

Recruitment slowed in December, but pre-pandemic comparisons suggest hiring still booming

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Following months of hiring spikes, recruitment levels in the UK slowed month-on-month in December, but pre-pandemic comparisons show the extent of pressure on the hiring sector. That's according to the latest Recruitment Trends Snapshot report from The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

The data, provided by the global leader in software for the staffing industry, Bullhorn, revealed that permanent and contract vacancies dropped 46% and 41% respectively in December 2021 when compared to the previous month. Placements also decreased, down 18% and 22% across permanent and contract roles respectively month-on-month.

This comes following months of record recruitment activity, with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reporting continued increases in vacancies and employment numbers since June last year.

While December's dip is indicative of a seasonal slowing down of recruitment activity, pre-pandemic comparisons highlight an expansion of hiring in December. The data shows an 85% increase in placements in the final month of 2021 when compared to December 2019, which is indicative of the sheer scale of recruitment in the UK towards the end of last year.

The number of contract vacancies also increased 27% during this period, suggesting that while 2021 ended with a slow-down of hiring activity, recruitment remains buoyant.

Commenting on the data Ann Swain, Chief Executive of APSCo said:

"The drop in seasonal hiring activity in December is something that the recruitment sector has come to expect. This latest dip suggests there is some stabilisation in what has been a significantly active hiring market for much of 2021. However, the fact that placements increased 85% between 2019 and 2021, shows the significant pressure that's been put on the recruitment market in the last year. The UK's skills shortages have been well documented throughout the latter half of last year and while the final month of 2021 saw a decline in hiring, we cannot forget that we are still operating in an environment where there are simply not enough active candidates to fill the demand we're experiencing."

Joe McGuire, Sales & Strategy Director, Analytics at Bullhorn comments:

"2021 was a year of new records for many across the industry and the annual slowdown in December was (hopefully) a chance for everyone to take a well-earned break. The demand for talent remains high which is great for the professional staffing industry and we expect 2022 to continue in a similar way to last year."

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Press contact

Sadie McGrath

sadie@bluesky-pr.com
01582 790 700