

Legal Recruitment News - July 2020

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Legal Job Market Report - June 2020

Good morning. Here is our summary of the current state of the legal job market:

Permanent Recruitment - Quiet

Remaining pretty much non-existent, but with signs of more partners sitting at home and deciding that it is time to retire and recruit permanent members of staff to replace them. However the same partners almost always want new replacements to have their own following of clients, which is a little like finding the Holy Grail. Fee share positions showing signs of increasing again... Salaried roles few and far between. No sign yet of an improvement in conveyancing and surprisingly not a lot of wills & probate work round yet.

Locum Recruitment - Quiet

Not busy but a steady trickle - we are getting assignments in but mostly for ad hoc work rather than set hours or annual leave cover, which of course is the bread and butter work for professional locums.

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

No distressed sales happening at the moment and not many buyers getting in touch to ask about bargains, but we do have one buyer who will purchase law firms north of the Watford Gap for £1. Please get in touch if you would like to take advantage of this..

[For details of current law firms for sale please click here to view our list.](#)

Permanent Jobs - Candidate Advice

Our advice to candidates looking for new permanent roles is to register and apply for jobs wherever you see them as you would normally, but don't expect a response from law firms or agencies for some time to come. However you never know who may be in need of staff and when the market reactivates itself so it is still worth going through the motions.

Locum Jobs - Candidate Advice

Be prepared to compete for work, which means drop your prices, and if you want the work drop them substantially. Instead of getting 1-2 locums expressing an interest in covering each assignment we are getting 5-40 each time.

Statistics

General Statistics for June 2020 (comparison is with June 2019)

New permanent vacancies added: 11 (69)

New locum vacancies added: 15 (28)

New candidates registering: 110 (85)

KPMG & REC UK Jobs Report

We contribute to this report - a survey of 100s of UK recruitment businesses large and small - every month. June findings below:

Softer, but still steep, falls in permanent placements and temp billings

Quickest rise in staff supply since start of 2009

Starting pay continues to fall as vacancies decline further

KPMG Vice Chair James Stewart said:

"Despite an inevitable further drop in hiring activity for permanent and temporary staff, it is encouraging to see they both fell at softer rates than seen in April and May. However, the air of uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic will linger – and rebuilding confidence in the UK jobs market will take time."

Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

July 2020 Locum Hourly Rates - Solicitors and Legal Executives

Child Care - £35-45 per hour.

Civil Litigation – £28-35 per hour.

Commercial Contract - £35-75 per hour

Commercial Litigation – £35-75 per hour.

Company Commercial – £45-85 per hour.

Construction (non-contentious) £60-75, (contentious) £45-60 per hour

Conveyancing – £20-£25 per hour.

Commercial Property – £30-50 per hour

Employment Solicitors – £30-50 per hour.

Family Solicitors – £30-35 per hour+.

In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £25-40 per hour,

In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £45-105 per hour

In House Interim Advisors (SME) - £55-65 per hour

Insolvency - £30-60 per hour.

IP - £50-85 per hour

Local authority rates: variable.

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £25-£40 per hour.

Professional Negligence - £45-55 per hour.

Wills & Probate – £30-50 per hour.

NB all rates exclude agency fees. The rates are for self-employed locums billing firms directly on a weekly basis.

Locums and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

An in house legal assignment recently threw up a query we have been asked very rarely over the years. Could we supply a locum with their own PII cover, because their insurance broker had informed them that locums were not covered by their policy. It took some time, but eventually the department managed to persuade their broker that the locum could be covered, but as we have not been asked the question for some time we thought a survey may be interesting.

The survey found the following:

94% of locums do not have their own Professional Indemnity Insurance.

88% did not know any locum or consultant solicitors who held their own PII.

14% had been asked by a client if they held their own PII cover.

4% had been prevented from taking a role because they did not have PII.

18% had looked into getting PII cover.

The respondents who had looked into getting PII cover had used titles such as Legal Consultant, Locum Lawyer and Consultant Lawyer, as well as Solicitor and Barrister. It has been reported to us before that persuading a broker to look for PII cover for a locum is very difficult because they think the locum is operating as a solicitors' firm and hence send out the usual 100 page proposal.

Locums who held PII paid £300 & £400 a year for it and used Axa and Hiscox. Finding a broker who was prepared to source cover was also difficult - one respondent reported it being near impossible.

We also had the following comments on PII from locums:

"I do not require a PII to work as a locum and never been asked to provide one by any law firm I've worked for. In any event assuming I have one, it would not cover the work I do for a law firm who engages me to provide legal service to its clients. It will only cover my own clients I solicit directly and I've not registered for a law firm. "

"It may be a good idea for the clients to employ a locum on temporary basis sine this should be covered under their PII cover. Otherwise they are effectively asking people to be Freelance Solicitors. This certainly would not be of any interest to me, as it is just like operating as a Sole Practitioner."

"This is really interesting. I have not heard of locums having to provide their own insurance, and this will hit some of them hard with the IR35 still "out there"!"

"Never been asked this question and alarmingly I have never thought to ask an employing firm the corresponding question."

We have come across companies like Simply Business being prepared to source PII for cover where consultants (including legal) are working in a range of industries but not dealing with regulated work. The cost of this insurance is minimal as above (£300-400 a year).

This survey was sent out to over 800 locums registered on our system and 51 responded.

The State of the Conveyancing Job Market

We recently sent out a questionnaire to conveyancing lawyers registered on our system for work. We did not get a large response, but this is the result of the survey.

94% of conveyancing lawyers have had their work affected by Covid-19.

51% of respondents had been furloughed.

23% have been made redundant since February 2020.

82% have not been working their normal hours since March 2020.

51% have been paid a lower salary since March 2020.

Respondents estimated that on average work had dropped off by 47% at their firm.

Lawyers who have lost their jobs replied to say that 76% have had no work since being made redundant and 24% have found new permanent legal jobs.

6% of respondents have claimed Universal Credit since March 2020.

Over 1,900 lawyers were asked to respond to this survey, but only 35 completed the questionnaire, which skews the answers completely. However the results do throw up some interesting issues - it looks as if lawyers who were furloughed have only been given the 90% payment rather than the employers topping up to 100%. Also from those who have lost their jobs 3/4 have not managed to find any more work.

Since the start of May 2020 we have only had one residential conveyancing vacancy registered with us. This was for a conveyancing locum to help out for a few months at a firm who had staff unable to return to work. We sent out the assignment to our locum list and were immediately inundated with available locums. What was interesting however was the hourly rate all the locums indicated. Despite us pointing out the difficult market a small minority of locums were prepared to drop their rates to get the work.

The firm in question indicated that they had received a large number of applications and would be looking to pay £20 per hour. No locums on our books were prepared to take the assignment.

This mirrors our experience in the recession in 2008-2010. Conveyancing was one of the first areas hit and recruitment froze very early on in the crisis. Salaries all but disappeared and any vacancies that did arise were fee share. On the locum side a similar pattern emerged. At first, locums did not drop their rates and instead chose not to work. After about 6 months hourly rates came down and stayed low at c£25 per hour for about 3 years. We have only regularly seen £30 per hour and upwards again since 2015-2016.

So what is the future? I predict that residential conveyancing locums will again be required to cover short term annual leave, but quite possibly from the autumn onwards. Hourly rates are going to be very low for quite some time.

Permanent conveyancing recruitment is likely to start trickling in, but again we anticipate the salary ranges are going to be substantially lower than recently, perhaps returning to pre-2015 levels.

Senior Solicitors more at Risk of Redundancy than the Office Cleaner

The Law Society Gazette recently (July 2020) ran an article regarding the concern at Magic Circle and city firms that newly qualified solicitors will be seeing pay cuts and it may be a rocky year ahead for newly qualified and trainee solicitors.

Struggling NQ City Solicitors?

Examples are given by the Gazette of Allen and Overy paying £90,000 to newly qualified solicitors rather than £100,000 and Clifford Chance cutting newly qualified pay to £94,500. Hogan Lovells trainees will receive £85,000 as opposed to £90,000 when they qualify.

The Law Society Gazette talks about newly qualified pay bouncing back the following year and it being a worry for newly qualified solicitors that they are going to get these low levels of salary.

Surely Some Mistake?

We think the Gazette is mistaken. Although salaries may be slightly dented to levels only high street solicitors can dream of, the likelihood is that, rather than junior lawyers being overly affected by the pandemic, it is much more likely that this is going to be the middle level of lawyers in private practice and in house who are made redundant. This was our experience in 2008, when we saw a large number of solicitors over the age of 45 lose their jobs.

Anecdotal Evidence

Our anecdotal experience so far is that the solicitors most likely to have been laid off or furloughed at the start of the pandemic are solicitors in their 50's, working full time, but not at equity partner level.

There are obviously good business reasons for this. It makes sense for a struggling law firm with high overheads to seize the opportunity to get rid of their highest expense. A 50-year-old senior solicitor costs money whereas a 25-year-old newly qualified solicitor on a fairly low level of salary does not cost as much.

When the work picks up obviously equity partners and senior staff will be undertaking as much of the work as they possibly can to maintain their fee levels and using the assistance of the more junior staff.

Partners Retain Work

It is similarly possible that the equity partners and senior staff will retain as much of the work for themselves as possible in order to justify their existence and by doing so deprive the next level down in terms of staffing from any fee earning opportunities. It is these members of staff who we think are more likely to face layoff and redundancy rather than the junior staff.

Gap in the Market

The senior staff who have been laid off already or face redundancy over the coming months are those most likely to be lost to the profession forever. Our experience back in 2008 was that the same thing happened. Firms actively recruited younger and more junior members of staff and overlooked senior members of staff and those above 45 years old.

High Locum Numbers

It is partly why there is currently a glut of locum solicitors desperately seeking work in certain areas of law because quite a number turned to locuming when the last recession hit and have not been back into permanent work since. Moving from locum to permanent is a very difficult thing to do at the best of times and it has been an issue for many years that firms actively discriminate against anyone who has tasted the freedom of locum work when looking to recruit into permanent roles.

Interim Lawyers Locum Bank

The top query we are getting from law firms and businesses at the moment is in relation to hiring consultants to work on an ad hoc self-employed basis either now or once the lockdown has ended.

With this in mind, we have developed "The Locum Bank". This is an online directory of vetted locums registered with us and available either to work on assignments or ad hoc work for solicitors' firms, or to contract directly with businesses to provide legal advice as required.

If you would like to use the service simply [click here](#).

If you would like to be listed on the Locum Bank, you will need to be registered as a Tier 1 locum with us. Full details on how to apply for Tier 1 status can be found by [clicking here](#).

Fixed Price Locums

We have also set up fixed rate locum services for all areas of law: Conveyancing £30 per hour, Wills Probate £40 per hour, Family £30 per hour, Corporate £50 per hour, Commercial Contracts £50 per hour. For details of how to use the service [please click here](#).

CV Writing Services - free and paid

Ten Percent Legal has been reviewing and writing CVs for over 20 years on a daily basis for lawyers at all levels. We have worked on CVs at all levels of experience, from law students through to senior partners.

This is a guide to our services, both free of charge and paid. If you would like to use our paid careers services we have a discount code valid for 30 days enabling you to get 20% off all products in our online career shop. [Testimonials for our careers services can be found here](#).

Please enter the code W7A6XYL3 when you checkout at our [legal careers shop website](#).

CV Reviews

We review CVs as a paid service (£64.99). We will review your CV, provide full feedback and suggestions on how to improve it as well as any additional follow up advice needed. [Details here](#).

CV Writing

We offer a [CV Writing Pack for £39.99](#), [CV Preparation for Qualified Lawyers](#) and [CV Preparation for non-qualified lawyers](#).

CV Guides - no charge

CV Guides - [take a look at our CV guides](#) - all available at no cost online. <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/cv-advice/>

Articles include: CV Myth - fitting a CV onto two pages, 20 second guide to writing a CV, Adding Extra Value, CV Writing Tips for Senior Solicitors (if you don't bother reading this it basically says write a lot more!), CV Writing for NQ Solicitors, Skills Sections, 5 Common Mistakes to Avoid, CV Writing for Locum Work, Avoiding Waffly Nonsense, Lying on CVs, Applying for Jobs after 25 years in the same role and many, many more. We have been writing CV guides for almost 20 years so there are quite a few! Full index here - <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/cv-advice/>

Remote Working and in need of secretarial assistance?

You may be currently working from home and finding yourself short of secretarial support, particularly for online audio typing services. Whilst there are plenty of systems out there that can be set up with ongoing contracts, what options are there for ad hoc typing and secretarial support? Self-interest alert - I have marked the service that our company part owns in the list below.

www.upwork.com - simply post your job on the site, specify your preferred hourly rates and sit back and wait for freelancers to bid for your work. The site works well - we use it regularly for IT and website developers - and occasionally you can source quality PA assistance.

*www.tptranscription.co.uk - our outsourced audio typing service, established in 2001. Prices from 80p per minute for dictation. Instant website uploading service - email return. ISO 27001 & 9001 accredited.

www.theofficegenie.co.uk - virtual PA, copy typing, audio typing, conferences, exhibition stand manning and more. No prices online.

www.transcribeit.co.uk - outsourced audio typing. no prices but start £1 per minute. This is the oldest established transcription agency in the UK (1992).

www.rev.com - Silicon Valley 'disrupter' company - \$1.25 per minute for all transcription. They use AI and humans to prepare transcripts and offer possibly the fastest service.

Low Cost Recruitment for Solicitors - Ten Percent Unlimited and Chancery Lane

We offer not one but two lower cost budget recruitment services.

1. Ten Percent Unlimited

Recruit as many staff as you like over a set period of time (3 or 5 years) for a low monthly fee starting at just £65 plus VAT. We offer this service to law firms and accountancy practices. There are no restrictions on numbers and no other similar services exist in the recruitment industry. You can save £000s on your ongoing recruitment. Includes unlimited job posting on www.chancerylane.co.uk. Interested? Call Clare Fagan on 0207 127 4343 or email clare.fagan@ten-percent.co.uk. www.tenpercentunlimited.co.uk.

2. ChanceryLane.co.uk

Our online jobs board. We have used this ourselves for years as a useful source of candidates from time to time. It is picked up by Google Jobs amongst other aggregators and has been around for over 10 years. This year we have decided to allow anyone to post onto the board for just £50 per vacancy. No time limit - keep the vacancy live for as long as it takes you to recruit and full CVs are sent over to you automatically when a candidate applies. For details please visit www.chancerylane.co.uk or give us a ring on 0800 246 5001.

How to be a Locum - pdf guide

We have produced a guide on how to be a locum. This includes sections on getting work, realistic

expectations, hourly rates, popular fields of law, payment, insurance, umbrella companies and much more. Available for download or to read online from www.interimlawyers.co.uk.

Outsourcing Transcription

TP Transcription Limited is our wholly owned subsidiary offering outsourced typing work by legal and medical secretaries since 2003. We work on thousands of hours of recording every year for law firms, companies, the NHS, academic institutions and individuals. Try the service out - email or whatsapp your recording to anna@tptranscription.co.uk, visit www.tptranscription.co.uk or call 01745 813306.

About Ten-Percent Legal Recruitment

We are a specialist legal recruiter, covering both permanent and locum roles across the whole of the UK. Over 11,000 lawyers are registered with us and we have access to a range of external and internal job boards and websites where we do not have candidates available ourselves. We also assist with recruitment advice and assistance, regularly advising partners and practice managers on suitable salary and package levels.

Our company is unique for a number of reasons, including the fact that we are not shy to publish our fee structure and also donate a chunk of our profits to charity each year. We offer unlimited permanent and locum recruitment for a fixed monthly fee or one-off fees depending on the job. We also buy and sell law firms. We donate 10% of our profits annually to charity, hence our name.

We have three recruitment consultants, Jonathan Fagan, Clare Fagan and Peter Gresty. As a team we have over 40 years of experience in the legal profession.

Ten-Percent Legal Recruitment also owns Interim Lawyers, a specialist locum service. We operate an outsourced UK based typing service as well – www.tptranscription.co.uk and are preferred suppliers to a number of institutional clients and law firms across the UK and overseas.

The Ten-Percent Group of Legal Recruitment websites gives 10% of annual profits to charity. We have maintained this tradition since we formed the company 19 years ago. So far over £100k has been donated to charities in the UK and Africa including LawCare, Unlock and Reprieve.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter and look forward to hearing from you if we can assist further.

Warm regards

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