

HR Committee Report for Q4 2026

Note: As of 31 March 2026, East Herts Council employed 263.92 FTE and had a headcount of 293.

1.0 Sickness Absence

At the end of Quarter 4 (Q4), the total number of sickness days taken was 724.10 full time equivalent (FTE) days. Of these, 246.56 FTE days (34%) were due to short term sickness, and 477.54 FTE days (66%) were due to long term sickness. The percentage of time lost due to short term sickness is 4.4% and the percentage of time lost due to long term sickness is 8.5% which equates to a total percentage lost time of 12.9%.

In Q4, the number of FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.92 days.

Short term sickness

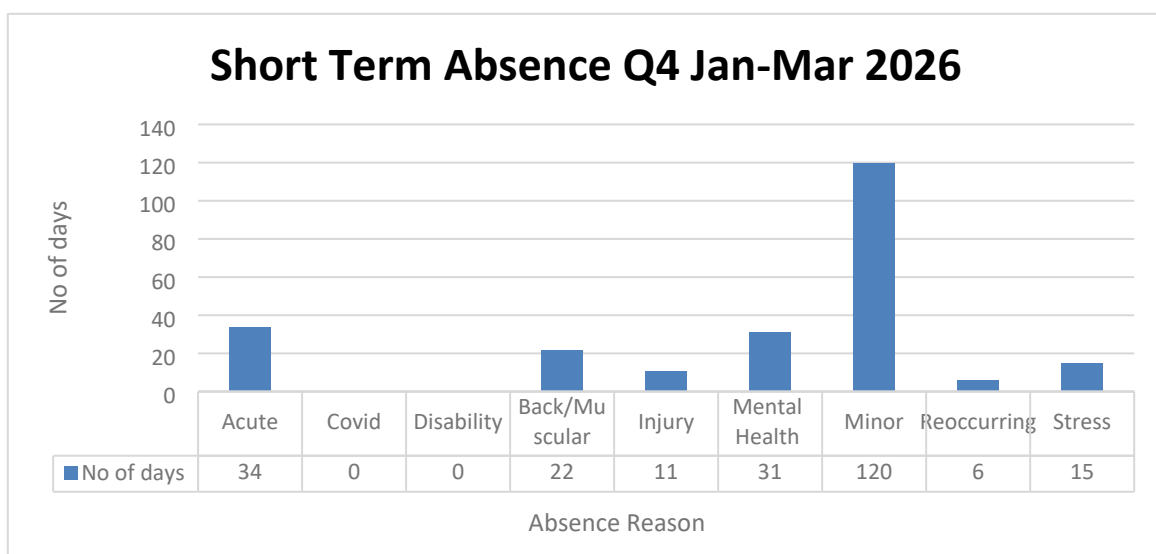
For this report, and in line with the Sickness Absence Policy metrics, short-term sickness absence is defined as any period of absence lasting less than four weeks.

In Q4, 89 employees had short-term sickness absence (an increase from 75 employees in Q3). This represents 30% of the total headcount. These absences totalled 246.56 FTE days.

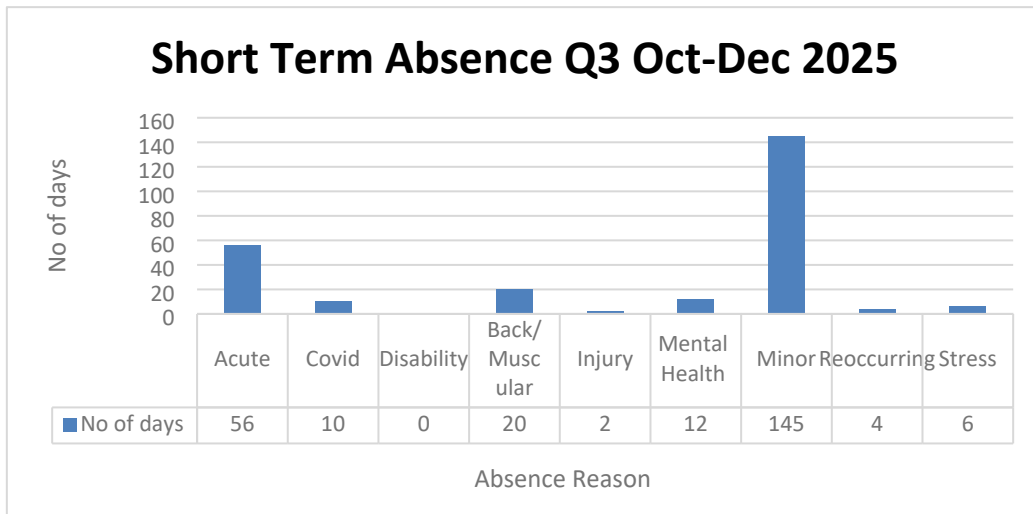
In Q4, the average number of short-term sickness absence days was 0.98 FTE days per FTE.

Short-term absences that meet the trigger points are managed under the Sickness Absence Policy.

The graph below highlights the number of days recorded by absence reason for Q4:



Comparison data for Q3:



Whilst there has been a decline in the recording of minor illness episodes across the workforce, instances of mental health-related absence and stress, alongside acute conditions, have increased. In response, a new repurposed space has been created to support Mental Health First Aiders (called the ‘Snug’), and the number of trained Mental Health First Aiders has now increased to seven.

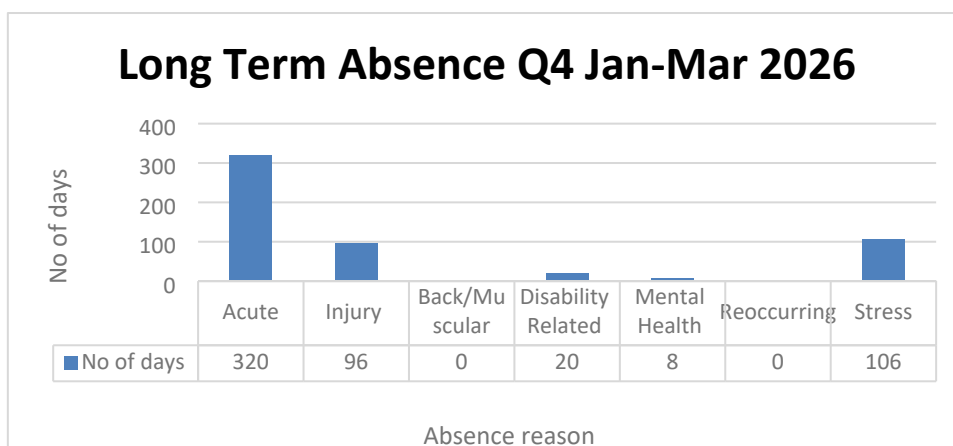
Long term sickness

For this report, and in line with the Sickness Absence Policy metrics, long-term sickness absence is defined as any period of absence in excess of 4 weeks / 28 consecutive calendar days.

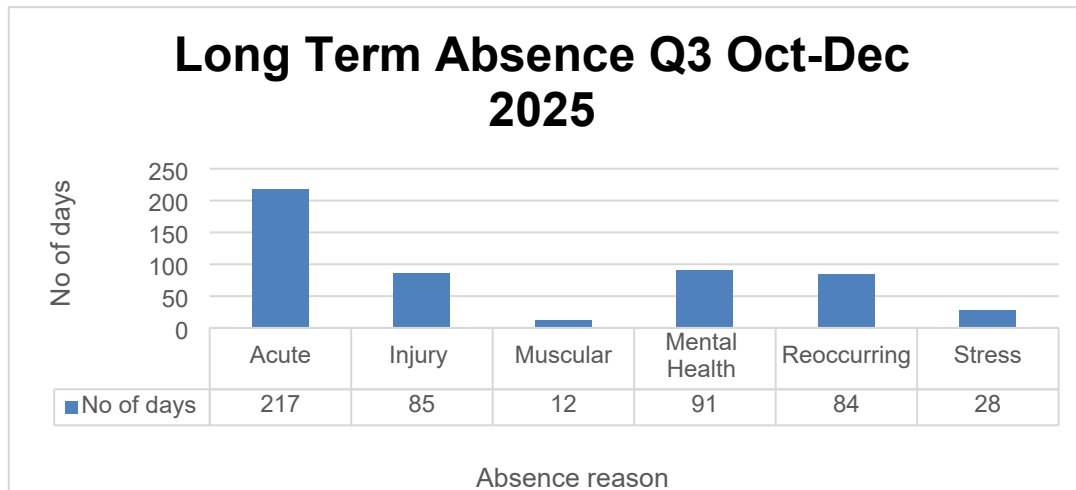
In Q4, 15 employees had long term absence (a decrease from 17 employees in Q3). This represents 5.11% of the total headcount. These absences totalled 477.54 FTE days.

In Q4, the number of long-term FTE days absent per FTE was an average of 0.6 days.

The graph below highlights the number of days recorded by absence reasons for Q4:



Comparison: Data for Q3



All long-term sickness absence is being actively managed, with HR staff supporting both the employee and manager to facilitate a return to work. This process is supported by our Occupational Health Service and Employee Assistance Programme, which provide guidance and recommendations to help us make appropriate workplace adjustments.

2.0 Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment

We currently advertise vacancies through Jobs Go Public, LinkedIn, Web Recruit (which includes job boards such as Indeed, CV Library, Total Jobs and Reed), and the East Herts Careers page for both internal and external candidates. In Quarter 4, we expanded our recruitment channels by creating a profile on Forces Families Jobs to engage with a wider audience within the armed forces community.

There has been success with 5 new starters in Q4:

- 1 in Place
- 1 in Legal. Policy & Governance
- 2 in Regeneration, Customer and Commercial
- 1 in Human Resources

However, East Herts continues to face challenges in recruiting for hard-to-fill roles, particularly within Planning and Environmental Health.

Vacant Posts

For clarity, a vacant post is defined as any role that remains on the financial establishment list with hours still attributed to it. In some cases, these remaining hours may be minimal and therefore do not constitute a recruitable position. In certain cases, these hours are being utilised to fund shared services such as HR and Procurement.

As of 31 March 2026, it is financially reported there are 63 vacant posts (56.69 FTE posts) unfilled for a variety of reasons. This represents 17.6% of overall posts on the establishment list.

The 63 vacancies have been categorised below:

Category	Description	Number of Vacant Posts Q3	Number of Vacant Posts Q4
Being held for budget savings	The post is intentionally not being filled so that the associated salary costs contribute to agreed budget savings.	3	4
Budget being used in a different way	Funding for the post is still in use but has been temporarily redirected (e.g., increased hours for another team member or short-term service needs).	18	14
Being held pending a service review	The post is not being recruited to because the service structure or staffing requirements are under review and future needs are yet to be confirmed.	8	4
In the process of being recruited to	Recruitment activity is underway (e.g. Job proposal, advertising, shortlisting, interviewing) but the post is not yet filled.	21	20
Recruitment successful	A candidate has been appointed and accepted the offer, but they have not yet started.	5	18
Externally Funded	Grant based	-	3
	Total	55	63

The table highlights the positive outcomes of our enhanced recruitment efforts, showing an increase in **successful appointments from 5 roles in Q3 to 18 roles in Q4**. It also demonstrates that overall vacant post levels have remained balanced as opposite to increasing further this quarter. The net increase of eight posts is explained by the identification of three externally funded roles, which do not represent true vacancies as they are staffed, and a net reduction of five posts when accounting for 10 leavers and 5 starters.

To ensure East Hertfordshire District Council achieves effective delivery of statutory services, legally required or hard-to-recruit posts are sometimes covered on a short-term basis through agency or contractor support, or through acting-up arrangements, which also offer valuable staff development opportunities.

Retention – Turnover

There were 10 leavers in Q4 giving a turnover rate for the quarter of 3.4%. The turnover rate predicted for the annual period 2025/26 is 14.9%. This is higher than our target of 14% and the national average across all sectors of 15%.

Reasons for leaving in Q4 included: To achieve promotion, retirement, changes in career, disciplinary and for personal reasons.

The leavers were in the following teams:

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

According to the latest Local Government Workforce Data (November 2025), 94% of councils in England reported recruitment and retention difficulties, as highlighted in the LGA Workforce Strategy Survey 2024.

Recruitment and retention related activity

We have now fully evidenced and completed our application for silver status under the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme, building on our existing bronze award. This enhanced commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community strengthens our employer brand, helping us to attract a broader talent pool and improve retention through our focus on inclusivity and support. The Applicant tracking system has been updated to include screening questions.

The external East Hertfordshire Careers page has been redesigned to showcase an updated employee rewards section, alongside enhanced information on the Disability Confident scheme and the Bronze Armed Forces Covenant recognition. We will also shortly be publishing newly recorded employee testimonials to further strengthen the “Working for Us” section.

Recruitment and retention related activity planned for Quarter 1 2026/27

- Finalise and publish the new employee testimonials.
- Create and publish best-practice guidance for recruiting managers, outlining the reasonable adjustments that can be offered at interview and how applications should be reviewed in line with our commitments under the Disability Confident Scheme and the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme, to ensure fair, inclusive selection and consistent best practice.

3.0 Learning and Development

The learning needs 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.

We continue to operate mandatory e-learning programmes listed below as well as other training events across the organisation:

- Data Protection
- Fire Safety
- Office Etiquette and Email Management
- Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- The Importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Understanding the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk

In Q4,

Two employees from the Democratic & Member Services and Licensing Team have successfully joined the SDP 2026 Programme. The programme forms part of the District Council's Network development offer and is designed to support employee growth, skills development and cross-organisational collaboration. It brings together delegates from across the Council to strengthen leadership capability, encourage knowledge sharing and build a strong professional network. Through participation, delegates are supported to enhance their skills, broaden their organisational understanding and contribute more effectively to service delivery and continuous improvement across the Council.

A new staff group, East Herts Unity (EHU), has been established to support staff mental health and wellbeing, and to promote diversity, equality, inclusion and representation across the organisation. The group aims to bring colleagues together, ensure all voices are heard, and help every employee feel welcomed and represented at East Herts Council. EHU staff volunteers hosted two internal community events designed to encourage interaction, learning and connection among colleagues.

- January Blues was a "beat the blues" coffee morning that gave colleagues the opportunity to meet and chat with people they would not usually interact with across the office. The meeting aim was for staff to share their understanding of Equality, diversity and inclusion and how it can be applied and achieved in a workplace and everyday life.
- Eid celebration: This event enabled staff to share food and learn about the significance of Eid and how it is celebrated.

A further PREVENT training session was delivered on 21 January at BEAM, primarily for BEAM staff and volunteers, with EHDC colleagues who missed the November session encouraged to attend. 47 people participated, including 5 EHDC staff, with most attendees from external partner agencies. The session covered local risks, safeguarding responsibilities, and how to identify and report concerns linked to radicalisation, supporting staff confidence in recognising and responding to vulnerabilities.

A MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) briefing session was delivered by HCC on 2 February in the Council Chamber. The session was primarily aimed at partner agencies, with relevant EHDC colleagues invited to attend. Representatives from

Community Safety and Housing Options were present. Attendance totalled approximately 36 external partner agency representatives, with five EHDC staff members in attendance.

A total of 23 employees attended the 'Planning for Retirement' webinar delivered by Affinity Connect on 4 March 2026. The session ran via Microsoft Teams. Affinity Connect is a public-sector financial education provider, specialising in retirement and pension guidance.

There were 97 active users recorded on SEEDL during Q4, 50 of whom were from East Herts employees. Between January and March 2026, 20 courses were completed. SEEDL is an online learning platform offering free training courses for all East Herts residents and employees, including council staff.

In March 2026, members of the HR Team met with one of the Councillors to review the mandatory training requirements for members. The discussions focused on the completion of mandatory training by members and the online platform Skillgate. One of the main outcomes from this meeting was to create a user guide for the platform to aid members with navigating the system and being able to view their personal dashboard to identify any gaps in mandatory training.

Discussions also took place about the mandatory training modules, in particular the Safeguarding module. It was recognised that some of the members will ordinarily undertake Safeguarding Training within their workplace and there is a possibility of this training being duplicated. However, it was acknowledged that the Safeguarding module cannot be changed or removed for members due to the system reflecting all mandatory modules for East Herts employees. It was also acknowledged that Safeguarding training requirements may differ from East Herts to individual workplaces.

Consideration was given to the expiry dates of mandatory training which is currently yearly and consistent with all East Herts employees. It was explained that there are no plans to extend the expiry dates beyond one year at present, but this could be considered in the future.

Learning and Development planned for the next quarter:

- Continue to review and update the mandatory training modules
- Scheduled training provided by the new Occupation Health Provider for managers that need to refer an employee

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 My View 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.

Work Related Accidents

	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Target 25/26
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Not reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	5	1	3
H&S Employee Work Related Accidents (Reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR 2013)	0	0	0

Work Related Incidents, Near Misses

	Q3 25/26	Q4 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 equipment 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.