Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 72 - August 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 Eyers

Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, Staffordshire County Council

Key Messages

Local Picture

- In Staffordshire we have seen **a small rise in the Claimant Count mainly due to youth unemployment**, while the rate remains broadly comparable to the level recorded a year ago. At the same time, we have **seen job vacancy levels in the local economy ease, with the overall trend becoming flatter** and reflecting 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 15,100, this is 80 more claimants than at the same time last year.** Staffordshire has seen a slight annual increase of 0.5% in the number of claimants. This compares to claimant numbers increasing by 1.1% nationally and by 0.8% across the West Midlands.
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire has increased from 2.7% to 2.8%** of the working age population since last year.
- **Staffordshire's claimant rate remains one of the lowest in the West Midlands, at 2.8%. This is well below the regional average of 5.3% which has increased from 5.2% and the England average of 4.0%, which remained unchanged over 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 3,325; this is 305 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 10.1% annual increase, which is higher than the 9.9% increase in the West Midlands and the 9.4% increase in England.
- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.3% of the 18-24 population, which is an increase from 4.8% 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 5.8%, which has increased from 5.3% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.1% which has 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 7% increase in the number of available job vacancies between July 2025 and July 2026 to a total of 13,100. This is lower than the number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 6% increase in job vacancies to a total of 5,200 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the past year there was a 2% increase,**

and nationally there was a 3% 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, **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Cleaners & Domestics'** show continued recruitment demand.
- Within the Education sector, vacancy levels remain elevated for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,' 'SEND Teaching Professionals'** and **'Teaching Professionals.'**
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** and **'Chefs'** remain key occupations for recruitment.
- The Logistics sector continues to have strong demand for **'Warehouse Operatives'** and **'Road Transport Drivers.'**
- In the Retail and Wholesale sector, **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** continue to attract strong employer demand.
- Across business sectors **'Customer Service Occupations,' 'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wage Clerks'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** continue to attract sustained demand.
- The Health & Social Care sector continues to have sustained demand for **'Social Workers.'**
- Demand for **'Vehicle Mechanics and Electricians'** in the Motor Trade are also high.
- In the Engineering sector **'Plant & Machine Operatives'** remain sought after.
- There is also notable demand for **'Early Education & Childcare Practitioners.'**
- It is in these areas of the economy where job vacancies remain particularly high and where we are hearing reports of **labour and skills shortages** with a mismatch of workers or skills to fill vacant jobs.
- This has the **potential to slow down economic growth and limit business survival unless the labour shortage and skills gap is quickly and effectively addressed**. Clearly employment support organisations, skills providers and the Government's Plan for Jobs including the Connect to Work schemes and new Skills Bootcamps have a vital role in upskilling and reskilling jobseekers into areas of demand and preventing them becoming long-term unemployed. Government and business sectors have a key role in ensuring that jobs in areas of demand are attracting workers with good pay and terms and conditions to help prevent labour shortages.
- There continues to be a high number of jobs available in the local economy and the need now is to ensure that there is a strong local labour pool with skilled workers able to fill these roles to support business recovery/survival and improve prosperity through better pay. The national and local support which is in place to support those that have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs is vital in both **reskilling and upskilling** as well as enabling potential applicants to access the opportunities available. Encouraging those that have become **economically inactive** since COVID 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.
- A successful county council business support programme which helped over 80 new enterprises to grow and thrive during its first year has launched its latest phase. Small businesses which have been operating for between two and five years can benefit from free expert guidance through the **Growth Ladder programme**. It offers one-to-one advisor sessions which will assess business needs, create a bespoke action plan for growth, and then provide ongoing check-ins to help stay on track or adjust the plan. The latest round of the programme opens Monday 25 May. People can find out more on the Growth Ladder webpage. There are also a host of free business growth workshops which people can sign up to now.
- Businesses in Staffordshire are able to benefit from a new free recruitment service which will help to match their employment vacancies with appropriate potential candidates. The **Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Service** provides advice and support to both businesses and people looking for employment opportunities. It will match vacancies with candidates looking for jobs in certain sectors and with appropriate skills. The service is working with a range of partner organisations, and a team of specialist brokers will advise employers and potential employees with options available to them. Find out more about Staffordshire Jobs and Careers.
- **Need some support? Contact the Growth Hub** - The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub is your first port of call for any business-support related enquiry. It acts as the focal point for businesses that wish to grow by referring them to co-ordinated and cohesive growth programmes, business networks, growth groups and links to specialist information, advice, and services. If you would like a free of charge appointment with a qualified Growth Hub Business Advisor to discuss what options are available to support the growth of your business, please contact them on 0300 111 8002.
- **Help To Grow: Management programme** is 90% funded by the government so you only

pay £750. Delivered in partnership with Small Business Charter, courses are running at leading business schools across the UK. This programme includes:

- access 12-weeks of learning designed to fit alongside work commitments
- develop a bespoke business growth plan to help your business reach its full potential
- get 1:1 support from a business mentor
- learn from peers and network with businesses just like yours

To find out more visit.

- The **Staffordshire Business and Enterprise Network (SBEN)** has introduced more support for businesses in Staffordshire. The Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme can help you to reduce your carbon footprint and increase energy efficiency. It has now been widened to include an additional Energy Efficiency Review for a business that has previously had one, and grants towards the capital costs for solar projects. Membership of SBEN is still free until the end of next March. Membership includes access to the Carbon Tracker tool. **Why join SBEN?**
- **Save up to 15% off your energy costs.** Sub-metering monitoring systems are a cost-effective way for Staffordshire businesses to manage and reduce their energy use. Sub-metering monitoring 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.
- **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.
  New programme set to help Staffordshire businesses Build and Scale
- **Staffordshire businesses linked with construction, maintenance, and professional services with ambitions to accelerate growth can apply for bespoke support as part of a new support project launched by the county council.** The **Build and Scale programme** aims to help companies accelerate sustainable business growth which must lead to improved productivity, job creation, Gross Value Added, turnover and profit. Successful applicants will work with a growth consultant to tackle barriers and build a clear path to high growth. To qualify, businesses must have been established between two and five years and be based in Staffordshire. The support will focus on the county's largest growth sectors which are property development and construction, trades such as electrical, plumbing carpentry and subcontracting and professional services like legal, accountancy, architecture, surveying, and consulting. Find out more about Build and Scale here.

National Context

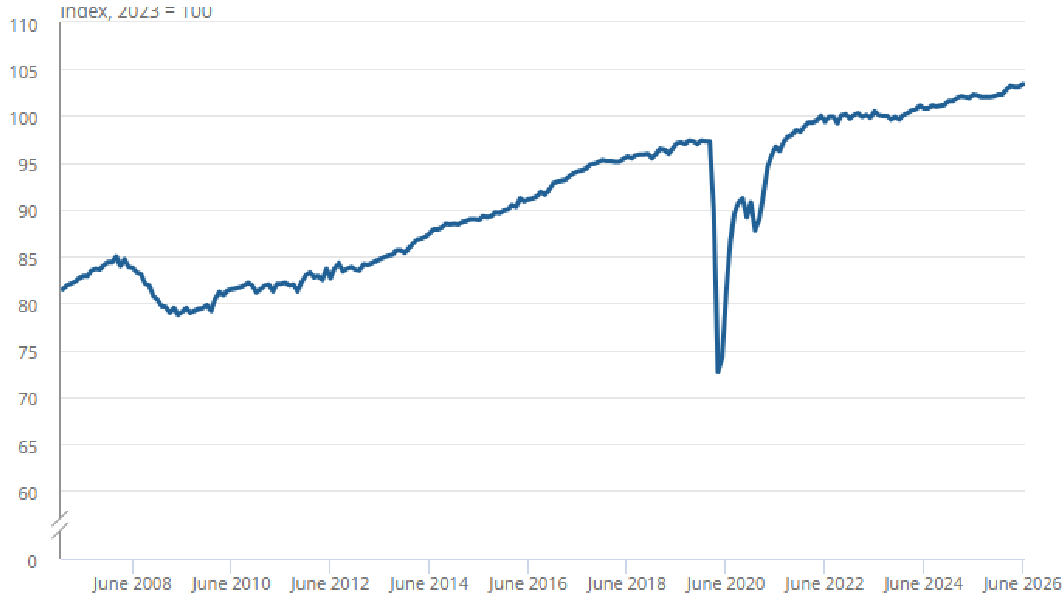
- This month the **Prime Minister, Andy Burnham has been touring the country and made a series of new government policy announcements**, but the detail will need to wait until the autumn.
- While the **Prime Minister has refused to rule out potential tax rises in the upcoming autumn budget** and no further government energy bill support is expected before the price cap increase of 4% in October.
- The **government has confirmed its decision on local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, this will see two new unitary councils** covering:
  - The north of Staffordshire including Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands. This is 494,803 people.
  - The south of Staffordshire including Stafford, East Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, Lichfield, Tamworth and South Staffordshire. This is 682,775 people.
- The new unitary councils will make use of the existing district, borough and city council boundaries.
- They will replace Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's ten existing county, city, district and borough councils, and they will be responsible for delivering all council services including waste collections, children's services, planning, adult social care, highways and more.

Economy

- The **UK's economy grew by 0.4 per cent in the second quarter of the year**. Businesses have been finding ways to cope with the effects of the Iran war, with manufacturers stockpiling to mitigate against supply shortages and price rises.
- The period also included political uncertainty in the run-up to Sir Keir Starmer's resignation as Prime Minister in June and the first of several summer heatwaves in May, putting some industries under pressure.
- This latest quarterly growth follows a growth of 0.6% in the three months to May 2026 and growth of 0.8% in the three months to April 2026.
- **Services output grew by 0.5%**, after growing by 0.6% in the three months to May 2026.
- **Production output showed no growth** following a growth of 0.2% in the three months to May 2026.
- **Construction output grew by 0.3%**; this follows a growth of 1.5% in the three months to May 2026.

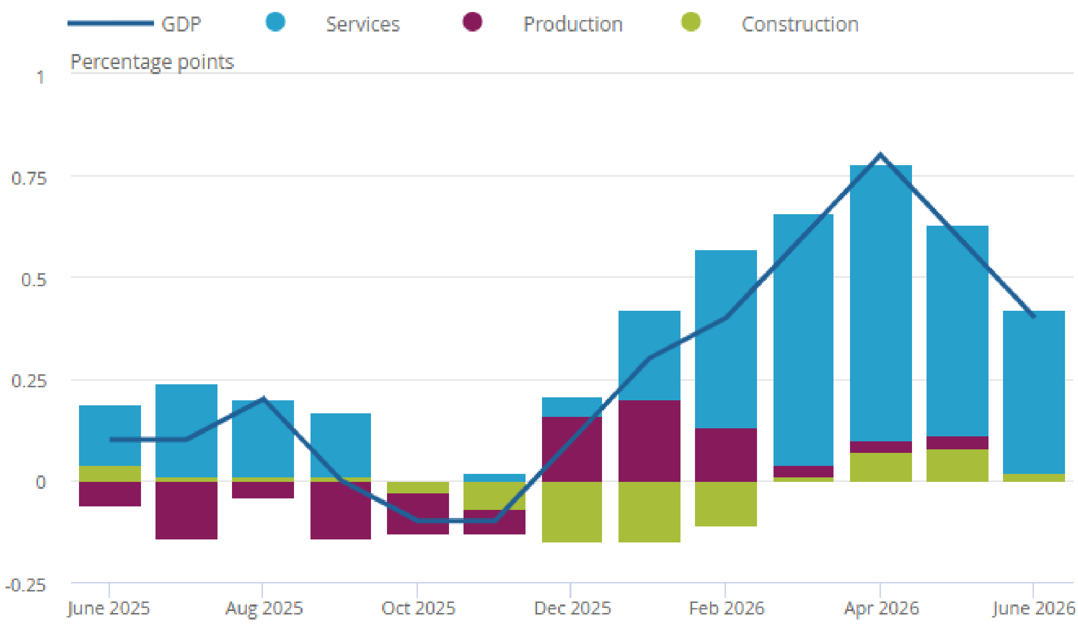
- Looking at monthly GDP in the month to June 2026:
  - **Monthly GDP grew by 0.3% in June 2026**, after showing no growth in May 2026 and a fall of 0.1% in April 2026.
  - The **growth in June was because of a rise of 0.4% in services and was partially offset by falls of 0.2% in production, and 0.1% in construction**.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to June 2026, UK



Source: GDP monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

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

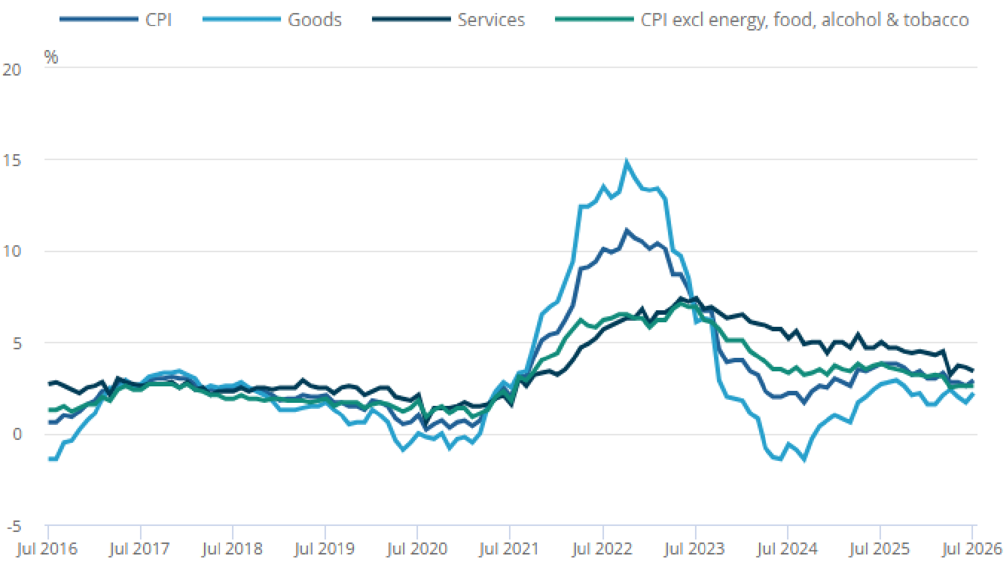


Source: GDP monthly estimate from Office for National Statistics

Cost of Living

- **UK inflation rose 2.9 per cent in the year to July, the fastest increase in four months**. The Office for National Statistics cites the increase is due to a rise in fuel prices, particularly gas.
- **Inflation remains above the 2 per cent target set by the Bank of England** and this has led to the **Bank of England keeping the UK base interest rate at 3.75 per cent for the fifth time this year**.
- Over the coming months it is expected that higher energy prices will feed through into higher inflation via food, core goods, and services, with the impact felt more by households than businesses. Although large firms show greater exposure to energy price risk.

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



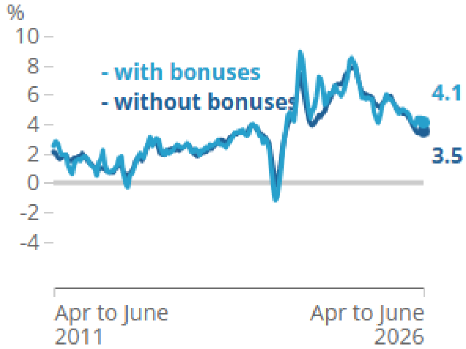
Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- **Annual growth in employees' average earnings in Great Britain was 3.5% for regular earnings (excluding bonuses) and 4.1% for total earnings (including bonuses) in April to June 2026**. Annual average regular earnings growth was 6.1% for the public sector and 2.8% for the private sector. Public sector annual pay growth continues to be affected by variations in the timing of pay awards this year.
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH), was 0.5% for regular pay and 1.1% for total pay in April to June 2026.**
- **Annual growth in real terms, adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Prices Index excluding owner occupiers' housing costs (CPI), was 0.7% for regular pay and 1.3% for total pay in April to June 2026.**

Nominal Earnings
Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – nominal pay

Nominal regular earnings growth remained relatively stable in April to June 2026

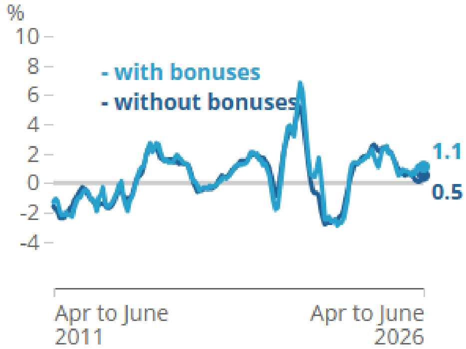
Source: Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Real Earnings CPIH
Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPIH

The real annual growth rate for regular pay was up on the previous period.

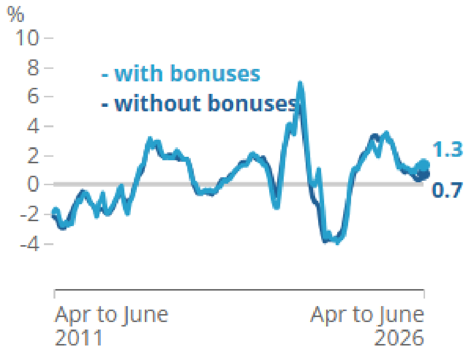
Source: Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Real Earnings CPI
Average Weekly Earnings annual growth rates – real pay using CPI

The real annual growth rate for regular pay was up on the previous period.

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



- There were an estimated 47,000 working days lost because of labour disputes across the UK in June 2026.

Business Conditions

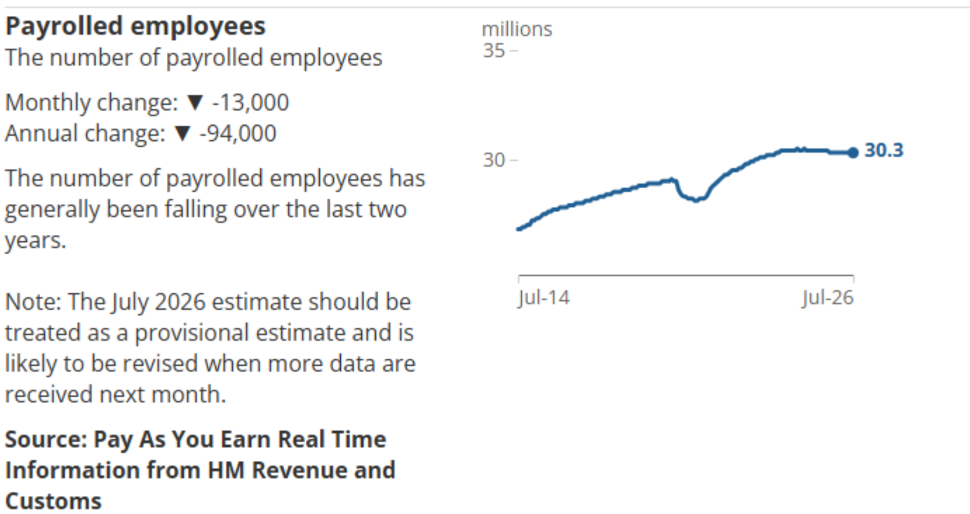
- The latest results from Wave 162 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 3 to 16 August 2026, suggest that **business conditions remain challenging due to several factors including the ongoing conflict in the Middle East**.
- **More than one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased in July 2026** when compared with the previous month, broadly stable with June 2026; **22% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had decreased in July** when compared with the previous month, also broadly stable over the same period.
- **Economic uncertainty (29%) remained the most reported challenge affecting turnover for trading businesses in August 2026**, down 3 percentage points from July

2026, but up 4 percentage points from August 2025; **for businesses with 10 or more employees, cost of labour (35%) was the most reported challenge**, broadly stable with July 2026.

- **More than one in seven (15%) trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase in September 2026**, broadly stable with expectations for August 2026; **15% reported that they expect their turnover to decrease**, down 3 percentage points from expectations for August 2026, but broadly stable with September 2025.
- **Over a quarter (27%) of trading businesses reported an increase in prices of goods and services bought in July 2026**, down 3 percentage points from June 2026 and broadly stable with July 2025; the movements follow a similar trend to previous years, where the proportion falls in the summer months following a peak in March or April.
- **Almost one in seven (14%) trading businesses expect the prices of goods and services that they sell to increase in September 2026**, broadly stable with August 2026; **25% of trading businesses reported that they were considering raising their prices because of energy prices, up 8 percentage points compared with September 2025**.
- **Just over three in five (61%) businesses expressed some degree of concern regarding energy prices in early August 2026**, up 4 percentage points from late July 2026; **10% of businesses reported that their main concern for September 2026 was energy prices, up 5 percentage points from August 2026**.
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in July 2026 there were a total of 2,069 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 5% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,180 in July 2025), but 20% higher than the number registered three years previously (1,723 in July 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:



Employment rate

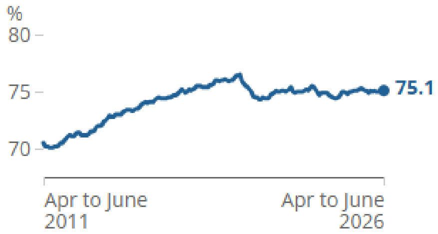
Employment rate (all aged 16 to 64 years)

Quarterly change: ▲0.1pps
Annual change: ▼ -0.2pps

The employment rate is down on the year but up on the quarter.

Note: Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from short-term changes, given volatility of Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, and we advise users to focus on long-term movements in the data.

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Unemployment rate

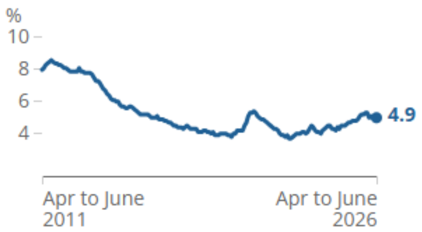
Unemployment rate (all aged 16 years and over)

Quarterly change: ▼-0.1pps
Annual change: ▲ 0.2pps

The unemployment rate is up on the year but down on the quarter.

Note: Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from short-term changes, given volatility of Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, and we advise users to focus on long-term movements in the data.

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics



Inactivity rate

Economic inactivity rate (all aged 16 to 64 years)

Quarterly change: ◀▶ 0.0pps
Annual change: ◀▶ 0pps

The economic inactivity rate is largely unchanged on both the year and the quarter.

Note: Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from short-term changes, given volatility of Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, and we advise users to focus on long-term movements in the data.

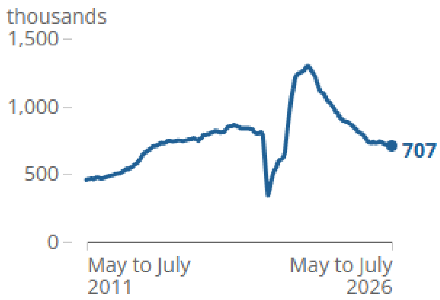
Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Job vacancies
Number of job vacancies

Quarterly change: ▼-6,000
Annual change: ▼ -19,000

Vacancy estimates have remained broadly flat since the start of the year.

Source: Vacancy Survey from the Office for National Statistics



- **Estimates for payrolled employees in the UK fell by 78,000 (0.3%) between June 2025 and June 2026. However, it was largely unchanged on the month, decreasing by 13,000 (0.0%) between May and June 2026**. This is based on administrative data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- When looking at April to June 2026, the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, the number of payrolled employees fell by 86,000 (0.3%) over the year and by 37,000 (0.1%) over the quarter.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for July 2026 decreased by 94,000 (0.3%) on the year, but was largely unchanged on the month, decreasing by 13,000 (0.0%) to 30.3 million. Figures for July should be treated as provisional estimates and are 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 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data collection and sampling methods introduced from January 2024 onwards. Since then, further changes that were introduced to help increase response levels may have an ongoing impact on the survey. However, some volatility remains, particularly for estimates for mid-2023 and throughout 2024, and for granular breakdowns, where sample sizes are smaller. Caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from short-term changes, and ONS advise users to focus on long term movements in the data.
- ONS recommend using 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 **75.1% in April to June 2026**. This is down by 0.2 percentage points on the year but up by 0.1 percentage points on the latest quarter.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at **4.9% in April to June 2026**. This is up by 0.2 percentage points on the year but down by 0.1 percentage points on the latest quarter.
- The **UK economic inactivity rate** for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at **20.9% in April to June 2026**. This is largely unchanged on both the year and on the latest quarter.
- The **UK Claimant Count for July 2026 decreased on the month and on the year to an estimated 1.665 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 decreased in the latest quarter. Early estimates for May to July 2026 suggest a decrease of 6,000 (0.8%) to 707,000, compared with February to April 2026**. Estimates have remained broadly flat since the start of the year, only decreasing by 11,000 since January to March 2026. Feedback from the ONS Vacancy Survey suggests that some small firms may not be recruiting because of increases in labour costs and other operating expenses. Outside of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic period, the last time there were 707,000 or fewer vacancies was in September to November 2014, when there were 703,000 vacancies.

Conclusion

- The **new Prime Minister and his government have been making a series of new policy announcements** although the detail is limited at this time, with the **potential for tax rises in the upcoming budget to fund this policy delivery**.
- The **government has confirmed its decision on local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, with the **creation of two new unitary councils, one in the north and one in the south**.
- It is positive that the **UK economy saw further growth in June**, with businesses finding ways to cope with the effects of the Iran war.
- However, **fuel price rises have seen inflation rise at the fastest rate in four months** and the **Bank of England has warned that inflation is likely to rise through the remainder of 2026 impacting both households and businesses**.
- Alongside **rising global uncertainty and the introduction of new business-related UK taxes and increased minimum wage**, many businesses are seeing their turnover impacted by **longer-term issues including high interest rates and energy prices, increased commodity costs, supply-chain disruption, lower consumer confidence,** and **some labour market challenges**.
- The **labour market continues to loosen, with wage growth having slowed and payrolled employees seeing a decline**. **This 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**.
- 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[1] for July 2026, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

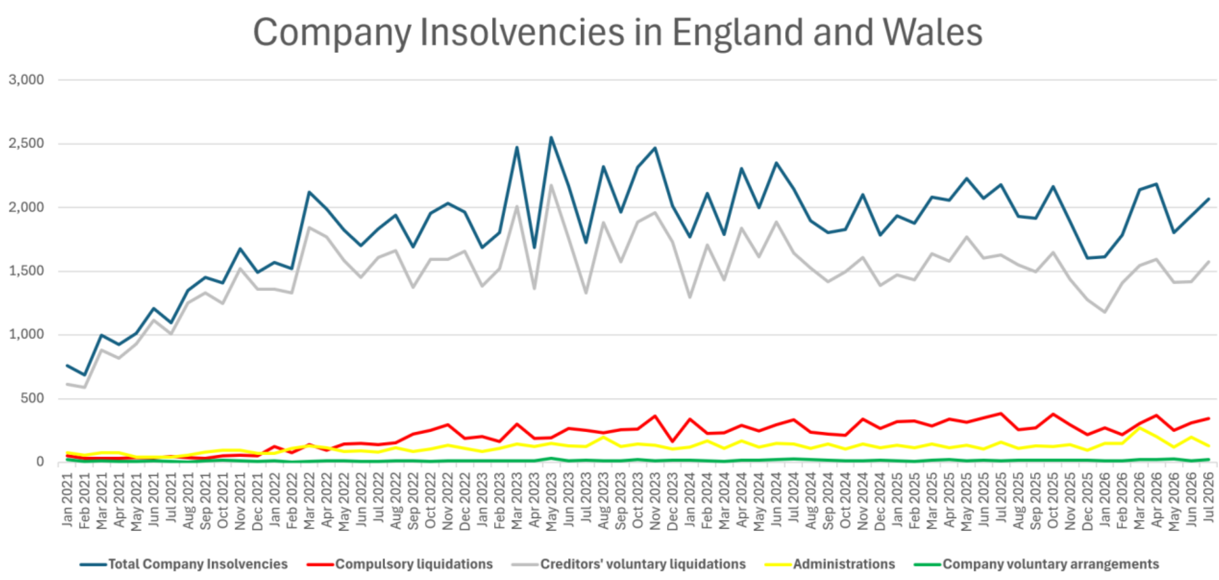
Company Insolvencies

In July 2026 there were a total of 2,069 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 5% lower than the number registered in the previous year (2,180 in July 2025), but 20% higher than the number registered three years previously (1,723 in July 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 344 compulsory liquidations in July 2026, 10% lower than the number in July 2025, but 38% higher than in July 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 July 2026 there were 1,576 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 3% lower than July 2025, but 17% higher than July 2023. Numbers of administrations are 3% higher than three years previously in July 2023, Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 16% higher than three years previously in July 2023, and numbers are low.

Company insolvencies between August 2025 and July 2026 are 3% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 806 fewer businesses



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

[1]Source: The Insolvency Service – Company insolvencies, July 2026 - GOV.UK

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between July 2025 and June 2026 continue to be the Construction sector (3,830), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,473), and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,254). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector: 4% lower, 5% lower for the Wholesale & Retail sector, and 3% lower for the Accommodation & Food sector than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are 3% lower.

Individual Insolvencies

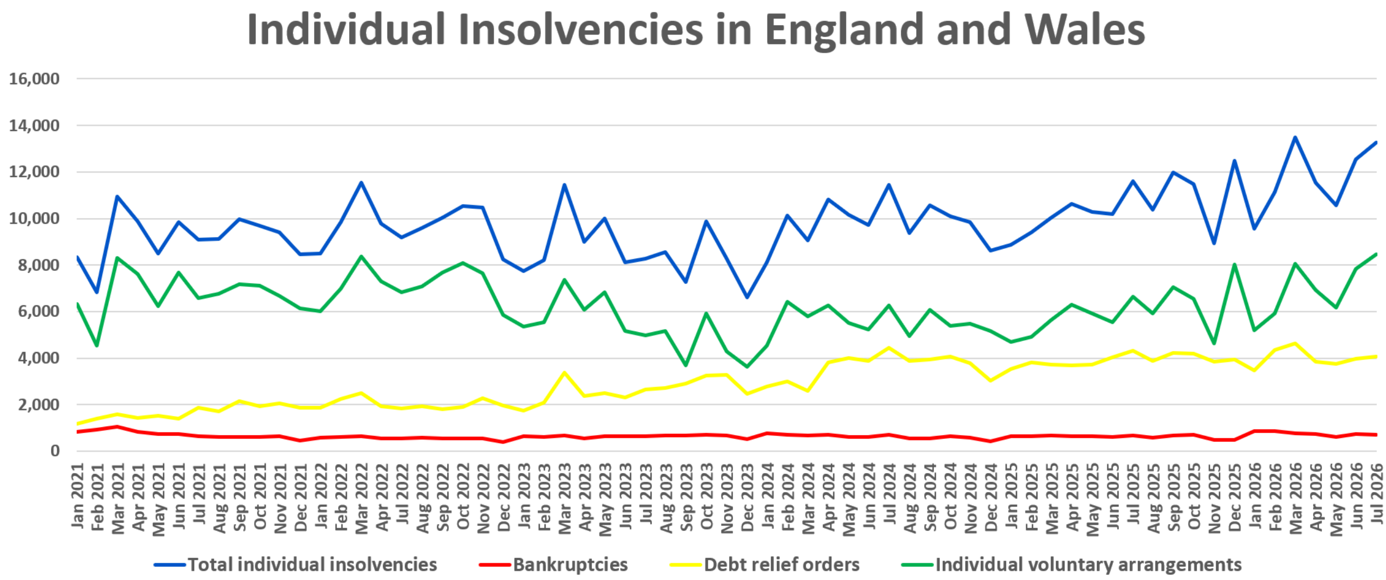
There were **13,264 total individual insolvencies in July 2026**, which was 14% higher than in July 2025, and 60% higher than in July 2023.

For individuals, **713 bankruptcies were registered in July 2026**, 7% higher than in July 2025, and 11% higher than in July 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 **4,077 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in July 2026**, 6% lower than in July 2025, and 53% higher than in July 2023.

There were **8,474 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in July 2026**, which was 28% higher than in July 2025, and 70% higher than in July 2023.

Total Individual Insolvencies between August 2025 and July 2026 are 15% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 17,800.



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **5,248 Breathing Space registrations in July 2026, which is 38% lower than the number registered in July 2025**. 5,098 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is382% lower and 150 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 32% higher than July 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[2]

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

Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: July 2026

Area	Claimant Count Rate (July 2025)	Claimant Count Rate (June 2026)	Claimant Count Rate[1] (July 2026)	Number of Claimants (July 2026)	Annual Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Claimants (%)
England	4.0	4.0	4.0	1,482,670	16,370	1.1%
West Midlands	5.2	5.2	5.3	201,520	1,580	0.8%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	3.4	3.3	3.4	24,050	-415	-1.7%
Birmingham	10.1	9.9	10.0	77,310	-85	-0.1%
Sandwell	6.7	6.6	6.7	14,945	-75	-0.5%
Wolverhampton	6.8	6.7	6.7	11,765	-185	-1.5%
Walsall	5.9	5.8	5.9	10,720	85	0.8%
Coventry	5.5	5.7	5.8	14,095	665	5.0%
Stoke-on-Trent	**5.6**	**5.2**	**5.3**	**8,950**	**-495**	**-5.2%**
Dudley	4.6	4.5	4.6	9,290	40	0.4%
Telford and Wrekin	3.8	3.8	3.9	4,785	195	4.2%
Solihull	3.5	3.6	3.6	4,730	135	2.9%
Worcestershire	2.9	2.9	3.0	11,035	205	1.9%
Warwickshire	2.7	2.9	2.9	11,280	770	7.3%
Staffordshire	**2.7**	**2.7**	**2.8**	**15,100**	**80**	**0.5%**
Herefordshire, County of	2.6	2.6	2.6	2,860	15	0.5%
Shropshire	2.3	2.4	2.4	4,660	240	5.4%
East Staffordshire	3.4	3.3	3.3	2,620	-110	-4.0%
Tamworth	3.2	3.2	3.2	1,605	10	0.6%
Cannock Chase	3.0	3.0	3.0	1,970	20	1.0%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.0	2.9	2.9	2,305	-85	-3.6%
South Staffordshire	2.5	2.6	2.6	1,760	105	6.3%
Stafford	2.3	2.5	2.5	2,145	170	8.6%
Lichfield	2.3	2.2	2.3	1,505	-5	-0.3%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.2	2.1	2.1	1,180	-40	-3.3%

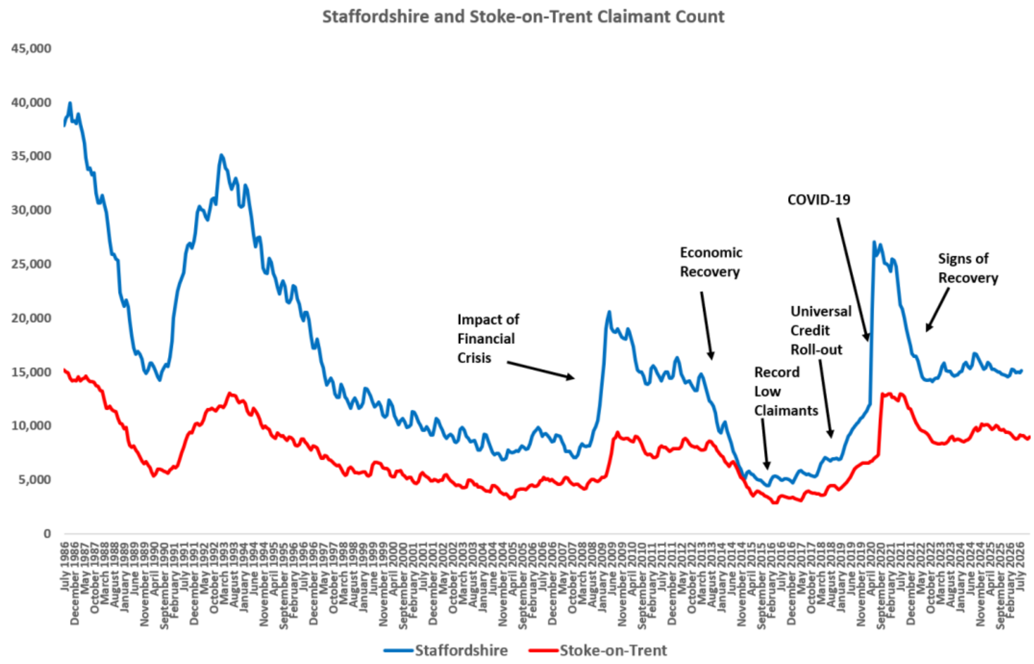
[1] The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 15,100; this is 80 more claimants than at the same time last year.** Staffordshire has seen a slight annual increase of 0.5% in the number of claimants. This contrasts with claimant numbers increasing by 1.1% nationally and by 0.8% across the West Midlands.

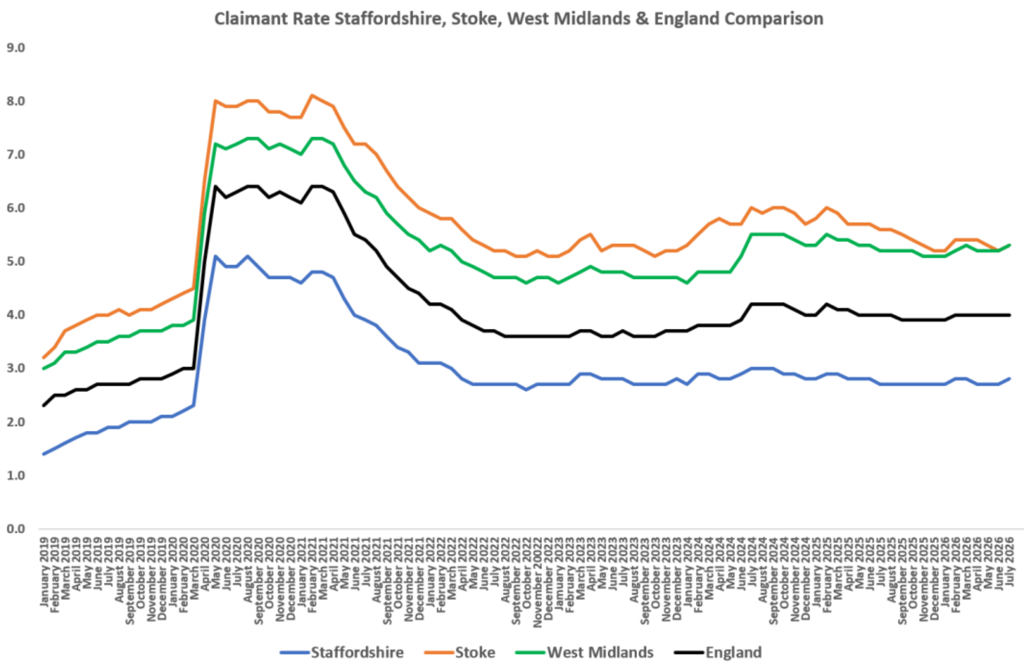
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.8%** of the working age population, which has **increased from 2.7% since a year earlier.**

- The number of **claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 8,950**, which is 495 lower than a year earlier, and the **claimant rate has decreased from 5.6% the previous year to 5.3%.**

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



- The **rate in Staffordshire remains one of the lowest in the West Midlands, at 2.8%. This is well below the regional average of 5.3% and the England average of 4.0%, both of which have remained unchanged over the past year**.



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- **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.

- **Claimant numbers have increased in Cannock Chase, Stafford, South Staffordshire, and Tamworth whilst half the districts have seen a decrease since the previous year.**

- **All districts have a lower claimant rate than both the regional and national rates**. The highest claimant rate at 3.3% is in East Staffordshire. Staffordshire Moorlands has the lowest claimant rate of 2.1%.

- 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

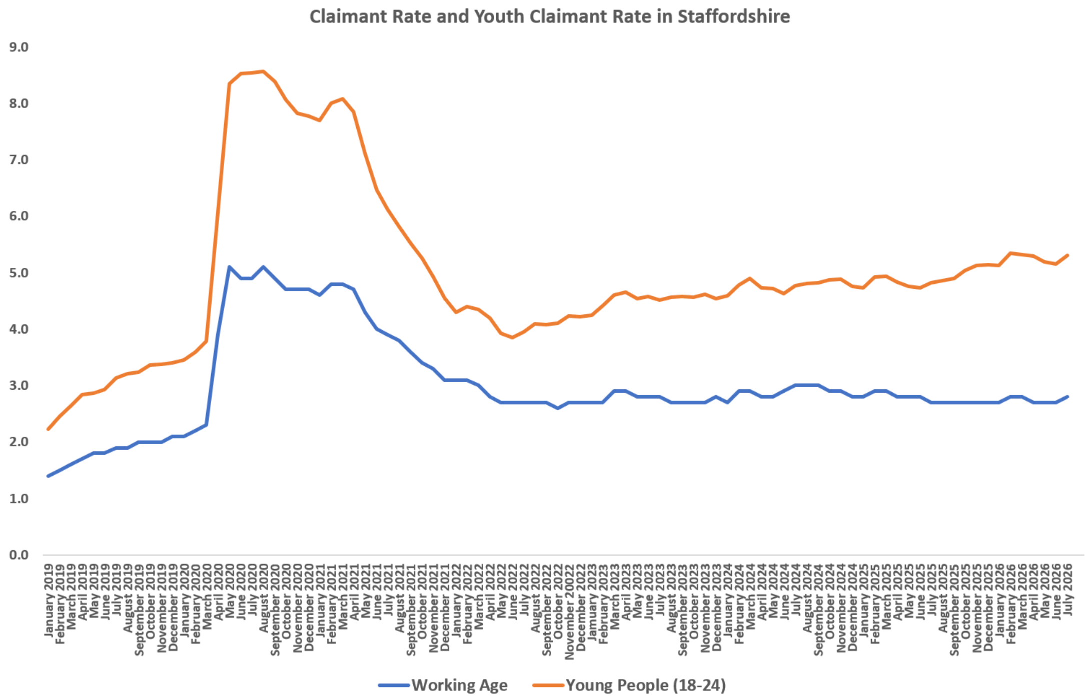
Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: July 2026

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (July 2025)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (June 2026)	Youth Claimant Count Rate[1] (July 2026)	Number of Youth Claimants (July 2026)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (%)
England	5.3	5.7	5.8	286,160	24,480	9.4%
West Midlands	7.4	7.9	8.1	42,635	3,855	9.9%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.7	5.9	6.0	5,200	305	6.2%
Birmingham	10.2	10.8	11.1	16,030	1,260	8.5%
Wolverhampton	9.8	10.6	10.8	2,475	240	10.7%
Wallsall	9.6	9.9	10.3	2,440	150	6.6%
Sandwell	9.6	9.5	9.8	3,015	45	1.5%
Dudley	7.6	8.3	8.6	2,075	240	13.1%
Stoke-on-Trent	**7.9**	**7.8**	**7.9**	**1,875**	**0**	**0.0%**
Solihull	6.4	7.4	7.7	1,125	185	19.7%
Telford and Wrekin	6.5	7.4	7.7	1,165	170	17.1%
Coventry	5.3	6.0	6.2	2,895	395	15.8%
Worcestershire	4.9	5.4	5.6	2,320	290	14.3%
Warwickshire	4.4	5.2	5.3	2,400	430	21.8%
Staffordshire	**4.8**	**5.1**	**5.3**	**3,325**	**305**	**10.1%**
Herefordshire, County of	4.8	4.9	5.1	565	40	7.6%
Shropshire	4.0	4.6	4.6	930	105	12.7%
Tamworth	6.4	7.0	7.1	385	35	10.0%
Cannock Chase	6.1	6.1	6.3	435	15	3.6%
South Staffordshire	5.3	6.2	6.2	425	60	16.4%
Stafford	4.6	5.2	5.5	450	70	18.4%
East Staffordshire	5.0	5.1	5.4	470	30	6.8%
Lichfield	4.1	4.7	4.7	335	45	15.5%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.0	4.1	4.3	590	40	7.3%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.9	4.2	4.2	240	15	6.7%

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

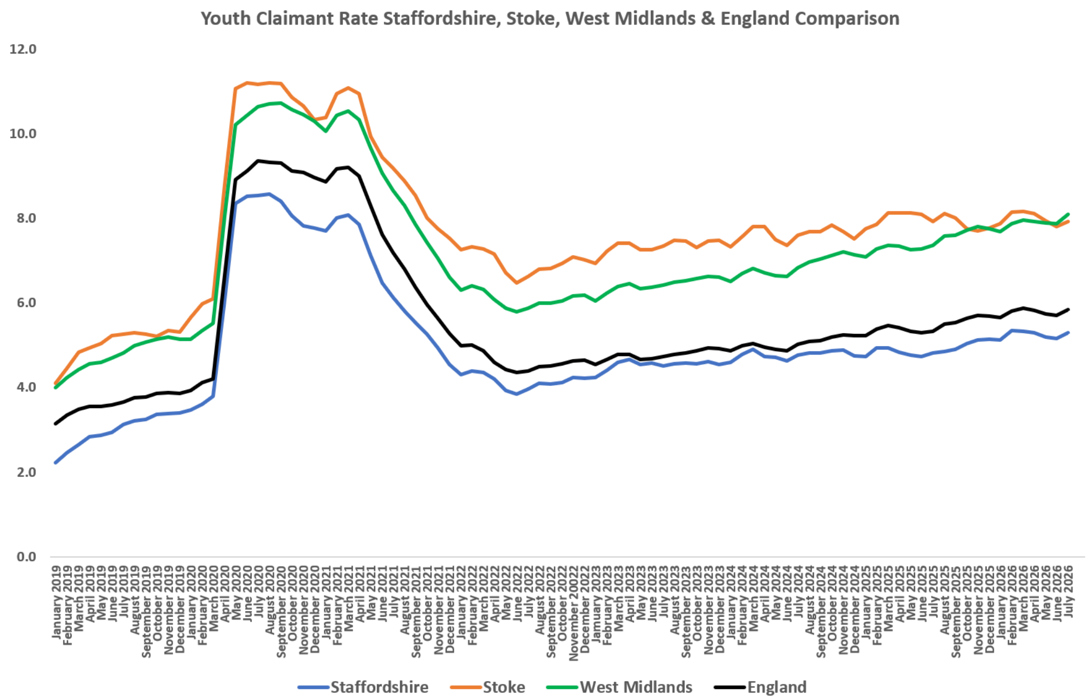
- The **youth claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 3,325, which is 305 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 10.1% annual increase, higher than the increases seen regionally (9.9%) and nationally (9.4%).

- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.3% of the 18-24 population, an increase from 4.8% a year earlier.** It is a concerning trend seen regionally and nationally.



- The number of **youth claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 1,875**, which is the same as a year earlier, with **the rate at 7.9%, and has remained the same as a year earlier.**

- It is important to note that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.8%, which increased from 5.3% 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 Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire and Tamworth 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

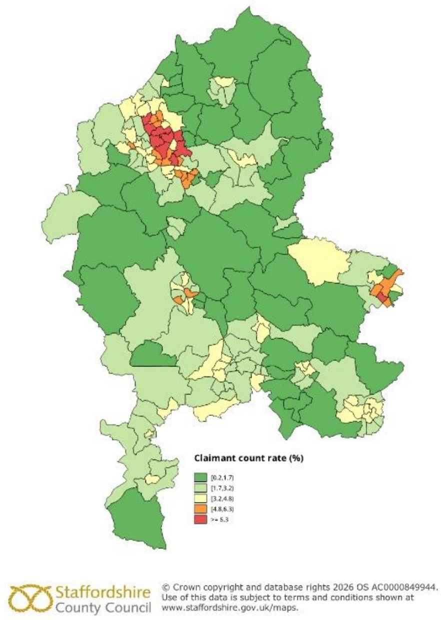
The following summaries and maps provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent. Please note that due to geographical changes in ward data from Nomis/ONS (17 Feb 2026), comparative data is based on January 2026.

Claimant Count Rate July 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 42 were above the England average of 4.0% for the number of claimants as a proportion of the working age population.

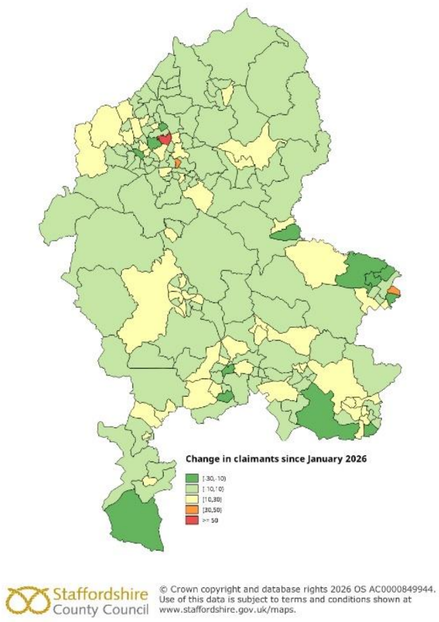
Within the twenty highest claimant rate wards, fifteen were in Stoke-on-Trent with the highest rates in Tunstall: 7.9%/375; Burslem: 7.7%/395; Hanley Park, Joiner's Square & Shelton: 7.4%/910; Etruria & Hanley: 7.3%/380; Birches Head & Northwood: 6.8%/485 claimants.

In Staffordshire, three wards in East Staffordshire had the highest claimant rates - Anglesey: 6.9%/405; Burton & Eton: 6.0%/450; Shobnall: 5.9%/345; Knutton (N-u-L): 5.8%/110; Forebridge (Stafford): 5.8%/160).



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 five wards in Stoke-on-Trent (Birches Head & Northwood): 70 increase to 485; (Sandford Hill): 40 increase to 245; (Burslem Park): 25 increase to 205; (Lightwood North & Normacot): 25 increase to 215; (Basford & Hartshill): 25 increase to 135; Winshill (East Staffordshire): 30 increase to 155; two wards in Stafford (Doxey & Castletown): 25 increase to 140; (Manor): 25 increase to 165; Holditch & Chesterton (N-u-L): 25 increase to 170; Brereton & Ravenhill (Cannock Chase): 25 increase to 185.

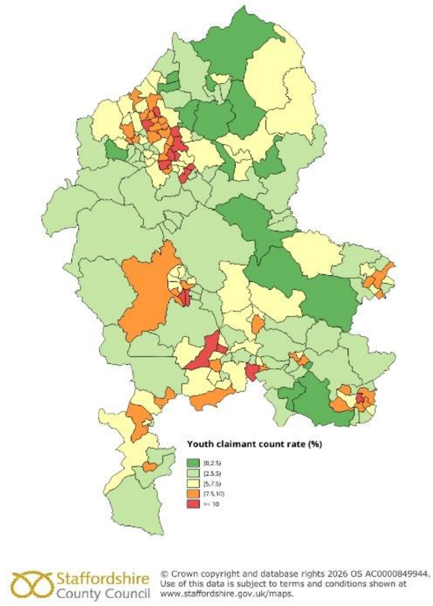


Youth Claimant Count Rate July 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-Trent, 84 were above the England average 5.8% for the number of claimants aged 18-24 a proportion of the 18-24 population.

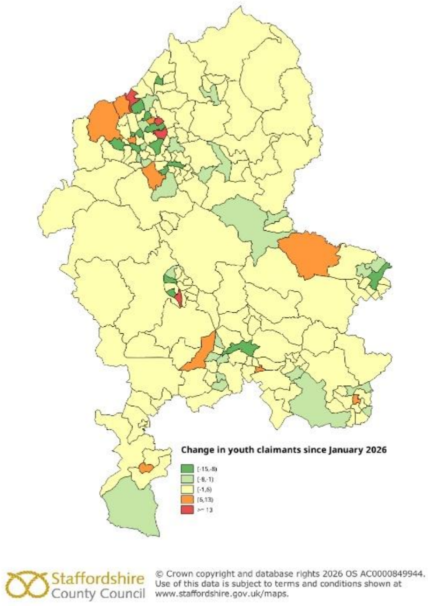
Of the ten wards with the highest youth claimant count rate, seven were in Stoke-on-Trent including Meir South: 12.6%/60; Sandford Hill: 11.6%/50; Abbey Hulton: 11.5/65; Fenton East: 11.3%/55; Meir North: 11.1%/65; Burslem: 10.9%/80; Hollybush: 10.8%/45.

Staffordshire wards with the highest claimant rate include Penkside (Stafford): 11.3%/25; Bolehall (Tamworth): 10.9%/50; Manor (Stafford): 10.7%/45.



Change in Youth Claimant Count since Jan 2026

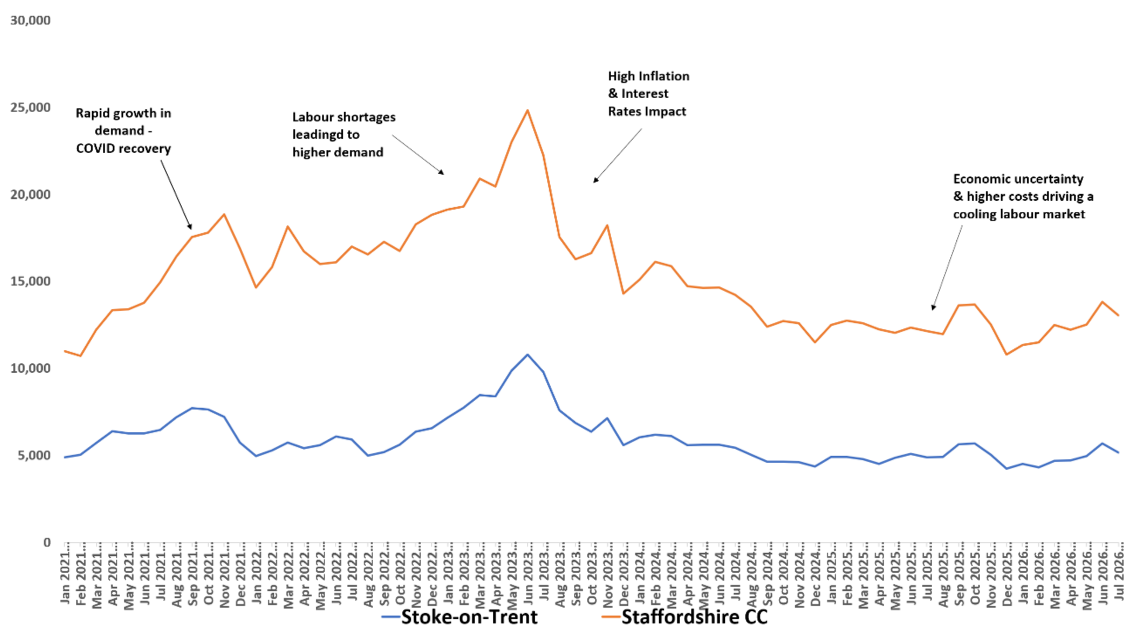
The ten wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent with the highest change in the number of youth claimants include three wards in Stoke-on Trent (Birches Head & Northwood): 20 increase to 70; (Ford Green & Smallthorne): 15 increase to 45; (Burslem Park): 10 increase to 40; and seven wards in Staffordshire including Manor (Stafford): 15 increase to 45; two wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme (Kidsgrove & Ravenscliffe): 15 increase to 55; (Cross Heath): 10 increase to 50; Bolehall (Tamworth): 10 increase to 50; two wards in South Staffordshire (Huntington & Hatherton: 10 increase to 40; (Wombourne South): 10 increase to 40; Summerfield & All Saints (Lichfield): 10 increase to 40.



Job Vacancies[3]

- **Staffordshire saw a 7% increase in the number of available job vacancies between July 2025 and July 2026 to a total of 13,100[4]. This was a higher increase than seen regionally and nationally. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 6% increase in job vacancies over the past year to a total of 5,200 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region over the past year there was a 2% increase, and nationally there was a 3% increase in the number of job vacancies. It is encouraging to see job vacancies rising and may well be reflective of a seasonal uplift.**
- 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. However, more recently in 2026 we are seeing an upward trend. 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

- All occupational groups saw an increase in vacancies over the past year. ‘Process, Plant & Machine Operatives’ occupations increased 25%, whilst ‘Associate Professional’ occupations saw the smallest increase of 1%.

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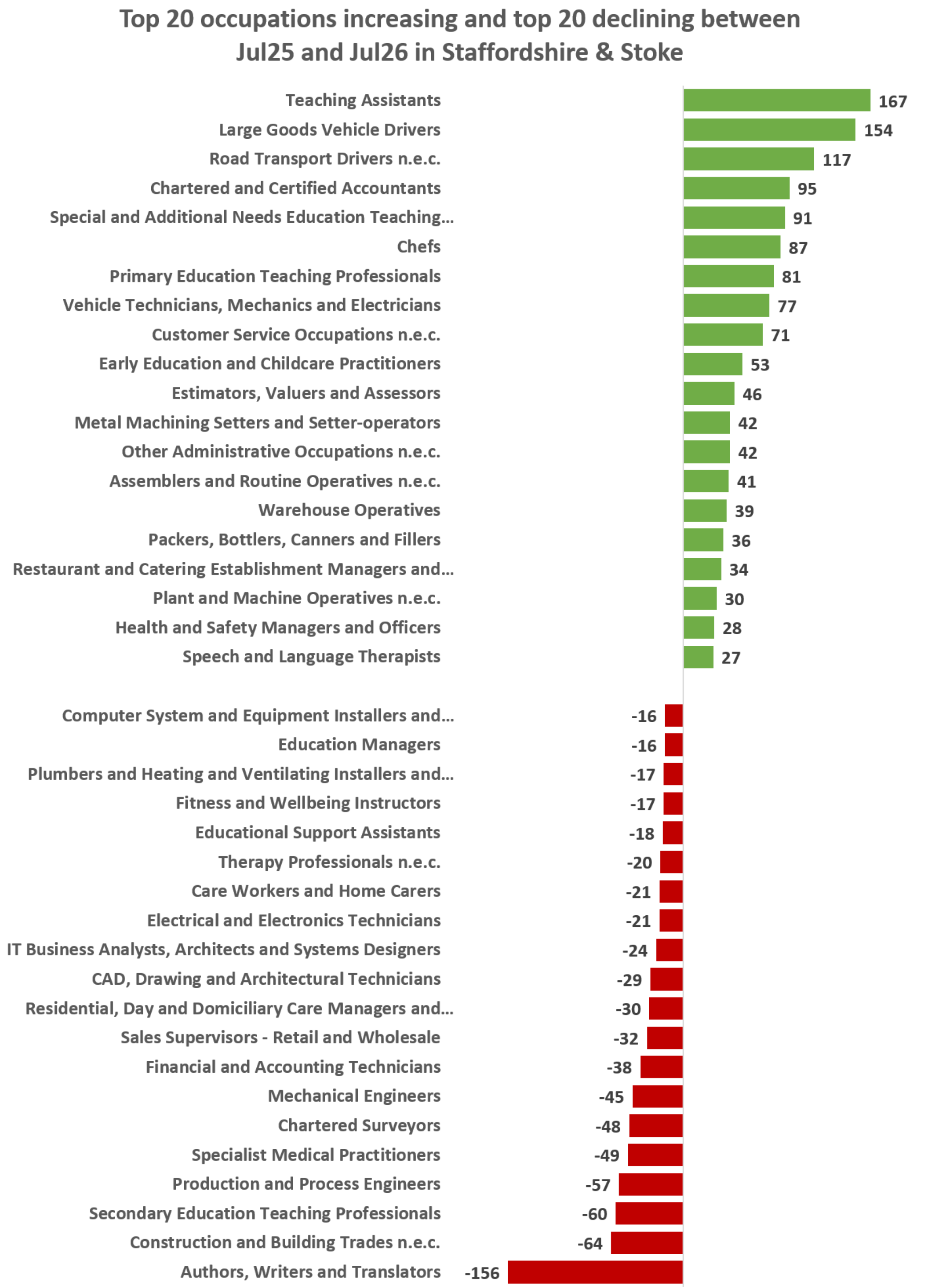
[3] Source: Lightcast

[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 Teaching Assistants; Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Road Transport Drivers; Chartered & Certified Accountants; SEND Teaching Professionals; Chefs; Primary Education Teaching Professionals; Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians; Customer Service; Early Education & Childcare Practitioners; Estimators, Valuers & Assessors; Metal Machining Setters & Seter operators; Other Administrative; Assemblers & Routine Operatives; Warehouse Operatives; Packers, Bottlers, Canners & Fillers; Restaurant & Catering Establishment Managers & Proprietors; Plant & Machine Operatives; Health & Safety Managers & Officers; Speech & Language Therapists.



- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year decrease include Authors, Writers & Translators; Construction & Building Trades; Secondary Education Teaching Professions; Production & Process Engineers; Specialist Medical Practitioners; Chartered Surveyors; Mechanical Engineers; Financial & Accounting Technicians; Sales Supervisors; Residential, Day & Domiciliary Care Managers & Proprietors; CAD, Drawing & Architectural Technicians; IT Business Analysts, Architects & System Designers; Electric & Electronics Technicians; Care Workers & Home Carers; Therapy Professionals; Educational Support Assistants; Fitness & Wellbeing Instructors; Plumbers & Heating & Ventilating Installers & Repairers; Education Managers; Computer System & Equipment Installers & Servicers.

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 **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Cleaners & Domestics'** show continued recruitment demand.

- Within the Education sector, vacancy levels remain elevated for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'SEND Teaching Professionals,' 'Secondary Education Teaching Professionals,'** and **'Teaching Professionals.'**

- In the Hospitality sector **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** and **'Chefs'** remain key occupations for recruitment.

- The Logistics sector continues to have strong demand for **'Warehouse Operatives,'**

- In the Retail and Wholesale sector, **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** continue to attract strong employer demand.

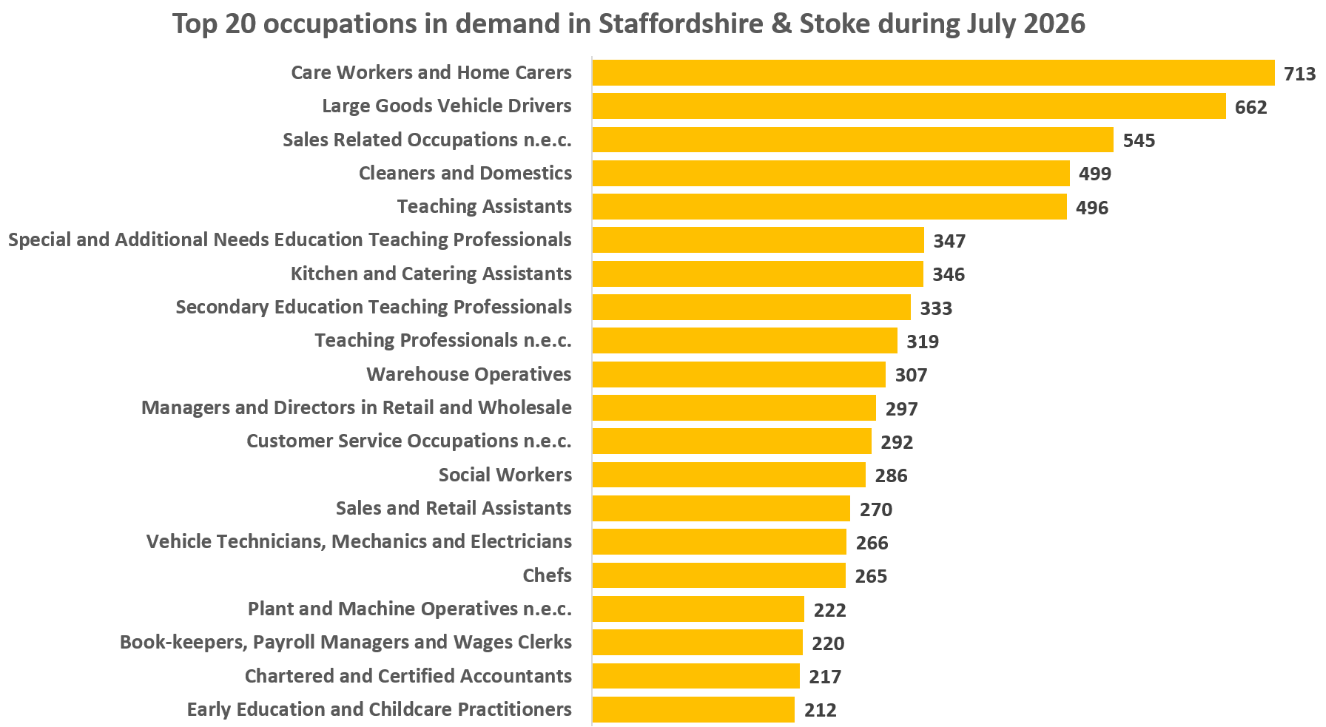
- Across business sectors **'Customer Service,' 'Book-keepers, Payroll Managers & Wages Clerks'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** continue to attract sustained demand.

- The Health & Social Care sector continues to have demand for **'Social Workers.**

- Demand for **'Vehicle Mechanics and Electricians'** in the Motor Trade are also high.

- In the Engineering sector for **'Plant & Machine Operatives'** remain sought after.

- There is also notable demand for **'Early Education and Childcare Practitioners.'**



- It is in these areas of the economy where job vacancies remain particularly high and where we are hearing 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.