

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 1st March 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Sara Saleh, Corporate Director of Strategy & Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q3 - Period 1st September 2020 to 31st December 2020

Recommendations

That the content of this report is noted.

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	This report aligns with the council's Corporate Priorities in respect to 'Thriving places'.
Financial	The cost of using agency workers is carefully managed and monitored through existing budgets and budget management frameworks.
Legal Implications:	Agency assignments are carefully monitored to ensure that they are legally compliant and any employment liability is mitigated.
Equality/Diversity Implications	None
Sustainability Implications	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	The use of agency workers supports critical resourcing gaps.
Risk Management Implications	See Legal Implications section.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None

1. Background

- 1.1 A robust vacancy clearance process is in place that ensures that posts are only filled where there is a compelling case to do so - vacancies are subject to approval by the relevant Corporate Director with HR and Finance. The aim is to recruit to posts as quickly as possible, however ensuring that we follow the process and firstly consider employees on notice from redundancy (redeployees), "at risk" staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) and apprentices before advertising openly.

- 1.2 It is however recognised that there will be circumstances whereby there are immediate resourcing needs that are predominantly short term in nature and require access to time limited and/or specialist skills that cannot be found within the organisation, or where cover is required for day-to-day absences. There are also roles for which we have recruitment and retention difficulties. For these reasons, access to temporary agency support is essential to cover critical gaps in service provision. In some cases due to the specialist nature of the work, consultants are required.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 details the spend breakdown for quarter 2.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of assignments that were still active as at 30th September 2020.
- 1.5 The agency costs for the quarter have been met from within existing staffing budgets to support services whilst they have been restructuring, reshaping and recruiting to vacant posts, thus ensuring that statutory obligations are met on a day-to-day basis.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children's Services

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2020/21, spend in Children's Services totalled £803,189 and as at 31st December 2020 there were a total of 54 active assignments across the Directorate. The majority of agency spend is due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social care services for vulnerable children. The interim staffing need is primarily required to cover staffing resource gaps, created as a result of short-term staff absences or whilst recruitment to permanent posts is underway and cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.
- 2.1.2 Spend has increased compared with Q2 2020/21 which was £769,122. When comparing spend with the corresponding period in 2019/20 (£439,088), it is nearly double the level. Although there has been an increase from the previous quarter it appears to have stabilised. With the response phase of the pandemic continuing, there remains pressure in this directorate and resourcing levels have had to be maintained with agency workers.
- 2.1.3 The proportion of the quarterly spend that is on interim qualified Social Worker roles has increased from quarter 2 when it was 92% to 94%. Spend on Social Worker roles for the quarter was £762k.
- 2.1.4 We still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers in addition to Reed, our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone.

The service continues to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.

2.1.5 We still have in place 2.0 FTE Social Work Development Officers to support staff with their professional development across children and adult services, as this is a crucial aspect of looking after our social workers. In particular, they are providing additional support for newly qualified social workers undergoing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), mentoring social work students on placements who are our future talent pipeline and supporting employees completing the social worker degree apprenticeship, whilst working within children and adult services.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q3 2020/21, spend in Adult Services totalled £180,042 and as at 31st December 2020 there were a total of 22 active assignments across the Directorate. The majority of agency spend is due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social care services for vulnerable adults. The interim staffing need is primarily required to cover staffing resource gaps, created as a result of short-term staff absences or whilst recruitment to permanent posts is underway and cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.

2.2.2 This is a slight increase as compared with Q3 2019/20 which was £170,766. Spend is also higher as compared with the previous quarter (Q2, 2020/21) which was £148,276. However it is expected that there might be increased pressure with the pandemic extending for longer than expected.

2.2.3 78% of spend was on interim qualified Social Worker roles, which is a decrease from the previous quarter's figure of 89%. There was minimal spend on Care Assistants in the quarter as Ascot House now use casuals instead of having a reliance on agency workers.

2.2.4 There has been a need to bring agency Support Workers in to work in the Supported Living Service at a cost of £28,978 for the quarter. This is in response to a need to improve the quality of service delivery. The service continues to strengthen its internal assurances processes including development of a quality assurance framework that complements their safeguarding policy and procedures.

2.2.5 In order to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers the Service has the Trafford Academy. This will provide a mechanism for a rolling recruitment programme. The Academy has developed an engagement programme with schools and colleges to promote and inspire adult social care as a rewarding career choice.

2.2.6 Although the initial project began in earnest in 2019, there have been some delays in the delivery of key objectives, this is in part due to the need to re-prioritise and direct resources to respond to the pandemic. A reassessing of priorities is taking place due to the shift in the ways of working and demands which have altered the requirements of Adult Social Care.

2.2.7 The Adults Workforce Development Group oversees workforce development across Adults Directorate and will now govern the decision making aspects of the Trafford Academy project.

2.4 Governance and Community Strategy

2.4.1 In Q3 2020/21, the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy equated to £96,007 and as at 31st December 2020, there were 6 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in specialist skills.

2.4.2 Spend has over trebled as compared to Q3 2019/20 which was £30,160. When compared to, Q2 2020/21 it has decreased by nearly 40%, from the figure of £127,132.

2.4.3 Difficulties continue with attracting suitably qualified legal professions so a high level of spend continued from quarter 2 at £74k. The remainder of spend was split between the STaR Procurement service and Information Governance. STaR Procurement has moved into this directorate from Finance and Systems and so contributes to the increased spend in the directorate.

2.5 Finance and Systems

2.5.1 In Q3 20/21, there was no agency spend in Finance and Systems and no active assignments at the end of the quarter.

2.6 Strategy and Resources

2.6.1 In Q3 2020/21, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources equated to £23,038 and as at 31st December 2020, there were no active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

2.6.2 Spend has increased significantly as compared with Q3 2019/20 which was only £2,503. It is also at a much higher level as compared to the previous period, Q2 2020/21 which was £5,876.

2.6.3 Spend has been exclusively on HR Consultant roles. As was the position in quarter 2, the pressures caused by the pandemic have led to a sustained increase in casework. To reduce the level of employee relations issues and to

support service redesign which is progressing, extra support has been necessary.

2.7 Place

2.7.1 In Q3 20/21 spend on agency in Place was £12,511 and as at 31st December 2020, there were 3 active assignments. This is an increase on the previous quarter when there was no spend. It is also an increase on the Q3 spend in 2019/20 which was £4,456.

2.7.2 Spend has been on key roles supporting the Planning Team and Economic Growth.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 2020/21 was £1,114,787. This is a slight increase of around 5% as compared with the previous period, Q2 2020/21 when spend was £1,059,834. As detailed in the previous report, the impact of the pandemic on agency spend appears to have had a time lag. Spend is also at a much higher level than the corresponding period last year when it was £671,326 for Q3 2019/20. As detailed in the previous report, 2020 was an extremely challenging year as the Council responded to ever-changing pressures from the COVID19 pandemic. Agency spend has increased in all directorates except for Governance and Community Strategy and Finance.

4. Consultant Spend

4.1 The total spend in Q3 2020/21 was £80,797. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's Services	Adult Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Strategy and Resources	Place
£0	£0	£0	£0	£76,047	£4,750

4.2 The level of spend has increased significantly from the amount in Q2 2020/21, which was £20,328. However there has been a huge decrease on Q3 in 2019/20 which was £279,545.

4.3 Consultant usage has been in two directorates, namely Place and Strategy and Resources. In Place it has been to bring in a contractor to support with the Amey contract. In Strategy and Resources support has been required in the Performance Team and also a consultant has been brought in as an

interim Programme Director to lead the Covid-19 response and recovery programme and strategy working closely with the corporate leadership team.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Agency and consultant spend will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and reports will be presented to Employment Committee, for information.
- 5.2 Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.

Appendix 1

Trafford Council Agency Spend By Directorate Q3 - 2020/2021

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
	Childcare Worker	1	£4,461.69
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£10,308.24
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£17,403.77
	Personal Advisor	1	£1,463.64
	Residential Childcare Officer	13	£18,581.86
	Safeguarding Board Manager	1	£9,220.25
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,565.81
	Senior Practitioner	2	£36,610.26
	Service Manager	2	£42,543.49
	Social Worker Level 2	1	£16,319.06
	Social Worker Level 3	38	£466,419.95
	Social Worker Level 3a	1	£2,874.82
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£76,487.72
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£43,847.08
	Team Leader	2	£34,853.10
	Team Manager	1	£15,228.26
	Total	69	£803,189
Adult Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres	1	£186.24
	Care at Home Manager	1	£2,990.74
	Cook Manager	5	£921.05

	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1	£6,431.65
	Quality Improvement Lead	1	£3,925.67
	Social Care Team Leader	2	£3,928.58
	Social Worker Level 3	9	£90,497.89
	Social Worker level 3a	4	£42,181.63
	Support Worker	26	£28,978.16
	Total	50	£180,041.61
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1	£8,363.57
	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	1	£11,892.96
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2	£35,652.58
	Procurement Officer	1	£1,745.62
	Solicitor	3	£38,352.16
	Total	8	£96,006.89
Strategy & Resources	HR Consultant	2	£23,038.06
	Total	2	£23,038.06
Place	Business Support Officer level 2	1	£2,949.00
	Skills Outreach Information Officer	1	£2,621.99
	Validation Officer	1	£6,940.44
	Total	3	£12,511.43
Grand Total		132	£1,114,787.99

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing active assignments as at 31st December 2020

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1
	Residential Childcare Officer	7
	Safeguarding Board Manager	1
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Senior Practitioner	2
	Service Manager	1
	Social Worker Level 2	1
	Social Worker Level 3	34
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Strategic Lead for Quality & Improvement	1
	Team Leader	2
	Team Manager	1
	Total	54
	Adult Services	Care at Home Manager
Quality Improvement Lead		1
Social Care Team Leader		2
Social Worker Level 3		7
Social Worker level 3a		2
Support Worker		9
Total		22

Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1
	Information Governance Officer	1
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2
	Solicitor	2
	Total	6
Place	Business Support Officer level 2	1
	Skills Outreach Information Officer	1
	Validation Officer	1
	Total	3

*These agency staff are used akin to a bank, so they have an assignment start and end date however they aren't working continuously, instead on an ad hoc basis.