Economy & Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee   **15 January 2020**

Report of the Director of Economy & Place

Attendance and Wellbeing

Summary

1.   At a meeting of the Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee in November it was recommended "*That the Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee be asked to further investigate staff wellbeing in the Economy and Place Directorate, starting with receiving 'Update report on Wellbeing Project' before reporting back to CSMC and with looking at the picture within enforcement as part of their ongoing scrutiny of planning enforcement".*

2.   This report therefore provides the committee with information on the wellbeing of staff, specifically within E&P, through updated management information, staff survey results and ongoing activities to support the wellbeing of staff and to reduce absence levels.

3.   It considers any correlation between the staff survey results and absence figures and suggests areas where the committee may wish to scrutinise further.
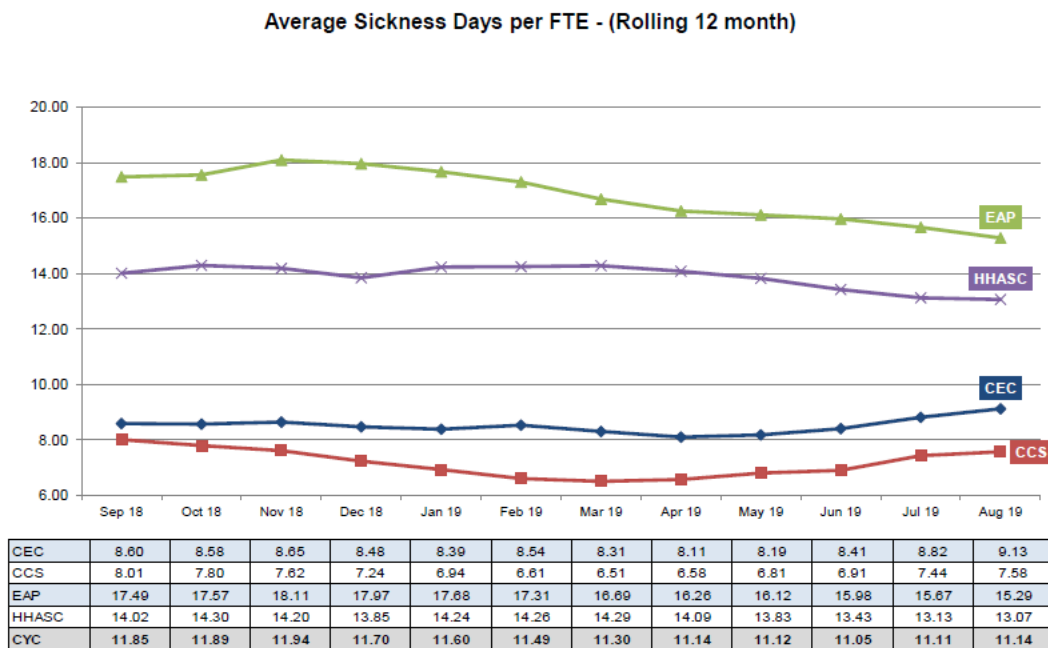
Background

4.   The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, April 19) states that "Fostering employee well-being is good for people and the organization. Promoting well-being can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals and organisations can thrive. Good health and well-being can be a core enabler of employee engagement and organisational performance."

5.   Supporting staff in their wellbeing continues to be a key focus at CYC. As you are aware it is complex and the tools and mechanisms to support staff wellbeing need to be multi-faceted, as one size does not fit all.

6. At CYC we are working with Public Health Colleagues to deliver a Workplace Health & Well Being Strategy and within HR the next 18 months our wellbeing approach is going to focus around stress and mental health in the workplace.

7. Absence of staff within the workplace has direct and indirect impact on the services we provide. The extent of the impact is dependent upon the role the member of staff carries out and the length of time of the absence.

8. Some roles require a replacement immediately due to the service, such as a waste operative, where without a replacement the waste collection will not be able to go ahead. Other roles can often manage for a day or so but where absence is extended temporary replacement will be required, such as social workers.

9. At CYC the levels of absence remain above an average of 11 working days per full time equivalent (fte). The CIPD report average sickness for the public sector is 8.5 days. CYC's aim is to reduce absence levels to around the 8.5 working days per fte, however it is acknowledged that this will be an average and in some areas across the council this may be higher and in other areas much lower.

10. Focussing on the health and wellbeing of our staff is important both from an employer's perspective but also as 80% of our staff are residents in York their improved health and will being will have a direct result on the population.

11. E&P, based on figures to August 2019 has the highest sickness rate across the council, however the directorate has seen a downward trend in the last 12 months.

12. For context the E&P Directorate has the highest proportion of manual staff undertaking physically demanding work outside in all weathers and therefore higher than average sick levels are generally experienced in these services across all Councils. The impact of these frontline services can be seen with the 23.3 days in Waste, Public Realm, Highways and fleet significantly impacting on the E &P averages. A breakdown is shown below where teams have 5 or more fte.

Area	Average sickness days per fte (rolling 12 months as at August 2019)	FTE
Asset & Property Management	8.2	13.3
Development	2.4	32.7
Economic Growth	2.4	5.0
Operations - Waste, Public Realm, Highways and fleet	23.3	232.7
Planning	2.8	15.9
Public Protection	3.6	36.2

13. However, as you can see from the graph below the sickness rates over the last 12 months have seen a downward trend.

Average Sickness Days per FTE - (Rolling 12 month)

	Sep 18	Oct 18	Nov 18	Dec 18	Jan 19	Feb 19	Mar 19	Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19
CEC	8.60	8.58	8.65	8.48	8.39	8.54	8.31	8.11	8.19	8.41	8.82	9.13
CCS	8.01	7.80	7.62	7.24	6.94	6.61	6.51	6.58	6.81	6.91	7.44	7.58
EAP	17.49	17.57	18.11	17.97	17.68	17.31	16.69	16.26	16.12	15.98	15.67	15.29
HHASC	14.02	14.30	14.20	13.85	14.24	14.26	14.29	14.09	13.83	13.43	13.13	13.07
CYC	11.85	11.89	11.94	11.70	11.60	11.49	11.30	11.14	11.12	11.05	11.11	11.14

14. This downward trend is promising and as a result of more proactive management of absence, through return to work interviews, consistent and fair application of the attendance management policy and overview from Directorate Management Team (DMT).

15. CYC has committed to a two year contract with a specialist provider to provide support to employees on their first day of absence and to support managers in their proactive management of staff wellbeing during periods of absence. This commenced in September 2019.

Analysis and further areas for consideration

Absence – Hot Spot Areas

16. As discussed above there is a slight downward trend in absence levels in E&P over a 12 month period and it is expected to decrease further over the next 12 months as a result of additional physical investments in the service i.e. new refuse collection vehicles, new IT systems, ongoing proactive management and support alongside the day one service.

17. CMT Cost Control and DMT directly monitor these measures across the authority on a regular basis.
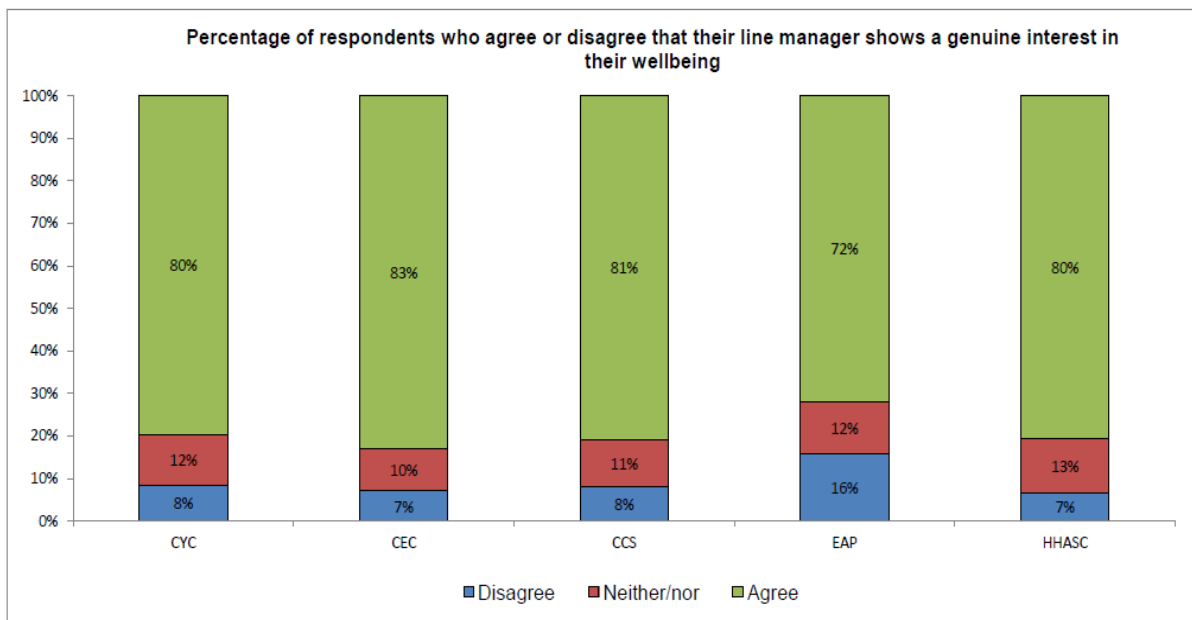
Absence – Long Term and Short Term sickness

18. Long term absence accounts for 28.5% of the percentage of FTE days lost, however within E&P long term absence is the lowest across the council with long term absence accounting for 15.4%.

19. However that means that short term sickness is 84.6% of E&P's absence compared to an average of 71.5% across CYC.

20. Through the introduction of the Day One Absence process it is hoped that we will see these short term figures decrease over the next 12 to 18 months, however in areas such as Waste and front line services as noted above the physically demanding and outdoor working means that staff need to be physically fit for work and cannot get by at work when feeling unwell and manage their workload or hours through flexible working practices.
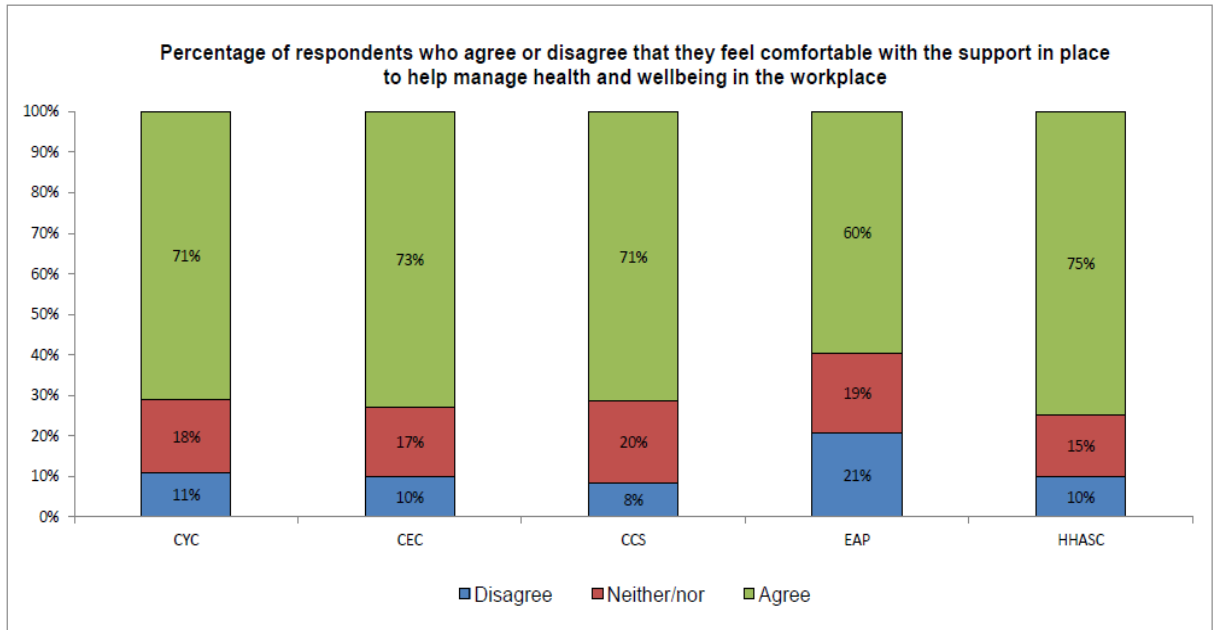
Staff Survey

21. Sitting alongside the actual staff absence data analysis Corporate Management Team have organised a number of short specific pulse staff surveys to help management contextualise data and give staff an opportunity to convey their sentiments and views in respect of a variety of aspects of the working relationship with the Council.

22. One of these Staff Surveys, focussed on Inclusion, Wellbeing & Behaviour at work. The results were positive and are shown below. It should be noted that only 38% of staff across CYC responded to the survey.

23. Within E&P the response rate in pulse survey 3 was 31% of staff so under the average response rate. Upon analysis it was clear that the

views of frontline manual staff in E&P working outside were not captured. This is anecdotally believed to be due the ease with which office staff can use and access the IT survey tool and the clunky nature of paper surveys and lack of familiarity with bureaucratic processes in frontline manual services.
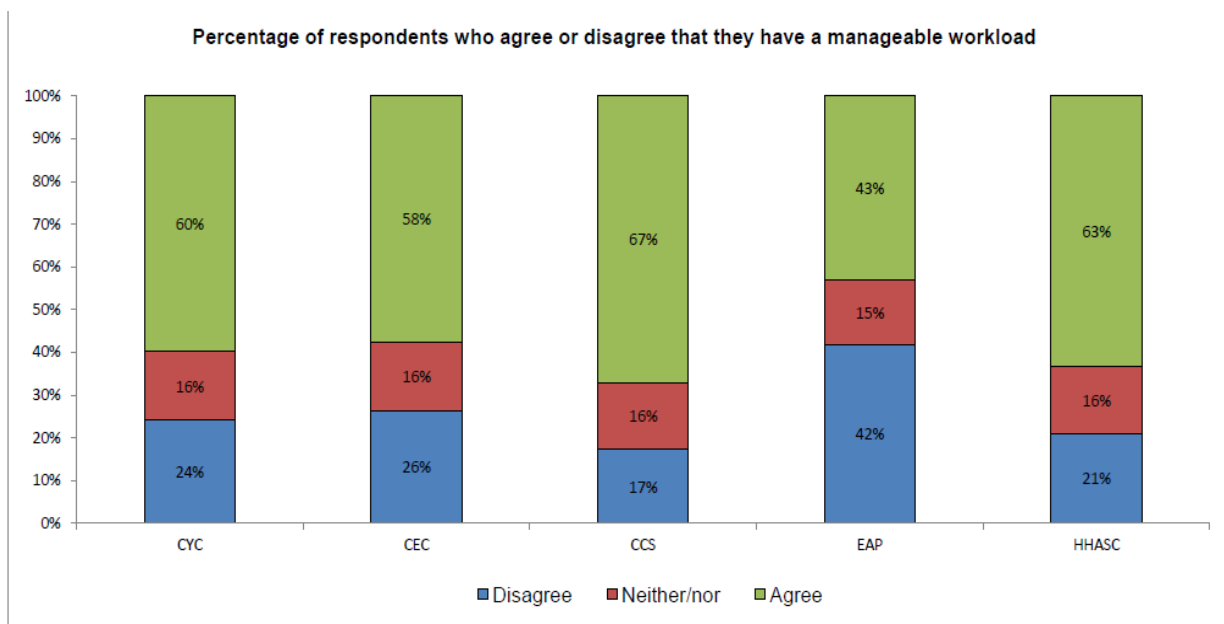
24. Extracts from the survey are shown below but as noted above are predominantly the views expressed by those services with low sickness absence rates. In light of these results the Corporate Director of E & P commissioned further focussed face to face workshops to be carried out within E&P to try and drill further into the responses. This work was undertaken with the office based staff who had predominantly participated in the survey and provides the commentary below each of the following Graphs.

Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that their line manager shows a genuine interest in their wellbeing

25. Overall 80% of respondents in CYC agreed that their line managers had a genuine interest in their wellbeing. It can be seen from the above that 16% in E&P of respondents disagreed compared to 7% of CYC staff.

26. The E&P workshops reflected that managers themselves had limited capacity, lack of visibility of senior managers (as it did in the whole survey) and that managers whilst they had very good technical skills and abilities that there were some skills lacking in people management.
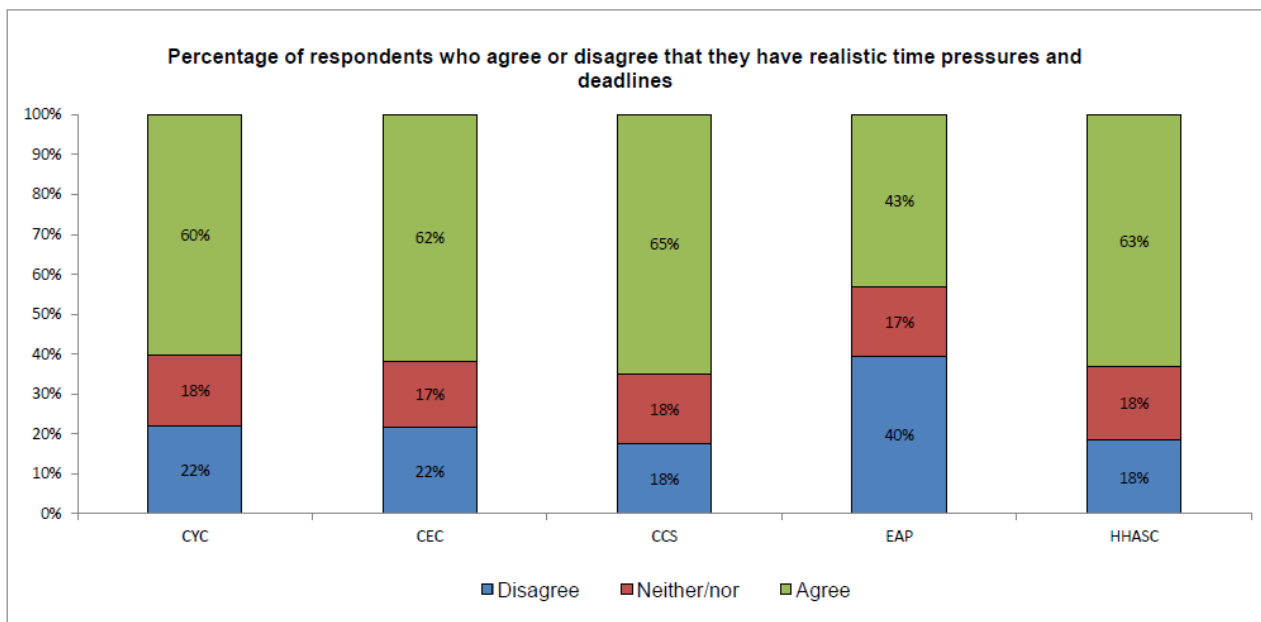
Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that they feel comfortable with the support in place to help manage health and wellbeing in the workplace

	CYC	CEC	CCS	EAP	HHASC
Agree	71%	73%	71%	60%	75%
Neither/nor	18%	17%	20%	19%	15%
Disagree	11%	10%	8%	21%	10%

27. Results from the workshop in E&P suggested that the open plan office environment is at odds with staff wellbeing; "unhealthy, not confidential or supportive, can't always sit together as teams", and "that it often it takes someone to have crisis or become ill before their wellbeing is looked at." There was also a degree of "halo" effect and sense of loss of "Team" placed around historical working at a variety of locations across the City in small teams and enduring adverse office circumstances this was particularly conveyed by long serving staff. It was however recognised that the physical office environment has improved and that Councils budgets have significantly reduced in recent years.

Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that they have a manageable workload

	CYC	CEC	CCS	EAP	HHASC
Agree	60%	58%	67%	43%	63%
Neither/nor	16%	16%	16%	15%	16%
Disagree	24%	26%	17%	42%	21%

28. Workload is a concern and has been raised in previous scrutiny committees linked to absence. The table above shows that 42% of those responding did not feel that their workload was manageable, within E&P, again this is much higher. However as noted above this response is not from the high sickness absence teams and therefore there is no correlation between sickness absence with high workloads that can be deduced in E & P from this work.

29. This area was approached in the E&P focus group and the findings with regard workload are shown below.

> The volume of work was felt, across all services, to be unmanageable and too high for the levels of staff. It was felt that although staff were cut, workload wasn't reviewed in line with staffing resources, putting an unmanageable strain on those left.
>
> There was also some discussion about processes and the type of work being done. It was felt in some areas that some tasks and processes were unnecessary and burdensome and that some business process re-engineering work would be useful to review this.

Percentage of respondents who agree or disagree that they have realistic time pressures and deadlines

30. Similar patterns in the responses above to workload and therefore time pressures.

31. Time pressures within the E&P areas were with regards to statutory timescales. Findings from the staff survey focus groups suggests that whilst there are statutory timescales many timescales and parameters are set locally and put strain on certain services and there was a feeling that these could be adjusted in light of changes to staffing levels and workload over recent years.

32. Service areas are constantly considering ways of working to ensure that work is being carried out in the most efficient manner.

33. E&P took a proactive stance when the results from pulse survey 3 were available. A focus group facilitated through independent facilitator was run and the feedback has been incorporated into the above and considered in detail by DMT.

34. 57% of those who responded in E&P to staff survey 3 are from Planning, Public Protection and Transport.

35. The work demand in these areas are uncontrollable, and customer expectations are rising and often the professional decision are subject to further challenge through appeals Freedom of Information requests, Judicial reviews Council Member and Member of Parliament lobbying which often adds further pressure and work demand. These areas have heavily regulated decision making parameters and officers are constrained by objective professional decision making frameworks so when the outcome is not in favour of the resident(s) or one group of residents feel disadvantaged against another then challenge is increasingly made in these different forms.

Correlation between Absence Data and Staff Survey Responses

36. As can be seen in the report the absence rates are highest within Operations, however those teams only accounted for 21% of the responses in survey 3.

37. The teams that made up half of the responses in E&P have a very low average sickness days lost.

38. What is clear from the responses though in the survey is that the areas where absence is highest have not responded to the survey and therefore we did not gather their views. This is an area upon which we are hoping to improve when the staff survey is re-run. Alternatives such

as using IPADS in team meetings and running sessions with the staff for them to respond are being considered.

39. The directorate are also more proactively engagement with the operations teams through quarterly early morning meetings ran by the Corporate Director / Assistant Director. In addition, members of the management team are making themselves available at regular times, over lunch, for staff to pop and see them. Union engagement has improved and a more proactive relationship with the unions is being experienced.

Seeking to improve staff experience

40. Notwithstanding the lack of correlation between sickness absence and the pulse survey responses addressing poor staff experiences / perceptions is being dealt with seriously not least as these are key factors in staff retention.

41. Within planning since the Survey work and workshops we have introduced new IT modules and staff training on the planning system. This allows managers to understand workloads and therefore assist in the proactive management and support. The system allows visibility of caseloads and therefore they can be managed more efficiently and fairly across the teams.

42. We have also started to engage more proactively with the Developers who are key customers to the service to help manage expectations and improve the way we respond to customers.

43. Within Transport, the capital programme is growing exponentially and we have been growing the team significantly for delivery and to improve resilience. However, as with planning, with an increasingly ageing workforce and the lack of talent development in the public sector has resulted in us increasingly losing staff to higher wages in other Councils in key areas of the team. We are trying to counterbalance this through retaining staff by offering to support staff development through a degree programme (supported by the apprenticeship levy) with internal promotion. In particular the Directorate has heavily invested in project management qualifications, this has however still left vacancies which have been difficult to fill.

44. In addition to these specific actions within Transport and Planning the Council has instigated an Organisational Development (OD) programme and has established a staff led task and finish group. This group is developing and proposing a series of interventions that will be co designed with staff to maximise the impact and avoid a top down approach, which in itself could be counterproductive when seeking to address the complexity of managing performance, customer expectations, staff happiness and health and wellbeing.

45. In part, the success of the Organisational Development programme will be down to the support it receives from organisational leaders including management at all levels, CMT and Members. To this end as the plan is developed it expected that it will be adopted by CMT, and be subject to Member engagement through Executive and Customer and Corporate Services scrutiny.

Stress and Mental Health

46. The figures we have relating to stress and mental health are from our absence data only and therefore just collected when staff go off sick. Whilst the staff survey looked at wellbeing what we have not carried out is any work or analysis relating to stress and mental health of those still in work, and perhaps this is an area for further activity.

47. The HSE reported that in 2017/18 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 44% of all work-related ill health cases and 57% of all working days lost due to ill health. Stress, depression or anxiety is more prevalent in public service industries, such as education; health and social care; and public administration and defence. The full document can be found in appendix 1.

48. In CYC absence as a result of Stress & Mental Health accounts for 30.7% of the percentage of FTE days lost, when compare to the same period last year there is a slight increase by 0.7%.

49. Across the Directorates it is interesting to see the changes, however as you are aware there may be a couple of long term sick cases that can skew the figures and further investigation would be needed to identify the individual cases.

	Of Employees claiming Sickness - % of FTE Days Lost in total due to Stress & Mental Health related absence	
30.0%		30.7%
39.0%	CEC	36.6%
15.6%	CCS	42.3%
27.1%	EAP	18.7%
36.4%	HHASC	27.1%

50. With regards to stress and mental health, any member of staff reporting absent on day one with this reason, are referred to occupational health for their professional advice. Staff are sign posted to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAsstP) who provide support direct to them, this includes counselling over the phone. Staff are positive about their experience of the helpline.

51. CYC has seen 11.7% utilisation (web site and helpline calls) of the EAsstP service, taking into consideration the declared headcount of 2600, for this period. The standard utilisation for the EAsstP is 5%. So CYC is just slightly above the standard usage.

52. The table below shows the work related issues that staff have contacted the EAsstP service on.

Work Issues

Issue	Jul 19 - Sep 19
External Pressures	3
Inappropriate work demands	1
Mental Health	0
Role Performance	1
Support from Management	2
Work Related trauma	1
Work Stress	5
Sickness Absence	1
Grievance/Disciplinary/Suspension	1
Total	**15**

53. The Council have signed up to the Time to Change Employers pledge. This is a social movement led by MIND and funded through Department of Health. There are alternatives such as Mindful Employer that other organisations have signed up to, ultimately with the same objectives.

54. Time to Change is focussed on changing how we think and act about mental health and aims to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health. Reducing stigma and discrimination has a positive impact on how we experience ourselves and our mental health problems, or how we might ask for help and support.

55. An action plan describing how CYC will achieve its pledge will be led through the organisational development programme.

56. This is an important step for CYC. We want to create a workplace environment which acknowledges that we're all human, we all have mental health, and that talking about it in a supportive environment makes a difference. Managers and leaders can help shape the workplace environment to be supportive of staff facing mental health problems.

57. Time to Change champions will receive training enabling them to promote public health messages across the organisation and support mental wellbeing in our staff.

58. A network of champions have been recruited and are in the process of defining their role and what they will be able to offer to colleagues. Training will then commence to enable them to carry out their role.

59. By way of next steps for organisational development and specific improvements in frontline services it is recommended that the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee receive a further report when the OD programme is developed and has a particular focus on interventions for manual frontline services and communications.

Consultation

60. There was no consultation involved in the production of this report.

Council Plan

61. The information outlined in this report is in line with the Council Plan and the People Plan which has health and wellbeing as a priority.

Implications

62. There are direct financial cost associated with health and wellbeing, mainly through the cost of absence. Managing Health & Well Being effectively will reduce this strain on resource.

63. HR implications are throughout health & wellbeing and ensuring that practice and policy is being consistently applied is essential.

64. There are no known Legal, ICT or other implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Risk Management

65. The main risks continue to relate to failure to record, track, monitor and put into place actions to monitor and manage wellbeing, which may cause sickness levels to rise.

Recommendations

i.   To consider the information provided in the report.

ii.   That the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee receive a further report when the OD programme is developed and has a particular focus on interventions for manual frontline services and staff engagement.

Reason: To inform the Committee of absence figures in the E&P directorate and the staff's response in the staff survey.

Contact Details

Author:	**Chief Officers Responsible for the report:**
Trudy Forster Head of HR 01904 553984	Neil Ferris, Corporate Director E&P

Report Approved ✓ **Date** 6/01/20

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: **All** ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report