

LAW PRACTICE SALARY GUIDE 2023-24

London, Essex and
East of England



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Our services

AJ Chambers is an award-winning specialist consultancy. From entry-level salaries to those at the top of the profession, our guide is your go-to resource for the legal salary you can expect. We have spent over 10 years understanding and shaping futures in the UK's leading law firms.

With the changing economy, it's hard to know what to expect when it comes to salary in the legal sector. Our guide is based on reliable sources and provides up-to-date information on salaries in the legal field.



- Our specialists have an incredibly in-depth knowledge of the marketplace
- We are committed to becoming the industry's most trusted advisor
- We will be there every step of the way with expert insights and advice
- We offer a tailored service to fit different organisation requirements



Corporate & Commercial



Litigation



Employment Law



Private Client



Family Law



Property Law

Overview

Over the last 12 months, we have seen continued and sustained growth at law firms throughout the country. The demand for legal professionals, across all practice areas, has remained a high priority for law firms amidst reports of record revenue growth for 2022, despite economic challenges on the horizon.

As various headwinds continue to impact the wider economy, the legal sector is remaining very strong on multiple levels and we anticipate this to continue in 2023. We believe that there will be an increased focus on sustainability through this cautious optimism. Given the news that the economy may even avoid a recession, we expect the rest of this year to remain strong.



Introduction from
Andrew Fragnito-Day
Stuart Whiter and
Ella Britton



Overview

Although interest rates have increased and property prices have dropped, we are still encountering conveyancing opportunities, which proves how robust the practice area has become. After a year of stability in family law, following 'no-fault divorce' we anticipate this to be a strong area in 2023, along with Private Wealth, which will always be topical in economic uncertainty as clients look to preserve their wealth.

In the commercial space, the outlook remains buoyant. Strong M&A activity across the commercial space has kept the Corporate and Commercial market very busy, as well as large construction projects ensuring a strong demand for those in the Real Estate space. We expect that Insolvency and Employment to have particularly strong years, as some companies struggle to meet the demands of increasing costs.

Support Roles changing

Over the last year we have seen a move in the support roles, where the Legal PA/Secretary roles have moved quickly, including individuals moving from the magic circle firms to smaller boutique firms and International Law Firms. Salaries seem to be steady but top end salaries are lower than before with hybrid working being more popular than ever. Before higher salaries and annual leave entitlement were the priority, now the main criteria are flexible working and home based working. Salaries within the Secretarial field differ significantly in London and Essex with at least £10k difference.

Paralegals are on the rise with clients expecting more experience and not guaranteeing a training contract which in turn has seen Paralegals joining smaller practices where the opportunity to qualify within the firm has a clearer path. But clients expect for the individual to show commitment and be with the firm at least a year until this is a discussion to be had. Local salaries and London salaries like the Secretarial roles differ but not as dramatic, £4k - £8k difference.

US Law Firms in the UK

The US has long been known for offering high salaries to lawyers in their legal profession. This has been especially true for the UK legal profession where the salaries for top British law firms have been steadily rising in recent years.

The rapid rise in salaries for US law firms in the UK has been driven by a number of factors. Primarily, these include the increasing demand for highly qualified lawyers from the United States, a trend that has been driven by the country's booming economy and the resulting demand for legal services.

Additionally, the rise in salaries has been fueled by the increasing demand for experienced attorneys who are able to advise clients on a range of issues. As such, the salaries of US law firms in the UK have skyrocketed over the last few years.

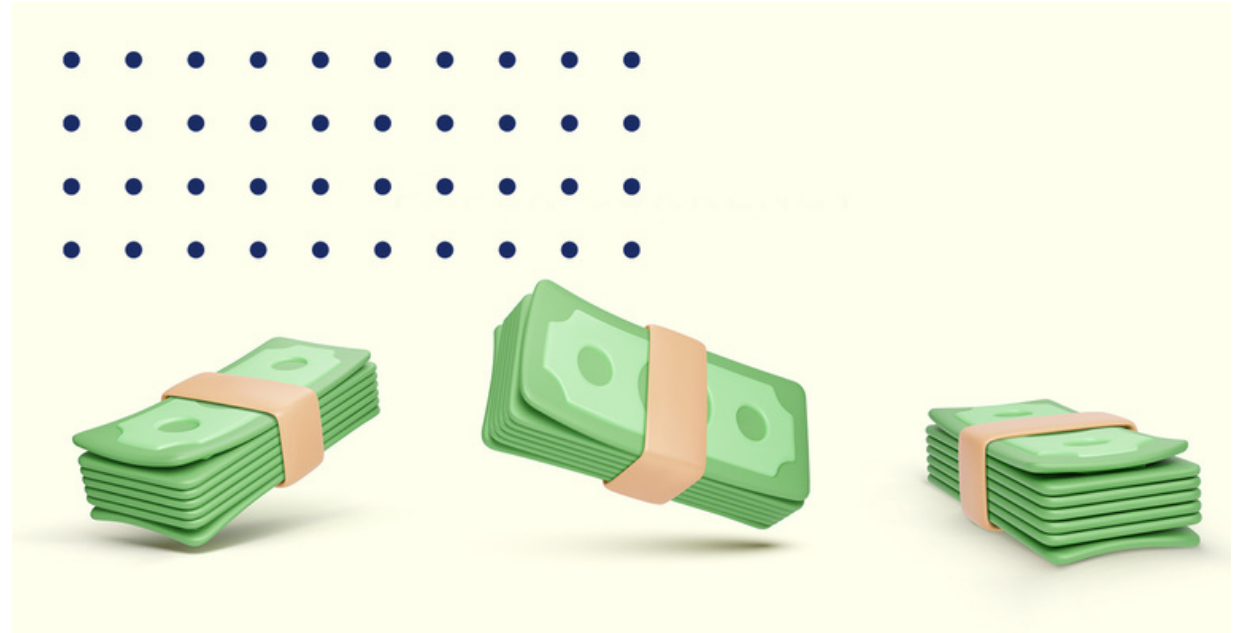
Furthermore, the rise in salaries is also attributed to the increasing competition among US law firms in the UK. As the number of US law firms in the UK continues to grow, the salaries of these firms have also increased significantly.

US Law Firms - Expected Salary

Role	Min
Partner	£300,000+
7+ Years PQE	£260,000+
6 Years PQE	£240,000+
5 Years PQE	£220,000+
4 Years PQE	£200,000+
3 Years PQE	£180,000+
2 Years PQE	£170,000+
1 Year PQE	£160,000+
Newly Qualified	£150,000+
Paralegal	£25,000

Trends in the legal market

Insights from Shannon Aldis



Salary bunching

When deciding where to train, or deciding on an NQ position, many aspiring and training solicitors are probably lured in by the high NQ salaries, and who can blame them.

However, NQ salaries alone are not necessarily a good indication of future earning potential.

Whilst most law firms disclose their NQ starting salaries, future earning potential is sometimes kept under wraps. Even for recruiters, it can be difficult to get a clear answer on salary bandings and how they equate to certain PQE levels.

However, through our market knowledge we do have a pretty clear grasp on the market rate. Earlier in the year, Legal Cheek opened a forum in which solicitors were asked to disclose the salary bandings at their current firms, providing never-before-seen insight into the pay structures of London law firms.

While we are unable to validate the data contained in that forum, it did confirm something we had already suspected. Salary bunching is real and as Legal Cheek termed it, “the unspoken effect of the war on talent”.

Salary bunching

WHAT IS SALARY BUNCHING?

Salary bunching refers to the pay structure of a firm or company, where employees do not necessarily see pay rises in line with their increased experience.

For example, one individual mentioned that an international law firm was paying its NQ solicitors £95k, its 1 PQE solicitors £96k, £98k for those with 2 PQE and £101k for those with 3.

As an NQ (or aspiring solicitor) a £10k increase in salary over a 3 to 4 year time period, is not necessarily what you would expect given the flashy NQ figures.

WHAT IS DRIVING THIS TREND?

The war on talent is unrelenting. When 'Biglaw' US firms entered the UK legal market, they set salaries soaring with some NQ solicitors being offered pay packets above and beyond £150,000 p.a.

To try to stop a mass exodus, Magic Circle and other elite UK-based firms have had to increase salaries to attract and retain young talent. This sparks a chain reaction and soon all law firms are upping salaries in order to compete.

WHEN WILL THIS BUBBLE BURST?

Many consider the huge pay increases we are currently seeing at the junior end of the market to be unsustainable.

The more firms pay their lawyers, the more money the firm has to earn. Cost is inevitably going to be passed to clients who will end up paying more for the same level of service.

Reluctant to fall too far behind the market rate, salary bunching may be one way that firms have tried to balance this issue. If they can get away with paying a 3 PQE only £6k more than an NQ, why wouldn't they employ this tactic?

Many suggest that the salary growth bubble will burst within the next couple of years, and I suspect they are right.

Something tells me that it will not be long before other firms are forced to join them and hold steady.



Salaries 2023-24

The following salaries relate to legal professionals working in London, Essex and the East of England. As one of the leading legal consultancies, we have taken this data from our day-to-day specialist experience in the market. We also include Legal Support professionals working in London (US and non-US law firms), and regional practices.

London

Private Practice - City Firm

Role	Min	Max
Partner	£140,000	£150,000+
7+ Years PQE	£110,000	£125,000
6 Years PQE	£100,000	£115,000
5 Years PQE	£90,000	£107,000
4 Years PQE	£85,000	£100,000
3 Years PQE	£79,000	£95,000
2 Years PQE	£75,000	£90,000
1 Year PQE	£73,000	£85,000
Newly Qualified	£70,000	£80,000

West End Firm

Min	Max
£80,000	£150,000
£75,000	£110,000
£72,000	£105,000
£70,000	£100,000
£68,000	£95,000
£65,000	£90,000
£62,000	£85,000
£58,000	£80,000
£55,000	£75,000

International Firm

Min	Max
£150,000	£200,000+
£140,000	£200,000
£130,000	£190,000
£120,000	£180,000
£110,000	£170,000
£100,000	£150,000
£95,000	£140,000
£90,000	£130,000
£85,000	£125,000

These figures are a guide only. Salaries differ from firm to firm.

Essex and East of England

These figures represent the salary bands for Solicitors, Licensed Conveyancers, and Legal Executives in line with their level of experience.

Role	Boutique Firms		Regional Firms	
	Min	Max	Min	Max
Partner	£60,000	£70,000+	£80,000	£130,000+
7+ Years PQE	£50,000	£60,000	£61,000	£84,000
6 Years PQE	£45,000	£55,000	£58,000	£80,000
5 Years PQE	£42,000	£50,000	£55,000	£77,000
4 Years PQE	£40,000	£48,000	£52,000	£74,000
3 Years PQE	£38,000	£45,000	£49,000	£71,000
2 Years PQE	£35,000	£43,000	£46,000	£68,000
1 Year PQE	£33,000	£41,000	£43,000	£65,000
Newly Qualified	£30,000	£38,000	£40,000	£62,000

These figures are a guide only. Salaries differ from firm to firm.

Legal Support positions

Role	London (Non US Firms)		London (US Firms)		Regional Firms	
	Graduate	2+ years	Min	Max	Min	Max
Paralegal	£25,000	£34,000	£25,000	£40,000	£20,000	£30,000
Legal PA	£34,000	£45,000	£34,000	£50,000	£23,000	£30,000
Legal Assistant	£30,000	£40,000	£25,000	£35,000	£22,000	£30,000
Legal Secretary	£28,000	£45,000	£32,000	£50,000	£23,000	£28,000

These figures are a guide only. Salaries differ from firm to firm.

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Fantastic Support

Thanks to the help of Andrew Fragnito-Day he has helped me secure the job offer of a lifetime. Andrew took on board any requirements I might have when deciding upon my new role. I am incredibly grateful for his help and could not recommend him more highly.

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Highly recommended

Clementine connected with me on LinkedIn and secured an interview within a few days. I was offered the job just 2 hours later. When Clementine went on holiday one of her colleagues kept in touch at all times and helped when I needed to push back my start date. I would recommend AJ Chambers and intend to use them again when my current contract ends.

Positive!

My experience with AJ Chambers has been overwhelmingly positive. Ella provided me with excellent support and found me the most perfect role. I would not hesitate in recommending AJ Chambers to anyone looking for a new role in the legal sector!

Skilled Legal Recruiters

Shannon and Stuart are down to earth, professional and clearly understand that legal market well. They provided ourselves with an outstanding candidate for a strategically important, difficult to fill role. Thanks to both!

Read more of our testimonials [here](#)



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