

## Quarterly Workforce Report

September 2022

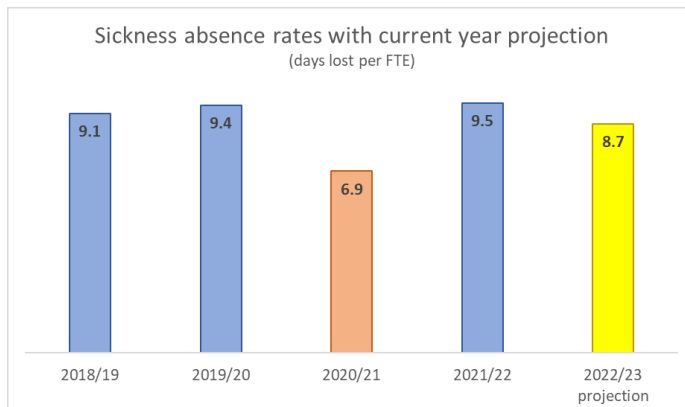


### Observations and Exceptions

Previous reports had been focussed primarily on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our workforce and service delivery. However with restrictions having been removed for some time, there are other topical challenges facing Wiltshire Council and our workforce that have surfaced. The current job market, central government leadership and policy instability, the cost of living and energy crises could all have an impact on Wiltshire Council and our staff. A cost of living working group has been established to monitor and measure the impact and explore what support we can provide our staff. Alongside this, Public Health experts are predicting flu and COVID variants to increase significantly this winter and the impact of this on our staff and service capacity will be something to closely monitor.

### **SICKNESS ABSENCE**

Sickness absence appears to have returned to a 'normal' pre-COVID level. Sickness rates in the first half of the current financial year (April 22 – September 22) are in line with pre-COVID trends and based on this, adjusting for a normal seasonal variance, we are projected to have a sickness rate broadly in line with pre-COVID rates, see the graph below.



Highlighted in orange is the financial year influenced significantly by COVID and the government and corporate restrictions on social contact. The projection for the current financial year is highlighted in yellow and is predicted to be very slightly lower than the 'normal' trend.

This projection, however, does not reflect expert opinion that flu and COVID cases will increase this winter<sup>1</sup>. Flu vaccine clinics have continued this year in County

Hall, Monkton Park and Five Rivers Leisure Centre, providing free vaccinations to staff or the ability to claim a free vaccine from either a boots or superdrug pharmacy. So far these clinics have provided 407 in-house vaccinations, with an additional 356 staff booked in for the remaining clinic dates; this covers in total around 16% of our workforce. In addition, all staff over the age of 50 were encouraged to use the free NHS flu vaccination offer. So assuming all staff over the age of 50 have received their vaccine

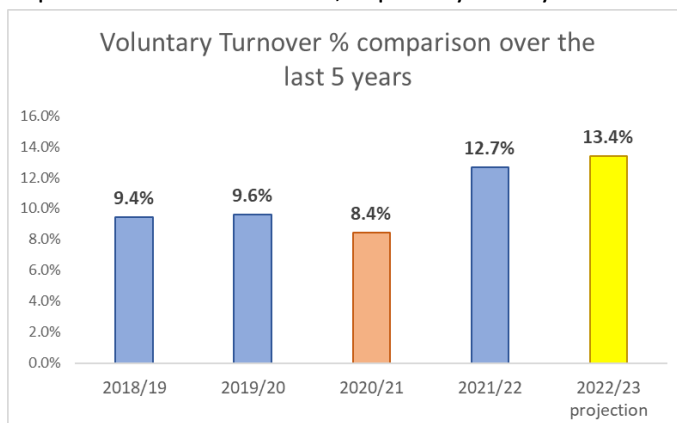
<sup>1</sup> This is due to a lower than usual natural immunity, due to previous COVID restrictions protecting people from flu, and due to a particularly bad winter flu season in the southern hemisphere, particularly in Australia, which experts normally use to predict what may happen in the northern hemisphere ([Why Experts Are Predicting a Bad 2022-2023 Flu Season \(prevention.com\)](#), [Lower than usual natural immunity has experts predicting flu and COVID-19 cases to climb this winter - News \(devon.gov.uk\)](#))

both of these methods together would cover around 58% of our workforce with a flu vaccine. However as we have no oversight of the over 50s taking up the NHS offer, we cannot conclusively say exactly what proportion of our workforce are covered by the vaccine. Occupational Health state the take up of the in-house flu vaccination offer is down from pre-COVID rates due to the NHS offer for over 50s being introduced over the last 2 years and with large proportions of our workforce predominantly working remotely the convenience of getting the vaccination at a work base is less than it was. Flu, COVID and other related illnesses are something we will continue to monitor over the next two quarters.

Stress related absence continues to be the biggest contributor to sickness absence, affecting around 1 in every 3 days lost to sickness. During COVID, Wiltshire Council experienced an increase in depression/anxiety, which has since been in decline, and experienced a further reduction (-12%) this quarter (July-September 2022). However non-work related stress experienced the biggest increase this quarter (+23%). Without any additional intelligence it's difficult to attribute this to anything, however current political and policy instability in central government and the cost of living crisis may be contributing factors. The increase in non-work related stress this quarter appears to have affected the HR & OD, Legal & Governance and Assets & Commercial Development directorates the most. Anecdotally, some of this is due to circumstances outside of anyones control, for example personal bereavement. However, in addition Wiltshire Council have established a cost of living working group to measure and monitor the impact on our staff to ensure we are supporting our staff through this difficult time as best we can. Signposting to available support is a continued theme in internal communications and a corporate staff survey is currently in development which may provide additional intelligence as to what additional support our staff may need.

### **Employee Turnover**

Nationally the country is in a candidate-driven job market. In this type of market, jobs are abundant, and top-tier candidates are often scarce and as a result employers have to compete for top talent, making attracting and recruiting the right talent increasingly challenging. COVID and the enforced requirement to work from home has caused technology in this field to improve drastically and quickly, this has meant that remote working and hybrid working is now a standard offering for most companies. This has opened the job market up significantly, with candidates now able to apply for jobs and companies further away than they would normally be comfortable commuting. This is positive for Wiltshire Council as it opens up the potential applicant pool for our vacancies, and we have seen some evidence of this with on average around 1 applicant more per advert between April – September 2022 compared to January – March 2022. However, conversely, the fact that there are more opportunities available, alongside the cost of living crisis, may be causing staff to leave to seek improved financial benefits, especially if they have more bargaining power in the current candidate



driven job market. It's difficult to provide any concrete evidence of this at Wiltshire Council as exit questionnaire completion is still low in comparison to all leavers, however Wiltshire Council have experienced increasing turnover rates over the last two financial years. Historically voluntary turnover at Wiltshire Council has been fairly static, fluctuating closely around 10%. However the 2021/22 financial year and the

projected rate for the 2022/23 financial year are both significantly above this at around 13%, see the graph on the left. HR business partners are reporting back exit questionnaire completion at senior management team (SMT) meetings and are working to increase completion rates corporately to provide richer insight into why our employees are leaving.

The yellow bar is the projection for the current 2022/23 year and the orange bar has been slightly influenced by COVID when there were concerns around job security, a theme that was consistently highlighted in the Wellbeing and Engagement Survey's at the time. This was also a national problem with furlough policies and the impact on the economy affecting recruitment.

The Economy & Regeneration, Public Health and Ageing & Living Well directorates have the highest voluntary turnover rates this quarter and have experienced the biggest increases in comparison to the previous quarter (April – June 22). 67% in Economy & Regeneration, 60% in Public Health and 47% in Ageing & Living Well stating that they left for work outside of local government as their reason for leaving in our SAP system. In addition, since the introduction of a new exit questionnaire in August 2021, there have been 3 times more staff mentioning better pay/better benefits/promotion as a reason for leaving in the last 6 months (May 2022 – October 2022) than in the preceding 9 months (August 2021 – April 2022), 1 in 3 of which were from either Ageing & Living Well and Public Health. In addition, anecdotal evidence from the relevant HR business partner also suggests that better pay was a major contributing factor to some of this increase. This suggests that the current job market and cost of living crisis has had some effect, however as mentioned before the exit questionnaire data is referring to very small numbers (around 7% of all voluntary leavers in this time period) so should not be taken as conclusive evidence. However in addition, there are challenges facing these services which are a national issue: latent demand, national shortages and pressures on domiciliary care may all be having an impact.

### **Finance and salary costs**

The financial health of the organisation remains a topic high on the agenda, especially with the new prime minister proposing to reintroduce austerity measures. Since the TUPE transfer of Places Leisure in October 2021, the council headcount has remained fairly stable, and in line with this permanent salary costs have also remained fairly stable, as can be seen from the long term graphs at the end of this report. Casual costs have increased this quarter (+28%), however this is a normal seasonal increase largely due to utilising casual staff to cover the increase in demand on the Leisure service during the summer months, which accounts for 92% of the increase this quarter. The impending pay award will also impact the salary costs of staff and will likely impact costs in the next workforce report.

Agency costs are however something to monitor. Although, as can be seen from the long term graphs at the end of this report, agency costs and use are still significantly lower than in the past, it is currently on an increasing trend, increasing consistently over the last two quarters. This increase, and the consistent increase across both quarters, is predominantly from social care (both adults and children's). The previous workforce report detailed a benchmarking exercise that had highlighted, and reaffirmed, that Wiltshire Council are a median payer for social workers, in line with our pay policy approach. This means that although we don't pay the least, some local authorities are offering higher salaries to social workers and are likely to attract more interest, especially in this candidate market. Retention issues are a national challenge and this has historically, and continues to, compel the social care services to recruit agency staff where they cannot fill the vacancy permanently to continue delivering this critical and statutory service. As mentioned previously in this report, the current job market and the cost of living crisis may be causing an increase in turnover, and we have experienced

an increase in adults social care in particular, and this is likely compounding this shift towards using agency staff. The HR business partners, alongside the Talent Acquisition Consultant for the area, are working with the services to explore possible recruitment and retention strategies. This includes exploring whether market supplements are appropriate as one recruitment and retention strategy.

### WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS



Current quarter	<b>4884</b>
Apr-June 22	<b>4876</b>
Jan-Mar 22	<b>4854</b>
Oct-Dec 21	<b>4869</b>



Current quarter	<b>3746.8</b>
Apr-June 22	<b>3717.5</b>
Jan-Mar 22	<b>3675.1</b>
Oct-Dec 21	<b>3688.4</b>

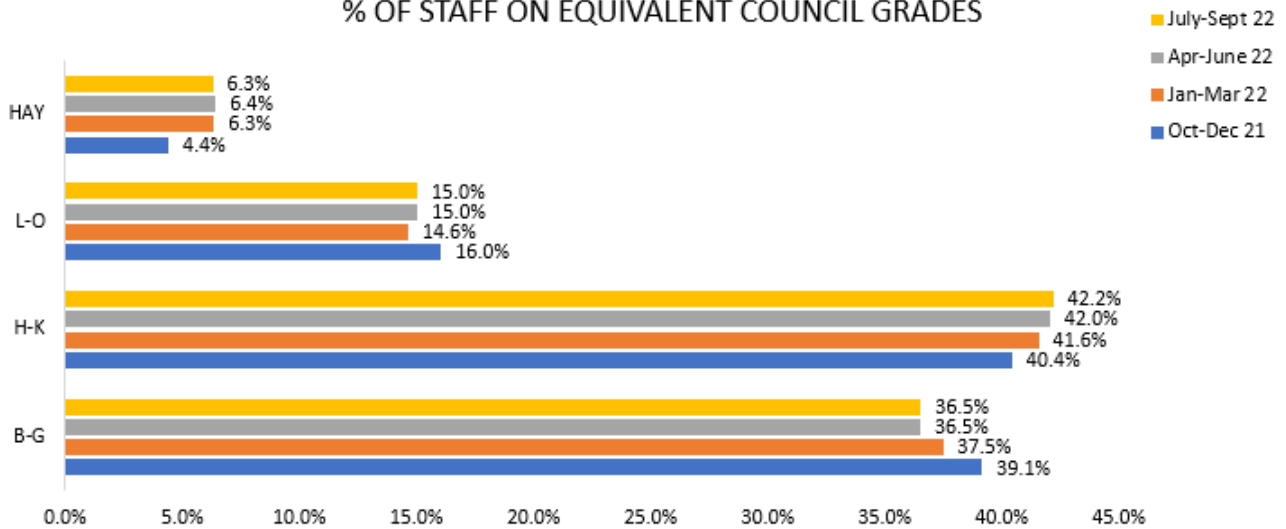


Current quarter	<b>8.0%</b>
Apr-June 22	<b>8.4%</b>
Jan-Mar 22	<b>8.8%</b>
Oct-Dec 21	<b>7.0%</b>

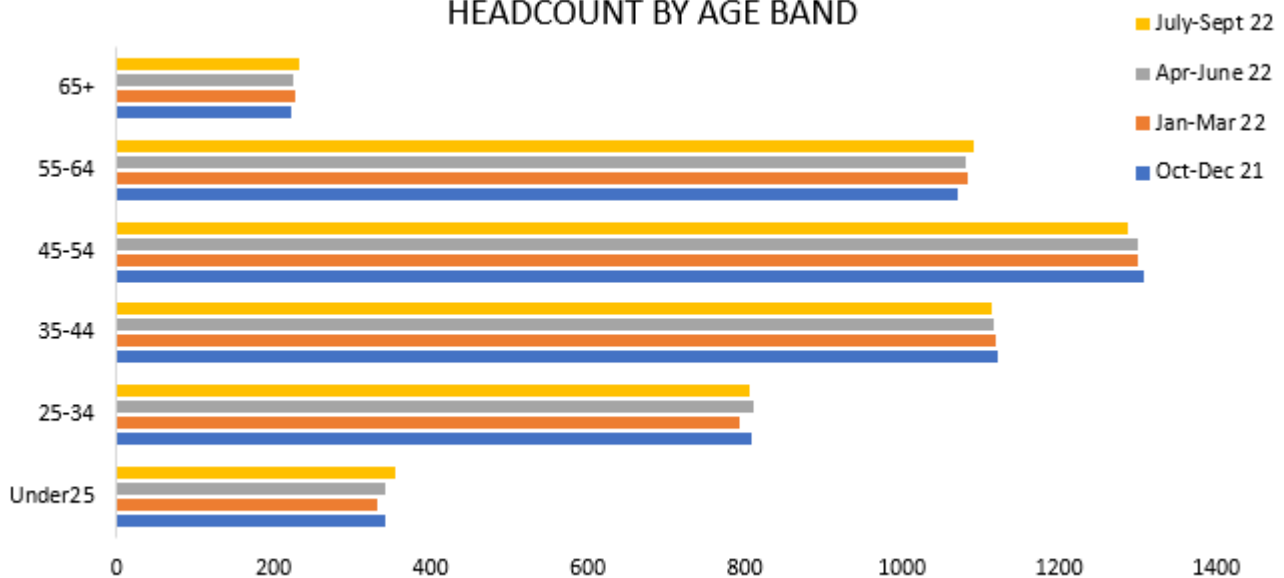


Current quarter	<b>4.3%</b>
Apr-June 22	<b>3.9%</b>
Jan-Mar 22	<b>3.9%</b>
Oct-Dec 21	<b>3.2%</b>

### % OF STAFF ON EQUIVALENT COUNCIL GRADES



### HEADCOUNT BY AGE BAND



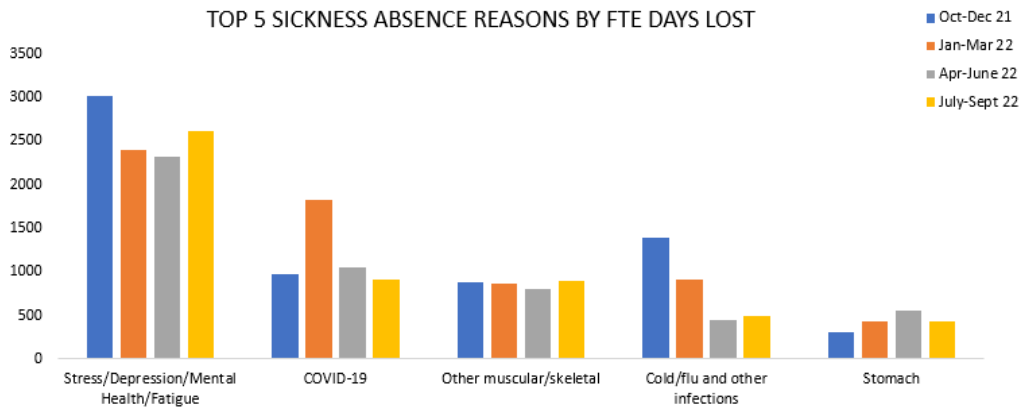
# SICKNESS ABSENCE

Working days lost per FTE for directorate

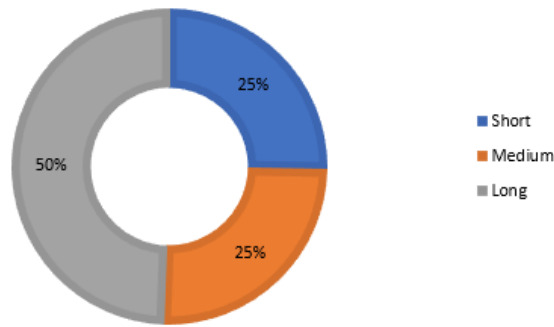
July-Sept 22

2.1

↑ an increase from last quarter (2.0)



## SICKNESS ABSENCE BREAKDOWN JULY - SEPT 2022



Long term absence: 20 working days or more in the quarter  
 Medium term absence: more than 5 days (less than 20)  
 Short term absence: 5 days or less

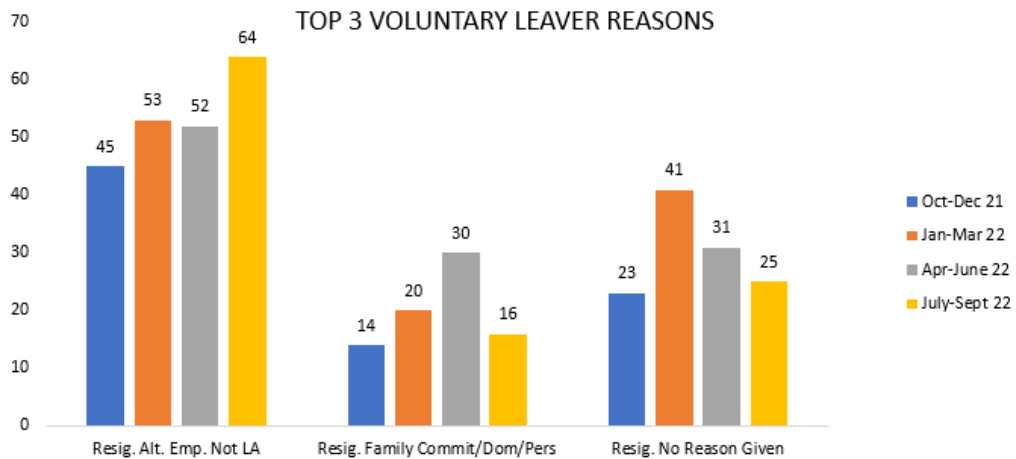
# TURNOVER

Leavers under 25 years old

Current quarter	15
Apr-June 22	14
Jan-Mar 22	24
Oct-Dec 21	14

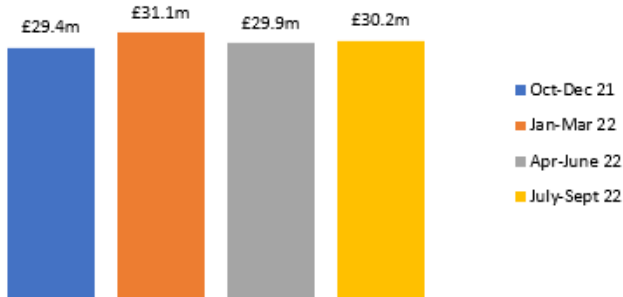
Leavers with less than 1 years' service

Current quarter	38
Apr-June 22	29
Jan-Mar 22	37
Oct-Dec 21	16

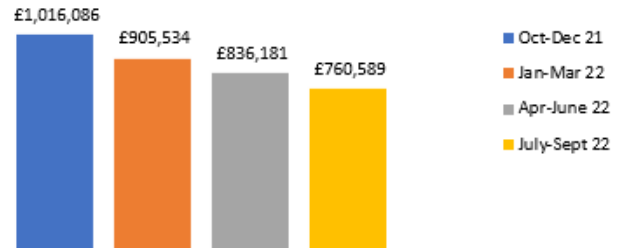


# EMPLOYEE COSTS

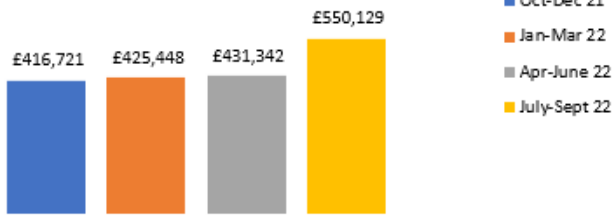
PERMANENT EMPLOYEE SALARY COSTS



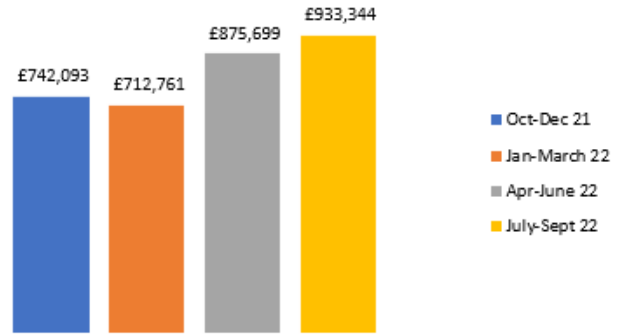
SICKNESS ABSENCE COSTS



CASUAL EMPLOYEE SALARY COSTS



AGENCY COSTS



# ADVISORY CASES

Disciplinary

	New cases this quarter	Variance from previous quarter
Current quarter	18	5
Apr-June 22	13	-9
Jan-Mar 22	22	9
Oct-Dec 21	13	-6

Absence & Health

	New cases this quarter	Variance from previous quarter
Current quarter	108	-22
Apr-June 22	130	-33
Jan-Mar 22	163	5
Oct-Dec 21	158	11

Grievance

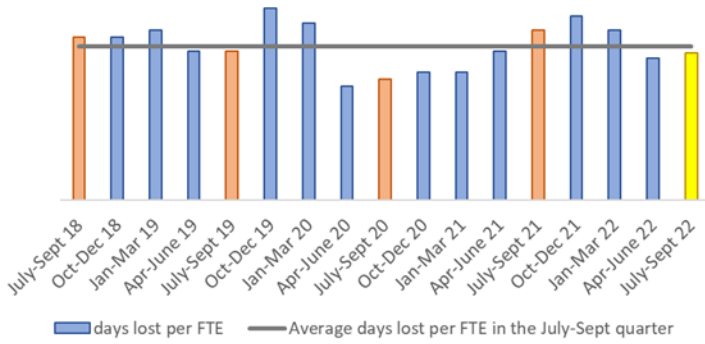
	New cases this quarter	Variance from previous quarter
Current quarter	5	2
Apr-June 22	3	0
Jan-Mar 22	3	-2
Oct-Dec 21	5	-5

Improving Work Performance

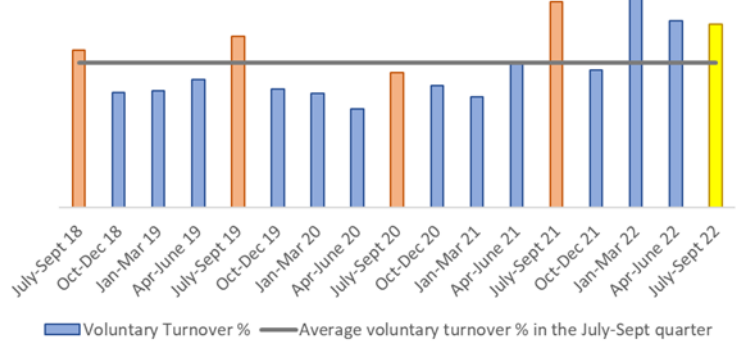
	New cases this quarter	Variance from previous quarter
Current quarter	3	1
Apr-June 22	2	-3
Jan-Mar 22	5	1
Oct-Dec 21	4	0

# LONG TERM TRENDS

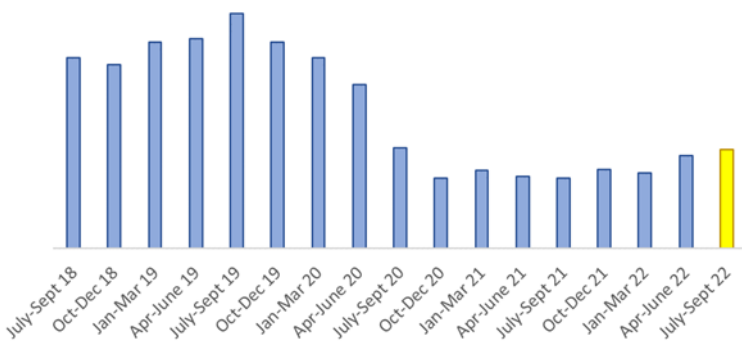
### Days lost per FTE over the last 4 years



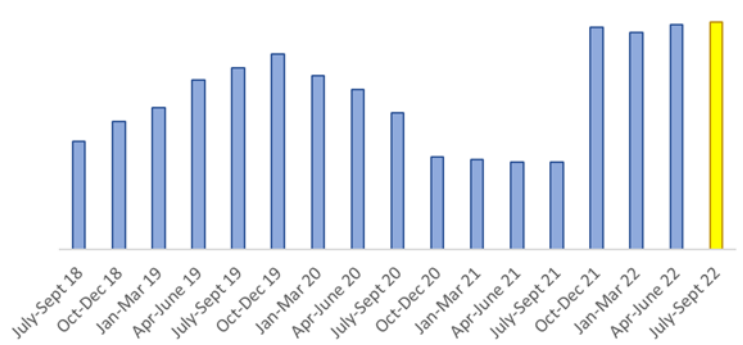
### Voluntary Turnover % over the last 4 years



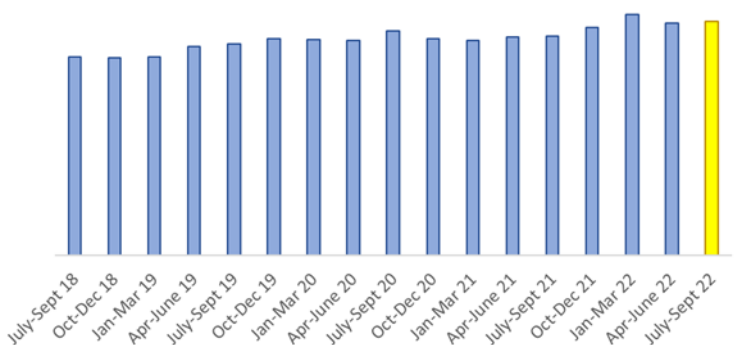
### Agency spend over the last 4 years



### Headcount change over the last 4 years



### Permanent staffing cost change over the last 4 years



### Disciplinary and Grievance cases per 1000 employees over last 4 years

