

Use of temporary agency workers within the Directorate

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Cllr B. McCracken - Adult Social Care and Inclusion

Executive Summary:

This report details the use and nature of temporary agency workers within the Adult Social Care and Inclusion Directorate over the last ten months and benchmarks this against use elsewhere within the Council. This report is for information only. No decisions or action is required by Scrutiny Panel.

Reason for scrutiny:

The Executive Director, Paul Davies and Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Tim Oliver have requested that Scrutiny Panel have oversight of the use of temporary agency workers and the reasons for their engagement across the Adult Social Care and Inclusion Directorate.

Recommendations:

That:

1. The Panel note the contents of the report and particularly the assurances from the Adult Social Care and Inclusion leadership team that temporary agency worker usage within the Directorate is appropriate, proportionate and well monitored both in terms of numbers, cost and quality.

Background papers:

Appendix 1 details a table showing Directorate use of temporary agency workers over the last 10 months and the reasons for their engagement.

Resource and legal considerations:

There will be a cost associated with engaging temporary agency workers. In some cases this cost is offset by the vacant post being covered for. In some instances engaging a worker through an employment agency can be more cost effective than employing direct where the on-costs can add a further 25% to the cost. Where the work is time limited it can be more advantageous to use temporary agency workers so that employment responsibilities are not inherited. It could also be that a 'fresh pair of eyes' brings innovation, creativity and new ways of working.

The Directorate is aware of the changes to the legislation associated with engaging temporary agency workers which came into force on 1st October, 2011.

Citizen impact:

Temporary agency workers provide necessary shift and absence cover for front line workers engaged in caring for and supporting vulnerable citizens. This ensures continuity of service delivery where care and support is required to keep people well and safe.

Environmental impact:

Not applicable.

Performance management:

Temporary agency workers enable the Council to meet its statutory and contractual obligations and provide continuity of service delivery.

Equality Implications:

By using the Council's Master Vendor, Starting Point Recruitment we can be assured that they operate fair and equitable recruitment policies and practices when recruiting temporary agency workers on our behalf. They also have a mandate to ensure as far as possible the recruitment of Walsall residents.


Temporary agency worker cover is especially scrutinised during periods of restructuring where compulsory redundancies are possible.

Consultation:

The data contained within this report was supplied by Human Resources and Development and specifically the Agency Clearing House Manager who acts as the conduit between the Council and the Master Vendor – Starting Point Recruitment.

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1. Report

Temporary agency workers are engaged within Adult Social Care and Inclusion for a variety of reasons, these are:

- To provide cover in the case of sickness or other absence such as maternity leave
- To provide shift cover, generally longer term shift cover where there is a need to backfill a secondment
- To provide cover for a vacant post whilst the post is under recruitment or where there is failure to recruit or a restructure is being carried out
- To cover a statutory requirement
- For other reasons such as completion of a specific project which is time limited

The table attached at Appendix 1 shows the reasons for temporary agency workers having been engaged within Adult Social Care and Inclusion over the last 10 months.

It represents agency 'placements' – each placement is counted once and therefore if the placement has been over more than one month it is only listed once. It should be born In mind that sometimes where placements carry on to a second month the manager sourcing the placement may not change the original reason for engagement, so if initially engaged to cover a vacant post, it could be that the worker goes on to provide shift cover but the reason for engagement remains vacant post.

In terms of benchmarking/comparing the use of temporary agency workers in Adult Social Care and Inclusion against the rest of the Council, the following represents the headlines.

- The 493 placements out of a total of 3150 placements over the last 10 months represents just 16% of the total placements within the Council over that same period.
- The main reason for engaging temporary agency workers is shift cover followed by covering a vacant post (cover for vacant posts was higher in the first part of the financial year and was necessary whilst the directorate underwent its restructure)
- The main type of posts being covered are those providing direct care or reablement services
- The total directly employed headcount within Adult Social Care and Inclusion is 788 (797 including casual staff)

The Directorate Leadership Team monitors the use of temporary agency workers on a monthly basis. It is acutely aware of the need to monitor cost and ensure employment law responsibilities are met. Specifically, agency placements would be stopped where it was felt that there was a directly employed member of staff potentially at risk of redundancy who could fulfil that job role.

The use of the Council's Master Vendor, Starting Point Recruitment, competitively selected, ensures the supply of quality workers who have been well inducted prior to commencing their placement. Where agency workers do not perform, the placement is stopped and another worker with more appropriate skills supplied.

Whilst recognising there is a need to engage temporary agency workers from time to time, the Directorate remains determined to 'grow' the social care workforce for the future. It has a growing Apprenticeship Scheme and a thriving positive action programme which ensures the hardest to reach are able to access employment opportunities with the Council and its partner organisations including those with a learning, physical or sensory impairment.

Appendix 1

Agency worker usage – Adult Social Care and Inclusion
April, 2011 – January, 2012

Reason	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
Absence Cover	8	7	5	5	6	6	6	3	3	3
Shift Cover	16	27	53	18	19	17	59	20	16	24
Vacancy Cover	19	21	15	13	9	12	9	7	6	7
Statutory Requirement	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other	6	5	4	3	9	9	7	3	3	1
Total	50	62	77	39	43	45	81	33	28	35