

A woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a red blazer over a light-colored top, is smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, another person wearing glasses is partially visible. The scene is set in an office environment with a window in the background.

Human Resources

Salary Guide 2026

Your essential guide to competitive salaries & hiring trends



Contents



03 Welcome to Pure

04 Your 2026 Salary Guide

05 Eastern Region Recruitment Insights

06 Human Resources Recruitment Insights

07 Cambridgeshire

09 Essex

11 Norfolk

13 Suffolk

15 Employee Benefits in 2026

17 Our Specialisms

18 Executive Pay Trends 2026

20 2026 Salary Benchmarking

21 Beyond Recruitment

22 Contact

Welcome to Pure



Pure is the East of England's professional recruitment consultancy, specialising in Accountancy, HR, Technology, Marketing, Professional Office, Supply Chain and Engineering roles. We recruit at every level, from temporary and contract roles through to permanent positions, senior leadership and board appointments delivered via Pure Executive.

Our consultants combine deep sector expertise with strong regional networks, helping organisations access high-quality, hard-to-reach talent. We stay closely connected to the people and businesses we support, offering guidance from recruitment through onboarding and long-term career development.

We're also committed to strengthening our communities. Through programmes like Best Employers Eastern Region and the Women's Leadership Programme, plus ongoing fundraising and volunteering, we help organisations grow and people progress.

Your 2026 Salary Guide



Our new Salary Guide brings together the latest salaries, hiring trends and market movement across the East of England – now in specialism-specific brochures for clearer benchmarking and deeper insight.

Built on real-time regional data

Based on a full year of live market data from Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, the guide helps you:

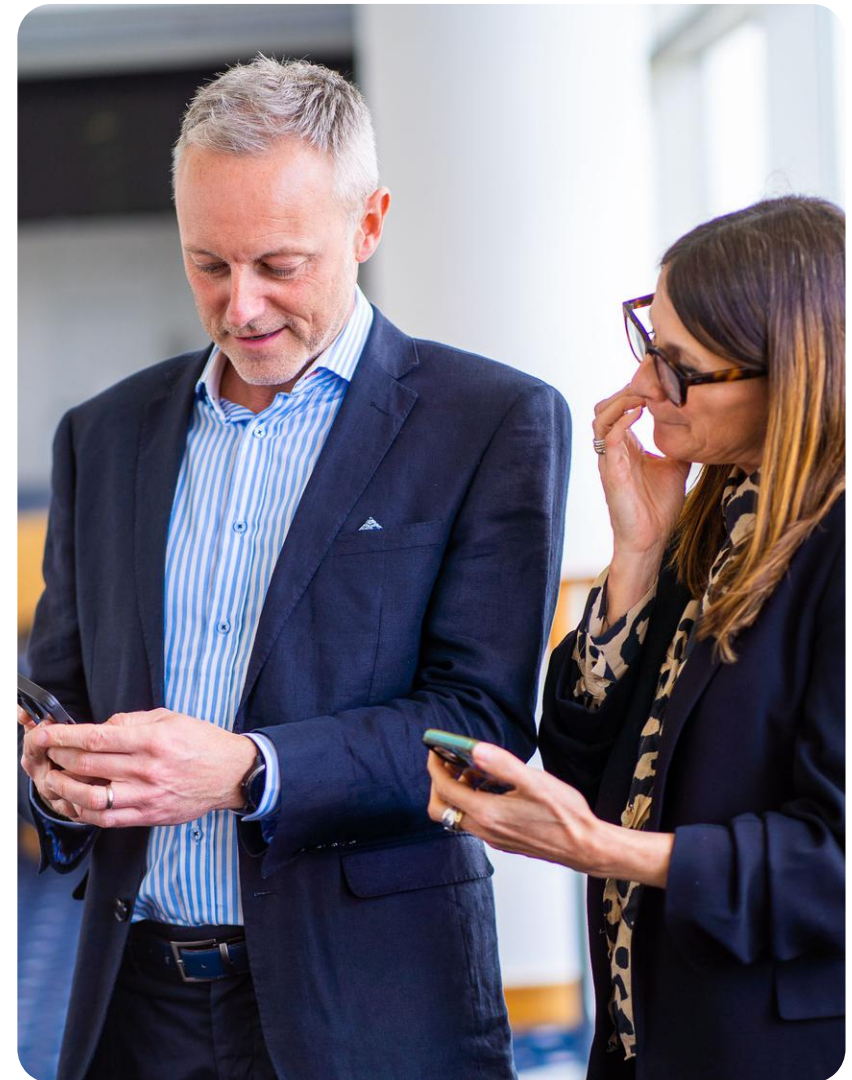
- Stay competitive on pay and benefits
- Understand pressures shaping the regional labour market
- Make informed, confident decisions
- Benchmark your salary or assess your value as a job seeker

What each brochure includes

Each guide provides:

- Salary ranges
- Role profiles
- Market insight
- Fresh research into 2026 hiring trends

[Click here](#) to find out more about our salary benchmarking services.



Eastern Region

Recruitment Insights 2026

A concise snapshot for employers



88%

of employers conduct annual salary reviews

2.5%

Average salary increase in 2025

75%

of businesses surveyed operate a hybrid working pattern

25%

of roles are now fully office-based

Hiring Challenges

- Shortage of high-quality or available candidates
- Salary expectations exceeding employer budgets
- AI polished CV's masking weaker interpersonal skills
- On-site requirements shrinking candidate pools

Skills in Demand

- AI literacy and practical AI use
- Data analytics and digital fluency
- Project management and deliverability
- Stakeholder and change management

Working Patterns

42%

Hybrid with set office days

33%

Hybrid with flexible office days

25%

Fully office-based roles

Benefits - What's being offered

- 75% Mental health support
- 62% Development & training
- 53% Private healthcare
- 53% Life assurance
- 53% Enhanced pension

Key Takeaways for 2026

- Specialist skills shortages are intensifying
- AI and digital capability are now mainstream requirements
- Hybrid working is stable; fully remote roles have largely disappeared
- Wellbeing and development benefits are now baseline expectations

Human Resources

Recruitment Insights 2026
A concise snapshot for employers



HR teams across the East of England continue to play a pivotal role in stabilising workforces as businesses navigate a softer but still selective labour market.

Demand remains strong for HR professionals with expertise in employee relations, legislative change and retention strategy, particularly as wellbeing becomes a top influencer of employee loyalty in 2026.

While broader hiring has cooled, organisations are leaning on HR to enhance engagement, support hybrid working expectations and deliver more tailored wellbeing and learning programmes. Burnout and workload pressure remain focus areas, and HR teams with the capability to drive proactive, people-centred initiatives are especially valuable across the region.

Roles Most in Demand

Employee relations

HR Business Partners

Pain Points

- Salary constraints versus expectations
- Quality and consistency of candidates
- Hybrid /on-site balance creating friction

Attraction Levers

- Wellbeing & mental health support
- Development & training opportunities
- Hybrid working options

Actions for 2026

- Upskill teams in AI, systems, people management & change
- Strengthen EVP clarity

Cambridgeshire



	2026		
HR GENERALISTS	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	TYPICAL
HR / People Administrator	£26,000	£28,000	£26,000
HR / People Assistant	£25,000	£30,000	£27,000
HR / People Coordinator	£28,000	£32,000	£30,000
HR / People Advisor	£32,000	£40,000	£38,000
HR / People Manager	£50,000	£65,000	£60,000
HR Business Partner / People Partner	£60,000	£75,000	£65,000
Head of HR / People	£70,000	£95,000	£85,000
TALENT & RECRUITMENT	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	TYPICAL
Talent / Recruitment Coordinator	£30,000	£35,000	£32,000
Talent Acquisition Advisor / Partner	£40,000	£60,000	£50,000
Head of Talent Acquisition	£60,000	£90,000	£75,000

Cambridgeshire



	2026		
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	TYPICAL
Learning and Development Assistant	£26,000	£30,000	£28,000
Learning and Development Advisor	£32,000	£40,000	£38,000
Learning and Development Manager	£50,000	£65,000	£60,000
SPECIALIST ROLES	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	TYPICAL
Organisational Development Manager	£50,000	£70,000	£65,000
Organisational Design Manager	£60,000	£80,000	£70,000
Reward Manager	£60,000	£80,000	£70,000
Head of Compensation and Benefits	£90,000	£120,000	£110,000
EDI Partner	£45,000	£60,000	£50,000
BOARD LEVEL	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	TYPICAL
HR / People Director	£95,000	£150,000	£120,000
Chief People Officer	£120,000	£200,000	£150,000



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HR / People Assistant	£26,000	£30,000	£27,000
HR / People Coordinator	£26,000	£32,000	£30,000
HR / People Advisor	£32,000	£45,000	£37,500
HR / People Manager	£45,000	£60,000	£55,000
HR Business Partner / People Partner	£50,000	£70,000	£57,500
Head of HR / People	£75,000	£95,000	£85,000
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Human Resources

Norfolk



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Employee Benefits in 2026: From Expected to Differentiation



The Core Benefits Baseline

- Pension & life assurance
- Mental health support / EAP
- Development & training
- Enhanced sick pay
- Hybrid working policy
- Standard annual leave

The Middle Tier

- Private healthcare
- Enhanced holiday
- Discount platforms
- Learning budgets
- Flexible working support
- Bonus schemes
- Enhanced parental leave
- Flexible benefits allowance

The Differentiators

- Family support
- Profit share / exit incentives
- Gym & wellbeing packages
- Equity and LTIPs
- ESG-linked incentives
- Retention bonuses
- Financial wellbeing advice
- Sabbaticals
- 4-day week / reduced hours
- Personalised benefits

What employers are offering vs what candidates value

Benefits are no longer a supporting element of reward—they are now a core lever in attracting and retaining talent.

Our 2026 data highlights a clear shift: while many organisations continue to offer similar baseline benefits, true differentiation is becoming harder—and more important—than ever.



The majority of employers are offering a consistent set of benefits, which candidates increasingly view as standard rather than compelling. These are no longer seen as differentiators; they are widely expected.



A second group of benefits is widely offered but less influential in decision-making: These support retention but rarely win talent on their own. Candidates expect a package, not individual perks.



Some benefits remain relatively underutilised—and this is where opportunity sits

Differentiation is shifting toward:

- Ownership (equity/share schemes)
- Flexibility and lifestyle benefits
- Purpose-driven benefits (ESG, wellbeing, community)

Employee Benefits in 2026: From Expected to Differentiation



Are Employers Actually Innovating?

Despite the growing importance of benefits:

- 40% of employers introduced new benefits in the last 12 months
- 60% made no changes at all



The market is evolving faster than employers are responding. This creates a clear opportunity for organisations willing to rethink their offering.

What This Means for Employers in 2026

- 1** You can't compete on salary alone
Candidates are making decisions based on total reward and lifestyle alignment.
- 2** "Standard benefits" won't differentiate you
Healthcare + pension + holidays = expected base benefits.
- 3** Innovation is your competitive edge
Most employers are not evolving their benefits—this is an opportunity to aid retention and attraction.
- 4** The future is personalised
The most effective strategies we're seeing include: Flexible benefits allowances, choice-led packages, tailored wellbeing support and work-from-anywhere policies.

Practical Actions for Employers

- Audit your benefits against the market baseline
- Identify 2-3 areas where you can genuinely differentiate
- Link benefits to your EVP (not just cost)
- Communicate them properly—many employers undersell what they already offer

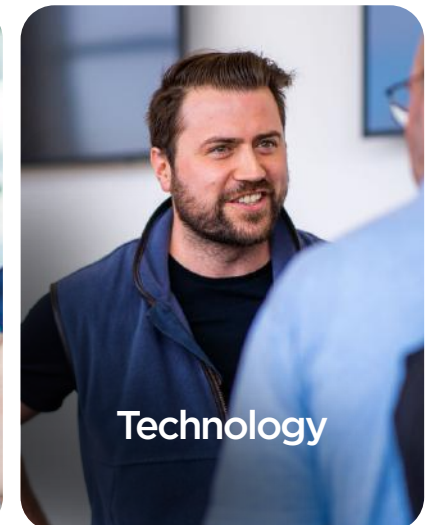
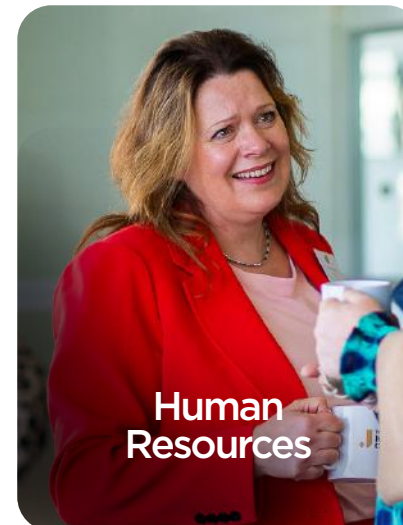
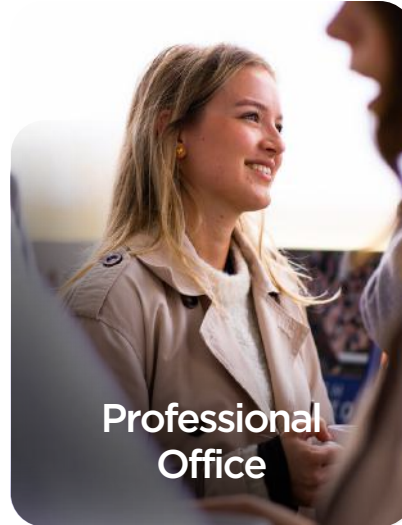
Our Specialisms



Struggling to find talent? We can help.

Managing a team or running a business leaves little time for reviewing applications, speaking to candidates and keeping up with a fast-moving hiring market. Our recruitment specialists know your sector and have the networks to reach people you won't find on job boards.

We handle the CVs and conversations so you can stay focused on what matters — helping you hire people with the right skills and the right cultural fit, whether you're recruiting one role or building a whole team.



Executive Pay Trends 2026: A more content-driven approach

Executive remuneration continues to evolve, becoming more tailored, less formulaic, and increasingly shaped by individual business context.

At board and senior leadership level, pay cannot be assessed in isolation. Ownership structure, growth stage, strategic agenda, and the specific mandate of the role all play a critical part. Benchmarking remains a useful reference point, but it only tells part of the story. Context is now the primary lens for effective remuneration decisions.

Market Dynamics Shaping Executive Pay

Stabilisation of base salary

Following a period of inflation driven increases, base salary growth has moderated. Most organisations are now operating within a more disciplined range of c.3-5%, with greater scrutiny on fixed costs and long-term affordability.

Rebalancing towards performance and outcomes

Variable reward remains central, with continued emphasis on performance-contingent structures aligned to:

- Financial delivery (EBITDA, cash flow, margins)
- Strategic execution (transformation, M&A, operational change)
- Sustainable long-term value creation

Long-term incentive plans (LTIPs) and exit-based structures are now well established, particularly in private and private equity backed environments.

Divergence across ownership models

Ownership continues to shape remuneration design:

- Listed organisations operate within tighter governance and external scrutiny
- Private and PE-backed businesses retain greater flexibility and closer alignment to value creation

This divergence reinforces the need for tailored approaches, rather than relying on direct cross-market comparisons.

More targeted use of incentives

Core benefits remain broadly consistent, but there is increased use of targeted, event-driven incentives, particularly sign-on and retention arrangements to secure critical talent.

Role scope over job title

Remuneration is increasingly defined by the scale, complexity, and impact of the role, not the title, making traditional comparisons less reliable.

Non-Executive Remuneration: From Oversight to Alignment

Non-Executive Director (NED) and Chair fees remain broadly stable but are under greater scrutiny, particularly in listed environments. The gap between listed and private companies is narrowing, with more structured benchmarking and clearer expectations around contribution.

Executive Pay Trends 2026: A more content-driven approach

In private and PE backed businesses, there is a shift towards stronger alignment between NED remuneration and value creation. This is reflected in the increased use of equity, equity-linked incentives, and “phantom” equity structures where direct shareholding is not feasible. However, many privately owned organisations still prioritise independence, favouring fixed annual remuneration.

Why Benchmarking Requires a Different Lens

At board level, context outweighs comparison. Benchmarking alone cannot fully reflect the strategic importance of the role, the complexity and risk involved, or the realities of securing high-calibre talent. Over-reliance on generic data risks mispricing leadership, either overpaying without alignment or underestimating what is required to attract the right individual.

The most effective approaches in 2026 are contextual, aligned, and grounded in both the role and the individual.

Our Perspective

At Pure Executive, we combine disciplined search methodology with real-time market insight and independent judgement. Having supported over 95 board and senior leadership appointments in the last three years, we bring a practical view of how remuneration is defined in live hiring situations, not just how it appears in survey data. If you are considering an executive or non-executive appointment, or reviewing your leadership structure, we would welcome a conversation.



2026 Salary Benchmarking



Get your compensation strategy right.

Without reliable data, it's hard to know if your salaries and benefits are competitive. Salary benchmarking compares your pay with similar roles and organisations, giving you clear, evidence-based insight.

What we review.

Pure analyses base pay, bonuses, benefits and total reward packages to show where you stand and where improvements could help. Many organisations come to us after losing candidates, seeing top performers leave or simply wanting reassurance they're paying fairly.

Tailored to your organisation.

We take time to understand your goals, gather trusted market data and assess it against your current structure. You'll get clear insights, practical recommendations and support in making any changes.

If you'd like to explore how benchmarking could support your business, we're ready to talk.



Beyond Recruitment



Careers are at the heart of everything we do. But we're also keen to give back to the communities we work in.

We do that by creating development opportunities and programmes for individuals and organisations, and by being a responsible business and employer. Find out more about how we go beyond recruitment:



The go-to programme to understand the employee experience. Based around an employee engagement survey, Best Employers is helping forward-thinking organisations achieve more through their people.

best-employers.co.uk



We run various programmes with experts from across our region, designed to help you and your teams reach your full potential, and be the best you can be.

prs.uk.com/events



We've designed this programme to help women take control of their careers and expand their networks, all while improving their leadership skills.

womeninleadership.co.uk



We put positive and determined decisions at the heart of everything we do. To help us do that we have an ESG statement - it's our commitment to being good people, and changing for the better.

prs.uk.com/esg

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