



A meeting of the **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE** will be held in **THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2026** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

1. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 14)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th June 2026.

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

3. WORKFORCE INFORMATION REPORT (QUARTER 1) (Pages 15 - 36)

To consider an update on HR matters impacting on the performance of the organisation.

Contact Officer: L Harfield
Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

4. WORKFORCE STRATEGY CLOSURE REPORT (Pages 37 - 56)

The Panel are invited to note the contents of the report.

Contact Officer: K Hans
Kiran.Hans@Huntingdonshire.gov.uk

5. WORKFORCE EQUALITY PROFILE REPORT (Pages 57 - 80)

Employment Committee are requested to note this report and the actions.

Contact Officer: L Harfield
Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY (Pages 81 - 98)

Employment Committee are requested to endorse the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Contact Officer: K Hans
Kiran.Hans@Huntingdonshire.gov.uk

7. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES UPDATE (Pages 99 - 166)

Employment Committee are requested to endorse the Council's Shared Parental Leave (updated), Paternity Leave (Updated), Unpaid Parental Leave (updated), Probation Policy (updated), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (new) and the Recruitment and Selection Policy (updated) policies.

Contact Officer: L Harfield
Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

8. REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

At the request of representatives of employees to consider a range of issues.

15 day of September 2026

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Please contact Miss Lauren Adams, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388234/e-mail Lauren.Adams@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

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In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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Members of the public may attend, film, photograph, and report on meetings that are open to the public. *

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View further information about [public speaking at Development Management Committees \[PDF, 0.5MB\]](#)

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Public access and seating

Meetings that are open to the public can be attended by anyone.

Seating in public areas is limited. Where demand exceeds the number of seats available, admission will be managed on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given in the following order:

1. People who live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District
2. Other interested members of the public.

This means that attendees within each priority group will be admitted in the order they arrive, subject to the number of seats available.

Reserved seating

Council Meetings - If you have registered in advance to ask a public question at a meeting of Full Council in accordance with the Council's [Constitution \[PDF, 1.5MB\]](#), a seat will be reserved for you.

Development Management, Licensing and Other Regulatory Hearings - If you have registered to speak or make representations in relation to an application or matter being considered by the Committee, a seat will be reserved for you.

You do not need to arrive early to secure your place.

When seating is full

Once all public seats are occupied, no further admission will be possible.

Standing is not permitted in meeting rooms. Additional seating cannot normally be provided, except where required as a reasonable adjustment for accessibility needs, including carers or support workers.

For meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee and other regulatory hearings, priority will be given to applicants, objectors, registered speakers and other parties directly involved in agenda items.

Arrival, sign-in and security

All visitors must sign in on arrival.

If attendance is expected to exceed capacity, you may be asked to provide evidence that you live, work or own property within the Huntingdonshire District so that seating priority can be allocated fairly. In these circumstances, we would request a photographic ID and evidence of your address or work premises. We recommend bringing only essential items.

Bags and personal belongings may be subject to security checks. Where necessary, security staff may also conduct further searches.

These arrangements apply equally to all public attending and are intended to help ensure meetings can take place safely and without disruption.

Any personal information collected as part of the sign-in process will be used only for meeting management and safety purposes in accordance with the [Council's Privacy Notice](#). Information will be retained no longer than is necessary.

Items not permitted

- Placards, banners, flags or similar items
- Knives, scissors or other sharp objects
- Whistles, air horns, loudhailers or other noise-making devices
- Bottles or other containers containing liquids, except drinking water intended for personal use during the meeting
- Any item that security staff reasonably believe could compromise safety or disrupt the meeting.

If you wish to bring large or specialist equipment into the meeting, such as recording equipment, please contact [Democratic Services](#) in advance via email to help avoid delays when entering the meeting.

Behaviour at meetings

Everyone attending a meeting is expected to treat others with courtesy and respect. Any form of verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated. Anyone presenting such behaviour will be asked to leave immediately.

Accessibility

If you have any accessibility requirements, it would be helpful to contact [Democratic Services](#) before the meeting so we can fully support you.

Speaking at a meeting or asking a question

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Members of the public may also speak or make representations at meetings of the Development Management Committee, Licensing Committee, and other regulatory hearings where public participation arrangements apply.

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Feedback

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Legal framework

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Information) (England) Regulations 2012, Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE held in THE CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 24 June 2026

PRESENT: Councillor A Blackwell – Chair.

Councillors L Ascroft, L Dewey-Beckett, J Francis, D Henly, D McIlwain, P Simpson and S Smith.

APOLOGIES: None.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th February 2026 and 21st May 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

6 Workforce Information Report (Quarter 4)

The Committee received and noted the report for Quarter 4 Human Resources (HR) matters impacting on the performance of the Council during the period 2nd December 2025 to 31st March 2026. The report included the latest position and trends relating to employee numbers, salary costs and sickness absence. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

The Committee heard that the workforce totalled 723, with the fulltime equivalent (FTE) working out at 669.09 Officers in Quarter 4. The figure represented a decrease from the previous Quarter. The period ended with an underspend of £2 million and an overspend of £1.92 million on Contractor and Agency costs.

It was confirmed that 32 individuals left the Council in Quarter 4, which was a slight decrease from the previous Quarter. The overall turnover was 16.95% in Quarter 4. Of these, six were retirements with a combined service period of 107 years. Measures to reduce turnover included enhanced exit interview arrangements better to understand reasons for leaving, regular one-to-one meetings between managers and employees, and the reintroduction of a formal incremental progression process linked to performance discussions. Consideration would be given to providing the Committee with anonymised information from exit interviews on the principal reasons for employees leaving the organisation.

Advertised vacancies decreased slightly from 72 to 67 in Quarter 4, following the significant recruitment activity undertaken in Quarter 3 to support the Food Waste Service launch. Most vacancies were within One Leisure, reflecting the

transfer of Sawtry Leisure Centre and seasonal staffing requirements. Application levels remained strong, although targeted recruitment campaigns continued for hard-to-fill roles, including Planning and ICT.

No new apprenticeships commenced during the Quarter. However, apprenticeship activity continued through course completions and the hosting of an apprenticeship event at Burgess Hall. The Leadership Development Programme had been successfully completed and had now moved into business-as-usual delivery. Following the success of a previous graduate placement, recruitment activity for a new graduate placement took place during April.

The Committee discussed the low balance of the Council's Apprenticeship Levy, whether any levy funding had expired, the proportion of funds utilised, and how apprenticeship programmes contributed to longer-term recruitment and retention. While no levy funding had expired, available funds had been fully utilised to support apprenticeship and management development programmes, including Level 5 and Level 7 qualifications. Levy funds were being rebuilt to provide future apprenticeship opportunities. Additional levy funding had been secured from other councils where required. All apprentices had either been existing employees undertaking development programmes or had progressed into permanent roles within the Council. ICT apprenticeships had proved highly popular and a significant proportion of apprenticeship funding has been utilised within the ICT service. The apprenticeship scheme would not be affected by Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The HR caseload remained stable at 91 active cases, with absence management continuing to account for the majority of casework.

Average sickness absence increased slightly from 9.6 to 10.0 days per FTE. Long-term sickness cases reduced from 24 to 23 employees, while short-term absence fell from 684 to 642 days lost. The most common reasons for absence remained stress, anxiety and depression, followed by coughs and colds. Officers highlighted ongoing measures to support employee wellbeing and manage absence, including enhanced occupational health provision, an employee assistance programme, wellbeing initiatives and proactive absence management.

Following a question on absence levels compared with national benchmarks, it was confirmed that the newly procured occupational health provider offered a tailored service, including case conferences, greater engagement with managers, and case-specific advice to support the effective management of absence. Additional services, such as physiotherapy support, were also available to help employees recover and return to work, particularly in physically demanding roles. Officers also advised that reducing sickness absence remained a priority. While sickness levels reflected the wider national picture, the Council was aiming to reduce absence rates towards private sector levels. Proactive measures were being taken to improve attendance and employee wellbeing.

In response to questions regarding sickness absence by Councillor Francis, Officers advised that reporting arrangements were currently being refined to provide this information. Sickness absence costs were approximately £82,000 per annum on a rolling-year basis, which were broadly in line with comparable

authorities. Furthermore, sickness-related dismissals were used where appropriate but progression to a Stage 3 absence management meeting did not automatically result in dismissal.

Councillor Davenport-Ray, Executive Councillor for Employees, stated that a significant proportion of the Council's absence related to long-term sickness, often involving employees in physically demanding roles who were awaiting or recovering from surgical procedures and were therefore unable to undertake their duties, even on a reduced basis. She also highlighted that sickness absence indicators were monitored quarterly by the Performance and Growth Scrutiny Committee. Current targets and intervention levels had been established through the scrutiny process and were regularly reviewed. Councillor Davenport-Ray welcomed the suggestion that the financial cost of sickness absence be included in future workforce reports, subject to the development of a robust methodology for measuring and reporting this information.

The Committee discussed stress-related sickness absence. Stress, anxiety and depression were recorded separately as either work-related or personal. The majority of absences within this category related to personal stress rather than work-related issues. The Workforce Strategy included measures to support employee wellbeing and address personal factors affecting attendance. Where work-related stress was identified, managers followed a formal stress management process, including early intervention, discussions with the employee and the development of action plans to help address the causes of stress.

In relation to sick pay, entitlement was determined locally and formed part of employees' contractual terms and conditions. Any changes would need to take account of wider workforce considerations, including recruitment and retention. Following a question, Councillor Davenport-Ray confirmed that the Council was not considering reducing contractual sick pay to lower absence levels.

Councillor Simpson queried whether the increase in absences relating to coughs, colds and gastrointestinal illnesses reflected a seasonal trend and whether the introduction of the hybrid working policy, requiring increased office attendance, might have contributed to higher levels of transmissible illness. An increase in such illnesses was expected during the winter months, but Officers were unable to draw a direct link between the hybrid working policy and sickness absence levels. The hybrid working policy had not resulted in a significant increase in office-based working, as many employees were already required to attend the workplace regularly due to the nature of their roles.

In response to a question by Councillor Dewey-Beckett regarding the ICT agency staff overspend, Officers advised that, where possible, agency roles were being converted to permanent posts. However, ICT remained a challenging area to recruit to due to competition from the private sector and pay constraints. Officers were working with the service manager to review recruitment challenges and identify opportunities to attract permanent staff. The use of agency staff was being maintained whilst internal service reviews and staffing changes were underway.

Further on the use of agency staff, Officers advised that the Council operated preferred supplier arrangements with approved agencies and thereby benefited

from agreed rates. Alternative agencies might be engaged where necessary to secure the required skills and expertise. Decisions on converting agency roles to permanent posts were considered on a service-by-service basis and were assessed against cost efficiency and operational requirements.

Regarding the retention of staff during the period of uncertainty associated with LGR, Officers advised that this was a key element of the Workforce Strategy. However, it was reported that there was currently no evidence of staff leaving due to LGR. Regular staff engagement sessions and internal communications were provided, and services were expected to continue operating largely as usual during the transition period. Lessons learnt from other councils that had undergone LGR were being used to inform preparations. The Corporate Director of Communities provided additional information on preparations for LGR that were underway both within the Council and across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Chair raised the point that the number of reported accidents involving non-employees at One Leisure had increased from 27 in the previous quarter to 71 in Quarter 4 and requested further information on the reasons for the increase. This information would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

It was then

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

7 Workforce Strategy Update

By means of a presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Kiran Hans, HR Coordinator – Project Delivery, provided the Committee with an update on the Workforce Strategy. Reference was made to examples of training and development activities, such as the Management and Leadership programme.

Members received an overview of the Workforce Strategy, which was developed following extensive staff engagement across all Council sites in 2024. The Strategy focused on three key themes: attraction and retention, engagement, and wellbeing, and was supported by a detailed action plan.

Officers highlighted progress made since the Strategy's adoption, including the introduction of the Leadership Development Programme, a new one-to-one performance framework, a buddy scheme for new starters, an enhanced Employee Assistance Programme, a revised employee handbook, and the establishment of the "HDC for Everyone" equality, diversity and inclusion network. A new pension salary sacrifice arrangement had also delivered employer National Insurance savings.

Members were advised of a range of initiatives introduced since the previous update, including electric and hybrid vehicle schemes, a new employee rewards platform, a job shadowing programme, improved career development opportunities, coaching and mentoring support, graduate placements, and measures to address pay grade compression. Officers also highlighted ongoing

health and wellbeing initiatives, staff engagement roadshows, and targeted support services aimed at improving employee wellbeing and reducing sickness absence.

Looking ahead, priorities included the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy, consideration of healthcare cashback schemes, and a review of mandatory training arrangements. All Workforce Strategy actions were either completed or in progress, with no actions currently outstanding.

Councillor Davenport-Ray welcomed the progress made through the Workforce Strategy and confirmed that it had been developed in response to feedback from employees on ways to improve the workplace. She emphasised that, whilst the initiatives supported staff wellbeing and engagement, they also delivered tangible organisational benefits. These included improved recruitment and retention, reduced staff turnover, fewer hard-to-fill vacancies, and a preventative approach to employee wellbeing that could help reduce sickness absence. Investment in the workforce should be viewed not only as the right thing to do for employees, but also as delivering a positive return on investment for the Council.

Councillor Dewey-Beckett commended Officers for the wide range of initiatives being delivered. He commented that organisational culture was a key factor in employee engagement and retention and noted that feedback from Staff, alongside the activities outlined in the report, demonstrated a positive and well-supported workplace culture. Appreciation was expressed to Officers for their work in developing and delivering the Strategy.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the information presented be received and noted.

8 Workforce Equality Report

The Committee gave consideration to a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which contained the annual summary of the profile of the workforce according to their protected characteristics as required by the Equality Act 2010. It covered the period to 31st March 2026. Equality monitoring data was provided voluntarily by employees and, as a result, the Council did not hold complete information for all members of Staff. Ongoing work continued to encourage data completion and raise awareness of the importance of providing this information.

Officers reported improvements in disclosure rates, including a reduction in the number of employees who had not declared their disability status or ethnicity. A range of measures was being implemented further to improve declaration rates, including targeted communications, manager engagement and support for frontline staff.

Members were advised that a further analysis, comparing workforce data with Census information would be presented to the September meeting. It would assess how representative the workforce was and identify any areas for improvement. Progress against existing actions and any new proposed actions

would also be reported. This work was being delivered within existing resources and, to help improve staff experience, belonging and engagement, it would be supported by the Council's Equality and Inclusion Network.

Councillor McIlwain questioned the purpose of collecting information on protected characteristics and sought assurance that employees who chose not to disclose such information were not subject to repeated requests. Officers advised that employees were not required to provide equality monitoring information and that a response of "prefer not to say" was accepted. Follow-up requests were only made where no response had been provided.

Following a question by the Chair, it was confirmed that the introduction of a dyslexia-friendly font through the ICT service remained an action within the Workforce Strategy. As ICT services were delivered through the shared 3C partnership, implementation required coordination across all three authorities. Having noted that work on the initiative was ongoing,

It was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

9 HR Policy Updates- Time off for Volunteering Policy, Expenses, Allowances and Overtime Policy and Recruitment and Selection Policy

By means of a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Committee was acquainted with the terms of policies relating to Volunteering, Overtime and Expenses and Recruitment. The Volunteering Policy had been developed as a new initiative under the Workforce Strategy and supported the Council's social responsibility objectives. Similar policies were already in place at some neighbouring authorities, so the introduction of the policy would help to ensure the Council remained a competitive employer while supporting employee engagement and opportunities for community involvement.

Following a question from Councillor Ascroft, the Committee was advised that requests for volunteering leave were subject to managerial approval and must take account of operational requirements and service delivery. The policy did not impose a restriction on employees with sickness absence records. Decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, volunteering might positively support an employee's wellbeing, particularly where absences related to mental health. Managers were required to seek HR advice where appropriate to ensure decisions were fair, reasonable and compliant with employment and equality obligations.

Councillor Henley wondered if the range of employee benefits, wellbeing initiatives and support measures was having the intended impact, noting that sickness absence levels had continued to rise despite progress in delivering Workforce Strategy actions. In response the Committee was advised that sickness absence was monitored through return-to-work interviews and underlying reasons for absence were analysed. The various wellbeing and support initiatives formed part of a coordinated, long-term approach to improving

employee health and attendance. The benefits of many initiatives were unlikely to be immediate and might take time to influence sickness absence levels. Ongoing efforts in this respect focused on supporting employees and encouraging attendance at work. The Corporate Director also advised that all measures introduced through the Workforce Strategy were regularly reviewed to ensure they delivered positive outcomes. New initiatives, including the Volunteering Policy, would be monitored to assess participation, impact and value, enabling the Council to focus resources on activities that supported staff wellbeing and corporate objectives. Guidance would be provided to ensure volunteering activities aligned with the Policy's aims.

Having commented on the importance of ensuring that monitoring arrangements were proportionate and not overly onerous, the Chair requested an update at the next meeting on the uptake of the Volunteering Policy

Councillor Dewey-Beckett expressed support for the proposed Volunteering Policy, welcoming both the opportunities it provided for staff to engage with their communities and the controls included within the framework. The Policy might help strengthen relationships between residents and the Council by increasing positive interaction with Council employees, thereby supporting the Council's organisational culture and community engagement objectives.

Members then received an introduction to a new Expenses, Allowances and Overtime Policy. The Policy reflected existing working practices and contractual arrangements, while ensuring consistency with neighbouring authorities in preparation for LGR. The policy did not introduce significant changes to current arrangements but provided greater clarity for employees and managers regarding expenses, allowances and overtime claims. The policy would strengthen governance arrangements by establishing clear guidance and approval processes.

The Chair welcomed the Expenses, Allowances and Overtime Policy but expressed concern regarding the requirement for managers to maintain written records relating to vehicle use. She suggested that automated systems might be used and that the implementation of the Policy should be monitored to ensure record-keeping requirements were practical, accurate and not overly burdensome.

Members received an update on the Recruitment and Selection Policy. The proposed changes were minor and followed a recent audit, which identified that the Council's existing practice regarding employment references was not fully reflected within the Policy. The amendments formalised current arrangements for obtaining references for new employees, including the types of references that might be accepted and the circumstances in which references might not be available. The changes aligned the Policy with existing practice.

The Chair raised an issue regarding the use of character references where standard employment references were unavailable, noting the importance of ensuring appropriate checks were in place before individuals were given access to Council systems, premises and information. Assurance was sought on the safeguards and processes used to manage any risks associated with such appointments. Officers advised that character references were only accepted as a last resort and managers were made aware when one had been provided.

Given the increasing difficulty in obtaining detailed employment references, greater emphasis was placed on robust recruitment processes and the probationary period to assess and support new employees.

It was then

RESOLVED

that the Volunteering, Overtime and Expenses and Recruitment policies be endorsed.

10 REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEES

It was noted that apologies had been received from the Representatives of Employees.

Chair

Insert:
Committee – Employment Committee
23 September 2026

Report by: Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce



Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Q1 26-27 Employment Committee Workforce Report

Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview of workforce activity and key people metrics for Quarter 1 2026/27. Workforce capacity has increased to support key service priorities, including the Aquapark opening and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), with employee numbers increasing to 749 and FTE increasing to 694.73. Recruitment activity remained strong, with 95 roles advertised, 1,265 applications received and 143 appointments made, including 34 internal appointments, demonstrating continued investment in workforce development, succession planning and organisational resilience. Turnover increased marginally to 18.97% but remains below the LGA benchmark, while overall HR caseloads reduced from 91 to 79 active cases.

Sickness absence remains the most significant workforce challenge, increasing slightly to 10.1 days lost per FTE, with long-term absence accounting for over 70% of all absence. In response, HR continues to strengthen attendance management, manager capability and wellbeing support arrangements to improve attendance and support employee health and wellbeing. While recruitment outcomes remain positive, challenges continue in a small number of specialist and operational areas, contributing to ongoing reliance on agency and contractor resources. Priorities for the coming quarters will focus on reducing sickness absence, strengthening recruitment and retention in hard-to-fill roles, reducing temporary staffing dependency and ensuring workforce plans remain aligned to LGR requirements and future service delivery needs.

Members are asked to note the contents of this report

Recommendations

- 1.1. Managing sickness absence and associated costs
- 1.2. Strengthening recruitment pipelines in hard-to-fill areas
- 1.3. Reducing reliance on temporary staffing
- 1.4. Ensuring workforce plans align with LGR developments

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

- 1 *Doing our Core Work Well*

Report Author(s)

Head of HR and OD. Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** Employment Committee have requested regular updates on HR matters impacting on the performance of the organisation. This report contains information such as staffing levels and sickness absence and will update Members on the latest position and trends.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1** This report is presented at Employment Committee on a quarterly basis outlining
- Employee Profile.
 - Sickness Absence
 - HR Caseload
 - Equalities Data
 - Accident/Incident Reports

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1** N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1** N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** N/A

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

This report supports organisational review of key data to ensure we have the right staff who are supported with the right policies to deliver the Council's key Priorities. This allows HDC to continue to work towards being an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

This highlights two key challenges that HR is managing

- reliance on temporary staffing in critical service areas.
- long term sickness

6.3 Policy Implications

- 6.3.1** N/A

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.4.1 N/A

6.5 Community Impact

6.5.1 N/A

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.6.1 N/A

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.7.1 A full breakdown of Equalities data is provided in Section 4

6.8 Implications on Resources

6.8.1 N/A

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.9.1 Sickness and wellbeing of staff is being actively managed and supported. HR is leading a continued push to upskill/empower/enable managers to manage sickness within their teams, to reduce absence rates across the organisation and to implement wellbeing support in line with the Workforce Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.10.1 Data collation from this report contributes to the progression of the LGR Workforce Workstream.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 We actively monitor the retention rates in line with the risk register.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 N/A.

Workforce Report

Quarter One 2026-27

Report Highlights

Report Section	Measure	Trend	Q4 2025/26	Q1 2026/27
1.1	Headcount	↑	723	749
1.1	FTE	↑	669.09	694.73
1.2	Variable Employees	↑	380	399
1.4	High Earners	↑	69	71
1.5	Leavers	↑	32	41
1.6	Turnover	↑	16.95%	18.97%
1.7	Employment Offers Made	↑	84	143
2.0	Sickness Days Lost per FTE	↑	10	10.1
2.3	Sickness Absence – Long-Term	↑	61.35%	70.47%
3.0	HR Caseload	↓	91	79
3.1	HR Caseload – Sickness Absence Management	↓	66%	57%
			Q4 Actual	Q1 Forecast
1.3	Pay bill – Total	↑	£36.2m	£39.7m
1.3	Pay bill – Employees	↑	£33.6m	£37.0m
1.3	Pay bill – Contract & Agency Staff	↑	£2.6m	£2.7m

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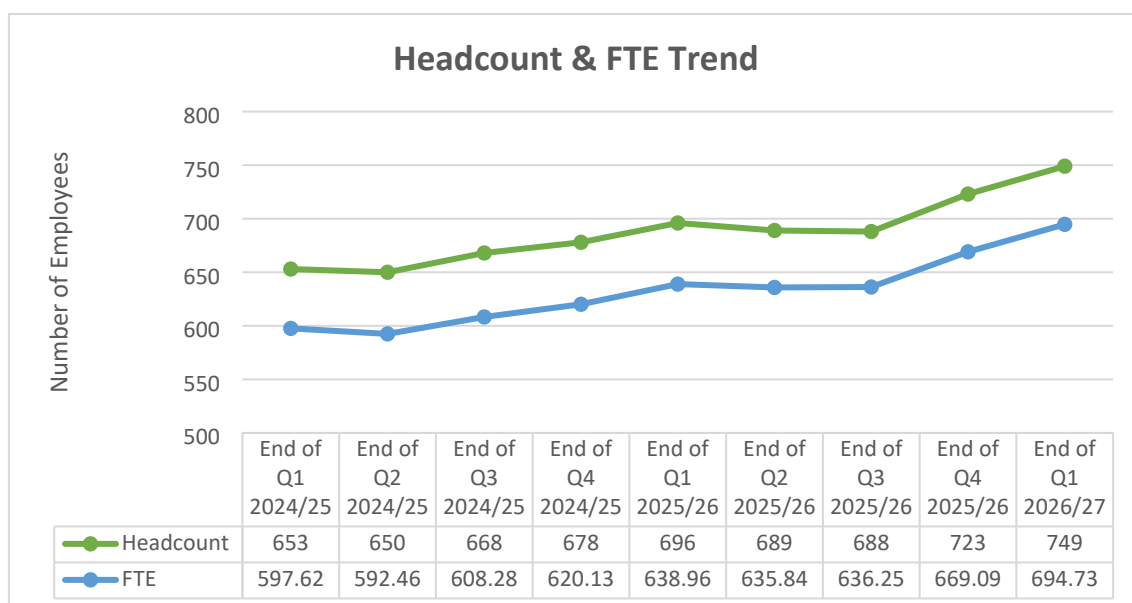
1.0 EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Definition: Headcount is the number of employees working within the Council, counting primary roles only, and excluding casual roles.

A **full time equivalent** (referred to as FTE) is a measure of an employee's workload to make the position comparable across the workforce based on a 37-hour full-time working week. For example, an FTE of 0.5 indicates that the employee works half of a full-time working week (18.5 hours).

1.1 HEADCOUNT AND FTE

At the end of Quarter One (30th June 2026), the total number of permanent and fixed term employees employed by Huntingdonshire District Council was 749 (excluding those employed on a variable or casual hour basis) with the number of full-time equivalent posts at 694.73

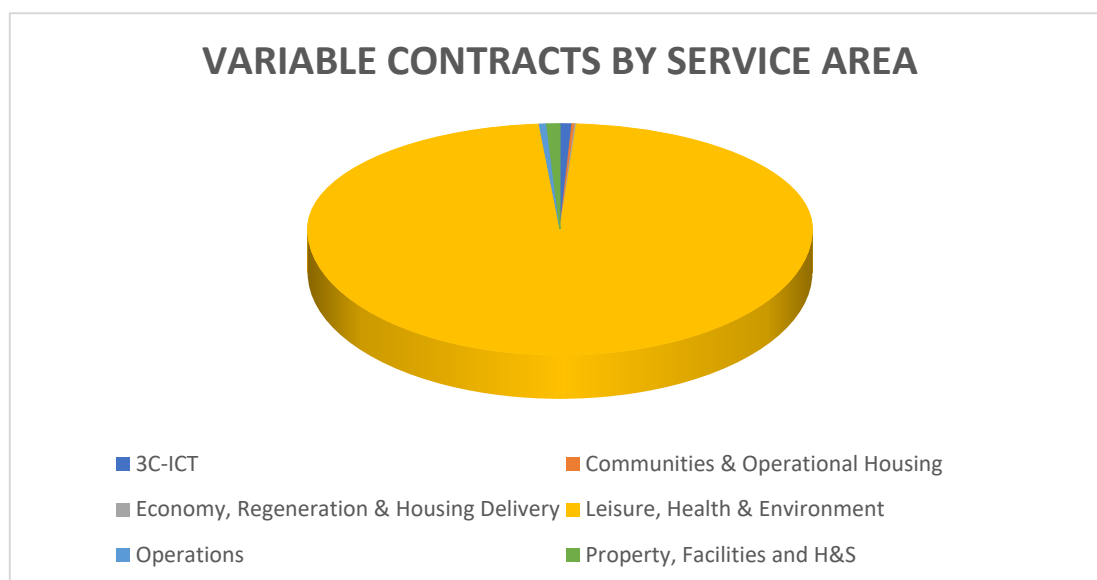


1.2 WORKFORCE BY CONTRACT TYPE

Data on Variable employees is included in the below table. However, data on Variables are not included in the other areas of the workforce reporting. Variables are typically employed in multiple positions across Leisure services; though a small number of Variables are employed in in other services. At the end of Q1, HDC had 399 variable individuals employed in 886 posts. This is a increase in headcount from Q4.

The numbers in the table below may vary as they include employees with multiple contracts/ positions.

Employment Type	Q4 2025/26	Q1 2026/27
Fixed Term	35	39
Permanent	663	684
Apprentice	2	2
Secondment/Acting Up	23	24
Grand Total	723	749
Variable employees	380 (860)	399 (886)

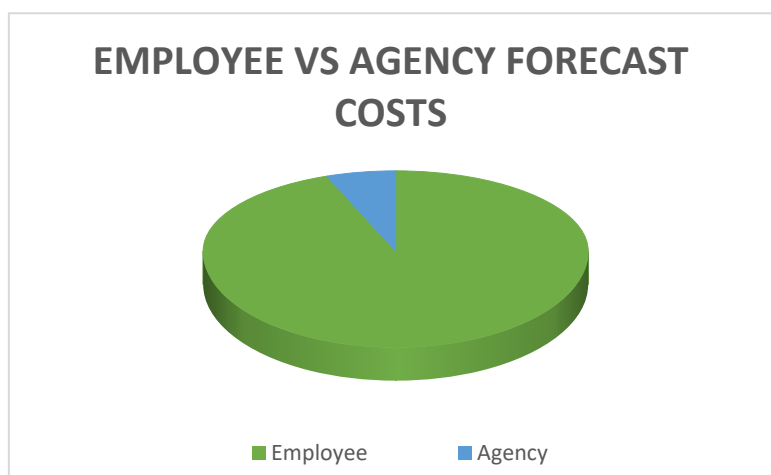


1.3 PAYBILL

The following table shows the employee pay costs over several years. At this stage of 2026/27 the forecast pay bill shows an underspend on all employee costs (staff, contractors and agency workers) of £110.6k. This arises from an underspend on employee salaries of £1.51m, but an overspend of £1.4m on contractors and agency workers against an agency budget of £1.3m.

The majority of our agency spend continues to be centred towards our ICT, Development Management and Operational Services teams.

Year	Employee Paybill Budget (£)	Employee Paybill Actual (£)	Employee Paybill Forecast (£)
2018/19	25,230,515	23,192,646	
2019/20	24,871,268	23,941,696	
2020/21	25,679,601	24,240,402	
2021/22	25,377,310	25,421,307	
2022/23	27,330,175	26,467,958	
2023/24	27,848,427	27,157,627	
2024/25	30,414,246	32,360,000	
2025/26	35,988,670	35,811,085	
2026/27	39,856,087		39,745,447



1.4 HIGH EARNERS

Definition: High earners are classified as employees who are paid at £50,000 or above. This information is already published annually in line with the Government's commitment to improve transparency across the public sector and the target hasn't changed since it was introduced. The Councils pay policy distinguishes authorisation of salaries over £75,000 per annum.

At the end of Quarter One, there were 71 employees paid at FTE salaries of £50,000 or above, representing 9.5% of the total workforce. 1.3% of the workforce are paid salaries over £75,000. The total number of employees classed as high earners has increased since the previous Quarter (69).

1.5 LEAVERS

During Q1, there were 41 employees on permanent or fixed-term contracts who left the organisation, which is an increase on the total leaving in the previous Quarter (32).

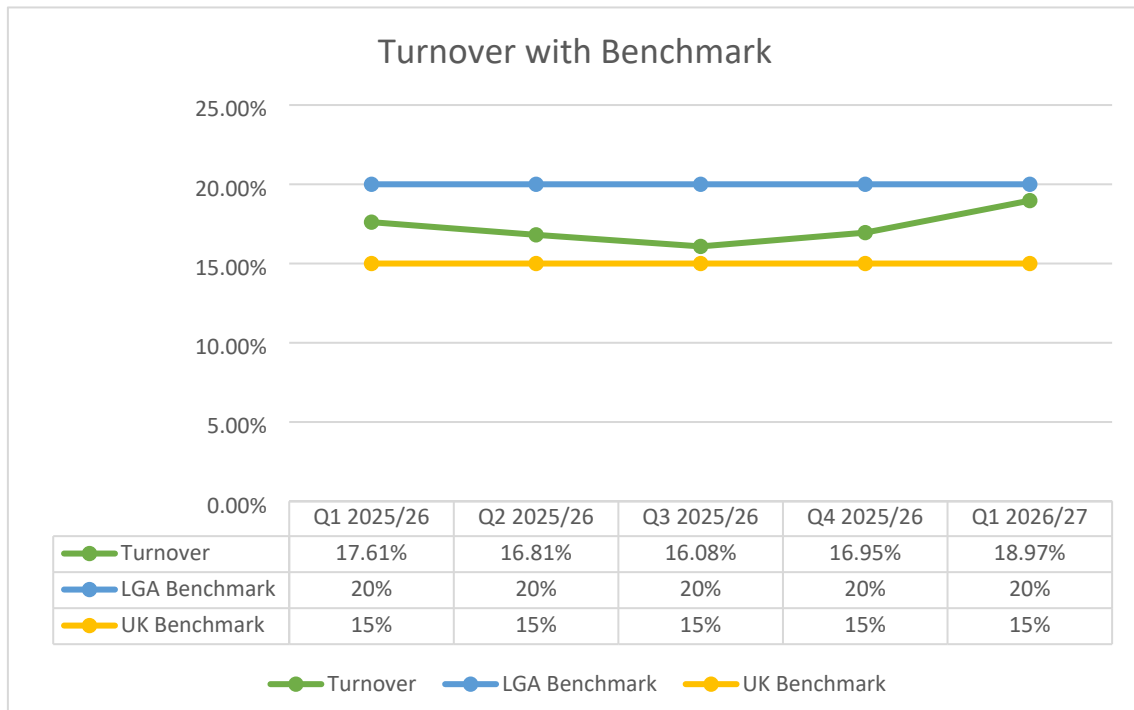
9 of the leavers from Q1, resigned to take up other posts with either commercial or public sector employers, this an increase from last quarters report (8). We had 2 retirements during this quarter with a combined service of 18 years.

Leaving Reason	Permanent	Fixed-term
Dismissal Misconduct	1	
Dismissal - Ill Health Retirement	1	
Dismissal - Capability	1	
Retirement	2	
Settlement Agreement	2	
Voluntary Resignation	33	1
Total	41	1

1.6 TURNOVER

In the 12 months to 30th June 2026, 133 employees left the Council. As a proportion of the average number of permanent/fixed term employees over this period, the overall annual turnover rate for employees is 18.97%, which is higher than the previous quarter but remains below the LGA benchmark. This rate is higher than we would like it to be, however on reviewing exit data, the highest proportion of leaving reasons were due to staff moving out of the area or being offered external promotions.

During this quarter, HR have been working with Heads of Service to identify high risk staff to support succession planning for critical roles to ensure the organisation is protected as it moves towards LGR



1.7 RECRUITMENT METRICS

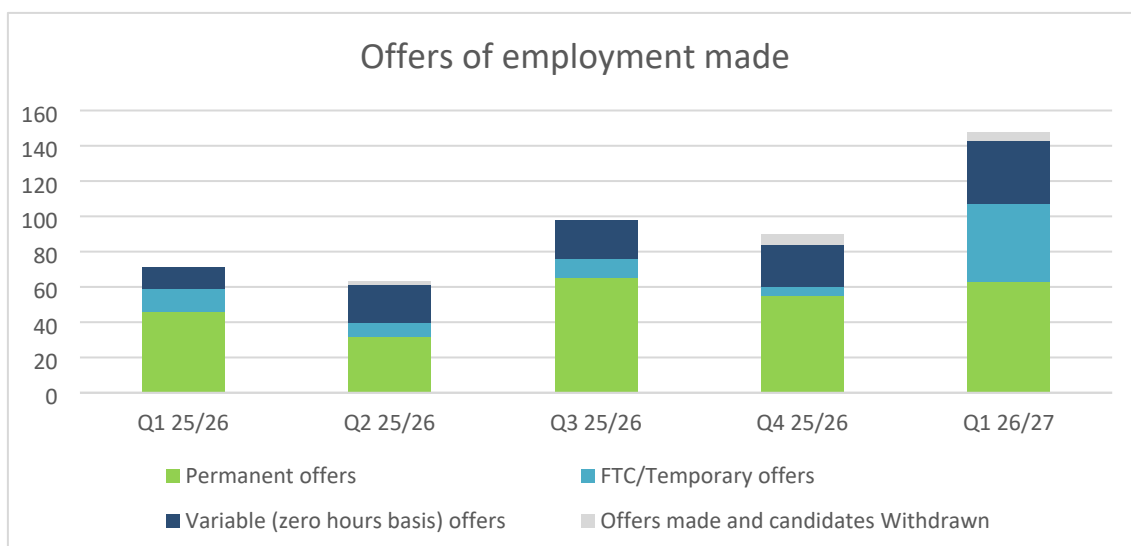
Of the 143 offers made through core recruitment activities, 34 were existing HDC staff, promoted or moving into other positions around the council. The HR team will continue to support the business with creating opportunities to grow and develop our workforce, careers, and mobility around services.

In terms of recruitment metrics, the council advertised 95 roles in Q1 26-27, an increase from 67 in the previous quarter.

Advertised Roles	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27
	51	59	72	67	95

Advertised Roles per business area	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27
3CICT	0	7	5	4	1
Corporate Services (HR, Finance, Facilities, Dem Services)	3	5	4	2	3
COO (Community, Revs & Bens, Customer Services)	3	7	9	9	14
Strategic Housing & Growth	0	2	3	1	3
One Leisure	23	13	15	27	44
Recovery Services (Car parking; Countryside, Parks & Open Spaces)	5	5	1	1	1
Operations (Waste, CCTV, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleaning)	12	17	31	23	9
Executive/Transformation/Communications	5	3	4	0	20

Number of candidates applied	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27
	644	1032	712	915	1265



1.8 Recruitment Challenges/Successes

Recruitment activity increased significantly during the first quarter of 2026/27, with 95 roles advertised compared to 67 in the previous quarter. Candidate attraction also remained strong, with 1,265 applications received, representing a

notable increase from the 915 applications received in Q4 2025/26. This demonstrates continued interest in opportunities across the Council and reflects the effectiveness of recruitment campaigns in reaching a broad candidate market.

A total of 143 offers were made during the quarter across permanent, temporary and variable-hours positions. Of these, 34 appointments were existing employees moving into new roles or securing promotions within the organisation. This continued level of internal progression highlights the Council's commitment to developing and retaining talent, supporting career development opportunities, and enabling workforce mobility across services.

The increase in recruitment activity was primarily driven by demand within One Leisure and Transformation. One Leisure accounted for 44 advertised roles, a substantial increase on previous quarters, reflecting workforce requirements linked to the new Aquapark and the need to ensure appropriate staffing levels are in place to support the expanded service offer. The Executive and Transformation services also saw a significant increase in recruitment activity, with 20 roles advertised compared to none in the previous quarter. This growth is largely attributable to additional resource requirements within Transformation to support Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) work and associated programme delivery.

Whilst recruitment outcomes have been positive overall, some challenges remain in attracting and securing candidates for specialist, operational and highly competitive roles. Three candidates withdrew after accepting offers during the quarter, highlighting the continued competition within the labour market and the need to maintain an agile recruitment approach. The reasons for withdrawal reflected both individual career aspirations and wider organisational factors; in some cases, candidates accepted alternative opportunities that were more closely aligned to their long-term career goals, whilst one candidate declined an offer due to concerns regarding the fixed-term nature of the position.

There were a small number of recruitment campaigns during the quarter that did not result in an appointment and subsequently required re-advertisement. Challenges were particularly evident within frontline operational roles, where candidate suitability, interview non-attendance and unsuccessful pre-employment assessments impacted recruitment outcomes. In several cases, applicants did not fully meet the requirements of the role or were unable to progress through the selection process, reducing the pool of appointable candidates. These challenges reflect ongoing labour market pressures and the difficulties often associated with recruiting to operational positions.

During the quarter, the Council agreed to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant, reinforcing its commitment to supporting care experienced young people. As part of this commitment, eligible care leavers who meet the minimum criteria for a role will be guaranteed an interview. This initiative demonstrates the Council's commitment to social value, equality of opportunity and inclusive recruitment practices, recognising that care leavers can face additional barriers to employment and benefiting from targeted support to access sustainable career opportunities.

Overall, Q1 2026/27 has been a strong quarter for recruitment, characterised by increased vacancy levels, high application numbers and strong appointment activity. The successful recruitment to support strategic priorities, including the Aquapark launch and LGR transformation programme, places the Council in a positive position to meet future service demands while continuing to develop internal talent and strengthen workforce resilience.

1.9 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The Learning & Development Team have been working on work experience placements for this year, and strong links with local educational settings and residents are proving worthwhile with 20 placements across the business throughout the summer months altogether, in Q1 there were 16 successful placements. Interest has been shown by students in gaining experience across the services working in both Corporate Services and Leisure.

Following the success of our previous Graduate placement through 'Impact: The Local Government Graduate Programme', we have been working with them again with a view to hosting another Graduate placement to support within the Transformation and Revenues and Benefits Teams. The recruitment process for this commenced in April, with local interviews held during May with Heads of Service expressing a keen interest in hosting a graduate; and successfully completed, outcomes of interviews are expected from Impact during the next quarter.

Q1 saw the conclusion of the Leadership Development Programme, launched in March 2025, with all eight modules delivered successfully. This was due to conclude at the end of Q4, however due to operational challenges and management capacity some of these courses extended into the first part of Q1 to ensure that they were completed.

The Learning and Development Team is now embedding the programme into business-as-usual activity as part of the Council's core learning offer, with a number of modules being adapted for in-house delivery to ensure continued access, long-term sustainability, and ongoing value for the organisation.

Apprenticeships

During Q1 we have had completions in the following courses, these are the apprenticeship standards:

- Business Administration Level 3
- Data Analyst Level 4
- Associate Project Manager Level 4

No new apprenticeships were started in this quarter, partly due to the timings of the start of new courses and partly due to the low funds currently within the apprenticeship levy, however this will enable us to support more apprentices in the next quarter.

The figures shown in the table below are as at the end of June 2026.

	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Total
New and transferred apprenticeships	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ongoing	2	3	0	1	4	10

2.0 SICKNESS ABSENCE

Definition: Long term sickness is classified as a continuous period of absence of 28 or more calendar days. All other periods of absence are defined as **short term**.

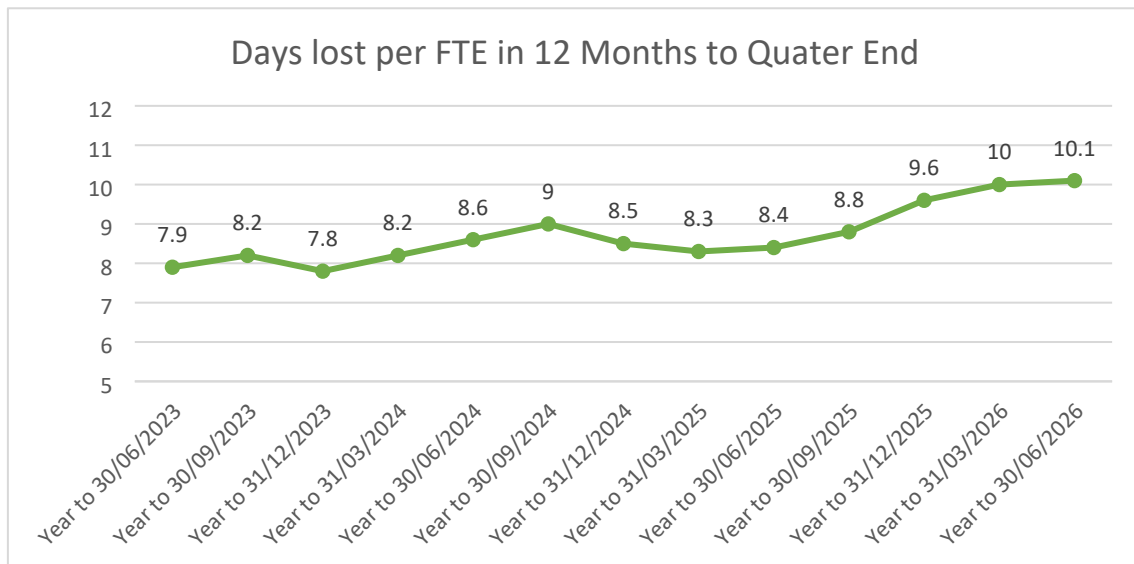
The absence data is calculated per full-time equivalent (FTE) as per the guidelines set out in the previous Best Value Performance Indicators (former statutory dataset) for sickness to account for adjustments in working hours.

Trigger points for management action under HDC policy are as follows:

- 3 or more periods of absence in a rolling 3-month period
- 6 or more periods of absence in a rolling 12-month period
- 8 working days or more in a rolling 12-month period
- Long term absence of 28 calendar days or more
- Patterns of absence
(e.g., regular Friday and/or Monday; repeated absences linked to holidays)

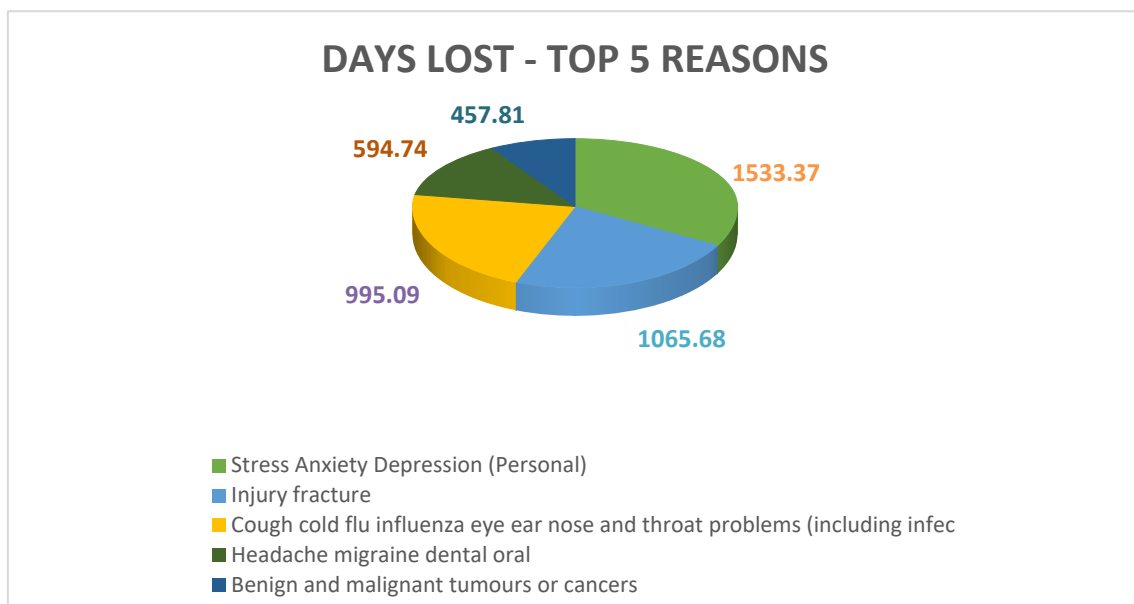
2.1 TREND OF WORKING DAYS LOST ACROSS HDC

The graph shows the trend in sickness absence per FTE employee over a rolling period to the end of each Quarter since June 2023. It shows that sickness absence to the end of Q1 has increased to 10.1 days per FTE, from the previous 10 days per FTE last quarter. This is in line with national trends for UK employers across many industries. The year to date cost of sickness is £219,808.



2.2 REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

The top 5 reasons for sickness absence by category below: -



2.3 SICKNESS ABSENCE BREAKDOWN

The increase in overall sickness absence during Q1 2026/27 continues to be driven primarily by long-term absence. Long-term sickness accounted for 70.47% of all working days lost during the quarter, increasing from 61.35% in the previous quarter, with long-term absence days increasing from 1,019 to 1,217 days. The number of employees absent on a long-term basis has increased from 23 to 29 as a quarter average, however this includes people who have hit long term sickness for a day or two within this quarter. The current long term sickness case load is 19 members of staff which has remained consistent from the previous quarter. All 19 cases are being managed actively, and long term cases of 6 months or longer have reduced.

In contrast, short-term absence reduced from 642 to 510 working days lost which is the lowest it has been since Q1 24/15 in terms of working days lost. This is to be expected due to the previous quarter falling into the 'winter' quarter and therefore a reduction in cough/cold related illnesses that we usually see during that quarter.

Whilst overall sickness absence remains a key workforce challenge, the reduction in short-term absence and the continued absence of work-related stress from the top causes of sickness suggest that wellbeing and attendance management interventions are having a positive impact in some areas. HR will continue to focus on proactive attendance management, manager capability and wellbeing support to help reduce long-term absence and improve attendance outcomes.

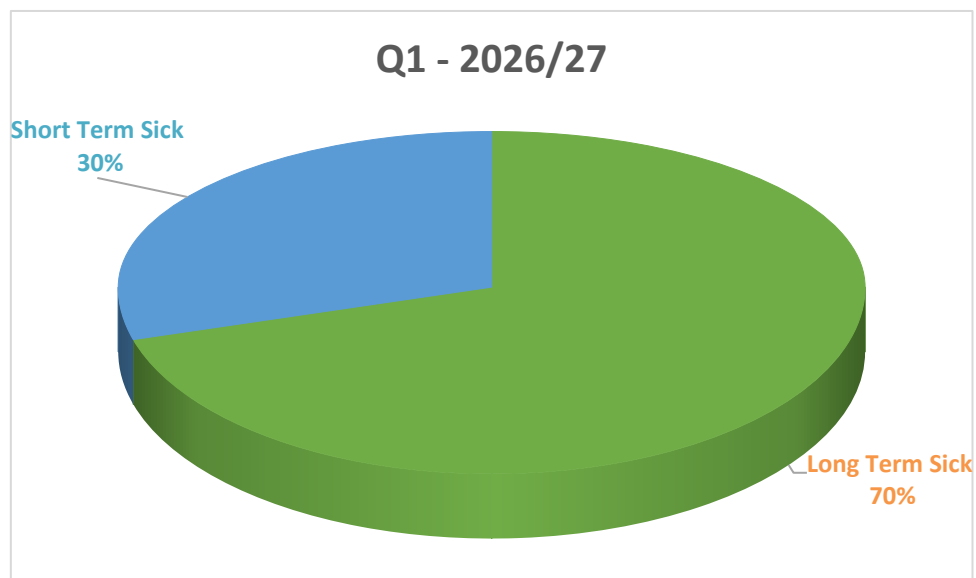
The Wellbeing Strategy that is being presented the evening is anticipated to have a positive impact on sickness. The strategy will be focusing on the following aims:

- Uptake of well-being-related activities.
- To keep sickness absence in line with or below benchmark data and aim to be in line with the private sector.
- Increased employee engagement shown in the staff survey.
- Employer of choice - recruitment and retention data.
- Take up of gym membership.
- Reduced agency spend.
- Reduced Occupational Health costs.
- Reduced accidents and injuries.
- Overtime payments reduce.
- Turnover within benchmark data.

Quarter	Total days of long-term sickness	Total Working days lost (Short term sickness)	% of total absence long-term	% of total absence short-term
Q4 2023/24	859 (29)	472	64.50%	35.50%
Q1 2024/25	859 (22)	449.5	65.60%	34.40%
Q2 2024/25	823 (18)	566.01	59.30%	40.70%
Q3 2024/25	525 (17)	663.29	44.10%	55.90%
Q4 2024/25	716 (22)	599	54.45%	45.55%
Q1 2025/26	750 (21)	600	55.56%	44.44%
Q2 2025/26	962 (22)	616	60.96%	39.04%
Q3 2025/26	978 (24)	684	58.84%	41.16%

Q4 2025/26	1019 (23)	642	61.35%	38.65%
Q1 2026/27	1217 (29)	510	70.47%	29.53%

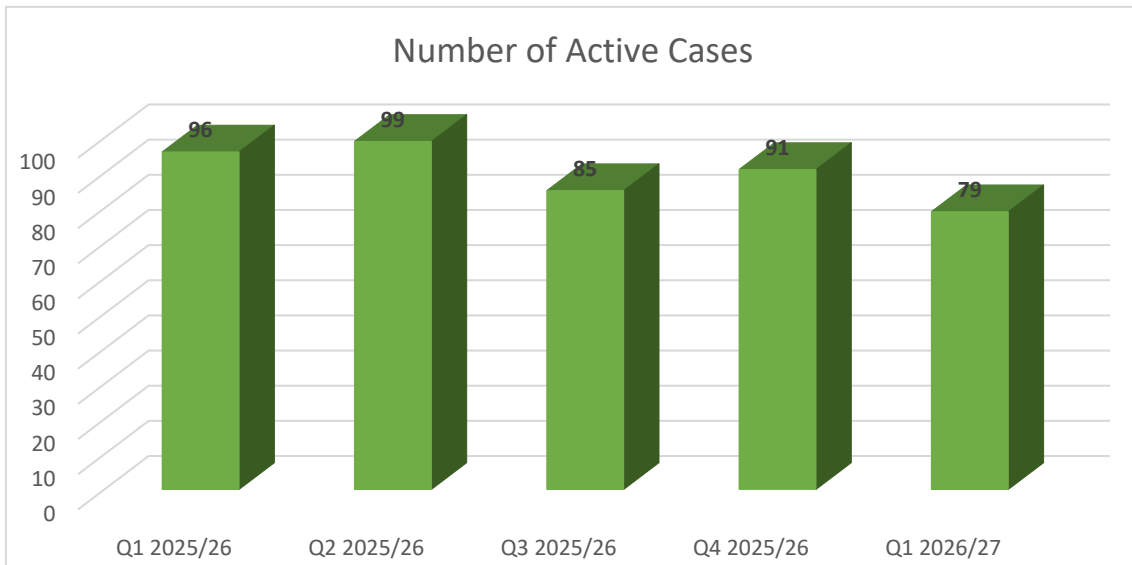
*Brackets denotes number of employees absent.



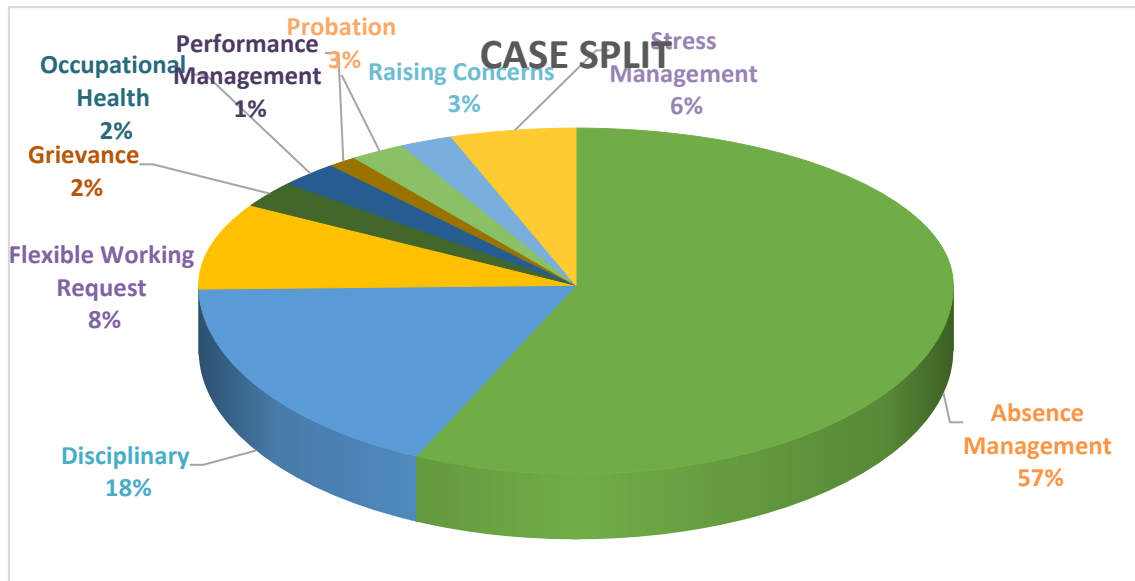
3.0 HR CASELOAD

The caseload is recorded to provide an indicator of the type of HR issues that the organisation has been dealing with over the last 12 months.

3.1 BREAKDOWN OF HR CASES BY TYPE



During Q1 there were 79 cases in progress, of which 24 were dealt with under formal procedures. Absence management continues to be the highest split of casework which is reflective of the sickness absence rates.

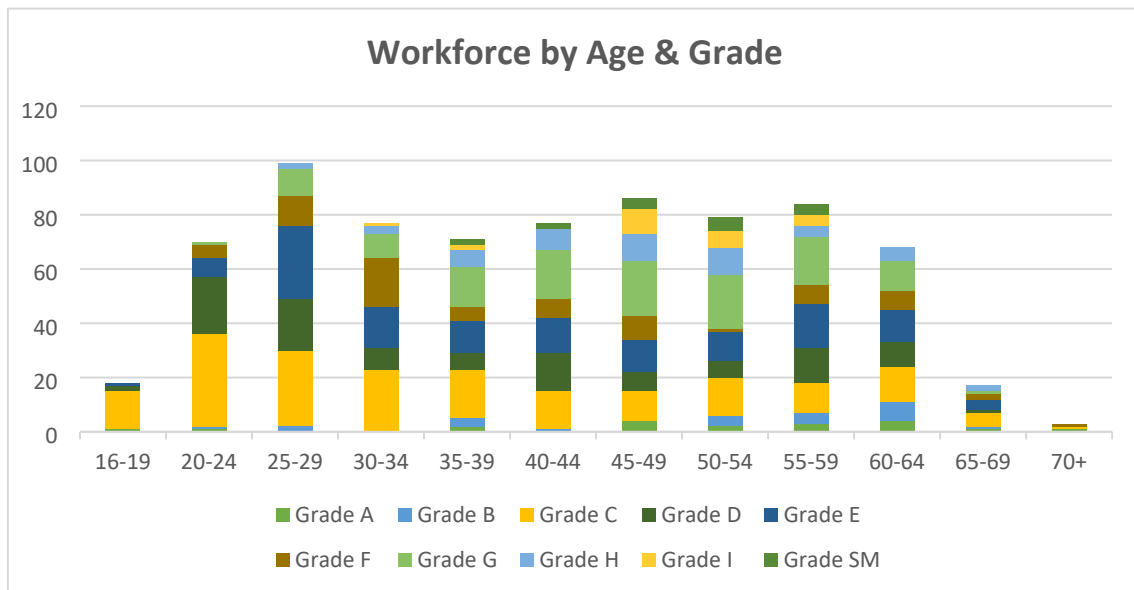


4.0 EQUALITIES DATA

Equality Data may be presented using percentages and not specific numbers as in some cases the sharing of specific numbers would mean that a small group of people could be easily identified.

4.1 WORKFORCE BY AGE AND GRADE

The number of employees by 5-year age band is depicted below by pay grade. Please note that where an employee has two jobs on different grades, they have been counted within their age band against both grades.

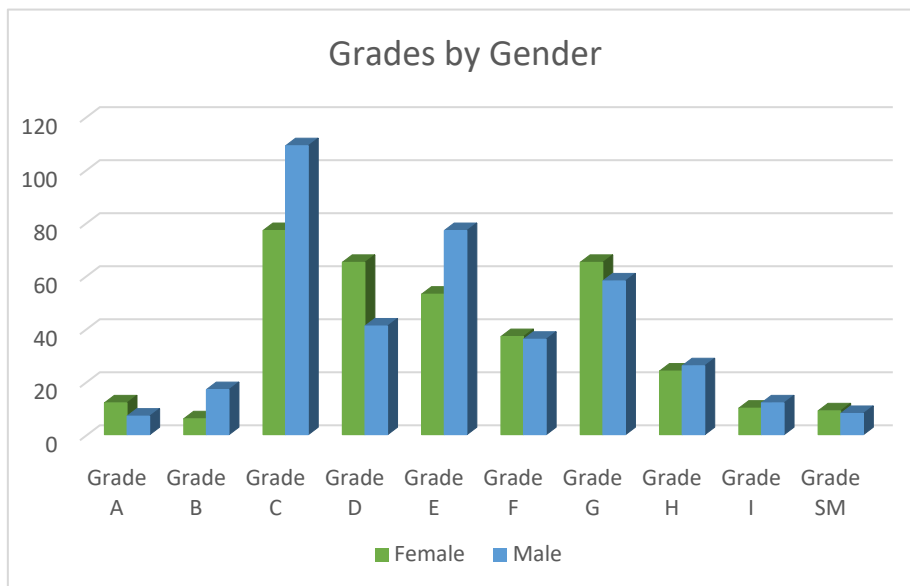


For the purposes of simplifying this graph, employees who have transferred into the Council on existing terms and conditions have been linked to Huntingdonshire District Council pay grades based on their current salary levels.

4.2 WORKFORCE GENDER



4.3 EMPLOYEES BY GRADE AND GENDER



4.4 WORKFORCE BY ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	% of workforce
Asian	2.67%
Black	1.87%
Mixed	1.34%
Not Stated	8.14%
Other Ethnic Groups	0.40%
White	85.58%

4.5 DISABILITY DATA

Disability Status	% of work force
No	77.84%
Not Known	11.62%
Yes	10.55%

5.0 ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORTS

This section reports on the number and nature of accidents and incidents occurring in owned, managed and occupied premises or associated with work activities undertaken by the Council's employees, during the period 1st April 2026 to 30th June 2026.

Definition:

Accidents reported to the Incident Control Centre under the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations are referred to as RIDDOR accidents.

5.1 OPERATIONS SERVICES

There was one RIDDOR accident reported.

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	Taken to Hospital	1

There were three non-RIDDOR accidents relating to employees recorded:

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	First Aid	2
		Taken to Hospital	1

5.2 OFFICE-BASED PREMISES

There were no RIDDOR accidents reported.

There were two non-RIDDOR accidents relating to employees recorded:

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	incident/no injury	Taken to Hospital	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Exposure to fire or heat	First Aid	1

There were no accidents relating to non-employees recorded.

5.3 ONE LEISURE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

There were no RIDDOR accidents reported.

There were five non-RIDDOR accidents relating to an employees recorded:

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Other kind of accident	First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Fall from a height - <i>up to and inc 2 metres</i>	Hospital recommended	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Slips, trips or falls on same level	Hospital recommended	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Taken to Hospital	1

A total of eighty-eight accidents were recorded involving non-employees.

There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents involving non-employees recorded.

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Insert:

Committee – Employment Committee
23 September 2026

Report by: HR Manager, Project Delivery

Lead Cllr: Cllr Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce**Wards**

All

Open / Exempt

Open

Key Decision?

No

Workforce Strategy Closure Report

Executive Summary:

In 2023, HDC began refreshing its Workforce Strategy to ensure the organisation can attract, retain and develop the talent needed to deliver future priorities. Developed through extensive employee engagement and approved by Full Council in June 2024, the strategy focuses on improving service delivery, employee engagement, retention and wellbeing while positioning HDC as an employer of choice. Built around three key pillars, Attraction and Retention, Engagement, and Wellbeing, it provides a framework for investing in people, fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture, and ensuring the workforce has the skills, support and opportunities needed to thrive and deliver high-quality services.

Recommendations

- 1.1. Members are asked to note the contents of this report

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

1

Doing our Core Work Well

Report Author(s)

HR Manager, Project Delivery – Kiran.hans@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to feedback to committee on the last 2 years of the Workforce Strategy project, highlighting the impact it has had on the council and the return on investment.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1** The Workforce Strategy was developed through extensive employee engagement and approved by Full Council in June 2024. This report reviews the work done over the past 2 years on the action plan.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1** N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1** N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** Workforce Strategy will now continue as part of BAU.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

This report supports a review of key data to review the impact of the Workforce Strategy.

6.2 Financial Implications

This project has been managed within budget and the initiatives have generated an estimated £150,000 in cost savings/cost avoidance, exceeding the investment made and delivering a net benefit of approximately £86,170.48.

6.3 Policy Implications

- 6.3.1** N/A

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

- 6.4.1** N/A

6.5 Community Impact

6.5.1 N/A

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.6.1 N/A

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.7.1 N/A

6.8 Implications on Resources

6.8.1 N/A

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.9.1 N/A

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.10.1 Data collation from this report contributes to the progression of the LGR Workforce Workstream. The Workforce Strategy has enabled HDC to set out clearly the support available to staff.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 N/A

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 N/A.



Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports

<u>Version Control</u>	
<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>
HR Manager – Project Delivery	August 2026

Workforce Strategy Closure Report

Background

In 2023 the council started work to renew and refresh its Workforce Strategy to prepare for the changing skills needed for its future workforce and to ensure that the council continue to attract, retain, and nurture talent. It focuses on the happiness, well-being and inclusion of staff and investment in HDC's current employees to develop and grow our own talent.

The Strategy was created through engagement with the workforce at all sites and agreed by Full Council in June 2024 with an action plan (49 overarching actions, 119 when broken down).

The aim of the strategy was to achieve:

- Higher quality services for our customers, greater staff engagement and retention, and lower levels of stress.
- Value for money services with our workforce made up of the right people in the right places recognising that the cost of getting it wrong can be significant.
- Assurance that we can deliver our organisational priorities with our workforce.
- Becoming an employer of choice by providing training and empowering an innovative workforce

The Workforce Strategy is based on the following three core pillars that are focussed on making HDC an employer of choice:

- **Attraction and retention** – this includes recruitment to attract top talent, growing talent through apprenticeships, retaining staff through robust onboarding, formal and informal training opportunities and reward through financial benefits and performance output.
- **Engagement** – this includes communication that is two-way and accessible using different methodologies, recognition through formal and informal processes and creating a positive working environment through inclusivity and collaboration.
- **Well-being** – physical, mental & emotional well-being through support services and initiatives, workplace social well-being and financial well-being through employee assistance programmes and discounts.

A budget of £1 million was allocated to deliver on the Workforce Strategy action plan over a 2-year period.

Pillar 1 – Attraction and Retention

The Attraction and Retention pillar aims to make the Council an employer of choice by attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees. Priorities include growing talent through apprenticeships and training, providing effective onboarding, supporting career development and progression, promoting diversity and inclusion, and offering a competitive rewards package with flexible working arrangements focused on performance outcomes.

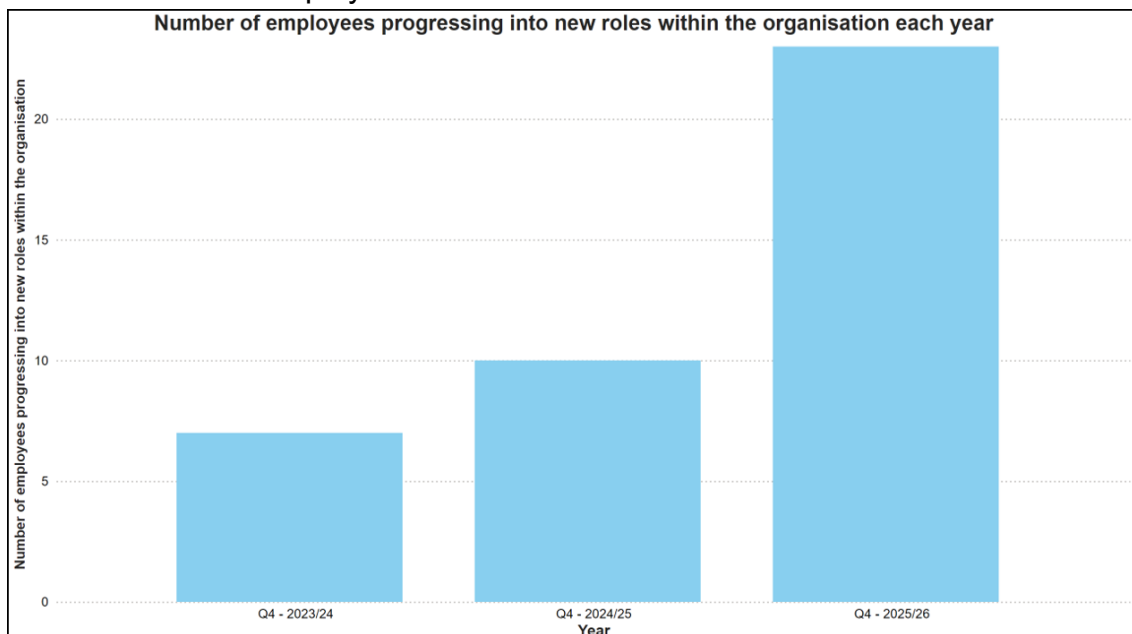
Examples of activity:

- Attending employer jobs fairs/events
- Review of careers website, online presence and targeted recruitment
- Reviewing the application form
- Review of onboarding and induction including buddy scheme
- Create a succession planning tool
- Mentoring and coaching cohort
- Pay and reward including schemes such as Electric vehicles

Key Metrics

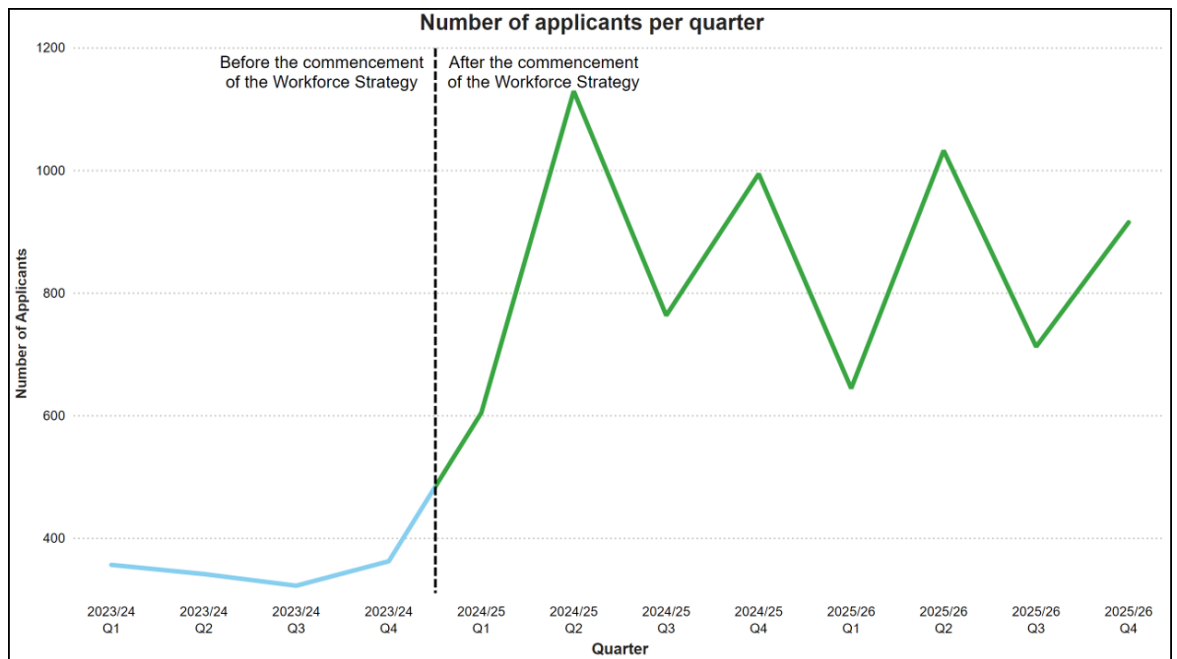
Recruitment

- The number of employees progressing into new roles within the organisation has increased significantly over the past three years. The data shows:
 - Q4 23/24 - 7 employees
 - Q4 24/25 - 10 employees (**Work on action plan started Q2 2024/2025**)
 - Q4 25/26 - 23 employees

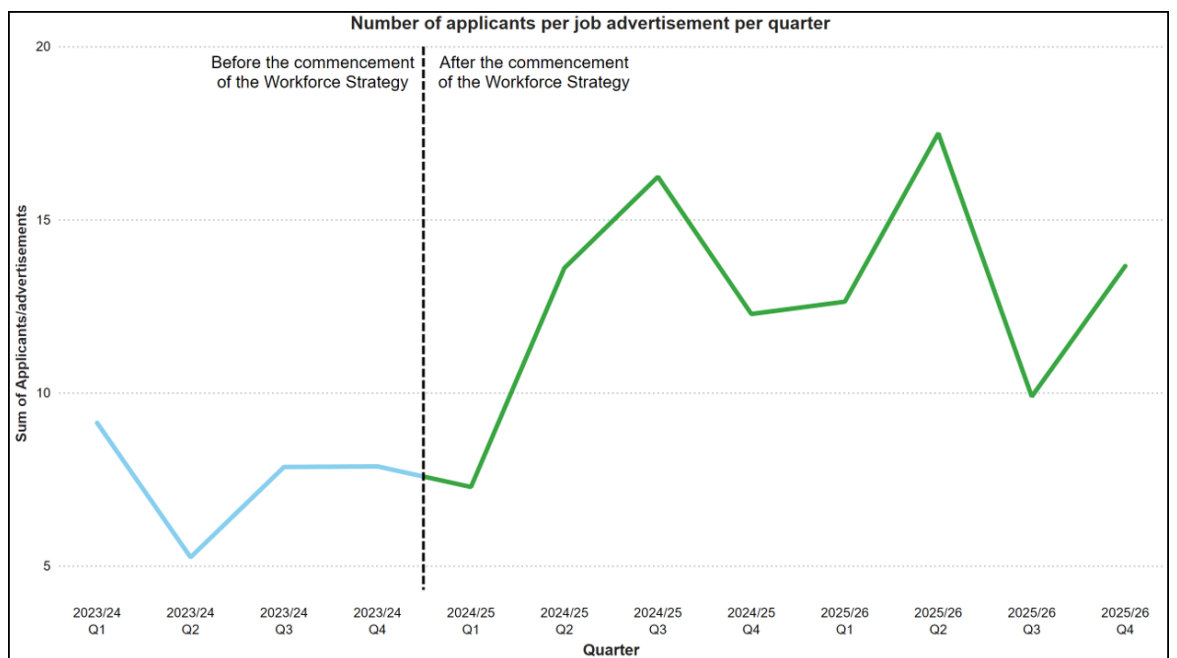


This represents an **increase of 229%**. In which the positive trend, shown on the graph above, highlights our success in creating career development opportunities, retaining talent, and enabling colleagues to grow and progress within the organisation.

- In relation to recruitment, the number of applications has consistently increased from before the strategy started to present quarter, please see graph below:



- The graph and table below show the average number of applicants per role advertised, which also demonstrates a consistent increase in HDC attraction rates.



Quarter	Advertised Opportunities	Total Candidate Applications
Q1 – 2023/24	39	356
Q2 – 2023/24	65	341
Q3 – 2023/24	41	322
Q4 – 2023/24	46	362
Q1 – 2024/25	83	604
Q2 – 2024/25	83	1129
Q3 – 2024/25	47	763
Q4 – 2024/25	81	994
Q1 – 2025/26	51	644
Q2 – 2025/26	59	1032
Q3 – 2025/26	72	712
Q4 – 2025/26	67	915

- In addition, by delivering an in-house talent acquisition function, the Council achieved approximately **£60,000 in agency fee cost avoidance** while successfully recruiting to several senior and hard-to-fill positions, including the Head of Transformation and Corporate Reporting, and Head of Finance. This approach has reduced recruitment costs while strengthening internal recruitment capability and outcomes.
- The Recruitment, Communications and Planning Team **were also shortlisted for an award** in recognition of its work on the Council's Recruitment Microsite. The microsite strengthened HDC's employer brand and played a key role in attracting candidates to apply for planning roles that had previously been difficult to recruit to, helping to address skills shortages and improve recruitment outcomes. Difficult to recruit to roles include Principal Development Management Officer, Development Management Technical Support Officer, Development Management Officer and Senior Recovery Officer).
- Effective onboarding was another focus, and is essential in helping new employees settle quickly, feel engaged, and remain with the organisation. Since the introduction of the New Starter Survey in

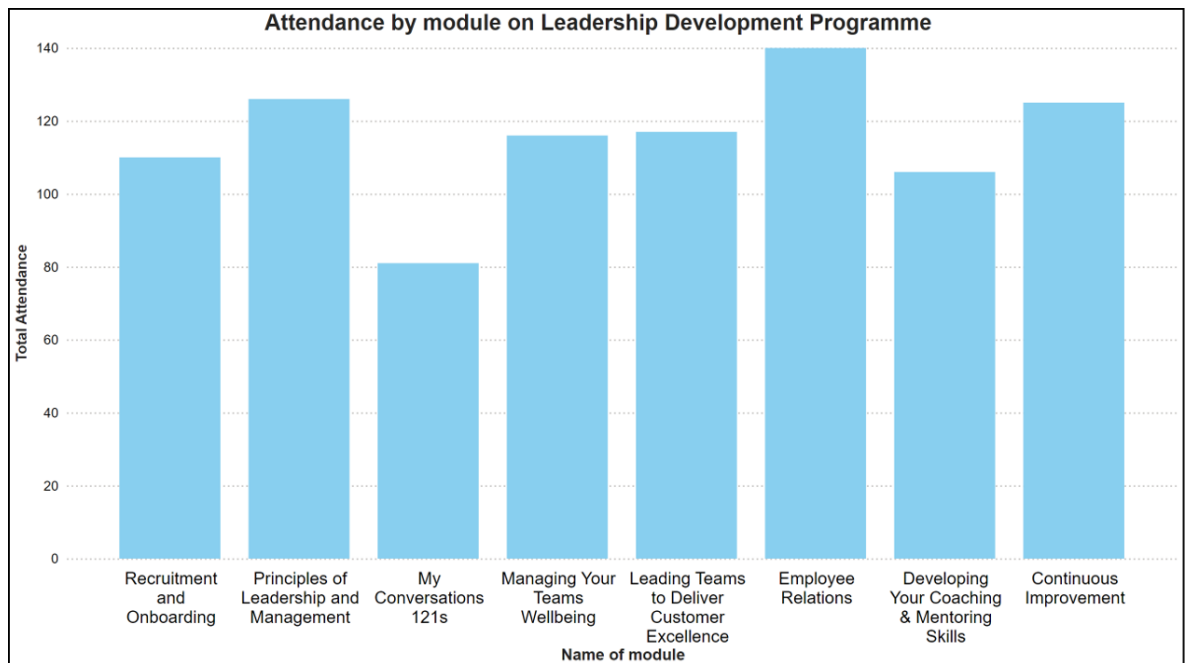
September 2025, 26 responses have been received, with **96%** (25 out of 26 respondents) rating the overall induction programme as either **good or excellent**, demonstrating the positive impact of HDC's onboarding approach.

- Another support mechanism for onboarding new starters is the Buddy Scheme. This was introduced at the start of 2025 and helps new starters integrate into the workforce, by pairing them up with another new starter or a longer serving HDC employee. Since then, **23 of our new starters** have chosen to take part in the scheme. The continued uptake of the scheme demonstrates its value to new starters and supports HDC's commitment to providing a positive employee experience and the retention of our staff. According to the LGA, average staff turnover is around 20%. The Council has consistently performed below this benchmark, maintaining turnover levels of **16-17%** across the last four quarters, demonstrating strong employee retention and workforce stability.

Learning and Development

- Since the Summer of 2024, there has been **53 apprenticeships**. Out of the 53, **26 are undertaking Leadership and Management qualifications**, whilst the rest are completing other apprenticeships:
 - 8 completing Level 3 Leadership & Management qualification
 - 9 completing Level 5 Leadership & Management qualification
 - 8 completing Level 7 Leadership & Management qualification
 - 1 completing Level 3 & Level 5 Leadership & Management qualification
- This demonstrates HDC's strong commitment to developing talent and building a sustainable workforce for the future. The Council consistently maximises the use of its apprenticeship levy funding to create development opportunities for both new and existing employees. Where appropriate, HDC has also collaborated with other Local Authorities to access additional levy funds, enabling even more apprenticeship opportunities. This ensures available funding is fully utilised to support skills development, career progression, and succession planning across the organisation.
- Between **100-140 managers** have attended each module of the Leadership Development Programme. Some modules were delivered externally during the first year due to the volume of managers to take through the training. However, most of the training was delivered in-house. This approach successfully built internal capability and expertise, enabling the programme to be fully delivered internally going forward. The Learning and Development resource now delivers the management programme alongside their existing responsibilities including areas such as work experience, apprenticeships, mandatory training, and

mentoring/coaching cohort. As a result, the programme has become embedded within business-as-usual activity, removing the need for ongoing external providers and avoiding approximately **£12,000** per year in training costs.



Rewards

- As part of the WFS actions around taking proactive steps to ensure we offer a competitive rewards package for our employees, HDC launched an Electric Vehicle and Hybrid vehicle scheme in January to support both affordability and sustainability. In addition, this provides, HDC with approximately £1370 in Employer NI savings since January 2026. The scheme has received a positive response from employees, demonstrating its value and appeal.

“

I was genuinely impressed by how smooth and well-organised the EV salary sacrifice process was, with clear updates and a much faster turnaround than I expected. The inclusion of a home EV charger added real value and made the switch to electric driving **simple and convenient**. I'm extremely pleased with my new EV and would **highly recommend the scheme** to anyone considering an electric vehicle through workplace benefits.

”

Pillar 2 – Engagement

The Engagement pillar focuses on creating a positive and inclusive workplace where employees feel valued and supported. Key priorities include clear leadership, open and transparent communication, and actively seeking and

responding to employee feedback. The strategy also promotes recognising and celebrating achievements, supporting effective hybrid working, and encouraging collaboration across teams and services. Embedding the Council's iCare values to strengthen inclusivity and help foster a culture of engagement, wellbeing, and high performance.

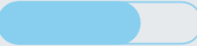
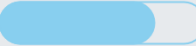
Examples of activity:

- Leadership Development Programme
- Job shadowing process
- Communications Strategy
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Network
- Embed iCare values, updating iCare video and further training
- Celebrating success
- My conversation new One to One process
- Engagement Calendar

Key Metrics

Communication

- Staff survey results for 2025/26 show an improvement in communication-related measures compared with the previous year, following the completion of the action to introduce a new Communications Strategy. This suggests that staff feel better informed and engaged, demonstrating the positive impact of a more structured and consistent approach to communication for wired and non-wired staff. In addition, staff engagement increased to **307 completed surveys in 2025** compared to **276** in the 2024 annual staff survey.

Question Asked	2024 Score	2025 Score	Score Improvement
I am kept informed about news and updates	3.72/5 	3.87/5 	↑ 0.15 (4%)
HDC communicates its priorities and values clearly	3.58/5 	3.77/5 	↑ 0.19 (5.3%)

- In relation to the introduction of the Comms Strategy, general views on intranet posts have increased since the start of the Workforce Strategy. From May 2024 to May 2026, there has been a **128.7% increase** in online engagement.

May 2024 average news post views: **81.6**

May 2025 average news post views: **149**

May 2026 average news post views: **186.6**

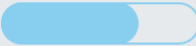
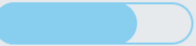
- The LGR intranet page has also recorded **2,300 views and 301 unique visitors**. The level of engagement, particularly the number of repeat visits, demonstrates that employees are actively using the page to stay informed. This indicates that key organisational messages are reaching employees effectively and suggests that the comms strategy is playing an important role in keeping colleagues informed and engaged especially during times of key organisational change.

Engagement Initiatives

- Over the past two years, a wide range of staff engagement events have been delivered, many of which were provided at little or no cost. These events have created valuable opportunities for colleagues to connect, share experiences, and access information and support. Activities included International Men's Day and International Women's Day events, which highlighted the importance of mental health and wellbeing, while also raising awareness of available support and opportunities for personal and professional development. In addition, quarterly roadshows have been held at all sites since the launch of the strategy, led by Michelle and members of the Corporate Leadership Team. These sessions have provided a valuable forum for staff to engage directly with senior leaders, ask questions, share feedback, and discuss potential improvements.
- Celebrating success has been an important part of the culture that HDC has sought to develop over the past two years. The organisation's values play a key role in recognising and celebrating work that delivers a direct benefit to residents and communities. The iCare Awards have become a significant part of this approach, attracting a high number of nominations each year and providing an opportunity to showcase outstanding contributions from across the organisation. The most recent awards ceremony was attended by approximately **160 members of staff**, demonstrating the strong level of engagement and commitment to recognising achievements and HDC's values.

Consistent Performance and wellbeing discussions

- The introduction of the My Conversation one to one form, developed in collaboration with services, has helped to create a more consistent and meaningful approach to manager and employee conversations. The form supports regular discussions about performance, wellbeing, development and objectives, helping to strengthen engagement and improve communication across teams. Since its introduction, **90% of staff** had started to receive their one to one, demonstrating strong adoption across the organisation (staff survey results 2025). In addition, the staff survey results show a positive picture in relation to feedback provided to employees and their understanding of HDC goals.

Question Asked	2024 Score	2025 Score	Score Improvement
I am provided with useful feedback on performance	3.44/5 	3.51/5 	↑ 0.07 (2%)
I understand how my work contributes to HDC goals	4.00/5 	4.11/5 	↑ 0.11 (2.75%)

Pillar 3 – Well-being

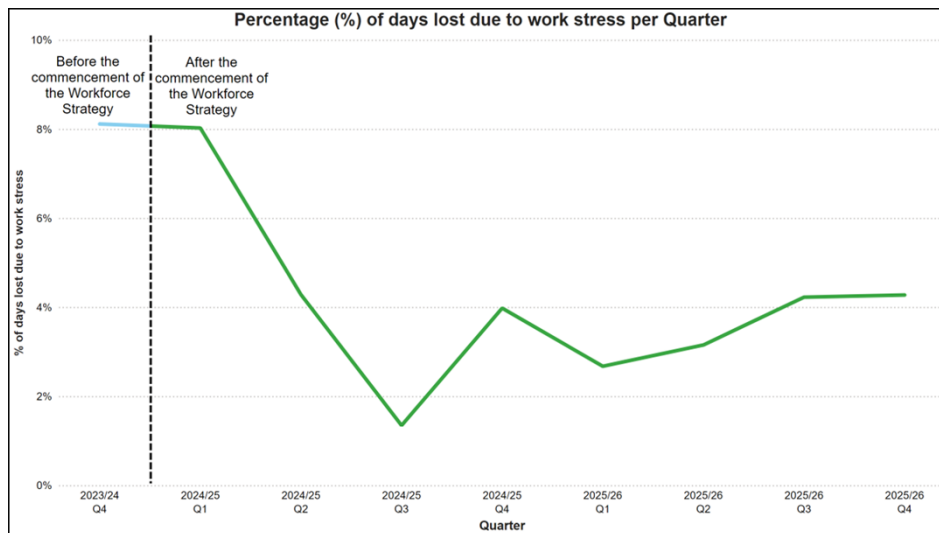
The Well-being pillar focuses on supporting employees' physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial wellbeing. The Council promote healthy working practices, provides access to support services, encourages positive workplace relationships and open conversations about wellbeing. Financial support, guidance, and employee discounts also help promote a healthy, resilient, and engaged workforce.

Examples of activity:

- Social wellbeing - e.g. peer networking, volunteering days
- Upskilling managers and staff in support services
- Employee Handbook
- Workplace adjustments passport
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Sickness absence - training managers on policy, monitoring of Action Stage 1 forms

Sickness Absence

- The Wellbeing pillar of the Workforce Strategy has delivered a positive and measurable impact on employee health and attendance. At the start of the action plan, work-related stress was consistently one of the top five causes of sickness absence, both in the quarter in which the work commenced and in the preceding quarter, contributing significantly to working days lost. Following the implementation of the wellbeing actions, work-related stress **ceased to feature within the top five reasons for sickness absence** from the subsequent quarter onwards. This demonstrates that the targeted wellbeing interventions have been effective in supporting employees, reducing work stress-related absences, and improving overall workforce resilience and promoting a healthier, more engaged workforce.



- Although sickness absence has increased to 10 days per FTE in the most recent reported quarter, (Quarter 4 2025/2026 - winter quarter), this reflects a wider national trend rather than a local issue. Local Government Association (LGA) metrics found that average employee absence reached 10 days per FTE over a 12-month period. While we would have liked to see overall sickness absence reduce, the Workforce Strategy was designed to deliver a broader range of workforce outcomes and the actions implemented have remained aligned to those objectives. Had reducing sickness absence been the primary focus, a different set of interventions would likely have been prioritised. That said, the proposed Wellbeing Strategy has targeted actions to support employee health, wellbeing and resilience, which are expected to contribute positively to attendance over time and support preventative health and wellbeing interventions. Given the national increase in sickness absence, it is reasonable to conclude that absence levels at the Council may have been higher without the workforce and wellbeing initiatives that have been put in place.
- A further review of sickness absence was undertaken to analyse overall sickness levels over the past two years. The analysis sought to distinguish areas where absence could reasonably be considered unavoidable or beyond an individual's control. These included categories such as:
 - Benign and malignant tumours or cancers
 - Covid-19
 - Injury fractures
 - Medical Operation Procedure & Recovery
 - Pregnancy Related
 - Stress related to close bereavement, serious family illness i.e. cancer/terminal

2024/25 sickness	Days lost		2025/26 sickness	Days lost
Total sickness	5817.09 days		Total sickness	8034.93 days
"Unavoidable" sickness	2242.70 days (39%)		"Unavoidable" sickness	3609.01 days (45%)
Other sickness	3573.39 days (61%)		Other sickness	4425.92 days (55% ↓)

- While sickness absence increased over the course of the strategy, there was a corresponding increase in absence related to factors that are generally considered unavoidable or outside the employee's control. This indicates that external and health-related factors played a significant role in the overall increase as seen in the table above.

Health and Wellbeing initiatives

- A new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was introduced at a lower cost than the previous supplier while providing a significantly enhanced range of support services. In addition to confidential counselling, the new EAP offers legal advice, financial guidance, relationship support and dedicated manager coaching, delivering greater value and a more comprehensive wellbeing offer for employees and managers. Reporting indicates a clear increase in engagement since the introduction of the new service. During the full 12-month period from October 2024 to September 2025, **31 new cases** were opened. By comparison, the October 2025 to June 2026 report shows **42 new cases** opened. As the June 2026 report covers only three quarters of the year (October 2025 to June 2026), this increase is particularly encouraging and suggests that the enhanced service offer is driving greater awareness and uptake among employees.
- To support staff wellbeing and help employees be their best at work, a programme of wellbeing webinars was introduced covering key life stages and personal challenges including Early Years, Midlife Matters and Infant Loss. Topics focussed on balancing the demands of parenting and work, support during the menopause, caring for elderly parents, and managing bereavement. These provide practical advice, guidance and support to help employees maintain their wellbeing both in and outside of work and were well received.

“

I just wanted to say how good the Midlife Matters webinar was today. It covered all the emotions I have been through. This webinar makes you feel you are not alone and all the emotions are normal. I just wanted to feedback that this is a **great benefit for staff** who need this (and other) webinars. It offers some very good practical advice and signposting as well.

”

- Engagement with the staff wellbeing page and intranet communications have remained positive throughout the project. The staff wellbeing page received 584 views from 218 viewers, with 133 views recorded in the last 90 days, indicating sustained interest in wellbeing information and support. The level of repeat visits across the page suggests that colleagues are actively using these platforms to stay informed and access key dates or resources.
- A wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives were delivered throughout the year, some of which promoted health screenings and others recommending preventative health measures which can help reduce future demand on NHS services. Access was provided to a specialist Endometriosis Consultant, a service that could cost approximately **£250 privately for each staff member**, as well as Diabetes and Kidney disease awareness sessions ESCAPE Pain Management programmes and Tai Chi classes. In addition, a Cervical screening awareness campaign was also delivered to encourage early detection and prevention. The 9 completed Cervical screenings for staff figure correlates to preventing 1-2 women from ever developing Cervical cancer by catching cell changes early (NHS England).
- Health Kiosks were also arranged to support employees to better understand and monitor their health, with reductions observed in smoking prevalence (11.5% to 9.8%) and high blood pressure (14.1% to 12.5%) between the November 2024 and July 2025 visits. From the results of the visits, 5 employees avoided CVD/stroke over next 10 years which in turn would save 1 life (Health You, 2024).

Measure	Nov - 2024 Score	Estimate annual cost loss of productivity	Jul - 2025 Score	Estimate annual cost loss of productivity	Estimate Cost saving from increased productivity
Smoking rate	11.6%	£51,239	8.6%	£23,911	£27,328 (↓)
Overweight / Obesity Rate	72.2%	£73,084	57.5%	£24,513	£48,571 (↓)
High Blood Pressure	15.7%	£6,559	12.7%	£3,279	£3,280 (↓)

Source: SISU Health UK

- Improvements made to the mental and physical wellbeing of staff members at HDC (2-5 from Health Kiosk results on smoking and obesity)

has very likely reduced time and cost pressures on the NHS. By having a healthier and happier work force, multiple employees that could have required significant treatments totalling up to £100,000 have potentially been avoided.

Source: NHS England

“

I haven't had my blood pressure, weight, etc. tested in years! The health kiosk couldn't have made it easier. I popped down for five minutes in the office and was given such **insightful** information, which has really **motivated me to be healthier!**

”

Financial wellbeing

- In relation to staff wellbeing, financial wellbeing is also an important factor. The introduction of Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) in August 2024 has provided employees with greater flexibility to plan and save for retirement while also delivering financial benefits to the Council. Since the scheme was launched, **237 employees** have taken up the opportunity, generating savings of approximately **£20,000** for HDC through reduced employer National Insurance contributions. As participation continues to grow, these savings are expected to increase.
- Further financial wellbeing support has been given to staff by improving access to pensions guidance through webinars and face to face advice. A Pensions Advisor was made available at Eastfield House for Operational Staff, providing them with a convenient opportunity to discuss retirement planning and pension options. The sessions were fully booked, with approximately **30 employees** attending from across a range of sites. The strong level of participation demonstrates significant employee engagement with financial wellbeing initiatives and further highlights the value of making support services more accessible to frontline and site-based staff.

“

I have joined two webinars about pensions and retirement, I learned so much about both. The pensions webinar is particularly **enlightening** and **informative**. I recommend it!

- Officer

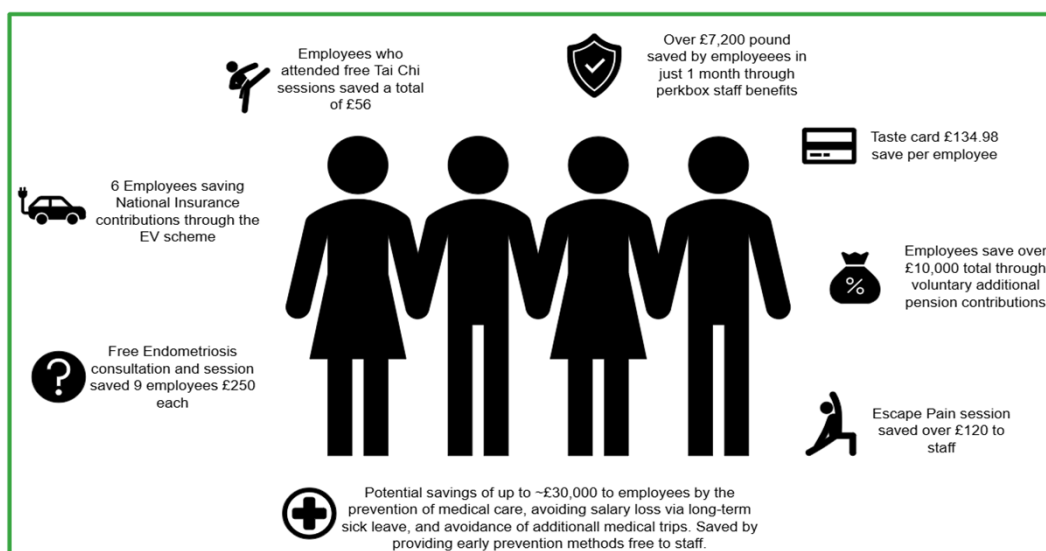
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Cost Savings

Please see table below with details on budget:

Budget	£1,000,000
Spent	£370, 308.32
Minus salaries which include, figures for Project Manager (2 years) and Project Co-ordinator (2-year project) and 3 years post project (5 years total for Co-ordinator role)	£370,308.32 - ££306,478.8 (salary) = £63,829.52 This means £63, 829.52 spent on initiatives
Cost savings/Cost avoidance through initiatives	Minimum approximation £150,000
Staff Savings	Minimum approximation £34,000

- The Workforce Strategy has delivered a positive return on investment, demonstrating both financial value and organisational impact. Out of the £1 million allocated budget, a total of £370, 308.32 was spent. When salary costs for the Workforce Strategy Manager and Co-ordinator roles are excluded (£306,478.80), the direct investment in workforce initiatives was £63,829.52. These initiatives have generated an estimated £150,000 in cost savings/cost avoidance, exceeding the investment made and delivering a net benefit of approximately £86,170.48. Alongside these financial gains, the strategy has delivered wider benefits including increased employee engagement, greater career progression opportunities, improved retention, and reduced reliance on external recruitment. This demonstrates that targeted investment in workforce development can achieve meaningful organisational outcomes while providing excellent value for money. Whilst the Workforce Strategy forms the primary focus of the dedicated post holders, the Council has also benefited from their experience. This has enabled them to support a range of business-as-usual activities across the wider team, for example acting as impartial panel members for complex employee appeal hearings avoiding the need for external support at an additional cost.
- In addition, staff have benefited from individual savings too, as outlined below:



Source: HDC and NHS Reference Costs

Conclusion

Going forward, Workforce Strategy priorities will be embedded into business-as-usual activity and integrated across the wider HR team to sustain and build on these achievements. The Workforce Strategy has delivered a strong return on investment by creating a more skilled, engaged and resilient workforce while also demonstrating clear cost effectiveness. By increasing opportunities for career progression and significantly growing the number of employees moving into new roles within the organisation, the strategy has helped reduce reliance on external recruitment, lowering associated recruitment and onboarding costs. Improvements in employee engagement, the introduction of more meaningful manager and employee conversations, and increased retention of talent have further strengthened organisational performance and capability. Collectively, these outcomes have enhanced the employee experience, delivered financial value, and ensured the organisation is better equipped to meet current and future workforce challenges. The results provide clear evidence that investment in our people has generated measurable benefits for both employees and the organisation.

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Insert:

Committee – 23 September 2026

Report by: Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce**Wards**

All

Open / Exempt

Open

Key Decision?

No

Workforce Equality Profile Report

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual summary of the profile of the workforce of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) by their protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

All public sector employers, including local authorities, have a statutory duty under the Equality Act (2010) to publish the equality profile data it holds for its directly employed workforce on a regular annual basis. The latest workforce information for HDC is based on data obtained as at 31 March 2025.

Recommendations

- 1.1. Employment Committee are requested to note this report and the actions.

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

1

Doing our Core Work Well

Report Author(s)

Head of HR. Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** This report provides a summary the Workforce Equality Profile as 31 March 2026 broken down protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act along with the action plan that has been develop off the back of this data.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1** The three aims of Equality Duty are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

As a public sector organisation we have a requirement to comply with the Equality Duty and therefore use this data to support our work towards creating a meaningful action plan.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1** N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1** N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** N/A

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

The data provided support HDC to ensure they have a representative workforce, with the right processes and procedures in place to support staff to do our core work well and to deliver the Council's key Priorities. This allows HDC to continue to work towards being an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

- 6.2.1** N/A

6.3 Policy Implications

- 6.3.1** Any relevant policies that are impacted by the action plan will be amended to ensure that they are in line with legislative updates and best practice.

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

- 6.4.1** As above

6.5 Community Impact

- 6.5.1** N/A

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

- 6.6.1** N/A

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

- 6.7.1** Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out where required

- 6.7.2** The Action Plan will support the delivery of ED&I within HDC

6.8 Implications on Resources

- 6.8.1** The actions will be carried out as BAU with the support of other teams and HDC4Everyone

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

- 6.9.1** N/A

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

- 6.10.1** All neighbouring Councils will also be required to comply with this duty

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1** N/A

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

- 8.1** N/A.



WORKFORCE PROFILE

as at 31 March 2026

Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual summary of the profile of the workforce of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) by their protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

All public sector employers, including local authorities, have a statutory duty under the Equality Act (2010) to publish the equality profile data it holds for its directly employed workforce on a regular annual basis. The latest workforce information for HDC is based on data obtained as at 31 March 2026.

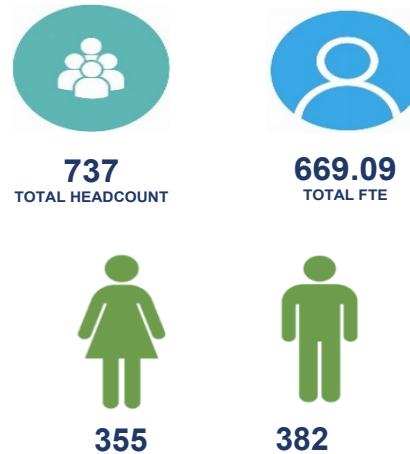
The three aims of the Equality Duty are:



- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

As equality monitoring questions are optional, the Council does not hold a full set of information for every employee. Where employees did not answer or did not want to state their protected characteristics, these are shown as “not declared”

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Headcount and Gender



The figures are split by Total Headcount

What does this data tell us?

- The census data 2021 shows that 49.6% of the population of Huntingdonshire are men, whilst HDC workforce is made up of 51.8.% male (49.7% in 2025). In comparison the census data shows 50.4% Females, whilst HDC workforce is made up of 48.2% females (50.3% in 2025).
This is the first time in 3 years that the male workforce in HDC is greater than the female workforce.
- In terms of those living in the district, who are employed the split is 52.5% male and 47.5% Female. Therefore, the makeup is reflective of the local demographic and demonstrates an evenly split in the workforce by gender identity.

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

- Our last Gender Pay Gap data for 31 March 2025 demonstrated that HDC continue to have a lower than average Gender Pay Gap.
The next report is due to be published by 31 March 2027.
- Flexibility, remote working and flexi scheme are promoted through recruitment processes where possible and dependent on the role.
- HDC continues to offer access to a number of recorded webinars through Bumps to Baby and Beyond to provide staff support on the early years of parenting to teenage years. In addition mid-life support training is also available for staff e.g.

perimenopause and menopause, empty nest syndrome and caring for elderly parents. Finally support for infant loss and coping strategies is also available.

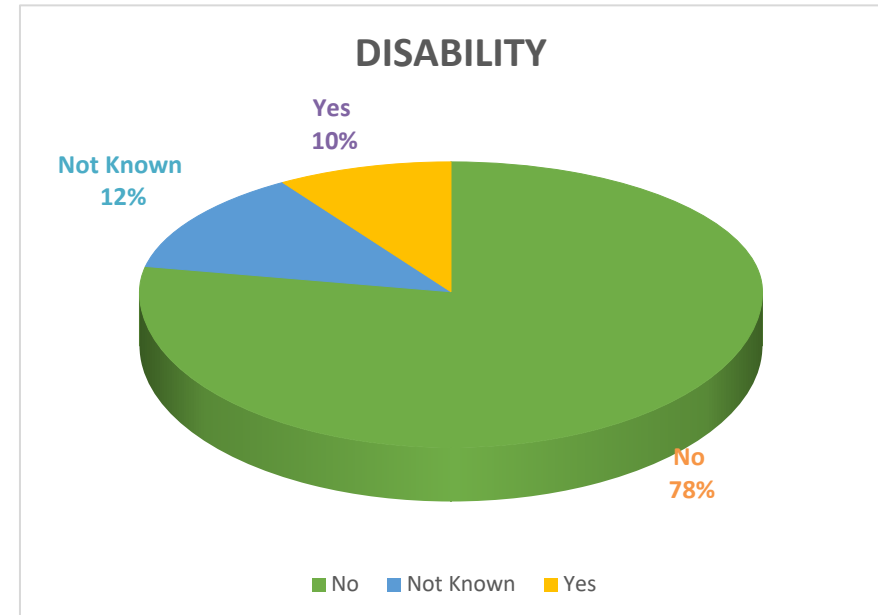
- We have held regular Wellbeing Cafés for women, covering key topics such as the menopause. Staff have also benefited from free support through a dedicated Menopause Café provided by UNISON.
- Menopause Awareness Day has been marked the last few years with special guest speakers to raise awareness and foster open conversations and work has been done to promote the resources, training and support available which includes a Teams channel and an updated Intranet page. Additionally, through HDC's staff discounts platform with Perkbox there are a number of resources to support staff wellbeing covering health topics for all employees.
- International Women's Day was celebrated and a panel event was held for International Men's Day with a focus on raising awareness on mental health.
- Various health initiatives have been promoted including awareness of prostate cancer and a webinar with a consultant on endometriosis.

Actions:

- Continue with initiatives and health promotion to support the workforce.

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Disability

Age Group	Number of Employee	Percentage
16-24	90	12%
25-29	90	12%
30-34	72	10%
35-39	72	10%
40-44	73	10%
45-49	88	12%
50-54	76	10%
55-59	89	12%
60-64	68	9%
65-69	16	2%
70+	3	1%



Year	No	Yes	Not Known
2024	468 (72%)	73 (11%)	108 (17%)
2025	507 (75%)	81 (12%)	90 (13%)
2026	572 (78%)	77 (10%)	88 (12%)

What does this data tell us?

- The census data shows that under the Equality Act category for 'day to day activities limited a lot and limited a little' we have a 16.3% make up in our demographic. HDC shows a make up of staff that have declared a disability at 10%. Please note the Census data would include people who are not of working age as well as people who are not able to work due to their disability or other reasons.
- The census results show for people living in the district that are employed 9.6% are disabled under the Equality Act. The data demonstrates that compared to those that are employed HDC employs a slightly higher percentage of people that have shared they have a disability compared to the census data.

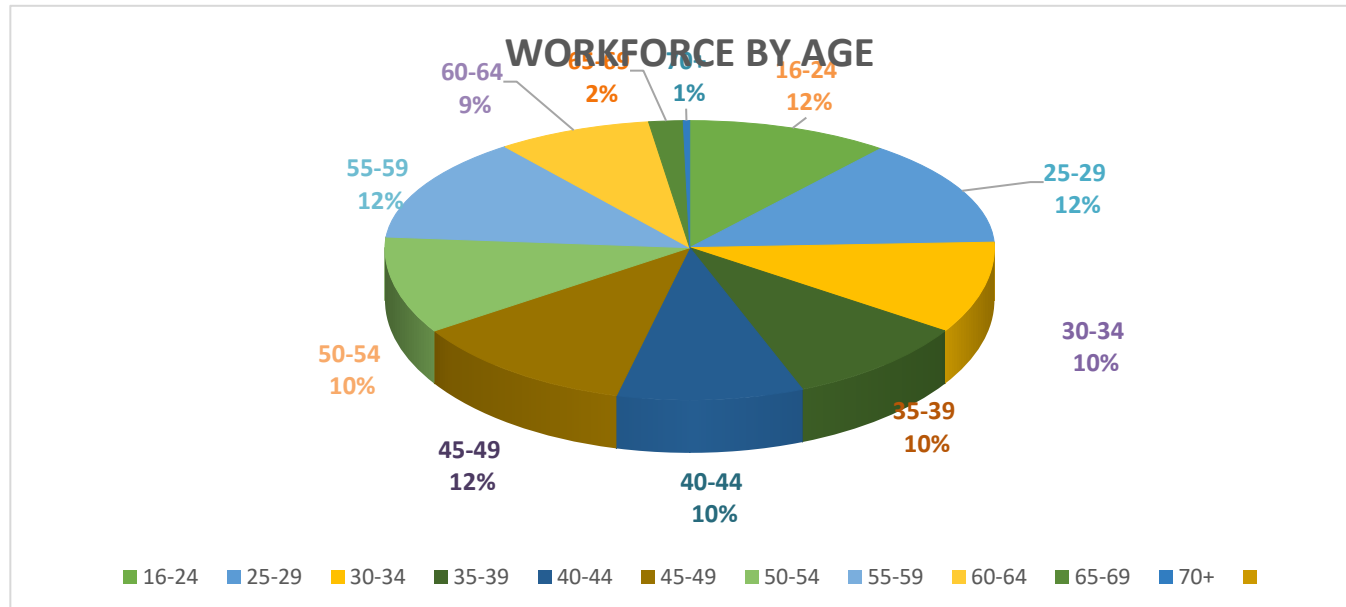
What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

- HDC is signed up to being a Disability Confident Employer, which is a commitment to improving the way we recruit, retain and develop disabled people, this pledge is used on the website for recruitment.
- The Adjustments Passport has recently been refreshed in line with HDC accessibility guidelines to make it more user friendly. The passport can be used by staff and managers where they have a disability, health condition or need temporary adjustments to enable them to carry out their role by facilitating conversations between employees and their line manager to capture the adjustments agreed.
- Additional accessible parking spaces were made available at Pathfinder and Eastfield House.
- New accessible doors were installed on the 1st Floor at Pathfinder House, improving ease of access.
- A sign language awareness session was delivered to mark Sign Language Week, helping colleagues better understand deaf culture and how to create a more inclusive workplace.
- A new wellbeing Intranet page was created to make it easier for staff to access and understand what support is available to them.

Actions:

- Continue discussions with ICT regarding a Dyslexia friendly font, so that emails can be in the correct size, justified appropriately and using the correct font.
- Explore Mindful employer charter, this charter is about taking positive approach to mental health at work – being fed through ED&I group.
- Implement Work well programme to provide staff with chronic health conditions with free coaching and or free physio.
- Implement pilot to provide where appropriate a 12-week free gym membership pass to staff on long term sick (over 28 days) to help rehabilitate and support an earlier return to work.
- Explore Neurodiversity training for managers and staff
- New accessibility guidelines have been rolled out across HDC to ensure all communications are inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Age



What does this data tell us?

- The census data age brackets are quite large so this makes it difficult to get an accurate comparison of age against the demographic.
- HDC data has an even spread, except for the higher age group category 60+. However, when including our variable workforce in the headcount, who predominantly work in leisure, the 16-24 category increases to 25%.

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

- The recruitment team continue to attend careers fairs in colleges to attract potential applicants.
- HDC will continue to work with local colleges to give students opportunities where possible
- Various initiatives have been run in relation to retirement and Pensions advice including face to face appointments with a Local Government Pensions Scheme Advisor and Planning for Retirement courses.
- We have had 20 work experience students from local education settings,
- HDC have successfully recruited 3 graduates through the Impact Local Government Association graduate scheme.
- HDC successfully utilised the Apprenticeship Levy pot and also works with neighbouring authorities to utilise their unused Levy pot (HDC had 21 apprentices in last year including those that completed and currently on the programme).

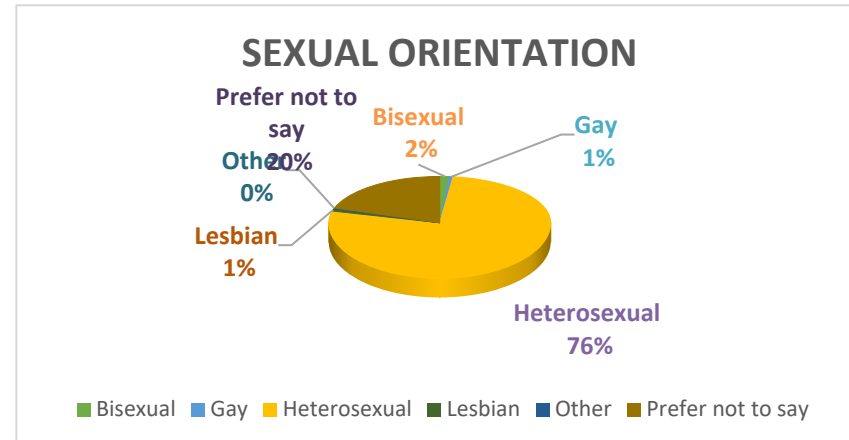
- Learning and Development Team launched a new coaching and mentoring cohort with 8 staff and this group is growing as coaching and mentoring modules continue to be delivered across HDC staff.
- The Early Careers Network in HDC aimed at those employed for the first time in local government and an opportunity to buddy up with other employees. This group is advertised at the point of Induction to all new employees; the group is active and hosts quarterly development events.

Actions:

- Continue to work on bringing in more Apprenticeships and graduate opportunities in HDC.

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	No of Employees	Percentage
Bisexual	12	1.6%
Gay	5	0.7%
Heterosexual	561	76.1%
Lesbian	5	0.7%
Other	2	0.3%
Prefer not to say	152	20.6%
Bisexual	12	1.6%



What does this data tell us?

- The census data shows the make-up of people that declared themselves as lesbian or gay to be 1.3%, HDC is aligned with the census at 1.4%, (1.8% last year). In relation to being bisexual HDC has a 1.6% declaration (1.01% last year) and the Huntingdonshire demographic data shows 1.2%. Heterosexuals make up of Huntingdonshire was 91% as opposed to HDC where it is 76.1%, this could be linked to the lower number of not shared rate. Similarly, the Census question on sexual orientation was a voluntary question and therefore not completed by everyone (20.6% preferred not to say).

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

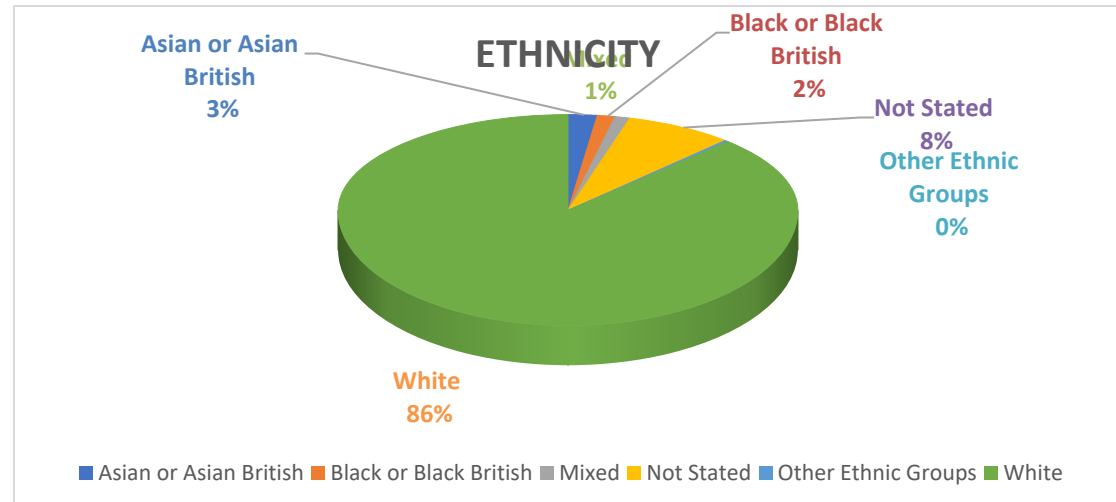
- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (HDC4Everyone) has been established and has started to gather data and has various work streams.
- Implemented legislative changes in relation to accessibility of toilets and changing facilities.

Actions:

- Work needs to continue on increasing the 'not shared' rate and education on the categories on the system will help with this, as this could be a contributing factor.
- New Sexual Harassment policy to be implemented in line with legislative requirements

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of Employee	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	18	2.4%
Black or Black British	11	1.5%
Mixed	9	1.2%
Not Stated	61	8.3%
Other Ethnic Groups	2	0.3%
White	636	86.3%



What does this data tell us?

- The census data shows an Asian make up of Huntingdonshire as 3.2%, HDC employ 2.4% in this category. Black as 1.5% and HDC employ 1.5% in this category. Mixed is 2.2% in the census data and HDC employ 1.2%. Under the category 'other' the census data shows 0.7% and HDC has a figure of 0.3%. For those that shared their ethnicity as white the census data showed 85.2% and HDC workforce is made up of 86.3% in this category (85% last year).
- We don't have data for all our employees (8.3%), therefore direct comparisons with the census cannot be made, although this is a slight improvement as last year the figure was 9%.

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

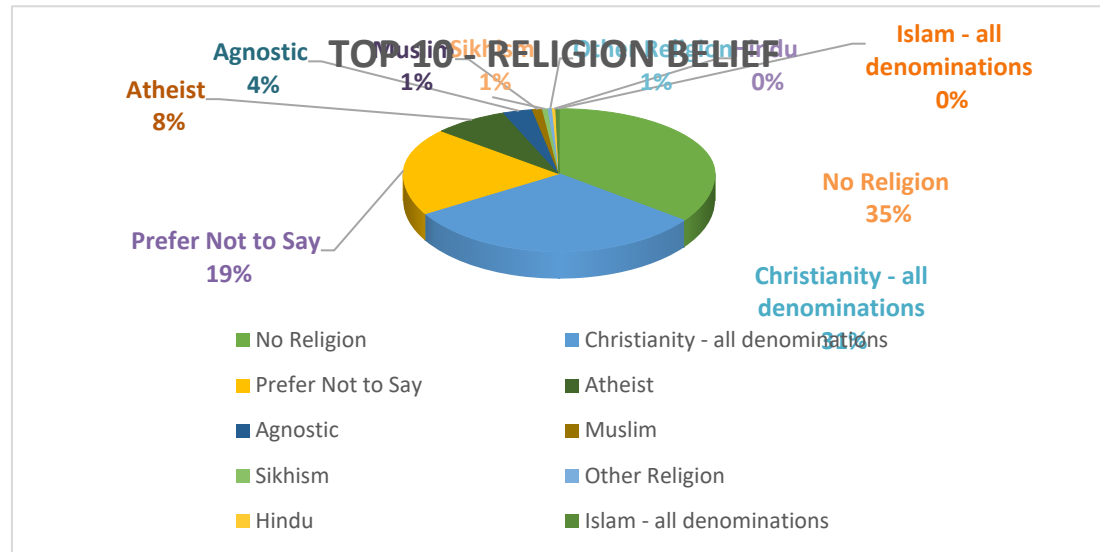
- HDC4 Everyone network created

Actions:

- Work to continue on non-declaration rate.
- Use demographic data to educate.
- Continue to improve declaration rate
- Explore The Race at work charter and UNISON Anti Racism Charter to see which actions can be implemented at HDC.
- Explore celebrating National Inclusion week - 14th -20th September

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 - Religion Belief

Religion	Number of Employees	Percentage
No Religion	258	35.01%
Christianity - all denominations	229	31.07%
Prefer Not to Say	136	18.45%
Atheist	60	8.14%
Agnostic	26	3.53%
Muslim	9	1.22%
Sikhism	5	0.68%
Other Religion	4	0.54%
Hindu	3	0.41%
Islam - all denominations	3	0.41%
Judaism - all denominations	2	0.27%
Buddhism - all denominations	1	0.14%
Rastafarian	1	0.14%



What does this data tell us?

- The census data shows among employed people living in the district:
 - 48.1% had no religion (includes Atheist and Agnostic), HDC has 35.01% in this category.
 - 43.4% were Christian – HDC has 31.07% in this category.
 - 0.1% were Jewish – HDC has 0.2% in this category
 - 1.2% were Muslim – HDC has 1.22% in this category
 - 0.2% were Sikh - HDC has 0.6% in this category
 - 0.9% responded with other religion - HDC has 0.5% in this category (includes religion's where under 2 employees have responded)
- The information shows that whilst some percentages have increased compared to last year the actual numbers for all the religions has stayed broadly the same or increased.

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

- HDC4 Everyone network created
- Dedicated prayer rooms were introduced on the 3rd Floor at Pathfinder House and on the 1st Floor at Eastfield House.

Actions:

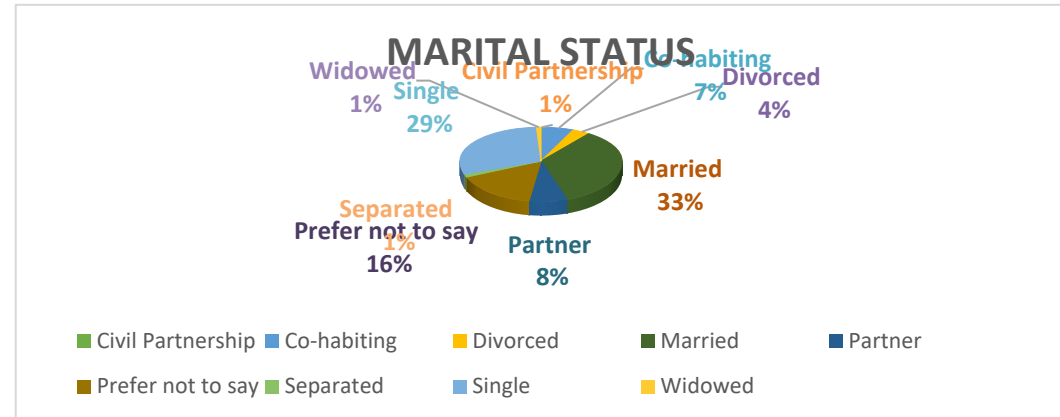
- Work to continue on non-declaration rate.
- Use demographic data to educate and provide awareness on key cultural celebrations.

Actions:

- Continue to improve declaration rate
- Explore The Race at work charter and UNISON Anti Racism Charter to see which actions can be implemented at HDC.
- Explore celebrating National Inclusion week - 14th -20th September

Huntingdonshire District Council 2025/26 – Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Employees	Percentage
Civil Partnership	3	0.41%
Co-habiting	53	7.19%
Divorced	28	3.80%
Married	246	33.38%
Partner	56	7.60%
Prefer not to say	119	16.15%
Separated	9	1.22%
Single	215	29.17%
Widowed	8	1.09%



What does this data tell us?

- The census data shows married/in a civil partnership as 50%, HDC data shows 33.7% in this category.

What are we doing well and where do we need to improve?

Action:

- No actions

Conclusions

Equality and diversity is about acceptance, fairness and respect and recognising individual differences. HDC want to create a workforce that is representative of our community, this will enable the council to:

- Value the skills of a diverse work pool
- Ensure that the services we provide are delivered by employees that understand our local community.
- Develop an inclusive workforce, which promotes and delivers improvements on equality through our policies and practices by ensuring they are not having an adverse impact
- Eliminate any barriers that certain groups may face
- Challenge any discrimination in the work place

The data in this report shows that HDC workforce is fairly reflective of the local demographic, however there are some areas that can be focused on, which are included in the action plan.

Equality Action Plan 2025/26 - Progress

Equality Actions		Owned by	Update	Progress
Gender	More education needs to be done around promoting awareness of men's health	Kiran Hans	International Men's day was celebrated across sites and health campaigns have been held such as awareness on prostate cancer.	Completed
Disability	Explore with IT a Dyslexia friendly font, so that emails can be in the correct size, justified appropriately and using the correct font.	Lisa Baggaley	Conversations have begun with IT to see if this is possible	In Progress
	Explore Mindful employer charter, this charter is about taking positive approach to mental health at work.	Sam Sanderson	This will be taken forward through ED&I Network	Carry over
Age	Continue to work on bringing in more Apprenticeships and increase the number of graduate opportunities in HDC.	Julie Holland	HDC have had 20 work experience students from local education settings in the last 12 months. 3 graduates were successfully recruited through the Impact Local Government Association graduate scheme. HDC had 21 apprentices in last 12 months this includes those that completed and staff currently on the programme.	Completed

	Develop a coaching and mentoring scheme for all employees but to also help younger employees.	Julie Holland/Beth Grey	Learning and Development Team launched a new coaching and mentoring cohort with 8 staff and this group is growing as coaching and mentoring modules continue to be delivered across HDC staff. The Early Careers Network in HDC aimed at those employed for the first time in local government and an opportunity to buddy up with other employees. This group is advertised at the point of Induction to all new employees; the group is active and hosts quarterly development events.	Completed
Sexual Orientation	Work needs to continue on increasing the not shared rate and education on the categories on the system will help with this, as this could be contributing.	Chloe George	Declaration has increased in the past due to targeted approach.	Completed
Ethnicity	Explore The Race at work charter and UNISON Anti Racism Charter to see which	Kiran Hans	EDI groups will look at this once set up	Carry over

	actions can be implemented at HDC.			
	Reach out to the workforce to promote cultural days as part of the Workforce Strategy	Kiran Hans	This was done but there was a low response, to be explored through ED&I group – see new action below.	Completed
General Actions	Work continued on decreasing the number of employees that have not shared their protected characteristics. This has helped to improve the data but will need to continue through managers and individuals by explaining the benefits of capturing this information and by being specific about the data that is missing. In some categories education will need to be provided.	Lily Tomkins	This will be an annual exercise	Ongoing
	Update the Equal Opportunities Policy.	Lisa Baggaley	This has been updated and is due to go to Employment Committee in November	Completed
	Workforce Strategy includes a number of areas that will support the work around Equalities.	Kiran Hans/Chloe George	ED&I network has been created, and an engagement calendar is in place to celebrate/mark key dates	Completed

Equality Action Plan 2026/2027

Equality Actions		Owned by
Gender	Continue with initiatives and health promotion to support the workforce.	HDC4Everyone

Disability	Explore with IT a Dyslexia friendly font, so that emails can be in the correct size, justified appropriately and using the correct font.	Lisa Baggaley
	Explore Mindful employer charter, this charter is about taking positive approach to mental health at work.	HDC4Everyone
	Implement Work Well programme to provide staff with chronic health conditions with free coaching and or free physio.	Lisa Baggaley
	Implement pilot to provide where appropriate a 12-week free gym membership pass to staff on long term sick (over 28 days) to help rehabilitate and support an earlier return to work.	Kiran Hans
	Explore Neurodiversity training for managers and staff	Julie Holland
Age	Continue to work on bringing in more Apprenticeships and graduate opportunities in HDC.	Julie Holland
Sexual Orientation	New Sexual Harassment policy to be drafted in line with legislative requirements	Lisa Baggaley
Ethnicity	Explore The Race at Work Charter and UNISON Anti Racism Charter to see which actions can be implemented at HDC.	HDC4Everyone
	Explore celebrating National Inclusion week - 14th -20th September	HDC4Everyone
Religion	Use demographic data to educate and provide awareness on key cultural celebrations.	HDC4Everyone
General Actions	Work continue on decreasing the number of employees that have not shared their protected characteristics. This has helped to improve the data but will need to continue through managers and individuals by explaining the benefits of capturing this information	Lily Tomkins

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Committee – 23 September 2026

Report by: HR Manager, Project Delivery

Lead Cllr: Cllr Stephen Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce



Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Executive Summary:

As part of HDC's Workforce Strategy there was an action to create a Health Wellbeing Strategy.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out our commitment to creating a healthy, supportive and inclusive workplace where employees can thrive both personally and professionally.

By focusing on mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing, the strategy aims to improve employee experience, resilience and engagement, enabling colleagues to perform at their best.

Through targeted initiatives, strong leadership and a culture of wellbeing, HDC will support a sustainable workforce that is equipped to deliver excellent services for our residents.

Recommendations

1.1. Employment Committee are requested to endorse the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

1 *Doing our Core Work Well*

Report Author(s)

HR Manager, Project Delivery - kiran.hans@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which is being submitted for endorsement.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Workforce Strategy Action plan consists of 49 actions (119 broken down). All the actions have come from staff when developing the strategy, one of which is the benefit of having a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the council.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been drafted using data sources such as our Employee Assistance programme to help shape the pillars and by looking at best practice. The strategy was shared at a workshop of managers and staff across services and their feedback has been amalgamated into the strategy.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1** N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1** N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** Over the next five years, this strategy will provide a clear direction for wellbeing at HDC while remaining flexible and responsive to the changing needs of our employees and council.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

This strategy supports HDC in creating a positive and supportive working environment that enables employees to maintain their wellbeing, perform effectively and contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities, helping HDC remain an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

Some wellbeing initiatives may require additional investment to support delivery. Where this is necessary, funding will be sought from the Workforce Strategy budget.

It is anticipated that the strategy will support cost reduction in the council through reduction of sickness absence.

6.3 Policy Implications

6.3.1 Any policies impacted by the strategy will be updated.

6.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.4.1 N/A

6.5 Community Impact

6.5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for the strategy following endorsement

6.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.6.1 N/A

6.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.7.1 This will be shared with HDC4Everyone (ED&I network).

6.7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for the strategy following endorsement.

6.8 Implications on Resources

6.8.1 The majority of the work will be absorbed by the HR team as BAU, with support from other services.

6.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.9.1 By focusing on mental, physical, financial and social wellbeing, the strategy aims to improve employee experience, resilience and engagement, enabling colleagues to perform at their best.

6.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.10.1 With LGR it is more important than ever to ensure that we support our employees through this change programme and beyond vesting day.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is designed to mitigate risk to the council and to allow consistent application across all service areas.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 N/A.



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Health and Well-being Strategy

2026 - 2031



Why does well-being matter?

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is committed to being an employer of choice within the district and recognises that an important aspect in achieving this is the promotion and maintenance of the physical and psychological well-being of its entire workforce. This strategy has been created as part of a wider commitment to providing the best possible opportunities for employees to maintain or improve their well-being. With Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), it is more important than ever to ensure that we support our employees through this change programme and beyond vesting day.

HDC is committed to providing services and support mechanisms for its employees to maintain and improve their own well-being and that of their colleagues. In return, employees are encouraged to take action to maintain and, where necessary, improve their own health and well-being in order to fulfil the requirements of their role to the best of their ability.

A well thought out, structured and comprehensive well-being strategy benefits an organisation. It helps to:

- ✓ Attract new people to the organisation.
- ✓ Engage, motivate and retain employees.
- ✓ Create a healthier, more inclusive culture.
- ✓ Lower sickness absence.
- ✓ Improve performance and development.
- ✓ Improve productivity and success.

Our Strategy

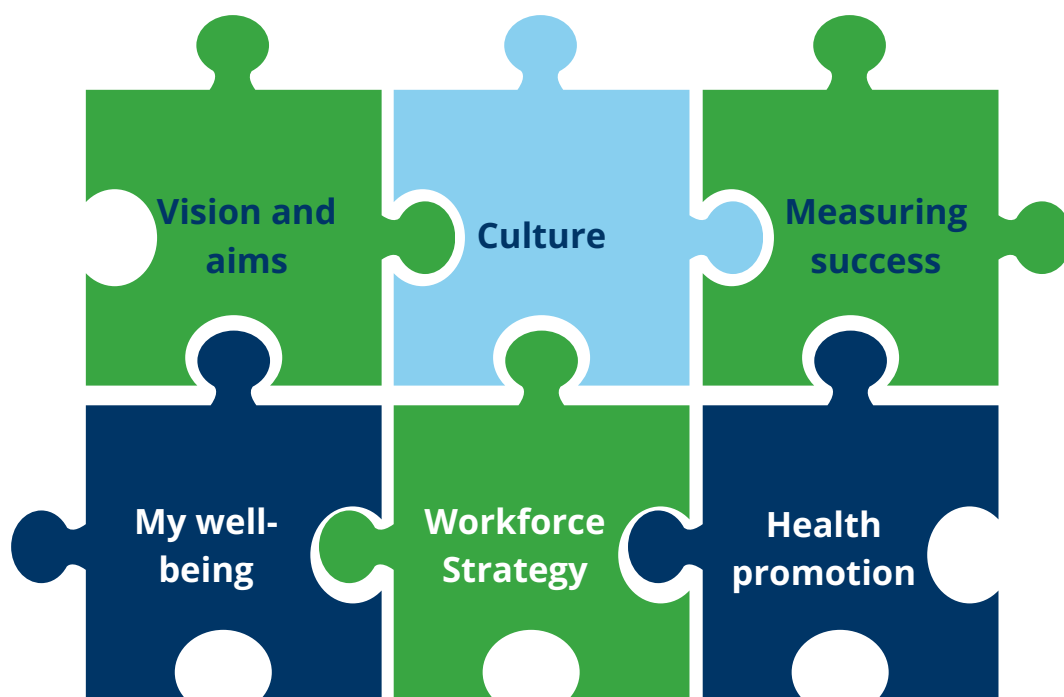
Here at HDC, we define well-being as:

Build resilience, individual health, in which employees are supported to make informed choices and engage in positive well being behaviours in order to succeed at HDC and beyond.

Our Health and Well-being Strategy sets out our vision and aims for employee well-being, our key areas of focus including our approach, and how the council will seek to measure success.

Well-being is the responsibility of everyone within HDC, with a focus on creating a well-being culture, which is championed at all levels, prevention-focused, and improves our standards and practices, and with the purpose of having a positive impact on everyone.

In addition, our Workforce Strategy 2024 has 'Well-being' as a core pillar and is an essential part of improving workforce well-being and will support achievement of the Workforce Strategy by improving staff capability and engagement to adapt to and embrace change as the organisation develops.



Our well-being aims

To be identified as an employer of choice who cares about well-being and recognises the role this can play in the bigger picture including improving productivity and ways of working. Throughout your employment journey with us, we want you to have a positive employee experience.

Create a safe and healthy work environment which fosters a positive culture, whereby the well-being of our employees is integral to everything we do.

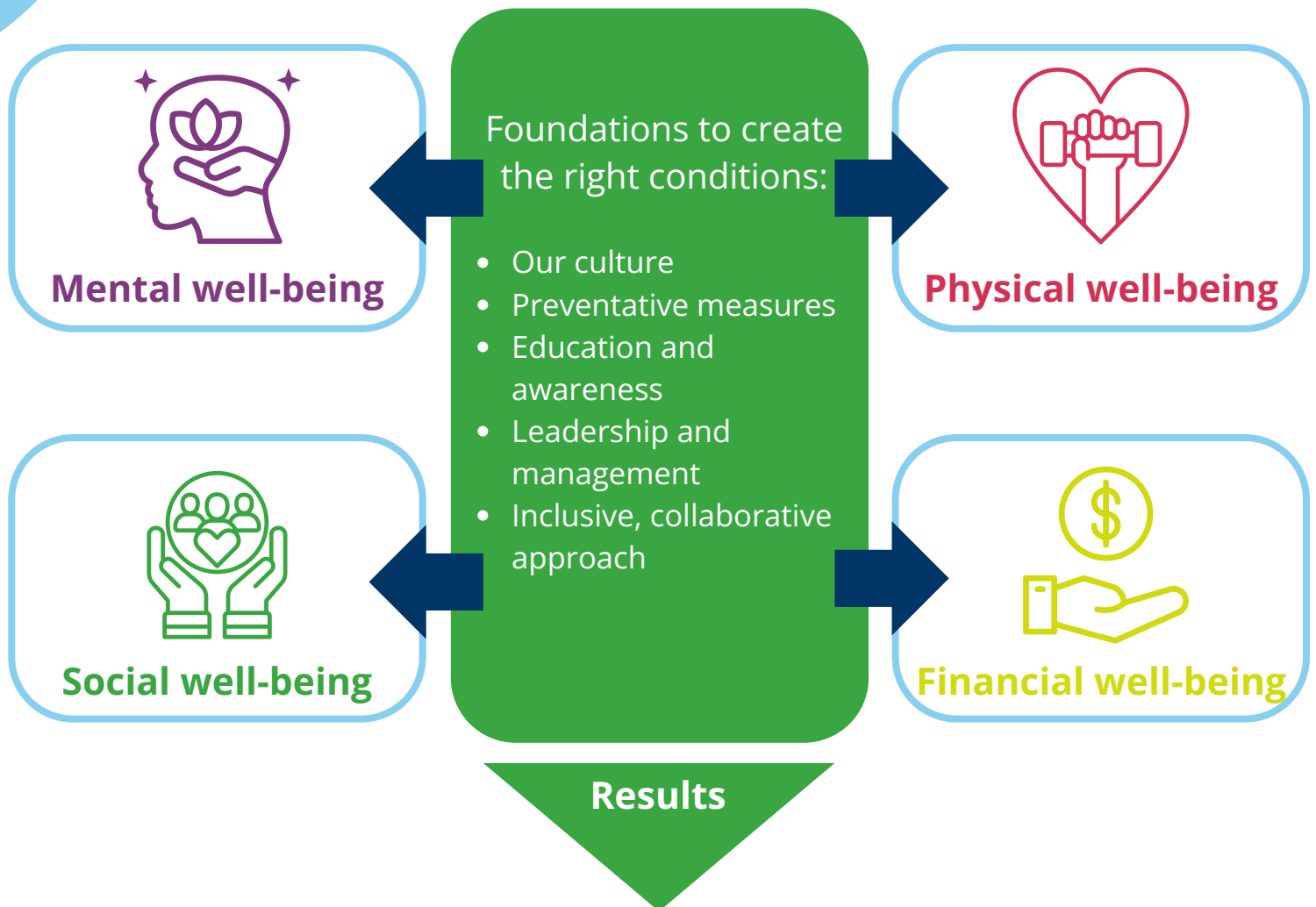
Provide impactful well-being support based on the needs of our employees, using a collaborative approach. Encourage employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle through the promotion of national campaigns, bitesize sessions and events.

Improve general well-being for our diverse workforce and ensure that it is seen as everyone's responsibility across HDC.



Well-being pillars

Four pillars of well-being



A safe, healthy environment where well-being is integral to everything we do. Impactful well-being support based on what our staff need.

Our well-being pillars

Our Health and Well-being Strategy 2026 - 2031 will focus on four key pillars of integrated well-being.

Mental well-being

- Create a culture of open discussion around stress and mental health.
- Supporting individuals to better manage their psychological well-being and develop personal resilience.
- Provide better access to support, advice and signposting.

Physical well-being

- Support people in making positive steps around health in areas such as sleep, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, and drinking enough water.
- Create an environment where people feel empowered and are educated about their physical well-being.
- Establish programmes for specific clinical conditions/areas of need.
- Improve our working environment and ways of working.



Social well-being



- Improve the relationships we have with each other across the organisation.
- Build healthy, collaborative, nurturing and supportive relationships, which includes good leadership, to foster a genuine community within HDC.
- Encourage community engagement to improve a sense of belonging and create strong links within the wider community of Huntingdonshire.

Financial well-being



- Reduce financial stress by supporting people to better manage their finances and become more financially secure. This will include areas such as managing debt, budgeting, saving, pensions, investments and living within our means.
- Promote employment practices that avoid low pay, insecure contracts, unfair pay gaps and ensure job security while meeting organisational requirements.
- Ensure reward and benefits' policies allow opportunities to support employees at all stages of their lives.

There is a wide range of information and support services already available to staff that align to our pillars. To find out more, visit the [Staff Well-being intranet page](#) or contact human.resources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Mental well-being

[Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)

[Well-being webinars](#)

[Resident Advice Team support](#)

[Domestic abuse support](#)

[Anglian Water - 'Shout' support](#)

[Bump 2 Baby and Beyond webinars](#)

Activities for awareness days, including International Men's and Women's Days

[Well-being hub on Perkbox](#)

Oasis well-being rooms at [Pathfinder House](#) and [Eastfield House](#)

[Workwell coaching](#)

Physical well-being

Health kiosks

[Eye test](#) and [flu jab vouchers](#)

'Escape' pain management and Tai Chi sessions

[Menopause support](#)

[Cycle to Work scheme](#) (subject to eligibility)

[Workwell coaching and physio](#)

Occupational health

Cervical screening unit

Blood donations at Burgess Hall

[Well-being webinars](#) on nutrition and endometriosis

Social well-being

[Buddy scheme](#)

[Volunteering policy](#)

[Staff golf association](#)

Lunchtime well-being walks

Quiz events

[HDC for Everyone \(EDI Group\)](#)

Engagement calendar, including Macmillan Coffee Morning, Brew Monday, and Random Acts of Kindness Day

[iCare Awards](#)

Christmas activities

Hunts Food Network (RAI Team)

Financial well-being

[One Leisure discounts](#)

Benefits and form filling support (RAI team)

[Perkbox discounts platform](#)

[Electric and hybrid vehicle scheme](#) (subject to eligibility)

[My Money Matters webinars and support](#)

[Additional voluntary contributions scheme](#)

GamCare webinars

[Energy advice from PECT](#)

LGPS pensions advice

[EAP financial support](#)

Measuring success

Success can be measured in many different ways. Our approach to measuring the success of our Health and Well-being Strategy will be a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection, review, and improvement.

We will use a range of hard and soft metrics to measure the impact of our actions and ensure that well-being is central to the success of our workforce and HDC as a whole.

Potential outcomes:

- Uptake of well-being-related activities.
- To keep sickness absence in line with or below benchmark data and aim to be in line with the private sector.
- Increased employee engagement shown in the staff survey.
- Employer of choice - recruitment and retention data.
- Take up of gym membership.
- Reduced agency spend.
- Reduced Occupational Health costs.
- Reduced accidents and injuries.
- Overtime payments reduce.
- Turnover within benchmark data.



Action plan

Mental well-being



- Educate managers / employees to recognise and support mental health and neurodiverse needs.
- Provide existing and new managers with training on Leadership Development.
- Promote access to support services (EAP, counselling, crisis support).
- Monitor employee engagement through staff survey.
- Promote Perkbox well-being assessments.
- Workwell referrals and promotion.
- Explore resilience training.

Physical well-being



Work currently underway:

- Understand workforce health needs (absence data, surveys, risk areas).
- Ensure safe, compliant working environments (including Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment for hybrid workers).
- Continue to encourage healthy habits and explore new health and well-being initiatives.
- Explore options available through use of One Leisure gym facilities to facilitate rehabilitation and general well-being.
- Analyse data to ensure relevant preventative measures are being taken to reduce accidents and injuries at work
- Review Sickness Absence Policy and process.

Social well-being



- Foster an inclusive, respectful culture where everyone belongs.
- Encourage collaboration and relationship-building across teams.
- Support employee networks and communities (e.g., Employee Representatives Group).
- Create opportunities for social interaction (formal and informal).
- Build trust through consistent, transparent communication.

Financial well-being



- Provide clear communication about pay, pensions, and benefits.
- Offer financial education (debt, additional voluntary contributions, and retirement planning).
- Signpost to support services (advice lines and hardship support if relevant).
- Help employees maximise value (discounts, salary sacrifice, and other schemes).
- Promote Cycle to Work scheme and explore lift share scheme.

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Committee – Employment Committee
23 September 2026

Report by: Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Claffey
Portfolio Holder for Workforce



Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Employment Policies Update

Executive Summary:

HR have a programme of undertaking a programme to review and refresh current policies to ensure that they are accurate, legally compliant and reflect current practice within HDC. We are therefore bringing the next set of policies we have reviewed to you.

Recommendations

1.1. Employment Committee are requested to endorse these policies

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

1 *Doing our Core Work Well*

Report Author(s)

Head of HR. Leanne.harfield@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides a summary the policies that are being submitted for endorsement.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 The policies reviewed in this period are:

- Shared Parental Leave (updated)
- Paternity Leave (Updated)
- Unpaid Parental Leave (updated)
- Probation Policy (updated)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (new)
- Recruitment and Selection Policy (updated)

Summary of the changes:

Policy	Amendments
Shared Parental Leave	Front Cover and Index Added 1.4 updated with eligibility requirements 1.7 added information to link to Leave Arrangements Policy for Parental Bereavement Leave. 4.2 details added to amount of SPL available 5.1 amended wording within the table to outlined changes due to changes to day one right for leave purposes 6.2 wording added regarding blocks of leave and process 8.1 Timescales removed as now day one right 9.2 Information added regarding contact during SPL and right to return to role. Flowchart updated to add in process changes Forms amended with timescales
Paternity Leave	Index added 1.1 service requirement removed as law changed for the purposes of leave as it is now a day one right 1.4 Removed the timeframe as eligible from day one. 1.5 Removed qualifying period as this is now a day 1 right for leave. 1.7 Section added to link to the leave arrangements policy for Parental Bereavement Leave. 3.0 Section added for Bereaved Parents Paternity Leave
Unpaid Parental Leave	Index added 3.2 one years service requirement removed as law changed and leave is now a day one right. 3.4 additional wording to clarify information regarding part-time working patterns. 4.1 additional wording added around meetings with employees where postponement is required
Probation Policy	Index added 2.2 Probation period reduced from 6 months to 3 months.

	2.3 Probation period for fixed term contracts reduced to 2 months. 3.2 Sickness triggers outlined during the probation period and new form introduced for sickness meetings in probation period – Appendix 1 6.0 Probation Review Meeting timescales changed in line with reduction of probation period. 7.1 New Probation Record form introduced – Appendix 2 8.1 Timescale amended in line with the changes to the probation period. 8.2 – 8.4 wording amended regarding extension to probation periods. 13.1 detail added regarding report and supporting documentation. 13.4 Wording added regarding postponement of meetings to enable companion attendance. 15.6 Information added regarding appeals process
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	This is a new policy as an outcome of the Workforce Strategy and HDC For Everyone Group
Recruitment and Selection Policy	Inclusion of Care Leavers commitment Reviewed and updated the policy to improve clarity, consistency and accessibility. Strengthened wording throughout to provide greater transparency of process and ensure alignment with current legislative and organisational requirements.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 N/A.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 N/A

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Policies endorsed will be reviewed in line with the policy schedule.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

- Improving quality of life for local people
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Doing our core work well

These policies support the organisation to ensure that they are legally compliant and have the right processes and procedures in place to support staff to do our core work well and to delivery the Council's key Priorities. This allows HDC to continue to work towards being an employer of choice.

6.2 Financial Implications

- 6.3** Day One rights for family leave policies may have an increased financial impact on the Council, but it is not possible to forecast this

6.4 Policy Implications

- 6.4.1** These have been amended to ensure that they are in line with legislative updates and best practice.

6.5 Legal & Constitutional Implications

- 6.5.1** These have been amended to ensure that they are in line with legislative updates and best practice.

6.6 Community Impact

- 6.6.1** Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for each policy following endorsement

6.7 Environment & Climate Change Implications

- 6.7.1** N/A

6.8 Equality & Diversity Implications

- 6.8.1** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will support staff in the workplace

- 6.8.2** Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out for each policy following endorsement

6.9 Implications on Resources

- 6.9.1** N/A

6.10 Health & Wellbeing Implications

- 6.10.1** N/A

6.11 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

- 6.11.1** LGR is taken into consideration for all policies that are reviewed or updated in line with legal requirements, and where possible, taking into consideration what neighbouring Council's approaches are.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1** These policies are designed to mitigate risk to the organisation and to allow consistent application across all service areas.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

- 8.1** N/A.

Shared Parental Leave Policy

Version 1.2

<u>Version Control</u>			
<u>Version</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Changes</u>
1.1	HR Business Partner LGSS	June 2015	New Policy
1.2	Lisa Baggaley	July 2026	Front Cover and Index Added 1.4 updated with eligibility requirements 1.7 added information to link to Leave Arrangements Policy for Parental Bereavement Leave. 4.2 details added to amount of SPL available 5.1 amended wording within the table to outlined changes due to changes to day one right for leave purposes 6.2 wording added regarding blocks of leave and process 8.1 Timescales removed as now day one right 9.2 Information added regarding contact during SPL and right to return to role. Flowchart updated to add in process changes Forms amended with timescales

Name of Policy	Shared Parental Leave Policy
Person / Post Responsible	HR Manager
Date approved / adopted	
Approved by	Employment Committee
Review Date	

Shared Parental Leave

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Shared Parental Leave Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the rights of employees to shared parental leave and pay. Shared parental leave (SPL) is a type of leave that is available to parents with babies due on or after 5 April 2015. In the case of adoption SPL is available to parents of children placed for adoption on or after 5 April 2015.
- 1.2 The intention of SPL is to allow both parents to take it turns to have periods of leave to care for a child or to take leave at the same time in the year following a child's birth/placement.
- 1.3 To do this the mother/primary adopter ends their maternity/adoption leave/pay and shares the remaining leave/pay with their partner as SPL. Alternatively the mother/primary adopter may return to work early from maternity/adoption leave and opt to take SPL at a later date.
- 1.4 SPL is not the same as ordinary parental leave which remains unchanged – the Council's ordinary parental leave policy gives further information.

Unlike paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, shared parental leave is not a day-one right. The eligibility conditions set out in section 5 continue to apply.

From 6 April 2026, under section 17 of the Employment Rights Act 2025, an employee who takes shared parental leave in respect of a child is no longer prevented from taking paternity leave, or from receiving Statutory Paternity Pay, in respect of the same child. Paternity leave and shared parental leave may be taken in any order.

2.0 Terminology

- 2.1 This policy uses the following terms:
 - Mother/expected mother.
 - Primary adopter.
 - Partner – the father of the child, or the partner, spouse or civil partner of the mother/primary adopter.
 - Expected week of childbirth (EWC) – The week (starting with the Sunday) in which it is expected that the child will be born.
 - Expected week of placement (EWP) - The week (starting with the Sunday) in which it is expected that the child will be placed for adoption.

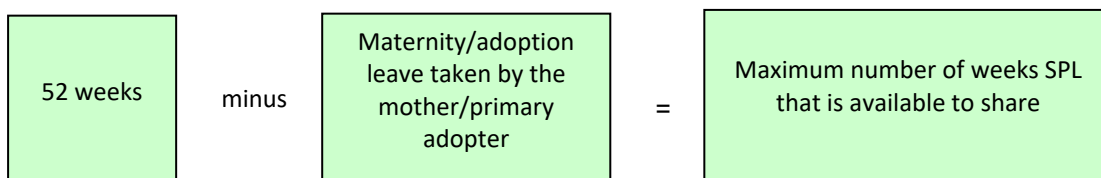
3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to employees of the Council, whether they are the mother/primary adopter or the partner.

- 3.2 If it is the mother/primary adopter who is employed by the Council, his/her partner must submit any notifications to take SPL to their own employer if they want to take a period of SPL.
- 3.3 Similarly, if it is the partner who is employed by the Council, the mother/primary adopter must submit any notifications to take SPL to their own employer. The mother/primary adopter and the partner should each liaise with their own employer to ensure that requests for SPL are handled appropriately.

4.0 Amount of SPL Available

- 4.1 The amount of SPL available depends on how much maternity/adoption leave the mother/primary adopter chooses to take before bringing their maternity/adoption leave to an end.
- 4.2 The maximum amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the number of weeks maternity / adoption leave the mother or primary adopter has taken, or will have taken, before ending that leave. Because a minimum of two weeks' maternity leave must be taken after the birth, the maximum SPL available in practice is 50 weeks.



- 4.3 The minimum period of maternity leave that a mother must legally is 2 weeks following the birth of the child. If a mother chooses to take only 2 weeks maternity leave then the remaining 50 weeks can be taken as SPL.
- 4.4 The earliest that SPL can commence is 2 weeks after the date on which the child is born or 2 weeks after the date of placement of adoption and it must end no later than 12 months after that date.
- 4.5 Employees are only entitled to a maximum of 50 weeks SPL regardless of the number of children born as a result of the pregnancy or the number of children placed under the same adoption arrangement.

5.0 Eligibility for SPL

- 5.1 For employees to be eligible to take SPL, both parents must meet certain eligibility criteria as outlined in the table below:

Mothers/primary adopter's eligibility for SPL (all of the following criteria must be met)	
The mother/primary adopter is eligible for SPL if s/he: Has been continuously employed by the Council for at least 26 weeks by the end of	In addition the partner must: Has been employed or self-employed in at least 26 weeks of the 66 weeks immediately before the expected week of childbirth or

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the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth or placement, and remain employed by the Council until the week before any period of SPL begins, is employed with the Council until the week before taking SPL. • Share main responsibility with the partner for the care of the child. • Is entitled to statutory maternity/adoption leave in respect of the child. • Have ended or given binding notice to end their maternity or adoption leave. • Complies with the notification requirements.	placement, have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks. • share main responsibility with the mother/primary adopter for the care of the child.
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Partners eligibility for SPL (all of the following criteria must be met)

The partner is eligible for SPL if s/he: • Has been employed or self employed in at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately before the expected week of childbirth or placement is employed • Is employed with the Council until the week before taking SPL. • Has average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in 13 of those 66 weeks. • share main responsibility with the mother/primary adopter for the care of the child. • Complies with the notification requirements.	In addition the mother/primary adopter must: • Has been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth or placement. • Has average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks. • share main responsibility with the partner for the child. • be entitled to statutory maternity/adoption leave, statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity/adoption allowance in respect of the child; and • comply with the relevant notification requirements.
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6.0 Notification Requirements

- 6.1 The notification requirements that must be followed by the mother/primary adopter and the partner are made up of 3 elements:

- a. **A curtailment notice** - from the mother/primary adopter stating when she proposes to end her maternity/adoption leave (this is not required if the mother/primary adopter has already returned to work).
- b. **A notice of entitlement and intention** giving an initial, non-binding indication of each period of SPL the employee is requesting; and
- c. **A period of leave notice** setting out the start and end dates of each period of shared parental leave the employee is requesting.

Requests for a single continuous block of a number of complete weeks will be granted.

- 6.2 An employee taking SPL can split their leave into up to 3 separate blocks instead of taking it all in one go, even if they are not sharing the leave with their partner. A request for blocks of leave will be granted unless there are clear and evidenced operational reasons why it cannot be accommodated. Where a request is refused, the manager will set out the reasons in writing and will meet the employee to discuss alternatives before the two week discussion period ends.
- 6.3 SPL must be taken in blocks of a week or more. A minimum of 8 weeks notice must be given before each block of leave begins.
- 6.4 If both parents are taking SPL then they can take their leave at the same time as each other, or at different times. However the combined time off can only reach a maximum of 50 weeks leave and 37 weeks Shared Parental Pay ShPP.
- 6.5 SPL can start for the partner whilst the mother/primary adopter is still on maternity or adoption leave as long as the mother/primary adopter has given binding notice to end their leave.
- 6.6 **Discontinuous Leave**

If the employee requests discontinuous periods of leave the Council has two weeks (from the date of the period of leave notice) to:

- Agree to the pattern of leave requested
- Propose an alternative pattern of leave
- Refuse the pattern of leave requested.

If no agreement has been reached within the two week discussion period, the employee is entitled to take the leave as one continuous period of leave – starting on a date chosen by the employee that is at least 8 weeks after the date the period of leave notice was submitted.

The employee must specify this date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period. If the employee does not choose a start date within this timeframe the period of continuous SPL will start on the date of the first period of leave originally requested.

Alternatively, if no agreement has been reached during the two-week discussion period, the employee may withdraw a period of leave notice (this can be done up to the 15th day after the notice was submitted). A notice that

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has been withdrawn does not count towards the total number of requests for leave an employee can make.

7.0 Shared Parental Pay

- 7.1 Statutory shared parental pay (ShPP) is available for eligible parents to share between them while on SPL. The number of weeks' ShPP available to the parents will depend on how much statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity/adoption allowance the mother/primary adopter has been paid when her maternity/adoption leave or pay period ends.
- 7.2 A total of 39 weeks' statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity/adoption allowance is available to the mother/primary adopter. The amount of ShPP will be:

39 weeks	minus	Statutory maternity/adoption pay received by the mother/primary adopter	=	Maximum amount of statutory shared parental pay available to be shared.
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- 7.3 ShPP is paid at a rate set by the Government or at 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).
- 7.4 It is up to the parents as to who is paid the ShPP and how it is apportioned between them.

8.0 Eligibility for Shared Parental Pay

- 8.1 For employees to be eligible for ShPP both parents must meet certain eligibility requirements as set out below:

Mothers/primary adopter's eligibility for ShPP (all of the following criteria must be met)	
The mother/primary adopter is eligible for ShPP if s/he: • Is employed by the council until the week before taking SPL; • has normal weekly earnings above the lower national insurance threshold in the 8 weeks ending with the 15th week before the EWC/EWP. • shares main responsibility with the partner for the child. • intends to care for the child during SPL; and • is entitled to statutory maternity/adoption pay but the	In addition the partner must: • have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold (currently £30) for any 13 of those 66 weeks. • share main responsibility with the mother/primary adopter for the care of the child.

maternity/adoption pay period has been reduced.	
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Partners eligibility for ShPP (all of the following criteria must be met)	
The partner is eligible for ShPP if s/he: • Is employed by the council until the week before taking SPL; • has normal weekly earnings above the lower national insurance threshold in the 8 weeks ending with the 15th week before the EWC/EWP. • shares main responsibility with the mother/primary adopter for the child. • intends to care for the child during SPL.	In addition the mother/primary adopter must: • have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold (currently £30) for any 13 of those 66 weeks. • share main responsibility with the partner for the care of the child; and • be entitled to statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity/adoption allowance but maternity/adoption pay period has been reduced.

9.0 Contact During Shared Parental Leave

- 9.1 The Council will maintain reasonable contact with employees on SPL to discuss return to work arrangements and to keep them informed of any significant changes in the team or the organisation.
- 9.2 An employee can agree to work for the Council (or to attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days. Both parents taking SPL have 20 SPLIT days each. The Council cannot require employees to undertake SPLIT days and is not obliged to agree to an employee's request for SPLIT days.

The method, frequency and purpose of contact during SPL will be agreed with the employee before their leave begins. An employee is not obliged to respond to contact during a period of SPL and will not be asked to work a SPLIT day at short notice.

An employee who takes 26 weeks or less SPL has the right to return to the same job. An employee who takes more than 26 weeks SPL has the right to return to the same job or, where that is not reasonably practicable, to a job which is suitable or appropriate in the circumstances. An employee has the right not to be subject to detriment, and not to be dismissed, for taking or seeking to take SPL. Taking SPL will not affect employee's performance assessment, access to training or promotion, routine pay increases, contractual benefits, employer pension contributions or accrual of annual leave.

- 9.3 Employees will be paid the hours undertaken during a SPLIT day at their normal hourly rate of pay. A SPLIT day claim form must be completed for each full or half day worked. Employees will receive payment for the SPLIT day in addition to any ShPP they are entitled to.

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10.0 Employee Rights During SPL

- 10.1 During SPL, all terms and conditions of the employee's contract except normal pay will continue. This means that, all other benefits will remain in place e.g. holiday entitlement will continue to accrue.

10.2 Local Government Pension Scheme Members

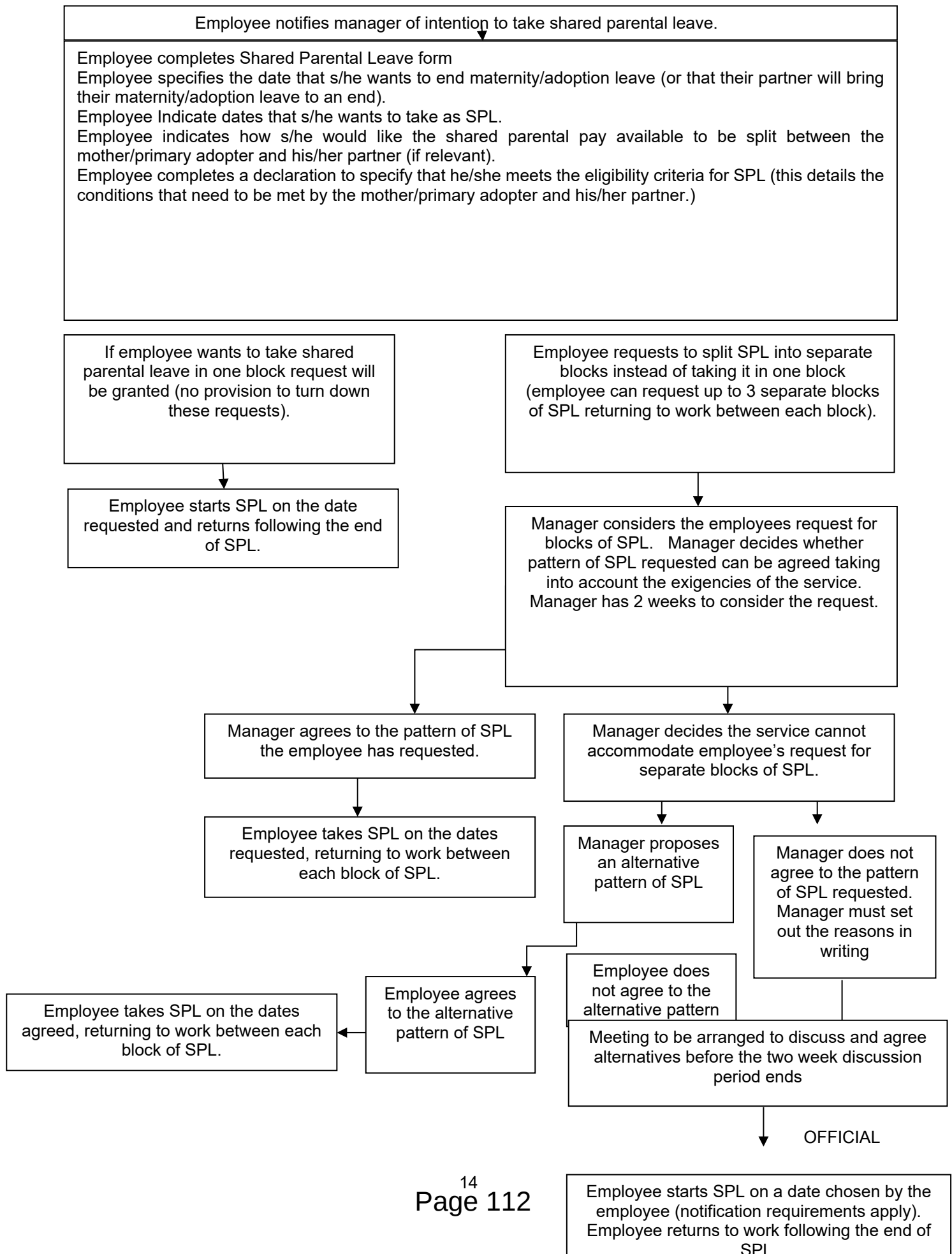
If the employee is a member of the local Government Pension Scheme, they will continue to pay contributions during the period of **paid** shared parental leave. These contributions will be based on any pensionable pay actually received but will allow service to be treated as working normally.

For periods of **unpaid** shared parental leave, employees will have the opportunity to buy back any or all of the “lost” pension by paying an age-related Additional Pension Contribution (APC). Provided the employee makes an application to make the arrangements within 30 days of the day they return to work, the employee shall pay 1/3rd of the cost and the council 2/3rd of the cost. The amount of lost pension will be calculated as 1/49th of the assumed pensionable pay for employees in the main LGPS scheme and as 1/98th for employees in the 50/50 section. If an employee is in the 50/50 section of the scheme, they can still commence an APC.

11.0 Return to Work Following SPL

- 11.1 The employee has the right to return to the same job when returning to work from shared parental leave if the period of leave (when added to any other period of shared parental leave, statutory maternity/adoption or paternity leave) is 26 weeks or less.
- 11.2 If the employee is returning from a total period of leave that is more than 26 weeks s/he has the right to return to the same job unless this is not reasonably practicable. In these circumstances the employee will then have the right to return to another job that is suitable and appropriate.
- 11.3 Where an employee intends to return to work earlier than the end of their SPL period they must provide the Council with at least eight weeks' notice of the date on which they intend to return.

Appendix 1: Process Flowchart



Appendix 2

Notice of entitlement and intention to take Shared Parental Leave

Employees with a child due to be born or placed for adoption on or after 5 April 2015 who wish to take shared parental leave (SPL) to share the main caring responsibilities with the other parent/partner must submit this form to their manager **at least eight weeks** before the start date of the first period of SPL.

Please refer to The Council's Shared Parental Leave policy for details on eligibility and further information before completing this form.

Section 1 – Basic Details

Employee name	
Are you the mother / main adopter of the child or the partner of the mother / main adopter?	
Child's expected date of birth/date of placement for adoption	
Child's actual date of birth/date of placement for adoption (if known)	
Start date of mother/main adopter's maternity/adoption leave (or pay period*)	
End date of mother/main adopter's maternity/adoption leave (or pay period*)	

* The start and end dates of the statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance period if the mother/main adopter is not entitled to statutory leave.

Section 2 – Employee notice of curtailment of maternity/adoption leave

Please complete this section if you are the mother / main adopter. If on maternity leave, this date must be at least two weeks after the birth of your baby. You must give at least eight weeks' notice of your curtailment date.

I wish my maternity / adoption leave to end on the following date:	
Signed: _____	Date: _____

Section 3 - Shared Parental Leave Details

The total amount available is 52 weeks minus the number of weeks' leave/pay already taken by the mother/main adopter according to the dates given in the previous section.

Total number of weeks' SPL available	
Number of weeks' SPL you intend to take	
Number of weeks' SPL the other parent intends to take	
Indication of start and end dates of SPL that you intend to take This indication is nonbinding. You must submit a formal period of leave notice for each period of SPL you wish to request for it to be binding. Complete the section below if you wish your request for any/all of these periods of leave to be treated as a period of leave notice.	
Do you wish the dates indicated for the period(s) of leave to constitute a formal (binding) period of leave notice? (delete as appropriate)	YES / NO / YES, for the following dates only:

Section 4 - Shared Parental Pay Details

The total amount of shared parental pay (ShPP) which may be available is 39 weeks minus the number of weeks' pay already taken by the mother/main adopter according to the dates given in Section 1.

Total number of weeks' ShPP available	
Number of weeks' ShPP you intend to claim	
Number of weeks' ShPP the other parent intends to claim	
Indication of start and end dates of your ShPP periods	

Section 5 – Employee declaration

I confirm that I meet the following conditions:

- I am the mother, father, or main adopter of the child, or the partner of the mother or main adopter
- I have (or share with the other parent) the main responsibility for the care of the child and I am taking SPL in order to care for the child
- I have been continuously employed by the Council for at least 26 weeks' by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of birth or placement, and remain employed by the Council before any period of SPL begins.
- I intend to be in continuous employment until the week before any SPL is taken
- (If I am claiming shared parental pay) I have average weekly earnings equal to or above the Lower Earnings Limit over the eight week period ending with the relevant week
- I agree to inform the Council immediately if I cease to meet the conditions for entitlement to SPL or ShPP.

If you are the mother/main adopter:

- I have submitted a curtailment of maternity/adoption leave notice by completing Section 4 above.

Signature: _____	Date: _____
------------------	-------------

Section 6 – Declaration of other parent

Name	
Address	
National Insurance Number	

I confirm that I meet the following conditions:

- I have been employed or self employed in at least 26 of the 66 weeks' immediately before the expected week of birth or placement.
- I have average weekly earnings of at least £30 during at least 13 of the 66 weeks prior to the relevant week

- I agree to inform your employee immediately if I cease to meet the two conditions above
- I consent to your employee taking SPP and ShPP as set out in Sections 2 and 3 above.

If you are the mother/main adopter:

- I have curtailed my maternity leave and pay/adoption leave and pay/maternity allowance or
- will have done so by the time your employee starts shared parental leave

I consent to you processing the information contained in this declaration.

Signature: _____	Date: _____
---------------------	-------------

Shared Parental Leave (SPLIT) Day Claim Form

Section A – Employee Details

Please complete Section A and submit to your line manager for approval AFTER each occasion you have attended work as a SPLIT day.

1. Name:

Payroll Reference:

Job Title:

Directorate:

2. I confirm that I am currently on Shared Parental Leave.

3. I wish to claim payment for working on an agreed shared-parental-leave-in-touch (SPLIT) day.

4. I confirm that I worked on the following date/s for the total number of hours each (SPLIT) day:

Date: Hours:

Date: Hours:

Date: Hours:

5. I understand that I will get paid for the number of hours undertaken on each SPLIT day. I understand that pay is based on my normal hourly rate of pay and is offset against any entitlement I have to occupational maternity pay.

6. I understand that any monies claimed will be subject to tax/NI and pension deductions in the normal way.

7. I confirm that the information provided above is correct.

Signed Date:

SECTION B – Manager Authorisation - To be completed by the line manager.

1. Name:

Job Title:

2. I confirm that the above SPLIT day payment is authorised.

Signed Date:

Submit a copy of this form to the HR Team -
HumanResources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk



Paternity Leave Policy

Version 1.2

<u>Version Control</u>			
<u>Version</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Changes</u>
1.1	Kiran Hans	March 2024	Added front cover and version control. Changed name to Paternity Leave. Added legal updates for 2024 and updated Paternity Leave Application form.
1.2	Lisa Baggaley	July 2026	Index added 1.2 service requirement removed as law changed for the purposes of leave as it is now a day one right 1.4 Removed the timeframe as eligible from day one. 1.5 Removed qualifying period as this is now a day 1 right for leave. 1.7 Section added to link to the leave arrangements policy for Parental Bereavement Leave. 3.0 Section added for Bereaved Parents Paternity Leave

Name of Policy	Paternity Leave Policy
Person/posts responsible	HR Manager
Date approved/adopted	
Approved by	Employment Committee
Review Date	

Paternity Leave

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1.0 Introduction

The Council grants Paternity Leave to a member of staff whose partner is pregnant or who plans to adopt a baby.

1.1 Who is Eligible for the Leave?

All staff employed by Huntingdonshire District Council are entitled to a block of 10 days Paternity Leave which includes 5 days payable at 100% of weekly wage (including SPP if applicable) plus 5 days payable at SPP (the entitlement is the same if you are having more than one child e.g. twins).

You can take unpaid leave to accompany a partner to 2 antenatal appointments if you meet any of the following criteria:

- the baby's father
- the husband or partner of the mother (or adopter) - this includes same-sex partners
- in a long-term relationship with the expectant mother
- the child's adopter
- the intended parent (if you're having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement)

You cannot get Paternity Pay and time off for appointments Leave if you have already taken the time off through the Adoption Leave Policy.

1.2 When can leave be taken?

Partners can choose to split their leave and pay into two non-consecutive periods of leave of a week each, it is up to you whether you wish to take one or two weeks leave. Leave cannot start before the child has been born and partners will be able to take their leave and pay at any time during the first 52 weeks of the birth or the placement of the child for adoption.

1.3 Requesting Leave

It is recognised that in many cases it will be difficult to predict exactly when the leave is required, but staff wishing to take Paternity Leave should inform their line manager as soon as possible of the likely dates of their absence. Applications for leave should be made at least 15 weeks before the expected date of childbirth or adoption, however, employees will only need to give 28 days' notice of the dates they wish to take. You will need to complete a Paternity Leave application form (Appendix 1). You are also able to take annual or flexi leave from your entitlement and have the option to take unpaid parental leave or Shared Parental Leave, details are available from the Human Resources Team.

The notice requirement for claiming SPP is 28 days before the expected date of childbirth or adoption, or if this is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible.

Where an employee joins the Council too late to give 15 weeks' notice of entitlement they must instead give as much notice as is reasonably practicable. No employee will lose their entitlement to paternity leave because they were not employed by the

Council at the point at which the standard notice would otherwise have been due. Paternity leave and shared parental leave may be taken in any order. Taking shared parental leave in respect of a child no longer prevents you from taking paternity leave, or from receiving Statutory Paternity Pay, in respect of the same child.

1.4 Time off for Antenatal appointments

You can take unpaid leave to accompany a pregnant woman to 2 antenatal appointments. You can take up to 6 and a half hours per appointment, where additional time is required please speak to your manager.

You should make your manager aware as soon as possible of any antenatal appointments. Where possible, a minimum of two weeks' notice should be given except in exceptional circumstances.

Evidence of the appointment is not a requirement, however the unpaid leave form will need to be completed giving dates and times of appointment.

1.5 Premature births

If your child is born prematurely, Paternity Leave can be taken at any point between the actual date of birth and 52 weeks following the birth.

1.6 Miscarriage, stillbirths or loss

You will be entitled to Paternity Leave and Pay if a child was miscarried or stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, or later died. If a miscarriage or stillbirth occurs before the end of the 24 weeks of pregnancy, you will not be entitled to Paternity Leave or SPP.

1.7 Parental Bereavement Leave

Please refer to the Council's Leave Arrangements Policy for further information on Parental Bereavement Leave entitlements and Pay.

2.0 Notification for Paternity Leave and Pay

In order to request Paternity Leave, an indicative date of leave should be given 28 days prior to the due date, in line with section 1.3 by completing the Paternity Leave application form.

You may choose to begin this period of leave on:

- The date on which the baby is born (This is a movable day)
- A predetermined date - this date must be later than the first day of the expected week of birth. If you have chosen a predetermined date and the baby is not born on or before that date, you must change your choice to another later predetermined date or you can choose to take leave from the actual date of birth or a specified number of days after the date of birth

3.0 Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave

- 3.1 Bereaved Partners Paternity leave is for the partner of someone who has died; either the mother or parent who gave birth, the primary adopter or an intended parent having a baby through surrogacy. The leave can be used when someone dies within the first year of their child's life or adoption. The leave is unpaid.

The father or partner can take up to 52 weeks' unpaid leave to care for their child, taken as one continuous block of leave.

In most cases, they must take the leave within 52 weeks of either:

- the child's birth – including intended parents in a surrogacy
- the child's adoption placement
- the child's entry to Great Britain for overseas adoptions

If the death happens less than 14 days before the end of the 52 weeks. The father or partner can still take 14 days' leave.

- 3.2 The father or partner must have responsibility for bringing up the child and be at least one of the following:
- the child's father
 - married to, the civil partner or partner of the mother or parent who gave birth
 - married to the civil partner or partner of the primary adopter.

3.3 Giving notice and starting leave

When requesting leave you should make contact with your Line Manager as soon as you can and complete the Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave Form (Appendix 2).

If it's less than 8 weeks since your partner died the leave can start straight away.

If it's more than 8 weeks after the death you must give at least 1 weeks' notice before the start of the leave.

Appendix 1: HDC Paternity Leave Application Form

Please complete this form, ask your manager to sign it and return it to Human.resources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk at least 28 days before the intended start of the Paternity Leave.

Employee Details			
Employee Number		Employee Name	
Post Title		Department	
Baby Due Date:			
To take the leave as one block please complete below (First week is paid at 100% of salary and second week is paid at Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP):			
Paternity Leave Start Date		Paternity Leave End Date	
To take the leave as two blocks please complete below (First week is paid at 100% of salary and second week is paid at Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP):			
Week 1 - Paternity Leave Start Date		Paternity Leave End Date	
Week 2 - Paternity Leave Start Date		Paternity Leave End Date	
Relationship to dependent:			
Continuous Service Date:			
Confirmation/Acknowledgment (In submitting this form the employee, has read and understands the Paternity Leave policy and the rates at which this will be paid):			
Employee Signature		Date of application	
Manager Name			
		Date	

Appendix 2: HDC Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave Application Form

Please complete this form, ask your manager to sign it and return it to
Human.resources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Employee Details			
Employee Number		Employee Name	
Post Title		Department	
Baby Birth Date:		Date of adoption:	
Date of Partners death:			
Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave Start Date		Bereaved Partners Paternity Leave End Date (if known)	
Relationship to dependent:			
Employee Signature		Date of application	
Manager Name		Date	

Unpaid Parental Leave Policy

Version 1.2

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.1	Kiran Hans	June 2015	New Policy
1.2	Lisa Baggaley	April 2026	Index added 3.2 one years service requirement removed as law changed and leave is now a day one right. 3.4 additional wording to clarify information regarding part-time working patterns. 4.1 additional wording added around meetings with employees where postponement is required.

Name of Policy	Unpaid Parental Leave
Person/posts responsible	HR Manager
Date approved/adopted	
Approved by	Employment Committee
Review Date	

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Unpaid Parental Leave

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council recognises that an employee may wish to take time off to look after his or her child, to spend more time with the child or to make arrangements in respect of the child (e.g. looking at new schools).
- 1.2 This policy aims to support parents through employment matters relating to parenting. Supporting employees makes good business sense for the Council as the Council retains valuable knowledge and skills and contributes towards equal opportunity in employment. This policy sets out the Council's unpaid parental leave policy.

2. Employee groups covered by the policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council employees.

3. Parental leave

- 3.1 An employee who is a parent of one of the following children is entitled to unpaid parental leave provided he or she meets all other eligibility requirements.

Child	Entitlement
Child under the age of 18	Up to 18 weeks until the child's 18 th birthday
Adopted child	Up to 18 weeks until the fifth anniversary of the adoption or by the child's 18 th birthday (if this is sooner)
Child who has been awarded the disability living allowance or personal independence payment	Up to 18 weeks until the child's 18 th birthday

- 3.2 To be eligible, the employee must:

- Have (or expect to have) the parental responsibility for the child.
- Give the Council the correct notice and evidence.

- 3.3 Parental leave can only be taken in full-week blocks unless the child has been awarded the disability living allowance or personal independence payment, in which case the parental leave can be taken one day at a time or in blocks or multiples of one day. In any given year, an employee cannot take more than four weeks' parental leave.

- 3.4 The right to a period of parental leave is available in respect of each child. If an employee has two or more children under the age of 18, he or she may take up to 18 weeks' parental leave in respect of each of those children. Part-time employees are entitled to parental leave on a pro rata basis. A week of parental leave means one week of the employees' normal working pattern. Part-time employees are entitled to the same 18 weeks' parental leave as full-time employees.
- 3.5 The employee must tell his or her manager as soon as possible and at least 21 days prior to starting parental leave:
- That the employee intends to take parental leave.
 - The dates the employee wishes to start parental leave.
 - The number of weeks (or days, in the case of a disabled child) of parental leave the employee wishes to take.
 - The name of the child in respect of whom the employee is taking parental leave.
 - That the parental leave is being taken for the primary purpose of caring for that child.
 - That the employee has not exhausted his or her entitlement to parental leave with a previous employer.

The employee must confirm the above in writing by submitting a Parental Leave Form. Unless the employee has already done so in a previous request for unpaid parental leave, the employee must also give his or her manager written evidence of:

- Parenthood or parental responsibility (e.g. birth certificate, adoption papers or evidence of the employee's relationship with the child's parent).
- The child's age, date of adoption or the child's entitlement to disability living allowance or personal independence payment.

4. Postponement of parental leave

- 4.1 The employee's manager can postpone a requested period of parental leave for up to six months (provided it ends before the entitlement to parental leave expires) if the employee's absence from work would unduly disrupt the operation of the Council's business, for example, work is at a seasonal peak, other members of staff are absent or particular skills or expertise are required at that time and cannot be easily covered.

Before postponing a period of parental leave, the manager will meet the employee to discuss whether the operational difficulty can be resolved by other means and will consider alternative dates put forward by the employee. Any postponement must be approved by the relevant Service Manager and the business reasons recorded in writing.

- 4.2 However, parental leave cannot be postponed where it is intended to begin on the day on which the employee's child is born or placed for adoption.
- 4.3 The employee's manager will write to the employee within seven days of receiving a request for parental leave confirming the reasons for the postponement and the dates that the leave can be taken.

5. Employees with more than one job

- 5.1 If an employee has more than one job within the Council, this does not increase the total leave to which he or she is entitled.
- 5.2 If the employee wants to take parental leave at the same time in both jobs, notice must be given to both managers. If one manager wishes to postpone the request, the parental leave will be postponed for both jobs. If the employee wishes to take parental leave at another time, both managers must agree to the timing of the request.

6. Rights during parental leave

- 6.1 All terms and conditions of an employee's contract of employment continue during parental leave except normal pay (e.g. annual leave continues to accrue and Council policies and procedures).
- 6.2 An employee is not entitled to contractual sick pay while on parental leave.
- 6.3 For every bank holiday that falls during a period of parental leave, an employee is entitled to accrue one day of annual leave.
- 6.4 An employee must not be dismissed for any reason directly connected with taking parental leave.

7. Return to work

- 7.1 During parental leave, the Council may make reasonable contact with the employee to help plan his or her return to work (e.g. to inform the employee of significant workplace developments, learning and development opportunities or job vacancies).
- 7.2 There is no need for the employee to give notice of his or her return to work – it is assumed that the employee will return to work on the date agreed with his or her manager.
- 7.3 An employee who returns to work from parental leave has the right to resume working in the same job if the period of parental leave was:
 - Four weeks or less.
 - An isolated period of leave.
 - The last of two or more consecutive periods of leave (not including a period of additional maternity leave of more than four weeks).
- 7.4 If the employee does not fall into one of the above categories, the employee has the right to return to the same job or, if that is not reasonably practicable, to another job that is suitable and appropriate for the circumstances.

8. Misuse of parental leave

- 8.1 An employee must not misuse this policy, for example, by:
 - Taking parental leave for a primary purpose that is not caring for the child (e.g. where another person is taking the primary responsibility for care of the child).
 - Misrepresenting the age of the child.
 - Misrepresenting the amount of parental leave taken with a previous employer.

9. Further Information

- 9.1 Employees with questions about this policy should speak to their Line Manager. Managers who need further information on how to apply this policy should contact the HR Team.

10. Policy monitoring

- 10.1 This policy and procedure will be reviewed and its effectiveness evaluated periodically. The Council retains the discretion to review it at any time and consult as appropriate.

Unpaid Parental Leave Form

Section A – Employee Details

Employee's Name:

Job Title:

Service:

Payroll Number (if known):

Section B – Notification of Parental Leave

3. I wish to apply for parental leave in respect of

..... (name of child)

for the periodto.....

4. The child's date of birth is.....

5. I confirm that I have (or expect to have) the parental responsibility for the child.

I attach copies of the following (please tick).

- Child's birth certificate
- Adoption papers
- Guardianship papers
- Court order
- Disability living allowance award (benefits agency letter/bank statement)
- Child benefit allowance award (benefits agency letter/bank statement) as evidence that the child resides with me

There is no need to attach evidence of parental responsibility if you have already done so in a previous request for parental leave.

6. I confirm that I am taking parental leave for the primary purpose of caring for the child. (Please provide details below).

7. I confirm that I have takenweeks'/days' (please circle) parental leave in respect of this child with a previous employer. I understand that I am not entitled to parental leave in respect of this child if I have exhausted my entitlement to parental leave with another employer.

8. I understand that the period of parental leave will be unpaid.

9. I understand that any false information that I give on this form may result in disciplinary proceedings against me.

Signed: Date:

Section C – Manager's Approval

1. Manager's name:

2. Parental leave approved?

• Yes ☐ No

3. If no, please confirm:

- Reasons for postponing leave:

- Dates when postponed leave may be taken:

Signed:..... Date:

4. Second manager's name (if employee has two jobs with the Council):

5. Parental leave approved?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If no, please confirm:

- Reasons for postponing leave:

- Dates when postponed leave may be taken:

7. Have you discussed the postponed leave with the employee's other manager?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Signed:..... Date:

Submit a copy of this form to the HR Team at HumanResources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Probation Policy

Version 1.2

Version Control			
<u>Version</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Changes</u>
1.1	Nicki Bane	March 2024	Added front cover for version control Rep Groups Amended Action plan wording taken out so that all objective/actions can be kept on one document.
1.2	Lisa Baggaley	April 2026	Index added 2.2 Probation period reduced from 6 months to 3 months. 2.3 Probation period for fixed term contracts reduced to 2 months. 3.2 Sickness triggers outlined during the probation period and new form introduced for sickness meetings in probation period – Appendix 1 6.0 Probation Review Meeting timescales changed in line with reduction of probation period. 7.1 New Probation Record form introduced – Appendix 2 8.1 Timescale amended in line with the changes to the probation period. 8.2 – 8.4 wording amended regarding extension to probation periods. 13.1 detail added regarding report and supporting documentation. 13.4 Wording added regarding postponement of meetings to enable companion attendance. 15.6 Information added regarding appeals process

Name of Policy:	Probation Policy
Person/posts responsible:	HR Manager
Date approved/adopted:	To be added
Approved by:	Employment Committee
Review Date:	To be added

PROBATION POLICY

Index Page Number

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy provides a framework to enable managers to monitor and support the progress of new starters in the initial stages of their appointment and to deal promptly and fairly with any apparent shortcomings in a probationers' work performance or conduct in accordance with the procedure outlined below.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the responsibilities of managers and employees during the probation period and outlines the process to be followed. The policy is not a substitute for a thorough selection procedure, every effort should be made at recruitment stage to ensure the right candidate is appointed.

2. Employees covered by this Policy

- 2.1 All new employees to Huntingdonshire District Council will go through a probationary period upon appointment. Existing employees who transfer from other jobs within the Council do not have a formal probationary period. However, they should still have a full induction to make sure they are able to achieve acceptable standards of conduct and work performance.
- 2.2 The length of the probationary period is 3 months for all employees, except those as stated in 2.3.
- 2.3 Employees on fixed term contracts are also covered by this policy, however, the length of probation period may be reduced in line with the length of contract i.e. a 6 month contract could have a 2 month probation period - please contact the HR team for further advice.

3. Principles of Policy

- 3.1 All issues with sickness absence, work performance or misconduct for new HDC employees during their probation period will be dealt with using the probation procedure rather than through the sickness absence, disciplinary or capability procedures, with the exception of gross misconduct or gross incompetence.
- 3.2 Managers should not wait until an absence trigger has been reached before engaging with an employee about an absence issue. Support to improve attendance should be offered as soon as it is needed.

Disability related illness will be referred to Occupational Health and where adjusted triggers are recommended this will be discussed with the employee.

Pregnancy related illness will not be included for monitoring purposed.

Where an employee has reached an absence trigger a Probation Sickness Review meeting should be carried out and documented, the form for this meeting is at Appendix 1.

Absence Triggers during the probation period:

- ☐ Over 3 working days in a 3 month rolling period
- ☐ Absences linked to the avoidance of work tasks
- ☐ Unacceptable patterns of absence causing concern e.g. repeat days of the week
- ☐ Part time absence trigger hit: _____ days

4. Manager's responsibilities

- 4.1 The manager must explain the Probation Policy to all newly appointed employees.
- 4.2 At the beginning of the probation period it is crucial that the manager clearly defines with the employee what is required of them and how their performance will be assessed. Performance standards should clearly state the skills, performance and attendance levels that are required. Throughout the probation period an employee's progress will be measured and evidenced against these performance standards.
- 4.3 The manager must carry out probation review meetings within the required timescale, or more frequently if required.
- 4.4 Where an employee has successfully completed the probation period it is the manager's responsibility to confirm the employee in post.

5. Employee responsibilities

- 5.1 It is the employee's responsibility to:
- attend and participate in all induction sessions and mandatory training;
 - ensure that they fully understand the standards of performance required throughout the probation period and ask for clarification if unsure;
 - participate fully in probation review meetings and undertake any agreed actions within the specified timescales;
 - take responsibility for their development and the quality of their work;
 - comply with the Council's Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Rules and any local rules and procedures applied in their work area (which will be explained by the manager); and
 - attend work if they are fit to do so.

6. Probation Review meetings

- 6.1 Probation review meetings will be held throughout the probation period between the manager and the employee as set out below.

A Probation Hearing will be convened where the required performance, conduct or attendance has not been achieved:

Timing of Meeting	Purpose of Meeting	Outcome of meeting
Week 1	Outline expectations of performance and explain how progress will be assessed. Explore if the employee requires and support / adjustments in post.	
4 weeks	To check that an employee is settling into the role and has an understanding of the basics required to do the job. To check the progress of an employee's induction. Any performance or attendance issues identified are discussed at this meeting with specific examples given and any support / adjustments discussed.	If necessary, actions to address any emerging issues are to be discussed by the manager and employee (the probation review notes can be used to document this). Copy provided to employee.
8 weeks	To check that an employee is progressing sufficiently in the role and to discuss any training or development issues. If there are performance or attendance issues these should be discussed and progress / improvement against actions reviewed.	Progress to be noted. Probation Review notes to be updated to address outstanding issues, including any support or training agreed and signed by manager and employee. Copy provided to employee.
Final Review 12 weeks	No outstanding issues or concerns The manager will inform the employee they have met the standards expected and that they will be confirmed in post subject to levels of performance being sustained. ----- Outstanding issues remain	No outstanding issues or concerns Manager prepares a confirmation in post letter and issues this to the employee. ----- Outstanding issues

	If there are outstanding concerns the manager decides at this point if a probation hearing is required. The manager will inform the employee that a probation hearing will be held	Manager informs HR and their Service Manager that a probation hearing is required. Letter sent by HR convening probation hearing.
No later than 16 weeks*	Probation Hearing chaired by a Service Manager.	Service Manager decides that employee should be confirmed in post; or Service Manager decides that the employee should not be confirmed in post and terminates employment contract.
*In exceptional circumstances, where the manager has followed and documented the probation process and there is sufficient evidence to support this approach, a Probation Hearing may be held at any point during the probation period.		

- 6.2 Probation review meetings can form part of 1:1 meetings in line with the above timescales or be held as separate meetings. It is important that there are regular feedback and 1:1 sessions throughout the probation period so that any issues can be identified and addressed quickly. The manager should seek guidance from HR as soon as issues are identified.

7. Record keeping

- 7.1 Records should be kept of probation review meetings using the probation review meeting record form at Appendix 2. These records should document discussions, induction and training given, agreed actions and performance measurements. The records will be used as evidence at a Probation Hearing if necessary.

8. Extending the Probation Period

- 8.1 Normally the probation period should not be extended, as three months should be sufficient time to assess an employee's suitability for a role.
- 8.2 In exceptional circumstances a maximum one-month extension may be agreed by the manager to see if improvements in attendance, performance and/or, conduct will be sustained or to allow for completion of mandatory training. Advice should be sought from HR before a probation period is extended. No further extensions will be agreed in any circumstances by the manager.

No further extension will normally be agreed. This does not affect the Council's duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. A further extension will be granted where it is a reasonable adjustment for a disabled employee, or where the employee has been unable to complete the probation period for a reason connected with pregnancy, maternity or another protected characteristic.

- 8.3 If an employee is absent during the probation period for any significant period (e.g. long term absence, maternity/paternity or adoption leave) the probation period will be suspended for the duration and will resume when they return. For the purposes of sickness absence up to 28 days the probation period may be reviews and the employee will be notified of any agreed extension period.
- 8.4 Where issues have arisen at a later stage in the probation period or hearing a Service Manager may deem it appropriate to grant a final extension period of a maximum of 1 month extension – please see section 16.

9. Criteria and process for confirming in post

- 9.1 An employee will be confirmed in post by letter if their manager is satisfied that by the end of the probation period they have met the required standards that have been set in terms of skills, knowledge, behaviour, and attendance. This letter will be issued by the manager and a copy sent to HR.

10. Employee Decision

- 10.0 During the probation period the employee may decide that the role is not suited to them. An employee should have been provided with sufficient induction and training in order to fully understand the role and to come to this decision. In this situation the employee may choose to resign and will be required to work their notice period (this decision is purely voluntary).

11. Criteria and process for “Not” confirming in post

- 11.1 An employee who does not meet the performance standards that have been set in terms of skills, knowledge, behaviour and attendance levels by the end of the probation period may have their contract terminated, a Service Manager will take this decision.
- 11.2 Appropriate grounds to consider termination of employment under the probationary procedure may include the following, but this is not an exhaustive list:

INTERMITTENT SICKNESS ABSENCE

Unacceptable levels of intermittent sickness absence could be defined as:

- Over 3 days sickness absence in 3 months;
- Unacceptable patterns of absence are identified e.g. Mondays, Fridays, extra days linked to holidays; OR
- Absences linked to the avoidance of particular work tasks.

WORK PERFORMANCE ISSUES

Despite reasonable levels of induction / training / support the employee:

- Is not producing work to the required standard.
- Is making repeated mistakes after efforts have been made to address these
- Does not have an understanding of the core areas of work.
- Does not have the experience / skills that are required to perform the requirements of the role.
- Requires excessive additional training / support to address work performance issues.
- Has not been able to demonstrate the experience/skills/behaviours that they referred to at the interview.
- Has not met mandatory training requirements or has refused to participate in mandatory training.

MISCONDUCT

The main rules and standards of conduct (behaviour) expected of employees are set out in the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

GROSS INCOMPETENCE

The actions and/or omissions of an employee during their probation period may be considered as gross incapability/incompetence. This would occur where the actual/potential consequences of any action/omission are considered so serious as to render the continued employment of the employee impossible, e.g. where others are put at risk of serious injury or death, or the Council's finances or reputation are put at serious risk.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

Gross misconduct constitutes a fundamental breach of the contract of employment between the employer and the employee and makes any further trust and working relationship impossible. Full details are set out in the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

12. Probation Report

- 12.1 Where a Probationary Hearing is required, the manager, with guidance from HR, will prepare a summary report of the concerns that have arisen during the probation period. This will outline the performance expectations that were set, evidence of how performance has been monitored, details of actions /meetings and copies of any written notes and communications. It is necessary to evidence in this report that an employee has been given reasonable levels of induction, training and support with regular reviews.

13. Written Notice of Probation Hearing

- 13.1 The employee must be given at least 7 calendar days notice of this hearing and has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague, trade union representative or Employee Representative Group member. The employee will also receive the probation report and any supporting documents at the time of notification.
- 13.2 The employee must provide HR with the name of their representative or work colleague and provide copies of any papers, as applicable, to be referred to three days prior to the hearing.
- 13.3 Employees are expected to take all reasonable steps to attend the probation hearing.
- 13.4 In the event that the employee is too ill to attend, their representative or work colleague is unavailable or other circumstances beyond the employee's control prevent them from attending the meeting, one alternative date normally within 7 calendar days of the original meeting will be arranged.

Where the employee's chosen companion is unavailable on the re-arranged date, the employee may propose an alternative time under section 10 of the Employment Relations Act 1999, and the hearing will be postponed to that time provided it is reasonable and falls within five working days of the original date. Where a longer postponement is requested and is reasonable in the circumstances, it will be considered and will not be unreasonably refused. If an employee then fails to attend without good reason, the hearing may proceed in their absence and any written representations will be considered.

14. Probation Hearing

- 14.1 The Service Manager will chair the probation hearing, supported by an HR representative and will start by outlining the purpose of the meeting.
- 14.2 The manager will then be required to evidence how;
 - the employee has been assessed
 - the employee has not met the required performance expectations in terms of skills, knowledge, behaviour and attendance (with examples);
 - induction, training and support that has been given during the probation period; and
 - explain any actions that were agreed and the outcome of these actions.
- 14.3 The Service Manager will give the employee every opportunity to respond to the points made by the manager and to put forward any mitigating circumstances.

15. Probation Hearing Decision

- 15.1 Following the discussions the Service Manager will adjourn the hearing to consider the evidence provided and make a decision whether to;

- confirm the employee in post; or
 - not to confirm the employee in post and to terminate their employment.
 - extend probation where for example the individual has not been able to undertake training or training/support was not put in place as agreed (see 16. below).
- 15.2 If the decision at the probation hearing is to confirm the employee in post, the Service Manager will inform the employee and their representative either at the hearing, or as soon as possible thereafter. The Service Manager will write to confirm the employee in post within 7 calendar days from the date of the hearing.
- 15.3 If the decision at the Probation Hearing is to not confirm the employee in post, the Service Manager will inform the employee and their representative that the employee is dismissed, with pay in lieu of notice i.e. they will not be required to work their notice. Adjustments in pay will also be made for any outstanding annual leave due or any taken above the allowance.
- 15.4 The Service Manager will confirm in writing, to the employee within 7 calendar days from the date of the hearing;
- that the employee has been dismissed
 - the grounds for dismissal and the reasons; and
 - the date the dismissal will be effective
- 15.5 Following dismissal, the manager is responsible for advising payroll of the termination date, and any leave adjustments and for ensuring that appropriate departments are advised such as ICT for systems access, Facilities Management for buildings access, and that the return of Council equipment is pursued.
- 15.6 Employees who have been dismissed will have a right of appeal in line with the Appeals against Dismissal Policy. The letter confirming dismissal will inform the employee of their right of appeal.

16. Final Extension

- 16.1 The Service Manager may decide that a final extension is required up to a maximum of 1 months.
- 16.2 An extension may only be given in exceptional circumstances if:
- an employee has already demonstrated an improvement during the probationary period – a final extension period can be used to show that this improvement can be sustained; or
 - an issue is identified relatively late in the probationary period and it is deemed that a final extension would provide an opportunity to address this and could realistically be achieved during this time period.
- 16.3 The manager is responsible for evidencing performance during the final extension period and producing/updating the probation summary report (where a hearing is required). After the final extension period if performance has not improved a probation hearing should be convened.

- 16.4 The employee must be given 7 calendar days notice of this hearing.
- 16.5 Based on the evidence presented at the hearing the Service Manager will decide:
- to confirm the employee in post - no further action will be taken under the procedure; or
 - not to confirm the employee in post and to terminate their employment
- 16.6 No further extensions of the probationary period can be given in any circumstances.

17. Review and Policy Monitoring

- 17.1 This policy and procedure will be reviewed and its effectiveness evaluated periodically. The Council retains the discretion to review it at any time and consult as appropriate.

PROBATION SICKNESS REVIEW MEETING FORM

Strictly Private and Confidential

Employee name:	Manager name:
Service:	Date of meeting:

This meeting is taking place because you have met the following sickness trigger under the probation policy (**please tick**):

- ☐ Over 3 working days in a 3 month rolling period
☐ Absences linked to the avoidance of work tasks
☐ Unacceptable patterns of absence causing concern e.g. repeat days of the week
☐ Part time absence trigger met: _____ days

Please outline in the table below the absence dates in the last 3-month period:

Reason	Absence Start Date	Absence End Date	Working Days lost
Total			

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your level of sickness that is causing concern. The meeting is also a chance for you to share any concerns you may have that are causing the absence.

Reasons for absence / any problems making it difficult to attend work/underlying condition?
If appropriate state medical advice sought (including advice from GP/Occupational Health (OH) and date/s of appointment and/or whether a OH referral is required, if there is an underlying health concern seek advice on whether employee is covered under Equality Act). ☐ If employee is covered under Equality Act give copy of Disability at Work policy
Please could you outline any action you have taken to improve your health?
The impact of the sickness on service provision (please tick to confirm this has been discussed) ☐

What support could we give as your employer (record any support/adjustments agreed)

Objectives and Actions agreed (please tick)

- ☐ To reduce your sickness and remain within the triggers laid out in the policy before the end of your probation period
- ☐ To return to work by: __ / __ / ____
- ☐ Another _____ agreed _____ objective, _____ please _____ include _____ below:

It is expected that you will:

- act in accordance with HDC's Sickness Absence and Attendance Policy
- comply with HDC's Sickness Pay Scheme, inappropriate use of the Sickness Pay Scheme can result in dismissal.

As a result of this meeting, if the objectives are not met and/or there has not been a reduction in your sickness levels, it may result in an extension of the probation period or dismissal.

Support services discussed and how to access them (please tick)

- ☐ Employee Assistance Programme (EAP including counselling, health and legal advice)
- ☐ Employee Representatives Group (Manager or Intranet)

☐ Copy of Probation Sickness Review form given to employee

☐ Copy of Probation Sickness Review form given to HR

Probation Review Meeting Record

Member of staff name:										
Managers name:										
Date of meeting:										
Probation review period. Enter a 'X':	Week 1		4 weeks		8 weeks		12 weeks		Extended review period. (Maximum 1 month):	

Target for 12 weeks – At the start of the probation period, detail here the targets you wish to be achieved by 12 weeks in line with the Job Description. For each review period discuss where the member of staff is regarding the achievement of these targets. You could score this out of ten if that helps represent progress. Follow-up this with actions that need to be implemented to achieve the targets set for week 12.

Work area	Targets to be achieved	Current position at review period	Comments at review period / any support agreed

icare values - Detail how the member of staff is presenting the icare values

Value area questions	Confirm, and add examples, of how this is met, or discuss how it could be improved. Identify actions if needed and add to the below list of actions.
Inspiring – You have genuine pride and passion for public service; doing the best you can for our customer's.	
Collaborative – You achieve much more by working with others, and this allows you to provide the best service to customers.	
Accountable – You take personal responsibility for your work and decisions and you deliver on your commitments to customers.	
Respectful – You respect people's differences and are considerate to their needs.	
Enterprising – You use drive and energy to challenge the norm and adapt to changing circumstances. You are always ready for challenge and opportunities and you embrace them.	

Actions agreed – This could include support that is required, further learning/training, work actions/performance that need to be completed and behaviours that need to be addressed. The actions listed must align to the above two sections work/value areas.

Work area	Actions agreed	By whom and when	Status Date completed / in progress / overdue

Others matters discussed – Please detail here any other discussions that took place.

Signatures for review period

The signatures can be electronically entered then a copy emailed across to the member of staff as confirmation, cc to include HR as an official record.

Employee signature or electronic printed name:		Date:
Manager signature or electronic printed name:		Date:

Complete for final review period only

Manager to select decision made at final review period, and provide appropriate advice to member of staff. Please refer to the policy and HR for guidance.

Final review outcome

Outcome decision by Manager. Enter an 'X' for decision made	Manager signature or electronic printed name	Date of decision:
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	No outstanding issues or concerns. The manager will inform the employee they have met the standards expected and that they will be confirmed in post subject to levels of performance being sustained. Manager prepares a confirmation in post letter and issues this to the employee.		
	Outstanding issues remain If there are outstanding concerns the manager decides at this point if a probation hearing is required. The manager will inform the employee that a probation hearing will be held. Manager informs HR and their Service Manager that a probation hearing is required. Letter sent by HR convening probation hearing.		

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version 1.1

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.1	Lisa Baggaley	June 2026	New Policy

Name of Policy:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Person/posts responsible:	HR Manager
Date approved/adopted:	To be added
Approved by:	Employment Committee
Review Date:	To be added

Equality, Diversity, and, Inclusion Policy

1.0 Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of our local demographic and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The council is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers and residents.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out HDC's commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I), ensuring fairness in employment and service delivery, and complying with all relevant UK legislation. It aims to create a culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where differences are valued and celebrated.

This policy applies to:

- All employees (permanent, temporary, part-time, full-time)
- Workers, contractors and agency staff
- Volunteers
- Job applicants
- Customers, clients and service users

It applies to all areas of employment and service provision, such as recruitment, training, promotion, pay, dismissal, redundancy, flexible working requests and access to services.

3.0 Principles

This policy is underpinned by current UK legislation and guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)
- Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
- Relevant case law and statutory guidance

The Equality Act protects individuals from discrimination based on the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including ethnic or national origin, nationality, colour)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We are committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between different groups
- Creating an inclusive environment where people feel safe, valued and able to contribute fully

We recognise that discrimination can be direct, indirect, institutional or systemic, and we are committed to identifying and removing barriers to inclusion.

We will:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all individuals
- Promote diversity and value differences
- Ensure decisions are based on merit and objective criteria
- Take proactive steps to remove disadvantage and support underrepresented groups
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and others where appropriate
- Encourage participation from diverse communities

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 HDC

HDC commits to:

- Develop our employees, volunteers and Councillors to help them promote equality and inclusion in our communities.
- encourage a genuine commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace
- create a working environment free of bullying, harassment,

victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued

- review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusive policy. This also involves staff conducting themselves to help the council provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

4.2 Managers

All managers will commit to:

- Implementing the EDI principles in day-to-day management of their teams
- making opportunities for training, development and progression available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council
- ensure decisions concerning staff are based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Address inappropriate behaviour promptly
- Support staff and promote inclusive team cultures

4.3 All Staff

All representatives of the Council (staff, Councillors and volunteers) are expected to treat others with dignity and respect in line with this policy. Not engage in any discrimination, harassment or victimisation of others and challenge inappropriate behaviour where safe to do so. All members of staff are expected to display the Council's iCare values at all times and Councillors should understand our iCare values and demonstrate them when dealing with HDC employees. All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment,

against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the

All staff must take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the council's work activities.

Appropriate and proportionate action will be taken in line with the Raising Concerns Policy, where complaints are raised.

5.0 Monitor and Review

The HR Team will:

- Monitor workforce data and equality outcomes annually
- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate
- Review this policy regularly (at least every 2–3 years or when legislation changes)
- Set and review equality objectives via the "HDC for Everyone" group

Recruitment & Selection policy

Version 1.3

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.1	Sam Sanderson	May 2025	Updated to reflect process change and included approach to secondments and internal moves. Included The Immigration Act 2016
1.2	Sam Sanderson	May 2026	Updated to reflect approach to references
1.3	Sam Sanderson	Sep 2026	Inclusion of Care Leavers commitment Reviewed and updated the policy to improve clarity, consistency and accessibility. Strengthened wording throughout to provide greater transparency of process and ensure alignment with current legislative and organisational requirements.

Name of Policy	Recruitment & Selection Policy
Person/posts responsible	Head of HR and OD
Date adopted	Reviewed July 2026 for Endorsement in Sep 2026
Endorsed by	Employment Committee
Review Date	Sep 2028

Recruitment and Selection Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) acknowledges that recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce is essential for achieving our goals. This policy promotes fair and consistent recruitment practices that support equality of opportunity, vital for service delivery.
- 1.2 Recruitment and selection are critical management functions representing significant investments. Our policy ensures effective recruitment practices to build a diverse workforce that enhances our service quality.
- 1.3 The policy is based on equal opportunities, emphasising equity, fairness, consistency, and merit-based appointments.
- 1.4 It aims to appoint the best candidates, support diversity, and ensure cost-effectiveness in the recruitment process.
- 1.5 HDC commits to ensuring hiring managers are trained and competent in managing recruitment and understanding equality standards.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 Effective recruitment is key to HDC's success, requiring employees with the skills and qualifications to meet strategic objectives.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all recruitment undertaken by or on behalf of HDC, including the engagement of temporary, agency and contract staff. Where a role is filled through an agency, the equality, shortlisting and selection standards in this policy apply equally.

3. Policy Objectives

- 3.1 We value diversity in our workforce and are committed to fostering diversity through our recruitment practices.
- 3.2 The recruitment policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure fair and equitable processes that do not discriminate unlawfully on various grounds.
- 3.3 All colleagues involved in recruitment must adhere to our Equality and Diversity Policy and Code of Conduct; violations may result in disciplinary action.
- 3.4 We will promote vacancies to a wide pool of candidates, encouraging applications from under-represented groups and considering positive action where appropriate.
- 3.5 Recruitment decisions will be based on merit, incorporating results from role-related assessments and interviews.
- 3.6 We will support career mobility by considering internal promotions and secondments.
- 3.7 Flexible working options will be offered where appropriate.

- 3.8 Agencies providing temporary workers must adhere to an open and transparent process aligned with HDC values.
- 3.9 Coaching and training on recruitment, equality, and diversity will be provided to all involved in the recruitment process.

4. Recruitment Steps

It is HDC policy to follow the steps below when considering the recruitment of new staff. Please refer to our Recruitment Processes Guide for Hiring Managers for more detail.

- 4.1 When an existing position becomes vacant, the hiring manager must review the requirements of the role and determine if the role is still required. If it is, considerations should be made to determine if a like for like replacement, or a revision of the role is required. If recruitment is necessary, the existing job description should be reviewed and any necessary changes made.
- 4.2 All new job descriptions must be evaluated before recruitment; existing posts should be re-evaluated if there are any changes made to the job description.
- 4.3 For any recruitment need, the hiring manager must complete and submit a vacancy authorisation form (VAF) to the recruitment team, for CLT approval.
- 4.4 Upon VAF approval, the hiring manager will provide advert copy along with a job description to the recruitment team, and a recruitment timetable will be established.
- 4.5 Job advertisements will usually close at least two weeks from publication, although the advertising period can be shortened, depending on business need. Hiring managers are encouraged to review applications regularly and can close the advert early, should sufficient applications be received. Shortlisting will be completed within five working days and the completed shortlisting matrix and interview schedule emailed to the recruitment team to action.
- 4.6 Secondment opportunities will be advertised internally.
- 4.7 Interview panel members must be informed of the timetable and collaborate and agreed on interview questions in advance.
- 4.8 Recruitment documentation, including shortlisting matrices, interview notes and scores for all candidates, will be retained for 12 months from the date of the selection decision and then securely destroyed."
- 4.9 If the successful candidate declines the offer or the post becomes available within six months, other suitable candidates will be contacted.

5. Advertising

- 5.1 We will ensure advertisements reach a diverse candidate pool, with all permanent and fixed-term posts advertised internally and externally as needed.
- 5.2 All vacancies will be advertised on the HDC website unless an internal-only recruitment approach is deemed appropriate. Any external advertising expenditure will be coordinated through the Recruitment Team.
- 5.3 The most effective advertising methods will be utilised, and positive action may be taken to encourage applications from under-represented groups.
- 5.4 Cost-effective campaigns may be run for specific posts.

- 5.5 In certain cases, vacancies may be offered to redeployees or as secondments instead of external advertising.

6. Information for Applicants

All advertised roles must include:

- Application instructions
- Job description and person specification
- Contract length and salary/grade
- Closing date and potential interview dates
- Location
- Working hours
- Background information on HDC and/or the role
- Any conditional offer requirements (e.g., DBS checks, Drug and Alcohol screening)
- Equality and diversity statement

7. Shortlisting

- 7.1 Applications received by the closing date will be reviewed and shortlisted by at least two assessors, including the hiring manager, to ensure a robust and objective selection process. Applicants **must** be chosen against the essential criteria. It is the responsibility of the hiring manager at this stage to record on the shortlisting matrix scores for all applicants. The completed shortlisting matrix and interview schedule must be returned to the recruitment team who will invite selected candidates for interview. This will include timetabling the interviews and arranging any pre-employment checks if appropriate. Candidates who have not been shortlisted will also be informed by the recruitment team.
- 7.2 HDC is a Disability Confident employer. Being a Disability Confident employer means actively committing to attracting, recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse workforce, including disabled people. A key component is the "guaranteed interview" aspect, where if an applicant with a disability meets the essential criteria (minimum requirements) outlined in the job description, they are guaranteed an interview. It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to ensure disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria, are shortlisted for interview.
- 7.3 HDC is a signatory to the Care Leaver Covenant and is committed to supporting care experienced young people into employment. As part of this commitment, applicants who identify as a care leaver and meet the essential criteria (minimum requirements) of the role, as outlined in the person specification, will be guaranteed an interview. It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to ensure that eligible care leaver applicants who meet the essential criteria are shortlisted for interview.
- 7.4 The appointing manager will approach suitable colleagues to assist with **shortlisting and interviewing**. At least two people should be involved in shortlisting and sit on the interview panel. The same people should be involved in all interviews where possible to ensure consistency. If a panel member feels there is a conflict of interest with a candidate, they should seek advice from the recruitment team at the earliest opportunity.

8. Interviews

- 8.1 The hiring manager must lead the interview panel, familiar with equality, diversity, and recruitment policies. All panel members should have received relevant training.
- 8.2 The interview panel should ideally consist of two members, ensuring diversity. More senior positions may require three members.
- 8.3 Candidates will be given reasonable notice for interviews and any required tests, with adjustments made for disabled candidates.
- 8.4 The panel will discuss questions in advance, covering requisite skills and HDC values. Consistency is essential; all candidates should be asked the same core questions.
- 8.5 Interview durations should be consistent, and notes should be taken. Recruitment documentation, including shortlisting matrices, interview notes and scores for all candidates, will be retained for 12 months from the date of the selection decision and then securely destroyed.
- 8.6 Appropriate selection methods will be used, including assessment centres or tests as needed.
- 8.7 The panel will score candidates based on their performance, considering both technical competence and alignment with HDC values.

9. Selection and Offer

- 9.1 Following interviews, the panel will compare candidates' answers against the person specification and decide on suitability.
- 9.2 Panel scores will be recorded, and appointment decisions will be made by consensus. If no candidates are suitable, the post may be re-advertised.
- 9.3 The hiring manager will inform the successful candidate and agree on a start date and salary.
- 9.4 Candidates will be informed of the outcome within five working days of the final interview. Feedback is available upon request and, where requested, will be provided within ten working days. Feedback will be based on the scores awarded and the written evidence recorded within the shortlisting matrix and interview assessment records.

10. External Offers

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to extend the verbal offer. Once accepted, the hiring manager will complete a preferred candidate form and email it along with the interview notes to the recruitment team.
- 10.2 The recruitment team will contact the selected candidate with a written conditional offer, subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks.
- 10.3 The recruitment team will ask the candidate for evidence of their right to work in the UK at point of offer. The hiring manager will verify the original right to work in the UK documentation on the candidate's first day and email it to the recruitment

team for our records. HDC does not hold a Sponsorship Licence and is unable to provide a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) or take over existing sponsorship.

- 10.4 Employment commences upon receipt of satisfactory references and required pre-employment checks, including an occupational health fit certificate.
- 10.5 The Recruitment team will manage DBS/BPSS checks, with costs covered by HDC. If the new starter requires a BPSS, the hiring manager will need to request this from the recruitment team.
- 10.6 Any unsatisfactory pre-employment checks (as laid out in section 16.1), may lead to a withdrawal of the conditional offer.

11. Internal Offers

- 11.1 It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to extend the verbal offer. Once accepted, the hiring manager will complete an internal mover's form and email it along with the interview notes to the recruitment team.
- 11.2 The recruitment team will contact the selected candidate with a written conditional offer, subject to any necessary pre-employment checks.
- 11.3 Hiring managers are advised to follow the guidelines as set out in the Guidance for Secondments and Internal Moves.

12. Redeployees

- 12.1 The Council is committed to minimising compulsory redundancies and redeploying employees who are no longer able to fulfil their current role. One way of achieving this is to redeploy employees who are at risk to other jobs within the Council.
- 12.2 Redeployees need only to demonstrate during the shortlisting and interview process that they meet the essential criteria in the person specification in order to be appointable to the job. The post must be deemed a suitable alternative employment.
- 12.3 Redeployees will be considered for suitable vacancies before the vacancy is advertised internally or externally. A redeployee who meets the essential criteria will be offered the role and will not be required to compete with other candidates. Redeployees are entitled to a trial period of at least four weeks in any suitable alternative role, in accordance with s.138 Employment Rights Act 1996, without prejudice to their redundancy entitlement. Reasonable training will be provided where a redeployee could meet the essential criteria within a reasonable period.
- 12.4 Please see the Redundancy Policy for more details.

13. Secondments and Internal Moves

- 13.1 We encourage the use of secondment arrangements as a valuable means of providing cost-effective career development opportunities for our employees. Secondments are also a way of effectively covering the need for resources on a fixed term basis and for resourcing project work. Managers are advised to follow the guidelines as set out in the Guidance for Secondments and Internal Moves.
- 13.2 Hiring managers are advised to conduct a formal interview process ensuring fairness and transparency by ensuring all interested parties are asked the same interview questions.

- 13.3 Applications shall be accepted from internal applicants who are not subject to a live formal disciplinary sanction. Applications from internal applicants who are subject to a capability action plan, to disciplinary proceedings, or to a live formal disciplinary sanction will be considered on their merits. The hiring manager will consult the relevant HR Business Partner before making a decision and will record the reasons. A move will not be refused solely because a process is ongoing, and where a move to a different role would be a reasonable adjustment for a disabled employee it will be given effect.

14. Acting Up

- 14.1 It is the responsibility of the Hiring Manager to determine the need for an acting up arrangement, usually in response to a temporary vacancy, absence, or project requirement. This assessment should involve consultation with your HR Business Partner.
- 14.2 The hiring manager must clearly communicate the acting up opportunity to all members of the team, outlining the reasons for the arrangement, the role's responsibilities, and the expected duration. This can help to manage expectations and encourage suitable candidates to apply.
- 14.3 Where more than one expression of interest is made, or there is more than one suitably qualified member of staff, hiring managers are advised to conduct a formal interview process ensuring fairness and transparency by ensuring all interested parties are asked the same interview questions. If there is only one expression of interest, it is the hiring manager's decision as to whether to conduct a formal interview process.

15. Equality and Diversity

- 15.1 HDC recruits based on ability and job requirements in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty Section 149 and the Equality Act 2010
- 15.2 The Equality and Diversity statement is included in all external advertisements and is available on HDC's careers page.
- 15.3 No applicant will be asked about pregnancy, or about an intention to have children, at any stage of the recruitment process. A conditional offer will not be withdrawn, and a start date will not be altered, because an applicant is pregnant or has notified an intention to take family leave.
- 15.4 HDC is committed to supporting disabled people and will actively promote opportunities for disabled applicants and employees in accordance with its commitments as a Disability Confident Employer.
- 15.5 HDC is committed to supporting care experienced people and will actively promote opportunities for care leavers in accordance with its commitments under the Care Leaver Covenant.

16. Employment Checks

- 16.1 The following checks are to be used to ensure suitability of all new colleagues, prior to commencement of employment at HDC.

- Proof of identity and right to work in the UK
 - Reference checks for two previous employers, or previous three years of employment, or character/education references if no employer references are available.
 - Occupational Health fit certificate.(Occupational health assessment, requested only after a conditional offer has been made).
 - Proof of qualifications (if relevant to the role)
 - Valid UK driving licence (if relevant to the role)
 - DBS (if relevant to the role)
 - Drug and Alcohol screening (if relevant to the role)
- 16.2 All candidates must have the proof of identity confirmed by the hiring manager and recruitment before they are offered employment. They must submit original documents (on the approved list) to prove their identity and their right to work in the UK. HDC does not hold a Sponsorship Licence and is unable to provide a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) or take over existing sponsorship.
- 16.3 Candidates are required to disclose any unspent criminal convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Possession of a criminal record does not necessarily preclude the candidate from employment. Information which has a bearing on the requirements of the post will normally be discussed with the candidate at interview. Where a criminal record is disclosed, the Council will consider its relevance to the specific role, the age and nature of the offence, and any evidence of rehabilitation, before reaching a decision. The candidate will be given the opportunity to provide context before any decision to withdraw an offer is taken.
- 16.4 If information given during the application process is found to be untrue, the offer of employment will be withdrawn.

17. English language

- 17.1 The Immigration Act 2016 created a duty for public sector employers to ensure that each person who works for them in a customer facing role speaks fluent English.
- 17.2 Fluency relates to an individual's ability to speak with confidence and accuracy, using accurate sentence structures and vocabulary, all without hesitation and appropriate to the situation in hand. It does not relate to regional accents, dialects, speech impediments or the tone of conversations.
- 17.3 The fluency standard will be applied only where the role genuinely requires it and will be assessed against the requirements of the role rather than against any particular manner of speech. Reasonable adjustments will be made for candidates whose disability affects speech. Complaints about the operation of the fluency duty may be made under the Council's corporate complaints procedure
- 17.4 The person specification for customer facing roles explains what our fluency standard is for those roles.
- 17.5 Job applicants will demonstrate their level of fluency by competently answering interview questions in English.

18. References

- 18.1 Employment references are required for each new colleague to cover the last two employers or previous three years of employment. One must be from their current or most recent employer unless suitable reason is given. References will be requested only after a conditional offer has been made, and will not be sought from a current employer without the candidate's written consent. The Council will seek factual references confirming dates of employment, job title and reason for leaving.
- 18.2 Where the candidate has no previous employment record, a reference from their school or other educational institution should be obtained where relevant. In exceptional circumstances, where no employment or education reference we will accept character references.
- 18.3 Where the candidate was self-employed, they will need to provide evidence that their business was properly conducted, i.e references from clients, bank manager, or accountant.
- 18.4 The recruitment team will take up references. If there are concerns about a reference, we will contact the referee for further information. If this is not possible or there is difficulty obtaining references, we will contact the hiring manager for authorisation to proceed without the required references.
- 18.5 If satisfactory references are not received within a reasonable timescale, the conditional offer of employment may be withdrawn.

19. Health

- 19.1 All employees at HDC are asked to complete an occupational health questionnaire via our occupational health provider. This is to ensure the employee is able to undertake all of the duties expected of them in line with the job requirements.
- 19.2 Successful applicants who share they are disabled or may require adjustments to their work or working environment may be referred to our Occupational Health provider. Where reasonable adjustments are agreed these must be recorded in writing using the adjustment passport. The candidate should also receive written confirmation of whatever adjustments have been agreed.
- 19.3 Where an occupational health report identifies a need for adjustments, the Council will consider and, where reasonable, implement them, and will record them using the Council's reasonable adjustments passport. A conditional offer will not be withdrawn on health or disability grounds unless the Council has first considered all reasonable adjustments, taken occupational health advice, discussed the position with the candidate, and recorded its reasons in writing. The candidate will be told of their right to raise the matter with the Head of HR and OD

20. Use of Agencies

- 20.1 In circumstances where there is deemed a business need, HDC shall use an agency to assist with finding the right candidate for a role.
- 20.2 Recruitment is responsible for all contact with the agencies and for negotiating the recruitment fees. Managers or other employees should have no contact with

agencies unless agreed by Recruitment and all enquiries from agencies should be re-directed to Recruitment. Equality and inclusion policies of all agencies shall be verified by Recruitment.

- 20.3 The Council will monitor the use of agency workers and will ensure that agency workers receive their entitlements under the Agency Workers Regulations 2010. Where an agency placement has continued for more than 12 months in a role which is not genuinely temporary, the Council will review whether the post should be established.

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