

Legal Recruitment News May 2025

Welcome to the May 2025 edition of Legal Recruitment News. It includes our legal job market report, locum hourly rates, a solicitor salary guide, CV, interview & careers advice and a spotlight on one of our charity donations. 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 - May 2025

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

Locum Recruitment - Quiet

Locum work remains quiet and is yet to pick up for May, which is unusual. Conveyancing rates for some locums are still bordering on the unrealistic (£55 per hour for residential conveyancing locums is unaffordable for a lot of smaller sized firms - see below for our hourly rate guide). We still have the ongoing standoff between firms wanting locum lawyers to work out of their offices, but a lot of locums looking for work remotely. The most recently posted roles have been in wills & probate, children law (legal aid), corporate and commercial contracts, commercial litigation, conveyancing and commercial property. Locum assignment [updates here](#).

Permanent Recruitment - Quiet

Permanent roles have remained lower and this is due to market conditions - turnover at a lot of firms we see remains the same or lower for most firms, other than an increase in work caused by the Stamp Duty deadline in April. We have started to see permanent conveyancing roles getting posted with us this month and a slight increase in corporate & commercial fields. In house legal activity remains muted across the board. Candidate registration numbers have dropped by over half again compared with last April (see below) and this is a good marker for demonstrating a bit of nervousness entering the market.

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

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

If you are considering retiring or selling now is still a very good time to start thinking about it. The market remains busy with high demand for particular types of law firm. There remains a good flow of buyer enquiries coming into us daily for our firms for sale, although interestingly our list of firms is a lot smaller than usual due to recent deals completing and firms in advanced talks with buyers. [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 ring 01824 780937 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 April 2025 (2024 figures in brackets)

- New locum roles added - 16 (19)
- New permanent roles added - 25 (30)
- New candidates added - 42 (104)

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK - 12th May 2025

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

- Permanent placements decline at softest rate in seven months
- Candidate numbers rise amid further drop in vacancies
- Temp wage growth improves to 11-month high

Commentary from Jon Holt, CEO of KPMG UK

“A softening in the pace of the hiring slowdown failed to bring any significant green shoots for the jobs market in April, as recruitment continued to be muted and the number of people looking for jobs increased. This is unsurprising, with businesses facing several pressures due to current global economic uncertainty and rising costs, it is unlikely to lead to a sudden turnaround in the market in the near term. Starting salaries increased again in April, as a new national minimum wage took effect, but the fact that the pace of growth continues to remain below the long-run average will support the Bank’s decision to decrease interest rates this month. While the inflation outlook has shown some improvement, businesses will be looking for more signs of market stability before committing to any major spending.”

Commentary from Neil Carberry REC CEO

“Given the bow wave of costs firms faced in April, maintaining the gradual improvement in numbers we have seen over the past few months is on the good end of our expectations. While we are yet to see real momentum build, hopes of an improving picture in the second half of the year should be buoyed by today’s data. Last week’s interest rate move is well-timed, offering some relief for businesses, with pay pressures now more contained. The biggest single drag factor on activity right now is uncertainty. Some of that can’t be helped, but payroll tax costs and regulation design is in the Government’s gift. Businesses have welcomed positive discussions with Ministers on the Employment Rights Bill, but now it is time for real changes to address employers’ fears and boost hiring.”

Interim Lawyers - Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives May 2025

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

- Civil Litigation – £45-£65 per hour
- COLP/COFA roles (temporary) - £50-£150 per hour/monthly retainer of £2-3k
- Commercial Contract – £35-£75 per hour
- Commercial Litigation – £50-£125 per hour
- Company Commercial – £50-£80 per hour
- Construction (non-contentious) £60-£75, (contentious) £45-£60 per hour
- Conveyancing – £35-£45 per hour
- Commercial Property – £45-£60 per hour
- Employment Solicitors – £50-60 per hour
- Family Solicitors (Legal Aid) – £35 per hour
- Family Solicitors (Private) – £45-£50 per hour
- Family (Child Care LA) – £35-£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-£95 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-£65 per hour
- Wills & Probate – £40-£60 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 locums billing firms directly on a weekly basis. These are the ranges we have seen over the last 30 days from assignments.

Ten Percent Legal Salary Guide – May 2025

Each month we publish a list of any salary levels we become aware of from employers in relation to jobs offered and salaries indicated. 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-£65k (£50k-£90k)
- Corporate Commercial - £50k-£150k (£65k-£175k)
- Construction - £65k-£95k

- Commercial Property - £55k-£100k
- Insolvency - £55k-£75k IP - £50k-£90k
- Professional Negligence - £45k-£65k
- Crime - £40-45k
- Civil Litigation - £40k-£60k
- Conveyancing £35k-£55k (£60k)
- Employment Solicitors - £35k-£55k
- Family Solicitors - £35k-£50k
- Immigration Lawyers - £35k-£45k
- Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence £30k-£55k
- Property Litigation - £45k-£60k
- Wills & Probate - £45k-£60k

Support Staff

- Office Manager - £40-60k
- Legal Cashier - £30-35k
- Senior legal accounts professional - £35k-45k
- Secretary - £22-28k
- Paralegal - £22-27k

Candidate Salary Expectations

Candidate salary expectations are very often higher than salaries being paid to existing staff within a law firm 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. There is also a huge 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

Law Society Gazette - Law Firms Put a Lid on M&A Activity - Really?

The recent Law Gazette article [Risk-averse law firms put brakes on M&A](#) paints a somewhat skewed picture of the current M&A market. It uses a single survey of 308 lawyers and frames risk aversion as the primary driver for a perceived slowdown in mergers, overlooking rather a lot of other factors that drive the law firm sales market.

308 Lawyers Make a Market?

Firstly, the article's central premise – that law firms are "putting the brakes on M&A" due to "risk aversion" – appears to be built on rather flimsy foundations. The sole piece of evidence presented is a LexisNexis survey of 308 lawyers, stating that only 5% are considering mergers or acquisitions in their growth plans, down from 10% and 13% in previous years. The UK legal sector comprises of over 9,000 law firms, ranging from sole practitioners to global giants. A sample of 308 can hardly be considered representative enough to draw such sweeping conclusions.

Only Law Firms Buy Law Firms?

The article demonstrates an ignorance of the M&A market. A lot of acquisitions are not made by law firms, so interviewing law firm owners to determine the status of the current market is inevitably going to be inaccurate. A lot of acquisitions are by individual solicitors, backed by external finance of some sort or another, and not law firms. In fact a lot of law firm acquisitions by other law firms are not really acquisitions in the sense that money has changed hands. They can also be one firm doing another firm a favour to enable retirement to take place where the other firm has no succession plans in place.

Risk - Major Influence

Talking about risk aversion as the sole inhibitor to M&A is completely wrong. Whilst risk forms a major part of expansion and growth plans, it is a fairly small part of firms' ongoing plans when it comes to making acquisitions. Strategic decisions are often driven by opportunity. Law firms and other types of buyers will very often keep an eye on the market to see what is out there, and acquisitions occur without any major planning, particularly amongst smaller sized firms.

Finding Partners

The article also indicated that in the case of mergers, 'half of those polled said they were put off by the difficulty of finding the right partner'. Difficulty in finding the right partner isn't a new phenomenon in M&A; it's an inherent challenge that has been around forever. What specific difficulties are these firms encountering - is it cultural misalignment (very common), differing visions for the future, incompatible client bases, or a lack of suitable targets in a highly competitive market? The article overlooks the profound impact of broader economic conditions. A challenging economic climate naturally encourages caution, not necessarily 'risk aversion', but a prudent approach to major financial commitments. High inflation, increasing PII premiums, rising interest rates, and a potential recession would naturally lead firms to prioritise cash flow, profitability, and survival over potentially costly and disruptive M&A activity. It's a strategic response to a dynamic environment, not simply an aversion to risk.

M&A Activity

Finally, actual M&A activity in the small-to-medium sized law firm market highlights the misleading nature of the article. We have had one of the busiest years for M&A work in our brokerage company. We work primarily with £0-£3 million turnover law firms and all our listed firms have enquiries against them at present. Some buyers are of course better than others and there is a very high churn rate when it comes to law firm sales & purchases (one of our major roles is to filter out the tyre kickers!), but the overwhelming atmosphere on the market is one of high levels of activity.

We think this type of article can be incredibly misleading and somewhat regrettable, as it points to a slowdown in a market where this hasn't happened in our experience. There are always law firm owners looking at M&A activity for a whole host of reasons, whether it is retirement planning, succession, merging due to financial difficulties, illness, selling for profit, expansion, growth, acquiring branch offices, building a national brand, creating a business for a family member, opening a new business due to insurance problems and much more besides. This never seems to change and why there is always a market out there for law firm owners.

Working Hybrid, Remote and Office Based - The Clash of Cultures

The past few years have fundamentally reshaped the landscape of work in the UK. What was once a niche benefit, or a necessity born of crisis, working from home has become a deeply entrenched part of the daily lives of individuals and families.

However a fascinating and often contradictory set of attitudes exists between employers and employees - and we very often sit in the middle in negotiations. While employees have largely embraced the flexibility and benefits, many employers are still very reluctant to consider it, particularly for locums and new employees.

Statistics

Before the seismic shift of 2020, just a fraction of the UK workforce regularly worked from home, with figures suggesting around 4.7% did so in 2019. The pandemic, however, saw this number surge dramatically. By the start of 2025, 25% of UK employees worked from home at least some of the time, with 13% working entirely remotely. The most common arrangement, however, is hybrid working, with around 28% of working adults splitting their time between home and the office by October 2024.

The Employee Perspective: Work Life Balance

According to the statistics, for 78% of employees (and locums), the appeal of working from home is the improved work-life balance. The daily grind of commuting, for many, is a significant drain on time and energy. This frees up many hours in the week for personal interests, family time, or simply rest. There are also cost savings - research suggests workers save an average of £200 per month on travel costs. 53% of employees report fewer distractions at home, leading to a quicker completion of work for 52%. 91% of workers globally view remote working positively.

Job Application Effects

58% of employees would be willing to change jobs or even relocate based on the availability of flexible working options, which underscores the extent to which flexible working has moved from a 'nice-to-have' perk to a fundamental expectation for many. 64% of employees in one survey thought that working from home should be a legal right.

The Down Side

48% of employees find it harder to collaborate with colleagues when working remotely. Loneliness and isolation are also concerns, affecting 30% of remote workers. 26% of employees report increased distractions at home and a reduced sense of wellbeing (19%). 23% feel negatively impacted in terms of promotion opportunities, and 25% report a negative effect on their training and development.

The Employer Perspective: Balancing Benefits with Concerns

While many employers have embraced remote and hybrid models, particularly out of necessity, a lot of SME owners we talk to have significant concerns.

On the positive side, employers acknowledge a range of advantages. Improved staff wellbeing is a significant benefit, cited by nearly 80% of businesses, recognising the link between employee happiness and productivity. Reduced overheads, such as office space rent, utility bills, and other facilities, are a clear financial incentive, appealing to 49% of employers. Furthermore, the ability to recruit from a wider talent pool is a powerful draw for 35% of businesses, as geographical limitations are removed. Increased productivity is also noted by a substantial 48% of employers, challenging the traditional assumption that office presence equals greater output. Reduced sickness levels (27%) and the ability to better match jobs with skills (17%) further add to the list of employer benefits.

The majority of UK employers (63%) now offer some form of remote working, but a substantial proportion still require or prefer staff presence in the office for at least part of the week. This is particularly evident in recent trends, with some businesses now asking staff to return to offices full-time or implementing mandatory in-office days.

Employers

We get the impression that a lot of employers think working from home is a trend that will change. One poll showed that 64% of CEOs believe that everyone will be back in the office by 2026, a sentiment that starkly contrasts with employee preferences!

The primary concerns for employers often revolve around company culture, collaboration, and control. The informal interactions that foster creativity and problem-solving in an office environment are perceived as harder to replicate virtually. Security risks, particularly regarding data, are increased when employees are accessing company networks from potentially less secure home environments. Productivity, while seen as a benefit by some employers, remains a point of contention for others. There are also concerns about career development, particularly for junior employees who might miss out on informal mentoring and learning opportunities. The 'coffee badging' trend, where hybrid employees go into the office for a few hours just to show face before returning home, highlights a disconnect in expectations and a potential waste of time and resources.

Hybrid Working: A Path Forward?

The prevailing trend in the UK, and indeed globally, is towards a hybrid model. This approach attempts to marry the benefits of remote work with office based. Employees overwhelmingly favour hybrid options, with many valuing it as much as salary considerations when considering new roles. Online job listings reflecting this shift have grown substantially, with remote or hybrid roles presently appearing in around 18% of UK job postings.

For businesses, the hybrid model offers a potential compromise. It allows them to retain the cost savings and wider talent pool afforded by remote work, but also with the benefits of office work - eg in-person collaboration and team building. Many companies are adopting structured hybrid models, requiring employees to be in the office for specific days.

The Evolving Landscape

The differing attitudes between employers and employees to working from home are a natural consequence of a significant societal and technological shift. The great divide may never fully close, but understanding and addressing these differing attitudes is the first step towards a more harmonious and productive working future for everyone. Will hybrid and remote working remain? From the conversations we have with candidates, it is definitely here for the foreseeable future.

10 Reasons Why Locum Lawyers Should Bill Law Firm and In-House Clients Regularly

For many locum lawyers, the flexibility and diverse experience are key attractions, as well as the ability to control when and where you work, with plenty of time off if wanted. However, a more common pitfall than you might think, even for experienced locums, is irregular billing. Some locums appear reluctant to put their bill into a firm and seem to dislike dealing with the financial side of their work.

If you're a locum lawyer working with law firms or in-house legal departments, here are ten compelling reasons why you should adopt a rigorous, regular billing schedule:

1. Optimise Your Cash Flow and Financial Stability

Really goes without saying! This is the most immediate and obvious benefit - as a self-employed professional, consistent cash flow is the lifeblood of your business. Regular billing, whether weekly or bi-weekly, ensures a steady stream of income, allowing you to manage your finances more effectively, plan for future investments, and reduce overall financial stress. However, think about it from the firm's perspective as well - regular payments are much better for their cashflow too. Reduce your stress levels and bill.

2. Transparency & Trust with Clients

Regular billing provides clients with a clear and consistent overview of the work being performed and the associated costs. When invoices arrive frequently, outlining the hours worked and tasks completed, it builds trust and eliminates surprises. Clients appreciate this transparency, as it allows them to track their budget in real-time and understand the value you're delivering. Conversely, a large, unexpected bill at the end of a long period can lead to questions, disputes, and erode the client relationship. Not only that, but they also get a large agency bill as well at the same time.

3. Reduce the Risk of Billing Disputes

The longer you wait to bill, the harder it becomes to accurately recall specific tasks, dates, and discussions. This can lead to discrepancies between your records and the client's perception, increasing the likelihood of disputes. Regular, detailed invoices for smaller periods minimise this risk. Both parties can quickly review and reconcile the work, address any queries promptly, and ensure accuracy, leading to smoother payment processes and fewer headaches. This is one of the primary reasons we recommend invoicing regularly and promptly. You will probably not remember why you spent 6 extra hours on a Saturday dealing with a case 4 months ago..

4. Improve the Accuracy of Your Time Recording

Knowing you'll be submitting an invoice frequently acts as a powerful incentive for diligent time recording. It encourages you to log your hours and activities daily, or even several

times a day, while the details are fresh in your mind. Provides a strong audit trail for your work.

5. Professionalism

A locum who bills regularly and systematically projects an image of professionalism and organisation. It demonstrates that you are meticulous in your record-keeping, efficient in your financial management, and take your professional obligations seriously. This leaves a positive impression on clients, potentially leading to repeat work.

6. Client Budget Management

Law firms and in-house legal departments operate on budgets, and they need to track expenses closely. Regular, smaller invoices are far easier for them to manage and allocate within their budgetary cycles than large, infrequent sums. This helps them with their internal accounting and financial planning, making you a more convenient and preferred supplier.

7. Avoid "Scope Creep" and Set Clear Expectations

When you bill regularly, particularly with detailed breakdowns, it acts as a subtle mechanism to manage project scope. If a client starts requesting tasks that fall outside the initial understanding, seeing the accumulating costs on frequent invoices can prompt a discussion about scope adjustment, preventing misunderstandings.

8. Streamline Your Administrative Processes

Regular billing can actually streamline your overall administrative burden. Instead of facing a daunting task of consolidating weeks or months of work, you're dealing with smaller, more manageable batches. This makes the billing process quicker and less prone to errors.

9. Expedite Collections and Reduce Debt Risk

The longer an invoice remains unpaid, the higher the risk of it becoming a bad debt. Regular billing means smaller amounts are outstanding at any given time, making them easier for clients to pay promptly. If an issue does arise with a particular invoice, it's a smaller amount to resolve, and the issue can be addressed before it compounds. This significantly reduces your exposure to extended payment terms or, in worst-case scenarios, non-payment.

10. Leverage Your Value

By consistently demonstrating the work you're doing and the hours you're putting in, you continually reinforce your value to the client. Regular invoices serve as mini-reminders of your contribution, keeping your impact top-of-mind for the decision-makers. This can strengthen your position for future engagements and justify your rates.

Careers Guides - Articles to Improve Your CV, Interview Technique and Career Prospects

Charity Donations 2025 - Decision Update

The Ten Percent Foundation Trustees have met and decided on a preliminary list of charities to support in 2025. The next step is for us to go through and speak to the charities & organisations to determine how much they want and what the money will be spent for. We like to support organisations on an ongoing basis and we encourage charities to update us with information about the money donated.

Off the Streets - Ten Percent Donate £750 to Southend Homeless Charity



Del Thomas, Off the Streets Charity

Off the Streets is a grassroots group of local residents who wanted to do something about the number of rough sleepers in Southend. We sent our graduate trainee, Mehak Gupta, to have a look around their new shelter in December 2024 with Del Thomas from the charity.

Further information here: <https://tenpercentfoundation.org/more-than-just-a-roof-the-lifetime-of-off-the-streets-in-southend-essex-750-donation-in-2024/>

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 Triodos bank charges, which are minimal). All monies donated are distributed to charities and community organisations. www.tenpercentfoundation.org

Why do we donate?

We set up our companies over 25 years ago with the intention of being ethical in everything we do. As part of this, we decided that a percentage of our profits should always be earmarked for charitable work and set the rate at ten percent. A sudden burst of inspiration meant we called ourselves the Ten Percent Group.

Nominations 2025

We have received over 75 charity nominations from academic clients, business clients, locums, solicitors, transcribers (via our sister company TP Transcription Limited) and staff. We have a strict list of criteria concerning our donation available on the Ten Percent Foundation website. Donations tend to be within the range of £500-£2000 per charity per year. However, in the past, we have supported charities over a period of 5 years with donations going towards specific ongoing projects.

Peaceful Weekend Getaways in Shropshire

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 (Ironbridge & Church Stretton nearby), weekend breaks and walking holidays. 10% of profits are donated to the Ten Percent Foundation. Rated 4 star accommodation by Visit England.

Website: <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 20 years ago. So

far over £225k 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

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