



UK PERMANENT ROLES

Salary Survey

WWW.DRCSEARCH.COM

2026



ABOUT DRC SEARCH

DRC Search was established to provide exceptional executive search solutions to the technology and digital sectors, with a focus on placing senior leaders who drive innovation, growth, and transformation. Founded in London, our mission is to support high-growth and enterprise businesses across the UK, Europe, and the US by delivering strategic leadership talent through a rigorous, insight-led search process.

Our specialism lies in Executive and Board-level appointments across Technology, Product, Data, Marketing, and Commercial leadership. From PE-backed scaleups to global technology firms, we partner with businesses that are shaping the future of their industries.

With deep sector knowledge, an extensive senior talent network, and a proven track record in executive hiring, we offer a consultative approach that goes beyond filling roles, we help organisations build the leadership foundations they need for long-term success.

Our core services include retained executive search, board and NED appointments, interim leadership, succession planning, and strategic talent mapping.



WELCOME TO THE 2026 SALARY SURVEY

Welcome to our annual salary survey for the digital sector. As always, we'd like to thank all those who participated to produce this year's report. One of the things we love at DRC Search is the amazing quality and diversity of people in our network and community. It is always a pleasure to put together this survey and we hope you find it useful. Following on from previous years we have produced two separate reports, one focused on permanent staffing and the other focused on contract workers. This report covers permanent workers.

16 YEARS OF DEDICATED CLIENT SERVICE

DRC Search provides its clients with the latest talent insights to help them achieve their workforce goals. We believe that good recruitment starts with the end in mind, that being that good recruitment leads to good retention. Our salary survey seeks to provide clients with the means to attract and retain the right hires. If you'd like to reach out or discuss anything in the report please contact Toby Day: toby@drc-search.com



Meet the Editor

Toby founded the DRC Search back in 2010. Toby has worked with a diverse range of clients over the years including agencies and inhouse teams. In addition to his recruitment responsibilities, Toby runs and edits our annual salary survey.

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS FOR 2026?

Toby Day

Director/Founder

The UK digital and technology talent market continues to evolve at pace, shaped by macroeconomic caution, rapid technological advancement, and shifting workforce expectations. As we move into 2026, hiring strategies are becoming more deliberate, data-led, and outcome-focused, particularly as organisations transition from experimentation to scaled adoption of AI across core business functions.

One of the defining features of the current market is the acceleration of AI adoption. By late 2025, 23% of UK businesses reported using AI, up significantly from just 9% in 2023, with adoption rising further to 27% among data-driven organisations. This increase is not just in usage, but in intensity, with 53% of adopters using AI constantly and 80% using it at least weekly, signalling a shift from optional tooling to embedded operational infrastructure.

At the same time, adoption remains uneven, creating a clear “data maturity divide”. London-based organisations, for example, report significantly higher adoption rates at 42% compared to 26% across the rest of the UK, reinforcing the link between talent density, infrastructure, and innovation capability.

Technology continues to be the primary catalyst behind these shifts. Among UK organisations already using AI, 85% are leveraging natural language processing and text generation, compared to 35% using computer vision, 21% using machine learning, and only 7% deploying agentic AI workflows. This highlights that whilst adoption is widespread, true transformation through automation and autonomous systems remains at an early stage.

From a commercial perspective, investment levels further reinforce the scale of change underway. UK startups raised \$23.6 billion in 2025, up 35% year-on-year, with AI-specific companies attracting \$7.9 billion, an 80% increase. Notably, 67% of AI funding rounds were concentrated in London, further strengthening its position as the UK’s leading hub for innovation, talent, and capital.



The UK digital and technology talent pool continues to expand and evolve in line with rapid AI adoption and increasing investment across the ecosystem. In 2025 alone, UK startups raised \$23.6 billion, up 35% year-on-year, with AI companies attracting \$7.9 billion, an 80% increase, reinforcing the growing demand for highly skilled digital, product, and data talent.

TALENT POOL INSIGHTS

Hiring patterns further reflect this shift. High-growth roles such as AI Engineers, Machine Learning Researchers, and Head of AI positions are most prevalent in London, but are increasingly distributed across regional hubs. Flexible working continues to underpin this distribution, with 54% of roles offered on a hybrid basis and 19% fully remote, enabling organisations to access broader and more diverse talent pools beyond traditional city centres.

At a capability level, the talent pool is being reshaped by the integration of AI into everyday workflows. Among organisations already using AI, 85% are leveraging natural language processing and text generation, demonstrating that the majority of professionals are now expected to operate with AI-assisted tools as part of their core skillset.

There remains a clear gap between adoption and capability. Key barriers such as skills shortages (16%), difficulty identifying use cases (39%), and cost constraints (21%) continue to limit how effectively organisations can scale AI and digital transformation initiatives. This is driving increased demand for talent that can bridge strategy, execution, and technology implementation.

The UK talent market is also becoming increasingly globalised. Whilst the UK remains a leading destination for digital and AI talent, supported by strong investment and infrastructure, global competition is intensifying. The UK's AI talent index ranking and concentration levels indicate a competitive but not dominant position globally, reinforcing the importance of flexible hiring models, international talent access, and distributed teams.

CANDIDATE MOTIVATION

EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE ATTRACTION STRATEGY

Candidate motivation in 2026 continues to evolve, with a growing disconnect between what attracts talent and what ultimately retains it. Whilst 81% of professionals cite salary as the primary reason to move roles, retention is increasingly driven by broader lifestyle factors, with 46% identifying work-life balance as the key reason to stay, compared to just 23% for pay alone.

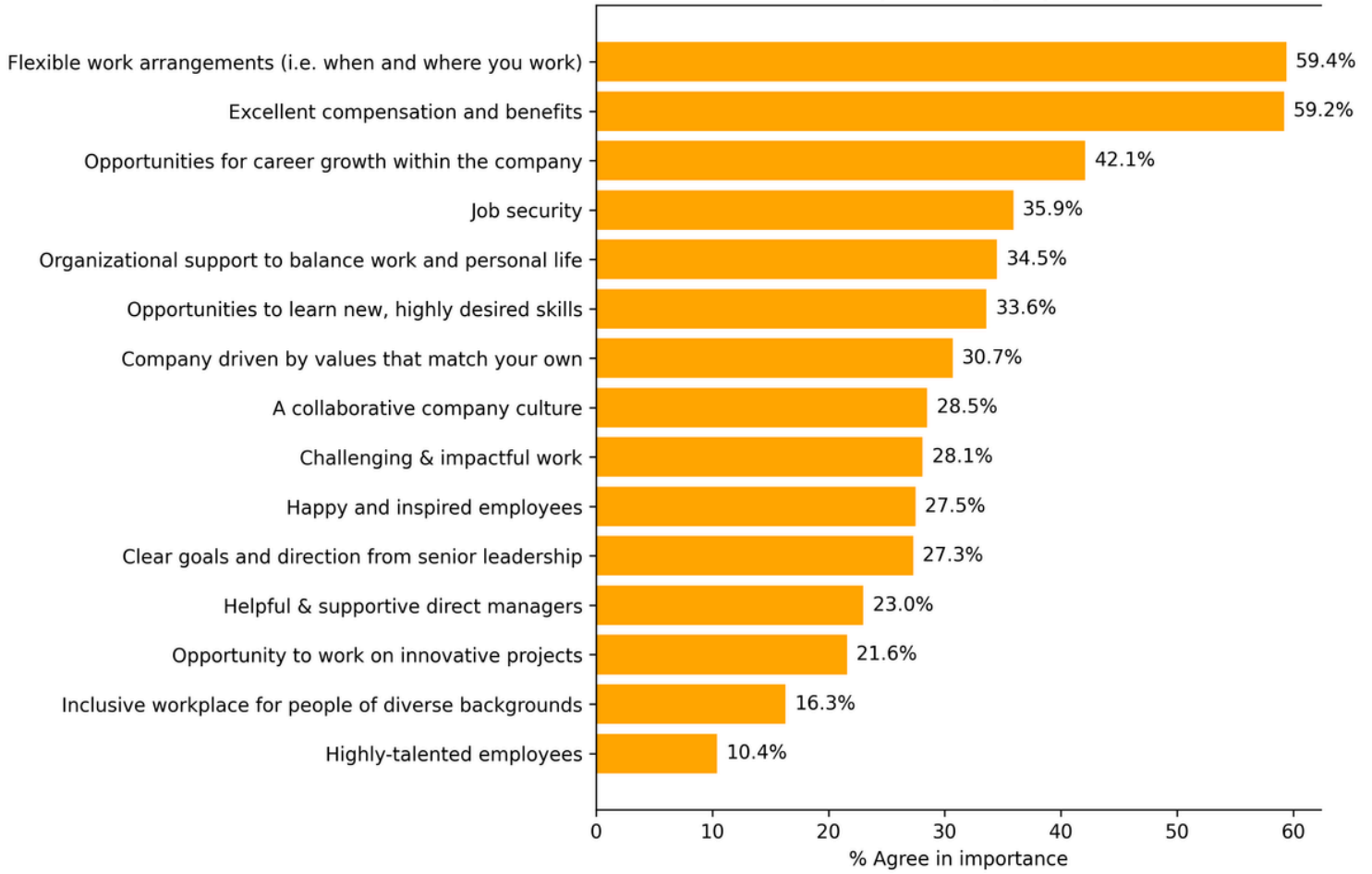
This divergence is becoming a defining feature of the UK talent market, requiring organisations to rethink how they position their Employer Value Proposition. Competitive compensation remains essential to attract talent, but it is no longer sufficient to secure long-term retention without a strong focus on flexibility, wellbeing, and career development.

Flexible working continues to play a central role in EVP. High-growth digital and AI roles are increasingly structured around hybrid models, with 54% of roles offered on a hybrid basis and 19% fully remote, reflecting both candidate expectations and employer access to wider talent pools.

At the same time, workforce behaviour is shifting. The rise of “portfolio careers” is becoming more evident, with 40% of professionals having taken on a second role and 36% planning to increase their working hours across multiple income streams. This signals a move away from traditional linear career paths and towards more flexible, skills-based career models.

What is an EVP? An Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is the unique set of benefits and rewards that an organization offers to its employees in return for their skills, capabilities, and performance. EVPs encompass tangible benefits like salary, perks, and career opportunities, as well as intangible aspects such as workplace culture, values, and flexibility.

EVP for UK Digital Marketing Sector Value Proposition by Importance



MARKETING AND SOCIAL & CONTENT CREATION

MARKETING

Marketing Executive	
Snr Marketing Executive	£26,000–£38,000
Marketing Manager	£33,000–£48,000
B2B Marketing Manager	£40,000–£82,000
Snr Marketing Manager	£48,000–£72,000
Marketing Director	£52,000–£92,000
Events Marketing	£85,000–£140,000
Campaign Manager	£30,000–£55,000
Brand Manager	£32,000–£60,000
Head of Brand	£45,000–£65,000
CMO	£70,000–£125,000
	£125,000–£210,000 +30–50%

SOCIAL AND CONTENT CREATION

Copywriter	£26,000–£35,000
Mid Copywriter	£30,000–£42,000
Senior Copywriter	£38,000–£70,000
Head of Copy	£75,000–£110,000
Content Executive	£24,000–£36,000
Content Manager	£35,000–£65,000
Content Strategist	£50,000–£95,000
Social Media Executive	£24,000–£36,000
Social Media Manager	£32,000–£60,000
Social Media Strategist	£42,000–£85,000
Head of Social	£75,000–£110,000
Senior Paid Social	£55,000–£95,000
Head of Paid Social	£75,000–£120,000
Video Editor	£32,000–£60,000
Sub-Editor	£30,000–£48,000
Editor	£36,000–£55,000
Editor Director	£60,000–£85,000



MARKET RESEARCH

Senior Researcher	
Research Manager	£40,000–£70,000
Research Director	£50,000–£85,000
Head of Research	£75,000–£130,000 £115,000–£155,000

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Executive	£25,000–£38,000
Project Manager	£40,000–£60,000
Project Director	£55,000–£85,000
Technical Project Executive	£32,000–£45,000
Technical Project Manager	£50,000–£85,000
Technical Project Director	£70,000–£110,000

UX & SERVICE DESIGN

Jnr UX Designer	£28,000–£42,000
Mid UX Designer	£42,000–£70,000
Snr UX Designer	£55,000–£110,000
UI Specialist	£50,000–£95,000
Senior UX/UI	£70,000–£110,000
Head of UX/UI	£100,000–£165,000
Jnr Service Designer	£30,000–£50,000
Mid Service Designer	£45,000–£85,000
Senior Service Designer	£65,000–£100,000
Head of SD/Innovation	£100,000–£170,000
Creative Director	£85,000–£140,000

MARKET RESEARCH UX & SERVICE DESIGN AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

TECHNOLOGY

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Head of IT	£120,000–£175,000
IT Director	£130,000–£210,000
IT Manager	£80,000–£150,000
Head of Software Engineering	£125,000–£190,000
Head of Data / CDO	£150,000–£240,000
VP of Engineering	£140,000–£200,000
Software Engineer	£95,000–£155,000
Development Manager	£105,000–£180,000
Full Stack Engineer	£80,000–£120,000
Lead .NET Developer	£90,000–£120,000
.NET Developer	£75,000–£105,000
PHP Developer	£60,000–£85,000
Front End Developer	£75,000–£105,000
Back End Developer	£85,000–£135,000
Graduate Developer	£38,000–£55,000
Test Manager	£95,000–£135,000
Lead Test Analyst	£70,000–£90,000
Senior Test Analyst	£65,000–£85,000
Test Analyst	£50,000–£70,000
Automation Test Analyst	£65,000–£85,000
Head of QA	£120,000–£150,000
QA Team Lead	£95,000–£115,000
QA Engineer	£60,000–£90,000

84%

84% of Software Development personnel that we surveyed where male

1.6

The median tenure in years of a sector software development professional is 1.6 years and has dropped in recent years.

40%

40% of graduate entrants in the last 12 months have a masters degree, compared to 29% of the overall workforce

33%

33% of the workforce have skills in Javascript making it the most popular programming language in the talent pool.



Although hiring demand for infrastructure professionals remains very high in the UK, there has been significant attrition in many of the biggest employers in the space.

TECHNOLOGY – INFRASTRUCTURE

DevOps Manager	£115,000–£150,000
Lead DevOps Engineer	£105,000–£140,000
DevOps Engineer	£85,000–£115,000
Network Manager	£75,000–£95,000
IT Support Manager	£75,000–£95,000
Cloud Systems Architect	£115,000–£155,000
Cloud Systems Engineer Systems	£85,000–£110,000
Administrator Infrastructure	£65,000–£85,000
Engineer	£70,000–£90,000
3rd Line Support Engineer	£65,000–£85,000
2nd Line Support Engineer	£40,000–£55,000
1st Line Support Engineer	£32,000–£40,000
Lead Application Support Engineer	£65,000–£90,000
Application Support Engineer	£55,000–£75,000
Service Delivery Manager	£85,000–£115,000
Service Desk Manager	£65,000–£90,000
Service Desk Team Lead	£50,000–£65,000
Service Desk Analyst	£32,000–£40,000
IT Operations Lead	£65,000–£90,000



DATA & ANALYTICS

Head of Analytics/Data	£140,000–£220,000
Director of Analytics/Data	£155,000–£220,000
Graduate Digital Analyst	£32,000–£45,000
Junior Digital Analyst	£35,000–£58,000
Senior Digital Analyst	£55,000–£95,000
Analytics Manager	£60,000–£100,000
BI Analyst	£50,000–£75,000
BI Engineer	£60,000–£100,000
Lead Data Scientist	£130,000–£190,000
Data Scientist	£75,000–£160,000
Research Scientist	£95,000–£180,000
Data Architect	£110,000–£155,000
Data Engineer	£80,000–£160,000
MLOps/DataOps Engineer	£100,000–£180,000
Insights Manager	£58,000–£78,000
Customer Insights Manager	£55,000–£75,000

The survey covered over 6,000 data & analytics professionals, just under a third of them had changed job in the last 12 months. Hiring demand is very high in England. Interestingly hiring demand is low in Scotland, representing a hidden gem location for firms looking to expand their teams.

AI & MACHINE LEARNING AND CYBER SECURITY

CYBER SECURITY

Head of Information Security	£135,000–£195,000	Application Security Engineer	£135,000–£175,000
Information Security Risk Manager	£100,000–£135,000	Operational Resilience Mgr	£90,000–£115,000
Senior Information Security Manager	£95,000–£125,000	IT Audit Manager	£90,000–£105,000
Information Security Manager	£85,000–£105,000		
Senior Information Security Analyst	£75,000–£105,000		
Information Security Analyst	£60,000–£85,000		
Security Operations Consultant (SOC)	£65,000–£95,000		
Security Engineer	£70,000–£105,000		
Security Architect	£105,000–£155,000		
CISO	£150,000–£280,000 +30–50%		
BISO	£115,000–£160,000		
Penetration Tester	£85,000–£120,000		
Business Continuity Analyst	£65,000–£85,000		
Cloud Security Architect	£120,000–£170,000		
Cloud Security Engineer	£85,000–£115,000		
Identity & Access Management Analyst	£80,000–£95,000		
Identity & Access Management Archt	£100,000–£125,000		

AI & MACHINE LEARNING

Head of AI/ML	£150,000–£250,000
Machine Learning Engineer	£85,000–£160,000
AI Developer	£120,000–£250,000
AI Prompt Engineer	£125,000–£185,000
AI Software Engineer	£115,000–£160,000
Computer Vision Engineer	£110,000–£180,000
NLP Engineer	£115,000–£165,000
Robotics Engineer	£100,000–£160,000
Software Architect	£150,000–£230,000
Research Scientist	£105,000–£180,000





PERFORMANCE MARKETING & CRM

Performance Marketing Executive	£30,000–£45,000	SEO Account Director	£65,000–£95,000
Performance Marketing Manager	£45,000–£75,000	Head of SEO	£85,000–£120,000
E-Commerce Executive	£38,000–£55,000	Acquisition Manager	£45,000–£85,000
E-Commerce Manager	£65,000–£105,000	Head of Performance	£120,000–£180,000
Head of E-commerce	£95,000–£150,000		
Director of E-commerce	£120,000–£195,000		
CRM Executive	£35,000–£60,000		
CRM Manager	£55,000–£95,000		
CRM Director	£70,000–£135,000		
Head of CRM	£95,000–£150,000		
PPC Executive	£30,000–£45,000		
PPC Manager	£50,000–£75,000		
Search Account Director	£65,000–£100,000		
Head of PPC/Search	£95,000–£145,000		
SEO Executive	£28,000–£40,000		
SEO Manager	£45,000–£75,000		

DESIGN & BRAND PRODUCT MANAGEMENT AND CLIENT SERVICES

DESIGN & BRAND

Junior Designer	
Midweight Designer	£27,000–£38,000
Senior Designer	£35,000–£55,000
Art Worker	£50,000–£70,000
Graphic Designer	£28,000–£60,000
Senior Graphic Designer	£30,000–£50,000
Head of Design / Director	£45,000–£75,000
Associate Creative Director	£70,000–£110,000
Head of Creative / Director	£80,000–£105,000
Executive Creative	£100,000–£145,000 £110,000–£185,000

CLIENT SERVICES

Graduate	£24,000–£30,000
Account Executive	£30,000–£40,000
Senior Account Executive	£35,000–£50,000
Account Manager	£40,000–£60,000
Senior Account Manager	£45,000–£75,000
Account Director	£60,000–£110,000
Senior Account Director	£70,000–£120,000
Group / Global AD	£85,000–£150,000
Head of Client Services	£100,000–£165,000
Business Director	£110,000–£185,000 + Commission

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

Head of Product Product	£110,000–£220,000
Marketing Manager Product	£65,000–£110,000
Marketing Director Technical	£90,000–£170,000
Product Manager Technical	£70,000–£110,000
Product Director Junior	£110,000–£220,000
Product Manager	£38,000–£55,000
Product Manager	£55,000–£95,000
Senior Product Manager	£80,000–£120,000
Resource Manager Resource	£45,000–£75,000
Director	£90,000–£140,000
Studio Manager	£40,000–£70,000

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & C-SUITE

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & SALES

Business Development / Sales Executive	£32,000–£45,000 + Commission
Business Development / Sales Manager	£45,000–£80,000 + Commission
Business Development / Sales Director	£75,000–£130,000 + Commission
Director of Business Development / Sales	£95,000–£175,000 + Commission

C-SUITE

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	£170,000–£280,000 +30–50%
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	£155,000–£235,000 +30–50%
Chief Revenue Officer (CRO)	£145,000–£270,000 +30–50%
Chief People Officer (CPO)	£130,000–£240,000 +30–50%
Chief Digital Officer (CDO)	£110,000–£200,000 +30–50%
Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	£160,000–£310,000 +30–50%
Chief Information Officer (CIO)	£165,000–£250,000 +30–50%
Chief Operating Officer (COO)	£140,000–£230,000 +30–50%
Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	£130,000–£215,000 +30–50%
Chief Data Officer (CDO – Data & AI)	£200,000–£320,000 +30–50%
Chief Product Officer (CPO)	£150,000–£310,000 +30–50%
Chief Strategy Officer (CSO)	£130,000–£215,000 +30–50%
Managing Director (MD)	£165,000–£320,000 +30–50%



OUR SPECIALISMS

- Technology
- Marketing (Including Mar tech)
- Data & Analytics
- Product
- UX & Service Design
- Client Services
- Project Management
- Strategy & Social

OUR SERVICES

With our clients we work alongside them not to only recruit but to consult on the current market, how best to structure, hire and retain new Marketing, Creative, Technology, Digital & Data & Insights divisions.

INITIAL CONSULTING

A scoping of your requirements and a follow up document putting forward our recommendations on market insights, department structure, salaries, packages etc - free of charge and does not come with any obligation to use us for the hiring.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Delivery of a recruitment strategy and hiring plan to identify, attract and retain the ideal talent for your organisation



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Market Leading Digital Recruitment Solutions

