

# TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Employment Committee  
**Date:** 4 March 2024  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Director of Human Resources

## Report Title

**Agency and Consultant Spend for Q3 Period - 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023**

## Summary

This report details the quarterly spend for the Council on agency workers and consultants. Spend is broken down by quarter and by Directorate. The report details 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 delivery of our corporate priorities.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	We are part of the GM Pledge for Social Work agency provision.
Financial	The cost of using agency workers is carefully managed and monitored through existing budgets.
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 via Agency where there is a compelling case to do so. Vacancies are subject to approval by the relevant Corporate Director. The Director of HR and Director of Finance also currently oversee a vacancy pause (excluding Health and Social Care, front line operational roles and services managed through Joint Management Boards -GMSS and STAR) to support budget pressures. A vigorous recruitment process is followed which prioritises employees on notice from redundancy (redeployees) and “at risk” staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) before we advertise roles.
- 1.2 In addition, we encourage a culture where we grow and develop skills of our existing workforce and offer career development and secondment opportunities within the council.
- 1.3 We recognise, 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 where 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.
- 1.4 The total agency spend in Q3 2023/24 was £1,924,770.70. This figure has increased compared with Q2 2023/24 where the total spend was £1,794,593.53.
- 1.5 Appendix 1 details the agency spend breakdown for Quarter 2 2023/24 by Directorate and role.
- 1.6 Appendix 2 shows a snapshot of the percentage of agency workers compared to Council staff as at December 2023.
- 1.7 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 Q3 2023/2024 agency spend in Childrens Services totalled £1,313,670.02. This includes spend via REED totalling £1,058,110.69 and spend on the Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF), totalling £255,559.33.

- 2.1.2 Agency spend in Q3 has increased by £87,898.96 compared with Q2 (where the spend was £1,225,771.96).
- 2.1.3 The largest proportion of the Q3 2023/24 agency spend is on interim qualified Level 3 Social Worker roles and Advanced Practitioners with spend with Reed of £602,936.01 and £214,974.26 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 historically REED were unable to meet our staffing requirements as required. The SWAF helped us, therefore, to manage these gaps and created some flexibility whilst still operating in a framework. The total spend via SWAF in Q3 2023/24 was £255,559.33. This spend has increased slightly compared to Q2 2023/24 (the spend in Q2 was £230,959.74).
- 2.1.5 Under the Social Work Agency Framework (SWAF) we awarded contracts to 3 agencies (HCL, Paradigm and Liquid Personnel) in June 2021 for a period of 3 years. This current framework agreement is due to expire in June 2024 and so there is currently an options appraisal taking place.
- 2.1.6 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.
- 2.1.7 We continue 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.
- 2.1.8 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 GM collaboration, Directors of Childrens Services have worked closely with HR Directors and the GM Pledge has been introduced from 1 November 2023 (this aligns to the London Pledge).

2.1.9 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 has included the introduction of price caps on what local authorities may pay per hour for an agency social worker, advanced practitioner and Manager. 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 been finalised and Trafford Council have no workers in place with Reed or SWAF above the capped rates. The introduction of these rates has had no impact on the quality and cost of workers at Trafford. 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 to address the permanent pay situation for Social Work roles and we continue to influence the discussions on this matter.

## **2.2 Adult Services**

2.2.1 In Q3 2023/24 the spend in Adult Services totalled £278,856.34 via Reed our Umbrella agency. This has increased when compared with Q2 2023/24 when the spend totalled £226,809.63.

2.2.2 This has reduced significantly when compared to the same quarter last year Q3 2022/23 where the spend was £370,229.99.

2.2.3 The largest spend in Q3 2023/24 was on qualified agency social workers and advanced practitioners at £169,577.88. This has slightly increased when compared to in Q2 2023/24 spend which was £142,398.60.

2.2.4 The next biggest spend is on Support Workers at Ascot House and Supported Living in Q3 which totals £36,262.95. Spend has reduced when compared to Q2 2023/24 (where the spend was £52,351.79). 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.

2.2.5 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.

2.2.6 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 and development. 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.

### **2.3 Childrens and Adults Services Social Work Development**

- 2.3.1 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 16 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.
- 2.3.2 Social work students: we have placed 4 students so far this academic year within Childrens services and 2 in Adults Services. We also have one Step Up student who will be starting a placement in Adults Services in March, with a Step-up Student placement starting in March 2024.
- 2.3.3 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 Manchester Met, with extended practice development opportunities within their substantive roles.

Cohort 3 – All 6 Colleagues have completed and passed their End Point Assessment in February 2024. Colleagues in due course will be allocated into roles and start on our ASYE Programme.

Cohort 4 – There are 5 colleagues on cohort 4 who are progressing well and will move into a social work placement from May/June.

Cohort 5 – There are currently 3 colleagues who will start on the programme in March 2024.

Cohort 6 – Adult Services are looking to recruit a further 3 colleagues and Childrens Services are looking to recruit 4 colleagues for the September 2024 intake.

- 2.3.4 Career progression – we continue to roll out a new approach to this pathway in Children’s services, with 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 process is working well with great feedback received. In Adults Services, social workers attend a university module at Masters level at Salford University, before preparing a portfolio of practice evidence for a panel. The latest consolidation module in February did not go ahead due to a low number of delegates on the course. We are currently considering alternative options for the 4 colleagues awaiting assessment and progression.
- 2.3.5 HR / OD completed the first set of cohorts of the Leading Through Change programme for leaders and managers at Band 9 and above late last year, aligning to the CQC inspection requirements and leadership framework from Skills for Care and acknowledging feedback from the 2022 b-Heard survey. An evaluation and recommended next steps report was shared with the Director of ASC and Wellbeing and is being reviewed alongside LGA Peer Review feedback.
- 2.3.6 A vision and strategy session took place at the beginning of December in the form of a Senior Leadership Team Away Day and is scheduled to be followed up beginning of March as the operating model for the service takes shape aligned to emerging Locality neighbourhood and community services transformation that should further support with retention as working models mature and become embedded.

## **2.4 Legal and Governance**

- 2.4.1 In Q3 2023/24 the total agency spend in Legal and Governance was £249,348.67. Spend has remained fairly static when compared to Q2 2023/24 which was £241,045.47.
- 2.4.2 By far the largest spend is on solicitors with spend of £237,970.49 for Q3 2023/24. This also remains static when compared to Q2 2023/24 which was £227,960.53. 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.

2.4.3 A review has been concluded to identify a solution to the recruitment and retention of these staff. Several options are being progressed 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.

2.4.4 The Legal service has now completed their service review/redesign and roles are in the process of being advertised so we should start to see some positive movement in agency spend in the next few quarters.

## **2.5 Finance and Systems**

2.5.1 In Q3 2023/24 the total agency spend in Finance and Systems was NIL. The spend has decreased when compared to Q2 2023/24 which was £7,755.04.

## **2.6 Place**

2.6.1 In Q3 2023/24 agency spend in Place totalled £49,755.70.

2.6.2 Agency spend has increased compared to spend in Q2 2023/24 which was £39,702.41

2.6.3 The spend in Q3 relates to the engagement of a variety of roles – Tenancy Support Officer Senior Surveyor, ESOL assessor roles (funded from the Home to Ukraine Funds), Building Control Officer, Handy Person and Business Support Officer.

## **2.7 Strategy and Resources**

2.7.1 In Q3 2023/24 the total agency spend in Strategy and Resources was £33,140.07 This spend with Reed was £8,176.10 and £24,961.97 was off contract with Berry recruitment.

2.7.2 Agency spend has reduced when compared with Q2 2023/24 which had a total spend of £53,509.02.

2.7.3 The agency spend this quarter has been 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 Q3 2023/24 was £1,924,770.70.

This includes agency spend with Reed, the Social Worker Agency Framework (SWAF) and Berry Recruitment broken down as follows:-

- Reed £1,644,247.40
- SWAF £255,559.33
- Berry Recruitment - £24,963.97

- 3.2 The total agency spend in Q2 2023/24 was £1,794,593.53 so the spend has increased.
- 3.3 In the corresponding Q3 2022/23 the overall spend was £1,714,205.62. Therefore, the spend has increased compared with the same time last year.
- 3.4 The majority of agency spend (83%) continues to be in Adults and Children's Services, due to ongoing challenges with recruiting and retaining social workers. As outlined above 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 £1,644,247.40. The next largest spend of £255,559.33 was via the Social Worker Agency Framework. Much of pressure continues to be the difficulties recruiting qualified Social Workers. The remaining spend of £24,963.97 was for cooks and cleaners with Berry Recruitment.
- 3.6 We will continue to monitor agency spend and provide reports for visibility and progress resourcing actions to support a more permanent workforce.



#### 4. Annual Agency Spend across GM

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

Headcount & Spend Trends													Last Updated   8-Jan-24 05:53
Spend (,000)	Spend	Heads	FTE	Total Hours	Standard	Overtime	Organisation	Directorate	Division	Department	Supplier	Job Category	>
Organisation	Dec-23	Nov-23	Oct-23	Sep-23	Aug-23	Jul-23	Jun-23	May-23	Apr-23	Mar-23	Feb-23	Jan-23	
Manchester City Council	1,594	1,272	1,193	1,447	1,149	1,180	1,288	955	848	1,153	826	710	
Greater Manchester Police	1,019	816	859	981	785	883	984	878	869	1,121	920	752	
Bolton Council	785	625	597	708	582	642	825	615	612	844	661	539	
	669	571	587	839	720	730	949	768	1,438	1,085	778	748	
Oldham Council	1,053	778	791	864	751	734	801	640	630	754	647	478	
Tameside Met BC	726	559	569	730	588	649	784	625	592	723	626	473	
Bury Council	731	609	617	730	600	618	769	574	596	827	591	508	
Rochdale BC	856	705	629	705	577	539	638	514	493	696	538	473	
Trafford Council	614	479	539	606	469	450	565	410	444	527	452	398	
Warrington BC	380	290	355	463	359	282	399	345	318	420	375	314	
Salford City Council	575	404	425	542	490	462	586	451	371	524	371	292	
Wigan Council	605	477	449	520	442	429	493	377	308	378	273	198	
Stockport Met BC	475	385	360	441	372	369	421	299	308	437	362	267	
Blackpool Council	110	81	74	91	75	85	103	68	72	94	69	46	
Blackburn with Darwen Council	146	117	95	120	84	66	57	54	47	72	55	34	
GM Collaboration	86	70	101	62	56	48	74	64	50	67	52	34	
TfGM	38	33	43	54	40	27	14	4	4	4	4	6	
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue	35	18	18	24	12	7	16	11	16	21	14	15	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,497</b>	<b>8,289</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>9,928</b>	<b>8,149</b>	<b>8,198</b>	<b>9,767</b>	<b>7,652</b>	<b>8,016</b>	<b>9,748</b>	<b>7,615</b>	<b>6,285</b>	

**Table (2): Spend by job category**

Job Category	Dec 23	Nov 23	Oct 23	Sep 23	Aug 23	Jul 23	Jun 23	May 23	Apr 23	Mar 23	Feb 23	Jan 23
	809	781	702	982	895	841	1,061	830	1,442	1,045	878	729
Admin & Clerical	470	354	380	385	325	315	338	269	275	350	322	214
Education - Non Qualified	6				5							
Education - Qualified	16	3	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
Engineering & Surveying	180	156	131	173	137	124	142	85	74	79	67	48
Facilities & Environmental Services	14	4	4	8	6	7	8	6				
Financial	58	49	46	64	51	60	55	47	49	52	43	25
Housing, Benefits & Planning	101	99	103	112	71	71	84	54	65	84	71	49
HR	66	52	45	54	44	33	26	26	19	26	25	28
Legal	817	654	670	727	610	630	768	542	494	662	527	424
Management	179	135	178	209	150	152	166	112	100	110	82	60
Manual Labour	579	495	530	712	669	605	680	538	533	728	525	464
Marketing	9	6	1	3						1	3	3
Procurement	37	26	28	37	25	10	10	9	10	14	9	10
Social & Health Care - Non Qualified	444	369	349	430	315	306	419	307	387	490	371	354
Social & Health Care - Qualified	5,753	4,433	4,407	4,974	4,033	4,104	4,880	3,954	3,581	4,766	3,828	3,030
Technology	442	341	352	384	322	321	366	249	253	379	272	207
Trades & Operative	312	258	229	321	265	281	350	234	246	345	233	203
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,293</b>	<b>8,217</b>	<b>8,156</b>	<b>9,577</b>	<b>7,923</b>	<b>7,866</b>	<b>9,353</b>	<b>7,262</b>	<b>7,530</b>	<b>9,130</b>	<b>7,257</b>	<b>5,850</b>

## 5. Consultant Spend

5.1 The total spend in Q3 2023/24 was £86,245.00. The spend breaks down as follows.

Children's	Adult & Well-being Services	Governance and Community Strategy	Finance and Systems	Place	Strategy & Resources
£76,970.00	£0	£0	£0	£9,275	£0

5.2 Consultancy spend in Q3 2023/24 has increased when compared to Q2 where the spend was £40,770.00.

5.3 During Q3 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 Q3 – 2023/2024**

Directorates	Job Title	Number of Active Assignments	Total Cost
Childrens	Social Worker Reed	41	£499,060.13
	Social Worker SWAF	10	£176,867.95
	Advanced Practitioner Reed	8	£103,875.88
	Advanced Practitioner SWAF	2	£38,106.31
	Practice/Team/Service Manager Reed	13	£268,414.31
	Practice Manager SWAF	2	£40,585.07
	Childcare Assistant/Worker	4	£2,623.98
	Family Contact Worker	1	£384.71
	Personal Advisor	2	£19,691.72
	Residential Childcare Officer	14	£45,416.61
	Business Support Officer	4	£14,638.12
	Strategic Lead Front Door & Children's Social Care	1	£39,317.72
	Strategic Lead Quality & Improvement	1	£34,054.56
	Independent Reviewing Officer	1	£20,243.64
	Support Worker	3	£10,389.31
	<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>£1,313,670.02</b>
Adults	Catering Asst/Chef/Cook Manager	11	£8,202.43
	Deputy Manager	2	£14,130.47
	Approved Mental Health Practitioner	4	£12,758.92
	Social Worker and Advanced Practitioners	16	£169,577.88
	Support Worker	36	£36,262.95
	Support Work Team Leader	1	£13,697.06

	Freedom of Information Officer	1	£8,506.11
	DoLS Team Manager	1	£15,720.52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>£278,856.34</b>
Finance and Systems			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>NIL</b>	<b>NIL</b>
Legal & Governance	Solicitor/Lawyer	12	£237,970.49
	Applications Support Officer	1	£7,912.56
	Governance Officer	1	£3,465.62
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>£249,348.67</b>
Place	ESOL Assessor	3	£2,187.76
	Tenancy Support Officer	3	£16,097.26
	Handy Person/cleaner	1	£3,958.73
	Business Support Officer	2	£10,363.50
	Building Control Officer	1	£11,918.31
	Senior Surveyor	1	£5,230.14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>£49,755.70</b>
Strategy and Resources	Area Manager (Operational Services for Education)	1	£4590.02
	Cook Manager (Terrace)	3	£3586.08
	Berry Recruitment (cooks and cleaners in schools)	20	£24,963.97
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>£33,140.07</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>228</b>	<b>£1,924,770.70</b>

## Appendix 2

Snapshot of the percentage of agency workers compared to Council staff as at December 2023

Workforce Measure	Current Month - December						
	Council	Children's Services	Adult Services	Finance and Systems	Strategy and Resources	Legal and Governance	Place
<b>Staff in Post</b>							
Staff in post (HC)	2499	572	476	197	970	49	235
Staff in post (FTE)	1937.5	462.5	416.1	186.9	606.6	42.4	223.1
<b>Temporary Resource</b>							
Agency staff (HC)	141	85	37	0	0	12	7
Percentage of agency workers to perm staff	5.64%	14.86%	7.77%	n/a	n/a	24.48%	2.97%

### 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.