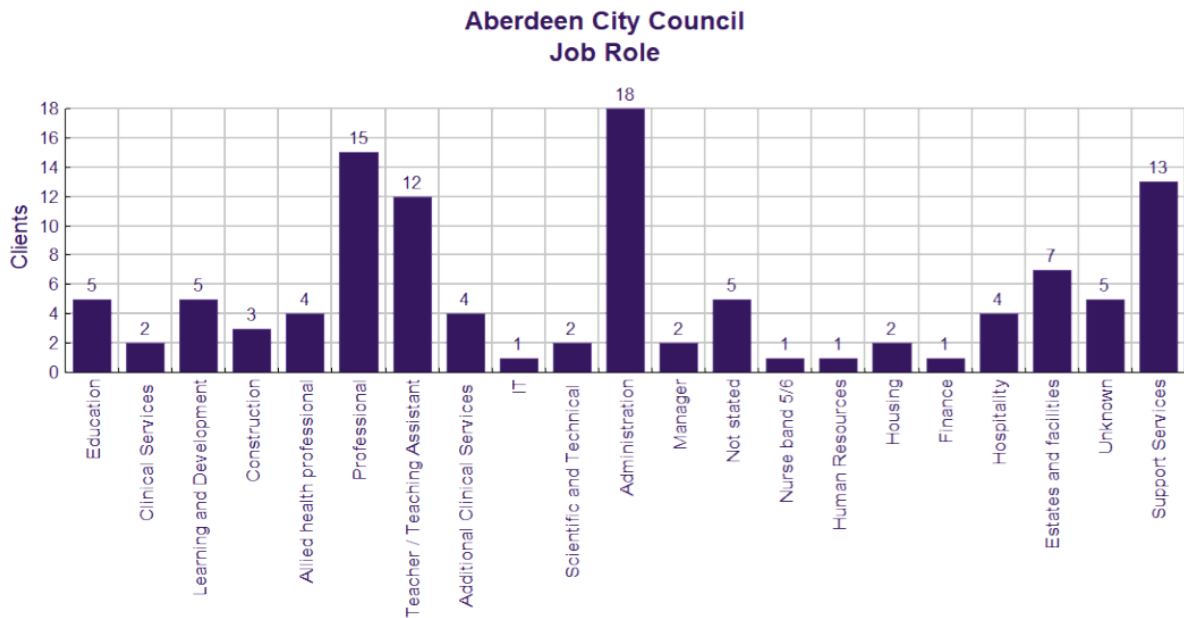
3.1.11 As can be seen from the charts below, the highest usage of the service between January and December was by employees in work demonstrating the proactive early intervention approach to be successful at keeping staff at work while actively seeking support. The majority of employees accessing the service are also in full time employment.



3.1.12 The highest number of staff accessing the EAP service are from the “White British” ethnic banding. A spread of other ethnic backgrounds can also be seen as accessing the service in the following table. A translator service is available at a cost to support any members of staff for whom English is not a first language and who may struggle to communicate and receive the right support otherwise.

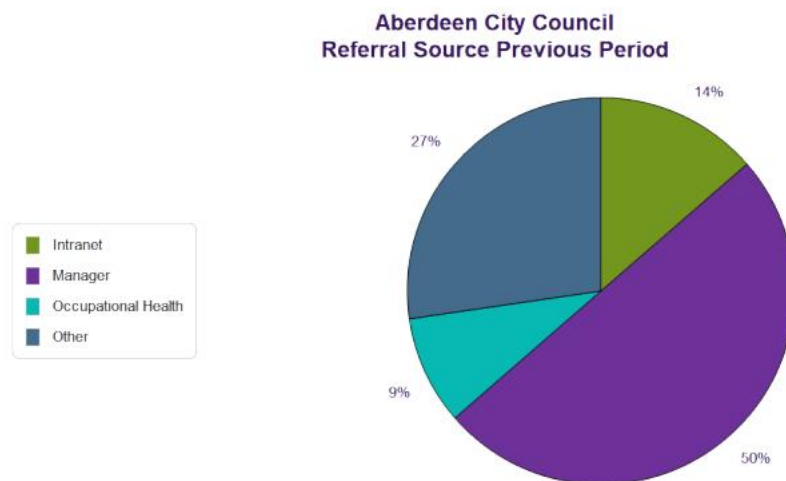
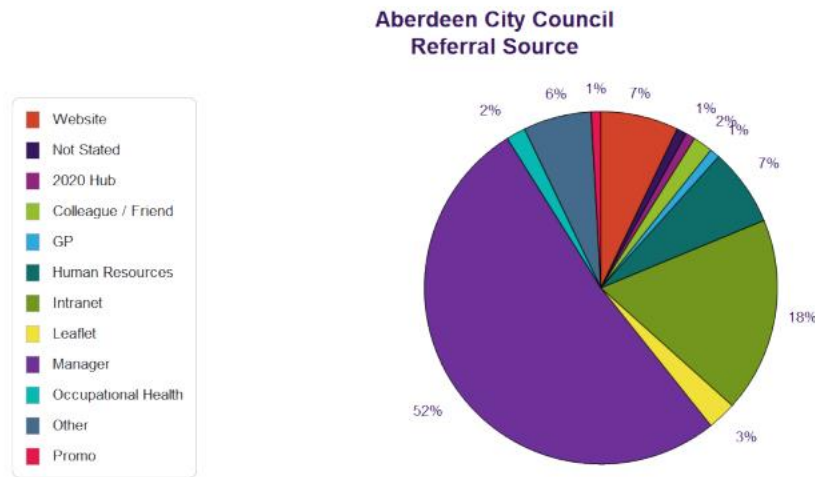


3.1.13 There is a good varied spread of staff accessing the service across the service from various job roles right across the organisation and this is shown in the chart below.



3.1.14 Managers have an important role to play in supporting staff that are experiencing mental health problems. This involves supporting employees in the workplace and supporting them back to work after a period of absence. The charts below show consistently that the majority of signposting done to the EAP service is done by managers. This remains steady from the last reporting period and is consistent with other organisations signed up to the EAP provider also. In

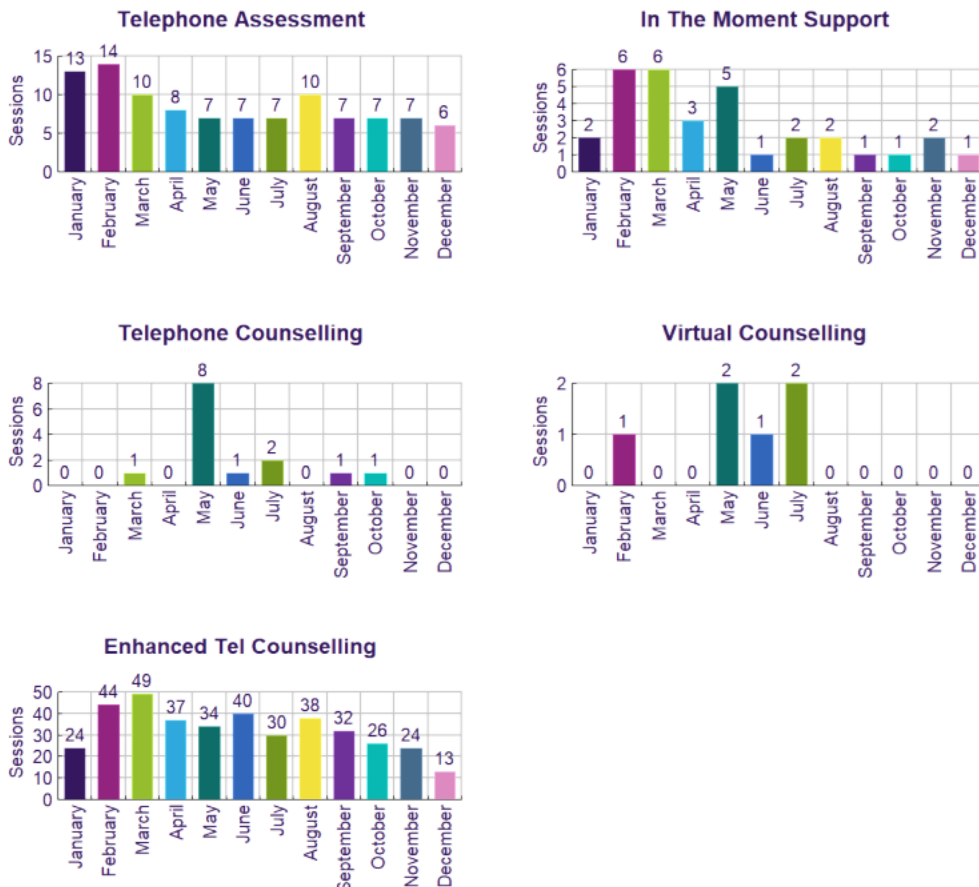
addition to managers signposting to the service, the chart below shows an increase in referrals coming from other sources for example from the Intranet (18%), People and Organisation aka HR (7%), Website (7%), Intranet (6%) and Leaflets (3%). This would be expected with the number of roadshows delivered to various areas across the organisation to help improve awareness and encourage engagement with the EAP service.



3.1.15 Managers can have a huge impact on supporting their staff by communicating, listening, being open to adjustments where required and by providing support and signposting as necessary. We continue to provide line managers with access to specialised training and deliver various awareness raising days, to enable them to initiate conversations with their employees, facilitate reasonable adjustments/return to work meetings and to identify signs of mental health issues in order to signpost them into the EAP service. Consideration is being given to adding these courses to the suite of mandatory training for managers.

Course	Jan to Dec 2023	Jan to Dec 2022
Mental Health Awareness for Managers (Face to Face)	48	56
Mentally Health Workplaces (eLearning)	130	131

3.1.16 Prior to the reporting period of January 2023 to December 2023, there were clients already engaged in Counselling therapy. The graphs below show the number of counselling sessions conducted during this period.



3.1.17 In addition to the “in the moment” and “counselling” support the EAP service provides to our employees, we continue to look for and run other proactive initiatives throughout the organisation to help us not only raise awareness of this vital support service but which also provide our employees with much needed relief and support. Our figures above show consistently high referrals relating to anxiety and depression among our staff.

3.1.18 A poster campaign highlighting the Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) has been re-launched with a new poster and is being displayed across the organisation. The new poster has introduced a QR code which takes viewers to an external landing page which will ensure everyone can access the current up-to-date list of Mental Health First Aiders which are located in various sites across the entire organisation. Mental Health First Aiders provide a very necessary frontline service and signpost colleagues to services such as the EAP and other initiatives which run across the organisation.

- 3.1.19 We are proactively addressing anxiety, depression and stress in the workplace through these initiatives, one of which has been the reintroduction of the [Therapet Service](#), initially piloting in Marischal College.
- 3.1.20 More and more offices are becoming pet friendly due to the benefits that [pets in the workplace](#) bring. Visiting pets have been found to improve concentration, decrease stress and pressure and force staff in to taking a short break. Immediate feedback has been extremely positive and in addition has seen an immediate list of requests from other venues across the organisation including Schools to have the service rolled out to them also.
- 3.1.21 The [benefits of volunteering](#) have also been very well documented and in tandem with the delivery of the Therapet service, a campaign to encourage employees to volunteer as “Therapet Assistants” to support delivery of the service has commenced. Volunteers will support by meeting and greeting and chaperoning the Therapet visitors around the venue to their places of work. They will encourage colleagues to take time to actively engage with the service so that they can enjoy the benefits it brings.
- 3.1.22 A sample of feedback from those accessing the EAP service can be seen below.



3.2 Occupational Health Service

- 3.2.1 The Occupational Health contract sits with TAC Healthcare, who formerly traded as Iqarus.
- 3.2.2 The current contract comes to an end in August 2024, and a process is currently underway jointly with Aberdeenshire Council to identify the provider that will deliver the best service to meet the needs of the Council within the existing budget.
- 3.2.3 The table below shows the volume of appointments for the period January – December 2023.
- 3.2.4 These figures include all appointments, including health surveillance assessments and pre employment screening as well as management referrals.

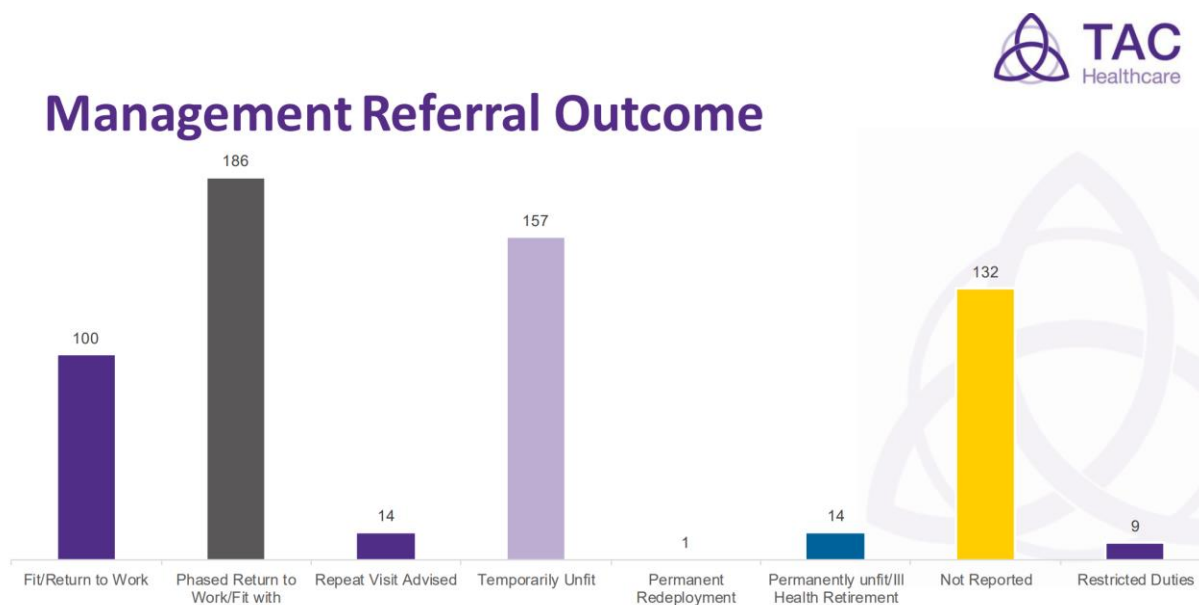
3.2.5 The cancelled appointments were either re-booked for a time that was more suitable for the employee or were cancelled as the employee had returned to work.

3.2.6 An appointment is recorded as did not attend (dna) if the employee fails to answer the initial telephone call from the OH provider; all dna appointments are identified and followed up with the service.

	Jan-23		Feb-23		Mar-23		Apr-23		May-23		Jun-23		Jul-23		Aug-23		Sep-23		Oct-23		Nov-23		Dec-23	
	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite	TAC Healthcare	Offsite
Attended	93	0	94	5	121	0	112	14	154	7	111	5	124	13	98	0	80	0	118	0	41	0	70	0
Cancelled	4	0	6	0	13	0	0	0	20	0	7	0	18	0	7	0	6	0	11	0	2	0	5	0
Did Not Attend	11	0	5	0	8	0	4	0	9	0	6	0	6	0	7	0	9	0	7	0	0	0	10	0

Management Referral Outcomes

3.2.7 The graph below shows the outcomes from management referrals made during the period January – December 2023.



3.2.8 A total of 295 appointments resulted in the employee returning to work, either fully, on a phased return with adjustments in place or on restricted duties. This represents 48.1% of the management referrals made over the period.

3.2.9 171 appointments confirmed that the employee was currently unfit for work, however only 14 of these required a repeat appointment to be made.

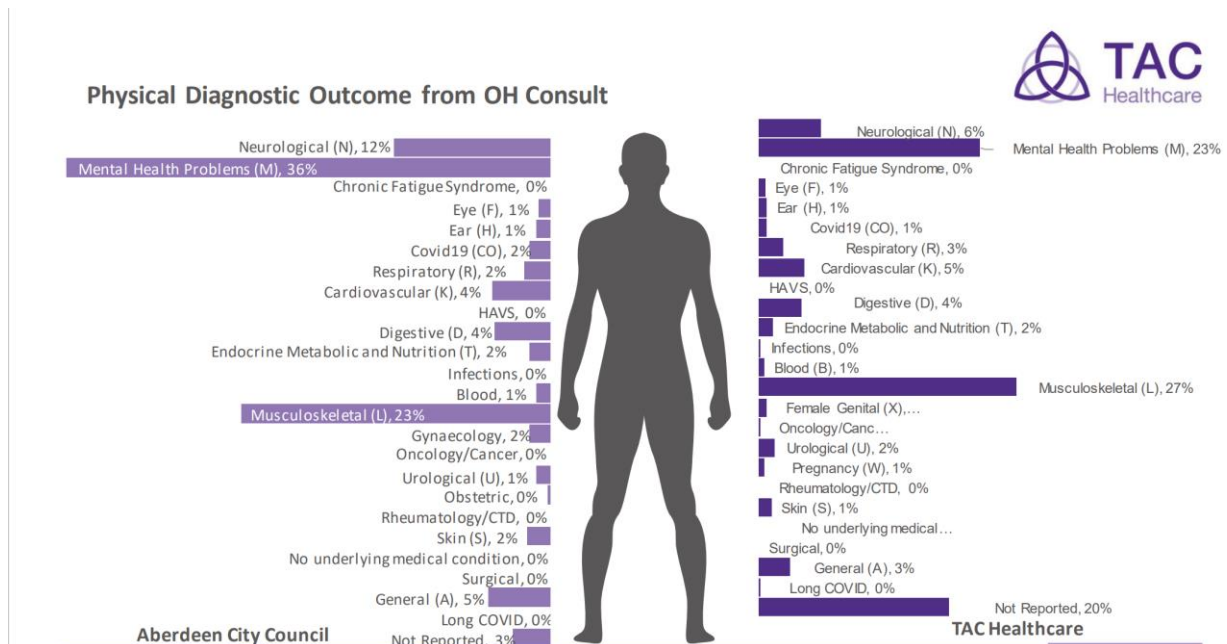
3.2.10 14 employees were identified as meeting the criteria for ill health retirement, and 1 employee was placed on the redeployment register as the OH advice was that they would not be able to return to their substantive role.

3.2.11 The change in provider from Iqarus to TAC Healthcare has led to two management information reporting systems being combined. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of outcomes being classed as “not reported.” Tac Healthcare have advised that this covers a range of

circumstances, including cases in which further medical information is being sought prior to a repost being released (for example GP or specialist reports), cases where the employee has elected not to release the report and cases where there is more than one reason for the referral which may require a range of outcomes to be recorded. Work is underway with the OH provider for this information to be broken down into more meaningful reporting categories.

3.2.12 The pictogram below illustrates the medical reasons for the management referrals, and compares the ACC referral levels for each category (on the left of the diagram) with the overall number of referrals TAC Healthcare are receiving (on the right). This demonstrates that the spread of absence reasons leading to referrals within the Council are very much in line with the reasons other organisations are making OH referrals.

3.2.13 The 2 most common reasons for referring to OH are mental health and musculoskeletal, which is consistent with the absence data.



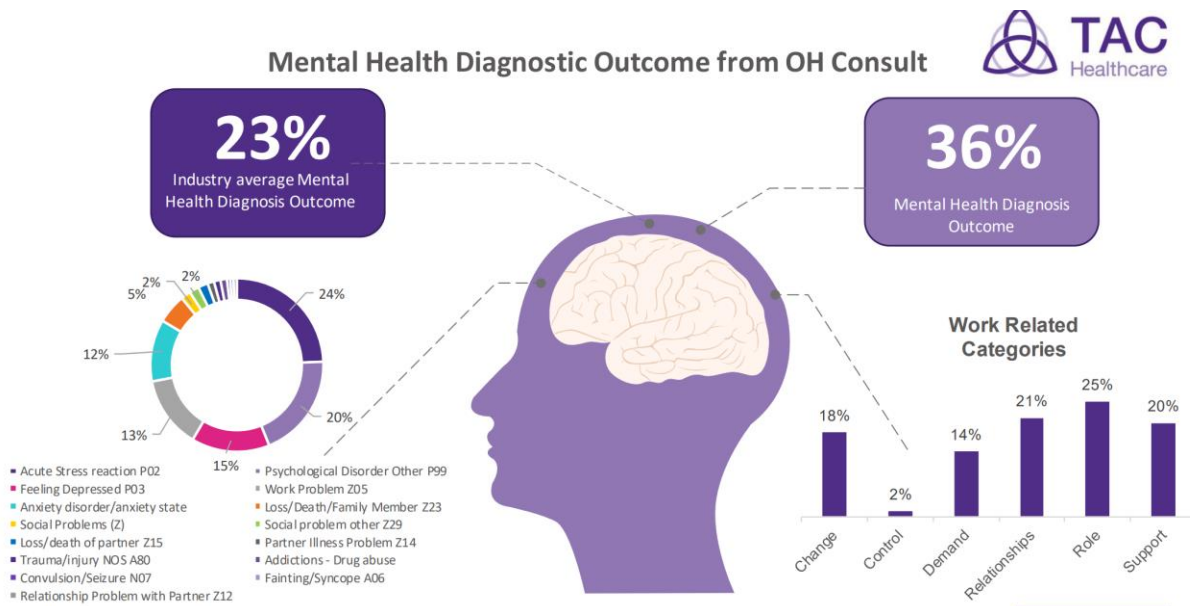
3.2.14 The top referral reasons broken down by age shows that for employees aged between 16 and 44 years of age the most prevalent reasons for referral are related to mental and psychological health, whilst for employees aged 45 and over the top reason for referral is related to musculoskeletal complaints.

Top referral reasons per age group



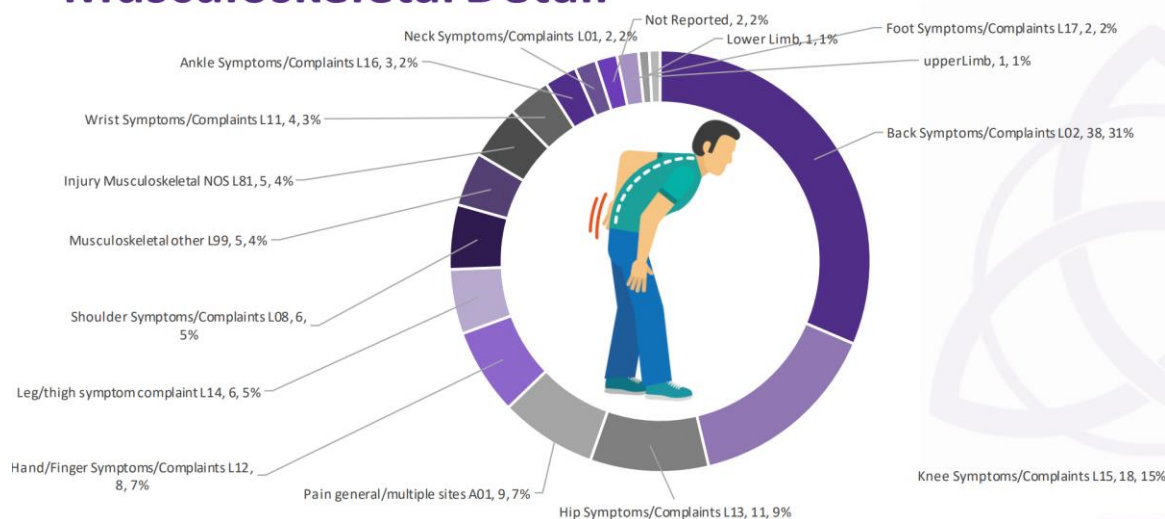
3.2.15 A further analysis of the referrals relating to mental health issues shows that 13% of these referrals are in relation to perceived work related issues; this is a decrease from the position in 2022, when 24% of mental health referrals were attributed to work related issues.

3.2.16 Within the work related categories, 25% of referrals were attributed to issues the employee was experiencing with their role, 21% were attributed to in work relationship issues and 20% to the level of support provided. The category which was recorded as highest in 2022, Change, has decreased from being the reason for 24% of work related mental health referrals in 2022 to 18% of work related mental health referrals in 2023.



3.2.17 The most prevalent reason for musculoskeletal referrals was back symptoms, which accounted for 31% of referrals, with knee symptoms being the second highest at 15% of referrals.

Musculoskeletal Detail



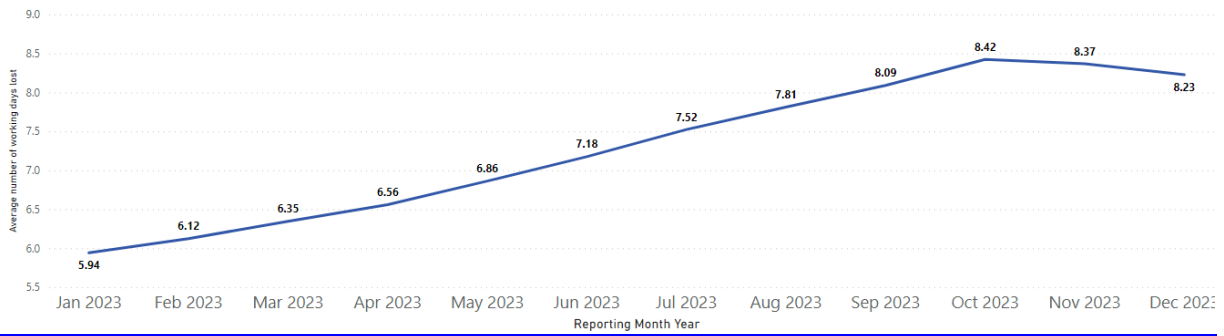
3.3 Sickness Absence

Data

3.3.1 The table below shows the average number of days lost per fte for the period January – December 2023 compared to the days lost in the period January – December 2022. As can be seen, the average number of days lost has continued to increase on a monthly basis up until November and December, at which point the trend, which has been upwards on a month by month basis since the pandemic, changed and a reduction in the number of days lost was recorded, as can be seen on the graph below.

Month	Days Lost 2022	Days Lost 2023
January	5.76	5.94
February	4.73	6.12
March	5.91	6.35
April	6.01	6.56
May	6.09	6.86
June	6.16	7.18
July	6.3	7.52
August	6.36	7.81
September	6.42	8.09
October	6.54	8.42
November	6.67	8.37
December	6.82	8.23

Average number of total working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE employee (12 month rolling average)



3.3.2 This upward trend reflects the national trend across all sectors. The CIPD and Simply Health Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey 2023 identifies that absence figures recorded in 2023 were the highest for a decade, with the average number of days lost per employee sitting at 7.8 days [Health and wellbeing at work \(cipd.org\)](#).

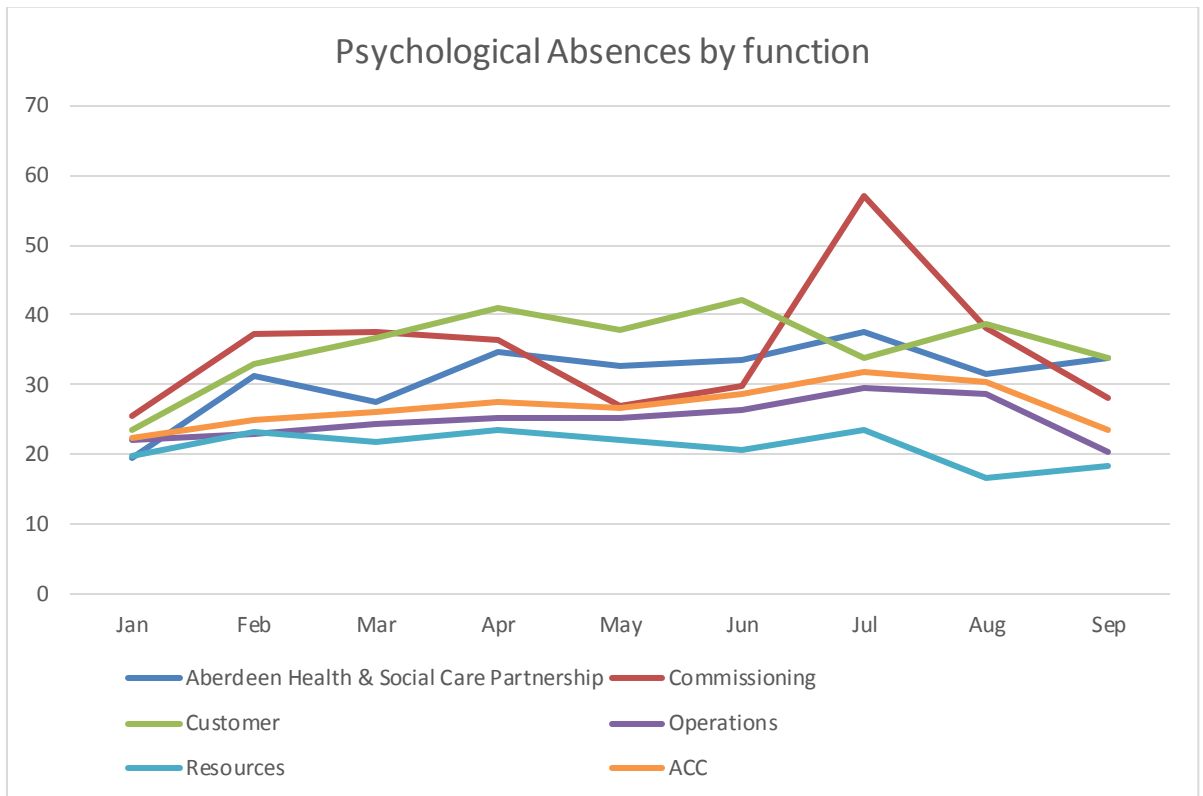
3.3.3 The same report gives the average number of days lost in public sector employers during 2023 as 10.6 days.

3.3.4 The table below sets out the breakdown of absence reasons for each month. Psychological and musculoskeletal continue to be the most prevalent reasons for absence, and this is reflected in the data received from the Occupational Health service as well as being identified as the top reasons for sickness absence nationally in the CIPD and Simplyhealth Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey 2023.

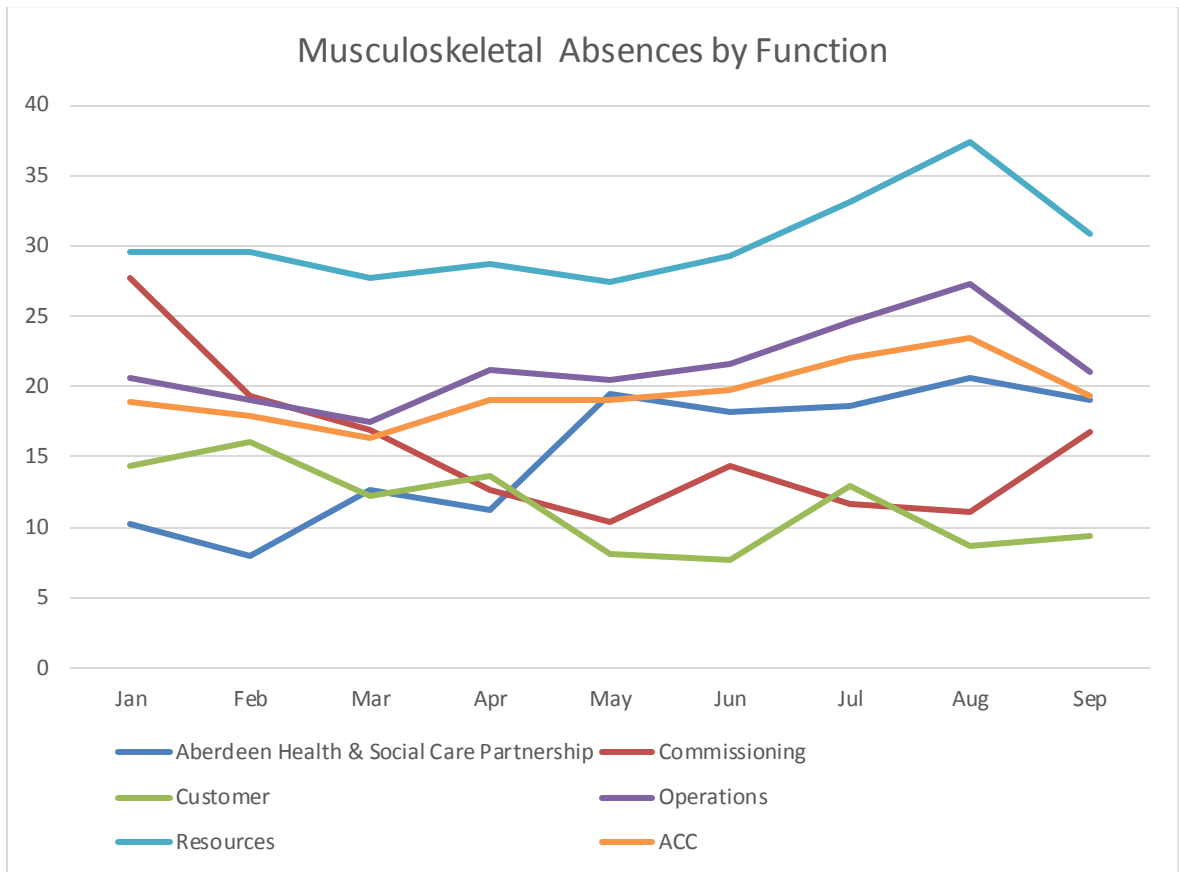
Sickness Category Breakdown, Monthly

SICKNESS_CATEGORY	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023
	0.22%	0.20%	0.18%	0.24%	0.21%	0.21%	0.21%	0.22%	0.16%
Bacterial	1.00%	1.42%	0.78%	1.07%	1.31%	1.32%	1.12%	0.81%	1.41%
Cardiovascular	2.07%	1.93%	1.90%	2.88%	3.02%	2.99%	2.31%	2.46%	3.05%
Covid-19 Related	3.24%	3.87%	6.51%	3.79%	3.12%	2.28%	1.68%	3.30%	5.69%
Dermatological	0.45%	0.55%	0.85%	0.54%	0.78%	0.62%	0.62%	0.81%	0.84%
Endocrine	0.09%	0.11%	0.16%	0.33%	0.33%	0.28%	0.25%	0.23%	0.29%
Gastro-intestinal	6.18%	6.92%	7.54%	6.66%	6.98%	7.87%	5.64%	6.22%	8.88%
Gynaecological	1.55%	1.37%	1.33%	2.14%	1.40%	1.73%	2.30%	1.61%	1.60%
Hospitalisation	10.33%	9.73%	8.68%	10.14%	10.56%	9.32%	8.97%	7.61%	7.02%
Malignancy	3.47%	3.82%	3.16%	3.20%	3.37%	2.77%	2.78%	3.34%	2.86%
Musculoskeletal	18.91%	17.87%	16.41%	19.10%	19.03%	19.69%	22.10%	23.45%	19.29%
Neurological	6.14%	6.74%	5.97%	5.95%	6.34%	7.22%	7.94%	5.93%	6.77%
Ophthalmic	0.48%	0.63%	0.55%	0.56%	0.36%	0.74%	0.84%	0.54%	0.92%
Other	2.39%	3.52%	2.97%	3.12%	2.40%	2.01%	1.96%	2.29%	1.55%
Psychological	22.25%	24.80%	25.98%	27.64%	26.78%	28.78%	31.71%	30.33%	23.36%
Respiratory	18.22%	14.42%	13.95%	10.88%	11.07%	9.48%	7.06%	8.71%	13.69%
Urological	0.50%	0.24%	0.30%	0.21%	0.66%	0.66%	0.77%	0.82%	0.37%
Viral	2.50%	1.84%	2.78%	1.55%	2.27%	2.03%	1.75%	1.32%	2.25%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

- 3.3.5 As illustrated by the graph below, the Functions within which psychological absences were highest (as a percentage of total absence within the Function) were AHSCP, Commissioning and Customer.
- 3.3.6 The level of sickness absence attributable to psychological absence in Operations closely mirrored the level of psychological absence across ACC as a whole.
- 3.3.7 The Resources Function showed a lower level of psychological absence as a percentage of total absences than the ACC level.



- 3.3.8 The graph below breaks down the musculoskeletal absences by Function.
- 3.3.9 The highest levels of musculoskeletal absences are within the Resources Function, and these are in the main within the Operations and Protective Services Cluster, where the highest numbers of frontline manual workers are employed.



Improvement Plan

- 3.3.10 Work is continuing to be progressed in line with the Absence Improvement Plan, with progress being reported through the Performance Board.
- 3.3.11 The key areas of focus for improvement have been identified as data, management support, process review improvement and early intervention/prevention.
- 3.3.12 Progress against these focus areas are set out in the table below:

Focus Area	Achieved	Next Steps
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full data cleanse carried out Review of methodology to provide more meaningful measures Roll out of PowerBI absence data report to 3rd tier managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign of PowerBI absence report On going monitoring of data to ensure robustness

Management Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New suite of trigger emails designed and rolled out • One stop absence management toolkit for managers designed and launched. • Regular meetings to undertake absence data deep dive arranged with P&OD Advisors and SMTs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of updated management training modules
Process Review Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Supporting Attendance Policy and accompanying guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Committee by November 2024 • Tendering process for new occupational health provider underway
Early Intervention/prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings to undertake absence data deep dive arranged with P&OD Advisors and SMTs • Wellbeing pulse check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat pulse checks both across the organisation as a whole and in areas identified through deep dive discussions.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The direct financial costs associated with sickness absence relate to the payment of occupational sick pay and cover of essential services. There is also a financial cost associated with the provision of the occupational health service, with the current annual budget sitting at £122,000.00. The indirect costs relate to impact on service delivery.
- 4.2 There is also the potential for employment tribunal associated costs if an employee were to make an employment related claim against the Council.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Failure to comply with legislation in ensuring a safe and healthy workplace has the potential to result in enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Such intervention can result in potential prosecution (criminal), equally, employees (civil claims) are more likely to succeed following a successful HSE prosecution. Changes in the Sentencing and Fines Guidance for health and safety non-compliances are resulting in increased financial penalties. Fine starting points are based on an organisation's turnover. As Local Authorities do not have turnover; Annual Revenue Budget is deemed to be the equivalent. This amount is then altered depending on the culpability of the organisation and harm factors to employees and members of the public.
- 5.2 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 there is a legal requirement to ensure the health safety and welfare at work of our employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees.
- 5.3 The provision of an EAS is in line with guidance produced by the HSE as one of the measures to control that risk. One person in four in the UK will experience a mental health problem in their lives.
- 5.4 HSE potential prosecution (criminal) can attract fines, imprisonment and remedial orders. There is also the possibility of employee claims (civil). Provision of an EAS can be used as mitigation against potential claims from employees exposed to work related stress.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			
Compliance	Compliance with legal requirements ensures the health and safety of employees. Poor management of	Assessment of risk via stress and Quality of Working Life risk assessments (QWL's) with identification and implementation of safe working arrangements.	M	Yes

	the risks and lack of support has the potential to attract enforcement action (criminal and civil)	Functions acting on utilisation, trend and root cause information to develop and implement controls to prevent a reoccurrence. Completion of Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool (HSE) by line managers acting on feedback. Provision of specialist support / advice.		
Operational	Risk to service delivery if absence levels are high and employees are not supported back to work timeously	Provision of information, instruction and training as identified in Job Profiles, skills and training matrices and in risk assessment. Open and clear two-way communication at all levels within the organisation. Non-judgmental and proactive support provided to employees who experience mental health problems. Good self-management of personal wellbeing and resilience.	M	Yes
Financial	If no action is taken to support individuals and address trends, then the organisation will incur both direct and indirect costs	Implementation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy and supporting Stress Procedure. Effective management and maintenance of a mentally healthy workplace and provision of appropriate support.	M	Yes

		Review and identification of EAS use and related absence to act on lessons learned. Corporate and individual awareness of mental health in the workplace. Active monitoring of workloads.		
Reputational	Without ensuring suitable employee support there is a risk of the organisation not being seen as an employer of choice and having recruitment and retention issues	As above	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement Working in Partnership for Aberdeen	The provisions within this report support the delivery of the Policy Statement through ensuring that sufficient resources are available to deliver the Council services which will achieve the policy priorities.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The Prosperous People theme in the LOIP indicates that all people in the City are entitled to feel safe, protected from harm and supported where necessary, which would include employees of the Council. Adopting the approach outlined in the report will support the workforce.
Workforce Plan	As set out in the Workforce Plan, the emphasis on developing internal capacity and the need for

	flexibility and efficiency in our reducing workforce, there is a need to focus on supporting employee health and wellbeing.
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Lindsay MacInnes, Chief Officer People and Citizen Services (Interim) on 28 March 2024.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[EAP usage and ROI: the pandemic effect in 2021](#)
[Thera-pets: How can pets benefit your mental health?](#)
[Health and wellbeing at work \(cipd.org\).](#)

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Employee Assistance Programme Poster

Appendix 2: Mental Health First Aider Poster

Appendix 3: Therapet Service Poster

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Mental Health First Aider Network

Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) are a point of contact if you, or someone you are concerned about, are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. They are not therapists or counsellors but have been trained to give you initial support and advise you of appropriate help if required.

You may contact any of the MHFA's for support.

**Scan the QR Code to see the full list of all
Mental Health First Aiders across various
Aberdeen City Council venues**



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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	22 April 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Corporate Health and Safety – October– December 2023
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/110
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jenni Lawson
REPORT AUTHOR	Colin Leaver
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The appendix to this report summarises statistical health and safety performance information for the 3-month reporting period October to December 2023 to provide the Committee with the opportunity to monitor compliance with health and safety legislation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the report and provide comment on the health, safety policy, performance, trends, and improvements.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The appendix to the report contains a dashboard of the statistical information in relation to health and safety activities for the three-month reporting period October to December 2023. The statistical information also contains an analysis of the key figures in each of the incident and near miss sections.

- 3.1.1 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) places duties on employers, the self-employed and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This reporting duty includes incidents which result in an employee being absent from work for 7 days or longer as a result of an injury, which have historically been the main reason for Aberdeen City Council's reports to HSE.

This report addresses the following matters:

- All incidents involving employees and members of the public (serious and minor)

- HSE Reportable Incidents
- Reportable Diseases
- Near Miss Information
- Enforcement Interventions
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety Audits
- Compliance Monitoring
- Health and Safety Policies, Procedures and Guidance

3.2 Incidents (Oct-Dec 2023)

All incident and near miss information in the appendix to this report has been provided to Cluster level in the appendix. However, within Education incidents have been reported to nursery, primary and secondary school level.

Incident information

- 3.3** The figures are reported to Cluster level for both employee and third-party incidents. Causation figures are also included within the appendix. There is also now a comparison for each of the three years prior to this reporting period so the Committee has sight of the reporting years through the Covid pandemic. The comparative figures for this year are in a separate chart due to the change of reporting system.
- 3.4** When an incident is reported, the manager is required to complete an investigation report, and this should be shared with the employee and signed off by both. This investigation report highlights categories of criteria which require to be considered including root cause, actions identified and completion dates.
- 3.5** Page five of the appendix details the breakdown of incident causation within the Education Service, where the largest number of incidents occur. Figures have stabilised or reduced slightly both from the corresponding period last year and year on year.
- 3.5.1** These incidents continue to often involve children/young people where a social, emotional, mental health need (SEMHN) has been identified.
- 3.5.2** Available national figures show that children in Aberdeen City are doing better than the national mean across mental health measures. However, it is seen that there can be no complacency, and that changes are being seen in the needs of children and young people.
- 3.5.3** The lack of socialisation and lack of structure from school during the periods of lockdown appears to have impacted some children more than others and vulnerability has undoubtedly increased. This is often heavily impacted by parental mental health. We also know that vulnerability is often directly linked to levels of child poverty, and the current cost of living crisis will be a significant factor too. In many cases, dysregulation is a sign that children do not feel safe and secure.

- 3.5.4 We are seeing a changing picture in attitudes, behaviours and engagement from some children and young people both in their social and school lives and this is mirrored nationally. Some children and young people are reaching increasing levels of dysregulation and struggle to maintain positive relationships or make positive choices which can impact on others.
- 3.5.5 Schools continue to follow the staged intervention procedure, whereby support is accessed using school-based, community, and city-wide supports.
- 3.5.6 The Health and Safety Sub-Group, which was formed, with a membership of Education staff, Trade Unions and Corporate health and safety, to undertake analysis of health and safety data generated by schools, informs the direction of the overall workstream. This also ensures that appropriate support is made available to schools if required.

HSE Reportable incidents (October – December 2023)

- 3.6 The table in the Appendix also shows the number of RIDDOR reportable incidents. During the reporting period between October and December 2023 5 incidents involving an employee required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. The vast majority of these continue to be for over 7-day absences.
- 3.7 The corporate health and safety team contact the reporting manager when a RIDDOR incident is reported to HSE to get assurance that the correct causation and remedial actions have been identified and that any identified remedial actions have been implemented.

Incident (reportable employee) frequency rates

Period – Quarterly	Reportable Incidence rate	Reporting period
Oct-Dec 2023	0.625	2023/24

- 3.8 The above figures are calculated using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Incidence rate} = \text{RIDDOR injuries per period} \times 1000}{\text{Number of employees}}$$

- 3.9 The figure for the corresponding period last year (October to December 2022) was 12 RIDDOR reportable incidents and a reportable incident rate of 1.5.

Reportable Diseases

- 3.10 There were no reportable diseases reported under RIDDOR; which was also the case in the corresponding reporting period last year.

Near Miss Information

- 3.11** Many safety activities are reactive, that is, they occur after an injury incident. By reporting near-miss incidents this promotes proactive safety, thereby raising awareness of potential hazards and mitigation strategies before an injury occurs. Recognising and reporting near-miss incidents can significantly improve employee safety and enhance the safety culture by allowing processes and systems to be altered before an incident occurs.
- 3.12** Reporting managers are required to investigate the near miss to identify the root cause and implement any new identified controls, where possible, to reduce the likelihood of any reoccurrence or for any future incident to result in injury.
- 3.13** The appendix shows information on the number of near miss figures for this reporting period and again a comparison with the three previous reporting years. Again the figures have stabilised or reduced slightly year on year and from 2022's corresponding reporting period.
- 3.14** Page nine of the appendix gives a breakdown of near misses within the Operations function. As with incidents, the majority are within the Education services. Like incident figures, these are mainly because of distressed behaviours evident in some children with additional support needs. Risk assessments are reviewed after every near miss to consider any actions which can be taken to prevent or reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Four-year comparison

- 3.15** The annual comparative figures are displayed to show a comparison across the period which also included those years through the Covid pandemic. The figures are increased in some areas, but they are lowered in Operations where most of the incidents and near misses occur. This has occurred whilst there has been a push by senior managers and Trade Unions to encourage staff to report all issues. Work continues to be undertaken in consultation with Clusters to continue to reduce these incidents where trends are identified. A process to allow employees to whistle blow where they feel incidents and near misses are not being reported is now in development to be rolled out very soon.

Regulator interventions (HSE / SFRS)

- 3.16** There are occasions where HSE and Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) contact Aberdeen City Council to request further information or ask for action to be taken regarding the way Aberdeen City Council undertake their legal duties.
- 3.17** HSE conducted a visit at one of Aberdeen City's schools as part of their annual visit plan on asbestos and reinforced autoclave aerated concrete (RAAC). They found our plans to manage RAAC to be suitable and sufficient. They suggested some changes to the layout of our site-specific asbestos management plans. We have responded to these suggestions and shared our revised management

plan template with HSE who have responded that they are satisfied with the proposed content.

- 3.18** SFRS carried out 5 site visits as part of their annual audit of ACC (Aberdeen City Council) care properties, homelessness accommodation and educational establishments. Any identified issues are allocated as actions against responsible officers and followed through to closure.

Fire risk assessments

- 3.19** Fire risk assessments are completed on a rolling 5-year programme. A total of 16 fire risk assessments were completed during this reporting period. The overall average compliance score was 90%. The issues identified are across the range of topics considered in the assessment process. These issues are given a priority level dependent on the resultant risk which requires an action by a specified date. No building is left at risk during this process.
- 3.20** Any identified actions are included into the fire risk actions database and monitored to a close. This database is available to all Chief Officers on the managers' portal, which shows live data on open, closed, and non-complied with actions. Should an action pass the compliance date these are escalated in writing to the Chief Officer.

Health and Safety Audits

- 3.21** Compliance visits have been undertaken on several topics / premises within the ACC estate. Topics included Management of Contractors (100%); Silica & Other Dusts (100%); Lone Working (100%); Noise at work (78%); Vibration (86%) Security (100%).
- 3.21.1** Again, all action points raised are included in an action log, which is reviewed weekly and reported to the relevant Chief Officer. Managers who have had actions allocated to them are given access to the action log to record the action taken to remove the risk and to record the date completed. Follow up visits are also carried out to ensure actions have been completed and that controls continue to be suitable and sufficient and are being followed. Again, the actions are given a compliance date based on the level of risk which ensures that the risk is removed before it places anyone in greater danger.
- 3.22** Line Manager responsibility is one strand of the review of the health and safety policy. Compliance monitoring continues to be undertaken to understand the level of line managers' understanding of the health and safety responsibilities placed on them by the Council. The results of these compliance visits identify areas where managers may require additional support, explanation, or training to close that knowledge gap. Several areas have been identified as requiring action including risk assessment training, completion of a first aid needs assessment and understanding and complying with the workplace inspection procedure. Having identified the areas requiring further improvement and those managers who require that additional support the Corporate Health and Safety Team (CHST) are currently providing training to all management levels, and

where required specific 1-2-1 training on manager responsibilities, risk assessment and reporting/investigating incidents.

- 3.23** The actions identified as requiring action are recorded in the compliance action log sheets and each is given a compliance date. Where actions in any audit or compliance process are not closed out on time these are initially raised with the relevant Chief Officer and reported through the relevant Risk and Performance Boards.

Health and safety policies, procedures, and guidance

- 3.24** The Noise at Work Procedure was reviewed this quarter. The Asbestos Management Plan was also reviewed with minor changes to reflect that paper copies of management plans were now located at each site.
- 3.25** When procedures are completed, they require to be approved by the relevant Chief Officer. Where the procedure is corporate these are communicated with the relevant services and step by step guidance is developed and made available to inform managers of what is required to be compliant.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires that an organisation has a suitably robust safety management system to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. Where any incident is of sufficient seriousness there is a requirement to report these under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 which provides a potential for the Enforcing Authorities to become involved and carry out their own investigation into the circumstances of the incident. Any investigation could result in prosecution of the organisation and in some cases prosecution of managers and/or employee.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no direct environmental implications because of this report.

7. RISK

Risk Appetite

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement

Management Of Risk

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *Taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	N/A	N/A		
Compliance	There is the risk that any injury or serious health and safety incident could result in focus from the Health and Safety Executive which could result in enforcement action in the form of notices or prosecution.	<p>Corporate Procedures require all tasks to be risk assessed and the controls implemented and supervised by line managers.</p> <p>All employees are trained to a level where they are competent to carry out the work.</p> <p>Analysis of the causes of the incidents, near misses and work-related absences and resultant improvements to prevent, where possible, reoccurrences, can reduce the financial exposure to the Council.</p> <p>This effective health and safety management system in which risks are identified and either eliminated or reduced will result in a reduction of costs to the organisation.</p>	L	Yes
Operational	The risk is that any health and safety incident can lead to an injury to an employee which could	The task has been risk assessed; employees are trained, competent and supervised then there should be less likelihood of incidents.	L	Yes

	<p>have the potential to temporarily or permanently affect either or both their employment and/or their life.</p> <p>The risk to our citizens is that we are unable to provide the same level of service delivery due to staff absences from illness and injury sustained during their work. Also, there is the possibility of a reduced budget due to the associated financial costs.</p>			
Financial	The risk is that any incident has the potential to bring a reduction in the overall budget in place to provide service delivery.	As per compliance above	L	Yes
Reputational	Local and National press coverage of	Each Function should have a robust safety management system in place. There are many	L	Yes

	any incident can present reputational damage to the organisation.	facets to this which are important starting from ensuring employees are trained and competent, every hazard is risk assessed and employees are up to carrying out investigation of near misses to ensure controls are reviewed to consider whether remedial actions are required.		
Environment / Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A	

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	A healthy and safe workplace assists the overarching principles of the stretch outcomes within the LOIP (Local Outcome Improvement Plan) by ensuring that resource is directed at the services required by the city. Removing the level of lost resource to the financial penalties incurred through the Civil and Criminal Courts and from the Regulators will allow the available resource to be best used to ensure funding of the growth sectors of the local economy.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The areas reported on within this report allow Clusters a further opportunity to recognise areas which when acted upon can assist with engagement of staff and service users to support the meaningful educational progress of children and young people.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Vikki Cuthbert, Chief Officer Governance in October 2023.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Quarterly staff governance Health and safety dashboard October to December 2023

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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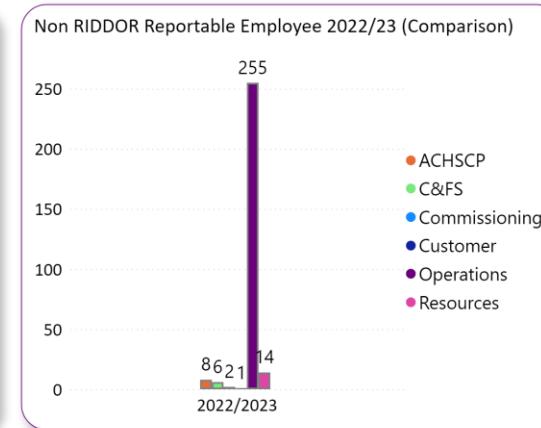
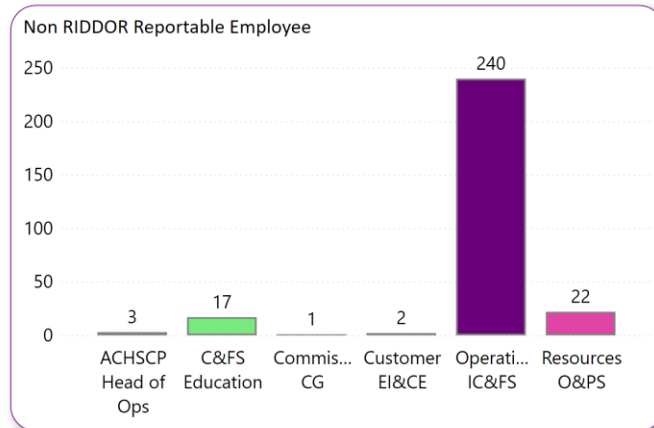
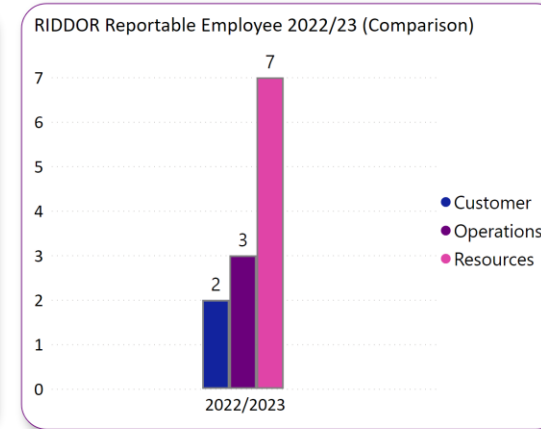
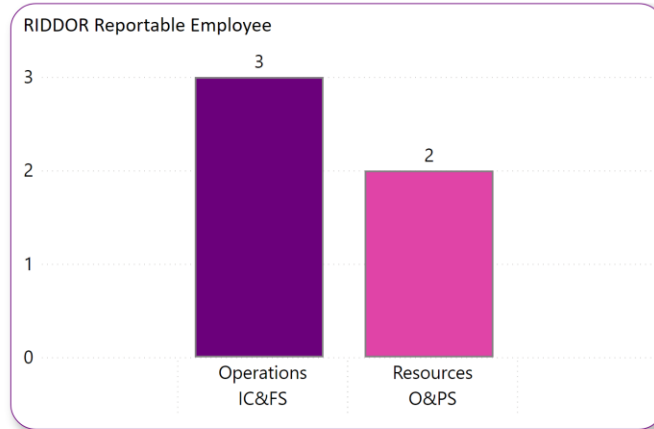
Staff Governance Health & Safety Report Quarter 3 2023/2024 (Oct 23 to Dec 23)

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Reported H&S Incidents (Employee) Between Oct to Dec 2023

The following tables give breakdown of all employee incidents across all Functions and Clusters in Aberdeen City Council. The tables on the left initially show the number of incidents for each Cluster this reporting period with those tables on the right giving a quarter 3 comparison for each Function from 2020/21 to 2022/23 where applicable.

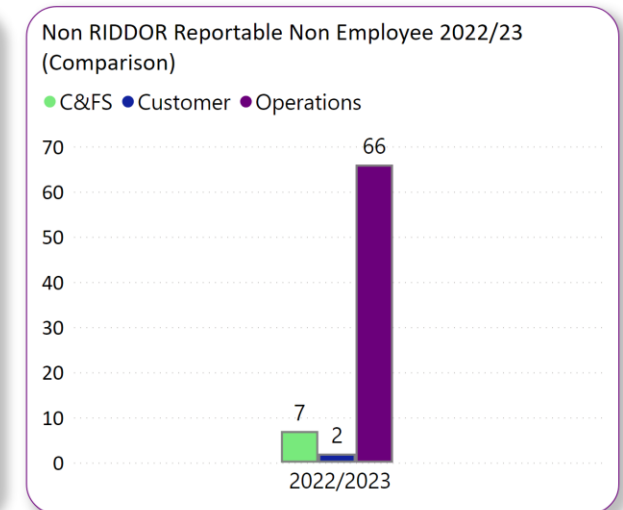
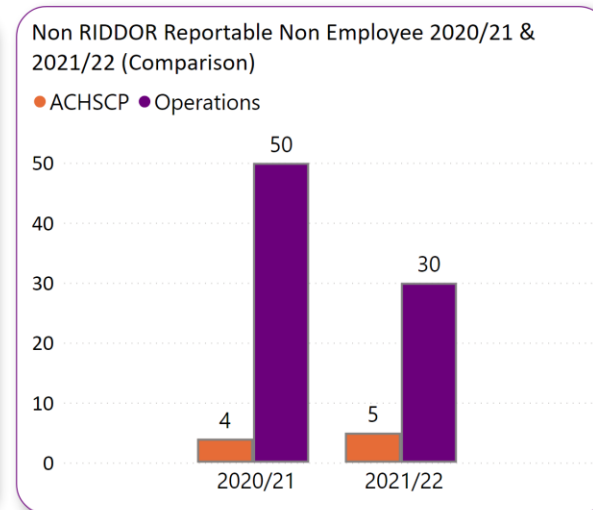
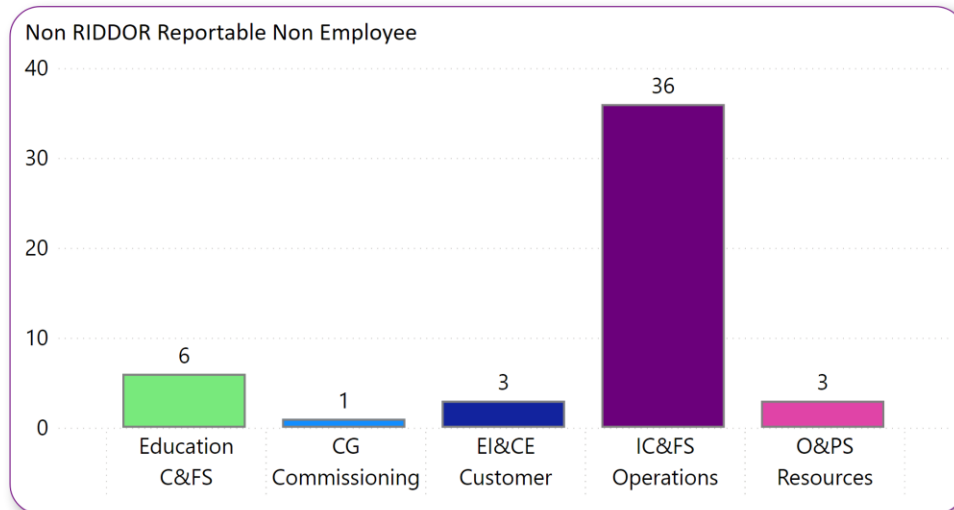
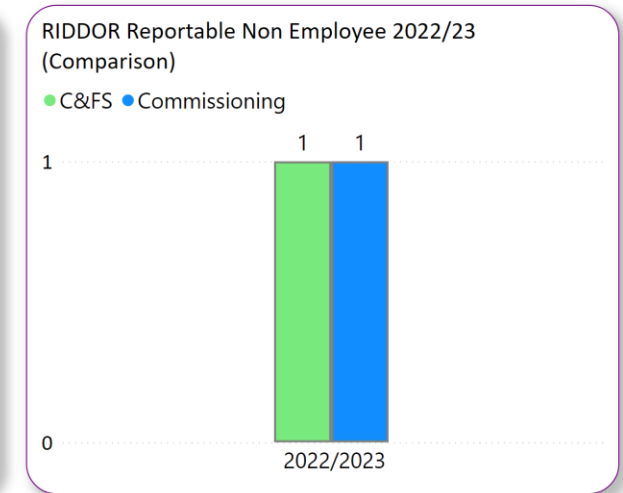
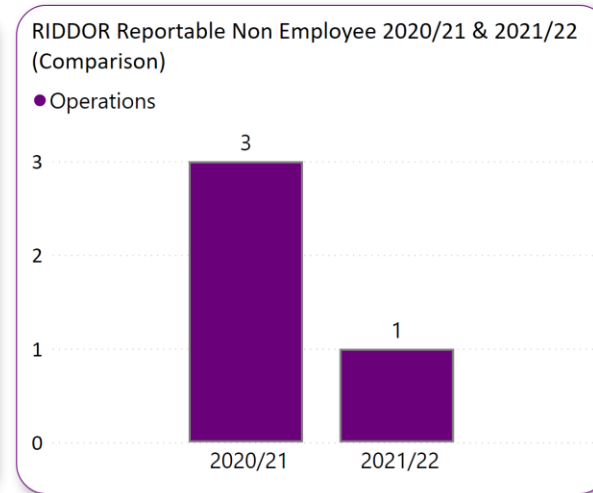
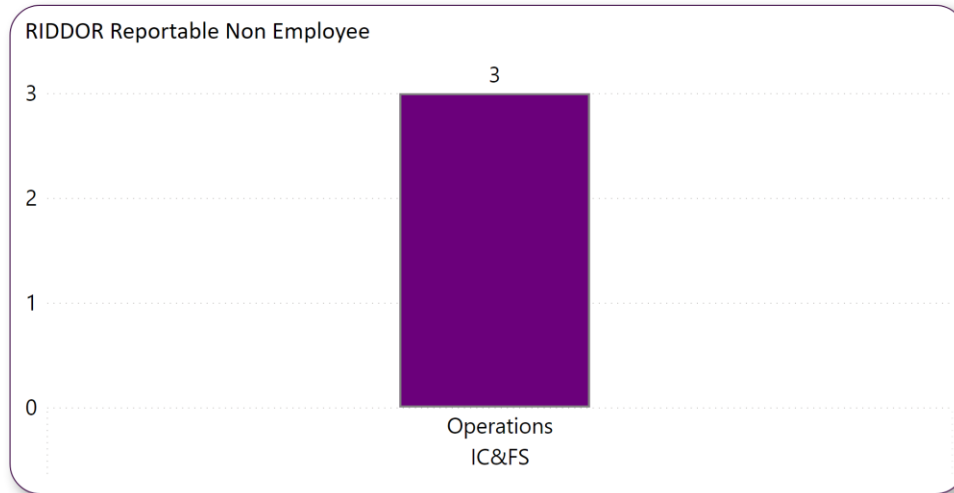


Employee Incident Information

RIDDOR reportable incidents compared to the corresponding quarter in 2022/23 are significantly reduced from 12 to 5. Non-RIDDOR reportable are nearly identical to the same period (286 to 285 this year) with the majority in IC & FS but the figures here have reduced from 255 to 240. Pages 4 and 5 show the causes of these incident reports with behavioural causes continuing to be the largest figure and the majority of these sitting within the nursery/primary schools. This may be the result of the staged intervention procedure schools follow and the H & S sub-group's work on this issue.

Reported H&S Incidents (Third Party) Between Oct to Dec 2023

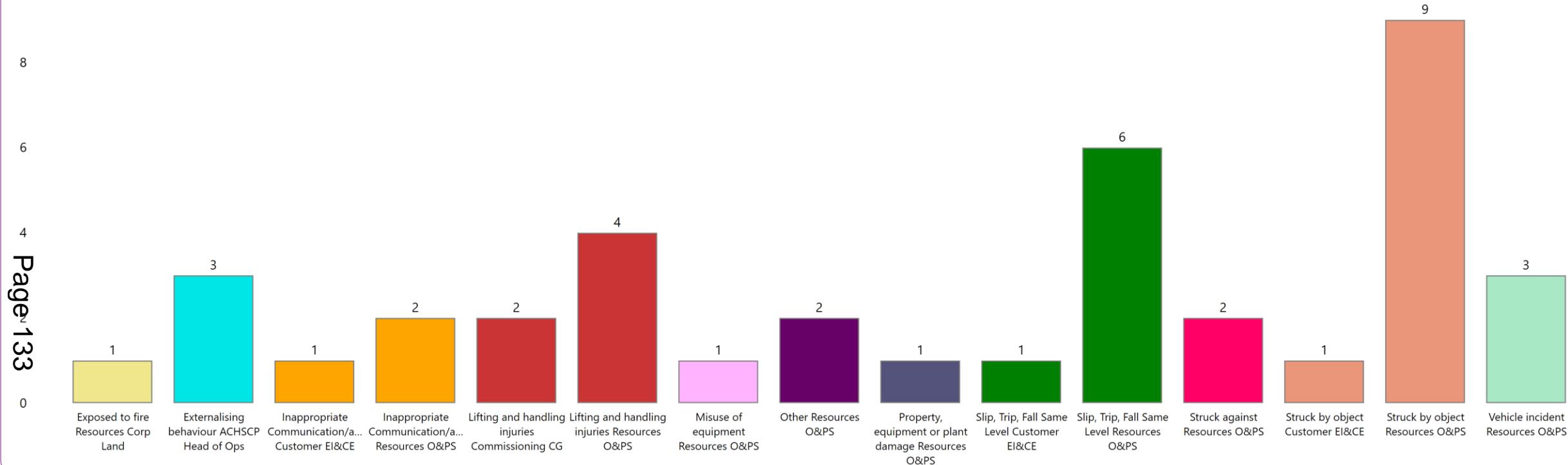
The tables below give information on those non-employee incidents which happened across all Functions and Clusters. Again the tables on the left show the current period for each Cluster, with those tables on the right giving a quarter 3 comparison for each function from 2020/21 to 2022/23 where applicable.



H&S Incident Causation Reported between Oct to Dec 2023

The table shows incident causation for each Cluster for this reporting period apart from Operations, which is covered in the next page.

Injury Cause

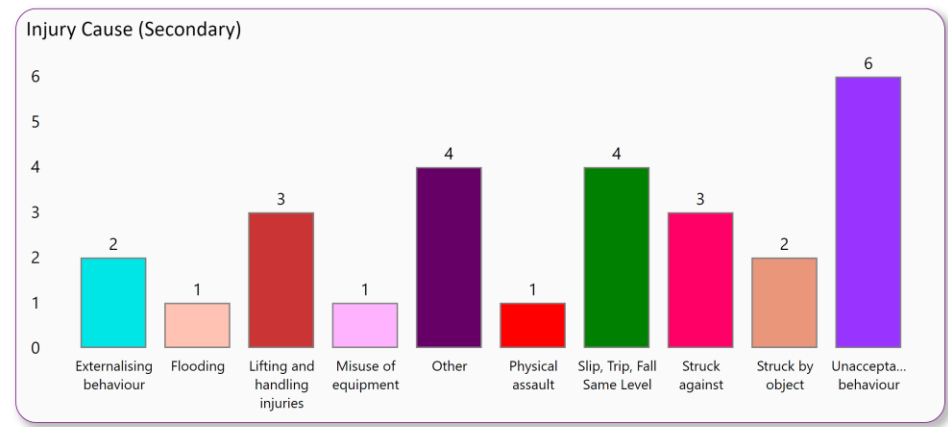
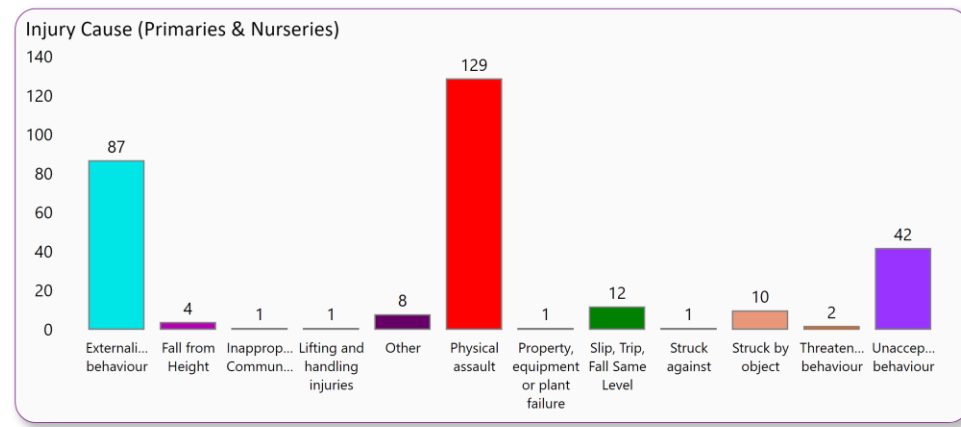
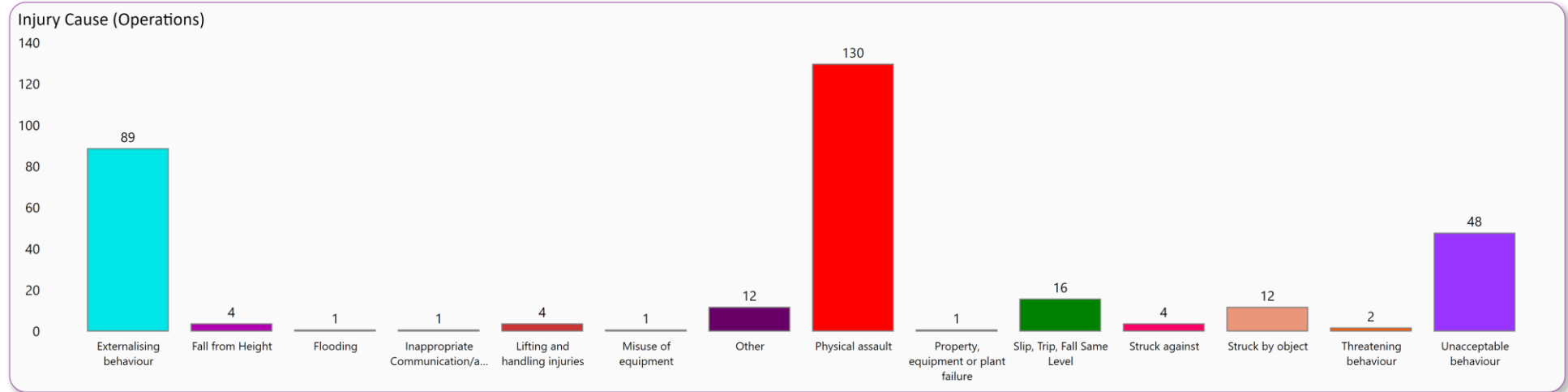


Injury Cause

Exposed to fire	Externalising behaviour	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Lifting and handling injuries	Misuse of equipment	Other	Property, equipment or plant damage	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Vehicle incident	Total
1	3	3	6	1	2	1	7	2	10	3	39

Operations IC&FS reported H&S Incidents Between Oct to Dec 2023

The following tables give a breakdown of **Operations** Incidents.

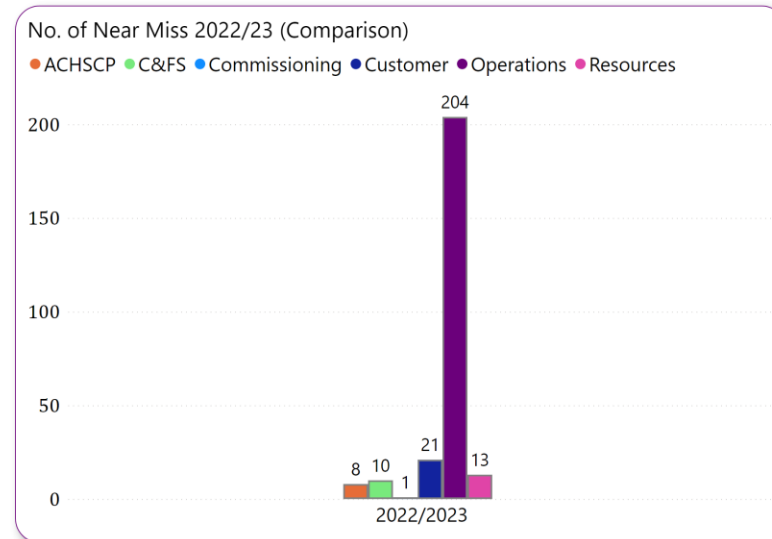
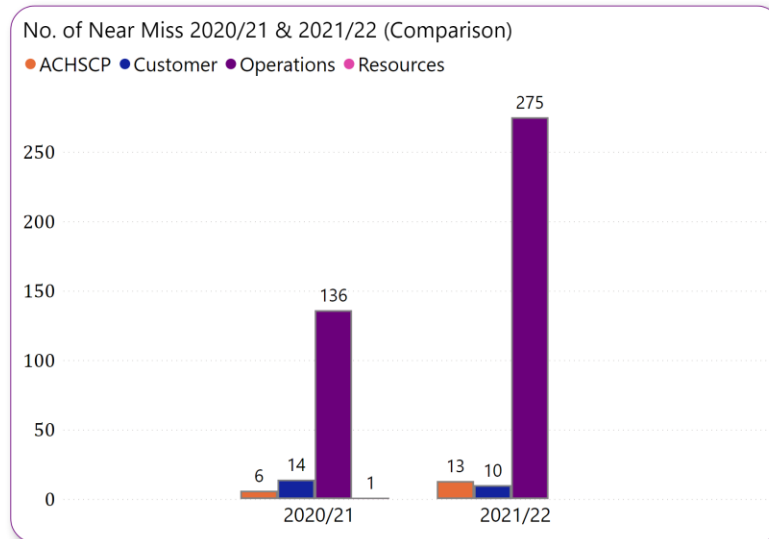


Injury Cause														
Externalising behaviour	Fall from Height	Flooding	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Lifting and handling injuries	Misuse of equipment	Other	Physical assault	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Total
89	4	1	1	4	1	12	130	1	16	4	12	2	48	325

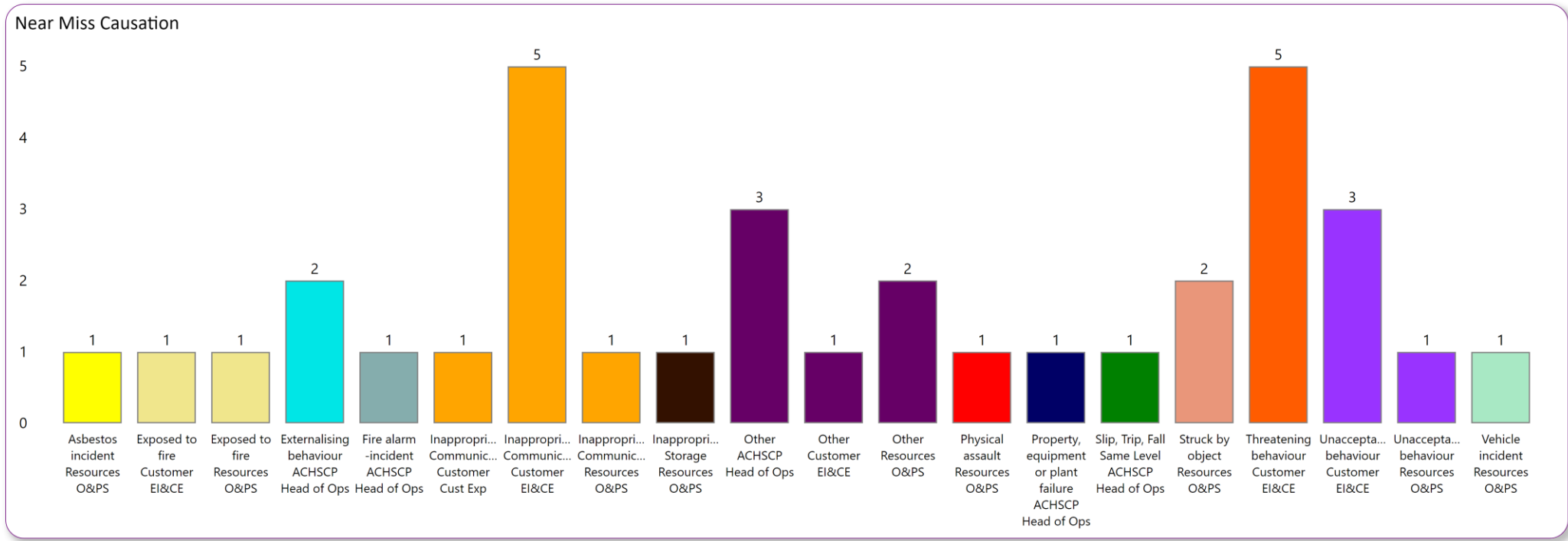
Reported H&S Near Miss Between Oct to Dec 2023

The tables below show information in relation to employee and non-employee Near Misses.

Top table: Total Near Misses for this reporting period for each Cluster. Bottom tables: quarter 3 comparison of Near Misses for each Function from 2020/21 to 2022/23.



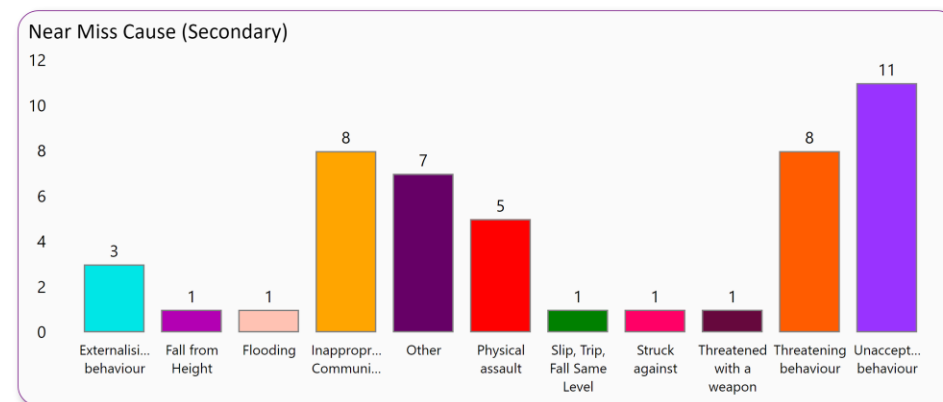
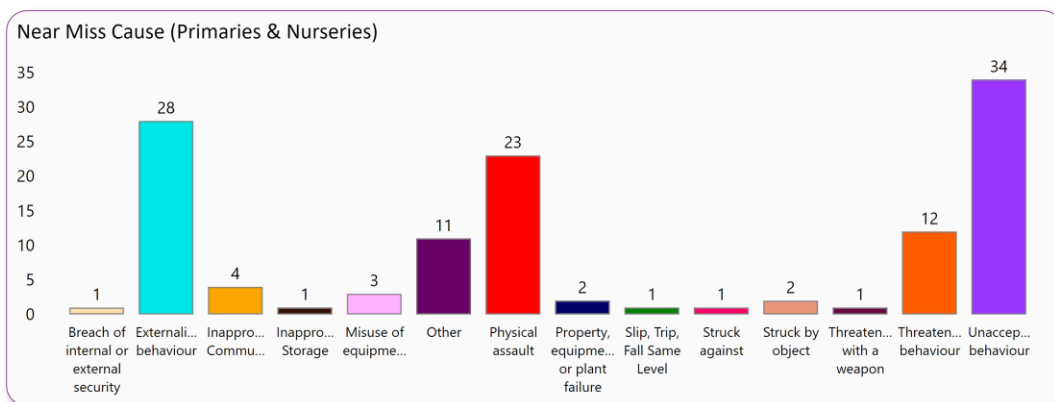
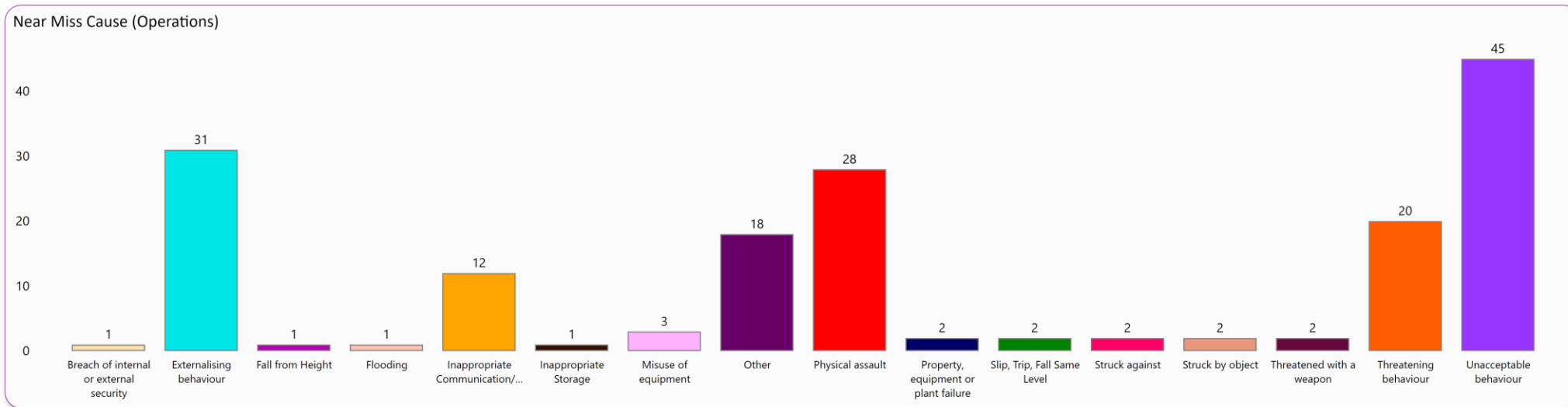
The table below shows information to a Function and Cluster level for employee and non-employee Near Misses apart from Operations, which is covered in the next page.



Near Miss Cause														
Asbestos incident	Exposed to fire	Externalising behaviour	Fire alarm - incident	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Inappropriate Storage	Other	Physical assault	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck by object	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
1	2	2	1	7	1	6	1	1	1	2	5	4	1	35

Near Miss
Near miss figures have reduced from 257 to 212 in the corresponding period with IC & FS still remaining the highest but showing a reduction from 204 to 158. Causes are still in the majority around behaviours with a similar narrative to incidents in location.

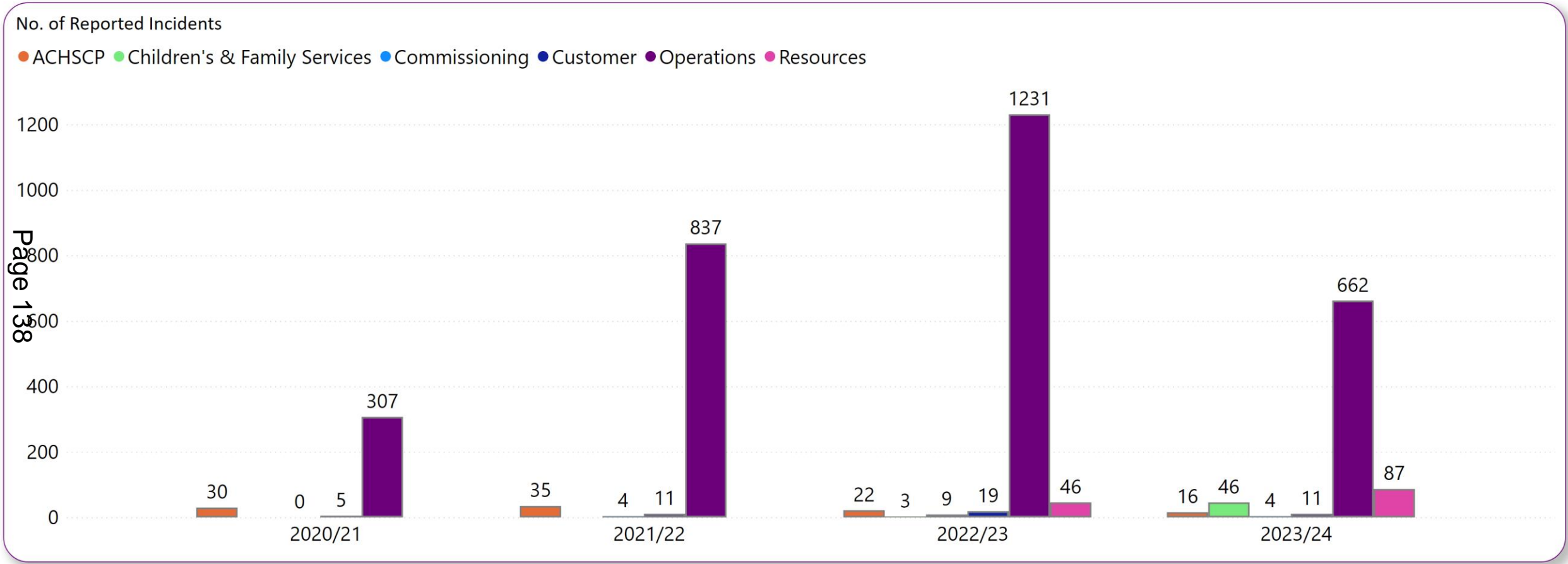
The following tables give a breakdown of **Operations** Near Miss.



Near Miss Cause																
Breach of internal or external security	Externalising behaviour	Fall from Height	Flooding	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Inappropriate Storage	Misuse of equipment	Other	Physical assault	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Threatened with a weapon	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Total
1	31	1	1	12	1	3	18	28	2	2	2	2	2	20	45	171

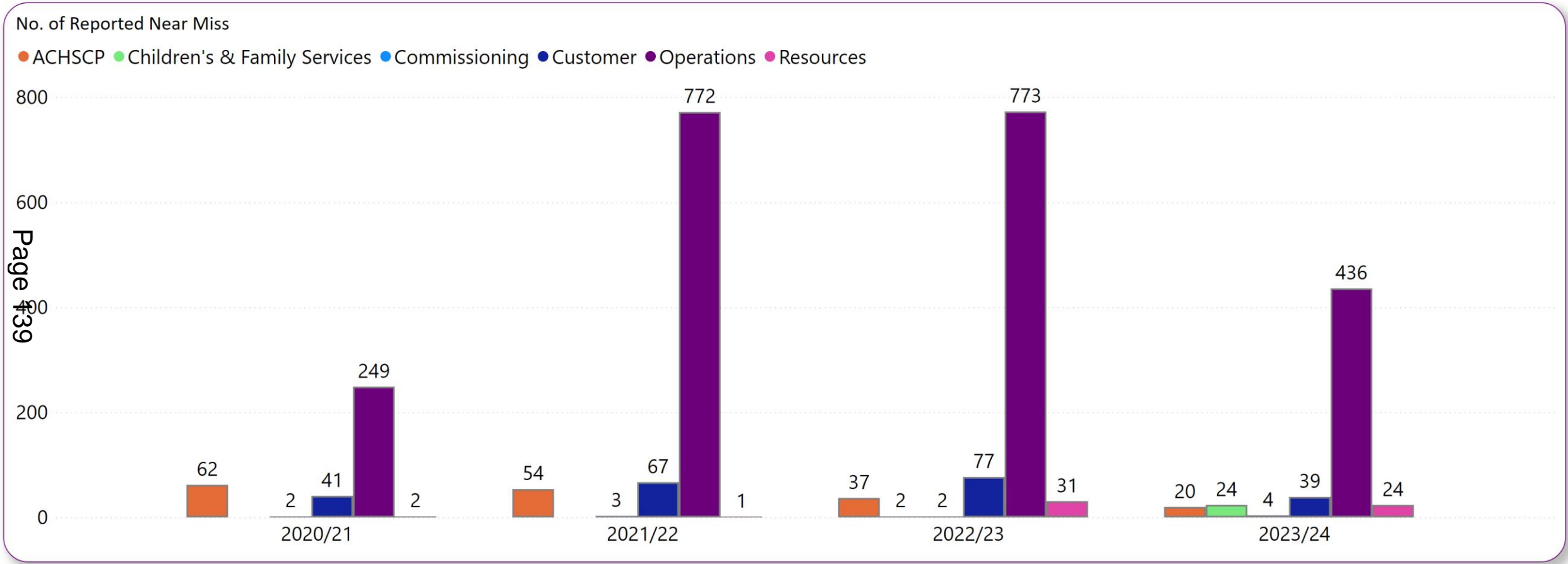
Reported Incidents From 2020/21 to 2023/24

The table provides information on the **total number** of incidents for the last four reporting years (including current year to date) to Function level.



Reported Near Miss From 2020/21 to 2023/24

The table provides information on the **total number** of near miss for the last four reporting years (including current year to date) to Function level.



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