

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 28 June 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Sara Saleh Corporate Director, Strategy and Resources

Report Title

Agency Spend for Period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Summary

This report details the annual spend for the Council on agency workers and also on consultants who are engaged. Spend is broken down by quarter and also by Directorate with an overview of the reasons agency and consultants are required to supplement the Council's workforce to meet temporary resource needs.

Recommendations

That the content of this report is noted.

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report aligns with the council's Corporate Priorities in respect to 'Thriving places'.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	None
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
Carbon Reduction	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

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: n/a

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 supporting information. This process was streamlined to reduce timescales for the full recruitment process and to reduce the need for agency pending the permanent recruitment solution. Where a post is filled, the aim is to match to the vacancy in the first instance in a priority sequence; employees on notice from redundancy (redeployees), "at risk" staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) and apprentices.
- 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. For these reasons, access to temporary agency support is essential to meet critical gaps in service provision as outlined below. In some cases due to the specialist nature of the work, consultants are required.
- 1.3 This report is the end of year report which includes the spend breakdown for quarter 4 and this is detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides information on the length of tenure for those assignments that were still active as at 31st March 2021.
- 1.5 The agency costs for the year 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. During this year, due to the pandemic the Council has been able to access additional funding and some of this will have been used for agency workers.

2. Summary Agency Spend Position

- 2.1 The total agency spend in 2020/21 is £4,315,087. This is a significant increase, equating to £1,597,154 from the previous year's total of £2,717,933. The position for the 4 most recent years can be seen below, which shows increases year on year.

2017/18 Total	2018/19 Total	2019/20 Total	2020/21 Total
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£1,901,088	£2,081,312	£2,717,933	£4,315,087
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- 2.2 There have been different patterns of expenditure within the directorates across the year, however many have seen overall increases through the year. Overall Council spend increases each quarter. See table below which details spend each quarter by directorate.

Directorate	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Children's Services	£644,050	£769,122	£803,189	£839,896	£3,056,257
Adult Services	£124,800	£148,276	£180,042	£261,489	£714,607
Governance & Community Strategy	£107,654	£127,132	£96,007	£62,003	£392,796
Finance & Systems	£5,450	£9,428	£0	£0	£14,878
Strategy & Resources	£9,710	£5,876	£23,038	£64,361	£102,985
Place	£0	£0	£12,511	£21,053	£33,564
Total	£891,664	£1,059,834	£1,114,787	£1,248,801	£4,315,086

- 2.3 Spend for each Directorate for this year and the previous year is summarised below, with a detailed explanation of activity and trends in the following section.

Directorate	2019/20	2020/21
Children's Services	£1,638,718	£3,056,257
Adult Services	£818,055	£714,607
Governance & Community Strategy	£190,173	£392,796
Finance & Systems	£48,034	£14,878
Strategy & Resources	£8,650	£102,985
Place	£14,303	£33,564
Total	£2,717,933	£4,315,086

3. Directorate Overview

3.1 Children's Services

3.1.1 The 2020/21 agency spend for Children's Services was £3,056,257, which was a very significant increase from the figure in 2019/20 of £1,638,718.

3.1.2 The spend is predominantly on social worker roles, which was 93% of the total, with only 5% on support roles and around 2% on admin and clerical support.

- 3.1.3 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. In addition there has been an increase in caseloads across the area teams, which has resulted in the need for additional resources. It is critical that these resource requirements are met to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support and are kept safe.
- 3.1.4 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. Spend through these agencies has been significant at £1,522,421, which is over double spend on the previous year which was £661,215. In order to support the recruitment and retention of permanent staff a market supplement has been agreed for Social Worker posts at band 8 and band 9. There will be a significant vacancy gap when the new Children's structure is implemented and therefore there will still be some reliance on agency workers. However the service is working with HR to develop a Social Worker recruitment campaign and this should start to see a reduction in reliance on agency usage once permanent recruitment has taken place.
- 3.1.5 We have in place 1 FTE Senior Learning and Development Officer and 1 FTE Social Work Development Officer, to support staff with their professional development across children and adult services. This is a crucial aspect of looking after our social workers, in particular, they provide additional support for newly qualified social workers undergoing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), as well as mentoring the practice educators of social work students on placements.
- 3.1.6 We have several 'grow your own' routes into social work, most notably the social worker apprenticeship programme. We currently have 2 social worker apprentices in Children's Services, who are due to qualify in October 2021, 3 more who are in their second year of this programme and are about to launch this opportunity again, with a planned start date for 3 apprentices in September 2021. We are part of the Greater Manchester Step Up partnership, which is a 15 month post graduate fast track route into social work. We have employed our first Step Up graduate this March and are due to take on 3 more Step Up students in January 2022. For several years we have supported two Frontline units, this is a 12 month post graduate route into children's social work. These units of 4 students, are guaranteed their first year of employment as a social worker, and often remain in Trafford after this. Another 8 students will qualify via this route in September 2021.

3.2 Adult Services

- 3.2.1 The 2020/21 agency spend for Adult Services was £714,607 which was a decrease of £103,448 as compared with spend of £818,055 in 2019/20.
- 3.2.2 The large majority of spend relates to qualified health and social care staffing, which was 75% of the total, with 20% on unqualified health and social care staffing and the remaining 5% is admin and clerical support and cook roles.
- 3.2.3 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.
- 3.2.4 In order to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers the Service has developed the Trafford Academy. This will provide a mechanism for a rolling recruitment programme stemming from an engagement programme with schools and colleges to promote and inspire adult social care as a rewarding career choice.
- 3.2.5 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. One of the emerging priorities for the Academy is looking at the issue of retention by exploring factors such staff wellbeing, resilience and training.
- 3.2.6 The Adults Workforce Development Group oversees workforce development across Adults Directorate and will now govern the decision making aspects of the Trafford Academy project.

3.4 Governance and Community Strategy

- 3.4.1 The total agency spend in 2020/21 was £392,796 which is an increase of £202,623 on spend in 2019/20, which was £190,173.
- 3.4.2 There is a small amount of spend on Procurement roles as this service moved under this directorate during the year. 18% of spend is on an Information Governance Officer. However the largest spend is on legal roles at 78% of the total for the directorate. There has been a continued difficulty with attracting solicitors with the skills that the service requires. The main reason for this is the competitiveness of their reward package as compared with the private sector. A review underway to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff, which will include looking at options to develop a pipeline in-house for example through apprenticeships.

3.5 Finance and Systems

3.5.1 In 2020/21 total spend for Finance and Systems was £14,878 which is a decrease of £33,156 on the figure of £48,034 in 2019/20. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

3.5.2 The agency usage relates solely to Procurement, with a requirement to bring in a Business Improvement Officer and Procurement Officer. Further to a restructure, STaR Procurement moved to Governance and Community Strategy during the year, so spend is lower in this Directorate now than it otherwise would have been.

3.6 Strategy and Resources

3.6.1 The 2020/21 agency spend for Strategy and Resources was £102,985, which was a significant increase of over £94,335 as compared with spend of £8,650 in 2019/20.

3.6.2 Apart from 1 Senior Personal Assistant in Leadership Support, the majority of spend was on HR roles. The pressures of the pandemic have meant that the HR service has required additional resource to be able to support managers and our workforce through the last 12 months. There has also been difficulty in recruiting a suitably qualified and experienced individual to the Head of Greater Manchester Shared Service (GMSS) and so we have used the agency route to ensure that this key role is filled.

3.6.3 Exit strategy for temporary staff is underway that should see reductions in this area over 2021/22 and we will continue to monitor agency usage.

3.7 Place

3.7.1 The total agency spend for 2020/21 was £33,564 and this was an increase of £19,261 from spend of £14,303 in 2019/20. Spend in this area relates to Planning roles (Business Support and Validation Officer) at 62% and Strategic Growth (Skills Outreach Information Officer and Sustainability and Climate Change Officer) at 38%.

4. **Consultant Spend**

4.1 Sometimes we need to bring in specialist skills that we don't have within the workforce and which can't be obtained through agency resourcing. This is often for project work for a time limited period or to cover a key role.

4.2 The total spend in 2020/21 was £514,407. This is a decrease as compared to 2019/20 when spend was £602,008. The quarterly spend for the year is detailed below.

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
£79,150	£113,887	£118,179	£203,191	£514,407

- 4.3 There were 12 consultants engaged over the year in: Children's; Strategy & Resources, and Place. Spend over the year related to the following services:
- **Place:** Strategic Growth: to support the Economic Recovery Plan, in particular skills and employment opportunities and the recovery of the borough's high streets.
 - **COVID Programme:** to Lead on the establishment and strategic development of the COVID 19 response and recovery programme and subsequent management, delivery and evaluation.
 - **Place:** Development Team: to strategically lead and develop Trafford's development programme ensuring a balanced portfolio of assets is achieved that delivers immediate out-turns alongside longer term income growth. Interviews are scheduled in June to recruit to the Director of Development post on a permanent basis.
 - **Children's Services:** to support the OFSTED Improvement Programme and the development of the Children's commissioning strategy due to the Head of Commissioning leading on the Community Response to COVID and the Early Help Resign.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The HR service will facilitate targeted and bespoke interventions to support managers to pro-actively manage temporary resourcing needs to continue to ensure that agency demand is proportionate and appropriate. A Resourcing Hub was established during the pandemic with the aim of supporting the rapid recruitment of resources to support our COVID response and recovery plans.
- 5.2 It has been an extremely challenging year for the Council with staffing pressures that we have had to respond to, to ensure that we are discharging our duties and keeping our citizen's safe with the services they require. Initially the agency requirements didn't seem to have increased too much, given the context of the pandemic – quarter 1 this year was actually lower than quarter 4 in 2019/20. However as the financial year progressed the challenges mounted and spend increased each quarter.
- 5.3 Agency spend will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and regular reports will be presented to Employment Committee, for information.
- 5.4 Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.

Appendix 1

Trafford Council Agency Spend By Directorate Q4 - 2020/2021

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Business Support Officer Level 2	1	£5,228.65
	Childcare Assistant	1	£4,754.64
	Childcare Worker	4	£4,646.72
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£8,850.45
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£15,772.17
	Residential Childcare Officer	10	£9,074.36
	Safeguarding Board Manager	1	£21,944.20
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,585.12
	Service Manager	1	£37,412.62
	Social Worker Level 2	1	£15,908.84
	Social Worker Level 3	44	£483,075.77
	Social Worker level 3a	2	£19,535.80
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£74,101.27
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£40,623.03
	Support Worker	1	£1,989.93
	Team Leader	3	£33,813.27
	Team Manager	4	£56,579.09
	Total	79	£839,895.93
Adults Services	Care at Home Manager	1	£10,240.02
	Cook Manager	4	£2,923.72
	Social Care Team Leader	4	£30,678.33

	Social Worker Level 3	13	£100,815.77
	Social Worker level 3a	2	£27,162.43
	Support Worker	30	£89,668.43
	Total	54	£261,488.70
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1	£7,470.79
	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	1	£11,336.30
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	1	£8,598.27
	Solicitor	4	£34,597.95
	Total	7	£62,003.31
Strategy & Resources	Head of HR Shared Service	1	£27,465.17
	HR Business Partner	1	£12,524.62
	HR Consultant	3	£16,407.83
	HRSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist	1	£7,962.98
	Total	6	£64,360.60
Place	Business Support Officer level 2	1	£3,201.13
	Skills Outreach Information Officer	1	£6,749.76
	Sustainability and Climate Change Officer	1	£3,217.82
	Validation Officer	1	£7,884.12
	Total	4	£21,052.83
Grand Total		150	£1,248,801.37

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing average tenure of active assignments as at 31st March 2021

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Business Support Officer	1
	Childcare Worker	3
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1
	Residential Childcare Officer	2
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Service Manager	1
	Social Worker Level 2	1
	Social Worker Level 3	31
	Social Worker Level 3a	2
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Strategic Lead for Quality & Improvement	1
	Support Worker	1
	Team Leader	3
	Team Manager	2
Total	52	
Adult Services	Cook	4
	Social Care Team Leader	2
	Social Worker Level 3	11
	Social Worker level 3a	2
	Support Worker	28

	Total	47
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1
	Information Governance Officer	1
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	1
	Solicitor	3
	Total	6
Strategy & Resources	Head of HR Shared Service	1
	HR Business Partner	1
	HR Consultant	2
	HRSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist	1
	Total	5
Place	Business Support Officer level 2	1
	Skills Outreach Information Officer	1
	Sustainability and Climate Change Officer	1
	Validation Officer	1
	Total	4
Grand Total		114