

- Report for:** **Scrutiny Committee**

performance review report and subsequent operational meetings. Additional monthly updates are provided to the Corporate Management Team and Leadership Team on workforce data. Where possible the collection, reporting and sharing of data is being automated using our own systems.

- 1.4 The workforce data allows us to compare the performance and impact of vacancies, sickness, turnover, agency and overtime spend both across the whole organisation and within individual service areas. This helps us to regularly review our establishment and make sure it is fit for purpose.

2.0 Sickness Absence

- 2.1 For 2024/25 the Council had an average of 7.35 days sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE). This compared to 10.45 days in 2023/24, 9.90 days in 2022/23, and 7.82 days in 2021/22. Figure 1 outlines sickness absence since 2021/22 and includes the first four months of the financial year 2025/26.

- 2.2 Our policy expects employees to not exceed 6 days sickness absence in a rolling 12 month period. It should be noted that there will be a difference between FTE and per employee statistics when comparing our statistics to other authorities.

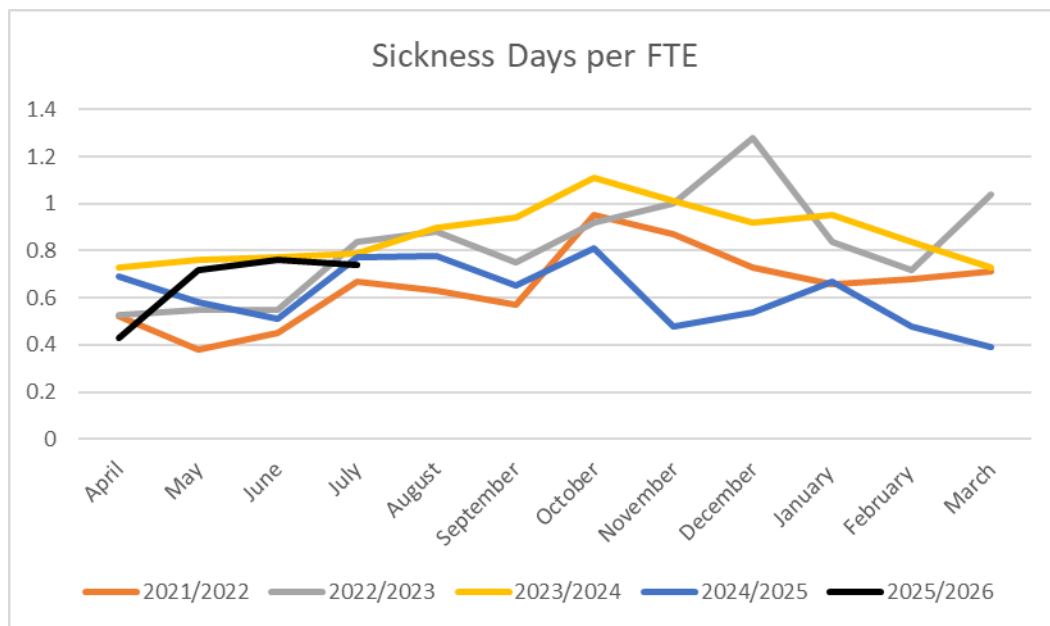


Figure 1. Sickness Days per FTE 2021/22 – 2025/26.

- 2.3 Whilst there has been a significant year on year reduction in sickness absence, the impacts from absence remain an ongoing challenge. The People Services department has rolled out in house training across the organisation following updates made to the sickness absence policy. This training has been made available to employees through the learning management system to ensure content created is readily available to existing and new line managers.

- 2.4 In the first four months of the current financial year for 2025/26, 2.65 days sickness absence per FTE were recorded. Acknowledging this, current projections would suggest approximately 7.95 days lost per FTE in 2025/26. Unlike previous years, the final quarter of 2024/25 saw a significant reduction in absence at a time where traditionally absence is higher compared to the rest of the year (e.g. higher levels of infection). It should be noted that sickness absence meetings do constitute a significant amount of our employee relations work.
- 2.5 Expectations regarding sickness absence continue to be communicated through line managers. This includes regular reminders to line managers of the risks of presenteeism and the expectation that if staff are not well enough to work, they do not.
- 2.6 Dedicated flu vaccination appointments for our staff have been secured with a local provider for the autumn of 2025. Uptake of the free flu jab through the Council last year was reduced compared to previous years. Some staff already have free access to the jab via the NHS should they meet the criteria set.
- 2.7 In January 2025 and July 2025, colleagues from our Leisure Service offered free health checks for staff across Council sites. The offer and uptake of the opportunity has been well received by staff. This has been further supported by a new virtual GP, virtual physio and virtual case management benefit that has recently been made available to all staff through our insurer. This continues the focus of prioritising health and wellbeing of our workforce.
- 2.8 The new calendar year will see the launch of a new all staff survey. Building on the positive work that has taken place since the last survey in 2023, this will provide insight into how staff are experiencing working life at the Council and contribute to a subsequent action plan of improvements. A core aim of the new survey will be to increase engagement, up from the 56% completion rate in 2023.

3.0 Agency Expenditure

- 3.1 During 2024/25 the Council spent £633,491 on agency workers. Table 1 outlines agency spend since 2021/22. It should be noted that figures outlined in Table 1 may vary from previous reporting due to payment terms with the providers.

Year	Agency Spend	Year On Year Change (+/-)
2021/22	£812,248	
2022/23	£1,102,933	+35.8
2023/24	£700,236	- 36.5%
2024/25	£633,491	- 9.5%

Table 1. Agency Spend 2021/22 – 2024/25

- 3.2 In the first four months of the current financial year for 2025/26, agency spend is tracking above year on year comparisons. Whilst the number of agency workers is usually higher in manual services such as Street Scene, these higher agency costs have arisen from workers in more corporate areas such as Finance, Legal and Planning. Skill shortages and the unique nature of roles is resulting in services needing to engage with external parties to ensure service delivery continues.

4.0 Establishment

- 4.1 Table 2 compares the Establishment for the Council and associated costs from 2021/22 to 2024/25. The 2025/26 pay award of 3.2% was finalised in July 2025, with staff having pay backdated to 1 April 2025.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total number of employees /workers paid	728	765	798	782
Establishment FTE (Average)	426.43	430.44	443.69	443.07
Total Taxable Gross Pay	£12,197,334.88	£13,168,855.70	£14,343,265.15	£14,916,364.76
Employers NI	£1,126,244.53	£1,277,182.95	£1,365,846.63	£1,449,342.13
Employers Pension	£1,938,973.16	£2,093,547.57	£2,585,379.63	£2,749,245.64

Table 2. Establishment 2021/22 – 2024/25

- 4.2 The increases in 'Total Taxable Gross Pay' outlined in Table 2 reflects the changes in FTE, each year's pay award made as well as the yearly incremental increase. It should be noted that the overall yearly payroll budget includes an aspect of agency staffing costs which can be used to cover hard to recruit areas e.g. Solicitors in Legal, Planning Enforcement Officers.
- 4.3 In addition to core staff training on professional disciplines we have also offered courses on Procurement Regulations, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health Awareness, and Financial Wellbeing alongside in-house courses on Managing Difficult Conversations, Managing Poor Performance and Investigation, Disciplinary and Grievance training.
- 4.4 Learning Partnerships, a collaborative group of staff from different services to review learning and workforce planning across the Council, has been

created. Regular meetings are underway and feedback is being shared with management teams on insight and action being proposed.

5.0 Turnover (and wider points of interest)

5.1 Turnover (including voluntary and involuntary turnover) for 2024/25 was 16.30%. This compares to turnover of 17% in 2023/24, 19.49% in 2022/23 and 21.25% in 2021/22. Figure 2 shows turnover at the Council since 2021/22 and includes the first four months of the financial year 2025/26.

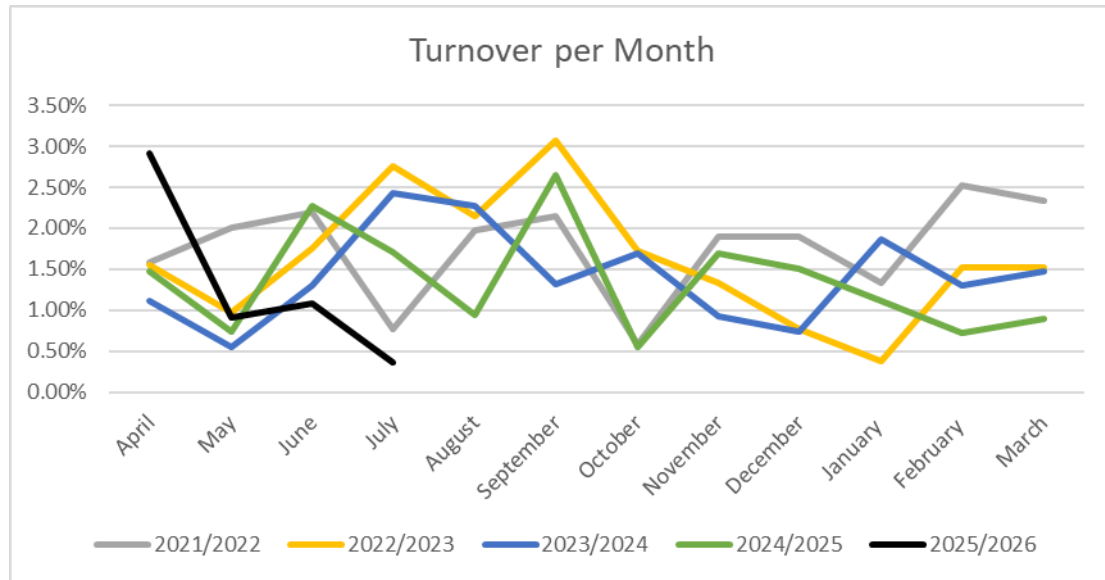


Figure 2. Turnover 2021/22 – 2025/26.

- 5.2 In the first four months of the current financial year for 2025/26, turnover totalled 5.28%. Acknowledging this, current projections would suggest we end 2025/26 with a turnover rate of approximately 15.84%.
- 5.3 Feedback from exit interviews is being shared with services to reflect on what we, both at a service and whole Council level, could consider to retain employees. Reasons cited by employees leaving the Council vary with Career Progression, Better Salary/Benefits and Retirement a regular feature.
- 5.4 A total of twenty students joined the Council in July 2025 for work experience across a range of services. Feedback from both services and students reinforces the value of providing work experience opportunities at the Council and we look forward to welcoming students again in 2026.
- 5.5 We have sixteen apprenticeships across the Council using the apprenticeship levy funds to support the development of our employees whether this is in the form of those joining us as an apprentice or then us upskilling existing employees. Of those that both completed the apprenticeship and had an end date in 2024, 87.5% became employees.

- 5.6 The annual appraisal process will begin in the coming months. Line Managers will continue to embed the Corporate Plan within the objective setting process so that all employees can understand how they contribute to the strategic direction of the Council.
- 5.7 We continue to work with other authorities to understand how our performance compares. A new online subscription will provide data to us on key workforce metrics of other authorities. Nationally sickness absence is reducing from a high in 2022 and levels seen from before the pandemic.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 6.1 Work will continue to review our establishment and staffing budget. Greater insight from data and analysis will support services to analyse their service needs. Although we have strengthened our understanding and analysis of how our projected establishment and actual workforce compare, there is further work to do to ensure we are effectively resourced right across the Council.
- 6.2 Whilst metrics have broadly moved in the right direction, it is important that we continue to both scrutinise workforce data and improve management practice.
- 6.3 Acknowledging the next All Staff Survey will be rolled out early next year, it is important that the associated action plan provides value to the Council to ensure we remain the employer of choice in Mid Devon.
- 6.4 In light of forthcoming communication and updates regarding LGR and the move to a new unitary status for April 2028, the Council is continuing to keep staff fully briefed and updated through regular workforce briefings led on by Leadership Team, fortnightly newsletters and other mediums as appropriate.

Financial Implications

Financial risk will only occur where the structure of a service changes without adherence to allocated budgets.

Legal Implications

In accordance with Article 14 of the Constitution.

Risk Assessment

If the Establishment of the Council is not appropriately managed and reviewed service delivery may be put at risk.

Impact on Climate Change

No climate change issues are highlighted in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Considerations are given to specific policy and decisions with regards to equality impact assessments.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

This report highlights the Establishment figures and supports our aim to reduce costs without affecting service quality and continuity, as well as, being an employer of choice in the Mid Devon area.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Date: 27.8.25

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 27.8.25

Chief Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 27.8.25

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 27/08/2025

Cabinet member notified: (yes)

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. No

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Matthew Page, Head of People, Performance & Waste
James Hamblin, Operations Manager – People Services

Email: MPage@middevon.gov.uk;
JHamblin@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 234919
01884 234203

Background papers: Previous Establishment Reports taken to Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and PDGs