

Wage watch: Legal executives

This excellent article from the October 2006 *Legal Executive Journal* is worth a read, so enjoy!

John Burns, head of membership interests at ILEX says 'at this time of year the employment market generally is in a buoyant mood. In particular, the conveyancing market as a whole is strong and seems to have the impetus to continue that way'. He adds, 'Panel member appointments add that extra cache to CVs and accredited representations are much sought after. All in all, a good upbeat set of reports from the recruitment specialists. As always, a well-qualified legal executive with a strong, positive personality that can add value to their firm is in demand.'

South West – data supplied by Carpe Diem

	Student	Member	Fellow
Corporate Commercial	£16-22K	£20-35K	£32-45K
Litigation	£10-25K	£18-30K	£20-45K
Private Client	£10-20K	£18-35K	£32-40K
Property	£10-22K	£18-35K	£32-42K

General comments

The figures outlined above should be considered as a general guideline. This must be taken in context with the diverse regional differences on salaries and the South West covers both rural and city locations, ranging from Truro and Taunton to Bristol, Exeter and Swindon.

Whilst many more firms now have standard salary scales and offer comprehensive flexible benefits packages, we are still finding that candidates are taken on their own merit when it comes to determining starting salary.

Qualification at F.Inst.L.Ex. level is still a valuable asset when competing with other senior fee-earners in the market.

Corporate/commercial (including corporate finance, M&A, construction , employment and pensions, IP/IT, media and entertainment and international law, including in-house)

While the demand for legal executives and paralegals is less than that of the City and surrounds, firms who operate in the major cities in the South West have increased their demand and salaries remaining relatively open. Strong academics and direct experience are notably more of a pre-requisite in the corporate/commercial service areas.

Litigation (including commercial, debt recovery, PI and med neg)

The PI market has constricted over the last couple of years and continues to be volatile. Salaries have consequently been slower to climb.

Private client (including family, wills and probate, immigration, housing, benefits and crime)

There has been a particular shortfall of experienced wills and probate, tax and trust and family candidates over the last year and consequently you can expect higher salaries in these practice areas. The disciplines with more heavy public funding weighting tend to show lower salary levels.

Property (both residential and commercial)

The property market is still booming and the South West is benefiting from the local and national market with major regional firms having large and profitable commercial client bases currently. Whilst there is a demand for skilled candidates in both areas, commercial is the most buoyant with residential on a slight decline.

You can visit Carpe Diem at www.carpediemlegal.co.uk

London – data supplied by Taylor Root

	Student	Member	Fellow
Civil Litigation	£22-25K	£24-28K	£30-38K
Commercial Litigation	£18-22K	£21-32K	£35-45K
Personal Injury	£20-22K	£23-33K	£30-45K
Private Client	£19-23K	£25-32K	£30-40K
Property Commercial	£19-22K	£23-36K	£33-45K
Property Residential	£18-23K	£24-35K	£32-40K

East Anglia – data supplied by Law Staff Legal Recruitment

	Student	Member	Fellow
Conveyancing	£18-22K	£29K	£35K
Crime	£14-18K	£16-25K	£28-40K
Family	£14-21K	£21-28K	£28-40K
Litigation	£15-22K	£22-30K	£30-40K
Personal Injury	£12-18K	£18-25K	£23-35K
Probate	£15-22K	£23-30K	£30-50K

Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Essex and Hampshire – data supplied by Lipson Lloyd Jones

	Student	Member	Fellow
Small Firms	£12-16K	£16-22K	£21-25K
Medium Firms	£16-18K	£20-26K	£24-30K
Large Firms	£18-20K	£24-30K	£28-35K

The personal injury market is still quiet in the region with most of the larger firms consolidating their departments. No real expansion in property either, although plot sales is very busy. Vacancies in employment, family and debt recovery are more through replacement than growth. A couple of growing areas of litigation include professional negligence and motor fraud.

You can visit Lipson Lloyd Jones at www.ll-j.com

North West – data supplied by Anakin Seal

	Student	Member	Fellow
Civil Litigation	£13-16K	£16-22K	£21-28K
Crime	£12-16K	£14-28K	£24-36K
Debt Recovery	£11-13K	£15-21K	£22-32K
Family	£12-15K	£17-28K	£23-35K
Personal Injury	£12-20K	£20-35K	£24-43K
Property	£14-24K	£18-35K	£25-45K
Wills & Probate	£14-20K	£19-28K	£25-40K

Civil litigation

Little movement in this area, with salaries remaining quite stable. True general civil litigation specialists tend to be in short supply, perhaps due to the fact that the majority of candidates are now specialising in a particular area of litigation.

Crime

Police station accredited representatives, as always, in high demand; however, there is always a general need for quality criminal clerks. Starting salaries for people without experience are low though once you have built a reputation in this field high salaries are to be had.

Debt recovery

The debt recovery market has picked up over recent months, with firms beginning to invest mainly in junior candidates. This area of work can in medium/small firms be a useful route into more complex commercial litigation.

Family

As one of the most popular areas of law for legal execs, positions are increasingly rare and competition is high. Qualification and panel membership seem to be key here with the higher salaries being offered to candidates who have completed their Legal Executive Qualification.

Personal injury

Personal injury appears to be steadily picking up, with firms growing in confidence again after slowing down due to changes in legislation. Demand is high for candidates with a minimum of 18 months' fee-earning experience and paralegals and legal executives are now seen as more cost-effective, self sufficient, and flexible than solicitors.

Property

Residential property has made a recovery following a worrying slump in 2004/05. Vacancies are coming through at all levels so this is again a healthy area of law for both established execs and junior fee earners alike. Experience and the ability to generate work is the key to high salaries in this area of work. Commercial property has been consistently developing over recent years in the North West and is still a very busy marketplace, which is increasingly utilising the skills of ILEX qualified staff.

Wills and probate (private client)

Stable environment with a relatively high demand for experienced execs. Senior candidates particularly with tax and trusts experience are always very marketable and more often than not are snapped up quickly.

You can visit Anakin Seal at www.anakinseal.com

Birmingham and the West Midlands – data supplied by MCA Legal

	Student	Member	Fellow
Civil Litigation	£14-18K	£16-25K	£24K +
Family	£14-22K	£18-26K	£25K +
Personal Injury	£12-22K	£18-26K	£25K +
Private Client	£14-18K	£18-28K	£26K +
Property	£14-24K	£18-26K	£25K +

Civil litigation

Broad litigators still sought by general practices.

Family

Legal help/publicly funded fee-earners still needed, with demand still growing for privately funded experts at the senior end.

Personal injury

The market has remained static across all areas with demand on the defendant side for fee earners with employers liability expertise at the senior end.

Private client

Experienced fee-earners in demand throughout the region, with highly experienced fellows sought for head of department roles.

Property

Demand remains the same for general residential property fee-earners with case management and volume conveyancing experience. Still great demand for those with plot sales/developer experience with the larger firms in the city centre.

You can visit MCA Legal at www.mcalegal.co.uk

East Midlands – data supplied by g2 Legal

	Student	Member	Fellow
Conveyancing	£15-26K	£22-38K	£25-42K
Corporate/Commercial	£15-24K	£22-38K	£24-42K
Crime	£13-22K	£20-30K	£25-35K
Family	£14-22K	£18-28K	£24-34K
Personal Injury	£14-25K	£20-32K	£26-42K
Wills/Probate/Tax/Trust	£14-25K	£20-36K	£24-45K

Property

Property has been the boom area of 2006, after a depressed 2005. This trend looks set to continue in 2007, with residential property riding high on the back of recovery of the home buyers' market (interestingly, most firms in the region are pretty much all geared up for the advent of HIPS) and the demand for people with solid commercial property experience has not flagged at all in the last few years.

Private client

Private client lawyers are sought across the board with firms looking for both wills and probate practitioners, as well as trust and tax specialists handling matters for high-net-worth individuals.

Personal injury

Claimant personal injury continues to struggle in part due to the uncertainty of reforms moving forward in this sector of the industry, but insurance litigation/defendant personal injury is a high-demand area currently – however most firms demand a defendant background for applicants.

Family

Family practitioners have been hesitant to recruit heavily in 2006 with future funding cited as the main reason – that said, we have been able to place solid technical lawyers with little difficulty.

Crime

Similarly, criminal lawyers are sometimes frustrated by lack of movement in the market but, as the new reforms bed in, movement in the market is inevitable – accredited representatives are always sought after.

You can visit g2 Legal at www.g2legal.co.uk

Yorkshire and the North East – data supplied by g2 Legal

	Student	Member	Fellow
Commercial Placements	£14-25K	£20-35K	£28-55K
Conveyancing	£11-23K	£17-40K	£25-40K
Crime	£10-18K	£17-23K	£20-34K
Family	£11-18K	£17-27K	£22-35K
Personal Injury	£12-17K	£19-30K	£23-40K
Wills/Probate/Tax/Trust	£15-23K	£18-35K	£25-50K

2006 has thus far seen a resurgence in the corporate and commercial sectors as the market has bounced back at its strongest since the late 1990s.

Property

Commercial property has remained strong and steady throughout this year and is expected to continue unabated into 2007. Residential conveyancing, which had a tough 2005, has bounced back with a vengeance in 2006 and we expect to see continued demand for property lawyers into 2007.

Private client

Private client work has remained strong also with particular demand for either straight probate practitioners or those with top drawer trust, tax and estate planning advice.

Personal injury

Personal injury has continued to struggle for the volume of vacancies to match the large number of candidates keen to make a move on – the only exceptions to this are more senior lawyers with a niche specialism such as litigated industrial disease or people with a solid defendant/insurance litigation background who are now in high demand.

Family and crime

Family and crime go through a seasonal demand, with there being a glut of vacancies followed by no demand for weeks on end – that said, panel members and accredited representatives will almost always find a good home.

Looking forward to 2007 in almost every area of law, if you are a dynamic individual with solid experience and good, up to date technical skills, then you will be sought after.

You can visit g2 Legal at www.g2legal.co.uk

Wales – data supplied by Legal People

	Student	Member	Fellow
All Specialisms	£14-20	£16.5-32.5K	£21-38K

The figures provided are a guideline only and vary according to the firm, its location, actual candidate experience and current market activity of department.

There has been a slight increase in salaries, however, this could be attributed to candidates staying with their employer for longer and gaining more experience. Those who choose to move employers mainly do so to progress their careers, workload responsibility and salary in line with their qualifications.

You can visit Legal People at www.legalpeople.co.uk

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