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Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Personnel Committee
Date: Wednesday 16 September 2026
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD

Membership

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Chair)	Councillor Julius Parker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed	Councillor Dr Faltermeyer
Councillor Frank Ideh	Councillor Paul Jeffreys
Councillor Kieron Mallon	Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor G.A. Popescu	Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Nigel Simpson	Councillor Bryonie Wells

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 - 8)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 June 2026.

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

7. Policy Review Updates (Pages 9 - 42)

Report of 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. Criminal Records Checking Policy and Procedure
- b. Exit Interview Policy
- c. Pensions and Retirement Policy

8. Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 1, 2026-2027 (Pages 43 - 74)

Report of 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 1 of 2026/27 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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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 8 September 2026

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 24 June 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Chair)
Councillor Julius Parker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dr Faltermeyer
Councillor Paul Jeffreys
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor G.A. Popescu
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Bryonie Wells

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Nigel Simpson)
Councillor Simon Lytton (In place of Councillor Frank Ideh)
Councillor Besmira Brasha (In place of Councillor Dr Isabel Creed)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Nigel Simpson

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 4 March and 20 May 2026 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

5 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

6 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

7 **Policy Review Updates**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Human Resources, which presented proposed updates to six policies.

The Assistant Director Human Resources explained that changes to three of the policies – Probation, Standby and on call, and bereavement and compassionate leave – had been required due to legislative changes. Following a change in the HMRC approved mileage rate, the travel and subsistence policy had been updated to reflect the increased rate.

The market supplement and capability policies had had additional clarity added regarding definitions, authorisation steps and formal stages.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the use of market supplements was not widespread, and benchmarking was undertaken against neighbouring authorities with similar vacancies to ensure the CDC offer was competitive.

Resolved

- (1) That the following policies be reviewed and approved for implementation:
 - a. Probation Policy
 - b. Travel and Subsistence Policy
 - c. Standby and On Call Policy
 - d. Bereavement and Compassionate Leave Policy
 - e. Market Supplement Policy
 - f. Capability Policy

8 **Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 4, 2025-2026**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Human Resources, which detailed workforce data for quarter four of 2025/26, including measuring staff well-being and action required from officers to address any issues.

With regard to apprenticeships and the associated levy, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that recent reform of the scheme had seen 16

apprenticeships defunded. This would mean that levy funding for higher level standards such as team leader, operations manager and chartered manager could no longer be used.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding detailed apprenticeship data, the Assistant Director Human Resources advised that some data was available, which could be included in future workforce data reports.

Following a question in relation to measures taken to help attract applicants to hard to fill vacancies, the Assistant Director Human Resources confirmed that flexible working and flexible retirement options were available.

With regard to data relating to applications from Armed Forces Personnel and the Armed Forces Covenant, the Assistant Director Human Resources confirmed that data was available and would look to include relevant information in future reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce data for quarter 4 of 2025/26, provided in appendix one to the report, devised to provide insight that will enable officers of CDC to address challenges and efficiencies in the workforce more efficiently, be noted.

9 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.23 pm

Chair:

Date:

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This report is public	
Policy Review Updates	
Committee	Personnel Committee
Date of Committee	16 September 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services, Councillor Nicola Borkmann
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	4 September 2026
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. Criminal Records Checking Policy and Procedure
- b. Exit Interview Policy
- c. Pensions and Retirement 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.

	Rachel Ainsworth, Finance Business Partner, 26 August 2026		
Legal	Having up to date policies in place will help to ensure that the Council allows staff to carry out their roles effectively going forward and support the Council's core values. Appendix 1 clearly identifies the proposed changes which members are being asked to approve. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 2 September 2026		
Risk	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. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 26 August 2026		
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, 26 August 2026
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	It is essential that policies are regularly reviewed and kept up to date with both legislative and organisational requirements. Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 24 August 2026			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	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.			

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: To continue with the existing policies.
This is 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	Outline of changes to policies
Appendix 2	Criminal Records Checking Policy and Procedure
Appendix 3	2026 Exit Interview Policy
Appendix 4	2026 Pensions and Retirement Policy
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 (if not report of Executive Director of Statutory Officer)	Executive Director for Resources

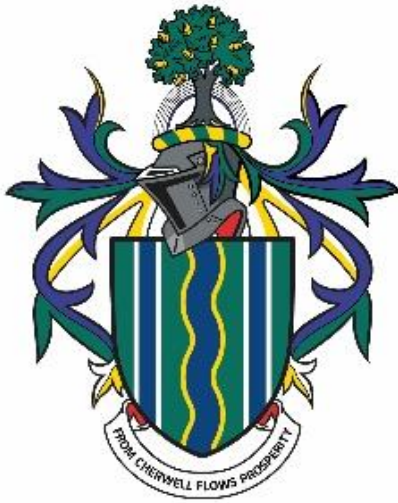
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Appendix 1

Changes to Policies

Policy	Changes
Criminal Record Checking Policy and Procedure	The policy has been reviewed and updated in line with current legislation. Updated Spent Convictions section: Since 28 October 2023, many custodial sentences over four years can now become spent. The exception is for specified serious violent, sexual and terrorist offences listed in legislation. Terminology is dated “Vulnerable adults” so suggested it is changed to current safeguarding legislation “Adults at risk” Criminal offences not disclosed by the Disclosure and Barring Service section has been amended in line with the new and amended DBS filtering rules. DBS Update Service section has been updated to reflect current guidance.
Exit Interview Policy	Reviewed with minimal update required.
Pensions and Retirement Policy	A refresh to ensure reference to LPGS regulations are up to date. Less focused on dates and refers to... ‘LGPS Regulations in force at that time’ therefore negating the need to keep updating should any regulations change. Put on new template. All supporting documents (guidance, forms) provided by Oxfordshire’s LGPS website remain unchanged.

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Criminal Record Checking Policy and Procedure

Document Control and Overview

Organisation	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy Title	Criminal Record Checking Policy and Procedure
Author	Human Resources
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Document Reference	
Approval Date	16/09/2026
Policy Review Cycle	3 years
Latest Review Date	16/09/2029

Document Revision History

Revision Date	Reviser	Previous Version	Description of Revision
16/09/2026	Human Resources	1.0	Three-year review.

Document Approvals

This document has been approved by:

Approval	Date
Personnel Committee	16 September 2026

Document Distribution

Name	Job Title
All employees of Cherwell District Council.	

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2. Types of workers and requirement for DBS checking
 - 2.2 Contractors
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 - 3.2 Spent convictions
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4. Levels of DBS checks
 - 4.2 Basic checks
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 - 4.4 Enhanced checks
 - 4.5 Enhanced checks with Children's and / or Adults' Barred list check(s)
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10. Criminal cases pending at the time of application for employment or volunteering
11. Confidentiality and records

Appendix 1

Categories of offences which may lead to refusal to appoint or require a risk assessment before an appointment decision can be made.

Appendix 2

Examples of activities listed under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975.

Appendix 3

Examples of activities that are defined as Regulated Activity in relation to children and adults at risk.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to all eligible employees (including agency/locum workers, casual workers, apprentices, volunteers and student placements) who are working in regulated activity or those identified in the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exemption) Order.
- 1.2 The aim of this policy is to provide a fair and consistent framework for checking criminal record information and to ensure those responsible for recruitment and management understand their responsibilities, the activities and jobs that are eligible for DBS checks and the information they can legally ask applicants to disclose.
- 1.3 This policy also ensures those subject to criminal record checking understand the information they are required to provide and how the information will be handled.
- 1.4 The Council requires criminal record checks for people applying to work or volunteer in certain types of jobs, such as to work with children, young people and adults at risk.
- 1.5 Checking criminal records is one of a range of measures that help the Council make safe recruitment decisions and protect those using its services, the public and public funds from the risk of criminal activity and abuse.
- 1.6 Individuals are informed when applying for work or volunteering with the Council, what information they are required to disclose about criminal convictions and whether the role is eligible for a criminal record check.
- 1.7 Applications for Criminal Record Certificates (DBS checks) are processed via Human Resources, as the registered body and are handled in accordance with the [DBS code of practice](#).
- 1.8 The Council will only ask applicants for criminal record information and apply for DBS checks that are permissible by law for the role.
- 1.9 The Council undertakes not to unfairly discriminate against anyone who is subject to a criminal record check because of a conviction or other information revealed. The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and reducing barriers to employment wherever legally possible.
- 1.10 Having a criminal record will not normally automatically bar an individual from working for the Council. The Council recognises that people with previous convictions can make a valuable contribution to the workforce. Decisions will be made on an individual basis, taking account of the nature of the offence, its relevance to the role, the time elapsed, evidence of rehabilitation and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. **Appendix 1** provides examples of offences that may lead to refusal to appoint or require a risk assessment before an appointment decision can be made.
- 1.11 Any information revealed as part of criminal record checking, will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

2. Types of workers and requirement for DBS checking

2.1 DBS checks are required for anyone applying to carry out certain jobs or activities regardless of whether they are applying for:

- Permanent, temporary or casual employment
- Volunteering
- An assignment as an agency/locum worker
- An apprenticeship

2.2 Contractors

Where the Council enters into contracts with external organisations which employ staff for the provision of services on the Council's behalf, it will ensure that the contractor's employment conditions comply with this policy.

2.3 Agency Workers

For agency workers it is the responsibility of the employing agency to ensure that appropriate criminal record checking is carried out to comply with this policy. A DBS check must have been processed within 12 months of the start date of the temporary agency assignment.

If, during the duration of the assignment, the DBS certificate date looks likely to exceed 12 months, a new application (or DBS Update Service check) must be processed by the employing agency. Council managers are responsible for verifying with the employing agency that satisfactory checks have been carried out.

3. Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

3.1 All applicants are required to disclose, as part of their application, details of any unspent criminal convictions or cautions, and when applying for certain eligible roles, details of convictions or cautions that are classed as 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

3.2 Spent convictions

The [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(ROA\)](#) allows most convictions and all cautions to be considered 'spent' after a specified 'rehabilitation' period.

Once a caution or conviction is spent, the ROA treats a rehabilitated person as if they had never committed or been convicted for the offence. The individual has the right not to disclose information about the spent conviction when applying for jobs, unless they are applying for a job or to undertake activities that are listed under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975. **Appendix 2** provides examples of activities included in the Exceptions Order.

3.3 Failure to disclose information

Failure by applicants to disclose information about criminal convictions, where required, is likely to result in an offer of employment being withdrawn or disciplinary action being taken for an employee, which may result in dismissal. Other legal action may be taken if appropriate.

If applicants have any concerns about what to disclose then they are advised to seek their own independent legal advice. The charity [NACRO](#) provides support and advice to ex-offenders and employers.

4. Levels of DBS checks

4.1 The Council will ensure that it only requests DBS checks for roles that it is legally entitled to and will ensure the level of criminal record check requested is relevant to the type of work being undertaken.

4.2 Basic DBS Checks

These checks provide details of unspent convictions only. A Basic Check, in accordance with the government's [Baseline Personnel Security Standard](#) (BPSS), is required for Council roles that have access to the Public Service Network (PSN).

4.3 Standard DBS checks

These checks provide information about spent and unspent convictions. To be eligible for a standard level DBS check, the position must be included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975.

4.4 Enhanced DBS checks

These checks include the same information as the standard check plus any additional information held by the local police that's reasonably considered relevant to the role being applied for. Eligibility for an Enhanced DBS check is determined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, the Police Act 1997 and associated Criminal Records Regulations.

4.5 Enhanced checks with Children's and/or Adults' Barred List check(s)

These checks are like the enhanced check but also include a check against the Children's and/or Adults' Barred Lists for certain roles that involve what is termed '*regulated activity*'. These are lists of individuals identified as unsuitable for working with children and/or Adults at risk.

Eligibility for an Enhanced DBS check, including a check of the Children's Barred List and/or Adults' Barred List, is determined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, the Police Act 1997 and associated safeguarding legislation. It is unlawful to request a Barred List check on individuals who are not going to be engaged in regulated activity.

Appendix 3 provides examples of activities that are defined as "regulated" under the Act.

4.6 The Disclosure and Barring Service online tool can also be used to check if a role is eligible for a DBS check. <https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>

4.7 DBS certificates are subject to filtering rules. Certain old or minor cautions and convictions are protected and will not be disclosed on Standard or Enhanced DBS certificates. All unspent convictions and conditional cautions will be disclosed. Further guidance is available from the DBS filtering guide. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-filtering-guidance/dbs-filtering-guide>

5. Requesting a DBS check

5.1 Please liaise with Human Resources if you believe a DBS check is required for an applicant, volunteer or employee.

5.2 Where appointments are subject to a satisfactory DBS check the successful applicant or volunteer will not normally be able to start in their role until this is in place.

In exceptional circumstances, where there are critical service needs, permission may be given by the relevant Assistant Director / Head of Service for an appointee to start work only if:

- all other pre-employment checks are in place and,
- a risk assessment is undertaken and establishes that there is low risk.

6. Portability of DBS checks

6.1 If an existing employee or casual worker is appointed to an eligible role, and they already have a DBS check, this will be accepted provided that:

- it covers the same workforce e.g. adults or children's and the relevant barred list check (where this is required)
- the employee has been continuously employed by the Council
- the check is not due for renewal until this policy and,
- where convictions were disclosed, a risk assessment is carried out and approval has been given by the Assistant Director / Head of Service to proceed with the appointment.

7. Re-checking

7.1 The Council will re-check all DBS checks every three years.

7.2 Managers have the discretion to request a re-check at any time if they have cause for concern about an employee's criminal record status.

7.3 All employees are responsible for notifying their manager immediately if their criminal record status changes, including driving offences.

7.4 Wherever possible, and with the employee's consent, the Council will use the **DBS Update Service** to re-check criminal record status rather than requesting a new DBS check.

8. Receiving results of DBS checks

8.1 Criminal Record certificates are issued directly to the individual, who must then show the original certificate to a member of Human Resources.

8.2 Where criminal offence information is disclosed, the line manager will meet with the employee or applicant to gather information about the conviction and carry out a risk

assessment. An employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a recognised trade union representative or workplace companion.

- 8.3 The Assistant Director / Head of Service, in conjunction with Human Resources, will make a final decision whether an appointment can be confirmed, and/or any further action to be taken.

9. Requirement to inform the Council of any criminal involvement

- 9.1 Employees and volunteers of the Council are required to notify their line manager immediately if they are under investigation, charged, convicted, cautioned, reprimanded or warned in relation to any criminal offence. This will be investigated and may result in formal action.
- 9.2 The Council will not assume guilt solely because an employee is subject to investigation. Any action taken will be proportionate, based on risk assessment, safeguarding requirements and the specific circumstances of the role.
- 9.3 Where an individual fails to notify their line manager however, this will be treated as a disciplinary offence and may result in dismissal.
- 9.4 There may be separate requirements imposed on the employee or volunteer to notify a regulatory or professional body as well. This requirement is not covered in this policy.

10. Criminal cases pending at the time of application for employment or volunteering

- 10.1 Where an applicant is under investigation, charged, convicted, cautioned, reprimanded or warned in relation to any criminal offence or has criminal proceedings pending at the time an application for a job is made, full consideration will be given to the individual case before deciding on any offer of employment. Failure to disclose any pending investigation may result in disciplinary action.

11. Confidentiality and records

- 11.1 Where an applicant is required to provide a DBS certificate, the original certificate must be viewed by a member of Human Resources, who will record the following information:
- the DBS certificate number
 - the date of issue of the certificate
 - the level of DBS check obtained
 - whether the certificate contains any information
 - the date the certificate was verified; and
 - the name of the person who carried out the verification
- 11.2 DBS certificate information will be handled, stored, retained and disposed of in accordance with the DBS Code of Practice, data protection legislation and the Council's data retention requirements.

11.3 Data relating to criminal convictions and offences will be processed only where there is a lawful basis for processing and appropriate safeguards have been implemented.

Appendix 1

Categories of offences which may lead to refusal to appoint or require a risk assessment before an appointment decision can be made.

For further advice please contact Human Resources.

Categories of offences which will normally disqualify applicants	Categories of offences which require a risk assessment
- Any sexual offence involving a child or an adult at risk. - Any sexual offence involving violence or the misuse of drugs. - Any sexual offence involving organising sexual activity.	- Where the applicant was convicted of sex with an under-age person when they themselves were of a similar age. - Any other sexual offences.
- Any violent offence against a child or an adult at risk. - Murder, manslaughter, grievous bodily harm or aggravated bodily harm. - Domestic violence.	- Actual bodily harm, wounding, assault and battery. - Possessing an offensive weapon. - Death by reckless driving. - Any other violent offences.
Any offence related to dealing, cultivating or supplying controlled drugs or substances.	- Possession of a class A, B or C drug. - Offences involving supplying alcohol to a child. - Repeated offences involving alcohol. - Being drunk or under the influence of drugs in charge of a motor vehicle. - Any other offences involving alcohol or drugs.
- Any offence involving theft or dishonesty with a child or adult at risk. - Any offence involving theft or dishonesty, including benefit fraud. - Burglary, aggravated burglary, robbery, blackmail, going equipped to commit burglary.	Any other convictions involving dishonesty.
	Any other offence relating to the misuse of information.

• Any offence relating to the misuse of the internet / technology involving a child or adult at risk. • Any offence for illegal pornography. • Any offence relating to the misuse of the internet / technology for the purposes of abusing others or inciting violence or racism.	
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Where a risk assessment is required, it should consider:

1. Relevance of offence to role
2. Seriousness of offence
3. Time elapsed
4. Age at time of offence
5. Pattern of offending
6. Evidence of rehabilitation
7. Mitigating circumstances
8. Safeguarding risk

The Assistant Director / Head of Service, in conjunction with Human Resources, will make a final decision whether an appointment can be confirmed, and/or any further action to be taken.

Appendix 2

Examples of activities listed under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975.

This is not a comprehensive list but gives an indication of the types of Council employment included in the Exceptions Order. The key point is that eligibility is determined by the actual duties of the role, not simply the job title. The DBS eligibility rules should be checked for each post before requesting a DBS check.

1. Roles involving the care, supervision, training or being in sole charge of children. Examples could include youth activity workers, holiday activity staff and certain community-based roles.
2. Employment concerned with the provision of health services, where applicable through council-run or commissioned services.
3. Employment concerned with the provision of care, training, supervision or welfare of persons under 18. This could apply to staff working in youth programmes or community activities delivered by the Council.
4. Licensing functions where legislation requires consideration of criminal history. Certain taxi and private hire licensing roles, for example, are associated with exempt positions and enhanced disclosure arrangements because of public safety considerations.
5. Housing roles involving regular access to vulnerable residents, where separate legislation and DBS eligibility criteria linked to the Exceptions Order may apply.
6. Safeguarding and community safety roles, particularly where staff work directly with children, adults at risk, victims of crime, or individuals receiving statutory support services.

Appendix 3

Examples of activities that are defined as Regulated activity in relation to children and adults at risk

Regulated activity is work that a person who is barred from working with children and/or adults must not carry out.

For **children**, regulated activity generally includes:

- Teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children on a frequent basis.
- Providing advice or guidance wholly or mainly for children's wellbeing.
- Driving a vehicle solely for children.
- Working regularly in specified establishments (such as schools or children's homes) where there is opportunity for contact with children.

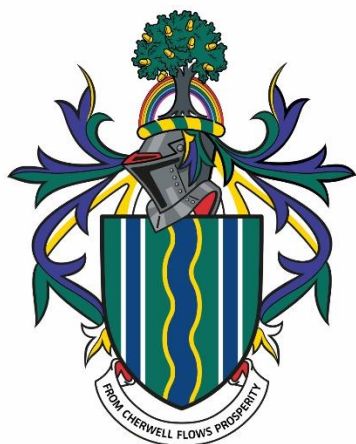
For **adults**, regulated activity focuses on the nature of the activity being undertaken rather than the setting. This includes:

- Providing healthcare, personal care or social work services.
- Assisting with eating, drinking, washing, dressing or toileting.
- Supporting adults in managing their own affairs.
- Transporting adults because of their age, illness or disability.

Roles that may constitute regulated activity will have direct responsibility for, or unsupervised contact with, children or adults receiving regulated services.

Where a role is identified as regulated activity, the Council will undertake an **Enhanced DBS check with a check of the relevant Barred List(s)** before appointment is confirmed. This check will be repeated at least every three years.

The Council will assess each role individually to determine whether it meets the legal definition of regulated activity. Not all roles involving contact with children, young people or adults at risk will qualify as regulated activity, and the level of DBS check required will be based on the specific duties and responsibilities of the post.



Exit Interview Policy

Document Control and Overview

Organisation	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy Title	Exit Interview Policy
Author	Human Resources
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Document Reference	
Approval Date	16/09/2026
Policy Review Cycle	3 years
Latest Review Date	16/09/2029

Document Revision History

Revision Date	Reviser	Previous Version	Description of Revision
16/09/2026	Human Resources	1.0	Three-year review

Document Approvals

This document has been approved by:

Approval	Date
Personnel Committee	16 September 2026

Document Distribution

Name	Job Title
All employees of Cherwell District Council.	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is committed to using feedback gathered through the exit interview process to continuously improve employee experience, leadership, workforce planning, wellbeing and organisational culture.
- 1.2 The Council's policy on the use of exit interviews is designed to support this aim by monitoring the reasons why employees leave the Council and managing actions to ensure that the Council is a satisfying place to work.
- 1.3 The Council strongly encourages all employees leaving the organisation to participate in the exit interview process and to complete an exit questionnaire. Feedback provided through exit interviews plays an important role in helping the Council identify opportunities to improve the employee experience for current and future employees. Participation remains voluntary and employees will not be compelled to take part.

2. The Procedure

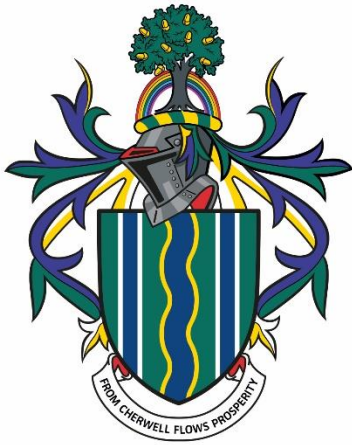
- 2.1 The Council will invite all employees leaving employment to complete an exit questionnaire and then attend an exit interview with a HR Business Partner. While participation is voluntary, employees are strongly encouraged to engage in the process to support organisational learning and improvement.
- 2.2 The purpose of the exit interview is to gather information around why the employee has decided to leave the Council and any feedback on their experience whilst working at the Council.
- 2.3 Exit interviews aim to:
 - Understand reasons for leaving.
 - Identify organisational strengths and areas for improvement.
 - Monitor employee experience trends.
 - Inform workforce planning and retention strategies.
 - Identify any risks relating to culture, wellbeing or inclusion.
- 2.4 All responses at the exit interview will be treated confidentially, unless the employee wishes any action to be taken, and the Council will make every effort to anonymise responses for analysis and reporting purposes.
- 2.5 Identifiable information will only be shared with management with the employee's consent. Any concerns relating to safeguarding, discrimination, harassment, criminal activity or other serious misconduct may be referred through the Council's relevant policies and procedures.
- 2.6 Employees will not suffer any detriment for participating in an exit interview or providing honest feedback. It will not affect references or future employment opportunities with the Council.
- 2.7 The exit interview should not be time constrained and should take as long as both parties feel is necessary for a full and honest discussion. Exit interviews can be held in person or virtually and will usually take place during the employees notice period.

- 2.8 Reasonable adjustments will be made to the process for employees who require additional support. Additionally, the employee is welcome to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or colleague if they wish.
- 2.9 Exit interview feedback will be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Personnel Committee on a quarterly basis.

3. Data Protection

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council is interested in understanding the real reasons as to why employees leave. All data will be held securely in line with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 3.2 Data will only be used for monitoring, reporting and organisational improvement purposes. Feedback will be reviewed for:
- Equality, diversity and inclusion issues.
 - Workplace culture.
 - Bullying and harassment concerns.
 - Wellbeing and workload trends.
- 3.3 Action plans will be developed where recurring issues are identified.

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Pension and Retirement Policy

Document Control and Overview

Organisation	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
Policy Title	Pension and Retirement Policy
Author	Human Resources
Owner	Human Resources
Version	2.0
Document Reference	
Approval Date	16/09/2026
Policy Review Cycle	3 years
Latest Review Date	17/09/2029

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16/09/2026	Human Resources	1.0	Three-year review.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Eligible employees who are under age 75 and have a contract of employment of three months or more will normally be enrolled into the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) from the first day of employment, subject to the LGPS Regulations in force at that time.
- 1.2 Under the LGPS regulations, employees on contracts of less than 3 months (and certain casual workers) are not automatically brought into the LGPS from their start date. Instead, they have the right to opt into the scheme, and they may subsequently be enrolled through the employer's automatic enrolment duties if they meet the relevant criteria.
- 1.3 The Council is legally required to assess employees for automatic enrolment and to undertake re-enrolment exercises at the intervals prescribed by pensions legislation. Employees affected by automatic enrolment or re-enrolment will be notified in writing. Where permitted by legislation, the Council may apply a postponement period of up to three months before assessing certain employees, including some casual workers, for automatic enrolment. Following postponement, eligible employees will be enrolled into the pension scheme unless they choose to opt out.
- 1.4 In order to determine correct pension contribution rates for employees a continual assessment will be made each pay period using the annual rate of pensionable pay together with any pensionable allowances. The pension contribution rates can be found on the Human Resources intranet page under Human Resources/Payroll/Pensions.
- 1.5 If an employee feels that their contribution rate has not been assessed correctly, they must contact Payroll to ask for a breakdown of the assessment no later than three months following any change, except in extenuating circumstances. Where it is confirmed that the assessment has been made in accordance with this policy and appropriate LGPS Regulations, but the employee is challenging the assessment, then the complaint will be referred to the Assistant Director of Human Resources. If a complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily then employees can use the process detailed in the Pension disputes and appeals section of this policy.
- 1.6 Employees with more than one job with the Council will be assessed separately for each individual contract of employment.
- 1.7 An employee who has chosen not to contribute to the LGPS will receive no pension benefits from the fund under this scheme upon retirement.
- 1.8 The Council will not at any time augment the pension or membership of employees nor award or fund additional pension to employees unless required to do so by the LGPS Regulations.
- 1.9 Where there is any conflict between this policy and the LGPS Regulations, the LGPS Regulations will take precedence.
- 1.10 The Council will apply this policy fairly, consistently and transparently. Decisions will be based on the circumstances of each case, relevant pension regulations, relevant employment policies, legal duties and the evidence available at the time.

2. Employee representation

- 2.1 Employees are encouraged to seek advice before making decisions about pension or retirement matters, particularly where decisions may have long-term financial, employment or wellbeing implications.
- 2.2 Employees may seek advice and support from their recognised trade union at any stage of this policy.
- 2.3 Employees may be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or workplace colleague at formal meetings relating to flexible retirement, ill-health retirement, early retirement requiring employer approval, retirement linked to redundancy, pension-related employment concerns, appeals or disputes relating to the application of this policy.
- 2.4 Reasonable adjustments will be considered where an employee is disabled or has a health condition that affects their ability to engage with this policy, attend meetings, understand information, complete forms or participate in discussions.

3. Retirement

- 3.1 Employees aged 55 or over may, subject to the LGPS Regulations in force at the time, elect to receive payment of their pension benefits before their Normal Pension Age. Where benefits are paid early, they will normally be subject to actuarial reduction in accordance with the LGPS Regulations.
- 3.2 Employees will not be asked or pressured to retire because of their age. Retirement decisions must be employee-led unless employment ends for another fair and lawful reason, such as redundancy, capability or ill health.

4. Flexible Retirement

- 4.1 Employees aged 55 or over may apply for flexible retirement in accordance with the LGPS Regulations in force at the relevant time. Flexible retirement enables an employee, with the Council's agreement, to continue working whilst drawing some or all of their pension benefits, subject to the applicable LGPS rules and employer discretions.
- 4.2 Flexible retirement will involve a reduction of 20% or more of the employee's normal pay by either:
 - a reduction in contractual hours; and/or
 - a move to a post with a lower level of responsibility or remuneration.
- 4.3 Flexible retirement is not an automatic entitlement and will only be approved where there is a clear business case and the arrangement can be accommodated without an adverse impact on service delivery.
- 4.4 All requests for flexible retirement will be considered on their individual merits, taking account of:
 - the operational and service requirements of the Council;

- workforce planning considerations;
- any financial implications for the Council;
- the sustainability of the proposed working arrangements; and
- the requirements of the LGPS Regulations and the Council's Employers LGPS Discretions Policy.

- 4.5 Any approved reduction in hours, responsibilities or remuneration will normally be expected to represent a permanent or long-term (no less than one year) change to the employee's contractual arrangements.
- 4.6 Pension benefits paid under flexible retirement may be subject to actuarial reduction where payment is made before the member's Normal Pension Age, in accordance with the LGPS Regulations and the Council's Employers LGPS Discretions Policy.
- 4.7 Approval of flexible retirement applications is to be obtained by the Assistant Director / Head of Service.
- 4.8 Employees considering flexible retirement are encouraged to obtain a pension estimate from the administering pension authority and, where appropriate, seek independent financial advice before making an application.
- 4.9 The employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the request before a final decision is made and may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.
- 4.10 The decision will be confirmed in writing and if approved, detail the expected start date and agreed contractual change(s).
- 4.11 Where a request is refused, the employee may appeal within ten calendar days of receiving the written decision to the Assistant Director of Human Resources. The appeal should be heard by a manager who has not previously been involved wherever reasonably practicable.

5. Re-employment following retirement

- 5.1 Employees who have retired and are in receipt of an LGPS pension may apply for employment with the Council. Any appointment will normally be made in accordance with the Council's recruitment and selection procedures.
- 5.2 Individuals who are re-employed following retirement remain responsible for complying with any requirements of the pension fund administering their LGPS benefits and should notify the administering authority of any new employment where required.
- 5.3 Employees are advised to seek guidance about the financial implications of continuing to work and starting to draw a LGPS or personal pensions.

6. Ill Health Retirements

- 6.1 An employee may be considered for ill health retirement in accordance with the LGPS Regulations in force at the relevant time where they are assessed as being permanently

incapable of efficiently discharging the duties of their employment because of ill health or infirmity of mind or body.

- 6.2 Any decision regarding entitlement to ill health retirement benefits will be based on certification provided by an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner and will be determined in accordance with the applicable LGPS Regulations and guidance.
- 6.3 Medical information obtained during ill health retirement proceedings will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Only those individuals who reasonably need access to medical information for the purpose of managing the process or making a decision will have access to it.
- 6.4 Ill health retirement may occur at any age, subject to the employee meeting the statutory criteria.
- 6.5 Any subsequent review, cessation or alteration of ill health retirement benefits will be managed in accordance with the LGPS Regulations in force at the relevant time.
- 6.6 Employees who are considering, or who may be affected by, ill health retirement should speak to their HR Business Partner. Employees are also encouraged to seek advice from their recognised trade union, the pension administering authority and, where appropriate, seek independent financial advice.

7. Early retirement cases requiring employer approval

- 7.1 The Council will consider requests for the early payment of pension benefits only where permitted by the LGPS Regulations and the Council's Employers LGPS Discretions Policy in force at the time of the application.
- 7.2 Early retirement cases may arise in circumstances including, but not limited to:
 - redundancy;
 - flexible retirement;
 - efficiency or organisational change requirements;
 - ill health retirement; and
 - any other circumstances permitted within the LGPS Regulations.
- 7.3 All requests will be considered on their individual merits and in accordance with:
 - the LGPS Regulations;
 - the Council's Employers LGPS Discretions Policy;
 - relevant employment policies and procedures; and
 - the financial and operational implications for the Council.
- 7.4 Where retirement arises as a result of redundancy, pension and compensation arrangements will be determined in accordance with the LGPS Regulations, statutory requirements and the Council's Organisational Change Policy.
- 7.5 Approval of any early retirement request will be subject to the appropriate authorisation arrangements in force at the time of the application.
- 7.6 Employees who are considering retirement are encouraged to obtain information

regarding their pension benefits from the administering pension authority and, where appropriate, seek independent financial advice before making any decisions about retirement.

8. Redundancy where there is no immediate entitlement to pension benefits

- 8.1 Employees who are dismissed by reason of redundancy and who do not qualify for the immediate payment of pension benefits under the LGPS Regulations will be entitled to any redundancy compensation due in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy and relevant statutory provisions.
- 8.2 Any entitlement to deferred pension benefits will be determined in accordance with the LGPS Regulations and administered by the relevant pension authority.

9. Pension disputes and appeals

- 9.1 Any questions or concerns regarding pension benefits should, in the first instance, be raised with the relevant pension administering authority or the Council's HR/Payroll team, as appropriate.
- 9.2 Where a member of the LGPS wishes to challenge a decision relating to their pension benefits, they may do so through the dispute resolution procedures set out in the LGPS Regulations in force at the relevant time.
- 9.3 Employment-related matters, including concerns regarding the application of Council's policies or procedures, may be raised through Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure where appropriate.
- 9.4 Information on pension dispute resolution processes and any further rights of appeal will be provided upon request or can be obtained from the relevant pension administering authority.

This report is public	
Workforce Profile Statistics – Quarter 1 of 2026/27	
Committee	Personnel Committee
Date of Committee	16 September 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services, Councillor Nicola Borkmann
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	4 September 2026
Report of	Assistant Director 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 1 of 2026/27 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 1 of 2026/27 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 1 as follows:
 - 14 leavers and 20 new starters
 - As at the end of quarter 1, headcount increased by 6 to 631. Of the 631, 14 employees are multiple role holders
 - FTE increased by 3.6, to 526.91, as at quarter end
 - Minimal shift in employment basis and role basis
 - Reduction of 4 agency workers at the end of quarter 1, compared to the previous quarter, from 54 to 50.

- A quarterly turnover rate of 2.23%, 0.56% lower than the previous quarter.
- Resignation and retirement were the main reason for leavers, accounting for 69.23% of all leavers. 29% of leavers completed exit interviews, this is a lower completion rate than the previous quarter, by 8.5%.
- Leavers either had no onward employment plans (50%), or were retiring (50%).
- Exit feedback was mixed but broadly positive, with employees highlighting valuable development opportunities, positive team experiences, and departures driven by career progression or new opportunities.
- However, recurring concerns were raised around workforce capacity, morale, and management support, including the impact of staffing shortages, limited supervision, perceived favouritism, and a lack of adequate consideration of employee wellbeing and health-related needs.
- 169 sickness absence incidents were recorded, 9 more than the same quarter in the previous year.
- Absence rate at the end of quarter 1 was 0.77 which has slightly decreased compared to the end of the last quarter. 15 long term sickness cases remain open at the end of quarter 1, which is 2 less than at the end of quarter 4.
- 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.
- 21 apprenticeships are currently underway across a diverse range of subject areas. Of the 21, 2 are being completed by apprentices, and 19 are being undertaken by staff. No apprenticeship funds expired in quarter 1 of 2026/27.

- 2.3 Apprenticeship reforms continue to focus on increasing flexibility, reducing administrative burden, and improving completion rates. Key changes include proposed reforms to End Point Assessments, ongoing reviews of apprenticeship standards, and enhanced government support through full funding for eligible apprentices aged 16 to 24 where levy funds are exhausted.
- 2.4 Additional financial support for low-income families, through a new apprenticeship bursary, aims to encourage greater participation and help address future skills shortages.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	This is an information report only, for the review of workforce statistical data for Q1 2026-27. It must be noted that future level 7 apprenticeships funded from the corporate Learning and Development budget, will add additional pressure to an already stretched budget. It is important that training budgets are reviewed as part

	future budget processes to ensure adequate funds are available. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 20 August 2026			
Legal	There are no legal implications within this report as it is for information only. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 19 August 2026			
Risk	There are no risks arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 19 August 2026			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
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, 19 August 2026
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	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. Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 18 August 2026			
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 1 of 2026/27 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 1 of 2026/27, 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 Statistics - Quarter 1 - 2026-27
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 an increase of 6 between the end of quarters 4 of 2025/26 and quarter 1 of 2026/27. Within the headcount of 631, 14 employees have 2 roles, and have therefore been counted twice, meaning we have 617 employees.

Quarter 1 of 2026/27 has seen adjustments of 14 leavers and 20 new starters across the organisation.

Chart 1

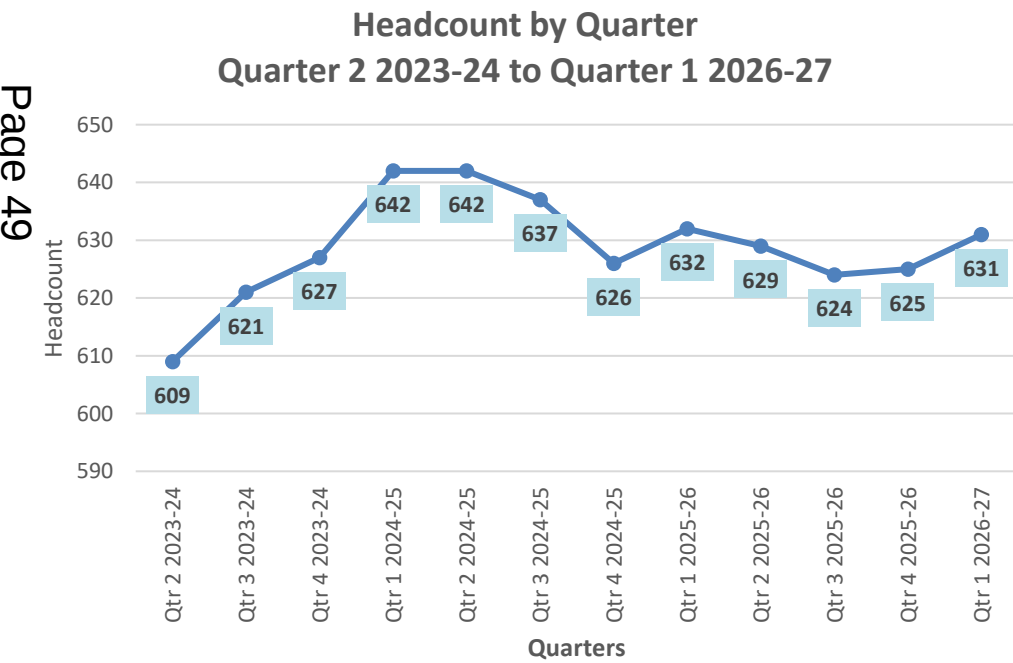


Chart 2 details the distribution of headcount across our departments and directorates as at the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27. Wellbeing and Environmental Services continue to show the highest headcount. CDC are host employer to the District Councils Network (DCN) and these employees are included in the HR, OD and Payroll directorate.

Environmental Services had the biggest increase in headcount with 5 since quarter 4 of 2025/26. Regeneration and Growth increased by 2. Wellbeing 's headcount reduced by 5.

Chart 2

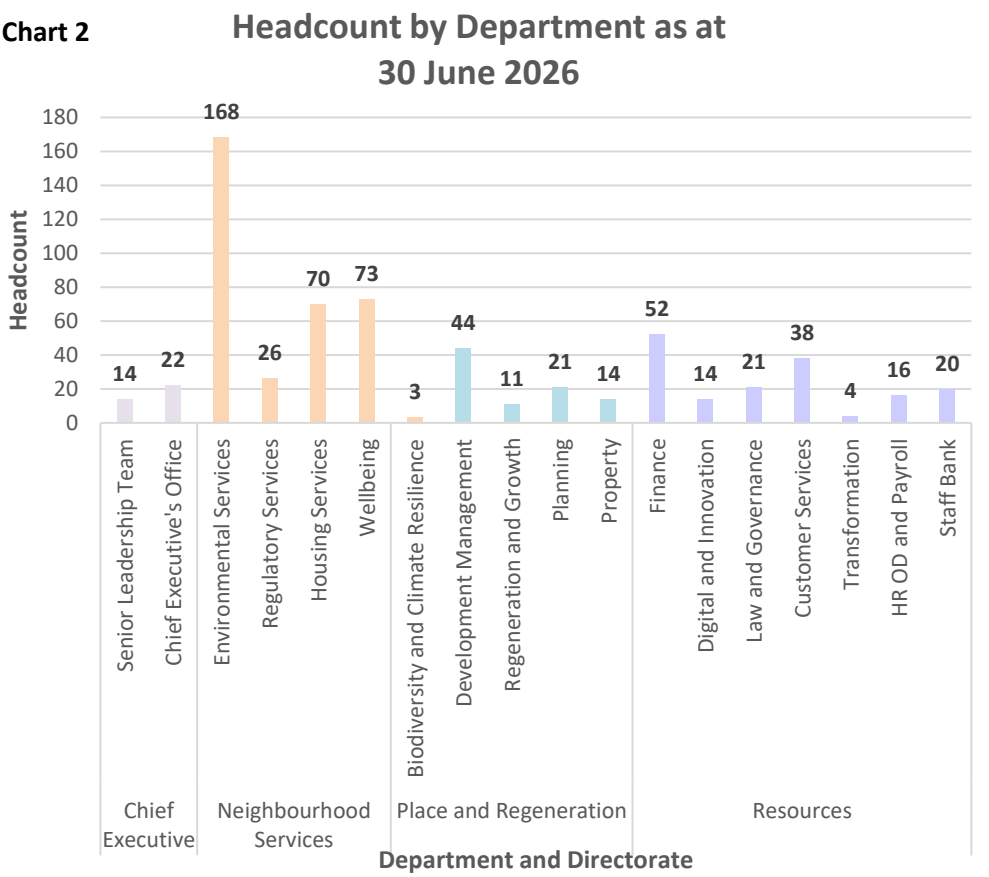


Chart 3 outlines the fluctuation of FTE which has increased by 8.97 between quarter 4 of 2025/26 and quarter 1 of 2026/27.

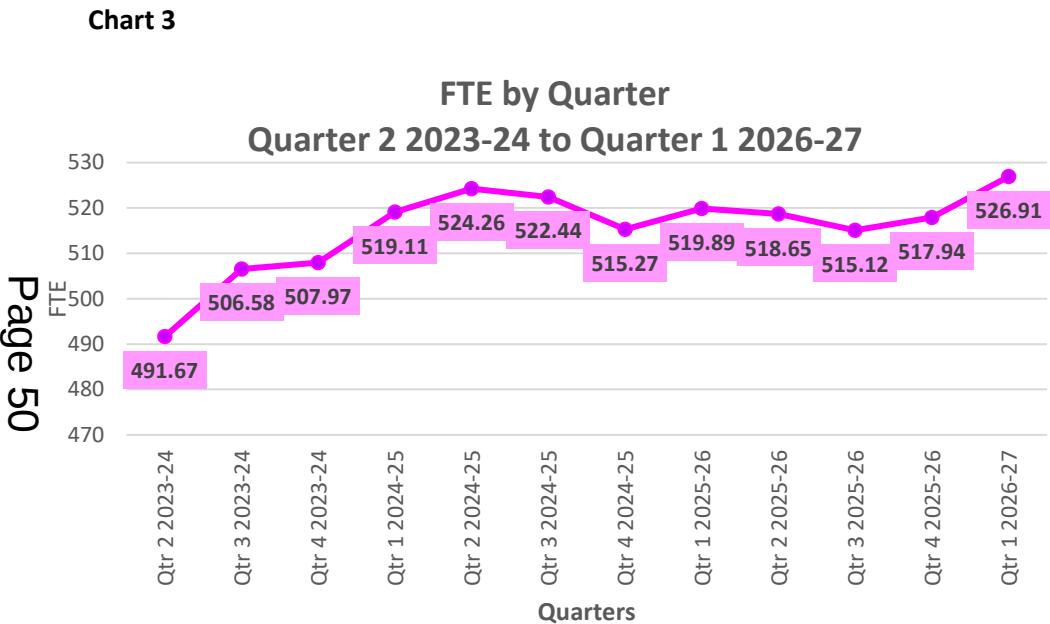


Chart 4

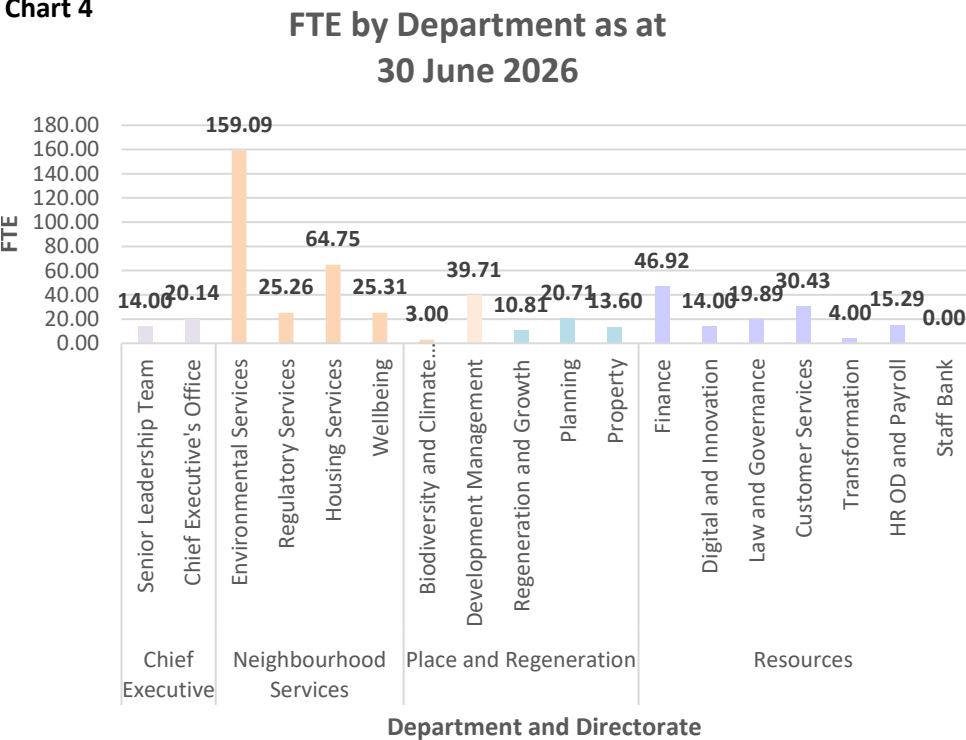


Chart 4 outlines the distribution of FTE across the departments and directorates as at the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Since quarter 4 of 2025/26; Environmental Services has increased by 3.6 FTE and Regeneration and Growth increased by 2 FTE. Wellbeing's FTE reduced by 1.97.

Charts 5 shows the breakdown of basis of hours across our workforce as of 30 June 2026. Since quarter 4 of 2025/26 there has been minimal change to the make-up of role-basis with our full-time increasing by 0.27% and part-time reducing by 0.9% and our casual workforce increasing by 0.63%.

Chart 5

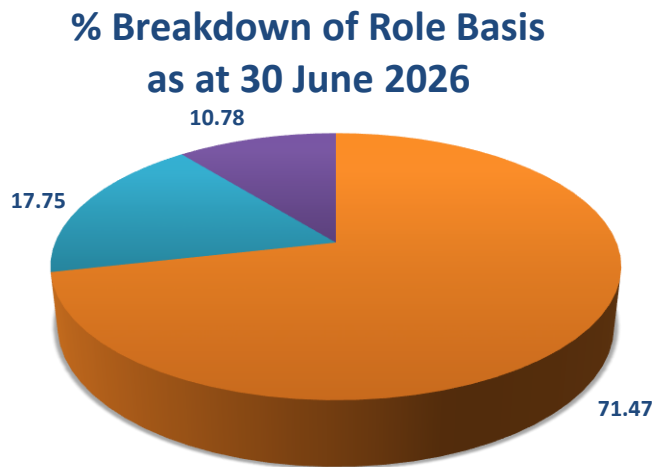
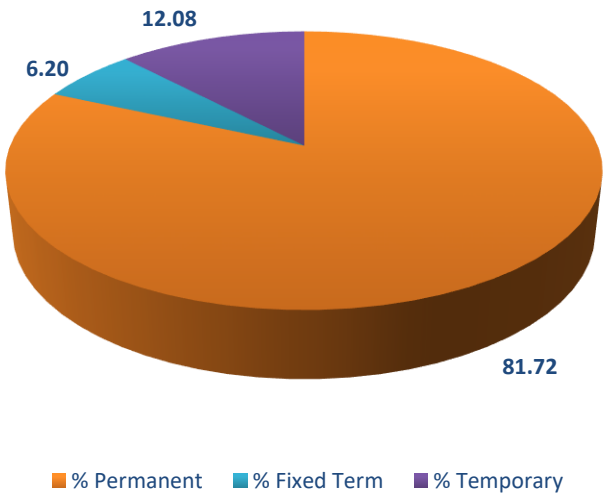


Chart 6 outlines the employment basis of those directly employed by CDC shows that 81.72% of our workforce are in permanent roles. This has slightly increased, by 1.08% since Quarter 4 of 2025/26. There has been minimal fluctuation of employment basis since the last quarter.

Chart 6

% Breakdown of Employment Basis
as at 30 June 2026

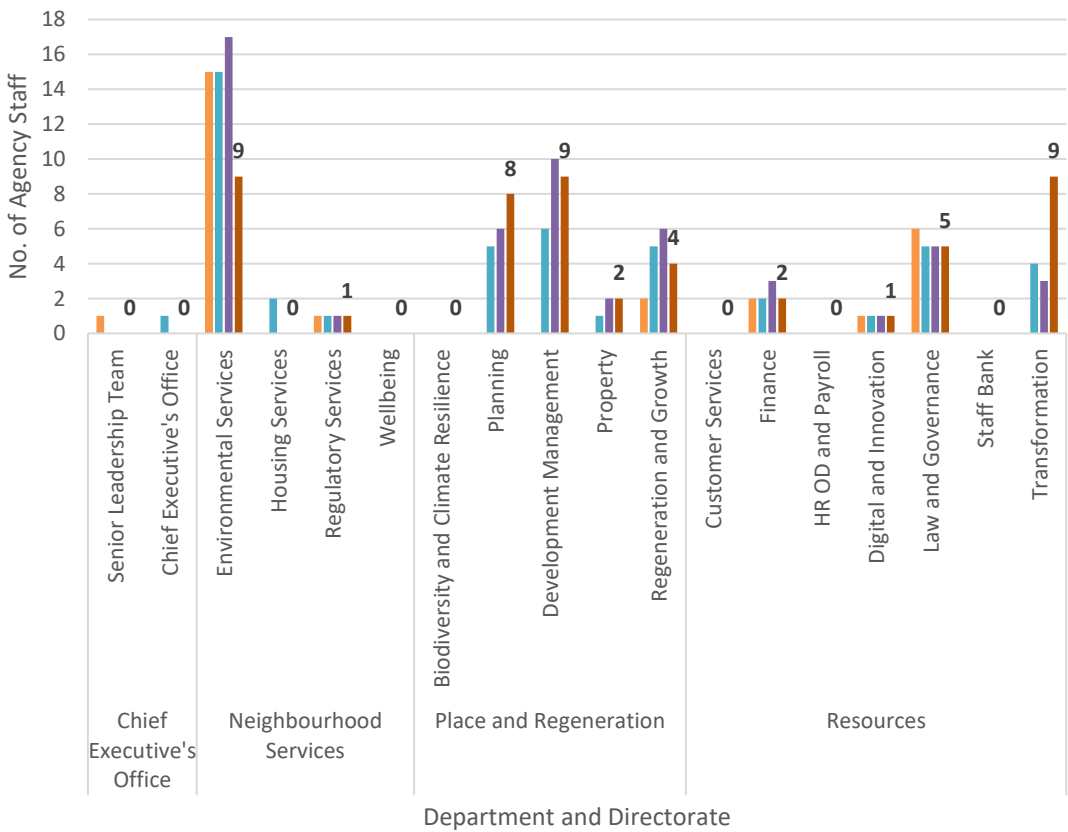


The highest agency usage is usually Environmental Services. Usage in this area reduced by 8 in the last quarter.

Transformation has increased by 6 over the last quarter. Planning and Regeneration have increased by 2 over the last quarter. Regeneration and Growth have reduced by 2 over the last quarter. Development Management and Finance have each reduced agency usage by 1.

Chart 7

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



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 50 agency workers were engaged with CDC at the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27. This has reduced by 4 since the end of quarter 4 of 2025/26 and is 15 more than the same quarter in 2025/26.

Turnover rates and Leaver information

Chart 8 tracks the turnover rate per quarter over a 3-year period, from July 2024 to June 2026. 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

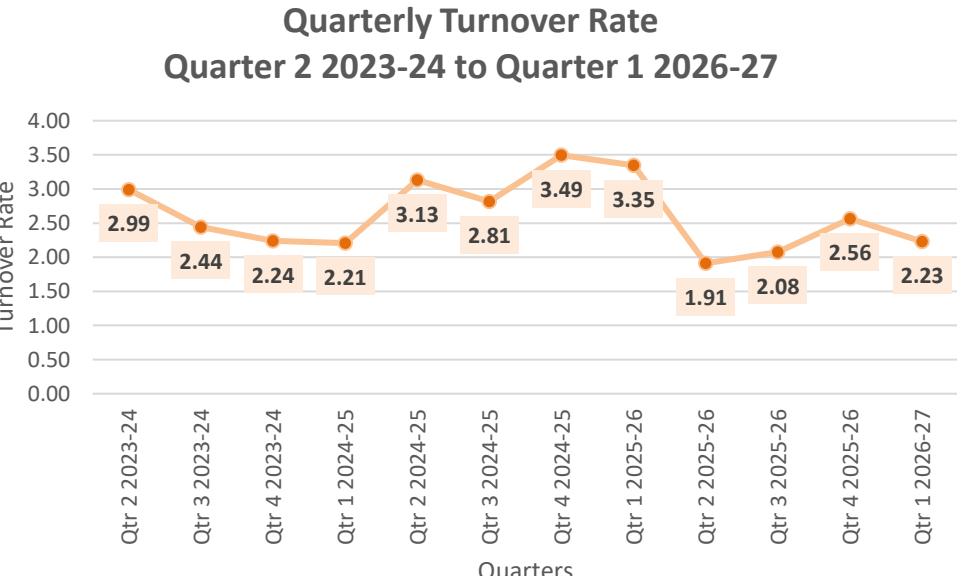


Chart 9

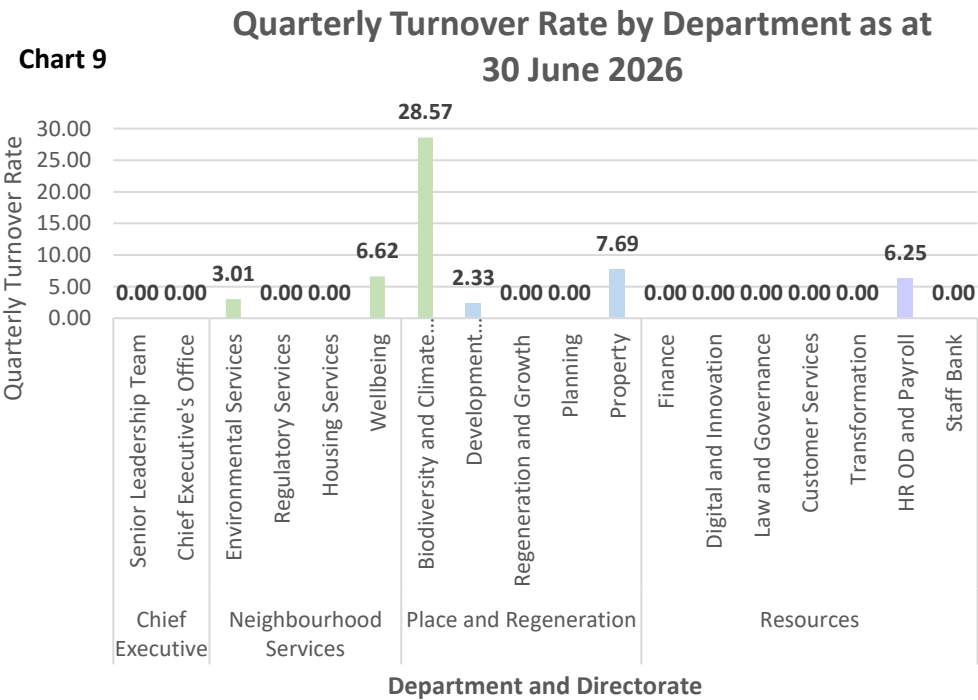


Chart 10

% of Leavers by reason
1 April to 30 June 2026



The turnover for quarter 1 of 2026/27 shows a reduction of 0.56% since quarter 4 of 2025/26.

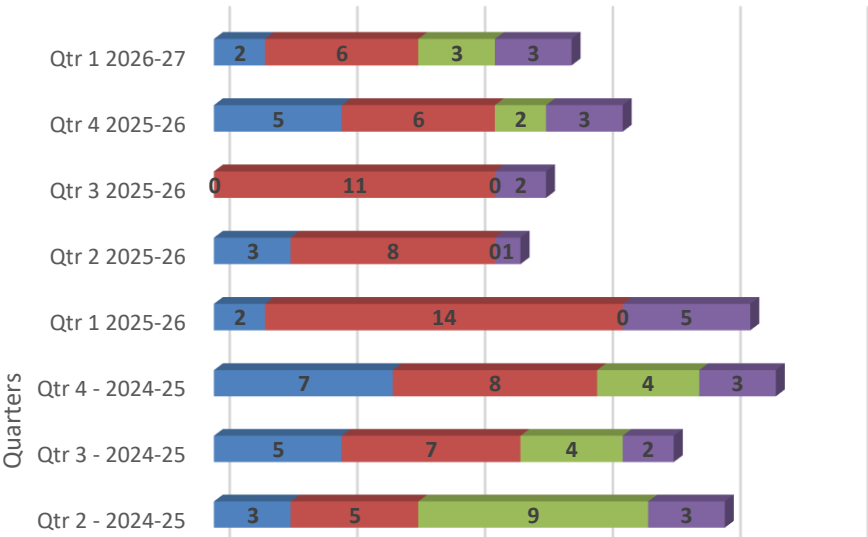
Chart 9 details the quarterly turnover rate by department for quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Chart 10 outlines leavers by reason for quarter 1 of 2026/27. Of the 14 leavers recorded in quarter 1, resignation is the highest reason for leaving, accounting for 46.15%. Retirement is the second highest reason, accounting for 23.08% of leavers. Death in Service, End of Fixed Term Contract and TUPE out accounted for 7.69% each.

Chart 11 outlines leavers by length of service across the last 12 quarters. In quarter 1 of 2026/27, 2 leavers had less than 1 years' service, 6 had less than 5 years' 3 had less than 10 years and 3 had over 10.

Chart 11

Leavers by Length of Service
1 July 2023 - 30 June 2026



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 14 leavers in quarter 1, 4 exit interviews were completed. This is a completion rate of 29%, which is a reduction of 8.5% compared to quarter 4 of 2025/26. 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.

Of the interviews completed, when asked where they were going next, 50% had no onward employment to go to and 50% were retiring.

Overall feedback included positive experiences of development and engagement, with one employee particularly valuing the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship and gain confidence working independently. Employees also highlighted generally positive experiences within their teams, and some left to pursue new opportunities, including consultancy work. One individual chose not to participate in a detailed exit interview, preferring to leave on positive terms.

Key themes raised in the small proportion of exit interviews completed centred on

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 July 2024. Musculo-skeletal has seen the most incidents across this period, with 311 recorded. This is followed by Cold and Flu Symptoms which had 274 incidents.

There were 169 incidents of sickness absence recorded in Quarter 1 of 2026/27, this is 9 more incidents than the same quarter of 2025/26.

For quarter 1 of 2026/27, musculoskeletal symptoms were the highest recorded reason for sickness absence, accounting for 19.5% of all incidents in the last quarter. This is followed by Stomach/liver/kidney and digestion, which accounts for 18.5% of incidents. The third highest reasons this quarter was neurological/headaches accounting for 15% of all incidents.

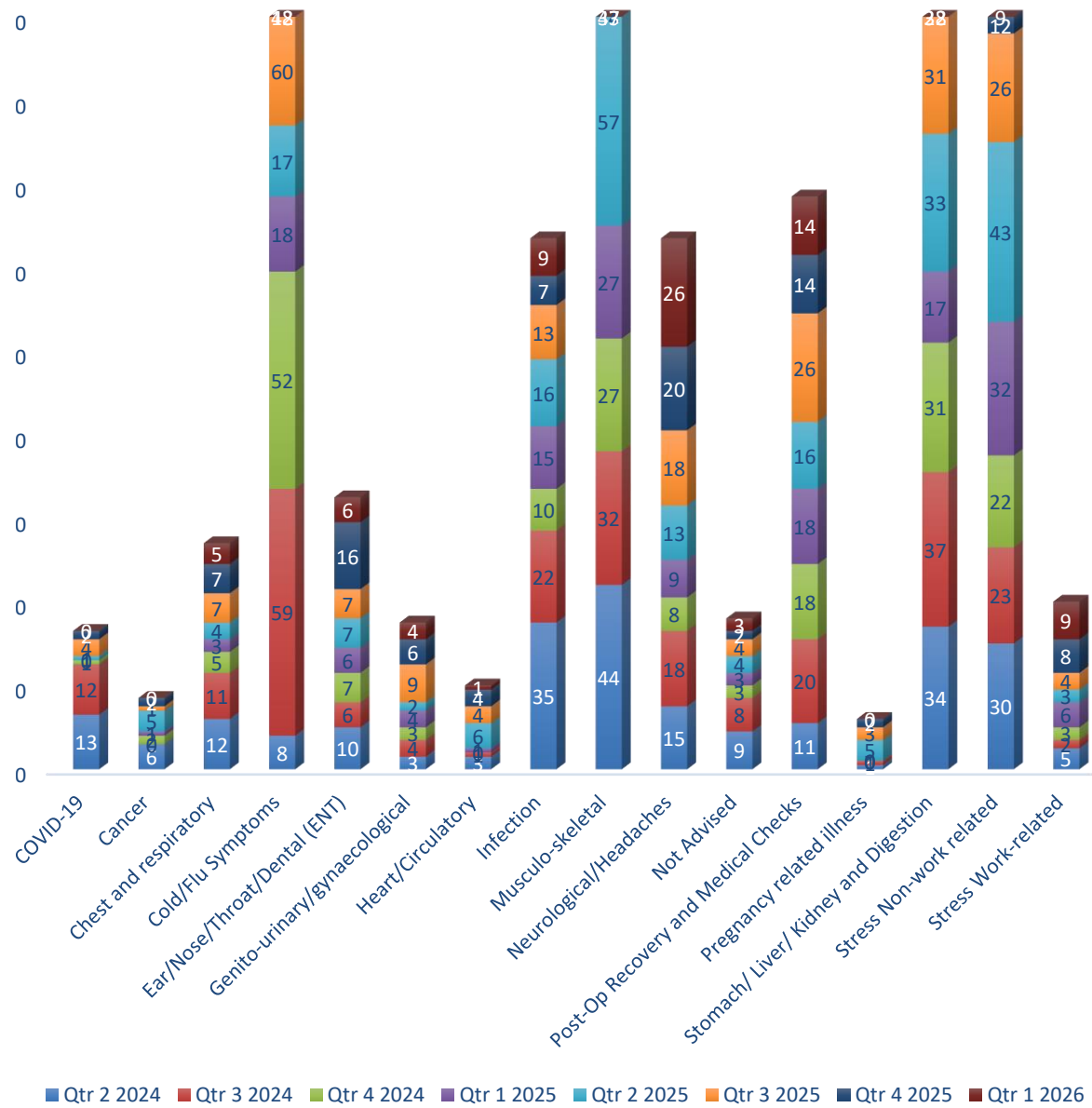
The highest reason for sickness absence across the last rolling 12 months was musculoskeletal, with 181 incidents recorded and accounting for 20.5% of all incidents.

The second highest reason for sickness absence in the last 12 months is cold and flu symptoms, with 137 incidents reported which equates to 15.5% of all incidents.

Stomach/liver/kidney and digestion is the third highest reason in the last 12 months, recording 124 incidents and accounting for 14% of all incidents.

Chart 12

Sickness Absence Incidents by Reason
July 2024 to June 2026



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 July 2023 to June 2026 and shows a slight reduction in the absence rate since the end of quarter 4 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. The end of quarter 1 records a reduction of the whole council absence rate of 0.01 from the end of quarter 4. 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.

Chart 13

Council Absence Rates by Month
Overall and broken down into short-term, long-term and stress
July 2023 to June 2026

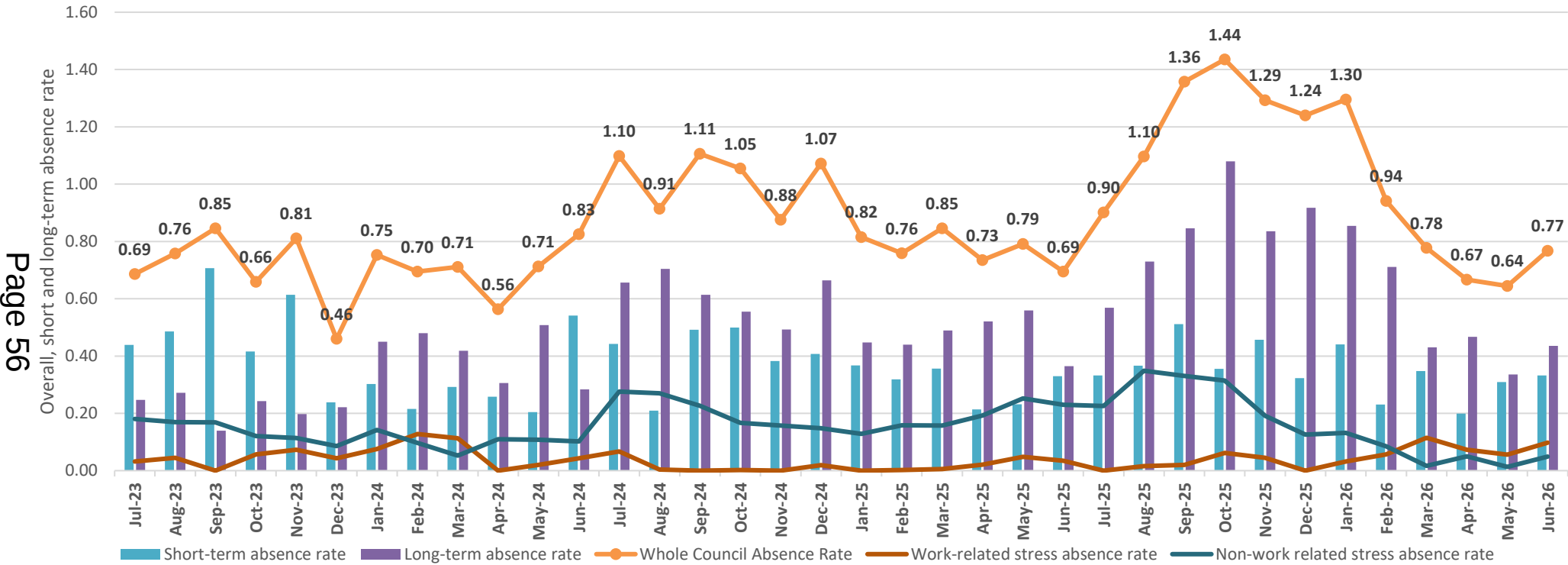


Chart 13 also captures the absence rate of short and long-term instances, In the last 12 months. September 2025 has the highest rate of short-term absence, recording a rate of 0.51 days lost. October 2025 had the highest rate of long-term absence in the last 12 months, with 1.08 days lost. At the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27, 15 long-term sickness absence cases remained ongoing, which is two less than the end of quarter 4 of 2025/26.

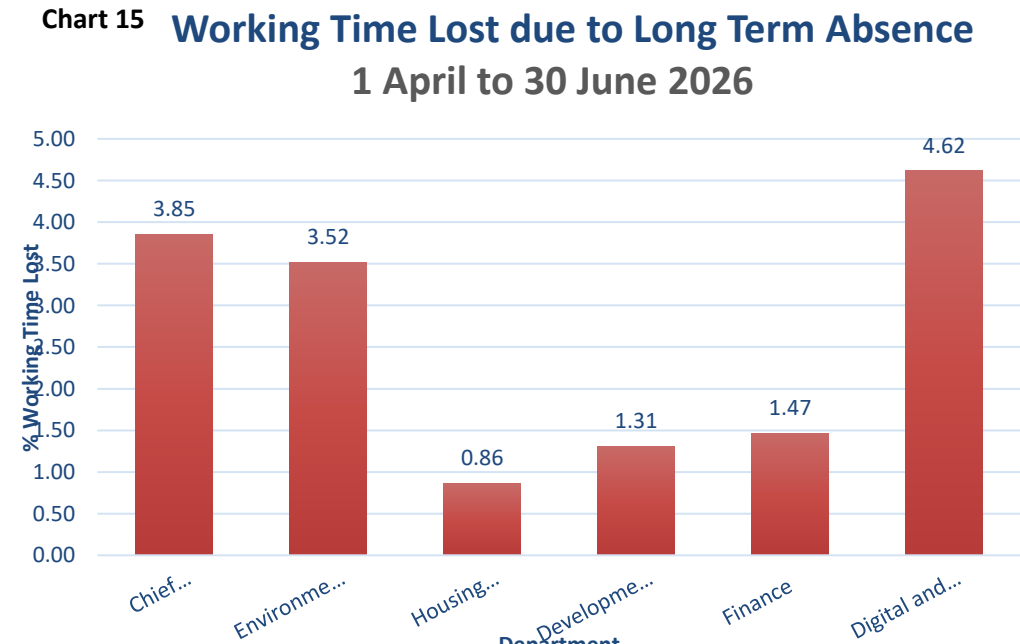
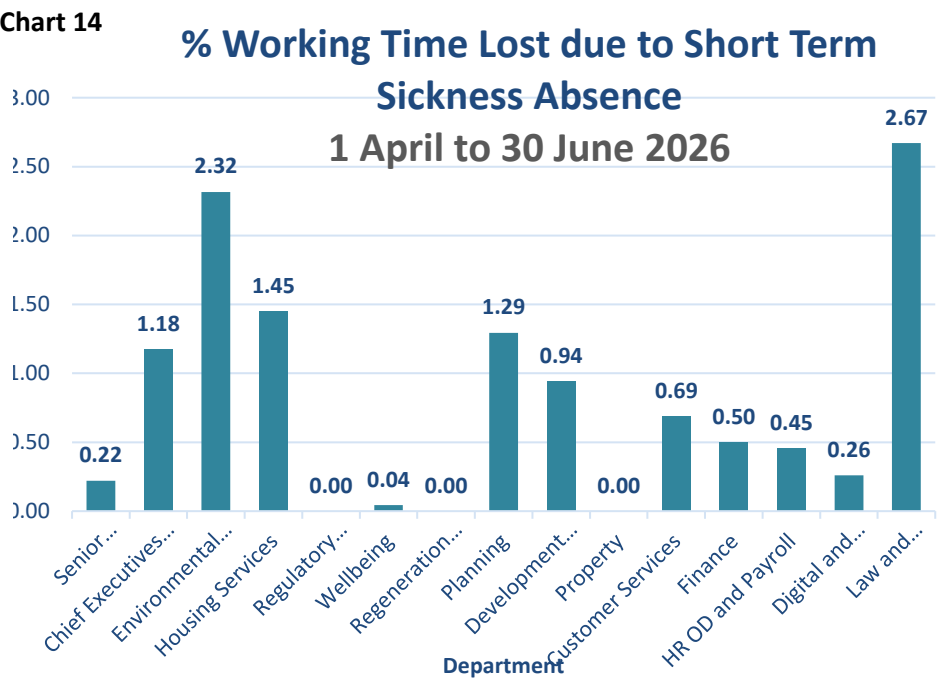
The absence rate attributed to stress is also displayed in Chart 13 and an increase in work-related stress was recorded in the last quarter, with 3 ongoing incidents being captured in quarter 1. Work-related stress incidents accounted for 5% of incidents in quarter 1 of 2026/27 and 3% of incidents in the last rolling 12 months.

The non-work-related stress absence rate has increased over the last quarter, with no open cases at the end of quarter 4 of 2025/26. There are no open cases at the end of quarter 1 of 2026/27 but it did account for 5% of incidents in quarter 1 of 2026/27 and 10% 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.



Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability and LGBTQ+ Workforce Profile as at 30 June 2026

Chart 16 shows a breakdown by age of the CDC workforce, expressed in percentage. 14% of CDC employees are over 60, this has not changed in quarter 1. 27% are aged between 51 and 60, again no change between quarters. 21% of CDC employees are aged between 41 and 50, this has increased by 2% in quarter 1. 21% are aged between 31 and 40, which has not changed in quarter 1 and 15% aged 30 and under which has reduced by 2 between quarter 4 of 2025/26 and quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Chart 16

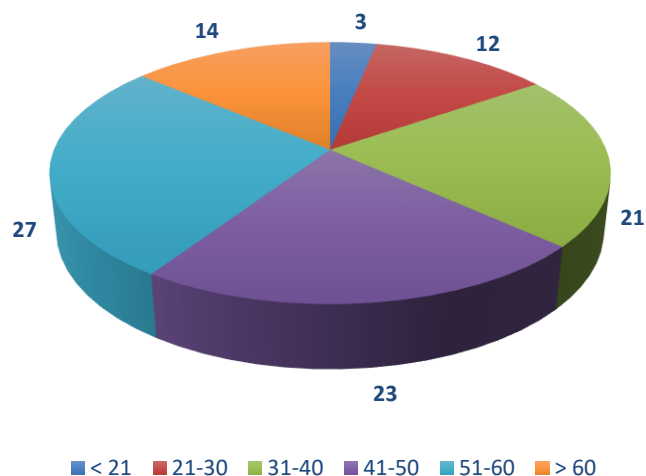
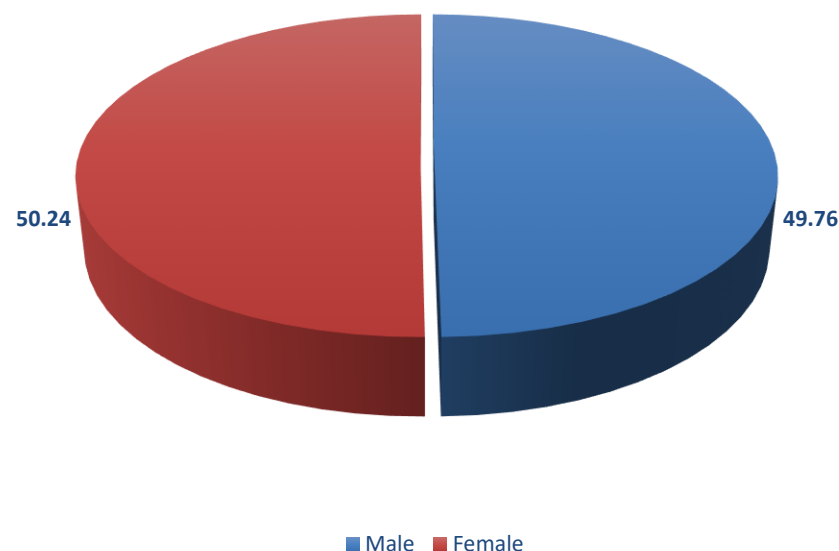
Age Profile Percentage as at 30 June 2026

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 June 2026

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, 49.76% of our workforce are male and 50.24% are female meaning it is representative of the district, and there has been minimal change since quarter 4 of 2025/26.

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 4 of 2025/26, 89.22% of employees have recorded this information, with 4.44% 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

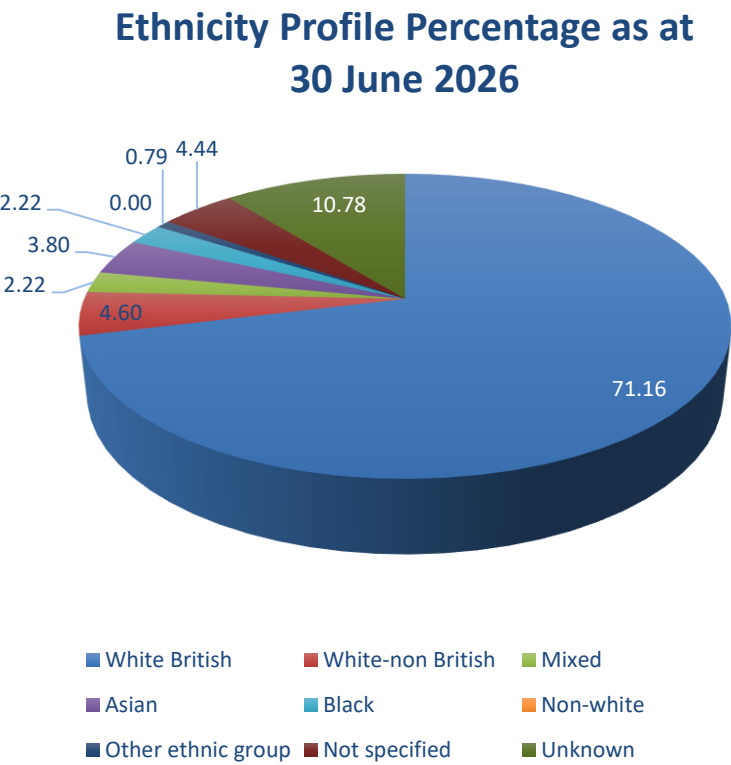


Table 1

Ethnic Group	England average (%)	Cherwell District (%)	CDC (%) Qtr 2 25/26	CDC (%) Qtr 3 25/26	CDC (%) Qtr 4 25/26	CDC (%) Qtr 1 26/27
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	9.3	6.0	3.66	3.37	3.68	3.80
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4.0	1.8	1.43	1.76	1.92	2.22
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	2.9	2.9	1.75	1.92	2.08	2.22
White	81.7	88.1	76.47	76.28	75.52	75.75
Other ethnic group	2.1	1.3	0.79	0.80	0.80	0.79
Prefer not to say	N/A	N/A	4.61	4.65	4.64	4.44
Unknown	N/A	N/A	11.29	11.22	11.36	10.78

CDC’s workforce is predominantly white British with 71.16% 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 marginally in the last quarter by 0.23% and at the end of quarter 1 was 12.35% 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 4 of 2025/26 and quarter 1 of 2026/27.

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 1 of 2026/27 this was down to 13% and remained the same for quarter 1, 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 June 2026

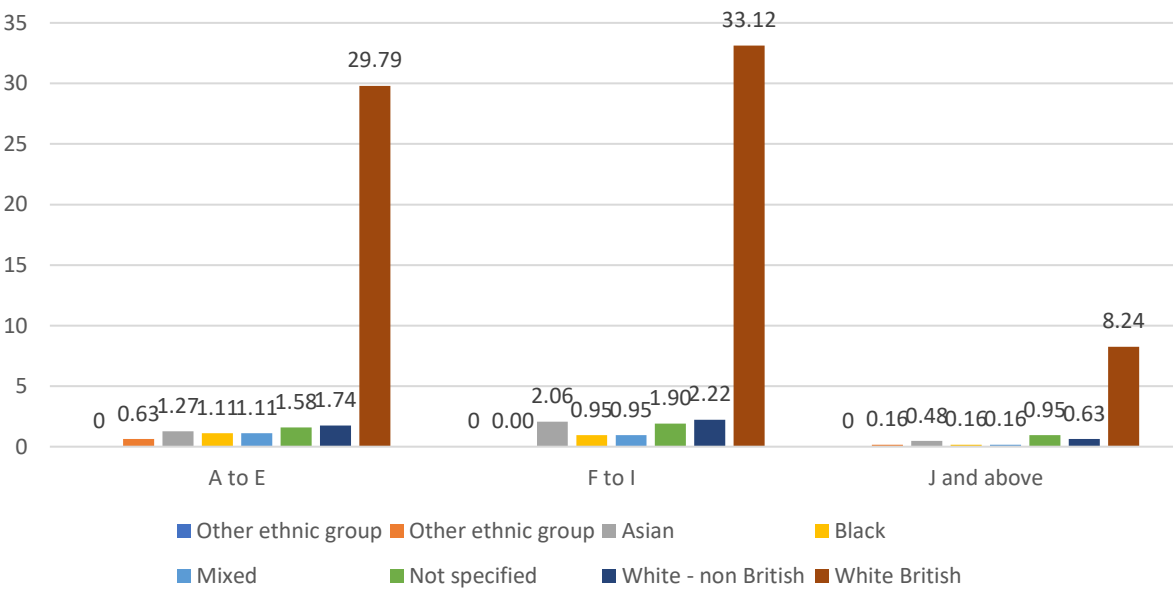


Chart 20
Disability Percentage Profile
as at 30 June 2026

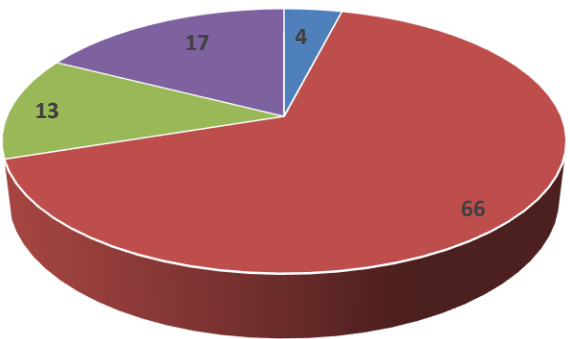
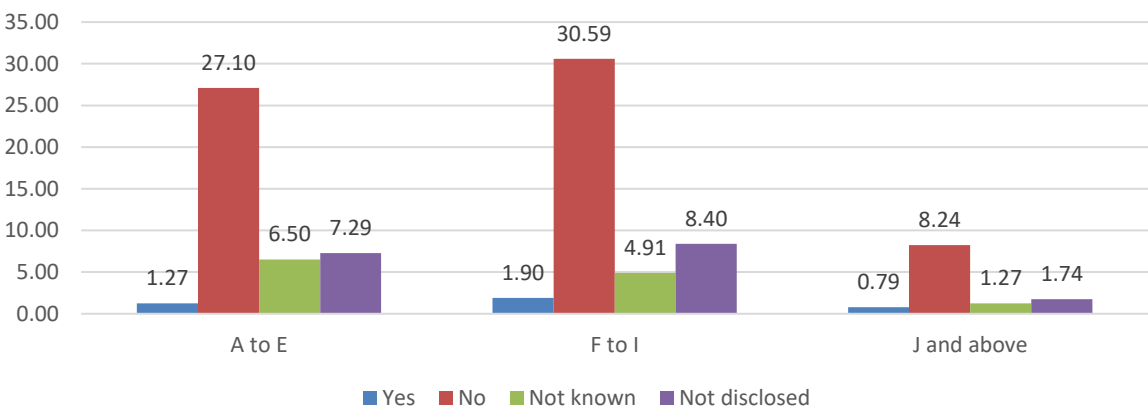


Chart 21
Disability Percentage by Grade Band
as at 30 June 2026



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, 11.25% of the workforce have declined to specify and 11.73% 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.

At Personnel Committee in June 2026, members requested information on the number of veterans we have employed.

Our records show that, 0.80% of the workforce have confirmed they are veterans, and 0.63% are reservists.

Chart 22

% Sexual Orientation as at 30 June 2026

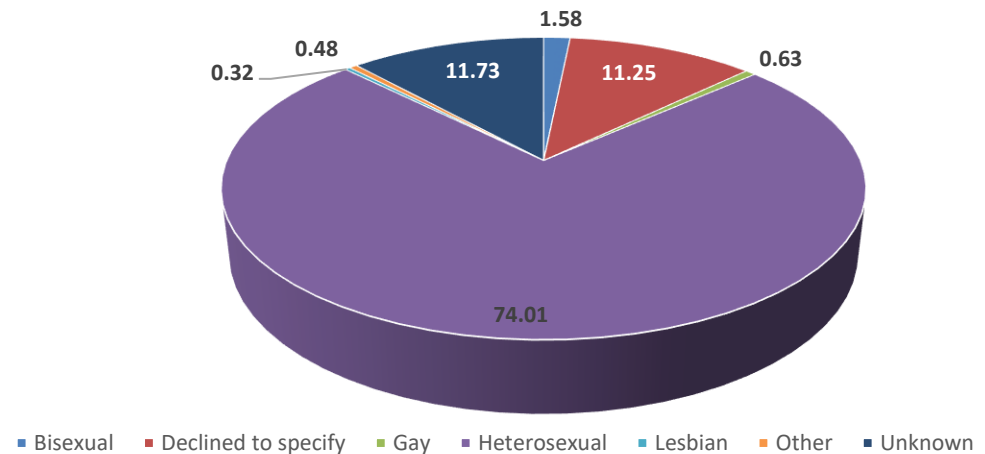
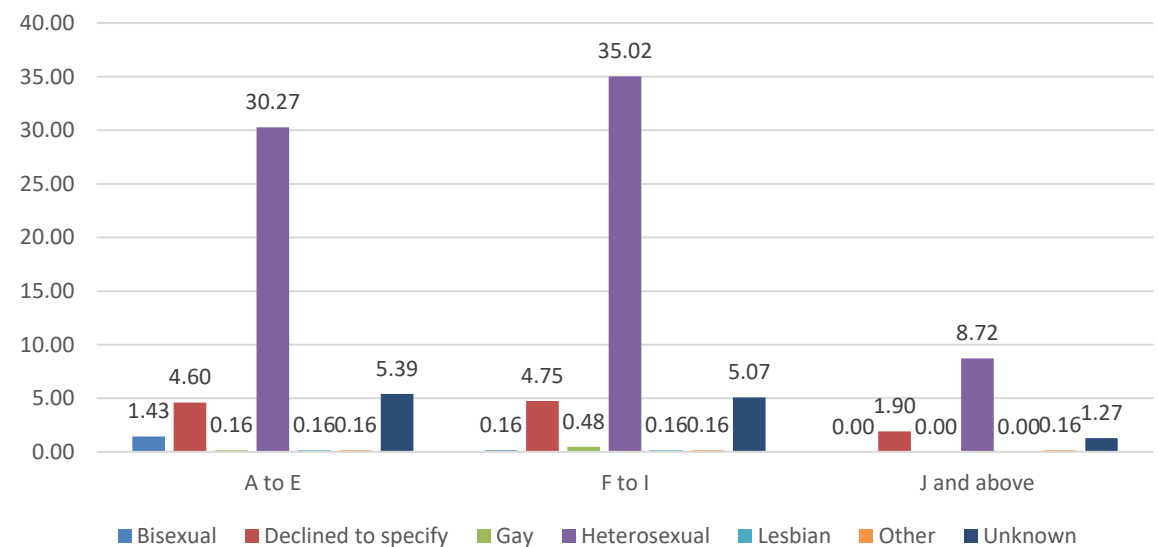


Chart 23

Sexual Orientation Percentage by Grade Band as at 30 June 2026



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 July 2025 to June 2026. There have been 102 recruitment campaigns during this period to which 1340 applications were received and 81 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 66.64% 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.

Chart 24

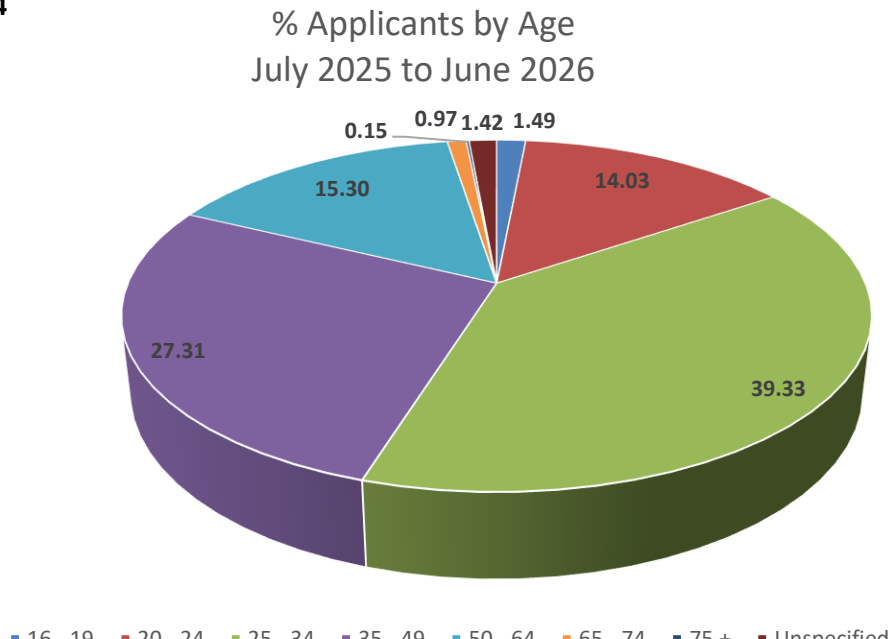


Table 2

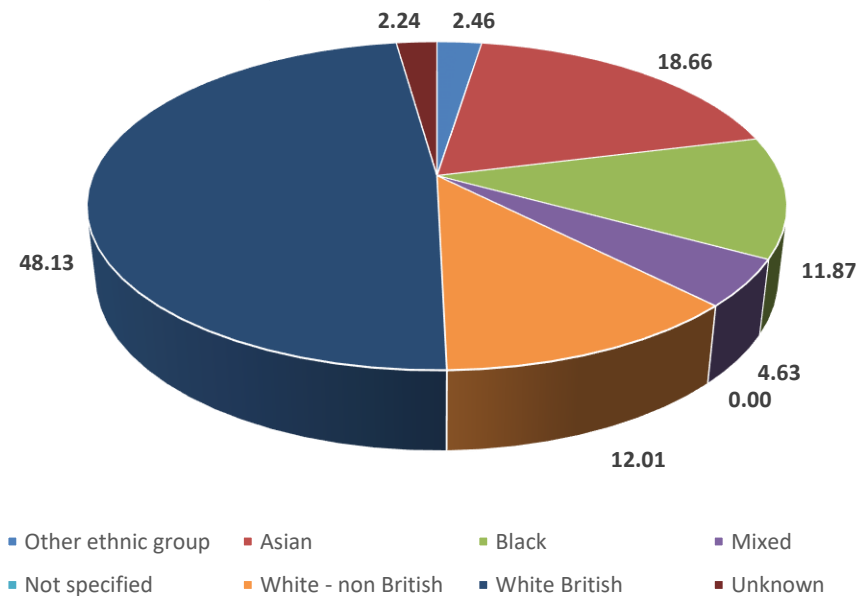
Age	% Residents
16 - 19	5.48
20 - 24	6.71
25 - 34	19.45
35 - 49	28.49
50 - 64	26.99
65 - 74	12.88
	100.00

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

Chart 25

Table 3

% Applicants by Ethnicity
July 2025 to June 2026



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

up of

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

Chart 26

% Applicants by Gender
July 2025 to June 2026

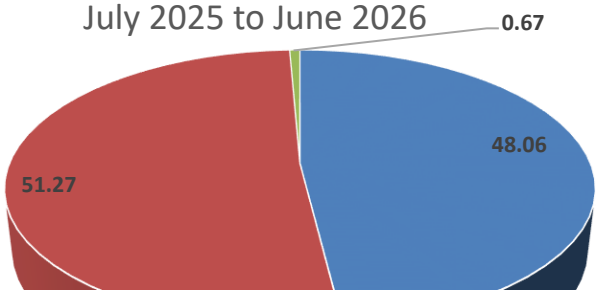


Chart 26 shows the percentage of applicants by gender, which is an almost 50/50 split across male and female, which is both reflective of our current workforce and district data covered earlier in this report.

Chart 27

% Applicants with Disabilities
July 2025 to June 2026

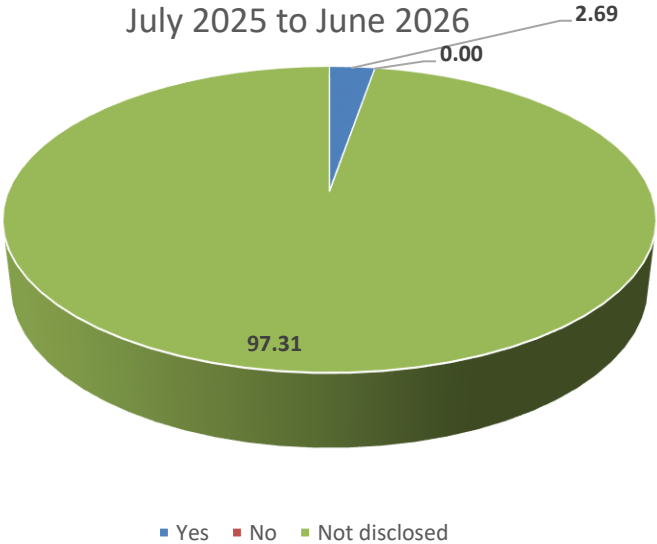


Chart 28 shows the percentage of applicants by sexual orientation. Oxfordshire County Council confirms from census 2021 information that 89.4% of the county identify as straight or heterosexual, with 3.4% not identifying as straight or heterosexual and 7.9% preferring not to say. CDC’s applicant data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

Chart 28

% Applicants by Sexual Orientation
July 2025 to June 2026

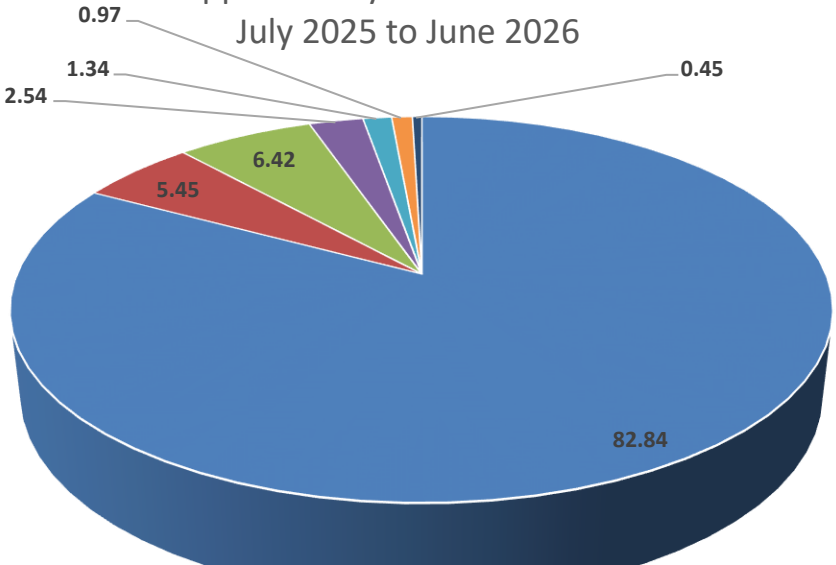


Chart 27 shows the percentage of applicants by disability. 97.31% of applicants have not disclosed this at applicant stage. It is hoped that applicants would provide this information should they have disabilities as we have a guaranteed interview scheme if they meet the essential criteria for a role, as part of being a disability confident employer.

Members at Personnel Committee in June 2026 were keen to understand how many veterans we had employed with us which is answered earlier in this report. We also operate a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans if they meet the essential criteria of the role being advertised. We only hold this data for 6 months and in the last 6 months of 515 applicants, 2% confirmed they were veterans.

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 over the last rolling 12-month period, 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
-------------	--------	--------	-------------	--------

Comparator Ethnic Group	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Other ethnic group	2.92	0.00	1.97	3.13	2.67	0.00	2.46	1.23
Asian	13.93	0.00	19.71	9.38	23.15	13.33	18.66	6.17
Black	6.97	8.82	15.59	6.25	12.17	13.33	11.87	8.64
Mixed	4.27	5.88	5.20	6.25	4.15	0.00	4.63	4.94
Not specified	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
White - non British	9.66	8.82	11.47	6.25	16.02	6.67	12.01	7.41
White British	61.80	73.53	43.91	68.75	37.09	66.67	48.13	70.37
Unknown	0.45	2.94	2.15	0.00	4.75	0.00	2.24	1.23
TOTAL %	100	100.00	100	100.00	100	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	445	34	558	32	337	15	1340	81

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	88.76	82.35	82.97	90.63	74.78	80.00	82.84	85.19
Bisexual	4.27	5.88	5.20	0.00	7.42	0.00	5.45	2.47
Declined to specify	3.60	0.00	6.27	9.38	10.39	13.33	6.42	6.17
Gay	1.35	5.88	3.58	0.00	2.37	6.67	2.54	3.70
Other	1.12	0.00	1.08	0.00	2.08	0.00	1.34	0.00
Lesbian	0.90	2.94	0.90	0.00	1.19	0.00	0.97	1.23
Unknown	0.00	2.94	0.00	0.00	1.78	0.00	0.45	1.23

TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	445	34	558	32	337	15	1340	81

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	4.04	5.88	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.49	2.47
20 - 24	14.61	8.82	15.23	3.13	11.28	0.00	14.03	4.94
25 - 34	29.89	5.88	43.01	28.13	45.70	33.33	39.33	19.75
35 - 49	31.01	44.12	27.24	37.50	22.55	40.00	27.31	40.74
50 - 64	18.20	35.29	13.62	31.25	14.24	26.67	15.30	32.10
65 - 74	1.12	0.00	0.54	0.00	1.48	0.00	0.97	0.00
75 +	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00	0.15	0.00
Unspecified	0.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.45	0.00	1.42	0.00
TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	445	34	558	32	337	15	1340	81

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	56.63	52.94	39.96	31.25	50.15	60.00	48.06	45.68
Female	43.15	47.06	59.68	68.75	48.07	40.00	51.27	54.32
Unspecified	0.22	0.00	0.36	0.00	1.78	0.00	0.67	0.00
TOTAL %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	445	34	558	32	337	15	1340	81

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

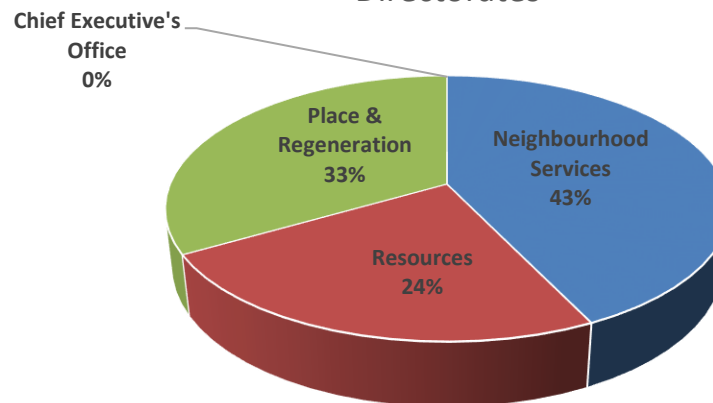
% Disability	A to E		F to I		J and above		TOTALS	
Disability	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers	No. of applicants	No. of offers
Yes	1.57	11.76	1.25	6.25	6.53	13.33	2.69	9.88
No	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Not disclosed	98.43	88.24	98.75	93.75	93.47	86.67	97.31	90.12
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
TOTAL NUMBER	445	34	558	32	337	15	1340	81

Apprenticeships within Cherwell District Council as at Quarter 1 – 2026/27

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. The Apprenticeship Levy Fund is a government initiative that enables employers to invest in workforce development through approved apprenticeship training and assessment. Levy payments are collected through PAYE and credited to the employer's Apprenticeship Service Account. For councils and other public sector organisations, Apprenticeship Levy funding can be used to support a wide range of apprenticeship programmes, from entry-level roles through to professional and leadership qualifications. The Council's levy is used to support apprentices to study for qualifications from Level 2 – Level 7.

Percentage of Apprenticeships within Directorates



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.

Information on apprentices in the organisation

There are 21 apprenticeships currently running within the Council for this quarter, of which 2 is an apprentice on programme, employed specifically as an apprentice; and the remaining 19 are employees undertaking an apprenticeship as CPD or career progression.

There are currently 10 apprenticeships within the Neighbourhood Services Directorate, 8 in Place and Regeneration, 5 within the Resources Directorate and 0 within the Chief Executive's Office – 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 (£)
Urban Driver	Level 2	8 months	3	CPD	Waste Collection	Neighbourhood Services (3)	24,000
Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician - light vehicle	Level 3	22 months	1	Apprentice	Fleet Management	Neighbourhood Services (1)	10,669
Associate Project Manager	Level 4	18 months	1	CPD	Waste Collection	Neighbourhood Services (1)	7,000
Data Protection and Information Governance Practitioner	Level 4	18 months	1	CPD	Legal Services	Resources (1)	10,000
Senior housing and property management	Level 4	22 months	2	CPD	Housing Grants and Standards	Neighbourhood Services (2)	17933
People Professional	Level 5	18 months	2	CPD (1) Apprentice (1)	Human Resources	Resources (2)	22,000
Building control surveyor	Level 6	48 months	1	CPD	Building Control	Place and Regeneration (1)	24,000
Environmental Health Practitioner	Level 6	48 months	1	CPD	Health Protection and Compliance	Neighbourhood Services (1)	22,000

Apprenticeship Standard	Level of Apprenticeship	Duration of Apprenticeship	Number of employees on apprenticeship	Apprentice or Employee CPD	Team	Directorate	Cost of Apprenticeships (£)
Public Health Practitioner	Level 6	36 months	1	CPD	Health Shaping Place	Place and Regeneration (1)	22,000
Chartered Town Planner	Level 7	30 months	5	CPD	Planning	Place and Regeneration (5)	57,000
Accountancy or Taxation Professional	Level 7	38 months	1	CPD	Finance	Resources (1)	21,000
Accountancy Professional (CIPFA)	Level 7	36 months	1	CPD	Finance	Resources (1)	20,433
Sustainability business specialist	Level 7	24 months	1	CPD	Environment Services	Neighbourhood Services (1)	10,755
			21		Total apprenticeship levy committed		268,790

Current amount in the Levy Account

The Council currently has **£156,036** in their levy account.

Expired Funds

Apprenticeship Levy funds can expire if not utilised in a timely manner. No funds expired from Cherwell District's Council's apprenticeship levy account in Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Latest Update around apprenticeship reforms

- **Change to End Point Assessment** - The biggest apprenticeship reforms in England currently are focussing on making apprenticeships shorter, more flexible, and less bureaucratic, while targeting funding towards skills shortages and younger entrants. Skills England are also looking at the way apprenticeships are assessed. Currently apprenticeships have an End Point Assessment where the learners are given, normally, 3 months to prepare for after the completion of their qualification. This can sometimes lead to learners not completing the apprenticeship as they have already completed the qualification they wish to attain. Skills England are looking at how assessments can be ongoing throughout the apprenticeship, which would mean completion would be slightly quicker and reducing administration burden and delays for both employers and providers.
- **Standard Revisions** - According to the latest Skills England revisions and adjustments status reports, there are 328 apprenticeship standards in the assessment reform pipeline as of July 2026. These are standards that have entered development for review, revision, adjustment, or reform under the new apprenticeship assessment model initiated by the Government in February 2025 following a review of the apprenticeship assessment system.
- **Under 25s exempted from apprenticeship co-investment hike** – The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed levy-paying employers that exhaust their apprenticeship service account will not have to contribute towards training and assessment for eligible new starts aged 16 to 24 from August 1. The government had planned to increase the contribution required from levy payers with insufficient account funds from 5 to 25 per cent for all new apprenticeship starts from that date. But this has now been changed and apprentices aged between 16 and 24 will now be exempt, meaning their training and assessment will be fully funded by government up to the relevant funding band maximum.
- **Benefit-hit apprentice families will be boosted by bursary** - Households will be able to claim a new bursary worth up to £4,500 a year to help offset the benefits they lose when a young person takes up an apprenticeship. The Department for Work and Pensions has announced the new bursary will close a loophole that penalises potentially thousands of low-income households when a young person starts an apprenticeship and is reclassified as an independent worker. This will hopefully mean parents will encourage their children to engage in apprenticeships.

At Personnel Committee in June 2026, members requested information around how many staff had studied via apprenticeships within the last 2 years, whether they were retained, and had then progressed in their careers. The Council's apprenticeship programme continues to demonstrate positive outcomes in supporting workforce development, retention and internal progression. Of the 11 employees identified as completing their apprenticeships, nine remain employed by the Council, with many using their apprenticeship to develop within their current role or progress into higher-level positions. Examples include promotions into team leader roles, progression through career-graded professional pathways, and enhanced capability following service restructures. Current apprenticeships are also supporting the development of specialist skills in areas such as Planning, Surveying, Building Control, Data Analysis and HR.

The programme is also helping to build future talent pipelines in hard-to-recruit professional areas. Several employees have progressed directly into substantive roles or achieved promotion following completion of their apprenticeship, while others continue to undertake higher-level qualifications alongside their employment. Two apprentices have left the organisation following completion of fixed-term apprenticeship arrangements; however, the overall retention rate remains strong, with the majority of participants continuing to contribute to the Council's workforce and organisational capability.

Over the past 24 months, two employees have left the Council before completing their apprenticeship programmes. At the point of leaving, a total of £17,724.06 had been spent on apprenticeship training (£9,120.06 for a Level 7 Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship and £8,604.00 for a Level 7 Sustainability Business Specialist apprenticeship). The combined full value of these apprenticeship programmes was £22,155, meaning approximately 80% of the total programme costs had been incurred before the employees left.

While this represents a training investment that did not result in completion, the number of early leavers remains low and should be considered alongside the wider success of the Council's apprenticeship programme, which continues to support recruitment, retention, professional development and succession planning across a range of service areas.

An apprenticeship qualification is more expensive than the normal University route, due to the fact that an apprenticeship is much more than the academic course. The individual is essentially studying for two qualifications and will achieve an apprenticeship qualification and also the qualification they wished to study as detailed in our table above. There are a lot of other costs associated with the apprenticeship due to the fact learners have 1:1 with a coach on a regular basis, meetings with managers, track of the off the job activities, End Point Assessments. To break it down:

- **University course only** → mainly academic teaching.
- **Apprenticeship** → academic teaching + workplace training + coaching + compliance + assessment + employer engagement.

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