

# 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 two vacancies (VOICE).

Town House,  
ABERDEEN, 14 June 2024

## **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

The Members of the **STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in the **Council Chamber - Town House on MONDAY, 24 JUNE 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>

ALAN THOMSON  
INTERIM 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**

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 April 2024 - for approval (Pages 5 - 10)

## **COMMITTEE PLANNER**

6.1. Committee Business Planner (Pages 11 - 16)

## **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. Developing the Young Workforce Update - CORS/24/183 (Pages 17 - 34)

## **COUNCIL POLICIES AFFECTING STAFF**

10.1. Family Friendly Policies Project Update - CORS/24/185 (Pages 35 - 68)

## **HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING OF STAFF**

11.1. Corporate Health & Safety January to March 24 - CORS/24/182 (Pages 69 - 88)

11.2. Sickness Absence for Environmental, Roads and Waste Services - CR&E/24/178 (Pages 89 - 110)

11.3. Employee Mental Health Action Plan Annual Progress Update - CORS/24/184 (Pages 111 - 132)

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

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

Website Address: [aberdeencity.gov.uk](http://aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Stephanie Dunsmuir, email [sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

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## STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 22 April 2024. Minute of Meeting of the STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Copland, Convener; Councillor David Cameron, the Lord Provost; Councillor Steve Delaney; the Depute Provost; and Councillors Boulton, Clark, Macdonald, MacGregor (as substitute for Councillor Al-Samarai), McLeod and Thomson.

Trade Union Advisers:- Zemeta Chefeke and Carole Thorpe (EIS); David Wallis and Kevin Masson (GMB); Mark Musk (UNISON); and Mishelle Gray (UNITE).

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 at this juncture.

### MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 22 JANUARY 2024

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 22 January 2024 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.

**The Committee resolved**:-

- (i) to note that at this time there was no report due on the business planner in relation to the 35 hour week, however officers would bring forward reports as required if there were to be any changes to terms and conditions; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the business planner.

### WORKFORCE DEEP DIVE – APPROACH TO WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND HARD TO FILL ROLES - CORS/24/107

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director – Corporate Services which set out the approach being taken by the Council in relation to workforce

## STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

22 April 2024

planning, in the context of challenges in building workforce capacity. The report also provided information in respect of the current job roles which were classed as 'hard to fill', and which proved a challenge in terms of recruitment, setting out the actions being undertaken to mitigate these challenges.

Members asked several questions on the report, particularly in relation to what was being done for those with disabilities; and how the Council was measuring success with apprenticeships, including whether the Council provided training; how apprentices moved through the organisation; gender balance; and whether there were any barriers.

### **The report recommended:-**

that the Committee note the actions contained in the report being taken to address workforce capacity challenges, including in respect of 'hard to fill' roles.

### **The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would include information in relation to measures of success with apprenticeships and some detail about what was available for all ages across the workforce, in the annual update on Developing the Young Workforce / Apprenticeship / Internship Update which was due to Committee at the next meeting;
- (ii) to note that officers would circulate information to Members on the disability working group (which formed part of the Equalities Working Groups headed up by People and Citizen Services) and the work being undertaken with third sector partner organisations in relation to opportunities for disabled people;
- (iii) to note that officers would take on board the request that information be included in future reports on the work being undertaken in respect of disabled people having apprenticeship opportunities; and
- (iv) to otherwise note the report.

## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY - CORS/24/102**

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director – Corporate Services which sought approval to implement the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which would replace the existing Diversity and Equality Policy.

**During discussion of the report, reference was made to an email from Unison which had been sent to Members. Councillor Thomson advised for reasons of transparency that she was a member of the health branch of Unison but did not consider this amounted to a declaration which would require her to not participate in the item.**

### **The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) approve the implementation of the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;

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- (b) instruct the Interim Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services 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;
- (c) instruct the Interim Chief Officer - People and Citizen Services to publish the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy on the Council's external website; and
- (d) instruct the Interim 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.

### **The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would ensure that future iterations of the policy and accompanying guidance were clear in terms of demonstrating employee voice in the documents;
- (ii) to note that officers had undertaken to review the Supporting Procedures and Documentation at section 4 of the Policy to ensure that all relevant links were included and up to date;
- (iii) to approve the recommendations contained in the report; and
- (iv) to agree that a service update be issued to all Members on the Policy for information.

### **ZERO TOLERANCE UPDATE AND ACTION PLAN - CORS/24/111**

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director – Corporate Services which provided an update on progress and activities in relation to the development of a Zero Tolerance approach of violent, aggressive and/or abusive behaviour towards staff.

Members and Trade Union advisers asked a number of questions on the report, including the use of the approach and posters in other Council establishments.

### **The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the report and the progress made to date, including staff development and the overall action plan developed;
- (b) 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;
- (c) instruct the Interim 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; with the exception of pupil behaviour in schools as this was governed by national policy and guidance; and report back to Committee for approval of the final policy; and

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22 April 2024

- (d) approve the described approach in forming a pledge to encompass the spirit of mutual respect.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would consider the feedback provided at the meeting in respect of the use of the word 'customer' on the posters and whether that might need to be altered depending on the Council establishment; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND ABSENCE ANNUAL UPDATE JANUARY 2023 –  
DECEMBER 2023 - CORS/24/114**

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director – Corporate Services which provided an update on the utilisation of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provided by VIVUP during the last 12 month period January 2023 – December 2023; and a 12 monthly update on the Occupational Health and Absence period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

- (a) consider the contents of the report; and
- (b) note the progress made in relation to the Attendance Improvement Project; the continuing drive to raise awareness of frontline staff support initiatives; and reintroduction of the Workplace Therapist Service.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

**CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY – OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023 -  
CORS/24/110**

8. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director – Corporate Services which provided a summary of statistical health and safety performance information for the 3-month reporting period October to December 2023 to provide Members with the opportunity to monitor compliance with health and safety legislation.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee note the report and provide comment on the health, safety policy, performance, trends, and improvements.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to note the report.

- **COUNCILLOR NEIL COPLAND, Convener**

**STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  
22 April 2024

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	<b>STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER</b> 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	<b>24 June 2024</b>								
4	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		
5	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 31 March 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
6	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		
7	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	This is included in the Family Friendly Policies report on the agenda	Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		





	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	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									
12	<b>9 September 2024</b>								
13	Internal 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		
14	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 30 June 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
15	<b>18 November 2024</b>								
16	Staff Governance Committee Effectiveness Report	To present the annual effectiveness report		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	8.5		
17	Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy	To seek approval of the policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
18	Corporate Volunteering Policy	A Corporate Volunteering Policy will be presented to Staff Governance Committee for approval later in the year. In addition, guidance for managers will be developed to cover all aspects of volunteering arrangements		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
19	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		
20	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		
21	Corporate Health & Safety Policy	To present the revised Health & Safety Policy, subject to approval being required		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	2.5		
22	Corporate Health & Safety Quarterly Update	For period to 30 September 2024		Colin Leaver	Governance	Corporate Services	3.2		
23	<b>2024 - Reporting dates to be confirmed</b>								
24	Employee Code of Conduct	To present an update on the Employee Code of Conduct		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

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2									
25	People development policy / guidance	To seek approval of the policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		
26	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan	<p>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</p> <p>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</p>		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services			
27	<b>2025</b>								
28	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	March 2025	Sandie Scott	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	TBC		



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
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2									
36	<b>REPORTING DATE TO BE CONFIRMED</b>								
37	Zero Tolerance Policy	SGC 22/04/24 - to instruct the Interim 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; with the exception of pupil behaviour in schools as this was governed by national policy and guidance; and report back to Committee for approval of the final policy		Isla Newcombe	People & Citizen Services	Corporate Services	2.5		

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance
<b>DATE</b>	24 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Developing the Young Workforce Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/183
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Alison Paterson / Lesley Strachan
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.2

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report follows on from a report to Staff Governance Committee in June 2023 (CUS/23/153), which provided an update to Committee on the progress on our activity relating to developing our young workforce and where it was agreed that a report would be brought to Committee to report progress on an annual basis.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update from a report at the April 2024 Staff Governance Committee; Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles (CORS/24/107), where Members asked for measures of success of our apprenticeship programme.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes progress of the continuing work to develop our young workforce, to do this in line with our LOIP commitments, and to shape our workforce for the future.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 Our Workforce Delivery Plan, relating to the workforce strategy included as part of the TOM 1.2 was approved at Staff Governance Committee in January 2023. The plan includes developing our young workforce (DYW) in order to meet our current and future organisational challenges, including our demographic challenges.
- 3.1.2 Our DYW approaches include involvement in employability programmes to support delivery of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) in terms of increasing the number of young people achieving positive destinations, as well as elements of the Socio-Economic Rescue Plan by providing supported work

placements, with built-in employability support to young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment. As a direct result of participating in internships, young people gain valuable work experience (in many cases resulting in continued employment with the Council), a reference, and in some cases, a qualification. Employability is a theme which runs strongly throughout the LOIP, with employment, training, and achievement of qualifications all being desired outcomes.

### 3.2 **Young Persons Guarantee**

3.2.1 We continue to develop initiatives and actions under our Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) employer status. The YPG pledges to support young people in the form of five pledges:

- To prepare young people for the world of work
- To help all young people achieve their potential
- To invest in a skilled workforce
- To create jobs, volunteering and training opportunities
- To create an inclusive and fair workplace

3.2.2 This report provides an update on the DYW activity we are undertaking, in line with the Young Person's Guarantee pledge.

### 3.3 **Apprenticeship Update**

3.3.1 We continue to develop and expand our Apprenticeship Programme which includes:

- Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) which are opportunities for secondary school pupils, S5 and S6 (age 15-17) to gain work experience and work-based learning whilst still at school gaining a qualification equivalent to a Higher.
- Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) which offer young people aged 16-24 an opportunity to undertake an apprenticeship which combines learning with on-the-job experience, whilst earning a salary.
- Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) offer individuals of any age, the opportunity to undertake an undergraduate degree whilst retaining their existing employment.
- All our Apprenticeships are part of a structured learning programme and the Apprentices are supported by a workplace mentor and the learning provider.

3.3.2 **Foundation Apprenticeships:** we continue to support work placements in Early Learning and Childcare, Business Skills and this year Fleet Services supported 5 pupils from Northfield Academy for the Automotive framework and our Laboratory supported a student for the Scientific Technologies framework. We continue to accommodate requests from our learning partner NESCOL for a range of frameworks depending on student need. This approach is very beneficial to the Council from an 'employer of choice' perspective as the young people who undertake their work placement with the Council may consider us as an employer in the future if they have a positive experience.

One of our Foundation Apprentice Students upon completion of their studies in 2023, successfully secured a Modern Apprenticeship with the Council and now

has a permanent role. Please see Appendix 1 for case studies from some of our Foundation Apprentice students.

**3.3.3 Modern Apprenticeships:** we continue to employ apprentices to our traditional Building Services roles (Electrician, Joiner, Plumber, Blacksmith, Mechanic etc) as well as Early Learning and Childcare, Adult Social Care, Business Administration and Customer Service. Alongside this, we continue to work with services to identify opportunities to create modern apprenticeships. In addition, as all new vacancies require approval to fill from the Establishment Control Board, the Board determine whether any vacancies submitted, could be filled on an apprenticeship basis, and this is discussed further with the recruiting manager. This process has recently resulted in Modern Apprenticeships also being introduced in schools in school administration roles. In addition, over the last 12 months we have introduced Modern Apprenticeships in our Pensions and Roads teams, and are currently developing Modern apprenticeships in our payroll and revenue and benefits teams.

**3.3.4** The table below shows the number Modern Apprentices we have recruited since we introduced our wider corporate apprenticeship programme in 2019, expanding the offer beyond our craft/trade roles.

	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023
<b>Craft / Trades</b>	12	1	10	16	9
<b>New Areas</b>	19	-	44**	26	21

\* 2020's intake was impacted by the COVID19 pandemic

\*\* 2021 saw a large intake of Early Learning and Childcare Modern Apprentices to support the Early Years Expansion Programme

**3.3.5** In terms of the success of our apprenticeship programme, there has been a very positive impact, with successful outcomes for the majority of Modern Apprentices. Since 2019, at the time of writing, 60 Modern Apprentices have completed their apprenticeships and secured either permanent or fixed term roles within the Council and a further 8 are Relief Workers, which either suits their lifestyle (perhaps whilst in further education) or whilst they await a permanent vacancy arising.

The programme has had a significant impact in terms of the Early Years workforce, with Modern Apprentices moving into Early Learning & Childcare Support Worker or Early Years Practitioner roles. Other areas to benefit from Modern Apprentices are Adult Social Care, Customer Services, Business Services and Pensions.

**3.3.6** The table below provides some data showing the journeys of our Modern Apprentices.

2019	Of the 31 who started an MA in 2019, 29 have completed their apprenticeship. 25 secured permanent or fixed term roles in Business Administration, Housing, Early Learning & Childcare and Adult Social Care within the Council.
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2021	Of the 54 who started an MA in 2021, 35 have completed their apprenticeship with some still to complete. 23 secured permanent or fixed term roles in Customer Services, Adult Social Care and Early Learning & Childcare and 5 are relief workers.
2022	Of the 42 who started an MA in 2022, 15 have completed their apprenticeship with many still to complete. 10 have secured permanent or fixed term roles and 2 are relief workers.
2023	Of the 30 who started an MA in 2023, 3 have completed their apprenticeship with many still to complete. 2 have secured permanent roles and 1 is a relief worker.

3.3.7 Our Apprenticeship Programme also links to other employability programmes and we have seen a number of young people from our Career Ready Programme and our CEYP Internship programme, being successfully appointed to Modern Apprenticeships.

Please see Appendix 2 for some case studies from some of our Modern Apprentices.

3.3.8 **Graduate Apprenticeships:** we continue to offer these to our existing staff as a development and succession planning offering, whereby 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. Our learning partner for our GA programme is the Robert Gordon University (RGU) for all courses with the exception of Civil Engineering, which is the University of Dundee.

3.3.9 Since we started offering Graduate Apprenticeships in 2018, 33 employees have taken up the opportunity to undertake these apprenticeships. Of this, 6 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 26 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

In 2023, an employee who came through the MA programme has taken the opportunity to commence a Graduate Apprenticeship. Please see Appendix 3 for some case studies from some of our GAs.

### 3.4 **Internships for Care Experienced Young People**

3.4.1 We continue to work together with the Employability Team within City Development and Regeneration, to create job and career opportunities for our care experienced young people, targeted at our hard to fill vacancies across



the Council. This supports our commitment to Care Experienced Young People as Corporate Parents and one of our aims in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 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.

- 3.4.2 One such employability programme commenced in 2023 with a pilot programme to create Internships for Care Experienced Young People, using funding secured by the Employability Team. The internships were fully funded at Grade G4, Living Wage, with the number of hours per week increasing incrementally throughout the period to ease the young people into work, depending on their needs.
- 3.4.3 Working with Children's Social Work, 23 care experienced young people expressed an interest in the programme and were matched with a job area that they wished 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.
- 3.4.4 The pilot programme was successful and some of the young people secured employment with the Council either in Modern Apprenticeships or entry level roles. Others went onto other employers or further education or other employment, and some continue to be supported by the Employability Team to become work ready with a dedicated employability keyworker.
- 3.4.5 The success of the programme was recently recognised during an ABZWorks Celebration Event on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at the Town House.
- 3.4.6 We have now commenced the second cohort of internships with a further 15 care experienced young people.
- 3.4.7 Any young person put forward for an internship who is not successful in immediately securing a placement, or who is not yet ready for it, will receive ongoing employability support to prepare them for a future opportunity.

### 3.5 **ABZ Campus – Employability Pathway Programme**

- 3.5.1 This employability pathway programme provides a new and unique opportunity to provide a vocational work experience option to students who may otherwise have made the decision to leave school, with limited qualifications or positive destination.
- 3.5.2 In June 2023 a pilot programme commenced with 10 pupils in S4 in 2 academies within the city. The programme started with a range of key skills workshops to prepare them for work and to gain an insight into the different types of jobs and career pathways available at Aberdeen City Council. They were matched to a particular job area within the Council according to their skills and area of interest and undertook a supported work placement.

- 3.5.3 The programme provided an opportunity for young people to identify and develop the key skills required for employment, and to develop their confidence and readiness for joining the workplace, as well as gaining a recognised SQA qualification at the end of the course.
- 3.5.4 The work experience placements were aligned to some of our hard to fill vacancy areas including Early Learning & Childcare, Roads, Fleet and Business Services.
- 3.5.5 All pupils completing the programme are eligible for a guaranteed interview for any ACC apprenticeships / entry level roles they wish to apply for, as well as a reference from their placement Manager / Mentor and in some cases, support from a dedicated Employability Key Worker.
- 3.5.6 This pilot programme is just coming to an end, and plans for the next cohort for academic session 2024/25 is underway and in addition a similar programme for pupils with additional support needs is being developed with a view to commencing in August 2024.

### 3.6 **Career Ready**

- 3.6.1 Career Ready is a social mobility charity providing school age young people in S5 and into S6 with a mentoring programme preparing them for the world of work. Each student is allocated a workplace Mentor over the 2 year programme, a 4 week paid internship in their Mentor's organisation, masterclasses and workplace visits. We continue to provide Mentors for the programme and support the 4 week paid internships. We are also a member of the Career Ready Local Authority Board.
- 3.6.2 In March 2024, for the first time, we hosted the North East Career Ready Graduation event for the 2022/2024 cohort from across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. This event was attended by pupils, Mentors, School Co-ordinators and the Senior Education team. This event recognised the pupil's success and the Mentors who supported them.

### 3.7 **Young Employee Voice**

- 3.7.1 The Young Employee Network provides a mechanism to hear our young employee voices about their employment experience, their ideas for change and the opportunity to get involved in organisation wide programmes. It was established in 2018, and since the end of 2023, work has been ongoing to re-energise the Network, which has been supported by Angela Scott, Chief Executive, with a 'Meet the Chief Executive' informal session. This has seen new employees join the Network. Two further sessions have been held with a focus on climate change, pensions and career progression. The next session will focus on agreeing the purpose of the Network and begin to identify areas / actions the young employees wish to focus on.
- 3.7.2 The Young Employee Network also feeds into the wider Age Working Group as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

### 3.8 **Collaborating with Partners**

3.8.1 We continue to work with partner organisations such as DYW Northeast, Skills Development Scotland, our schools, colleges and universities on new employability programmes or initiatives.

3.8.2 We regularly attend and participate in jobs and career related events at schools across the city, colleges and universities promoting the range of jobs and careers that the Council can offer as well as internship, apprenticeship and entry level roles. This includes promoting part-time employment opportunities for students during their studies.

## 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**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level</b>	<b>*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)</b>  <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	<b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b>
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	No significant	None	L	Yes

	risks identified			
<b>Reputational</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified	None	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<a href="#"><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024</u></a>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<p><b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b></p> <p><b><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></b></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:-</p> <p>Caring for Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>A City of Opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the number of apprenticeships available through the Council;</li> <li>• 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 apprenticeships.</li> </ul> <p>A Prosperous City:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, and third sector.</li> </ul> <p>Valuing Our Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></a>	

Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Economy stretch outcomes 1. No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026; 2. 400 unemployed Aberdeen residents into Fair Work by 2026, and 3. 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled / reskilled to enable them to move into, within, and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026.</p> <p>People Stretch Outcome 7: Page 22 • 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> <p>The key drivers for this outcome are: 7.1 Improving pathways to education, employment and training for all our children.</p>
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Lindsay MacInnes, Chief Officer People & Citizen Services on 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2024.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	n/a

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Staff Governance Committee Report, CUS/22/236 Developing the Young Workforce and Employability Programmes Update, November 2022 [Agenda for Staff Governance Committee on Monday, 21st November, 2022, 10.00 am ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Foundation Apprentice Case Studies  
11.2 Appendix 2 – Modern Apprentice Case Studies  
11.3 Appendix 3 – Graduate Apprentice Case Studies

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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## **Appendix 1 – Foundation Apprentice Student Case Studies**

### **Kornelia's Story**

The reason I chose a Foundation Apprenticeship is because I was going into my last year of secondary school and was keen to gain work experience as well as a further qualification. Therefore, I applied for a Foundation Apprenticeship in Business Skills at NESCOL and I managed to secure a place for myself on the course. The college put me on the 6-month work placement at the Council in the People and Organisational Development Team, which I really enjoyed. I have been determined to continue with something very similar when I leave school and therefore I have secured a Modern Apprenticeship with the Council. I applied for the Modern Apprenticeship because I don't want to feel the pressure of sitting exams and I benefit more from hands on learning.

The Foundation Apprenticeship allowed me to improve my computing skills, which will very much benefit me when undertaking the Modern Apprenticeship as I will be undertaking administration work.

What I found difficult during the work placement was working from home, which I only had to do a few times. I am more efficient and motivated in a work based surrounding, i.e. an office.

The highlight of my experience was being able to be within a workplace and get a proper perspective of what it all looks and feels like. In addition to that, creating SharePoint pages for the team meaning all employees in the Council could see the work I have produced. Also joining group chats and Teams sites within the Council which made me feel very welcomed.

**I would describe this experience as:**

**Beneficial**

**Inspiring**

**Exciting**

*"The advice I would give someone starting a Foundation Apprenticeship is make sure to use your time management skills as you will have to attend school, on top of that college classes and a work placement. However, all of this builds skills and prepares you for the real world of work and gives you great experience to put on your CV. "*

## **Kerem's Story**

Hello! I am Kerem a 17 year old Foundation Apprentice that got placed in Marischal College for their Work Placement, and this is my story.

Ever since my interest in the world of business began, I always imagined working my way up the chain of an organisation or owning my own company. Why did I decide to pick up the Foundation Apprenticeship? Well I don't really know myself to be honest. I saw that the course offered the equivalent to 2 B's at Higher level and offered work experience which was enough to draw me in, thinking that this course can help build my skills that will be necessary in the workplace whilst also deepening my knowledge of the business world.

Overall I have enjoyed the work placement I was assigned to by North East Scotland College (NESCOL). I was able to see the inside work in the council especially in the equalities team which I was assigned. I was put into a team that I enjoyed working with and who were always open to any questions or concerns that I may have had during the placement.

I have enjoyed being put into a different environment from NESCOL or Aberdeen Grammar School which I was getting fed up of. Friday off school to work in Marischal College was now something different and something for me to look forward to becoming a highlight of my week and something I was looking forward to going to, surprising I know. I enjoyed participating in events where I had to work with different people in the team such as an event about how the council's money should be split to priorities where I was greeting people at the entrance and handing out forms that they could complete. Another is going to Aberdeen Gurudwara the first Sikh place of worship in Aberdeen to learn about the religion and how the temple started.

At first it was a strange feeling switching from going to Aberdeen Grammar School to then suddenly going to Marischal College but the environment was surprisingly easy to get used to, much to my surprise.

Overall the Foundation Apprenticeship has been very rewarding in terms of the work placement in Marischal College. I was able to get first hand experience of how the workplace can be and have thoroughly enjoyed it. Being able to work with different people and tasks and gaining an experience that will not be forgotten, showing me how it feels like to be placed in a workplace environment for the first time. And now it is time to see what the future will hold.

## **Emmanuel's Story**

Hi! My name is Emmanuel a 17-year-old Business FA student at Nescol who has been lucky enough to be provided the opportunity to work and learn with the council in Marischal college. I moved to Aberdeen from London just over a year ago now and I am enjoying life here, it is different.

Now, why did I choose to do the business skills FA? To be honest I am not sure. I had always wanted to go into business, but I am not completely sure what drew me to the business FA over all other courses I could have done. However I do not regret it I am thankful this is the path I had chosen.

I truly began to embark on a journey last year when I had joined the business FA as I had seen and realised how humbling and unforgiving life can be. The FA has really taught me a lot being a huge help to me it helped me to learn a lot, while also giving me the opportunity to put everything I have learnt into action. I can gain practical experience as well as knowledge which is pivotal to my future as an entrepreneur.

There is a lot I do not know and can still learn but it has been a guide I never thought I would have and will be forever thankful for.

The hands-on aspect of the FA is especially advantageous because it helped me to learn what it felt like to have an actual first job (and trust me Marischal college is not as simple as it seems) as you are unable to deny the growth achieved by being hands on which is something you would very rarely be able to achieve in school. Each day I feel closer and closer to being able to really step into the world of business realising my dreams.

It is truly a rewarding experience, and I cannot wait for the future.



## **Appendix 2 – Modern Apprentice Case Studies**

### **Ryley's Story**

Ryley undertook a **Support Worker Modern Apprenticeship** in 2021, working with adults with learning disabilities. On completing her apprenticeship, Ryley secured a Support Worker role in one of the in-house learning disability teams. What inspired Ryley to undertake this opportunity was the fact that she left school and wasn't entirely sure what she wanted to do and didn't have much work experience and the Modern Apprenticeship seemed like a great opportunity for her to gain experience and a recognised qualification.

On completing her apprenticeship, Ryley secured a Support Worker role in one of the in-house learning disability teams, within the Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership. From here Ryley can develop within the role and there are many opportunities for her to develop her skills and experience and a range of career progression opportunities for the future.

***“Personally, I would recommend it to anyone as I myself love it and I never in a million years would have thought I would be able to love a job. It is very good for people with less experience as you can learn on the job and get a qualification that would help you progress later.”***

## **Aaron's story**

Aaron undertook a **Modern Apprenticeship in Business Administration** in one of our Children's Social Work teams. What inspired Aaron to undertake this opportunity was the fact that he is a determined individual who wants to progress his career. Aaron knew that the Council offered Modern Apprenticeships and saw the vacancy when he was job hunting after he finished college. Aaron's previous employer's opportunities for progression were limited and he saw this as an opportunity to progress his career.

***"I would definitely recommend taking a Modern Apprenticeship, there isn't a downside to the opportunity at all".***

### **Aaron's top takeaways from his Apprenticeship:**

- He enjoyed the "working while you learn" aspect as being assessed on work you produce everyday seemed more relaxed and got rid of the stress you'd experience when sitting an exam.
- Getting to know the team he worked with and building good working relationships
- He was delighted to be in the top 3 finalists for 'Trainee, Apprentice or Student of the year' at last year's Star Awards.

### **Aaron's future aspirations**

Aaron enjoyed his time in business administration, and since completing his apprenticeship has gone on to secure a permanent, promoted administrative role, within the Music Service team.

Aaron studied music in college, and this new role is good fit for him and his passion for music, and to use his skills and experience in administration.

## **Lois's Story**

Before Lois applied for the **Customer Modern Apprenticeship**, she didn't know that the Council offered Modern Apprenticeships. Lois didn't have any office experience and believed that the Council would allow her to gain just that.

**Lois's takeaway from this experience:** - Lois really enjoyed working with her assessor.

**Lois's career aspirations now that she has completed her Modern Apprenticeship:**

Now she is a full-time permanent employee at Aberdeen City Council as an Information and Investment Assistant, within our Corporate Landlord Cluster. She hopes to gain experience in a number of other teams/services of the Council.

***"I would recommend this experience. If someone is looking to gain work experience or a qualification without going to college or university this is a good option. Also, if someone is looking to gain experience within the places that offer the apprenticeships this is a good starting point."***

## **Appendix 3 – Graduate Apprenticeship Case Studies**

### **Lorna's Story**

Lorna was looking for an opportunity to undertake a degree, however, could not afford to reduce her hours to do this through normal routes. Lorna found that a Graduate Apprenticeship was an ideal solution as it allowed her to continue to work full time and learn at the same time. In 2018 Lorna started her Graduate Apprenticeship BA (hons) in Business Management at the Robert Gordon University.

#### **Lorna's top takeaways from the Graduate Apprenticeship**

- Reinforced knowledge and skills
- Helped develop a greater knowledge of the wider council
- Increased confidence in her abilities

In December 2022, Lorna graduated from Robert Gordon University with **1<sup>st</sup> class honours BA (hons) Business Management**.

#### **Lorna's advice to anyone considering a Graduate Apprenticeship:**

Try to make sure you link it to what you do on a day-to-day basis. Set aside time, e.g., one evening a week plus ½ day at work, to fully focus on the course so that you don't have great chunks of work to catch up on.

#### **Did Lorna face any challenges?**

- Lorna said she found it difficult to get into the rhythm of viewing lecture material and doing the weekly assignments.
- She found it difficult finding the time to complete assessments around her usual workload.
- Some coursework was better suited to the private sector or didn't fit well within her role.

**Despite these challenges, Lorna describes her experience in 3 words as:**

*Challenging      Worthwhile      Beneficial*

***“Whilst studying I moved into my current role, and I feel this may not have been possible without the confidence and qualification I gained. I have no great aspiration to advance further at this point.”***

## **Steve's Story**

On Wednesday 8th December 2021, I took to the stage at the Music Hall to accept my BSc (Hons) in IT Management for Business in front of family and friends.

I was part of the first cohort to complete a Graduate Apprenticeship while navigating the impact of the pandemic.

It's been a great experience, complemented by the support and commitment from the university tutors and council staff that kept me motivated. I've enjoyed the opportunity to further my experience and skills around my career aspirations.

If this wasn't enough excitement for one day, my daughter, Natalie Robertson, was in hospital preparing to welcome my first grandchild.

I undertook my degree under RGU's industry-driven approach, where students work full-time for a partner employer while studying towards their degree - integrating student learning with suitable workplace projects and experience as a collaborative effort between university and employer, while also satisfying the career ambitions of the student.

I was inspired by the flexibility the Graduate Apprenticeship course that RGU offered, which Aberdeen City Council supported. University was a different way of learning from being at school, and I found the flexibility and continued support key to the success I achieved.

As with most things, my studies were impacted by the continued presence of the global coronavirus pandemic which forced me and other students to adapt our learning.

I think the pandemic put significant challenges on us as students, but the university adapted its learning patterns to suit, and that gave students assurances and comfort as part of their study and attainment.

I have the qualification now, so I would say the opportunities are endless. There were good times and fun with other students online, and there were challenging times also but I will say that the support I received from the staff and lecturers was fabulous. I take my hat off to them!

As a mature student, I decided to utilise the Graduate Apprenticeship scheme as a means of doing the degree in a flexible way, which helped me to manage my work, study, and family-life balance and I would encourage anyone to do the same.

Steve undertook further studies through the Graduate Apprenticeship Programme and graduated in December 2023 with an MSc in Cyber Security.

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	24 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Family Friendly Policies Project Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/185
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald, Director – Corporate Services
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe Chief Officer
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Sharon Robb, Employee Casework Lead Linsey Blackhurst, Interim Organisational Change and Design Lead
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.5

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to update Committee on the progress in relation to the Family Friendly Project and seek approval for the Special Leave policy.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 notes the content of the report and the progress made to date within the Family Friendly Project;
- 2.2 approves changes to the Special Leave Policy to ensure compliance with the Carer’s Leave Act 2023 and the Paternity Leave (amendment) Regulations 2024;
- 2.3 approves the project next steps as outlined in section 5 of the report; and
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to report back to Staff Governance Committee in one year’s time with updated policies and documentation for approval.

### 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 Council's Workforce strategy and Delivery Plan aims to enable employees to thrive personally and professionally with a key strategic objective which states that Aberdeen City Council is a supportive, caring employer that provides a range of mental health and wellbeing interventions and support; supports staff through the cost of living crisis; recognizes and supports work/life balance and enables individuals to remain in work or return to work effectively. The family friendly policy review is directly linked as a component which seeks to enable this objective.
- 3.1.3 Currently, the Council's family friendly policies and guidance documents include:
- Family Friendly Policy Feb 2015
  - Maternity Leave Guidance Feb 2020
  - Paternity Leave Guidance July 2017
  - Shared Parental Leave Guidance July 2017
  - Adoption Leave Guidance July 2017
  - Managing Employees Undergoing IVF Treatment Guidance Oct 2014
  - Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance Dec 2015
- 3.1.4 In addition, the Council also has a Special Leave Policy which includes special leave and flexible working provisions that employees can use which includes:
- Parental Leave
  - Time Off for Dependant / Family Emergencies
  - Parental Bereavement Leave
  - Time Off for IVF Treatment
- 3.1.5 A summary of the entitlements under the above mentioned policies is provided at appendix 1.
- 3.1.6 There are also a number of Flexible and Smarter Working options that employees may benefit from such as flexi-time, term-time working, part-time working, amongst others, and Guidance for Situations of Adverse Weather also covers time off for primary care givers in situations where there are school closures due to adverse weather.
- 3.1.7 It is worth noting that those on Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) terms and conditions, [under Part 2 Section 7 of the SNCT Handbook](#), have separate provisions for the following, which are agreed at a national level:
- Maternity Leave and Pay
  - Adoption Leave and Pay
  - Shared Parental Leave and Pay
  - Surrogacy Leave
  - Maternity and Adoption Support Leave and Pay (including Ordinary Paternity Leave and Pay)
  - Parental Leave
  - Leave of Absence



- Time Off for IVF Treatment
- Compassionate Leave
- Flexible Working

## 3.2 Links to Other Outcomes, Agreements and Pledges

3.2.1 The Council currently has two equality outcomes as an employer. These are:

Improve the diversity of our workforce and address any areas of underrepresentation, ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all protected groups (with consideration for both internal employees and external applicants), with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Race and Sex.

Ensure that all of our employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work, with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Race, Sex and Sexual orientation.

To align with these outcomes, each guidance document now includes an 'Inclusivity Statement'; and the language/terminology within each guidance document and the Special Leave Policy has also been reviewed and updated.

3.2.2 In November 2022, Aberdeen City Council committed to sign the [Pregnancy Loss Pledge](#) which was subsequently done in 2023. This committed Aberdeen City Council to:

- Encourage a supportive work environment where people feel able to discuss and disclose pregnancy and/or loss without fear of being disadvantaged or discriminated against
- Understand and implement the rules around pregnancy-related leave, ensuring staff feel able to take the time off they need.
- Show empathy and understanding towards people and their partners experiencing pregnancy loss.
- Implement a pregnancy loss policy or guidance, or ensure it is included in sickness, bereavement or other workplace policies – being mindful of the needs of partners, too.
- Support people back to work by being responsive to their needs and showing flexibility wherever possible.

3.2.3 Aberdeen City Council joined the [Equally Safe at Work Accreditation Programme](#) in January 2021. Equally Safe at Work is run by Close the Gap and is intended to provide a framework for employers to create an inclusive workplace culture for women which also prevents violence against women.

## 3.3 Outcomes

3.3.1 Based on the data trends, research, benchmarking and current engagement previously undertaken, a number of key outcomes were identified as part of this

project and these were reported in the [Previous September 2023 Committee Report](#).

3.3.2 In addition to the above, the family friendly 'suite' will link with updates relating to flexible and smarter working across the organisation which are currently being reviewed in line with the [Workforce Delivery Plan](#), and will take into consideration the legislative updates associated with the Employee Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.

3.3.3 Further recommendations and proposals may be brought into scope following ongoing engagement and as the project develops. These proposals will be reported back to Staff Governance Committee in line with section 5.

### **3.4 Data**

3.4.1 Since September last year additional data has been gathered regarding Special Leave as follows:

- Paid special leave provisions in scope for this project were used 3110 times in the last 5 years with an average of 1.8 days being taken. Of those who took these provisions, 2567 were female (82.54%) and 543 were male (17.46%).
- Unpaid special leave provisions in scope for this project were used 2330 times in the last 5 years with an average of 2.2 days being taken. Of those who took these provisions, 2088 were female (89.61%) and 242 were male (10.39%).

## **4. Progress Update**

4.1 Since approval for the Family Friendly approach in September 2023, and in line with findings from employee engagement undertaken, all Family Friendly guidance documents have been updated to:

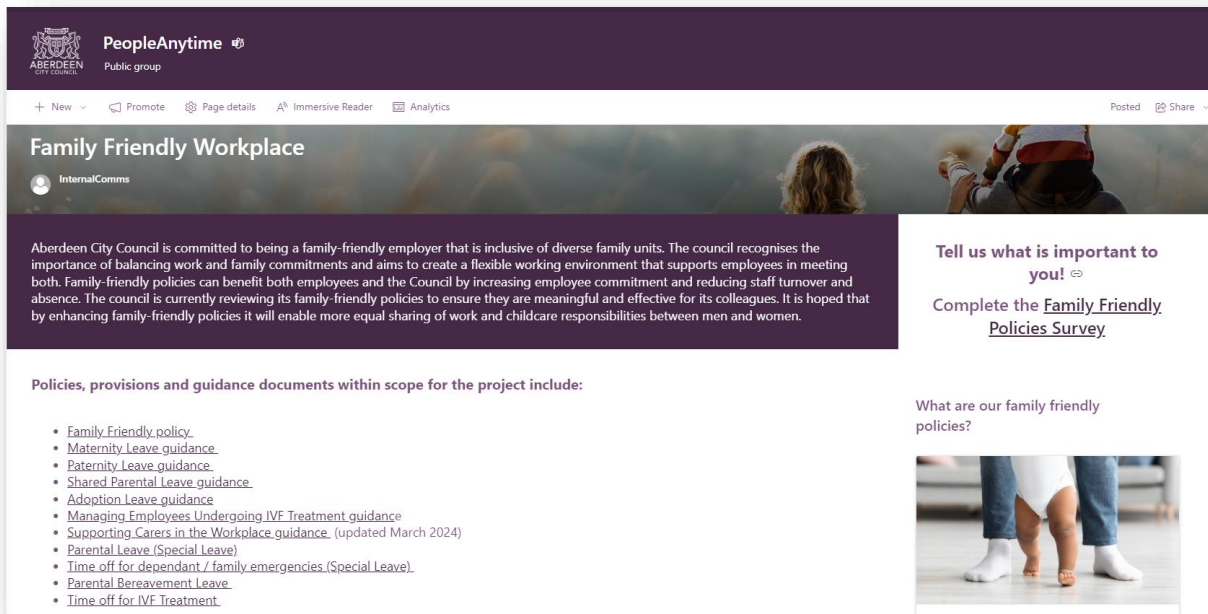
- enhance inclusivity by ensuring shared language and terms used throughout to maximise accessibility.
- provide clarity for managers in applying the guidance to support employees accordingly.
- ensure they are reflective of ACAS guidelines and current legislative position.

This applies to the following guidance documents:

- [Maternity Leave Guidance](#)
- [Paternity Leave Guidance](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave Guidance](#)
- [Adoption Leave Guidance](#)
- [Supporting Employees Undergoing IVF Treatment Guidance](#)
- [Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance](#)

4.2 A [Family Friendly homepage](#) has been created on the intranet to introduce and raise awareness to the project. All in scope and available policies,

provisions and guidance documents are linked and will be further consolidated into a family friendly 'suite', to ensure they are readily available for those who need it at point of need, that employees make the most informed choices and managers are able to provide consistent and appropriate support and decisions.



4.3 In addition, specific changes have been made to the following documents as a result of legislative changes:

#### 4.4 Carer's Leave Act Changes

4.4.1 The Carer's Leave Act 2023 came into effect from 6 April 2024 and entitles employees up to one week's unpaid leave per year to care for a dependent with a long-term care need. This right applies from the first day of employment and can be used to provide or arrange care.

4.4.2 Changes have been made to the Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance and Special Leave Policy to ensure compliance with the legislation, as well as providing clear information to managers and employees.

4.4.3 The wording in both documents was changed with immediate effect following committee approval in September 2023 to:

*“Employees who are caring for a dependent with a long-term care need are entitled to a week of unpaid flexible leave per year. Managers can also consider, where appropriate, granting special leave such as ‘compassionate leave’ or agreeing with the employee that any time off required is taken as annual or flexi leave or that hours lost are made up at a later point.”*

## **4.5 Paternity Leave Changes**

- 4.5.1 The Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into force on 8 March 2024. The changes apply to children who are due to be born or placed for adoption after 6 April 2024. The following statutory provisions will change:
- Instead of taking the entire two week entitlement in consecutive weeks, employees can now separate their leave into separate one week blocks.
  - Employees can take their paternity leave any time in the 52 weeks after the birth or adoption of their child.
  - The notice period required for each period of leave has been shortened to 28 days, or four weeks.
- 4.5.2 For parents of babies born before 6 April 2024, the statutory provision remains that leave can only be taken in one continuous block of one or two weeks within the first eight weeks after birth, and notification of the leave before the end of the 'qualifying week' (15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth).
- 4.5.3 Changes are proposed to the Paternity Leave Guidance and Special Leave Policy to ensure that Aberdeen City Council is compliant with the amended regulations.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 All in scope policies, provisions and guidance documents are to be consolidated, streamlined, readily available, easy to understand and clear for those who need it at point of need, packaged within a family friendly 'suite'.
- 5.2 Continuous monitoring and improvement of all documents within the family friendly 'suite' to ensure the language remains inclusive and contemporary, reflecting the organisation's Guiding Principles as well as all family types and circumstances, such as LGBTQ+ couples and kinship carers.
- 5.3 The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023, which provides parents with a right to 12 weeks leave and pay when their baby requires neonatal care, is due to come into effect in April 2025 and will be incorporated into the relevant policies and guidance to ensure compliance
- 5.4 A communications and engagement plan will be developed to increase awareness of family leave provisions and maximise uptake.
- 5.5 Improve communications and training for managers about family friendly employee entitlements so that managers are able to provide consistent and appropriate support and decisions.
- 5.6 Job Families are considered so that information is accessible in a way that suits the needs of different employee groups.
- 5.7 Ensure the family friendly 'suite' is well-connected to, and makes the most of, government websites and toolkits that are available for employees.

- 5.8 Support provisions, such as entitlements around pregnancy loss and counselling services, will be readily available at point of need so that employees will have easy access to support.
- 5.8 The family friendly 'suite' will link with updates relating to flexible and smarter working across the organisation which are currently being reviewed in line with the [Workforce Delivery Plan](#), and will take into consideration the legislative updates associated with the Employee Relations (Flexible Working) Act.
- 5.9 Further benchmarking and research will continue with other local authorities, partner organisations as well as with other private and third-sector organisations to identify further best-practice examples of family friendly policies and provisions.
- 5.10 Employee equality networks and working groups will continue to be engaged throughout so that they are co-designing improvements to our family friendly policy, guidance documents and provisions.
- 5.11 The Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services will report to Staff Governance Committee in 2025 with the revised family friendly policy, along with an update on any other changes and improvements to procedures and guidance documentation.
- 5.12 Any additional changes to provisions or documentation required in the meantime, will be brought to Staff Governance Committee within appropriate timescales and cycles.
- 5.13 Ongoing feedback and data analysis will be taken to measure impact of any improvements.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations in this report, however failure to comply with legislation could result in claims being made against the Council.
- 6.2 Any other identified implications will accompany the Staff Governance Committee paper in summer 2025 alongside policy updates and any further proposals.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Family Friendly Policies Project will continue to ensure compliance with all employment provisions associated with maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave as well as entitlements to parental leave.
- 7.2 The Family Friendly Policies Project will ensure compliance with the Council's duties under the Equality Act (2010), Employment Acts and associated regulations.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

## 9. 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?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Inability to deliver on Workforce Delivery Plan.	Ensuring that the Family Friendly policy review is delivered and implemented within relevant timescales	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Ability to meet our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) as well as the Employment Acts/Regulations and legislative provision around carers leave and neonatal care leave.	Ensuring that the legislative requirements are captured within the review and implemented within relevant timescales.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Inability to provide support for employees or not competing with other organisations and industries could result in poor staff morale or higher turnover.	Ensuring that benchmarking and research is undertaken so that what Aberdeen City Council is offering is best-practice and progressive.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	Not complying with legislation may leave the Council open to claims.  Many services will need to manage to redistribute work as required for the short-term period of paternity leave	Ensuring that the legislative requirements are captured within the review and implemented within relevant timescales.	L	Yes

	without backfill. In the instances where services will need a role fully covered during paternity leave then People and Citizen Services will work together with them to find flexible options within the confines of our Establishment Control Board	Guidance for managers on how to accommodate leave will be available. In addition, recruitment approval governance and support remains in place.		
<b>Reputational</b>	Risks of not providing an inclusive environment could impact on Council reputation and employer brand.	Ensuring that benchmarking and research is undertaken so that what Aberdeen City Council is offering is best-practice and progressive.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified			

## 10. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025</u></b>	
<b>Impact of Report</b>	
<b><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></b>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	This report supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>400 unemployed Aberdeen City residents supported into Fair Work by 2026</li> </ul>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	This report supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups</li> </ul>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	This report links directly with the Council's <a href="#">Workforce Delivery Plan</a> in ensuring that employees have the right support.  This also supports the Council's <a href="#">Equality Outcomes</a> and <a href="#">Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan</a> .

## 11. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required

## 12. APPENDICES

12.1 Special Leave Policy

12.2 Summary of Current Provisions

## 13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 [Previous September 2023 Committee Report](#)

## 14. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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# Special Leave Policy

Approved by Committee on 20 March 2020 and implemented on that date, interim updates approved and implemented 04 September 2023

## Document Control

<b>Approval Date</b>	
<b>Implementation Date</b>	
<b>Policy Number</b>	POL-R-0002
<b>Policy Author(s) and Owner</b>	Sharon Robb – Policy author Isla Newcombe – Policy owner
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>Scheduled Review</b>	Annually
<b>Changes – Sept 2023</b>	In line with the Carers Leave Act, this policy has been updated to reflect relevant entitlements for carers leave.
<b>Changes - June 2024</b>	Updated in line with the Paternity Leave (amendment) Regulations 2024.  Provisions for time off for IVF treatment updated in line with ACAS guidance.  Language reviewed to ensure inclusive.  Structure updated in line with current ACC Policy Template

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Appendix 1 – Special Leave policy provisions

## 1. Why does the Council need this Policy?

- 1.1 This policy provides details of the Council's special leave provisions which may be available to employees to assist with their other responsibilities and personal circumstances in some situations, details of which can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Special leave covers various scenarios where an employee requires time off from work, other than for planned annual leave or due to sickness absence.
- 1.3 The Council recognises that employees have responsibilities and personal circumstances, out-with work, which may occasionally impact upon their normal working lives. It is supportive of the key benefits that maintaining employee work/life balance brings for employees and, therefore, the whole organisation.
- 1.4 Special leave will also be applicable to other situations such as voluntary public duties, attendance at court as a witness or juror or undertaking election duties and training.

## 2. Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees in the Council except teachers and those other employees under SNCT terms and conditions who have a separate local agreement covering special leave.
- 2.2 Its main aim is to provide supportive provisions to employees to help them balance the demands of domestic and work responsibilities through offering paid and unpaid leave, according to the circumstances.
- 2.3 The provisions of this policy will only apply with the prior agreement of management, whether statutory or not.
- 2.4 Special leave may be granted as paid or unpaid leave, depending on the circumstances.
- 2.5 Line Managers can submit requests on behalf of employees should the employee not have access to the Council's HR/Payroll system.
- 2.6 Requests for leave can be made and the decision given verbally, however, requests and decisions on special leave require to all be recorded through the Council's HR/Payroll system.

- 2.7 For any period of unpaid leave, a deduction will be made to pay which will be based on the total number of hours lost for that period. If a period of absence is over several weeks/months, the deduction may be spread over more than one pay period.
- 2.8 For periods of unpaid leave which exceed 90 days, annual leave entitlement will be recalculated based on the number of days lost. This will not be less than the statutory minimum annual leave entitlement.
- 2.9 Where an employee is dissatisfied with a decision under the provisions of this policy, they have the right to raise a grievance under the [Managing Grievances policy/procedure](#).
- 2.10 During meetings arising under the provisions of this policy, special allowance will be made for those employees whose first language is not English or who have difficulty expressing themselves. The same applies to employees with a disability.
- 2.11 Whilst on unpaid authorised leave, neither an employee nor the Council will pay pension contributions. As such, an employee will not build up pension during this period. Upon returning from unpaid leave, if they wish to buy the pension “lost” while on unpaid leave they may do so through an Additional Pension Contribution (APC) contract through liaison with the [Pensions](#) team.
- 2.12 Employees who have term time or part year contracts have set annual leave and cannot normally take leave on their contracted working days. If time off is required, the manager and employee will agree if this is to be unpaid leave or the time being made up later.

### 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The **Council** will adhere to all its statutory responsibilities in relation to the provisions of this policy.
- 3.2 Chief **Officers** are responsible for the application of the policy and associated guidance within their service delivery remit.
- 3.3 Line **Managers** have responsibility for applying this policy, its provisions and managing requests for leave from their employees. Line Managers should also:
- Make every effort to ensure fairness and consistency in decision-making in relation to the provisions of this policy.

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Commit to consider options to allow individuals time off to deal with situations detailed in this policy and also to maintain work.
- Effectively manage any operational impact as a result of employees taking special leave.
- Create an environment where employees are aware of this policy and can make requests for special leave.

3.4 **Employees** have a responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy.
- Co-operate with management in providing information in relation to any requests for special leave.
- Commit to consider options to allow them time off to deal with situations detailed in this policy and also to maintain work.

3.5 A breach or misuse of this policy may result in the potential use of a corporate policy e.g., [Managing Discipline](#).

3.6 Any feedback on the policy or suggestions for improvement should be shared with the policy author or owner in the first instance.

## 4. Supporting Procedures & Documentation

4.1 There are various guidance documents in place to support the provisions in this policy, including guidance on Maternity, Adoption, Paternity, Shared Parental Leave, Disability Leave, Supporting Carers, IVF, Bad Weather and Employing Reservists.

4.2 This policy also links to:

- Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy
- Family-Friendly policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy
- Managing Grievances policy and guidance
- Managing Discipline policy and guidance
- Gender-Based Violence policy
- Framework Agreement for Industrial Relations (FAIR)
- Career Break policy
- Authorised Unpaid Leave process
- Employee Development policy
- Our Guiding Principles

## 5. About this Policy

5.1 The policy is not creating any specific regulations or requirements other than what is stated in the Council's special leave provisions under Appendix 1.

## 6. Risk

6.1 A function of ACC policies is to reduce risks around compliance, operational, financial and reputational. Compliance risk is the risk that may prevent the Council adhering with laws and regulations. Operational risk is concerned with the risk of disruption to Council services and service users. Financial risk is where unexpected costs could be incurred that have not been budgeted for. Reputational risk concerns the threat of adverse media coverage for the organisation which could affect its standing in the community.

6.2 This special leave policy helps ensure that the Council follows best practice and is legally compliant; with many of the leave provisions being statutory related. Operational risks will be reduced as, if employees who have a need for leave in relation to their personal circumstances are supported in the workplace through this policy, this should assist with employee well-being, performance and attendance levels at work; as well as meeting service requirements. Financial risks should be mitigated by this policy as its contribution to employee wellbeing supports employees with leave to deal with arising circumstances which may potentially help alleviate stress and reduce the risk of related claims against the Council. The policy will also contribute towards reducing reputational risks, as providing a range of special leave provisions should assist with enhancing the Council as an employer of choice and an organisation that applies good employment practices.

6.3 There have been no unintended effects, consequences and risks identified resulting from the introduction of the policy.

6.4 The risks identified will be managed and mitigated through application of the policy across the Council. This will be undertaken by ensuring the policy is readily available to managers and employees and that support is provided from People and Organisational Development Service in the interpretation of the policy, wherever required.

6.5 The policy will also support the organisation's 'PREVENT' obligations as part of the 'CONTEST' framework by helping to ensure that employees requiring time off in relation to their personal circumstances are supported in the workplace, which should help to maintain their health and wellbeing and reduce their vulnerability. This should in turn make employees less susceptible to radicalization and being drawn into terrorist organisations.

## 7. Environmental Implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this policy.

## 8. Policy Performance

8.1 The main factors determining the effectiveness of the policy, and whether it adds the value intended, is the usage of the policy by employees requiring time off related to personal circumstances and the consistency in its application by managers.

8.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be measured through gathering data on the requests and authorisations for special leave, through monitoring corporate absence levels, including stress related absence, and through collecting feedback from users of the policy.

8.3 The Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services will decide where and when data is reported on the effectiveness of the policy, in conjunction with 10.1, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained.

## 9. Design and Delivery

9.1 The policy links to the Council's 'Workforce Design' principle in that it is concerned with organisational culture and promotion of equality in the workplace. Special leave provisions contribute to a supportive culture in the Council and many of the provisions are related to family leave involving caring for children or vulnerable adults, relevant to our responsibilities under Equalities. It also accords with the Council's Guiding Principles, particularly in relation to the commitment to valuing and supporting staff.

9.2 The policy also links to the 'Prosperous Place' theme in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which indicates that all people in the City are entitled to feel safe and protected from harm and supported where necessary. All citizens are equally entitled to enjoy these aspirations, including employees of the Council. Having a wide range of special leave provisions in place for staff will help to contribute to this objective, giving supportive provisions to cover a variety of circumstances.



## 10. Housekeeping and Maintenance

10.1 The Policy will be reviewed annually, and any necessary updates made to it and the accompanying guidance document.

## 11. Communication and Distribution

11.1 The policy will be communicated through the Council's Intranets and Leadership Forum, including networks for Frontline staff, to ensure all relevant parties are aware of its content.

## 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 Special leave is leave provided to an employee to cover various scenarios where an employee requires time off from work other than for planned annual leave or due to sickness absence.

13.2 Worker – A worker e.g. a Relief Worker is not an employee of the Council on set contracted hours, but can be asked to cover hours as required for planned or unplanned absence. Workers are classed as having 'no mutuality of obligation' status which means that they can be offered work but are not required to accept that work. As an employer, there is no obligation to offer work to any workers

13.2 Details and definitions of specific special leave provisions are provided in Appendix 1

## Appendix 1

# Special Leave policy provisions

### **SECTION 1: FAMILY AND DEPENDANTS LEAVE**

#### **Maternity Leave**

---

The provisions for pregnant employees include statutory time off for antenatal care as well as for maternity leave itself. See separate **Maternity Guidance** for full details including time off and applicable payments. Forms can be found within that guidance to inform the Council of pregnancy, which is essential to ensure appropriate risk assessments are undertaken, and to ensure maternity leave and pay arrangements can be timeously processed.

#### **Adoption Leave**

---

This is a provision for employees who are adopting a child from within the UK or having a child through a surrogacy arrangement. Please see separate **Adoption Guidance** for full details on the leave, applicable payments and the application process. If the child is being adopted from out with the UK, there may be entitlement to adoption leave or pay, subject to certain qualifying criteria.

#### **Paternity Leave**

---

This is a leave provision for the father, partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother/birth partner at or around the time of the birth. In the case of adoptions this leave is for the spouse or civil partner or partner, of the primary adopter, or for surrogacy arrangements, the spouse or partner of the parental order surrogacy parent. Paternity leave applies to all **employees** of the Council, irrespective of hours of work and length of service, with the option to take up to 2 weeks leave. See separate **Paternity Leave Guidance** for full details.

#### **Shared Parental Leave**

---

These provisions apply to employees with babies due or matched with a child for adoption (including surrogacy arrangements), who meet the qualifying criteria. They enable mothers/ birth parents/adopters to commit to ending their Maternity or Adoption Leave and Pay at an agreed date and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as Shared Parental Leave and Pay with their partner, or to return to work early from Maternity Leave or Adoption Leave and opt in to Shared Parental Leave and Pay at a later date. The provisions allow employees the flexibility to choose how to share the care of their child with their partner during the first year of birth or adoption and enable them to be on leave at the same time or stop and start their leave, returning to work between periods of leave. See separate **Shared Parental Leave Guidance** for full details.

## Parental Leave

---

This is a statutory entitlement for parents where they can take **unpaid** leave to look after their child's welfare e.g. this could include for spending time with the child, looking at new schools, settling a child into a new school or for spending time with family members i.e. grandparents.

An employee is entitled to take up to 18 weeks' leave for each child and adopted child, up to their 18th birthday.

Time off must be taken as a whole week (not individual days unless the child has a disability), with a maximum of 4 weeks per child per year (unless agreed with the Council). A week is the equivalent to the employee's usual working week and pro-rated for part-time employees.

Parental leave applies to each child not to an individual's job. For instance, where an individual joins the Council and they have used 10 weeks parental leave with a previous employer, they can use up to 8 weeks (the remaining balance of the 18-week entitlement) with the Council, if they are eligible.

To be eligible for Parental Leave the following criteria must be met:

- The person must be an employee (not a "worker") and have at least 1 year's continuous service with the Council.
- The child must be under 18 years old.
- The employee must be named on the child's birth/adoption certificate (proof may be requested prior to first period of leave)
- Have, or expect to have, parental responsibility.

**Note:** Both foster carers and kinship carers qualify for Parental Leave, provided they meet the first two bullet points above.

The employee must give at least **21 days'** notice of their intention to take Parental Leave and provide the intended start and end dates.

The Council can delay the start of the period of Parental Leave, however, it cannot be delayed by the Council -

- If there is no 'significant reason' (e.g. where granting the leave would cause significant disruption to the Service)
- When it is requested by the child's father or partner or support person (meaning a person who lives with the mother/birth parent in an enduring family relationship but who is not their parent, grandparent, sibling uncle or aunt) immediately after the birth/adoption of the child.
- Where it impacts the employee's eligibility for Parental Leave i.e. after the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday

If the Parental Leave is postponed by the Council, the manager must write to the employee within **7 days** from the date that the original request is received, explaining the reasons for the change and suggesting a more suitable start date – which must be within 6 months of the original requested start date and in agreement with the employee. The Council cannot change the amount of leave that has been requested by the employee.

## Time off for dependants/family emergencies

---

This is a statutory right to **unpaid** reasonable time off to deal with **unforeseen** and **emergency** matters regarding a dependant. A dependant can be either a spouse, partner, child, parent or someone who depends on the employee for care. This time off can be granted in the following circumstances:

- To deal with a breakdown in a dependant's care arrangements.
- To put in place longer term care for a child or elderly relative.
- When a dependant falls ill or is taken to hospital.
- To make funeral arrangements. (See section on Compassionate Circumstances).

This provision does not include taking a dependant to hospital for planned appointments (see [Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance](#) and Carer's Leave below for provision that may be applicable in this regard), and applies only in emergency situations that are unforeseen. Unpaid reasonable time off will be given to deal with the immediate emergency only. Where longer periods are required, this is no longer considered an emergency situation, therefore other leave provisions should be explored, such as, annual leave or parental leave.

## Carers' Leave

---

Employees who are caring for a dependent with a long-term care need are entitled to a week of unpaid flexible leave per year. Managers can also consider, where appropriate, granting special leave such as compassionate leave or agreeing with the employee that any time off required is taken as annual or flexi leave or that hours lost are made up at a later point.

Please see the [Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance](#) for full details.

## Employee Aide

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This is a provision within the Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy which provides time off to deal with domestic emergencies (which is different to dealing with family emergencies as above). This covers time off at short notice, where it is not possible to apply in advance for flexi leave, or annual leave etc. This would include, for example, dealing with a burst pipe or flooding within the home. Please see relevant section within the [Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing policy](#) for further information.

## IVF Treatment

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There is currently no legal provision for time off work for IVF treatment or related sickness,

nonetheless and in line with the Special Leave Policy, any IVF appointments or sickness will be treated in the same as any other medical appointment or sickness.

The Council will work with employees undergoing an IVF process with respect and consideration, with requests for time off being considered sensitively by managers and with a supportive approach taken.

Depending on the frequency and length of appointments, as with medical appointment leave, it may be appropriate that alternative options (or a combination of these) be explored by the manager and employee with the appropriate option(s) selected to accommodate the request. The options include the following:

- Unpaid leave
- Annual leave
- Flexi leave (for those on flexi time)
- Making lost time up at a later date
- Altering hours on a temporary basis
- Making use of a Coreless Flexi day (for those on Flexi time)
- Consideration of other flexible working options (see the Council's Smarter Working guidance)

It is acknowledged that fertility challenges, investigations or appointments can be difficult and therefore any employee who is the partner or support person may also use the above options.

## **SECTION 2: COMPASSIONATE CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Bereavement Leave**

An employee will be granted bereavement leave on the death of a family member, relative, close friend/colleague. This includes time off for bereavement, making funeral arrangements and for attending the funeral.

The maximum amount of paid leave that can apply is as follows (pro-rated for part-time employees).

Immediate family member (e.g. spouse, partner, child (18 or over), parent, resident relative living in employee's household)	Up to 5 days
Close family (e.g. brother, sister, son/daughter-in-law, parent-in-law) if not covered by the above	Up to 2 days
Other family members (e.g. grandparents, aunt, uncle, grandchild)	1 day
Others that are not specified above (e.g. neighbour, close friend)	½ day to attend funeral

The line manager may take into consideration special factors such as exceptional relationship to the bereaved, travelling time to attend the funeral etc.

As family and personal circumstances vary, the above is not intended to be fully prescriptive and circumstances will be assessed individually. For example, it may be an aunt or another family member who has taken on the role of a parent and as such longer than one day leave is appropriate.

## **Parental Bereavement**

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Parents are entitled to statutory leave of 2 weeks if they suffer the loss of a child under the age of 18 or suffer a still birth from 24 weeks of pregnancy. The leave can be taken as a single block of 2 weeks or discontinuously as 2 separate blocks of 1 week – and is in addition to maternity leave entitlement, where this also applies.

The Council offers employees contractual pay for the two weeks of Parental Bereavement Leave.

Full details of the provisions are contained in the [Parental Bereavement Leave guidance](#).

## **Compassionate Leave**

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Paid time off may be granted where an employee is faced with a serious/critical family situation, for example where a close relative, partner or dependant has a serious illness, becomes critically ill or injured or is missing.

Service Managers may grant compassionate leave with pay following assessment of an employee's individual circumstances; this will not normally exceed 10 days (pro-rated for part-time employees). If time off is required, and deemed appropriate, the Service Manager and employee should discuss and agree other provisions that may be more suitable such as unpaid leave, temporary reduction in hours, use of TOIL /Flexi leave where appropriate etc.

This provision is not intended to include time off to look after children in the event of sickness due to difficulties in making childcare arrangements. These are covered by other provisions such as [Time off for Dependants/family emergencies](#).

## **SECTION 3: APPOINTMENTS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **Leave to attend Medical and Dental Appointments**

---

Where possible, employees should arrange medical and dental appointments either on non-working days or outwith core hours to minimise disruption to the working day. Where this is not possible, either due to an emergency situation or lack of available appointments, reasonable paid time off will be given in order to attend the appointment. However, if appointments become frequent,

employees may be asked to make up the hours or to take annual/flexi leave, or they may choose to make use of a flexible working option.

Appointments include (but are not limited to) medical, dental, hospital, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech/language therapy. Paid time off will not be provided where an appointment is to carry out a medical for the purpose of assessing an insurance claim, nor for elective cosmetic procedures.

In certain circumstances where the employee has a disability (which is covered under the Equality Act 2010) and is required to attend frequent outpatient appointments in relation to their disability, these appointments may be covered by the provisions within the [Disability Leave Guidance](#). Please refer to section 4.

## Leave to attend Interviews

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Employees who request time off to attend an employment interview within Aberdeen City Council will be granted paid leave of absence. Travelling time to and from the interview location will be taken into consideration when granting time off.

Employees, who request time off to attend an employment interview which is out with Aberdeen City Council, will not be entitled to paid leave of absence. The employee is expected to use other leave to cover this period of absence e.g. annual leave or flexi-leave.

## **SECTION 4: DISABILITY LEAVE**

Disability Leave can be a form of reasonable adjustment in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It is a provision offering reasonable paid special leave to disabled employees requiring time off for planned absences directly related to their disability, that prevent the employee from undertaking their usual working arrangements. The types of situations where Disability Leave could apply include: where disability related equipment is being installed, dialysis treatment, planned therapy (including physiotherapy, occupational or speech and language therapy), hearing aid tests, receiving hospital treatment related to the disability as an outpatient. Full details, including eligibility and the application process, can be found in the separate [Disability Leave Guidance](#).

## **SECTION 5: AUTHORISED UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

### Career Break

---

This is a provision to allow an extended period of unpaid leave. To be entitled to a career break, the employee must meet the qualifying criteria within the Career Break policy and the career break must be approved in advance by the Service based on the requirements of the Service at the time. Please see the separate [Career Break Policy](#) for further details.

## Authorised Unpaid Leave

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An employee may make a request through their Service Manager for unpaid leave of absence providing this period does not exceed **one** consecutive calendar month. If a longer period of unpaid leave is requested, a request must be submitted in writing and approved by the relevant Chief Officer. Where an unpaid leave period is extended beyond one consecutive calendar month, consideration should be given to any potential impact on pension, annual leave abatement and continuous service as well as impact on service provision within that team. Employees should discuss with their line manager whether any other leave provision would be more suitable to allow the extended period of leave. Please see the separate [Authorised Unpaid Leave Process](#) for further details.

### **SECTION 6: ADVERSE WEATHER**

The Council's [Guidance for Situations of Adverse Weather](#) has details on special leave entitlements and how to manage non-working time in instances of adverse weather.

### **SECTION 7: DEVELOPMENTAL LEAVE**

## Study Leave

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This provision allows an employee who is undertaking an approved course of study to take paid time off for study leave and to attend exams. The time off includes a half day per assignment and a maximum of one day per exam, with the total leave being a maximum of 5 days per academic year. Please see the [Employee Development Policy](#) for further details.

## Weekend Courses

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This provision allows an employee who undertakes approved work-related training on a day, or during hours, that falls outwith their normal working week, to take time off in lieu. If the course requires the employee to travel during time that is not part of their normal working week, time off in lieu will be granted.

This provision applies equally to part-time employees who undertake work-related training outwith their normal working hours.

Please see the [Employee Development Policy](#) for further details.

### **SECTION 8: SPORTING/ARTISTIC EVENTS**



## **Leave for Employees to represent their country at National Sporting, Artistic or Related Event**

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This provision allows paid time off for employees to represent their country at a national sporting, artistic or related event. The employee should provide information in relation to the reason for the leave, including dates and times to be requested, at least one month in advance. The Service Manager may approve the leave request and grant paid time off, depending on operational requirements at the time of request.

## **Volunteering at a Multiple Sporting Event**

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This provision is for employees who wish to work in a volunteer role at an event involving multiple sporting disciplines e.g. at an Olympic or Commonwealth Games. This can be granted provided that it is subsequently approved by the Director in consultation with the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services. The maximum entitlement is 10 days' leave, which includes any volunteer training. Of the total leave requested half can be paid special leave, with the remaining half being matched by the employee through other leave provisions.

E.g. If an employee requests 2 days in total, 1 day will be classed as paid special leave and the employee is expected to take 1 day as either unpaid leave, annual leave or flexi leave. Where 5 days in total are requested 2.5 days will be paid special leave and the employee is expected to take 2.5 days as above etc.

## **SECTION 9: PUBLIC/STATUTORY DUTIES**

### **Leave when called as a Witness in Court/or to attend for Jury Service**

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Where an employee has been summoned to attend court either as a witness or to serve on a jury, they must inform their line manager as soon as possible and provide the relevant documentation which must be submitted to the HR Service Centre. Special leave will be granted to allow the employee to attend this duty which can be requested and approved through the HR/Payroll system.

When attending for jury service the employee is responsible for claiming any loss of earnings by sending the documentation provided by the court prior to attendance, to the Payroll Team through the HR Service Centre. Payroll will return the completed documentation to the employee for submission at the Court.

When attending as a witness in court, the employee will be granted paid time off. They can also retain any additional out of pocket witness expenses paid for by the court.

In all of these instances, the employee is required to maintain regular contact with their manager as to the status in terms of the leave required as the case progresses.

### **Leave for Trade Union Duties**

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Time off for Trade Union duties is provided for in the [Framework Agreement for Industrial Relations \(FAIR\)](#).

## **Reservists**

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This provision covers those who are, or considering becoming a reservist within the Army Reserves, the Royal Navy Reserves, Royal Marines Reserves or Royal Air Force Reserves. Reservists must inform their manager when they have been accepted on the Reservist list and the manager must pass the Notification Paperwork provided by the Reserve Force to the HR Service Centre.

Paid special leave up to a maximum of 15 days will be granted to volunteer reservists to attend their annual training event/camp (this covers the period in attendance at the event but does not include travel time). Payment will be subject to the deduction of service pay and allowances received from the forces.

Reservist employees who require time off for other Reservist activities are expected to use days from their normal annual leave entitlement (or to take unpaid or flexi leave or to agree with their Manager to make the lost time up at a later point).

Please see separate [Employing Reservists Guidance](#) for full details on employing reservists and for mobilisation of reservists.

## **Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV)**

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This provision covers those who are Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV).

Paid special leave up to a maximum of 5 days will be granted to CFAV to attend relevant annual training and camps.

CFAV who require further time off are expected to use days from their normal annual leave entitlement (or to take unpaid or flexi leave or to agree with their Manager to make the lost time up at a later point).

## **Leave for Undertaking Election Duties and Training**

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Paid special leave can be granted for employees to undertake work in relation to election duties. If granted, time off will be given for employment at polling stations, at counts etc. and for associated elections training. (Employees will at – the same time- receive the separate payment agreed with the Election Unit in respect of their election work). Time off will be granted by the employee's Service Manager in accordance with operational requirements.

## **Leave for Carrying out Public Duties**

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This applies to employees who hold certain public positions such as Justice of the Peace, being a member of a Children's Panel or being an elected member for another local authority, excluding Aberdeen City Council. Paid time off will be granted provided that the request satisfies the following conditions for it to be a reasonable request:

- The amount of time off required in general to perform the particular public duty and the amount of time off required on the particular occasion in question is reasonable.
- The amount of time the employee has been granted already for this purpose or any other activities has not been excessive.
- Conforms with section 10 of the Local Government Housing Act 1989 which states that paid leave of absence to serve as an elected member of some other Local Authority cannot exceed 208 hours within one financial year.
- It will have no significant impact on service delivery.

### **Leave for Special Police Constables and Volunteer Emergency Responders**

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Employees who are Special Police Constables or volunteering in what the Council considers to be an emergency service may be entitled to paid special leave to attend training or duties related to the role e.g. emergency call out situations. The maximum paid special leave entitlement is 10 days per year, and this will be granted in line with operational demand at the time of request.

## Appendix 2 – Summary of Current Provisions

Entitlement	Leave (maximum)	Pay
Maternity	52 weeks	<p>Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP) and Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for a maximum period of 39 weeks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first 6 weeks 90% of average weekly earnings.</li> <li>• For the following 12 weeks a sum equal to 50% of normal pay.</li> <li>• In addition, employees get the flat rate of SMP or 90% of average weekly earnings if this is less than the flat rate of SMP.</li> <li>• For the following 21 weeks flat rate of SMP (or 90% of average weekly earnings if this is less than the flat rate of SMP).</li> <li>• The remaining 13 weeks of maternity leave, if taken, is without pay.</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Maternity (SNCT)	52 weeks	<p>Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP) and Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for a maximum period of 39 weeks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first 13 weeks OMP and SMP to equal normal salary.</li> <li>• For the following 26 weeks the flat rate of SMP.</li> <li>• The remaining 13 weeks of maternity leave, if taken, would be without pay.</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Paternity	2 weeks	<p>Full pay</p> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Maternity and Adoption Support Leave incl. Paternity (SNCT)	2 weeks	<p>One week full pay, one week at the Statutory Paternity Pay rate.</p> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>

Adoption	52 weeks	<p>Occupational Adoption Pay (OAP) and Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) for a maximum period of 39 weeks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first 6 weeks 90% of average weekly earnings.</li> <li>• For the following 12 weeks a sum equal to 50% of normal pay.</li> <li>• In addition, employees get the flat rate of SAP or 90% of average weekly earnings if this is less than the flat rate of SAP.</li> <li>• For the following 21 weeks flat rate of SAP (or 90% of average weekly earnings if this is less than the flat rate of SAP).</li> <li>• The remaining 13 weeks of adoption leave, if taken, is without pay.</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Adoption (SNCT)	52 weeks	<p>Occupational Adoption Pay (OAP) and Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) for a maximum period of 39 weeks as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first 13 weeks Occupational Adoption Pay (OAP) and Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) to equal normal salary.</li> <li>• For the following 26 weeks flat rate of SAP.</li> <li>• The remaining 13 weeks of adoption leave, if taken, is without pay.</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Shared Parental Leave and Shared Parental Leave (SNCT)	50 weeks can be shared between parents)	<p>As per Government guidance. Up to 37 weeks of pay between parents.</p> <p>The actual amount depends on how much maternity or adoption leave and pay (or Maternity Allowance) the employee and their partner take. If eligible can:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take less than the 52 weeks of maternity or adoption leave and use the rest as Shared Parental Leave (SPL)</li> <li>take less than the 39 weeks of maternity or adoption pay (or Maternity Allowance) and use the rest as Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP)</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility criteria applies.</p>
Parental Leave and Parental Leave (SNCT)	Up to 18 weeks' leave for each child and adopted child up to their 18th birthday.	Unpaid Eligibility criteria applies.
Time Off for Dependant / Family Emergencies	Reasonable time off granted.	Unpaid however can be discussed with management to make the time back or use of annual leave, flexi time.
Leave of Absence (SNCT)	Up to 2 days	Paid  This may be used for a number of situations but for family purposes, this relates to illness of a child, attending family events, being a birthing partner, supporting dependents at national or international sporting events, as well as anything under discretion of a Head Teacher.
Surrogacy Leave (SNCT)	52 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 weeks at normal salary</li> <li>26 weeks at a sum equivalent to Statutory Adoption Pay.</li> <li>The remaining 13 weeks of leave, if taken, is without pay.</li> </ul>
Parental Bereavement Leave and Parental Bereavement Leave (SNCT)	2 weeks	Paid
Time Off for IVF Treatment	Reasonable time off granted.	Unpaid, however can be discussed with management to make the time back or use of annual leave, flexi time.
Time Off for IVF Treatment (SNCT)	Reasonable time off granted.	Paid leave will be granted for related absences during one cycle of treatment.

Adverse Weather	Up to 1 days' leave per weather situation.	Paid.
Compassionate Leave	Reasonable time off up to 10 days' (pro-rata)	<p>Paid.</p> <p>Note that this is not normally intended to be used for childcare purposes but is specified as an option within our Supporting Carers in the Workplace Guidance.</p>

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## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	24 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Corporate Health and Safety – January to March 2024
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/182
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Alan Thomson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Colin Leaver
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	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 January to March 2024 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 January to March 2024. 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 (Jan – Mar 2024)**

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 increased both from the corresponding period last year and year on year.
- 3.5.1** Incident numbers have increased year on year. It is difficult to identify exact reasons for this but as the majority of the increase is within Education the increase is likely to be largely down to 2 reasons: those being 1) the changing behaviours of society in general and pupils in particular post-pandemic and 2) the campaign by Education senior management and Trade Union colleagues to encourage reporting by staff of every incident, which they feel affects their physical or mental wellbeing.
- 3.5.2** Most of the incidents within Education are recorded from incidents involving children with additional support needs. The current system in Core HR does not record the number of incidents as ASN but will from this month. However, in the Your HR system the numbers historically sat at around 70%. Incidents can be recorded as externalising behaviour or as physical assault. An attack by a pupil with additional support needs would not legally be an assault if the pupil lacks the capacity to understand the nature and consequences of their actions, or if they act impulsively or reactively due to their condition. A pupil with additional support needs may have a learning disability, a mental health problem, a

neurological disorder, a sensory impairment, or a physical disability that affects their cognitive, emotional, or behavioural functioning. These factors may impair their ability to control their impulses, regulate their emotions, communicate their needs, or empathize with others.

- 3.5.3** Therefore, an aggressive act by a pupil with additional support needs may not be motivated by malice, but by frustration, confusion, fear, pain, or distress. The pupil may not intend to cause harm or injury, but to express their feelings, needs, or preferences, or to defend themselves from a perceived threat. The pupil may not have the capacity to realize the impact or consequences of their actions. The pupil may also have difficulty in understanding or following the rules, expectations, or boundaries of the school or society.
- 3.5.4** In such cases, an attack by a pupil with additional support needs would not meet the legal definition of assault, as there would be no mens rea (guilty mind) or actus reus (guilty act) involved. The pupil would not be criminally responsible for their behaviour, but they would still need appropriate support, guidance, and intervention to prevent further incidents and to address the underlying causes of their aggression.
- 3.5.5** This explanation does not reduce the impact that it can have on the staff supporting and teaching these children and senior managers understand that working with children who have additional support needs and exhibit dysregulated behaviours can be challenging at times for staff. However, the support provided by the staff plays a vital role in helping these children learn to regulate their emotions and behaviours, and to cope with the demands and expectations of the school environment. By providing consistent, positive, and supportive guidance, staff can help the children understand the rules, boundaries, and consequences of their actions, and to develop skills such as self-control, problem-solving, and empathy. This can lead to a medium to long term reduction in the level of incidents from an individual child, as they become more confident, cooperative, and resilient.
- 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 (January – March 2024)**

- 3.6** The table in the Appendix also shows the number of RIDDOR reportable incidents. During the reporting period between January and March 2024 10 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
Jan-Mar 2024	1.29	2023/24

3.8 The above figures are calculated using the formula:

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

3.9 The figure for the corresponding period last year (January to March 2023) was 8 RIDDOR reportable incidents and a reportable incident rate of 0.98.

### 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. The near miss figures have stabilised or reduced slightly year on year and from 2023'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.

### Regulator interventions (HSE / SFRS)

3.15 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.

- 3.16** There were no HSE visits or interventions during this reporting period.
- 3.17** SFRS carried out no audit visits of any ACC (Aberdeen City Council) owned or managed buildings during this reporting period.

#### **Fire risk assessments**

- 3.18** Fire risk assessments are completed on a rolling 5-year programme. A total of 18 fire risk assessments were completed during this reporting period. The overall average compliance score was 85%. 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.
- 3.19** 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**

- 3.20** Compliance visits have been undertaken on several topics / premises within the ACC estate. Topics included Management of Contractors (93%); Lone Working (96%); Security (100%); Line Managers Health & Safety Responsibilities (97%); Workplace Inspections (88%); COSHH (75%); First Aid (88%); Waste & Refuse Operations (96%); Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment Operations (100%) and Object Handling (100%).
- 3.20.1** 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.
- 3.21** 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.

- 3.22** 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**

- 3.23** 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.
- 3.24** 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) <small>*Considering controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	N/A	N/A		
<b>Compliance</b>	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	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Operational</b>	The risk is that any health and safety incident can lead to an injury to an employee which could have the	The task has been risk assessed; employees are trained, competent and supervised then there should be less likelihood of incidents.	L	<b>Yes</b>

	<p>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>			
<b>Financial</b>	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	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Local and National press coverage of any incident	Each Function should have a robust safety management system in place. There are many facets to this which are	L	<b>Yes</b>



	can present reputational damage to the organisation.	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.		
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	

## 8 OUTCOMES

<a href="#"><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u></a>	
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
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Vikki Cuthbert, Chief Officer Governance in October 2023.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required

## 10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

### 10.1 N/A

## 11 APPENDICES

11.1 Quarterly staff governance Health and safety dashboard January to March 2024

## 12 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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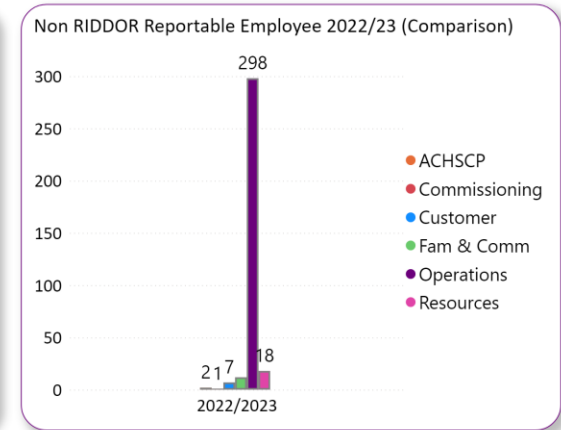
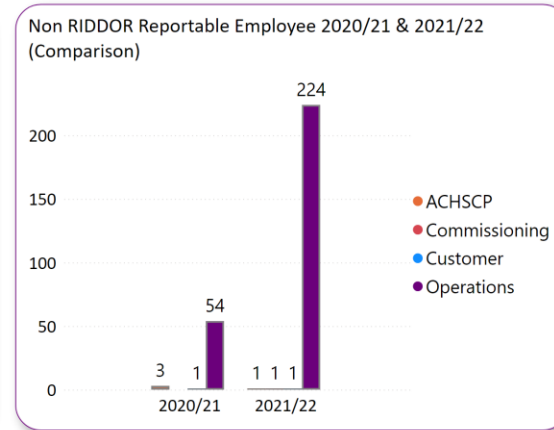
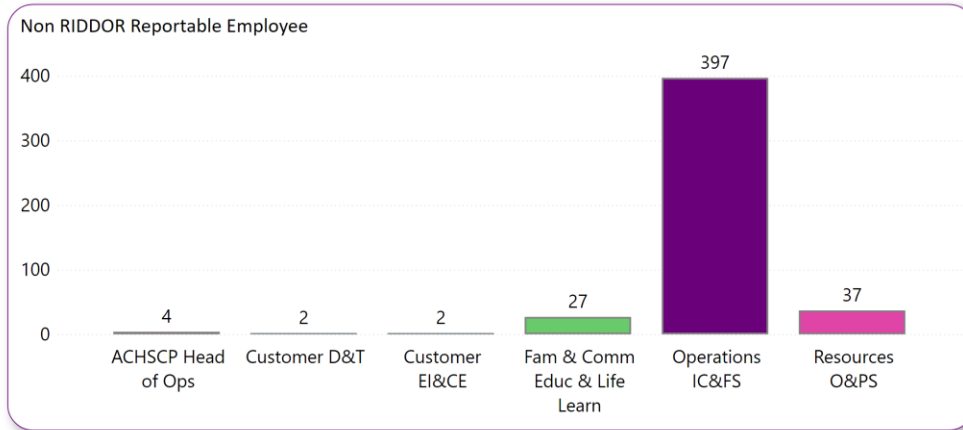
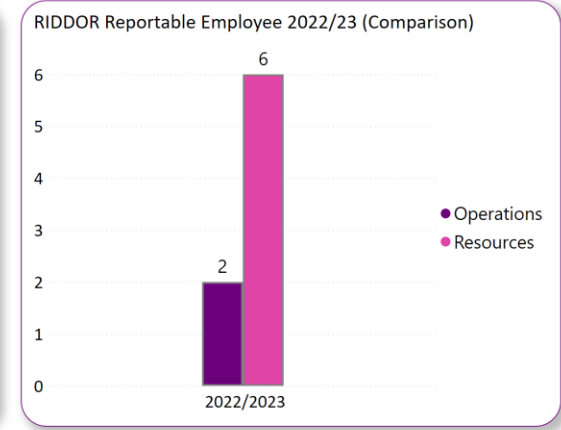
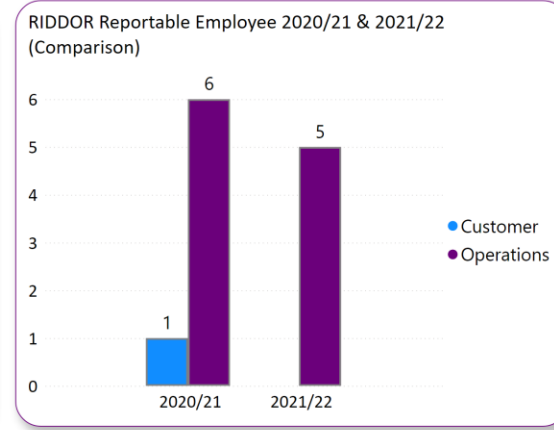
# Staff Governance Health & Safety Report Quarter 4 2023/2024 (Jan 24 to Mar 24)

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## Reported H&S Incidents (Employee) Between Jan to Mar 2024

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 4 comparison for each Function from 2020/21 to 2022/23 where applicable.



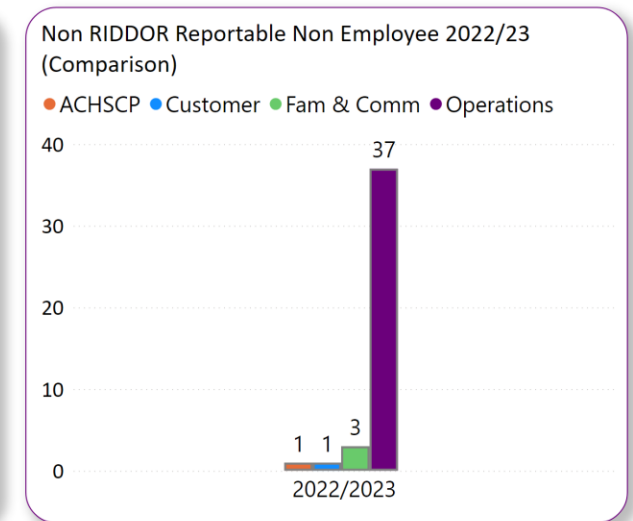
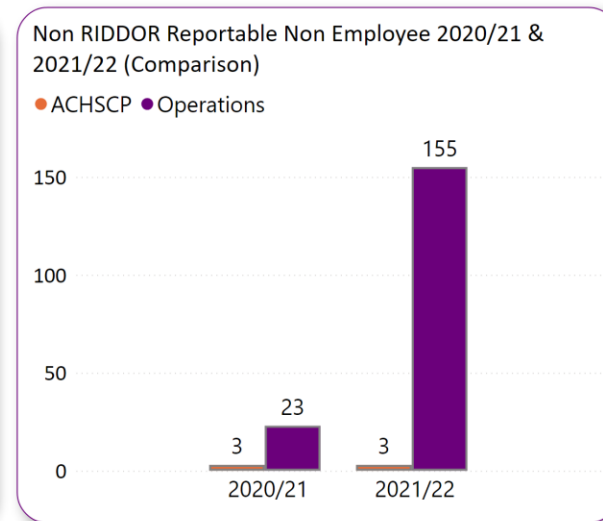
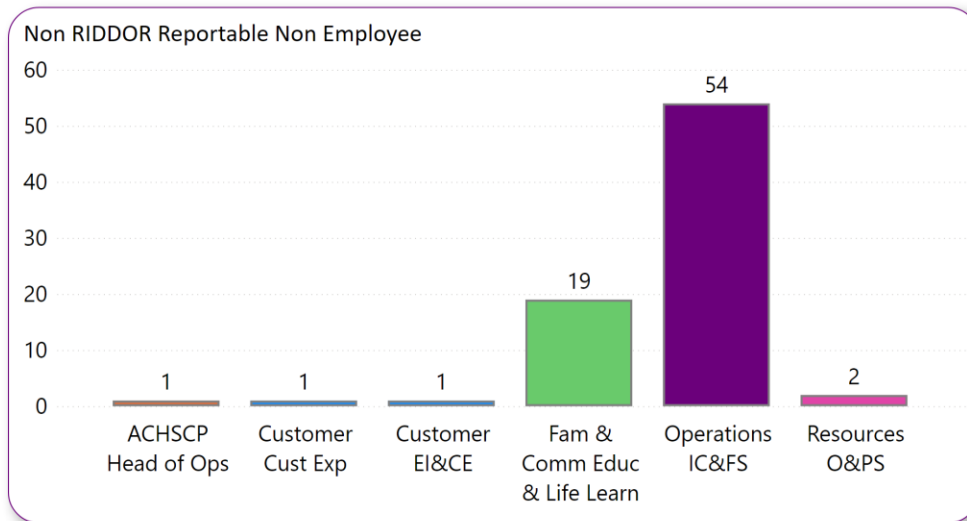
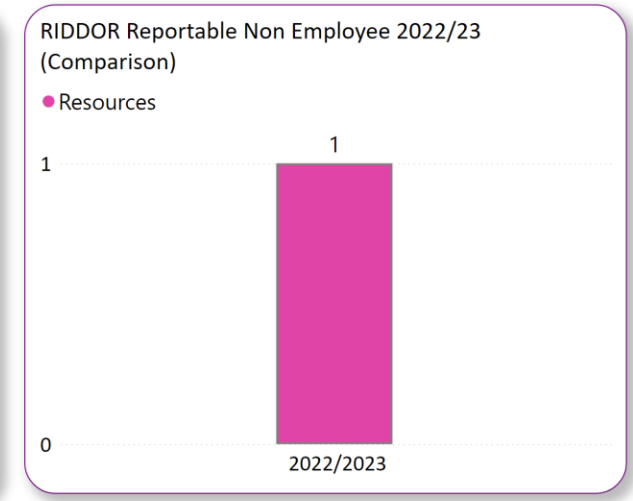
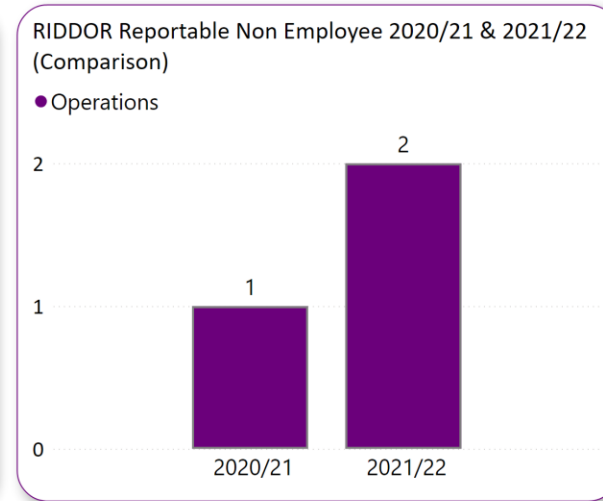
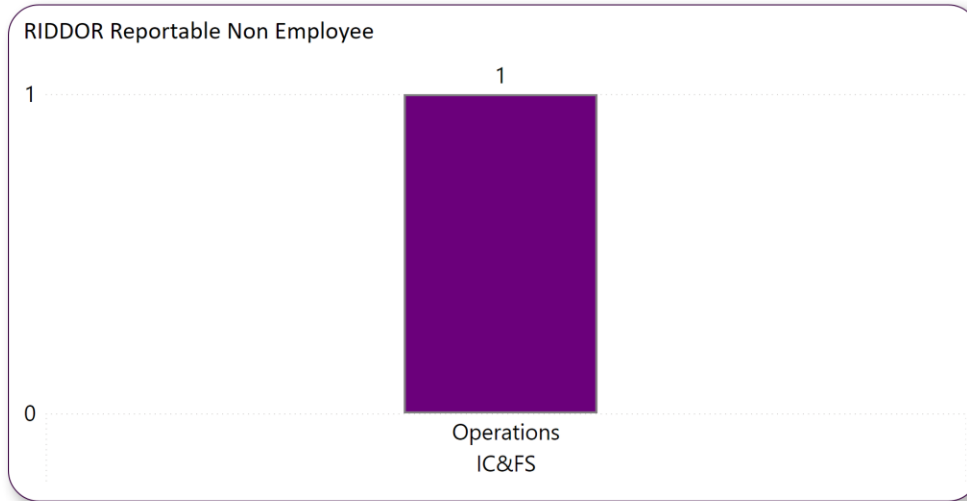
### Employee Incident Information

Incidents which result in injury have increased from the same quarter in the previous 2 reporting years. The majority of these are due to behavioural issues and the HSE report on violence at work in Great Britain in 2019/20 shows that the incidents of violence at work have increased (by 13%) and particularly in the education sector. The possible causes and factors of violence at work identified by HSE include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures, and the influence of the media and the social media. Aberdeen City Council Education Senior Managers and Trade Union colleagues have also encouraged staff to report all incidents. This campaign together with a general longer-term increase in all sectors could be responsible for the rise in reporting.

RIDDOR reportable figures are increased over the last 3 years. The majority of these are reported as they cause 7 days absence for the affected employee.

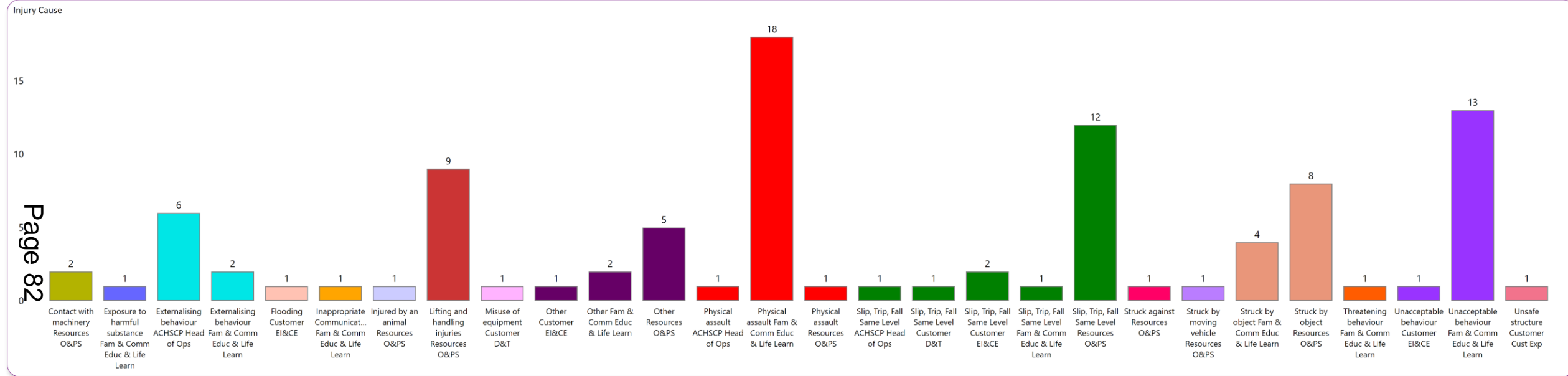
## Reported H&S Incidents (Third Party) Between Jan to Mar 2024

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 4 comparison for each function from 2020/21 to 2022/23 where applicable.



## H&S Incident Causation Reported between Jan to Mar 2024

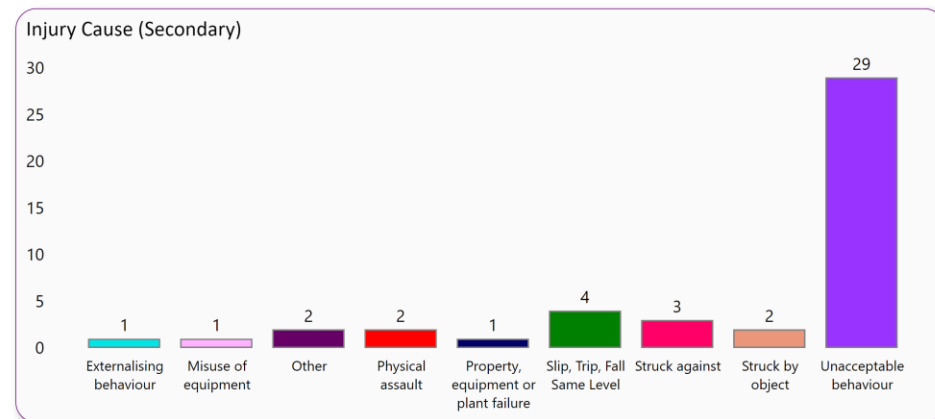
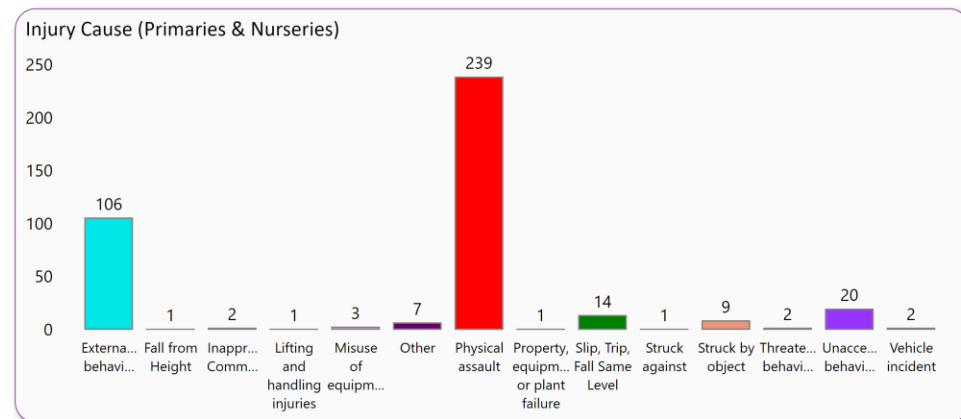
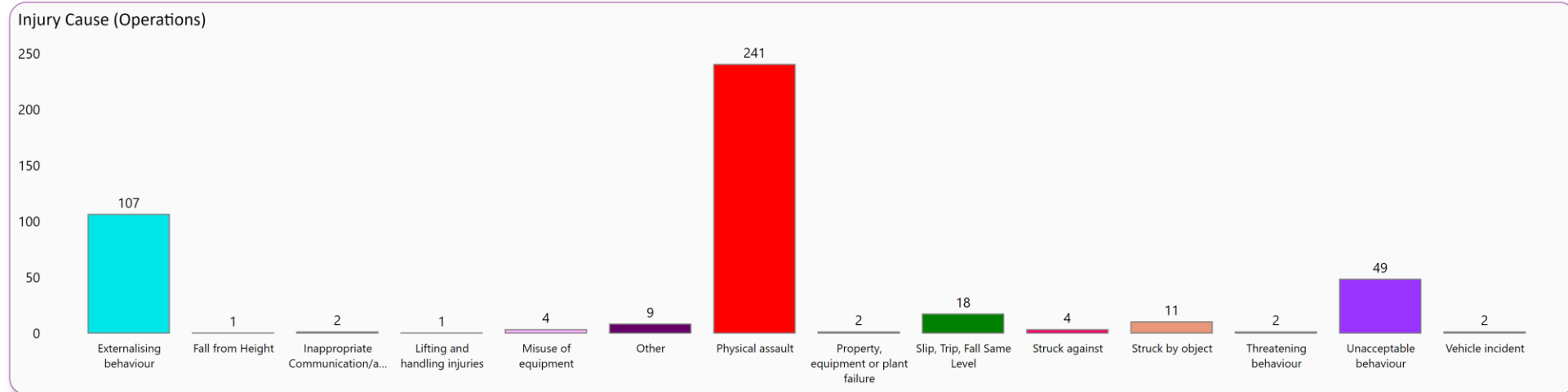
The table shows incident causation for each Cluster for this reporting period apart from Operations, which is covered in the next page.



### Injury Cause

Contact with machinery	Exposure to harmful substance	Externalising behaviour	Flooding	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Injured by an animal	Lifting and handling injuries	Misuse of equipment	Other	Physical assault	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by moving vehicle	Struck by object	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Unsafe structure	Total
2	1	8	1	1	1	9	1	8	20	17	1	1	12	1	14	1	99

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

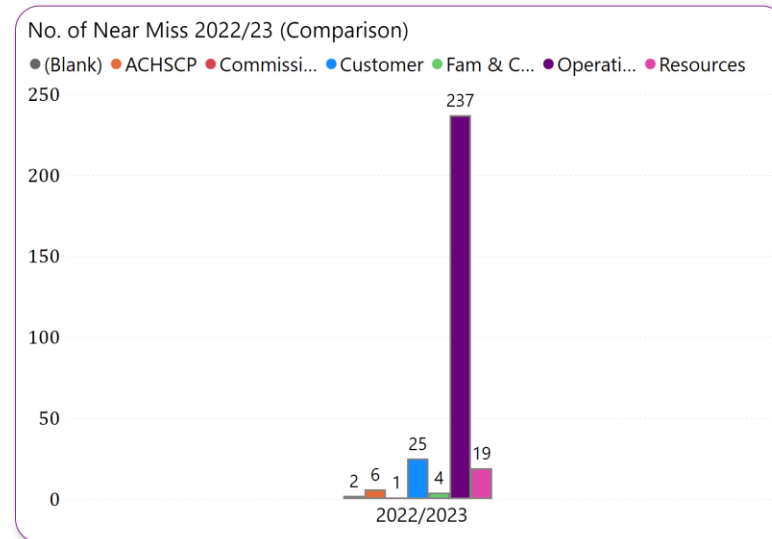
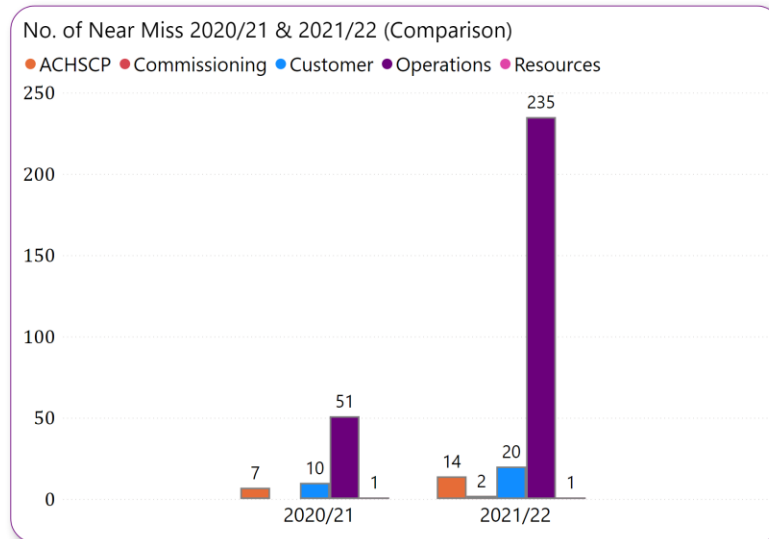
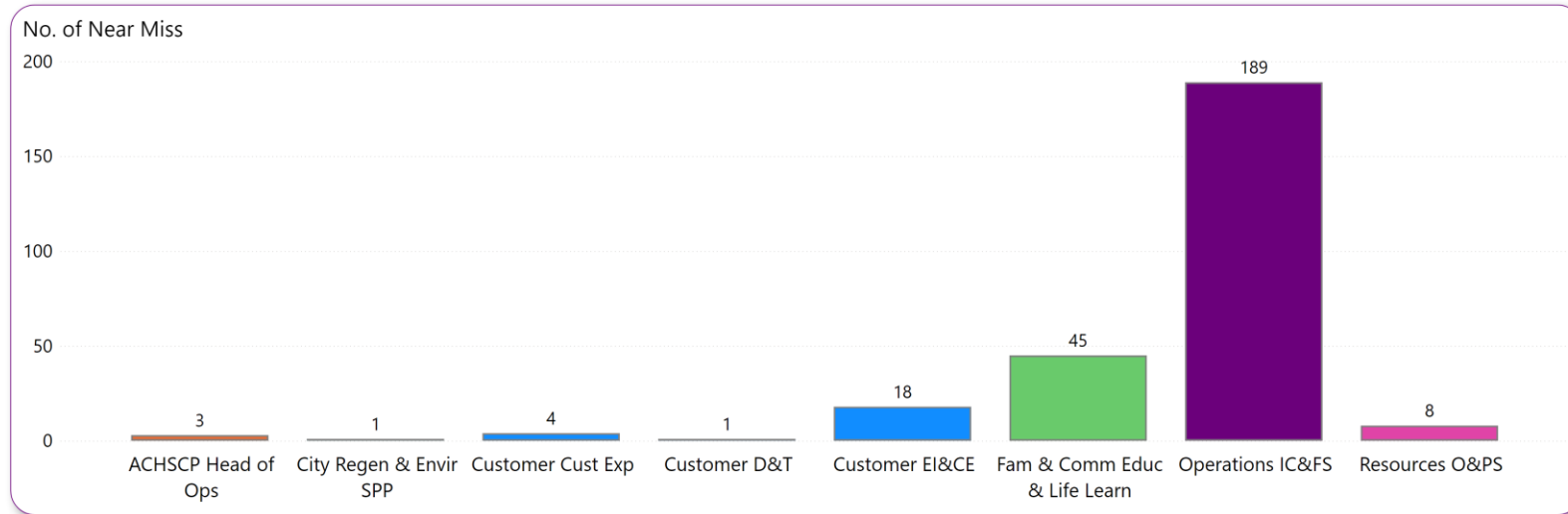


Injury Cause														
Externalising behaviour	Fall from Height	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Lifting and handling injuries	Misuse of equipment	Other	Physical assault	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
107	1	2	1	4	9	241	2	18	4	11	2	49	2	453

## Reported H&S Near Miss Between Jan to Mar 2024

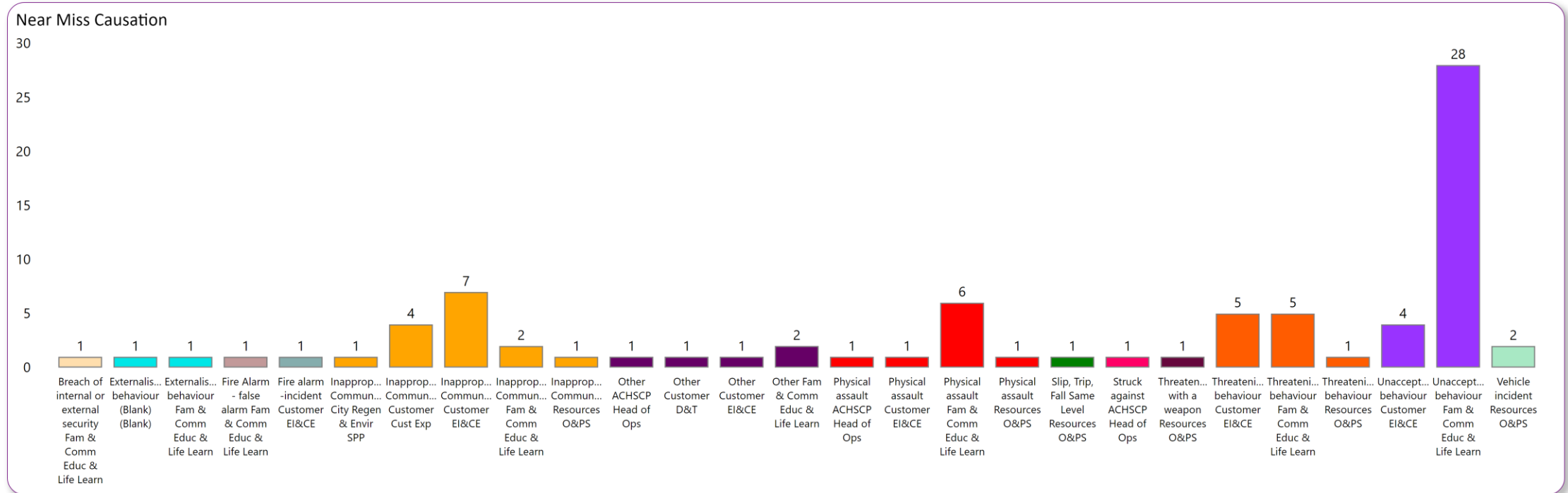
The tables below show information in relation to employee and non-employee Near Misses.

Top table: Total Near Misses for this reporting period for each Cluster. Bottom tables: quarter 4 comparison of Near Misses for each Function from 2020/21 to 2022/23.





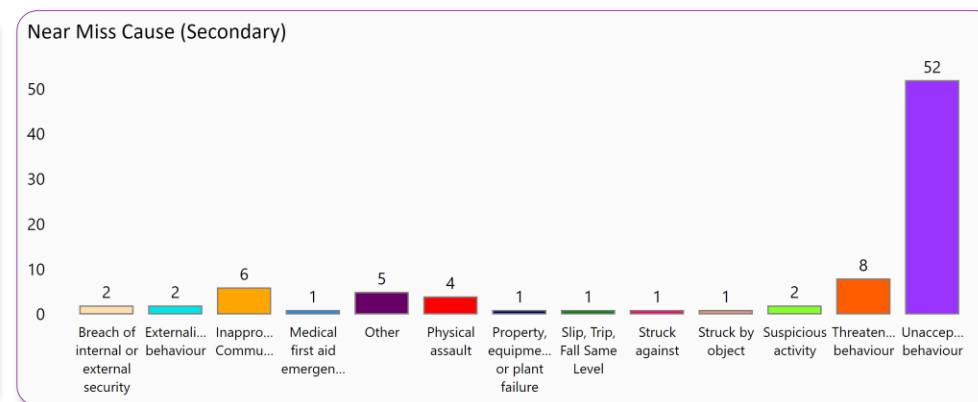
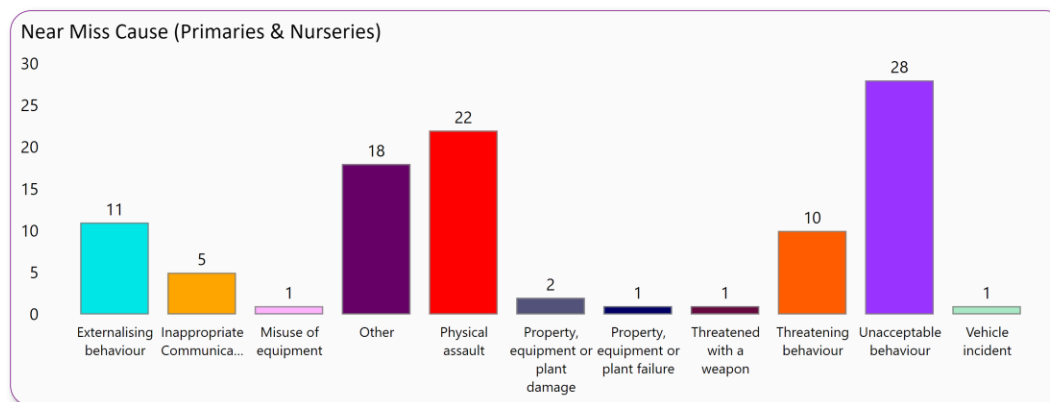
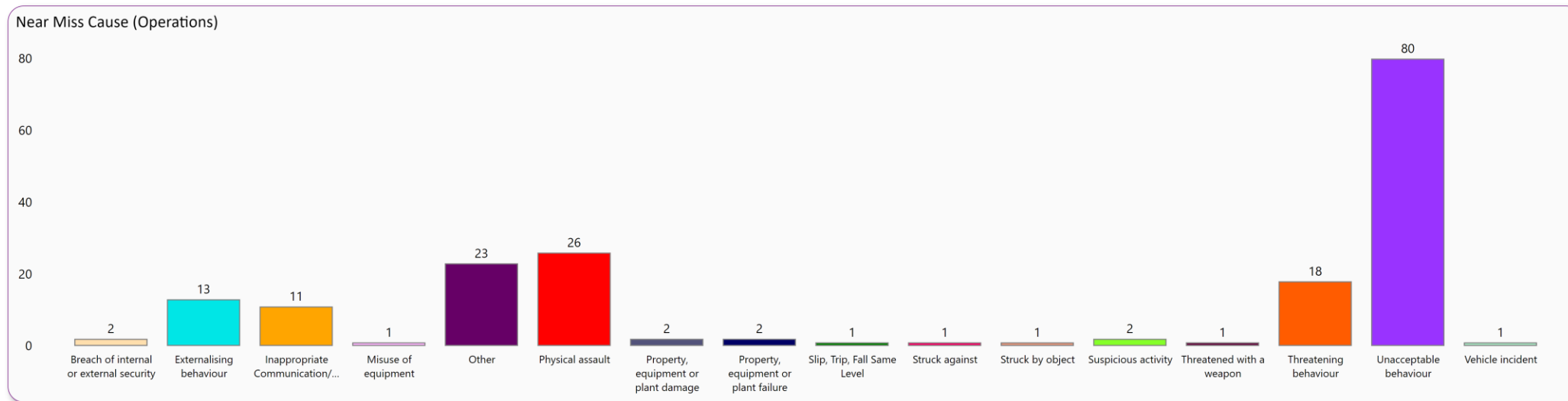
The table below shows information to a Function and Cluster level for employee and non-employee Near Misses apart from Operations, which is covered in the next page.



Near Miss Cause													
Breach of internal or external security	Externalising behaviour	Fire Alarm - false alarm	Fire alarm -incident	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Other	Physical assault	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Threatened with a weapon	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
1	2	1	1	15	5	9	1	1	1	11	32	2	82

**Near Miss**  
The number of near misses reported have decreased when compared to the statistics from the previous 3 years. This may appear odd given the increase in injury incidents and one reason may be that staff do not place the same importance on a near miss and therefore do not report.  
Some possible reasons why staff may not report a near miss are: lack of awareness or training; inconvenience or hassle; belief that it is not important; fear of blame or punishment.  
With most incidents and near misses occurring in Education they are undertaking a training and awareness programme with all reporting officers to educate them on the reporting system and the importance of recording all near misses to address these 4 reasons.

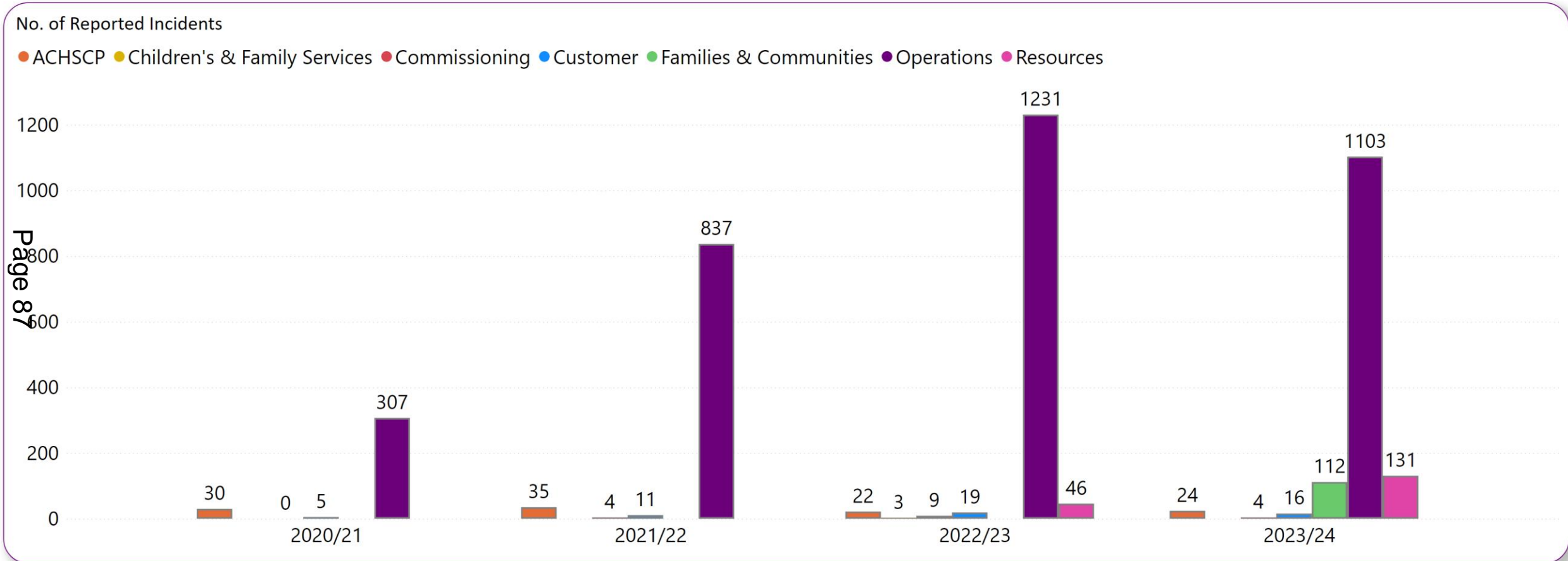
The following tables give a breakdown of **Operations** Near Miss.



Near Miss Cause																
Breach of internal or external security	Externalising behaviour	Inappropriate Communication/abuse	Misuse of equipment	Other	Physical assault	Property, equipment or plant damage	Property, equipment or plant failure	Slip, Trip, Fall Same Level	Struck against	Struck by object	Suspicious activity	Threatened with a weapon	Threatening behaviour	Unacceptable behaviour	Vehicle incident	Total
2	14	12	1	23	27	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	18	80	6	193

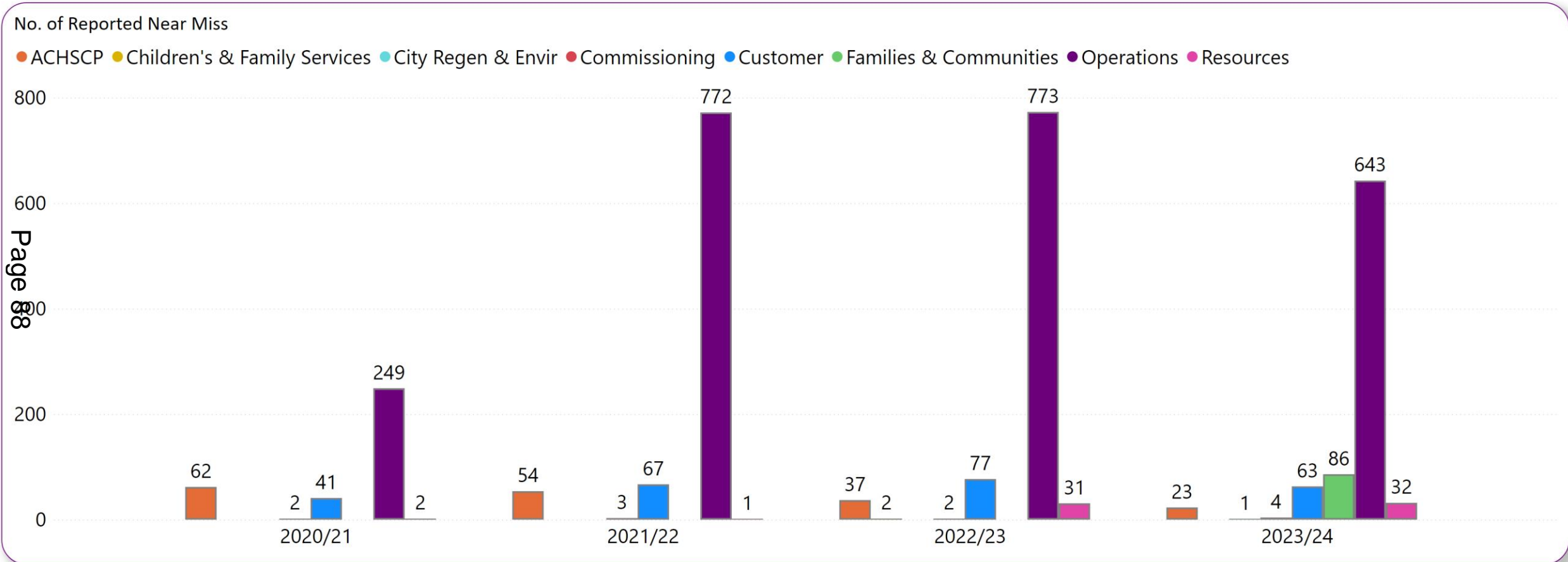
## Reported Incidents From 2020/21 to 2023/24

The table provides information on the **total number** of incidents for the last four reporting years 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 to Function level.



## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	24 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Sickness Absence for Environmental, Roads and Waste Services
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CR&E/24/178
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Gale Beattie
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Mark Reilly – Chief Officer Operations Isla Newcombe – Chief Officer People & Citizen Services
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Martina Klubal – Acting Waste Resources Manager Sharon Robb – Employee Relations Casework lead
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.7

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report on sickness absence trends for Environmental, Roads & Infrastructure and Waste Services, following the instruction at the meeting of Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee in March 2024:

- i) to note the report and agree that the report indicated Sickness Absence at Environmental, Roads and Waste to be well above average and of concern to officers; and
- ii) in light of the high sickness absence within these 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 was so high within those services and what the Council was doing to reduce such absence; and for future updates to be incorporated into the relevant sickness absence report to Staff Governance Committee.

1.2 To report on what the Council is doing to reduce absences within these areas.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

2.1 note the explanation and update provided within this report for assurance; and







2.2 instruct the Chief Officers - Operations and People and Citizen Services to incorporate any future updates into the Absence Annual Update (EAS Annual Progress Update, Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update).

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION







#### 3.1 Background

3.1.1 Sickness absence in Environmental , Roads & Infrastructure and Waste Services was highlighted as higher than average across Council services by the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee within Appendix A of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Performance Report. A RAG status of Red (more than 20% below target and being actively pursued) was noted against the Sickness Absence Performance Indicator for each service. The relevant performance indicators are shown below.







##### Environmental Services (Environment)

Performance Indicator	Nov 2023		Dec 2023		Jan 2024		2023/24 Target
	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status	
Sickness Absence - Average Number of Days Lost - Environmental	15.3		15.3		15.2		10
Establishment actual FTE	319.18		314.83		313.02		

##### Roads and Infrastructure Services (Roads)

Performance Indicator	Nov 2023		Dec 2023		Jan 2024		2023/24 Target
	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status	
Sickness Absence - Average Number of Days Lost - Roads	13.5		13.2		13.0		10
Establishment actual FTE	162.19		161.19		159.59		

##### Waste Services (Waste)

Performance Indicator	Nov 2023		Dec 2023		Jan 2024		2023/24 Target
	Value	Status	Value	Status	Value	Status	
Sickness Absence - Average Number of Days Lost - Waste	14.1		13.6		12.9		10
Establishment actual FTE	186.34		187.12		187.05		

#### 3.2 Data

3.2.1 The attached appendices illustrate the available sickness absence data in relation to each service and, where possible, this has been shown as a monthly trend across the period April 2023 to April 2024. It should be noted that within monthly trend patterns of sickness absence, seasonal and other variations often occur (for example it is normal for sickness absence to be higher in winter months).

3.2.2 Appendix 1 shows the number of employees absent from work each month per service, broken down by long and short term absences (long term is defined as more than 23 working days). For all 3 services, the trend for long term sickness showed an overall increase in the number of employees absent until this peaked in July 2023 for Waste and in October 2023 for Environment and Roads. Thereafter, in both services, the number of employees with long term absences showed a significant improvement. Data shows that the number of employees with long term absence per month for the period October 2023 to April 2024 for Roads decreased from 14 to 5 and for Environmental from 52 to 15. Waste decreased for the period July 2023 to April 2024 from 30 to 15.

There is a less clear pattern in the short term absence numbers, which can be more variable due to a number of factors, such as outdoor conditions, outbreaks of minor infections such as cold/flu viruses, and these are less likely to be attributable to underlying medical conditions.

3.2.3 Appendix 2 shows the number of days lost per FTE employee across the April 2023 to April 2024 period. Each service has a similar peak when compared to the numbers of employees with long term absence (i.e. July 2023 for Waste and October 2023 for Environment and Roads) with a decline in the number of absence days from the respective peak in absence. Whilst there has been a slight increase in the number of days per employee within Waste in 2024, which correlates to a small increase in the number of people with long term absence, there has still been an overall decrease from May 2023.

Work is underway within Data Insights to make similar monthly trend data available within the Sickness Absence dashboard thereby enabling management teams to follow absence more easily on a monthly basis and identify trends, fluctuations and anomalies more timeously.

3.2.4 Appendix 3 shows the main reason category for sickness absence within each area. The top 3 reasons for absence within each area are as follows:

<b>Service</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Environment</b>	Musculoskeletal	Psychological*	Respiratory
<b>Roads</b>	Musculoskeletal	Respiratory	Psychological*
<b>Waste</b>	Musculoskeletal	Psychological*	Hospitalisation

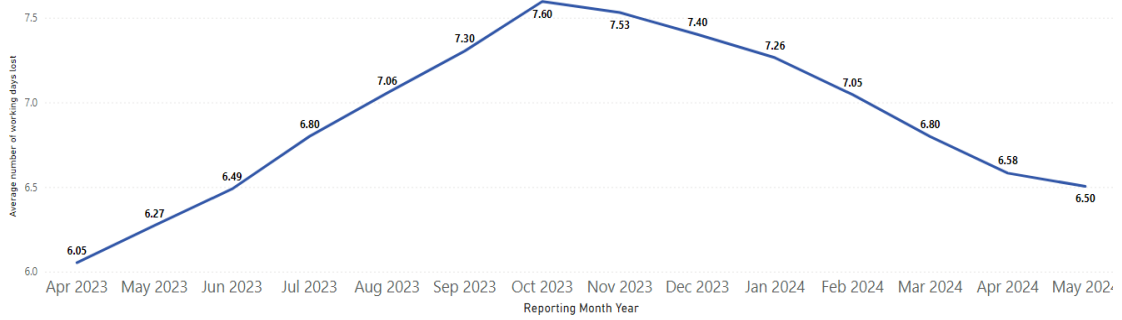
(\*Psychological includes anxiety, depression, mental health and stress)

Given the physical nature of the work within the three service areas, it would be expected that musculoskeletal would be the main reason for absence. Staff in operational services undertake physical tasks outdoors, for example pushing and pulling heavy wheeled and bulk bins over uneven surfaces and in inclement weather. Any musculoskeletal injury or condition will more likely result in a period of sickness absence when compared to, for example, office based staff, where similar injuries/conditions have a lower likelihood of impacting their ability to attend work.

3.2.5 Appendix 4 shows the average number of working days lost due to sickness per FTE employee as a 12 month rolling average across a trend graph for each service. This data is used to populate the Sickness Absence Performance Indicator used within the [Performance Report](#). Whilst there was an increase in the 12 month rolling average across all 3 services, peaking around the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2023, all 3 services have seen an improvement since this time, with both Roads and Waste now close to the target level of 10 in April 2024. The peak for Environment is somewhat later, but a downward trend is now emerging. A similar pattern can be seen in the rest of the Council's 12 month rolling average (with these 3 services not included).

## ACC 12 month rolling average

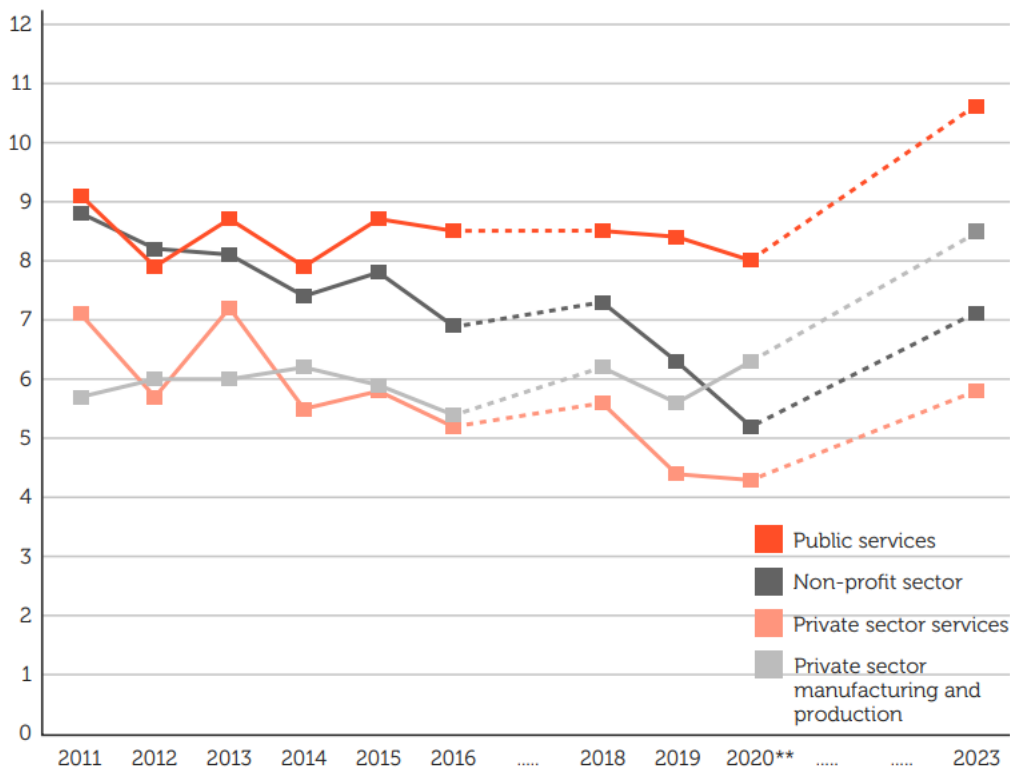
Average number of total working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE employee (12 month rolling average)



It is worth noting that the 12 month rolling average takes into account the current FTE (which has decreased within Environment but has remained steady in Waste and Roads) and as it continues to factor in absences within the last 12 months, any changes can take time to balance out.

- 3.2.6 A review of the CIPD's annual [Health and Wellbeing at Work Report](#), published in September 2023, reports an increase in sickness absence across all sectors in 2023 when compared to previous years and notes a correlation between the size of the workforce and the average number of days lost per employee (see figures below).

Figure 25: Average number of days lost per employee per year, by sector (5% trimmed mean)



\* 5% trimmed mean.

\*\* Data collected in October/November 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK.

Base: 290 (2023); 365 (2020); 446 (2019); 443 (2018); 736 (2016); 396 (2015); 342 (2014); 393 (2013); 498 (2012); 403 (2011).



Figure 26: The effect of workforce size on absence levels



### 3.3 Progress Update

- 3.3.1 To address absence within the services, interventions have been developed in conjunction with colleagues in People and Citizen Services (P&CS) to better support operational services to manage absences. The Absence Improvement Project, in particular, aimed to reduce the number of absences through several key actions implemented around October 2023 including: targeted intervention to ‘hot spot’ services where recorded absence was notably higher than average; a [Sickness Absence Toolkit](#) was launched to support managers in managing sickness absence; a data cleansing exercise was undertaken to improve reporting; and development of notifications were implemented to improve the quality of absence reporting and to monitor the impact of interventions.
- 3.3.2 Operational Management in each service, with assistance from P&CS, focused on cases with the highest absence figures. The services developed individual plans to reduce the number of cases in each of the service areas. The services consistently followed the “Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy” and put in supportive approaches, such as referral to Occupational Health, and wider communication of the “Employee Assistance Programme” (EAP) to enable employees to return to work, where possible.
- 3.3.3 Within these Services there has been a particular focus on staff absence and performance for the last 9 months. Services have worked closely with the P&CS teams and in some instances worked through each staff absence line by line. The original priority was a focus on the highest long term sickness cases, with a particular aim of getting employees back to work wherever possible, but this has now moved to a more holistic approach to tackling all staff absence and supporting staff with their health and wellbeing at work.
- 3.3.4 This original management focus has seen the services work through, stage by stage, the Council’s Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy and applying the policy to each, very different, staff absence, which in some cases, can take several months. Services have ensured that meetings and the process have been followed in a very timely and proper manner. For example, within Environment, this included weekly sessions with the Employee Relations Casework Lead initially, to ensure the management team were coached and fully confident in following all process and procedures,

considering and implementing individually tailored options correctly and consistently, while taking a supportive and positive approach to absence management.

3.3.5 The work involved has been very challenging, but it has seen significant improvement in the services' absence figures. Wherever possible, services have managed and supported employees back to work, but where necessary also have followed the policy through to conclusion.

3.3.6 Other measures services have taken to reduce absence include –

- Carrying out regular Toolbox Talks
- Investigating all accidents and incidents.
- Reviewing risk assessments.
- Share with staff all updates on health and wellbeing initiatives and campaigns.
- Regular meetings with management and Trade Union colleagues to discuss health and safety and any other staff concerns.
- A tailored solutions based approach to enable employees to return to work, utilising options such as physiotherapy, phased return and temporary adjustments to duties, or where necessary, redeployment.

3.3.7 In partnership with colleagues in People and Citizen Services (P&CS), each of the Service Managers have ensured that their team have the correct skills and knowledge in the use of the interventions / procedures to be able to sustain this work. The service managers have worked with their respective teams to ensure that, moving forward, the use of these interventions / procedures is continued.

3.3.8 In October 2023, the Waste service held a Health and Wellbeing Roadshow at Altens, promoting mental health, men's health and healthy eating and physical wellbeing assessments were offered on the day. The Council's Employee Assistance Programme was promoted, in particular, with assistance also provided to assist staff in accessing employee benefits more generally. The event was attended by external partners to promote wellbeing and was also supported and promoted by Trade Union colleagues. The roadshow was undertaken as a pilot project and feedback following the event was extremely positive from staff, managers and Trade Union representatives who attended. Building on the success of the roadshow, it is planned to roll this out to other locations.

# Benefits and Wellbeing Roadshow

*Celebrating World Mental Health Day  
'Mental Health is a universal human right'*

Come along and hear about our employee wellbeing and benefits opportunities available to you.

**1.00 pm to 3.00 pm**  
**Tuesday 10 October 2023**  
**Altens East Depot, Portacabins**



3.3.9 P&CS have been working directly with Operations SMT and with Trade Union colleagues to understand barriers to communication, engagement and development for colleagues in frontline operational services. The key issues include a lack of digital skills to access information available online, lack of available technology or opportunity as part of their role to access information, and challenges with log-ins. Together, they are working together to develop a Frontline Communication Action Plan, which has a multifaceted approach to improving access to information and opportunities. Key successes so far include a Frontline Newsletter for Building Services, which includes local news and success stories provided by Building Services, and corporate initiatives, such as support for mental and physical health and wellbeing, health and safety, and the Employee Assistance Programme. The team built on this model to raise awareness and provide opportunities for input to the organisational restructure, with a 'Transformation Special – Frontline

Newsletter' which was issued to managers in all frontline operational areas. It is intended to continue building on this approach in future.

3.3.10 The work from the teams within the services to improve absence figures has been well received and everyone in the services has seen a benefit. It is appreciated that any ongoing measures are not a short term fix, and the work will continue to ensure there is continuous and sustained improvement, continuing to utilise the support provided by P&CS. The teams will continue to take a fully holistic approach in managing absence by planning and managing each service's staff absence and performance in line with corporate people policies, be supportive and flexible in their approach, and continue to promote and ensure staff are informed about and encouraged to engage with health and wellbeing initiatives and support programmes in place.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Financial implications of sickness absence rates include costs incurred for salary or sick pay for absent employees and additional costs incurred for temporary cover. Financial impact will reduce as a result of decreasing long term sickness cases across all three operational services.

4.2 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). Changes in the Sentencing and Fines Guidance for health and safety non-compliances are resulting in increased financial penalties.

#### **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.

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None

## 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?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	Service disruption or failure where absence levels are persistently high.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	Failure to meet a service's statutory duties. Failure to comply with H&S legislation can lead to enforcement by HSE.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	M	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Service disruption or failure where absence levels are persistently high.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	Costs incurred for salary or sick pay for absent workers and additional costs for temporary cover.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	M	Yes

	Failure to comply with H&S legislation can lead to enforcement by HSE.			
<b>Reputational</b>	Failure to deliver service standards.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	Failure to deliver waste and environmental services resulting in overflowing bins and increased litter.	Management of absences using the Supporting Attendance Policy and supporting health and wellbeing of staff. Data capture and reporting to monitor trends and improvements.	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <u><a href="#">Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</a></u>	Delivery of vital local services on which people depend.
<u><a href="#">Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u>	

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	No assessment is required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Mark Reilly, Chief Officer, Operations and Protective Services, on 21/05/2024.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

### 10.1 [Net Zero, Environment & Transport Performance Report – COM/24/088](#)

- [Performance report appendix](#)

### 10.2 [CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2023](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 - Monthly Number of Short and Long Term Absences for the period April 2023 to April 2024.

11.2 Appendix 2 - Monthly Days Lost Per FTE for the Period April 2023 to April 2024.

11.3 Appendix 3 – Absence Reasons the period April 2023 to April 2024.

11.4 Appendix 4 – Current 12 Month Rolling Averages for the period April 2023 to April 2024.

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Martina Klubal
<b>Title</b>	Acting Waste Resources Manager
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<b>Title</b>	Employee Relations Casework lead
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<b>Tel</b>	01224 067405

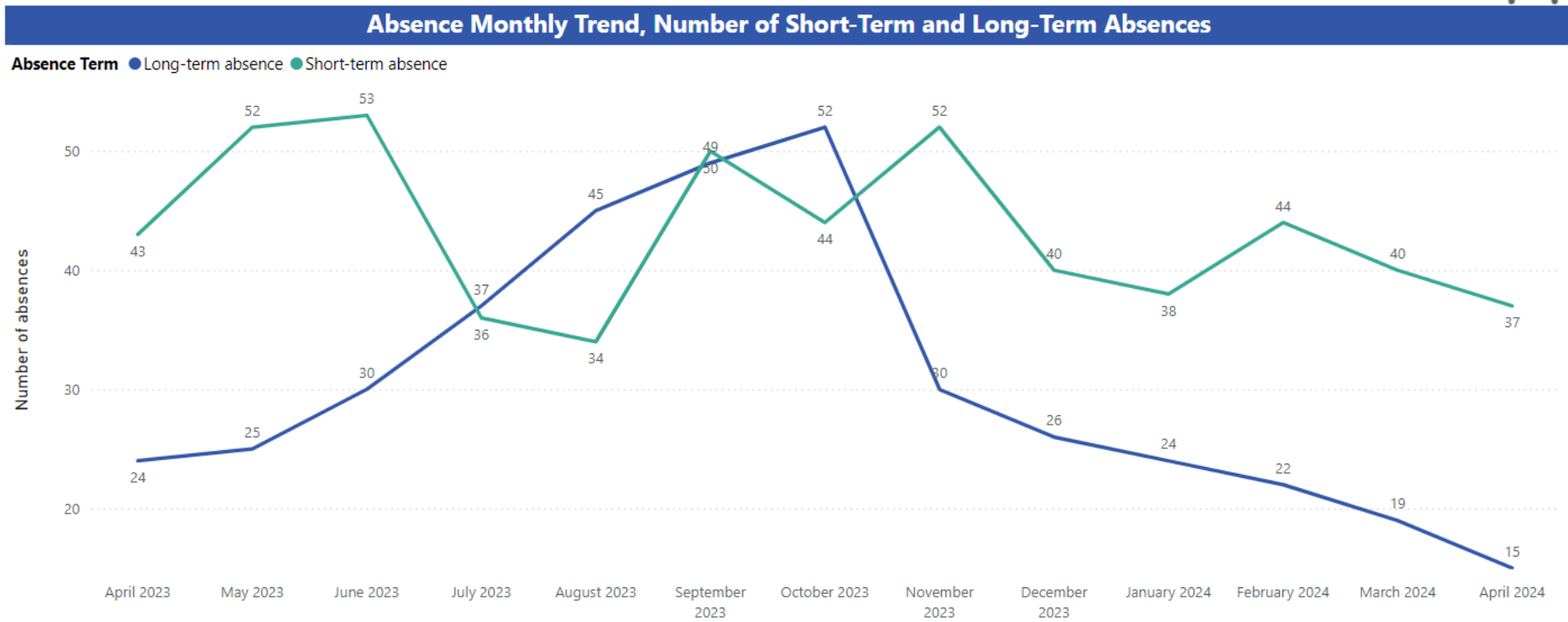
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**Appendix 1 - Monthly Number of Short and Long Term Absences for the Period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Sickness Absence Trends for Environmental Services, Roads & Infrastructure Services, and Waste Service for the period April 2023 to April 2024**

**Environmental Services**

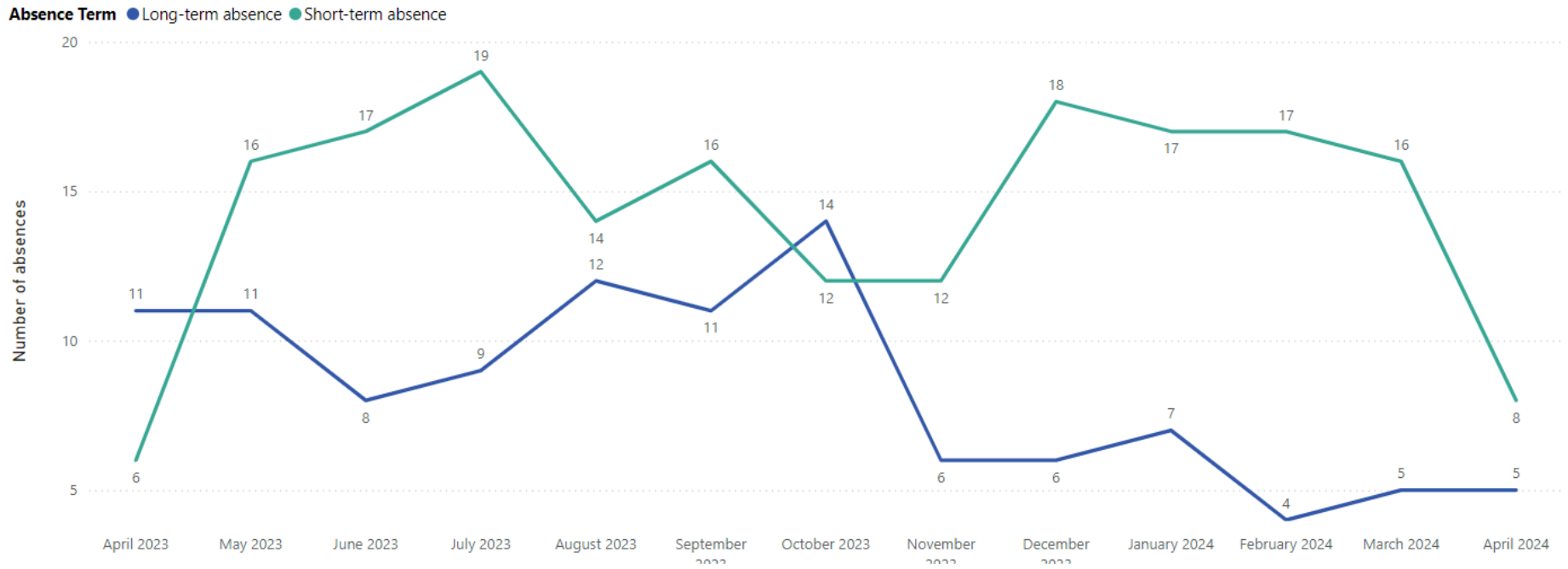


*These graphs show the number of people absent in each month due to short term absence (up to 23 working days) and long term absence (more than 23 working days)*

**Appendix 1 - Monthly Number of Short and Long Term Absences for the Period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Roads & Infrastructure Services**

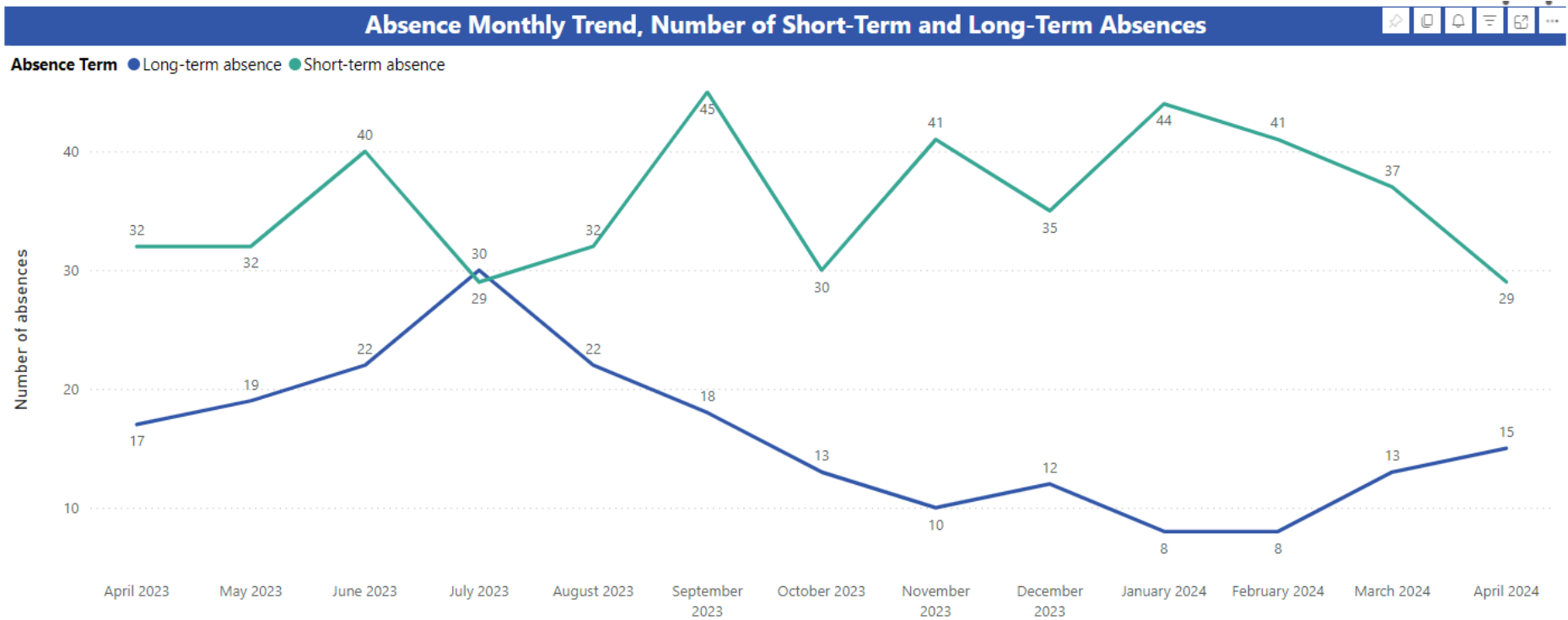
**Absence Monthly Trend, Number of Short-Term and Long-Term Absences**



*These graphs show the number of people absent in each month due to short term absence (up to 23 working days) and long term absence (more than 23 working days)*

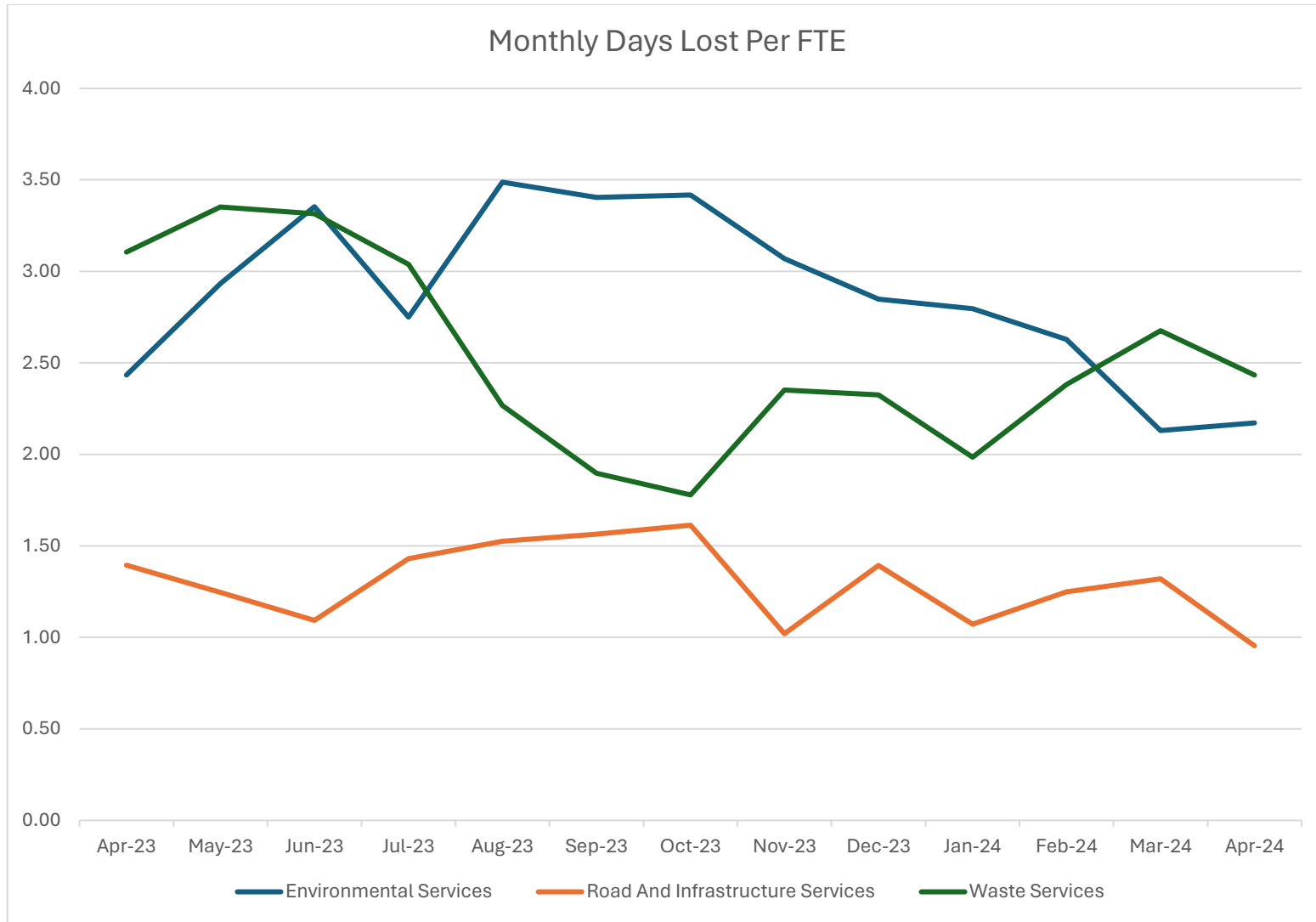
**Appendix 1 - Monthly Number of Short and Long Term Absences for the Period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Waste Services**



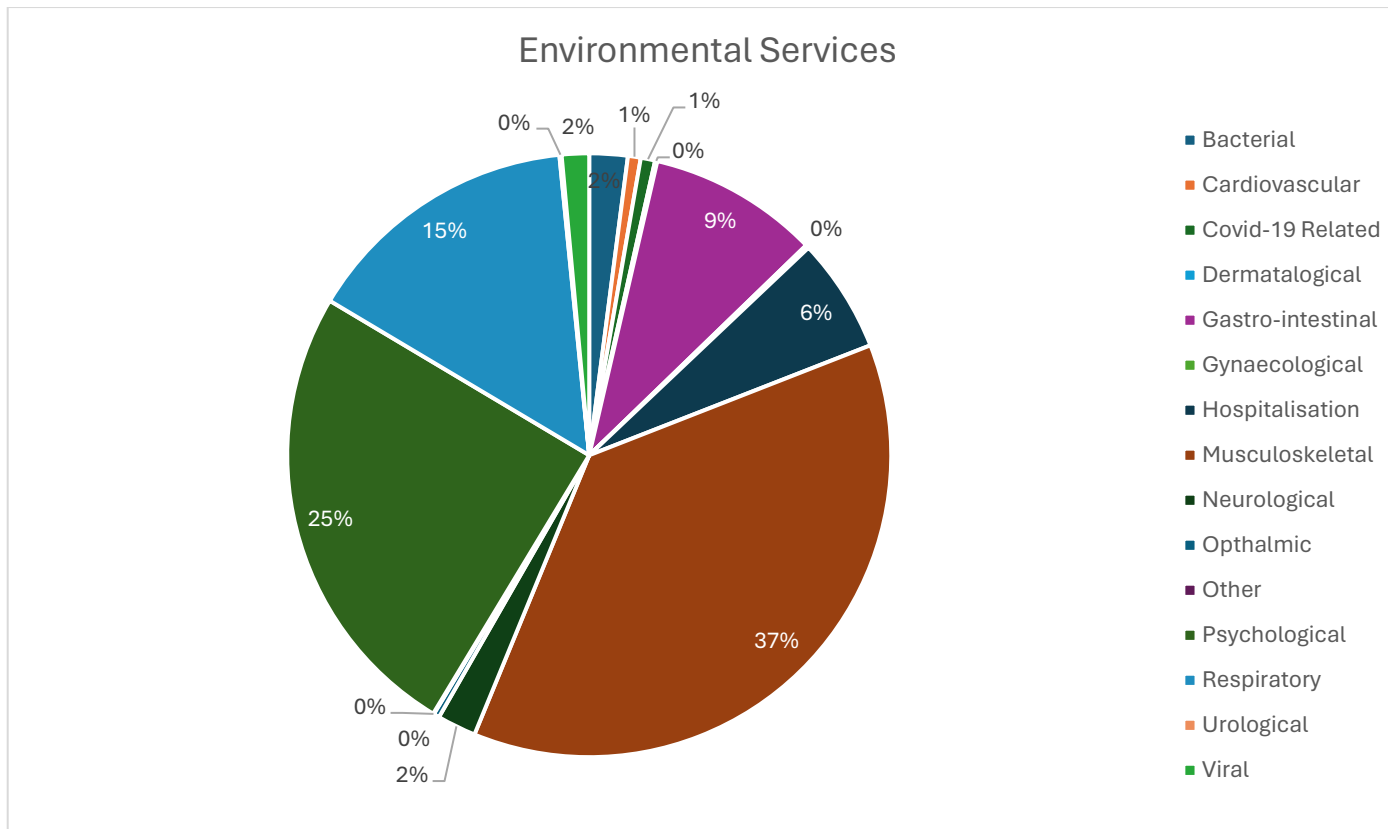
*These graphs show the number of people absent in each month due to short term absence (up to 23 working days) and long term absence (more than 23 working days)*

**Appendix 2 - Monthly Days Lost Per FTE for the Period April 2023 to April 2024.**



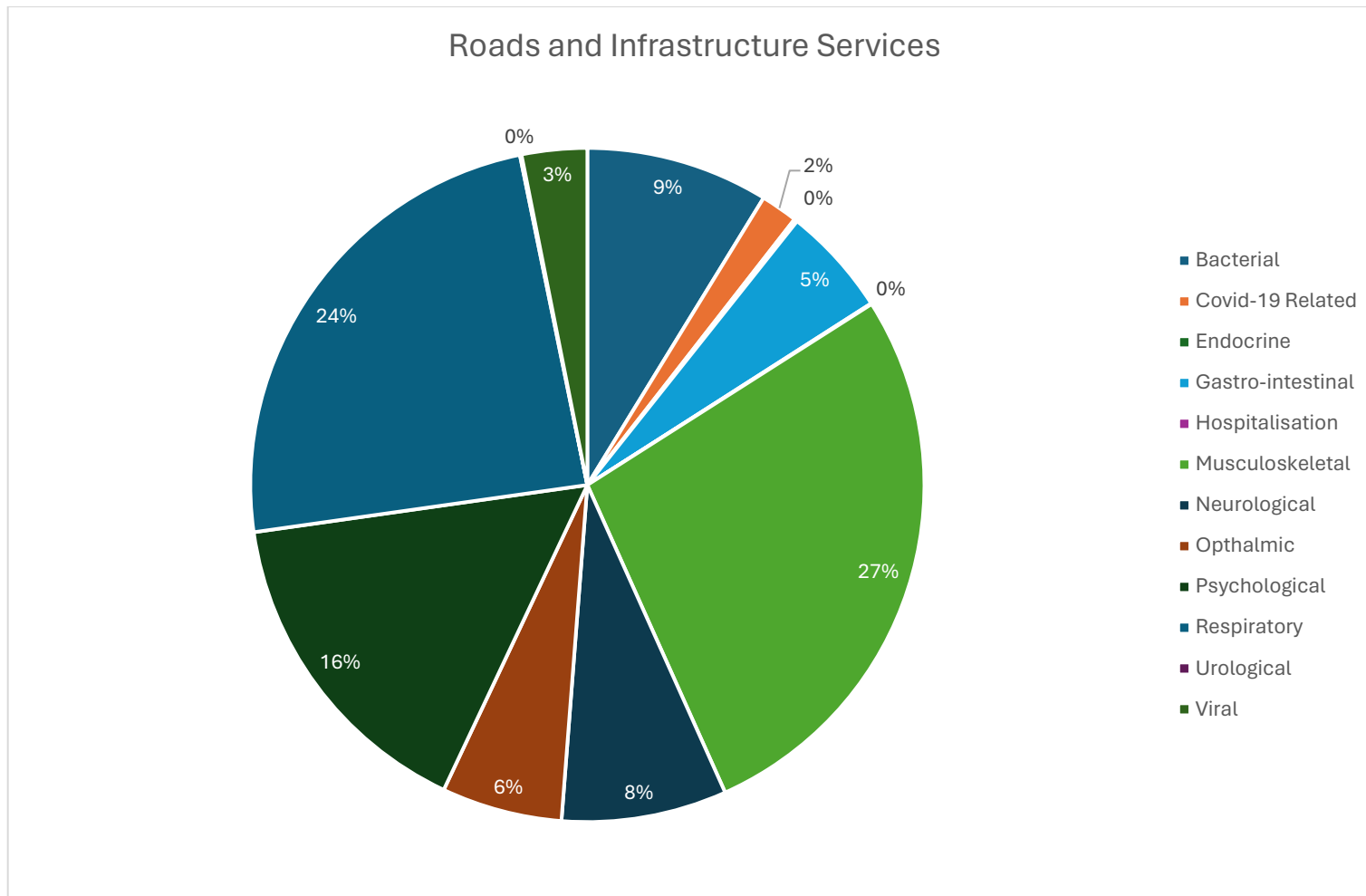
*This graph show the number of days lost in each month due to absence per FTE (i.e. the total number of days lost divided by the total FTE for each service)*

**Appendix 3 – Absence Reasons the period April 2023 to April 2024.**



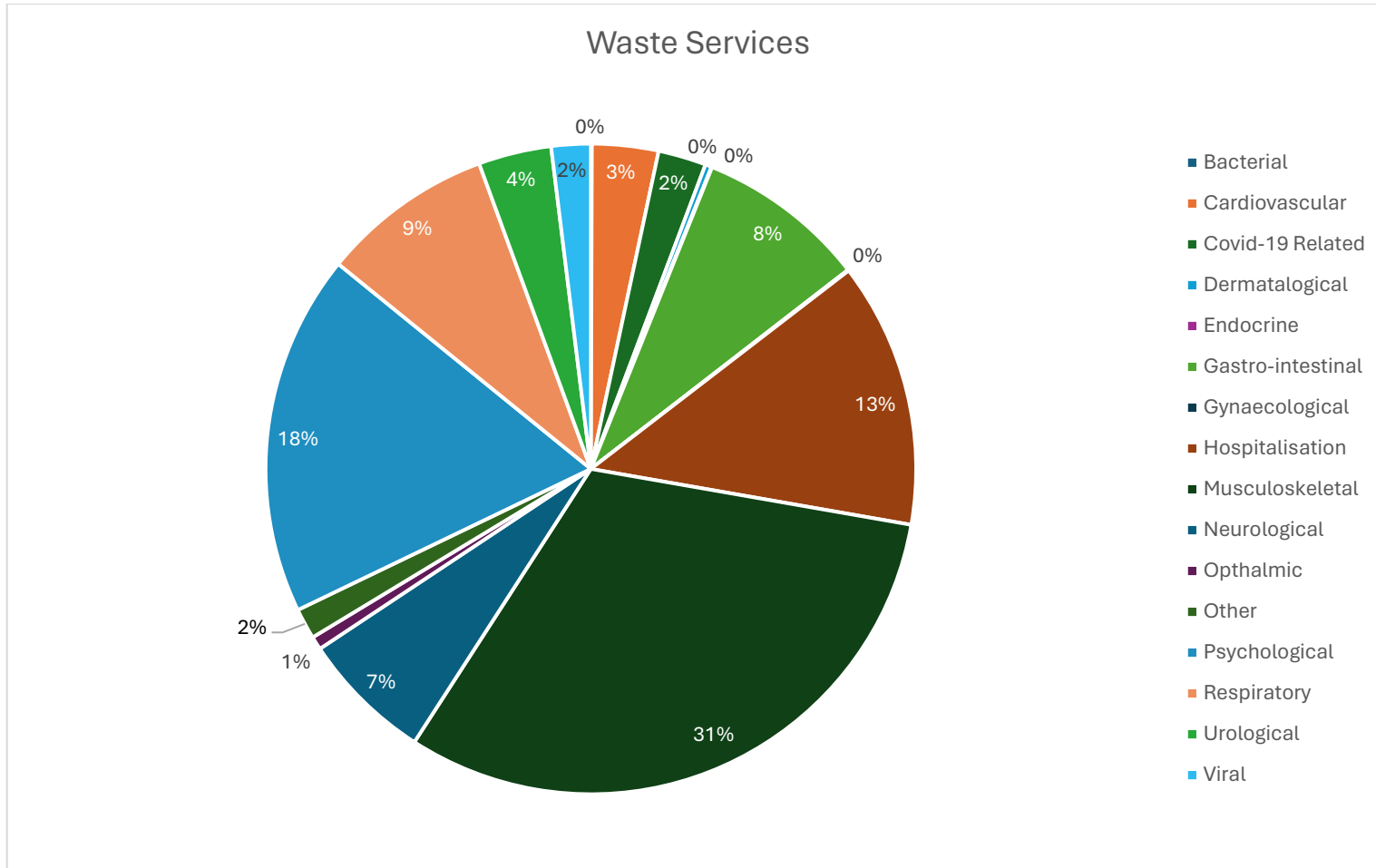
*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*

**Appendix 3 – Absence Reasons the period April 2023 to April 2024.**



*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*

**Appendix 3 – Absence Reasons the period April 2023 to April 2024.**

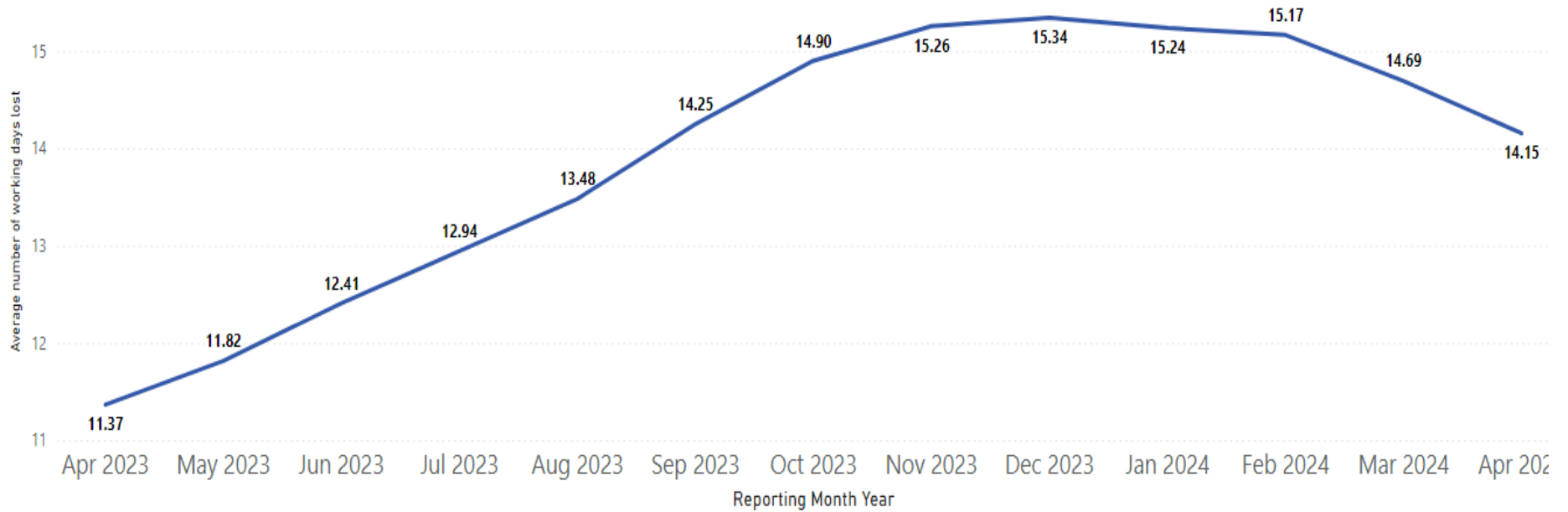


*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*

**Appendix 4 – Current 12 Month Rolling Averages for the period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Environmental Services**

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



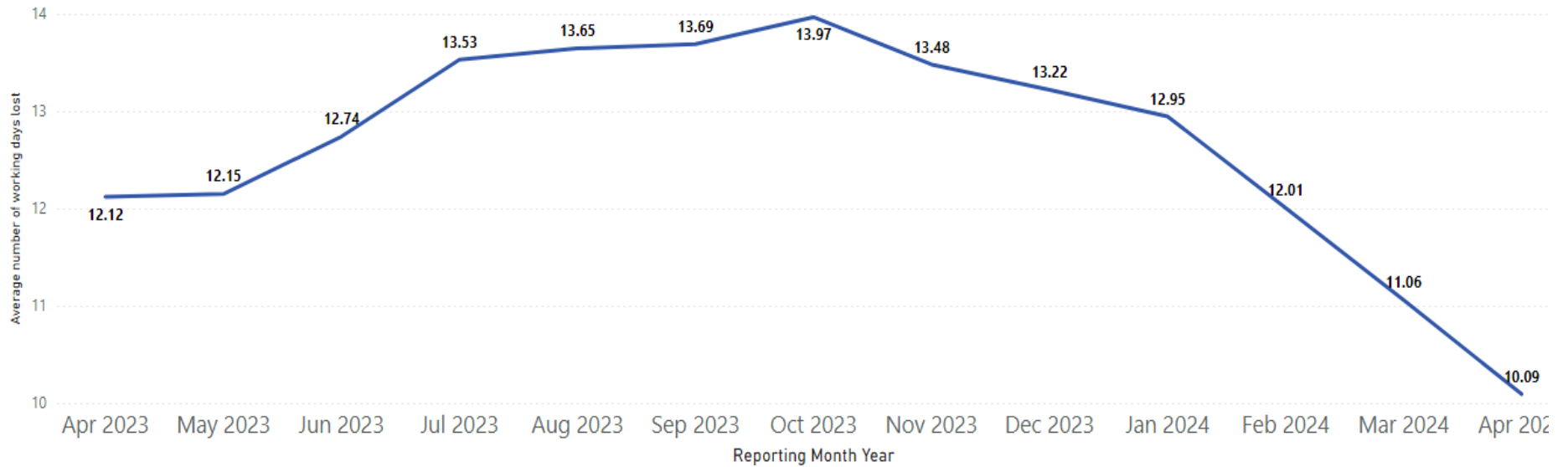
*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*



**Appendix 4 – Current 12 Month Rolling Averages for the period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Roads & Infrastructure Services**

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

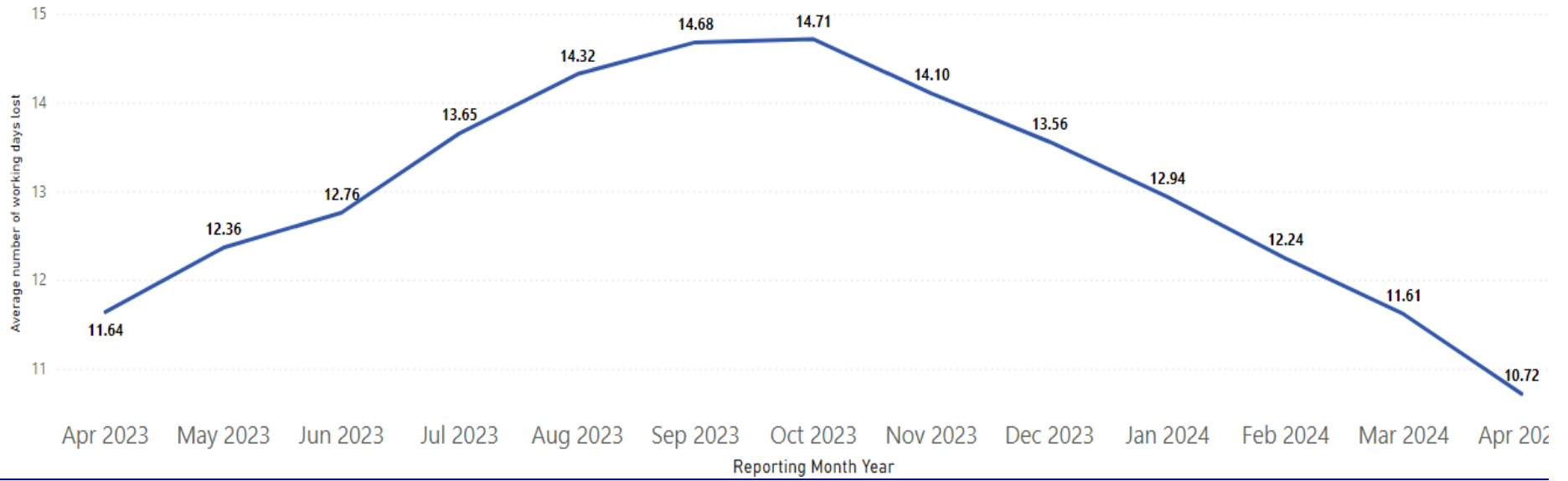


*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*

**Appendix 4 – Current 12 Month Rolling Averages for the period April 2023 to April 2024.**

**Waste Services**

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



*These charts show the reasons for absence as a percentage of the number of days lost for each service for the period April 2023-April 2024*

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance
<b>DATE</b>	26 June 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Employee Mental Health Action Plan Annual Progress Update
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CORS/24/184
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Sandie Scott
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	3.2iii

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present committee with the updated Mental Health Action Plan for 2024, which aligns with our Workforce Delivery Plan and our approved approach to culture change.
- 1.2 To update Committee on progress and activity from January 2023 to December 2023, towards our Employee Mental Health Action Plan.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

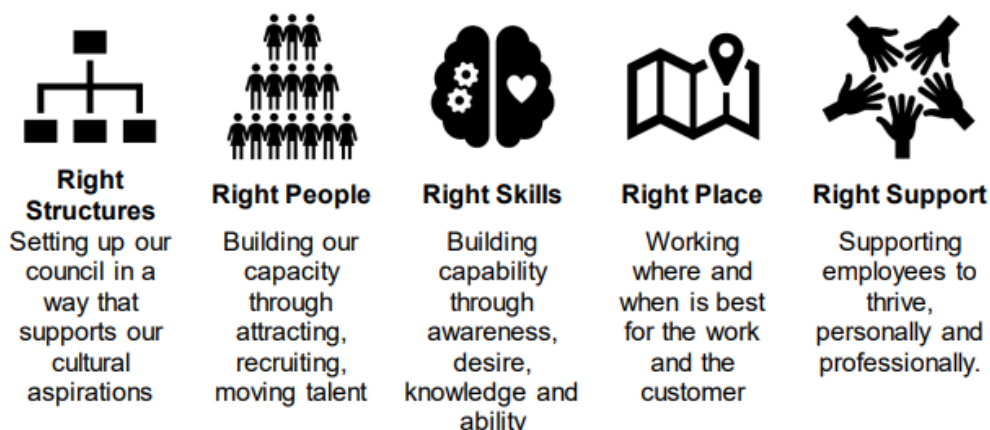
- 2.1 Notes the continuing progress made on our Mental Health Action Plan and the proactive actions taken to address and support positive employee mental health during the last 12 months.
- 2.2 Approves the updated Mental Health Action Plan for 2024.

### 3 CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 In [January 2019](#), Committee approved the Mental Health Action Plan.
- 3.1.2 Reports to the Staff Governance Committee in [February 2020](#), [June 2021](#), [February 2022](#) and [June 2023](#) provided updates on progress made towards the plan.
- 3.1.3 In January 2023, Committee approved the [Workforce Delivery Plan](#), which set out the detail for delivery of the workforce strategy aspect of the transformation programme.

3.1.4 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.



3.1.5 This paper addresses the fifth lever, Right Support, and specifically presents a refreshed and updated Mental Health Action Plan to set out our priorities to deliver two of the strategic objectives listed in the Workforce Delivery Plan:

3.1.5.1 Aberdeen City Council is a supportive and caring employer that provides a range of mental health and wellbeing interventions and support; supports staff through the cost of living crisis; recognises and supports work/life balance.

3.1.5.2 Reduce absence levels across the organisation and ensure employees are supported through a range of resources and interventions to remain in work or return to work, whenever possible and that is beneficial to them; allowing support to be targeted to the areas of highest need.

3.1.6 Aberdeen City Council continues to hold mental health and wellbeing among its top priorities for the city and this can be seen outlined in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026. The value of mirroring this commitment internally for our employees is vital to ensuring the right support is in place to deliver the Council's vision for Aberdeen as a place where everyone can prosper.

3.1.7 These programmes of work are well underway, and this report provides an update on the ongoing progress made between January 2023 and December 2023.

## 3.2 National Context

3.2.1 The Scottish Government continue to place Mental Health and Wellbeing at the centre of their Programme for Government – and in November 2023 published their Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan 2023 – 25, which highlights the importance of local authorities in promoting mental health and wellbeing within their communities and implementing strategies and initiatives to address mental health stigma, provide support in educational and workplace settings, and enhance crisis support services.

3.2.2 To achieve the outcomes of the Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy the key areas of focus are to:

- **Promote** positive mental health and wellbeing for the whole population, improving understanding and tackling stigma, inequality and discrimination.
- **Prevent** mental health issues occurring or escalating and tackle underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible; and
- **Provide** mental health and wellbeing support and care, ensuring people and communities can access the right information, skills, services and opportunities in the right place at the right time, using a person-centred approach.

3.2.3 Internally, we have aligned and embedded these three key areas of focus within our own Mental Health Action Plan as follows:

- **Promote** mental health and wellbeing for the whole organisation through a renewed focus on communications campaigns (including events) to raise awareness of these tools and a platform that is easily accessible (see **Workstream 2** of the Mental Health Action Plan 2024).
- **Prevent** mental health issues occurring or escalating through a focus on self-help tools and resources that empower employees to support their own health and wellbeing (see **Workstream 1**) and training for employees so that they have the skills to manage their own wellbeing and support their colleagues (see **Workstream 3**); and tackling underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible through data reporting to target interventions proactively to areas of highest need (**See Workstream 6**)
- **Provide** mental health and wellbeing support and care through our Managers supporting their teams confidently and appropriately (see **Workstream 5**); through a person-centred approach to mental health and wellbeing support by focusing on employee engagement, empowerment and co-creation (see **Workstream 4**).

3.2.4 [Audit Scotland's 2023 Local Government Overview](#) notes that councils have never faced such a challenging situation. Service demands have increased after the Covid-19 pandemic and funding is forecast to reduce in real terms. Workforce pressures have increased due to a competitive labour market, employee retention and high sickness absence levels are putting councils under continued pressure. They conclude that wellbeing initiatives must continue, and councils should monitor the impact of new ways of working such as hybrid working on both performance levels and staff wellbeing.

3.2.5 New figures revealed in November 2023 by a [Mental Health Foundation](#) poll of 5000 UK adults shows that 'cost-of-living is still causing widespread mental distress'.

- Almost one third (31%) of UK adults have felt anxious in the past month due to their personal financial situation.
- More than one quarter (27%) felt stressed in the past month due to their personal financial situation.

- Almost one in ten (9%) felt hopeless in the past month due to their personal financial situation.
- Adults in the lowest socioeconomic groups (DE) were much more likely than those in the highest (AB) to report feeling anxious (37% v 24%), stressed (33% v 21%) or hopeless (14% v 6%) about their financial situation.

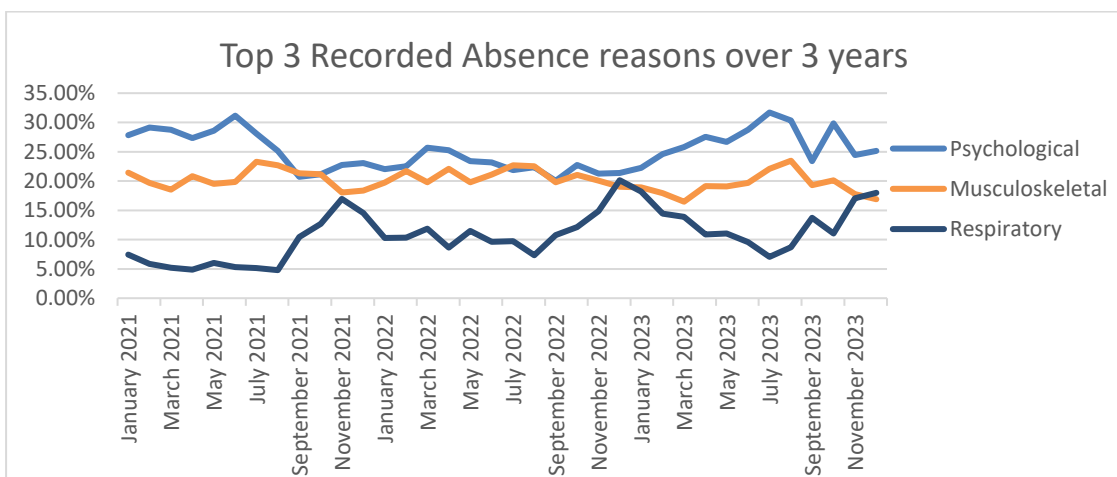
3.2.6 These figures have not changed significantly since November 2022 when the Mental Health Foundation surveyed the nation about the mental health impacts of the rising cost of living – and found financial strain and poverty to be key drivers of poor mental health.

3.2.7 A new survey by the CIPD and Simplyhealth, show that stress is found to be a significant factor for both short- and long-term absence, with over 76% of respondents reporting stress-related absence in their organisation in the past year. Heavy workloads remain by far the most common cause of stress-related absence (67%), followed by management style (37%).

3.2.8 [Personnel Today](#) stated that UK employees were absent for 7.8 days on average over the past year, the highest level reported in over a decade and two days more than the pre-pandemic sickness absence rate of 5.8 days.

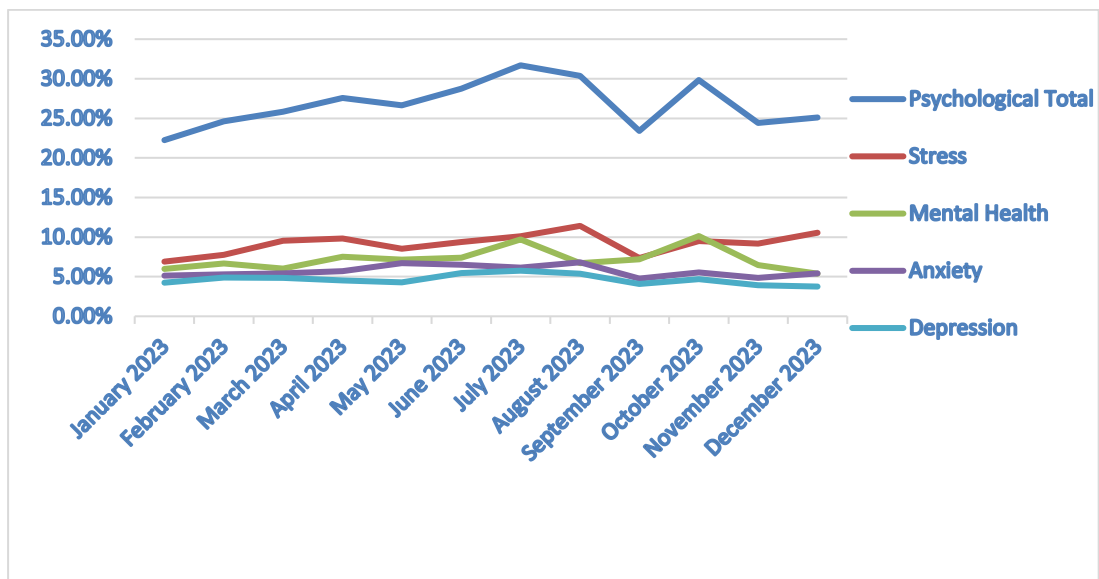
### 3.3 Local Context: Absence Data

3.3.1 The data on employee absences from January 2023 to December 2023 shows that psychological absence - which includes anxiety, depression, mental health, work-related stress and personal stress - is still one of the three most common reasons for absence reported - and this has not changed in the past 3 years (the others being musculoskeletal and respiratory illnesses).



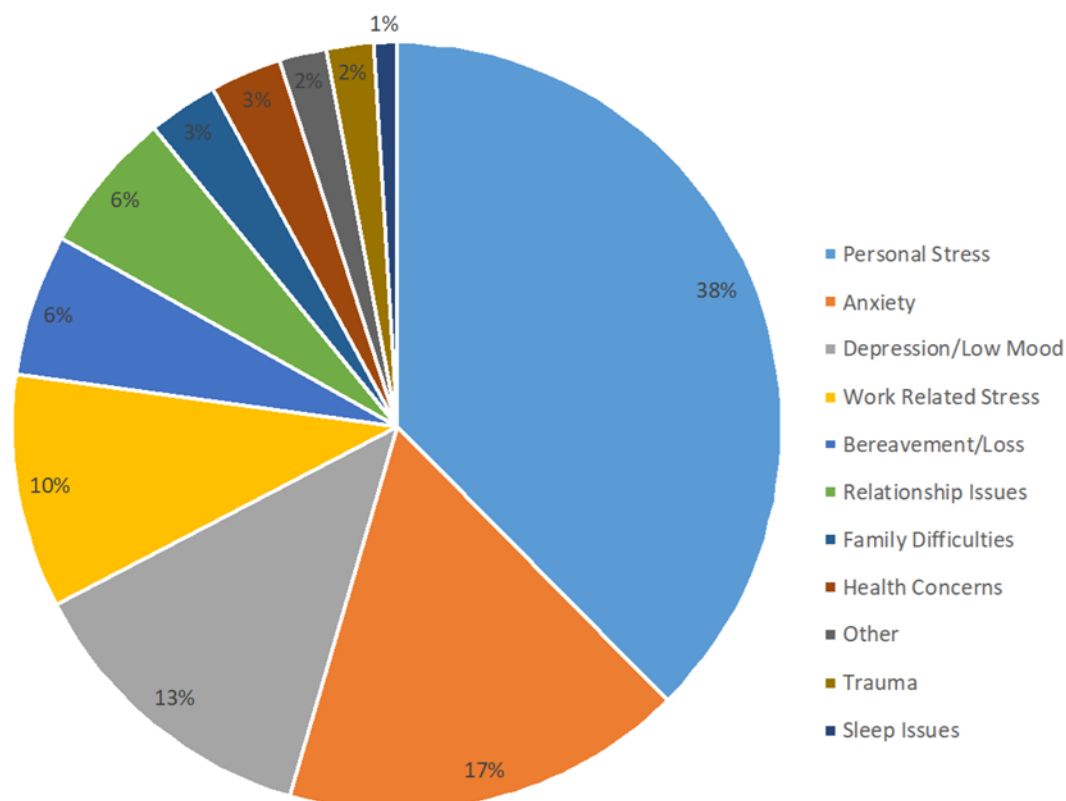
3.3.2 Psychological absence accounts for an average of 26.71% of all absences in 2023. This is an increase from 22.64% in 2022 and a return to the average of 26.14% in the pandemic year of 2021. This is consistent with national findings.

3.3.3 The graph below shows a breakdown of the different subcategories of psychological absences in 2023. This shows that stress was the main reason for psychological absences in 2023, while depression was the least common reason.



3.3.4 In addition to our absence data showing that stress is the most common reason for psychological absence in 2023, we also find that stress is the most common reason for referrals to our Employee Assistance Programme. As reported in EAS Annual Progress Update Occupational Health and Absence Annual Update January 2023 – December 2023 – stress accounts for 38% of referrals, anxiety accounts for 17% of referrals, and depression accounts for 13%.

## Referral Reason to Employee Assistance Provider January 2023 - December 2024



Please note the figures above total 101% due to numbers being rounded up.

3.3.5 This local picture is consistent with the national findings and concurs that stress is currently the top cause of absence across the country, which has been exacerbated by the cost of living crisis and financial worries.

### 3.4 Local Context: Employee Voice

3.4.1 In winter 2023 a council-wide 'Wellbeing Pulse Check' survey was trialled. The purpose of this survey was to build on previous feedback gathered through focus groups in 2022, gain insights into the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce, and identify hot spots and trends to inform priority areas for the Mental Health Action Plan in the year ahead.

3.4.2 The results of this were comprehensively reported in a report to [Staff Governance Committee in January 2024](#) – with a commitment to repeat the survey with further communications and engagement later in Spring 2024. To allow time for the new priority actions set out in the refreshed Mental Health Action Plan 2024 to fully embed and have an impact, it is now planned to undertake this follow-up survey annually, with the results informing the Mental Health Action Plan update for 2025. Therefore, the next all employee Wellbeing Pulse Check will take place in November/December 2024.

3.4.3 A summary of the key findings from the survey are as follows:



- 52.5% of respondents feel comfortable talking about mental health at work.
- 63% feel that their manager supports them to maintain positive wellbeing.
- 66% are aware of the Employee Assistance Programme and know how to access this.
- 58.4% are aware of the Mental Health First Aiders network and know how to access it.
- 62.1% of respondents were unaware of the 'Your Care' proactive wellbeing platform and how to access it.

- 3.4.4 The response rate for this survey was low compared to other similar staff surveys - at only 2% of the workforce, but that there was a wide range of responses from across all our Job Families and Clusters. It is positive to note the encouraging trend of these results, whilst also acknowledging that there is still a significant distance to travel to achieve our strategic outcomes. And if the results show that even one employee was not aware of mental health and wellbeing support freely available, then this means that additional communication and promotion is required. Our intended outcome is for our programme of support and tools to be easily accessible to **all staff**. This aligns to the wider Scottish Government initiative for resources to be easily available to all.
- 3.4.5 Regular consultation and open dialogue with our Trade Union colleagues has supported us to improve our communication and engagement campaigns and deliver on several major wellbeing initiatives over the period January 2023 to December 2023. This includes the implementation and delivery of our wellbeing roadshows for frontline employees and the rollout of our corporate approach to Reasonable Adjustment Passports. This close working partnership is key to us delivering targeted support exactly where it is required.
- 3.4.6 It is evident from surveys undertaken by our trade union colleagues that there is a need for increased awareness raising campaigns in Housing around the service available from our Mental Health First Aiders and the Employee Assistance Programme.
- 3.4.7 It is important for us to take action to reduce levels of psychological absence because of its impact on the quality and continuity of service delivery, and the morale and productivity of staff. It can also lead to significant increased costs for the council, such as sick pay, overtime, agency use, training, and legal fees, at a time when that could be invested in other areas of service delivery or staff development.
- 3.4.8 Therefore, a renewed focus on the mental health and wellbeing of staff, and the need to reduce the level of psychological absence, remains a top priority for the year ahead. This can be achieved by implementing effective policies and interventions that aim to address the causes and consequences of stress and other psychological conditions; and a proactive and holistic approach to

wellbeing, inclusive of financial wellbeing. This is reflected and presented in our updated Mental Health Action Plan for 2024.

### **3.5 Refreshed Mental Health Action Plan**

3.5.1 To address the two strategic objectives set out in the Workforce Delivery Plan under 'Right Support' and 3.1.5 above, six updated workstreams are proposed for our refreshed Mental Health Action Plan for 2024. Based on the findings identified through the local context data set out above, a new set of priorities are identified for 2024. A detailed report of the activity undertaken and delivered during 2023 under the workstreams is available in Appendix 1.

### 3.5.2 Mental Health Action Plan 2024 – The Workstreams

Workstream	Priorities for the year ahead
<b>1: Self-help tools and resources that empower employees to support their own health and wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch the YourCare portal available through VIVUP and deliver awareness raising campaign.</li> <li>• Review and evaluate partnership with SportAberdeen to explore next steps for scaling out physical wellbeing health checks.</li> </ul>
<b>2: Communications campaigns (inc. events) that raise awareness of these tools and a platform that is easily accessible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure coverage of all communications campaigns includes physical campaigns and Viva Engage to be inclusive and accessible for frontline colleagues and break down the stigma of mental health.</li> <li>• 95% of employees are aware of the ACC Employee Assistance Provider Vivup – and how to access it.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 50% of employees are aware of the YourCare platform available as part of Vivup.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 95% of employees are aware of Mental Health First Aiders</li> <li>• 75% of employees are aware of Reasonable Adjustment Passports</li> <li>• 75% of employees are aware of Able Futures to help employees living with mental health to stay in work.</li> <li>• 75% of employees are aware of Wellness Action Plans.</li> <li>• Support staff through cost of living crisis by developing closer working partnership with Financial Inclusion team to promote information and advice to the organisation internally.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of Employee Benefits opportunities and promote potential savings, focus on financial wellbeing to support people through the cost of living crisis.</li> <li>• Deliver a communications campaign to raise awareness of proposed Zero Tolerance campaign – to support frontline colleagues facing violence and aggression in the workplace, ensure they are aware of policies and procedures to support them and report incidents.</li> <li>• Deliver communication campaign that raises awareness of Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Hub and resources, aligns with national wellbeing campaigns, and normalises talking about mental health at work.</li> <li>• Increase focus on physical health and wellbeing to address post-pandemic home-working culture.</li> <li>• Information to signpost employees to various bereavement support services, policies and external organisations to better support the workforce in times of grief.</li> </ul>
<b>3: Training for employees so that they have the skills to manage their own wellbeing and support their colleagues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for frontline employees in preventing violence and aggression – including how to de-escalate possible disputes, manage their emotions and keep themselves and others safe.</li> <li>• Provide training for employees on how to manage their own resilience and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Provide employees with the skills to support their peers colleagues with their mental health, tackle the stigma of mental health, and build confidence to have conversations around suicide.</li> <li>• Provide employees with skills to support women at work going through the menopause.</li> <li>• Provide employees with the skills to support their colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure employees are 'Trauma Informed' so that they know how to support their colleagues and customers who have experienced trauma.</li> </ul>
<b>4: Employee engagement, empowerment and co-creation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with frontline employees to co-create the new Zero Tolerance policy and guidance – ensuring steps are in place to protect their wellbeing during and after violent or aggressive incidents.</li> <li>• Undertake employee engagement with Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) and other Equality Working Groups to understand needs of protected groups and improve accessibility and shape future wellbeing initiatives.</li> <li>• Increase number of Mental Health First Aiders to reach target of 2.5% coverage across organisation.</li> <li>• Deliver additional Continuous Professional Development and support for Mental Health First Aiders</li> <li>• Introduce a more formal method of supervision by way of 1-2-1 meetings with MHFAs across the organisation.</li> <li>• Upskill, develop and motivate current support MHFA through peer sessions and one-to one for debriefing and sharing best practice.</li> <li>• Employee engagement and inclusive groups to drive and shape initiatives - focus groups and networks to gather additional anecdotal feedback and needs and priorities.</li> </ul>
<b>5: Managers support their teams confidently and appropriately</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procure and/or deliver training for managers in frontline areas to upskill them in debriefing individuals and teams after incidents of violence, aggression or trauma.</li> <li>• 100% of managers are aware of Wellness Action Plans as part of their absence management practice.</li> <li>• 100% of managers are aware of Reasonable Adjustment Passports</li> <li>• 100% of managers are aware of Stress Risk Assessments for individuals and teams.</li> <li>• 100% of managers have completed the mandatory Mental Health eLearning.</li> <li>• 100% of managers have a wellbeing conversation with their employees every year.</li> <li>• 100% of Service Managers have undertaken Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness for managers and Supervisors.</li> <li>• Build an Employee Wellbeing section on templates for 1-2-1s as part of Continuous Review &amp; Development conversations.</li> <li>• Upskill managers to have the confidence to support and have conversations with staff about their mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Coach and support managers directly.</li> </ul>
<b>6: Data reporting to understand underlying causes, adversities and inequalities and target</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat Wellbeing Pulse Check in Autumn 2024 to gather feedback on success of above initiatives.</li> <li>• Target initiatives based on the data gathered from various systems, surveys, Core HR, focus groups and anecdotal feedback gathered.</li> <li>• Continuous review of Mental Health First Aiders network to ensure wide coverage and target areas for increased representation.</li> </ul>

**interventions proactively to areas of highest need.**

- MHFA Recording Tool – encourage recording of interactions to show the demand on the network and help build data trends on where staff are contacting from and the underlying reasons.
- Evaluate the impact of Mental Health & Wellbeing now being part of the employee capability framework and appraisal – evolve to respond to feedback.
- Attend Health and Safety Committee Groups and SMTs to discuss data and identify potential supports to be implements in targeted areas.
- Analyse and interrogate Power BI Absence data and use this information to target areas.
- Analyse data received from Employee Assistance Programme and use this to target areas of need.
- Analyse activity undertaken to support mental and physical health and wellbeing, and available data, to contribute towards Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Report 2024.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Mental health and wellbeing is increasingly becoming a core component of service delivery, linked to both staff retention and customer satisfaction. There is the potential to reduce direct and indirect costs in relation to sickness absence, low morale/engagement and increased turnover by supporting and promoting positive mental health. This can have a significant impact on Function / Cluster budgets.

#### 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) and 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; their 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.

#### 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from 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?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Compliance</b>	Compliance with legal requirements ensures the health and safety of employees	Actions outlined in the appendix provide additional support for employees.	M	<b>Yes</b>

<b>Operational</b>	No risks identified			
<b>Financial</b>	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	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Without ensuring suitable employee support there is a risk of the organisation not becoming an employer of choice and having recruitment and retention issues.	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	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified			

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</a></u>	
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>	
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.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	not required
<b>Other</b>	N/A

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Stress Statistics UK | 2023 Data | Champion Health
- 10.2 [Mental Health Foundation Survey and Research](#)
- 10.3 [Scottish Government Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan.](#)
- 10.4 [Simply Health | CIPD - Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2023](#)
- 10.5 [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016 - 2026](#)
- 10.6 [Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023 \(audit.scot\)](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Mental Health Action Plan Progress Report: January 2023 – December 2023

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix 1

**Mental Health Action Plan Progress Report: January 2023 – December 2023**

**Workstream 1: Self-help tools and resources that empower employees to support their own health and wellbeing.**

Improvement actions	Progress update - January 2023 – December 2023	Status
<p><b>1. Establish and build new partnership with Able Futures to help employees living with mental health to stay in work.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership established 2022 and continued to promote through 2023 - a great build on to the employee assistance service and good feedback received</li> </ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing</p>
<p><b>2. Establish Wellness Action Plans for employees to share with managers before there's a crisis</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellness action plans have been launched and an ACC template shared with managers looking to additionally support staff</li> </ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing</p>
<p><b>3. Embed Vivup as our new Employee Assistance Provider (EAP). Launch YourCare portal – a proactive wellbeing hub tailored to individual's experience.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vivup – new EAP – launched October 2022. Focus in 2023 was on a promotional campaign to raise awareness of new provider and the 24/7 service they provide to employees, including immediate crisis support.</li> <li>Intranet pages continually updated with regular reminders via blogs and Viva Engage posts.</li> <li>Poster campaign rolled out across entire council estate – including schools, depots, housing offices. All pigeonholes populated!</li> <li>Flyers and business cards promoting Vivup distributed to all desks within Marischal College.</li> <li>In-person roadshows delivered at Altens, at Cluster conferences.</li> <li>Virtual team meetings attended to promote services.</li> <li>Review progress and report uptake to Staff Governance Committee.</li> <li>YourCare portal launched – additional promotion required to embed in 2024.</li> </ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing</p>
<p><b>4. Establish partnership with Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Sports Village to support physical wellbeing initiatives.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procured 12 week physical wellbeing programme offered free to all employees across the organisation.</li> <li>Raised awareness through digital comms campaign and roadshows.</li> </ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing</p>

Improvement actions	Progress update - January 2023 – December 2023	Status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SportAberdeen delivered physical wellbeing health checks for frontline operational colleagues in portcabins at Altens depot. Very well received and appreciated by colleagues.</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Absence management letters to be amended so seen as more of a support than a punitive exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letters amended as part of Absence Improvement Project.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered
<b>6. Reasonable adjustment passports rolled out</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched and communicated to support employees with a variety of issues. Additional communication needed.</li> </ul>	Continue into 2024.
<b>7. Stress Risk Assessments – communicate and raise the awareness of the importance of these.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raised awareness and promoted Stress Risk Assessments via one-to-one coaching conversations with managers.</li> <li>Team Stress Risk Assessments utilised with Housing by Health &amp; Safety team.</li> <li>Additional promotion required.</li> </ul>	Continue into 2024.
<b>8. Embed Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing within the employee capability framework and appraisal.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with People Development to design suitable indicators for all Job Families. These are now embedded into all employee annual appraisals.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered

**Workstream 2: Communications campaigns (inc. events) to raise awareness of these tools and a platform that is easily accessible.**

Improvement actions	Progress update January 2023 – December 2023	Status
<b>1 Create a single accessible online Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub – as a one-stop-shop for all resources.</b>	Originally delivered 2019, significantly enhanced and promoted to support people during the pandemic in 2020, continuous improvement delivered to keep pace with evolutions in intranet.	Delivered and continuously improved
<b>2 Raise awareness of Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub through a regular programme of blogs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular communication campaigns around professional services available for support – see key topics for 2023 in table below.</li> <li>Viva Engage (previously Yammer) used to create Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing community specifically to promote campaigns.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

Improvement actions	Progress update January 2023 – December 2023	Status
<b>3 Target Frontline Operational Areas for communication and engagement to break down the stigma of mental health.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several roadshows delivered across frontline services including attending staff events and specifically organised wellbeing events.</li> <li>• Communications significantly increased this year using a variety of methods including poster and leaflet and social media campaigns to spread the word.</li> <li>• Significantly increased communication to frontline employees using their own Microsoft Teams sites and Viva Engage communities.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>4 Focus on financial wellbeing to support people through the cost of living crisis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information shared around Citizens Advice Bureau Debt Support team on Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Hub and via Viva Engage.</li> <li>• Financial Wellbeing intranet pages updated.</li> <li>• Additional work required in 2024 to support employees through continued cost of living crisis.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>5 Raise awareness of Mental Health First Aiders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical poster campaigns delivered to raise the profile of the MHFA and other support area and initiatives in outlying sites with details on how to get involved or contact.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>6 Align with national wellbeing campaigns (see list of campaigns below)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of messages have gone out this year using other platforms including social media for maximum reach. Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser present at various public events. Year of Disabled Worker, Children's Services Development Day to increase awareness of support and initiatives available to staff</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>7 Increase focus on physical health and wellbeing to address post-pandemic home-working culture.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered through partnership with SportAberdeen and physical wellbeing checks delivered at Altens. Potential for scaling out to other venues in 2024.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>8 Information to signpost employees to various bereavement support services, policies and external organisations to better support the workforce in times of grief.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to the loss of colleagues via tragic means in 2022-23, we increased focus on support available for employees affected by trauma and bereavement. Created specific, easy to find pages on the intranet relating to bereavement along with support services available, internal and external, with additional information signposting employees to external professional organisations.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

### Wellbeing Awareness Campaigns and Initiatives delivered – January 2023 – December 2023

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Initiatives promoted across the organisation

<b>Aberdeen Sports Village – Discount Offers and FREE taster sessions to activities and facility</b>	Physical Activities Awareness and Opportunities
<b>Alcohol Awareness Campaign – Sobering Thought and Alcohol Tips and support</b>	Preventing Suicide
<b>Breathing Space, knowledge and understanding awareness sessions</b>	Sport Aberdeen Drop Ins and Access to Discount
<b>Dementia Awareness</b>	Stress Awareness Month – Risk Assessments, policies, materials, support
<b>Domestic Abuse Training and Comms campaign</b>	Suicide Prevention Campaigns, support, training and advice
<b>Employee Assistance Programme – awareness campaign and poster comms plan</b>	Therapet Service
<b>Fibromyalgia Week Awareness Campaign</b>	Time to Talk Day – Awareness Campaign and signposting to local support
<b>Financial Wellbeing / Employee Benefits and Cost of Living Support</b>	Tinnitus and Hearing Loss Awareness – creation of new Viva Engage Peer Support Group
<b>Home Energy Advice and Awareness</b>	World Health Day Campaign
<b>Mental Health Awareness Week – Movement: Moving more</b>	World Mental Health Day Awareness
<b>Menopause Awareness Campaign</b>	World Sleep Day – access to online training and support
<b>Multiple Sclerosis Week</b>	

### **Workstream 3: Training for employees so that they have the skills to manage their own wellbeing and support their colleagues.**

<b>Improvement actions</b>	<b>Progress update</b>
<b>1. Provide training for employees on how to manage their own resilience and wellbeing.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eLearning modules available on Building Resilience and Psychological First Aid: Taking Care of Yourself.</li> </ul> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>2. Provide employees with the skills to support their peers colleagues with their mental health, tackle the stigma of mental health, and build confidence to have conversations around suicide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eLearning module made available to provide employees with awareness and skills to tackle stigma in work - Ask Tell, Save a Life short online learning.</li> <li>Mentally Healthy Workplaces eLearning available to all. This training is for anyone who wants to learn more about mental health in the workplace. Everyone has a role to play in creating a mentally healthy workplace and it can have benefits for you and your colleagues</li> </ul> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

<p><b>3. Provide employees with skills to support women at work going through the menopause.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menopause Awareness training available through ACC Learn and aimed at all employees to support women in the workplace</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<p><b>4. Provide employees with the skills to support their colleagues experiencing domestic abuse.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intranet landing page created which includes information about how to support a colleague and links to the Aberdeen Protects website. Training also available for staff to undertake to find out more about coercive and controlling behaviours</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<p><b>5. Ensure employees are 'Trauma Informed' so that they know how to support their colleagues and customers who have experienced trauma.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added to Capability Framework for relevant job families.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Frontline Customer Services:</b> I understand the impact that trauma can have on an individual and the positive difference I can make to the customer's experience.</li> <li><b>Social &amp; Community Services:</b> I know how to spot the signs and respond to people who are affected by trauma.</li> <li><b>People Manager:</b> I know how to spot the signs and respond to people who are affected by trauma.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Trauma Informed eLearning – developed by NHS Grampian - available for all staff</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

#### Workstream 4: Employee engagement, empowerment and co-creation

Improvement actions	Progress update	Status
<p><b>1. Expand Mental health first aider network to increase coverage across the organisation to 2.5% and make finding support accessible to all</b></p>	<p>Continued to grow the Mental Health First Aid network for the organisation with a further 52 employees trained in 2023. Feedback suggests this is a vital frontline service used by many staff</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<p><b>2. Upskill, develop and motivate current support MHFA through peer sessions and one-to one for debriefing and sharing best practice.</b></p>	<p>Sessions delivered to Mental Health First Aiders to upskill and increase knowledge around hot topics like Domestic Abuse, Wellness Action Plans, Bereavement Support</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<p><b>3. Continuous review of MHFA list to ensure wide coverage</b></p>	<p>Increased reach of Mental Health First Aiders with many now trained throughout school settings with a total of 129 volunteers. This equates to 1.6% of employees trained across the whole organisation.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

<b>4. Target schools for recruitment and training of MHFAs</b>	Training to be available to both primary and secondary schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>5. Employee engagement and inclusive groups to drive and shape initiatives - focus groups and networks to gather additional anecdotal feedback and needs and priorities.</b>	Viva Engage used to create communities for peer support and discussion around various mental health and wellbeing topic. This enables employees to find and share resources for self-help	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

### Workstream 5: Managers support their teams confidently and appropriately

Improvement actions	Progress update	Status
<b>1. Provide clarity for managers on their role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Manager Capability Framework now finalised – with ‘mental health’ indicators added to the core capability of ‘Care’:</li> <li>1) I self-reflect and take care of own wellbeing and others by actively promoting health and wellbeing initiatives.</li> <li>2) I display empathy and genuine concern by taking time to find out how challenges and pressures feel from the perspective of others.</li> <li>3) I understand my duty of care for my employees – to support them to stay healthy and well at work, both mentally and physically.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Adviser worked closely with People Development team to develop these indicators.</li> <li>• Capability Framework now embedded within appraisal.</li> <li>• Wellbeing check-in question added to End of Year appraisal.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered
<b>2. Upskill managers so that they have greater awareness of Mental Health and how to support their employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness for managers and Supervisors sessions procured through NESCol - 48 managers trained in Jan -Dec 2023 to support managers to have sensitive conversations positively.</li> <li>• Mental Health and Wellbeing resources readily available and made externally accessible for managers to share easily with staff.</li> <li>• eLearning is mandatory for managers: Mentally Healthy Workplaces. This training is for anyone who wants to learn more about mental health in the</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing

	workplace. Everyone has a role to play in creating a mentally healthy workplace and it can have benefits for you and your colleagues	
3. Ensure that managers are 'trauma informed' and understand how trauma can impact on mental health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The responsibility for managers to be 'trauma informed' is clarified through their People Manager Capability Framework: <b>People Manager:</b> I know how to spot the signs and respond to people who are affected by trauma.</li> <li>Trauma Informed training available for all employees through ACC Learn.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
4. Deliver new Quality of Working Lives Stress Risk Assessment training to managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with the Health and Safety Team and Employee Relations and Wellbeing to develop training available for individual managers and teams support to complete QWL Risk Assessment. This is now provided on a one-to-one basis by H&amp;S Advisers to manager as required.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
5. Coach and support managers directly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental Health and Wellbeing Adviser provides regular contact and support to managers across the organisation to provide 1-2-1 support and advice where needed.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
6. Ensure managers are having wellbeing conversations with employees at least once per year through CR&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellbeing check-in question added to End of Year appraisal in CoreHR – to be piloted during 2024.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered

### Workstream 6: Data reporting to understand underlying causes, adversities and inequalities and target interventions proactively to areas of highest need.

Improvement actions	Progress update	
1. Continue work towards improving data recording reasons for absences and reporting on this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work continuing to analyse the data and target initiatives according to where the data leads</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
2. Attend Health and Safety Committee Groups and SMTs to discuss data and identify potential supports to be implements in targeted areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular updates send to H&amp;S groups. Current report will be distributed to groups.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
3. MHFA Recording Tool – encourage recording of interactions to show the demand on the network and help build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to analyse the data gathered from the MHFA Recording Tool to help identify hot spots and trends and to help</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing



<b>data trends on where staff are contacting from</b>	target initiatives and awareness raising campaigns across the organisation.	
<b>4. Introduce Wellbeing Pulse Checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further Wellbeing Pulse Check Surveys to be send out in 2024 and analyse data gathered to identify trends and target initiatives across the organisation</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivered and Ongoing
<b>5. Analyse and interrogate Power BI Absence data and use this information to target areas</b>	Continuing analysis of the data to identify trends and target initiatives across the organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing
<b>6. Analyse data received from Employee Assistance Programme and use this to target areas of need</b>	Continuing analysis of the data to identify trends and target initiatives across the organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing