
Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

18 July 2019

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor J Mutton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Agency Workers – Performance Management Report Q4: 1 January to 31 March 2019

Is this a key decision?

No.

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member with performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Q4 period 2018/2019.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is requested to note:

1. The recruitment and retention challenges impacting and affecting the business and strategies in place or working towards to support these.
2. The agency / interim spends for Q4 2018/19.
3. The cumulative spend for both agency workers via Reed and outside Reed (Table 2.1).
4. The upward trajectory of permanent filled jobs in Children Services (Appendix 1).

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 shows a 12 month upward trajectory of filled permanent posts in Children's Social Care.

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Agency Workers and Interim Managers – Performance Management Report Q4, 1 January to 31 March 2019.

1. Context (or background)

1.1 Coventry City Council has a Master Vendor Contract with Reed for the supply of agency workers. Through the contract, Reed supply all suitable agency workers either through their own agency or via a 2nd tier arrangement with other agencies, using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with the Master Vendor. The information supplied by Reed gives detailed information on agency worker usage and expenditure. Spend is based on timesheets paid during the quarter.

Reed is not always able to supply the required agency workers and where this is the case, service areas will use other suppliers. However, where other suppliers are being used, the business is engaging with Reed to bring other suppliers and or workers under the Master Vendor contract. Reed covers all agency workers required by the core council. The contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

1.2 This report highlights across the council several examples where agency is being used during service pressure or restructure/change and special projects. This has a cumulative impact across the business incorporating numerous internal and external factors that affect the context of the council and demonstrate why using agency is on occasions appropriate, but also provides detail around what measures are in place to ensure this doesn't drift.

Whilst the control of agency spend is managed locally within individual service areas, the internal and external factors that drive our workforce challenges lends itself to the whole of the organisation. Financial constraints, technology, political, local and legislative agenda's as well as the speed of change, high customer demand and more attractive offers add to the recruitment and retention pressures the organisation is faced with.

We operate in a very tight labour market i.e. more jobs than candidates, the market is candidate led e.g. financially driven, which in turn creates both internal and external challenges and a highly competitive environment when recruiting and retaining staff. Coupled with skills and experience shortages, locally as well as nationally in qualified and specialist arenas specifically social care, planning and other professional services including surveyors, transportation and UTMC. An ageing workforce also contributes to the recruitment challenges as well as recruiting and retaining staff across 5 generations with differing needs, expectations and requirements, puts extra pressure on service areas to attract and retain the right people.

1.3 The apprenticeship levy has provided some leeway in creating opportunities to address some of these areas, however, adverse weather conditions during this quarter and unexpected staff cover has contributed to the increased pressure and demand on frontline services across both directorates. Local and national skills shortages and a sparse candidate labour market pool therefore requires reliance on agency workers to counteract the risk of not being able to provide a front-line service. In order to continue to make efficiencies through the organisation, dictates the use of a temporary workforce until such arrangements have been concluded.

1.4 Alternative options can be considered for example pools of workers are viable options, however, they require funding. In addition, to maximise the potential for both service and individuals and to allow for cross service working, would require skills sets in various disciplines across the service areas, which can present problems for regular updated training and maintenance of skills.

At the same time regular working could impact employee status as well as increase the temporary workforce; options need to consider the financial costs to manage and resource. Agency usage is on a pay as you use basis and incurs charges via pay rates x hours worked and agency fees. In comparison with financial obligations to resource a pool, will require a permanent resource – which will incur a fixed price e.g. to use and to source.

Career pathways, development opportunities and graduate placements as well as redeployment outplacements are activities currently being utilised and developed for maximum potential across the business to enhance our candidate pools.

The recruitment service has recently appointed a new Recruitment Manager and the implementation of a new recruitment model will aim to support and assist innovative and direct sourcing of candidates to recruit to vacancies as an alternative to agency usage. In addition, close working with HR/OD will support more collaborative working and pooling of ideas to address many of the recruitment and retention issues that all employers are facing in today's constant changing and challenging times.

1.5 The commentary throughout this report will provide more detail around the specific service area.

2 Directorate Commentary on Agency Worker Spend for Q4 2018/19

Table 2.1

The table below highlights the **overall cumulative spend** on the use of agency workers with Reed and outside Reed, and compares Q3 and Q4 2018/19.

	Q3 2018/19	Q4 2018/19	Increase/Decrease
Reed	£1,206,650	£1,155,406	-£51,244
Outside Reed	£282,801	£328,777	£45,976
Total	£1,489,451	£1,484,183	-£5,268

The below table provides a breakdown of the cumulative spend across the Directorates for the same periods.

	Q3 2018/19		Q4 2018/19	
	Reed	Outside Reed	Reed	Outside Reed
PEOPLE	£1,071,341	£177,285	£1,009,693	£246,457
PLACE	£135,309	£105,517	£145,713	£82,320
TOTAL	£1,206,650	£282,802	£1,155,406	£328,777

Table 2.2

Tables 2.2 below shows comparative expenditure for the **Master Vendor Contract** between Q3 2018/19 and Q4 2018/19 as well as Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19. There has been a **decrease of £51k** in spend between Q3 and Q4 2018/19 and a **decrease of £99k** compared to the same quarter in 2017/18. The Master Vendor Contract covers all agency workers required by the core Council, the Reed contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

	Spend comparing Q3 2018/19 to Q4 2018/19	Spend Q3 2018/19	Spend Q4 2018/19	Increase / Decrease £000's
PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	£164,072	£235,279	£71,207
	Children and Young People's Services	£835,891	£684,719	-£151,172
	Customer Services & Transformation	£68,222	£84,974	£16,752
	Education and Skills	£3,157	£4,721	£1,564
	People Directorate Total	£1,071,341	£1,009,693	-£61,648
PLACE	Finance & Corporate Services	£18,404	£20,347	£1,943
	Project Management and Property Services	£7,169	£4,534	-£2,635
	Streetscene & Regulatory Services	£109,737	£112,750	£3,013
	Transportation & Highways	£0	£0	£0
	City Centre & Major Projects Development	£0	£8,082	£8,082
	Place Directorate Total	£135,309	£145,713	£10,404
Total	£1,206,650	£1,155,406	-£51,244	

	Spend comparing Q4 2017/18 to Q4 2018/19	Spend Q4 2017/18	Spend Q4 2018/19	Increase / Decrease
PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	£206,201	£235,279	£29,078
	Children and Young People's Services	£690,482	£684,719	-£5,763
	Customer Services & Transformation	£93,325	£84,974	-£8,351
	Education and Skills	£0	£4,721	£4,721
	People Directorate Total	£990,008	£1,009,693	£19,685
PLACE	Finance & Corporate Services	£33,406	£20,347	-£13,059
	Project Management and Property Services	£0	£4,534	£4,534
	Streetscene & Regulatory Services	£225,358	£112,750	-£112,608
	Transportation & Highways	£5,917	£0	-£5,917
	City Centre & Major Projects Development	£398	£8,082	£7,684
	Place Directorate Total	£265,080	£145,713	-£119,367

	Total	£1,255,088	£1,155,406	-£99,682
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3. People Directorate

The table below shows the main areas that contribute to the Children's and Adult's spend in table 2.2 above:

	Q3 £'000	Q4 £'000
Children's Services: Social workers (Inc. Senior Social Workers)	718	606
Children's Services: Senior roles e.g. Social Work Team Managers, IR0's (G9+).	110	40
Adults' Services: Social workers (Inc. AMHP)	146	191
Adults' Services: Support Workers & Drivers	17	7

3.1 Children's Services – Total Spend Q4 £685k (Q3 £836k)

Children Services continues to use agency workers to fulfil frontline services. The bullet points below provides an overview of the impact of their ongoing recruitment and retention interventions:

- A continued stable positive downward trajectory of agency staff since December 2018 resulting in an overall 17% decrease in agency numbers from 47 in December 2018 to 39 in March 2019. This includes cover for 11 social workers who are currently on maternity leave.
- A continued recruitment drive resulting in a rise in the number of permanent staff. 84% of the Children's Social work establishment has now been filled with permanent staff. See Appendix 1 - highlights the upward trend.
- Increased retention of the workforce from a 79% retention rate in December 2018 to 83% at the end of March 2019.
- Recent attendance at the Birmingham and Manchester Jobs Fair and scheduled attendance at the London Jobs Fairs along with Open evenings held throughout the year to ensure recruitment, brand awareness and reputation building is optimised through multiple channels.
- The development of a social work academy which is attracting cohorts of 12 newly qualified social workers in to a highly supportive and learning environment for the first six months of their career is contributing to increased stability and reduced turnover.

3.2 Adult Services – Total Spend Q4 £235k (Q3 £164k)

The number of Agency Social Workers in Adult Services continues to cover interim posts over the winter and recruiting to particularly time limited service increases. As such, this has seen an increase of £71k in agency spend between Quarter 3 and Quarter 4. The reasons for continuing to employ agency social workers are:

- a) To cover vacancies and ensure that statutory duties are met in the Adults Disability, Mental Health and Older People Service areas. For all substantive vacancies recruitment is underway but in Adults Disability and Mental Health, initial recruitment has not resulted in the filling of all the vacancies.
- b) There are a number of posts that are short term due to the nature of funding. Funding is specifically linked to winter periods when anticipated surge activity needs to be met; such posts are very challenging to fill with directly employed staff and in order to make maximum use of available funding the speed of obtaining agency capacity is greater than the speed of direct recruitment. It enables a response to surge activity only over specific periods and avoids unnecessary additional establishment costs throughout the year. Alternatives such as a pool of staff would place additional burden on the ASC budget and reduce the capacity during winter to support essential health related activity which funding is intended to support.

Adult Social Care also employ support workers and OT/OTA's within provider services on an agency basis in order to maintain the staffing levels required to meet the needs of service users in registered care provision. Agency support workers tend to be required in order to cover vacancies where recruitment is underway and some occasions of sickness absence. The use of agency OT/OTA is related to the additional winter capacity and input to D2A pathways. Management action in being taken in respect of sickness, some vacancies have already been filled and further recruitment is underway.

3.3 Customer Services & Transformation Q4 £85k (Q3 £68k)

Agency spend of £53k for Q4 in **Customer Services and Business Services** is across three main areas;

- Consideration is being given for a review of the PA service. A potential future model has been considered with SMB and whilst this is formally consulted on and a subsequent change implemented, temporary staff members are being used to maintain the service.
- A review of Business Services has been undertaken and now moved into the implementation phase of the proposals. Through discussions at the project board an agreement was reached to avoid recruiting to vacancies where possible to ensure the services continued to be supported and to allow posts to be secured for those undergoing consultation. As a consequence it has been agreed with the service area that temporary support would be used to fill vacant hours.
- Within Housing, a decision was taken organisationally to increase the number of people working within the Housing and Homelessness structure. As an interim measure individuals were recruited from an agency to ensure that demand was managed within the service area while the longer term structural requirements were better defined.

The £15k agency worker spend in **ICT & Digital** is across three distinct areas. We are using agency staff to assist with the closure of the Mitel platform and migration to Skype as well as utilising agency staff to assist with the mobile phone deployment project. Reed are used to help with recruiting to some of our more specialist permanent roles.

Moving forward we are looking to bring our reliance on agency staff to a close – especially on the Mitel project. The need for this agency resource will cease by the end of Q2 2019/20.

HROD used Reed for a period of time to cover maternity and a recruitment to a vacant post to enable the continuation of business. Total spend £3k. Agency workers will cease from June 2019.

Procurement & commissioning total spend of £11k, relates to the use of one agency worker providing cover for Contracts workload and vacant post whilst mini review of structure undertaken prior to appointments being made for permanent roles.

3.4 Education Services

The provision of essential interim administrative and financial support in **SEND £5k** is to cover vacancy to recruitment gaps during peak activity e.g. end of year accounts.

4. Place Directorate – Total Spend Q4 £146k (Q3 £135k)

The table below shows the main areas that contribute to the “Streetpride, Streetscene and Regulatory Services” in table 2.2:

	Q3 £'000	Q4 £'000
Waste Services	12	34
Street Pride	41	49
Planning & Regulation	53	29

4.1 Waste Services - The £34k spend in domestic waste relates to the end of the Christmas collections. From 1st week January, Waste Services carry out double collections to compensate for the Christmas closure. In addition, Fleet Services are also carrying a vacant position whilst a review of services concludes.

4.2 Streetpride spend (Q4 £49k) continues to reflect the high number of vacant posts within the service and the seasonal nature of the service. The number of Agency staff used by the service will reduce as a result of the current recruitment exercise in the service area. A recent recruitment activity will reduce this spend which will be evident in the next quarter.

4.3 Within Planning Services (Q4 £29k), whilst the agency spend has decreased, the Development Management team currently employs 1 agency officer. The team has experienced vacancies over the last couple of years and due to the level of workload in the team it has been necessary to employ agency officers. The team has just recruited to the last vacancy and therefore once this new staff member starts the agency employment can cease. Current agency contract expires at end of July, this may need extending by a further month to ensure continuity of service.

4.4 **Finance and Corporate Services** agency spend in Q4 is £20k, increased from Q3 £18k as anticipated. This is due to posts being covered by agency staff in Legal Services covering long term sickness and maternity leave. The covering of these posts is likely to continue into Q1 (2019/20), in addition an agency lawyer has also been recruited to provide more in house advocacy support and to reduce more expensive external Counsel spend.

4.5 **City Centre & Major Projects**, CSW Sport is a hosted service which is governed by a partnership board. All permanent recruitment has been put on hold by the Board while a transformation project is scoped and any change concluded. Therefore, agency workers and freelance contractors are being used to deliver the service during this time. The spend in Q4 is £8k. Following any transformation project the service intends to reinstate recruitment processes.

4.6 **Project Management & Property Services** spend in Q4 £5k relates to short term cover of a Property Manager post which was to allow a handover period between the temporary and permanent member of staff. This post has now been filled on a permanent basis.

A Senior Building Surveyor post was also required to deliver a number of building related projects on the Council's Commercial Property Portfolio to include a Planned Maintenance Programme. There is currently no Building Surveying resource in the Council with all Building Surveying consultancy currently being outsourced except for the current project work being picked up by the agency post. A full time position is to be created, subject to the relevant approvals being obtained.

5. Spend outside of the Reed Contract

Table 5.1 below shows comparative expenditure outside of the Reed contract between Q3 2018/19 and Q4 2018/19 as well as Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19.

There has been an **increase of £45k** in spend outside of the Reed contract between Q3 and Q4 2018/19 compared to a **decrease of £215k in comparison** to the same quarter Q4 2017/18.

Table 5.1:

a) Q3 2018/19 and Q4 2018/19

Directorate	Total Spend Q3 2018/19	Total Spend Q4 2018/19	Increase / Decrease
People: Children's	£45,654	£109,491	£63,837
People: Education	£52,244	£82,000	£29,756
People: Adults	£0	£0	£0
People: Cust. Serv.	£79,386	£54,966	-£24,420
Place: Professional Services Contract	£90,059	£82,320	-£7,739
Place: City Centre & Major Projects	£15,458	£0	-£15,458
TOTAL	£282,801	£328,777	£45,976

b) Q4 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19

Directorate	Total Spend	Total Spend	Increase / Decrease
	Q4 2017/18	Q4 2018/19	
People: Children's	£107,266	£109,491	£2,225
People: Education	£67,437	£82,000	£14,563
People: Adults	£0	£0	£0
People: Cust. Serv.	£34,639	£54,966	£20,327
Place: Professional Services Contract	£335,299	£82,320	-£252,979
Place: City Centre & Major Projects	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	£544,641	£328,777	-£215,864

5.2 People: Children's Services

Spend of £109k in Q4. (Q3 £45k)

During the quarter, there were two interim contractors secured directly by the Council who supported service delivery and improvement. Of these, one was filling a Team Manager post and the other an Improvement Partner working closely with external bodies. The assignments for the Improvement Partner have now concluded, with the Team Manager due to conclude at the beginning of June as a result of successful permanent recruitment to this position. The Director of Children's Services has subsequently confirmed that both these assignments have ended and that there are no other 'off contract' interim contractors or consultants working in Children's Services.

5.3 People: Education Q4 £82k (Q3 £52k)

Centrally employed teachers/teaching assistants:

The increase in spend (£32k) is mainly around the **PRU CELC**. This has been due to sickness, suspension and staff leaving. There has been an increase in incidents warranting safeguarding interventions with poor behaviour requiring staffing levels to be increased at one site. The Management Board and Director have been informed and are aware of the pressures. Once the restructure is in place for September 2019 the amount should see a gradual decrease over 4 months once we are able to appoint staff.

The cost of supply teachers in **SEND** (£49k) is to secure short-term specialist provision for vulnerable children including 6th day provision for primary age children excluded from school.

5.4 People: Customer Services

Spend of £54k in Q4. (Q3 £79k)

Whilst there has been a decrease in outside Reed spend in Customer Services (Homelessness), for reasons highlighted in 3.3, there has been a continued need within the Housing and Homelessness structure to use agency individuals to ensure that demand is managed within the service area while the longer term structural requirements are better defined.

5.5 Place – Professional Services Contract

The revenue spend in Q4 is £82k (Q3 £90k). (This includes year-end adjustments for accruals)

Recruitment to vacant posts is ongoing using the Transport & Highways microsite and recruitment campaigns, reducing the need for agency cover across the division. We are currently advertising for staff in the Strategic Transportation and UTMC service areas, which if successful, will further reduce agency costs.

Where posts prove difficult to recruit to, we continue utilising options such as career grading, career development opportunity and graduate placements. Where possible, we recharge relevant revenue costs to Capital projects and external funding to reduce the impact on core budgets.

6. Overall Management Comment

The Master Vendor contract is a planned strategy to work towards reducing the level of agency spends and to better understand where and how we use agency workers.

There will always be the need to use agency workers. The current usage continues to cover extra workload, vacancy, sickness absence and short-term cover whilst Service Reviews are taking place and to cope with sudden surges of demand. This will require the need for scarce skills and workers during these reviews; organisational restructures and sudden peaks in demand.

In terms of the cost of using agency workers, it is important to note that not all of the cost is in addition to normal staffing spend. Although agency cover associated with sickness absence in front line services is often an additional cost, in the case of agency cover for vacant posts the cost will be funded at least in part by the relevant staffing budget due to increase in demand of services.

Where opportunities exist for bulk recruitment campaigns to front line essential services, the Human Resources Recruitment Team will continue to work with service managers to identify workers, who are available for casual, temporary or permanent work in order to reduce the use of agency workers.

However, some roles continue to be hard to recruit particularly as we notice a skills shortage across the wider labour market which in turn creates a highly competitive employee led market place which is candidate driven. This is becoming more notable in areas that require legislative knowledge and experience as well as those of a specialist skill set.

In the case of children's social workers there has been some success with the current campaign which has been evolved to make extensive use of social media and other recruitment initiative to attract talent. Nevertheless, recruitment of experienced, high quality children's social workers continues to be difficult reflecting the national shortage of experienced social workers.

The new Master Vendor contract started on 25th June 2018 and is starting to embed across the authority. The new contract is joint with Solihull and again is a hybrid Master Vendor.

The need for managers to ensure that the process of filling vacancies is undertaken at the earliest opportunity has been communicated to senior management teams and this has been reflected in the processes to be used for the new contract.

The requirement that all engagement of agency staff be approved by senior management has been communicated to management teams. This requirement has been built into the set-up for the new contract. Combined with a consistent approach in the way data is recorded and collected should allow for governance and monitoring on the use of agency workers.

7. Results of consultation undertaken

- 7.1 The report sets out the steps the Council is taking to reduce expenditure on agency workers, particularly in those areas where they are used most intensively.
- 7.2 Officers will continue to bring the monitoring information to the Cabinet Member and steps will continue to be taken to endeavour to reduce the level of expenditure.
- 7.3 Management Information has given the opportunity for the Recruitment Team to target large areas with high usage of agency workers to try and reduce the need for agency workers. This work is ongoing.

8. Timetable for implementing this decision

Not applicable

9. Comments from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services

9.1 Financial implications

Quarterly monitoring of expenditure on agency workers will continue throughout the contract.

Reed operate a live management accounts system which places the cost of agency workers in the period the work took place rather than the period of time in which the Council was billed for or paid the related invoices. The system shows the volume of agency activity/usage in a particular quarter irrespective of when invoices are paid.

Reeds system only incorporates timesheets authorised by managers and therefore the costs for a particular quarter will have a small tendency to increase throughout the year as more timesheets are authorised. We actively work with the master vendor to keep outstanding timesheets to a minimum.

Spend outside of the Reed contract, relates to the invoices paid during the relevant period. This expenditure relates to both temporary workers supplied by agencies other than Reed and to interim workers who operate under a PSC (Personal Service Company) with whom we contract directly.

9.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

10. Other implications

10.1 The Agency Worker Contract arrangement provides good value for money in relation to the procurement of agency workers. It also provides firmer controls on the use of agency workers and has in place sound management reporting to see where spend is taking place to target recruitment, maximise resources, and reduce spend on agency workers.

10.2 How is risk being managed?

There may be a risk to the Council where managers go outside of the Reed and contract directly with workers with the advent of changes to IR35 arrangements. There has been numerous communications across the Council to inform managers of changes and this will continue into the future.

10.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Through the rigorous monitoring of agency worker usage and alternative strategies for resourcing short-term work requirements, the dependency on agency workers should be reduced. The Council's Policy on the use of agency workers states that Agency Workers should only be used when:

- Proper recruitment processes have failed to secure an appointment and staff cover has become crucial to the delivery of services;
- Short-term temporary cover is required until proper recruitment processes have been completed and an appointment is made;
- Unplanned absences that require immediate cover to ensure continuity of services;
- Unplanned, short-term or peak workloads occur.

Human Resources are proactively supporting managers to reduce agency spend.

10.4 Equalities / EIA

The master vendor has made considerable efforts to ensure that the equalities monitoring form is completed. The graphs in appendix 3 show the main equalities data at corporate level for the agency workers who were on assignment with us in the month of June 2018.

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as the recommendations do not constitute a change in service or policy.

10.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

10.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Andy Williams	Director of Business, Investmt & Culture	Place	22 May 19	13 June 2019
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Member: Councillor J Mutton	Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources		4 July 2019	4 July 2019

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Appendix 1 – Children Services

Please see below graph showing the 12 month upward trajectory of filled permanent posts in Children's Social Care.

