

TITLE	Agency & Temporary Worker Report Q3 23/24
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Personnel Board on 21 st June 2023
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Sally Halliwell – Lead HR & OD Business Partner Louise Livingston – Assistant Director, HR and OD
RECOMMENDATION	

Personnel Board note the content of the report and agree the new style of reporting.

Executive Summary

This report contains information based on the end of Q3 for the financial year of 2022/23 and is for information purposes for CLT in advance of submission to Personnel Board

- 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.
- Agency Workers currently make up 7% of our workforce; Consultants make up 0.7% of our workforce
- As at end of Q3 there were 100 agency workers at a cost of £2,213,790 and 13 Consultant workers at a cost of £283,712.
- Costs are slightly down, as a whole, when measured against the period for Q2

FY to date Agency Worker Spend	Q1 Total	Q2 Total	Q3 Total
Adult Social Care	£518,181	£739,875	£675,441
Chief Executive	£86,100	£100,723	£192,127
Children’s Services	£687,974	£845,843	£917,419
Place & Growth	£250,774	£305,060	£220,852
Resources & Assets	£249,110	£270,097	£207,951
Total	£1,792,139	£2,261,599	£2,213,790

Analysis by Directorate

1. Adult Social Care and Health

There remain national difficulties in recruiting permanent Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Advanced Mental Health Practitioners 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.

Agency staff have been used to cover time-limited, grant funded initiatives to respond to the impact of these pressures and income that is provided through central government which is required to be spent as part of programmes of delivery or other initiatives. There have also been Invest to Save opportunities which have required additional support, on an interim basis, to deliver savings.

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.

As part of a longer-term strategy, a specialist recruitment and retention post has been appointed with a view to improving recruitment of key staff, to reduce the reliance on agency staff and to focus on permanent solutions. This will be supported by the recent launch of a dedicated ASCH recruitment page designed to better promote careers in Social Care and the benefits and advantages of working for Wokingham Borough Council.

Additional transformation funding in 2022/23 has also been used to secure agency support to drive demand down, review high-cost packages and contribute towards savings targets.

2. Children's Services

There continue 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 such as Data and Intelligence and Commissioning. 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. We continue to be in competition with other LAs to attract, recruit and retain in these key roles.

We are responding creatively to these challenges by making early offers to undergraduates, recruiting trainees and growing our own social work workforce.

3. Resources & Assets

A national skills shortage challenge continues to impact the Council's ability to recruit auditors however reliance is decreasing, and a review of the internal structure has helped to encourage and generate more interest from applicants. Recruitment strategies will continue to be developed to reduce reliance on agency workers through internal development and opportunities.

Agency workers are being used to fill vacancies in several departments including Income & Assessments while work is being undertaken to move to a permanent structure following consultation and the acquisition of funding for permanent recruitment.

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

Engagement of temporary consultant resource has been necessary to support the transitional arrangements to improve the HR provision for the organisation however now that the new HR structure is in place and begins to embed the costs for HR will reduce. A number of specialist IT and Digital interims have been brought in and engaged on very specific capital projects such as website replacement, corporate document management and HR/ Finance ERP system improvements.

5. Place & Growth

Within Place and Growth, Highways is a national sector that is underpinned by an agile, contracting labour force. Across the sector, due to the nature of national schemes and projects, specialists are interim in nature contracting when and where schemes are financed and as such, there are nationally very few specialists who undertake permanent placements. Most of the high-cost agency workers identified in the report fall into this category and as such, whilst we continue to apply good governance and replace contractors with permanent staff as and when we can, the nature of this industry remains reliant on agency workers.

Looking Ahead

The costs associated with agency workers and consultants are high across the Council and work has commenced to address this.

A report was presented to CLT mid-February highlighting issues of non-compliance in the hiring of agency workers. A corporate mandate of only hiring workers through the Matrix framework will go on 1st April 2023. In addition to this a steering group has been initiated with HR, Finance and Procurement working in collaboration to try and reduce these costs where possible but also look at the governance in the appointment of agency workers and developing more enhanced conversations with DLTs through stronger partnership working.

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 and actions have also been addressed within the Q3 period

- Appointment of a dedicated Account Manager for Wokingham where previously this has been split across a number of accounts
- A full review of the supply chain has been undertaken, in each category, removing agencies that are not performing and adding specialist agencies in areas that are difficult to fill
- Dedicated resource within the Council to assist the hiring managers and hold Matrix to account for their service that has been agreed
- Assessment of job titles and pay rates to ensure consistency and fairness in the market
- A policy is being developed through HR and procurement that will outline the processes for the hiring of agency workers
- HR and Finance will look at the governance and approval of the appointment of agency workers and ensure that there is consistency with other forms of recruitment approval
- 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. Our permanent Resourcing Advisor will work closely with Business Partners in relation to this and suggestions on where to market roles.

- 20 previously 'off framework' agency workers have been brought back onto framework resulting in lower costs on contracts which should see reductions within Q4

Is it important to highlight that there are stronger working relationships through Procurement and HR and in turn our services which has allowed for a shift in the approach to agency workers and their appointment. Managers are already actively working with our Agency Specialist, in advance of the corporate mandate, to discuss interim opportunities and ensure that the most appropriate methods of appointment are done so through the framework but also seeing success in niche and senior roles that would have previously gone off contract to individual expensive agencies.