Get Cheshire and Warrington Working
Stakeholder Event

Cheshire + Warrington

Bringing better jobs, better transport, smarter investment -now's the time.

Outline of the Session

Welcome and introduction to Get Britain Working	Leah Maltby	13.00-13.10
Presentation: Labour market analysis – key evidence	Lizi Hopkins Sam Barrett	13.10-13.30
Workshop discussion: Evidence and priorities	All – discussion in groups	13.30-14.10
Workshop discussion: Taking actions forward	All – discussion in groups	14.10-14.50
Washup and next steps	Leah Maltby	14.50-15.00

How the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan fits with national and local strategies

National

- Get Britain Working White Paper published in November 2024 – ambition of 80% employment rate across the UK

- Pathways to Work - Welfare reform

- Keep Britain Working – what support do employers need?

- Industrial Strategy

- Development of Jobs and Careers Centres

How the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan fits with national and local strategies

Cheshire and Warrington

- Integrated Care Board's Work and Health Strategy
- Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter
- Local Skills Improvement Plan

**Emerging Devolution documents**

- Cheshire and Warrington Growth Plan
- Strategic Skills Plans – priorities for the Adult Skills Fund
- Supported Employment (non DWP)

The purpose of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan

- Develop a local plan informed by data and feedback from stakeholders and residents
  - Where are the gaps in provision?
  - What provision is working well, and could this be scaled up and sustained?
  - What are the local barriers people face when looking for and sustaining work?
- Improve co-ordination of existing support
- Agree a vision and actions for the next 12-24 months
- Potential to lobby government for funding

Cheshire and Warrington has a tight labour market with rising job vacancies and skills shortages

After a prolonged period of falling vacancies after the Pandemic, vacancies have started to rise over the last year. Job vacancies are focused in Health and Social Care, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing and the Visitor Economy.

Online job adverts 2020-2025

Legend: Cheshire East — Cheshire West and Chester — Warrington
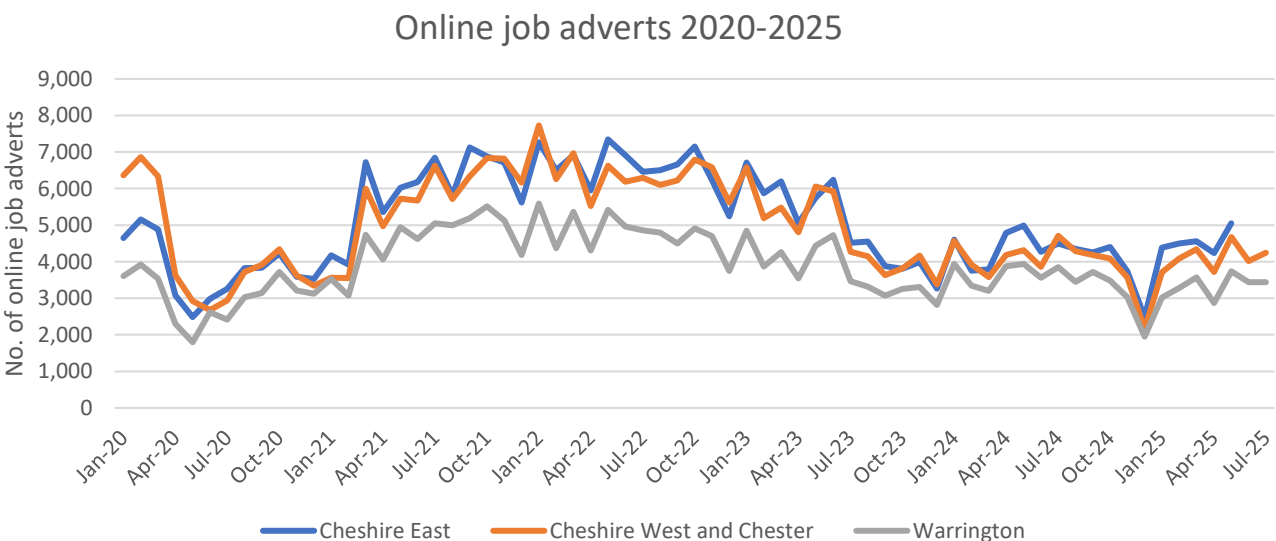
Other Statistics

The following information spans the period from 1st July 2024 to 31st March 2025 for Cheshire & Warrington, and has been collated based on unique job postings:

TOP TEN

| INDUSTRIES HIRING	SECTORS HIRING	OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND	MOST IN-DEMAND SKILLS REQUESTED BY EMPLOYERS
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Engineering jobs	Engineer	Communication
	Teaching Jobs	Manager	Management
Professional, scientific and technical activities	Hospitality and Catering Jobs	Social Care Worker	Clients
	Accounting and Finance Jobs	Teaching Assistant	Solutions
Human health and social work activities	Sales Jobs	General Nurse	Customer Service
Accommodation and Food Services	Healthcare and Nursing Jobs	Lorry Driver	Assertiveness
Financial and insurance activities	IT Jobs	Project Manager	Wellbeing
Transportation and storage	Trade and Construction Jobs	Healthcare Support Worker	Engineering
Information and communication	Logistics and Warehouse Jobs	Assistant	Sales
Administrative and support service activities	Social work Jobs	Chef	Healthcare
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security			
Arts, entertainment and recreation			

6

Understanding inactivity

Economic inactivity in Cheshire and Warrington is generally low but rising, especially in Warrington, where over a quarter of the working-age population is now inactive.

Key inactive cohorts

- People with mental health conditions
- Individuals with disabilities
- Over 50s
- Homeless individuals
- Ex-offenders
- People with musculoskeletal (MSK) problems

While levels remain below the regional and national averages, the rate of increase in Cheshire and Warrington is steeper than the national trend. This indicates a growing regional and local challenge.

## Economic Activity Rates (Dec 2024) in Cheshire and Merseyside
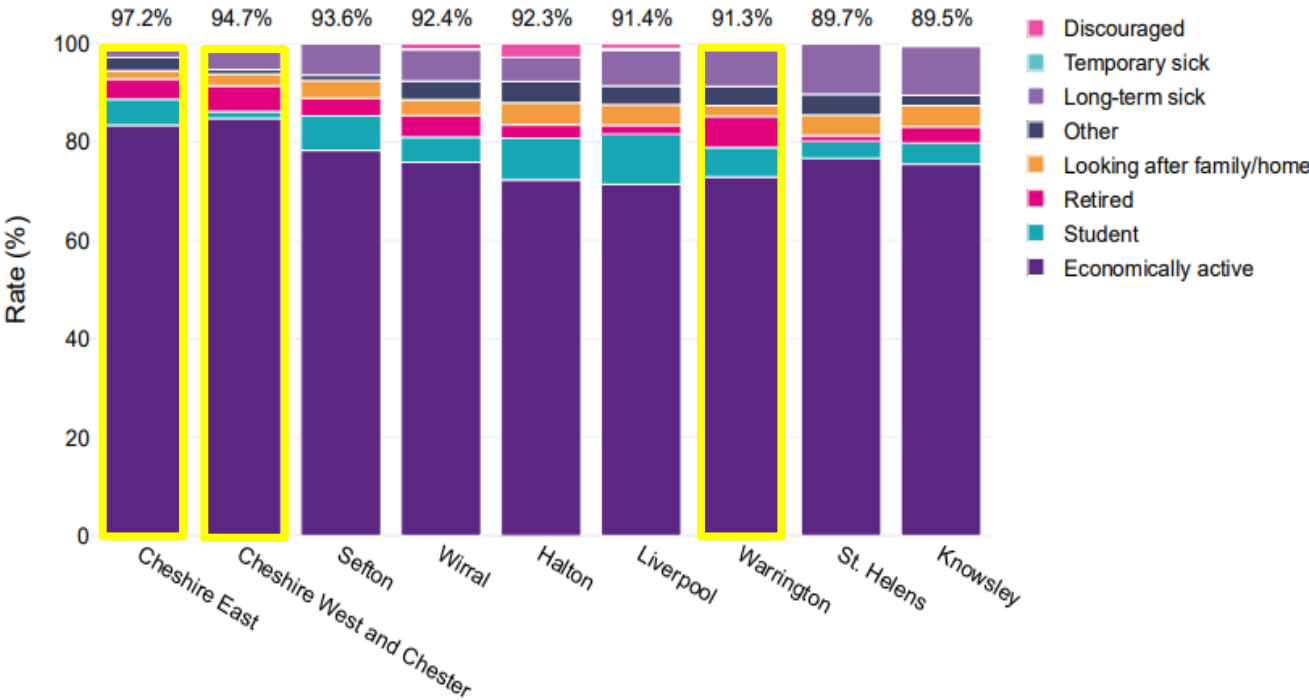
| Area	Inactivity (2024)	Change (2019-24)
Cheshire and Warrington	18.5%	+0.7%
Cheshire East	16.6%	+1.8%
Cheshire West & Chester	15.2%	-6.2%
Warrington	27.1%	+9.8%
North West	23.5%	+1.2%
UK	21.5%	+0.3%

Understanding inactivity

Sickness-related inactivity is rising across Cheshire and Warrington

- The proportion of people inactive due to sickness, rose from 21.3% to 27.5% 2019-24. A 6.2 percentage point rise, compared with a 4.5 point rise nationally (from 25.9% to 30.4%).

- This rise in sickness related inactivity is reflected in rising sickness absence rate across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Sickness Absence Rate in Cheshire and Merseyside vs Great Britain
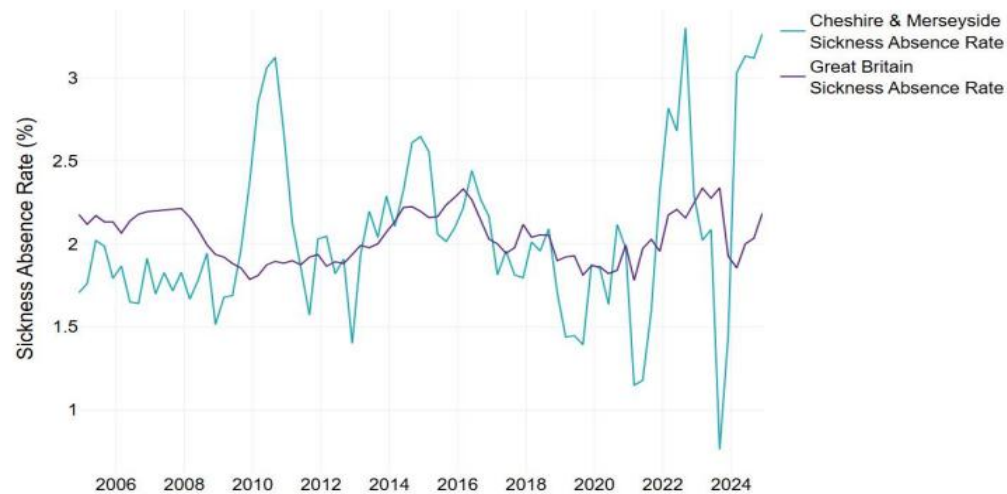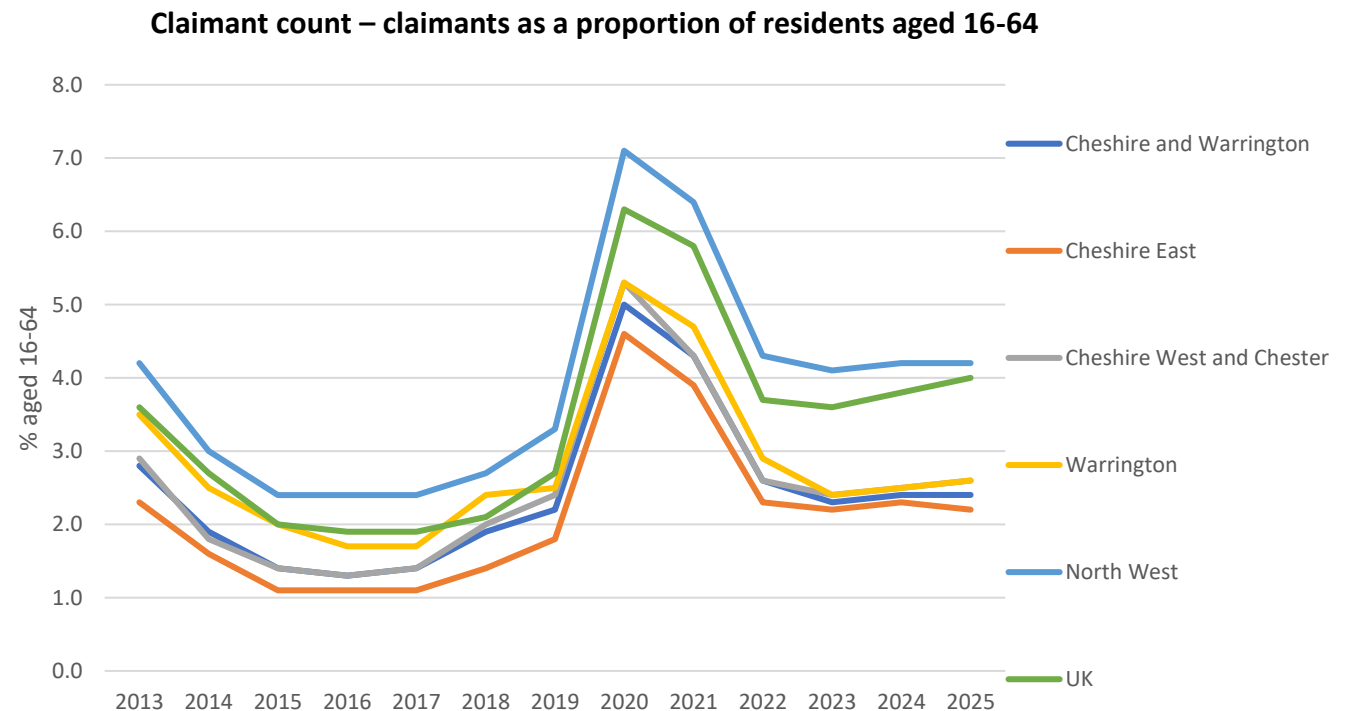

Economic inactivity by reason
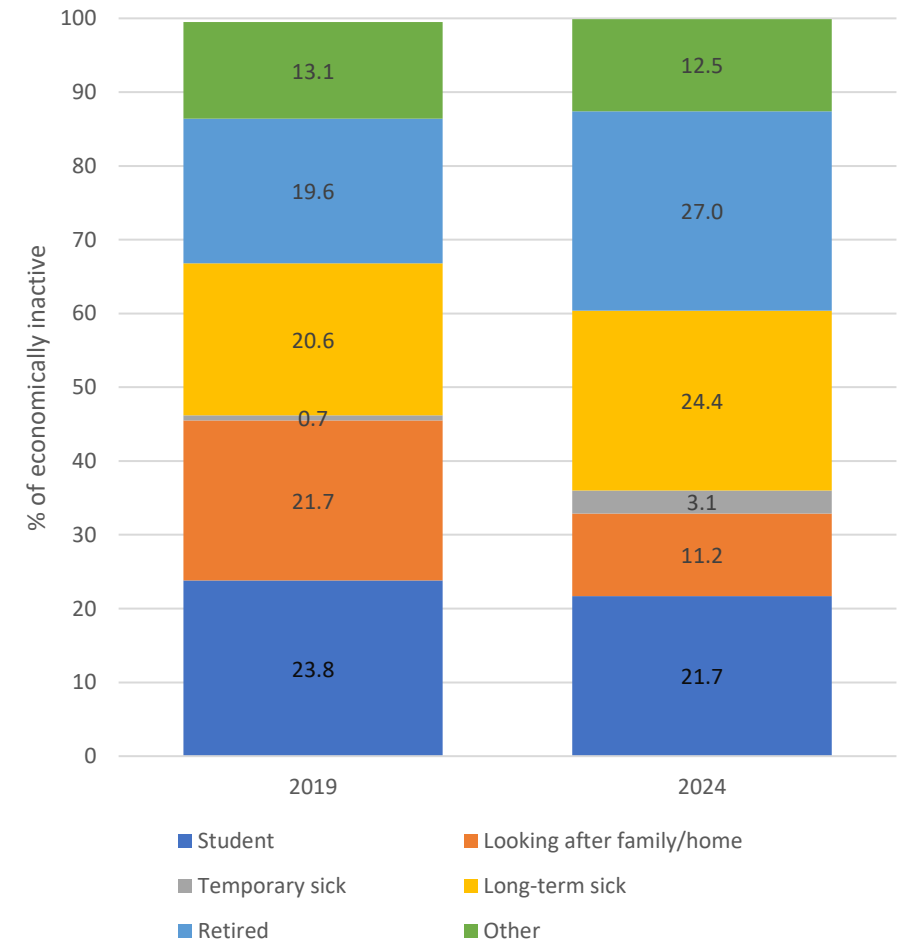
Universal Credit and long-term sickness

Claimant count fallen from previous rises after Covid. Warrington and Crewe account for almost half of total Universal Credit claimants with no work requirements.
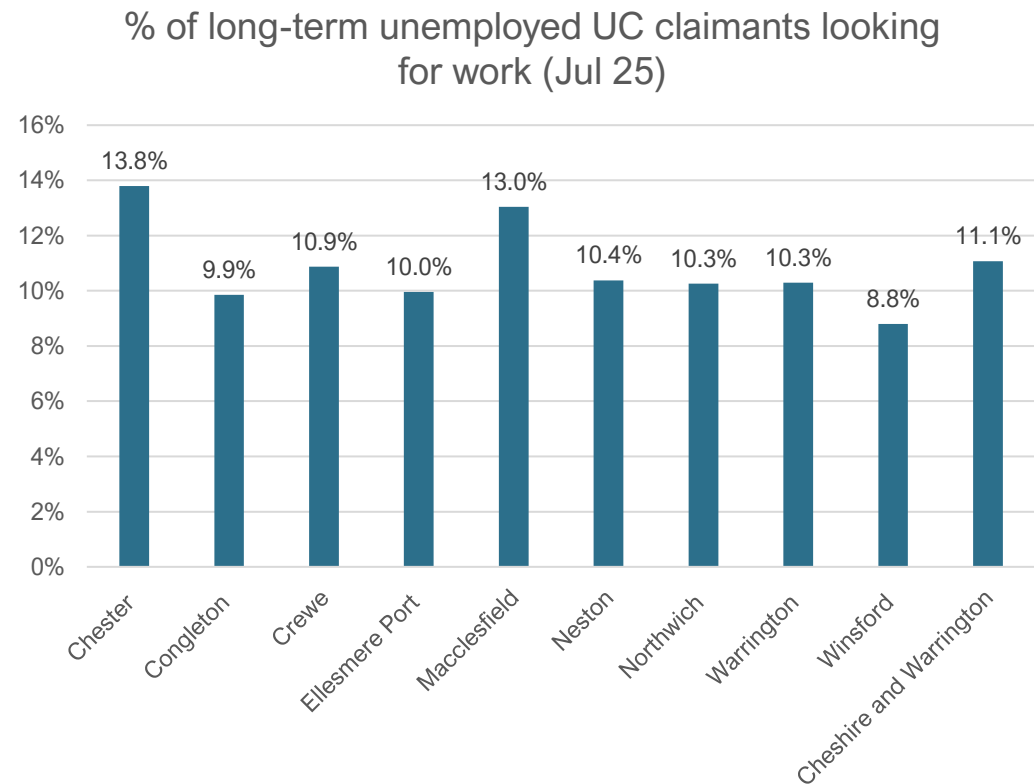
- The number of UC claimants remains 16% above 2019 levels in Cheshire and Warrington, but this is lower than the 31% rise regionally and 52% across the UK.

- This breaks down to elevated levels of 31% in Cheshire East, 11% in Cheshire West and Chester, and 4% in Warrington. Half of all claimants are from Warrington and Crewe.

- In Cheshire and Warrington during May 2025 registered as long-term sick:

  o 61% were women, 39% men

  o 35-44 was the largest group (26% of all claimants)

  o 9% were below the age of 25

Claimant count – claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16-64

Legend: Cheshire and Warrington, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington, North West, UK

Universal Credit claimants

Deprivation levels generally low but pockets of high deprivation in some of our urban centres and rural communities.

- In total there are 89,850 residents across Cheshire and Warrington claiming Universal Credit (UC)

- Most of UC claimants are not working – half of total claimants have no work requirements

- An increase of over 7,000 UC claimants who are long-term unemployed to 65,400 across Cheshire and Warrington

- 11% of UC claimants who are long-term unemployed are looking for work

- Total claimants looking for work has fallen by 6% from 14,450 to 13,635

% of long-term unemployed UC claimants looking for work (Jul 25)

Area	%
Chester	13.8%
Congleton	9.9%
Crewe	10.9%
Ellesmere Port	10.0%
Macclesfield	13.0%
Neston	10.4%
Northwich	10.3%
Warrington	10.3%
Winsford	8.8%
Cheshire and Warrington	11.1%

Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Deprivation levels generally low but pockets of high deprivation in some of our urban centres and rural communities.

- On the whole deprivation low at the Cheshire and Warrington level

- Around two thirds of neighbourhoods living in the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally.

- However there are pockets of deprivation particularly in urban centres of Crewe, Winsford, Warrington, Northwich, Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port.

- Overall IMD may mask barriers faced in more rural communities in accessing services and housing affordability

Deprivation decile

Decile ●1 ●2 ●3 ●4 ●5 ●6 ●7 ●8 ●9 ●10

Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

11
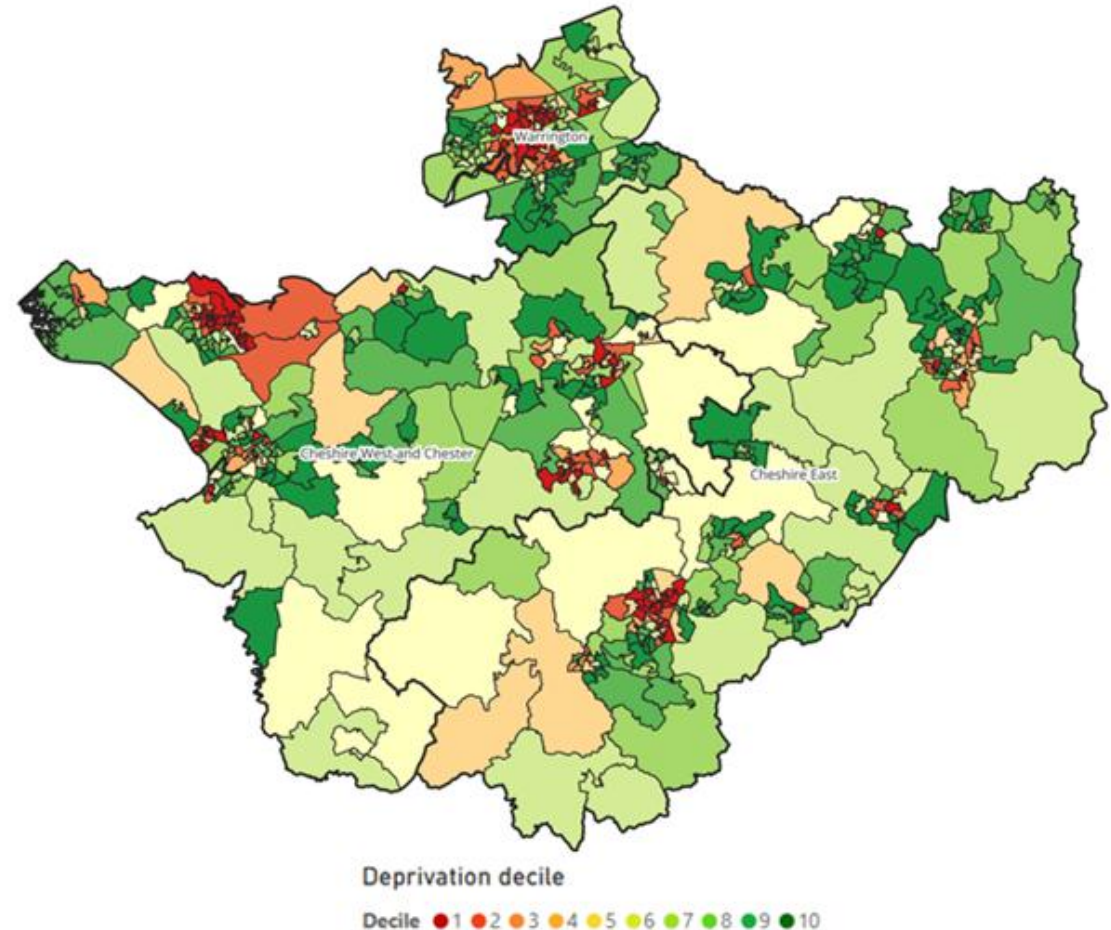
Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

The number of young people who are NEET has grown over recent years.

- The number of young people who are NEET has risen to over 500

- Cheshire and Warrington NEET rate at 3.2%, closely aligning with the national average

- Cheshire West and Chester has seen the sharpest rise, reaching 4.6% in 2024, exceeding national average

- Further barriers for those who are known to be from a disadvantaged background inc care leavers

Proportion of 16-17 year olds who are NEET (2019 and 2024)
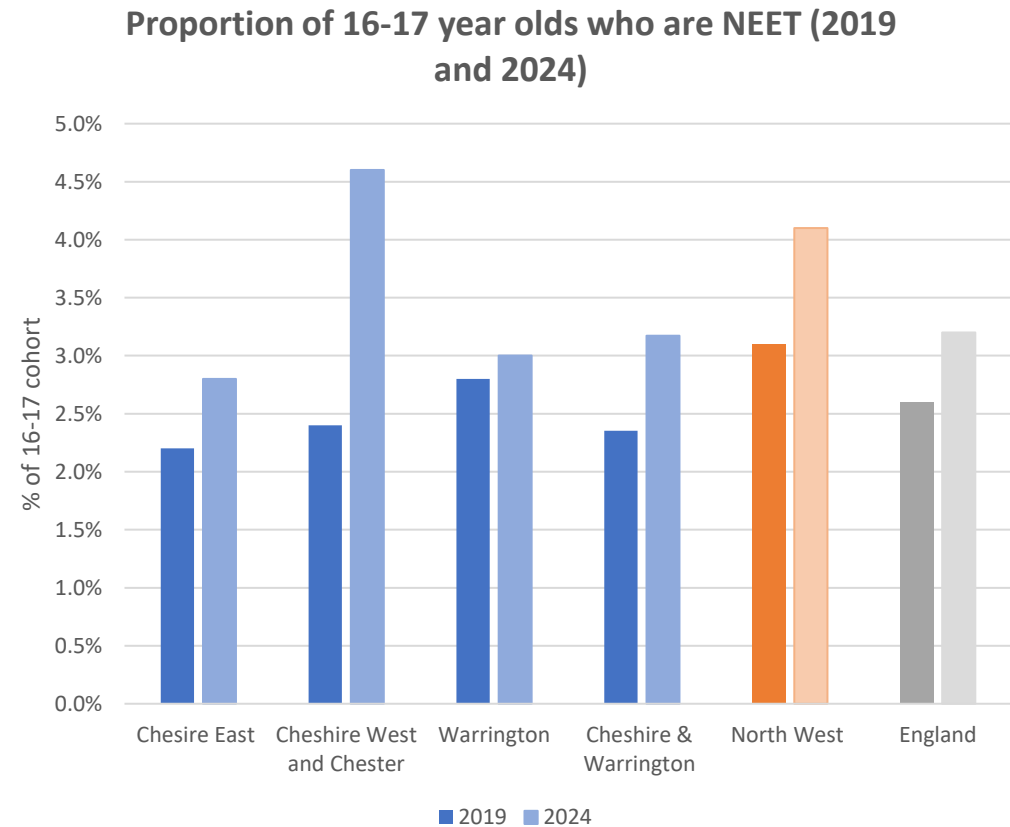
Key transition points and early intervention models

Key transition points increase the risk of inactivity. They require sufficient, joined-up support to prevent disengagement and support groups most at risk

Transition point	The need for intervention	Existing support
Leaving education becoming NEET	• Over 500 16-17 year olds in Cheshire & Warrington are NEET, equal to 3.2% of this age group, matching the national average. • Risk factors include poverty, SEND, care leavers and rural isolation • There are a lack of reengagement routes or sustained outreach in some areas	• Pledge Partnership Careers Hub • Fresh Start • Total people
Falling out of work due to health	• Rising long-term sickness is a key driver of inactivity • Includes mental health, MSK and other chronic illness	• Mid-Life MOT • Restart • IPS Severe Mental Health
Leavers from institutional systems (e.g. prison, military)	• High risk of disengagement after structured institutional life • Complex needs, including housing, mental health, addition and stigma • Limited integration with integration services and low levels of employer engagement in targeted hiring	• Breaking the Cycle: Tempus Novo support for ex-offenders • The Armed Forces community support hub

Priorities

Most deprived neighbourhoods

This includes some of neighbourhoods in urban centres and those in more rural communities struggling to access services

Young people and NEETs

Number of 16-17 year olds who are NEET risen to over 500 (3%). Rises across the sub-region particularly Cheshire West & Chester

Long-term sickness and early retirement

Fit note data shows 7% off work due to long-term or temporary sickness across Cheshire and Merseyside. Earl retirement most likely reason for inactivity in C&W

Carers and parents facing challenges

Poverty levels low but a rising number of children living in relative poverty therefore impacting social mobility as can be seen with low attainment rates for those who are disadvantaged

Connecting people to opportunities

Variable qualification attainment and known gaps in levels 2 and 3. Also requires employers to provide opportunities for those looking for work

Discussion questions

- In addition to the the evidence, what issues are important in the local labour market?

- What do we need to better understand that isn't in the data?

- Do you agree with the priorities outlined?

- Is there anything missing?

Actions

Developing a strategic employment support service for Cheshire and Warrington through core functions:

- Building on provision that is working well
- Data and evidence development
- Partnership collaboration

Maximising the impact of the new Strategic Authority, aligning with:

- Adult Skills Fund
- Local Growth Plan and funding
- Transport strategy
- Housing and spatial planning
- SA-ICB partnership

Actions

Developing a strategic employment support service for Cheshire and Warrington, integrating future service design, enhancing collaboration mechanisms, and maximising the impact of the new Strategic Authority.

Most deprived neighbourhoods	Targeting support in people's communities through neighbourhood access points in e.g. Crewe North East, Hebden Green, Northwich, Dallam, Ellesmere Port, Central Warrington and Blacon.
Young people and NEETs	Preventing young people from falling through key transition points between school, college, training, and work. Supporting young people to access entry-level and upskilling opportunities through partners' collective levers.
Long-term sickness and early retirement	Joined-up tailored support for people who have and are at risk of being long-term sick, inactive or unemployed, integrating employment support and other support with mental health, physical health and disability care to tackle multiple barriers.
Carers and parents facing challenges	Responding to rising challenges for people with caring responsibilities and families with children living in low-income households and facing multiple issues e.g. childcare, fuel poverty and insecure work or unemployment.
Connecting people to opportunities	Better connecting employment support programmes with employers, supporting their capacity to employ and train people facing barriers to the labour market, supporting good and flexible job design.

Discussion questions

- Do you agree with the actions identified?

- What is missing?

- What should we agree to do over the next 12 months?

- What longer term outcomes should we aim for?

Next Steps

- Start of a journey
- Further engagement required with employers and service users (or potential users)
- How can we work better moving forwards? – e.g. developing a data lake to inform and improve services
- Informing devolution discussions