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Committee – 24 June 2026

Report by: Leanne Harfield, Head of HR and OD

Lead Cllr: Cllr Davenport-Ray
Portfolio Holder for Workforce



Wards
All

Open / Exempt
Open

Key Decision?
No

Q4 25-26 Employment Committee Workforce Report

Executive Summary:

This report summarises workforce activity and key people metrics for Quarter Four 2025/26, highlighting a broadly stable workforce size and improving retention trends. Recruitment activity remained strong, particularly in critical roles, though some service areas continue to require targeted approaches and role design review, while internal progression opportunities (either on a permanent or temporary basis) supports organisational resilience.

Sickness absence remains a key concern, with rising days lost per FTE. This is in line with national trends for UK employers across many industries. HR caseloads have increased overall and sickness absence management continues to dominate activity. In response, HR is leading a continued push to upskill/empower/enable managers to manage sickness within their teams. Further actions to reduce sickness absence are detailed in the report.

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)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Employment Panel 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

- 6.2.1 A full breakdown of this is in 'Paybill' Section 1.3 of the report, however a summary of this is that the total pay bill remains broadly stable at £36.2m forecast, with agency spend unchanged at £2.6m.

A projected overspend of £161.4k is driven by:

£1.75m underspend on salaries

£1.92m overspend on agency and contractor costs

Agency expenditure is concentrated in ICT, Development Management and Operational Services.

This highlights a key challenge that HR is managing - reliance on temporary staffing in critical service areas.

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

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 Four 2025-26

Report Highlights

Report Section	Measure	Trend	Q3 2025/26	Q4 2025/26
1.1	Headcount	↑	688	723
1.1	FTE	↑	636.25	669.09
1.2	Variable Employees	↓	439	380
1.4	High Earners	↑	62	69
1.5	Leavers	↑	31	32
1.6	Turnover	↑	16.1%	16.95%
1.7	Employment Offers Made	↓	98	84
2.0	Sickness Days Lost per FTE	↑	9.6	10
2.3	Sickness Absence – Long-Term	↑	58.84%	61.35%
3.0	HR Caseload	↑	85	91
3.1	HR Caseload – Sickness Absence Management	↑	55%	66%
			Q3 Forecast	Q4 Actual
1.3	Pay bill – Total	↓	£36.3m	£36.2m
1.3	Pay bill – Employees	↓	£33.7m	£33.6m
1.3	Pay bill – Contract & Agency Staff	=	£2.6m	£2.6m

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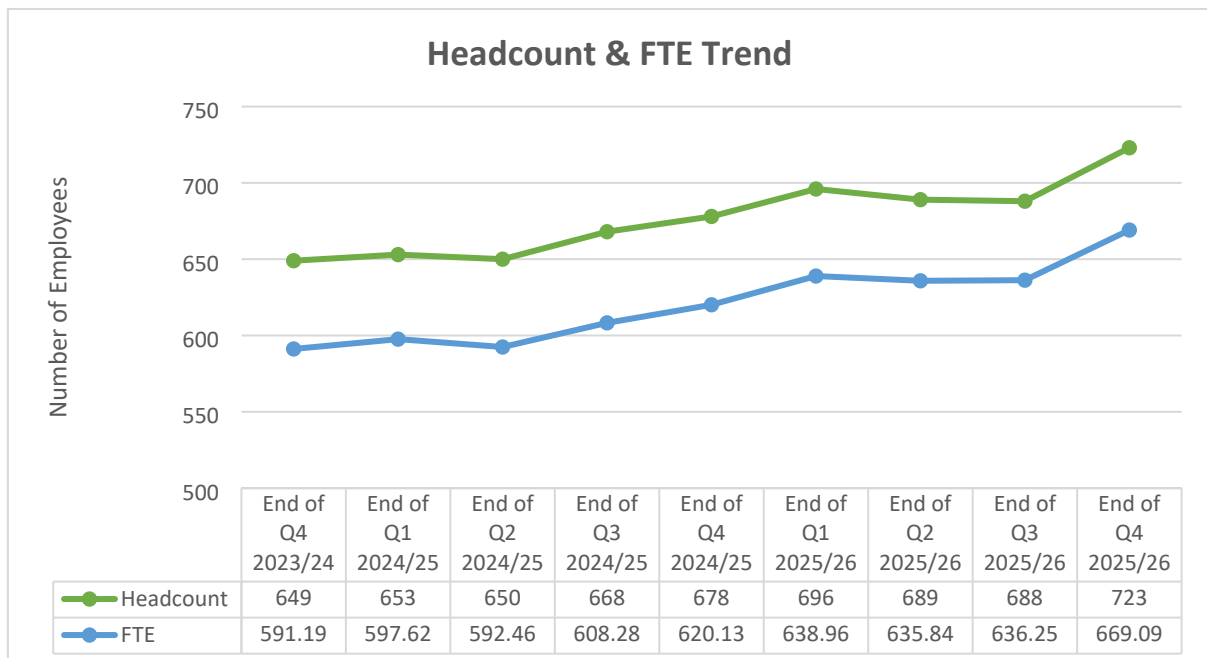
1.0 EMPLOYEE PROFILE

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 Four (31st March 2026), the total number of permanent and fixed term employees employed by Huntingdonshire District Council was 723 (excluding those employed on a variable or casual hour basis) with the number of full-time equivalent posts at 669.09.



1.2 WORKFORCE BY CONTRACT TYPE

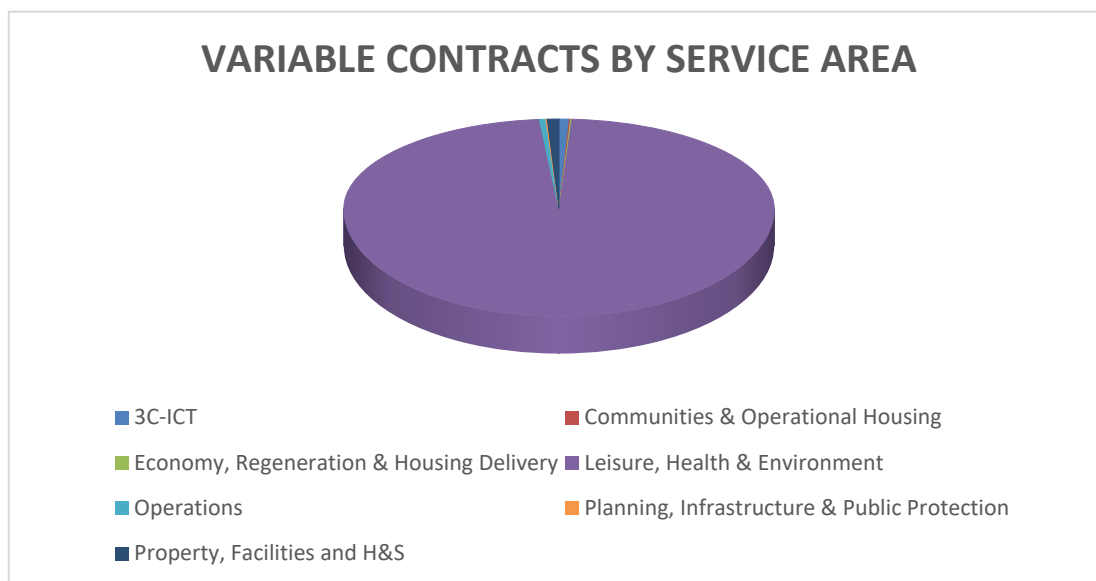
Data on Variable employees is included in the below table. However, data on Variables are not included in the other areas of the workforce reporting. Variables are typically employed in multiple positions across Leisure services; though a small number of Variables are employed in Operations, and ICT. At the end of Q4, HDC had 380 variable individuals employed in 860 posts. This is a decrease in headcount from Q3.

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

There is a significant reduction in the number of variable staff who are employed by the Council due to the HR and Payroll team cleansing the data

and ensuring staff who do not carry out regular variable shifts are not live on the system.

Employment Type	Q3 2025/26	Q4 2025/26
Fixed Term	38	35
Permanent	635	663
Apprentice	3	2
Secondment/Acting Up	13	23
Grand Total	688	723
Variable employees	439 (885)	380 (860)



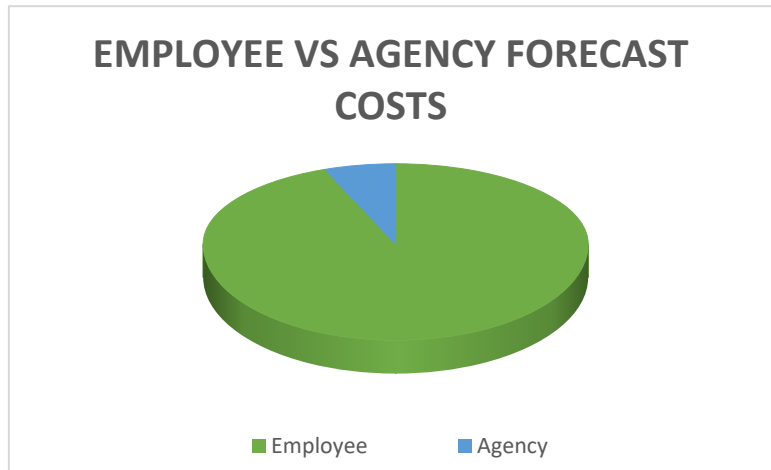
1.3 PAYBILL

The following table shows the employee pay costs over several years. At the end of 2025/26 the actual paybill shows an underspend on all employee costs (staff, contractors and agency workers) of £177.5k. This arises from an underspend on employee salaries of £2m, but an overspend of £1.92m on contractors and agency workers against an agency budget of £630,982. The overall picture that is we have underspent on both forecasted and budgeted figures.

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

Year	Employee Paybill Budget (£)	Employee Paybill Actual (£)	Employee Paybill Forecast (£)
2017/18	24,591,631	23,536,053	
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	36,150,048



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 Four, there were 69 employees paid at FTE salaries of £50,000 or above, representing 9.5% of the total workforce. 1.4% of the workforce are paid salaries over £75,000. The total number of employees classed as high earners has increased since the previous Quarter (62).

1.5 LEAVERS

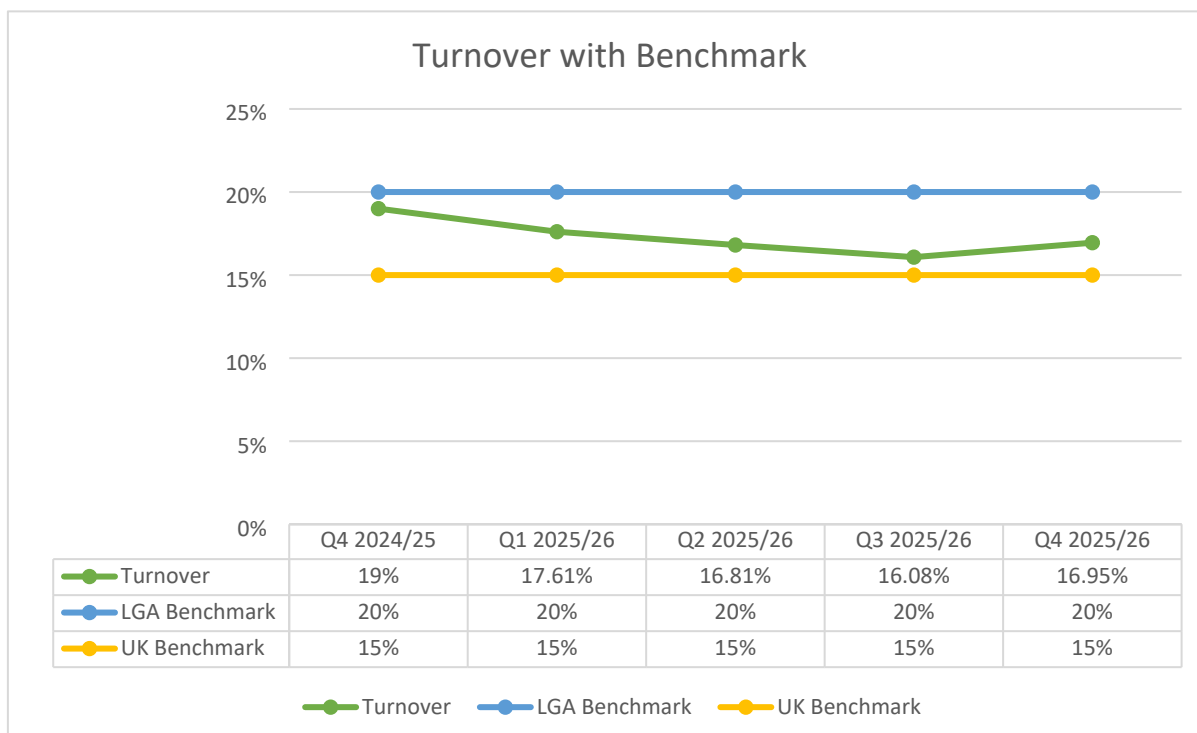
During Q4, there were 32 employees on permanent or fixed-term contracts who left the organisation, which is an increase on the total leaving in the previous Quarter (31).

8 of the leavers from Q4, resigned to take up other posts with either commercial or public sector employers, this a decrease from last quarters report (16). We had 6 retirements during this quarter with a combined service of 107 years.

Leaving Reason	Permanent	Fixed-term
Dismissal Misconduct	1	
Settlement Agreement	2	
Redundancy – Compulsory	2	
End of Contract		1
Retirement	6	
Voluntary Resignation	20	
Total	31	1

1.6 TURNOVER

In the 12 months to 31st March 2026, 117 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 16.95%, which is higher than the previous quarter but remains below the LGA benchmark and is still significantly below Q4 2024/2025.



1.7 RECRUITMENT METRICS

Of the 84 offers made through core recruitment activities, 14 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.

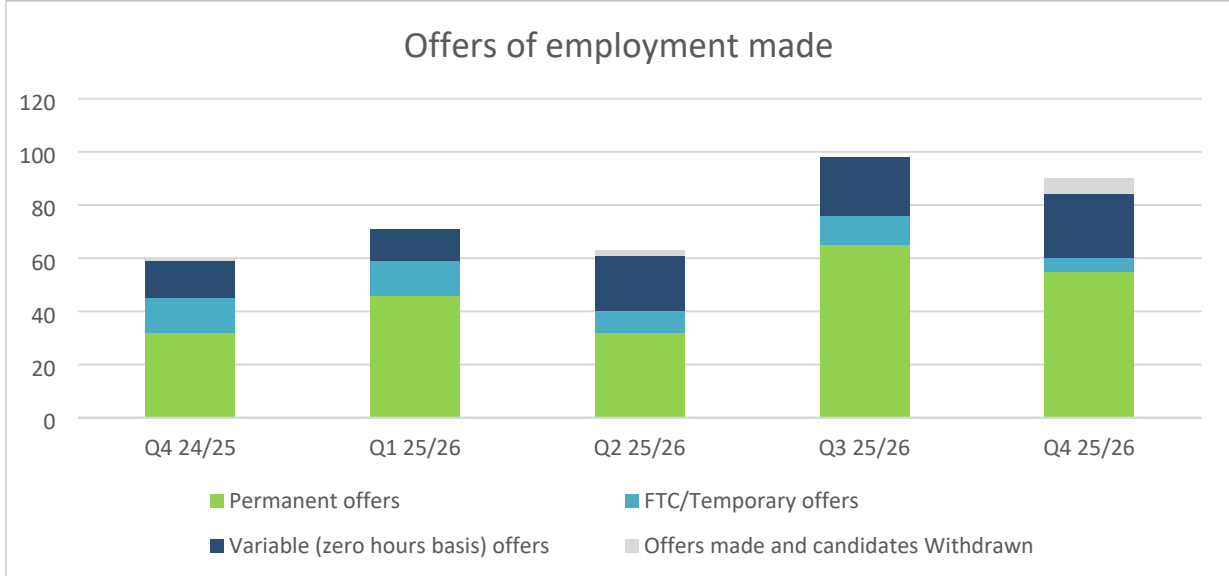
In terms of recruitment metrics, the council advertised 67 roles in Q4 25-26, this is a decrease from 72 in the previous quarter.

Advertised Roles	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26
	81	51	59	72	67

Advertised Roles per business area	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26
3CICT	6	0	7	5	4
Corporate Services (HR, Finance, Facilities, Dem Services)	6	3	5	4	2
COO (Development/Planning, Community, Revs & Bens, Customer Services)	11	3	7	9	9

Strategic Housing & Growth	3	0	2	3	1
One Leisure	32	23	13	15	27
Recovery Services (Car parking; Countryside, Parks & Open Spaces)	6	5	5	1	1
Operations (Waste, CCTV, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleaning)	15	12	17	31	23
Executive/Transformation/Communications	2	5	3	4	0

Number of candidates applied	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	24/25	25/26	25/26	25/26	25/26
	994	644	1032	712	915



1.8 Recruitment Challenges/Successes

In the fourth quarter of 2025/26, recruitment activity remained strong, with 67 roles advertised and 915 applications received. This represents an increase in candidate interest compared to the previous quarter, suggesting improved reach and engagement across our recruitment campaigns.

A total of 84 offers were made across the period, including 14 internal moves and promotions, demonstrating continued progress in developing internal talent and supporting career pathways within the organisation. The volume of offers and internal progression reflects a positive and responsive recruitment approach, enabling services to fill vacancies and maintain operational delivery.

There were also notable successes across high-volume service areas, particularly within One Leisure and Operations, where recruitment demand remains high. This is mostly due to ensuring sites are fully staffed for the summer activity schedules and the re-opening of Sawtry Swimming Pool. The ability to convert applications into appointments in these areas highlights the effectiveness of targeted recruitment activity and ongoing workforce planning.

Despite these successes, a number of roles proved challenging to recruit to. In some cases, candidates withdrew following offers due to external competition, reflecting ongoing market pressures and candidate choice. This was evident in

roles such as CCTV Monitoring Centre Operator and Street Cleanser Driver, where offers were declined in favour of alternative opportunities. Additionally, the Conservation Officer role presented difficulties due to its specialist nature, requiring re-advertisement before successfully securing a candidate.

Other roles required alternative approaches to ensure service continuity. For example, the One Leisure General Manager position has been managed through a temporary acting-up arrangement, providing an opportunity for internal development while maintaining leadership capacity.

These challenges are consistent with wider recruitment trends, particularly in specialist and operational roles where there is strong competition for candidates and a limited pool of suitably qualified applicants. The increase in withdrawals following offers, as reflected in the quarterly data, further highlights the need to remain agile and competitive in our recruitment approach.

Overall, while recruitment performance in Q4 has been positive, continued focus will be required to address hard-to-fill roles, strengthen candidate attraction in competitive markets, and build sustainable talent pipelines to support future workforce needs.

1.9 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The Learning & Development (L&D) Team have been planning ahead and working on work experience placements for this year, and new links with local educational settings are proving worthwhile with several placements in the pipeline across the business throughout the summer months. Interest has been shown by students in working in both Corporate Support and Leisure.

Following the success of our previous Graduate placement, through Impact, we have made contact with the Graduate Programme again with a view to hosting another placement to support within the Transformation and Revenues and Benefits Teams. The recruitment process for this will commence in April. As we head into the final quarter, the Leadership Development Programme (launched in March 2025) is progressing strongly, with all eight course titles being successfully delivered through to the end of the financial year; the programme, fully supported by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), is designed for all people managers across the council and covers the following topics:

- Employee Relations
- My conversations (121)
- Recruitment Selection & Onboarding
- Leading Teams to deliver customer excellence
- Continuous Improvement
- Principles of Leadership & Management
- Developing your Coaching & Mentoring Skills
- Managing your teams Wellbeing

This is a snapshot of feedback received from the courses during this period:

- Working with people that we have not worked with before was good; good to speak with relevant colleagues. Useful, practical activities and a good method to mix groups with an open atmosphere.
- Very interactive with group activities building on skills that the group had available to them.
- Exercise-based training worked well to empower the use of skills in everyday tasks.
- The trainer was great and very clear in explanations, roleplay activities were very helpful

The L&D Team are now working on moving this into business as usual and delivering elements of the course in-house.

Apprenticeships

During Q4, we have had completions in the following courses, these are the apprenticeships:

- Cyber Security Technologist Defend & Respond Level 4
- Operations or departmental manager, Level 5

During National Apprenticeship Week in February, HDC hosted an event to celebrate apprenticeships, focusing on small and medium enterprises and local businesses to challenge common misconceptions and highlight the wide range of apprenticeship opportunities and training providers available to them. This has also provided the L&D Team will networking opportunities and fresh ideas to support the apprenticeship programme back at HDC.

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 March 2026.

	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Total
New and transferred apprenticeships	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ongoing	4	6	0	1	5	16

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**.

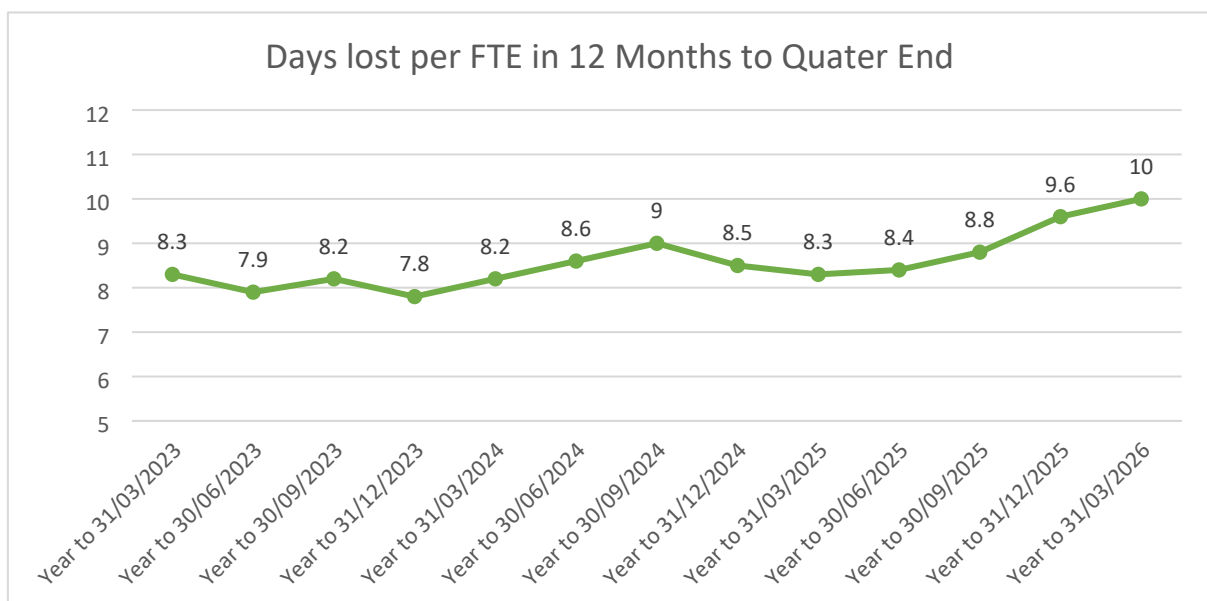
The absence data is calculated per full-time equivalent (FTE) as per the guidelines set out in the previous Best Value Performance Indicators (former statutory dataset) for sickness to account for adjustments in working hours.

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)

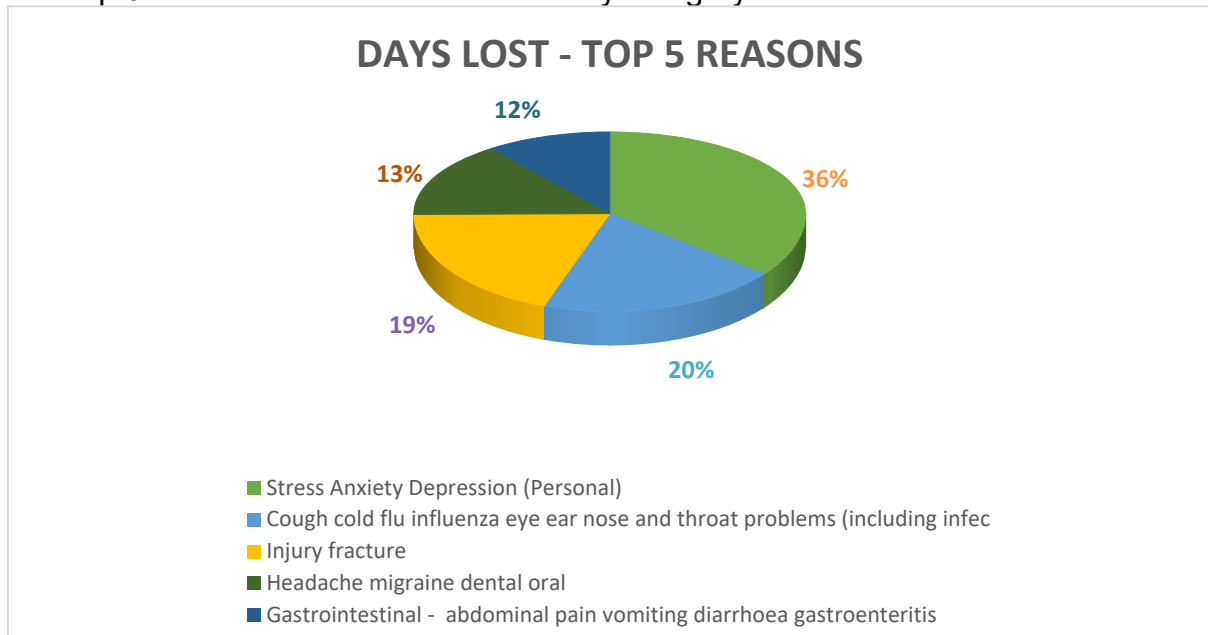
2.1 TREND OF WORKING DAYS LOST ACROSS HDC

The graph shows the trend in sickness absence per FTE employee over a rolling period to the end of each Quarter since March 2023. It shows that sickness absence to the end of Q4 has increased to 10 days per FTE, from the previous 9.6 days per FTE last quarter. This is in line with national trends for UK employers across many industries.



2.2 REASONS FOR SICKNESS ABSENCE

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



2.3 SICKNESS ABSENCE BREAKDOWN

Days lost due to long-term sickness has increased in Q4 compared to the previous Quarter.

However, the number of staff absent from work on long term absence has reduced slightly. This is due to the resolution of some long term sickness cases. Short term sickness has seen a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter. We continue to see a high level of staff waiting for surgical operations, recovery time and personal stress cases.

With the support of the Workforce Strategy, there have been changes in the way that staff are supported both in work to improve their attendance and therefore reduce their chances of them being off sick and also to provide additional support to staff who are off sick to support their return to work. Some of these initiatives are listed below:

- The procurement of a new Occupational Health Service who are provide a more personalised service to the Council with add on services such as physiotherapy
- The procurement of a new Employee Assistance Programme who provide services such as counselling, legal and financial advice and relationship counselling
- Working with the Residents Advice Team to access the Workwell Coaching Programme for issues such as chronic pain, mental health support, debt struggles, and access to the Community Fridge
- Access to Escape Pain Management and Tai Chi sessions from the Active Lifestyles Team to help with physical and mental health issues
- Health Kiosks are periodically installed at sites which measure blood pressure, BMI, and heart age. During the first instalment of these

machines, helped to identify 5 members of staff with health conditions who were advised to see their doctor due to them being at risk of developing CVD or having a Stroke within the next 10 years.

- 'Know your numbers' week run by Active Lifestyles
- Health MOT run by the NHS to measure cholesterol level, BMI and to discuss and advise on lifestyle habits
- Health walks, again run by Active Lifestyles to help with mental health, building relationships across the organisation and physical fitness
- Education initiatives such as diabetes awareness, endometriosis, menopause to staff to remain in the workplace when living with chronic conditions.
- Engagement events, such as International Men's Day and Brew Monday, which had a mental health focus

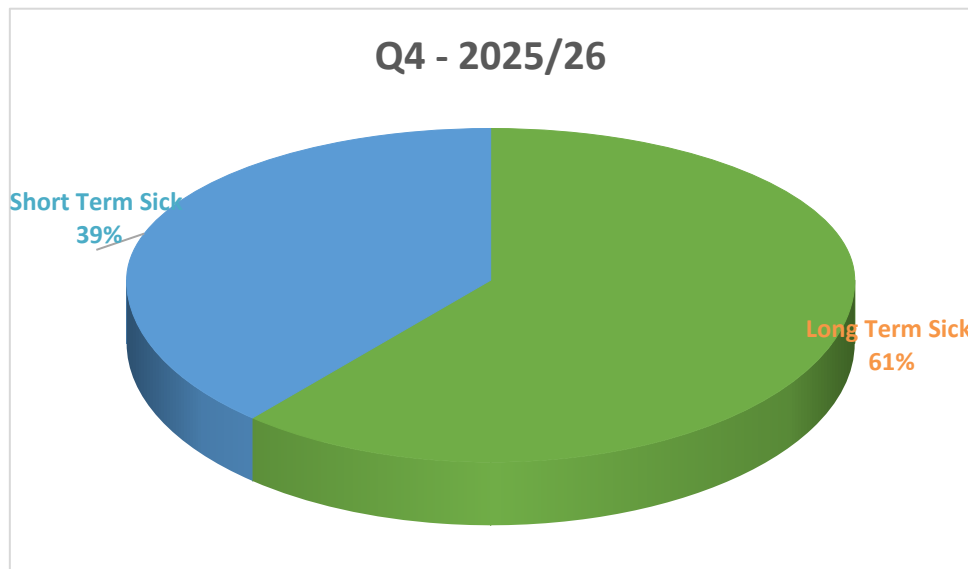
HR is working with Heads of Services to identify patterns relating to sickness absence, so that HR and managers can provide the best support to staff to prevent further increases in sickness absence.

To try and prevent lengthy absences and to support staff members beginning long-term absences, the manager now completes an Action Stage 1 meeting as soon as a case moves from short-term absence to long-term absence (28 days of absence). This is a new initiative that began at the beginning of quarter 4.

A management group has been set up relating to preventative measures to reduce the level of sickness absence and to better support managers in managing team absences.

Quarter	Total days of long-term sickness	Total Working days lost (Short term sickness)	% of total absence long-term	% of total absence short-term
Q3 2023/24	878 (24)	541	61.80%	38.20%
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%

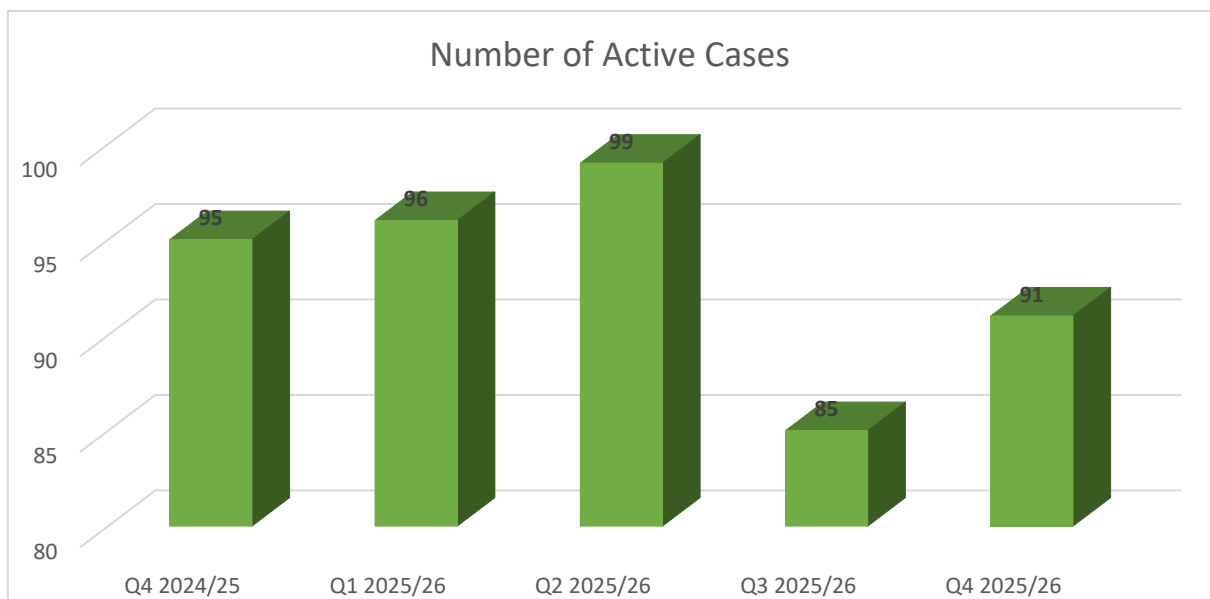
*Brackets denotes number of employees absent.



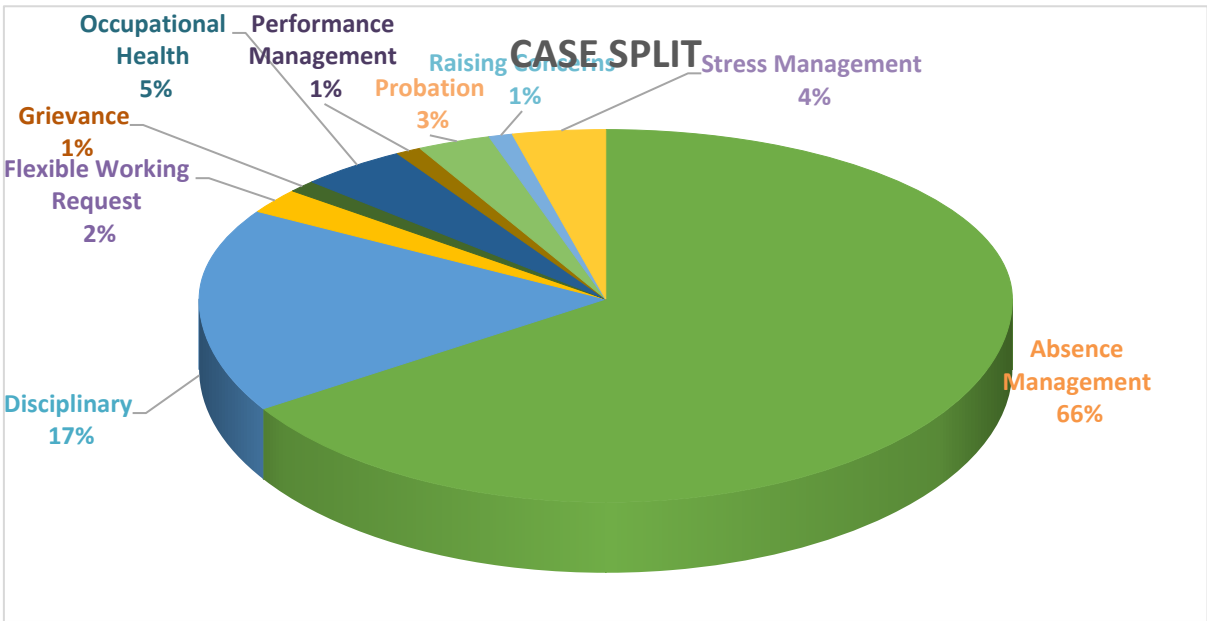
3.0 HR CASELOAD

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 Q4 there were 91 cases in progress, of which 30 were dealt with under formal procedures. Absence management continues to be the highest split of casework which is reflective of the sickness absence rates.

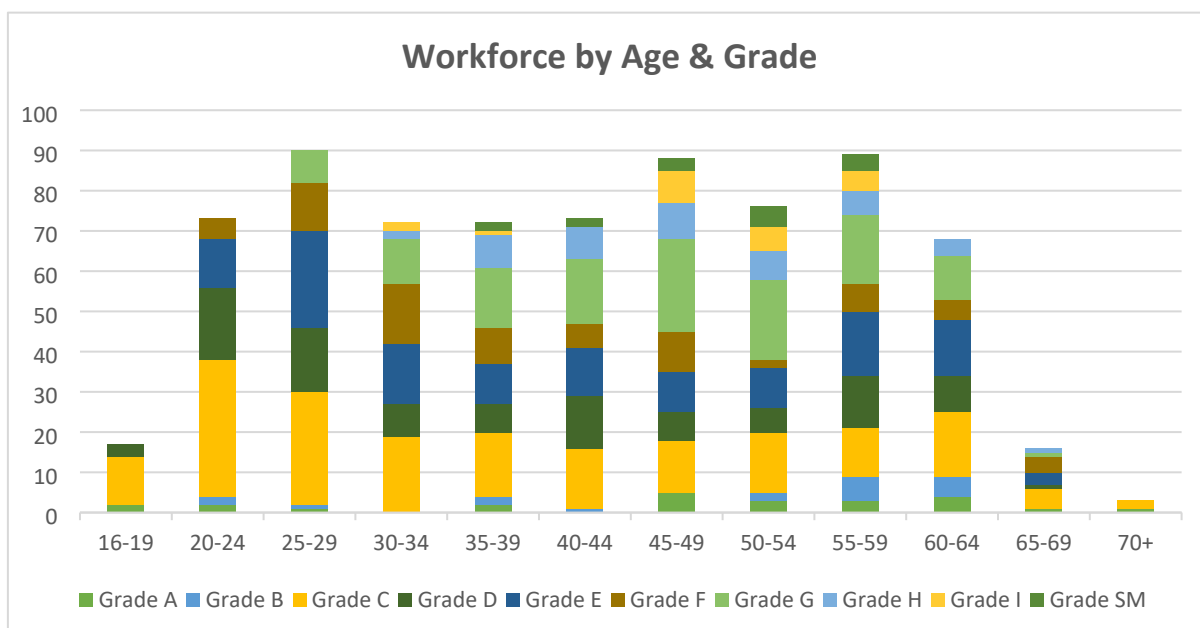


4.0 EQUALITIES DATA

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

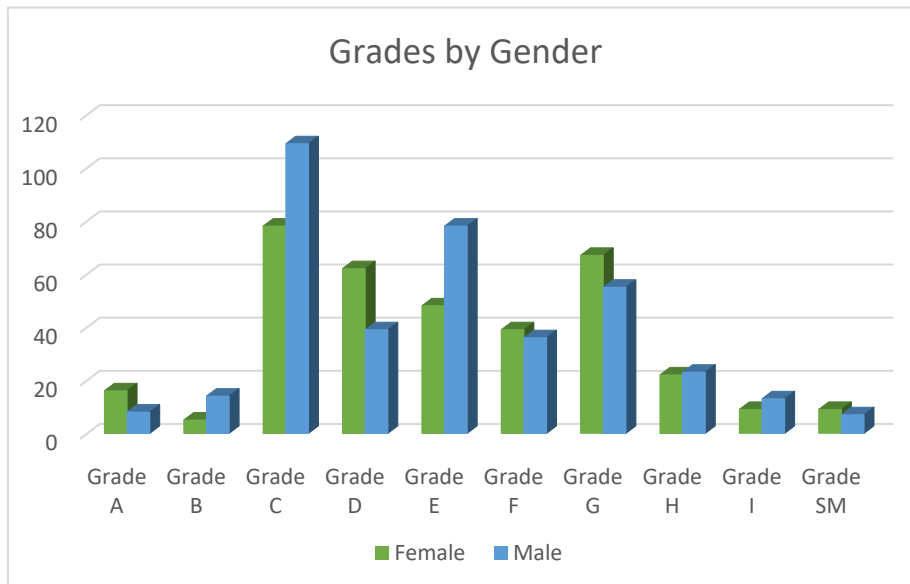


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4.3 EMPLOYEES BY GRADE AND GENDER



4.4 WORKFORCE BY ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	% of workforce
Asian	2.44%
Black	1.49%
Mixed	1.22%
Not Stated	8.28%
Other Ethnic Groups	0.27%
White	86.30%

4.5 DISABILITY DATA

Disability Status	% of work force
No	77.61%
Not Known	11.94%
Yes	10.45%

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 January to 31st March 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 were no RIDDOR accidents reported.

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

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Contact with moving machinery	No First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Slips, trips or falls on same level	No First Aid	2
Non-RIDDOR accident	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	No First Aid GP contacted GP Recommended Hospital Recommended	2 1 2 1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	No First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Other kind of accident	No First Aid	1

There were no non-RIDDOR accidents relating to employees recorded.

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	Doctor Recommended	2

There was one non-RIDDOR accident relating to non-employees recorded.

5.3 ONE LEISURE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

There were no RIDDOR accidents reported.

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

Type	Category	Severity	No of cases
Non-RIDDOR accident	Struck by moving, including flying/falling, object	Hospital Recommended	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Slips, trips or falls on same level	First Aid	1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Exposure to fire or heat	First Aid	1

Non-RIDDOR accident	Incident/no injury	First Aid Taken to Hospital	2 1
Non-RIDDOR accident	Other kind of accident	First Aid	1

A total of seventy-one accidents were recorded involving non-employees.
There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents involving non-employees recorded.