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KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs: North of England

North of England signals fastest rise in permanent placements in nearly four years

Key findings

Decline in temp billings loses pace

Steeper rise in staff supply but vacancy growth slows

Stronger salary inflation, but temp pay rates decrease

Data were collected 9-24 April 2026.

Summary

April's KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs: North of England survey not only signalled a sustained increase in permanent staff appointments across the region, but one that was the strongest in almost four years. Although temp billings decreased again, the pace of contraction was softer than in March.

Pay trends meanwhile diverged, as a stronger rise in starting salaries contrasted with a faster reduction in temp pay. The availability of both permanent and short-term workers continued to increase at historically sharp rates, while growth of demand for staff softened.

Growth in permanent placements hits 47-month high in April

April survey data pointed to a third consecutive monthly increase in permanent placements across the North of England. The respective seasonally adjusted index rose to its highest in almost four years, signalling a solid rise in appointments. Some recruiters noted an improvement in business confidence locally. Of the four monitored English regions, the North was one of two to see an uptick in permanent placements. The expansion in London was faster than that seen in the North of England, however.

Recruiters based in the North of England signalled a sixth consecutive monthly fall in billings

received from the employment of temporary staff in April. According to anecdotal evidence, the decline reflected firms' decisions not to extend contracts and the completion of projects. Although the rate of contraction slowed on the month, it was the strongest recorded across the four monitored English regions and solid overall.

Latest data marked the third month in a row in which job vacancies have increased across the North of England. For both permanent and temporary roles, the rate of vacancy growth slowed from March, and was modest. Nevertheless, London was the only other monitored English area to record an increase in permanent job openings, while the North was the only region to register a rise in temp vacancies.

Further marked growth in permanent labour supply

April data signalled a further increase in permanent staff availability across the North of England. Although panellists often linked the rise to more redundancies and challenging labour market conditions, there were also mentions of a greater willingness among candidates to seek out new roles. The rate of growth in availability accelerated to its fastest since November last year and was the sharpest of all four monitored English regions.

Amid reports of greater redundancies and fewer job opportunities, the availability of temporary staff increased again across the North of England in April, thereby stretching the current trend of growth that dates back to March 2023. The rate of expansion picked up from March and was substantial, albeit broadly in line with the national trend.

Rate of starting salary inflation picks up in April

Recruiters based in the North of England indicated a fifth consecutive monthly rise in salaries

awarded to permanent joiners in April. Panellists linked the latest increase to attempts by firms to attract skilled labour and the filling of more senior roles. Although up on the month, the pace of inflation was far weaker than the historical average and only moderate in nature. Nonetheless, the rate of pay growth was slightly stronger than the UK-wide trend.

April survey data signalled a second successive monthly decrease in temp pay rates across the North of England. Although only modest overall, the rate of reduction was the most pronounced in five months. The North was also the only one of the four monitored English regions to post a decline.

Comments

Commenting on the latest survey results, Chris Stott, Manchester Office Senior Partner at KPMG UK, said:

“The North’s jobs market is continuing to show signs of resilience, with permanent placements rising for a third consecutive month and at the fastest pace in almost four years. While overall hiring conditions remain uncertain, businesses are still moving ahead with recruitment plans, particularly for roles where specialist skills remain in demand.”

“At the same time, candidate availability remains high, giving employers access to a broader talent pool as they navigate ongoing economic uncertainty. Permanent salary growth has also strengthened, reflecting continued competition for experienced talent, even as firms take a more selective and strategic approach to hiring. Many businesses are continuing to recruit, but with a clearer focus on the roles and capabilities that will support long-term stability in the face of a difficult operating environment.”

Neil Carberry, REC Chief Executive, said:

“So far this year we’ve seen signs of improving momentum across the UK, but that is now being tempered by the economic effects of the Gulf conflict. Businesses will be particularly concerned about the impact on inflation, their borrowing costs and any disruption to wider supply chains. A double boost came from the North of England where permanent placements rose to the highest level in almost four years in the region, which is down to an improvement in business confidence locally, and the rate of contraction in temp billings slowed on the previous month in the North of England. Government can do more to help firms feel able to commit to permanent hiring too, by addressing the cost of doing business – the key domestic contributor to hiring activity. Taking the threat of badly designed guaranteed hours rules off the table would make a huge difference.”

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Methodology

The KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs: North of England is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to around 100 recruitment and employment consultancies in the North of England (defined as NUTS1 regions North West, Yorkshire & Humber and North East).

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 data series.

For further information on the survey methodology, please contact economics@spglobal.com. Full reports and historical data from the KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs are available by subscription. Please contact economics@spglobal.com.

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