

Employment Matters Committee

3 December 2025

Workforce Update 2025/2026

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Summary

The report provides the latest information on the Workforce for 2025/26 and requests that this move to an annual report, to allow full year comparison.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the 6 month Workforce Update 2025/26 and further supported data as set out in the Appendices 1 - 4 to the report.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to agree that this report moves to yearly reporting, to align to the Workforce Strategy review, acknowledging there is quarterly senior oversight and review in place already.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1 The Workforce update is a matter for this Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1 This report is the second biannual 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 financial year, so cover 6 months, rather than a year. This does create a projection but is often with little movement. We have a structure in place to report quarterly but are suggesting the report comes to Employment Matters Committee annually for comparison alongside the Workforce Strategy review.
- 3.3 Full data can be found in the Appendices to the report as follows:
 - Appendix 1 Workforce Summary 30 September 2025.
 - Appendix 2 Sickness Dashboard 2025-26.

- Appendix 3 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Dashboard 2025-26.
- Appendix 4 Turnover 2025-26.

4. Advice

4.1 **Workforce** - This section provides information about Medway Council's Workforce as of 30 September 2025, with comparative figures shown in brackets.

4.1.1 Staffing levels increased during the year to 2,362 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) as of 30 September 2025. This is 139 FTE higher than the end of the last financial year (2,223 FTE at 31 March 2025). 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 remained the same as the previous reporting period (31 March 2025) at 5.4%. The proportion of casual posts for relief and seasonal work has reduced from 34.7% on 31 March 2025 to 32.7% on 30 September 2025. There were 1353 casual posts as of 30 September.

4.1.3 As at 30 September 2025, there were 194 agency staff. The agency staff cover a variety of different positions, but particularly Social Work and areas where we require unique one off skills for projects and/or have a skills shortage.

4.1.4 13.8% of MedPay staff are in a post with a salary band of R2 or below, with a maximum full-time salary of £25,200 (20.8% at 31 March 2025). The proportion of staff on grades Service Manager and above has decreased slightly to 2.6% (2.9% at 31 March 2025). 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.

4.2 **Sickness Absence** - The sickness performance indicator calculates the working days lost per FTE. The 2025/26 year-to-date sickness rate as of 30 September 2025 was 4.90 days per FTE. This is a decrease of 0.29 days per FTE when compared to the same point in the 2024/25 financial year.

4.2.1 For the period 1 April 2025 - 30 September 2025 the most calendar days lost were due to the following reasons, in descending order: 'Stress and Anxiety', 'Cancer' and then 'Surgery'. Sickness due to 'Stress and Anxiety' accounts for 18.3% of the total calendar days lost so far this year.

4.2.2 Reason not stated is an issue across all absence reporting and is due to reporting errors and system processes which are being historically rectified. This is being monitored as we move forward with self-reporting.

- 4.2.3 41.2% of all absence is reported as long term sickness (over 4 weeks) and 48.8% 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 1.90, followed by Frontline Services at 3.41. People Directorate continues to have the highest sickness absence per FTE with Adults at 6.75, Children's Social Care at 5.77 and Education and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) at 5.28.
- 4.3 **Equality** - A breakdown by equality is shown below with 31 March 2025 figures in brackets.
- 4.3.1 The percentage of female staff has remained consistent at 74.7% (74.4% in 2024/25). This is highest in the Children and Adults Directorate at 84.1%. Frontline Service have a more balanced split with 51.3% female and 48.7% male; all other divisions have a high proportion of female staff.
- 4.3.2 Disabled staff figures have increased making up 6.3% of staff in the workforce (6.0% in 2024/25) with Business Support reporting the highest at 7.6% (7.4% in 2024/25). A large proportion of staff (43.5%) have not declared, and this remains a priority to increase disability declaration rates.
- 4.3.3 Medway Council has an aging workforce with 16.7% of employees being under 30 years old. This is up 0.5% since 31 March 2025 where 16.2% of employees were under 30.
- 4.3.4 The percentage of staff from an Ethnic Minority background has increased by 0.9% this year, to 16.6% (15.7% in 2024/25).
- 4.3.5 The percentage of staff who declared they are LGBTQ has increased to 4.4% (3.5% in 2024/25). The highest declaration rate is in Public Health with 6.7%. 24.2% of employees have yet to declare their sexual orientation and increasing the declaration rate remains a priority for this year.
- 4.4 **Turnover** – The 2025/26 year-to-date turnover rate as of 30 September 2025 was 5.4%. This is a 1.2% drop when compared to the same point in the 2024/25 financial year. Turnover rate is highest in Education and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) at 4.8%, followed by Legal and Governance at 4.0% and jointly by Finance and Business Improvement and Children's Services at 3.7%
- 4.5 **First-year Turnover** – First-year turnover reflects the number of employees who leave within 12 months of starting their role at Medway Council. The year-to-date first-year turnover rate as of 30 September was 25.6%. This is a decrease of 3.6% when compared to the same period in the 2024/25 financial year. First-year turnover is highest in Adult Social Care at 66.7%, followed by Education and SEND at 41.7% and Public Health at 40.0%.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Workforce update for 2025-26 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 Working in partnership with Public Health	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 Provide Career Development Opportunities through MedPay 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 additional financial risks from this report, sickness absence is captured as a hidden loss to the organisation.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

Lead Officer Contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Workforce Summary 30 September 2025

Appendix 2 Sickness Dashboard 2025-26

Appendix 3 EDI Dashboard 2025-26

Appendix 4 Turnover 2025-26

Background papers

None