

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored top, is smiling and looking towards the left. She is sitting at a table in what appears to be a meeting room or office. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and office furniture. The image is framed by a thick orange border on the right and top edges.

Talent Trends Report.

April 2026

The market is steadier, but caution lingers.

Hiring didn't fall off a cliff in March, but it didn't take off either. The latest REC/KPMG data for March shows the market holding up, with only a small drop in permanent hiring and a smaller fall in temporary hiring than last month.

Job adverts are still down overall, but the decline has slowed to its weakest pace in ten months. At the same time, there are more candidates available, and pay rises at the point of hire have eased again.

What this means for businesses:

There's an opportunity here, but only for employers who are organised. When more candidates are available, it doesn't automatically make hiring easier. The difference comes down to how quickly and clearly you run your process.



From the conversations we're having, the market feels steadier but decision-making is still cautious. The difference isn't who gets the most applicants, it's who converts the right ones. That's why we're focused on how well hiring works, not just how busy it looks."

Anthony Butler, Managing Director
anthony.butler@gerrardwhite.com
07843 625 559



Hiring headlines | What March data tells us.

Permanent hiring: close to flat, but still slightly down (**49.2**). This points to employers hiring where there's a clear need, while staying cautious on new headcount

Contract/temporary: still down (**48.4**), but the fall has eased since February suggesting the market is soft, not collapsing

Vacancies: still falling (**46.0**), but at the slowest pace in ten months, a sign demand is starting to steady

Pay: still rising, but more gently. Starting salaries and temp rates both slowed, helped by higher candidate numbers and tighter budgets

Candidates: availability rose sharply (**62.4**). That should ease pressure in some areas, but specialist roles won't automatically get easier.



Regional differences (worth keepng an eye on)

The market isn't moving evenly. In March, London and the North were the brighter spots for permanent hiring, while the South and Midlands stayed softer. For contract/temporary hiring it flipped: the Midlands held up strongly, while London saw the biggest drop, a reminder that hiring plans (and timelines) need to flex by region, not just by role.

Jon Holt, UK Senior Partner, KPMG

“...there have been signs this year that the long-term decline in hiring may be starting to stabilise as businesses press ahead with their previously delayed recruitment plans. However... many employers will remain cautious about committing to new roles.”

How to interpret this:

Some employers are moving ahead with hiring they previously put on hold, which is encouraging. But Jon Holt's point is that uncertainty still has real impact: roles can be delayed, reshaped or paused again if confidence dips. For hiring teams, that's a reminder to keep plans tight and decision-making clear, so you can move quickly when approval comes through and avoid losing good candidates while you wait.

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive, REC

“The Gulf Conflict provided a headwind to hiring in March, but this did not stop the trend of stabilisation that has defined 2026 so far... the resilience of the jobs market last month was heartening.”

How to interpret this:

Even with fresh uncertainty, the market didn't nose-dive, it pretty much held its shape. Neil Carberry also highlights that the picture isn't even across the UK, with signs of resilience showing up more strongly in some regions than others. The practical takeaway: don't rely on a single “UK market” view. Regional differences can change your time-to-hire, offer expectations and where the best candidates are coming from.

Our view: April's message isn't necessarily “hire more” - it's “hire well”. With more candidates available and a bit less pay pressure, the biggest risk isn't a lack of talent. It's the things that slow hiring down: unclear briefs, slow decisions, and offers that take too long - which is when strong candidates disappear late in the process.

Why some employers still struggle to hire.

Candidate numbers are rising. Pay rises are easing. On paper, that should make hiring easier. But in practice, many employers won't feel the benefit, because hiring usually breaks in the same places:

- slow feedback and delays booking interviews
- unclear decision-making (“we’ll know it when we see it”)
- changes to the role part-way through
- long gaps between stages (good candidates move on)
- offers taking too long to approve
- contractor checks and onboarding happening too late

April takeaway:

The next quarter will reward good hiring habits: clarity at the start, pace through the middle and no friction at the end. If your process is slow or inconsistent, more candidates simply means more drop-off. If it's responsive and well-run, this is a great moment to hire without overpaying.



Turn a steadier market into better hires.

Candidate availability is up and pay growth has eased. That can create a useful window for employers — but only if you can move quickly and keep the process clear. The biggest wins in markets like this come from good basics: strong role clarity, fast feedback, and offers that don't drag.

From a recruitment agency perspective, this month is about making hiring easier to complete, not just easier to start.

What we're seeing in practice

- Roles are being approved, but decisions can still slow down mid-process
- The best candidates still move quickly — even when more people are available
- Counteroffers and “late surprises” are still common when timelines stretch

What to focus on now

1. Tighten the brief so everyone is hiring for the same thing
2. Keep momentum between stages (short gaps, quick feedback)
3. Be ready to close (clear salary range, quick offer approvals)

How Gerrard White helps:

We support employers with permanent and contractor hiring across Insurance, Tech & Change and Legal, helping you move faster, keep quality high, and stay compliant where contractor engagement is involved.

Three things to get right in April.

1) Make decisions faster: If candidates are more available, speed becomes the difference between hiring and missing out. Aim to reduce delays between each step, especially feedback and scheduling

2) Be clear on what you're hiring for: The market is still cautious and budgets are still tight. Clear priorities (and clear role briefs) stop wasted time and help hiring managers stay aligned

3) Keep contractor hiring tidy: Even when contract demand softens, it remains part of how many businesses deliver work. Make sure checks, onboarding and compliance don't slow things down at the last moment.



How Gerrard White supports your hiring.

Gerrard White is a specialist recruiter across Insurance, Tech & Change and Legal, supporting permanent and contractor hiring across the UK, US and Europe. In a cautious market, we help you reach the right talent fast, deliver shortlists you can trust, and keep momentum through to offer and start.

Permanent

When you need the right hire (not just a CV), we deliver:

- qualified, role-matched shortlists
- pace without compromising quality
- strong candidate management end-to-end

Priority roles in Q2? We'll deliver shortlists fast.

Contractor / interim

When timelines matter, we help you add capacity quickly with:

- fast access to specialist contractors
- clear scoping to reduce mismatch
- onboarding support where needed

Need project support? We'll source contractors quickly.

Compliance-first contractor engagement (IR35-aware)

Where risk sits with contractor hiring, we keep it structured:

- IR35-aware engagement approach
- clear documentation and consistent process
- a smoother experience for managers and contractors

Fast and controlled: governance in place from day one.

Q2 hiring checklist: 5 things to tighten now.

A steadier market and more candidates can help but only if your process doesn't lose people in the gaps.

This quick checklist covers the five areas that most often slow hiring down.

1. **Role clarity:** Can someone explain the role in one sentence and do all interviewers agree on what “good” looks like?
2. **Decision speed:** Are you giving feedback within 48 hours and booking the next stage quickly?
3. **Interview load:** Have you kept stages to what's necessary, or has the process grown over time?
4. **Offer flow:** Do offers get approved fast, and are you speaking to candidates early about salary expectations?
5. **Onboarding & compliance:** For contractors especially: are checks and paperwork smooth, consistent and started early?

If even 1–2 of these feel shaky, it usually shows up as longer time-to-hire and more drop-off.





Gerrard White is an award-winning specialist recruitment agency across insurance, technology & change and legal.

01892 553355 | info@gerrardwhite.com

www.gerrardwhite.com