

Hospitality Salary Benchmarking Report 2026

Essential insights
on salaries, benefits
and skills in the
hospitality industry.



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Contents

Page 3	Introduction
Page 4	Hospitality Salary Trends and Insights: What the Latest Data Shows <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Median Salary Levels■ Salary Equity, Transparency, and Worker Sentiment■ Salary Expectations and Financial Pressure■ Salary, Age and Attitudes■ Employer Size and Salaries
Page 8	Employer Viewpoints: Insights from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Marriot International■ The Ned■ Hospitality Talent and Recruitment Partner mum
Page 12	Top Tips on Salaries from the Experts
Page 13	Caterer.com – the Hospitality Industry’s Hiring Partner



Introduction

Welcome to your Caterer.com Salary & Benefits Report 2026

Across three compact reports, we're sharing the latest on hospitality salaries, benefits and skills, with fresh data, insights and tips to boost the impact of your hiring approach.

In this first report, we'll take a close look at hospitality salaries by role and location. **We analysed 865,000 hospitality job ads** and online surveys of hospitality recruiters and candidates* to give you valuable insights into attitudes and influences on employer and jobseeker behaviour. Plus, expert hospitality employers and recruiters share their latest approaches on salary, benefits and skills.



Hospitality Wage Hikes and Workforce Changes

Following a difficult 2025, the latest hospitality industry data reflects a sector that's evolving. Pay is rising, expectations are shifting and there is a renewed focus on the value of people.

Hospitality wages are becoming more competitive. In 2025, changes to the National Living Wage increased hospitality incomes, with **hourly rates rising by 16.3% to £10 for those aged 18-20 and by 6.7% to £12.21 for those over 21.**

Further National Living Wage increases arrive in April 2026, plus rates for younger workers and apprentices will also increase. Statutory payments such as sick pay and family related

leave will rise in parallel. Together, these changes are expected to benefit millions of lower-paid workers and will naturally impact hospitality employers and incomes.

Wage changes have driven a shift in hospitality workforce structure and numbers but have also given employers greater power to attract the right talent. As a result, employers are paying closer attention to who they're hiring, why and how. **Fair salaries, attractive benefits and skills-based hiring are central in workforce strategies**, and more than ever before, every hire counts in hospitality.

Let's take a look at the latest hospitality salary data and trends...

Our research is based on insights from 21.6 million job adverts across 22 industries, alongside surveys of 1,000 recruiters and 3,000 UK workers. This includes hospitality-specific data from 865,000 job adverts, 54 specialist hospitality recruiters, and 167 hospitality jobseekers. All salary data reflects advertised salaries over actual earnings, highlighting how employers position roles in a tight market. We mapped candidates' benefit preferences to the broader set of benefits captured in job ads to allow for comparison. Gender Pay Gap indicators were calculated using Office for National Statistics (ONS) weekly and hourly earnings data.

Hospitality Salary Trends and Insights: What the Latest Data Shows

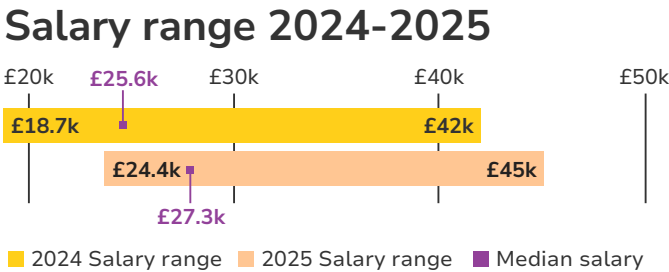
Median Salary Levels

Recent years saw consistent wage growth in hospitality, with the **median salary rising from £20,800 to £27,258 over five years**, although it still trails the UK median of **£33,526**. Further changes are due in April 2026, when the **National Living Wage will increase to £12.71 per hour**, alongside rises for younger workers, apprentices and statutory payments, such as sick pay and family-related leave. These changes are expected to benefit millions of lower-paid workers and will inevitably impact hospitality employers.

Median salary

£27,258

Salary growth compared to 2024 ↑ 7%

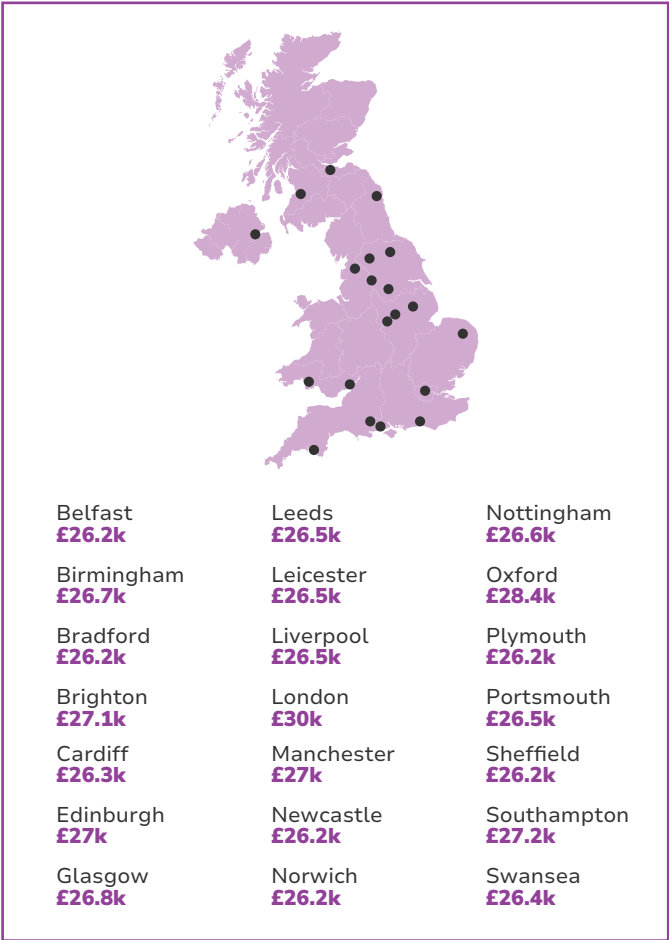


Median Hospitality Salary in UK Cities

London continues to dominate hospitality hiring, with the **highest number of vacancies and a median salary of £30,000**, reflecting strong demand and higher living costs.

Other major cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Oxford also show healthy hiring activity, with median salaries slightly above the national average.

Across most other UK cities, both vacancies and pay levels are more consistent. **Median salaries clustered around £26,200–£26,700, indicating a stable nationwide baseline**, with a few locations showing more competitive local markets.





In-Demand Positions

No.1

Kitchen porter
£25,396-£27,040

No.2

Cook
£25,437-£31,200

No.3

Housekeeper
£25,396-£29,543

The most frequently advertised hospitality roles are kitchen porters, cooks and housekeepers. While kitchen porters lead in volume, **cooks and housekeepers offer higher earning potential, with salaries exceeding £30,000 at the top end.** Cooks show the widest salary range, highlighting strong progression opportunities, while housekeepers maintain consistently competitive median pay.



Salary Equity, Transparency and Worker Sentiment

Gender pay gap

2%

Difference in advertised pay between men and women in hospitality

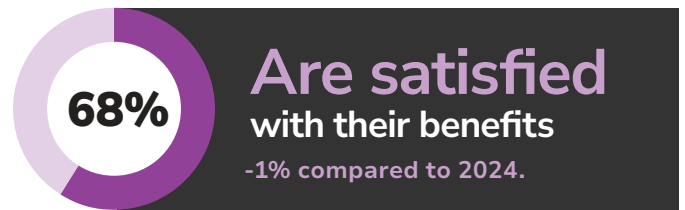
Alongside general salary increases, the hospitality sector has made real progress on pay equity, with the **gender pay gap narrowing to 2%, well below the 6.9% gap seen across the wider labour market** (for full-time employees). This positions hospitality as a sector moving faster than average towards fairer pay outcomes and should provide a strong competitive edge in attracting and retaining talent.

Worker Satisfaction with Salary & Benefits



More positive news is that **52% of hospitality employees received a pay rise in the past year**. As a result, salary satisfaction has jumped to 76%.

1 in 3 received a pay rise as part of the company's standard pay rise process, 22% got it to match inflation – showing the impact of the rising cost of living and employers taking action to keep talent.



But despite this positive picture, pay transparency remains low and impacts candidate engagement. **Only 61% of hospitality job advertisements in 2025 included salary details**. At the same time, 81% of candidates avoid applying for roles without salary information. More than half of employees in larger companies (**54%**) and (**37%**) in smaller companies say that a **lack of salary information damages their opinion of an employer**.

Pay Transparency



Hospitality employers acknowledge that transparency is not established in the sector. **Just 22% say they regularly publish salary ranges (vs 34% overall), and only 24% plan to expand transparency efforts**. Hospitality business adopt many of the measures that build trust (clear salary guidelines, pay equity reviews, transparent reward systems and structured career pathways) at significantly lower rates compared with the wider labour market.

The impact of this misalignment is clear in hiring outcomes. **According to one-third (32%) of recruiters, they often lose candidates when another employer offers a higher salary**. This highlights the importance of competitive pay and clear communication in a market where workers are increasingly mobile and financially pressured.



Salary Expectations and Financial Pressure

Desire for higher pay remains a powerful motivator, with financial pressure a major driver. 54% of hospitality workers reduced social or leisure spending, and 39% cut back on essentials in the past year. 33% also relied on savings, loans and credit cards for their daily spending. This situation is influencing jobseeker behaviour, with **16% actively looking for a new**

role and a further 31% planning to look in early 2026. A significant 51% of hospitality workers plan to look for a new job in 2026 specifically to gain a better salary. Financial pressures are impacting employer behaviour too, with 32% reducing planned salary increases due to economic conditions.

Salary, Age and Attitudes

Hospitality workforces are age diverse, and differing age groups can have contrasting needs and views.

When it comes to salary, **employees under 40 are almost twice as likely to say they are 'very satisfied' with their salary (22%) than those over 40 (12%).** Those under 40 are also more confident in knowing their market value (23% vs 16%) and believe their salary reflects that value (24% vs just 9%). Yet they remain under significant financial pressure. **Only 13% of younger workers say their salary covers essentials plus savings or leisure spending, compared with 24% of older workers.**

Employees under 40 are far more likely to rely on savings, loans or credit cards (42% vs 26%), to have changed their living situation (10% vs 5%), or to have delayed major life plans (25% vs 7%) because of the cost of living.

These pressures and perceptions feed directly into job seeker behaviour. **Younger workers are almost twice as likely to be planning a job search in the next year (42% vs 22% of those over 40),** reflecting both their financial challenges and their confidence in negotiating or securing better pay elsewhere.

Employer Size and Salaries

The size of an organisation also impacts employee sentiment. **Those in larger organisations feel more confident in their market value (23% vs 17%) and are much more likely to have received a pay rise in the past year (62% compared with 47% in smaller companies).** As a result, those in smaller organisations are potentially more likely to take on extra work or side jobs to make ends meet (22% vs 14%).

Overall, the data shows a hospitality workforce that is increasingly aware of its worth but unevenly supported, where age and employer size strongly influence financial security, pay progression and the likelihood of staying or leaving.



Employer Viewpoints



Insights from *Marriott International* and *The Ned*. Plus hospitality talent and recruitment partner *mum*.

When every hire counts and costs are closely managed, how are hospitality employers approaching salaries? And how are their actions impacting their recruitment success?

We talked to **Craig Prentice**, Founder & Director of *mum*, **Chris Gilchrist**, People Director at *The Ned* and **Yasmin Rose**, Assistant Director of HR for the Central London Cluster at *Marriott International*, to get their expert hiring insights.



Craig Prentice
Founder & Director
Hospitality talent and
recruitment partner mum

How have the legislative changes around salary impacted your clients' workforce structure?

I've definitely seen employers implementing compressed workforce structures, hiring fewer people but expecting broader skill sets. Employers are also being more strategic and selective with new hires, really focusing on the value and positive impact each role brings to the business.

How do you see salary transparency impacting the hiring process?

Transparency around salary bands is crucial. Not listing salaries upfront can really deter top talent from even applying. However, there's sometimes a disconnect between what candidates think they're worth and what employers are offering. This makes benchmarking roles challenging. Employers need to regularly review and adjust pay structures to remain competitive.

How important is salary now when it comes to attracting and retaining talent?

Salary is the key initial factor, more so than in the past. Candidates, especially earlier in their careers, are very focused on salary, benefits and progression. More senior candidates tend to prioritise things like autonomy in role and work-life balance. But overall, salary is the main door opener, and candidates now tend to be more direct and pragmatic about their expectations.

What are your top tips for employers when it comes to managing salaries?

The key things are **transparency, benchmarking and regular review**. Employers need to be really clear on salary bands and not be afraid to list them. And they have to constantly assess and adjust pay structures to stay competitive in this very heated market.





Chris Gilchrist
People Director
The Ned

How have legislative changes around salaries impacted The Ned's workforce approaches?

The compression of wages due to legislative wage increases has meant we have to be more strategic about our workforce structure and role design to maintain appropriate pay differentials. This is not a step change for us though, it's something we have always paid attention to.

How do you balance salary versus culture, employer brand, and employee benefits when attracting talent?

Salary is a baseline, but we emphasise The Ned's unique culture, clear progression paths and robust benefits package (e.g. recognition program, wellbeing initiatives) to differentiate ourselves. **Transparency around total rewards is really key. It's a non-negotiable for us.**





Yasmin Rose
Assistant Director of HR
The Central London Cluster
at Marriott International.

How have the changes in hospitality salaries caused by recent legislation impacted your workforce structure and hiring approaches?

Legislative changes have made hospitality far more intentional about job design, progression and pay structures. Rising statutory rates and greater transparency mean employers must protect role differentiation while remaining competitive. At the same time, changes to sponsorship requirements have reshaped how we think about long-term workforce planning at Marriott. While sponsorship was once more flexible in the UK, the current landscape requires closer tracking of regulatory changes and more thoughtful decisions, as external hiring can directly impact internal pay balance and progression frameworks.

What are your top tips for employers around managing salaries?

Be transparent about pay – hidden pay creates mistrust. Link pay to progression, not just length of service. Regularly test pay against the market to stay competitive.

How important is salary now to candidates and your existing workforce, compared to factors like company culture and benefits?

Salary matters more than ever, but it's rarely the only deciding factor. **While expectations vary by role and career stage, candidates increasingly expect openness early in the process.** At the same time, culture, wellbeing, development and flexibility strongly influence attraction and retention. Transparency from the outset builds trust and helps people commit with confidence.



Six Top Tips on Salary - from the Experts

01 Transparency

Be transparent on salary in job ads; hidden pay creates mistrust.

02 Progression

Link salary to progression and capability, not just length of service.

03 Benchmarking

Benchmark thoroughly to ensure fairness and competitiveness.

04 Review

Review salaries regularly to align with business needs and employee expectations.

05 Address

Address pay equity proactively to avoid systemic gaps.

06 Communicate

Communicate clearly about how salary decisions are made.



In the next two reports in this series, we'll look in detail at approaches to employee benefits and the value of skills-based hiring.

Caterer.com the Hospitality Industry's Hiring Partner

Caterer.com makes finding the right hospitality talent simple!

Create and post a job ad in just a few clicks – and achieve maximum reach for your jobs. Our intelligent technology helps you find the best candidates for all hospitality jobs – as quickly as possible.

At the same time, we use our extensive network of industry partners to spotlight your roles to relevant hospitality candidates. We bring the hospitality community together and host live sessions to learn from each other. We share these insights with you so you can enhance your hospitality hiring strategy. And best of all: We support you with outstanding service from day one – and accompany you at every step.



- **Innovative technology** to reach & engage the right candidates to your roles, reducing cost of hiring.
- **Aggregator partners** that drive greater reach for your roles.
- Build your talent pipeline by reaching a vast **hospitality-specific audience now**. We partner with key industry organisations such as The Institute of Hospitality, Springboard, HR in Hospitality, HIT Scotland, Hospitality Titans, Catering Scotland, Choose Hospitality and we deliver our jobs feed directly into some of their sites, ensuring your roles are seen amongst their extensive hospitality audiences.
- Dedicated **Account Management** and Customer Success support
- We actively partner with **industry bodies, charities and organisations** to promote the industry as a great place to work and champion the fantastic people within it.
- Gain access to additional relevant candidate audiences, at no extra cost. All jobs on Caterer.com also appear on our sister site Totaljobs, **expanding your reach into new talent pools across other sectors**.
- **Employer brand insights** & support to help you elevate your brand
- Regular sector insights & guidance through **the Caterer.com Leadership Collaborative**, an open community that pulls on joint forces to provide peer-to-peer support, insight and learning to help leaders navigate through challenge and drive team growth and development and business success.
- Access the largest **specialist hospitality talent pool**. With a database of over 5 million profiles, each quarter an average 180k active jobseekers make over 1.5 million applications on Caterer.com, with over 3 million site visits.

Hiring Solutions

Enhance your hiring campaigns with our portfolio of end-to-end recruitment solutions:

Equality Boost

A diverse and inclusive workforce is key to strong business performance. Engage the right people for your roles in a diverse talent pool, by widening your hiring reach and taking new approaches to candidate targeting. Equality Boost can help you:

- Extend your candidate reach into new and diverse talent pools
- Deliver a tangible impact on your DE&I strategy
- Broaden the range of skills you attract to your business

Visibility Solutions

It's crucial you reach the talent you need ahead of the competition. Reach the right candidates first and build your team by targeting and attracting relevant hires. Our innovative Visibility Solutions can help you:

- Broaden the reach of your message
- Enhance your potential to grow applications
- Increase the relevancy of applicants

Programmatic

Find who you want, faster with programmatic targeting for a more efficient use of your high-volume hiring budget. Our sophisticated technology uses rule-based algorithms to distribute jobs to the best places throughout the entire web so you can pin-point the best candidates, quickly.

- Track performance in real time and gain valuable insights to enable your campaign to be optimised quickly
- Only pay for the number of completed applications you receive
- Effortless integration with your ATS talent pools

CV Database

Take control of your hiring and find the ideal person quickly by using our CV Database to search over 5 million profiles. Using our intuitive search and filters, you can easily find and contact the most relevant people for your jobs.

- Get ahead of the competition and be the first to find candidates who may not have applied to your jobs. Receive relevant candidates directly to your inbox.
- Save your searches and receive an email as soon as matching candidates register or updates their profile.

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