

# Sickness Absence Update (September 2024 – August 2025)

**October 2025**

**Business Executive Team  
People and OD Committee**

# People and OD

## Sickness Absence

### Purpose

To provide an update to the Business Executive Team and the People and OD Committee on sickness absence, following the discussion at the July meeting.

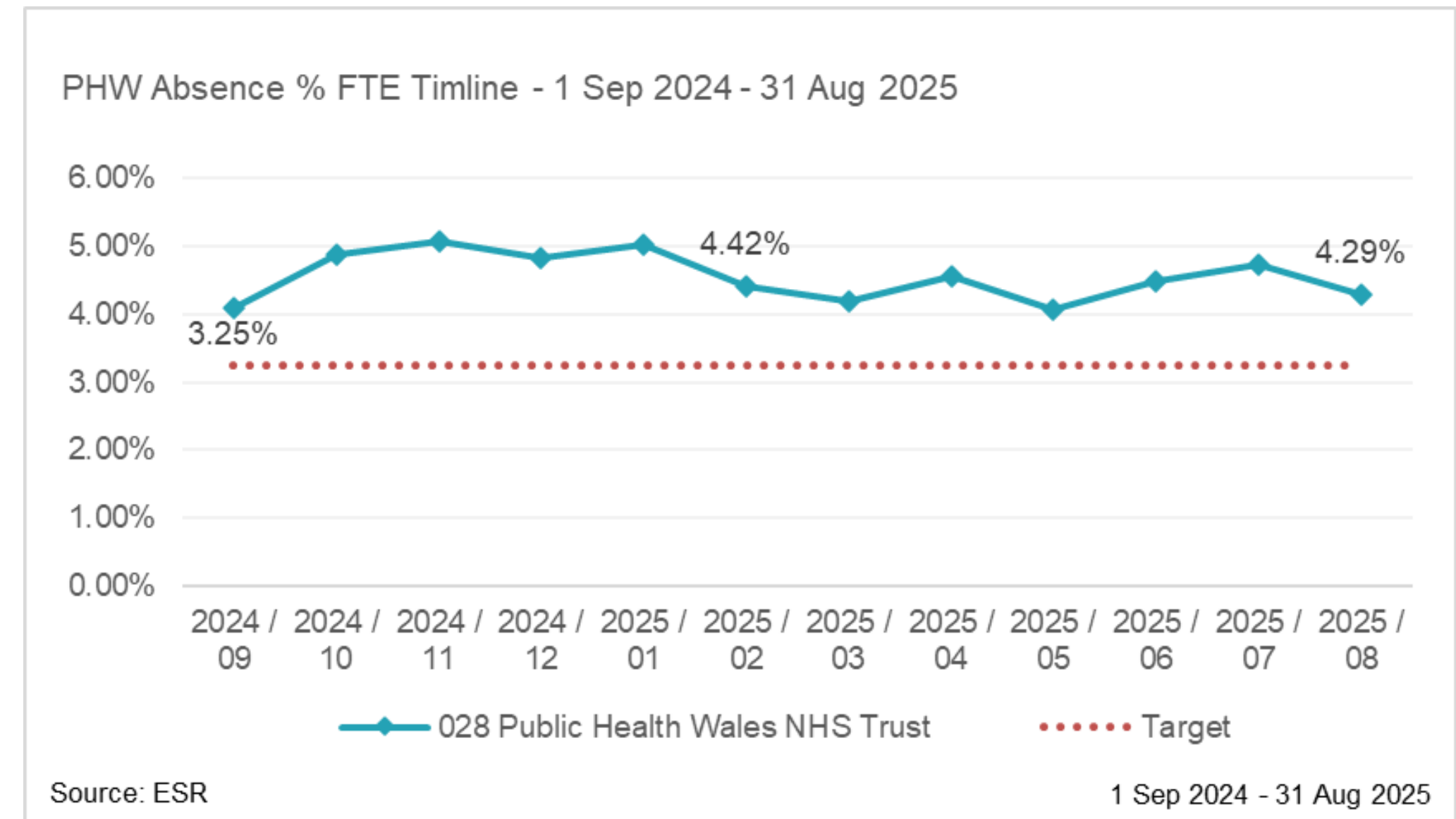
The Business Executive Team and the People and OD Committee are asked to receive assurance on sickness absence and management of sickness absence for the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025.



# People and OD

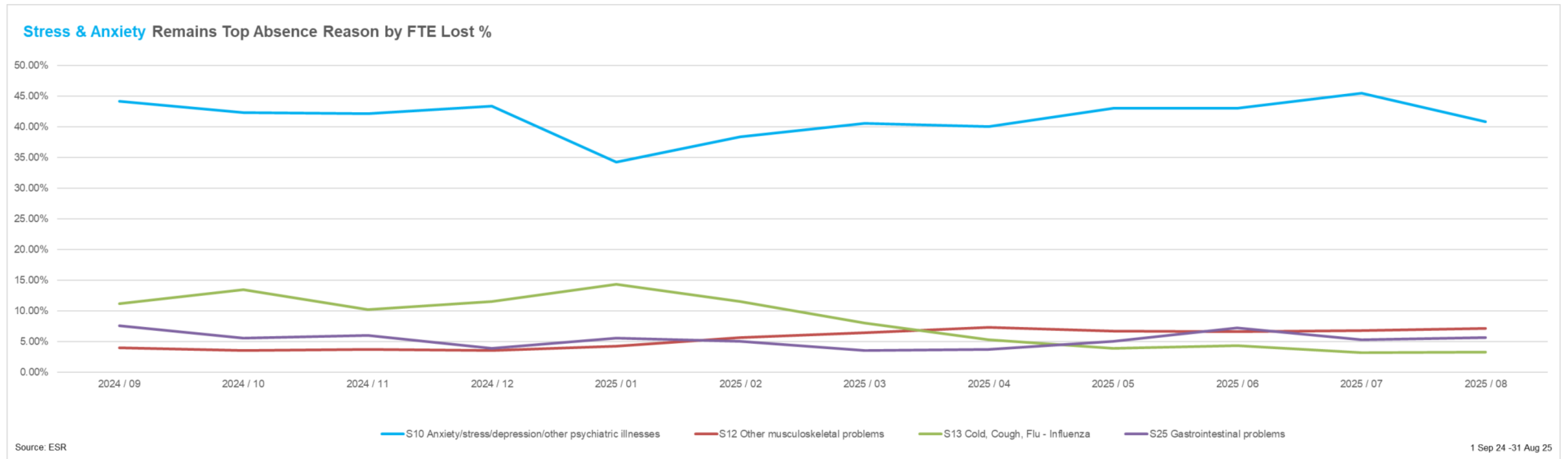
## Sickness Absence – Current position

- For the 12-month period ending 31 August 2025, sickness absence was 4.55 % FTE.
- This is above the national target of 3.25% FTE.
- Monthly sickness absence was 4.29% in August 2025, compared with 4.08% in May 2025.
- Stress, anxiety, and depression accounted for 946 FTE days lost in August 2025 (914 in May 2025).
- ‘Unknown’ and ‘other’ reasons for absence accounted for 172 FTE days lost in August 2025 (343 in May 2025).



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## Sickness Absence – Focus Area: Anxiety, stress, and depression (S10)



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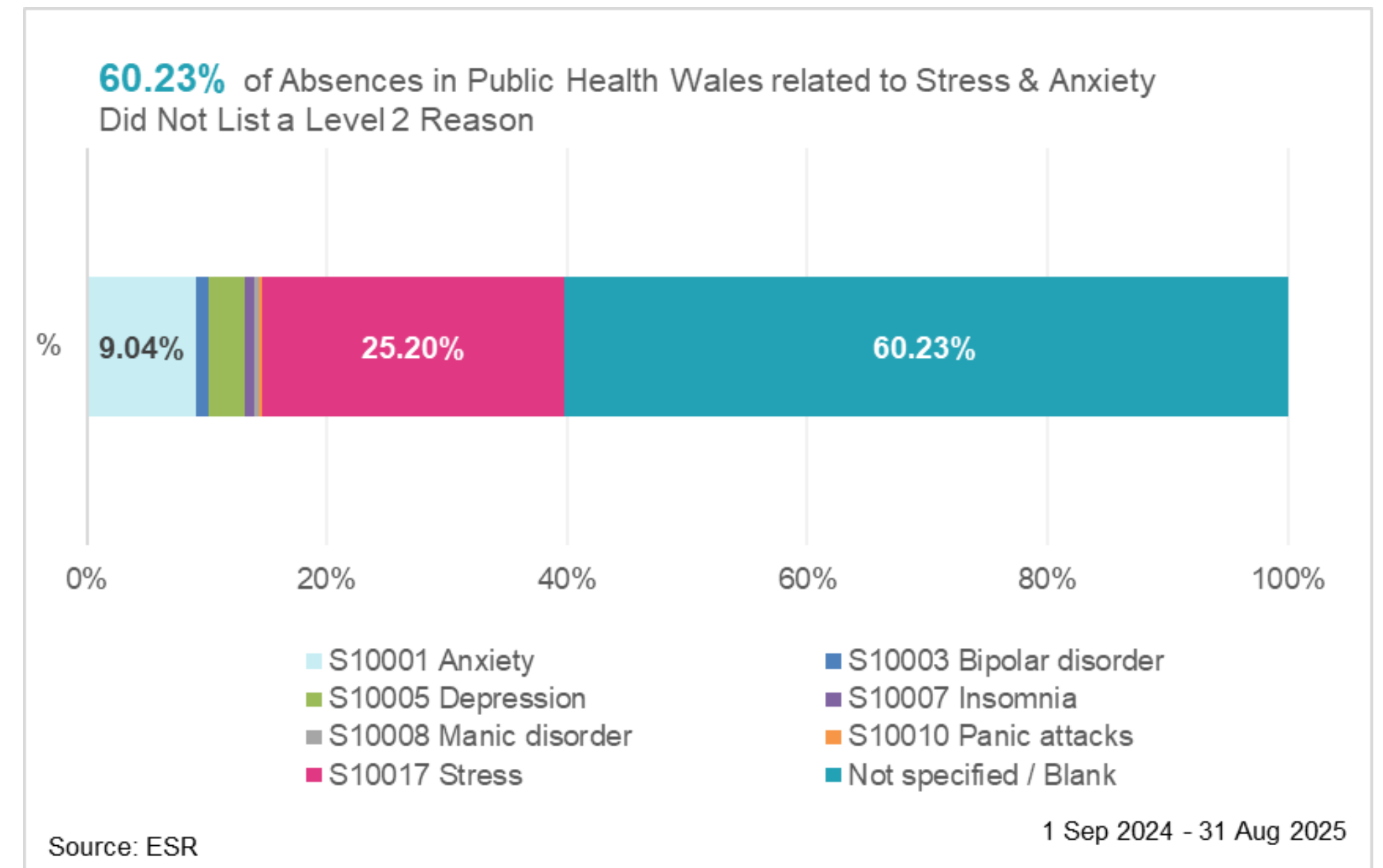
## Sickness Absence – Focus Area: Anxiety, stress, and depression (S10)

### ‘Level 2’ Absence Reasons for S10:

- 60.23% of all ‘Anxiety/Stress/Depression’ absence reasons did not provide a Level 2 reason. (61.22% in July update)

### Level 2 reasons disclosed:

- Stress: 25.2%
- Anxiety: 9.04%
- Depression: 3.09%



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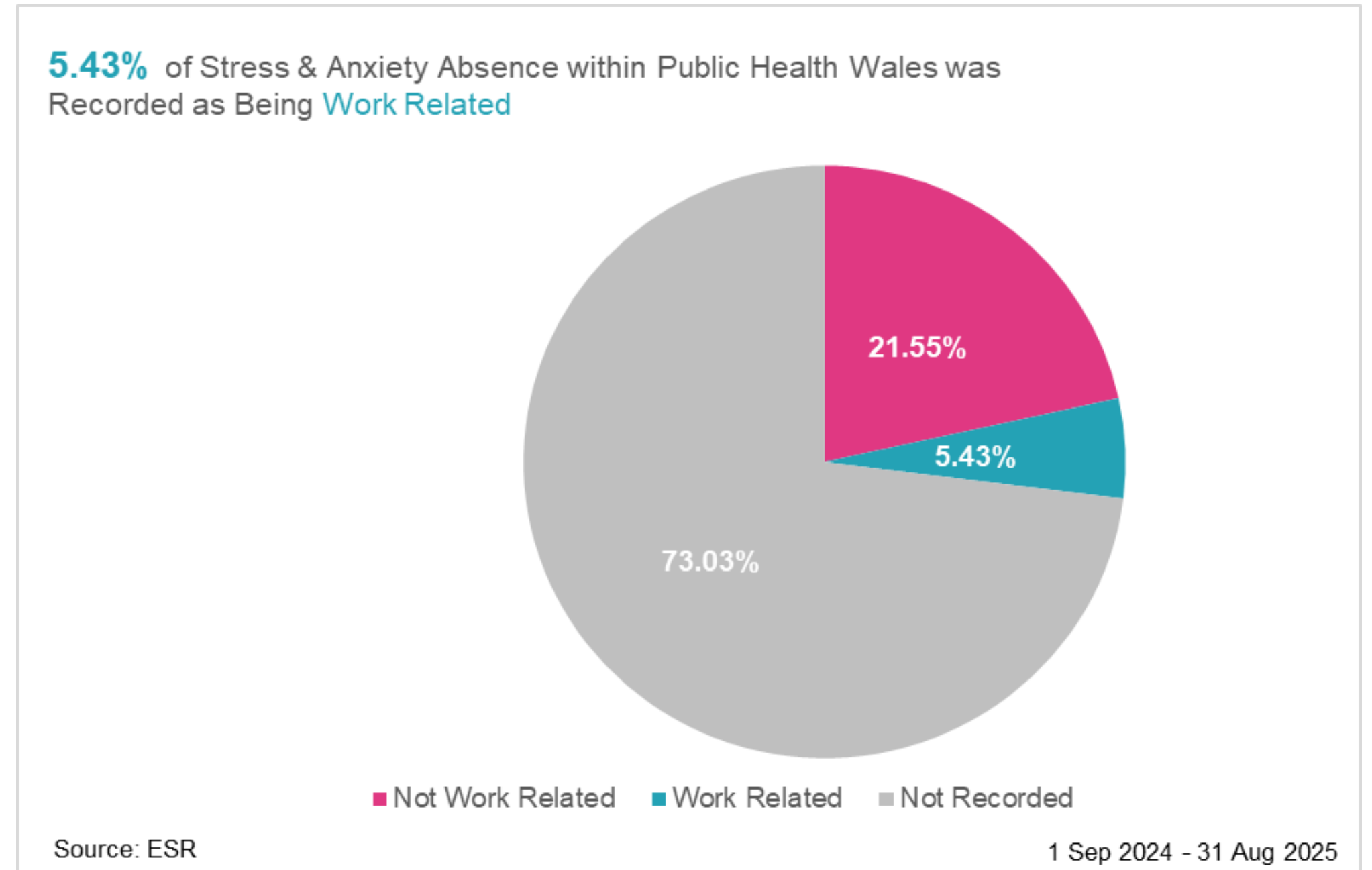
## Sickness Absence – Focus Area: Anxiety, stress, and depression (S10)

### Work-related vs. Non-work-related sickness for S10:

- This is not a mandatory field in ESR, limiting comprehensive analysis.
- 73.03% of FTE Days lost in 2024/2025 attributed to S10 were left blank for this question. (79.49% in July update)

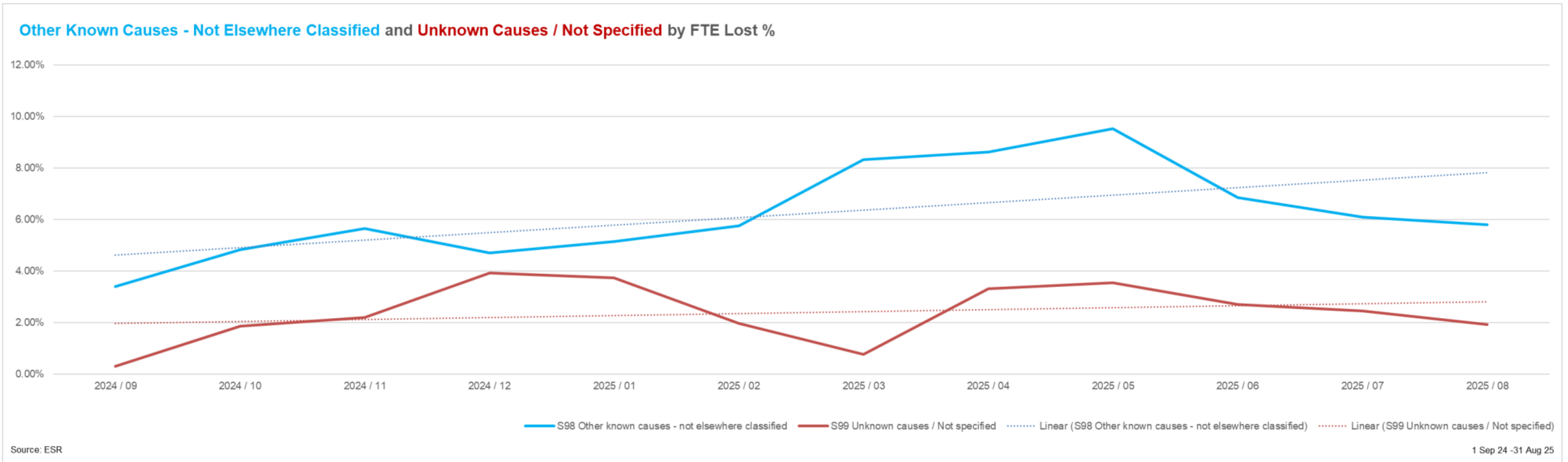
### Of those that were recorded:

- 5.43% indicated it *was* work-related.
- 21.55% indicated it *was not* work-related.



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## Sickness Absence – Unknown/'uncategorised' reasons for absence (S98 and S99)



# People and OD

## Sickness Absence – Unknown/'uncategorised' reasons for absence (S98 and S99)

For the period 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025:

- “Other known causes – Not elsewhere classified” (S98) accounts for 2,470.4 FTE days lost
- "Unknown causes / Not specified" (S99) accounts for 970.84 FTE days lost
- In total, this equates to 8.63% of total sickness absence for the year. (10.25% in July update).

- Trust and psychological safety are critical for employees to feel safe disclosing mental health challenges.
- Interventions that improve psychological safety - inclusive leadership, open communication, and managerial support - can improve people's willingness to speak up about their mental health concerns.
- [Read more \(CIPD\)](#)

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## Sickness Absence – Unknown / uncategorised reasons for absence

- A piece of work has been undertaken to understand why managers have recorded an absence as unknown or uncategorised. 57 managers were contacted, and 31 responses were received.
- 68% of respondents said they couldn't locate the correct reason for the absence in ESR.
- A reference table has been made available on the MAAW pages on the staff intranet (with a link added to the manager dashboard on ESR) listing all level 1 and level 2 absence reasons available to select from on ESR.
- The MAAW learning and development sessions for managers have been updated to highlight level 2 options available and signpost managers to absence reasons table mentioned above.

# People and OD

## Sickness Absence – October 2025 Update

Addressing the questions from the July Committee meeting:

- The Internal Audit into wellbeing support and management of sickness absence related to mental ill health has been delayed. The People and OD team will provide a further update to the People and OD Committee in February 2026.
- Where the usual line manager is not available, local arrangements are put in place to support the recording of staff sickness and enable the return to work process to continue as normal.
- If an individual requests to work with another manager to manage their absence and return to work, this is considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, there may be occasions where the relationship between the manager and employee has been a factor in the absence and so it may be appropriate for another manager to step in whilst those issues are being worked through.

# People and OD

## Sickness Absence – October 2025 Update continued

- People and OD continue to work closely with Line Managers and Trade Union partners in supporting employees to return to work or to remain in work during periods of mental ill-health.
- Managers are encouraged to use the facility in the MAAW Policy which allows for tailored adjustments to support staff to remain in work. They are also encouraged to undertake Stress Risk Assessments to help identify the causes of stress and actions to address these.
- A number of things are in place to address the concern of staff burnout, including the Burnout Support Hub, the use of Stress Risk Assessments and individual referrals to Occupational Health, and access to the Employee Assistance Programme and other wellbeing resources.

# People and OD

## Sickness Absence – October 2025 Update continued

- There is a small difference in the proportion of managers using 'Unknown' and 'Other', between Long-term and Short-term sickness. Over the last 12 months, 7.9% of long-term absence was recorded either as 'Unknown' or 'Other' compared with 6.7% for short-term sickness.
- There is a possibility that where someone is delegated to record an absence on a manager's behalf using ESR Proxy Access, if they don't have all the info they need, they could be selecting 'Unknown' or 'Other'. This has been reviewed, and we have identified 180 occurrences where proxy users have inputted sickness absence episodes for staff on behalf of their manager. Of those 180, 8.3% were recorded as 'Unknown' or 'Other'.