

A Report

The Role of Temporary Workers in Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery

Introduction

Allen Associates conducted a survey of the Oxfordshire temporary employment market to assess the degree to which Oxfordshire-based businesses had utilised temporary workers after the first Covid-19 lockdown and their reasons for doing so.

This survey carried out in October 2020, follows hot on the heels of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) Report on Jobs in August and September which showed a rise in the recruitment of temporary workers in most parts of the UK, apart from London.

The REC's September report revealed that demand for blue collar temporary workers in the private sector had increased at its fastest rate since the end of 2018. This was attributed to the gradual easing of restrictions and re-opening of the economy in the months after the first national lockdown.

These findings are supported by the British Chambers of Commerce Quarterly Recruitment Outlook which found that just over one-third of UK SMEs had attempted to recruit in July, August and September, up from one-quarter in April, May and June. This is still a long way off the figures for January, February and March when 55% of firms were hiring – but the general gradual upward trend following the first lockdown is still seen as encouraging, albeit predictable.

The greatest number of current vacancies are reportedly in the IT, construction, engineering, transport and distribution sectors while unsurprisingly, the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors are among the hardest hit.

What does this mean for Oxfordshire?

Allen Associates surveyed HR decision-makers in Oxfordshire-based businesses of all sizes operating across a wide range of sectors. Nearly half (43%) of the businesses surveyed had taken on temporary workers in

the months after lockdown had ended and restrictions were eased, but most said they had taken on fewer than they would have done, pre Covid-19.

Reasons for Hiring Temporary Workers

46%

for short-term support



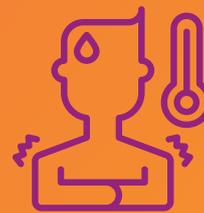
36%

to plug gaps until they can afford to fill the roles permanently



25%

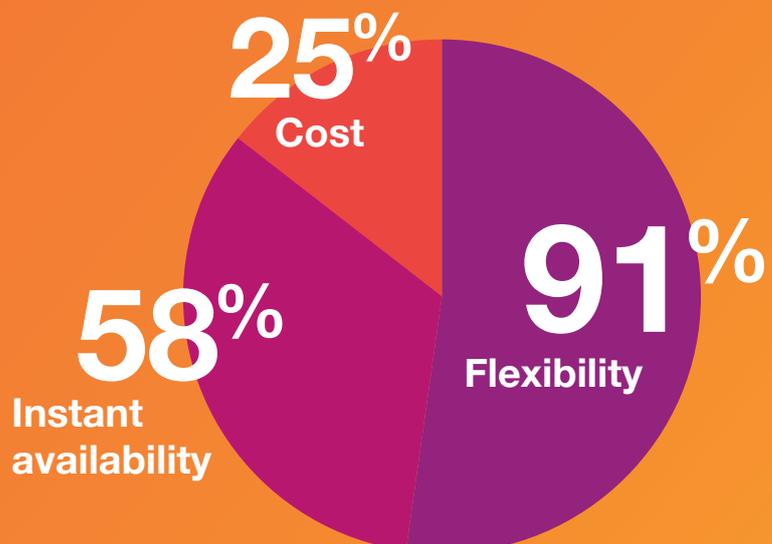
to cover sickness absence



Some businesses commented that they had taken on Temps to cover a backlog of annual leave accrued by

permanent employees; others said they had taken on temps to assist with peak season workloads.

Benefits of using Temps

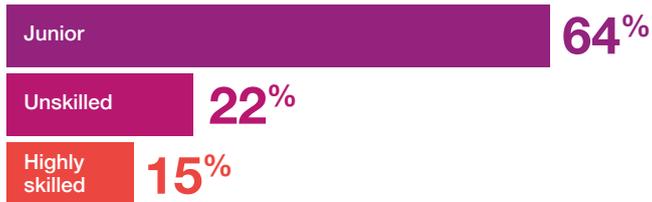


Roles and Responsibilities

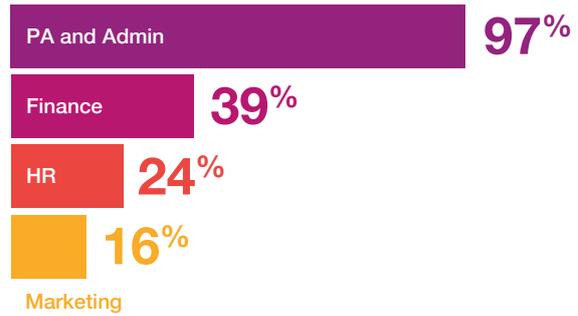
Most Oxfordshire businesses surveyed used temporary workers to fill more junior or unskilled roles in July, August and September, despite the increasing numbers of highly experienced candidates coming to the market, many

of whom have proven management capabilities. The overwhelming majority of businesses looked for temps to work in PA or Administration roles with Finance being the second most common area.

Temp Roles



Areas of Support Needed



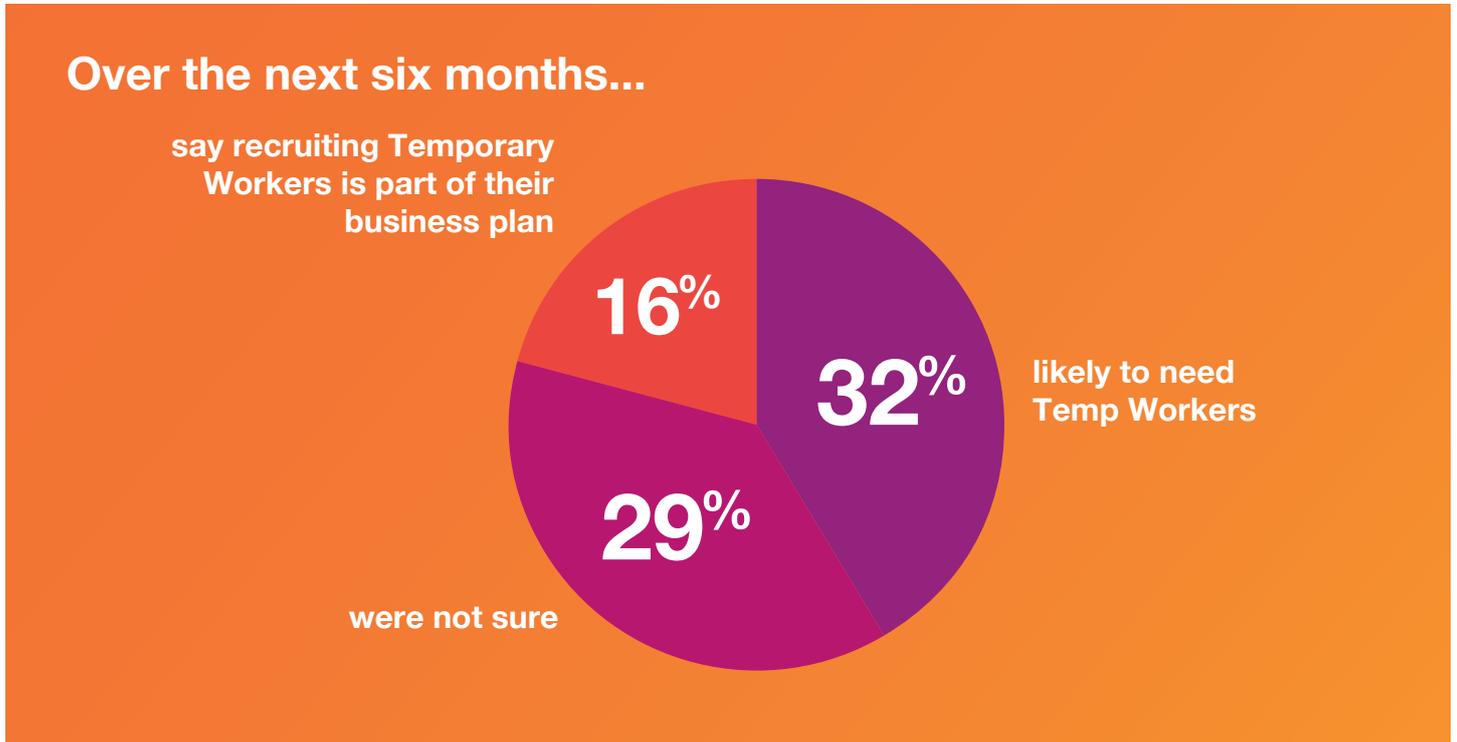
Some respondents had also taken on temporary drivers, cleaners and teachers as well as staff for roles within warehousing, IT, data control and operations.

Employers are most likely to use Temps for more junior, admin roles



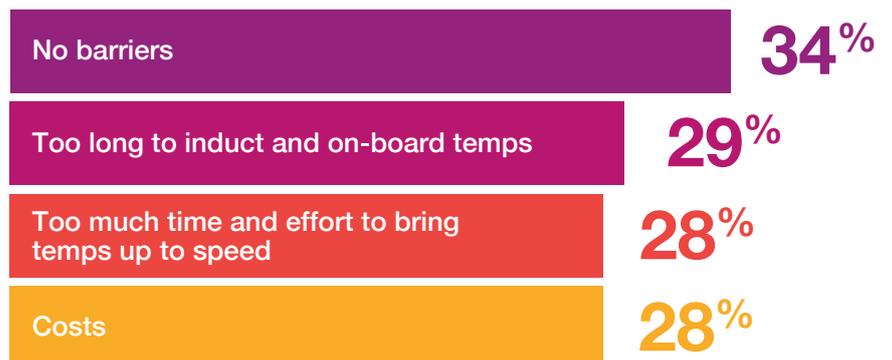
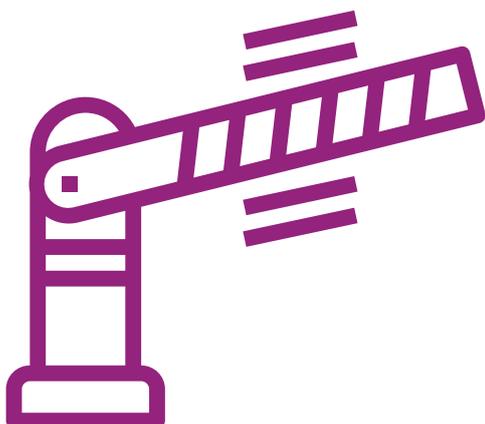
Demand for Temp Workers

Almost two-thirds of Oxfordshire employers said they might need the support of Temps over the next six months although very few said that taking on Temporary Workers formed part of their business recovery plan or continuity strategy.



Perceived Barriers to Temp Employment

While just over one-third of employers cited no barriers to taking on temps, others expressed concerns, particularly in relation to time commitment and costs. Our experience shows that these concerns are quickly overcome when employers work closely with the right recruitment partner and choose skilled temps with a proven track record of successfully working remotely and adding significant value from day one.

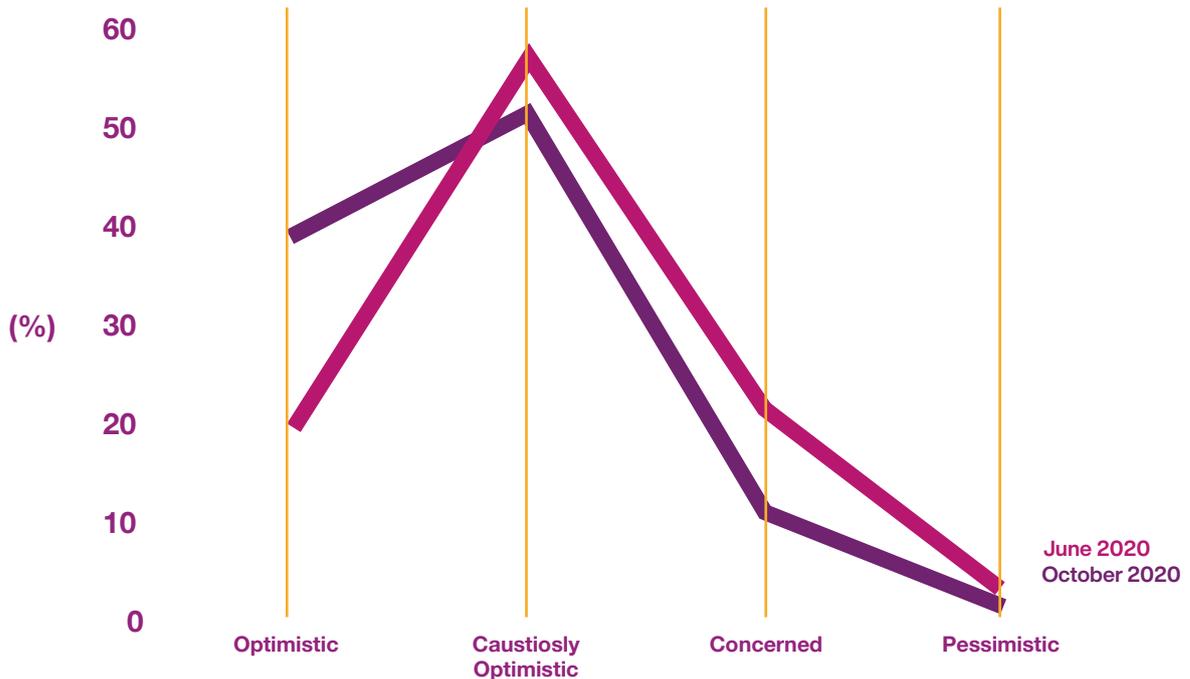


Economic Outlook

Oxfordshire businesses remain bullish about the future with confidence levels higher in October than when we conducted our [previous survey](#) in June to better understand the impact of Covid-19 on local businesses.

While it is encouraging that HR decision-makers appear to be feeling more positive, it's worth noting that this survey was completed just before the second national lockdown was announced on 31 October and sentiment may have changed again since then.

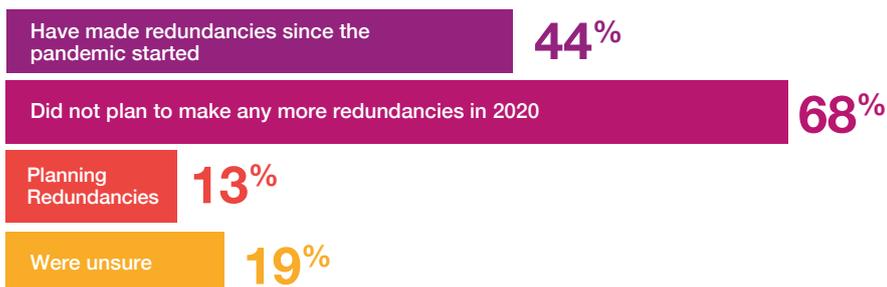
Oxfordshire business sentiment



Redundancy

Since the start of the pandemic, almost half of those surveyed have made redundancies but this is significantly down on the 65% that anticipated having to take this step when surveyed in June for our [Covid-19 impact report](#). Encouragingly, most respondents said they were not planning to make any further redundancies in 2020.

Redundancy snapshot



Outplacement Services

It is evident that most employers want to do the right thing by their people with the majority of survey respondents saying they would consider offering [Outplacement Services](#) to staff facing redundancy.

Support for Redundant Workers



Executive Summary

At Allen Associates, we have seen a significant rise in the number of enquiries from Oxfordshire employers looking for an extra pair of hands, often at very short notice, across all the business support functions we recruit for. Our experiences were born out by the REC's nationwide Report on Jobs in August and September.

This apparent demand for temporary workers prompted us to reach out to our network of clients and contacts within the Oxfordshire business community to better understand the extent to which Temps were helping them to bridge gaps and resource new opportunities during this period of unprecedented change and uncertainty.

What we found was that although just under half of the employers and HR decision-makers that responded to our survey had taken on Temps, it was clear that this was mostly to provide administrative support – and at a fairly junior level. Before the pandemic, when highly skilled, experienced staff were in short supply and high demand, employers may have found it difficult to find the right people for temporary roles at a senior level.

However, the employment market has been turned on its head and we are now seeing increasing numbers of top quality candidates looking for temporary work until such time as more permanent roles become available.

Competitive Advantage

There is a real opportunity for employers who are unable to grow their headcount at this time to inject fresh creativity, insights, the latest marketing know-how and strategic thinking by bringing temporary managers and directors into their business. It is also an effective and cost-effective way to share knowledge, experience and industry insights and to upskill existing staff members.

Thank you, as always, to everyone who took the time and trouble to complete our survey. We are extremely grateful for your input and hope that these findings have provided food for thought. If we can help with any recruitment needs you may have, please do get in touch.

Very best wishes,

Kate Allen,
Managing Director,
Allen Associates
kate@allen-associates.co.uk