



Salary Guide

2026 Northern Ireland

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Our Role Is To Help You Excel By Building Careers & Shaping Futures Together. In this guide, you will find:



Expert insights on Northern Ireland's employment trends and strategies for success in 2026.



Current salary benchmarks across specialisations to ensure competitive compensation.



Key data from our latest research to inform and strengthen your talent strategy.

Foreword

As we close the first quarter of 2026, Northern Ireland's job market continues to demonstrate resilience, with signs of stabilisation following a period of strong recovery. Employers and job seekers have navigated ongoing cost pressures and economic uncertainty with adaptability, and the labour market remains robust by historical standards. Recent data indicates that unemployment stands at approximately 2.2%, reflecting a slight increase over the past year but remaining low overall. While employment levels are stable, there are signs of slowing momentum, with modest job growth and a rise in redundancies. Despite wage increases, Northern Ireland remains among the lowest-earning regions in the UK, highlighting the need for competitive and strategic salary benchmarking.

Looking ahead, 2026 presents both challenges and opportunities. The impact of legislative and cost changes introduced over the past year is now fully embedded in employer decision-making. From April 2025, employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) increased to 15%, raising the overall cost of employment. From April 1st 2026, the National Living Wage increased to £12.71 per hour for those aged 21 and over, adding further pressure to salary structures, particularly at entry and mid-level roles.

Combined with rising employment costs, these changes are now long-term factors shaping workforce planning and hiring strategies. As a result, organisations are placing greater emphasis on efficiency, productivity, and employee retention, while ensuring salary structures remain competitive and aligned. There is also an increasing focus on total reward, with employers enhancing benefits such as flexible working, career development, and wellbeing initiatives to attract and retain talent. In this environment, a clear and data-driven salary strategy is essential. Businesses that balance cost management with competitive compensation and strong employee value propositions will be best positioned to succeed in 2026.

Damien Davis

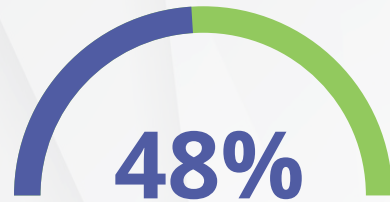
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Key Takeaways



of employers see **'Lack of skilled candidates available'** as the main hiring challenge.



of employers have **lost talent** in the last 6 months.



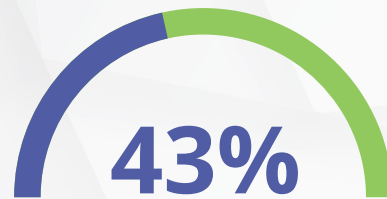
of businesses we spoke to are using **Temporary Staffing Solutions**.



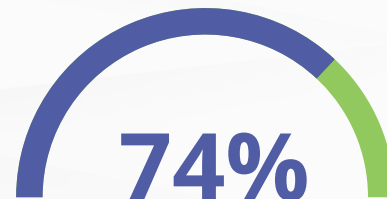
of businesses we spoke to **found sourcing top talent difficult** in 2026.



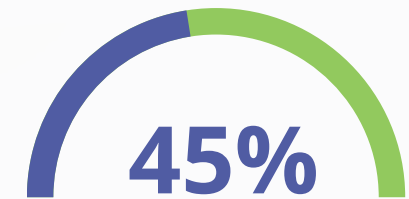
of businesses we spoke to **are optimistic about the economy** in 2026.



of professionals plan on **actively looking for a new job** in the next few months.



of candidates we spoke to **prefer a mix of in office and remote work** options.



of candidates we surveyed said that the **lack of housing** options will directly impact their employment plans.



Hotel & Catering

2026 Salary Guide, Northern Ireland

Hotel & Catering Market Overview

Businesses are facing sustained increases in core operating costs, particularly energy, insurance, and supplier pricing. Ongoing global conflicts continue to impact gas and electricity markets, while inflation remains a key concern for both businesses and consumers. The planned implementation of Revaluation (Reval) rates has been paused temporarily, offering short-term relief. However, uncertainty remains, as future implementation could introduce significant additional cost burdens for operators.

Labour Shortages & Wage Pressures

Recruitment challenges persist across all levels of hospitality, with particular shortages in chefs, kitchen staff, and experienced front-of-house professionals. Post-Brexit labour constraints, combined with historically low unemployment (circa 2–2.5% entering 2026), continue to limit talent availability. The increase in the National Minimum Wage - while essential for supporting workers through the cost-of-living crisis - adds further pressure to already tight margins. Wage growth combined with rising costs risks creating a cycle where increased expenses are passed onto consumers.

Changing Employment Models

To manage uncertainty, many businesses are adapting their staffing strategies by:

- Increasing reliance on part-time and agency staff
- Reducing full-time permanent hires
- Cutting operating hours during quieter periods
- Streamlining team structures

While these measures provide short-term flexibility, they are not sustainable long-term solutions for growth or service quality.

Technology & Operational Efficiency

Technology adoption continues to accelerate, with AI-driven systems, automated check-ins, and digital ordering helping to offset staffing shortages. However, there remains a delicate balance between efficiency and maintaining the personal service that defines Northern Ireland's hospitality offering.

Compliance & Recruitment Risks

Labour shortages have also created increased exposure to non-compliant recruitment practices. The rise of unregulated or "black market" staffing presents serious risks, including:

- Non-payment of taxes and pensions
- Potential HMRC liability for employers
- Reputational damage

Ensuring compliant, transparent recruitment processes is becoming increasingly critical in 2026.

Investment & Growth Opportunities

Despite ongoing challenges, confidence in the Northern Ireland hospitality market remains strong. Significant investment continues across the sector, with new hotel developments opening and further projects planned throughout 2026 and beyond. This reflects long-term belief in the region's tourism potential and the continued demand for high-quality accommodation and dining experiences. However, growth must be carefully managed alongside operational realities particularly staffing availability and cost control to ensure long-term sustainability.

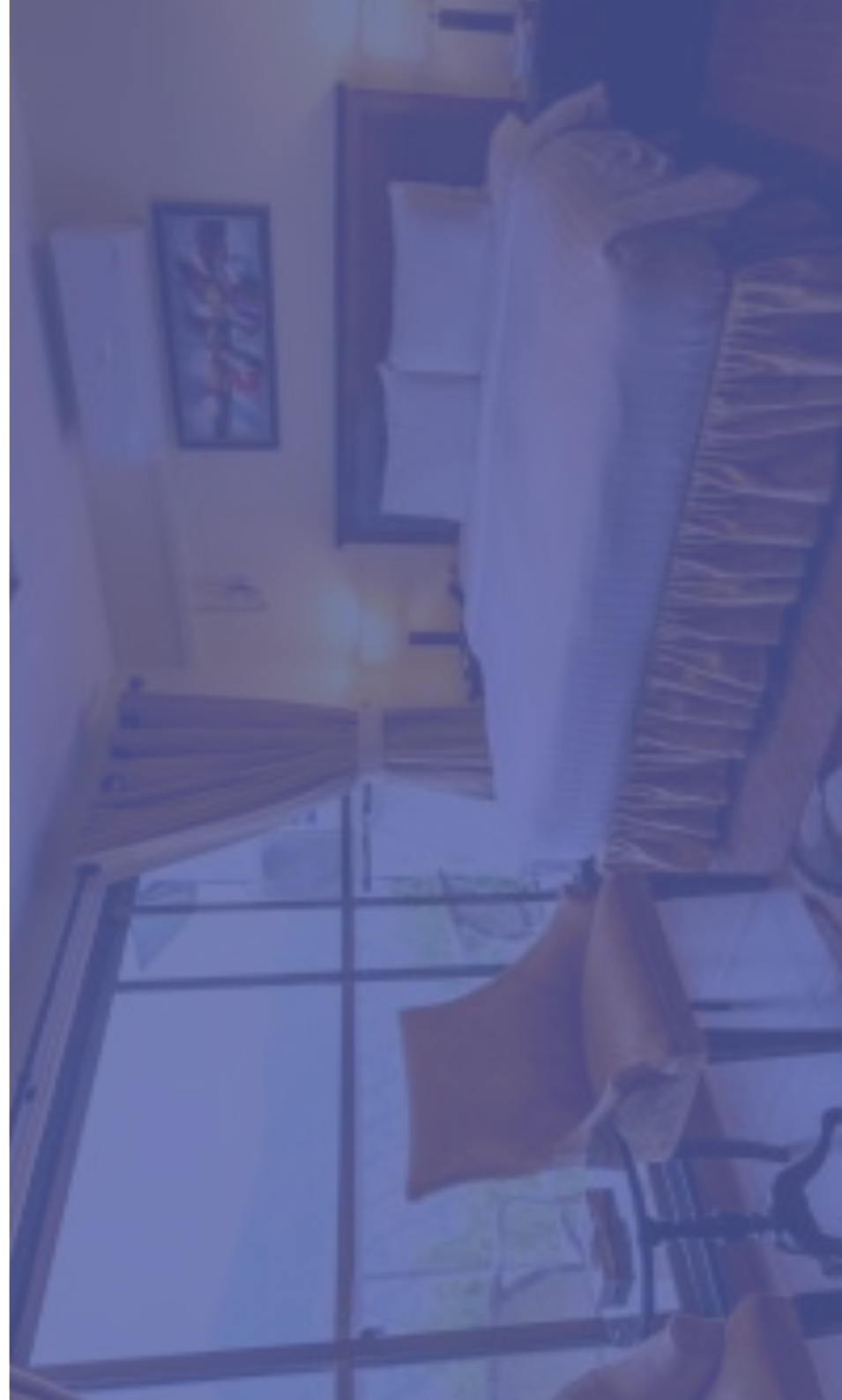
2026 Outlook

The outlook for Northern Ireland's hospitality sector in 2026 is one of resilience, adaptation, and cautious optimism. Demand is expected to remain high, supported by strong tourism and domestic activity. However, businesses must continue to navigate:

- Ongoing cost inflation
- Labour and skills shortages
- Regulatory and compliance pressures
- Economic uncertainty

Success in 2026 will depend on striking a careful balance between cost control and investment, while maintaining service standards and operational viability.

The importance of staff retention, training, and flexible workforce solutions has never been greater. The role of staffing partners and agencies will continue to grow, enabling businesses to adapt to fluctuating demand while remaining compliant and efficient. Ultimately, the sector's ability to innovate, remain agile, and protect margins will define performance in the year ahead.



Hotel & Catering Salary Guide	Low	Average	Good
Chef Salaries			
Executive Chef	£49,500	£70,200	£90,500
Head Chef	£40,000	£55,000	£65,720
Sous Chef	£35,500	£36,000	£45,500
Jnr Sous Chef	£29,000	£31,500	£32,500
Breakfast Chef	£27,000	£29,000	£31,000
Chef De Partie	£27,750	£29,500	£32,000
Pastry Chef	£28,000	£32,150	£38,125
Head Pastry Chef	£30,000	£35,720	£41,050
Commis 1st Year	£24,785	£25,000	£25,500
Commis 2nd Year	£25,000	£25,500	£26,000
Commis 3rd Year	£25,500	£25,800	£26,000
Commis 4th Year	£25,000	£25,500	£26,000
Industrial, Corporate and Retail Catering Salaries			
Regional Manager	£35,025	£42,675	£58,260
Area Manager Industrial Catering	£37,000	£42,000	£46,050
Unit Manager	£34,120	£38,175	£42,000
Unit Supervisor	£27,200	£30,150	£32,820
Executive Chef / Culinary Director	£32,900	£37,905	£44,800
Chef Manager	£31,850	£35,750	£41,250
Head Chef Industrial Catering	£30,000	£32,500	£35,000
Sous Chef Industrial Catering	£28,250	£29,750	£32,025
Chef De Partie Industrial Catering	£26,000	£27,250	£28,500
Kitchen Porter	£24,785	£24,785	£25,000
Catering Assistant	£24,785	£25,350	£25,350
Waiting Staff or Baristas	£24,785	£25,350	£25,350

Hotel & Catering Salary Guide	Low	Average	Good
Hotel Salaries			
General Manager	£50,000+ Bonus	£65,200+ Bonus	£95,000+ Bonus
Deputy general Manager	£32,000+ Bonus	£40,400+ Bonus	£55,750+ Bonus
Operations Manager	£30,000	£35,255	£39,300
Food & Beverage Manager	£28,050	£32,500	£34,520
Accommodation Manager	£27,000	£32,050	£35,100
Accommodation Staff	£24,785	£25,350	£25,250
Restaurant Manager	£28,500	£31,000	£36,250
Restaurant Supervisor	£26,000	£28,500	£32,000
Director of Sales	£41,250	£51,025	£72,800
Sales & Marketing Manager	£37,125	£43,140	£48,115
Wedding Coordinator	£26,850	£28,050	£32,500
Sales Executive	£27,240	£32,050	£39,875
Conference & Banqueting Manager	£26,850	£28,950	£33,855
Meeting & Events Coordinator	£26,850	£27,020	£31,500
Revenue Manager	£29,750	£33,250	£38,080
HR Manager	£29,500	£35,000	£40,500
HR Assistant Manager	£26,500	£28,500	£32,500
Front Office / Res Manager	£28,000	£31,200	£34,850
Reception Supervisor	£25,750	£27,250	£29,200
Receptionist	£24,785	£25,000	£25,250
Night Manager	£27,500	£29,100	£33,250
Duty Manager	£26,250	£27,250	£35,200
Spa & Leisure Manager	£28,000	£32,050	£36,125
Spa Therapist	£25,200	£27,500	£29,140
Bar Manager	£27,250	£32,500	£36,250
Bar Staff	£24,785	£25,350	£25,750
Waiting Staff	£24,785	£25,350	£25,250



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Healthcare

2026 Salary Guide, Northern Ireland

Healthcare Market Overview

Northern Ireland's healthcare sector enters 2026 under continued and well-documented strain, driven by sustained workforce shortages, rising patient demand, and ongoing system pressures across both public and private care settings. Demand for healthcare professionals remains exceptionally high across all levels, including nursing, social care, allied health, and support roles. This is being driven not only by current service pressures, but also by long-term demographic trends, with an ageing population continuing to increase demand for care services. One in six people in Northern Ireland are aged over 65, with this projected to rise further by 2030. At the same time, system-wide challenges including waiting lists, delayed discharges, and pressure on emergency departments continue to place additional strain on already stretched staffing resources.

Workforce Shortages & Vacancy Levels

Workforce shortages remain the most significant challenge facing the healthcare sector in Northern Ireland in 2026. Recruitment difficulties persist across key areas including nursing and midwifery, social care and support workers, as well as GP and community services. There are thousands of vacancies across Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts, alongside additional shortages within private care homes and domiciliary care services, highlighting the ongoing pressure on workforce capacity.

This is not a short-term recruitment issue, but a structural workforce challenge driven by an ageing population, workforce attrition, and increasing demand for services continuing to impact service delivery across Northern Ireland.

Retention, Pay & Workforce Pressures

Retention remains a critical concern, with many healthcare workers leaving the sector due to:

- High levels of stress and burnout
- Workload pressures
- Pay disparities compared to other UK regions

Northern Ireland healthcare workers continue to be among the lowest paid in the UK under Agenda for Change structures, contributing to ongoing dissatisfaction and previous industrial action. At the same time, increases in minimum wage and wider cost-of-living pressures while positive for employees are adding financial strain to care providers, particularly within the private sector.

Social Care & Support Worker Challenges

Shortages in social care and support worker roles remain particularly acute. Key contributing factors include:

- Relatively low pay compared to job demands
- High emotional and physical workload
- Accessibility challenges in rural areas
- Limited progression pathways

These shortages are contributing directly to wider system pressures, including delayed hospital discharges and increased demand on acute services.

International Recruitment & Regulation

International recruitment continues to play a vital role in sustaining workforce levels, with ongoing efforts to attract healthcare workers from overseas. However, recruitment pipelines can be impacted by:

- Visa processing timelines
- Regulatory requirements
- Policy changes affecting sponsorship and migration

These factors create uncertainty for employers attempting to plan long-term workforce strategies.

Technology, AI & Digital Transformation

Digital transformation remains a key focus within the sector. The rollout of the Encompass electronic patient record system across HSC Trusts represents a major step toward a fully integrated digital care system. In addition, continued investment in digital health, AI-assisted diagnostics, and virtual GP services aims to improve efficiency and reduce pressure on frontline services. While these innovations offer significant potential, their long-term impact on workforce demand and service delivery is still developing.

Workforce Solutions & Future Approach

Addressing workforce challenges in healthcare will require long-term, sustainable solutions rather than short-term fixes. Key priorities for 2026 include:

- Staff retention, ensuring experienced employees are supported and developed
- Expanding recruitment pipelines through education, return-to-work programmes, and international hiring
- Streamlining onboarding processes while maintaining compliance standards
- Investment in training and qualifications, improving access to careers within the sector. A balanced approach across these areas will be essential to stabilising the workforce and supporting future growth.

2026 Outlook

The outlook for Northern Ireland's healthcare sector in 2026 remains challenging but critical.

Demand for services will continue to grow, driven by demographic changes and ongoing system pressures. At the same time, workforce shortages, retention issues, and financial constraints will remain key barriers to stability.

However, there are clear opportunities for progress through:

- Continued investment in digital transformation
- Development of workforce pipelines
- Greater focus on retention and staff wellbeing
- Strategic use of both local and international talent


Healthcare remains an essential service that underpins society as a whole. Ensuring its sustainability will require ongoing collaboration between government, providers, and workforce partners to support both immediate needs and long-term growth.

Healthcare Salary Guide	Low	Average	Good
Residential Care			
Director of Nursing	£79,000	£92,000	£120,000
Assistant Director of Nursing	£76,000	£78,000	£81,000
Clinical Nurse Manager	£46,500	£49,000	£53,400
Senior Staff Nurse	£42,500	£44,500	£48,000
Staff Nurse Day	£35,500	£38,250	£41,000
Staff Nurse Night	£37,800	£41,250	£43,500
Healthcare Assistant Day			
1 - 2 years	£24,785	£25,500	£27,250
3+ years	£25,500	£26,750	£28,825
Healthcare Assistant Night			
1 - 2 years	£24,785	£26,825	£28,750
3+ years	£27,000	£28,500	£31,250
Senior Healthcare Assistant			
Activities Coordinator	£25,250	£28,250	£29,925
1 - 2 years	£25,250	£28,250	£29,925
3+ years	£26,250	£29,255	£31,200
Human Resource Manager	£50,000	£55,000	£57,100
Human Resource Administrator	£25,500	£27,500	£31,250
Reception/ Administrator	£29,500	£32,200	£34,000
Catering and Household			
Head/ Senior Chef	£40,000	£45,000	£47,000
Chef	£32,000	£38,000	£39,500
Kitchen Porter	£24,785	£25,350	£25,350
Catering Assistant	£24,785	£25,500	£25,800
Housekeeper/ Cleaner	£24,785	£25,500	£25,800




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Industrial & Warehousing

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Industrial & Warehousing Market Overview

Northern Ireland's industrial and warehousing sector enters 2026 in a stable position, with continued demand across manufacturing, logistics, and construction. While not experiencing rapid growth, the sector remains resilient, supported by ongoing investment and strong underlying demand for goods movement and production. However, businesses continue to face a range of challenges, particularly around workforce availability, rising operational costs, and evolving industry requirements. As highlighted in the 2025 outlook, skills shortages across key areas such as engineering, manufacturing, and machine operation remain a persistent issue.

Skills Shortages & Workforce Gaps

Recruitment remains a significant challenge across the industrial sector, particularly in:

- Skilled trades and engineering roles
- Machine operators and production staff
- Warehouse operatives and logistics personnel

An aging workforce, combined with fewer young people entering the industry, continues to widen the skills gap. While apprenticeship schemes and training initiatives are expanding, these are longer-term solutions and are yet to fully address immediate shortages.

Automation & Changing Workforce Needs

Automation and AI are becoming increasingly embedded across manufacturing and warehousing environments. Larger organisations are leading the way with significant investment, while smaller businesses are adopting more targeted automation solutions to improve efficiency. This shift is gradually changing the nature of roles within the sector, with increased demand for workers who can operate, manage, and maintain automated systems. This transition is driving the need for ongoing upskilling and workforce adaptation.

Logistics & Driver Shortages

Driver shortages continue to present challenges across logistics and distribution networks. While availability has improved compared to previous years, employers still face difficulties attracting and retaining drivers due to:

- Unsociable working hours
- Competitive market conditions
- Pay expectations relative to job demands

To remain competitive, businesses are increasingly reviewing salary structures and benefits packages to attract experienced drivers.

Cost Pressures & Pay Expectations

Rising costs remain a key concern for industrial businesses, including:

- Energy and operational costs
- Supply chain pressures
- Wage inflation driven by National Minimum Wage increases

While increases in baseline pay support entry-level workers, they also create upward pressure on salaries across supervisory and skilled roles. This requires businesses to carefully manage internal pay structures to maintain fairness and retention.

Investment & Industry Development

Despite these challenges, the sector continues to benefit from significant investment in innovation and infrastructure. Northern Ireland is seeing growth in sustainable manufacturing and advanced technologies, with major projects supporting job creation and long-term economic development.

Developments such as advanced manufacturing facilities, innovation centres, and increased activity within Belfast Harbour are helping to strengthen the region's industrial base and create new employment opportunities.

2026 Outlook

The outlook for Northern Ireland's industrial sector in 2026 is stable and evolving. While workforce shortages, cost pressures, and regulatory complexities continue to present challenges, investment in automation, sustainable manufacturing, and infrastructure offers clear opportunities for growth.

Businesses that focus on workforce retention, skills development, and competitive pay structures will be best positioned to navigate ongoing challenges and build long-term stability.

As competition for talent remains high, employers must continue to adapt their offering - balancing operational efficiency with employee expectations to attract and retain the workforce needed to support future growth.



Industrial & Warehousing Salary Guide	Low	Average	Good
Warehouse Manager	£40,000	£45,000	£50,000
Administrative Assistant	£24,785	£25,350	£28,000
Assistant Warehouse Manager	£28,000	£32,000	£34,000
Reach Counterbalance Operative	£24,785	£25,985	£28,750
PPT Operative	£24,785	£27,115	£29,235
Handballer	£24,785	£26,125	£28,765
Rigid Truck Driver	£29,000	£31,175	£34,025
Artic Truck Driver	£34,025	£43,500	£59,800
Shipping Specialist	£26,200	£30,225	£33,450
Customs Clearing Specialist	£28,790	£33,200	£35,150
Gen-Operative	£24,785	£26,575	£29,800



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