



Legal Recruitment News from Ten Percent Legal

Welcome to the May 2026 edition of Legal Recruitment News from the Ten Percent Group. It includes our Legal Job Market Report, locum hourly rates & solicitor salary guide, your questions answered about Employee Ownership Trusts, 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 - May 2026

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

Locum Recruitment - Quiet

Locum assignments remain very low; although April does tend to be a very quiet month before the busy season starts in May. We have continued to see increased traffic from locum solicitors checking in with us to see if any roles have come up. Some are reporting that other locum agencies are struggling to source any vacancies at all. Although we anticipate hourly rates inevitably dropping in these tougher conditions, there is no sign of this happening yet.

Locum assignment [updates here](#).

Permanent Recruitment - Quiet

Permanent recruitment is quiet, although there is a lot happening if a good candidate registers with us and firms take the opportunity to fill roles they have had vacant for some time. Candidates and firms are not particularly active, and world events appear to be making candidates very nervous about making a move currently. 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, although more firms are at least talking about remote working options these days rather than flatly refusing to engage.

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

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

Law firm M&A activity never appears to be very affected by world events, and there is a steady stream of enquiries from active buyers for firms of all shapes and sizes. We did see a bit of a drop in the numbers of offers and deals moving forwards last month, but May has returned to usual levels of activity both from sellers and buyers. We have completed the highest number of market valuations for clients in the last month than ever before (our team is looking forward to a quieter summer hopefully!). Valuations

have included potential MBOs, partner disputes, future exit planning, deal valuations (independent valuations where a firm has an offer from their own sourced buyer and wants to check it against a market price), buyer & seller valuations.

We ran a webinar last week, attended by over 45 law firm & accountancy practice owners, on Q&A with an experienced SME law firm M&A solicitor, Harry Winkley from Herrington Carmichael LLP. The session covered due diligence, deal negotiation, business purchase agreements, heads of terms and all things legal including ABS formation and SRA regulation. **For the next 7 days you can access the webinar recording [here](#).** NB - you will need a password for this - just email jf@jonathanfagan.co.uk with the words "webinar password please".

[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 April 2026 (2025 figures in brackets)

- New locum roles added - 12 (16)
- New permanent roles added - 16 (25)
- New candidates added - 30 (42)
- New law firms listed for sale: 1
- Law firms for sale: 39
- Deals going through (heads of terms signed): 4

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK - May 2026

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

- Stronger, but modest decline in permanent placements
- Temp billings expand for first time in three months
- Rates of pay growth remain relatively weak

Commentary from Jon Holt, CEO of KPMG UK

"The small signs of recovery in the jobs market may have been disrupted in April by the uncertainty stemming from the conflict in Iran. Although conditions remain more favourable than they were through much of 2025, hiring decisions are being deferred, with the rise in temporary recruitment pointing to chief execs taking a more flexible approach to workforce planning."



Commentary from Neil Carberry, REC CEO

"So far this year we've seen signs of improving momentum but that is now being tempered by the economic effects of the Gulf conflict. Businesses will be particularly concerned about the impact on inflation, their borrowing costs and any disruption to wider supply chains. The good news is that employers are leaning more on temporary work to move ahead with their plans in this more uncertain time, demonstrating again why temporary and contract work matters so much to growth and jobs. The temporary sector showed its strongest growth in two and a half years last month."

Interim Lawyers - Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives May 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 – £50-£60 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-£65 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 - May 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.

Employee Ownership Trusts - Your Questions Answered

EOTs are becoming increasingly discussed by law firms of all sizes in terms of succession planning and acquisition.

Employers

It is always a much easier path to look internally when exiting a business than to go external. Internal deals are usually with people you know, trust and like (hopefully!) whereas external buyers are an unknown.

Employees

If you are a 1-30 year PQE solicitor currently working in a SME law firm with partners at retirement age, but you are not sure about taking over the onerous responsibilities for managing and owning a law firm, the EOT route may be something to think about. Particularly useful if there are a group of lawyers considering an MBO or similar. We hope this article proves food for thought..

We asked Harry Winkley from Herrington Carmichael to put together FAQ on EOTs for this newsletter.

FAQ for EOTs

For law firm owners that are looking to finally realise the value that they have built up over time (and retire), selling to an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT) is an ever popular method of disposing of your shares in a tax efficient way, whilst also providing your employees with a greater level of involvement in the company than they currently enjoy.

What is an EOT?

An EOT is an Employee Ownership Trust, which is a trust that allows a company to become owned by its employees.

Why sell to an EOT?

There are lots of reasons why business owners consider exiting through an EOT, and these include:

- Tax efficiencies as provided certain statutory requirements are met, 50% CGT relief is available.
- Succession planning and the passing down of the legacy of the business – preserve the culture and goodwill of your law firm.
- Tax-free bonuses for employees.



- Less intensive legal due diligence / transaction process than if you were selling to a third-party buyer;
- Lower risk: the assurances provided in the sale contract will likely be far less onerous than if you were selling to a third party buyer. Risk of confidential information being shared with competitors is minimised.

What is the process to implement an EOT?

Implementation of an EOT firstly involves creation of the 'trust' itself, and as is stated in its name, the trust is 'employee-owned', this is because the employees of the trading company are the beneficiaries of the trust. The shares in the trading company are transferred from the original owners to the EOT. The employees then indirectly hold shares in the trading company because they are beneficiaries of the trust.

Where does the money to buy the shares come from?

The consideration for an EOT transaction can be satisfied in multiple ways:

- Cash – The consideration may involve a day 1 payment of the trading company's surplus cash, together with a combination of the methods listed below.
- 3rd party loan – Funding can be obtained from a bank in the form of a loan, and this loan can be used to pay the owner for their shares. The loan will then be repaid out of future profits.
- Seller loan – This will work in the form of an 'I.O.U' from the trustee company to the owner.
- Deferred payments – This will involve payment of the purchase price to the owner in instalments on agreed dates for a set period of time until the full amount has been settled.

Affordability is a key factor, and the trustees must be satisfied that the financial commitments are achievable, and will not cause the company to fail. Whichever method is chosen, the trading company will contribute its profits to the EOT, to allow the EOT to pay the sellers for their shares.

What changes post-sale?

After the sale has completed, the trading company will carry on in largely the same way as it did previously, and there is unlikely to be any change to operations and day-to-day activities. This is much more straight forward than a traditional sale where post-completion the business will go through an integration with the buyer's existing practice. However, instead of the trading company being administered by the previous shareholders, this role will be undertaken by the EOT. This means that the EOT will have responsibility for decisions at shareholder level, which can ultimately determine the direction and profitability of the company.

Who can be a director post-sale?

For CGT relief to apply, the sellers must relinquish control on completion. The sellers can, however, input on key decisions through having a place on the board, provided that they do not have a majority place.

SRA Requirements / consents?

In the usual way, the sale to an EOT involves a number of regulatory considerations (albeit these should usually be more straightforward given the arrangement is an internal sale rather than a transfer to a third-party buyer).

For example: (non-exhaustive):

ABS / Restructuring: it is very likely that an ABS is required as the trust and its non-lawyer trustees own the shares for employee benefit, meaning the firm is no longer exclusively owned by solicitors, necessitating ABS status.

Corporate Structuring: If you are not currently operating as a LTD, to benefit from the CGT reliefs you will likely need to undertake a restructure to convert to a LTD company before selling to the EOT.

Approvals: There will need to be “Manager” and “Owner” approvals for the EOT, the Trustees and certain employees.

Clients: As the firm’s clients will essentially be transferring to a new corporate entity, clients should be provided reasonable notice to transfer their file to the new entity.

Successor Practice Status: the EOT transition must comply with the SRA’s rules on successor practices as the new entity will essentially be required to take on the historic liabilities and client files of the business. Accordingly, the sellers / management team will need to work with their existing PII insurers / an insurance broker to ensure that suitable cover is obtained pre-completion.

It is for this reason that if you are considering an EOT sale, you should seek the advice of a firm who not only specialises in EOTs but also has suitable experience in the law firm M&A / the regulatory sector.

About the Author

Harry Winkley is a corporate solicitor at [Herrington Carmichael LLP](#) and leads the M&A team specialising in transactions within the legal sector. The article was co-authored with Sophie Protheroe & Rhian Hazeldene.

This article reflects the law and market position at the date of publication and is written as a general guide. It does not contain definitive legal advice, which should be sought in relation to a specific matter.

Jonathan Fagan MD Runs London Marathon to Support Cure Parkinson's



Jonathan Fagan, Founder of the Ten Percent Group, recently ran the London Marathon, raising an additional £780 from family & friends for [Cure Parkinson's](#), one of our regularly supported charities; in the last 9 years we have donated well over £30,000 to them in their quest to cure Parkinson's Disease. We hope one day they find the cure and remove the purpose of their existence.

Jonathan said "it was a real privilege to be able to run the Marathon and support Cure Parkinson's in this way. 10 years ago, in April 2016, my father died with Parkinson's Disease and I wanted to do something this year to remember him by. Although he would probably have thought running a marathon a bit extreme (he much preferred a quick stroll), it was nice to be able to do such an iconic run in his memory. Thanks to everyone who supported me; I can safely say that I will never voluntarily run a marathon again, it is way too much time & effort!"

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 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

Jonathan Fagan, Director

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