

*1st*Executive

SALARY MARKET PULSE

SPECIALIST RECRUITMENT, INTERIM AND SOW SOLUTIONS



A MARKET PULSE BUILT FOR TODAY'S CONDITIONS - NOT LAST MONTH'S

At 1st Executive, we are in the market every day - speaking to hiring leaders, mapping specialist talent, supporting critical hires and mobilising interim and SOW solutions across Procurement, Supply Chain, Commercial, CCM and QS/Cost.

That is why this guide has been built as a live market pulse rather than a generic salary guide. It combines our consolidated salary and day-rate inputs with real consultant intelligence, offer outcomes and what we are seeing in live hiring activity across the UK and EU.

WHILE BROADER HEADLINES CONTINUE TO POINT TO CAUTION, OUR SPECIALIST MARKETS TELL A MORE POSITIVE STORY.

We're seeing continued month-on-month growth in permanent and interim opportunities, especially where clients need delivery impact, specialist capability and access to upper-quartile talent.

The wider context does matter. Heightened conflict risk in the Middle East and renewed concern around energy flows has increased volatility in oil and inflation expectations. For employers, that doesn't automatically mean hiring stops. It means hiring becomes more selective and more outcome-led.

In our market, that typically strengthens the case for:

- Sharper role definition and decision clarity
- Stronger EVP positioning and consistent stakeholder messaging
- Faster, tighter hiring processes
- Flexible hiring routes - particularly interim and Statement of Work models where speed, certainty and delivery matter

In other words: macro market caution - micro market momentum in the areas we serve.

This guide is designed to be decision-useful. It helps you answer three questions that matter in a volatile market:

1. What's really happening in our specialist markets right now?

Headlines can lag. Our view is based on live briefs, candidate sentiment, offer outcomes and actual hiring behaviour.

2. What does it take to secure upper-quartile talent in 2026?

In a selective market, the winners are not always the highest payers — they are the employers who are clearer on scope, faster in process, sharper in EVP and smarter in route-to-market.

3. Should this hire be permanent, interim or SOW?

When uncertainty rises, organisations often need capability with flexibility. Interim and SOW routes can provide speed, delivery focus and controlled risk - if they're structured properly.

Our aim with this brochure is simple: to give clients and candidates a clearer view of the market, better benchmark guidance, and practical advice on what is actually winning talent now.



GARY NOBLE FIRP
CEO & FOUNDER,
1ST EXECUTIVE



60-SECOND MARKET PULSE CHECK

Send us the role title, location and sector.

We will reply with a live benchmark, availability view and likely hiring risks.

Permanent, interim or SOW - we will recommend the fastest route to secure capability.

enquiry@1st-executive.com

2026 SALARY & MARKET PULSE

PROCUREMENT | SUPPLY CHAIN | COMMERCIAL | CCM | QS & COST

BENCHMARKS, MARKET CONTEXT AND WHAT ACTUALLY WINS TALENT IN 2026

Prepared by 1st Executive

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Use the narrative sections to understand today's hiring context - not just historic salary data.
- Use the benchmark tables as directional guidance and validate against scope, sector, geography and package.
- Use the CTA boxes to request a bespoke benchmark or hiring route recommendation.

WHAT THIS GUIDE GIVES YOU

- A live market read on hiring conditions in early 2026.
- Our view on what current geopolitical volatility means for hiring decisions.
- Practical benchmark placeholders ready to populate with final validated data.

NEED A LIVE VIEW OF YOUR MARKET?

We can benchmark a role, sense-check a package and pressure-test your process before you go to market. Permanent, interim or SOW - we'll recommend the route most likely to secure capability quickly and effectively.

START WITH A 60-SECOND PULSE CHECK: enquiry@1st-executive.com



THE MARKET CHANGED AGAIN

STABILISATION WAS APPARENT

The labour market was stabilising. The geopolitical backdrop then shifted sharply. The result is a market that is still active, but much more fragile and more selective than it looked even a few weeks ago.

Even so, in our specialist markets we are bucking the wider trend, with month-on-month growth in both permanent and interim opportunities and continued demand for upper-quartile talent.

LATEST LABOUR-MARKET PULSE

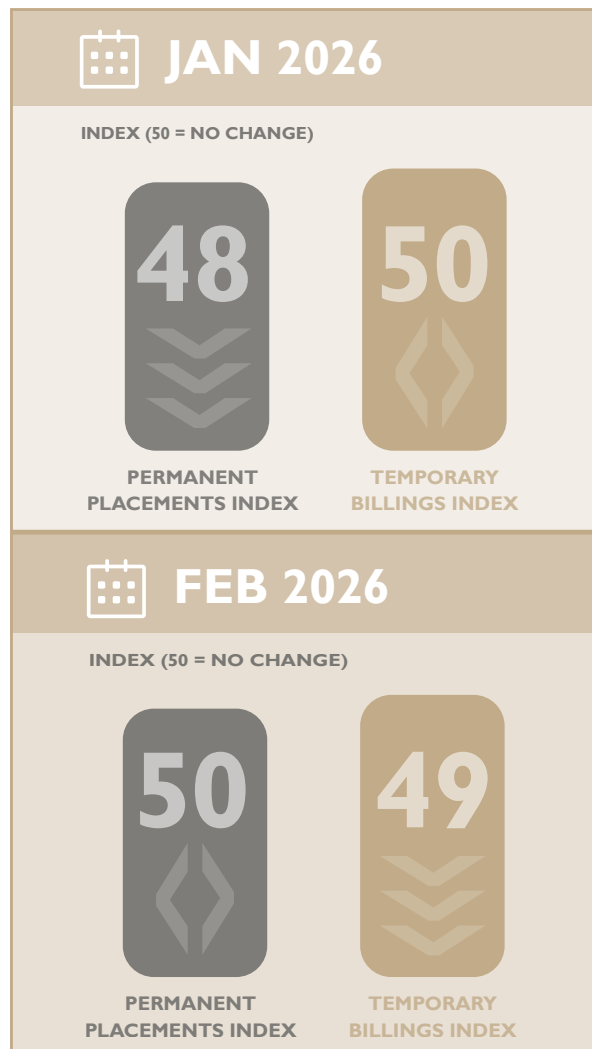
The March 2026 KPMG and REC UK Report on Jobs (covering February survey data) shows the market moving closer to stabilisation.

- Permanent placements were still fractionally lower month-on-month but at the weakest rate for nearly three years (index 49.2).
- Temporary billings dipped back into mild contraction (index 48.0).
- Vacancies continued to fall, but the decline eased to its softest pace in nine months (index 45.8).
- Pay growth cooled from January's highs as staff availability rose again (staff availability index 59.1; permanent salaries 52.3; temp wages 52.6).

WHAT CHANGED - IT'S CHANGING DAILY

The widening conflict involving the U.S., Israel, Iran and Lebanon has pushed energy markets higher and reintroduced inflation and confidence risk into the hiring outlook.

Geopolitical risk in the Middle East has created extreme volatility in energy markets, with rapid swings in oil prices and knock-on effects for inflation expectations, business confidence and



rate-cut assumptions. Brent crude has traded above \$110 during periods of escalation and was around \$106 on 23 March after de-escalation signals.

For hiring, this tends to push Boards toward greater selectivity: prioritising roles tied to margin protection, resilience, contract delivery and transformation, while using interim or SOW models where flexibility is valued.

TODAY'S MARKET CONTEXT



BRENT CRUDE
\$106.25

AP reported Brent at \$106.25 per barrel on 23 March after sharp war-driven swings.



UK 2026 GROWTH
1.1%

OBR March 2026 forecast: UK GDP growth 1.1% in 2026



BOE CUT?
0%*

Reuters polling shows economists have largely dropped expectations of a cut amid energy-driven inflation risk.

* % Chance March 2026

WHAT THAT MEANS FOR HIRING

- Recovery is likely to be slower and bumpier - but not cancelled.
- Interim, project and SOW models become more attractive where Boards want flexibility.
- Non-essential permanent hiring may stay cautious for a longer period of time.
- Capabilities linked to cost control, supplier risk, contracts, resilience and transformation remain better supported.

Source note: Reuters reporting, 3-4 March 2026; wider 2026 UK growth context also supported by the OECD United Kingdom Economic Snapshot.



 **2026 MARKET AT A GLANCE**

1stExecutive **MARKET VIEW: WE ARE BUCKING THE TREND**

Across our specialist markets, both permanent and interim opportunities continue to rise month on month.

The strongest movement remains where clients need specialist capability, delivery impact and access to upper-quartile talent.



FOR CANDIDATES: this means the right opportunities are increasing.



FOR CLIENTS: this means the right specialist partner matters more.

HIRING CLIMATE:

IMPROVING, BUT SELECTIVE

The market is moving again, especially mid-to-senior, but Boards remain ROI-led.

WHAT WINS:

PACE + STORY + FLEXIBILITY

A better process and stronger proposition can beat a higher base in today's market.

PAY MOVEMENT:

LARGELY FLAT

Broad inflation in salaries and rates has eased; stretch happens mainly for scarce, high-impact talent.

BEST-SUPPORTED DEMAND:

TECH, INFRASTRUCTURE, RISK, CONTRACTS
IT procurement, supplier risk, CAPEX, contract management, QS and cost remain the clearest hotspots.

CANDIDATE MOOD:

CAUTIOUS, NOT PASSIVE

Strong candidates will move, but only where pace, role quality and flexibility align.

HIRING ROUTE SHIFT:

INTERIM AND SOW RE-EMERGING

Where outcomes matter or uncertainty is high, flexible delivery models are back in the conversation.



NEED THE TALENT BEHIND THE TRENDS?

We can turn a benchmark into a hiring plan: market mapping, shortlist delivery and route-to-market advice.

IF THE ROLE MATTERS, THE ROUTE TO MARKET MATTERS TOO.

enquiry@1st-executive.com

WHAT CANDIDATES VALUE - AND EMPLOYERS STILL GET WRONG

♥ WHAT CANDIDATES ARE VALUING MOST

- Hybrid and flexibility as standard, not as a perk.
- Clearer progression and stronger development stories.
- Total package, not just base salary.
- Less travel and better overall workability.
- Faster, more decisive interview processes.
- A credible role story and better EVP messaging.

✓ WHERE EMPLOYERS ARE STILL FALLING SHORT

- Processes that drift and lose momentum.
- Salary bands that are too rigid for market reality.
- Over-reliance on generic channels and LinkedIn alone.
- 4+ day office mandates that add friction without adding value.
- Underselling scope, influence and career path.
- Treating specialist hiring as a volume exercise.



1stExecutive VIEWPOINT

“ THE MARKET IS NOT BEING WON ON SALARY ALONE. IN 2026, WORKABILITY OFTEN MATTERS AS MUCH AS PAY: HYBRID PATTERN, COMMUTE, DECISION SPEED, LEADERSHIP QUALITY AND ROLE CREDIBILITY. ”



WHY IS YOUR PROCESS LOSING CANDIDATES?

We will pressure-test your package, process and EVP against what the market is actually accepting. We can usually identify the weak points before the shortlist is lost.

ASK FOR OUR PROCESS FIX CHECKLIST.

enquiry@1st-executive.com

WHY 1stExecutive

This guide gives you the benchmarks. 1st Executive gives you the advantage behind them — access, judgment and execution. When the market becomes more selective, specialist access matters more. That is why we continue to see growth in live opportunities and continued demand for upper-quartile talent across the markets we serve.

WHY CLIENTS ENGAGE US

- Specialist-only focus across Procurement, Supply Chain, Commercial, CCM and QS/Cost.
- Permanent, interim and SOW capability under one roof.
- UK and EU reach with public and private sector depth.
- Access to passive talent increasingly missed by generic channels.
- Benchmarking grounded in real market activity, not generic title lists.

HOW WE PROTECT OUTCOMES

- Calibrate the brief and proposition before launch.
- Map the right market, not the noisiest one.
- Assess for capability, stakeholder influence and delivery impact.
- Manage interview process, offer strategy and close with intent.
- Adapt fast when market signals change.



NEED A SHORTLIST - FAST?

Tell us the must-haves and the non-negotiables. We will come back with a delivery plan and an evidence-led shortlist timeline.

START HERE:

enquiry@1st-executive.com

ROLE-FAMILY PULSE: WHERE DEMAND IS HOLDING UP BEST



SUPPLY CHAIN / MANUFACTURING PURCHASING

More focused than broad-based. Direct procurement, commodity, supplier performance and production-facing buying roles remain more active where manufacturers need delivery and resilience rather than overhead.



COMMERCIAL / CCM / QS / COST

Infrastructure, capital projects, major programmes and regulated environments continue to support contract managers, commercial managers, estimators and QS/cost professionals who can drive tangible value from contracted spend.



PROCUREMENT

Demand is strongest where procurement capability links directly to cost, resilience, risk or transformation. IT procurement, supplier risk, SRM and more strategic category roles remain better supported than broad BAU hiring.



PUBLIC SECTOR

Public sector activity has improved, particularly where Procurement Act awareness, stakeholder management and end-to-end capability are present. Salary banding remains a constraint, but demand has picked up.



INTERIM / SOW

Where hiring certainty is lower or outcomes are urgent, interim and SOW routes become more attractive. In a more volatile market, Boards often prefer flexibility over fixed cost.

2026 SALARY & MARKET PULSE

Procurement - UK Public Sector

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
Procurement Analyst	£30,000	£35,000	£200	£300
Buyer	£30,000	£38,000	£200	£300
Senior Buyer	£38,000	£47,000	£300	£450
Procurement Manager	£45,000	£65,000	£400	£550
Contract Manager	£45,000	£55,000	£350	£475
Supplier Relationship Manager	£45,000	£60,000	£400	£550
Third Party Risk Manager	£45,000	£65,000	£400	£600
Senior Procurement Manager	£48,000	£72,000	£500	£650
Procurement Operations Manager	£48,000	£72,000	£500	£650
Head of Procurement	£65,000	£90,000	£600	£800
Procurement Director	£80,000	£120,000	£600	£800
Chief Procurement Officer	£85,000	£120,000	£750	£950

Procurement - UK Private Sector

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
Procurement Analyst	£35,000	£45,000	£275	£350
Senior Buyer	£40,000	£65,000	£350	£550
Procurement Manager	£50,000	£85,000	£500	£700
Category Manager	£50,000	£90,000	£500	£750
Third Party Risk Manager	£50,000	£100,000	£500	£850
Supplier Relationship Manager	£55,000	£95,000	£500	£750
Contract Manager	£60,000	£82,500	£400	£700
Procurement Operations Manager	£65,000	£85,000	£500	£800
Procurement Consultant	£70,000	£100,000	£600	£900
Senior Procurement Manager	£75,000	£110,000	£600	£800
Head of Procurement	£80,000	£150,000	£800	£1,200
Head of Supply Chain	£85,000	£140,000	£750	£1,050
Head of Third Party Risk	£90,000	£150,000	£750	£1,200
Procurement Director	£120,000	£180,000	£800	£1,350
Chief Procurement Officer	£120,000	£300,000	£1,000	£2,000



NEED ROLE-SPECIFIC ACCURACY?

These ranges are directional. We can return a bespoke benchmark in 24-48 hours for your exact scope, sector and geography.

REQUEST A BESPOKE BENCHMARK.

enquiry@1st-executive.com

CCM/Commercial/QS - UK Public Sector

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
Contract Officer	£35,000	£45,000	£300	£400
Contract Manager	£45,000	£65,000	£400	£550
Contract Performance Manager	£50,000	£65,000	£400	£550
Quantity Surveyor	£55,000	£80,000	£500	£600
Commercial Manager	£60,000	£85,000	£550	£800
Senior Cost Manager	£60,000	£80,000	£500	£750
Senior Commercial Manager	£70,000	£90,000	£600	£850
Senior Quantity Surveyor	£70,000	£100,000	£700	£800
Head of Commercial	£120,000	£180,000	£900	£1,200
Commercial Director	£150,000	£250,000	£900	£1,200

CCM/Commercial/QS - UK Private Sector

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
Contracts Manager	£40,000	£60,000	£400	£650
Senior Contracts Manager	£45,000	£70,000	£400	£750
Quantity Surveyor	£60,000	£90,000	£500	£750
Commercial Manager	£65,000	£95,000	£550	£850
Senior Cost Manager	£65,000	£90,000	£500	£800
Senior Commercial Manager	£70,000	£110,000	£600	£900
Senior Quantity Surveyor	£75,000	£100,000	£600	£850
Director of Contract Management	£90,000	£120,000	£700	£900
Head of Commercial	£130,000	£200,000	£900	£1,300
Commercial Director	£150,000	£250,000	£1,000	£1,400



NEED AN INTERIM OR SOW SOLUTION QUICKLY?

We can mobilise specialist capability fast - interim, project-based or outcome-led SOW. Ask for an outside IR35 options pack aligned to your deliverables.

REQUEST SOW OPTIONS.

enquiry@1st-executive.com

Manufacturing Supply Chain - UK

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
MaterialsPlanner /Supply Planner / Production Planner	£30,000	£40,000	£250	£350
Commodity Buyer / Commodity Specialist	£35,000	£55,000	£400	£500
Materials Manager	£35,000	£55,000	£400	£500
Senior Materials Planner	£35,000	£50,000	£350	£450
Buyer	£35,000	£45,000	£300	£400
Commodity Manager	£40,000	£65,000	£500	£600
Purchasing Engineer / Supplier Development Engineer	£40,000	£60,000	£400	£500
Supplier Quality Engineer (SQE)	£40,000	£55,000	£300	£400
Category Manager (Direct Materials)	£45,000	£70,000	£500	£650
Senior Buyer (Direct) / Senior Manufacturing Buyer	£45,000	£60,000	£350	£450
Supplier Relationship Manager (Direct)	£45,000	£75,000	£600	£700
Senior Commodity Manager	£50,000	£70,000	£600	£700
Purchasing Manager	£55,000	£85,000	£500	£600
Supply Chain Manager (Manufacturing)	£60,000	£80,000	£500	£600
Head of Purchasing	£75,000	£120,000	£800	£1,000
Head of Supply Chain (Manufacturing)	£75,000	£110,000	£800	£1,000
Procurement / Supply Chain Director	£85,000	£150,000	£800	£1,000
Director of Supply Chain	£85,000	£140,000	£700	£1,200

Procurement - Europe Private Sector

(Mainland Europe - France, Belgium, Germany & NL focused)

ROLE	Permanent LOW	Permanent HIGH	Day Rate LOW	Day Rate HIGH
Buyer	€40,000	€65,000	€350	€600
Procurement Analyst	€50,000	€75,000	€400	€800
Senior Buyer	€55,000	€80,000	€450	€800
Contract Manager	€60,000	€95,000	€500	€850
Category Manager	€60,000	€100,000	€500	€900
Procurement Manager	€70,000	€100,000	€600	€1,000
Supplier Relationship Manager	€70,000	€100,000	€500	€850
Procurement Operations Manager	€75,000	€110,000	€600	€1,000
Third Party Risk Manager	€75,000	€105,000	€550	€900
Senior Procurement Manager	€80,000	€120,000	€800	€1,100
Senior Category Manager	€85,000	€125,000	€650	€1,100
Head of Supply Chain	€90,000	€150,000	€850	€1,600
Head of Procurement	€90,000	€140,000	€850	€1,500
Head of Third Party Risk	€100,000	€150,000	€800	€1,300
Procurement Director	€110,000	€180,000	€900	€2,000
Chief Procurement Officer	€175,000	€300,000	€1,500	€2,500

**READY TO ACT ON THE MARKET - NOT JUST READ ABOUT IT?**

Whether you need a critical permanent hire, interim capability at pace or an outcome-led SOW solution, 1st Executive can help. Speak to us for bespoke benchmarks, market mapping, shortlist support and hiring-route advice.

SPEAK TO US FOR BESPOKE BENCHMARKS, MARKET MAPPING, SHORTLIST SUPPORT AND HIRING-ROUTE ADVICE.

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METHODOLOGY, CURRENT-CONTEXT SOURCES AND CONTACT

This is a market pulse, not a scientific study. Ranges reflect experienced consultant inputs and active market activity. Use them as directional guidance and validate against scope, geography, sector, clearance and package.

DEFINITIONS

- UK vs EU: Euro currency used for EU.
- Inside IR35: engagement taxed as employment; day rates shown are gross, excluding employer costs.
- Outside IR35 / SOW: outcome-based deliverables under a statement of work; fees shown are for services, not employment.
- CCM: complex contract management across performance, risk, change and value realisation for critical contracts.

CURRENT-CONTEXT SOURCES USED

- KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs (March 2026 release; covering February 2026 survey data).
- REC, UK Report on Jobs PDF (uploaded evidence pack) – indices and commentary for the February 2026 snapshot.
- Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), Economic and Fiscal Outlook (March 2026) – UK GDP growth forecast for 2026.
- Reuters reporting (March 2026) – Bank of England rate-cut expectations and UK market implications under energy-driven inflation risk.
- Associated Press (AP) reporting (March 2026) – Brent crude price context and volatility commentary.
- OECD United Kingdom Economic Snapshot (accessed March 2026) – wider macro context and international comparator framing.

“ WE ARE SEEING CONTINUED
GROWTH IN LIVE PERMANENT
AND INTERIM OPPORTUNITIES
MONTH ON MONTH - AND
CONTINUED DEMAND
FROM CLIENTS SEEKING
UPPER-QUARTILE TALENT. ”

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM - SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Our leadership team brings together more than 90 years of combined experience across specialist recruitment, executive search and Managed Service SOW delivery. With deep roots in Procurement, Supply Chain, Commercial Strategy & Delivery, Risk, CCM, QS and Sustainability, we have built one of the most trusted and influential talent networks in our markets.



GARY NOBLE
Joint CEO and Operations Director

Gary is a founder director of the firm and has a wealth of experience in delivering talent search solutions. Gary has gained an impressive track record of professional recruiting and leadership experience.

✉ gary.noble@1st-executive.com
☎ 07795 518307



JAMES TUCKER
Founder and Joint CEO

James is also a founder director of the firm and has an impressive track record of executive recruitment and global account management, having personally appointed over 1000 senior professionals.

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RICHARD SHELLEY
Director of Sales

Richard leads a team of associate directors, senior consultants and researchers delivering permanent recruitment solutions across a portfolio of international clients and is part of the senior leadership team.

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SALLY DAVIS
Director of Sales

Sally is a director of 1st Executive and established and built our highly successful interim management practice. Her role now focuses on developing clients and new business opportunities across the UK, US and EU.

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