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# Briefing to PVFM

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019

## Subject:

Update on the Improving Attendance and Health and Wellbeing

## For Information / Update

## Report of:

Martyn Bramwell

## Portfolio holder:

Councillor Abdul Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance and HR

## Contact Officer:

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## Introduction:

This report seeks to:

- Update the position in relation to Improving Attendance for the financial year 2018/19
- Provide information in relation to:
  - sickness absence percentages per weekdays per directorate
  - levels of compliance and Return to Work Interview statistics per directorate
  - top reasons for absence
- Summarise progress on the Health and Wellbeing Programme – ‘Fit for Oldham’

## Recommendation:

To receive and direct as appropriate on:

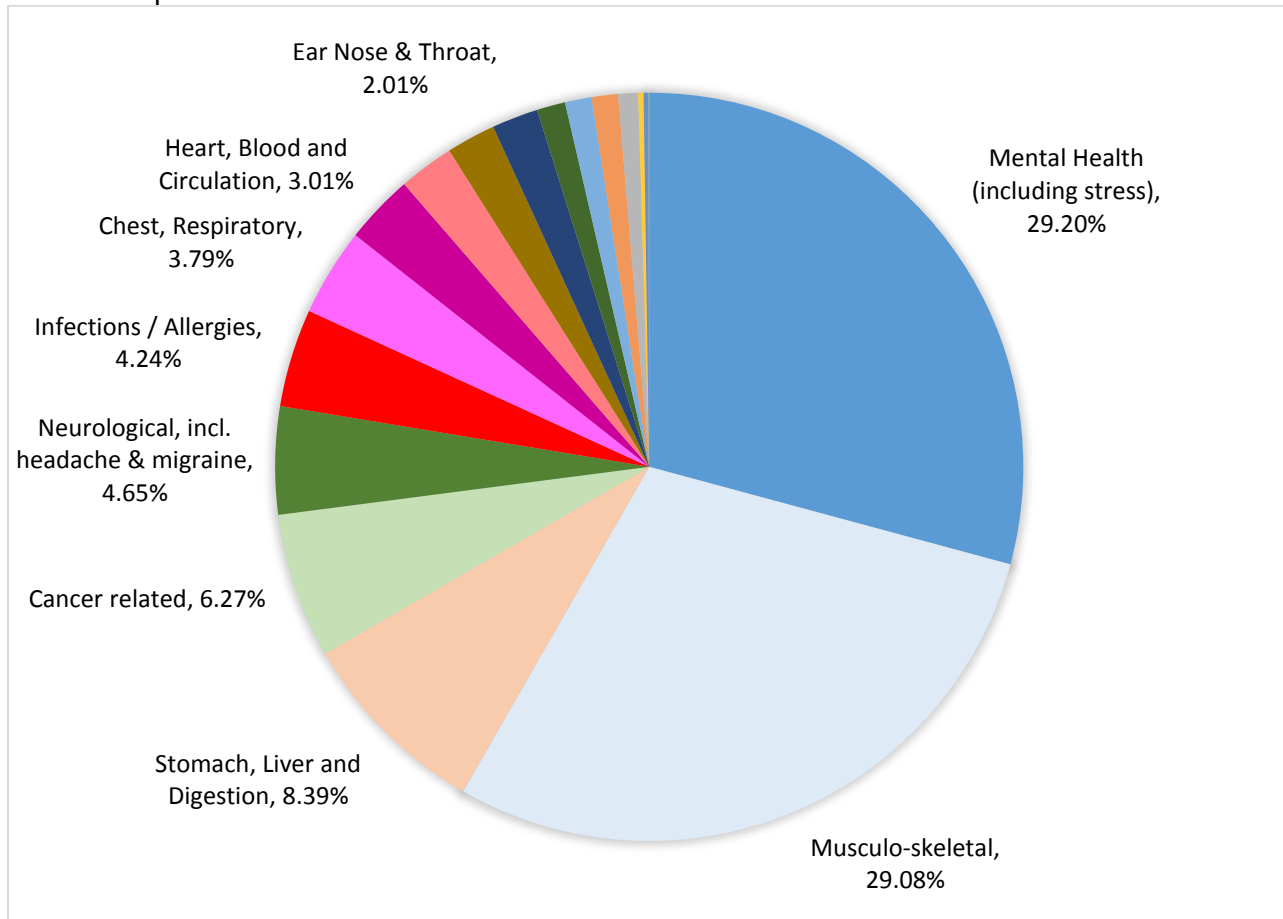
1. The contents and actions contained in this report to improve attendance at work
2. The current sickness position for the financial year 2018/19
3. The update on the health and wellbeing programme – ‘Fit for Oldham’

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## 1. **Current position**

1.1 The out turn for the 2018/19 financial year shows an average of 9.611 working days lost per employee in Council directorates. In percentage terms this amounts to 3.79%. The Council target for this period is 6 working days lost.

1.2 The reasons for absence in % terms from April 2018 to March 2019 as a cumulative picture are depicted below:



1.3 The two top reasons for absence remain mental health and musculo–skeletal. This has remained constant for several years and these two reasons for absence continue to be the prime focus for the health and wellbeing campaign – ‘Fit for Oldham’ and early intervention guidance for managers. Support for MSK includes; Alexander Technique training, Yoga and Pilates, along with signposting and support via the Fit for Oldham hub. Intervention and support is available for Mental Health and includes Yoga, Tai Chi, Mindfulness and Calma Art classes, alongside bespoke employee and Manager training to support mental wellbeing in the workplace.

1.4 The fourth highest reason for absence of Cancer related also forms part of the Fit for Oldham offer of support to staff and managers, via a dedicated area on the Fit for Oldham hub and through the provision of cancer awareness training sessions for staff and managers.

## 2. **Policy Compliance**

2.1 There is a continuing focus on improving managerial compliance with regards to conducting return to work interviews and stage meetings in a supportive and timely manner. This has been the subject of extensive management communications via Manager’s Brief, personal emails, SLT communications and regular DMT attention.

There can be expected to be some small levels of departure from policy triggers on the basis that the policy permits exceptional factors to be considered in the later stages of absence management. Nevertheless, where compliance is variable, these instances are being dealt with incisively in discussion with DMT members.

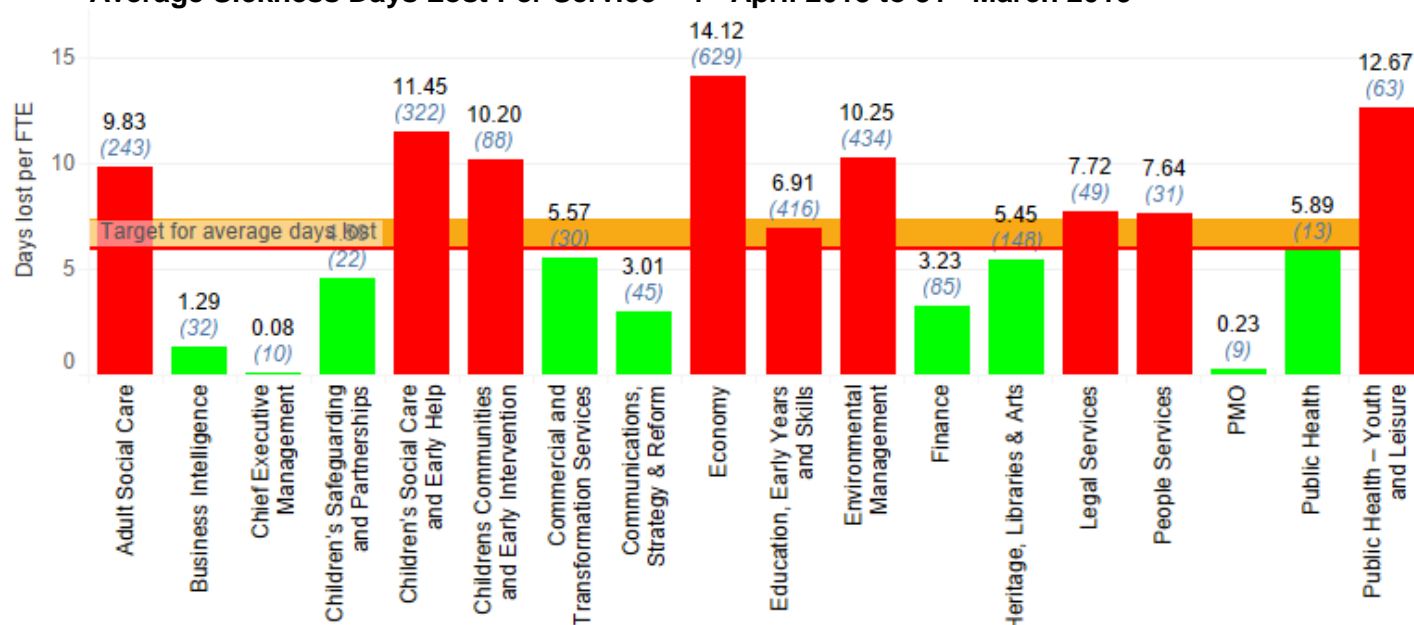
- 2.2 In relation to 'Return to Work' interviews, whilst not policy good practice indicates that these are completed within 5 days of return. People Services are continuing to work with services to ensure that these interviews are conducted with employee who work remotely in a timely manner.

### 3. Absence Detail

- 3.1 2018/2019 end of year absence at 9.61 days per FTE saw us outperform both the GM Local Authority average of 10.35 days and the Nationwide Local Authority average of 9.8 days (2017/18 last available benchmark figures).

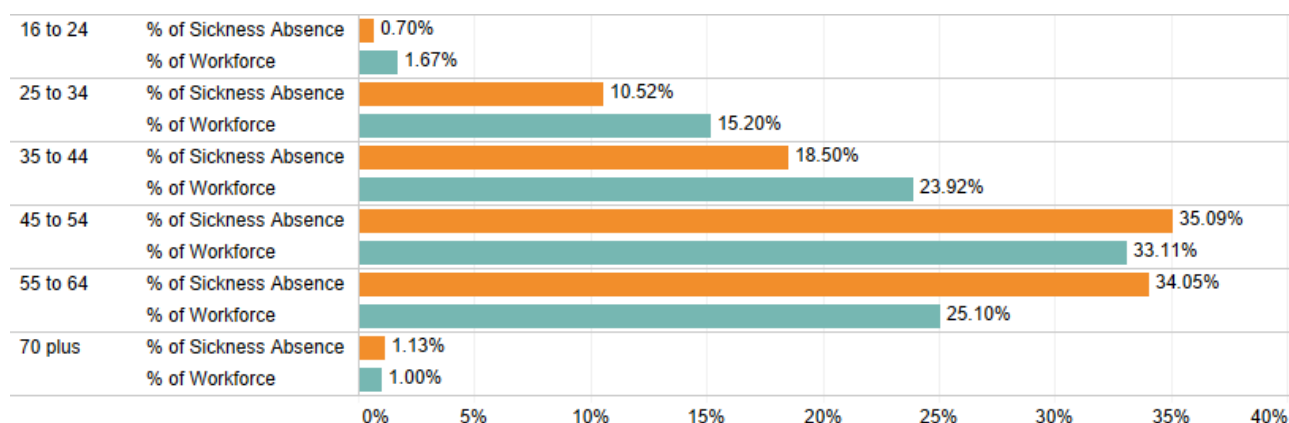
- 3.2 9.61 days for 18/19 represented an absence rate of 3.79%

**Average Sickness Days Lost Per Service – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**



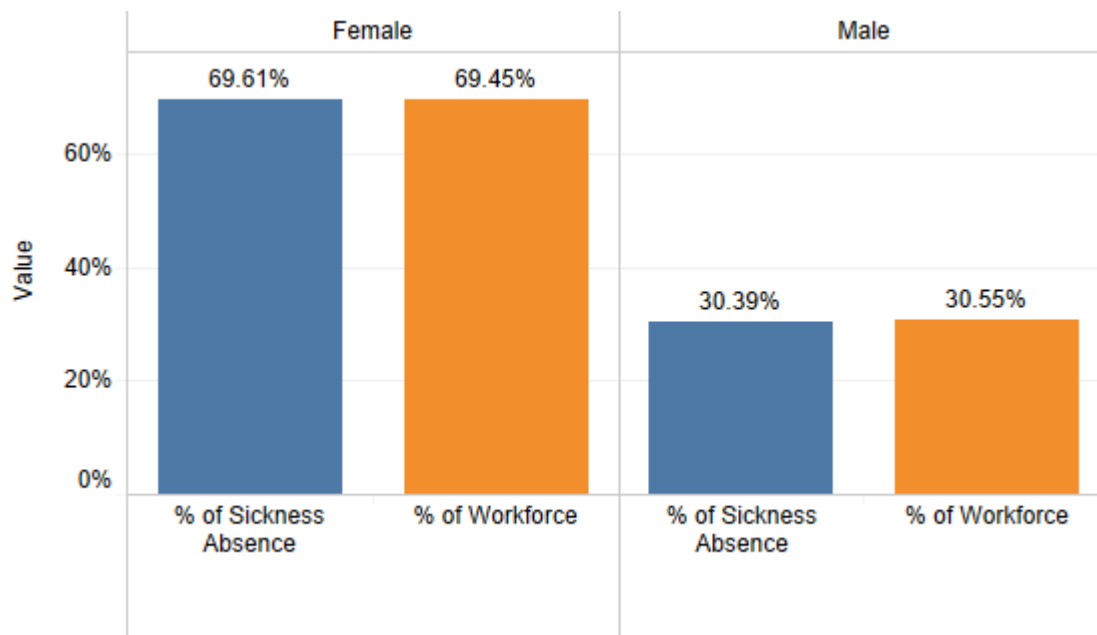
Note: The numbers within brackets indicate the number of employees in each service for the purpose of proportionality.

### 3.3 Absence by Age – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019



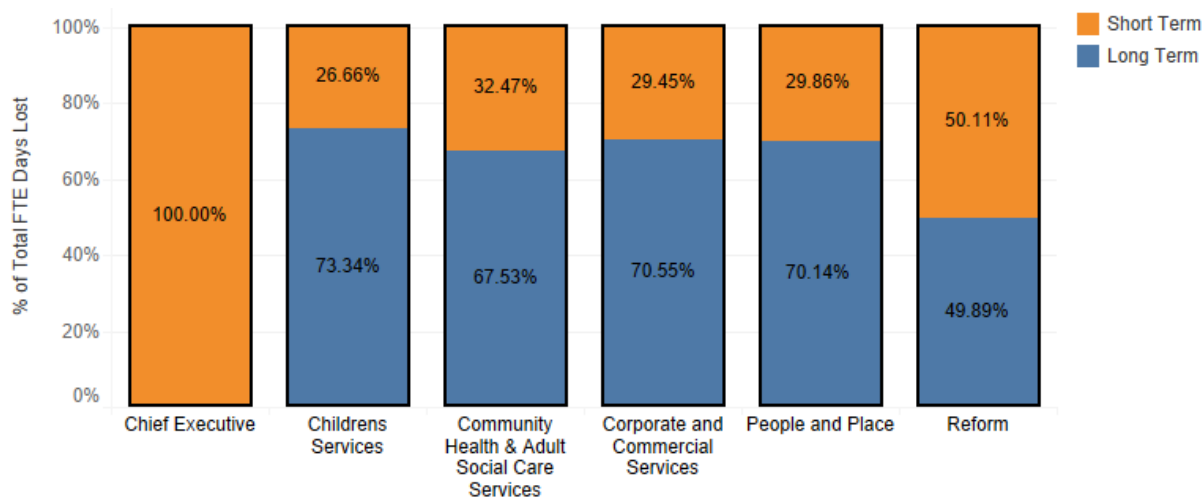
The above chart shows that those aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 account for 69.14% of all absence but account for only 58.21% of the workforce.

### 3.4 Absence by Gender – 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019



This data confirms that women have slightly more absence than men across the directorates

### 3.5 Short-term and Long-term sickness – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

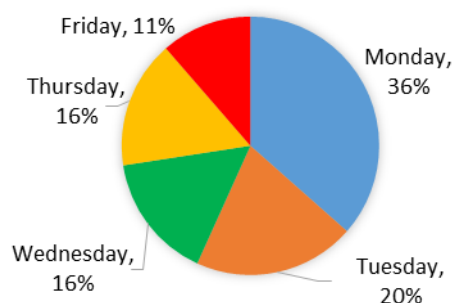


The level of long-term absence as a % against short term absence is consistent with national trends. Long term absence is managed with support from the HR Advisory service and managers are encouraged to undertake early dialogue and intervention in each case. The HR Advisory service, once a case reaches 4 weeks in duration, create an action plan to reaffirm the requirement to reduce long term absence with suitable support and adjustments.

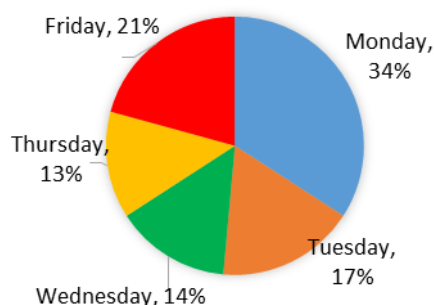
### 3.6

## Sickness absence percentage by weekday – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 – all directorates

### All absences - Council

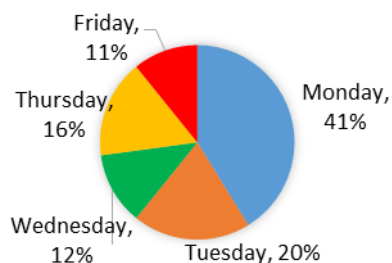


### One day only absences – Council

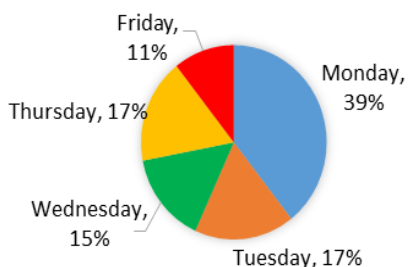


### All absences by Directorate

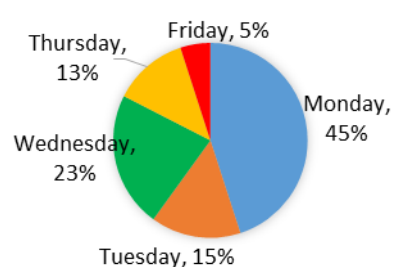
#### Children's Services



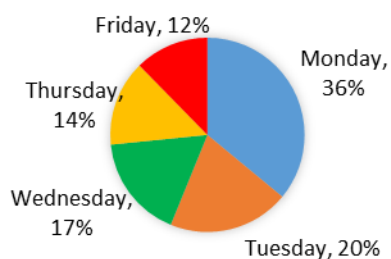
#### Community Health & Adult Social Care



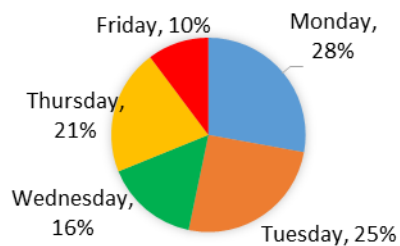
#### Commissioning



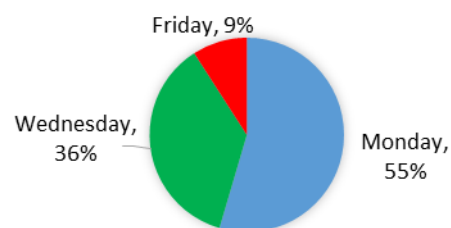
#### People and Place



#### Reform

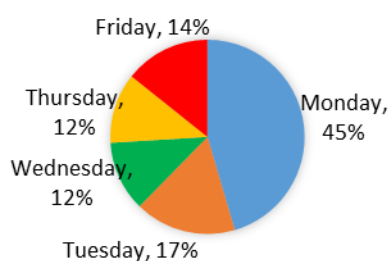


#### Legal and Democratic Services

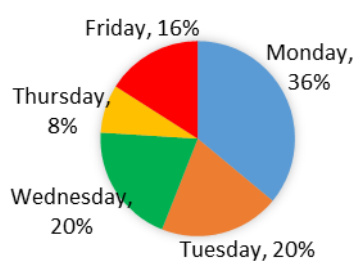


### One day only absences by Directorate

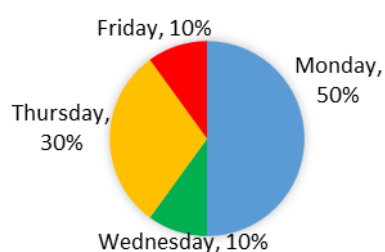
#### Children's Services



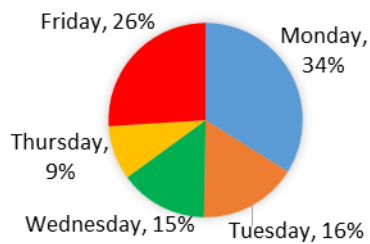
#### Community Health & Adult Social Care



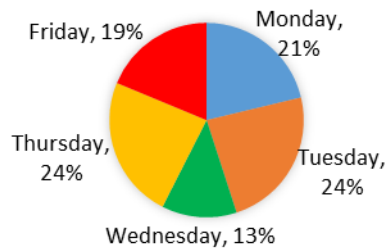
#### Commissioning



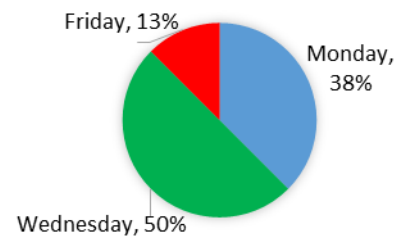
## People and Place



## Reform



## Legal and Democratic Services



The above charts evidence absences by day.

The evidence shows a consistency amongst all the directorates. Unity HR Advisory service are continuing to review one day absences on a Friday and Monday to ensure that these are managed effectively.

## 4. Health and Wellbeing

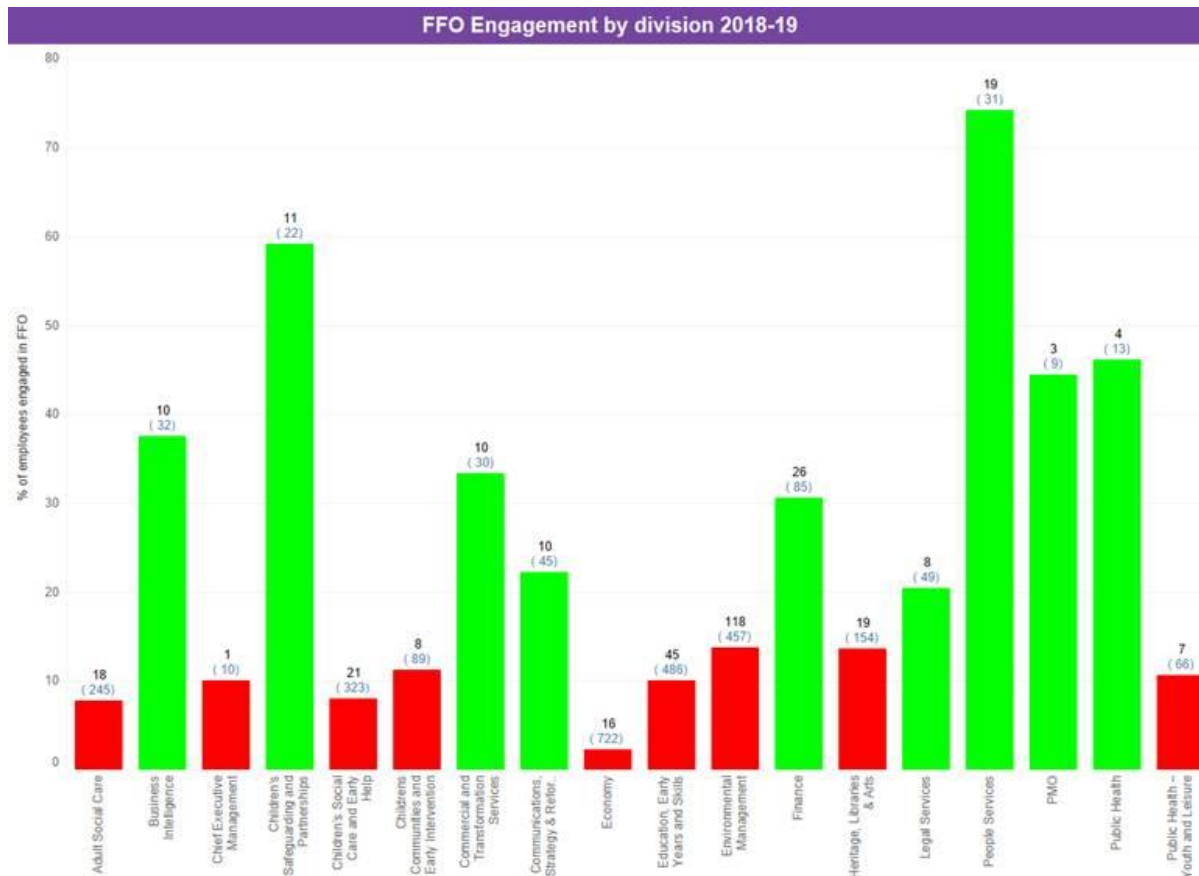
- 4.1 Following the successful launch of the Fit for Oldham programme in June 2016, the campaign established a 4-term structure that delivers a variety of activity across several locations to meet the programme's objectives. We continue to respond to feedback from the workforce about how the Health and Wellbeing of our employees may best be enhanced. The 4-term format is in the beginning of its second year and has an established metrics reporting mechanism that supports it.
- 4.2 Activities within the programme have been designed to be inclusive and give employees a wide range of support for their needs. This includes restorative yoga, vinyasa flow yoga, pilates, tai chi, mindfulness, alexander technique and art classes. These sessions take place across a number of different council sites in order to provide employees with a variety of opportunities to engage.
- 4.3 Last year we introduced bespoke training - Supporting Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace, for both staff and managers. This was designed to align with the training that SLT undertook in March 2018 and has been positively received by all participants. The training provides an understanding of different mental health issues and aims to equip individuals with a variety of tools and techniques to cope with the different pressures and challenges they may encounter in both their work and personal lives. In response to feedback from some Heads of Service, the training for managers incorporates building team resilience and focuses upon our internal processes for managing mental health related sickness absence.
- 4.4 We have scheduled regular Health checks for employees which fall on a quarterly basis for the duration of the year. There were 180 health checks made available for employees during 2018/19, with a further 176 checks available for 2019/20. These checks have been instrumental for some employees as they have uncovered potential health risks such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol and as a result employees have been provided with the intervention and support needed to address these issues.
- 4.5 'Employee lead groups' have also been introduced and incorporated into the programme to support the aims and objectives. These have included a running club and a knit and natter group.

We have also launched a new section on the intranet hosted Health and Wellbeing hub following requests for support relating to coping with the menopause at work. This information will be supported by lunch and learn sessions which are being launched in the autumn.

- 4.6 We are currently in the process of implementing a network of workforce wellbeing champions, with over 30 employees initially expressing an interest in supporting our aim of reducing mental health stigma, supporting their colleagues, and spreading wellbeing messages across the organisation. It

has been evident that there is a continuing need for crisis intervention, and the network is one of the ways that we are addressing this need. Experience shows that the programme has helped individuals reduce or stop the use of medication, manage mental wellbeing issues, tackle and prevent the development of diabetes, lose significant amounts of weight, supporting carers in their time of need and also helping a small number of employees who are dealing with suicidal thoughts.

#### 4.7 A snapshot of results so far include:



The data above indicates that the services with the highest levels of engagement in the Fit for Oldham programme have lower levels of sickness absence.

- In the first 5 months of this year there have been 921 visits to the Fit for Oldham hub – with the most visited pages within the hub being mental wellbeing, healthy behaviours and aches, pains and strains – this correlates with our sickness absence figures.
- In 2018/19 354 council employees and 48 Unity and Miocare employees who took part in Fit for Oldham activity.
- 2094 employees have become members at Oldham Community Leisure who operate Oldham's leisure centres since Fit for Oldham began in June 2016. There are currently 1190 live members from the Council, Unity and Oldham Cares.

In 2018 every service area engaged in the programme along with employees from Unity and Miocare. We are working to grow engagement levels further and evolve the programme based upon changing organisational need and individual feedback.

#### 4.8 The campaign has resulted in an increased joint working evidencing Oldham's co-operative ethos. The programme has provided opportunities for growth and income for both our local leisure trust and private leisure providers to generate income and strengthened community links through promotion of events such as Parkrun, dance classes and Race for Life.

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- 4.9 Internally the programme has prompted discussion due to its visibility and impact on employees daily working lives and behaviour. This will increase further from the 'real life' success stories The visibility programme providers and word of mouth has promoted sessions and evidenced increasing uptake. Feedback has been that classes have helped to form new friendships and support networks, often for employees who previously felt isolated or disengaged with other teams and directorates. Managers have also reported positive impact and change in employee behaviour.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 Understandably, the organisation will want to reduce the level of absenteeism amongst employees.

- 5.2 In order to achieve this the following actions are intended:

- The commissioning of a whole system review of the Council's approach to the management of employee health, wellbeing and its approach to absence management
- A sustained focus on increased compliance with good practice and early intervention to reduce the length of absence
- A targeted approach to the management of absence 'hot spots' by absence type, service area and role
- The provision of bespoke return to work documentation for stress and musculo-skeletal absences featuring enhanced support
- Dissemination of material on the management of employee with chronic illness
- Absence management as an agenda item at monthly DMT's
- Unity HR Advisory proactively pursuing amended duties to facilitate an earlier return to work
- Regular communication to managers on policy compliance, early intervention and the use of recuperative duties