

Insert:

Committee – Employment 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

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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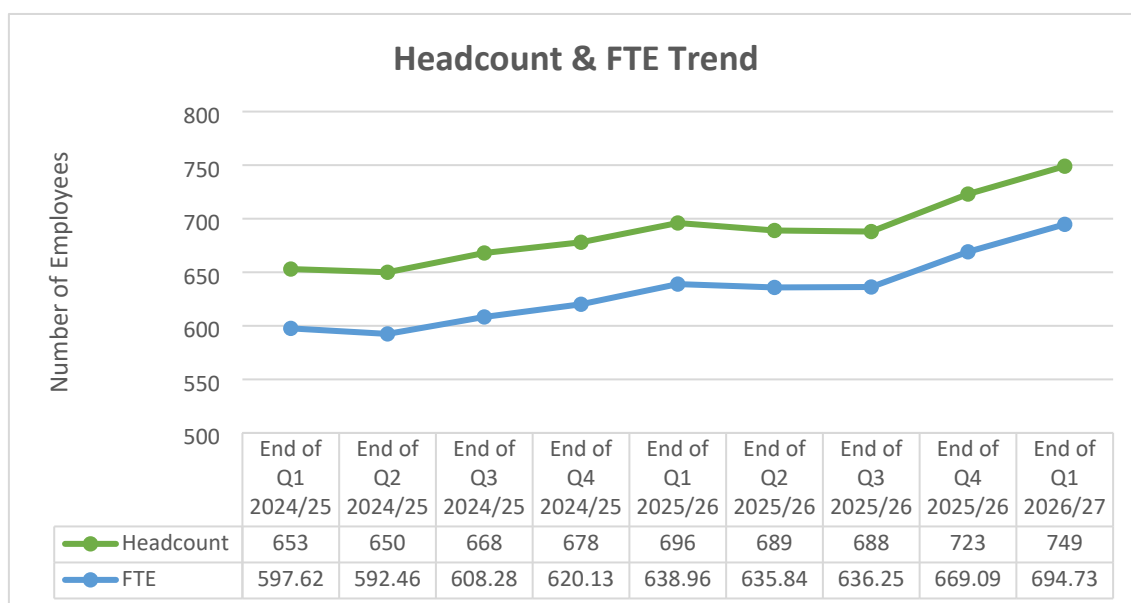
1.0 EMPLOYEE PROFILE

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

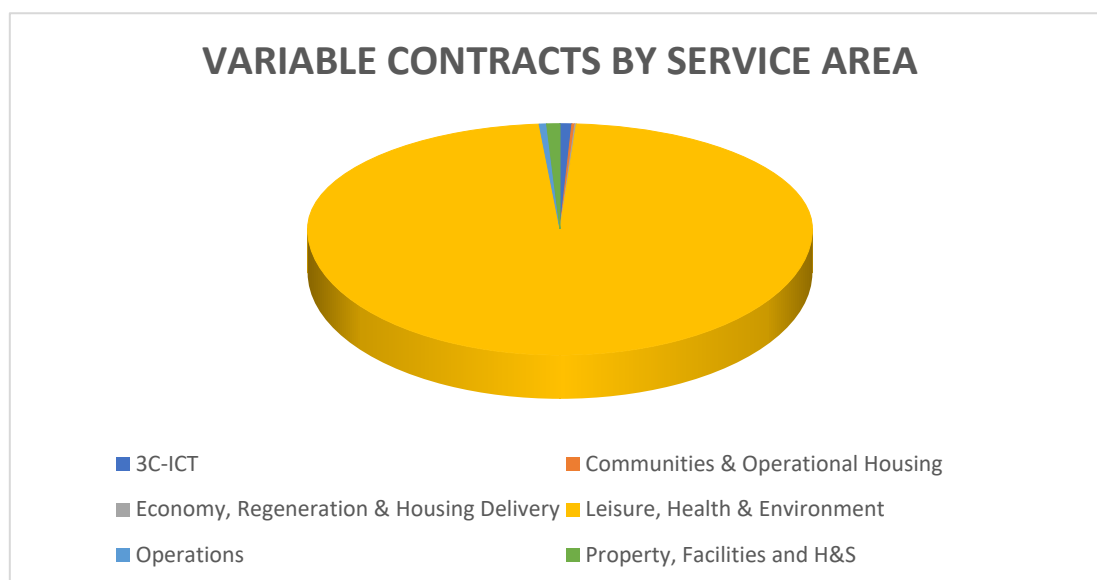


1.2 WORKFORCE BY CONTRACT TYPE

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)

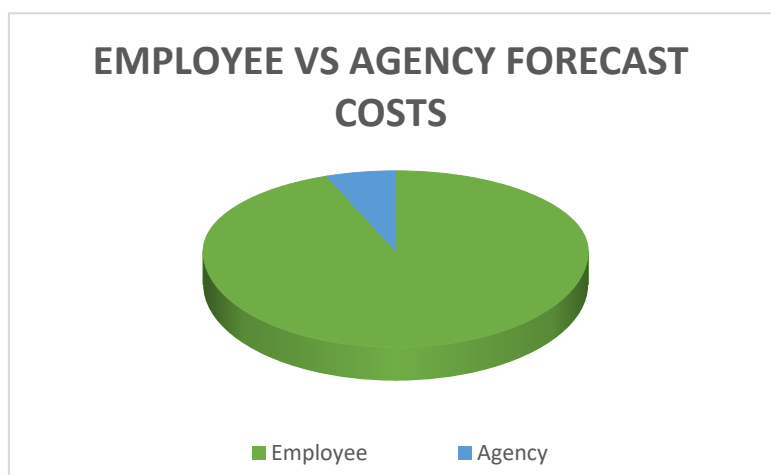


1.3 PAYBILL

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).

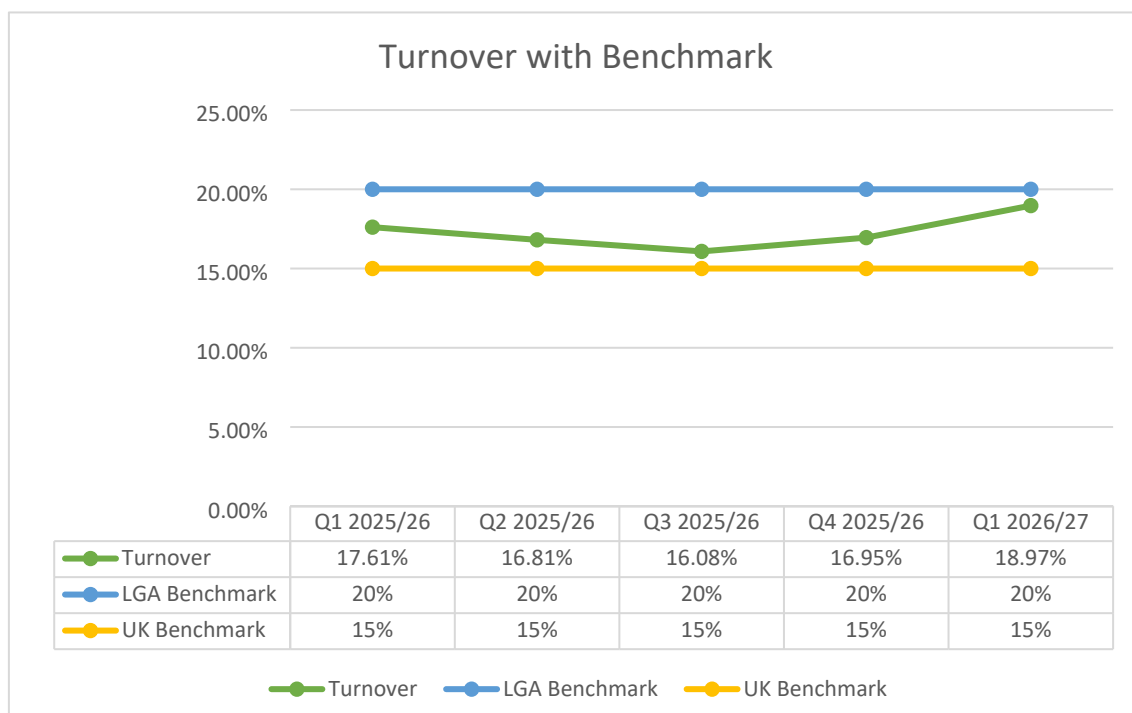
9 of the leavers from Q1, resigned to take up other posts with either commercial or public sector employers, this an increase from last quarters report (8). We had 2 retirements during this quarter with a combined service of 18 years.

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

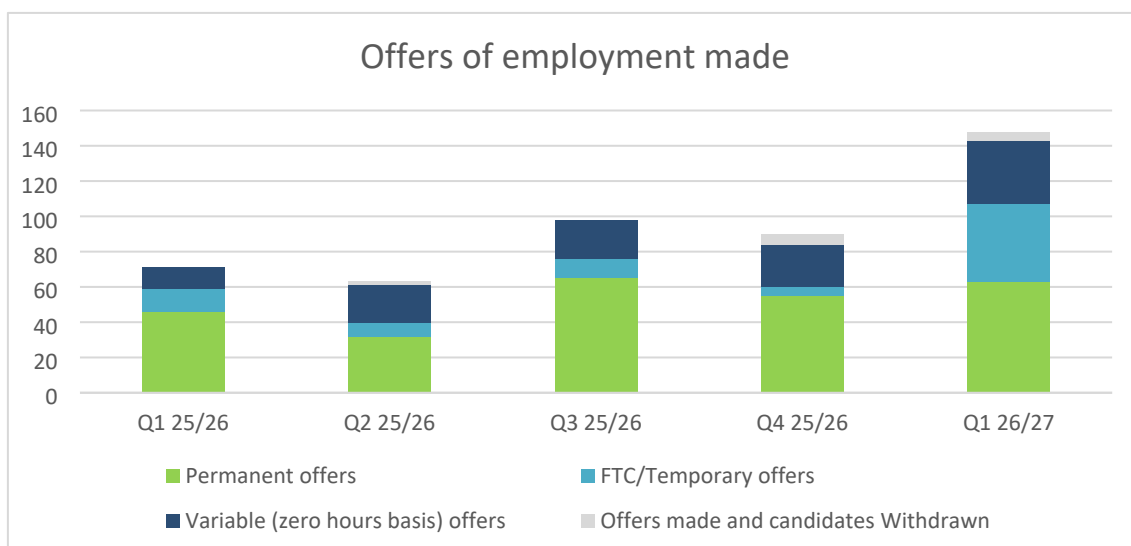
Of the 143 offers made through core recruitment activities, 34 were existing HDC staff, promoted or moving into other positions around the council. The HR team will continue to support the business with creating opportunities to grow and develop our workforce, careers, and mobility around services.

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**.

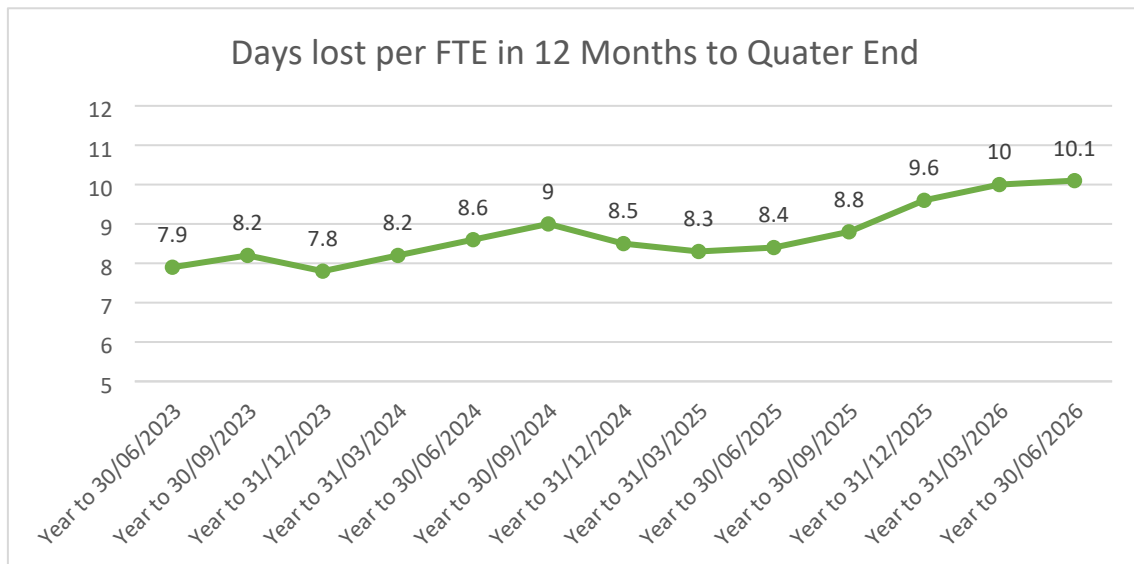
The absence data is calculated per full-time equivalent (FTE) as per the guidelines set out in the previous Best Value Performance Indicators (former statutory dataset) for sickness to account for adjustments in working hours.

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)

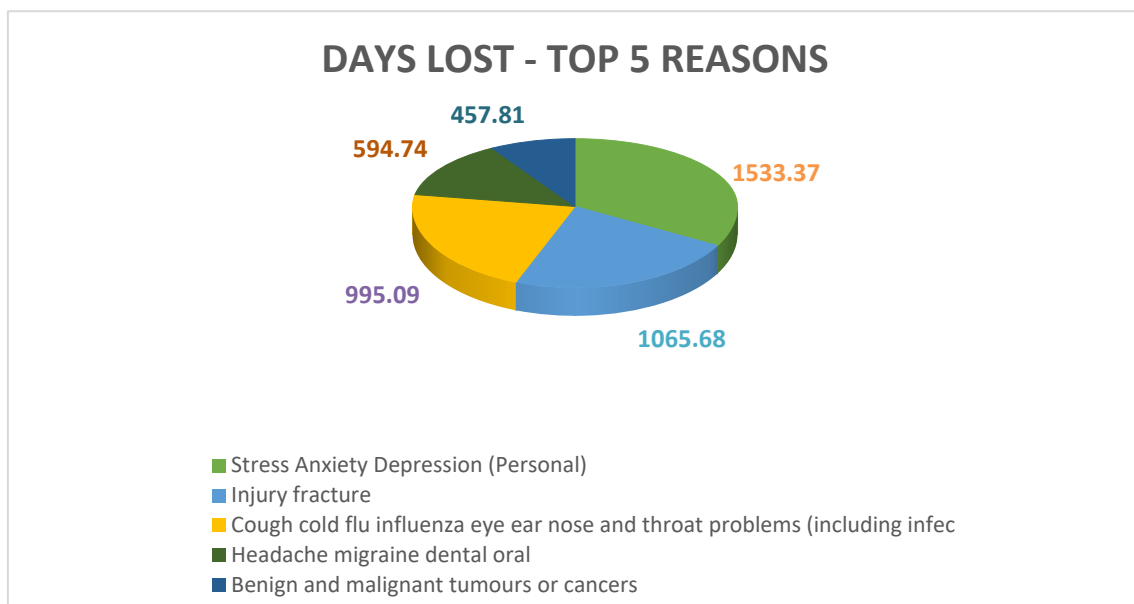
2.1 TREND OF WORKING DAYS LOST ACROSS HDC

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.

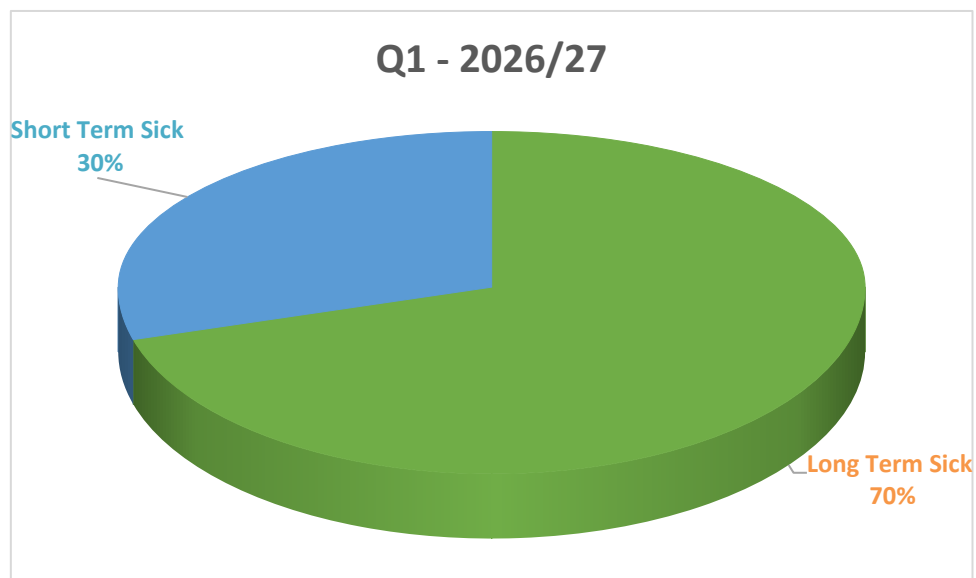
The Wellbeing Strategy that is being presented the evening is anticipated to have a positive impact on sickness. The strategy will be focusing on the following aims:

- 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%

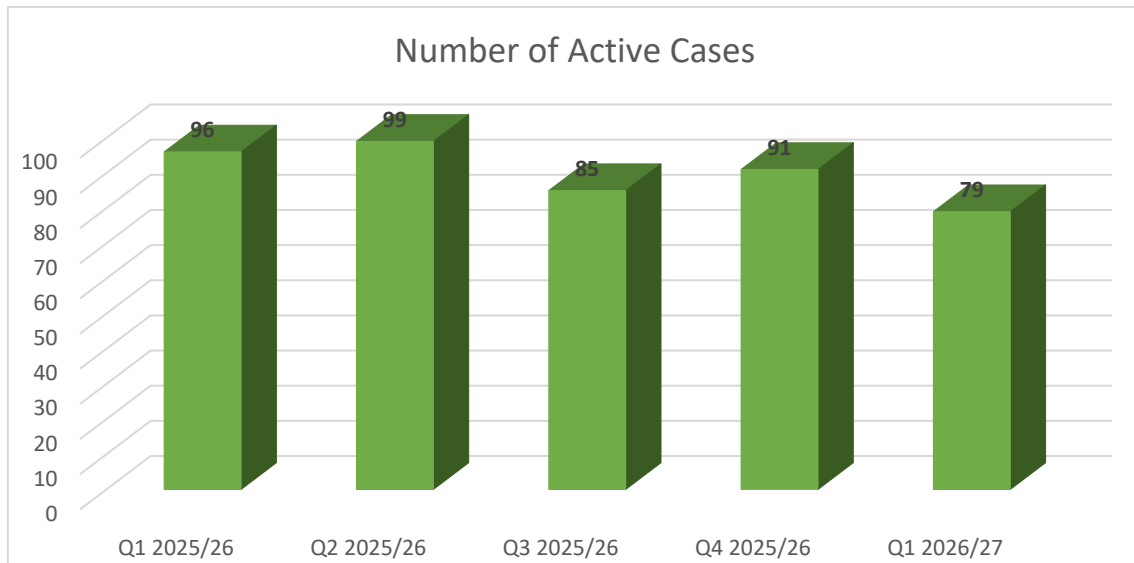
*Brackets denotes number of employees absent.



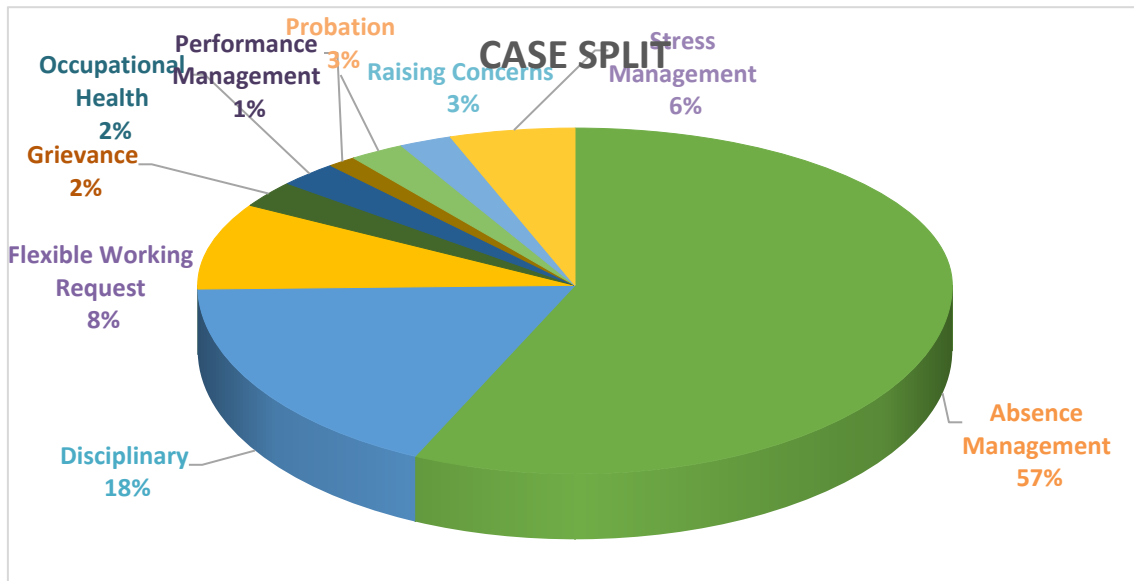
3.0 HR CASELOAD

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.

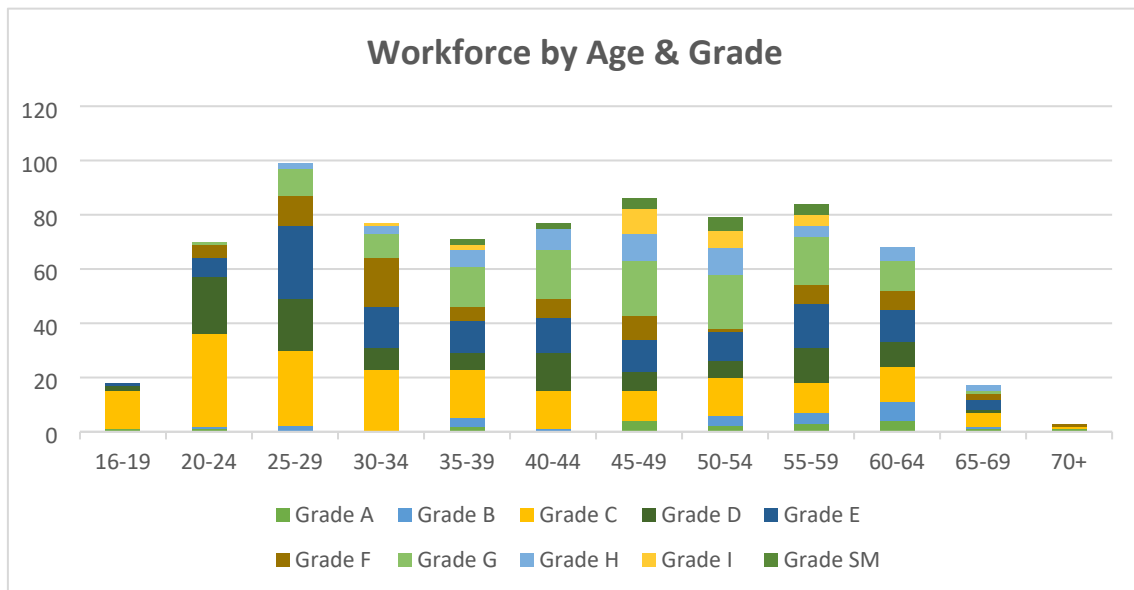


4.0 EQUALITIES DATA

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.

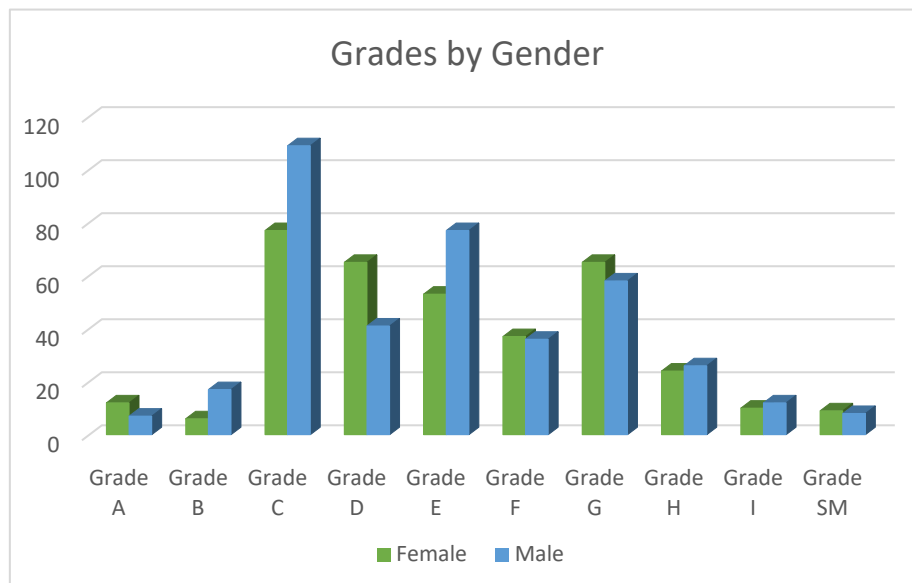


For the purposes of simplifying this graph, employees who have transferred into the Council on existing terms and conditions have been linked to Huntingdonshire District Council pay grades based on their current salary levels.

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.