

Q1
2026

SALARY SURVEY



ABOUT US

Counted Recruitment are a leading Midlands accountancy recruitment agency. We are based in Halesowen & Worcester, helping both large PLCs and regionally important SMEs to hire and retain finance staff.

MISSION AND VISION

At Counted, we are here to champion the talent of the outstanding West Midlands accountancy market.

Counted makes sure we know every detail of the market and you can count on us to put service first. We aim to be the most knowledgeable accountancy recruitment agency in the Midlands.



MARKET OBSERVATIONS

REMOTE WORK

Remote work is in steep decline. Most companies are somewhere near 3 days a week in the office, with a suprising increase in those demanding 4 or 5 days a week in the office. **Hybrid remains the most powerful talent attraction tool.**



JOB TITLES

Are all over the place! Part qualified titles are often interchangeable, and qualified titles (Management accountant, Finance Business Partner, FP&A) often have huge areas of crossover. We suggest looking at the role duties, not the title.



SALARIES

Have now settled. Despite stubborn inflation, salaries are no longer seeing the large (8-10%) jumps that we saw post covid. Most salaries are either stabilising or seeing small (2-4%) increases.



MARKET CONDITIONS

Its improving. 2025 and into 2026 has been tough for many, with the NI + MW increases being a particularly low point. The market feels like it is on a steady rise, but does need a steady hand from those writing policy! **Redundancies are without doubt, on the rise.**



PART QUALIFIED

The rise of exemptions has almost destroyed the original meaning of part qualified in recruitment. Judging people by exams left is no longer useful. Someone leaving university (2:1) has just 4 exams left to complete, but no experience. In comparison, an accountant with 3 years' work experience may have done AAT and a level of CIMA yet still face 8 exams."





SALES & PURCHASE LEDGER

The foundation of your finance team, everything is built on an efficient transactional finance team!

SALES LEDGER

£26k - £32k

The lower end of the bracket would represent a junior with 0-6 months notice, studying AAT. £27.5k+ would get you 1-2 years of experience and £30k+ is the salary for an experienced, "set and forget" ledger clerk. **Sales Ledger supervisors are £35k - £40k.**

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CREDIT CONTROL

£27k - £34k

At the lower end, you will attract someone looking to get into Credit Control, they may have some office experience. £31k/£32k gets you a seasoned credit controller. **Credit Control supervisors are £35k - £40k.**



KEY VARIABLES



Hybrid: Opportunities which offer higher levels of hybrid working are sought after in the current market. Office based roles often need to offer improved packages to compete with processes offering hybrid working.

Study Support: Offering study support in a chosen specialism (AAT, CIMA, CIPP) is a fantastic way to secure the strongest candidates available in a competitive market!

Potential: Positions offering development opportunities are exciting which helps to attract people looking to forge a career within a business.

LEDGER MANAGEMENT



Overseeing various size teams, ledger management is a broad spectrum! Responsibilities range from management positions within SMEs overseeing smaller teams, through to leading complex teams of 10+ employees in large shared service centre environments.

SALES LEDGER MANAGER

£35K - £60K

£35,000+ attracts someone overseeing a smaller team, or working in a Team Leader/Supervisor position with management support. Management positions within complex environments are often offering salaries towards the higher end of the range provided.

PURCHASE LEDGER MANAGER

£35K - £60K

£35,000+ attracts someone overseeing a smaller team, or working in a Team Leader/Supervisor position with management support. Management positions within complex environments are often offering salaries towards the higher end of the range provided.

CREDIT CONTROL LEAD / HEAD

£45K - £70K+

£45,000+ typically attracts those leading small teams or in Team Leader/Supervisor roles with support. Larger, more complex environments push salaries towards the higher end, with pay rising alongside business size and team complexity.



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PAYROLL



Not all heroes wear capes! A business critical function which is responsible for ensuring that employees are paid accurately and efficiently within a constantly evolving industry. Responsibilities range from management positions within SMEs overseeing smaller teams, through to leading complex teams of 10+ employees in large shared service centre environments.

PAYROLL ADMINISTRATOR

£27k - £33k

£27,000+ attracts someone at the start of their career with 0-6 months experience. £30,000 is market average for established experience and £32,000+ for "Senior" individuals bringing a wealth of knowledge into a purely administration role. **Payroll supervisors are £35k - £45k. Hybrid working policies are extremely important to this talent pool.**

PAYROLL MANAGER

£45k - £70k

£45,000 suits a standalone payroll role in an SME, managing a smaller payroll end to end. £50,000-£55,000 is market average for experienced payroll professionals in Team Leader/ Supervisor roles with support. In larger, more complex environments, salaries move to the higher end, rising with business size and team complexity.

HEAD OF PAYROLL

£80k - £100k

A wide ranging salary bracket, which would be influenced by the complexity and size of payroll department, often overseeing multi-site teams with the potential for off-shore management experience required. Salaries would range based on system implementation experience, or requirement for large scale process improvements.



KEY VARIABLES

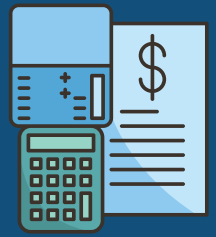


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JUNIOR FINANCE



The foundation of any management accounting team. An Assistant Management Accountant learning the roles in management accounting. A Management Accountant may be a finalist or newly qualified, able to complete much of the work alone.

ASSISTANT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT

£26k - £35k

£25,000+ suits an AAT studier or graduate with up to 6 months' experience. £28,000+ is typical for candidates with 1+ years, often in ledger roles. The top end reflects part qualified candidates with 18-24 months' experience.

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT

£28k - £38k

Experienced candidates which are further along in their studies, or have had more exposure to reporting and other areas such as VAT and basic financial accounting will look for increased packages nearer the £35k+ level.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT (STUDYING)

£35k - £50k

£35,000 will attract talent actively studying ACCA/CIMA. Market average for a part-qualified candidate ranges from £36,000 - £38,000 and £45,000-£48,000 is a package aimed towards a finalist. **Qualified Accountant salaries can be £45k - £60k depending on how demanding and complex the accounting is.**



KEY VARIABLES



Education: A first-class graduate with A levels will often secure more than an AAT-qualified candidate with a similar level of experience.

Company: Junior candidates from a PLC background often secure higher salaries than those from SMEs.

Studies: The more ACCA/CIMA exams a candidate has completed, the better the package on offer tends to be.



Minimum wage rises have pushed salaries at this level up, draining value from the £25k-£28k range. Study support is vital here, with most packages covering books, courses and some time off per exam.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS



Financial Accountants often take on the more technical area of Accounting, including complex reporting, audit requirements, statutory accounts, tax and other group work.

NQ 1ST TIME MOVER

£52K - £57K

Newly qualified first time movers are getting paid £44k-£48k in the larger audit firms, so are seeking circa £52k+ for a move. You will need to pay higher salaries for less commercial roles, such as reporting and internal audit.

GROUP / FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANT

£55K - £75K

£55,000 suits a newly ACA-qualified candidate from practice, rising to £58k for compliance, controls or reporting-heavy roles.

Around £65k reflects someone who has left audit with 1-3 years in industry. £75k attracts a qualified Group Accountant with large-scale technical accounting exposure and 4+ years' industry experience on top of practice training.



KEY VARIABLES



Training: Those with a big 4 background, can command a little more than those from a small regional firm. However, there is a real demand for mid tier (5-20) candidates who blend both PLC and SME exposure

Company: Qualified candidates from a PLC background often command higher salaries than those from smaller, private businesses (unless they are PE backed). Candidates with a group background also attract higher packages than those from divisional backgrounds.

Experience mix: An Accountant with experience in both practice and industry will often secure a higher salary than someone at the same "level" but who has purely sat in practice (eg senior manager looking for their first move)

COMMERCIAL FINANCE



Qualified Accountants are the engine of a developed finance team. Either managing more junior members, driving forward month end or supporting the business with detailed commercial analysis.

FINANCE BUSINESS PARTNER

£50K - £70K

£50,000 would attract a CIMA/ACCA finalist who may have some exposure to basic business partnering concepts. The higher end of the bracket would be market average for an established qualified FBP with 3-5+ years experience business partnering.

SENIOR FINANCE BUSINESS PARTNER

£65K - £80K

£65,000 represents a strong Business Partner who is likely to operate in a standalone position, or managing a small team. Increased salaries attract a Senior/Qualified Finance Business Partner. The role may also be called a Commercial Finance Manager.

FP&A ANALYST / MANAGER

£55K - £75K

£55,000 would attract a Finance Analyst moving into FP&A. £65k-£70k suits an analytically strong FP&A Analyst with modelling skills and responsibility for multiple territories or large businesses. Technical expertise (Power BI, automation, etc.) increases a candidate's value. £75k reaches "manager" level.



KEY VARIABLES



Qualifications: Non-qualified individuals tend to secure salaries up to 15% lower than qualified staff with the same skillset.

Company & Training: Bigger companies with bigger, more detailed numbers often pay higher salaries. Those from an ACA background come at a premium.

Technical Exposure: Strong system skills (PowerBI, automation etc), drives up a candidates value.

Group Exposure: Roles requiring group level exposure pay more than divisional Roles.

MANAGEMENT FINANCE



These roles are centered around providing their core function to the relevant department, with the support of a team that they directly manage.

FINANCE MANAGER

£55K - £75K

£55,000 would attract a newly qualified candidate with basic team management experience, whilst the higher end would be market average for an experienced Finance Manager with 5+ years of management experience.

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER (SME)

£65K - £85K

£65,000+ will attract a Finance Manager looking for progression, whilst at £80,000, the candidate will often be a deputy to the FD and a key senior person in the finance team.

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER (LARGE BUSINESS/PLC)

£75K - £95K

£70,000 would attract a qualified Finance Manager with team management experience. An improved package is required if the individual needs to be particularly technically strong, from a practice background, or the division is complex.



KEY VARIABLES



Education: An Accountant with formal qualifications will command more than one qualified by experience. CIMA/ACCA qualified candidates come at a premium and an ACA qualified professional can often secure even more.

Company: Candidates with a background in private equity-backed or listed businesses will command higher salaries than those from other private businesses.

Training: An Accountant with experience in both practice and industry will often secure a higher salary.

Industry: Candidates with experience in industries such as Financial Services, Technology, PE backed companies and ecommerce often come at a premium.

SENIOR FINANCE



Senior finance positions have broad salary bandings as their duties and scope can vary widely. Factors to consider include their operational involvement, the complexity of the business and the future growth plans/demands of the role.

FP&A MANAGER / LEAD

£90K - £125K

Titles are tricky, as “FP&A Managers” often aren’t the functional lead. These roles are listed on the previous page.

£90,000 attracts someone with strong FP&A experience who has led teams and processes, but not large complex planning teams. Higher salaries appeal to senior candidates able to lead planning in large/complex PE-backed or listed businesses. System implementation or consolidation/technical skills can add a premium.

GROUP FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

£85K - £125K+

Salaries depend on business size and complexity. The more complex the role, the higher the package. A highly competent qualified accountant handling all technical requirements would typically sit mid-range.

Companies with technical accounting, complex structures, overseas entities, or strict audit requirements (often listed) often pay the top of the range.

HEAD OF COMMERCIAL FINANCE

£80K - £100K+

A Head of Business Partnering or Commercial Finance is usually found in larger companies, split from the “core” finance team, often being the most operationally-facing function. £80,000+ attracts a strong Senior Business Partner seeking progression, while the higher range reflects an established Senior Head of Commercial Finance leading a team of qualified staff. The most demanding roles can reach £120k.

FINANCE DIRECTOR (SME)

£80K - £130K+

A first time FD in a manager-owned £3m – £15m business may command £80,000+, whilst the salary will edge towards £100,000 for a complex, larger, or high growth business. The higher end of the range would be market average for a very demanding role within a PE backed business.

SENIOR FINANCE (CTND)



FINANCE DIRECTOR (LARGE BUSINESS/PLC)

£100K - £150K+

A first-time FD who has been an FC in a large, complex business will command around £100,000. Salaries can rise to £125,000 for an experienced, technically astute finance leader, while £150,000+ is usually for high-profile companies, demanding PE environments, or turnaround situations.

Pay varies with the size and scope of the role and can reach £200k in some companies, while in others the role would be a CFO.

FD roles are hard to benchmark.

Salaries vary widely by ownership structure, role demands, and business growth profile.

Large PLCs may offer high base pay with strong benefits, while PE-backed companies may structure packages differently, especially around a sale. At FD level, it's less about the "market rate" for the role and more about the candidate's experience and profile.



KEY VARIABLES



Experience profile: "Exposure" is what costs money at this level. Candidates who have been through (all or some of) system changes, sales processes, transformation processes, team builds, refinancing, M&A work will all add their own premiums.

Company: Candidates with a background in private equity-backed or listed businesses will command higher salaries than those from other private businesses.

Future: Roles with more exciting future, long term incentives and potential change (sales, M&A), will be more attractive than "standard" divisional FD roles.

Industry: Candidates with experience in industries such as Financial Services, Technology, PE backed companies and ecommerce often come at a premium.

SALARY IMPACTS

GEOGRAPHICS



Rural areas on average tend to offer lower salaries. Whilst talent pools may be smaller, competition will also be reduced and many candidates prioritise location over remuneration.

Birmingham can now be particularly expensive with long journey times, lack of parking and the pollution charge.



Best Value: Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Telford & Worcestershire



Average Expense: Coventry, Sutton Coldfield, Tamworth, Walsall, Redditch



More Expensive: Warwick, Solihull, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire



Most Expensive: Birmingham City Centre

ACADEMICS



Qualified candidates regularly secure increased salaries when compared to qualified by experienced candidates, often by 10-25%. Individuals with strong degrees and A levels also command up to 20% more at a junior level in comparison.

INDUSTRY



Manufacturing, Financial Services and Technology sector experience tends to command a premium. Focusing on sector experience within a specific industry often increases packages by 10-15%, simply because it dramatically reduces the talent pool. **Care, Ecommerce and Logistics** are three fast-growing areas.

SALARY INCREASES

LOWER LEVELS



Salaries within these markets have changed dramatically in the current climate, with the National Minimum Wage increasing to £12.71 from April 2026. This is £26,436 for a 40 hour week.

Often, employers look for their entry level graduate and finance positions to offer an improvement on standard minimum wage, meaning an ever increasing amount of entry level salaries are heading towards £27,000+. This in turn has an effect on salaries within the team for experienced employees.

PART QUALIFIED



Part-qualified salaries are rising. AAT candidates are securing better packages, while part-qualified CIMA/ACCA professionals typically earn £35,000–£40,000.

Finalists can expect around £44,000–£49,000. Salaries vary with work experience and number of exams passed. There has also been a noticeable drop in candidates actively studying or at finalist level, which benefits those who do finish their exams.

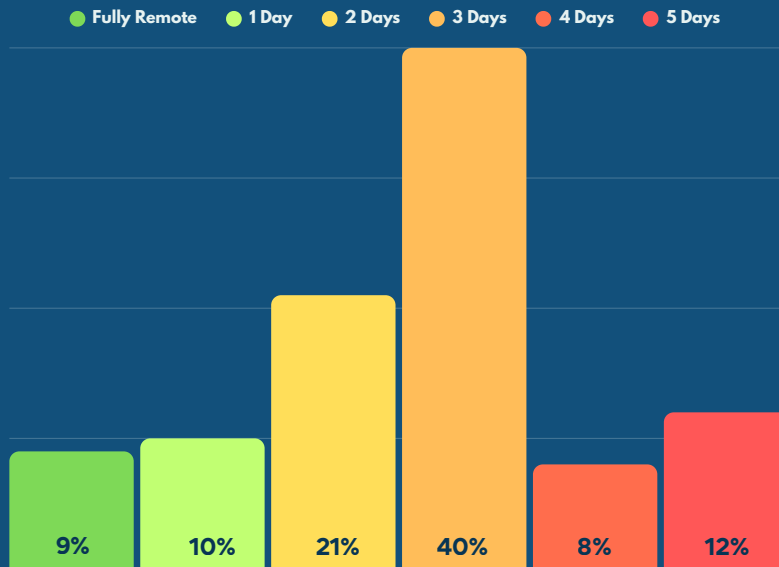
NEWLY QUALIFIED



Salaries for newly qualified individuals are now c£50,000+, with more experienced candidates approaching £55,000. ACA-qualified candidates with practice experience start at £52,000 and rise to £57,000 depending on experience and background.

HYBRID WORKING

How many days per week should you be in the office, as per company standard?



BACK TO OFFICE

Companies are ushering people back to the office! Many companies that offered fully flexible work patterns are now asking for employees to attend the office. Companies that require five full days a week in the office are on the rise, but still in the minority.

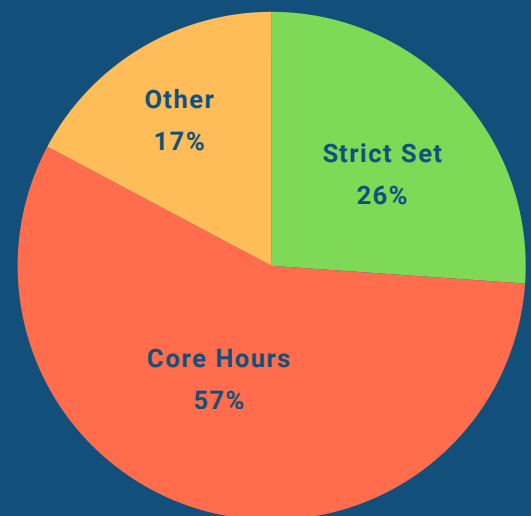
The "back to office" mandate is especially obvious in junior/transactional roles.

HOURS ARE MIXED

Some companies are seeking set hours, like a traditional 9-5, but the majority of companies use some variation of a "core hours" policy.

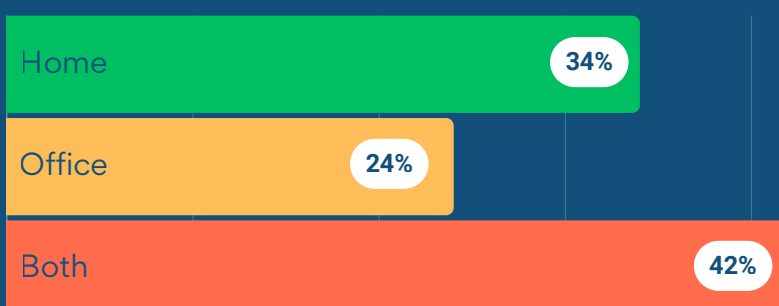
Those that do have strict hours can be less attractive to working parents and can be impacted more by local traffic conditions.

Do you work strict hours (eg 9-5) or have flexitime?



FINAL THOUGHTS

Where do you think you are the most productive?



The debate on office productivity is a very mixed one!

Some feel going into the office makes them less productive, although this is likely true in a silo, when taking the wider picture into account, we feel going into the office brings other benefits that help you be more productive on those days at home.

BENEFITS

The below show the "average" and "fair" benefits expected at each level.



£25k - £40k



£41k-£70k



£71k+



23 days +

25 days +

25 days +



3%+

5%+

8%+



Often not

Single

Family



No

£5.5k+

7.5k+



5%+

10%+

20%+



Hybrid working is the single, most game-changing benefit you can offer that is appreciated at all seniority levels.



WE KNOW THE MARKET

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