

# Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

## Issue 50 - October 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin produced by our Economy, Skills, and Insight Teams, which provides the timeliest analysis of official Government data, national intelligence, and local insights on the state of the local economy.

Alongside information on the Claimant Count and Job Vacancies that will be a part of every Bulletin, this month's issue also provides more detailed youth claimant count analysis and updated ward level analysis of the claimant count to help identify areas which are being impacted the hardest by unemployment and a reliance on work-related benefits across Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent and where there may be a greater need for support. We also provide analysis of the latest business insolvency data to further understand how businesses are faring during the current economic climate.

We hope you find the Bulletin useful and welcome your comments and suggestions on further information you would like to see included in future editions to make sure that it continues to meet your needs. If you do have any feedback please send your comments to Darren Farmer, Economy & Skills Analyst at [darren.farmer@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:darren.farmer@staffordshire.gov.uk).


Stay Safe,

Darryl Evers

Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, Staffordshire County Council

## Key Messages

### Local Picture

- In Staffordshire having seen **improvement in the local economy and labour market following the COVID pandemic**, as seen nationally, we have seen unemployment, youth unemployment and dependency on work-related benefits increase during the energy and cost-of-living crisis.
  - This month we have **seen a decrease in the Claimant Count which is encouraging given the ongoing challenging economic conditions and changes by the Department of Work and pensions introduced in May that are expected to increase the claimant count nationwide.**
  - **Although job vacancies have continued to decline, new job postings in Staffordshire are just above pre-pandemic levels meaning that there are job opportunities across Staffordshire for those that unfortunately find themselves out of work.**
  - **We will continue to support our residents into work and ensure that Staffordshire has the strong workforce it needs to grow the economy.**
  - We also continue to support **local businesses that face ongoing challenging conditions** due to a wide range of factors including **high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, increasing wage levels and lower consumer demand.**
  - Looking at the local data in more detail, following increases in the claimant count since before the start of the year, **the number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire decreased by 165 this month to a total of 16,475 claimants.**
  - It is of note that Staffordshire had the highest percentage decrease this month in the West Midlands, with most other areas seeing an increase.
  - **The claimant rate for Staffordshire has remained unchanged at 3.1%** of the working age population. Staffordshire continues to have one of the lowest rates in the West Midlands, far lower than the average for the region of 5.8% which increased from 5.7%, and lower than the average for England of 4.4% which increased from 4.3%. We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our partnership working and dedicated Jobs Brokerage service.
  - This month the **youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 45 claimants with the total number of youth claimants now standing at 3,060.** This was a lower percentage increase than seen both regionally and nationally this month. **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.8% to 4.9% this month. It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.4% and far lower than the regional rate of 7.5%.** Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or to continue in education and training.
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- Turning to job vacancies, **Staffordshire saw a 9% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between August and September to a total of 12,000. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw an 8% decrease in job vacancies to a total of 4,800 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the last month there was also a 9% decrease, and nationally there was a 10% decrease in job vacancies.**
- Although we are seeing a slight decline in total vacancies, positively for those residents out of work, **demand for labour remains comparatively high with the number of vacancies just above pre-pandemic levels.**
- Considering the **top 20 job vacancy occupations in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire**, demand for roles in social care continue to remain high with **'Care Workers and Home Carers' being the most in demand occupations.**
- The following occupations **'Sales Related,' 'Cleaners & Domestic' and 'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** also have strong demand.
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives.'**
- There is **strong demand for 'Customer Service,' 'Administrative' and 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** across business sectors to support business in their recovery, survival, and new methods of working.
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen and Catering Assistants' remain the roles most in demand.**
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' and 'Special & Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- Demand for **'Sales and Retail Assistants' and 'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers' and 'Registered Nursing Professionals.'**
- Demand for **'Programmers and Software Development Professionals'** in the ICT sector remains high.
- In the Motor Trade **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians'** are in demand.
- Demand for **'Plant and Machine Operatives'** are also high.
- It is in these areas of the economy where job vacancies remain particularly high and where we are hearing reports of **labour and skills shortages** with a mismatch of workers or skills to fill the vacant jobs.
- This has the **potential to slow down economic growth and limit business survival unless the labour shortage and skills gap is quickly and effectively addressed.** Clearly employment support organisations, skills providers and the Government's Plan for Jobs including the Restart schemes and new Skills Bootcamps have a vital role in upskilling and reskilling jobseekers into areas of demand and preventing them becoming long-term

unemployed. Government and business sectors have a key role in ensuring that jobs in areas of demand are attracting workers with good pay and terms and conditions to help prevent labour shortages.

- There continues to be a high number of jobs available in the local economy and the need now is to ensure that there is a strong local labour pool with skilled workers able to fill these roles to support business recovery/survival and improve prosperity through better pay. The national and local support which is in place to support those that have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs is vital in both **reskilling and upskilling** as well as enabling potential applicants to access the opportunities available. Encouraging those that have become **economically inactive** due to COVID will further help to address labour shortages and skills gaps.
- **Staffordshire County Council's dedicated Job Brokerage Service** is designed to do exactly this by matching local people, employers, and training providers to fill jobs and provide people with the jobs and careers they need.
- There are clear **emerging opportunities for job creation in digital (including online retail and e-commerce) and the green economy (including retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency, electric cars e.g., Jaguar Land Rover, and hydrogen e.g., JCB).**
- We will also look to build on our existing strengths including **engineering and advanced manufacturing** through the adoption of AI, Automation and Machine Learning, **construction** to achieve Government house building targets and build major new infrastructure projects such as the West Midlands Freight Interchange which will create 8,500 new jobs. Also **advanced logistics** with ecommerce creating continued demand and the announcement by Pets At Home in Stafford creating over 750 new jobs.
- **We will continue to support our residents into work and ensure that Staffordshire has the strong workforce it needs to grow the economy.**



## Local Initiatives

- We are continuing to prioritise support for businesses and people whose jobs or employment prospects have been impacted by the pandemic and aid the recovery, as well as putting in place the support needed locally during the cost-of-living and energy crisis.
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent businesses that have been turned down by other lenders can now apply to the **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Loan Fund**, supporting businesses to grow through affordable, unsecured loans from £10,000 to £50,000. To find out more visit [here](#).
- The **Get Started and Grow scheme** has been extended which provides fully funded support for 0- to 5-year-old businesses. Businesses have already saved thousands by getting accountancy, business planning, website and branding professionally sorted completely free of charge. Now everyone, from those just thinking about setting up a side-business to those who have got past the tricky first few years can get the support that they need. It's all in response to what you've said is most important for your business growth. [To apply for fully funded SME support](#).
- Businesses in Staffordshire are able to benefit from a new free recruitment service which will help to match their employment vacancies with appropriate potential candidates. The **Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Service**, provides advice and support to both businesses and people looking for employment opportunities. It will match vacancies with candidates looking for jobs in certain sectors and with appropriate skills. The service is working with a range of partner organisations and a team of specialist brokers will advise employers and potential employees with options available to them. [Find out more about Staffordshire Jobs and Careers](#).
- **Need some support? Contact the Growth Hub** - The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub is your first port of call for any business-support related enquiry. It acts as the focal point for businesses that wish to grow by referring them to co-ordinated and cohesive growth programmes, business networks, growth groups and links to specialist information, advice, and services. If you would like a free of charge appointment with a qualified Growth Hub Business Advisor to discuss what options are available to support the growth of your business, please contact them on 0300 111 8002.
- **Help To Grow: Management programme** is 90% funded by the government so you only pay £750. Delivered in partnership with Small Business Charter, courses are running at leading business schools across the UK. This programme includes:
  - access 12-weeks of learning designed to fit alongside work commitments
  - develop a bespoke business growth plan to help your business reach its full potential
  - get 1:1 support from a business mentor
  - learn from peers and network with businesses just like yoursTo find out more [visit](#).
- The **Staffordshire Business and Enterprise Network (SBEN)** has introduced more



support for businesses in Staffordshire. The Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme can help you to reduce your carbon footprint and increase energy efficiency. It has now been widened to include an additional Energy Efficiency Review for a business that has previously had one, and grants towards the capital costs for solar projects. Membership of SBEN is still free until the end of next March. Membership includes access to the Carbon Tracker tool. **Why join SBEN?**

- **Save up to 15% off your energy costs.** Sub-metering monitoring systems are a cost-effective way for Staffordshire businesses to manage and reduce their energy use. Sub-metering monitoring use a combination of hardware and software to collect and analyse data about energy performance. SBEN (Staffordshire Business Environment Network), through Staffordshire County Council, is providing businesses with a sub-metering monitoring grant of up to £5000 (50% match funded) to get everything set up. Find out more and apply
- **Staffordshire targets gigabit connectivity for residents and businesses** - A drive to connect Staffordshire residents and businesses to gigabit technology over the next eight years will be coordinated by the county council. Working with broadband and mobile providers, developers and national government, the county council will be aiming to ensure the vast majority of properties can access gigabit speeds by 2030. As part of the government's Levelling Up agenda, Project Gigabit aims to reach those premises in the county that are not considered commercially viable. The new Gigafast Staffordshire team (renamed from the Superfast Staffordshire team) will take a leadership role in the county to deliver the programme locally. The county council will also be working with government on its Shared Rural Network programme to boost 4G mobile connectivity. As well as improving everyday life, the move to gigabit technology could boost the local by hundreds of millions of pounds, and also supports the county council's climate change commitments - with smart technology reducing energy consumption and cutting carbon emissions. The county council launched the Community Fibre Partnership support fund for communities which could not be reached by the main programme which helped nine communities to benefit, with a further 24 communities benefitting from the Gigabit Broadband Top-up Voucher scheme. The new Gigafast Staffordshire website has launched to help everyone understand the benefits of gigabit connectivity at [www.gigafaststaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.gigafaststaffordshire.co.uk).
- **Staffordshire County Council** is also supporting our residents and businesses through the **Here to Help - cost of living support programme**. This website signposts to a range of support that is already available to people.
- The Government has launched the **Skills for Life** campaign which highlights the range of training and employment schemes available for businesses wanting to boost their workforce capabilities, including apprenticeships, traineeships, and T-Levels. The Government's Skills for Life website showcases hundreds of government-funded skills opportunities. It promotes online learning options and free essential skills courses, such as numeracy, English and digital, sector specific qualifications, Skills Bootcamps, Free

Courses for Jobs, and in-work training, as well as personalised support and guidance from the National Careers Service. Refreshed [campaign toolkits](#) for the skills campaigns currently running for employers, adults and young people are available to share via your networks and channels, with your own audiences, staff and customers to help extend the reach of the campaigns to those people who will benefit most. [Find out more.](#)

- **New employer information and advice service - Support with Employee Health and Disability:** A digital information and advice service for businesses is live on [GOV.UK](#), providing tailored guidance on health and disability, to prevent avoidable job loss and help people thrive at work. Employers and disability organisations have been involved in the design and testing of the service which will continue to be developed throughout 2022/23. Current features include:
  - Helping employers to feel more confident having conversations about health and disability.
  - Encouraging early intervention and sustained support.
  - Signposting to trusted expert support and resources.
  - Helping employers understand their legal responsibilities.

Please use the [feedback link](#) as your thoughts on how the content and design are shaped really will make a difference. [Read the press release](#)

- **Stoke-On-Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub have partnered with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to offer free 1-2-1 virtual business support sessions.** Are you looking to start a business or in the embryonic stages of growth? Are you:
  - keen to identify potential new markets?
  - interested in bidding for public procurement opportunities?
  - in need of advice on chasing late payments?
  - seeking general advice and support?

Through one of these invaluable 1-2-1 sessions, you can:

- get in touch with international trade specialists
- find sources of local authority support
- learn key steps in starting a business and get assistance with many more issues/challenges your business faces

If you feel you might benefit from one of these virtual sessions, please email [karen.woolley@fsb.org.uk](mailto:karen.woolley@fsb.org.uk) This offer is open to FSB members and non-members.

- **Do you know what your employees need to be their most productive?** Any business' most valuable asset is its people, and with adults spending most of their time at work, businesses need to know how to best support their health and wellbeing. The **Staffordshire County Council Workplace Health Service**, working with public health and local health experts, offers businesses a comprehensive and funded package of online and in-person support, including:
  - mental health and wellbeing
  - smoking cessation

- healthy activity and healthy eating in the workplace, and more.

**But where do you start?**

- 1) Check out the business wellbeing support available online
- 2) Join the Healthy Workplace Newsletter
- 3) Check out the Everyone Health offer - in-business support
- 4) Consider starting the Thrive at Work Workplace Wellbeing Award Programme.

**CHECK OUT HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS**

- Businesses across Staffordshire have the opportunity to build confidence and skill-up their staff for free with the government's **Multiply scheme**. Multiply is a programme that helps employees build confidence and lifelong numeracy skills through bitesize courses, bespoke help for businesses and functional maths qualifications. In a recent poll, over 60% of businesses in Staffordshire say that they need more functional maths capacity in their workforce, for increased performance, personal and professional confidence, and team motivation, alongside career progression.

Eligibility:

- Staffordshire based business.
- Adults aged 19 plus.
- Individuals that have not achieved a Level 2 maths qualification, i.e., GCSE of at least a Grade C or equivalent.
- Individuals who may want to develop numeracy skills for work or progression.
- Individuals that want to brush up and develop their numeracy skills for everyday life and work.

Contact [Multiply@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Multiply@staffordshire.gov.uk) to explore your options.

- **Businesses in Staffordshire can now apply for free energy assessments through the Green Solutions scheme.** The scheme aims to help businesses reduce their energy consumption and costs for a greener future and more sustainable business practices. Businesses will get a free energy assessment plus expert advice to help improve energy efficiency and support to implement the proposed measures. Firms signing up will also benefit from complimentary Carbon Literacy Training. To apply and submit an expression of interest, businesses can visit the official Green Solutions website. A dedicated member of the Green Solutions team will review the submission and reach out to discuss the next steps.
- **A programme designed to empower a new generation of thriving start-up businesses across Staffordshire is set to drive growth across the county.** Offering fully-funded places for budding entrepreneurs to access business training sessions, masterclasses, coaching and mentoring, the new programme has been launched by Staffordshire County Council and funded by UK Government. Delivered by business support specialists, The NextGen, which has a track record in helping fledgling businesses in the county plot a successful growth curve, the programme also offers networking opportunities, a comprehensive digital marketing audit and mentor matching service. **Apply for fully-**



**funded start-up support**

- **Apprenticeship funding available as part of wider grant for Stafford business.** Businesses with a minimum of 75% of their income coming from sales to other businesses can apply for a grant to develop new products and services. Grants of between £10,000 and £25,000 can be spent on anything from marketing to supporting the costs of taking on an apprentice. **MORE**
- **Staffordshire County Council has launched the Succeed and Grow scheme, a programme that offers support to rural microbusinesses in Staffordshire Moorlands and East Staffordshire.** Delivered through webinars, events, peer support and focus groups, any business needing help with professional tasks, such as marketing and legal support, can get fully-funded help from consultants. **MORE**
- As part of UKSPF funding, **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council have released a final round of business grants to drive growth and innovation across the district.** Deadline - 10th November.
  - **SME Innovation and Growth grant** - grow your business through innovation. Grants of up to £15,000.
  - **Capital Equipment Grants** for rural businesses - up to £15,000.



## National Context

- Over the last month **we have heard more about the plans and policies of the new Government**, with Sir Keir Starmer saying he would not offer “easy answers” or “false hope” but promised a Britain “built to last” in his first speech to the Labour Party conference as prime minister. He said Labour would deliver the “national renewal” the country wanted but warned it would involve some “trade-offs”, such as new prisons and electricity pylons near homes.
- There has been much discussion around the **Government’s five key policy missions**:

### The Government’s five missions

**1) Kickstart economic growth** to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every part of the country making everyone, not just a few, better off.

**2) Make Britain a clean energy superpower** to cut bills, create jobs and deliver security with cheaper, zero-carbon electricity by 2030, accelerating to net zero.

**3) Take back our streets** by halving serious violent crime and raising confidence in the police and criminal justice system to its highest levels.

**4) Break down barriers to opportunity** by reforming our childcare and education systems, to make sure there is no class ceiling on the ambitions of young people in Britain.

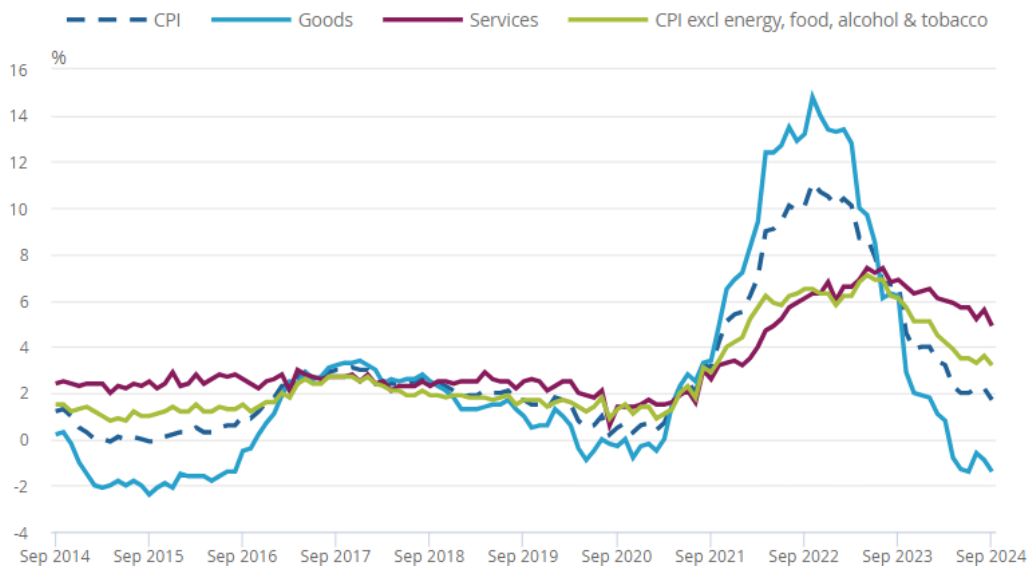
**5) Build an NHS fit for the future** that is there when people need it; with fewer lives lost to the biggest killers; in a fairer Britain, where everyone lives well for longer.

- We now await what will be announced in the **Budget on the 30<sup>th</sup> October**, with **local leaders expectant that the new Government will give local areas the money and powers they need to deliver for their residents, businesses and communities**.
- There was also the **release of the Industrial Strategy Green Paper, ‘Invest 2023: the UK’s modern industrial strategy’** which provided further detail on the Government’s vision for “a modern Industrial Strategy a credible, 10-year plan to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the high growth sectors that will drive our growth mission”. The Green paper forms a public consultation which will inform the development of the new industrial strategy: the government's proposed plan to ease the investor journey and create long-term, inclusive, secure and sustainable growth. The consultation closes on 24 November 2024 and the final industrial strategy will be published in spring 2025, alongside the multi-year spending review.

## Cost of Living

- **UK inflation fell unexpectedly to 1.7 per cent in the year to September**, the lowest rate in three-and-a-half years. Lower airfares and petrol prices were the main drivers behind the surprise slowdown.
- It means **inflation is now below the Bank of England's 2 per cent target**, paving the way for interest rates to be cut further next month. UK interest rates are currently at 5%. The Bank made a first cut in August but decided to hold them last month.

**Annual CPI core, goods and services inflation eased in September 2024**  
**CPI goods, services and core annual inflation rates, UK, September 2014 to September 2024**



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- **Real earnings continue to rise, but at a slower pace.**
- **Annual growth in employees' average regular earnings (excluding bonuses) in Great Britain was 4.9% in June to August 2024, and annual growth in total earnings (including bonuses) was 3.8%.** This total annual growth is affected by the NHS and civil service one-off payments made in June, July and August 2023.
- **Annual growth in real terms (adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH)) for regular pay was 1.9% in June to August 2024, and for total pay was 0.9%.**

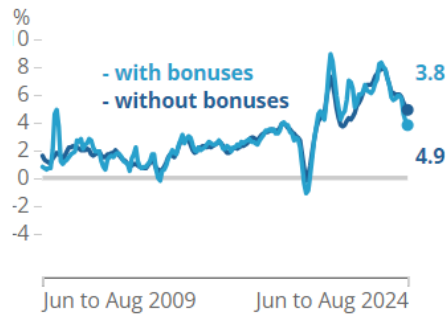
### Nominal Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates - nominal pay

In June to August 2024, regular and total annual growth rates are lower than the previous three-month.

Note: The total annual growth rate is affected by the NHS and civil service one-off payments made in June, July and August 2023.

Source: MWSS from ONS



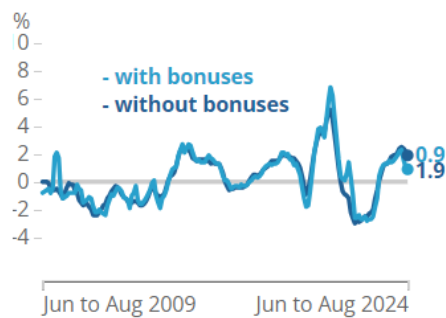
### Real Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates - real pay (using CPIH)

In June to August 2024, regular and total annual growth rates are lower than the previous three-month.

Note: The total annual growth rate is affected by the NHS and civil service one-off payments made in June, July and August 2023.

Source: MWSS from ONS



- **There were an estimated 31,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in August 2024.** Most of the strikes were in the health and social work sector.

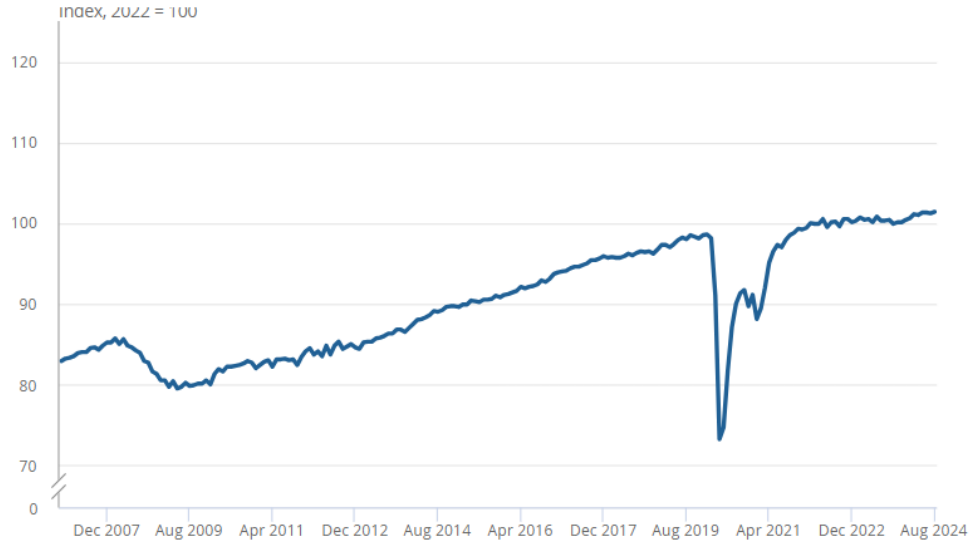
## Economy

- **The UK returned to growth in August**, a bounce back in construction and strong month for accountancy, manufacturers and retail businesses helped boost the economy by 0.2 per cent, after it failed to grow in the previous two months, but economic growth is weaker compared with the first half of the year.
- Real **GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in the three months to August 2024 compared with the three months to May 2024.**
- **Services output grew by 0.1% in August 2024**, following an increase of 0.1% in July 2024, and grew by 0.1% in the three months to August 2024.
- **Production output grew by 0.5% in August 2024**, following a revised fall from 0.8% to 0.7% in July 2024, but showed no growth in the three months to August 2024.
- **Construction output grew by 0.4% in August 2024**, following an fall of 0.4% in July 2024, and grew by 1.0% in the three months to August 2024.

## GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to August 2024, UK

Figure 1: UK GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in August 2024, and increased by 0.2% in the three months to August 2024.

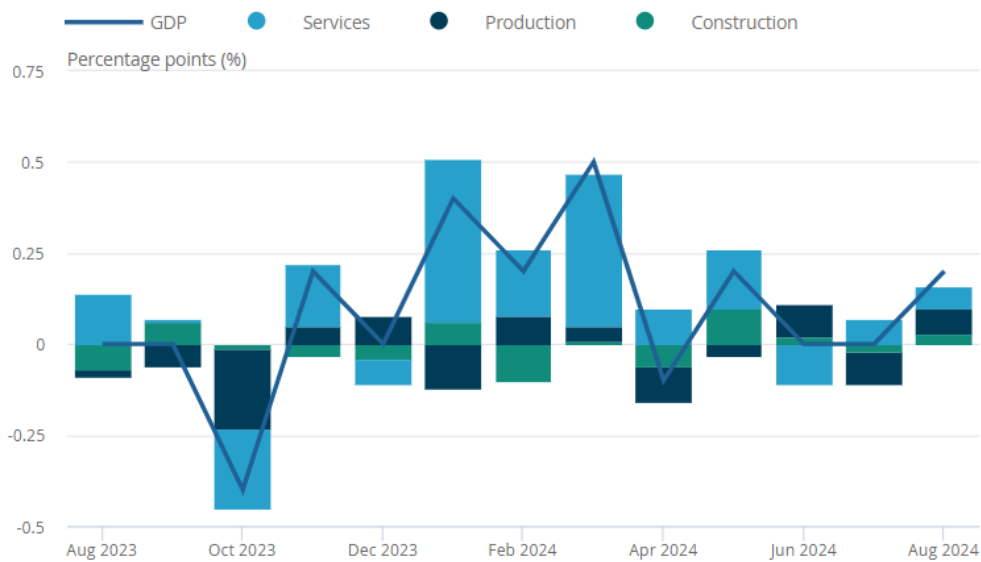
Monthly index, January 2007 to August 2024, UK



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 2: Monthly GDP increased by 0.2% in August 2024, with growths in all the main sectors.

Contributions to monthly GDP growth, August 2023 to August 2024, UK



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

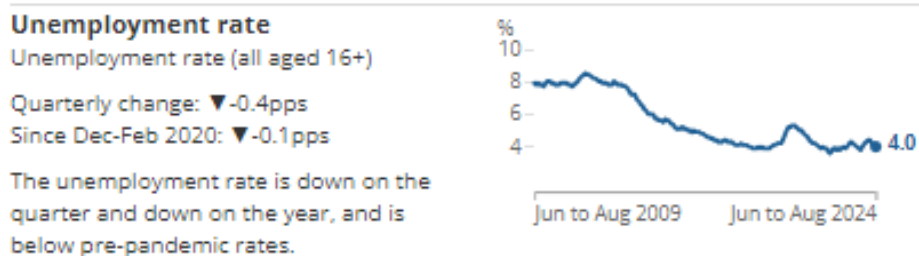
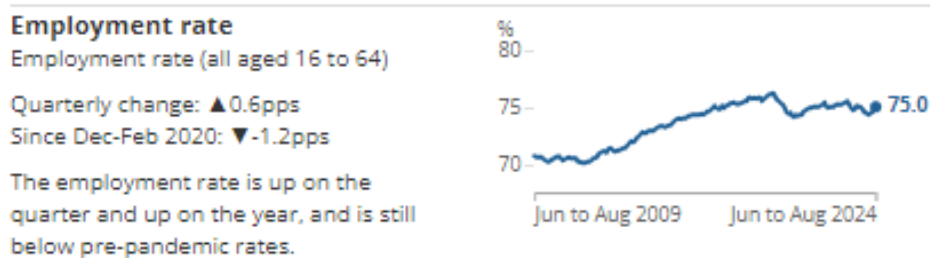


## Business Conditions

- It remains evidence that **many businesses struggling due to a wide range of factors including high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, wage pressures, supply-chain constraints, lower consumer confidence and labour market challenges.**
- The latest results from Wave 118 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 7 October to 20 October 2024 suggest that business conditions continue to remain challenging.
- Approximately **one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in September 2024** compared with August 2024, broadly stable with the previous month; **in contrast, 24% reported that their turnover had decreased** from August 2024, with 22% citing economic uncertainty as a challenge.
- Approximately **one in six (16%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase in November 2024, down 4 percentage points from expectations for October 2024.**
- Nearly **one in eight (12%) trading businesses reported that they expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in November 2024**, broadly stable with expectations for October 2024.
- In early October 2024, **8% of all businesses and 19% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages**; both figures are broadly stable with early September 2024.
- Approximately **one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported their overall performance increased in September 2024 compared with the same calendar month last year, broadly stable with August 2024; in contrast, 22% reported that their performance decreased over the same period, with this proportion trending upwards since May 2024 (17%).**
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in September 2024 there were a total of 1,801 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 8% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,965 in September 2023), and 24% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,453 in September 2021).** The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.
- It is important that we continue to support viable businesses through these challenging times to survive and then grow.

## Labour Market

- In summary, this month's labour market figures show employment has increased but remains down on pre-pandemic levels, unemployment has decreased and is now below pre-pandemic levels, and economic inactivity has also decreased but remains above pre-pandemic levels. Job vacancies have seen a further decline which reflects the long-term trend but remain above pre-pandemic levels.
- The following charts shows the latest **labour market position** and the latest Office for National Statistics data for June 2024 to August 2024:



### Inactivity rate

Economic inactivity rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▼-0.3pps  
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲1.3pps

The economic inactivity rate is down on the quarter and down on the year, but is still above pre-pandemic rates.

Note: Due to increased volatility of LFS estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, estimates of change should be treated with additional caution.

Source: LFS from ONS



### Job vacancies

Number of job vacancies

Quarterly change: ▼-34,000  
 Since Jan-Mar 2020: ▲45,000

Vacancies decreased on the quarter but remain above pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Vacancy Survey from ONS




- Estimates for **payrolled employees in the UK decreased by 35,000 (negative 0.1%) between July and August 2024, but rose by 165,000 (0.5%) between August 2023 and August 2024.**
- When looking at June to August 2024 (comparable with Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates), payrolled employees rose by 3,000 (0.0%) over the quarter and by 203,000 (0.7%) over the year.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for September 2024 decreased by 15,000 (0.0%) on the month but increased by 113,000 (0.4%) on the year, to 30.3 million. ONS advise that the September 2024 estimate should be treated as a provisional estimate and is likely to be revised when more data are received next month.
- ONS have also stated that increased volatility of LFS estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, means that estimates of change should be treated with additional caution. ONS recommend using them as part of their suite of labour market indicators, alongside Workforce Jobs (WFJ), Claimant Count data, and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) estimates.
- The **UK employment rate** (for people aged 16 to 64 years) was estimated at 75.0% in June to August 2024, above estimates of a year ago, and increased in the latest quarter.
- The **UK unemployment rate** (for people aged 16 years and over) was estimated at 4.0% in June to August 2024, below estimates of a year ago, and decreased in the latest quarter.
- The **UK economic inactivity rate** (for people aged 16 to 64 years) was estimated at 21.8%

in June to August 2024, below estimates of a year ago, and decreased in the latest quarter.

- The **UK Claimant Count** for September 2024 increased on the month and on the year, to 1.797 million. Starting in May 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions are rolling out an increase in the administrative earnings threshold for full work search conditionality. This change is likely to affect around 180,000 claimants over a period of around six months, increasing the Claimant Count over that time.
- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** decreased in July to September 2024, by 34,000 on the quarter to 841,000. Vacancies decreased on the quarter for the 27th consecutive period but are still above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Job coaches will visit seriously ill patients on mental health wards to try to get them back to work, the Government has said.** Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall said trials of employment advisers giving CV and interview advice in hospitals produced “dramatic results”.

## Green Economy

- **The Energy Secretary has announced plans to raise energy efficiency rules for social housing, in a bid to cut fuel bills for tenants and meet climate goals.** Speaking at Labour conference, Ed Miliband unveiled plans for all social homes in England to achieve an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of at least C by 2030. In response, the LGA underlined the need for “sufficient long-term funding” to meet the targets, given “wider financial pressures on social housing funding”.
  - **Landlords will be handed grants of up to £15,000 to cover the cost of the Government’s new EPC targets - but only if they let to low-income tenants.** A new warm homes grant will pay property owners up to £15,000 for energy performance upgrades and the installation of low-carbon heating systems, such as heat pumps ahead of a ban on letting out poorly insulated homes, but only those who house low-income tenants will be eligible for the scheme when it launches in April.
  - **A more ambitious reform of the planning process could cut the time to build power lines critical in achieving net zero to five years, according to the Government’s independent adviser.** Nick Winser, Britain’s electricity networks commissioner, last year put forward a set of recommendations to help speed up the construction of many hundreds of miles of high-voltage cables needed to connect new wind farms and meet increased power demand for electric vehicles and heat pumps.
  - **The Government has pledged nearly £22 billion for projects to capture and store carbon emissions from energy, industry and hydrogen production.** Carbon capture and storage facilities prevent CO2 produced from industrial processes and power stations from being released into the atmosphere.
  - **The leaders of the world’s biggest green energy companies have promised more than £24 billion of new private investment across Great Britain,** prior to meeting the Prime
- 

Minister at the first Council of Nations and Regions in Edinburgh to discuss the multibillion-pound projects, days before the Government's international investment summit.

- **The amount of land which is protected for nature in England has fallen to just 2.93 per cent, despite government promises to conserve 30 per cent of it by 2030.** Campaigners are calling for a "rapid rescue package for UK nature", as government delegates head to Cop16, the international nature summit.

## Housing

- **The number of housing projects given planning permission by councils in England reached a record low in the final months of the last government.** Data for the year to June showed 31,562 housing proposals were granted, 8 per cent down in a year, as the total number of planning applications to build new homes brought forward by developers dropped sharply.
- **Councils will be given £68 million to build thousands of homes on disused brownfield sites, the Government has announced.** The money will be spread across 54 local authorities in England and is expected to deliver 5,200 homes on sites such as former industrial land and car parks which can be difficult to build on.

## Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Government continues to provide further details on their policies and plans for the country**, with much anticipation for the upcoming Budget and new Industrial Strategy to be published in spring 2025.
- There was the **welcomed news of UK inflation falling unexpectedly in September** to the lowest rate in three-and-a-half years and below the Bank of England's 2 per cent target. It is expected that this could pave the way for interest rates to be cut further over the coming months and easing pressure on businesses. While **wage levels continue to rise further easing cost of living pressures.**
- There was **further positive news with the economy returning to growth**, however the "broader picture" is one of a "slowing" economy in recent months, with many businesses 'pausing' hiring and investing ahead of Budget.
- It is clear that for **many businesses conditions remain challenging due to a wide range of factors and this has seen more businesses report a decline in their turnover.**
- There area **signs of further cooling in labour demand**, with job vacancies continuing to fall while unemployment is now back below pre-pandemic levels. However, employment levels are still being impacted by the rise in economic inactivity witnessed since the pandemic.
- We need to continue to **support those still struggling with the cost-of-living, residents to transition into work and viable businesses to survive and grow.** By reducing the impact on our business base, we can see faster recovery and greater economic growth to



the benefit of all.

- **In Staffordshire we have a confident, diverse, and robust economy**, demonstrated by the improvement and recovery witnessed since the last lockdown due to Covid. As the **ongoing global and national socio-economic challenges** persist it remains **vital that local partners work together to support local businesses and residents**. We continue to deliver the **Staffordshire Means Business Programme** which has helped hundreds of Staffordshire **businesses transition to new business models including diversification, digitisation and greenification to improve their viability and sustainability**.
- **We continue to support residents into work and help businesses address ongoing labour shortages and skills gaps** to aid survival and growth. A key part of this being the recently **established Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Brokerage Service** which is designed to match local people, employers, and training providers to fill jobs and provide people with the jobs and careers they need.
- Alongside this skills provision has an important role to play in **ensuring that local residents have the skills and training needed within the local economy to support increased growth, productivity, and prosperity**. Reskilling and upskilling residents from declining sectors into priority growth areas of the economy such as digital, green, advanced manufacturing, advanced logistics, construction, and health and social care where they can access higher value better paid jobs will be key.



## Data Deep Dives:

### Business and Individual Insolvencies

This section covers the latest Insolvency Service monthly insolvency statistics<sup>1</sup> for August 2024, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

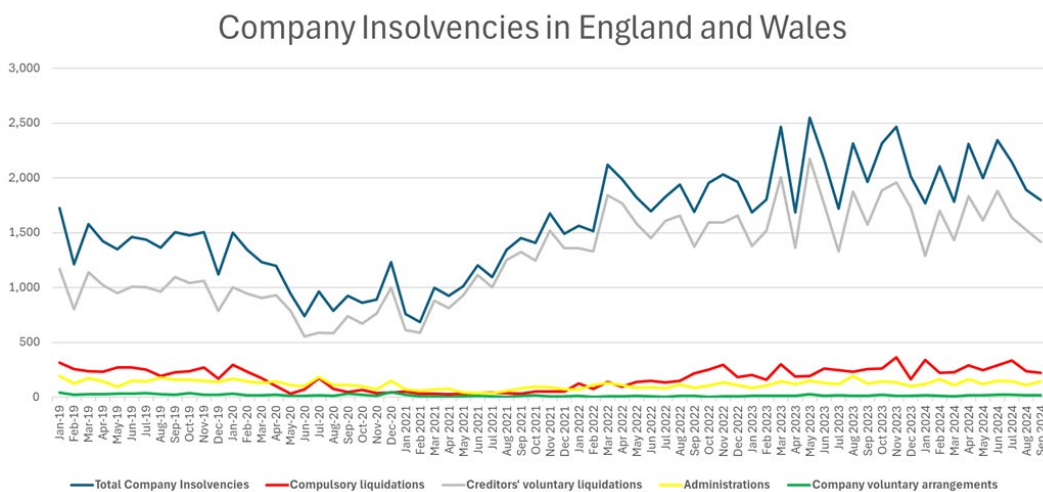
#### Company Insolvencies

**In September 2024 there were a total of 1,801 company insolvencies in England and Wales.** The overall number of **company insolvencies** are **8% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,965 in September 2023), and 24% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,453 in September 2021).** Please note that due to the volatility of the underlying data the Insolvency Service recommends comparisons are made with the same month in previous years rather than with the previous month.

There were 221 compulsory liquidations in September 2024, which is 13% lower than the number in September 2023, and 591% higher than in September 2021. Numbers of compulsory liquidations have increased from historical lows seen during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, partly as a result in the increase of winding-up petitions presented by HMRC.

In September 2024 there were 1,417 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 10% lower than September 2023, and 7% higher than September 2021. Numbers of administrations are higher than pandemic levels at 80% higher than September 2021, and Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are also higher than pandemic levels at 42% above September 2021 levels, although numbers are low.

**Company insolvencies between October 2023 and September 2024 are 3% higher compared to a year earlier, representing 641 more businesses.**



Source: Insolvency Service (compulsory liquidations only); Companies House (all other insolvency types)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: *The Insolvency Service* - [Company Insolvency Statistics, September 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvency-statistics-september-2024)

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between September 2023 and August 2024 continue to be the Construction sector (4,310), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,814) and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,712). Levels exceed those seen for the same period the previous year with the Construction sector 1% higher, Wholesale & Retail sector 2% higher, and Accommodation & Food Service sector 9% higher than levels seen a year earlier. This can be attributed to higher commodity costs, energy costs and wage costs; lower consumer confidence/demand, the longer-term impact of the pandemic along with the higher cost of living impact, interest rate and inflation increases.

**Individual Insolvencies**

There were **10,541 total individual insolvencies in September 2024**, which was 45% higher than in September 2023, and 6% higher than in September 2021.

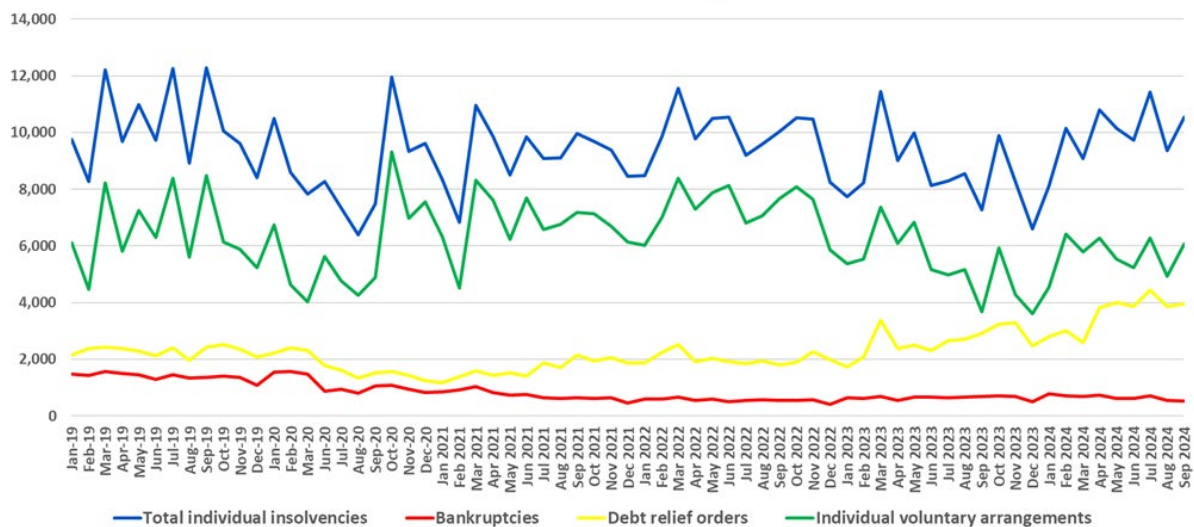
For individuals, **518 bankruptcies were registered in September 2024**, which was 24% lower than in September 2023, and 18% lower than in September 2021.

There were **3,955 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in September 2024**, which was 36% higher than in September 2023, and 84% higher than in September 2021.

There were **6,068 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in September 2024**, which is 65% higher than September 2023, and 16% lower than September 2021.

**Total Individual Insolvencies between October 2023 and September 2024 are 6% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 6,165.**

**Individual Insolvencies in England and Wales**



Source: Insolvency Service

**Breathing Space numbers for September 2024 are not available from the Insolvency Service this month due to a technical issue and will be provided in the November release when available.**

From the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic until mid-2021, overall numbers of company and individual insolvencies were low when compared with pre-pandemic levels. This is likely to have been partly driven by government measures put in place to support businesses and individuals during this time. **Company insolvency numbers have now returned to and exceeded pre-pandemic levels. For individuals, numbers of individual voluntary arrangements and bankruptcies remain lower, but debt relief orders are higher than pre-pandemic levels.**

The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.



## Claimant Count<sup>2</sup>

The following table highlights the level of Universal Credit claimants in the Staffordshire Districts and each of the Strategic Authorities in the West Midlands Region:

### Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: September 2024

Area	Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2023)	Claimant Count Rate (August 2024)	Claimant Count Rate <sup>1</sup> (Sept 2024)	Number of Claimants (Sept 2024)	Monthly Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Claimants (%)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	3.7	4.3	4.4	1,567,825	21,480	1.4%	504,320	47.4%
West Midlands	4.8	5.7	5.8	214,930	4,580	2.2%	70,580	48.9%
SSLEP	3.3	3.8	3.9	26,750	80	0.3%	7,380	38.1%
Birmingham	8.5	10.6	11.0	80,855	2,425	3.1%	31,485	63.8%
Wolverhampton	7.4	8.0	8.3	13,640	375	2.8%	3,260	31.4%
Sandwell	6.1	7.4	7.6	16,380	465	2.9%	5,600	51.9%
Walsall	5.5	6.5	6.7	11,590	275	2.4%	2,985	34.7%
Stoke-on-Trent	5.3	6.2	6.4	10,275	245	2.4%	2,955	40.4%
Coventry	5.5	6.1	6.3	14,055	270	2.0%	6,055	75.7%
Dudley	4.6	5.2	5.3	10,365	220	2.2%	1,850	21.7%
Telford and Wrekin	3.4	4.1	4.2	4,910	190	4.0%	1,480	43.1%
Solihull	3.1	3.7	3.8	4,885	155	3.3%	1,235	33.8%
Worcestershire	2.9	3.4	3.4	12,170	-50	-0.4%	3,865	46.5%
Staffordshire	2.7	3.1	3.1	16,475	-165	-1.0%	4,425	36.7%
Herefordshire, County of	2.3	2.9	3.0	3,215	85	2.7%	1,105	52.4%
Wanwickshire	2.5	3.0	3.0	10,995	95	0.9%	3,165	40.4%
Shropshire	2.2	2.7	2.7	5,120	-5	-0.1%	1,110	27.7%
East Staffordshire	3.3	4.0	4.0	3,070	-60	-1.9%	1,350	78.5%
Cannock Chase	3.3	3.5	3.5	2,220	-10	-0.4%	565	34.1%
Tamworth	3.3	3.5	3.5	1,690	-35	-2.0%	200	13.4%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.0	3.3	3.3	2,500	-5	-0.2%	520	26.3%
South Staffordshire	2.5	2.8	2.8	1,845	15	0.8%	535	40.8%
Stafford	2.4	2.8	2.7	2,255	-35	-1.5%	600	36.3%
Lichfield	2.3	2.6	2.5	1,595	-25	-1.5%	275	20.8%
Staffordshire Moorlands	1.9	2.4	2.3	1,305	-10	-0.8%	385	41.8%

The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

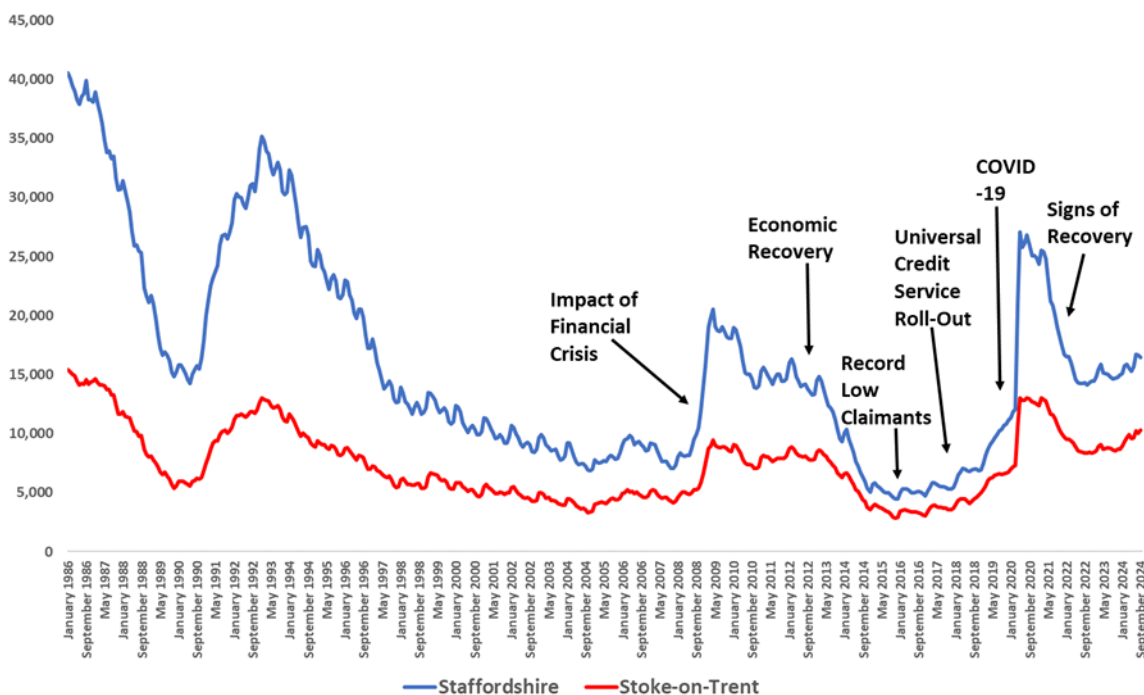
- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw a **decrease of 165 claimants in September**, with the **total number now at 16,475**.
- It is of note that Staffordshire had the highest decrease this month in the West Midlands, with most other areas seeing an increase.
- Over the last month, the **claimant rate for Staffordshire has remained unchanged at 3.1%** of the working age population.
- The **rate in Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and is far lower than the average for the region of 5.8%, and lower than the average for England of 4.4%**.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>



- Stoke-on-Trent saw an **increase of 245 claimants** over the same period with a **total of 10,275 claimants in September**, with the **rate increasing from 6.2% to 6.4%**.
- Staffordshire saw a -1.0% decrease monthly change in claimants whereas nationally we saw a 1.4% increase and regionally a 2.2% increase. **Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest claimant rates in the region.**
- **The total number of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in Staffordshire is now 36.7% or 4,425 higher than the level seen in March 2020 (pre-COVID)**, which is lower than the 47.4% increase seen nationally and the 48.9% increase seen regionally.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Claimant Count



- **It is important to note that not all claimants will be out of work.** The increases seen since COVID-19 struck in March need to be viewed in the context of the move to Universal Credit. Before Universal Credit, the Claimant Count was based upon Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants - people out of work but looking for a job. However, in response to COVID-19 the Government changed the criteria for Universal Credit to allow certain people on low incomes to claim whilst in work. Therefore, there will be **a proportion of claimants that will still be in work but claiming Universal Credit because they are on a low income or have seen reduced hours (under-employment)**, although from the data released by the Government it is not currently possible to quantify claimants that are unemployed or employed but on a low income.

- It is also important to recognise that although claimant numbers are higher than pre-pandemic levels, given our strong position going into the pandemic, we still perform well given **Staffordshire’s claimant rate is 3.1% of the working age population compared to 5.8% regionally and 4.4% nationally. In Stoke-on-Trent, the Claimant Count remains above both the regional and national averages at 6.4%.**
- For those that find themselves out of work, **demand for labour remains high with the number of new job postings just above pre-pandemic levels.**
- We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our partnership working and dedicated Jobs Brokerage service.
- There were decreases in the claimant count this month in the majority of districts in Staffordshire, except for South Staffordshire.
- East Staffordshire has the highest claimant rate at 4.0% and Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest at 2.3%. It is important to note all districts have a lower claimant rate than both the regional and national rates.

## Youth Claimant Count

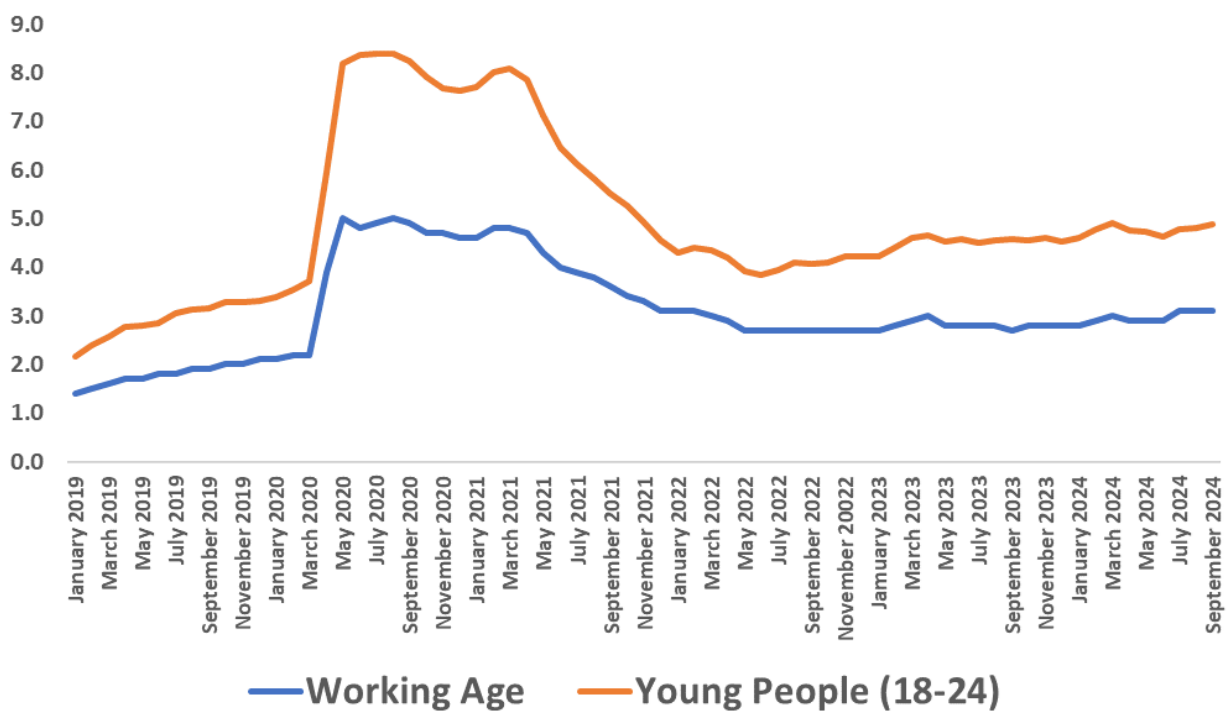
### Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: September 2024

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2023)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Aug 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate <sup>1</sup> (Sept 2024)	Number of Youth Claimants (Sept 2024)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (%)	Change in Youth Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Youth Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	5.0	5.3	5.4	255,295	5,895	2.4%	57,565	29.1%
West Midlands	6.7	7.3	7.5	37,745	1,000	2.7%	9,840	35.3%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.4	5.7	5.8	4,920	90	1.9%	1,100	28.8%
Wolverhampton	10.6	10.9	11.2	2,400	80	3.4%	490	25.7%
Birmingham	9.1	10.4	10.6	13,830	335	2.5%	4,725	51.9%
Wallsall	9.0	9.7	10.2	2,300	110	5.0%	385	20.1%
Sandwell	9.1	9.7	10.0	2,855	80	2.9%	740	35.0%
<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>1,865</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>32.7%</b>
Dudley	7.6	7.5	7.8	1,850	70	3.9%	100	5.7%
Telford and Wrekin	5.6	6.1	6.5	975	60	6.6%	215	28.3%
Solihull	5.2	6.0	6.0	905	5	0.6%	80	9.7%
Coventry	5.2	5.5	5.6	2,400	45	1.9%	865	56.4%
Worcestershire	4.6	4.9	5.0	2,110	70	3.4%	515	32.3%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3,060</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>26.7%</b>
Herefordshire, County of	3.7	4.1	4.3	495	20	4.2%	80	19.3%
Warwickshire	3.7	4.1	4.1	1,845	35	1.9%	510	38.2%
Shropshire	3.4	3.9	3.9	855	-5	-0.6%	30	3.6%
Cannock Chase	6.1	6.3	6.4	455	10	2.2%	90	24.7%
Tamworth	6.1	6.4	6.4	365	0	0.0%	70	23.7%
East Staffordshire	5.2	5.3	5.3	475	0	0.0%	155	48.4%
Stafford	4.2	4.8	4.8	415	0	0.0%	100	31.7%
South Staffordshire	4.4	4.6	4.8	355	10	2.9%	105	42.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.1	4.2	4.4	520	30	6.1%	95	22.4%
Lichfield	3.8	4.0	4.0	285	0	0.0%	15	5.6%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.9	3.2	3.2	190	0	0.0%	15	8.6%

The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- This month the **youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 45 claimants with a total of 3,060 young people**. This was a lower percentage increase than seen both regionally and nationally this month.
- **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.8% to 4.9%**. It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.4%, and far lower than the regional rate of 7.5%.
- **Stoke-on-Trent saw an increase of 45 claimants to a total of 1,865 claimants with the rate increasing from 8.0% to 8.2% this month.**

Claimant Rate and Youth Claimant Rate in Staffordshire



- This month the majority of districts in Staffordshire saw no change in the youth claimant rate, with three districts seeing small increases.
- Cannock Chase and Tamworth have the highest rate at 6.4%, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest rate at 3.2%. Newcastle-under-Lyme has the highest number of youth claimants at 520, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest number of youth claimants at 190.
- Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or to continue in education and training, such as through the Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Brokerage service, the Restart Scheme, and the new Skills Bootcamps to help prevent them becoming long-term unemployed.

## Claimant Counts and Rates in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Wards

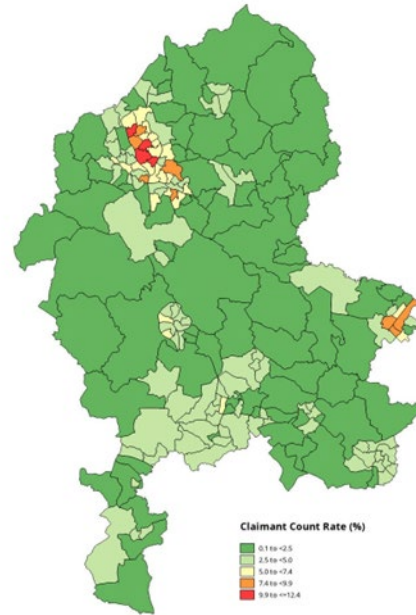
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

### Claimant Count Rate September 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 52 were above the England average of 4.4% for the number of claimants as a proportion of the working age population.

Within the twenty highest claimant count rate wards, sixteen were in Stoke-on-Trent with the highest rates in Joiner's Square: 12.4%/570; Etruria & Hanley: 11.8%/635; Moorcroft: 11.3%/420; Tunstall: 10.1%/425; Burslem Central: 9.7%/445 total claimants.

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant count rates were all in East Staffordshire with Anglesey: 9.2%/500; Burton: 8.3%/250; Shobnall: 7.9%/425; Eton Park: 7.3%/360 total claimants.

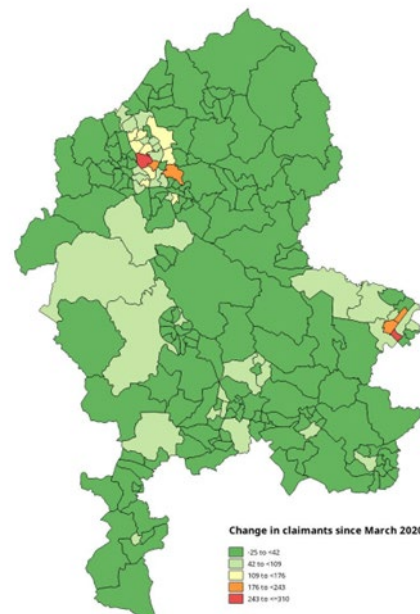


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### Change in Claimant Count since March 2020

Of the top ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of claimants since March 2020 there were seven in Stoke-on-Trent including Etruria & Hanley (280 increase to 635); Joiner's Square (195 increase to 570); Bentilee & Ubberley (195 increase to 595); Tunstall (175 increase to 425); Hanley Park & Shelton (175 increase to 360); Moorcroft (160 increase to 420); Lightwood North & Normacot (145 increase to 290).

Of the remaining three wards in the top ten, all were in East Staffordshire including Anglesey (310 increase to 500); Shobnall (215 increase to 425); Eton Park (180 increase to 360).



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## Youth Claimant Counts and Rates in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Wards

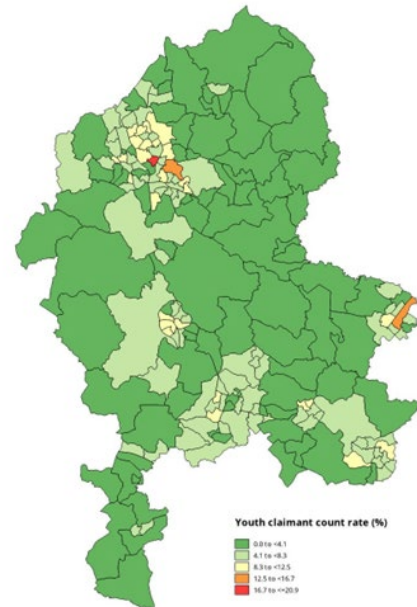
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

### Youth Claimant Count Rate September 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 84 were above the England average of 5.4% for the number of claimants aged 18-24 as a proportion of the 18-24 population.

Of the top ten wards with the highest youth claimant count rate, six were in Stoke-on-Trent including Joiner’s Square: 20.9%/160; Bentilee & Ubberley: 15.5%/140; Fenton East: 11.8%/55; Burslem Central: 11.4%/70; Abbey Hulton & Towsend: 10.8%/85; Tunstall: 10.5%/65 total youth claimants.

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant count rates were Burton (East Staffordshire): 13.0%/50; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 12.2%/65; Knutton (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 10.9%/30; Highfields & Western Downs (Stafford): 10.6%/55 total youth claimants.

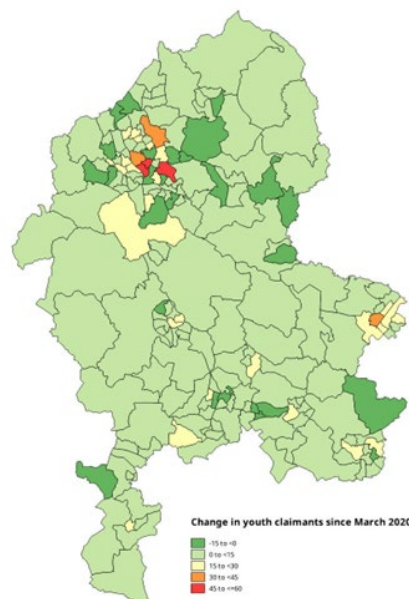


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### Change in Youth Claimant Count since March 2020

Of the top ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, six were in Stoke-on-Trent including Joiner’s Square (60 increase to 160); Hanley Park & Shelton (55 increase to 85); Bentilee & Ubberley (50 increase to 140); Etruria and Hanley (35 increase to 80); Baddeley, Milton & Norton (35 increase to 95); Tunstall (25 increase to 65).

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, were Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 40 to 75; Anglesey (East Staffordshire): 25 increase to 55; May Bank (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 25 increase to 50; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 25 increase to 65.



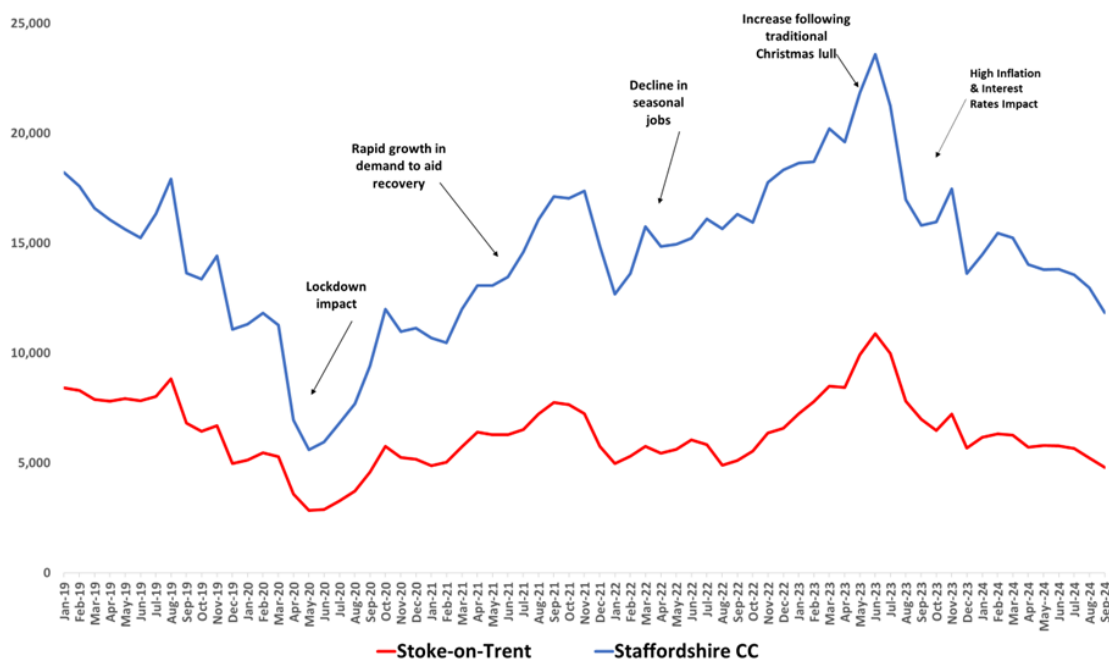
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### Job Vacancies<sup>3</sup>

- **Staffordshire saw a 9% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between August and September to a total of 12,000<sup>4</sup>. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent also saw an 8% decrease in job vacancies to a total of 4,800 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region in the last month there was also a 9% decrease, and nationally there was a 10% decrease in job vacancies.**
- In September there has been a decrease in the number of available job vacancies, compared to a year ago in Staffordshire with the number of job adverts being posted 25% lower, whilst Stoke-on-Trent decreased 31%. The chart below indicates a general declining trend overall from July last year suggesting a slowdown in the jobs market as a result of business sectors delaying recruitment due to increased costs and uncertainty in the economy. Overall, the outlook remains positive although recruitment demand is declining. New job postings remain slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels with Staffordshire job vacancies 0.1% higher in line with the national level and higher than the West Midlands -8% decrease. Stoke-on-Trent job vacancies are 12% lower. Our focus continues to be to support those that unfortunately find themselves unemployed, to transition into work.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Unique Job Vacancies Trend



*\*\*Important to note that Lightcast (formerly EMSI/Burning Glass) live job vacancy data has been upgraded and improved through enhanced AI deduplication and sharper skill scraping of job postings.\*\**

<sup>3</sup> Source: Lightcast (formerly EMSI/Burning Glass)

<sup>4</sup> Lightcast updated its deduplication algorithm for UK job postings on 17 November 2023. As a result of this change historic posting counts have decreased on average by 2% to 4%.

## Monthly Trends in recruitment

- All occupational groups saw a decrease in vacancies during September. 'Skilled Trades,' saw the highest decrease of -17% whereas 'Caring, Leisure & Other Service' occupations saw the smallest decrease of -2% during September.
- The occupations to see the most significant increases during September include **Special & Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals; Teaching Professionals; Professional/Chartered Company Secretaries; Roundspersons & Van Salespersons; Sales Administrators; Education Managers; Managers in Transport & Distribution; Cyber Security Professionals; Personal Assistants & Secretaries; Customer Service Supervisors; Biological Scientists; Programmers & Software Dvpt Professionals; Authors, Writers & Translators; Catering & Bar Mgrs.; IT Business Analysts, Architects & System Designers; FE Teaching Professionals; Cleaning & Housekeeping Managers & Supervisors; Plant & Machine Operatives; Teaching Assistants; Bus & Coach Drivers.**

## Annual Trends in job vacancies

- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year increases include Teaching (Special & Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals; Teaching Professionals; Secondary Education Teaching; FE Teaching Professionals), Logistics (Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Road Transport Drivers; Managers in Transport & Distribution), Administrative (Professional/Chartered Company Secretaries; Legal Secretaries; Office Managers), Construction & Building Trades Supervisors, Retail (Shelf Fillers), Biological Scientists, Skilled Trades (Plumbers and Heating & Ventilating Installers), Health & Social Care (Health Associate Professionals), Communication Operators, Engineering (Civil Engineers), Parking & Civil Enforcement, Forestry Workers, Planning, Process & Production Technicians.

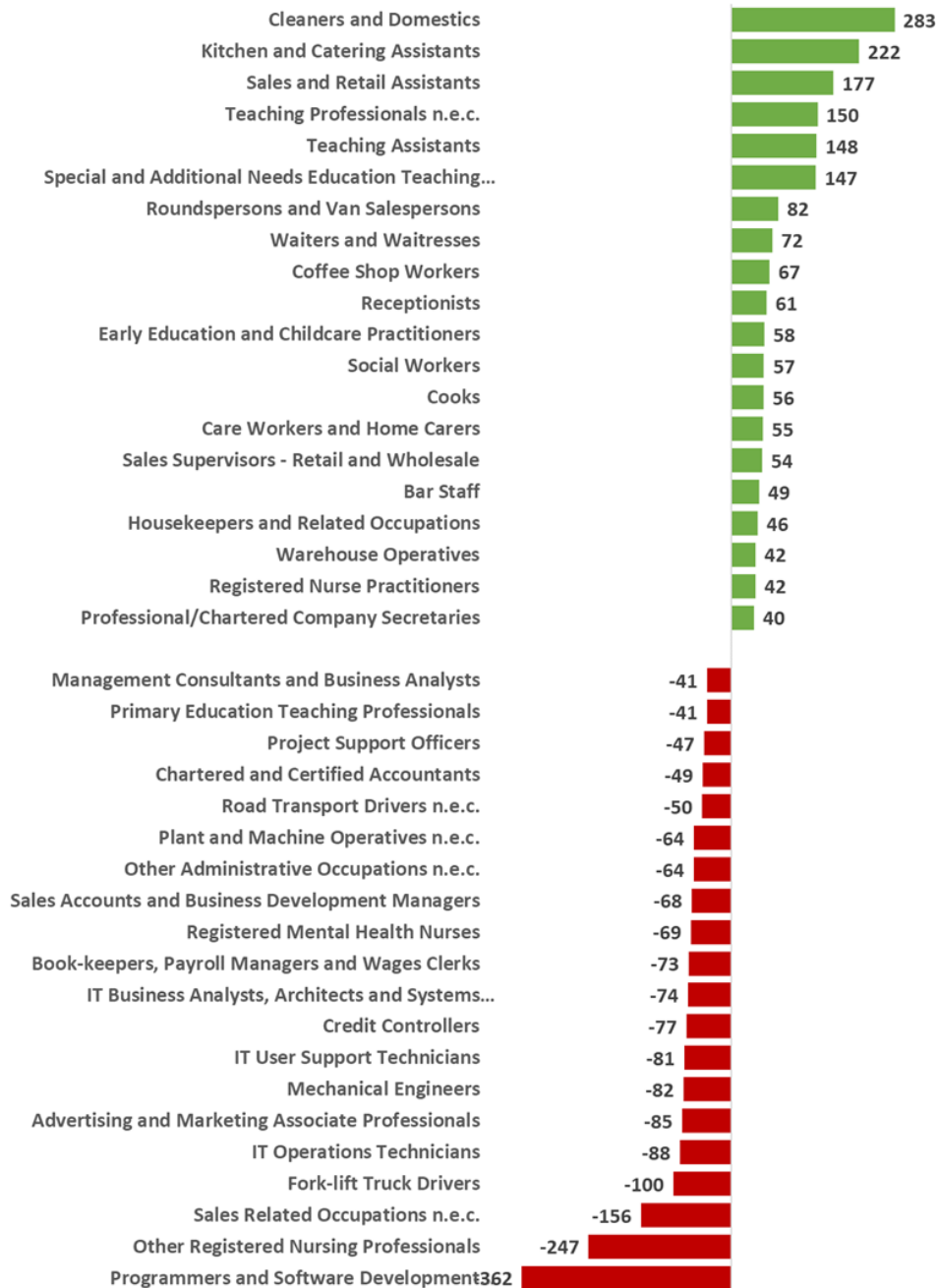
## Pre-COVID baseline trends in job vacancies

- The main occupations with higher vacancies compared to pre-COVID are mainly found in:
  - **Housekeepers & Related Occupations** (Cleaners & Domestics; Housekeepers & Related)
  - **Hospitality** (Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Waiters & Waitresses; Cooks; Coffee Shop Workers; Cooks; Bar Staff)
  - **Retail & Wholesale** (Sales & Retail Assistants; Sales Supervisors)
  - **Education** (Teaching Professionals; Teaching Assistants; Special & Additional Needs Education & Teaching Professionals)
  - **Logistics** (Roundspersons & Van Salespersons; Warehouse Operatives)
  - **Cross Sector Business Roles** (Receptionists; Professional/Chartered Company Secretaries)
  - **Childcare** (Early Education & Childcare Practitioners)

- o **Health and Social Care** (Social Workers; Care Workers and Home Carers; Registered Nurse Practitioners)

This is reflective of the ongoing long term recruitment difficulties in these sectors.

**Top 20 occupations increasing and top 20 declining between Feb 2020 (Pre-COVID) and Sept 2024 in Staffordshire & Stoke**

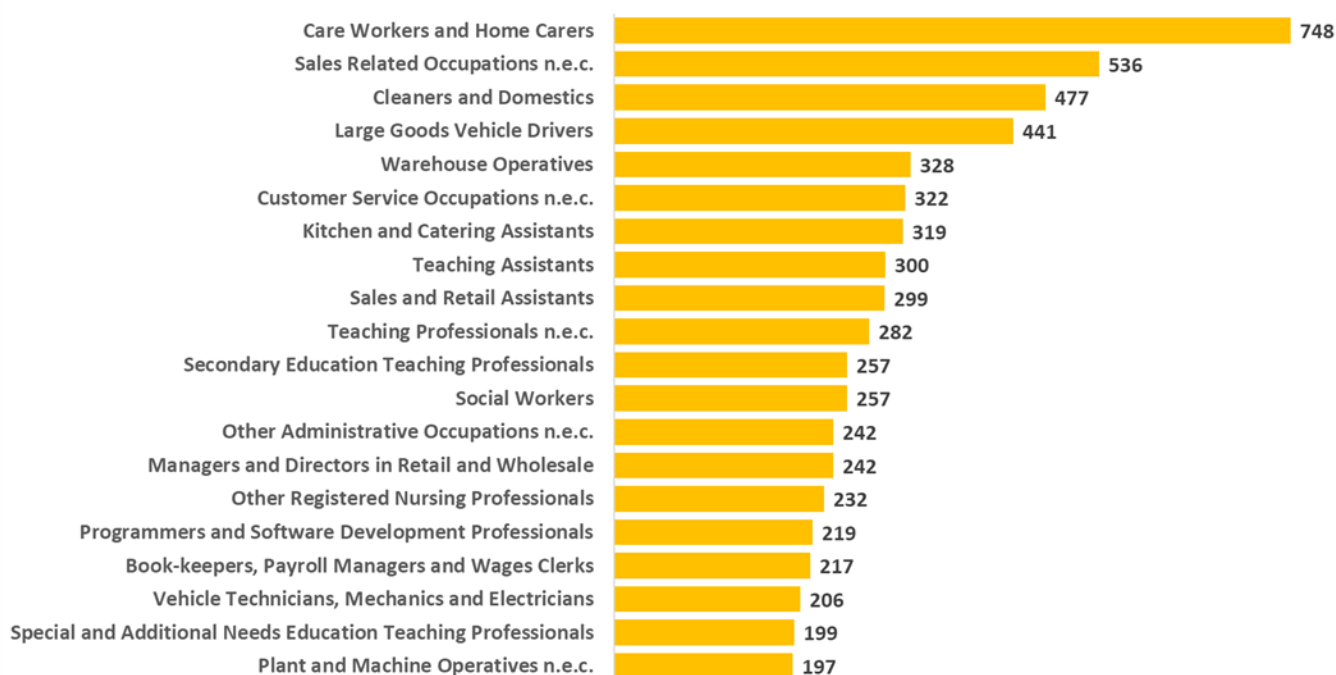


### Top Occupations in Demand

- Considering the **top 20 job vacancy occupations in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, demand for roles in social care continue to remain high with **'Care Workers and Home Carers'** being the most in demand occupations.

- The following occupations **'Sales Related, 'Cleaners & Domestics' and 'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** also have strong demand.
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives.'**
- There is **strong demand for 'Customer Service,' 'Administrative,' 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** occupations across business sectors to support business in their recovery, survival, and new methods of working.
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** remain the roles most in demand.
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'Teaching Professionals' and 'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- Demand for **'Sales & Retail Assistants' and 'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers,' and 'Registered Nursing Professionals.'**
- Demand for **'Programmers and Software Development Professionals'** remains high.
- In the Motor Trade **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians'** are in demand.
- In the Manufacturing sector **'Plant & Machine Operatives'** are most in demand.

Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire & Stoke during September 2024



- It is in these areas of the economy where job vacancies remain particularly high and where we are hearing the most reports of **labour and skills shortages** with a mismatch of workers or skills to fill the vacant jobs.
- This has the **potential to slow down economic growth and limit business survival unless the labour shortage and skills gap is quickly and effectively addressed**. Clearly employment support organisations, skills providers and the Government's Plan for Jobs including the Restart schemes and new Skills Bootcamps have a vital role in upskilling and reskilling jobseekers into areas of demand and preventing them becoming long-term unemployed. Government and business sectors have a key role in ensuring that jobs in areas of demand are attracting workers with good pay and terms and conditions to help prevent labour shortages.
- It is clear there continues to be a high number of jobs available in the local economy and the need now is to ensure that there is a strong local labour pool with skilled workers able to fill these roles to support business recovery/survival and improve their own prosperity through better pay. The national and local support which is in place to support those that have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs is vital in both **reskilling and upskilling** as well as enabling them to access the opportunities available. Also encouraging those that have become **economically inactive** due to COVID back into work will further help to address labour shortages and skills gaps.
- **Staffordshire County Council's new Job Brokerage Service** is designed to do exactly this by matching local people, employers, and training providers to fill jobs and provide people with the jobs and careers they need.
- There are also clear **emerging opportunities for job creation in digital (including online retail and e-commerce) and the green economy (including retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency, electric cars e.g., Jaguar Land Rover and hydrogen e.g., JCB)**.
- We will also look to build on our existing strengths including **engineering and advanced manufacturing** through the adoption of AI, Automation and Machine Learning, **construction** to achieve Government house building targets and build major new infrastructure projects such as the West Midlands Freight Interchange, and **advanced logistics** with ecommerce creating continued demand and the recent announcement by Pets At Home in Stafford creating over 750 new jobs.