

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 53 - January 2025

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 decrease in the Claimant Count which is welcome news. However, there are still challenging economic conditions and changes by the Department of Work and Pensions introduced in May are expected to increase the claimant count nationwide.**
 - **Job vacancies have continued to decline, and new job postings in Staffordshire are now below pre-pandemic levels. In comparison, job vacancies in the region and nationally have declined at a higher rate than pre-pandemic levels. However, there continue to be 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 85 claimants this month to a total of 15,535 claimants.**
 - It is of note that this month Staffordshire saw a decrease whereas the West Midlands and England both saw increases.
 - **The claimant rate for Staffordshire remained unchanged at 2.9%** 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 5.6% which remained unchanged, and lower than the average for England 4.3% which increased from 4.2% this month. 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 a decrease of 30 claimants with the total number of youth claimants now 3,030.** It is of note that this month Staffordshire saw a decrease whereas both the West Midlands and England saw increases. **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit decreased from 4.9% to 4.8% this month. It is important to state 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 an 8% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between November and December to a total of 10,900. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 4% 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 7% decrease, and nationally there was a 6% decrease in the number of job vacancies.**
- 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 'Teaching Assistants'** also have strong demand.
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers' and 'Other Registered Nursing Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Warehouse Operatives' and 'Roundspersons & Van Salespersons.'**
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals,' 'Special & Additional Needs Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants' roles are most in demand.**
- Demand for **'Managers & Directors' and 'Sales and Retail Assistants'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is **strong demand for 'Customer Service,' 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks' and 'Administrative'** across business sectors to support business in their recovery, survival, and new methods of working.
- In the Motor Trade **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians'** continue to be in demand.
- Demand for **'Programmers and Software Development Professionals'** in the ICT sector remains 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 Connect to Work 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, renewables, 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 pioneering business event in Stoke-on-Trent is set to be one of the biggest funding opportunities ever hosted in the region.** Staffordshire Funding Festival 2025 will bring together funding providers and support organisations, offering businesses of all sizes and sectors an opportunity to secure a funding boost. Organised by Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub, The NextGen and The British Business Bank, the festival will be at BET365 Stadium in February. The festival is free to attend and features expert talks and networking opportunities as well as a complimentary lunch and refreshments.

- More than 20 funding, finance providers and support organisations such as BCRS Business Loans, Mercia Ventures, Minerva Business Angels, Michelin Development Loan and more will be exhibiting at the festival. The Staffordshire Funding Festival 2025 is at the Tony Waddingham Suite, BET365 Stadium, Stoke-on-Trent from 10am to 4pm on Thursday 6 February. Spaces are limited, so businesses are encouraged to register in advance at: [Staffordshire Funding Festival 2025 Tickets, Thu, Feb 6, 2025 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)



National Context

- This month we have heard further details around the Prime Minister's commitment to "galvanising" his government behind a series of new promises for voters to judge him against by the time of the next election. **The Prime Minister has pledged to meet six explicit "milestones", including to raise living standards, cut NHS waiting lists and build 1.5 million new homes.**
- **Chancellor Rachel Reeves has pledged to go "further and faster" to improve economic growth after market turbulence saw the cost of servicing UK debt rise.** Pressures on the public finances have increased, after government borrowing costs reach their highest level for several years.
- **Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner has said she wants every region of England to get a mayor, as she outlined plans for a reorganisation of local government.** Under the proposals, the Government wants to merge areas where there are currently two tiers of local authority in a bid to streamline services. The LGA said its members were "open to change" but that local government reorganisation should be a matter for councils and local areas to decide. It also added that "devolution is not an end in itself" and cannot distract from severe funding pressures on local services.
- We have also seen the **Chancellor announce that the Spending Review will be held on June 11 and will set resource or day-to-day departmental budgets until 2028/29 and capital departmental budgets until 2029/30.** Treasury minister Darren Jones has warned that Government departments which do not meet a five per cent savings target in the upcoming Spending Review will not get cash for "new priorities".

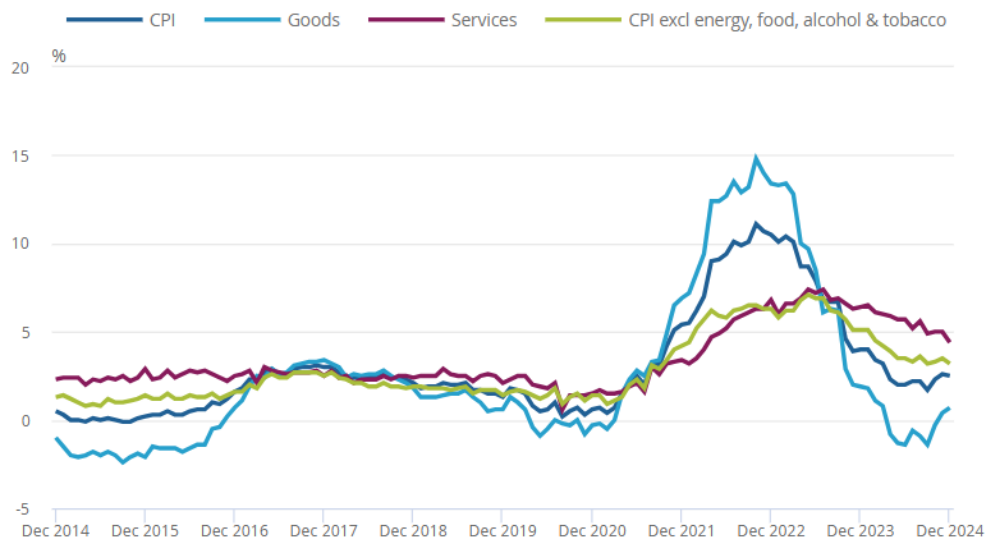
Cost of Living

- **UK inflation unexpectedly dipped in December for the first time in three months, as hotel prices fell, and tobacco costs eased.** The Office for National Statistics said prices rose 2.5 per cent in the year to December, down from 2.6 per cent the month before, but the rate of price rises remains above the Bank of England target of 2 per cent.



**CPI core annual inflation rate was last lower in
September 2021**

**CPI goods, services and core annual inflation rates, UK, December 2014 to
December 2024**



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- **The Bank of England has kept interest rates on hold as it warned UK growth is on the brink of stagnation amid the fallout from Rachel Reeves's budget and threat of Donald Trump reigniting global trade wars.** Reflecting heightened concerns over stubborn inflation, they voted to leave interest rates unchanged at 4.75 per cent, prolonging the pressure on households and businesses from elevated borrowing costs. Threadneedle Street also issued a sharp downgrade in its forecasts for the British economy, predicting zero growth in the final three months of the year.
- **It is also predicted that UK interest rates will fall by less than expected over the next two years after The Chancellor Rachel Reeves revealed significant spending and borrowing plans in the Budget, according to a report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).** In its annual economic survey, the OECD said **UK inflation would also surpass previous forecasts next year**, and **upgraded growth projections for the economy, because of boost from October's budget.**
- **Overall, the Budget impact is expected to see stronger economic growth, but inflation will remain above target and therefore interest rates will fall more slowly.**
- We have seen the **second increase in Ofgem's energy price cap this winter takes effect and means someone paying by direct debit and using a typical amount of gas and electricity will pay £1,738 a year**, which is £21 a year more than under the previous cap. **Bills are about 50 per cent higher than pre-Covid levels, and analysts predict they will rise by a further 3 per cent in April.**

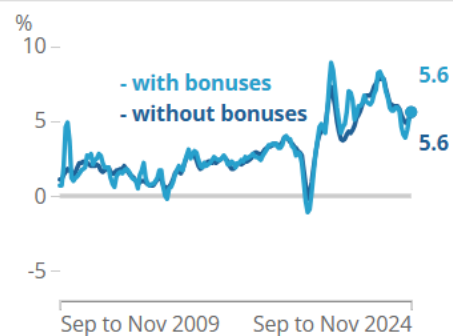
- Real earnings continue to rise at a faster pace.
- Annual growth in employees' average earnings for both regular (excluding bonuses) and total earnings (including bonuses) in Great Britain was 5.6% in September to November 2024. HM Revenue and Customs Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Indicators (RTI) pay data showed a similar annual growth rate when looking at both rates including arrear payments.
- Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), was 2.5% for regular pay and 2.4% for total pay in September to November 2024.

Nominal Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates - nominal pay

Regular and total annual growth rates are up on the previous three-month period.

Source: MWSS from ONS

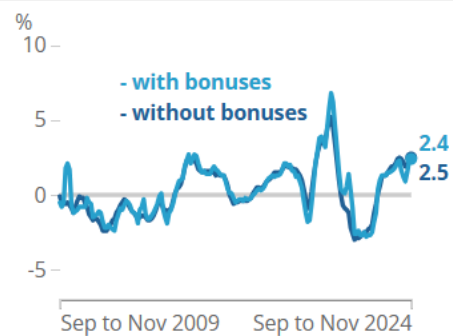


Real Earnings

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

Regular and total annual growth rates are up on the previous three-month period.

Source: MWSS from ONS



- There were an estimated 51,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in November 2024. Most of the strikes were in the health and social work sector.

Economy

- The International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook report indicates that Britain's gross domestic product (GDP) is on track to grow by 1.6 per cent in 2025, up on the 1.5 per cent predicted last October. This UK is predicted to be the fastest growing European country this year.
- Monthly real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 0.1% in November 2024 largely because of a growth in services, the first growth in three months.
- Real GDP is estimated to have shown no growth in the three months to November 2024, compared with the three months to August 2024.
- Monthly services output grew by 0.1% in November 2024, after falling by 0.1% in

October 2024, but showed no growth in the three months to November 2024.

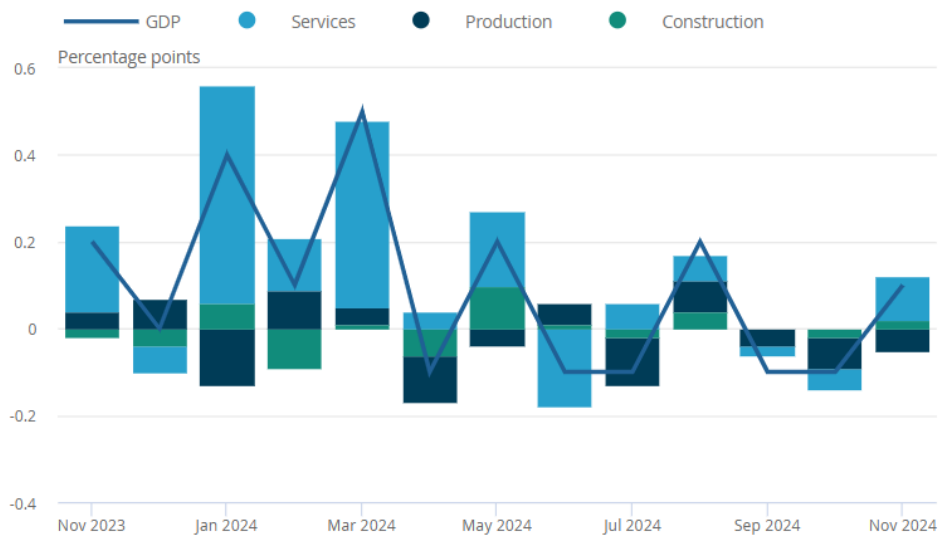
- **Production output fell by 0.4% in November 2024**, following a fall of 0.6% in October 2024; production fell by 0.7% in the three months to November 2024, driven by a decline in manufacturing.
- **Construction output grew by 0.4% in November 2024**, following a fall of 0.3% in October 2024; construction also grew by 0.2% in the three months to November 2024.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to November 2024, UK



The services sector was the main contributor to the 0.1% growth in GDP in November 2024

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



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

- **The Government has set out plans to use artificial intelligence across the UK to boost growth and deliver public services more efficiently.** The **AI Opportunities Action Plan** will be backed by leading tech firms, which are said to have committed £14 billion towards various projects, creating 13,250 jobs. It includes plans for **growth zones** where development will be focused, and the technology will be used to help tackle issues such as potholes.

Business Conditions

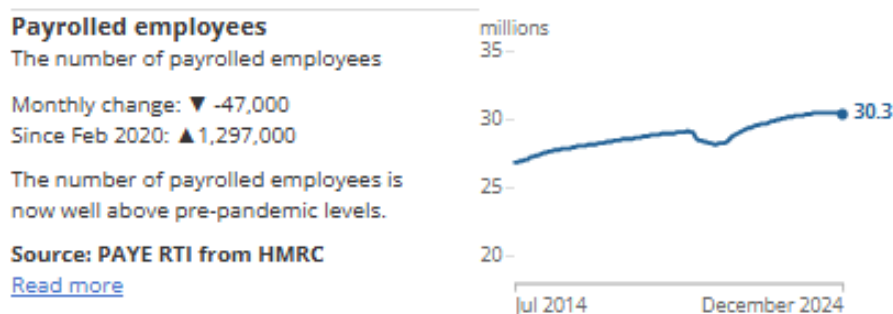
- It remains evident that **many businesses struggling due to a wide range of factors including high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, wage pressures, supply-chain constraints, lower consumer confidence and some labour market challenges.** There is also evidence of **business concerns regarding higher taxes and wage levels following the announcements in the recent Budget.**
- The latest results from Wave 124 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 6th to 19th January 2025 suggest that business conditions continue to remain challenging.
- Around 3 in 10 (30%) trading businesses reported that their **turnover had decreased in December 2024** compared with the previous calendar month, up 5 percentage points from the proportion reported for November 2024, and the highest proportion reported since December 2022; in contrast, 14% reported their **turnover was higher**, broadly stable from last month.
- Around 1 in 5 (20%) trading businesses reported that they **expect their turnover to decrease** in February 2025, down 5 percentage points from expectations for January 2025; conversely, 17% reported that they **expect their turnover to increase** in February 2025, up 4 percentage points over the same period.
- In early January 2025, 62% of trading businesses reported that they were **experiencing at least one challenge that was having an impact on their turnover**, broadly stable from early December 2024; the most reported challenge was **economic uncertainty** at 28%.
- Around 1 in 5 (20%) trading businesses reported that they **expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in February 2025**, broadly stable with January 2025, but up 10 percentage points from expectations for December 2024; 26% cited **labour costs** as a reason for considering raising prices, broadly stable from January 2025.
- In early January 2025, 16% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they were currently **experiencing worker shortages**, the lowest proportion since the question was introduced in October 2021.
- Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported that they had experienced recruitment difficulties in December 2024; this is the lowest proportion reported since the question was introduced in March 2022.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in December 2024 there were a total of 1,778 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 12% lower than the number**

registered in the previous year (2,012 in December 2023), and 19% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,490 in December 2021). The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.

- **Businesses are warning that Budget measures such as the rise in employer NICs, together with the higher National Living Wage, could lead to job cuts and price rises.**
- **A survey by the British Chambers of Commerce has found that more than half of UK companies plan to raise prices in the next three months due to rising costs and taxes,** including an increase in national insurance contributions announced in the recent Budget.
- **The charity sector says rises in National Insurance payments for employers will cost it more than £1 billion.** Research from 400 charities by Charity Finance Group says 87 per cent are now concerned about being able to afford the higher costs.
- 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 continued to ease.**
- **Positively, economic inactivity is down on the last quarter, but employment is also down, and unemployment is up.**
- **This would indicate that more people are searching for work at a time when job vacancies continue to decline, however vacancies remain above pre-pandemic levels so there are jobs available if people have the right skills and interests.**
- The following charts shows the latest **labour market position** and the latest Office for National Statistics data:



Employment rate

Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▼-0.1pps
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▼-1.6pps

The employment rate is down 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: ▲0.4pps
 Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲0.5pps

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: ▼-0.2pps
 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: ▼-24,000
 Since Jan-Mar 2020: ▲16,000

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 32,000 (0.1%) between October and November 2024 but rose by 95,000 (0.3%) between November 2023 and November 2024.**
- Payrolled employees fell by 11,000 (0.0%) over the quarter but rose by 134,000 (0.4%) over the year, when looking at September to November 2024. This is the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for December 2024 decreased by 47,000 (0.2%) on the month and decreased by 8,000 (0.0%) on the year to 30.3 million. The December 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. We 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 September to November 2024. This is largely unchanged on a year ago, but down in the latest quarter.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at 4.4% in September to November 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 21.6% in September to November 2024. This is below estimates of a year ago, and down in the latest quarter.
- **Men are twice as likely to be off work sick than a decade ago, with three quarters of those off saying they have no interest in working. Economic inactivity remains at near record levels of 9.3 million people.**
- **Local government is to be given nearly £300 million to develop new ways of tackling unemployment and inactivity, as part of the Get Britain Working White Paper.**
- **Teenagers will get skills training at the Premier League, Royal Shakespeare Company and Channel 4 as part of a government drive to get hundreds of thousands into jobs or education and make sure “no young person is left behind”.** Some of Britain’s biggest cultural and sporting institutions will provide work or training opportunities as part of a £45 million “trailblazer” scheme across eight English regions, including Liverpool, Tees Valley and the East Midlands.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for December 2024 increased slightly on the month and is up on the year, at 1.744 million.
- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** decreased by 24,000 on the quarter to 812,000 in October to December 2024. Vacancies decreased on the quarter for the 30th consecutive period but are still above pre-pandemic levels.

- **The number of job vacancies in November fell at the fastest rate since the start of the pandemic.** The latest monthly report on the job market from accountancy firm **KPMG and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation** found demand for staff declined at a “sharp and accelerated pace” last month, with the steepest fall in vacancies since August 2020.
- **One of the country’s biggest job recruiters, ManpowerGroup, has warned that job recruitment has significantly slowed in November and continues to be poor, citing the National Insurance contribution increase in the Budget.**

Green Economy

- **The planet has moved a major step closer to warming more than 1.5C, despite world leaders vowing a decade ago they would try to avoid this.** The European Copernicus climate service said 2024 was the first calendar year to pass the symbolic threshold but does not mean the international 1.5C target has been broken, as that refers to a long-term average over decades.
- **The Energy Secretary has suggested the Government could introduce new rules making it mandatory for developers to install solar panels on new build homes as standard,** telling MPs he was “very sympathetic” to the idea. Ed Miliband has pledged to “unleash a solar rooftop revolution”, with builders encouraged to deliver the “win-win” technology to millions of addresses.
- **The Government has abandoned its plans to ban the sale of new gas boilers by 2035, opting instead to implement energy efficiency standards in new buildings that would effectively preclude their installation, while extending grants to encourage the adoption of heat pumps.**
- **The Government has confirmed nearly all homes will end up having to install a heat pump rather than a gas boiler or other green alternative,** in a move that could cost consumers thousands of pounds. The measures are part of efforts to move the UK’s heating networks away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.
- **Carmakers sold a record number of electric cars in the UK last year.** The number of new cars sold in the UK rose by 2.6 per cent in 2024 to 1.95 million, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders lobby group and of those, 19.6 per cent were electric, up from 16.5 per cent a year earlier.
- **The UK is expanding its electric vehicle charging infrastructure with over £500 million approved for new charge points, supporting the Government's 2030 ban on petrol and diesel cars.**
- However, these **plans to roll out 300,000 electric vehicle charge points across the UK by 2030 risks creating a “regional divide” between well-connected areas in London and the south-east and the rest of the country, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).** The NAO found that the Government was on track to meet its goal for 300,000 charge points to be fitted by 2030, but that large swathes of the country were missing out.

It warned that London has more charge points installed per capita than any other region of the UK.

Housing

- **The Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, has said the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, announced in the King's Speech in July, is expected to be introduced in March.** Ms Rayner also said, while questioned by the Commons' Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, that housing targets should be met over the course of parliament.
- **Analysis suggests some local councils in England would need to see at least a five-fold increase in new housing to meet government targets.** The Government has a target of building 1.5 million new homes in England over five years.
- **Industry leaders have warned the UK does not have enough construction workers to build the 1.5 million homes the Government has promised.** The Home Builders Federation and the UK's largest housebuilder Barratt Redrow said skill shortages, ageing workers and Brexit were some of the reasons behind the shrinking workforce.

Transport

- **Bus mileage in England remains 11 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.** The total distance travelled by buses in the year to the end of March was 1.01 billion miles, according to the Department for Transport.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Prime Minister has pledged to meet six explicit "milestones"**, including to raise living standards, cut NHS waiting lists and build 1.5 million new homes, while the **Chancellor has pledged to go "further and faster" to improve economic growth.** The **Deputy Prime Minister wants every region of England to get a mayor**, as outlined in the English Devolution White Paper. While it has been announced that the **Spending Review will be held on June 11.**
- Positively, **UK inflation reduced in December but remains above the Bank's target** and therefore **interest rates have been held.** It is also good news that **real earnings continue to rise at a faster pace**, meaning more money in workers pockets and helping to ease cost-of-living pressures.
- This year the **UK is expected to see stronger growth than other European countries, following the small growth seen in November last year.**
- 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 continuing to ease.** We have seen **further declines in economic inactivity**; however, we have also seen

employment decline and unemployment rise with more people searching for a job at a time of declining vacancies.

- 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 December 2024, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

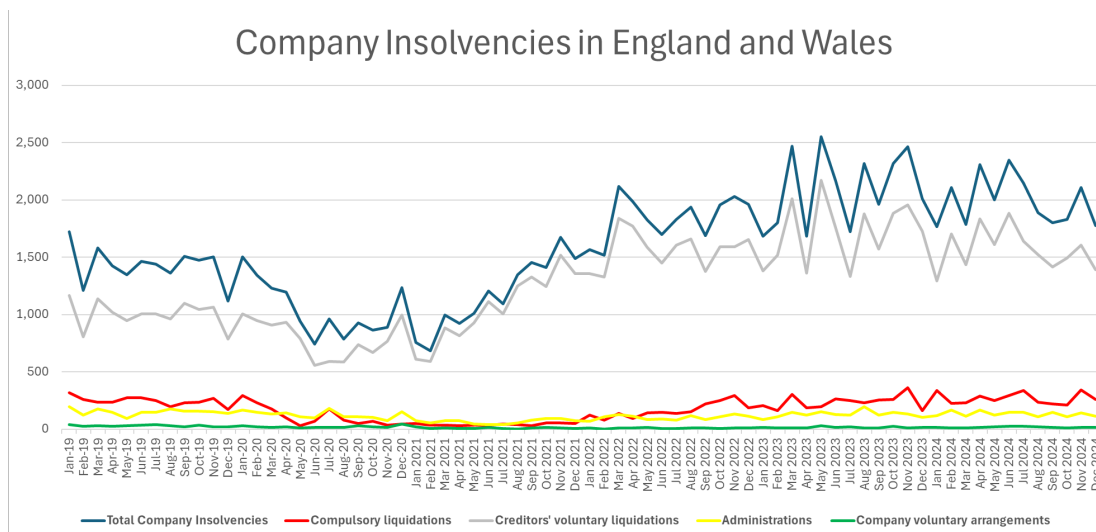
Company Insolvencies

In December 2024 there were a total of 1,778 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 12% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,012 in December 2023), and 19% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,490 in December 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 258 compulsory liquidations in December 2024, which is 57% higher than the number in December 2023, and 396% higher than in December 2021. Numbers of compulsory liquidations have increased from historical lows during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, partly as a result in the increase of winding-up petitions presented by HMRC.

In December 2024 there were 1,390 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 20% lower than December 2023, and 2% higher than December 2021. Numbers of administrations are higher than pandemic levels at 57% higher than December 2021, and Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are higher than pandemic levels at 143% above December 2021 levels, although numbers are low.

Company insolvencies between January 2024 and December 2024 are 5% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 1,291 fewer businesses.



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

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

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between December 2023 and November 2024 continue to be the Construction sector (4,102), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,618) and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,555). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -4% lower, the Wholesale & Retail sector -6% lower, and the Accommodation & Food sector -8% lower than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are -4% lower. It is positive to see improvements overall.

Individual Insolvencies

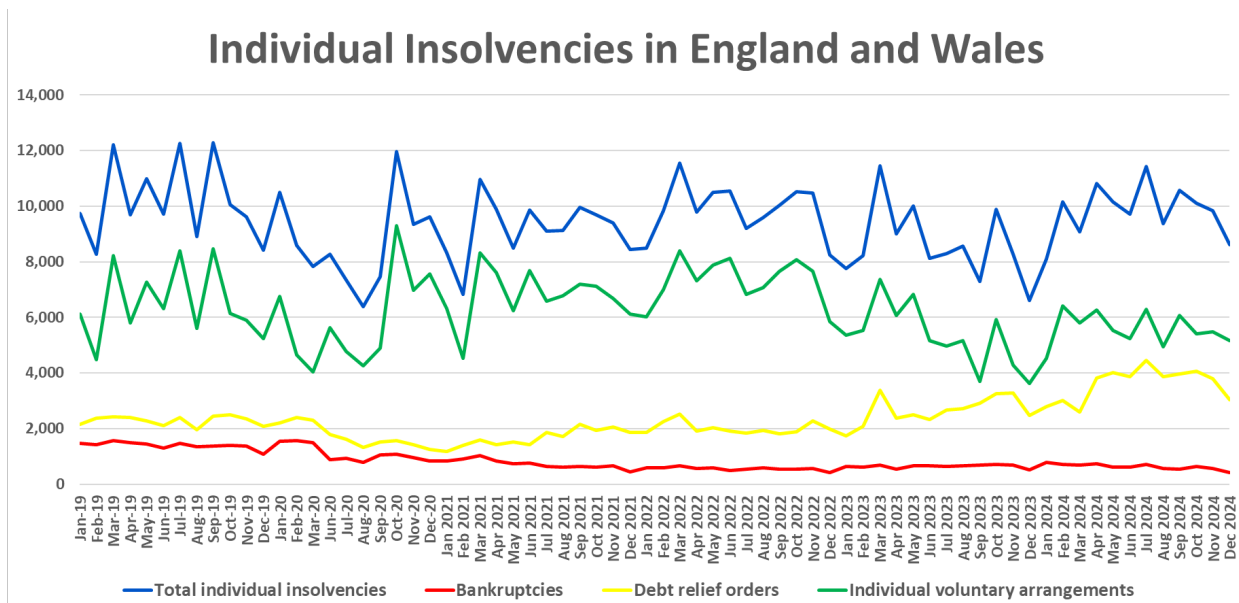
There were **8,620 total individual insolvencies in December 2024**, which was 31% higher than in December 2023, and 2% higher than in December 2021.

For individuals, **415 bankruptcies were registered in December 2024**, which was 19% lower than in December 2023, and 9% lower than in December 2021.

There were **3,044 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in December 2024**, which was 23% higher than in December 2023, and 63% higher than in December 2021.

There were **5,161 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in December 2024**, which is 43% higher than December 2023, although 16% lower than December 2021.

Total Individual Insolvencies between January 2024 and December 2024 are 14% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 14,513.



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **5,650 Breathing Space registrations in December 2024, which is 2% lower than the number registered in December 2023.** 5,563 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 2% lower and 87 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 22% lower than December 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 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 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: December 2024

Area	Claimant Count Rate (Dec 2023)	Claimant Count Rate (Nov 2024)	Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Dec 2024)	Number of Claimants (Dec 2024)	Monthly Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Claimants (%)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	3.8	4.2	4.3	1,517,155	5,710	0.4%	453,650	42.7%
West Midlands	4.8	5.6	5.6	207,945	365	0.2%	63,595	44.1%
SSLEP	3.4	3.7	3.7	25,405	-115	-0.5%	6,035	31.2%
Birmingham	8.6	10.8	10.8	79,970	645	0.8%	30,600	62.0%
Wolverhampton	7.1	7.8	7.8	12,840	-65	-0.5%	2,460	23.7%
Sandwell	6.1	7.2	7.3	15,765	140	0.9%	4,985	46.2%
Walsall	5.5	6.4	6.4	11,180	10	0.1%	2,575	29.9%
Stoke-on-Trent	5.4	6.1	6.1	9,870	-30	-0.3%	2,550	34.8%
Coventry	5.4	6.0	5.9	13,305	-210	-1.6%	5,305	66.3%
Dudley	4.6	5.0	5.0	9,885	0	0.0%	1,370	16.1%
Telford and Wrekin	3.4	4.0	4.0	4,695	35	0.8%	1,265	36.9%
Solihull	3.1	3.6	3.6	4,705	20	0.4%	1,055	28.9%
Worcestershire	3.0	3.2	3.2	11,590	-125	-1.1%	3,285	39.6%
Staffordshire	2.8	2.9	2.9	15,535	-85	-0.5%	3,485	28.9%
Warwickshire	2.5	2.9	2.9	10,575	15	0.1%	2,745	35.1%
Herefordshire, County of	2.4	2.8	2.8	3,065	-10	-0.3%	955	45.3%
Shropshire	2.2	2.6	2.6	4,955	25	0.5%	945	23.6%
East Staffordshire	3.3	3.6	3.6	2,830	25	0.9%	1,110	64.5%
Cannock Chase	3.3	3.4	3.4	2,135	-30	-1.4%	480	29.0%
Tamworth	3.5	3.4	3.3	1,635	-45	-2.7%	145	9.7%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.0	3.1	3.1	2,360	0	0.0%	380	19.2%
South Staffordshire	2.5	2.7	2.6	1,730	-20	-1.1%	420	32.1%
Stafford	2.5	2.6	2.5	2,070	-40	-1.9%	415	25.1%
Lichfield	2.3	2.4	2.4	1,515	-5	-0.3%	195	14.8%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.1	2.2	2.3	1,255	25	2.0%	335	36.4%

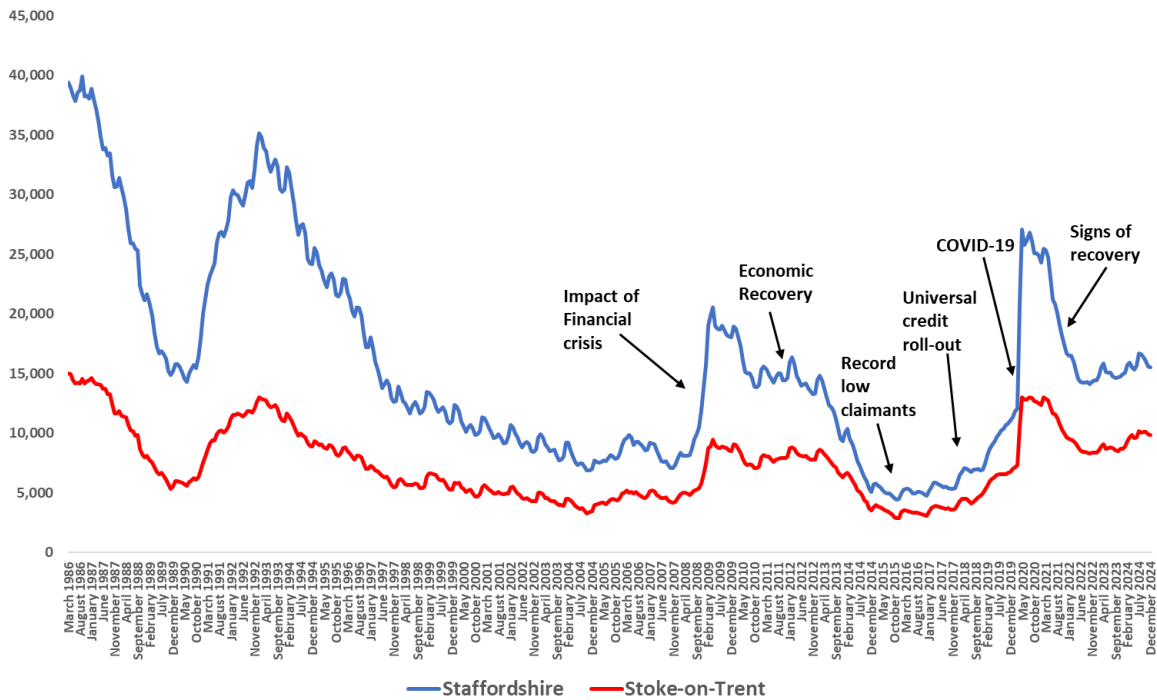
¹ The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw a **decrease of 85 claimants over the last month**, with the **total number now at 15,535**. It is of note that Staffordshire saw a decrease whereas the West Midlands and England saw increases.
- Over the last month, the **claimant rate for Staffordshire has remained unchanged at 2.9%** 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 5.6%, and lower than the average for England of 4.3%**.
- Stoke-on-Trent saw a **decrease of 30 claimants** over the same period with a **total of 9,870 claimants in December**, with the **rate remaining the same at 6.1%**.

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

- Staffordshire saw a -0.5% decrease monthly change in claimants whereas nationally we saw a 0.4% increase and regionally a 0.2% 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 28.9% or 3,485 higher than the level seen in March 2020 (pre-COVID), which is lower than the 42.7% increase seen nationally and the 44.1% 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 2.9% of the working age population compared to 5.6% regionally and 4.3% nationally. In Stoke-on-Trent, the Claimant Count remains above both the regional and national averages at 6.1%.**
- 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.
- Five districts in Staffordshire saw decreases in the claimant count and one district remained unchanged whilst East Staffordshire and Staffordshire Moorlands saw increases this month.
- The highest claimant rate at 3.6% is in East Staffordshire 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

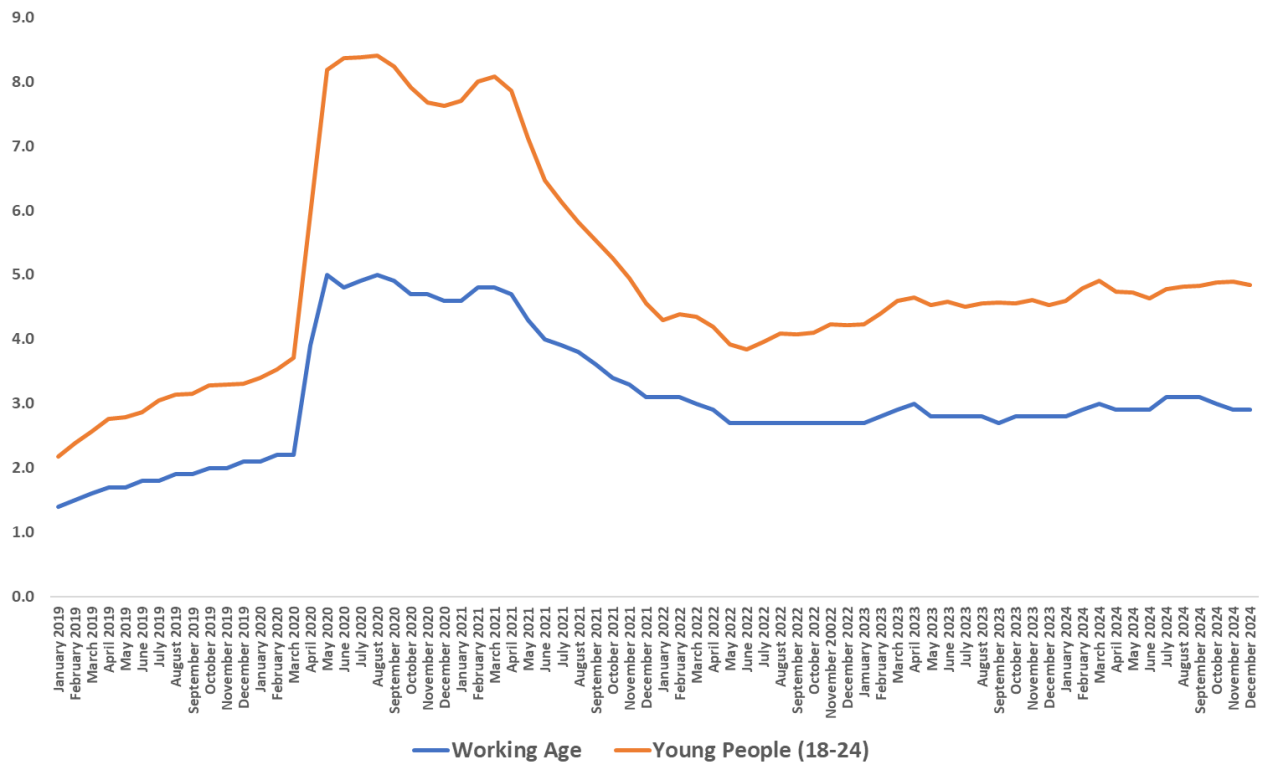
Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: December 2024

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Dec 2023)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Nov 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Dec 2024)	Number of Youth Claimants (Dec 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	5.1	5.5	5.6	260,475	2,855	1.1%	62,745	31.7%
West Midlands	6.8	7.5	7.6	38,200	260	0.7%	10,295	36.9%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.3	5.7	5.7	4,850	-25	-0.5%	1,030	27.0%
Wolverhampton	10.7	11.0	11.0	2,350	-10	-0.4%	440	23.0%
Birmingham	9.3	10.8	10.9	14,200	195	1.4%	5,095	56.0%
Wallsall	9.2	10.3	10.3	2,320	0	0.0%	405	21.1%
Sandwell	9.2	9.9	10.1	2,885	45	1.6%	770	36.4%
Dudley	7.8	8.0	8.1	1,915	15	0.8%	165	9.4%
Stoke-on-Trent	7.6	8.0	8.0	1,815	-5	-0.3%	410	29.2%
Telford and Wrekin	5.5	6.5	6.8	1,020	45	4.6%	260	34.2%
Solihull	5.3	6.3	6.3	940	0	0.0%	115	13.9%
Coventry	5.2	5.5	5.6	2,385	5	0.2%	850	55.4%
Worcestershire	4.7	5.0	4.9	2,070	-40	-1.9%	475	29.8%
Staffordshire	4.5	4.9	4.8	3,030	-30	-1.0%	615	25.5%
Warwickshire	3.8	4.2	4.3	1,905	40	2.1%	570	42.7%
Herefordshire, County of	3.9	4.1	4.1	480	0	0.0%	65	15.7%
Shropshire	3.3	4.1	4.1	890	0	0.0%	65	7.9%
Tamworth	6.2	6.6	6.6	380	0	0.0%	85	28.8%
Cannock Chase	6.3	6.4	6.2	440	-10	-2.2%	75	20.5%
East Staffordshire	4.9	5.1	5.1	460	5	1.1%	140	43.8%
South Staffordshire	4.5	4.7	4.6	345	-5	-1.4%	95	38.0%
Stafford	4.2	4.7	4.6	400	-10	-2.4%	85	27.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.0	4.4	4.2	500	-20	-3.8%	75	17.6%
Lichfield	3.5	4.2	4.2	295	0	0.0%	25	9.3%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.0	3.4	3.5	205	5	2.5%	30	17.1%

¹The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- This month the **youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw a decrease of 30 claimants with a total of 3,030 young people**. It is of note that this month Staffordshire saw a decrease whereas both the West Midlands and England saw increases.
- **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit decreased from 4.9% to 4.8%**. 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 a decrease of 5 claimants to a total of 1,815 claimants with the rate unchanged at 8.0% this month**.

Claimant Rate and Youth Unemployment Rate in Staffordshire



- This month half of the districts in Staffordshire saw a decrease in the youth claimant rate, with two districts seeing no change whilst East Staffordshire and Staffordshire Moorlands saw slight increases.
- Tamworth has the highest rate at 6.6%, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest rate at 3.5%. Newcastle-under-Lyme has the highest number of youth claimants at 500, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest number of youth claimants at 205.
- 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 Connect to Work Scheme, and the new Skills Bootcamps to help prevent them becoming long-term unemployed.

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

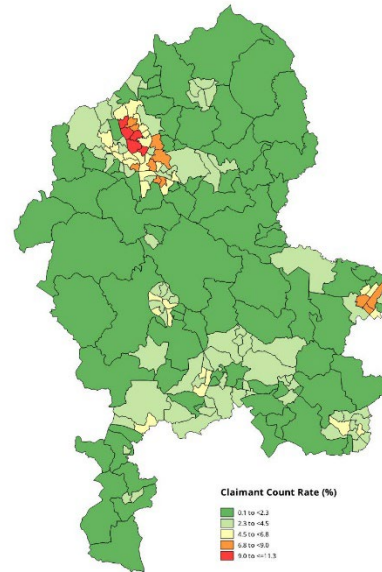
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Claimant Count Rate December 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 50 were above the England average of 4.3% 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 Moorcroft: 11.3%/420; Etruria & Hanley: 11.0%/595; Joiner’s Square: 11.0%/505; Burslem Central: 9.5%/435; Tunstall: 9.5%/400 total claimants.

In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant count rate were in East Staffordshire with the highest rates in Anglesey: 7.8%/425; Shobnall: 7.6%/415; Burton: 6.9%/205; Eton Park: 6.57%/320 total claimants.

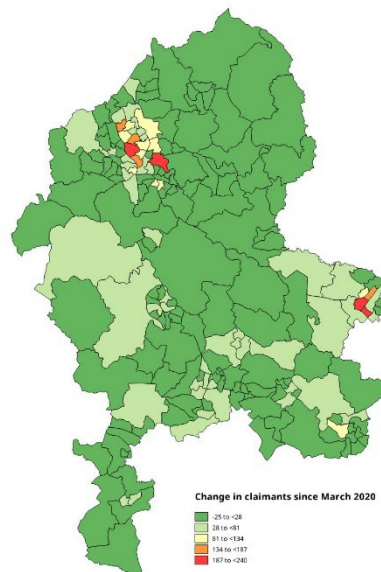


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Change in Claimant Count since March 2020

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 (240 increase to 595); Bentilee & Ubberley (190 increase to 590); Moorcroft (160 increase to 420); Tunstall (150 increase to 400); Hanley Park & Shelton (150 increase to 335); Joiner’s Square (130 increase to 505); Lightwood North & Normacot (115 increase to 260).

Of the remaining three wards in the top ten, all were in East Staffordshire including Anglesey (235 increase to 425); Shobnall (205 increase to 415); Eton Park (140 increase to 320).



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

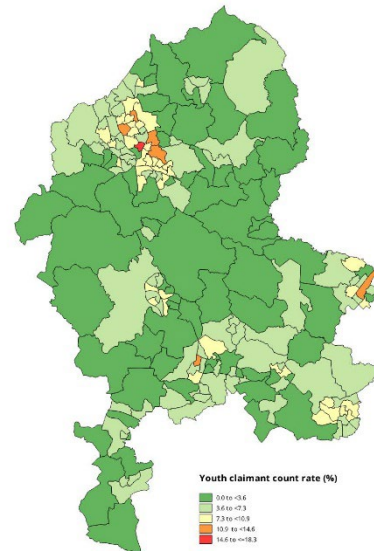
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Youth Claimant Count Rate December 2024

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 76 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, seven were in Stoke-on-Trent including Joiner’s Square: 18.3%/140; Bentilee & Ubbberley: 14.4%/130; Burslem Central: 12.2%/75; Abbey Hulton & Towsend: 11.4%/90; Bradeley & Chell Heath: 11.3%/50; Fenton East: 10.7%/50; Tunstall: 10.5%/65 total youth claimants.

In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest claimant rates were Burton (East Staffordshire): 11.7%/45; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 11.3%/60; Forebridge (Stafford): 10.3%/30 total claimants.

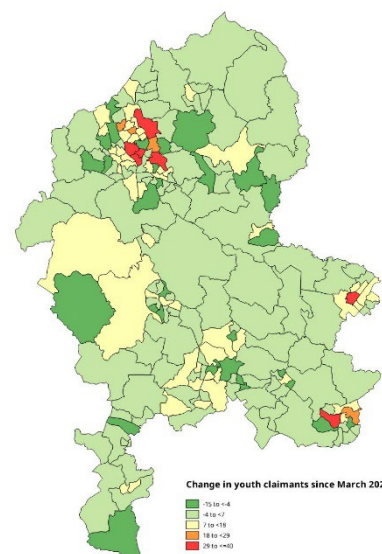


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Change in Youth Claimant Count since March 2020

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 Joiner’s Square (40 increase to 140); Bentilee & Ubbberley (40 increase to 130); Hanley Park & Shelton (40 increase to 70); Etruria and Hanley (30 increase to 75); Baddeley, Milton & Norton (30 increase to 90); Tunstall (25 increase to 65); Abbey Hulton & Townsend (20 increase to 90).

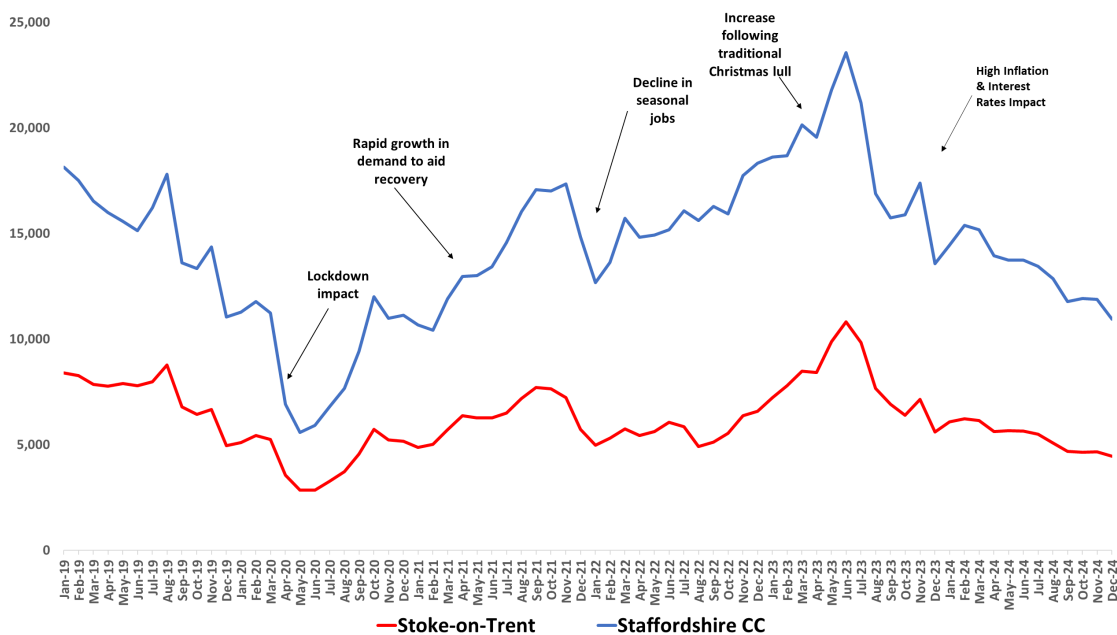
In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, were Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 35 to 70; Castle (Tamworth): 30 increase to 45; Amington (Tamworth): 20 increase to 65.



Job Vacancies³

- **Staffordshire saw an 8% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between November and December to a total of 10,900⁴. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent also saw a 4% 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 7% decrease, and also nationally there was a 6% decrease in the number of job vacancies.**
- In December 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 19% lower, whilst Stoke-on-Trent decreased 21%. 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. New job postings have this month declined below pre-pandemic levels with Staffordshire job vacancies 7% lower although both the national level which is 8% lower and the West Midlands which is 15% lower have declined at a much higher rate than Staffordshire. Stoke-on-Trent job vacancies are 18% 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. ****

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 a decrease in vacancies during December. 'Sales & Customer Service' occupations saw the biggest decrease of -16% whilst 'Professional Occupations' remained unchanged.
- The occupations to see the most significant increases during December include **Social Workers; Teaching Assistants; Authors, Writers & Translators; Production & Process Engineers; Human Resource Managers & Directors; Other Psychologists; Education Managers; Programmers & Software Development Professionals; Optometrists; Managers & Directors in Retail and Wholesale; Veterinarians; Dental Practitioners; Higher Education Teaching Professionals; Photographers, Audio Visual & Broadcasting Equipment Operators; Chartered & Certified Accountants; Quality Control & Planning Engineers; Artists; Taxation Experts; Youth & Community Workers; Skilled Metal, Electrical & Electronics Trades Supervisors.**

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; FE Teaching Professionals; Higher Level Teaching Assistants), Logistics (Road Transport Drivers; Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Delivery Drivers & Couriers), Retail (Sales & Retail Assistants; Managers & Directors), Health & Social Care (Dental Practitioners; HealthCare Practice Managers; Social Workers; Other Psychologists; Specialist Medical Practitioners), Child Minders, Legal Associate Professionals, Caretakers, Hotel & Accommodation Mgrs/Proprietors, Brokers, Business Sales Executives.

Pre-COVID baseline trends in job vacancies

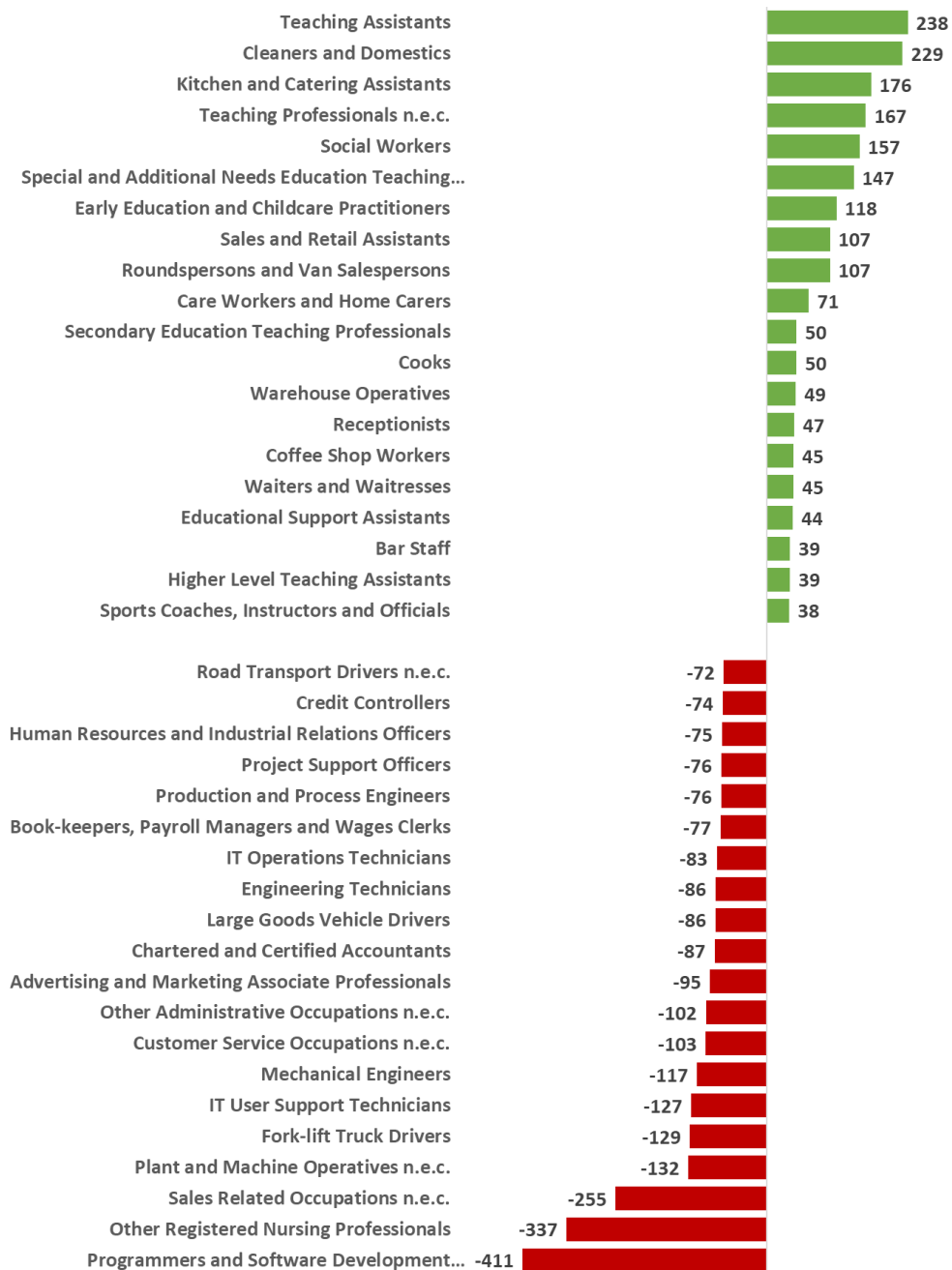
The main occupations with higher vacancies compared to pre-COVID are mainly found in:

- **Education** (Teaching Assistants; Teaching Professionals; SEND Teaching Professionals; Secondary Education Teaching Professionals; Educational Support Assistants; Higher Level Teaching Assistants)
- **Housekeepers & Related Occupations** (Cleaners & Domestic)
- **Hospitality** (Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Cooks; Coffee Shop Workers Waiters & Waitresses; Bar Staff)
- **Health and Social Care** (Social Workers, Care Workers and Home Carers)
- **Retail & Wholesale** (Sales & Retail Assistants)
- **Logistics** (Roundspersons & Van Salespersons; Warehouse Operatives)
- **Childcare** (Early Education & Childcare Practitioners)
- **Cross Sector Business Roles** (Receptionists)

- o **Sport** (Sports Coaches, Instructors & Officials)

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 Dec 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 ‘Teaching Assistants’ also have strong demand.**



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

Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire & Stoke during December 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 Connect to Work 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, renewables, 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.