

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Strategic Lead – People and Technology****Housing and Communities Committee: 2 September 2020**

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**Subject: Employee Wellbeing: Attendance Management  
Annual Update (2019/20)****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with detailed analysis on employee wellbeing and attendance from 1st April 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 for the Strategic Lead areas covered by Housing and Communities Committee and an annual update on Council wide attendance for the same period.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee notes the findings, namely:
- The decrease of 40.21 full time equivalent (FTE) days lost (approx. 6.2%) in service area covered by this report compared to the same period last year as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2;
  - The decrease in Council wide sickness absence of 3147 FTE days lost (approx. 6.4%) compared to 2018/19 as outlined in Appendix 1

**3. Background**

- 3.1** The Council is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all employees. This is driven by the Employee Wellbeing Strategy and supported by initiatives and projects delivered through the Employee Wellbeing Group. The aim of this work is to improve employee morale and engagement, promote a healthier and more inclusive culture and lower sickness absence rates.

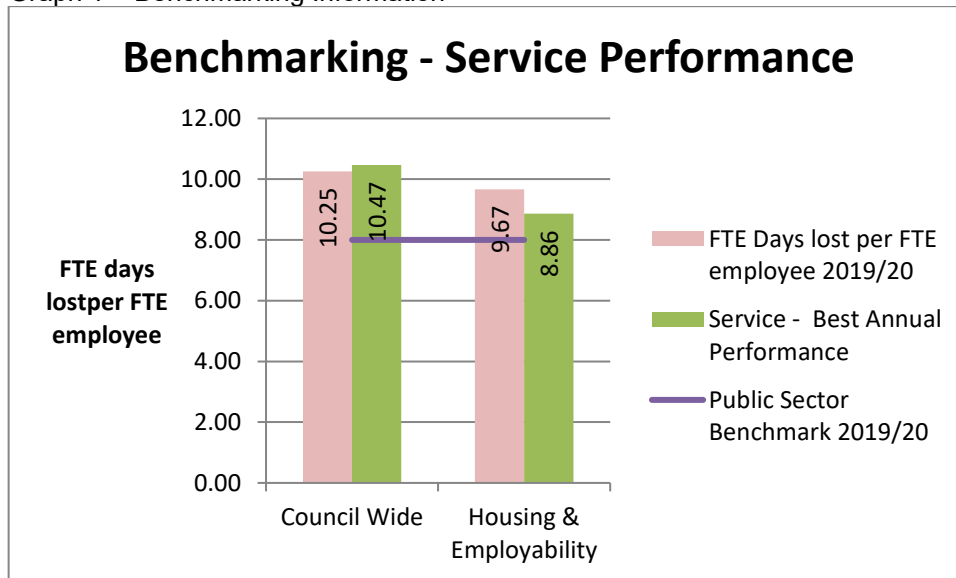
**4. Main Issues****April 2019 – March 2020**

- 4.1** From 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, a total of 2,666.05 days were lost due to sickness absence in the service covered by this report. This represents an decrease of 40.21 FTE days lost compared to 2018/19.
- 4.1.2** Graph 1 details benchmarking information to enable comparison to the service's best performance in the last 4 years as well as the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) benchmark for the public sector. The

FTE figures are shown in Appendices 1 and 2 to provide context of the service size.

**4.1.3** The graph shows that Housing and Employability have higher levels of absence than the CIPD public sector benchmark and that absence recorded is slightly lower than Council Wide average.

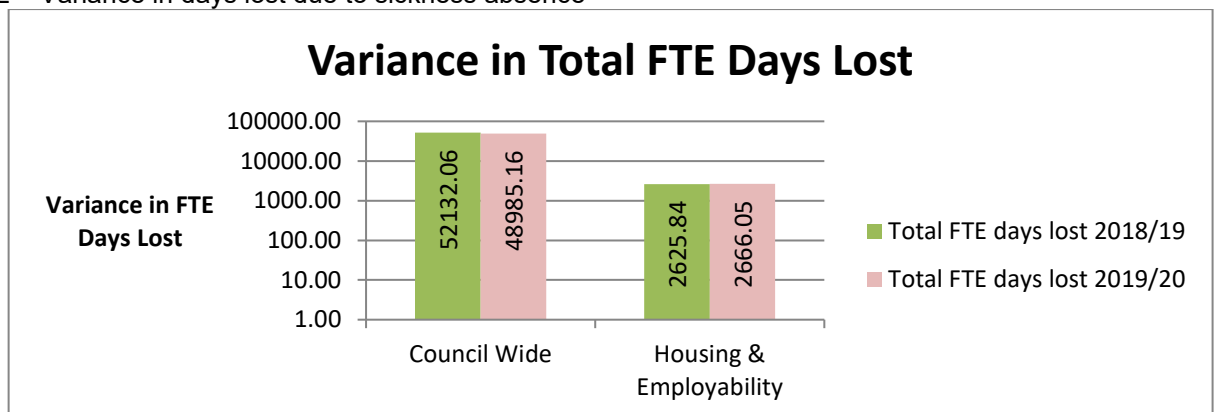
Graph 1 – Benchmarking Information



\*Source 2020 CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work report

**4.1.5** Graph 2 details the variance in FTE days lost due to sickness absence between 2019/20 and 2018/19. It is positive to note that the FTE days lost per FTE employee in 2019/20 does show an improved picture when compared to 2018/19.

Graph 2 – Variance in days lost due to sickness absence

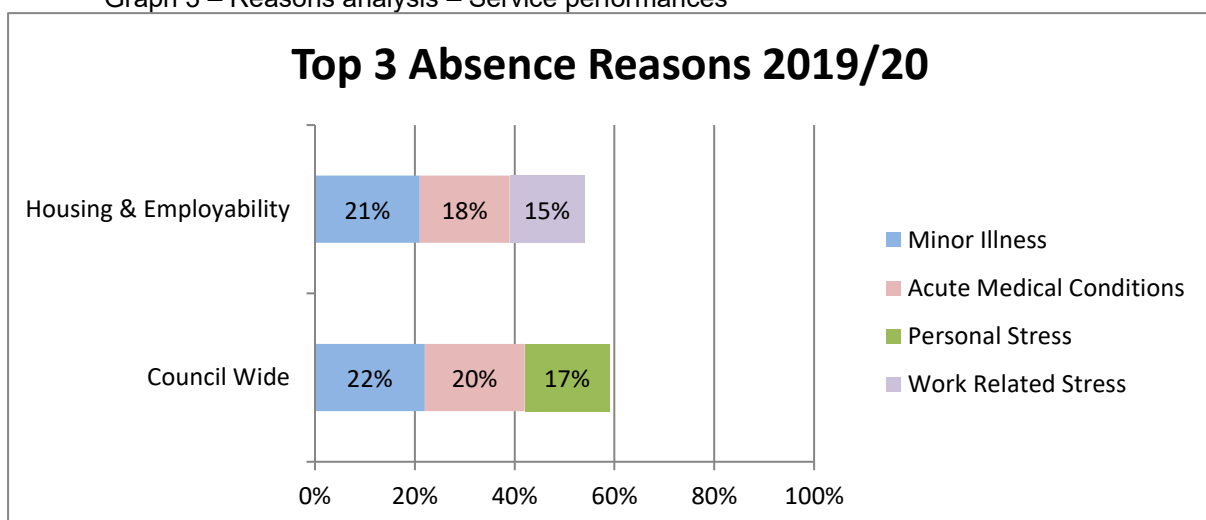


\*This is calculated based on the variance of actual FTE days lost and not the variance in average FTE days lost per FTE employee as shown in the Headline figure in Appendix 1.

**4.2** Absence Reasons – Service Performance

- 4.2.1** Appendix 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the reasons for absence Council Wide.
- 4.2.2** The top 3 reasons for absence 2019/20 for the Housing and Employability were Minor Illness, Personal Stress and Work Related Stress. Graph 3 below shows the top 3 reasons recorded for the Council and compares these with the reasons recorded for Housing and Employability. Minor Illness continues to be the top reason for absence, followed by Personal Stress and Work Related Stress. The top 3 reasons for absence recorded by Housing and Employability have changed from those reported in 2018/19 when Minor Illness, Acute Medical Conditions and MSK were the top 3 reasons for absence.
- 4.2.3** The proportion of absence attributed to Minor Illness has consistently been one of the 3 main reasons for absence in the past few years however this is lower than Council wide figures and has reduced in comparison to 2018/19.
- 4.2.4** Appendix 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the reasons for absence in Housing and Employability and you will note that the levels of work related stress and personal stress reported have increased since last year. This may be reflective of the amount of change which has been introduced within Housing and Employability in the past year.
- 4.2.5** The level of sickness absence attributed to both personal and work related stress is a concern and work continues to build a culture of openness when discussing mental health. Feedback from the Employee Wellbeing Group is that some employees are beginning to feel more comfortable discussing such matters with their managers and so people are accessing appropriate support at an earlier stage.
- 4.2.6** The Employee Wellbeing Group remains focused on programmes of work to help employees manage their mental health and wellbeing and further details of this work are provided in section 4.5 of this report.

Graph 3 – Reasons analysis – Service performances

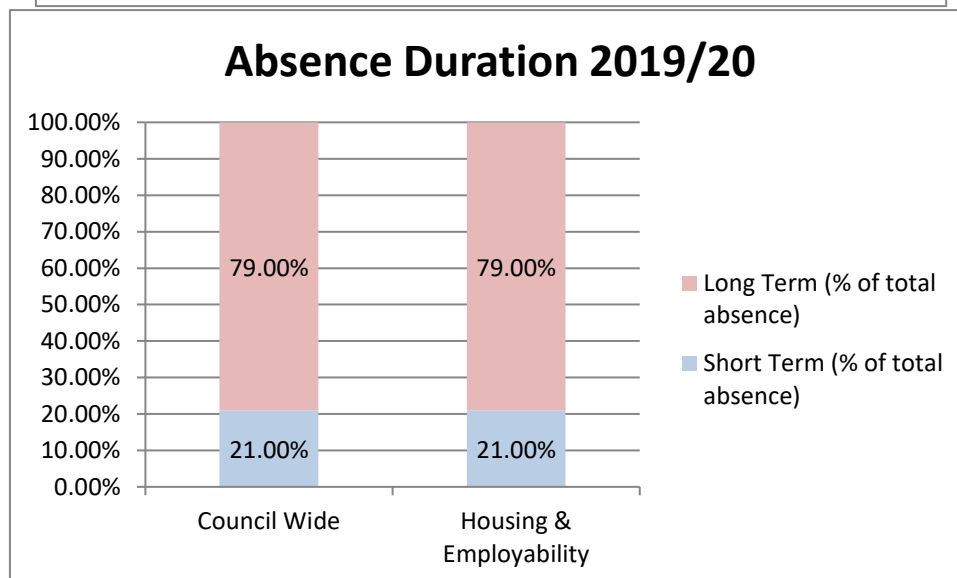
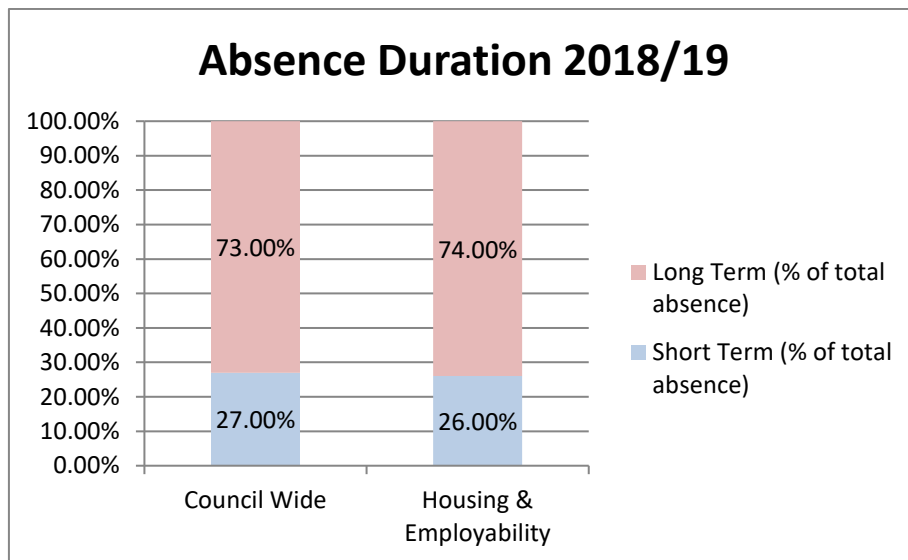


### 4.3 Absence Duration – Service Performance

4.3.1 Graphs 4 and 5 show the duration profile for the service covered by this report and compares to the overall Council-wide duration profile including data from 2018/19 for comparison purposes. Long term absence accounts for approximately 79% of Council-wide absence 2019/20, which is an increase compared to the previous year. Housing and Employability have also recorded an increase in long term absence which is reflective of the top reasons for absence; personal and work related stress are often long term in nature.

4.3.2 Long term absences are managed in line with the Supporting Employee Wellbeing policy ensuring that a fair, consistent and supportive approach is adopted. This includes holding regular Wellbeing Support meetings to explore appropriate supports and facilitate a return to work where possible.

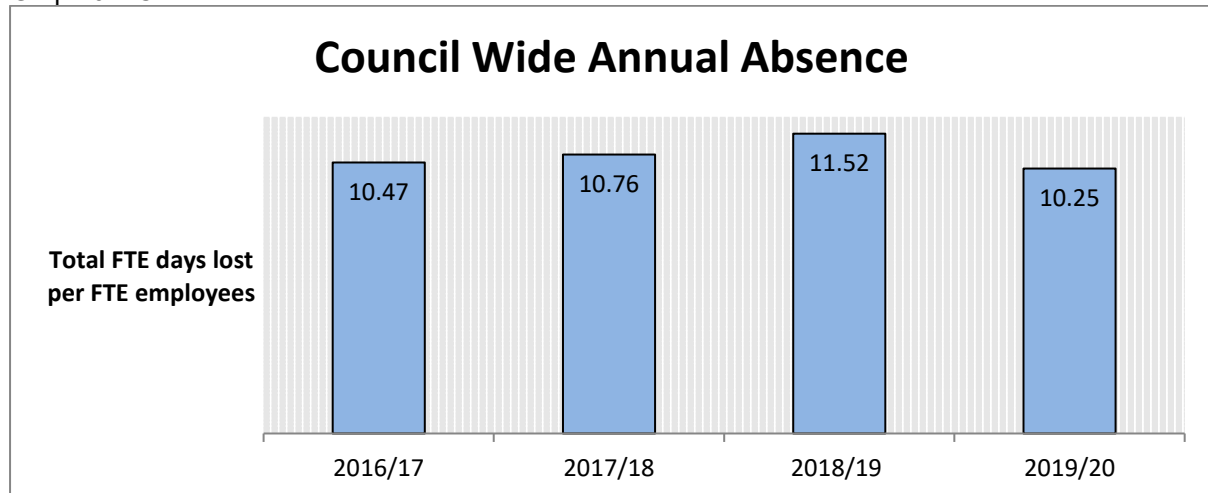
Graphs 4 and 5 – Duration analysis – Service performances



#### 4.4 2019/20 Council-wide Performance

4.4.1 Graph 6 below shows that, in 2019/20, the Council's absence performance improved with a reduction of 1.27 FTE days lost by FTE employees when compared to 2018/19. It is very positive to note that the 2019/20 level of absence is the lowest recorded in the last 4 years, showing an improved picture even when compared to the previously best performing year in 2016/17.

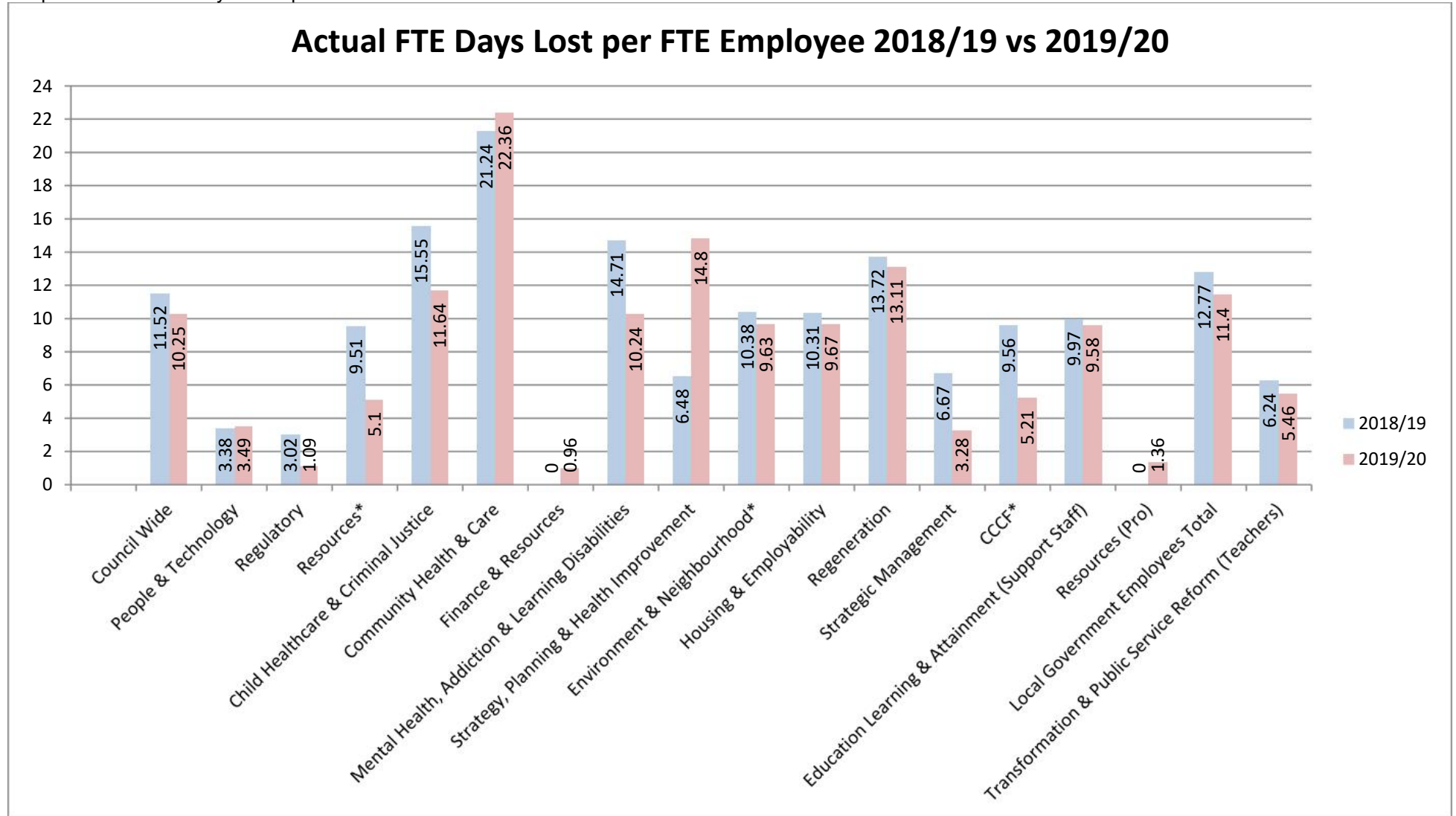
Graph 6 – Council Wide Annual Absence



4.4.2 Graph 7 (below) shows absence levels for 2019/20, by Strategic Lead Area, and associated annual figures for 2018/2019 to allow comparison. Please note that the FTE days lost per FTE employee which is reported for each Strategic Lead Area is based on where employees were located as at 31 March 2020.

4.4.3 It can be seen in Graph 7 that 10 of the services shown have reported an improving picture in relation to their sickness absence in 2019/20 when compared to 2018/19. This is in keeping with the reduction in public sector absence noted in the CIPD 2020 Health and Wellbeing at Work report.

Graph 7 – Total FTE days lost April –2019/20 vs 2018/19



## 4.5 Employee Wellbeing Group

4.5.1 The Employee Wellbeing Group continues to make progress through wellbeing initiatives, employee support mechanisms and working with trade unions and local partners to identify and address areas for improvement. Updates on progress are reported to Performance and Monitoring Group on a monthly basis. Actions completed since the last report to this Committee in November 2019, or which are currently being progressed, include the following:

- The Attendance Management policy was replaced with the Supporting Employee Wellbeing policy and was implemented with a comprehensive roll out including online training, face to face training, communications issued through the Workforce Updates, direct to employees through Administrator email, payslip messages and newsfeed posts on the intranet. The new policy puts an emphasis on supporting the employee and changing the language used when discussing sickness absence.
- Regular meetings for both the Managers' group for Employee Wellbeing and the Wellbeing Advocates group continue to take place regularly with membership of the Advocates group continuing to grow month on month. These groups have provided vital feedback which has directly informed the development and roll out of new policies, initiatives and training relating to wellbeing and digital skills which had been cited as a cause of anxiety for employee.
- A range of events took place throughout the year including Employee Wellbeing Information Events for employees, Senior Manager Network gathering focused on employee wellbeing as well as events focused on national awareness raising such as Time to Talk day.
- A range of new guidance documents were launched including Menopause guidance and the Disability Passport guidance.
- A range of promotional communications highlighting the importance of physical activity including walks in Levensgrove Park, the Cycle to Work scheme and a summer walking challenge. In addition, communications were shared during Suicide Prevention week and Mental Health day highlighting the supports available.
- West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust continue their regular visits to Council premises to promote their discounted membership deals for employees and carry out health checks.
- The focus on mental health continued with the pilot project with Headtorch progressing with different employee groups, training sessions on mental health delivered in conjunction with the Trade Union Learning Fund and additional external resources being highlighted to employees through regular newsfeed posts as well as the promotion of the Mental Health First Aiders. Additional training for employees who wish to become Mental Health First Aiders is currently being sourced and a waiting list of those wishing to sign up has been collated.
- Sickness absence reporting was further automated in line with the new Supporting Employee Wellbeing policy and work was started to move the stress risk assessment process online. This change to the process will enable analysis to be undertaken, identify any trends in stress risk

assessments thereby identifying any remedial action that needs to be taken.

- The use of data relating to Employee Wellbeing was reviewed and a new Employee Wellbeing Dashboard was introduced to provide senior management with a more comprehensive and insightful view of the wellbeing of their teams.
- The Council was awarded the Gold Award for the support provided to Reservists and their family.

## 5. People Implications

- 5.1 Effective and robust management of absence can have a positive impact upon employees, promoting early return to good health and work. The results for 2019/20 indicate a slight improvement for the areas covered by this Committee and absence levels remain below the Council average. The service is engaged with the Employee Wellbeing Group and are committed to supporting employee wellbeing through the implementation of actions developed through the group.

## 6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 Based on the average cost of a day (£138), table 1 provides the estimated productivity loss associated with absence across the Council and the Strategic Lead areas. This does not include any associated costs such as cover or overtime.

Table – Loss of Productivity

Strategic Lead Area	2019/20 Loss of Productivity (approx.)
Council Wide	£6,759,952
Housing & Employability	£367,915

- 6.3 There are no procurement implications.

## 7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 There is a risk that managers do not fulfil their role and comply with the policy and in turn Council-wide absence continues to increase.
- 7.2 While it is evident in many instances that the necessary and proactive steps are being undertaken, such as early referral to occupational health, there is still a significant amount of work to do to continue to reduce absence.
- 7.3 Without maintaining and continuing to improve attendance there continues to be a risk of detrimental impact on service delivery, loss of productivity and reduced team performance.

## 8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)



**8.1** This report is for noting only, therefore no EIA is required. Any associated policies are subject to Equalities Impact Screening and Assessment if required.

**9. Consultation**

**9.1** Consultation is on-going with trades unions in the main through the Wellbeing Group, the local Joint Consultative Committees, Convenor meetings and, for more strategic matters, through the Joint Consultative Forum.

**10. Strategic Assessment**

**10.1** Effective attendance management will support the Council's aim to make best use of both financial and human resources resulting in a positive impact upon service provision.

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**Victoria Rogers**  
**Strategic Lead People and Technology**  
**Date: 15 July 2020**

**Person to Contact:** Louise Hastings, HR Business Partner  
People & Technology

16 Church St, Dumbarton  
Tel: 01389 737687  
Email: [louise.hastings@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:louise.hastings@west-dunbarton.gov.uk).

**Appendices:** Appendix 1 Council Wide 2019/20 Absence Summary  
Appendix 2 Housing and Employability 2019/20 Absence Summary

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** None

