Legal Recruitment News from Ten Percent Legal

Welcome to the August 2026 edition of Legal Recruitment News from the Ten Percent Group. It includes our Legal Job Market Report, locum hourly rates & solicitor salary guide, using AI effectively for job descriptions, selling or merging with local competitors, the threat to SME law firms from the proposed COLP/COFA changes & client account interest, CV writing & legal careers articles and our charity work. You can read the entire content below, or access the newsletter in PDF format at **www.legal-recruitment.co.uk**.

Legal Job Market Report - August 2026

Here is our summary of the current state of the UK legal job market.

Locum Recruitment - Steady

Locum assignments are lower than usual for this time of year (we should be busy in August, not steady!), and it has not been busy at all this summer. It is not clear yet whether this is short or longer term. Hourly rates for conveyancing solicitors remain higher than we anticipate are affordable for a number of smaller law firms, but the time of year is going to mean they remain high for the next few months. We really hope more locum conveyancers start to realise the market has changed as we think rates are going to need to drop. They have now fallen a bit - currently lowest rate we see if £40 per hour.

Locum assignment **updates here**.

Permanent Recruitment - Quiet

Permanent recruitment is quiet, although we have seen a number of new roles into us over the last few weeks. We are aware of a number of senior candidates moving on over the summer in a number of firms, which is quite unusual. Candidates are still hesitant about moving unless there is significant professional or monetary benefit and our candidate registrations are down significantly compared with last year.

Permanent vacancies can be viewed here: **https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/vacancies/**

Law Firms for Sale - Steady

Law firm M&A activity always drops down in the summer and this year is no exception. Valuation and Exit Strategy services have finally dropped off in August, but we already have a busy book of new work for the autumn, especially in light of the proposals from the SRA for the COLP/COLP changes and client account interest (we know that interest received has kept a number of businesses afloat and a lot more profitable that they would otherwise have been in recent years).

Full details of firms currently for sale on our website available here - list updated daily. For valuations, exit planning or a confidential discussion about a potential sale or acquisition generally please call 0800 246 5016 or email jf@jonathanfagan.co.uk. You can also download our free detailed guides on **Buying a Law Firm** and **Selling a Law Firm**.

Ten Percent Group statistics for July 2026 (2025 figures in brackets)

- New locum roles added - 20 (29)
- New permanent roles added - 14 (16)
- New candidates added - 47 (73)
- New law firms listed for sale: 4
- Law firms for sale: 43
- Deals going through (heads of terms signed): 5

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK - August 2026

This is a monthly report prepared by KPMG following a questionnaire sent to over 400 UK recruitment consultancies, including ourselves.

- Temp billings growth remains among quickest since early 2023
- Stronger upturns in pay for both permanent and temp staff
- Temporary vacancies rise for first time in two years

Commentary from Callum Licence, KPMG UK

“Despite ongoing uncertainty it’s encouraging that businesses are starting to press ahead with investment, which means across the board we are starting to see the data moving in the right direction. This is most pronounced in the continued rise of temporary work, where employers have been looking at flexible approaches and hiring has been growing for several months, and permanent hiring is starting to turn a corner. Over the past 45 months we have seen the longest recorded period of contraction in the permanent placements index, so to finally have it stable is a big milestone."

Commentary from Neil Carberry, REC CEO

"Rays of light are beginning to break through for the job market as employers revive hiring plans. Temporary vacancies are up for the first time in two years, while recruiters’ revenue from supplying temporary workers has risen for a fourth consecutive month. And the permanent market is stabilising. Remarkably, this is the first month without a decline in permanent placements since Liz Truss resigned as Prime Minister in 2022, underlining just how prolonged the downturn in permanent hiring has been."

Interim Lawyers - Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives August 2026

NB: Remote Working Role rates are about 10% lower.

- Civil Litigation – £50-£70 per hour
- COLP/COFA roles (temporary) - £50-£150 per hour/monthly retainer of £2-3k
- Commercial Contract – £35-£75 per hour
- Commercial Litigation – £55-£125 per hour
- Company Commercial – £60-£120 per hour
- Construction (non-contentious) £80-£110, (contentious) £60-90 per hour
- Conveyancing – £40-£55 per hour
- Commercial Property – £50-£70 per hour
- Employment Solicitors – £50-65 per hour
- Family Solicitors (Legal Aid) – £40 per hour
- Family Solicitors (Private) – £45-£55 per hour
- Family (Child Care LA) – £40-£45 per hour
- Immigration Lawyers – £35-£70 per hour
- In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £40-£50 per hour
- In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £50-£125 per hour
- In House Interim Lawyers (SMEs) – £60-£85 per hour
- Insolvency – £50-£55 per hour
- IP – £55-80 per hour
- Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £40-£50 per hour
- Professional Negligence – £45-£60 per hour
- Property Litigation – £45-£75 per hour
- Wills & Probate – £45-£70 per hour
- Locum Legal Cashiers - £25-£35 per hour
- Locum Paralegals - all areas - £20-£30 per hour

We have an online calculator to convert hourly rates to salary equivalents - **click here**. NB all rates exclude agency fees. The rates are for self-employed locum solicitors billing firms directly on a weekly basis. These are the ranges we have seen at **www.interimlawyers.co.uk** over the last 30 days from locum assignments posted with us, rates indicated by locums and rates agreed on new assignments started. For expert guidance on locum work please email Emma Ireland at emma.ireland@ten-percent.co.uk.

Ten Percent Legal Salary Guide - August 2026

Each month we publish a list of any salary levels we become aware of from employers in relation to jobs offered and salaries indicated via **Ten Percent Legal Recruitment**. These are the salaries we have had indicated by law firms to us for 3 years PQE and upwards. London figures in brackets where relevant.

- Commercial In House Solicitor (General) - £80k - £120k (£85k-140k)
- Commercial Litigation - £45-£70k (£50k-£95k)
- Corporate Commercial - £50k-£150k (£65k-£175k)
- Construction - £65k-£95k

- Commercial Property - £55k-£100k
- Insolvency - £60k-£75k
- IP - £55k-£90k
- Professional Negligence - £55k-£75k
- Crime - £40-50k
- Civil Litigation - £45k-£60k
- Conveyancing £45k-£75k (£70k)
- Employment Solicitors - £45k-£55k
- Family Solicitors - £37k-£50k
- Immigration Lawyers - £37k-£75k
- Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence £40k-£60k
- Property Litigation - £50k-£70k
- Wills & Probate - £45k-£65k

Support Staff

- Office Manager - £40-60k
- Legal Cashier - £30-40k
- Senior legal accounts professional - £40k-50k
- Secretary - £23-28k
- Paralegal - £22-27k

Using AI for Writing Job Adverts

AI can be very useful for writing legal job adverts. Give it the basic facts about a vacancy and, within seconds, you can have a reasonably polished advert ready to work on. The important words here are “work on”.

We are starting to see more legal job adverts that have quite clearly been written by AI and then posted without anyone giving them much thought. They tend to be long, rather grandiose and packed with phrases that no solicitor has ever used when talking about their next job. Used properly, AI can save a considerable amount of time. Used badly, it can make your firm sound exactly the same as everyone else.

Here are 10 things we recommend you don't do when using AI to write a legal job advert.

1. Don't post the first draft - treat the first version as exactly that: a first draft. Read it, edit it and make sure it sounds like your firm rather than something generated by a robot for any law firm anywhere in the country. A good way of keeping AI on track is to build yourself a briefing sheet which outlines who your firm is, your style, preferences for content, factual information about the practice, and your preferences for any advertisement creation - eg colours and fonts.

2. **Don't let it invent benefits** - if you don't offer private healthcare, bonuses, free parking or four days working from home, make sure they don't somehow appear in the advert. Check every factual

statement. Again, if you create job adverts regularly, create a cheat sheet for AI to use for a base when creating your ad.

3. Don't use vague descriptions - “Exciting opportunity”, “dynamic team” and “fast-paced environment” tell candidates very little. Tell them what the solicitor will actually be doing. This isn't just AI, so many employers do this and it really doesn't help anyone. I have never quite worked out if a dynamic team is actually code for a group of lawyers who drink too much coffee and shout a lot!

4. Don't forget the salary - one of the most useful pieces of information in a job advert is also one of the most frequently omitted. If at all possible, include a salary range. You are never restricted to this. Give us a ring for advice if wanted - always happy to help if we can.

5. Don't hide the location or conditions - candidates want to know where they will be working. Give the town or city and explain the firm's home working arrangements clearly. Remember - remote working is the future as far as candidates are concerned.

6. Don't make the firm sound wonderful - not every firm is “award-winning”, “forward-thinking” or “prestigious”. Candidates will usually respond much better to a straightforward description of the practice without any accolades being presented.

7. Don't produce an enormous list of requirements - AI is very good at creating lengthy person specifications. Unfortunately, these can put perfectly suitable candidates off applying. Separate genuine requirements from things that would simply be useful. Ask yourself what is essential really rather than desirable.

8. Don't add legal experience that isn't necessary Think carefully before specifying very narrow experience or a particular PQE level. If you would actually consider somebody outside those parameters, say so.

9. Don't forget who you are writing for A commercial property solicitor with 10 years' experience will be looking for different information from a newly qualified family solicitor. Write for the person you actually want to recruit.

10. Don't forget the human review This is the most important point. AI doesn't know your firm, your department or the personalities involved. Someone who does should always read the advert before it goes live.

Our view

AI is an excellent time-saving tool for writing job adverts. It can help turn a collection of notes into a structured advert and suggest points you may have overlooked. However the best job adverts tell it like it is. What the job is, where it is, what it pays, what experience you need and why somebody might enjoy working for you. If yours sounds so generic it could apply to any job anywhere then change it and learn how to use AI effectively.

Selling or Merging Your Law Firm with a Local Competitor: 10 Things to Consider

One of the first thoughts many law firm owners have when considering retirement or an exit is to approach a nearby competitor. It seems logical. They know the local market, they already know your firm, and they may be interested in increasing their client base or expanding into another area of work. Sometimes this can work very well, but our experience is that selling or merging with a local competitor is not always straightforward or financially attractive. Here are 10 things to be aware of.

1. They may not offer you any money This is probably the biggest surprise for many law firm owners. A local competitor may be very happy to take on your files, staff and clients, but that does not necessarily mean they will pay for the business. Their view may simply be that they are providing you with an exit route. A significant proportion will want you to close your firm down and pay run off cover.

2. A merger will usually be a takeover The word “merger” can sound attractive, but make sure you understand exactly what is being proposed. Mergers are usually in reality takeovers - your name will disappear, your systems will be replaced and all decisions will be made by the other firm.

3. Confidentiality is particularly important A local competitor may know your staff, clients and professional contacts. You should be careful about what information you disclose, particularly at an early stage. Always a very, very difficult balancing act. Very occasionally we hear of horror stories about aggressive firms opening up offices near targets and essentially trying to destroy their business. Rare, but it happens.

4. Consider your staff A buyer may be interested in your client base but less enthusiastic about taking on every member of staff - why would a new firm need two legal cashiers for example?

5. Don't assume your clients will stay, just because the buyer is local Clients are a law unto themselves. Some may choose to move elsewhere, particularly if they have had a personal relationship with you rather than the firm.

6. Approaching potential buyers damages your value Common sense really. A very wise expert broker once said that if a local rival hasn't contacted you to buy your firm then its probably not worth contacting them because they are not really interested. Once you make an approach to a firm, you will almost certainly be on the back foot throughout any negotiations.

7. Property can complicate matters A long lease, owned premises or an office that is larger than the buyer requires can affect negotiations considerably if you want to offload them at the same time. Try to keep the premises separate if you can.

8. Compare the offer with other options A convenient deal is not necessarily the best deal. Before accepting an approach from a local firm, it is worth finding out whether other buyers may be interested. Prices on the open market vary widely according the types of buyer involved.

9. Be clear about your own future Do you want to retire immediately, remain as a consultant for a year, or continue working part-time? Your plans can have a significant effect on the structure of a deal. Keep your future plans at the front of your mind throughout and do not allow emotions to get in the way. If the aim is to retire and walk away, keep concentrating on this as the goal.

10. Don't leave it too late The strongest position is usually to explore your options while the firm is trading well and you are under no pressure to sell. Approaching one competitor shortly before your 85th birthday really gives you very little negotiating power (unless you have built a fully self-functioning future-proofed law firm with the latest tech, but that is another article!).

Is a local competitor the right buyer?

Possibly, but rarely in our experience, and even more rarely where you have approached them to offer your business for sale. There can be very good reasons for selling to or joining forces with another local practice. They understand the area, there may be obvious savings from combining the firms and the transition can be easier for clients and staff. But it should be treated as one option rather than the only option. Before committing yourself, understand what your firm may be worth, what other buyers might offer and exactly what you want your exit to look like.

Is Someone Trying to Get Rid of Small Law Firms?

Two recent Law Gazette reports make it difficult not to wonder whether small law firms are being slowly squeezed out of existence.

The first concerns the Ministry of Justice proposal to take a share of the interest earned on money held in law firms' client accounts (https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/revealed-mojs-stealth-plan-to-seize-client-account-interest/5127734.article).

The original proposal was for the government to receive 50% of the interest on individual client accounts and 75% on pooled accounts, with the money used to fund justice services. The consultation outcome has not yet been published. Nevertheless, the MoJ is advertising for two senior civil servants to develop and implement the scheme, which the advert describes as a "flagship programme". Solicitors can reasonably ask whether the consultation was ever likely to change the decision. Client account interest is not free government money. For some practices it helps meet the considerable cost of administering client funds and complying with regulation. Taking most of it will not affect every firm equally. Larger firms may absorb the loss. Smaller practices may have to increase fees or reconsider whether certain work remains viable.

The second concern is the SRA's plan to prevent owners/managers at firms above certain thresholds from also acting as COLP or COFA (https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/separating-colp-and-cofa-roles-could-force-firms-to-close-sra-warned/5127751.article).

The rules will apply where annual turnover is at least £600,000 or the firm holds at least £2 million in client money, although partial exemptions will apply. The SRA wants better checks and balances following serious cases in which client money disappeared. However, £600,000 turnover does not make a firm large or complex. A specialist practice can exceed that figure with only a handful of staff. Conveyancing, probate and Court of Protection firms may also hold substantial client funds simply because of their work.

Forcing these firms to appoint or outsource separate compliance officers could add a sizeable cost while placing responsibility with someone who knows less about the business than its owners. It is also doubtful whether this would stop a dishonest owner, who could manipulate or collude with those appointed.

The danger is a profession dominated by fewer, larger organisations, with less local choice, fewer specialist practices and higher barriers for solicitors wanting to establish their own firms.

Perhaps government and regulators simply find larger firms easier to supervise? The evidence surely does not back this up when you think about the most recent high profile law firm failures (Axiom Ince, SBS Solicitors etc etc).

Client interest has always been discounted in law firm valuations, simply because it is not part of the trading income of the business. The future for some firms looks a little tough if the government are going to extract a sizeable chunk of money from firms simply because they can. Recruiting COLP and/or COFAs is, by the sounds of it, going to grow as an area. We already work with firms introducing candidates for these roles, but it is not cheap and again the future for some smaller firms with limited turnover looks difficult.

Ten Percent Foundation £500 Donation to Purple Patch, Leeds

Purple Patch Arts – Creative Learning for Learning-Disabled People in Yorkshire

Purple Patch Arts is a Yorkshire charity with a simple but important aim: to help learning-disabled people thrive, be heard and enjoy lifelong learning. The charity uses creativity as the route into learning. Its sessions bring together art, music, drama, movement, sensory activities and discussion, creating spaces where people can explore ideas at their own pace and in ways that work for them.

Purple Patch calls this its own "Purple Patch Approach", developed through more than 16 years of working with learning-disabled adults and young people. What particularly stands out is that the work is not simply about providing an enjoyable activity for an afternoon. Purple Patch uses creative learning to build confidence, independence, communication and social connections. Its programmes include lifelong learning sessions, work aimed at young people moving into adulthood, projects looking at accessibility beyond physical ramps, and a Purple Research Group that helps ensure learning-disabled people have a genuine voice in research.

The charity works with more than 200 learning-disabled adults and young people in a typical year. For a relatively small organisation, that is a sizeable reach, particularly when much of the work involves regular sessions and close personal support rather than one-off events. There are also some lovely examples of what relatively modest donations can provide. Purple Patch has previously explained that £20 can help cover hundreds of cups of tea.

That may not sound like an obvious charitable expense, but anyone who has spent time in a welcoming community group will understand the importance of a cup of tea, a chat and the chance to build friendships. Other donations help with sketchbooks, creative materials and sensory equipment.

Purple Patch Arts is a good example of a charity doing something practical, local and specialist. It recognises that learning should not stop when formal education ends, and that people learn in many different ways. For learning-disabled people across Yorkshire, the result is a chance to try new things, make friends, express themselves and take a fuller part in their communities.

Find out more: https://purplepatcharts.org/

What is this all about?

Ten-Percent Legal, Interim Lawyers, and Jonathan Fagan Business Brokers donate 10% of annual net profits to charity via the Ten Percent Foundation, a charitable trust set up by our group of companies to distribute monies to charities in the UK and Africa. We have been doing this for over 25 years. We have just completed the 2026 round of donations, and a list will shortly be published on our website. The Foundation never incurs any administration costs other than bank charges, which are minimal. All monies donated are distributed to charities and community organisations. **www.tenpercentfoundation.org**

Peaceful Getaways in Shropshire

Ludlow Holiday Cottage - Sleeps 4

St Milburga Chapel in the Shropshire Hills is a luxury 4 person, Grade 2 listed holiday home in open countryside overlooking the Clee Hills. Renovated in 2022, it is approximately 10 minutes' drive from Ludlow with its highly regarded restaurants, cafes and independent shops. The chapel is perfectly located for family holidays, weekend breaks and walking holidays. 10% of profits are donated to the Ten Percent Foundation. 10% discount code for newsletter readers: NEWS10

https://www.stmilburgachapel.co.uk

About Ten Percent Legal Recruitment

We are a specialist legal recruiter, covering both permanent and locum roles across the whole of the UK. Over 12,500 lawyers are registered with us on our own database and we have access to a range of external & internal job boards and websites where we do not have candidates available ourselves. We also assist with recruitment advice and assistance, regularly advising partners and practice managers on suitable salary and package levels. Our company is unique for a number of reasons, including the fact that we are not shy to publish our fee structure and also donate a chunk of our profits to charity each year. We also buy, merge and sell law firms.

The Ten Percent Group of Legal Recruitment websites gives 10% of annual profits to charity. We have maintained this tradition since we formed the company 25 years ago. So far over £270k has been donated to charities in the UK and Africa including LawCare, Unlock and Reprieve.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter and look forward to hearing from you if we can assist further.

Warm regards

Jonathan Fagan, Director

E: jbfagan@tenpercentgroup.com | T: 0207 127 4343

Head Office: Ty Brith, Llandegla Road, Mold CH7 4QX

London Office: Ten-Percent.co.uk Limited, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AX

Offices also in Brighton, Coventry, Glasgow and Bristol

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