# 2026 SALARY GUIDE

wade macdonald

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# INTRODUCTION TO 2026

## Welcome to the 2026 Salary Guide

After another year of economic twists and turns, many businesses remain in problem-solving mode. One of the biggest concerns we've heard from clients is the rise in Employers National Insurance. This isn't just a line on a payslip. It's a serious cost that's squeezing budgets and causing hesitation around new hires and workforce planning.

Job vacancies have continued to drop against previous years, we have ongoing global uncertainty with wars, Trump keeps talking tariffs and there continue to be lingering questions around employment rights…. It's clear we're still not in "business as usual" territory!

That said, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Salaries have continued to rise, albeit more steadily than in the peak post-Covid years. Our data shows average increases of between 4 & 5% which is also broadly in line with ONS statistics.

We've also included insight into how the world of work continues to evolve. Is AI genuinely reshaping Finance and HR roles, or is the impact still more theoretical than practical?

What benefits really matter at different career stages? And are people truly returning to the office, or is that just another media narrative?

Closer to home, Wade Macdonald has moved into new offices in Winnersh Triangle this year. It's a fresh setting, but with the same commitment to honest advice, strong relationships, and expert recruitment across Finance, HR and business support. And we look forward to celebrating 35 years in business in February 2026. You will see much more about that from January as we plan events to mark the milestone.

As always I hope you find this guide useful. Unlike other guides available we have chosen to break down the salaries by county, which we hope makes it more relevant for you, but please reach out if you need further detail and I'd be happy to chat it through. Like many of you, we're hoping that 2026 will bring a more stable and positive environment for business and careers alike.

Chris Goulding | Managing Director

# OUR SPECIALISMS

Wade Macdonald is a leading recruitment and search firm based in the Thames Valley. We have been a trusted partner to many organisations and professionals across the Thames Valley, West London and surrounding areas for nearly 35 years.

Specialising in Accountancy & Finance and Human Resources, we support organisations in their search for the best talent to join their teams, and help individuals with their career journey - whether it be on a permanent, temporary or interim basis.

Our 2026 Salary Guide focuses on Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Hampshire & West London but we do cover other areas on request.

### ACCOUNTANCY & FINANCE:

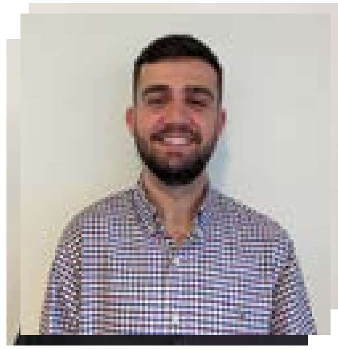
- TRANSACTIONAL FINANCE
- CREDIT CONTROL & ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE
- PAYROLL
- PART-QUALIFIED FINANCE
- QUALIFIED FINANCE
- EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS
- IN-HOUSE TAX & TREASURY
- INTERNAL AUDIT & COMPLIANCE

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- GENERAL
- TALENT ACQUISITION
- REWARD
- LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT
- EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

ZOE JONES
BUSINESS MANAGER

KEELEY HAMBLIN
BUSINESS MANAGER



HARRY MCCAFFREY
SNR. CONSULTANT

KADY MEDFORD
CONSULTANT

# TRANSACTIONAL FINANCE

Although headlines continue to focus on artificial intelligence replacing transactional finance roles, our survey, explored in more detail later, suggests that the pace of change has been slower than widely reported.

Some larger organisations have continued the trend to offshore certain transactional roles. However, demand remains strong for professionals who combine accuracy, efficiency, and service with solid systems knowledge.

In 2025, the market has remained steady, particularly for those with high-volume experience, strong Excel or ERP capability, and those progressing through qualifications. While salary growth has stabilised, overall packages remain competitive. Flexibility, development, and culture remain key to candidate decisions.

**Have you seen our latest finance report?**


Click here to access your copy

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE & SURREY

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts Payable Manager | 40-65k | 50k |
| Accounts Payable Supervisor | 35-50k | 40k |
| Senior AP Specialist | 30-40k | 36k |
| AP Specialist | 28-35k | 30k |
| AP Administrator | 25-30k | 28k |
| | | |
| QBE Finance Manager | 45-65k | 53.5k |
| Assistant Accountant | 30-45k | 37.5k |
| AAT Studier | 25-37k | 32k |
| Accounts Assistant | 26-37k | 32k |
| Accounts Administrator | 25-30k | 28k |

## OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKS

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts Payable Manager | 40-65k | 48.5k |
| Accounts Payable Supervisor | 35-50k | 38k |
| Senior AP Specialist | 30-40k | 35k |
| AP Specialist | 28-35k | 30k |
| AP Administrator | 25-30k | 27k |
| | | |
| QBE Finance Manager | 40-65k | 51k |
| Assistant Accountant | 30-45k | 36k |
| AAT Studier | 25-37k | 32k |
| Accounts Assistant | 26-37k | 30k |
| Accounts Administrator | 25-30k | 27k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts Payable Manager | 40-65k | 48.5k |
| Accounts Payable Supervisor | 35-50k | 38k |
| Senior AP Specialist | 30-40k | 35k |
| AP Specialist | 28-35k | 30k |
| AP Administrator | 25-30k | 27k |
| | | |
| QBE Finance Manager | 40-65k | 51k |
| Assistant Accountant | 30-45k | 36k |
| AAT Studier | 25-37k | 32k |
| Accounts Assistant | 26-37k | 30k |
| Accounts Administrator | 25-30k | 27k |

## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts Payable Manager | 40-65k | 55.5k |
| Accounts Payable Supervisor | 35-50k | 43k |
| Senior AP Specialist | 30-40k | 37.5k |
| AP Specialist | 28-35k | 32k |
| AP Administrator | 25-32k | 29k |
| | | |
| QBE Finance Manager | 40-65k | 59.5k |
| Assistant Accountant | 30-45k | 41k |
| AAT Studier | 25-37k | 33.5k |
| Accounts Assistant | 26-37k | 33.5k |
| Accounts Administrator | 25-32k | 30k |

"This was our first role with Wade Macdonald and Keeley. I would come back and use the service again, as the team were consultative, helpful and not overpowering with their contact. We are faced too often with partners who want to email and call you multiple times a day, and with our workload in Talent Acquisition, it is not sustainable. We need consultants like Keeley, who know when and when not to make contact. And we got the role filled so thanks for your help."

# CREDIT CONTROL & ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

Every year, the importance of strong credit management and efficient accounts receivable grows more apparent, not just as a support function, but as a strategic driver of business resilience.

In 2025, we've continued to see these professionals play a vital role in protecting cash flow as economic uncertainty lingers and interest rates start to ease. With board-level focus on working capital and liquidity, skilled credit teams are increasingly recognised for the value they bring.

Salaries in the Credit and AR space have grown again this year, although more steadily than in previous periods. Alongside pay, however, flexibility, job stability, and clear progression routes remain high on the list of candidate priorities. And with technology accelerating change, demand is increasing for professionals who can blend people skills with data and digital fluency.

**What could 2026 hold for the industry?**

- Proactive credit risk strategies
- Wider use of AI & Automation
- Data driven KPIs on customer retention, debtor days and long term value
- More strategic credit roles and involvement in financial planning and growth
- Stronger ties to ESG and ethical collections

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE & SURREY

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Credit Director | 80-130k | 105k |
| Head of Credit | 60-105k | 78k |
| Credit Manager | 40-75k | 60k |
| Credit Supervisor | 35-55k | 45k |
| Credit Analyst | 35-55k | 50k |
| Senior Credit Controller | 35-45k | 37.5k |
| Credit Controller | 28-40k | 33k |
| Credit Administrator | 24-30k | 28.5k |
| | | |
| AR Manager | 40-65k | 53.5k |
| AR Supervisor | 35-50k | 45k |
| AR Specialist | 28-35k | 31k |
| AR Administrator | 24-30k | 28k |

## OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKS

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Credit Director | 80-130k | 100k |
| Head of Credit | 60-105k | 76k |
| Credit Manager | 40-75k | 58k |
| Credit Supervisor | 35-55k | 43k |
| Credit Analyst | 35-55k | 47.5k |
| Senior Credit Controller | 35-45k | 35.5k |
| Credit Controller | 28-40k | 32k |
| Credit Administrator | 24-30k | 28k |
| | | |
| AR Manager | 40-65k | 51k |
| AR Supervisor | 35-50k | 45k |
| AR Specialist | 28-35k | 30k |
| AR Administrator | 24-30k | 27k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Credit Director | 80-130k | 100k |
| Head of Credit | 60-105k | 76k |
| Credit Manager | 40-75k | 58k |
| Credit Supervisor | 35-55k | 43k |
| Credit Analyst | 35-55k | 47.5k |
| Senior Credit Controller | 35-45k | 35.5k |
| Credit Controller | 28-40k | 32k |
| Credit Administrator | 24-30k | 28k |
| | | |
| AR Manager | 40-65k | 51k |
| AR Supervisor | 35-50k | 45k |
| AR Specialist | 28-35k | 30k |
| AR Administrator | 24-30k | 27k |

## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Credit Director | 80-160k | 120k |
| Head of Credit | 65-105k | 82k |
| Credit Manager | 45-80k | 65k |
| Credit Supervisor | 35-60k | 47.5k |
| Credit Analyst | 35-60k | 52.5k |
| Senior Credit Controller | 35-50k | 39k |
| Credit Controller | 30-45k | 35k |
| Credit Administrator | 25-32k | 30k |
| | | |
| AR Manager | 45-65k | 55.5k |
| AR Supervisor | 40-55k | 47k |
| AR Specialist | 28-40k | 32k |
| AR Administrator | 25-32k | 30k |

# PAYROLL

Payroll continues to be one of the most specialised and in demand skillset in finance.

Salaries have remained resilient, still outpacing much of the wider finance market, though the pace of growth has slowed. Flexibility, once a sticking point due to concerns over data confidentiality, is now the norm. Most employers now offer hybrid working options, recognising that flexibility is essential in attracting and retaining talent in such a competitive space.

**Looking ahead to 2026, we expect:**

• **Continued growth in international payroll;** As businesses expand globally, multi-country payroll experience will be in high demand.
• **More integration with finance and HR systems;** Payroll will play a central role in streamlining employee lifecycle management.
• **Increased focus on data security & compliance;** Especially with hybrid working here to stay, robust systems and controls will be critical.
• **Rise of real-time reporting & analytics;** Payroll teams will provide more insight to support decision-making, not just process payslips.
• **Greater emphasis on training & succession;** With a shortage of experienced payroll professionals, upskilling and internal progression will be key for business continuity

## REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL PAYROLL WEEK

### 1st week in September 2026

Established by the CIPP in 1998, this special event demonstrates the impact the payroll industry has in the UK and gives those who work within the industry the recognition they deserve.

**Without them the UK stops getting paid!**

**#NPW26 #BePayroll #KeepUKPaid**

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE & SURREY

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Payroll | 70-120k | 83k |
| Payroll Manager | 45-80k | 62k |
| Sole Charge Payroll | 35-50k | 45k |
| Payroll Supervisor/Team Leader | 35-55k | 47k |
| Payroll Specialist | 35-50k | 45k |
| Payroll Administrator | 28-40k | 36k |
| | | |
| Head of EMEA Payroll | 80-130k | 95k |
| EMEA Payroll Manager | 50-90k | 75k |
| EMEA Payroller | 38-60k | 50k |

## OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKS

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Payroll | 70-120k | 78k |
| Payroll Manager | 45-80k | 60k |
| Sole Charge Payroll | 35-50k | 43k |
| Payroll Supervisor/ Team Leader | 35-55k | 47k |
| Payroll Specialist | 35-50k | 43k |
| Payroll Administrator | 28-40k | 35k |
| | | |
| Head of EMEA Payroll | 80-130k | 92.5k |
| EMEA Payroll Manager | 50-90k | 72.5k |
| EMEA Payroller | 38-60k | 48k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Payroll | 70-120k | 78k |
| Payroll Manager | 45-80k | 60k |
| Sole Charge Payroll | 35-50k | 43k |
| Payroll Supervisor/ Team Leader | 35-55k | 47k |
| Payroll Specialist | 35-50k | 43k |
| Payroll Administrator | 28-40k | 35k |
| | | |
| Head of EMEA Payroll | 80-130k | 92.5k |
| EMEA Payroll Manager | 50-90k | 72.5k |
| EMEA Payroller | 38-60k | 48k |

## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Payroll | 70-130k | 85k |
| Payroll Manager | 45-80k | 65k |
| Sole Charge Payroll | 35-50k | 50k |
| Payroll Supervisor/ Team Leader | 35-55k | 48k |
| Payroll Specialist | 35-50k | 45k |
| Payroll Administrator | 28-40k | 38k |
| | | |
| Head of EMEA Payroll | 80-150k | 100k |
| EMEA Payroll Manager | 50-95k | 77.5k |
| EMEA Payroller | 38-60k | 52k |

"I can't speak highly enough about Jodie and the incredible support she provided throughout my job search. From our very first conversation, Jodie demonstrated a deep understanding of my professional goals and a genuine commitment to helping me find a role that aligned with my values and aspirations.

What truly sets Jodie apart is her thoughtful communication and unwavering encouragement. Her ability to match talent with opportunity is exceptional, and thanks to her guidance, I've landed a role that I am going to love."

# PART-QUALIFIED FINANCE

Part-qualified finance professionals continue to be in short supply. While we do not have formal statistics, it appears that those beginning their studies are broadly back on track. However, the legacy of pandemic-era disruption is now showing at the later stages, where fewer candidates are reaching qualification milestones.

This gap is being felt most where businesses seek individuals with both experience and exam progress. Those candidates are not just building technical skillsets; many are stepping into broader, more commercial work.

Whether in business partnering, FP&A, or transformation projects, part-qualified candidates are increasingly expected to bring insight as well as numbers. Employers want people who can spot the trends behind the spreadsheets.

**Study support** is no longer seen as a perk. It is a critical part of attracting and retaining talented part-qualified professionals.

Financial support, flexibility, and on-the-job learning reduce pressure, build loyalty, and help develop future leaders.

Employers should avoid waiting until after probation to offer study packages, as this can deter candidates who already receive support. In a competitive market, offering to cover 'pay back' fees can also make the difference when securing someone with the right potential and attitude.

**What we expect for Part-Quals in 2026:**

•**Increased crossover into commercial teams;** Expect more demand for candidates who can support business planning.
•**Higher expectations for digital fluency;** Power BI, Excel modelling and ERP knowledge will become standard, not standout.
•**Closer alignment with operations;** Candidates will support cross-functional collaboration, from sales forecasting to cost tracking.
•**Faster progression routes;** Employers will invest more in internal development due to talent shortages.
•**More hybrid study + work environments;** Flexibility will be key to balancing study demands with business needs.

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE & SURREY

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| **ACCA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 48k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 42k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 33k |
| | | |
| **CIMA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 48k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 42k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 33k |
| | | |
| **ACA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 48k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 42k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 33k |

## OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKS

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| **ACCA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47.5k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 41k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 32k |
| | | |
| **CIMA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47.5k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 41k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 32k |
| | | |
| **ACA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 39.5k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 29k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| **ACCA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47.5k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 41k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 32k |
| | | |
| **CIMA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47.5k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 41k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 32k |
| | | |
| **ACA** | | |
| Finalist | 38-55k | 47k |
| Part Qualified | 35-50k | 39.5k |
| Trainee | 26-37k | 29k |

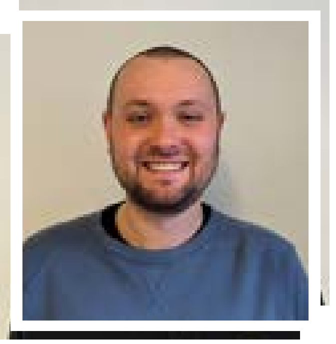
## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| **ACCA** | | |
| Finalist | 40-60k | 52k |
| Part Qualified | 37-55k | 45k |
| Trainee | 28-40k | 35k |
| | | |
| **CIMA** | | |
| Finalist | 40-60k | 52k |
| Part Qualified | 37-55k | 45k |
| Trainee | 28-40k | 35k |
| | | |
| **ACA** | | |
| Finalist | 40-60k | 52k |
| Part Qualified | 37-55k | 45k |
| Trainee | 28-40k | 35k |

GARETH JENKINS
BUSINESS MANAGER

MILES GALLAGHER
BUSINESS MANAGER

NATHAN FREESTONE
BUSINESS MANAGER



PHIL BERESFORD
BUSINESS MANAGER

ROB ANDERSON
DIRECTOR

# QUALIFIED FINANCE

As we move into 2026, the market for qualified finance professionals continues to evolve faster and more competitively than ever. Demand remains high, and expectations have grown alongside it.

Newly qualified accountants are commanding ever-stronger starting salaries, with £50-55K now firmly considered the floor in most locations we recruit across. In fact, we've seen a growing number of candidates expecting closer to £60K for their first move post-qualification, particularly those with experience in large, complex environments or those with strong commercial exposure.

Commercial finance roles remains popular among newly qualified professionals keen to get away from pure reporting. This shift continues to widen the skills gap in technical accounting roles, making those with a solid grounding in statutory reporting, audit, or controls even more sought after.

Clients are still placing huge emphasis on data, and commercial insight. Proficiency in tools like Power BI, Tableau and advanced Excel modelling is no longer a 'nice to have' but often a prerequisite, particularly for FP&A and business partnering roles.

We've also seen a rise in leadership roles as finance continues to cement its position at the strategic heart of the business. With digital transformation still high on the agenda and AI creeping further into financial processes, companies are looking for senior finance professionals who can not only navigate change, but lead it. Those with a blend of strategic vision, commercial nous and people leadership are especially well-positioned.

Looking ahead, the most successful qualified finance professionals will be those who embrace continuous learning, champion technological advancement, and view sustainability, data fluency and business partnering as core components of their role, not side projects.

**THE QUALIFIED FINANCE TEAM HAVE A COMBINED TOTAL OF OVER 100 YEARS WORTH OF EXPERIENCE IN RECRUITMENT.**

# SALARIES

| CORPORATES | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Group FD / CFO | 200-525k | 375k | 200-525k | 365k | 200-525k | 365k | 220-550k | 387.5k |
| Finance Director | 120-220k | 190k | 120-220k | 187k | 120-220k | 187k | 120-250k | 192.5k |
| Financial Controller | 80-160k | 110k | 80-160k | 105k | 80-160k | 105k | 85-165k | 115k |
| Finance Manager | 60-100k | 80k | 60-100k | 77.5k | 60-100k | 77.5k | 65-110k | 85k |
| Head of FP&A | 80-150k | 110k | 80-150k | 105k | 80-150k | 105k | 85-150k | 115k |
| FP&A Manager | 70-120k | 90k | 70-120k | 88.5k | 70-120k | 88.5k | 70-125k | 100k |
| Financial/ ManagementAccountant | 55-85k | 70k | 55-85k | 68k | 55-85k | 68k | 60-90k | 73k |
| Financial Analyst/FP&A | 55-85k | 70k | 55-85k | 68k | 55-85k | 68k | 60-90k | 73k |
| Business Partner | 55-90k | 80k | 55-90k | 77.5k | 55-90k | 77.5k | 60-90k | 83k |
| Newly Qualified | 55-70k | 62.5k | 55-70k | 60k | 55-70k | 60k | 60-70k | 65k |

| SME'S | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Finance Director | 90-140k | 105k | 90-140k | 100k | 90-140k | 100k | 100-180k | 130k |
| Finance Controller | 70-110k | 87.5k | 70-110k | 85k | 70-110k | 85k | 70-130k | 100k |
| Finance Manager | 55-90k | 72.5k | 55-90k | 70k | 55-90k | 70k | 60-100k | 80k |
| Head of FP&A | 75-120k | 100k | 75-120k | 95k | 75-120k | 95k | 75-130k | 100k |
| FP&A Manager | 65-100k | 82.5k | 65-100k | 80k | 65-100k | 80k | 65-105k | 90k |
| Financial/Management Accountant | 55-80k | 65k | 55-80k | 62.5k | 55-80k | 62.5k | 55-85k | 67.5k |
| Financial Analyst/FP&A | 55-80k | 65k | 55-80k | 62.5k | 55-80k | 62.5k | 55-85k | 67.5k |
| Business Partner | 55-85k | 72.5k | 55-85k | 70k | 55-85k | 70k | 55-90k | 75k |
| Newly Qualified | 50-60k | 55k | 50-60k | 52.5k | 50-60k | 52.5k | 55-90k | 57.5k |

"

Miles is my first port of call when searching for a new role. He is professional in his approach, takes the time to listen and understand what his candidates are looking for. Most importantly, he delivers. During my search for employment, Miles actively communicated with me, returning my calls and providing regular updates. He was proactive in his approach and very supportive from start to finish. I would not hesitate to recommend Miles to anyone looking for new opportunities.

- SENIOR FINANCE PROFESSIONAL -

"

# TAX

Tax continues to be a cornerstone of financial strategy, with rising demand driven by ongoing regulatory changes, international expansion, and an increased focus on compliance and efficiency.

SMEs are reaching growth points that require in-house tax expertise, while larger corporates continue to scale their teams, especially in response to global tax reforms and ESG-linked reporting obligations. This, combined with a persistent talent shortage, is keeping salaries on an upward trajectory.

The complexity of tax across corporate, indirect, employment, and international spheres means businesses need qualified specialists who can provide strategic insight as well as technical accuracy. In 2026, the tax professional's role is more vital than ever: safeguarding compliance while unlocking value.

# TREASURY

Moving into 2026, treasury continues to grow in importance as businesses face persistent economic headwinds, higher borrowing costs, and a renewed focus on financial resilience. Liquidity and cash flow management remain top priorities, placing treasury professionals at the centre of strategic decision-making.

We're seeing increased demand across the board, from SMEs looking to formalise treasury processes, to large corporates bolstering teams with specialists in funding, FX, and risk management. Treasury is no longer just a back-office function, it's a core partner to CFOs and finance leadership.

Professionals with strong analytical capabilities, cross-border experience, and the ability to navigate complex funding environments are particularly sought after. As businesses expand internationally and look to future-proof their operations, the role of treasury has shifted from operational to transformational.

In short, the demand for treasury expertise shows no signs of slowing, and neither does its influence on business growth and stability.

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE & SURREY

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Tax | 100-220k | 175k |
| Group Tax Manager | 80-140k | 120k |
| Senior Tax Manager | 75-115k | 100k |
| Tax Manager | 60-100k | 77.5k |
| Tax Accountant | 50-80k | 68k |
| VAT Director | 80-130k | 110k |
| VAT Manager | 60-100k | 85k |
| VAT Accountant | 50-75k | 65k |
| Transfer Pricing Manager | 60-120k | 95k |

## OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKS

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Tax | 100-220k | 172.5k |
| Group Tax Manager | 80-140k | 118k |
| Senior Tax Manager | 75-115k | 95k |
| Tax Manager | 60-100k | 75k |
| Tax Accountant | 50-75k | 66.5k |
| VAT Director | 80-130k | 100k |
| VAT Manager | 60-100k | 82.5k |
| VAT Accountant | 50-75k | 63k |
| Transfer Pricing Manager | 60-120k | 92.5k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Tax | 100-220k | 172.5k |
| Group Tax Manager | 80-140k | 118k |
| Senior Tax Manager | 75-115k | 95k |
| Tax Manager | 60-100k | 75k |
| Tax Accountant | 50-75k | 66.5k |
| VAT Director | 80-130k | 100k |
| VAT Manager | 60-100k | 82.5k |
| VAT Accountant | 50-75k | 63k |
| Transfer Pricing Manager | 60-120k | 92.5k |

## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head of Tax | 100-220k | 180k |
| Group Tax Manager | 80-140k | 125k |
| Senior Tax Manager | 75-115k | 105k |
| Tax Manager | 60-100k | 80k |
| Tax Accountant | 50-85k | 70k |
| VAT Director | 80-140k | 120k |
| VAT Manager | 60-100k | 85k |
| VAT Accountant | 50-75k | 67.5k |
| Transfer Pricing Manager | 60-120k | 100k |

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Group Treasurer | 100-180k | 150k | 100-180k | 145k | 100-180k | 145k | 100-180k | 160k |
| Treasury Manager | 60-100k | 82.5k | 60-100k | 80k | 60-100k | 80k | 60-100k | 85k |
| Treasury Accountant | 50-80k | 65k | 50-80k | 63k | 50-80k | 63k | 50-80k | 67.5k |
| Treasury Analyst | 40-60k | 52k | 40-60k | 50k | 40-60k | 50k | 40-70k | 55k |

# INTERNAL AUDIT & COMPLIANCE

Internal Audit continues to face long-standing talent shortages, with fewer professionals entering the field as many opt for commercial roles post-practice. Despite this, the demand for skilled internal auditors has only increased, driven by global expansion, regulatory scrutiny, and a steady stream of M&A activity.

Once seen as a transitional step, internal audit is now a strategic function in its own right. It offers exposure to the entire business and direct access to board-level decision-making. Internal auditors are no longer just compliance checkers. They're risk managers, data analysts, and trusted advisors amongst their many talents!

As organisations become more complex, internal audit teams are being called on to assess everything from cyber risks and ESG reporting to operational resilience. This shift, combined with the continuing candidate shortage, has pushed salaries above many mainstream finance roles.

For professionals who want to future-proof their careers and gain unrivalled commercial insight, internal audit remains one of the most dynamic routes into senior finance leadership.

# SALARIES

## BERKSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head / Director | 120-200k | 165k |
| Senior Audit Manager | 80-140k | 110k |
| Audit Manager | 60-100k | 85k |
| Senior Auditor | 50-85k | 70k |
| Newly Qualified Auditor | 45-65k | 55k |
| Junior Auditor | 32-50k | 42k |

## OXFORDSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head / Director | 100-180k | 150k |
| Senior Audit Manager | 70-130k | 105k |
| Audit Manager | 60-95k | 80k |
| Senior Auditor | 50-80k | 70k |
| Newly Qualified Auditor | 45-60k | 55k |
| Junior Auditor | 30-45k | 40k |

## HAMPSHIRE

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head / Director | 100-180k | 150k |
| Senior Audit Manager | 70-130k | 105k |
| Audit Manager | 60-95k | 80k |
| Senior Auditor | 50-80k | 70k |
| Newly Qualified Auditor | 45-60k | 55k |
| Junior Auditor | 30-45k | 40k |

## WEST LONDON

| | RANGE | TYPICAL |
|---|---|---|
| Head / Director | 120-200k | 170k |
| Senior Audit Manager | 80-140k | 115k |
| Audit Manager | 60-100k | 90k |
| Senior Auditor | 50-85k | 72.5k |
| Newly Qualified Auditor | 45-65k | 58k |
| Junior Auditor | 32-50k | 44k |

### A FIRST MOVE FROM PRACTICE INTO INTERNAL AUDIT

Transitioning from practice into commerce can be a significant career move for accountants, and internal audit can be an excellent starting point for several reasons:

- **Risk management expertise:** This experience can be highly beneficial in commerce, as risk management is a critical aspect of decision-making and financial planning.
- **Exposure to various departments:** Internal auditors often work across different departments, reviewing their activities and financial processes. This exposure enables accountants to build cross-functional knowledge.
- **Enhancing analytical skills:** Internal audit involves analysing financial data, controls, and processes, which can enhance an accountant's analytical and problem solving skills. These skills are transferable and valuable in many commerce roles.
- **Compliance & regulatory knowledge:** Internal auditors often deal with compliance matters and regulatory requirements. This is advantageous when moving into roles that involve financial reporting and compliance.
- **Continuous learning & adaptability:** Adaptability is essential in a commerce setting, where business conditions and priorities can change rapidly.
- **Foundation for other roles:** Internal audit can serve as a stepping stone to various other roles in finance and accounting, such as financial planning and analysis, corporate accounting, or management accounting.

LUCY-EMMA HEATH-TURRALL
SNR. BUSINESS MANAGER

GARETH JENKINS
BUSINESS MANAGER

ZOE JONES
BUSINESS MANAGER

ROB ANDERSON
DIRECTOR

# INTERIM APPOINTMENTS

The interim market for both **Finance** and **HR professionals** has witnessed significant changes and adaptations over the past few years due to both economic and regulatory factors.

### Finance Interim Market:

As we look ahead to **2026**, the interim finance market continues to prove its value, offering agility, specialist expertise and stability during times of transition or change. With economic conditions expected to steady and confidence beginning to return, we anticipate sustained demand for experienced interim professionals across both commercial and regulatory-facing roles. However, the landscape is set to shift again with the impact of new umbrella company legislation from April 2026, which could reshape how interim contracts are managed and increase scrutiny on supply chain compliance. For hiring managers and agencies, it means greater accountability, and for interims, a reminder to stay informed and selective about their engagement routes. As always, adaptability will remain the interim market's greatest strength.

### HR Interim Market:

The HR interim market has remained resilient through recent uncertainty, and as we move into **2026**, demand shows no signs of slowing. With continued transformation across organisational structures, technology, and talent strategies, businesses are turning to experienced interim HR professionals to lead change, drive culture, and provide specialist support where it's needed most. From navigating complex ER challenges to embedding DE&I and wellbeing strategies, the role of HR interims is becoming more strategic and more visible than ever. In a landscape that rewards agility and impact, those who can quickly embed, influence and deliver will continue to be in high demand.

LUCY-EMMA HEATH-TURRALL
SNR. BUSINESS MANAGER

JODIE HAYDEN
SNR. CONSULTANT

# HUMAN RESOURCES

People & Culture continues to sit at the heart of business strategy. Following a period of intense change, the function has evolved into a true commercial partner, driving recruitment, retention, culture and capability at every level.

While demand remains high across core specialisms like **Reward, ER, L&D and People & Culture, the Talent Acquisition market has rebalanced after a post-pandemic surge, with fewer new roles created in 2025 and increased competition following rounds of redundancy in some sectors.**

**That said, areas such as Employee Relations and Digital L&D remain** on the rise. Organisations are investing in scalable, tech-enabled development solutions to support hybrid workforces and are increasingly focused on wellbeing, DE&I, and employee experience as a means of retaining top talent.

Although salary growth has slowed from the highs of the post covid aftermath, the market remains competitive, particularly for those with a proven track record of influencing change and delivering tangible impact.

In **2026**, HR professionals who blend strategic insight with people-first thinking will continue to be key to business success.

## CIPD FESTIVAL OF WORK
### June 2026

Connect, collaborate and take inspiration from fellow people professionals and business leaders across the world. The free two day event is held at Excel London and filled with experts sharing their knowledge, research and market trends.

# SALARIES

## GENERAL

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| HR Director | 100-180k | 140k | 100-175k | 135k | 100-175k | 135k | 120-180k | 145k |
| Head of HR | 80-130k | 105k | 80-130k | 100k | 80-130k | 100k | 80-135k | 107.5k |
| HR Manager | 55-90k | 75k | 55-90k | 72.5k | 55-90k | 72.5k | 65-90k | 80k |
| HR Business Partner | 50-85k | 70k | 50-85k | 68k | 50-85k | 68k | 60-85k | 72.5k |
| HR Advisor | 35-55k | 45k | 35-55k | 43k | 35-55k | 43k | 40-57.5k | 50k |
| HR Coordinator | 26-40k | 35k | 26-40k | 33k | 26-40k | 33k | 28-40k | 36k |
| HR Administrator | 26-32k | 30k | 26-32k | 29k | 26-32k | 29k | 26-35k | 32k |

## TALENT ACQUISITION

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Talent Director | 90-160k | 125k | 100-160k | 120k | 100-160k | 120k | 100-175k | 130k |
| Head of Talent | 75-115k | 93.5k | 75-110k | 88.5k | 75-110k | 88.5k | 80-120k | 96k |
| Talent Acquisition Manager | 60-85k | 73k | 60-80k | 70k | 60-80k | 70k | 60-90k | 77k |
| Talent Acquisition Specialist | 50-70k | 57k | 50-70k | 54.5k | 50-70k | 54.5k | 55-70k | 62.5k |
| Resourcing Advisor | 35-50k | 42k | 38-50k | 41.5k | 38-50k | 41.5k | 38-55k | 47k |
| Resourcing Co-ordinator | 28-38k | 34k | 28-37k | 33.5k | 28-37k | 35.5k | 28-40k | 36k |

## REWARD

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Director of Reward | 95-160k | 119.5k | 95-160k | 107.5k | 95-160k | 107.5k | 100-170k | 130k |
| Head of Reward | 75-110k | 91.5k | 75-110k | 88.5k | 75-110k | 88.5k | 80-115k | 94k |
| Reward Manager | 55-90k | 77.5k | 55-90k | 70k | 55-90k | 70k | 60-95k | 80k |
| Reward Analyst | 38-55k | 50k | 38-55k | 48.5k | 38-55k | 48.5k | 40-65k | 52k |
| HRIS Manager | 50-80k | 73k | 50-80k | 70k | 50-80k | 70k | 60-90k | 78k |

## EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| Head of ER | 95-140k | 125k | 95-130k | 110k | 95-130k | 110k | 100-150k | 125k |
| ER Manager | 70-110k | 90k | 70-110k | 86.5k | 70-110k | 86.5k | 70-120k | 93.5k |
| ER Specialist | 45-65k | 55k | 45-65k | 55k | 45-65k | 55k | 50-70k | 61k |

SALARIES

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

| | BERKS/SURREY | | OXON/BUCKS | | HAMPSHIRE | | WEST LONDON | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL | RANGE | TYPICAL |
| L&D Director | 100-155k | 119.5k | 100-155k | 113k | 100k-155k | 113k | 100-160k | 119.5k |
| Head of L&D | 75-100k | 91.5k | 75-100k | 91.5k | 75-100k | 91.5k | 75-110k | 93.5k |
| L&D Manager | 55-90k | 70k | 55-90k | 70k | 55-90k | 70k | 60-100k | 75.5k |
| L&D Officer | 40-60k | 48.5k | 40-60k | 43k | 40-60k | 43k | 40-65k | 50k |
| L&D Coordinator | 28-40k | 35.5k | 28-40k | 34.5k | 28-40k | 34.5k | 30-45k | 39k |

**Have you downloaded our latest report on :**
**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

Our latest HR report examines the changing landscape of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in UK workplaces. Drawing on insights from over 100 HR leaders from across the Thames Valley, it explores current challenges, accountability, and the authenticity of DE&I efforts. The report provides data-driven analysis, real-world perspectives, and actionable steps to ensure DE&I remains a business priority.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# BENEFITS HIERARCHY

## DOES LEVEL UNLOCK REWARD?

To write this report we spoke to over 650 people working in HR and Finance to get a real feel for what's going on in today's workplace. Around two-thirds of them came from finance roles, with the rest representing the HR world. And we heard from all levels, from early-career professionals right through to senior leaders and the C-suite.

We also took a look at the generational angle, with input from Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers, giving us a great mix of perspectives on how needs and priorities shift as careers progress.

What did we want to find out? Not just what benefits people get, but which ones they actually care about – and how things like flexibility, AI and automation are changing the game when it comes to work, recruitment and retention.

This isn't just a snapshot. It's a real-life look at what people want, what they're getting, and where things are heading as we move into 2026.


ASHLEY PAGE
CLIENT RELATIONS MANAGER



### Benefits By Career Level

Workplace benefits are not window dressing. They are a core part of any compensation strategy and increasingly the dealmaker or dealbreaker in recruitment. In our survey clear patterns emerged around what people receive and, more importantly, what they now expect.

We have broken down the data across three key groups: **Non-Management, Senior Manager/Manager, and Director/C-Suite.** What emerges is a picture of rising expectations and widening gaps.

### Holiday: Anything below 25 Days is a Huge Red Flag

What is striking is the upward shift in entitlement above **25 days**. A total of **28.6%** of directors and **25.8%** of managers receive between **26 and 27 days.** A further **13.3%** of directors enjoy **30 or more days'** leave. In contrast, just **10.9%** of non-managers, **3.6%** of managers, and only **2.4%** of leaders receive fewer than **22 days.**


| | Non Management | Management | Director Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average Holidays | 25.6 days | 26.4 days | 26.6 days |
| <22 days | 10.9% | 3.6% | 2.4% |
| 22-24 days | 2.9% | 6.8% | 4.8% |
| 25 days | 52.6% | 42.7% | 38.6% |
| 26-27 days | 15.3% | 25.8% | 28.6% |
| 28-29 days | 7.3% | 11.6% | 12.3% |
| 30+ days | 10.9% | 9.7% | 13.3% |

Fig 1 How many days holiday do you receive?

The average entitlement now stands at **25.6 days** for non-management staff, rising to **26.4** for managers and **26.6** at director level, reinforcing the trend towards enhanced leave as professionals progress.

These figures should give serious concern to any business still offering less than **25 days** as standard. This shift reflects a wider cultural change. Holiday is no longer just about rest; it is about wellbeing. As burnout increases and people reassess work-life balance, offering less than the norm sends the wrong message. Candidates are quick to draw the line between limited benefits and a rigid culture. They will simply look elsewhere.

# WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN 2026

## Pensions: The Quiet Deal Breaker:

**Pensions** may not grab headlines, but they are becoming a deciding factor, especially for professionals beyond the early stages of their careers. That said even **50%** of Gen Z stated that an **above statutory contribution** would be important to them.

The data shows a stark divide by level. While **32.7%** of non-managers remain on **statutory contributions,** this figure drops to **17.7%** at manager level and only **7.2%** for directors.

**Enhanced contributions** become far more common as seniority increases. A third of directors receive between **6%** and **9%**, with a further **16.5%** in the **10%** to **15%** bracket. An additional **13.7%** report pension levels of **16%** or more.

The average employer contribution rises significantly with seniority, from **4.8%** for non-management roles to **8%** at manager level and **9.3%** for directors.


| | Non Management | Management | Director Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average Contribution | 4.8% | 8% | 7.2% |
| Statutory Pension | 32.7% | 17.7% | 6.5% |
| 4% | 16.7% | 11.4% | 22.3% |
| 5% | 21.3% | 15.9% | 33.8% |
| 6-9% | 21.7% | 25.7% | 28.6% |
| 10-15% | 4% | 16.2% | 16.5% |
| 16% | 8% | 13.1% | 13.7% |

Fig 2 : Pension received across levels

Professionals are increasingly aware of what a good pension looks like. As people begin to plan seriously for life after work, employer contributions can be a decisive element in a job offer. Yet they remain one of the most overlooked areas of reward. Employers who do not benchmark and enhance their offering risk being excluded from consideration altogether.

## Bonuses: The Missing Piece in Total Compensation

**Bonuses** are no longer just a nice-to-have. For many, they are a core part of total earnings, particularly at mid to senior levels. Our data shows that **51.9%** of **non-managers** receive a bonus, and most of these are in the **1%** to **5%** range. In contrast, **70%** of **managers** and **76.4%** of **directors** now receive a bonus.

The average bonus increases steeply with seniority. **Non-managers** report an average of **4%**. For **managers,** this rises to **10.5%**, and for **directors,** the average is **17.4%**.

This progressive increase in average bonus size reflects the growing importance of variable pay in leadership roles.

Higher bonus tiers are increasingly common. Among **directors, 32.1%** receive between **21% and 40%**, and a further **28.6%** receive between **11% and 20%**. Even 3.6% now report bonuses over 40%. These numbers reinforce the message that for senior professionals, bonus structures are not only expected but are being used to actively compare offers.

Employers who do not include a meaningful bonus as part of the reward package are limiting their appeal, particularly for roles that carry commercial, strategic, or leadership responsibilities.

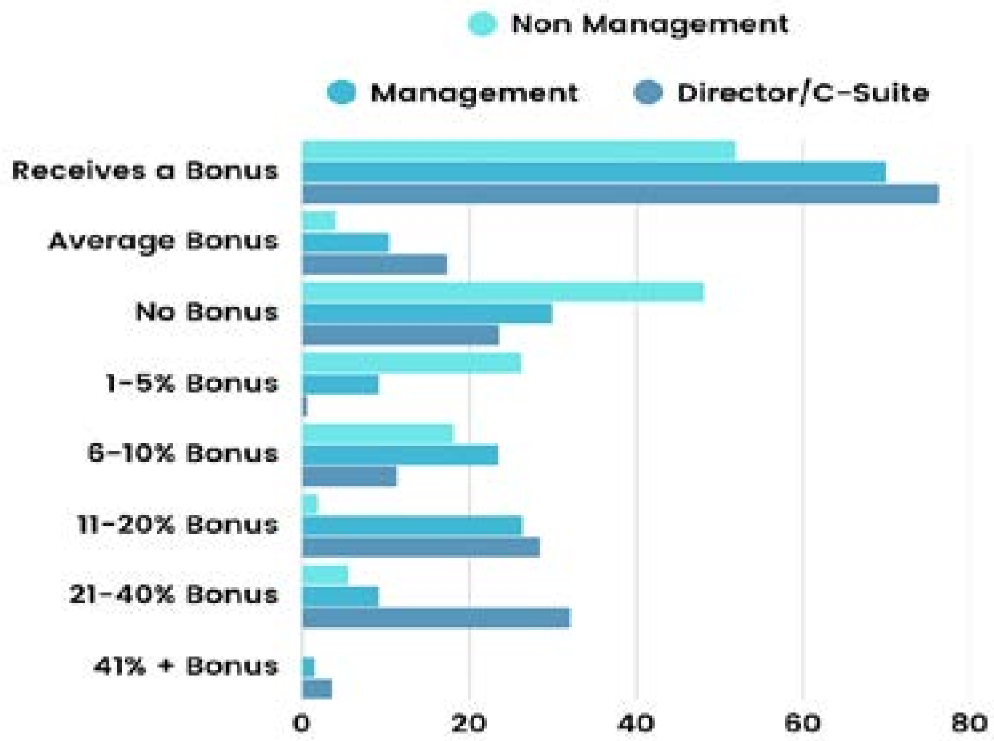



Fig 3 : Bonuses received across levels

# BENEFITS – ALL LEVELS

## What Employees Receive

Across all respondents, the most commonly provided benefits are private healthcare **(63.0%)**, life insurance or death in service **(61.7%)**, bonus schemes **(58.3%)**, wellbeing or mental health support **(57.0%)**, pension contributions above statutory minimum **(55.1%)**, and free parking **(59.6%)**.

These have become baseline expectations in many organisations. Yet some of the most valued benefits remain underutilised. Only **8.2%** offer compressed hours or a four-day week. Just **12.7%** offer the ability to work from abroad. Childcare support is still only available to **13.2%**, despite its clear importance to professionals balancing work and family.

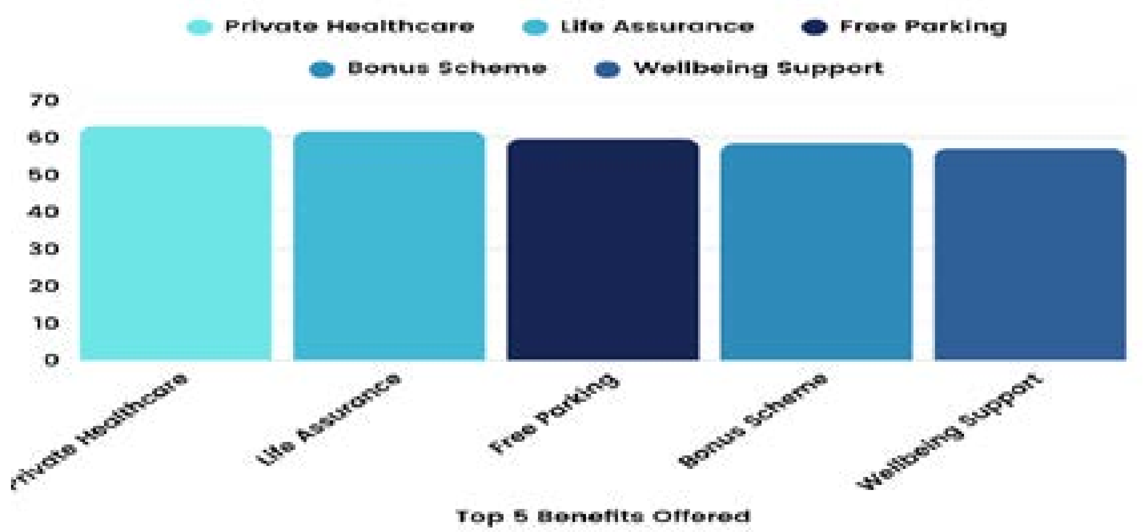
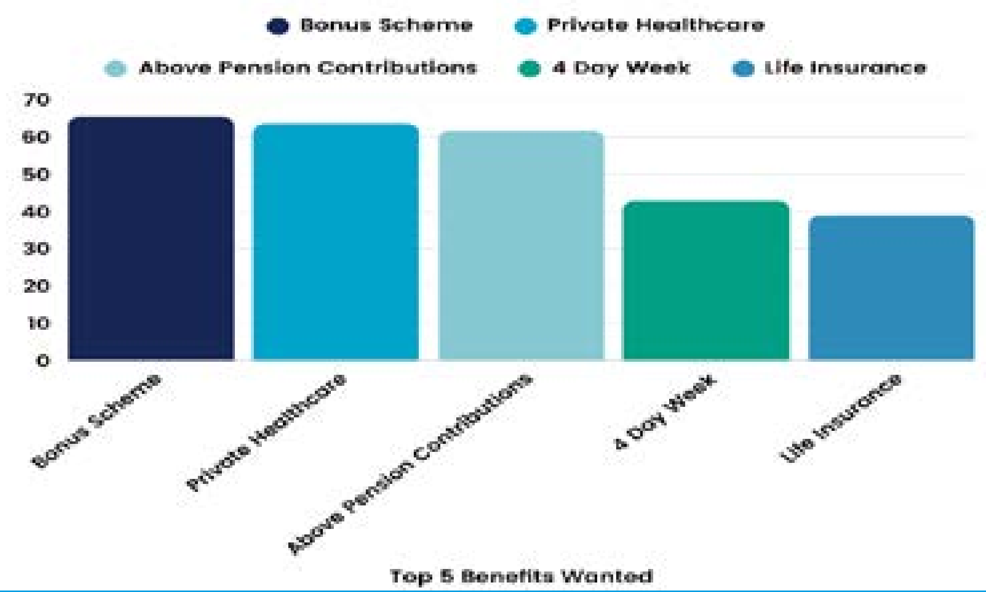



Fig 4 : Top 5 Benefits Received

# WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY WANT

When asked to choose their five most important benefits, professionals prioritised bonus schemes (65.4%), private healthcare (63.5%), pension contributions above statutory (61.6%), a four-day week or compressed hours (42.9%), and life insurance (38.9%). There is broad alignment in some areas, particularly bonuses, healthcare, and pensions. However, the data also reveals gaps, especially in flexibility.




Many of the more common, lower-cost benefits such as gym memberships, retail discounts, and social events feature much less in what people actually value. This suggests that some employers are still investing in benefits that make little real impact on engagement or retention.

**Fig 5 : Top 5 Benefits Wanted**

# DO EMPLOYEES GET WHAT THEY WANT WITH PROGRESSION?

## Does Progression lead to improved benefits?

Benefit expectations clearly shift throughout a career. The question is whether employers are successfully keeping pace. When we compare what professionals value with what they actually receive, the results reveal strong delivery in some areas and shortfalls in others.

## Non-Management: High Expectations, Low Delivery

Among non-management professionals, the biggest disconnect is between what they value and what they actually receive. This group places the highest emphasis on **flexibility, wellbeing, and cost-of-living support**, but most of those benefits remain out of reach.

Flexibility tops the list of priorities. A **four-day week** or **compressed hours** is considered one of the five most important benefits by **49.1%** of this group, yet only **7.4%** receive it. Similarly, **23.9%** want the option to work from abroad, but just **6.6%** are offered it.

**Mental health and wellbeing support** is also seen as essential. Encouragingly, **60.3%** of non-management employees receive this. **Free parking**, received by **63.9%**, also matches well with demand, as it is one of the most appreciated practical perks.

However, other low-cost, high-impact benefits remain patchy. Only **17.2%** receive **gym access,** and just **40.2%** are offered **retail discounts**. While these are not top priorities for everyone, they are still valued by a sizable group and can significantly enhance perceived value.

Perhaps most telling is the financial picture. While this group places strong emphasis on **pension contributions**, only **21.3%** receive contributions of **5%**, and **32.7%** are still on the statutory minimum. **Bonus access** is similarly limited. Just over half **(51.9%)** receive one, and most sit in the lowest percentage tiers.

In short, early-career professionals want flexibility, wellbeing, and meaningful financial recognition. What they are offered often falls short. If employers want to attract and retain up and coming talent, these are the areas that need urgent attention.

## Senior and Management: Strong Financials, Soft Spots in Flexibility and Support

For managers and senior managers, the benefits picture is mixed. This group generally receives solid financial rewards, but falls short on flexibility and some key support areas, despite those being rising priorities.

**Private healthcare** is received by **64.1%** and ranks second in importance, valued by **64.9%.** Bonus schemes are well aligned too, offered to **70%** and listed as the most important benefit by 66.8%.

However, the gaps emerge elsewhere. **Compressed hours** or a **four-day week** are received by just **7.3%**, yet **47.6%** say this is one of their top five benefits. This is the biggest delivery gap in the data. **Working abroad** policies are similarly scarce, offered to only **13.5%,** while **19.2%** list it among their most valued benefits.

## Senior and Management continued................

Support-related benefits are also falling short. Just **8.9%** receive **gym subsidies**, while **24.2%** value them. Only **13.2%** receive **childcare support**, despite it being a critical factor for many in this mid-career bracket. **Mental health and wellbeing support** is received by **60.1%** but valued by just **18.5%**, suggesting it is appreciated but may no longer be viewed as a point of differentiation.


**Retail discounts (33.3%)** and **free food or drink (21.6%)** are still widely provided, but remain low on priority lists. Just **7.4%** and **11.0%** value them, respectively. These perks are increasingly seen as outdated or tokenistic at this level.


Ultimately, managers and senior managers are clear in what they want: **financial recognition, flexibility, and meaningful support for work-life balance.** Employers are broadly succeeding on pay, healthcare, and pensions, but falling behind on flexibility and career-stage support, particularly for those juggling leadership roles with family and personal responsibilities.

## Director and C-Suite: Strategic Rewards, but Gaps Remain in Flexibility and Personalisation


At **Director and C-Suite level**, core financial benefits remain essential, and in most cases, they are being delivered well. **Private healthcare, enhanced pensions and bonus schemes** continue to dominate both the most valued and most received benefits, suggesting a strong foundation for senior attraction and retention. For example, **69%** of leaders value **private healthcare** and nearly **75%** receive it. **Bonus schemes** and **pensions** show similar alignment, reinforcing their role as baseline expectations.


However, many employers are still missing the mark when it comes to differentiation. Several widely offered benefits are not resonating with senior professionals. **Gym subsidies** are received by **22%** of leaders but valued by fewer than **10%. Free food, lifestyle discounts and eyecare support** follow a similar pattern. These legacy perks may appear generous on paper but rarely drive engagement or loyalty.

What is being overlooked is **autonomy.** More than one third of leaders would value **compressed hours or a four day week**, yet fewer than **9%** receive this. The option to work from abroad is also under delivered.


To recruit and retain top talent, businesses must look beyond standard packages. The strongest employer brands will offer benefits that reflect how senior professionals actually want to live and lead, with trust, balance and long term value at the centre.

# FLEXIBILITY IN 2026: HAS IT REALLY CHANGED?

## What People Are Actually Receiving

**Flexibility** remains one of the most talked about aspects of modern employment.


Headlines often suggest that businesses are pulling back, enforcing office returns and reversing progress. But what is really happening?

Our data tells a more balanced story. Among over **650 HR** and **Finance** professionals, **21 %** said flexibility had **increased**, **55%** reported **no change,** and **24%** said it had **decreased.**

By flexible working, we don't just mean remote/hybrid work patterns - solutions like compressed hours, flexi-time, time off in lieu, job sharing, term time working are all options on the table.

**21%**
**Flexibility increased**

**55%**
**No Change**

**24%**
**Decreased**

**Fig 6: Has your flexibilty increased in the last 12 months?**

However, flexibility is not distributed equally.

**Directors** were the most stable group, with **62%** reporting **no change, 22%** seeing a **decrease** and **16%** an **increase.**

At **Manager** level, the picture was split evenly between those gaining and losing flexibility, while non-management employees were the most likely to report reduced flexibility overall.

For employers, the message is clear. **Flexibility** remains a key factor in how professionals assess roles, consider offers and decide whether to stay. While it may no longer dominate headlines, it is still a critical differentiator.

Employers who listen to what their people need, whether that is autonomy, trust or smarter hybrid models, will be best placed to attract and retain top talent in 2026 and beyond.

# FLEXIBILITY IN 2026: CONTINUED

## What People Actually Want

**Flexibility** remains the **most valued** benefit across all levels of seniority.

It was selected as a top priority by **93%** of non-managers, **89%** of managers and senior managers, and **76%** of directors. While it becomes slightly less critical the more senior someone is, the expectation never disappears.

For junior and mid-level professionals in particular, flexibility is no longer a perk. It is a basic expectation. It is about trust, work-life balance, and the freedom to perform without rigid structures.

**93%** Non Management

**89%** Senior & Management

**76%** C-Suite/ Directors

**Fig 7:**

**Flexibilty valued as a top priority**

## Take it away at your peril...............

The message from employees is clear. If flexibility is withdrawn, they are prepared to vote with their feet.

**Over half** of respondents said they would actively begin looking for a new role if their current flexibility was reduced. That figure is even higher among non-management employees.


Flexibility is not about convenience. It is about **autonomy and respect.**

It has become a key element of how people define a healthy working environment.

Employers who scale it back without consultation or consideration are risking more than just discontent.

They are risking their best people!

# THE GREAT WORKPLACE DEBATE.....

## So where is the work happening?

Looking at actual working patterns provides further clarity. The five-day office model is now less common, and full-time remote work is also less common outside of certain sectors.

Across all respondents, **17%** are fully office based and **14%** are fully remote. The majority, **69%,** work on a hybrid model, blending home and office time.

The most common pattern is three days in the office and two at home. The next most common is two in the office and three at home. A smaller number work just one day in the office each week.

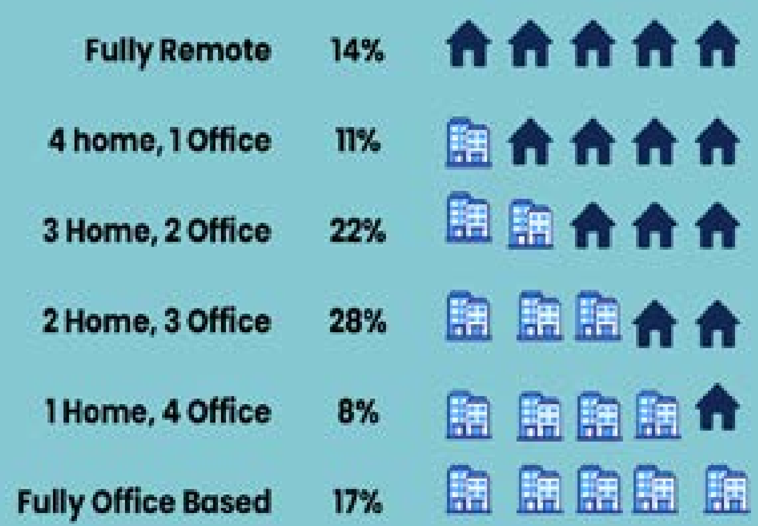



**Fig 8: Work Patterns Overall Respondants**

Despite the above responses and strong employee demand for some kind of hybrid working, we are seeing a growing trend among larger organisations, particularly in the Thames Valley, towards mandating a return to the office.

These **Forced return-to-office (RTO)** policies are increasingly being threatened as companies seek to re-establish team working, reinforce culture, and maximise the use of their office spaces.

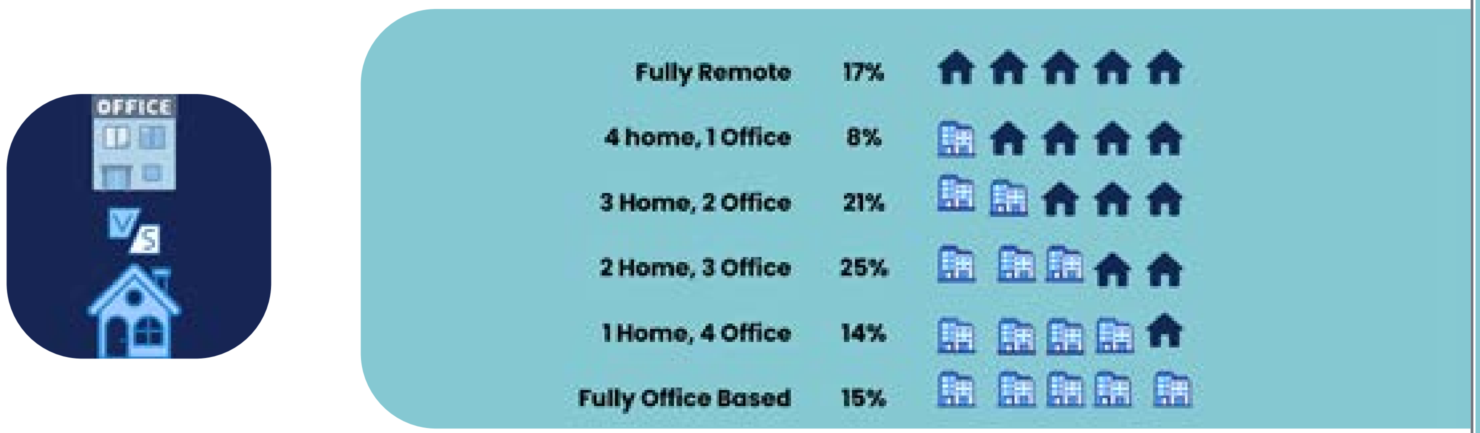
However, this shift often clashes with employee expectations, especially following the widespread adoption of hybrid and remote models post-pandemic. The tension is particularly evident in larger firms, where standardised policies and top-down leadership decisions are more common, prompting ongoing debate about the future of hybrid working and its role in talent attraction and retention.

# WORK PATTERNS BY SENIORITY

## Director & C Suite

Heads and directors report the highest level of **remote working**, with **17%** based fully from home. Just **15%** are **fully office based,** while the majority follow a **hybrid pattern.** One quarter are in the office three days each week, and **21%** attend for two. A smaller group, **8%**, spend four days at home and one in the office.

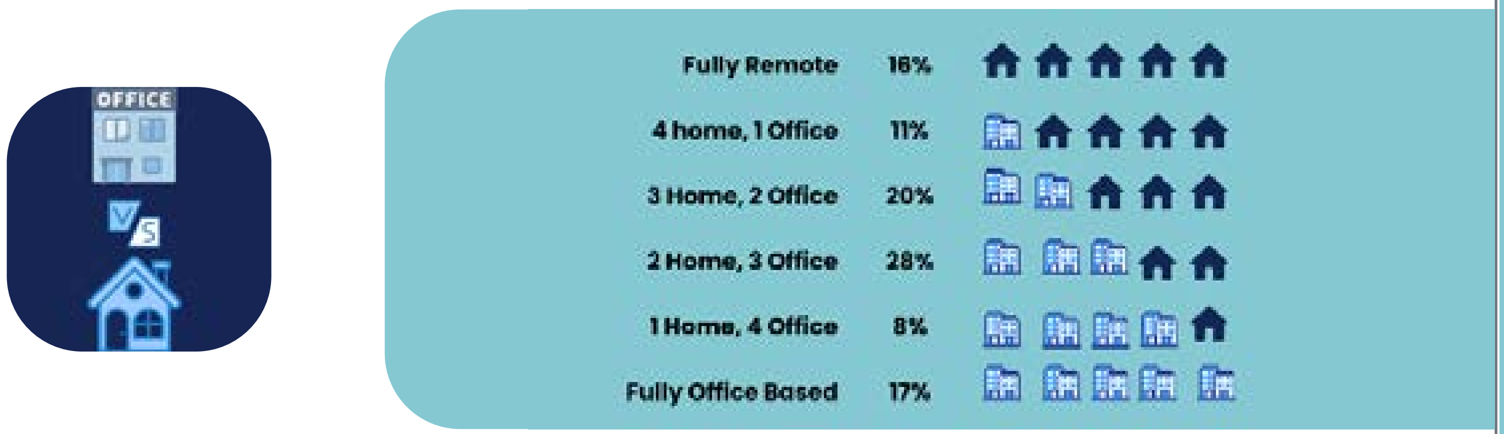
This distribution reflects a strong degree of autonomy. Directors are more likely to shape their working week around strategic responsibilities, business demands or personal preference. The consistency of hybrid working at this level suggests that flexibility is well embedded and underpinned by trust.




## Senior & Management

Senior and management professionals follow a **structured but flexible** working model. Like non-management employees, **17%** are **fully office based,** and **16%** are **fully remote**. The majority fall within a hybrid pattern. **28%** are in the office three days a week, and **20%** attend for two. **11%** work four days from home and one in the office.

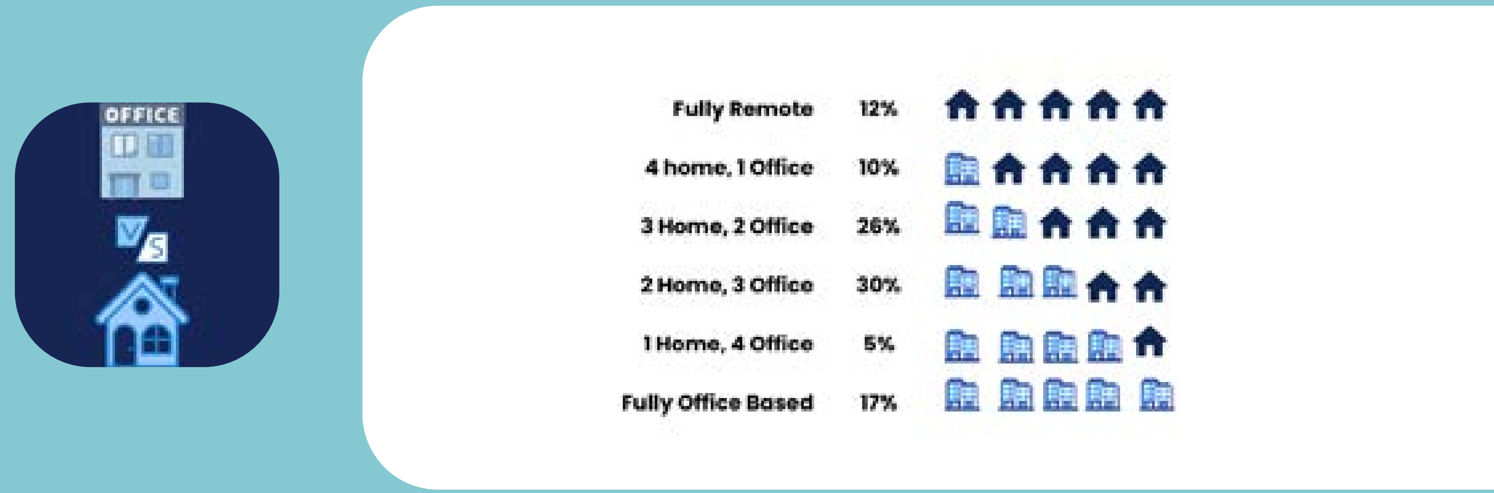
While this group benefits from **flexibility,** their routines are more likely to be influenced by team norms or business rhythms. Compared to junior colleagues, they have more input into how their weeks are shaped, although still within the framework of broader operational needs.




## Non Management

Non-management employees are among the most likely to be **fully office based,** with **17%** on site each day. This is the joint highest across all groups. A further **12%** work **fully remotely**. **Hybrid working** is most common, with **30%** in the office three days a week and **28%** in for two. **10%** work four days at home and one in the office.

Although the overall patterns look similar to other levels, autonomy is less visible. Only **21%** of non-management employees work one day or less in the office, compared to **25%** of senior managers and **23%** of directors. Their hybrid arrangements are often more standardised, with less opportunity to tailor schedules. The structure may be functional, but limited control can affect how flexibility is perceived and experienced.




## A Shared Hybrid Reality

While assumptions persist about a divide in day to day flexibility, the data paints a more balanced picture.

**Hybrid working** is now the norm across all levels, and differences between seniority bands are smaller than expected. Fully remote roles are rare, and fully office based ones are in the minority.

Most professionals, regardless of level, now spend two or three days in the office each week.

Even so, experiences vary. While **21%** of professionals say they now have **more flexibility** than last year, **24%** say they have **less.** This suggests that for every gain, there is a loss elsewhere. Flexibility is not moving in one direction. It is being reshaped in different ways across teams and organisations.

To succeed in 2026, employers must ensure consistency and clarity. Flexibility cannot be assumed. It must be communicated, structured and valued. In recruitment and retention, perception matters. A clear and equitable approach tells people they are trusted, and that message travels fast.

# AI IN THE WORKPLACE
# REALITY VS RHETORIC

Artificial intelligence has dominated workplace conversations over the past year. But while the buzz continues to grow, the reality inside most organisations remains far more measured. For many professionals in HR and Finance, AI is impacting tasks but not replacing roles, and the impact is piecemeal rather than wholesale.

## Who Has Been Affected?

Just **0.9%** of respondents, said a significant part of their role had been automated or replaced. Another **15.9%** said a small portion of their work had been affected. A further **20.3%** reported that change was planned but had not yet happened. The majority, **62.8%**, said there had been no impact at all and no current plans for automation.

This confirms that most professionals have not yet seen major disruption in their own role.

## Where Is AI Making an Impact?

Our respondants confirmed that AI is focused on repetitive and time-consuming tasks.

In **Finance,** it is being used for **invoice processing, reconciliations, payroll, forecasting and reporting.**

In **HR,** it is supporting **CV screening, onboarding and communication tasks.**

Other examples cited include **meeting note transcription, email drafting** and **document preparation.**

In nearly all cases, **AI** handles the first step, while humans remain responsible for reviewing, editing and decision making. So we are still needed afterall!

## What is holding back progress?

Concerns raised include bias in historical data, depersonalised recruitment, privacy and data security risks, and lack of trust in AI outputs.

But cost is also a factor. For many, limited investment in tools, training or infrastructure is slowing adoption.

To see real progress, organisations must invest not only in technology but also in the people who will use it.

BRIDGE THE GAP

# SLOW BURN
# OR BIG BANG?

## Is It Moving as Fast as Expected?

Only **3.3%** said AI adoption was happening much faster than they expected. A further 8.4% described it as slightly faster. Nearly half, at **48.4%**, said the pace was about what they had anticipated. However, **39.9%** said AI was arriving more slowly than expected, including **18.1%** who described it as much slower.

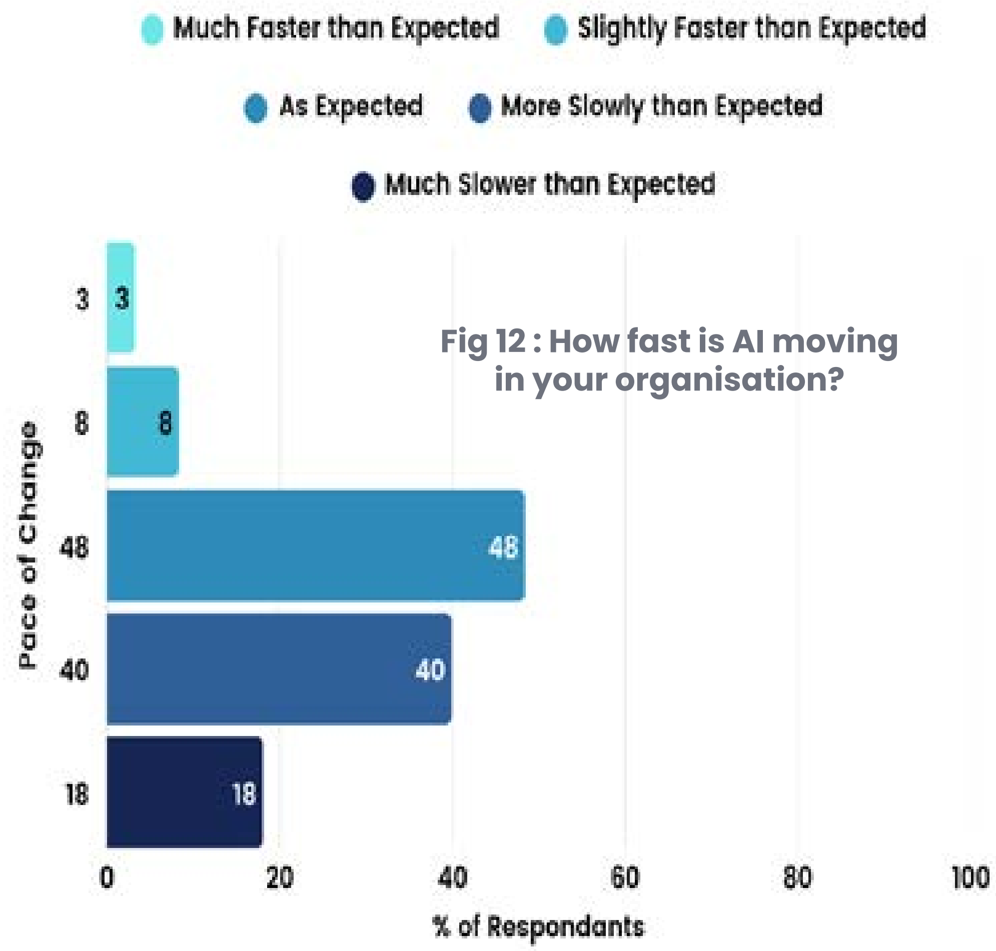



Fig 12 : How fast is AI moving in your organisation?

This data reveals a notable disconnect between the external hype around AI, (often fuelled by media narratives and company marketing), and the reality playing out inside UK organisations. While headlines frequently warn of rapid transformation and job displacement, our respondents report a far more measured picture. In fact, the figures suggest a cautious and perhaps even hesitant approach to adoption in some quarters.

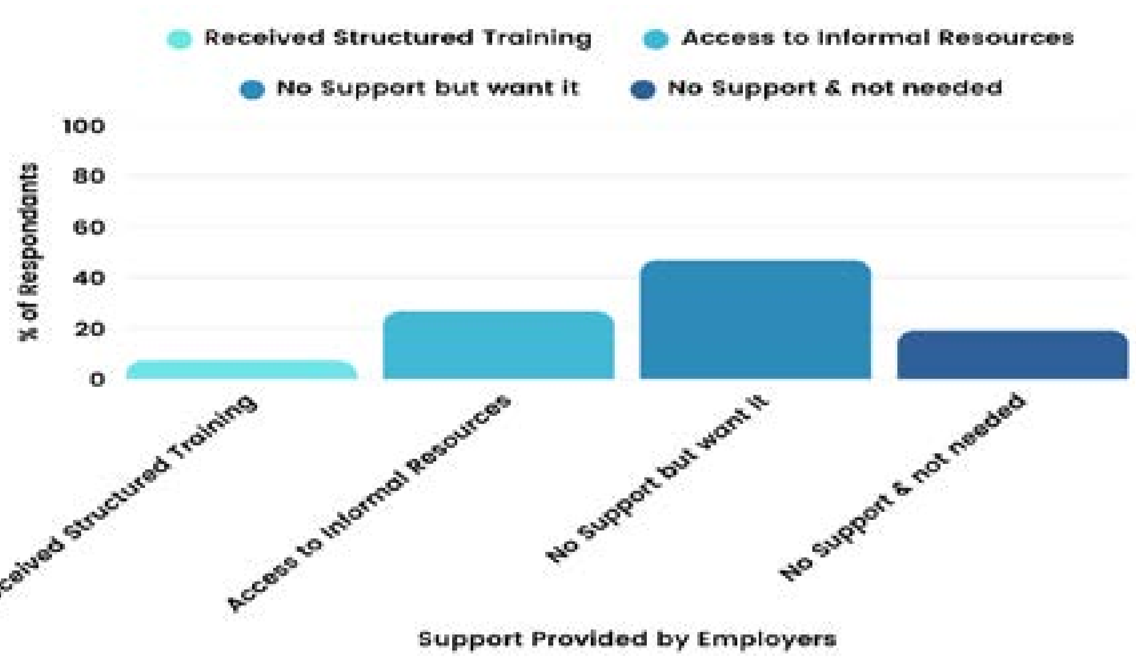
It's clear that while the appetite for AI exists, many organisations are still navigating how best to integrate these tools meaningfully, balancing risk, compliance, and skill gaps. The expectation of a tech revolution hasn't quite matched the operational readiness on the ground. AI adoption, it seems, is proving more of a slow burn than a big bang.

# AI IN THE WORKPLACE WHAT'S GOING ON?

## Are Employers Providing Support?

Just **7.2%** of respondents said they receive structured AI training through their employer. A further **26.8%** have access to informal resources. The majority, **47%**, said they receive no support but would like it. Another **19.1%** said they receive no support and believe it is not needed.

This highlights a major gap. Interest is high, but structured development is rare.




## How Does This Vary by Level?

Non-management professionals were more likely to report direct automation of their tasks. These included scheduling, data entry and document generation. Many are now reviewing AI-generated outputs rather than completing the task manually.

Managers are often being asked to oversee systems that now include automation. Some are expected to help their teams adapt, without being offered any training themselves.

Directors have been the least affected in terms of their own role. However, many are responsible for AI-related investment and implementation. There is growing pressure for them to lead change with confidence, even if their personal exposure is still limited.

## Our AI MD Chris Goulding gives his final thoughts...........

## Final Thought: Awareness Is High, Action Is Low

AI hasn't transformed most roles just yet, but it's already reshaping how we work, make decisions, and deliver value. And while headlines often focus on automation as the threat, the real risk lies in a workforce that feels unprepared, unsupported, and unsure of where they fit in this evolving landscape.

In 2026, we expect to see more Finance and HR teams shifting from experimentation to integration. In Finance, AI will continue to automate transactional tasks, assist with forecasting, and flag anomalies faster than any spreadsheet ever could. But the human element - strategic thinking, stakeholder communication, and commercial acumen - will remain irreplaceable.

In HR, AI will enhance data-driven decision making, from workforce planning to retention strategies. But empathy, judgement, and trust building will stay firmly in human hands.

The challenge for employers is no longer whether to use AI, but how to bring their people with them. Those who prioritise training, communicate openly, and build confidence will future-proof not just their tech stack, but their talent too. Because in the end, it's not the pace of AI that defines success, it's how quickly people are empowered to keep up with it.

# CONCLUSION

This report confirms a major shift in how professionals across **HR** and **Finance** view their working lives. **Benefits** are no longer seen as optional extras; they are core to how people assess value, culture, and long-term commitment from an employer. Whether it is **holiday allowance, pension contributions, or meaningful bonus structures**, employees now expect a package that reflects both their level and their priorities. The gap between what is offered and what is valued remains significant, especially for junior staff. Closing this gap is not only a retention issue; it is a reputational one.

**Flexibility** remains the defining issue of our time. It is the most consistently valued benefit across every level of seniority, yet still inconsistently applied. While hybrid working is widespread, real autonomy, especially at junior levels, is limited. This inconsistency signals more than just policy. It speaks to trust and culture. Leaders who enjoy remote freedom while teams are required to commute, sends a message that undermines cohesion and fairness. To retain talent in 2026, flexibility must be accessible, equitable, and embedded in culture, not just policy.

Finally, **Artificial Intelligence** is reshaping the workplace, but more slowly and unevenly than expected. Awareness is high, but structured action remains low. Many professionals are already seeing AI impact tasks, particularly at junior levels, but training and support are lagging. There is a clear appetite to engage with change. What is missing is confidence and preparation. Organisations must invest in development and communication if they want their people to thrive in an AI-enabled environment.

What links all three themes is **trust**. When **benefits** match real needs, when **flexibility** is applied fairly, and when **change** is introduced with **clarity and support**, employees feel valued. That is the foundation of engagement, performance, and long-term success.

## WE'RE GROWING A FOREST

Well, a digital one...

All the physical trees are being planted in different locations around the world.

Since October 2022, for every placement we make, we've committed to planting trees and contributing towards carbon capture / sustainability projects across the globe.

We do this via Ecologi - a certified platform for both individuals and organisations wanting to invest into the replanting of different species of trees and supporting environment focused initiatives.

At the time of writing, we have over 2,500 trees in our forest and have supported the prevention of 34 tCO2e from being emitted through 6 verified carbon avoidance projects. You can see our dashboard full of information and our digital forest **here!**

## OUR PLATFORMS & CONTACT DETAILS

For general enquiries, questions or anything else you need to reach out to us for, you can do so in any of the ways below. Our social channels are updated daily with new content ranging from advice to informative pieces to internal news.

We've moved office! You can now find us in our new home in Winnersh Triangle, just outside Reading.


**You can find us here, in the Regus Building**

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