

Salary Survey & Legal Market Report

2025



CLAYTON
LEGAL



WE ARE CLAYTON LEGAL

At Clayton Legal, we've spent the last 25+ years helping legal professionals take the next step in their careers, as well as supporting law firms across the UK in finding the right people to grow their teams.

We work with firms of all shapes and sizes, from Legal 500 and Top 200 to regionals and boutiques, building long-standing relationships based on trust, results, and real understanding. For us, legal recruitment is all about people - not just placements. That means working with integrity, offering a personal touch, and staying committed to delivering excellent outcomes for everyone we work with.

We're proud of the reputation we've built. It's grounded in strong ethics, genuine relationships, and a culture of accountability - values that run right through our team and shape everything we do. Whether it's how we approach hiring, support our colleagues, or partner with clients and candidates, we're always focused on doing the right thing.

We take the time to really listen, offer honest advice, and share insight that helps firms hire more strategically. And when it comes to our candidates? We're here to champion you, connect you with great opportunities, and make a lasting difference to your career.

So, whether you're growing your team or planning your next move, we're here to help.

Welcome



I'm really pleased to share with you our latest Salary Survey and Market Insight Report; built on honest, real-world input from professionals and firms right across the UK legal sector.

The team at Clayton Legal has worked hard to analyse what's happening on the ground, going beyond the numbers to give you a genuine feel for how the legal world is shifting, and what that might mean for you – whether you're reading this as a potential jobseeker, or hirer.

It's no secret that the past year has continued to test the resilience of legal teams. With economic pressures, cautious hiring behaviours, and a still-competitive labour market, firms have had to get creative with their people strategies; balancing cost with culture, and growth with retention.

But as we head further into 2025 and look ahead to 2026, the outlook feels more optimistic. Confidence is gradually returning. Hiring pipelines are starting to rebuild. And while talent shortages remain a reality in some areas, we're also seeing more movement, more ambition, and a real appetite to grow again.

A heartfelt thank you to the many hundreds of legal professionals and hiring firms who contributed their time and thoughts to this year's research. Your input helps shape a clearer picture of where we are – and where we're heading.

Thanks,



Louise Kearns

Managing Director



Legal market overview

The global workforce has continued to evolve dramatically – shaped not only by the lasting ripple effects of the pandemic, but by fresh economic, demographic, and technological shifts. And while 2024 brought a level of stability to some sectors, the UK labour market has remained complex – particularly when it comes to attracting and retaining top legal talent.

2024 was a mixed bag. Growth returned in pockets – especially across areas like finance, digital, and technology – with [ONS data](#) showing record levels of employment in professional services. But pressures persisted: inflation cooled but remained above the [Bank of England's 2% target](#) for much of the year; skills shortages continued to frustrate hiring plans; and many firms found themselves juggling cautious optimism with ongoing cost control.

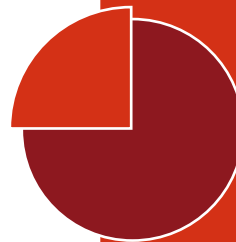
Recruitment difficulties are still front and centre for 2025. With over 2.5 million people classed as economically inactive due to long-term sickness (according to the ONS), and a growing number of Baby Boomers approaching retirement, the supply of skilled workers remains tight. At the same time, the demographic shape of the workforce is shifting. Millennials continue to dominate, but [Gen Z](#) – predicted to make up over a quarter of the global workforce this year (World Economic Forum) – are reshaping expectations around flexibility, wellbeing, and purpose.

These younger professionals value autonomy, digital tools that work, inclusive environments, and clear development paths. They're also more likely to explore lateral moves in search of a better fit, meaning the pressure is on for law firms to showcase more than just competitive salaries.



2.5 million

people classed as economically inactive due to long-term sickness in 2025



25%

of the global workforce in 2025 predicted to be made up of Gen Z workers

Shift in workplace priorities

↑ Flexibility & autonomy
Digital tools that work
Inclusive environments
Clear development paths
Sense of purpose
↓ Competitive salary



That said, wages remain in the spotlight. The National Living Wage rose again in April 2025, adding further pressure for firms already navigating tight margins. While real pay growth edged into positive territory in late 2024 (thanks to falling inflation), the cost-of-living challenges haven't disappeared – and employees are still prioritising financial security alongside flexibility.

In the legal sector, the LexisNexis Gross Legal Product Index projected a modest +2% growth in demand for legal services in 2024, down from 6% the previous year – suggesting a more stable but slower-moving market. While forecasts for 2025 are yet to be formally released, this trend indicates continued caution. This is echoed by the Law Society's recent economic outlook, which highlights restrained investment, regional disparities, and ongoing recruitment challenges – particularly in high-demand specialisms.

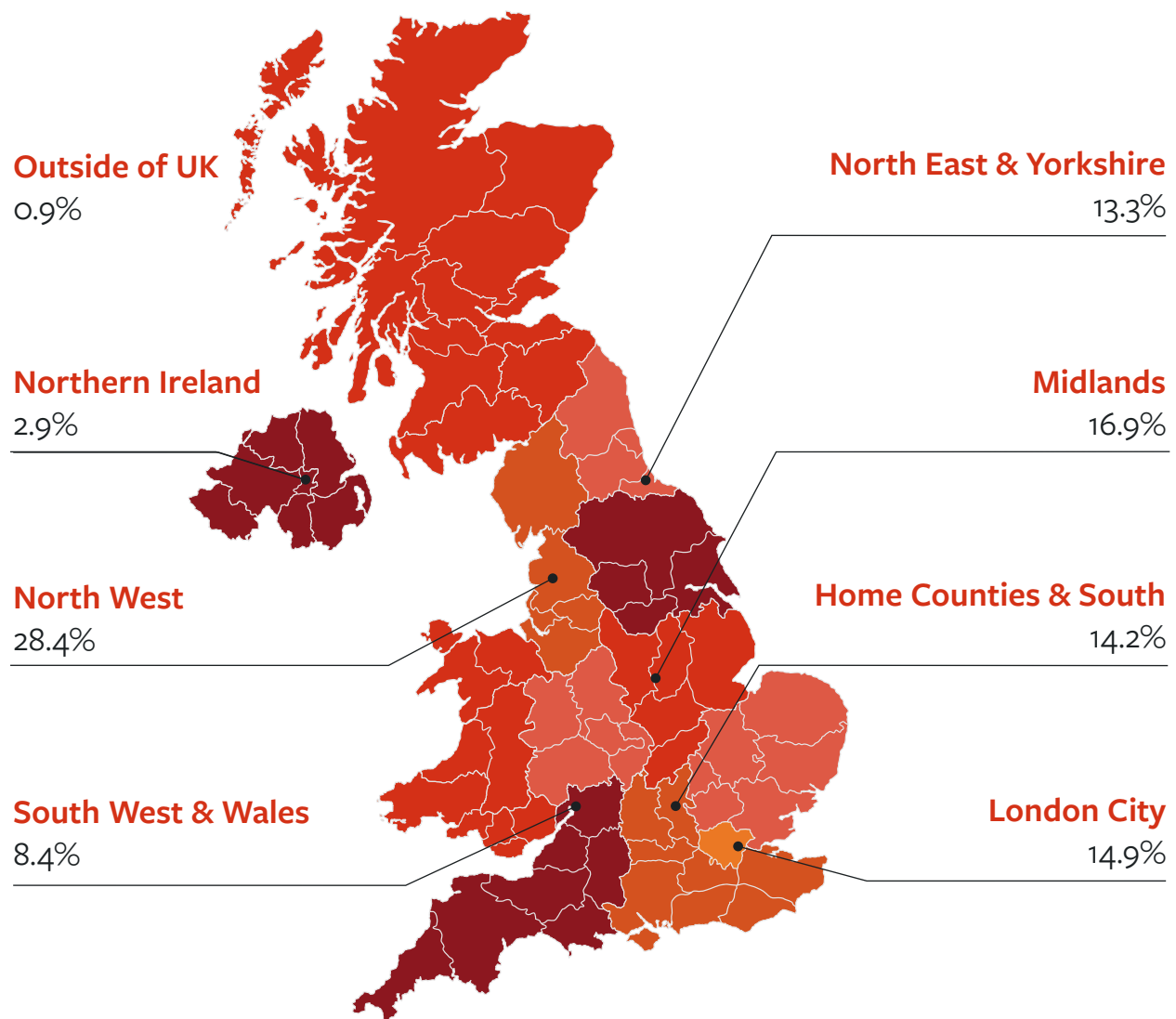
For legal employers, the challenge in 2025 is two-fold: standing out in a noisy hiring market and keeping hold of the people they've already got. With traditional routes to market less effective, many are turning to headhunter-style recruitment – but that, too, has implications for retention, as even 'settled' employees are being courted more regularly.

In short, it's never been more important to build and communicate a strong employer value proposition – one that reflects not just fair pay, but a progressive and inclusive culture, development opportunities, and a compelling reason to stay.

Survey Demographics

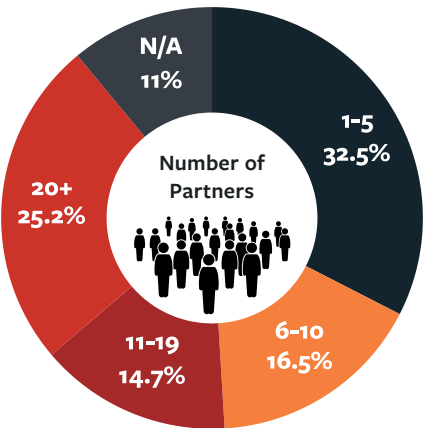
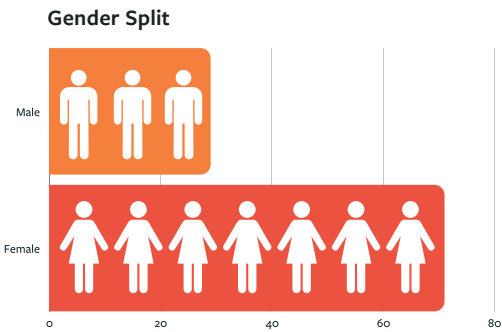
The research insights presented here are based on responses gathered at the end of 2024, drawing on legal professionals across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Respondents represented a broad mix of roles, levels and practice areas, supported by insight from our Recruitment Consultants – informed by many hundreds of conversations we’ve had in the past 12-18 months, the roles that we’ve been instructed on, and the huge variety of legal professionals that we’ve supported in furthering their careers.

As in previous years, most responses came from the North West, followed by the Midlands, London, and Yorkshire / North East. Firms ranged from high street and boutique practices to Legal 500 and multi-location firms, with most having five partners or fewer.



Gender Split

Women made up 71% of all respondents. While not fully representative of the sector, this aligns with broader trends. According to the SRA, women now make up 62% of solicitors in law firms, yet only 32% of full-equity partners – highlighting the continued gap at senior level.

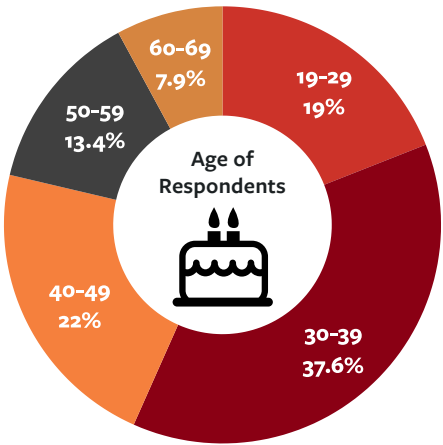


No. of Partners

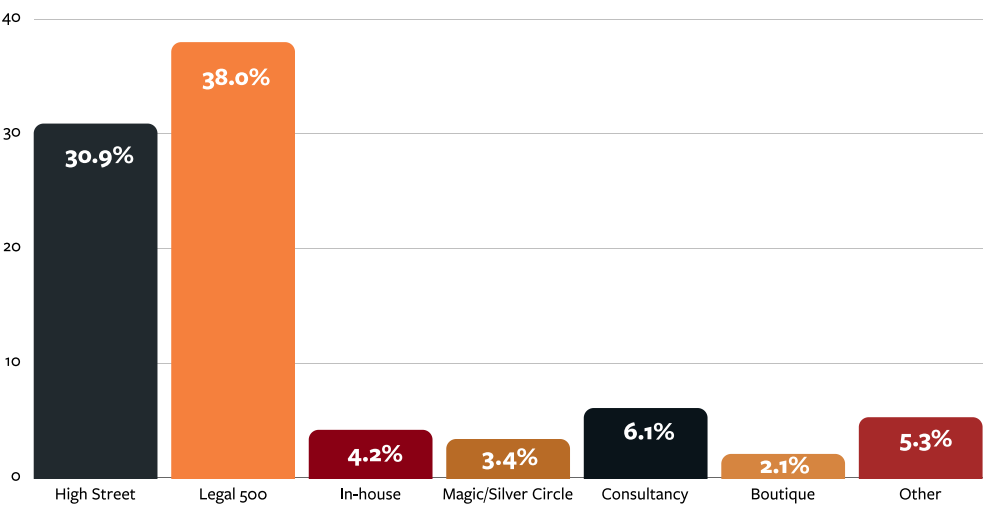
In-house lawyers accounted for 4.2% of our sample (down from 7%), though over 26% of all solicitors now work in-house. As LexisNexis reports, many junior solicitors are stepping away from traditional partnership ambitions in favour of flexible, strategic in-house roles.

Age of Respondents

Respondents spanned all age groups, with the largest share in their 30s – a key group for leadership development. At the same time, Gen Z professionals are entering the workforce, bringing fresh expectations around flexibility, inclusion and purpose. With over 40% of solicitors now aged 45 and above, effective succession planning and generational balance will be essential across the profession.



Type of Firm



Inertia and the Movement of Talent

What’s Driving Legal Moves in 2025? Confidence, Cash and Control

Career progression remains the top reason legal professionals are changing roles – cited by 39.6% of respondents, up from 32% last year. While this marks a noticeable increase, it doesn’t necessarily reflect growing market confidence. In an unsettled landscape, it may signal a desire for greater control, security, or simply the need to keep moving forward despite ongoing uncertainty.

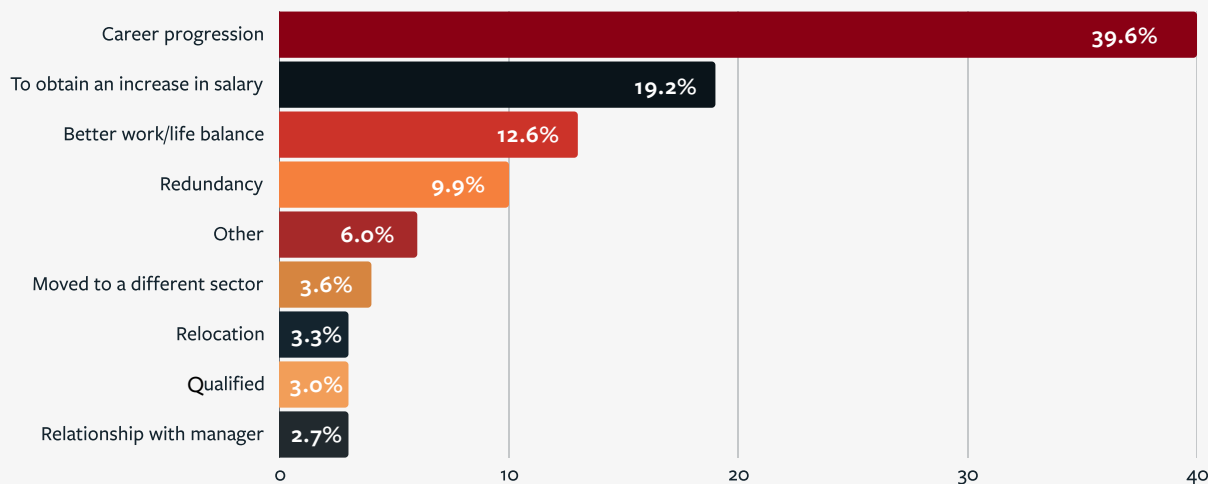
The pursuit of better remuneration has also become more prominent, with 19.2% seeking salary increases, up from 15% previously. This trend aligns with broader economic conditions, where [UK wage growth](#) has risen by 6% in the three months to December 2024.

The biggest shift? Work-life balance. This was the main motivator for 12.6% – nearly double last year’s figure. It’s clear that flexibility, wellbeing, and hybrid working are now front of mind, particularly for those assessing long-term career sustainability. According to [Thomson Reuters](#), work-life balance has become one of the top three drivers of retention across UK law firms.

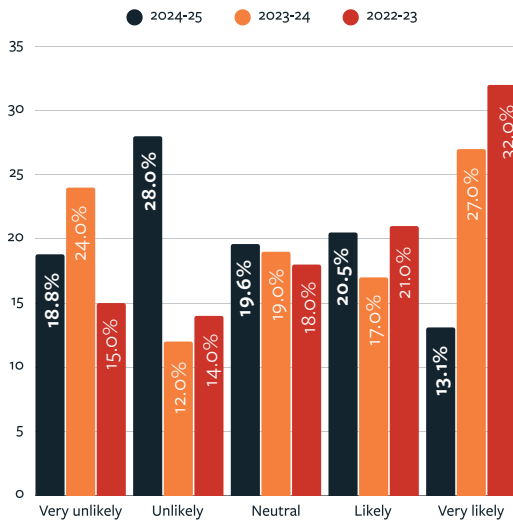
Redundancy unfortunately still plays a role – 9.9% this year – down slightly from 12% but consistent with recent headlines around restructures and cutbacks, particularly within corporate and real estate teams. [Lexis Nexis](#) had forecast a modest 2% growth in demand for legal services in 2024 – but many firms remain cautious as client activity continues to vary by practice area.

Other reasons such as sector shifts, qualification, relocation and manager relationships made up a much smaller proportion. But overall, the data reflects a workforce reassessing its priorities – and making moves that align more closely with personal and professional needs in a still-volatile market.

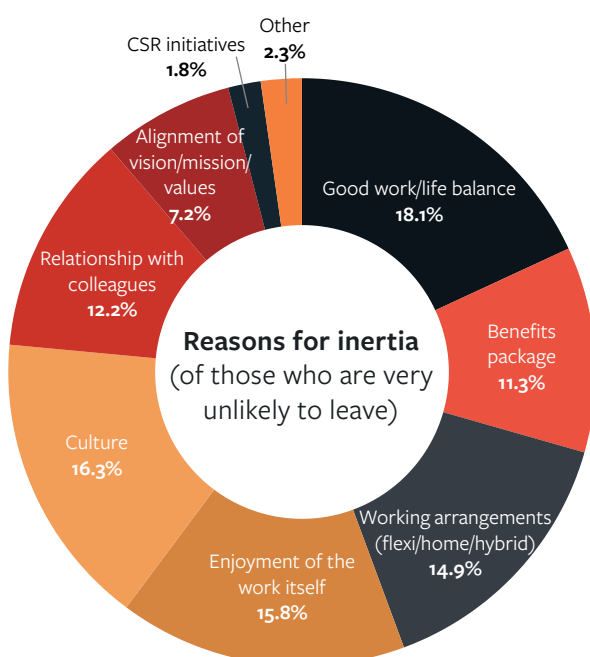
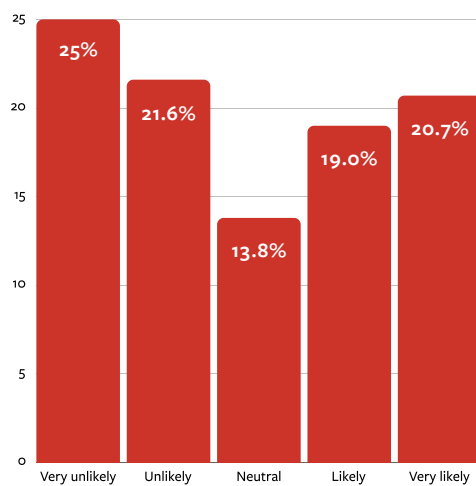
Career Moves in Law: The Top Motivators



How likely are you to move in the next 6 months?



How likely are you to relocate for a new role (of those who are likely/very likely to move)



Mobility in the legal profession

The tide of the Great Resignation continues to recede across the legal profession. This year, 33.6% of respondents said they are either 'likely' or 'very likely' to move roles within the next six months - a significant drop from 44% in 2024 and 53% the year before. While this may suggest greater stability, it could equally reflect growing caution. Economic uncertainty, tighter budgets, and increased competition for roles are making some professionals more risk-averse when it comes to changing jobs. The direction of travel is clear: legal professionals are moving less - but whether that's driven by satisfaction or hesitancy depends on who you ask.

That said, 1 in 5 remain neutral - a valuable audience for firms looking to tempt passive candidates, particularly in specialist or skill-short areas. Regionally, the Midlands has the highest proportion of professionals open to a move (25%), followed by the North (22.9%). Londoners are the least likely to be considering a change at 16.8%, perhaps reflecting a more settled hybrid culture or reduced appetite for upheaval post-pandemic. Men are slightly more likely than women to express openness to a move (30.8% vs. 26.8%).

For those planning to stay put, satisfaction is a recurring theme - but security may also be a factor. Among respondents who said they were 'very unlikely' to move, work/life balance (63.5%) was the most cited reason, followed by culture (57.1%), enjoyment of the role (55.6%), and flexible working (52.4%). Fewer cited pay or benefits as a primary reason to stay, pointing to a shift in what really matters.

Ultimately, the legal workforce in 2025 appears more settled, but also more measured. For employers, this means retention strategies that go beyond surface-level perks - focusing instead on meaningful engagement, flexibility, and a sense of purpose. And for those hoping to attract talent, the bar for change is higher. A compelling culture and long-term vision may carry more weight than a pay bump alone.

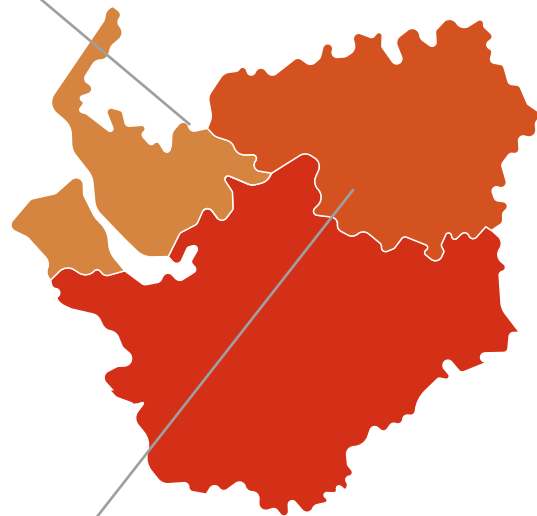
Spotlight on: Property

The property law recruitment market in 2024 experienced notable shifts across the UK, with distinct regional trends shaping demand, salaries, and hiring challenges. While the sector showed signs of stabilisation post-COVID, firms continued to face a competitive hiring landscape, particularly in commercial property roles. Here's a snapshot of some of the key insights from the Northern property sector – although we also work closely with firms in London and the southern regions, supporting recruitment needs across the country.

Merseyside and Cheshire

Recruitment in property law across Merseyside and Cheshire remained highly active, particularly between May and July - the busiest hiring period for the past two years.

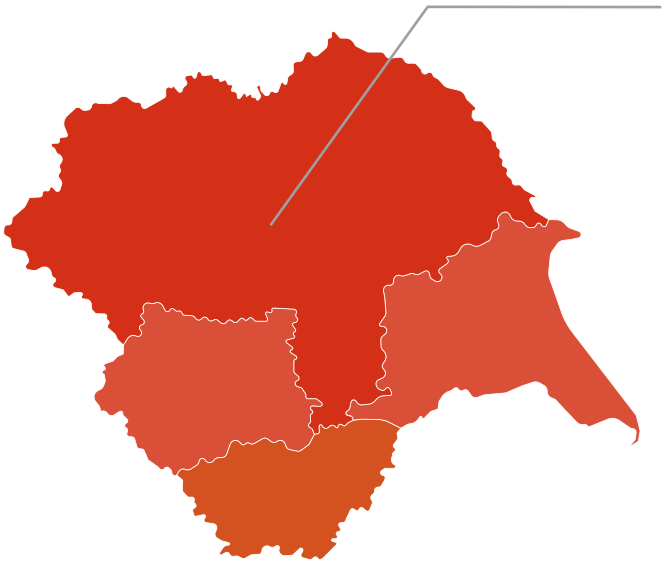
- **Commercial Property Demand:** There was a noticeable rise in demand for commercial property lawyers, yet sourcing suitable candidates remained a challenge.
- **Salary Growth & Counteroffers:** Salaries for fee earners, assistants, and paralegals increased by around £3,000, while counteroffers exceeding £8,000 became more common as firms attempted to retain talent.
- **Market Recovery: Encouragingly,** property teams within firms appeared to be regaining stability after the fluctuations seen during and after the pandemic.



Manchester

Manchester's property law market remained robust throughout 2024, with an ongoing surplus of job opportunities, especially in commercial property.

- **High Job Volume:** There was no shortage of roles, particularly in conveyancing and commercial property law
- **Delayed Salary Increases:** Many firms were reluctant to raise salaries upfront but were forced to reconsider once they entered the interview process and faced competition
- **Return-to-Office Push:** Employers actively tried to bring staff back into offices, which extended hiring timelines, with some roles remaining unfilled for several months.



Yorkshire

Yorkshire’s property law sector was driven by both residential and commercial transactions, though hiring challenges persisted.

- **Strong Market Demand:** Cities like Leeds, Sheffield, and York saw steady property market activity, increasing demand for conveyancers.
- **Skills Shortages:** Despite demand, there was a shortage of experienced professionals, particularly in commercial property law.
- **Salary Competition:** Firms raised salaries to attract and retain talent, often pairing increases with hybrid working options and performance-based incentives.
- **Technology & Remote Work:** The adoption of legal tech and hybrid working models broadened hiring opportunities, allowing firms to tap into a wider talent pool.

| Remuneration Overview: Commercial Property | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £24,000 | £26,000 | £25,000 | £30,000 |
| Legal Sec | £24,000 | £28,000 | £25,000 | £40,000 |
| Paralegal | £25,000 | £30,000 | £25,000 | £35,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £30,000 | £25,000 | £35,000 |
| NQ | £30,000 | £35,000 | £30,000 | £50,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £40,000 | £40,000 | £65,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £35,000 | £55,000 | £45,000 | £85,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £40,000 | £65,000 | £50,000 | £100,000+ |
| 10+ | £45,000 | £75,000+ | £65,000 | £120,000+ |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

| Remuneration Overview: Residential Property | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £24,000 | £26,000 | £25,000 | £30,000 |
| Legal Sec | £24,000 | £28,000 | £25,000 | £40,000 |
| Paralegal | £25,000 | £30,000 | £25,000 | £35,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £30,000 | £25,000 | £35,000 |
| NQ | £30,000 | £35,000 | £30,000 | £50,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £38,000 | £35,000 | £55,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £35,000 | £50,000 | £40,000 | £75,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £40,000 | £55,000 | £50,000 | £85,000 |
| 10+ | £45,000 | £60,000+ | £65,000 | £100,000+ |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

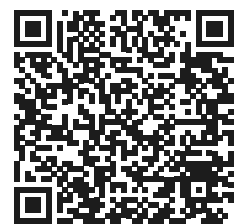
Conclusion

The conveyancing recruitment market in 2024 remained active across all key regions, but firms continued to face challenges in attracting and retaining experienced professionals, particularly in commercial property law. While salary increases and counteroffers were prevalent, many firms were still hesitant to adjust compensation proactively. The return-to-office push in some regions, coupled with a skills shortage, extended hiring timelines. However, with demand for legal property services remaining high, recruitment remained competitive throughout the year.



Are you looking for your next role in Property?

Scan the QR code to see all of our current jobs on the Clayton Legal website.





Spotlight on: Family & Private Client

The Family and Private Client recruitment market in 2024 witnessed a slowdown in candidate movement. With fewer qualified professionals making moves, stability within firms became more common, creating a challenging environment for firms looking to recruit top talent. However, demand for skilled solicitors remained high, particularly in areas with complex, high-value cases, and this imbalance between demand and supply led to a rise in salaries.

In the Private Client space, firms faced a shortage of newly qualified solicitors, as many candidates opted for other practice areas. The demand for Private Client specialists continued to outpace that for Family law, with firms struggling to find talent in certain regions. Areas like the Northwest, for instance, saw an increasing need for solicitors with expertise in high-net-worth estate planning, tax advisory, and trust work. Similarly, London's demand for experts in international tax planning and cross-border trusts continued to grow, with firms seeking professionals who could handle complex client portfolios.

Family law also saw an uptick in demand, particularly for solicitors experienced in complex divorce cases, financial settlements, and child custody disputes. In these high-stakes cases, professionals with experience in financial remedy work were in high demand. Family law firms were also adapting to changing work preferences, offering greater flexibility and remote working options to attract top candidates, recognising the growing importance of work-life balance.

As the market continued to be candidate-driven, salary and flexibility became key factors in attracting and retaining talent. Candidates were increasingly seeking roles that offered competitive pay and the ability to work remotely or with flexible hours, particularly to balance personal commitments such as childcare. Firms that could accommodate these preferences gained a competitive edge in the hiring process.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Family and Private Client sectors will likely continue to evolve in response to these shifts. The shortage of skilled professionals in both practice areas will keep demand high, and firms that can offer a combination of competitive salaries and flexible working arrangements will be better positioned to succeed. Furthermore, as client needs become increasingly complex, firms will need to ensure they are investing in the development of their staff to maintain a competitive edge in a market that is likely to remain challenging. The key to success in the coming year will lie in finding the right balance between attracting new talent and nurturing the growth of existing teams.

| Remuneration Overview: Family | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Cashier | £24,000 | £28,000 | £25,000 | £30,000 |
| Legal Sec | £23,000 | £27,000 | £24,000 | £30,000 |
| Paralegal | £23,000 | £27,000 | £25,000 | £32,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £28,000 | £27,000 | £35,000 |
| NQ | £28,000 | £35,000 | £35,000 | £42,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £40,000 | £38,000 | £50,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £35,000 | £50,000 | £48,000 | £60,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £40,000 | £65,000 | £55,000 | £80,000 |
| 10+ | £65000+ | | £80000+ | |

| Remuneration Overview: Private Client | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Cashier | £24,000 | £28,000 | £25,000 | £30,000 |
| Legal Sec | £23,000 | £27,000 | £24,000 | £30,000 |
| Paralegal | £23,000 | £27,000 | £25,000 | £32,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £28,000 | £27,000 | £35,000 |
| NQ | £28,000 | £35,000 | £35,000 | £42,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £40,000 | £38,000 | £50,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £35,000 | £50,000 | £48,000 | £60,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £40,000 | £65,000 | £55,000 | £80,000 |
| 10+ | £65000+ | | £80000+ | |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Are you looking for your next role in Family & Private Client?

Scan the QR code to see all of our current jobs on the Clayton Legal website.



Spotlight on: Costs

The Costs market in 2024 was bustling, with firms across the UK looking to fill positions at all levels, from junior to senior costs specialists. As the legal recruitment sector moves fully beyond the post-COVID era, there has been a marked shift in the way firms operate, with more professionals returning to the office. As a result, fully remote working options have decreased across private practice. However, costs consultancies have maintained a competitive advantage by offering the flexibility of full remote working, making them an attractive option for candidates seeking such arrangements.

A significant trend emerging last year was the increasing demand for candidates qualified as Costs Lawyers, rather than just Costs Draftsmen. This shift reflects the broader changes in UK legal costs practices, with firms aiming to incorporate more qualified professionals to ensure greater efficiency, transparency, and innovation in managing legal costs. The focus is on evolving practices and integrating technological advancements that cater to client demands for faster, more accurate, and more cost-effective services.

Regional patterns also play a role in the recruitment landscape, with the bulk of recruitment activity for Costs professionals happening in the North of the UK, rather than the South. More firms are choosing to operate their Costs teams outside of London, where recruitment tends to be more competitive, and costs can be lower. This trend is especially evident in cities such as Manchester, Leeds, and Newcastle, which have seen increased demand for legal costs specialists.

The main motivations for candidates looking to make a move within the Costs market remain largely consistent: work-life balance, remote working opportunities, and the attraction of better overall packages. As work-life balance continues to be a top priority for professionals, firms that can offer flexible working arrangements are likely to attract the best talent. Additionally, competitive salary packages remain crucial in attracting and retaining skilled candidates in an increasingly competitive market.

Looking to 2025, the Costs recruitment sector is expected to continue evolving in line with these trends. The shift toward hiring qualified Costs Lawyers will likely persist, as firms continue to focus on efficiency and innovation in managing legal costs. Furthermore, the demand for remote working is expected to remain high, with costs consultancies continuing to lead the way in offering flexible working options. As firms in the North continue to expand their Costs teams, the recruitment landscape will become even more regionalised, making it essential for businesses to adapt their hiring strategies to secure the best talent in an increasingly competitive market.

Remuneration Overview: **Law costs**

| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Average Lowest | Average Highest | Average Lowest | Average Highest |
| Trainee Costs Draftsman | £25,000 | £27,000 | £26,000 | £28,000 |
| Costs Draftsman 2 yr ex | £27,000 | £29,000 | £28,000 | £30,000 |
| Costs Draftsman 5yr | £36,000 | £43,000 | £33,000 | £40,000 |
| Senior Costs Draftsman | £40,000 | £55,000 | £43,000 | £55,000 |
| Trainee Costs Lawyer | £28,000 | £32,000 | £30,000 | £34,000 |
| Costs Lawyer NQ | £34,000 | £35,000 | £35,000 | £36,000 |
| Costs Lawyer 3 years xp | £34,000 | £37,000 | £38,000 | £42,000 |
| Costs Lawyer 5 years ex | £38,000 | £43,000 | £40,000 | £46,000 |
| Senior Costs Lawyer | £45,000 | £55,000 | £55,000 | £65,000 |
| Costs Solicitor | £43,000 | £65,000 | £50,000 | £65,000 |
| Senior Associate | £500,000 | £65,000 | £55,000 | £65,000 |
| Head of Costs | £65,000 | £95,000 | £65,000 | £110,000 |
| Costs Partner | £80,000 | £140,000 | £100,000 | £200,000 |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Spotlight on: Personal Injury & Clinical Negligence

The personal injury recruitment market remained active throughout 2024, although hiring trends varied across different specialisms.

Demand for HDR litigators and EL/PL/OL litigation roles stayed steady, while opportunities in RTA litigation were scarce, reflecting the continued downturn in that sector. Credit Hire remained an area of demand, but the candidate market was challenging, with many professionals seeking to transition out of Credit Hire altogether rather than moving between firms, further limiting the available talent pool.

Workplace flexibility continued to be a barrier to recruitment, as a number of firms resisted offering hybrid or remote working options, deterring candidates from considering new roles. This misalignment between employer expectations and candidate preferences remained a notable sticking point.

Salaries for litigators, including newly qualified (NQ) solicitors, largely stayed between £30,000 and £40,000, with little upward movement; although some firms offered higher salaries, overall pay progression remained static.

A positive development during the year was the increase in entry-level and paralegal roles, signalling that firms were investing in junior talent pipelines - an encouraging sign for a market that had previously struggled with hiring at this level.

Market Outlook

The PI sector continued to face challenges in 2024, particularly in RTA litigation, which showed no signs of recovery. However, opportunities in HDR, EL/PL/OL, and Credit Hire litigation remained available, albeit with hiring difficulties due to candidate shortages and a lack of salary progression. Flexibility remained a key factor in recruitment success, with firms unwilling to offer hybrid working struggling to attract talent.

According to [The Law Society](#), many PI firms continued to navigate financial pressures following the whiplash reforms, which reduced claim values and affected profitability in RTA cases. And, whilst recruitment remained steady in certain areas, firms seeking to attract and retain top talent would need to reassess their approach to salaries, flexibility, and career progression in the coming years. On a positive note, firms are investing in junior hires and alternative revenue streams, such as multi-track claims, to position themselves for long-term stability.

Remuneration Overview: **Personal Injury**

| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £22,000 | £28,000 | £26,000 | £32,000 |
| Legal Sec | £23,000 | £30,000 | £26,000 | £34,000 |
| Paralegal | £24,000 | £32,000 | £28,000 | £36,000 |
| Trainee | £24,000 | £30,000 | £28,000 | £36,000 |
| NQ | £28,000 | £35,000 | £35,000 | £42,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £38,000 | £38,000 | £45,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £35,000 | £45,000 | £45,000 | £55,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £42,000 | £60,000 | £55,000 | £75,000 |
| 10+ | £60,000+ | £70,000+ | £75,000+ | £90,000+ |

Remuneration Overview: **Client Negligence**

| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £23,000 | £29,000 | £25,000 | £32,000 |
| Legal Sec | £24,000 | £32,000 | £26,000 | £35,000 |
| Paralegal | £26,000 | £35,000 | £30,000 | £40,000 |
| Trainee | £26,000 | £34,000 | £30,000 | £38,000 |
| NQ | £32,000 | £40,000 | £38,000 | £48,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £35,000 | £45,000 | £42,000 | £55,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £42,000 | £55,000 | £50,000 | £65,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £50,000 | £70,000 | £60,000 | £85,000 |
| 10+ | £70,000+ | £85,000+ | £85,000+ | £100,000+ |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Are you looking for your next role in Personal Injury & Clinical Negligence?

Scan the QR code to see all of our current jobs on the Clayton Legal website.



Spotlight on: Risk & Compliance

Recruitment activity for compliance professionals in law firms remained steady throughout 2024, shaped by shifting regulatory demands and broader pressures across the legal market. While opportunities did emerge - particularly within larger firms - the hiring landscape was challenged by talent shortages, rising salary expectations, and ongoing debates around the viability of remote working for sensitive roles.

Evolving regulatory frameworks, including Anti-Money Laundering (AML) protocols, GDPR obligations, and updates to the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) Standards, continued to drive demand for compliance professionals. Heightened scrutiny across the sector meant firms were under increasing pressure to bolster their internal compliance functions. This was especially true for candidates with the ability to navigate both legal and financial compliance, whose expertise remained in high demand.

The size and structure of a firm significantly influenced its hiring strategy. Larger, often international firms continued to invest in robust, standalone compliance departments, recognising the strategic importance of risk and regulatory management. By contrast, smaller practices frequently absorbed compliance responsibilities into broader legal or operational roles, resulting in reduced external hiring activity and a more reactive approach to recruitment.

A persistent shortage of suitably skilled professionals remained a key challenge. Candidates with deep regulatory knowledge and practical compliance experience were few and far between, leading to fierce competition between firms. As a result, many firms faced difficulties in both attracting and retaining talent in this niche but critical area.

Salary expectations added further complexity. Top-tier compliance professionals often commanded high remuneration packages - especially in the face of increasing regulatory risk. However, many smaller firms found themselves unable to meet these demands, particularly given that compliance is typically a non-fee-earning function. This placed them at a disadvantage when competing with in-house legal departments and larger private practice firms that could offer more competitive packages.

In response, some firms looked inward, promoting individuals from within their ranks. These internal promotions were often seen as beneficial due to the individual's existing knowledge of the firm's culture, processes, and risk appetite. However, where significant change or growth was planned, firms were more inclined to recruit externally in search of fresh perspectives and deeper regulatory expertise.

Reputation also played a crucial role in attracting talent. Firms with a strong track record in compliance, a proactive approach to risk, and a healthy internal culture often had the edge in recruitment. Conversely, those with a history of regulatory failings or a reactive compliance culture found it more difficult to engage top-tier candidates.

Hybrid and remote working arrangements presented a mixed picture. Many firms acknowledged that flexible working could help broaden the talent pool and improve work-life balance. However, for certain compliance roles - particularly those involving highly sensitive data - there was still a clear expectation of in-office presence. This limited flexibility and, in some cases, reduced candidate interest, especially among professionals seeking greater autonomy over how and where they work.

Market Outlook

Looking back on 2024, it’s clear that the compliance recruitment market remained both necessary and competitive, but not without its challenges. Regulatory pressure is unlikely to ease in the short term, meaning demand will remain. However, for firms to attract and retain the right professionals, a reassessment of salary benchmarks, flexibility, and long-term talent strategy may be needed - particularly as the war for top compliance talent shows no signs of slowing down.

| Remuneration Overview: Risk & Compliance | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Compliance Assistant | £28,000 | £32,000 | £32,000 | £35,000 |
| Compliance Analyst | £30,000 | £34,000 | £32,000 | £40,000 |
| Compliance Officer | £40,000 | £50,000 | £45,000 | £60,000 |
| Compliance Manager | £50,000 | £60,000 | £55,000 | £70,000 |
| Head of Compliance | £60,000 | £80,000 | £65,000 | £100,000 |
| COLP | £65,000 | £75,000 | £75,000 | £100,000 |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Are you looking for your next role in
Risk & Compliance?

Scan the QR code to see all of our current jobs on the Clayton Legal website.



Spotlight on Criminal Law

The criminal law recruitment market in 2024 saw significant shifts, driven by the growing demand for specialists in areas such as cybercrime, financial crime, and regulatory enforcement.

While the overall recruitment landscape remained active, trends varied across different levels of experience and specialisms. A rise in high-profile cases, complex fraud investigations, and regulatory action spurred demand for experienced criminal lawyers.

Specialisms such as cybercrime, extradition, and financial crime saw particularly strong demand, alongside niche roles in areas like anti-money laundering (AML). The increasing complexity of international crime and cross-border financial fraud prompted firms to seek highly skilled talent capable of navigating these challenging cases.

Legal aid reforms continued to impact smaller practices, pushing some criminal lawyers to transition to private-paying clients or to move into adjacent areas of law, while the pipeline of junior lawyers entering publicly funded criminal law roles remained limited. Toward the end of 2024 and into early 2025, further pressure on legal aid funding exacerbated these trends, and firms increasingly prioritised candidates with strong regulatory or white-collar crime experience.

Remote and hybrid working models became more common among private practices dealing with high-end criminal work, offering some flexibility that helped to attract and retain experienced talent. However, publicly funded criminal law roles remained less flexible, continuing to present challenges for recruitment at the junior end of the market.

Market Outlook

The criminal law market is expected to remain strong, especially in high-profile cases and niche areas like financial and cybercrime. While salaries are increasing, particularly in London, firms nationwide are facing similar challenges related to recruitment, especially for junior roles in publicly funded criminal law. With firms offering competitive packages and focusing on career progression, the demand for top talent is set to continue, particularly in specialist areas.



Remuneration Overview: **Criminal Law**

| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £24,000 | £26,000 | £25,000 | £26,000 |
| Legal Sec | £23,000 | £27,000 | £25,000 | £28,000 |
| Paralegal | £25,000 | £26,000 | £25,000 | £28,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £28,000 | £28,000 | £32,000 |
| NQ | £28,000 | £32,000 | £30,000 | £40,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £30,000 | £36,000 | £35,000 | £45,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £32,000 | £40,000 | £40,000 | £55,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £36,000 | £55,000 | £45,000 | £70,000 |
| 10+ | £45,000 | £60,000+ | £45,000 | £100,000+ |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Are you looking for your next role in Criminal Law?

Scan the QR code to see all of our current jobs on the Clayton Legal website.



Spotlight on Litigation

The litigation market remained active throughout 2024, with hiring levels holding steady, albeit with a noticeable shift towards more specialist roles.

While generalist litigation opportunities became less common, firms were more frequently recruiting in response to specific client demands, case volumes, or regulatory change. There was increasing demand for litigators with expertise in areas such as property disputes, contentious probate, and professional negligence, reflecting a wider client appetite for firms offering deep, technical knowledge over broad litigation capability.

Many firms restructured their litigation departments in response to continued client pressure on fees, resulting in leaner teams expected to do more with less and placing a premium on mid-level fee earners who could hit the ground running without the cost of a partner or the need for close supervision.

Candidate appetite for hybrid or remote working arrangements remained strong, and firms unwilling to offer this flexibility continued to face resistance from candidates, particularly in the mid to senior bracket, who were less likely to move unless home working was on the table.

The growing role of litigation funding supported recruitment in areas with high claim values, including class actions and high-value commercial disputes, and

candidates with experience in managing funded claims or working closely with funders were increasingly sought after.

Salary trends in litigation were mixed; in-demand specialists often secured uplifts when moving roles, while more generalist roles saw limited salary movement, with firms remaining cautious and offering competitive pay only where business need or candidate scarcity justified it.

There was a steady flow of opportunities for junior litigation talent, particularly in firms willing to invest in training and progression, and candidates with strong academics and early exposure to litigation work remained highly employable even in a cautious hiring climate.

As with other practice areas, firms with strong team cultures, clear career paths, and flexible working policies were better positioned to attract and retain talent, while those falling short in these areas found it harder to compete; especially when hiring at the experienced associate level.

Market Outlook

Civil litigation remains a critical area of focus for many firms, and while recruitment wasn’t without its challenges in 2024, demand for skilled litigators persisted – especially in specialist areas. Firms that adapted their structures, supported flexible working, and remained agile in their hiring approach were best placed to secure talent. Looking ahead, litigation practices with a strong pipeline and a commitment to developing junior talent are likely to be in the best shape for sustainable growth.

| Remuneration Overview: Commercial/Civil Litigation | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Job Title | Outside London | | London | |
| | Average Lowest | Average highest | Average Lowest | Average highest |
| Legal Admin | £20,000 | £27,000 | £22,000 | £31,000 |
| Legal Sec | £30,000 | £40,000 | £32,000 | £40,000 |
| Paralegal | £26,000 | £32,000 | £28,000 | £45,000 |
| Trainee | £25,000 | £31,000 | £30,000 | £45,000 |
| NQ | £29,000 | £44,000 | £40,000 | £50,000 |
| 1PQE - 2PQE | £38,000 | £48,000 | £45,000 | £55,000 |
| 3PQE - 5QE | £43,000 | £53,000 | £50,000 | £60,000 |
| 6PQE - 10PQE | £58,000 | £73,000 | £65,000 | £80,000 |
| 10+ | £68,000 | £83,000 | £75,000 | £90,000 |

* Salaries are based on a standard 35-hour working week. Please note that additional factors - such as firm size, location, and individual experience - may influence average salary levels.

Perks of the Job

Beyond the Payslip: Bonuses, Benefits and What Really Matters in 2025

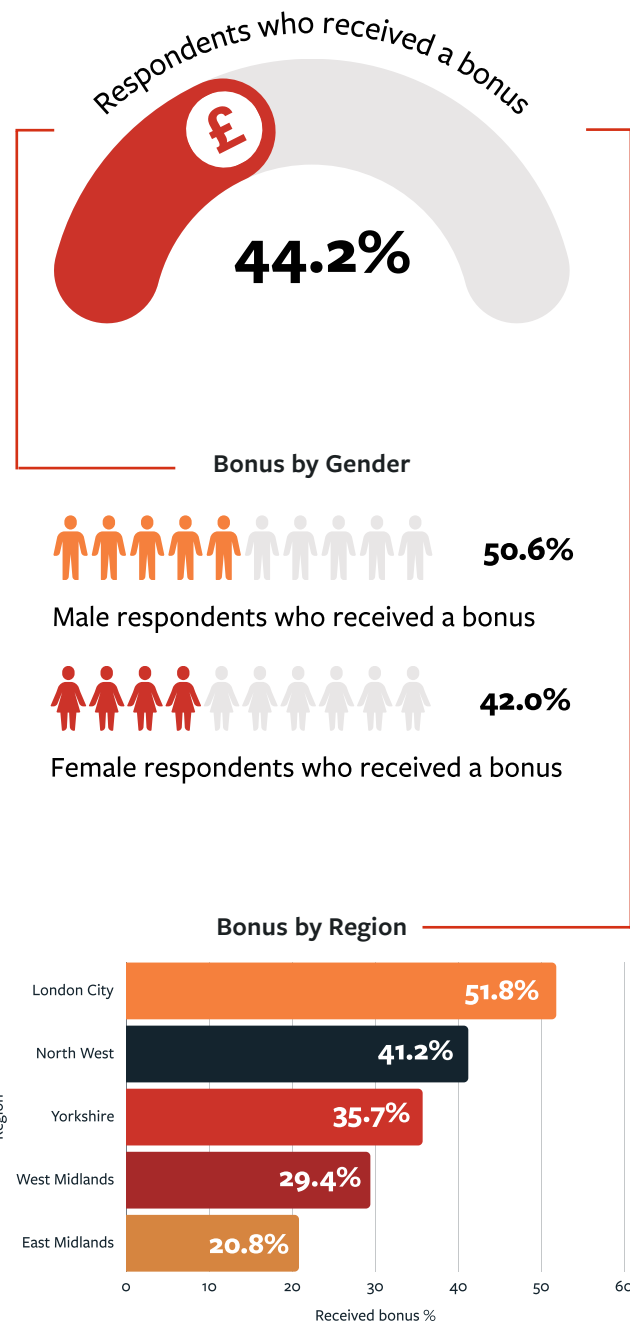
As salary inflation begins to settle, employers in the legal sector are focusing once again on total reward strategies – blending financial incentives, benefits, and flexibility to retain talent. Our 2025 research highlights changing expectations around bonuses, growing demand for holistic support, and the enduring importance of work-life autonomy.

Just under half (44.2%) of legal professionals received a bonus in the past year. Encouragingly, among those who did, 42.6% said it was higher than their previous bonus. However, 55.8% received no bonus at all, highlighting the continued disparity in reward structures across the sector.

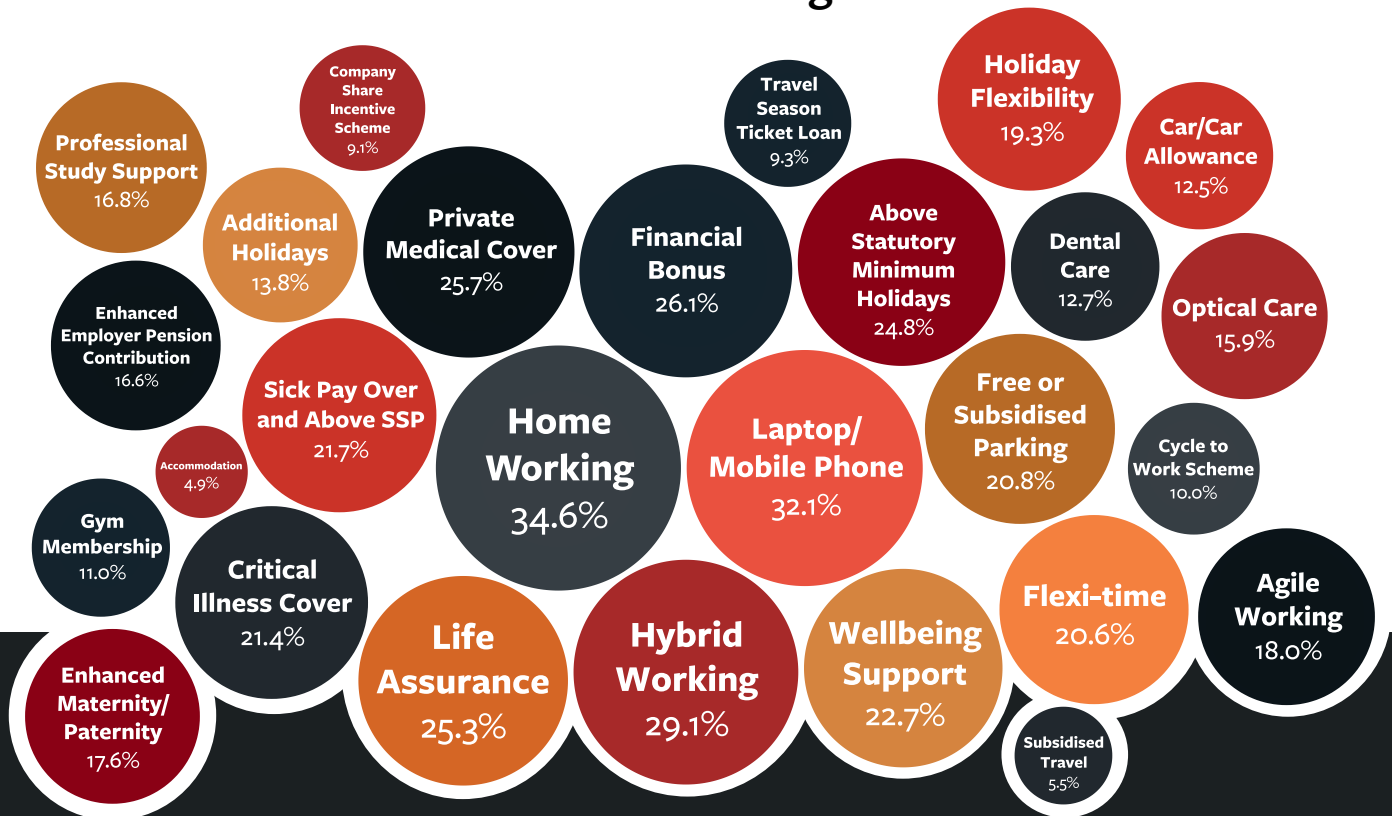
The data also reveals a clear gender gap: 50.6% of men received a bonus, compared with 42.0% of women. While this is a modest improvement on previous years, it reinforces the need for firms to audit and clarify how bonuses are allocated. Regionally, the picture is mixed. In London City, 51.8% of respondents received a bonus, compared with just 29.4% in the West Midlands and 20.8% in the East Midlands – a likely reflection of firm size, profitability, and performance culture perhaps?

When it comes to how bonuses are awarded, responses suggest a lack of consistency. The most common criteria were billing targets vs performance (26.9%), general performance (23.7%), and overall firm profitability (15.1%). However, more than 1 in 8 respondents (12.6%) said they were unsure how their bonus was determined. A range of qualitative responses described schemes as “unclear,” “non-existent,” or “based on what leadership decides,” with some bonuses only granted following external job offers or personal negotiation. This lack of transparency can damage morale, especially in environments where contribution feels overlooked.

Looking beyond bonuses, the most widely offered benefits include home-working (34.6%), laptops or mobile devices (32.1%), and hybrid working (29.1%). More traditional benefits such as private medical cover (25.7%), life assurance (25.3%), and enhanced holiday entitlement (24.8%) also remain prominent.



Benefits Packages:



Flexible First: What Today's Talent Really Wants

When it comes to what people truly value, the message is clear: 30.1% of respondents said homeworking is their single most valued benefit, followed by hybrid working (10.6%) and financial bonuses (6.8%). Autonomy and flexibility continue to trump more transactional perks.

Yet while demand for flexibility remains high, its availability is slipping. This year, just 34.6% of respondents reported receiving homeworking as a formal benefit – a significant drop from 59% the previous year. Hybrid working also fell from 45% to 29.1%. The decline suggests that some firms are reasserting office-based expectations, despite flexibility being consistently ranked as a top priority by legal professionals. Without clear policies or genuine alternatives, such shifts risk driving dissatisfaction and attrition.

Satisfaction with benefit packages overall remains steady: 50.9% of respondents said they were happy or very happy, while around one-third (33.3%) were neutral. However, 15.8% reported being unhappy or very unhappy, suggesting many firms still miss the mark on relevance and delivery.

The increasing inclusion of benefits such as wellbeing support (22.7%), critical illness cover (21.4%), and enhanced sick pay (21.7%) reflects a broader shift towards holistic support in the legal industry. This trend aligns with findings from the [Top 6 Employee Benefits Trends for 2025 report](#), which highlights that 86% of employees are more likely to stay in jobs that prioritise wellbeing – underscoring the importance of comprehensive mental health initiatives in enhancing satisfaction and retention.

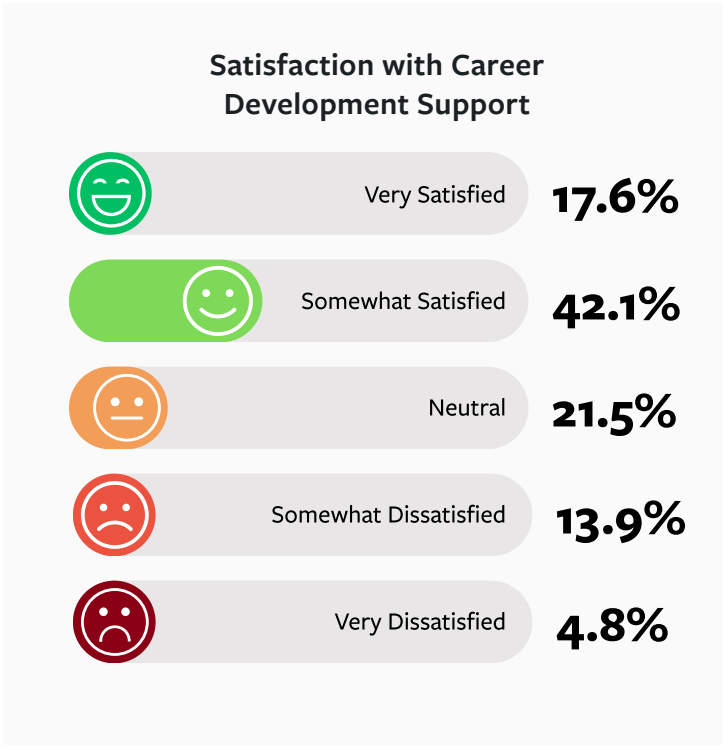
For legal employers, the takeaway is clear: reward strategies in 2025 need to go far beyond pay. Those that combine financial fairness with genuine flexibility and personalised support will be best placed to keep their people engaged – and in post.

Employee Satisfaction and Career Development

Climbing the Ladder: Career Development and Progression in Legal Roles

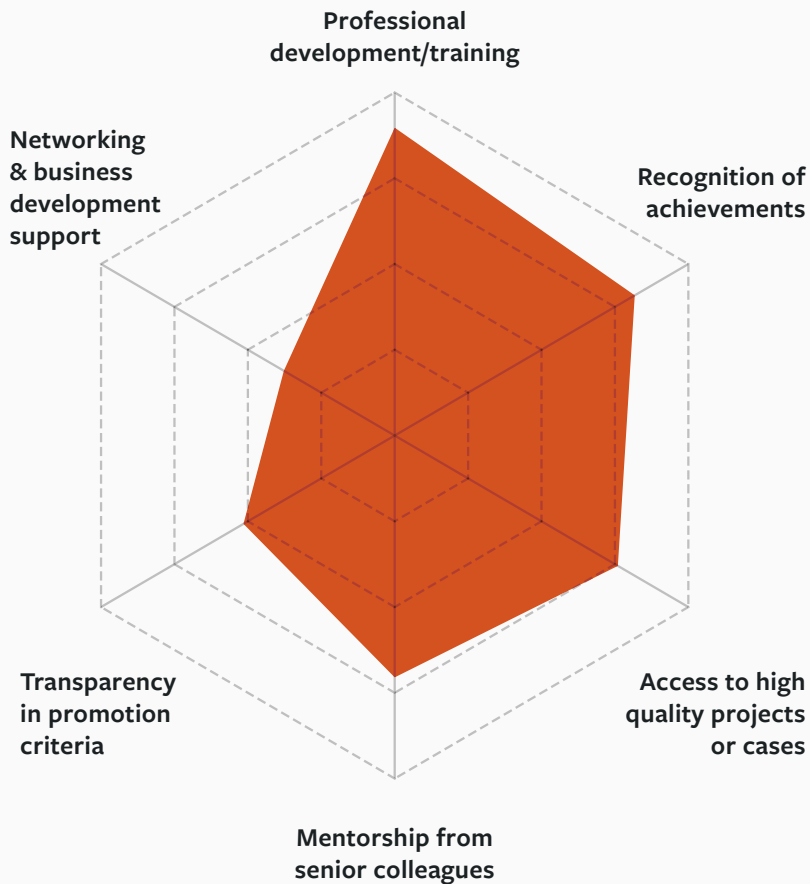
For many legal professionals, the ability to grow, learn and progress is just as important as pay or flexibility. Our recent research offers fresh insight into how well law firms are supporting this – and what professionals value most when it comes to career progression.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with career development support – including training, mentorship and access to resources – 42.1% described themselves as somewhat satisfied. A further 17.6% said they were very satisfied. However, 18.7% were dissatisfied to some degree, and 21.5% remained neutral – suggesting that while most employees see some support, there is room for firms to do more.



Key factors for Career Progression

(% of respondents who selected each - multiple selections possible)



Digging deeper into what employees' value most when it comes to career progression, 35.9% highlighted professional development and training as key. 32.7% emphasised recognition of their achievements, while 30.4% rated access to high-quality projects or cases as essential. Mentorship was cited by 28.2%, with transparency in promotion criteria selected by 20.6%, and networking and business development support by 15.1%.

These results reinforce a consistent message: employees want meaningful opportunities to grow. Recognition, clear progression pathways and skills development are non-negotiables – particularly among ambitious mid-career professionals.

This trend is echoed in [LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report 2025](#), which found that companies identified as "career development champions" – those with mature learning cultures and clear development pathways – report significantly stronger outcomes than their peers.

According to the report, 75% of these organisations are confident in their profitability (vs 64% of others), 71% are confident in attracting **qualified** talent (vs 58%), and 67% are confident in retaining it (vs 50%). The report also found these champions are 42% more likely to be frontrunners in adopting generative AI – signalling that investment in learning and development directly supports innovation, performance and talent retention.

We also see some notable gender and regional variation in our dataset:



Female respondents were slightly more likely than males to report lower satisfaction with career development support.



Respondents from London and the South East showed higher levels of satisfaction compared to those in the North West and North East, where dissatisfaction was marginally more common.



Mid-sized and Legal 500 firms tended to score higher on development satisfaction than smaller practices – possibly reflecting broader training budgets and structured programmes.

In conclusion, if law firms want to keep talent moving upwards – and not out the door – structured development, meaningful mentorship and clear pathways to recognition are key.

Workplace Fulfilment and Work/Life Balance

Culture, Capacity, Contentment: What Keeps Legal Talent Happy?

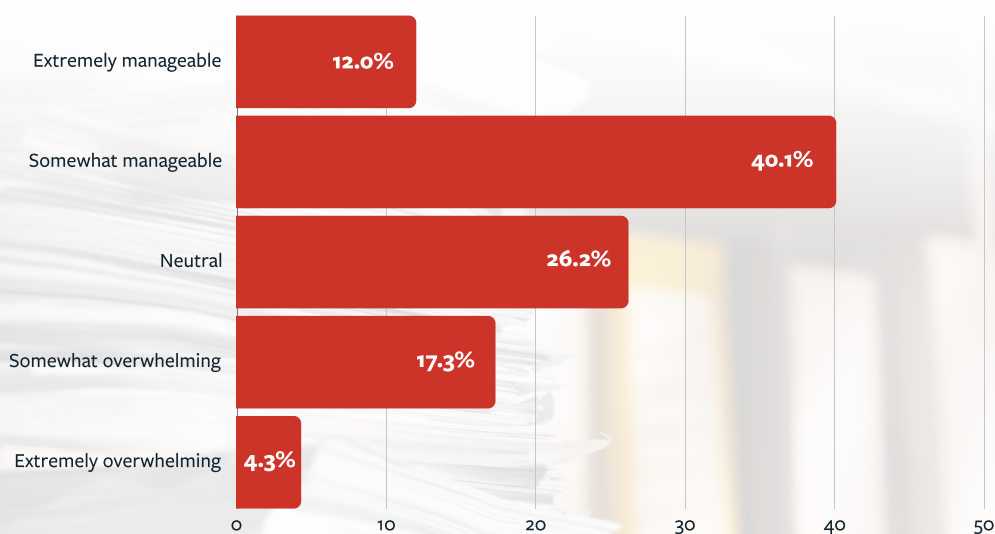
In a competitive legal market, understanding what drives workplace fulfilment and work/life balance is essential for firms looking to retain and engage talent in 2025.

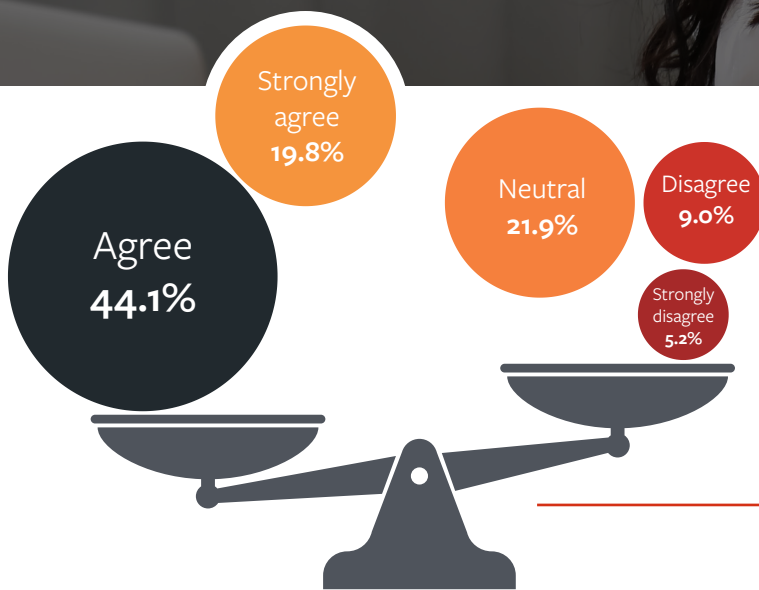
Our latest survey reveals that job satisfaction in the legal profession stems from a blend of technical, interpersonal, and developmental aspects. While 42.0% of respondents found the legal work itself (such as casework and advising) particularly fulfilling, many also pointed to working with clients (26.5%), collaboration with team members (25.1%), and learning new skills (21.7%) as key contributors. Notably, mentoring junior staff and business development were cited by 17.0% respectively, and 18.5% took fulfilment from achieving measurable outcomes such as winning cases.

This spread of responses suggests fulfilment is multidimensional – extending well beyond legal problem-solving to include people-centred, performance-driven, and developmental motivations.

On the topic of workload, just over half (52.1%) said their current workload is manageable, with 12.0% describing it as “extremely manageable” and 40.1% as “somewhat manageable.” However, 21.6% reported feeling overwhelmed to some degree – a cause for concern when considering the link between high workloads and lawyer burnout, a subject increasingly covered in industry press and employment law updates.

Workload Perception





Work/life balance Support

(When asked whether their firm provides adequate support)

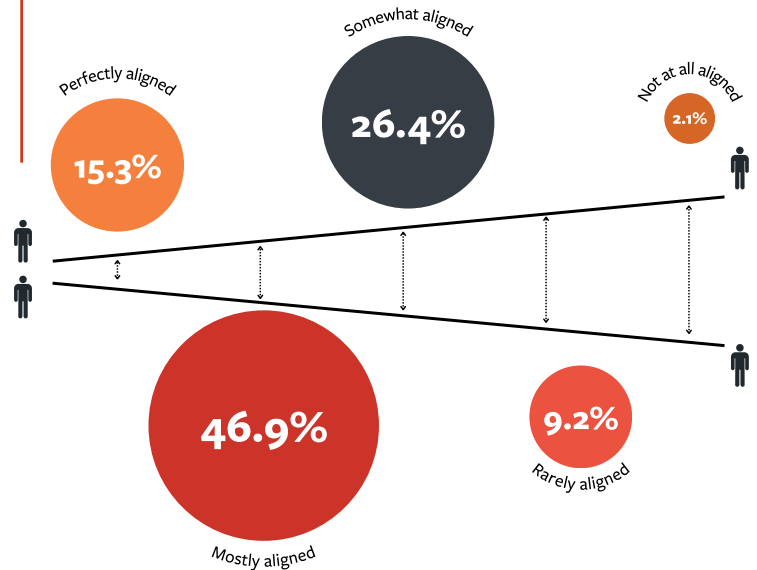
Work/life balance, while broadly positive, shows room for improvement. A combined 63.9% agreed their firm provides adequate support in this area, but 14.2% disagreed – a reminder that despite more widespread hybrid working, wellbeing support must be meaningful, visible, and consistent.

Cultural Alignment

Crucially, 62.2% of respondents said their firm's culture is either "perfectly" or "mostly" aligned with their personal values. This correlation between cultural alignment and satisfaction reflects wider 2025 trends: recent reports from [LinkedIn](#) highlight that employees are more likely to stay in roles where their firm's values match their own, and where they feel they are treated with dignity and autonomy.

Furthermore, a recent editorial in [The Guardian](#) emphasises that enhancing workplace dignity and aligning organisational values with employees' personal values can boost job satisfaction and productivity.

Ultimately, the results point to a simple truth: firms that cultivate a fulfilling, balanced, and values-led working environment are far more likely to retain top legal talent – particularly in a market where flexibility, purpose, and wellbeing are increasingly non-negotiable.



Conclusion:

A Legal Hiring Landscape in Transition

The 2024/25 Clayton Legal Salary Survey paints a picture of a legal recruitment market that is cautious but not static – a profession recalibrating its values, priorities, and people strategies in the face of continued change.

Economic pressures, evolving workforce demographics, and heightened candidate expectations have all played a role in shaping the year's hiring and retention challenges. While demand for legal talent remains high, particularly in specialist areas such as compliance, commercial property, and private client, firms continue to wrestle with candidate shortages and shifting notions of value – where flexibility, culture, and purpose weigh as heavily as pay.

Mobility within the profession has dipped, but that doesn't equate to complacency. Legal professionals are making considered moves, often driven by a desire for career progression, better work/life balance, or stronger cultural alignment. The traditional salary arms race has lost some of its dominance, with autonomy and support emerging as equally powerful motivators.

This year's data also highlights critical regional and practice-specific nuances. The North continues to see high demand for property and costs specialists. Litigation is evolving towards niche areas. Family and private client firms face a tight talent pipeline, and the compliance function is increasingly stretched by rising regulatory demand and constrained budgets.

Importantly, the survey underscores a growing desire for meaningful, supported careers. Professionals are calling for clearer development pathways, mentoring, recognition, and transparency. Bonuses and benefits play their part – but what really retains talent in 2025 is purposeful leadership and genuine support for wellbeing and growth.

For employers, the takeaway is clear: the war for legal talent is no longer just about acquisition, but also about retention and reputation. The firms that will thrive in this next phase are those who adapt – who champion inclusion, invest in future leaders, offer flexibility without compromise, and cultivate cultures that reflect what professionals truly value.

At Clayton Legal, we're proud to partner with law firms and legal professionals navigating this shifting landscape.

Whether you're hiring or considering your next move, we're here to help – with honest insight, tailored support, and a long-standing commitment to doing the right thing, for every person and every placement.



This year's research shows a legal sector in quiet transformation. Professionals aren't just chasing titles or salaries – they're prioritising flexibility, values, and the ability to thrive.

Law firms that recognise this shift and evolve their culture accordingly will stand out. It's no longer just about where you work, but how you're supported, how you're developed, and whether your firm's vision aligns with your own. The firms who understand that – and act on it – won't just hire better, they'll keep the best people too.



Louise Kearns

Managing Director

l.kearns@clayton-legal.co.uk



Salary Survey & Legal Market Report

2025

Call us

Preston: 01772 259 121

Manchester: 0161 9147 357

Liverpool: 0151 2301 208

Yorkshire: 0113 3979 929

Midlands: 0121 2963 819

London: 0203 7149 446

Email us

enquiries@clayton-legal.co.uk

Connect with us

/Clayton Legal