

Health and Wellbeing Plan.

2024–27

A healthy and high-performing workforce



The Council's workforce priorities are:

- Attract, develop and retain talent
- Be an inclusive employer that represents the communities we serve at all levels
- Have a thriving and healthy workforce
- Develop world-class leaders and managers
- Have a high-performing workforce that delivers great services for our city.

Introduction

Promoting and supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff is a key priority for the Council.

We understand that effective workplace wellbeing leads to increased resilience, better employee engagement, reduced sickness absence, and higher performance and productivity.

This means that staff will be in the best position to deliver excellent services to residents and support the Council to achieve its objectives.

The Health and Wellbeing Plan is a key building block that sets out our vision and the things we will do to strengthen our support for staff, so that wellbeing is:

- **A central part of our strategic priorities**
- **Essential to everything we do**
- **Championed at all levels.**

This plan adopts a strategic approach to health and wellbeing – we have identified six priority areas that we will focus on to achieve our vision, address our biggest challenges, and shift our approach to early intervention and prevention.

This plan supports the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan and promotes Making Manchester Fairer, which makes clear that good-quality work has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

Why do we need a Health and Wellbeing Plan?

The plan will help to:

- Attract new people to the organisation
- Engage, motivate and retain employees
- Create a healthier, more inclusive culture
- Address our biggest challenges
- Reduce sickness absence
- Improve performance and development
- Improve productivity and success.

Our key challenges:

- **Sickness absence rates:** in the past 12 months the Council has lost 89,800 days due to sickness absence; this has cost c£12.6million. In the same period, the Council has also lost 34,000 days due to mental health-related absence; this has cost c£4.9million.
- **Mental health crisis across the UK:** this is reflected in our sickness-absence figures.
- **Mental health (stress/depression):** this is the highest cause of absence in the Council. Staff reported challenges with mental and physical health in the last staff survey.
- **Cost-of-living crisis:** most of our workforce will be significantly affected by this.
- **COVID-19:** this continues to affect employee health and wellbeing.

How we got here:

It's only right that the voice of the workforce is at the heart of this plan. Employees led this process to ensure the plan's priorities and subsequent activities were authentic and accessible.

The Health and Wellbeing Plan was developed with a core group of 20 volunteers who represented a cross section of the organisation. The group were guided through an agile and design-led process, including problem definition, producing priority themes and solutions, and putting a few of them into practice. By doing it this way we have ensured that the voice of our workforce has been heard.

We didn't start with a blank page; we built on our Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018 and what we had learnt from our 2022 Staff Survey and guidelines from CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).

Using the behaviours framework, we worked with volunteers to:



Understand what the current view of the workforce is about health and wellbeing in the workplace



Discover what the good (and not so good) looks like in terms of health and wellbeing support within the organisation



Prioritise and validate ideas and solutions, formulating them into our Health and Wellbeing Plan



Consider the priorities and activities to deliver and embed the plan.

Our health and wellbeing vision:

To create a healthy and high-performing workforce by prioritising and promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.



Our wellbeing aims:

- Build a healthy and high-performing workforce that delivers great services to residents.
- Create a safe and healthy work environment that fosters a culture of positive wellbeing, ensuring the wellbeing of our people is integral to everything we do.
- Improve the general wellbeing for our diverse workforce and ensure that wellbeing is seen as everyone's responsibility.
- Embed wellbeing as a central part of our strategic priorities, ensuring it is essential to everything we do and the decisions we make.
- Be identified as an employer of choice that promotes and prioritises wellbeing and recognises the role wellbeing can play in the bigger picture, including performance, productivity, and sickness absence.
- Tackle our health and wellbeing challenges (sickness absence, mental health-related absence).



How we will get there:

Our principles describe how we will achieve our health and wellbeing vision.



Our health and wellbeing principles:

- Empower and educate our workforce to make the right choices.
- Prevent health and wellbeing issues from arising or escalating.
- Support our workforce when problems arise.



Our priority areas:



1. Promote and encourage good mental health and wellbeing:

Ensure staff and managers have the knowledge, skills and tools to promote good mental health and wellbeing across the Council, so everyone feels they can talk openly about stress and mental health.



2. Encourage staff to make good physical health and lifestyle choices:

Encourage our workforce to engage in healthy lifestyle choices by promoting and providing access to physical activities, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.



3. Embed good wellbeing practices in our leadership:

Support leaders (at all levels) to promote and prioritise the health and wellbeing of their teams and services.



4. Strengthen health and wellbeing, communications and engagement:

Develop first-class communications and engagement, ensuring everyone is encouraged to stay safe and well, and that they have a say in decision-making.



5. Expand our inclusive and accessible financial wellbeing offer:

Continue to strengthen our financial wellbeing offer; this promotes financial literacy, provides access to affordable borrowing, and responds directly to the cost-of-living crisis.



6. Healthy and inclusive workplace:

Ensure that staff work in open and inclusive environments that promote wellbeing, a good work-life balance, and a sense of role fulfilment.



1

Promote and encourage good mental health and wellbeing:

Ensure staff and managers have the knowledge, skills and tools to promote good mental health and wellbeing across the Council, so everyone feels they can talk openly about stress and mental health.

Now:

Strengthen our mental health support, guidance and training for staff and line managers:

- Stress risk assessments
- Service stress risk assessments
- Mental health action plan
- Training/guides for managers on understanding Mental Health, Health and Safety Executive Stress Management Standards, spotting early signs, early intervention and prevention, and facilitating a good return to work
- Sign up to the Mental Health at Work Commitment and develop and deliver the action plan.

Next:

Review our commissioned mental health support services to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of our workforce:

- Ensure mental health is a consideration when key decisions are made, to include responsibilities of line managers, service and job design Pilot Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) with some of our front-line services.
- Support individuals to better manage their psychological wellbeing and develop personal resilience.
- SLG to have a mental health objective that reflects the wellbeing level of their service.

Later:

- Deliver 'Mental Health at Work' to raise awareness and understanding of mental health in the workplace.
- Provide targeted support for groups (eg. men, Black, Asian and minority ethnic) with high levels of mental health-related absence.
- Provide targeted support for services with high levels of mental health-related absence.
- Strengthen workforce intelligence and reporting by developing a wellbeing dashboard.



2

Encourage staff to make good physical health and lifestyle choices:

Encourage our workforce to engage in healthy lifestyle choices by promoting and providing access to physical activities, healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.

Now:

- Provide and promote opportunities to increase physical activity through active working, active travel and active leisure.
- Equip our managers with the tools and knowledge to support their staff with disabilities and long-term health conditions (in partnership with the Workplace Adjustment Hub).
- Provide free flu vaccinations for all staff.
- Ensure staff and managers know how to keep themselves safe in work, in line with the Good Manager Guide, and ensure appropriate checks are in place.

Next:

- Ensure there is an understanding of the long-term physical and mental wellbeing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Encourage staff to take care of themselves and look after their health in relation to sleep, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol and drinking.

Later:

- Create an environment where people feel empowered and are educated about their physical wellbeing.
- Launch a Wellbeing and Activity space in the Town Hall (some time in 2024/25).



3

Embed good wellbeing practices in our leadership:

Support leaders (at all levels) to promote and prioritise the health and wellbeing of their teams and services.

Now:

- Establish a corporate health and wellbeing group to oversee the delivery of this plan at a directorate and service level.
- Establish checks as part of the Manager Accountability Framework, to ensure wellbeing conversations in one-to-one, Our Conversation and team meetings.
- Work with leaders to regard wellbeing as business as usual and not just for times of change, crisis or adversity.

Next:

- Improve leadership development so that leaders understand the links between wellbeing and other core areas, such as health and safety, and performance and development.
- Support our leaders (and managers) to embed, promote and prioritise wellbeing within services, service plans and delivery: understand the existing wellbeing culture; create positive (healthy and inclusive) working environments; invest in employee wellbeing; and embed wellbeing in everything we do – priorities, meetings and culture.

Later:

- Support leaders to better utilise data and intelligence relating to health and wellbeing and how they support their services.
- Support leaders and managers to develop teams with high psychological safety.



4

Strengthen health and wellbeing, communications and engagement:

Develop first-class communications and engagement, ensuring everyone is encouraged to stay safe and well, and that they have a say in decision-making.

Now:

- Deliver an annual internal communication and engagement plan on health and wellbeing.
- Increase awareness and understanding of health and wellbeing support programmes, such as the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health.
- Update the Manager Hub with resources for line managers to embed and promote the health and wellbeing offer in their teams.

Next:

- Establish a network of health and wellbeing ambassadors across all services to advocate, promote and signpost wellbeing resources.
- Ensure that all the workforce are aware of wellbeing-related support groups and networks (eg. Mental Health Group, Walking Clubs, Yoga Club, gym classes) and support the creation of new groups.

Later:

- Establish mechanisms to continually seek feedback from the workforce on the Health and Wellbeing Plan, to ensure that it evolves to meet the diverse and changing needs of our workforce.



5

Expand our inclusive and accessible financial wellbeing offer:

Continue to strengthen our financial wellbeing offer; this promotes financial literacy, provides access to affordable borrowing, and responds directly to the cost-of-living crisis.

Now:

- Improve the financial literacy of staff, ensuring they have the understanding to make informed decisions about financial issues.
- Align our staff benefits and discounts to the cost-of-living crisis (eg. discounted food and travel).

Next:

- Ensure managers understand the link between financial and mental wellbeing, as well as the negative impact that money worries can have on performance; if necessary, arrange to have supportive conversations.
- Support staff with financial planning for retirement.

Later:

- Promote employment practices that avoid low pay, insecure contracts and unfair pay gaps, and ensure job security while meeting organisational requirements.



6

Healthy and inclusive workplace:

Ensure that staff work in open and inclusive environments that promote wellbeing, a good work-life balance, and a sense of role fulfilment.

Now:

- Encourage staff to have a healthy work-life balance that will be modelled by leaders and managers.
- Review our existing policies and practices to ensure wellbeing is embedded, or that they support the delivery of our wellbeing aims.
- Improve our support for colleagues who are disabled or have a long-term health condition, ensuring access to workplace adjustments in a timely manner.

Next:

- Review how we support people returning to work from long-term sickness, including the return-to-work procedure/process.
- Integrate wellbeing within our procedures, policies and working practices.
- Continually review our contracts of employment to ensure they are secure.
- Review our flexible working policy and approach, to ensure our workforce has access to flexible working arrangements in line with business needs, and to ensure flexible working decisions are fair and consistent.

Later:

- Review our job-design process to ensure consideration is given to factors such as workload, work intensity, and autonomy.
- Ensure our workforce has good physical working conditions and inclusive workspaces.

How we will deliver the plan

We will develop a long-term action plan containing details of the specific actions we will take over each phase to progress the delivery of our aims and approach.

This strategic plan will be underpinned by business and service plans.

An annual report will be produced at the end of each year to review progress, impact, and alignment with the Council's wider strategic aims.

Ultimately, every individual in the Council should feel a connection to the plan's vision, aims and approach.

Year 1

Launch the plan, action planning, embed wellbeing



Year 2

Embed wellbeing, making changes, impact



Year 3

Impact, take stock, next steps



Measuring success

Success can be measured in many ways. Our approach to measuring the success of our Wellbeing Plan will be a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection, review and improvement.

We will use a range of hard and soft metrics to measure the impact of our actions and ensure that wellbeing is central to the success of our workforce and Manchester City Council as a whole.

Hard outcomes

- Uptake of wellbeing-related activities
- Reduced sickness absence
- Monitoring employee engagement
- Recruitment and retention rates
- Surveys and ongoing feedback
- Engagement with the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index
- Conducting Deep Dives
- Monitoring and robustly evaluating initiatives
- Annual Evaluation Report and updated action plans.

Soft outcomes

- Improved productivity, performance and satisfaction
- Improved relationships
- Improved Change Management processes
- Customer satisfaction/Reaching organisational aims
- Enhanced reputation as a service provider in the community.

Governance and making the plan work for us

Why is it important?

We want to set up a governance arrangement that will allow us to achieve our aims, but also ensure we're focusing on the right things as we progress.

It's critical that the Health and Wellbeing Plan supports our workforce. Therefore, we will commit to a process whereby we 'check in and iterate' the plan, regularly taking stock of progress, outstanding activities and any key learnings about why something was and was not achieved.

How do we do it?

This plan is owned by the Senior Management Team (SMT). We will report to the SMT via the Director of Public Health (SMT Lead for Health and Wellbeing, and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Group) and the Health and Wellbeing Group.

- The purpose of this group is to provide assurance to the SMT that action is being taken across the Council to improve health and wellbeing and tackle our biggest challenges.
- The Group will be chaired by the Director of Public Health (SMT Lead for Health and Wellbeing) and will be supported by the Head of Workforce Strategy.
- Each directorate will nominate a senior officer to represent the directorate at this group – the purpose of this role is to share local updates, progress and challenges and to share best practice with colleagues across the Council.

