HR Committee Report for Q2 2025/26

Note: As of 30 September 2025, East Herts Council employed 274.34 fte and had a headcount of 304.

1.0   Sickness Absence

At the end of Quarter 2, the total number of sickness days taken was 584.87 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 114.16 FTE days (19.5%) were due to short term sickness and 470.71 FTE days (80.5%) were due to long term sickness.   The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 2% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 8.4% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 10.4%.

At the end of Quarter 2, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 2.11 days.
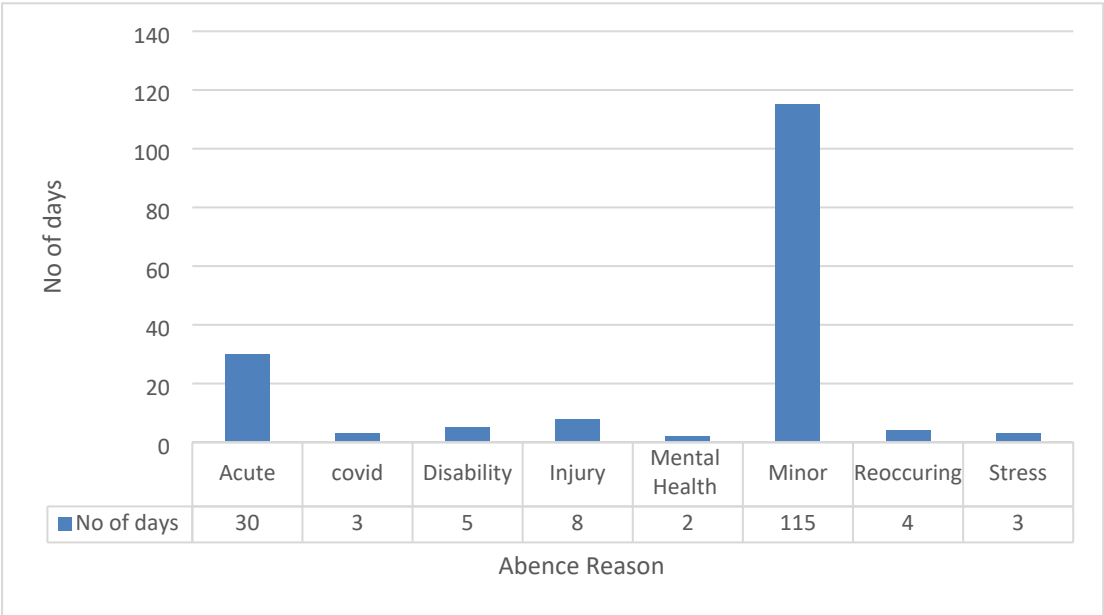
Short term sickness

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

43 employees (14% of the total headcount) had short term sickness absence during Q2 totalling 114.6 FTE days.

At the end of Q2, the number of short-term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.42 days.

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

See graph below that highlights the number of days recorded by absence reason:

|	Acute	covid	Disability	Injury	Mental Health	Minor	Reoccuring	Stress
No of days	30	3	5	8	2	115	4	3

Long term sickness

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

14 employees (8.4 % of the total headcount) had long term sickness absence during Q2 totalling 470.71 FTE days.

At the end of Q2, the number of long-term FTE days absent per FTE was 1.71 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.

See graph below that highlights the number of days recorded by absence reason:

	Acute	Mental Health	Reoccuring	Stress
No of days	303	72	17	66

Absence reason
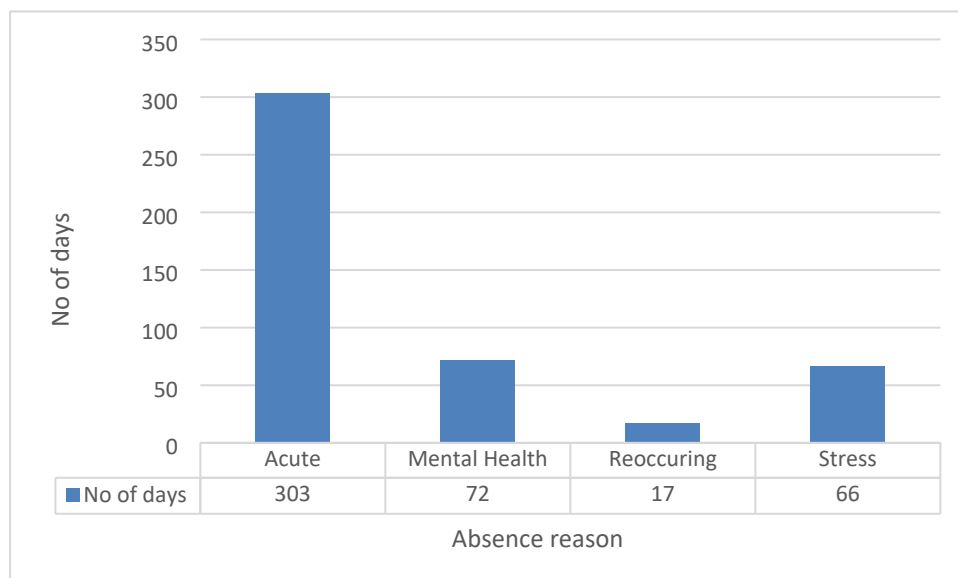
2.0 Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

Our biggest recruitment challenge this quarter were qualified Environmental Health Technical Officers. The team are currently reviewing the structure, with a focus on developing career progression opportunities to both attract new talent and retain staff. We are also reviewing the new environmental health apprenticeships that are being developed by East Suffolk Council as a possible future avenue for recruitment.

We have an agreement with LinkedIn to market our top 5 roles, and boost any roles that are difficult to recruit, this has helped with attraction. We continually review our offers against the market and adapt what we can given our financial constraints.

All recruitment requests must be accompanied by a business case and signed off by a panel. 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 10 new starters in quarter 2:

- 4 in Place
- 1 in Communities
- 4 in Regeneration, Customer and Commercial
- 1 in Legal, Policy and Governance

Vacancies

As of 30 September 2025, we had 54 posts unfilled for a variety of reasons. This represents 17.7% of posts.

These are the main reasons posts are vacant:

- Being held for budget savings
- Budget being used in a different way e.g. temp increase in hours
- 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 16 leavers in Q2 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 5.2%. The turnover rate predicted for the annual period 2025/26 is 15.7%. This is slightly higher than our target of 14% and the national average across all sectors of 15%.

Reasons for leaving in Q2 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, changes in career, and for personal reasons.

The leavers were in the following teams:

- 5 in Place
- 2 in Communities
- 5 in Regeneration, Customer and Commercial
- 1 in Legal, Policy and Governance
- 3 in Finance, Risk and Performance

Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Q3

- We will be reviewing our job adverts with Jobs Go Public to allow for optimisation.
- We will be reviewing our insights within our LinkedIn agreement to allow our job adverts to reach a wider audience.

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 have created a training needs analysis which highlights Statutory learning, CPD requirements and skill/knowledge development which has been used to scope the annual training plan.

In quarter 2 SPACE delivered a workshop for Neurodiversity in the workplace, covering what neurodiversity means, sensory processing and functioning differences and provide managers with practical adaptations they can implement.

We are utilising the apprenticeship levy, with 4 officers currently completing a level 7 qualification, 1 officer completing level 4 qualification and 1 officer completing a level 3 qualification.

The annual mandatory e-learning training programme has continued for employees to complete in line with their performance review. These courses include Data Protection, Health and Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding. A mandatory course on preventing sexual harassment has now been added to ensure compliance with the new statutory requirements and increase the safety of all of our staff at work and in work related activities.

In addition to our mandatory programmes there are many other programmes that our staff can access to increase their knowledge and skills. We have renewed our contract with our e-learning provider for a further year.

Learning and Development planned for the next quarter:

- Review the content for the mandatory training within Skillgate (data protection, equalities, safeguarding) to make sure we're still compliant.

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 using the online self-service portal MyView or completing an accident report from the accident report pad. These are designated form 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 Executives 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.
- 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-creating 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.

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.

Incidents and Near Miss Events

An incident is a broader term for any event, planned or unplanned, positive, or negative, that may or may not result in harm, damage, or injury. In essence, an accident is a specific type of incident that leads to a negative outcome.

Examples of incidents include, but are not limited to the effects of abusive, threatening behaviours, receiving obscene, aggressive, or threatening phone calls, correspondence, effects on the health of an individual arising from illness, health exacerbated by environmental factors e.g. excessive heat, air quality, extremes of temperature.

Colleagues are encouraged to report incidents and near misses in order to identify patterns and themes that allow the organisation to implement measures and controls to protect employee health and wellbeing. A new table has been introduced to report the number of Incident and Near Miss events occurring.

The Council also has the Employee Assistance scheme that offers confidential counselling, advice and support for any person affected by an incident, accident or near miss event.

Further support will also be available through the re-launched Mental Health First Aid provision following the successful participation in a 13-week Mental Health skills bootcamp.

Work Related Accidents

	Q1 24/25	Q2 25/26	Target 25/26
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (**Not** reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	**2**	3
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	**0**	0

Work Related Incidents, Near Misses

	Q1 24/25	Q2 25/26	Target 25/26
H&S Employee Work Related **Incidents** (**Not** reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	**0**	3
H&S Employee Work Related **Incidents** (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	**0**	0
H&S Employee Work Related **Near Miss** Events	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 oversite:

- 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.