

# Trade body responds to latest ONS labour statistics

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With the latest Labour market data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) revealing that the proportion of businesses' workforce on furlough leave increased by 10.6 percentage points to 18.3% between October 2020 and January 2021, Tania Bowers, Legal Counsel and Head of Public Policy at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO) comments:

“This increased reliance on the furlough scheme in the lead up to the national lockdown at the beginning of the year demonstrates how important Government support schemes are at the moment. As we near the Chancellor's budget announcement, APSCO hopes that Rishi Sunak takes these latest figures into consideration and ensures that aid for struggling businesses and employees isn't removed too quickly.”

“The ONS data is already revealing a concerning rise in job losses, with the UK redundancy rates during the pandemic increasing faster than during the 2008 to 2009 economic downturn. In order to provide security for firms and prevent employees, workers and the self-employed from facing a 'cliff edge', it's crucial that support isn't prematurely or suddenly withdrawn and is, instead, wound-down in a structured way.”

“The on-going roll out of the vaccine is providing a level of encouraging optimism, but this positivity won't translate into a return to 'business-as-usual' for some time yet, and the UK's organisations need support that flexes with the changing landscape. There have already been a number of challenges from firms seeking access to aid - with some businesses, including staffing firms, facing difficulties accessing Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBILS) and Bounce Back Loan schemes. If companies are to stay afloat in these difficult times and be in the best possible position for recovery in a post-Covid world, they will need sufficient aid to safeguard their company and their people.”

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