

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

## 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Corporate HR Metrics – Sickness Absence
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<b>Policy context:</b>	This report provides an update on the levels of sickness absences for the directly employed staff in the corporate workforce.

**An update from HR&OD, following the Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025.**

### **HR Metrics**

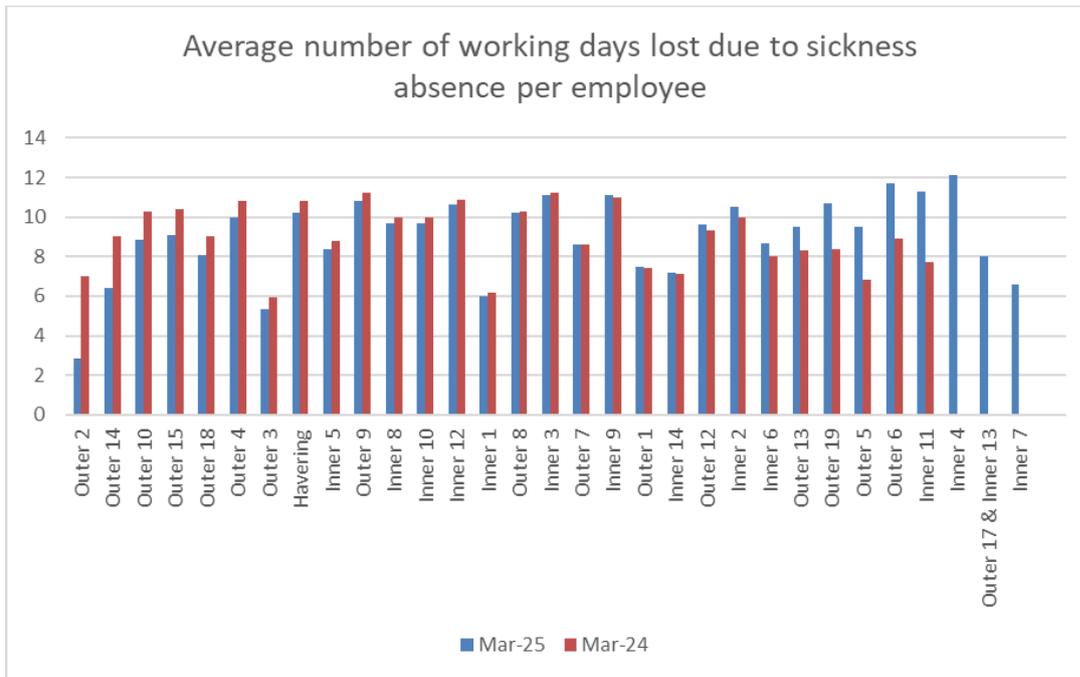
#### Sickness Absences

This report is in response to a specific request to provide the latest London comparisons.

Benchmarking information/dashboards are sourced from London Councils using the Infinistats metrics subscription service, for all London boroughs who recently completed the “Human Capital Metrics” survey for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

#### **1. Average number of days lost per employee**

Havering's average number of days lost per employee has fallen from 10.8 in 2023/24 to 10.2 in 2024/25. In comparisons with 28 other London Boroughs, who presented data for both years, Havering's improvement ranked them 9<sup>th</sup> in improved rates. The below data shows that Outer London Boroughs have lowered their sickness levels the most and the chart shows the comparison between 2023/24 and 2024/25. Havering's good performance is despite the median for this period raising from 9 to 9.5 average number of days lost.



## 2. Average days lost per employee to short term sickness

Short-term sickness is defined as absences of up to 19 days' duration.

Havering's short-term sickness absence rate of 3.30 days sits precisely at the median of all London councils, indicating typical performance. This is marginally higher than the Outer London average of 3.24 days (excluding the outlier Outer 2 at 8.76 days) but below the Inner London average of 3.45 days. Notably, Havering shares identical figures with three other councils: Outer 12, Inner 10, and Outer 19.

Among neighbouring East London boroughs, Havering performs better than Outer 1 (2.75) but worse than Outer 3 (2.32). Outer 14 shows the lowest absence rate (2.10), potentially offering best practice insights.

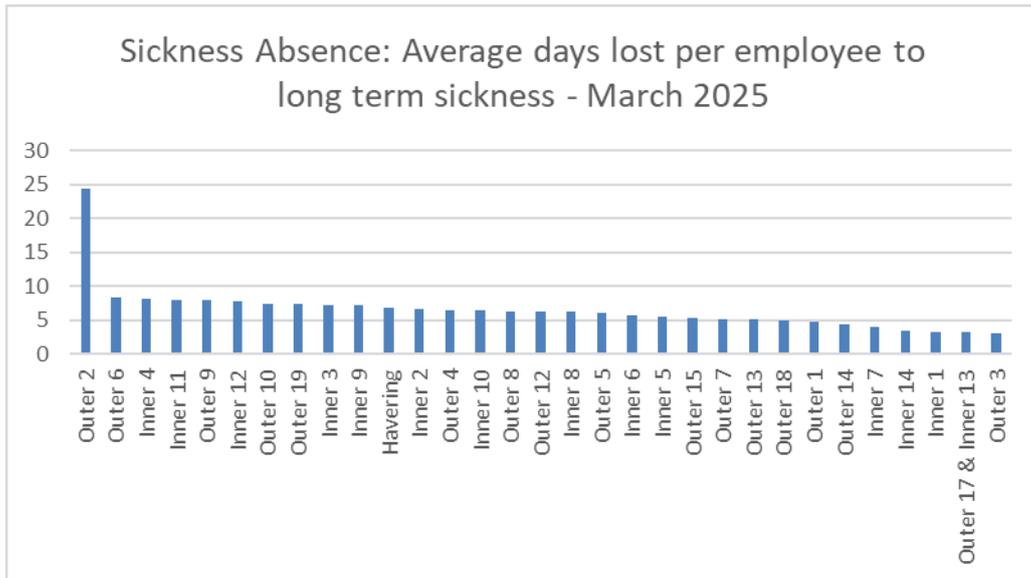


## 3. Average days lost per employee to long term sickness

Long-term sickness is defined as absences of 20 or more days' duration.

Havering's long-term sickness absence (6.9 days) sits slightly above the London average of 6.4 days, placing it in the upper-middle range among Outer London boroughs. Excluding Outer 2's significant outlier value (24.3 days), Inner London councils generally show higher absence rates than Outer London, with Inner 11 (7.92 days) and Inner 12 (7.74 days) recording the highest non-outlier figures.

Among neighbouring East London boroughs, Havering's rate exceeds Outer 3 (3.0) and Outer 1 (4.8) but remains lower than Outer 19 (7.4).



#### 4. Percentage of staff who had sickness in period

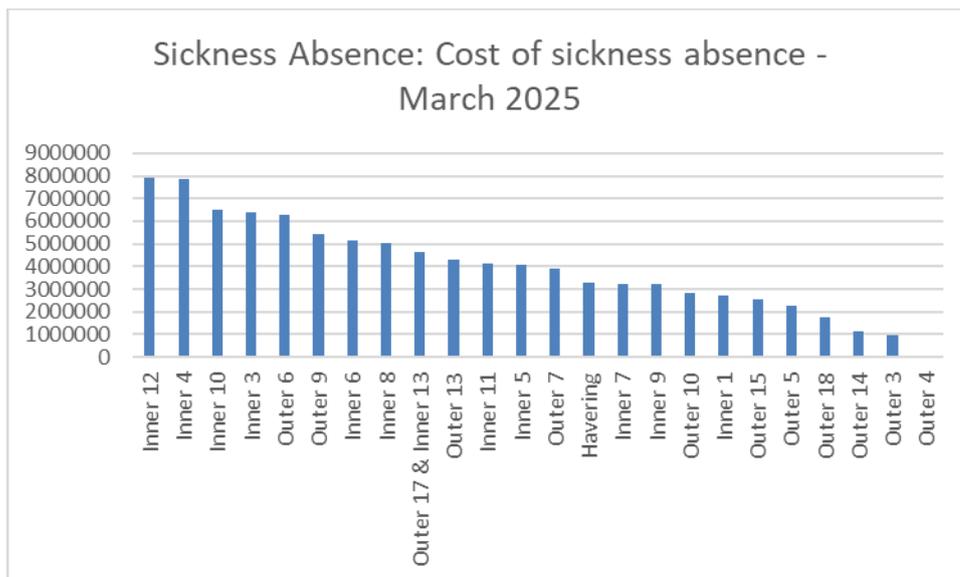
Havering's percentage of staff who recorded sickness for 2024/25 was 53.8% and falls in the third quartile of all the London boroughs, and for outer London. It has risen by 2.6% since the last survey in 2023/24, when it was 52.5%. This compares with a median average change of +3.7% for outer London since 2023/24.



## 5. Cost of sickness absence

Havering's sickness absence cost (£3.29M) sits favourably below the overall London average (£3.95M), positioning it as a mid-performer among the 24 councils analysed. While significantly lower than highest-spending Inner 12 (£7.92M) and Inner 4 (£7.87M), there remains room for improvement compared to better-performing Outer London peers like Outer 14 (£1.11M) and Outer 18 (£1.76M).

A clear Inner/Outer London divide exists, with Inner London boroughs averaging £4.71M compared to £3.35M for Outer London councils, likely reflecting higher wage structures. Notably, Outer 4's figure (£28,070) appears anomalously low and warrants verification.

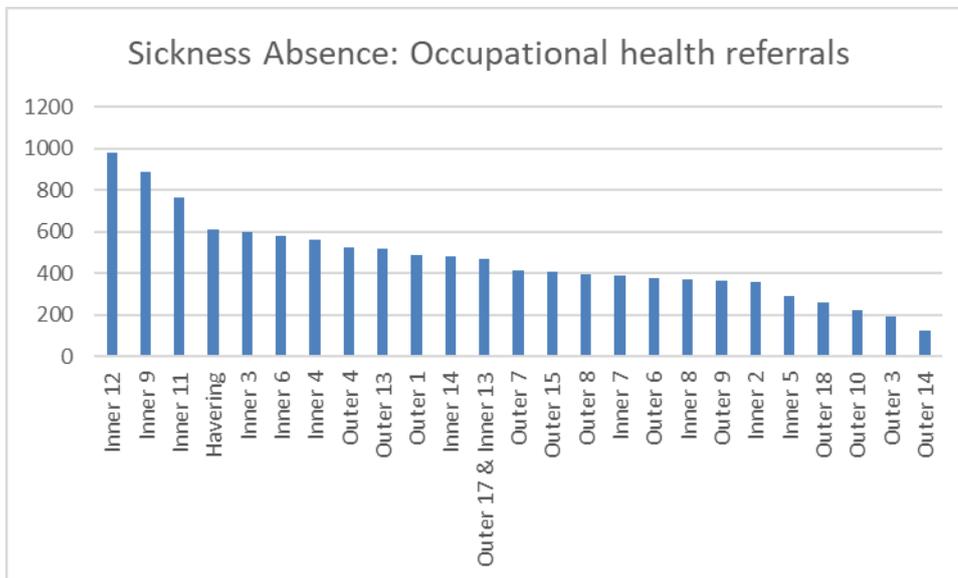


## 6. Occupational health referrals

Havering's 612 occupational health referrals position it as the 4th highest among all councils surveyed and the 3rd highest among Outer London boroughs. This significantly exceeds both the London-wide average of 506 referrals and the Outer London average of 432.

Notably, Havering's referral rate is 42% higher than neighbouring Outer 16 (not included in this dataset) based on historical trends. The borough's aging workforce demographic likely contributes to this elevated figure, as approximately 31% of Havering's council employees are over 50. This high referral rate may indicate proactive occupational health management.

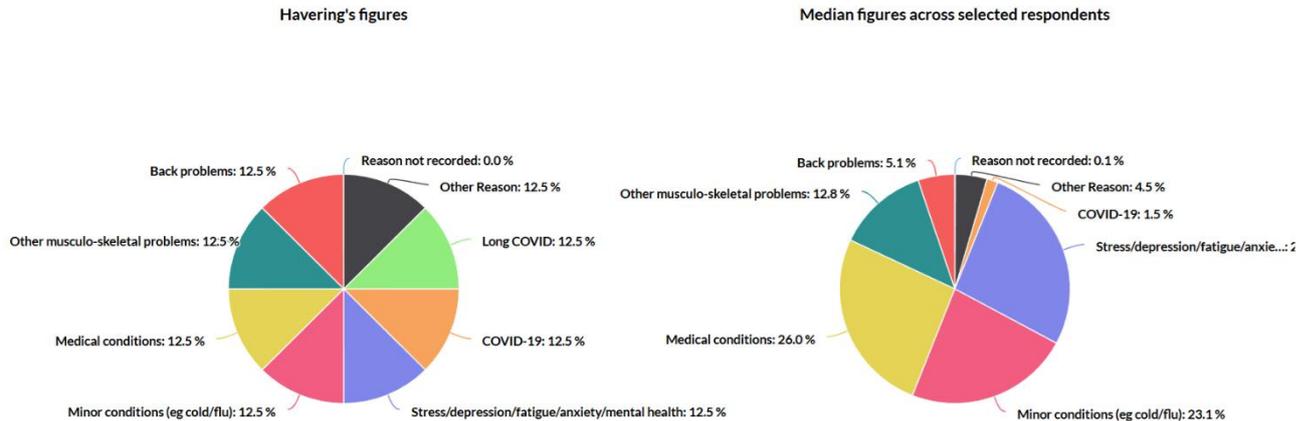
N.B. The occupational health referral numbers slightly differ in the more detailed wellbeing report due to this being a 2025 calendar year report.



## 7. Sickness Absences by Sickness Reason

The specific sickness reason categories vary between Councils. However, the survey groups the reasons most commonly recorded.

Days lost by sickness reason for the 12 months up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



*Median figure for London for sickness reason: Stress/depression/fatigue/anxiety/mental health = 26.8%*

### Work done by HR&OD to help reduce sickness levels.

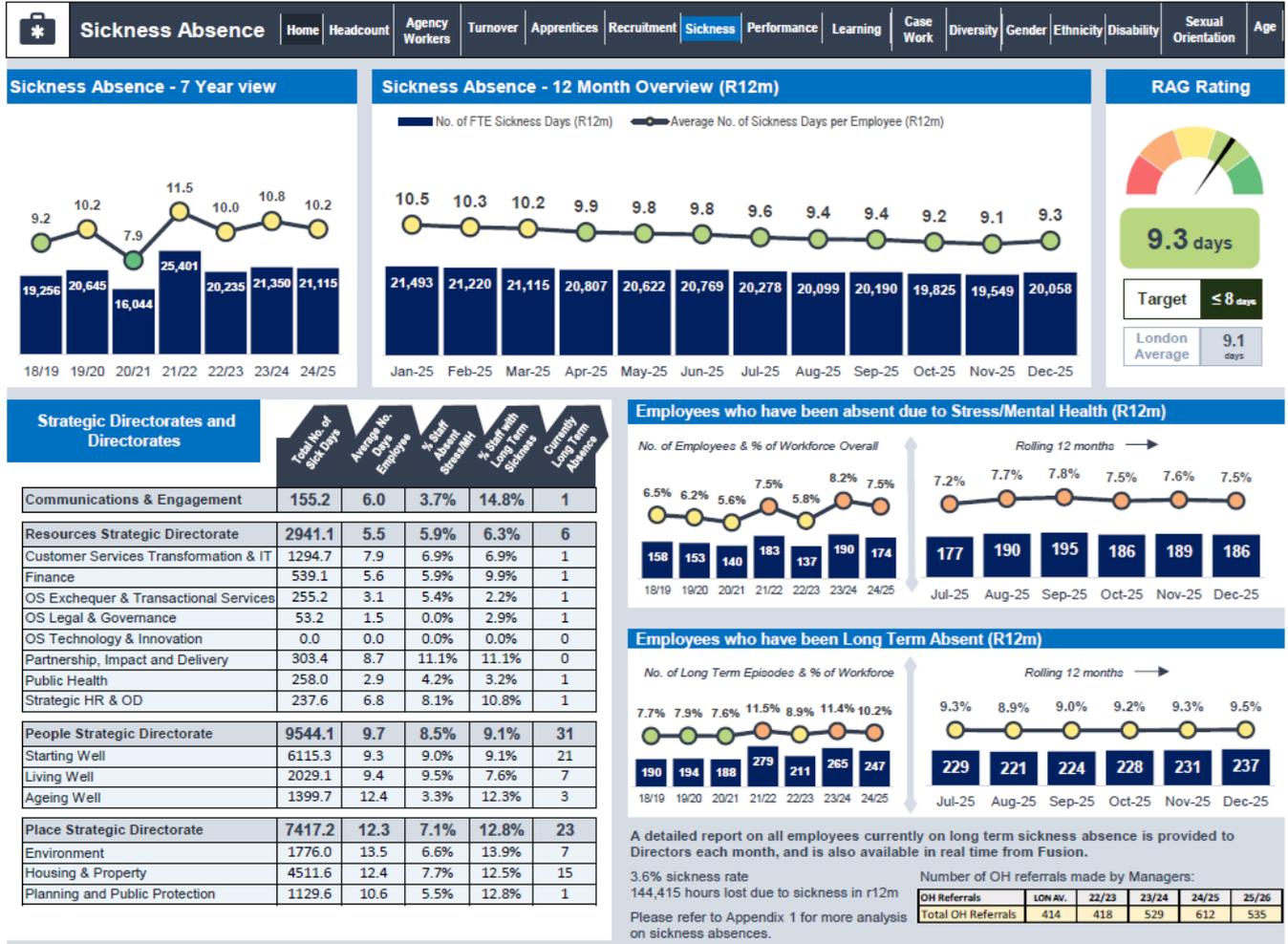
A review of the Sickness reason categories in Fusion was undertaken, with the aim of updating and simplifying the categories to assist Managers when recording sickness. This resulted in some sickness reasons being removed (e.g. Other), some being added and some renamed. The revised list provides more meaningful categories which helps to facilitate early signposting to further health and wellbeing resources and support.

The HR Advice & Consultancy team held a series of surgeries with Managers to explain the changes and to remind them on how to manage sickness effectively and the tools available throughout the process to best support employees to return to work, and more referrals to our Occupational Health provider.

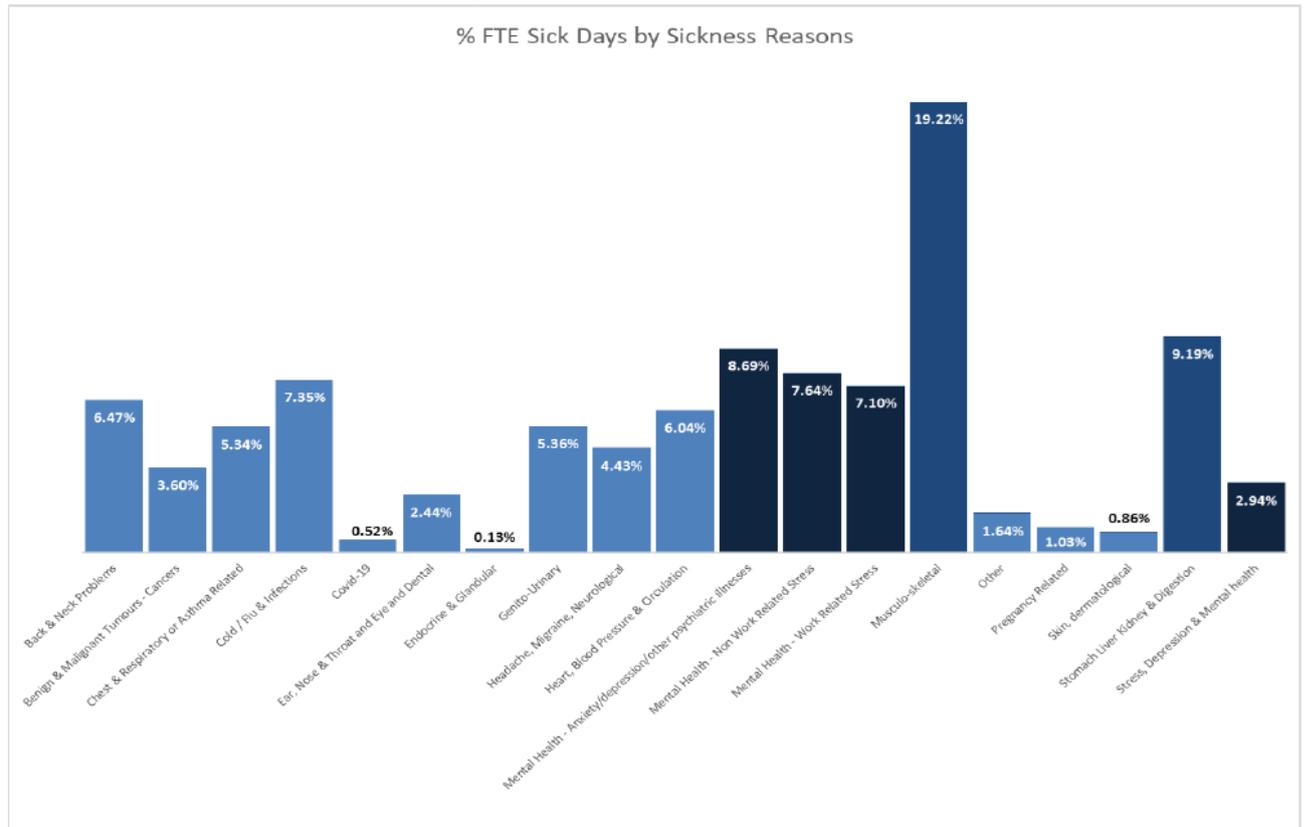
A range of Health and Wellbeing initiatives have been delivered throughout the years, emphasising how employees can utilise resources such as EAP.

All that hard work has contributed to achieving sustained lower levels of sickness absences.

The below extracts from Havering's workforce information report for month end December 2025 highlights the progress made in reducing sickness absences over the rolling 12-month (R12m) period:

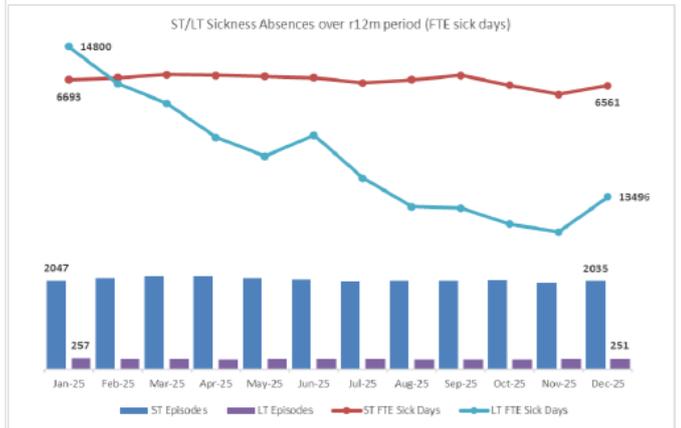
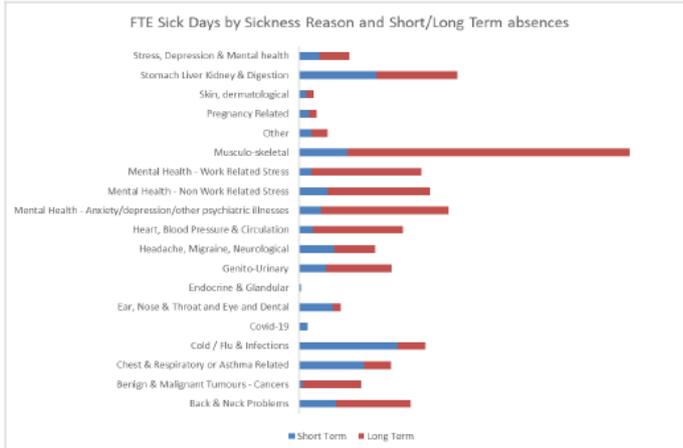


**Appendix 1a - Sickness Absences (in r12m period ending 31st December 2025)**

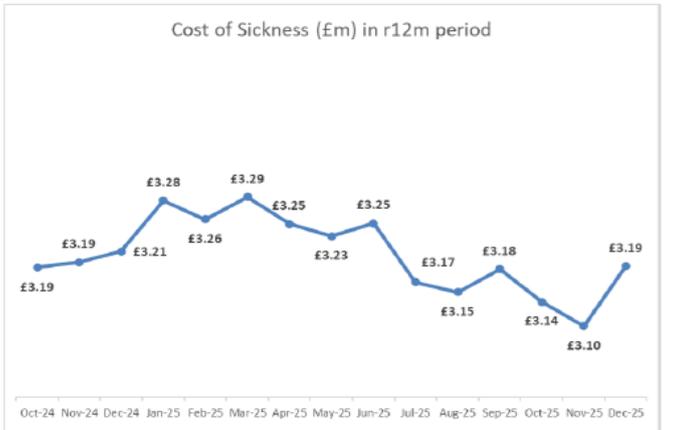


The new sickness reasons came into effect from 1st April 2025, with "Other" and "Stress, Depression & Mental Health" both no longer in use from that date. The introduction of the new Mental Health reasons highlight the underlying causes of the absence, enabling more tailored support to be given. Almost 26.5% of all FTE Sick Days are recorded as being related to poor Mental Health

**Appendix 1b - Sickness Absences (in r12m period ending 31st December 2025)**



Sickness Reason	r12m Cost of Sickness	%
Back & Neck Problems	£206,249	6.47%
Benign & Malignant Tumours - Cancers	£125,794	3.95%
Chest & Respiratory or Asthma Related	£163,451	5.13%
Cold / Flu & Infections	£232,986	7.31%
Covid-19	£18,026	0.57%
Ear, Nose & Throat and Eye and Dental	£79,330	2.49%
Endocrine & Glandular	£5,956	0.19%
Genito-Urinary	£173,869	5.45%
Headache, Migraine, Neurological	£155,319	4.87%
Heart, Blood Pressure & Circulation	£192,426	6.04%
Mental Health - Anxiety/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	£270,746	8.49%
Mental Health - Non Work Related Stress	£246,767	7.74%
Mental Health - Work Related Stress	£260,411	8.17%
Musculo-skeletal	£559,056	17.54%
Other	£53,075	1.66%
Pregnancy Related	£38,528	1.21%
Skin, dermatological	£24,828	0.78%
Stomach Liver Kidney & Digestion	£282,746	8.87%
Stress, Depression & Mental health	£98,267	3.08%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£3,187,829</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



*\*Cost of Sickness is an indicative cost only*