

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 7th December 2020
Report for: Information
Report of: Sara Saleh, Corporate Director of Strategy & Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q2 - Period 1st July 2020 to 30th September 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. 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 roles for which we have recruitment and retention difficulties. For these reasons, access to temporary agency support is essential to cover 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 2.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of assignments that were still active as at 30th September 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 Q2 2020/21, spend in Children's Services totalled £769,122 and as at 30th September 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 compared with Q1 2020/21 which was £644,050. When comparing spend with the corresponding period in 2019/20 (£343,673), it is over double the level. In Q1 the pandemic didn't appear to be having a big impact on spend, however it seems that there may have been a time lag in terms of needing additional resource, or invoices being received. There has been sustained pressure and the service has had to ensure appropriate resourcing levels so we can run critical services.
- 2.1.3 The proportion of the quarterly spend that is on interim qualified Social Worker roles has continued from quarter 1 at 92%. However as the overall spend in this quarter has increased, spend on Social Worker roles has increased. This has increased from around £593k to £712k. The next biggest spend is on Residential Childcare Officers at nearly £23k.

2.1.4 Further to additional resources being put in place as a result of the Ofsted report, our umbrella agency, Reed, were unable to meet our requirements in terms of number and quality of assignees. This led to us engaging agency workers from other providers - we have a continuing reliance on these agencies at a higher cost.

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. The service is monitoring this situation very closely and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.

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 is available as an option for staff undergoing career progression from social worker (level 2) to Experienced Social Worker (Level 3).

2.1.7 The 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 Q2 2020/21, spend in Adult Services totalled £148,276 and as at 30th September 2020 there were a total of 12 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 Q2 2019/20 which was £246,621. Spend has however increased a little as compared with the previous quarter (Q1, 2020/21) which was £124,800. However this position isn't too concerning given the pressures on services as a result of the pandemic.

- 2.2.3 89% of spend was on interim qualified Social Worker roles, which is an increase from the previous quarter's figure of 76%. The level of spend on Care Assistants has continued to reduce each quarter from Q4 2019/20. In Q1 it was £21k and this quarter it was around £6k. This is despite Ascot House being a service which has been at the forefront of COVID-19 pressures. They continue to resource using casuals where needed.
- 2.2.4 Additional resource have been put in place in Supported Living as a result of an employment relations matter and in response to a need to improve quality of service delivery. In addition the service is looking to strengthen its internal assurances processes including development of a quality assurance framework that complements our safeguarding policy and procedures. This will initially be concentrated within Supported Living but will be developed in a way as to facilitate wider implementation across other internal support services.
- 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.
- 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 Q2 2020/21, the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy equated to £127,132 and as at 30th September 2020, there were 6 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in specialist skills.
- 2.4.2 Spend has over trebled as compared to Q2 2019/20 which was £40,451. When compared to, Q1 2020/21 it has increased from the figure of £107,654.
- 2.4.3 Spend on bringing in legal support is still around 80% of the total. It has increased from around £86k in Q1 to £102k this quarter. Resourcing difficulties persist in this service and different options continue to be explored. The remainder of spend was on Information Governance expertise.

2.5 Finance and Systems

- 2.5.1 In Q2 20/21, the total agency spend in Finance and Systems equated to £9,428 and as at 30th September 2020, there were 2 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

2.5.2 There has been a significant increase as compared to the previous period, Q1 2020/21 which was £5,450. There has also been an increase as compared to the corresponding period in 2019/20 when there was no spend.

2.5.3 The spend was all in the STaR Procurement service, which provides a service for several organisations and so it is essential that required staffing levels are maintained.

2.6 Strategy and Resources

2.6.1 In Q2 2020/21, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources equated to £5,876 and as at 30th September 2020, there were 2 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in professional and specialist skills.

2.6.2 Spend has increased significantly as compared with Q2 2019/20 which was only £312. However promisingly it has decreased as compared to the previous period, Q1 2020/21 which was £9,710.

2.6.3 Spend has mostly been on HR Consultant roles. The pressures caused by the pandemic have led to an increase in casework and early in the pandemic response it was difficult to progress cases leading to delays. To address these issues and move cases along, to reduce employee relations issues, extra support has been necessary.

2.7 Place

2.7.1 In Q2 20/21 there was no spend on agency in Place and there were no active assignments at the end of the quarter. This is the second quarter with no spend. This is an improvement on the Q2 in 2019/20 when there was spend of £4,547.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q2 2020/21 was £1,059,834. This is a significant increase as compared with the previous period, Q1 2020/21 when spend was £891,664. However despite the pandemic spend in quarter 1 was fairly stable with the increase being experienced in the following quarter. Spend is also at a much higher level than the corresponding period last year when it was £635,604 for Q2 2019/20. However the Council has experienced its most difficult period for at least a decade over the last few months responding to the national emergency. 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 continues 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 Q2 2020/21 was £20,328. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's Services	Adult Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	People	Place
£17,578	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,750

4.2 The level of spend has stayed much the same as in Q1 2020/21 which was £21,495. There has been a huge decrease on Q2 in 2019/20 which was £177,146.

4.3 Consultant use has been limited to Children's Services and Place.

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 - 2020/2021

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Care Assistant – Residential Homes & Day Care Centres	1	£206.23
	Childcare Assistant	1	£109.36
	Childcare Worker	3	£2,204.89
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£11,592.25
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£18,219.56
	Personal Advisor	1	£9,342.06
	Project Support Officer	1	£3,453.10
	Residential Childcare Officer	15	£22,930.80
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,366.96
	Senior Practitioner	1	£31,297.01
	Service Manager	3	£30,885.20
	Social Worker Level 2	2	£18,740.04
	Social Worker Level 3	39	£479,710.69
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£47,932.46
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	2	£47,415.56
	Team Leader	2	£38,715.85
	Total	76	£769,122.02
Adult Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres	5	£6,394.03
	Cook Manager	4	£804.35

	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1	£9,400.90
	Social Worker Level 3	10	£81,404.15
	Social Worker level 3a	4	£50,272.79
	Total	24	£148,276.22
Governance & Community Strategy	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	2	£25,263.86
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2	£50,664.97
	Solicitor	3	£51,203.44
	Total	7	£127,132.44
Finance & Systems	Business Improvement Officer	1	£1,389.73
	Procurement Officer	1	£8,037.98
	Total	2	£9,427.71
Strategy & Resources	HR Consultant	2	£3,870.08
	Senior Personal Assistant	1	£2,005.72
	Total	1	£5,875.80
Grand Total		110	£1,059,834.19

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing active assignments as at 30th September 2020

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Childcare Worker	1
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1
	Personal Advisor	1
	Residential Childcare Officer	4
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Senior Practitioner	1
	Service Manager	2
	Social Worker Level 2	1
	Social Worker Level 3	33
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Team Leader	2
	Total	50
Adult Services	Care Assistant - Residential Homes & Day Centres*	1
	Cook Manager	2
	Customer Engagement Support Officer	1
	Social Worker Level 3	4
	Social Worker level 3a	4
	Total	12
Governance &	Information Governance Officer	1

Community Strategy	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	2
	Solicitor	3
	Total	6
Finance & Systems	Business Improvement Officer	1
	Procurement Officer	1
	Total	2
Strategy & Resources	HR Consultant	2
	Total	2

*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.