

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 6th September 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q1 - Period 1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021

Summary

This report details the quarterly spend for the Council on agency workers and also on consultants who are engaged. Spend is broken down by quarter and also by Directorate with an overview of 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 aligns with the council's Corporate Priorities in respect to 'Thriving places'.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	None
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
Carbon Reduction	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

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

Name: Tracey Sefton, Interim HR Strategic Resource Lead

Extension: x 4131

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 a breakdown of assignments that were still active as at 30th June 2021.
- 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 2021/22 spend in Children's Services totalled £466,567.80 and as at 30th June 2021 there were a total of 47 active assignments across the Directorate.
- 2.1.2 The spend has substantially reduced as compared with Q4 2020/21 which was £839,896. When comparing agency spend with the corresponding period in Q1 2020/21 (£644,050) it is substantially lower.

- 2.1.3 The proportion of the quarterly spend that is on all interim qualified Social Worker roles has decreased from 91% in quarter 4 to 73% in quarter 1. The next biggest spend is on Independent Reviewing Officers with £20k. This demonstrates that resourcing for this workforce, with the exception of Social Workers is stable.
- 2.1.4 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 and cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.
- 2.1.5 We still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers in addition to Reed, our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone. Spend through these agencies in Q1 (2021/22) is £407,044.16 which has increased when compared with the corresponding period in Q1 (2020/21) £361,564.29. The service will continue to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.
- 2.1.6 As part of the service redesign, a number of improvements have been implemented to attract, recruit and retain qualified social workers, along with the development of a Recruitment and Retention Strategy. This includes the introduction of a market supplement in April 2021 that will support the immediate recruitment and retention of front-line social workers and bring Trafford to a more competitive place with our GM neighbours
- 2.1.7 The improvements also include an updated induction programme for all new colleagues, manageable workloads, practice led improvements to refresh their supervision framework, investment in a minimum 3 year programme with relational partners, 'Strengthening Practice' who will deliver a programme of 'core skills' to the workforce and work at all levels in building relationships and help to unblock any culture barriers to improvement and learning. There will be a significant vacancy gap when the new Children's structure is implemented and therefore there will still be some reliance on agency workers in the short term. However, HR continue to work alongside the service redesign project team and provide on-going support with regards to Organisational Development interventions, delivering change workshops and running sessions on interview skills for colleagues looking to progress in their careers.
- 2.1.8 HR have provided support and advice to engage a recruitment consultancy to work in partnership to develop a high quality Social Worker recruitment campaign in order to successfully attract and recruit to a number of vacancies, therefore reducing the reliance on agency workers. The recruitment campaign will be launched in September 2021 which will run for a period of 3 months initially with the flexibility to extend the campaign if required.

2.1.9 We have in place 1 FTE Senior Learning and Development Officer and 1 FTE Social Work Development Officer, to support staff with their professional development across children and adult services. This is a crucial aspect of looking after our social workers, in particular, they provide additional support for newly qualified social workers undergoing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), as well as mentoring the practice educators of social work students on placements.

2.1.10 We also have several 'grow your own' routes into social work, most notably the social worker apprenticeship programme. We currently have 2 social worker apprentices in Children's Services, who are due to qualify in October 2021, 3 more who are in their second year of this programme and are about to launch this opportunity again, with a planned start date for 3 apprentices in September 2021. We are part of the Greater Manchester Step Up partnership, which is a 15 month post graduate fast track route into social work. We have employed our first Step Up graduate this March and are due to take on 3 more Step Up students in January 2022. For several years we have supported two Frontline units, this is a 12 month post graduate route into children's social work. These units of 4 students, are guaranteed their first year of employment as a social worker, and often remain in Trafford after this. Another 8 students will qualify via this route in September 2021.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q1 2021/22, spend in Adult Services totalled £305,630.73 and as at 30th June 2021 there were a total of 77 active assignments across the Directorate.

2.2.2 This is a significant increase as compared with Q1 2020/21 which was £124,800. Spend has further increased when compared with the previous quarter Q4 2020/21 which was £261,489.

2.2.3 45% of spend was on interim qualified Social Worker roles. The majority of the remainder of spend is on Support Workers at 36% (£110,223) and Social Care Team Leader at 17%. Agency spend on Support Workers in Ascot House is at 1.2% (£1,351) and in Supported Living is 98.8%. The internal Resourcing service has been supporting Ascot House and Supported Living to recruit casuals and a number of permanent roles to reduce the reliance on agency.

2.2.4 In order to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers the Service has developed the Trafford Academy. This will provide a mechanism for a rolling recruitment programme stemming from an engagement programme with schools and colleges to promote and inspire adult social care as a rewarding career choice.

2.2.5 Although the initial project began in earnest in 2019, there have been some delays in the delivery of key objectives, this is in part due to the need to re-prioritise and direct resources to respond to the pandemic. A reassessing of priorities is taking place due to the shift in the ways of working and demands which have altered the requirements of Adult Social Care.

2.2.6 The Adults Workforce Development Group oversees workforce development across Adults Directorate and will now govern the decision making aspects of the Trafford Academy project.

2.3 Governance and Community Strategy

2.3.1 In Q1 2021/22, the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy totalled £66,883.91 and as at 30th June 2021, there were 9 active assignments.

2.3.2 The spend has decreased as compared to Q1 2020/21 which was £107,654 and when compared to Q4 2020/21, it has increased slightly from £62,003.

2.3.3 There is a small amount of spend on Procurement roles as this service moved under this directorate during the year. 16% of spend is on an Information Governance Officer. However the largest spend is on legal roles at 72% of the total for the directorate. There has been a continued difficulty with 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 underway to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff, includes looking at options to develop a pipe-line in-house for example through apprenticeships and the development of career pathways to support succession planning and career progression.

2.4 Finance and Systems

2.4.1 In Q1 2021/22, there was no agency spend in Finance and Systems and no active assignments at the end of the quarter (Q4 2020/21).

2.5 Strategy and Resources

2.5.1 In Q1 2021/22, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources totalled £59,566.31 and as at 30th June 2021, there were 5 active assignments.

2.5.2 The spend has increased as compared with Q1 2020/21 which was £9,710. It has reduced slightly compared to the previous period, Q4 2020/21 which was £64,361.

2.5.3 The spend was on HR roles with the majority on the Head of Shared Service at 47%. The majority of the remainder of spend is on HR Business Partner and HR Consultants at 27%.

2.5.4 Exit strategy for temporary staff is still underway that should see further reductions in this area over 2021/22 and we will continue to monitor agency usage.

2.6 Place

2.6.1 In Q1 2021/22 agency spend in Place totalled £42,545.05 and as at 30th June 2021, there were 6 active assignments.

Agency spend has increased significantly compared to the previous Q1 2020/21 which was zero spend. It has more than doubled compared to the previous period, Q4 2020/21 which was £21,053.

The majority of the spend is in the Inclusive Economies and Communities Team at 66% with the largest spend on the Inclusive Economies and Communities Manager at 36%. Due to the unsuccessful recruitment to the role of Inclusive Economies and Communities Manager, following the resignation of the former post-holder, there was an urgent need to engage an agency worker to fill a significant skills gap within the team. The Skills & Employment Officer is funded via a ring-fenced grant budget from GMCA. The next largest spend is on the Head of Regulatory Services at 24%. The Head of Service substantive post-holder is currently seconded to the COVID 19 Neighbourhood and Engagement Team and the secondment is funded from contain funding.

3. **Summary Agency Spend Position**

3.1 The total agency spend in Q1 2021/22 was £921,193.20. This is a substantial decrease of £327,607.80 on the previous period, Q4 20/21 when spend was £1,248,801. Given the pressures of the pandemic it is good to see the position has improved. However the spend is at a slightly higher level than the corresponding period last year when it was £891,664 for Q1 2020/21. Around 57.5% of the total spend is on social workers which has reduced when compared with the previous period Q4 2020/21 which was 76%. Spend has significantly increased in Place, with the highest spend in the Inclusive Economies and Community Team. Agency spend in Strategy and Resources has slightly reduced compared to the previous Q4 (2020/21), although it more than doubled compared to the previous Q1 due to recruitment difficulties, in particular the Head of Shared Service. It is still positive that there has been no agency spend in Finance and Systems.

4. **Consultant Spend**

4.1 The total spend in Q1 2021/22 was £79,167 including circa £50k spend in Strategy and Resources for the Interim Programme Director, funded via the COVID Contain Grant. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£29,167	£0	£0	£0	£0	£50,000

4.2 The spend was significantly lower than the level of Q4 2020/21 which was £203,191. When comparing consultancy spend with the corresponding period Q1 in 2020/21 which was £79,150 this has remained consistent.

4.3 During Q1 (2021/22) two consultants were engaged, one in Children's Services and one in Strategy and Resourcing 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 - 2021/2022

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Business Support Worker	1	£4,264.58
	Childcare Assistant new	2	£802.35
	Childcare Worker – more than doubled	4	£3,963.34
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£10,294.59
	Independent Reviewing Officer	3	£19,719.78
	Residential Childcare Officer	2	£918.08
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£6,627.14
	Service Manager	5	£34,925.28
	Social Worker Level 2	1	£4,069.11
	Social Worker Level 3	12	£143,557.27
	Social Worker level 3a	4	£35,520.54
	Social Worker Level 3a/Senior Practitioner	1	£1,313.80
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£66,335.14
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	1	£38,688.60
	Support Worker	1	£4,638.55
	Team Manager	5	£66,598.45
	Training Officer	1	£4,331.20
	Total	47	£446,567.80
Adult Services	Cook Manager	4	£2,125.99
	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1	£2,164.23
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£1,359.67
	Social Care Team Leader	3	£51,062.89
	Social Worker Level 3	16	£126,812.79

	Social Worker level 3a	2	£11,882.00
	Support Worker	50	£110,223.16
	Total	77	£305,630.73
Finance & Systems	No agency in Q1	0	£0
	Total	0	£0
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1	£7,571.87
	Information Governance Officer (Corporate)	1	£10,823.03
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	1	£6,656.28
	Solicitor	6	£41,782.73
	Total	9	£66,883.91
Place	Business Support Officer Level 2	1	£2,304.57
	Head of Regulatory Services	1	£10,374.99
	Inclusive Economies & Communities Manager	1	£15,252.68
	Skills & Outreach Worker	1	£4,622.70
	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	1	£8,394.42
	Validation Officer	1	£1,595.69
	Total	6	£42,545.05
Strategy and Resources	Head of Shared Service	1	£28,169.39
	HR Business Partner	1	£5,470.25
	HR Consultant	2	£15,894.03
	GMSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist	1	£10,032.64
	Total	5	£59,566.31
Grand Total			

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate

Breakdown by Directorate showing active assignments as at 30th June 2021

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Business Support Officer Level 2	1
	Childcare Worker	2
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1
	Independent Reviewing Officer	3
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Service Manager	3
	Social Worker Level 3	9
	Social Worker Level 3a	4
	Social Worker 3a/Senior Practitioner	1
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Strategic Lead for Quality & Improvement	1
	Support Worker	1
	Team Manager	5
	Training Officer	1
Total	35	
Adult Services	Cook Manager	2
	Freedom of Information Officer	1
	Social Care Team Leader	3
	Social Worker Level 3	12
	Social Worker level 3a	1
	Support Worker	42
Total	61	
	Business Improvement Officer	1

Governance & Community Strategy	Information Governance Officer	1
	Litigation Solicitor - Corporate & Commercial	1
	Solicitor	5
	Total	8
Place	Head of Regulatory Services	1
	Inclusive Economies & Communities Manager	1
	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	1
Strategy & Resources	Head of HR Shared Service	1
	HR Consultant	1
	HRSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist	1
	Total	3