

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 5 February 2023
Report for: Information
Report of: Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q3 Period 1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022

Summary

This report details the quarterly spend for the Council on agency workers and consultants. Spend is broken down by quarter and 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 supports the outcomes of our corporate priorities.
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: Cal Aston, Resourcing Consultant

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. We currently have a 4-week vacancy pause in place for some roles (excluding Health and Social Care) to support budget pressures with a weekly meeting of the Director of Finance and Director of HR to consider all business cases. We ensure a thorough recruitment process is followed 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 roles openly.
- 1.2 It is recognised, however, 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 - 2022/2023, alongside the number of active assignments during Quarter 3.
- 1.4 Agency costs for this quarter have been met from within existing staffing budgets to support services whilst they have been restructuring, reshaping and recruiting to vacant posts, ensuring we meet our statutory obligations on a day-to-day basis.

Directorate Overview

2.1 Children's Services

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2022/2023 agency spend in Children's Services totalled £1,076,845.94. This includes spend via REED Agency, totalling £820,240.93 and the Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF), totalling £256,605.01. During this quarter there were a total of 129 active assignments across the Directorate.
- 2.1.2 Children's agency spend in Q3 2022/2023 has decreased by £56,079.40 (5.2%) when compared with Q2 2022/2023 which was £1,132,925.34. When comparing Q3 2022/23 (£1,076,845.94) agency spend with the corresponding period in Q3 16.2%.
- 2.1.3 The largest proportion of the Q3 2022/23 agency spend is on interim qualified Level 3 Social Worker roles (£484,337.02 with Reed and SWAF £201,987.02). The next biggest spend is on Practice Managers at £173,207.08 followed by Strategic Leads at £85,877.43. The increase at Strategic Lead level is cover for an extended period of time off for a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 2.1.4 We continue to rely on the use of agency workers from other providers which we engaged via the Councils 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. Having the SWAF has assisted in managing the gaps and created some flexibility whilst still operating in a framework. Children's spend via SWAF in Q3 2022/23 in total was £256,605.01. This spend has decreased when compared to spend in Q2 22/23 (£338,604.83). We have continued to see a level of stability in agency staffing complimented by a relentless focus on permanent recruitment.
- 2.1.5 The majority of agency spend is due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social work and social care services for vulnerable children. The interim staffing need is primarily required to cover staffing resource gaps, created as a result of recruitment to permanent posts continues and where there is cover for maternity leave or secondment opportunities. Cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.
- 2.1.6 There are varying reasons for high agency spend which, in part, are linked to the national challenges around recruiting and retaining experienced front line social workers. Work is already underway to help combat some of the challenges and to support a more stable workforce e.g.: Investing in our people steering group. HR are also continuing to work closely with the Practice Improvement and

Learning Service in several of areas people steering group. HR are also continuing to support the service in several of areas: -

- Service redesign and work is progressing on the recruitment and retention strategy required in the service.
- working with the service in support of their training programme with Strengthening Practice and sharing EPIC Manager programme content, to ensure that there was a commonality of language and approach.
- Attending their EPIC Leadership Masterclasses, the first of which was on resilience and supporting leaders and managers put the learning into practice with themselves and their teams.
- Continue to support Children's Leadership forums and will be looking further at how psychological safety correlates to the b-Heard survey results and influence the service and team action plans.

2.1.7 HR are continuing to work in partnership with the Strategic Lead - Practice and Improvement and Learning, to implement the resourcing 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. Developing target recruitment to key areas of the service is also underway.

2.1.8 Regional meetings facilitated by North West Employers have taken place bringing colleagues together to consider the ongoing challenges of recruitment and retention across the social care workforce at a national, regional, and local level. We will be focussing on the need for national early career requirements, standardised pay and conditions, alongside a national communications strategy.

2.1.9 GM we are working towards a NW pledge (that aligns to the London Pledge). This involves the introduction of a set of national rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care including the introduction of national price caps on what local authorities may pay per hour for an agency social worker.

2.1.10 ASYE: The senior learning and development officer supports the Learning and Improvement team with the coordination of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). There are currently 17 NQSWs in Children's Services on the ASYE, 3 successfully completed this in December and 3 more are due to

start in January 2023. This programme involves support and assessment against the Post Qualifying Standards in their first year in practice.

2.1.11 Social work students: We have facilitated 3 social work final placements, to date in this academic year, with another 6 due to start in early 2023. We plan to support these degree students to apply for jobs in the authority, once they are qualified. We have successfully recruited from final year students consistently over the last 2 quarters.

2.1.12 Greater Manchester Step Up partnership: We are involved with this 15 month post graduate fast track route into children's social work. We are supporting three Step Up students, with 2 placements each, in Trafford. All 3 students are nearing successful completion of their qualification and we are encouraging them to apply for vacancies, once they are qualified in February 2023

2.1.13 Social worker apprenticeship: We have a successful social worker apprenticeship programme. Cohort 2 (2020-2023) are in their final year of training with 3 staff members now in the End Point Assessment phase, due to qualify in March 2023. Cohort 3 (2021-2024) has 3 staff members, who are in the final stage of year 2 of their degree. Cohort 4 of this programme successfully started in September 2022, with 4 new social worker apprentices working in roles in social care, while completing the degree in social work, through university learning and extended development opportunities within their substantive roles.

Frontline social work training: We have one unit of 4 students who started in September 2022. These students qualify while integrated within a children's social work team and are guaranteed a social work position on successful completion of their 12 month post graduate fast track training.

Career progression: We have supported 5 social workers to complete their career progression from band 7 to band 8 in September 22. This involves the social workers attending and passing a university Consolidation of practice module at Master's level and preparing a portfolio for the panel. In the portfolio and panel discussion, the social worker evidences their work and development against the Experienced Social Worker level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers before their progression is confirmed.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q3 2022/23 spend in Adult Services totalled £370,229.99 via REED our umbrella agency and during this quarter there were a total of 109 active assignments across the Directorate.

2.2.2 This is an increase of £45,646.55 when compared with Q2 2022/23 which was £324,583.44. Spend has also increased (16.7%) when compared with the previous corresponding Q3 2021/2022 which was £317,378.61.

- 2.2.3 58.16% (£215,341.21) of spend in Q3 2022/23 was on interim qualified Social Worker roles. This is a 4% decrease on spend in comparison to the previous quarter (Q2) which was £224,366.73.
- 2.2.4 The next biggest spend is on One to One support in private care homes in Trafford at £77,124.60. This spend is fully recharged to clients and does not come out of the Council staffing budget.
- 2.2.5 There is also spend on Support Workers at Ascot House and Supported Living in Q3 which totals £55,195.68. Spend has decreased by 22.7% when compared to Q2 2022/23 (£67,741.89). The internal Resourcing service continues to support the targeted recruitment of Support Workers via a social media campaigns and attendance at job and career fairs.
- 2.2.6 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](#). 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 schools' 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 building strong connections with schools offering Health and Social Care GCSE; there are now 6 schools offering the course and will increase to 7 in September 2023. Trafford Learning Academy is now a school enterprise advisor for Altrincham College and Flixton Girls School. The Learning Academy has developed links with Manchester Metropolitan University to promote Trafford ASC career opportunities with Integrated Health and social Care undergraduates.
- 2.2.7 Trafford Learning Academy provides a range of support to aid staff retention, such as confidential 1:1 support around career aspirations or frustrations, Ripfa communities of practice to support workers CPD, group learning support for newly qualified Social Workers, and learning support for apprentices.
- 2.2.8 The Learning Academy is proactively supporting school students with their work experience opportunities in Year 10, identifying schools and social care services by locality, and linking students seeking work experience with local social care providers. A similar offer has been extended to college students who require a year-long placement as an integral part of their health and social care course.
- 2.2.9 There was a recent paper on this committee that set out a response to the challenges faced recruiting to and retaining qualified social workers. The paper sets out options which included increasing the rate of pay by paying a market

supplement which has been agreed, development opportunities and incentives, and bespoke recruitment campaigns.

- 2.2.10 We continue to support the directorate with action planning following a staff survey and subsequent establishment of a staff group and action plan. This has involved working with the senior leadership team and staff representatives to make sure that the defined action plan has allocated owners and existing work is populated and communicated to the workforce. The staff group met in December where further actions were agreed to also align actions discussed in the CQC events.
- 2.2.11 HR have supported the facilitation of the second of two 'Time to Shine' CQC preparation events which have helped leaders in the service understand more around the Quality Strategy and enabled them to complete a self-diagnostic against the CQC Key Lines of Enquiry, using CQC Assurance Themes as a guide. This has brought a greater understanding of where their strengths and areas for development are. These sessions have generated useful information, which will inform the creation of team quality improvement action plans. These plans will be further developed in another facilitated workshop, which will also enable directorate wide plans and actions for continuous improvement.
- 2.2.12 HR have helped to develop the six month Leadership programme for Adults that considers both the work of the CQC / Skills for Care and also the identified needs from the b-Heard survey. The programme is due to be launched in February 23.
- 2.2.13 ASYE: The senior learning and development officer coordinates the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). There are currently 11 NQSWs in Adult services on the ASYE. This programme involves support and assessment of new social workers against the Post Qualifying Standards across their first year in practice.
- 2.2.14 Social work students: We have facilitated 4 social work final placements so far this academic year, with another 1 due to start in early 2023. We plan to support these degree students to apply for jobs in the authority, once they are qualified.
- 2.2.15 Social worker degree apprenticeship: We have a successful social worker apprenticeship programme. Cohort 2 (2020-2023) are in their final year of training with 3 staff members in their final year. Cohort 3 (2021-2024) has 3 staff members, who are at the end of year 2 and Cohort 4 successfully started in September 2022. This programme involves the employees (social worker apprentices) working in roles in social care, while completing the degree in social work, through university learning and extended development opportunities within their substantive roles.

2.2.16 Career progression: We have supported 2 social workers to complete their career progression from band 7 to band 8 in September 22. This involves the social workers attending and passing a university Consolidation of practice module at Masters level, and preparing a portfolio for the panel. In the portfolio and panel discussion, the social worker evidences their work and development against the Experienced Social Worker level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers, before their progression is confirmed.

2.3 Legal and Governance

2.3.1 In Q3 2022/23 the total agency spend in Legal and Governance totalled £211,069.95 and as at 31 December there were 12 active assignments. Spend has slightly decreased compared to Q2 2022/23 which was £227,751.20. However, spend has increased from £107,036.65 (97%), when comparing it to the previous year (Q3 21/22).

2.3.2 The largest spend is on legal roles for Q3 22/23 (£161,255.34), this was a slight decrease (6.6%) when compared to Q2 22/23 (£171,882.22). 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.

2.3.3 The next biggest spend is on an Assistant Head of Legal (£33,668.94) and Information Governance Manager (£14,506.82). We have now appointed to the Assistant Head of Legal Role on a permanent basis which will significantly reduce spend in the future.

2.4 Finance and Systems

2.4.1 In Q3 2022/23 the total agency spend in Finance and Systems totalled £8,934.38 and as at 31 December 2022 there was 1 active assignment. Spend has marginally increased when compared to Q2 2022/23 which was £8,027.08. Spend has also increased by 60.9% when compared to the corresponding period in 21/22, which was £5,551.61.

2.4.2 The service has engaged an additional agency worker to support the roll out of Windows 365. We have recently advertised a Level 4 Development Operations apprenticeship which will help support this work in the near future.

2.5 Place

2.5.1 In Q3 2022/23 agency spend in Place totalled £2,432.72 and as of 31 December 2022, there were 3 active assignments.

2.5.2 Agency spend has decreased compared to spend in Q2 2022/23 which was £8,446.68. When compared to the corresponding period in (Q3) 21/22 spend has reduced significantly from £28,829.42

2.5.3 The total spend in Q3 for ESOL assessor roles are being funded from the Home to Ukraine Funds.

2.6 Strategy and Resources

2.6.1 In Q3 2022/23, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources totalled £44,692.64 and there were 3 active assignments (31 December 2022).

2.6.2 Agency spend has increased when compared with Q2 2022/23 which was £3,908.61. Spend has also increased when comparing against the same period (Q3) in 21/22, which was £15,802.38

2.6.3 The majority of agency spend this quarter is on the Director of Communications, Marketing and Events post, whilst a service review is being undertaken.

3. **Summary Agency Spend Position**

3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 2022/23 was £1,714,205.62. In the previous period of Q2 2022/23 the spend was £1,706,142.35 – so it has remained static. The majority of the agency spend was through Reed (our umbrella agency) with the remaining spend via the Social Worker Agency Framework. Much of pressure continues to be the difficulties recruiting qualified Social Workers.

3.2 In the corresponding Q3 2021/22 the overall spend was £1,760,892.36. So again this figure remains static. The majority of agency spend this quarter is in Adults and Children's Services, due to ongoing challenges with recruiting and retaining social workers. Work continues to try to mitigate this and move to a more stable resourcing position. We will continue to monitor agency spend and provide reports for visibility.

4. Annual Agency Spend across GM

Table (1): The table below highlights the annual agency spend to December 2022 with REED, our umbrella agency provider across Greater Manchester by Local Authority. 52% of all agency spend with Reed is within the social care sector.

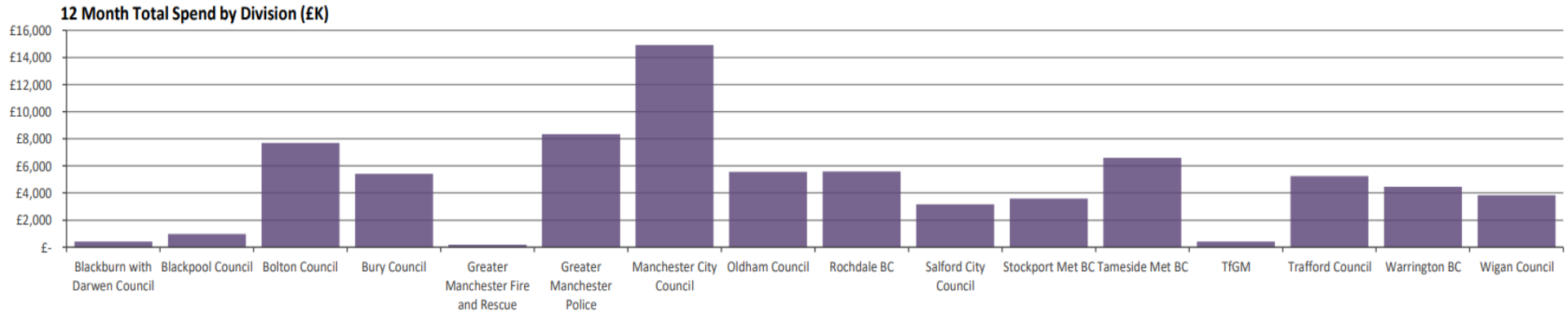


Table (2): Details the annual spend and out of the 10 local authority neighbours in GM and GMP that use REED, we are the 7th lowest spend Authority..

Local Authority	Annual Spend (£)
Blackburn with Darwen Council	£ 422,026
Blackpool Council	£ 987,841
Bolton Council	£ 7,679,597
Bury Council	£ 5,408,278
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue	£ 199,928
Greater Manchester Police	£ 8,349,702
Manchester City Council	£ 14,918,268
Oldham Council	£ 5,555,121
Rochdale BC	£ 5,596,340
Salford City Council	£ 3,162,927
Stockport Met BC	£ 3,587,071
Tameside Met BC	£ 6,584,348
TfGM	£ 400,237
Trafford Council	£ 5,251,107
Warrington BC	£ 4,448,372
Wigan Council	£ 3,839,333
Total	£ 76,390,496

5. Consultant Spend

5.1 The total spend in Q3 2022/23 was £47,742.50. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£47,742.50	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

5.2 Consultancy spend in Q3 2022/23 has increased when compared to Q2 2022/23 which was £23,500.00. When comparing consultancy spend with the corresponding period Q3 in 2021/2022 which was £76,538.88, consultancy spend has decreased.

5.3 During Q3 2022/23 four consultants were engaged in Children's Services.

The (x4) consultants have been engaged to undertake bespoke pieces of work, such as independent grievance investigation, work with Early Help/Family Hubs, bespoke training. We have also engaged a consultant who is reviewing the quality of practice of work with children in need.

5.4 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.

5.5 It continues to be challenging 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.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Agency and consultant spend will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and reports will be presented to Employment Committee, for information.

6.2 Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.

Appendix 1

Trafford Council Agency Spend By Directorate Q3 - 2022/2023

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's		86	£484,337.02
	Social Worker Level 3	7	£173,207.08
	Service/Team Manager	2	£85,877.43
	Strategic Lead	7	£31,129.01
	Support Worker	15	£26,613.70
	Residential Childcare Officer	3	£14,213.84
	Business Support Officer	8	£4,014.45
	Childcare Worker	1	848.40
	Early Help Intervention Worker		
	Total	129	£820,240.93
Adults	Social Worker	13	£215,341.21
	1:1 Support (Private Care Homes)	56	£77,124.60
	Support Worker	35	£55,195.68
	Safeguarding Board Manager	1	£17,868.66
	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1	£4,098.93
	Cook Manager	1	£600.91
	Total	107	370,229.99
Finance & Systems	Windows 10 Deployment Lead	1	£8,934.38
	Total	1	£8,934.38
Legal & Governance	Assistant Head of Legal	1	£33,668.94
	Information Governance Manager	1	£14,506.82
	Litigation Solicitor	1	£28,696.83
	Planning Lawyer	1	£21,425.18
	Solicitor	7	£111,133.33

	Application Support Officer	1	£1,638.85
	Total	12	£211,069.95
Place	ESOL Assessor	3	£2,432.72
	Total	3	£2,432.72
Strategy and Resources	HR Consultant	1	£4,910.46
	Director of Communications, Marketing and Events	1	£ 39,542.90
	Business Support	1	£239.28
	Total	3	£44,692.64
Grand Total	Via Reed	255	£1,457,600.61