

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 8th September 2020
Report for: Information
Report of: Sara Saleh Director of Strategy and Resources

Report Title

Annual Agency Spend for Period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

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 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 2020.
- 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.

2. Summary Agency Spend Position

- 2.1 The total agency spend in 2019/20 is £2,717,933. This is a significant increase, equating to £636,621 from the previous year's total of £2,081,312. The position for the 4 most recent years can be seen below, which shows both increases and decreases over the period.

2016/17 Total	2017/18 Total	2018/19 Total	2019/20 Total
£2,020,069	£1,901,088	£2,081,312	£2,717,933

- 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 with a significant increase in quarter 4 of around a third. See table below which details spend each quarter by directorate.

Directorate	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Children's Services	£216,823	£343,673	£439,088	£639,134	£1,638,718
Adult Services	£226,422	£246,621	£170,766	£174,246	£818,055
Governance & Community Strategy	£46,166	£40,451	£30,160	£73,396	£190,173
Finance & Systems	£10,486	£0	£24,350	£13,198	£48,034
People	£0	£312	£2,503	£5,835	£8,650
Place	£0	£4,547	£4,456	£5,300	£14,303
Total	£499,897	£635,604	£671,326	£911,109	£2,717,933

- 2.3 The 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	2018/19	2019/20
Children's Services	£444,109	£1,638,718
Adult Services	£993,559	£818,055
Governance & Community Strategy	£224,824	£190,173
Finance & Systems	£65,979	£48,034
People	£91,356	£8,650
Place	£64,000	£14,303
Total	£2,081,312	£2,717,933

3. Directorate Overview

3.1 Children's Services

- 3.1.1 The 2019/20 agency spend for Children's Services was £1,638,718, which was a very significant increase from the figure in 2018/19 of £444,109.
- 3.1.2 Part of this increase will be due to the fact that in 2018/19 some services which are now in this directorate were under the Adult Services directorate. So if we applied the current structure in 2018/19 the figure for that year would be higher and the gap between the two years would not be as stark.
- 3.1.3 The spend is predominantly on qualified health and social care staffing, which was 95% of the total, with only 1% on unqualified health and social care staffing (17k) and around 4% on admin and clerical support (59k).
- 3.1.4 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.
- 3.1.5 Our framework agency provider Reed had encountered difficulties in meeting the demand for Social Workers in Greater Manchester, and due to this we have engaged staff through other agencies in line with procurement rules. Unfortunately this has meant accepting increased rates for these workers. Spend through these agencies has been significant at £661,215. It has increased as we have moved through the year: Q1 is £33,952; Q2 is £143,922; Q3 is £191,690, and; Q4 is £291,651.
- 3.1.6 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. Following the Ofsted inspection, additional Team Leader posts were

added to the establishment and there is currently work being undertaken to review the position as part of the 3 year improvement plan, which may result in additional posts being created in order to future-proof children's services. As well as this a recruitment and retention strategy has been developed and a recruitment campaign has recently been launched. It is therefore anticipated that the agency levels will reduce over the coming months.

- 3.1.7 Where possible agency staff have been encouraged to take up permanent positions and to date 3 agency workers have taken up this option.
- 3.1.8 The social worker apprenticeship programme continues with 3 current members of staff due to qualify in October 2021. There are 3 due to start the 30 month programme in September 2020.
- 3.1.9 The Frontline social work training programme now has 2 units in Trafford. These students train in small units and are guaranteed a permanent role on completion. As a result of this scheme there will be 7 newly qualified social workers starting their AYSE year in September.
- 3.1.10 Students who have undertaken their placements with Trafford are encouraged to apply for positions and we have recently had four applications which have successfully been shortlisted and will be interviewed shortly.

3.2 Adult Services

- 3.2.1 The 2019/20 agency spend for Adult Services was £818,055 which was a decrease of £175,544 as compared with spend of £993,599 in 2018/19.
- 3.2.2 The large majority of spend relates to qualified health and social care staffing, which was 62% of the total, with 37% on unqualified health and social care staffing and the remaining 1% is admin and clerical support and cleaning 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 As detailed in the section on Children's Services, due to some services moving between Adults and Children's between the 2 years, the actual spend in Adults would have been higher if the revised structure had been in place in 2018/19.
- 3.2.5 In previous years there had been usage of Support Worker agency staff in the Supported Living Service, however they now have in place successful casual provision and had no need for agency at all.

- 3.2.6 There is an ongoing restructure within the directorate to enable new and improved ways of working, primarily in the screening and assessment teams. The change was originally anticipated to come into effect in April 2020 however implementation was paused due to the coronavirus pandemic. The position will now be assessed via a view to progressing over the coming weeks. It is expected 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.
- 3.2.7 The Trafford Academy is underway and the first cohort of 3 Social Worker apprentices commenced this year and will qualify in October 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. A second cohort of 3 will commence in September 2020. The course runs for 30 months.

3.4 Governance and Community Strategy

- 3.4.1 The total agency spend in 2019/20 was £190,173 which is a decrease of £34,651 on spend in 2018/19, which was £224,824.
- 3.4.2 The majority of spend is on roles in Legal Services (82%), with 14% on Community Safety Officers and remaining 4% on Information Governance, Performance and Business Support. The requirement for Community Safety Officers was linked to a restructure and has been resolved and one was made a permanent employee. There have been continuing difficulties in retaining and 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 to be undertaken to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff, which will include looking at options to develop a pipe-line in-house for example through apprenticeships. In quarter 4 spend only related to Legal Service as the issues in the other services had been resolved.

3.5 Finance and Systems

- 3.5.1 In 2019/20 total spend for Finance and Systems was £48,034 which is a decrease of £17,945 on the figure of £65,979 in 2018/19. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.
- 3.5.2 The agency usage relates to: Procurement at 60%; Finance at 22%, and; Business Change Analyst in Transformation at 18%. Procurement have recruited an agency worker into a permanent role. In Finance a Senior Accountant had been needed temporarily pending a service restructure, however the need for this ceased after quarter 1.

3.6 People

3.6.1 The 2019/20 agency spend for People was £8,650, which was a very significant decrease of over £111,802 as compared with spend of £120,452 in 2018/19.

3.6.2 Spend relates mostly to Business Support in Operational Services for Education and a Personal Assistant in Leadership Support as there was a risk to service provision, particularly with OSfE being a Traded Service.

3.7 Place

3.7.1 The total agency spend for 2019/20 was £14,303; this represented a decrease of 77% from spend of £64,000 in 2018/19. Spend in this area relates to Regulatory Services roles (Pest Control, Licensing and a Personal Assistant) which saw 78% of spend. The other spend relates to Business Support in Strategic Growth.

3.7.2 Previously there had been a reasonable spend on Building Control roles, however the service has now ceased their reliance on agency staffing due to the high costs. They continue to explore strategies to attract staff on a permanent basis.

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 2019/20 was £602,008. This is an increase as compared to 2018/19 when spend was £410,619. The quarterly spend for the year is detailed below.

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
£47,380	£177,146	£279,545	£97,937	£602,008

4.3 Spend over the year related to the following: One Trafford Response; interim Corporate Director for Children's Services; interim Director of Development, and; a legal role.

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.

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

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

Appendix 1

Trafford Council Agency Spend By Directorate Q4 - 2019/2020

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Childcare Worker	7	£4,167.82
	Customer Service Advisor - Libraries and Contact Centre	1	£927.86
	Customer Service Advisor (MARAT)	1	£3,373.39
	Early Help Intervention Worker	4	£25,226.14
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£5,176.11
	Personal Advisor	1	£8,509.28
	Project Support Officer	1	£7,452.20
	Residential Childcare Officer	4	£1,282.61
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£7,333.13
	Senior Practitioner	1	£6,206.27
	Service Manager	1	£22,447.51
	Social Worker Level 2	4	£48,564.02
	Social Worker Level 3	33	£399,557.10
	Social Worker level 3a	1	£10,682.12
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	1	£34,075.82
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£18,858.35
	Team Leader	2	£35,294.36
Adults Services	Business Support Officer level 2	1	£285.07
	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres	17	£38,255.12
	Cook Manager	4	£572.78
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	2	£6,504.68
	Customer Service Advisor (MARAT)	1	£1,805.10

	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£5,446.68
	Social Worker Level 3	11	£73,899.28
	Social Worker level 3a	4	£47,477.78
	Business Change Analyst - level 1	1	£1,943.38
	Procurement Officer	2	£7,589.07
Finance & Systems	Trainee Procurement Officer	1	£3,665.32
	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	2	£3,474.66
	Legal Executive	1	£8,486.47
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2	£26,501.72
Governance & Community Strategy	Solicitor	4	£34,933.32
	Business Support Officer Level 2	2	1309.16
People	Events Co-Ordinator	1	1004.44
	Senior Personal Assistant	1	3521.66
	Business Support Officer level 2	1	1372.7
Place	General Labourer	1	2624.36
	Personal Assistant - Level 1	1	1303.41
Grand Total		126	£911,110.25

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing average tenure of active assignments as at 31st March 2020

Directorate	Job Title	Average Tenure	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Childcare Worker	1year 4months	1
	Early Help Intervention Worker	3months 28days	1
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2months 4days	1
	Personal Advisor	3months 22days	1
	Project Support Officer	2months 25days	1
	Senior Business Support Officer	9months 21days	1
	Senior Practitioner	5months 3days	1
	Service Manager	3months 28days	1
	Social Worker Level 2	3months 15days	1
	Social Worker Level 3	4months 26days	27
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	5months 24days	1
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1month 19days	1
	Team Leader	4months 14days	2
Adults Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres*	1years 1month	8
	Cook Manager	9 days	2
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1month 5days	1
	Social Worker Level 3	3months 13days	7
	Social Worker level 3a	9months 1day	3

Governance & Community Strategy	Legal Executive [Trafford]	5months 24days	1
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	1month 19days	2
	Solicitor	7months 12days	3
Finance & Systems	Procurement Officer	5months 1day	1
	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	20days	2
People	Events Co-Ordinator	19days	1
	Senior Personal Assistant	1month 3days	1

*These agency staff are used akin to a bank, so they have an assignment start and end date however they aren't working continuously, instead on an ad hoc basis.