

Hiring a locum?

What you need to consider

Hiring a locum solicitor or lawyer requires careful planning to get the right outcome. From defining the role to setting expectations and arranging budgets, this guide outlines the key considerations to help you secure the support your organisation needs quickly and effectively.

1. Clarify the need

Before you look for a locum, be clear on why you need them and what success looks like.

Reason for hiring

- Planned cover – maternity, long-term sick leave, secondments.
- Short-term peaks – seasonal workload spikes, tribunal preparation, case backlogs.
- Specialist expertise – niche projects like regeneration schemes, procurement, or complex litigation.

Urgency and flexibility

- Do you need someone next week, or can you plan a start date a month away?

Budget availability

- Clarify which cost centre will fund the role and whether spend approval is already in place.

Impact on stakeholders

- Consider who will be affected if the role is not filled quickly, for example service users, internal departments or external partners. This can help you prioritise the hire.

Internal sign-off process

- Make sure all decision-makers (HR, budget holders, service heads) are on board. Delays at this stage can mean missing the best candidates.

2. Define the role

A locum brief doesn't have to be long, but it does need to be clear and targeted.

Define legal specialisms required

- Contracts, employment law, research matters, Intellectual property etc.

Experience and qualifications required

- Are you looking for someone to lead a team, manage complex caseloads, or simply provide competent day-to-day cover?
- Would you consider an experienced contracts manager, Legal Executive or Barrister as well as a Solicitor?

Responsibilities

- Prioritise the top 4–5 duties they must be able to handle immediately.
- If the role includes several legal areas, try and break that down to a percentage e.g. 70% contracts, 20% IP and 10% employment.

Essential vs. desirable

- Mark “must-haves” (e.g. previous university experience) separately from “nice-to-haves” (e.g. experience with a specific case management system).

Team context

- Will the locum be working independently, as part of a team, or managing junior staff?
- Who will be their main contact or line manager?

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Looking to bring in a locum? Our legal recruitment specialists provide tailored advice, market insight and access to trusted professionals, ensuring you find the right support quickly, compliantly and with complete confidence.

3. Consider working arrangements

Being flexible with hours, location and contract length can help attract the most experienced and high-calibre locums.

Location and attendance

- Decide whether the role must be on-site, can be hybrid, or could be fully remote.

Hours and patterns

- Full-time is most common, but part-time, compressed hours, or flexible start/finish times can help secure candidates with other commitments.

Length of assignment

- Shorter assignments (1–3 months) can fill urgent gaps, but longer terms (6–12 months) attract candidates seeking stability.

Equipment and access

- Ensure IT equipment, remote log-ins, and case management system access can be set up quickly.

Reporting and supervision

- Identify who will sign off work, conduct check-ins, and provide any necessary support.

Handover and induction

- Even the most experienced locums need a short introduction to your systems, processes, and key contacts. Planning a clear handover helps them become effective from day one.

4. A specialist recruitment partner

Using an established legal recruitment specialist like Sellick Partnership saves time, reduces risk, and improves the quality of hire.

Established candidate network

- Decades of building relationships with experienced locum solicitors, legal executives, and barristers in every public sector specialism.

Market insight

- Up-to-date knowledge of availability, realistic pay rates, and candidate expectations.

Candidate quality and fit

- Specialist agencies know how to match not only technical expertise but also organisational culture and working style.

Speed

- Often able to present suitable, vetted candidates within 24–48 hours.

Compliance handled

- From right-to-work and DBS checks to IR35 and contractual documentation.

Reduced admin

- Recruitment partners oversee payroll, contracts, and onboarding, freeing your team to focus on service delivery.

Reduced risk

- Using an established agency provides reassurance that locums are fully vetted and referenced before starting.