

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

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

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q1 - Period 1st April 2020 to 30th June 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. 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 role 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 1.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides information on the length of tenure for those assignments that were still active as at 30th June 2020.
- 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.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children's Services

- 2.1.1 In Q1 2020/21, spend in Children's Services totalled £644,050 and as at 30th June 2020 there were a total of 50 active assignments across the Directorate. 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.
- 2.1.2 The spend has increased slightly compared with Q4 2019/20 which was £639,134. However when comparing the spend with the corresponding period in 2019/20 (£216,823) it is substantially higher. As detailed in the annual report, this is in part due to some services which are now in the this directorate being under Adult Services last year. Although the spend isn't going in the right direction, given the fact that the pandemic was at its height during this period, a modest increase in spend might be expected, given the pressures.
- 2.1.3 The proportion of the quarterly spend that is on interim qualified Social Worker roles has increased from 82% in quarter 4 to 92% in quarter 1. The next biggest spend is on Residential Childcare Officers with £19k. This demonstrates that resourcing for this workforce, with the exception of Social Workers is stable.

2.1.4 Following the Ofsted inspection outcome which highlighted high caseload numbers, additional resources were put in place. However due to the volume of agency workers required, our umbrella agency, Reed, have been unable to meet our requirements in terms of number and quality of assignees.

The issues in relation to recruiting suitably qualified and experienced social workers is being considered at a GM level together with concerns regarding the Reed contract.

It is vital that the assignments are filled to ensure the service meets its statutory requirements in order to keep children safe and that the service successfully delivers the Ofsted Improvement plan. There is on average a need for 32 agency workers which has resulted in a need to go off framework and 17 agency workers have been sourced in this way which has resulted in higher costs. The service is monitoring this situation very closely and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.

2.1.5 The Families Matter team is now in place, and the new Family Practitioners are case managing a number of low level child in need cases under the supervision of a qualified Social Worker. This model will provide a career pathway for social care staff to develop and progress to become qualified. It will also help reduce the workloads of Social Workers by taking open low level Child in Need cases and preventing cases escalating to child protection cases. The team are currently holding a caseload of 69.

2.1.6 We still have in place 1.5 FTE Social Work Development Officers to support staff with their professional development as this is a crucial aspect of looking after our Social Workers. In particular, they are providing additional support for newly qualified Social Workers undergoing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and for children's Social Workers and practice supervisors who have volunteered for the National Assessment and Accreditation system. This pathway has also been added as an option for staff under-going career progression from social worker (level 2) to Experienced Social Worker (Level 3).

2.1.7 The new Corporate Director for Children's Services is taking a holistic view of Social Worker resourcing so we can take actions to improve recruitment and retention.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q1 2020/21, spend in Adult Services totalled £124,800 and as at 30th June 2020 there were a total of 13 active assignments across the Directorate. 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.

- 2.2.2 This is a significant decrease as compared with Q1 2019/20 which was £226,422. This is likely in part to be due to some services having moved to Children's Services, which has seen an increase in spend. Spend has however increased as compared with the previous quarter (Q4, 2019/20) which was £174,246.
- 2.2.3 76% of the spend was on interim qualified Social Worker roles. The majority of the remainder or the spend is on Care Assistants at 17%. The spend on Care Assistants in Ascot House reduced from £38k in quarter 4 to £21k in quarter 1, which is despite the COVID-19 situation putting pressure on the service. The internal Resourcing Hub that was established supported and additional casuals were recruited to avoid over reliance on agency.
- 2.2.4 The picture of no spend on agency Support Workers continued in this quarter. This was further to the review in Supported Living which saw better establishment of roles and the use of casuals to support where required.
- 2.2.5 In order to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers the Service has the Trafford Academy. This will provide a mechanism for a rolling recruitment programme. The Academy has developed an engagement programme with schools and colleges to promote and inspire adult social care as a rewarding career choice. An Insight Event was held at Trafford Town Hall In March 2020 attended by 6 secondary schools across Trafford and Greater Manchester, engaging in interactive sessions facilitated by adult social care workers. A live online Q+A session was also held with students from a school. This gave them the opportunity to submit questions to Adult Social Care workers about their roles and their experience of working during the Covid19 pandemic.
- 2.2.6 Trafford continues to offer the Social Worker apprenticeship degree. This route enables Trafford to grow our own Social Workers.

2.4 Governance and Community Strategy

- 2.4.1 In Q1 2020/21, the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy equated to £107,654 and as at 30th June 2020, there were 7 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in specialist skills.

2.4.2 The spend has over double as compared to Q1 2019/20 which was £46,166. When compared to, Q4 2019/20 it has increased from the figure of £73,396.

2.4.3 Around 80% of the spend was to bring in legal support at a very difficult time for the Council. This is an area that is continually difficult to resource and different options are being considered. The remainder of the spend was on Information Governance expertise.

2.5 Finance and Systems

2.5.1 In Q1 20/21, the total agency spend in Finance and Systems equated to £5,450 and as at 30th June 2020, there was 1 active assignment. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

2.5.2 The spend has reduced by nearly half as compared with Q1 2019/20 which was £10,486. There has also been a significant reduction as compared to the previous period, Q4 2019/20 which was £48,034.

2.5.3 The spend was for a Procurement specialist for STaR.

2.6 People

2.6.1 In Q1 2020/21, the total agency spend in People equated to £9,710 and as at 30th June 2020, there were no active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

2.6.2 The spend has increased as compared with Q1 2019/20 as there was no spend in this period. It has nearly doubled as compared to the previous period, Q4 2019/20 which was £5,835.

2.6.3 The spend was to bring in personal assistant skills at a critical time for the leadership of the Council.

2.7 Place

2.7.1 In Q1 20/21 there was no spend on agency in Place and there were no active assignments at the end of the quarter.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q1 2020/21 was £891,664. This is an decrease of £20k on the previous period, Q4 2018/19 when spend was £911,109. Give the pressures of the pandemic it is good to see the position hasn't deteriorated. However the spend is at a much higher level than the corresponding period last year when it was £499,897 for Q1 2019/20. Around 76% of the total spend is on social workers. 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 is ongoing to try to mitigate this and move to a more stable resourcing position. It is really positive that there has been no or minimal agency spend in Place, People and Finance and Systems.

4. Consultant Spend

4.1 The total spend in Q1 2020/21 was £21,495. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children and Families	Adult Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	People	Place
£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£21,495

4.2 The spend was around a quarter of the level of Q4 2019/20 which was £97,937 and it was also a decrease on Q1 in 2019/20 which was £47,380.

4.3 There was only consultant used in the Place directorate.

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 Q1 - 2020/2021

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Childcare Worker	3	£1,117.84
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£8,821.18
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£14,165.56
	Personal Advisor	1	£8,103.83
	Project Support Officer	1	£7,021.64
	Residential Childcare Officer	18	£18,978.77
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,972.48
	Service Manager	1	£17,946.16
	Social Worker Level 2	2	£24,199.37
	Social Worker Level 3	30	£421,687.97
	Social Worker level 3a	1	£17,663.50
	Team Leader	2	£35,081.98
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	1	£31,577.77
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£30,712.17
Adult Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres	8	£21,167.61
	Cook Manager	2	£423.30
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1	£7,708.43
	Social Worker Level 3	7	£68,993.90
	Social Worker level 3a	3	£26,507.02
Finance & Systems	Procurement Officer	1	£5,450
Governance & Community Strategy	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	2	£21,499.476
	Legal Executive	1	£3,113.38

	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2	£40,915.29
	Solicitor	4	£42,125.61
People	Senior Personal Assistant	1	£9,710.11
Grand Total		96	£891,664

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing average tenure of active assignments as at 30th June 2020

Directorate	Job Title	Average Tenure	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Early Help Intervention Worker	6 months 28 days	1
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2 months 25 days	1
	Personal Advisor	6 months 22 days	1
	Project Support Officer	5 months 24 days	1
	Residential Childcare Officer	3 months 9 days	11
	Service Manager	6 months 28 days	1
	Social Worker Level 2	6 months 15 days	1
	Social Worker Level 3	7 months 5 days	29
	Social Worker Level 3a	8 months 2 days	1
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	8 months 23 days	1
	Team Leader	7 months 13 days	2
Adult Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres*	1 year 1 month 9 days	5
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	4 months 6 days	1
	Social Worker Level 3	6 months 22 days	6
	Social Worker level 3a	8 months 16 days	1
Governance & Community Strategy	Information Governance Officer	3 months 17 days	2
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	4 months 20 days	2
	Solicitor	7 months 13 days	3

Finance & Systems	Procurement Officer	7 months 31 days	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.