NEWS NEWS



Workplace wellbeing

The statistics speak for themselves: Housing associations are not immune to the consequences of having staff exposed to high workloads and stressful situations and feeling lost.

Our findings, taken from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, give a glimpse into the reality of mental health among staff in the housing sector.

Results varied massively. Some organisations reported over 40% of employee absences were mental health related; others just 1%.

Many organisations said they did not capture full data from their absences, something they were looking to rectify.

Other respondents were not keen to share information, with various HR departments reluctantly sharing and others not publishing anything at all.

And although some organisations reported mental-

Lowest percentage of absence due to mental health

health-related absences as low as 1%, 3%, or 4%, they were keen to stress they did not know the true figure.

Our survey found that workplace culture and reticence around mental health were issues many organisations were still battling. Many of these were attempting to ameliorate such issues through employing initiatives; some, for example, had worked hard on events

Average percentage of absence due to mental health

such as Stress Awareness Week and Mental Health Awareness Day to highlight the importance of speaking out.

Looking beyond the figures, the most common reasons for the absence was workplace stress, home-related stress, anxiety or depression.

Respondents said stress was the fastest growing reason for absenteeism, prompting many to employ policies such as flexible working and phased Highest percentage of absence due to mental health

43%

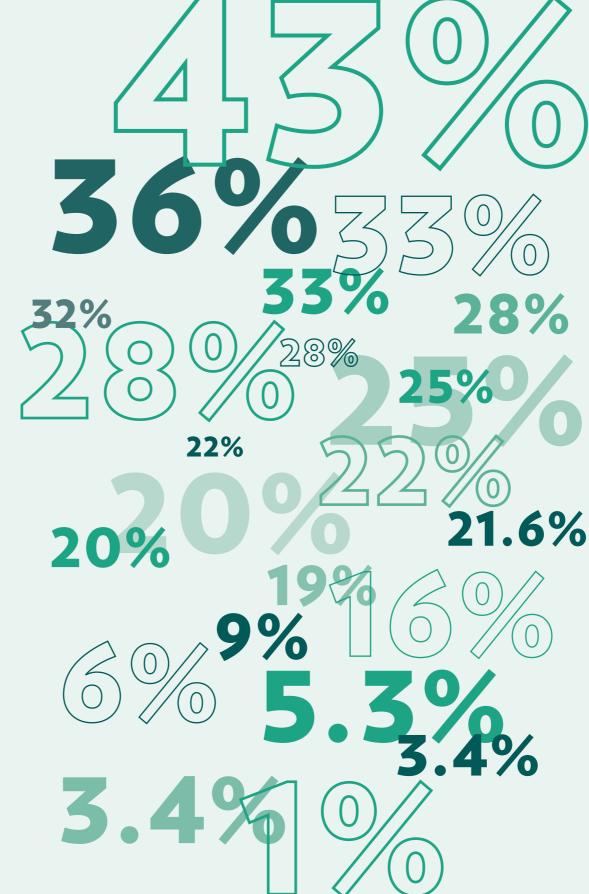
returns to support staff.

One organisation noted that, in its workplace, women were twice as likely to self-certify stress compared with men.
Other providers corroborated this finding, saying women were more represented than men in their mental health statistics.

Nearly all organisations committed to doing more with the data they gather and say it is informing their approach to acknowledging and improving staff mental health.

The survey was born from the 24housing Mental Health in Housing campaign, where we were keen to raise awareness of the work housing associations and ALMOs are doing to ease the pressures, stresses, and strains of their workforce.

Due to the large numbers of organisations that did not want to be named in the reporting, we have decided to omit all names from the survey results.



HOUSING SECTOR MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES:

- Mental Health Champions
- Occupational health support and EAP programmes
- Flexible working
- · Sickness policy
- Wellbeing Statement
- Leave and Time Off policy
- Counselling funded by association if needed
- Mental health awareness sessions led by MIND
- Dementia awareness training
- MOTs to cover both physical and mental health
- Frontline staff mentalhealth trained
- Phased returns if stress is work related
- Highlighting and celebrating national initiatives
- Educational guidance on the intranet
- · Mindfulness sessions
- Encouraging dogs into work
- Development of Mental Health in the Workplace policy
- Stress at Work survey
- Generous sick-pay schemes
- Managers mentalhealth trained
- 24-hour employeeassistance helpline
- Headspace mindfulness app
- Social media connectivity to tackle social isolation.

Turn to page 32 to read our full Mental Health in Housing features roundup