

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

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

### Report Title

**Agency and Consultant Spend for Q2 - Period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 roles 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 2.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of assignments that were still active as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 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. A small number of roles in Adults have been funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) Contain Grant.

## **2. Directorate Overview**

### **2.1 Children's Services**

- 2.1.1 In Q2 2021/22 spend in Children's Services totalled £1,076,569.27 and as at 30 September 2021 there were a total of 115 active assignments across the Directorate.

- 2.1.2 Children's agency spend has increased by £264,290.38 when compared with Q1 2021/22. When comparing Q2 agency spend with the corresponding period in Q2 2020/21 which was £769,122 it is substantially higher.
- 2.1.3 The proportion of the Q2 2021/22 spend that is on all interim qualified Social Worker roles has increased from 73% in quarter 1 to 84.75% in Q2. The largest spend in Q2 is on Level 3 Qualified Social Workers (57%). The next biggest spend is Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement (£42K), Independent Reviewing Officers (£31K) and Childcare Assistants (£11.5K). There has also been an increase in spend for two new Heads of Service (£21.5K) which remained vacant following the internal recruitment as part of the service redesign.
- 2.1.4 We still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers which we engaged via the Councils new Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF) in addition to Reed, our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone. Children's spend via SWAF in Q2 (2021/22) is £431,788.89 which has increased when compared with the corresponding period in Q2 (2020/21) £401,982.9. The spend via SWAF for Q2 2021/22 was spent on Level 3 Social Workers, Team Leaders and Waking Night Residential Childcare Officers. The service will continue to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.
- 2.1.5 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.
- 2.1.6 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 December 2021 and 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 have 4 newly qualified social workers who have just qualified via the social worker apprenticeship route (2 in children and 2 in adults), a cohort of 6 more are in their second year of this programme and 5 who started this work based route in to social work, in September 2021.

2.1.1 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 2021, 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. 7 students qualified via this route in September 2021 and a further 8 started this programme the same month.

## 2.2 Adult Services

- 2.2.1 In Q2 2021/22 spend in Adult Services totalled £320,167.81 and as at 30 September 2021 there were a total of 79 active assignments across the Directorate.
- 2.2.2 This is an increase of £6,505.73 when compared with Q1 2021/22. Spend has significantly increased when compared with the previous quarter Q2 2020/21 which was £148,276.
- 2.2.3 Adult's still have a reliance on agency workers from other providers which we also engaged via the Councils new Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF) in addition to REED our umbrella agency. This is because we haven't been able to meet our staffing requirements through Reed alone. Adult's spend via SWAF in Q2 (2021/22) is £15,058.22 which has increased when compared with the corresponding period in Q2 (2020/21) which was zero. The agency spend via SWAF for Q2 2021/22 was spent on Level 3 Social Workers. The service will continue to monitor this situation and ending assignments as soon as permanent workers have commenced in post.
- 2.2.4 47% of spend in Q2 2021/22 was on interim qualified Social Worker roles compared with 45% in Q1 (2021/22). £26,777.64 of the spend on Social Workers in Urgent Care is funded from the COMF Contain Grant, along with the Business Support and Engagement Assistants (£3,318.12). The majority of the remainder of spend is on Support Workers at 34% compared with 36% in Q1 and Social Care Team Leader at 16%. Agency spend on Support Workers in Ascot House is at 0.3% and in Supported Living is 99.7%. 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.
- 2.2.5 In order to improve the recruitment of Social Workers the Service has developed the Trafford Learning 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. The school and engagement project is becoming more established within schools, and offers initial myth busting sessions to young people about what a career in adult social care is really like. Trafford Learning Academy is working with partners across schools in Trafford to promote the use of the health and social care GCSE, increasing the amount of schools that offer this to students by linking in with the Cllr for Education and Director for Education. Trafford Learning Academy is now a school enterprise advisor for Altrincham College and Flixton Girls School.
- 2.2.6 Trafford Learning Academy provides a range of support to aid staff retention, such as, social work forum, confidential support around career aspirations or

frustrations, 1:1/ group learning support where required around specific areas of learning, and mentorship for apprentices.

2.2.7 The Adults Workforce Development Group continues to assist and oversee workforce development across Adults Directorate, and will align closely with the other DASS and TSSP sub-boards to enable shared working wherever there is shared priorities.

2.2.8 A paper was submitted to CLT for consideration in light of the current challenges faced recruiting to and retaining qualified social workers. The paper set out options which included increasing the rate of pay, development opportunities and incentives, and bespoke recruitment campaigns.

2.2.9 Adults Services is also taking part in North West ADASS which is aimed at attracting under 35's into roles such as support workers and care workers to address workforce pressures in the system.

## 2.3 Governance and Community Strategy

2.3.1 In Q2 2021/22 the total agency spend in Governance and Community Strategy totalled £82,366.36 and as at 30 September 2021 there were 6 active assignments. Spend has increased as compared to Q1 2021/22 which was £66,883.91 and when compared to the corresponding Q2 2020/21 period, it has decreased from £127,132.

2.3.3 The largest spend is on legal roles at 93.3% of the total spend 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 Q2 2021/22, there was no agency spend in Finance and Systems and no active assignments at the end of the quarter (Q1 2021/22). In the corresponding Q2 2020/21, the total agency spend in Finance and Systems equated to £9,428.

## 2.5 Place

2.5.1 In Q2 2021/22 agency spend in Place totalled £30,406.57 and as at 30 September 2021, there were 2 active assignments.

2.5.2 Agency spend has decreased compared to spend in Q1 2021/22 which was £42,545.05. In the corresponding Q2 2020/21 period, there was no spend on agency in Place and there were no active assignments at the end of the quarter.

2.5.3 The majority of spend (72.6%) is on the Head of Regulatory Services due to the Substantive post-holder being on internal secondment to the COVID 19 Neighbourhood and Engagement Team. The secondment is being funded from the COVID Contain Grant.

## 2.6 Strategy and Resources

2.6.1 In Q2 2021/22, the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources totalled £21,602.85 and as a 30 September 2021, there were 5 active assignments.

2.6.2 Agency spend has decreased as compared with Q1 2021/22 which was £59,566.31. It has increased compared to the corresponding Q2 2020/21 period which was £5,876.

2.6.3 The biggest spend was on HR Consultant roles at 66.8%. The remainder of spend is on Head of Shared Service and GMSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist.

2.6.4 An 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.

## 3. **Summary Agency Spend Position**

3.1 The total agency spend in Q2 2021/22 was £1,531,112.86. This is an increase of £244,302.5 compared to the previous period of Q1 2021/22. The majority of the agency spend was through Reed, our umbrella agency which was £1,084,265.66 and the remaining spend via the new Social Worker Agency Framework which was £466,874.20. The majority of pressure is due to difficulties recruiting qualified Social Workers.

3.2 The spend via the new Social Worker Agency Framework for Children's was included in section 2.1.5 of the Q1 report however, it was omitted in error from the Children's total and the overall total and the appendices at that time. However, the agency spend in this Q2 2021/22 report includes the actual increase in agency spend compared to the revised agency spend in Children's for Q1 2021/22.

3.3 The agency spend via the new Social Worker Agency Framework for Adults in Q2 (2021/22) which was £15,058.22 has decreased when compared to the previous Q1 2021/22 period which was £19,995.47. £30,095.76 of the Q2 agency spend on Social Worker Level 3 and Business Support and

Engagement Assistant roles in Adults has been funded from the COMF Contain Grant.

3.4 Agency spend is significantly higher than the corresponding period last year when it was £1,059,834 for Q2 2020/21. Around 68.55% of the total spend in Q2 2021/22 is on interim qualified social worker roles which has increased when compared with the previous period Q1 2021/22 which was 57.5%. 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. Spend has increased in Governance and Community Strategy due to difficulties recruiting to legal positions. Spend has decreased in Place and Strategy and Resources. 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 £101,892.56 including circa £51,850 spend in Strategy and Resources for the Interim Programme Director and £2,750 for the Consultant spend in Place with both consultants funded via the COMF Contain Grant. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children’s	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£35,142.56	£0	£0	£0	£14,900	£51,850

4.2 Consultancy spend is higher than the level of Q1 2020/21 which was £79,167. When comparing consultancy spend with the corresponding period Q2 2021/22 which was £20,328 this has increased.

4.3 During Q2 (2021/22) 4 consultants were engaged as follows

- Children’s x 1
- Place x 2 (1 funded from the COMF Contain Grant)
- Strategy & Resources x 1 (funded from the COMF Contain Grant)

#### 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 - 2021/2022**

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Children's Services	Business Support Officer Level 2	1	£4,855.23
	Childcare Assistant	2	£11,511.50
	Childcare Worker	2	£2,886.29
	Early Help Intervention Worker	1	£7,126.08
	Head of Service	2	£21,454.43
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2	£31,239.33
	Residential Childcare Officer	17	£6,404
	Senior Business Support Officer	1	£5,565.43
	Service Manager	3	£69,023.40
	Social Worker Level 3	41	£474,583.61
	Social Worker Level 3a	15	£117,276.04
	Social Worker Level 3 a/Senior Practitioner	1	£18,774.50
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2	£66,063.35
	Strategic Lead - Quality and Improvement	2	£41,912.65
	Support Worker	3	£16,845.92
	Team Leader	12	£166,529.32
	Training Officer	1	£6,874.67
	Waking Night Residential Childcare Officer	7	£7,643.52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>£1,076,569.27</b>
Adult Services	Business Support & Engagement Assistant	2	£3,318.12
	Cook Manager	2	£319.86
	Freedom of Information Support Officer	1	£3,995.35
	Social Care Team Leader	3	£51,804.46
	Social Worker Level 3	19	£150,995.15

	Support Worker	52	£109,734.87
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>£320,167.81</b>
Finance & Systems	No agency in Q2	0	£0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>
Governance & Community Strategy	Business Improvement Officer	1	£5,558.90
	Solicitor	5	£76,807.46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>£82,366.36</b>
Place	Head of Regulatory Services	1	£22,152.01
	Sustainability & Climate Change Officer	1	£8,254.56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>£30,406.57</b>
Strategy and Resources	Head of Shared Service	1	£4,694.90
	HR Consultant	3	£14,431.89
	GMSS Payroll & Pensions Specialist	1	£2,476.06
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>£21,602.85</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>207</b>	<b>£1,531,112.86</b>

Appendix 2

**Trafford Council Agency Tenure by Directorate**

Breakdown by Directorate showing active assignments as at 30 September 2021

Directorate	Job Title	No. of active assignments
Children's Services	Early Help Intervention Worker	1
	Head of Service	2
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2
	Residential Childcare Officer	13
	Senior Business Support Officer	1
	Service Manager	3
	Social Worker Level 3	9
	Social Worker Level 3a	15
	Social Worker 3a/Senior Practitioner	1
	Strategic Lead for Front Door & Children's Social Care	2
	Strategic Lead for Quality & Improvement	1
	Support Worker	3
	Team Manager	8
	Training Officer	1
	Waking Night Residential Childcare Officer	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	
	Business Support & Engagement Assistants	2
Adult Services	Cook Manager	1
	Freedom of Information Officer	1
	Social Care Team Leader	3
	Social Worker Level 3	13
	Support Worker	33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

Governance & Community Strategy	Solicitor	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>
Place	Head of Regulatory Services	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
Strategy & Resources	HR Consultant	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>128</b>