

**WE ARE SEWELL WALLIS**



**ACCOUNTANCY  
& FINANCE  
SALARY INSIGHTS  
2026**

# CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION.....	03
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---

THE LACK OF OPTIONS FOR FINANCE TRAINEES .....	04
--	----

---

RETAINING WOMEN IN FINANCE LEADERSHIP ROLES .....	05
---	----

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THE RISE OF THE INTERIM FINANCE PROFESSIONAL .....	06
--	----

---

RETAINING PART-QUALIFIED FINANCE TALENT.....	07
--	----

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SALARY INFORMATION .....	08
--------------------------	----

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WE ARE SEWELL WALLIS .....	14
----------------------------	----

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MEET THE TEAM .....	15
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# THE WORLD OF HIRING IS CHANGING: GET RECRUITMENT READY FOR 2026

We're pleased to share our annual Accountancy & Finance Salary Survey with you. This report brings together valuable market insights from our network and experienced recruitment team, providing you with a roadmap to steer your hiring in 2026. This year's report reflects a market that has not slowed, but has become more selective, with employers taking a more considered and strategic approach to hiring. Organisations remain cautious in the face of economic uncertainty, but this has translated into smarter hiring rather than inaction.

This shift is driving a continued evolution in finance roles. We're seeing a growing demand for finance professionals who can operate as true business partners. Roles increasingly combine technical expertise with analysis, forecasting, systems knowledge and stakeholder management, meaning employers are prioritising adaptable skillsets that can support this shift.

Wider hiring trends are also influencing how finance talent is attracted and retained. Flexible working is now an expectation rather than a differentiator, and organisations with rigid models are experiencing longer hiring timelines. Interim and contract solutions are being used more strategically, particularly for periods of change, project work and short term leadership gaps.

Despite ongoing hiring uncertainty, confidence across Yorkshire remains resilient. Businesses continue to invest, restructure and plan for growth, albeit with closer scrutiny on cost and capability. Finance functions sit at the heart of this activity, which is reflected in hiring priorities and the continued competition for high caliber talent across the region.

This report is designed to help you navigate that landscape with clarity, confidence and context as you plan your hiring strategy for the year ahead - and if you need a hand with any of it, we're only a phonecall away!



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# THE LACK OF OPTIONS FOR FINANCE TRAINEES

The finance talent pipeline has shifted dramatically in recent years, creating a tough entry-level market for new graduates and trainees. While some parts of the sector have grown, many school leavers and graduates face fierce competition for their first professional roles.

Across finance and professional services, the supply-demand imbalance is stark. In the 2024 recruitment cycle, there were on average 188 applicants per graduate finance role; a sharp increase from 2023 and far higher than most industries. This surge reflects both a large graduate pool and fewer early career openings in accounting and finance.

Official graduate employment data underscores this. National surveys reveal only 59% of 2022/23 graduates secured full-time employment 15 months after graduating, down from about 61% previously. Many are in part-time, contract roles, or working outside their field. Although graduate unemployment remains lower than for those without degrees, these figures mask the difficulties graduates face entering structured trainee schemes and professional training programmes - the traditional paths to long-term finance careers.

Despite graduate numbers, many struggle to enter structured trainee schemes. Since the pandemic, firms have cut or delayed graduate intakes and now favour candidates with experience or specialised skills, sidelining true entry-level applicants. Around a third of finance employers report difficulty filling junior roles—not due to lack of candidates, but growing skills gaps in data analysis, forecasting, and digital fluency where graduates often fall short. This challenge is worsened by the broader UK economy, with younger workers (18–34) facing higher unemployment as employers remain cautious.

The result is clear. Despite producing hundreds of thousands of graduates annually, the UK's supply of defined trainee roles in finance lags far behind demand. Candidates face fierce competition for few openings, often taking roles outside finance or switching sectors to gain experience. This squeeze is reshaping early careers; delaying professional growth and forcing graduates and employers alike to rethink how talent is sourced, developed, and retained.

“ the supply of defined trainee roles in finance lags far behind demand ”

# RETAINING WOMEN IN FINANCE LEADERSHIP ROLES

Retaining women in senior roles remains a major challenge for UK organisations. Only 22% of mid-market businesses have a female CEO or Managing Director, down from 30% in 2023. This is rarely about ambition or capability. More often, women leave because workplace structures and expectations fail to reflect the realities of life outside work. When those structural issues are addressed, retention improves quickly.

Many workplaces still operate around outdated ideas of leadership and progression. Rigid working hours, narrow career paths, and leadership teams lacking diversity create systems that were never designed with women in mind. Women hold just 36.8% of senior leadership roles in the UK, a figure that has declined for three consecutive years. The result is predictable: organisations lose high-performing talent and leadership teams remain unchanged.

Change starts with fixing structures, not people. Recruitment and promotion processes often reward those who fit the existing mold. Mixed-gender interview panels, clearer progression criteria, and fairer systems help remove unintentional barriers and support sustainable progression.

**“ Over 70% of women see flexible working as a deciding factor in staying with an employer, and nearly half say hybrid working contributed to their promotion ”**

Real allyship matters. Career progression is often unlocked through sponsorship, not just mentorship. Senior leaders, particularly men who hold most leadership roles, must actively advocate for women and put them forward for opportunities.

Flexibility is critical to retention. Over 70% of women see flexible working as a deciding factor in staying with an employer, and nearly half say hybrid working contributed to their promotion. Job sharing and custom working patterns allow high performance without burnout.

Diversity of thought is a commercial advantage. Gender-diverse teams outperform all-male teams by around 25% and make better decisions. Retention requires action, not awareness. Organisations that remove barriers and build leadership environments that work for real lives will retain talent others lose.

# THE RISE OF THE INTERIM FINANCE PROFESSIONAL

As organisations look ahead to 2026, recruitment strategies are being reshaped by ongoing economic uncertainty, skills shortages, and changing workforce expectations. While permanent hiring remains important, it often lacks the flexibility businesses now need to respond quickly to market fluctuations, regulatory change, and shifting workloads. As a result, temporary and contract talent is playing a more strategic role in workforce planning.

Interim and contract hires offer organisations the ability to scale teams up or down in line with real business needs, whether to manage peak periods, deliver time-bound projects, or navigate periods of change. Recent labour market data supports this shift, with temporary worker numbers rising year on year and contract roles continuing to account for a meaningful share of total UK employment, even as permanent hiring activity cools.

**“ Contract roles  
continue to  
account for a  
meaningful  
share of total UK  
employment ”**

One of the key drivers behind interim hiring is access to specialist skills. Contract professionals can bring targeted expertise in areas such as transformation, systems implementation, compliance, or change management, often at speed and without the long lead times associated with permanent recruitment. This allows organisations to meet critical deadlines while maintaining quality and momentum.

Cost control is another significant factor. Permanent hires bring long-term financial commitments, including salaries, pensions, benefits, and potential redundancy costs. Interim talent helps organisations manage risk by offering flexibility, predictable costs, and the ability to assess capability and fit before considering permanent appointments. Industry data from late 2025 shows temporary billings increasing while permanent placements slowed, reinforcing the growing reliance on flexible hiring models.

Beyond operational benefits, interim professionals can also support innovation and business continuity by bringing fresh perspectives and experience from different sectors. In an environment defined by uncertainty and rapid change, temporary and contract talent provides organisations with a practical way to remain agile, protect the bottom line, and future-proof their workforce strategy heading into 2026.

# RETAINING PART-QUALIFIED FINANCE TALENT

Hiring a part-qualified accountant can be one of the smartest long-term investments your finance team makes. But holding onto them in the long run can be where many businesses fall short. If you're looking to hire someone who's planning to study or is mid-study, you're not just hiring for now. You need to acknowledge that you're making an active investment into someone's future. If that employee doesn't feel valued or supported throughout their study journey, there is every chance they'll look elsewhere before you can say "exam results".

So how do you make sure your part-qualified talent sticks around once you've hired them?

First, recognise progress early. Incremental pay increases during study show appreciation and reduce the risk of attrition.

Make sure you provide a clear progression plan. If the post-qualification role is unclear, expect them to look elsewhere.

You should realistically be offering full study support, including funding, exam leave and protected study time. These are essentials for a lot of PQ professionals, not perks.

Make sure you build in mentorship. Learning from someone who has completed the same qualification accelerates development and confidence.

Finally, plan for post-qualification pay so salary increases are expected and budgeted for.

Before hiring, be honest about what you can offer. If you cannot provide most of the above, a qualified-by-experience hire may be a better fit.

When people feel supported throughout their journey, loyalty follows. That trust goes beyond salary and is one of the most effective retention tools you have.

**“ You need to acknowledge that you're making an active investment into someone's future ”**

# TRANSACTIONAL FINANCE

ROLE	MIN	MAX
Purchase Ledger Clerk	£25,000	£30,000
Purchase Ledger Supervisor	£32,000	£36,000
Purchase Ledger Manager	£35,000	£55,000
Sales Ledger Clerk	£25,000	£32,000
Sales Ledger Supervisor	£32,000	£38,000
Sales Ledger Manager	£38,000	£55,000
Credit Controller	£28,000	£34,000
Senior Credit Controller	£32,000	£38,000
Credit Control Team Lead	£34,000	£42,500
Credit Manager	£40,000	£65,000
Head of Credit	£60,000	£90,000
Legal Cashier	£30,000	£40,000
Billing Assistant	£29,000	£32,000
Payroll Administrator	£26,000	£30,000
Payroll Clerk/Assistant	£27,000	£36,000
Payroll Supervisor	£33,000	£42,000
Payroll Manager	£50,000	£78,000

# PART-QUALIFIED FINANCE

ROLE	MIN	MAX
AAT Level 2	£25,000	£27,000
AAT Level 3	£27,000	£29,000
AAT Level 4	£30,000	£33,000
CIMA/ACCA Year 1	£28,000	£32,000
CIMA/ACCA Year 2	£32,000	£40,000
CIMA/ACCA Finalist	£40,000	£48,000

# QUALIFIED FINANCE

ROLE	MIN	MAX
ACCA Newly Qualified	£48,000	£55,000
ACCA 2/3 Years Post Qualified	£55,000	£65,000
ACCA 4+ Years Post Qualified	£65,000	£80,000
CIMA Newly Qualified	£50,000	£55,000
CIMA 2/3 Years Post Qualified	£55,000	£65,000
CIMA 4+ Years Post Qualified	£65,000	£80,000
ACA Newly Qualified	£50,000	£55,000
ACA 2/3 Years Post Qualified	£60,000	£70,000
ACA 4+ Years Post Qualified	£70,000	£85,000

# SENIOR FINANCE

ROLE	MIN	MAX
Financial Controller – SME	£70,000	£95,000
Financial Controller – PLC	£100,000	£130,000
Finance Director – SME	£80,000	£140,000
Finance Director – PLC	£130,000	£250,000
Financial Controller – PE Backed	£85,000	£100,000
Finance Director – PE Backed	£100,000	£150,000
Site Controller	£75,000	£120,000
FP&A Analyst	£40,000	£60,000
Senior FP&A Analyst	£60,000	£90,000
FP&A Manager	£70,000	£100,000
Head of FP&A	£90,000	£150,000
Finance Business Partner	£45,000	£65,000
Senior Finance Business Partner	£60,000	£90,000
Finance Manager – Business Partnering	£55,000	£80,000
Head of Business Partnering	£75,000	£100,000

# ADDITIONAL FINANCE ROLES

ROLE	MIN	MAX
Treasury Administrator	£28,000	£35,000
Treasury Analyst	£35,000	£50,000
Treasury Manager	£50,000	£70,000
Head of Treasury	£70,000	£90,000
Risk & Compliance Administrator	£28,000	£35,000
Risk & Compliance Accountant	£40,000	£60,000
Risk & Compliance Manager	£50,000	£80,000
Head of Risk & Compliance	£80,000	£150,000

# PRACTICE ROLES

ROLE	MIN	MAX
Audit Semi-Senior	£25,000	£32,000
Audit Senior	£35,000	£40,000
Audit Assistant Manager	£40,000	£50,000
Audit Manager	£50,000	£60,000
Audit Director	£80,000	£110,000
Business Services/Client Manager	£45,000	£55,000
Client Accountant	£40,000	£50,000
Tax Assistant	£25,000	£32,000
Tax Accountant	£40,000	£45,000
Tax Manager	£50,000	£70,000
Tax Partner	£80,000	£110,000

# WE ARE SEWELL WALLIS

We're experienced recruiters focusing entirely on the Yorkshire market, with offices in Sheffield and Leeds; our networks are concentrated in the areas where our clients are located, and we consistently work with candidates who will be able to commute to those locations.

Your hiring depends on having a recruitment partner who knows your business and can work with you to solve the hiring headaches you come up against. We tackle every assignment with energy, combining this with the lived experience of a team that's been there and seen it all before. And it works. Our clients come back again and again, and our networks are full of candidates who reach out when they're looking for something new, and recommend us to their networks.

We exclusively focus on Finance, HR and Business Support roles, with consultants who also concentrate on executive search when clients have a requirement.

Our team understand the ins and outs of their specialisms, and will work with you to find talent that will be a good personality match with your current teams. We can also advise on things like qualification pathways, and salary benchmarking, and are able to provide other consultative advice beyond just who we think you should hire.

We're passionate about business and about people, and we love bringing the two together. If you're looking for a recruitment partner that will work side by side with you to help you reach your strategic goals, we're the one for you.

# GET IN TOUCH



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# **WE ARE SEWELL WALLIS**

**PEOPLE-FIRST RECRUITMENT FOR  
FINANCE, HR & BUSINESS SUPPORT.**

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