Industry Trends & Salary Guide 2026–2027

EXPECTATIONS EXCEEDED | ASPIRATIONS ASSURED

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INTRODUCTION

"The measure of intelligence is the ability to change."

– ALBERT EINSTEIN

Since 2005, Core-Asset Consulting has produced the definitive Salary Guide for the financial and professional services sectors. Recognised as a trusted partner for compensation benchmarking and strategic headcount planning, the guide draws on deep sector expertise to provide insight into emerging trends, evolving risks, and the shifting dynamics shaping the labour market.

This edition has been developed using our in-depth 2025 candidate and recruiter survey, conducted across a broad range of industries, and overlaid with real-time market intelligence gathered throughout the year. The research explores key themes including changes in the job market, business transformation, career priorities, working preferences, and organisational values.

By combining perspectives from both employers and employees, this guide is designed to support informed hiring and workforce planning decisions for 2026. It offers clarity, context, and practical insight at a time when financial and professional services firms are navigating sustained transformation, cost pressure, regulatory complexity, and rapidly evolving expectations around talent, productivity, and culture.

BETSY WILLIAMSON,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Core-Asset CONSULTING

“2025 CEMENTED THE INDUSTRY’S FOCUS ON RESILIENCE, REGULATORY ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATION. THESE CHANGES WERE NOT INCREMENTAL — THEY WERE STRUCTURAL.”

– BETSY WILLIAMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE (CEO)

MARKET REVIEW

Review - 2025

2025 was a year defined by regulatory acceleration, geopolitical uncertainty, and ongoing transformation across the UK’s financial and professional services sectors. While the broader economy continued to navigate inflationary pressures and uneven growth, financial services continued to adapt to challenging conditions, underpinned by pockets of capital markets activity, targeted investment in technology, and sustained demand for critical specialist skills.

Political stability played a key role. With a full year under the UK’s Labour government and fiscal direction becoming clearer, firms began adjusting their hiring strategies in anticipation of new public investment plans, evolving tax policies, and increased scrutiny on governance and conduct. Global events, including ongoing conflict in Eastern Europe and persistent supply chain tension, continued to influence market confidence and risk appetite.

Alongside these macro pressures, 2025 marked a decisive turning point in how organisations approached productivity and transformation. The imperative to “do more with less” became a defining strategic driver, shaped by a combination of elevated interest rates, inflationary cost pressures, sustained regulatory investment, and constrained access to specialist talent. These pressures were compounded by the post-pandemic recruitment surge following the reopening of labour markets, when firms competed aggressively for scarce skills, driving significant salary inflation across financial and professional services.

As a result, many organisations entered 2024–25 with a materially higher cost base, particularly in people, while overall productivity gains failed to keep pace. UK productivity growth remained subdued relative to historic trends, intensifying scrutiny on cost efficiency and return on headcount. Together, these factors limited headcount-led growth and accelerated the shift towards productivity improvement through automation, workflow redesign, and AI-enabled operating models.

As investment flowed into AI-enabled tools, workflow automation, and data infrastructure, AI moved beyond back-office experimentation into front-office enablement, reshaping research, reporting, and decision-making processes. Productivity, data quality, and operational efficiency became dominant themes in board-level discussions, directly influencing organisational design and hiring priorities.

Despite continued geopolitical uncertainty and elevated interest rates, these pressures acted as catalysts rather than constraints. The financial and professional services sectors continued to operate against a challenging backdrop, while maintaining their central role in the UK economy and contributing significantly to output, employment, and international competitiveness. However, the composition of that contribution continued to shift, with digital capability, data literacy, and hybrid skillsets increasingly valued over traditional role demarcations.

Professional services experienced a parallel reinvention. Demand grew for advisory expertise in digital transformation, AI governance, and operational redesign, reflecting the challenges clients faced internally. Employment across the sector remained substantial, but roles evolved rapidly. Hybrid skillsets — combining domain expertise with data fluency and regulatory understanding — became essential, particularly within advisory, finance, risk, and technology functions.

Geographically, major hubs such as London and Edinburgh continued to anchor the UK’s global competitiveness, particularly in asset management, fintech innovation, and regulatory expertise. At the same time, regional centres across the Midlands, the North of England, and Ireland gained momentum. Decentralisation strategies, supported by scalable digital infrastructure, enabled firms to build distributed teams without compromising capability, supporting both regional economic growth and broader access to skilled employment.

In Scotland, financial and professional services continued to play a central role in the economy throughout 2025, but the recruitment market was notably more challenging. Edinburgh and Glasgow continued to anchor asset management, fintech, and sustainable finance activity; however, hiring volumes were uneven, with firms adopting a more cautious, selective approach amid cost pressures, regulatory delivery, and ongoing transformation. Rather than broad-based expansion, demand was concentrated in specialist areas such as compliance, risk, data, and digital transformation, reflecting the sector’s focus on resilience and long-term capability building.

Looking back, 2025 cemented the industry’s focus on resilience, regulatory accountability, and long-term transformation. These changes were not incremental — they were structural. Organisations increasingly balanced cost discipline with strategic investment, particularly in technology, operational resilience, ESG capability, and people, laying the foundations for a more digitally enabled, outcome-focused financial services sector.

OVERVIEW

Outlook - 2026

The outlook for 2026 reflects a sector moving decisively from strategy to execution amid continued complexity. While economic conditions are expected to stabilise, supported by improving market confidence and easing inflationary pressure, financial and professional services firms are likely to continue operating within a constrained environment. Cost discipline, regulatory delivery, productivity expectations, and the need to rebalance post-pandemic cost bases are expected to shape hiring, investment, and workforce strategies throughout the year.

A defining feature of 2026 will be the shift from strategic intent to delivery. Firms face the challenge of executing technology, regulatory, and operating model change simultaneously, while managing heightened scrutiny from regulators, boards, and investors. Cost pressure, technology enablement, and governance expectations will increasingly converge, placing greater emphasis on execution capability, role clarity, and measurable outcomes.

Regulatory focus will intensify across multiple dimensions. While Consumer Duty moves further into enforcement, supervisory attention will increasingly extend to operational resilience, outsourcing and third-party risk, data governance, and digital decision-making. The FCA's non-financial misconduct framework is expected to progress towards implementation, embedding culture, conduct, and behavioural risk more formally into regulatory and governance frameworks. As a result, expectations on boards, senior leadership, HR, legal, and compliance teams will continue to rise, with culture and conduct scrutinised alongside financial and operational performance.

Investor and allocator expectations are also evolving. Beyond strategic narratives, firms are increasingly expected to evidence efficiency, resilience, and tangible returns on technology investment. Demonstrable AI-enabled productivity gains — rather than ambition alone — are becoming a differentiator in capital allocation, placing further pressure on organisations to translate innovation into measurable outcomes.

Labour market pressures are expected to persist into 2026. Economic inactivity remains above pre-pandemic levels, and shortages across specialist and technical disciplines — particularly in compliance, financial crime, actuarial science, data, cyber, engineering, and change delivery — show little sign of easing. In this environment, firms are likely to prioritise retention, internal mobility, and targeted upskilling over broad-based recruitment. Hiring activity is expected to remain selective, focused on roles that directly support regulatory delivery, transformation, and revenue protection.

Across investment management, alternatives, advisory, and private markets, demand is increasingly concentrated on hybrid skillsets that combine domain expertise with data, automation, and AI-enabled workflows. Traditional role boundaries continue to blur as firms redesign teams around outcomes rather than functions.

In Scotland, competition for experienced talent is expected to remain acute, reflecting both national shortages and continued nearshoring activity from London-based firms. Employers are likely to place greater emphasis on hybrid working models, clear progression pathways, and broader UK-wide hiring strategies to access scarce skills. Alongside the UK, Ireland is expected to remain a key growth market in 2026, particularly across fund servicing, hedge fund operations, and regulatory reporting, with AI oversight and governance capability driving demand.

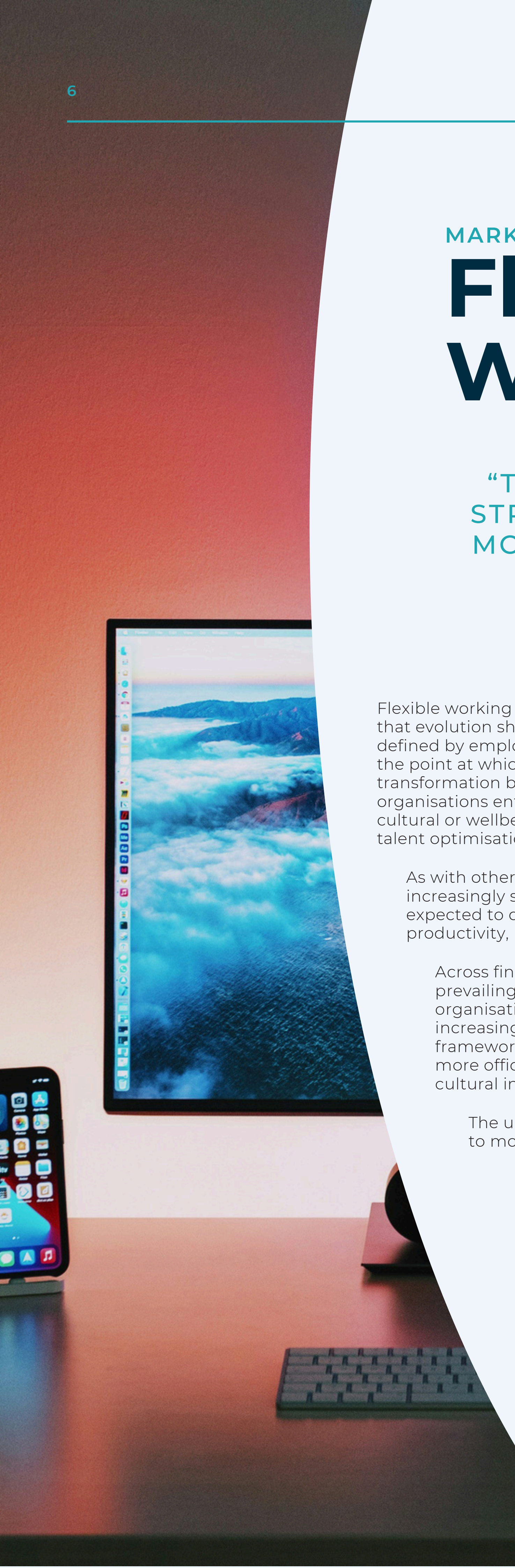
Technology adoption will accelerate further in 2026, but with a sharper emphasis on execution, control, and return on investment. AI and automation will continue to reshape compliance monitoring, client onboarding, investment research, reporting, and operational processes. However, regulatory scrutiny of AI-enabled decision-making, data integrity, and model governance will intensify, requiring firms to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and effective human oversight. The focus will shift decisively from experimentation to embedded, business-as-usual deployment that delivers measurable productivity gains.

Operational resilience will remain a central regulatory and operational priority. As resilience frameworks transition fully into supervision and testing regimes, firms will be expected to demonstrate ongoing scenario testing, remediation, and oversight of critical services and third-party dependencies. This will continue to sustain demand for risk, change, technology, and governance capability, even as overall headcount growth remains constrained.

Cost pressures are expected to remain elevated throughout 2026. Incremental employment law changes, rising statutory costs, and ongoing wage inflation — particularly in specialist roles — will influence headcount planning. Many organisations will seek to rationalise inflated salary structures created during the post-pandemic hiring surge, placing greater emphasis on productivity, automation, role consolidation, and the selective use of interim and contract resource.

Looking ahead, **ESG and sustainability** considerations are expected to move further from narrative to enforcement. Firms will face increasing scrutiny around ESG disclosures, data quality, and greenwashing risk, particularly within asset management, pensions, insurance, and private markets. Demand for ESG, risk, legal, and data expertise is therefore expected to remain relatively resilient, even where broader hiring activity slows.

Across the UK and Ireland, 2026 is expected to be defined less by growth and more by execution. Financial and professional services firms will be judged on their ability to translate AI investment into measurable productivity, operational resilience, and sustainable operating models. Scotland's regional strengths — particularly in fintech, asset management, risk, and professional services — position it well to support these priorities, although successful execution will remain highly dependent on access to critical skills, leadership capability, and effective change management.



MARKET COMMENTARY

Flexible Working

"THE TREND FOR 2026 IS TOWARDS STRUCTURED FLEXIBILITY — HYBRID MODELS THAT BALANCE AUTONOMY WITH CLEARER EXPECTATIONS AROUND OFFICE PRESENCE."

– BETSY WILLIAMSON, CEO

Flexible working continued to evolve throughout 2025, but the drivers behind that evolution shifted significantly. Whereas the post-pandemic years were defined by employee expectations and wellbeing considerations, 2025 marked the point at which AI adoption, productivity pressures, and operational transformation became the dominant forces shaping workplace design. As organisations enter 2026, flexible working is no longer viewed primarily as a cultural or wellbeing initiative — it has become a strategic lever for efficiency, talent optimisation, cost containment, and digital enablement.

As with other areas of transformation, flexible working models are increasingly subject to board-level and senior leadership scrutiny, with firms expected to demonstrate that hybrid arrangements actively support productivity, resilience, and delivery rather than dilute accountability.

Across financial and professional services, hybrid working remains the prevailing model, but it is not being applied uniformly across organisations. While experienced and senior professionals are increasingly operating within structured, outcomes-led hybrid frameworks, expectations for junior and early-career roles are becoming more office-based, reflecting the importance of learning, supervision, and cultural integration.

The unstructured flexibility of previous years is therefore giving way to more differentiated, role- and seniority-specific models.

Firms are increasingly differentiating between:

- AI-enabled and specialist roles, typically at mid-to-senior level, that can be performed remotely with high efficiency, such as data analysis, reporting oversight, and certain investment research functions
- Collaboration-heavy and leadership roles, where in-person interaction supports decision-making, oversight, and complex problem-solving
- Junior and operational oversight roles, where proximity to teams, systems, and regulated environments supports learning, supervision, and risk management

The trend for 2026 is towards structured flexibility — hybrid models that balance autonomy with clearer expectations around office presence, collaboration rhythms, and productivity outcomes.

Flexible working is also increasingly linked to real estate strategy and cost base optimisation. Firms are reassessing office footprints, regional hubs, and location-based pay structures as part of a broader reset of post-pandemic cost bases, using hybrid models to balance access to talent with tighter control of fixed costs.

The rapid integration of AI tools across middle office, risk, compliance, and investment functions is changing how work is organised and, critically, how productivity is monitored. In 2026, AI is less about enabling freedom and more about enabling control, visibility, and efficiency within increasingly flexible operating models.

In practice:

- Routine and repeatable tasks are increasingly automated, reducing dependency on manual effort and limiting the need for physical presence in execution-heavy roles
- Teams are being structured around outputs and delivery milestones, with AI providing real-time visibility into workflow progress, bottlenecks, and capacity utilisation
- Scheduling, resourcing, and performance management are becoming more data-led, allowing firms to flex working patterns while maintaining accountability and regulatory oversight

Rather than expanding flexibility for its own sake, AI is allowing firms to apply flexibility selectively and safely, supporting tighter cost control, clearer accountability, and more consistent delivery across distributed teams.

While some global institutions increased office attendance during 2024–25, the approach in 2026 is less about blanket mandates and more about targeted intervention. Under continued cost pressure and heightened scrutiny on productivity, firms are increasingly aligning office presence to specific business outcomes rather than visibility or presenteeism.

In practice, this means organisations are:

- Requiring in-office attendance where it demonstrably improves delivery, such as onboarding, regulated supervision, complex collaboration, and decision-making that benefits from real-time interaction
- Reducing physical attendance for execution-heavy or AI-enabled tasks, where productivity can be measured digitally and delivered more efficiently outside the office
- Using office space more selectively, consolidating footprints and prioritising functions that support learning, oversight, and critical collaboration rather than routine desk-based activity

This shift reflects a more disciplined approach to workforce design. Office attendance is increasingly treated as a productivity and risk-management tool, not a cultural default — supporting tighter cost control, clearer accountability, and more efficient use of both people and real estate.

The workforce is becoming more segmented in its expectations:

- Early-career talent increasingly values in-person learning, mentorship, and social connection
- Mid-career professionals prioritise flexibility, autonomy, and reduced commuting
- Senior leaders remain focused on culture, cohesion, and strategic alignment

Firms that succeed in 2026 will be those that tailor flexible working models to different career stages, supported by AI-enabled workflow visibility and performance measurement.

As remote and hybrid models mature, regulators are paying closer attention to:

- Data security
- Model oversight
- Operational resilience
- Supervision of AI-enabled workflows
- Record keeping and audit trails

In 2026, firms will need to demonstrate that flexible working arrangements are supported by robust governance frameworks, particularly in regulated functions such as risk, compliance, and portfolio oversight.

"FIRMS THAT SUCCEED IN 2026 WILL BE THOSE THAT TAILOR FLEXIBLE WORKING MODELS TO DIFFERENT CAREER STAGES, SUPPORTED BY AI-ENABLED WORKFLOW VISIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT."

Flexible working expectations and norms continue to vary across the UK and Ireland:

- **Scotland** continues to favour hybrid models supported by strong digital infrastructure, although 2026 is expected to bring clearer expectations around office attendance for learning, collaboration, and regulated activity
- **North of England** hubs are using flexibility as a competitive advantage to attract talent from London, with remote and hybrid working remaining a key differentiator
- **London** is seeing a more structured return to office across alternatives, private markets, traditional investment management, private wealth, and investment banking
- **Ireland** maintains high levels of flexibility in fund servicing and tech-enabled roles, supported by multinational operating models

These regional differences will continue to shape hiring strategies, salary benchmarking, and talent mobility in 2026.

In 2026, flexible working will be defined by structured hybrid models, AI-enabled productivity, and role- and seniority-specific expectations. What was once a cultural benefit is now a strategic business tool — shaping cost structures, hiring strategies, and workforce design across financial and professional service

MARKET COMMENTARY

Regulatory

2026 will be a defining year for regulation across the UK and Europe, marking a clear shift from framework implementation to active supervision and enforcement. While 2024–25 focused on stabilising the post-pandemic regulatory landscape and embedding Consumer Duty, the year ahead reflects a more structural change in supervisory priorities. Regulators are now concentrating on AI governance, operational resilience, data integrity, and senior management accountability in increasingly automated operating environments across both financial and professional services.

Supervisory bodies including the FCA, PRA, ESMA, and their international counterparts have been explicit that the adoption of AI and digital tools does not dilute regulatory expectations — it intensifies them. In line with wider market dynamics, regulatory scrutiny in 2026 is increasingly focused on execution: how frameworks operate in practice, how risks are managed day to day, and whether firms can evidence consistent delivery rather than intent alone. Firms are expected to demonstrate not only compliance, but active, documented oversight of how technology influences decision-making, risk management, and client or customer outcomes.

These developments are not only reshaping operational strategies but are also driving increased demand for talent in regulatory and compliance-related roles.

The most significant regulatory development for 2026 is the emergence of AI governance as a core supervisory priority. As firms scale the use of AI across onboarding, surveillance, suitability, credit decisioning, risk modelling, reporting, and client communications, regulators are focusing on whether firms can explain, control, and evidence how automated decisions are made.

Supervisory scrutiny is increasingly centred on transparency around model training, validation, and monitoring; clear delineation of human oversight and decision-making; bias mitigation and fairness in automated processes; auditability and explainability of AI-driven outputs; and robust data lineage, quality, and security. Firms deploying AI are expected to demonstrate comprehensive governance frameworks, including model risk management, scenario testing, and clear board-level accountability for AI-enabled processes.

These expectations extend beyond regulated financial institutions. Professional services firms using AI-enabled tools for advisory, modelling, drafting, due diligence, audit support, and analytical work are increasingly required to demonstrate governance over how technology informs professional judgement. Clear ownership of decision-making, transparency around AI use, and defensible audit trails are becoming essential to manage professional liability, client risk, and reputational exposure.

In parallel, investors and institutional clients are increasingly acting as secondary sources of regulatory pressure, demanding transparency, assurance, and evidence of governance quality as part of capital allocation and client selection decisions.

Operational resilience also moves into a more intensive supervisory phase in 2026. Having met earlier implementation milestones, firms are now expected to evidence that important business services can withstand disruption in practice. This includes demonstrable resilience testing, remediation planning, and continuous improvement.

Regulators are placing increased emphasis on the integration of AI-enabled processes into resilience frameworks, alongside strengthened oversight of outsourcing arrangements and third-party providers. As reliance on cloud platforms, data infrastructure, and external technology vendors increases, supervisory focus on concentration risk, digital supply chains, and operational dependencies is intensifying across both financial institutions and professional services providers delivering critical client-facing services.

As automation and AI become embedded at scale, data integrity has moved firmly into the regulatory spotlight. Supervisors are intensifying their focus on data accuracy, lineage and traceability, model inputs and assumptions, real-time reporting capability, cybersecurity, and data protection.

The FCA has made clear that poor data quality is no longer viewed solely as an operational weakness — it is increasingly treated as a conduct risk. For professional services firms, these expectations are reinforced by client-driven assurance and contractual requirements, with growing demand for transparency over data sources, assumptions, and AI-supported outputs forming part of commercial and delivery obligations.

Senior Managers & Certification Regime (SMCR) expectations continue to rise, particularly in relation to AI-enabled decision-making, outsourcing oversight, data governance, operational resilience, and conflicts of interest. boards and senior leaders are expected to demonstrate clear ownership of risks associated with digital transformation, including the ethical, conduct, and operational implications of automation.

For professional services firms, governance scrutiny is also intensifying around independence, conflicts management, and accountability structures — particularly where advisory, assurance, transformation, and managed services intersect. Firms are increasingly required to demonstrate clear separation of responsibilities, robust conflict frameworks, and transparent governance as service offerings become more integrated and technology-enabled.

Consumer Duty remains a central regulatory pillar within financial services, but in 2026 the emphasis shifts decisively from embedding to evidencing. Firms must demonstrate measurable improvements in customer outcomes, transparent pricing and value assessments, and effective, data-driven monitoring of product performance.

AI-driven customer interactions — including automated communications, suitability assessments, and decisioning — will be subject to heightened scrutiny. Regulators expect firms to proactively identify and mitigate harm, including harm arising from automated or data-led processes, with clear Senior Manager accountability.

With middle office, operational, and technology functions increasingly outsourced, regulators expect firms to demonstrate robust third-party oversight. This includes clear contractual accountability, regular performance and resilience assessments, and evidence that firms retain ownership of key controls.

In areas such as asset management, fund administration, hedge fund operations, and professional services delivery models, oversight — rather than execution — is increasingly the core internal function. This shift has direct implications for organisational design, governance capability, and the skills firms must retain in-house.

While AI dominates the regulatory agenda, ESG regulation remains a material and evolving priority. In 2026, firms face more detailed sustainability disclosure requirements, greater scrutiny of ESG data and methodologies, tighter controls to prevent greenwashing, and increasing expectations around biodiversity, climate resilience, and social impact reporting.

Asset management, real assets, infrastructure, real estate, and advisory firms are likely to feel this most acutely, particularly where ESG claims intersect with data quality, governance, and investor or client disclosure obligations.

From a workforce perspective, regulatory intensity continues to sustain demand for experienced compliance, financial crime, risk, legal, data governance, and regulatory change professionals across both financial and professional services. However, under ongoing cost pressure, firms are increasingly selective.

Crucially, regulatory expectations are not softening to reflect cost constraints. Firms are required to deliver compliance, governance, and supervisory outcomes within tighter, more efficient operating models rather than through headcount expansion alone. As a result, there is growing preference for individuals who can operate across regulatory, operational, and technological domains — translating complex regulatory expectations into practical, scalable business processes.

Professionals with experience in AI governance, data-led supervision, operational resilience, outsourcing oversight, and evidence-based regulatory delivery continue to command salary premiums, particularly where they can demonstrate impact within constrained operating environments.

MARKET COMMENTARY

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation accelerated significantly across financial and professional services during 2025, but 2026 marks a clear inflection point. What began as experimentation with automation, analytics, and AI has evolved into a fundamental redesign of how organisations operate, make decisions, and deliver value. In 2026, AI is no longer an adjunct to transformation programmes — it is becoming the defining force reshaping business models, workforce structures, and competitive advantage.

Across investment management, banking, insurance, private markets, real estate, legal, accountancy, and advisory services, firms are moving beyond incremental improvement towards AI-enabled operating models that prioritise productivity, resilience, and data-driven insight. The imperative to “do more with less” is now the central driver of transformation, reinforced by sustained cost pressure, regulatory scrutiny, and heightened expectations from clients and investors.

AI BECOMES THE CORE OPERATING LAYER

In 2026, AI is increasingly embedded as the digital infrastructure underpinning day-to-day operations rather than a standalone capability. Firms are deploying AI to automate manual processes, enhance risk and compliance oversight, improve investment research and portfolio analytics, strengthen operational resilience, personalise client engagement, support real-time decision-making, and reduce cost while increasing scalability.

This shift is structural rather than cyclical. As AI becomes embedded across workflows, organisations are redesigning how work is performed, how decisions are escalated, and where human judgement adds the greatest value. Firms that fail to modernise risk falling behind on efficiency, regulatory expectations, and client outcomes, particularly as peers begin to translate AI investment into measurable productivity gains.

FROM TECHNOLOGY DELIVERY TO OPERATING MODEL REDESIGN

A defining feature of digital transformation in 2026 is the move away from technology-led change towards operating model redesign. Firms are reassessing which activities should be automated, which require specialist expertise, and how teams are structured around outcomes rather than functions.

Traditional role boundaries continue to blur as AI-enabled workflows support cross-functional delivery. This is reshaping job design, performance measurement, and career pathways across both financial and professional services. Transformation programmes are increasingly evaluated not on speed of deployment, but on their ability to embed sustainably into business-as-usual operations.

COST DISCIPLINE AND VALUE REALISATION

Cost discipline remains a critical constraint on digital transformation. Many organisations entered 2026 with elevated technology and people costs following rapid post-pandemic investment cycles. As a result, transformation initiatives are now expected to deliver tangible cost reduction as well as capability enhancement.

Automation, workflow rationalisation, and platform consolidation are being prioritised over bespoke development. Firms are focusing on eliminating duplication, reducing manual intervention, and simplifying operating structures, with a clear emphasis on return on investment and payback periods rather than innovation for its own sake.

GOVERNANCE, CONTROL, AND ASSURANCE

As AI becomes more deeply embedded, governance and control have moved to the centre of transformation delivery. Regulators, boards, and clients expect firms to demonstrate robust oversight of digital tools, particularly where AI influences advice, risk decisions, or client outcomes.

This has elevated demand for strong data governance, model oversight, technology risk management, and change capability. Successful transformation increasingly depends on the ability to balance innovation with explainability, accountability, and control, ensuring that AI-enabled processes can withstand regulatory scrutiny and client assurance requirements.

WORKFORCE AND SKILLS IMPLICATIONS

From a workforce perspective, digital transformation continues to drive demand for hybrid skillsets. Firms are increasingly seeking professionals who combine domain expertise — across finance, advisory, risk, operations, and assurance — with digital and data fluency.

Demand remains strong for business analysts, product owners, data specialists, automation leads, and change professionals who can translate strategic objectives into deliverable outcomes. However, hiring remains selective. Employers are prioritising individuals who can demonstrate delivery impact, operational understanding, and the ability to work within constrained, execution-focused environments.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DELIVERY MODELS EVOLVE

Professional services firms face a parallel transformation challenge. As clients demand faster delivery, greater transparency, and defensible use of AI in advisory and assurance work, firms are investing in digital platforms and repeatable solutions to augment traditional delivery models.

This is reshaping utilisation, pricing, and talent strategies, with increased emphasis on IP-enabled services, data-driven insight, and scalable delivery rather than purely time-based billing. The ability to govern AI-supported outputs and evidence quality and judgement is becoming a differentiator in client selection and retention.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026, digital transformation will increasingly be judged by its ability to support resilience, scalability, and sustainable operating models. Firms that succeed will be those that treat AI as an enabler of disciplined execution — aligning digital investment with workforce design, governance expectations, and measurable business outcomes.

Those that fail to translate transformation into tangible value risk carrying inflated cost bases without commensurate productivity gains, leaving them exposed to competitive pressure, regulatory scrutiny, and shifting client expectations.

> “FIRMS THAT SUCCEED WILL BE THOSE THAT TREAT AI AS AN ENABLER OF DISCIPLINED EXECUTION — ALIGNING DIGITAL INVESTMENT WITH WORKFORCE DESIGN, GOVERNANCE EXPECTATIONS, AND MEASURABLE BUSINESS OUTCOMES.”
>
> – BETSY WILLIAMSON, CEO

MARKET COMMENTARY

Environmental Social Governance (ESG)

Environmental, Social and Governance considerations remained a central theme across financial and professional services throughout 2025, but the nature of the conversation evolved significantly. While earlier years focused on policy development, disclosure frameworks, and high-level commitments, 2025 marked a decisive shift toward evidence-based delivery, data integrity, and measurable impact. As organisations enter 2026, ESG is no longer viewed as a standalone initiative — it has become a core component of risk management, investment strategy, and operational resilience, increasingly intertwined with digital transformation and AI adoption.

Across asset management, banking, insurance, private markets, real estate, infrastructure, and professional services, firms are under growing pressure to demonstrate that ESG commitments are credible, governed, and consistently applied. Regulators, investors, and clients are increasingly focused on the substance of ESG frameworks: how claims are supported by data, how risks are overseen, and how sustainability considerations are embedded into decision-making.

FROM NARRATIVE TO EVIDENCE AND ENFORCEMENT

A defining shift for ESG in 2026 is the move from disclosure to enforcement. Regulators, investors, and institutional clients are demanding more than broad sustainability statements. Firms are now expected to demonstrate robust, auditable ESG data; clear methodologies for climate and biodiversity reporting; evidence of progress against net-zero pathways; transparent governance structures; and meaningful integration of ESG considerations into investment, lending, and advisory decisions.

The era of high-level commitments has passed. The expectation in 2026 is proof rather than promise, with increasing scrutiny of greenwashing risk and misalignment between stated objectives and underlying activity.

AI BECOMES A CATALYST FOR ESG DELIVERY

AI is increasingly acting as a catalyst for ESG execution rather than simply a governance challenge. As ESG reporting and analysis become more complex, firms are deploying AI and automation to improve the scalability, consistency, and timeliness of sustainability insights.

In practice, firms are using AI to automate ESG data collection and validation, enhance climate risk modelling and scenario analysis, monitor supply chain and counterparty sustainability risks, identify potential greenwashing indicators, support biodiversity and nature-related reporting, and improve transparency in stewardship and voting activity. This shift is enabling organisations to move away from manual, resource-intensive ESG processes toward real-time, data-driven sustainability intelligence.

However, as with other AI-enabled activity, this also raises governance expectations. Firms must be able to explain how ESG data is sourced, validated, and used, particularly where outputs influence investment decisions, client advice, or public disclosures.

CLIMATE AND NATURE REPORTING TIGHTEN

Climate-related reporting frameworks continue to mature in 2026, with regulators and investors expecting greater granularity and consistency. This includes more detailed emissions data, credible transition plans, physical and transition risk modelling, and increasing integration of nature-related risks in line with emerging principles such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

Real estate, infrastructure, and private markets are particularly affected, as asset-level data, climate resilience, and nature-related considerations become central to valuation, underwriting, and investment decision-making. Firms operating in these sectors face heightened expectations to evidence how ESG risks are identified, priced, and managed over the asset lifecycle.

GOVERNANCE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Governance remains the most scrutinised pillar of ESG in 2026 and increasingly acts as the lens through which environmental and social credibility is judged. Boards and senior leadership teams are under growing pressure to demonstrate strong oversight of ESG strategy, data, AI usage, and operational resilience, supported by clear accountability and effective governance frameworks.

Investors increasingly view governance quality as a proxy for long-term resilience. This includes scrutiny of conflicts of interest, stewardship and voting practices, alignment between ESG commitments and remuneration, and the robustness of oversight structures. For professional services firms, expectations are also rising around the independence and rigour of ESG-related advice, particularly where advisory, assurance, and implementation services intersect.

SOCIAL IMPACT GAINS MOMENTUM

The social dimension of ESG is gaining renewed focus in 2026, driven by both regulatory expectations and workforce realities. Firms are placing greater emphasis on socio-economic mobility initiatives, skills-based hiring, fair pay and progression transparency, community investment, and inclusive growth.

Employee wellbeing, particularly in hybrid and AI-enabled workplaces, is increasingly viewed as a component of social impact rather than a standalone HR issue. Organisations are recognising that social outcomes are not only a moral imperative but also a strategic differentiator in talent attraction, retention, and workforce sustainability.

REGIONAL ESG DYNAMICS

ESG priorities continue to vary across the UK and Ireland. Scotland remains a leader in sustainable finance, green investment, and climate innovation, supported by strong public and private sector collaboration. The North of England is strengthening ESG capability through regional investment and infrastructure programmes, while London remains the centre for stewardship, ESG analytics, and sustainable investment products.

Ireland continues to align closely with EU sustainability frameworks, driving sustained demand for ESG reporting, regulatory, and data expertise. These regional dynamics are shaping hiring patterns, capability building, and competition for ESG talent throughout 2026.

HIRING AND SKILLS IMPLICATIONS

From a talent perspective, ESG continues to drive demand for specialist capability, but hiring patterns are evolving. Rather than expanding standalone ESG teams, firms are increasingly seeking professionals who can combine ESG expertise with data, risk, regulatory, legal, and governance knowledge.

Demand remains strong for ESG analysts, sustainability specialists, climate risk professionals, and ESG data experts, particularly those able to translate complex regulatory and reporting requirements into practical business processes. Under continued cost pressure, firms are prioritising scalable ESG capability, favouring hybrid skillsets over volume hiring.

Professionals who can operate at the intersection of ESG, data, AI, and governance continue to command salary premiums, especially where they can support both regulatory compliance and commercial decision-making.

> “PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN OPERATE AT THE INTERSECTION OF ESG, DATA, AI, AND GOVERNANCE CONTINUE TO COMMAND SALARY PREMIUMS.”
>
> – BETSY WILLIAMSON, CEO

MARKET COMMENTARY

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion remained an important priority across financial and professional services throughout 2025, but the nature of that priority evolved significantly. While earlier years were characterised by high-profile commitments, representation targets, and policy development, 2025 marked a shift toward more data-driven, skills-based, and outcomes-focused approaches. As organisations enter 2026, DEI is increasingly viewed through the lens of workforce sustainability, culture, and long-term performance rather than standalone initiatives or compliance-led programmes.

Against persistent skills shortages, cost pressure, and evolving workforce expectations, firms are reassessing how inclusive practices support access to talent, retention, productivity, and decision-making quality. In a constrained hiring environment, inclusive access to talent and fair progression are increasingly viewed as practical levers to reduce attrition and replacement cost, rather than discretionary initiatives. DEI is therefore becoming less about visibility and more about effectiveness — embedded within hiring, progression, leadership, and operating models.

FROM PROGRAMMES TO OUTCOMES

A key shift for DEI in 2026 is the move away from programme-led activity toward demonstrable outcomes. As with other strategic priorities, DEI initiatives are increasingly judged on execution and measurable impact rather than stated intent. Employers are placing greater emphasis on whether DEI activity genuinely improves access to opportunity, progression, and retention, particularly at mid-career and senior levels where attrition and representation gaps remain most persistent.

Representation across gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ+ communities continued to improve in 2025, particularly at entry level. However, progress slows without structural intervention. Firms making sustained gains are those that embed DEI into leadership accountability, use data to track progression and pay equity, invest in sponsorship rather than mentorship, and align inclusive practices with hybrid and flexible operating models.

DEI, CULTURE, AND CONDUCT RISK

Although UK regulators have stepped back from introducing mandatory diversity targets or disclosure requirements, DEI remains closely linked to culture, conduct, and non-financial misconduct frameworks. Regulators continue to emphasise leadership behaviour, workplace culture, and psychological safety as components of effective governance and risk management.

In this context, DEI is increasingly understood as part of conduct risk rather than a separate HR agenda. Firms are expected to demonstrate that behaviours, decision-making norms, and management practices support fair treatment, challenge inappropriate conduct, and reduce the risk of discrimination, harassment, or exclusionary cultures — particularly within regulated environments.

AI, TECHNOLOGY, AND INCLUSIVE OPERATING MODELS

The rapid adoption of AI and digital tools is reshaping the DEI landscape, creating both opportunity and risk. As AI becomes embedded across recruitment, performance management, and workflow design, DEI and AI governance are increasingly interconnected.

Firms are focusing on bias-aware AI deployment, inclusive data practices, and transparent model governance to ensure fairness in automated decision-making. AI-supported recruitment and assessment tools are enabling more skills-based hiring approaches, reducing reliance on traditional credentials and subjective judgement, while accessible digital tools are improving inclusion for neurodiverse and disabled employees.

As AI reshapes roles and career pathways, firms are increasingly focused on ensuring that reskilling, redeployment, and progression opportunities are accessible and equitable, reducing the risk of uneven workforce outcomes as operating models evolve.

BROADENING THE DEFINITION OF INCLUSION

The scope of DEI in 2026 continues to broaden beyond traditional dimensions such as gender and ethnicity. Firms are placing greater emphasis on socio-economic background, disability, neurodiversity, age, and generational diversity, reflecting a more intersectional understanding of inclusion.

Socio-economic mobility has emerged as a particular focus, with organisations recognising that narrow talent pipelines, geographic concentration, and traditional hiring criteria exclude capable candidates. In response, firms are adopting skills-based hiring frameworks, expanding early-career and apprenticeship pathways, and leveraging regional recruitment strategies — particularly across Scotland, the North of England, and Ireland — to widen access to talent.

WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION AND INCLUSION

Hybrid working, automation, and AI-enabled operating models are reshaping how work is performed and how careers develop. In this environment, DEI considerations are increasingly tied to workforce transformation and change management.

Firms are paying closer attention to how hybrid models, performance frameworks, and visibility of work operate in practice, ensuring that flexibility does not inadvertently disadvantage under-represented groups. Inclusive design of office space, digital collaboration tools, and development pathways is becoming an important component of equitable workforce strategy.

LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

Accountability for DEI outcomes is increasingly moving toward senior leadership and boards. Rather than being delegated solely to HR or specialist teams, DEI is becoming part of broader discussions around leadership effectiveness, succession planning, and organisational resilience.

Governance expectations are rising around how DEI considerations are integrated into decision-making, particularly in relation to senior appointments, pay and progression transparency, and the management of bias and conflicts. For professional services firms, this also intersects with expectations around independence, ethical standards, and the quality of professional judgement.

HIRING, PAY, AND RETENTION IMPLICATIONS

From a talent perspective, DEI continues to influence attraction and retention, particularly among early- and mid-career professionals. Candidates increasingly assess employers on fairness, progression, and inclusion alongside salary, rather than viewing DEI as a standalone value proposition.

Employers are under growing pressure to demonstrate transparency and consistency in pay, promotion, and performance assessment, particularly in hybrid and distributed environments. DEI metrics are increasingly feeding into ESG frameworks and investor scrutiny, especially within asset management, private markets, and real assets, where governance quality is closely linked to capital allocation decisions.

While specialist DEI roles remain important, hiring demand is increasingly focused on embedding inclusive capability within leadership, management, and core people processes rather than expanding standalone DEI functions. Professionals who can combine DEI expertise with organisational design, data insight, and cultural change continue to be in demand, particularly where they can demonstrate measurable impact.

MARKET COMMENTARY - WEALTH & ADVISORY

Private Wealth & Family Office

Private Wealth and Family Office hiring in 2025–26 reflects a sector undergoing structural and technological change rather than cyclical expansion. While client demand for advice, investment management, and wealth structuring remains resilient, firms are increasingly selective in how they build teams. Hiring decisions are shaped less by short-term asset growth and more by governance strength, investment architecture, long-term client trust, and adviser productivity.

The private wealth market remains highly fragmented, spanning private banks, discretionary investment managers, independent advisory firms, multi-family offices, and single family offices. Each operates under different commercial, regulatory, and cultural models, with distinct talent requirements. As a result, salary levels and hiring demand are increasingly influenced by operating-model maturity, investment governance, and digital capability rather than assets under management alone.

Regulatory scrutiny continued to intensify through 2025, with heightened focus on advice suitability, supervision, and investment oversight. This has reinforced the importance of clearly defined propositions, robust governance frameworks, and credible supervisory capability. Senior hires are now expected to demonstrate not only technical competence, but sound judgement, regulatory confidence, and the ability to operate effectively within structured investment and risk frameworks.

At the same time, many firms are evolving their investment models. Centralised and hybrid approaches — separating portfolio construction from advice delivery — are becoming more prevalent, placing greater emphasis on CIO functions, investment committees, and oversight roles. This shift has reshaped hiring priorities, increasing demand for investment specialists, technically strong paraplanners, and advisers comfortable operating within defined governance and investment architectures.

Private Wealth is also undergoing one of the most significant digital shifts in its history. The sector is moving away from relationship-led, paper-heavy processes toward AI-enabled, highly personalised client service models. AI increasingly supports suitability assessments, portfolio reviews, and client reporting, while digital onboarding and automated KYC/AML reduce friction and strengthen compliance. Workflow automation is freeing advisers to spend more time with clients, but it has also raised expectations around data literacy, regulatory understanding, and disciplined advice delivery.

As a result, demand is growing for professionals who combine client-facing capability with regulatory confidence, investment understanding, and comfort operating within digitally enabled advice models. Traditional relationship management alone is no longer sufficient to command salary premiums.

Salary pressure in private wealth is increasingly driven by capability alignment rather than tenure. The strongest premiums attach to individuals who combine technical depth with governance responsibility, investment exposure, and credibility in supervised environments. Key drivers include experience within discretionary or centralised investment models, supervisory and oversight responsibility, qualification depth (particularly Level 6 and Level 7 paraplanners and Chartered advisers), exposure to complex client structures such as UHNW and family office environments, and digital capability that enhances adviser productivity and client outcomes.

Hiring in 2026 is steady but highly selective. Firms prioritise long-term fit, progression potential, and alignment to investment and operating models over short-term revenue generation. Counteroffers remain common for experienced paraplanners, credible advisers, and supervisory talent, with retention strategies increasingly focused on development, clarity of role, and investment exposure rather than purely financial incentives.

Looking ahead, private wealth hiring will continue to be shaped by governance discipline, digital enablement, and succession planning rather than rapid expansion. Firms that articulate clear propositions, invest in robust oversight, and deploy technology to enhance — rather than replace — human judgement will be best positioned to attract and retain talent in an increasingly selective market.

"DEMAND IS GROWING FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO COMBINE CLIENT-FACING CAPABILITY WITH REGULATORY CONFIDENCE, INVESTMENT UNDERSTANDING, AND COMFORT OPERATING WITHIN DIGITALLY ENABLED ADVICE MODELS."

– Ellen Davie, Senior Consultant

SCOTLAND - Private Wealth & Family Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
IFA Administrator	26-32	30-48	48-68	68-85
Paraplanner	32-40	45-65	65-85	85-105
Wealth Manager / Financial Planner	n/a	45-65	65-90	95-120
Portfolio Management Administrator	27-36	36-55	55-70	70-90
Associate Portfolio Manager	32-45	45-70	70-95	95-115
Investment Manager (Advisory & Discretionary)	n/a	50-75	75-100	100-125
Sales Support	27-35	35-50	50-75	75-90
Non-Advised Sales Consultant (Office-Based)	27-35	35-55	55-70	70-95
Telephone Account Manager	27-35	35-60	60-70	70-100
Sales Manager / Business Development Pensions / Platform	45-55	55-80	80-100	105-160
Sales Manager / Business Development Asset Management	45-60	60-90	90-125	125-175
T&C	32-45	45-70	70-95	95-110
Private Banking	27-40	40-65	70-95	85-120
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-200
Head of Office	n/a	n/a	n/a	130-200

LONDON - Private Wealth & Family Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
IFA Administrator	30-40	45-65	68-85	88+
Paraplanner	40-50	52-68	70-100	110+
Wealth Manager / Financial Planner	n/a	70-135	140-200	200+
Portfolio Management Administrator	30-42	45-65	70-100	110+
Associate Portfolio Manager	35-50	52-85	90-130	135+
Investment Manager (Advisory & Discretionary)	n/a	70-135	140-200	200+
Sales Support	30-42	45-70	70-95	100+
Non-Advised Sales Consultant (Office-Based)	30-42	45-68	70-90	90+
Telephone Account Manager	30-42	45-70	72-85	90+
Sales Manager / Business Development Pensions / Platform	30-42	45-75	75-95	100+
Sales Manager / Business Development Asset Management	55-70	70-110	115-160	165+
T&C	35-50	50-90	90-130	135+
Private Banking	35-55	60-115	120-180	190+
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	175+
Head of Office	n/a	n/a	n/a	200+

REGIONAL - Private Wealth & Family Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
IFA Administrator	26-32	30-45	45-65	65-80
Paraplanner	32-38	40-50	55-65	70-85
Wealth Manager / Financial Planner	n/a	45-65	45-65	65-80
Portfolio Management Administrator	27-35	36-45	55-70	70-90
Associate Portfolio Manager	32-45	45-70	70-95	95-115
Investment Manager (Advisory & Discretionary)	n/a	50-75	75-100	100-125
Sales Support	26-35	35-50	50-75	75-90
Non-Advised Sales Consultant (Office-Based)	26-35	35-52	55-68	70-85
Telephone Account Manager	26-35	35-55	58-68	70-90
Sales Manager / Business Development Pensions / Platform	40-50	55-75	80-95	100-140
Sales Manager / Business Development Asset Management	40-50	55-80	85-115	120-150
T&C	32-45	45-65	68-90	90-100+
Private Banking	26-35	38-60	62-80	85-120
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-200
Head of Office	n/a	n/a	n/a	130-200

MARKET COMMENTARY - ASSET & INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Asset Management: Front Office

Asset management hiring in 2025–26 reflects a sector operating under sustained structural complexity rather than cyclical expansion. While capital continues to flow across public and private markets, firms are navigating tighter cost discipline, heightened regulatory and fiduciary scrutiny, and growing expectations around governance, transparency, and institutional resilience. As a result, hiring decisions are increasingly focused on strengthening decision quality, accountability, and continuity rather than expanding headcount.

The asset management landscape remains diverse, encompassing traditional long-only managers, multi-asset firms, alternatives platforms, private markets specialists, real assets investors, fiduciary managers, and asset-owner environments. Across these models, hiring demand and salary levels are shaped less by assets under management and more by mandate complexity, investment philosophy, governance exposure, and stakeholder accountability — particularly in institutional and publicly scrutinised contexts.

Throughout 2025, scrutiny from regulators, boards, consultants, and clients continued to intensify. Expectations around fiduciary duty, risk management, ESG integration, and decision transparency have risen materially, especially within pension funds, LGPS pools, insurance-linked mandates, and fiduciary-led structures. Performance is no longer assessed in isolation, but alongside the robustness of investment processes, quality of challenge, and the ability to articulate and defend outcomes under scrutiny.

At the same time, portfolios have become structurally more complex. Increased allocations to private markets, real assets, and illiquid strategies have extended investment horizons, heightened governance load, and increased the consequences of investment error. This has driven demand for investment professionals who can operate confidently within committee-led, consultant-influenced decision-making frameworks, balancing performance objectives with governance discipline and institutional credibility.

Technology and AI are moving from experimentation toward integration across research, screening, scenario analysis, and portfolio construction. Rather than reducing accountability, this shift has raised expectations around judgement, challenge, and explainability. Investment professionals are increasingly expected to interpret and interrogate model outputs, understand data and assumption risk, and evidence how technology informs — but does not replace — human decision-making. AI-literate analysts, data-enabled researchers, and portfolio managers comfortable operating within technology-augmented processes are increasingly valued.

Hiring across front-office teams reflects a focus on institutional resilience rather than individual star performance. Demand remains strongest for professionals who strengthen decision quality, contribute to disciplined investment debate, and support long-term continuity. This includes analysts with strong judgement and contextual awareness, private markets and real assets specialists where underwriting rigour is critical, macro and multi-asset investors aligned to allocator demand for diversification, and thematic specialists with credible expertise in areas such as energy transition and sustainability.

Salary pressure in asset management is increasingly driven by replacement risk, mandate criticality, and governance exposure rather than broad market inflation. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose expertise is difficult to replicate and whose roles sit close to investment decision-making, client accountability, or oversight risk. As a result, compensation variation within similar job titles is significant, with titles alone becoming unreliable indicators of value.

Hiring in 2026 is selective and targeted. Firms remain cautious on permanent headcount but will invest decisively where capability gaps pose material institutional risk. Mandate and philosophy mismatch remains a common barrier to successful hiring, while counteroffers continue to be prevalent for experienced professionals operating close to investment and governance risk.

Looking ahead, asset management hiring will continue to be defined by precision rather than expansion. Firms that succeed will be those that invest selectively in roles aligned to mandate complexity, governance expectations, and technology-enabled operating models, favouring professionals who combine investment expertise with judgement, accountability, and institutional credibility.

SCOTLAND - Asset Management: Front Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) — **CAREER STAGE**

Role	Early	Experienced	Senior	Head
Investment Assistant	27-35	35 - 55	55-80	90-130
Front Office Investment Support (Technical)	33-45	45-65	65-90	90-115
Quantitative Analyst / Financial Modelling	35-50	50-80	80-100	100-140
Investment/Research Analyst / Sector Specialist	35-55	55-80	80-110	110-140
ESG / SRI Analyst / Manager	35-55	55-65	65-90	90-140
Trainee Fund Manager - All Asset Classes	35-55	55-80	n/a	n/a
Investment / Fund Manager - Equity / Fixed Income	n/a	n/a	80-120	120-180
Real Estate - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	30-45	45-65	65-100	100-150
Private Equity & Venture Capital - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	30-40	45-65	65-100	100-150
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-160+
Chief Operating Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	160-220
Chief Executive	n/a	n/a	n/a	220-350

"SALARY PRESSURE IN ASSET MANAGEMENT IS INCREASINGLY DRIVEN BY REPLACEMENT RISK, MANDATE CRITICALITY, AND GOVERNANCE EXPOSURE RATHER THAN BROAD MARKET INFLATION."

– Kamilla Mathias, Senior Consultant

LONDON - Asset Management: Front Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)

Role	Early	Experienced	Senior	Head
Investment Assistant	35-50	50-85	85-95	95-150
Front Office Investment Support (Technical)	40-60	60-85	85-110	110-140
Quantitative Analyst / Financial Modelling	50-70	70-85	90-145	150-200
Investment /Research Analyst/ Sector Specialist	45-65	68-95	95-130	135-210
ESG / SRI Analyst / Manager	40-65	65-85	85-120	120-180
Trainee Fund Manager - All Asset Classes	45-65	65-80	n/a	n/a
Investment / Fund Manager - Equity / Fixed Income	n/a	n/a	95-150	150-250
Real Estate - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	55-75	75-95	95-130	135-210
Private Equity & Venture Capital - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	65-85	85-150	150-250	250+
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	150-200+
Chief Operating Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-160+
Chief Executive	n/a	n/a	n/a	220-350+

REGIONAL - Asset Management: Front Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Senior	Head
Investment Assistant	27-34	35 - 50	50-75	80-100
Front Office Investment Support (Technical)	28-35	35-50	50-70	70-90
Quantitative Analyst / Financial Modelling	30-40	42-60	63-85	90-110
Investment / Research Analyst / Sector Specialist	35-50	50-75	80-110	110-140
ESG / SRI Analyst / Manager	30-40	40-55	55-75	80-110
Trainee Fund Manager - All Asset Classes	30-35	40-55	55-70	n/a
Investment/Fund Manager - Equity / Fixed Income	n/a	n/a	70-100	100-130+
Real Estate - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	35-50	50-75	80-110	110-140
Private Equity & Venture Capital - Analyst / Portfolio Manager	30-45	50-70	75-100	105-150+
Chief Investment Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-220
Chief Operating Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	130-200
Chief Executive	n/a	n/a	n/a	230+

MARKET COMMENTARY - ASSET & INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Asset Management: Middle Office

Middle-office hiring in asset management in 2025–26 reflects a function that has moved decisively beyond post-trade processing into a central role supporting governance, risk oversight, and institutional confidence. As investment strategies, asset classes, and operating models have grown more complex, the middle office has become a critical control point between investment activity and external scrutiny.

Across traditional asset managers, alternatives platforms, fiduciary managers, and asset-owner environments, middle-office capability is increasingly judged not on efficiency alone, but on its ability to validate outcomes, challenge assumptions, and evidence control. In this guide, the middle office also encompasses sales, marketing, and client service functions where these roles sit close to investment delivery, client reporting, mandate communication, and oversight of client outcomes, rather than operating as purely commercial or front-line sales functions. Hiring demand is therefore focused on professionals who combine strong technical understanding with judgement, credibility, and the confidence to operate under scrutiny.

Increased allocations to private markets, complex derivatives, and illiquid strategies have materially extended valuation cycles and heightened reliance on third-party administrators. At the same time, regulatory expectations around outsourcing oversight, operational resilience, data quality, and reporting confidence have intensified. Boards, regulators, and clients are paying closer attention to how investment data is produced, validated, and controlled — not simply to the reported outputs.

Automation, outsourcing, and platform consolidation have significantly reduced manual processing within middle-office functions. Responsibility has shifted toward oversight, validation, and exception management. Middle-office teams are increasingly expected to validate NAVs and valuations, challenge administrators and vendors, oversee reconciliations and pricing processes, and evidence controls, escalations, and decision-making to auditors, regulators, and clients.

AI-enabled tools are increasingly used to support exception detection, reconciliation analysis, and cashflow forecasting. However, as with front-office technology adoption, automation has not reduced accountability. Instead, it has raised expectations around data lineage, explainability, and governance, reinforcing the middle office's role as a validation and control function rather than a processing one.

Data has become the connective tissue between investment, risk, finance, and external stakeholders. Middle-office functions now play a central role in ensuring data accuracy, consistency, and integrity across increasingly automated and outsourced workflows. Demand is strongest for professionals who understand how data is generated and transformed across the investment lifecycle and who can identify where risk is introduced through system handoffs, manual intervention, or model assumptions.

Salary pressure within asset management middle-office functions is increasingly driven by control criticality and replacement risk rather than generic market inflation. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose expertise sits close to valuation risk, regulatory exposure, or institutional confidence. Key drivers include experience across complex or illiquid asset classes, credibility in valuation and pricing governance, proven ability to manage and challenge third-party administrators, regulatory fluency across outsourcing and operational resilience, and strong data and systems understanding.

Hiring in 2026 is selective and risk-led. Firms remain cautious on overall headcount but continue to invest where capability gaps create disproportionate institutional exposure. Recruitment processes increasingly test candidates' comfort operating under scrutiny, ability to challenge senior stakeholders constructively, judgement in prioritising issues and escalation, and experience operating within outsourced and automated environments.

Looking ahead, the asset management middle office will continue to evolve toward a governance- and risk-led function. Organisations that invest in capability aligned to mandate complexity, outsourcing models, and regulatory expectations — rather than treating the middle office as a cost centre — will be best positioned to maintain confidence in increasingly complex investment environments.

SCOTLAND - Asset Management: Middle Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Product Specialist / Investment Specialist	45-60	60-85	85-135	135-180
Client Portfolio Manager / Fund Manager 'Proxy'	45-60	60-85	85-110	110-150
Business Development / Sales	n/a	55-80	80-120	120-180
Client Management	32-45	45-70	70-90	90-110
Investment Writing	35-45	45-68	68-85	85-110
Fund Performance	28-35	35-60	60-85	85-115
Private Equity / Fund Controller	30-45	45-75	75-90	90-145
Middle Office Admin	32-50	50-65	65-90	90-140
Derivatives	27-40	40-65	65-90	90-130
On Desk / Investment Support	27-40	40-65	65-90	90-130
Collateral Management	27-40	40-65	65-90	90-125
Investment Risk	40-50	50-85	85-125	125-180
Portfolio Compliance	35-50	50-65	65-90	95-140
Fund Governance	35-50	50-65	65-90	95-140
Fund Accountant	27-35	40-65	65-90	90-135
RFP	27-40	40-65	65-90	90-135
Investment Writing	27-50	50-70	75-100	100-130
Dealing / Trading	30-55	55-75	75-100	100-135

"THE STRONGEST PREMIUMS ATTACH TO INDIVIDUALS WHOSE EXPERTISE SITS CLOSE TO VALUATION RISK, REGULATORY EXPOSURE, OR INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE."

– Emma Hogg, Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract

LONDON - Asset Management: Middle Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Product Specialist / Investment Specialist	50-65	68-90	95-140	145-200
Client Portfolio Manager / Fund Manager 'Proxy'	50-65	68-90	95-140	145-200
Business Development / Sales	n/a	70-125	130-185	190+
Client Management	38-55	56-80	82-98	100-150
Investment Writing	38-50	52-98	100-135	140+
Fund Performance	38-50	52-90	92-135	140+
Private Equity / Fund Controller	45-65	65-85	88-130	135+
Middle Office Admin	38-50	52-78	80-120	120-160
Derivatives	40-60	60-88	90-125	140-165
On Desk / Investment Support	38-50	50-75	80-120	125-150
Collateral Management	42-60	60-88	90-125	140-165
Investment Risk	45-60	60-110	115-150	150-175
Portfolio Compliance	35-50	50-65	65-90	95-140
Fund Governance	35-50	50-65	65-90	95-140
Fund Accountant	42-50	55-75	75-95	100-150
RFP	40-50	50-95	100-130	135+
Investment Writing	45-65	68-110	115-140	150+
Dealing / Trading	50-65	65-110	115-150	160+

REGIONAL - Asset Management: Middle Office

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Product Specialist / Investment Specialist	30-40	40-55	55-75	75-100
Client Portfolio Manager / Fund Manager 'Proxy'	35-45	45-65	65-85	85-120
Business Development / Sales	28-35	35-60	60-85	85-130
Client Management	28-35	35-50	50-70	70-100
Investment Writing	28-35	35-50	50-65	65-85
Fund Performance	30-38	38-50	50-65	65-85+
Private Equity / Fund Controller	40-50	50-70	70-90	90-120
Middle Office Admin	30-40	42-60	65-80	85-100
Derivatives	30-38	38-50	50-70	70-90+
On Desk / Investment Support	26-40	40-65	65-90	90-130
Collateral Management	30-38	38-55	55-75	75-95
Investment Risk	32-40	45-70	70-85	100-140+
Portfolio Compliance	30-38	38-55	55-75	75-100
Fund Governance	30-38	35-55	55-75	75-100
Fund Accountant	28-35	35-50	50-70	65-85
RFP	28-35	35-50	50-65	65-85
Investment Writing	28-35	35-50	50-65	65-85
Dealing / Trading	30-40	40-60	60-80	80-115

MARKET COMMENTARY - ASSET & INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT

Investment Operations

Investment operations hiring in 2025–26 reflects a function operating under sustained pressure to deliver execution accuracy, operational resilience, and regulatory compliance in increasingly complex investment environments. Across asset managers, investment platforms, and asset-owner organisations, operations teams remain critical to the day-to-day functioning of investment activity, underpinning settlement, asset servicing, cash management, and lifecycle processing.

While automation and outsourcing have reduced manual intervention across many workflows, the operational consequences of failure have increased materially. As a result, hiring demand is increasingly focused on strengthening control effectiveness, execution discipline, and resilience rather than maximising throughput or reducing cost alone. Operational robustness is now viewed as a fiduciary and reputational issue, not simply a back-office concern.

Increased allocations to alternatives, more complex instruments, and the proliferation of platforms and wrappers have materially increased operational complexity across the investment lifecycle. At the same time, regulatory scrutiny around settlement discipline, asset segregation, operational resilience, and outsourcing oversight has intensified. Regulators, clients, and boards are paying closer attention to how operational risks are identified, managed, and evidenced — particularly where services are automated or delivered through third parties.

Core investment operations activity continues to centre on trade processing, settlements, corporate actions, income processing, cash and collateral management, and reconciliation. However, as workflows become increasingly automated, responsibility has shifted toward exception-based processing, oversight of outsourced delivery models, and incident management. Hiring demand therefore favours professionals with strong end-to-end understanding of the investment lifecycle, combined with control mindset, attention to detail, and the ability to operate under sustained time pressure.

Automation has transformed investment operations, particularly across reconciliations, settlement matching, and reporting. Firms are also investing in cloud-based OMS and PMS platforms to improve scalability, standardisation, and resilience. However, automation has introduced new dependencies on systems, vendors, and data quality. Accountability for outcomes remains internal, reinforcing demand for operations professionals who understand both system behaviour and operational risk within platform-led environments.

Operational resilience has become a defining theme. Firms are investing in clearer ownership models, incident response frameworks, and contingency planning to ensure continuity of service under stress. As a result, operational data capability has grown in importance, with teams increasingly responsible for ensuring data quality, integrity, and continuity across automated and AI-enabled processes.

Salary pressure across investment operations is increasingly driven by service criticality, execution risk, and resilience exposure rather than role seniority alone. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose expertise protects continuity, regulatory compliance, or client confidence. Key drivers include experience in high-volume or complex operational environments, corporate actions and asset servicing expertise, operational resilience and incident management capability, oversight of outsourced or offshore models, and the ability to support audit, regulatory review, and client assurance.

Hiring in 2026 is selective and risk-led. Organisations remain cautious on net headcount growth but continue to invest where operational fragility, regulatory scrutiny, or service dependency is highest. Recruitment processes increasingly assess accuracy under pressure, judgement in escalation, and comfort operating within automated and outsourced models.

Looking ahead, investment operations will remain a cornerstone of investment delivery. Firms that invest selectively in capability aligned to scale, resilience, and regulatory expectation — rather than relying solely on automation or outsourcing — will be best positioned to sustain confidence in increasingly complex operating environments.

SCOTLAND - Investment Operations

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Market Data	27-30	30-45	45-55	55-70
Settlements	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Treasury Settlements	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Reconciliations	27-30	30-45	45-55	55-70
Corporate Actions	27-30	30-45	45-55	55-70
Fund Pricing / Valuations	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Data Management	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Client Services	27-30	30-40	45-60	60-70
Trade Support	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Cash Management	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
Trustee and Depositary / Fiduciary	27-30	30-50	50-65	70-85
Client Reporting	27-30	30-50	55-65	70-85
Investment Restrictions / Mandate Compliance	27-30	30-50	55-65	70-85
Supplier Management	27-30	30-45	50-65	70-85
Transitions	27-30	30-45	45-55	55-70
Regulatory Risk	27-30	30-50	55-70	70-85
CASS Specialist	35-38	35-65	65-90	100-130
Chief Operating Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-160+

"ORGANISATIONS REMAIN CAUTIOUS ON NET HEADCOUNT GROWTH BUT CONTINUE TO INVEST WHERE OPERATIONAL FRAGILITY, REGULATORY SCRUTINY, OR SERVICE DEPENDENCY IS HIGHEST."

– Rachael O'Neill, Director, Investment Operations and Accounting & Finance

LONDON - Investment Operations

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Market Data	35-45	50-65	70-85	90+
Settlements	35-45	50-65	70-85	90+
Treasury Settlements	35-45	50-65	70-85	90+
Reconciliations	35-42	45-55	60-75	80-100
Corporate Actions	35-42	45-55	60-75	80-100
Fund Pricing / Valuations	35-45	50-65	70-90	95+
Data Management	35-45	45-55	60-75	80-100
Client Services	35-45	45-55	55-70	80-100
Trade Support	35-45	45-55	55-70	80-100
Cash Management	35-45	45-55	55-70	80-100
Trustee and Depositary / Fiduciary	35-45	45-55	60-80	85-130
Client Reporting	35-45	50-65	70-90	100+
Investment Restrictions / Mandate Compliance	35-45	50-65	65-85	90-120
Supplier Management	35-45	50-65	65-85	90-130
Transitions	35-45	50-65	65-85	90+
Regulatory Risk	35-45	50-65	70-95	100+
CASS Specialist	35-50	55-85	95-130	135+
Chief Operating Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-180+

REGIONAL - Investment Operations

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Market Data	26-35	35-50	50-70	70-90
Settlements	26-35	35-50	55-70	70-90
Treasury Settlements	26-35	35-50	55-95	95-120
Reconciliations	26-35	35-50	45-55	70-90
Corporate Actions	30-33	35-50	45-55	70-90
Fund Pricing / Valuations	26-35	35-50	55-70	70-90
Data Management	26-35	35-50	55-70	70-90
Client Services	26-35	35-50	40-50	70-90
Trade Support	26-35	35-50	55-70	70-90
Cash Management	30-33	35-50	55-90	90-110
Trustee and Depositary / Fiduciary	26-30	35-50	50-65	70-90
Client Reporting	26-30	35-50	55-65	70-90
Investment Restrictions / Mandate Compliance	26-30	30-50	55-65	70-90
Supplier Management	30-35	40-55	60-80	80-120
Transitions	26-30	35-50	45-55	70-90
Regulatory Risk	26-30	30-50	55-70	70-90
CASS Specialist	30-35	35-65	65-85	90-130
Chief Operating Manager	n/a	n/a	n/a	100-140

MARKET COMMENTARY - PRIVATE CAPITAL & TRANSACTIONS

Private Markets

- Private Equity, Infrastructure & Alternatives

As the market enters 2026–27, Private Markets are being shaped less by deal volume alone and more by discipline, governance, and execution risk. While private capital continues to attract long-term investor interest, firms are operating in a more cautious environment characterised by higher financing costs, longer hold periods, and intensified scrutiny from LPs, regulators, and investment committees. Recruitment has therefore become more selective, with greater emphasis placed on judgement, underwriting quality, and operational capability rather than rapid headcount expansion.

The private markets landscape spans private equity, infrastructure, private credit, real assets, and specialist alternatives, each with distinct risk profiles, governance requirements, and investment horizons. Across these strategies, hiring demand and salary levels are increasingly influenced by investment complexity, stakeholder accountability, and the robustness of decision-making frameworks rather than headline fund size or transaction activity.

Following a period of heightened competition for assets, deal processes have slowed and diligence has deepened. Investment committees are placing greater emphasis on downside protection, scenario analysis, and operational resilience within portfolios. This has elevated the importance of governance-led capability across the investment lifecycle, particularly in environments where capital is illiquid, exit optionality is constrained, or public and political scrutiny is elevated.

Infrastructure and other long-duration assets exemplify this shift. Regulatory risk, climate resilience, and stakeholder engagement now sit alongside financial performance as core determinants of investment success. Demand remains strong for professionals who can operate confidently within structured decision-making frameworks, engage effectively with investment committees, and balance commercial ambition with fiduciary responsibility.

Salary pressure in private markets is increasingly driven by scarcity of experience rather than deal flow. The strongest premiums attach to individuals who combine strong investment judgement with execution credibility and stakeholder management capability. Key drivers include experience across multiple market cycles; underwriting and structuring expertise in higher-rate environments; operational and portfolio value-creation capability; governance fluency, including committee interaction and LP engagement; and deep sector specialism such as infrastructure, energy transition, real assets, or private credit.

While headline compensation remains highest in London, salary inflation has moderated compared with previous cycles. Firms are placing greater emphasis on alignment between fixed compensation, long-term incentives, and fund performance, with less tolerance for short-term cash competition where execution risk is high.

Hiring in 2026–27 is deliberate and highly selective. Firms are investing more time upfront to ensure alignment of investment style, risk appetite, and cultural fit. Recruitment processes are often longer, with increased use of case studies, scenario testing, and reference-led assessment. There is also growing demand for hybrid profiles — individuals who can bridge investment analysis with portfolio oversight, ESG integration, and operational engagement — reflecting the shift toward active ownership and hands-on value creation models.

Succession planning is becoming more prominent, particularly within mid-market and specialist platforms, where founding partners and senior leaders are increasingly focused on long-term continuity and governance resilience. Recruitment is therefore as much about mitigating key-person risk as it is about incremental capacity.

Looking ahead through 2026–27, private markets hiring will continue to be shaped by capital discipline, governance maturity, and operational capability. Firms that balance investment ambition with robust risk frameworks and long-term stewardship will be best positioned to attract and retain experienced talent in a more measured and scrutiny-driven market.

SCOTLAND - Private Markets

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Investment	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Senior**	**Partner**
Private Equity	45-60	65-85	85-120	130+
Infrastructure	45-60	65-90	90-125	135+
Private Credit / Alternatives	45-65	65-90	90-125	135+
Role - Platform / Portfolio	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Management**	**Head**
Portfolio Management	45-60	70-95	95-120	135+
Value Creation	45-65	75-100	100-130	145+
ESG / Responsible Investment	35-50	65-90	90-115	130+

"FIRMS THAT BALANCE INVESTMENT AMBITION WITH ROBUST RISK FRAMEWORKS AND LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP WILL BE BEST POSITIONED TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN EXPERIENCED TALENT IN A MORE MEASURED AND SCRUTINY-DRIVEN MARKET."

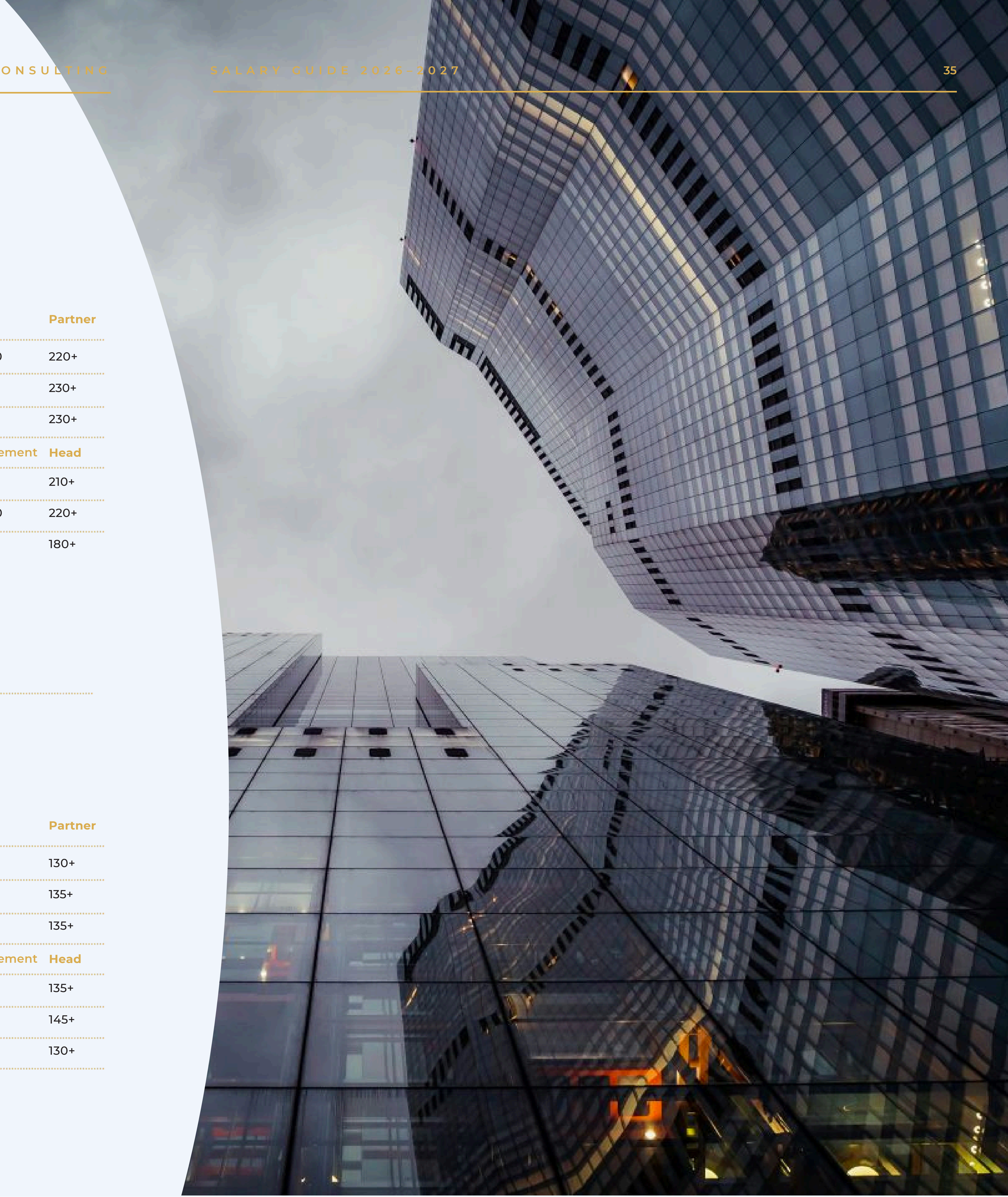
– Kamilla Mathias,
Senior Consultant

LONDON - Private Markets

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Investment	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Senior**	**Partner**
Private Equity	65-85	85-130	130-200	220+
Infrastructure	65-85	85-140	140-210	230+
Private Credit / Alternatives	65-85	85-140	140-210	230+
Role - Platform / Portfolio	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Management**	**Head**
Portfolio Management	75-95	95-140	140-190	210+
Value Creation	80-100	100-150	150-200	220+
ESG / Responsible Investment	65-85	85-120	120-160	180+

REGIONAL - Private Markets

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Investment	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Senior**	**Partner**
Private Equity	45-60	65-85	85-120	130+
Infrastructure	45-60	65-90	90-125	135+
Private Credit / Alternatives	45-65	65-90	90-125	135+
Role - Platform / Portfolio	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Management**	**Head**
Portfolio Management	45-60	70-95	95-120	135+
Value Creation	45-65	75-100	100-130	145+
ESG / Responsible Investment	35-50	65-90	90-115	130+



MARKET COMMENTARY - PRIVATE CAPITAL & TRANSACTIONS

Corporate Finance & Advisory

As firms move into 2026–27, Corporate Finance and Advisory activity is characterised by resilient demand alongside heightened execution risk, cost discipline, and client scrutiny. While deal volumes remain uneven across sectors and geographies, demand for advisory expertise continues to be driven by restructuring activity, portfolio optimisation, private equity exits, carve-outs, and strategic M&A in response to shifting capital markets and ongoing macroeconomic uncertainty. Hiring decisions are therefore increasingly focused on execution quality, analytical depth, and judgement rather than capacity expansion.

The corporate finance landscape spans M&A, transaction services, restructuring, valuations, and strategic advisory across professional services firms, investment banks, boutiques, and in-house advisory teams. Across these models, hiring demand and salary levels are shaped less by transaction volume alone and more by deal complexity, stakeholder scrutiny, and the consequences of execution failure. Advice is increasingly assessed not just on technical accuracy, but on its defensibility under challenge from boards, lenders, regulators, and legal advisers.

Deal processes have become slower and more complex. Valuation uncertainty, higher financing costs, and extended timelines have increased pressure on advisers to provide rigorous analysis, downside protection, and clearly articulated judgement. This has reinforced demand for professionals who can operate confidently in high-pressure environments, manage competing stakeholder interests, and maintain credibility where outcomes carry material financial, reputational, or legal risk.

Technology and advanced analytics are increasingly embedded within corporate finance and advisory workflows. AI-enabled tools are being used to accelerate financial modelling, scenario analysis, due diligence, and data extraction. However, as with other Financial Services domains, technology is augmenting rather than replacing human judgement. Accountability for advice remains firmly with senior advisers, increasing the premium on experience, credibility, and the ability to challenge model outputs and assumptions rather than rely on them uncritically.

Hiring demand across 2026–27 is concentrated in roles that directly influence transaction execution and advisory credibility. Priority areas include M&A analysts and managers with strong modelling capability and sector understanding; transaction services specialists supporting due diligence, carve-outs, and integration; restructuring and special situations professionals reflecting continued balance-sheet stress; and digital and data specialists embedded within advisory teams to improve productivity and analytical rigour.

Salary pressure across corporate finance and advisory roles is increasingly driven by execution risk, deal criticality, and replacement difficulty rather than headline transaction volumes. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose expertise materially influences deal outcomes or mitigates downside risk. Key drivers include a proven transaction track record, sector specialism aligned to client demand, ability to operate under sustained scrutiny, seniority and credibility in judgement-led roles, and analytical capability that enhances the speed, accuracy, and defensibility of advice.

Hiring through 2026–27 is targeted and role-critical. Firms remain cautious on broad headcount growth but will invest decisively where capability gaps threaten execution quality or client confidence. Recruitment processes increasingly test candidates' judgement under pressure, ability to operate across multidisciplinary teams, and alignment with firm culture, sector focus, and risk appetite. Mismatch remains a common challenge where candidates' transaction experience does not align with deal size, sector focus, or execution environment.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, Corporate Finance and Advisory hiring will continue to be shaped by execution quality rather than deal volume alone. Firms that succeed will be those that combine analytical excellence with judgement, technology-enabled productivity, and the ability to advise credibly through uncertainty and scrutiny.

SCOTLAND - Corporate Finance & Advisory

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Advisory (Corporate Finance, M&A, Deal Advisory)	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Finance / M&A	45-60	60-80	80-110	120+
Deal Advisory / Transaction Services	42-55	55-75	75-105	110+
Restructuring & Special Situations	45-60	60-85	85-115	125+
Role - In-house / Platform	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Development	55-65	65-85	85-110	120+
Internal Advisory / Strategy	50-60	60-80	80-105	115+

"SALARY PRESSURE ACROSS CORPORATE FINANCE AND ADVISORY ROLES IS INCREASINGLY DRIVEN BY EXECUTION RISK, DEAL CRITICALITY, AND REPLACEMENT DIFFICULTY RATHER THAN HEADLINE TRANSACTION VOLUMES."

– Ian Greep, Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract

LONDON - Corporate Finance & Advisory

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Advisory (Corporate Finance, M&A, Deal Advisory)	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Finance / M&A	60-75	75-110	120-180	200+
Deal Advisory / Transaction Services	55-70	70-100	100-150	170+
Restructuring & Special Situations	60-80	80-120	130-190	220+
Role - In-house / Platform	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Development	70-90	90-130	130-180	200+
Internal Advisory / Strategy	65-85	85-120	120-160	180+

REGIONAL - Corporate Finance & Advisory

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Advisory (Corporate Finance, M&A, Deal Advisory)	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Finance / M&A	45-60	60-80	80-110	120+
Deal Advisory / Transaction Services	42-55	55-75	75-105	110+
Restructuring & Special Situations	45-60	60-85	85-115	125+
Role - In-house / Platform	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Corporate Development	55-65	65-85	85-110	120+
Internal Advisory / Strategy	50-60	60-80	80-105	115+

MARKET COMMENTARY - FINANCE, CONTROL & ASSURANCE

Accounting & Finance

As organisations move into 2026–27, Accounting and Finance functions are operating well beyond historical reporting and compliance, playing a central role in governance, decision-making, and institutional confidence. Across Financial Services and adjacent professional services environments, finance teams face heightened scrutiny, tighter cost discipline, and increasing expectations to deliver timely insight, control, and assurance within complex and regulated operating models.

The sector spans internal finance functions within asset managers, private wealth firms, platforms, insurers, and asset owners, alongside external accounting, advisory, and outsourced service providers. Across these environments, hiring demand and salary levels are shaped less by reporting cadence or transaction volume and more by operating-model complexity, regulatory exposure, and reliance on accurate, defensible financial information.

Balance sheets and reporting structures have become more complex, reflecting increased use of alternative assets, structured products, outsourcing, and multi-entity operating models. At the same time, regulatory and stakeholder scrutiny around valuation, provisioning, revenue recognition, and capital adequacy has intensified. Finance teams are increasingly expected to evidence judgement, control effectiveness, and audit readiness — particularly in regulated environments where financial reporting underpins trust with regulators, investors, and clients.

While core responsibilities around statutory reporting, tax, and audit remain essential, the emphasis within accounting and finance has shifted toward forward-looking insight and stewardship. Finance professionals are now expected to support investment, transaction, and capital-allocation decisions; oversee outsourced accounting and fund administration models; and act as a critical link between operations, risk, and senior management. As execution is increasingly automated or delivered through third parties, accountability for outcomes remains firmly internal.

Technology and automation continue to reshape finance operating models. Routine processing, reconciliations, and reporting are increasingly automated or outsourced, allowing internal teams to focus on review, validation, and interpretation. However, automation has heightened — rather than reduced — expectations around governance, data quality, and explainability. Demand is strongest for finance leaders and managers who understand how outputs are generated, where risk is introduced, and how assumptions can be challenged under audit or regulatory scrutiny.

Hiring demand across 2026–27 is selective and capability-led. Priority areas include financial controllers and heads of finance with experience in regulated Financial Services environments; fund, product, and investment accountants supporting asset managers, platforms, and alternative structures; commercial finance and FP&A professionals providing insight into performance and cost; transaction and deal-facing finance specialists bridging accounting and advisory activity; and professionals with experience overseeing outsourced or shared-service models.

Salary pressure across accounting and finance is increasingly driven by replacement risk, regulatory exposure, and proximity to decision-making rather than qualification level alone. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose expertise underpins confidence in reported outcomes or materially influences strategic decisions. As with other sectors, salary dispersion within similar titles is significant, reflecting differences in responsibility, scrutiny, and institutional risk rather than tenure alone.

Hiring through 2026–27 is targeted and risk-aware. Organisations remain cautious on broad headcount growth but will invest decisively where capability gaps threaten reporting confidence, audit outcomes, or strategic decision-making. Recruitment processes increasingly assess candidates' judgement under scrutiny, ability to operate within outsourced or hybrid operating models, comfort engaging with senior stakeholders and external advisers, and alignment with organisational maturity and risk appetite.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, Accounting & Finance will continue to be defined by accountability rather than automation. Firms that invest in finance capability aligned to governance, insight, and operating-model complexity — rather than treating finance purely as a cost function — will be best positioned to maintain institutional confidence in an increasingly scrutinised environment.

"...AUTOMATION HAS HEIGHTENED — RATHER THAN REDUCED — EXPECTATIONS AROUND GOVERNANCE, DATA QUALITY, AND EXPLAINABILITY."

– Ian Greep, Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract

SCOTLAND - Accounting & Finance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Graduate / Part-Qualified	28-35	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newly qualified Accountant	n/a	45-52	n/a	n/a
External Audit	28-38	38-60	65-85	85-140
Internal Audit	28-38	38-75	75-95	110-180
Corporate Finance / Transaction Services	38-40	40-65	65-90	95-120
Decision Support / Finance Business Partnering	28-45	45-65	65-85	85-120
Financial Accountant	28-45	45-65	65-85	85-125
Forensic Accounting	28-45	45-65	65-80	80-110
Fund Accountant	28-45	45-65	65-85	85-125
Private Equity / Fund Controller	28-45	45-75	75-90	90-130
Insolvency	n/a	32-45	45-70	70-85
Management Accountant	28-45	45-65	65-95	95-125
Payroll	28-35	35-55	55-70	70-90
Project Accountant	28-40	40-65	65-85	85-110
Regulatory Reporting	28-35	35-65	65-85	85-100
Systems Accountant	28-40	40-65	65-85	85-110
Tax Professional	28-45	45-65	65-95	95-125
Treasury / Transfer Pricing	28-45	45-65	65-95	90-100
Finance Controller	n/a	n/a	55-75	75-130
Finance Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	110-150
CFO	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-240

LONDON - Accounting & Finance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Graduate / Part-Qualified	30-40	40-55	n/a	n/a
Newly qualified Accountant	n/a	50-60	n/a	n/a
External Audit	30-42	50-65	75-105	120-160
Internal Audit	30-42	50-65	75-105	120-160
Corporate Finance / Transaction Services	38-45	50-70	70-100	100-140
Decision Support / Finance Business Partnering	35-45	45-65	70-90	100-140
Financial Accountant	30-45	55-75	75-90	95-130
Forensic Accounting	30-45	45-65	65-90	100-140
Fund Accountant	35-45	45-65	70-90	110+
Private Equity / Fund Controller	45-65	65-85	90-110	130-180
Insolvency	n/a	35-45	50-70	70-100
Management Accountant	40-50	55-65	75-95	100-130
Payroll	30-42	45-65	65-75	90-130
Project Accountant	35-45	50-70	80-100	110-150
Regulatory Reporting	30-45	45-65	65-85	95-110
Systems Accountant	35-45	45-65	75-95	110+
Tax Professional	35-45	50-70	80-100	110+
Treasury / Transfer Pricing	35-45	45-65	70-95	110+
Finance Controller	n/a	n/a	85-110	120+
Finance Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	130-180
CFO	n/a	n/a	n/a	180-280

REGIONAL - Accounting & Finance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Graduate / Part-Qualified	28-35	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newly qualified Accountant	n/a	45-52	n/a	n/a
External Audit	26-42	40-60	60-85	90-130+
Internal Audit	26-42	40-70	75-90	95-120+
Corporate Finance / Transaction Services	28-35	40-65	70-90	90-120
Decision Support / Finance Business Partnering	26-45	40-60	70-90	90-120
Financial Accountant	30-40	45-65	65-85	85-125
Forensic Accounting	26-45	45-62	65-80	80-110
Fund Accountant	28-35	35-50	50-70	65-85
Private Equity / Fund Controller	40-50	50-70	70-90	90-120
Insolvency	26-32	38-50	55-70	70-85
Management Accountant	26-45	45-65	65-95	95-125
Payroll	26-35	35-50	55-70	70-90
Project Accountant	26-40	40-63	65-80	85-110
Regulatory Reporting	26-35	40-50	50-80	80-100
Systems Accountant	26-40	40-63	65-85	85-110
Tax Professional	26-45	45-65	65-85	90-110
Treasury / Transfer Pricing	26-45	42-55	55-75	75-110+
Finance Controller	n/a	n/a	55-80	80-115+
Finance Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	90-150+
CFO	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-200+

MARKET COMMENTARY - TECHNOLOGY, CHANGE & DIGITAL

Financial Technology - Technology, Change & Data

As Financial Services move into 2026–27, technology has shifted from episodic transformation to permanent institutional infrastructure. It is no longer a discrete support function or time-bound programme, but is embedded within investment processes, advice delivery, data governance, regulatory oversight, and operational resilience. Decisions made within Financial Technology now carry long-term operational, regulatory, and reputational consequences.

As a result, hiring demand is increasingly focused on strengthening technology, data, and change capability that supports continuity, control, and sustainable execution rather than rapid delivery alone. Organisations are prioritising professionals who combine deep technical expertise with sector understanding, judgement, and the ability to operate effectively within highly regulated, interconnected environments.

This sector spans technology and change capability across asset management, private wealth, pensions, insurance, investment platforms, third-party administration, and professional services. Across these contexts, hiring demand and salary levels are shaped less by system count or delivery velocity and more by operating-model complexity, regulatory exposure, data dependency, and the consequences of execution failure.

Financial Services technology environments operate under a distinct set of pressures. Core systems are long-lived, highly integrated, and subject to evolving regulatory, cyber security, and operational resilience expectations. Change must be delivered alongside live operations, regulatory supervision, and client delivery — often over multi-year horizons. As system complexity increases, hiring decisions are judged not on speed to hire, but on whether new capability strengthens the organisation or introduces fragility.

AI and data-driven automation are increasingly embedded across Financial Services, supporting decision-making, efficiency, and oversight. As adoption accelerates, expectations around governance, auditability, and explainability are rising in parallel. Demand has increased for professionals who understand not only how systems and models work, but how they fail — including the ability to interrogate data quality, manage model and automation risk, and embed AI capability within defensible control frameworks.

This shift has elevated the importance of judgement, challenge, and cross-functional collaboration. Technology leaders, engineers, data specialists, and change professionals are increasingly expected to operate at the intersection of technology, regulation, and business outcomes, balancing innovation with control and resilience.

Transformation in Financial Services rarely occurs in isolation. Platform implementations, data migrations, automation programmes, and operating-model change must coexist with business-as-usual delivery and regulatory obligations. Hiring demand therefore favours professionals with experience operating in hybrid BAU and change environments, where sequencing, stakeholder management, and risk awareness are critical. Purely delivery-led profiles without experience navigating regulatory scrutiny, legacy complexity, or operational dependency are increasingly viewed as high-risk hires.

Salary pressure across Financial Technology roles is increasingly driven by execution risk, regulatory exposure, and institutional dependency rather than broad market inflation. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose capability reduces fragility, protects business-critical services, or strengthens long-term platform ownership. Key drivers include experience delivering technology change in regulated environments, data governance and architecture capability, cyber security and operational resilience expertise, technology leadership aligning architecture and operating models, and change professionals with proven judgement in complex live environments.

Hiring through 2026–27 is selective and context-driven. Organisations remain cautious on headcount growth but will invest where capability gaps pose material operational, regulatory, or delivery risk. Recruitment processes increasingly test candidates' comfort operating under scrutiny, evidence of controlled execution rather than speed alone, ability to balance trade-offs between pace and governance, and alignment with organisational maturity and risk posture.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, Financial Technology hiring will be defined by institutionalisation rather than acceleration. Firms that invest in technology, data, and change capability aligned to long-term operating models and regulatory expectations will be best positioned to enable change without destabilising core services.

SCOTLAND - Financial Technology

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) — CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Data Analyst - SAS / SQL	28-38	45-65	65-95	90-140
BI Engineer / Data Visualisation	28-38	45-65	65-95	95-145
Systems Analyst	30-38	38-65	65-95	n/a
Front End Developer	32-40	40-60	65-80	90+
Back End Developer	32-40	45-65	68-95	100+
Full Stack Developer	n/a	60-75	80-110	110-160+
Dev Ops	28-45	45-70	70-90	90-110
Architecture	n/a	65-85	90-120	130-180
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	27-32	32-45	45-55	55-70
IT Support (3rd Line)	n/a	40-55	55-65	65-80+
AI Implementation Specialist	45-55	55-75	75-90	90-120+
Information & Data Security	45-55	55-85	85-120	120-165
IT / Technology Risk	35-45	50-75	75-110	110-165
Delivery, Implementation & Release	n/a	50-70	70-90	90-115
Test & Defect Management - Manual	27-32	35-42	45-55	55-75
Test & Defect Management - Automated	27-40	35-60	60-95	95-115
Chief Technology Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	160-230+

"DEMAND HAS INCREASED FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO UNDERSTAND NOT ONLY HOW SYSTEMS AND MODELS WORK, BUT HOW THEY FAIL."

– Christopher Wright, Senior Consultant, Interim, Temporary & Contract

LONDON - Financial Technology

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Data Analyst - SAS / SQL	35-45	48-70	70-95	95-150
BI Engineer / Data Visualisation	35-45	48-75	75-100	100-155
Systems Analyst	35-45	45-62	65-100	110+
Front End Developer	38-50	55-85	85-120	120+
Back End Developer	38-50	55-85	85-130	135+
Full Stack Developer	38-50	60-95	95-140	145+
Dev Ops	38-50	60-85	85-115	120+
Architecture	n/a	70-110	110-135	145+
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	35-42	45-55	55-68	70-85
IT Support (3rd Line)	35-45	45-60	62-75	75-95
AI Implementation Specialist	50-60	70-100	100-130	130+
Information & Data Security	42-55	55-90	95-140	140+
IT / Technology Risk	40-50	50-95	100-130	130+
Delivery, Implementation & Release	38-50	52-75	75-100	100-125
Test & Defect Management - Manual	35-45	45-60	60-73	75-90
Test & Defect Management - Automated	38-50	50-70	70-95	100-125
Chief Technology Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	220-350

REGIONAL - Financial Technology

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Data Analyst - SAS / SQL	27-36	38-52	65-95	95-140
BI Engineer / Data Visualisation	27-36	38-52	65-90	90-140
Systems Analyst	28-38	40-60	65-95	n/a
Front End Developer	28-38	42-65	65-80	90+
Back End Developer	30-40	42-68	68-95	100+
Full Stack Developer	n/a	48-75	80-110	110-160+
Dev Ops	30-40	45-68	n/a	n/a
Architecture	n/a	60-75	90-120	130-180
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	27-32	32-45	45-55	55-70
IT Support (3rd Line)	n/a	40-60	55-65	65-80+
AI Implementation Specialist	45-55	55-75	75-90	90-120+
Information & Data Security	32-45	45-80	85-100	105-145+
IT / Technology Risk	30-45	45-75	75-95	100-140+
Delivery, Implementation & Release	n/a	50-70	70-90	90-115
Test & Defect Management - Manual	27-36	40-55	60-78	80-95
Test & Defect Management - Automated	30-40	50-80	85-110	115+
Chief Technology Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-200+

MARKET COMMENTARY - LEGAL, GOVERNANCE & RISK

Legal

As organisations enter 2026–27, the legal profession is operating under conditions of structural rather than cyclical change. While demand for legal expertise remains resilient across transactional, regulatory, disputes, and advisory activity, organisations are facing sustained cost discipline, heightened scrutiny, and accelerating technological change. Hiring decisions are therefore increasingly shaped by value delivery, governance assurance, and operating-model alignment rather than volume growth alone.

The legal sector now spans a broad range of organisational models, including private practice, in-house legal teams, governance and Company Secretariat functions, alternative legal service providers, and managed or technology-enabled delivery platforms. Across these environments, demand and compensation are shaped less by traditional prestige or billable hours and more by judgement, productivity, and the ability to support defensible decision-making under scrutiny.

Clients of legal services — including asset managers, financial institutions, corporates, private equity firms, and public bodies — are increasingly explicit in their expectations. Legal advice is assessed not only on technical accuracy, but on its ability to manage risk, support governance, and enable effective strategic decisions. As cost sensitivity and procurement discipline have intensified, time-based inputs continue to lose relevance as the primary measure of value.

Governance and Company Secretariat capability has become increasingly prominent. Board effectiveness, regulatory governance, entity management, and statutory compliance are now viewed as critical institutional capabilities rather than administrative functions. Hiring demand in this area is driven by the need for board confidence, regulatory fluency, and institutional memory, particularly in regulated and complex organisational structures. Mis-hires in governance-adjacent roles carry disproportionate reputational and regulatory risk, reinforcing the premium placed on experience and judgement.

Technology and AI adoption are reshaping legal operating models in a structural way. Tools supporting document review, research, contract analysis, regulatory tracking, and entity management are increasingly embedded across advisory and governance functions. However, technology has reset expectations rather than reduced accountability. Boards, clients, and regulators expect productivity gains and improved oversight, not simply faster delivery. Demand therefore remains strongest for legal professionals who can understand, challenge, and explain technology-supported outputs while maintaining auditability and regulatory confidence.

As routine and process-driven work is increasingly automated or outsourced, human expertise is being concentrated in areas requiring ambiguity management, interpretation, and judgement. Legal professionals are expected to provide concise, decision-ready advice to senior stakeholders, operate confidently under regulatory and reputational scrutiny, and work closely with finance, risk, compliance, and Company Secretariat functions.

Salary pressure across the legal sector through 2026–27 is increasingly driven by institutional risk and replacement cost rather than seniority, chargeable hours, or firm pedigree alone. The strongest premiums attach to individuals whose judgement materially protects governance outcomes, regulatory standing, or board confidence. As a result, compensation dispersion within similar titles is significant, reflecting differences in exposure, accountability, and decision impact rather than tenure alone.

Hiring through 2026–27 is cautious, deliberate, and increasingly risk-aware. Organisations are not struggling to find technically capable lawyers; they are focused on avoiding operating-model mismatch. Recruitment processes increasingly test candidates' judgement under pressure, ability to distil complexity into clear guidance, comfort operating within technology-enabled delivery models, and alignment with organisational maturity and risk appetite.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, legal hiring will continue to be shaped by governance expectations, productivity discipline, and operating-model clarity rather than headline growth. Firms that align legal, governance, and technology capability to institutional needs will be best positioned to sustain trust, control, and defensible decision-making.

SCOTLAND - Legal

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Private Practice	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Senior**	**Partner**
Private Client	40-55	55-75	75-95	100+
Corporate	50-68	68-80	80-120	120+
Role - In-house	**Early**	**Experienced**	**Management**	**Head**
Paralegal	28-35	35-65	n/a	n/a
Legal Counsel	50-60	60-85	85-110	110+
General Counsel	n/a	n/a	n/a	200+
Company Secretary	40-45	55-85	85-110	110-150

"HIRING THROUGH 2026–27 IS CAUTIOUS, DELIBERATE, AND INCREASINGLY RISK-AWARE. ORGANISATIONS ARE NOT STRUGGLING TO FIND TECHNICALLY CAPABLE LAWYERS; THEY ARE FOCUSED ON AVOIDING OPERATING-MODEL MISMATCH."

– Kim Bower, Business Manager, Asset Management & Financial Services

LONDON - Legal

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM(£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Private Practice	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Private Client	50-70	70-100	100-150	160+
Corporate	65-75	75-120	125-190	200+

Role - In-house	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Paralegal	38-50	50-85	n/a	n/a
Legal Counsel	65-85	85-150	150-220	220+
General Counsel	n/a	n/a	n/a	250+
Company Secretary	45-60	60-130	130-190	200+

REGIONAL - Legal

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM(£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role - Private Practice	Early	Experienced	Senior	Partner
Private Client	40-55	55-75	75-95	100+
Corporate	50-68	68-80	80-120	120+

Role - In-house	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Paralegal	28-35	35-65	n/a	n/a
Legal Counsel	50-60	60-85	85-110	110+
General Counsel	n/a	n/a	n/a	200+
Company Secretary	40-45	55-85	85-110	110-150

MARKET COMMENTARY - LEGAL, GOVERNANCE & RISK

Risk & Compliance

As organisations move into 2026–27, Risk & Compliance functions are operating well beyond traditional control roles, sitting at the centre of institutional confidence, regulatory alignment, and operational resilience. Across regulated Financial Services — including asset management, banking, insurance, pensions, investment platforms, and fund services — risk functions face sustained pressure from evolving regulatory expectations, increasing operational complexity, and expanding technology-linked risk surfaces.

Regulators in the UK and Europe have shifted decisively from stabilisation toward active supervision and enforcement. Expectations now extend beyond technical compliance to demonstrable governance, data integrity, and documented oversight — particularly where automation, outsourcing, and AI are embedded within core operating models. Hiring decisions are therefore increasingly focused on capability density, judgement, and strategic influence rather than broad headcount expansion.

Risk & Compliance spans a wide set of disciplines, including regulatory compliance, financial crime, conduct risk, operational and enterprise risk, third-party and outsourcing oversight, operational resilience, and emerging areas such as data, model, and AI governance. Across these areas, hiring demand and salary levels are shaped less by policy ownership alone and more by proximity to regulatory accountability, institutional risk, and decision-making consequence.

A defining feature of the current market is the elevation of risk from back-office control to strategic enablement. Risk professionals are increasingly expected to translate regulatory expectations into practical operating frameworks, validate and challenge automated and model-driven processes, and articulate risk trade-offs clearly to executives and boards. This has increased demand for individuals who can operate confidently at the intersection of regulation, technology, and business strategy.

Technology and data have become core to modern risk execution. AI, analytics, and automation are increasingly embedded across monitoring, surveillance, reporting, and control testing. At the same time, supervisory expectations around explainability, data quality, and governance have risen sharply. Demand therefore remains strongest for risk professionals who understand not only how models and systems operate, but how they fail — and who can evidence oversight, validation, and accountability under scrutiny.

Salary pressure across Risk & Compliance through 2026–27 is increasingly driven by regulatory exposure, replacement risk, and scarcity of specialised capability rather than market-wide inflation. The strongest premiums attach to individuals operating close to governance architecture and regulatory accountability, including senior compliance leaders, enterprise and operational risk specialists, data and model risk professionals, and experts in outsourcing and operational resilience. Compensation dispersion within similar titles is significant, reflecting differences in exposure, judgement required, and institutional consequence.

Hiring through 2026–27 is disciplined and outcome-focused. Organisations remain cautious on net headcount growth but will invest decisively where capability gaps create material regulatory, reputational, or operational risk. Recruitment processes increasingly assess candidates' judgement under pressure, ability to communicate risk impact clearly, fluency across data- and technology-enabled risk environments, and confidence engaging with regulators, boards, and senior stakeholders. Operating-model mismatch remains a common hiring failure point, particularly where candidates lack experience in supervised or governance-intensive environments.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, Risk & Compliance hiring will continue to be defined by precision rather than expansion. Organisations that succeed will be those that invest selectively in roles aligned to regulatory exposure, institutional risk, and technology-enabled operating models. Demand will increasingly favour professionals who combine deep technical understanding with strategic judgement, narrative clarity, and the ability to operate confidently within complex, scrutiny-driven environments.

SCOTLAND - Risk & Compliance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	EXPERIENCE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Compliance Monitoring	30-45	45-75	75-110	110-130
Regulatory Compliance	30-50	50-85	90-115	115-140
Compliance / T&C	26-35	35-60	60-85	95-125
Regulatory Risk	40-50	55-88	90-110	100-120
Data Protection	40-50	50-70	70-90	90-130
Cyber Security	40-50	55-75	70-100	100-145
Information Security Risk	40-50	55-75	70-100	100-140
IT / Technology Risk	35-50	50-89	80-110	110-165
Investment Risk	35-50	50-85	85-125	125-180
Operational Risk	35-50	50-85	85-110	100-120
Financial Crime / Money Laundering	27-35	35-65	65-95	95-140
MLRO	n/a	n/a	n/a	110-140
SMF16 / SMF17	n/a	n/a	n/a	120-200

> "A DEFINING FEATURE OF THE CURRENT MARKET IS THE ELEVATION OF RISK FROM BACK-OFFICE CONTROL TO STRATEGIC ENABLEMENT."
>
> – Kim Bower, Business Manager, Asset Management & Financial Services

LONDON - Risk & Compliance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM(£'000s)	EXPERIENCE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Compliance Monitoring	40-55	55-100	100-140	140+
Regulatory Compliance	40-55	55-110	110-150	150+
Compliance / T&C	35-50	50-90	90-130	135+
Regulatory Risk	40-55	55-120	120-180	185+
Data Protection	42-55	55-90	95-150	150+
Cyber Security	42-55	55-90	95-155	160+
Information Security Risk	42-55	55-90	95-140	140+
IT / Technology Risk	40-50	50-95	100-150	150+
Investment Risk	45-60	60-110	115-150	150-175
Operational Risk	40-55	55-120	120-150	150-185+
Financial Crime / Money Laundering	38-50	50-90	90-130	135+
MLRO	n/a	n/a	n/a	150+
SMF16 / SMF17	n/a	n/a	n/a	150-250

REGIONAL - Risk & Compliance

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM(£'000s)	EXPERIENCE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Compliance Monitoring	28-38	38-70	75-100	105-120+
Regulatory Compliance	30-40	45-75	80-110	115-130
Compliance / T&C	28-38	38-55	55-75	85-115+
Regulatory Risk	35-45	50-65	70-100	105-120+
Data Protection	30-45	45-70	70-85	90-125
Cyber Security	32-45	45-75	75-95	100-140+
Information Security Risk	32-45	45-80	85-100	105-145+
IT / Technology Risk	30-45	45-75	75-95	100-140+
Investment Risk	35-50	50-85	85-125	125-180
Operational Risk	35-50	50-85	85-110	110-145
Financial Crime / Money Laundering	26-38	40-65	70-95	95-140
MLRO	n/a	n/a	n/a	100-150
SMF16 / SMF17	n/a	n/a	n/a	140-195

MARKET COMMENTARY - BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Business Services

As organisations move into 2026–27, Business Services functions are undergoing a fundamental reappraisal. Roles historically labelled as "support" — including Executive Assistants, Office and Workplace Operations, Marketing and Communications, Human Resources, Knowledge and Practice Support, and Front-of-House — are increasingly recognised as critical enablers of productivity, organisational resilience, and leadership effectiveness. Hiring decisions are therefore shaped less by headcount growth and more by role substance, delivery credibility, and proximity to institutional risk.

Operating under sustained cost pressure, heightened scrutiny, and evolving hybrid working models, organisations are placing greater emphasis on the effectiveness and strategic contribution of their internal infrastructure. Business Services functions now sit closer to leadership, culture, client experience, and operational continuity — areas where failure is visible, costly, and often reputationally damaging. As a result, judgement, discretion, and operating maturity have become central hiring criteria.

The Business Services sector spans a broad range of functions, including executive and practice support, workplace and facilities management, business and office operations, marketing and PR, internal communications, HR and people leadership, and knowledge management. While Finance, Risk & Compliance, Sales, and Technology are addressed separately in this guide, Business Services roles increasingly intersect with these functions, reinforcing their role as institutional glue rather than administrative overhead.

Market conditions have constrained broad-based hiring. Organisational consolidation, cost discipline, and post-pandemic workplace redesign have flattened salary bands for many Business Services roles and reduced the number of distinct employers in certain segments. However, this has been accompanied by a rise in role complexity. Organisations increasingly expect Business Services professionals to deliver more with fewer resources, supporting senior leadership, maintaining client-facing standards, and enabling coordination across distributed workforces.

Technology and automation continue to reshape Business Services delivery, though unevenly across functions. Administrative tasks are increasingly automated, while roles evolve toward coordination, oversight, and judgement. AI-enabled tools are being adopted across scheduling, workflow management, HR analytics, knowledge retrieval, and communications. However, technology has raised expectations rather than reduced accountability. Firms increasingly expect Business Services professionals to understand how tools are used, where risk sits, and how outputs should be interpreted — particularly where decisions affect people, culture, or reputation.

Salary pressure across Business Services through 2026–27 is shaped by a complex interplay of replacement risk, proximity to leadership, and broader market constraints. While overall salary growth remains subdued due to consolidation and cost discipline, premiums continue to attach to roles with outsized institutional impact. Senior Executive Assistants, HR leaders, communications specialists, knowledge heads, and workplace leaders with responsibility for continuity, discretion, and risk management continue to command stronger compensation, reflecting the cost of mis-hire or disruption.

Hiring through 2026–27 is selective and increasingly risk-aware. Organisations are not struggling to attract candidates; they are focused on identifying individuals who can operate credibly within constrained, high-expectation environments. Recruitment processes increasingly test judgement under pressure, ability to manage competing priorities and senior stakeholders, comfort operating with incomplete information, and resilience where errors are highly visible. Failed hires most often reflect underestimation of role complexity rather than lack of technical skill.

Looking ahead across 2026–27, Business Services hiring will continue to be shaped by institutional resilience rather than expansion. Organisations that recognise Business Services as a source of stability, productivity, and risk control — and invest selectively in roles that enable leadership effectiveness, cultural coherence, and operational continuity — will be best positioned to operate effectively in increasingly scrutinised environments.

SCOTLAND - Business Services

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Secretarial & Executive Assistant	27-35	35-50	50-65	n/a
Receptionist / Facilities	27-32	35-48	48-60	60-90
Office Manager	n/a	n/a	45-55	55-60
Bid / RFP	27-35	35-55	55-80	80-120
Customer Data Analytics	27-40	45-68	70-95	90-115
Events Management	27-35	35-55	55-70	70-95
Brand Marketing	27-35	35-55	55-70	70-95
PR	27-35	35-55	55-73	70-98
Digital Marketing	27-35	35-65	65-90	90-120
SEO / Social Media	27-35	35-55	55-85	85-105
UX Design	27-35	35-70	70-90	90-120
Client Experience Manager	27-35	35-45	45-55	55-85+
Marketing & Communications	27-35	38-65	65-85	85-125
Marketing Strategy	27-35	35-55	70-85	90-125
Chief Marketing Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	150-200
HR Admin	27-35	35-50	50-65	65-80
Human Resources - Generalist	27-35	40-75	75-99	100-125
Human Resources - Reward	27-38	38-75	75-100	100-135
Human Resources - L&D	28-35	35-50	50-75	75-90
Human Resources - Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	90-150
Chief People Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	130-200

"ORGANISATIONS INCREASINGLY EXPECT BUSINESS SERVICES PROFESSIONALS TO DELIVER MORE WITH FEWER RESOURCES, SUPPORTING SENIOR LEADERSHIP, MAINTAINING CLIENT-FACING STANDARDS, AND ENABLING COORDINATION ACROSS DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCES."

– Louise Powrie, Managing Director

LONDON - Business Services

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Secretarial & Executive Assistant	35-45	50-70	72-90	n/a
Receptionist / Facilities	35-40	40-65	68-85	85+
Office Manager	n/a	n/a	65-90	95+
Bid / RFP	40-50	50-95	100-130	135+
Customer Data Analytics	35-50	50-80	85-100	110+
Events Management	35-48	50-75	78-100	110+
Brand Marketing	35-48	50-90	95-140	140+
PR	35-48	50-75	78-100	110+
Digital Marketing	35-48	50-95	95-150	155+
SEO / Social Media	35-48	50-95	95-150	155+
UX Design	35-50	50-85	90-130	135+
Client Experience Manager	35-40	40-55	55-70	75-110+
Marketing & Communications	35-48	50-95	95-150	155+
Marketing Strategy	35-48	50-115	120-175	180+
Chief Marketing Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	180-250
HR Admin	35-40	40-65	68-85	85+
Human Resources - Generalist	35-50	50-110	120-165	170+
Human Resources - Reward	35-50	50-120	125-175	180+
Human Resources - L&D	35-50	50-110	120-165	170+
Human Resources - Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	125+
Chief People Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	185+

REGIONAL - Business Services

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Secretarial & Executive Assistant	26-32	35-50	55-65	70-80
Receptionist / Facilities	26-32	33-46	50-75	75-100
Office Manager	n/a	n/a	45-55	55-60
Bid / RFP	26-35	35-48	55-80	80-120
Customer Data Analytics	26-40	45-68	70-95	90-115
Events Management	26-35	35-55	55-70	70-95
Brand Marketing	26-35	35-55	55-70	70-95
PR	26-35	35-55	55-73	70-98
Digital Marketing	26-35	35-65	65-90	90-120
SEO / Social Media	26-35	35-55	55-85	85-105
UX Design	26-35	35-70	70-90	90-120
Client Experience Manager	30-38	39-50	50-60	65-90+
Marketing & Communications	26-35	38-65	65-85	85-125
Marketing Strategy	26-35	35-70	70-85	90-125
Chief Marketing Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	150-200
HR Admin	26-35	35-50	50-65	65-80
Human Resources - Generalist	26-35	40-75	75-99	100-125
Human Resources - Reward	26-38	38-70	75-100	100-135
Human Resources - L&D	25-35	35-55	50-75	75-90
Human Resources - Director	n/a	n/a	n/a	90-125
Chief People Officer	n/a	n/a	n/a	100-135

MARKET COMMENTARY - LIFE, PLATFORMS, PENSIONS & ACTUARIAL

Life, Platforms, Pensions & Actuarial

Life, platforms, pensions, and actuarial markets operate within one of the longest-horizon and most accountability-intensive environments in Financial Services. Decisions taken today on pricing, capital, platform design, investment strategy, or benefit delivery frequently have consequences that extend decades into the future.

In 2025–26, this reality has become more pronounced. Regulatory scrutiny continues to intensify across capital adequacy, Consumer Duty, value-for-money assessments, operational resilience, data quality, and governance. Regulators increasingly expect firms not only to comply, but to evidence how decisions are made, challenged, and governed over time — particularly where consumer outcomes are long-dated and difficult to reverse.

Prudential reform under Solvency UK has not reduced the need for senior actuarial, risk, and finance talent, but it has materially compressed the margin for error. Firms are relying more heavily on internal models, assumptions, and documented judgement, increasing individual accountability rather than diffusing it. This has reshaped recruitment demand faster than the talent pool can adjust, creating scarcity in governance-exposed actuarial and risk capability even where overall headcount growth remains constrained.

At the same time, consolidation, outsourcing, and platform-led delivery have transformed operating models across life and pensions markets. While scale has delivered efficiency, it has also introduced deeper dependencies on administrators, technology vendors, asset managers, and data providers. Accountability has not diminished — it has concentrated. Organisations remain fully responsible for outcomes even where execution is outsourced or automated, and platforms increasingly operate as critical financial infrastructure rather than distribution channels.

Regulatory initiatives such as Pensions Dashboards and small-pot consolidation have elevated data quality, record accuracy, and incident readiness from operational hygiene to front-line regulatory risk. As a result, recruitment demand has shifted away from execution-heavy roles toward individuals willing and able to operate in high-accountability environments where delivery failure carries asymmetric reputational and regulatory consequences.

Actuarial capability now sits at the centre of this ecosystem. The profession has evolved from a specialist technical function into a core institutional control capability, embedded across pricing and product design under Consumer Duty, capital and solvency management, longevity risk, bulk annuity activity, investment strategy, and model and data governance. The value of actuarial talent increasingly lies not in technical production alone, but in judgement, challenge, and the ability to defend decisions under scrutiny.

For specialist pension actuaries, the introduction of the Financial Reporting Council's TAS 300 rules is expected to intensify demand further, particularly for those with expertise in DB funding and surplus management. In an already constrained market, this is likely to increase competition for experienced individuals and place upward pressure on salaries.

Hiring across the sector in 2026 remains deliberate and risk-aware. Organisations are selectively reinforcing capability where failure would create disproportionate institutional exposure. Recruitment processes are therefore slower and more selective, driven by low tolerance for mis-hire rather than lack of demand.

Value and scarcity in this market are increasingly determined by proximity to risk rather than organisational hierarchy. Individuals with exposure to regulated decision-making, balance-sheet risk, governance scrutiny, and outsourced delivery oversight continue to command the strongest demand.

Looking ahead, hiring across life, platforms, pensions, and actuarial functions will remain shaped by governance, data integrity, and operating-model resilience rather than growth alone. In a sector defined by long horizons and irreversible decisions, the labour market will continue to reward firms — and individuals — that strengthen institutional confidence through judgement, clarity, and accountability.

SCOTLAND - Life, Platforms, Pensions & Actuarial

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s) CAREER STAGE

Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Pensions Admin (DB/DC)	28-38	40-55	55-70	70-90
Actuarial Analyst (Non-Studying)	32-40	42-55	60-80	80-90
Actuarial Student	31-35	50-60	n/a	n/a
Newly-Qualified Actuary	55-65	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scheme Actuary	n/a	65-95	95-130	130-220
Project Actuary	30-45	65-95	95-130	130-220
Transitions	35-45	45-65	65-80	80-100
Research	32-45	45-65	70-90	96-135
Governance	30-40	40-60	60-75	80+
Trustee	32-43	45-75	80-100	105-130+
Investment Consultant	32-45	45-90	90-130	130-190
Pension Consultant	30-35	35-60	60-90	90-114
Product / Proposition Development	28-40	40-75	75-95	95-120
Customer Data Analytics	28-42	45-68	70-95	90-115
Data Visualisation	30-40	45-68	70-95	90-115
UX / UI Design	28-35	35-70	70-90	90-120
Strategy	35-45	45-75	75-95	95-130

"...RECRUITMENT DEMAND HAS SHIFTED AWAY FROM EXECUTION-HEAVY ROLES TOWARD INDIVIDUALS WILLING AND ABLE TO OPERATE IN HIGH-ACCOUNTABILITY ENVIRONMENTS WHERE DELIVERY FAILURE CARRIES ASYMMETRIC REPUTATIONAL AND REGULATORY CONSEQUENCES."

– Louise Powrie, Managing Director

LONDON - Life, Platforms, Pensions & Actuarial

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Pensions Admin (DB/DC)	35-45	45-65	70-85	90+
Actuarial Analyst (Non-Studying)	35-48	45-65	70-85	90+
Actuarial Student	31-35	50-70	n/a	n/a
Newly-Qualified Actuary	55-70	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scheme Actuary	n/a	80-110	115-140	150+
Project Actuary	35-50	65-95	95-130	130-220
Transitions	35-50	50-80	80-100	110+
Research	35-50	52-80	85-100	110+
Governance	35-45	45-60	65-85	90-120
Trustee	40-50	55-90	95-120	125+
Investment Consultant	35-60	65-130	130-165	170+
Pension Consultant	35-48	65-120	125-160	160+
Product / Proposition Development	35-45	48-90	95-130	135+
Customer Data Analytics	35-50	50-80	85-100	110+
Data Visualisation	35-50	50-80	85-100	110+
UX / UI Design	35-50	50-85	90-130	135+
Strategy	35-50	52-80	85-100	110+

REGIONAL - Life, Platforms, Pensions & Actuarial

PERMANENT SALARY PER ANNUM (£'000s)	CAREER STAGE			
Role	Early	Experienced	Management	Head
Pensions Admin (DB/DC)	27-35	38-52	55-75	70-90
Actuarial Analyst (Non-Studying)	27-35	42-55	60-80	80-90
Actuarial Student	31-35	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newly-Qualified Actuary	n/a	55-65	n/a	n/a
Scheme Actuary	n/a	55-75	75-100	130-220
Project Actuary	31-35	55-65	70-100	130-220
Transitions	35-45	40-60	80-85	80-100
Research	32-45	40-60	65-85	90-110
Governance	28-35	36-50	55-80	85-100
Trustee	28-35	36-65	65-90	95-130+
Investment Consultant	32-45	55-85	90-130	130-190
Pension Consultant	30-35	55-85	90-120	90-114
Product / Proposition Development	28-38	40-70	75-90	95-120
Customer Data Analytics	28-36	40-65	70-95	90-115
Data Visualisation	28-36	40-65	70-95	90-115
UX / UI Design	27-35	35-70	70-90	90-120
Strategy	35-45	45-75	75-95	95-130

MARKET COMMENTARY - UK INTERIM, TEMPORARY & CONTRACT

Daily Rates

As organisations enter 2026–27, contingent capability has become increasingly mission-critical to delivery confidence — even where hiring volumes are constrained. Across many regulated and professional environments, temporary, interim and contract labour has become structural rather than tactical, often without being deliberately designed or governed as such. This shift provides important context for how the contingent market across the UK and Ireland is evolving, and why its role remains central despite continued caution in overall hiring activity.

As organisations across the UK and Ireland move into 2026–27, the temporary, interim and contract market is being shaped by a common set of forces: economic caution, higher employment costs, tighter governance expectations, and accelerating technology change. Across the UK, official indicators point to a softening labour market, with unemployment rising and payroll employment weakening into late 2025. Alongside this, recruiter-led indices continue to show downward pressure on hiring activity, with both permanent placements and temporary billings declining—reflecting fragile confidence and sustained cost sensitivity.

In this context, contingent labour is increasingly being treated less as a broad "flex lever" and more as a selective mechanism for delivery assurance, deployed where work is time-bound, high exposure or cannot be absorbed through internal productivity measures. Employers across professional and financial services have leaned more heavily on predictable engagement structures, including fixed-term contracts, PAYE or inside-IR35 models and statement-of-work arrangements. This shift reflects not a reduced need for specialist capability, but a greater emphasis on governance, auditability and cost certainty in resourcing decisions.

Across the UK, this national picture masks meaningful regional variation. While the same macro forces — cost discipline, regulatory pressure and AI adoption — are present everywhere, their practical impact differs materially by market. As seen in contrasts between Scotland and London, some regions prioritise continuity, tenure and institutional knowledge, while others operate with greater intensity, sharper role definition and outcome-driven deployment. The UK contingent market should therefore be understood as a collection of distinct regional dynamics rather than a single, uniform trend.

Decision-making behaviour is also shifting. Across the UK and Ireland, approval cycles for temporary and contract roles have lengthened, with greater scrutiny applied to role definition, delivery risk and expected outcomes. Many organisations show a clear preference for extending existing contingent engagements rather than onboarding new resource, reflecting both cost control and risk aversion. Where new hires are approved, there is increased reliance on known individuals, trusted suppliers and clearly evidenced capability. This behavioural shift reinforces the broader move away from interchangeable capacity and towards contingent labour as a deliberate, risk-managed investment in delivery confidence.

A practical feature of the UK market is increasing regional dispersion. London remains the most liquid professional contractor market, but meaningful regional centres — including Scotland, the North of England and Ireland — display different hiring rhythms and risk tolerances. This has created a market characterised not by uniform expansion or contraction, but by pockets of demand linked to sector concentration, regulatory workload, infrastructure investment and technology delivery cycles.

Across both the UK and Ireland, demand that does secure approval continues to cluster around areas closest to institutional risk and evidencing requirements. Risk & Compliance, Finance Controls and Regulatory Reporting, Data Governance, Cyber and Information Security, Change Governance, operational resilience and complex platform delivery remain active, particularly in Financial Services and other regulated environments where delivery failures are often judged retrospectively.

AI is now a material second-order driver of contingent demand through 2026–27. Its impact is unlikely to be uniform. AI-enabled tools are beginning to compress demand for routine, execution-heavy temporary work, while simultaneously expanding demand for interim and contract capability aligned to risk management, control design, governance and assurance. This is especially evident in Financial Services, where regulators are actively engaging on AI use, accountability and associated model and data risks.

As a result, a clear polarisation by seniority is emerging across the UK and Ireland. Fewer junior, task-based contractor assignments are being approved, while demand is increasingly concentrated on experienced practitioners who can operate independently, exercise judgement within governance frameworks, evidence decisions clearly and deliver outcomes that withstand scrutiny. Where contingent hiring does take place, selectivity is higher and expectations around pace, quality and defensibility are elevated.

Ireland's outlook mirrors many of these themes, but with some distinct structural features. While the labour market has cooled modestly, Ireland remains a major European hub for multinational professional and financial services. EU-level regulatory developments, including the EU AI Act and digital operational resilience requirements, continue to shape supervisory focus. In practice, this sustains demand for interim and contract capability in risk, controls, assurance, resilience and data-related functions, even where overall hiring volumes remain measured.

Looking ahead through 2026–27, the UK and Ireland contingent market is unlikely to revert to a purely volume-led contractor model. The more durable trajectory is toward selective, governance-aware deployment of interim and contract capability, with engagement models increasingly structured around predictability and accountability. Employers that treat contingent resource as a governed, delivery-critical component of their operating model — rather than interchangeable capacity — will be better positioned to sustain confidence under continued scrutin

INTERIM, TEMPORARY & CONTRACT (£)

Shown as bundled daily rates (£), inclusive of statutory employment costs such as holiday pay, employer's pension and employer's NI.

SCOTLAND - Daily Rates

Function	Entry Level	Mid-Level	Senior
FINTECH			
Architecture	550	700	800+
Software Engineering	500	600	700+
Software Development	450	550	650+
Dev Ops	350	550	700+
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	150	250	350
IT Support (3rd Line)	350	400	450+
Information & Cyber Security	350	500	650+
Delivery, Implementation & Release	450	550	650+
CHANGE			
Programme Manager / Director	700	850	1000+
Project Management	450	550	650+
Change Management	300	400	500+
Process Improvement & Business Efficiency	400	500	600+
Business Analysis	350	450	550+
Project Support / PMO	250	400	450
Data Analysis, Business & Management Information	250	400	500+
Test & Defect Management	300	400	500+
Systems Analyst	500	600	700+

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Customer Services	135	150	190+
Call Centre	135	150	190+
General Administration	135	165	190+
Marketing	140	200	300+
Executive & PA	140	170	200+
Secretarial (incl. Legal)	140	170	200+
Facilities, Reception & Office Management	140	150	190+
HR	140	200	350+

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

Investment & Fund Accounting	250 (Part Qual.)	375	450+
Regulatory, Prudential & Product Control	275 (Part Qual.)	425	500+
Financial Reporting & Control	250 (Part Qual.)	400	475+
Payroll	175	250	325+
Finance Operations	175	250	325+
Procurement	250	450	550+
Internal Audit & Controls	300	450	550+
Financial Planning & Analysis	250 (Par Qual.)	400	500+
Project Accounting	250	450	550+
Tax	300 (Part Qual.)	500	600+
Treasury and Liquidity	250	425	550+

CORE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS (FINANCIAL SERVICES)

Investment Operations (Asset Management, Custody & Fund Services)	225	350	400+
Operations (Wider Financial Services, e.g. Fintech, Wealth, Brokerage)	200	300	350+
Client Relationship & Service	150	250	350+
Compliance Monitoring	300	400	500+
Regulatory Compliance	300	400	500+
Operational Risk	250	350	500+
Financial Crime / Anti-Money Laundering	200	300	400+
Investment Risk	350	500	600+
Product Development	n/a	350	500+
Analysis, Performance & Research	250	350	500+
Third Party Oversight	n/a	350	400+
Data Analysis	200	300	400+

"AS ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE UK AND IRELAND MOVE INTO 2026–27, THE TEMPORARY, INTERIM AND CONTRACT MARKET IS BEING SHAPED BY A COMMON SET OF FORCES: ECONOMIC CAUTION, HIGHER EMPLOYMENT COSTS, TIGHTER GOVERNANCE EXPECTATIONS, AND ACCELERATING TECHNOLOGY CHANGE."

– Emma Hogg, Assistant Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract

INTERIM, TEMPORARY & CONTRACT (£)
Shown as bundled daily rates (£), inclusive of statutory employment costs such as holiday pay, employer's pension and employer's NI.

LONDON - Daily Rates

Function	Entry Level	Mid-Level	Senior
FINTECH			
Architecture	550	800	900+
Software Engineering	550	650	800+
Software Development	550	650	750+
Dev Ops	400	600	750+
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	180	275	400
IT Support (3rd Line)	400	450	500+
Information & Cyber Security	400	550	700+
Delivery, Implementation & Release	500	650	700+
CHANGE			
Programme Manager / Director	750	900	1100+
Project Management	500	650	750+
Change Management	350	500	600+
Process Improvement & Business Efficiency	450	550	650+
Business Analysis	400	500	650+
Project Support / PMO	300	400	450
Data Analysis, Business & Management Information	300	450	550+
Test & Defect Management	350	450	600+
Systems Analyst	550	650	750+
BUSINESS SUPPORT			
Customer Services	150	175	250+
Call Centre	150	175	250+
General Administration	150	190	225+
Marketing	165	250	350+
Executive & PA	180	200	250+

Secretarial (incl. Legal)	200	250	300+
Facilities, Reception & Office Management	175	200	225+
HR	175	250	400+
CORE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS (FINANCIAL SERVICES)			
Investment Operations (Asset Management, Custody & Fund Services)	250	400	450+
Operations (Wider Financial Services, e.g. Fintech, Wealth, Brokerage)	250	350	400+
Client Relationship & Service	180	300	400+
Compliance Monitoring	350	450	550+
Regulatory Compliance	350	450	550+
Operational Risk	300	400	550+
Financial Crime / Anti-Money Laundering	250	350	500+
Investment Risk	350	500	600+
Product Development	n/a	400	550+
Analysis, Performance & Research	300	400	550+
Third Party Oversight	n/a	400	450+
Data Analysis	350	400	500+
ACCOUNTING & FINANCE			
Investment & Fund Accounting	300 (Part Qual.)	400	450+
Regulatory, Prudential & Product Control	300 (Part Qual.)	450	600+
Financial Reporting & Control	275 (Part Qual.)	450	550+
Payroll	200	300	375+
Finance Operations	200	275	375+
Procurement	300	500	650+
Internal Audit & Controls	350	500	650+
Financial Planning & Analysis	275 (Par Qual.)	450	600+
Project Accounting	275	500	650+
Tax	325 (Part Qual.)	550	700+
Treasury and Liquidity	275	475	600+

INTERIM, TEMPORARY & CONTRACT (£)
Shown as bundled daily rates (£), inclusive of statutory employment costs such as holiday pay, employer's pension and employer's NI.

REGIONAL - Daily Rates

Function	Entry Level	Mid-Level	Senior
FINTECH			
Architecture	550	700	800+
Software Engineering	500	600	700+
Software Development	450	550	650+
Dev Ops	350	550	700+
IT Support (1st & 2nd Line)	150	250	350
IT Support (3rd Line)	350	400	450+
Information & Cyber Security	350	500	650+
Delivery, Implementation & Release	450	550	650+
CHANGE			
Programme Manager/Director	700	850	1000+
Project Management	450	550	650+
Change Management	300	400	500+
Process Improvement & Business Efficiency	400	500	600+
Business Analysis	350	450	550+
Project Support / PMO	250	400	450
Data Analysis, Business & Management Information	250	400	500+
Test & Defect Management	300	400	500+
Systems Analyst	500	600	700+
BUSINESS SUPPORT			
Customer Services	135	150	190+
Call Centre	135	150	190+
General Administration	135	165	190+
Marketing	140	200	300+
Executive & PA	140	170	200+
Secretarial (incl. Legal)	140	170	200+
Facilities, Reception & Office Management	140	150	190+
HR	140	200	350+
CORE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS (FINANCIAL SERVICES)			
Investment Operations (Asset Management, Custody & Fund Services)	225	350	400+
Operations (Wider Financial Services, e.g. Fintech, Wealth, Brokerage)	200	300	350+
Client Relationship & Service	150	250	350+
Compliance Monitoring	300	400	500+
Regulatory Compliance	300	400	500+
Operational Risk	250	350	500+
Financial Crime / Anti-Money Laundering	200	300	400+
Investment Risk	350	500	600+
Product Development	n/a	350	500+
Analysis, Performance & Research	250	350	500+
Third Party Oversight	n/a	350	400+
Data Analysis	200	300	400+
ACCOUNTING & FINANCE			
Investment & Fund Accounting	250 (Part Qual.)	375	450+
Regulatory, Prudential & Product Control	275 (Part Qual.)	425	500+
Financial Reporting & Control	250 (Part Qual.)	400	475+
Payroll	175	250	325+
Finance Operations	175	250	325+
Procurement	250	450	550+
Internal Audit & Controls	300	450	550+
Financial Planning & Analysis	250 (Par Qual.)	400	500+
Project Accounting	250	450	550+
Tax	300 (Part Qual.)	500	600+
Treasury and Liquidity	250	425	550+

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Regional Market Overview - UK & Ireland

The UK and Ireland financial and professional services labour market is increasingly fragmented as firms enter 2026. While national themes — regulatory intensity, AI adoption, cost discipline, talent scarcity, and organisational redesign — are consistent, their impact is uneven across regions. Scotland, the North of England, London, and Ireland are each experiencing distinct market dynamics, shaped by local talent pools, cost structures, sector concentration, and employer strategy.

Political and policy uncertainty continues to influence confidence unevenly across regions, weighing most heavily on London-facing investment and advisory activity, while regional hubs and Ireland benefit from longer-term operational mandates and planning horizons. The result is a market defined not by uniform recovery or growth, but by divergence — with regional hubs evolving at different speeds and in different directions.

SCOTLAND:

STRONG FOUNDATIONS, STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT — AND A NET EXPORTER OF TALENT

Scotland remains a critical pillar of the UK financial and professional services ecosystem, particularly across asset management, pensions, insurance, sustainable finance, fintech, legal services, and advisory. Edinburgh and Glasgow continue to attract long-term institutional investment, and Scotland's depth of experience in regulated environments remains a core strength.

However, 2025 proved a more challenging year for recruitment. Hiring slowed as firms prioritised cost control, productivity, and internal restructuring over headcount growth. Consolidation across large pensions providers, asset managers, and platforms has reduced the number of distinct senior employers, reshaping market depth and external opportunity. Salary inflation moderated outside specialist compliance, risk, and transformation roles, and candidate movement became more cautious.

In practical recruitment terms, hiring in Scotland in 2026 is defined by depth rather than volume. Candidate pools are experienced and technically strong, but relatively compact — particularly at senior levels. Searches progress best where roles offer clear scope, decision-making authority, and credible progression. They stall quickly where expectations are misaligned around seniority, hybrid working, or remuneration. Counteroffers remain less aggressive than in London, but replacement hiring is often slower and more deliberate due to limited like-for-like supply.

Historically, Scotland benefited from lower cost-of-living pressures relative to London. That advantage has now narrowed materially for mid- to senior-level professionals. Higher personal taxation, rising housing costs in Edinburgh, increased childcare and family expenses, and the introduction of VAT on private school fees have significantly reduced differences in disposable income between Edinburgh and London at senior salary levels. As a result, geography alone is no longer a reliable retention lever.

A defining shift entering 2026 is the increasing integration of regional labour markets. Employer consolidation, sustained cost pressure, and the normalisation of hybrid and remote working have weakened traditional geographic boundaries. Professionals are increasingly living in Scotland while working for London-based asset managers, North of England platforms, or Dublin-based fund groups. This has expanded opportunity and flexibility for individuals, but intensified competition for Scotland-based employers and distorted traditional salary benchmarks.

London compensation increasingly influences expectations across regions, while cost-of-living convergence limits the effectiveness of geographic arbitrage. Scottish employers are therefore competing not only with local peers, but with national and international firms able to access the same talent remotely.

At the same time, Scottish-based teams are increasingly taking on higher-value oversight, data governance, and transformation responsibilities, rather than purely execution-based work. However, where progression pathways or leadership exposure are constrained locally, cross-regional roles have become a viable — and increasingly normalised — alternative for experienced professionals.

Looking ahead, Scotland's ability to retain senior capability will depend less on affordability and more on role substance, progression clarity, leadership exposure, and flexible operating models. While nearshoring into Scotland remains part of long-term strategy, 2026 is likely to remain a year of selective, capability-led hiring rather than broad expansion, within a labour market that is no longer purely regional in nature.

NORTH OF ENGLAND:

ACCELERATING MOMENTUM AND STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

The North of England has emerged as one of the most dynamic regional labour markets entering 2026. Manchester, Leeds, and other hubs are increasingly viewed as strategic delivery centres, not simply lower-cost alternatives to London.

Growth has been driven by the expansion of banking, insurance, asset servicing, and professional services platforms; nearshoring of operations, change, risk, and technology-enabled roles; and strong uptake of AI, automation, and shared service models. Flexible and remote working continues to be used deliberately as a competitive advantage to attract talent from London and other regions.

Recruitment across the North is becoming increasingly competitive. Employer demand is rising faster than the available pool of candidates who combine technical capability with stakeholder confidence and delivery credibility. While mobility within the region has increased, there remains a strong preference for roles that offer local progression rather than relocation to London. Hiring processes that remain overly London-centric in pace or structure risk losing candidates to faster-moving regional competitors.

The North is also leveraging regional hubs to broaden socio-economic access, supported by skills-based hiring and regional talent strategies. More favourable cost-of-living dynamics and increasing role sophistication are strengthening the region's appeal to mid-career professionals seeking progression without London-level salary inflation. As in Scotland, regional teams are increasingly responsible for oversight, data, and transformation activity, not just volume delivery.

Over the next 12–24 months, the North is expected to absorb a greater share of regulatory delivery, data governance, and operational resilience activity, increasing salary pressure in mid-level compliance, risk, and transformation roles as capability deepens.

LONDON:
SCALE, SPECIALISATION, AND STRUCTURAL IMBALANCE

London remains the dominant centre for financial services, particularly across investment management, private wealth, hedge funds, private markets, capital markets, finance, and high-end legal services. It also remains the most diverse overall talent market in the UK.

However, London continues to operate in a bubble. Salary expectations remain elevated, particularly at mid-to-senior levels, while hiring is increasingly polarised between high-value specialist roles and contraction in traditional operations. Senior representation challenges persist despite diverse entry-level pipelines.

Hiring in London remains fast-moving and highly transactional. Candidate expectations are shaped by constant market visibility, and counteroffers are common — particularly in investment, private markets, finance, and specialist legal roles. Searches frequently stall where compensation, bonus potential, or role scope are not clearly articulated early in the process. Burnout, cost pressure, and return-to-office mandates are increasing friction, particularly at mid-career level.

High nominal pay is increasingly offset by taxation and cost-of-living pressures, but London continues to offer greater upside through salary ceilings, bonus potential, and exposure to complex, judgement-led roles. Hiring remains highly sensitive to global capital cycles and allocator sentiment, contributing to volatility in both hiring activity and compensation.

IRELAND:
REGULATORY ALIGNMENT AND OPERATIONAL EXPANSION

Ireland continues to play a strategically important role across fund administration, hedge fund operations, payments, and multinational shared services, underpinned by EU regulatory alignment.

Hiring demand remains strong for regulatory reporting, compliance, fund oversight, and AI-enabled operational roles, particularly within Dublin. Candidate pools are internationally mobile but increasingly selective, with compensation, flexibility, and role substance closely scrutinised.

Recruitment in Ireland is characterised by tightening talent supply and growing competition for experienced professionals. Hiring timelines have lengthened, counteroffers are becoming more common, and cost pressure in Dublin is accelerating faster than in UK regional hubs. Over the medium term, firms are expected to become more selective about incremental Ireland expansion, increasingly weighing UK regional hubs where cost, talent availability, and regulatory delivery capability are converging.

OUTLOOK

The UK and Ireland labour market entering 2026 is defined by rebalancing rather than recovery. Scotland remains foundational but structurally constrained and increasingly interconnected; the North of England is accelerating as a delivery and transformation engine; London continues to command premium roles while facing cost and productivity tension; and Ireland remains a regulatory and operational anchor.

For employers, the implication is clear: regional strategy is inseparable from talent, cost, and operating-model strategy. Firms that understand not just where roles sit, but how talent flows across regions — and who adapt hiring, reward, and progression strategies accordingly — will be best positioned to compete in 2026 and beyond.

ABOUT CORE-ASSET CONSULTING

We're here to assure your aspirations and exceed your expectations.

Core-Asset Consulting was founded on the belief that people are a business's greatest asset. Whether you're a major financial institution or a fintech start-up, success depends on having the right people in the right place at the right time. As leading consultants for the financial and professional services sector in the UK and Ireland, we transform expectations and performance through strategic, long-term partnerships. We source and secure the talent you need today while helping you develop sustainable success strategies. Our expertise is unrivalled. We understand boardroom priorities, from diversity and culture to purpose, and use this insight to shape your strategy, equipping you for the future. Our intelligence, knowledge, and service set us apart, ensuring a seamless and ethical process.

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From full-service recruitment to workforce management and vetting, we provide exceptional solutions at every stage of the hiring process. Successful businesses know people and culture drive long-term prosperity. The right people drive sustainable growth by bringing their diverse ideas, imagination and ambition.

We're here to help you find them.

OUR SALARY GUIDE

Methodology

Purpose and Scope
This guide aims to provide comprehensive insights into salary trends and employment conditions within Scotland's financial, professional, and asset management sectors. The data reflects market conditions for the years 2025 and 2026, drawing on extensive research and expert analysis.

Data Collection
Data collection sources include candidate registrations, placements, and job offers recorded through Core-Asset Consulting. Additional insights are drawn from client consultations, candidate interactions, and our internal expertise. Salary metrics are presented with permanent salaries expressed as annual figures, excluding bonuses and benefits, while interim roles are detailed as bundled daily rates based on a seven-hour workday, inclusive of statutory employment costs such as holiday pay, employer's pension and employer's NI.

Analysis parameters
Salary data and employment trends were assessed using:

1. Quantitative data: Market averages, median salaries, and placement data.
2. Qualitative insights: Consultant expertise, candidate insight, sector-specific challenges, and emerging trends.

Disclaimer
This guide provides a general overview of market trends. Salary figures may vary depending on factors such as individual experience, company size, and market demand. If you require tailored insights specific to your business, including a more detailed analysis of market conditions or advice aligned with your unique organisational needs, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Our team is available to provide personalised support and guidance to help you make informed decisions.

Betsy Williamson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Louise Powrie
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Rachael O'Neill
DIRECTOR,
INVESTMENT OPERATIONS AND
ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

Emma Hogg
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERIM, TEMPORARY
& CONTRACT

Kim Bower
BUSINESS MANAGER,
ASSET MANAGEMENT &
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Julia Mundell
BUSINESS MANAGER,
INTERIM, TEMPORARY
& CONTRACT

Ian Greep
BUSINESS MANAGER,
INTERIM, TEMPORARY
& CONTRACT

Titta Hukkanen
BUSINESS MANAGER,
FINANCIAL & PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES

Kamilla Mathias
SENIOR CONSULTANT, FRONT
OFFICE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Christopher Wright
SENIOR CONSULTANT,
INTERIM, TEMPORARY &
CONTRACT

Ellen Davie
SENIOR CONSULTANT,
PERMANENT RECRUITMENT

Laura Cruickshank
CONSULTANT,
INTERIM, TEMPORARY
& CONTRACT

Julie Fraser
SENIOR OPERATIONS
LEAD

Chloe Scott
ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT -
RECRUITMENT

Lauren Jenkins
ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT -
RECRUITMENT

Core-Asset CONSULTING

CONTACT DIRECTORY SALARY GUIDE 2026–2027

Investment Management: Front Office
Emma Hogg – Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: emma@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0246 m: 07946 099 441

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

Investment Management: Middle Office
Rachael O'Neill – Director, Investment Operations and Accounting & Finance
e: rachael@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0233 m: 07535 897 789

Kim Bower – Business Manager, Middle Office Asset Management & Legal
e: kim@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0238 m: 07535 897 729

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

Emma Hogg – Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: emma@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0246 m: 07946 099 441

Investment Operations & Third-Party Administrators
Emma Hogg – Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: emma@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0246
m: 07946 099 441

Ian Greep – Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: ian@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0239 m: 07535 897 714

Christopher Wright – Senior Consultant, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: christopher@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0260 m: 07535 897 712

Risk & Compliance
Titta Hukkanen – Business Manager, Financial & Professional Services
e: titta@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0232 m: 07494 257 808

Kim Bower – Business Manager, Middle Office Asset Management & Legal
e: kim@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0238 m: 07535 897 729

Emma Hogg – Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: emma@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0246 m: 07946 099 441

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

Accounting and Finance
Rachael O'Neill – Director, Investment Operations and Accounting & Finance
e: rachael@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0233 m: 07535 897 789

Ian Greep – Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: ian@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0239 m: 07535 897 714

Private Wealth
Ellen Davie – Senior Consultant
e: ellen@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0228 m: 07535 897 704

Louise Powrie – Managing Director
e: louise@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0229 m: 07535 897 810

Private Markets
Rachael O'Neill – Director, Investment Operations and Accounting & Finance
e: rachael@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0233 m: 07535 897 789

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

Louise Powrie - Managing Director
e: louise@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0229 m: 07535 897 810

Fintech & Digital Technology
Louise Powrie – Managing Director
e: louise@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0229 m: 07535 897 810

Christopher Wright – Senior Consultant, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: christopher@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0260 m: 07535 897 712

Emma Hogg – Associate Director, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: emma@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0246 m: 07946 099 441

Pensions & Insurance
Titta Hukkanen – Business Manager, Financial & Professional Services
e: titta@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0232 m: 07494 257 808

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

Christopher Wright – Senior Consultant, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: christopher@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0260 m: 07535 897 712

Business Services
Titta Hukkanen – Business Manager, Financial & Professional Services
e: titta@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0232 m: 07494 257 808

Julia Mundell – Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: julia@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0240 m: 07535 897 815

Legal
Kim Bower – Business Manager, Middle Office Asset Management & Legal
e: kim@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0238 m: 07535 897 729

Julia Mundell – Business Manager, Interim, Temporary & Contract
e: julia@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0240 m: 07535 897 815

Corporate Finance & Advisory
Rachael O'Neill – Director, Investment Operations and Accounting & Finance e:
rachael@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0233 m: 07535 897 789

Kamilla Mathias – Senior Consultant, Front Office Asset Management
e: kamilla@core-asset.co.uk
t: 0131 264 0227 m: 07535 897 791

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Contact us today

T: +44(0)1317184600
W: www.core-asset.co.uk
E: recruitment@core-asset.co.uk