SALARY GUIDE 2026

AI | Data | Executive Search | GTM | Product | Software Engineering

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"2025 marked a clear return to growth, with demand increasing quarter by quarter. Organisations invested in strengthening teams, building new functions, and disrupting existing models in order to stay competitive.

Much of this activity was driven by AI, with roles either focused on or adjacent to AI featuring heavily as companies moved from experimentation to execution.

This report does not reflect the general talent market. Instead, it is weighted towards senior and specialist roles: founders, C-level leaders, and experienced product, engineering, and data professionals, the individuals responsible for setting direction and delivering scale.

Despite increased hiring activity, the market remains saturated and weighted in favour of employers.

Hiring processes became more selective, with less appetite for risk and greater emphasis on proven experience and immediate impact. While salary bands stabilised across many roles, scarce skill sets, particularly in AI and senior technical leadership continued to attract premium compensation.

This guide is designed to help organisations and candidates understand current salary expectations and the market forces shaping them as we move into 2026."

Mark Long, Founder at numi

Our 2026 Salary Guide offers a focused view of the London and UK technology market, informed by real hiring activity and supported by both market benchmarks and our internal data.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

This report is based on real-world placement data, market benchmarks, and internal compensation insights, providing a grounded view of the UK technology market in 2025. Rather than a traditional survey, the data reflects actual hiring activity and compensation packages across senior roles.

Participants and roles represented include Founders, CTOs, CPOs, VP-level leaders, senior product, engineering, and data professionals, capturing the talent driving strategic growth and organisational transformation.

The data spans a range of company stages:

- Early stage: pre-Series B companies focused on product-market fit, team formation, and early scaling.
- Later stage: post-Series B organisations prioritising growth, optimisation, and organisational maturity.

Salary bands in this report represent the 25th to 75th percentile, giving a representative view of the core market while highlighting trends for scarce or highly sought-after talent. Unless otherwise specified, all figures are London and UK-focused.

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PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

TITLE	Low (£)	Median (£)	High (£)	Avg Day Rate
CPO	170k	190k	240k+	£1,250–£2000
VP Product	150k	185k	210k	£900-£1050
Director of Product	120k	140k	165k	£900–£1,100
Head of Product	95k	110k	140k	£850-£950
Staff PM	110k	130k	150k	£850-£1000
Lead / Principal PM	90k	95k	120k	£700–£850
Senior PM	70k	75k	95k	£600–£750
PM (Mid)	60k	80k	85k	£500–£650
PM (Junior)	50k	55k	60k	NO DATA

Note on Compensation: The figures in this table represent annual base salary only. These benchmarks do not include performance-based bonuses, stock options, equity grants, or other long-term incentives (LTIs), which can significantly increase total compensation packages, particularly for senior and specialist roles.

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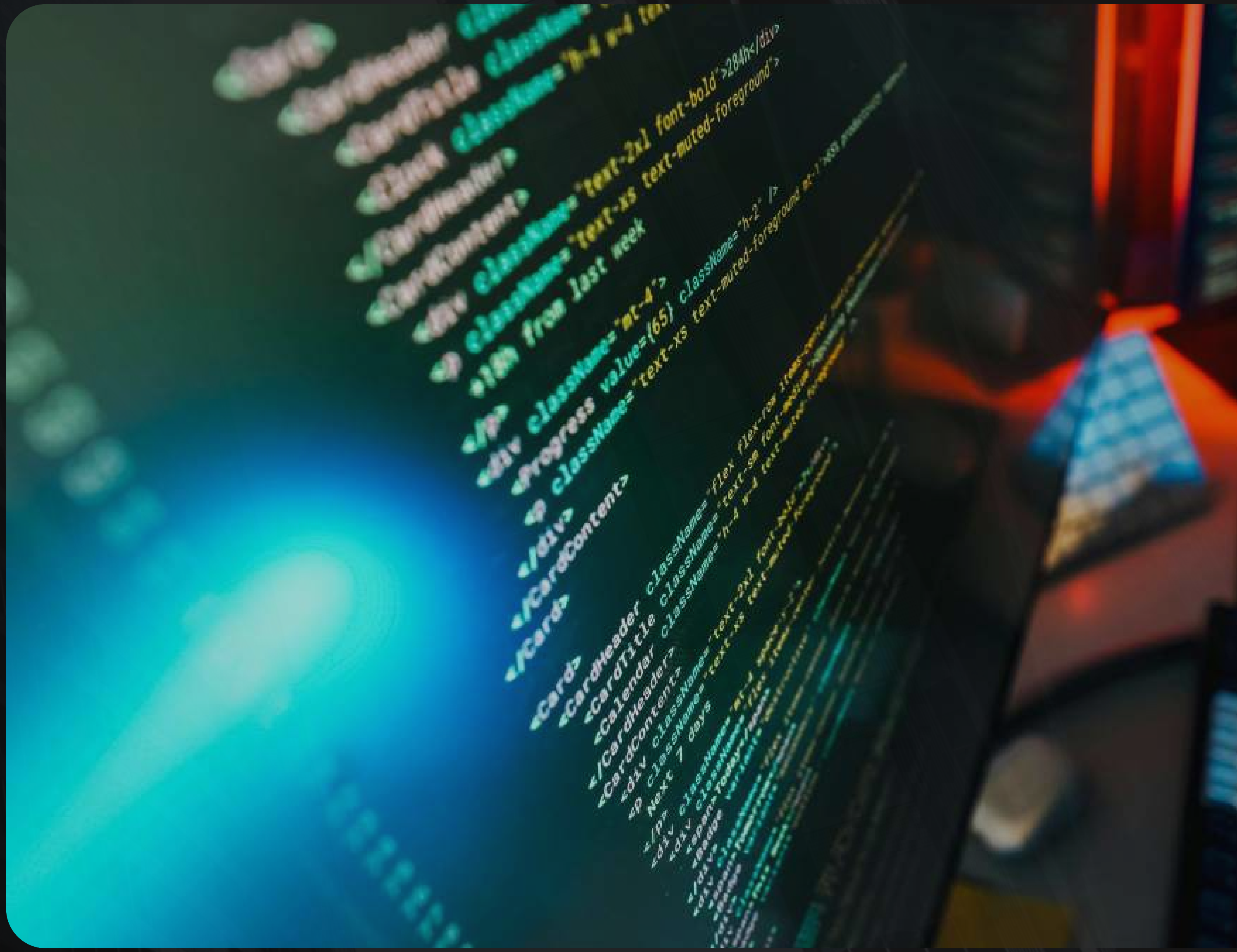
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING

TITLE	Low (£)	Median (£)	High (£)	Avg Day Rate
CTO	180k	205k	250k+	£1,300–£2,200
VP Engineering	160k	190k	250k+	£1,200–£1,800
Director of Engineering	150k	155k	170k	£850–£1,050
Head of Engineering	135k	150k	170k	£900–£1,100
Staff / Principal Engineer	140k	160k	185k+	£1,100–£1,300
Engineering Manager	105k	115k	120k	£800–£950
Senior Software Engineer	65k	120k	140k	£700–£850
Software Engineer (Mid)	60k	82.5k	95k	£550–£700
Software Engineer	38k	55k	65k	£300–£400



Market recalibration is driving a shift toward leaner operations, with a high premium for leaders who can drive product innovation without bloating headcounts

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DATA, AI & MACHINE LEARNING

TITLE	Low (£)	Median (£)	High (£)	Avg Day Rate
Director of Science / Data	135k	140k	160k+	£900–£1,100
Head of AI / VP AI	190k	235k	280k+	£1,200–£1,800
Staff AI / ML Engineer	160k	185k	210k+	£1,000–£1,300
Principal / Lead AI Eng	100k	120k	150k+	£850–£1,100
Senior AI / ML Engineer	120k	145k	170k	£700–£900
Data Engineer (Senior)	65k	80k	100k	£650–£850

The "AI Premium": While base salaries for AI roles are 20–30% higher, these roles also often command more aggressive equity stakes to attract top-tier talent in a competitive market.

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DESIGN & PRODUCT DESIGN

TITLE	Low (£)	Median (£)	High (£)	Avg Day Rate
VP Design	145k	160k	210k+	£900 - £1,100+
Director of Design	120k	145k	175k	£850 - £1,050
Head of Design	100k	125k	150k	£700 - £900
Staff/Principal Designer	90k	100k	150k	£700 - £850
Lead Product Designer	85k	95k	120k	£600 - £750
Senior Product Designer	75k	85k	100k	£550 - £700
Product Designer (Mid)	55k	65k	85k	£450 - £600
Product Designer (Junior)	40k	45k	55k	£300 - £400
UI/UX Designer	45k	55k	70k	£400 - £550

Note on Compensation: The figures in this table represent annual base salary only. These benchmarks do not include performance-based bonuses, stock options, equity grants, or other long-term incentives (LTIs), which can significantly increase total compensation packages, particularly for senior and specialist roles.

FINTECH & PAYMENTS

FinTech and payments remain one of the most mature and resilient areas of the UK tech market.

Hiring activity has rebounded steadily following earlier corrections, with demand strongest for leaders who can operate at scale in regulated environments.

Product, platform engineering, and risk-focused roles continue to dominate senior hiring.

While salary inflation has cooled compared to peak years, compensation remains competitive for individuals with direct experience in payments infrastructure, fraud prevention, and compliance-led product development.

London continues to act as the primary hub, supported by sustained investor confidence in the sector.

MARKET SIGNALS

- London accounts for ~70% of UK FinTech roles
- UK FinTech hiring expected to grow ~30–35% year-on-year through 2025 (Pitchbook)
- Compliance, risk, and financial crime roles among the fastest-growing functions
- FinTech consistently ranks among the top 3 VC-funded UK tech sectors (PitchBook)

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI has moved decisively from research and experimentation into commercial execution.

Hiring is now focused on practitioners who can deploy models into production, integrate AI into existing platforms, and deliver measurable business outcomes rather than purely academic innovation.

This shift has driven strong demand for AI engineers, machine learning engineers, and senior technical leaders with hands-on implementation experience.

Compensation remains elevated relative to broader tech roles, particularly where AI capability is core to product differentiation.

MARKET SIGNALS

- UK AI roles grew at more than double the rate of wider tech hiring in 2024–2025 (LinkedIn Economic Graph)
- AI companies accounted for ~30% of all UK VC investment in 2024 (PitchBook)
- London hosts ~80% of UK AI job postings, with emerging growth in regional hubs (Tech Nation)
- Generative AI skills ranked among the top 5 fastest-growing skills in the UK (LinkedIn)

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SAAS

SaaS continues to underpin much of the UK tech ecosystem, providing steady demand across product, engineering, and commercial leadership roles.

While hiring volumes are more measured than in previous expansion cycles, well-capitalised SaaS businesses continue to invest in senior talent to support sustainable growth.

Increasingly, SaaS hiring is shaped by efficiency and monetisation rather than pure expansion.

Leaders with experience scaling revenue, improving retention, and integrating AI capabilities into existing platforms are particularly sought after.

MARKET SIGNALS

- SaaS remains one of the largest contributors to UK tech employment (Tech Nation)
- UK SaaS companies feature heavily in high-growth and scale-up cohorts (Deloitte Fast 50)
- Product and engineering roles make up the majority of SaaS senior hires (LinkedIn Jobs data)
- SaaS consistently attracts repeat-stage VC investment, supporting leadership hiring (PitchBook)

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TECH (GENERAL)

The broader UK technology market has stabilised following a period of correction, with hiring becoming more selective and outcomes-driven.

Organisations are prioritising experienced professionals who can demonstrate immediate impact, particularly at senior and leadership levels.

While overall vacancy volumes are lower than peak levels, demand remains robust for specialist skills and experienced operators.

This has resulted in a more employer-led market, with longer hiring cycles and increased scrutiny on role scope and ROI.

MARKET SIGNALS

- UK tech workforce exceeds 2.1 million professionals (CompTIA UK Tech Workforce Report)
- Tech employment continues to grow faster than the wider UK economy (CompTIA)
- Senior and specialist roles represent a disproportionate share of open vacancies (LinkedIn)
- London remains the largest hub, but regional hiring continues to increase (Tech Nation)

MEDIA & PUBLISHING

Media and publishing organisations are undergoing continued digital transformation, with hiring focused on technology, data, and platform leadership rather than traditional editorial roles.

Investment is increasingly directed toward digital distribution, audience analytics, and monetisation technology.

Compensation tends to sit below deep-tech sectors, but senior technology and product leaders with experience modernising legacy systems can still command competitive packages, particularly in digitally native media businesses.

MARKET SIGNALS

- Digital revenue now represents the majority of income for many UK publishers (Ofcom)
- Technology and data roles are among the fastest-growing functions in media firms (LinkedIn)
- MediaTech investment remains selective but stable (PitchBook)
- Demand strongest for leaders with platform and data transformation experience (industry reports)

HEALTH TECH

HealthTech continues to attract long-term investment driven by ageing populations, data-driven care, and system efficiency pressures.

Hiring is concentrated around product, engineering, and data leadership roles that can operate within complex regulatory environments.

While hiring volumes are measured, compensation remains strong for individuals with experience navigating healthcare regulation, interoperability, and clinical-grade platforms.

MARKET SIGNALS

- UK HealthTech investment has remained resilient year-on-year (PitchBook)
- HealthTech is one of the top-funded UK verticals outside FinTech (Dealroom)
- Demand strongest for roles combining technical depth and regulatory understanding (LinkedIn)
- London and the South East dominate HealthTech hiring (Tech Nation)

CLIMATE TECH

Climate Tech has emerged as one of the most strategically important sectors in the UK tech ecosystem.

Hiring is driven by energy transition, carbon reduction, and infrastructure modernisation initiatives, often supported by public and private funding.

Leadership compensation reflects the technical and regulatory complexity of the sector, with premium pay for those able to bridge engineering, policy, and commercial execution.

MARKET SIGNALS

- UK Climate Tech investment reached record levels in recent years (Dealroom)
- Climate Tech accounts for a growing share of European VC funding (Dealroom)
- Demand strongest for engineering, data, and platform leadership roles (LinkedIn)
- Public sector policy continues to support long-term hiring outlook

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability-focused roles are increasingly embedded across organisations rather than isolated functions.

Hiring now centres on leaders who can operationalise sustainability goals through technology, data, and measurable impact.

While not always the highest-paying sector, sustainability roles are seeing increased seniority and influence, particularly where ESG reporting and compliance intersect with technology platforms.

MARKET SIGNALS

- ESG and sustainability roles have grown consistently year-on-year in the UK (LinkedIn)
- Sustainability is increasingly tied to board-level accountability (PwC)
- Demand rising for leaders with data, reporting, and regulatory expertise (PwC, LinkedIn)
- Sustainability hiring spans multiple sectors rather than a single vertical

You're navigating a leadership market that expects scale, financial, strategic, and team-building. Compensation across FinTech, AI, and HealthTech reflects that requirement.

Use this report as your benchmark toolkit:

- If you're scaling a startup, align compensation with role complexity and equity ambition.
- If you're evaluating career movement, these are your profiles and the bands they command.
- If you're an investor or board member, this underscores the need to link leadership pay with outcomes, not just tenure.

If you're considering a move or planning key hires in 2026, we're happy to share market insights specific to your situation.

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