

White collar jobs see seasonal blip – but data reveals hiring is beginning to improve

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- Permanent hiring down 27% month-on-month with contract vacancies also dropping 20%
- Annual percentage drop closes with a 10% improvement on 2019 figures
- Daily tracking data shows December started with a bang with a 20% uptick in permanent vacancies in the first two weeks

Professional vacancy numbers in the UK saw a seasonal 27% dip month-on-month in December, but the year ended on a high, with the annual discrepancy in job numbers closing. That's according to the latest monthly Recruitment Trends Snapshot report from The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

Vacancies down month-on-month

The data, provided by growth analytics platform, cube19, revealed a 27% and 20% month-on-month decline in permanent and contract vacancies respectively in December. This drop can be attributed to an expected seasonal dip as a result of the Christmas holidays.

However, the statistics also revealed a positive development, with the annual percentage drop in jobs improving. Year-on-year, permanent vacancies were down 22% while contract dropped just 1% for December 2020 when compared to 2019 figures. In comparison, the yearly discrepancy in vacancies for permanent stood at 32% in November and 16.2% for contract, signalling a 10% and 15.2% improvement respectively in December. The annual percentage drop in placements also showed signs of improvement, with permanent placements up 12% when compared to November's year-on-year figures.

Daily tracking shows initial hiring spike in December

The daily tracking data also indicates that both permanent and contract vacancies were on the up before the holiday period started. Contract jobs grew 20% in the first two weeks of December when compared to the end of November, with permanent vacancies also reporting an increase in the first half of the month, up 10% from the end of November.

Interview numbers in the first half of December also saw a 2% growth in comparison to the end of November, indicating that the UK's hiring activity was on an upward trajectory before the holidays.

Ann Swain, CEO of APSCo comments:

"With the holiday period usually much quieter for hiring, it comes as no surprise that vacancies were down in December overall, however the data shows some incredibly promising signs. The year-on-year comparisons are the greatest indicator of the impact that the on-going pandemic is having on recruitment and these figures are rather promising for the end of 2020. The improvements we can see in the daily tracker data for the first half of December paint a positive picture for the beginning of 2021, suggesting that we are on the path to recovery – though it may be a long one with the UK once again

moving into a national lockdown.”

Joe McGuire, Global Sales Director of cube19 says:

“A reduction in volume over the holiday period is always expected but it is pleasing to see new contract placements/sales not following the usual Christmas dip. Additionally, perm year over year was at the same level seen in 2019 which is particularly encouraging. There is still some way to go but with the vaccine roll out there seems to be a bright light at the end of the tunnel.”

ENDS

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