Agenda Item No: 4

Workforce Update

To:	Staffing and Service Appeals Committee
Date:	18 November 2025
From:	Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships
Electoral division(s):	All
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Purpose:	To provide a mid-year update to Staffing and Service Appeals Committee on the workforce demographics and People related challenges.
Recommendation:	The Committee is recommended to note the report.

Officer contact:

Name: Caroline Adu-Bonsra, Head of People Services
Post: Email: Caroline.Adu-Bonsra@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Staffing and Service Appeals Committee with an overview of our workforce demography, current people related challenges across the organisation and the work being undertaken and planned to address these challenges.

2. Our Workforce

2.1. This report sets out key information relating to our workforce of 4487, excluding schools, who serve the 678,600 residents of Cambridgeshire. The information provided in this report is as of 30 September 2025, focusing on workforce demographics, starters and leavers, absence cases, recruitment and change management.

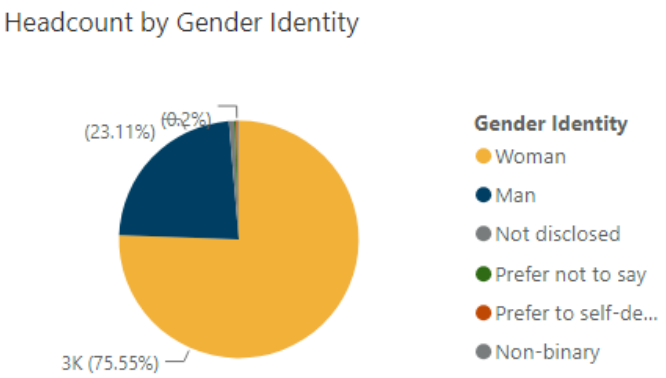
2.2. Headcount

On 30 September 2025 the overall headcount for Cambridgeshire County Council was 4487 which is a decrease from the 30 September 2024 when the headcount was 4557. This decrease of 70 people is consistent with the decrease reported in the previous report to committee and attributable to the work of the Workforce Expenditure Control Panel which continues to provide challenge and rigour around the requirement for new and replacement roles against a backdrop of financial constraints.

The diagram below shows headcount per directorate:

Directorate	Employee	Relief	Total
⊞ Adults, Health and Commissioning	1155	266	**1237**
⊞ Children, Education and Families	1559	281	**1771**
⊞ Finance and Resources	341	2	**343**
⊞ Greater Cambridge Partnership	43		**43**
⊞ Place and Sustainability	446	64	**498**
⊞ Strategy and Partnerships	586	51	**632**
Total	**4129**	**649**	**4487**

The information and diagrams below show headcount broken down into diversity categories:



From a Gender Identity perspective, the workforce is made up 75.55% Women and 23.11% men with the remaining 1.34% as not disclosed, prefer not to say, prefer to self-describe or non-binary.

In terms of disability, we continue to encourage higher disclosure rates as the numbers available limit our understanding of our workforce.

Since introducing the Care Experienced categories, we have seen 41 people disclose as being care experienced.

The tables below show the ethnicity groups and age breakdowns of the workforce.

Headcount, Headcount %

BY ETHNICITY GROUPS

Ethnicity Groups	Headcount	Headcount %
Asian or Asian British	127	2.8%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	140	3.1%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	65	1.4%
Not disclosed	1087	24.2%
Other ethnic group	23	0.5%
Prefer not to say	81	1.8%
White	2964	66.1%
Total	**4487**	**100.0%**

Headcount

BY EDI - AGE GROUP

EDI - Age Group	Headcount
Under 30	580
30-40	992
40-50	1185
50-60	1211
Over 60	519
Total	**4487**

The table above shows the highest proportion of our workforce being aged 50 60 which is important when considering succession planning, but also reflects that many of our workforce have remained loyal to the organisation for much of their careers.

2.3. Starters and Leavers

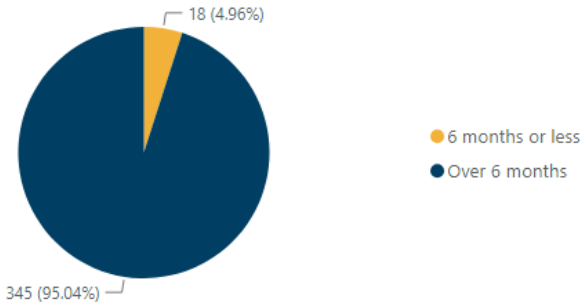
Between September 2024 and September 2025, there were 497 new starters and 574 leavers, resulting in a net reduction of 77 employees*. This trend reflects the impact of the current workforce controls, particularly the Workforce Expenditure Control Panel, which rigorously reviews and challenges each appointment across the organisation.

*figure can vary if individuals join or leave more than once within the reporting period or hold more than one position

2.4. Turnover

This year the turnover figure has remained within the target range of 10 - 13%. There are fluctuations during the year, notable in March 2025 with a higher number of leavers, this is largely attributed to an increase in voluntary resignations and fixed term contracts which cease in line with the financial year. We have increased our focus again this year on gathering information from colleagues who leave the organisation, and this information is proving insightful, with the feedback being shared with Directorate Management Teams, resulting in changes in practice where appropriate. Whilst we are conscious a level of turnover in any organisation is healthy, we are keen that newly recruited colleagues settle quickly into their roles and find their early experience of working for Cambridgeshire County Council positive.

Percentage of leavers with less than 6 months service



The chart above shows that 4.96% of leavers had less than 6 months service before leaving, this is has remained consistent over the past 6 months.

We continue to see benefits from the roles within our recruitment team that focus on colleague retention and engagement, particularly with individuals who are new to the organisation or preparing to leave. These roles are instrumental in capturing feedback on employee experiences, with the aim of reducing avoidable attrition during the early stages of employment.

Additionally, the objective is to gain insight into the reasons for employee departures across each directorate, and to identify whether any changes could have positively influenced retention or the overall employment experience. Intelligence gathered through these conversations is regularly shared with Directorate Management Teams, with emerging patterns or areas of concern highlighted for further consideration. Where appropriate, individual issues are escalated to support resolution.

Leavers Discussion Insights - Q2 Overview

The table below gives a breakdown of the numbers of notifications of leavers received across all directorates during Quarter 2.

Directorate	Total of Directorate	Percentage of discussions held
Children, Education and Families	35	48%
Adults, Health and Commissioning	36	27%
Finance and Resources	5	80%
Place and Sustainability	11	54%
Strategy and Partnership	21	61%
Total across the Council	**108**	

Engagement with leavers discussions varies across directorates and roles, the information gathered is based on the information from those who do choose to engage.

Timely processing of leaver notifications is key to increasing participation and learning from departing colleagues, a reduction in uptake in leaver discussions has been seen in some directorates and engagement will continue to improve the quantity of individuals we can reach to glean information from.

Emerging Themes from Leavers Discussions:

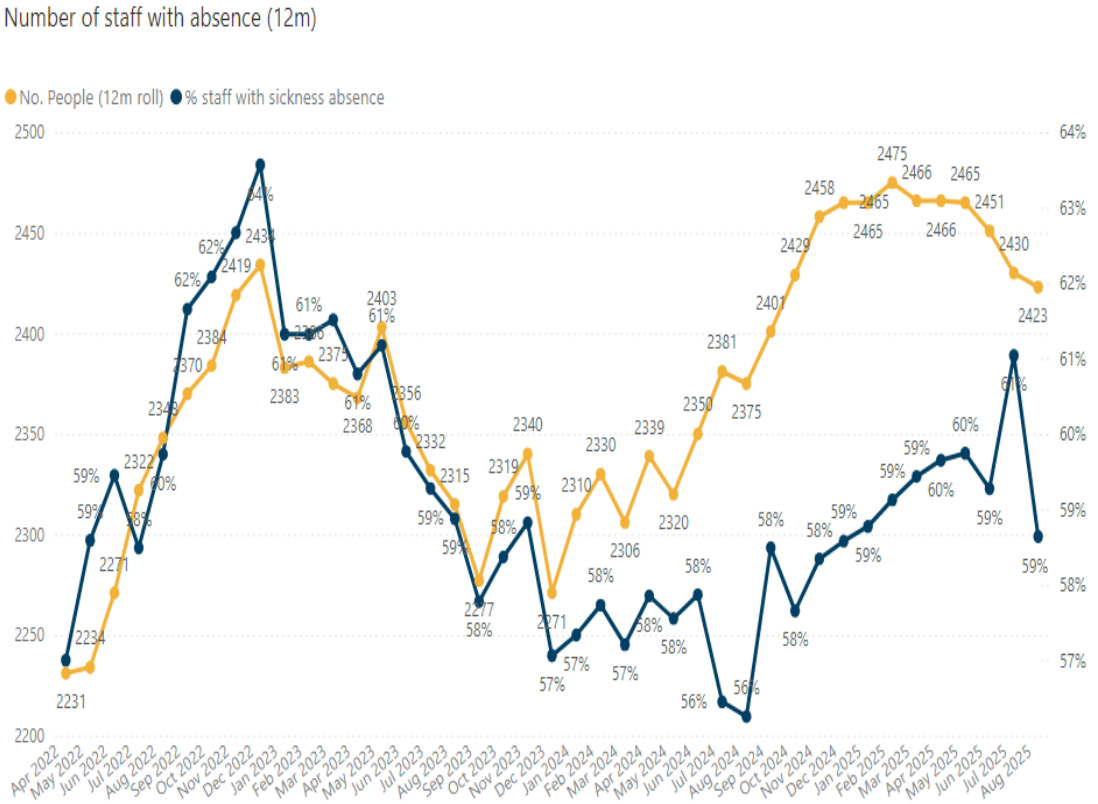
Team morale, opportunities for progression and work-life balance are reported as key factors in decisions to leave

Positively the wellbeing offer is widely appreciated as a valuable employee benefit with leavers benefiting from the flexibility of the offer and breadth of topics covered.

3. Workforce Health, Wellbeing And Attendance

3.1. The health, wellbeing and attendance of our workforce remains a core priority for the Council, supported by the comprehensive wellbeing offer. Maintaining good health and attendance is essential, as absence directly impacts the services we deliver to residents. Absence is monitored through our employee management system, and it is critical that line managers accurately record all periods of absence so that this can be effective. This ensures correct pay processing and provides the HR team with a complete overview, enabling targeted support, advice, and challenge where appropriate.

3.2. The tables below present absence data, showing the number of people absent from work due to ill health over the past 12 months. This diagram shows the number of people absent is starting to decline.

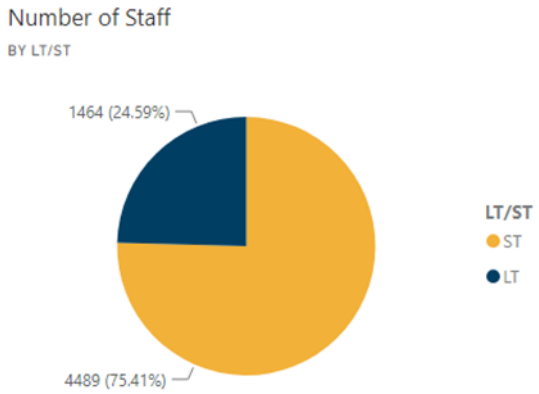


3.3. The table below shows the average number of days lost per Full Time Equivalent over the last rolling 12 months. This table shows the number of days lost per FTE to be increasing, therefore in comparison to the table above whilst the number of people out of the workplace due to absence is declining, the length of time people are absent has increased. The People Strategy update will discuss further benchmarking of our statistics against comparators.

Month Year	Sum FTE per. days roll 12m Benchmark	Average FTE in 12m period Benchmark	Average days lost per FTE - Benchmark
May 2024	31,263.6	3,525.66	8.87
Jun 2024	31,701.6	3,562.61	8.90
Jul 2024	31,878.0	3,633.92	8.77
Aug 2024	31,926.0	3,628.39	8.80
Sep 2024	32,412.8	3,597.86	9.01
Oct 2024	32,827.9	3,644.12	9.01
Nov 2024	33,536.1	3,651.52	9.18
Dec 2024	33,666.4	3,677.49	9.15
Jan 2025	33,459.2	3,670.63	9.12
Feb 2025	33,224.5	3,665.27	9.06
Mar 2025	33,818.7	3,653.40	9.26
Apr 2025	34,928.2	3,647.29	9.58
May 2025	36,123.1	3,655.05	9.88
Jun 2025	37,331.4	3,746.82	9.96
Jul 2025	38,199.2	3,674.44	10.40
Aug 2025	39,087.9	3,702.67	10.56
Sep 2025	39,816.4	3,732.11	10.67

3.4. The primary reason for long term absence is Anxiety, Mental Health and Depression and for short term Coughs, Cold and flu across the directorates.

3.5. The graphic below shows more people are absent with short term (ST) illness as opposed to long term (LT). This quarter People Services have focused on longer term absence cases and brought them to a conclusion where and when appropriate through a variety of resolutions which includes dismissal from post as well as supporting people back to work and providing reporting data on regular short-term absences to enable managers to address this directly and provide support as appropriate.

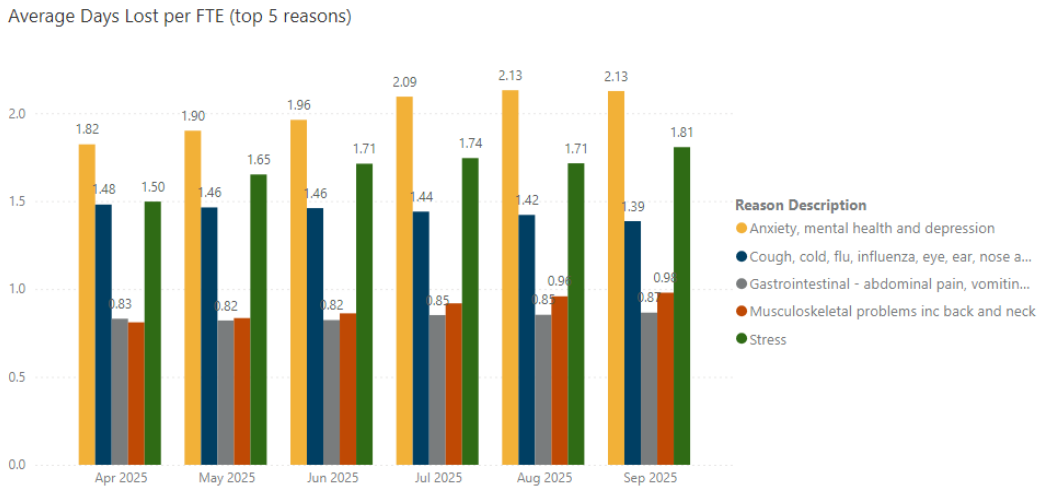


3.6. It is vital that absence is managed well from the moment an individual is experiencing any issues that may result in them needing to take time away from work, and therefore good line management support is vital. The People Services Advisory team continue to provide tools and support to line managers to enable them to manage absence as efficiently as possible.

3.7. Line managers can seek advice from their HR Advisor directly or by recording any instances of absence on the ERP system, this data is regularly monitored by the People Services Advisory team allowing them to proactively support and challenge managers to address their team absence both through support to individuals and by following procedures. People Services analyse patterns of absence across the organisation by looking at lengths of absence, reasons for long term absence, short term absence and the number of instances in the different directorates.

3.8. The training and materials available to managers to give them the tools and information necessary to be in the best position to manage absence in their teams is provided through a mix of online offers and more targeted direct advice and coaching from People Services. There are a number of additional tools available for managers when handling absence cases including the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health, the full suite of wellbeing offers and some targeted support such as Maximus, who are an organisation providing support to individuals with mental health conditions helping them to stay in or return to work.

The table below highlights the top 5 reasons for absence.



4. People Services Advisory Activity

4.1. Case Management

The People Services Advisory team comprises of 16 officers supporting our 4487 strong workforce and are organised in a business partnering model. Working in an aligned way with leaders in each directorate to provide strategic, operational and practical advice to manage all employee relations matters including absence, disciplinary, respect at work, resolving workplace concerns or performance matters. The team provide, challenge, support and pace to enable and empower managers whilst also striking a balance of support and opportunity to individuals. Currently the team are supporting 130 cases across all policies.

4.2. Change Management

To deliver the Our Future Council - Change Strategy agreed by Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee in October 2024, the Target Operating Model (TOM) Programme vision is to deliver an effective and sustainable organisation in readiness for the changes that will come from Local Government Reorganisation. The Target Operating Model Board creates a central point of governance and oversight for any changes that are proposed, ensuring that they meet the organisational design principles, the business case is sound including the financial aspects of any changes proposed. This board provides a single point of focus on all restructure activity across the organisation.

4.3. Throughout 2026, the Council has maintained a strong focus on implementing structural changes across a wide range of teams and services. These changes have been driven by the need to deliver savings identified in the Business

Planning proposals and to reconfigure teams in line with service requirements and the Council's Organisational Design principles.

4.4. To support this, the People Services Advisory team has established a dedicated team to provide comprehensive guidance and advice, ensuring timely progress and active engagement. This approach helps colleagues feel supported and equips managers to navigate organisational change effectively, achieving the desired outcomes.

4.5. Change, in any form, can present challenges for both individuals and managers, as people respond differently, often impacting service delivery. Since its inception 12 months ago, the team has successfully supported 30 services through organisational change programmes, reinforcing its role as a key partner in delivering organisational change successfully.

4.6. Workforce Data

As well as using our workforce information to shape strategy and people related project work, the People Services Advisory team meet with Executive Directors and Directorate management teams on a regular basis to review the data relevant to their services. Dashboards are provided comprising of headcount, starter and leaver information and absence. This enables each directorate to have an overview and understanding of the absence trends, turnover and cases such as performance management, disciplinary and workplace concerns that are happening across their services. The workforce data helps to inform solutions and mitigation for potential workforce challenges.

5. Resourcing

5.1. The Recruitment and Retention team

This team is also organised in a business partnering structure to give continuity and consistency to services providing professional recruitment advice across the whole organisation through the use of a single Recruitment Hub System. The team has responsibility for the co-ordination of the Workforce Expenditure Control Panels, which seeks to review and challenge all proposed recruitment ensuring that roles are only progressed and filled where it is essential to do otherwise service delivery would be unacceptably impacted.

5.2. The recruitment team also provides dedicated and high-level support to Children's Social Care along with regularly delivering training, which is always well attended, writing guidance notes and templates to bring consistency to the adverts that are presented to the recruitment market exploiting our benefits and strong wellbeing offer and ensuring candidates have a positive experience. Improvements to systems and processes are continuous and we are about to launch a new provider for our Disclosure and Barring checks and right to work in the UK checks which will give candidates and recruiting managers a more streamlined and efficient process to follow.

6. Support for Line Managers

6.1. The support for line managers from HR Advisory continues to be developed with micro learning being provided across the organisation this is accessible short pieces of information and training that managers can easily engage with to increase their skills and knowledge and compliments the essential training and the specifically designed “Confident Managers” training course which provides every line manager with the key information they need and signposts to further support for people to be well informed and confident line managers.

7. Challenges and Areas of Focus

7.1. Key areas of focus for the People Services Advisory and Recruitment team for the next 12 months

- Managing sickness absence remains a key focus for the team in response to the increased levels of absence. The team will continue to assess absences and address those with long term absence and regular intermittent absence focusing on ensuring that managers are taking proactive and pre-emptive measures in services where absence rates are highest.

- Continue to lead the implementation of the Organisational Design Principles by working systematically through the organisation reviewing structures and realising savings to meet business planning targets.

- Continue to enhance the retention of new employees by proactively applying insights from exit interviews to improve both retention strategies and the overall employee experience at Cambridgeshire County Council.

- Actively support the development of skills, knowledge and confidence in managers by providing bespoke training and embedding the learning and development offering already available.