

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 4 March 2024
Report for: Decision
Report of: Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care

Report Title

Children's Social Care - Market Factor Supplement

Summary

This paper describes the current position in relation to the Market Factor Supplement payment that is paid to Children's Social Workers and Advanced Practitioners (who meet the qualifying criteria) and sets out a proposal and rationale regarding the continuation of this payment.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended the Employment Committee:

- Approve the recommendation to continue to pay the Market Factor Supplement payment of £2,400 per annum (pro rata) to employees who meet all of the following criteria:
 - An employee of Trafford Council Children's Social Care Service
 - A social worker who has achieved Band 8 Level 3 status or band 9 Advanced Practitioner status.
 - Working in a case holding social work role
- Approve the continued payment of the Market Factor Supplement arrangement to qualifying colleagues until 31 January 2026 subject to a review after 12 months (i.e. to be undertaken and completed by 31 January 2025).

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Pamela Wharton, Director Children's Social Care

Background Papers: None

Implications:

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|---|--|
| Relationship to Corporate Priorities | <i>One of Trafford Council's key priorities is to support people out of poverty by improving overall employment rate (aged 16-64) (%). Paying a market supplement payment and making the overall remuneration competitive and attractive will aid recruitment and retention of colleagues.</i> |
| Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework | <i>Not applicable The decision to pay a market factor supplement is a local decision.</i> |
| Financial | <i>There is an additional financial cost arising from the payment of a market factor supplement.</i> |
| Legal Implications | <i>Not applicable</i> |
| Equality/Diversity Implications | <i>An EIA was undertaken when the Market Factor Supplement payment was introduced. This will be reviewed and updated accordingly.</i> |
| Sustainability Implications | <i>Not applicable</i> |
| Carbon Reduction | <i>Not applicable</i> |
| Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications | <i>The intention of the Market Factor Supplement is to lessen recruitment and retention challenges</i> |
| Risk Management Implications | <i>There is a risk that if we do not extend the market forces supplement that in respect of remuneration we will not be competitive and we may face increased remuneration and retention challenges.</i> |
| Health and Safety Implications | <i>No applicable</i> |

1.0 Background

1.1 In February 2021 the Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care presented a paper to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team which set out a proposal to introduce a market supplement rate for hard to recruit and retain roles, specifically Level 3 Social Workers (Band 8) and Advanced Practitioners (Band 9) who met all of the following qualifying criteria:

- An employee of Trafford Council Children's Social Care Service
- A social worker who has achieved Band 8 Level 3 status or band 9 Advanced Practitioner status.
- Working in a case holding social work role

1.2 The rationale for the introduction of the market factor supplement payment was to lessen recruitment and retention challenges which whilst always prevalent had been exacerbated following the Ofsted inspection in March 2019.

1.3 A rate of £2,400 per annum was proposed, which would be paid pro-rata to contractual hours. The proposed rate following extensive research and benchmarking across other Greater Manchester (GM) Authorities.

1.4 The Market Factor Supplement payment is a remuneration payment for posts where it is difficult to recruit and retain staff. The payment is not contractual and is subject to review on an evidence base to justify the ongoing payment.

1.5 There are currently 26 colleagues in receipt of the market supplement payment.

1.6 The introduction of the market factor supplement was endorsed and approved for a period of 2 years (subject to review) and expired in 30 September 2023.

This was extended until 31 January 2024 to allow an evaluation of options and the payment proposal is set out in this report for a continuation of current arrangements.

2.0 Social Worker and Advanced Practitioner Workforce – The National and Local Picture

- 2.1 Councils across the country are struggling to recruit and retain social workers, with finding and keeping children’s practitioners the biggest challenge across the workforce.
- 2.2 Responding to a Local Government Agency (LGA) survey, 83% of authorities said they were experiencing difficulties recruiting children’s social workers, with 72% highlighting retention being a problem.
- 2.3 As of June 2022 almost one in five (19%) children’s social worker posts in England lying vacant, up from 14.6% a year previously, according to an Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) survey of 108 of the 152 authorities. As of September 2023, the figure for all councils was 16.7%.
- 2.4 A breakdown of Trafford Council’s Children’s Social Worker workforce at the time of writing the report is as follows:

| Position | Headcount | Vacancies |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Social Worker, Band 7 | 28 | 48 |
| Social Worker, Band 8 | 16 | |
| Advanced Practitioner, Band 9 | 15 | 7 |

3.0 Agency Spend

- 3.1 Due to challenges of the recruitment and retention of social workers and advanced practitioners, it is necessary for us to engage with agency partners to enable us to meet our statutory responsibilities for providing social work and social care services for vulnerable children.
- 3.2 As at 30 September 2023 Trafford Council’s Social Worker workforce consisted of the following number of agency workers:

| Position | Headcount (agency workers) |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Social Worker (Level 3) | 46 |
| Advanced Practitioner | 8 |

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 The continued use of agency workers has resulted in a degree of a ‘revolving door’ of workers due to the short notice period agency workers are able to give and the competitive nature of the supply and demand across the region. This has a negative impact on face-to-face engagement with our children and their families which is reflected in feedback and complaints. Our children and young people also report the emotional impact of having to “relive my story over and over again” to different professionals.
- 3.6 Our permanent workforce are also impacted by the resource gap; the time it takes to recruit and also in terms of allocation / re- allocation of work that is needed as a consequence of this instability. Each agency staff member requires the same level of induction, management oversight and investment of management time, to become active case holders and with turnover being high this is a significant demand.
- 3.7 It is acknowledged that some level of agency work is arguably inevitable in any front-line profession. In a bid to tackle the high use of agency staff and provide stability to our vulnerable and young people Trafford Council along with 9 other GM Local Authorities have recently committed to the introduction of the Greater Manchester Pledge. The GM Pledge is designed to address challenges related to the workforce of Children’s Social Work Professionals with focus on the supply and quality of agency with a commitment to work collectively to support and manage our social care workforce.

4.0 Market Pay Data

4.1.1 Social Workers – Band 8

4.1.2 The Trafford Council local pay scales (2023/24) for Band 8 are as follows.

| Spinal Column Point (SCP) | Band | Annual Salary (per annum) (2023/2024) |
|---------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 30 | 8 | £38,223 |
| 31 | 8 | £39,186 |
| 32 | 8 | £40,221 |

4.1.3 In comparison the minimum and maximum scale points for Band 8 equivalent pay scales paid by other Local Authorities are as follows:

| Local Authority | SCP (min) | SCP (max) | Annual (min) (2023/2024) | Hourly (min) | Annual (max) (2023/2024) | Hourly (max) | Rank (SCP max) |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Wigan | 34 | 38 | £42,403 | £21.98 | £46,464 | £24.08 | 1 |
| Oldham | 29 | 32 | £40,221 | £21.04 | £44,428 | £23.24 | 2 |
| Rochdale | 30 | 36 | £38,223 | £19.81 | £44,428 | £23.03 | 2 |
| Bolton | 31 | 35 | £39,186 | £20.31 | £43,421 | £22.51 | 3 |
| Manchester | 31 | 35 | £39,186 | £20.31 | £43,421 | £22.51 | 3 |
| Salford | 32 | 35 | £40,221 | £21.43 | £43,421 | £22.51 | 3 |
| Stockport | 29 | 34 | £37,336 | £19.35 | £42,403 | £21.98 | 4 |
| Tameside | 29 | 34 | £37,336 | £19.89 | £42,403 | £22.59 | 4 |
| Bury | 31 | 33 | £39,186 | £20.31 | £41,418 | £21.47 | 5 |
| Trafford | 30 | 32 | £38,223 | £20.22 | £40,221 | £21.28 | 6 |

4.1.4 Based on the above data Trafford Council ranks lowest based on maximum annual salary (2023/2024). Factoring in the £2,400 market factor payment this would increase the minimum annual salary to £40,623 per annum and

maximum annual salary to £42,621 per annum. Based on maximum salary including the market supplement payment this would see our ranking increase to 4th however, out of the 10 Local Authorities we would be 7th in respect of pay value.

4.2 Advanced Practitioners – Band 9

4.2.1 The Trafford Council local pay scales (2023/24) for Band 9 are as follows.

| Spinal Column Point (SCP) | Band | Annual Salary (per annum) (2023/2024) |
|---------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 33 | 9 | £41,418 |
| 34 | 9 | £42,403 |
| 35 | 9 | £43,421 |
| 36 | 9 | £44,428 |

4.2.2 In comparison the minimum and maximum scale points for Band 9 equivalent pay scales (2022/2023) paid by other Local Authorities are as follows:

| Local Authority | SCP (min) | SCP (max) | Annual (min) (2023/24) | Hourly (min) | Annual (max) (2023/24) | Hourly (max) | Rank (SCP max) |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Wigan | 42 | 45 | £50,512 | £26.18 | £54,243 | £28.19 | 1 |
| Tameside | 40 | 43 | £48,474 | £25.82 | £51,515 | £27.44 | 2 |
| Salford | 39 | 42 | £47,420 | £25.26 | £50,512 | £26.91 | 3 |
| Manchester | 36 | 40 | £44,428 | £25.13 | £48,474 | £25.82 | 4 |
| Oldham | 36 | 40 | £44,428 | £23.24 | £48,474 | £25.82 | 4 |
| Stockport | 34 | 40 | £42,403 | £21.98 | £48,474 | £25.82 | 4 |
| Trafford | 37 | 39 | £45,441 | £24.04 | £47,420 | £25.09 | 5 |
| Bolton | 35 | 39 | £43,421 | £22.51 | £47,420 | £24.58 | 5 |
| Bury | 37 | 38 | £45,441 | £23.55 | £46,464 | £24.08 | 6 |
| Rochdale | 34 | 38 | £42,403 | £21.98 | £46,464 | £24.08 | 6 |

4.2.3 Based on the above data Trafford Council ranks joint 5th based on maximum annual salary (2023/2024). Factoring in the £2,400 market supplement payment this would increase the minimum annual salary to £47,841 per annum and maximum annual salary to £49,820 per annum. Based on maximum salary including the market supplement payment this would see our ranking increase to 4th. Out of the 10 Local Authorities we would be 4th in respect of pay value.

4.2.4 We are aware that Oldham and Rochdale have no Advanced Practitioner roles but remunerate their Level 3 Social Workers on pay band 9.

4.3 Enhancements and Additional Allowances

4.3.1 In addition to the above pay scales, we are aware that some Local Authorities pay enhancements and/or additional allowances. Details of enhancements and additional allowances for all Local Authorities is not available, however we are aware of the following enhancements and allowances being in place:

- **Bolton:** Essential car user allowance paid at NJC rate. Additional 4 days annual leave per annum.
- **Oldham:** Essential car user allowance of £500 per annum. Acceleration through the grade to penultimate incremental point after completion of AYSE.

- **Salford:** New starters from 1 April 2022 receive a £1,500 recruitment payment and a £1,500 retention payment after 12 months service. Existing employees received a £1,500 retention payment in April 2022 and a further retention payment of £1,500 after 12 months service.
- **Stockport:** Essential car user allowance of between £846 to £963 per annum paid to some social workers (subject to mileage) plus £1,800 recruitment and retention payment after 12 months service.
- **Manchester:** Childrens Service pay a £2,000 retention payment to Level 2 Social workers (equivalent to Trafford Council Band 7 Social Workers) and £5,000 market supplement payment to their Level 3 Social Workers (equivalent to Trafford Council Band 8 Social Workers).

4.3.2 In Trafford, some staff will remain in the critical car allowance scheme that was frozen to new entrants in 2014 when the car allowance schemes were phased out as part of budget proposals. Staff in the scheme receive a lump sum payment of £423 per annum, payable monthly. They can also claim mileage at the standard rate of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles travelled and 25pence per mile for miles travelled thereafter.

4.3.3 All other staff who undertake business mileage are termed as Casual Users and will claim mileage at the standard rate of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles travelled and 25 pence per mile for miles travelled thereafter.

5.0 Options

5.1 Following a review of the current arrangement and an options appraisal, the following 3 options have been considered:

Option 1

To not pay a market supplement payment

Option 2

To retain the current market factor supplement payment of £2,400 per annum (pro rata) for a period of 2 years.

Option 3

To introduce a higher market supplement payment:

- (i) For both posts to increase the benchmark ranking to 1st position (based on maximum salary) the payment made to Social Workers and Advanced Practitioners would need to be:

Social Workers: £6,244 per annum

Advanced Practitioners: £6,824 per annum

- (ii) For both posts to increase the benchmark ranking to 2nd position (based on maximum salary) the payment made to Social Workers and Advanced Practitioners would need to be:

Social Workers: £4,208 per annum

Advanced Practitioners: £4,096 per annum

- (iii) For both posts to increase the benchmark ranking to 3rd position (based on maximum salary) the payment made to Social Workers and Advanced Practitioners would need to be:

Social Workers: £3,201 per annum

Advanced Practitioners: £3,093 per annum

5.2 It is recommended that Option 2 is progressed i.e. the market factor supplement payment of £2,400 per annum (pro rata) continues to be paid for a further 2 years to colleagues who meet all the qualifying criteria. Whilst we recognise that our level of remuneration may not be as attractive as other Local Authorities in GM we believe the continuation of the current market supplement payment combined with other factors such as quality and regular supervision, reasonable case loads and the culture of Trafford Council and Children's Social Care allows us to offer a package to attract, recruit, retain and sustain our Social Care workforce.

5.3 The ongoing drivers for the continuation of the market factor supplement payment are:

- We would have difficulty recruiting to case holding social worker and Advanced Practitioner roles.
- Evidence that our Band 8 and Band 9 pay scales are below some other Local Authorities across GM who we compete with in the labour market.
- High level of cost of agency staff to cover established vacancies.
- The national shortage of children's social workers and the knowledge that we will have a significant problem recruiting and retaining social workers if we do not have in place a remuneration package which is competitive.
- The need to continue to support our model of social work.

6.0 Financial Considerations

| Role | No of staff | Salary (inc. on costs) | Salary inc. MFS payment (inc. on costs) | Total: Salary inc. MFS payment |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Social Worker (Band 8) | 16 | £52,237 | £55,429 | £886,864 |
| Advanced Practitioner (Band 9) | 10 | £57,834 | £61,026 | £976,413 |

7.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Employment Committee:

- Approve the recommendation to continue the pay a Market Forces Supplement payment of £2,400 to colleagues who meet all the following criteria:
 - An employee of Trafford Council Children's Social Care Service
 - A social worker who has achieved Band 8 Level 3 status or band 9 Advanced Practitioner status.
 - Working in a case holding social work role

- Approve the continued payment of the Market Factor Supplement arrangement to qualifying colleagues until 31 March 2026 subject to a review after 12 months (i.e. to be undertaken and completed by 31 March 2025).