



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL

# Workforce Sickness Absence

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Report to Health Scrutiny 13 November 2024

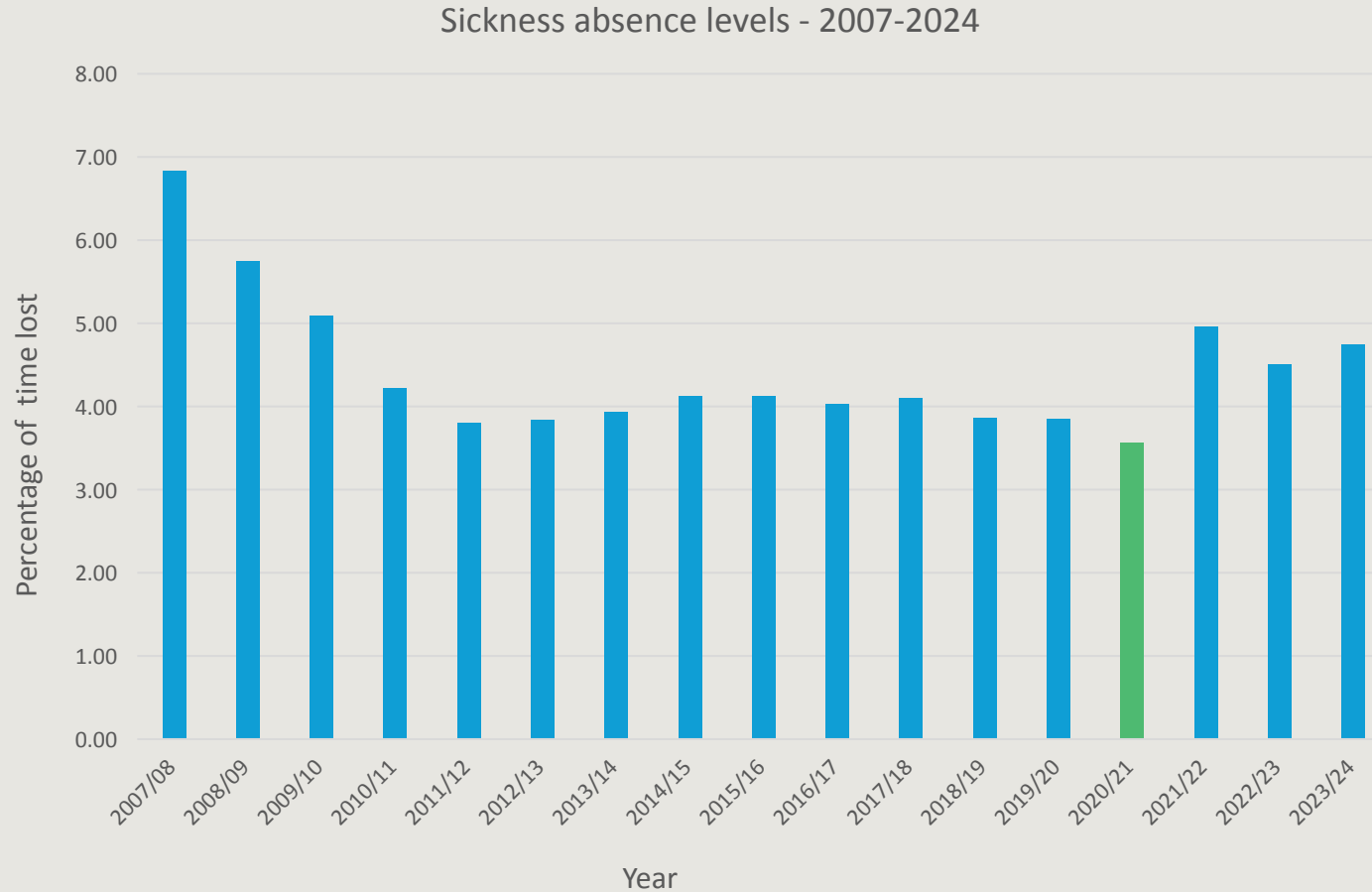
Angela Beadsworth

Director of Human Resources

***Presentation brief: To receive information relating to sickness absence rates to cover the period from before Covid 19 restrictions to date.***

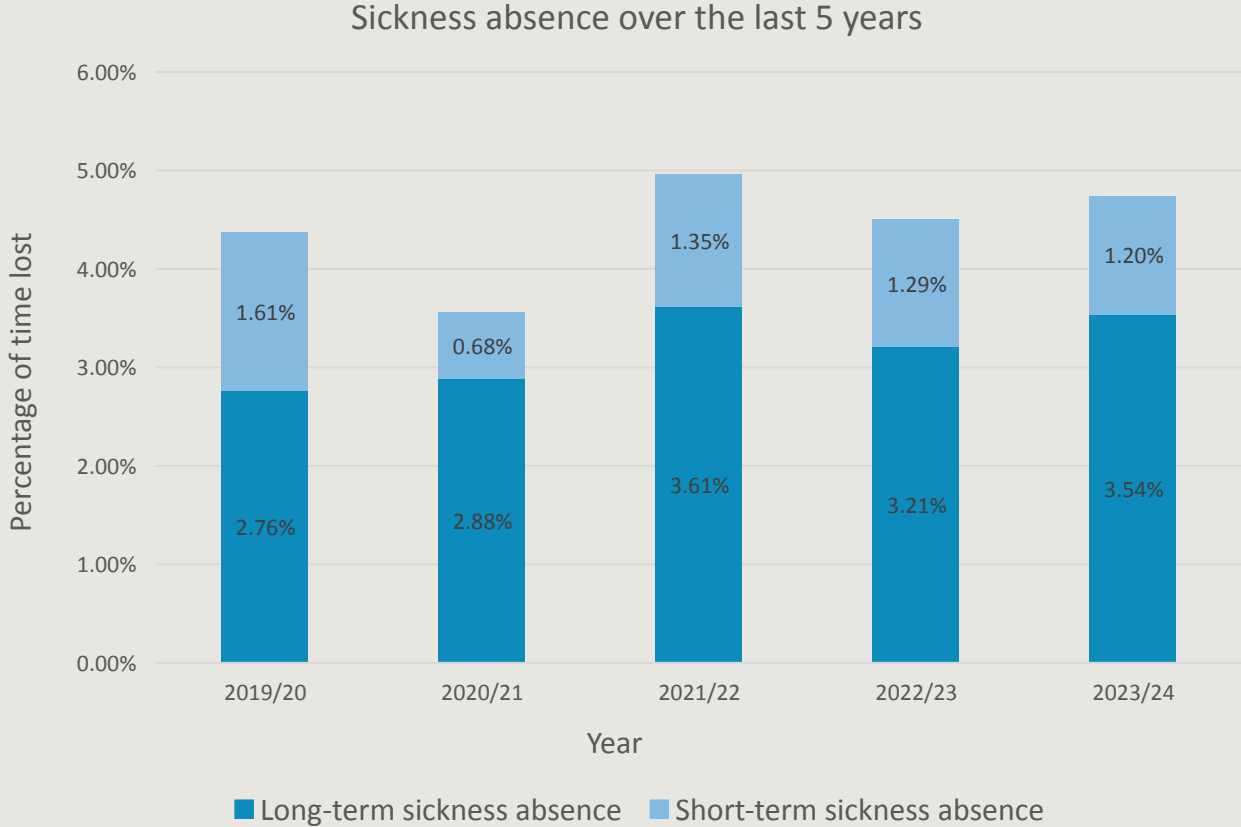
- Long-term trend of sickness absence levels
- Sickness absence demographics over the last 5 years (to cover period pre-covid to most recent financial year)
- In-depth sickness absence demographics 2023/2024
- Recent sickness (October 2024)
- Our commitment to colleagues around wellbeing
- Manager development to support wellbeing and manage sickness absence.
- Conclusion

# Long-term sickness trend



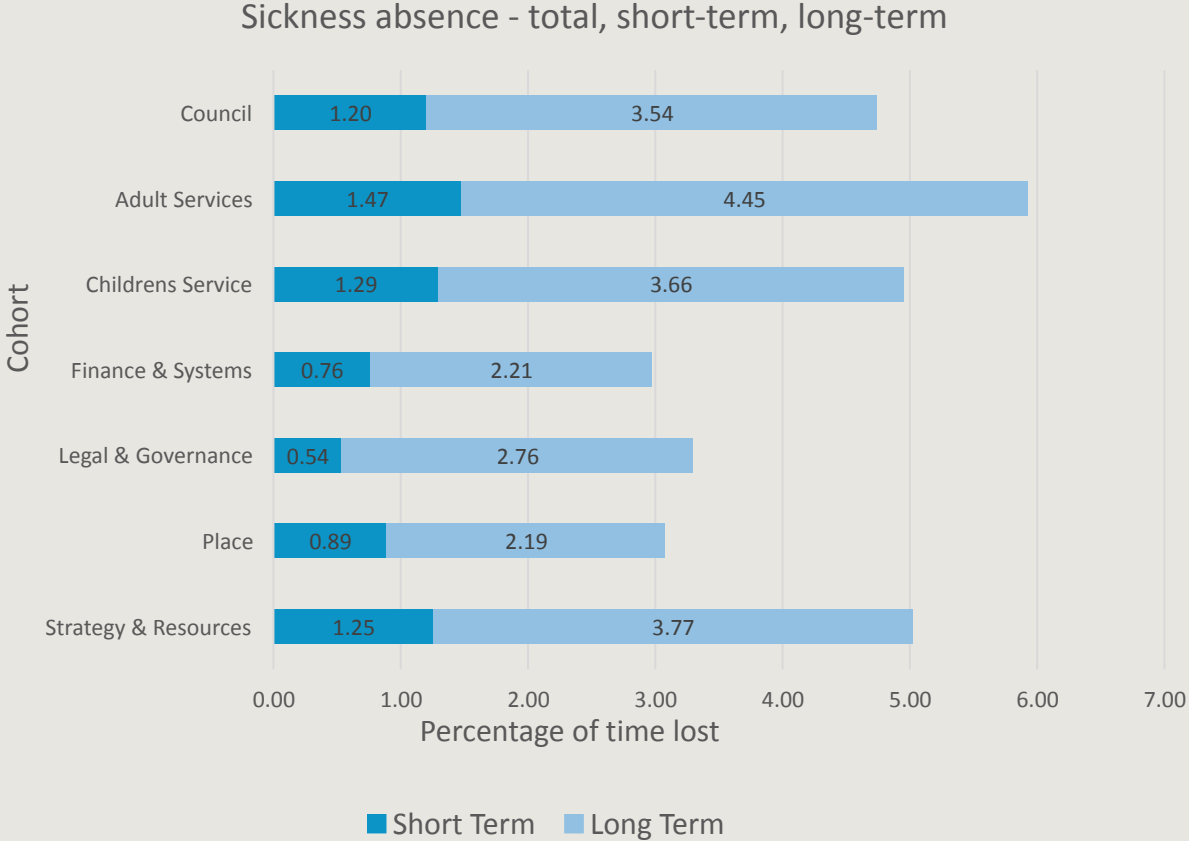
- In 2007/2008 sickness was at 6.84% - the highest level over the period
- The lowest level over the period was in 2020/21 at 3.56% during COVID pandemic period.
- Prior to this, sickness absence levels had been fairly stable, at around 4% for circa 10 years
- Post COVID-19 levels have been higher than before the pandemic so there is no significant correlation

# Summary of sickness absence - last 5 years



- Sickness levels have fluctuated year on year
- At the start of the period (2019/2020) sickness was 4.37%
- In the most recent year (2023/2024), sickness was 4.78%
- Over the 5 years short-term sickness has reduced but long-term sickness has increased
- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted on sickness levels in 2020/2021 and likely the following year

# Sickness levels by directorate for 23/24



- Overall sickness absence within the Council was 4.74%
- 1.20% of time lost to ST sickness and 3.54% of time lost to LT sickness
- Adult Services had the highest level at 5.92% followed by Strategy and Resources at 5.02% and Children’s Services at 4.95% - these directorates have high headcounts, and most roles are front-line.
- The other 3 directorates have much lower sickness levels ranging from 2.97% to 3.30% - they have low headcounts and have fewer front-line services.

# Our EPIC Wellbeing Commitment

- Colleague wellbeing (both mental and physical) continues to be a high priority
- An important part of our colleague engagement strategy
- Improving colleague wellbeing, will have a positive impact on sickness levels
- Our wellbeing offer has had increased visibility in 2024
- Core enabler for our culture & central to our EPIC values
- Plan to further develop a culture of Whole Self across a wide range of topics
- Encourage positive working practices across teams

# EPIC Wellbeing – Key focus areas

- Raise awareness of both physical and mental wellbeing importance
- Remove the stigma around mental wellbeing
- Improve resources on and understanding of things that affect mental wellbeing
- Help colleagues to know what to look out for
- Practical resources to empower our colleagues to prioritise their wellbeing and take personal responsibility
- Improve manager capability and approaches to support their team
- Ensure access to a range of support

# Wellbeing Resources

- Regular in-house spotlight sessions & articles across physical and mental health topics - examples include National Fitness Day, World Mental Health Day, menopause awareness, financial wellbeing, 2024 Wellbeing Open Day at Trafford Town Hall and event planned for 2025 at Sale Town Hall
- Renewed focus and increased visibility on our EPIC Values – Creating further opportunities to sign-post to resources available and share inspiring colleague stories
- EPIC You – Intranet site resources & signposts
- Occupational Health
  - Employee Assistance Programme – 24/7 support, resources and free counselling sessions
  - Physiotherapy – free access to 6 sessions
- Bee seen get screened campaign – release for cancer screening appointments
- Access to Work support
- Suicide Awareness & Support Toolkit
- Team of Mental Health First Aiders
- Staff networks – Carers, LGBTQ+, BAME and disability
- Trafford Directory - Trafford based support groups on many topics



# Wellbeing tips – co-designed with colleagues

**EPIC WELLBEING**

**TOP TIPS**

**Trafford's Top Tips for Positive Wellbeing**

**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

EPIC Wellbeing is one of our top priorities at Trafford Council! As part of this commitment, we wanted to share some simple steps we can all put in place to improve our wellbeing.... To help with this, here's a snapshot of ideas shared by colleagues at our recent Let's Talk sessions!

- Mood Boosters
- Sleep Well
- Reach Out
- Giving Back
- Healthy Eating
- Guilty Pleasures
- Move More
- Healthy Boundaries
- Gratitude
- Be Present

# Management development and support

- Wider wellbeing – monthly spotlight sessions and intranet resources
- EPIC Manager Workshop: Health & Wellbeing (recently refreshed and updated)
- Enhancing our offer of support to managers by rolling out face to face attendance management training session with key focus on:
  - **Absence Prevention** – identifying support mechanisms and ways in which we can proactively manage health and wellbeing in the workplace
  - **Formal Absence Management** – proactively managing long term absence or frequent short-term absence to help facilitate a sustained return to work and good attendance levels.

# Conclusions

- Absence levels were fairly stable before the COVID-19 pandemic at which point they reduced and then increased to levels higher than they were pre-pandemic.
- There has likely been a legacy effect from the pandemic which is reducing over time.
- Sickness is on a downward trend - for the 12-month period to September 2024 it was 4.49% (for the corresponding period to September 2023 it was 4.91%)
- We continue to promote wellbeing to encourage colleagues to take responsibility for their health, to offer support in the workplace where colleagues have health conditions and to foster early returns with adjustments where required when employees have periods of absence.
- We will continue to evolve our culture of wellbeing as we go forward into 2025