



KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs

Starting salary inflation softens to 34-month low in **January**

43.4

PERMANENT PLACEMENTS INDEX JAN '24

48.9

TEMPORARY BILLINGS INDEX JAN '24

Starting salary growth eases amid further rise in staff supply Sustained and sharp drop in permanent placements...

...while temp billings fall slightly

Commenting on the latest survey results, Jon Holt, Chief Executive and Senior Partner of KPMG in the UK, said:

"We're starting the year with the labour market remaining tight overall, though we are seeing the number of job seekers increasing as demand softens.

"The skills gap is part of this story. We know the UK's ambition is for technology to drive productivity and economic growth, and yet we still face a shortfall in skilled tech talent. If the UK is serious about equipping the workforce for a modern digital economy, we need Government and business working together and investing in reskilling and upskilling.

"All eyes will now be on the Chancellor's upcoming Budget, and while recruiters and businesses would no doubt welcome any further cuts in payroll tax costs, they will also be hoping for a bit of policy stability during an election year.

Permanent Placements Index ■ Temporary Billings Index sa, >50 = growth since previous month

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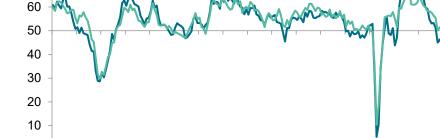
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Neil Carberry, REC Chief Executive, said:

"The labour market's resilience is a great strength of the British economy - but it can't last for ever without sustained economic growth. Pay has normalised, inflation is dropping and the hiring market has been cooling for a year now - it's high time that the Bank of England starts releasing the brake pedal on our economy.

"The Chancellor has the perfect opportunity in the Spring Budget to give some clear signals on growth. A long-term plan to tackle skills and labour shortages, economic inactivity and weak productivity is essential. A Spring Budget full of practical steps on skills, welfare to work and the cost of doing business will help hugely.

"We can get the wheels of investment turning by recognising that the people stuff matters as much as capital expenditure. Investment in new industries and technologies such as green skills and Al is great and necessary, but we must get more of firms thinking about how they organise work, and how to build new skills to fuel local economies across the UK.



'07 '08 '09 '10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 '17 '18 '19 '20 '21 '22 '23 '24

The KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 UK recruitment and employment consultancies.





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1 Executive summary

The Report on Jobs is unique in providing the most comprehensive guide to the UK labour market, drawing on original survey data provided by recruitment consultancies and employers to provide the first indication each month of labour market trends.

The main findings for January are:

Uncertainty over the outlook continues to constrain hiring

The latest survey of recruitment agencies across the UK revealed a further drop in hiring activity at the start of 2024, particularly for permanent workers. Notably, permanent staff appointments fell at a sharp and accelerated pace, while temp billings fell only slightly. There were frequent reports that businesses had often paused recruitment plans due to the subdued economic environment, while fewer vacancies also dampened staff placements.

Overall demand for workers falls for third month running

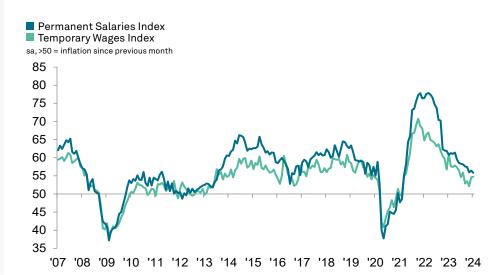
Total vacancies across the UK declined again during January, albeit marginally. Demand for staff has now weakened in four of the past five months, driven by a sustained reduction in permanent job opportunities. Meanwhile, temp vacancies expanded at the slowest rate since November 2020 and only slightly.

Permanent salary inflation slips to 34-month low...

Although starting salary inflation remained sharp in January, the latest increase in pay was the softest recorded since March 2021 and slower than the series average. Temp wage growth quickened slightly to a five-month high, but was also below the historical trend. According to recruiters, competition for suitably-skilled staff amid a strong inflationary environment continued to push pay rates higher. However, there were also reports that pressure on client budgets had limited overall increases in pay.

...as supply of candidates continues to increase

UK recruiters registered a further sharp increase in overall candidate availability at the start of the year. This was despite the rate of growth easing to a four-month low. Permanent staff supply continued to rise at a slightly quicker pace than that seen for short-term workers, but both saw upturns ease since December. There were frequent reports that redundancies and a slowdown in recruitment activity had increased the pool of available workers.





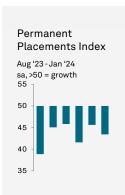




2 Staff Appointments

Recruitment consultancies report on the number of people placed in permanent jobs each month, and their revenues (billings) received from placing people in temporary or contract positions at employers.

An index reading above 50 signals a higher number of placements/billings than the previous month. Readings below 50 signal



January sees sharper drop in permanent placements

As has been the case since October 2022, the number of people placed into permanent job roles across the UK declined at the start of the year. The rate of contraction accelerated to one that was sharp and slightly quicker than the average seen over this period. According to recruitment agencies, companies had often paused hiring decisions amid caution around the economic outlook. Others noted that fewer job opportunities had surpressed hiring activity during January.

The latest reduction in permanent staff appointments was broad-based across the four English regions monitored by the survey. The steepest rate of contraction was seen in the Midlands, though marked falls were also recorded elsewhere.

Permanent Placements Index



Permanent Placements Index

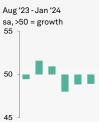
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sa, >50 = growth since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	38.9	39.8	39.0	37.3	38.0
Sep '23	45.1	47.7	40.2	45.7	45.5
Oct '23	45.8	37.1	46.9	50.2	45.7
Nov '23	41.6	26.3	38.9	51.3	48.3
Dec '23	45.6	48.7	45.4	41.0	46.5
Jan '24	43.4	43.4	41.4	41.2	44.2

Temporary Billings Index



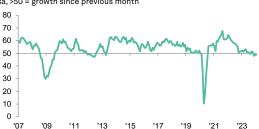
Marginal reduction in billings from temp workers

Adjusted for seasonal influences, the Temporary Billings Index posted below the neutral 50.0 level to signal a decline in temp billings for the third straight month in January. That said, the pace of reduction was the softest seen over this period and only marginal. Reports from panellists indicated that demand for short-term staff had weakened in the latest survey period. However, some recruiters noted that companies had preferred to use temp workers when filling roles.

Higher temp billings in the North and South of England contrasted with declines in the Midlands and London.

Temporary Billings Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



Temporary Billings Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	49.5	47.8	49.1	51.4	49.7
Sep '23	51.6	54.6	47.2	53.3	52.9
Oct '23	50.9	54.0	50.7	51.5	47.5
Nov '23	48.0	48.5	45.9	50.3	51.2
Dec '23	48.8	51.6	47.3	47.5	53.5
Jan '24	48.9	44.8	53.7	43.0	54.6







3 Vacancies

Recruitment consultants are asked to specify whether the demand for staff from employers has changed on the previous month, thereby providing an indicator of the number of job vacancies.



Vacancies fall for fourth time in past five months

At 49.4 in January, the seasonally adjusted Total Vacancies Index edged up fractionally from 49.3 in December. The reading therefore signalled a marginal fall in demand for staff for the fourth time in the past five months.

Permanent and temporary vacancies

Underlying data showed that permanent staff demand fell for the fifth straight month at the start of 2024, albeit slightly. At the same time, temp vacancies expanded at a marginal pace that was the slowest since November 2020.

Public & private sector vacancies

Staff vacancies increased in the private sector but fell in the public sector during January.

The strongest increase in demand was seen for short-term workers in the private sector, though the upturn was only mild overall. In contrast, the quickest decline in job opportunities was signalled for permanent roles in the public sector.

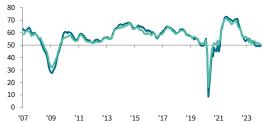
Total Vacancies Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month 70



Permanent Vacancies Index Temporary Vacancies Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



Vacancy Index summary

sa, >50 = growth since previous month. *Not seasonally adjusted.

		Permanent			Temporary		
	Total	Total	Private*	Public*	Total	Private*	Public*
Aug '23	50.4	50.2	49.9	51.7	53.1	53.6	50.8
Sep '23	49.2	49.1	49.8	45.8	52.0	52.6	49.0
Oct '23	50.0	49.9	50.7	46.2	51.7	52.8	46.2
Nov '23	49.2	49.0	49.5	47.0	51.7	52.1	49.5
Dec '23	49.3	49.2	48.2	53.7	50.8	51.2	48.9
Jan '24	49.4	49.3	51.1	41.0	50.7	51.6	46.8

Official data: UK job vacancies

Vacancies continued to decline over the final quarter of 2023, according to latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The number of open roles fell by 49,000 over the three months to December to reach 934,000 overall. This marked the lowest level of vacancies for twoand-a-half years.

Nevertheless, the number of unfilled job roles was still over 100,000 higher than that seen just prior to the pandemic (826,000 in the three months to February 2020).







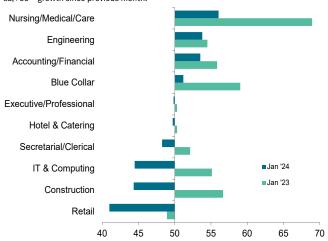
4 Vacancies by sector

Recruitment consultancies are requested to compare the demand for staff according to sector with the situation one

Permanent vacancies

Permanent staff demand fell across just over half of the ten monitored job categories during January. The steepest rates of contraction were seen in the Retail, Construction and IT & Computing sectors. Meanwhile, the strongest rise in vacancies was signalled for Nursing/Medical/Care roles.

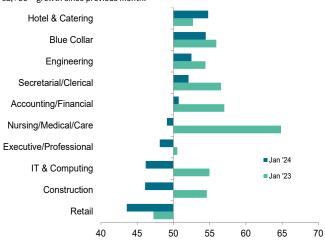
Permanent Vacancies Index sa, >50 = growth since previous month.

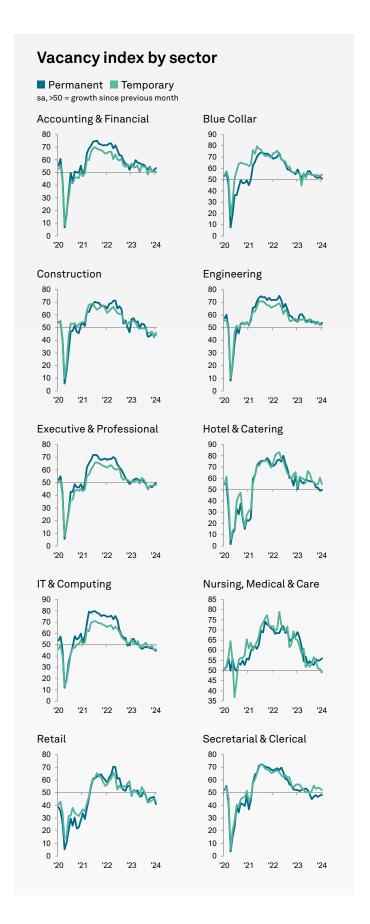


Temporary vacancies

Of the five broad employment sectors to see firmer demand for short-term workers, Hotel & Catering and Blue Collar saw the steepest rates of vacancy growth overall. At the same time, the quickest drop in temp job opportunities was seen in the Retail sector.

Temporary Vacancies Index sa, >50 = growth since previous month.











5 Staff availability

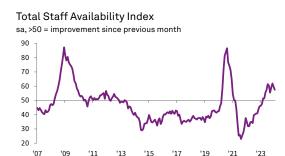
Recruitment consultants are asked to report whether availability of permanent and temporary staff has changed on the previous month. An overall indicator of staff availability is also calculated.



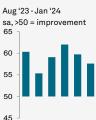
Availability of candidates rises at softest pace for four months

The overall supply of candidates across the UK expanded for the eleventh month running in January. The respective seasonally adjusted index posted comfortably above the no-change 50.0 threshold at 57.5, to signal a historically marked rate of growth. However, this was down from a reading of 59.7 in December, to indicate the softest increase since last September.

The latest survey pointed to slower rises in both permanent and temporary labour supply.



Permanent Staff Availability Index



Supply of permanent staff expands at softer, but still sharp rate

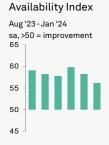
Recruitment consultancies across the UK registered a softer rise in permanent candidate availability at the start of the year. Though sharp in the context of historical data, the latest upturn was the least pronounced in four months. Where higher candidate numbers were recorded, panel members often linked this to redundancies and a slowdown in hiring activity.

All four monitored English regions saw the availability of permanent workers increase during January, led by London.

Permanent Staff Availability Index ■ Temporary Staff Availability Index sa, >50 = improvement since previous month 90 80 70



Temporary Staff



Temp candidate numbers increase

at slowest pace in eight months

The latest survey signalled a sustained rise in temporary worker availability in January, thereby stretching the current period of expansion to 11 months. Whilst marked, the rate of growth was the softest seen since last May. There were frequent reports that the improvement in temporary staff availability was due to company layoffs and relatively subdued demand for workers.

The steepest upturn in temp candidate supply was seen in the capital, while the slowest was recorded in the North of England.

Permanent Staff Availability Index

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	60.3	68.5	57.2	61.4	63.6
Sep '23	55.3	55.3	53.9	55.7	57.1
Oct '23	59.1	63.7	59.5	61.3	56.6
Nov '23	62.0	63.8	64.1	63.0	59.1
Dec '23	59.7	66.3	61.0	69.7	49.5
Jan '24	57.6	61.1	57.0	60.1	56.3

Temporary Staff Availability Index

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	59.1	69.1	59.3	57.6	56.8
Sep '23	58.2	54.6	64.8	52.0	57.1
Oct '23	57.8	59.1	61.0	57.2	56.9
Nov '23	59.8	64.2	58.9	62.5	55.6
Dec '23	58.3	60.5	59.3	54.7	54.8
Jan '24	56.2	61.5	56.2	55.5	51.0







6 Demand for skills

Recruitment consultancies are invited to specify any areas in which they have encountered skill shortages during the latest month.

Skills in short supply: Permanent staff

Accounting/Financial ACA Qualified ACCA Accountants Assistant Accountant Auditors **Book Keepers** CIMA Compliance Professionals Credit Controllers Estimators Finance Management Accountants Part Qualified Accountants Payroll Practice Accountant Purchase Ledger Taxation Blue Collar

Blue Collar Decorators HVAC Industrials Manufacturing MHE Trainers Refrigeration Security Guards Semi-skilled Industrial Site Managers Unskilled Labour

Construction Architectural Tech Architecture Quantity Surveyors

Welders

Engineering Electrical Engineers Electronic Design

Fire & Security Engineers Manufacturing Engineers Mechanical Design Radio-Frequency Engineer Service Engineers Technicians Toolroom Supervisor

Executive/Professional

Business Analysts Business Development Compliance Digital Marketing Energy & Renewables Executives Management Marketing Mid-senior Management Project Managers

Recruitment Consultants

Senior-level Management Hotel/Catering

Hospitality

IT/Computing **Automation Testers** Cyber Security Data Engineers Data Scientists

DDaT Developers Digital Front-end Developer

IT Directors IT System Administrators ML Engineer Senior IT Engineers Service Desk Software Architects Software Engineers

Software Sales Technical Roles Technology UX Developers

Carers

Nursing/Medical/Care

Doctors Healthcare Qualified Hearing Aid Dispensers Medical Mental Health Nurses NMC Registered Occupational Therapist

Optometrists Paramedics Pharmacy Managers Physiotherapist Psychologist Specialist Nurses

Secretarial/Clerical

Administration Office Staff Office Support Staff

Other

Account Managers Buvers Careers Adviser Commercial Domestic Workers Estate Agency Sales European Languages Logistics Operations Product Managers Sales Sales Order Processor Supply Chain

Telemarketing Telesales

Engineers Fire & Security Engineers Transport&LogisticsManagers

Skills in short supply: Temporary staff

Accounting/Financial ACCA

Accountants Auditors Book Keepers CIMA

Credit Controllers Finance Part Qualified Accountants

Payroll Taxation

Blue Collar

Blue Collar Cleaners Coded Welders Forklift Drivers **HGV** Drivers **HVAC** Industrial Operatives Industrials LGV 2 Drivers LGV Drivers Manufacturing Operatives Plater

Production Refrigeration Security Guards Semi-skilled Industrial Warehouse

Welders Construction

Architectural Tech Bricklayers Planners

Engineering

Electrical Engineers Electronics Engineer Engineering Management Industrial Engineers Installation Engineers Maintenance Engineers Manufacturing Engineers Mechanical Engineers Service Engineers

Executive/Professional

Business Analysts Legal Secretarial Operations Managers

Hotel/Catering

Chefs Hospitality Kitchen Porters

IT/Computing

Automation Testers Cyber Security Data Engineers Developers Senior IT Engineers Software Engineers Technical Roles Technology

Nursing/Medical/Care

Hearing Aid Dispensers Nurses Optometrists Pharmacists Social Workers Support Workers

Secretarial/Clerical

Office Support Staff

Other

Commercial Tractor Drivers

Skills in excess supply: Permanent staff

Accounting/Financial **CFOs**

Entry Level Finance Finance Finance Directors Finance Manager Management Accountants

Blue Collar

Industrial Operatives Industrials Manufacturing Manufacturing Operatives Operatives Site Managers Warehouse

Construction Office Fit-out

Engineering Mechanical Engineers

Project Engineers

Executive/Professional

Business Analysts

Executives Human Resources Marketing Professional Project Managers Recruitment Consultants

Senior-level Management

Hotel/Catering

Hospitality

IT/Computing

Developers Entry Level IT IT Directors IT Helpdesk Support QA Software Developer Senior IT Engineers Software Design Software Engineers Technical Support Technology

Nursing/Medical/Care

Carers Healthcare Assistants

Nurses Retail

Retail Secretarial/Clerical

Administration Clerical Office Support Staff Public Sector Administration Receptionist

Other

Call Centre Customer Service Data Entry General Operatives Graduates Hvbrid Import/Export Clerk Logistics Remote Workers Sales

Skills in excess supply: Temporary staff

Accountants

Blue Collar

Accounting/Financial Entry Level Finance

Blue Collar

Carpenters Decorators Industrial Operatives Industrials Manufacturing Operatives

Production Riggers Site Managers

Warehouse Construction

Labourers Unskilled Labourers

Engineering

Mechanical Engineers

Executive/Professional

Business Analysts Executives Project Managers

Hotel/Catering

Hospitality

IT/Computing

IT Directors Software Engineers Technical Support

Nursing/Medical/Care

Carers

Healthcare Qualified Nurses

Retail Retail

Secretarial/Clerical

Administration

Other

Graduates Logistics Operations Part-time Workers Testers

Note: Skills can be reported as being both in short supply and excess supply as we survey various recruitment agencies across the country, so there is geographical variation as well as the possibility of candidates with particular skills being concentrated in certain areas.

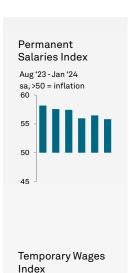






7 Pay pressures

The recruitment industry survey tracks both the average salaries awarded to people placed in permanent jobs each month, as well as average hourly rates of pay for temp/contract staff.



Aug '23 - Jan '24

60

55

45

sa, >50 = inflation

Starting salary growth dips to 34-month low

Average salaries awarded to new permanent joiners continued to increase across the UK at the start of 2024. Whilst sharp, the rate of pay growth slipped to the softest since March 2021 and moved further below the historical average (57.4). The higher cost of living and competition for skilled workers had placed further pressure on starting salaries, according to recruiters. However, there were also reports of tighter client budgets and more stable salaries after a strong period of growth.

Temp wage growth edges up to five-month high

Adjusted for seasonal influences, the Temporary Wages Index pointed to an increase in average pay rates for short-term staff for the thirty-fifth month in a row in January. Recruiters often mentioned that wages had increased in order to attract and secure suitably-skilled workers amid the higher cost of living. Whilst solid and the quickest in five months, the rate of pay growth was slower than seen on average over the current period of rising wages. All four monitored English regions noted higher temp pay, led by the South of England.



Permanent Salaries Index

sa, >50 = inflation since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	58.2	55.9	55.4	59.9	60.9
Sep '23	57.6	59.4	54.8	55.9	58.2
Oct '23	57.4	60.1	53.0	57.2	57.5
Nov '23	56.0	58.8	51.8	57.6	56.1
Dec '23	56.5	56.7	54.1	60.8	55.3
Jan '24	55.8	57.6	54.8	55.3	56.0

Temporary Wages Index

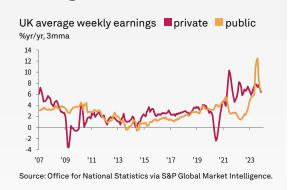
sa, >50 = inflation since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Aug '23	55.9	60.7	52.1	56.5	55.5
Sep '23	52.9	55.7	51.4	54.2	50.7
Oct '23	53.5	53.9	53.0	52.9	55.5
Nov '23	52.2	55.4	52.4	53.2	47.9
Dec '23	54.6	53.6	54.7	59.1	54.6
Jan '24	54.8	53.8	58.7	53.8	52.6

Official data: UK average weekly earnings

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated that total employee earnings (including bonuses) increased +6.5% on an annual basis over the three months to November 2023. Though strong in the context of historical data, this marked the softest rate of pay growth since the three months to March 2023.

Similarly steep increases in average earnings were recorded across both the private and public sectors in the latest three-month period (+6.4% and +6.6%, respectively). In both cases, growth rates have cooled since last summer, particularly in the public sector which, at the time, was boosted by one-off payments across the NHS and civil service, according to the ONS.







8 Special feature

This section features data from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation

Struggles with childcare funding and staff are an all-too typical problem in the UK today

As Coram Family and Childcare Trust begins work on its 23rd annual Childcare Survey, its last such survey published in March revealed a sharp drop in childcare availability across England during the past year, with only half of local areas reporting sufficient childcare provision for children under two years old, a decrease of 7% on 2022, and under half (48%) reporting enough childcare for parents working full-time, a decrease of 11% on last year.

With the government's £4bn scheme, announced in the last Spring Budget, starting this April , there are concerns about its feasibility and whether nurseries have the money and staffing capacity to adequately achieve the pledges made by ministers.

With National Apprenticeships Week this month, can reform of apprenticeships help widen childcare provision?

Ofsted has flagged that the number of new apprentices starting in the early years sector has fallen by 40% in six years. The decline is happening as demand for childcare is likely to increase by around 15%. This is the equivalent of 100,000 additional children in full-time care.

As demand for childcare increases, so do resignations - with more than half of nursery staff having considered quitting, further adding to the issue for nurseries, who are struggling to maintain existing provision without nearly 50,000 new staff.

This lends weight to REC's view that temporary workers should be eligible for apprenticeship levy funding when today they are excluded because only 2% of assignments last longer than 12 months.

Apprenticeships need to work better for businesses. Within the childcare sector, there are serious talent shortages. A solution to this would be creating a talent pipeline in the form of nursery practitioner apprenticeships that would recognise and address the 40,000 new staff and upskill individuals.

There are nearly 1 million temporary workers in the UK and without expanding the levy to make it easier for them to access training the labour market as a whole will miss out on the value of their contribution.

After all, in its annual report, Ofsted acknowledged that early years apprenticeships may provide a way to raise the quality and size of the early years workforce.

The need for reform for apprenticeships therefore is urgent.

Adequate provision of early years education has wide ranging benefits, not only for parents and children but for the economy more widely. Pregnant then Screwed, a campaigning charity supporting pregnant women and parents who encounter pregnancy, paternity or maternity discrimination, has recently found that one in five parents earning less than £50,000 are leaving the workforce due to the cost of childcare.

There is clearly a need to improve the provision of childcare to help both parents and childcare professionals into the workforce. This will also help fill the high vacancy levels in the labour market driven by skills and worker shortages.

Wider revisions of the early years apprenticeship scheme make for a compelling development. From April 2024, the funding band for the level 3 early years educator apprenticeship will increase from £6,000 to £7,000. More broadly, the Secretary of State for Education has also committed to increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7bn by 2024/25.

Businesses, particularly those in early education, should be positioned to proceed into this year with strength and confidence. The lack of childcare workers will dampen that. The REC's recent Jobs Outlook has found that businesses' mood about their own prospects continues to improve, as does their confidence in making hiring decisions. In the upcoming budget, the chancellor can fuel this optimism by improving access to skills and workers through Apprenticeship Levy reform.







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The KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 UK recruitment and employment

Survey responses are collected in the second half of each month and indicate the direction of change compared to the previous month. A diffusion index is calculated for each survey variable. The index is the sum of the percentage of 'higher' responses and half the percentage of 'unchanged' responses. The indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease. The indices are then seasonally adjusted.

Underlying survey data are not revised after publication, but seasonal adjustment factors may be revised from time to time as appropriate which will affect the seasonally adjusted

For further information on the survey methodology, please contact

Survey Dates

Data were collected 11-25 January 2024.

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