

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 54 - February 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 an increase in the Claimant Count which is reflective of the challenging economic conditions that businesses continue to operate in across the country. Changes by the Department of Work and Pensions introduced in May 2024 are also expected to increase the claimant count nationwide.**
 - **Job vacancies have increased this month, and new job postings in Staffordshire are now slightly above pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, job vacancies in the region and nationally have declined below pre-pandemic levels.**
 - **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, increased 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 350 claimants this month to a total of 15,615 claimants.**
 - Both the West Midlands and England also saw increases in the claimant count this month.
 - **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 increased from 5.5%, 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 an increase of 25 claimants with the total number of youth claimants now 3,005. Staffordshire saw a 0.8% increase** in line with a **0.8% increase in the West Midlands but lower than the 1.3% increase in England this month. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit remained unchanged at 4.8% this month. It is important to state that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate of 7.5%.** Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or to continue in education and training.
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- Turning to job vacancies, **Staffordshire saw an 8% increase in the number of available job vacancies between December and January to a total of 11,800. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 12% increase in job vacancies to a total of 5,000 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the last month there was a 10% increase, and nationally there was an 8% increase 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 & Home Carers'** being the most in demand occupations.
- The following occupations **'Sales Related,' 'Cleaners & Domestic's'** and **'Teaching Assistants'** also have strong demand.
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives'** and **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers.'**
- 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,' 'Other Administrative'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** across business sectors.
- In the Motor Trade **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians'** continue to be in demand.
- In the Engineering sector **'Production & Process Engineers'** are in demand.
- Demand for **'Programmers & 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 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 the digital economy (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 has continued demand with 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 yours

To 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.

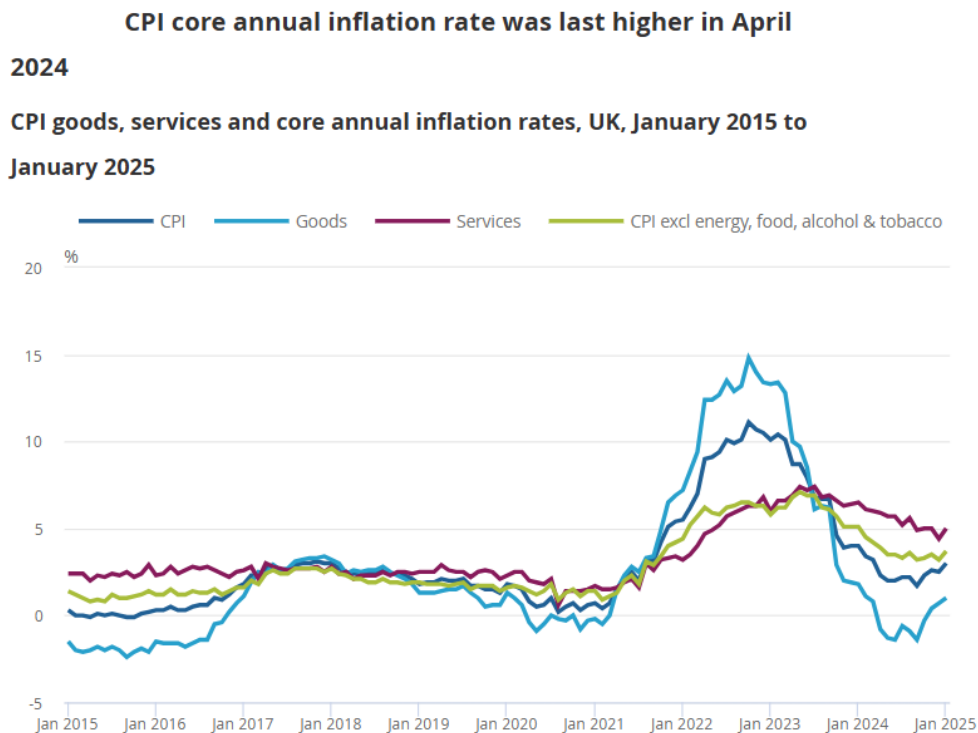
- **Businesses in Staffordshire can now apply for free energy assessments through the Green Solutions scheme.** The scheme aims to help businesses reduce their energy consumption and costs for a greener future and more sustainable business practices. Businesses will get a free energy assessment plus 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.

National Context

- This month the **Chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined plans for economic growth, backing major projects like Heathrow's third runway, building nine new reservoirs and the Oxford-Cambridge arc - which she says has the "potential to be Europe's Silicon Valley"**. There was also confirmation of a **new approach to the National Wealth Fund and Office for Investment to get regional development happening faster**. The Chancellor also **suggested easing planning rules and didn't rule out tax rises in the Spring Budget**.
- Although **Labour's industrial strategy will now be published in June, alongside the spending review**. Plans for key sectors like life sciences and advanced manufacturing will be released earlier to boost business confidence and signal efforts to drive growth.

Cost of Living

- **The UK's inflation rate unexpectedly increased from 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent in January, the highest level in 10 months** and driven by higher air fares, food and private school fees. The rate remains above the Bank of England target of 2 per cent.



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- **Annual growth in employees' average regular earnings excluding bonuses in Great Britain was 5.9% in October to December 2024, and annual growth in total earnings including bonuses was 6.0%**. HM Revenue and Customs Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Indicators (RTI) pay data showed a similar annual growth rate when compared with

Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) total earnings including arrear payments.

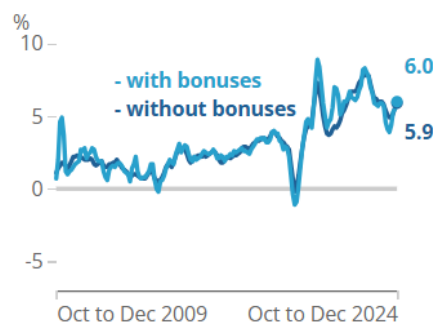
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), was 2.5% for both regular pay and total pay in October to December 2024.**

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 52,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in December 2024.** Most of the strikes were in the health and social work sector.

Economy

- **The UK economy grew 0.1 per cent in late 2024, avoiding immediate recession. Annual GDP rose 0.8 per cent, while GDP per capita fell for two quarters.**
- **The EY ITEM Club, a UK economic forecasting group, has reduced its estimate for GDP growth to 1 per cent down from 1.5 per cent for 2025.** The figure has been revised ahead of business tax and wage rises expected in April, however rising consumer confidence and wage increases are predicted to contribute to a rise in growth of 1.6 per cent in 2026.
- **Monthly real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 0.4% in December 2024,** largely because of growth in the service sector, following growth of 0.1% in November 2024.
- **Monthly services output grew by 0.4% in December 2024,** following growth of 0.2% in November 2024, and grew by 0.2% in the three months to December 2024.
- **Production output grew by 0.5% in December 2024,** following a fall of 0.5% in November 2024; production fell by 0.8% in the three months to December 2024, driven by a decline in manufacturing output.

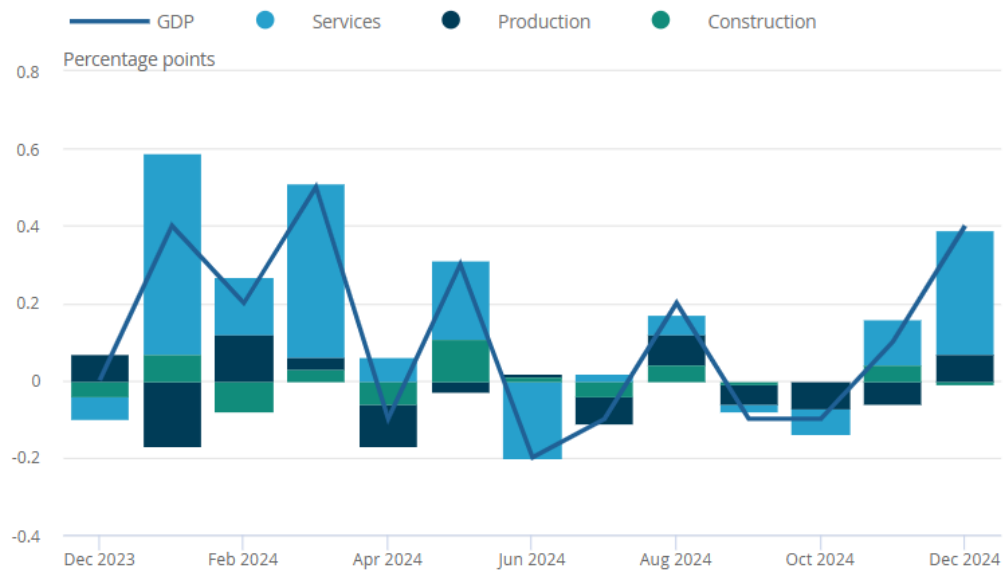
- **Construction output fell by 0.2% in December 2024**, following growth of 0.6% in November 2024, and grew by 0.5% in the three months to December 2024.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to December 2024, UK



The services sector was the main contributor to the 0.4% growth in GDP in December 2024

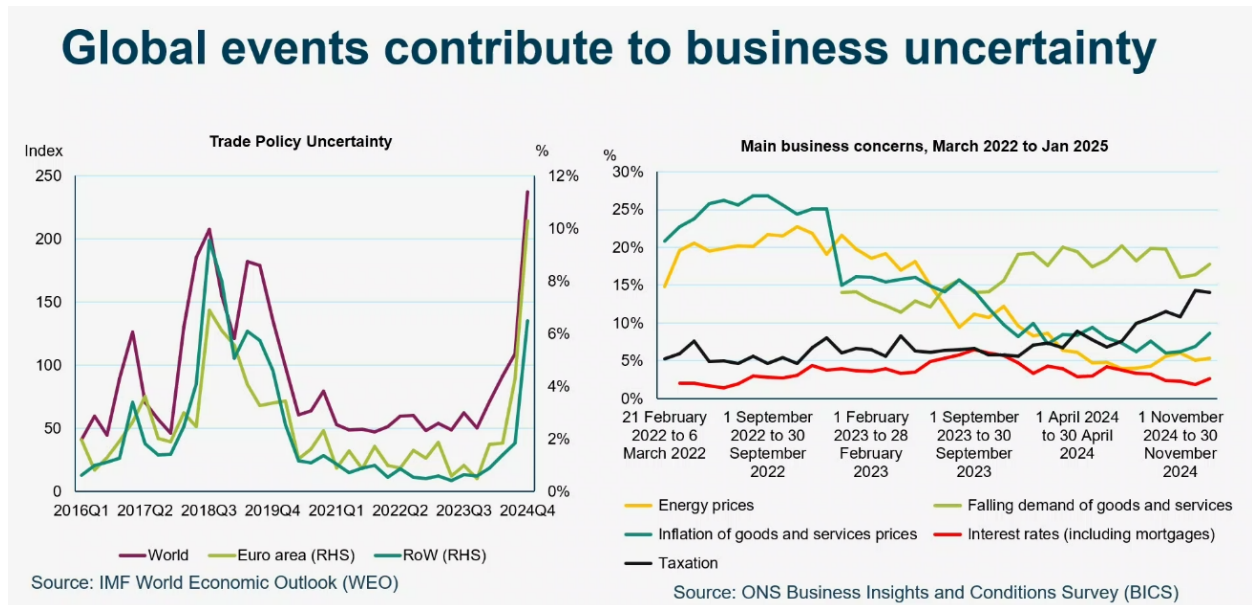
Contributions to monthly gross domestic product (GDP) growth, UK, December 2023 to December 2024



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 some labour market challenges**. There is also evidence of **business concerns regarding higher taxes and wage levels following the announcements in the recent Budget**. Global events are also contributing to business uncertainty, with emerging new trade policies:



- The latest results from Wave 126 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 3rd to 16th February 2025 suggest that business conditions continue to remain challenging.
- Approximately one in six (16%) trading businesses reported that their **turnover had increased** in January 2025 compared with the previous calendar month, up 2 percentage points from December 2024; the proportion that reported a **decrease in turnover** (28%) fell by 2 percentage points over the same period, in line with movements seen at this time of the year in 2023 and 2024.
- More than one in five (22%) trading businesses reported that they **expect their turnover to increase** in March 2025, up 5 percentage points compared with February 2025; conversely, 13% reported that they **expect their turnover to decrease**, down 6 percentage points over the same period, but in line with expectations seen at this time in previous years.
- More than a quarter (28%) of trading businesses reported an **increase in the prices of goods or services bought** in January 2025 when compared with December 2024, up 4 percentage points from the previous month, and the largest proportion reported since July 2023.
- More than 1 in 10 (13%) trading businesses reported an **increase in the prices of goods**

or services sold in January 2025 when compared with December 2024, up 5 percentage points from the previous month, and the largest proportion reported since April 2024.

- More than 4 in 10 (46%) trading businesses reported they were **not considering raising prices in March 2025**, broadly stable with February 2025; **labour costs** continued to be reported as the main reason for businesses **considering raising prices**, at 28%.
- When looking ahead to March 2025, **65% of businesses reported having some form of concern for their business**, broadly stable with February 2025; the most-reported **main concern continues to be falling demand for goods and services**, at 18%.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in January 2025 there were a total of 1,935 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 9% higher than the number registered in the previous year (1,768 in January 2024), and 23% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,567 in January 2022).** The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.
- **There has been a record jump in the number of UK businesses in critical financial distress, according to insolvency specialists Begbies Traynor.** Businesses in the most distress include those in hospitality, leisure and retail, but the construction industry is also facing challenges.
- **More than two-thirds of hospitality businesses will reduce staffing as a result of tax changes taking effect in April**, according to research by industry bodies. Of the businesses polled by the British Beer and Pub Association, the British Institute of Innkeeping, Hospitality Ulster and UKHospitality, 60 per cent said they would cancel planned investment as a result of the increased expenses.
- It is important that we continue to support viable businesses through these challenging times to survive and then grow.

Labour Market

- In summary, the **labour market looks fairly flat overall**, not surprising given the current economic outlook. Encouragingly, this month's labour market figures show that **economic inactivity has continued to decline with resultant increases in both employment and unemployment. This is helping to create a larger pool of labour for businesses to access, at a time when the long-term decline in job vacancies has slowed.**
- The following charts shows the latest **labour market position** and the latest Office for National Statistics data:

Payrolled employees

The number of payrolled employees

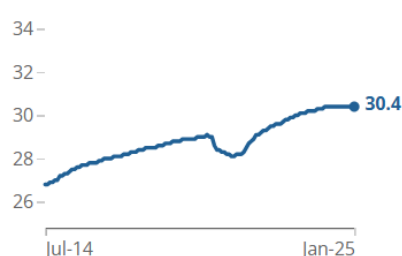
Monthly change: ▲ 21,000

Since Feb 2020: ▲ 1,370,000

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

Source: PAYE RTI from HMRC

millions



Employment rate

Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▲0.1pps
Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▼-1.5pps

The employment rate is up on the quarter and up 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: ▲0.4pps

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: ▼-0.1pps
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: ▼-9,000
Since Jan-Mar 2020: ▲23,000

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 14,000 (0.0%) between November and December 2024 but rose by 44,000 (0.1%) between December 2023 and December 2024.**
- Payrolled employees fell by 3,000 (0.0%) over the quarter but rose by 106,000 (0.3%) over the year, when looking at October to December 2024. This is the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for January 2025 increased by 21,000 (0.1%) on the month and increased by 49,000 (0.2%) on the year to 30.4 million. The January 2025 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 74.9% in October to December 2024. This is above estimates of a year ago, and up in the latest quarter.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at 4.4% in October to December 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 21.5% in October to December 2024. This is below estimates of a year ago, and down in the latest quarter.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for January 2025 increased on the month and is up on the year, at 1.750 million.
- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** decreased by 9,000 on the quarter to 819,000 in November 2024 to January 2025. Vacancies decreased on the quarter for the 31st consecutive period but are still above pre-pandemic levels.
- **UK employers are considering the largest wave of redundancies in a decade due to declining business confidence and anticipated tax increases, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)**, whose recent survey of 2,000 employers found that the number of businesses considering redundancies is at the highest level in 10 years, barring the COVID19 pandemic.
- **The UK's construction sector faces a significant labour shortage, with the lowest ratio of construction workers per capita on record.** This shortage poses a substantial challenge to the Government's economic growth plans, including its goal of building 1.5 million new homes.
- **Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner has pledged to address construction worker**

shortages, including plans for better training and fair pay to boost housebuilding.

- **The construction industry wants a special visa to be created to import enough workers it says are critical to meeting the Government's target to build more than 1.5 million new homes in the UK by the end of this parliament.** The **National Federation of Builders** said there is a shortage of more than 200,000 construction workers and has proposed a three-to-five-year construction visa alongside a "one for one" scheme whereby for every overseas worker employed, a British worker in the same discipline is funded or trained.
- **A looming lorry driver shortage threatens plans to ramp up housebuilding and infrastructure projects in order to drive economic growth.** The **Road Haulage Association** has issued a warning to ministers that the logistics industry faces "significant structural challenges" and if the Government wants to hit its target of building 1.5 million homes, the industry needs to recruit 40,000 drivers a year for the next five years.
- **The LGA has launched its latest Pathways to Planning initiative, through which it is offering to cover all or part of graduate planner salaries at councils using £4.5 million of government funding to help enhance their planning capacity.** The initiative aims to tackle the ongoing shortage of skilled planning professionals. Last year, almost 90 graduates from the programme started working with councils.

Green Economy

- **The net zero sector is growing three times faster than the overall UK economy,** new analysis has found. A report by the Confederation of British Industry, found that 22,000 net zero businesses, from renewable energy to green finance, employ almost a million people in full-time jobs and the average annual wage in the businesses – £43,000 – was also £5,600 higher than the national average.
- **The number of electric vehicle (EV) chargers around the country will need to keep pace with the big increase in electric car ownership required by the UK's zero-emission vehicle mandate.** Local authorities are under pressure to add to the country's 74,000 public chargers and the number could increase rapidly in the next year, as councils are due to receive **£381 million in funding under the Government's local electric vehicle infrastructure (Levi) fund.**
- **The Government has announced a new "land use framework" to protect farmland in England from development pressures such as housing, solar panels, and onshore wind projects.** This initiative aims to balance agricultural preservation with environmental and energy needs.

Housing

- **The Government has announced plans for over 100 new towns as part of the largest housebuilding programme since the post-war era.** A draft blueprint, outlining green spaces, GP surgeries, schools, public transport, and affordable housing, has been

published, with a final framework due this summer.

- **New figures from Halifax show that UK house prices rose in January, with the average price now being £300,000.**

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Chancellor Rachel Reeves has set out the Government's plans for economic growth**, but the publication of the **new Industrial Strategy has been delayed until June** to coincide with the spending review.
- **UK's inflation rate unexpectedly rose to 3 per cent in January** and is above the Bank of England target of 2 per cent. Positively, **real earnings continue to increase**, helping to somewhat offset the rise in prices but the **cost-of-living remains a concern for many**.
- The UK avoided recession in late 2024, but **growth forecasts for 2025 have declined** due to tax and wage pressures.
- It remains evident that **many businesses struggling due to a wide range of factors impacting turnover**, while more **businesses are concerned about the impact of the Budget and emerging global trade policies**.
- The **labour market looks fairly flat overall**, not surprising given the current economic outlook. Although it is encouraging to see **economic inactivity continuing to fall** and the need now is to support those seeking work to find employment and support growth.
- 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 January 2025, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

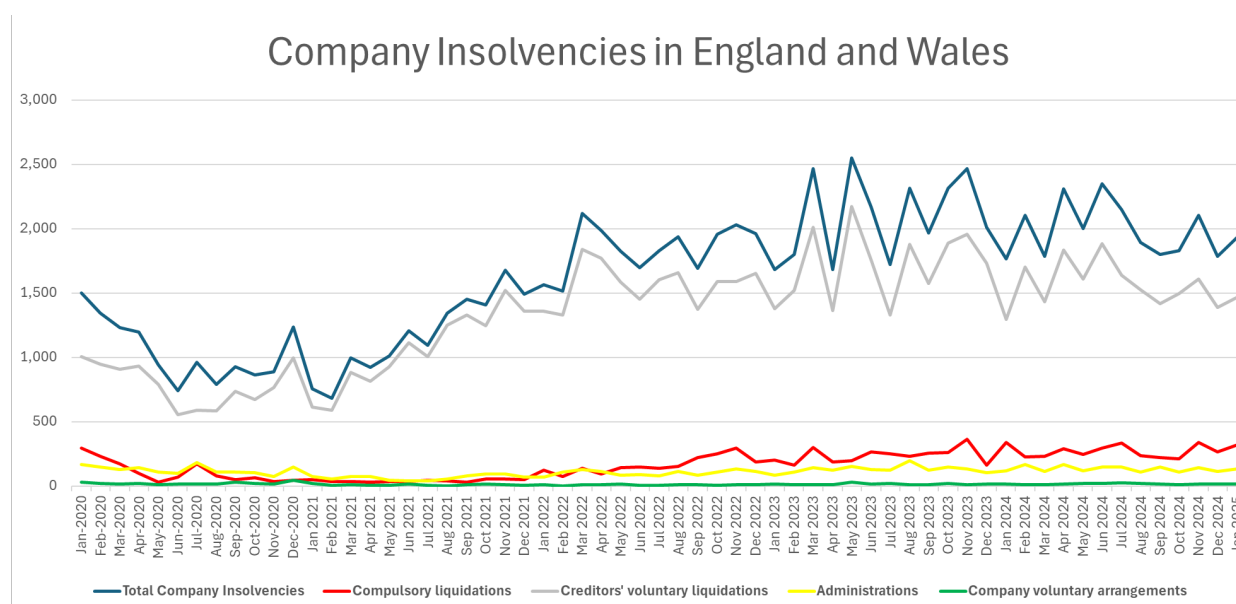
Company Insolvencies

In January 2025 there were a total of 1,935 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies** are **9% higher than the number registered in the previous year (1,768 in January 2024), and 23% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,567 in January 2022).** 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 321 compulsory liquidations in January 2025, which is 5% lower than the number in January 2024, but 159% higher than in January 2022. It is important to note numbers of compulsory liquidations have increased from historical lows during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, partly as a result of the increase in winding-up petitions presented by HMRC.

In January 2025 there were 1,468 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 13% higher than January 2024, and 8% higher than January 2022. Numbers of administrations are 86% higher than three years previously in January 2022, and Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 8% higher than three years previously in January 2022, although numbers are very low.

Company insolvencies between February 2024 and January 2025 are 5% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 1,200 fewer businesses



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

¹Source: The Insolvency Service – [Company insolvencies, January 2025 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvencies-january-2025)

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between January 2024 and December 2024 continue to be the Construction sector (4,032), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,572) and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,737). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -8% lower, the Wholesale & Retail sector -10% lower, and the Accommodation & Food sector -7% lower than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are -5% lower. It is positive to see improvements overall.

Individual Insolvencies

There were **8,860 total individual insolvencies in January 2025**, which was 9% higher than in January 2024, and 4% higher than in January 2022.

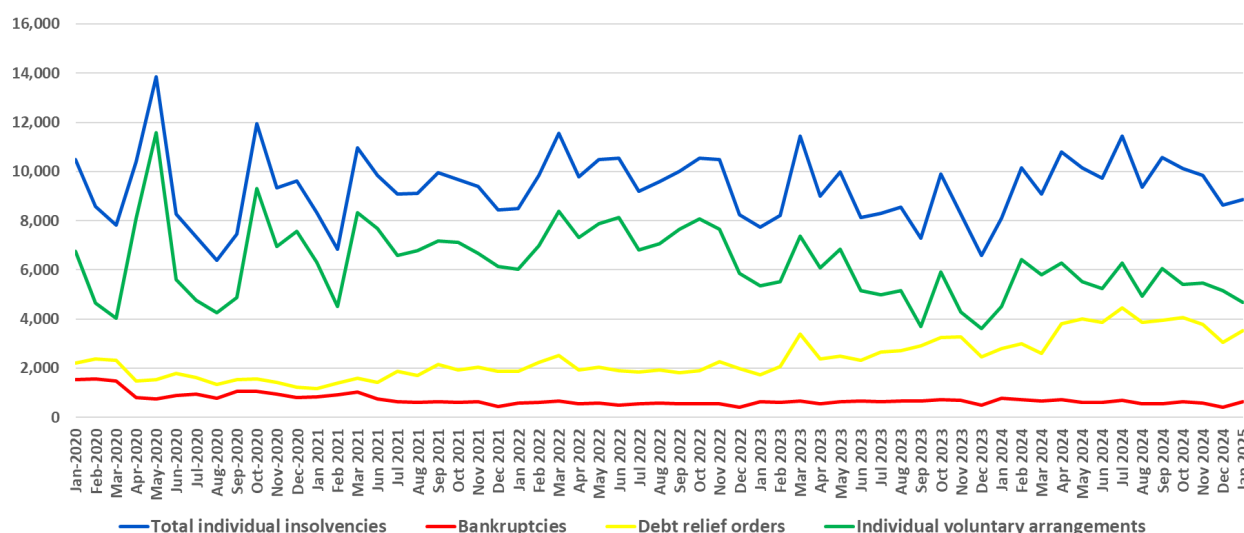
For individuals, **644 bankruptcies were registered in January 2025**, which was 18% lower than in January 2024, but 10% higher than in January 2022.

There were **3,525 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in January 2025**, which was 26% higher than in January 2024, and 88% higher than in January 2022.

There were **4,691 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in January 2025**, which was 4% higher than January 2024, although 22% lower than January 2022.

Total Individual Insolvencies between February 2024 and January 2025 are 14% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 14,926

Individual Insolvencies in England and Wales



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **8,240 Breathing Space registrations in January 2025, which is 1% lower than the number registered in January 2024**. 8,150 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 1% lower and 90 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 28% lower than January 2024.

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: January 2025

Area	Claimant Count Rate (Jan 2024)	Claimant Count Rate (Dec 2024)	Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Jan 2025)	Number of Claimants (Jan 2025)	Monthly Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Claimants (%)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	4.2	4.2	4.3	1,515,945	24,865	1.7%	452,440	42.5%
West Midlands	5.6	5.5	5.6	206,860	2,465	1.2%	62,510	43.3%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	3.7	3.6	3.7	25,550	590	2.4%	6,180	31.9%
Birmingham	10.8	10.7	10.7	79,045	310	0.4%	29,675	60.1%
Wolverhampton	7.8	7.6	7.7	12,715	110	0.9%	2,335	22.5%
Sandwell	7.2	7.1	7.2	15,660	250	1.6%	4,880	45.3%
Walsall	6.4	6.3	6.3	10,990	25	0.2%	2,385	27.7%
Stoke-on-Trent	6.1	6.0	6.2	9,935	245	2.5%	2,615	35.7%
Coventry	6.0	5.8	5.9	13,285	210	1.6%	5,285	66.1%
Dudley	5.0	4.9	5.1	9,960	235	2.4%	1,445	17.0%
Telford and Wrekin	4.0	4.0	4.0	4,680	75	1.6%	1,250	36.4%
Solihull	3.6	3.6	3.7	4,720	65	1.4%	1,070	29.3%
Worcestershire	3.2	3.2	3.2	11,670	245	2.1%	3,365	40.5%
Staffordshire	2.9	2.9	2.9	15,615	350	2.3%	3,565	29.6%
Warwickshire	2.9	2.8	2.9	10,635	230	2.2%	2,805	35.8%
Herefordshire, County of	2.8	2.8	2.8	3,045	40	1.3%	935	44.3%
Shropshire	2.6	2.5	2.6	4,905	80	1.7%	895	22.3%
East Staffordshire	3.6	3.6	3.7	2,835	55	2.0%	1,115	64.8%
Cannock Chase	3.4	3.3	3.4	2,125	35	1.7%	470	28.4%
Tamworth	3.4	3.3	3.3	1,615	5	0.3%	125	8.4%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.1	3.0	3.1	2,395	75	3.2%	415	21.0%
South Staffordshire	2.7	2.6	2.6	1,715	15	0.9%	405	30.9%
Stafford	2.6	2.5	2.6	2,100	55	2.7%	445	26.9%
Lichfield	2.4	2.3	2.4	1,525	50	3.4%	205	15.5%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.2	2.2	2.3	1,305	60	4.8%	385	41.8%

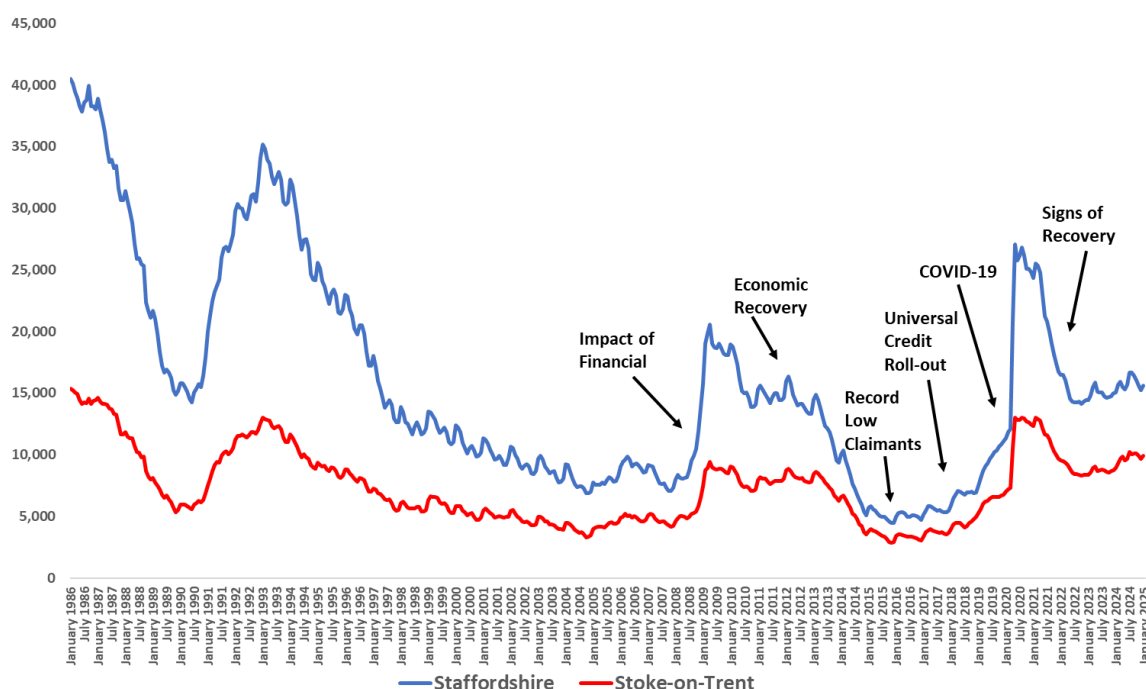
¹ The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw an **increase of 350 claimants over the last month**, with the **total number now at 15,615**. Both the West Midlands and England saw increases in the claimant count this month.
- 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% which increased from 5.5%, and lower than the average for England of 4.3% which increased from 4.2%.**

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

- Stoke-on-Trent saw an **increase of 245 claimants** over the same period with a **total of 9,935 claimants in January**, with the **rate increasing to 6.2%, from 6.0% this month.**
- Staffordshire saw a 2.3% increase monthly change in claimants whereas nationally we saw a 1.7% increase and regionally a 1.2% 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 29.6% or 3,565 higher than the level seen in March 2020 (pre-COVID)**, which is lower than the 42.5% increase seen nationally and the 43.3% 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 6.2%.**

- 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.
- All of the districts in Staffordshire saw increases in the claimant count this month with Staffordshire Moorlands having the highest monthly change of 4.8% and Tamworth having the lowest increase of 0.3%.
- The highest claimant rate at 3.7% 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: January 2025

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Jan 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Dec 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate ¹ (Jan 2025)	Number of Youth Claimants (Jan 2025)	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	5.5	259,870	3,295	1.3%	62,140	31.4%
West Midlands	6.8	7.5	7.5	37,890	300	0.8%	9,985	35.8%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.4	5.6	5.7	4,850	85	1.8%	1,030	27.0%
Birmingham	9.3	10.8	10.8	14,035	-15	-0.1%	4,930	54.1%
Wolverhampton	10.6	10.8	10.7	2,290	-20	-0.9%	380	19.9%
Walsall	9.4	10.1	10.0	2,270	-5	-0.2%	355	18.5%
Sandwell	9.2	9.9	10.0	2,865	35	1.2%	750	35.5%
Dudley	7.7	7.9	8.3	1,960	85	4.5%	210	12.0%
Stoke-on-Trent	7.7	7.9	8.2	1,845	65	3.7%	440	31.3%
Telford and Wrekin	5.6	6.7	6.6	990	-10	-1.0%	230	30.3%
Solihull	5.7	6.2	6.3	940	5	0.5%	115	13.9%
Coventry	5.2	5.4	5.5	2,355	20	0.9%	820	53.4%
Worcestershire	4.7	4.8	5.0	2,110	85	4.2%	515	32.3%
Staffordshire	4.6	4.8	4.8	3,005	25	0.8%	590	24.4%
Warwickshire	3.7	4.2	4.2	1,875	15	0.8%	540	40.4%
Shropshire	3.4	4.0	4.1	890	20	2.3%	65	7.9%
Herefordshire, County of	3.7	4.0	4.0	465	5	1.1%	50	12.0%
Tamworth	6.2	6.6	6.5	370	-10	-2.6%	75	25.4%
Cannock Chase	6.3	6.2	6.2	440	5	1.1%	75	20.5%
East Staffordshire	5.0	5.1	4.9	440	-15	-3.3%	120	37.5%
Stafford	4.3	4.5	4.6	395	5	1.3%	80	25.4%
South Staffordshire	4.6	4.6	4.5	335	-5	-1.5%	85	34.0%
Lichfield	3.4	4.0	4.3	305	20	7.0%	35	13.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.2	4.2	4.3	505	15	3.1%	80	18.8%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.1	3.5	3.6	215	10	4.9%	40	22.9%

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

- This month the **youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 25 claimants with a total of 3,005 young people.** Staffordshire saw a 0.8% increase in line with a 0.8% increase in the West Midlands but lower than the 1.3% increase in England this month.

- **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit remained unchanged at 4.8%.** It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.5%, and far lower than the regional rate of 7.5%.
- **Stoke-on-Trent saw an increase of 65 claimants to a total of 1,845 claimants with the rate increasing to 8.2% from 7.9% this month.**



- The majority of the districts in Staffordshire saw an increase in the youth claimant rate, with three districts (East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire and Tamworth) seeing a decrease this month.
- Tamworth has the highest rate at 6.5%, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest rate at 3.6%. Newcastle-under-Lyme has the highest number of youth claimants at 505, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest number of youth claimants at 215.
- 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

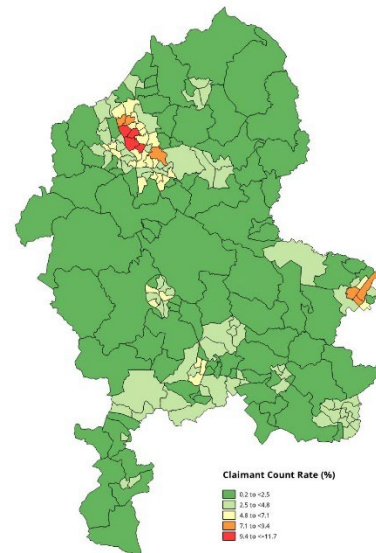
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Claimant Count Rate January 2025

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 rate wards, seventeen were in Stoke-on-Trent with the highest rates in Moorcroft: 11.7%/435; Joiner's Square: 11.5%/ 530; Etruria & Hanley: 10.5% /565; Burslem Central: 9.5%/435; and Tunstall: 9.2% /390 total claimants.

In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest claimant rate were in East Staffordshire with the highest rates in Anglesey: 7.9%/430; Shobnall: 7.6%/410; and Burton: 7.4%/220 total claimants.

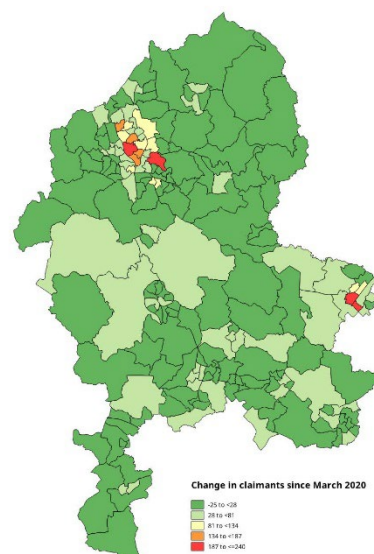


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Change in Claimant Count since March 2020

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 Bentilee & Ubberley (230 increase to 630); Etruria & Hanley (210 increase to 565); Moorcroft (175 increase to 435); Hanley Park & Shelton (165 increase to 350); Joiner's Square (155 increase to 530); Tunstall (140 increase to 390); Burslem Central (110 increase to 435).

Of the remaining three wards in the top ten, all were in East Staffordshire including Anglesey (240 increase to 430); Shobnall (200 increase to 410); Eton Park (130 increase to 310).



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

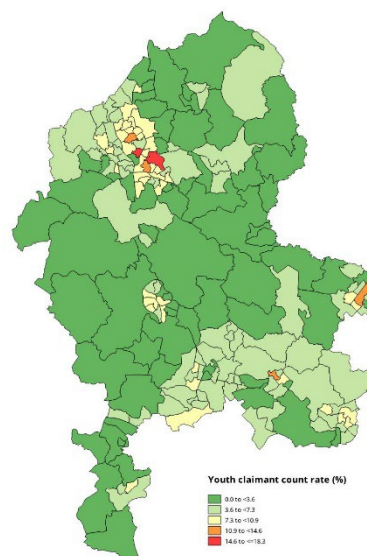
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Youth Claimant Count Rate January 2025

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 76 were above the England average of 5.5% 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 & Ubberley: 15%/135; Fenton East: 11.8%/55; Moorcroft: 11.2%/60; Abbey Hulton & Towsend: 10.8%/85; Burslem Central: 10.6%/65; Tunstall: 10.5%/65 total youth claimants.

In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest claimant rates were Burton (East Staffordshire): 14.2%/55; Chadsmead (Lichfield): 11.9%/35; Cannock North (Cannock Chase): 10.3%/55 total claimants.

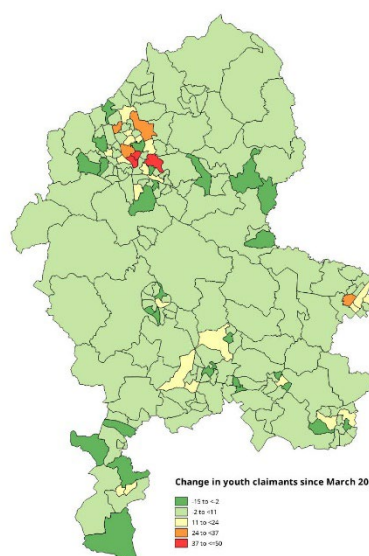


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Change in Youth Claimant Count since March 2020

Of the top ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, eight were in Stoke-on-Trent including Hanley Park & Shelton (50 increase to 80); Bentilee & Ubberley (45 increase to 135); Joiner's Square (40 increase to 140); Tunstall (25 increase to 65); Etruria and Hanley (25 increase to 70); Baddeley, Milton & Norton (25 increase to 85); Fenton East (20 increase to 55); Blurton West & Newstead (20 increase to 55).

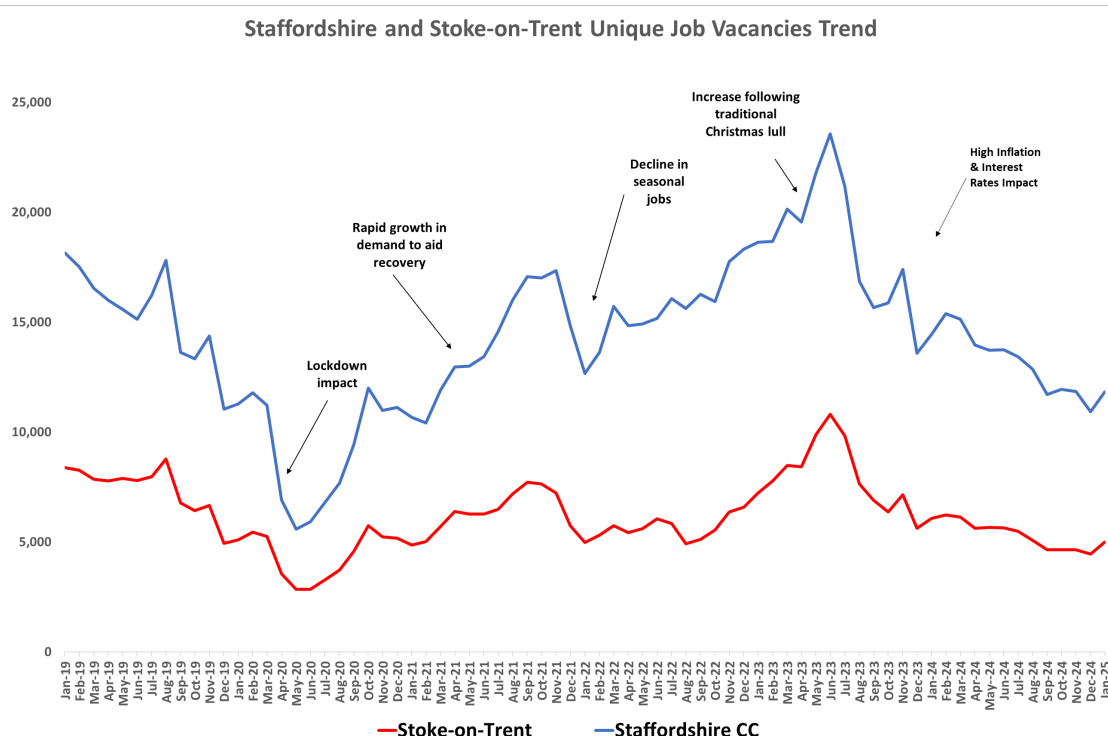
In Staffordshire, the two wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, were Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 25 to 60; Burton (East Staffordshire): 20 increase to 55.



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Job Vacancies³

- Staffordshire saw an 8% increase in the number of available job vacancies between December and January to a total of 11,800⁴. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 12% increase in job vacancies to a total of 5,000 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.
- Across the region in the last month there was a 10% increase, and nationally there was an 8% increase in the number of job vacancies.
- In January 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 18% lower, whilst Stoke-on-Trent also decreased by 18%. The chart below indicates a general declining trend overall from July 2023 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 shown a slight increase this month to be above pre-pandemic levels, with Staffordshire job vacancies 0.3% higher and a positive contrast to the national level which is 0.2% lower and the West Midlands which is 6% lower. Stoke-on-Trent job vacancies are 8% 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

- All of the occupational groups saw an increase in vacancies during January. 'Skilled Trades' occupations saw the biggest increase of +27% whilst 'Process, Plant & Machine Operatives' saw the smallest increase of +1%.
- The occupations to see the most significant increases during January include Cleaners & Domestic; Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians; Sales Related; Production & Process Engineers; Care Workers & Home Carers; Chartered & Certified Accountants; Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks; Merchandisers; Customer Service; Plant & Machine Operatives; Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Engineering Technicians; Elementary Construction; Warehouse Operatives; Solicitors & Lawyers; Buyers & Procurement Officers; Welding trades; Gardeners & Landscape Gardeners; Fork-Lift Truck Drivers; Personal Assistants & Other Secretaries.

Annual Trends in job vacancies

- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year increases include Teaching (Teaching Professionals; SEND Teaching Professionals), Logistics (Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Road Transport Drivers), Retail (Managers & Directors; Shelf Fillers), Legal Associate Professionals, Welfare & Housing Associate Professionals, Health & Social Care (Other Psychologists; Dental Practitioners), Sport (Sports Coaches, Instructors & Officials), Gardeners & Landscape Gardeners, Construction (Skilled Metal, Electrical & Electronic Trades Supervisors; Elementary Construction occupations), Taxation Experts, Coffee Shop Workers, Quality Assurance & Regulatory professionals, Business Research & Administrative professionals, Caretakers, Rail Construction & Maintenance Operatives.

Pre-COVID baseline trends in job vacancies

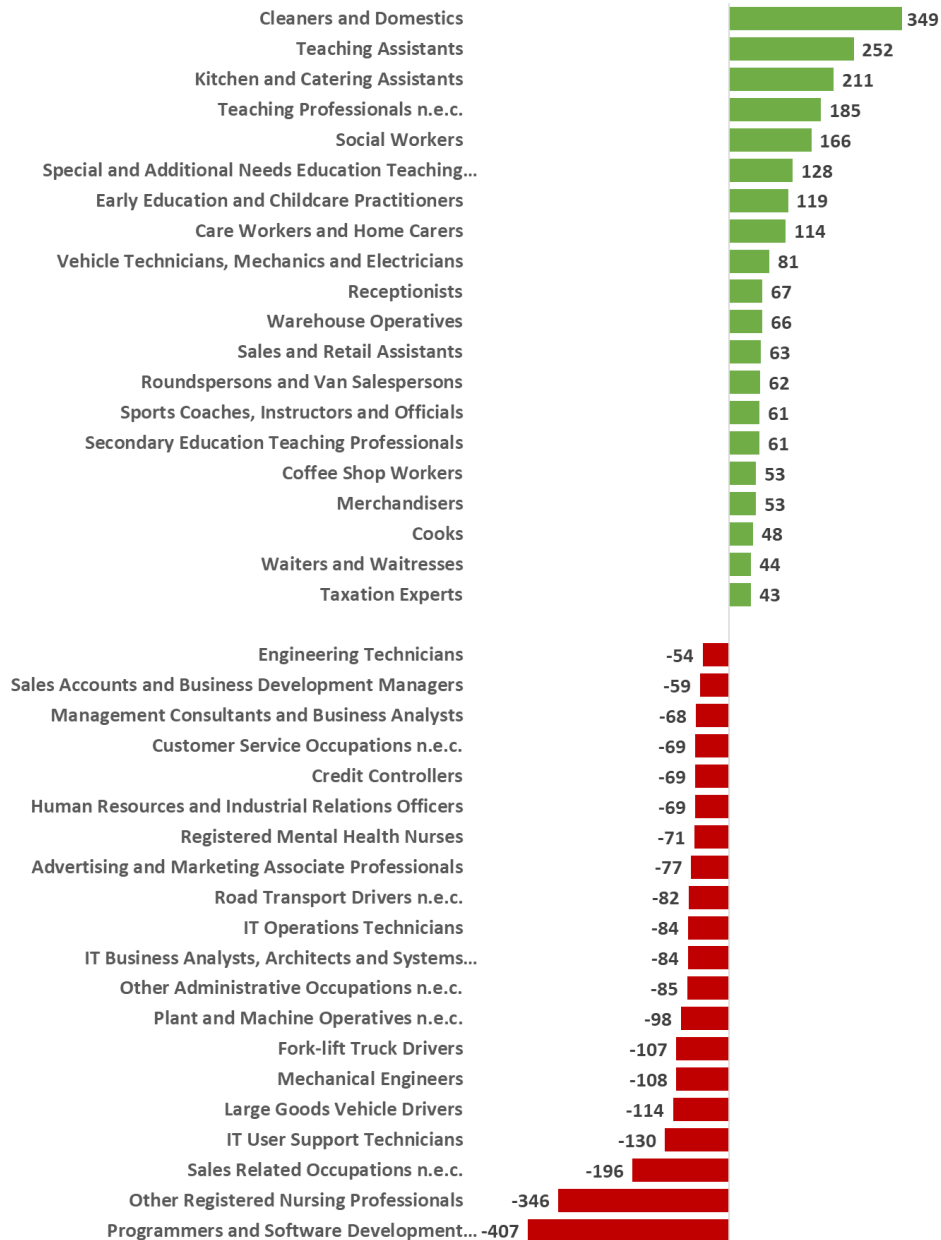
The main occupations with higher vacancies compared to pre-COVID are mainly found in:

- **Housekeepers & Related Occupations** (Cleaners & Domestic)
- **Education** (Teaching Assistants; Teaching Professionals; SEND Teaching Professionals; Secondary Education Teaching Professionals)
- **Hospitality** (Kitchen & Catering Assistants; Coffee Shop Workers; Cooks; Waiters & Waitresses)
- **Health and Social Care** (Social Workers, Care Workers and Home Carers)
- **Childcare** (Early Education & Childcare Practitioners)
- **Motor Trade** (Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians)
- **Cross Sector Business Roles** (Receptionists)
- **Logistics** (Warehouse Operatives; Roundspersons & Van Salespersons)
- **Retail & Wholesale** (Sales & Retail Assistants; Merchandisers)

- **Sport** (Sports Coaches, Instructors & Officials)
- Taxation Experts

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 Jan 2025 in Staffordshire & Stoke

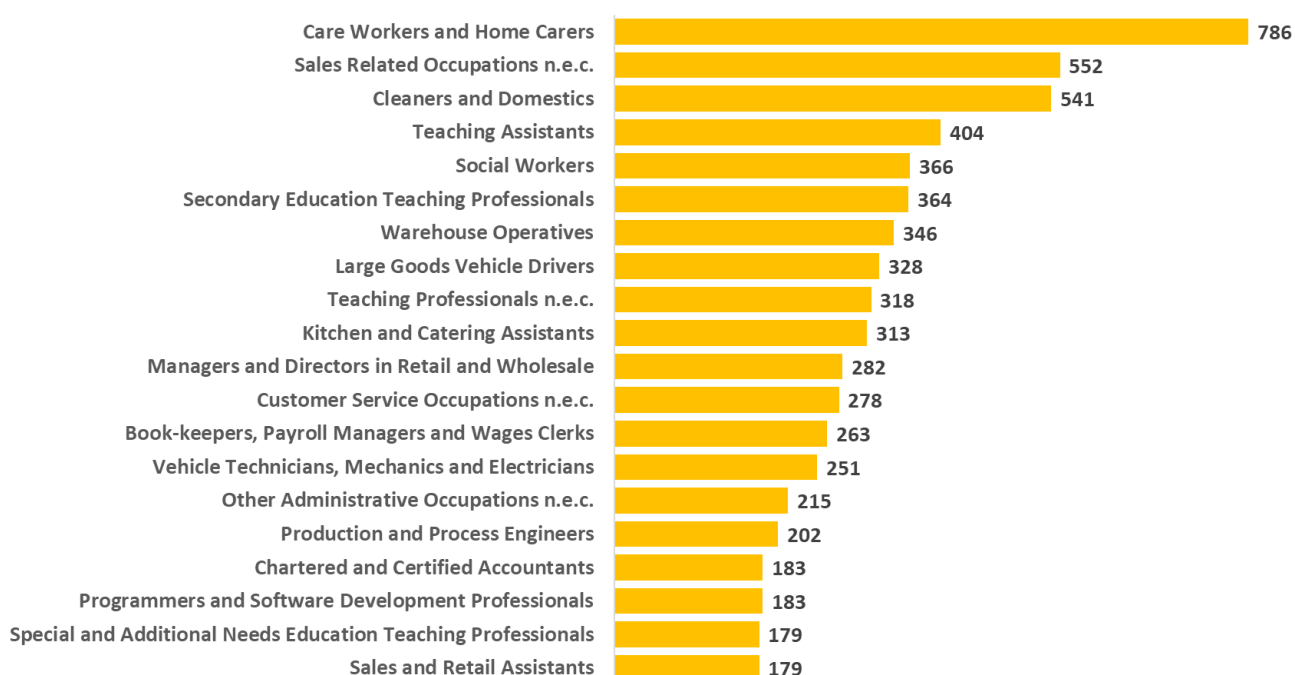


Top Occupations in Demand

- Considering the **top 20 job vacancy occupations in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, **'Care Workers & Home Carers'** roles are 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 & Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives'** and **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers.'**
- In the Hospitality sector **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** 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,' 'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks,' 'Other Administrative occupations'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** across business sectors.
- In the Motor Trade there is demand for **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians.'**
- In the Engineering sector **'Production & Process Engineers'** are in demand.
- There is continued demand for **'Programmers & Software Development professionals'** in the ICT sector.

Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire & Stoke during January 2025



- 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.

