

TITLE **Agency Worker Report
Q3 2023/24**

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Personnel Board on 20th February 2024

WARD None Specific

LEAD OFFICER Sally Halliwell

RECOMMENDATION

That Personnel Board:

Notes the information contained within the report

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report contains information based for Q3 of the financial year 2023/24 which covers October, November and December of 2023.

- It is important to recognise that there are specific scenarios where reliance on temporary workers is both a necessary and appropriate resourcing solution to meet service delivery needs especially in areas where staffing numbers are governed by statutory requirement e.g., in the care services. This obviously needs to be underpinned by commercial cost governance.
- The headcount for agency workers at the end of Q3 2022/23 was 100
- The headcount for agency workers at the end of Q3 2023/24 was 80
- It is worth noting that there can sometimes be a lag in the invoices being received and the accounting transactions being completed.

	October	November	December	Q3 2023/24 Total	Year to Date 2023/24	Same period for 2022/23
Adult Social Care	£157,824	£307,077	£184,915	£649,816	£1,907,456	£1,933,497
Chief Executive	£18,115	£26,817	£28,328	£73,260	£163,913	£350,097
Children’s Services	£264,569	£476,643	£308,022	£1,049,233	£2,922,704	£2,451,236
Place & Growth	£88,196	£133,984	£66,540	£288,720	£667,557	£776,686
Resources & Assets	£71,142	£48,096	£17,666	£136,905	£440,705	£756,011
Total	£599,846	£992,618	£605,470	£2,197,934	£6,102,336	£6,267,527

Analysis by Directorate

1. Adult Social Care and Health

There remains national difficulties in recruiting permanent Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) and Operational Commissioning Officers and this has required the directorate to use agency workers to ensure consistent, safe provision of services and maintain performance against KPI's. Since the introduction of market supplement payments the recruitment into AMHP vacancies has not been successful however we have internal employees who we are developing through a trainee scheme which will result in an improved position moving forward once qualified.

The long-standing agency staff have mainly been utilised flexibly across the whole service to meet the needs as they arise, cover vacancies that we have been unable to recruit, to cover during absences and to fulfil the roles created by grant funded initiatives.

2. Children's Services

There continues to be challenges regionally, sub regionally and nationally in recruitment to the children's workforce. This includes social work, Educational Psychology and other key parts of the workforce. There is a national shortage of trained and qualified workers for particular roles eg the Doctorate level qualification for Educational Psychology has had a notable impact.

The Council will remain in competition with other LAs to attract, recruit and retain in these key roles and this is being looked at in more detail through a separate steering group has been created to look at social work recruitment, specifically within Children's services, to understand and benchmark against other Berkshire councils when it comes to packages being offered. We are implementing a recruitment and retention payment into Social Work roles, which is in keeping with other Berkshire councils that have similar offers. This has been because of ensuring we remain competitive and through benchmarking activities undertaken.

3. Resources & Assets

The use of agency workers within this area has been in relation to hard to fill posts where we have ongoing recruitment campaigns but are struggling to fill the vacancies due to ongoing market challenges such as salary we can offer. These areas relate to legal and also procurement where specialist skills and knowledge are required. Agency usage within the property team is being used to support specific projects whose cost is capitalised against the projects worked on.

4. Chief Executive Office

Agency workers are only being engaged on a short-term basis for IT and business change through interim contracts to work on key transformation projects within other areas of the

business. This can be utilised on a turn on and turn off situation which is often better value for money to engage in this way rather than have extended fixed term contracts in place.

5. Place & Growth

There remains to be ongoing placement within highways which is a national sector that typically sees a lot of movement as it is an agile and contracted market due to national schemes which can typically command higher markets rates in the short term. This leaves very few specialists within this sector that will take permanent placements in highways. This is also the same for areas such as building control, where the market is strong and competitive not only with other local authorities but the private industry too.

Business Overview

The re-tendering of the agency contract has been approved by Full Council and is in process.

In addition to looking at how corporate functions can work more closely to improve the position when it comes to interims and agency workers the following areas are progressing.

- HR and Procurement continue to work in collaboration to tightly manage Matrix, holding them to account of their contractual obligations and service level agreement. There are weekly operational meetings and quarterly strategic meetings to ensure that improvement continues.
- Market intelligence is used to assess appropriate pay of specialist interims and the memorandum of understanding for the South East is being adhered to for Social Care jobs in both Adults and Children's Services
- Having capped agency fees through the contract it ensures value for money without impairing quality. Hiring managers are supported by HR in hard to fill roles such as change and programme managers, strategic commissioning, and educational psychologists.
- HR have established a front door for recruitment needs and regularly collaborate and advise hiring manager to the most appropriate resourcing route whether that be agency or fixed term.
- HR and Finance have agreed an amended governance of the appointment of agency workers and ensure that there is consistency with other forms of recruitment approval but also value for money. A business case will need to be produced and signed off by the relevant Director, HR and Finance before an agency worker is engaged.
- HR Business Partners will focus within DLTs and senior management meetings with each of their assigned areas so that there is full oversight and challenge in terms of tenures and the appointment of agency workers this will also include understanding whether or not permanent posts are being advertised on a cyclical basis, to test the market which will allow further justification for interim appointments if they are unable to successfully fill.
- Reviews have commenced on whether agency workers can be converted onto either permanent or fixed term contracts and we have been successful in some areas in achieving this

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Contained within existing budgets	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2) <i>Ongoing annually</i>	NA	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	NA

Other Financial information relevant to the recommendation/decision

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
NA

List of Background Papers
N/A

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