

HR Committee Report for Q3 2023/24

Note: As of 31 December 2023, East Herts Council employed 271.33 fte and had an establishment of 357 posts

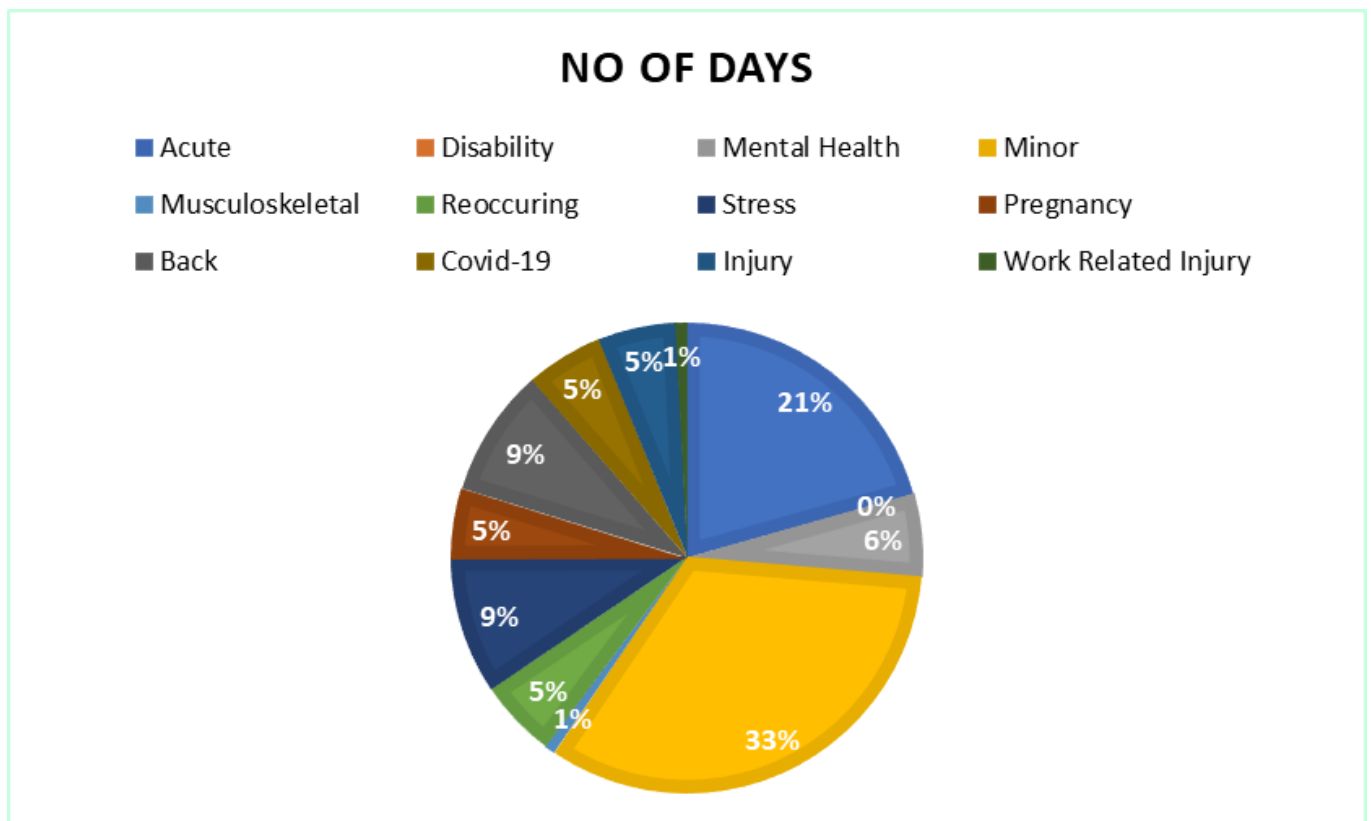
1.0 Sickness Absence

Sickness levels rose slightly in Q3 largely due to increase in seasonal illnesses, this is no different to what we have seen in previous years.

At the end of Quarter 3, the total number of sickness days taken was 447.78 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 259.23 FTE days (58%) were due to short term sickness and 188.55 FTE days (42%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 1.5% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 1.1% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 2.6%.

At the end of Quarter 3, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 4.76 days.

Q3 is broken down as follows:



For reference:

Acute absence relates to cancer.

There was no reported Work-Related Stress, all stress absence was in relation to issues outside of work.

Work related injury is in relation to a vehicular collision which is being dealt with through our insurers.

Short term sickness

Absences of less than four weeks are considered to be short term sickness absence.

76 employees (25% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Q3 totalling 259.23 FTE days.

At the end of Q3, the number of short-term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 2.25 days.

Short term absences that meet out trigger points are handled through our Absence Management Policy processes.

Long term sickness

Absences in excess of 4 weeks / 28 consecutive calendar days are considered to be long term sickness absence.

7 employees (2.3% of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Q3 totalling 188.55 FTE days.

All long-term absence is being managed with HR staff supporting the employee and manager to help get the member of staff back to work. We use our Occupational Health Service and Employee Assistance Programme to support this process, they provide helpful guidance and recommendations to help us accommodate return to work for the member of staff.

At the end of Q3, the number of long-term FTE days absent per FTE was 2.51 days.

2.0 Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Our biggest recruitment challenge remains the recruitment of qualified Planners. East Herts geographical position does mean that qualified staff have a large number of employment options within easy reach and the new standard blended working offer means that their options are now even bigger. We have made some progress with the development of a recruitment landing page which has a video of Ben Crystall, the Council's Leader, The Head of Planning and a member of staff explaining the benefits of working for us. We have also developed a recruitment identity that we use in our advertising and advertorial pieces.

We have a Market Forces Supplement that is applied to hard to fill roles in Planning and this is reviewed annually to ensure it is still relevant. We also have a small agreement with LinkedIn to market our top 5 roles. We do rely on agency staff for some key roles but are actively trying to recruit to the roles permanently.

We continually review our offer for planners against the market and adapt what we can given our financial constraints.

Recruitment to posts in other service areas is generally more straightforward and successful first time.

With the exception of Planners all other recruitment requests must be accompanied by a business case and signed off by a panel consisting of Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Section 151 officer and Head of HR and OD. This ensures that we challenge ourselves to consider if we need to replace roles like for like, should we use the opportunity to reshape roles, do we really need the role etc.

There have been 12 new starters in quarter 3:

- 3 in Operations- Hertford Theatre
- 2 in Planning
- 1 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
- 1 in Revenue and Benefits
- 1 in HR
- 3 in Housing and Health
- 1 in Strategic Finance and Property

Vacancies

As of 31 December 2023, we had 41 posts unfilled for a variety of reasons, for the same quarter of 2022/3 it was 40. This represents 11.5% of posts

These are the main reasons posts are vacant:

- Being held for budget savings
- Being held as a service review pending
- To be deleted following service review
- In the process of being recruited to
- Recruitment successful, job offer out but new member of staff has not yet started.

It takes almost twice as long to recruit to a post as it takes for someone to resign and work their notice which often account for the high vacancy number. Business critical posts get covered by agency / interim staff or through acting up arrangements that also offer staff development opportunities.

Retention – Turnover

There were 11 leavers in Q3 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 3.7%. Based on the leavers so far, it is estimated that the turnover rate for the annual period 2023/24 will be **15.6%**. This is slightly higher than our target of 14% but we have had additional turnover through ill health retirements and Transforming East Herts. This turnover rate is not unusual in local government, indeed the national average across all sectors is about 15% with a lot of councils reporting rates of over 20%. Churn in Planning services is even higher in most authorities largely due to the lack of qualified planners at a time when the planning targets are high, when agency work can seem more attractive.

Reasons for leaving in Q3 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, for personal reasons and end of fixed term contracts.

2 in Housing and Health
1 in Operations,

3 in Communications, Strategy and Policy
 4 in Revenue and Benefits
 1 in Planning.

Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Q4

- Investigate benefits and costs of using other types of recruitment to fill hard to fill posts
- Review of the end-to-end recruitment process including the Applicant Tracking System
- Review how we present features and benefits of employment
- Review / reprocur our neutral vendor contract (for agency staff) hopefully using the government procurement framework to save time).
- Further campaigns for planning staff

3.0 Learning and Development

The learning needed in our organisation is delivered by e-learning, one to one training or group-based learning remotely or in person.

HR is responsible for the corporate training budget, including professional training. We use training identified through annual employee reviews to scope the annual training plan.

Employee can request funding for training and development relevant to their role by completing a form outlining how the event will support their learning and individual objectives, all requests are considered but not all can be agreed. Where this is the case we will look to find an alternative solution.

We provide evaluation forms for all corporate training to collate staff feedback and measure the effectiveness of the sessions.

The annual mandatory e-learning training programme is currently being refreshed. Courses will be going live in March 2024 for employees to complete in line with their performance review. These courses include Data Protection, Health and Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding.

In addition to our mandatory programmes there are many other programmes that our staff can access to increase their knowledge and skills. In Q3 we also saw 1500 e-learning courses accessed by our staff.

Learning events held in Q3

Event/Course	No of Participants	Number of sessions
ModGov Training	13	1
Managers- Menopause awareness	30	1
Menopause Awareness	38	1
DSE, workstation and Chairs	20	1
Understanding Conflict Management	10	1
First Step – Bitesize session 2	6	1
Total	117	6

Learning and Development Planned for Q4

- Complete the First Step Programme for aspirant managers
- Run the final 2-day session for Service Managers (mandatory)
- Complete the development of a 2-day team leader programme and roll out (mandatory)
- Plan and begin roll out of Commercial Awareness and Political Awareness training events
- Develop a simple train the trainer workshop for subject matter experts to enable them to develop their colleagues

Organisational Development activity planned for Q4

- Review and relaunch staffing groups to support the Transformation Programme and minority groups
- Working with the LEP, develop proposals for workplace events for students over the summer
- Ensure all Service Manager Meetings and Staff Briefings have a developmental session for organisational learning
- Further work with Unison and staff on the Anti Racism Charter
- Further work on raising awareness of the menopause
- Co deliver workshops for staff around Co-Design of services
- Ongoing support to the transformation programme
- Review and relaunch the annual performance review process

NB We will also continue to review our staffing policies to ensure they are legally compliant and balanced in their approach and support ER processes; this is business as usual

4.0 Health and Safety

Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

Background Information

Accidents are classified into two categories:

Non-Reportable Accidents

These are minor accidents such as cuts, minor contact injuries e.g., walking into the corner of a desk etc, slips, trips. Staff are encouraged to report these and can use the online self-service portal MyView or completing an accident report from the accident report pad. These are designated as BI510 accidents.

East Herts Council operates predominately back-office functions in a low-risk environment, the determination of low risk is based on the Health and Safety Executive's definition, therefore, a high rate of accidents is not expected to occur.

Reportable Accidents

The **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013**, often known by the acronym **RIDDOR**, is a 2013 statutory instrument of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It regulates the statutory obligation to report deaths, injuries, diseases and "dangerous occurrences".

Types of incidents that are reportable under RIDDOR?

- accidents resulting in the death of any person
- accidents resulting in an absence from work over 7 days (excluding the day of the accident) e.g., degloving injury
- Any injury from work in an enclosed space leading to hypothermia or heat-induced illness or requiring resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours
- non-fatal accidents requiring hospital treatment to non-workers. E.g., anyone not employed by the council
- dangerous occurrences e.g., collapse, overturning or failure of any load-bearing part of lifting equipment, failure of any closed vessel or associated pipework forming part of pressure systems, collapse of scaffold this is not a definitive list
- Reportable diseases under RIDDOR are listed in regulations 8 and 9 of the regulations. Types of occupational diseases include occupational dermatitis, hand-arm vibration syndrome, occupational cancer etc
- Carpal tunnel syndrome from using percussive or vibrating tools
- Occupational dermatitis from exposure to unknown skin sensitizers or irritants
- Hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) from regular use of percussive or vibrating tools or materials

Any reportable accident, incident or near miss arising from construction work e.g., building sites, new builds, demolition work or developments fall under the purview of the Health and Safety Executive.

	Q3 22/23	Q3 23/24	Target 23/24	Predicted 23/24
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (<u>Not</u> reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	1	2	0	2
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	0	0	0
H&S Employee Work Related Incidents and Near Misses (No.)	0	0	0	0

Contract Management and Responsibility

The Council have outsourced a number of high-level services from waste collection and recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and leisure services and employs contractors for capital projects.

However, health and safety responsibilities cannot be passed from one party to another by a contract. If something goes wrong the Council can and will be held accountable by the HSE and the Courts.

The Council therefore ensures that contractors have appropriate health and safety policies in place, monitor contractor performance and safety standards. In order to ensure that services are delivered safely the officers with contract oversight:

- Convene meetings to review performance.
- Monitor complaints received and undertake investigations.
- Undertake onsite inspections and reviews.

Heads of Service with responsibility for these functions are responsible for ensuring that effective management controls are implemented.

Safety Committee Update – Related to the minutes of Safety Committee 19 September 2023

Item 4 Related to the report from the shared waste services manager that there had been an increase in verbal abuse toward waste collection crews, in one instance a matter was reported to the Police seeking intervention due to the nature of an incident with a member of the public who was aggressive and had a history of mental health issues. The shared waste services manager explained that the contractor was addressing concerns with crews and taking steps to continue to monitor.

Item 6.2 The contractor appointed to carry out work appointed a separate division of the main company to carry out work as part of the wider project The Leisure, Parks and Development Manager discussed the issue involving the mini dump truck with the principal contractor overseeing the project and expressed disappointment that this had occurred and gave them a warning. The Health and Safety Executive concluded it's investigation having spoken to the Contractor issuing an advisory but taking no further action.

Item 7

- The incident occurred on the 17th of August 2023
- On the day the contractor, Cadman, had a number of deliveries coming in and out as they were approaching completion of the extension ready for Everyone Actives opening day in early September.
- 2 banksmen were deployed to control pedestrians and passing vehicles while they allowed deliveries in and out of the compound which was located in the leisure centres front car park.
- One of the banksmen saw the parents and their children approaching and called out for them to stop and stay where they were until given clearance to proceed.
- The parents heard the call and called out to the young girl to stop as well, unfortunately the young girl either ignored the call or didn't hear it and continued to walk out.
- A customer of the leisure centre was driving by, and it was the **customer** whose car clipped the young girl and not one of the contractors vehicles.
- Cadman reported that the parents were understanding and cooperative with the Cadman team.
- As a precaution Cadman called the Police and Ambulance services.
- Cadman's Health & Safety officer visited to review the risk assessment and safe systems of work, there were no issues noted and the safety measures in place were implemented and in line with the assessment. Regardless of that, Cadman decided to add another banksmen just to be extra sure that no further incidents would occur.
- This is less of an issue now as the current phase has Cadman located in the furthest part of the rear car park where interaction with customers is significantly decreased.

NB Safety Committee falls on 7 February 2024 so minutes will be shared at the next HRC.