



March 2026 Legal Recruitment News from Ten Percent Legal

Welcome to the March 2026 edition of Legal Recruitment News. It includes our Legal Job Market Report, locum hourly rates & solicitor salary guide, when solicitors should think about changing jobs, advice on first meetings with law firm buyers, advertising jobs on your website, CV writing & legal careers articles and our charity donation. 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 - March 2026

Here is our summary of the current state of the UK legal job market. Probably in a similar way to other parts of the economy, recruitment will be subdued until the Middle East quiets down a bit.

Locum Recruitment - Quiet

Locum assignments remain very low; in February just 8 new assignments were registered with us. We have seen increased traffic from locum solicitors checking in with us to see if any roles have come up. Suffice to say - if the low number of assignments being registered continues, we think rates will fall quite substantially this year after a few years of rapid growth. Booking annual leave cover now for later in the year is a very good idea, as its a lot easier to source locums in March/April than it is in July..

Locum assignment [updates here](#).

Permanent Recruitment - Quiet

Permanent recruitment is also quiet. Candidates and firms are not particularly active. This may change in the next 3-4 weeks as we go towards the busy summer season. There remains a huge gap between interest in roles from candidates and vacancies being posted, together with a disparity between salary expectations and working arrangements 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

As ever, law firm M&A activity is not affected much by world events, although we have seen a number of deals falling through recently. 6 new listings in February and our stock levels have returned to normal after a busy end to last year.

We recently ran a webinar, attended by over 80 law firm owners, on selling a law firm and valuations. We will be holding a webinar every 2 months this year, so keep an eye out for our next one in May.

[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 February 2026 (2025 figures in brackets)

- New locum roles added - 8 (26)
- New permanent roles added - 15 (20)
- New candidates added - 51 (51)
- New law firms listed for sale: 6
- Law firms for sale: 54
- Deals going through (heads of terms signed): 8

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK – March 2026

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

- Permanent staff appointments fall at weakest rate for nearly three years
- Demand for staff declines at softest pace in nine months
- Rates of pay growth ease amid further increases in staff availability

Commentary from Jon Holt, CEO of KPMG UK

“Despite a marginal fall in hiring last month, the jobs market was showing its strongest signs of improvement in three years, with hiring at its closest point to turning positive. However, we need stability for sustained growth, and yet again businesses are facing into unexpected economic shocks because of global events out of their control. Resilience is now the new normal, so it is likely we may see these signs of recovery stall again in the near term as chief execs take stock.”

Commentary from Neil Carberry, REC CEO

"While February's report is by no means a source of unalloyed celebration, it does suggest that the worst of the hiring slowdown has passed. There may still be a few bumpy months to come, especially in light of global instability, but the stabilising trend we have seen so far this year has continued."

Interim Lawyers - Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives February 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 - February 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. If you would like assistance with salary levels, please contact our specialist permanent recruiter, Peter Gresty FIRP. Email pete.gresty@ten-percent.co.uk.

Solicitors - How Long Should You Stay at a Firm Before Moving?

Not quite as dramatic as “should I leave law altogether?” but still enough to prompt a fair bit of overthinking during your commute or while updating your LinkedIn “just to see what’s out there.”

The honest answer is that there’s no perfect timeline, but there are definitely some patterns, expectations and a bit of unspoken etiquette in the UK legal market that are worth understanding.

In writing this article, you may think we have a vested interest in encouraging moves. The more times a candidate leaves and joins a new firm, the more money a recruitment consultant makes, so therefore we should advise candidates to leave firms every 12 months. Actually, we like recruitment where in 15 years time the candidate we placed is now the recruiting partner and remembers what a nice bunch of recruiters we are to work with.

Don't Leave Too Quickly

Let's start with the obvious one. Leaving too quickly can raise eyebrows and damage your career. If you move after only a few months in a role, most hiring managers will wonder what went wrong. That doesn't mean you're stuck if the job genuinely isn't right, but you may need a clear and sensible explanation. "It wasn't what I expected" is fine once. Saying it three times in a row starts to look like a trend.

Don't Get Stuck in a Rut

At the other end of the spectrum, staying too long can also work against you personally. A firm may exploit your good nature and not pay you your worth, or offer conditions much worse than you could get elsewhere. If you've been at the same firm for many years without progression or potential future opportunity, recruiters and firms might also start to question whether you've plateaued or become a bit too comfortable.

The Sweet Spot

So where is the sweet spot? We don't think there is one. I was talking with a solicitor recently who joined a firm at 22 years old and has just retired at 55 years old, never once moving. He has been well rewarded throughout his career, has worked hard, and can now retire with a comfortable existence. Would anything be different if he had moved around? Why would he want to move around if he liked the firm and they were paying him well?

2-4 Years

For most employed solicitors in the UK, somewhere between two and four years in a role that is not leading to anything particularly good tends to be seen as acceptable, although I can think of at least one senior partner who will refuse to look at CVs with moves after this length of time (much longer stints required). 2-4 years is long enough to show commitment, build solid experience and ideally achieve some progression, but not so long that you look stuck.

That said, your level of experience matters. Newly qualified solicitors often face the most pressure here. The jump from NQ to around three years' PQE is one of the most competitive and mobile stages of a legal career. Many solicitors move within one to two years post-qualification, often to get a pay rise. That's generally understood in the market, so slightly shorter stints at this stage are usually forgiven by most (not all!).

As you become more senior, expectations shift. Firms will typically want to see longer tenures, more consistent progression and a clearer narrative. Moving every year or so at five or six years' PQE can start to look less like ambition and more like restlessness or something wrong at your end. Of course, all of this assumes things are broadly going well.

If you're in a role where the work isn't what you were promised, progression has stalled completely, or the manic work culture is making you question your life choices, you don't need to sit it out just to hit an imaginary timeline. A well-explained move for the right reasons is rarely held against you, provided they are not too regular. It's also worth remembering that not all moves are created equal.

Moving for a clear step up in responsibility, better quality work, or a stronger platform will almost always make sense on your CV, even if the timing isn't textbook. Moving sideways repeatedly without a clear reason is where things can start to look a bit muddled.

Question the Move

A good way to sense-check your position is to ask yourself a few simple questions. Are you still learning? Are you progressing in responsibility or title? Can you point to development over the last year? Are there clear future opportunities to earn more, learn more, do more? If the answer is yes, there's usually no urgent need to move. If the answer is no, it might be time to at least explore your options.

Timing

The best time to look at the market is usually when you don't urgently need to leave. It gives you more control, more confidence in negotiations and a better chance of finding something that's genuinely right, rather than just different. In reality, most legal careers aren't perfectly planned. They're a series of decisions made based on instinct and occasionally contact from a recruiter at just the right moment!

Law Firm Sales - Meeting with Buyers - What to Expect

This is a very common question from our sellers. Once a firm is listed for sale, there will be enquiries from potential buyers, lots of decisions to make on who to release information to, how much information to release, and how much detail you go into prior to any meeting. And then we get to the meeting stage. When a business owner first sits down with a prospective buyer, it can feel very daunting. Solicitors and accountants are very used to dealing with clients and handling first meetings, but this is different.

The Purpose of the First Meeting

At its core, the first meeting is exploratory. We very often advise sellers and buyers that the key to a successful deal is for both sides to trust each other and form a rapport. Without that connection, deals rarely succeed. Buyers tend to have low expectations as to what they are going to get out of the first meeting. Very often it is simply to ask the inevitable question – how much? – and to check out the sellers' weaknesses. For example, if they meet a seller who continually talks about retiring and wanting to go on a cruise around the world within 12 months, they know that the seller is keen to get out, come what may. There will be impacts on the offer as a result.

For sellers, we recommend using the meeting as an opportunity to check out the buyer. What are their likely strengths and weaknesses – ie do they bring management experience, potential financial investment, or do they lack sector understanding and are yet to implement plans to actually run the business once they acquire it? A successful first meeting should leave both sides with a clear sense of whether it is worth progressing to the next stage.



What Questions Sellers Should Expect

Buyers will typically focus on understanding the fundamentals of the firm. Most will cover several key areas.

Financial Performance

Expect high-level questions around turnover, profit levels, and financial trends. Buyers are looking for consistency and sustainability rather than just headline figures. We usually recommend allowing buyers to see the last 3 years of accounts before meeting so they can ask you about them. Buyers will want to go into detail about the accounts – and you need to be able to explain them. So many times we ask sellers questions about their end of year figures when conducting valuations and their accountants have included descriptions or amounts that don't make sense. Don't try to hide anything, but instead explain it. You do not need to provide any detailed accounts at this stage, but you should be able to speak confidently about the overall financial health of the firm.

Work Mix and Client Base

Buyers want to understand what kind of work the firm does and what the likelihood is of that work continuing in the future. We usually recommend providing your most recent PII proposal form to buyers, as this gives them a lot of detail prior to your meeting.

Team and Structure

The strength and stability of your team will be a major consideration. So many business owners think the sale is about them – it rarely is. Buyers want to see evidence of a business being able to continue without involvement of the owners – as this is also evidence that the work will carry on post-sale. Buyers may well ask about billing levels and targets – it is worth knowing these and having the information available to hand. We would not usually recommend handing this over at an initial meeting.

Reason for Sale

This is one of the most important—and often most sensitive—questions. Be prepared to answer: Why are you looking to sell now? What are your plans post-sale? Honesty is crucial here. Buyers are not necessarily deterred by retirement or succession planning, but they may be cautious if the reasons suggest underlying issues. There are also strategic responses here. Do not fall into the trap of saying that you want to get out as quickly as possible, unless you are desperate for a sale and need a buyer to commit to a fast timetable to get a deal through. Be positive about your business where possible, and avoid giving the impression you are tired, you want to retire, or you are fed up with all the admin and regulation.

How Sellers Should Approach the Meeting

Preparation and mindset are everything. Sellers who treat the first meeting as a structured but open conversation tend to achieve the best results. Think about it as selling your house. Some things need to be disclosed to buyers, but other issues are best left for them to ask about. Similarly don't be offended by awkward questions. If a buyer asks why your systems are so antiquated (for

example you are using a paper based system), accept the question and answer it truthfully. Do not get defensive.

Focus on Fit, Not Just Price

While valuation is important, the first meeting is not the time to negotiate price. Instead, focus on whether the buyer is the right partner. Inevitably at the first meeting, the buyer will want to know how much you want for the business. We usually advise sellers not to give a price where possible, but instead focus on finding out about the buyer. A buyer who is able to acquire your firm within 3 months and immediately continue trading is going to have a different value to you from a buyer who needs to go through the whole ABS process, is unable to manage the business, and is going to need to recruit staff in order to take over. Your price/package expectations from one may well be very different to the other. Try to avoid actual figures, but if you have to go with something, give a range. Go higher than you are expecting.

Form an Idea of Expectations

While detailed negotiations come later, you should leave with a general feeling that the buyer is going to be able to buy your business, may be prepared to offer you a deal you are comfortable with, and that their expectations of your involvement post-sale will be acceptable to you. If there is a significant mismatch at this stage, it may not be worth progressing.

A full version of this article is available here:

<https://jonathanfagan.co.uk/what-sellers-should-expect-from-first-meetings-with-buyers/>

What's the Point in Trying to Recruit - We've Advertised a Vacancy on our Website for Years without any responses

If you've ever muttered this (usually while staring at the same job advert you posted sometime in 2018), you're not alone. Many firms quietly keep a "careers" page ticking along, hoping the right candidate will simply stumble across it one day. We are guilty of the same - we have had an advert on the Ten Percent Legal site since 2011 for a London based recruitment consultant to get into the larger Legal 100 firm market!

Unfortunately, most solicitors aren't casually browsing individual law firm websites in their spare time, waiting to be inspired. The reality is that the legal recruitment market has shifted. Good candidates are busy, often already employed, used to getting contacted almost daily by 'headhunters' and a little bit sceptical. If your advert has been sitting untouched for years, it may not be that people aren't interested. It may just be that nothing about it is catching their attention.

Remote & Flexible Working

Start with flexibility. Remote and hybrid working are no longer “nice to have” perks, they’re expected. If your role requires five days in the office 9am to 5pm, candidates will want to know why and you will immediately rule out well over 75% of your target audience! If you can offer flexibility, make it clear.

Salary Levels

Then there’s salary. It’s remarkable how many adverts still say “competitive” and leave it at that. Candidates don’t want a competitive salary, they want one that reflects the work they do. Transparency is the key. Including a salary range immediately increases engagement and saves everyone time.

You can also make your role more appealing by highlighting bonus schemes, generous annual leave, and pension contributions. These are key decision factors. If you offer them, say so clearly.

Culture

Just as important is how your firm comes across. Does your advert sound like a place where people actually enjoy working, or does it read like a list of demands about the qualities of the person you are trying to recruit? What’s in it for the candidate? A few lines about culture, team support and progression can go a long way.

Job Boards etc

Finally, consider where you’re advertising. A static page on your website is unlikely to get much interest unless your role is unique and exceptional. Who is ever going to find it? Candidates need to see the opportunity in the places they already are (recruiters, job boards, Law Society Gazette etc).

In short, if your advert hasn’t had a response in years, it might not be the market conditions - it will almost certainly be you!

Ten Percent Foundation Donates £500 to Forever Colours Childrens Hospice

Forever Colours Children’s Hospice supports families facing some of life’s toughest circumstances. Founded in 2018, Forever Colours is a relatively young hospice, created to address a clear gap in support for families in the local community.

Rather than a traditional, building-based hospice, it takes a community-first approach, working directly with families where they are. The focus is on babies, children and young people aged 0 to 18 who are living with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions, as well as those with profound and multiple learning disabilities.



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Their work is centred around making life a little easier (and a little brighter) for both the child and their family. This includes short breaks and respite care, play therapy, sibling support, and help for parents navigating everything from paperwork to accessing funding. They also provide end-of-life and bereavement support. There's a strong reliance on community involvement, with volunteers playing a key role in delivering support and fundraising efforts. In terms of numbers, the charity operates on a relatively modest scale, with around 15 volunteers supporting its work and an annual income of just under £200,000. It's a small organisation with a big impact, proving that sometimes the most meaningful support doesn't come from large institutions, but from dedicated teams working closely with the families who need them most. We donated in December during a Big Give Challenge, and we understand that our donation was doubled to £1,000 as a result.

For further details about Forever Colours, please visit their website -

<https://forevercolourshospice.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

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St Milburga Chapel in the Shropshire Hills is a cosy 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

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