

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 67 - March 2026

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 SkillsAnalysis@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Kind Regards,

Darryl Evers

Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, Staffordshire County Council

Key Messages

Local Picture

- In Staffordshire we are **starting to see a rise in the Claimant Count**, although the rate remains below that seen a year ago. At the same time, we have **seen the number of job vacancies in the local economy decrease**, reflective of the challenging economic climate.
- During these challenging times **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, the **number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire now stands at 15,620, this is 245 fewer claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a -1.5% annual reduction which is slightly lower than the reduction seen nationally (-1.8%) and lower than regionally (-2.4%).
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.9%** of the working age population, which has **remained unchanged since last year.**
- **Staffordshire continues to have one of the lowest claimant rates in the region, far lower than the regional average 5.3% which decreased from 5.5% the previous year, and lower than the England average of 4.1% which decreased from 4.2% the previous year.**
- 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 stands at 3,410, this is 320 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 10.4% annual increase, which is slightly higher than the increases seen both regionally (9.9%) and nationally (9.4%).
- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.4% of the 18-24 population, which is an increase from 4.9% last year.** This is a concerning trend seen both regionally and nationally. It is important to note that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.9%, which increased from 5.4% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.0% which increased from 7.3%** over the last year. 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 6% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between February 2025 and February 2026 to a total of 12,000. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire. Stoke-on-Trent saw a decrease of 8% in job vacancies to a total of 4,500 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the past year there was a**

1% decrease, and nationally there was a 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 & Domestic,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Teaching Assistants'** also have strong demand.
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** roles are most in demand.
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for and **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector has high demand for **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Warehouse Operatives,'** and **'Transport & Distribution Clerks/Assistants.'**
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- Demand for **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is strong demand for **'Customer Service occupations'** and **'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** across business sectors.
- There is also high demand for **'Early Education & Childcare Practitioners.'**
- In the Engineering sector **'Plant & Machine Operatives,'** and **'Mechanical Engineers'** are in demand.
- In the Financial sector **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** are in demand.
- It is in these areas of the economy where job vacancies remain particularly high and where we are hearing reports of **labour and skills shortages** with a mismatch of workers or skills to fill 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 through the **Connect to Work Programme** 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), construction sector (including retrofitting homes), the car industry e.g. electric cars at Jaguar Land Rover, and in manufacturing e.g. hydrogen combustion technology at 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. **Advanced logistics** within the ecommerce sector continue to drive demand, evidenced by Pets At Home in Stafford recently creating over 750 new jobs and Carlsberg Britvic investing £4 million in a new depot, with plans to create several hundred additional 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 is all in response to what you have said is most important for your business growth. [To apply for fully funded SME support.](#)
- Businesses in Staffordshire are able to benefit from a new free recruitment service which will help to match their employment vacancies with appropriate potential candidates. The **Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Service**, provides advice and support to both businesses and people looking for employment opportunities. It will match vacancies with candidates looking for jobs in certain sectors and with appropriate skills. The service is working with a range of partner organisations, and a team of specialist brokers will advise employers and potential employees with options available to them. [Find out more about Staffordshire Jobs and Careers.](#)
- **Need some support? Contact the Growth Hub** - The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub is your first port of call for any business-support related enquiry. It acts as the focal point for businesses that wish to grow by referring them to co-ordinated and cohesive growth programmes, business networks, growth groups and links to specialist information, advice, and services. If you would like a free of charge appointment with a qualified Growth Hub Business Advisor to discuss what options are available to support the growth of your business, please contact them on 0300 111 8002.
- **Help To Grow: Management programme** is 90% funded by the government so you only pay £750. Delivered in partnership with Small Business Charter, courses are running at leading business schools across the UK. This programme includes:
 - access 12-weeks of learning designed to fit alongside work commitments
 - develop a bespoke business growth plan to help your business reach its full potential
 - get 1:1 support from a business mentor
 - learn from peers and network with businesses just like yoursTo find out more [visit](#).
- The **Staffordshire Business and Enterprise Network (SBEN)** has introduced more

support for businesses in Staffordshire. The Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme can help you to reduce your carbon footprint and increase energy efficiency. It has now been widened to include an additional Energy Efficiency Review for a business that has previously had one, and grants towards the capital costs for solar projects. Membership of SBEN is still free until the end of next March. Membership includes access to the Carbon Tracker tool. **Why join SBEN?**

- **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 uses 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:

- contact 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

- **Developer Indurent to invest £800m in Staffordshire**

Developer Indurent plans to invest £800m in Staffordshire over the next few years. The industrial and logistics specialist is currently delivering or promoting six million sq. ft of space in the county, said senior director of planning Richard Hickman. "These sites are either in the planning process with a draft allocation, or they're sites that we're building on currently," said Hickman. "To bring those sites forward over the next few years, we're going to be investing something in the order of £800m. That's a huge investment and a reflection of the confidence that we have in Staffordshire. "We're very much focused on the spine of the country and Staffordshire is the central part of that spine."

- **£100 million investment in Staffordshire unveiled by JCB**

JCB is marking its 80th birthday with news of a £100 million investment in ultra-modern manufacturing facilities at its global headquarters in Staffordshire. The project at the company's plant in Rocester, Staffordshire, will see the installation of a fully automated powder paint plant costing £60 million as well as a full modernisation of the shop floor, with new machining centres, friction welders, and cylinder boring machines.



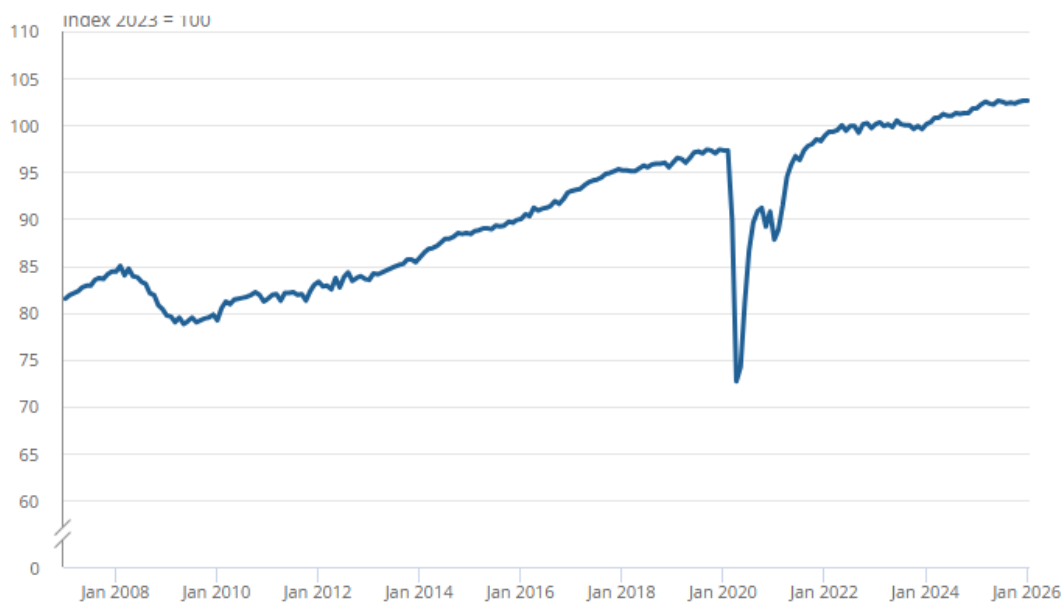
National Context

- This month we **heard the Chancellor present her Spring Statement**, in which the government moved away from multiple fiscal events per year, with **little in the way of new policies or knee-jerk changes creating a stability which was welcomed by many**.
- The Spring Statement was more of a response to the Office for Budget Responsibility's update on the state of the country's finances. **For businesses, local authorities and households looking at their budgets for 2026/27, there are no unexpected changes**. But the **backdrop global instability, rapid changes and uncertainty** is still there.

Economy

- **The economy grew by 0.2% in the three months to January 2026**, compared with the three months to October 2025. This follows a growth of 0.1% in the three months to December, and no growth in the three months to November 2025.
- It is widely recognised that the **impact of the ongoing war in Iran on the UK economy will depend on the size and the duration of the energy shock**.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to January 2026, UK



Source: Gross domestic product (GDP) monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

- **Services output grew by 0.2%**, after showing no growth in the three months to December 2025.
- **Production output grew by 1.3%**; this follows a growth of 1.2% in the three months to December 2025.

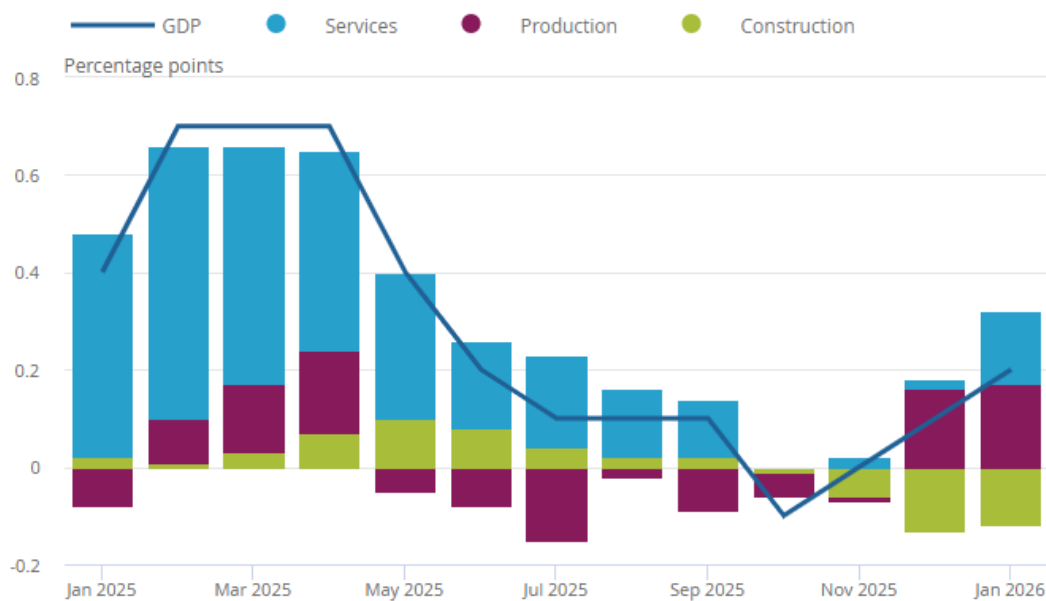
- **Construction output fell by 2.0%**, following falls of 2.1% in the three months to December and of 0.9% in the three months to November 2025.

In the month to January 2026:

- **Monthly GDP showed no growth**, following growths of 0.1% in December and 0.2% in November 2025.
- **Services showed no growth, production fell by 0.1%, and construction grew by 0.2% in January 2026.**

Contributions to three-month GDP growth, January 2025 to January 2026,

UK



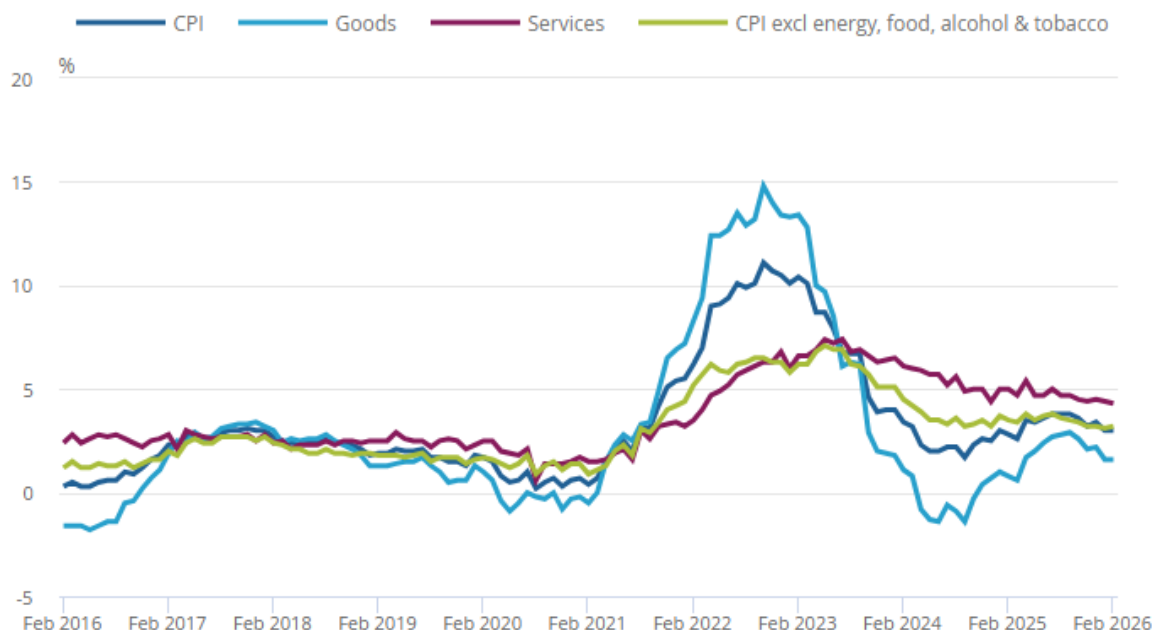
Source: Gross domestic product (GDP) monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

Cost of Living

- **The consumer price index measure of inflation stayed at 3 per cent in the year to February.** That figure had been expected, the ONS says clothing was the largest driver of inflation, but this was offset by lower petrol prices before the US-Israel war with Iran.
- It is important to recognise that these **latest figures were collected before the war began**, so won't show the impact it has had on the UK's economy, it therefore doesn't tell us much about the future direction of prices. Although it is expected that the **impact may lead to interest rate rises by the Bank of England in the future.**

CPI goods, services and core annual inflation rates, UK, February 2016 to

February 2026



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

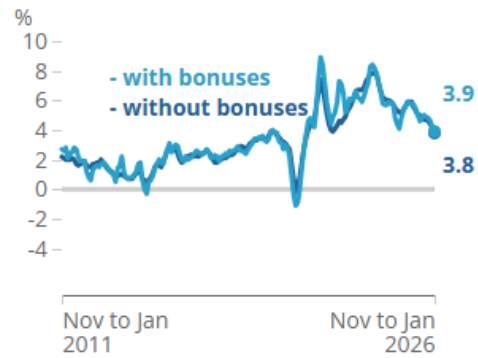
- **Wage growth continues to slow. Annual growth in employees' average earnings in Great Britain was 3.8% for regular earnings (excluding bonuses) and 3.9% for total earnings (including bonuses) in November 2025 to January 2026.**
- Annual average regular earnings growth was 5.9% for the public sector and 3.3% for the private sector. The public sector annual growth rate is affected by some public sector pay rises being paid earlier in 2025 than in 2024. This has caused a base effect that reached its peak in the three months to November 2025 and will phase out over the next few periods.
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), was 0.4% for regular pay and 0.5% for total pay in November 2025 to January 2026.**
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index excluding owner occupiers' housing costs (CPI), was 0.5% for regular pay and 0.7% for total pay in November 2025 to January 2026.**

Nominal Earnings

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – nominal pay

The nominal annual growth rate for both regular and total pay was down on the previous period.

Source: Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey from the Office for National Statistics

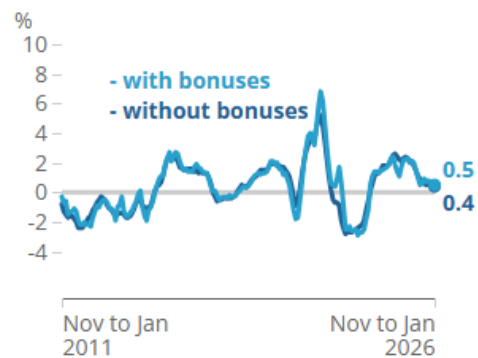


Real Earnings CPIH

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPIH

The real annual growth rate for regular pay was down on the previous period while total pay was unchanged.

Source: Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey from the Office for National Statistics

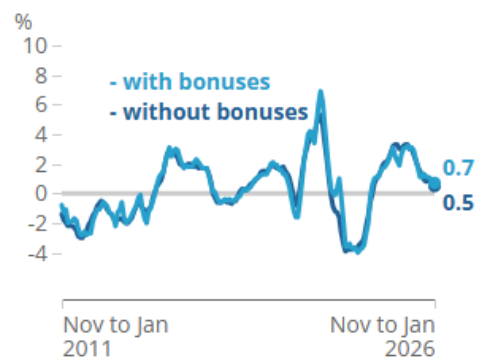


Real Earnings CPI

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPI

The real annual growth rate for both regular pay and total pay was down on the previous period.

Source: Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey from the Office for National Statistics



- There were an estimated 31,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in January 2026.

Business Conditions

- The latest results from Wave 152 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 2 to 15 March 2026, suggest that business conditions continue to be challenging.
- Approximately a quarter (25%) of trading businesses reported that their **turnover had decreased in February 2026** compared with the previous month; this is down 6 percentage points from January 2026, but broadly stable with February 2025 and in line with movements seen around this time in previous years.
- **Economic uncertainty remained the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in early March 2026** at 32%, broadly stable with early February 2026;

the **most reported challenge for businesses with 10 or more employees was cost of labour** (35%), which was broadly stable over the same period.

- Almost 3 in 10 (29%) trading businesses reported an **increase in the prices of goods or services bought in February 2026** when compared with the previous month, which was the **highest proportion reported since April 2025**; 11% reported an **increase in the prices of goods or services sold**, which was broadly stable with January 2026.
- More than 1 in 5 (22%) trading businesses **expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in April 2026**, up 4 percentage points from expectations for March 2026; 51% of businesses reported they expect prices will stay the same, down 7 percentage points over the same period.
- Approximately 3 in 10 (29%) trading **businesses reported labour costs as a reason for considering raising their prices** in April 2026, up 2 percentage points from March 2026; 25% of **businesses reported energy prices as a reason**, up 6 percentage points from March 2026, and the **highest since July 2023**.
- **Falling demand of goods and services (14%) was the most reported main concern for businesses when looking ahead to April 2026**; 7% of businesses reported their main concern was energy prices, up 2 percentage points from March 2026, and the highest proportion recorded since February 2024.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in February 2026 there were a total of 1,783 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 5% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,878 in February 2025), and 1% lower than the number registered three years previously (1,802 in February 2023)**. The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.

Labour Market

- The following charts shows the latest **labour market position** and the latest Office for National Statistics data:

Payrolled employees

The number of payrolled employees

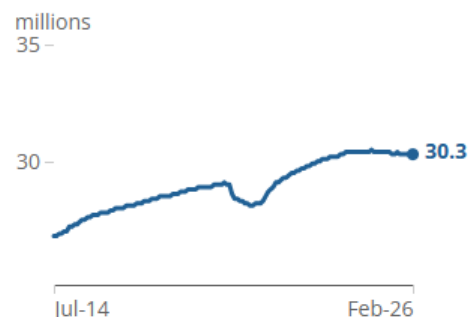
Monthly change: ▲ 20,000

Annual change: ▼ -49,000

"The number of payrolled employees rose slightly in recent months but the overall recent picture is broadly flat."

Note: The February 2026 estimate should be treated as a provisional estimate and is likely to be revised when more data are received next month."

Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information from HM Revenue and Customs



Employment rate

Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64 years)

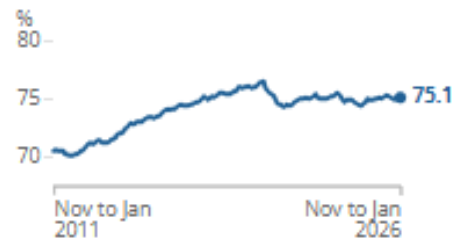
Quarterly change: ▲0.2pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▼-1.4pps

"The employment rate is up on the quarter and on the year, and is still below pre-coronavirus pandemic rates.

Note: Because of increased volatility of Labour Force Survey estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, estimates of change should be treated with additional caution."

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Unemployment rate

Unemployment rate (all aged 16 years and over)

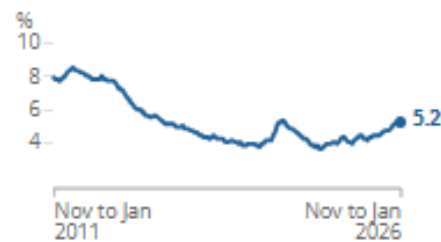
Quarterly change: ▲0.1pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲1.2pps

"The unemployment rate is up on the quarter and the year, and is above pre-coronavirus pandemic rates.

Note: Because of increased volatility of Labour Force Survey estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, estimates of change should be treated with additional caution."

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Inactivity rate

Economic inactivity rate (all aged 16 to 64 years)

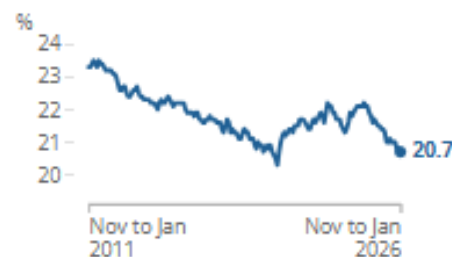
Quarterly change: ▼-0.3pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲0.4pps

"The economic inactivity rate is down on the quarter and the year, but is still above pre-coronavirus pandemic rates.

Note: Because of increased volatility of Labour Force Survey estimates, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, estimates of change should be treated with additional caution."

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics



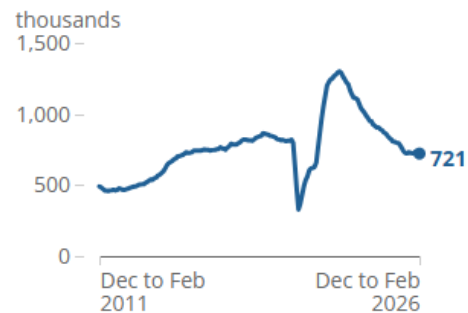
Job vacancies

Number of job vacancies

Quarterly change: ▼-6,000

Annual change: ▼ -76,000

Vacancies have decreased slightly in the latest quarter

Source: Vacancy Survey from the Office for National Statistics

- **Estimates for payrolled employees in the UK fell by 96,000 (0.3%) between January 2025 and January 2026 but increased by 6,000 (0.0%) between December 2025 and January 2026.** This is based on administrative data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- When looking at November 2025 to January 2026, the period comparable with ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, the number of payrolled employees fell by 109,000 (0.4%) over the year and by 31,000 (0.1%) over the quarter.
- **The early estimate of payrolled employees for February 2026 decreased by 49,000 (0.2%) on the year, but increased by 20,000 (0.1%) on the month, to 30.3 million.** The February 2026 estimate should be treated as a provisional estimate and is likely to be revised when more data are received next month.
- Estimates from January to March 2025 include the full effect of the improvements in LFS data collection and sampling methods introduced from January 2024. However, since then, ONS has increased the number of interviewers for the LFS, which has continued to increase the number of responses to the survey. Consequently, estimates may be subject to the effect of these further improvements, which may have an ongoing impact on the survey. An increased volatility will remain in the LFS estimates for mid-2023 and throughout 2024, so we would advise additional caution when interpreting survey change measures.
- ONS recommend using LFS estimates as part of our suite of labour market indicators, alongside workforce jobs, Claimant Count and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) estimates.
- The **UK employment rate** based on the LFS for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at 75.1% in November 2025 to January 2026. This is up in the latest quarter and above estimates of a year ago.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at 5.2% in November 2025 to January 2026. This is up in the latest quarter and above estimates of a year ago. **UK unemployment is at the highest rate in five years, with the increases in the last three months "largely" due to young people aged 18 to 24.**
- **The British Chambers of Commerce has warned that the unemployment rate is expected to rise, with business leaders reporting that rising costs, including increased minimum wage and national insurance, are making it difficult to hire young**

people in the UK.

- The **UK economic inactivity rate** for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at 20.7% in November 2025 to January 2026. This is down in the latest quarter and below estimates of a year ago.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for February 2026 increased on the month but decreased on the year to an estimated 1.692 million. The Claimant Count figure for the latest month is provisional and is subject to revisions after first publication. This is the result of later amendments to records in the administrative systems, for example, as work capability assessments conclude and more information is available about benefit claimants' ability to work. Revisions in recent months have tended to be made downwards.
- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** has remained broadly flat across recent periods. Early estimates for December 2025 to February 2026 suggest a small decrease of 6,000 (0.8%), to 721,000, compared with September to November 2025.
- The estimated number of **workforce jobs in the UK** was 36.6 million in December 2025. This is an increase of 33,000 (0.1%) from September 2025, with an increase of 60,000 (0.2%) in the employee jobs component, but a decrease of 28,000 (0.7%) in the self-employment jobs component. Over the year, the estimated number of workforce jobs was down by 266,000 (0.7%), with decreases of 25,000 (0.1%) in the employee jobs component and 242,000 (5.6%) in the self-employment jobs component.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the **Spring Statement provided some certainty on the Government's approach to the economy**, which is welcomed, but this comes at a time of **increasing uncertainty due to global conflicts and instability**.
- It is **positive that the economy saw some growth in the last quarter**, but this is **limited and the war in Iran is expected to impact the economy at least in the short-term** due to the associated energy shock.
- The **rate of inflation has remained at 3 per cent**, but this comes **before the impact of the US-Israel war with Iran**, which is **expected to increase inflation** in the coming months due to fuel and energy cost rises and is also **likely to lead to future interest rate rises** impacting businesses and communities.
- Alongside **rising global uncertainty and the introduction of new business-related UK taxes**, many businesses also have ongoing concerns around **longer-term issues including high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, wage pressures, supply-chain constraints, lower consumer confidence, and some labour market challenges**.
- The **labour market continues to loosen, with wage growth slowing and unemployment rising**, the latter partly driven by people moving from being economically inactive. **This all comes at a time when job vacancies have seen a long-term decline**,

with the **challenging economic conditions meaning more businesses have reduced recruitment and made redundancies, therefore it will be more challenging for those looking for work to find work.**

- 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.**
- **In Staffordshire we have a confident, diverse, and robust economy,** demonstrated by the improvement and recovery witnessed since the pandemic. 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. We are also delivering the new **Connect to Work programmes** which forms a fundamental part of our Get Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Working Plan.
- Alongside this, skills provision, such as the new Institute of Technology, has a significant role to play in **ensuring that local residents have the skills and training needed within the local economy to support increased growth, productivity, and prosperity.** Reskilling and upskilling residents from declining sectors into priority growth areas of the economy such as digital, green, advanced manufacturing, advanced logistics, construction, and health and social care where they can access higher value better paid jobs will be key.



Data Deep Dives:

Business and Individual Insolvencies

This section covers the latest Insolvency Service monthly insolvency statistics¹ for February 2026, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

Company Insolvencies

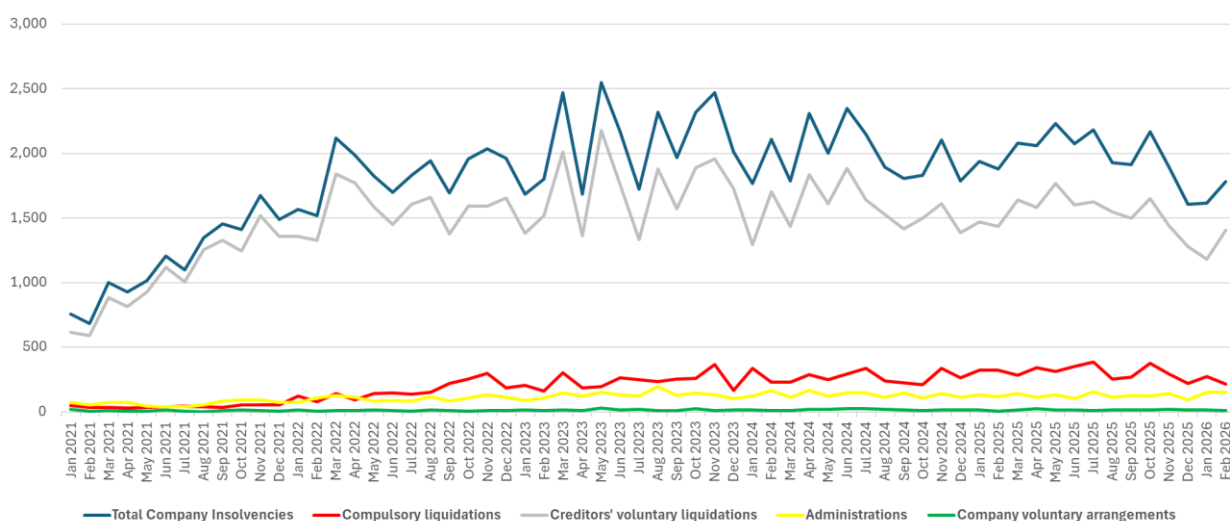
In February 2026 there were a total of 1,783 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 5% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,878 in February 2025), and 1% lower than the number registered three years previously (1,802 in February 2023).** 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 215 compulsory liquidations in February 2026, 33% lower than the number in February 2025, but 33% higher than in February 2023. 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 2026 there were 1,407 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 2% lower than February 2025, and 7% lower than February 2023. Numbers of administrations are 40% higher than three years previously in February 2023, Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 17% lower than three years previously in February 2023, and numbers are low.

Company insolvencies between March 2025 and February 2026 are 1% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 291 fewer businesses

Company Insolvencies in England and Wales



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

¹Source: The Insolvency Service - [Company insolvencies, February 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvencies-february-2026)

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between February 2025 and January 2026 continue to be the **Construction sector (3,912)**, **Wholesale & Retail sector (3,661)**, and **Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,305)**. Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -3% lower, but slightly higher for the Wholesale & Retail sector +0.7% higher, and the Accommodation & Food sector is -5% lower than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are -2% lower.

Individual Insolvencies

There were **11,093 total individual insolvencies in February 2026**, which was 18% higher than in February 2025, and 35% higher than in February 2023.

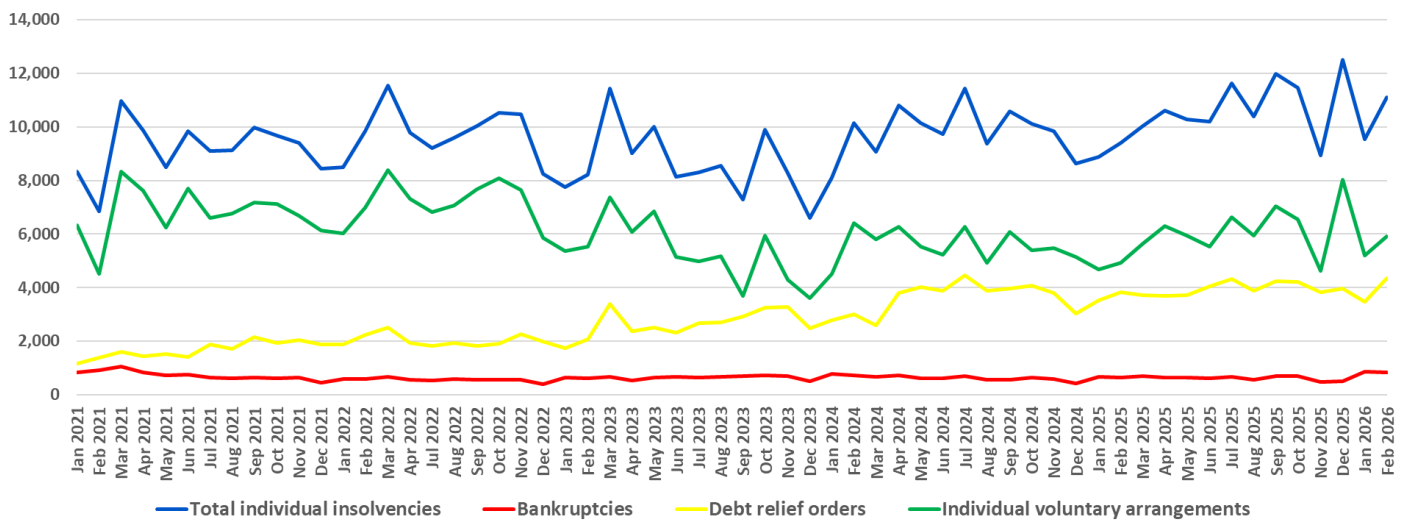
For individuals, **825 bankruptcies were registered in February 2026**, 28% higher than in February 2025, and 35% higher than in February 2023. (Please note numbers higher due to clearing of a backlog following a move to a new case management system by the Insolvency Service).

There were **4,353 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in February 2026**, 14% higher than in February 2025, and 109% higher than in February 2023.

There were **5,915 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in February 2026**, which was 20% higher than in February 2025, and 7% higher than in February 2023.

Total Individual Insolvencies between March 2025 and February 2026 are 9% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 10,671.

Individual Insolvencies in England and Wales



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **5,102 Breathing Space registrations in February 2026, which is 35% lower than the number registered in February 2025**. 4,997 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 36% lower and 105 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 8% lower than February 2025.

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 bankruptcies and individual voluntary arrangements remain lower, but debt relief orders are higher than pre-pandemic levels and have increased every year since 2021.**

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



Claimant Count²

The following table highlights the level of Universal Credit claimants in the Staffordshire Districts and each of the Strategic Authorities in the West Midlands Region:

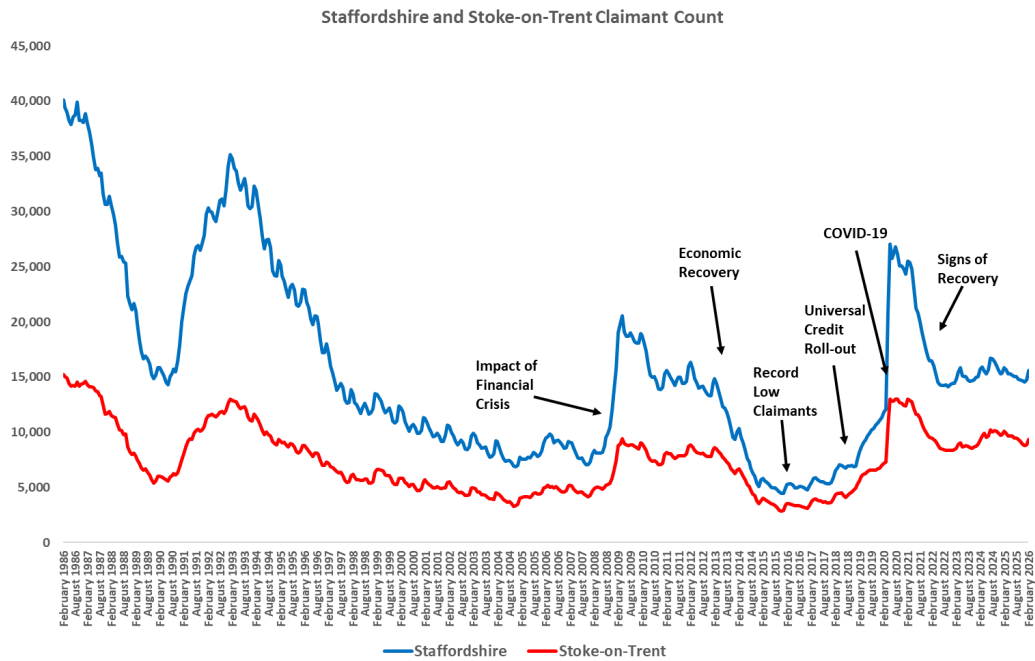
Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: February 2026

Area	Claimant Count Rate (February 2025)	Claimant Count Rate (January 2026)	Claimant Count Rate ¹ (February 2026)	Number of Claimants (February 2026)	Annual Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Claimants (%)
England	4.2	3.9	4.1	1,506,680	-27,535	-1.8%
West Midlands	5.5	5.1	5.3	203,440	-5,005	-2.4%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	3.6	3.3	3.5	24,980	-960	-3.7%
Birmingham	10.3	9.7	10.0	77,310	-2,160	-2.7%
Wolverhampton	7.2	6.5	6.9	12,130	-565	-4.5%
Sandwell	7.1	6.4	6.8	15,140	-710	-4.5%
Walsall	6.1	5.5	5.8	10,550	-540	-4.9%
Coventry	5.6	5.3	5.7	13,785	250	1.8%
Stoke-on-Trent	6.0	5.2	5.5	9,360	-715	-7.1%
Dudley	4.9	4.6	4.8	9,750	-215	-2.2%
Telford and Wrekin	3.8	3.7	3.9	4,740	110	2.4%
Solihull	3.7	3.5	3.7	4,775	-15	-0.3%
Worcestershire	3.2	2.9	3.1	11,380	-305	-2.6%
Staffordshire	2.9	2.7	2.9	15,620	-245	-1.5%
Warwickshire	2.8	2.7	2.9	11,225	475	4.4%
Herefordshire, County of	2.9	2.5	2.6	2,895	-240	-7.7%
Shropshire	2.5	2.3	2.5	4,785	-115	-2.3%
East Staffordshire	3.6	3.3	3.5	2,795	-75	-2.6%
Tamworth	3.3	3.1	3.4	1,695	40	2.4%
Cannock Chase	3.2	3.0	3.2	2,080	-5	-0.2%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.1	2.8	3.0	2,360	-115	-4.6%
South Staffordshire	2.6	2.6	2.7	1,810	55	3.1%
Stafford	2.5	2.4	2.5	2,145	30	1.4%
Lichfield	2.4	2.2	2.3	1,520	-50	-3.2%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.4	2.1	2.2	1,215	-120	-9.0%

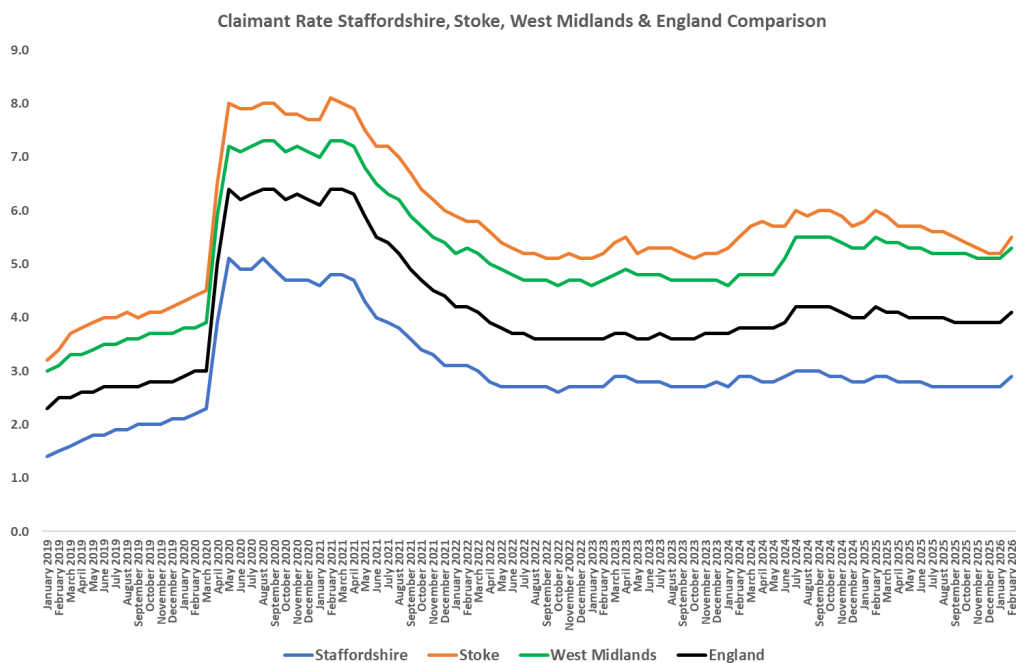
¹ The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 15,620 this is 245 fewer claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a -1.5% annual reduction which is lower than the reduction seen regionally (-2.4%) and nationally (-1.8%)
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.9%** of the working age population, which has **remained unchanged since a year earlier.**
- The number of **claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 9,360**, which is 715 lower than a year earlier, and the **claimant rate has decreased from 6.0% the previous year to 5.5%.**

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



- The **rate in Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and is far lower than the average for the region 5.3% which decreased from 5.5% the previous year, and lower than the average for England of 4.1% which has decreased from 4.2% the previous year.**



- **It is important to note that not all claimants will be out of work and should 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.
- **The majority of Staffordshire districts have seen a decline or remained unchanged in the number of claimants over the last year except for South Staffordshire and Tamworth which saw an increase.**
- **All districts have a lower claimant rate than both the regional and national rates.** The highest claimant rate at 3.5 is in East Staffordshire. Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest claimant rate of 2.2%.
- We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our partnership working and Jobs Brokerage service.

Youth Claimant Count

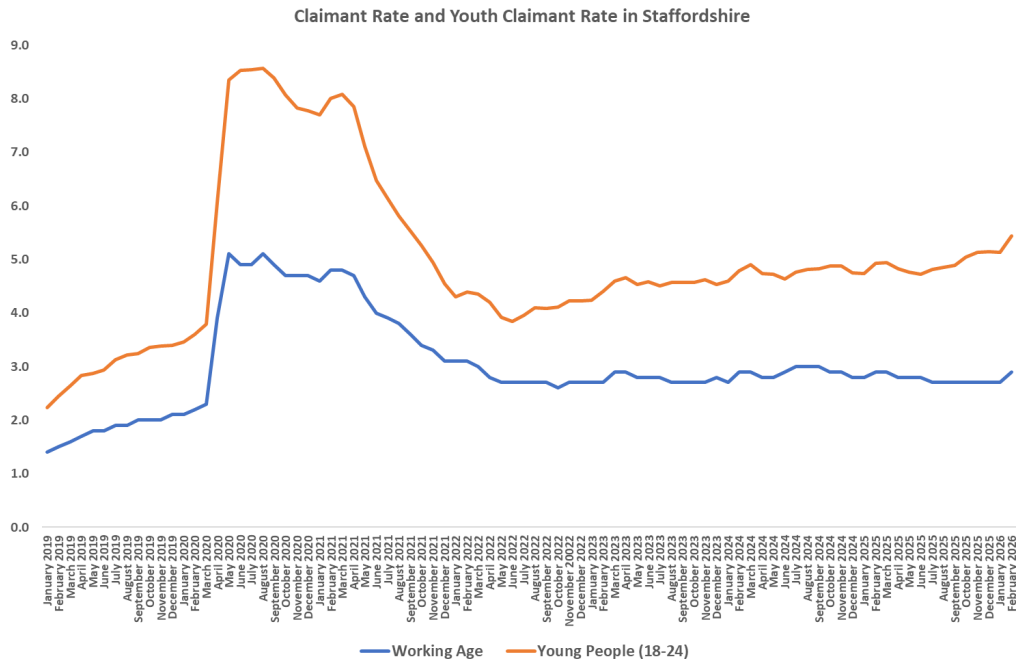
Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: February 2026

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (February 2025)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (January 2026)	Youth Claimant Count Rate ¹ (February 2026)	Number of Youth Claimants (February 2026)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (%)
England	5.4	5.6	5.9	288,965	24,865	9.4%
West Midlands	7.3	7.7	8.0	42,095	3,780	9.9%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.7	5.9	6.2	5,365	415	8.4%
Birmingham	9.8	10.6	10.8	15,690	1,520	10.7%
Wolverhampton	10.2	10.1	10.5	2,395	65	2.8%
Wallsall	9.5	10.0	10.3	2,440	175	7.7%
Sandwell	9.5	9.5	10.0	3,080	160	5.5%
Dudley	7.9	8.5	8.9	2,150	255	13.5%
Stoke-on-Trent	7.9	7.9	8.3	1,955	95	5.1%
Solihull	6.6	7.4	7.7	1,130	160	16.5%
Telford and Wrekin	6.3	6.9	7.1	1,080	125	13.1%
Coventry	5.1	5.5	5.8	2,735	325	13.5%
Worcestershire	5.1	5.3	5.5	2,280	165	7.8%
Staffordshire	4.9	5.1	5.4	3,410	320	10.4%
Herefordshire, County of	4.6	4.8	5.1	565	60	11.9%
Warwickshire	4.3	4.7	5.0	2,250	330	17.2%
Shropshire	4.4	4.3	4.6	935	30	3.3%
Tamworth	6.9	6.7	7.5	410	35	9.3%
Cannock Chase	6.4	6.5	6.9	475	35	8.0%
South Staffordshire	5.0	5.8	6.1	420	75	21.7%
East Staffordshire	5.1	5.4	5.5	485	35	7.8%
Stafford	4.8	5.1	5.5	450	55	13.9%
Lichfield	4.3	4.4	4.8	340	35	11.5%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.9	4.3	4.5	255	30	13.3%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.1	4.1	4.2	580	25	4.5%

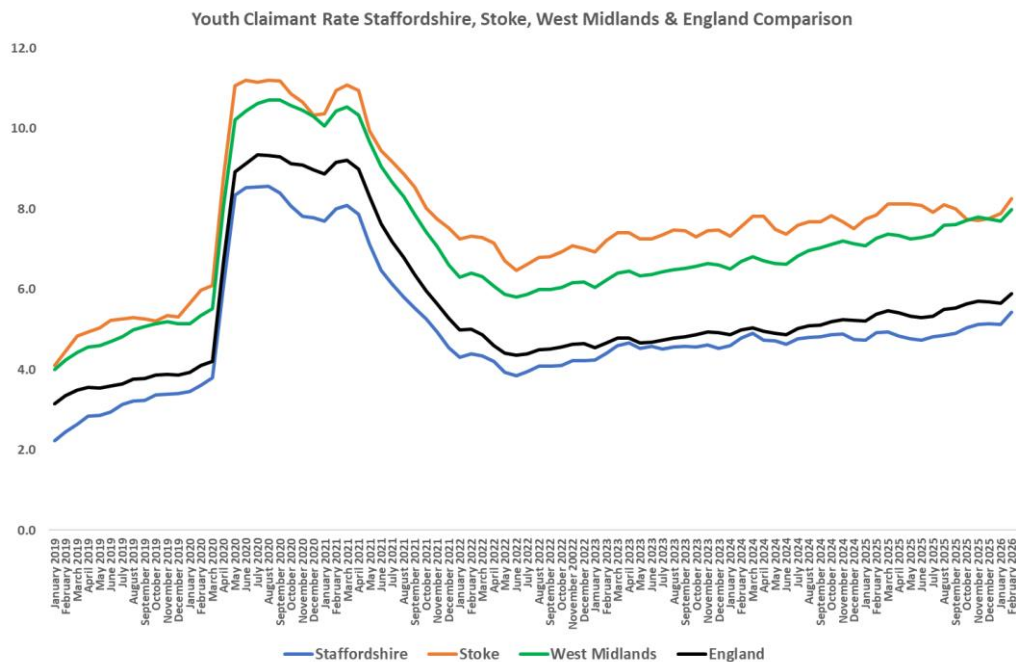
¹ The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **youth claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 3,410 this is 320 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 10.4% annual increase, which is slightly higher than the increases seen both regionally (9.9%) and nationally (9.4%).

- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.4% of the 18-24 population, an increase from 4.9% a year earlier.** It is a concerning trend seen regionally and nationally.



- The number of **youth claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 1,955**, which is 95 higher than a year earlier, with **the rate at 8.3%, increasing from 7.9% a year earlier.**
- It is important to note that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.9%, which increased from 5.4% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.0% which increased from 7.3% over the past year.**



- **All districts in Staffordshire have seen increases in the number of youth claimants over the last year.**
- **It is important to note that all Staffordshire districts have a youth claimant rate below the regional average, but Tamworth, Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire have rates above the national average.**
- 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

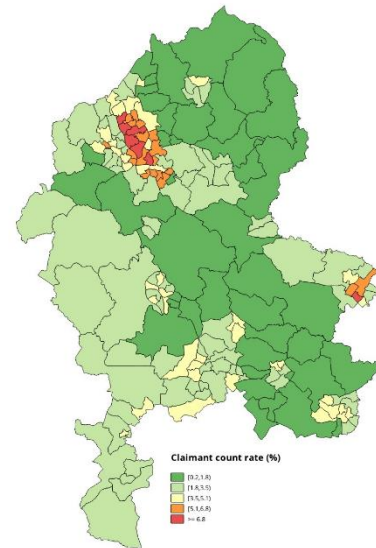
The following summaries and maps provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent. Please note that due to geographical changes in ward data from Nomis/ONS (17 Feb 2026), comparative data is based on January 2026.

Claimant Count Rate February 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 41 were above the England average of 4.1% 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 Burslem: 8.5%/430; Etruria & Hanley: 8.2%/425; Hanley Park, Joiner's Square & Shelton: 7.7%/945; Tunstall: 7.6%/365; Moorcroft & Sneyd Green: 7.1%/515 claimants.

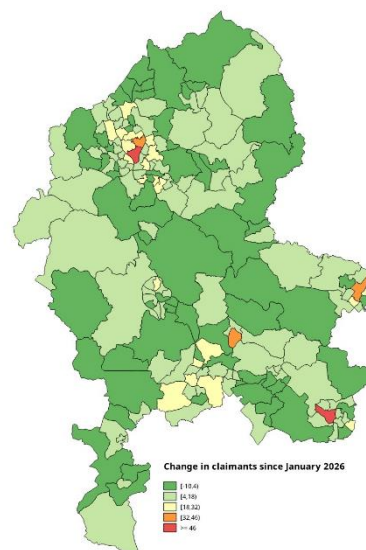
In Staffordshire, three wards in East Staffs had the highest claimant rates - Anglesey: 7.2%/425; Burton & Eton: 6.6%/495; Shobnall: 6.2%/360; and Knutton in Newcastle-u-Lyme: 6.4%/120 claimants.



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Change in Claimant Count since Jan 2026

The ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of claimants include Castle in Tamworth: 60 increase to 265; five wards in Stoke-on-Trent (Hanley Park, Joiner's Square & Shelton): 50 increase to 945; Birches Head & Northwood: 40 increase to 455; Moorcroft & Sneyd Green: 30 increase to 515); Burslem: 25 increase to 430; Bentilee, Ubberley & Townsend: 25 increase to 560; two wards in East Staffordshire including Burton & Eton: 35 increase to 495; Anglesey: 25 increase to 425; two wards in Cannock Chase including Brereton & Ravenhill: 35 increase to 195; Cannock Longford & Bridgtown: 30 increase to 260.



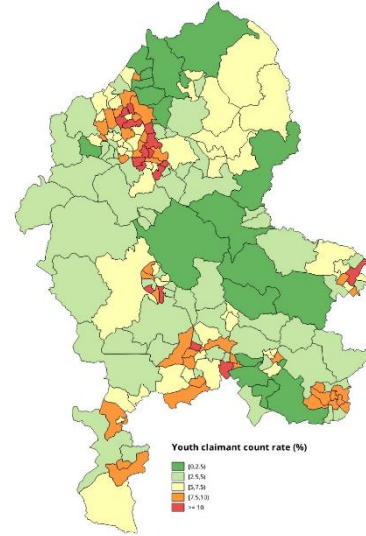
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Youth Claimant Count Rate February 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-Trent, 92 were above the England average 5.9% for the number of claimants aged 18-24 a proportion of the 18-24 population.

Of the ten wards with the highest youth claimant count rate, seven were in Stoke-on-Trent including Meir South: 12.6%/65; Blurton: 12.4%/60; Burslem: 12.3%/90; Hollybush: 12.0%/50; Abbey Hulton: 11.5%/65.

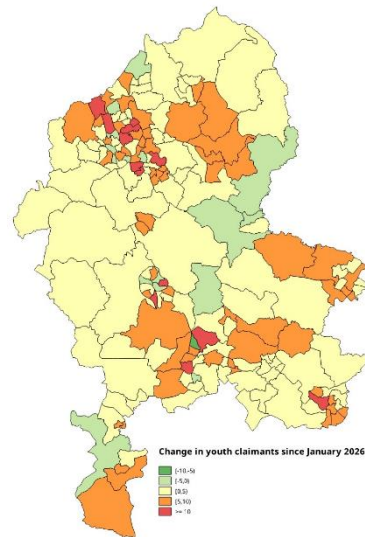
In Staffordshire, the wards with the highest claimant rate were Highfields & Western Downs (Stafford): 11.7%/55; Penkside (Stafford): 11.3%/25; Chadsmoor (Cannock): 11.1%/80.



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Change in Youth Claimant Count since Jan 2026

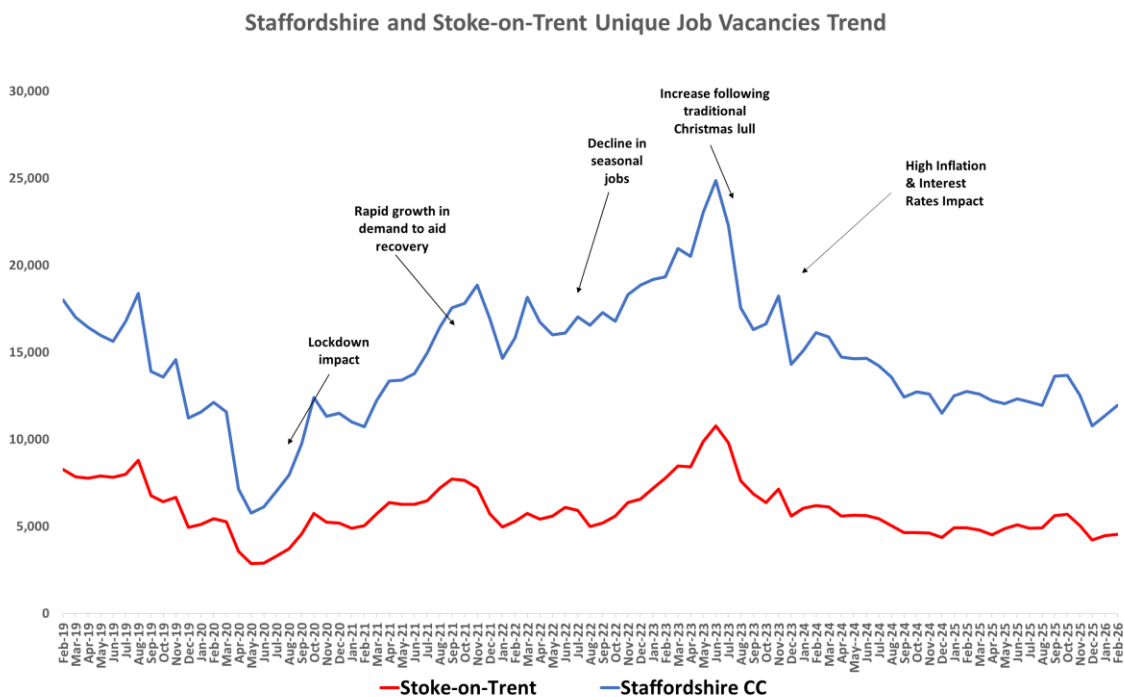
The ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of youth claimants include Castle in Tamworth: 15 increase to 55; six wards in Stoke-on Trent including Blurton: 10 increase to 60; Hollybush: 10 increase to 50; Moorcroft & Sneyd Green: 10 increase to 100; Etruria & Hanley: 10 increase to 70; Ford Green & Smallthorne: 10 increase to 40; Meir Hay North, Parkhall & Weston Coyney: 10 increase to 55; Manor in Stafford: 10 increase to 40; Cannock, Longford & Bridgtown in Cannock Chase: 10 increase to 60; Bradwell in Newcastle-under-Lyme: 10 increase to 50.



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Job Vacancies³

- **Staffordshire saw a 6% decrease in the number of available job vacancies between February 2025 and February 2026, higher than the decrease seen regionally and in contrast to the increase nationally to a total of 12,000⁴. Job vacancies in Staffordshire are lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw an 8% decrease in job vacancies over the past year to a total of 4,500 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region over the past year there was a 1% decrease, and nationally there was a 1% increase in the number of job vacancies.**
- The chart below indicates a general declining trend overall since 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. Our focus continues to be to support those that unfortunately find themselves unemployed, to transition into work.



Important to note that Lightcast live job vacancy data has been upgraded and improved through enhanced AI deduplication and sharper skill scraping of job postings.

Annual Trends in recruitment

- The majority of occupational groups saw a decrease in vacancies over the past year. However, 'Process, Plant & Machine Operatives' occupations increased +5% whilst 'Professional' occupations saw a decrease of -14%.

³ Source: Lightcast

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.

- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year increases include Transport & Distribution Clerks & Assistants; Mechanical Engineers; Assemblers & Routine Operatives; Teaching Assistants; Business Sales Executives; Sales & Retail Assistants; Managers in Storage & Warehousing; Warehouse Operatives; Plant & Machine Operatives; Catering & Bar Managers; Electrical Engineers; Restaurant & Catering Managers & Proprietors; Management Consultants & Business Analysts; Bar Staff; Bar & Catering Supervisors; Animal Care Services Occupations; Waiters & Waitresses; Road Transport Drivers; Assemblers (Electrical & Electronic Products); Purchasing Managers & Directors.

Top 20 occupations increasing and top 20 declining between Feb25 and Feb26 in Staffordshire & Stoke

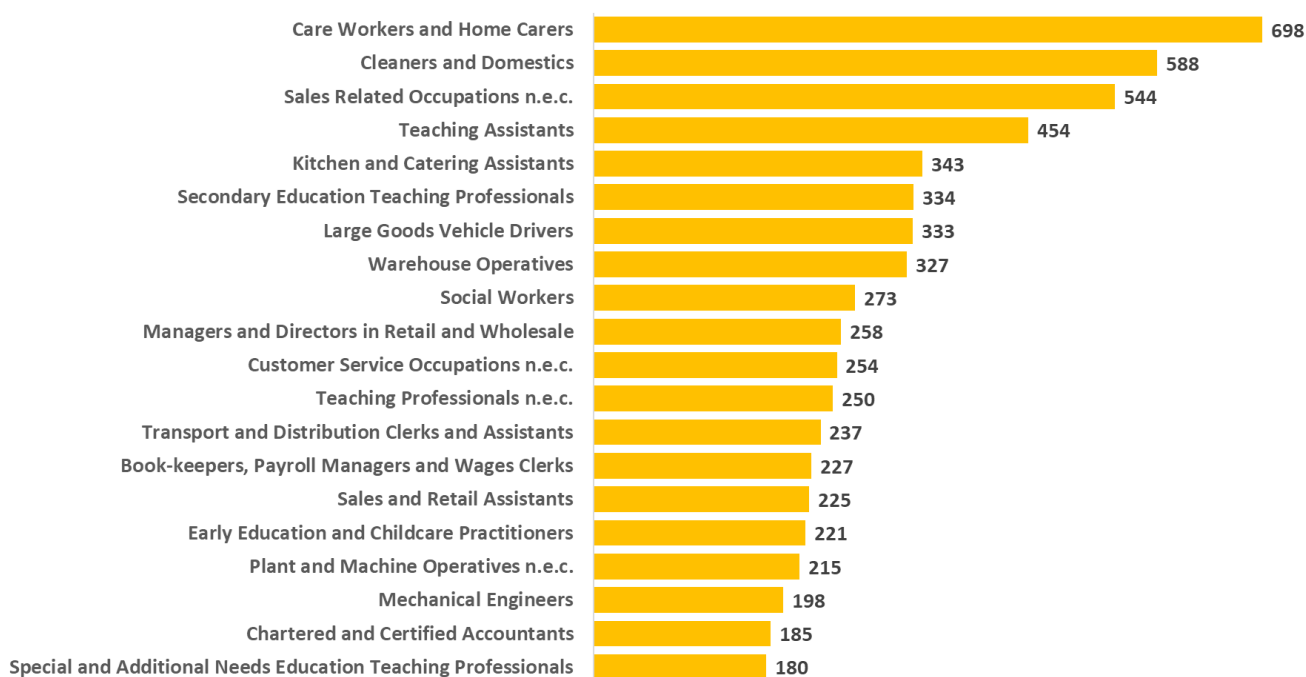


- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year decrease include Teaching Professionals; Care Workers & Home Carers; Other Registered Nursing Professionals; SEND Teaching Professionals; Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians; Social Workers; Book-Keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks; Customer Service; Education Managers; Receptionists; Authors, Writers & Translators; Legal Secretaries; Sales Supervisors; Early Education & Childcare Services Proprietors; Health Care Practice Managers; Chefs; Early Education & Childcare Assistants; Hospital Porters; Customer Service Supervisors; Taxation Experts.

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 Hospitality sector **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** are most in demand.
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**
- The Logistics sector continues to have high demand for **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Warehouse Operatives'** and **'Transport & Distribution Clerks & Assistants.'**
- There is high demand in the Health & Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- Demand for **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is strong demand for **'Customer Service'** and **'Bookkeepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** occupations across business sectors.
- There is also high demand for **'Early Education and Childcare Practitioners.'**
- There is continued demand in the Engineering sector for **'Plant & Machine Operatives,' 'Mechanical Engineers'** and **'Engineering Technicians.'**
- In the Financial sector **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** are in demand.

Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire & Stoke during February 2026



- 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 the digital economy (including online retail and e-commerce), construction sector (including retrofitting**

homes), the car industry e.g. electric cars at Jaguar Land Rover, and in manufacturing e.g. hydrogen combustion technology at 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. **Advanced logistics** within the ecommerce sector continues to drive demand, evidenced by Pets At Home in Stafford recently generating over 750 new jobs and Carlsberg Britvic investing £4 million in a new depot, with plans to create several hundred additional jobs.

