Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 55 – March 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 Eyers

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 and seasonal impact. 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 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 825 claimants this month to a total of 16,180 claimants.**
- **The claimant rate for Staffordshire has increased from 2.8% to 3.0% this month** of the working age population. **Staffordshire saw an increase of 5.4% this month, higher than the regional increase of 4.5% and the national increase of 5.1%.** These increases will be reflective of the seasonal impact seen every year at this time, where temporary jobs created during the heightened customer demand period at Christmas have now ceased.
- **Staffordshire continues to have one of the lowest rates in the region, far lower than the average for the region 5.6% which increased from 5.4%, and lower than the average for England 4.3% which increased from 4.1% 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 175 claimants with the total number of youth claimants now 3,145**. **Staffordshire saw a 5.9% increase, higher than the 3.9% increase in the West Midlands and the 4.6% increase in England. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.7% to 5.0%.** It is important to state that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.7% and far lower than the regional rate of 7.4%.** Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or to continue in education and training.

- Turning to job vacancies, **Staffordshire saw a 2% increase in the number of available job vacancies between January and February to a total of 13,000. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a negligible decline 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 1% increase, and nationally there was a modest 0.1% 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 **'Cleaners & Domestics,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Teaching Assistants'** also have strong demand.
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals' and 'Teaching Professionals.'**
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives,' 'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** and **'Fork-lift Truck Drivers.'**
- There is strong demand for **'Customer Service,' 'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks,' 'Other Administrative'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** across business sectors.
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** roles are most in demand.
- Demand for **'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- In the Motor Trade **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians'** continue to be in demand.
- In the Engineering sector **'Production & Process Engineers'** and **'Mechanical Engineers'** are in demand.
- There is continued demand for **'Early Education and Childcare Practitioners.'**
- 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 to help deliver growth across Staffordshire, 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?**
- **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.
- **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
- **Leaders lobby for investment into A50/A500 Transport and Growth Corridor.** Public and private sector leaders have joined forces to put forward the case for investment to strengthen plans to develop the A50/500 corridor. The A50/A500 is already a vital east-west route within the region, linking Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire to Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire and the North-West. MPs, councils and businesses from across Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire were joined by Lilian Greenwood, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Future of Roads) at an event at the House of Commons on Tuesday. They called for a £3 million investment to help develop detailed business plans for economic growth and transport schemes which would deliver once in a lifetime benefits in:
  - Manufacturing
  - Energy
  - Transport
  - Innovation
  - Skills

  Find out more about the scheme and the benefits it will bring at fifty500 | Midlands Growth Corridor - vision.

National Context

- This month the **Chancellor Rachel Reeves set out her plans for the UK economy during the Spring Statement in the House of Commons**. It comes as the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) - which monitors the government's spending plans - unveiled its latest economic forecasts. Here is a summary of the main points:

  Welfare changes
  - Incapacity benefits under universal credit (UC) to be halved and cut for new claimants
  - It comes after official forecasters said a package of cuts announced last week would save only £3.4bn in 2030 rather than £5bn initially claimed by ministers
  - The package included a stricter eligibility test for personal independence payments (Pips), the main disability benefit, from November 2026
  - Incapacity benefits to be frozen in cash terms for existing claimants at £97 per week from April next year, with a top-up payment for those with the most severe conditions
  - Those aged under 22 will no longer be able to claim the incapacity benefit top-up of universal credit

  Economic forecasts
  - The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has downgraded predicted growth for this year from 2% to 1%
  - But it has upgraded estimated growth for the next four years, to 1.9% next year, 1.8% in 2027, then 1.7% in 2028, and 1.8% in 2029
  - Inflation forecast to average 3.2% this year, up from 2.6% previously forecast, before falling back to 2.1 in 2026
  - Inflation expected to hit 2% government target from 2027

  Defence and overseas aid
  - Defence spending, which had been due to rise £2.9bn next year, to increase by a further £2.2bn
  - The Treasury says this will take military expenditure to 2.36% of national income next year, a "down payment" on plans to raise it to 2.5% by 2027
  - Ministers say the spending will be funded by reducing overseas aid from 0.5% to 0.3% of gross national income in 2027, and from the Treasury's reserves

  Public services
  - Target to reduce the administrative costs of government departments by 15% by 2030
  - About 10,000 civil service jobs are expected to go, including staff working in HR, policy advice, communications and office management

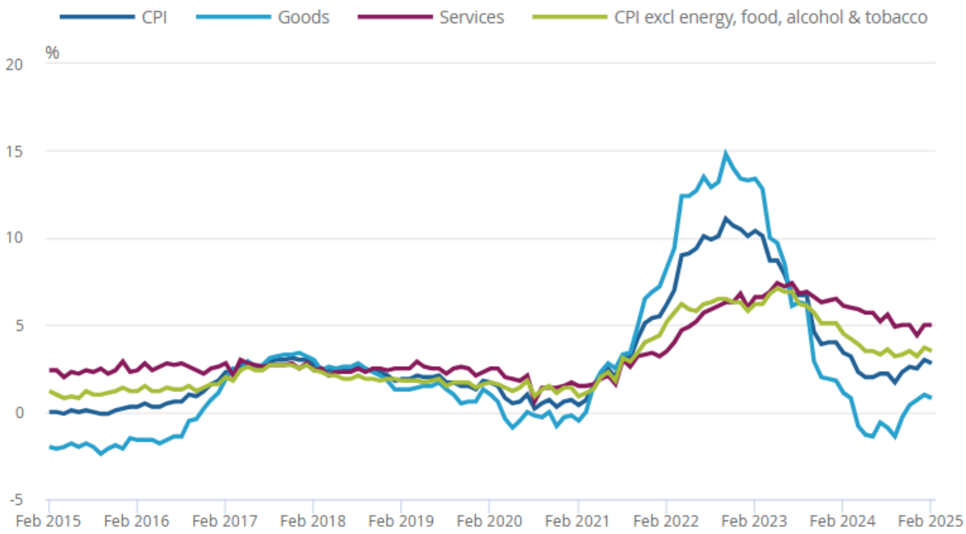
- While we have also seen **areas across the country submit their interim plans for Reorganisation and Devolution to Government**, the resulting changes which will play a key part in how local areas support the Government’s growth agenda moving forwards.

Cost of Living

- **The UK's inflation rate rose by 2.8 per cent last month, below the 3 per cent recorded in January**, with the largest downward contribution coming from clothing. However, the rate remains above the Bank of England target of 2 per cent.

CPI goods and core annual inflation rates eased in February 2025 while the CPI services rate was unchanged

CPI goods, services and core annual inflation rates, UK, February 2015 to February 2025



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

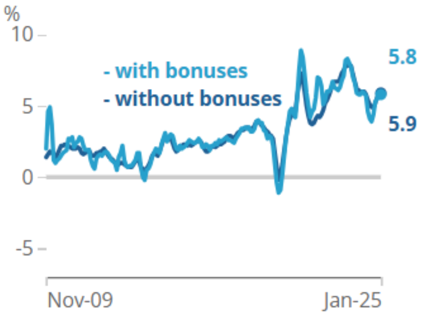
- **The energy regulator Ofgem has announced a 6.4 per cent rise in energy prices from April, which will see a typical household bill rise by £111 to £1,849 annually**. Ofgem said that the rise, which had been projected to be 5 per cent, has been driven by higher wholesale gas and electricity costs and inflation.
- **Annual growth in employees' average regular earnings excluding bonuses in Great Britain was 5.9% in November 2024 to January 2025, and annual growth in total earnings including bonuses was 5.8%.** 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 2.2% for regular pay and 2.1% for total pay in November 2024 to January 2025.**

Nominal Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates - nominal pay

Both regular and total pay annual growth rates remain relatively strong.

Source: MWSS from ONS

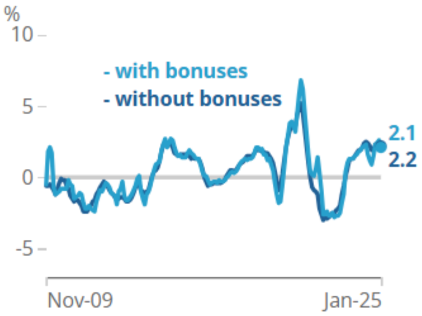


Real Earnings

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

The recent increase in inflation has reduced the real annual growth rate in the most recent period.

Source: MWSS from ONS

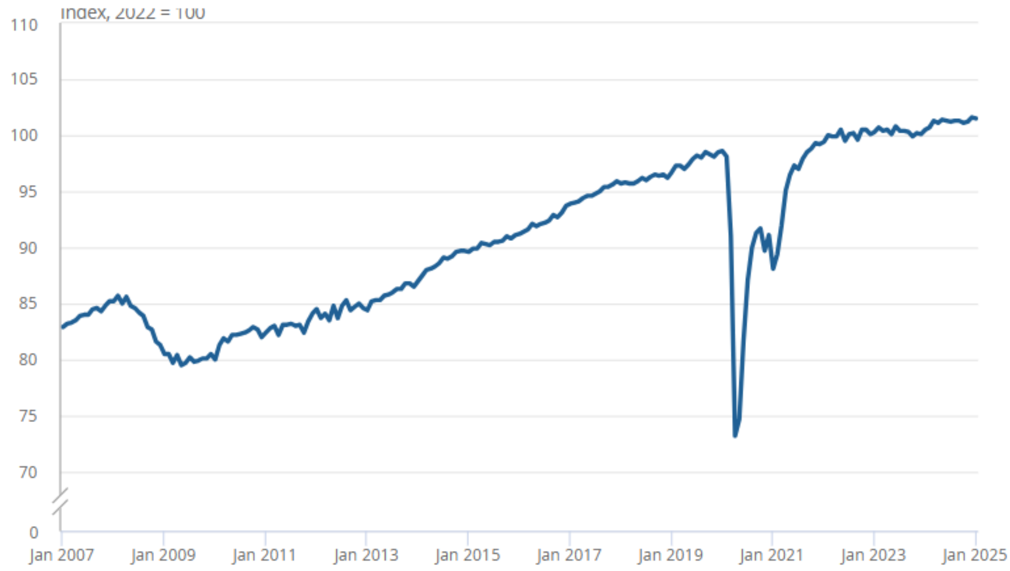


- **There were an estimated 50,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in January 2025.** Most of the strikes were in the health and social work sector.

Economy

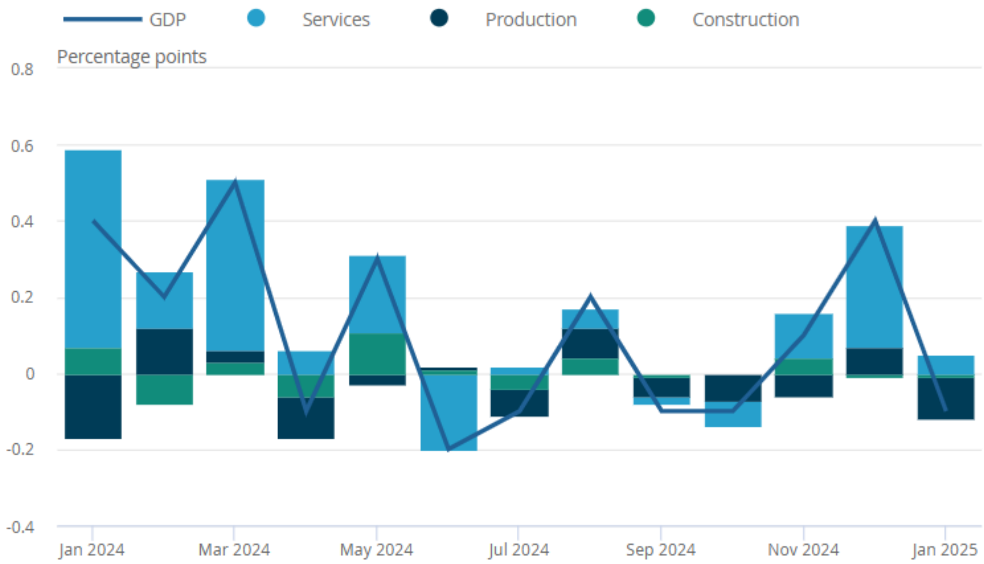
- **The Governor of the Bank of England has warned that tariffs and an ageing population posed major threats to the economy**. In an assessment of Britain's economic prospects before the Spring Statement, Andrew Bailey said a 15-year stagnation in productivity was dragging down living standards and that there were "strong headwinds" against growth.
- **The UK economy shrank at the start of 2025 but had been expected to show further low growth.** The Office for National Statistics said that **output declined by 0.1 per cent during the month**, mainly caused by a fall in the production sector, following the 0.4 per cent growth seen in December, after a growth figure of 0.1 per cent had been predicted by most economists.
- Real GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in the three months to January 2025, compared with the three months to October 2024, mainly because of growth in the services sector.
- **Monthly services output grew by 0.1% in January 2025**, following growth of 0.4% in December 2024, and grew by 0.4% in the three months to January 2025.
- **Production output fell by 0.9% in January 2025**, following growth of 0.5% in December 2024, and fell by 0.9% in the three months to January 2025, with manufacturing output driving both the monthly and three-month falls.
- **Construction output fell by 0.2% in January 2025**, following a fall of 0.2% in December 2024, but grew by 0.4% in the three months to January 2025.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to January 2025, UK



The production sector was the largest contributor to the 0.1% fall in GDP in January 2025

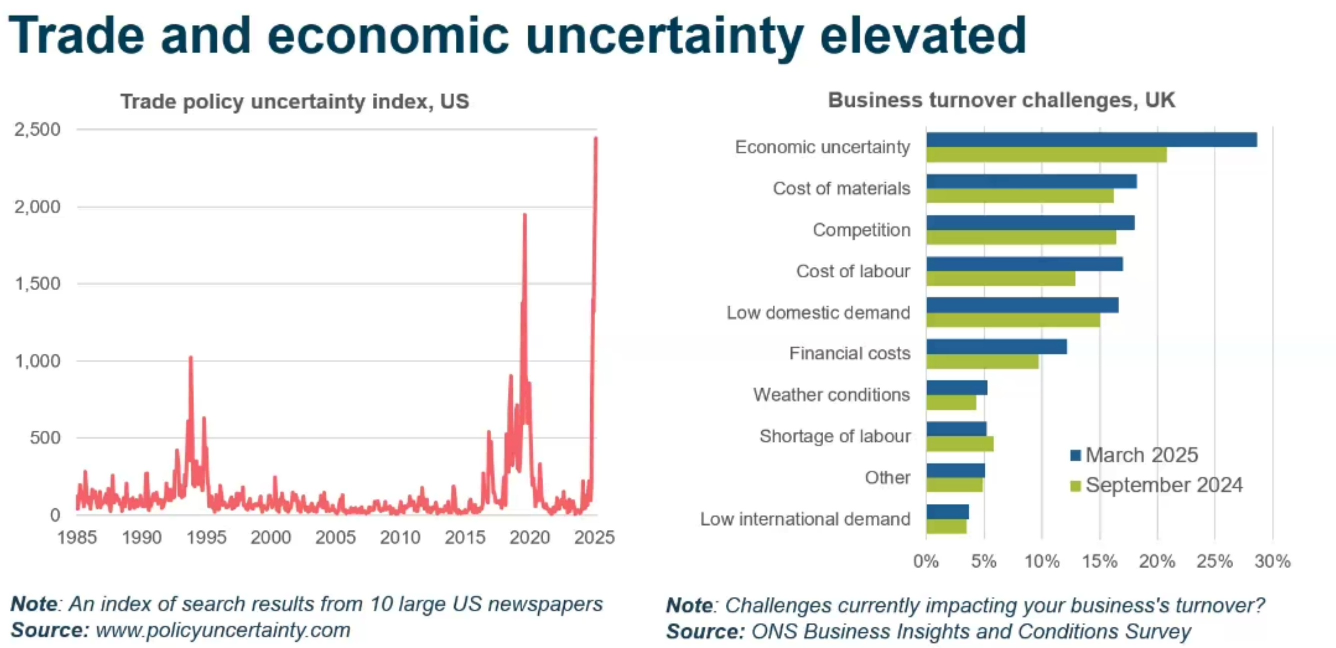
Contributions to monthly gross domestic product (GDP) growth, UK, January 2024 to January 2025



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 further evidence of **business concerns regarding higher taxes and wage levels following the announcements in the recent Budget**.
- While there **remain trade concerns with further emerging US policy**, although it is recognised that the UK is less exposed to trade uncertainty than many other economies.



- The latest results from Wave 128 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 3rd to 16th March 2025 suggest that business conditions continue to remain challenging.
- More than a quarter (26%) of trading businesses reported that their **turnover had decreased** in February, compared with the previous calendar month; this is down 2 percentage points from January, but in line with historical movements seen at this time of year.
- Approximately one in seven (14%) trading businesses reported that they **expect their turnover to decrease** in April 2025, broadly stable with expectations for March; however, this is 4 percentage points higher than April 2024, suggesting businesses are less optimistic than they were at this time last year.
- In early March 2025, the **cost of labour was the most commonly reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses with 10 or more employees** at 37%; this is the largest proportion reported since the question was introduced in April 2022.
- Nearly 3 in 10 (29%) trading businesses reported an **increase in the prices of goods or**

services bought in February 2025 when compared with January 2025, while 11% reported an **increase in prices sold**; both percentages were broadly stable compared with January.

- **More than half (56%) of trading businesses with 10 or more employees cited labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices in April 2025**; this is up 8 percentage points from March and the largest proportion reported since the question was introduced in April 2022.
- In early March 2025, 8% of trading businesses reported that they were currently **experiencing worker shortages**, which is broadly stable since February 2024; this rises to 18% for businesses with 10 or more employees, which is broadly stable since September 2024.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in February 2025 there were a total of 1,884 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 11% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,107 in February 2024), but 24% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,518 in February 2022).** The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.

Labour Market

- In summary, the **labour market continues to look fairly flat overall**, not surprising given the current economic outlook. Encouragingly, this month's labour market figures show that **economic inactivity has seen a further 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 paused.**
- The following charts shows the latest **labour market position** and the latest Office for National Statistics data:

Employment rate

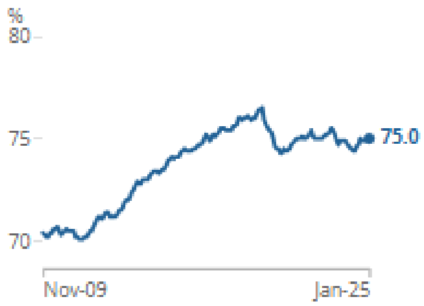
Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64)

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

The employment rate is up on the quarter and up on the year, but 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

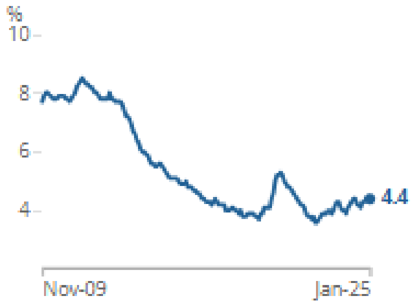
Unemployment rate (all aged 16+)

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

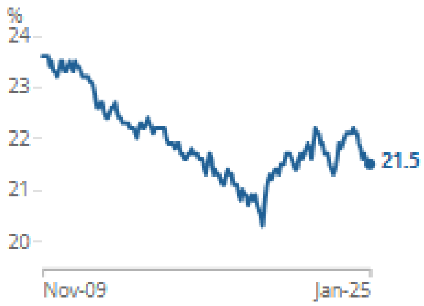
Economic inactivity rate (all aged 16 to 64)

Quarterly change: ▼-0.2pps
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



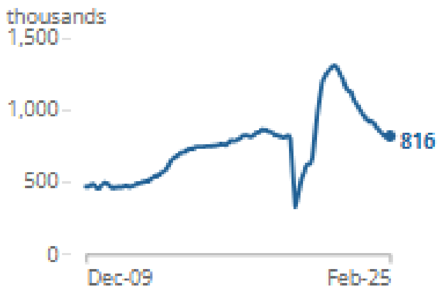
Job vacancies

Number of job vacancies

Quarterly change: ▲1,000
Since Jan-Mar 2020: ▲20,000

Vacancies are broadly unchanged on the quarter with a very small quarter increase but remain above pre-pandemic levels.

Source: Vacancy Survey from ONS



- Estimates for **payrolled employees in the UK increased by 9,000 (0.0%) between December 2024 and January 2025 and rose by 44,000 (0.1%) between January 2024 and January 2025**.
- Payrolled employees fell by 9,000 (0.0%) over the quarter but rose by 72,000 (0.2%) over the year, when looking at November 2024 to January 2025. This is the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for February 2025 increased by 21,000 (0.1%) on the month and increased by 66,000 (0.2%) on the year to 30.4 million. The February 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 75.0% in November 2024 to January 2025. 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 November 2024 to January 2025. 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 November 2024 to January 2025. This is below estimates of a year ago, and down in the latest quarter.
- **The number of people considered too sick to work has risen almost five-fold since the pandemic**, it is reported. More than 1.8 million people are now on the highest rate of Universal Credit with no support to look for work, compared with 360,000 at the start of the pandemic in early 2020.
- **Only 1 per cent of people out of the workforce for health reasons find a job within six months, even though 20 per cent want one**, according to research from the Learning and Work Institute.
- **Almost one million young people are not working, studying or looking for a job, the highest figure for a decade**. Official figures show that 987,000 people aged 16-24 were not in education, employment or training in the three months to last September, the highest figure since the end of 2013, with more than a quarter of a million more young people outside work and education than just after the pandemic.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for February 2025 increased on the month and is up on the year, at 1.775 million.
- The estimated number of **workforce jobs** in the UK was 36.9 million in December 2024; this is an increase of 403,000 (1.1%) from December 2023, with the largest increase in the

employee jobs component, which rose by 248,000 (0.8%).

- **Employment in the public sector** was estimated at 6.14 million in December 2024, an increase of 19,000 (0.3%) compared with September 2024, and an increase of 53,000 (0.9%) compared with December 2023.
- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** in December 2024 to February 2025 was 816,000. Vacancies are broadly unchanged on the quarter (with early estimates suggesting a small increase of just 1,000) and are still above pre-pandemic levels.
- **The Commission for Healthier Working Lives has warned against cutting sickness benefits**. It has called for a step-change in job support for people with health conditions, concluding that a more proactive approach could help at least 100,000 more people to stay in a job within five years.
- **Unfilled vacancies for teaching posts are at a record high, whilst recruitment into the sector remains low**, according to a new survey by the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER), which has called on the Government to “act now” or potentially miss its target of recruiting 6,500 more people into the profession.
- **The Government has launched a new training scheme to encourage 60,000 school leavers to take up jobs in the building sector**. Chancellor Rachel Reeves will spend £600 million to fund extra work placements and apprenticeships, and to set up new colleges to teach technical skills. School leavers should get a job on a building site rather than turn to a life on benefits, Bridget Phillipson, the Education Secretary, has said in an Op-Ed.

Green Economy

- **Four in five cars should be electric and half of homes should have heat pumps within 15 years**, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), the Government's independent climate advisers have concluded.
- **Many motorists are confused about what vehicle changes are coming and when, according to new research from the AA, especially around the roll-out of electric vehicles (EVs)**. It is calling on ministers to co-ordinate a public awareness campaign alongside the motoring industry which directly targets drivers who doubt the viability of EVs.

Housing

- **Official data shows that the number of planning approvals fell to a ten-year low last year while the pace of housebuilding has fallen to the slowest rate since the financial crisis**. Data from the Home Builders Federation showed councils in England approved 242,610 planning applications in 2024 – 2 per cent fewer than in 2023 and a quarter below the 2019 peak when almost 330,000 approvals were granted.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Chancellor Rachel Reeves delivered her Spring Statement** with the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) halving the growth estimate for 2025 from 2% to 1% but upgrading its longer-term growth estimates from 2026. Areas across the country have also submitted their **interim plans for Reorganisation and Devolution** to Government.
- **The UK's inflation rate rose by 2.8 per cent last month, below the 3 per cent recorded in January** and remains above the Bank of England target of 2 per cent. We **continue to see growth in real earnings**, however inflation has reduced the real annual growth rate in the latest period and further heightening **cost-of-living concerns** for many.
- **The UK economy shrank in January and the Governor of the Bank of England has warned that tariffs and an ageing population posed major threats to the economy**.
- 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 long-term decline in job vacancies has paused**, 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 statistics[1] for February 2025, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

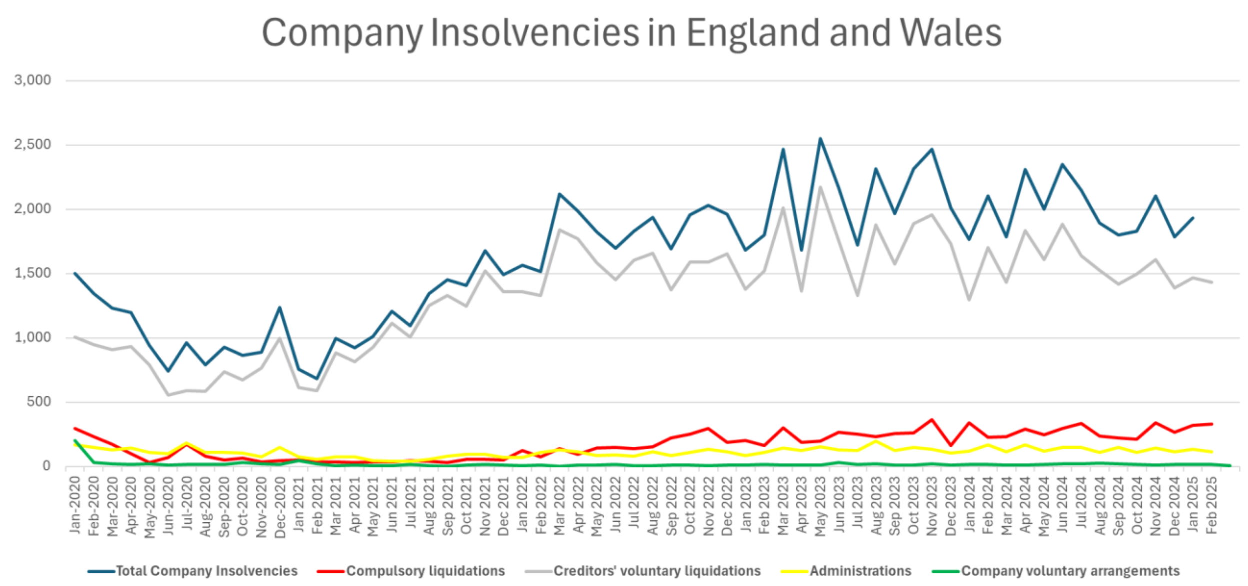
Company Insolvencies

In February 2025 there were a total of 1,884 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 11% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,107 in February 2024), but 24% higher than the number registered three years previously: 1,518 in February 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 328 compulsory liquidations in February 2025, 46% higher than the number in February 2024, but 326% higher than in February 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 February 2025 there were 1,433 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 16% lower than February 2024, but 8% higher than February 2022. Numbers of administrations are 6% higher than three years previously in February 2022, and Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 133% higher than three years previously in February 2022, but numbers are very low.

Company insolvencies between March 2024 and February 2025 are 7% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 1,700 fewer businesses



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

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[1] *Source: The Insolvency Service* – [Company insolvencies, February 2025 - GOV.UK]

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between February 2024 and January 2025 continue to be the Construction sector (4,031), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,631) and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,474). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -8% lower, the Wholesale & Retail sector -7% 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 across sectors.

Individual Insolvencies

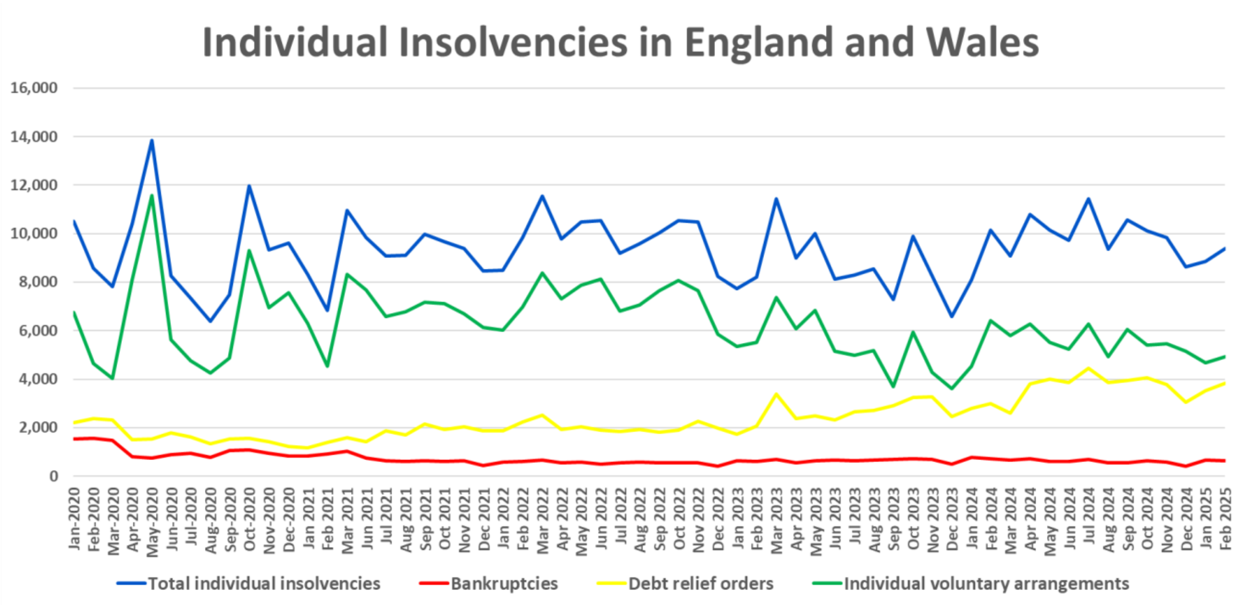
There were **9,385 total individual insolvencies in February 2025**, which was 7% lower than in February 2024, and 5% lower than in February 2022.

For individuals, **628 bankruptcies were registered in February 2025**, which was 13% lower than in February 2024, but 4% higher than in February 2022.

There were **3,831 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in February 2025**, which was 27% higher than in February 2024, and 71% higher than in February 2022.

There were **4,926 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in February 2025**, which was 23% lower than February 2024, and 30% lower than February 2022.

Total Individual Insolvencies between March 2024 and February 2025 are 12% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 12,263



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **7,889 Breathing Space registrations in February 2025, which is 2% lower than the number registered in February 2024**. 7,775 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 2% lower and 114 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 5% higher than February 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 remain lower, but bankruptcies and debt relief orders are higher than pre-pandemic levels.**

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

Claimant Count[2]

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: February 2025

Area	Claimant Count Rate (Feb 2024)	Claimant Count Rate (Jan 2025)	Claimant Count Rate[1] (Feb 2025)	Number of Claimants (Feb 2025)	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	4.1	4.3	1,562,960	75,510	5.1%	499,455	47.0%
West Midlands	4.8	5.4	5.6	212,075	9,125	4.5%	67,725	46.9%
SSLEP	3.5	3.6	3.7	26,455	1,310	5.2%	7,085	36.6%
Birmingham	8.6	10.3	10.7	80,745	3,175	4.1%	31,375	63.6%
Wolverhampton	7.0	7.4	7.6	12,850	385	3.1%	2,470	23.8%
Sandwell	6.0	7.0	7.4	16,125	805	5.3%	5,345	49.6%
Walsall	5.5	6.1	6.4	11,295	545	5.1%	2,690	31.3%
Stoke-on-Trent	5.7	6.0	6.3	10,275	480	4.9%	2,955	40.4%
Coventry	5.3	5.5	5.8	13,760	715	5.5%	5,760	72.0%
Dudley	4.6	5.0	5.1	10,135	345	3.5%	1,620	19.0%
Telford and Wrekin	3.4	3.8	4.0	4,745	195	4.3%	1,315	38.3%
Solihull	3.2	3.6	3.8	4,875	240	5.2%	1,225	33.6%
Worcestershire	3.0	3.1	3.3	11,960	540	4.7%	3,655	44.0%
Staffordshire	2.9	2.8	3.0	16,180	825	5.4%	4,130	34.3%
Herefordshire, County of	2.4	2.7	2.9	3,190	215	7.2%	1,080	51.2%
Warwickshire	2.5	2.8	2.9	10,955	515	4.9%	3,125	39.9%
Shropshire	2.3	2.5	2.6	4,980	145	3.0%	970	24.2%
East Staffordshire	3.6	3.6	3.7	2,945	150	5.4%	1,225	71.2%
Tamworth	3.5	3.2	3.4	1,690	115	7.3%	200	13.4%
Cannock Chase	3.3	3.2	3.3	2,130	65	3.1%	475	28.7%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.1	2.9	3.1	2,515	150	6.3%	535	27.0%
South Staffordshire	2.6	2.5	2.7	1,790	100	5.9%	480	36.6%
Lichfield	2.3	2.3	2.5	1,605	95	6.3%	285	21.6%
Stafford	2.6	2.5	2.5	2,150	75	3.6%	495	29.9%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.2	2.3	2.5	1,355	80	6.3%	435	47.3%

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

- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw an **increase of 825 claimants over the last month**, with the **total number now at 16,180**.

- Over the last month, the **claimant rate for Staffordshire has increased from 2.8% to 3.0%** of the working age population.

- **Staffordshire saw a 5.4% increase monthly change in claimants, higher than the regional increase of 4.5% and the national increase of 5.1%.** These increases will be reflective of the seasonal impact seen every year at this time, where temporary jobs created during the heightened customer demand period at Christmas have now ceased.

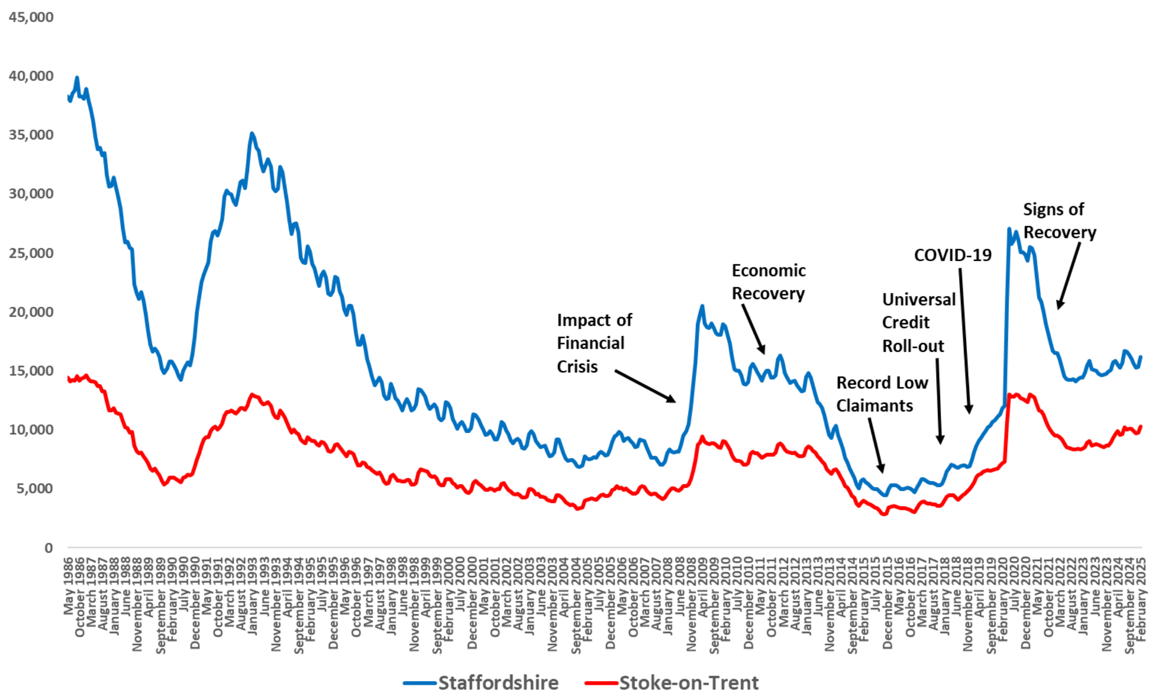
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and is far lower than the average for the region 5.6% which increased from 5.4%, and lower than the average for England 4.3% which increased from 4.1%**.

[2] *Source: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/*

- Stoke-on-Trent saw an **increase of 480 claimants** over the same period with **a total of 10,275 claimants**, with the **rate increasing to 6.3%, from 6.0% this month.**

- **The total number of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in Staffordshire is now 34.3% or 4,130 higher than the level seen in March 2020 (pre-COVID)**, which is lower than the 47.0% increase seen nationally and the 46.9% increase seen regionally.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Claimant Count



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

- It is also important to recognise that although claimant numbers are higher than pre-pandemic levels, given our strong position going into the pandemic, we still perform well given **Staffordshire's claimant rate is 3.0% 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 6.3%.**

- For those that find themselves out of work, **demand for labour remains high with the number of new job postings 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 Tamworth having the highest monthly change of 7.3% and Cannock Chase having the lowest increase of 3.1%.

- The highest claimant rate at 3.7% is in East Staffordshire and Lichfield, Stafford and Staffordshire Moorlands have the lowest at 2.5%. 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: February 2025

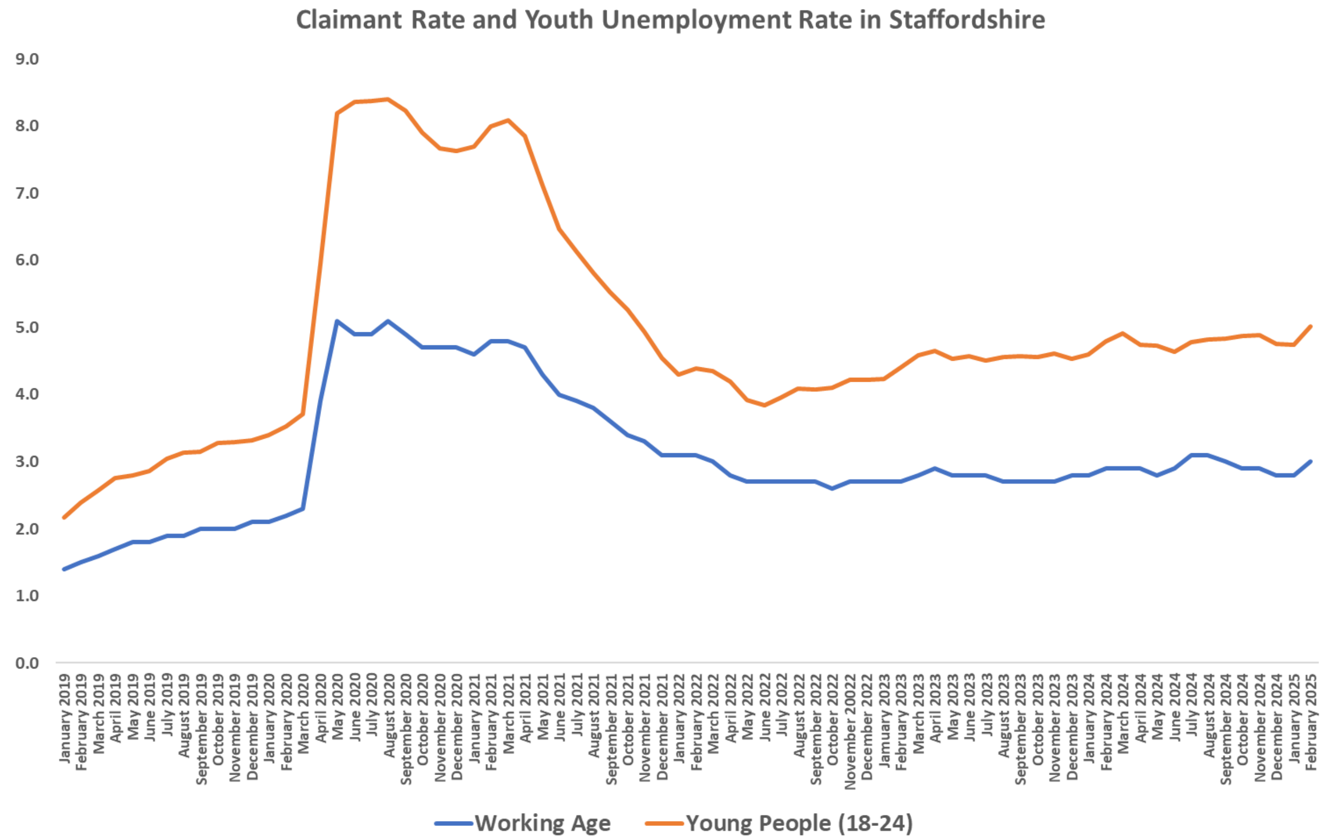
Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Feb 2024)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Jan 2025)	Youth Claimant Count Rate[1] (Feb 2025)	Number of Youth Claimants (Feb 2025)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (%)	Change in Youth Claimants since March 2020 (Numbers)	Change in Youth Claimants since March 2020 (%)
England	5.2	5.5	5.7	267,870	11,860	4.6%	70,140	35.5%
West Midlands	7.0	7.4	7.7	38,825	1,470	3.9%	10,920	39.1%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.6	5.6	5.9	5,040	235	4.9%	1,220	31.9%
Birmingham	9.7	10.7	11.0	14,315	450	3.2%	5,210	57.2%
Wolverhampton	11.0	10.5	11.0	2,340	95	4.2%	430	22.5%
Sandwell	9.2	9.9	10.3	2,955	130	4.6%	840	39.7%
Wallsall	9.5	9.8	10.2	2,300	85	3.8%	385	20.1%
Stoke-on-Trent	**7.9**	**8.1**	**8.4**	**1,895**	**60**	**3.3%**	**490**	**34.9%**
Dudley	7.7	8.1	8.2	1,935	10	0.5%	185	10.6%
Solihull	5.7	6.2	6.5	980	50	5.4%	155	18.8%
Telford and Wrekin	5.8	6.5	6.5	975	10	1.0%	215	28.3%
Coventry	5.4	5.4	5.7	2,445	130	5.6%	910	59.3%
Worcestershire	4.8	5.0	5.2	2,160	85	4.1%	565	35.4%
Staffordshire	**4.8**	**4.7**	**5.0**	**3,145**	**175**	**5.9%**	**730**	**30.2%**
Herefordshire, County of	4.0	3.9	4.5	520	65	14.3%	105	25.3%
Warwickshire	3.9	4.1	4.4	1,950	105	5.7%	615	46.1%
Shropshire	3.6	4.0	4.1	910	25	2.8%	85	10.3%
Tamworth	6.5	6.4	6.7	385	20	5.5%	90	30.5%
Cannock Chase	6.2	6.2	6.3	445	5	1.1%	80	21.9%
East Staffordshire	5.3	4.9	5.2	465	30	6.9%	145	45.3%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.4	4.2	4.7	560	60	12.0%	135	31.8%
South Staffordshire	4.6	4.4	4.7	350	25	7.7%	100	40.0%
Stafford	4.5	4.5	4.6	400	15	3.9%	85	27.0%
Lichfield	3.8	4.3	4.3	305	0	0.0%	35	13.0%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.4	3.6	3.9	230	15	7.0%	55	31.4%

[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 175 claimants with a total of 3,145 young people**. Staffordshire saw a 5.9% increase, higher than the 3.9% increase in the West Midlands and the 4.6% increase in England this month.

- **The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 claiming work-related Universal Credit increased from 4.7% to 5.0%.** It is important to note that Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate 5.7%, which increased from 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate 7.7% which increased from 7.4%.

- **Stoke-on-Trent saw an increase of 60 claimants to a total of 1,895 claimants with the rate increasing to 8.4% from 8.1% this month.**



- The majority of the districts in Staffordshire saw an increase in the youth claimant rate, with one district (Lichfield) remaining unchanged this month.

- Tamworth has the highest rate at 6.7%, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest rate at 3.9%. Newcastle-under-Lyme has the highest number of youth claimants at 560, whilst Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest number of youth claimants at 230.

- 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

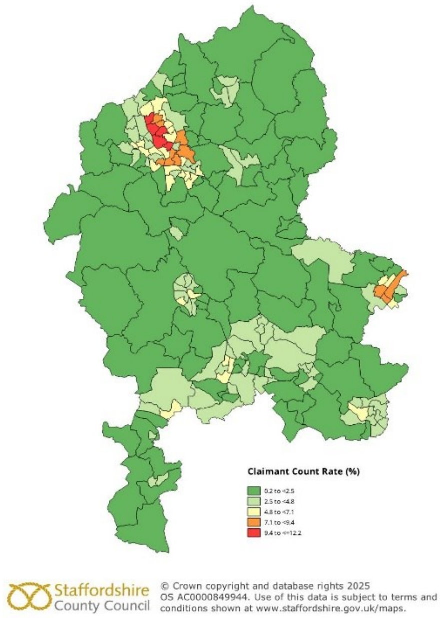
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Claimant Count Rate February 2025

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 53 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, sixteen were in Stoke-on-Trent with the highest rates in Moorcroft: 12.2%/455; Joiner's Square: 11.4%/ 520; Etruria & Hanley: 11.1% /600; Burslem Central: 10.2%/465; and Tunstall: 9.7% /410 total claimants.

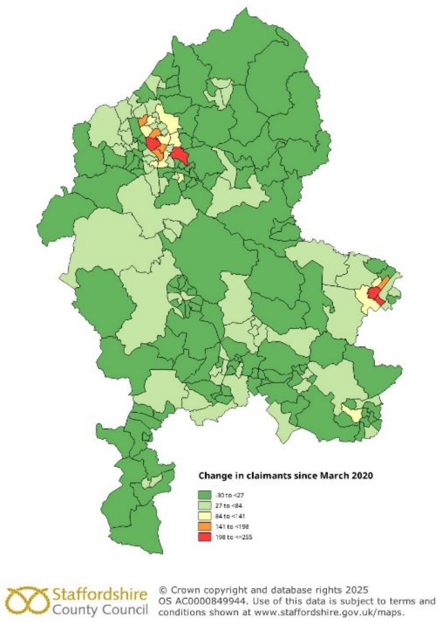
In Staffordshire, the four wards with the highest claimant rate were in East Staffordshire with the highest rates in Anglesey: 8.2%/445; Shobnall: 7.8%/420; Burton: 7.5%/225; Eton Park: 6.7%/330 total claimants.



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 (245 increase to 600); Bentilee & Ubberley (235 increase to 635); Moorcroft (195 increase to 455); Hanley Park & Shelton (180 increase to 365); Tunstall (160 increase to 410); Joiner's Square (145 increase to 520); Burslem Central (140 increase to 465).

Of the remaining three wards in the top ten, all were in East Staffordshire including Anglesey (255 increase to 445); Shobnall (210 increase to 420); Eton Park (150 increase to 330).



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

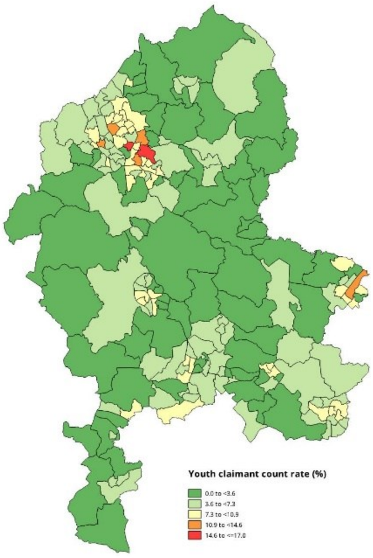
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Youth Claimant Count Rate February 2025

Of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 80 were above the England average of 5.7% 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: 17%/130; Bentilee & Ubberley: 16.1%/145; Abbey Hulton & Towsend: 12.1%/95; Fenton East: 11.8%/55; Burslem Central:11.4%/70; Meir South: 10.8%/60; Burton West & Newstead: 10.3%/60.

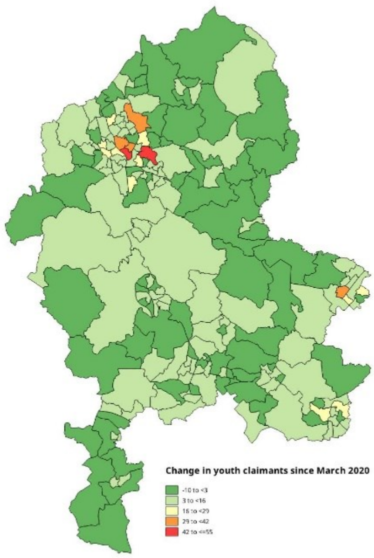
In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest claimant rates were Burton (East Staffordshire): 13%/50; Cross Heath (Newcastle-u-Lyme): 11.7%/60; Forebridge (Stafford): 10.3%/30.



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 Bentilee & Ubberley (55 increase to 145); Hanley Park & Shelton (45 increase to 75); Etruria and Hanley (35 increase to 80); Baddeley, Milton & Norton (30 increase to 90); Joiner's Square (30 increase to 130); Abbey Hulton & Townsend (25 increase to 95); Blurton West & Newstead (25 increase to 60).

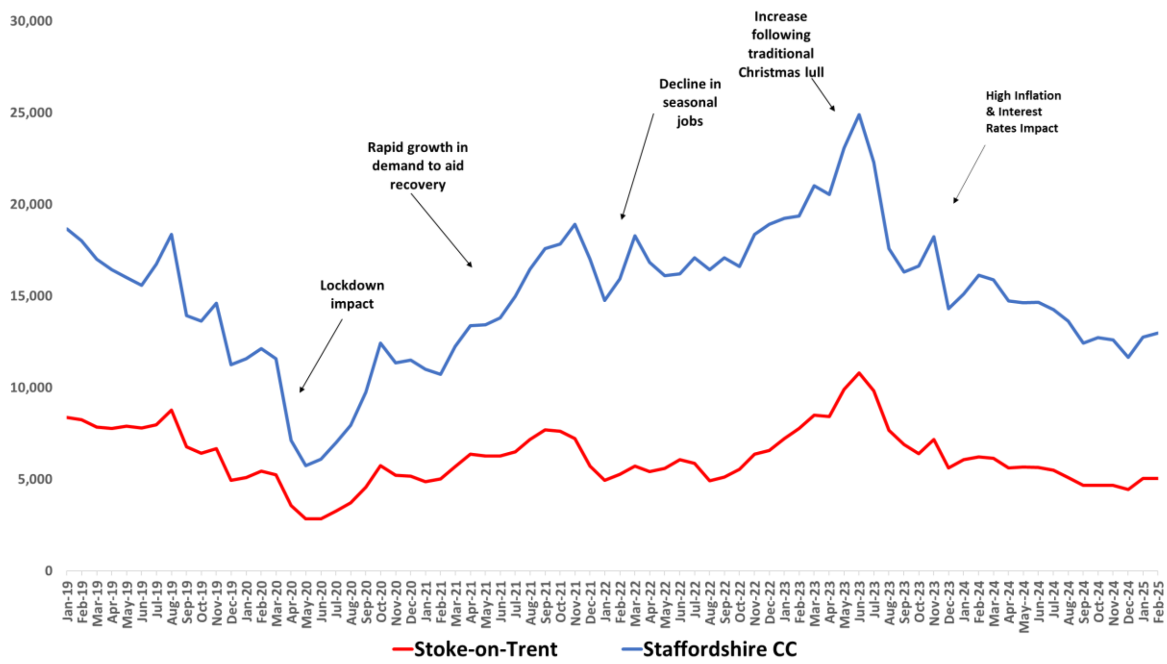
In Staffordshire, the three wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020, were Shobnall (East Staffordshire): 35 to 70; Cross Heath (Newcastle-u-Lyme): 25 increase to 60; Town (Newcastle-u-Lyme): 25 increase to 75.



Job Vacancies[3]

- **Staffordshire saw a 2% increase in the number of available job vacancies between January and February to a total of 13,000[4]. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw negligible change 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 1% increase, and nationally there was a 0.1% increase in the number of job vacancies.**
- In February 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 20% lower, whilst Stoke-on-Trent also decreased by 19%. 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 an increase this month to be above pre-pandemic levels, with Staffordshire job vacancies 7% higher and a positive contrast to the national level which is 0.4% lower and the West Midlands which is 12% lower. Stoke-on-Trent job vacancies are 7% 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.

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[3] *Source: Lightcast (formerly EMSI/Burning Glass)*

[4] *Lightcast upgraded its location coding process for UK job postings on 19 February 2024. As a result of this change, historic posting counts are estimated to have annual changes of -0.5 to -1% in 2018-19 & 2021; +1%-2% 2020 & 2022-2024.*

Monthly Trends in recruitment

- The majority of occupational groups saw an increase in vacancies during February. 'Skilled Trades' occupations saw the biggest increase of +10% whilst 'Managers, Directors & Senior Officials' and 'Caring, Leisure & Service' saw -2% decreases.
- The occupations to see the most significant increases during January include Welfare & Housing Associate professionals; Teaching professionals; Customer Service occupations; Early Education & Childcare practitioners; Construction & Building trades; Cleaners & Domestics; Chefs; Fork-lift Truck drivers; Legal secretaries; Gardeners & Landscape gardeners; Authors, Writers & Translators; Project Support officers; Production, Factory & Assembly supervisors; Youth Work professionals; Therapy professionals; Sales Accounts & Business Development Mangers; Customer Service supervisors; Registered Nursing professionals; Refuse & Salvage occupations; Cooks.

Annual Trends in job vacancies

- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year increases include Teaching (Teaching Professionals; SEND Teaching Professionals; Secondary Education Teaching Professionals), Welfare & Housing Associate Professionals, Legal Associate Professionals, Taxation Experts, Logistics (Road Transport Drivers; Large Goods Vehicle Drivers), Retail (Shelf Fillers), Youth Work Professionals, Construction (Chartered Surveyors, Mechanical Engineers, Construction & Building Trades), Air Travel Assistants; Health & Social Care (Dental Practitioners, Senior Care Workers), Gardeners & Landscape Gardeners, Public Relations Professionals, Data Analysts, Chemical Scientists.

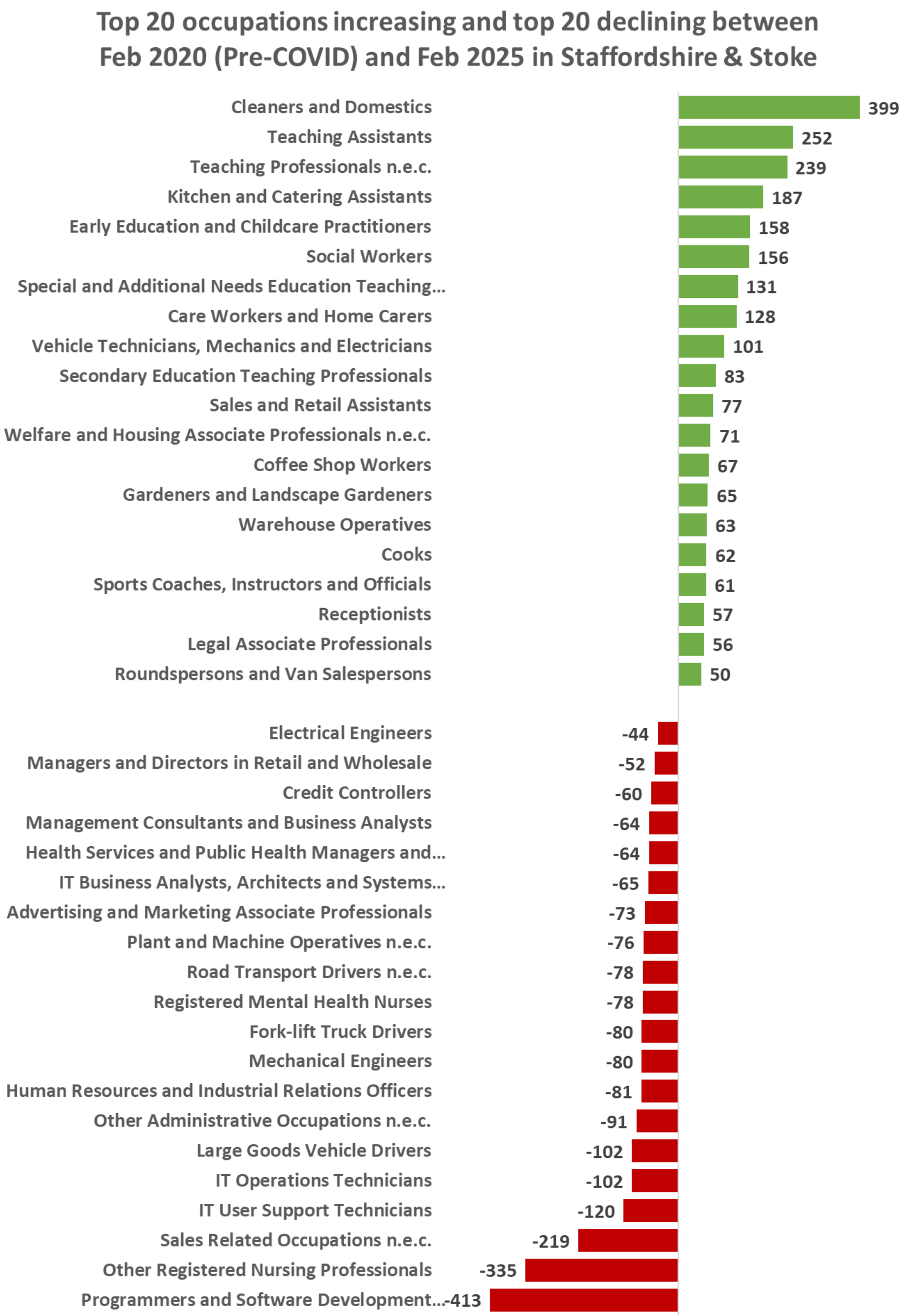
Pre-COVID baseline trends in job vacancies

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

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

- **Sport** (Sports Coaches, Instructors & Officials)
- **Law** (Legal Associate Professionals)

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



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 **'Cleaners & Domestics,' 'Sales Related,** and **'Teaching Assistants'** also have strong demand.

- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**

- There is high demand in the Health & Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**

- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Warehouse Operatives,' 'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** and **'Fork-lift Drivers.'**

- There is strong demand for **'Customer Service,' 'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks,' 'Other Administrative occupations'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** across business sectors.

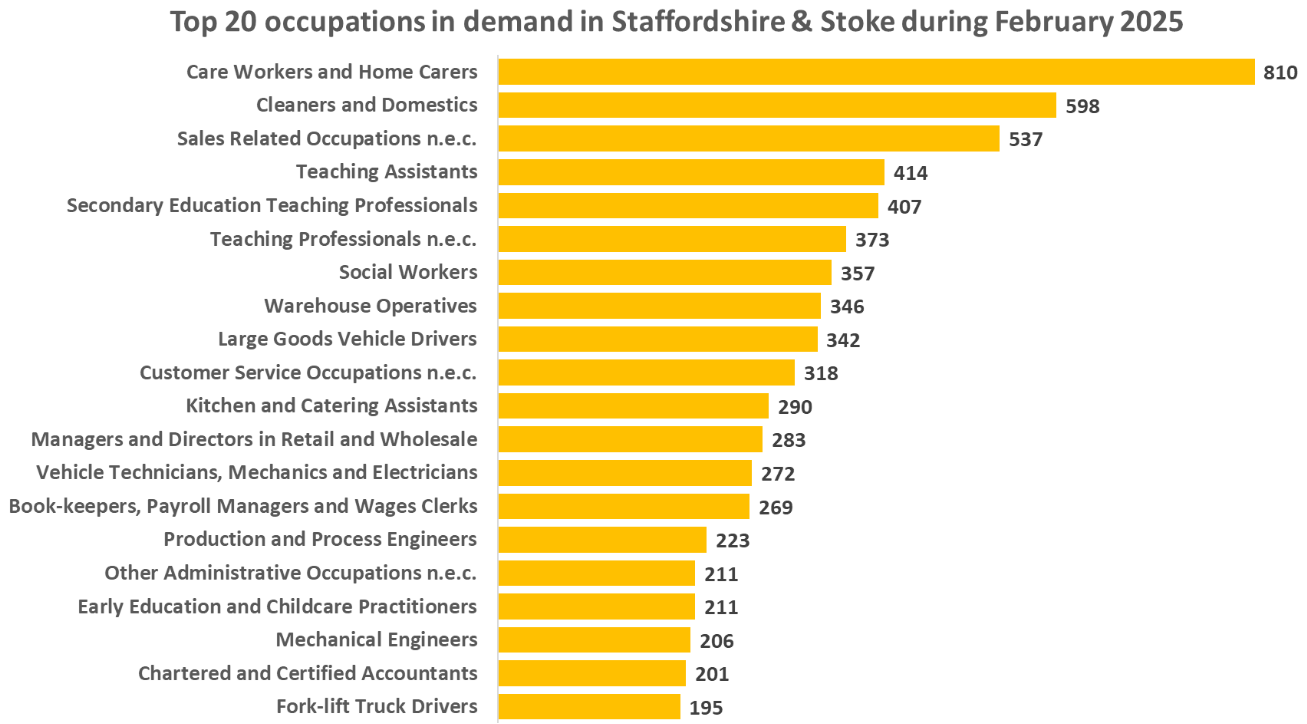
- In the Hospitality sector **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** are most in demand.

- Demand for **'Managers & Directors'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.

- In the Motor Trade there is demand for **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians.'**

- In the Engineering sector **'Production & Process Engineers'** and **'Mechanical Engineers'** are in demand.

- There is continued demand for **'Early Education & Childcare Practitioners'** in the Childcare sector.



- 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.