

Executive Summary

The following bullet points summarise the key information contained in this report:

- a) Headcount at the end of the year 20/21 was 487 and FTE was 448.30, our budgeted FTE was 467.3
- b) Absence has increased from 8.62 FTE days per person to 9.52 FTE days per person. This is a 10.44% increase. Our Target is 8.5 days.
- c) For 2020/2021 the combined voluntary and non-voluntary turnover of staff was 10.04%, this is a slight increase of 0.33% on last year's 9.60%
- d) Recruitment advertising expenditure for the period was £30,105 which is £885 per head
- e) HR completed 4 disciplinary investigations 2 went to formal proceedings
- f) HR dealt with 4 grievances
- g) 452 people received training on 24 different subjects over 61 sessions
- h) The average age of the workforce is 48

Key people data report for 2020/2021

Human Resources

1 Introduction

This report has been produced annually for a number of years with the aim of providing important workforce management information and analysis to the Strategic Management Team and to Councillors.

2 Headcount and full time equivalent numbers

As at March 31st 2021 the headcount was 487 and the full time equivalent was 448.30. Budgeted FTE for 2020/21 was 467.3

In 2020, the headcount was 511 and the full time equivalent was 464.33

In 2019, the headcount was 496 and the full time equivalent was 449.29

In 2018, the headcount was 499 and the full time equivalent was 452.29

In 2017, the headcount was 505 and the full time equivalent was 455.09

3. Turnover and voluntary turnover

For 2020/2021 the combined voluntary and non-voluntary turnover of staff was 10.04%, this is a slight increase of 0.33% on last year's 9.60%

Voluntary turnover has reduced to 6.97% this year compared to the previous year of 7.30%.

Non-voluntary turnover includes dismissals, ill health retirement, death in service, redundancy and end of fixed term contracts. For 2020/2021 non voluntary turnover was 3.07% and is an increase on the previous year's 2.30%

We anticipated our voluntary turnover would be relatively low this year due to uncertainty of the economic climate as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, however overall our combined turnover rate has not changed significantly and has stabilised as predicted since our relocation to Blackdown House from Sidmouth.

In the last 4 years, the following areas had the following voluntary leavers (This excludes internal movements/transfers) Housing, Health and Environment has maintained similar level of leavers to previous years and the outcome is proportionate

to the number of employees within the service. Organisational Development which includes Communication has had 2 leavers for first time since 2016.

Service	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Chief Executives & Support	0	1	0	2
Organisational Development	2	0	0	0
Legal, Licensing & democratic Services	0	0	4	2
Housing, Health & Environment	26	25	37	23
Growth, Development & Prosperity	0			
Development, Regeneration and Partnership	2	5	8	8
Finance	3	4	9	8
Total	33	35	58	47

4 Dismissals (including redundancy dismissals)

In 2020/21 there were 14 dismissals which is the same as the previous year.

3 employees were made redundant, 7 dismissals as a result of their fixed term contract ending, 1 dismissal under ill health retirement and 3 dismissals as a result of long term absence.

5. Leavers within first 9 months

According to ACAS employing the wrong candidate can cost an organisation at least £30k in hidden costs from lost productivity through induction and getting the person up to speed, HR and management time dealing with the issue and recruitment costs of hiring and replacing.

In the last financial year we had 4 employees who left the Council inside 9 months of starting - this is an estimated 120K. These leavers were from the following areas and for the following reasons:

Streetscene	1	Dismissed for Misconduct
Property & Asset Management	1	Career move
Countryside and Leisure	2	Permanent job offer, relocation.

This is an improvement compared to the previous year 2019/20 where there were 8 leavers in the year.

6. Disciplinary action (excluding absence warnings)

In 2020/2021 there were 2 disciplinary actions as a result of employee conduct falling below Council expectation. A further two disciplinary investigations were completed and although the investigations recommended a formal disciplinary meeting should take place, both employees made the decision to resign before this stage of the process.

7. Grievances

In 2020/21 we received 4 formal grievances.

We aim where possible to resolve grievances informally and through mediation, however, it is for the individual to decide whether they wish to take a formal or informal approach in the first instance. The impact of grievances on the individuals involved cannot be underestimated in terms of damage to confidence and relationships but also the cost to the organisation in time required to investigate and deal with the issue, as well as the impact on teams of resulting absence. These are the hidden costs which impact on morale and lead to feelings of discontent which can spread quickly through the organisation, it is therefore important to seek an early resolution to any employee grievance and to protect the organisation from legal claims.

8 Absence

Absence has increased from 8.62 FTE days per person to 9.52 FTE days per person. This is a 10.44% increase. This is our 2nd highest absence outcome per FTE in the last 5 years of reporting and 6th highest in our history of 15 years reporting. This increase is hardly surprising and is a trend which has followed organisations nationally given the knock on effects of a global pandemic. The main reason for the increase is long term absence.

The top 3 main reasons for absence are:

1. Stress, Anxiety and Fatigue (Personal) (1072 days)
2. Stress, Anxiety and Fatigue (Work Related) (588 days)
3. Hospital Treatment (445 days)

Summary overview of absence for 2020/21

- Overall the number of days lost across the organisation increased by 469 days to 4388 days compared to 3919 last year.
- 35 employees had absence as a result of personal stress, anxiety and fatigue ranging from 0.5 days absence to the most significant 227.5 days
- Last year 324 employees had at least one episode of absence, this year it has reduced by 85 to 239 employees.
- Of the 239 employees who had absence this year, 80 people had more than 1 episode this is a 58.76% reduction compared to last year.
- 49% of the workforce had no sickness absence this year
- 70 employees exceeded 9 days or more absence compared to last year which was 38
- 25 employees had absence for longer than 2 months compared to last year where there were 12.
- 115 days were lost by employees citing Covid-19 as a reason based on an average salary this has cost the council in the region of 12k. This figure could have been higher if we had not swiftly implemented working from home which enables some individuals to continue working whilst self-isolating.

- The average length of absence was in the region of 6.48 days
- Women (126) had more absence than men (113) this year losing 2330 days compared to men 2058 days. The organisation is split equally between men and women.
- Work related stress/ depression increased this year by 313 days and resulted in 588 days absence which is a 144.2% increase. The cost to the organisation is circa £61k based on an average salary.

Further analysis is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

9. Learning and development

We have had to cancel face to face training as a result of social distancing measures and the requirement to stay at home due to Covid-19. As a result we have modified our approach to delivering training through tools such as zoom or skype. Training has either been compressed to fit into half a day or has been over several days to avoid screen fatigue which would only serve to reduce the effectiveness of the training. We have within budget organised training around themes which emerged during lockdown such as resilience, working from home, mindfulness as well as training up Mental Health First aiders and focussing on mental health awareness.

We have organised and delivered 61 training events on 24 different subjects to 452 attendees.

- Resilience
- Working from home Maintaining your Focus
- An Introduction to Mindfulness
- Mental Health Awareness and remote working
- NLP for effective telephone communication
- Emotional Intelligence - an Introduction
- Emotional Intelligence - an Introduction follow-on
- Giving Feedback
- Appraisal Conversations for PERS
- Managing Virtual Teams
- Thinking Differently

- Choosing your State and Energy
- Planning for Post Lockdown
- Time Management
- Delivering Engaging Presentations
- Effective Meetings
- Dealing with Difficult Phone Calls
- Minute Taking
- Writing in Plain English
- Welcome Morning
- Pre-retirement course
- Asbestos compliance courses
- Mental Health First Aider Course
- Mental Health Awareness for Managers - Asking those difficult questions

E-learning is now firmly bedded in as a valuable learning and development resource and the number of employees engaging with e-learning has increased significantly by **26.7% over the last 2 years**. We have 361 users, 1192 courses are covered and 1551 lessons were activated.

10. Recruitment

We continue to operate a Service Level Agreement with Devon County Council so that we can use their advertising agency. This enables us to use DCC's leverage in terms of negotiating prices for advertisements and saves considerable officer time at EDDC as there is no requirement to go through lengthy tendering and procurement procedures.

In 2018/19 we spent £52,708 on recruitment advertising, 2019/20 this decreased to by 37.55% to £32,917, and this year 2020/21 it has decreased further by 8.5% to £30,105 this correlates with the decrease in turnover but also at the start of lockdown we temporarily ceased recruitment.

We recruited 34 new starters and therefore the cost per head of recruitment was £834

We use public sector sites and local online advertising, as well as our own careers page. We write our own adverts to cut down costs. We have not been able to attend any job fairs this year as we would have pre pandemic but continue to look at ways in which we can creatively recruit. This new financial year we have engaged with the government's kick-start scheme, a scheme aimed at employing claimants of universal credit in the 16-24 age bracket for 6 months in order to help re-establish themselves in the employment market.

We also have a referral scheme for employees to recommend a friend, this last year 1 employee was recommended and subsequently recruited.

11. Apprenticeship training and apprentices

In the last financial year we have not recruited any new apprentices to the organisation although we are still supporting some apprentices which were recruited in 2019/20. We have also supported the further development of existing employees who are wanting to progress within their career, this fits with our strategy of growing our own and succession planning where we are at risk of losing specific skills due to desires to retire.

In the last financial year we have been supporting the following apprenticeships which are either 1 or 2 years in duration.

- **1 x Level 4 Accountant - Finance**
- **1 x Construction Level 4 – Project Engineering**
- **1x Level 3 Business Administration- Customer Services**
- **2 x level 3 Town Planning - Planning**

- **2 x Revenues and Welfare Practitioner Level 4**
- **1 X Arborist – Level 2**
- **1 x Horticulture Level 3**
- **2 x Chartered Town Planner Degree - Level 7**

We have been working with the following education providers who have delivered excellent training to our apprentices, CIPFA, Exeter College, Bicton College, Education Training and Skills, University of West of England, Plymouth University Institute of Revenues and Valuations, and Bridgewater and Taunton College.

Apprenticeship training is paid for through the apprenticeship levy fund.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 just over £58K was transferred to our levy account to spend on Apprenticeship training, this includes the 10% top up the Council is given from the government. From this 58K we have spent just over £38K. Our projected spending for next year is around £25k. We continue to encourage managers to review their vacancies and assess their suitability for apprenticeship and to develop existing staff through the apprenticeship scheme to encourage better succession planning and skills development within the Council. We have already agreed to an existing apprentice continuing her development with us as we are keen to retain them with a Masters Level qualification to start in September.

12. Preferred supplier savings for temporary staff

Reasons for using recruitment agencies range from recruitment difficulties, absence cover and short term need due to increase in operational demand.

We have for some years used “Temp Solutions” which is Devon County Council’s in house preferred supplier which provides administrative and clerical roles. This enables EDDC to take advantage of lower agency commission rates negotiated by Devon County.

Up until the end of last year we also used Comensura for the supply of seasonal StreetScene Staff, again with a lower agency fee than if we did not have this agreement. It was apparent from our 2019/2020 agency spend and from Manager feedback that it was becoming increasingly harder for Devon County to fulfil some of our more difficult niche roles and subsequently we have extended our agreement with Comensura beyond just StreetScene placements to assistance in all council areas where required. This has proved fruitful and we have seen a significant saving in overall spend of £136,934 in 20/21 down from £483,474 in 19/20 to £346,540 in 202/21

13. Work experience and student placements

In previous years we have worked in partnership with local schools and Exeter University to provide meaningful work experience opportunities for students. This year we have been unable to offer such opportunities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and requirement to stay home. We hope that in the following years to come we will be able to resume this offering to students in the East Devon community as it is an excellent opportunity to see the wide and varied work which is carried out by the Council and its employees and to understand the different career possibilities that local government can offer.

14. Organisation profile

The average age of an employee at East Devon District Council is 48. 222 employees are between the age of 41 and 55 years of age. 12 employees are working beyond the age of 65. The oldest employee is 76, the youngest is 20. We have 5 employees aged 70 and over.

Age Group	No. of Employees	% of work force
25 and under	18	3.69%
26 to 40	100	20.53%
41 to 55	222	45.58%
56 to 65	135	27.72%
>65	12	2.46%

Average Age	48
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75.35% (367 employees) of our workforce are full time employees working 37 hours per week. The rest of the organisation 24.64% is made up of part time employees. We have on record 69 different working arrangements which reflects the flexible working environment offered.

Appendix 1 – Sickness Absence 2020/2021

The graph below illustrates that the number of days lost per person has increased by 10.44 % from 8.62 days per person to 9.52 days per person which has exceeded our target of 8.5 days. Whilst this is an increase it is important to put this into the context of people living through one of the most difficult periods in our history and despite this we have had worse outcomes in previous years where there has been no pandemic. The overall increase is a direct result of the number of long term absences increasing this year due to Stress, Anxiety and Fatigue (Personal).

There have also been other factors which have likely had a negative impact on absence levels as previously highlighted in the [Scrutiny Committee report](#) provided by the Chief Executive in March. The report highlighted themes of member behaviour adversely affecting staff and absence analysis indicates this has resulted in some absences, regrettably this is not a theme we have seen before or had to cite in 16 years of reporting.

It should be acknowledged that staff, managers and HR have worked tirelessly this last year under the most difficult of circumstances and without their hard work to support staff through the most unprecedented period of our time, absence levels may have been a lot worse.

Table 1: Number of Days lost per FTE 2006 -2021

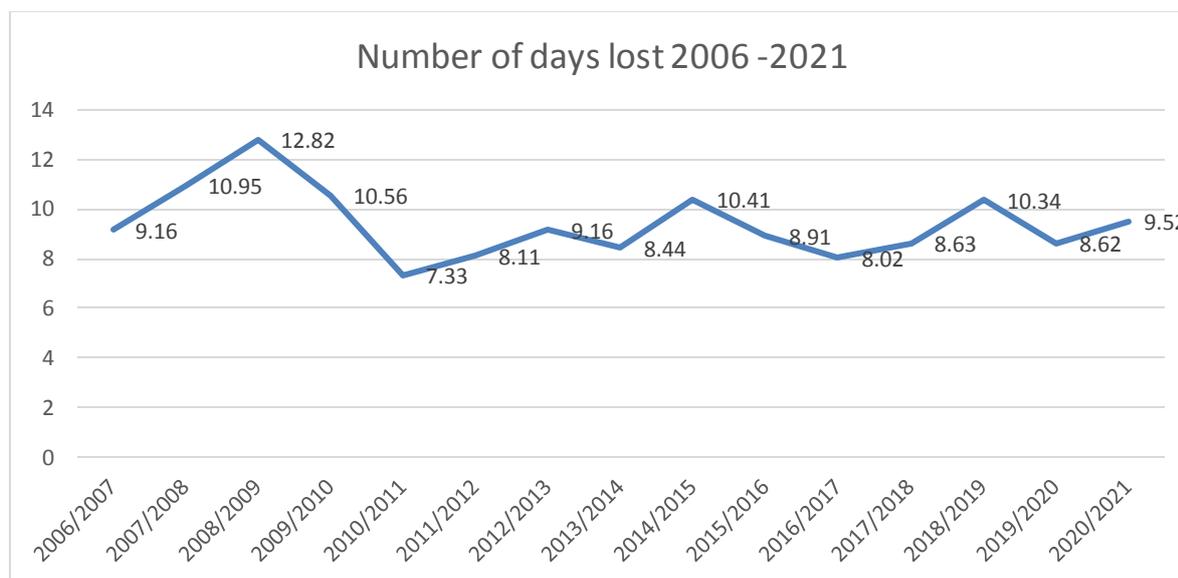
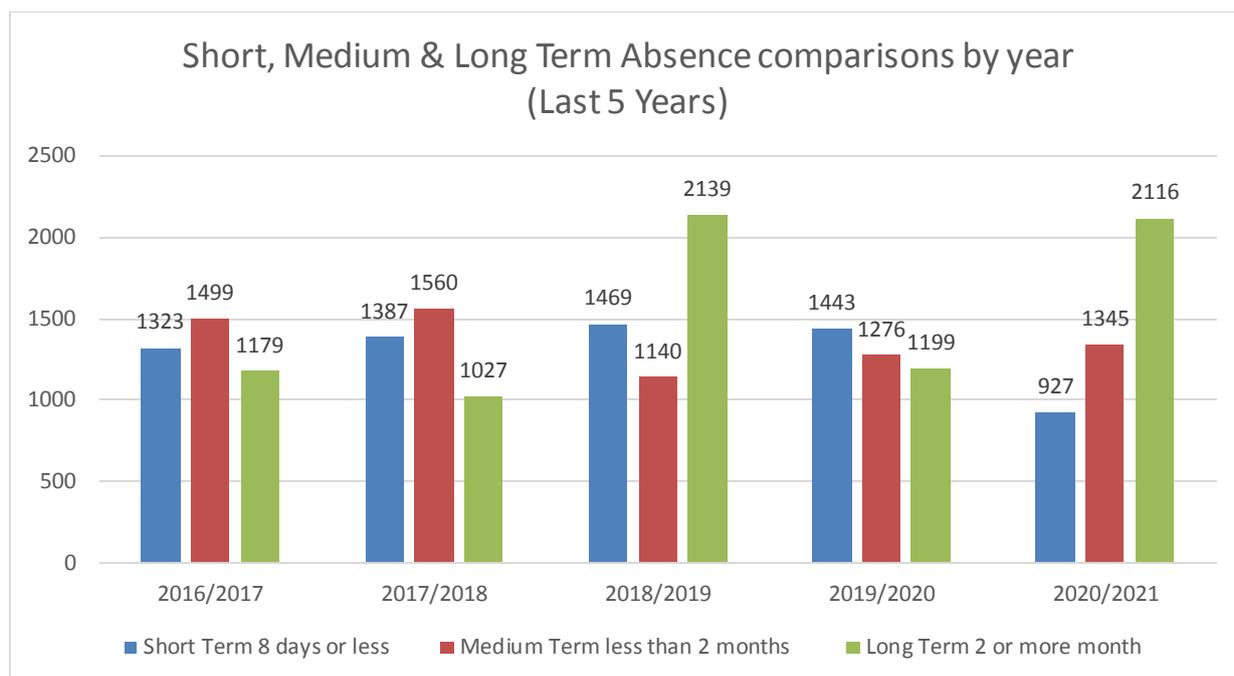


Table 2: Short, Medium & Long Term Absence Comparisons over a 5 year period



Short Term Absence (8 days or less) (927 days)

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the sickness absence data in a number of ways. While the virus and the impact of the virus itself may have led to additional sickness absence, measures such as furloughing, social distancing, shielding and increased homeworking appear to have helped reduce other causes of absence which would typically have featured in short term absence reasons.

Short term absence is any absence of 8 days or less. Short term absence has **reduced** by 35.75% to 927 short term days lost in total across the organisation. This is the lowest level ever reported.

The top 3 reasons for short term absence were;

1. Phased return to work (140 days)
2. Stomach, kidney, liver, digestion (103 days)
3. Cold & Flu (100 days)

Cold and flu is normally the most cited reason for short term absence, this deviation in trend is most likely as a result of hand, face, space, hygiene and less social mixing / working from home. Phased returns are a management tool to assist employees who have had periods of medium to long term absence return to work on a gradual basis, implementing phased return helps to facilitate a more successful return and reduces the likelihood of further absence.

Medium Term Absence (9 days or more but less than 2 months) (1345 days)

Medium term absence has increased slightly this year by 5.40% (69 days) compared to the same period last year. 70 employees had medium absence this year.

The top 3 reasons for Medium Term Absence were;

1. Stress, anxiety, Fatigue (personal) (525.5 days)
2. Stress, Anxiety, fatigue, (work related) (165 days)
3. Hospital Treatment / operation (142 days)

The most significant reason for medium absence which accounts for 525.5 days or 39% of all medium term absence was Stress, Anxiety and Fatigue (Personal).

187 days were lost by 5 employees who were feeling anxious or fatigued due to the knock on effects of the pandemic because of loneliness and isolation, home schooling and caring for elderly parents. 83 days were lost by 3 employees as a result of close family bereavement which was made harder to deal with due to Covid-19 restrictions on funerals and seemingly longer wait times for funeral services. Other reasons for absence included stress caused by family illness, new diagnosis of long term health condition, changes in personal circumstances and family problems.

4 employees lost 165 days combined as a result of work related absence. 1 employee was struggling to cope with the increased high work demands and quick change in requirements as a result of government initiatives to support businesses and residents during the pandemic. This employee has now returned to work following a phased return and support. 1 employee cited work related stress caused by member behaviour and finally 2 employees who have now since left the council were absent as a result of managing their poor performance.

Other significant reasons for medium term absence cited by employees was operations or hospital treatment for serious illnesses. In this last year we have had 11 employees who have had medium term absence because of this reason.

Long Term Absence (More than 2 months) (2116 days)

Long-term absence is usually defined as lasting at least 2 months or more and can be challenging to manage as the longer someone is off sick, the harder it can be for them to return.

The role of the line manager is vital in managing long-term absence, but other interventions which we commonly practice are also important. These include:

- Maintaining regular contact with the absent employee
- Return-to-work interviews that are supportive and discuss ongoing adjustments where needed.
- The role of occupational health services and proactive measures to support staff health and wellbeing.
- A supportive case management approach, for example involving HR, occupational health services and the individual's line manager.
- Risk assessment to help return to work after long-term absence.
- Changes to work patterns or environment, including flexible working or phased return.
- Return-to-work interviews.

There are five typical elements in the recovery and return-to-work process in order to ensure that return to work is successful:

- Keeping in contact with unwell employees, in a sensitive manner, to help prevent them feeling isolated.
- Planning and implementing workplace adjustments where necessary, in collaboration with the individual.
- Accessing professional advice and treatment.
- Planning and co-ordinating a return-to-work plan.
- Regular evaluation with the employee about how they are adjusting to being back at work.

24 employees lost 2116 days between them as a result of absences longer than 2 months. This represents 48.22% of the total days lost. This is a 76.48% **increase** compared to same period last year.

8 employees were absent as a result of serious/acute medical conditions requiring treatment and often a period of post-operative recovery.

Of the 24 cases, 2 employees lost 399 days combined. Both of these cases were awaiting surgery just as the pandemic started. Unfortunately the pandemic impacted on non-urgent surgery waiting times which resulted in prolonging their absence, both being unable to work whilst surgery was awaited. If just these 2 cases alone were not included in the absence figures this year our outcome would have been 8.65 days per person and on target.

7 employees had 616 days absence as a result of personal stress, anxiety and fatigue. Reasons for this varied from post-natal depression, family problems, health worries and 3 employees had anxiety related to lockdown.

A further 7 employees were absent as a result of work related stress which accounted for 513 days lost between them. 2 employees were facing performance/ disciplinary action and as a result were signed off by their GP. 2 employees in the same team were absent as a result of deterioration of cross departmental relationships which had impacted on them adversely, this has now been addressed. 2 employee's cited councillor behaviour as an underlying reason for their absence which resulted in 178 days between them and 1 employee has struggled with homeworking.

Of the 24 cases, 1 employee had more than one episode of long term absence and 10 employees are no longer with the organisation.

Covid - Absence

Sickness absence directly and clearly attributable to covid-19 was 115 days. There has also been the indirect effects on absence which are much harder to determine. We have identified at least a further 892 days which may not have occurred if it had not been for the pandemic as a result of the effects of isolation, bereavement, family

problems, home schooling children whilst trying to also work, and anxiety about family getting Covid-19 as well as delays to receiving surgical procedures.

As an organisation we have proactively taken steps to support employees through this unprecedented period of uncertainty and worry; for example we have;

- Trained and implemented Mental Health First aiders through Mental Health First Aid England.
- Implemented Stay Informed, Stay Connected, Stay Well a communications tool to promote wellbeing advice/ training, organisation information and news to prevent isolation and feelings of remoteness
- Introduced new topics to the training available to deal with Pandemic issues such as managing remote teams, resilience training, mindfulness, mental health awareness, working effectively at home etc.
- Produced a stay well resource full of information, advice and sources of help
- A dedicated covid-hub on the intranet signposting staff to sources of help and information.
- Flexibility around working hours to help support working parents who needed to home school their children.
- During height of pandemic weekly check in with employees required to self- isolate.

The graphs below illustrate the rise and falls of absence and personal stress related absence. Table 4 closely mirrors the implementation and easing of lockdowns.

Absence per month is relatively low until June where there is a small rise and a small peak around July when lockdown 1 restrictions started to ease, absence cases reduced slightly in August but follows an upward trend beginning in September where restrictions started to be imposed and once again people were prohibited from meeting more than 6 people. In November national restrictions started again and non-essential shops were closed and people were prohibited from meeting those not in a support bubble apart from 1 person to exercise with. In December the Tier system was introduced, initially East Devon was in Tier 2, but by 30 December we were into Tier 4 and on 6 January we were into a third national lockdown and people were once again told to “ Stay Home” on 8th March England began a phased, cautious, exit out of lockdown.

Table 3: Number of days lost per Month

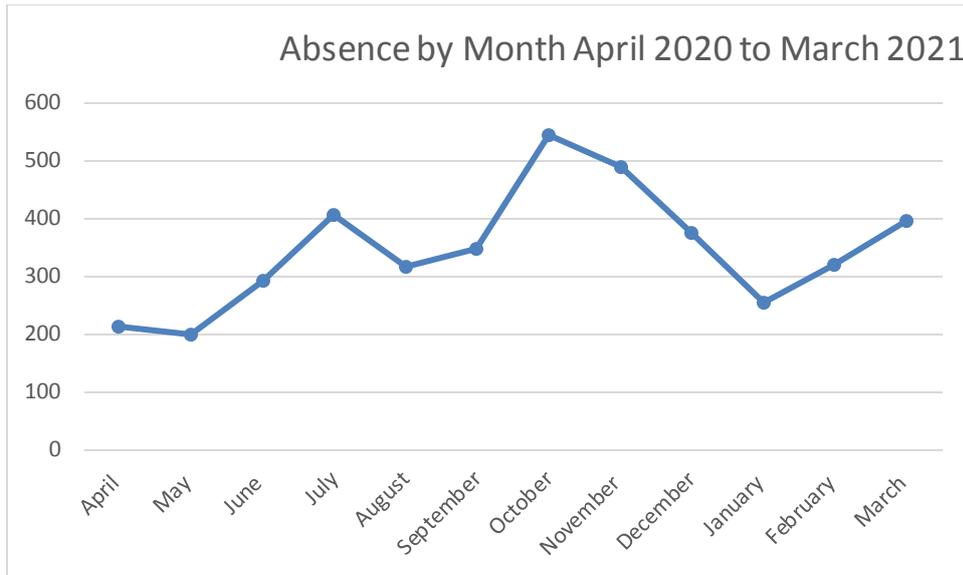


Table 4: Days lost due to Stress, Anxiety, Fatigue (Personal) by Month

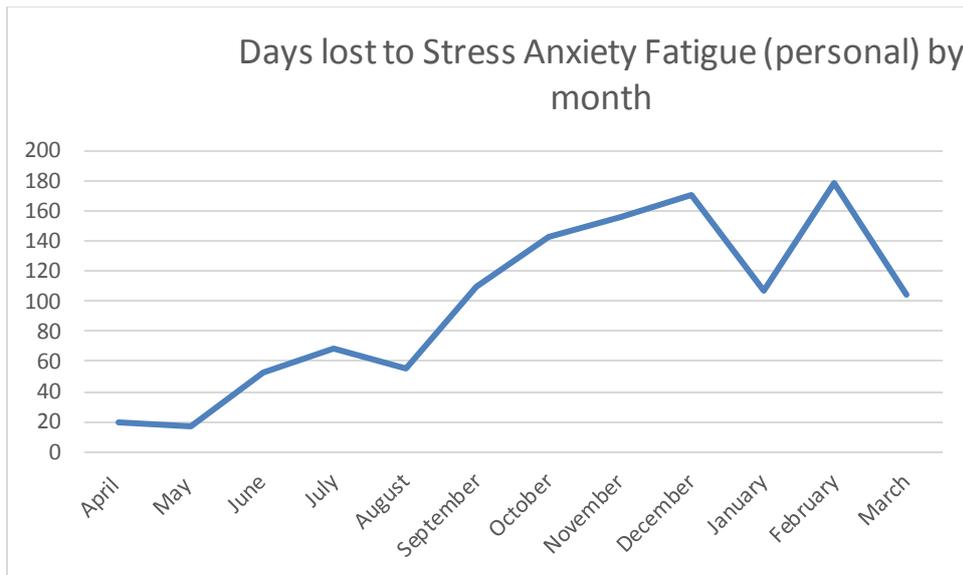


Table 5: Counselling Services

46 employees contacted the counselling services over the last year. Which is an annual utilisation of this service of 9.2% against a headcount of 497.

38 of the 46 calls were counselling calls. Partner was the most common reason, accounting for 23.7% of overall counselling engagement, this was followed by individual event 15.8% and anxiety 10.5%

h a Employee Assistance Programme: East Devon District Council
1 May 2020 - 30 April 2021

	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sep 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	Total	Total
Counselling	0	3	6	7	2	3	4	5	3	3	0	2	38	83%
Legal	0	0	0	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	17%
Overall	0	3	6	9	6	5	4	5	3	3	0	2	46	100%



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