

Absence Reduction Activity Portfolio

Senior Leadership Review

ast updated: 17 September 2026

A consolidated view of programme activity, maturity, evidence and recommended direction. Priority: reduce sickness absence by 0.5% in 2026/27 through complementary PMO-led implementation and QI-led testing.

Total active initiatives	Continue	Further assess	Hold	Defer	Stop	Scale
34	26	0	5	1	2	0

INITIATIVES BY MATURITY STAGE		INITIATIVES BY WORKSTREAM	
Discover	3	Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	6
Assess	10	Mental Health and Wellbeing	6
Design	10	Moving and Handling, MSK and Physical Health	3
Test	4	Data, Systems and Process Enablement	14
Implement	5	Other cross-programme activity	5
Embed	2		

LEADERSHIP ATTENTION			
Initiative	Stage	Current position	Recommended direction
Psychological safety and trust	Discover	Confidentiality standards and feedback loops have been identified for review; evidence and scope are not recorded; ownership remains unclear.	Hold
Appreciation and Recognition Guide	Discover	A guide using local recognition examples has been proposed; evidence and delivery scope are not recorded; ownership remains unclear.	Hold
Alternative Duties Framework	Implement	Guidance was approved by PDG on 11 August 2026; JSG consideration was delayed; tool launch, policy clarification and uptake monitoring remain to be coordinated. The policy has been reviewed and transfer to HR BAU is under way; benefit evidence is not recorded; IT delivery presents a high transition risk.	Continue
Workplace Adjustments	Embed	Relaunch and promotion are under way; adoption evidence is not recorded; delivery depends on effective communications and signposting.	Continue
Health and Wellbeing Passport	Design	Accessibility and awareness activity is under way; evidence of reach or earlier access is not recorded; communications capacity is the main dependency.	Continue
Access to psychological support	Implement		Continue
Resilience coaching and preventative support	Test	Preventative coaching has been identified and is described as in progress; the intervention model and evidence are not recorded; test ownership and capacity need definition.	Continue

Mental health awareness and stigma reduction	Design	Targeted awareness campaigns are being developed; reach and behaviour evidence are not recorded; communications capacity and a delivery plan are required.	Continue
ISU deployment and use	Design	A review of incident support unit is underway to look at improving utilisation.	Continue
HR Case process simplification	Assess	Removal, simplification or automation of HR Case steps has been proposed; process evidence and scope are not recorded; ownership capacity and dependencies need assessment.	Continue
HR Case / GRS replacement feasibility	Assess	The potential for GRS to replace HR Case has been identified; feasibility and a strategic case are not recorded; Data and Digital capacity is required.	Hold
Return-to-work simplification	Design	A simplified return-to-work form and direct GRS recording approach is being developed; impact has not been assessed; Case Management consultation is required.	Continue
Absence case grip and control	Implement	A task force is being stood up; five proposed long-term sickness controls are only potentially in scope; scope, ownership and measures need confirmation.	Continue
Sickness absence snapshot	Assess	A snapshot email showing absence and return-to-work status has been proposed; user need and information-governance implications are not assessed; BI capacity is required.	Continue
Targeted absence notifications and alerts	Assess	Three overlapping notification and alert ideas are not started; targeting rules and GRS feasibility are not established; Digital capacity is required.	Hold
Supporting Attendance Policy Review	Assess	A review of managerial discretion is proposed; supporting evidence and governance route are not recorded; national policy developments may affect the design.	Hold
Copilot support for absence meeting notes	Implement	A digital note-writing use case has been identified; approved-tool, information-governance and quality assessments are not recorded; ownership is TBC.	Continue
GRS mobile / web access	Assess	Digital discussion is under way and iPad icon limits have been identified; feasibility and priority are unresolved; Digital capacity is the release dependency.	Continue
Absence reporting and measurement	Design	BI review, an absence-measures framework and dashboard usage work are in progress; no agreed metric set or adoption baseline is recorded; BI capacity is a key dependency.	Continue
Improve HR Case configuration and tracking	Assess	Two overlapping configuration needs are not started; detailed requirements have not yet been supplied to the lead; scope and system capacity are unresolved.	Continue
Fit note reminders	Assess	Automated reminders have been proposed but not started; process design and technical feasibility are not recorded; system capacity is required.	Continue
Use of existing GRS reports	Assess	Better use of secondment and alternative-duties reports has been proposed; current usage and gaps are not evidenced; GRS and BI capacity may be required.	Continue
Wellbeing team in A&E Operations	Assess	Feasibility exploration is under way; the model, demand, expected benefit and resource case are not recorded; operational workforce capacity is a constraint.	Defer
Insource Occupational Health service	Discover	The source and provenance of the proposal are unclear; no sponsor, evidence or developed strategic case is recorded; programme alignment is unsupported.	Stop

Occupational Health referral effectiveness

Embed

Manager engagement on referral quality is existing BAU; a comprehensive review would be resource-intensive; no separate change case is recorded.

Stop

Workstream	Initiative	Type	Maturity stage	Current position	Expected contribution	Recommended direction	Decision / next step	Accountable lead	Time Frame to impact on sickness
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Enabler	Design	Core guidance, Pulse resources and the Wellbeing Commitment are being developed; no outcome evidence is recorded; consultation and pathway completion must precede Academy and GRS training.	More consistent manager decisions and higher-quality wellbeing conversations.	Continue	Next: complete guidance and consultation, publish the Pulse resource, then confirm the Academy and GRS training plan and readiness review.	Paul Whitehouse / Jayne Smyth / Muz Suleman	Long Term
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Psychological safety and trust	Idea / opportunity	Discover	Confidentiality standards and feedback loops have been identified for review; evidence and scope are not recorded; ownership remains unclear.	Greater trust in wellbeing and attendance conversations.	Hold	Decision: appoint a sponsor and define the problem, evidence and review scope, or remove the item from the programme.	TBC	Long Term
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Appreciation and Recognition Guide	Idea / opportunity	Discover	A guide using local recognition examples has been proposed; evidence and delivery scope are not recorded; ownership remains unclear.	More consistent local recognition and celebration practice.	Hold	Decision: confirm a sponsor and a defined discovery brief before committing delivery capacity.	TBC	Long Term
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Alternative Duties Framework	Project	Implement	Guidance was approved by PDG on 11 August 2026; JSG consideration was delayed; tool launch, policy clarification and uptake monitoring remain to be coordinated.	Earlier and more consistent use of alternative duties across services.	Continue	Decision: confirm the next JSG governance route and release condition, then launch the portal and policy clarification with named adoption measures.	Kerry Rigby	Short Term
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Workplace Adjustments	BAU transition	Embed	The policy has been reviewed and transfer to HR BAU is under way; benefit evidence is not recorded; IT delivery presents a high transition risk.	Easier and more consistent access to workplace adjustments.	Continue	Decision: confirm the BAU owner and IT support needed to complete transition, communications and the planned 12-month review.	Kerry Rigby / Abby Holmes	Medium Term
Leadership and Culture / Prevention and Recovery Pathway	Health and Wellbeing Passport	Enabler	Design	Relaunch and promotion are under way; adoption evidence is not recorded; delivery depends on effective communications and signposting.	Better access to adjustment and wellbeing support.	Continue	Next: complete the relaunch, define an adoption measure and review reach through normal wellbeing governance.	Rob Harrison	Long Term
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Access to psychological support	Enabler	Implement	Accessibility and awareness activity is under way; evidence of reach or earlier access is not recorded; communications capacity is the main dependency.	Earlier use of appropriate psychological support.	Continue	Next: specify reach and access measures, complete communications activity and review whether awareness improves early access.	Leonie Gillies	Medium Term
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Post-incident support pathway (PIC)	PDSA / pilot	Test	A process-improvement workshop took place on 5 August 2026 and PDSA pilots are in planning or preparation; results are not recorded; consistent measures and test sites are required.	Timely, consistent and compassionate support after trauma exposure.	Continue	Next: confirm each PDSA question, site, measures and review point before considering wider implementation.	Vicky Pickles	Immediate
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Resilience coaching and preventative support	PDSA / pilot	Test	Preventative coaching has been identified and is described as in progress; the intervention model and evidence are not recorded; test ownership and capacity need definition.	Earlier preventative support and improved resilience.	Continue	Decision: define the intervention, target group, test measures and delivery capacity before authorising a pilot.	Leonie Gillies	Medium Term
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Mental health awareness and stigma reduction	Enabler	Design	Targeted awareness campaigns are being developed; reach and behaviour evidence are not recorded; communications capacity and a delivery plan are required.	Greater confidence, openness and help-seeking.	Continue	Next: finalise the campaign plan, target audience and reach measures, then review learning before further rollout.	Leonie Gillies	Long Term
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Organisational occupational risk assessments	Project	Design	HSE requirement. Previously presented to TEG on the back of action taken at another Ambulance Trust. Joint work with H&S team	Ensure compliance with HSE legislation	Continue		Shelley Jackson	Long Term
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Unified Wellbeing and Support System	Project	Design	System has been prototyped and the team have been engaged in the Digital Front Door process. Next steps as per CIO request is a case to TEG.	Reduce overall absence. Provide proactive wellbeing support and restorative clinical supervision	Continue		Vicky Pickles and Craig Reynolds	Long Term
Moving and Handling, MSK and Physical Health	BackTrack posture feedback pilot	PDSA / pilot	Design	A three-month pilot is planned at Bradford Ambulance Station and Scunthorpe PTS Hub from 5 October 2026; no results exist yet; manufacture and equipment supply may delay launch.	Reduced high-risk posture over time, rather than an immediate absence reduction.	Continue	Next: confirm equipment supply, baseline measures, sites and launch readiness before the planned pilot start.	Emily Stirling / Rob Harrison	Immediate
Moving and Handling, MSK and Physical Health	ISU deployment and use	Idea / opportunity	Design	A review of incident support unit is underway to look at improving utilisation.	Safer equipment use and reduced physical strain.	Continue	Decision: define the equipment problem, affected users, evidence and review scope before commissioning work.	Emily Stirling	Long Term
Moving and Handling, MSK and Physical Health	Early MSK support trials	PDSA / pilot	Test	Early physiotherapy is being trialled in East Yorkshire and a three-month manager-referral trial to Health and Fitness Advisers is due to start in September 2026; results are not recorded; manager engagement and measurement are required.	Earlier support for musculoskeletal issues and physical health.	Continue	Next: confirm participation, referral quality and outcome measures, then review both limited trials before any wider rollout.	Muz Suleman / Rob Harrison	Medium term
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	HR Case process simplification	Project	Assess	Removal, simplification or automation of HR Case steps has been proposed; process evidence and scope are not recorded; ownership capacity and dependencies need assessment.	A simpler and less burdensome absence case process.	Continue	Decision: commission a time-bounded discovery of pain points, volumes, controls and automation opportunities.	Jayne Smyth / Kerry Rigby	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	HR Case / GRS replacement feasibility	Idea / opportunity	Assess	The potential for GRS to replace HR Case has been identified; feasibility and a strategic case are not recorded; Data and Digital capacity is required.	A more coherent absence-management system landscape.	Hold	Decision: agree whether to complete a formal options appraisal covering capability, cost, risk and migration implications.	Jayne Smyth / Neil Disney	Administrative Burden Reduction

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Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Return-to-work simplification	Project	Design	A simplified return-to-work form and direct GRS recording approach is being developed; impact has not been assessed; Case Management consultation is required.	Less duplication and clearer return-to-work recording.	Continue	Decision: complete Case Management consultation and an impact assessment before approving the revised process.	Jayne Smyth	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	End-to-end absence process map	Enabler	Design	A standardised process map has been drafted and is with QI; evidence of agreement or use is not recorded; governance approval is still required.	A shared view of the intended absence-management process.	Continue	Next: validate the draft with users and governance, publish the agreed map and identify measures for adoption.	Jayne Smyth	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Absence case grip and control	Project	Implement	A task force is being stood up; five proposed long-term sickness controls are only potentially in scope; scope, ownership and measures need confirmation.	Faster, more consistent management of long-term absence cases.	Continue	Decision: confirm the project scope, including meeting dates, pre-booking, cross-cover, escalation and case-pack support, then agree measures and review cadence.	Gem Flood	Short Term
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Sickness absence snapshot	Enabler	Assess	A snapshot email showing absence and return-to-work status has been proposed; user need and information-governance implications are not assessed; BI capacity is required.	Timelier management visibility of absence status.	Continue	Decision: validate the user need, lawful data use, source quality and BI effort before prioritisation.	Ryan Higgins	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Targeted absence notifications and alerts	Project	Assess	Three overlapping notification and alert ideas are not started; targeting rules and GRS feasibility are not established; Digital capacity is required.	More relevant and less burdensome absence notifications.	Hold	Decision: pause build activity until one owner consolidates requirements and Digital confirms GRS feasibility and capacity.	Neil Disney	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Supporting Attendance Policy Review	Project	Assess	A review of managerial discretion is proposed; supporting evidence and governance route are not recorded; national policy developments may affect the design.	Clearer and more consistent policy decisions by managers.	Hold	Decision: define the review questions and confirm how the national policy timetable affects local work.	Gem Flood	Short Term
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Policy comparison with West Midlands	Enabler	Closed	The comparison is recorded as not applicable; the programme is awaiting a national policy framework; no current delivery activity remains.	Potential future alignment with national policy.	Stop	Next: reconsider only when the national policy framework is issued and local comparison is still relevant.	Gem Flood	N/A
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Copilot support for absence meeting notes	Enabler	Implement	A digital note-writing use case has been identified; approved-tool, information-governance and quality assessments are not recorded; ownership is TBC.	Reduced administrative burden with safe and consistent records.	Continue	Decision: appoint an owner and complete approved tool, information-governance, quality and user assessments before any test.	TBC	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	GRS mobile / web access	Project	Assess	Digital discussion is under way and iPad icon limits have been identified; feasibility and priority are unresolved; Digital capacity is the release dependency.	Easier manager access to record sickness absence.	Continue		Jayne Smyth / Neil Disney	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Absence reporting and measurement	Enabler	Design	BI review, an absence-measures framework and dashboard-usage work are in progress; no agreed metric set or adoption baseline is recorded; BI capacity is a key dependency.	Reliable measures and greater manager use of absence intelligence.	Continue	Next: agree the core measure set, dashboard ownership and adoption baseline, then retire local spreadsheets through a controlled plan.	Ryan Higgins	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Improve HR Case configuration and tracking	Project	Assess	Two overlapping configuration needs are not started; detailed requirements have not yet been supplied to the lead; scope and system capacity are unresolved.	Improved workflows, usability and visibility of absence cases.	Continue	Decision: consolidate and prioritise requirements, then confirm configuration feasibility and ownership.	Kerry Rigby / Hannah Shephard	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Fit note reminders	Project	Assess	Automated reminders have been proposed but not started; process design and technical feasibility are not recorded; system capacity is required.	Fewer outstanding fit notes and more timely case administration.	Continue	Decision: assess volumes, reminder rules, risks and technical feasibility before prioritisation.	Neil Disney	Administrative Burden Reduction
Data, Systems and Process Enablement	Use of existing GRS reports	Enabler	Assess	Better use of secondment and alternative-duties reports has been proposed; current usage and gaps are not evidenced; GRS and BI capacity may be required.	Improved visibility of secondments and alternative duties.	Continue	Decision: establish the current reports, users and gaps before commissioning new reporting work.	Neil Disney	Administrative Burden Reduction
Other cross-programme activity	Wellbeing team in A&E Operations	Idea / opportunity	Assess	Feasibility exploration is under way; the model, demand, expected benefit and resource case are not recorded; operational workforce capacity is a constraint.	Potentially more accessible wellbeing support in A&E Operations.	Defer	Decision: complete a defined feasibility assessment covering demand, model, resource, benefits and operational acceptability.	Craig Reynolds	Medium Term
Other cross-programme activity	Insource Occupational Health service	Idea / opportunity	Discover	The source and provenance of the proposal are unclear; no sponsor, evidence or developed strategic case is recorded; programme alignment is unsupported.	No evidenced contribution is available.	Stop	Decision: remove from the change portfolio unless a sponsor supplies a clear strategic case and evidence.	Muz Suleman	Long Term
Other cross-programme activity	Occupational Health referral effectiveness	BAU transition	Embed	Manager engagement on referral quality is existing BAU; a comprehensive review would be resource-intensive; no separate change case is recorded.	Appropriate referrals that support effective decisions.	Stop	Next: monitor referral quality through normal Occupational Health arrangements and do not manage this as a separate programme project.	Muz Suleman / Rob Harrison	Medium Term
Other cross-programme activity	Annual leave booking East pilot	PDSA / pilot	Test	An East pilot of alternatives to fastest-finger-first and Christmas leave booking is in progress; results and measures are not recorded; operational and Digital support may be required.	Fairer and more workable annual-leave booking.	Continue	Next: define fairness, participation and operational measures, then review the East pilot before any wider decision.	Davy Bradshaw / Michelle Gough	Long Term

Workstream	Initiative	Type	Maturity stage	Current position	Expected contribution	Recommended direction	Decision / next step	Accountable lead	Time Frame to impact on sickness
Other cross-programme activity	Team Based Working - Absence management	BAU transition	Implement	Team based working review has moved to changing the absence management in 999 ops to AOM's for all LTS cases and stage 2 and beyond. To be implemented by 4 October 26	Improved case escalation and subsequent management	Continue		Adam Layland	Short Term

Portfolio Definitions and Controls

Reference for consistent classification, review and decision-making.

ACTIVITY TYPES

Idea / opportunity	A problem or possibility identified before a committed delivery route is agreed.
PDSA / pilot	A limited, measured test intended to generate learning before wider implementation.
Project	A defined change with governance, ownership, deliverables and implementation activity.
Enabler	Policy, data, digital, guidance, training or communications work that supports delivery.
BAU transition	Activity transferring into routine operational ownership, adoption and monitoring.

MATURITY STAGES

Discover	Opportunity or problem identified, but scope, ownership, alignment or evidence is insufficient.
Assess	Need, feasibility, benefit, dependencies, resource or delivery route is being evaluated.
Design	Intervention, plan, measures, guidance, process or governance is being developed before launch.
Test	A live PDSA or limited pilot is under way, or launch-ready with defined measures and sites.
Implement	Approved intervention is being introduced beyond initial testing.
Embed	Activity is transferring or has transferred into BAU, with adoption and benefits monitored.
Closed	Item is completed, stopped, merged, superseded, duplicated or removed from the active portfolio.

DECISION DEFINITIONS

Continue	Maintain the current approved activity and resource.
Further assess	Complete defined discovery, feasibility or evidence gathering before commitment.
Hold	Pause because a named dependency or decision prevents sensible progress; state the release condition.

Defer	Retain as potentially valid but outside the current capacity window; state when to reconsider.
Stop	Discontinue because the item is duplicative, superseded, unsupported, out of scope or unjustified.
Scale	Evidence supports wider implementation; state the next population, service or implementation step.

CURRENT-POSITION STRUCTURE

Required sentence	Stage or progress; available evidence or learning; principal dependency or constraint.
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READY TO SCALE

Evidence required	Adoption or participation; impact on the intended process or outcome; feasibility and resources; operational acceptability; risks or unintended consequences; and a named owner for wider implementation.
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Programme context	The 2026/27 priority is a 0.5% sickness-absence reduction. PMO leads consistent Trust-wide implementation and scale; QI leads problem understanding, PDSA testing and evidence-building. No sustained programme-wide improvement is yet demonstrated.
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