



CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of item:	Annual Report - Workforce
Cabinet Member:	Coun. Llio Elenid Owen
Relevant Officer:	Eleri Jones, Human Resources Advisory Service Manager
Date of meeting:	16 October 2026

1. DECISION SOUGHT:

Approval of the annual report for 2025/26.

2. THE REASON WHY THE CABINET MUST MAKE THE DECISION:

To reflect on the corporate strategy in this key area for the future.

3. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The report summarises the main activities in the field of employment within the Council during 2025/26. The information also provides a general overview of the characteristics of our workforce and notes how these steer certain elements of our staffing strategy.

THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE

The table below shows the numbers employed on a full-time and part-time basis within the Council over the past five years. These numbers include staff who work in our schools but not those staff employed on a casual basis during holiday/sickness periods of the permanent workforce.

	31/3/21	31/3/22	31/3/23	31/3/24	31/3/25	31/03/26
Full-time	3,073	3,258	3,306	3,354	3,334	3,269
Part-time	2,776	2,650	2,689	2,648	2,561	2,525
Total	5,849	5,908	5,995	6,002	5,895	5,794

As can be seen, there has been a further reduction in staff numbers during 2025/26, with the total workforce falling from 5,895 to 5,794 individuals. This represents a reduction of 101 members of staff over the year. The decline was evident among full-time and part-time staff alike.

This reduction reflects the financial pressures facing local government in general. Services have had to continue to review their staffing arrangements and priorities in order to respond to the significant financial challenges faced. Although reductions in staff numbers are

inevitable in some areas, the Council continues to seek to maintain effective services for the county's residents.

Additionally, this is the first year in which GwE and North Wales Economic Ambition Board data have not been included as part of Cyngor Gwynedd's workforce, following the organisational changes reported last year.

WORKFORCE DIVISION BY GENDER

Below is a further analysis of the number of men and women employed on a full-time and part-time basis during the same period. The workforce pattern remains very similar to previous years with a significantly higher number of women working for the Council. On 31 March 2026, 71% of the Council's workforce was female and 29% male.

A significantly higher number of those women are employed on a part-time basis and within services such as Adults, Health and Well-being, Children and Supporting Families, and Education. This division has been a consistent trend, not only in Gwynedd but also within local government in general.

While gender balance remains uneven in some service areas, this reflects recruitment patterns and career choices that have developed over a lengthy period of time. The Council continues to seek to attract candidates of all genders to all areas of work.

Gender division

(a) Whole Council – last 3 years

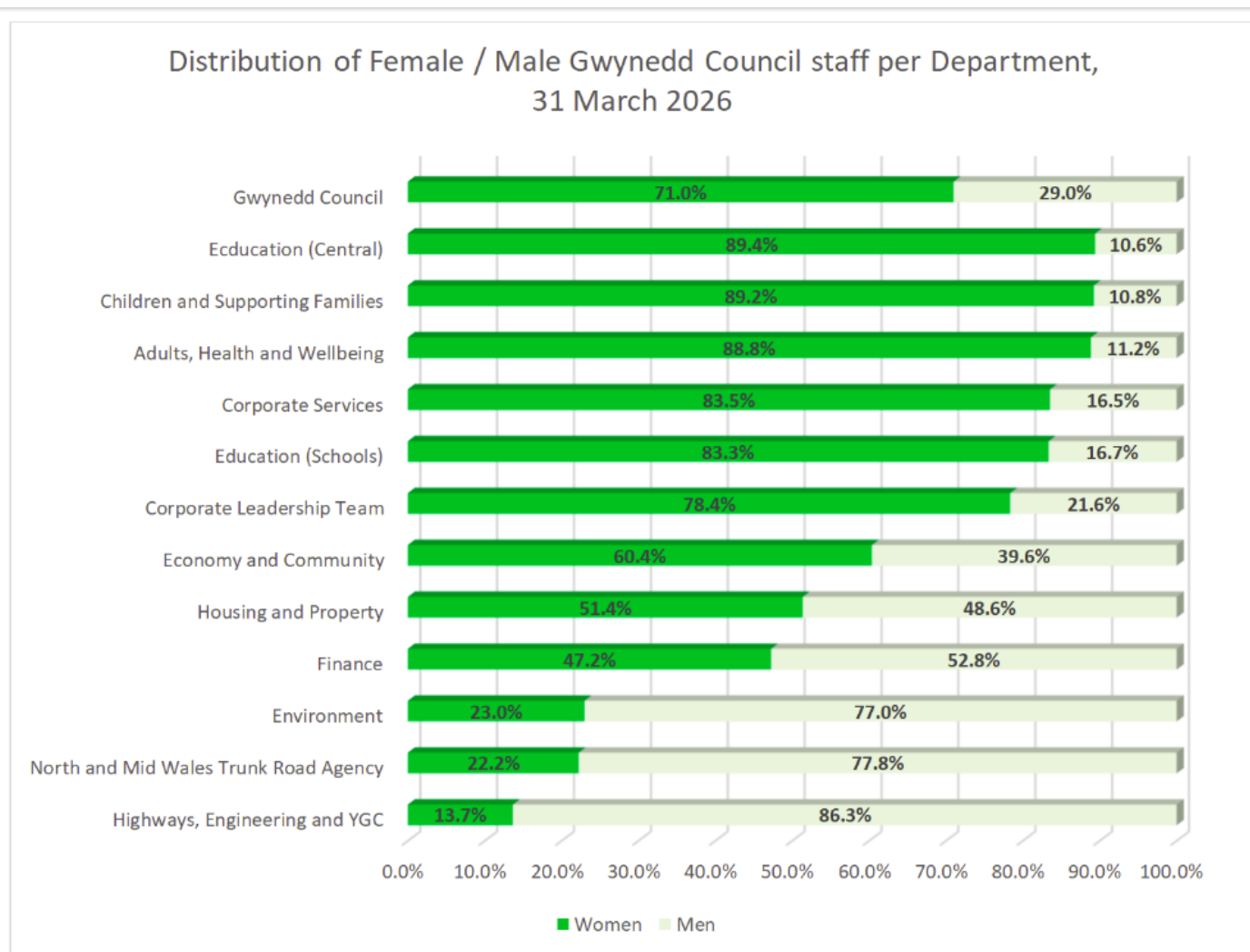
		31/3/23	31/3/24	31/3/25	31/3/26
Full-time	Men	1,462	1,501	1,480	1,431
	Women	1,844	1,853	1,854	1,838
Part-time	Men	264	259	247	250
	Women	2,425	2,389	2,314	2,275
Total	Men	1,726	1,760	1,727	1,681
	Women	4,269	4,242	4,168	4,113
Total %	Men	28.8%	29.3%	29.3%	29%
	Women	71.2%	70.7%	70.7%	71%

Here is a further analysis of the gender division in the Council's departments as at 31 March 2026.

b. Distribution of women / men within Cyngor Gwynedd staff by Department, 31 March 2026 (based on each individual's main post)

	Women	Men	Total
Education (Central)	658 (89%)	78 (11%)	736
Environment	85 (23%)	285 (77%)	370
Corporate Services	137 (84%)	27 (16%)	164
Finance	103 (47%)	115 (53%)	218
Economy and Community	102 (60%)	67 (40%)	169
Adults, Health and Well-being	796 (89%)	100 (11%)	896
Children and Supporting Families	348 (89%)	42 (11%)	390
Highways, Engineering and YGC	57 (14%)	360 (86%)	417
Housing and Property	95 (51%)	90 (49%)	185
Corporate Leadership Team	76 (78%)	21 (22%)	97
Schools	1,606 (83%)	321 (17%)	1,927
Sub-total	4,063 (73%)	1,506 (27%)	5,569
North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent	50 (22%)	175 (78%)	225
Total – as reported to Data Cymru	4,113 (71%)	1,681 (29%)	5,794

As above in chart form:



AGE PROFILE OF COUNCIL STAFF

A detailed profile of the Council's age profile can be found in **Appendix 1**. This information is important as it provides a robust basis for the Council's workforce planning activities. To enable us to ensure that the necessary knowledge, skills and experience are available within the Council's workforce, it is important that we have an understanding of colleagues' long-term plans; who is considering retirement over the coming months and years and what risks might there be in terms of service delivery as a result? This type of information and discussions within teams enables departments to proactively plan and develop their workforce to address such risks.

For several years, it has been reported that the age profile pattern for staff shows that the majority of the workforce is over the age of 40, and that this poses a risk in terms of retention of knowledge, skills and experiences. The figures were consistent again for 2025/26, with 66% over the age of 40 and 42% over the age of 50.

This is not a problem in itself. In fact, this profile means that the Council has a workforce that has extensive experience of valuable knowledge, skills and understanding. However, it also underlines the importance of effective workforce planning to ensure that essential

knowledge and skills are passed on before experienced members of staff leave the organisation.

This is not only a significant challenge for us as an employer, but also for local government and the wider public sector. This is why, for instance, there are national efforts in the field of social care to improve the image of some aspects, and also why discussions are taking place at a Welsh level about whether consideration should be given to reconciling social workers' pay and terms of employment across Wales.

These are significant and complex steps, but due to the scale of the challenge facing employers, we must consider all options when looking ahead to the challenging years ahead. This is all long-term work, but it is key to the continuity and effectiveness of future services. One example of this is the continued emphasis on investing in apprenticeship schemes, professional trainees and in-house staff development to ensure a supply of talent for the future.

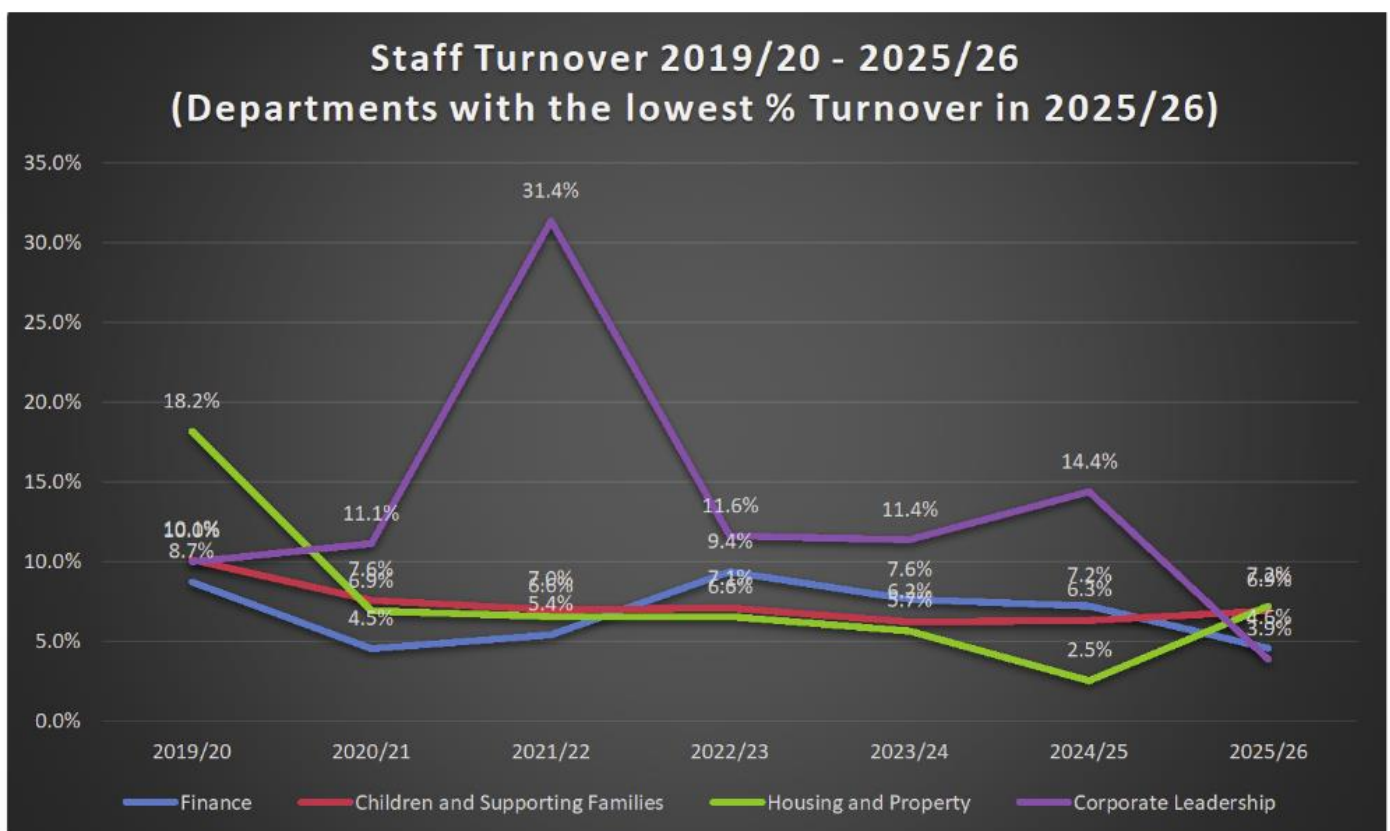
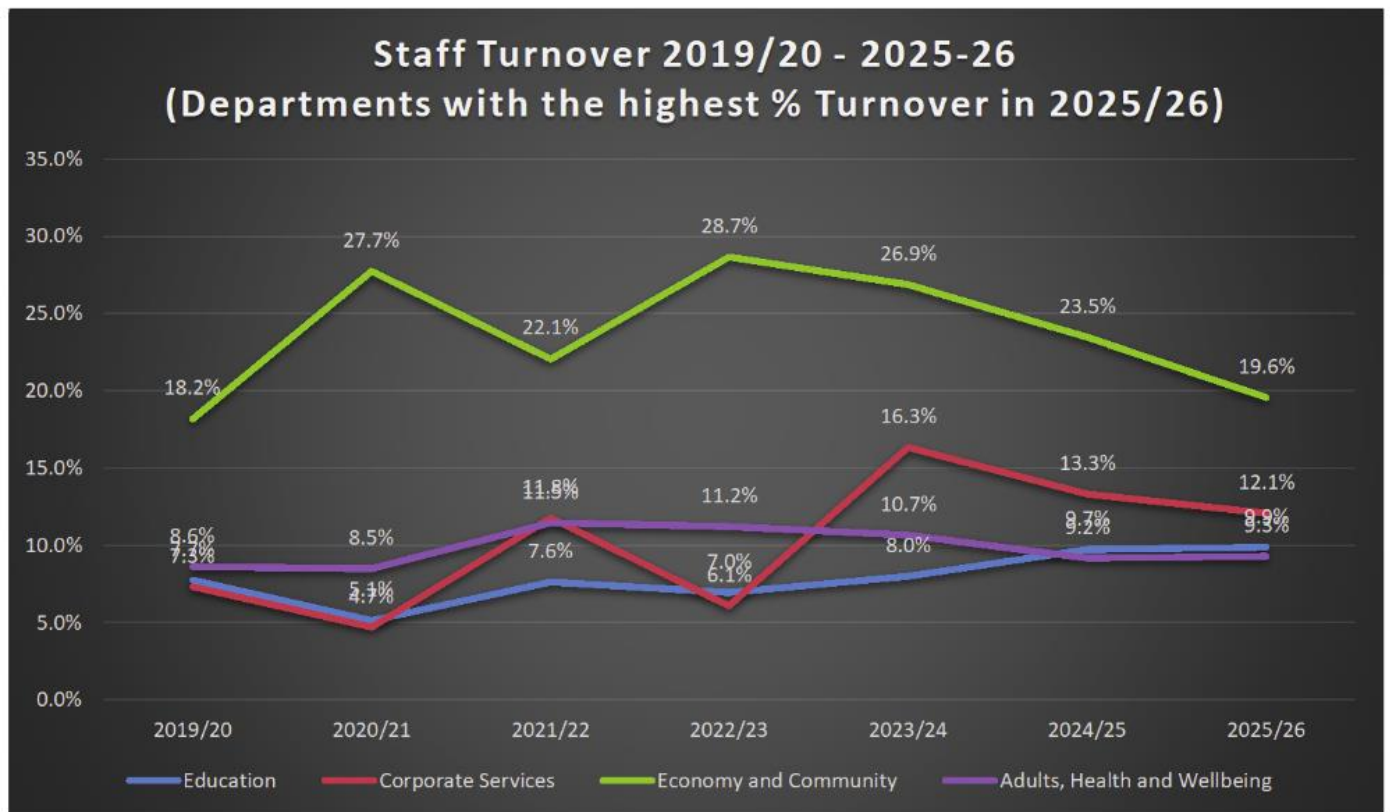
STAFF TURNOVER

The staff turnover rate of 9.3% remains high compared to some previous years but has decreased somewhat during 2025/26 compared to 2024/25 (9.9%), a slight change to the trend of a gradual increase seen over previous years. This possibly suggests some stabilisation.

The annual levels since 2020/21 are:

2020/21	6.8%
2021/22	8.5%
2022/23	8.1%
2023/24	8.9%
2024/25	9.9%
2025/26	9.3%

Graph of some Departmental patterns vs the Council's total (Departments with highest and lowest turnover percentages in 2025/26)



The situation also varies across Council departments. Turnover was highest this year in the Economy and Community (19.6%), Corporate Services (12.1%), Education (9.9%) and Adult, Health and Well-being (9.3%) departments, with those percentages being slightly above the Council average.

There is a link between the level of turnover in the Economy and Community department and the method of funding a significant number of employment contracts there; a number of staff work on contracts which are grant-funded from outside Cyngor Gwynedd. Such

working arrangements can lead to significant uncertainty for staff, for instance it can be an obstacle to purchasing a property. Although grants are often renewed annually (leading to extending employment for another year), such decisions often reach the Council very late in the day, leading to great uncertainty for the affected staff.

During 2025/26, turnover was at its lowest level in the Corporate Leadership (3.9%), Finance (4.6%), Children and Supporting Families (6.9%) and Housing and Property (7.2%) departments.

As noted in previous years, staff turnover can be a natural and healthy aspect within an organisation. There is no need to be excessively concerned about a situation where there is no consistent pattern and reasons for leaving; it must be respected that staff wish to take advantage of opportunities to develop and move onwards.

It is possible to delve further into these high-level statistics to better understand the reasons for high and low turnover rates, and to see whether it is possible to learn from any particular factor. This type of information, along with analysis from the staff survey, can provide guidance to heads of departments on how to try to influence turnover levels.

SICKNESS ABSENCES

The level of sickness absences has increased slightly during the year 2025/26. Below is a straightforward table showing the level of sickness in the Council over the last three years, shown as the average number of days of sickness absence per head over the year in question.

2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
10.29	12.94	13.01

While this is a relatively small increase compared to the previous year, the level remains higher than over previous years. The situation therefore remains a corporate priority.

One possible contributing factor towards this trend is the introduction of an improvement to the sickness recording system by services across the Council in 2024/25, with a new computer module for managers on the Council's Self-Service system enabling them to record conversations with staff. The system also guides managers through the sickness absence management policy and procedures. From the data we have, we believe that the introduction of this system has led to an improvement in the standard of recording; it was a significant step forward from the old paper-based arrangements that had existed for many years. There has also been a significant and ongoing effort by departments and a number of support services to deal with sickness absences within services.

Additional support is available through the Occupational Health Service which offers a range of specialist support and advice to staff and managers. Individual case review arrangements are in place with some specific departments experiencing high levels of sickness absences. There is also support for the management of individual cases through capability panel arrangements, with an emphasis on supporting staff to improve their health and return to work.

However, one challenge with the above work programme is to ensure consistency of approach across all Council services. Managers must possess specific skills to deal with sickness absences in a way that is compassionate while also having to take difficult decisions when it is necessary to do so. Advice is available to managers in such situations, but of course as levels of sickness increase the demand for that advice also increases.

Here is a breakdown of the sickness absences showing long-term and short-term sickness. Long-term sickness is defined as 28 or more consecutive days of illness.

Long-term/ Short-Term

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2 2	2022/23	2023/2 4	2024/2 5	2025/2 6
Long-term	62%	71%	57%	53%	51%	56%	62%
Short-term	38%	29%	43%	47%	49%	44%	38%

Note - Definition of long-term is "28 or more consecutive calendar days."

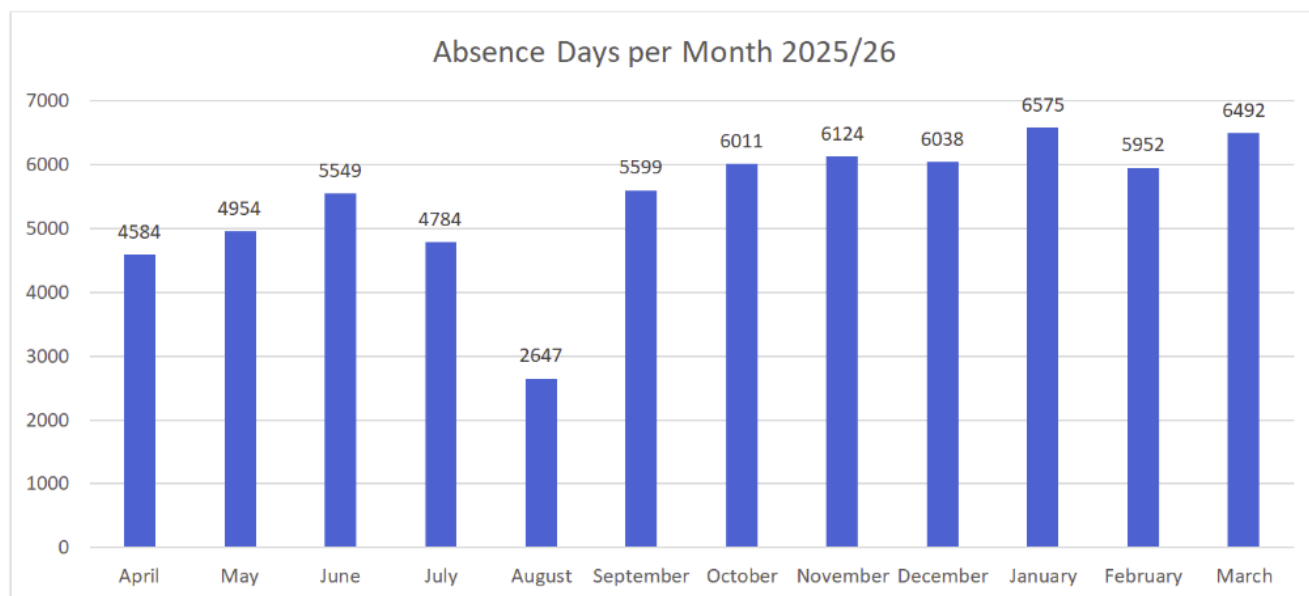
For a meaningful analysis, the Long-term/Short-term figures are calculated at the end of a year. This is because, while we have improved our indicator reporting time to be monthly, it means that some cases are initially reported as short-term, before they extend further than the snapshot month and become long-term.

A change can be seen in the percentage of long-term and short-term sickness during 2025/26 compared to previous years, with the percentage of long-term absence continuing to increase (6% higher than 2024/25). Again, this can be linked to an improvement in recording, but the context must also be considered. Sickness levels are increasing across different sectors of the economy. We also know, from the individual cases we deal with, that health service problems affect our sickness levels; many staff are on waiting lists for treatment and there is no doubt that this has an impact on our long-term sickness levels.

Of all staff employed by the Council in 2025/26, 52% were absent with a period(s) of sickness absence. This means that 48% of Council staff took no sickness absence. 45% of Council staff took no sickness absence in 2024/25, so there was a 3% increase this year.

The following table shows the levels of sickness absences for each month over the past year, showing a very similar trend to previous years with illness peaking over the winter and at its lowest over the summer.

Absence Days Pattern per Month

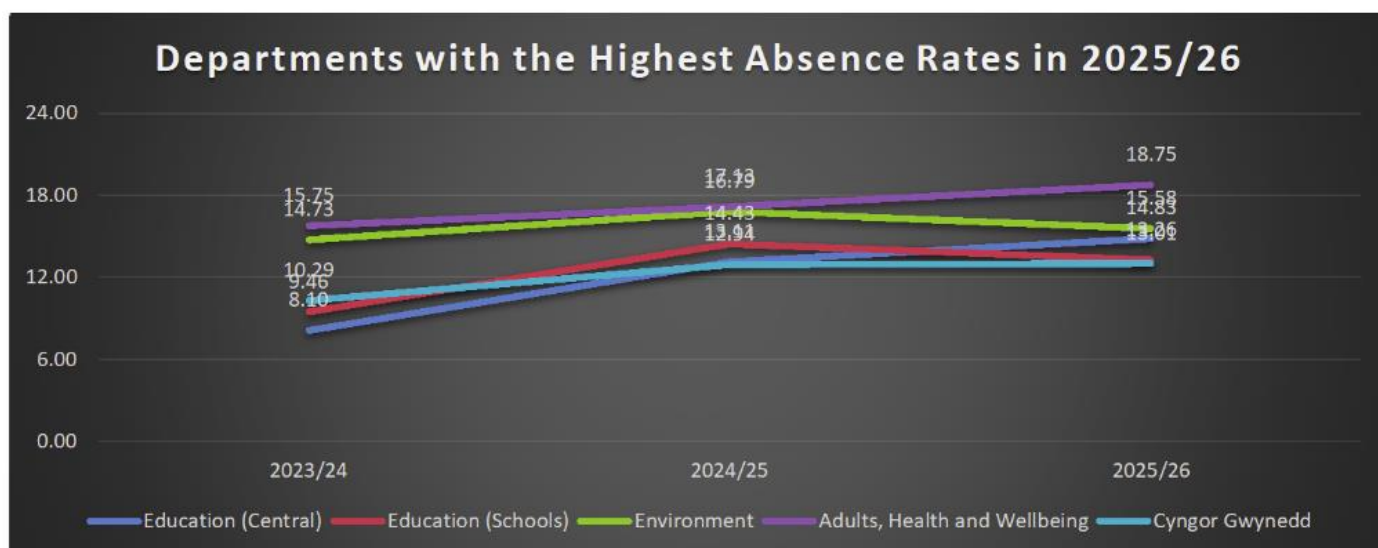


By Department

The following graph shows the average number of days per head lost to sickness within Council departments during the year.

The sickness level was **highest** in 2025/26 in the Adults, Health and Well-being department (18.75 days), Environment department (15.78 days), Education – Central (14.83 days) and Education – Schools (13.26 days).

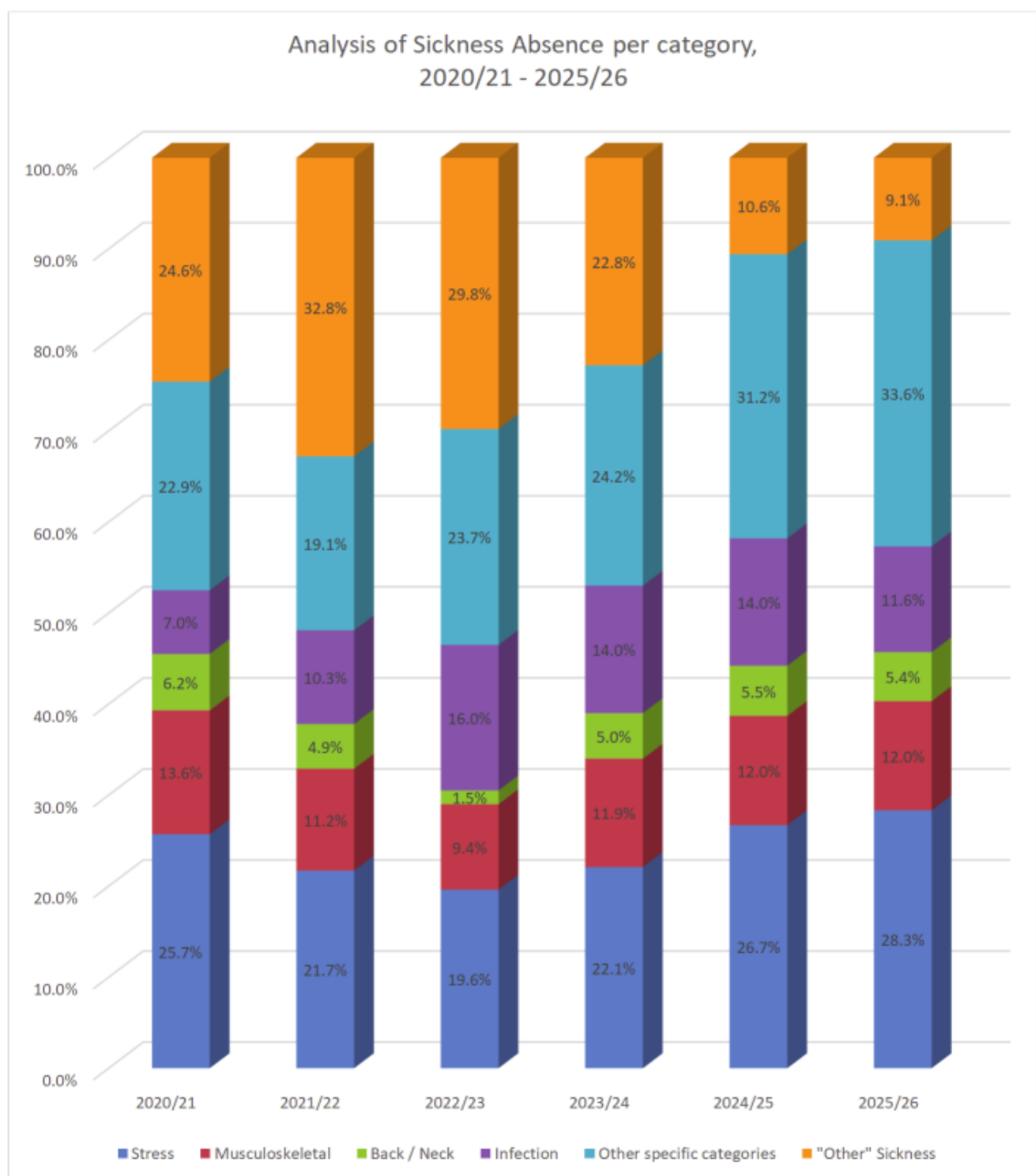
The sickness level was **lowest** in 2025/26 in the Corporate Leadership Team (6.21 days), Economy and Community department (6.91 days), Finance department (7.14 days) and Housing and Property department (9.70 days).



Sickness by category

The following chart analyses the type of illness that has been recorded for absences over the past five years.

Sickness absence breakdown by category each year to 2025/26



The level of the "Other Sickness" category has fallen further this year (-1.5%), suggesting that efforts to improve the quality of recording and analysis of sickness information continue to have a positive impact with the system, meaning that there are now more options available for staff to record the condition. On the other hand, it can be seen that stress levels continue to increase and contribute towards 28.3% of all absences (+1.6%), which is obviously worrying.

However, despite the higher levels of stress, having accurate recording is one positive step forward to enable us to identify the problem. While the information in this report focuses on providing a very high-level analysis, at a whole Council and departmental level, we use

more detailed data with specific departments when trying to resolve particular situations within their services.

PAY STRUCTURE

The Council's Pay Policy for 2025/26 was approved by the full Council in accordance with statutory requirements. The policy sets out the Council's pay arrangements, including the relationship between the salaries of the wider workforce and the salaries of senior managers.

As part of the national arrangements, the salaries of the vast majority of staff continue to be determined through local government national pay agreements. The Council continues to implement any relevant nationally agreed pay agreements, ensuring that staff are paid accurately and on time in accordance with their terms and conditions of service. The agreement for 2025/26 entailed a 3.20% increase on each pay point on the pay structure.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENTS

Please see the following statistics on the number of vacancies advertised by the Council in the last five years, the number of applications received and also the number of vacancies re-advertised. Analysing these details again contributes to our ability to identify areas in which the Council needs to focus its attention in relation to developing expertise and planning the future workforce, e.g. increasing our understanding to help with succession planning, identifying relevant Yfory / apprenticeship schemes, secondment opportunities etc.

Year	Number of posts advertised	Number of applications	Number of posts re-advertised	Number of applications following the second advertisement
2018 / 2019	555	3281	57	240
2019 / 2020	586	2726	101	249
2020 / 2021	486	2112	77	227
2021 / 2022	515	2394	114	369
2022 / 2023*	1054	3402	259	315
2023 / 2024	848	3608	195	471
2024 / 2025	855	3038	163	254
2025 / 2026	946	4386	180	322

***Please note that the figures from 2022/23 onwards include posts within our schools, which explains the difference in numbers compared to previous years.**

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

We have for years prided ourselves on the constructive relationship that exists between the unions locally and ourselves as officers. The emphasis is on trying to work together to ensure a smooth relationship between management and staff, and there is certainly effective collaboration between us.

That said, it must be recognised that there are difficult situations to be discussed at times, but we believe that there is a mutual appreciation of the complexity that exists in the relationship between staff and the employer, and therefore there is a genuine desire to work together for the benefit of everyone who works for the organisation. The relationship is nurtured through regular contact and discussions between us as officers and union officials, with the ultimate intention of trying to resolve employment issues before situations deteriorate to such an extent that the working relationship between individuals breaks down.

We usually meet as a Liaison Group on a monthly basis, and there is also an arrangement to meet the union officers individually each month, in order to try to resolve any situations that are unique to that union. There is also a strong link between the union officials and the management teams of some individual departments, although there remains scope to develop this further.

Our efforts have been strengthened this year to work on the basis of a Social Partnership, which means consulting and collaborating with the unions on key and strategic issues. Meetings were held between Chief Officers within the Council, including the Chief Executive and Directors, and the Unions to discuss some of the main issues affecting the authority, for example the Council Plan and the Budget. There is now a programme of meetings in place twice a year, or as required, to nurture this relationship and meet the Welsh Government's aspirations in line with the Social Partnership Duty Act.

In addition to the above, we continue to secure funding to enable us to support the unions by releasing staff to undertake union activities. This gives greater certainty that staff can be released from their posts to take up their roles with the unions.

However, it is inevitable that Council managers must sometimes deal with difficult individual cases, and the Human Resources Service officers have a key role in advising and providing guidance on such situations. The following summarises the number of formal cases that Council managers and team officers have been involved in over the past year. The above figures also include staff in our schools.

Individual cases 2025/26

Disciplinary investigations	148
Complaints	19
Compulsory and voluntary redundancies	22

The figures continue to show an increase in cases this year compared with last year, with 148 new disciplinary investigations (117 – 2024/25) and 19 complaints (15 – 2024/25). There is no obvious pattern to these cases, but there is no doubt that such situations can be difficult for everyone involved, including staff involved in the cases, the managers who carry out investigations and the human resources service who provide advice and support.

There is a regular review of the circumstances behind these cases and reflection on whether there are ways to improve or to resolve cases earlier.

TUC WELSH LANGUAGE CHARTER

During 2025/26, Cyngor Gwynedd reinforced its position as a leading organisation in fostering a culture that places the Welsh language at the heart of its work, as it was the first workplace in Wales to sign and adopt Twf – The Welsh Language at Work Charter.

Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet resolved in December 2025 to proceed with the adoption of the charter, with a special event held in the Cyngor Gwynedd Chamber afterwards to celebrate the signing of the charter with representatives of the TUC, Unison, GMB and Unite unions as well as Lowri Williams, Strategic Director of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

TUC Cymru has developed and adopted the Twf Charter to help workers, their trade union branches and employers to work together to create bilingual workplaces. There is also a specific emphasis on ensuring an increase in the use of the Welsh language at work and that workers have access to representation by trade unions in their chosen language.

By agreeing to adopt and sign the charter, the trade unions and Cyngor Gwynedd as an employer commit to work together on the basis of four core principles, namely:

- Growth and Welsh Language rights – a commitment to growing the Welsh language in the workplace.
- Inclusion and linguistic justice – creating a work culture that is supportive of the use of Welsh.
- Leadership and accountability – embedding a visible and inclusive bilingual ethos and culture.
- Continuous learning and confidence building – providing ongoing support for staff to learn and improve their Welsh language skills.

Promoting and supporting the use of the Welsh language by staff – and ensuring that all services are available through the medium of Welsh – has been one of the Council's priorities since its inception. This is reflected in the Council's Plan, in the authority's language policy and in the fact that 99.1% of the Council's staff possess Welsh language skills.

STAFF EQUALITY FORUM

One of our main priorities for the first year of the Equality Plan was to gain an understanding of staff perspectives and receive their feedback in relation to equality matters by establishing a Staff Equality Forum. During 2025/26 several meetings were held and the group meets each quarter. By bringing together a cross-section of staff from different departments, the forum provides a valuable opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of the workforce. The agenda is steered by the members themselves, with discussions during the year including workforce planning, consultation on employment policies and wider issues affecting staff experience in the workplace. Since establishing this group, further developments have been made in this area, and another staff forum, namely the minority ethnic forum, has now been formally established.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS REVIEW

Further to the work involved with being a leading employer, we continue to take steps to fully develop the awareness of managers and staff of the working conditions, including equality, inclusion etc. As part of this a revised Whistleblowing Policy has been adopted by the Council this year which also includes sexual harassment as a basis for reporting through whistleblowing. This ensures that serious concerns about malpractice can be shared in a safe and confidential manner, while promoting transparency and accountability. It also gives individuals legal protection in accordance with the Employment Rights Act (2025).

APPRENTICE AND GRADUATE TRAINEE SCHEMES

These schemes are an important element of attracting and developing future talent as part of the Council's wider workforce planning efforts. Here are the statistics for the past year:

Overview

- The plans are going from strength to strength. 2026 has been the most successful year so far.
- Up to 29 posts have been filled (currently 24)
- We have received 375 applications for posts this year (an increase of 120% from 2025). This follows a successful comprehensive marketing and engagement plan.
- In addition to this, 16 individuals have been added to the talent pool. The talent pool has been established to keep track of candidates who have participated in the recruitment process and have shone but have not been successful.

Apprenticeship Scheme:

- The Scheme has provided an opportunity for 104 apprentices since its launch
- 21 new apprentices have been appointed for this year, in the areas of Finance, Civil Engineering, Digital, Business, Electrical, Footpaths and access, and arboriculture among others.
- Over 50% of appointments are women and many are in technical fields.
- Over 80% of the apprentices who have started are between 16 and 20 years old.

Cynllun Yfory (Council Graduate Scheme):

- Since 2017, the Council has appointed 52 professional trainees, with over 95% of trainees having been offered a job at the end.
- 8 new professional trainees have been appointed in the areas of Finance and Accounting, land maintenance, Health, Safety and Well-being, Marketing, and Engineering to name but a few.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL SYSTEM

A new human resources and payroll system will be introduced to the Council over the coming months. That need has arisen as the current payroll system will come to an end in winter 2026. From a data perspective on HR issues, this development is exciting and will be a major step forward; these types of systems can offer features to facilitate the work of managers and

the supporting teams and means that we will be able to report to you on new information headings in due course. The project is ambitious in terms of timescales and is a significant priority for the next 12 months.

CONCLUSIONS

This report provides high-level information, but this type of information at a more detailed level is helpful to managers and advising officers when planning services and identifying promptly the issues that require further investigation and action.

The main messages are:

- A further reduction in the number of employed staff.
- The gender pattern of the workforce remains constant.
- A workforce with an age profile that highlights the importance of long-term workforce planning.
- A slight decrease in the staff turnover rate.
- Sickness absence levels remain high, especially long-term illness.
- Stress continues to be the leading cause of sickness absences

These factors will continue to inform the HR Service's priorities over the coming year. Reflecting on workforce data over the past period reinforces and informs future strategic decisions – about our services, our budgets and the capacity of our workforce to cope with future demands. The Service will focus on the following areas to try to address these:

1. **Workforce Planning:** Develop a strategic workforce plan to support succession planning, skills development and ensure that the Council has the necessary capacity and expertise to deliver services in the future.
2. **Integrated HR/Payroll System:** Support the successful implementation of the new system and take advantage of opportunities to improve processes, management information and data usage.
3. **Policies and Training:** Review employment policies and procedures in order to respond to legislative changes (e.g. Employment Rights Act) ensuring that managers receive the appropriate support and training to implement those changes consistently and effectively.
4. **Attendance, Health and Well-being:** Continue to develop arrangements that support positive attendance at work, with a particular focus on reducing long-term absences, supporting staff mental health and well-being, and ensuring that managers have the tools and confidence to manage cases effectively and sensitively.
5. **Equal Pay:** Move forward with work relating to equal pay and review job appraisal arrangements to ensure fairness and consistency.
6. **Social Partnership:** Further strengthen the constructive relationship with the trade unions and develop social partnership arrangements across the Council.
7. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**
Implement the relevant actions from the Equality Plan 2024-28, ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are embedded in all aspects of the service's work and the Council's employment decisions.

4. VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

The report contains useful information for dealing with the Council's employment and workforce development issues. The decision sought does not create a commitment for additional expenditure.

4.2 Monitoring Officer

The report provides an important overview of the staffing and employment situation in the Council. I have no further observations to add in relation to propriety.