

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 51 - November 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.


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 small increase in the Claimant Count which is reflective of 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 still 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 increased by 25 this month to a total of 16,415 claimants.**
 - It is of note that Staffordshire had the second smallest increase this month in the West Midlands, and a far lower increase than seen regionally and nationally.
 - **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 remained unchanged, 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 115 claimants with the total number of youth claimants now standing at 3,140.** This was a similar percentage increase to those seen both regionally and nationally. **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.8% to 5.0% this month. It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.6% and far lower than the regional rate of 7.6%.** 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 1% increase in the number of available job vacancies between September and October to a total of 12,000. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 1% decrease in job vacancies to a total of 4,700 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the last month there was also a 3% increase, and nationally there was no change in the number of job vacancies.**
- Encouragingly 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.**
- 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,' 'Teaching Professionals' and 'Special & Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives.'**
- Demand for **'Sales and Retail Assistants' and 'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is **strong demand for 'Customer Service,' 'Administrative,' 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks,' and 'HR & Industrial Relations Officers'** across business sectors to support business in their recovery, survival, and new methods of working.
- 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 Engineering Sector **'Mechanical Engineers'** are most in demand.
- 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** since 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.
- **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 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 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 survive. **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**

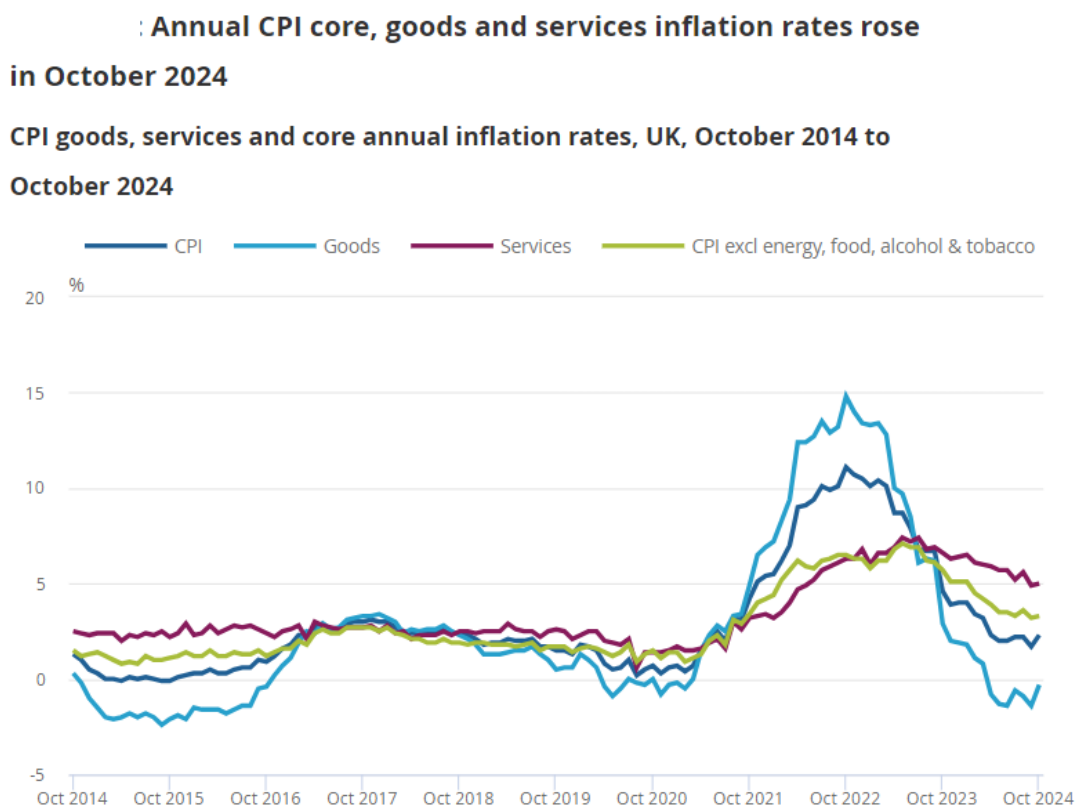


National Context

- This month we have seen the **Government pass two important milestones - 100 days in office and the Chancellor's first Budget** - we now have a clearer idea of what it is willing to do to encourage economic growth everywhere in the country.
- The **Autumn Budget introduced record tax increases to bolster public finances and boost investment**, including a rise in National Insurance for employers, increases to capital gains and inheritance taxes, and the removal of VAT exemptions for private schools. The Budget included an extra £1.3 billion for councils, which includes £600 million for social care, and extra funding for SEND provision and homelessness support.
- Following the recent Industrial Strategy Green Paper and Budget, **the soon to be published English Devolution White Paper will be the next important milestone in the government's growth programme**. It provides an opportunity to reform and strengthen local government in a way that places it at the centre of the country's growth ambitions.

Cost of Living

- **UK inflation rose this month to 2.3 per cent**, a six-month high, this was mainly driven by increasing household energy bills.



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- It means **inflation is once again above the Bank of England's 2 per cent target**, adding further pressure on the Bank of England, beyond that from the budget, to **delay further interest rate cuts** until next year. This follows the Bank cutting interest rates earlier this month from 5 per cent to 4.75 per cent.
- We have also **heard from Ofgem that energy bills for a typical household will rise by £21 a year in January**, the second dries this winter. It means someone paying by direct debit and using a typical amount of gas and electricity will pay £1,738 a year, which remains high compared with pre-Covid norms, with charities warning many will struggle to cope with bills or choose to go without heating at the coldest time of year.
- **Real earnings continue to rise, but at a slower pace.**
- **Annual growth in employees' average regular earnings excluding bonuses in Great Britain was 4.8% in July to September 2024, and annual growth in total earnings including bonuses was 4.3%.** This total annual growth is affected by the civil service one-off payments made in 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 July to September 2024, and for total pay was 1.4%.**

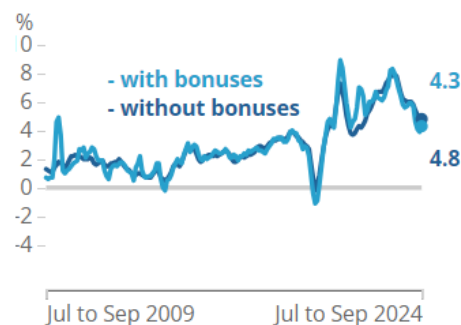
Nominal Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates - nominal pay

Regular and total annual growth rates are down from the high rates over the last couple of years.

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

Source: MWSS from ONS



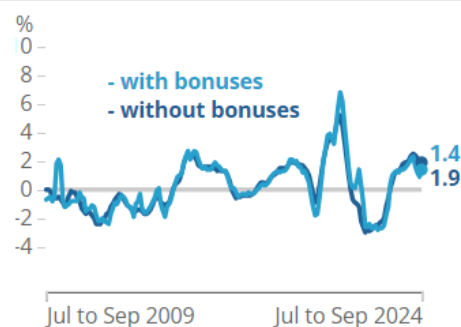
Real Earnings

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

Regular and total annual growth rates are down from the high rates over the last couple of years

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

Source: MWSS from ONS

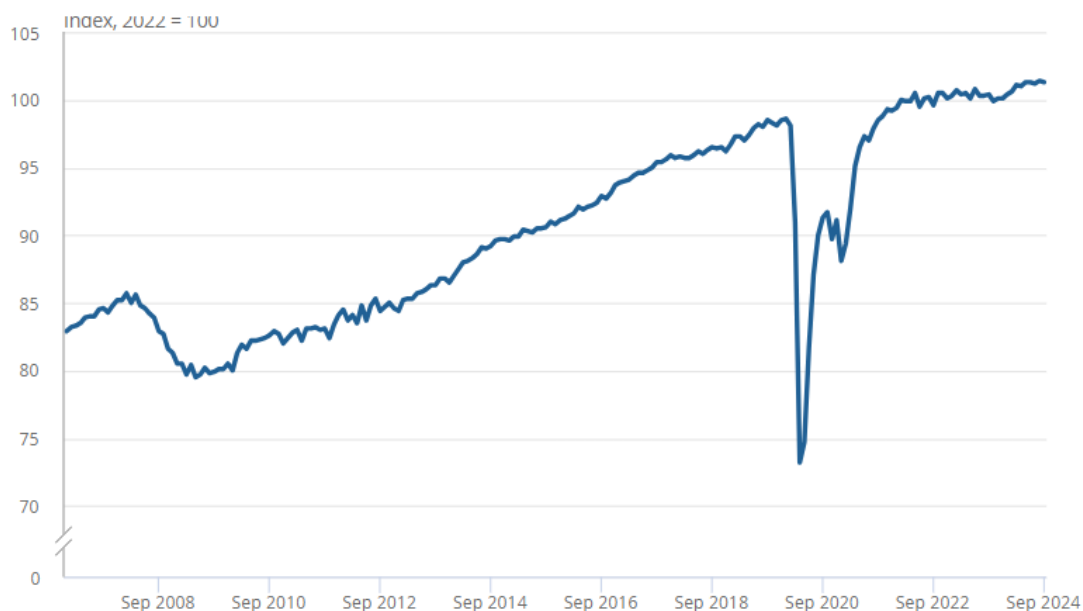


- **There were an estimated 48,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in September 2024.** Most of the strikes were in the health and social work sector.

Economy

- **The UK's economy slowed by more than expected between July and September, with uncertainty about the Budget being blamed for the weak growth.** The economy grew by just 0.1 per cent over the period, and the Office for National Statistics said activity was subdued across most industries. A number of economists said that concerns about what measures would be included in October's Budget had affected decision making by firms and households.
- **Real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 0.1% in the three months to September 2024 compared with the three months to June 2024, mainly because of growth in retail trade, excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles, and new construction work.**
- **Monthly real GDP is estimated to have fallen by 0.1% in September 2024, largely because of declines in manufacturing output and information and communication services,** after growth of 0.2% in August 2024.
- **Services output showed no growth in September 2024,** following an increase of 0.1% in August 2024, and grew by 0.1% in the three months to September 2024.
- **Production output fell by 0.5% in September 2024,** mainly because of a fall in manufacturing output, following growth of 0.5% in August 2024; it fell by 0.2% in the three months to September 2024.
- **Construction output grew by 0.1% in September 2024,** following growth of 0.6% in August 2024; it grew by 0.8% in the three months to September 2024.

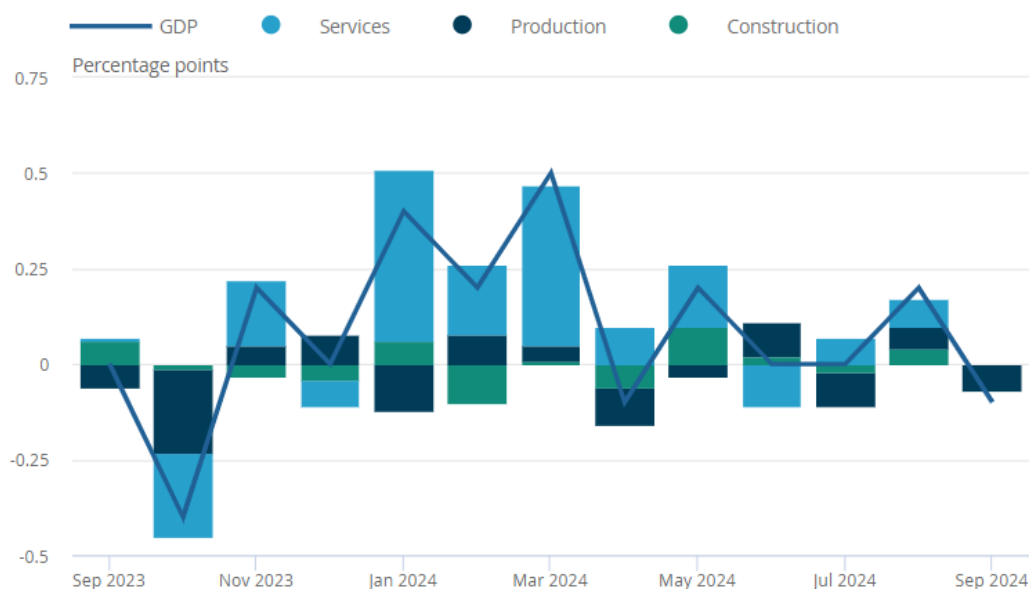
GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to September 2024, UK



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

Production sector output decreasing by 0.5% was the main contributor to the fall in GDP in September 2024

Contributions to monthly gross domestic product (GDP) growth, September 2023 to September 2024, UK



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

Business Conditions

- It remains evident 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**. There is also evidence of **business concerns regarding higher taxes and wage levels following the announcements in the recent Budget**.
- The latest results from Wave 120 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 4th to 17th November 2024 suggest that business conditions continue to remain challenging.
- Approximately **one in six (16%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in October 2024 compared with September 2024**, broadly stable with the previous month; **in contrast, 22% reported that their turnover had decreased** from September 2024, with 23% citing economic uncertainty as a challenge.
- More than **one in five (22%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to decrease in December 2024, up 6 percentage points from expectations for November 2024**; meanwhile 50% of businesses reported that they expect turnover to stay the same, down 7 percentage points over the same period.
- Approximately **one in seven (15%) trading businesses with 10 or more employees**

reported that they expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in **December 2024**, with 39% citing labour costs as a reason for considering doing so; these percentages are up 4 and 9 percentage points, respectively from November 2024.

- In early November 2024, **8% of all businesses and 18% of businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were experiencing worker shortages**; both figures are broadly stable with early October 2024.
- **Looking ahead to December 2024, over three in five (61%) businesses have some form of concern for their business**, broadly stable from November 2024; the most reported main concern was falling demand of goods and services (16%), however, there was a 4 percentage point rise from November 2024 in the proportion of businesses that reported that their main concern was taxation (14%).
- Approximately **one in seven (14%) trading businesses reported they expect their overall performance to decrease over the next 12 months, with this proportion trending upwards since July 2024 (9%)**; meanwhile 43% of trading businesses reported they expect their overall performance to stay the same over the next 12 months, with this proportion trending downwards since July 2024 (49%).
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in October 2024 there were a total of 1,829 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 21% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,317 in October 2023), and 30% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,410 in October 2021**). The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.
- **Retail sales fell last month as shoppers held back on spending ahead of the Budget.** Sales volumes fell by 0.7 per cent in October, with speculation over which taxes might be increased ahead of last month's Budget blamed as a reason why households and businesses were more reluctant to make spending decisions.
- 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 the labour market is cooling and recruitment challenges have eased. Over the latest period employment increased but remains down on pre-pandemic levels, unemployment has increased and is now above pre-pandemic levels, and economic inactivity has 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:



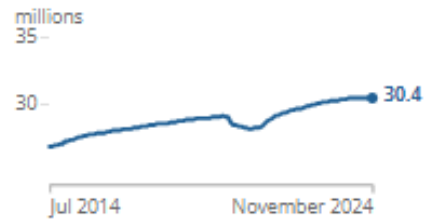
Payrolled employees

The number of payrolled employees

Monthly change: ▼ -5,000
 Since Feb 2020: ▲ 1,322,000

The number of payrolled employees is now well above pre-pandemic levels.

Source: PAYE RTI from HMRC



Employment rate

Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▲ 0.3pps
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▼ -1.4pps

The employment rate is up on the quarter but largely unchanged on the year, and is still below 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



Unemployment rate

Unemployment rate (all aged 16+)

Quarterly change: ▲ 0.1pps
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲ 0.2pps

The unemployment rate is up on the quarter and up on the year, and is 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



Inactivity rate

Economic inactivity rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▼ -0.4pps
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲ 1.2pps

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: ▼-35,000

Since Jan-Mar 2020: ▲35,000

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 9,000 (0.0%) between August and September 2024 but rose by 136,000 (0.4%) between September 2023 and September 2024.**
- Payrolled employees fell by 9,000 (0.0%) over the quarter but rose by 182,000 (0.6%) over the year, when looking at July to September 2024, which is the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for October 2024 decreased by 5,000 (0.0%) on the month but increased by 95,000 (0.3%) on the year, to 30.4 million. The October 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 our 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 74.8% in July to September 2024. This is largely unchanged on a year ago, but up in the latest quarter.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at 4.3% in July to September 2024. This is above estimates of a year ago, and up in the latest quarter.
- The **UK economic inactivity** rate for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at 21.8% in July to September 2024. This is below estimates of a year ago, and down in the latest quarter.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for October 2024 increased both on the month and on the year, to 1.806 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 August to October 2024, by 35,000 on the quarter to 831,000. Vacancies decreased on the quarter for the 28th consecutive period but are still above pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels.
- **Youth worklessness has risen to a 10-year high of 1.2 million**, according to the Office for National Statistics, adding to concerns about an increase in sickness and unemployment. A record 789,000 people aged 16 to 24 who are not studying full-time are

neither working nor looking for a job - thought in part to reflect a post-pandemic rise in mental health problems among the young - with 422,000 unemployed people also looking for work in this age group, a figure which has almost doubled in two years.

- **Disability benefit claims among working-age Britons will rise by a quarter of a million each year until the end of the decade, official forecasts show.** About 4.2 million adults will be claiming personal independence payment (PIP) by 2030, up from just over 3 million today, according to estimates published by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Green Economy

- **The Government will encourage the public to switch to cheaper heat pumps and more electric cars in a push to cut Britain's greenhouse gas emissions by more than half in just over a decade.** The Prime Minister used his trip to the COP29 climate summit in Azerbaijan to announce the UK's new climate target to reduce emissions by 81 per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2035, a cut of around 60 per cent from now, while ruling out imposing extra bans or taxes.
- **Gas boilers are set to be banned in most new homes by 2027.** The Future Homes Standard will mean developers must ensure that new builds have electric heat pumps or non-gas alternatives.
- **An LGA report found that by 2050, there could be 1.18 million UK net zero roles available, but not enough people with skills to fill them.** Addressing this requires upskilling, reskilling and empowering a new generation of energy professionals, including tackling inequalities, says Parminder Kohli, Chair of Shell UK. The Energy Transition Skills Hub opening at Fife College this autumn will welcome a new cohort of energy pioneers. Students will, among other things, get an immersive hands-on experience of a nanogrid, a self-contained energy system that relies on its own energy source such as renewable power.

Housing

- **The Government has confirmed reforms to the Right to Buy scheme, including reduced discounts and allowing councils to permanently keep 100 per cent of sale receipts to replace sold homes.** It is reported that the discount available to social housing tenants will reduce from a maximum of 70 per cent to 25 per cent and that Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner is also considering suspending the Right to Buy altogether for newly-built council homes.
- **The average price of a house is at a record high, according to Halifax, Britain's biggest mortgage lender, who said that demand could slow as a result.** Halifax's monthly house price index found that the cost of the average home hit £293,999 in October, the highest ever recorded, outstripping the £293,507 reached in June 2022.
- **Fewer homes will be built under the new government than were constructed under**

the last administration, according to forecasts prepared by the UK's official spending watchdog. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is projecting that 1.3 million homes will be built across the UK over the course of the current parliament – lower than the 1.6 million built in the preceding years under the Conservatives.

Transport

- **Almost £1 billion in funding will go to delivering 'London-style' bus services nationwide, the Government has promised.** The Department for Transport has given more details on its plans for 2025 after announcing the funding last month and said this would be allocated based on levels of deprivation and population, instead of making areas compete for investment as it has in previous years.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Government has set out further details on their policies and plans for the country in the Budget**, many of which will have a significant impact on the economy. We **await the publication of the Devolution White Paper** which will determine the role of local government in the Government's growth plans.
- **UK inflation rose due to increased household bills** and is once again above the Bank of England's target and is likely to slow further interest rate cuts. This increase in inflation comes at a time when **wage growth is slowing** and may put pressure on some household budgets.
- **Uncertainty about the Budget contributed to a slowdown in the economy**, with businesses limiting investment and households reducing spending.
- It is clear that for **many businesses conditions remain challenging due to a wide range of factors impacting turnover**, while the Budget has increased concerns regarding taxation and payroll demands.
- **The labour market continues to cool, with recruitment challenges easing**, we are seeing economic inactivity decline leading to increases in both employment and unemployment levels. However, youth worklessness and for those that are disabled remains a concern.
- 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 statistics¹ for October 2024, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

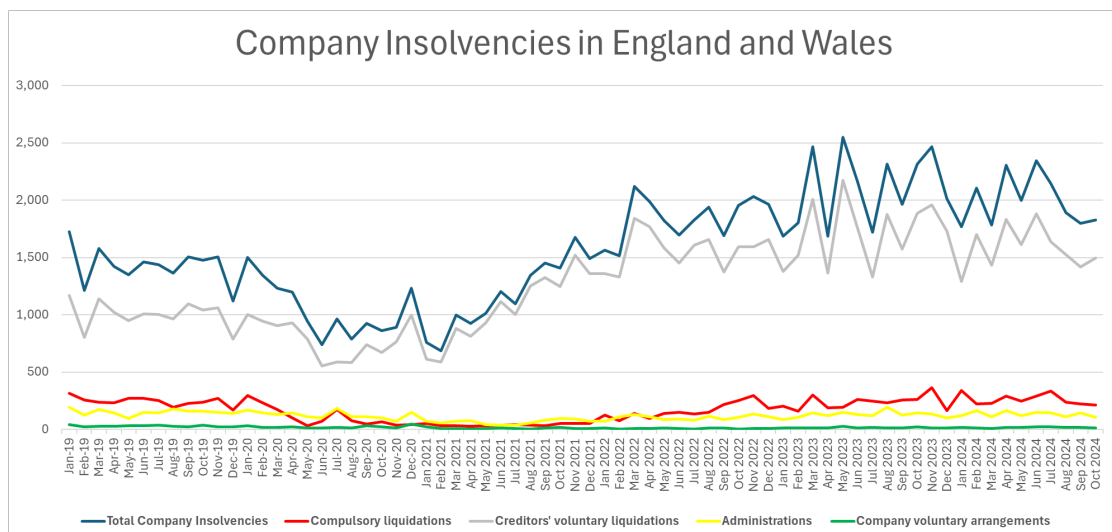
Company Insolvencies

In October 2024 there were a total of 1,829 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 21% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,317 in October 2023), and 30% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,410 in October 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 212 compulsory liquidations in October 2024, which is 18% lower than the number in October 2023, and 300% higher than in October 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 October 2024 there were 1,496 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 21% lower than October 2023, and 20% higher than October 2021. Numbers of administrations are higher than pandemic levels at 13% higher than October 2021, although Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are lower than pandemic levels at 25% below October 2021 levels, although numbers are low.

Company insolvencies between November 2023 and October 2024 are 1% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 212 fewer businesses.



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

¹Source: *The Insolvency Service* - [Company insolvencies, October 2024 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvencies-october-2024)

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between October 2023 and September 2024 continue to be the Construction sector (4,264), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,774) and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,679). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -1% lower, and the Wholesale & Retail sector -1% lower, but higher for the Accommodation & Food sector +5% higher than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are 3% higher and can be attributed to higher commodity, energy and wage costs; lower consumer confidence, long-term impact of the pandemic along with the higher cost of living, interest rate and inflation increases. It is positive though to see some sectors improving.

Individual Insolvencies

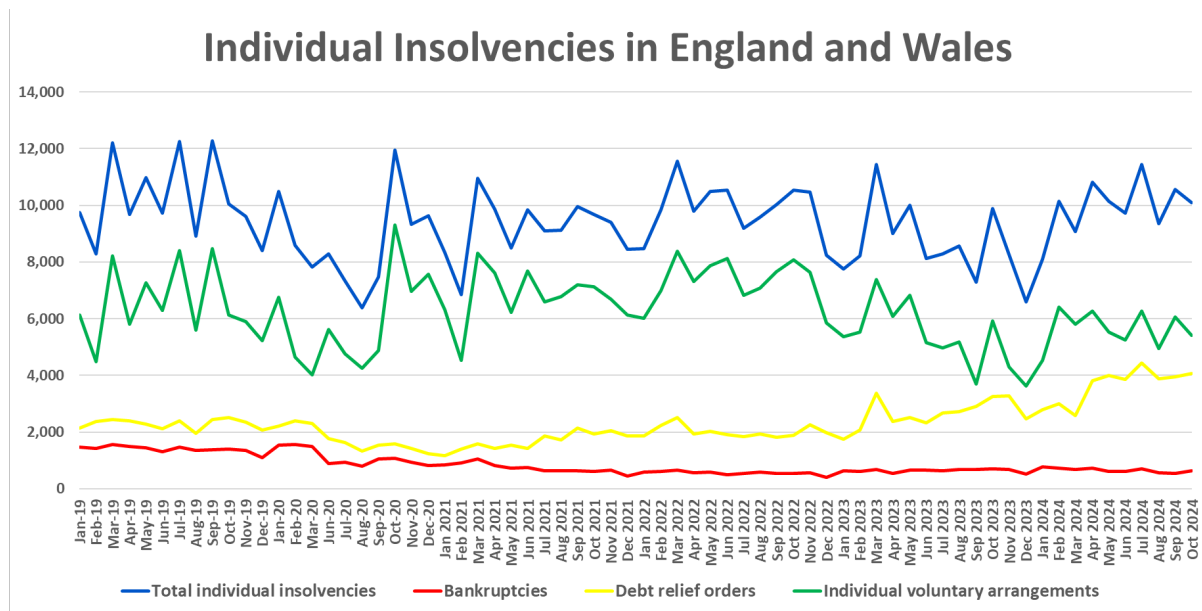
There were **10,096 total individual insolvencies in October 2024**, which was 2% higher than in October 2023, and 4% higher than in October 2021.

For individuals, **630 bankruptcies were registered in October 2024**, which was 12% lower than in October 2023, and 2% higher than in October 2021.

There were **4,061 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in October 2024**, which was 25% higher than in October 2023, and 110% higher than in October 2021.

There were **5,405 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in October 2024**, which is 9% lower than October 2023, and 24% lower than October 2021.

Total Individual Insolvencies between November 2023 and October 2024 are 7% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 7,045.



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **7,099 Breathing Space registrations in October 2024, which is 7% lower than the number registered in October 2023.** 7,002 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 7% lower and 97 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 24% lower than October 2023.

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 remain lower, but bankruptcies and 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 Count²

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: October 2024

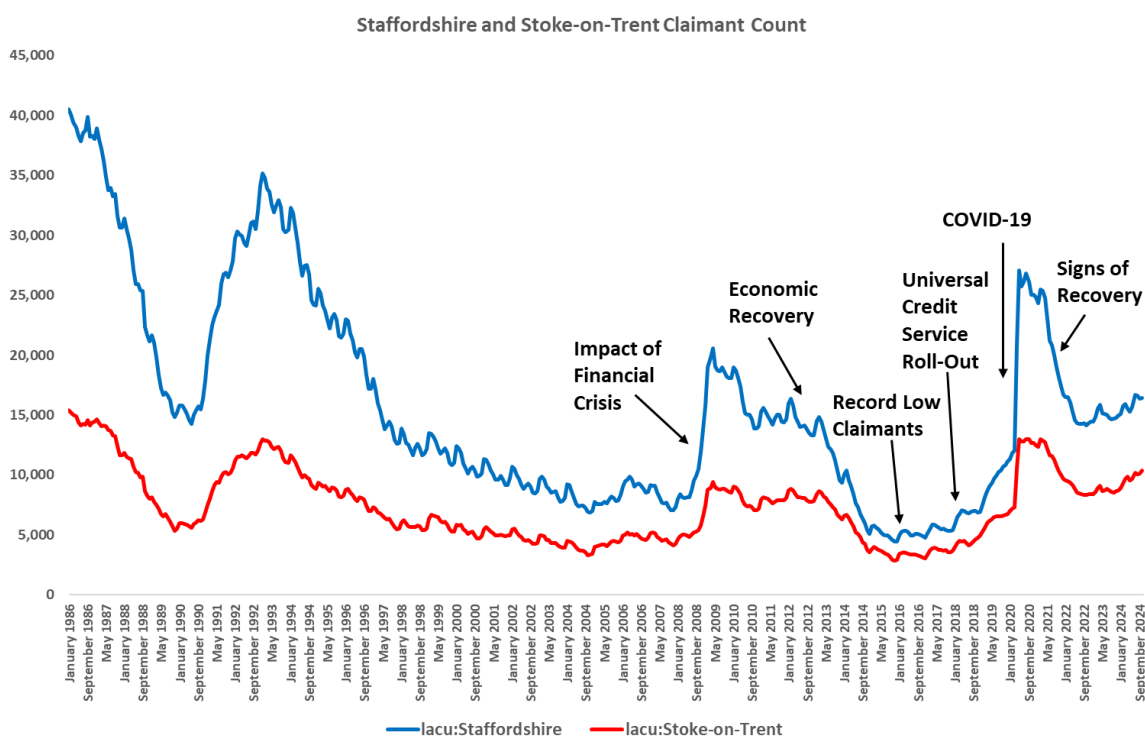
Area	Claimant Count Rate (Oct 2023)	Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2024)	Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Oct 2024)	Number of Claimants (Oct 2024)	Monthly Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Claimants (%)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	3.7	4.3	4.4	1,569,275	22,580	1.5%	505,770	47.6%
West Midlands	4.8	5.8	5.8	215,345	3,515	1.7%	70,995	49.2%
SSLEP	3.3	3.8	3.9	26,765	255	1.0%	7,395	38.2%
Birmingham	8.5	10.8	11.0	81,375	1,855	2.3%	32,005	64.8%
Wolverhampton	7.3	8.1	8.2	13,525	110	0.8%	3,145	30.3%
Sandwell	6.1	7.4	7.6	16,385	350	2.2%	5,605	52.0%
Walsall	5.5	6.6	6.7	11,725	270	2.4%	3,120	36.3%
Stoke-on-Trent	5.3	6.3	6.4	10,350	230	2.3%	3,030	41.4%
Coventry	5.5	6.1	6.2	13,945	170	1.2%	5,945	74.3%
Dudley	4.5	5.2	5.3	10,375	140	1.4%	1,860	21.8%
Telford and Wrekin	3.5	4.2	4.2	4,875	60	1.2%	1,445	42.1%
Solihull	3.1	3.7	3.7	4,840	55	1.1%	1,190	32.6%
Worcestershire	2.9	3.3	3.4	12,250	150	1.2%	3,945	47.5%
Staffordshire	2.8	3.1	3.1	16,415	25	0.2%	4,365	36.2%
Herefordshire, County of	2.2	2.9	3.0	3,245	35	1.1%	1,135	53.8%
Warwickshire	2.5	3.0	3.0	10,955	15	0.1%	3,125	39.9%
Shropshire	2.2	2.6	2.7	5,090	50	1.0%	1,080	26.9%
East Staffordshire	3.3	3.9	3.9	3,015	-15	-0.5%	1,295	75.3%
Cannock Chase	3.3	3.5	3.5	2,200	20	0.9%	545	32.9%
Tamworth	3.3	3.5	3.5	1,705	10	0.6%	215	14.4%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.0	3.3	3.3	2,485	-10	-0.4%	505	25.5%
South Staffordshire	2.5	2.8	2.8	1,870	20	1.1%	560	42.7%
Stafford	2.4	2.7	2.7	2,255	-5	-0.2%	600	36.3%
Lichfield	2.3	2.5	2.5	1,555	-40	-2.5%	235	17.8%
Staffordshire Moorlands	1.9	2.3	2.4	1,330	45	3.5%	410	44.6%

The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming benefits

- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw a **small increase of 25 claimants in October**, with the **total number now at 16,415**. It is of note that Staffordshire had the second smallest increase this month of all areas in the West Midlands and a far lower increase than seen regionally and nationally.
- Over the last month, the **claimant rate for Staffordshire has remained unchanged at 3.1%** of the working age population.
- The **claimant 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%**.

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

- Stoke-on-Trent saw an **increase of 230 claimants** over the same period with a **total of 10,350 claimants in October**, with the **rate increasing from 6.3% to 6.4%**.
- Staffordshire saw a 0.2% increase monthly change in claimants whereas nationally we saw a 1.5% increase and regionally a 1.7% 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 36.2% or 4,365 higher than the level seen in March 2020 (pre-COVID)**, which is lower than the 47.6% increase seen nationally and the 49.2% increase seen regionally.



- **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 increases in the claimant count this month in four of the districts in Staffordshire, with the exception of East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford.
- East Staffordshire has the highest claimant rate at 3.9% and Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest at 2.4%. 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: October 2024

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Oct 2023)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Oct 2024)	Number of Youth Claimants (Oct 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	5.4	5.6	260,145	9,260	3.7%	62,415	31.6%
West Midlands	6.7	7.3	7.6	38,330	1,270	3.4%	10,425	37.4%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.3	5.7	5.9	5,015	170	3.5%	1,195	31.3%
Wolverhampton	10.7	11.1	11.3	2,415	50	2.1%	505	26.4%
Birmingham	9.2	10.4	10.8	14,055	485	3.6%	4,950	54.4%
Wallsall	9.3	10.0	10.5	2,380	115	5.1%	465	24.3%
Sandwell	9.3	9.7	10.1	2,875	95	3.4%	760	35.9%
Stoke-on-Trent	7.4	8.0	8.3	1,875	55	3.0%	470	33.5%
Dudley	7.5	7.7	8.0	1,890	75	4.1%	140	8.0%
Telford and Wrekin	5.9	6.4	6.7	1,000	45	4.7%	240	31.6%
Solihull	5.3	5.9	6.2	930	45	5.1%	105	12.7%
Coventry	5.1	5.5	5.6	2,400	60	2.6%	865	56.4%
Worcestershire	4.6	5.0	5.1	2,135	45	2.2%	540	33.9%
Staffordshire	4.6	4.8	5.0	3,140	115	3.8%	725	30.0%
Herefordshire, County of	3.7	4.2	4.3	495	10	2.1%	80	19.3%
Warwickshire	3.8	4.1	4.2	1,875	60	3.3%	540	40.4%
Shropshire	3.3	3.8	4.0	870	30	3.6%	45	5.5%
Tamworth	6.1	6.5	6.9	395	25	6.8%	100	33.9%
Cannock Chase	6.0	6.2	6.4	450	15	3.4%	85	23.3%
Stafford	4.2	4.7	5.1	440	35	8.6%	125	39.7%
East Staffordshire	5.1	5.1	5.0	450	-10	-2.2%	130	40.6%
South Staffordshire	4.6	4.7	5.0	370	20	5.7%	120	48.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.1	4.5	4.5	535	5	0.9%	110	25.9%
Lichfield	3.5	4.1	4.0	285	-5	-1.7%	15	5.6%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.0	3.1	3.6	210	25	13.5%	35	20.0%

¹The 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 115 claimants with a total of 3,140 young people**. This was a similar percentage increase to those seen both regionally and nationally.
- **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.8% to 5.0%**. It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.6%, and far lower than the regional rate of 7.6%.
- **Stoke-on-Trent saw an increase of 55 claimants to a total of 1,875 claimants with the rate increasing from 8.0% to 8.3% this month.**

Claimant Rate and Youth Unemployment Rate in Staffordshire



- This month the majority of districts in Staffordshire saw increases in the youth claimant rate, with the exception of East Staffordshire and Lichfield which saw small decreases.
- Tamworth has the highest rate at 6.9%, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest rate at 3.6%. Newcastle-under-Lyme has the highest number of youth claimants at 535, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest number of youth claimants at 210.
- 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

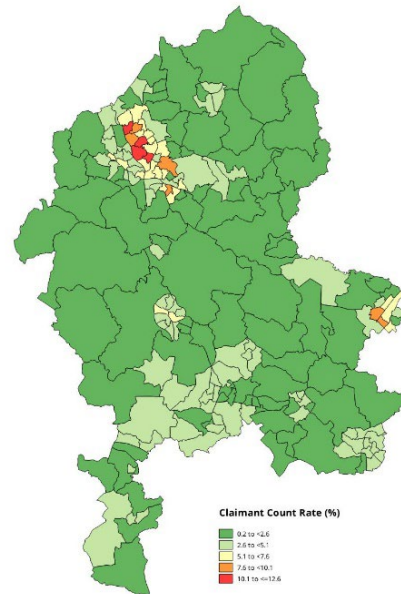
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Claimant Count Rate October 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 51 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: 12.6%/580; Moorcroft: 12.2%/450; Etruria&Hanley:11.9%/640; Tunstall: 10.6%/450; Burslem Central: 10.1%/460 total claimants.

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant count rate were in East Staffordshire with the highest rates in Anglesey: 8.8%/480; Shobnall: 8.2%/445; Burton: 7.2%/220; Eton Park: 7.2%/350 total claimants.

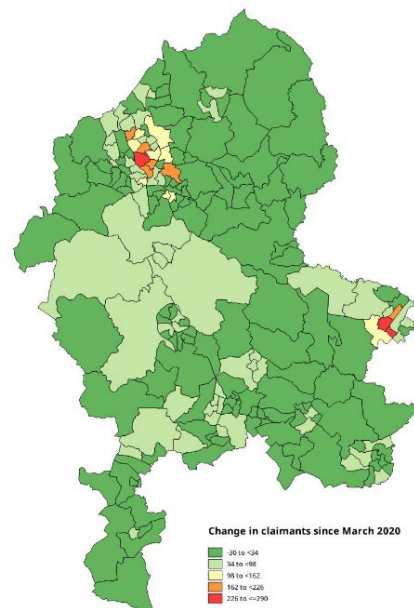


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Change in Claimant Count since March 2020

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 (285 increase to 640); Bentilee & Ubbberley (210 increase to 610); Joiner’s Square (205 increase to 580); Tunstall (200 increase to 450); Moorcroft (190 increase to 450); Hanley Park & Shelton (175 increase to 360); Lightwood North & Normacot (145 increase to 290).

Of the remaining three wards in the top ten, all were in East Staffordshire including Anglesey (290 increase to 480); Shobnall (235 increase to 445); Eton Park (170 increase to 350).



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

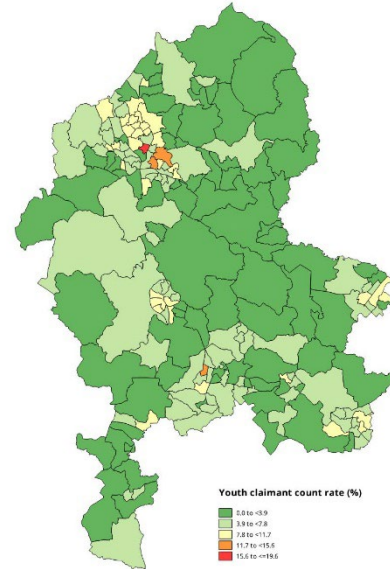
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Youth Claimant Count Rate October 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 87 were above the England average of 5.6% 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: 19.6%/150; Bentilee & Ubberley: 15.0%/135; Fenton East: 11.8%/55; Abbey Hulton & Towsend: 11.4%/90; Burslem Central: 11.4%/70; Tunstall: 11.3%/70 total youth claimants.

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant count rates were ; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 12.2%/65; Burton(East Staffordshire): 11.7% /45; Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 10.3%/75; Forebridge (Stafford): 10.3%/30 total youth claimants.

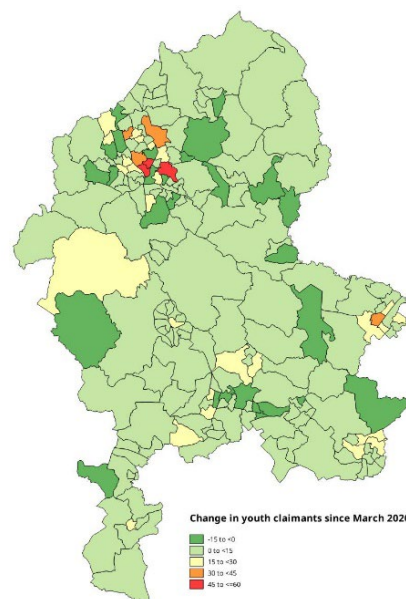


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Change in Youth Claimant Count since March 2020

Of the top ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, seven were in Stoke-on-Trent including Hanley Park & Shelton (60 increase to 90); Joiner’s Square (50 increase to 150); Bentilee & Ubberley (45 increase to 135); Etruria and Hanley (35 increase to 80); Baddeley, Milton & Norton (35 increase to 95); Tunstall (30 increase to 70); Sneyd Green (25 increase to 40).

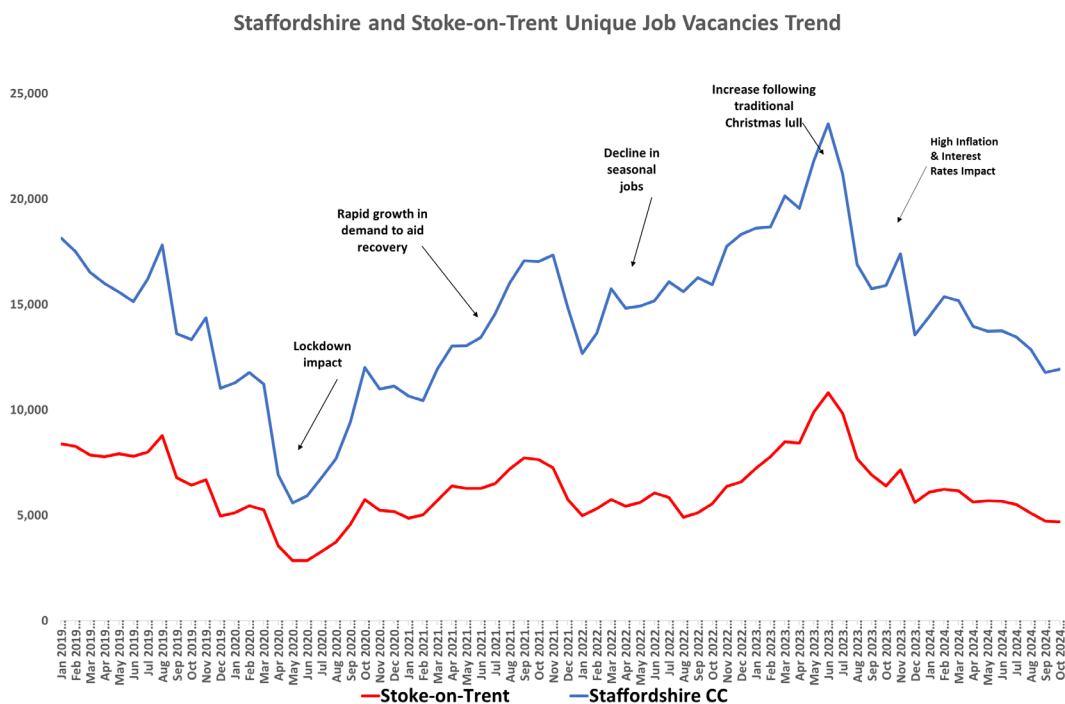
In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, were Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 40 to 75; May Bank (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 25 increase to 50; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 20 increase to 65.



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Job Vacancies³

- **Staffordshire saw a 1% increase in the number of available job vacancies between September and October to a total of 12,000⁴. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent also saw a 1% decrease in job vacancies to a total of 4,700 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region in the last month there was a 3% increase, and nationally there was no change in the number of job vacancies.**
- In October 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 27%. The chart below indicates a general declining trend overall from July last year suggesting a slowdown in the jobs market, at least in part due to business sectors delaying recruitment because of increased costs and uncertainty in the economy. Overall, the outlook remains positive although recruitment demand is declining. New job postings remain slightly above pre-pandemic levels with Staffordshire job vacancies 1% higher and higher than both the national level which remained unchanged and the West Midlands which had a -6% decrease. Stoke-on-Trent job vacancies are -14% lower. Our focus continues to be to support those that unfortunately find themselves unemployed, to transition into work.



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.

³ Source: Lightcast (formerly EMSI/Burning Glass)

⁴ 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

- The majority of occupational groups saw an increase in vacancies during October. 'Elementary' occupations saw the biggest increase of 7% during October whilst 'Skilled Trades' saw the largest decrease of -12%.
- The occupations to see the most significant increases during October include **Secondary Education Teaching Professionals; Teaching Assistants; Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Sales & Retail Assistants; Sales Related; Credit Controllers; Early Education & Childcare Practitioners; Roundspersons & Van Salespersons; Mechanical Engineers; Warehouse operatives; Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks; Transport & Distribution Clerks and Assistants; Bar & Catering Supervisors; Solicitors & Lawyers; Cleaners & Domestic; Primary Education Teaching Professionals; Chartered Surveyors; Taxi & Cab Drivers and Chauffeurs; Waiters & Waitresses; Social Workers.**

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), Biological Scientists, Health & Social Care (Health Associate Professionals; Specialist Medical Practitioners), Sport (Sport Coaches, Instructors & Officials), Retail (Shelf Fillers), Skilled Trades (Plumbers and Heating & Ventilating Installers), Other Elementary Services, Chartered Surveyors, Forestry Workers, Hospitality (Hotel & Accommodation Managers and Proprietors; Coffee Shop Workers), Managers & Directors in Creative Industries.

Pre-COVID baseline trends in job vacancies

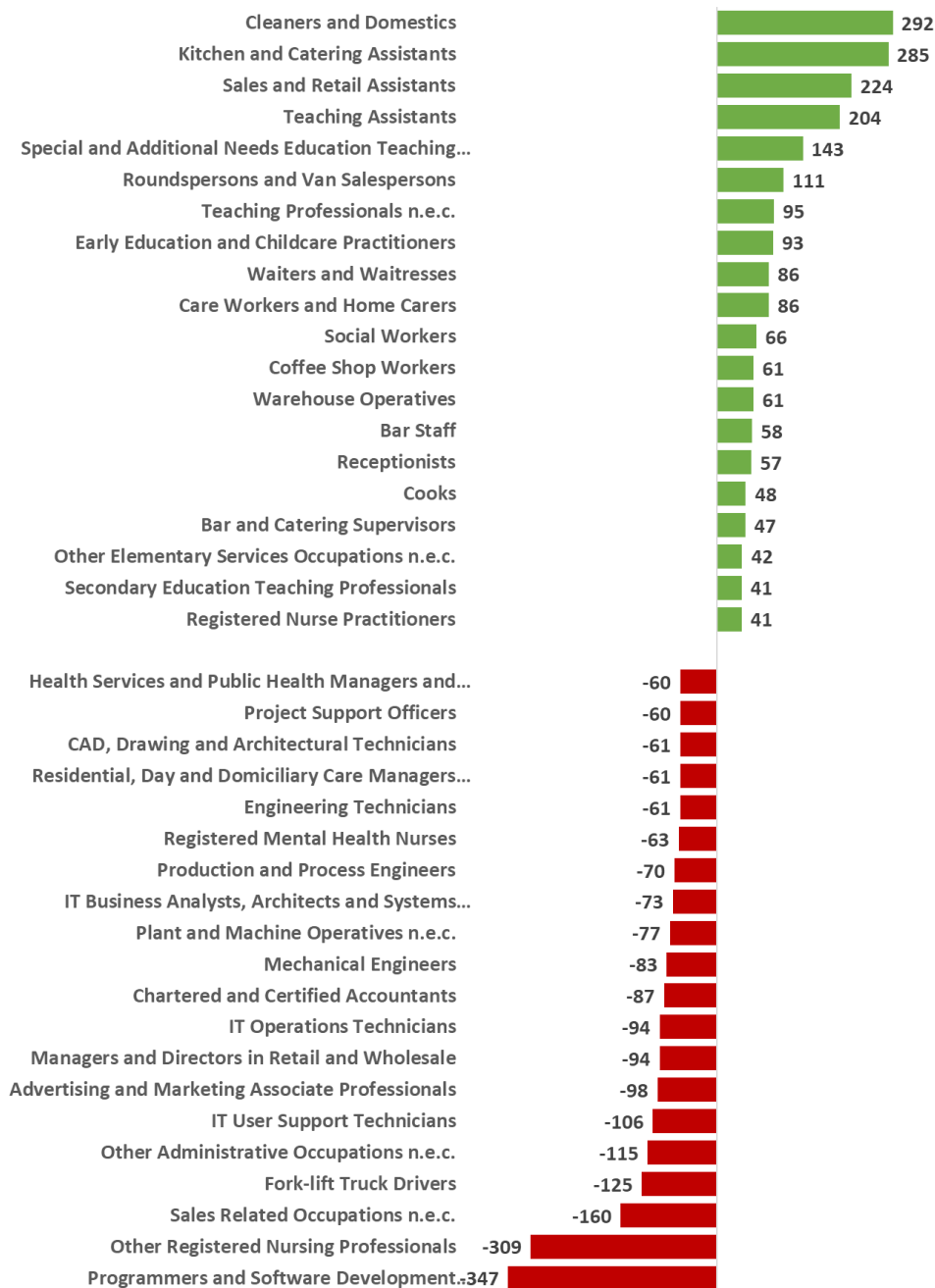
The main occupations with higher vacancies compared to pre-COVID are mainly found in:

- **Housekeepers & Related Occupations** (Cleaners & Domestic)
- **Hospitality** (Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Waiters & Waitresses; Coffee Shop Workers; Bar Staff; Cooks; Bar & Catering Supervisors)
- **Retail & Wholesale** (Sales & Retail Assistants)
- **Education** (Teaching Assistants; Special & Additional Needs Education & Teaching Professionals; Teaching Professionals; Secondary Education Teaching Professionals)
- **Logistics** (Roundspersons & Van Salespersons; Warehouse Operatives)
- **Childcare** (Early Education & Childcare Practitioners)
- **Health and Social Care** (Care Workers and Home Carers; Social Workers; Registered Nurse Practitioners)

o **Cross Sector Business Roles** (Receptionists; Other Elementary Services)

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 Oct 2024 in Staffordshire & Stoke



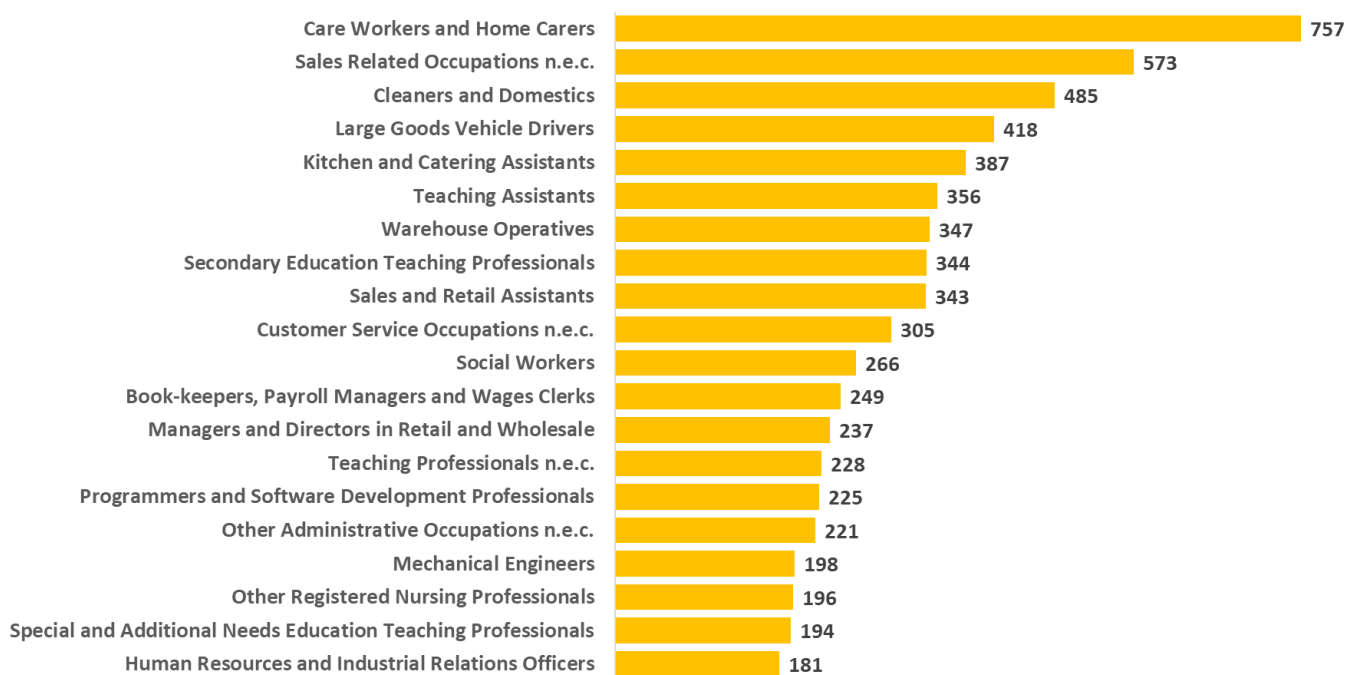
Top Occupations in Demand

- 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 & Domestic' and 'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** also have strong demand.
- 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,' 'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals' and 'Special and Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives.'**
- Demand for **'Sales & Retail Assistants' and 'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is **strong demand for 'Customer Service,' 'Administrative,' 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks' and 'HR & Industrial Relations Officers'** occupations across business sectors to support business in their recovery, survival, and new methods of working.
- 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 Engineering Sector there is high demand for **'Mechanical Engineers.'**

Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire & Stoke during October 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.