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DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Personnel Committee
Date: Wednesday 3 December 2025
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD

Membership

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)

Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden

Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitutes Any member of the relevant political group, except members of the Appeals Panel

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. Minutes (Pages 5 - 6)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2025.

4. Chair's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chair.

5. Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chair to report on any requests to address the meeting.

6. Urgent Business

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

7. Policy Review Updates (Pages 7 - 126)

Report of the Assistant Director Human Resources.

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

Recommendations

The Personnel Committee resolves:

1.1 To review and approve the following policies for implementation:

- a. Grievance Policy
- b. Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- c. Maternity Leave Policy
- d. Adoption Leave Policy
- e. Parental Leave Policy
- f. Shared Parental Leave Policy
- g. Time off for Dependents
- h. Domestic Abuse Policy

8. Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 2 of 2025-26 (Pages 127 - 156)

Report of the Assistant Director Human Resources.

Purpose of report

To provide the Personnel Committee with an update on Cherwell District Council's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers are taking to address any issues.

Recommendations

The Personnel Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review and note the workforce data for quarter 2 of 2025/26 provided in appendix one, devised to provide insight that will enable officers of CDC to address challenges and efficiencies in the workforce more efficiently.

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members' Lounge at the end of the meeting.

Information about this Meeting

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

Evacuation Procedure

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The council is obliged, by law, to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, and report on proceedings. The council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

Published on Tuesday 25 November 2025

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 17 September 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Besmira Brasha (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

10 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

11 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

12 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

14 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

15 **Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 1 of 2025/26**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's (CDC) workforce as at the end of quarter 1 of 2025/26, including measuring staff well-being and highlighting the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Brant, advised that there were no issues, risks or concerns to highlight.

In response to a question regarding potential barriers to recruitment due to ethnicity, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the Councils recruitment process aimed to be as fair and transparent as possible, but that a review of the process was underway to ensure that any remaining barriers were removed or mitigated where practicable.

In response to a question regarding dismissals based on capability and the processes in place to prevent such dismissals, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that such cases were rare. Should such a case arise, a review would be held to provide lessons learned to help prevent future occurrences.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 1 of 2025/26 (financial year dates) be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.02 pm

Chair:

Date:

This report is public	
Policy Review Updates	
Committee	Personnel Committee
Date of Committee	3 December 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	21 November 2025
Report of	Assistant Director of Human Resources, Claire Cox

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to existing HR policies.

1. Recommendations

The Personnel Committee resolves:

1.1 To review and approve the following policies for implementation:

- a. Grievance Policy
- b. Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- c. Maternity Leave Policy
- d. Adoption Leave Policy
- e. Parental Leave Policy
- f. Shared Parental Leave Policy
- g. Time off for Dependents
- h. Domestic Abuse Policy

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides overview of the latest policies that have been updated for review and approval by the Committee, as part of a rolling programme of policy reviews and updates.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	This is an information report recommending Committee to approve the reviewed and revised policies itemed above. Therefore, there are no financial implications associated with this report. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 11 November 2025

Legal	<p>Having policies in place to ensure that all new starters receive a consistent level of support and training will help to ensure that the Council inducts all of its new staff in a manner which will allow them to carry out their roles effectively going forward and support the Council's core values.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill Head of Legal Services, 19 November 2025</p>			
Risk	<p>There are no risks arising directly from this report. Having up-to-date and fit for purpose policies mitigates risks such falling behind our peers regarding staff health and wellbeing policies, or new starters falling behind due to lack of support and training.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 November 2025</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		There are no Equalities impacts arising directly from this report. Our policies are developed/reviewed according to the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, and in line with the Equalities Act 2010. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 November 2025
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A

Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	N/A			
Human Resources	<p>It is essential that policies are regularly reviewed and kept up to date with both legislative and organisational requirements.</p> <p>Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 10 November 2025</p>			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	<p>UNISON, the Extended Leadership Team and the Corporate Leadership Team have all been consulted on these policies ahead of submission for approval by the Personnel Committee.</p>			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The policies outlined above are part of the rolling programme of policy updates that officers are bringing to Personnel Committee for approval as HR systematically work through and refresh all HR-related policies.
- 3.2 UNISON, and Extended and Corporate Leadership Teams have been provided with these documents for review and comment ahead of approval being sought from the Personnel Committee.

4. Details

- 4.1 The approach officers are taking to review all HR policies is to prioritise those needed to reflect changes in legislation and or work practices.
- 4.2 The aim of the review was to simplify the content where possible, removing any unnecessary information and ultimately making them more user friendly for managers and employees to understand and follow.
- 4.3 The table in Appendix 1 gives an overview of all the proposed changes for each policy.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: The alternative option would be to continue with the existing policies however officers have rejected this as the policies do not reflect current legislation or the Council's objectives of being an attractive, modern employer.

6. Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Officers have updated the policies attached to this report to reflect current legislation and good practice but also to make them much more user friendly and attractive for existing and potential employees. For these reasons officers recommend the committee approves the revised policies.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	N/A

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Changes to policies
Appendix 2	2025 Grievance Policy and Procedure
Appendix 3	2025 Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
Appendix 4	2025 Maternity Leave Policy
Appendix 5	2025 Adoption Leave Policy
Appendix 6	2025 Parental Leave Policy
Appendix 7	2025 Shared Parental Leave Policy
Appendix 8	2025 Time Off for Dependents Policy
Appendix 9	2025 Domestic Abuse Policy
Report Author	Assistant Director of Human Resources, Claire Cox
Report Author contact details	Claire.cox@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 221549

Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Executive Director for Resources
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Changes to Policies

Policy	Changes
Grievance Policy	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates. tracked changes for review. Added third-party harassment.
Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates. Change reference to 'you' and replaced with 'employee'. Added reference to neurodivergent employees.
Maternity Leave Policy	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates. Reference added to the EV salary sacrifice scheme and the new neonatal policy. Updated to reflected employees on the EV salary sacrifice scheme.
Adoption Leave Policy	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates. Reference added to the EV salary sacrifice scheme
Parental Leave Policy	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates. Change reference to 'you' and replaced with 'employee'. Updated to reflected employees on the EV salary sacrifice scheme.
Shared Parental Leave Policy	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates.
Time off for Dependents	Minor tweaks to reflect review date and footer dates.
Domestic Abuse Policy	Full policy refresh following feedback from the Lived Experience group.

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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Grievance Policy and Procedure

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Grievance Policy and Procedure
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District Council.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 3 December 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.0	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance.

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of the Grievance Policy and Procedure is to give all employees access to a procedure to help deal with any grievances relating to their employment fairly and promptly.
- 1.2 In practice this means we aim to investigate any formal grievance raised, hold a meeting to discuss it with the employee, inform them in writing of the outcome, and give them the right of appeal. The purpose of this procedure is to set out how employees can raise a grievance and how we will investigate and deal with grievances.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all employees at Cherwell District Council, and will apply whenever grievances are raised. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers.
- 2.2 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.
- 2.3 Human Resources has responsibility for advising managers on all aspects of the operation of this policy. Therefore, HR should be consulted when a grievance is raised by an employee or in respect of any grievance that is being dealt with.

3. Confidentiality

- 3.1 Strict confidentiality must be maintained when dealing with grievances. **All those involved in the grievance** including managers, the employee, colleagues, witnesses and representatives must maintain strict confidentiality **at all times** in order to ensure the integrity of the investigation process.
- 3.2 Records should be kept detailing the nature of the grievance raised, the response, any action taken, and the reasons for it.

4. Types Of Grievance

- 4.1 There are many forms of grievance that staff may have. They can range from work related issues, to concerns about an employee's fellow worker's or a client's actions that affect them. They can also cover terms and conditions of employment, health and safety, relationships at work, new working practices, organisational change and equal opportunities. Whilst not exhaustive, the following list identifies the main grievances that can be brought under this procedure. Types of grievance may include:
 - (a) Discrimination
 - (b) Terms and conditions of employment
 - (c) Unfair application of Council policy
 - (d) Health and safety complaints

- (e) Work relations
- (f) Bullying and harassment;
- (g) New working practices;
- (h) Working environment; and
- (i) Organisational change.

4.2 This procedure covers all types of grievances **except** those relating to grading, pensions or disciplinary issues for which separate procedures exist. (See separate Council policies as appropriate.)

5. Collective Grievances

5.1 If a collective grievance arises involving a group of employees within the same or different departments, but relating to the same issue, it may be dealt with through this policy, and the group of staff may nominate a spokesperson to represent their case.

PROCEDURE

6. Raising grievances informally

- 6.1 Most grievances can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with their line manager. All employees may choose and are encouraged to discuss the grievance with their line manager (or their line manager's manager where the grievance concerns the line manager) to see if the matter can be resolved informally and without invoking the formal grievance procedure.
- 6.2 Informal procedures concentrate on conciliation, not sanctions. For example, asking someone to stop doing something or to apologise. Managers must take any issue raised with them seriously.
- 6.3 If this does not resolve the issue, the employee should follow the formal procedure below.
- 6.4 Mediation may potentially be an option available to the employee, in appropriate circumstances, as an alternative way of resolving a grievance.

7. Third-Party Harassment

7.1 Grievances involving harassment or inappropriate conduct by third parties (e.g. clients, customers, contractors) will be taken seriously. The council will investigate such complaints and take appropriate action, which may include reviewing service arrangements, issuing warnings to third parties, or terminating contracts where necessary.

8. Formal written grievances

8.1 If the grievance cannot be resolved informally the employee should put it in writing. The written grievance should contain a brief description of the nature of the complaint, including any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved. The employee should complete a staff grievance form (which can be found at Appendix 1). The employee making the grievance should send the grievance form to their HR Business Partner.

9. Representation

- 9.1 If the employee is invited to a grievance meeting or appeal meeting under this procedure, they may bring a companion who may be either a trade union representative or a colleague.
- 9.2 The representative must be permitted to make representations and ask questions, and to confer with the person they are representing during the hearing in order to clarify issues. However, the representative is not entitled to answer questions on behalf of that person.
- 9.3 The hearing must be postponed if the representative is unavailable, but they must propose a reasonable alternative date and time within five working days from the postponed hearing date. If the chosen companion will not be available for more than five working days afterwards, we may ask the employee to choose someone else.

10. Timing

- 10.1 A key and essential feature of the Grievance policy and procedure is dealing with grievances promptly.
- 10.2 The actual timescale will depend on the nature of the grievance, the circumstances and the complexity
- 10.3 Dependent upon the nature of the grievance, it may be appropriate to take immediate steps to assist the employee. For example, it may be necessary to take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the employee making the grievance. Such action could include reorganising or relocating work to avoid close or regular contact with a particular individual.

11. Grievance meetings

- 11.1 Following receipt of the grievance form (Appendix 1), we will arrange a grievance meeting, normally to take place within one week of receiving the written grievance. The employee and companion (if any) should make every effort to attend the grievance meetings. If the employee or companion cannot attend at the time specified, they should inform us immediately and we will try, within reason, to agree an alternative time.
- 11.2 The purpose of a grievance meeting is to enable the employee to explain the grievance and how they think it should be resolved, and to assist us to reach a decision based on the available evidence and the representations they have made.
- 11.3 After an initial grievance meeting, we may carry out further investigations and hold further grievance meetings as we consider appropriate. Such meetings will be arranged without unreasonable delay.

- 11.4 We will write, usually within one week of the final grievance meeting, to inform the employee of the outcome of their grievance and any further action that we intend to take to resolve the grievance. We will also remind the employee of the right of appeal. Where appropriate we may hold a meeting to give this information in person.

12. Investigation

- 12.1 It may be necessary for us to carry out an investigation into the grievance. The amount of time any investigation is required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. It may involve interviewing and taking statements from the employee and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents.
- 12.2 The employee must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing us of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending interviews, as part of our investigation.
- 12.3 We may initiate an investigation before holding a grievance meeting where we consider this appropriate. In other cases, we may hold a grievance meeting before deciding what investigation (if any) to carry out. In those cases, we will hold a further grievance meeting with the employee after our investigation and before we reach a decision.

13. Stage Three - Appeal

- 13.1 The employee can appeal against the decision/outcome if the grievance has not been resolved to their satisfaction. This appeal must be made to the Assistant Director – HR in writing on the form found at Appendix 2 within 5 working days of receiving the decision in writing.
- 13.2 An appeal meeting will be held, normally within five working days of receiving the written appeal. The appeal will be heard by the Appeals Panel. They may ask anyone previously involved to be present. The employee has the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting.
- 13.3 The Appeals Panel will confirm their decision in writing, usually within 5 working days of the appeal hearing. This decision is final and there is no further appeal.

Staff Grievance Form

Your Name	
Your Job Title	
Your Service Area and Line Manager	

Details of your grievance including a description of the nature of your complaint, with any relevant facts, dates and names of individuals involved (please continue on separate sheet if required)

[illegible]

Did you speak informally to your line manager about your grievance?	
If so, why are you dissatisfied with the response?	

Signature	
Date	

Please send or give this form to your HR Business Partner

Appeal Statement

This statement should be completed only if you wish to appeal against the decision in respect of your grievance.

Your Name	
Your Job Title	
Your Service Area and Line Manager	

Details of your appeal stating your full grounds of appeal (please continue on separate sheet if required)

Signature	
Date	

Please send this form to the Assistant Director – HR **within 5 working days** of receiving your grievance decision in writing.

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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
Owner	Human Resources
Version	3.0
Date of implementation	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 3 December 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
1.0	13 June 2023	Update of appeal procedure following change to constitution. The Personnel Committee agreed to this change.
2.0	06 Jan 2024	Update to add the ill health dismissal procedure as an Annex to this policy.
3.0	03 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and the Council may amend it at any time.
- 1.2 This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers, or interns.
- 1.3 The Council value the contribution of their employees in delivering quality services to their customers. Whilst recognising that employees may be prevented from attending work due to ill health the Council also have a duty to maintain service delivery and minimise disruption. The overriding objective of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure is to manage sickness absence levels whilst maintaining a positive, fair, and consistent approach to staff.
- 1.4 The Council recognise and accept their responsibility to employees to ensure the working environment is safe and that the conditions of employment are conducive to good health and wellbeing. A satisfactory level of employee attendance at work is crucial and non-satisfactory levels reduce our available resources and can have a negative impact on how we deliver our services. It also places colleagues under undue pressure.
- 1.5 The purpose of this policy is to support all employees to achieve and maintain an optimum level of attendance at work, to ensure that attendance is managed effectively, and that the sickness scheme is not abused, whilst ensuring that employees with a genuine illness are treated sensitively.
- 1.6 When an employee is absent due to sickness, they must satisfy the requirements of the Council's absence procedure in order that their respective entitlements to statutory and occupational sickness pay are made.
- 1.7 The Council expects all employees to take their mental and physical health seriously and to take personal responsibility for following health working practices and lifestyle choices so that they remain healthy and can attend work regularly, e.g. taking regular breaks, booking annual leave.

2. Policy statement

- 2.1 It is the policy of the Council:
 - To objectively assess any periods of absence and decide on appropriate action.
 - To review reasons for sickness absence in order to help prevent the absence recurring.
 - To address any welfare problems and ensure appropriate medical assistance is being provided.

- To identify work-related ill health and address the cause.
- To promote occupational health and welfare to ensure the workforce is effective and efficient.

2.2 The policy and procedures will be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner taking into account individual circumstances and respecting confidentiality.

3. Definitions

- ✓ **Absence** – not attending for work when contractually required to do so.
- ✓ **Authorised absence** – absence authorised by line management prior to or after its occurrence and can be paid or unpaid.
- ✓ **Unauthorised absence** – absence not authorised by line management prior to or after its occurrence and is **always unpaid**.
- ✓ **Self-certificated sickness** – employees are required to complete a self-certification form for the first seven days of any sickness absence. This form is sent to HR via the employee's line manager. (Saturdays and Sundays are included if both the Friday and Monday are recorded as sickness absence).
- ✓ **Medically certificated sickness** – sickness absence of more than 7 consecutive days must be supported by a medical certificate.
- ✓ **Frequent short-term absence** – absences that are normally sporadic and attributable to minor ailments. Often the employee will only be absent for a maximum of a week, but more often for single days.
- ✓ **Long term absence** – where an employee has been, or is expected to be, continuously absent for four weeks or more.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 Medical information is confidential. This does not mean that employees have the right to withhold information about their medical condition. However, it does mean that the Council recognise that some employees may be reluctant to divulge sensitive or personal information and therefore the absence procedures allow employees some discretion over who, within management, they may speak to about ill health problems. Whoever receives such information must respect confidentiality.
- 4.2 Any information the employee provides to us about their health will be processed lawfully and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.
- 4.3 Any breach of confidentiality will be regarded as serious and could lead to disciplinary action.

5. Notification of absence - *Day one*

- 5.1 Employees must contact their line manager on the first day of absence ideally by the time they would normally start work, and in any case within one hour of their normal start time, giving the nature of their illness or symptoms, its likely duration and what arrangements are being made, if any, to seek medical advice. This is to ensure that the work can be covered and there is a minimum of disruption to service delivery.
- 5.2 Personal contact should be made by the employee by telephone. If an employee is unable to reasonably access a telephone, they should make arrangements for an appropriate person to notify their line manager personally on their behalf. Sending a text message via a mobile phone or an e-mail is not an acceptable method of notifying a period of absence. An exception to this rule is in circumstances when an employee is due to start an early shift, and it would be unreasonable to contact the manager other than by text. However, in this circumstance the employee must follow up any message with personal contact no later than 9.00am.
- 5.3 In the event of not being able to contact the line manager, employees must leave a message, including the information in 5.1, with another colleague in their team. The member of staff receiving this information will ensure that the line manager, or another appropriate manager, is informed of the absence verbally as soon as possible.
- 5.4 The line manager should obtain and record the following information from the employee when they notify them of their absence:
- Date and time of call.
 - Reason for absence/nature of illness.
 - Likely duration of absence.
 - If the employee does not call in themselves the name and relationship of the individual reporting the absence.
- 5.5 The line manager and employee may agree arrangements to contact each other during the period of absence in addition to those required in this policy, in the interests of both the welfare of the member of staff and the maintenance of service delivery levels.
- 5.6 Except where a medical certificate covering the period has already been supplied to the Council, through the employee's line manager, employees should contact their line manager on each subsequent working day of absence unless otherwise instructed by their line manager, until their return to work.

More than seven days' absence

- 5.7 After seven calendar days' continuous absence the employee must inform their line manager of progress and obtain a medical certificate. This form must be sent by the employee to HR via the line manager as soon as possible.

Continuing absence

- 5.8 A medical certificate is required for all subsequent absence both to authorise that absence and to ensure payment of appropriate sickness pay.
- 5.9 An employee can provide a medical certificate that has been issued by a hospital instead of a medical certificate if there has been a period of hospitalisation.
- 5.10 After absences of fourteen days or more the employee may be required to see the Council's Occupational Health Advisor to confirm that they are fit to return to work.

6. Non-compliance with this procedure

- 6.1 Sick pay may be withheld for any periods of sickness absence not covered by a self-certificate or a medical certificate. Continuation of medically certificated absence must be provided no later than 7 days after the expiry of the previous medical certificate. If this is not provided without good reason pay may be suspended until a medical certificate is produced to cover the period of absence.
- 6.2 Where periods of absence are not correctly reported in line with this procedure, this may be treated as unauthorised absence and the appropriate pay deducted. Formal procedures will be invoked where repeated non-compliance with this procedure occurs.

7. Conduct during absence

- 7.1 The purpose of paid and unpaid sickness absence is to facilitate an employee's recovery from an illness or injury. Therefore, activities which would normally be considered inconsistent with genuine sickness or injury, or contravene this policy include:
- Participation in any sport, hobby, social or other activity which could aggravate the illness or injury, or which could delay recovery.
 - Undertaking any other employment during sickness absence whether paid or unpaid, which is in any way inconsistent with the nature of the illness or injury.

- Taking sickness where annual leave has not been granted (in the event of this happening, a doctor's note will be requested as part of the investigation).
- Altering or causing to have altered any of the details on the fit note.
- Providing inaccurate or misleading information about the absence.

7.2 Formal disciplinary measures may be taken against any individual who is believed to have contravened the policy and if employees are found to be using the scheme for purposes other than recovery from illness or injury.

7.3 During any period of sickness absence an employee must be willing to participate in regular contact with their line manager or another nominated officer such as an HR representative. This could also include Occupational Health when this is deemed appropriate.

8. Contact during long term absence

8.1 The line manager should take positive steps to keep in touch so that the employee knows that the employer is interested in their health in instances of long-term absence. Line managers should ask the employee whether they would prefer telephone contact, occasional visits at home (perhaps by a colleague), email communication or a combination of these. The line manager will not put pressure on the employee and the employee's wishes as regards contact arrangements. HR should be kept informed of progress and can offer advice and support as and when required.

9. Occupational health

9.1 During the course of employment, the Council may request that the employee undergoes medical examinations or health interviews by our Occupational Health Advisors. They are able to provide an invaluable service, for instance, in assisting employees to return to work after prolonged periods of absence and can advise us on how best to manage and support them. In such circumstances, to ensure that our occupational services can provide us with the advice we need, the employee will be asked to agree to the medical advisor disclosing the results of the examination to the organisation in accordance with the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and shall provide the organisation with such formal consents as may be necessary for this purpose. The Council reserves the right to test for alcohol and drug intoxication as detailed in the Alcohol and Drugs policy.

9.2 Employees are asked to co-operate with a request to obtain a medical report although if they do not, management will have no choice but to make a decision based on the information available.

9.3 In the event that there is a conflict between Occupational Health advice and the advice provided by the employee's Doctor, the Council reserves the right to prefer the advice of Occupational Health on account of their independence.

10. Annual leave and sickness absence

10.1 Where an employee falls sick or is injured while on holiday, the Council will allow the employee to transfer to sick leave and take replacement annual leave at a later time. This is subject to the following strict conditions:

- The employee must contact their Line Manager (by telephone if possible) as soon as they know that there will be a period of incapacity during a holiday.
- A qualified medical practitioner must fully certificate the total period of incapacity.
- Where the employee is overseas when he/she falls ill or is injured, evidence must still be produced that the employee was ill by way of either a medical certificate or proof of a claim on an insurance policy for medical treatment received at the overseas location.

10.2 Where the employee fulfils all of the above conditions, the Council will grant the employee the same number of days' replacement annual leave as the number of annual leave days lost due to sickness or injury. An employee must request to take any replacement annual leave in accordance with the Council's normal annual leave policy and should endeavour to take the replacement annual leave in the same leave year in which it was accrued. During sickness absence an employee will continue to accrue annual leave entitlement.

10.3 If the employment is terminated before an employee returns from sick leave, they will receive a payment in lieu of any accrued but untaken annual leave.

11. Absence relating to Neurodivergent Employees

11.1 The Council recognises that neurodivergent employees (including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other cognitive differences) may experience illness, stress, and workplace environments differently.

11.2 Reasonable adjustments will be considered for neurodivergent employees in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. In these circumstances managers are advised to contact HR at the earliest opportunity for help and advice.

12. Managing mental health related illness

12.1 Any employee who is suffering from a mental health related absence e.g. stress, depression, anxiety must be referred immediately to our Occupational Health providers who will make an assessment and give the manager appropriate advice.12.2 In these circumstances managers are advised to contact HR at the earliest opportunity for help and advice.

13. Long term sickness and ill health dismissal

- 13.1 Consecutive medical certificates are needed to cover the full period of long-term absence, and the employee must contact their line manager each time a new medical certificate is obtained.
- 13.2 The underlying principle in the management of long-term absence is to balance the service needs against the circumstances of the employee concerned. Each case will be assessed individually. HR will work in close partnership with the employee's line manager.
- 13.3 HR may, as appropriate, arrange a mutually convenient time to visit the employee at home to discuss their wellbeing and the circumstances relating to their sickness absence. The visit may include gaining written consent to obtain medical information.
- 13.4 The line manager or nominee will also maintain regular contact with the employee, ideally at least every two weeks to prevent the employee feeling isolated, ensure their welfare needs are being met and keep them updated with any developments at work which may affect them. Contact may be by telephone, letter, or home visits.
- 13.5 A meeting either at home or at work, must be arranged with the employee at a time to suit them. They can have friends, family, colleagues, or their Trade Union Representative present and will be advised of this when making any arrangements.
- 13.6 An Occupational Health referral is needed in the majority of cases of long-term absence. This should occur at the earliest practical opportunity in order to gain a speedy and useful response.
- 12.7 The Occupational Health Advisor may seek further medical advice on the nature of the employee's illness, whether and when the employee is likely to be able to return, whether they are likely to be able to return full-time or part-time for a while, or whether they will need alternative work.
- 13.8 When the employee returns to work a Return-to-Work Meeting must be held and a Self-Certification / Return-to-Work form completed.
- 13.9 An employee recovering from long-term sickness absence must be properly monitored and managed by the line manager. Other arrangements may include temporary revision of workloads and/or refresher training.
- 13.10 If, following review, permanent adjustments need to be made, all reasonable steps will be taken to accommodate the changes. The aim is, as far as is practical, to facilitate continued employment.
- 13.11 When medical advice indicates that the employee may have become incapable of undertaking their duties, the Council's Ill Health Dismissal Procedure (Annex A) will

be followed. If the employee is a member of the local government pension scheme, the Ill health retirement process will be discussed.

14. Terminal illness

14.1 When the Council becomes aware that an employee has a terminal illness the following needs to be taken into account:

- The employee may not be aware that the illness is terminal if the medical practitioner has decided that it is not in the person's best interest to be informed of their condition.
- The financial entitlement available to relatives on the death of the employee may be substantially more if the employee remains employed by the Council until the time of death.
- People are affected differently by the knowledge that they are terminally ill. Some may wish to continue working for as long as they are able while others may find it impossible to remain at work.
- The Council is sympathetic to the employee's situation and will manage the employee's situation on an individual basis, giving careful consideration to the employee's interests.
- The Council will be mindful of the pension benefits that can accrue and the length of service qualifications that apply to those benefits. Where possible, decisions about ill health retirement will aim to provide the employee with the most financially beneficial result.

15. Returning to work

15.1 Return-to-Work Interviews will be conducted for all sickness absence regardless of length of time off.

15.2 A Return-to-Work Interview should be done on the day of return, preferably within the first four hours of starting either their rota or normal working day. It is at this point that any failure to comply with this policy will also be recorded. In some circumstances there may be an acceptable explanation, and this can be acknowledged. If there is no acceptable explanation, the disciplinary process may apply. HR should be contacted for advice if this is being considered.

15.3 Return-to-Work Interviews should be conducted in a sympathetic manner and appropriate arrangements for privacy should be made. The Return-to-Work Interview should facilitate a resumption of work and progression to full responsibilities within an agreed timescale.

15.4 It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that the correct documentation is received to cover the period of absence, whether it is a Self-Certification Form / Return-to-Work form or a medical certificate. These must be passed to HR to be

kept on the employee's record and to ensure payroll are able to pay the correct entitlement.

- 15.5 The line manager should also be alert to any patterns of absence, for example the persistent Monday or Friday absentee. If a pattern is identified, the line manager should put their observations to the employee directly so that the employee has the opportunity to provide an explanation. The line manager should, however, remain open-minded and not jump to any hasty conclusions about the employee's absences.
- 15.6 The line manager will approve the Self-Certification Form / Return-to-Work Form, provided that they are satisfied that the claim is genuine and the reason for the absence is suitable. If the reasons are not deemed acceptable this then may constitute unauthorised absence, and disciplinary action may also be instigated.
- 15.7 The purpose of this return-to-work interview is to explore:
- What actions the employee has taken to address the issue e.g. medical treatment.
 - Whether any aspect of the job may be affecting the employee's health and whether any temporary changes to the job could assist attendance.
 - Any underlying health problem and the likelihood of further absence.
 - Whether the employee has a disability, and if so whether there are any reasonable adjustments that could be made.
 - The impact of the absence on the service.
 - Setting clear targets for improved attendance, e.g. no more than one day's sickness in three months. Occupational Health or HR can advise on appropriate targets.
 - Whether medical advice is needed from the Occupational Health Service.
 - Any other relevant considerations.
- 15.8 Where an employee returns to work after an extended period of sickness absence, the return-to-work interview will take account of any particular difficulties in relation to any agreed return to work programme. The Council will discuss reasonable adjustments, on an individual basis, with all employees who have been on long-term sick leave. Long term changes to roles will be considered but not guaranteed. Redeployment will be considered where appropriate.
- 15.9 Where an employee has been on long term sick, the Council will consider the possibility of a four-week phased return to work pattern. During that period of a phased return, where it has been specifically recommended by a GP or Occupational Health professional, the employee will receive full pay. In exceptional circumstances only, the period of phased return may be extended beyond four weeks. If extended beyond four weeks, the employee would only be paid for the

hours worked. The remaining hours would be unpaid, or the employee can use annual leave, where available.

16. Monitoring sickness absence

16.1 Informal action

16.2 The line manager should try to establish, through investigation and discussion with the employee, the underlying reasons for frequent absences. Until the underlying cause is identified, an appropriate and effective remedy will be impossible to identify. Check whether or not absences are in part because of personal or family problems. Check whether the employee's absences are in any way work related, for example as a result of workplace stress. If the problem is work related, the line manager should take prompt steps to remove or reduce the factor that is causing the employee's problem. Seek medical advice through Occupational Health, if appropriate, to determine whether there is any underlying medical cause for the employee's frequent absences. Speak to the HR department to refer to Occupational Health.

16.3 Set reasonable targets and time-limits for improvement in attendance and ensure that the employee is committed to achieving them. Warn the employee of the consequences of continuing unsatisfactory attendance, i.e. that further action will be taken which may eventually lead to dismissal. Schedule a follow-up meeting at an agreed time to monitor the on-going situation.

16.4 Before taking any formal action in respect of an employee who has had frequent absences from work, the line manager should check the employee's absence record to gain an accurate assessment of the number of days' absence that they have had and the number of separate occasions that they have been absent.

16.5 If there is no improvement and absence levels are unsustainable; the formal stages of this policy will be invoked.

17. Stage One - First Formal Discussion

17.1 This discussion will be conducted where:

- There have been three periods of absence in 5 or less consecutive calendar months, or
- Sickness absence levels are running at 8 working days or more in a rolling year (pro-rata for part time staff).
- There is an unacceptable pattern of absence, such as, regular Fridays or Mondays.
- Absence regularly occurs on a particular day of the week.

- Absence regularly occurs at peak workload periods.
- Any period of absence gives concern.
- There is continued failure to follow the notification process without good reason.
- No satisfactory reason for being absent from work has been provided.
- There is a continuing pattern of unauthorised absences.
- There has been a failure to provide medical certificates when required.
- There is reason to believe that the employee has taken part in activities that are inconsistent with the cause of absence or prejudicial to recovery.

Managers in consultation with Human Resources should use their discretion and not automatically go to a stage one meeting in certain exceptional circumstances e.g. due to a terminal illness or surgical intervention.

- 17.2 The line manager should inform the employee of the date, time, and place of the meeting, giving a minimum of 5 working days' notice, as well as a brief explanation of why the meeting is to be held, by using the Formal Discussion letter (Appendix D). The employee is entitled to be represented by a Trade Union Representative or colleague of their choice, which they are responsible for arranging.
- 17.3 If the employee's representative is unavailable to attend at the appointed time, the employee may request postponement and suggest an alternative time and date. If this is reasonable and within 5 working days of the original date, the meeting will be postponed.
- 17.4 The first formal discussion gives the line manager and the employee the opportunity to discuss the employee's absence record and the reasons for the absence(s), and any non-compliance with the Sickness Policy. A course of action will be set out over a specified period of time to provide the employee with an opportunity to improve. During the discussion, the line manager will:
- Review the employee's attendance record during the relevant period.
 - Review any non-compliance issues.
 - Give the employee the opportunity to discuss any problems or raise any concerns.
 - Decide whether any further action is required such as a referral to the Council's Occupational Health Advisor (see Section 7).
 - Agree a target for improvement in sickness levels over an agreed monitoring period, usually 3 months.
 - Inform the employee that if attendance and/or compliance does not improve within the time period, a second formal discussion will be held.
- 17.5 During the discussion a formal discussion form must be completed by the employee and line manager.

- 17.6 Following the meeting the employee will be given a copy of the form, and a letter advising of his/her right of appeal. A copy of both the form and letter will be sent to Human Resources.
- 17.7 In setting targets for improvement, the line manager will take into account the individual circumstances of the case; any advice received from the Occupational Health Advisor; the impact of any underlying medical condition or disability; and any reasonable workplace adjustments that need to be put in place to enable the employee to improve their attendance.
- 17.8 Following the First Formal Discussion, attendance and/or compliance will be monitored monthly.
- 17.9 A target of reduced absence during the formal monitoring period (normally 3 months) will be set, following which a formal review will be held.
- 17.10 If the target set for improvement has not been met and the agreed action from Stage 1 is not having satisfactory results, the line manager may move to Stage 2 at which a HR representative will also be present.
- 17.11 If the target set for improvement has been met there will be no need for further formal review meetings. However, attendance will continue to be monitored for a further three months. Provided that attendance and/or compliance do not deteriorate during this period there will be no further need for formal monitoring and the employee will be removed from the formal stages of this policy. If attendance and/or compliance deteriorate during this period, however, the line manager may move to Stage 2.

18. Stage Two - Second Formal Discussion

- 18.1 Progression to Stage 2 may occur where: there has been a failure to meet the targets set out in Stage 1, an employee has two Stage 1 discussions within the previous 3-year period or where the total period of absence in any 2-year period exceeds 6 months.
- 18.2 The employee will be notified of the date, time, and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance using the formal discussion letter and advised of the right to be represented. If the employee's representative is unavailable to attend at the appointed time, the employee may request postponement and suggest an alternative time and date. If this is reasonable and within 5 working days of the original date, the meeting will be postponed.
- 18.3 The purpose of this discussion is to ensure that the employee is given a further opportunity to discuss their absence formally and explain why their absence level is not improving. During the Second Formal Discussion the line manager will:

- Review the employee's attendance record during the monitoring period.
- Review any areas of non-compliance with the policy and procedures.
- Review the steps that have been taken to support him/her in achieving the required level of attendance.
- Give the employee the opportunity to discuss any problems or raise any concerns.
- Discuss any Occupational Health advice that has been received.
- Review the impact of any support or work adjustments recommended by the Occupational Health Advisor, for example counselling.
- Decide whether any new information requires further referral to the Council's Occupational Health Advisor.
- Agree a target for improvement in sickness levels over a further monitoring period, usually three months.
- Agree any further help and support that can be provided to enable the employee to improve their attendance.
- Consider any changes in working arrangements which would allow the employee to continue working in their current job e.g. change of hours, period of unpaid leave, job design – whilst maintaining appropriate levels of service.
- Inform the employee that in the event of a medical report advising that they are permanently unfit to undertake their duties, their continued employment will be in question.
- Consider the possibility of redeployment on medical grounds.
- Consider if ill health retirement should be explored.
- Issue a **formal warning** to the member of staff that his/her employment may be terminated if their attendance levels do not improve within the specified time period.

18.4 A Formal Absence Discussion Form must be completed. This will provide a record of the meeting and the outcome. A copy will be given to the employee and to Human Resources.

18.5 The employee must be advised of his/her right of appeal.

18.6 A target of reduced absence during a formal monitoring period (normally 3 months) will be set, and attendance and compliance will be monitored monthly during that period, following which a formal review will be held.

18.7 If the target set for improvement has not been met and the agreed action from Stage 2 is not having results, the line manager may move to Stage 3.

18.8 If the target set for improvement has been met there will be no need for further formal review meetings. However, attendance will continue to be monitored for a further three months. Provided that attendance and/or compliance do not

deteriorate during this period there will be no further need for formal monitoring, the employee will be removed from the formal stages of this policy. If attendance and/or compliance deteriorate during this period, however, the line manager may move to Stage 3.

19. Stage Three - Final Formal Discussion: Dismissal

- 19.1 A Final Formal Discussion may be held if the improvement target(s) have not been met or sustained. Failure to meet the targets set out in Stage 2 may result in progression to Stage 3, or if an employee has two Stage 2 discussions (or more) within the previous 3-year period. This meeting will be with the Assistant Director, line manager and a representative from the HR Team.
- 19.2 The employee should be notified of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance and advised of the right to be represented. If the employee's representative is unavailable to attend at the appointed time, the employee may request postponement and suggest an alternative time and date. If this is reasonable and within 5 working days of the original date, the meeting will be postponed.
- 19.3 The purpose of the meeting is to consider whether the employee should be dismissed on the grounds of capability. Dismissal on grounds of ill health capability means that the employee's health is such that they cannot satisfactorily do the work they are employed to do. Ultimately, the Council do not have to retain the services of any employee who cannot for whatever reason attend work on a regular basis and by definition fulfil their contractual obligations to their employer. Each case will be dealt with on its own individual merits and particular circumstances in the light of the following information:
- The employee's attendance record.
 - The steps that have been taken to support them in achieving the required level of attendance.
 - Any mitigating circumstances the employee may wish to be taken into account.
 - Any occupational health advice that has been received.
 - Other information that may have been collected during previous formal absence discussions.
- 19.4 Following the meeting a decision will be taken by the Assistant Director whether to dismiss the employee on the grounds of capability.
- 19.5 The **formal warning** may be extended to allow time for improvement in sickness absence levels. The option of allowing further time for improvement will only be considered if there is evidence that this is likely to lead to the required improvement in attendance.

19.6 The Assistant Director will confirm the decision in writing as soon as reasonably practicable and give details of the appeal process. In the case of dismissal, the employee will be provided with the reasons for it and the date on which employment will terminate.

19.7 In the event that a **formal warning** is extended the individual's sickness absence pattern will be monitored over an appropriate, specified period and regular reviews will be undertaken by the line manager during the monitoring period.

20. Appeals

20.1 An employee has rights of appeal against decisions taken. Appeals are heard by a Senior Manager who has not previously been involved in the case.

20.2 If an employee wishes to appeal s/he must do so in writing within ten working days of the written notification of the decision to the Assistant Director of Human Resources.

20.3 The outcome of the appeal will be notified either immediately after the hearing and confirmed in writing, or in any event by written notification within ten working days of the appeal hearing.

21. Sickness pay

21.1 An employee absent from work due to illness is entitled to receive sick pay, depending on their continuous service in Local Government, as follows:

Service	Full Pay	Half Pay
Less than 4 months	1 month	None
After 4 months but less than 1 year	1 month	+ 2 months
After 1 year but less than 2 years	2 months	+ 2 months
After 2 years but less than 3 years	4 months	+ 4 months
After 3 years but less than 5 years	5 months	+ 5 months
After 5 years	6 months	+ 6 months

21.2 The Council has the discretion to extend the application of the above scale in exceptional circumstances.

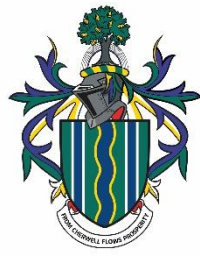
21.3 The Payroll team will notify the employee at the earliest opportunity of any reduction in sick pay entitlement.

- 21.4 Sickness absence during the twelve months immediately preceding the first day of current absence will be included in the calculation for sick pay entitlement.
- 21.5 This does not affect any entitlement the employee may have to receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for the same periods of sickness absence, although any sick pay the employee receives from the Council shall be inclusive of any SSP due.
- 21.6 If the employee has been on long term sick leave continuously for more than a year, they will not qualify for Council sick pay again until they have returned to work for a total of 26 weeks. This does not affect any entitlement the employee may have to receive further SSP.
- 21.7 Further details of entitlement to sick pay is available from the Payroll Team.

22. When the disciplinary policy applies

- 22.1 Most issues relating to absence and non-compliance are managed within the formal stages of this policy.
- 22.2 The Disciplinary Policy will be used for offences that may be regarded as gross misconduct such as:
- Making a false claim of incapacity for work due to ill health
 - Deliberate falsification of self or medical certificates
 - Abuse of the sickness scheme, for example, by undertaking paid or unpaid work elsewhere whilst on sick leave without permission
- 22.3 Further detailed advice and guidance on the use of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures is available from Human Resources.

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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Maternity Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Maternity Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	03 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	17 October 2022 (16:00)
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District Council.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 3 December 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.0	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Who the scheme applies to

Cherwell District Council's Maternity Leave Policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and the Council may amend it at any time.

1.2 Maternity rights

All pregnant employees are entitled to: -

- special consideration with regard to health and safety
- paid time off for antenatal care
- 26 weeks' ordinary maternity leave
- 26 weeks' additional maternity leave

Qualifying employees are also entitled to: -

- maternity benefit (Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance)
- occupational maternity pay

1.3 Health and safety

The Council's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy requires you to inform your manager if you are unable to carry out any working activity in a safe manner or without risk to your health and safety.

Therefore, you are strongly advised to inform your manager of your pregnancy as soon as possible. This is important as there may be health and safety considerations. This will also enable him/her to arrange for a risk assessment to be carried out relating to your working activities and environment. This will establish what, if any, action is required to safeguard your health and well-being and/or that of your unborn child.

Where an unacceptable risk is identified, the Council will take protective or preventative measures to eliminate it. Where this will not avoid the risk, you may find that one of the following steps is taken: -

- *if it is reasonable to do so, your working conditions or hours of work may be altered;*
- *if it is not reasonable to make such alterations, or if the risk cannot be avoided in this way, you may be offered suitable alternative work;*
- *if no suitable alternative work is available, you may be suspended from duties, that is given paid leave, for as long as necessary to protect your safety or health (unless you have unreasonably refused suitable alternative work).*

Another risk assessment will be undertaken upon your return to work, and if, for health and safety reasons, you are still considered to be at risk, alternative arrangements may be put in place.

If you have any further concerns or queries about the effects of your work on your own or your unborn baby's health, you should consult your manager immediately.

1.4 Time off for antenatal care

If you are pregnant, you are entitled to take paid time off, at your normal rate of pay, during your normal working hours to attend antenatal appointments. This may include relaxation and parentcraft classes as recommended by your GP on a clinical basis, as well as medical examinations.

You should advise your manager that you will be absent as far in advance of your appointment as possible. With the exception of your first appointment, you must provide evidence of your appointments if requested to do so by your manager, which could include providing a certificate from the doctor, midwife or health visitor stating that you are pregnant; and an appointment card.

1.5 **Sickness during pregnancy**

If you become ill while you are pregnant you will receive your normal entitlement to sick pay, whether or not your illness is pregnancy related. You must not remain at work if you have been certified medically unfit to do so.

If you are absent from work because of a pregnancy related illness and your illness continues or starts after the beginning of the 4th week before the week in which your baby is due, your maternity leave will usually start automatically. Non pregnancy related illness during this 4-week period will be treated as normal sickness absence.

Periods of pregnancy-related sickness absence from the start of your pregnancy until the end of your maternity leave will be recorded separately from other sickness records and will be disregarded in any future employment-related decisions.

2 **MATERNITY LEAVE**

2.1 **Timing of maternity leave**

You can choose to start your maternity leave at any time after the start of the 11th week before the week in which your baby is due (unless your baby is born prematurely before that date) and your maternity leave will start on the day that you have notified the organisation.

However, in the last 4 weeks prior to the week, starting on a Sunday, in which your doctor or midwife expects you to give birth (**Expected Week of Childbirth**) your maternity leave will begin on the day after any day on which you are absent from work wholly or partly due to pregnancy related illness or suspension from work for a pregnancy related health and safety reason.

2.2 **Early birth**

Your leave will start on the day after your baby is born if this is earlier than your notified leave date.

If your baby is born before a maternity certificate has been issued, one should be completed by your general practitioner or registered midwife showing the date your baby was born as well as the date the baby was expected. You must, if reasonably practicable, provide your manager with this certificate within 28 days.

2.3 **Death of your baby or still-birth**

If your baby dies or is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy you will still be entitled to leave in accordance with this policy and SMP. You will also be entitled to parental bereavement leave which can be one week, two consecutive weeks, or two separate weeks and can be taken at any time during the first 56 weeks after the child's death.

2.4 **Entitlement to ordinary maternity leave**

All pregnant employees are entitled to a period of 26 weeks' **ordinary maternity leave (OML)**, provided the notification requirements have been complied with (see section 2.7).

2.5 **Entitlement to additional maternity leave**

All pregnant employees are entitled to a period of 26 weeks' **additional maternity leave (AML)**. This runs from the day after the last day of the OML period and continues for a further 26 weeks,

provided the notification requirements have been complied with (see section 2.7).

2.6 Compulsory maternity leave

You must take 2 weeks' **compulsory maternity leave** beginning on the day that your child is born.

2.7 Notification requirements

You are required to notify your manager in writing of your intention to take maternity leave before the end of the fifteenth week before the week that you expect to give birth (**Qualifying Week**) or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards. You will need to tell your manager:

- that you are pregnant
- the week, starting on a Sunday, in which your doctor or midwife expects you to give birth (**Expected Week of Childbirth**)
- the date on which you would like your maternity leave to commence (**Intended Start Date**)

If you wish to change the Intended Start Date you will need to tell your manager at least 28 days in advance of the new commencement date (unless this is not reasonably practicable).

Note: Medical evidence usually in the form of a maternity certificate (known as a MAT B1 form) will need to be provided for SMP purposes and to confirm your Expected Week of Childbirth. The earliest this can be obtained from your general practitioner or registered midwife is the 20th week of pregnancy.

You can notify your manager of the above on any day of the week and your maternity leave can start on any day of the week.

2.8 The contract of employment during maternity leave

Your contract of employment continues throughout OML and AML and all of the terms and conditions of your employment remain in force during OML and AML except for the terms relating to pay (unless your employment terminates during this period of time).

2.9 Contact with work during maternity leave

You and your employer are entitled to have reasonable contact with each other to ensure that you are kept up to date with departmental changes, vacancies and any other matters relevant to the employees of CDC. The mode of contact should be confirmed and agreed prior to the commencement of maternity leave. Contact during maternity leave does not bring that period to an end. Reasonable contact does not constitute 'work' as described in 2.10 below and would not therefore count towards the 10 days.

2.10 Working during maternity leave

For the purposes of this provision, 'work' is defined as any work done under the contract of employment and may include training or any activity undertaken for the purposes of keeping in touch with the workplace. You may ask or be asked to come to work for up to 10 keeping in touch (KIT) days during the maternity leave period without bringing that period to an end as a result of carrying out the work. Working for part of a day will count as one day. This is not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your line manager.

In any case, you cannot work during the compulsory maternity leave period i.e. the first two weeks' following childbirth. The maternity leave will not be extended due to the fact that you have carried out some work in this period.

You will not lose your right to SMP as a result of working up to 10 days. You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for the actual time spent working on a KIT day and this will be inclusive of any maternity pay entitlement. To claim for hours worked you will need to submit a maternity kit day payment claim form (Appendix 4).

2.11 Terms and Conditions

i) Annual leave

Your entitlement to annual leave remains unaffected by maternity leave.

Subject to agreement by your manager, you should take your accrued annual leave prior to the commencement of your maternity leave. Any holiday entitlement for the year that is not taken **OR** cannot reasonably be taken before starting your maternity leave can be carried over to the next holiday year. This must be taken immediately before returning to work **OR** within three months of returning to work (unless your line manager agrees otherwise).

ii) Local Government Pension Scheme

Pension contributions will be deducted in the normal way from any payment you receive during your Maternity Pay Period. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any maternity pay you are receiving.

Any maternity absence which is unpaid will be treated as a break in service for occupational pension purposes unless you choose to pay voluntary contributions. These contributions will be based on the reduced remuneration that you were entitled to receive immediately before the unpaid period (this means that even if you defer receipt of your half pay until your return to work, you will pay the same contributions as someone who actually receives it during maternity leave).

You must write to Payroll and state your intention to pay voluntary contributions no later than 30 days after your return to work. You may pay these contributions as a lump sum or in instalments. For further advice please contact Payroll.

2.12 Allowances

i) Assisted car or cycle purchase scheme

The terms and conditions contained in your car or cycle loan agreement apply throughout the period of your maternity leave. Therefore, you are required to continue to make the appropriate repayments throughout your maternity leave period.

During the period of your leave where you are receiving payment, your repayment will be deducted as usual. Where there is a shortfall, you must make arrangements for the Council to receive the outstanding amount before the end of each calendar month. During any period of your maternity leave in which you are receiving no payment, you must ensure that the Council receives the full monthly amount due before the end of each calendar month.

ii) Standby duty payments

During the period of your maternity absence, you will not be required to undertake standby duty and therefore you will not receive any standby payments.

2.13 Flexible working arrangements

The Council will deal with any requests by employees to change their working patterns (such as working part-time) after maternity leave on a case-by-case basis. There is no absolute right to insist on working part-time, but you do have a statutory right to request flexible working, and we will try to accommodate your wishes unless there is a justifiable reason for refusal, bearing in mind the needs of our business. It is recommended that you review the flexible working policy before any formal request for flexible working is made. You may wish to explore this with your manager either before or during your maternity leave, however, it is helpful if requests are made as early as possible.

2.14 Other leave arrangements

Please refer to the following Council policies for further information including Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy, Parental Leave, Paternity Leave, Time off for Dependents and Special Leave

arrangements.

3 **STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY (SMP)**

Entitlement to maternity pay is determined by various factors, including length of service and earnings, and therefore Human Resources (in conjunction with Payroll) will assess your eligibility and entitlements on an individual basis.

SMP is payable for a maximum of 39 weeks. This is called the “**Maternity Pay Period**” and it may start at any time from the start of the 11th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth.

SMP is paid to you by the Council on behalf of the Inland Revenue.

3.1 **The right to SMP**

If you are pregnant or have just given birth, you are entitled to a maximum of 39 weeks' SMP providing that you: -

- *have been continuously employed by this Council for at least 26 weeks at the end of the Qualifying Week (the 15th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth);*
- *have average weekly earnings of not less than the lower earnings limit for National Insurance contributions purposes set by the government during the eight weeks ending with the Qualifying Week;*
- *still be pregnant at the 11th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth or have had your baby by that time;*
- *have provided medical evidence (usually a MAT B1) confirming the Expected Week of Childbirth either before the birth or no more than 3 weeks after the birth (or if you have good cause for delay, as soon as reasonably practicable);*
- *have stopped working for the Council wholly or partly because of pregnancy or confinement (either a live birth (at any time), or a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy);*
- *have given at least 28 days' notice (or, if that is not possible, as much notice as you can) to your manager of your intention to take maternity leave.*

3.2 **Non entitlement to SMP**

If you are not entitled to SMP or if your circumstances change and you stop getting SMP, Payroll will provide you with form SMP1 which states the reasons why the Council cannot pay you SMP.

You may be entitled to receive Maternity Allowance (**MA**) if you do not qualify for SMP. You will need form SMP1 and your maternity certificate to claim MA. This benefit is paid to you directly by the Department for Work and Pensions (for more information contact your local Social Security office or Job Centre Plus office).

You must claim MA if you are entitled to receive occupational maternity pay but are not eligible to receive SMP. You should inform your manager immediately if you receive MA as this allowance will be offset against any occupational maternity payments made to you.

3.3 **Changes in circumstances**

You cannot continue to receive SMP if, during the Maternity Pay Period:

- *you return to work after your baby is born, or you work for a new employer after the child is born who did not employ you in the Qualifying Week; or*
- *you are taken into legal custody (this means that you have been detained, usually arrested or in prison) or;*
- *you die.*

You (or a person acting for you, if applicable) are responsible for informing your manager if your circumstances change in any of the ways described above.

3.4 The rate of SMP

There are two weekly rates of SMP: -

“Earnings Related Rate”: *This is equivalent to 9/10^{ths} of your average weekly earnings before tax and is payable during the first 6 weeks of the Maternity Pay Period. As a general rule, your gross earnings will be averaged over the 8 weeks up to and including the last payday before the end of the Qualifying Week.*

“Flat Rate”: *This is paid at the prescribed rate which is set by the government and reviewed each year, or at the Earnings-Related Rate if this is lower, and paid for the remaining 33 weeks of the Maternity Pay Period. Human Resources can confirm the current rate on request.*

3.5 Payment of SMP

You will receive SMP at the same time and in the same way as your normal salary would be paid. SMP is subject to income tax and National Insurance contributions. Any deductions which are lawfully made from pay, for example pension contributions, trade union subscriptions etc, will also be made from SMP, if applicable.

3.6 Multiple Births

There is no entitlement to additional SMP for multiple births.

4 OCCUPATIONAL MATERNITY PAY

4.1 Entitlement to occupational maternity pay

You qualify for occupational maternity pay if you have completed a minimum of one year's continuous local government service at the beginning of the 11th week before the week in which your baby is due.

4.2 The rate of occupational maternity pay

For the first 6 weeks of your maternity leave you will be entitled to 90% of your average weekly earnings which will be offset against payments made by way of SMP or MA if you are not eligible for SMP (this means that you will not receive two lots of payments).

For the next 12 weeks you will receive your entitlement to the Flat Rate SMP (or MA if you are not entitled to SMP), as well as half pay. However, if your half pay plus SMP (or MA and any dependants' allowances if you are not eligible for SMP) comes to more than your full pay, it will be reduced accordingly.

You will then receive the Flat Rate SMP for the remainder of your maternity leave period (up to a maximum of 21 weeks).

4.3 Conditions attached to receiving half pay

You will receive 12 weeks' half pay (as set out at [5.2] above) on the understanding that you will return to work for the Council for **at least three months following your period of maternity leave**. Should you not do so, you may be required to pay back all, or part, of the 12 weeks' half pay. You do not have to pay back any payments made to you by way of SMP.

If you are unsure about your intention to return to work after your maternity leave, the Council will retain your half pay until you do return, provided that you inform Human Resources of your request for half pay to be withheld until your return *before* you start your

maternity leave.

4.4 Calculation of a week's pay

For the purposes of occupational maternity pay, a week's pay is calculated in one of the following ways depending upon your working hours: -

Normal working hours: *where your normal working hours do not vary with the amount of work done in the period, a week's pay is the amount payable to you by the Council under your current contract of employment for working your normal working hours in a week.*

Variable working hours: *where there are no normal working hours, a week's pay is your average remuneration in the period of 12 weeks preceding the date on which the last complete week ended, excluding any week in which no remuneration was earned.*

As the amount of maternity pay is based upon your contract of employment in force during your maternity leave, it would consequently change if, for instance, a pay award was implemented during this period.

4.5 Payment of occupational maternity pay

During your maternity absence, the payments due to you will be paid in exactly the same way as you normally receive your salary.

If you have certain payments deducted from your salary, for example, car loan, Council Tax, rent, etc, these will continue to be deducted from any payments made to you.

If you have an electrical vehicle on the salary sacrifice scheme, you must contact your HR Business Partner for more information on how maternity leave may impact your payments.

Payroll will inform you if you need to make alternative arrangements at any time during your maternity leave to ensure that you do not fall into arrears.

5 NOTICE OF RETURN TO WORK AFTER MATERNITY LEAVE

5.1 Notice required for return to work

If you intend to return immediately after the end of your AML period (52 weeks), you do not need to give advance notice of your return. Your expected date of return will be your next normal working day after the end of your 52 weeks maternity leave period (i.e. your first normal working day of the 53rd week).

However, if you wish to return to work earlier than the end of your entitled maternity leave period or if you wish to change your date of return from maternity leave, you must give your manager at least eight weeks' notice of your return date. If you do not provide this notice, the Council may postpone your return date for a period of up to eight weeks after you gave notice, or until the end of the maternity leave period, if this is sooner.

At the very least you must take two weeks' compulsory maternity leave beginning on the day that your baby is born. Should you decide to return immediately after the compulsory leave period, you may be required to provide your manager with a certificate from your

doctor which states that you are fit to work.

5.2 Employees who do not wish to return to work after maternity leave

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work after your OML or AML period, you must provide your manager with a written statement of your resignation giving the notice required by your contract of employment.

5.3 Sickness at the end of OML or AML

If you are unable to attend work at the end of your OML or AML period due to sickness, the normal contractual arrangements for sickness absence will apply.

6 RIGHTS ON AND AFTER RETURN TO WORK AFTER MATERNITY LEAVE

6.1 Return to work after OML

You are entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions of employment as if you had not been absent.

6.2 Return to work after AML / parental leave

If you have taken any period of AML, or more than 4 weeks' parental leave, and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.

6.3 Return to work and redundancy

If a redundancy situation has arisen either during your maternity leave or upon your return to work, you have the right to be offered a suitable and appropriate alternative vacancy, where there is one.

Appendix 1

New and Expectant Mothers Risk Assessment

Name:	Job Title:
-------	------------

1. Physical Job Demands	Yes	No
Does your role involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifting or pushing of heavy objects, e.g. lifting boxes?• Standing or squatting for long periods?• Lots of walking?• Working at height or climbing steep steps?• The need to access areas with limited space, e.g. storerooms? If yes, will the task become more hazardous to your changing shape and size? Does your role involve shift work? If yes, does it involve working in the evening or at night?		

2. Mental Job Demands	Yes	No
Does your role involve meeting challenging deadlines? Does your role involve rapidly changing priorities and demands? Does your role require a high degree of concentration? Can you control the pace of your work?		

3. Working Conditions	Yes	No
Does your role involve any lone working or working in remote locations? Does your role involve any home working? Are there any risks of violence at work? Does any part of your role involve dealing with members of the public? If yes, do you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact with young children?• Contact with sick people?• To deal with distressed people? Does your role involve dealing with emergencies?		

4. Office Environment	Yes	No
Are toilet facilities easily accessible?		
Can you take toilet and rest breaks when required?		
Are there any obstacles that could cause you problems in the event of evacuation?		
Is there any form of indoor air pollution, e.g. diesel fumes?		
Is the temperature reasonable?		
Is there enough room for you to get in and out of your workstation?		
Will there be enough room as your pregnancy develops?		
Do you have an adjustable seat, which conforms to statutory standards?		

5. Specific Hazards	Yes	No
Does any part of your role involve the use of chemicals?		
If yes, are there any additional risks while you are pregnant?		
Is there any exposure to vibration, e.g. through the use of hand tools?		
Do you need to wear personal protective clothing?		
If yes, will this present any problems as your pregnancy develops?		

Notes

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

MATERNITY LEAVE NOTIFICATION FORM	
Name of employee	
Department	
Job Title	
Line Manager	

Please complete this form and return it to the HR Department with your MAT B1 (if not already forwarded) before the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth.

The earliest date for the commencement of maternity leave is at the beginning of the 11th week before the week in which your baby is due.	
My expected date of childbirth is:	
The date of the 11 th week before the week in which my baby is due is:	
I intend to commence my maternity leave on:	
I intend my maternity leave to end on:	
Following my maternity leave, I intend to take Annual Leave	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes , after I have taken Annual Leave, I intend to be back in the office on:	
During your maternity leave your line manager will keep you up to date and informed of changes, vacancies and any other matters that are of relevance to you. You may also wish to discuss the opportunities for returning on reduced hours or with a change to your pattern of work. Please tell us how you wish to be contacted during your Maternity Leave, and give details:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	
<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail	
After the first 6 weeks of your maternity leave you will receive 12 weeks' half pay on the understanding that you will return to work for the Council for at least 3 months. This payment is in addition to Statutory Maternity Pay. You will have to pay back the 50% salary that you receive if you do not return to work for the Council for at least 3 months after your baby is born. Please select the option you wish to be applied to you:	
<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to receive the 50% salary whilst on Maternity Leave	

<input type="checkbox"/>	I wish to receive the 50% salary in a lump sum after I have completed the 3 months back at work.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not wish to receive the 50% salary payment.		
HR will need your MAT B1, please select the option that applies to you:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	I enclose my MAT B1		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have previously forwarded my MAT B1		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will forward my MAT B1 as soon as I receive it		
Signed Employee			Date

Appendix 3

MATERNITY KIT DAY PAYMENT CLAIM FORM

Name of employee	
Department	
Job Title	
Line Manager	

I wish to claim for hours worked on
These hours represent one day of the ten maximum that I can take without bringing my maternity leave to an end. I understand that working for part of a day will count as one day. This payment is made in addition to any SMP owed.

I have now worked days during my maternity leave

Signed Employee		Date	
Signed Line Manager		Date	

PAYROLL USE ONLY			
Date Received		By	
Date System Updated		By	



Adoption Leave Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Adoption Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	03 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	17 October 2022 (16:00)
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District Council.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 1st November 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.0	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

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Adoption leave notification form

Appendix 1

Kit day payment request form

Appendix 2

1 **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to set out the arrangements for adoption leave and pay for employees who are adopting a child through a UK adoption agency, fostering a child with a view to possible adoption or having a child through a surrogate mother.

This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and the Council may amend it at any time.

1.1 **Who the scheme applies to**

In adoption cases or fostering for adoption cases you are entitled to adoption leave if you meet all the following conditions:

(a) You are adopting a child through a UK adoption agency, or you are a local authority foster parent who has been approved as a prospective adopter.

(b) The adoption agency or local authority has given you written notice that it has matched you with a child for adoption, or that it will be placing a child with you under a fostering for adoption arrangement and tells you the date the child is expected to be placed into your care (**Expected Placement Date**).

(c) You have notified the agency that you agree to the child being placed with you on the Expected Placement Date.

In a surrogacy case, you are entitled to adoption leave if all the following conditions are met:

(a) A surrogate mother gives birth to a child who is biologically your child, the child of your spouse or partner, or the child of both of you.

(b) You expect to be given parental responsibility for the child under a parental order from the court. The child must live with you, and you must apply for the parental order within six months of the child's birth.

2 **Length of adoption leave**

The maximum adoption leave entitlement is 52 weeks, consisting of 26 weeks' Ordinary Adoption Leave (**OAL**) and 26 weeks' Additional Adoption Leave (**AAL**). Only one period of leave will be available irrespective of whether more than one child is placed for adoption as part of the same arrangement.

Where a couple adopts jointly, only one partner can take adoption leave in respect of each adoption. The other partner maybe eligible to take paternity leave (please refer to the paternity leave policy) and/or shared parental leave.

3 **Time off to attend adoption appointments**

An adoption appointment is an appointment arranged by an adoption agency (or at the agency's request) for you to have contact with a child who is to be placed with you for adoption, or for any other purpose related to the adoption.

You may take time off to attend an adoption appointment once the agency has notified you that a child is to be placed with you for adoption but before the child is actually placed with you.

Where you and your partner are adopting a child, you must decide between you who will be treated as the primary adopter and who will be treated as the secondary adopter for the purposes of time off. You must tell us your decision the first time you request time off for an adoption appointment. This will affect how much time you can take off.

You will usually choose to be the primary adopter if you intend to take adoption leave when the child is placed with you. You would not be able to take paternity leave if you have elected to be the primary adopter.

You will usually choose to be the secondary adopter if you intend to take paternity leave when the child is placed with you, although you may be able to take adoption leave if your partner is not taking it.

If you are adopting on your own or have elected to be the primary adopter, you may take paid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to five occasions in relation to any particular adoption. If you are the secondary adopter, you may take paid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to two occasions only. You must not take more than six and a half hours off for each appointment, including travel and waiting time.

Please give us as much notice of the appointment as possible. You must provide your line manager with a signed statement or an email confirming:

- (a) The date and time of the appointment.
- (b) That the appointment has been arranged or requested by the adoption agency.

We may sometimes ask you to try and rearrange an appointment where it is reasonable to do so. In exceptional circumstances we reserve the right to refuse a request for a particular appointment, but we will not do so without good reason.

4 Evidence of entitlement

You are required to produce a matching certificate as evidence of your entitlement to adoption leave and for Statutory Adoption Pay (**SAP**) purposes. You must provide a copy of this once you have been provided with a copy. It will be issued by the approved adoption agency stating the:

- name and address of the agency;
- name and address of the employee;
- date on which the employee was notified that he/she had been matched with the child;
- date on which the agency expects to place the child with the employee and, if the placement has already occurred, the date of the placement.

5 Notice of intention to take adoption leave

5.1 Adoption or fostering for adoption cases

You will be required to notify your manager in writing of your intention to take

adoption leave within seven days of being notified by the adoption agency or local authority of the match with a child for adoption or where this is not reasonably practicable, as soon as reasonably practicable. You will need to tell your manager:

- when the child is expected to be placed;
- when you want your adoption to leave to commence.

The Adoption Leave Notification Form (Appendix 1) should be utilised for this purpose. If you wish to change the date of commencement of your adoption leave you will need to tell your manager at least 28 days in advance of the new commencement date (unless this is not reasonably practicable).

OAL can start on any day of the week, this can either be:

- the date on which the child is placed for adoption; or
- a predetermined date which can be up to 14 days prior to the Expected Placement Date.

We will then write to you within 28 days to inform you of the date you would be due to return to work (**Expected Return Date**) assuming you take your full entitlement to adoption leave.

5.2 Surrogacy cases

In a surrogacy case, you must tell us in writing of your intention to take adoption leave and give the expected week of childbirth (**EWC**). You must give this information by the end of the 15th week before the EWC, or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as is reasonably practicable.

We will write to you within 28 days of receiving your notification, to confirm your Expected Return Date assuming you take your full entitlement to adoption leave.

When the child is born you must tell us the date of birth.

In a surrogacy case, OAL will start on the day the child is born, unless you are at work, in which case it will start on the following day. You cannot change the start date.

6 End of child placement during adoption leave

If adoption leave has started and you are notified that the placement will not take place, or the child placement ends during adoption leave or the child dies during adoption leave, your entitlement to adoption leave and pay (if applicable) will continue for a further eight weeks from the end of the week in which you were notified of the placement not taking place, or the date of the child's death, or the child is returned to the adoption agency after placement unless your entitlement to leave or pay would have ended earlier in the normal course of events.

In a surrogacy case, adoption leave is disrupted where you do not apply for a parental order within the relevant time, or the court does not grant a parental order and the time limit for appeal or further application has expired, or where the child dies. In such circumstances adoption leave and pay (if applicable) will continue for a further eight weeks from the end of the week in which disruption occurred, unless your entitlement to leave or pay would have ended earlier in the normal course of events.

7 Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP)

Entitlement to adoption pay is determined by various factors, including length of

service and earnings, and therefore Human Resources in conjunction with payroll will assess your eligibility and entitlements on an individual basis.

7.1 The right to SAP

You are entitled to a maximum of 39 weeks' SAP providing that you: -

- have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks ending with the week in which the agency notified you that you had been matched with the child (**Qualifying Week**) and are still employed by us during that week;
- comply with the notice requirements at paragraph 5 above, including producing evidence of the adoption in the form of a matching certificate;
- give 28 days notice of when you wish the SAP to commence (unless this is not reasonably practicable);
- have average weekly earnings during the eight weeks ending with the Qualifying Week of not less than the lower earnings limit for the payment of National Insurance contributions set by the government; and
- have stopped working for the Council.

If you satisfy all of these conditions, you qualify for SAP.

7.2 Non entitlement to SAP

If you are not entitled to SAP or if your circumstances change and you stop getting SAP, payroll will inform you that the Council cannot pay you SAP. You should then contact your local Social Security office or JobCentre Plus office for further information about entitlements to alternative benefits.

7.3 Changes in circumstances

You cannot continue to receive SAP if:

- the child placed for adoption becomes 18 years of age;
- you start work for an employer who did not employ you prior to the commencement of adoption leave;
- you return to work;
- you are taken into legal custody (this means that you have been detained, usually arrested or in prison); or
- you are ill or die.

You (or a person acting for you, if applicable) are responsible for informing your manager if your circumstances change in any of the ways described above.

7.4 The rate of SAP

SAP is payable for a maximum of 39 weeks. The rate of SAP will be:

- a) First six weeks: SAP is paid at the **Earnings-related Rate** of 90% of your average earnings over the Relevant Period.
- b) Remaining 33 weeks: SAP is paid at the **Prescribed Rate** which is set by the government for the relevant tax year, or the Earnings-related Rate if this is lower.

7.5 Payment of SAP

You will receive SAP at the same time and in the same way as your normal salary would be paid. SAP is subject to income tax and National Insurance contributions. Any deductions which are lawfully made from pay, for example pension contributions, trade union subscriptions etc, will also be made from SAP, if applicable.

8 Occupational Adoption Pay

8.1 Entitlement to occupational adoption pay

You qualify for occupational adoption pay if you have completed a minimum of one year's continuous local government service at the beginning of the 11th week before the week of placement.

8.2 The rate of occupational adoption pay

For the first six weeks of your adoption leave you will be entitled to 9/10ths of a week's pay offset against payments made by way of SAP.

For the next 12 weeks you will receive your entitlement to the Prescribed Rate SAP and half pay. However, if your half pay plus SAP comes to more than your full pay, it will be reduced accordingly.

You will then receive the Prescribed Rate SMP for the remainder of your period of adoption leave (up to a maximum of 21 weeks).

8.3 Conditions attached to receiving half pay

You will receive 12 weeks' half pay (as set out at [8.2] above) on the understanding that you will return to work for the Council **for at least three months following your period of adoption leave**. Should you not do so, you may be required to pay back all or part of the 12 weeks' half pay. You do not have to pay back any payments made to you by way of SAP.

If you are unsure about your intention to return to work after your adoption leave, the Council will retain your half pay until you do return, provided that you inform Human Resources of your request for half pay to be withheld until your return before you start your adoption leave.

8.4 Calculation of a week's pay

For the purposes of occupational adoption pay, a week's pay is calculated in one of the following ways depending upon your working hours:

- Normal working hours - where your normal working hours do not vary with the amount of work done in the period, a week's pay is the amount payable to you by the Council under your current contract of employment for working your normal working hours in a week.
- Variable working hours - where there are no normal working hours, a week's pay is your average remuneration in the period of 12 weeks preceding the date on which the last complete week ended, excluding any week in which no remuneration was earned.

As the amount of adoption pay is based upon your contract of employment in force during your adoption leave, it would consequently change if, for instance, a pay award was implemented during this period.

8.5 Payment of occupational adoption pay

During your adoption absence, the payments due to you will be paid in exactly the same way as you normally receive your salary.

If you have certain payments deducted from your salary, for example, car loan, Council Tax, rent, etc, these will continue to be deducted from any payments made to you.

If you have an electrical vehicle on the salary sacrifice scheme, you must contact your HR Business Partner for more information on how adoption leave may impact your payments.

Payroll will inform you if you need to make alternative arrangements at any time during your adoption leave to ensure that you do not fall into arrears.

9 The contract of employment during adoption leave

Employees are entitled to benefit from their normal terms and conditions of employment, except for the terms relating to salaries and wages, throughout adoption leave.

9.1 Terms and Conditions: Annual Leave

Your entitlement to annual leave remains unaffected by adoption leave.

Subject to agreement by your manager, you should take your accrued annual leave prior to the commencement of your adoption leave. Any holiday entitlement for the year that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your adoption leave can be carried over to the next holiday year and must be taken within three months of returning to work unless your line manager agrees otherwise.

9.2 Terms and Conditions: Local Government Pension Scheme

Pension contributions will be deducted in the normal way from any payment you receive during your adoption leave. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any adoption pay you are receiving.

Any absence, which is unpaid as a result of adoption leave, will be treated as a break in service for occupational pension purposes unless you choose to pay voluntary contributions. These contributions will be based on the reduced remuneration that you were entitled to receive immediately before the unpaid period.

You must write to Payroll and state your intention to pay voluntary contributions no later than 30 days after your return to work. You may pay these contributions as a lump sum or in instalments. For further advice please contact Payroll.

9.3 Contact with work during adoption leave

You and your employer are entitled to have reasonable contact with each other to ensure that you are kept up to date with departmental changes, vacancies and any other matters relevant to the employees. The mode of contact should be confirmed and agreed prior to the commencement of adoption leave. Contact during adoption leave does not bring that period to an end. Reasonable contact does not constitute 'work' and would not therefore count towards the 10 "keeping in touch" days.

9.4 Working during adoption leave

For the purposes of this provision, 'work' is defined as any work done under the contract of employment and may include training or any activity undertaken for the purposes of keeping in touch with the workplace. You may ask or be asked to come to work for up to 10 "keeping in touch" days during the adoption leave period without bringing that period to an end as a result of carrying out the work.

Working for part of a day will count as one day. This is not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your line manager. The adoption leave will not be extended due to the fact that you have carried out some work in this period.

You will not lose your right to SAP as a result of working up to 10 days. You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a "keeping in touch" day and this will be inclusive of any adoption pay entitlement. To claim for hours worked you will need to submit a Payment Claim Form (*Appendix 2*)

10 Flexible working arrangements

The Council will deal with any requests by employees to change their working patterns (such as working part-time) after adoption leave on a case-by-case basis. There is no absolute right to insist on working part-time, but you do have a statutory right to request flexible working, and we will try to accommodate your wishes unless there is a justifiable reason for refusal, bearing in mind the needs of our business. It is recommended that you review the flexible working policy before any formal request for flexible working is made. You may wish to explore this with your line manager either before or during your adoption leave, however, it is helpful if requests are made as early as possible.

11 Return to work after adoption leave

11.1 Notice required for return to work

If you intend to return immediately after the end of your full adoption leave entitlement, you do not need to give advance notice of your return. Your expected date of return will be your next normal working day after the end of your 52-week adoption leave (i.e. your first normal working day of the 53rd week).

However, should you wish to return to work earlier than the end of your entitled adoption leave or if you wish to change your date of return from adoption leave, you must give your manager at least eight weeks' notice of your return date. If you do not provide this notice, the Council may postpone your return date for a period of up to eight weeks after you gave notice, or until the end of the adoption leave period, if this is sooner.

11.2 Employees who do not wish to return to work after adoption leave

Should you decide that you do not wish to return to work after your adoption leave, you must provide your line manager with a written statement of your resignation giving the notice required by your contract of employment.

11.3 Sickness at the end of adoption leave

If you are unable to attend work at the end of your adoption leave due to sickness, the normal contractual arrangements for sickness absence will apply.

11.4 Rights on return to work after OAL

You are entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions of employment as if you had not been absent.

11.5 Rights on return to work after AAL / parental leave

If you have taken any period of AAL or have combined your adoption leave with more than four weeks' parental leave, and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.

ADOPTION LEAVE NOTIFICATION FORM	
Name of employee	
Department	
Job Title	
Line Manager	
I am adopting a child and wish to apply for statutory adoption pay and statutory adoption leave.	

I declare that:-	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I enclose the matching certificate as evidence of the adoption;
<input type="checkbox"/>	I intend to apply for a parental order and expect the order to be granted (in surrogacy cases)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have given 28 days notice of when I wish my Statutory Adoption Pay to commence (or where this is not reasonably practicable as much notice as possible); and
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>I will have been continuously employed by Cherwell District Council for at least 26 weeks ending with the week in which the agency notified me that I had been matched with the child</p> <p>or</p> <p>I will have been continuously employed by Cherwell District Council for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the baby is due (in surrogacy cases)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will have stopped working for the Council wholly or partly because of the adoption.

Dates for Pay and Leave		
I am adopting a child and was provided with the matching certificate on:	Date:	
The baby is due to be born on (relevant to surrogacy cases):	Date:	
The adoptive child is expected to/did actually start living with me on:	Date:	
I would like my adoption pay and adoption leave to commence on:	Date:	

Signed Employee:		Date:	
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ADOPTION KIT DAY PAYMENT CLAIM FORM
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Name of employee	
Department	
Job Title	
Line Manager	

I wish to claim for hours worked on

These hours represent **one day** of the **ten** maximum that I can take without bringing my adoption leave to an end.

I understand that working for part of a day will count as one day. This payment is made in addition to any SAP owed.

I have now worked days during my adoption leave

Signed Employee		Date	
Signed Line Manager		Date	

PAYROLL USE ONLY

Date Received		By	
Date System Updated		By	

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Parental Leave Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Parental Leave Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	17 October 2022 (16:00)
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 1st November 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.0	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

1	Entitlement to parental leave	4
2	Notification requirements	4
3	Exceptions to the parental leave provisions for parents with disabled children	4
4	Definition of a week	5
5	Request for evidence	5
6	Postponement of leave period	5
7	Right during and after parental leave	5
8	Standby and on call duty	5
9	Local government pension scheme	6
10	Multiple contracts	6
	Appendix 1 - Parental Leave Application Form	7

1 Entitlement to parental leave

- 1.1 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and the Council may amend it at any time.
- 1.2 This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.
- 1.3 Parental leave is unpaid, and the principles are as follows:
 - An employee must have a minimum of one year's continuous service.
 - Employees are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave in respect of each child.
 - The leave must be taken before the child's 18th birthday.
 - The leave is in respect of each child for whom the employee has responsibility. An employee has responsibility for a child if they are the child's biological mother or father (whether or not they are living with the child); the child's adoptive parent; or otherwise have legal parental responsibility for the child, for example, if they are the child's guardian, or a step-parent who has a parental responsibility agreement or parental responsibility order.
 - The leave can be for any purpose connected with spending time with or otherwise caring for the child.
 - No more than four weeks parental leave can be taken in any one year in relation to each child. A year for this purpose begins on the date when the employee became entitled to take parental leave in relation to the child in question.
 - In default of any agreement to the contrary parental leave may only be taken in blocks of one week or multiples of a week unless the leave is to be taken in respect of a disabled child.

2. Notification requirements

- 2.2 The employee must give their line manager at least 21 days' notice of the intention to take parental leave, and of when the leave begins and ends by using the parental leave application form (Appendix A).
- 2.3 If the employee wishes to start parental leave immediately on the birth of a child, they must give notice at least 21 days before the expected week of childbirth.
- 2.4 If they wish to start parental leave immediately on having a child placed with them for adoption, they should give notice at least 21 days before the expected week of placement, or if this is not possible, give as much notice as they can.

3 Exceptions to the parental leave provisions for parents with disabled children

- 3.1 Special rules apply to parents of disabled children (for these purposes disability means being entitled to disability living allowance, armed forces independence allowance or personal independence payment). They are not required to take leave in respect of that child in blocks of full weeks. However, there is still a limit of four weeks a year for each child and 18 weeks in total for each child.

4 Definition of a week

- 4.1 Where an employee's working pattern does not vary, under the contract of employment, a week is the period the employee normally works.
- 4.2 Where the working pattern normally varies from week to week or over a longer period, or if the employee is normally required to work in some weeks and not other weeks, then a week is the total of all periods worked over one year divided by 52.

5 Request for evidence

- 5.1 On applying for parental leave, the employee must provide evidence of the child's date of birth or date of adoption placement, the employee's responsibility or expected responsibility of the child (for example, a birth certificate, adoption or matching certificate parental responsibility agreement or court order), and if applicable the child's entitlement to a disability living allowance. This evidence should be attached to the parental leave application form.

6 Postponement of leave period

- 6.1 Although we will try to accommodate any request for parental leave, an employer can postpone leave if business operation would be unduly disrupted by the leave being taken. This postponement will be done, in writing, within seven days of receiving the request for parental leave, stating the reason for the postponement, and specifying the new dates the leave may be taken with the agreement of the employee.
- 6.2 If the employer and employee cannot agree on new dates then the employer must determine the most appropriate dates. Parental leave cannot be postponed if it is to be taken immediately after the child is born or placed for adoption. Parental leave also cannot be postponed for more than six months or beyond the child's 18th birthday (if sooner).

7 Rights during and after parental leave

- 7.1 leave under this policy is unpaid. The employee's contractual provisions relating to pay and benefits are suspended during parental leave.
- 7.2 However, annual leave entitlement and continuous services are unaffected during parental leave. The employees will remain bound by their duties of good faith and confidentiality, and any contractual restrictions on accepting gifts and benefits, or working for another business.
- 7.3 If an employee has an electrical vehicle on the salary sacrifice scheme, they must contact their HR Business Partner for more information on how parental leave may impact their payments.

8 Standby and on call duty

- 8.1 During the period of parental leave the employee will not be required to undertake standby or on call duty and therefore will not receive payment for these tasks.

9 Local government pension scheme

- 9.1 Any absence, which is unpaid, will be treated as a break in service for occupational pension purposes unless you choose to pay voluntary contributions.
- 9.2 You must write to Payroll and state your intention to pay voluntary contributions no later than 30 days after your return to work. You may pay these contributions as a lump sum or in instalments. For further advice, please contact Payroll.

10 Multiple Contracts

- 10.1 Where an employee works in more than one department of the Council this will not affect the total leave entitlement. If the manager of one of the jobs wishes to postpone leave this will have the effect of postponing leave for both jobs. It is up to the line managers and the employee concerned to agree a convenient time for parental leave to be taken, as long as this is within six months of the original request.

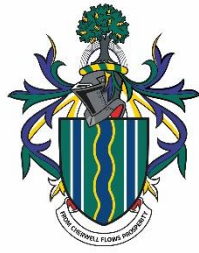
PARENTAL LEAVE APPLICATION FORM
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Surname		
First Name(s)		
Job Title		
Department		
I have		Child(ren) who is/are under the age of eighteen years (enter number of children) in respect of whom you are applying for parental leave <u>or</u>
I have		Disabled child(ren) who is/are under the age of eighteen years (enter number of children) in respect of whom you are applying for parental leave
<p>Please attach a copy of the child's/children's birth certificate(s), adoption or matching certificate, parental responsibility agreement or court order to this form.</p> <p>If your child is in receipt of disability living allowance proof should also be attached.</p>		

Date parental leave requested to start from:		Date parental leave requested to end on:	
If your hours of work do not vary each week: total hours that would be worked each week			
If your hours of work vary each week: please specify the arrangement regarding your working hours			
I have taken		weeks parental leave with previous/current employers in relation to this child/children	

<p>I confirm that my purpose in requesting unpaid parental leave is for caring for my child(ren) and I understand that any false information that I give on this form may result in disciplinary proceedings being taken against me.</p>
--

Signed Employee:		Date:	
Signed Assistant Director:		Date:	
This form should be returned to Human Resources			



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Shared Parental Leave Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Shared Parental Leave Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	03 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	17 October 2022 (16:00)
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 1 November 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.0	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

1	Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave	4
2	What is shared parental leave?	4
3	Who is eligible for shared parental leave?	4
4	Shared Parental Leave and Pay Details	6
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7	Declaration	10
8	Fraudulent Claims	10
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10	Local Government Pension Scheme	11
Appendix 1	Shared Parental Leave Curtailment Notice	
Appendix 2	Shared Parental Leave Notice of Entitlement and Intention to Take Shared Parental leave	

1 Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and the Council may amend it at any time.

This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

This policy outlines the statutory right to take Shared Parental Leave (**SPL**) to care for a child due to be born or placed for adoption by a UK adoption agency or where fostering a child with a view to possible adoption. It also outlines the arrangements and notification requirements before a period of SPL and the entitlement to pay during SPL.

SPL gives employees with caring responsibilities for babies or newly adopted children the opportunity to share up to 50 weeks' leave should they wish to do so. Parents taking SPL can take leave in separate blocks, returning to work in between blocks, and can be on leave at the same time.

Employees and managers should where possible have an informal discussion prior to employees giving formal notification of intention to take SPL so that statutory entitlements to other types of leave and pay can be discussed, and to ensure that plans for any discontinuous periods of leave can be considered as early as possible.

Requests for SPL which are not made in accordance with the statutory notification requirements will be given reasonable consideration but may not be granted.

You will find a helpful flow chart detailing important events and dates to remember for SPL requests at Appendix 1.

Please seek further guidance from your HR Business Partner or another member of the HR team.

2 What is Shared Parental Leave?

Shared Parental Leave enables eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. Its purpose is to give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for, and bond with, their child. All eligible employees have a statutory right to take Shared Parental Leave.

3 Who is eligible for Shared Parental Leave?

To qualify for SPL in relation to the birth of a child you must:

- be the child's mother and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's father or with your partner, or
- be the child's father and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's mother; or
- be the mother's partner and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the mother (where the child's father does not share the main responsibility with the mother).

The following conditions must also be fulfilled in relation to the birth of a child:

- you must have at least 26 weeks continuous employment with Cherwell District Council (previous continuous service from another employer will not be counted) by the end of the **Qualifying Week** (i.e. the fifteenth week before the expected week of childbirth, ("**EWC**"). The EWC is the week, beginning on a Sunday, in which the doctor or midwife expects your child to be born.). You must also still be employed by CDC in the week before the leave is to be taken;
- the other parent must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the EWC and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
- you and the other parent must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end any maternity leave, statutory maternity pay (**SMP**) or maternity allowance (**MA**) periods.

You may be entitled to SPL in relation to the adoption of a child if:

- a UK adoption agency places a child with you and/or your partner for adoption, or
- a child in local authority care is placed with you and/or your partner as foster parents under a "fostering for adoption" or "concurrent planning" scheme, or

The following conditions must also be fulfilled in relation to the adoption of a child:

- You and your partner must intend to share the main responsibility for the care of the child.
- You must have at least 26 weeks continuous employment with Cherwell District Council by the end of the week the adoption agency notifies you that you have been matched with a child for adoption and still be employed by CDC in the week before the leave is to be taken.
- Your partner must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the week the adoption agency notifies you that you have been matched with a child for adoption and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks.
- Either you or your partner must qualify for statutory adoption leave and/or statutory adoption pay (**SAP**) and must take at least two weeks of adoption leave and/or SAP.

- You and your partner must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end adoption leave or SAP.

Partner means your spouse, civil partner or someone living with you in an enduring family relationship at the time the child is born or placed with you for adoption, but not your sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

4 Shared Paternity Leave and Pay Details

Birth cases

The total amount of SPL available in birth cases is 52 weeks, less the weeks spent by the child's mother on maternity leave (or the weeks in which the mother has been in receipt of SMP or MA if she is not entitled to maternity leave). If you are the mother, you cannot start SPL until after the compulsory maternity leave period, which lasts until two weeks after birth. If you are the child's father or the mother's partner, you should consider using your two weeks' paternity leave before taking SPL. Once you start SPL you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement. SPL entitlement is additional to your paternity leave entitlement.

You may be able to claim Statutory Shared Parental Pay (**ShPP**) of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SMP, MA or SAP) if you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with CDC at the end of the Qualifying Week and your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid by employers at a rate set by the government each year. If you intend to claim ShPP during your leave, you should tell us in writing at least eight weeks before you want ShPP to start.

Adoption cases

The total amount of SPL available in adoption cases is 52 weeks, less the weeks of adoption leave taken by either you or partner (or the weeks in which your partner has been in receipt of SAP if they were not entitled to adoption leave). If your partner is taking adoption leave and/or claiming SAP, you may be entitled to two weeks' paternity leave and pay (see our Paternity Leave Policy). You should consider using this before taking SPL. Paternity leave is additional to any SPL entitlement you may have, but you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement once you start a period of SPL.

You may be able to claim ShPP of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SAP claimed by you or your partner) provided you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week the adoption agency notifies you that you have been matched with a child for adoption and your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid at a rate set by the government each year. If you intend to claim ShPP during your leave, you should tell us in writing at least eight weeks before you want ShPP to start.

Shared parental leave cannot be taken until after the birth/placing of the child.

Partners do not have to work for the Council, but they must satisfy minimum employment and earnings criteria.

How can periods of leave be taken?

SPL must be taken in complete weeks; it can be taken:

- *as one continuous block, or;*
- *in multiples of complete weeks.*

The minimum SPL that can be taken is one week and, as you can give up to three period of leave notices, this may enable you to take up to three separate blocks of SPL.

Provided that both parents qualify for SPL you can choose to take leave at the same time as your partner, or you can take your leave separately.

You may take one or more periods of shared parental leave per pregnancy or adoption.

Notice of Entitlement

Not less than eight weeks before the date you intend your SPL to start, a notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave, must be submitted (Appendix 3). This may be submitted at the same time as the maternity/adoption curtailment notice or at a later date, but it cannot be later than 8 weeks before the date of the first period of shared parental leave.

Curtailment Notice

Anyone eligible and intending to take shared parental leave must submit a maternity/adoption leave curtailment notice, giving at least 8 weeks' notice stating that they wish to end their maternity or adoption leave early. This form is at Appendix 2. You must also give us a notice to opt into the SPL scheme (see above) or a written declaration that your partner has given their employer an opt-in notice and that you have given the necessary declarations in that notice. In adoption cases, if your partner is eligible to take SPL from their employer they cannot start it until you have given us your curtailment notice. In birth cases, the other parent may be eligible to take SPL from their employer before your maternity leave ends, provided you have given the curtailment notice.

Once you have ended your maternity/adoption leave and have returned to work you will only be entitled to statutory pay during periods of shared parental leave and at that point you cannot revert back onto maternity or adoption leave.

The curtailment notice is binding and cannot usually be revoked. You can only revoke a curtailment notice if maternity or adoption leave has not yet ended and one of the following applies:

- (a) if you realise that neither you nor the other parent are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, in which case you can revoke the curtailment notice in writing up to eight weeks after it was given;

- (b) if you gave the curtailment notice before giving birth, you can revoke it in writing up to six weeks after birth; or
- (c) if the other parent has died.

Ending your partner's maternity/adoption leave or pay

In birth cases, if you are not the mother, but the mother is still on maternity leave or claiming SMP or MA, you will only be able to take SPL once she has either:

- (a) returned to work;
- (b) given her employer a curtailment notice to end her maternity leave;
- (c) given her employer a curtailment notice to end her SMP (if she is entitled to SMP but not maternity leave); or
- (d) given the benefits office a curtailment notice to end her MA (if she is not entitled to maternity leave or SMP).

In adoption cases, if your partner is taking adoption leave or claiming SAP from their employer, you will only be able to take SPL once your partner has either:

- (a) returned to work;
- (b) given their employer a curtailment notice to end adoption leave; or
- (c) given their employer a curtailment notice to end SAP (if they are entitled to SAP but not adoption leave).

Right to return to work after a period of SPL

You have the right to return to the same job if you have been on shared parental leave plus any other type of leave for 26 weeks or less.

If you have been on leave for more than 26 weeks you have the right to return to the same job unless this is not reasonably practicable and we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.

5 Keeping in Touch Days

You may be asked to attend work on occasional days during your SPL period. These days could be for training, to attend department meetings,

or just for keeping in touch (KIT). You may work for up to 20 days without bringing the SPL to an end but work during SPL will not have the effect of extending your SPL period. If you do work, you will be paid your normal rate of pay inclusive of any ShPP entitlement. You are under no obligation to work during SPL, and the Council is under no obligation to offer work.

The 20 KIT days available during SPL are in addition to the 10 KIT days available during maternity and adoption leave.

6 Booking your SPL dates and request for Blocks of Leave

Having opted into the SPL system, you must book your leave by giving us a period of leave notice. This may be given at the same time as the opt-in notice or later, provided it is at least eight weeks before the start of SPL.

The period of leave notice can either give the dates you want to take SPL or, if the child has not yet been placed with you or not yet been born, it can state the number of days after the placement or birth that you want the SPL to start and end. This may be useful if you intend to take paternity leave or adoption leave starting on the date of placement or birth and wish to take SPL straight afterwards.

Where the child is born early (before the beginning of the EWC), you may be able to start SPL in the eight weeks following birth even though you cannot give eight weeks' notice. In such circumstances particular rules apply – please speak to a member of HR.

Requests for a single block of leave must be agreed by the Council and will need to meet the needs of the business.

If a request is for more than a single block the Council may:

- *agree to your request*
- *decline your request due to organisational need or propose alternative dates*

Up to three separate requests for periods of shared parental leave and three withdrawal notices may be submitted. Any periods of leave that have been declined do not count towards these totals.

You can cancel a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date in the period of leave notice. You can change the start date for a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original start date or the new start date, whichever is earlier. You can also change the end date for a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original end date or the new end date, whichever is earlier.

A notice to change or cancel a period of leave will count as one of your three period of leave notices, unless:

- (a) it is a result of your child being born earlier or later than the EWC or the variation is a result of the child being placed with you earlier or later than the expected placement date; ;

(b) you are cancelling a request for discontinuous leave within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period (as referred to below);

(c) it is at our request; or

(d) we agree otherwise.

7 Declaration

Each **parent** must submit a signed declaration (*Appendix 2*) to their line manager with the notice of entitlement and intention, stating:

- *their full name;*
- *their partner's full name*
- *the name and address of their partner's employer*
- *confirmation that they are eligible for SPL*
- *a statement that the information contained within the declarations is accurate.*
- *details of the amount of leave each partner is to take (this is nonbinding) and*
- *the amount of shared parental leave each partner is to take (start/end date).*

8 Fraudulent Claims

The Council can, where there is a suspicion that fraudulent information may have been provided or where the Council has been informed by the HMRC that a fraudulent claim was made, investigate the matter further in accordance with the usual disciplinary procedures, and may lead to gross misconduct if the allegations are found to be true.

9 Annual leave during a period of SPL

Your entitlement to annual leave remains unaffected by SPL leave.

Subject to agreement by your manager, you should take your accrued annual leave prior to the commencement of your SPL. Any holiday entitlement for the year that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your SPL can be carried over to the next holiday year and must be taken within three months of returning to work unless your line manager agrees otherwise.

Please discuss your holiday plans with your line manager in good time before starting SPL. All holiday dates are subject to approval by your line manager.

10 Local Government Pension Scheme

Any absence, which is unpaid, will be treated as a break in service for occupational pension purposes unless you choose to pay voluntary contributions.

You must write to Payroll and state your intention to pay voluntary contributions no later than 30 days after your return to work. You may pay these contributions as a lump sum or in instalments. For further advice, please contact Payroll.

Appendix 1

Note

Please think very carefully before you submit this form. Once the form is submitted, you can withdraw your maternity/adoption leave curtailment notice only in limited circumstances.

SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE CURTAILMENT NOTICE			
Name of employee			
Department			
Job title			
<p>I wish to bring my [ordinary/additional] maternity/adoption leave [and statutory maternity/adoption pay] to an end to be able to take shared parental leave.</p>			
<p>The date on which you end your maternity/adoption leave must be at least: <i>eight weeks after the date on which you provide this notice to the organisation; two weeks after you give birth; and one week before what would have been the end of your additional maternity/adoption leave</i></p>			
I wish to end my leave on:			
I wish my statutory pay period to end on:			
<input type="checkbox"/> I have also completed a form providing a notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave.			
<input type="checkbox"/> My partner has provided a notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave to his/her employer.			
<input type="checkbox"/> I consent to the amount of leave that my partner intends to take.			
Signed Employee			Date

SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE: NOTICE OF ENTITLEMENT AND INTENTION TO TAKE SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE	
Name of employee	
Department	
Job title	
<p>I wish to provide the organisation with an initial indication of my proposed shared parental leave, as well as the required declarations from myself and my partner.</p> <p>(* indicates to delete as appropriate throughout the form)</p>	
Section A: Information to be provided by employee	
<p>I am the child's mother*/child's father*/mother's partner*</p> <p>"Partner" means the mother's spouse, civil partner, or other person living with her in an enduring family relationship, but who is not her sibling, parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.</p>	
My partner's name is:	
My maternity*/adoption leave* started/is expected to start on:	
My maternity*/adoption leave* ended/is expected to end on:	
My statutory maternity pay*, maternity allowance* or statutory adoption pay* start date:	
My statutory maternity pay*, maternity allowance* or statutory adoption pay* end date:	
My partner is taking maternity leave*/adoption leave* which started/is	

expected to start on and ended/is expected to end on:	
My partner is not entitled to statutory maternity leave*/statutory adoption leave* but is receiving or will receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance* or statutory adoption pay* from and to the following dates:	
<p>My child's expected week of birth is/child was born on*</p> <p>or</p> <p>The date the adoption agency notified me of being matched with the child, the expected date of placement and the actual date of placement. If your child has not yet been placed with you please give the date of placement as soon as possible after placement and before starting SPL)*</p>	
<p>Shared parental leave</p> <p>The start date of the first period of shared parental leave that you wish to take must be at least eight weeks after you have provided this opt-in notice and a period of leave notice. Shared parental leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week.</p> <p>This notice is to allow the organisation to check that you are entitled to shared parental leave and to provide the organisation with an initial indication of the shared parental leave pattern that you wish to take. The notice is not binding, and you must give the organisation a period of leave notice at least eight weeks before the first period of shared parental leave that you wish to take. Any periods of shared parental leave that you indicate in this notice can be changed at a later date by giving the organisation a variation notice.</p>	
The total amount of shared parental leave my partner and I have available is:	
I intend to take the following number of weeks shared parental leave:	
My partner intends to take the following number of weeks shared parental leave:	
I intend to take shared parental leave on the following dates (please include the start and end dates for each period of leave that you intend to take):	

I intend to take the following number of weeks' shared parental pay:	
Section B: Declaration to be completed by employee	
I satisfy/will satisfy the following eligibility requirements to take shared parental leave:	
<p>I am the child's mother, and I am entitled to statutory maternity leave. I have submitted a curtailment of maternity leave notice (or will submit it before my partner takes SPL and at least eight weeks before the first date on which I intend to take SPL). *</p> <p>or</p> <p>I am the child's father or the child's mother's partner. *</p> <p>or</p> <p>A child has been placed or will be placed with me for adoption, and I am entitled to statutory adoption leave. I have submitted a curtailment of adoption leave notice (or will submit it before my partner takes SPL and at least eight weeks before the first date on which I intend to take SPL). *</p> <p>or</p> <p>My partner is entitled to statutory adoption leave because of the placement of a child with us/him/her* for adoption. *</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have/will have 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth* or at the end of the week in which we were notified that we had been matched with the child*, and, by the week before any period of shared parental leave that I take, I will have remained in continuous employment with the organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	I expect to share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the person who has completed the declaration in Section C.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I intend to care for the child during each week that I am on shared parental leave
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have complied with the organisation's maternity/adoption leave curtailment requirements/returned to work before the end of my statutory maternity/adoption leave period, and will comply with the organisation's shared parental leave notice and evidence requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	The information that I have provided in this notice is accurate
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will immediately inform the organisation if I cease to care for the child or if I no longer satisfy the other conditions for entitlement to SPL

<input type="checkbox"/> I have given no less than 8 weeks' notice of my intention to take SPL	
Section C: Declaration to be completed by employee's partner	
My name is:	
My address is:	
My National Insurance number is:	
My employer's name and address (if employed) or business address (if self-employed).	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have been employed or been a self-employed earner in at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth or the week we were notified that we had been matched with a child.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have average weekly earnings of at least £30 for any 13 of those 66 weeks	
<input type="checkbox"/> I expect to share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the employee	
<p>I am the father of the child*,</p> <p>or</p> <p>I am the partner of the child's mother*</p> <p>or</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am the mother of the child, and I am (or was) entitled to maternity leave, statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance. I have curtailed my maternity leave; statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance or will have done so by the time your employee starts parental leave.*</p> <p>or</p> <p>The employee is my partner</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am (or was) entitled to statutory adoption leave and/or statutory adoption pay. I have curtailed my statutory adoption leave or pay or will have done so by the time the employee starts parental leave. (<i>Delete if not applicable.</i>)	
<input type="checkbox"/> I consent to the employee taking shared parental leave as set out in this notice	

<input type="checkbox"/>	I consent to your organisation processing the information provided in this form and to the information in this declaration being used for the purposes of administering shared parental leave		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I will immediately inform the employee if I cease to satisfy any of the conditions in this declaration.		
Section D: Signatures			
Signed (employee)		Date	
Signed (employee's partner)		Date	

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Time Off for Dependents Leave Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Time Off for Dependents Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	3 December 2025

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This document requires the following committee approvals:

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CDC Personnel Committee	17 October 2022 (16:00)
Personnel Committee	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 1 November 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
2.1	3 Dec 2025	This policy is reviewed on a three-year cycle to ensure continued relevance and compliance

TIME OFF FOR DEPENDENTS POLICY

Contents

1	Entitlement
2	Purpose of the absence
3	Exercising the right to time off
4	The needs of the organisation
5	The procedure
6	Special Paid Leave
7	Local government pension scheme
Appendix 1	Time off for dependents application form

1 Entitlement to time off for dependents leave

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and the Council may amend it at any time.

This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

Time off for dependents leave is unpaid but provides the employee with the right to take a reasonable amount of time off work in particular circumstances relating to your dependents. Dependents in respect of whom the employee can take time off are:

- their spouse or civil partner
- their child
- their parent
- a person who lives in their household (excluding tenants, lodgers and employees)
- a person who reasonably relies on them for assistance, to make arrangements or take action of the kind referred to within the bullet points set out below at (2).

2 The purpose of the absence

The right to time off work for dependants is limited to dealing with an unexpected events and emergencies involving a dependant.

The circumstances in which employees may take time off for dependants are specified in legislation. These are to:

- provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted
- make arrangements to provide longer-term care to a dependant who is ill or injured
- deal with the death of a dependant
- deal with the unexpected disruption, breakdown or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant
- deal with an incident involving the employee's child while a school or another educational establishment is responsible for them.

The right to time off is limited to taking action that is necessary to deal with one of the above unexpected events. Its purpose is to allow an employee a short period of breathing space to deal with a dependant.

This policy does not apply where an employee needs to take planned time off or provide longer-term care for a dependant. If the right to time off for dependants does not give the employee, the scope / time off needed to look after a dependant then they should refer to other Council policies such as Flexi-Time or use annual leave.

Further detail on circumstances where time off work for dependants applies is as follows:

3 Exercising the right to time off

Whether the action the employee is taking because of an immediate or unexpected crisis will be considered necessary will depend on the circumstances, including the nature of the problem, the closeness of the relationship between them and the dependant, and whether anyone else is available to assist. Action is unlikely to be considered necessary if the employee knew of a problem in advance but did not try to make alternative care arrangements.

The manager should take into account the circumstances and treat each situation on the basis of whether or not the time off is reasonable and necessary.

4 The needs of the organisation

Reasonable time off in relation to a particular problem will not normally be more than one or two days. However, we will always consider each set of circumstances on their facts.

Line managers cannot take into account the operational needs of their organisation when assessing whether or not an employee is entitled to take time off for dependants, or whether or not the amount of time off that the employee needs to take is reasonable and necessary to deal with the particular circumstances. Even where the employee has an important deadline to meet, this should not prevent the line manager from permitting the employee to take time off.

All employees are entitled to take time off for dependants, and they do not need to have accrued a minimum period of continuous service to be eligible.

5 The procedure

An employee will only be entitled to time off under this policy if, as soon as is reasonably practicable, they tell their line manager:

- (a) the reason for their absence; and
- (b) how long they expect to be away from work.

If the employee fails to notify us as set out above, they may be subject to disciplinary proceedings under our Disciplinary Procedure for taking unauthorised time off.

We may in some cases ask the employee to provide evidence for their reasons for taking the time off, either in advance or on their return to work. Suspected abuse of this policy will be dealt with as a disciplinary issue under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

All line managers should familiarise themselves with this policy.

Provided that the correct process has been followed in line with this policy, an employee should complete a copy of the form at Appendix 1 on their return to work and forward directly to payroll for processing once the form has been authorised by their line manager. As all time off for dependents is unpaid, payroll will arrange for the employees' salary to be adjusted accordingly in light of the time off.

6 Special Paid Leave

In exceptional cases, Special Paid Leave of up to five days may be granted in any one leave year by the line manager to enable an employee to face an emergency situations or to cope with a critical situation involving a dependant / close family member / someone who depends on them.

An example could be:

- Employees whose partner or close family member have a terminal/life threatening illness

Special paid leave is not suitable for situations where advance notice is given (i.e. to take a dependant to hospital for an appointment or planned school inset days).

Additional leave, without pay, may be granted in special circumstances at the discretion of the Council, whereby provisions are not made elsewhere to cover such circumstances.

7 Local government pension scheme

Any absence, which is unpaid, will be treated as a break in service for occupational pension purposes unless the employee chooses to pay voluntary contributions.

The employee must write to Payroll and state their intention to pay voluntary contributions no later than 30 days after their return to work. They may pay these contributions as a lump sum or in instalments. For further advice, please contact Payroll.

TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS' NOTIFICATION FORM			
Name of employee			
Department			
Job Title			
I declare that I am requesting to take unpaid time off for a dependant, in accordance with my rights under the Employment Rights Act 1996.			
The dependant I request to take the time off for is:-			
<input type="checkbox"/> My child			
<input type="checkbox"/> My partner / spouse			
<input type="checkbox"/> My parent / step-parent			
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone who lives with me as part of the family (this excludes lodgers, tenants, boarders and live in employees)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone who reasonably relies on me for assistance in the absence of someone who has a closer relationship with them			
And the reason for this time off is / was:-			
<input type="checkbox"/> To provide assistance on an occasion when this dependant fell ill or was injured or assaulted.			
<input type="checkbox"/> To provide assistance on an occasion when this dependant gave birth.			
<input type="checkbox"/> To make longer term care arrangements for this dependant who was ill or injured (this includes mental illness or injury).			
<input type="checkbox"/> To take action required in consequence of the death of the dependant.			
<input type="checkbox"/> To deal with an unexpected disruption, breakdown or termination of arrangements for the care of the dependant.			
<input type="checkbox"/> To deal with an incident which involved/involves my child, and which occurred unexpectedly in a period which an educational establishment which my child attends was responsible for him or her.			
When did / will this absence take place:-			
From (date):		To (date):	
Total missed hours that would normally be working during this period:			

Signed Employee:		Date:	
Signed Assistant Director:		Date:	
This form should be returned to Human Resources			



Domestic Abuse Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation(s)	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy title	Domestic Abuse Policy
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Date of implementation	3 December 2025

DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

Committee	Date of meeting pending approval
CDC Personnel Committee	03 December 2025

DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District Council.

DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 03 December 2028 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Revision date	Summary of revision
1.0	09 July 2024	Introduction of policy
2.0	03 Dec 2025	Best practice updates following feedback from the Lived Experience Group.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender, religion, sexuality, or ethnicity.
- 1.2 Employers have a duty of care and a legal responsibility to ensure that all employees have a safe working environment. Cherwell District Council is committed to fostering a workplace culture that proactively supports and responds to disclosures of domestic abuse.
- 1.2 This policy aims to raise awareness of domestic abuse and ensure that all employees know where to seek help and support if they, or a colleague, are affected.
- 1.3 Victims of domestic abuse may not always realise that they are experiencing domestic abuse. This policy aims to ensure that all employees can understand and spot the signs of abuse, in order to move to a culture where employees feel comfortable talking about domestic abuse.
- 1.4 This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual employees and challenge abusive behaviours. It is the Council's expectation that managers will show empathy, flexibility and understanding with victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 1.5 The Council sees that part of their role is to provide training to employees about domestic abuse to enable them to recognise the signs and be aware of support pathways for those experiencing domestic abuse.
- 1.6 This policy also covers the approach to be taken where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of the abuse. The Council is clear that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

2 Purpose and scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - support employees experiencing domestic abuse
 - aid managers seeking to help team members experiencing domestic abuse
 - assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse
 - outline the approach to be taken where there are concerns that an employee may be a perpetrator of domestic abuse
 - move the Council to a culture of domestic abuse being seen as everyone's responsibility
 - enable employees to remain productive and at work.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all employees. The Council will also offer support to agency, contract workers and volunteers wherever possible.

3 What is domestic abuse?

- 3.1 **Domestic abuse** is defined as, *"Any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone's behaviour towards another is abusive, and where the people involved are*

age 16 or over and are, or have been, personally connected to each other, regardless of gender or sexuality.” (Domestic Abuse Act 2021)

Domestic abuse can encompass:

- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse

- 3.2 This definition includes stalking and so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage otherwise known as Harmful Practices.
- 3.3 **Controlling behaviour** is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 3.4 **Coercive behaviour** is defined as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, frighten or control their victim. It is also about the emotional control and manipulation of another person which may sometimes be referred to as ‘gaslighting’. Sometimes victim-survivors may not recognise this as abuse as it is less physical and more psychological.
- 3.5 **Physical abuse** is when an abuser's actions physically harm someone, or physically threaten them to make someone feel scared, helpless, and to gain power. Abusers use **sexual violence** for the same reason they use physical violence: to gain control.
- 3.6 Often, when people hear the term ‘domestic abuse’ they picture acts of physical violence, but there are also more subtle forms of behaviour. Since 2015, the offence of coercive and controlling behaviour within a relationship has been illegal in England and Wales. While this abuse takes many forms, it typically involves manipulation, humiliation, intimidation, denigration to family and friends, and isolation to control and instil fear in people who are harmed, leaving lasting effects.
- 3.7 **Violent or threatening behaviour** is any kind of behaviour that hurts, or threatens to hurt, one person or more, or behaviour that damages property.
- 3.8 **Economic abuse** is when the abuser controls someone’s access to money, resources and economic stability and restricts their ability to act freely and independently.
- 3.9 **Psychological or emotional abuse** is the regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person.
- 3.10 **Stalking and Harassment** can be defined as persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered and harassed. It includes behaviour that happens two or more times, directed at or towards the individual by another person, which causes

them to feel alarmed or distressed or to fear that violence might be used against them. This can include in person events, as well as through digital methods.

- 3.11 **So called “Honour” Based Abuse** is an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion, or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse), which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and / or community’s code of behaviour. It can be distinguished from other forms of abuse as it is often committed with some degree of approval and / or collusion from family and/or community members.
- 3.12 **Female Genital Mutilation** refers to procedures that intentionally alter and cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is classed as child abuse and leads to severe short and long term physical and psychological consequences and is illegal within the UK, as is taking or being involved in a child being taken abroad to undergo this practice.
- 3.13 All employees staff have a responsibility to remain vigilant and to act promptly if they have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a young person. All safeguarding concerns must be reported in line with our Safeguarding procedures.
- 3.14 **Harmful practices** are a collective term for several different forms of abuse which all share a similar characteristic, that they are seen as acceptable practices within sections of society. Harmful practices can cover, amongst other forms of abuse, child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, breast flattening/ironing, hate crimes, child abuse linked to faith or belief and so called “honour-based” abuse.
- 3.15 Ultimately, domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another.
- 3.16 Domestic abuse can result in lasting trauma for victim-survivors and their extended families. The impact of domestic abuse can range from loss of self-esteem to loss of life.
- 3.17 Domestic abuse can particularly impact children and young people who may witness the abuse, or who may not see the abuse but may be aware of it or hear it occurring. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 makes clear that children, irrespective of whether they are injured or see the offending, are deemed to be victims of domestic abuse if they live in an abusive household.
- 3.18 It is important to recognise that both females and males can be subjected to domestic abuse from and by a current/ex-partner, their children (aged 16+) or a member of their family or people that they live with. Perpetrators can be either male or female. However, we know that women disproportionately experience domestic abuse and men disproportionately perpetrate it.
- 3.19 Domestic abuse is often more common in groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community, those who are not white, disabled communities, the elderly and other groups who may be marginalised.
- 3.20 Most abusive relationships display a distinct pattern; however not all experiences of domestic abuse are the same. The Drama Triangle is a psychological and relational

model, developed by Dr. Stephen Karpman, that illustrates the shifting roles often present in dysfunctional or abusive relationships. It identifies three key roles:

- **Persecutor** – The person who uses blame, criticism, or control to dominate or diminish others.
- **Victim** – The individual who feels oppressed, helpless, or powerless, often internalising the abuse.
- **Rescuer** – The person who intervenes or takes responsibility for others, sometimes enabling the cycle by preventing accountability or change.



- 3.21 In the context of domestic abuse, individuals may shift between these roles, creating a cycle of emotional manipulation, dependency, and confusion. For example, an abuser may alternate between persecuting and rescuing the victim, reinforcing control and emotional entrapment. The victim may also adopt the rescuer role in an attempt to appease or protect the abuser, further complicating the dynamic.
- 3.22 Understanding the Drama Triangle can help professionals and victims recognise patterns of coercive control and emotional abuse, and support efforts to break the cycle through healthy boundaries, empowerment, and appropriate intervention.

4 Identifying domestic abuse

- 4.1 There are ways in which a manager or colleague may become aware that an individual is being subject to domestic abuse. These may include:
- an employee may disclose domestic abuse to a colleague, directly to their manager or tell them something which makes them concerned for their safety.
 - there may be obvious effects of physical abuse, or injuries that don't match the explanation given (it is important not to make assumptions).

- the situation may become known during discussions regarding a workplace concern such as sickness absence, timekeeping, drop in performance or a change in behaviour.
- there might be increased contact from a partner, ex-partner or family member to the employee during working hours.

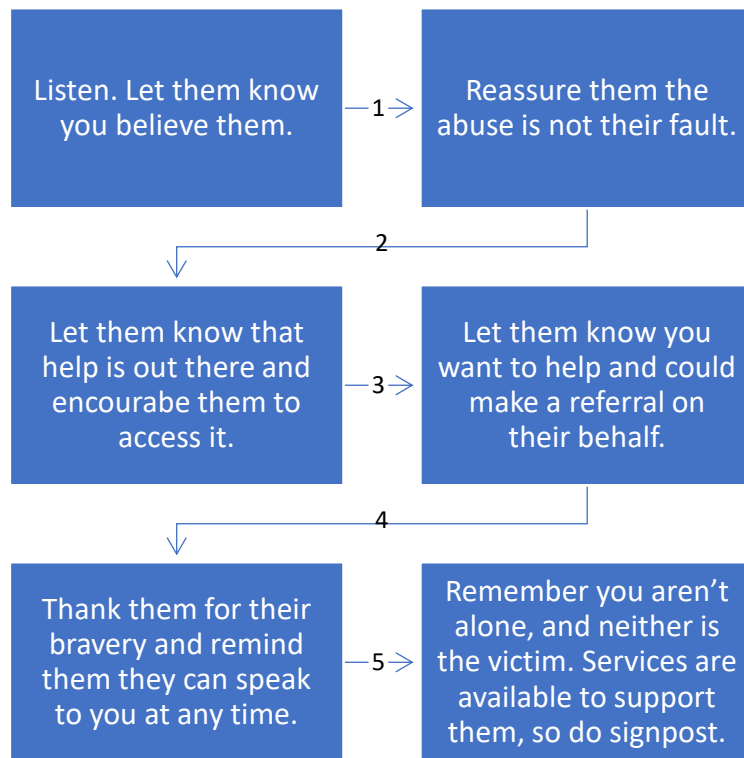
4.2 Possible signs of domestic abuse include:

- a change in appearance, behaviour or demeanour
- changes in quality of work for no explained reason
- receiving repeated social media contact, calls, texts, emails, or visits to the workplace
- physical indications, such as unexplained bruises or injuries, or wearing clothes that cover their body
- avoiding lunch breaks or socialising outside of work
- loss of self-esteem or confidence, or becoming withdrawn
- increased absenteeism or increased presenteeism
- unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol or substance misuse
- financial hardship / not having control over their money
- reluctance for video calls or partner is always in the background
- being concerned about leaving children or pets at home without them
- seeming nervous of their partner's reaction to things they've done.

4.3 This is not an exhaustive list, and it is important to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which domestic abuse may be one.

5 **Line managers' role**

- 5.1 Managers have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help and to work in a safe environment.
- 5.2 If a line manager suspects that an employee is experiencing domestic abuse, they should facilitate a conversation to discuss this and identify / implement appropriate support. Often employees will not feel confident in speaking up, so making the first move to begin a conversation can be key.
- 5.3 Always have the conversation face to face. Make sure you are in a safe quiet space, won't be interrupted or overheard and have enough time to chat. Approach the subject with patience, kindness and concern. A good starting point might be to mention things you have noticed in their behaviour, or that of the potential abuser.
- 5.4 In supporting the employee, the line manager should:



5.5 It should be recognised that the employee may need some time to decide what to do. Try not to influence them, allow them to be in control of their own decisions.

5.6 All line managers have a responsibility to:

- be aware of this policy and be able to apply it when they suspect or have identified an employee who may be suffering from domestic abuse.
- understand it can be difficult to make a disclosure and make it clear that the employee will be supported.
- prioritise safety over work efficiency.
- Offer solutions to work related problems in a supportive, sensitive and non-judgemental way.
- help the employee to identify the best source of external support (internal colleagues that can provide guidance on this are listed at section 7.1).
- report anything that raises concern via a [See it – Report it \(SIRI\) form](#).

6 Confidentiality and right to privacy

6.1 The Council encourages employees at risk from domestic abuse to disclose this so that they can receive support.

6.2 The Council respects an employee's right to privacy should they make a disclosure and recognises the importance of maintaining confidentiality to protect the safety of an employee and any associated children or adults who may be experiencing domestic abuse. However, in certain circumstances including those of child protection or the protection of adults at risk from abuse, relevant safeguarding authorities may

need to be informed. Complete confidentiality therefore cannot be guaranteed in these situations.

- 6.3 If it is necessary to disclose certain information the manager will discuss with the employee, the reasons why. Information will only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis and will be proportionate. Any decision to disclose without consent (if an employee is at serious risk of injury or death, or a child or other adult is at risk of significant harm) should be documented.
- 6.4 Employees can be assured that the information they provide will not be shared with colleagues without their agreement. In some cases, it may be advisable to share some information with colleagues, for example, it may be helpful for colleagues to know how to respond in cases where the alleged perpetrator of the abuse tries to contact the employee at work.
- 6.5 All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential and in line with the [Council's Privacy Notice](#).
- 6.6 All incidents of violence or threatening behaviour, or breaches of security in the workplace must be retained for evidence purposes. These should be recorded via a [See it – Report it \(SIRI\) form](#) which will be reviewed and retained by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer. The record must be clear, accurate and include the date, time, location and witnesses.

7 Internal support

7.1 Support is available to employees involved in domestic abuse through:

- line managers
- [the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead](#)
- [the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator](#)
- [human resources](#)
- [domestic abuse champions](#)
- [trade union representatives](#)

7.2 The Employee Assistance Programme is also available.

Heath Assured is a confidential counselling and information service available 24/7 to assist employees and their immediate family members with personal or work-related problems including life support, legal information, bereavement support and medical information.

✓ Telephone line, **0800 030 5182**, open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

7.3 Through the Wisdom smartphone app, employees can access a range of features, all aimed at improving health and wellbeing.

✓ [Wisdom](#) smartphone app, access using code **MHA222473**

8 External support

8.1 The Council provides a comprehensive directory of domestic abuse support services on its website, including both local and national resources. We encourage any

employee affected by domestic abuse to access this information, which offers guidance, support, and pathways to safety. You are not alone, and help is available. <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/directory/157/domestic-abuse-directory-of-services>

- 8.2 If you believe someone is in immediate danger, you should call the **police on 999**.

9 Attendance

- 9.1 Where domestic abuse has been reported managers, with guidance from Human Resources, should be flexible with unplanned absences and timekeeping.
- 9.2 Managers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse flexibility to attend relevant appointments, including those with support agencies, solicitors and court.

10 Perpetrators of domestic abuse

- 10.1 Any allegation of involvement in domestic abuse should be reported promptly via a [See it – Report it \(SIRI\)](#) form where an assessment will be made on the most appropriate course of action. This may include referral to the police and/or the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).
- 10.2 Should an employee approach the Council about their abusive behaviour; information will be provided about the services and support available to them.
- 10.3 Employees are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the Council and its reputation. In line with the Council's disciplinary policy and procedure it would therefore be considered gross misconduct if an employee were to be convicted of the physical violence, threat or assault of another person.
- 10.4 The Council is committed to ensuring that:
- all allegations and convictions of domestic abuse are dealt with fairly and proactively.
 - confidentiality is maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need to know.
 - all efforts are made to put support in place as quickly as possible.

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This report is public	
Workforce Profile Statistics – Quarter 2 of 2025-26	
Committee	Personnel Committee
Date of Committee	3 December 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	21 November 2025
Report of	Assistant Director of Human Resources, Claire Cox

Purpose of report

To provide the Personnel Committee with an update on Cherwell District Council's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers are taking to address any issues.

1. Recommendations

The Personnel Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review and note the workforce data for quarter 2 of 2025/26 provided in appendix one, devised to provide insight that will enable officers of CDC to address challenges and efficiencies in the workforce more efficiently.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines statistical data in relation to CDC's workforce at the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26 for information. There are no issues, risks or concerns to highlight this quarter.

- 2.2 Appendix 1 provides the following highlights in CDC's workforce statistics for quarter 2 as follows:

- 12 leavers and 13 new starters
- As at the end of quarter 2, headcount reduced by 3 to 629. Of the 629, 15 employees are multiple role holders
- FTE reduced by 1.24, to 518.65, as at quarter end.
- Minimal shift in employment basis and role basis
- Increase of 3 agency workers at the end of quarter 2, compared to the previous quarter, from 35 to 38.
- A quarterly turnover rate of 1.91%, 1.44% lower than the previous quarter.

- Resignation was the main reason for leavers, accounting for 58.33% of all leavers. 33% of leavers completed exit interviews.
- Comments received within the interviews that took place were mixed with some relating to personal circumstances and travel being too much, protracted processes meant getting things done provide difficult at times, work more administrative based than anticipated, work had peaks and troughs and would have benefitted from a more structured approach. Some had opportunity for further career progression. All were positive about the colleagues they worked with and their teams overall.
- 232 sickness absence incidents were recorded, 7 less than the same quarter in the previous year.
- Absence rate at the end of quarter 2 was 1.36 which has increased compared to the end of the last quarter and is the highest it has been for some time, this is due a rise in long-term sick cases with 24 remaining open at the end of quarter 2, compared to 13 at the end of quarter 1.
- Minimal shift in age, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation profile
- Recruitment data has been provided for the last 12 months, and shows applicants are representative of the district.
- 30 apprenticeships currently underway across a diverse range of subject areas. Of the 30, 5 are being completed by apprentices, and 25 are being undertaken by staff.

2.3 As advised in previous reports, the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson announced a new growth and skills levy which will replace the existing apprenticeship levy and is to include new foundation apprenticeships. These new apprenticeships will give young people a route in to careers in critical sectors, enabling them to earn a wage whilst developing vital skills. This situation is being monitored, and further updates will be provided once available.

2.4 In February the government highlighted several changes to how apprenticeships will operate in the future, in response to employers' calls for more flexibility. This will include introduction of shorter apprenticeships from August 2025 (subject to the parliamentary timetable), with the minimum length reduced from 12 to 8 months. The new development will allow training to be delivered and completed faster where that makes sense for a given industry, or an individual has significant prior learning.

2.5 From 1 January 2026, level 7 qualifications will no longer be funded for new starters who are over aged 22. This will unfortunately have quite a big impact on CDC as we utilise the apprenticeship levy fund for level 7 apprenticeships in Planning, Finance and Waste. Apprenticeship providers are reviewing how

levy funding may still be utilised up to level 6, with level 7 qualifications requiring funding from the learning and development budget.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications		Commentary		
Finance		This is an information report only, for the review of workforce statistical data for Q2 2025-26. It must be noted though, that if future level 7 apprenticeships require funding from the corporate learning and development budget, that this will need to be reviewed as part of the budget process to ensure adequate funds are available. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 10 November 2025		
Legal		There are no legal implications within this report as it is for information only. Denzil – John Turbervill Head of Legal Services, 19 November 2025		
Risk		There are no risks arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 November 2025		
Impact Assessments		Positive	Neutral	Negative
Equality Impact			X	
		There are no equalities implications directly related to this report. However, this report provides the council with valuable data which will help us support and promote equality, diversity and inclusion within our workforce. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 November 2025		
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?			X	
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics,			X	

including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	N/A			
Human Resources	<p>The workforce profile statistics provide valuable insight into the make-up of the council's workforce, which helps form policies and initiatives to suit its diversity.</p> <p>Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 9 November 2025</p>			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	The Corporate Leadership Team have reviewed the workforce statistics prior to submission to Personnel Committee.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Workforce Data for Quarter 2 of 2025/26 has been produced and is available at appendix one of this report. HR monitor workforce data on a quarterly basis to identify emerging trends in staff wellbeing and organisational development. Comparative data is included for sensitive information such as ethnicity, gender, and age against the make-up of the district and the UK overall.

4. Details

- 4.1 The workforce profile report at appendix 1 provides commentary and data for quarter 2 of 2025/26, as well as quarterly, whole year and end-of-year comparisons.
- 4.2 The report provides statistics on:
- Headcount & FTE
 - Employment and role basis

- Agency usage
- Turnover
- Leavers by length of service
- Leavers by reason
- Sickness absence incidents by reason
- Sickness absence rates –all absence, short-term, long-term, stress-related
- Percentage of working time lost due to sickness absence
- Age profile
- Gender profile
- Ethnicity profile
- Disability profile
- Sexual orientation profile
- Recruitment data relating to personal attributes for the purposes of inclusion
- Apprenticeship information

- 4.3 Our collection of data relating to protected characteristics has vastly improved, and HR are continuing to encourage all employees to provide this data. CDC recognise this is not mandatory but are encouraging staff to share as widely as possible as all information helps inform future policies / programmes of support.
- 4.4 Following the implementation of the recruitment module within the HR/Payroll system, data around recruitment has also been included in the latest report. This is initially at a high level to provide details of applicants by EDI categories, in order to monitor that recruitment opportunities are reaching all communities within Cherwell, and that applicant pools are reflective of the district we serve. Applicant data shows that communities are being reached, and applicant pools are reflective. This will continue to be monitored.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.
 - Option 1: Not to complete workforce statistics, this option is rejected as workforce analytics will enable CDC to address challenges and efficiencies in the workforce more efficiently.

6. Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Monitoring workforce data helps CDC to measure how well it is supporting staff - focusing on wellbeing and personal development so it can identify issues at the earliest opportunity to address them effectively. It is also helpful for some data sets to compare how we are performing against the rest of the local government sector, to ensure it remains an attractive employer and retains its staff.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	N/A

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Workforce Profile Data – Quarter 2, 2025/26
Background Papers	N/A
Reference Papers	N/A
Report Author	Assistant Director of Human Resources, Claire Cox
Report Author contact details	Claire.cox@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 221549
Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Executive Director for Resources

Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) comparison and Agency usage

Chart 1 shows that the headcount (based at the end of each quarter) at Cherwell District Council (CDC) has seen a reduction of 3 between the end of quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26. Within the headcount of 629, 15 employees have 2 roles, and have therefore been counted twice, meaning we have 614 employees.

Quarter 2 of 2025/26 has seen adjustments of 12 leavers and 13 new starters across the organisation.

Chart 1

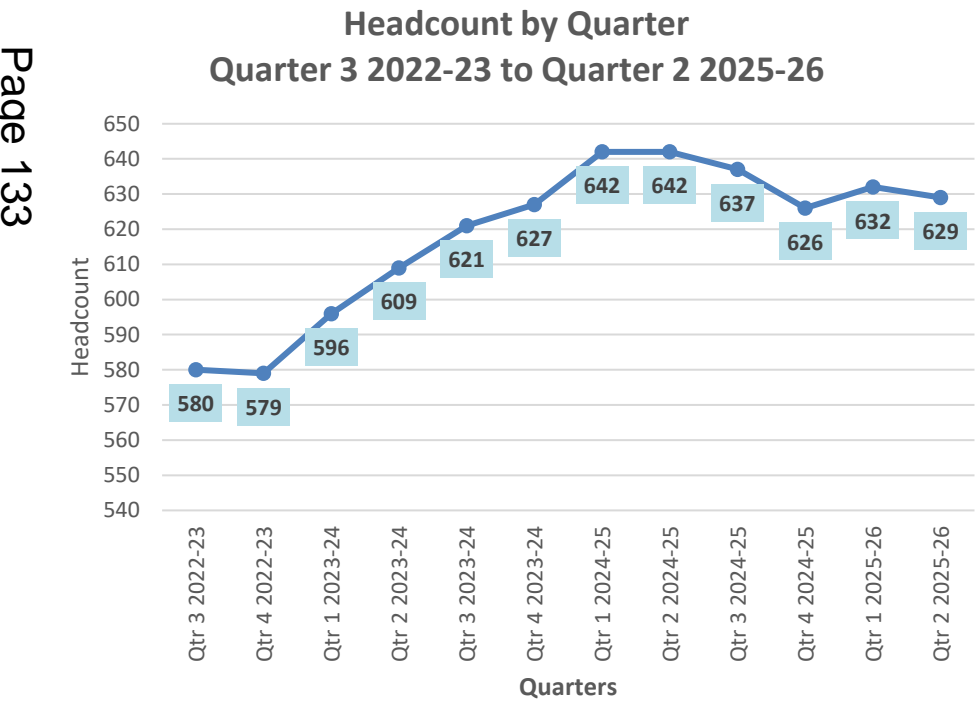


Chart 2 details the distribution of headcount across our departments and directorates as at the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26. Wellbeing and Environmental Services continue to show the highest headcount. CDC are host employer to the District Councils Network (DCN), and these employees are included in the HR, OD and Payroll directorate.

Wellbeing has had the biggest reduction in headcount with 3 since quarter 1 of 2025/26. Property and the Chief Executive’s Office have each reduced by 2. Environmental Services’ and HR, OD and Payroll’s headcount each increased by 2. In quarter 3, departments will be reflective of the new senior management structure that was implemented by the Chief Executive in October 2025.

Chart 2

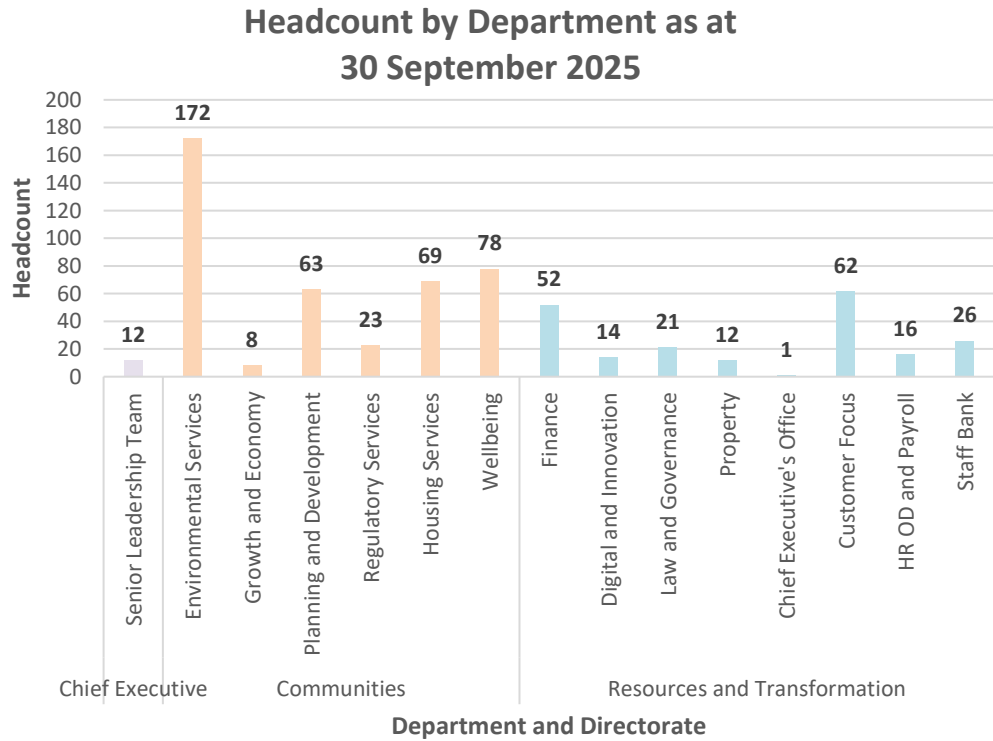


Chart 3 outlines the fluctuation of FTE which has increased by 1.24 between quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26.

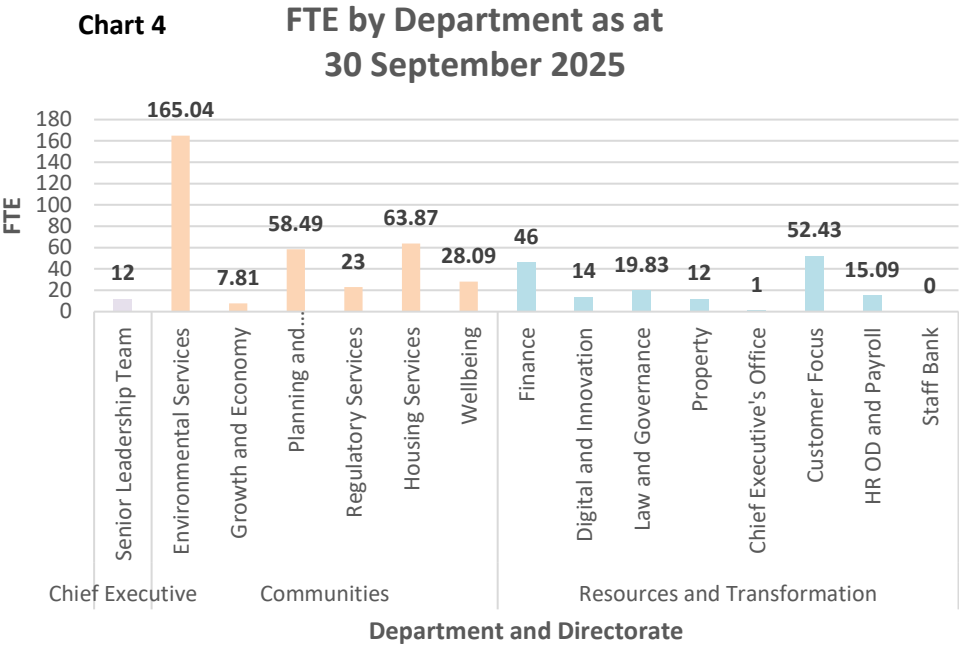
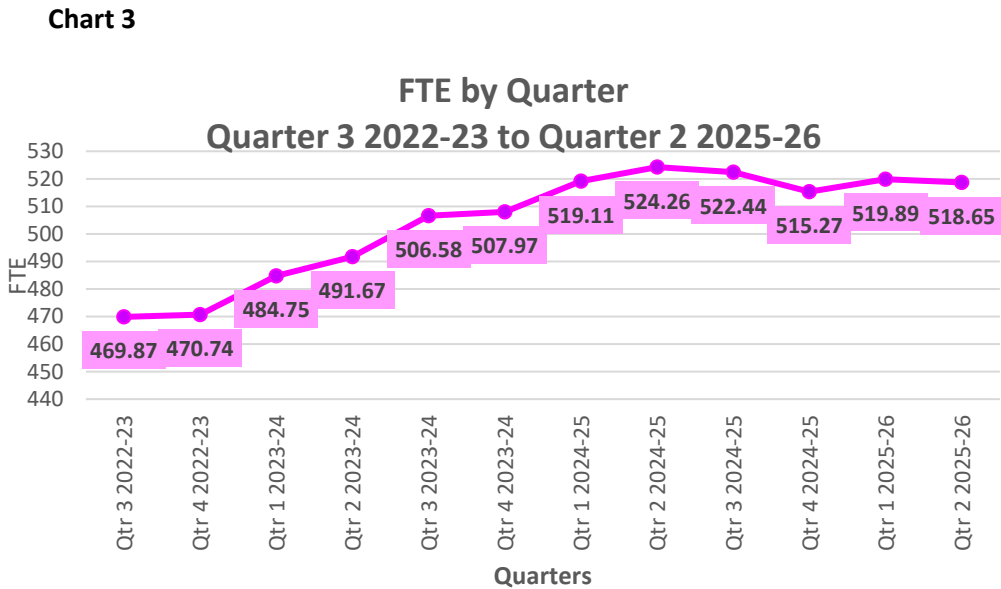


Chart 5

% Breakdown of Role Basis as at 30 September 2025

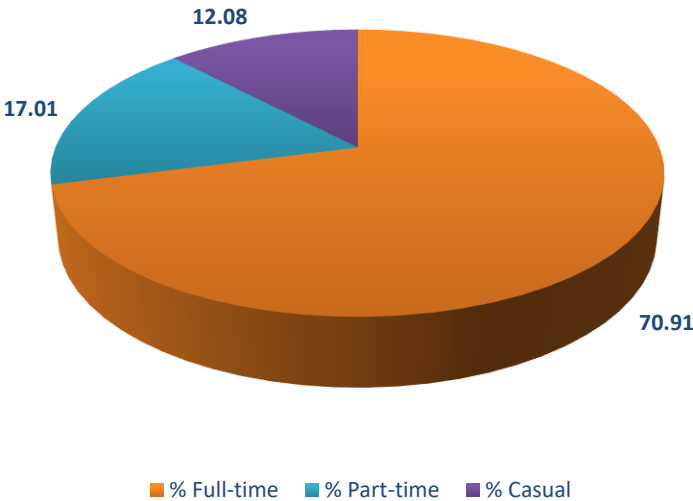
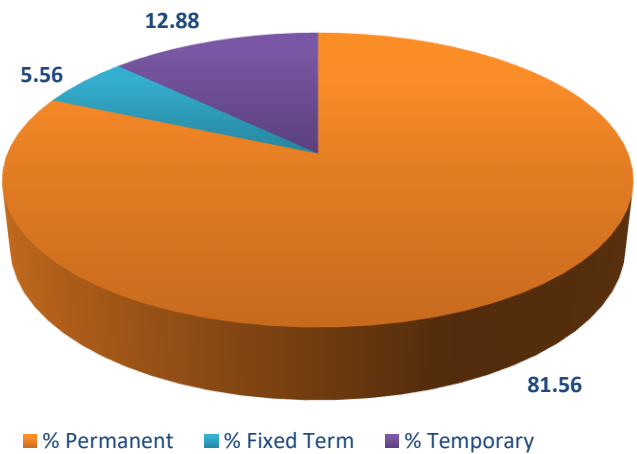


Chart 6 outlines the employment basis of those directly employed by CDC shows that 81.56% of our workforce are in permanent roles. This has slightly reduced, by 0.42% since Quarter 1 of 2025/26. There has been minimal fluctuation of employment basis since the last quarter.

Chart 6

% Breakdown of Employment Basis as at 30 September 2025



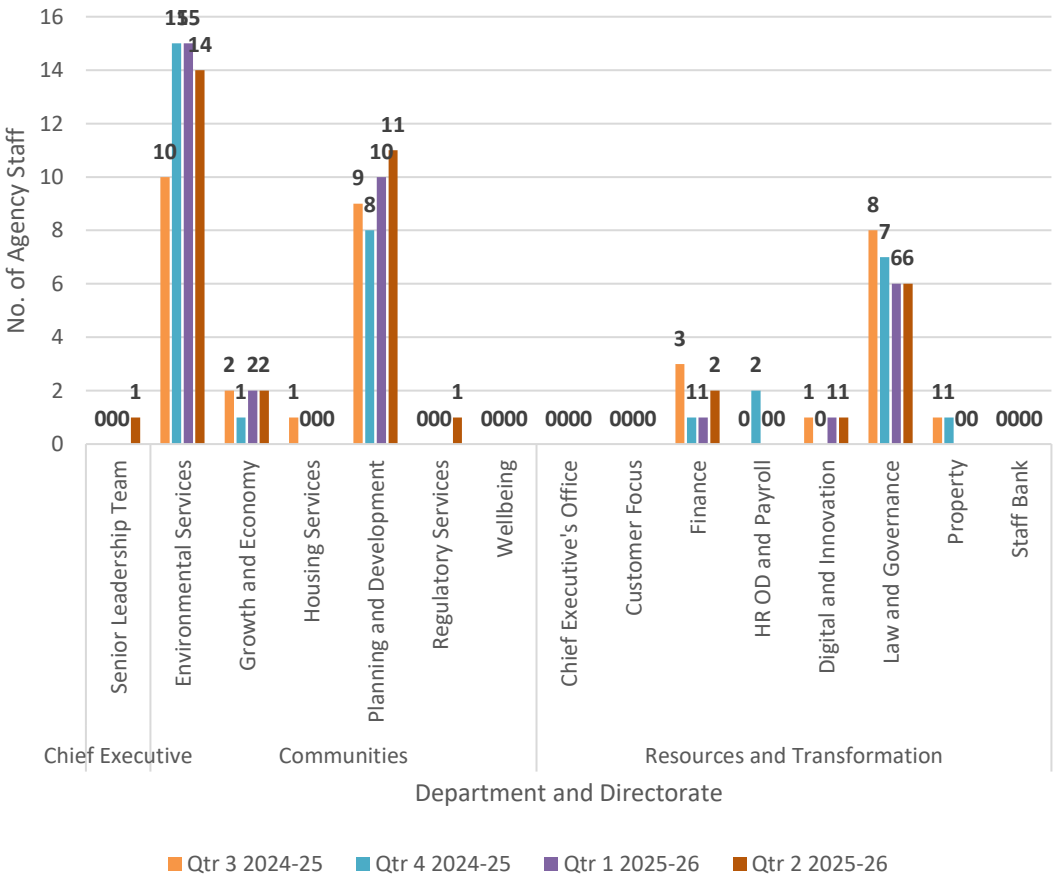
In addition to employing staff directly, CDC also utilise Agency Workers, either for interim or short-term usage for specific posts and projects.

Chart 7 outlines agency usage as at the end of each quarter for the last rolling year by department. A total of 38 Agency workers were engaged with CDC at the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26. This has increased by 3 since the end of quarter 1 but is 6 less than the same quarter in 2024/25.

The highest agency usage is usually Environmental Services, within refuse collection and this is due to having 3-person crews, often utilising agency staff to cover for employee sickness and holidays. Usage in this area has remained the same for the last 3 quarters.

The Senior Leadership Team, Planning and Development, Regulatory Services and Finance have each increased agency usage by 1 in the last quarter. Environmental Services has reduced by 1.

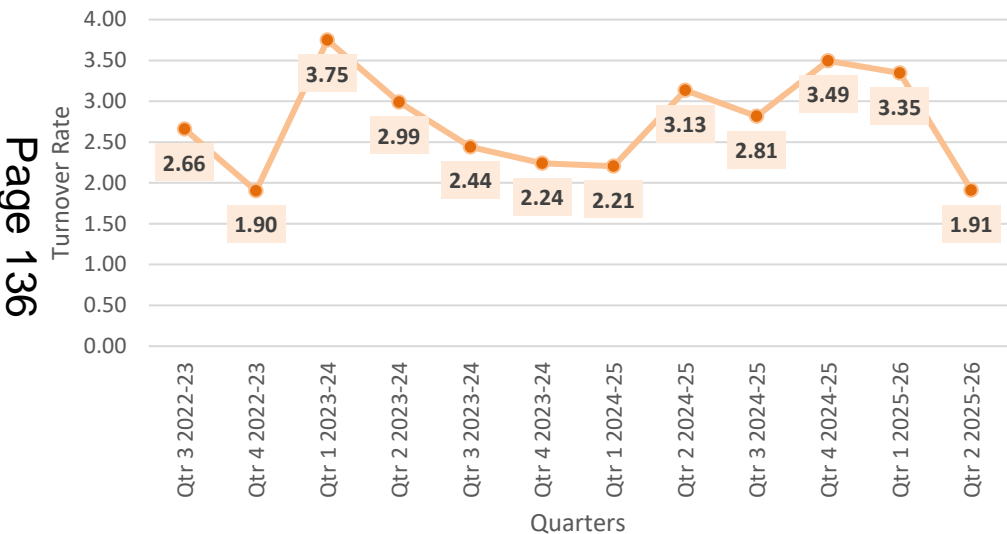
Chart 7 Agency Usage as at Quarter End for the last rolling 12 months



Turnover rates and Leaver information

Chart 8 tracks the turnover rate per quarter over a 3-year period, from October 2022 to September 2025. The turnover rate is defined by firstly calculating the average number of employees for the quarter period and then dividing the number of leavers by the average number of employees.

Chart 8
Quarterly Turnover Rate
Quarter 3 2022-23 to Quarter 2 2025-26



The turnover for quarter 2 of 2025/26 shows a reduction of 1.44% in the turnover rate since quarter 1.

Chart 9 details the quarterly turnover rate by department for quarter 2.

Chart 10 outlines leavers by reason for quarter 1 of 2025/26. Of the 12 leavers recorded in quarter 2, resignation is the highest reason for leaving, accounting for 58.33%. 16.67% of leavers were due to End of Fixed Term Contract. Dismissal – Capability, Redundancy and Retirement each accounted for 8.33%

Chart 9
Quarterly Turnover Rate by Department
as at
30 September 2025

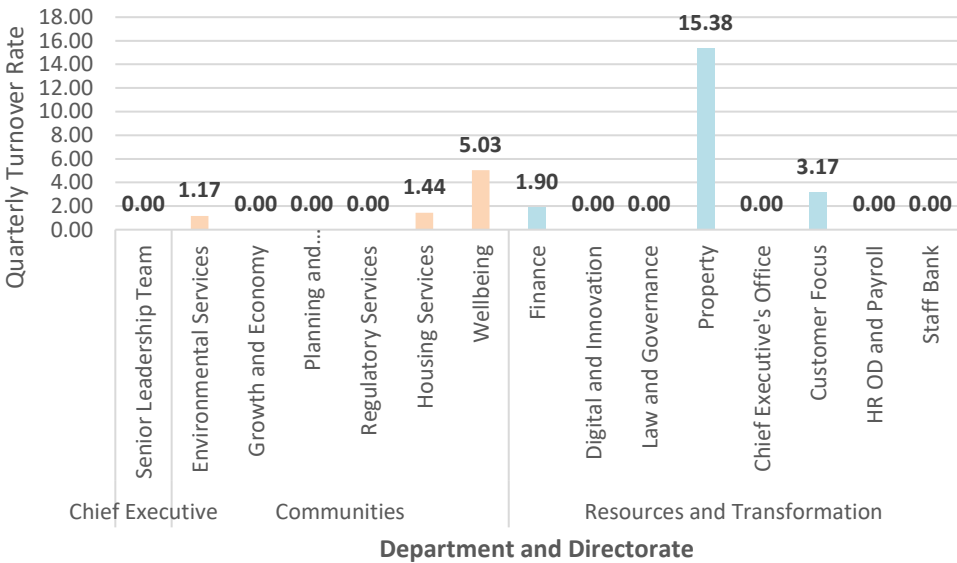
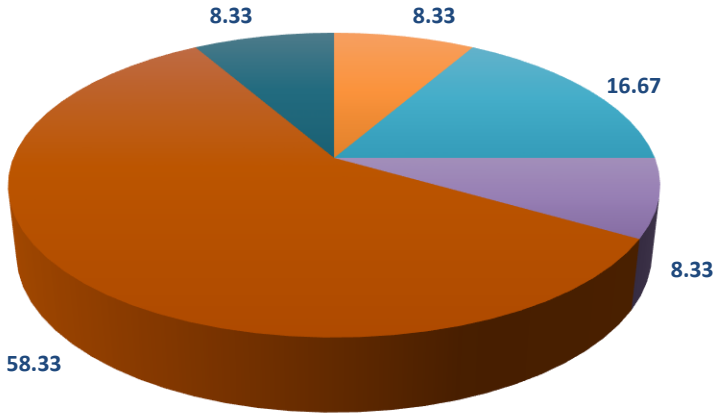


Chart 10
% of Leavers by reason
1 July to 30 September 2025

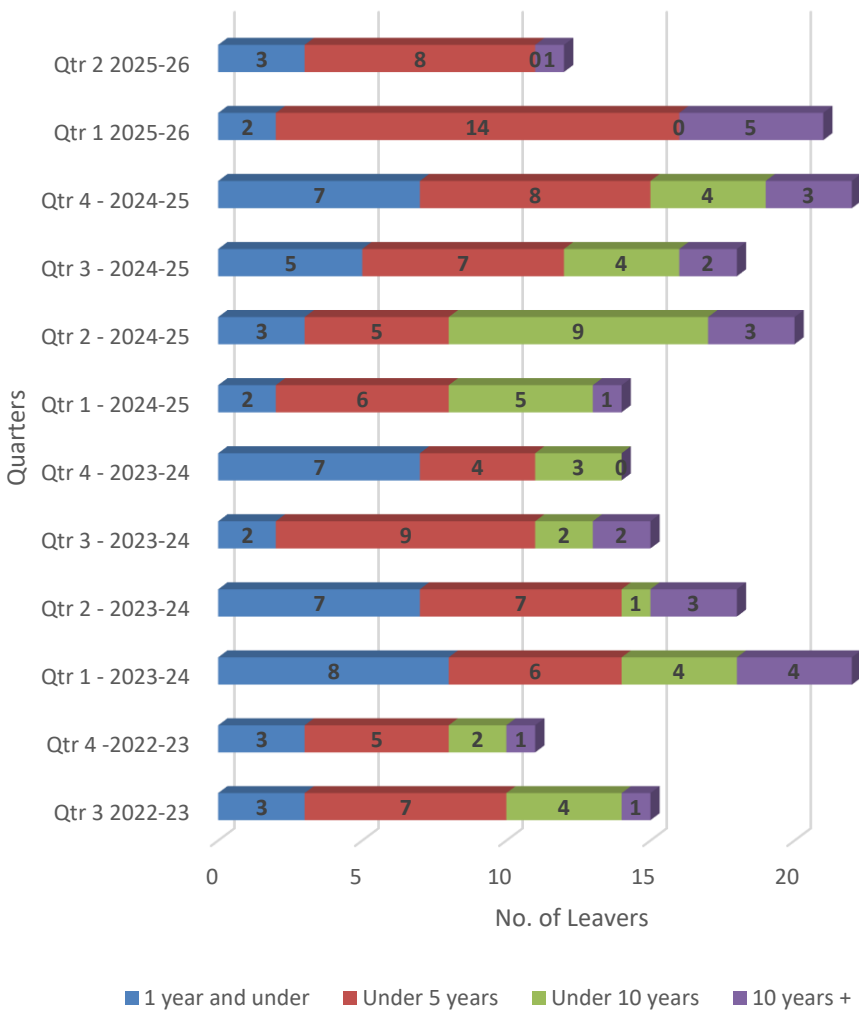


Dismissal - Capability End of Fixed term contract Redundancy Resignation Retirement

Chart 11 outlines leavers by length of service across the last 12 quarters. In quarter 2 of 2025/26, 3 leavers had less than a year’s service, 8 had under 5 years’ service, none had less than 10 years’ service and 1 had over 10 years.

Chart 11

Leavers by Length of Service
1 October 2022- 30 September 2025



When a resignation is received within HR, employees are provided with an electronic exit questionnaire to complete via our HR/Payroll system and invited to attend a meeting with a member of the HR team to ascertain why they are leaving and whether they have any advice or comments on lessons learned or improvements that could be made.

Of the 12 leavers in quarter 2, 33% were casual workers who had not engaged in work with us for some time, and 17% left abruptly. Out of the remaining leavers, 4 completed the exit interview questionnaire and attended meetings with a member of the HR Team. This is a 33% completion rate across all leavers, which is a reduction from the last quarter that recorded a 38% completion rate. However, based on exit interviews that could have been captured in this quarter, the completion rate is 66%. We cannot force employees to provide this data to us or attend a meeting with HR, but we will continue to encourage engagement in this process. We have also noted the need to strengthen the wording around the completion of exit interviews for circumstances where end of fixed term contracts come to an end, which should help further improve our completion rate.

When asked where they were going next, 25% were moving to another local authority, 25% were retiring, 25% were returning to studies, 25% had no other employment to move to at the point of leaving.

Comments received within the interviews that took place were mixed with some relating to personal circumstances and travel being too much, protracted processes meant getting things done provide difficult at times, work more administrative based than anticipated, work had peaks and troughs and would have benefitted from a more structured approach. Some had opportunity for further career progression. All were positive about the colleagues they worked with and their teams overall.

HR Business Partners review exit interview data in order to pick up any trends and discuss content with relevant managers. Data will continue to be gathered and shared with the relevant managers in a bid to act on any advice received in order to make improvements, where possible, for existing employees, thus aiding retention.

Sickness Absence reasons and rates

Chart 12 shows the number of sickness absence incidents by reason over the last 8 quarters, with data captured on a monthly basis, back to October 2023. Musculo-skeletal has seen the most incidents across this period, with 237 recorded. This is closely followed by Stomach/liver/kidney and digestion which had 219 incidents.

There were 232 incidents of sickness absence recorded in Quarter 2 of 2025/26, this is 7 less incidents than the same quarter of 2024/25.

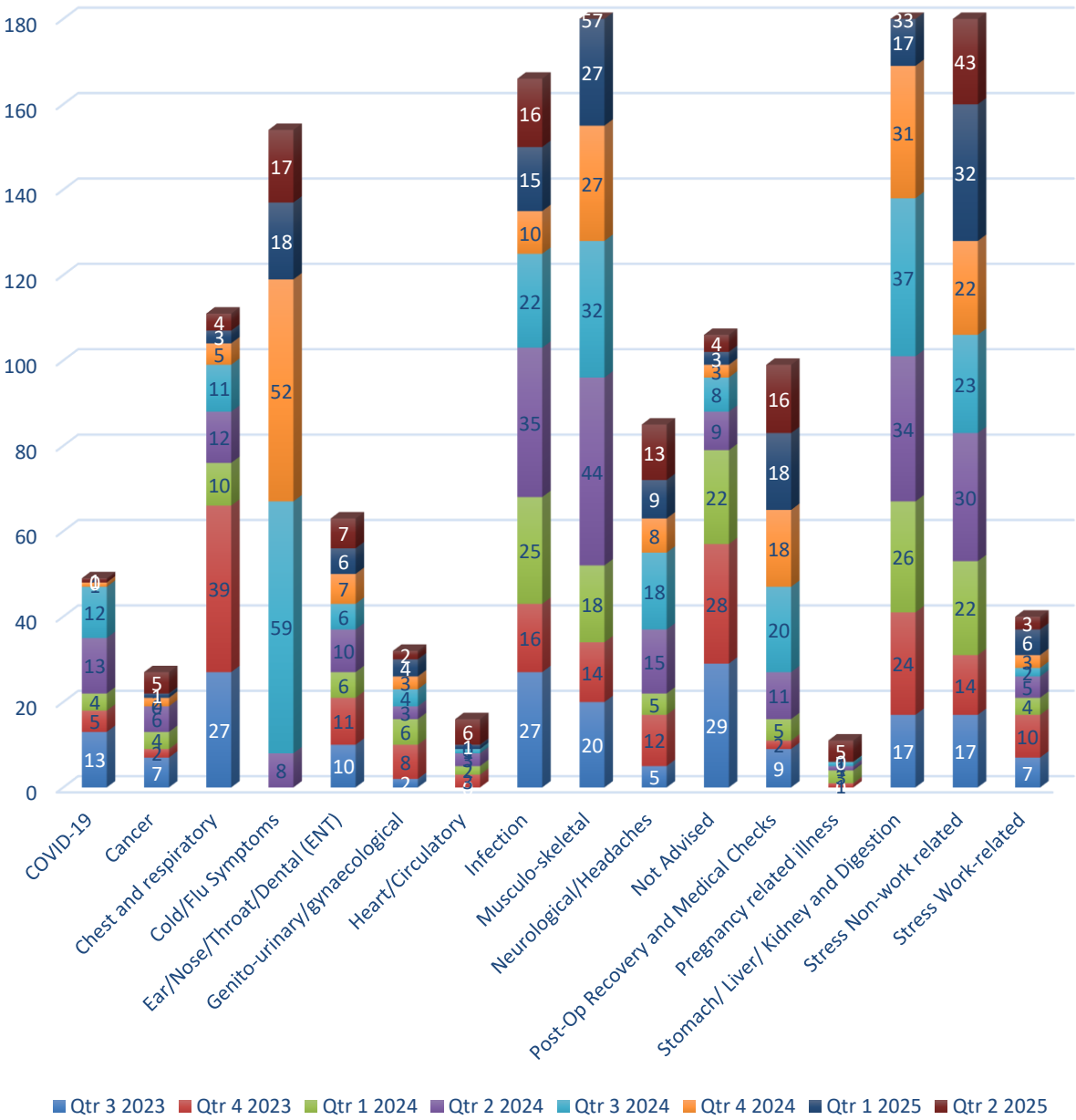
For Quarter 2 of 2025/26, Musculo-skeletal was the highest recorded reason for sickness absence, accounting for 25% of all incidents in the last quarter. This is followed by stress- non work related, which accounts for 19% of all incidents in the last quarter. The third highest reasons this quarter was Stomach/liver/kidney and digestion, accounting for 14.5% of all incidents.

The highest reason for sickness absence across the last rolling 12 months was cold and flu symptoms, with 146 incidents recorded and accounting for 17.5% of all incidents.

The second highest reason for sickness absence in the last 12 months is Musculo-skeletal, with 143 incidents reported which equates to 17% of all incidents.

Stress – non work related is the third highest reason in the last 12 months, recording 120 incidents and accounting for 14.5% of all incidents.

Chart 12
Sickness Absence Incidents by Reason
October 2023 to September 2025



For the purposes of sickness absence reporting, short term absence is recorded as any incident that is less than 28 days, and a GP fit note is required after an employee has been absent for 7 calendar days. Long-term sickness is recorded as any absence spanning 28 days or more. HR work with managers and employees, where employees are off on long-term sick to engage with Cordell Health, CDC’s Occupational Health Provider and ensure effective absence management.

Chart 13 tracks the absence rate per month, which is effectively the percentage of working time lost, from October 2022 to September 2025 and shows an increase in the absence rate since the end of quarter 1 of 2025.26. The absence rate is calculated by dividing the hours lost due to sickness absence by the available working hours for the period. September 2025 records the highest rate of absence at 1.36% of working time lost. The whole council absence rate followed the same trajectory in quarter 2 of 2024/25 as it has done in 2025/26, although absence levels are higher due to an increase in long-term sickness absence. Research completed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) and Simplyhealth with over 1100 employers and published in September 2025 recorded that *UK employees were off sick for nearly two full working weeks (9.4 days) on average in the last 12 months* which has jumped from 7.8 days in 2023, and 5.8 days pre-pandemic (<https://www.cipd.org/uk/about/press-releases/workplace-absence-soars-nearly-two-working-weeks-each-year/>). Whilst CDC’s absence rate has increased, it remains significantly lower than the findings of the CIPD report. The report acknowledged that *As people are working and living longer, employers need to create workplaces that are supportive and help staff manage health changes, like flexible hours and adjustments to workload*. CDC are committed to considering flexible working hours as appropriate, and HR work closely with managers and Occupational Health to review possibilities around workloads as required.

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Chart 13

Council Absence Rates by Month
Overall and broken down into short-term, long-term and stress
October 2022 to September 2025

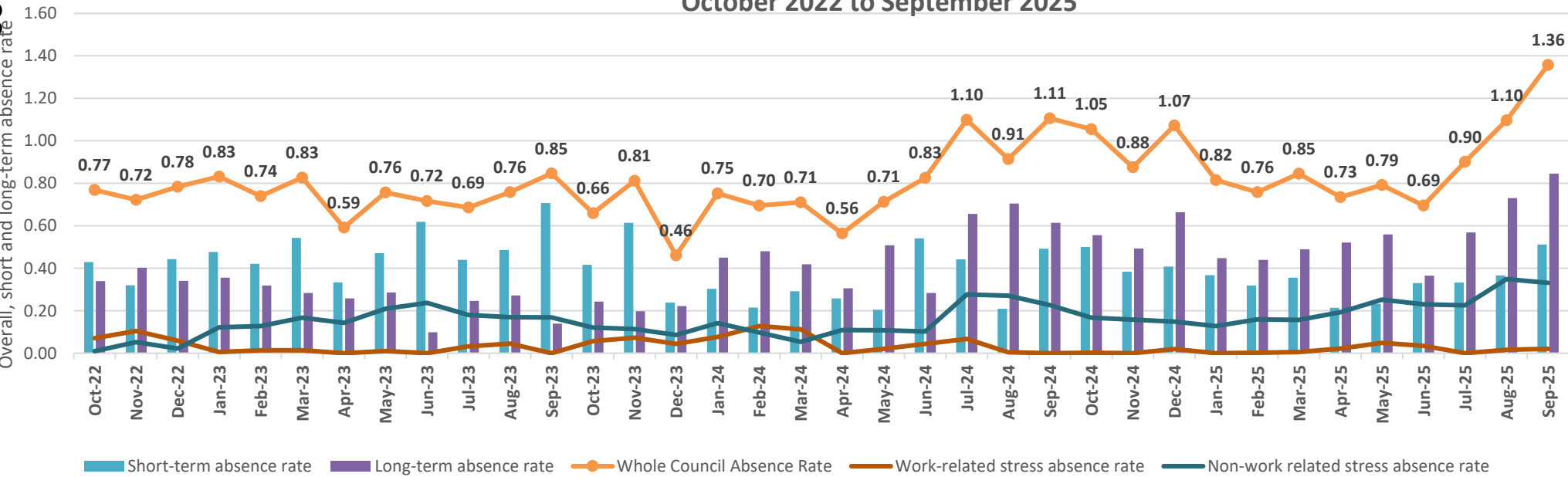


Chart 13 also captures the absence rate of short and long-term instances, In the last 12 months. October 2024 has the highest rate of short-term absence, recording a rate of 0.50 days lost. September 2025 had the highest rate of long-term absence in the last 12 months, with 0.85 days lost. At the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26, 24 long-term sickness absence cases remained ongoing, which had increased by 11 from quarter 1.

The absence rate attributed to stress is also displayed in Chart 13 and a slight reduction in work-related stress was recorded in the last quarter, with a rate of 0.02 days lost in September 2025. Work-related stress incidents accounted for 1.3% of incidents in quarter 2 of 2025/26 and 1.7% of incidents in the last rolling 12 months.

The non-work-related stress absence rate has increased slightly over the last quarter, from 0.23 at the end of quarter 1 of 2025/26 to 0.33 at the end of quarter 2. Non-work-related stress accounted for 18.5% of incidents in quarter 2 of 2025/26 and 14.3% of incidents in the last rolling 12 months.

HR continue to ensure that Occupational Health support is accessed at the point that employee sickness is classified as long-term unless there are benefits to instigate this sooner. If an employee reports that they are absent due to stress, then an immediate referral to Occupational Health is made to ensure that support mechanisms can be put in place as soon as possible. Employees are also asked to complete a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Stress Questionnaire as this provides information on the causes of stress which aids the organisation in supporting employees to deal with these issues where possible.

Employees also continue to have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is provided by Health Assured and offers access to counselling, legal and financial advice, and wellbeing resources. The service is confidential and whilst statistics on usage are reported through to CDC; details of which employees have made contact is withheld.

Charts 14 and 15 provide a breakdown of the percentage of working time lost by department for both short term and long-term sickness absence.

Chart 14 % Working Time Lost due to Short Term Sickness Absence

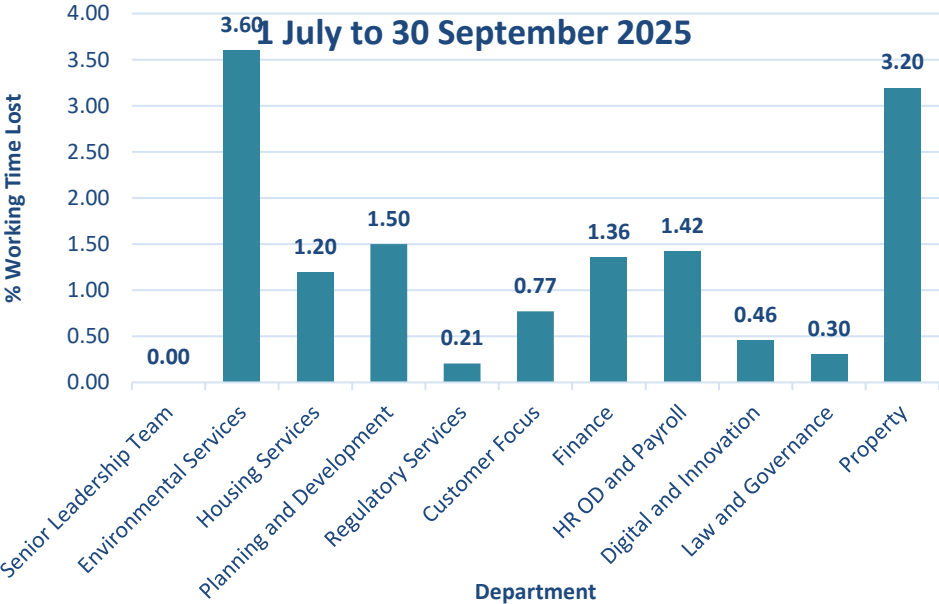
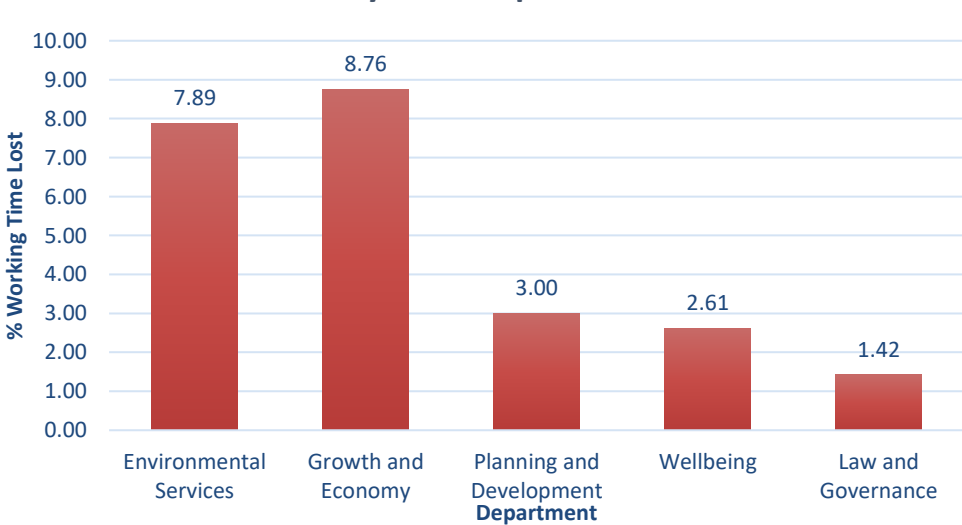


Chart 15 % Working Time Lost due to Long Term Absence 1 July to 30 September 2025



Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability and LGBTQ+ Workforce Profile as at 30 September 2025

Chart 16 shows a breakdown by age of the CDC workforce, expressed in percentage. 14% of CDC employees are over 60. 27% are aged between 51 and 60. 20% of CDC employees are aged between 41 and 50. 21% are aged between 31 and 40 and 11% aged 30 and under. There has been minimal change to the age profile within the last quarter.

Chart 16

Age Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2025

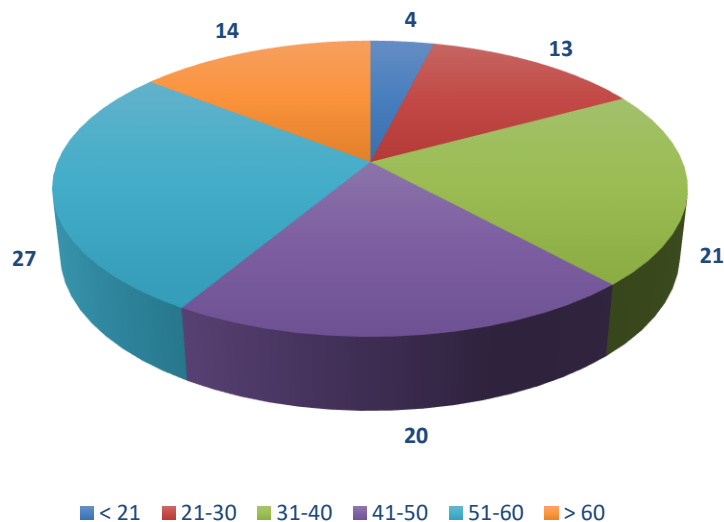
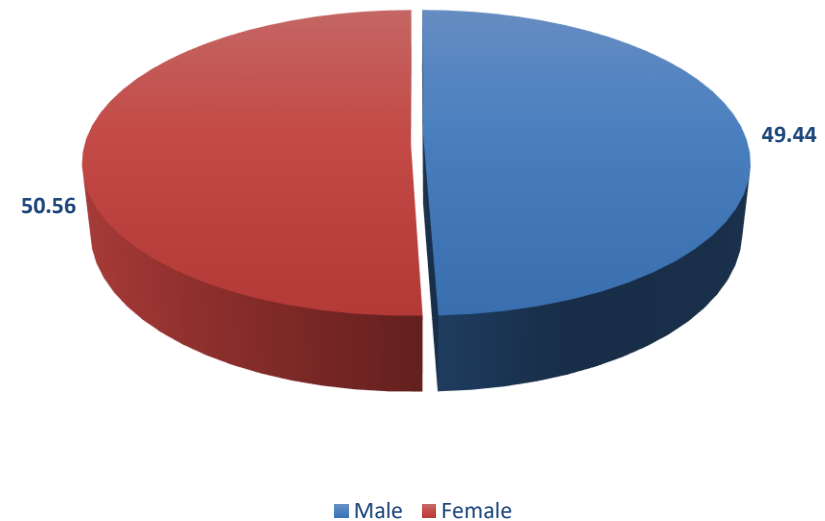


Chart 17 breaks down the gender of the CDC workforce and shows that CDC is almost a 50% split.

CDC record statistics on employee equalities data in order to ensure that our workforce is representative of the district we support and serve. Where we are under-represented, we need to review what we can do to ensure these groups are aware of the employment opportunities we have available. Local Insight data in relation to gender and ethnicity within the Cherwell District has been used to compare against the make-up of our workforce.

Chart 17

Gender Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2025



Out of a population of 161,837 within the Cherwell District, the latest census data records that 49.6% are male and 50.4% are female. At CDC, 49.44% of our workforce are male and 50.56% are female meaning it is representative of the district.

CDC employees continue to be encouraged to share their equalities data. In relation to employee ethnicity data, in quarter 1 of 2022/23 51% of employees had not provided this. At the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26, 88.71% of employees have recorded this information, with 4.61% preferring not to specify.

Chart 18 shows a breakdown of ethnicity within CDC. Comparative data has been sought both nationally and from the district and is presented in Table 1.

Chart 18 **Ethnicity Profile Percentage as at 30 September 2025**

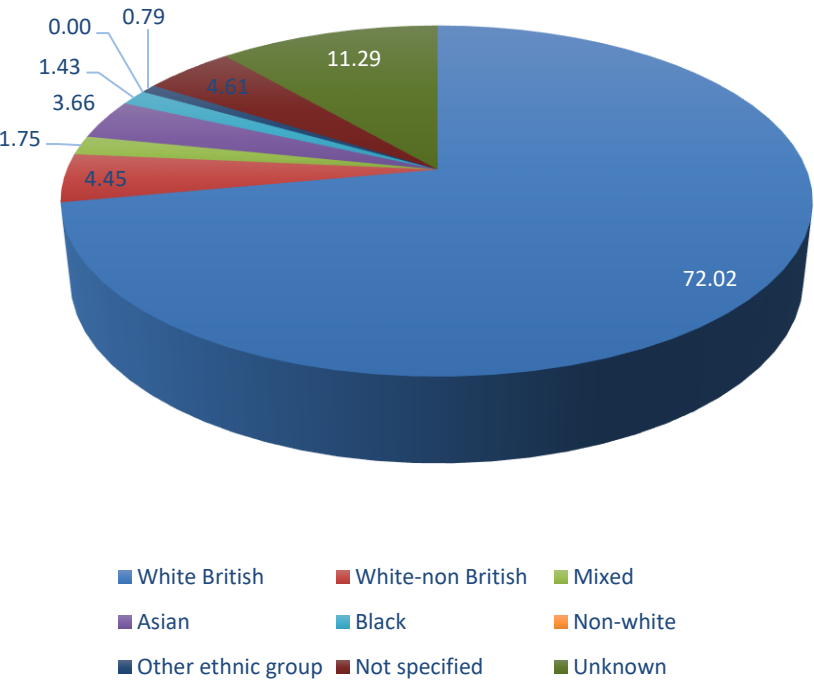


Table 1

Ethnic Group	England average (%)	Cherwell District (%)	CDC (%) Qtr 3 24/25	CDC (%) Qtr 4 24/25	CDC (%) Qtr 1 25/26	CDC (%) Qtr 2 25/26
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	9.3	6.0	4.08	3.98	3.80	3.66
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4.0	1.8	1.88	1.59	1.42	1.43
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2.9	2.9	1.88	1.91	1.74	1.75
White	81.7	88.1	70.02	74.84	76.27	76.47
Other ethnic group	2.1	1.3	0.78	0.80	0.79	0.79
Prefer not to say	N/A	N/A	5.18	5.10	4.75	4.61
Unknown	N/A	N/A	11.62	11.78	11.23	11.29

CDC’s workforce is predominantly white British with 72.02% of the workforce recording their ethnicity in this category.

Table 1 compares the make-up of ethnic groups across the UK and the Cherwell District and then compares this with the make-up of our workforce. The Cherwell District has a higher percentage of residents in the *White* ethnic group than the average across the UK. Of the workforce data recorded, the *White* category increased in the last quarter by 0.02% but at the end of quarter 2 was 11.63% less than the Cherwell District.

The CDC workforce is slightly under-represented in all the ethnic groups in comparison to the district, and there has been no significant change in any ethnic group between quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26.

The Personnel Committee requested further information on ethnicity by grade across the organisation. The grade bands have been split into 3 categories; A to E who generally have no supervisory or line management responsibilities, F to I; who are typically team leader and supervisory level roles and then J and above which are management grades.

Chart 19 outlines the percentage of employees by ethnic group and grade band.

We have requested disability information be provided by employees. At the end of quarter 1 of 2024/25, 43% of the workforce had not provided this data, however at the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26 this was down to 13%, as illustrated in Chart 20. The HR Team are committed to completing further follow-up to improve the data collection within this area. Chart 21 shows a breakdown of data relating to disability by grade band.

Chart 19 Ethnic Group Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 September 2025

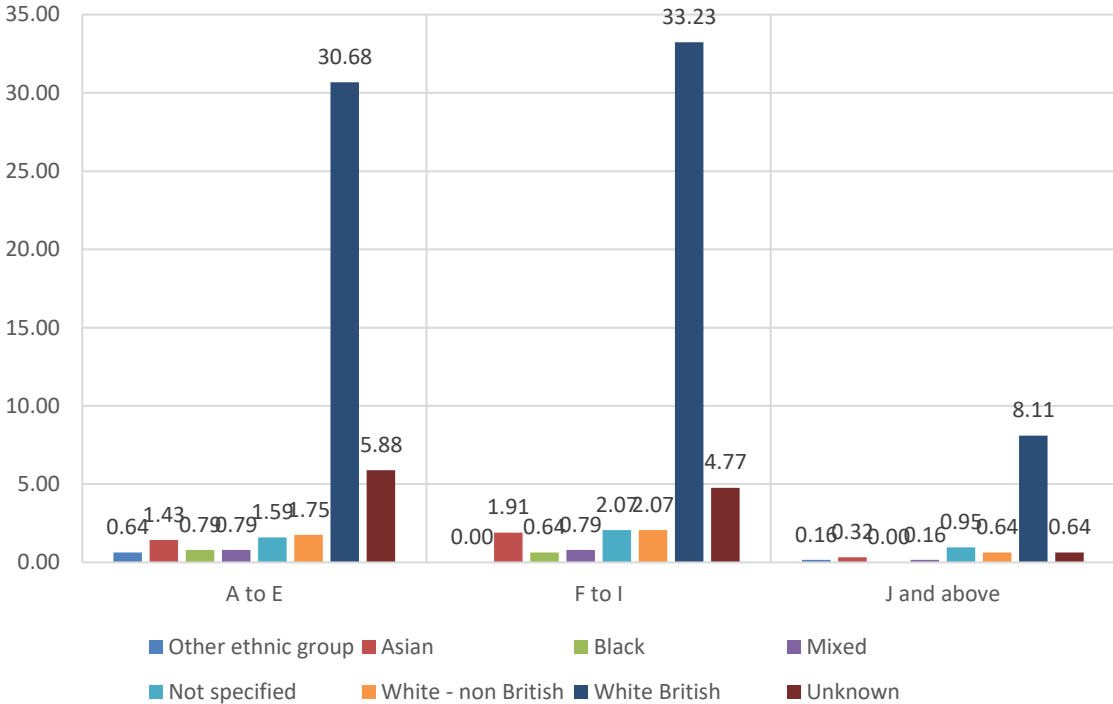


Chart 20 Disability Percentage Profile as at 30 September 2025

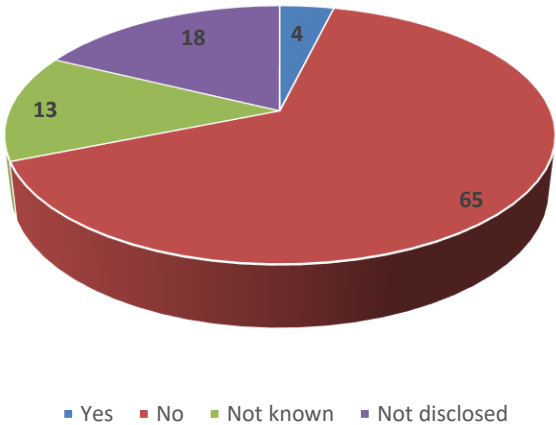
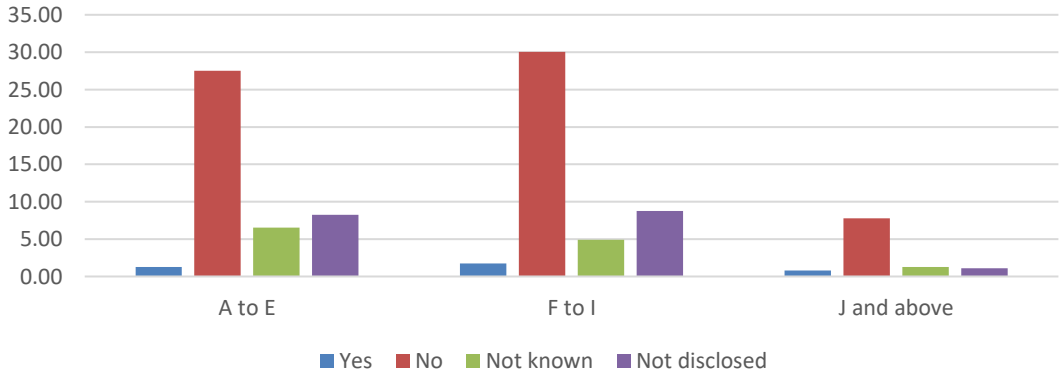


Chart 21 Disability Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 September 2025



CDC is a disability confident employer which means we participate in the Department of Work and Pensions Scheme to guarantee interviews to any disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria for our roles. Where disabilities are identified, management and HR work closely with employees and the council’s occupational health provider to review any reasonable adjustments that could be put in place to assist the employee in their role.

The Personnel Committee also requested data on sexual orientation for our workforce which is provided at Chart 22.

Within this category, 12.24% of the workforce have declined to specify and 12.24% have not completed this data.

As with ethnicity information, sexual orientation data has also been broken down into grade bands, and this is shown at chart 23.

As part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity strategy that was published this year, we have a workforce plan with actions to work through. Data around protected characteristics will continue to be tracked whilst the actions are undertaken, and variations will be provided in future iterations of these statistics.

The HR Team will continue to work with the organisation to gather outstanding data and will continue to update on a quarterly basis.

Chart 22

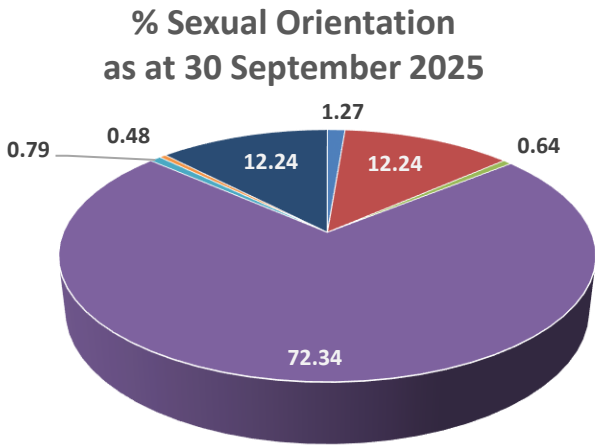
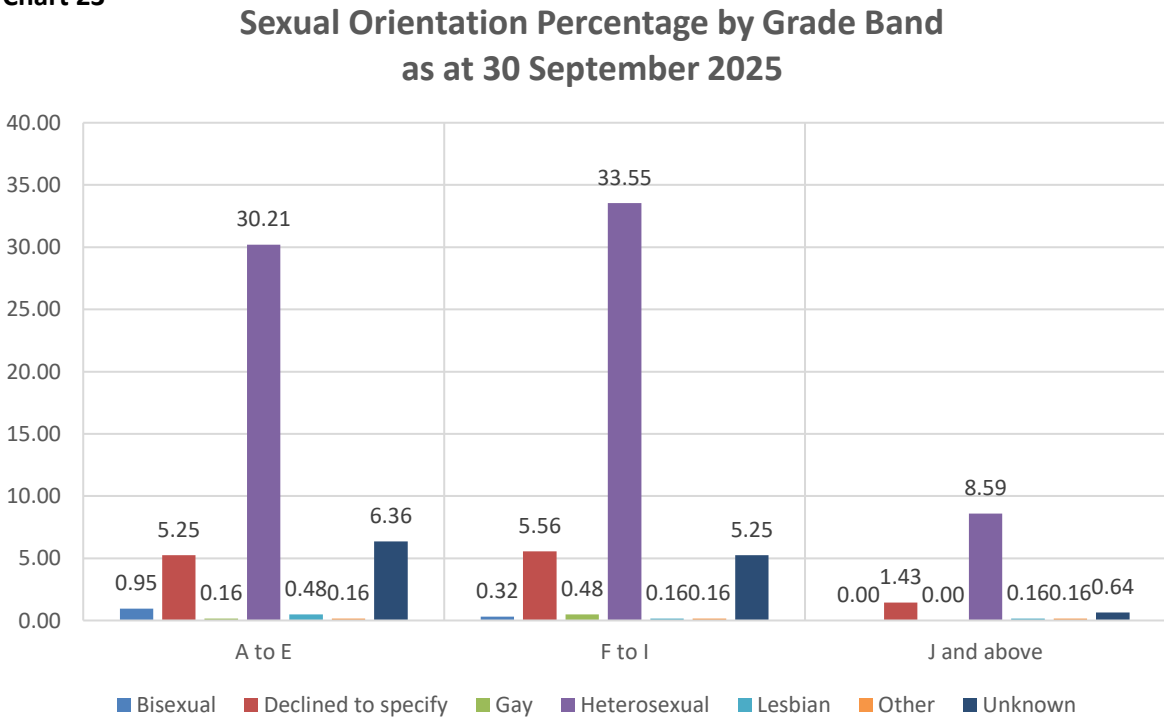


Chart 23



Diversity in Recruitment

In October 2023, CDC launched a new recruitment module as part of its HR and Payroll system. This has meant that analysis of recruitment data can now be completed. In line with CDC’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity agenda, this data allows insight into whether or not CDC is reaching and is representative of all communities within the district. The data presented in this report is representative of the last 12 months from October 2024 to September 2025. There have been 67 recruitment campaigns during this period to which 945 applications were received and 55 offers of employment made.

The following data provides insight into the application data, and where possible provides comparison to the make-up of the district to aid analysis into representation.

Chart 24 shows a breakdown of applicants by age category. At the request of Personnel Committee, the age ranges of applicants have been updated to match the district census data. The highest number of applicants were between ages 25 and 34, followed by 35 to 49, these 2 groups account for 66.78% of all applications. Table 2 provides district data on age bands. When comparing the data of applicants by age to district census data, it shows that applicants in the 25-34 age range are significantly higher than the district percentage. Applicants in the 50-64 age range are significantly lower than the district percentage. and other categories broadly align.

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Chart 24

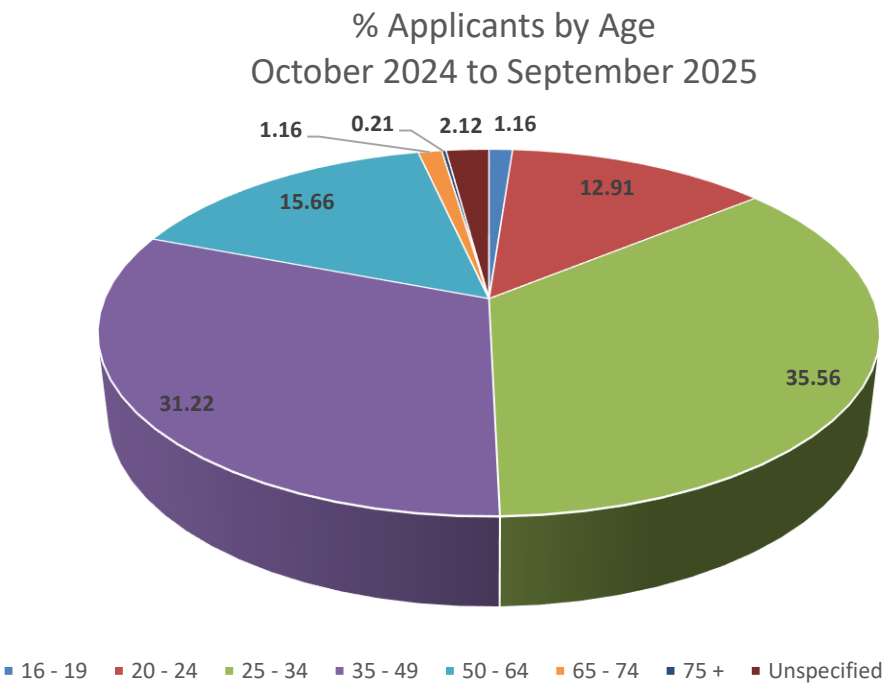


Table 2

Age	% Residents
16 - 19	5.48
20 - 24	6.71
25 - 34	19.45
35 - 49	28.49
50 - 64	26.99
65 - 74	12.88
	100.00

Chart 25 outlines the percentage of applicants per ethnic group and Table 3 shows the make-up of the District.

Chart 25

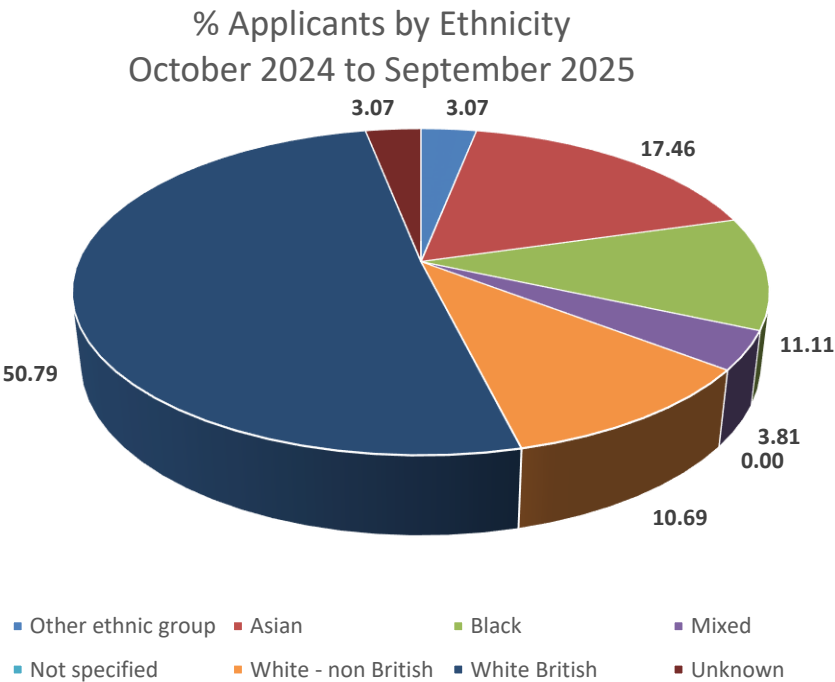


Table 3

Ethnic Group	Cherwell District (%)
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	6.0
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	1.8
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2.9
White	88.1
Other ethnic group	1.3
Not specified	N/A
Unknown	N/A

This data shows that applicants for CDC jobs are ethnically diverse, with applicant numbers within Asian, Black and Mixed ethnic groups significantly higher than the district percentages.

Chart 26

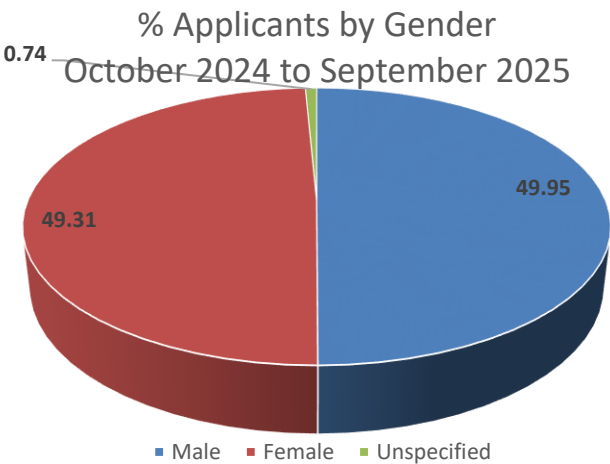


Chart 26 shows the percentage of applicants by gender, which is an almost 50/50 split across male and female, which is both reflective of our current workforce and district data covered earlier in this report.

Chart 27

% Applicants with Disabilities
October 2024 to September 2025

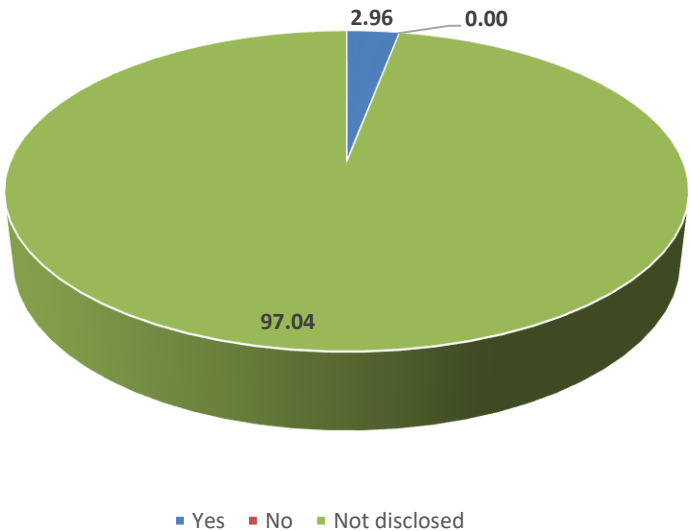


Chart 28 shows the percentage of applicants by sexual orientation. Oxfordshire County Council confirms from census 2021 information that 89.4% of the county identify as straight or heterosexual, with 3.4% not identifying as straight or heterosexual and 7.9% preferring not to say. CDC's applicant data is reflective of these county statistics.

Chart 28

% Applicants by Sexual Orientation
October 2024 to September 2025

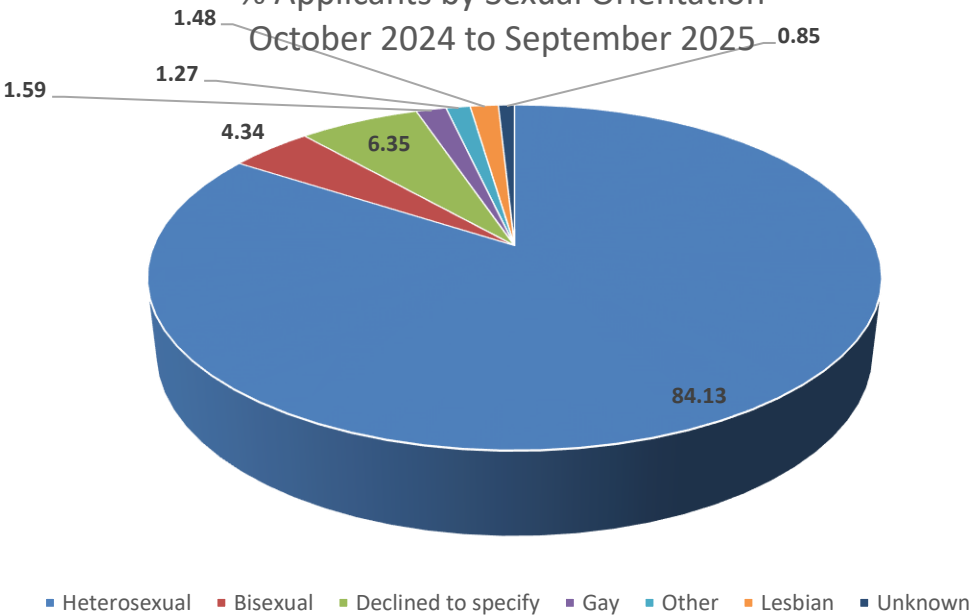


Chart 27 shows the percentage of applicants by disability. 97.04% of applicants have not disclosed this at applicant stage. It is hoped that applicants would provide this information should they have disabilities as we have a guaranteed interview scheme if they meet the essential criteria for a role, as part of being a disability confident employer.

Diversity in Recruitment: A breakdown of applicants to offer by personal attributes for inclusion and grade group

As requested at the Personnel Committee in June 2025, Tables 4-8 below provide a breakdown of applicants and offers of employment made, broken down into grade groups and then by:

- Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Gender
- Disability

Table 4: Number of applicants and offers by ethnicity and grade group

% ETHNICITY	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Comparator Ethnic Group								
Other ethnic group	2.37	3.70	3.73	0.00	3.53	0.00	3.07	1.82
Asian	15.40	3.70	15.67	8.70	22.75	0.00	17.46	5.45
Black	8.29	3.70	17.16	0.00	9.41	0.00	11.11	1.82
Mixed	4.50	7.41	1.87	4.35	4.71	0.00	3.81	5.45
Not specified	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
White - non British	8.29	3.70	8.58	4.35	16.86	0.00	10.69	3.64
White British	60.19	70.37	50.75	73.91	35.29	100.00	50.79	74.55
Unknown	0.95	7.41	2.24	8.70	7.45	0.00	3.07	7.27
TOTAL %	100	100.00	100	100.00	100	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	422	27	268	23	255	5	945	55

Table 5: Number of applicants and offers by sexual orientation and grade group

% LGBTQ+	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
Sexual Orientation	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Heterosexual	90.28	85.19	86.57	82.61	71.37	100.00	84.13	85.45
Bisexual	2.84	0.00	2.99	0.00	8.24	0.00	4.34	0.00
Declined to specify	3.32	0.00	7.46	8.70	10.20	0.00	6.35	3.64
Gay	1.18	3.70	1.12	0.00	2.75	0.00	1.59	1.82
Other	0.47	0.00	1.12	0.00	2.75	0.00	1.27	0.00
Lesbian	1.90	3.70	0.75	0.00	1.57	0.00	1.48	1.82
Unknown	0.00	7.41	0.00	8.70	3.14	0.00	0.85	7.27
TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	422	27	268	23	255	5	945	55

Table 6: Number of applicants and offers by age and grade group

% Age Band	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
Age Band	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
16 - 19	2.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.16	0.00
20 - 24	15.17	7.41	7.09	4.35	15.29	0.00	12.91	5.45
25 - 34	29.38	14.81	32.46	39.13	49.02	20.00	35.56	25.45
35 - 49	32.23	40.74	38.43	34.78	21.96	80.00	31.22	41.82
50 - 64	17.77	37.04	20.90	17.39	6.67	0.00	15.66	25.45
65 - 74	1.90	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.39	0.00	1.16	0.00
75 +	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.39	0.00	0.21	0.00
Unspecified	0.71	0.00	0.37	4.35	6.27	0.00	2.12	1.82
TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	422	27	268	23	255	5	945	55

Table 7: Number of applicants and offers by gender and grade group

% Gender	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
Gender	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Male	52.13	66.67	47.39	39.13	49.02	80.00	49.95	56.36
Female	47.87	33.33	51.87	56.52	49.02	20.00	49.31	41.82
Unspecified	0.00	0.00	0.75	4.35	1.96	0.00	0.74	1.82
TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	422	27	268	23	255	5	945	55

Table 8: Number of applicants and offers by disability and grade group

% Disability	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
Disability	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Yes	0.47	3.70	1.87	4.35	8.24	40.00	2.96	7.27
No	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Not disclosed	99.53	96.30	98.13	95.65	91.76	60.00	97.04	92.73
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	422	27	268	23	255	5	945	55

Apprenticeships within Cherwell District Council as at Quarter 2 – 2025/26

Background

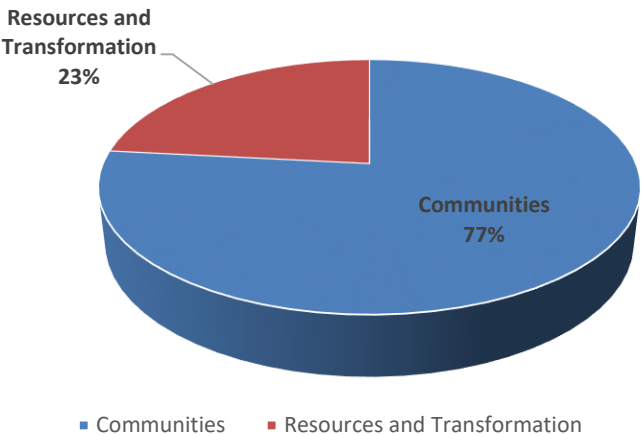
As an organisation with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million, we pay 0.5% of our pay bill towards the apprenticeship levy. This levy is then used to support apprentices to study for qualifications from Level 2 – Level 6.

Apprentices are new employees into the organisation, who are employed specifically into an apprenticeship role, or it is also existing staff who are upskilling using the levy.

The organisation has an apprenticeship levy dashboard (DAS) which is supervised by the HR Department.

Chart 29

Percentage of Apprenticeships within Directorates



Information on apprentices in the organisation

There are 30 apprenticeships currently running within the Council for this quarter, of which 5 is an apprentice on programme, employed specifically as an apprentice; and the remaining 25 are employees undertaking an apprenticeship as CPD or career progression.

There are currently 23 apprenticeships within the Communities Directorate and 7 within the Resources and Transformation Directorate – please see chart 26.

Details of the apprenticeships at the organisation are detailed in the table below. The organisation is using its apprenticeship levy predominantly for upskilling existing staff.

Apprenticeships details below:

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
NEW - Urban Driver	Level 2	8 months	3	CPD	Waste Collection	Communities (3)	24,000

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
Business Administrator	Level 3	18 months	1	Apprentice	Depot – Thorpe Lane	Communities (1)	5,000
Team Leader/Supervisor	Level 3	18 months	3	CPD	Sport and Physical Activities (2) ICT (1)	Resources and Transformation (1) Communities (2)	13,500
Transport and warehouse operations supervisor	Level 3	14 months	1	CPD	Business Support - Depot	Communities (1)	4,700
Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician - light vehicle	Level 3	22 months	1	Apprentice	Fleet Management	Communities (1)	10,669
NEW - Associate Project Manager	Level 4	18 months	1	CPD	Waste Collection	Communities (1)	7,000
Sports Coach	Level 4	14 months	1	Apprentice	Wellbeing	Communities (1)	9,000
Data Analyst	Level 4	14 months	1	CPD	Digital Innovation and	Resources and Transformation (1)	14,250
Data Protection and Information Governance Practitioner	Level 4	18 months	1	CPD	Legal Services	Resources and Transformation (1)	10,000

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
Senior housing and property management	Level 4	22 months	1	CPD	Housing Grants and Standards	Communities (1)	8,933
People Professional	Level 5	18 months	2	CPD (1) Apprentice (1)	Human Resources	Resources and Transformation (2)	22,000
NEW - Building control surveyor	Level 6	48 months	1	CPD (1)	Building Control	Communities (1)	24,000
Chartered Surveyor	Level 6	66 months	1	Apprentice	Access and Grants	Communities (1)	27,000
Environmental Health Practitioner	Level 6	48 months	1	CPD	Health Protection and Compliance	Communities (1)	22,000
Public Health Practitioner	Level 6	36 months	1	CPD	Health Shaping Place	Communities (1)	22,000
Chartered Town Planner	Level 7	30 months	7	CPD	Planning	Communities (7)	92,450
Accountancy or Taxation Professional	Level 7	38 months	1	CPD	Finance	Resources and Transformation (1)	21,000
Accountancy Professional (CIPFA)	Level 7	36 months	1	CPD	Finance	Resources and Transformation (1)	20,433
Sustainability business specialist	Level 7	24 months	1	CPD	Environment Services	Communities (1)	10,755

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
			30		Total apprenticeship levy committed		368,690

NEW – means apprenticeship started in this quarter.

Current amount in the Levy Account

The Council currently has £168,430 in their levy account and we have spent a total of £106,546 in the last 12 months.

Expired Funds

No funds expired in Quarter 2 of 2025/26. We are not able to estimate what will expire in the future, as the government has taken this option out of the apprenticeship dashboard but will be updating these calculations in the future.

Apprenticeship Reforms

The Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson announced a new growth and skills levy which will replace the existing apprenticeship levy and is to include new foundation apprenticeships.

These new apprenticeships will give young people a route in to careers in critical sectors, enabling them to earn a wage whilst developing vital skills.

In February the government highlighted several changes to how apprenticeships will operate in the future, in response to employers' calls for more flexibility. This will include

- Introduction of shorter apprenticeships from August 2025 (subject to the parliamentary timetable), with the minimum length reduced from 12 to 8 months. The new development will allow training to be delivered and completed faster where that makes sense for a given industry, or an individual has significant prior learning. Our Urban Driver apprenticeship has been reduced from 12 months to 8 months.
- Added to this, employers were given more flexibility over maths and English requirements for apprentices. Businesses will now be able to decide whether adult learners, over the age of 19 when they start their apprenticeship course, will need to complete a level 2 English and maths qualification (equivalent to GCSE) to pass it. This does not mean that apprentices won't be assessed on core English and maths skills needed to demonstrate competency relevant to their occupation,

these requirements will remain a fundamental part of the apprenticeship. Some Universities are still specifying that they require the Level 2 Maths and English, and it is still built into their programmes. Learners aged 16-18 will still be required to achieve English and maths qualifications.

- From 1 January 2026, Level 7 qualifications will no longer be funded for new starters aged 22 over. This will have quite a big impact at CDC as we do use the levy to fund Level 7 apprenticeships in Planning, Finance and Waste. We currently have 10 members of staff on a Level 7. After discussions with apprenticeship providers, it looks as if some will be looking at how the levy can still be used up to Level 6 of a Level 7 qualification and then the final level will have to be paid for from the Learning and Development budget. For example, to become a solicitor the SQE1 would be a Level 6 (funded by the levy) and then the final year SQ2 would be Level 7 (funded by the L&D budget).
- Part of the Department for Education's pivot towards young people is the new foundation apprenticeships, designed for 16 to 21-year-olds, or up to age 24 for apprentices who were in care, in prison or with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The first seven approved foundation apprenticeship courses have been announced; three in construction, two in digital, one in health and social care and one in engineering and manufacturing. There are some concerns within the construction industry that the shorter time in which it takes to gain the apprenticeship will mean that apprentices are not as fully tested and trained as normal, as the Government reforms to apprenticeship assessments risk allowing apprentices to qualify without proving they are competent. Plans currently being developed by Skills England involve assessment bodies testing only a sample of knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) rather than all of them, inferring overall competence from partial evidence.

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