

UK firms face £300M+ losses as risk, compliance & cybersecurity talent gap peaks in wake of rogue state threats

- Salary inflation is accelerating across risk and security roles, with many employers offering above-market pay to attract and retain talent.
- Cybersecurity is now a strategic priority, not a back-office function-with 48% of UK employers citing it as a top hiring focus.
- 42% of organisations plan to hire IT security experts, while 26% set to expand permanent headcount in legal, risk, and compliance teams.
- 23% are increasing contract resources to bolster resilience and regulatory readiness.

New research from international recruitment firm Robert Half reveals a sharp rise in salary premiums for risk, compliance, and cybersecurity professionals, as UK businesses scramble to protect themselves from escalating threats - including those linked to rogue state actors.

Recent cyberattacks on major UK brands such as Marks & Spencer (which has lost £300M+ in revenue to date), Co-op, and Jaguar Land Rover have exposed vulnerabilities even among well-resourced organisations. The financial and reputational fallout from these breaches has pushed operational resilience to the top of boardroom agendas.

Robert Half's data echoes these findings with 42% of employers planning to hire additional IT security experts in the coming months, and 48% of respondents stating that cybersecurity is a priority for their immediate hiring needs. A further 26% will expand permanent headcount in legal, risk, and compliance teams, while 23% are increasing contract resources to bolster resilience and regulatory readiness.

Premium risk and compliance salaries being offered

According to Robert Half's analysis, UK employers are increasingly offering above-market salary premiums to fill gaps in compliance, governance, security architecture and threat intelligence to stay competitive and attract core talent. Almost two-thirds (63%) of employers indicated that they would be inclined to offer premium salaries if specialist skills are in short supply.

With cybersecurity critical as brands seek to protect critical infrastructure, almost half (44%) of employers have indicated that hiring cybersecurity professionals in the coming months will require premium salaries.

Matt Weston, Senior Managing Director, Robert Half UK & Ireland, commented:

"In today's climate, a breach isn't just an operational failure – it's a financial and reputational catastrophe. With rogue state threats, increasingly sophisticated hacking groups and rising regulation, firms that fail to invest in risk, compliance and security talent will be exposed. We're seeing salary outlays rise, roles expand in scope and expectations from boards at an all-time high.

“The remuneration expectation in the London region, for example, tells the story. Senior Operational Risk Managers are set to move from a 2025 average pay of £94,625 to £103,625 in 2026 – a rise of 9.5 per cent. Operational Risk Managers, meanwhile, will see an increase from £75,375 to £83,750, an 11.1 per cent jump. In cybersecurity the escalation is even starker – Chief Information Security Officers climb from a 2025 average of £150,250 to £171,625 in 2026, representing a 14.2 per cent surge.

“London’s sharp upward trajectory is no accident. Global financial institutions headquartered there face relentless scrutiny from regulators, ever-present geopolitical risks and boardrooms that now see cyber resilience as central to maintaining trust. The talent pool is not keeping pace with demand – particularly for senior leaders who can blend technical depth with strategic oversight with competition for top performers driving rapid pay inflation. Salaries in London City are even higher, reflecting the premium placed on attracting and retaining talent at the very centre of the UK’s financial system. Organisations that build resilience into their DNA – from systems to culture – will be those that survive and thrive in 2026.”

	2025 Greater London	2026 Greater London	2026 London City
Director/Head of Operational Risk Management	£123,000 to £153,750	£136,000 to £170,250	£139,000 to £174,000
Senior Operational Risk Manager	£87,000 to £102,250	£94,750 to £112,500	£97,000 to £115,000
Operational Risk Manager	£65,250 to £85,500	£72,500 to £95,000	£74,000 to £97,250
Director/Head of Compliance	£125,750 to £173,500	£137,250 to £191,250	£140,500 to £195,500
Compliance Analyst	£34,250 to £43,500	£38,500 to £48,250	£39,500 to £49,250
Head of HR	£82,250 to £100,750	£83,000 to £107,500	£85,000 to £109,750

Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)	£116,500 to £184,000	£128,000 to £215,250	£131,000 to £220,000
Information Security Manager	£72,250 to £102,500	£79,750 to £112,750	£81,500 to £115,250
Information Security Analyst	£50,250 to £66,250	£56,250 to £74,500	£57,500 to £76,250
Security Network Engineer	£56,500 to £79,250	£65,500 to £94,000	£67,000 to £96,250

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Methodology

The salary benchmarks listed in this release are based on actual compensation for professionals Robert Half has matched with employers across the country and over 350k third-party job posting data from Textkernel used to independently validate the salary levels.

Hiring intentions projections are based on an online survey developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm. During June and July 2025 Robert Half commissioned research amongst 1,500 respondents using an online data collection methodology. The respondents represent 500 hiring managers and 1,000 workers in finance and accounting, IT and technology, administrative and office support, marketing and creative, and legal, risk and compliance. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SMEs to large private, publicly listed and public sector organisations across the UK.

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