

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Employment Committee  
**Date:** 9th December 2024  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Director of Human Resources

### Report Title

**Agency and Consultant Spend for Q2 Period - 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024**

### Summary

This report details the quarterly spend for the Council on agency workers and consultants. Spend is broken down by quarter and by Directorate. The report details 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 delivery of our corporate priorities.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	We are part of the GM Pledge for Social Work agency provision.
Financial	The cost of using agency workers is carefully managed and monitored through existing budgets.
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	None
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

**Names:** Nina Kijowski, Head of Organisational Development & Resourcing, Cal Aston, Resourcing Consultant

## **1. Corporate Overview**

- 1.1 To ensure that we are proactively managing all vacancies and vacancy spend across the council we have a robust approvals process in place. This process helps us to support the management and reduction of agency spend.
- 1.2 Currently all vacancy requests go through an online chain of advice and approvals starting with the HR and Finance Business Partners, through to the relevant Corporate Director and for final approval from the Director of Human Resources and Director of Finance and Systems.
- 1.3 This process supports us to ensure that vacancies are only filled if there is an absolute requirement to do so.
- 1.4 Currently there is an 8-week vacancy pause in place. This pause excludes Health and Social Care, front line operational roles and services managed through Joint Management Boards (GMSS and STAR).
- 1.5 To further support the work of the Finance and Change board, the HR Team are undertaking a review of the current process with the aim of identifying if there are any opportunities to further strengthen and streamline the vacancy approval process, specifically in relation to agency and casual workers.
- 1.6 To support us to meet service requirements, there are still specific circumstances where immediate resourcing (predominantly short term in nature) is required and access to temporary agency support is essential to meet critical gaps in service provision. In some instances, due to the nature of specific or specialist work, consultants may also be required.
- 1.7 As outlined in our people plan (2025-2028) there are a number of projects currently underway that should positively impact over the long term on vacancy and agency spend. These include, but are not limited to, formalising an approach to succession and talent development, a review and refresh of how we design roles and role profiles and developing specialist skills through career graded posts.

## **2. Spend Overview - Quarter 2 (July 2024 to September 2024)**

- 1.4 The total agency spend in Q2 2024/25 was £1,744,971.31. This has slightly decreased since Q1, where the spend was £1,892,864.16.
- 1.5 Total agency spend to date for this financial year is £3,637,835.47. In comparison to the same period last year, total spend has slightly increased by £213,149.02.

- 1.5 Appendix 1 gives a specific breakdown of agency spend for Quarter 2 by Directorate and role type.

## **Directorate Overview**

### **2.1 Children's Services**

- 2.1.1 In Q2 2024/2025 agency spend in Children's Services totalled £1,237,126.91. In comparison to Q1 spend has slightly decreased from £1,353,536.18.
- 2.1.2 In comparison to Q2 in 2023/24 (£1,225,771.96) the spend is marginally higher (+£11,1354.95).
- 2.1.3 The largest proportion of the Q2 2024/25 agency spend is on Qualified Social Worker roles and Advanced Practitioners. The spend with Reed, the GM collaborative Agency Provider, for these roles equates to £591,326.85 and the spend with the Social Work Additional Framework (SWAF) is £265,059.93.
- 2.1.4 The combined spend for Reed and SWAF for Advanced Practitioner and Social Work roles (£856,386.78) accounts for 69% of overall agency spend within Children's Services.
- 2.1.5 Under the Social Work Agency Framework (SWAF) we awarded contracts to 3 agencies (HCL, Paradigm and Liquid Personnel) in June 2021 for a period of 3 years. The purpose of this arrangement was to provide an additional supplementary supply chain which could be used if Reed was unable to source suitable candidates. Due to Reed comfortably being able to now source these candidates and greater stability in the workforce, we have only sought to extend these contracts in the short term until 31 December 2024.
- 2.1.6 Despite a reported increase in agency assignments, we are seeing a greater stability in the workforce across the Directorate. The number of occupied positions in the Directorate at the end of Q2 was 593, this is the highest number of occupied posts since April 2023. Turnover has also been on a downward trend since a peak of 14.31% in December 2023. At the end of Q2 turnover the percentage figure for turnover was 11.30%.
- 2.1.7 We continue in our attempts to recruit to vacant roles across the Directorate and negate the need for agency workers. At the end of Q2 there were 52 open cases of recruitment, 29 were up to offer stage and 23 were after offer stage.
- 2.1.8 The Directorate have recently successfully recruited to 2 Practice Manager roles on a permanent basis and have received positive enquiries from 3 interim Practice Managers engaged by agency about converting their assignments to contracted employment with the Council.

- 2.1.9 In Q2 we completed the service redesign of Early Help which saw the introduction of our Family Help model. The previous model contained several temporary roles and appointments. All roles in the new structures, which spans 3 service areas, are permanent roles. Interviews for remaining roles took place recently and conditional offers of employment were made.
- 2.1.10 The greatest reduction in the number of agency assignment was Residential Child Care Officers where the number of assignments reduced by 7 (from 16 in Q1 to 9 in Q2). Recruitment to RCCO vacancies will be taking place following recent business case approval.
- 2.1.11 The greatest increase in agency assignments was Child Care Workers who are deployed to work in our Day Care and Day Nurseries with the number of assignments increasing from 11 in Q1 to 24 in Q2. The service has struggled with recruitment to these roles over the past 18 – 24 months however this is showing signs of improvement with Sanyu Daycare being fully staffed since September and recruitment to the Day Nursery taking place with confirmed appointments.
- 2.1.12 The number of Social Worker agency assignments has remained relatively static. The recruitment challenge to social care roles is one that all Local Authorities across Greater Manchester find themselves facing. Whilst recognising that our workforce comprises a significant percentage of agency workers this is balanced with the need to support services across the directorate in discharging their statutory responsibilities and being able to respond in an agile way to unexpected demands in service areas.
- 2.1.7 This month marks the 1-year anniversary of the inception of the GM Pledge which saw a memorandum of understanding being introduced by Directors of Children's Services and HR Directors across GM creating an agreed set of principles on the engagement of agency social work resource. This included introducing a pricing framework for temporary roles which all Local Authorities should adhere to. We have and continue remain compliant with this pricing framework having benefitted prior to the creation of the Pledge with a robust internal process for the approval of agency assignments within Children's Services.

## **2.2 Adult Services**

- 2.2.1 Q2 2024/25 spend in Adult Services totalled £268,996.37, spend has increased slightly since Q1 (£259,101.70) and Quarter 4 2023/0024 (£247,525.39).
- 2.2.2 Total agency spend to date for this financial year is £528,098.07. In comparison to the same period last year, total spend has slightly increased by £57,613.69 from £470,484.38
- 2.2.3 The largest spend in Q2 2024/25 was a combined spend on qualified agency social workers (£155,915.52) followed by support workers at Ascot House and Supported

Living (£54,167.07). Combined spend in these areas' accounts for (£210,082.59) approximately 78.09% of agency spend in the directorate.

- 2.2.5 To support career development and attraction into the sector, Adults Trafford Learning Academy has an engagement programme with schools and colleges across Trafford to promote and inspire adult social care as a rewarding career choice. During Q2 the learning academy attended 4 careers events at schools across the borough.
- 2.2.6 Alongside the above activity, in partnership with Blessed Thomas Holford (BTH) and Trafford Local Care Organisation, the academy attended a specific Health and Social Care Careers event on 01 July, which was attended by year groups from BTH and Sale High School who are studying Health and Social Care.
- 2.2.8 The Learning Academy is proactively supporting school students with their work experience opportunities in Year 10, by linking students seeking work experience with local social care providers and Ascot House. During this financial year 7 work experience placements have taken place to date.
- 2.2.7 Following the implementation of a market supplement for qualified Social Workers, along with the launch of the new recruitment approach we have seen a reduction in the number of vacancies in the service. During Q1, 2.0 FTE Social Workers left the service and a further 4.8 FTE left in Q2 for the following reasons: 3 x personal reasons, 1.8 x early retirement and 2 x dissatisfied with the job. The service has reviewed the adverts and ensured that the benefits of working for Trafford are promoted via Greater Jobs and we have since recruited to 4 of the roles and currently out to advert to recruit to the remaining vacancies.

### **2.3 Update - Children's and Adults Services Social Work development**

- 2.3.1 ASYE: The Learning and Development Team supports the coordination of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), supported by the Learning and Improvement Team in Children's Services and Principal Social Worker in Adults Services.
- 2.3.2 There have been 9 newly qualified Social Workers who have started in Children's Services in Q2 and 4 in Adults Services. This programme involves support and assessment against the Post Qualifying Standards in their first year in practice. In total we have 8 colleagues registered and undertaking the ASYE programme in Adult Services and 18 colleagues in Children's Services. The programme for Adult's ASYE has been reviewed and the updated programme is due to launch in January 2024.
- 2.3.2 Social work students: We have identified 6 student placements within Children's Services and 3 in Adults Services for this academic year. Students on placement

with us are engaged with regularly and those in their final year are encouraged to apply for vacancies with Trafford Council upon completion of their degree.

2.3.3 Social worker apprenticeship: We have a successful social worker apprenticeship programme, which involves completing a social work degree in 30 months, through university learning at Manchester Metropolitan university, with extended practice development opportunities within their substantive roles. To date we have supported 16 colleagues to complete the Social Work degree, with the following cohorts in progress.

- Cohort 4 – There are 7 colleagues on cohort 4 who are progressing well and are currently undertaking placements (Children’s Services x4, Adults x3). They are due to complete in early 2025.
- Cohort 5 – There are 3 colleagues who will started on the programme in March 2024, they have all completed the first six months of the course successfully (Children’s Services x2, Adults x1).
- Cohort 6 – Children’s Services recruited 3 colleagues in June who started the course in September 2024, one person has since gone on a Break in learning due to their health but hope to rejoin in early 2025.
- Cohort 7 – Adult services are currently recruiting up to 3 colleagues for a March 2025 start.

Once graduated, the new qualified workers move into vacant social work positions identified in our Adults or Children’s Directorate.

## **2.4 Legal and Governance**

2.4.1 In Q2 2024/2025 the total agency spend in Legal and Governance was £204,988.14. The spend has decreased slightly since Q1 from £233,634.32. The spend in this directorate is all on lawyers and solicitors. The reduction in spend is accounted for in one less assignment in Q4 (11 assignments as opposed to 12) than there was in Q1.

2.4.2 Total agency spend to date for this financial year is £438,622.46. In comparison to the same period last year, total spend has marginally decreased from £444,103.78.

2.4.3 The recruitment and retention of solicitors within the public sector is recognised nationally. The main reason for this is the competitiveness of their reward package as compared with the private sector.

2.4.3 A Directorate review was completed within the parameters of the existing budget, part of which was to develop ways in which to embed supportive career options to attract new staff and to provide more internal opportunities for colleagues to grow and progress at Trafford. New posts were introduced to the existing structure,

including at junior and senior level, all of which have been successfully recruited to this year including two Senior Lawyer posts.

2.4.4 Market force supplements remain in place across specific Lawyer roles to promote attraction and retention. A more detailed review of the Legal Service is currently being undertaken and this will include an exploration of other routes to qualification, such as the wide range of apprenticeships, and the viability of introducing and embedding these into the teams to attract new talent.

2.4.4 The GM Lawyer Academy, in partnership with the GMCA and Manchester Metropolitan University, has been established to support the growth and development of Lawyers across the region. The pilot programme has commenced and involves Lawyers working in the commercial/property teams. Trafford have one member of staff participating. If the scheme is successful, consideration will be given to expanding into other areas of specialism and the potential for a formal qualification will be explored. Activity is ongoing across GM Local Authorities, who are working together to explore ways in which we can collaboratively create, promote and support a learning and development offer and career progression pathways to attract people to legal careers in Local Government.

## **2.5 Finance and Systems**

2.5.1 In Q2 2024/25 the total agency spend in Finance and Systems was zero. The spend in the previous Q4 was also zero.

## **2.6 Place**

2.6.1 In Q2 2024/25 agency spend in Place totalled £11,744.94. The spend has increased since Q1 from £2,155.69. This is due to an increase in business support assignments from 1 to 3. The increase, in spend is temporary and relates to Parking Services who require additional capacity to deal with a peak in demand for residents permit applications for three months.

2.6.2 Agency spend has significantly reduced in comparison to the same quarter in 2023/2024 (£39,702.41) and in overall terms when comparing total spend to date (£13,900.63) in this financial year in comparison to last year (£47,845.23).

## **2.7 Strategy and Resources**

2.7.1 In Q2 2024/25 the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources was £22,114.87. This has reduced from the previous quarter where spend was £44,436.27. Total spend this quarter within the directorate, pertains to Operational Services for Education for catering and cleaning roles. The reduction in spend, during Q2 is linked to schools closing for the summer break.

- 2.7.2 The number of assignments were reduced from 79 to 59 from Q1 to Q2, which accounts for some reduction in spend alongside less reliance on off contract agencies due to Reed (who offer more competitive margins) now being able to fulfil cleaning shifts in schools by using a local supplier in Trafford.
- 2.7.3 Total agency spend to date for this financial year is £66,551.14. In comparison to the same period last year, total spend has significantly decreased to £124730.18

### 3. Summary Agency Spend Position

- 3.1 The total agency spend in Q2 2024/25 was £1,744,971.31. Spend has decreased from £1,892,864.16 in Q1.
- 3.2 In the corresponding period (Q2) in 2023/24 the overall spend was £1,794,593.53. Therefore, spend has slightly decreased by £49,622.22.
- 3.2 The majority of agency spend continues to be in Legal Services alongside Adults and Children’s Services, due to ongoing challenges with recruiting and retaining social workers and lawyers. As outlined above work continues to try to mitigate this and move to a more stable resourcing position.
- 3.3 We will continue to monitor agency spend and provide reports for visibility and progress resourcing actions to support a more permanent workforce.

### 4. Consultant Spend

- 4.1 The total spend in Q2 2024/25 was £14,489.60. The spend breaks down as follows:

	Children’s	Place
Q2	£3,609.60	£10,880

- 4.2 During Q2 2024/25 consultants were engaged in Children’s Services and Place. Both consultants have been engaged to undertake bespoke pieces of work. Within our Place directorate a temporary Trading Standards Officer is leading on a piece of work (tobacco agenda) which was funded by Public Health. This role is due to end in November 2024. In Children’s Services consultancy spend is on an ongoing basis for Foster Panel Chair.

### 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 Q2– 2024/2025**

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Assignments</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
<b>CHILDRENS</b>	Business Support Officer	5	£20,685.14
	Child Care Worker	24	£18,857.26
	Reed - Advanced Practitioner	7	£89,202.49
	SWAF - Advanced Practitioner	4	£78,355.02
	Reed - Social Worker	37	£502,124.36
	SWAF – Social Worker	10	£186,704.91
	Family Support Worker	3	£16,342.68
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£17,772.28
	Personal Advisor	2	£19,734.34
	Residential Child Care Officer	9	£36,415.06
	Strategic Lead	1	£24,147.71
	Practice Manager	12	£203,784.04
	SWAF – Practice Manager	1	£23,001.70
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>116</b>	<b>£1,237,126.99</b>
<b>ADULTS</b>	Senior Practitioner	2	£27,250.73
	Social Worker	17	£155,915.52
	AMHP	2	£2,017.88
	Catering Assistant	2	£1,673.29
	Chef/Chef Manager	7	£3,771.87
	Domestic Support	3	£2,427.86
	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1	£1,634.62
	Social Care Team Leader	1	£5,698.39

	Social Work/Best Interest Assessor	1	£14,439.14
	Support Worker	50	£54,167.07
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>85</b>	<b>£268,996.37</b>
<b>LEGAL &amp; GOVERNANCE</b>	Lawyer/Solicitor	11	£204,988.14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>£204,988.14</b>
<b>PLACE</b>	Business Support Officer	3	£10,529.33
	English for Speakers of Other Languages	1	£1,215.61
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>£11,744.94</b>
<b>Strategy and Resources</b>	REED – Catering Assistant	2	£1,690.03
	REED - Chef/Chef Manager	4	£3,141.31
	REED - Cleaner	29	£12,851.37
	Off Contract – Catering	14	£4,432.16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>£22,114.87</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>277</b>	<b>£1,744,971.31</b>

Workforce Measure	Current Quarter 2- July to September						
	Council	Children's Services	Adult Services	Finance & Systems	S&R	Legal & Governance	Place
<b>Staff in Post</b>							
Staff in post (HC) - end of quarter	2541	593	472	198	971	58	249
Staff in post (FTE) end of quarter	1984.6	481.9	410.4	186.9	613.9	51.7	239.9
<b>Temporary Resource</b>							

Agency staff (HC) in quarter	245	113	85	0	32	11	4
<b>Total Headcount</b>	2786	706	557	198	1003	69	253
% of Agency Workers to Perm Workers	8.8	16.0	15.3	0.0	3.2	15.9	1.6

## **Appendix 2**

Snapshot of the percentage of agency workers compared to Council staff as at September 2024.

### **Please Note:**

**Staff in Post:** Figures are based on posts, not people, as some employees have multiple posts which maybe in different directorates.

**Agency spend and headcount:** Headcount is based on those on assignment in month and spend is based on the invoices received in the month.

**Working Patterns:** Agency workers will be working ad hoc shifts and not all will be on full/part time assignments.

### **3. Annual Agency Spend across GM**

**Table (1):** The table below highlights the 12 months agency spend to September 2024 with REED, our umbrella agency provider across Greater Manchester by Local Authority. Trafford rank 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of smallest spend out of 13 Local Authorities in the collaboration.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Total 12 Month Spend to September 2024</b>
<b>1. Blackpool</b>	£1,357,415
<b>2. Blackburn &amp; Darwen</b>	£1,368,492
<b>3. Stockport</b>	£3,897,998
<b>4. Warrington</b>	£4,527,720
<b>5. Trafford</b>	£6,355,105
<b>6. Wigan</b>	£7,185,781
<b>7. Salford</b>	£7,214,012
<b>8. Bolton</b>	£8,636,327
<b>9. Bury</b>	£9,010,154
<b>10. Rochdale</b>	£9,011,984
<b>11. Tameside</b>	£9,484,121
<b>12. Oldham</b>	£11,923,941
<b>13. Manchester City</b>	£25,045,635