

Freedom of Information – Response – 26532

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am writing to request the following information regarding your council's use of agency labour for the financial year 2023/24 (or the most recent complete 12-month period for which data is available):

Note the information provided below from HR includes Tile Hill and Opus workers only for the 12-month period 2023/24.

1. Financial Information

- *What was your total expenditure on hourly paid agency workers?*

For the period 2023/24 £5,199,289.46 (including hourly and daily paid workers)

- *How many total hours were supplied by hourly paid agency workers?*

For the period 2023/24 157,658 (including daily paid workers working 8 hours per day)

- *What were your top 3-5 job roles/categories by volume of agency hours used?*

For the period 2023/24 –

- Social Care – qualified
- Admin & clerical
- Technical

2. Procurement and Management

- *How is agency labour supply currently procured and managed? Please specify:*

o Any frameworks used (e.g., ESPO, YPO, CCS, regional frameworks)

o Whether you use a master vendor, neutral vendor, or direct supply arrangements

o The number of agency suppliers you currently work with

Agency workers are primarily sourced through Opus People Solutions for all roles.

However, for executive-level positions, we engage the services of Tile Hill recruitment agency.

The Opus People Solutions contract was not procured through an external framework. Instead, it was awarded under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 Regulation 12 (TECKAL) exemption because Opus People Solutions is a wholly owned company of Suffolk County Council (via Suffolk Group Holdings). This means no competitive procurement process was required. The contract commenced on 30 May 2014. As Opus is a wholly owned company, the arrangement operates on a rolling basis with no fixed end date, under the TECKAL exemption. Opus People Solutions is a master vendor.

The agreement with Tile Hill was established through a direct award, following their demonstrable success in supporting Suffolk County Council with executive recruitment. Previous engagements with alternative executive recruitment agencies did not meet the organisation's standards; therefore, a direct award was considered necessary to ensure continuity and avoid further disruption to executive appointments, particularly given the immediate need for senior leadership support. Tile Hill is engaged as the designated preferred supplier for agency support in the provision of management and executive roles

within Suffolk County Council. This arrangement encompasses Head of Service positions and above, equivalent to or exceeding the Senior Manager (SM) pay grade on the Council's pay scales, as well as interim management assignments remunerated at £500 per day or higher, across all council service areas.

3. Cost Verification and Recovery

- *Do you have contractual provisions or audit processes in place to verify that the actual employer costs (National Insurance, pension contributions, holiday pay, apprenticeship levy, etc.) charged by agencies match the costs genuinely incurred for each worker?*
- *If yes, please describe the verification mechanism and any recoveries made in the last 12 months*
- *If no, are there plans to implement such measures?*

We do not currently undertake verification of National Insurance rates or similar employment-related costs. However, we do ensure that all agreed rates, including National Insurance, pension contributions, and other applicable costs, are published and made transparent to the recruiting manager.

4. Compliance and Modern Slavery

- *What modern slavery due diligence requirements do you impose on your agency suppliers?*
- *Do you conduct working pattern analysis to identify potential exploitation indicators (e.g., multiple occupancy reporting, excessive hours, workers' wages being paid into duplicate bank accounts)?*
- *Have you identified any modern slavery concerns within your agency workforce in the past 12 months?*

Suffolk County Council is committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking within its operations and supply chains, in line with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This commitment extends to all agency worker arrangements managed through approved suppliers.

- **Modern Slavery Awareness:**

- Guidance for managers to identify indicators of exploitation, such as third-party control or reluctance to provide original documentation.
- Clear escalation routes for concerns, supported by whistleblowing procedures.

- **Compliance and Monitoring:**

- All agency suppliers are required to adhere to safeguarding and ethical employment standards.
- Non-compliance with safer recruitment requirements may result in disciplinary action or removal from approved supplier lists.

These measures create a robust framework to protect individuals from exploitation and ensure ethical recruitment practices for agency workers.

We do not conduct working pattern analysis to identify potential exploitation indicators, and we have not identified any modern slavery concerns within your agency workforce in the past 12 months.

