

White collar vacancies stalled in October as lockdown rumours circulated

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- Contract vacancies dropped 1% and permanent hiring saw no change month on month amid confusion around tiered restrictions
- The percentage drop in year on year hiring increases for the first time in months
- Daily tracking data shows national lockdown rumours halted recruitment at the end of October

Confusion around regional tiered restrictions and rumours of a national lockdown stalled hiring in October, with contract vacancies dropping -1% while the number of permanent jobs remained unchanged month on month. That's according to the latest monthly Recruitment Trends Snapshot report from The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

Annual gap in hiring widens

The data, provided by growth analytics platform, cube19, revealed that while month-on-month vacancy numbers saw little to no change, the year-on-year percentage drop has slightly increased for October following several months of improvement in annual comparisons. In September, the year-on-year drop in vacancy numbers stood at -33% for permanent and -15% for contract. For October, this comparison stood at -38% and -22% respectively. Much of this drop in job vacancies can be attributed to the confusion surrounding the tiered lockdown system and rumours of increased restrictions on a regional and national basis throughout October.

In comparison, placements fared relatively well in October following a strong month for vacancies in September. The number of new hires last month increased 3% for permanent roles and 5% for contract placements.

Daily tracking shows dip ahead of national lockdown

The daily tracking data also indicates that rumours of a national lockdown had an impact on hiring in the UK. Contract vacancies saw a small drop of 3% at the end of month when compared to the beginning, while permanent jobs dipped by 0.5% in the last two weeks. Interview numbers were fairly flat with similar levels across the month, which is indicative of the uncertainty created by the increasing introduction of the tier system around the country and the original end-date of the furlough scheme nearing.

Ann Swain, CEO of APSCo comments:

"It's disappointing to see the progress the UK had made in closing the annual percentage drop in hiring activity stall in October, though it's perhaps unsurprising given the continued uncertainty as we moved towards another national lockdown. With regional tiered restrictions in place throughout October, hiring did take a marginal knock, but it is encouraging to see placements remain relatively stable following a strong month in September. While we are now under a national lockdown, we don't expect hiring to be impacted as significantly as it was in the height of the pandemic as many businesses have the set up in place to support remote recruitment. And with news of a potential vaccine breaking

this month, November could potentially be a turning point for the UK's business confidence.”

Joe McGuire, Global Sales Director of cube19 says:

“The recruitment industry bounce back stalled in October and is hovering around 20% down when compared to a year earlier. The enhanced restrictions throughout November are expected to place downward pressure on the key metrics in this report, but certainly not of the order we saw earlier in the year. Recruitment companies have generally prepared well for the winter months and there is a reasonable level of confidence in the medium-term outlook. Forward thinking recruiters will be relying on their data to identify opportunities and make fast decisions about where to focus their efforts.”

ENDS

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