

Staffordshire

Means**Back to Business**

Economic Bulletin - Issue 8 – February 2021

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 secondary data available on what is happening with the local economy. However, this clearly only provides part of the picture and we continue to build up our softer intelligence to provide a better indication of what is happening on the ground, including the local response to the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent recovery.

Alongside information on the Claimant Count and Job Vacancies that will be a part of every Bulletin, we again look at the latest Government data regarding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Furloughed Workers and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). 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 have been impacted the hardest across Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent and where there may be a greater need for support.

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. 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

- Over recent weeks there does feel like there is light at the end of tunnel with the **UK vaccine programme** achieving its first significant milestone of vaccinating more than 15 million people and offering all of the most vulnerable a first jab. In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent more than 300,000 residents have been given their first doses of the vaccines.
- The successful rollout of the vaccines to date alongside the latest lockdown has helped see a **strong decline in COVID-19 infection rates** across most parts of the UK, with the R number falling below 1 for the first time since July and therefore the virus is no longer growing. There is also emerging evidence of reduced hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated, easing the pressure on the NHS and saving lives.
- Although it is important to recognise that virus cases remain high and it is therefore vital that everyone continues to follow the guidance, gets tested on a regular basis even if they have no symptoms and take up the offer of the vaccine when called to do so.
- To ease lockdown restrictions it is clearly important that the vaccine programme continue to be successfully rolled out at pace, with the aim for all over-50s offered a vaccine by mid-May and all adults offered a first dose by the end of July.
- There remain concerns regarding the **emergence of new variants** but the Government and initial scientific studies indicate that the vaccines remain effective. Alongside potential **booster jabs** to combat new variants the **expansion of workplace testing** for staff that are unable to work from home and **rapid lateral flow testing** will be important in preventing the spread of new variants and reopening further parts of the economy.

Economic Impact and Support

- In terms of the ongoing economic impact from the pandemic, the **UK economy shrank by a record 9.9% in 2020** which was the largest slump since 1709 and is more than twice as much as the previous record. However, there was a **growth of 1.2% in December** as some restrictions eased looks to have prevented what could have been the country's first double-dip recession since the 1970s.
- The **rate of unemployment in the UK rose to 5.1%** in the three months to December, with 1.74 million people unemployed in the October to December period, up 454,000 from the same quarter in 2019.
- The **economy is expected to shrink by 4.2% in the first three months of 2021**, amid tighter lockdown restrictions to slow the spread of the virus. More positively **the Bank of England feels that the economy will rebound strongly** due to the rapid vaccine rollout leading to improved consumer confidence during spring and summer but this

is dependent on controlling new strains.

- To oversee the exiting from lockdown and recovery the Government has this week announced its "cautious" **four-part roadmap out of lockdown** - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021>
- There are a number of key earliest possible dates at which point certain easing may take place if four tests on vaccines, infection rates and new coronavirus variants are met at each stage, these include:

Step One: 8 March

- Schools open and outdoor after-school sports allowed
- Two people allowed to sit together outdoors
- Care home residents allowed one regular visitor

Step One: 29 March

- Six people or two households allowed to meet outdoors
- Outdoor sports facilities open and organised sport allowed
- Travel outside local area allowed

Step Two: 12 April

- Non-essential retail and personal care open
- Hospitality outdoors open
- Indoor leisure such as gyms and swimming pools open
- Self-contained holiday accommodation open

Step Three: 17 May

- Outdoors most social contact rules lifted
- Six people or two households can meet indoors
- Indoor hospitality and hotels open

Step Four: 21 June

- All legal limits on social contact removed
- Hope to reopen final closed sectors of the economy

- As well as the 'roadmap' there is also the **Budget on 3rd March** where it is expected that the Chancellor will provide a long-term blueprint which commentators believe is likely to mean high state spending for a decade, including extending government relief, such as the furlough scheme and business rates relief, self-employment grants, business support loans, cuts in VAT and possibly even stamp duty, to prevent a surge in unemployment while the virus is brought under control.
- This further support comes as the UK recorded their highest January level of borrowing since records began, with the **total borrowed reaching £8.8 billion last month**.
- The chancellor has also announced that small businesses will have more time to repay state-backed loans taken out to help survive the coronavirus lockdown, with the option to extend the length of the loan from six to ten years under a "pay-as-you-grow"

initiative.

- It will be important that as we progress out of lockdown the Government works with business to reopen the economy and unlock investment for a recovery from COVID-19.

Green Recovery

- The LGA has stated that a green industrial revolution could “ignite” the UK’s recovery from the pandemic and create up to two million jobs. Up to 1.18 million green jobs could be created in England alone by 2050, with a near-fourfold increase to 680,000 in just nine years, including roles in the building of more turbines, retrofitting homes and by building electric cars.
- An example of this is the recent announcement by Jaguar that their production will be all-electric by 2025, with the company launching electric models of its entire Jaguar and Land Rover line-up by 2030 and investing £2.5bn a year on new technology.
- It is clear that local authorities are best placed to work with employers and skills providers to ensure local communities can benefit. Making the right investments now and in our Covid recovery will help us towards net zero carbon targets and address the economic challenges.
- Staffordshire County Council has also agreed plans to transform Staffordshire into a carbon neutral county council by 2050, with measures including:
 - replacing street lights
 - creating energy from waste
 - more sustainable travel
- The authority has also committed £600,000 over the next year to push forward the climate change agenda, and a further £2m up to 2024/25.

Local Picture

- Looking locally due to our strong position going into the crisis the number of people on some form of government economic support scheme (including Universal Credit, Furlough and Self-employment Income Support) is estimated to be lower than the rest of the country, 20% compared to 23% nationally, but increased further during the third lockdown as more people were furloughed.
- The claimant count in Staffordshire saw a **further decrease of 410 claimants between December 2020 and January 2021 to a total of 24,440 claimants** and the **claimant rate has declined to 4.6% of the working age population in January**.
- This shows both the positive effect that the package of Government support such as the furlough scheme is having on staving off further job losses.
- However, the area has seen **Universal Credit (UC) claimants more than double since March (pre-COVID), an increase of just under 12,400 claimants** - however, not all will be out of work.

- These increases 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 some people on low income to claim whilst in work. Therefore, there will be **a proportion of claimants currently that will still be in work but claiming Universal Credit because they are on a low income**, although from the data released by Government it is not currently possible to quantify the proportion of people that are indeed unemployed or employed but on a low income.
- Therefore, the reasons for the increase in claimants are still to fully emerge but evidence suggests there will be a combination of factors such as the self-employed no longer being able to operate, part-time employees working less than 16 hours a week who are now furloughed, and Small & Medium Enterprises laying off staff in the short-term.
- It is important to recognise that although we have seen a rise in claimant numbers due to COVID given our strong position going into the pandemic we still perform comparatively well for **our claimant rate which stood at 4.6% of the working age population in January compared to 7.1% regionally and 6.3% nationally**.
- However, it is young people, women, the lowest paid (including those in manual occupations, more routine or less skilled jobs) and part-time workers who continue to feel the impact of the economic shock the most. For example, the **proportion of young people aged 18-24 that are claiming Universal Credit has increased from 3.7% in March 2020 to 7.3% in January 2021**, well above the rate of 4.6% for the working age population. Given that it is harder for these groups to find a new job it is increasingly vital that the welcomed announcements made in 'A Plan for Jobs 2020' such as the **Kickstart Scheme** are quickly and effectively put in place to support these groups and help prevent them becoming long-term unemployed.
- The latest Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) figures show that there were **55,400 furloughed job claims in Staffordshire up to the end of January, equivalent to 14% of eligible workers**, which is in-line with the regional average but slightly lower than the national average of 15%. **Stoke-on-Trent had 14,400 jobs still furloughed**, equivalent to 13% of eligible jobs. The concern is how many of those on furlough will be able to return to work once the CJRS scheme ends at the end of April.
- **Staffordshire has seen 25,300 self-employed workers claim for the third SEISS grant up to the end of January** and a take-up rate of 64% for those eligible through the scheme, slightly lower than the regional and national average take-up rates (both 65%). **Stoke-on-Trent had 7,300 SEISS claims up to the end of January**, equivalent

to 71% of those eligible. This is the highest rate the West Midlands Region upper-tier authorities. There are concerns as to how many of these businesses will be viable and able to continue to operate after Government support is withdrawn.

- The ongoing third lockdown has seen a further decline in recruitment during January, with **job vacancies in Staffordshire decreasing by 3% between December and January equivalent to 550 fewer job vacancies, which is slightly above the 2% decline seen nationally. Stoke-on-Trent also saw a decline of 2% with just over 110 fewer vacancies in January compared to December.** However, it is **still positive that vacancy levels remain above those seen a year earlier.**
- We continue to see **demand for roles in health, social care and logistics e.g. ASOS and Pets at Home** with clear **emerging opportunities for job creation in digital (including online retail), advanced manufacturing (AI, Automation and Machine Learning), construction (£900 million Getting Building Fund) and the green economy (including retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency and electric cars).**
- We will also look to build on existing strengths including **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 HS2 and West Midlands Freight Interchange, and **advanced logistics** with the online retail boom such as the recent announcement of ASOS's decision to build a £90million distribution centre creating 2,000 jobs close to Cannock and Tamworth where jobs will be very much needed.
- Although the number of job vacancies has been impacted by the latest lockdown and tighter restrictions it is important that we continue to work together to support our residents reskill and upskill into the roles that do exist such as through the work of the **Countywide Redundancy Task Group**, the **£2 billion Government Kickstart Scheme** – find out more about the types of roles and how to express an interest at the [Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership website](#), and the **Government Restart Scheme**.

Local initiatives

- We are continuing to prioritise support for small businesses and people whose jobs or employment prospects have been impacted by the pandemic.
- In addition to the package of support already being delivered by the county council and programmes by a range of other organisations, including , Staffordshire County Council is working with our district and borough council partners to produce a **£5m support package** that will help more businesses and more people.

This includes:

- **More funding on top of the Additional Restrictions Grant managed by the district and borough councils** - the county council will be investing £860,000 towards the scheme.
- **Contributing to the cost of apprentices through 'The Staffordshire 500' Apprentices Wage Support programme** - Supporting smaller businesses not paying into the national apprenticeship levy by contributing to the cost of the wages of 16 to 24-year olds. This could create up to 500 apprentices.
- **Up to £5,000 for re-training through the 'Nil Cost Training for Employers Top-up Project'** - offering businesses the opportunity to up-skill employees or train new staff if looking to change business operations or enter new markets. Up to £5,000 would be provided and matched through other funding sources. Up to 400 Staffordshire businesses could be supported over the next 15 months through the programme.
- **The Small Business 'To Thrive' Financial Support programme** - would offer grants to small businesses between £2,000 and £5,000 to cover expenditure costs. Applicants would need to demonstrate all the measures they have put in place to remain open during the restriction period.
- More information when the new initiatives go live will be available [here](#).
- **Other support you can access now** includes over £615,000 in start-business support, including:
 - [The Start-Up Programme](#) of free online webinars and training - get your business going
 - [The Start-Up Loans Scheme](#) - of £3,000 to £5,000 for people who have completed the Start-Up Programme
 - **'Ignite'** - the start-up programme supporting students to start up their own business
 - [The Redundancy and Recruitment Triage Service](#) - Free and one to one support for you and your staff if you are having to make redundancies. The service helps people discover their transferable skills and match them to new work.
- The **Growth Hub has launched its online webinar library** to provide dedicated support to local businesses on topics ranging from funding and finance to marketing, HR and business growth. You can access the library [here](#).
- Keele University and partners have launch ambitious plans to strengthen recovery and help SMEs. **The Keele Deal I Recovery** will create a wide-ranging programme of contributions aimed at achieving a major impact on our area's recovery from Covid-

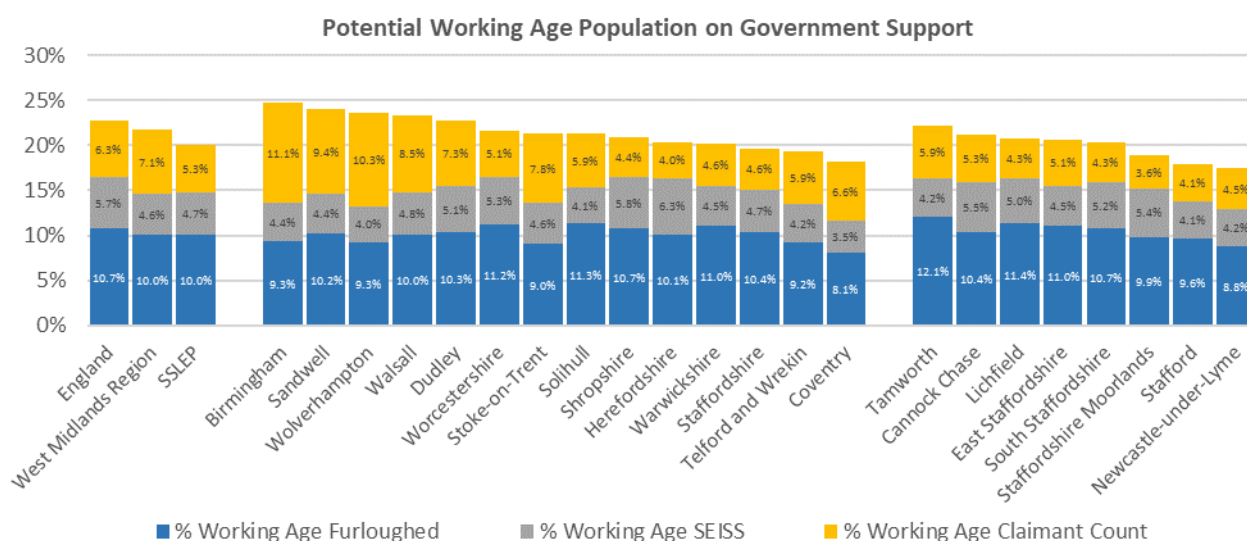
19. The Deal sees Keele University working with partners, including the county council, to develop responses to the increasing job losses and changing labour market caused by the pandemic, ensuring that current and future generations of workforce have the skills they need. The Deal incorporates a number of projects, including the expansion of the University's Science and Innovation Park. Innovation Centre 7 is set for completion in the spring of 2022 and specialising in digital enhancement and will help more than 300 SMEs to benefit from a data analytics transformation programme.

- In conclusion, it is apparent that the third national lockdown and tighter restrictions have caused further economic impact to businesses and jobs but it continues to be clear that **Government and local support is playing a vital role in helping businesses to survive and stave off further job losses**. Alongside this the increasing speed and success of the vaccination programme rollout is a major step in the right direction to reducing further impacts.
- As the vaccines continue to be provided to the general population it is vital that additional support such as the **Additional Restrictions Grant** is utilised to **help businesses transition to new business models including diversification and digitisation to improve their viability and sustainability**. Alongside this the **Restart Scheme has an important role to play in ensuring that local residents have the skills needed within the local economy to support increased growth, productivity and prosperity**.

Local Picture – Residents on Government Support Schemes

During this period it is important to be able to understand how local businesses are responding to the gradual reopening of the economy and what impact COVID-19 has had and continues to have on jobs. A key aspect of this is monitoring the number of people claiming Universal Credit (Claimant Count), and the number of people on the Coronavirus Job Retention (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Schemes (SEISS), as seen below.

Overall Number of Residents on Government Support Schemes



In line with the Claimant Count rate which shows the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit we have calculated the proportion of the working age population which may be on the furloughed or have accessed SEISS support.

In total there are potentially just over 139,000 residents in the SSLEP area on Government support, equivalent to around 20% of the working age population which is lower than the regional (22%) and national (23%) averages. Tamworth (22%) and Cannock Chase (21%) have the highest rates while Newcastle-under-Lyme (18%) and Stafford (18%) have the lowest.

SSLEP Working Age Population	694,954
Jobs in High Risk Sectors	221,000
Claimant Count Jan 2021	36,860
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Furloughed job claims as at 31st Jan	69,800
Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) claims up to 31st Jan	32,600
Potential workers on Government support	139,260
Potential % of working age population on Government support	20.0%

Note: Important to recognise that there may be some workers which are accessing more than one support scheme and there may be some double counting due to jobs moving on and off the furlough scheme

Detailed Breakdown

Claimant Count¹

The following table highlights the level of claimant unemployment in the Staffordshire Districts and each of the Strategic Authorities in the West Midlands Region:

Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: January 2021

Area	Claimant Count Rate (January 2020)	Claimant Count Rate (December 2020)	Claimant Count Rate ¹ (January 2021)	Number of Claimants (January 2021)	Monthly Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Claimants (%)	Change in Claimants since March (Numbers)	Change in Claimants since March (%)
England	2.9	6.3	6.3	2,200,965	-15,820	-0.7%	1,137,460	107.0%
West Midlands	3.8	7.2	7.1	260,100	-1,790	-0.7%	115,750	80.2%
SSLEP	2.6	5.4	5.3	36,860	-460	-1.2%	17,490	90.3%
Birmingham	6.5	11.1	11.1	81,210	-25	0.0%	31,840	64.5%
Wolverhampton	5.9	10.3	10.3	16,750	30	0.2%	6,370	61.4%
Sandwell	4.9	9.5	9.4	19,325	-60	-0.3%	8,545	79.3%
Walsall	4.6	8.5	8.5	14,705	20	0.1%	6,100	70.9%
Stoke-on-Trent	4.4	7.8	7.8	12,420	-50	-0.4%	5,100	69.7%
Dudley	4.2	7.3	7.3	14,110	-110	-0.8%	5,595	65.7%
Coventry	3.0	6.6	6.5	16,270	-155	-0.9%	8,270	103.4%
Telford and Wrekin	2.9	6.0	5.9	6,565	-150	-2.2%	3,135	91.4%
Solihull	2.8	5.9	5.8	7,460	-55	-0.7%	3,810	104.4%
Worcestershire	2.3	5.2	5.1	17,855	-355	-1.9%	9,550	115.0%
Warwickshire	2.1	4.7	4.6	16,215	-265	-1.6%	8,385	107.1%
Staffordshire	2.1	4.6	4.6	24,440	-410	-1.6%	12,390	102.8%
Shropshire	2.0	4.4	4.4	8,305	-135	-1.6%	4,295	107.1%
Herefordshire, County of	1.8	4.0	4.0	4,470	-75	-1.7%	2,360	111.8%
Tamworth	3.0	6.1	5.9	2,790	-85	-3.0%	1,300	87.2%
Cannock Chase	2.5	5.3	5.3	3,355	5	0.1%	1,700	102.7%
East Staffordshire	2.1	5.0	5.0	3,645	-40	-1.1%	1,925	111.9%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	2.3	4.6	4.5	3,670	-95	-2.5%	1,690	85.4%
Lichfield	2.0	4.4	4.3	2,650	-75	-2.8%	1,330	100.8%
South Staffordshire	1.9	4.4	4.3	2,920	-45	-1.5%	1,610	122.9%
Stafford	1.9	4.1	4.0	3,305	-70	-2.1%	1,650	99.7%
Staffordshire Moorlands	1.6	3.7	3.6	2,100	-15	-0.7%	1,180	128.3%

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

- The Claimant Count in Staffordshire saw a further decrease of 410 between December 2020 and January 2021 to a total of 24,440 claimants. While Stoke-on-Trent saw a decrease of 50 over the same period with a total of 12,420 claimants in January.
- These decreases in the Claimant Count are similar to the decline seen nationally. This reflects both the positive effect that the package of Government support such as the furlough scheme is having in staving off higher job losses and the job opportunities that are now available.
- It is also important to look at the change in the Claimant Count seen since March 2020 (pre-COVID) where the number of claimants in Staffordshire has more than doubled with an increase of 12,390 claimants and in Stoke-on-Trent there has been an increase of 5,100.

- Ultimately, the full effect of COVID-19 on employment will not be felt until the furlough and SEISS schemes and further Government support comes to an end.
- The increases in the Claimant Count also 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, i.e. people out of work but looking for a job. A proportion of claimants currently will have a job but claiming Universal Credit due to having a low income - the reasons for the increase in claimants are still to fully emerge but evidence suggests there will be a combination of factors such as:
 - New Job Starters/PT employees/Self-employed with no income claiming Universal Credit because they are not eligible for the CJRS;
 - Self-employed ceased trading or have very low income claiming Universal Credit (and are either not eligible for, or not yet been paid, income under the SEISS);
 - Working part-time low-income workers claiming Universal Credit and may be furloughed;
 - Potential Redundancies within Small & Medium Enterprises laying off staff in the short-term.
- Unfortunately, due to Government data limitations it is not currently possible to quantify the proportion of people that fall into these cohorts at a local level.
- Given the comparatively strong position of Staffordshire going into the pandemic and the fact that COVID-19 has impacted much of the economy during lockdown, even with the significant increase in claimants the proportion of working age residents on such benefits remains comparatively low in Staffordshire with a rate of 4.6% in December compared to 7.1% regionally and 6.3% nationally. In Stoke-on-Trent the Claimant Count rate remains above both the regional and national averages at 7.8%.
- This month all Staffordshire Districts have seen a decline in the claimant count with the exception of Cannock Chase which saw a small rise of 5. Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tamworth and Lichfield saw the largest decreases in the number of working age claimants in January.
- Tamworth and Cannock Chase continue to record the highest rates in Staffordshire, although Newcastle-under-Lyme and East Staffordshire have the largest caseloads. However, it's important to note all Districts and Boroughs remain lower than the current national and regional rates.

¹ Source: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

- As well as workers across sectors being impacted differently, there are also signs that it is the lowest paid, women, part-time workers and young people (particularly apprentices) that are being hardest hit. These groups are more likely to work in sectors that have shut down or reduced activity, such as hospitality and non-essential retail. They are also less likely to be able to work from home.

Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: January 2021

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (January 2020)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (December 2020)	Youth Claimant Count Rate ¹ (January 2021)	Number of Youth Claimants (January 2021)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Monthly Change in Youth Claimants (%)	Change in Youth Claimants since March (Numbers)	Change in Youth Claimants since March (%)
England	3.9	8.9	8.8	419,235	-2,260	-0.5%	221,505	112.0%
West Midlands	4.9	9.9	9.7	51,220	-960	-1.8%	23,315	83.6%
SSLEP	3.9	8.2	8.1	7,225	-115	-1.6%	3,405	89.1%
Wolverhampton	8.5	15.1	14.8	3,165	-50	-1.6%	1,255	65.7%
Sandwell	7.3	15.1	14.7	3,895	-95	-2.4%	1,780	84.2%
Walsall	7.6	13.7	13.6	3,110	-30	-1.0%	1,195	62.4%
Dudley	6.9	12.8	12.5	2,995	-70	-2.3%	1,245	71.1%
Birmingham	6.0	11.3	11.1	15,685	-205	-1.3%	6,580	72.3%
Solihull	5.1	11.2	11.0	1,670	-30	-1.8%	845	102.4%
Stoke-on-Trent	5.5	10.1	10.0	2,370	-15	-0.6%	965	68.7%
Telford and Wrekin	4.7	10.1	9.7	1,460	-60	-3.9%	700	92.1%
Worcestershire	3.7	8.5	8.3	3,445	-105	-3.0%	1,850	116.0%
Shropshire	3.8	8.1	7.9	1,650	-45	-2.7%	825	100.0%
Staffordshire	3.3	7.5	7.3	4,855	-100	-2.0%	2,440	101.0%
Herefordshire, County of	3.2	6.8	6.7	820	-10	-1.2%	405	97.6%
Warwickshire	2.8	6.6	6.5	2,960	-40	-1.3%	1,625	121.7%
Coventry	2.7	6.1	5.9	3,140	-105	-3.2%	1,605	104.6%
Tamworth	4.8	10.8	10.7	615	-10	-1.6%	320	108.5%
Cannock Chase	4.4	10.2	10.0	735	-15	-2.0%	370	101.4%
East Staffordshire	3.2	8.0	7.9	670	-5	-0.7%	350	109.4%
South Staffordshire	3.0	7.5	7.4	590	-10	-1.7%	340	136.0%
Lichfield	3.3	7.5	7.1	500	-30	-5.7%	230	85.2%
Stafford	3.2	6.6	6.7	610	5	0.8%	295	93.7%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.7	6.1	6.1	390	0	0.0%	215	122.9%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	2.8	5.6	5.4	750	-30	-3.8%	325	76.5%

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

- Young people aged 18-24 continue to be disproportionately impacted by unemployment where the claimant rate for young people in Staffordshire has increased from 3.7% in March to 7.3% in January compared to a rise from 2.3% to 4.6% for all working-age residents, while in Stoke-on-Trent the rate has risen from 5.9% in March to 10.0% in January.
- Staffordshire has seen a decrease of 100 in the youth claimant count over the latest month to a total of 4,855, while Stoke-on-Trent has seen a decline of 15 to 2,370 youth claimants.
- This month the majority of Staffordshire Districts saw slight decreases in youth claimants, with the exception of Stafford which saw an increase of 5 and Staffordshire Moorlands which remained unchanged. Tamworth and Cannock Chase continue to record the highest rates in Staffordshire, both above the regional and national averages.

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

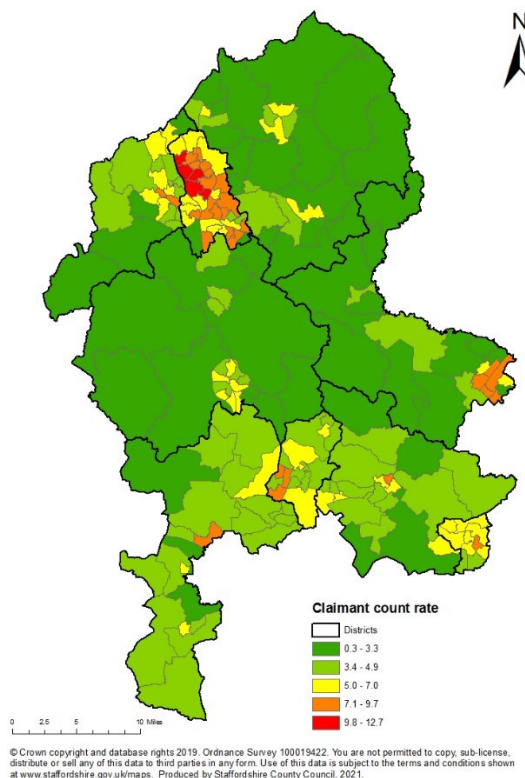
- The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Claimant Count Rate January 2021

Out of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 46 were above the England average of 6.3% for the number of claimants as a proportion of the working age population.

The top 15 wards with the highest claimant count rate were all in Stoke-on-Trent with Joiner's Square (12.7% or 570 claimants), Moorcroft (12.3% or 450), and Etruria and Hanley (12.2% or 635 claimants) having the highest rates.

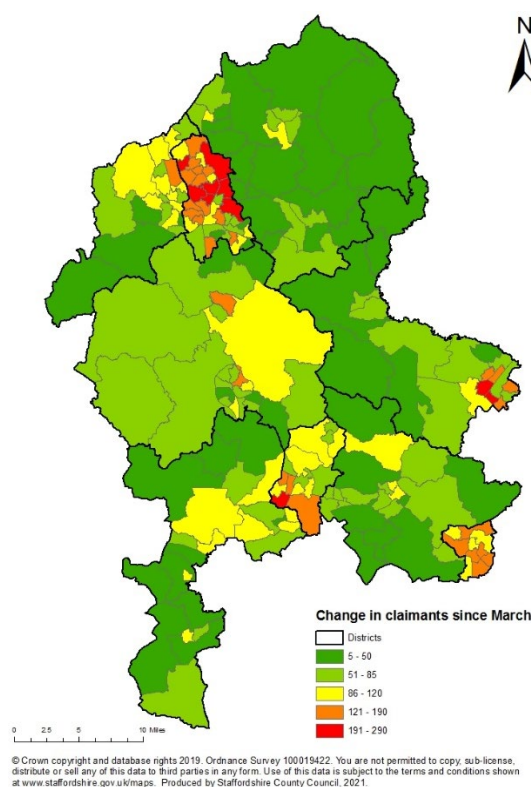
In Staffordshire, Cannock North in Cannock Chase (8.4% or 395), Burton in East Staffordshire (8.4% or 250) and Anglesey in East Staffordshire (8.2% or 435) had the highest claimant count rates.



Change in Claimant Count since March 2020

The top 3 wards with the highest change in the number of claimants since March 2020 were in Stoke-on-Trent and included Birches Head and Central Forest Park (290 increase to 680 in total), Etruria and Hanley (280 rise to 635), and Bentilee and Ubberley (250 increase to 650).

In Staffordshire the highest increases were seen in Anglesey in East Staffordshire (245 rise to 435), Shobnall in East Staffordshire (225 increase to 435) and Cannock South (200 rise to 425).



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

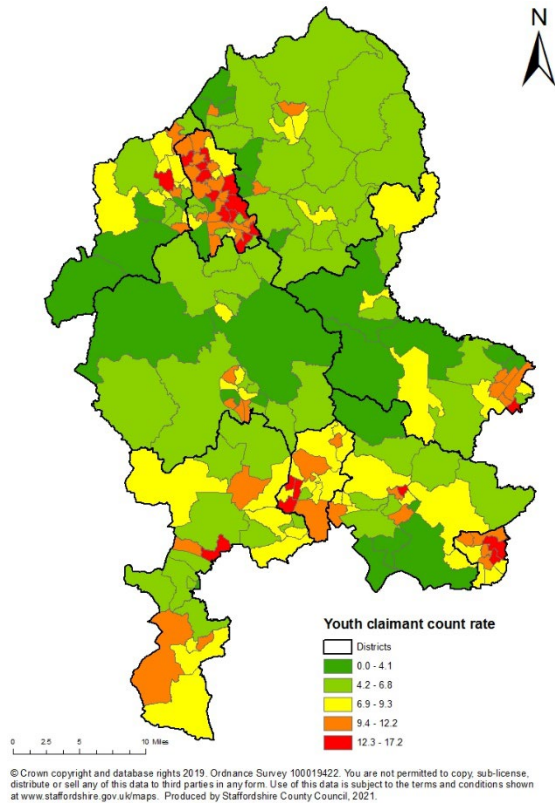
The following maps and tables provide the latest breakdown of the youth claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent.

Youth Claimant Count Rate January 2021

Out of the 201 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 75 were at or above the England average of 8.8% for the number of claimants aged 18-24 as a proportion of the 18-24 population.

Of the top 10 wards with the highest youth claimant count rate 7 were in Stoke-on-Trent including Joiner's Square (16.3%), Moorcroft (15.8%), Burslem Park (14.9%), Bentilee and Ubbertley (14.4%), Meir North (14.4%), Abbey Hulton and Townsend (14.0%) and Tunstall (13.8%).

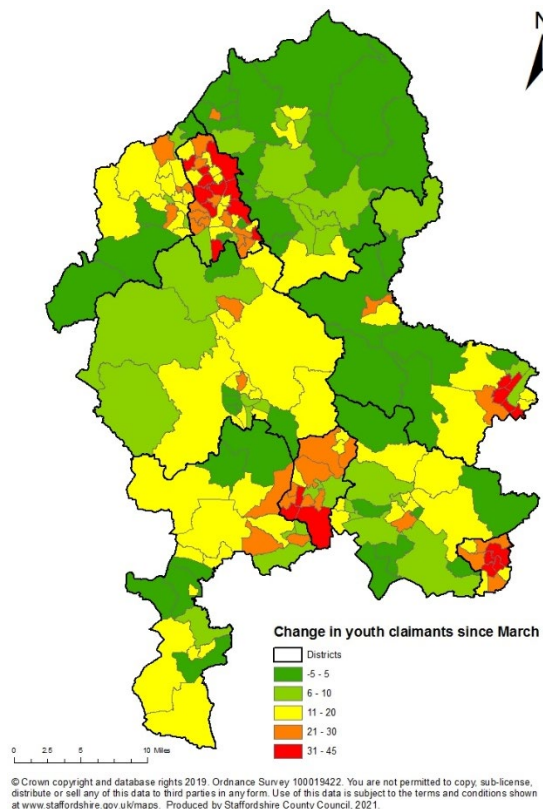
In Staffordshire, the highest rate was Glascote in Tamworth with 17.3%, followed by Cannock South (13.8%) and Curborough in Lichfield (13.8%).



Change in Youth Claimant Count since March 2020

Out of the top 10 wards with the highest change in the number of youth claimants since March 2020 8 were in Stoke-on-Trent including Burslem Park (45 rise to 65), Tunstall (45 rise to 85) and Birches Head and Central Forest Park (45 rise to 115).

In Staffordshire, the highest increases were seen in Glascote in Tamworth (45 rise to 100), Belgrave in Tamworth (45 rise to 75) and Cannock South (40 rise to 90).



Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Furloughed Jobs²

- HMRC have released local authority level breakdowns of the CJRS scheme for claims submitted to HMRC by 15th February 2021 for the period up to 31st January 2021.
- HMRC have stated that the CJRS claims data are provisional and subject to revisions in future releases due to additional claims submitted following this release. This means that figures are preliminary and are likely to be revised upwards in future releases, with HMRC estimating that the number of claims reported for January could increase by around 3%.
- Based on the provisional figures, **Staffordshire had the 2nd highest number of furloughed job claims up to the end of January in the WM with 55,400**, behind only Birmingham and equivalent to 14% of eligible workers. This is to be expected given Staffordshire is the 2nd largest strategic authority area in the region but shows the potential size of the challenge as furlough ends.
- Between December and January Staffordshire has seen **an increase of 8,700 furloughed jobs, reflecting the impact of the third lockdown and tighter restrictions**. This has seen **Staffordshire's rate of furlough increase from 12% to 14% but remains in-line with the regional average and slightly lower than the national average (15%)**.
- **Stoke-on-Trent has seen the number of furloughed jobs increase from 12,200 to 14,400**, equivalent to 13% of eligible jobs.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Statistics: February 2021

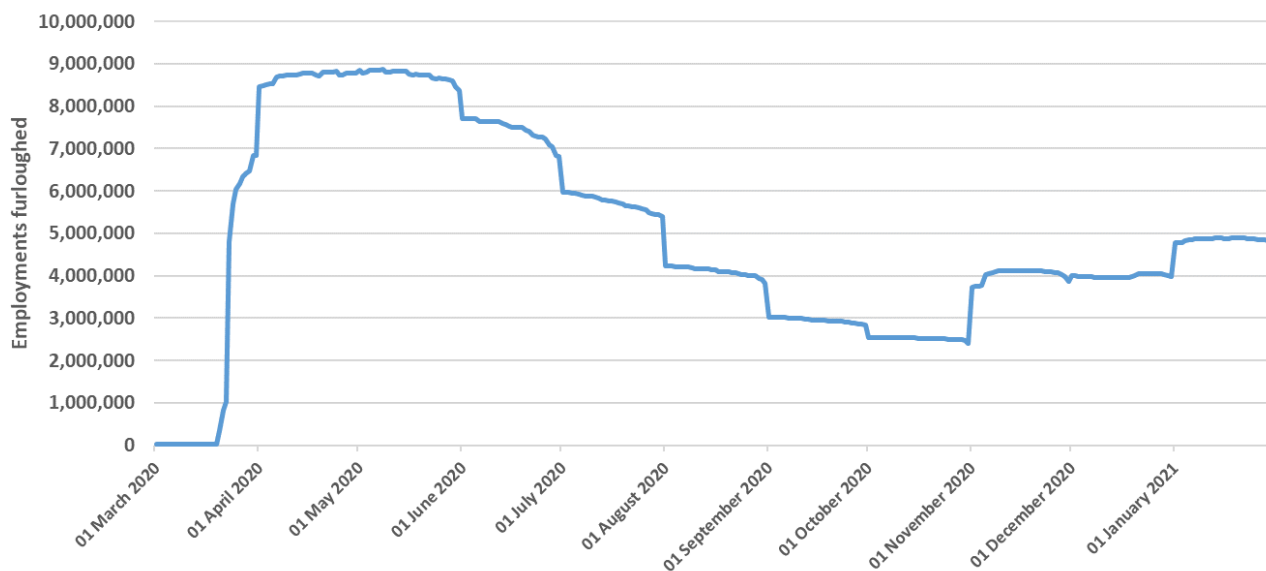
County and district / unitary authority	Total employments eligible for furlough	Total	
		employments furloughed at 31 January (provisional)	Total take up-rate at 31 January (provisional)
England	25,577,900	3,769,700	15%
South Staffordshire	48,300	7,200	15%
Tamworth	38,400	5,700	15%
Lichfield	47,300	7,000	15%
West Midlands	2,580,400	366,400	14%
Cannock Chase	46,400	6,600	14%
Staffordshire County	398,200	55,400	14%
East Staffordshire	58,400	8,100	14%
SSLEP	510,800	69,800	14%
Staffordshire Moorlands	42,300	5,700	14%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	55,200	7,200	13%
Stoke-on-Trent UA	112,600	14,400	13%
Stafford	61,900	8,000	13%

Source: HMRC CJRS and PAYE Real Time Information

² Source: HMRC – <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-february-2021>

- There is concern as to how many of those workers which remain on furlough are to return to work once furlough ends at the end of April.
- The national data provides more detailed breakdowns than available for local authorities and looking at the national picture allows for greater insight into who is currently being supported by the furlough scheme.
- Nationally there were 802,000 (an increase of nearly 100,000 since December) employers making 4,703,600 (an increase of over 728,500 since December) furloughed job claims up to the end of January.
- Over two thirds (68%) of claims were made by SMEs with 32% in large businesses with 250+ employees. While of those workers furloughed, over two thirds (68%) were fully furloughed and 28% partially furloughed with 4% unknown. The proportion that are fully furloughed had been declining going into the second lockdown but has risen due to the impact of the second lockdown and third lockdown.
- The following chart shows the trend in furloughed job claims nationally, it shows that as lockdown was eased furlough claims gradually declined, however it is clear that the second and third lockdowns impacted jobs between November and January.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Statistics: February 2021 Time Series



- Nationally, the identified high-risk sectors of 'Accommodation and Food services' and 'Arts, entertainment and recreation' have by far the highest furlough take-up rates. While it is 'Accommodation and Food services' and 'Wholesale and retail including the repair of motor vehicles' which have the highest number of jobs that are still furloughed, with these two sectors seeing by far the highest increases during the third lockdown.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) Statistics: February 2021 by Sector

Sector	Employers			Employments			Value of claims made for periods 1 November to 31 January (provisional) (£ million)
	Employers (PAYE schemes) with staff eligible for furlough	Employers furloughing staff at 31 January (provisional)	Take-up rate at 31 January (provisional)	Employments eligible for furlough	Employments furloughed at 31 January (provisional)	Take-up rate at 31 January (provisional)	
Accommodation and food services	133,800	90,400	68%	2,037,800	1,147,200	56%	2,520
Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles	249,100	130,400	52%	4,520,000	938,500	21%	1,833
Administrative and support services	165,300	71,900	43%	2,739,200	387,000	14%	866
Arts, entertainment and recreation	41,000	26,100	64%	574,900	315,100	55%	652
Manufacturing	101,300	49,200	49%	2,363,400	312,800	13%	704
Professional, scientific and technical	308,000	102,400	33%	2,255,200	270,600	12%	662
Construction	239,100	94,000	39%	1,297,700	244,100	19%	595
Other service activities	93,600	59,200	63%	548,800	222,600	41%	444
Education	39,600	19,200	49%	3,236,600	188,200	6%	233
Transportation and storage	77,100	30,400	39%	1,373,600	187,600	14%	525
Health and social work	101,300	35,000	35%	4,199,600	183,000	4%	286
Information and communication	146,200	39,100	27%	1,239,400	110,500	9%	294
Real estate	48,000	20,500	43%	437,400	64,900	15%	154
Finance and insurance	34,500	9,300	27%	1,083,500	31,400	3%	77
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	33,700	5,800	17%	207,000	21,200	10%	38
Water supply, sewerage and waste	5,800	2,600	45%	177,100	14,200	8%	35
Public administration and defence; social security	7,700	300	4%	1,374,100	9,500	1%	13
Households	77,700	2,600	3%	133,000	3,400	3%	7
Energy production and supply	1,300	400	32%	133,200	3,000	2%	9
Mining and quarrying	1,000	300	30%	48,900	2,100	4%	6
Unknown and other	53,300	13,600	-	195,600	46,600	-	103
Total	1,958,200	802,700	41%	30,175,900	4,703,600	16%	10,057

Source: HMRC CJRS and PAYE Real Time Information

- The Government has now set out its roadmap out of lockdown and it is clear that due to the given timings of lifting certain restrictions there will be certain sectors which will continue to be adversely affected until such measures are lifted. In the longer-term, specific industrial sectors and the associated labour market may continue to be adversely affected, particularly due to reduced economic support measures and challenging market conditions.
- A particular risk is the end of the Government's Job Retention Scheme (JRS) at the end of April. The JRS has been successful in enabling many people to remain in employment but furloughed during the crisis but once this comes to an end there are concerns that many furloughed workers may find themselves out of work.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)³

- **Staffordshire has seen 25,300 self-employed workers claim for the third SEISS grant up to the end of January** and a take-up rate of 64% for those eligible through the scheme, which is slightly below the regional and national average take-up rates (both 65%).
- **Stoke-on-Trent had 7,300 SEISS claims up to the end of January**, equivalent to 71% of those eligible. This is the highest rate the West Midlands Region upper-tier authorities.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Statistics: February 2021

County and district / unitary authority	Total potentially eligible population	Total no. of claims made to 31/01/21	Total value of claims made to 31/01/21 (£)	Average value of claims made to 31/01/21 (£)	Total Take-Up Rate
Stoke-on-Trent UA	10,400	7,300	18,300,000	2,500	71%
Cannock Chase	5,000	3,500	10,600,000	3,000	70%
Tamworth	3,000	2,000	5,600,000	2,800	68%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	5,200	3,400	9,800,000	2,900	66%
South Staffordshire	5,300	3,500	10,100,000	2,900	66%
SSLEP	49,800	32,600	91,200,000	2,798	65%
England	3,067,000	1,998,000	5,666,000,000	2,836	65%
Lichfield	4,800	3,100	9,500,000	3,100	65%
West Midlands	259,000	170,000	461,000,000	2,700	65%
East Staffordshire	5,200	3,300	8,700,000	2,600	64%
Staffordshire County	39,400	25,300	72,900,000	2,900	64%
Stafford	5,600	3,400	9,800,000	2,900	60%
Staffordshire Moorlands	5,400	3,100	8,800,000	2,800	58%

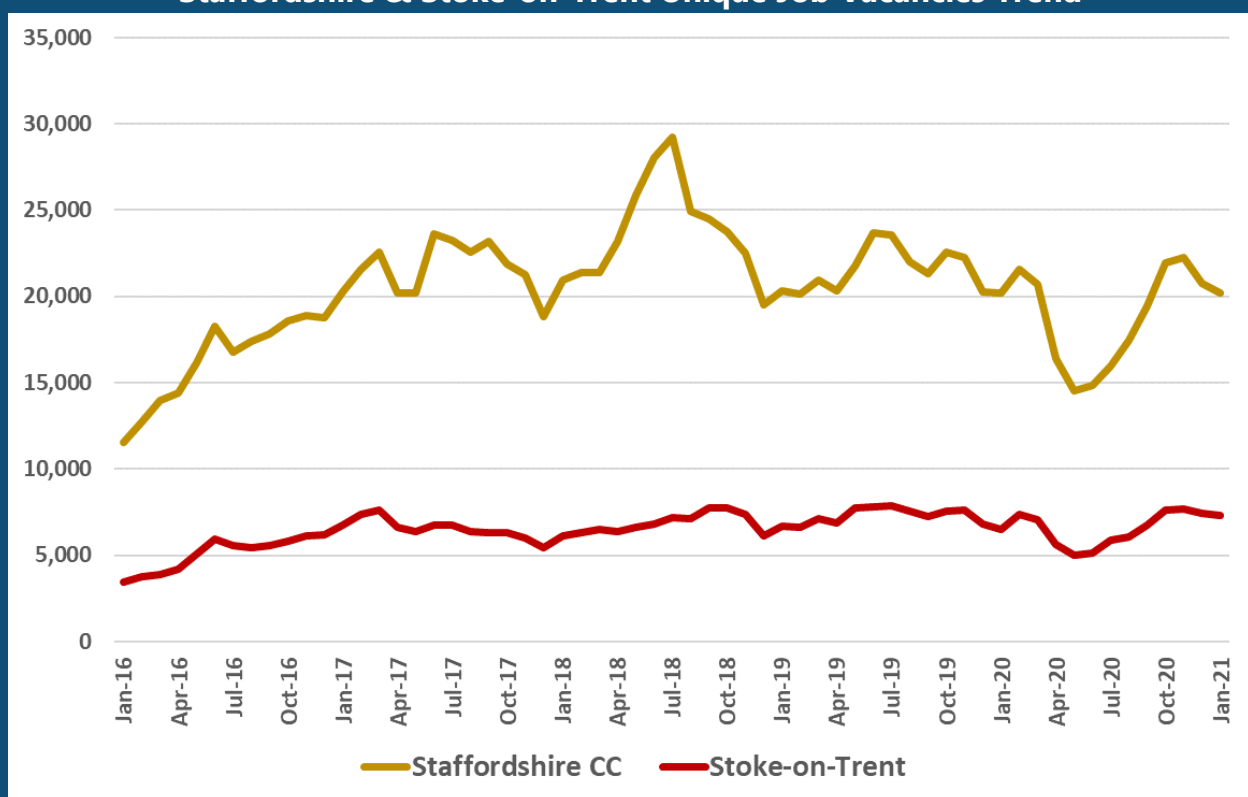
- Nationally, **transport and storage, education, construction, and arts, entertainment and recreation remain the sectors which have seen the highest take-up rates.**

³ Source: HMRC - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-february-2021>

Job Vacancies⁴

- The ongoing third lockdown has seen a further decline in recruitment during January, with **job vacancies in Staffordshire decreasing by 3% between December and January equivalent to 550 fewer job vacancies, which is slightly above the 2% decline seen nationally.**
- **Stoke-on-Trent also saw a decline of 2% with just over 110 fewer vacancies in January compared to December.**
- However, it is **still positive that vacancy levels remain above those seen a year earlier.**

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Unique Job Vacancies Trend



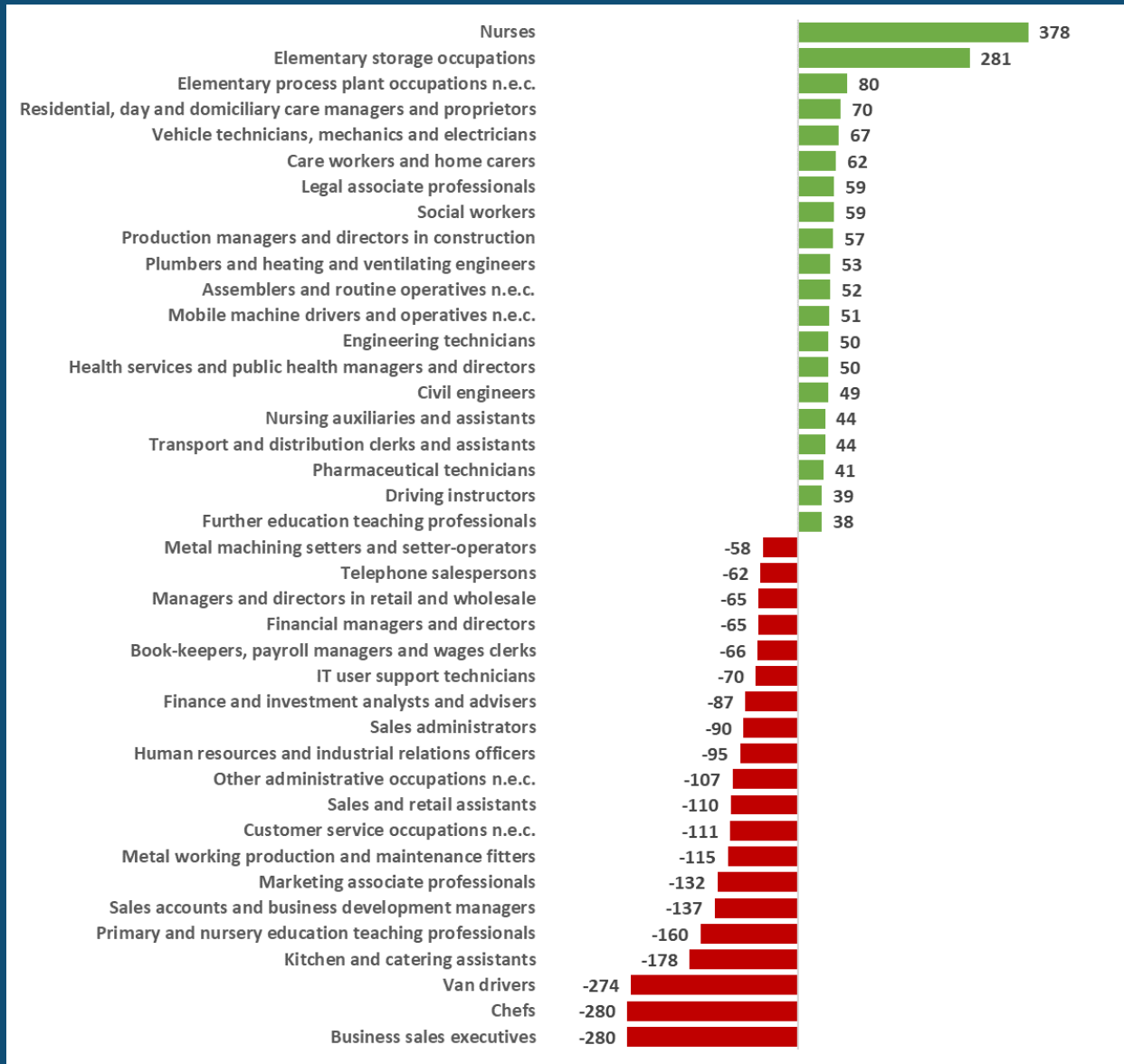
- The third lockdown has impacted the majority of occupational groups with only 'skilled trades occupations' and 'administrative and secretarial occupations' seeing a small increases in vacancies over the last month.
- As seen last month the occupations to see the most significant declines during January were associated to the logistics sector with elementary storage occupations and van drivers accounting for over a third of the total decline in vacancies seen in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. This is likely a reflection of the large number of businesses that

⁴ Source: EMSI

have had to close during the lockdown and therefore not requiring logistics during the period.

- By far **the main recruitment growth occupations between Feb (pre-COVID) and January have been nurses and elementary storage occupations.**

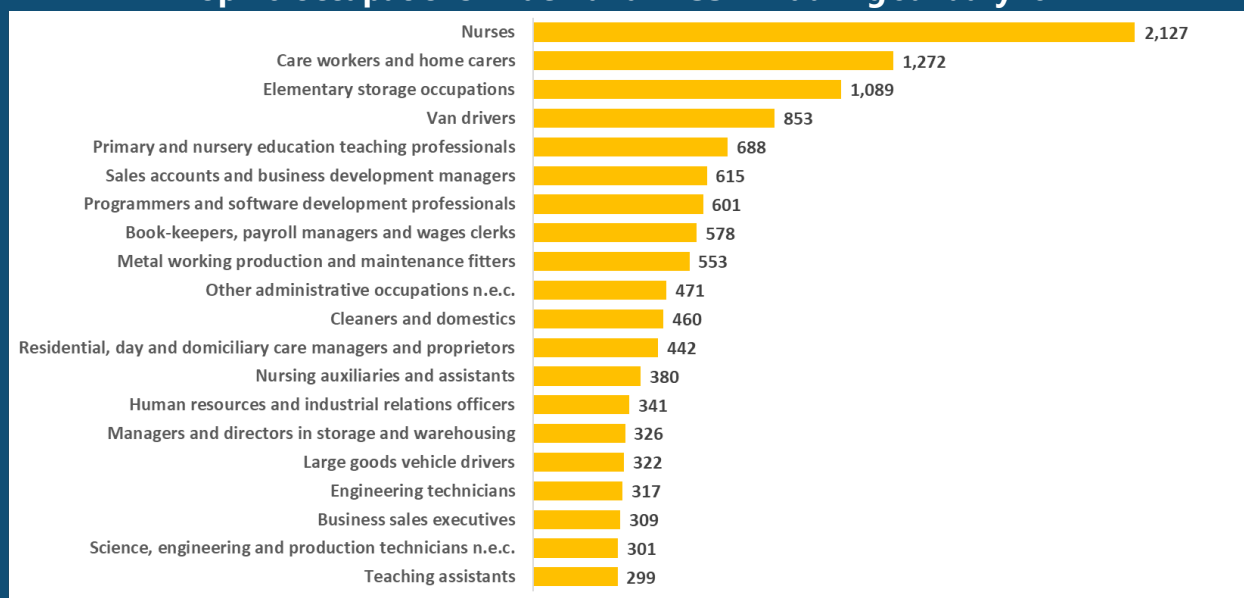
Top 20 occupations declining and top 20 increasing between Feb 2020 (Pre-COVID) and Jan 2021 in SSLEP



- While demand for roles in health and social care including **nurses and social care workers and home carers** alongside roles in logistics such as **elementary storage occupations and van drivers** remain by far the strongest of all occupations.
- There is also demand for **primary and nursery education teaching professionals**, which is an area which was badly impacted during lockdown. While in manufacturing **metal working production and maintenance fitters** remain the occupation in most demand.

- As well as these more sector specific roles, there is continuing and growing demand for workers which support numerous sectors including **sales and business development managers, programmers and software development professionals, book-keepers, and admin roles.**

Top 20 occupations in demand in SSLEP during January 2021



- It is clear that there are jobs available in the local economy but clearly there will be increasing competition for those roles. 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.

Job Vacancies Summary Table

Area / SSLEP Occupational Group	Jan 2020 Unique Postings	Feb 2020 Unique Postings	Nov 2020 Unique Postings	Dec 2020 Unique Postings	Jan 2021 Unique Postings	Dec 2020-Jan 2021 (Month on Month Change)	Dec 2020-Jan 2021 Monthly % Change	Feb 2020-Jan 2021 (Month on Month Change)	Feb 2020-Jan 2021 Monthly % Change	Jan 2020-Jan 2021 (Year on Year Change)	Jan 2020-Jan 2021 Annual % Change
Staffordshire CC	20,223	21,569	22,232	20,769	20,217	-552	-3%	-1,352	-6%	-6	0%
Stoke-on-Trent	6,519	7,346	7,701	7,426	7,314	-112	-2%	-32	0%	795	12%
SSLEP	26,742	28,915	29,933	28,195	27,531	-664	-2%	-1,384	-5%	789	3%
West Midlands	177,017	194,979	186,230	180,033	176,672	-3,361	-2%	-18,307	-9%	-345	0%
England	2,077,174	2,229,865	2,196,421	2,097,119	2,050,719	-46,400	-2%	-179,146	-8%	-26,455	-1%
South Staffordshire	753	655	948	826	787	-39	-5%	132	20%	34	5%
Stafford	4,563	4,887	5,569	5,327	5,123	-204	-4%	236	5%	560	12%
East Staffordshire	3,343	3,678	4,013	3,838	3,795	-43	-1%	117	3%	452	14%
Lichfield	2,564	2,533	2,751	2,569	2,526	-43	-2%	-7	0%	-38	-1%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	1,525	1,676	1,904	1,694	1,659	-35	-2%	-17	-1%	134	9%
Cannock Chase	2,490	2,657	2,798	2,632	2,509	-123	-5%	-148	-6%	19	1%
Tamworth	3,046	3,392	2,747	2,634	2,548	-86	-3%	-844	-25%	-498	-16%
Staffordshire Moorlands	1,939	2,091	1,502	1,249	1,270	21	2%	-821	-39%	-669	-35%
Professional Occupations	6,401	7,086	7,732	7,606	7,600	-6	0%	514	7%	1,199	19%
Elementary Occupations	2,359	2,469	3,330	2,839	2,576	-263	-9%	107	4%	217	9%
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	1,700	1,951	2,041	2,088	2,033	-55	-3%	82	4%	333	20%
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	2,637	2,685	2,884	2,699	2,610	-89	-3%	-75	-3%	-27	-1%
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	2,521	2,234	2,604	2,231	2,087	-144	-6%	-147	-7%	-434	-17%
Skilled Trades Occupations	2,232	2,632	2,498	2,310	2,356	46	2%	-276	-10%	124	6%
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	5,009	5,625	5,171	4,943	4,898	-45	-1%	-727	-13%	-111	-2%
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	2,791	2,986	2,617	2,510	2,545	35	1%	-441	-15%	-246	-9%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	1,092	1,247	1,056	969	826	-143	-15%	-421	-34%	-266	-24%

Notes

Claimant Count and ILO Unemployment Definitions

The Claimant Count is a measure of the number of working age people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, including those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those who claim Universal Credit and are required to seek work and be available for work.

ILO unemployment data is obtained from the national Labour Force Survey. The definition for unemployment is those without a job, want a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks, or; are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start work in the next two weeks.

Understanding the differences between the Claimant Count and ILO Unemployment

According to the UK Claimant Count for May, claimant unemployment increased to 2.8 million and a rate of 7.8% – a rise of 125% in just two months, the fastest rate of growth on record. However, the ILO measure shows that unemployment has remained largely unchanged at around 1.3 million and a rate of 3.9%. Understanding the reasons why there is this difference is important for policymakers trying to determine whether we are currently in the middle of an unemployment crisis or whether this is to come as the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) is gradually withdrawn.

The following section tries to explain this incredibly confusing, complicated and often contradictory data.

The main reasons for the difference between the Claimant Count and ILO measures include:

- **The two measures describe different periods** – for claimant unemployment, the numbers refer to claimants on a specific 'count date' with the last three being 12 March, 9 April and 14 May. Therefore, these are point-in-time estimates, and handily we can compare what the situation was about a week before the crisis (12 March) with how things were two months later (14 May).

The ILO measure is a three-month average of survey responses between early February and late April 2020. This means that two months pre-date the crisis, while one month (April) is since the crisis began. However, ONS does release [single month estimates](#) (latest available April 2020) which show a drop in employment in April of 320,000 explained almost entirely by fewer people self-employed but only slight increase of 40,000 unemployed. Instead there is a steep rise in 'economic inactivity' which is those who are out of work but are not looking and/ or available for work.

- **Difference in measuring economic inactivity/worklessness** - the Claimant Count measures those who are required to look/be available for work as a condition of benefit, while the ILO measure is those who say that they actually are actively seeking and available for work. The Labour Force Survey is recording a single-month increase in the number of people out of work (unemployed and economically inactive) of 330,000, but nearly 290,000 of these people are not looking for work (economically inactive). The majority of this rise is people previously self-employed and are either not eligible for, or not yet been paid, income under the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS).
- **Claimant Count now includes more workers on low-income** - In the Claimant Count, people with earned income can be counted as claimant unemployed if their earnings in the reference month are below a set threshold (£338 per month for a single person, or £541 per month for a couple). Before Universal Credit (UC), short-hours working was penalised and so these numbers were generally low. However, UC incentivises short-hours work, and so we've seen a growth in recent years in the number of people treated as being unemployed but who have some earnings. The detailed data for UC suggests that 190,000 of the 1 million increase between March and April was accounted for by working claimants – so around one fifth of the rise.
- **Difference in recording people who are 'in work'** – in the Labour Force Survey you are recorded as in employment even if you have not done any work that week but 'have a job or business that you were away from... (and that you expect to return to)". Obviously this category of workers 'away' from work now captures about 9 million people furloughed under the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) who are continuing to earn, but it also includes people who consider themselves to be employees or self-employed but who have no earnings. 'Real time' Pay As You Earn data suggests that this may be mainly employees, with the number of paid employees falling by 450,000 between March and April. This 450,000 could include a large number of people who may have been due to start a job in March or April but have been told that their job isn't available yet and may also be people who had very few or irregular hours before the JRS was introduced and whom employers have not submitted a JRS claim. These people may be describing themselves as being workers with a job that they are away from, rather than as being actively seeking a new job.
- **Benefit take-up/eligibility impact on the Claimant Count** – given that the claimant count only counts those who claim benefit it may be under-stating the growth in worklessness. We know that many unemployed people do not claim, and particularly young people (usually due to eligibility). Under UC, there have been on average 450,000 more ILO unemployed young people than claimant unemployed and even if that gap narrows in the crisis, as tends to happen in recessions, it's possible that ILO youth unemployment will remain significantly higher than the claimant measure.

Summary table outlining the potential estimates for the Claimant Count rise in April

Potential Proportion of Claimant Count Change Mar-20 to Apr-20	Potential Number of Claimants	Potential Reasons for being a Claimant	Labour Force Survey Categorisation
44%	450,000	New Job Starters/PT employees/Self-employed with no income claiming Universal Credit not supported by JRS	In Employment - even if not done any work that week but 'have a job or business that were away from... (and that expect to return to)' – rather than unemployed
28%	292,500	Self-employed ceased trading or have very low income claiming Universal Credit (and are either not eligible for, or not yet been paid, income under the SEISS)	Economically inactive - people out of work but are not looking for work - majority people previously self-employed
18%	190,000	Working part-time low income workers claiming Universal Credit	In Employment
10%	100,000	Potential Redundancies	
100%	1,032,500	Claimant Count Increase Mar-20 to Apr-20	

- It is hoped that this analysis has provided further clarity as to why we have seen such a spike in the number of claimants early in the crisis. What is clear is that we have seen a record fall between March and April in the number of people working and not being supported by JRS. We have also seen worklessness rising at a faster rate than at any time before. Although very few of the decline in the numbers 'working' had translated into higher unemployment in April, it is envisaged that this may be the case if people are unable to get back into work quickly.
- Looking forward, the growth in claims for UC is slowing and so the growth in the Claimant Count is also likely to slow as well. That said claimant unemployment is currently at the highest level on record. The main concern now is what happens to many workers as JRS is gradually withdrawn and it is important that we are thinking now about how to support people that are made redundant and what policy interventions are needed.

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What is Kickstart?

Covid- 19 is causing all sorts of challenges. It's a tough time, but the Kickstart scheme is a great way for businesses and young people in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to get back on their feet.

It's a £2 billion fund to create thousands of high-quality, six-month work placements for young people to give them a stepping-stone to future work and the confidence they need for the future.

Employers are being called on to put forward placements for enthusiastic 16 to 24 year olds and get fully funded in return.

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How does Kickstart work?

Employers can get funding for their costs to host a young person in a placement for 6 months, as well a training fund of up to £1,500. It's all about helping them to get the skills and get the experience they need to move onto sustained employment after their placement.

When you offer a work placement, you're giving a young person facing real barriers to employment the confidence and skills they need to start their career. It also means an injection of new enthusiasm, imagination and innovation into your business.

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- [Information for employers and how to express an interest for funding](#)
- [Becoming a Gateway organisation – representing a group of employers for funding](#)
- [Information for young people: What KickStart is and how to apply](#)
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