

SANDWELL ECONOMIC DASHBOARD – FEBRUARY 2025

Indicator ¹	Pre-Pandemic (Context) ²	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	August 2024	September 2024	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	January 2025	Trend	National/ Regional or LA Comparator ³	Commentary/ Context
Regional Business Activity Index	51.2 (Feb 2020)	53.1	53.1	52.8	55.5	54.2	51.6	51.2	52.2	51.2	50.0	49.9	48.9	47.2		WM: 2 nd Lowest Region UK: 50.6 Northern Ireland: 45.0 (1 st) London: 54.8 (12 th)	The West Midlands Business Activity Index decreased from 48.9 in December 2024 to 47.2 in January 2025, a third successive fall in business activity across the region.
Regional Future Business Activity Index	72.3 (Feb 2020)	78.1	76.8	79.7	78.7	80.5	74.8	77.9	76.1	69.8	71.0	68.6	67.2			WM: 5 th Highest Region East Midlands: 70.4 (1 st) Scotland: 54.7 (12 th)	The West Midlands Future Business Activity Index decreased from 68.6 in November 2024 to 67.2 in December 2024, a two-year low. Firms remained confident that output would increase in 2025 with optimism being underpinned by advertising, investment and hopes of a recovery in client demand.
Employment Rate (Aged 16-64) ⁴	70.7% Full Year 2019 69.4% Apr 2019 – Mar 2020			68.0% Apr 2023 – Mar 2024			67.4% Jul 2023 – Jun 2024			66.4% Oct 2023 – Sep 2024						Sandwell: Joint 22 nd Lowest (with Birmingham) /361 UK: 75.4% Wyre Forest: 88.8% (1 st) West Lindsey: 60.2% (348 th)	Since the year ending September 2023, the employment rate for Sandwell decreased by 3.8 percentage points (pp) to 66.4% in year ending September 2024. The UK-wide employment rate decreased by 0.3 to 75.4% over this period. For Sandwell to reach the UK-wide employment rate requires an increase of 18,850 residents to be in employment.
Youth Claimants (Aged 16-24)	2,130 (6.2% of 16 – 24 years old pop.) (Mar 2020)	2,635 (7.0% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,645 (7.0% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,735 (7.2% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,660 (7.0% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,645 (7.0% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,680 (7.1% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,710 (7.2% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,790 (7.4% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,795 (7.4% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,820 (7.4% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,855 (7.5% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,850 (7.5% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)	2,880 (7.6% of 16 – 24 years old pop.)		Sandwell: 7 th Highest LA / 361 UK: 4.3% of Pop. aged 16-24 years old Birmingham: 8.7% (1 st) Isles of Scilly: 0% (361 st)	Sandwell had 2,880 youth claimants in January 2025, an increase of 30 claimants (+1.1%, UK +1.4%) from the previous month. When compared to January 2024, the number of youth claimants has increased by 245 (+9.3%, UK +8.1%).

¹ Indicators that are in hatched marked boxes represent regional level analysis. The dashboard sources are as followed: NatWest, UK Regional Tracker report, released February 2025, NatWest, UK Regional Growth Tracker for December 2024, released January 2025 (please note, the index is seasonally adjusted and measures the month-on-month change in the combined output of the region’s manufacturing and service sectors), Office for National Statistics (ONS)/Annual Population Survey (APS), released January 2025, ONS/Department for Work and Pensions, Claimant count (provisional), released February 2025, Department for Education, released January 2025, Adzuna Intelligence, accessed February 2025.

² A pre-pandemic column has been included which will not be RAG rated as this is to show where we were before the impacts of Covid-19 were seen. However, across the dashboard RAG rating is based on change from each month (and not compared to March 2020), green shading illustrates indicators which have moved in a positive direction compared to the UK or England average. The red shading indicates the reverse and amber indicates a change in the right direction but less than the UK or national average (excluding the Business Activity Index and Future Business Activity Index indicators where the threshold mark is 50 for growth– figures below 50 are red, amber if it has decreased from the previous but remains above or at 50, green if improved from previous month).

³ The peer group selected varies by indicator – regional is based on all the regions in the UK – showing a range from highest to lowest to understand how the West Midlands compares and then where available, Sandwell has been used and compared to all available local authorities.

⁴ Data is not comparable across the table as they are rolling quarterly years.

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Claimants (Aged 16+)	10,780 (4.2% of pop. aged 16+) (Mar 2020)	13,050 (4.9% of pop. aged 16+)	13,200 (5.0% of pop. aged 16+)	13,285 (5.0% of pop. aged 16+)	13,165 (4.9% of pop. aged 16+)	13,355 (5.0% of pop. aged 16+)	14,230 (5.3% of pop. aged 16+)	15,840 (6.0% of pop. aged 16+)	15,915 (6.0% of pop. aged 16+)	16,035 (6.0% of pop. aged 16+)	15,975 (6.0% of pop. aged 16+)	15,625 (5.9% of pop. aged 16+)	15,410 (5.8% of pop. aged 16+)	15,660 (5.9% of pop. aged 16+)		Sandwell: Joint 15 th Highest LA (with Ealing) /361 UK: 3.2% of Pop. Aged 16+ Birmingham: 8.9% (1 st) Isles of Scilly: 0.8% (361 st)	Sandwell had 15,660 claimants aged 16 years and over in January 2025, an increase of 250 (+1.6%, UK +1.7%) claimants from the previous month. When compared to January 2024, the number of claimants has increased by 2,610 (+20.0%, UK +11.5%).
Apprenticeship Starts ⁵	2,870 (Q4 Full Year 2018/19)	1,120 (Q2 Aug-Jan 2023/24)			1,640 (Q3 Aug-Apr 2023/24)			2,050 (Q4 Aug-Jul 2023/24)								Sandwell: 32 nd Highest LA (With Central Bedfordshire) /295 Birmingham: 6,020 (1 st) City of London: 50 (295 th)	In the 2023/24 academic year there were 2,050 apprenticeship starts in Sandwell, a decrease of 2.8% (-60) since 2022/23. Nationally, apprenticeship starts were up by 0.7% (to a total of 339,580 in 2023/24).
Adzuna Apprenticeship Postings	14 (Mar 2020)	63	110	98	79	105	71	22	22	11	20	14	26	28		-	In Sandwell, there were 28 apprenticeship postings in January 2025, a monthly increase of 2. When compared to January 2024, apprenticeship postings decreased by 35.
Adzuna Unique Job Postings	2,868 (Mar 2020)	3,155	3,596	3,425	3,300	3,557	3,162	3,527	3,730	3,200	3,960	3,435	2,796	3,279		This number of postings is high compared to the average for all local authority districts	In Sandwell, there were 3,279 unique job postings in January 2025, a monthly increase of 483. When compared to January 2024, postings increased by 124. In January 2025, the Interest Quotient was 1.8 (high)

⁵ Data is not comparable across the table.