Working for the Agency

The Role and Significance of
Temporary Employment Agencies in the
Social Care Workforce

Interim Report

August 2008

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Contents

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Executive Summary of Interim Report Findings - August 2008

1: Overview

'Options for Excellence – Building the Social Care Workforce of the Future' (DfES/DH 2006) sets out an ambitious agenda to reduce over reliance on temporary staff supplied through private employment agencies. Drawing on the findings of a mapping exercise and literature review, which form part of an ongoing research project into the role and significance of temporary employment agencies in the social care workforce, this report reviews what early progress has been made toward achieving this policy goal.

2: Key Findings

It is recognised that one of the most significant challenges facing social care commissioners is ensuring services can recruit and retain quality staff long enough to provide consistent care to service users.

Faced with chronic staff shortages, local councils in England (and especially those in London) have made substantial use of temporary agency workers to manage staff shortages.

Concern has been rising over the increasing use of agency staff for a variety of reasons including cost and the perceived negative impact on the quality of services. Most authors concur that the costs of agency working in core professional services outweigh the benefits.

Paradoxically, while agency work is associated with increased financial rewards and offers workers flexibility in the location and hours worked most agency social workers envisage returning to permanent employment.

For newly qualified social workers, agency work is often used as a way of gaining experience before deciding to take on a permanent position.

In seeking to reduce overreliance on temporary agency workers, local councils have focused on recruitment and retention and have introduced a number of management responses.

There is some limited evidence that measures to tackle recruitment and retention are having some impact on reducing vacancy rates and the level and use of agency workers.

Management approaches such as the introduction of 'managed vendor' schemes are reducing expenditure on agencies and achieving cashable savings of between 3-10%. However there are concerns from inside the employment agency sector that they do not provide the most skilled and appropriate candidates for the job.

Arguably to achieve a lasting solution, more fundamental root and branch reform of the social care sector is required to make permanent employment more appealing, to take into account workforce desires for flexibility, and to instigate better ways of working in groups and teams so that some degree of continuity can be maintained.   .

1: Introduction

In some parts of England where staff shortages are particularly acute, temporary agency workers account for 30% of the total social care workforce (IDeA Knowledge, 2005/6). 'Options for Excellence – Building the Social Care Workforce of the Future' (DfES/DH 2006) sets out an ambitious programme to reduce over reliance on temporary staff supplied through private employment agencies. By 2020 it is expected that employers will no longer need to rely on temporary agency staff to cover tasks that would be normally carried out by a permanent social worker and that as a result those receiving support will be able to count on continuity in the person providing their care. In order to reduce costs, it is expected that local commissioners will support the development of non-profit employment agencies and that these will increasingly provide local councils and other employers with a flexible staff supply.

The overall aim of this study is to assess what progress is being made toward achieving this policy goal and to highlight some of the emerging issues around the strategic procurement and management of temporary social care agency staff. Within social care, the term 'agency' is often used in ways that do not distinguish between employment agencies and recruitment businesses concerned with the provision of staff (on either temporary or permanent basis) and service providers contracted to provide services on behalf of the council. It should be noted that service provider agencies are **not** the focus of this study. This study is concerned with the provision of *staff* and not the provision of *services*.

The aims of the study are:

- To explore how local councils with social services responsibilities and care service providers manage staff shortages including the procurement processes through which temporary agency staff are employed.

- To explore the views of employment agency managers as to the impact of 'Options of Excellence' and other recent strategic developments within the sector.

- To gain a better understanding of the motivations, work histories, and future employment plans of staff choosing to work in the agency sector. This includes social workers, newly qualified social workers, occupational therapists and care workers.

- To work with a group of service users and carers to hear their views on this workforce issue.

The study commenced in July 2007 and is due to be completed in June 2009. It is one of three projects on recruitment and retention commissioned by the Department of Health as part of the Social Care Workforce Research Initiative. This interim report provides a mid-point review of progress and presents some early findings from the mapping exercise and literature review.

2: Progress Update

Figure 1 below presents an overview of the different research stages and a summary of progress across Year 1.

Figure 1: Progress in Year 1

Month	*Governance*	*Activities*	*Status*
1 - 3	Hold first Steering group meeting. Obtain ethics permissions	Undertake literature review. Commence mapping exercise of employment agency sector.	First steering group meeting held. Ethics permissions granted. Literature review completed. Mapping exercise completed.
4 -6	Secure local research governance	Identify 3 case study sites. Review data and undertake documentary analysis for each site. Develop interview topic guides and undertake other preparatory work.	3 case study sites have been identified. Review work completed. Local research governance has been secured in two of the sites to permit access to social services staff. Application has been submitted for the third site.
7 - 18		Carryout fieldwork in 3 case study sites. Carry out interviews with: agency managers (n=15); managers working in social services and care provision (n=15); and agency workers (n=75).	Interviews with agency mangers are complete. 11 interviews have been carried out with social services managers and 8 interviews with agency workers have been completed. All interviews have been taped recorded and transcribed.
13-16	Hold second steering group meeting	Undertake National Survey	Second steering group meeting has been held. Interim Report completed. Survey design and planning underway.
17		Hold 'interest groups' with service users and carers	
18-19		Analyse data	
20- 24	Final Steering group meeting	Draft final report and circulate for comment	Final Report Dissemination activities

During the preparatory stages of the project relevant ethics committee permissions were secured from King's College London Research Ethics Subcommittee. A small operational steering group has been established brining together the research team with an agency worker, a former agency manager, a workforce development manager and two service user and carer representatives. The steering group has met formally twice with informal meetings and contact in between. To ensure the findings translate into practice, the researcher has linked the project to local workforce development initiatives, for example, joining a 'Recruitment and Retention Strategy Group' in one of the fieldwork sites.

The first stages of the research involved a mapping exercise and a literature review in order to estimate, insofar as is possible, the type and scale of temporary social care employment agencies operating in England. Both these stages are now complete and are discussed in more detail later in the report.

The mapping exercise along with analysis of the Local Authority Area Profiles (Sector Sub-analysis) of the National Minimum Data Set (NMDS-SC) from Skills for Care helped inform the purposive selection of three case study sites. In each of the three case study sites we wanted to explore different patterns of agency use and observe different strategic arrangements for the management of staff shortages and the procurement of temporary agency staff. The sites have now been selected and their key characteristics as regards different fieldwork foci are summarised below in Figure 2. Each site corresponds to one local council area (with social services responsibilities). Because of the potential sensitivity of some of the information the sites were given assurances that they would remain anonymous in any reports.

Figure 2: Profile of Local Council Case Study Sites

SITE PROFILE*	Vacancy Rate	Staff Turn Over	% Temporary Staff
Site 1: Urban area, part of the outer London conurbation. Number of Bank Staff = 218 Number of Agency Workers = 77 Number of Local Temporary Employment Agencies with Offices Based in the County Boundary = 8 *Reason for site selection*: Opportunity to focus on 'Managed Vendor Procurement'**. High use of agencies in domiciliary care sector.	4.8%	11.2%	4.8%
Site 2: Seaside town, south of England. Number of Bank Staff = 31 Number of Agency Workers =46 Number of Local Temporary Employment Agencies with Offices Based in the County Boundary = 4 *Reason for site selection*: Opportunity to focus on a not for profit employment agency.	2.8%	20.6%	4.8%
Site 3: Rural area, north of England. Number of Bank Staff = 152 Number of Agency Workers = 40 Number of Local Agencies with Offices Based in the County Boundary = 0 *Reason for site selection*: Opportunity to focus on 'Partially Outsourced Human Resources Managed Service'. Focus on zero hour staff banks. No use of agencies in domiciliary care sector.	3.4%	16.8%	4.1%
Notes *Figures from NMDS-SC Local Authority Area Profile for All Social Care Sectors. ** More details about the different management models mentioned below are given later in the report. ***Excludes National Chains with Regional/Multiple Office Bases. Local Agencies all list 'care' as a service provided. Most are agencies advertising 'nursing and care' rather than specialist social work agencies.			

In each of the sites, we are concurrently conducting interviews as detailed in Figure 3 below. The topic guides are presented in Appendix 1. Although we had anticipated completing the interview work by the end of year one, it has taken considerably longer to identify and gain access to appropriate contacts. Hussein (2008) for example, described how in approaching employment agencies six contacts yielded access to one telephone interview. Some agencies have been keen to sign up to the research while others have been reluctant to get involved and to share what can be seen as privileged business information. Having a former agency manager on our steering group has proved invaluable in establishing the research as credible and valuable and in securing the support of the new Association of Social Work Employment Businesses (ASWEB).

Figure 3: Interview Participants

Interviewees (n=105)	Site 1:	Site 2:	Site 3:
Agency Managers (n=15) (Completed 15/15)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Social Care Providers and Managers (n=15)	5 (Underway 1/5)	5 (Completed 5/5)	5 (Completed 5/5)
Agency Workers (n=75)			
- Newly Qualified Social Workers	5 (Underway 2/5)	5	5
- Social Workers (ordinarily qualified)	5 (Underway 1/5)	5	5
- Social Workers (ASW qualified)	5 (Completed 5/5)	5	5
- Care Workers	5	5	5
- OTs	5	5	5

The interviews with agency managers are now complete (n=15). We should point out however, that these are only loosely site specific. While agencies providing care workers do tend to be more locally based in terms of a physical office presence, agencies providing qualified staff more often

operate nationally with the larger chains (with specialist social care divisions) having regional office bases. Furthermore, an increasing number of employment businesses are becoming web based. One agency manager based in Site 2 described how it was now possible to conduct his employment business in the UK via a lap top from the beach in Australia. No agencies were physically located in Site 3 and the impact of this is emerging in the interviews.

We have encountered no problems accessing social services managers and care service providers in Site 2 and Site 3. We have contacts lined up with social services managers in Site 1 and are awaiting local research governance approval before commencing with these.

We have discussed a range of issues with local social services managers (see Appendix 1b) and have used this qualitative data to assist in the design of a postal questionnaire to be administered to all local councils in England. The aim of the survey is to provide a snapshot of progress around the implementation of 'Options for Excellence' one year on in reducing reliance on agency staff and the development of non-profit agencies to provide a flexible staff supply. A draft of the survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.

Accessing agency workers has proved more difficult than we had anticipated. We asked one large agency to pass on our invite letter to all their registered agency social workers, asking them to contact us if they would be willing to be interviewed for the study. We received no replies despite offering a £10 voucher for taking part. Also, in Site 3, approaches through the local council to target agency workers working in the locality yielded no responses. Where we have been successful in securing access to agency workers this has usually been through personal introductions and then snowballing to find further contacts, requiring much time to be spent physically on site. Snowballing does, however, have the advantage of enabling us to target a wide range of practice experiences (e.g. agency workers working in services covering mental health, learning disabilities,

older people etc,). It should be noted that we have a Master's student working on the project and have sub-divided the qualified social worker cohort into workers who are 'ordinarily qualified' and those who are Approved Social Workers (ASWs). This has enabled us to take forward an emergent theme in literature which sees agency working as having particular appeal to social workers working in high risk (high 'burn out') areas (Kirkpatrick and Hoque, 2006). The aim of the Master's study (which will contribute findings for the main report) is to explore why Approved Social Workers (ASWs) choose to leave permanent employment for agency work; and what, if anything, would entice them back into permanent employment.

Having completed the interviews with agency managers, we are now in a good position to access care workers and occupational therapists undertaking agency work in the specific sites. We plan to commence these interviews shortly. If we are not able to identify sufficient participants in the study sites, we shall seek to recruit via the professional press and professional associations (e.g. College of Occupational Therapists).

The Social Care Workforce Research Unit's 'Service User and Carer Advisory Group' is actively involved in many of the projects linked to the wider Social Care Workforce Research Initiative. In July, a seminar was held on the theme of new ways of working, with Dr Guro Huby of the University of Edinburgh in attendance. A seminar on agency working is planned for October (to be run in conjunction with the theme of international workers). Later on in the study, the research team will approach local service user and carers' forums in each of the field work sites to present and discuss the emerging findings. This was felt to be a more appropriate method of involvement and engagement rather than individual interviews as it was assumed that most service users and carers would not be aware of the 'employment status' of the individual workers involved making any comparisons between 'agency' and 'permanent' staffing difficult to draw out. It should be noted that in areas with high staff turnover rates, lack of continuity of care does not simply equate with agency working. Equally, agency workers

can be employed in temporary posts for long periods (upwards of three years plus in some instances) and are therefore well able to deliver continuity of care. For the service users and carers on the project steering group, the most pressing issues identified relate to the issue of personalised care and direct payments and how people in receipt of these will cover their own staff shortages when personal assistants are sick or on holiday. Will temporary employment agencies provide the solution and, if so, how prepared are they for contracting directly with individual service users and carers?

3: Sector Mapping

3:1 Commentary

The private employment agency sector remains a significant yet little understood component of the qualified and unqualified social care workforce. There is no single comprehensive database of social care agencies. The employment agency and employment business sector have a particular relationship with the rest of the social care sector, which results in limited information about its national presence. In the past, the sector's response to traditional research methods, such as postal surveys, has been poor (Social and Health Care Workforce Group, 2002; TOPSS England, 2003). For example, an attempt in 2002-03 by the TOPSSE/REC Task & Finish Group to conduct a postal survey of agencies resulted in a very disappointing response rate of fewer than six per cent, with the data being considered inadequate for statistical analysis.

Agencies with the exception of those providing 'nursing and domiciliary care', are not required to be licensed. Agencies must comply with the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and the conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business Regulations 2003. This imposes a duty to carry out checks on those working with vulnerable people. The sector is inspected by the government's Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate who can impose fines agencies who do not fulfil this duty.

A further difficulty stems from the need to find an agreed definition of the term 'agency'. Under the Employment Agencies Act 1973, there is an important distinction between employment *agencies,* whose purpose is to find workers employment or to supply employers with workers for employment by them, and employment *businesses,* who hire out workers on a temporary basis. Generally, the term 'agency worker' is used as shorthand to refer to workers who contract with an agency but carry out work not for the agency but for the agency's client with whom they have no direct contractual relationship. There are legal complexities about the precise status of people working for agencies, such as whether they are the employees of the agency or of the client (Laflamme & Carrier, 1997). Agencies also vary in terms of their type

and degree of specialisation. For example, some agencies specialise in qualified social workers only; others are general agencies that happen to provide workers for the care sector. Many of the main employment agencies in the UK are multinational corporations and significant amounts of capital from the UK public sector are transferred as 'profits' to the USA (Carey, 2004).

In the mapping exercise described below, of the 199 agencies which provide 'care' very few are specialist social care agencies providing qualified social workers. The vast majority provide 'nursing and care'. There are also a small number of large generic employment agencies which have specialist departments for the recruitment and placement of both care workers and qualified staff. We are currently undertaking more detailed analysis of the sector information gathered as part of the mapping exercise. We are also continuing to collect information and will repeat the various searches listed below so that we can monitor any changes occurring in the sector over the coming year. In the previous year, the number of agencies registered with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation has remained static.

3:2 Searches and search findings

The first stage of the research involved a mapping exercise in order to estimate insofar as is possible, the type and scale of temporary social care employment agencies operating in England. This was achieved through:

1. Monitoring of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) Register of agencies in the Nursing and Social Care Group.
2. Search of the Yellow Pages and other electronic databases (Agency Central),
3. Monitoring of advertisements in the professional press (Compass, Community Care, etc) and general alertness to any agencies identified during the lifetime of the research project.
4. Compilation and maintenance of a database. Where employment agencies have multiple office bases, only the location of the main head office is recorded.

1) Findings from the REC Register

The REC is the trade body that supports and represents the recruitment industry. It was launched in January 2000. The REC's membership is made-up of over 8,000 recruitment agencies and businesses (corporate members) and 6,000 recruitment professionals (individual members). There are number of sector specific groups. The Nursing and Social Care Group was set up to provide support for recruitment agencies specialising in social care, domiciliary care and healthcare. All members of the Nursing and Social Care Group are required to comply with the REC Code of Professional Practice (http://www.rec.uk.com/regions-sectors/sectors/nursing_social_care/code-of-practice [Accessed 8.8.08]).

The REC also accepts complaints and queries in regards to the standards of best practice by its members. In the 2007, the REC received 8 complaints about members in the REC Nursing and Social Care Sector. The problems highlighted included problems with payment, issues around the portability of CRB checks and receiving unsolicited mail despite requests to stop (http://www.rec.uk.com/_uploads/documents/2007Report.pdf. [Accessed 8.8.08]).

In August 2008, there were 193 members registered with the Nursing and Social Care Group [www.rec.co.uk [Accessed 8.8.08]. In August 2007, the figure was 194. However, the membership database lists only 132 entries. As 61 registered members are unidentifiable, these are excluded from the research database. It was also the case that some agencies claimed REC registration but were not then listed as members (these are recorded in the research database as unregistered).

2) Online databases

Yellow Pages (www.yell.com [Accessed 10.8.08])

The search terms [social-care-temporary-employment-agency$] and [locum-social-care$] led to a specialist classification on the Yell website entitled 'Home Care Services; Nurses Agencies and Care Agencies'. Here, there were 3,752 listings (if agencies had offices across the UK, they were repeat

listed in the database). This included agencies supplying permanent nursing and care staff to local councils etc. To identify agencies working specifically as employment businesses or those advertising the supply of 'temporary workers' we then searched the service descriptions for each listed agency. Across all Yell databases it was only possible to search the first 100 listings (10 pages) as access was not permitted beyond this. This search identified 13 agencies supplying 'nursing and care'. Only 1 listed agency in this section specialised in 'social work and social care'. Of the 13 agencies identified, 3 were registered with the REC and therefore already included on our database.

We then refined the search terms to identify any further agencies not already listed. The search terms: [social-care-recruitment-consultant$] [social-work-recruitment-consultant$] [social-work-temporary-employment-agency$] [social-care –contingency-work$] [social-work-contingency-work$] and [locum-social-worker$] led to the main database of recruitment consultancies working in all employment areas across the UK. There were a total of 18,228 listings. Searching of the service descriptions for the first 100 listings (for each search term) revealed a further 18 agencies not already identified. Of these 5 agencies were REC registered and therefore already included on our database.

Agencysocialcare.com (www.agencysocialcare.com [Accessed 12.8.08])
This dedicated site listed 28 social care recruitment agencies. 4 were REC registered. Of the remaining 24 listed agencies, 23 were not already known to the research database.

Agency Central (www.agencycentral.co.uk [Accessed 11.8.08])
Search of Agency Central's social care category ('All Social Care Skills Recruitment Agencies') revealed 19 listings. Seven listings related to social care agencies. The remainder were generic recruitment consultancies (which did not mention social care in their service descriptions). Of the 7 social care agency listings, a further 2 agencies were identified which were not already known to the research database. Neither of these appeared in the REC membership database, though one did claim REC membership.

Compass (www. Compassjobsfair.com) and **Agency Seeker** (agencyseeker.co.uk)

'Compass Guide to Social Work and Social Care' lists 5 recruitment consultancies in its 2008 directory. One further agency was identified for the research database. It was not REC registered. The Compass website also linked to another website (www.agencyseeker.co.uk). Classifications for 'social workers' and 'other social services' led to the identification of 6 listings. Four were generic recruitment agencies which did not refer to social care and social work in their service descriptions. Of the 2 remaining, 1 was not already known to the research database.

3. Professional Press and Other Sources.

During August 2007- August 2008 around twelve recruitment agencies ran adverts in *Community Care*. All were specialist social care agencies providing access to qualified social workers. 4 were REC registered. Of the remaining 8, 6 were not already identified on the research database. Search of the *Community Care* Website directory revealed 1 further agency not already known to the database.

Figure 4: Snap Shot at August 08 of the County Wide Distribution of Employment Agencies in England Providing Care Workers (Qualified and Unqualified to the Social Care Sector) [with Aggregate Figures for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland].

	Agencies Registered with REC	Other Agencies Identified – Not REC Registered	Total
Avon	2	4	**6**
Bedfordshire	3	1	**4**
Berkshire	2		**2**
Buckinghamshire	4		**4**
Cambridgeshire			
Cheshire	5	1	**6**
Cleveland			
Cornwall			
Cumbria			
Derbyshire		1	**1**

Devon		1	**1**
Dorset	2	1	**3**
Durham			
East Sussex	2	2	**4**
East Yorkshire	1		**1**
Essex	10	5	**15**
Gloucestershire	1	1	**2**
Greater London	36	16	**52**
Manchester	1	3	**4**
Hampshire	1	3	**4**
Herefordshire			
Hertfordshire	6		**6**
Kent	5	6	**11**
Lancashire	2	2	**4**
Leicestershire	2		**2**
Lincolnshire	2		**2**
Merseyside	3		**3**
Norfolk			
North Yorkshire			
Northamptonshire	2	1	**3**
Northumberland	1		**1**
Nottinghamshire			
Oxfordshire	2		**2**
Rutland			
Shropshire		1	**1**
Somerset	1		**1**
South Yorkshire	2		**2**
Staffordshire	3		**3**
Suffolk		2	**2**
Surrey	6	2	**8**
Tyne and Wear	1	1	**2**
Warwickshire	1		**1**
West Midlands	2	3	**5**
West Sussex	3		**3**
West Yorkshire	2	2	**4**
Wiltshire	4		**4**
Worcestershire	1		**1**
Scotland	3	2	**5**
Wales	5	3	**8**
Northern Ireland	1	1	**2**
Location not known		2	**2**
Total	**132**	**67**	**199**

4: Preliminary Findings from the Literature Review

4:1 Overview

In this section we present a review of the literature on the role and significance of temporary employment agencies in the social care workforce. We review key policy documents and other official data to give a picture of current agency use and the different methods of procuring agency staff. We also review what is known about the motivations and career histories and future employment plans of agency worker themselves. Finally, we explore the evidence on the implementation of 'Options for Excellence' as it relates to reducing over reliance on temporary agency staff. The discussion is limited to social care, though we have gathered much information on the temporary employment sector in general.

4:2 Method

The literature review was accomplished by searching the following databases: Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Social Care Online (SCO), Sociological Abstracts (SA) and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS). In addition to the academic literature, particular attention was paid to the web site material linked to service improvement agencies namely the Care Services Improvement Partnership (www.csip.org.uk) and IDeA Knowledge (www.idea.org.uk). Other official sources searched included the Department of Health (www.dh.gov.uk), Skills for Care (www.skillsforcare.org.uk), Commission for Social Care Inspection (www.csci.org.uk), General Social Care Council (www.gscc.org.uk), and the British Association of Social Workers (www.basw.co.uk). The search terms used were:

agency-staff agency-social-work$ agency-care-work$ agency-working agency-work$ agency-workforce	interim-staff interim-working interim-work$ interim-workforce

temporary-social-work$ temporary-care-work$ temporary-workforce	temp$ temporary-employment temporary-employment-agency
contingency-staff contingency-social-work$ contingency-employment	contingent-social-work$ contingent-care-work$ contingent-workforce
casual-staff casual-employment casual-care-work$ casual-social-work$	locum-staff locum-social-worker$ locum-employment locum-work$
transient-staff	

The search of the academic databases revealed 266 records for which abstracts were attained. Of these 41 full articles were retrieved. Most records were not relevant as they related to other kinds of agency working (e.g. multi-agency working). Furthermore, many of the records were news reports form the professional press (e.g. *Community Care*, *Nursing Times*) rather than peer review articles.

4:3 Review Findings

i) Policy background

In July 2005, the Government announced a review of the social care workforce in England to be led jointly by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health. The 'Options for Excellence' review (DfES/DH 2006) was established with three key aims: first to feed into the implementation of the children's workforce strategy and the white paper 'Our health, our care, our say'; secondly to produce an analysis of the economic and social case for investment in the social care workforces; and thirdly to set out a vision for the social care workforce to 2020. In particular the review was asked to bring forward recommendations in order to increase the supply of all workers within the sector, such as domiciliary care workers, residential care workers, social workers and occupational therapists, and to look at measures to tackle recruitment and retention issues. According to Norris (2007) one of the biggest challenges facing social care commissioners is whether services

can recruit and retain quality staff that stay long enough to provide consistent care to service users. By 2020 it is expected that employers will no longer need to rely on temporary agency staff to cover tasks that would be normally carried out by a permanent social worker.

Key to achieving the policy goal of reducing over reliance on temporary staff supplied through private employment agencies is the implementation of measures to improve recruitment and the retention of staff in permanent employment. 'Options for Excellence' outlines a number of key strategies. This includes: publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the work that the sector does and to improve its image; research into the links between rewards offered in the sector, recruitment and retention difficulties; enhancing the role of support staff and ethical international recruitment (the subject of another research project in the Social Care Workforce Research Initiative). It also acknowledged that there is a need to promote a professional approach to improve continuity of care, enabling one person to co-ordinate the delivery of multiple services, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the social work role by giving individual workers more autonomy (DfES/DH 2006 p46).

'Options for Excellence' also promotes social enterprise and encourages local commissioners to support the development of local and regional 'not for profit' employment agencies alongside more traditional staff banks and pools. A well cited example is the Brighton Care Crew. This is a relief pool of care workers who operate right across the Brighton and Hove locality in much the same way as an agency but at a much reduced hourly cost (IDeA, 2005/6, DfES/DH, 2006).

ii) Latest figures on agency working

Recruitment and retention are also the focus of another study in the 'Social Care Workforce research Initiative', suffice it to say here that recent figures suggest that the vacancy rate in the social care sector is double that for all types of industrial, commercial and public employment. Council reported vacancy and turnover rates for staff in adult social care were 8.4% [1 in 12 posts vacant] (Eborall and Griffiths, 2008).

In the private sector, staff shortages are often dealt with by the use of paid or unpaid overtime (Hall & Wreford, 2007). However, local councils (and social services in particular) have made substantial use of temporary employment agencies to manage staff shortages (Morgan, Holt and Williams, 2007). In the London area where staff shortages are particularly acute, the use of agency workers can be three times higher than in other parts of the country (IDeA Knowledge, 2005/6). Nevertheless, while the number of agency workers in England (especially in London) is growing, it is still small relative to the total employment in social services (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Between April to September 2001, local authority social service departments in England spent £74 million on long-term agency costs. For the same period in 2004, the figure rose to £151 million (LAWSG, 2005). A recent estimate by one local council in England, calculated that it costs £14,400 a year more to employ an agency worker rather than a permanent social worker (based on figures for a newly qualified worker) (Sefton Council, 2008). According to Douglas (2003) fees in London are 'not far short of institutional extortion'.

Gathering accurate information about the use of agency staff in social care poses data collection problems for local councils (Morgan, Holt and Willaims, 2007). As a result, the exact size and composition of the agency workforce are difficult to assess (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2007). In the UK, the agency workforce is often described as the 'invisible workforce' (London Centre for Excellence, 2007).

Analysis of the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) undertaken by Eborall and Griffiths (2008) provides the most up to date picture and, importantly establishes a baseline figure for future monitoring of agency use in social care. They report that of an estimated 1.39 million people in paid employment in adult social care in England, in 2006-7, 78,000 (5.6%) were bank, pool and agency staff. At September 2006, local councils employed 217,000 social services staff (excluding those working in areas specifically for children and families). Of these, 11,200 (5.2%) were agency staff working mainly (as care workers) in residential care and (social workers)

in field social work. Earlier figures from the Employers Organisation Social Care Workforce Report (2004) suggest that in 2003, 2% of the total local authority workforce were long term agency workers. In 2004 the figure was 3.3%. Analysis of the GSCC's social care register at March 2007 suggests that of the 76,300 registered social workers, 6% were employed by agencies (Eborall and Griffiths, 2008).

In the independent sector, of 584,000 workers, 33,000 (5.7%) were bank and pool staff and 10,000 (1.7%) were agency workers. Recruitment and retention problems are known to be particularly acute in the domiciliary care sector (Eborall and Griffiths, 2008). In two of our research sites, this sector had the highest proportion of agency workers in its workforce. In Site 1, 14.8% of domiciliary care workers were agency staff and Site 2 the figure 12.9% (Eborall and Griffiths, 2008). Despite experiencing recruitment and retention problems, there is no 'tradition' of agency use in our third fieldwork site. How staff shortages are managed here is an interesting focus of the fieldwork.

iii) The agency workforce

Change within the labour market and moves from standard full time permanent employment to a plethora of contingent working arrangements have been the subject of much academic interest (Gamwell, 2007). US research has highlighted both the ways in which temporary workers differ from 'traditional' employees but also to the difficulties in making generalisations about the sector (Cohany, 1996). In social care, the agency workforce is very diverse, ranging from experienced professionals providing managerial expertise or consultancy at senior levels to part time or one off workers in care homes or domiciliary settings. Kirkpatrick and Hoque (2006) estimate that approximately half of all agency workers in English social services are professionally qualified social workers, the majority being employed in higher profile (higher risk) services for children and families with the vast majority based in London.

Information that compares agency staff with permanent employees is unavailable. As a result, there is an inability to address whether there are issues with gender or race equality on an aggregate level of positions held by agency workers (London Centre for Excellence, 2007). Figure 5 below presents a demographic profile of the qualified social workers registered with one large London based agency participating in this study. Many of the agencies we approached do not routinely gather this kind information.

Figure 5: Profile of Agency Social Workers Registered with One London Agency

Ethnicity

White British	83
Black British	228
Black African	176
Asian	13
Other	57

Gender

Male	167
Female	390

Age

18-25 :	135
26-35 :	110
35-45 :	198
46+ :	114

Time with agency

Less 1 year :	67
1-2 years :	114
2-3 years :	133
3-4 years :	147
4 years+ :	96

Experience

Newly Qualified :	96
1yrs + :	166
3yrs + :	202
5yrs+ :	93

Little is also known about the extent to which agency working contributes to the operation of a dual labour market in social care in which there are strong contrasts between a minority of comparatively well remunerated and highly skilled workers (for example, those providing specialist advice and consultancy) and the majority who are not (Ungerson, 2000). Based on research in two local authorities, Conley (2002, 2003) suggests that workers employed on a temporary basis (either from agencies or on temporary short term contracts) are more likely to be younger, to work part time, and to be of a different ethnicity to their counterparts on permanent contracts. While temporary work provides them with additional choice and flexibility, Conley suggests that this does pose a threat to equal opportunities, given that women, people from minority ethnic groups, and people with disabilities are over-represented among people employed on a temporary basis.

iv) Reasons for using agencies

According to the London Centre for Excellence (2007), the main reason for using agency staff is as an inability to recruit permanent staff. Where services have a statutory requirement leaving positions unfilled is not an option. These positions are often classified as 'hard-to-fill' and may exist because of lack of capacity or skills in the market. Other reasons cited for using agency staff included:

- **Flexibility**: managers cannot merely rely on permanent staff for work as there are often peaks and troughs in workloads
- **Covering sickness**: agency workers are often used as a stop gap because it is impossible to predict when ailing workers might return
- **Time-to-Recruit**: Needs for agency workers range from next day availability to within hours in the case of having to cover a position if someone phones in sick. As the time from advertisement to permanent employment ranges from 6 weeks to 3 months, depending on the checks required, it is much quicker to phone an agency to cover the position. If poor performance is an issue, it is in theory much easier and quicker to remove an agency worker rather than a permanent one

- **Cost:** Contrary to popular media portrayal it may actually be cheaper to engage agency staff rather than permanent employees, particularly for lower paid workers. This is because in general, agency workers are not paid for sick days above statutory requirements and are not given access to local government pension schemes or subject to rise reviews.

(London Centre for Excellence, 2007 p 7-8)

v) Procurement models

Traditionally, many local councils obtained temporary agency staff through a number of suppliers, often on an *ad hoc* uncoordinated basis with individual service managers contacting individual agencies and making their own arrangements (IDeA Knowledge 2005/6). In many cases this proved costly and resource intensive. According to the London Centre of Excellence

(2007), costs can vary significantly across the sector. For example, some agencies charge 50% commission of the workers' wage per hour, while others charge around 14% or lower. A significant spur for change was the Gershron review of 2004 which identified contingency work as a key area where efficiency savings could be made.

> 'During our mapping exercise [of agency use], to our shock and horror, we discovered there were big variations in prices. Some recruitment agencies had negotiated different prices with different managers for the same work, without managers realising'

> James Reilly (Director of Community Services, Hammersmith and Fulham Council) quoted in *Community Care*, 14.9.06

In terms of controlling costs, achieving cashable savings and driving-up quality in the private employment agency sector, many local councils have introduced so called 'managed vendor schemes'. These have their origins in the manufacturing and construction industries and have been heavily promoted by government service improvement agencies. The tool kit produced by the London Centre of Excellence (2007) is seminal in this respect and builds on earlier work by IDeA (www.idea.gov.uk). A managed service is one that acts as an interface or broker between the council and employment agencies. It avoids the need for individual service managers to 'ring around' all the different agencies acting as one point of contact for all agency worker procurement. There are four principal types of scheme:

Vendor Neutral Managed Service (brokerage service)
Authorities employ a third party organisation or broker to negotiate and manage agency contracts on their behalf. It is the responsibility of the broker (the vendor neutral company) to enter into contracts with a wide range of supply agencies, re-negotiating charges and rates and undertaking routine monitoring and inspection (checking procedures for CRB checking, insurance etc). Agencies are scored and compete for business through the managed service. The vendor neutral managed service does not supply staff as an agency so that it can be "neutral" in selecting agencies and candidates.

Master Vendor Managed Service

The master vendor also acts as a broker as described above, but supplies candidates directly – candidates from the master vendor are usually given priority before recourse to other employment agencies.

Internally Managed Service

Here, a new department is created within the local council that will act neutrally in choosing suppliers, the same as a vendor neutral managed service.

Partially Outsourced Human Resources Managed Service

In this model all recruitment is outsourced, both permanent and temporary. For temporary recruitment, the managed service acts as a master vendor.

(London Centre for Excellence, 2007)

vi) Reasons for undertaking agency work

In their study of agency social workers in three case study sites in England, Kirkpatrick and Hoque (2006) suggest that that for one reason or another, professionals who once valued an actively sought standard (long term permanent) contracts now seem to be opting for some kind of alternative. They discuss whether the retreat from permanent employment can be explained in terms of so called portfolio careers and the 'free agent' perspective (pull factors), or whether such moves reflect an attempt to escape from deteriorating conditions of work in public organisations (push factors). In the free agent perspective, it is argued that an elite minority of highly skilled experts or 'gold collar' workers can now secure a variety of benefits (financial and otherwise) by working outside of conventional organisational hierarchies. The social workers they interviewed, including those who were newly qualified, reported being able to greatly increase their income by as much as £5000 per annum by undertaking agency work. While labour market scarcity has placed professional social workers in a very strong

position as gold collar workers in some areas, they suggest however, that deteriorating organisational conditions are key influences on moves into agency work, and perhaps also decisions to leave public service employment altogether. They conclude that, arguably, it is only by addressing these broader issues that lasting solutions will be found.

In a study of 23 agency care managers, Carey (2007) suggests that one of the most apparent advantages offered by agency work is the high degree of flexibility and choice in relation to available work placements. Flexibility also extended to the number days and hours worked. Such discretion meant that for many agency workers a permanent post remained unappealing.

For newly qualified workers, Kirkpatrick and Hoque (2006) found that agency work appealed to them as it afforded opportunities to explore different options and locations before opting for a permanent post. In a survey of agency workers in the West Midlands, influences toward agency work upon graduation were found to include higher rates of pay, flexibility of working, immediacy of employment, help in finding work, experience of a variety of settings and no wish for permanency of employment (Morgan, Holt and Williams, 2007). In Carey's study (2006) one recently qualified agency worker reflected upon her initial lack of confidence in relation to her role as a care manager owing to 'poor placements' while training for the MA/Diploma in Social Work. This problem however had been quickly resolved after a year working as an agency worker because of the opportunities it afforded to work with so many clients, carers and other professionals. In contrast, some agency workers saw agency work as potentially de-skilling because of the lack of access to training and the tendency to give agency workers the more routine office based jobs (Carey, 2007, Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Interviews with managers of recruitment agencies undertaken as part of a wider DH-funded project looking at migrant (international) workers in adult social care (Hussein *et al.*, 2008) found that agency work in social care was seen to be particularly attractive to migrant workers who were already in the UK with any type of visa that allowed them to work for a limited period of time.

It was seen as a way of gaining experience in a variety of jobs without the difficulties of obtaining a more permanent position.

Significantly, the vast majority of social workers (unlike IT workers and other groups of gold collar contingent professionals) in Kirkpatrick and Hoque's (2006) study did not regard agency contracts as long-term career options. While agency working was higher paid in the short term it was perceived to be inferior in the longer term because of the loss of benefits such as pensions and sick pay. There were also other disadvantages such as lack of access to training, difficulties of progressing up the career ladder, being marginalised within the host team and being made to feel like an outsider. Carey's (2006) study of 23 agency care managers reinforces this with most suggesting that they wanted to gain a permanent post.

In Gamwell's (2007) study of agency social workers and occupational therapist in two London authorities, most said that they were undertaking agency work in order to get a permanent job. For them, job insecurity was not an issue as most felt that the current state of the labour market meant that work would always be available:

> 'In general for other areas of agency work, a role was identified and then workers were selected from a pool that may be interested in the role. In the case of social work, if an agency worker became available a number of posts would normally be open to them… The difficulty was normally in identifying workers and not posts which is a measure of the tightness of the labour market'. (Gamwell, 2007 p16)

For one occupational therapist, the decision to return to permanent employment was described as follows:

> 'The premium paid for his labour as an agency worker was attractive to him for as long as he perceived the risk of being unemployed between placements as low, however as he perceived the labour

market to be less tight… the balance shifted for him and a permanent job became more attractive.' (Gamwell, 2007 p18)

vii) Evidence on the impact of agency working on service delivery

In exploring the consequences of agency use, Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2007) reveal a mixed picture of both the costs and the benefits. On balance for employers, they conclude that both the direct and indirect costs of agency working in core professional services outweigh the benefits:

> 'On the hand, agency workers in all three cases played an important role in covering for vacancies and therefore helped to maintain levels of service delivery… Against this however, were some significant costs relating to both rising fee levels and operational concerns… while agency workers helped to relieve the work pressure on permanent staff, our cases reveal how they could also increase it (in the form of additional coaching and supervision) possibly with negative consequences for the morale and stability of the social work team.' (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2007, p.341)

In their study of workforce planning in the West Midlands, Morgan, Holt and Williams (2007) conclude that while temporary agency staff have proved to be a valuable, flexible part of the workforce, concerns have been raised about variable recruitment and monitoring standards, higher costs and the ability of current recruitment and selection procedures to meet European Directive standards for agency work. In a *Community Care* news report concern has been raised about the failure of some employment agencies to carry out appropriate checks and to pick up inconsistencies in CVs, especially as regards staff recruited from overseas:

> 'The transient nature of agency work means people can move from place to place evading detection' (Gillen, 2007 p.14)

According to Douglas (2003) reliance on agency workers has led not only to increasing costs but also unreliable and poorer services. Carey (2006 p.9) charts the impact for users and carers as follows:

> 'Inevitably, contact with clients and informal carers tended to be both brief and formal for most locum workers… As one worker suggested her contact with clients tended [to comprise] 'one visit, one form' epitomising the generally unfulfilling procedural and 'mechanical relationship.'

In a *Community Care* news report, Unity Sale (2007) reports that the Commission for Social Care Inspection has begun to monitor how local councils use agency social workers and the impact this is having on service continuity. The implication is that personnel departments and social services departments more generally, as well as recruitment agencies will have to place more emphasis on hiring skilled and qualified agency social workers and supervising them.

In their conclusions, Hoque and Kirkpatrick see agency working as posing a very real threat to the fabric of public service delivery, creating a downward spiral in which permanent employees leave to become agency workers to reap the benefits of agency employment. 'The suggestion here is that once they have emerged the problems could become damagingly self-perpetuating.' (p.342).They view the institutionalisation of agency working into local managers' employment practices as an extremely bleak scenario.

viii) Implementing Options for Excellence – Early Progress

The first interim report on the implementation of Options for Excellence (DH, 2008) suggests that some early progress is being made with recruitment and retention but that significant challenges remain. For example, it was reported that in 2007 there had been no increase in the number of students applying to the new social work degree courses as compared to the previous year. As regards the national social care recruitment advertising campaign of 2008, another Department of Health (2006) report suggested that an earlier £1.5

million campaign may not have been as effective in attracting new workers into domiciliary care. In the interim report (DH, 2008) there is no mention of what progress is being made to reduce overreliance on temporary agency staff.

In terms of impact on the private employment agency sector, the mapping exercise, discussed earlier shows that the number of agencies registered with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation's 'Nursing and Social Care Group' remains largely unchanged from the previous year. In 2006, Carey (2006) counted 50 agencies in London. Our estimate for 2008 was 52.

In their aforementioned study of three case study sites, Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2007) chart how managers had responded to the challenges posed by agency working, looking at initiatives designed to both reduce demand for agency workers, and also to manage them more effectively. Approaches varied considerably across the sites. In one site, a series of creative measures had been introduced to tackle issues around recruitment and retention. Measures included local advertising campaigns, retainer schemes to encourage social workers to stay in post after qualifying, and extending the mentoring role of 'lead practitioners'. Linked to this were moves to downgrade some social work posts (re-labelling them as 'community care' posts) to attract other professionals such as teachers and nurses. In seeking to manage and improve the performance of agency workers, measures adopted in the sites included improving the quality and level of induction and supervision, and ensuring that as far as possible agency staff were treated in the same way as permanent employees. Early indications were that these measures were having some impact, both on vacancy rates and the level and use of agency workers. However, they caution;

> 'Even assuming that resources are available, negotiating change in incentive structures, working hours and job descriptions will be undoubtedly be a complex and arduous task… There is a constant threat that solutions will be undermined by short term pressures on resources and the resulting pressure to treat agency workers as a variable cost'. (Hoque and Kirkpatrcik, 2007 p343)

Initial reports of the implementation of managed vendor schemes have been promising (IDeA 2005/6). According to London Centre of Excellence (2007) cashable savings on agency expenditure can be in the region of 3-10%. This is because the master vendor is in a powerful position to negotiate with agencies for better rates of commission and will ensure accuracy of all charges (previously agencies were thought by some to overcharge on the employers element of National Insurance (NI) payments). Finally, such schemes are also thought to facilitate improved practice because the managed service will audit agencies to ensure they have appropriate insurance and that they follow proper procedure to ensure that candidates are CRB checked and eligible to work in the UK. Where there is evidence of poor performance, agencies can slip down the managed service list of 'preferred providers'. There is scope then to drive up quality by putting some agencies out of business. In one London Borough it is reported that many of the agencies relied on before the contract are no longer heavily used. Potential issues raised through monitoring include the discovery that some 'temps' are ineligible to work in the UK' while some workers are signed up to multiple agencies and were therefore working over legal working limits (Commissioning News, 2007).

Managed vendor schemes are not, however, universally welcomed. Fourteen specialist social work employment agencies have recently joined forces to launch a new trade association (The Association of Social Work Employment Businesses [ASWEB]). The pressure group believes that standards have slipped since many councils have adopted master vendor schemes (Hunt, 2008).The problem is that under master vendor rules specialist social work agencies can no longer speak directly with hiring service managers. Thus, rather than being able to specify precisely the type of practitioner they need to work with a specific client group, recruitment is often reduced to finding the quickest and cheapest applicant. In particular it is argued that such an approach takes no account of service users' needs and the specialist skills that may be required to address them (www.asweb.org.uk [Accessed 20th August 2008]). Interestingly, a master vendor scheme had been introduced in one of Hoque and Kirkpatrick's (2007) case study sites. They report that

managers at a service level also questioned the success of the scheme at the level of improving the selection of agency workers and ensuring a better fit between workers and jobs.

5: Summary

'Options for Excellence – Building the Social Care Workforce of the Future' (DfES/DH 2006) sets out an ambitious agenda to reduce over reliance on temporary staff supplied through private employment agencies. Drawing on the findings of a mapping exercise and literature review, which form part of an ongoing research project into the role and significance of temporary employment agencies in the social care workforce, this report highlights what early progress is being made toward to achieving this policy goal. We also highlight some of the emerging issues around the strategic procurement and management of temporary social care agency staff.

- It is recognised that one of the most significant challenges facing social care commissioners is ensuring services can recruit and retain quality staff long enough to provide consistent care to service users.

- Faced with chronic staff shortages, local councils in England (and especially those in London) have made substantial use of temporary agency workers to manage staff shortages.

- Concern has been rising over the increasing use of agency staff for a variety of reasons including cost and the perceived negative impact on the quality of services. Most authors concur that the costs of agency working in core professional services outweigh the benefits.

- The agency workforce is known as the 'invisible' workforce because of the lack of visibility and control.

- Paradoxically, while agency work is associated with increased financial rewards and offers workers flexibility in the location and hours worked most agency social workers envisaged returning to permanent employment.

- For newly qualified workers, agency work was a way of gaining experience before deciding on a permanent position.

- In seeking to reduce overreliance on temporary agency workers, local councils have focused on recruitment and retention issues and have introduced a number of management responses.

- There is some limited evidence that measures to tackle recruitment and retention (such as those local advertising campaigns) are having some impact on vacancy rates and the level and use of agency workers.

- Management approaches such as the introduction of 'managed vendor' schemes are reducing expenditure on agencies and achieving cashable savings of between 3-10%. However there are concerns from inside the employment agency sector that they do not provide the most skilled and appropriate candidates for the job.

- Arguably more fundamental root and branch reform of the social care sector at the level of job descriptions, terms and conditions will be required to make permanent employment more appealing, to respond to staff's desire for greater work flexibility and to achieve a lasting solution.

The main implications of the literature review for the further conduct of this study are:

- That good evidence is now emerging around (professionalised or 'gold collar') agency working, but that much less is known about other forms of agency work (such as the high use of agencies by domiciliary care providers)

- Scant attention has been focussed on areas with low agency use and how staff shortages are managed there.

- There is scope for learning from the NHS, which has longer experience of using managed vendor and other approaches.

- Little attention has been paid to the development of non-profit employment agencies.

- Employment agencies have largely been excluded from the debate thus far. The potential for promoting 'ethical recruitment' is under researched.

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Appendix 1: Topic Guides

Appendix 1A: TOPIC GUIDE AGENCY MANAGERS

Could you please give some background details about your agency?
- National chain or single operator?
- Year established?
- General employment/ social care specialist?
- Links with any trade agencies or networks?

What is your role in the agency?

Which types of employer use your services?
- Local authority, private care homes, voluntary agencies or others?
- Volume/Pattern of business
- How are your services procured (e.g. through individual managers contacting you directly or through intermediaries (master vendor type schemes)? How does this work?

What are the benefits of using an agency such as this?

How do you recruit staff?
- Are there any difficulties/shortages associated with particular staff/professional groups?
- Do you keep records on gender/age/ethnicity of those registering with you? Are there any discernable trends?
- Which are the hardest posts to fill and which are the easiest?
- In your opinion, why do people choose agency work?
- On average how long do people stay registered with your agency?
- What training and support is provided to Agency Workers?

Does your agency recruit international staff by going abroad, advertising internationally, on the internet etc?
- What countries do you recruit from?
- Do you experience any issues with work permits?
- What about criminal record checks?
- Have you noticed any trends regarding international workers?

Are you aware of "Options for Excellence" and the requirement that local councils with social services responsibilities reduce their reliance on agency staff provided through private employment agencies? [If yes]
- How is this being implemented locally?
- What are the barriers?
- What are the implications for your agency?

Discussion around the possibility of recruiting agency workers through this employment agency.

THANK YOU

Appendix 1B: TOPIC GUIDE SOCIAL SERVICES/

SOCIAL CARE MANAGERS

What is your role in [insert department]?

(Strategic Commissioner Level)

- How does your department procure temporary/agency/interim staff?
- What percentage of your workforce is supplied through temporary employment agencies?
- What did your authority spend last financial year on agency workers?
- Is this seen as problematic?
- What are the possible reasons for using agency staff? Explain any under reliance/over reliance?
- What are the advantages of using agency staff?
- Which agencies do you work with – what is the range locally – private or non-profit?

(Team Leader Level)

- How are decisions made about the need to use an employment agency?
- What is the process a team manager might go through to procure a worker form an agency?
- What are the issues for day to day management and supervision of agency workers?
- What are the implications for the wider staff team?
- How many temporary workers chose to become permanent employees with your department?

Are you aware of "Options for Excellence" and the requirement that local councils with social services responsibilities reduce their reliance on agency staff provided through private employment agencies? [If yes]

- What progress is being made locally to implement Options for Excellence?
- What are the barriers? [e.g. local issues in recruitment and retention]
- Has any work being carried out to promote the development of not for profit agencies?

THANK YOU

Appendix 1C: TOPIC GUIDE – AGENCY WORKERS

Can you tell me about your employment history?

What attracted you to temporary work?

Can you tell about your experience as an agency worker?

>   What are the advantages?
>   What are the disadvantages?
>   - Work life balance
>   - Flexi-security
>   - Job satisfaction
>   - Induction
>   - Fitting in

What education and training have you done while working as an agency worker?

What are your plans for your future career?

- What if anything would tempt you back into permanent employment?

Are you aware of "Options for Excellence" and the requirement that local councils with social services responsibilities reduce their reliance on agency staff provided through private employment agencies? [If yes]

- What are your views on this?
- How is this being implemented in your area?

THANK YOU

Appendix 2: Draft Survey

[Text version only not as will appear in print]

SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE RESEARCH UNIT

KING'S College LONDON
University of London

The Role and Significance of Temporary Employment Agencies in the Social Care Workforce

Questionnaire to Local Councils with Social Services Responsibilities

Reference Number
[To be completed by the research team]

PLEASE READ THESE IMPORTANT NOTES BEFORE COMPLETING THE SURVEY:

Within social care, the term 'agency worker' is often used in ways that do not distinguish between workers employed temporarily through employment agencies ('temps' or 'locums') and those employed by service providers contracted to provide services on behalf of the council. These last named workers are <u>not</u> the focus of this survey, which is concerned about the provision of *temporary staff* and not the provision of *services*.

When referring to 'agency workers' we are referring to social workers, care workers and occupational therapists – not the local council workforce as a whole.

All questions relate to the practices of your employer organisation [the local council]

SECTION ONE: PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY STAFF

1. Within your organisation, what are the main reasons for employing temporary agency staff?

Please rank in order of 1-4 (1 being the most frequent reason for using agency staff). Please give information in relation to different staff groups if possible.

	Social Workers	Care Workers	Occupational Therapists	All Social Care Staff Groups
Sickness Cover				
Recruitment difficulties				
Seasonal; flexibility				
Other *(Please give details)*				

2. How does your organisation manage the procurement of temporary agency staff?

Please tick one of the boxes below

It is down to individual service managers to approach the employment agency of their choosing	
In House Agency (Staff Bank)	
Vendor Neutral Managed Service Social care service managers have one point of contact for the procurement of temporary agency workers. Agencies are scored and compete for business through the managed service. The vendor neutral managed service does not supply staff as an agency so that it can be "neutral" in selecting agencies and candidates. The local council contracts with an external provider to provide the managed service	
Master Vendor Managed Service Social care service managers have one point of contact for the procurement of temporary agency staff. A master vendor managed service is one that does provide staff of its own accord – candidates from master vendor are given priority before recourse to other employment agencies.	
Internally Managed Service Social care service managers have one point of contact for the procurement of temporary agency staff. Here, a new department is created within the local council that will act neutrally in choosing suppliers, the same as a vendor neutral managed service.	
Partially Outsourced Human Resources Managed Service In this model all recruitment is outsourced, both permanent and temporary. For temporary recruitment the managed service acts as a master vendor.	
Other (please give details):	

Definitions of 'managed services' are taken from the London Centre of Excellence (2006) Transforming the Procurement of Temporary, Agency and Interim Staff: Your Toolkit for Success. www.lcpe.gov.uk

SECTION TWO: WORKFORCE COMPOSITION & STAFFING COSTS

6. Including temporary agency workers, what is the total size of your organisations social care workforce?

7. How many temporary agency workers are there in your organisations current social care workforce?

8. What were your organisations total social care staffing costs in the last financial year (April 2007-March 2008)?

9a. How much of the budget was spent on temporary agency staffing costs (April 2007- March 2008)?

9b. What was the figure for temporary agency staffing costs in the previous financial year?

SECTION THREE: LOCAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

10. Has your organisation introduced any specific strategies to reduce reliance on temporary agency staff?
Yes/No

> If yes, please give details and attach any supporting papers if possible

11. Has your organisation introduced any specific strategies to promote the development of non-profit employment agencies?
Yes/No

> If yes, please give details and attach any supporting papers if possible

12. Is there anything further you would like to add?

In case we need to clarify anything raised in the survey, may we have permission to contact you?

YES ☐   NO ☐

If yes, please let us have your contact details.

Name	
Job Title	
Organisation	
Address	
	Postcode:
Telephone	
Email	

If you have any questions about the survey or completing the questionnaire, please contact Michelle Cornes scwru@kcl.ac.uk
Telephone: 020 7848 3700

Please return in the FREEPOST envelope provided to;
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Strand, London, WC2R 2LS