

An aerial photograph of a city square in Leeds, featuring a large, ornate, light-colored stone building with a clock tower on the left. A modern, curved glass and concrete building stands in the center. To the right is another large, multi-story building with a green dome. The square is paved with cobblestones and has several statues. A green and blue double-decker bus is visible on the street. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Thornton Legal Salary Guide 2025 Leeds



Thornton Legal is pleased to share our latest salary guide for the Leeds legal market.

This guide covers commercial private practice across Corporate, Banking, Real Estate, Litigation, Employment, Insolvency & Restructuring, and Commercial Contracts, broken down by:

- Large Corporate (international/national firms)
- Regional Commercial (UK regionals with Leeds presence)
- Leeds-Only Independents

Salary data is drawn from live mandates, candidate offers and firm announcements during 2025. Figures represent base salary only (excluding bonuses and benefits).

This report reflects what we see in the Leeds market today.

Firm Examples (Tier Definitions)

Large Corporate (International / National)

Top of the Leeds market; global or national leaders with the highest salary scales.
Examples: DLA Piper, Addleshaw Goddard, Pinsent Masons, Eversheds Sutherland, Squire Patton Boggs, CMS

Regional Commercial (UK Regionals with Leeds Presence)

Strong national/regional players with core Leeds offices. Salaries £8-15k below Large Corporate at NQ-SA.
Examples: Mills & Reeve, Gateley, TLT, Shoosmiths, Irwin Mitchell, Walker Morris

Leeds-Only Independents

Independent firms with a purely Leeds/Yorkshire focus. Salaries typically £10k below regionals, but strong on culture, progression and client exposure.
Examples: Clarion, Schofield Sweeney, Blacks, LCF Law, Chadwick Lawrence, Ison Harrison

Large Corporate

PQE	Corporate / M&A	Banking & Finance	Litigation	Real Estate	Employment	Insolvency	Commercial Contracts
NQ	£65–82k	£65–82k	£65–82k	£65–82k	£65–82k	£65–82k	£65–82k
1 PQE	£68–85k	£70–88k	£68–85k	£68–80k	£68–80k	£68–85k	£68–85k
2 PQE	£72–88k	£75–92k	£72–88k	£70–82k	£70–82k	£72–88k	£72–88k
3–4	£78–95k	£80–100k	£76–92k	£75–90k	£74–88k	£76–95k	£76–92k
5–6	£85–110k	£88–115k	£82–105k	£82–100k	£80–100k	£82–105k	£82–105k
SA 7+	£95–125k	£100–130k	£92–120k	£90–115k	£88–110k	£92–120k	£90–115k

Regional Commercial

PQE	Corporate / M&A	Banking & Finance	Litigation	Real Estate	Employment	Insolvency	Commercial Contracts
NQ	£55-67k	£58-67k	£52-62k	£50-60k	£48-58k	£50-60k	£52-62k
1 PQE	£57-70k	£60-70k	£54-65k	£52-63k	£50-60k	£52-65k	£54-65k
2 PQE	£60-74k	£62-75k	£56-70k	£55-68k	£52-65k	£55-68k	£56-70k
3-4	£65-78k	£65-82k	£60-75k	£58-72k	£56-70k	£58-72k	£60-75k
5-6	£70-88k	£72-90k	£68-85k	£65-80k	£64-82k	£65-80k	£68-85k
SA 7+	£78-100k	£80-100k	£75-95k	£72-92k	£70-90k	£72-92k	£75-95k

Leeds-Only Independents

PQE	Corporate / M&A	Banking & Finance	Litigation	Real Estate	Employment	Insolvency	Commercial Contracts
NQ	£45-55k	£45-55k	£43-52k	£42-50k	£42-50k	£42-50k	£43-52k
1 PQE	£47-57k	£47-57k	£45-53k	£44-52k	£44-52k	£44-52k	£45-53k
2 PQE	£50-60k	£50-60k	£48-57k	£46-55k	£46-55k	£46-55k	£48-57k
3-4	£52-65k	£52-65k	£50-62k	£50-60k	£50-62k	£50-60k	£50-62k
5-6	£60-75k	£60-75k	£58-72k	£58-70k	£58-70k	£58-70k	£58-70k
SA 7+	£70-85k	£70-85k	£65-85k	£65-80k	£65-80k	£65-80k	£65-85k



Market Insights

- Top NQ pay in Leeds now £82k (DLA Piper).
- Banking and Corporate remain the highest-paying practices.
- Regional independents typically £10–15k behind nationals, but compete on culture, flexibility and progression.
- Hybrid working: 2–3 days in office is the Leeds norm; some push 3–4 for training.
- Counter-offers common, usually 5–12% uplift.



Bonuses & Extras

- Regional bonuses: 5–15%.
- Large corporates: 10–25%.
- Sign-on/retention occasionally £2–5k
- Niche expertise (banking, projects, tech) can exceed bands.



About Thornton Legal

Thornton Legal is a specialist legal recruitment consultancy with deep roots in the North of England. We partner with law firms across Leeds, Yorkshire, the North West and beyond, placing lawyers from NQ through to Partner level.

- **Trusted by leading firms:** We work with international, national, regional and independent Leeds firms, giving us unrivalled market visibility.
- **Proven track record:** Our salary data is drawn from real offers and mandates, not competitor guides.
- **Personal approach:** Candidates and clients value our straightforward, confidential advice
- **Specialist knowledge:** Whether you're a lawyer benchmarking your worth or a firm designing competitive packages, we provide clarity and insight.

 **For tailored benchmarking or confidential career advice, get in touch with Thornton Legal today.**

 **joe@thorntonlegal.co.uk**

 **07903 222 898**

 **www.thorntonlegal.co.uk**