



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Volunteering

Employee Led
Groups

Management

Behaviours

Physical Health
Support

EAP

Disability
Confident

Policies

Mental Health
Support

Culture

Carers

Leadership

Equality &
Inclusion

OWOW

Comms &
Engagement

Being Our Best Selves

Our Employee Health and wellbeing strategy for the council

Why?

The Manchester Context

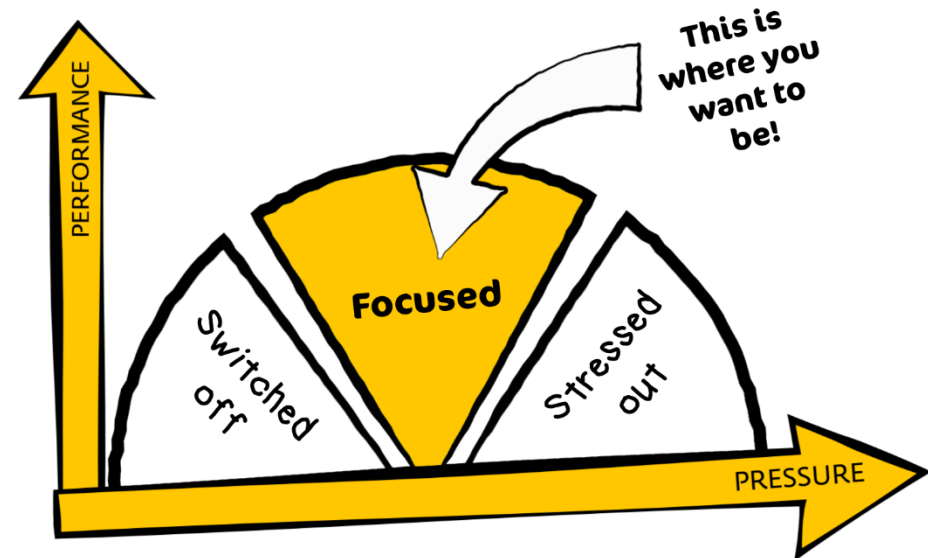
Improving the Health and Wellbeing outcomes of the Manchester population is central to achieving the progressive and equitable strand of the [Our Manchester strategy](#) and a clear and demonstrable way in which we can promote the 'Better Lives' principle of the Our Manchester approach. In support of this, the [Manchester Population Health Plan 2018-2027](#) sets out a vision to optimise the physical and mental health of our residents, in order that they can engage with and benefit from the education and lifestyle opportunities across the city, to live well and independently. The Plan outlines the five priorities:

- Improving outcomes in the first 1000 days of a child's life
- Strengthening the positive impact of work on health
- Supporting people, households and communities to be socially connected and make changes that matter to them
- Creating an age friendly city that promotes good health and wellbeing for people in mid and later life
- Taking action on preventable early deaths

As it is such a critical area of work, employee health and wellbeing is managed by individual organisations, but also overseen at a City-wide level by the Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board who commissioned an independent review of

the employee health and wellbeing practices of all member organisations; [Health and Wellbeing Board Workplace Health Baseline Assessment, 5 July 2017](#). The Baseline Assessment provides a framework for organisations to both assess and further enhance their approach on an ongoing basis with the aim of making the health and social care system in the City exemplars of good workforce wellbeing. - The recommendations from this assessment have helped inform our Strategy.

Work and Health



Studies show that work is good for both physical and mental wellbeing, but that this needs to be 'good work' ([Working for a Healthier Tomorrow, 2008](#)) which is safe, healthy and with employees having some degree of say about how this work is done and an understanding of its alignment to the higher purpose of the organisation.

The same point also works in reverse - **good physical and mental wellbeing is good for work**. It is well documented that staff who report good wellbeing are both more engaged in their work and are more productive. Staff are able to thrive when they receive the right balance of pressure and support, but can struggle or even become unwell if overworked and under supported ([Thriving at Work, 2017](#)). Having a physically and mentally well workforce, and an organisational framework and culture to support those who are struggling or unwell to maximise their wellbeing, will contribute significantly to increased performance across the City Council

Employee Health and Wellbeing at Manchester City Council

As an employer, the City Council is in a unique position to further directly influence and embed the importance of health and wellbeing. Our circa. 7,000 staff connect on a daily basis with the City's population through their work and over 50% of our employees are themselves Manchester residents.

Through understanding the positive contribution that work can make to health and the connection between wellbeing and effectiveness this Strategy will play a key role in supporting the delivery of the organisation's overarching priorities.

Over the past eight years the organisation has experienced an unprecedented level of change, with a reduction in workforce of over 40%. However, our ambition for the City remains just as great. Through the Our Manchester approach we've recognised that the only way we can deliver on this ambition in the context of such reduced resources is to work in a new way.

However, it's important to acknowledge the increasing demands which this context places on our people and the potential implications for physical and mental wellbeing. As detailed later in this Strategy, the high levels of sickness absence over recent years is a practical indicator of this challenge. In this, context a positive approach to employee wellbeing all the more important.

Through effective employee health and wellbeing in the Council, we can help create a workforce and organisational culture which both understands and exemplifies wellbeing in Manchester, supporting the Council and City's strategic priorities in this area.

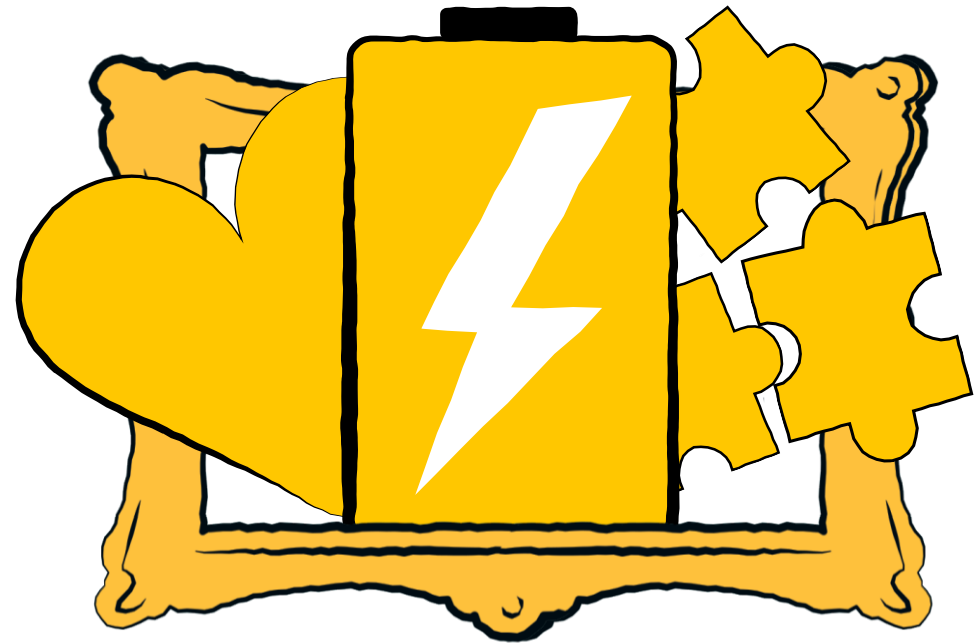


What?

At Manchester City Council we want everyone to support each other in **being our best selves** at work everyday, and for time at work to support us in being our best selves at home too. We recognise that this will mean different things to different people.

We'll only achieve this through working together. - HR, Health and Safety, our Trades Unions, Managers and leaders and importantly staff themselves all have a critical role to play.

We need to keep getting the basics right, supporting our people when they need it through strong and supportive management and a framework of policies and interventions like a quality Occupational Health service. However, for us, wellbeing at work is about much more than this: It's about having systems and processes that enable people to feel empowered and able to deliver exceptional performance and creating a culture which means people are proud and connected to the Council and work in a safe and sustainable way.



We want our people to feel
**healthy, connected and
energised** enough to act with
drive and determination.

This means that we can deliver
our peak performance:
being our best selves.

Where are we now?

The Council has a good foundation from which to start:

- An underpinning policy framework is monitored and reviewed by the Personnel Committee. Policies, including management of attendance, flexible working and paid volunteering leave support a healthy working environment and provide a framework to help those absent through sickness get back to work.
- Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health provision support our staff to keep well, remain in work and return to work quickly when they're absent.
- Leadership and Management development programmes are in place to help develop more effective and supportive people managers.
- A range of employee led groups promote physical and mental wellbeing and provide opportunities for staff to engage with each other inside and outside the workplace.
- Our HROD and Health and Safety teams provide advice, guidance and support to managers and staff.
- Communications and engagement campaigns promote targeted opportunities and interventions to staff across a range of areas.

However, our baseline data shows there remain some significant challenges here. An average of 12.24 days are lost due to sickness by each employee every year, significantly higher than comparable averages for public sector organisations of our size, with mental wellbeing issues the biggest contributor to days lost. Our wellbeing score from the most recent BHeard Survey is also an area of concern in a number of parts of the Council. - Appendix A includes more detail on our baseline position.

Oversight of Employee Health and wellbeing is already provided by a Council-wide steering group. However, there's more we need to do to deepen this organisational ownership and ensure everyone understands the role they need to play.

Appendix B provides a range of measures which will help us measure progress against where we're trying to get to.

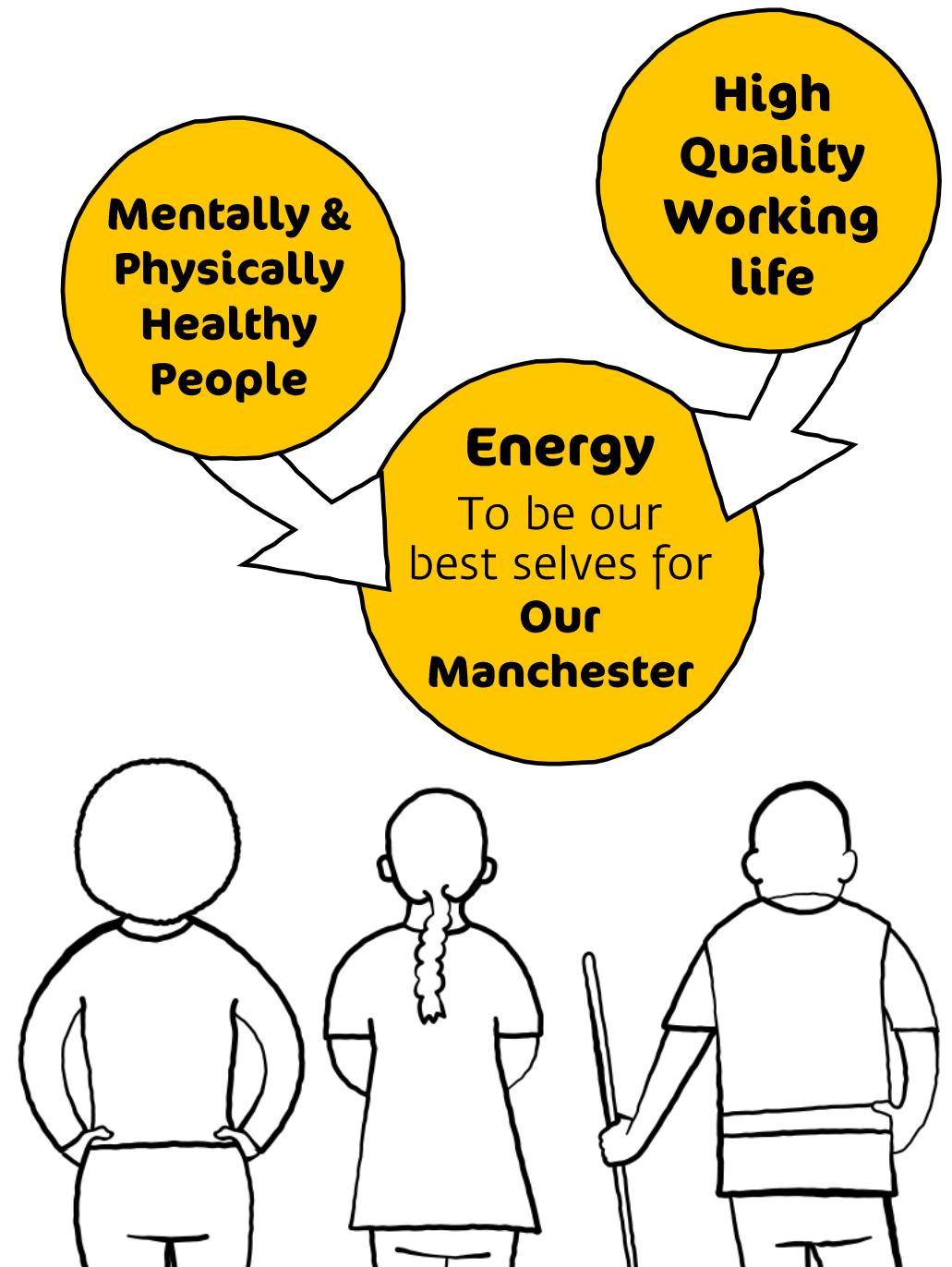
How?

Our priorities for employee health and wellbeing have been informed by the data baseline, including the views and experiences of our people and intelligence on the population health and wellbeing challenges facing the City as a whole. We've talked to experts in the field and considered both local recommendations, like the [Health and Wellbeing Board Workplace Health Baseline Assessment](#) and national evidence, like [Thriving at Work](#).

For us, physical and mental health and wellbeing are of equal importance and inexorably linked. Our plan considers both areas with most of the activities aimed at addressing them together.

We've grouped our priorities under two broad headings:

- High quality working life
- Mentally & Physically Healthy People

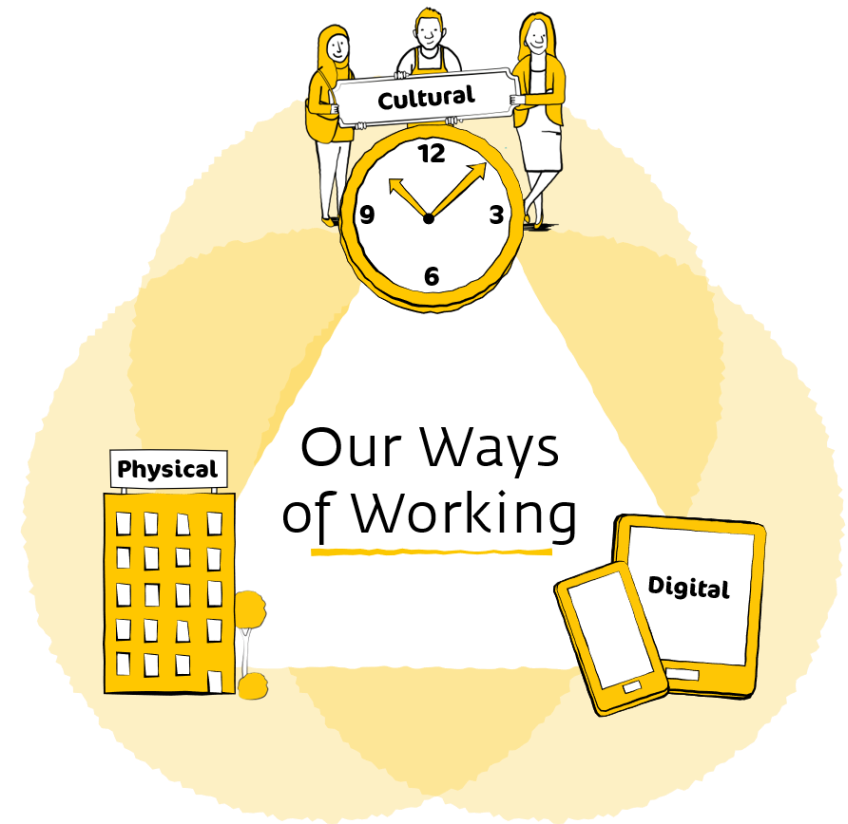


High Quality Working Life

The objective of a high-quality working life is to ensure we provide 'good' work to which employees can connect and within a culture and an environment that promotes wellbeing.

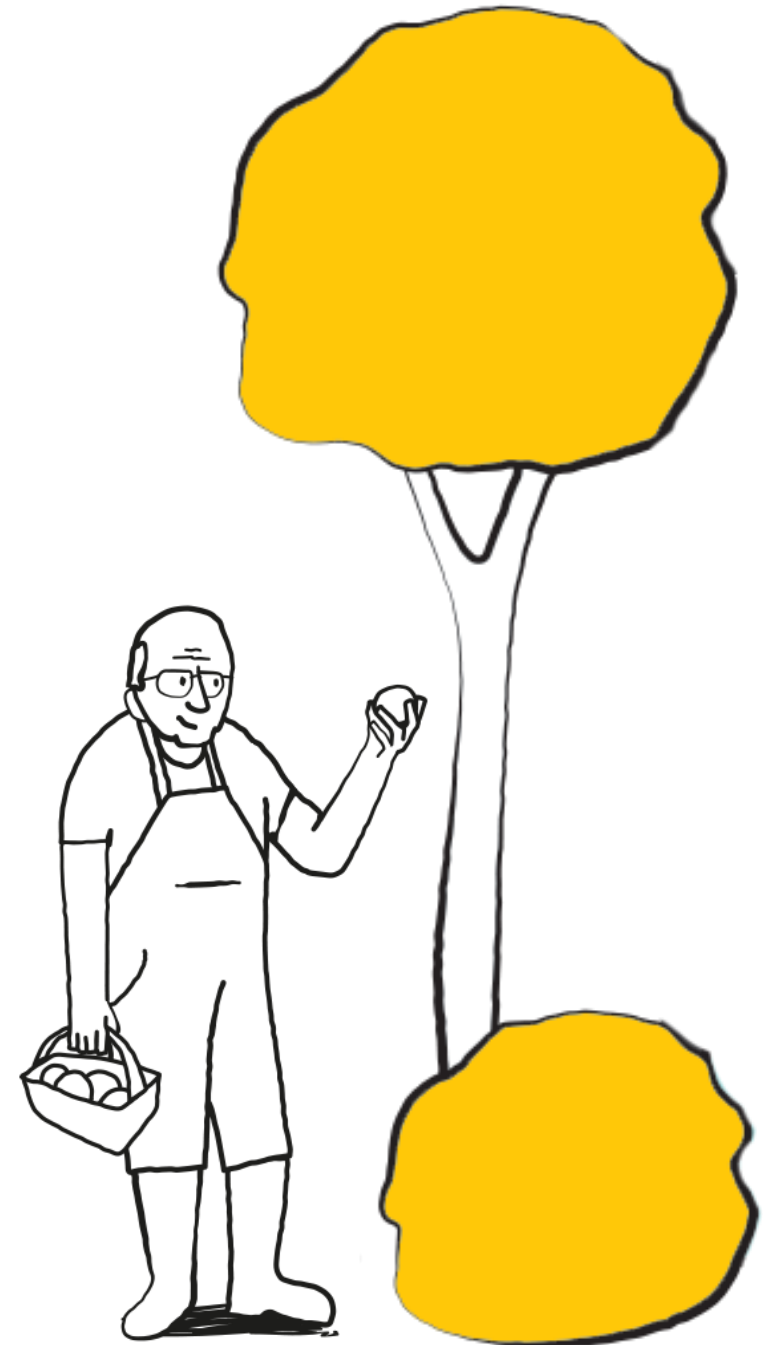
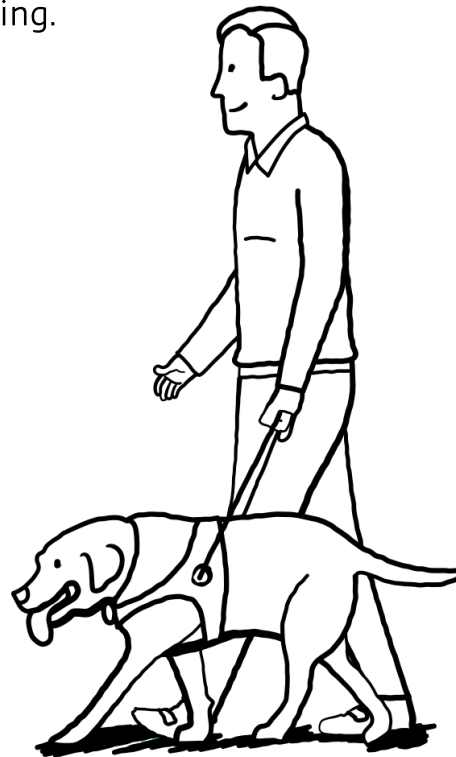
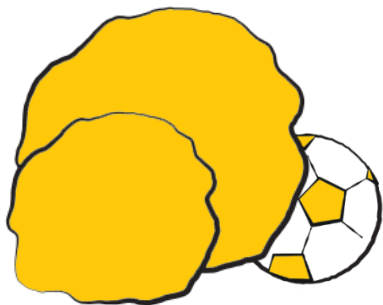
This area is about creating a working culture and environment which supports wellbeing. We'll do this by:

- Embedding the Our Manchester behaviours as the way we do things.
- Becoming a Timewise accredited Council and promoting flexibility in how we work, recruit and lead through the Our Ways of Working programme.
- Achieving level three of the national Disability Confident accreditation, supporting the recruitment, progression and workforce experience of our disabled employees and those with a long term health condition.



Above: The Our Ways of Working model, focusing on how we can improve the workplace through the physical working space, the digital technology, and the workplace culture.

- Creating a truly shared ownership of the employee wellbeing agenda:
 - An organisational environment which promotes wellbeing at all levels.
 - Leaders who deliver this message with authenticity and passion: walking the walk as well as talking the talk.
 - Managers who understand their role and manage with compassion.
 - Providing opportunities for staff to come together to promote their wellbeing.
- Reviewing our framework of policies and guidance in support of managers and staff to ensure this proactively supports our approach to wellbeing.



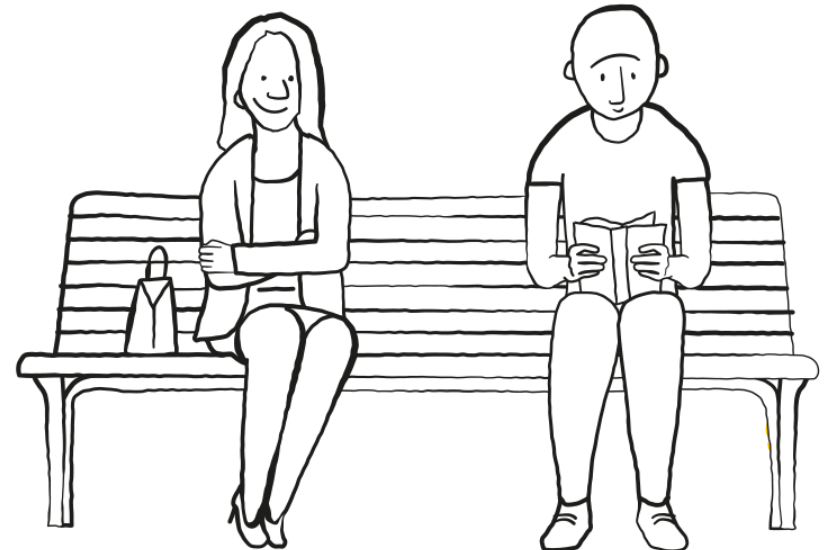
Mentally & Physically Healthy People

This priority is about preventing the causes of poor health and supporting employees to maximise both their mental and physical health and resilience. We'll do this by:

- Creating an organisational culture and framework of support which is open and honest about the scale and challenge posed by mental health, recognising that around one in four people will experience a mental health problem each year.
- Strengthening the way in which we manage those employees who are unwell, supporting them to stay in work where possible and appropriate, and recover and return when they're absent.
- Communications and initiatives designed to promote health and build understanding targeted and informed by both evidence from the workforce and the broader city-wide population wellbeing agenda.
- Continuing to review and strengthen our broader offer of support to staff, including through the Employee Assistance Programme, our Occupational

Health provision and targeted programmes in areas like, mental health, carers support and smoking cessation.

- Strong and flexible management of our people which recognises different needs and supports those absent due to sickness back into work.
- Recognising that Being our Best Selves means different things for different people and that this may change over the course of someone's time working for the Council, requiring supportive and adaptable management.



A three year delivery plan is appended below (Appendix C). Delivery of this plan will be reviewed annually and overseen by the Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group and, ultimately, the Personnel Committee.

It is worth noting that this plan by no means captures the entirety of work to promote employee wellbeing. Delivery of the Our People Strategy will in itself provide an overarching framework to further the High Quality Working Life strand. There will also be more local and targeted work in Services and Teams.



APPENDIX A: The Baseline

It is important to be clear on our starting point in terms of employee wellbeing to help both target actions and understand progress. Key current metrics of relevance include:

- Our overall workforce engagement score through the 2018 Bheard survey was 610.6. – This makes the Council a 'One to Watch' organisation.
- Our wellbeing score through the survey is at 4.06, a neutral point (neither negative or positive).
- Using the feedback from BHeard it is clear that in general people feel they are able to balance their work and home responsibilities, however their work life does impact on their overall energy levels when they do get home.
- 75,309 days were lost to staff sickness absence between June 17 and May 18, an average of 12.24 days per FTE
- Mental health issues are the biggest cause of absence, relating to 33% of days lost over the this period.
- Less than 5% of staff have declared that they consider themselves to be disabled. However, 18% of BHeard Survey respondents indicated they considered themselves to have a disability.
- In the last year, 1107 referrals were made to our occupational health provider. This included 144 referrals for fast track physiotherapy.
- In the last year 18 employees have been dismissed on the grounds of medical capability.
- In advance of Attendance Management Hearings, 22 referrals have been made for employees to be assessed by Independent Registered Medical Practitioners to seek advice about ill health retirement in the past year. 7 employees met the criteria for pension release and 9 are currently pending a decision.
- Since the EAP was launched in May 2017, 1,249 calls have been received 89.2% of these calls were counselling related. 4,256 hits have been recorded on the website.
- Pre- Employment Questionnaires (PEQs) continue to be requested by mainly managers in the Children's and Adults' Directorates to ensure the people we recruit are fit to carry out their role in its entirety and thus provide effective services to Manchester residents. On average 30 PEQs are requested per month.
- In 201/18 circa. £230K was spent on agency staff to cover for sickness absence

APPENDIX B: What does 'good' look like if this works?

- Reduction in occupational health referrals and demands on primary carers but increased utilisation of the EAP and universal services.
- Increased number of communications to the workforce regarding health and wellbeing.
- The introduction of a developing library of This Is Me videos helping to normalise talking about mental ill health.
- Increased uptake in health and wellbeing related training and management and leadership programmes.
- More positive feedback from future Bheard Surveys with an annual increase of between 4-6% on our current score and in particular across those questions within the wellbeing factor. This will be accompanied by an honest and transparent response to the results.
- Attaining Disability Confident Level 3 Accreditation and increased representation at all levels of disabled employees.
- Increased attendance at engagement events (e.g. Listening in Action).
- Increase in employee led groups both employment related and also for leisure.
- Reduction in those requiring movement to a new post for medical reasons.
- Reduction in sickness absence: the City Council's sickness absence rates are the third highest out of the seven Greater Manchester authorities that have reported absence levels with 12.13 days lost per employee between April 17 and March 18. Although benchmarking has been undertaken with other Councils there is now work underway to benchmark services against similar functions both in private sector and in Councils with a view to setting some realistic and achievable targets at a more localised level.
- A reduction in agency spend to cover for sickness absence.
- Managers will be more empathetic, and better equipped to support staff when they are struggling or unwell and all managers have completed mental health awareness training.
- Reduction in presenteeism as a result of more flexible working.
- Increased registration for MCR+ employee benefits scheme and increased uptake of individual benefits
- Timewise accreditation and delivery of the associated action plan including a review and refresh of flexible working policies with senior managers promoting the model of true flexible working.
- Delivery of OWOW and a truly flexible workforce in cultural and practical terms.
- Manchester City Council a dementia friendly organisation with a network of Dementia Friends and Champions.

- First Aiders accessible to employees throughout the organisation.
- TRiM practitioners available to respond as required.
- Increased number of coaches and mentors, employees applying for coaching and mentoring, and successful coaching and mentoring relationships.
- Increased uptake of winter flu vaccinations.
- Formation of working carers network and adherence to best practice guidelines.
- Gender specific training and events to be a staple of the learning and development catalogue.
- A policy, guidance and training framework for the management of attendance which is strengthened based on feedback and best practice.
- A reduction in the number of people absent with mental health problems.
- A reduction in people leaving the organisation due to long term health problems.
- The City Council becomes an employer of choice measured by increased interest in recruitment, engagement, low sickness absence and a continued low turnover of employees.
- The role and expectations of leaders and employees in wellbeing are embedded:

leaders who:	staff who:
Take ownership of emotional temperature	Have a clear connection to their end goal and purpose
Act with authenticity	Understand own energy levels and know how to manage these
Truly value wellbeing / instinctive prioritisation to achieve outcomes	Have the ability to manage the emotional impact of things they can't control
See this as a core strand of enabling safe and sustainable service delivery	Accept control of own experience at work
	Look after self and others

Ultimately, this strategy will support a more positive, engaged and well workforce driving increased productivity: Being our best selves

APPENDIX C: Delivery Plan

The plan below identifies high level deliverables for the next three years. The plan for 2019/20 and 2020/21 will be further developed via the Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group over time.

Each year we will:

- Deliver of an annual plan of communications aligned to national and local health and wellbeing priority campaigns &
- Progress a targeted action plan of wellbeing specific engagement informed by BHeard

2018 – 2019

The initial aim will be to continue to progress with a programme of interventions led centrally by HROD and the Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group. In tandem with this we will build awareness, interest, trust, and openness to the idea that wellbeing is an authentic and attainable priority for the City Council's workforce. The employee wellbeing agenda will evolve to encourage ownership by leaders, senior managers in addition to HR and the Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group. This will be achieved by:

High Quality Working Life	Mentally & Physically Healthy People
Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy published including, calendar of health events	<p>Creation of a clear offer for mental health support across the thriving, struggling and unwell spectrum including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management training and personal resilience sessions, • Communications to de-stigmatize mental health ('This is Me' and 'Time to Talk'), • Support through the EAP and Occupational health • On-line and physical promotion of the offer

Leaders and managers modelling behaviours that create a positive culture around health and wellbeing including targeted engagement with SMT, SLG and the top 400 leaders.	Promotion of carers support and development of a carers network
Continuous dialogue with employees about what matters to them, About You, Bheard, Employee Led Groups	Gender specific health themes and support
OWOW programme including Timewise Accreditation and review of flexible working policies	Development of a Dementia Friends network
Delivery of Level 3 disability confident action plan	Promotion of employee led groups e.g.choir, crochet, circuits
Focused work on management of attendance compliance and review of policy, guidance and support	Formal review of EAP operation after year 1
Developing and introducing a coaching programme	Explore potential approaches to developing physical and mental health first aid
Promotion of wider wellbeing benefits including volunteering, gym discounts, cycle scheme and refreshed attendance reward scheme to include a refresh and re-launch of active travel support	Promotion of winter influenza vaccination

2019 – 2020

The aim in the second year of the strategy will be to leverage the enthusiasm and openness around health and wellbeing in order to engage more widely with the workforce. The employee wellbeing agenda will evolve to continue to encourage ownership by the whole organisation and all stakeholders. This will be achieved by:

High Quality Working Life	Mentally & Physically Healthy People
OWOW flexible working offer for all employees	Introduction of a forum for all employee led groups to share good practice
Leaders and senior managers acting with authenticity when encouraging participation in health and wellbeing activity i.e. leading by example.	Development of Dementia Friends network with champion training being offered too so MCC can proactively grow the network
Disability Confident products, including disabled employees passport promoted	Gender specific health sessions as standard in the annual learning and development catalogue
Regular comms to advertise the benefits of employment by MCC, with wellbeing as an integrated component	Enhanced campaign and stories in support of mental health
Targeted and evidence based strategies for improving attendance management	Campaign focused on ageing well, linked to age related health conditions
Review options for external accreditation of our wellbeing offer	Review and potential extension of EAP and Occupational Health Contracts
A review of the organisation's approach to supporting staff managing bereavement.	Review of smoking cessation policy and support

2020 – 2021

The aim of the third year of the strategy will be to focus on sustainability of approach and increase reach further amongst all stakeholders. The employee wellbeing agenda will be recognised as a cultural norm amongst all stakeholders. This will be achieved by:

High Quality Working Life	Mentally & Physically Healthy People
OWOW flexible working offer embedded for all	Targeted support / campaign informed by organisation and city-wide evidence base
Wellbeing owned by all and supported by multiple opportunities to engage and participate	Promotion as a best-practice employer for mental wellbeing
Work to embed a coaching culture	Opportunities for collaborative programmes and activities explored