

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 2nd March 2020
Report for: Information
Report of: Sara Saleh, Corporate Director of People

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q3 - Period 1st October 2019 to 31st December 2019

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 supporting information. This process has recently been 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 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 The breakdown of agency spend over Q3 of 2019/20 (October to December 2019) is attached at Appendix I. It should be noted that the agency costs for the quarter have been met from within existing staffing budgets, whilst services have been restructuring, reshaping and recruiting to resultant vacant posts and ensuring that statutory obligations are met on a day-to-day basis.
- 1.4 Appendix II provides information on the assignments that were still active as at 31st December 2019 and the average length of tenure.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children's Services

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2019/20, spend in Children's Services totalled £439,088 and as at 31st December 2019 there were a total of 52 active assignments across the Directorate. Spend through the Reed agency framework was £247,398 and off contract spend was £191,690. The spend has increased significantly as compared with Q2 2019/20 which was £343,673 and also with the corresponding period in 2018/19 (£79,344). However it should be noted that due to the structure in late 2018, some of the spend for this directorate would have been within the Adult Services directorate spend so it actually would have been higher than it appears for this period.
- 2.1.2 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. In addition there is an increase in caseloads across some teams which has resulted in the need for agency staff to ensure that caseloads are kept to an acceptable level.
- 2.1.3 85% of the spend is on interim qualified Social Worker roles.
- 2.1.4 There continues to be a national shortage of suitably qualified and experienced children's social workers on the market and councils across Greater Manchester are all experiencing difficulties in recruiting. This issue has been raised at GM level and work is underway to try to improve this

position. In order to bolster the service, following the Ofsted inspection, additional Team Leader posts were added to the establishment and there is currently work being undertaken to review the position. The service is finalising a 3 year plan, which may result in additional posts being created in order to future-proof children's services. We have developed a recruitment and retention strategy to support this plan.

2.1.5 We have in place different routes to 'grow our own' social workers which should help with resourcing in this area. We are supporting 3 Social Work apprentices who are undertaking the Social Work degree while working in substantive posts. They will qualify in June 2021. There is another cohort commencing in March this year. The 'Frontline' initiative will see postgraduate students working towards the Social Worker qualification within 12 months. We also have candidates signed up through the 'Step up' programme which supports external candidates to become qualified through a 15 month programme.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q3 2019/20, spend in Adult Services totalled £170,766 and as at 31st December 2019 there were a total of 40 active assignments across the Directorate. This is a significant decrease as compared with Q3 2018/19 which was £298,492. It is also a large decrease on agency spend in the previous quarter (Q2, 2019/20) which was £246,621.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 62% of the spend is on interim qualified Social Worker roles which is similar to the level the previous quarter. However actual spend on Social Workers has reduced by around £52k. The next biggest spend is on Care Assistants at 34% where gaps in the rota at Ascot House have to be covered. Since the service has established a staff bank the spend has continued to reduce and in Q3 it is around £21k lower than in Q2.

2.2.4 For the third quarter, there was no use of agency Support Workers which is further to Supported Living filling gaps in provision with casual staff.

2.2.5 There is an ongoing restructure within the directorate to enable new and improved ways of working, primarily in the screening and assessment teams.

Longer term, the changes will likely have a positive impact on retention of social workers in Adult Social Care and enable more effective distribution of cases which will reduce the need for reliance on agency staff.

2.2.6 The Trafford Academy is underway and the first cohort of 3 Social Worker apprentices commenced this year and will qualify in June 2021. The aim is that every year a new cohort will commence and progress through the scheme. This means that we can train our own staff to this level, giving unqualified social care staff a pathway to grow and develop into qualified roles and remain in Trafford.

2.2.7 The Trafford Academy work continues which means that we can train unqualified social care staff so they can take up qualified roles and become one of talent pipelines into the social work profession.

2.3 Governance and Community Strategy

2.3.1 In Q3 2019/20, the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy equated to £30,160 and as at 31st December 2019, there were 4 active assignments. The spend has reduced both compared to Q3 2018/19 which was £56,525 and the previous period, Q1 2019/20 which was £40,451.

2.3.2 Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in specialist skills. In the most recent quarter, the spend is almost exclusively in relation to Legal roles as the service continues to experience difficulties in attracting solicitors. They continue to consider how they can resource the service on a more permanent basis.

2.4 Finance and Systems

2.4.1 In Q3 2019/20, the total agency spend in Finance and Systems was £24,350 and as at 31st December 2019, there were 4 active assignments. This spend this quarter is further to no spend in Q2 and it is also higher than the spend in Q3 2018/19 which was £11,011.

2.4.2 Nearly three quarters of the spend was on qualified Procurement roles and the other spend was on a Business Analyst.

2.5 People

2.5.1 In Q3 2019/20, the total agency spend in People was £2,503 and as at 31st December 2019, there were 3 active assignments. This is an increase on the level of spend in Q2 2019/20 which was £312. However the spend is half the level in the corresponding period in 2018/19 when it was £5,012. This was to bring in business support for Operational Service for Education.

2.6 Place

2.6.1 In Q3 2019/20, the total agency spend in Place was £4,456 and as at 31st December 2019, there were 2 active assignments. Although there has been an increase on spend in Q2 2019/20 £4,547 it is lower than in Q3 2018/19 was £20,387. The spend has been on business support for Strategic Growth and other services within the directorate.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 2019/20 was £671,326. Without the off contract spend on Children’s Social Workers it was £479,636. This is a slight increase on the previous period, Q2 2019/20 when spend was £635,604. It is also higher than the figure for Q3 2018/19 which was £470,771. There has been a mixed picture across the directorates with some seeing an increase in spend whilst in other parts there has been a decrease.

4. Consultant Spend

4.1 The total spend in Q3 2019/20 was £279,545. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children and Families	Adult Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	People	Place
£106,453	£0	£0	£6,150	£0	£166,942

4.2 This spend was a significant increase as compared with Q2 which was £177,146 and it was also an increase on Q3 in 2018/19 which was £233,514. However the senior roles which required interim cover are critical to the organisation meeting its statutory responsibilities and for supporting the investment strategy.

4.3 The spend in Children’s Services relates to the interim Corporate Director – this post has now been appointed to and the permanent post holder commenced in January. In the Place directorate it relates to One Trafford Client Partnership and the interim Development Director. Arrangements are in place to recruit to this post on a more permanent basis & proposals contained in a separate employment committee report.

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 - 2019/2020

Monthly breakdown by Directorate (cost and number of active assignments)

Directorate	Active assignments in month	Total cost
October		
Children's Services	33	£105,307.43
Adults Services	33	£49,956.41
Governance & Community Strategy	4	£7,195.05
Finance & Systems	2	£2,765.84
People	2	£1,260.52
Place	2	£575.41
Total	76	£167,060.66
November		
Children's Services	42	£170,220.02
Adults Services	35	£61,043.69
Governance & Community Strategy	3	£10,815.69
Finance & Systems	4	£10,198.85
People	1	£624.06
Place	2	£1,861.75
Total	87	£254,764.06
December		
Children's Services	62	£163,561.21
Adults Services	28	£59,766.73
Governance & Community Strategy	3	£12,150.09
Finance & Systems	4	£11,386
People	1	£618.55
Place	2	£2,018.85
Total	100	£249,501.43
Grand Total	263	£671,326.148

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing full tenure of active assignments as at 31st
December 2019

Directorate	Job Title	Average Tenure	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Childcare Assistant	0years 0months	2
	Childcare Worker	0years 11months	6
	Customer Service Advisor - Libraries and Contact Centre	0years 1months	1
	Customer Service Advisor (MARAT)	0years 11months	1
	Early Help Intervention Worker	0years 1months	4
	Personal Advisor	0years 3months	2
	Residential Childcare Officer	0years 4months	8
	Senior Business Support Officer	0years 9months	1
	Service Manager	0years 2months	2
	Social Worker Level 2	0years 3months	6
	Social Worker Level 3	0years 6months	15
	Social Worker level 3a	1years 11months	1
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	0years 3months	1
	Team Leader	0years 5months	2
Adults Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres	1years 6months	22
	Cook Manager	0years 1months	3
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1years 1months	1
	Social Worker Level 3	0years 7months	9
	Social Worker level 3a (Hospital/EDT)	0years 9months	3
	Social Worker level 3a	0years 4months	1
	Team Leader	0years 5months	1
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Support Officer	0years 2months	1
	Legal Executive	0years 5months	1

	Solicitor	0years 10months	2
Finance & Systems	Business Change Analyst	0years 5months	1
	Procurement Officer	0years 5months	2
	Trainee Procurement Officer	0years 4months	1
People	Business Support Officer	0years 2months	2
	Recruitment Coordinator	0years 3months	1
Place	Business Support Officer	0years 4months	1
	Personal Assistant	0years 3months	1

**It should be noted that in many assignments, the agency worker will be working less hours than the full time equivalent (FTE) hours. 1 assignment does not necessarily equal 1 FTE.*