

## **Children’s Social Care Requirements for Agency Workers and Overtime**

### **Background**

Children’s Social Work is a frontline service supporting the most vulnerable children, young people and families in the city. The work in this area is a key political priority and improving the outcomes and futures for these children and young people is a key strand to creating a Child Friendly City. As the Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan outlines in achieving our ambition to become the Best City in the Country “we know we must try and prevent situations in families escalating to the point at which the council has to take serious action, which in the most extreme cases can mean removing a child from their family, because the social and financial costs of doing so, as well as the impact on the child themselves, can be significant.”

Children’s Services is the only part of the Council which is subject to external inspection through Ofsted. The Children’s Social Work Service provides a range of statutory and regulatory services and functions, requiring the service to meet key performance indicators in delivering these services, in a timely and safe way. Key to this is having the right staff deployed in the right place at the right time, with the right skills. The belief in the Directorate is that good practice leads to good outcomes which in turn can lead to lower running costs. The work and changes that the Directorate have put in place have already made a significant financial impact particularly in the area of costs for Children who are looked after.

This report focuses on Children’s Social Care because the use of Agency staff in other parts of Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted is limited. The main areas of Agency use are frontline services or support to frontline provision, in order to maintain services or minimum cover levels. There will be some Agency usage in the future but there are a range of measures in place to minimise this usage.

### **The reasons for using Agency Workers**

Agency staff are used to fill a variety of roles. There are a variety of reasons for this:

- Covering vacancies on the structure, e.g., leavers, maternity and long-term sickness.
- Adding additional capacity to the structure, e.g., to cover the reduced capacity of newly qualified social workers
- Retained to ensure effective handover and management of complex cases.
- To maintain caseloads for social workers at safe levels.
- To cover emergency, unplanned shift cover, e.g., care staff in residential homes

### **Main Areas of Agency Usage**

- Social Work – includes Team Managers, Social Workers and Social Assistants
- Residential Work – includes care officers
- Administration

In 2012/13, there was an overall underspend of £4m across the employee budgets which was spread across the general fund, grant funded and central schools budgets. The underspend on the £97m basic staffing budget was £9.8m which reflected the number of vacant posts across the Directorate throughout the year. The final spend on agency staffing was £7.5m with the majority of the agency staff deployed in the social work fieldwork teams, the complex need teams and across children’s centre provision. The spend on overtime was £1.4m which

was £0.3m above the budget and was due in the main to the need to maintain 24/7 cover for vacancies and sickness across the residential and secure settings.

### Social Worker Agency Usage

There are a variety of factors that contribute to agency use in Children's Social Work service. These are:

- Retention issues because of turnover figures
- High vacancy levels
- The workforce profile
- The need to backfill vacancies as cases cannot be unallocated
- The need to keep caseloads at manageable levels for Social Workers

### Statistical Analysis

#### Current Social Worker Profile

Position	FTE staff	No. of Staff in Post	Posts on structure
Social Workers (31.5.12)	210.52	222	234
Social Workers (30.9.12)	220.96	235	240
Social Workers (31.12.12)	226.26	240	260
Social Workers (28.2.13)	230.87	246	260
Social Workers (31.7.13)	232.90	244	260

### Turnover and Recruitment Figures

#### Leavers

31 March 2012/13 = 13.7% - with 43 Social Workers leaving during this period

31 March 2011/12 = 9.7% - with 23 Social Workers leaving during this period.

31 March 2010/11 = 15.7% - with 29 Social Workers leaving during this period

When staff leave to ensure that cases are appropriately managed agency staff will be used.

#### Starters

128 Social Workers have joined Fieldwork and LAC since the 1 April 2011 and are still employed within the service.

The turnover figures have meant that the profile of the Directorate is predominantly of a workforce with limited experience

30/09/2011 49 Social Workers were paid on scp 26-30 = 31.41% of the total

30/09/2012 114 Social Workers were paid on scp 25# - 30 = 48.71% of the total

31/07/2013 101 Social Workers were paid on scp 25#-30 = 41.4% of the total

#### Maternity Cover and Sickness Levels

Provision has already been made for maternity cover and sickness. In the past three years the average number of maternities is 20.

Sickness levels in Children's Services are higher than the corporate average. However Social Workers absence is broadly in line with the Council average of 10.61 days although there are some hot spots.

In the past 3 years for Social Workers the follow numbers of occurrences/days lost through long-term absence have been recorded. (Long-term sickness means an occurrence of 20 workdays off sick)

	Occurrences	Days lost
2010/11 =	54	6853
2011/12 =	62	6360
2012/13 =	44	4334

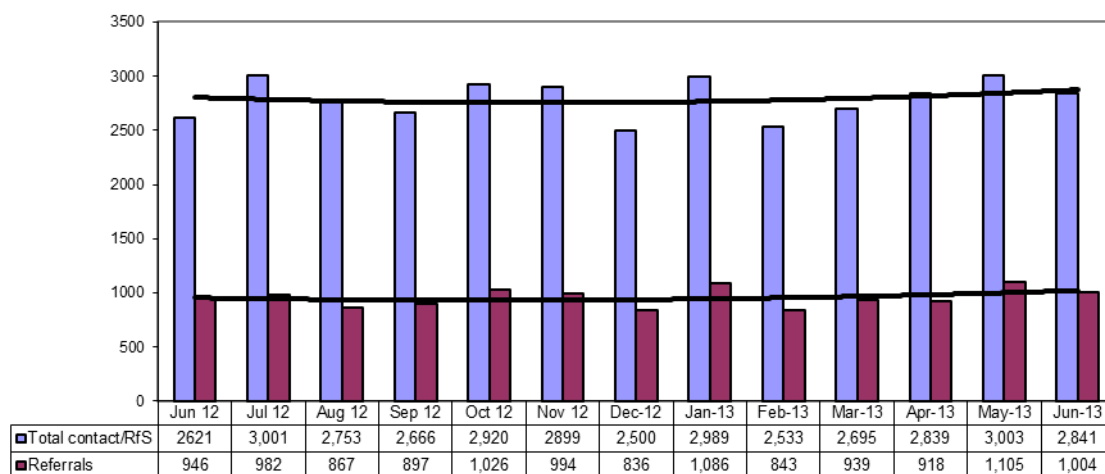
## Caseloads

The safe management of the caseloads of Social Workers is critical to improving the outcomes for children. Lower caseloads will lead to better practice and outcomes, which in turn will reduce costs. Therefore, a key aspect of our improvement strategy is to reduce the caseloads to improve the quality of social work and outcomes for children and young people. At present, there is a 9% increase in referrals in comparison to same period last year.

The complexity and intensity of caseloads remains challenging. The numbers of Children who are looked after and on Child Protection plans means that a significant percentage of an average social worker's caseload is both statutory and covered by regulation as well as being complex. Given the profile of the Directorate already outlined, there are capacity issues for the newly recruited, inexperienced social workers and their caseloads and the level of support they require.

To ensure that caseloads are maintained at safe levels, additional agency staff have been engaged to meet this increased demand.

Total contact and referrals by month



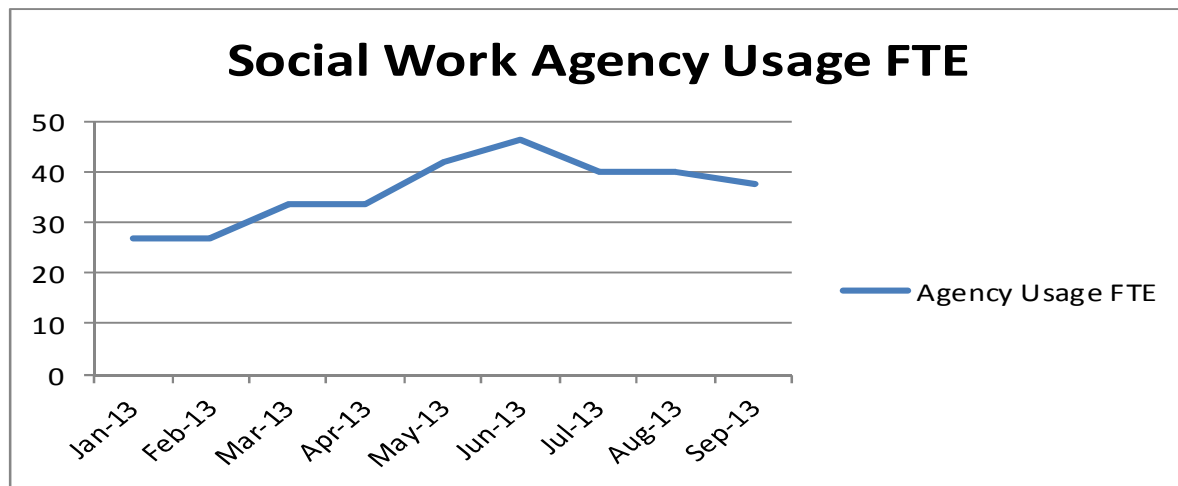
## Agency Social Work Figures

The use of agency Social Workers has generally decreased over the last two years although there are monthly variations. This has been achieved through an on-going recruitment programme, the development of a social work recruitment microsite and a more streamlined process. Recruitment has also aligned its focus more closely to college graduates.

Month	Social Workers FTE	Month	Social Workers FTE	Month	Social Workers FTE
Sept 2011	64.08	Sept 2012	52.16	Sept 2013	37.45

## Agency Usage in 2013

Month	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13
Agency Usage FTE	26.66	26.65	33.66	33.39	42.08	46.08	39.77	39.77	37.45



## Proposals to address use of social workers agency workers

### New Career Progression

Along with Adult Social Care a new Social Work Career Structure has been implemented (backdated until April 2013) The main focus is to improve the starting salary for newly qualified Social Workers (to attract the best candidates to Leeds) and allow staff to progress to the level of Senior Social Worker more quickly, if they can demonstrate the required capability. This along with other changes, such as, the new recording system, will hopefully help to address turnover figures, providing better staff retention and help ensure we recruit the best candidates, with the ability to progress. It should be noted that the new scale does not exceed regional or core city comparators but brings us into the top quartile.

### The Leeds Offer to Social Workers

Linked to the new career structure is a revised offer offered to Social Workers in terms of career development and development opportunities. The aim of this offer is to promote Leeds as a centre of best practice and the place for Social Work in the region/country. There will be a particular focus on newly qualified Social Workers.

### Future Projection/Target

The aim of the service is to achieve 100% of Social Work posts filled by substantive employees. The ideal solution would be that we have a waiting list of applicants who can be used as an alternative to agency staff. However, at this stage this pool does not exist and in the short term any waiting list is likely to constitute either inexperienced or newly qualified Social Workers. Therefore, in the short-term, there is likely to be a need to use Agency Social Workers if we are to cover vacancies or address the increases in referrals.

Work has already been undertaken to create extra capacity through Peripatetic Social Workers. Three Peripatetic Social Work teams have been established to cover vacancies planning for sickness and maternity but the overall levels of vacant posts mean that these teams are deployed covering other vacancies too. Having analysed the levels of sick/maternity leave per year the existing 18 FTE Peripatetic provision may not have the capacity to cover the average of 20 maternity leaves per year/sickness.

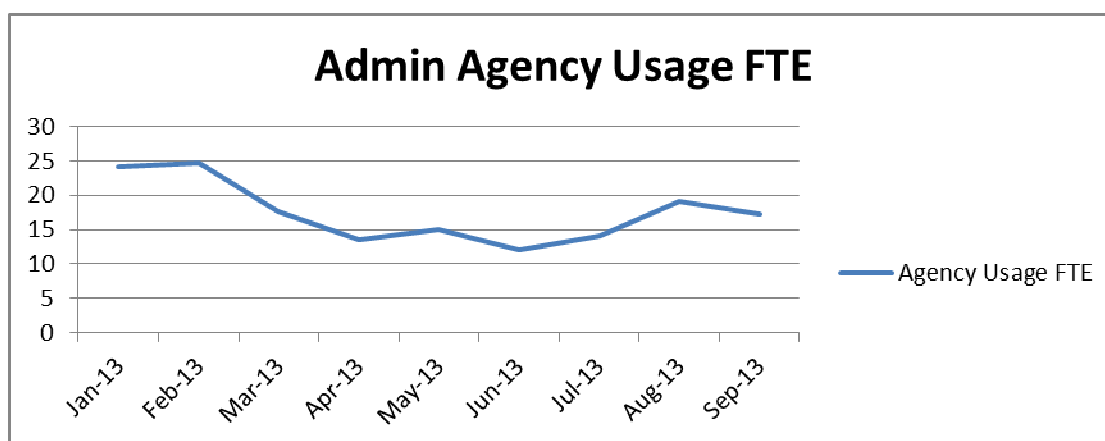
Base on the analysis and factors above, including the relatively inexperienced workforce that will still exist in the next period the service would expect Agency usage at December 2013 to stand at less than 20 FTEs, seeing it drop to between 10-15 FTEs by December 2014. It needs to be noted, however, if referrals maintain their current levels or there are external factors such a new "baby P" then the use of agency staff will be higher.

### Admin Agency Use

The Service has used agency staff to cover a number of administrative roles and functions. There is recognition that the current structure needs to be reviewed as it is still largely based on the transfer from Adults in 2010. Since this date there have been a number of service redesigns and the administrative functions need to be realigned to ensure they are flexible and effective in offering business support. There have also been legislative and legal changes which have required different levels of administrative support. Given that admin workers support frontline meetings there is a need to fill any vacancies as quickly as possible.

It is recognised that there is a lack of flexibility in the deployment of existing resources which has meant that Agency staff have been engaged to cover gaps. These gaps do not equate to vacancies and reflect the fact that the existing structure is deficient and need reviewing.

Month	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13
Agency Usage FTE	24.22	24.72	17.72	13.5	15	12	14.08	19.18	17.18



### Proposals to address use of Admin agency workers

The Service is undertaking a review of its Administrative function in Social Care which is tasked with reviewing and consolidating the existing arrangement as well as producing a more flexible structure. This is due to be consulted on in December 2013 and should be implemented in early 2014. This is likely lead to a significant reduction in Agency staff to a level of 5 -10 FTEs, with a corresponding increase in FTE in this area in 2014.

### Residential Agency Use

At present all residential establishments are rated as either good or outstanding by Ofsted. This reflects the commitment within the service to raise standards and outcomes for its most vulnerable children.

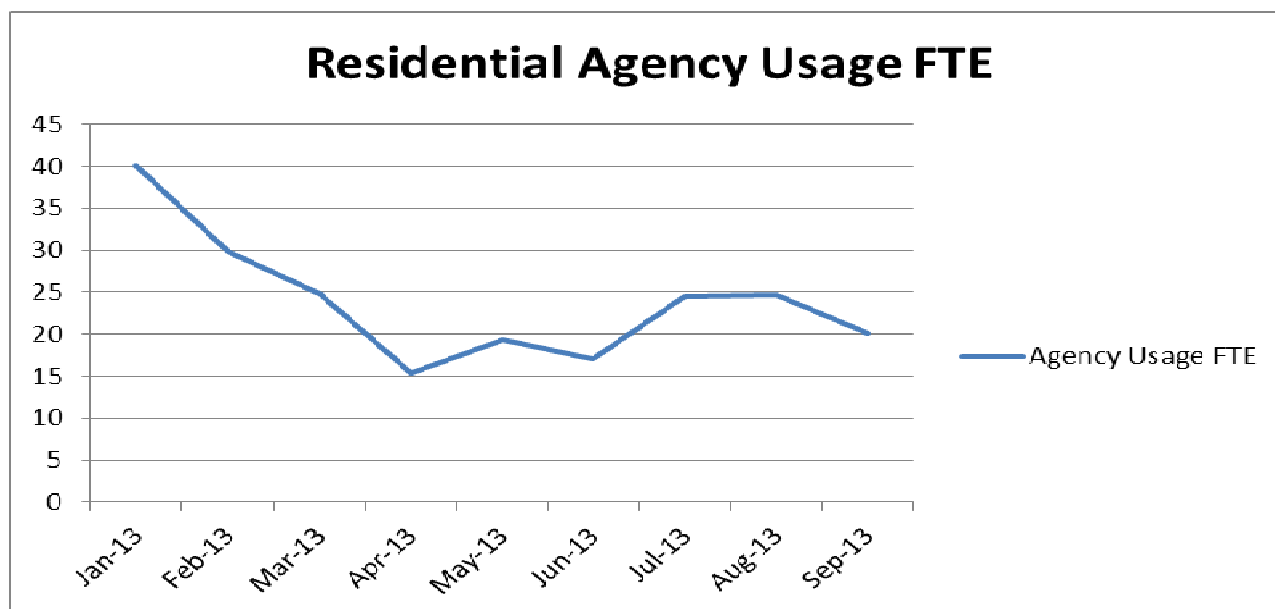
In Residential Services there is a need to maintain minimum staffing levels. Given that the service is 24/7, at times there is a need to cover absence at short-notice. This can be provided either through overtime or Agency staff. The latter option is generally cheaper than the payment of overtime at enhanced rates.

The main area for the use of Agency staff in the Residential sector is East Moor Secure Children's Centre. Historically, there have been significant levels of sickness at East Moor which have been covered by agency staff. This in large measure affects Care and Senior Care Officers roles. In the recent period there have been proposals for a new build at East Moor which has meant that vacant posts have been covered by agency staff because of uncertainty of the new staffing structure for the new build.

East Moor's management have recently reviewed the usage of agency staff and have released a number of posts for recruitment. Recruitment has taken place into 2 care officer posts with one

redeployee from a children’s home and 1 secondment from Adult social care. Further recruitment will take place on a temporary one year contract pending the new build completion. Existing Agency staff have been informed of this development and the likelihood that if they are not successful in obtaining on of these role then their contracts will be ended.

Month	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13
Agency Usage FTE	40	29.81	24.81	15.41	19.3	17.1	24.57	24.72	20.09



### Proposals to address use of Residential agency workers

As a result of the review and changes in the age and profile of looked after children the service has developed a strategy to have outstanding children’s homes. These would be small homes, situated in local communities, child centred and outcome focused, appropriately resourced and in good condition. The strategy intends to extend the quality, flexibility and range of children’s homes in Leeds, including the development of homes providing specialist care, to improve the outcomes for the children placed there and to reduce the dependence on expensive external placements.”

Children’s Services are looking to close down a number of residential homes including Inglewood and Wood Lane and replace them with smaller homes. As part of this process the existing staff will be redeployed to other homes to provide addition support and this will help address both overtime and agency use.

The review is due to be complete next year when the new homes will open and part of the review is a more fundamental review of staff which will address issues such as inflexible rotas ensuring they are more centred around the needs to the home. The report to CLT outlined “The staffing of the three new homes would initially be drawn from the existing cohort of residential staff and would create an opportunity to develop new teams with a broad and diverse range of skills and experience.” This should reduce Agency usage.

There are further proposals to develop a bank of employees to cover residential shifts at plain time which will address both overtime and agency costs. This will draw from existing staff, college placements and those wishing to further develop their social care experience and should mean that any additional hours worked are not paid at an enhanced rate. One pressure that is developing is trade union resistance to proposals to significantly reduce overtime undertaken in residential sector where it has been the established practice for some period.

Based on this analysis and trends the service would expect agency usage to be reduced in the next period. At December 2013 the service would expect the figure to be 16 FTEs and in 2014 the target would be 8 FTEs.

### **Overtime Usage**

Overtime usage is almost exclusively restricted to the Residential sector. The main reasons for overtime being authorised are to maintain continuity of care and response to specific situations where complex and challenging cases require additional staffing resources.

As indicated earlier the service is taking steps to reduce agency usage and these measures will as impact on overtime usage as well. The additional staff available through the closure of some homes is already impacting on overpayments.

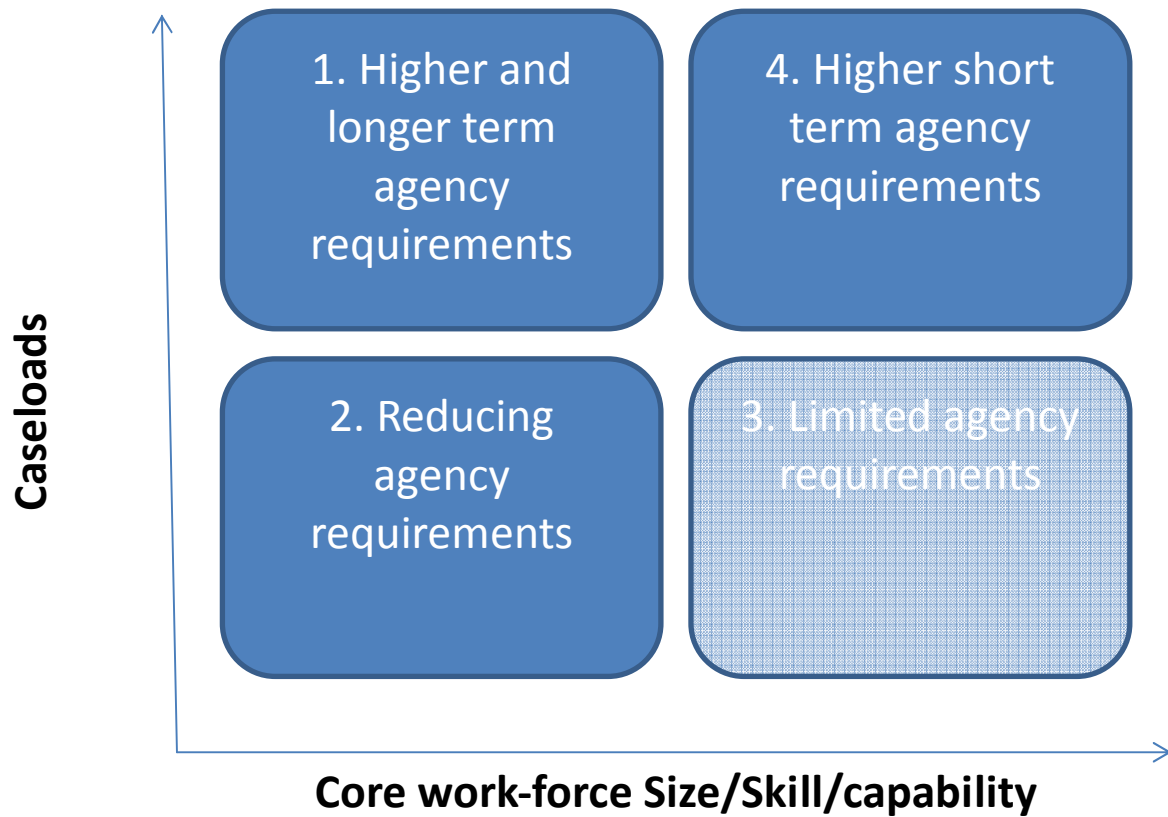
There measures outlined for East Moor will also impact on overtime spent as well. However, the relatively high levels of sickness at East Moor will mean there will remain some agency use.

Comparators with previous years are not possible because the data has not been collected. The year to date spend (31<sup>st</sup> August 2013) is £521427 a monthly average of £104285, a mixture of additional hours and enhanced payments.

### **Conclusions**

There are a variety of reasons for agency staff being used in Children's Services. In 2013/14 and 14/15 there will continued to be agency spend. This agency spend, however, is to maintain essential frontline services offering a 24/7 and ensuring that children at risk are allocated social workers appropriately and our statutory and legal obligations are met.

The strategy for the Directorate is to develop the experience and capacity particularly its Social Workers and adjust its staff structures to deal more successfully with any short-term pressures. Reducing caseloads in the long run will reduce the pressure to engage agency staff. There are robust plans in places to review and reduce the use of agency staff. They can be summarised as below.



1. Recent position high cases lower skill base
2. Current position reducing cases
3. Desired position more experienced teams
4. Exceptional position