

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 28 February 2022
Report for: Information
Report of: Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q3 - Period 1st October 2021 to 31th December 2021

Summary

This report details the quarterly 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

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

Name: Tracey Sefton, Interim HR Strategic Resource Lead

Extension: x 4131

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. 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 meet 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 3 - 2021/2022.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of assignments that were still active as at 31st December 2021.
- 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. A small number of roles in Adults have been funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) Contain Grant.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children's Services

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2021/22 agency spend in Children's Services totalled £1,286,293.68 (includes REED Agency: £752,384.18 and the new Social Worker Agency Framework: £533,909.50) and as at 31 December 2021 there were a total of 98 active assignments across the Directorate.

- 2.1.2 Children's agency spend in Q3 2021/22 has increased by £209,724.41 when compared with Q2 2021/22 which was £1,076,569.27. When comparing Q3 2021/22 agency spend with the corresponding period in Q3 2020/21 which was £803,189 it is substantially higher.
- 2.1.3 The proportion of the Q3 2021/22 spend that is on all interim qualified Social Worker roles has increased from to 84.75% in Q2 2021/22 to 90.2% in Q3 2021/22. The largest spend in Q3 is on Level 3 Qualified Social Workers (63.12%). The next biggest spend is Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement (£42K), Independent Reviewing Officers (£21K) and Support Workers (£15.5K).
- 2.1.4 We still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers which we engaged via the Councils new Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF) in addition to Reed, our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone. Children's spend via SWAF in Q3 2021/22 was £533,909.50 which has increased when compared with Q2 period 2021/22 which was £431,788.89. The largest spend via SWAF for Q3 2021/22 was spent on Level 3 Social Workers which was £475,618.80 (89.1%). The remaining spend was on Team Leaders, Practice Manager and Waking Night Residential Childcare Officers. The service will continue to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.
- 2.1.5 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.
- 2.1.6 HR have provided support and advice to engage a recruitment consultancy to work in partnership to develop a high quality Social Worker recruitment campaign in order to successfully attract and recruit to a number of vacancies, therefore reducing the reliance on agency workers. The recruitment campaign was launched in December 2021 and will run for a period of 3 months initially with the flexibility to extend the campaign if required. The initial phase of this campaign generated 10 applications, 7 for the position of social Worker and 3 for the position of Advance Practitioner. Interviews will take place over the coming weeks. The second phase of the campaign is due to launch at the end of January 2022.

- 2.1.7 HR are currently working in partnership with the Strategic Lead, Practice and Improvement, to develop a strategy to robustly reduce the agency resource requirements by, fully understanding the resistance to consider a permanent contract with Trafford, and, highlighting the total reward package and development opportunities available to agency workers who wish to move into permanent employment status. This will be done via focus groups for current agency workers and will be a continuous engagement, communication and information sharing session which will aid Trafford to understand current market / labour trends and thinking.
- 2.1.8 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.
- 2.1.9 We also have several 'grow your own' routes into social work, most notably the social worker apprenticeship programme. We have 4 newly qualified social workers who have just qualified via the social worker apprenticeship route (2 in children and 2 in adults), a cohort of 6 more are in their second year of this programme and 5 who started this work based route into social work, in September 2021.
- 2.1.10 We are part of the Greater Manchester Step Up partnership, which is a 15 month post graduate fast track route into social work. We are supporting three Step Up students, starting 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. 7 students qualified via this route in September 2021 and a further 8 started this programme the same month.

2.2 Adult Services

- 2.2.1 In Q3 2021/22 spend in Adult Services totalled £317,378.61 (includes REED Agency: £294,271.29 and the new Agency Social Worker Framework: £23,207.32) and as at 31 December 2021 there were a total of 80 active assignments across the Directorate.
- 2.2.2 This is a slight decrease of £2,789.2 when compared with Q2 2021/22 which was £320,167.81. Spend has significantly increased when compared with the previous quarter Q3 2020/21 which was £180,042.

- 2.2.3 68% of spend in Q3 2021/22 was on interim qualified Social Worker roles compared with 47% in Q2 (2021/22). £40,365.60 of the agency spend on Social Workers in Urgent Care is funded from the COMF Contain Grant. The majority of the remainder of spend is on Support Workers in Supported Living at 30.13% compared with 34% in Q2 2021/22. The internal Resourcing service has been supporting Ascot House and Supported Living to recruit casuals and a number of permanent roles via a social media campaign which has helped reduce the reliance on agency workers.
- 2.2.4 Adults still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers which we also engaged via the Council's new Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF) in addition to REED our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone. Adults' spend via SWAF in Q3 2021/22 is £23,207.32 which has increased when compared with the previous quarter which was £15,058.22. The agency spend via SWAF for Q3 2021/22 was spent on Level 3 Social Workers. The service will continue to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.
- 2.2.5 Our new Trafford Learning Academy seeks to provide an innovative approach to recruiting, growing and retaining our adult social care workforce and can be found at the following link <https://www.traffordlearningacademy.co.uk/>. The academy 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. The school and engagement project is becoming more established within schools, and offers initial myth busting sessions to young people about what a career in adult social care is really like. Trafford Learning Academy is working with partners across schools in Trafford to promote the use of the health and social care GCSE, increasing the amount of schools that offer this to students by linking in with the Cllr Karina Carter, Lead Member for Education and Karen Samples, Director for Education. Trafford Learning Academy is now a school enterprise advisor for Altrincham College and Flixton Girls School.
- 2.2.6 Trafford Learning Academy provides a range of support to aid staff retention, such as, social work forum, confidential support around career aspirations or frustrations, 1:1/ group learning support where required around specific areas of learning, and mentorship for apprentices.
- 2.2.7 The Adults Workforce Development Group continues to assist and oversee workforce development across Adults Directorate, and will align closely with the other DASS and Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership sub-boards to enable shared working wherever there is shared priorities.

2.2.8 A paper was submitted to CLT for consideration in light of the current challenges faced recruiting to and retaining qualified social workers. The paper set out options which included increasing the rate of pay, development opportunities and incentives, and bespoke recruitment campaigns.

2.2.9 The Senior Workforce Development Practitioner and HR Business Partner attended a GM integrated workforce planning training session in November. The intention is to test and apply the methodology to assist the workforce planning process.

2.3 Governance and Community Strategy

2.3.1 In Q3 2021/22 the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy totalled £107,036.65 and as at 31 December 2021 there were 8 active assignments. Spend has increased as compared to Q2 2021/22 which was £82,366.36 and when compared to the corresponding Q3 2020/21 period, it has increased from £96,007.

2.3.3 The largest spend is on legal roles at 97.89% compared to 93.3% for Q2 2021/22. 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 is underway to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff, includes looking at options to develop a pipe-line in-house for example through apprenticeships and the development of career pathways to support succession planning and career progression.

2.4 Finance and Systems

2.4.1 In Q3 2021/22 the total agency spend in Finance and Systems totalled £5,551.61 and as at 31 December 2021 there was 1 active assignment. Spend has increased when compared to Q2 2021/22, as there was zero agency spend and no active assignments at the end of the quarter Q2 2021/22. In the corresponding Q3 2020/21 period, there was no agency spend or active assignments.

2.4.2 The service engaged an agency worker to support the roll out of Windows 365 whilst the recruitment was underway to recruit a number of resources at Band 2 on a casual basis.

2.5 Place

2.5.1 In Q3 2021/22 agency spend in Place totalled £28,829.42 and as at 31 December 2021, there were 5 active assignments.

- 2.5.2 Agency spend has decreased compared to spend in Q2 2021/22 which was £30,406.57. Spend has increased when compared to the corresponding Q3 2020/21 period, which was £12,511.
- 2.5.3 The majority of spend is on a Building Control Officer at £12K due to difficulties in recruiting to this role. The secondment largest spend at £8.5K is on the Tenancy Support Officer. The Housing Options Officer is currently funded from COMF Contain Grant which is £4,746.38.
- 2.6 Strategy and Resources
- 2.6.1 In Q3 2021/22, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources totalled £15,802.38 as at 31 December 2021, there were 2 active assignments.
- 2.6.2 Agency spend has decreased as compared with Q2 2021/22 which was £21,602.85. It has decreased compared to the corresponding Q3 2020/21 period which was £23,038.
- 2.6.3 The biggest spend was on a HR Consultant role at £11.5K. The remainder of spend is on an Applications Support Officer.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

- 3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 2021/22 was £1,760,892.36. This is an increase of £229,779.5 compared to the previous period of Q2 2021/22 which was £1,531,112.86. The majority of the agency spend was through Reed, our umbrella agency which was £1,203,775.54 and the remaining spend via the new Social Worker Agency Framework which was £557,116.82. The majority of pressure is due to difficulties recruiting qualified Social Workers.
- 3.2 Agency spend is significantly higher than the corresponding period last year which was £1,114,787. Around 78.13% of the total spend in Q3 2021/22 is on interim qualified social worker roles which has increased when compared with the previous period Q2 2021/22 which was 68.55%. Most notably, agency spend has continued to increase in Children's Services which is still experiencing considerable issues with recruiting and retaining social workers. Work continues to try to mitigate this and move to a more stable resourcing position. Spend has increased in Governance and Community Strategy due to difficulties recruiting to legal positions. Spend has decreased slightly in Place and the Housing Options Officer is being funded from the COMF Contain grant. Strategy and Resources agency spend has also decreased. We will continue to monitor agency spend and provide reports for visibility.

4. Annual Agency Spend across GM

The table (1) below highlights the annual agency spend to December 2021 with REED, our umbrella agency provider. Table (2) details the annual spend and out of the 10 local authority neighbours in GM and GMP that use REED, we are the 5th lowest spend authority.

Table (1)

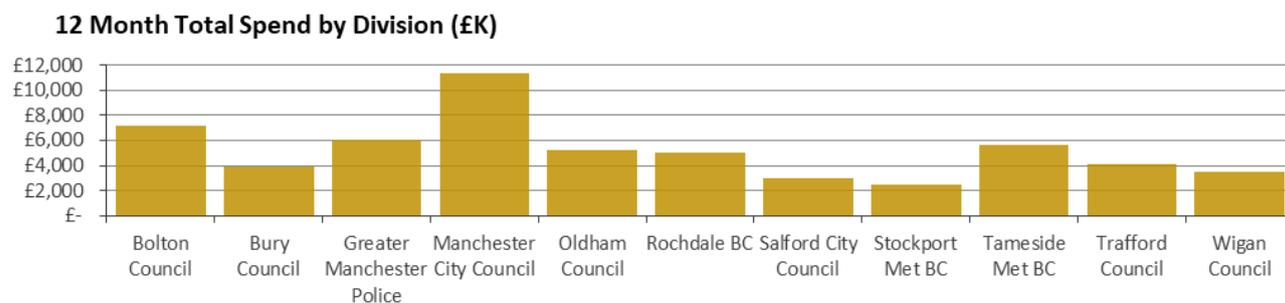


Table (2)

Organisation	12 Month Spend to Dec 21	Spend by Division (1 = Lowest)
Bolton	7,141.00	9
Bury	3,854.715	4
MCC	11,345.610	11
Oldham	5,204.435	7
Rochdale	4,990.348	6
Salford	2,977.592	2
Stockport	2,488.638	1
Tameside	5,611.989	8
Trafford	4,066.391	5
Wigan	3,497.163	3
GMP	6,069.469	10

5. Consultant Spend

5.1 The total spend in Q3 2021/22 was £76,538.88 including £49,300 spend in Strategy and Resources for the Interim Programme Director funded via the COMF Contain Grant. The spend breaks down is as follows.

Children's	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£14,517.88	£0	£0	£0	£12,721	£49,300

4.2 Consultancy spend in Q3 2021/22 has reduced when compared to the previous Q2 2021/22 period which was £101,892.50. When comparing consultancy spend with the corresponding period Q3 2020/21 which was £80,797 this has decreased (includes £32,300 spend funded from COMF Contain Grant).

4.3 During Q3 (2021/22) 6 consultants were engaged as follows:

- Children's x 3
- Place x 2
- Strategy & Resources x 1 (funded from the COMF Contain Grant)

6. 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 - 2021/2022

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Business Support Officer Level 3	2	£2,508.63
	Childcare Assistant	2	£3,008.86
	Childcare Worker	2	£1,664.18
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£12,614.02
	Head of Service	2	£29,278.98
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2	£21,402.83
	Practice Manager	1	£20,235.50
	Residential Childcare Officer	8	£8,600.83
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,598.10
	Service Manager	3	£66,663.61
	Social Worker Level 3	41	£641,294.82
	Social Worker Level 3a	13	£163,639.66
	Social Worker Level 3 a/Senior Practitioner	1	£6,961.70
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£67,130.96
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£41,912.65
	Support Worker	3	£15,581.87
	Team Leader	10	£164,743.86
	Training Officer	1	£6,249.70
	Waking Night RCCO	2	£6,202.92
	Total	98	£1,286,293.68
Adults	Cook Manager	5	£1,777.37
	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1	£4,160.18
	Service Manager	1	£9,577.73
	Social Care Team Leader	2	£27,257.09
	Social Worker Level 3	22	£177,476.60

	Social Worker Level 3a	1	£1,511.62
	Support Worker	48	£95,618.03
	Total	80	£317,378.61
Finance & Systems	Windows 10 Deployment Lead	1	£5,551.61
	Total	1	£5,551.61
Governance & Community Strategy	Litigation Solicitor	1	£5,899.53
	Procurement Officer	1	£2,262.21
	Solicitor	6	£98,874.91
	Total	8	£107,036.65
Place	Building Control Officer	1	£12,161.84
	Head of Regulatory Services	1	£3,364.87
	Housing Options Officer	1	£4,746.38
	Tenancy Support Officer	2	£8,556.33
	Total	5	£28,829.42
Strategy and Resources	Applications Support Officer	1	£4,272.28
	HR Consultant	1	£11,530.10
	Total	2	£15,802.38
Grand Total		194	£1,760,892.36

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing active assignments as at 31 December 2021

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
	Business Support Officer Level 3	2
	Childcare Worker	2
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1
Children's	Independent Reviewing Officer	1
	Residential Childcare Worker	8
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Service Manager	3
	Social Worker Level 3	36
	Social Worker Level 3a	8
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Strategic Lead for Quality & Improvement	1
	Support Worker	1
	Team Manager	8
	Waking Night RCCO	1
	Total	75
Adult Services	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1
	Service Manager	1
	Social Care Team Leader	1
	Social Worker Level 3	15
	Support Worker	44
	Total	62
Finance & Systems	Windows 10 Deployment Lead	1
	Total	1

Governance & Community Strategy	Litigation Solicitor	1
	Procurement Officer	1
	Solicitor	6
	Total	8
Place	Housing Options Officer	1
	Tenancy Support Officer	1
	Total	2
Strategy & Resources	Applications Support Officer	1
	HR Consultant	1
	Total	2
	Overall Total	150