

Legal Recruitment News – January 2026

Welcome to the January 2026 edition of Legal Recruitment News. It includes:

- Legal Job Market Report
- Locum hourly rates & solicitor salary guide
- [Selling a law firm - your questions answered](#)
- [New Year, Time For Change? - Career Planning for Solicitors - 15 Top Tips](#)
- CV writing & legal careers articles

You can read the entire content below in an email, or read the newsletter in PDF format at www.legal-recruitment.co.uk.

Legal Job Market Report - January 2026

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

Locum Recruitment - Quiet

Locum assignments are picking up again after Christmas but remain low; it is traditionally a very quiet time on the locum calendar for obvious reasons. New assignment numbers are c33% lower this year than last. Booking annual leave cover now for later in the year is a very good idea, as its a lot easier to source locums in the next 6 weeks than after this point.

Locum assignment [updates here](#).

Permanent Recruitment - Busy

Permanent recruitment is busy. We are at least 33% up on last year in terms of new vacancies and there is activity from both candidates registering for work and firms looking for new staff. There remains a huge gap between interest in roles from candidates and vacancies being posted, together with a disparity between salary expectations of candidates and firms. No signs of any change here. Permanent vacancies can be viewed here: <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/vacancies/>

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

Lots of activity in the M&A sector - we have had 9 new listings since the 1st January and our numbers of firms for sale are back up again. We recently ran a webinar, attended by over 80 law firm owners, on selling a law firm and valuations. [To view the webinar please click here](#) - it is available for the next 7 days. [Full details of firms currently for sale on our website](#)

- 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 Nov-Dec 2025 (2024 figures in brackets)

- New locum roles added - 22 (36)
- New permanent roles added - 42 (29)
- New candidates added - 73 (98)
- New law firms listed for sale: 2
- Law firms for sale: 29
- Deals going through (heads of terms signed): 5

Commentary:

Locum roles have declined, permanent jobs have increased. New candidate numbers are still down significantly on last year. Candidate numbers are a very good indication of market conditions.

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK - January 2026

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

- Permanent placements fall at sharpest rate since August
- Temp billings decline at quicker, but mild rate
- Starting salary inflation improves and temp pay returns to growth

Commentary from Jon Holt, CEO of KPMG UK

"The jobs market at the end of 2025 was still signalling caution. After a long stretch of rising cost pressures and higher global economic uncertainty, many firms continue to pause hiring and are flexing where they can by using temporary staff. Chief execs who have been prioritising increased investment in tech to improve resilience and productivity, will be looking for signs of greater confidence in the wider economy before turning the hiring taps back on."

Commentary from Neil Carberry, REC CEO

"It's always difficult to draw conclusions from jobs data in December, but the fact that the market slipped back a little on November is a reminder of the pressure employers are under.. and with placements falling at a slower pace than the 2025 average in December there is some hope that we are seeing a December dip, rather than a change in the trend."

Interim Lawyers - Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives January 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 – £45-£55 per hour
- Commercial Property – £45-£65 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 – £30-£55 per hour
- In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £35-£50 per hour
- In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £50-£110 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-£55 per hour
- Property Litigation – £45-£75 per hour
- Wills & Probate – £40-£60 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 - January 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

Candidate Salary Expectations

Candidate salary expectations are very often higher than salaries being paid to existing staff within law firms with less than a £2 million turnover. We regularly view staff lists when valuing law firms via our business broker service, and the salaries being paid by law firms to existing staff are invariably lower than candidate salary expectations for similar roles. Similarly there is a disparity at the moment between expectations for remote working from candidates compared with firms' requirements - hybrid working is becoming the minimum requirement for a significant proportion of candidates.

Salary Level Assistance

If you would like assistance with salary levels, please contact our specialist permanent recruiter, Peter Gresty FIRP. Email pete.gresty@ten-percent.co.uk.

Selling a Law Firm - Your Questions Answered

We recently held a webinar on [Law Firm Sales & Valuations](#), which was attended by over 80 law firm owners from across the UK and Ireland. There was time for a Q&A at the end, and these were the questions asked, together with our answers. You can still view the webinar on our website for the next 7 days. Its 50 minutes long and covers a range of topics.

Q: What sort of broker fees would a seller look at? Who pays these fees?

A: Broker fees depend on the broker. Many national brokers are seller-side and charge the seller an upfront (and in some cases ongoing) marketing fee, plus an additional fee if the sale completes. Buyer-side brokers are typically paid by the buyer on completion (often a fixed fee) and do not charge the seller. Some sellers may choose paid “premium” support services (e.g., valuations, deal structures, process support). Specialist brokers often sit between both parties and advise confidentially to help guide the deal through.

Q: Is there a market for small law firm mergers?

A: Yes, but it depends what you mean by “merger.” In the strict SRA sense, a merger is where two firms create a new entity and close the old ones. Many deals described as “mergers” are actually one (often weaker) firm joining a stronger firm, which is effectively a takeover. Two equal firms combining can happen, but it’s often structured using one existing entity to avoid the heavy admin and regulatory burden of closing both and starting a new one.

Q: How does an internal conflict between partners affect the ability to sell?

A: If all partners support the sale and cooperate, a sale can be possible. But if partners are arguing throughout, it becomes very difficult for a buyer to complete. For example, if one partner wants to sell and the other doesn’t, and the seller wants someone to buy into that situation, it’s virtually impossible because buyers don’t want to walk into an ongoing conflict. A valuation for a buyout by the other partner (or someone internal) may still be feasible.

Q: How far in advance should you think about speaking to a broker?

A: If you’re aiming to sell quickly, around a year in advance is often fine. If you’re planning longer-term (well ahead of exit deadlines), then any time is a good time—even partners in their late 30s or early 40s aren’t too early to start discussing options.

Q: Is it possible to pin down which transactions require a cash payment or deposit versus instalments or earn-out?

A: Not exactly – it very much depends on the buyer and the overall deal. As a rough example, if a practice was valued at c£750k, a seller might aim for a £200k–£250k deposit, with the rest paid over time (negotiable). Earn-outs are rare at these levels. Future payments are often paid from business profits and may not be guaranteed unless additional protections are negotiated. Sellers are often advised to view the upfront deposit as the real price because it’s the most secure & future payments tend not to be guaranteed.

Q: Can the seller have any guarantees against the buyer going bust?

A: Sometimes, but it’s uncommon. Payments can occasionally be held by a third party and released at a future date regardless of what happens, but this is rare and buyers are often

hesitant to go down this route. More commonly there's an upfront payment and then future instalments without guarantees, which brings the issue back to trust in the buyer.

Q: Does a will bank have any value?

A: It's difficult to separate out. We understand that an SRA-regulated entity can generally only dispose of a will bank to another SRA-regulated entity, while the parties most likely to pay specifically for will banks are usually non-SRA entities. In practice, a will bank usually adds value as part of the overall firm value rather than having a standalone price. Large, well-documented will banks with accessible marketing data can increase saleability.

Q: Who draws up the sale agreement?

A: Usually the buyer drafts the sale agreement (SPA or BPA). It's rarer for the seller to do it, though it does happen occasionally.

Q: Why is having a recent PII claim such a problem if you've otherwise had a good PII record?

A: Because a law firm buyer typically has to run the acquired practice through their broker or insurer to get a quote, and claims in the last three to five years can lead to a significant premium increase even if it didn't heavily affect the seller's own premiums. It matters less to individual solicitor buyers because they may well be simply taking over existing premium arrangements.

Q: Is there a difference between a notification and a claim when it comes to selling?

A: Yes. Notifications that didn't turn into claims can often be discounted if you can explain them and they don't look serious. However, a high volume of notifications may still raise questions about what's happening in the practice. If they're clearly spurious, they typically won't affect value or saleability.

Q: In your experience, what would the legal fee be for a sale of circa £350,000?

A: It depends on the solicitors used. An example specialist firm might charge fixed fees such as around £1,500 for heads of terms and about £1,000 more for an SPA or business purchase agreement, with an overall affordable figure being £5,000. Other specialist commercial practices could cost £15,000–£20,000 or more. The key is to find someone you are comfortable working with, who you trust, and also who is experienced in SME law firm acquisitions without consuming too much of the sale proceeds in costs.

Q: For a solicitor in their 40s, is it worth converting to an ABS, given potential PII impact?

A: The short answer given is yes. It's a complex area and specialist advice is recommended (we can point you in the right direction). Conversion can significantly increase saleability and value because it opens up a market of investor buyers who couldn't buy otherwise, or would have to spend time & money converting. Conversion is said to take six months or more in practice and typically doesn't increase your insurance cover too much, though it changes liabilities in various ways.

Q: What is a shell company? Is there a market for shell companies, and how do you market one for sale?

A: A shell firm is typically a practice that has traded and has a clean PII history, reasonable premiums, and no clients. Limited company shells are generally more valuable than sole practitioner shells due to insurance issues. Such shells presently attract a premium in the £20k–£45k range. Demand comes from buyers who need to start quickly for regulatory reasons, have a project they require a small law firm for, or who struggle to obtain insurance as a new entity (very common). ABS shells with accreditations or panel status tend to attract higher premiums.

Q: On the sale of a law firm (for example, a traditional partnership), how is run-off cover dealt with?

A: If there's a successor practice or individual solicitors come in and carry on the practice, run-off cover shouldn't be needed because the practice is continuing in the same or slightly different form. Despite this, some brokers seem to want to claim that everyone has to have run-off cover if they exit, creating confusion in the market! The general position is that continuation or a successor practice usually means no run-off cover. Check your policy terms and also the SRA pages re PII.

Q: What other terms form part of negotiations other than the sale price?

A: Common negotiation points include whether owners stay on in consultancy or salaried roles, how WIP is valued and paid, premises and lease obligations, and how much cash must remain in the bank to cover short-term liabilities. Law firm deal structures are interconnected, so negotiations are rarely about just one cash price.

Q: What is the market like for legal aid practices?

A: Legal aid practices generally do sell and tend to have value, often because buyers see ongoing contracts and revenue potential. It's easier to buy a practice with an LAA contract than to establish a new law firm and apply for a contract (we are not sure when the next contract application deadlines are). Demand depends on the firm's wider circumstances.

Q: If a sale does not materialise and the firm lacks suitable management, what are the alternatives to winding up? Can this be done positively?

A: Alternatives include selling parts of the business, such as clients and staff, sometimes leaving the owner with the structure and run-off cover. Another option is to close and run down clients over time, though this usually involves run-off cover and redundancy costs. The general advice is to try marketing first and, if unsuccessful, review why the firm isn't attracting buyers before deciding to close.

Q: What is the average multiple of EBITDA paid for a two-partner retiree practice?

A: There is no meaningful average EBITDA multiple for that scenario. Using EBITDA multiples for valuing small two-partner practices is often not relevant, as valuation depends on many other factors considered together. Market valuations are the key here.

Any further questions? Contact us via the

Career Planning for Lawyers – Stick or Twist?

15 top tips for career planning for solicitors from Ten Percent Legal Recruitment.

The world of work this year looks very different to even a few years ago. Hybrid working is normal, there are huge demands on employers for full remote working, AI tools are embedded in most professions, career paths never appear to be straightforward (train, qualify, move around a bit, become a partner, sell your firm/share, retire) and jobs for life seem to largely be a thing of the past. The first five tips are for everyone. The remaining ten are for those who are not completely sure about their current role or direction.

1. Revisit (or finally create) Your Career Plan

No plan? Once a year, step back and write down the following (on paper, not in your head):

- What you earn now
- What you want to earn in 5 years
- What work you do now
- What work you want to be doing in 5 years
- Where you want to live and work in 5 years
- Five positives and five negatives about your current role
- Where your family or household wants to be in 5 years — and whether this matches your plan

What needs to happen between now and then to close the gap? Put this somewhere safe. Revisit it every January. Most people are surprised by how much (or how little) their answers change.

2. Examine Your Overheads — can you actually afford your job?

Some people actually pay to work. If commuting costs, childcare, subscriptions, professional fees eat most of your income, your job may not be serving you — even if the salary looks decent on paper and you enjoy your work. Ask yourself: Do I need a pay rise, a role change, or a structural shift (hybrid, remote, compressed hours)? Could flexibility, bonuses, profit share, or reduced hours improve my quality of life more than a headline salary increase?

3. Update your CV and your Online Footprint (eg LinkedIn)

In today's online world, your CV is only a small part of the picture.

- Does your CV reflect what you actually do now — not what you did three roles ago?
- Does your LinkedIn profile clearly explain who you help, how, and why you're good at it?
- When did you last write a post on LinkedIn or create an online advice article for your work website?
- Is your contact information easy to find on social media platforms?

- Does your LinkedIn profile look current, or abandoned in 2021?
- Have you actively sought Google reviews from clients? They help you personally as well as your employers.

Headhunters, clients, and employers will Google you. Make sure they like what they see.

4. Plan Your Year

Book annual leave early. Protect it. Waiting to see what everyone else does usually means worse dates, more stress, and less rest. Time off is not a luxury; it's maintenance. A burnt-out professional is rarely a high-performing one. When on annual leave, turn your mobile phone off.

5. Invest in Life Outside Work

Work cannot be the only pillar holding up your wellbeing. Ask yourself: What do I do that has nothing to do with my job? Am I learning, moving, socialising, or contributing to something bigger than work? Whether it's sport, volunteering, creativity, fitness, travel, or community involvement, a fuller life supports a longer, happier career.

If you are genuinely happy at work, stop reading this article. Otherwise, read on.

6. Are You Happy at Work?

If the answer is no, do something about it.

7. Identify the Reason You're Unhappy

You can't fix what you haven't identified. Ask yourself: Is it the workload, the culture, the people, or the leadership? Are boundaries respected? Are you being undermined, ignored, or quietly bullied? Does your boss use passive aggression to torture you? Are expectations unclear or constantly moving? Many people leave one bad situation only to walk straight into another, because they never worked out what went wrong the first time. Seek external help where necessary.

8. Is the Profession Where You Still Want to be?

Are you doing this job because you enjoy it, it aligns with your values, and it supports the life you want? Or is it because it's what you trained for, what your family expected, or it feels too late to change? It is never too late to pivot. Staying miserable to keep up appearances is a terrible long-term strategy.

9. Research the Market Look outward — not just inward.

What are people like you doing elsewhere? What skills are in demand at present? What roles are growing, shrinking, or being automated? How do your pay, responsibilities, and progression compare? The market often tells you things your employer won't.

10. Start Building Visible Expertise

Consider writing short posts or articles, speaking on panels or podcasts, contributing to professional forums, or mentoring and teaching. You don't need to be an influencer — just visible enough that people know what you're good at. This investment in creating your own expertise benefits your employer as well as you personally.

11. Discover How AI Affects or Could Affect Your Role

Ask: Which parts of my job are being automated? Which parts are becoming more valuable because of AI? Am I using AI as a tool, or competing with it?

12. Build a bit of Gig Economy Into Your Career

This might include a side hustle, joining a broader professional network, or get a qualification that opens doors or starts you down other routes. Careers feel less scary when you're not trapped in one specialism.

13. Stress-Test Your Career Against Your Future

Ask yourself: Will this job still work if my health changes? If caring responsibilities increase? If I want more flexibility, not more money?

14. Don't Sell Your Soul to Your Boss

Your career is not a charity — your relationship with your employer is a business to business relationship in lots of ways. Going above and beyond occasionally is healthy. Doing it constantly at the expense of your wellbeing is not. A good employer benefits from a healthy, balanced professional, not a burnt-out one.

15. Work is a Means to an End, not the Meaning of Your Existence

Your job supports your life, and you need to protect your work life balance at all costs. Your physical and mental health should be your number one priority at all times.

Ten Percent Foundation Donates £500 to Wildteam Conservation

Who are Wildteam Conservation?

Wildteam Conservation is a charity set up to enable access to conservation training for local people based in locations affected by climate change. The charity started in Bangladesh, working with local communities to save the tigers of the Sundarbans mangrove forest. From that experience they learnt how skills building can transform the scale of impact that can be achieved, so WildTeam UK was set up in 2012 to provide high-quality, vocational training for conservationists from disadvantaged communities.

'If we empower local people to lead conservation and restoration efforts in their areas then we can address the otherwise impossible challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Our approach also ensures that conservation as a career is accessible to all, rather than to the few

who are set up with the funds and opportunities to pursue that as an option. We have established a 5,000 strong online global community of conservation professionals to enable us all to support each other, collaborate, and share lessons learned, solutions, and opportunities.'

'We are in the last year of a 3 year project training in-country trainers to deliver vocational conservation courses in their own countries. This is putting capacity building into the hands of local leaders who are best placed to inspire and support local conservationists. So far 9 East African trainers have completed their training, with 18 more currently undergoing their training. One of the trainers in Kenya has recently successfully delivered 2 courses to provide conservation skills to youth leaders. We will track further impact from this project through annual online surveys to determine to what extent the training has benefited the careers and conservation work of all beneficiaries.'

Feedback

Christell Chesney, Guyana: "I believe Wild Team is setting the stage for effective, systematic processes in the conservation realm. These training not only provided the needed skills of today's practitioners but a safe space to network and learn from and likeminded individuals."

Asma Bile Hersi, Republic of Somaliland: "The training was excellent and prepared me to learn more about project management in general and wildlife conservation in particular. My greatest source of inspiration during the training came from the trainees and other participants; they helped me expand my network and meet different people around the world who are also doing amazing work."

Message from Adam Barlow, Executive Director

On behalf of WildTeam and our beneficiaries, please accept all our thanks for your generous donation. At least 2 conservationists from disadvantaged backgrounds will be able to access training in key conservation skills thanks to your support - which should help them progress their career and empower them to help save more wildlife..

For further information about Wildteam Conservation, please visit their website at <https://www.wildteam.org.uk/>

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. 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 Autumn Getaways in Shropshire



Ludlow Holiday Cottage - Sleeps 4

St Milburga Chapel in the Shropshire Hills is a cosy 4 person, Grade 2 listed holiday home in open countryside overlooking the Cleve 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

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