Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Economic Bulletin

Issue 74 - October 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 rise in the Claimant Count compared to a year ago, mainly due to the rise in youth unemployment**. Encouragingly, **job vacancy levels in the local economy have increased since the start of the year,** despite the wider economic challenges.
- 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 15,430, this is 640 more claimants than at the same time last year.** Staffordshire has seen an annual increase of 4.3% in the number of claimants. This compares to claimant numbers increasing by 2.6% nationally and by 3.1% 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 5.4% which has increased from 5.2% and the England average of 4.1%, which has increased from 3.9%**.
- 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 3,490; this is 420 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 13.7% annual increase, which is higher than the 11.8% increase in the West Midlands and the 10.3% increase in England.
- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.6% of the 18-24 population, which is an increase from 5.0% 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 6.1%, which has increased from 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.5% which has increased from 7.6%** 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 15% increase in the number of available job vacancies between September 2025 and September 2026 to a total of 15,700. This is now higher than the number of work-related benefit claimants in Staffordshire. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 10% increase in job vacancies to a total of 6,200 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants. Across the region in the past year**

there was an 11% increase, and nationally there was an 11% increase in the number of job vacancies.

- Considering the **top 20 job vacancy occupations in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, demand for roles in logistics continue to remain high with **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** being the most in demand occupations.
- The following occupations, **'Care Workers,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Cleaners & Domestics'** show continued recruitment demand.
- The Logistics sector continues to have strong demand for **'Warehouse Operatives,' 'Fork-lift truck Drivers,' 'Road Transport Drivers,' 'Roundspersons & Van Salespersons'** and **'Transport & Distribution Clerks & Assistants.'**
- In the Hospitality sector, **'Kitchen & Catering Assistants'** and **'Chefs'** remain key occupations for recruitment.
- Within the Education sector, vacancy levels remain elevated for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'Teaching Professionals,'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals'.'**
- In the Retail and Wholesale sector, **'Managers & Directors'** and **'Sales & Retail Assistants'** continue to attract strong employer demand.
- The Health & Social Care sector continues to have sustained demand for **'Social Workers.'**
- Across business sectors **'Customer Service Occupations'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** continue to attract sustained demand.
- In the Motor Trade, **Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians** 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.
- 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.

- **George Bamford is to become Joint Chairman of JCB alongside his father, Lord Bamford, marking the first change at the top of the Staffordshire manufacturer in more than 50 years**. Fresh from setting a new world land speed record of 406.320mph powered by its pioneering hydrogen technology, JCB is accelerating investment in its future, with major commitments to British manufacturing and new production capacity in the United States. The announcement comes as the family-owned business reports pre-tax profits of £642 million on turnover of £5.7 billion for 2025, while pressing ahead with major investments in Rocester and Texas. Locally, a £100 million transformation of JCB's Staffordshire headquarters includes a £60 million fully automated powder paint plant and extensive shop floor modernisation, helping secure more than 8,000 UK jobs.

National Context

- This month **the new Chancellor, John Healey delivered his first budget, setting out the government's tax and spending plans**. The following is a summary of the main points:

Energy bills and cost of living support

- One-off £100 payment for up to 20 million households in council tax bands A-D in England to help deal with rising energy bills, with equivalent funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Standing charges – fixed daily fees customers pay regardless of usage – to be removed from household gas bills in England, Scotland and Wales, with costs added to the unit rate instead.
- VAT cut on electricity bills extended to July.
- A green levy - the Gas Shipper Obligation to fund hydrogen projects - to be removed from energy bills and put on to general taxation.
- Freeze on fuel duty extended again to July.
- Import taxes to be removed on more than 100 food products, including gherkins and marmalade, as well as kerosene and fertilisers.
- A 55p per mile tax-free mileage rate for those driving up to 10,000 miles for work made permanent, with the rate rising from 25p per mile to 35p above that distance.
- A new scheme taking 25% off electricity bills for 10,000 energy-intensive businesses to launch in April, with payments backdated for energy costs this year.

Taxes

- An extra 2% tax on income from savings and property rental from April.
- Amount people can put into tax-free cash Isas (Individual Savings Accounts) to remain at £20,000 a year, with plans to lower the limit to £12,000 for under-65s scrapped.
- Surcharge banks pay on their profits to rise from 3% to 6% for 15 months, starting in January.
- Threshold at which High Street shops start paying business rates in England to be increased from £12,000 to £18,000, meaning businesses would pay no rates on properties with a rateable value below this level.
- Adult games centres and vape shops will no longer qualify for certain business rates relief.
- Taxes on gambling machines with stakes over £1 to rise from 20% to 25%.
- Online marketplaces like Amazon, eBay and Temu to be made responsible for collecting VAT owed by sellers using their platforms.

Wages, benefits and pensions

- New, flat-rate state pension to rise by £488 a year from April – equivalent to 3.9% - under the triple lock policy, with old basic state pension to rise by £374.40.
- A new tax-free allowance for low-income pensioners, to ensure those with income up to the value of the full new state pension will not pay income tax.
- Legal minimum wage to rise by 3.9% in April.

- Unpaid carers will no longer lose their entire Carer's Allowance if they earn more than £204 a week after tax, with a taper rate introduced instead.
- Parental pay extended to self-employed fathers and parents in same-sex couples.

Housing and property

- New scheme to help first-time buyers in England purchase a home, offering government-backed loans to households earning less than £110,000, or £140,000 inside London.
- A new First Time Buyer ISA to be introduced from April 2029, to replace the Lifetime ISA and help people save a deposit for their first home.
- Lifetime ISA holders buying a property above the £450,000 cap will pay a reduced withdrawal charge of 20%, down from 25%.
- An extra £1bn for social and affordable housing in England, taking total funding for the 10-year programme to more than £40bn.
- An extra £432m for a programme aimed at giving every rough sleeper in England a route off the streets by Christmas.

Devolution

- All business rates to be retained locally by the end of the decade, with mayors to keep 20% of revenue from next year.
- A share of income tax receipts to go to mayors from 2028.
- Regional bodies and mayors in England to get greater powers over spending, starting with £285m next year for things like housing, transport and High Streets.
- Government to work with mayors to design a £1.5bn borrowing facility, enabling investment in larger projects.

Defence

- Defence Investment Plan to be fully funded through a further 1% cut to capital budgets of other government departments, after Sir Keir Starmer only committed £10.3bn for the £15bn plan.
- Details of how the government will meet a Nato commitment to spend 3.5% of GDP on defence by 2035 to be set out at next year's Spending Review, with a target date for 3% in 2030.
- Extra £10bn of economic and military support for Ukraine.

Other measures

- More than £600m of investment in projects related to artificial intelligence (AI), including an extra £120m for the UK's AI Security Institute and £100m for a national AI Biosecurity Lab.
- A £7m fund to explore a possible future bid to hold the Olympics and Paralympics in northern England.
- Fund to tackle misogyny in schools, at work and in communities to get £15m.

UK growth, inflation and debt

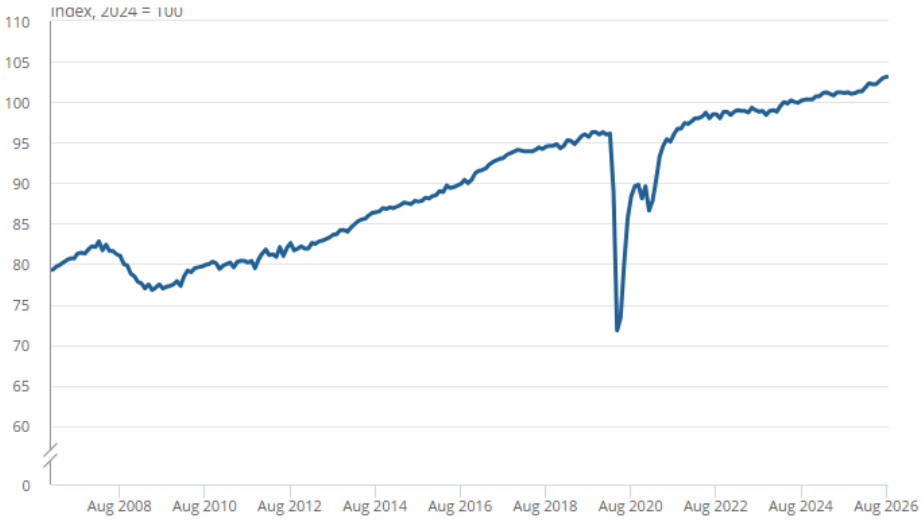
- Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) predicts the UK economy will grow by 1.2%

this year, up from a previous estimate of 1.1%.
    - Growth then expected to slow to 1% next year, a downgrade from the watchdog's previous forecast of 1.6%, before lifting back to 1.6% in 2028.
    - Inflation is predicted to average 3.1% this year and then 3.4% in 2027, a hike on previous forecasts, before declining to the government's 2% target in 2028.
    - Government borrowing is predicted to be higher than previously expected in every year of the latest forecast.
    - But borrowing as a proportion of GDP is forecast to fall to 4.2% this year, dipping each year of the forecast to 1.8% in 2030/31.
    - UK national debt set to rise from 96% of GDP this year to 97% in 2028/29, before falling back to 96% in 2031.
- In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the **Government has agreed to begin discussions about establishing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for our area**. Devolution is about giving local areas more control over decisions that affect local people and communities. A Mayoral Strategic Authority could help bring **greater influence over areas such as transport, skills, jobs, housing and economic growth**, while also giving Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent a stronger voice with Government and other partners. **Subject to agreement with Government, there will be a consultation towards the end of the year, and the new authority could be set up in autumn 2027 with the mayor elected in May 2028**.

Economy

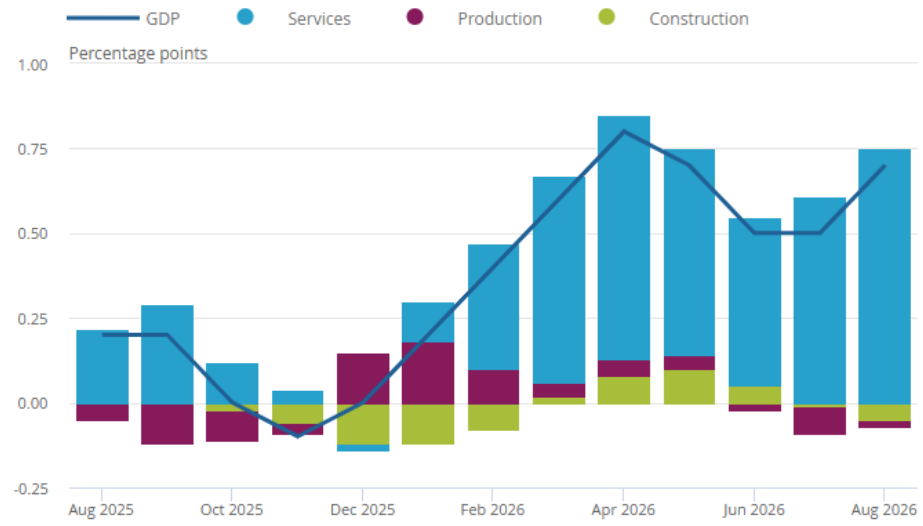
- The **UK's economy grew by 0.1% in August**, following a growth of 0.4% in July 2026 and a growth of 0.4% in June 2026.
- The growth in August was driven by a 0.8% growth in production, with services showing no growth, and construction falling by 0.2% in August 2026.
- While the **International Monetary Fund has upgraded the UK's growth forecast for 2026 to 1.3 per cent**, citing resilience despite global economic challenges. However, it warns that higher energy prices and interest rates will impact the economy in 2027.
- **Latest quarterly GDP data shows that in the three months to August 2026, compared with the three months to May 2026 GDP grew by 0.7%.** This follows a growth of 0.5% in the three months to July 2026 and a growth of 0.5% in the three months to June 2026.
- **Services output grew by 0.9%**, after growing by 0.7% in the three months to July 2026.
- **Production output fell by 0.2%**, following a fall of 0.7% in the three months to July 2026.
- **Construction output fell by 1.0%**; this follows a fall of 0.2% in the three months to July 2026.

GDP Monthly index, January 2007 to August 2026, UK



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

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



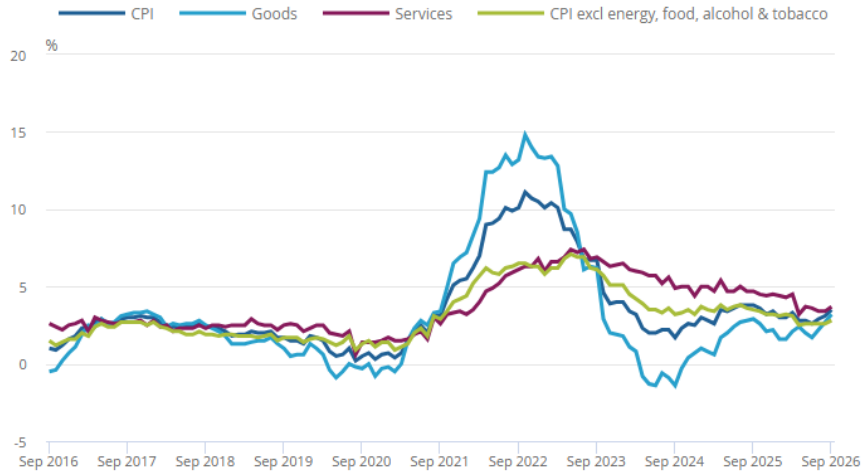
Source: Gross domestic product (GDP) monthly estimate from the Office for National Statistics

Cost of Living

- **UK inflation rose from 3.1 per cent in August to 3.5 per cent in September**.
- Transport, particularly motor fuels, made the largest upward contribution to the monthly change in inflation; restaurants and hotels made the largest, partially offsetting, downward contribution.

- **Inflation remains above the 2 per cent target set by the Bank of England** and with GDP and inflation both rising it is widely expected that the **Bank of England will most likely increase interest rates in November.**

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



Source: Consumer price inflation from the Office for National Statistics

- **Annual growth in employees' average regular earnings (excluding bonuses) was 3.7% in June to August 2026 and has been relatively stable over the past six consecutive three-month periods, after a year of slowing growth.**
- Annual growth in total earnings (including bonuses) was 3.7% in June to August 2026, down from 3.9% on the previous three-month period.
- Annual average regular earnings growth was 6.3% for the public sector and 3.0% 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 0.6% for regular pay and 0.7% for total pay in June to August 2026. When using the Consumer Prices Index excluding owner occupiers' housing costs (CPI), annual growth in real terms for regular pay was 0.8%, and for total pay it was 0.9%, in June to August 2026.**

— Nominal Regular Earnings Growth

Average weekly regular earnings annual growth rates in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, three month average



Change in percentage points

three months up to August 2026

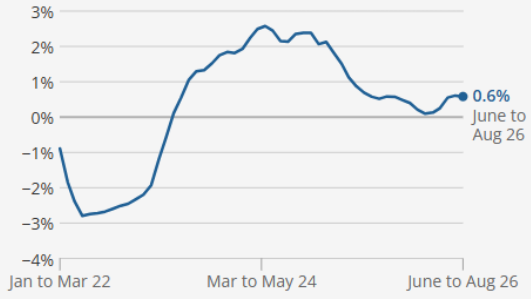
From past quarter	From past year
↑ **0.3pp** higher	↓ **1.0pp** lower

Go to the bulletin for nominal regular earnings growth

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

— Real Regular Earnings Growth CPIH

Real average weekly regular earnings three-month annual growth rates in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, and Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers housing costs (CPIH) annual rate



Change in percentage points

three months up to August 2026

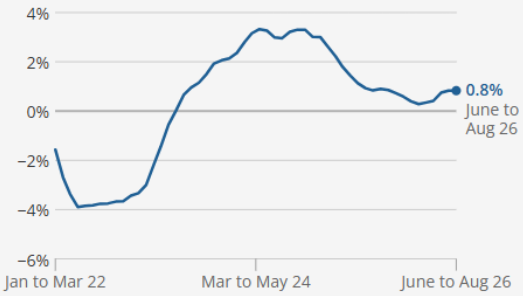
From past quarter	From past year
↑ **0.3pp** higher	Largely unchanged

Go to the bulletin for real regular earnings growth CPIH

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

— Real Regular Earnings Growth CPI

Real average weekly regular earnings three-month annual growth rates in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, and Consumer Prices Index (CPI) annual rate



Change in percentage points

three months up to August 2026

From past quarter	From past year
↑ **0.4pp** higher	↓ **0.1pp** lower

Go to the bulletin for real regular earnings growth CPI

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

Business Conditions

- The latest results from Wave 166 of the **Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS)**, which was live from 5 to 18 October 2026, suggest that **business conditions remain challenging due to several factors including the ongoing conflict in the Middle East**.
- **In September 2026, 17% of trading businesses reported that their turnover had increased** compared with the previous calendar month, up 5 percentage points from

August 2026 and broadly stable with September 2025; **26% of trading businesses with 10 or more employees reported that their turnover had increased**, up 7 percentage points from August 2026 and broadly stable with September 2025.

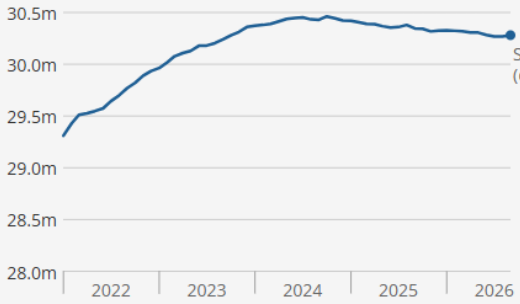
- **15% of trading businesses reported that they expect their turnover to increase in November 2026**, while **17% reported that they expect their turnover to decrease**; both figures are broadly stable with expectations for October 2026 and November 2025.
- **One third (33%) of trading businesses reported an increase in the prices of goods and services bought in September 2026**, up 4 percentage points from August 2026, and up 12 percentage points from September 2025; **12% reported an increase in the prices of goods and services sold**, broadly stable with August 2026, but up 3 percentage points from September 2025.
- **17% of trading businesses expect the prices of goods and services that they sell to increase in November 2026**, which is broadly stable with October 2026, but up 7 percentage points from November 2025; **the most reported factor causing businesses to consider raising prices was energy prices, at 32%**.
- **15% of businesses reported that energy prices will be their main concern in November 2026**, up 5 percentage points from October 2026, and up 10 percentage points from November 2025; the transportation and storage industry (33%) had the largest proportion of businesses reporting energy prices as their main concern, followed by the accommodation and food service activities industry (25%).
- **In early October 2026, 72% of businesses reported some degree of concern about increases in fuel prices**, with 38% reporting that they were "very concerned"; **70% reported some degree of concern about energy prices**, with 30% reporting that they were "very concerned".
- The latest business insolvencies data shows that **in September 2026 there were a total of 1,834 company insolvencies in England and Wales, 4% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,913 in September 2025), and 7% lower than the number registered three years previously (1,966 in September 2023).** The main concern around company and individual insolvencies are associated issues such as mental health and homelessness.

Labour Market

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

— Payrolled employees

Payrolled employees, seasonally adjusted, UK, monthly



Change
up to September 2026

From past month
↑ **13,000 (0.0%)** higher

From past year
↓ **66,000 (0.2%)** lower

Go to the bulletin for payrolled employees

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

— Employment rate

UK employment rates, people, (aged 16 to 64 years), seasonally adjusted



Change in percentage points
three months up to August 2026

From past quarter
↑ **0.2pp** higher

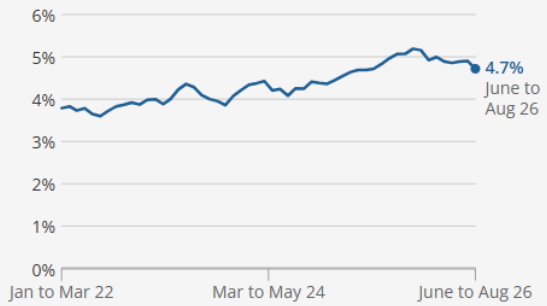
From past year
↑ **0.2pp** higher

Go to the bulletin for employment rate

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

— Unemployment rate

UK unemployment rates, people, (aged 16 years and over), seasonally adjusted



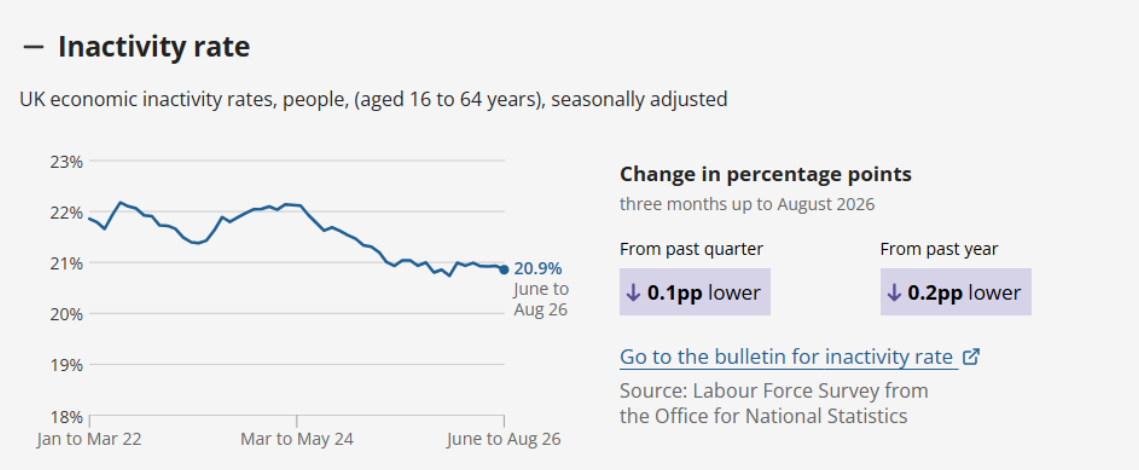
Change in percentage points
three months up to August 2026

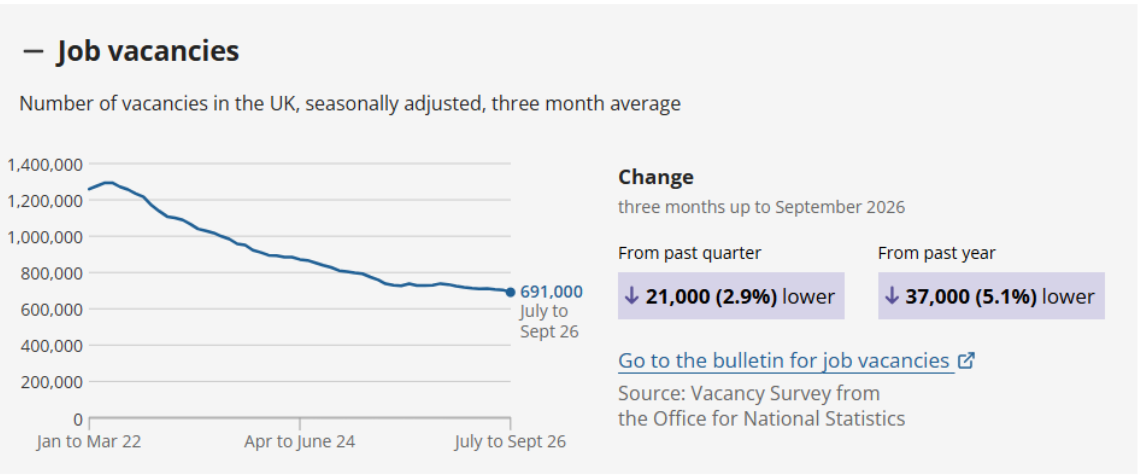
From past quarter
↓ **0.1pp** lower

From past year
↓ **0.1pp** lower

Go to the bulletin for unemployment rate

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics





- **Estimates for payrolled employees in the UK fell by 111,000 (0.4%) between August 2025 and August 2026, but it remained largely unchanged between July and August 2026, increasing by 1,000 (0.0%)**. This is based on administrative data from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- When looking at June to August 2026, the period comparable with our Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, the number of payrolled employees fell by 92,000 (0.3%) over the year and by 37,000 (0.1%) over the quarter.
- The early estimate of payrolled employees for September 2026 decreased by 66,000 (0.2%) on the year, but remained largely unchanged between August and September 2026, increasing by 13,000 (0.0%) to 30.3 million. Figures for September should be treated as provisional estimates and are likely to be revised when more data are received next month.
- The **UK employment rate** (based on the LFS) for people aged 16 to 64 years, including both employees and self-employed, was estimated at **75.3% for June to August 2026**. This is **up by 0.2 percentage points on both the year and the latest quarter**.
- The **UK unemployment rate** for people aged 16 years and over was estimated at **4.7% in June to August 2026**. This is **down by 0.1 percentage points on the both the year and**

the latest quarter.

- The **UK economic inactivity rate** for people aged 16 to 64 years was estimated at **20.9% in June to August 2026**. This is **down by 0.2 percentage points on the year and down by 0.1 percentage points in the latest quarter**.
- **The UK Claimant Count for September 2026 increased on the month and on the year to an estimated 1.701 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 July to September 2026 suggest a decrease of 21,000 (2.9%) to 691,000, compared with April to June 2026**. This is the largest quarterly fall since January to March 2026, which was also a fall of 21,000 vacancies. Estimates have remained broadly flat since the start of the year, decreasing by 28,000 since January to March 2026. On the year, vacancies decreased by 37,000 (5.1%). Outside of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic period, the last time there were 691,000 or fewer vacancies was in July to September 2014, when there were 686,000 vacancies. Feedback from the ONS Vacancy Survey continues to suggest that smaller firms may not be recruiting because of increases in labour costs.

Conclusion

- The **new Chancellor has delivered his Autumn Budget with a clear focus on providing immediate "breathing space" for households and businesses while absorbing the severe economic impacts of the Middle East conflict.** Locally we heard that the **Government has agreed to begin discussions about establishing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent** with the aim to have the new authority in place in autumn 2027 and a mayor elected in May 2028.
- It is positive that the **UK economy continued to see growth in August**, which was in contrast to what many economists were expecting. While the **IMF has upgraded the UK's growth forecast for this year** but also warned **higher energy prices and interest rates will impact the economy next year**.
- The **conflict in the middle east continues to impact the UK with rising fuel prices driving increased inflation** and the **Bank of England expected to respond by increasing interest rates**, impacting both households and businesses.
- Alongside **rising global uncertainty, including the war in Iran, 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**.

- Having seen the labour market loosen for some time, there are **some positive signs with payrolled employees and employment both seeing a slight increase** over the last quarter alongside **small declines in unemployment and economic inactivity**. However, **job vacancies have further declined**, with the **challenging economic conditions meaning more businesses have reduced recruitment, therefore it will be more difficult 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 programme** 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 and more than £34 million of government funding allocated to colleges across Staffordshire to increase provision, 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 September 2026, which shows the number of new companies and individuals who are unable to pay debts and enter a formal insolvency procedure.

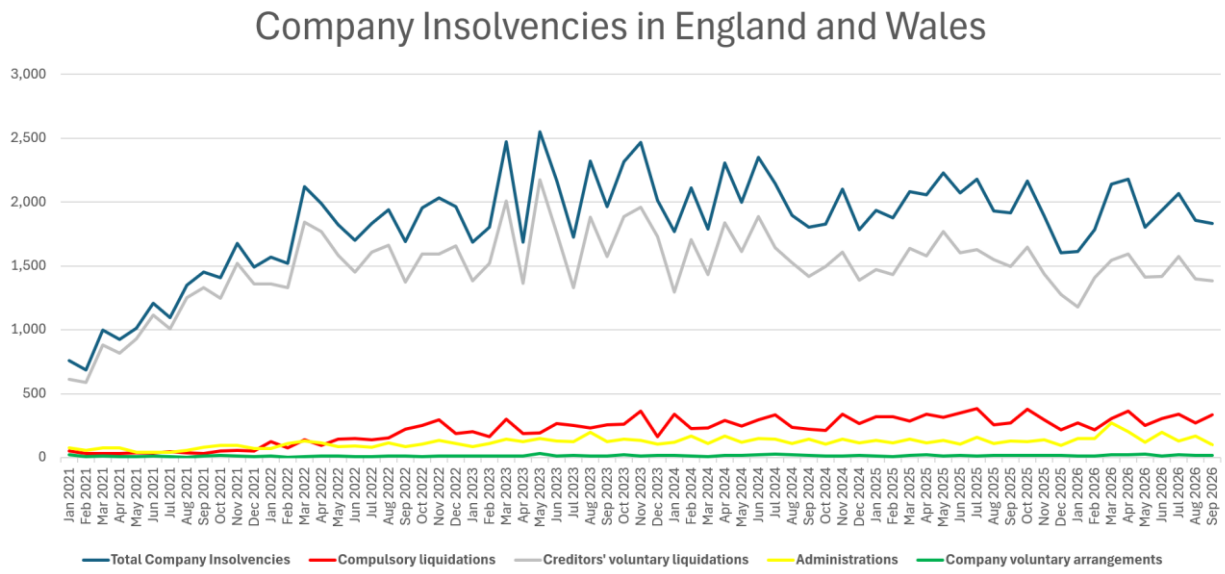
Company Insolvencies

In September 2026 there were a total of 1,834 company insolvencies in England and Wales. The overall number of **company insolvencies are 4% lower than the number registered in the previous year (1,913 in September 2025), and 7% lower than the number registered three years previously (1,966 in September 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 333 compulsory liquidations in September 2026, 23% higher than the number in September 2025, and 30% higher than in September 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 September 2026 there were 1,382 Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations (CVLs), 8% lower than September 2025, and 12% lower than September 2023. Numbers of administrations are 20% lower than three years previously in September 2023, Company Voluntary Arrangements (CVAs) are 73% higher than three years previously in September 2023, and numbers are low.

Company insolvencies between October 2025 and September 2026 are 5% lower compared to a year earlier, representing 1,113 fewer businesses



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

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

The sectors to have seen the largest number of company insolvencies between October 2025 and September 2026 continue to be the Construction sector (3,873), Wholesale & Retail sector (3,364), and Accommodation & Food Service sector (3,208). Levels are below those seen for the same period the previous year for the Construction sector: 2% lower, 10% lower for the Wholesale & Retail sector, and 5% lower for the Accommodation & Food sector than levels a year earlier. Overall, for this period company insolvencies by industry are 5% lower.

Individual Insolvencies

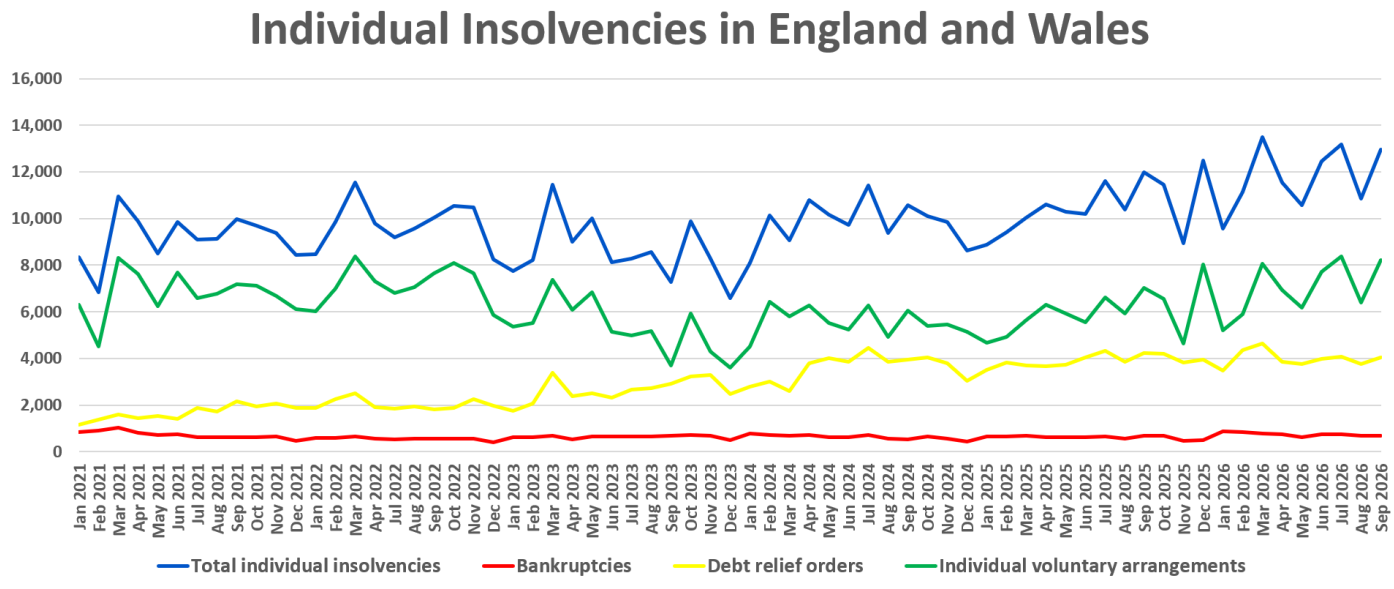
There were **12,949 total individual insolvencies in September 2026**, which was 8% higher than in September 2025, and 78% higher than in September 2023.

For individuals, **687 bankruptcies were registered in September 2026**, 1% lower than in September 2025, and the same as September 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 **4,038 Debt Relief Orders (DROs) in September 2026**, 5% lower than in September 2025, and 39% higher than in September 2023.

There were **8,224 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) registered in September 2026**, which was 17% higher than in September 2025, and 123% higher than in September 2023.

Total Individual Insolvencies between October 2025 and September 2026 are 14% higher than the same period a year earlier, representing an increase of 16,660.



Source: Insolvency Service

There were **5,149 Breathing Space registrations in September 2026, which is 33% lower than the number registered in September 2025**. 5,021 were Standard Breathing Space registrations, which is 34% lower and 128 were Mental Health Breathing Space registrations, which is 35% higher than September 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 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: September 2026

Area	Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2025)	Claimant Count Rate (Aug 2026)	Claimant Count Rate[1] (Sept 2026)	Number of Claimants (Sept 2026)	Annual Change in Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Claimants (%)
England	3.9	4.0	4.1	1,493,875	37,810	2.6%
West Midlands	5.2	5.2	5.4	204,770	6,100	3.1%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	3.4	3.3	3.4	24,455	340	1.4%
Birmingham	10.0	10.0	10.2	78,705	1,735	2.3%
Sandwell	6.7	6.6	6.8	15,180	165	1.1%
Wolverhampton	6.7	6.6	6.7	11,835	25	0.2%
Walsall	5.7	5.9	6.0	10,820	480	4.6%
Coventry	5.5	5.7	5.8	14,170	845	6.3%
Stoke-on-Trent	**5.5**	**5.2**	**5.3**	**9,030**	**-300**	**-3.2%**
Dudley	4.6	4.6	4.7	9,500	250	2.7%
Telford and Wrekin	3.8	4.0	4.0	4,890	285	6.2%
Solihull	3.5	3.6	3.7	4,840	200	4.3%
Warwickshire	2.7	2.9	3.0	11,465	845	8.0%
Worcestershire	2.9	3.0	3.0	11,280	505	4.7%
Staffordshire	**2.7**	**2.8**	**2.8**	**15,430**	**640**	**4.3%**
Herefordshire, County of	2.6	2.6	2.6	2,890	70	2.5%
Shropshire	2.3	2.4	2.5	4,735	345	7.9%
Tamworth	3.1	3.2	3.3	1,665	90	5.7%
Cannock Chase	2.9	3.1	3.2	2,055	145	7.6%
East Staffordshire	3.4	3.2	3.2	2,540	-170	-6.3%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	3.0	2.9	3.0	2,380	25	1.1%
South Staffordshire	2.4	2.6	2.7	1,775	155	9.6%
Stafford	2.4	2.5	2.6	2,185	175	8.7%
Lichfield	2.1	2.3	2.4	1,595	170	11.9%
Staffordshire Moorlands	2.1	2.1	2.2	1,230	50	4.2%

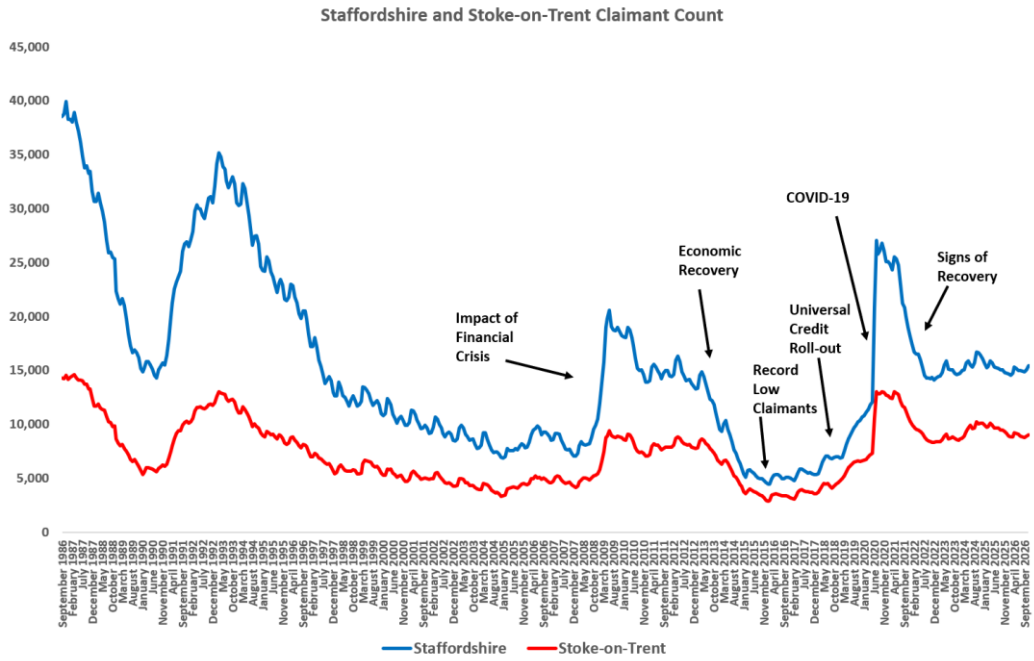
[1] The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit

- The **claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 15,430; this is 640 more claimants than at the same time last year.** Staffordshire has seen an increase of 4.3% in the number of claimants. This contrasts with claimant numbers increasing by 2.6% nationally and by 3.1% across the West Midlands.

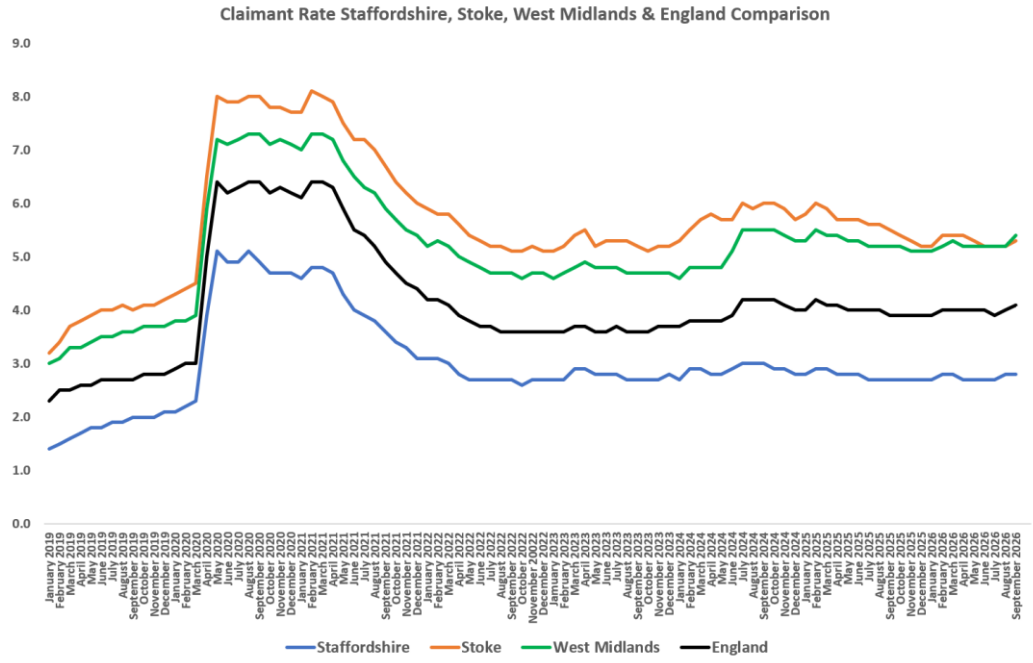
- The **claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 2.8%** of the working age population, which has **increased from 2.7% since a year earlier.**

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

- The number of **claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 9,030**, which is 300 lower than a year earlier, and the **claimant rate has decreased from 5.5% the previous year to 5.3%.**



- The **rate in Staffordshire remains one of the lowest in the West Midlands, at 2.8%. This is well below the regional average of 5.4% which has increased from 5.2% and the England average of 4.1% which has increased from 3.9%**.



- **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 the majority of districts with the exception of East Staffordshire which 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 Tamworth. 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

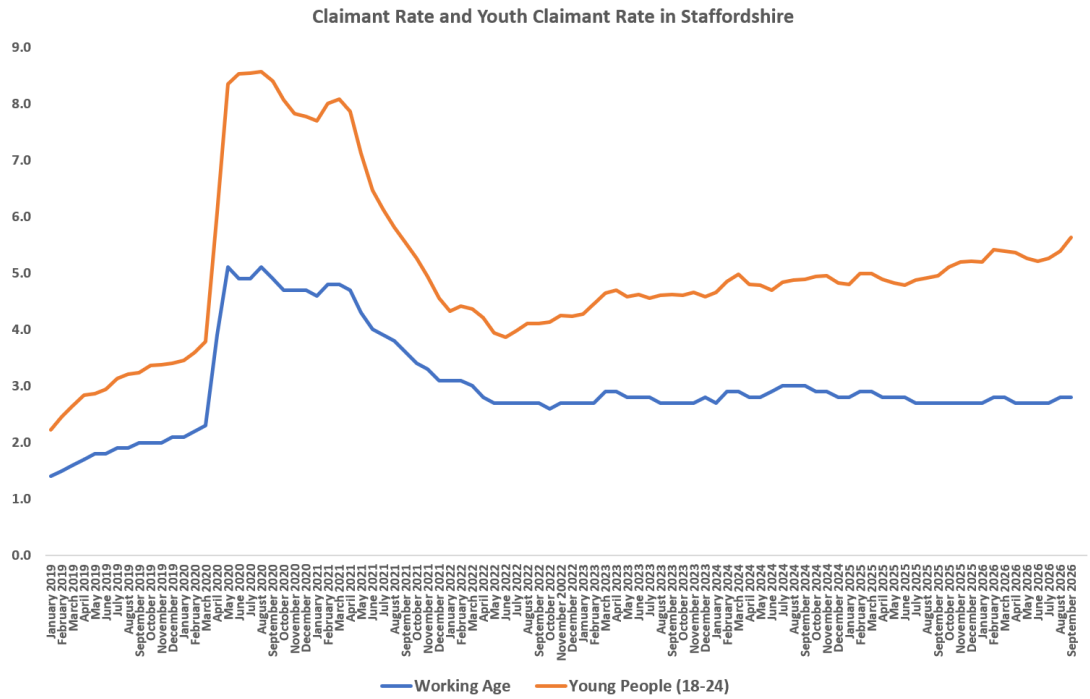
Youth Claimant Count (Universal Credit) Statistics: September 2026

Area	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Sept 2025)	Youth Claimant Count Rate (Aug 2026)	Youth Claimant Count Rate[1] (Sept 2026)	Number of Youth Claimants (Sept 2026)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (Numbers)	Annual Change in Youth Claimants (%)
England	5.5	5.9	6.1	299,175	27,885	10.3%
West Midlands	7.6	8.2	8.5	44,785	4,715	11.8%
Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent	5.8	6.1	6.3	5,430	465	9.4%
Birmingham	10.3	11.1	11.4	16,710	1,590	10.5%
Wolverhampton	10.0	10.8	11.2	2,595	280	12.1%
Wallsall	9.8	10.8	10.8	2,545	235	10.2%
Sandwell	10.0	10.0	10.4	3,195	120	3.9%
Dudley	8.4	9.0	9.5	2,255	250	12.5%
Telford and Wrekin	7.0	8.2	8.2	1,255	185	17.3%
Solihull	7.1	7.9	8.2	1,185	165	16.2%
Stoke-on-Trent	**7.8**	**7.9**	**8.0**	**1,940**	**45**	**2.4%**
Coventry	5.5	6.2	6.4	3,040	460	17.8%
Worcestershire	5.2	5.8	6.0	2,480	325	15.1%
Staffordshire	**5.0**	**5.4**	**5.6**	**3,490**	**420**	**13.7%**
Warwickshire	4.5	5.3	5.5	2,535	470	22.8%
Herefordshire, County of	4.9	5.2	5.5	590	60	11.3%
Shropshire	4.4	4.8	4.9	965	105	12.2%
Tamworth	6.9	6.8	7.1	380	15	4.1%
Cannock Chase	6.5	6.5	6.8	460	20	4.5%
South Staffordshire	5.6	6.2	6.3	430	50	13.2%
Stafford	4.8	5.6	5.8	475	80	20.3%
Lichfield	4.0	5.0	5.3	375	95	33.9%
East Staffordshire	5.2	5.3	5.1	450	-5	-1.1%
Staffordshire Moorlands	3.9	4.4	5.0	275	60	27.9%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4.0	4.5	4.7	640	95	17.4%

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

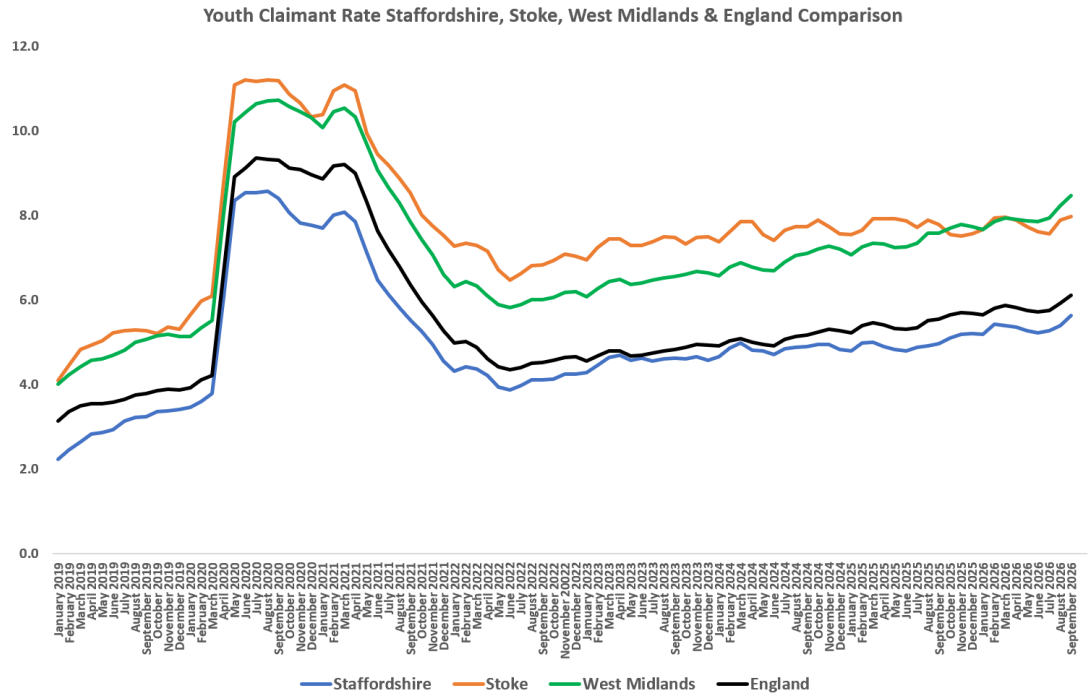
- The **youth claimant count in Staffordshire currently stands at 3,490, which is 420 more youth claimants than at the same time last year.** This is equivalent to a 13.7% annual increase, higher than the increases seen regionally (11.8%) and nationally (10.3%).

- The **youth claimant rate in Staffordshire is currently 5.6% of the 18-24 population, an increase from 5.0% a year earlier.** It is a concerning trend seen regionally and nationally.



- The number of **youth claimants in Stoke-on-Trent stands at 1,940 which is 45 more than the previous year**, with **the rate at 8.0%, a rise from 7.8%.**

- It is important to note that **Staffordshire continues to be lower than the national rate of 6.1%, which increased from 5.5% and far lower than the regional rate of 8.5% which increased from 7.6% over the past year**.



- **The majority of districts in Staffordshire have seen increases in the number of youth claimants over the last year except East Staffordshire which decreased by 5 claimants** .

- **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

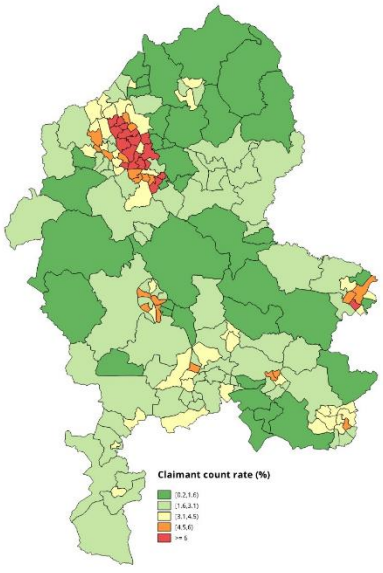
The following summaries and maps provide the latest breakdown of the claimant count by wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent. Please note that due to geographical changes in ward data from Nomis/ONS (17 Feb 2026), comparative data is based on January 2026.

Claimant Count Rate September 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent, 43 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, eighteen were in Stoke-on-Trent with highest rates in Tunstall: 7.5%/360; Burslem: 7.4%/375; Hanley Park, Joiner's Square & Shelton: 7.2%/885; Etruria & Hanley: 7.1%/370; Abbey Hulton: 6.9%/300 claimants.

In Staffordshire, two wards in East Staffordshire had the highest claimant rates - Anglesey: 6.4%/380; Shobnall: 6.1%/355; Burton & Eton: 5.7%/425.

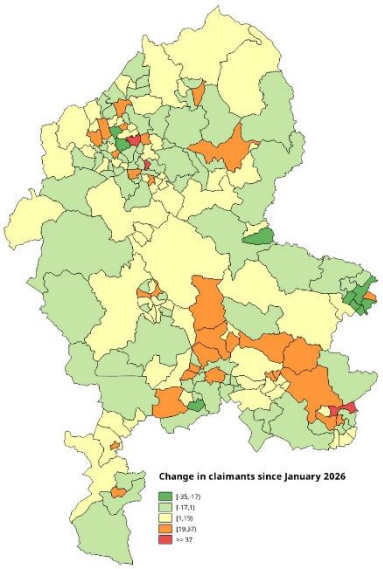


Staffordshire County Council

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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 three wards in Stoke-on-Trent (Birches Head & Northwood): 55 increase to 470; (Sandford Hill): 45 increase to 250; (Basford & Hartshill): 30 increase to 140; Spital (Tamworth): 40 increase to 165; Armitage with Handsacre (Lichfield): 35 increase to 105; Doxey & Castletown (Stafford): 30 increase to 145; three wards in Cannock Chase (Chadsmoor): 30 increase to 305, Brereton & Ravenhill: 30 increase to 190 and Hednesford Pye Green: 30 increase to 170; Winshill (East Staffordshire): 30 increase to 155.



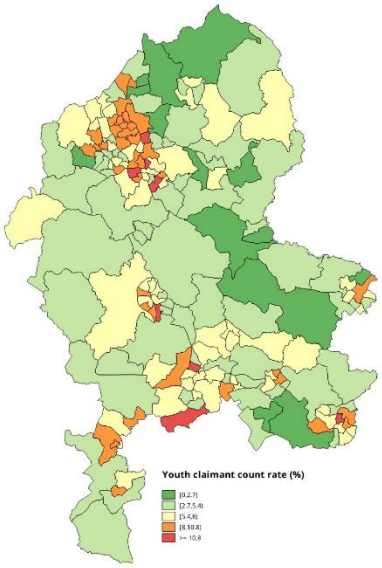
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Youth Claimant Count Rate September 2026

Of the 185 wards in Staffordshire & Stoke-Trent, 82 were above the England average 6.1% 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, four were in Stoke-on-Trent including Abbey Hulton: 13.3/75; Hollybush: 13.3%/55; Meir South: 11.6%/60; Sandford Hill: 11.6%/50.

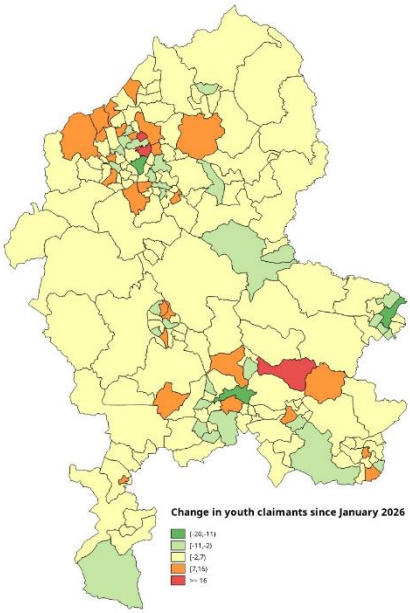
Staffordshire wards with the highest claimant rate include Penkside (Stafford): 13.5%/30); Essington (South Staffordshire): 11.3%/40; Chadsmoor (Cannock Chase): 11.1%/80; Bolehall (Tamworth): 10.9%/50; Chasetown (Lichfield): 10.6%/35; Biddulph East (Staffs Moorlands): 10.6%/50.



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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 five wards in Stoke-on Trent (Birches Head & Northwood): 25 increase to 75; (Ford Green & Smallthorne): 20 increase to 50; (Abbey Hulton): 15 increase to 75; (Hollybush): 15 increase to 55; (Baddeley, Milton & Norton): 15 increase to 100) and five wards in Staffordshire: (Armitage with Handsacre) Lichfield: 20 increase to 30; three wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme (Cross Heath): 15 increase to 55; (Crackley & Red Street): 15 increase to 45; (Audley): 15 increase to 35; (Etching Hill & the Heath) Cannock: 15 increase to 40.



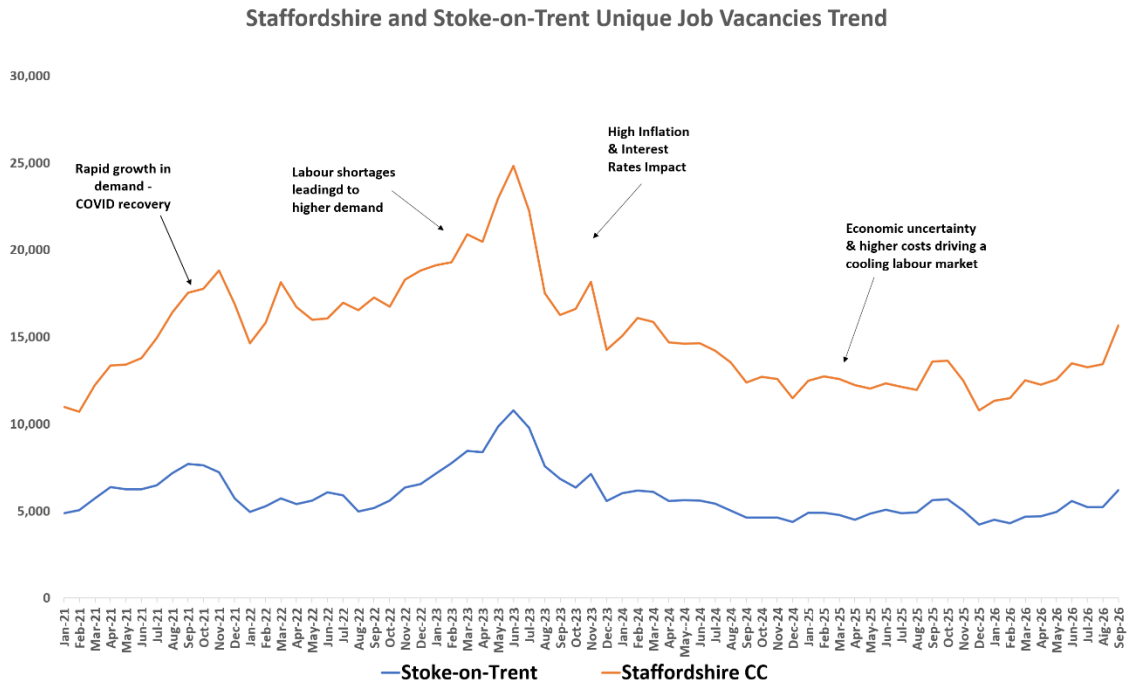
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Job Vacancies[3]

- **Staffordshire saw a 15% increase in the number of available job vacancies between September 2025 and September 2026 to a total of 15,700[4]. This was a higher increase than seen regionally and nationally. Stoke-on-Trent saw a 10% increase in job vacancies over the past year to a total of 6,200 which is significantly lower than the number of claimants.**
- **Across the region over the past year there was an 11% increase, and nationally there was an 11% increase in the number of job vacancies. It is encouraging to see job vacancies rising.**
- 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.

[3] *Source: Lightcast*

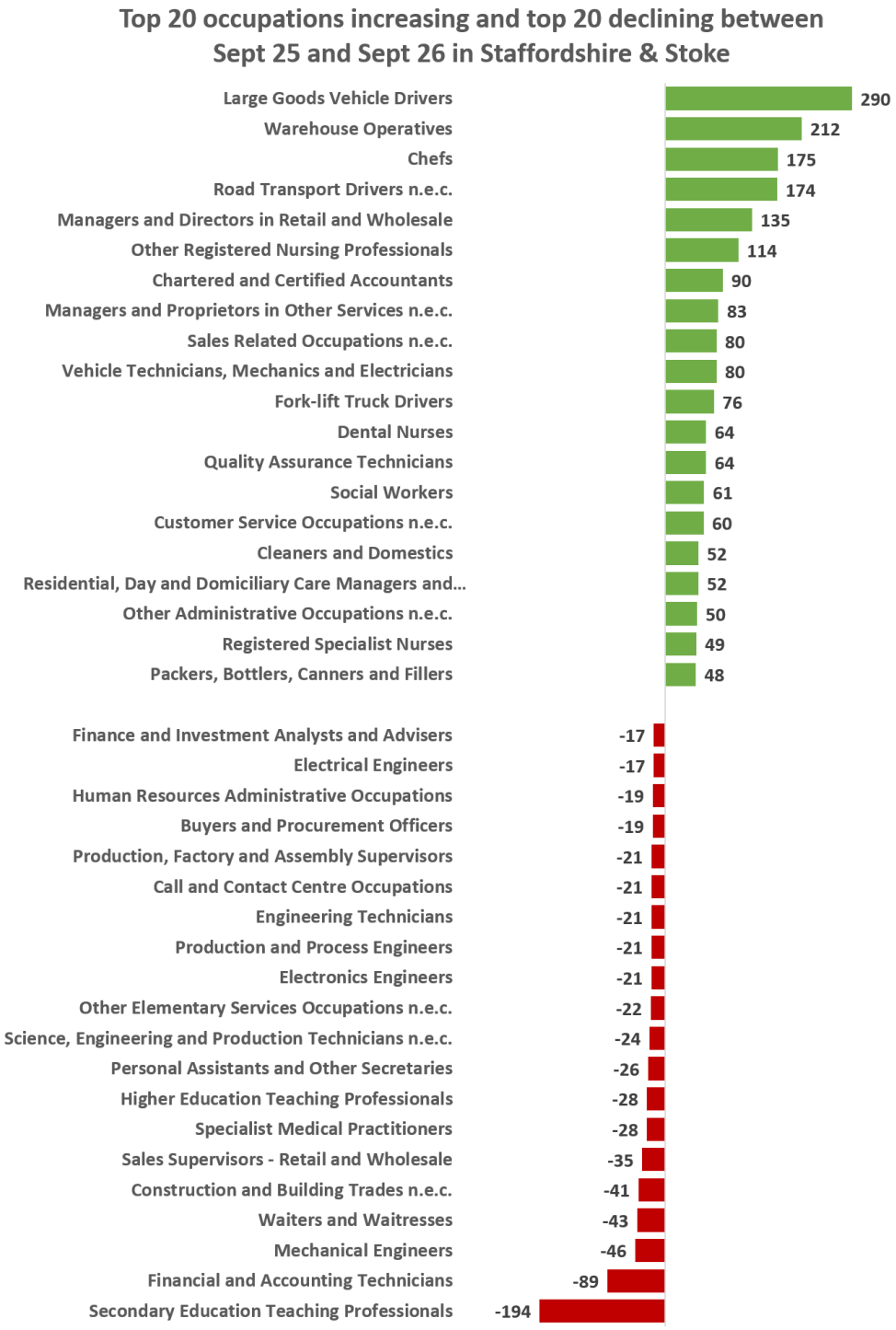
[4] *Lightcast upgraded its location coding process for UK job postings on 19 February 2024. As a result of this change, historic posting counts are estimated to have annual changes of -0.5 to -1% in 2018-19 & 2021; +1%-2% 2020 & 2022-2024.*



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. 'Administrative & Secretarial' occupations increased the most at 34%.
- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year increases include Large Goods Vehicle Drivers; Warehouse Operatives; Chefs; Road Transport Drivers; Managers & Directors in Retail & Wholesale; Other Registered Nursing Professionals; Chartered & Certified Accountants; Managers &` Proprietors in Other Service; Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians; Sales Related; Fork-lift Truck Drivers; Quality Assurance Technicians; Dental Nurses; Social Workers; Customer Service; Residential, Day & Domiciliary Care Managers & Proprietors; Cleaners & Domestics; Other Administrative; Registered Specialist Nurses; Packers, Bottlers, Canners & Fillers.



- The occupations to see the largest year-on-year decrease include Secondary Education Teaching Professions; Financial & Accounting Technicians; Mechanical Engineers; Waiters & Waitresses; Construction & Building Trades; Sales Supervisors; Specialist Medical Practitioners; HE Teaching Professionals; Personal Assistants & Other Secretaries; Science, Engineering & Production Technicians; Other Elementary Services; Electronics Engineers; Production & Process Engineers; Engineering Technicians; Call & Contact Centre; Production, Factory & Assembly Supervisors; Buyers & Procurement Advisors; HR Administrative; Electrical Engineers; Finance & Investment Analysts & Advisers.

Top Occupations in Demand

- Considering the **top 20 job vacancy occupations in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, **'Large Goods Vehicle Drivers'** roles are the most in demand occupations.

- The following occupations **'Care Workers & Home Carers,' 'Sales Related'** and **'Cleaners & Domestics'** show continued recruitment demand.

- The Logistics sector continues to have strong demand for **'Warehouse Operatives'** and **'Fork-lift Truck Drivers,' 'Road Transport Drivers,' 'Roundspersons & Van Salespersons'** and **'Transport & Distribution Clerks & Assistants.'**

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

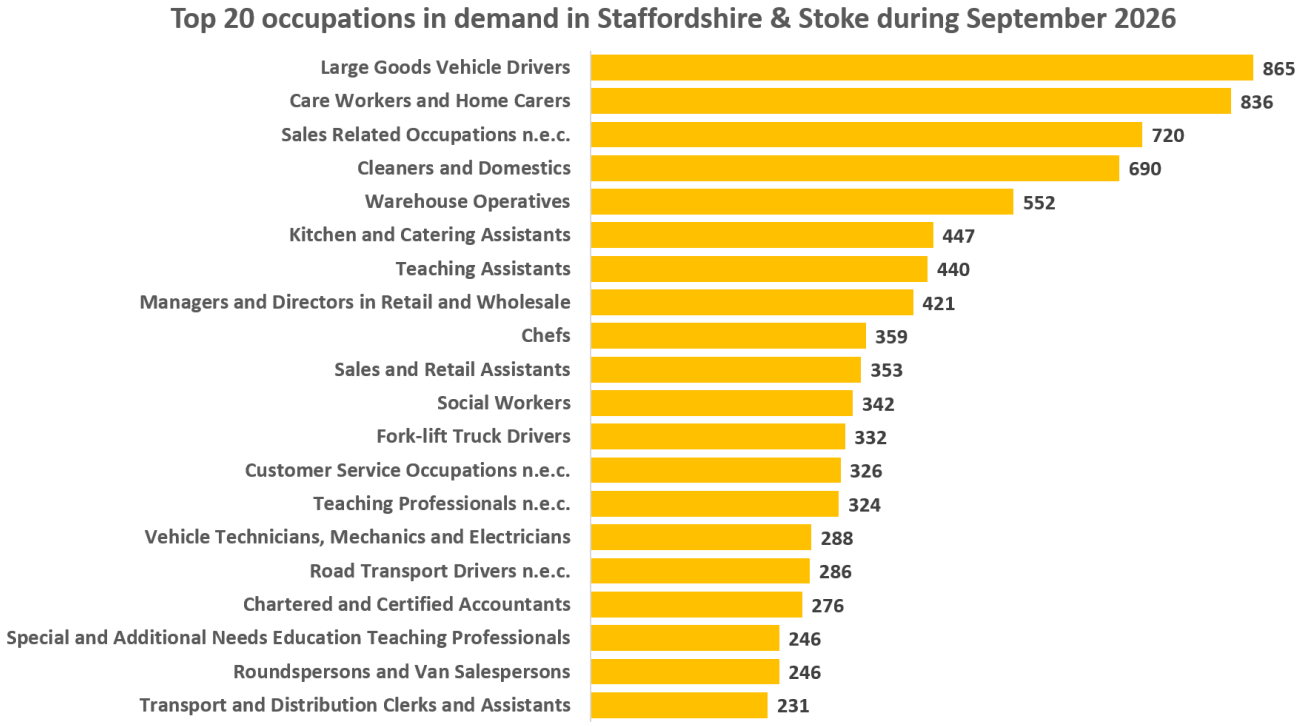
- Within the Education sector, vacancy levels remain elevated for **'Teaching Assistants,' 'Teaching Professionals,'** and **'SEND Teaching Professionals.'**

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

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

- Across business sectors **'Customer Service'** and **'Chartered & Certified Accountants'** continue to attract sustained demand.

- In the Motor Trade sector for **'Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics & Electricians'** remain sought after.



- 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.