



TALENT TRENDS REPORT

APRIL 2026

Source: REC/KPMG data March 2026



Award-winning talent partner, trusted by growing companies across the UK

THE MARKET IS STEADIER BUT EMPLOYERS ARE STILL CAREFUL

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."

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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.

Vermelo's view: April's message isn't necessarily “hire more”; it's “hire better”. With candidate availability rising and pay pressure easing, the biggest risk is not talent shortage, it's hiring friction: slow decisions, unclear ownership and offer delays that lose strong candidates late-stage.

WHY SOME EMPLOYERS STILL STRUGGLE, EVEN WHEN SUPPLY IS UP

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.

FEATURE | YOUR HIRING SCORE

If you're planning hiring for Q2 - or you want to use any quieter hiring time to make sure your process is efficient - the best starting point is knowing how well your hiring works right now, and spotting bottlenecks before they cost you time, candidates, or budget.

That's why we created the **Vermelo Hiring Score**. It's a short self-assessment that gives you an immediate score, helping you identify where your hiring process may be slowing you down or causing drop-off, so you know what to fix first.

What you'll get:

- an instant Hiring Score as soon as you complete the self-assessment
- a clear view of where delays or drop-off may be happening
- practical focus areas that can make the biggest difference

Get your instant hiring score:

www.vermelorpo.com/hiring-score

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 VERMELO CAN HELP

Vermelo helps organisations hire faster, with less hassle, through flexible support that fits the situation.

Embedded Talent (RaaS)

When you need extra hands to keep hiring moving - especially on specialist roles - we can place recruiters into your team to support day-to-day delivery.

Vermelo supports businesses that need extra hiring capacity quickly.

Managed Service Provider (MSP)

When contractor hiring becomes hard to control (too many suppliers, inconsistent checks, unclear spend) we can put structure around it so it runs smoothly.

Vermelo supports businesses that want contractor hiring to be consistent and compliant.

Talent Advisory & Consultancy

When the problem isn't "finding people" but the process itself - approvals, interviews, unclear briefs - we help you sort the root cause so hiring gets easier.

Vermelo supports businesses that want to remove delays and improve outcomes.



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.

If you want a fast benchmark, the Vermelo Hiring Score gives you an immediate snapshot of where bottlenecks may be sitting:

www.vermelorpo.com/hiring-score

READY TO TALK THROUGH YOUR HIRING ROLES?

If you're hiring in Q2, we're happy to talk through your priorities and timelines - whether you need extra delivery support, tighter contractor governance or help improving the process itself.

Vermelo delivers award-winning RPO and flexible talent solutions across insurance, insurtech, fintech, legal, technology, financial services and regulatory sectors.

We support clients through:

- Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO)
- Managed Service Provision (MSP)
- Embedded Talent (RaaS)
- Talent Advisory & Consulting

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VERMELO | YOUR STRATEGIC TALENT PARTNER

Part of the GWV Talent Solutions Group, Vermelo delivers award-winning RPO and flexible recruitment solutions across insurance, insurtech, fintech, legal, technology, financial services and regulatory sectors.

We help organisations hire smarter by combining people, process and technology to deliver faster, compliant and cost-effective hiring through:

- Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO)
- Managed Service Provision (MSP)
- Embedded Talent (RaaS)
- Talent Advisory & Consulting

Vermelo brings deep sector knowledge and a strong track record supporting hiring in complex, fast-moving environments. We work as an extension of your team and focus on outcomes that matter: faster time-to-hire, quality hires, and a better experience for hiring managers and candidates.

Vermelo | flexible talent solutions that scale with your business.

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