

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 4 December 2023
Report for: Information
Report of: Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Agency and Consultant Spend for Q2 Period 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023

Summary

This report details the quarterly spend for the Council on agency workers and consultants. 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 supports the outcomes of our corporate priorities.
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	None
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

Name: Cal Aston, Resourcing Consultant

1. Background

- 1.1 A robust vacancy clearance process is in place to ensure 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 the Director of HR and Director of Finance overseeing a 4 week vacancy pause in place for some roles (excluding Health and Social Care) to support budget pressures. A robust recruitment process is followed which prioritises employees on notice from redundancy (redeployees), “at risk” staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) and apprentices before we advertise roles.
- 1.2 It is recognised, however, that there will be circumstances where immediate resourcing (predominantly short term in nature) is required. This is usually where 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 The total agency spend in Q2 2023/24 was £1,794,593.53. This figure has increased compared with Q1 2023/24 where the spend was £1,581,444.51. If we look at the corresponding Q2 2022/23 the overall spend was £1,706,142.35. Therefore, the spend remains fairly static compared with the same time last year. Appendix 1 details the agency spend breakdown for Quarter 2 2023/24 by Directorate and role.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 shows a snapshot of the percentage of agency workers compared to Council staff as at September 2023
- 1.5 Agency costs for this quarter have been met from within existing staffing budgets to support services whilst they have been restructuring, reshaping and recruiting to vacant posts and meeting our statutory obligations on a day-to-day basis.

Directorate Overview

2.1 Children’s Services

- 2.1.1 In Q2 2023/2024 agency spend in Children’s Services totalled £1,225,771.96 This includes spend via REED totalling £994,812.22 and the Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF), totalling £230,959.74.
- 2.1.2 Agency spend in Q2 has increased by £190,437.48 compared with Q1 (where the spend was £1,035,334.48).

- 2.1.3 The largest proportion of the Q2 2023/24 agency spend is on interim qualified Level 3 Social Worker roles and Advanced Practitioners with spend with Reed of £561,559.48 and £185,316.69 with SWAF.
- 2.1.4 We continue to rely on the use of agency workers from other providers which we engaged via the Councils 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. Having the SWAF has assisted in managing the gaps and created some flexibility whilst still operating in a framework. The total spend via SWAF in Q2 2023/24 was £230,959.74. This spend has increased compared to Q1 2023/24 (the spend in Q1 was £179,748.33). We have continued to see a level of stability in agency staffing complimented by an ongoing focus on permanent recruitment.
- 2.1.5 The majority of agency spend is due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social work and social care services for vulnerable children. The interim staffing need is primarily required to cover staffing resource gaps, created where there is cover requirement for sickness, maternity leave or secondment opportunities. Cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.
- 2.1.6 HR are continuing to work in partnership with the Strategic Lead - Practice and Improvement and Learning, to implement the resourcing strategy to try to reduce the agency resource requirements. Agency Social Workers are asked to consider a permanent contract with Trafford. We highlight the total reward package and development opportunities available to workers who wish to move into permanent employment status. Individual conversations are held with our current agency workers to share information about the benefits of working at Trafford on a permanent contract. This will aid Trafford to understand current market / labour trends and thinking. Developing target recruitment to key areas of the service is also underway.
- 2.1.7 GM Pledge update – In GM Qualified Social Care represents 49% of spend, and heads remain static. There are ongoing challenges of recruitment and retention across the social care workforce at a national, regional, and local level. As part of the AGMA collaboration the GM Pledge has been introduced from 1 November 2023 (this aligns to the London Pledge). This involves the introduction of an agreed set of rules on the engagement of agency social work resource in local authority children's social care. This will include the introduction of price caps on what local authorities may pay per hour for an agency social worker. It is also proposed that if a permanent social worker leaves an authority, they will be unable to work as an agency worker in GM for 6 months. The pay rates have now finalised and Trafford Council have no workers in place with Reed or SWAF above the capped rate. With the successful

implementation of the GM Pledge, we can be optimistic that at least the total charge per hour will reduce long term as we halt the trend of increasing pay rates and prevent off contract spend in this area. However, demand is still high. There is also work ongoing on a national level.

- 2.1.8 ASYE: The Learning and Development Team supports the coordination of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), supported by the Learning and Improvement Team in Children's Services and Principle Social Worker in Adults Services. There are currently 19 NQSWs in Children's Services and 9 in Adults Services. This programme involves support and assessment against the Post Qualifying Standards in their first year in practice. We are looking at piloting and introducing "stay interviews" to support the retention of ASYE colleagues over the forthcoming months.
- 2.1.9 Social work students: we have placed 3 students so far this academic year within Childrens services with a further 2 planned for January 2024 start dates.
- 2.1.10 Social worker apprenticeship: We have a successful social worker apprenticeship programme, which involves completing a social work degree in 30 months, through university learning at Man Met, with extended practice development opportunities within their substantive roles. Two social workers have graduated this year and are now starting their ASYE.

Cohort 3 (September 2021 – March 2024) – have all now moved in preparation for their End Point Assessment.

Cohort 4 – All doing well, 10 days shadowing to take place early 2024.

Cohort 5 – Both Adults and Childrens are looking to recruit 3 students for the March 2024 intake.

Cohort 6 – Childrens Services are looking at recruiting a further 3 colleagues for the September 2024 intake.

- 2.1.11 Career progression: There has been a review and new approach to this pathway in children's services. This involves band 7 social workers (post ASYE) evidencing their practice against the Experienced Social Worker level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers before their progression is confirmed. This approach has been piloted with a few social workers and feedback from them and their managers has been positive.

2.2 Adult Services

2.2.1 In Q2 2023/24 the spend in Adult Services totalled £226,809.63 via Reed our Umbrella agency.

2.2.2 This has reduced slightly when compared to Q1 2023/24 where the spend was £243,674.75.

2.2.3 The largest spend in Q2 2023/24 was on qualified agency social workers and advanced practitioners at £142,398.60. The spend has slightly reduced when compared to Q1 2023/24 spend which was £158,967.00.

2.2.4 The next biggest spend is on Support Workers at Ascot House and Supported Living in Q2 which totals £52,351.79. Spend has remained static when compared to Q1 2023/24 (where the spend was £53,043.74). The internal Resourcing service continues to support the targeted recruitment of Support Workers via a social media campaigns and attendance at job and career fairs.

2.2.6 Trafford Learning Academy provides 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 schools' engagement project is established with 11 schools, with consistent presence at careers events as well as delivering myth busting sessions to young people about what a career in adult social care is really like. Trafford Learning Academy has built strong connections with schools offering Health and Social Care GCSE level qualifications; with 6 Trafford schools offering the course. The Senior Workforce Development Practitioner of Trafford Learning Academy is a school enterprise advisor for Altrincham College and Flixton Girls School, a voluntary role supporting schools with delivering a robust careers offer to young people. The Learning Academy has developed links with Manchester Metropolitan University to promote Trafford ASC career opportunities with Integrated Health and social Care undergraduates.

2.2.7 Trafford Learning Academy provides a range of support to aid staff retention, such as confidential 1:1 support around career aspirations or frustrations, Research in Practice Communities of Practice groups to support workers CPD, group learning support for newly qualified Social Workers, and learning support for Social Work Degree Apprentices.

2.2.8 The Learning Academy is proactively supporting school students with their work experience opportunities in Year 10, identifying schools and social care services by locality, and linking students seeking work experience with local social care providers, which includes students attending work experience placements in

Ascot House. A similar offer has been extended to college students who require a year-long placement as an integral part of their health and social care course.

2.2.9 Following the implementation of a market supplement in July 2022 for qualified Social Workers, along with the launch of the new recruitment approach in November 2022, we have seen a reduction in the number of vacancies in the service.

2.2.11 HR / OD have now completed the first set of cohorts of the Leading Through Change programme for leaders and managers at Band 9 and above.

The 7 workshops programme were developed with the Director and Quality Assurance Lead and is aligned to the CQC inspection requirements and leadership framework from Skills for Care and acknowledges the b-Heard survey report responses from 2022.

An evaluation and recommended next steps report has been sent to the Director of ASC and Wellbeing. This is being reviewed alongside the feedback from the LGA Peer Review to consider next steps. We will be supporting a Leadership away day for the service at the end of November.

Discussions will also take place on how the programme is continued for new joiners and those unable to complete the initial programme.

2.2.12 ASYE: The Learning and Development Team supports the coordination of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), supported by the Learning and Improvement team in children's services. There are currently 9 NQSWs in adult services on the ASYE programme. This programme involves support and assessment against the Post Qualifying Standards in their first year in practice.

2.2.13 Social work students: Adult services have supported and assessed 12 social work students (placements) in the academic year 2022/2023. We support these degree students to apply for jobs in the authority, once they are qualified.

2.2.14 Social worker degree apprenticeship: We have a successful social worker apprenticeship programme. Two SW apprentices qualified in March and are taking up social work posts and starting the ASYE. Cohort 3 (2021-2024) has 3 staff members, who are starting their third year and 3 staff members in Cohort 4 have started their second year. This programme involves the employees (social worker apprentices) working in frontline roles in social care, while completing the degree in social work, through university learning at MMU and extended development opportunities within their substantive roles. We are now in the process of supporting the service to promote the next cohort (5) which is due to start in March 2024. Adults aspire to support 3 placements on this cohort.

2.2.15 Career progression: This involves social workers attending and passing a university module at Masters level, and preparing a portfolio of practice evidence for a panel. In the portfolio and panel discussion, the social worker evidences their work and development against the Experienced Social Worker level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for social workers, before their progression is confirmed. There are currently 3 colleagues being scheduled to attend career consolidation training with Salford University. Once completed they will progress to the career progression panel. There are currently 2 colleagues who have attended this training and are being scheduled to attend panels in early 2024.

2.3 Legal and Governance

2.3.1 In Q2 2023/24 the total agency spend in Legal and Governance was £241,045.47. Spend has increased compared to Q1 2023/24 which was £203,058.31.

2.3.2 By far the largest spend is on solicitors with spend of £227,960.53 for Q2 2023/24. This was an increase compared to Q1 2023/24 which was £203,058.31. This is a national issue and there is 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.

2.3.3 A review has been concluded to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff. Several options have been proposed including developing a pipe-line in-house (for example through apprenticeships) and the development of career pathways to support succession planning and career progression. Market supplements have also been introduced with effect from 1 October 2023 to aid attraction.

2.3.4 The Legal service is currently under a service review/redesign.

2.4 Finance and Systems

2.4.1 In Q2 2023/24 the total agency spend in Finance and Systems was £7,755.04. The spend has decreased when compared to Q1 2023/24 which was £20,012.99.

2.4.2 The spend is relating to the engagement of a Finance Manager to cover long term sickness absence. This assignment has now ended.

2.5 Place

2.5.1 In Q2 2023/24 agency spend in Place totalled £39,702.41.

2.5.2 Agency spend has increased compared to spend in Q1 2023/24 which was £8,142.82.

2.5.3 The spend in Q2 relates to the engagement of Senior Surveyor, ESOL assessor roles (funded from the Home to Ukraine Funds), Building Control Officer and Business Support Officer.

2.6 Strategy and Resources

2.6.1 In Q2 2023/24 the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources was £53,509.02. This spend with Reed was £21,328.20 and £32,180.82 was off contract with Berry recruitment.

2.6.2 Agency spend has reduced when compared with Q1 202/24 which had a total spend of £71,221.16.

2.6.3 The agency spend this quarter has been mainly within Operational Services for Education in Catering and Cleaning Services. Berry recruitment are used for catering and cleaning cover in schools and Reed for a Cook Manager at the Terrace and an Area Manager.

3. **Summary Agency Spend Position**

3.1 The total agency spend in Q2 2023/24 was £1,794,593.53. This includes agency spend with Reed, Berry Recruitment and the SWAF.

3.2 The total agency spend in Q1 2023/24 was £1,581,444.51, therefore, the spend has increased.

3.3 However if we look at the corresponding Q2 2022/23 the overall spend was £1,706,142.35. Therefore, the spend remains fairly static compared with the same time last year.

3.4 The majority of agency spend continues to be in Adults and Children's Services, due to ongoing challenges with recruiting and retaining social workers. Work continues to try to mitigate this and move to a more stable resourcing position.

3.5 The majority of the agency spend was through Reed (our umbrella agency) where the spend was £1,531,452.97. The next largest spend of £230,959.74 was via the Social Worker Agency Framework. Much of pressure continues to be the difficulties recruiting qualified Social Workers. The remaining spend of £32,180.82 was off contract with Berry Recruitment.

- 3.6 It is worth noting, with the Pay Award recently being agreed, we expect a significant jump in spend and adjustments as Reed begin to process them. On the plus side, it should help increase the attraction for candidates who are paid to grade.
- 3.7 We will continue to monitor agency spend and provide reports for visibility.

4. Annual Agency Spend across GM

Table (1): The table below highlights the 12 months agency spend to September 2023 with REED, our umbrella agency provider across Greater Manchester by Local Authority. Trafford are 8th largest spend out of 17 organisation in the collaboration.

Spend (,000)	Spend	Heads	FTE	Total Hours	Standard	Overtime	Organisation	Directorate	Division	Department	Suppl			
Organisation	Oct-23	Sep-23	Aug-23	Jul-23	Jun-23	May-23	Apr-23	Mar-23	Feb-23	Jan-23	Dec-22	Nov-22		
Manchester City Council	1,193	1,447	1,149	1,180	1,288	955	848	1,153	826	710	997	776		
Greater Manchester Police	859	981	785	883	984	878	869	1,121	920	752	987	724		
Bolton Council	595	707	582	642	825	615	612	844	661	539	816	572		
Tameside Met BC	587	839	720	730	949	768	1,438	1,085	778	748	876	689		
Oldham Council	569	730	588	649	784	625	592	723	626	473	683	607		
Bury Council	791	864	751	734	801	640	630	754	647	478	712	571		
Rochdale BC	617	730	600	618	769	574	596	827	591	508	697	553		
Trafford Council	629	705	577	539	638	514	493	696	538	473	597	417		
Warrington BC	539	606	469	450	565	410	444	527	452	398	531	433		
Salford City Council	355	463	359	282	399	345	318	420	375	314	473	383		
Wigan Council	425	542	490	462	586	451	371	524	371	292	434	298		
Stockport Met BC	449	520	442	429	493	377	308	378	273	198	321	268		
Blackpool Council	360	441	372	369	421	299	308	437	362	267	389	303		
Blackburn with Darwen Council	74	91	75	85	103	68	72	94	69	46	77	69		
GM Collaboration	95	120	84	66	57	54	47	72	55	34	34	27		
TfGM	104	63	56	48	74	64	50	67	52	34	52	35		
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue	43	54	40	27	14	4	4	4	4	6	16	31		
Total	18	24	12	7	16	11	16	21	14	15	25	9		

Table (2): Spend by job category

Job Category	Oct-23	Sep-23	Aug-23	Jul-23	Jun-23	May-23	Apr-23	Mar-23	Feb-23	Jan-23	Dec-22	Nov-22
	622	886	761	750	943	748	1,384	968	683	671	768	599
Admin & Clerical	380	385	325	315	338	269	275	350	322	214	416	285
Education - Non Qualified			5									
Education - Qualified	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Engineering & Surveying	131	173	137	124	142	85	74	79	67	48	70	57
Facilities & Environmental Services	4	8	6	7	8	6						
Financial	46	64	51	60	55	47	49	52	43	25	44	31
Housing, Benefits & Planning	103	112	71	71	84	54	65	84	71	49	74	57
HR	45	54	44	33	26	26	19	26	25	28	40	31
Investigation	568	712	566	642	729	665	657	832	657	566	767	601
Legal	670	727	610	630	768	542	494	662	527	424	597	493
Management	178	209	150	152	166	112	100	110	82	60	93	87
Manual Labour	530	712	669	605	680	538	533	728	525	464	656	483
Marketing	1	3						1	3	3	6	9
Procurement	28	37	25	10	10	9	10	14	9	10	11	3
Social & Health Care - Non Qualified	349	430	315	306	419	307	387	490	371	354	333	315
Social & Health Care - Qualified	4,063	4,711	3,827	3,885	4,684	3,760	3,469	4,628	3,725	2,958	4,257	3,316
Technology	352	384	322	321	366	249	253	379	272	207	276	143
Trades & Operative	229	321	265	281	350	234	246	345	233	203	306	252
Total	8,300	9,928	8,149	8,198	9,767	7,652	8,016	9,748	7,615	6,285	8,718	6,762

5. Consultant Spend

5.1 The total spend in Q 2023/24 was £40,770.00. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£23,070	£0	£0	£0	£17,700	£0

5.2 Consultancy spend in Q2 2023/24 has reduced when compared to Q1 where the spend was £49,700.00.

5.3 During Q2 2023/2 three consultants were engaged in Children's Services and one in Place.

The consultants have been engaged to undertake bespoke pieces of work, such as an independent chair of the SEND board, service redesign, work with Early Help/Family Hubs and bespoke training. We have also engaged a consultant who is reviewing safeguarding processes and the quality of practice of work.

5.4 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.

6. Conclusion

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

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

Appendix 1

Trafford Council Agency Spend By Directorate Q2 – 2023/2024

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Childrens	Social Worker Reed	41	£465,888.74
	Social Worker SWAF	19	£185,316.69
	Advanced Practitioner Reed	6	£96,503.81
	Team Leader SWAF	1	£24,422.32
	Practice Manager Reed	14	£229,435.30
	Practice Manager SWAF	1	£21,220.73
	Childcare Assistant/Worker	6	£16,418.22
	Independent Reviewing Officer	2	£24,616.75
	Personal Advisor	2	£16,681.75
	Residential Childcare Officer	13	£44,014.12
	Business Support Officer	4	£11,668.30
	Strategic Lead Front Door & Children's Social Care	1	£30,530.45
	Strategic Lead Quality & Improvement	1	£38,524.02
	Support Worker	3	£20,530.76
Total	114	£1,225,771.96	
Adults	Catering Assistant	2	£2,736.13
	Chef/Cook Manager	8	£10,032.22
	Deputy Manager	1	£11,708.27
	Senior Practitioner	1	£8,174.98
	Approved Mental Health Practitioner	1	£1,730.58
	Social Worker	16	£133,390.55

	Support Worker	29	£52,351.79
	Freedom of Information Officer	1	£1,727.81
	DoLS Team Manager (2803.50)	1	£4,957.30
	Total	60	£226,809.63
Finance and Systems	Finance Manager	1	£7,755.04
	Total	1	£7,755.04
Legal & Governance	Solicitor/Lawyer	11	£227,960.53
	Applications Support Officer	1	£7,006.17
	Senior Business Intelligence Analyst	1	£6,078.77
	Total	13	£241,045.47
Place	ESOL Assessor	3	£2,424.85
	Handy Person	1	£1,533.51
	Business Support Officer	2	£16,737.90
	Building Control Officer	1	£6,453.81
	Senior Surveyor	1	£12,552.34
	Total	8	£39,702.41
Strategy and Resources	Area Manager (Operational Services for Education)	1	£12,551.46
	Cook Manager (Terrace)	3	£8,776.74
	Berry Recruitment (cooks and cleaners in schools)	20	£32,180.82
	Total	24	£53,509.02
Grand Total		220	£1,794,593.53

Appendix 2 – Snapshot of the percentage of agency workers compared to Council staff as at September 2023

Workforce Measure	Current Month - September 2023						
	Council	Children's Services	Adult Services	Finance and Systems	Strategy and Resources	Legal and Governance	Place
Staff in Post							
Staff in post (HC)	2493	575	480	202	960	51	225
Temporary Resource							
Act Ups (HC)	7	3	1	1	2	0	0
Honoraria (HC)	22	1	4	3	4	0	10
Fixed term contracts/internal secondments (HC)	143	26	42	12	34	7	24
Total staff	2665	605	527	218	1000	58	259
Agency staff (HC)	149	90	38	1	22	10	8
Percentage of agency workers to perm staff	5.59%	14.87%	7.21%	0.45%	2.20%	17.24%	3.09%
	<p>Notes Staff in post - figures are based on posts, not people, as some employees have multiple posts which may be in different directorates. Agency headcount - headcount is based on those on assignment in month and spend is based on the invoices received in the month.</p>						