

# Employment Law Services Retainer 2026

As part of our range of flexible fee arrangements, we offer employers a retainer scheme. This allows employers to spread the cost of receiving employment law advice and to receive up to 20% of that advice free of charge. Our retainer service also supports employers with recent changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025 and upcoming reforms in 2026. Our advice is practical, commercially focused and tailored to your organisation.

## Why Paris Smith?

We are a leading regional law firm with offices in Southampton, Winchester and Bournemouth, acting for a wide range of clients including businesses, local authorities, schools and private individuals.

Our Employment team is recognised in both Chambers & Partners and The Legal 500 for delivering high-quality, practical advice. We support employers with both day-to-day issues and complex matters, providing clear, commercially focused guidance tailored to your organisation.

## The retainer scheme

The retainer scheme is one of shared risk in terms of your spend on legal fees. It is not a fixed fee scheme. We can separately quote for a fixed fee scheme if this is something you would prefer. The retainer arrangement has a number of advantages for you and for us:

### For you...

- Agreeing a retainer will allow you to budget for your legal spend on employment law issues.
- You have flexibility as to how much time you want to purchase and can spread the cost over 12 months.
- If you reach the agreed retainer sum, you will then receive free advice of up to 20%. Only if you exceed the free advice buffer will we start charging you for our further advice.
- The retainer will cover all day to day employment law advice and we will only open a separate file for distinct matters relating to an individual, such as an Employment Tribunal claim.

### For us...

- We get to know you and your business better through the retainer arrangement.
- While we provide some free advice, we know we will not be exposed to giving a substantial amount of advice for which we do not charge, something which in the long term is not in your or our interests.
- The risk of overuse and underuse is shared as detailed below.



## The Employment team

The Employment team is one of the largest teams in the South and it has a very strong reputation. The Employment team is recognised by the two main legal directories (Chambers & Partners and Legal 500) with our partners recognised as leaders in their field.

Our specialist employment team advises on all aspects of the employment relationship, supporting employers with both day-to-day matters and complex issues.

### How does the retainer scheme work?

You choose the basic cost of the retainer you would like. Each level brings with it free advice up to 20%. Please see the end of this document for the basic costs.

### What conditions apply?

There will be terms and conditions which will apply to the retainer arrangements but we have tried to keep the arrangement as simple as possible.

The terms which will apply will be as follows:

- You will be invoiced monthly in arrears.
- Disbursements (such as mileage and photocopying) will be payable in addition.
- The value of advice given under the retainer will be calculated according to our normal charging rates.

Our normal hourly rates (excluding VAT) are as follows:

- Partners – £290 – £445
- Associates / Solicitors – £205 – £225
- Trainees – £190 – £210

### What if the retainer and free advice is used up prior to the end of the 12 month period?

Predicting your use of the retainer is difficult and you may use it more or less than anticipated.

If the time spent advising you exceeds both the basic retainer sum chosen and the free advice, the following will happen:

- We will notify you that the retainer sum (and free advice) has been exceeded.
- We will send you an invoice for all unpaid instalments and any sum over and above the level of free advice.

We will discuss with you the options which will include:

- increasing the retainer sum;
- starting a new retainer early or;
- charging you on a time basis for the remainder of the retainer period (with the rate discounted by 5%).

### What about Tribunal claims?

Retainer clients will be entitled to reduced rates on Tribunal claims and will also have the option of capped fee Tribunal representation.

Alternatively, for complete peace of mind, clients can add an insurance policy to their retainer.

### What if you underuse the scheme?

There is a chance you will underuse the scheme. To balance the fact that we offer free advice of up to 20%, we ask you to take a similar risk. Therefore, if you underuse the scheme by more than 20%, we will credit you the sum exceeding this amount. We therefore share the risk equally which we hope you agree is fair.

#### Example

- For example, suppose Jones Limited has a retainer of £6,000 which is invoiced at £500 per month.
- If Jones Limited uses £7,200 in time, there is no additional charge.
- If Jones Limited reaches the extent of the retainer sum and free advice after 10 months, we would then send a final invoice for the balance of the retainer sum (£1,000).
- If Jones Limited under uses the scheme by £2,000 they would receive a credit of £800 against the following year.

### Reporting

To ensure you are kept up to date, we send you a report of all time used under the scheme each month.

### Contract review

Having up to date contracts of employment and employment policies is vital. We can either carry out this work under the retainer scheme or agree a separate project fee for this.

**Insurance**

Some clients like to add insurance to the retainer package and we can do this. This will cover the client for all legal costs and any award made by the Employment Tribunal, up to the chosen level of indemnity. The insurance is provided by an external insurance company and to get a quote for this, you will be asked to complete a proposal form. Provided you comply with the policy conditions, you will then be covered by insurance in the event you have a claim.

**Paris Smith HR Network**

We offer our retainer clients the chance to join the Paris Smith HR network which is on LinkedIn. There is no charge for being a member.

We regularly publish updates on current employment issues via the Paris Smith HR network and on our website.

Take a look and join our group [here](#).

Retainer option	Basic annual cost of retainer	Value of free advice if overall retainer reached	Level of fees at which discounted charging rates would commence
A	£3000	£600	£3600
B	£5000	£1000	£6000
C	£6000	£1200	£7200
D	£7500	£1500	£9000
E	£10000	£2000	£12000
F	£13000	£2600	£15600
G	£18000	£3600	£21600
H	£24000	£4800	£28800

We can individually quote for sums not stated above.



**Clive Dobbin**  
Partner and Head of Employment

023 8048 2370 07793 625897

clive.dobbin@parissmith.co.uk



**Claire Merritt**  
Partner - Employment & Education

023 8048 2112 07793 625903

claire.merritt@parissmith.co.uk



**Andrew Willshire**  
Partner - Employment & Education

01202 162043 07901 243809

andrew.willshire@parissmith.co.uk

**SOUTHAMPTON**

Number 1  
London Road  
Southampton  
SO15 2AE  
02380 482482

**WINCHESTER**

9 Parchment Street  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 8AT  
01962 706 926

**BOURNEMOUTH**

Suite 9, Ninth Floor Avalon  
26-32 Oxford Road  
Bournemouth  
BH8 8EZ  
01202 162042

