

# Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

## Issue 68 - April 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](mailto: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 show a slight increase following an overall downward trend**, 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 15,505, this is 175 fewer claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a -1.1% annual reduction which is slightly lower than the reduction seen nationally (-1.2%) and lower than regionally (-2.0%).
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.8%** of the working age population, which has **decreased from 2.9% 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 5.4% the previous year, and lower than the England average of 4.1% which has remained unchanged since 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 3,445, this is 350 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to an 11.3% annual increase, which is slightly higher than the increases seen both regionally (9.8%) and nationally (9.1%).
- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.5% 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 6.0%, which increased from 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.1% which increased from 7.4%** 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 1% increase in the number of available job vacancies between March 2025 and March 2026 to a total of 12,700. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire. Stoke-on-Trent saw a decrease of 2% in job vacancies to a total of 4,700 which is significantly lower**

**than the number of claimants. Across the region in the past year there was a 4% increase, and nationally there was a 7% 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,' 'Teaching Assistants'** and **'Sales Related'** also have strong demand.
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** roles are most in demand.
- The Logistics sector has high demand for **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Warehouse Operatives,'** and **'Transport & Distribution Clerks/Assistants.'**
- In the Education sector there is particularly high demand for and **'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'Teaching Professionals,' 'SEND Teaching Professionals'** and **'Primary Education Teaching Professionals.'**
- Demand for **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** in the Retail and Wholesale sector remain strong.
- There is strong demand for **'Customer Service occupations,' 'Project Support Officers'** and **'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** across business sectors.
- There is also high demand for **'Early Education & Childcare Practitioners.'**
- There is high demand in the Health and Social Care sector for **'Social Workers.'**
- In the Engineering sector **'Plant & Machine Operatives'** 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](http://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](mailto: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.



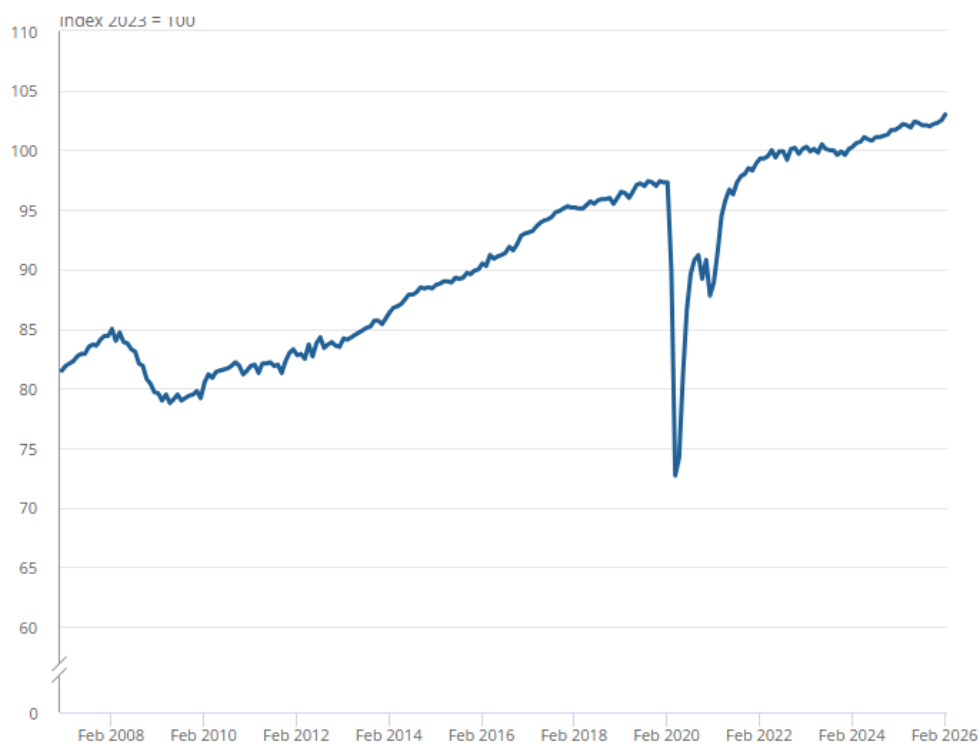
## National Context

- This month we have heard **warnings from the International Monetary Fund that the ongoing conflict in Iran could lead to a global recession, with the UK facing the most significant impact on growth.**
- The IMF has downgraded its growth forecasts for the UK, predicting inflation and unemployment will rise as a result of the conflict and increasing energy prices, with the biggest hit among G7 countries.

## Economy

- **The UK economy grew faster than expected in February ahead of Iran war.**
- **The economy grew by 0.5% in the three months to February 2026**, compared with the three months to November 2025. This follows a growth of 0.3% in the three months to January, and no growth in the three months to December 2025.

**GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to February 2026, UK**



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

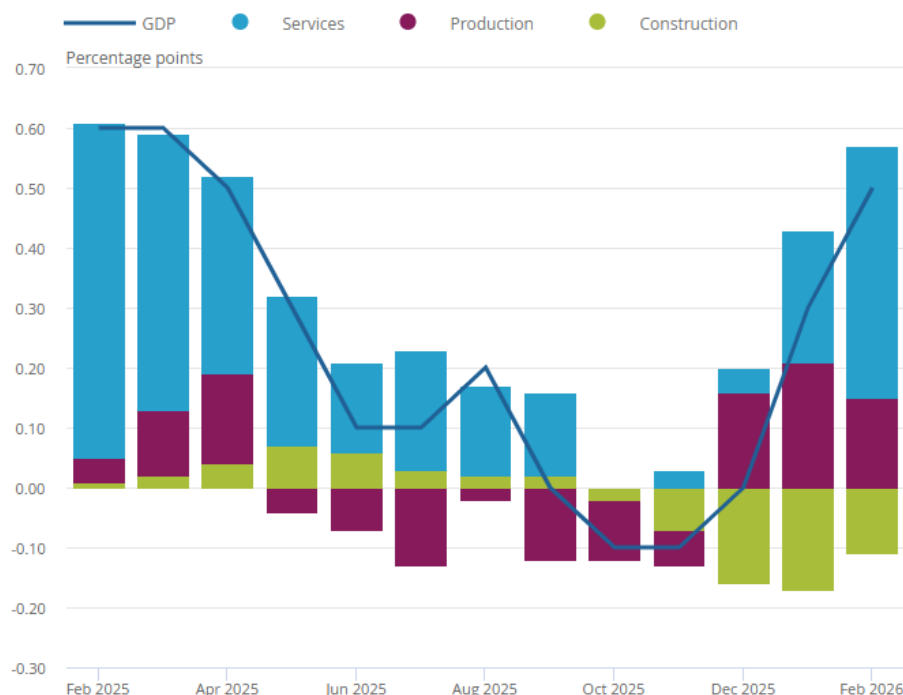
- **Services output grew by 0.5%**, after showing a growth of 0.3% in the three months to January 2026 (revised up from a growth of 0.2%).
- **Production output grew by 1.2%**; this follows a growth of 1.7% in the three months to January 2026 (revised up from a growth of 1.3%).

- **Construction output fell by 2.0%**, following falls of 2.8% in the three months to both January 2026 and December 2025 (these falls were revised down from falls of 2.0% and 2.1% respectively).

In the month to February 2026:

- **Monthly GDP grew by 0.5% in February 2026**, following a growth of 0.1% in January 2026 (revised up from no growth) and 0.1% in December 2025.
- **Services and production both grew by 0.5%, and construction grew by 1.0% in February 2026.**

Contributions to three-month GDP growth, February 2025 to February 2026, UK



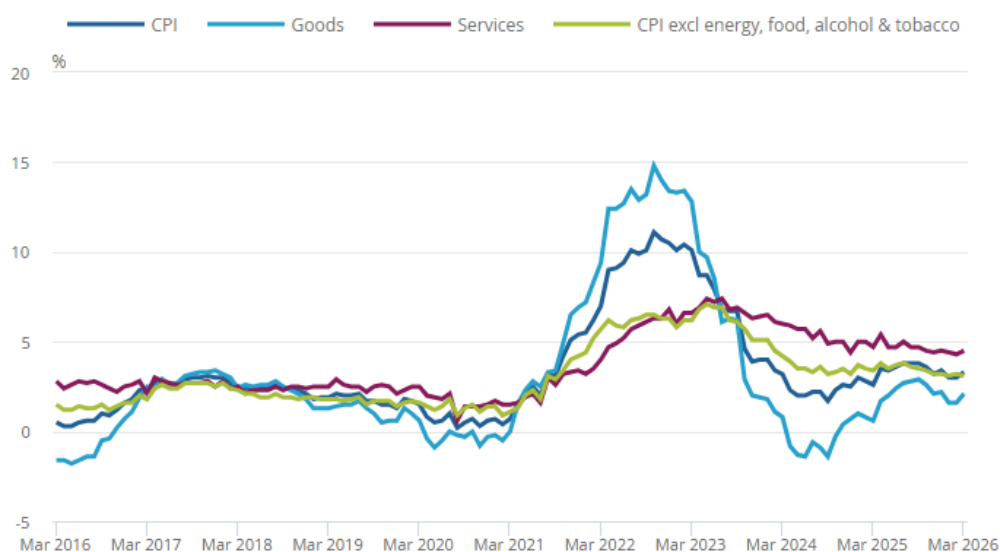
Source: Gross domestic product (GDP) monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

## Cost of Living

- **UK inflation rose to 3.3 per cent in March, driven by higher fuel and transport costs.** Rising oil prices linked to the Iran conflict are expected to keep inflation elevated, adding pressure on households and the wider economy.
- Against a volatile backdrop in the war, the International Monetary Fund has warned that **Britain faces the sharpest growth slowdown and joint highest inflation rate in the G7 this year amid the threat of a global recession.**
- **March’s headline rate of inflation remains above the 2% target set by the government.** The Bank of England left interest rates unchanged last month while warning that a prolonged conflict and disruption to global energy markets could force it to raise

borrowing costs to stop high inflation from becoming entrenched.

CPI goods, services and core annual inflation rates, UK, March 2016 to March 2026



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

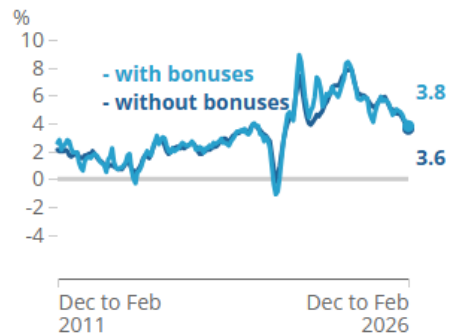
- **Wage growth continues to slow. Annual growth in employees' average earnings in Great Britain was 3.6% for regular earnings (excluding bonuses) and 3.8% for total earnings (including bonuses) in December 2025 to February 2026.**
- Annual average regular earnings growth was 5.2% for the public sector, and 3.2% for the private sector. The public sector annual growth rate has recently been affected by a base effect because of some public sector pay rises being paid earlier in 2025 than in 2024. This effect is now minimal, reaching its peak in the three months to November 2025, and will have worked its way out next month.
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), was 0.2% for regular pay, and 0.4% for total pay in December 2025 to February 2026.**
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index excluding owner occupiers' housing costs (CPI), was 0.4% for regular pay, and 0.7% for total pay in December 2025 to February 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**

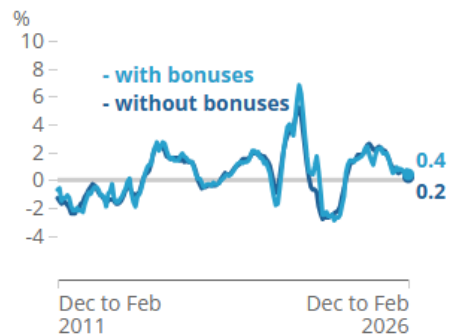


### Real Earnings CPIH

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPIH

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

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

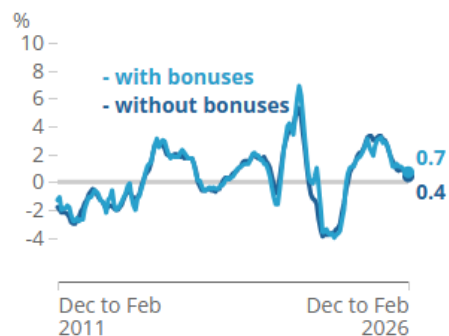


### Real Earnings CPI

Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPI

The real 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**



- There were an estimated 39,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in February 2026.

## Business Conditions

- The latest results from Wave 154 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 6 to 19 April 2026, suggest that **business conditions have become more challenging due to the conflict in the Middle East**.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of trading businesses reported that their **turnover had decreased in March 2026** when compared with the previous month, down 2 percentage points from February but in line with movements seen around this time in previous years; 16% of trading businesses **expected turnover to decrease in May 2026**, which is broadly stable compared with expectations for April.
- **Economic uncertainty remained the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in early April 2026** at 35%, rising to 40% for trading businesses with 10 or more employees; these were up 3 and 6 percentage points, respectively, since

March, and the highest proportions reported since the question was introduced in April 2022.

- Four in ten (40%) trading businesses reported an **increase in the prices of goods or services bought in March 2026** when compared with the previous month, 11 percentage points higher than February, and the highest proportion reported since December 2022 (41%); 15% reported an **increase in the prices of goods or services sold**, the highest proportion since April 2023 (16%).
- Over a quarter (28%) of trading businesses **expect the prices of goods or services they sell to increase in May 2026**, up 6 percentage points compared with April and the highest since January 2023; 34% cited **energy prices as a reason for considering raising prices** in May, up 9 percentage points from April, the highest proportion since April 2023.
- 66% of **businesses reported at least some level of concern about energy prices in early April 2026**, up 11 percentage points from late March; this proportion was 76% for businesses with 10 or more employees, a rise of 2 percentage points from late March.
- Almost 1 in 10 (9%) **businesses experienced global supply chain disruption in March 2026**, up 6 percentage points from February and the highest proportion since December 2022 (10%); of these businesses, 46% cited **conflict in the Middle East as a reason for experiencing global supply chain disruption** in March, a 34-percentage-point rise from February.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in March 2026 there were a total of 2,138 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 3% higher than the number registered in the previous year (2,080 in March 2025), and 13% lower than the number registered three years previously (2,470 in March 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

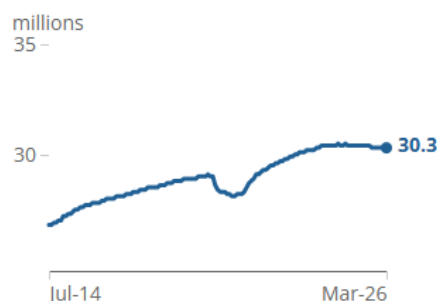
Monthly change: ▼ -11,000

Annual change: ▼ -65,000

The number of payrolled employees decreased slightly in the latest month but the overall recent picture is broadly flat.

Note: The March 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)

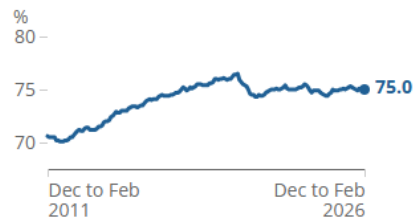
Quarterly change: ▼-0.1pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▼-1.5pps

The employment rate is down on the quarter but largely unchanged 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)

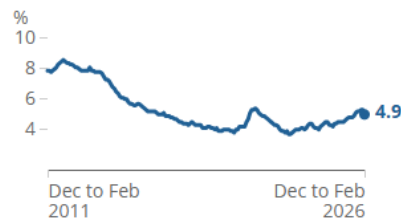
Quarterly change: ▼-0.2pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲1.0pps

The unemployment rate is down on the quarter but up on 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)

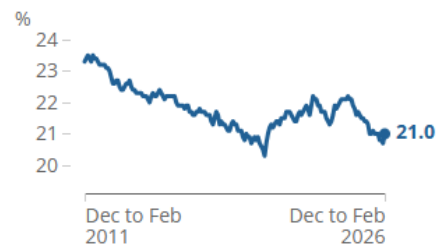
Quarterly change: ▲0.2pps

Since Dec-Feb 2020: ▲0.7pps

The economic inactivity rate is up on the quarter but down on the year, and 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**

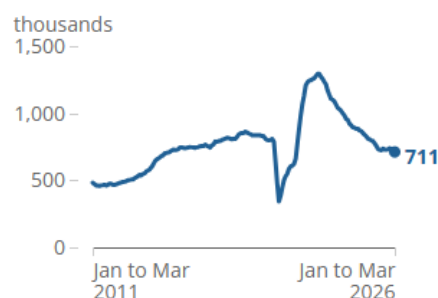
Number of job vacancies

Quarterly change: ▼ -29,000

Annual change: ▼ -65,000

Vacancies have decreased in the latest period

Source: Vacancy Survey from the Office for National Statistics



- **Estimates for payrolled employees in the UK fell by 74,000 (0.2%) between February 2025 and February 2026 and decreased by 6,000 (0.0%) between January and February 2026.** This is based on administrative data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- When looking at December 2025 to February 2026, the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, the number of payrolled employees fell by 87,000 (0.3%) over the year and by 9,000 (0.0%) over the quarter.
- **The early estimate of payrolled employees for March 2026 decreased by 65,000 (0.2%) on the year, and by 11,000 (0.0%) on the month, to 30.3 million.** The March 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 ONS 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** for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at 75.0% in December 2025 to February 2026. This is down in the latest quarter but largely unchanged compared with estimates of a year ago.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at 4.9% in December 2025 to February 2026. This is down in the latest quarter but above estimates of a year ago.
- The **UK economic inactivity rate** for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at 21.0% in December 2025 to February 2026. This is up in the latest quarter but below estimates of a year ago.
- The **UK Claimant Count** for March 2026 increased on the month but decreased on the year to an estimated 1.694 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.

- The estimated number of **vacancies in the UK** has decreased in the latest quarter, following broadly flat estimates since March to May 2025. Early estimates for January to March 2026 suggest a decrease of 29,000 (3.9%), to 711,000, compared with October to December 2025, this is the **lowest level of vacancies since February to April 2021**.

## Conclusion

- In conclusion, clearly the **ongoing conflicts across the world are starting to have an increased impact on the UK and local economy**. We are seeing more businesses impacted by issues such as **price rises and supply chain constraints**, which in turn is leading increasing **cost of living issues** for our residents. Both our businesses and residents will therefore need **increased support during this time of heightened global instability**.
- It is **positive that the UK economy grew faster than expected in February prior to the Iran war**, but **the war in Iran is expected to impact the economy at least in the short-term** due to the associated energy shock.
- The war has also seen **UK inflation rise to 3.3 per cent** and is expected to keep inflation elevated and the **Bank of England may need to raise interest rates** to help control inflation, all of this **adds to the pressures that households and businesses are already experiencing**.
- Alongside **rising global uncertainty and the introduction of new business-related UK taxes**, many businesses are seeing their turnover impacted by **longer-term issues including high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, wage pressures, supply-chain disruption, lower consumer confidence, and some labour market challenges**.
- The **labour market continues to loosen, with wage growth slowing and those in employment declining**. This all comes at a time when **job vacancies have seen a long-term decline to their lowest level since early 2021**, 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**.
- During these challenging times 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 **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 statistics<sup>1</sup> for March 2026, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

#### Company Insolvencies

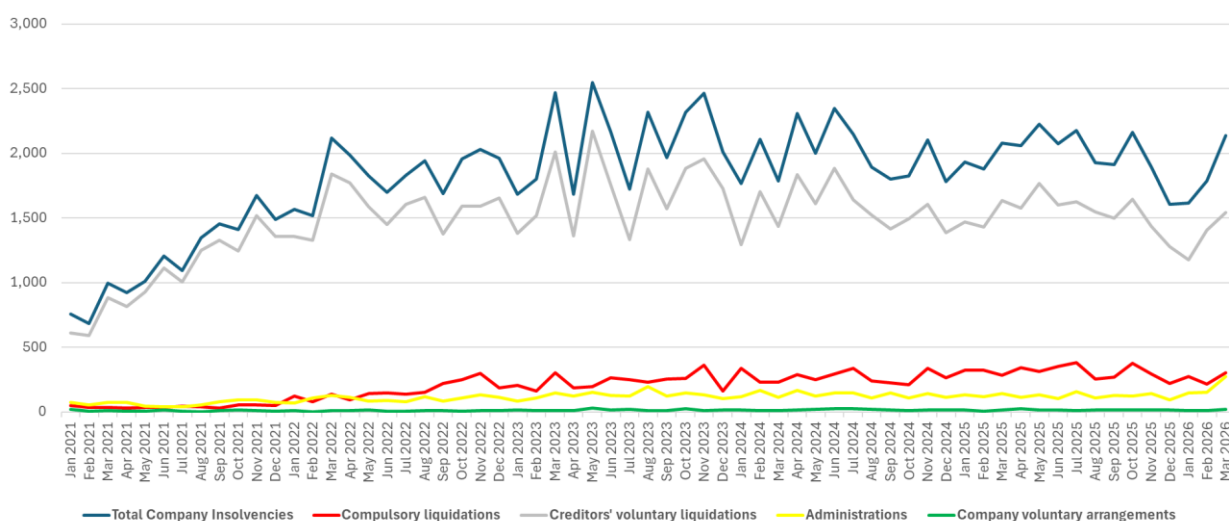
**In March 2026 there were a total of 2,138 company insolvencies in England and Wales.** The overall number of **company insolvencies are 3% higher than the number registered in the previous year (2,080 in March 2025), and 13% lower than the number registered three years previously (2,470 in March 2023).** 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 303 compulsory liquidations in March 2026, 7% higher than the number in March 2025, and 0.3% higher than in March 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 March 2026 there were 1,543 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 6% lower than March 2025, and 23% lower than March 2023. Numbers of administrations are 88% higher than three years previously in March 2023, Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 54% lower than three years previously in March 2023, and numbers are low.

**Company insolvencies between April 2025 and March 2026 are 2% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 525 fewer businesses**

Company Insolvencies in England and Wales



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

<sup>1</sup>Source: The Insolvency Service - [Company insolvencies, March 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvencies-march-2026)

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between March 2025 and February 2026 continue to be the **Construction sector (3,851)**, **Wholesale & Retail sector (3,652)**, and **Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,304)**. Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector -5% lower, but higher for the Wholesale & Retail sector +1% higher, and lower for the Accommodation & Food sector -3% lower than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are -1% lower.

### Individual Insolvencies

There were **13,460 total individual insolvencies in March 2026**, which was 34% higher than in March 2025, and 18% higher than in March 2023.

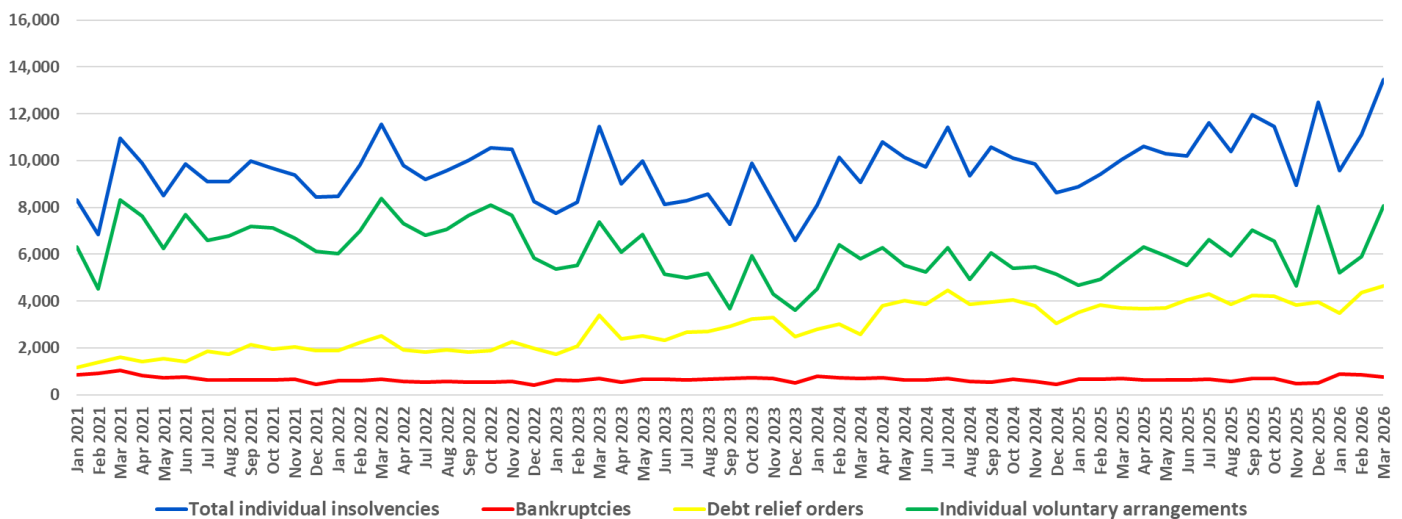
For individuals, 747 **bankruptcies were registered in March 2026**, 9% higher than in March 2025, and 9% higher than in March 2023. (Please note the Insolvency Service moved to a new case management system on 1 November 2025, which resulted in delays to recording data).

There were **4,637 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in March 2026**, 25% higher than in March 2025, and 37% higher than in March 2023.

There were **8,076 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in March 2026**, which was 43% higher than in March 2025, and 9% higher than in March 2023.

**Total Individual Insolvencies between April 2025 and March 2026 are 11% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 13,168.**

## Individual Insolvencies in England and Wales



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **5,175 Breathing Space registrations in March 2026, which is 36% lower than the number registered in March 2025**. 5,045 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 36% lower and 130 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 29% higher than March 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 Count<sup>2</sup>

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: March 2026

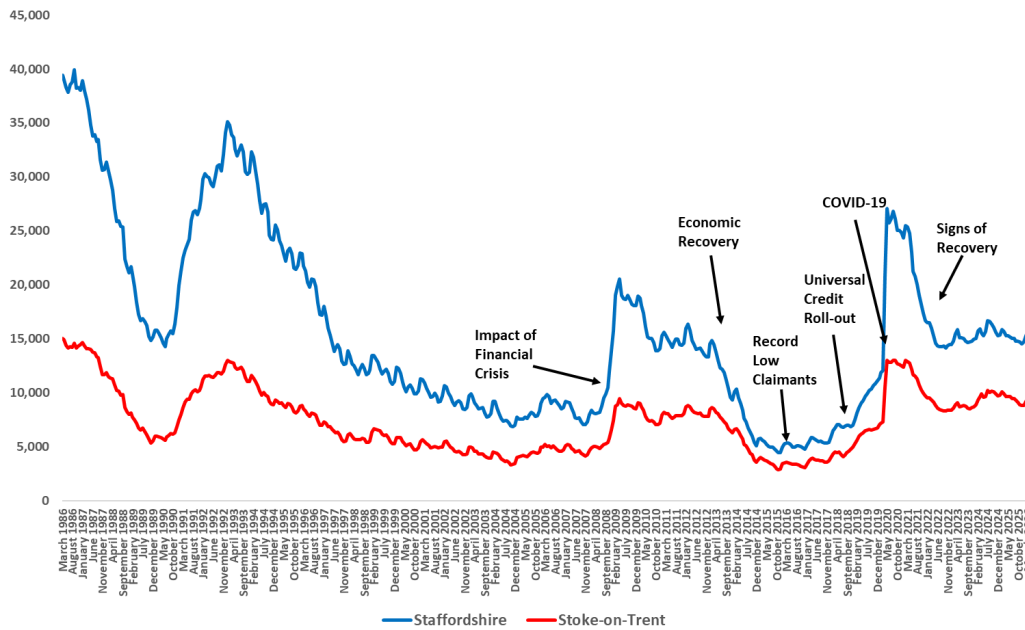
Area	Claimant Count Rate (March 2025)	Claimant Count Rate (February 2026)	Claimant Count Rate <sup>1</sup> (March 2026)	Number of Claimants (March 2026)	Annual Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Claimants (%)
England	4.1	4.0	4.1	1,510,730	-18,685	-1.2%
West Midlands	5.4	5.2	5.3	204,170	-4,170	-2.0%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	3.6	3.4	3.5	24,765	-825	-3.2%
Birmingham	10.4	9.9	10.1	77,715	-2,220	-2.8%
Wolverhampton	7.2	6.7	6.9	12,025	-610	-4.8%
Sandwell	7.1	6.6	6.8	15,155	-710	-4.5%
Walsall	6.1	5.7	5.9	10,700	-285	-2.6%
Coventry	5.7	5.6	5.8	14,035	265	1.9%
<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>9,260</b>	<b>-655</b>	<b>-6.6%</b>
Dudley	4.9	4.8	4.8	9,675	-245	-2.5%
Telford and Wrekin	3.8	3.8	3.9	4,765	185	4.0%
Solihull	3.6	3.6	3.7	4,810	85	1.8%
Worcestershire	3.1	3.0	3.1	11,435	-155	-1.3%
Warwickshire	2.8	2.8	2.9	11,330	540	5.0%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>15,505</b>	<b>-175</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>
Herefordshire, County of	2.9	2.6	2.7	2,960	-180	-5.7%
Shropshire	2.5	2.4	2.5	4,800	-15	-0.3%
East Staffordshire	3.6	3.4	3.4	2,680	-215	-7.4%
Tamworth	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,675	25	1.5%
Cannock Chase	3.2	3.1	3.2	2,055	-15	-0.7%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.1	2.9	3.0	2,395	-80	-3.2%
South Staffordshire	2.6	2.6	2.6	1,740	30	1.8%
Stafford	2.3	2.5	2.6	2,195	210	10.6%
Lichfield	2.3	2.2	2.3	1,550	-5	-0.3%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.4	2.2	2.2	1,215	-120	-9.0%

<sup>1</sup> The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 15,505 this is 175 fewer claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a -1.1% annual reduction which is lower than the reduction seen regionally (-2.0%) and nationally (-1.2%)
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.8%** of the working age population, which has **decreased from 2.9% since a year earlier.**
- The number of **claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 9,260**, which is 655 lower than a year earlier, and the **claimant rate has decreased from 5.9% the previous year to 5.5%.**

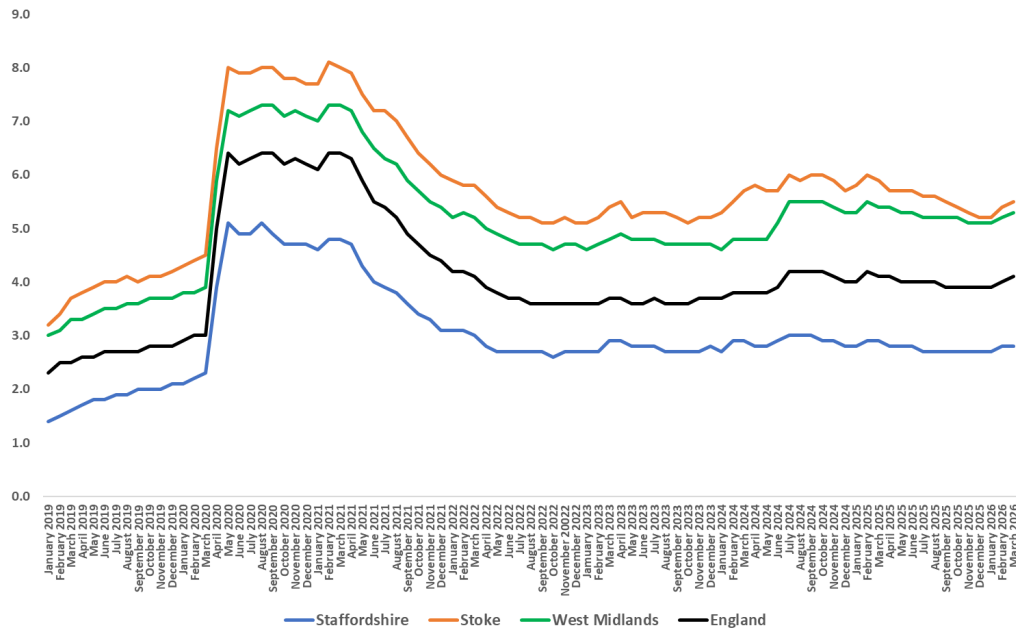
<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Claimant Count



- 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 5.4% the previous year, and lower than the average for England of 4.1% which has remained unchanged since the previous year.**

Claimant Rate Staffordshire, Stoke, West Midlands & England Comparison



- **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 in the number of claimants over the last year except for South Staffordshire, Stafford 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 3.4% 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

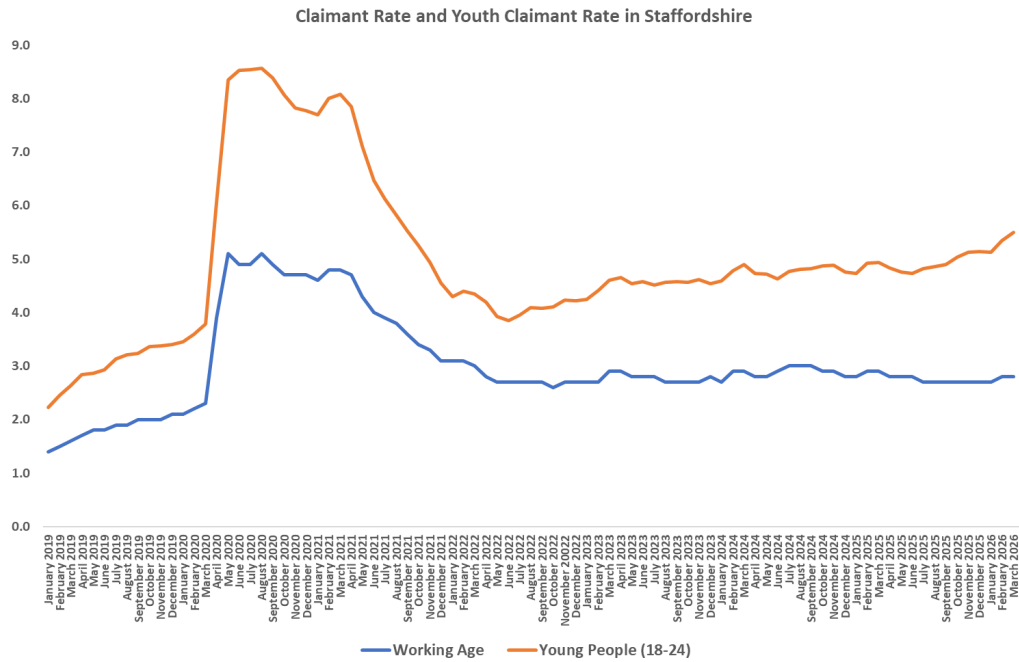
### Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: March 2026

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (March 2025)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (February 2026)	Youth Claimant Count Rate <sup>1</sup> (March 2026)	Number of Youth Claimants (March 2026)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (%)
England	5.5	5.8	6.0	292,130	24,325	9.1%
West Midlands	7.4	7.9	8.1	42,605	3,790	9.8%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.8	6.1	6.2	5,390	370	7.4%
Birmingham	10.0	10.7	10.9	15,780	1,380	9.6%
Wolverhampton	10.1	10.3	10.5	2,405	95	4.1%
Wallsall	9.7	10.2	10.4	2,460	160	7.0%
Sandwell	9.7	9.8	10.0	3,085	95	3.2%
Dudley	7.9	8.8	8.9	2,145	240	12.6%
<b>Stoke-on-Trent</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
Solihull	6.6	7.6	7.7	1,135	165	17.0%
Telford and Wrekin	6.2	7.0	7.4	1,120	180	19.1%
Coventry	5.3	5.8	6.0	2,835	350	14.1%
Worcestershire	5.2	5.5	5.8	2,385	245	11.4%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3,445</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
Warwickshire	4.3	4.9	5.2	2,320	370	19.0%
Herefordshire, County of	4.8	5.0	5.0	555	30	5.7%
Shropshire	4.3	4.5	4.8	980	100	11.4%
Tamworth	7.2	7.3	7.6	415	25	6.4%
Cannock Chase	6.2	6.6	6.6	455	25	5.8%
South Staffordshire	5.1	5.9	5.9	405	55	15.7%
Stafford	4.6	5.4	5.8	480	100	26.3%
East Staffordshire	5.2	5.5	5.5	485	30	6.6%
Lichfield	4.4	4.6	4.7	335	25	8.1%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.0	4.3	4.5	620	75	13.8%
Staffordshire Moorlands	4.1	4.5	4.4	250	15	6.4%

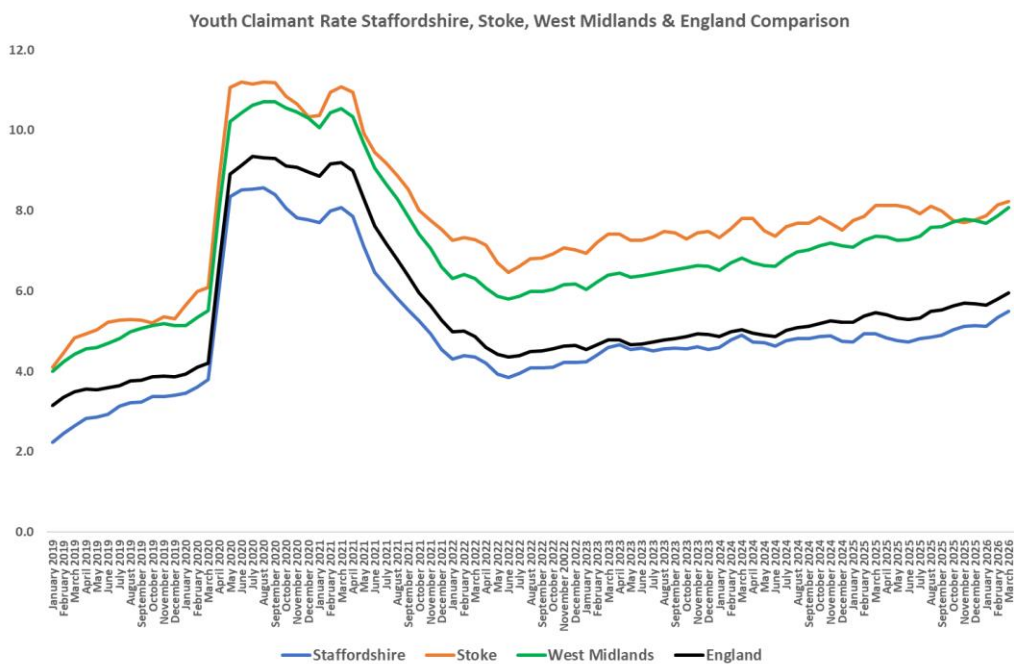
<sup>1</sup> The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **youth claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 3,445 this is 350 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 11.3% annual increase, which is slightly higher than the increases seen both regionally (9.8%) and nationally (9.1%).

- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.5% 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 1,950**, which is 25 higher than a year earlier, with **the rate at 8.2%, increasing from 8.1% a year earlier.**
- It is important to note that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 6.0%, which increased from 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.1% which increased from 7.4% 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 and Cannock Chase 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

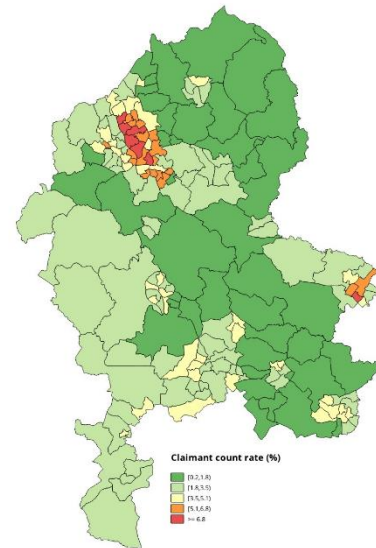
The following summaries and maps provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent. Please note that due to geographical changes in ward data from Nomis/ONS (17 Feb 2026), comparative data is based on January 2026.

### Claimant Count Rate March 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 45 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%/435; Tunstall: 8.3%/395; Etruria & Hanley: 7.9%/410; Hanley Park, Joiner’s Square & Shelton: 7.5%/925; Fenton East: 6.9%/275 claimants.

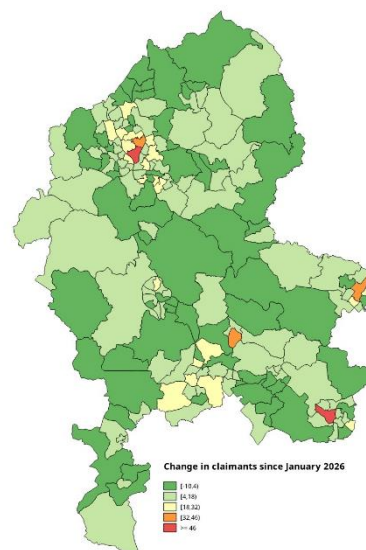
In Staffordshire, three wards in East Staffs had the highest claimant rates - Anglesey: 7.0%/410; Burton & Eton:6.6%/495; Shobnall: 5.7%/330; and Knutton in Newcastle-u-Lyme: 6.1%/115 claimants.



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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: 45 increase to 250; five wards in Stoke-on-Trent (Tunstall): 40 increase to 395; (Burslem): 30 increase to 435; (Hanley Park, Joiner’s Square & Shelton): 30 increase to 925; (Birches Head & Northwood): 30 increase to 445; (Sandford Hill): 25 increase to 230; Burton & Eton in East Staffordshire: 35 increase to 495; three wards in Cannock Chase including Hednesford Pye Green: 35 increase to 175; Chads Moor: 30 increase to 305; Cannock Longford & Bridgtown: 30 increase to 260.



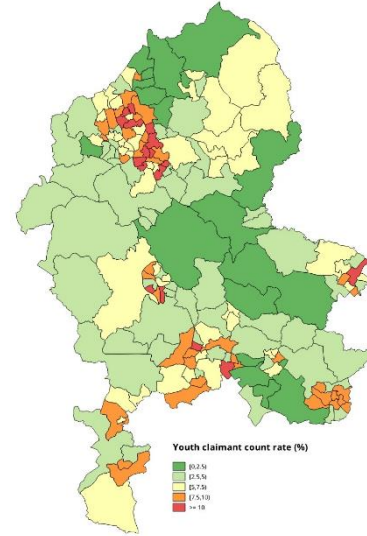
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### Youth Claimant Count Rate March 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-Trent, 85 were above the England average 6.0% 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, five were in Stoke-on-Trent including Hollybush: 12.0%/50; Burslem: 11.6%/85; Meir South: 11.6%/60; Sandford Hill: 11.6%/50; Blurton: 11.4%/55.

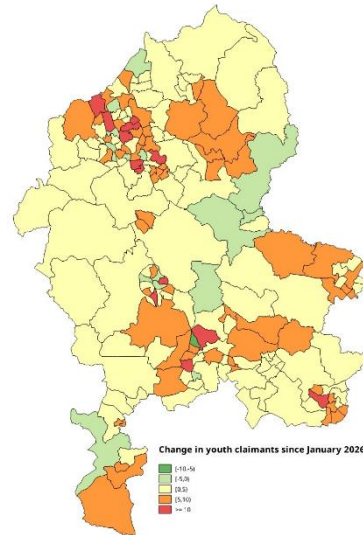
In Staffordshire, the wards with the highest claimant rate were Chasetown (Lichfield): 12.1%/40; Highfields & Western Downs (Stafford): 11.7%/55; Knutton (Newcastle): 11.5%/30; Penside (Stafford): 11.3%/25; Chadsmoor (Cannock): 11.1%/80.



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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 two wards in Stafford including Manor: 15 increase to 45 and Common: 10 increase to 25; two wards in East Staffordshire: Branston: 15 increase to 40 and Stapenhill: 10 increase to 55; Westlands in Newcastle-under-Lyme: 15 increase to 20; three wards in Stoke-on Trent including Hollybush: 10 increase to 50; Moorcroft & Sneyd Green: 10 increase to 100; Tunstall: 10 increase to 70; Cheadle South East in Staffs Moorlands: 10 increase to 20; Belgrave in Tamworth: 10 increase to 45.

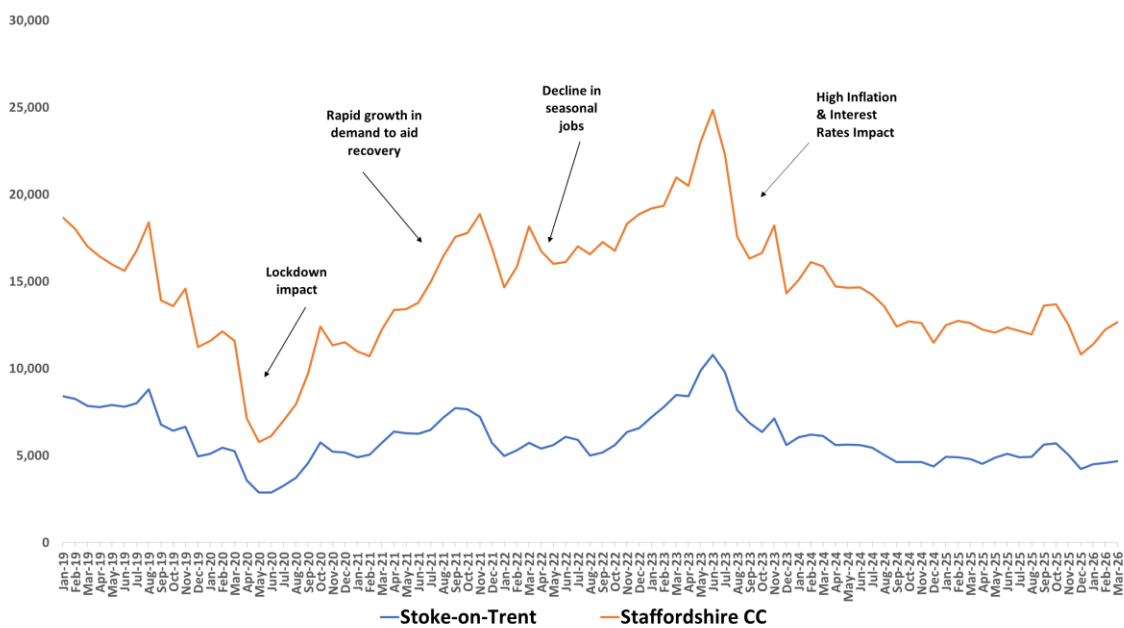


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## Job Vacancies<sup>3</sup>

- **Staffordshire saw a 1% increase in the number of available job vacancies between March 2025 and March 2026, although lower than the increase seen regionally and nationally to a total of 12,700<sup>4</sup>. Job vacancies in Staffordshire are lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 2% decrease in job vacancies over the past year to a total of 4,700 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region over the past year there was a 4% increase, and nationally there was a 7% 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.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Unique Job Vacancies Trend



*\*\*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

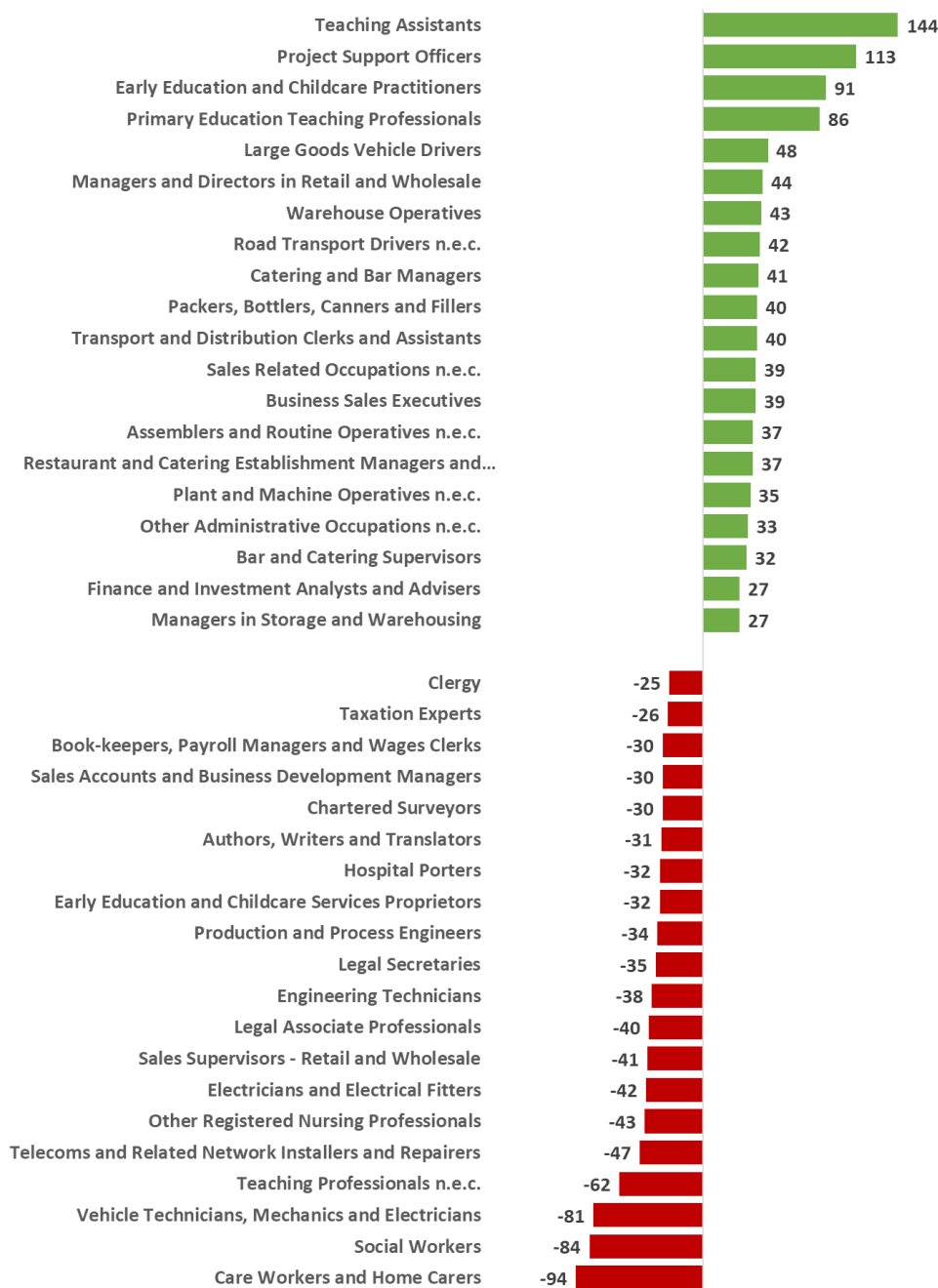
- The majority of occupational groups saw an increase in vacancies over the past year. Whilst 'Process, Plant & Machine Operatives' occupations increased +10% 'Skilled Trade' occupations saw a decrease of -9%.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Lightcast

<sup>4</sup> 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 Teaching Assistants; Project Support Officers; Early Education & Childcare Practitioners; Primary Education Teaching Professionals; Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Managers & Directors in Retail & Wholesale; Warehouse Operatives; Road Transport Drivers; Catering & Bar Managers; Transport & Distribution Clerks & Assistants; Packers, Bottlers, Canners & Fillers; Business Sales Executives; Sales Related; Restaurant & Catering Establishment Managers & Proprietors; Assemblers & Routine Operatives; Plant & Machine operatives; Other Administrative; Bar & Catering supervisors; Managers in Storage & Warehousing; Finance & Investment Analysis & Advisers.

**Top 20 occupations increasing and top 20 declining between Mar25 and Mar26 in Staffordshire & Stoke**

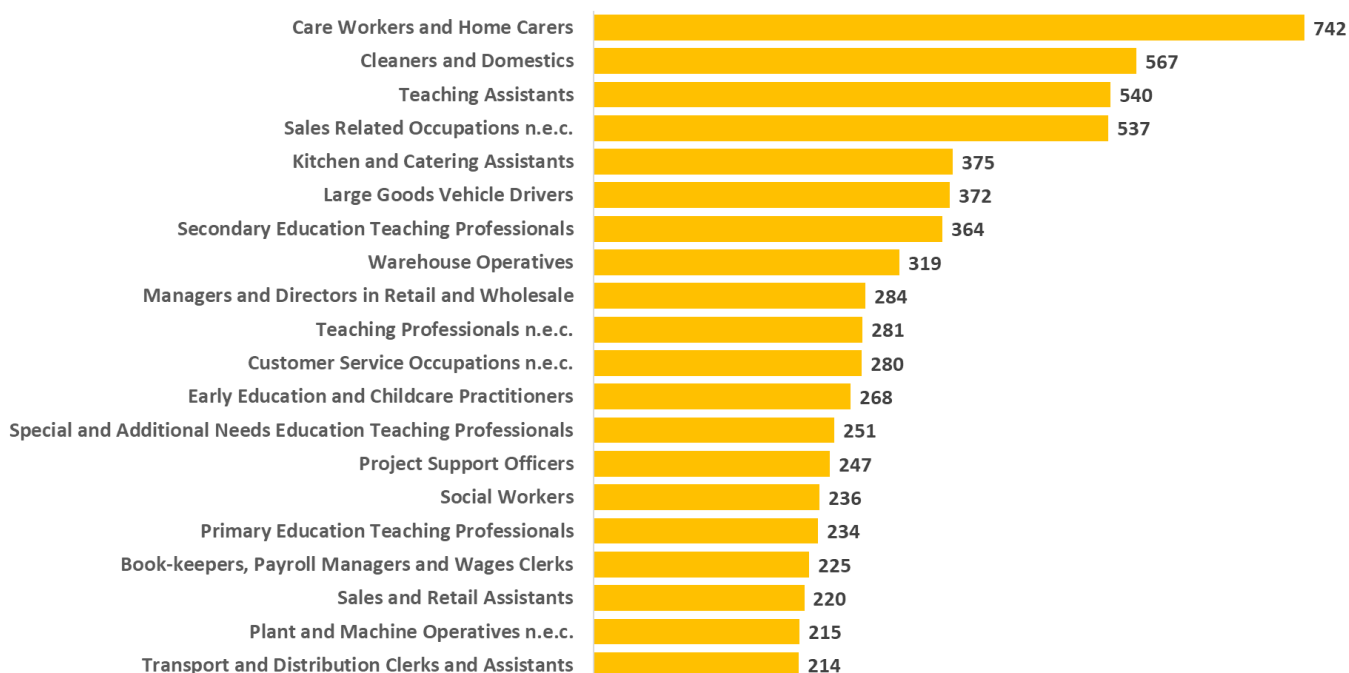


- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year decrease include Care Workers & Home Carers; Social Workers; Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians; Teaching Professionals; Telecoms & Related Network Installers & Repairers; Other Registered Nursing Professionals; Electricians & Electrical Fitters; Sales Supervisors; Legal Associate Professionals; Engineering Technicians; Legal Secretaries; Production & Process Engineers; Early Education & Childcare Services Proprietors; Hospital Porters; Authors, Writers & Translators; Chartered Surveyors; Sales Accounts & Business Development managers; Book-Keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks; Taxation Experts; Clergy.

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

## Top 20 occupations in demand in Staffordshire &amp; Stoke during March 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.

