



Insights

Benchmarking Report

Consumer Health Salary Benchmarking Report 2026





Introduction

The UK consumer healthcare environment is under real strain. Inflation remains high, wages are under pressure, and economic growth is flat. The latest ONS figures show payrolled employment down 0.3% year-on-year, with month-on-month changes essentially flat. Hiring is tightening, cost pressures are mounting, and candidates hold increasing leverage. Organisations have navigated a tricky period and now need talent that can support growth.

This is particularly true across consumer health segments such as cosmetics, diagnostics, dental and orthodontics, ophthalmology and audiology, veterinary, fertility, and gym and leisure. These markets are not generic. Senior candidates move

across sectors only if they are exceptional leaders who understand the customer, the regulatory environment, and the nuances of adjacent markets.

That makes leadership scarce. Those who can scale businesses, navigate regulatory shifts, and pivot into new health verticals are highly sought after. Attracting and retaining them requires more than a competitive salary. Organisations must offer compelling propositions, growth trajectories, meaningful influence, and financial security. In markets already facing margin pressures, such as wellness clinics and diagnostic chains, mis-stepping on pay risks either overcommitment or falling behind in the talent war. Compass focuses on understanding

clients' stories and positioning them to attract passive talent.

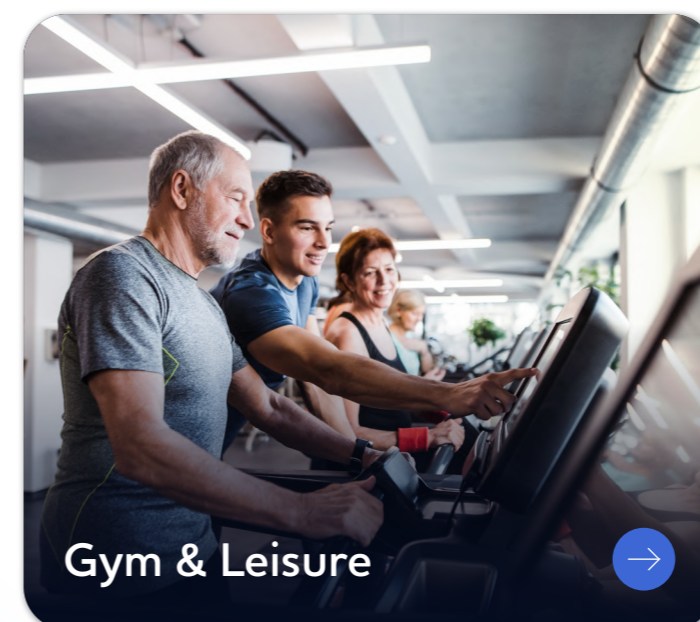
This report cuts through these challenges. Inside you'll find curated benchmarking for leadership and senior roles across consumer health verticals, visualised clearly and grouped by client segment. Beyond numbers, it identifies hard-to-fill roles and zones of retention risk, helping you stress-test offers, pinpoint leadership vulnerabilities, and develop compensation strategies that are both compelling and sustainable.

Should you ever want an honest transparent discussion on the market beyond this data, I would love to connect in the future.



Stuart Cousins FREC CertRP
Head of Compass Associates

 07465 411 481
 scousins@compassltd.co.uk
 Connect

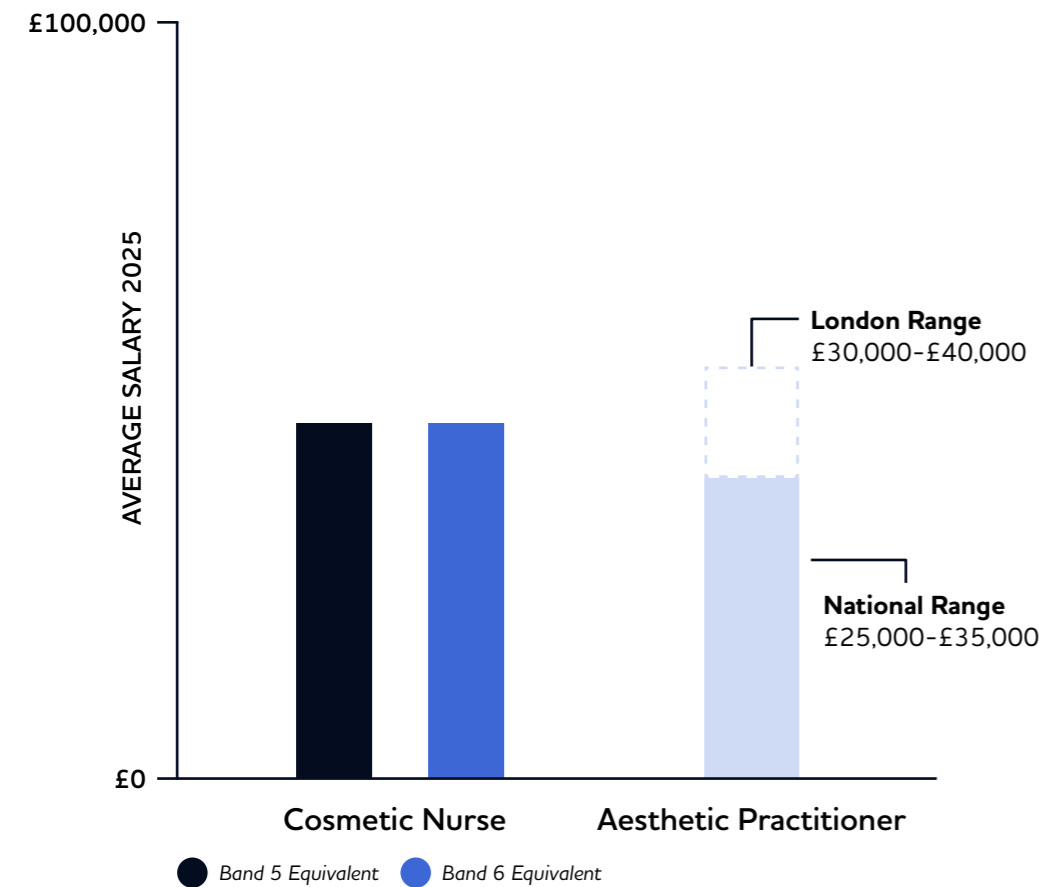


Cosmetics

The cosmetics sector is currently facing significant talent shortages, particularly among aesthetic practitioner nurses. Rising wage inflation and recent increases in national insurance contributions have exacerbated operational costs. In this environment, larger corporate groups are consolidating and securing a competitive advantage by offering structured career progression, CPD funding, and flexible working arrangements.

Clients in this sector are finding it increasingly difficult to attract candidates, especially where there is a lack of support for CPD and clearly defined career development pathways. Smaller businesses are particularly affected, often struggling to match the employment packages offered by larger, more established groups. Additionally, limited employer branding and inflexible working models further hinder their competitiveness.

Candidates are gravitating toward employers that offer tangible support for professional development, including CPD budgets, flexible scheduling, and transparent progression opportunities. As a result, many are choosing to work with larger organisations that can provide a more comprehensive employment proposition.



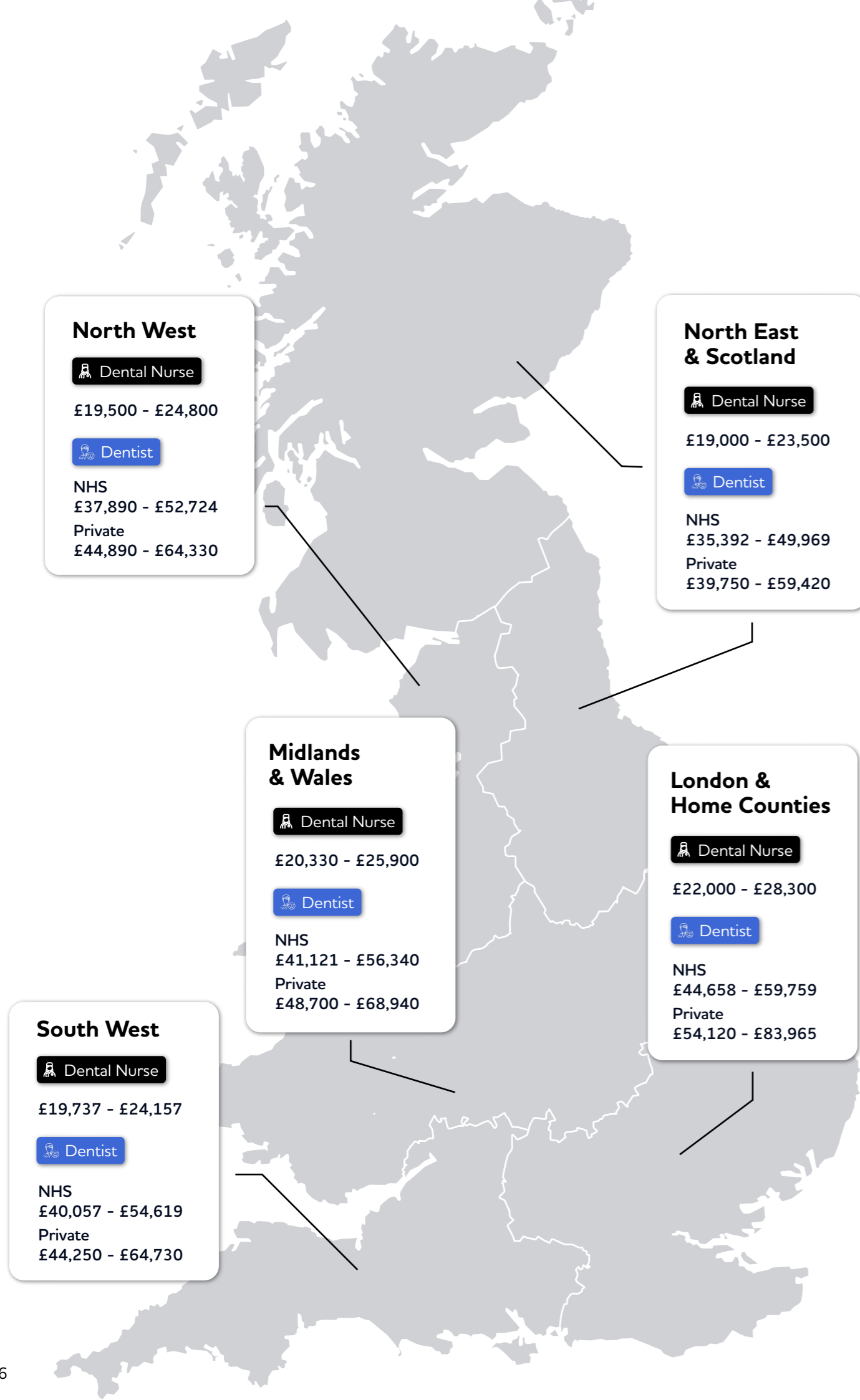


Dentistry

The dental sector continues to face significant difficulties in recruiting both dentists and dental nurses. Constraints within NHS contracts and increasingly tight margins have limited the sector's appeal to potential candidates. In contrast, private dental practices are becoming more attractive, offering greater flexibility and more competitive remuneration packages.

Clients are struggling to compete with larger corporates that have well-established recruitment pipelines, including connections with universities and international talent sources. Recruiting skilled professionals for NHS-funded services remains particularly challenging due to lower pay and less flexibility.

Candidates are showing a clear preference for roles in the private sector, where they benefit from reduced administrative burdens and greater opportunities for career progression. The shift away from NHS roles reflects broader concerns about sustainability and workload.



Regional Manager

South West
£55,000 - £65,000

London
£65,000 - £75,000

Midlands
£50,000 - £60,000

North West
£50,000 - £60,000

North East & Scotland
£45,000 - £55,000

National Average - £55,000
(Excluding London)

London Average - £70,000



Area Manager

South West
£40,000 - £60,000

London
£40,000 - £60,000

Midlands
£35,000 - £50,000

North West
£38,000 - £55,000

North East & Scotland
£35,000 - £55,000

National Average - £46,000
(Excluding London)

London Average - £50,000



Operations Director

South West
£80,000 - £95,000

London
£95,000 - £115,000

Midlands
£75,000 - £90,000

North West
£75,000 - £85,000

North East & Scotland
£70,000 - £85,000

National Average - £81,875
(Excluding London)

London Average - £105,000





Ophthalmology & Audiology

The ophthalmology and audiology sectors have been impacted by changes to NHS frameworks and reductions in government contracts. These changes have led to redundancies in some areas, even as clinical vacancies remain high due to a lack of qualified candidates.

Employers face ongoing difficulties in recruitment, constrained by NHS service limitations and reduced contract availability. Adapting to these new delivery models while maintaining service levels remains a key obstacle.

Candidates are prioritising job security and career progression. Many are looking for roles that offer stability, especially in a shifting NHS environment where contract renewals and funding are less predictable.

Optometrist



South West
£55,000 - £80,000



London
£50,000 - £80,000



Midlands
£40,000 - £65,000



North West
£40,000 - £78,000



North East
£42,000 - £72,000



Scotland
£40,000 - £60,000

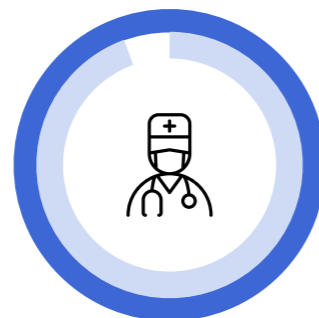
Audiologist

South West / North West / North East / Midlands

£29,970 - £45,000

London

£33,000 - £45,000



● National Average - **£37,485**
(Excluding London)

● London Average - **£39,000**

Dispensing Optician

South West

£24,500 - £34,000

London

£28,000 - £38,000

Midlands

£24,500 - £38,000

North West

£24,500 - £35,000

North East

£24,500 - £38,000

Scotland

£24,500 - £35,000

National Average (Excluding London) - £30,250

London Average - £33,000

Managers

Regional Manager

South West
£55,000 - £65,000

London
£65,000 - £75,000

Midlands
£50,000 - £60,000

North West
£50,000 - £60,000

North East & Scotland
£48,000 - £58,000

National Average - £55,750
(Excluding London)

London Average - £70,000

Area Manager

South West
£45,000 - £55,000

London
£50,000 - £60,000

Midlands
£50,000 - £60,000

North West
£50,000 - £60,000

North East & Scotland
£48,000 - £58,000

National Average - £46,875
(Excluding London)

London Average - £37,750

Operations Director

South West
£40,000 - £50,000

London
£40,000 - £50,000

Midlands
£40,000 - £50,000

North West
£40,000 - £50,000

North East & Scotland
£40,000 - £50,000

National Average - £35,000
(Excluding London)

London Average - £37,750

Recruitment in the veterinary sector is being hindered by challenges related to international hiring post-Brexit and persistent issues with staff retention. Consolidation in the sector has led to larger corporate groups dominating the market, often able to offer attractive employment packages and clear paths for professional development.

Employers are finding it increasingly difficult to source qualified candidates in a competitive market. In response, they must work to differentiate themselves through compelling employer branding, greater workplace flexibility, and robust CPD programs to attract and retain top talent.

Veterinary professionals are placing greater emphasis on flexibility, benefits, and transparent career progression when evaluating job opportunities. They also expect a high degree of transparency from employers, as well as a digital-savvy approach to recruitment and culture communication.

Registered Veterinary Nurse

Non-London	£30,000	£37,000
Outer London	£32,000	£42,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £35,000	
London Average	- £37,750	

Veterinary Surgeon

Outer London	£32,000	£42,000
Inner London	£35,000	£42,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £35,000	
London Average	- £37,750	



Managers

Practice Manager		
SW / NE / NW / Midlands	£30,000	£50,000
London	£35,000	£55,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £40,000	
London Average	- £45,000	

Regional Manager		
SW / NE / NW / Midlands	£45,000	£60,000
London	£55,000	£85,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £52,500	
London Average	- £70,000	

Area Manager		
SW / NE / NW / Midlands	£35,000	£45,000
London	£40,000	£50,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £40,000	
London Average	- £45,000	

Operations Director		
South West	£85,000	£100,000
London	£95,000	£120,000
Midlands	£80,000	£95,000
North West	£75,000	£90,000
North East & Scotland	£70,000	£85,000
National Average (Excluding London)	- £85,000	
London Average	- £107,500	



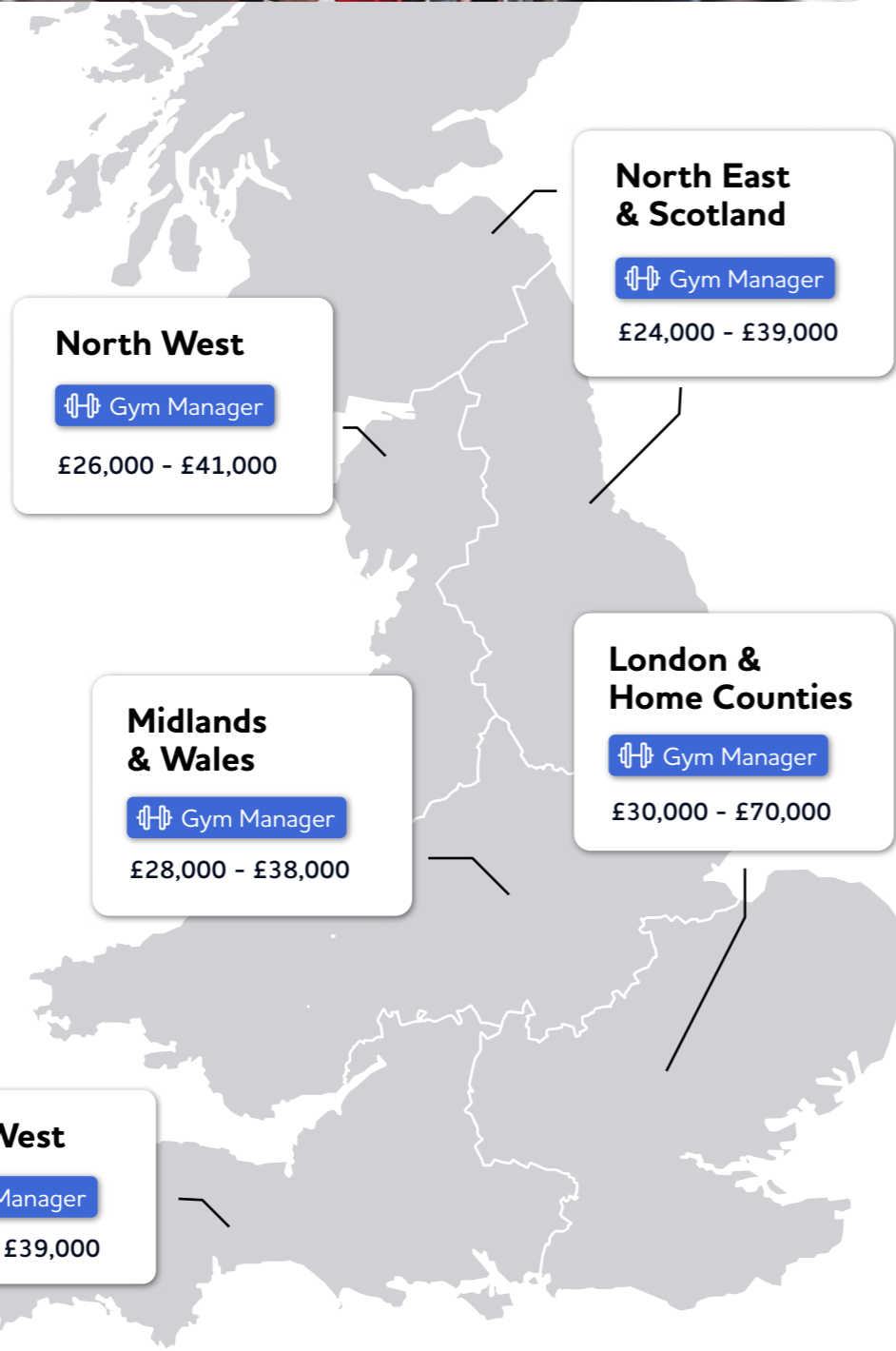


Gym & Leisure

After a pandemic-driven boom in health and wellness, the gym and leisure sector has seen a decline in corporate gym usage, particularly in business districts affected by remote work. Conversely, community-based gyms are experiencing modest growth, driven by local demand.

Employers are struggling to attract qualified clinicians, such as physiotherapists, due to competition from the healthcare sector. To remain competitive, these organisations must invest in their working environments and expand their commercial service offerings.

Candidates often prefer roles in more clinical environments, which they perceive to be more aligned with their professional goals. Work-life balance, a clear sense of purpose, and meaningful career development are critical decision-making factors for job seekers.



Fertility

The fertility sector has seen substantial wage inflation over the past 12 months, with embryologists, fertility nurses, and clinic directors all commanding higher salaries. Despite these increases, the sector remains under pressure from a shortage of qualified clinical professionals and growing competition from international markets, particularly in Europe.

Fertility clinics, especially smaller ones, are finding it difficult to compete with well-funded European providers. Limited investment in the UK market has made it challenging for these clinics to attract and retain talent.

Candidates in this sector are actively seeking opportunities for growth, CPD, and involvement in research. Smaller clinics that cannot offer these opportunities are often overlooked in favour of larger, more resourced organisations.

Fertility Nurse / Midwife

Band 5 & Equivalent



SW / NW / NE /
Midlands & Scotland
£29,970 - £36,483

London
£35,000 - £45,000

Senior Fertility Nurse / Midwife

Band 6 & Equivalent



SW / NW / NE /
Midlands & Scotland
£37,338 - £46,000












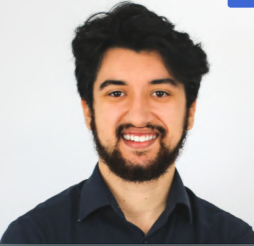


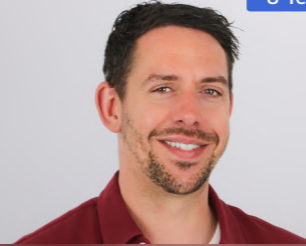


London
£45,000 - £58,000





Team Breakdown

Our Healthcare experts

 <div>14 Years</div> <div>Senior Appointments</div> <p>Stuart Cousins Head of Compass Associates</p>	 <div>11 Years</div> <div>Senior Appointments</div> <p>Adam Brenton Director of Healthcare & Specialist Services</p>	 <div>5 Years</div> <div>Pharmacy Primary Care</div> <p>Jamie Cutts Divisional Manager</p>	 <div>4 Years</div> <div>Radiology Diagnostics</div> <p>Morgan Whelan Managing Consultant</p>	 <div>4 Years</div> <div>Primary Care GP Care at Home</div> <p>Camila Mader Lead Consultant</p>	 <div>3 Years</div> <div>Veterinary Care</div> <p>Theo Hoten Senior Consultant</p>
 <div>8 Years</div> <div>Cosmetics</div> <p>Kane Pfeiffer Associate Director</p>	 <div>4 Years</div> <div>Surgical Hospitals Cosmetics Care at Home</div> <p>Louise Holmes Divisional Manager</p>	 <div>7 Years</div> <div>Surgical Hospitals</div> <p>Benedict Warnes Senior Principal Consultant</p>	 <div>2 Years</div> <div>Diagnostics</div> <p>Reza Abbasi Consultant</p>	 <div>1 Year</div> <div>Veterinary Care</div> <p>Carina Walker Consultant</p>	 <div>1 Year</div> <div>Healthcare</div> <p>Roberto Amos Consultant</p>
 <div>8 Years</div> <div>Surgical Hospitals</div> <p>Rachel Smith Senior Principal Consultant</p>	 <div>11 Years</div> <div>Physiotherapy Pharmacy</div> <p>Natasha Isaac Senior Principal Consultant</p>	 <div>8 Years</div> <div>Radiology Diagnostics</div> <p>Tom Fitch Senior Principal Consultant</p>	 <div>2 Years</div> <div>HR Finance Marketing</div> <p>Simon Codling Consultant</p>	 <div>6 Years</div> <div>Healthcare</div> <p>Julie Gregson Senior Resourcer</p>	

Conclusion

The consumer health landscape continues to evolve under significant economic and workforce pressures, and the themes introduced at the outset of this report are echoed consistently across every sector assessed. Organisations are operating in a talent market defined by high expectations, limited supply and increasing scrutiny from candidates who now prioritise not only pay, but security, purpose, flexibility, and a clear pathway for advancement.

Across the board, salary inflation continues to reshape expectations. Cosmetic nurses now average £33,500 at both Band 5 and Band 6 equivalents, while aesthetic practitioners sit at £30,000; dental regional managers in London command up to £75,000; ophthalmology and audiology area managers nationally average £46,875; and veterinary operations directors outside London reach £85,000, climbing beyond £100,000 in the capital. Fertility roles have seen some of the sharpest increases, with senior fertility nurses in London reaching £58,000. These figures illustrate a market in which competitive compensation has become essential simply to remain visible to candidates.

The insights across cosmetics, dentistry, veterinary care, fertility, ophthalmology, audiology, and gym and leisure reveal a common pattern: those employers who are winning in this environment are doing so through a deliberate and well-articulated employer value proposition. Strong brands, structured development routes, credible CPD investment, and responsive working models are rapidly becoming the baseline rather than points of differentiation.

Structural constraints in the market, whether regulatory, contractual, or linked to international supply, further underscore the need for deliberate planning and proactive engagement with senior and specialist talent. Competition for experienced individuals remains intense, and misalignment between organisational expectations and candidate motivations continues to be a common barrier to successful hiring.

In this context, recruitment and retention must be treated as strategic business imperatives. This means designing compensation approaches that support long-term workforce needs, ensuring leaders foster environments where people can thrive, and engaging with passive talent early and consistently.

An increasingly critical part of this strategy is the ability to identify not only what candidates can do, but how they think, behave, and lead. High-performing individuals in consumer health often share key psychometric characteristics; resilience, adaptability, emotional intelligence, commercial acuity, and the ability to influence across clinical and non-clinical settings. These attributes are often more predictive of long-term success than technical capability alone.

Clevry psychometric assessments provide a valuable tool in uncovering these factors. Their behavioural insight enables organisations to distinguish between competent candidates and truly exceptional ones by highlighting strengths, motivational drivers, leadership tendencies, and areas for development. Used effectively, these assessments help reduce hiring risk, support more objective decision-making, and ensure that senior appointments are aligned not only with role requirements but with the culture and strategic direction of the organisation. As the market continues to shift, organisations that integrate this level of psychometric intelligence into their recruitment processes will be better positioned to secure and develop high-performing teams.

Compass Associates remains committed to supporting organisations through these challenges. Our role is to provide clarity, market insight, and honest dialogue - combining sector knowledge with tools such as Clevry assessments to help clients strengthen retention, build resilience into their leadership teams, and secure the talent required for sustainable growth. We welcome the opportunity to continue these conversations and to partner with you as the sector moves forward.



For all enquiries, please contact:
Stuart Cousins FREC CertRP
Head of Compass Associates

 scousins@compassltd.co.uk

 07465 411 481

 [Connect](#)

Read all
about our
commitment
to the sector

