

## **Employment Matters Committee**

**1 May 2025**

### **Workforce Update 2024/2025**

Report from: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer

Author: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer

#### **Summary**

The report provides the latest information on the Workforce for 2024/25.

#### **1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the Workforce update 2024/25 and further supported data as set out in the Appendices to the report.

#### **2. Budget and policy framework**

- 2.1 The Workforce update is a matter for the Employment Matters Committee.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 This report is the first annual report on staffing levels across directorates, together with comparative information from the previous year. The report also provides information on diversity and demographics.

- 3.2 Unless stated, comparisons are from the end of the previous year.

- 3.3 Full data can be found in the Appendices to the report as follows:

- Appendix 1 Workforce Summary 31 March 2025
- Appendix 2 Sickness Dashboard 2024/25
- Appendix 3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Dashboard 2024/25
- Appendix 4 Turnover 2024/25

#### **4. Advice**

- 4.1 **Workforce** - This section provides information about Medway Council's Workforce as at 31 March 2025, with comparative figures shown in brackets.

- 4.1.1 Staffing levels increased during the year to 2,223 FTE at year end. This is 136 FTE higher than end of the last financial year. (2,087 FTE at 31 March 2024). This increase is largely down to an increase of establishment for Children's Services, Adults Social Care and Business Support to cope with increase of demand. All increases have been through the relevant governance routes before recruitment commenced.
- 4.1.2 The percentage of staff on fixed-term contracts (posts) has increased slightly from the previous year to 5.4% (4.8% at 31 March 2024) and the proportion of casual posts for relief and seasonal work has reduced this year to 34.7% (38.7% at 31 March 2024). In March 2025 there were 1341 casual posts.
- 4.1.3 As at March 2025, there were 222 agency staff. The agency staff cover a variety of different positions, but particularly Social Work and areas whereby we require unique one off skills for projects and/or have a skills shortage. The forecast spend for agency staff in 2024/25 is around £14.5million.
- 4.1.4 20.8% of MedPay staff are in the salary band R2 or below, with a maximum full-time salary of £25,200 (20.0% at 31 March 2024). The proportion of staff on grades Service Manager and above has increased slightly to 2.95% (2.89% in 2023/24). In February 2015, the Government introduced a revised version of the Local Government Transparency Code. Under this code the Authority must publish information on employees whose salary exceeds £50,000 and an organisation chart that covers employees in the top three levels of the organisation, including salary and job information for each employee. This will be published in May 2025.
- 4.2 **Sickness Absence** - The sickness performance indicator calculates the working days lost per FTE, in 2024/25 this figure increased to 10.90 days per FTE (9.63 in 2023/24). The 'Health and Well-being at Work' Survey report (September 2023, conducted by the CIPD in partnership with SimplyHealth) identified a marked increase in sickness absence; at 7.8 days on average per employee per year, which is the highest level in a decade.
- 4.2.1 Most calendar days in 2024/25 were lost due to the following reasons, in descending order: 'Stress and Anxiety', 'Reason not stated', 'Surgery'. In 2023/24 most days were lost due to 'Stress and Anxiety', 'Surgery', and 'Reason not stated', in descending order. Sickness due to 'Stress and Anxiety' accounts for 17.0% of calendar days lost, a decrease from the previous year (17.3% in 2023/24).
- 4.2.2 Reason not stated is an issue across all absence reporting and is due to a reporting errors and system process which are being historically rectified for the last 6 months and will be monitored as we move forward into self-reporting.
- 4.2.3 62.4% of all absence is reported as long term sickness (over 4 weeks) and 37.6% for short term sickness (less than 4 weeks).

- 4.2.4 Sickness absence is at the lowest in Legal and Corporate Services per FTE at 5.05, followed by Public Health at 6.86. People Directorate continues to have the highest sickness absence per FTE with Children's Social Care (CSC) at 13.85, Education and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) at 13.37 and Adult Social Care (ASC) 12.45.
- 4.2.5 Findings of the 'Health and Well-being at Work' Survey reports 'Mental Health' (MH) being the largest contributor to the sickness figures. Mental Health remains the most common focus of organisations' wellbeing activity, with more than half of respondents reporting their activity is focused on this area 'to a large extent' ('Health and Well-being at Work' Survey). Stress also continues to be one of the main causes of short- and long-term absence which mirrors Medway. Overall, 76% of respondents report some stress-related absence in their organisation over the last year ('Health and Well-being at Work' Survey). 'Stress – Not MH' is the highest contributor to Medway's workforce sickness at 3,997 days lost (3,436 in 2023/24). According to 'Health and Well-being at Work' Survey, heavy workloads remain by far the most common cause of stress-related absence, followed by management style.
- 4.3 **Equality** - A breakdown by equality is shown below with March 2024 figures in brackets.
- 4.3.1 The percentage of female staff has remained consistent at 74.4% (74.2% in 2023/24). This is the highest in the People Directorate at 84.9%. Frontline Service have a more balance split with 49.3% female and 50.7% male, all other divisions have a high proportion of female staff.
- 4.3.2 Disabled staff figures have decreased making up 6.1% of staff in the workforce (6.4% in 2023/24) with Business Support reporting the highest at 7.5% (8.4% in 2023/24). A large proportion 40.2% have not declared and this remains a priority this year to increase disability declaration rates.
- 4.3.3 Medway Council has an aging workforce with 16.3% of employees being under 30 years old. This is up 1.1% since 2023 where only 15.2% of employees were under 30.
- 4.3.4 The percentage of staff from an Ethnic Minority background has increased by 1% this year, to 15.7% (14.7% in 2023/24).
- 4.3.5 The percentage of staff who declared they are LGBTQ has increased to 3.5% (3.2% in 2023/24). The highest declaration rate is in Public Health with 5.7%. 19.8% of employees have yet to declare their sexual orientation and increasing the declaration rate remains a priority for this year.
- 4.4 **Turnover** - Overall turnover levels have decreased to 12.2% during 2024-25 (13.3% in 2023-24). The turnover rate is lowest in Education and SEND at 7.2%, followed by Finance and Business Improvement at 8.5% and Adults at 8.7%. Children's Social Care continues to have the highest turnover at 19.3% (19.0% in 2023/24).

- 4.5 The first-year turnover rate has increased significantly this year to 29.3% (16.8% in 2023/24). First-year turnover reflects the number of employees who leave within 12 months of starting their role at Medway Council. The highest figure is within Public Health with 45.5% (21.1% in 2023/24), followed by Legal and Governance with 40.0% (14.3% in 2023/24). Some of these will be end of contract finishes. Further analysis is to be undertaken.

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Workforce update 2024/25 has not been subject to consultation.

## 6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
High level sickness impacting service delivery	Reduced Productivity Increased Costs Employee Burnout. Lower Hiring and Training Costs	New sickness and absence policy  Review of current health contracts  Leadership training  Deep dive into cases	BII
Dominated female workforce	Unconscious Bias and Discrimination: Work-Life Balance Challenges Underrepresentation in Leadership Gender Pay Gap Cultural Resistance	Inclusive Hiring Practices:  Equal Pay for Equal Work  Flexible Work Arrangements  Career Development Programs  Leadership Opportunities  Regular Training:  Support Networks  Transparent Policies	CIII
Missing declarations	Lack of Accommodations and policy to support  Increased Stress and Burnout  Safety Concerns	Declaration campaign to build trust  Equality Board oversight  EDI strategy	CIII

	Legal Risks. Workplace Morale	Supported networks with senior champions and budget	
High Turnover	Increased Recruitment Costs  Loss of Skills and Knowledge.  Reduced Employee Morale  Decreased Productivity  Impact on Customer Satisfaction  Negative Company Reputation:	People Promise  Foster a Positive Work Environment (GW refurbishment)  Provide Career Development Opportunities through Mepay review (PPP  Promote Work-Life Balance  Improve Management Practices  Conduct Exit Interviews.  Enhance Employee Engagement:  Create a Strong Onboarding Process	CIII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, it is recognised that there is a financial cost to the organisation through the loss of working hours, especially where there is an operational requirement to cover the provision of essential services with the use of agency staff.

## 8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## Lead officer contact

Samantha Beck-Farley

01634 331963

[samantha.beckfarley@medway.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.beckfarley@medway.gov.uk)

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Workforce Summary 31 March 2025

Appendix 2 Sickness Dashboard 24-25

Appendix 3 EDI Dashboard 24-25

Appendix 4 Turnover 24-25

## Background papers

None