

# Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan Evidence Base

September 2025

Live working draft



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# Introduction

This evidence base has been developed to support the design of the Get Britain Working plan for Cheshire and Warrington. It brings together emerging data, insights and analysis, alongside service mapping, to inform strategic priorities.

This is a **live working draft**, designed to evolve throughout the course of the project. It will be iteratively updated as new evidence emerges and through engagement with partners.

Forthcoming insights to be included

- Insights from engagement with key partners: employers, local authorities, ICB teams and public sector stakeholders
- Expanded analysis of priority cohorts, including those affected by mental health conditions, musculoskeletal issues, homelessness, and ex-offenders
- Employer perspectives on training investment, job quality, and workforce retention
- Evidence on what works in reducing economic inactivity and supporting progression
- Exploration of key drivers of inactivity, including early retirement trends
- Further analysis of Universal Credit levels, particularly in Cheshire East
- Investigation into NEET-to-inactivity transitions and long-term outcomes
- Detailed mapping of existing services and support infrastructure
- Assessment of project impact, identifying what's working well locally

# Summary findings and priorities to explore

# Priorities to explore

Through initial data analysis, and review of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan high level summary, the following priorities for investigation have emerged

Understand rising inactivity

Rising long-term sickness and early retirement

Where to target support?

Targeted support for groups

Provision gaps

Employer Investment

# Known labour market challenges

Across Cheshire and Warrington, employment is high, particularly relative to the North West average. There has been strong jobs growth averaging 1.5% a year since 2011 (1.3% regionally and nationally) and there are a high number of jobs per working age resident (0.97 vs 0.86 nationally) but there are differing experiences, with certain cohorts and neighbourhoods experiencing more challenges – inactivity is generally low but in Warrington levels have been increasing.

<p>Labour market continues to perform strongly - employment at 80% target set out in the Get Britain working white paper.</p> <p>Economic inactivity and the claimant count also low compared to regional and national averages.</p> <p>But stubborn long-term unemployment around 100,000 people with little change over the last two decades.</p>	<p>Half the population qualified to degree level and above (47% UK and 43% North West) and in high skilled occupations.</p> <p>Apprenticeship achievements high but NEET levels have been increasing - a need to ensure progression pathways for level 3 and above.</p> <p>Estimated 64,000 jobs in Cheshire and Warrington earn below the living wage with a growing number of job vacancies.</p>	<p>Deprivation levels on the whole appear relatively low in Cheshire and Warrington. However, there are pockets of deprivation particularly in urban centres.</p> <p>This impacts social mobility and creates barriers for those in more deprived areas. Attainment and progression rates lower for young people eligible for free school meals.</p>
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# Cohorts most likely to face challenges

## Economically inactive residents

Inactivity low but has been rising. Focus on those with mental health conditions, disabilities, over 50, homeless, ex-offenders and MSK problems

## NEET and young people

Number of 16-17 year olds who are NEET risen to over 800 (3.8%). Rises across the sub-region particularly Cheshire West & Chester

## Those living in more deprived areas

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

## Unpaid carers and single parents

Barriers to workforce participation faced by unpaid carers and single parents recognised in Cheshire and Merseyside Work and Health Strategy

## Sector specific challenges

Lack of health and social care experts leading to reliance on agency staff. Need to monitor trends across key sectors including life sciences, manufacturing, digital and low carbon

# Progression in work and quality of jobs

While Cheshire and Warrington’s economy is strong, stalled productivity suggests mixed job quality, while skills gaps show a lack of career progression opportunities and access to adequate support

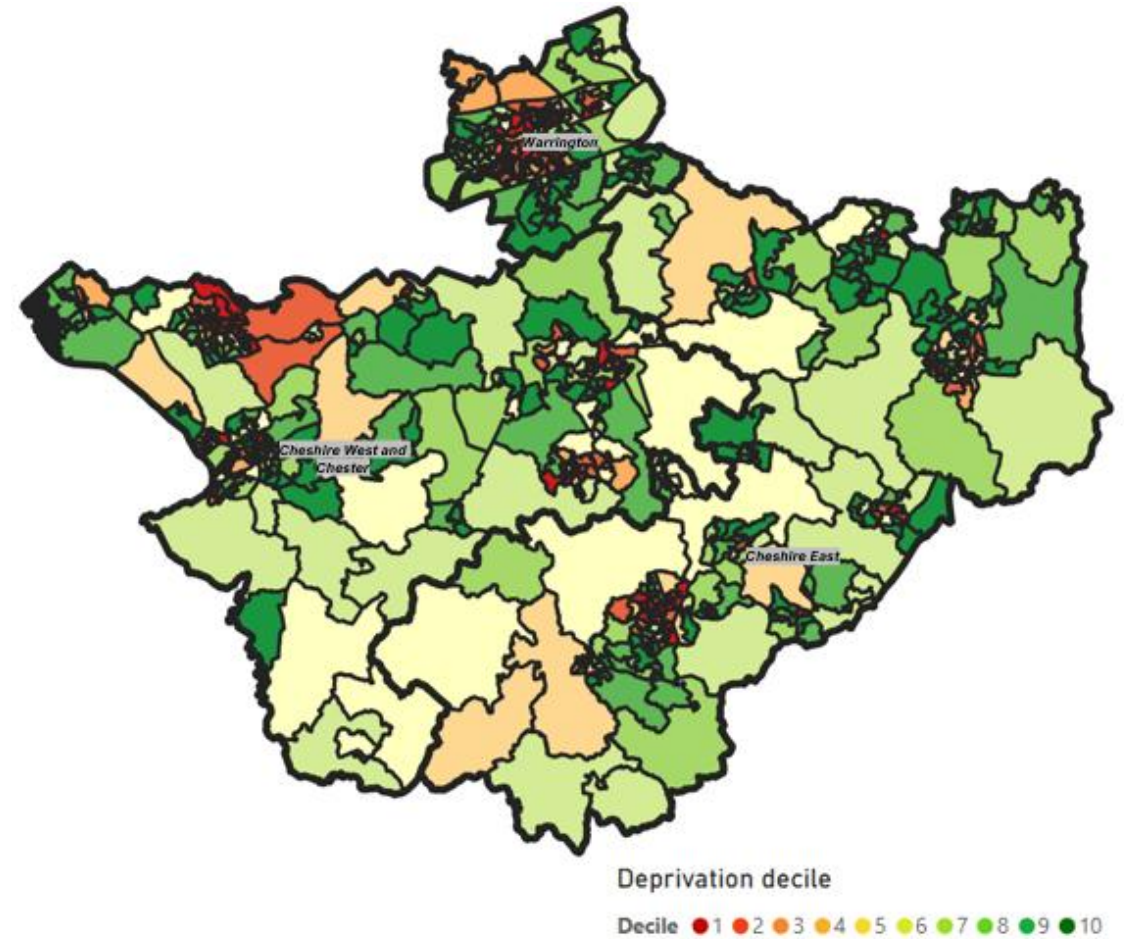
Employment is high, but not always job quality	Opportunities are growing but access is uneven	Residents pay exceeds local jobs pay	Progression is improving but clear gaps remain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>80% employment rate across Cheshire &amp; Warrington</li><li>Average earnings in line with national average</li><li>Proportion earning below the living wage of 13.8% low compared to 16-17% regionally and nationally</li><li>But around 64,000 people in low-paid or insecure work with limited progression routes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Faster jobs growth than regionally and nationally</li><li>Sectors with growing demand include health and social care, construction and advanced manufacturing</li><li>But skills mismatch makes career progression challenging</li><li>Variable levels of training – less than half of staff trained in Cheshire East (~60% nationally)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In Cheshire East and Cheshire West, residents pay exceeds local job pay</li><li>This suggests people are commuting for better jobs, or that local jobs do not align with local skills needs</li><li>Estimated 40% of employees (~400,000) in Cheshire &amp; Merseyside work in industries with high levels of work-related health problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Higher-level apprenticeship rate remains high</li><li>But lower intermediate apprenticeship achievement rate than regionally</li><li>Persistent skills gaps, especially level 2-3 qualifications</li><li>13.5% of adults in Warrington have no qualifications</li><li>NEET levels below regionally but risen to 4%</li></ul>

The LSIP has identified clear skills needs and is working to align education and training with labour market demand, this includes interactions with schools, and championing employer-led skills development priorities.

# Deprivation

**Deprivation levels generally low but pockets particularly in urban centres amongst most deprived nationally**

- On the whole deprivation is low with almost two thirds of neighbourhoods living in the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally, and over a third of neighbourhoods in the least 20% deprived nationally.
- However there are pockets of deprivation across the sub-region particularly in urban centres of Crewe, Winsford, Warrington, Northwich, Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port.
- This includes some neighbourhoods towards the most deprived in the country including Crewe North East, Lache, Hebden Green, Poplars and Hulme, Central Warrington and Wharton.



# Priorities to explore

## Understand rising inactivity

Inactivity generally low but levels have been increasing in Warrington to above a quarter of the working age population despite a high number of jobs available per working age resident – further research and engagement to understand the differences to Cheshire.

## Rising long-term sickness and early retirement

Both increasing as reasons for economic inactivity. Rising long-term sickness reflective of wider national trend but increasing proportion giving retirement as reason for inactivity not seen nationally. Engagement to help inform local drivers of inactivity

## Where to target support?

Additional engagement to test focus groups for tailored support. These groups are those with mental health conditions, disabilities, over 50, homeless, ex-offenders and MSK problems.

## Targeted support for groups

Support to be more focused where deprivation is highest and therefore barriers to social mobility and employment are higher - from initial research this is Crewe North East, Hebdon Green, Northwich, Dallam, Ellesmere Port, Central Warrington and Blacon.

## Provision gaps

Understand more about the employment support system and targeted provision programmes on offer in Cheshire and Warrington – where has there been successes and where remains gaps in provision?

## Employer Investment

Engage with employers to better understand which employers are investing in training and progression, what is holding others back, and the quality of work on offer.

# Place-based inequality and social mobility

# On the whole, fewer households tend to be deprived in Cheshire and Warrington

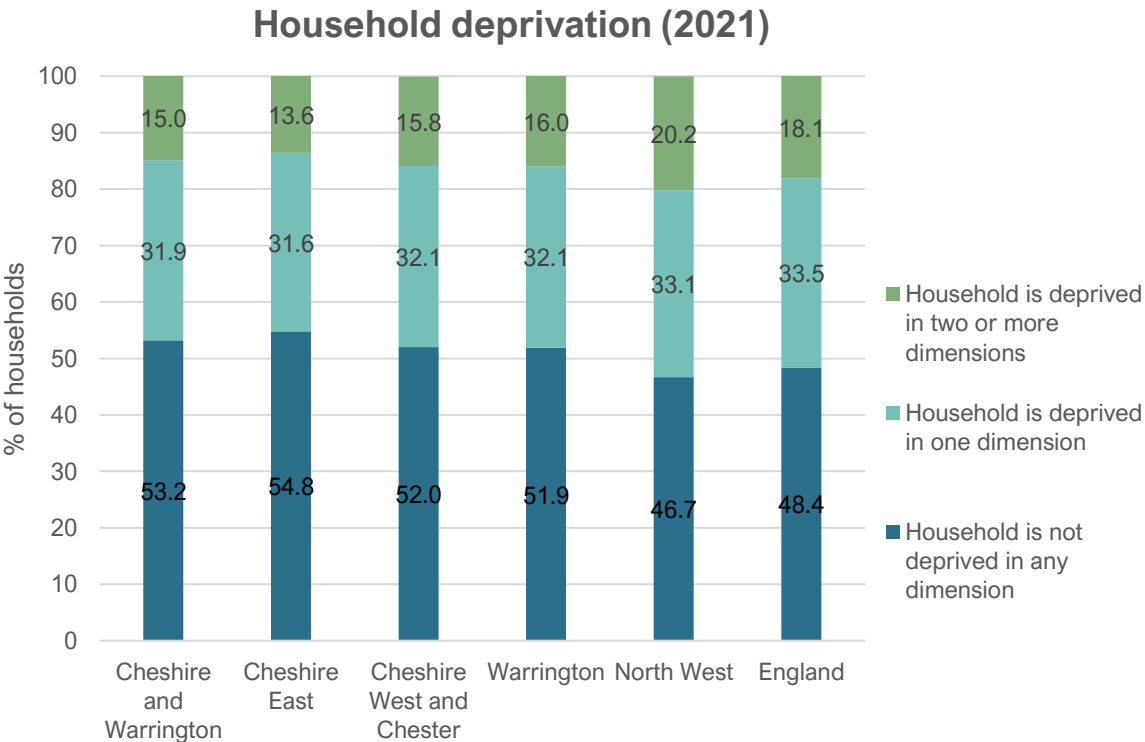
**Fewer households in Cheshire and Warrington tend to be deprived in one of the four dimensions of education, employment, health and housing.**

Using latest Census data, we can see more up-to-date estimates relating to deprivation. The dimensions of deprivation are based on education, employment, health and housing.

Over half of households are not deprived in any of the four dimensions in Cheshire and Warrington, with the lowest level of household deprivation in Cheshire East.

This does not provide a detailed sense across the place, but provides an indication that generally deprivation is deemed to be lower in Cheshire and Warrington, especially within the regional context.

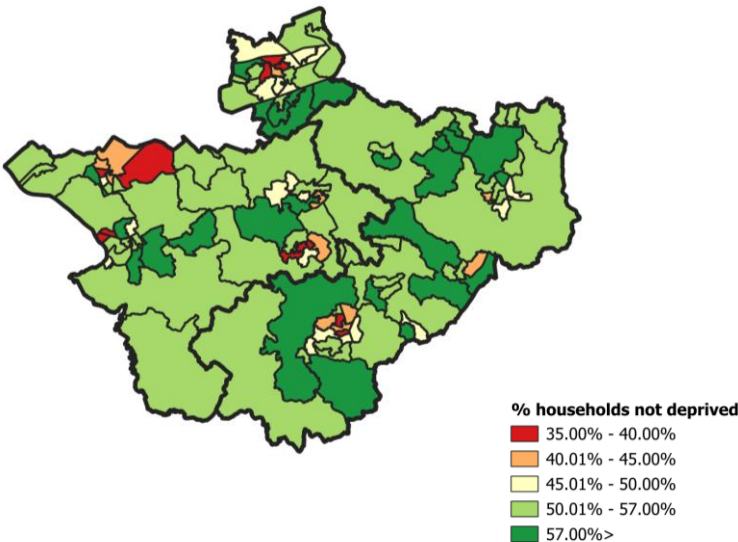
The Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a neighbourhood level view of deprivation to get a better sense of inequality within the region.



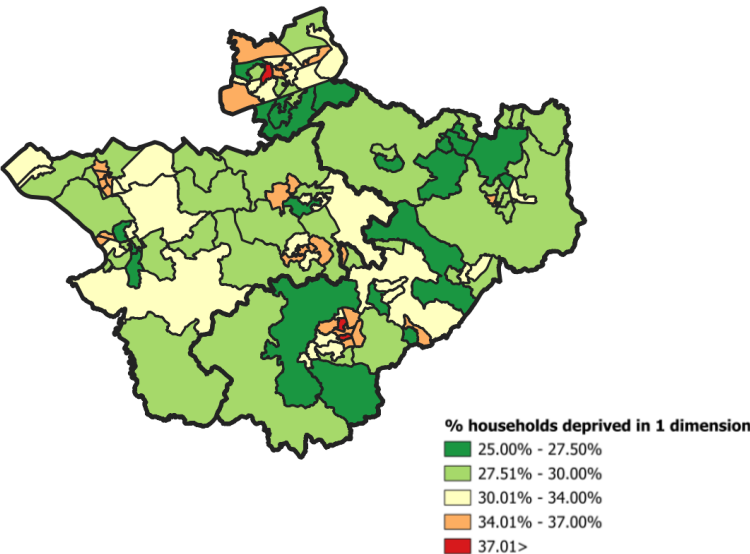
# Areas tend to experience deprivation across multiple dimensions

As shown on the last slide, household deprivation on the whole is relatively low in Cheshire and Warrington. However there are some areas which appear to experience more challenge – deprived in at least two of the four dimensions of education, employment, health and housing. This includes neighbourhoods in Crewe, Winsford and Hebden Green, Lache, Ellesmere Port, Kingsmead, Congleton, Warrington and Lyme Green. This will be explored further in the following slides which maps the Index of Multiple Deprivation including its 7 domains.

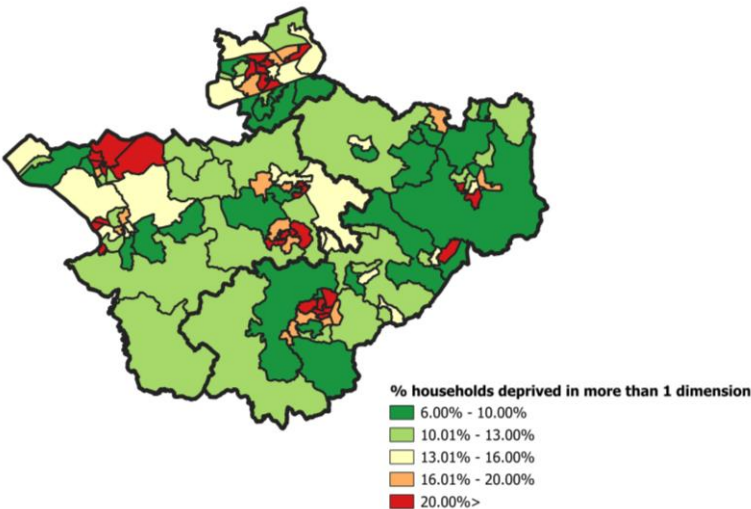
Percentage of households not deprived



Percentage of households deprived in one dimension



Percentage of households deprived in more than one dimension



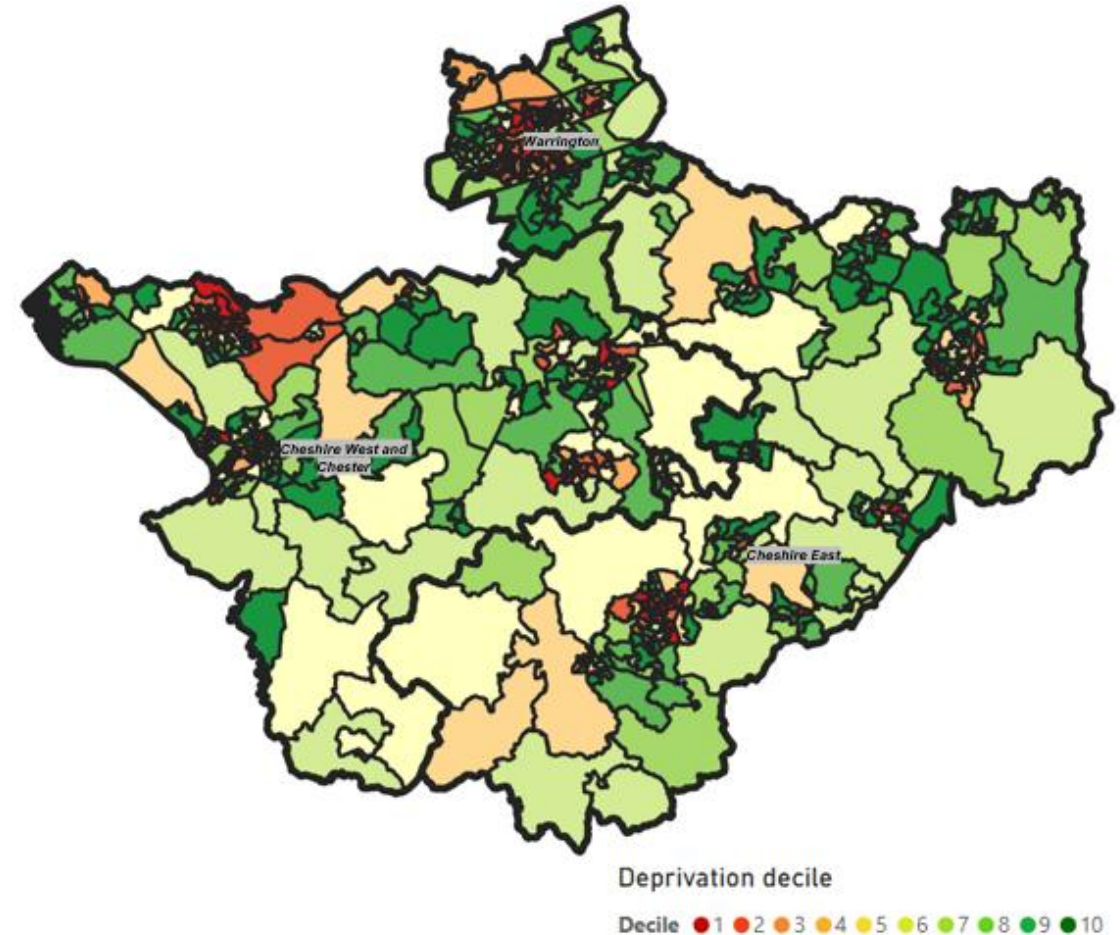
# Deprivation – Index of Multiple Deprivation

## Deprivation levels generally low but pockets in urban centres amongst the most deprived nationally

Across Cheshire and Warrington deprivation levels are generally low, with almost two thirds of neighbourhoods living in the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally, and over a third of neighbourhoods in the least 20% deprived nationally. Deprivation levels on the whole are particularly low in Cheshire East, with over 40% of neighbourhoods in the least 20% deprived nationally, and only around 7% of neighbourhoods in the top 20% most deprived nationally.

However there are pockets of deprivation across the region including in and around Crewe, Winsford, Warrington, Northwich, Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port.

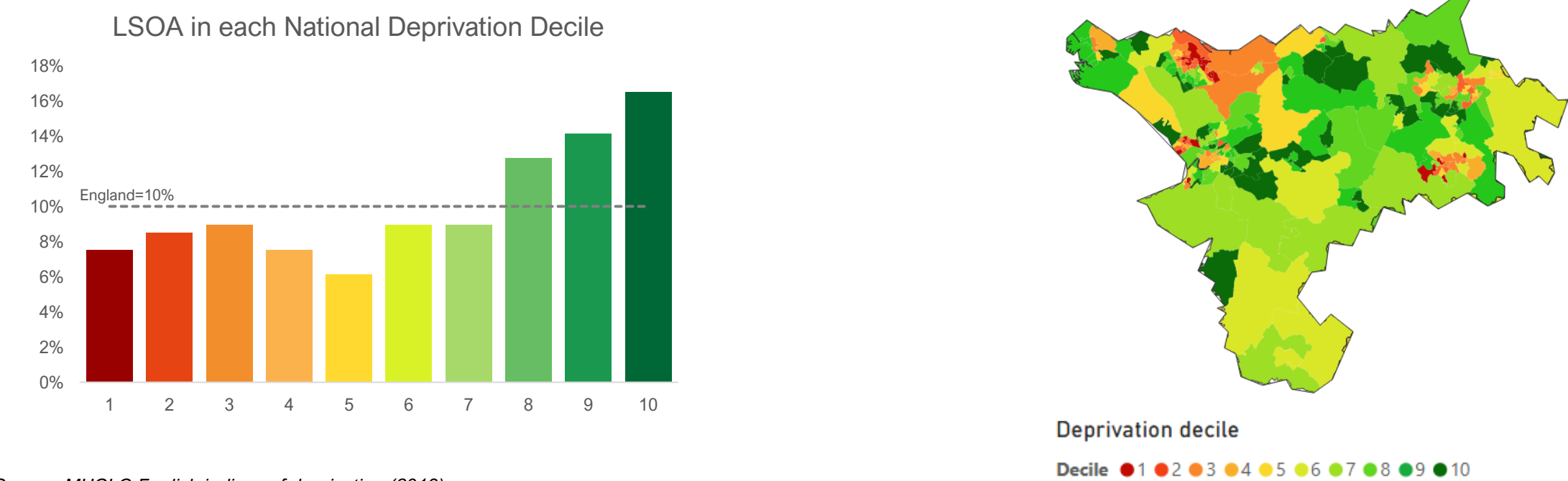
This includes some neighbourhoods towards the most deprived in the country including Crewe North East, Lache, Hebden Green, Poplars and Hulme, Central Warrington and Wharton.



# Cheshire West and Chester IMD

Cheshire West and Chester presents a varied picture of deprivation. While much of the borough is relatively affluent, with a high proportion of boroughs amongst the least deprived nationally, there are pockets of significant deprivation concentrated in some urban areas. Blacon, Ellesmere Port and parts of Winsford feature LSOAs ranked amongst the most deprived nationally.

7% of LSOAs fall into the most deprived nationally, slightly below the national average, and a notably high 17% fall in the least deprived decline.

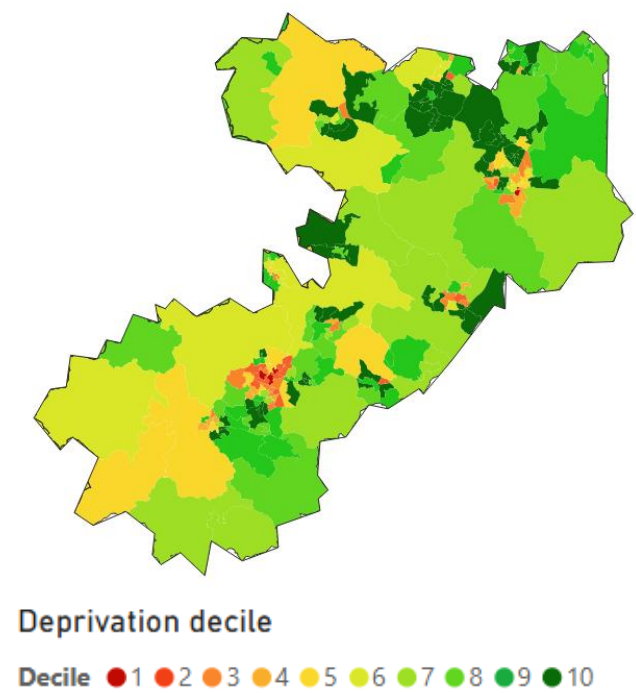
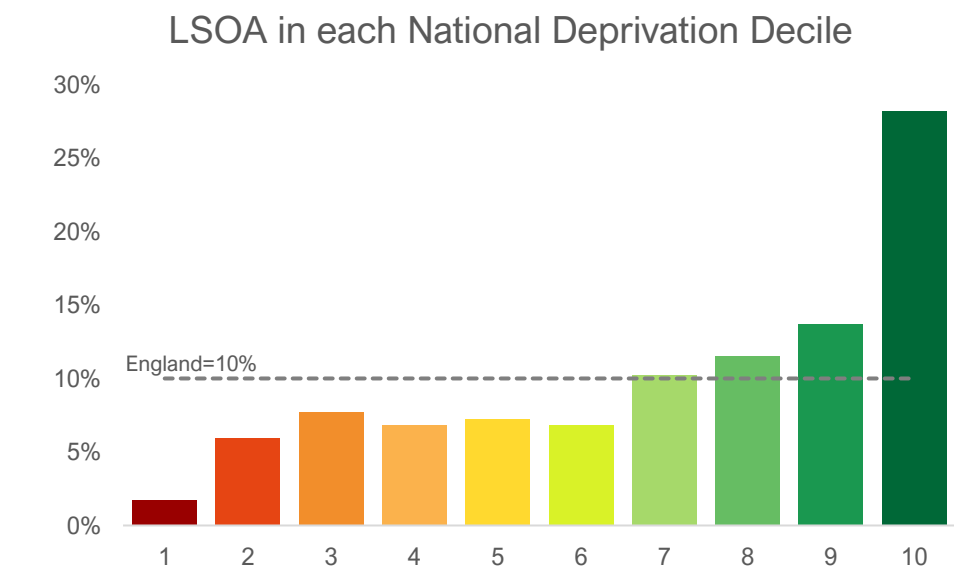


Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Cheshire East IMD

Cheshire East has a strong proportion of its neighbourhoods ranking among the least deprived nationally. Over a quarter of LSOAs fall into the least deprived decile, significantly outperforming the national average and reflecting high overall quality of life across much of the borough.

There remain some small areas of deprivation, particularly around Crewe and parts of Macclesfield, where a few neighbourhoods fall into the most deprived national decile, accounting for 2% of LSOAs. These areas also suffer most significantly across health, and education deprivation.

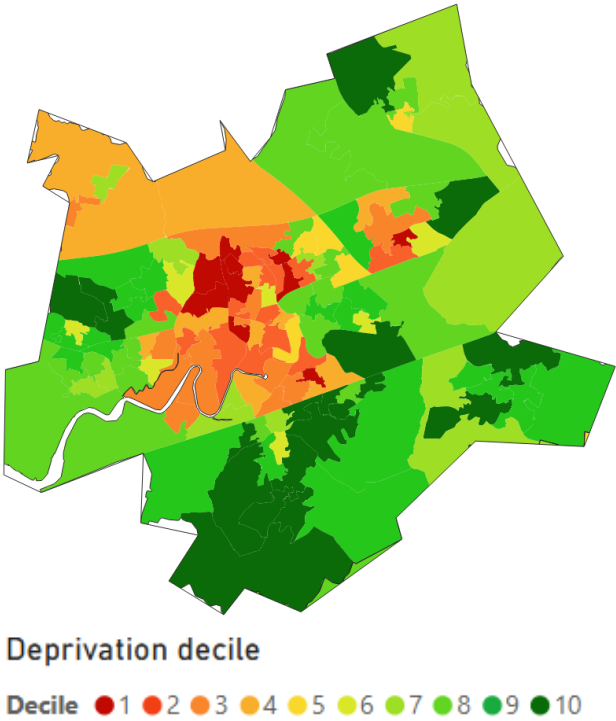
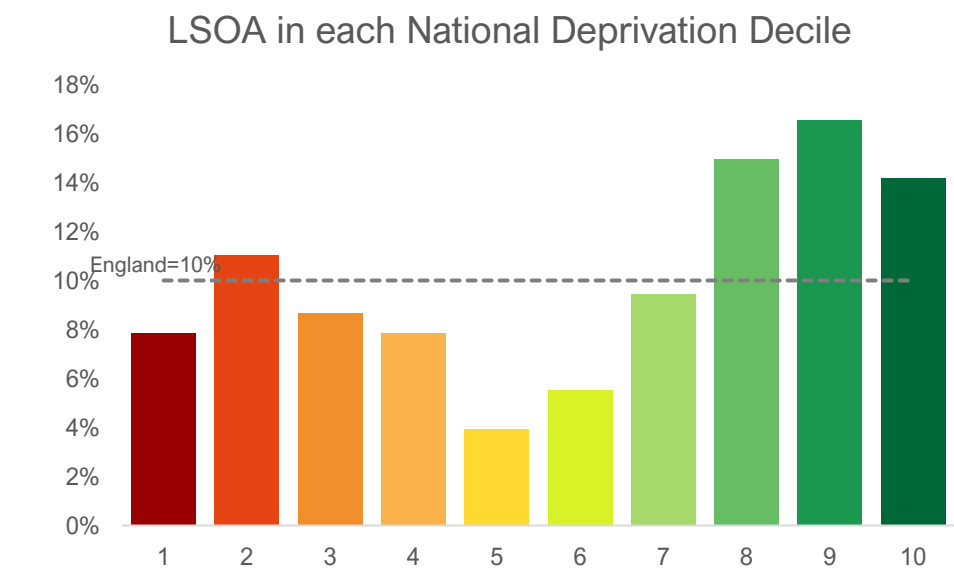


Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Warrington IMD

Warrington has clear contrasts between central urban and rural areas. 18% of LSOAs fall into the 2 most deprived deciles. There are concentrations of deprivation in areas such as Orford, Poplars and Hulme and Dallam, exhibiting poor health outcomes, low education attainment, and income deprivation.

At the same time, over 45% of areas sit within the top three least deprived deciles, reflecting significant disparities within the borough. Parts of the boroughs urban fringe, such as Appleton and Stockton Heath sit strongly in the least deprived deciles.



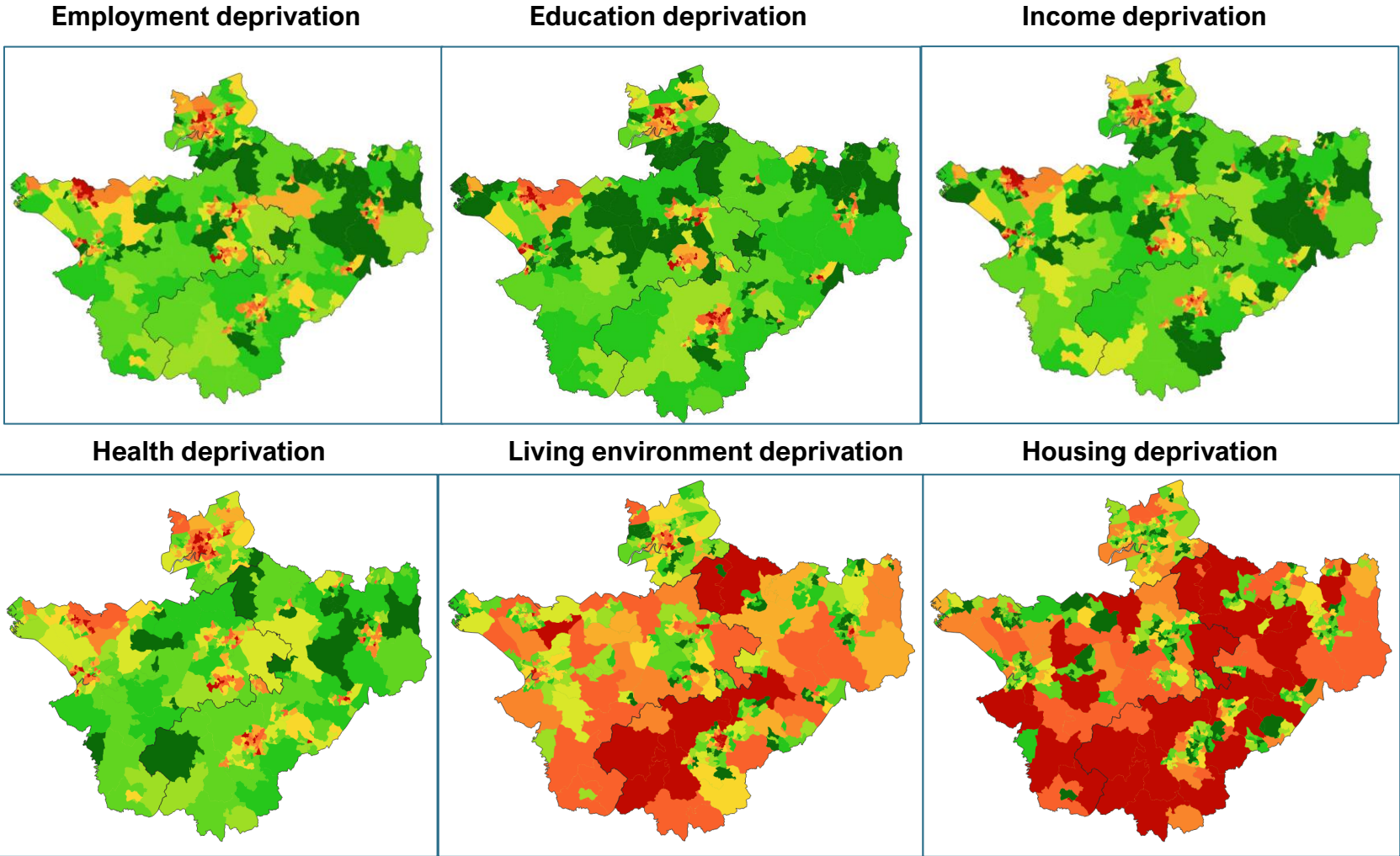
Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Varied experience across Cheshire and Warrington

Focusing on different domains which make up the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation mostly points to a relatively low level of deprivation across Cheshire and Warrington, particularly across the domains of employment; health; education, skills and training; and income.

However deprivation is much higher in relation to living environment (*housing quality proxies for indoor environment and outdoor environment by traffic accidents and air quality*) and access to housing and services (*physical proximity of local services and wider barriers such as affordability*).

Deprivation generally low across the East of the sub-region and North Cheshire apart from in regards to living environment and housing. Some neighbourhoods experience deprivation across domains including Crewe North East, Hebden Green, Northwich, Dallam, Ellesmere Port, Central Warrington and Blacon.



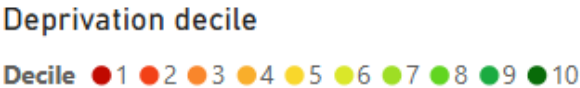
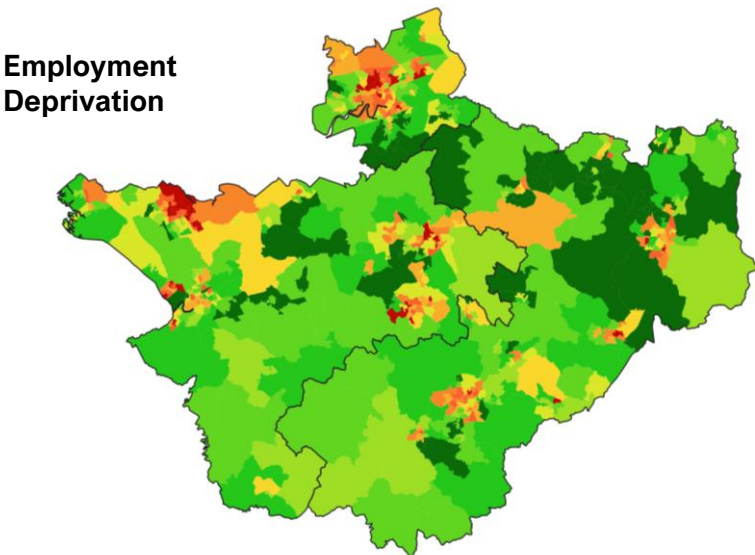
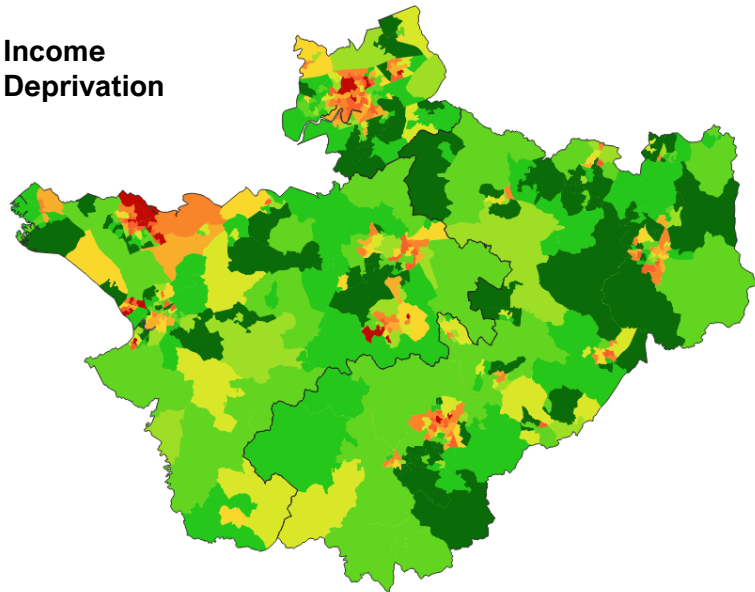
Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Employment and income deprivation

Income deprivation measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. Employment measures the proportion of the working age population in an areas involuntarily excluded from the labour market.

Generally the East shows a low level of deprivation apart from some areas in and around Macclesfield and Congelton. Much of the South of Cheshire also shows low levels of deprivation.

Crewe displays a high level of deprivation which can be seen in many of the other domains, as well as areas in and around Winsford and Hebden Green, Ellesmere Port, Blacon and Warrington including Dallam.



Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Education, skills and training deprivation

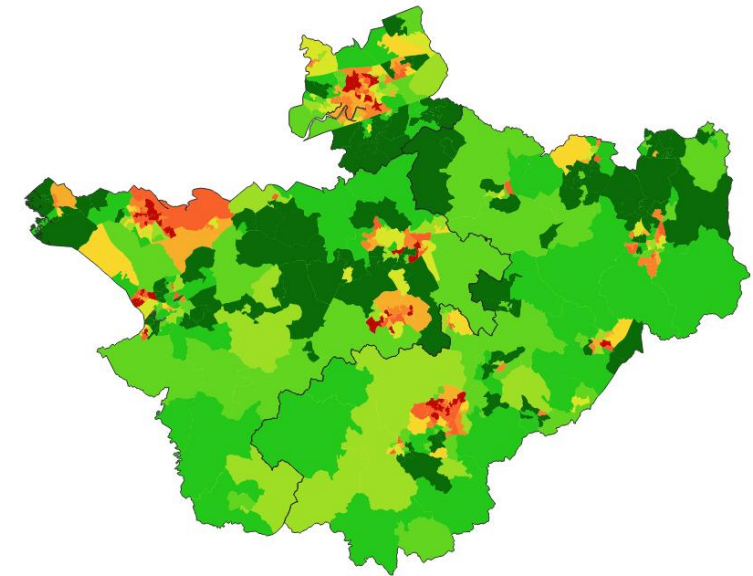
Education, skills and training deprivation domain measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population.

Again the East of the region displays a low level of deprivation apart from Congelton. Much of the South of Cheshire also shows low levels of deprivation including Stapeley.

There are some significant pockets of deprivation including Crewe, Winsford, Ellesmere Port and Bacton but much of the remainder of Cheshire displays a low level of deprivation.

Warrington displays higher levels of deprivation in relation to education, skills and training particularly Central Warrington including Dallam, Westy and Orford.

Education, skills and training deprivation



Deprivation decile

Decile 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Health deprivation

## Cheshire and Warrington’s economic success masks deep disparities between places

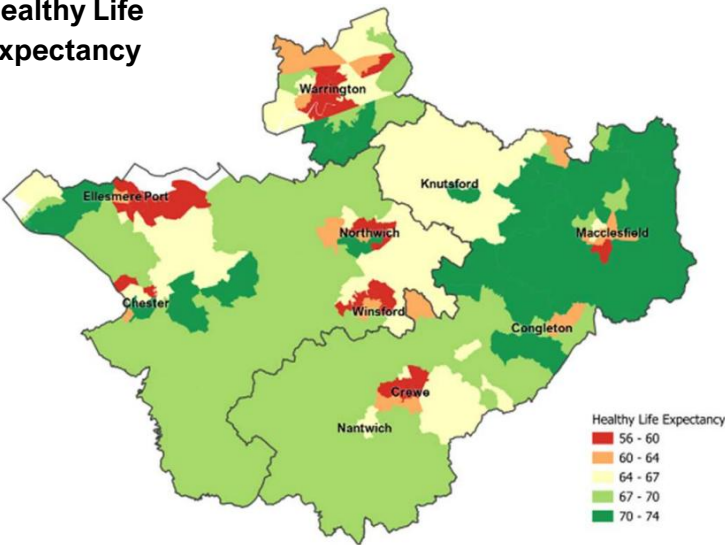
Health deprivation measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.

Taking a closer look at health deprivation across the region, there are significant pockets of challenge, more so than income, employment and education, with more of neighbourhoods in the top 50% deprived nationally. The most at risk of impairment of quality of life through poor health are residents living in Crewe, Hebdon Green, Blacon, Ellesmere Port and Northwich. There are also some neighbourhoods likely to experience health challenges in and around Chester.

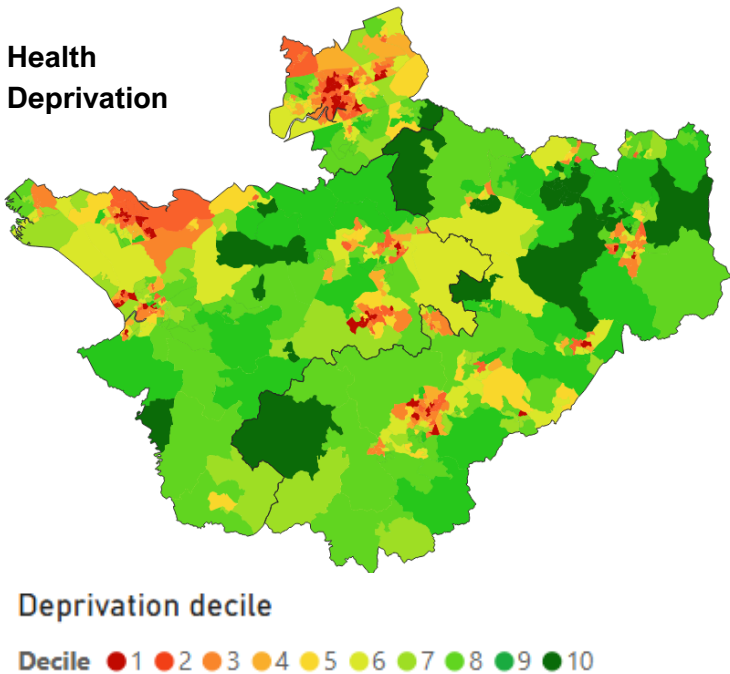
Across Cheshire and Warrington, residents who live in the most deprived wards are more likely to be economically inactive and/or suffering from ill health are amongst the most disadvantaged. There are clear links between these metrics:

Life expectancy differs by nearly a decade between affluent and deprived wards

Healthy Life Expectancy



Health Deprivation



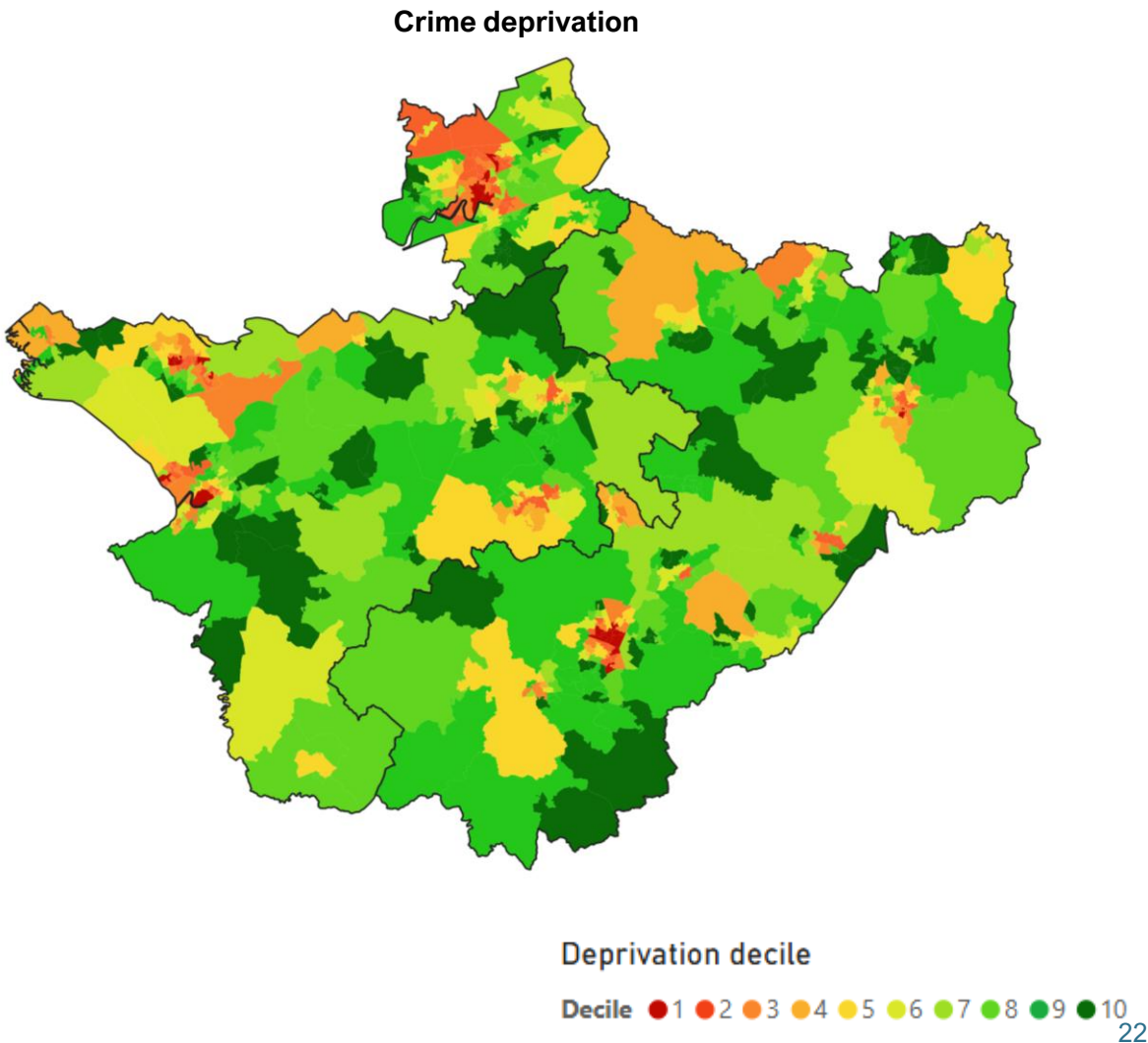
Source: Cheshire & Warrington: Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy DRAFT  
MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Crime deprivation

The crime domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level.

This varies somewhat to the previous domains analyses, but generally there is a low level of deprivation in relation to crime, although there are some pockets which are not deprived in other domains including areas around Nantwich including Ravensmoor and Burland, Morley Green, areas around Knutsford including Mere and Ashley, areas around Disley.

Other areas where pockets of crime deprivation are highest tends to be towards the most deprived in other domains including Crewe, Ellesmere Port, Maccelsfield and Warrington.

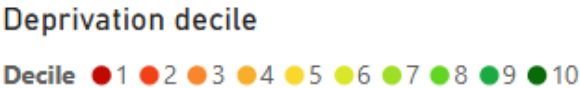
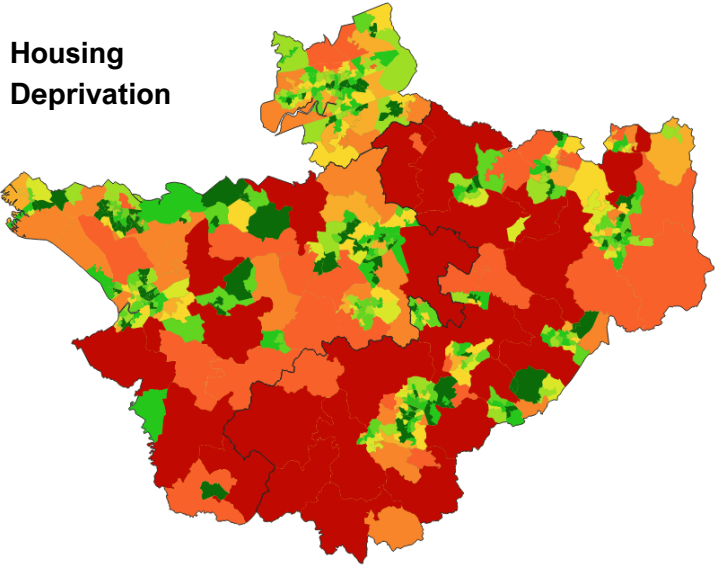
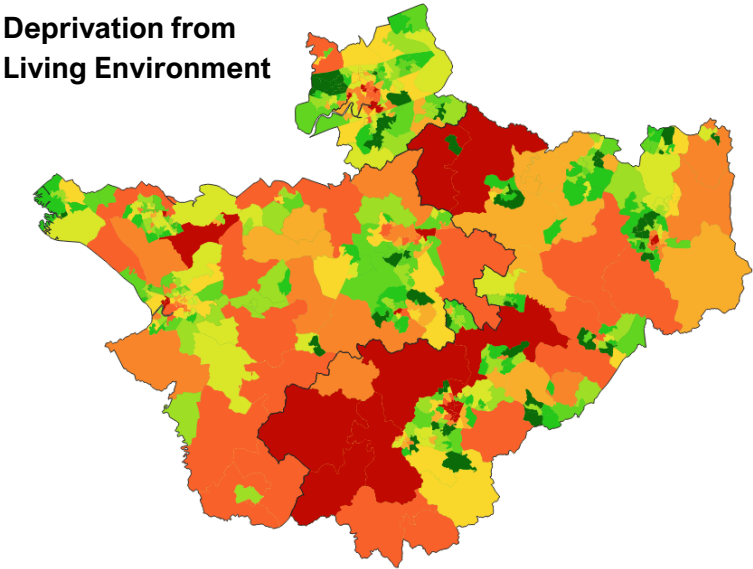


# Living environment and housing deprivation

The living environment measures indoor environment (housing quality proxies for indoor environment and outdoor environment (traffic accidents and air quality). Access to housing and services is measured by physical proximity of local services and wider barriers such as affordability.

These two domains show by far the highest level of deprivation but interestingly pockets of high deprivation in other areas are less deprived in these domains, perhaps particularly explained by lower house prices providing greater housing affordability and especially in urban centres, greater accessibility to services. Lower levels of deprivation include areas in and around Crewe, Northwich, Congelton and Warrington.

But much of the South and East of Cheshire displays high levels of deprivation in relation to housing, perhaps with reduced housing affordability and more rural nature of some areas meaning accessibility to services is more limited/ is further away in terms of physical proximity.



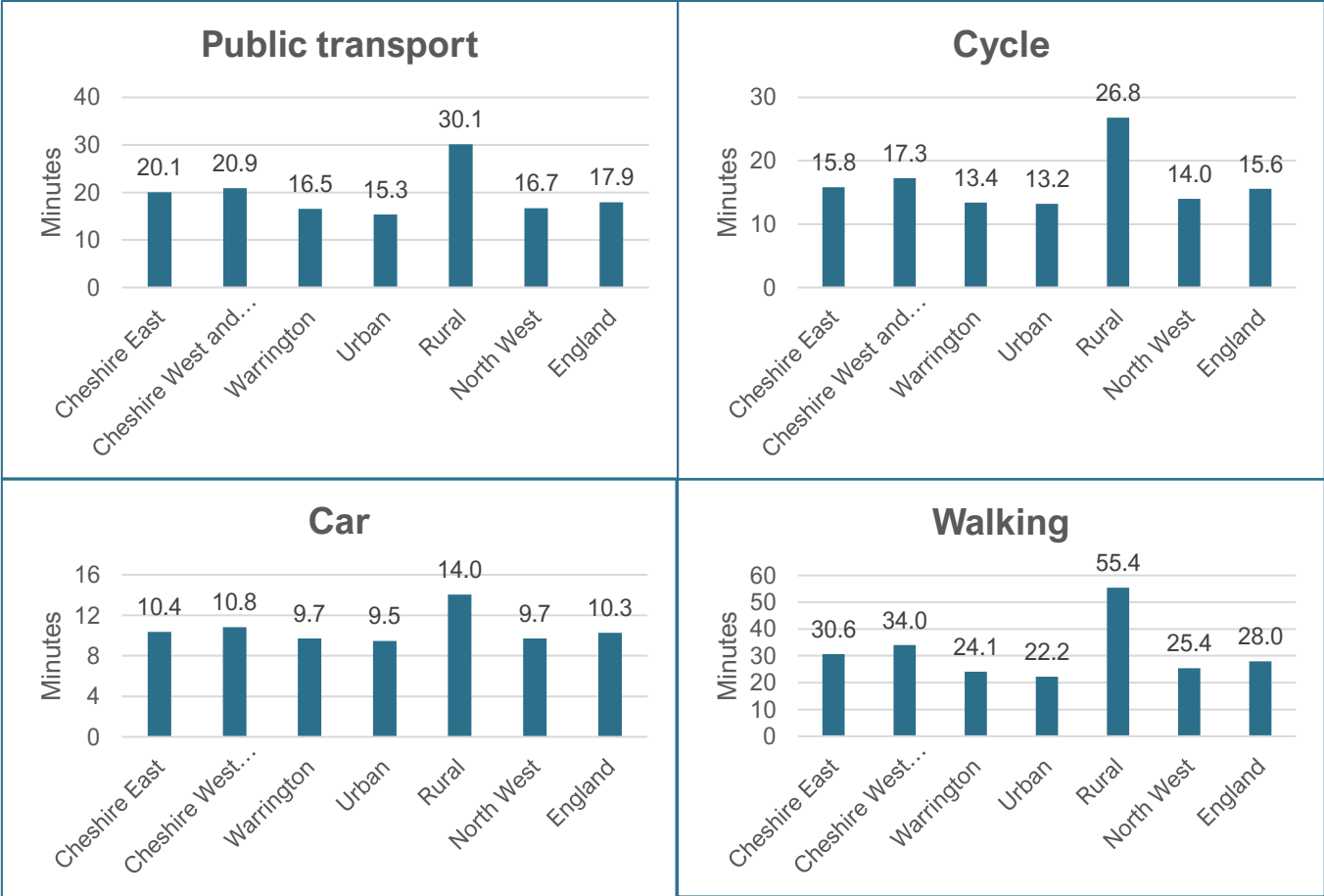
Source: MHCLG English indices of deprivation (2019)

# Journey times to key services

The charts to the right show the average journey time to reach eight key services\* by mode of transport in 2019.

Journey times are longer in Cheshire than in Warrington reflecting the more rural nature of Cheshire.

Although journey times to reach key services are below the average for all rural areas in England in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester across modes, accessibility to key services appears more of a barrier in Cheshire than it does in Warrington.



Notes: Average of minimum journey times to medium sized centres of employment (500-4999 jobs), primary schools, secondary schools, further education, GPs, hospitals, food stores and town centres.

Source: DfT Journey time statistics (2022)

# Journey times to employment centres

This table presents travel times to employment sites of different sizes (100-499 jobs, 500-4,999 jobs, and 5,000+ jobs) indexed to the England average (1.0) for different modes of transport in 2019. A value above 1.0 indicates longer travel times relative to the national average, while a value below 1.0 indicates shorter travel times.

Across employment centre sizes, Warrington tends to have quicker journey times particularly to large employment centres with 5,000 or more jobs, indicating fairly good accessibility to employment sites.

Journey times to employment centres are longer in Cheshire than the national average particularly for smaller employment sites but comparable to the national average for larger employment sites. Again journey times are quicker to employment sites compared to the average for all rural areas across modes and employment centre sizes although this highlights that there may be more challenges in Cheshire in accessing employment sites particularly using public transport.

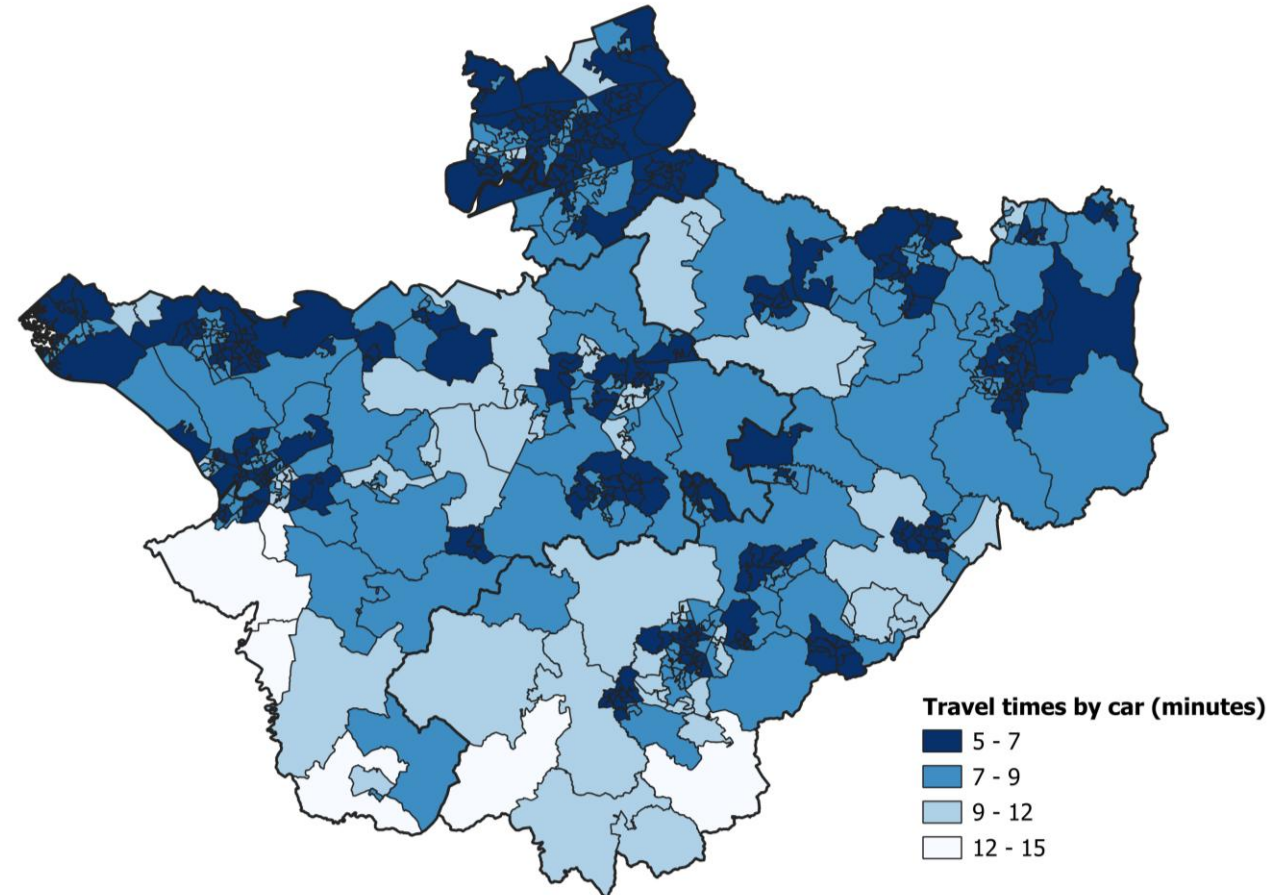
Area	Places with 100-499 jobs				Places with 500-4999 jobs				Places with 5000 or more jobs			
	Public Transport	Cycle	Car	Walking	Public Transport	Cycle	Car	Walking	Public Transport	Cycle	Car	Walking
Cheshire East	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0
Cheshire West and Chester	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.3
Warrington	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7
North West	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9
Urban	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8
Rural	2.0	1.6	1.3	2.6	1.7	1.6	1.3	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.8

# Journey times to employment centres by car

The map to the right shows journey times to medium employment centres (500-4,999 jobs) by car at an LSOA level across Cheshire and Warrington.

Accessibility does not vary significantly to the regional or national average of around 7 minutes on the whole. Journey times are quickest in Warrington along with urban centres of Crewe, Winsford, Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Knutsford, Congleton and Macclesfield.

Journey times by car to medium sized employment centres typically are longer in more rural areas including North Eastern (Aston, Delamere, Crowton) and southern areas (Aldford, Eccleston and Farndon) of Cheshire West and Chester and southern areas (Bradfield Green, Barbridge and Brindley, (Marbury, Hatherton and Blackenhall) of Cheshire East.



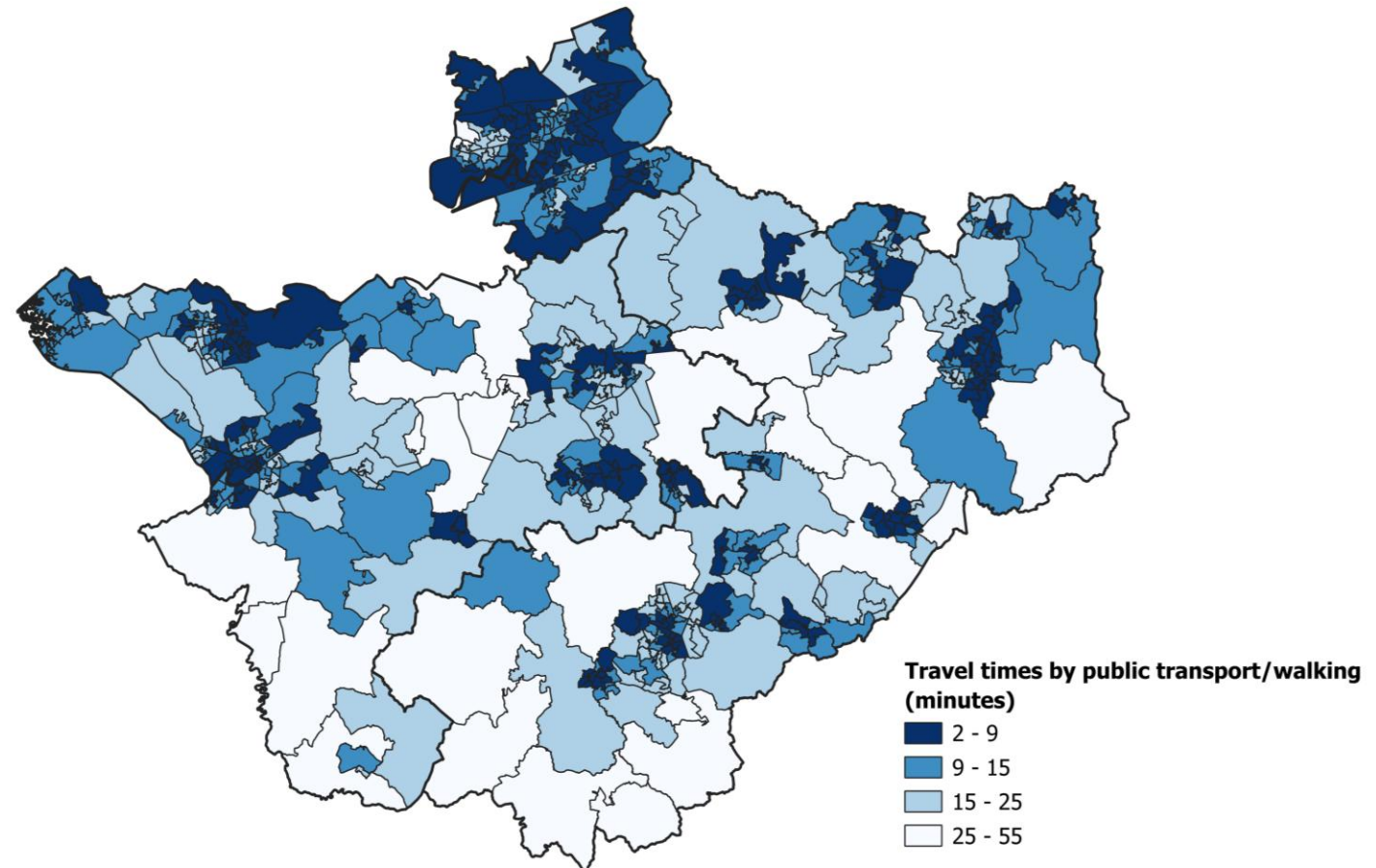
# Journey times to employment centres by public transport

The map to the right shows journey times to medium employment centres (500-4,999 jobs) by public transport at an LSOA level across Cheshire and Warrington.

Similarly to the map on the previous slide, journey times are shorter in the subregion's urban centres Crewe, Winsford, Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port and Neston, Knutsford, Congleton and Macclesfield and generally across areas in Warrington, on average less than 15 minutes.

Journey times by public transport to medium sized employment centres typically are longer in more rural areas, with this being seen more starkly than compared to journey times by car with large areas of Cheshire at least 25 minutes away from medium sized employment centres.

In Cheshire East this includes northern (Marshall, Siddington, areas close to Macclesfield Forest) and southern areas of the district and Cheshire West following a similar trend to car journey times, where journey times are longer in north eastern and southern areas.



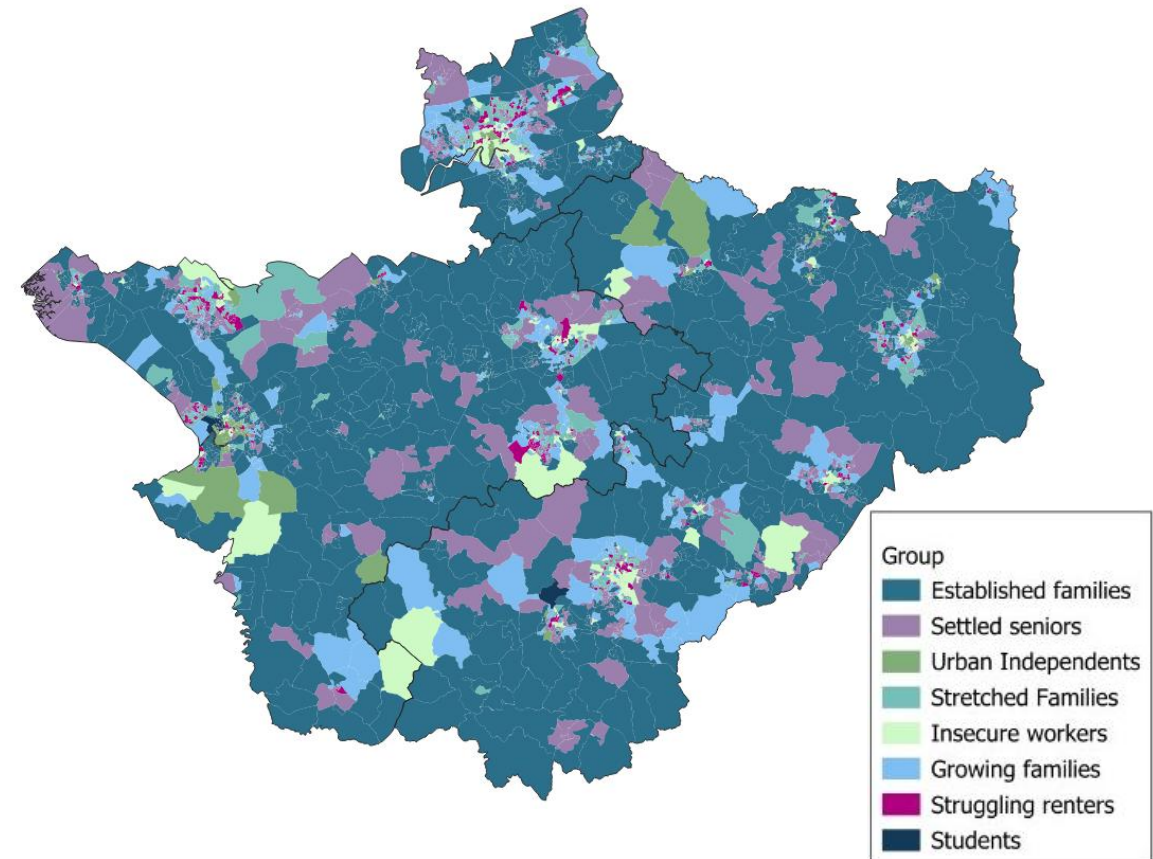
# Population clusters breakdown

**Cheshire and Warrington is largely composed of established and growing families, with a notable senior population. Insecure Workers and Struggling Renters are concentrated in urban centres.**

Metro Dynamics have developed a multi-dimensional, descriptive tool to classify population groups using 2021 data. This approach synthesises multiple characteristics of people living in a small area combining indicators covering: Housing tenure, occupation group, recent move, health, economic activity status, household type, household deprivation and qualification levels.

This map reflects the breakdown of the population:

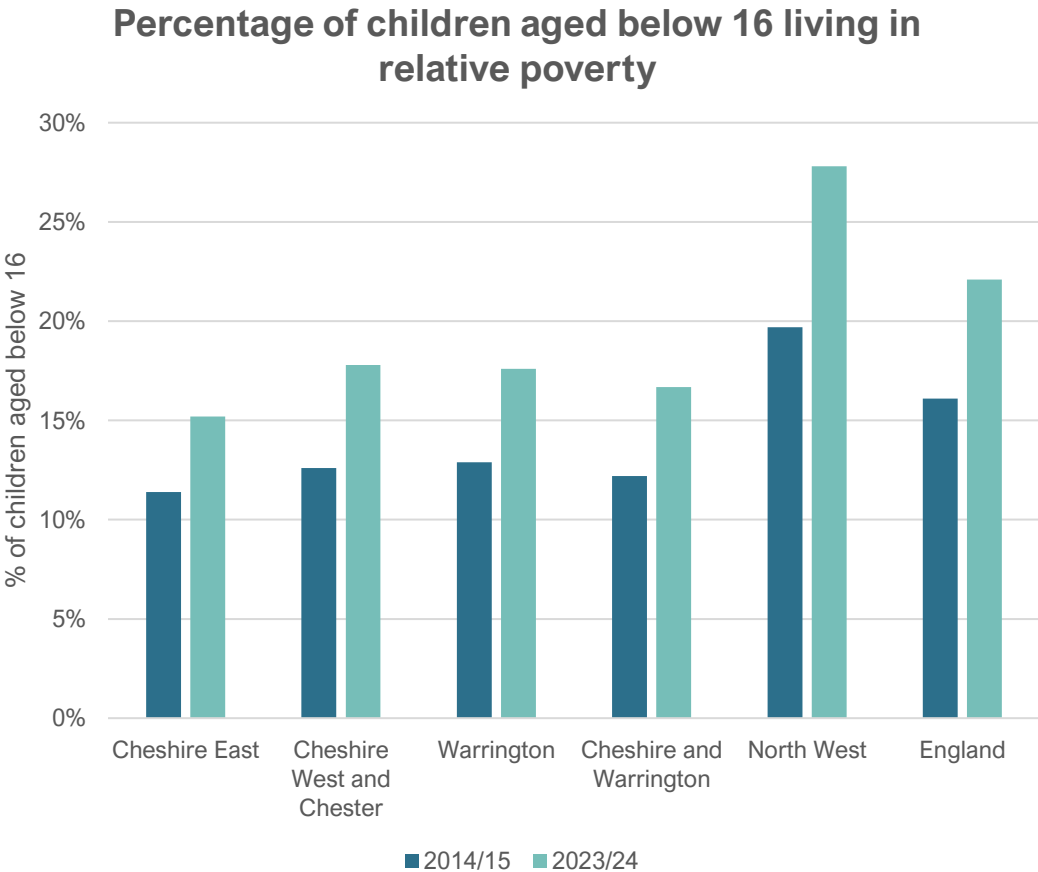
- The majority of those living in Cheshire and Warrington are established families.
- There is a significant settled senior population, reflective of the ageing population.
- Insecure Workers are present in multiple locations, with a scattered distribution but tending to overlap with areas of high deprivation particularly in urban centres of Crewe, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Blacon and Warrington.
- Stretched Families and Struggling Renters are also dispersed across the sub region but tend to be concentrated in urban centres which are amongst the most deprived nationally.



# Child poverty

**Although the number of children living in poverty is comparatively low, especially within the North West region, there has been a rise in the number of children living in poverty**

- Latest estimates across Cheshire and Warrington estimate that just over 29,000 children aged below 16 are living in relative poverty (refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year), around 17% of children across Cheshire and Warrington, however this is up from 12% in 2014/15, a rise of 9,000 children.
- The three authorities in Cheshire and Warrington rank amongst the six districts with the lowest levels of relative child poverty across the North West
  - Cheshire East an increase from 7,500 children to 11,000 living in relative poverty – 15% of children, third lowest out of 37 local authorities across North West although a rise of 4.4% a year in relative poverty over the last decade.
  - Warrington a rise from 5,100 children to 7,000 living in relative poverty – 17.6% of children, fifth lowest across local authorities in the North West
  - Cheshire West & Chester a rise from 7,400 to 11,150 children in relative poverty – 17.8% of children, sixth lowest across North West.
- Nonetheless, there has been an increase in the number of children living in relative poverty across all areas of Cheshire and Warrington.

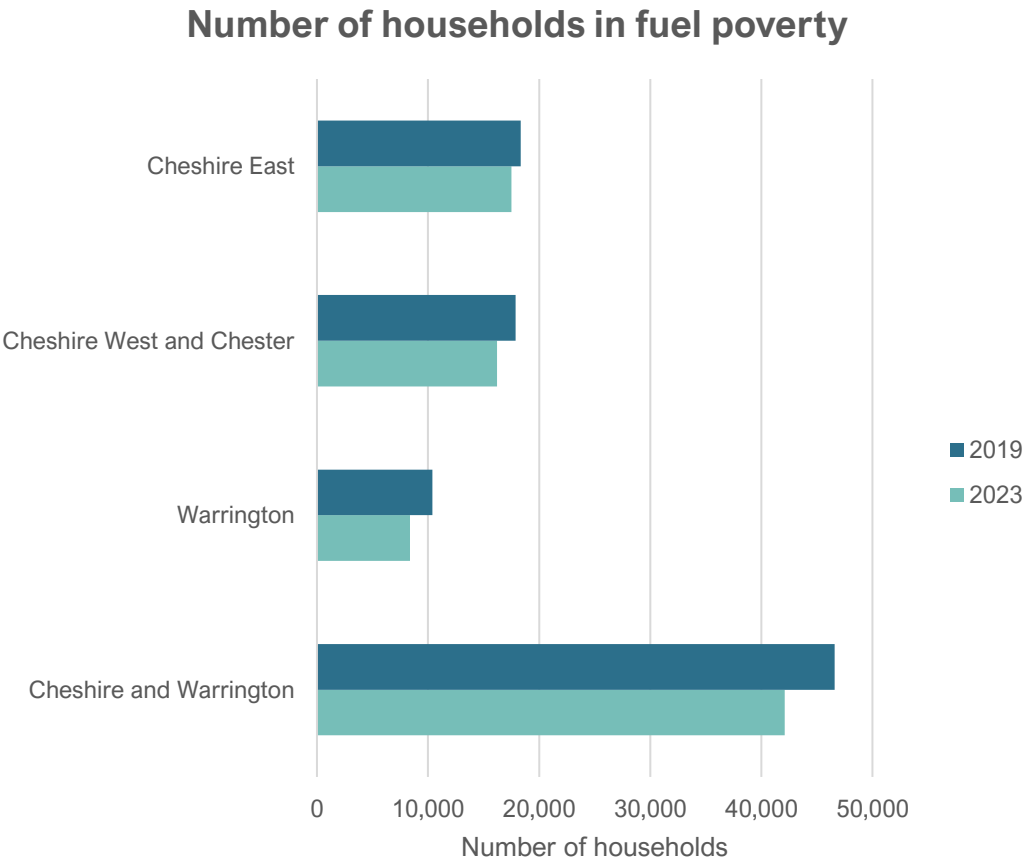


Source: Department for Work and Pensions Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2024

# Fuel poverty

10% of households across Cheshire and Warrington are experiencing fuel poverty.

- Although the percentage of households who are in fuel poverty as fallen over recent years, there remains over 42,000 (10% of households) households across Cheshire and Warrington who are experiencing fuel poverty (A household is considered to be fuel poor if they are living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below).
- The three local authorities have seen a fall in the number of households who are in fuel poverty, this is no lower than 9%, so continues to show thousands of households continue to face significant potential barriers to entering into employment
- Warrington has the lowest proportion of households in fuel poverty, the second lowest across 37 local authorities in the North West, although at almost 8,400 households (9% of households) this is still a significant proportion of the population.
- 17,500 households are in fuel poverty in Cheshire east, 9.7% of total households – this is fourth lowest across the North West.
- 16,200 households are in fuel poverty in Cheshire West & Chester, 10% of total households, the sixth lowest across the North West.

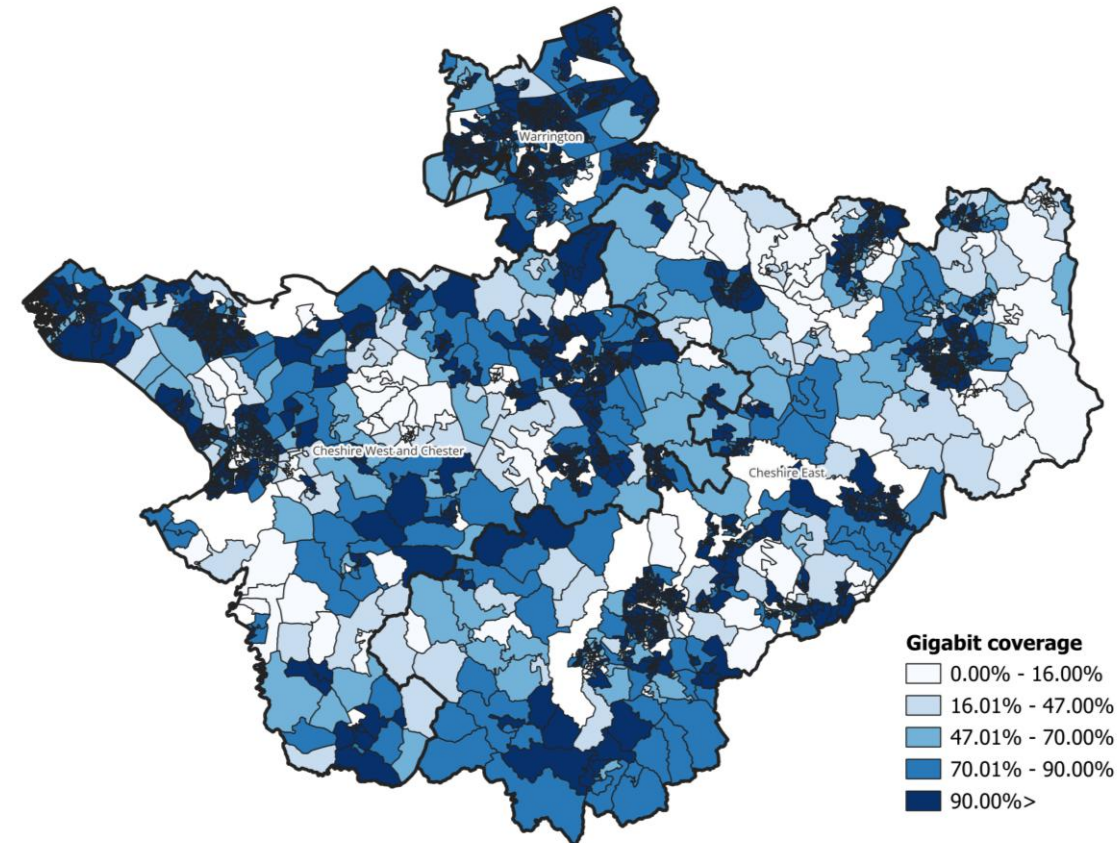


Source: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Fuel Poverty Subregional fuel poverty data (2025)

# Broadband coverage

- Digital connectivity can be a barrier to accessing employment related support, and preventing taking up hybrid working opportunities.
- The map to the right shows gigabit broadband coverage by output areas.
- There is variable coverage across Cheshire and Warrington with Cheshire around the national 84% of premises with gigabit capable speeds, much higher coverage in Warrington:
  - Cheshire East: 81.6%; Cheshire West and Chester: 84.3%; Warrington: 93.7%
- There tends to be less coverage in rural areas as seen by many areas in white or light blue in Cheshire and Warrington – potentially opening up a digital divide with urban areas – nationally only 56% of rural premises have gigabit capable services.
- Although take-up of services (stats available at LA level) is lower in Warrington than in Cheshire, implying there may be barriers preventing some from accessing broadband which is available to them: Below are the coverage of full-fibre of premises with full fibre access:
  - Cheshire East: 47%; Cheshire West and Chester: 52%; Warrington: 30%
- Urban areas which tend to be more deprived such as Crewe, Macclesfield, Warrington and Ellesmere Port have good broadband coverage but there may be barriers to take-up these services, as highlighted by lower take-up in Warrington.

**Gigabit broadband coverage (2025)**



# Service Mapping

## Place based inequality and social mobility

Strategic plans such as the **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** and the **All Together Fairer Plan** there is inequality across the sub-region with areas of high deprivation particularly in the sub-region’s urban centres, but also in some rural communities where there is more limited access to services. These areas face entrenched disadvantage - including low income, poor health, transport isolation, and weaker access to skills and jobs - all of which limit social mobility. The **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** sets bold ambitions to tackle key indicators or deprivation and combat place-based inequality, including improving healthy life expectancy, no communities in C&W in the most 20% deprived nationally by 2045, an economy that is inclusive of rural areas, no child in Cheshire & Warrington living in poverty and no household in fuel poverty by 2045.

### Cheshire & Warrington

- **Cheshire & Warrington Fair Employment Charter:** The fair employment charter is supported by district councils and a growing number of businesses in the area are committed to supporting good employment practices.
- **Care Leaver Covenant:** All councils have signed the Care Leaver Covenant, pledging to improve opportunities for young people coming out of foster care.
- The expansion of **neighbourhood health and employment teams**, embedded in local communities is a step toward ensuring that support is available and accessible, trusted, and tailored to local need.

### Cheshire West & Chester

**Regeneration with Social Value:** Industrial Strategy and Inclusive Economy Plan embed social value metrics in procurement including jobs for local people and apprenticeships  
**ForHousing:** Provide skills and learning support, including guidance on digital services, as well as Steps to Connect, to employment, training and volunteering

### Cheshire East

**Lifelong Learning:** Deliver and work with local organisations to create learning opportunities, courses and classes.

### Warrington

**Warrington’s Town Deal** funded projects that combine urban renewal with training infrastructure, such as new construction and care skills centres located in areas with low educational attainment.

Live working draft

# Labour market analysis, skills gaps and workforce planning

# Labour supply snapshot

**Cheshire and Warrington has a strong labour market with high employment and economic activity rates, particularly within the North West region.**

Cheshire and Warrington continues to demonstrate a strong labour market, outperforming both the North West and Great Britain averages across several key indicators.

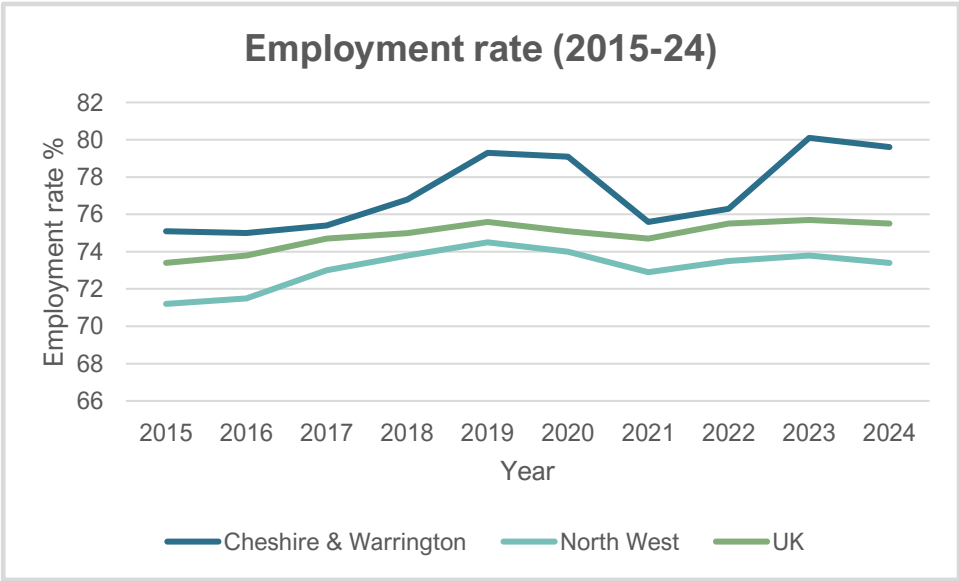
- At 81.5% the region has a higher proportion of economically active residents than both the North West (76.5%) and the national average (78.6%).
- With 79.6% of the working-age population in employment, Cheshire and Warrington surpasses both the region and the country average.
- The unemployment rate stands at just 2.2%, significantly lower than the North West (4.0%) and Great Britain (3.8%), indicating strong job availability.
- Although still low at 18.5%, economic inactivity has risen slightly over recent years
- At 2.6%, the proportion of people claiming unemployment-related benefits is also well below the regional (4.5%) average.

	Cheshire & Warrington (%)	North West (%)	Great Britain (%)
Economically Active	81.5	76.5	78.6
In Employment	79.6	73.4	75.5
Unemployed	2.2	4.0	3.8
Economically Inactive	18.5	23.5	21.4
Claimant Count (March 2025)	2.6	4.5	4.2

# Employment rate is high

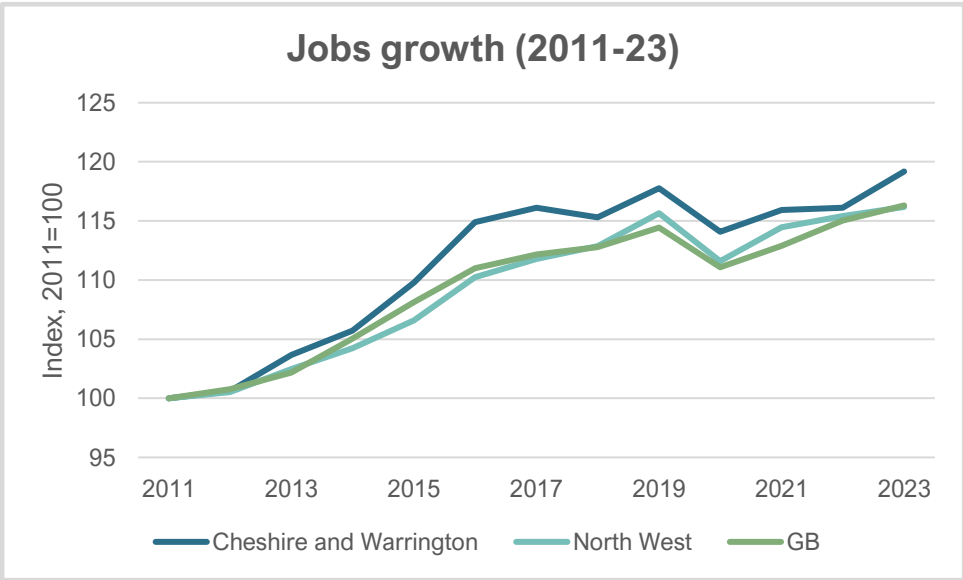
## Consistently strong employment rate

The employment rate in Cheshire and Warrington has consistently been higher than regionally and nationally. Notwithstanding a strong decline around the Pandemic, employment has bounced back strongly, reaching 80% in 2023. Although there has been a slight decline up to 2024, this is in keeping with wider trends, with employment remaining well above regional and national levels, and pretty much at the 80% target level set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper.



## Jobs continue to grow strongly

The number of jobs have risen from 490,000 to 584,000 between 2011 and 2023, an increase of 19%. Annual growth of 1.5% is above the 1.3% seen regionally and nationally. Across all areas there was a decline in the number of jobs during the Pandemic, but there has been a recovery, with the number of jobs now 1.2% above levels in 2019 in Cheshire & Warrington. This varies across the region, with the number of jobs now 7% above 2019 levels in Warrington but remaining 4.5% below 2019 levels in Cheshire West and Chester.



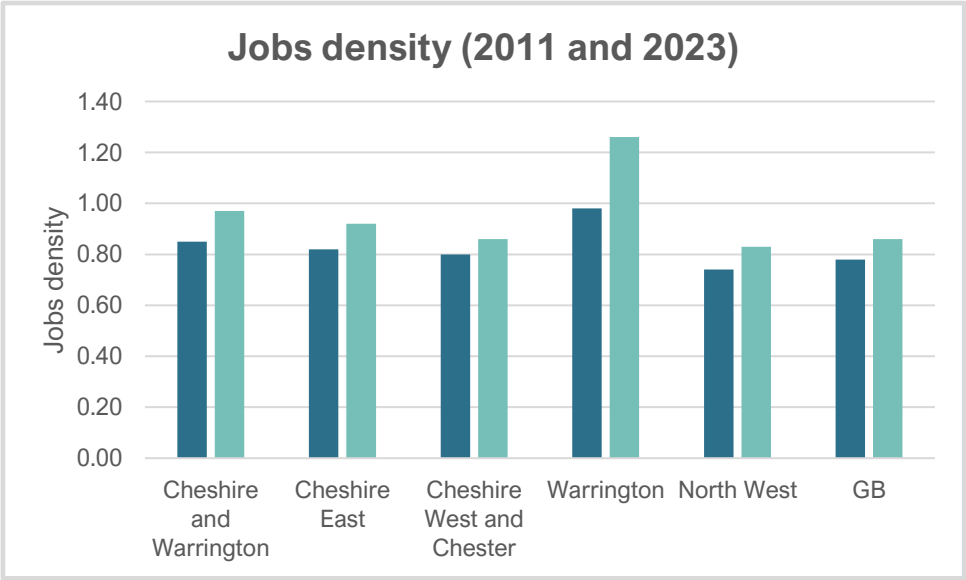
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025); ONS Jobs Density (2025)

# High number of job opportunities available

There is a growing number of jobs per working age resident particularly in Warrington.

Relatively high growth in the number of jobs in Cheshire and Warrington has translated to rising jobs density – the number of jobs available per working age resident. Typically, areas have less than 1 job per working age resident. In 2023, only 26 county/unitary authorities had a jobs density of 1 or above, around 12% of all unitary authorities. Warrington ranks particularly strongly with 1.26 jobs per working age resident placing it eight highest of all unitary authorities in terms of number of jobs per working age resident.

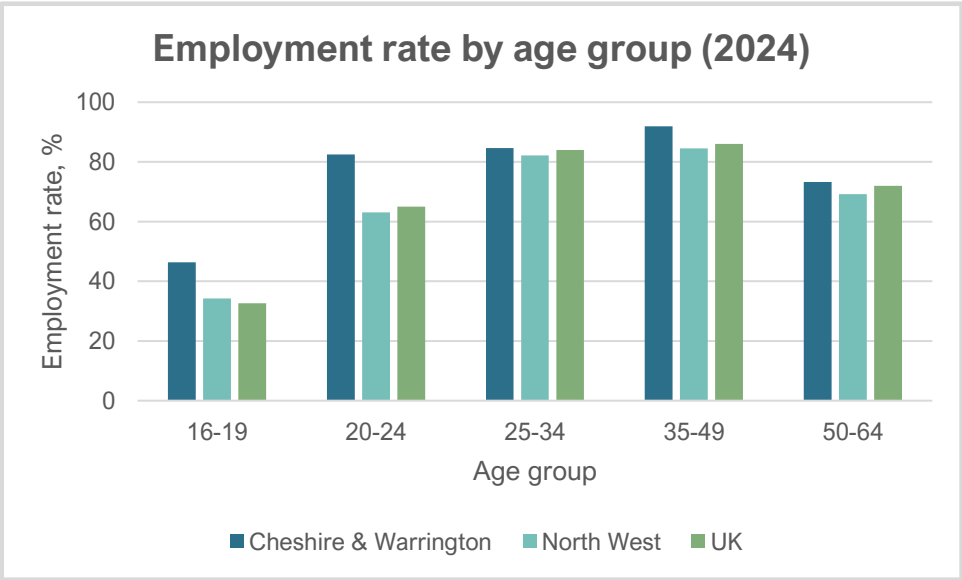
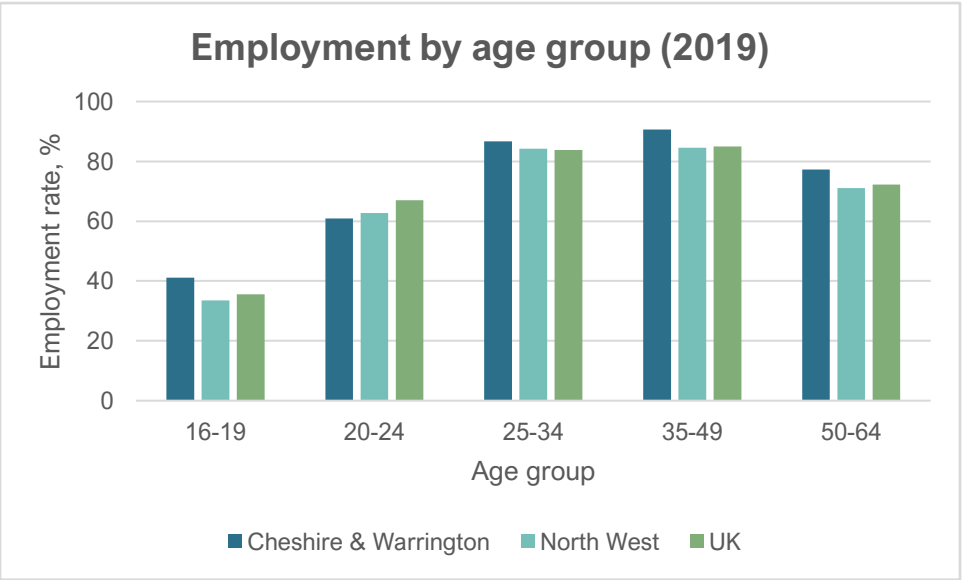
Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester still rank highly, at or above the national average for jobs density. For Cheshire & Warrington combined there are 0.97 jobs per working age resident, which would rank just outside the top 10% of unitary authorities in terms of number of jobs per working age resident – emphasising the high number of job opportunities available within the region, especially so in Warrington.



# Employment by age

## Employment across age groups is relatively high

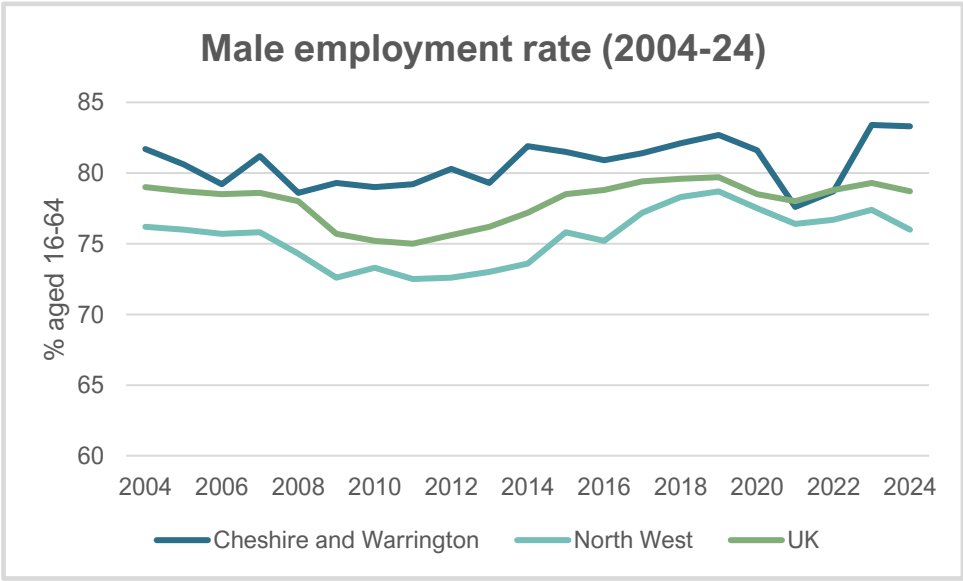
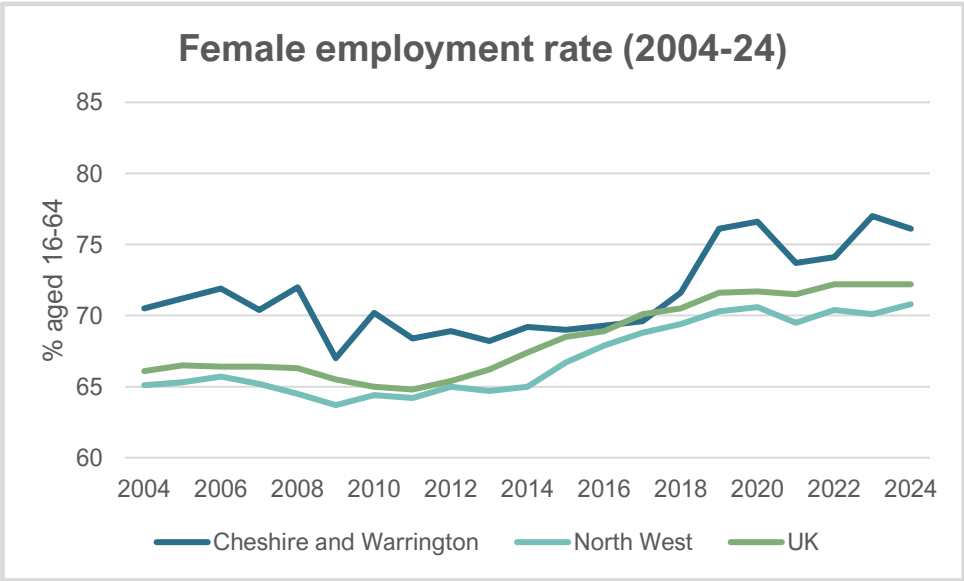
Since 2019, there has been an increase in the employment rate for younger age groups, matching trends seen regionally but to a much greater extent and contrasting to a slight decline nationally. There has been a rise in employment for those aged 35-49, matching what has been seen regionally. Across the board there has been a decline for those aged 50-64 but to a larger extent than nationally. However, across age groups, the employment rate remains high in Cheshire and Warrington, growing for younger age groups but narrowing for older groups. The highest rates are seen in the 35-49 and 25-34 age bands, reflecting a strong core working-age population.



# Employment by sex

## Employment lower for women but generally high compared to regionally and nationally

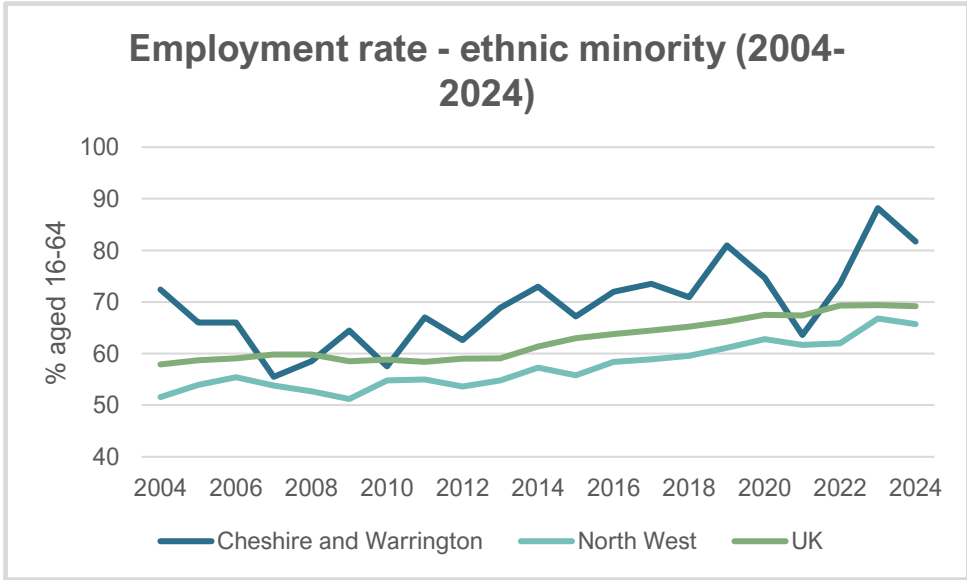
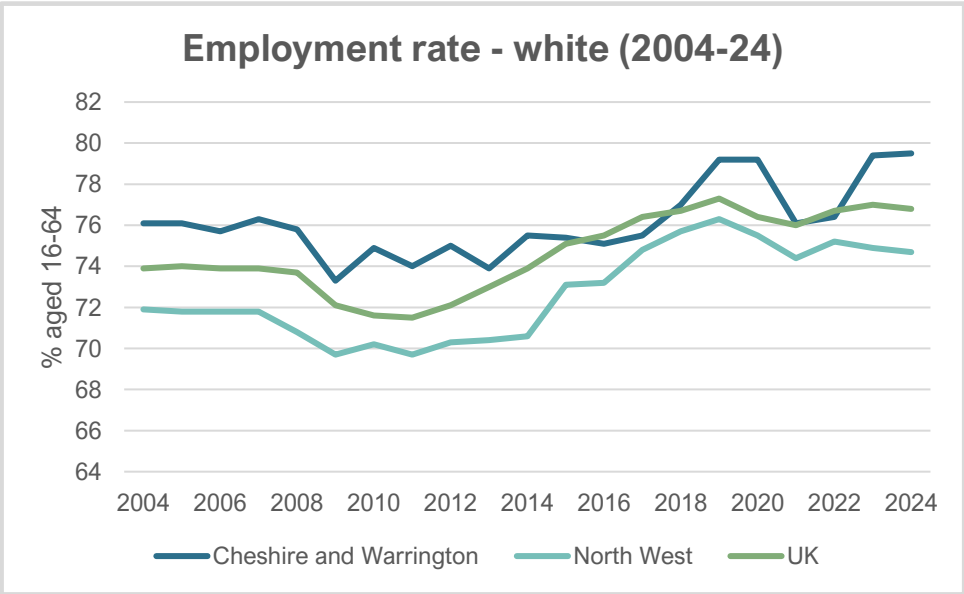
The female employment rate in Cheshire and Warrington has consistently been lower than it has for men, reflective of wider trends, although there has been a general rise in the female employment rate over the last two decades, rising to 76% in Cheshire and Warrington. The employment rate for men took a significant hit during the Pandemic, falling to national levels but has since recovered strongly, as has the employment rate for women, meaning for both men and women the employment rate is higher in Cheshire and Warrington, although there has been a slight decline over the most recent year in employment for women.



# Employment by ethnicity

## Employment amongst ethnic minority groups in Cheshire and Warrington has generally risen over the last two decades

Historically the ethnic minority employment rate has been lower than the employment rate for those who are white, reflective of wider trends although there has been a steady climb in the ethnic minority employment rate. There has been more variation in Cheshire and Warrington, likely explained by smaller sample sizes creating more volatility in estimates. Nonetheless, it appears that the ethnic minority employment rate has been trending upwards in Cheshire and Warrington until the Pandemic where there was a steep decline. But since, the ethnic minority employment rate has jumped to over 80% and is around the levels for those who are white, contrasting with regional and national trends. As explained, the lower sample size likely explains some of this variation, but there does appear a general upwards trend in the ethnic minority employment rate in Cheshire and Warrington. The ethnic minority employment rate has consistently been higher than regionally and nationally from about 2010 except during the Pandemic.



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)

# Occupational employment

A varied economy with both higher and lower skilled employment present

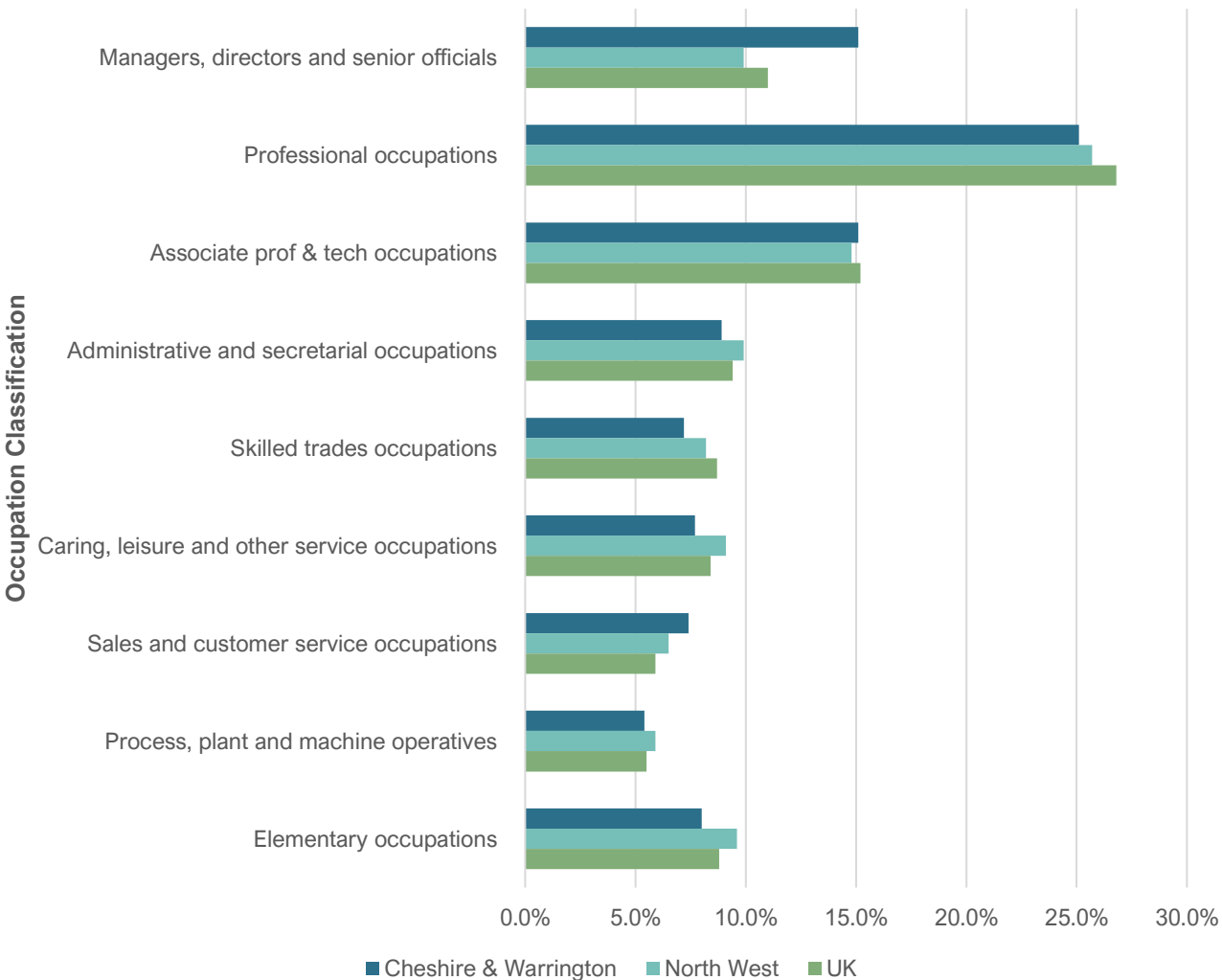
Cheshire and Warrington has a relatively high share of workers in managerial roles, well above regional and national averages. 55% of people are employed across high skilled occupations, (manager and professional occupations), above 50% regionally and 53% nationally.

24% of employment is in medium skilled occupations (admin, skilled trades and caring and leisure), roughly in line with 27% regionally and nationally.

The remaining 21% are employed in lower skilled occupations, with a relatively high proportion in sales and customer service occupations.

There is a varied economy with both higher and lower skilled employment present, not massively different to the make-up of regional and national employment, although there is a slightly higher base in high skilled occupations.

Occupation as a % of those in employment (2024)

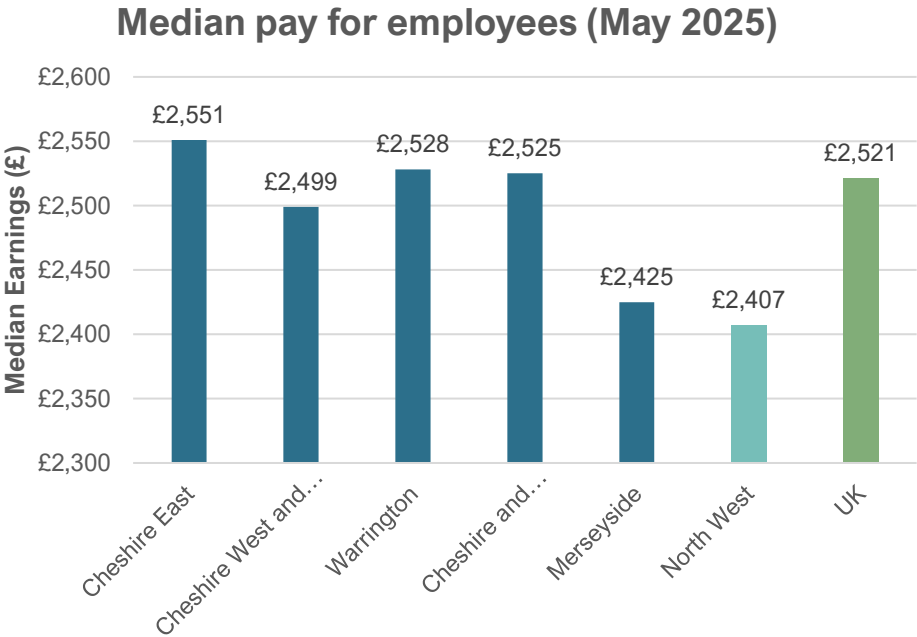


Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)

# Average earnings

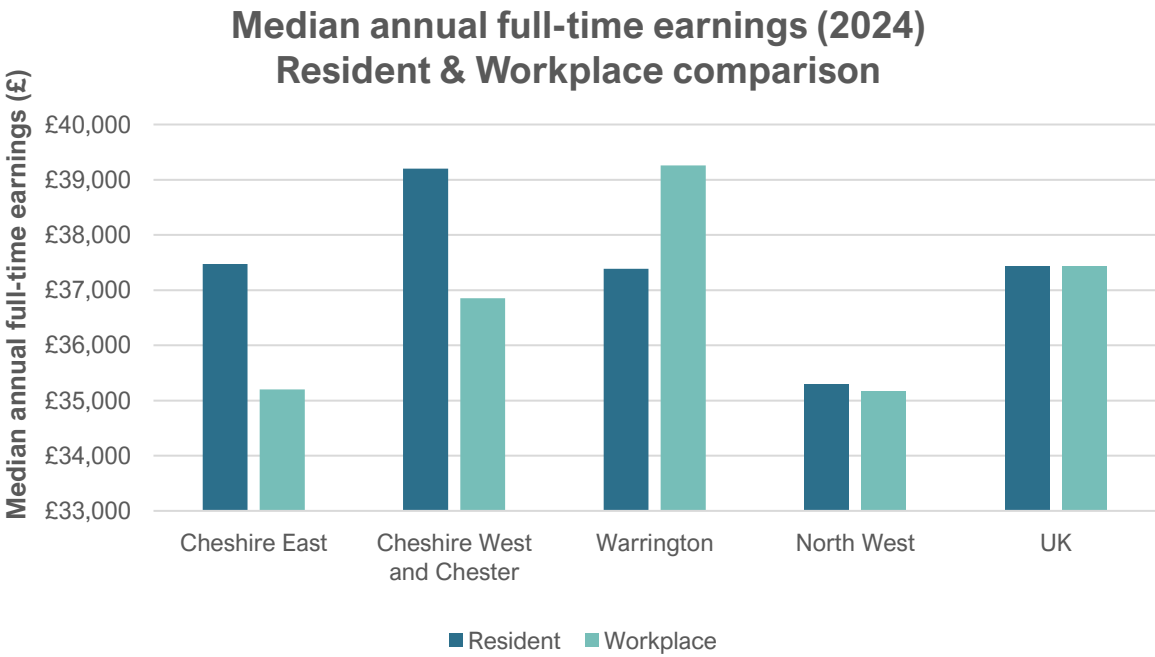
## Earnings broadly match UK average

Median pay in Cheshire and Warrington closely matches UK levels, with modest variation across local areas. Median pay for employees living in Cheshire & Warrington is highest in Cheshire East, and lowest in Cheshire West & Chester, although pay is almost £100 above the regional average for all three areas.



## Cheshire East and CWAC residents earn more than local jobs pay; the opposite is true in Warrington

The comparison of resident versus workplace median annual earnings reveals important spatial patterns across Cheshire and Warrington. In Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, residents' earnings are higher than workplace earnings suggesting many commute to higher-paid jobs outside the area. In contrast, Warrington workplace earnings are higher than resident earnings, indicating an inflow of higher-paid workers and potential skills mismatches among the local population.



Source: ONS PAYE Real Time Information (2025); ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2025)

# Employees earnings below the living wage

**While median earnings are closely aligned with UK levels, around 64,000 people earn below the Living Wage contributing to in-work poverty.**

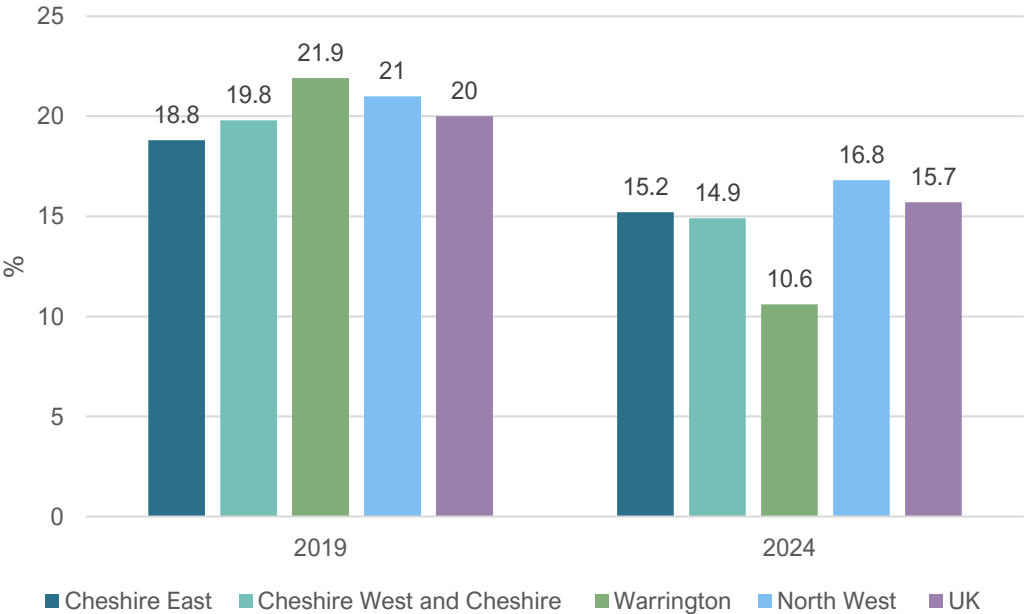
There has been a decline in the proportion of residents earning below the living wage across Cheshire and Warrington, especially in Warrington where the proportion has fallen from 21.9% to 10.6%.

Across Cheshire and Warrington, the proportion of employee jobs earning below the living wage is below the regional average and either in line or below the national average in the case of Warrington.

This coupled with a strong employment rate, high earnings in relation to the regional averages, a high number of jobs per working age resident, and a high proportion in high skilled occupations points to a strong labour market featuring high quality job opportunities.

However, this is not felt by all in Cheshire and Warrington as shown by concentrations of deprivation relating to employment and income. In 2024, it is estimated that 64,000 people earn below the living wage, around 14% of the working age population in Cheshire and Warrington, so there remains challenges for many residents in low-paid or insecure work with limited progression routes.

Percentage earning below the Living Wage (2019 and 2024)



Source: ONS Number and proportion of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage (2025)

# Sector composition

## A diverse economy with professional, scientific and technical services the highest employing sector

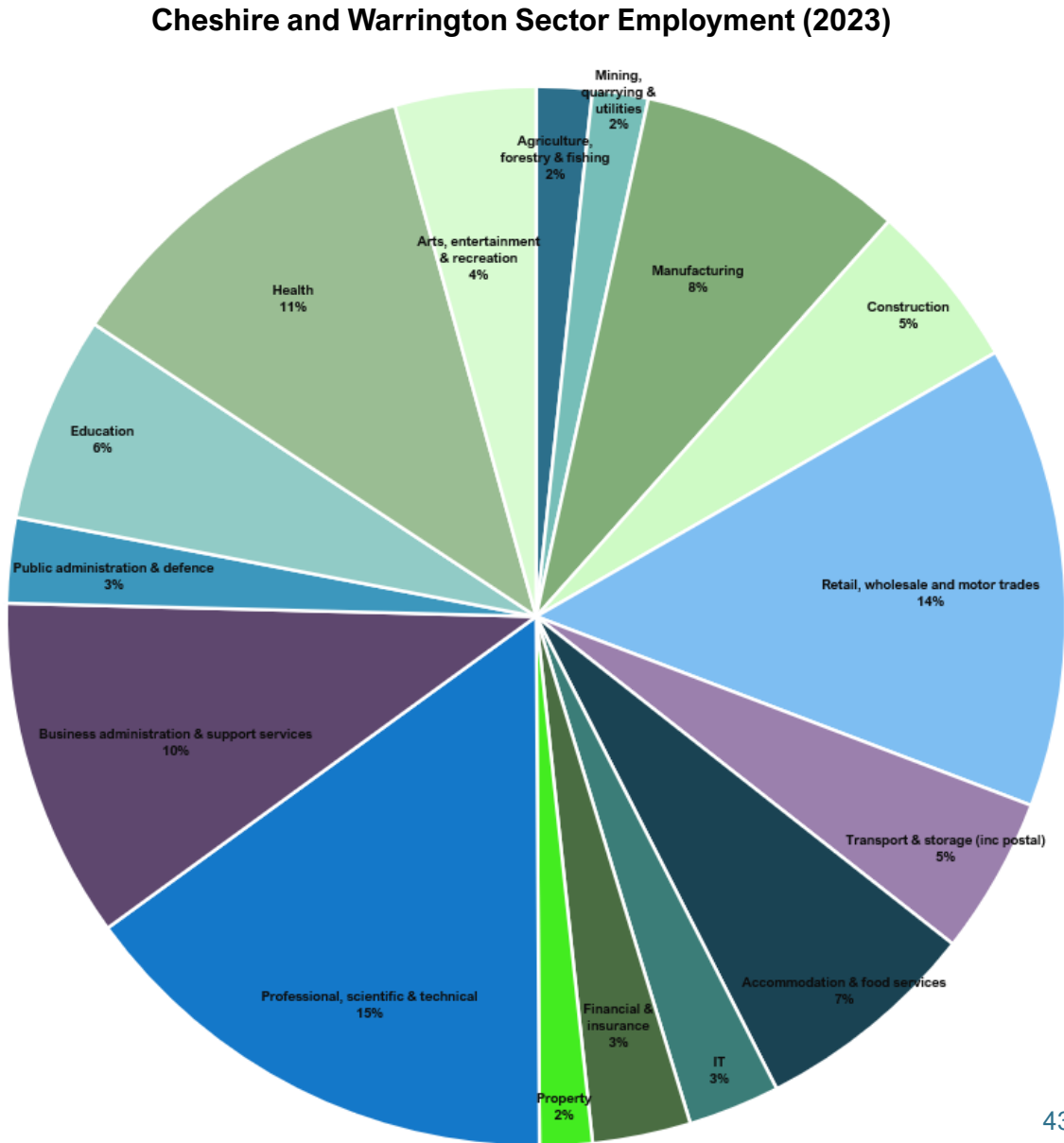
The pie chart to the right shows the proportion of total employment by sector across Cheshire and Warrington in 2023.

Professional, scientific and technical services is the highest employing sector in Cheshire and Warrington, with employment growing strongly in the sector particularly between 2022 and 2023. The sector makes up 15% of total employment, well above 9.5%-10% regional and national averages. This tends to be a high value sector, covering areas such as life sciences (one of five priority sectors identified in their LSIP) and are core components of the growth sectors identified by the Government as part of their Industrial Strategy.

Manufacturing remains an important sector (another priority sector) at over 8% of total employment, with employment growing by 1% a year on average since 2015, whereas nationally employment has declined somewhat. Business admin & support is also a relatively big employer in Cheshire and Warrington at over 10% of total employment.

Overall there are few major differences in sector employment to the overall national economy, although IT is relatively small compared to nationally, along with health although this is still a significant employer regionally at 11% and another of sector priorities, public admin & defence has a low proportion of employment compared to nationally, as does education which may point towards having to travel outside the region for certain courses/training options.

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2025)



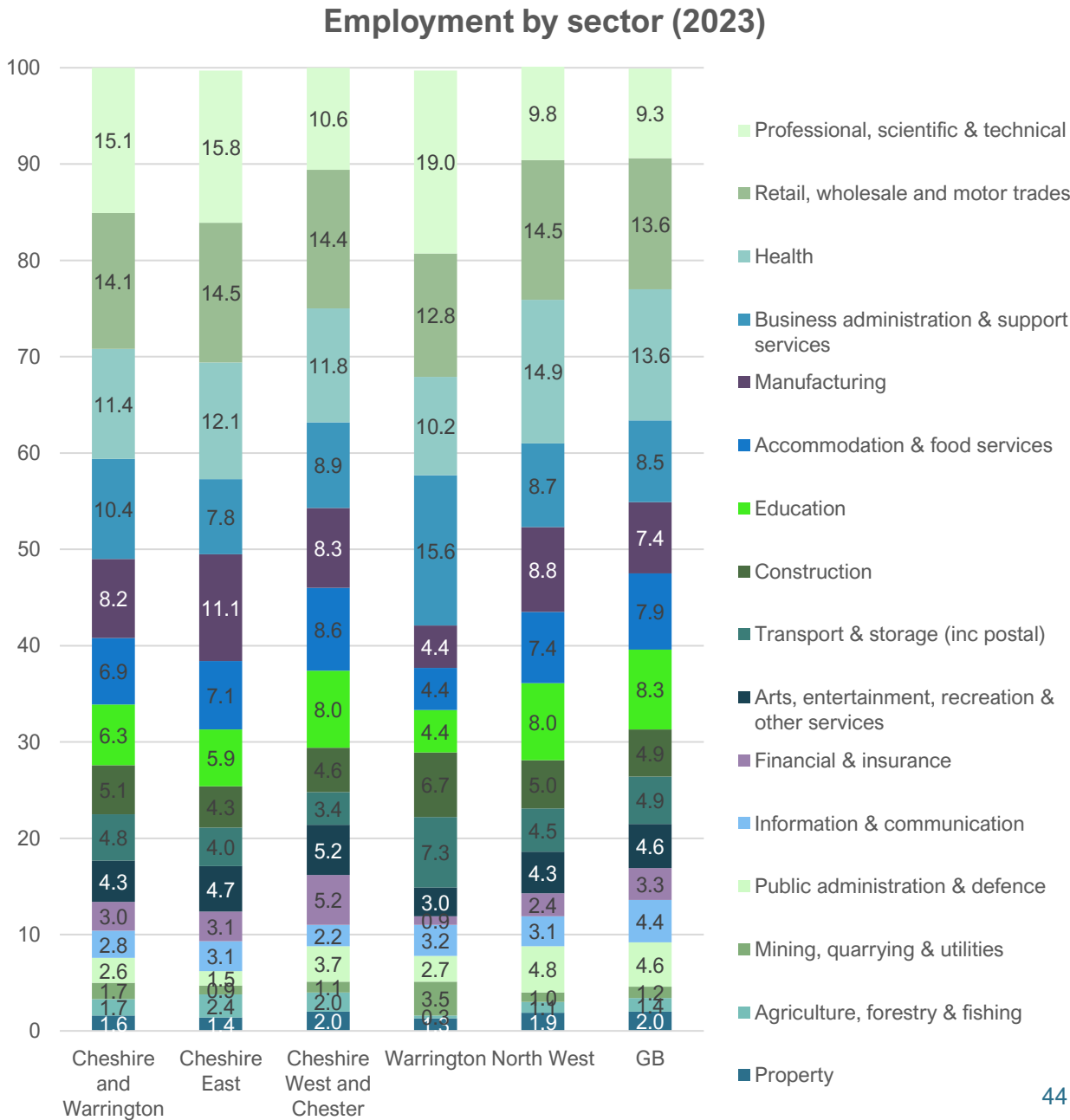
# Sector employment by authority

**Cheshire East:** centre of manufacturing employment in the region - 11% of total employment in Cheshire East. Also a strong base for professional, scientific and technical services. Although a relatively small employer by total, agriculture is an important employer locally, accounting for double the regional proportion and helps explain specialism at a Cheshire and Warrington level as seen on the next slides.

**Cheshire West and Chester:** strong base in financial & insurance sectors, along with the creative and hospitality sectors. Important location for education across Cheshire and Warrington, accounting for a similar proportion of employment compared to regionally and nationally. Lowest proportion of employment in professional, scientific and technical sectors in Cheshire and Warrington but still employs almost 11%, which is above regional and national averages.

**Warrington:** professional, scientific and technical sectors largest employing sector at 19% of total employment, double the proportion regionally and nationally. Central hub for business admin and wider logistics employment across the sub region, along with construction and utilities. Manufacturing sector small compared to other areas as well as education, finance and insurance, and creative and hospitality sectors.

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2025)



# Professional scientific and technical sector

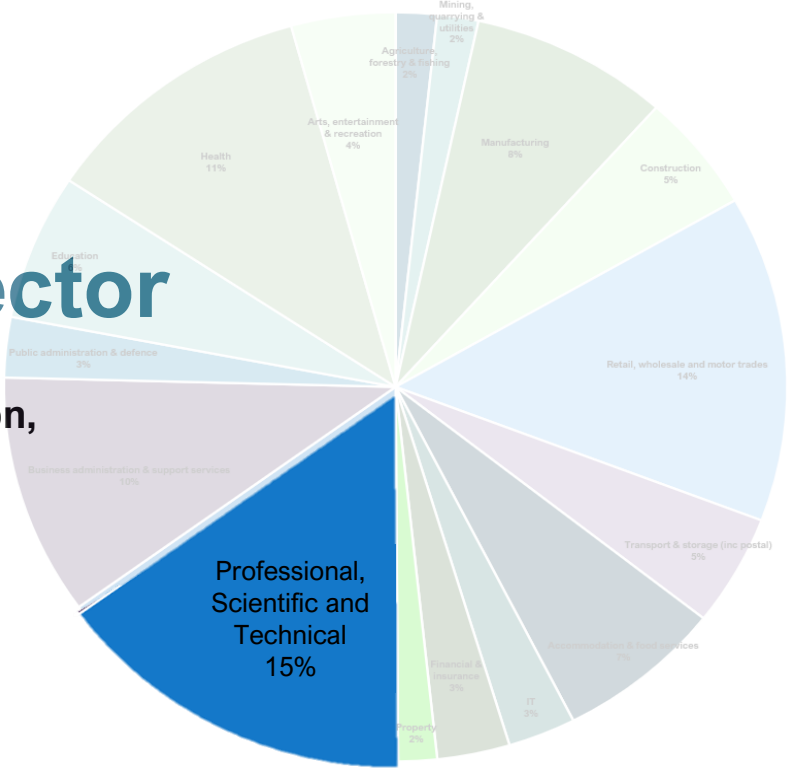
**Professional scientific and technical sector is the largest employer in the sub-region, accounting for 15.3% of employment, and 19.4% of employment in Warrington**

The professional scientific and technical sector is a significant employer within Cheshire and Warrington, accounting for 15% of employment. Within this, Legal and accounting activities account for the majority of employment, at 7.1% across the sub region. This is notably higher in Warrington, at 11.2%. Bookkeeping activities, covering recording financial transactions, preparing accounts and payroll, auditing records, and providing tax preparation and advice are the largest contributor within this, making up 10.3% to Warrington’s sectoral composition.

Management consultancy and head office activities are the second largest contributor, at 4% across the sub-region, and is especially prominent in Cheshire East (6.3%). Architectural and engineering activities contribute a smaller share overall but are more prominent in Warrington at 4.2%. The remainder of the sector is made up of smaller specialist activities.

In Warrington, key employment sites such as Birchwood Park, a nuclear and engineering hub, housing companies such as Rolls-Royce SMR, Cavendish Nuclear and National Nuclear Laboratory which may account for this higher proportion. Jobs in this sector are generally high-skill, stable, and command higher pay.

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2025)



	Cheshire and Warrington	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Warrington
Legal and accounting activities	7.1	5.8	5.0	11.2
Bookkeeping activities	5.7	4.4	3.2	10.3
Activities of head offices; management consultancy activities	4.0	6.3	2.4	3.0
Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis	2.3	1.3	1.5	4.2
Scientific research and development	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.1
Advertising and market research	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.2
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.5
Veterinary activities	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.2
Total	15.3	16	10.9	19.4

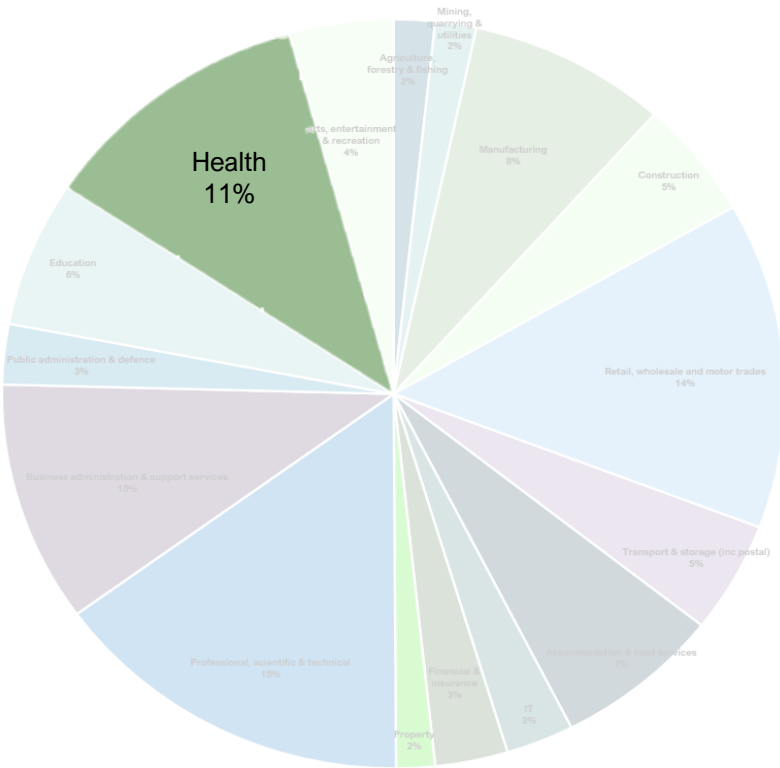
# Health sector

The health sector accounts for 11.7% of employment across Cheshire and Warrington, with the highest share in Cheshire East at 12.4%

The health sector is a key employer across the sub-region, representing 11.7% of jobs. Human health activities form the largest part of this, accounting for 7.1% of total employment. Within this, hospital activities make up 4.3%. Residential care activities account for 2.3% of jobs, with most focused on elderly and disabled care. Social work activities without accommodation represent a further 2.3%, again dominated by services for older people and those with disabilities, reflective of the aging population across Cheshire and Warrington.

Cheshire East has the highest overall share of health-related employment at 12.4%, driven by a strong presence in hospital and residential care roles. Cheshire West and Chester has a stronger proportion at 12.2%, while Warrington is the lowest with just 10.2%.

Despite making up a notable share of employment, the health and social care sector in Cheshire and Warrington faces persistent staffing challenges. An insufficiently trained workforce creates bottlenecks across the sub-region, increasing reliance on costly agency staff, delaying hospital discharges, and reducing people’s ability to stay in or return to work.



	Cheshire and Warrington	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Warrington
Human health activities	7.1	7.5	7.4	6.4
Hospital activities	4.3	4.6	4.7	3.5
Residential care activities	2.3	2.7	2.1	1.9
Residential care activities for the elderly and disabled	1.0	1.3	1.0	0.6
Social work activities without accommodation	2.3	2.2	2.7	1.9
Social work activities without accommodation for the elderly and disabled	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.4
Total	11.7	12.4	12.2	10.2

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2025)

# The visitor economy

## **The visitor economy makes up 7.2% of sector employment in Cheshire and Warrington, increasing to 12.9% in Cheshire West and Chester**

The visitor economy, encompassing roles within tourism, hospitality, accommodation, recreation and related services, is a significant source of employment in Cheshire and Warrington. According to data from STEAM economic impact report 2024, the visitor economy sector in Cheshire and Warrington supported 38,006 jobs in 2023, accounting for 7.2% of employment.

Cheshire West and Chester is the largest tourism employer in the sub-region, driven by its high profile visitor attractions. The area accounts for around 22,000 jobs in the sector, equivalent to 12.9% of its employment base. In contrast, this is notably lower in Cheshire East and Warrington, at 4.9% and 4% respectively.

The sector has demonstrated sustained recovery in recent years and remains an important employer, particularly for lower-skilled workers, as many roles do not require advanced qualifications. It offers accessible entry points into the labour market and pathways for skills development, making it a valuable driver of inclusive growth. Employment opportunities in the visitor economy are often well-suited to students, school leavers, and part-time workers balancing family or education commitments.

Beyond direct employment, a strong visitor economy stimulates local business activity and underpins a wider supply chain, indirectly sustaining jobs across retail, transport, cultural services, and food production.

# Sector specialisms

Location Quotients (LQs) measure how concentrated a sector is locally compared to the national average. Higher LQs correspond to higher levels of specialisation, with an LQ above 1 indicating that the area is more specialised in that sector than GB as a whole. A threshold of above 1.25 signifies the area has a significant specialism.

Professional, scientific & technical services is the most specialised, over 1.5x as specialised as nationally and with strong growth in employment over recent years, with a significant employment base with over 81,000 jobs. Agriculture and mining & utilities are also more 1.25x as specialised as nationally, although they are not large employers by volume.

Business administration & support services and manufacturing (including oil and gas refinery activities) also show strong local presence, supporting a diverse economic base and employing around 100,000 of the local workforce.

Health is the second largest employer in the region, and has an LQ of 0.83, falling below the national average.

Sectors such as retail, wholesale, and transport & storage have LQs below 1, indicating lower-than-average concentration of employment compared to nationally, but these sectors remain crucial to the economy.

Broad Industry	LQ	Jobs
Professional, scientific & technical	1.66	81,000
Mining, quarrying & utilities	1.37	9,000
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	1.29	4,500
Business administration & support services	1.22	56,000
Motor trades	1.11	10,000
Manufacturing	1.11	44,000
Construction	1.07	27,000
Retail	1.03	45,000
Wholesale	0.98	19,000
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	0.97	23,000
Transport & storage (inc postal)	0.95	25,000
Financial & insurance	0.89	16,000
Accommodation & food services	0.88	37,000
Health	0.83	61,000
Property	0.81	8,000
Education	0.75	34,000
Information & communication	0.63	15,000
Public administration & defence	0.56	14,000

# Growth Index

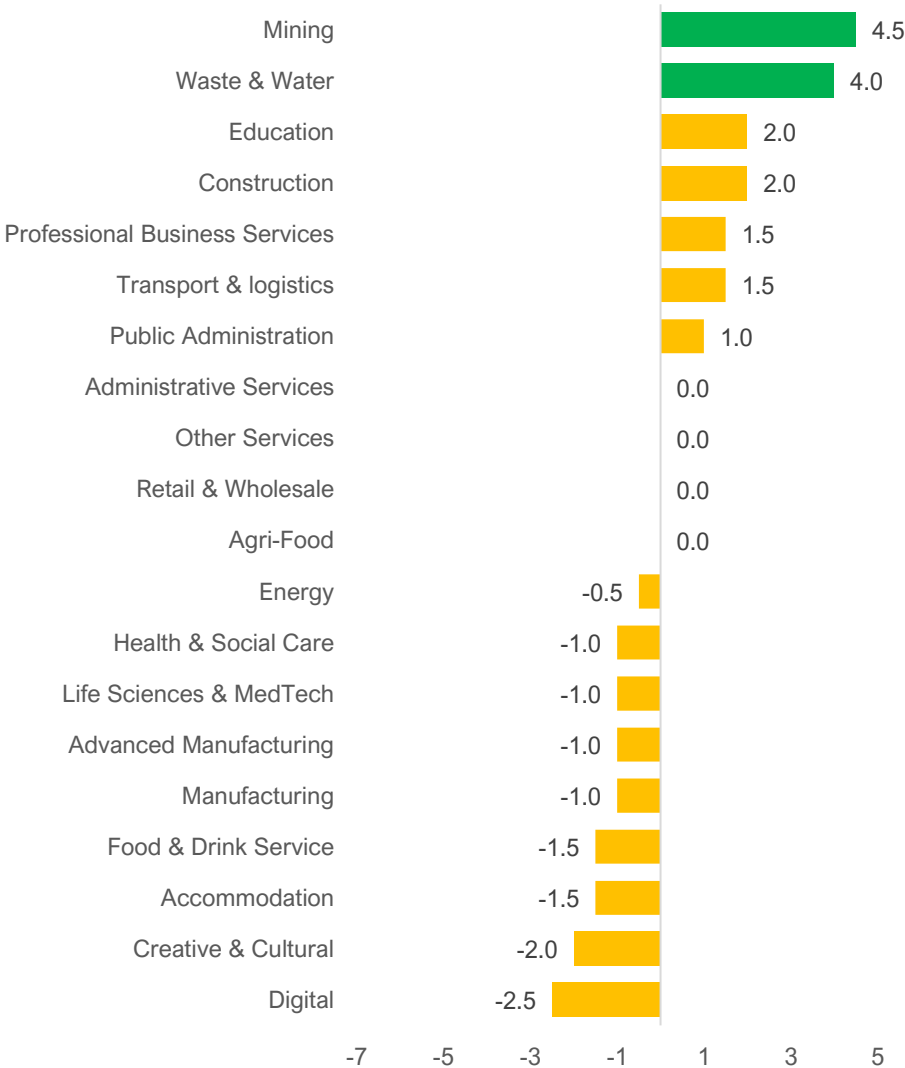
Metro Dynamics constructed an index aggregating five-year changes to employment, business counts, GVA, productivity and concentration (Location Quotients for employment and businesses). If a sector is seeing significant growth (>2% CAGR) in either employment, business counts, GVA and productivity (GVA per job)), it adds a score of 1. The index also takes into account whether each sector is growing nationally. If the sector is growing significantly faster than the GB average (>7.5% difference), it adds a further 0.5 points.

The maximum score possible is 7 – meaning that a sector has seen growth across all measures, each of which is also growing faster than nationally, to a low of -7 meaning that a sector has felt a significant decline. This analysis demonstrates the change that has happened in each sector, so does not reflect a sectors overall size, value or specialism.

Many sectors classified as static using the Sector Growth Index, with many scoring ±2. Mining and utilities sectors display the highest growth but these are relatively small employers and contributors to the overall economy. Construction, professional business services and logistics all display some signs of growth over recent years.

Manufacturing has shown some signs of decline but remains a key sector of the economy. Digital and creative sectors have shown the most signs of decline but not significant signs of decline.

	Growth index score of 3 or more, sector has seen growth across multiple measures.
	Growth index score between -3 and 3, growth has been relatively static or mixed
	Growth index score of -3 or less, sector has seen decline across multiple measures.



# The three boroughs fall within different labour market types

District	Labour market types	Claimant count	Employment rate	Work-limiting disability rate	Level 4+ qualification	Musculoskeletal condition rate	Mental health conditions
Cheshire East	Remote Rural						
Cheshire West and Chester	Representative agent						
Warrington	Trade Towns						

Cluster analysis categories local authorities into different labour market types based on key labour market variables.

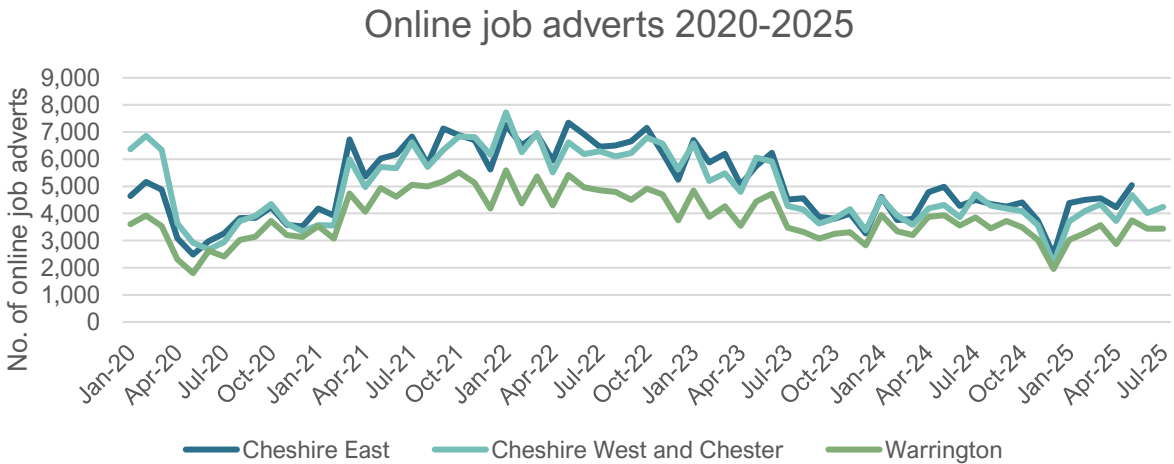
**Cheshire East – Remote Rural:** This cluster is characterised by high labour demand, with a low claimant count and high employment rate, and less pronounced health problems. This category of areas tend to be sparsely populated rural areas.

**Cheshire West and Chester – Representative agent:** Areas in this cluster score in the middle of the range on most measures. The cluster is a mix mainly of rural areas and smaller towns.

**Warrington – Trade Town:** Areas in this cluster have lower levels of skills in the workforce, with average levels of unemployment, MSK and mental health conditions with low rates of disability. These areas tend to be towns or areas on the periphery of big cities with medium skilled economies.

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

After a prolonged period where vacancies fell after the Pandemic, vacancies have started to rise over the last year. Job vacancies are focused in Health and Social Care, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing (including opportunities associated with low carbon) and the Visitor Economy.



Source: ONS Vacancies and jobs in the UK (2025)

## 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:

T O P T E N			
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
	Healthcare and Nursing Jobs	Lorry Driver	Assertiveness
Accommodation and Food Services	IT Jobs	Project Manager	Wellbeing
	Trade and Construction Jobs	Healthcare Support Worker	Engineering
Financial and insurance activities	Logistics and Warehouse Jobs	Assistant	Sales
	Social work Jobs	Chef	Healthcare
Transportation and storage			
Information and communication			
Administrative and support service activities			
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security			
Arts, entertainment and recreation			

# Sectors facing a high proportion of work-related problems

Evidence from the Local Skills Improvement Plan and health and wellbeing strategies, alongside national trends and workforce challenges highlight several industries where work related problems are most acute. These challenges typically stem from a combination of skills shortages, recruitment and retention issues, workplace health concerns and structural pressures in the business environment.



Health and social care is one of the most pressured industries, with staff shortages, high turnover, and rising demand from an ageing population. Employers report challenges in recruitment and retention, reliance on agency workers, and above average sickness absence linked to physical strain and stress. The sector has difficulty retaining younger staff, with a 44.6% turnover rate of care workers aged under 25.



Retail, hospitality, and other parts of the visitor economy see high workforce churn. Many roles are low paid, involve unsocial hours, or are seasonal, with peak periods in customer-facing jobs creating additional pressure. The sector also lost many workers during the pandemic, with a need to attract people back to sustain this part of the foundational economy.



Logistics, warehousing, and transport experience skills gaps in higher-skilled roles, alongside high turnover in lower-skilled positions. Shift work, long hours, and physically demanding tasks contribute to musculoskeletal problems and absence rates.



Construction and skilled trades face shortages of qualified workers, an ageing workforce, and the physical risks of the job. Seasonal weather disruption, demanding work, and a lack of new entrants in trades such as bricklaying, electrical installation, and retrofitting create capacity pressures nationally.



Manufacturing and process industries are a major economic contributor, with strengths in advanced engineering, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. The sector faces an ageing workforce in specialist roles, skills gaps, and the need to adapt to automation and digital manufacturing. Some jobs remain repetitive or physically demanding, adding to recruitment and retention pressures.

# Health and Social Care

**Reducing turnover in the health and social care sector requires intentional recruitment, accessible progression pathways, and more secure working condition.**

According to the Skills for Care 2024 state of report, the adult social care sector has faced vacancy rates of around 9.9% and turnover exceeding 28% in 2023/24. This pattern is mirrored in the health sector, with NHS vacancy rates at roughly 8%, both exceeding the average across the wider economy. These challenges are underpinned by systemic issues such as low pay, negative perceptions of care work, and limited visibility of career opportunities.

For younger workers in particular, clear career pathways are of particular interest when entering the workforce. Social care turnover rates are highest for those at the start of their careers, so purposeful recruitment and clear training and progression routes are key to retention and building a sustainable workforce. The Care Workforce Pathway sets out achievable progression routes and promotes the wide variety of roles available in health and social care sector. Aligning this framework with meaningful local progression opportunities can promote the sector to new workers as a viable and accessible career path.

Recruitment	Retention
<p>Intentional recruitment practices can play an important role in shaping long-term workforce stability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Values-based recruitment is effective in attracting and retaining individuals whose personal values align with the ethos of care, helping to reduce attrition.</li><li>• Tailored induction programmes for new starters can improve early retention and confidence among new staff.</li></ul>	<p>Skills for Care analysis details factors linked to reduced staff turnover. Staff are less likely to leave when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Earn above the national living wage,</li><li>• Are not employed on a zero hour contract,</li><li>• Receive training,</li><li>• Hold a relevant qualification, and</li><li>• Work full time.</li></ul> <p>Research shows that secure pay, stable employment conditions, intentional recruitment and workforce development opportunities support retention.</p>

# Service Mapping

## Skills gaps and workforce planning

Tackling skills gaps and enabling effective workforce planning are core priorities in Cheshire and Warrington’s strategic agenda. The **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)** sets out a plan to reshape post-16 technical skills provision to better meet business needs. **The Strategic Economic Plan** also highlights the risk of constrained economic growth if critical skills gaps, particularly in STEM subjects are not addressed, and sectoral risks associated with an ageing population.

### Cheshire & Warrington

- **LSIP:** Employer led-skills plan to align training with industry needs, has convened working groups in key sectors including Energy & Engineering, Life Sciences, Health & Social Care and Digital, where local employers define skill shortages and co-design solutions with colleges. Early outcomes include new curriculum modules and better brokerage between companies and FE providers.
- **The Local Skills Improvement Fund** investments created new training facilities such as the Green Technology Hub (Warrington College) and Advanced Manufacturing Centre (Cheshire College). As of 2025 4,281 learners have trained using this equipment and 119 instructors received upskilling CPD, bolstering talent pipeline capacity.
- **Institute of Technology:** A partnership between leading local colleges, universities, and employers, offering training in high-demand fields like agriculture, healthcare, digital, construction and engineering.
- **Skills bootcamps:** 19+, helping residents to upskill and access new jobs or progression opportunities in work. Skills Bootcamps are funded, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, designed to meet the needs of local employers.
- **In To Work Board** coordinates programs supporting 18+ furthest from progressing into work
- C&M ICB have submitted bids to deliver pilot **WorkWell** services and **Employment Advisors in musculoskeletal (MSK)** services.

### Cheshire West & Chester

**Skills Escalators:** Bring businesses and education providers together to develop joined up skills and career pathways for key sectors.

### Cheshire East

**Cheshire East Carers’ Hub:** Provide information, advice and support to carers, also working with employers to support the workforce.  
**Safe Opportunities:** A registered Section 41 Post-16 Specialist Provider based in Crewe offering various work-related learning pathways for young people.

### Warrington

**Warrington Sector Skills Academies:** Specialist training centers (The Health & Social Care Academy and the Advanced Construction & Civil Engineering Centre) launched at Warrington & Vale Royal College, providing state-of-the-art facilities to train students and upskill adults in high-demand fields.

# Service Mapping Employer investment

The **Local Skills Improvement Plan**, and the **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** both emphasise the need for employer driven investment in talent and stronger alignment between training provision and labour market needs. **The Fair Employment Charter** also encourages employers to offer secure work, training pathways and diversity in recruitment, ensuring skills investment also supports inclusive growth.

## Cheshire & Warrington

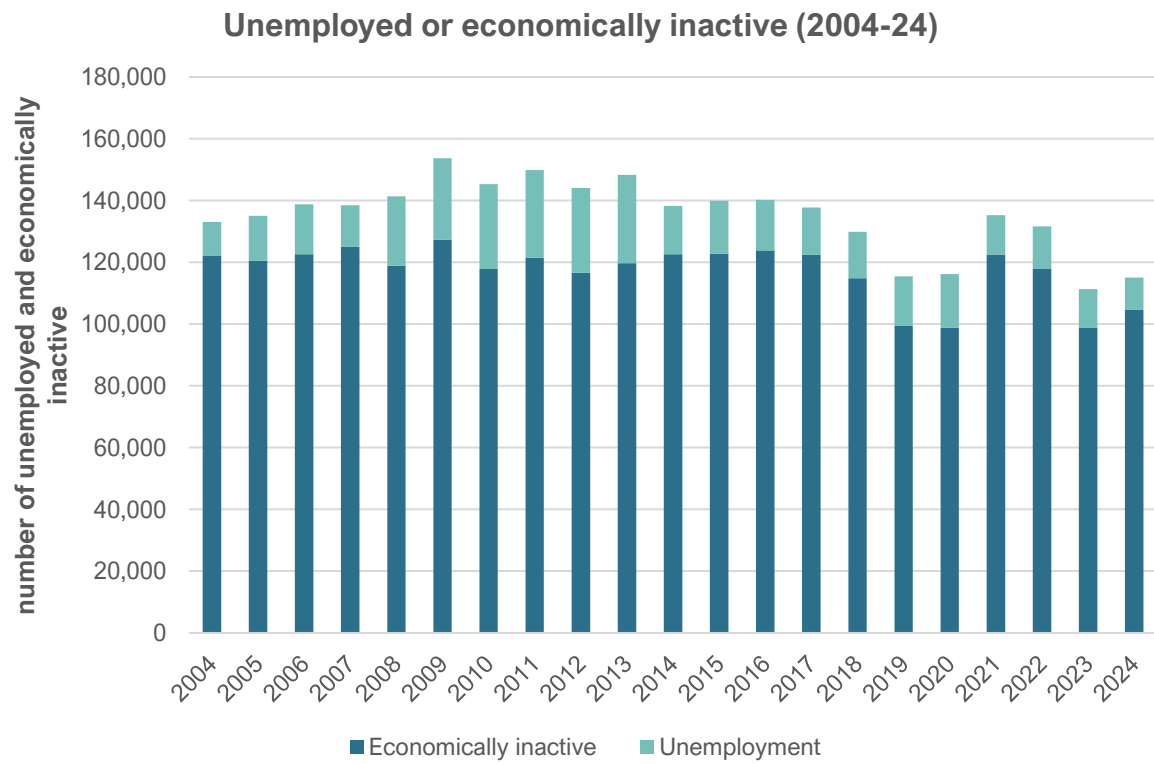
- **Supported Internships:** Also known as New Ground is a structured study programme enabling young people aged 16-24 with an active EHCP, to achieve sustainable paid employment. A Supported Internship programme provides employability training (along with Maths and English skills) and facilitates a work placement in industry, where they will be supported by a Job Coach.
- **Skills bootcamps:** Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington are currently working with Training Providers and Employers to fund a wide variety of Skills Bootcamp, delivered with DfE funding, directly targeting technical skills gaps identified by employers.
- **LSIP's sector groups** spanning Manufacturing; Health and Social Care; Life Sciences; and cross-cutting themes of Digital and Low Carbon (including green skills), over 200 employers have provided input on skills needs, qualifications in demand, and barriers to recruitment, influencing employer-led curriculum development and new courses in priority fields.
- **Apprenticeship levy transfers:** The LSIP team have helped 55+ companies navigate training and funding options, including facilitating apprenticeship levy transfers (for example, guiding the glass-maker Encirc to transfer unused levy funds to a small care provider to train care workers).
- **Sector based employer forums:** The LSIP progress update details the launch of employer forums: Life Sciences employer group (with Cogent Skills) now works on lab skills needs, and the LSIP joined the Hydrogen Skills Alliance and a regional gas-network task force to plan for future workforce needs in the energy transition.
- **Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives:** Employers (e.g. Cadent, Balfour Beatty) have launched Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives, aimed at attracting diverse candidates from various backgrounds. These include removing entry barriers; modularised development packages; and diverse recruitment channels.

Live working draft

# Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity

# Economic inactivity

The number of people who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive (approximately 100,000 people) has not changed over the last 20 years despite significant investment and multiple initiatives. Levels have reduced since the Pandemic but remain higher than they were in 2019.



# Understanding inactivity

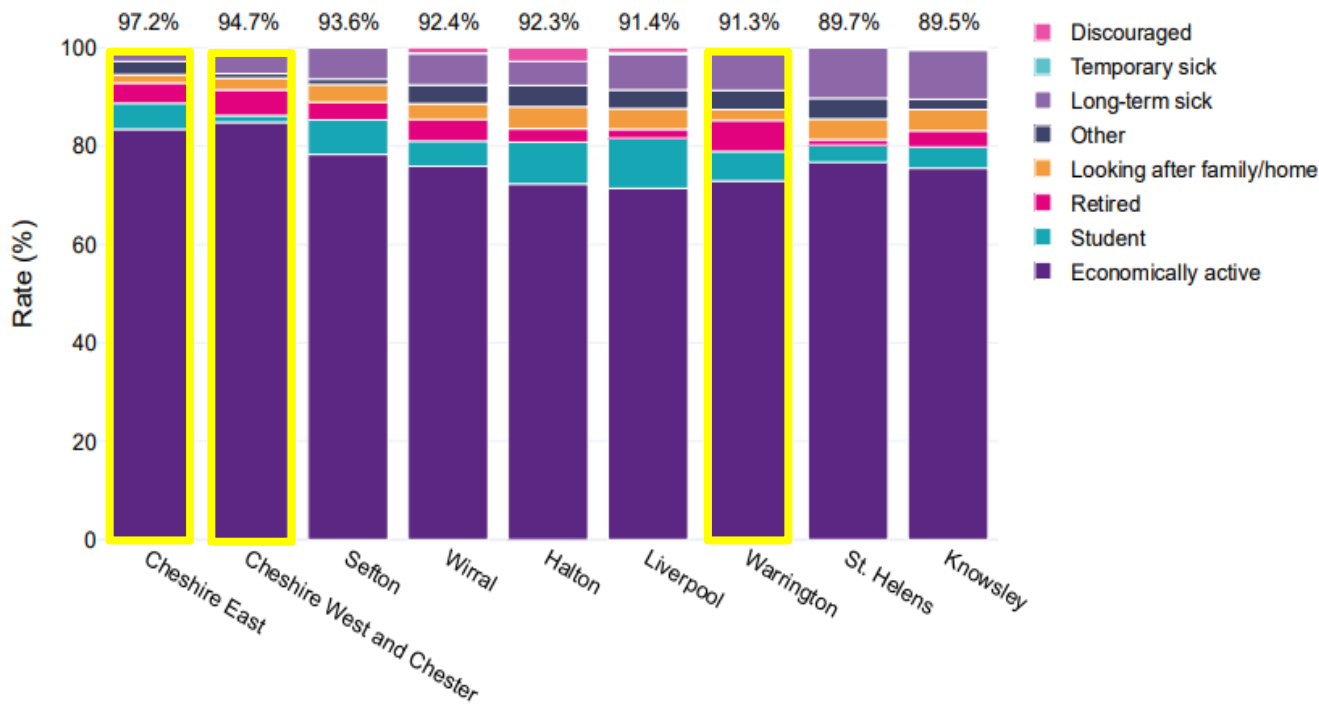
Economic inactivity in Cheshire and Warrington is generally low but rising, especially in Warrington, where over a quarter of the working-age population is now inactive.

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, particularly so in Warrington, indicating there remains challenges to address to ensure residents can access employment and training opportunities in the sub-region.

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%

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025); Social Finance, All Together in Health and Work

# Economic inactivity

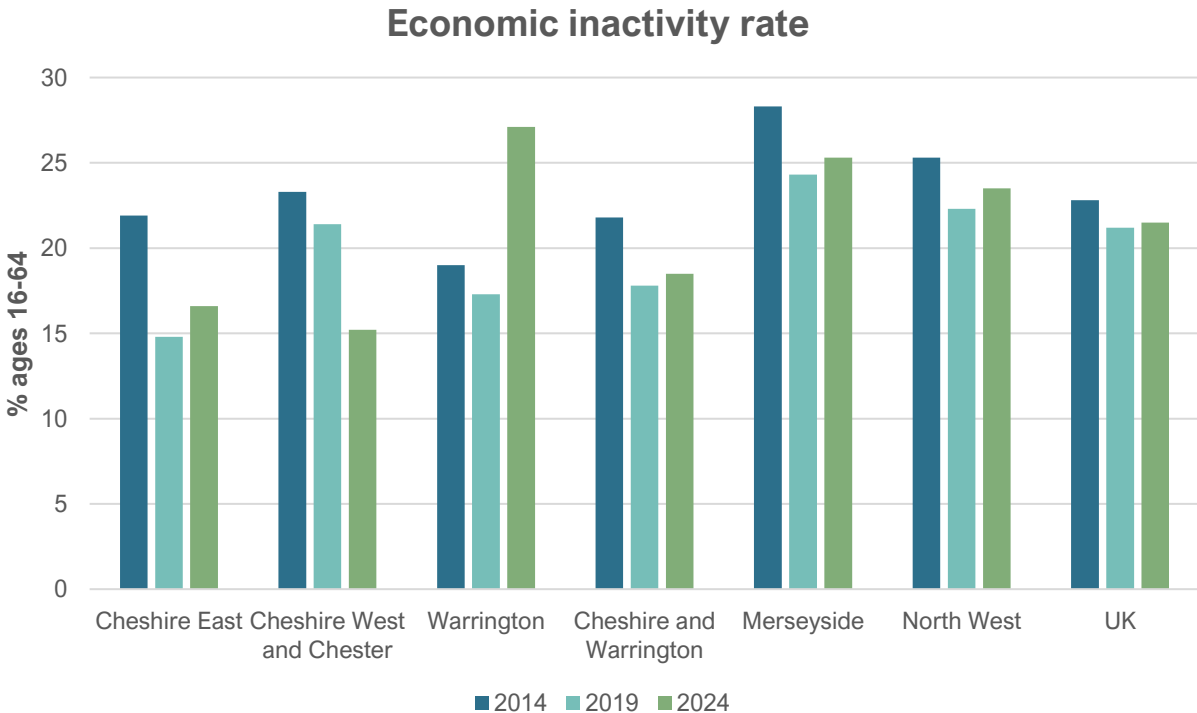
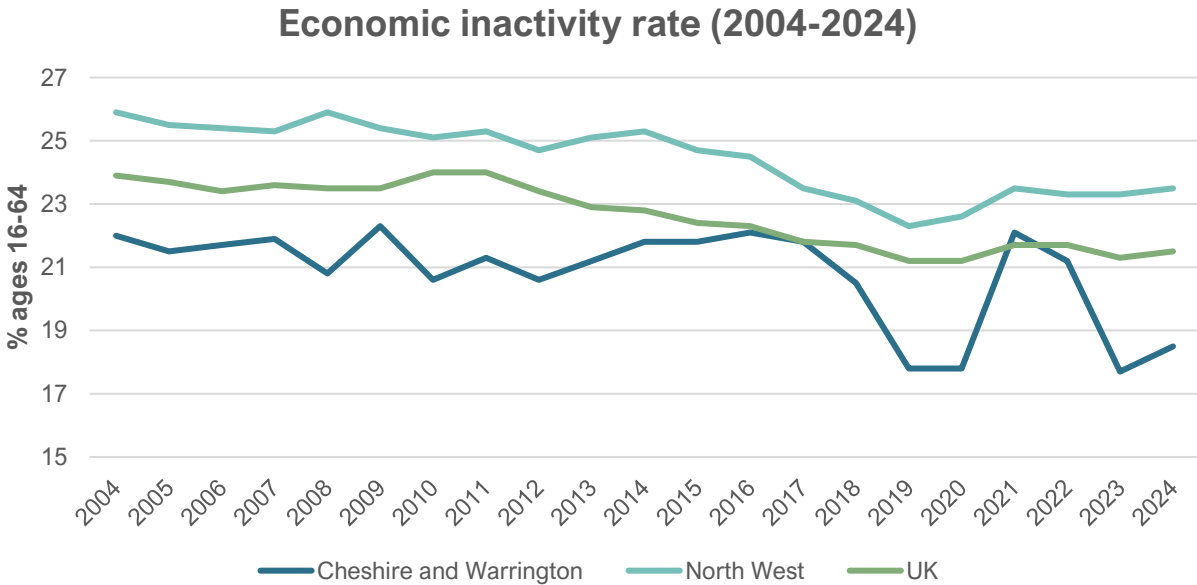
Economic inactivity continues to remain low but differing experiences within Cheshire and Warrington.

The latest estimates report that 18.8% of the working age population in Cheshire and Warrington are economically inactive, below the national average of 21.5%.

Between 2019 and 2024, there has been a slight rise in inactivity across Cheshire and Warrington, following wider trends since the Covid Pandemic where economic inactivity has rose. Although remaining well below the regional and national averages, inactivity has risen more steeply than compared to nationally.

However, within Cheshire and Warrington there has been differing experiences. Economic inactivity is lowest in Cheshire West and Chester, where inactivity continued to decline over the last decade, including over the last 5 years to 15%, in contrast to trends seen elsewhere. Cheshire East has seen a slight increase in inactivity to 16.6% but again this is well below regional and national averages. Warrington has seen a significant rise in inactivity from 17% to 27% and has by far the highest rate of inactivity in Cheshire and Warrington, which is also above the regional rate.

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)



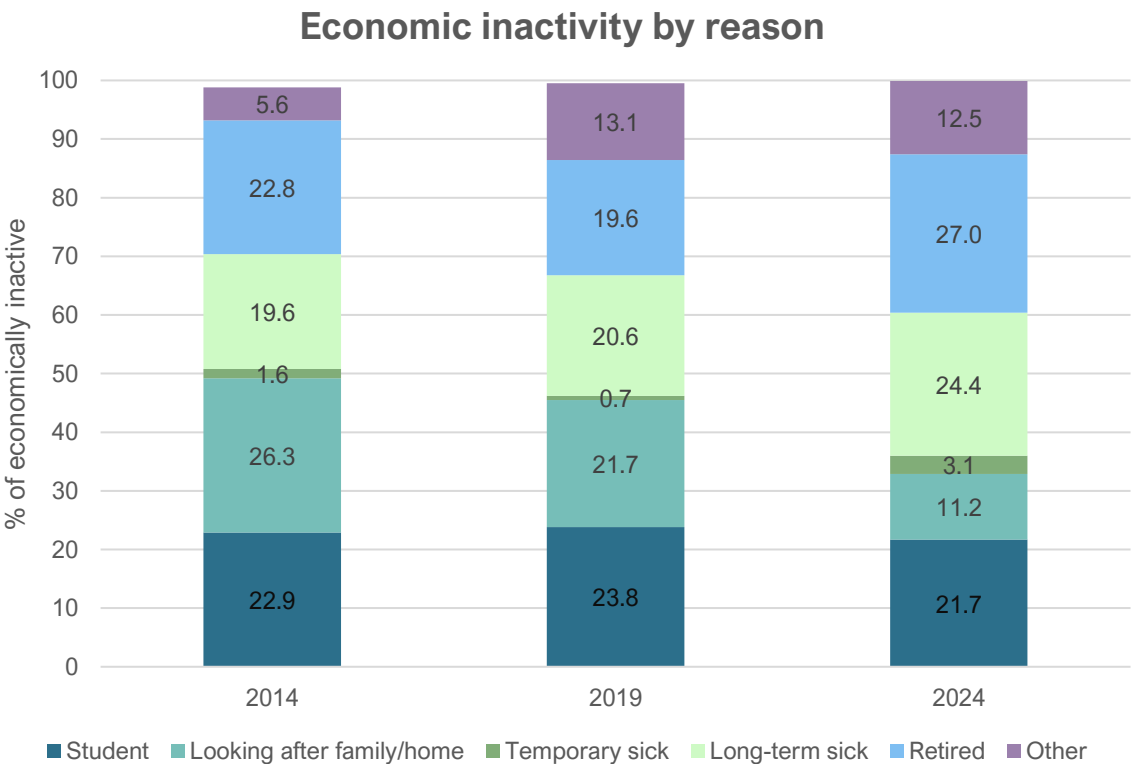
# Economic inactivity by reason

Rising long-term sickness matches trends seen more widely, rising early retirement contrasts with what has been seen elsewhere.

The chart to the right shows how reasons for economic inactivity in Cheshire and Warrington have changed over the last decade amongst the working age population. There are two reasons which now account for more of the economically inactive population – these are retirement and long-term sickness. Increasing long-term sickness is reflective of wider trends seen regionally and nationally.

An increasing proportion who are retiring early in Cheshire and Warrington counters what has been seen regionally and nationally, with a slightly lower proportion of economic inactivity accounted for by retirement compared to a decade before.

All areas have seen a decline in the proportion looking after family/home as a reason for economic inactivity with an even steeper decline for this as a reason in Cheshire and Warrington, although as explained, some of this may be more people going into early retirement. There has also been a jump in other as a reason, which could include *those who are waiting for the results of a job application; have not yet started looking for work; do not need or want employment; have given an uncategorised reason for being economically inactive; or have not given a reason for being economically inactive.*



Notes: Estimates for discouraged are unavailable for Cheshire and Warrington therefore reasons may not sum to 100 percent  
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)

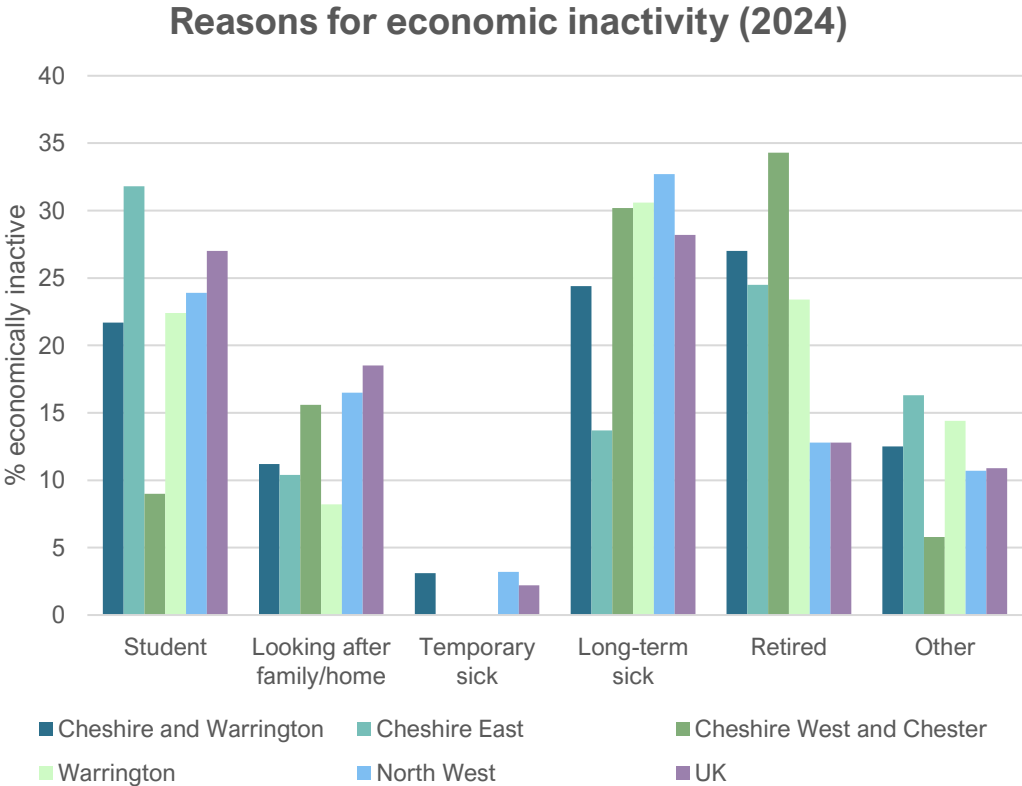
# Economic inactivity by reason (2024)

The chart to the right shows how reasons for economic inactivity vary within Cheshire and Warrington and comparator areas.

Retired is the most likely reason for economic inactivity in Cheshire and Warrington, and as explained on the previous slide, this counters the slight decline for early retirement as a reason regionally and nationally. This accounts for over a third of total economic inactivity in Cheshire West and Chester.

The next highest reason for economic inactivity is long-term sickness which is the most likely reason for inactivity regionally and nationally. All areas have seen long-term sickness increase particularly so over the last 5 years in Cheshire West and Chester, and a continued rise over the last decade in Warrington, although long-term sickness accounts for a low proportion of economic inactivity in Cheshire East.

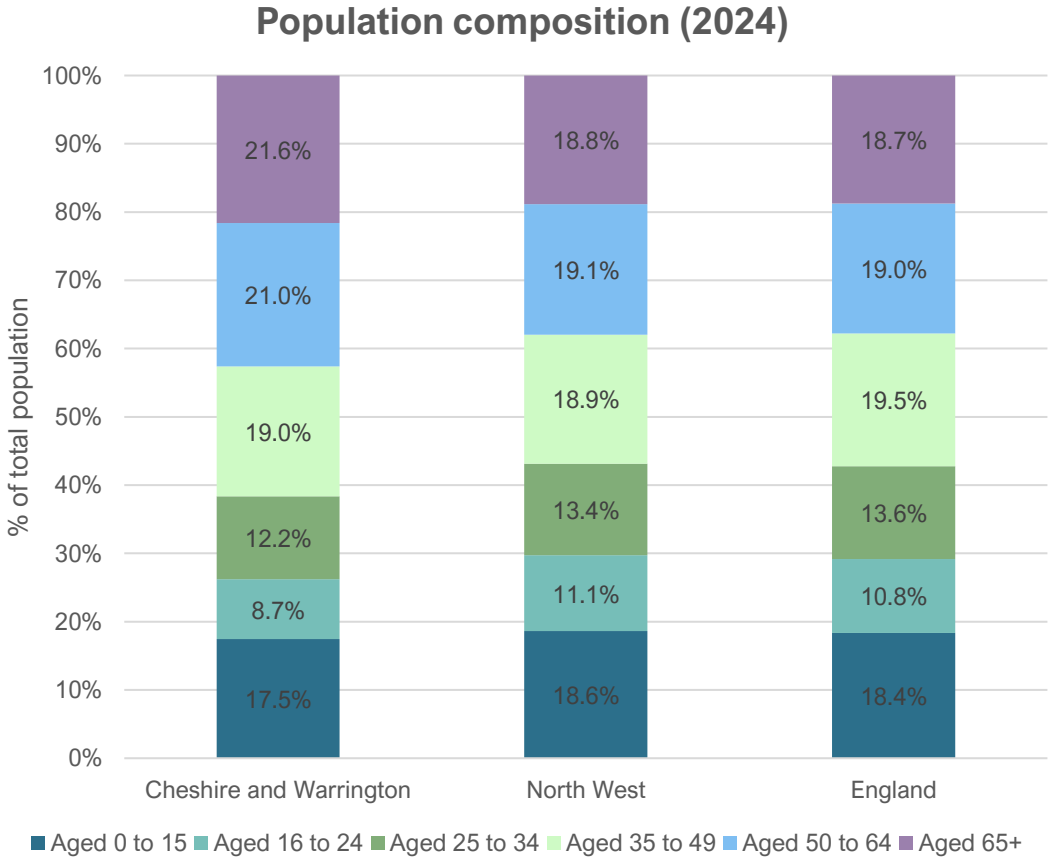
There is variation in inactivity attributed to being a student – this has significantly increased in Cheshire East but declined in Cheshire West and Chester. Across Cheshire and Warrington, being a student is less likely to be a reason for economic inactivity than compared to regionally and nationally. All areas have seen a decline in the proportion looking after family/home and this is less likely to be a reason for inactivity across Cheshire and Warrington than compared to regionally and nationally.



Notes: Estimates for discouraged and temporary sick are unavailable for the three districts. Estimate unavailable for discouraged at the Cheshire and Warrington level  
Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)

# Population composition (2024)

- Cheshire and Warrington has a relatively old population compared to regionally and nationally.
- Median age is 44 years old, (42.8 Warrington, 43.4 Cheshire West and Chester and 44.8 Cheshire East)
- 22% are aged 65 and over in Cheshire and Warrington compared to 19% regionally and nationally with more people aged 50 and over.
- 61% of population are of working age in Cheshire and Warrington, 63% regionally and nationally.
- Those approaching retirement will be an important cohort to target to ensure there is support for those who need it to stay in the workforce, including for those that may need support to stay in the workforce due to illness or health conditions, and those who may be considering retiring early as they feel they do not need to work



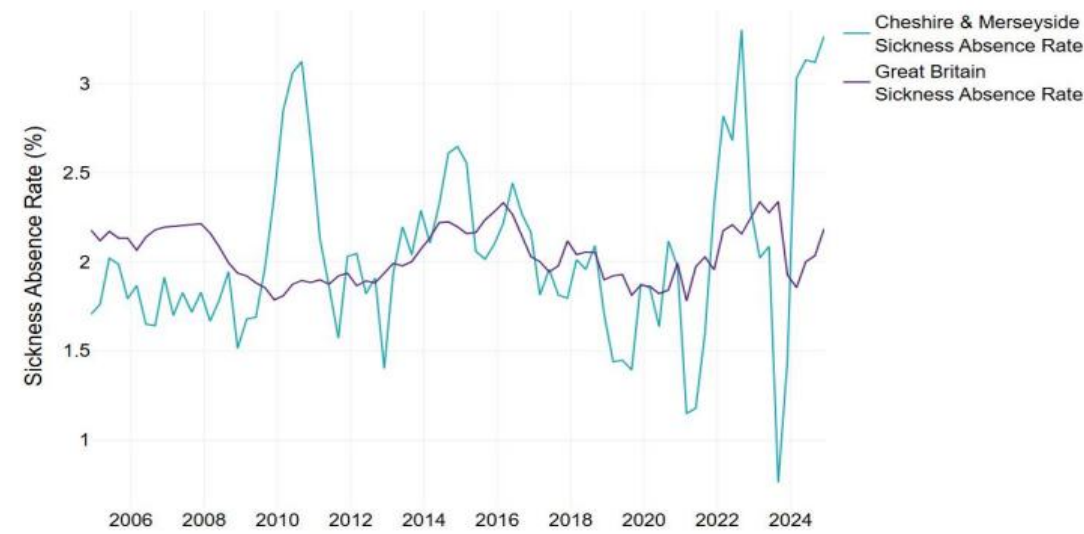
# Sickness absence

## Sickness-related inactivity is rising across Cheshire and Warrington

The proportion of people inactive due to sickness, rose from 21.3% to 27.5% between 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



# Universal Credit and long-term sickness

The claimant count has fallen from previous rises after Covid. Warrington and Crewe account for almost half of total Universal Credit claimants with no work requirements.

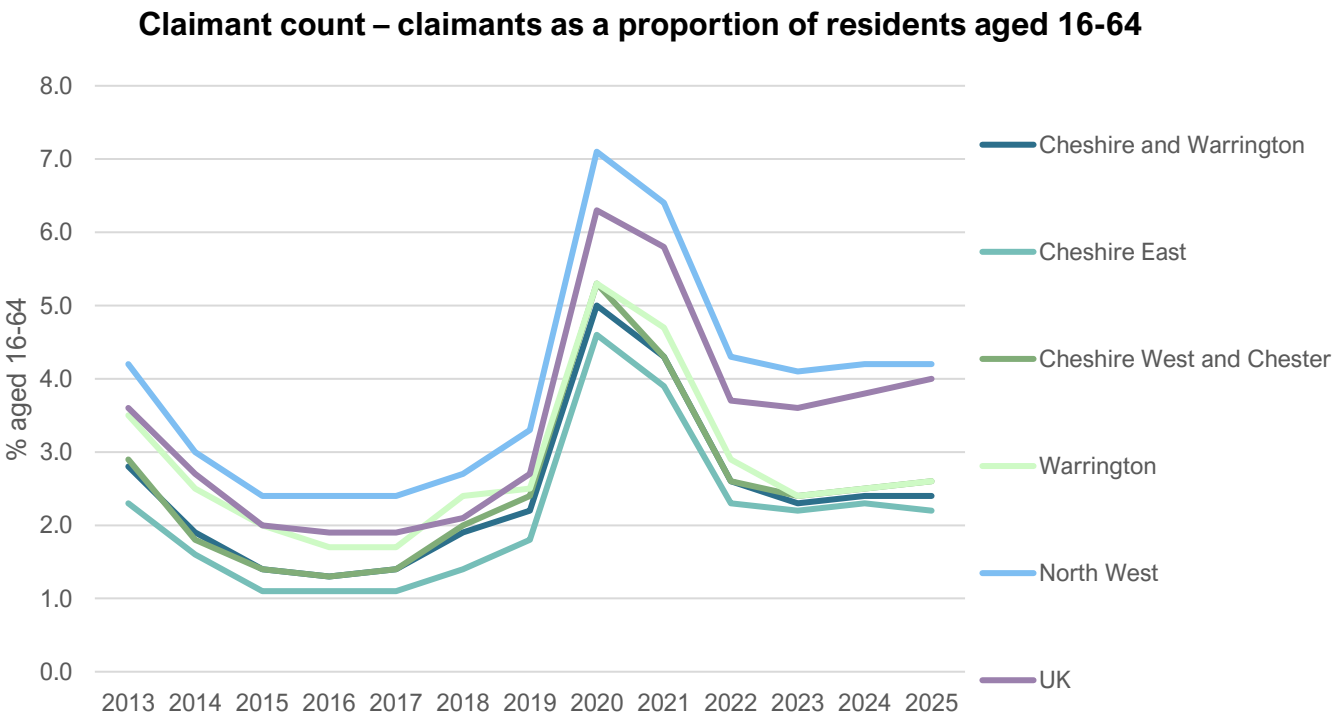
The number of UC claimants remains 16% above 2019 levels in Cheshire and Warrington, but this is lower than the 31% rise regionally and 52% across the UK.

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:

- 61% were women, 39% men
- 35-44 was the largest group (26% of all claimants)
- 9% were below the age of 25

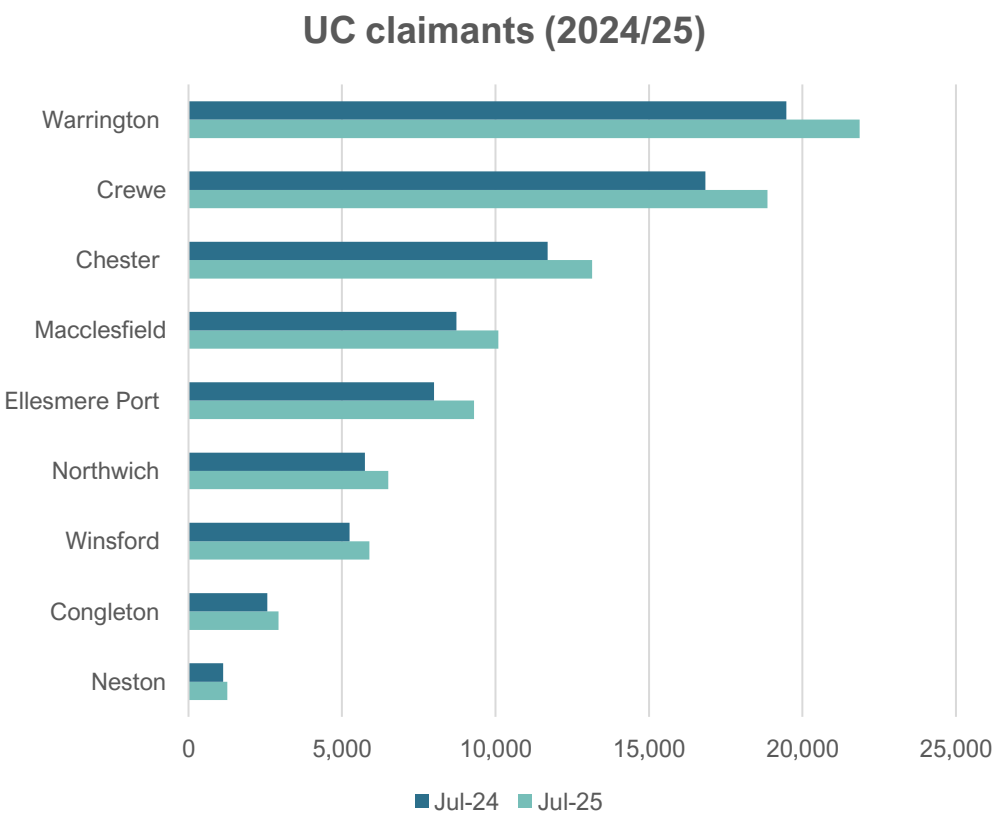
Source: ONS Claimant Count



# Universal credit claimants

UC claimants have risen by 13% over the last year across Cheshire and Warrington with rises across all areas of at least 12%. This is at least partly explained by Universal Credit replacing six legacy benefits.

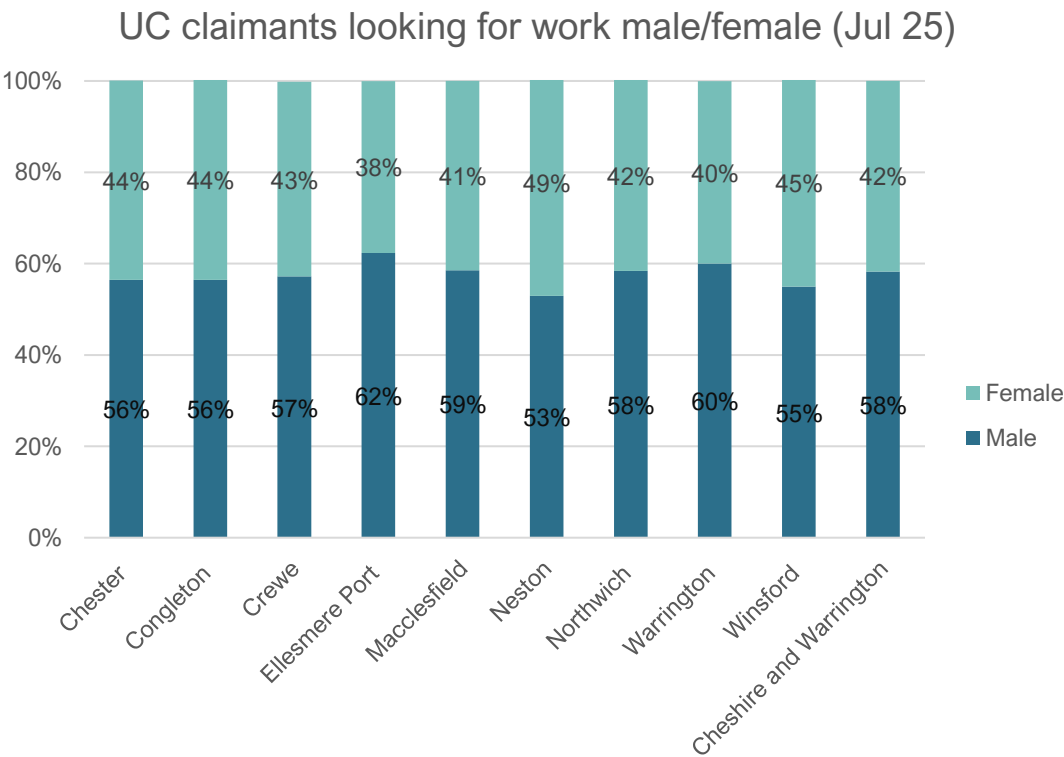
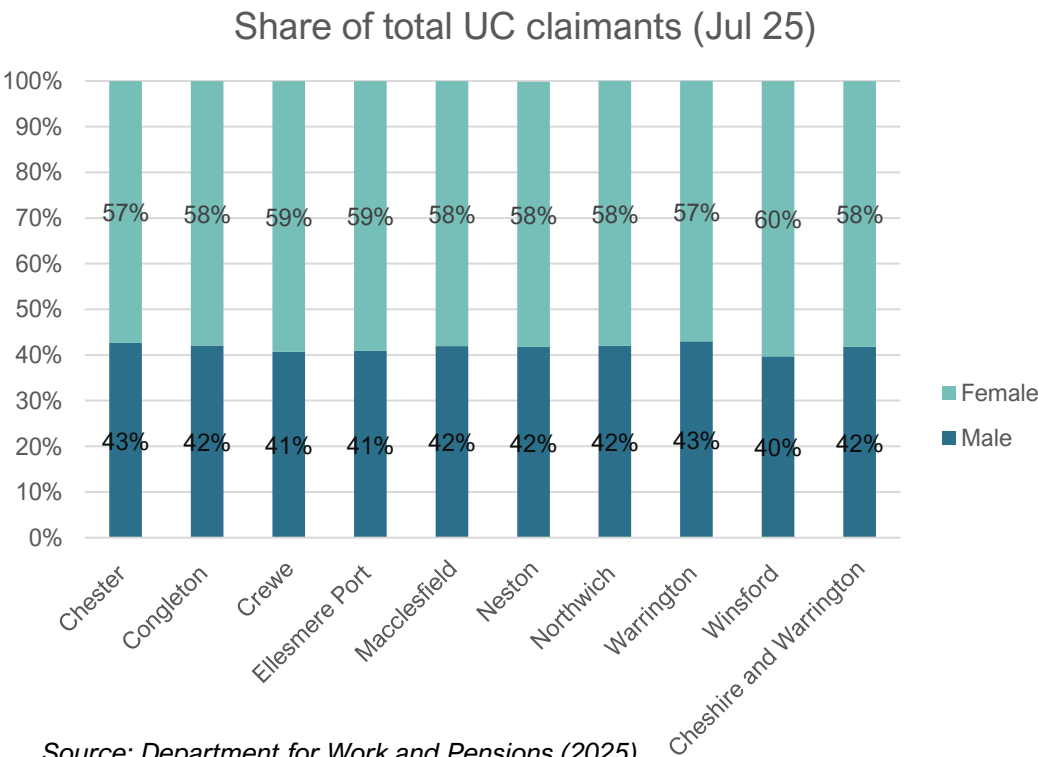
- Between July 2024 and July 2025 total claimants have risen by over 10,000 from 79,400 to 89,850 across Cheshire and Warrington. *However this is partly explained by UC replacing six legacy benefits (income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Housing Benefit (HB), Income Support (IS), Working Tax Credit (WTC), and Child Tax Credit (CTC), essentially bringing together benefits under UC.*
- All areas within Cheshire and Warrington have seen a rise of at least 12% in total claimants over the last year, the highest rises being in Ellesmere Port and Macclesfield of 16%. Ellesmere Port and Macclesfield combined made up a quarter of the total rise in claimants across C&W over the last year.
- These are significant rises but the rise across C&W is slightly below 16% rise regionally and nationally (although Ellesmere Port and Macclesfield are in line with these rises).
- Nonetheless this presents a challenge. Some of the 89,000 claiming won’t be able to work either part of full-time but some will and the challenge will be to ensure barriers are removed to help these people enter into employment.
- Warrington continues to make up around a quarter of total claimants followed by just over one in five from Crewe – combined Warrington and Crewe make up nearly half of total claimants.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025)

# Universal credit claimants – male/female

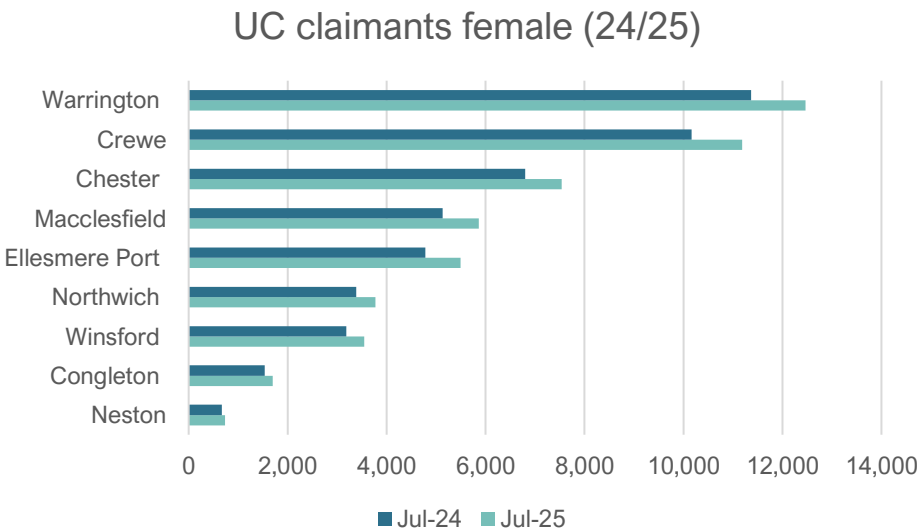
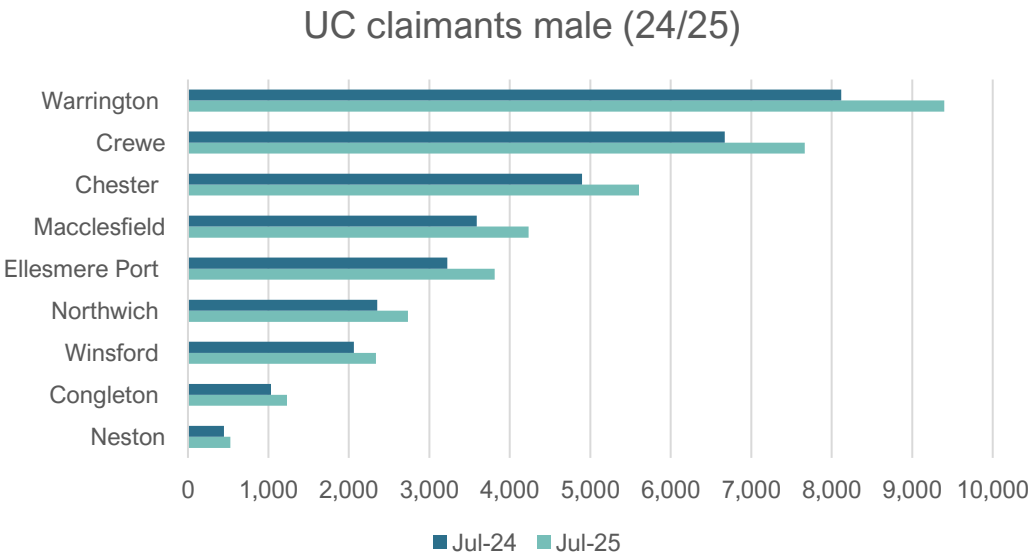
- Women make up 58% of total UC claimants across Cheshire and Warrington. Women make up over half of UC claimants across all areas of Cheshire and Warrington with not variation – 57% of women the lowest proportion of claimants in Chester and Warrington, rising to 60% in Winsford but not much variation across areas.
- This varies when considering the shares of UC claimants looking for work. The male share is above 50% for all areas varying from 53% in Neston to 62% in Ellesmere Port.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025)

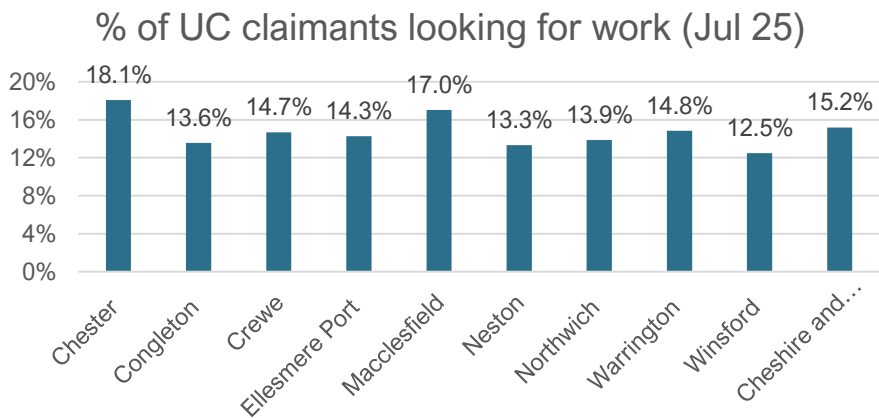
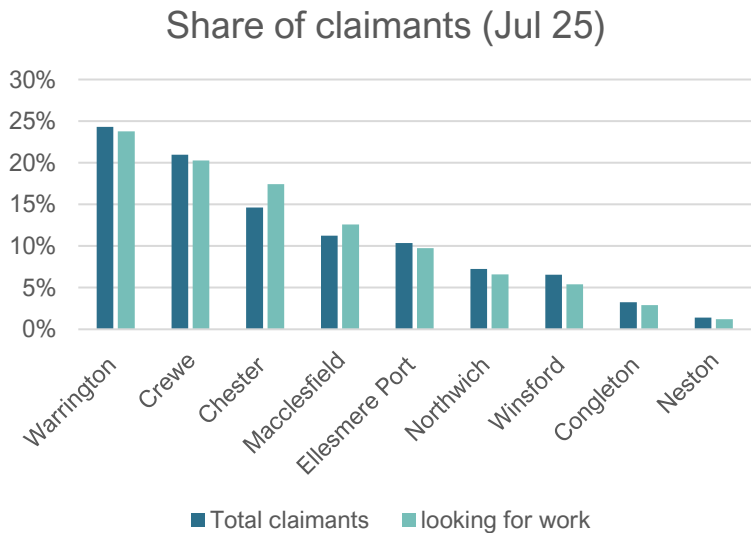
# Universal credit claimants – male/female

- The rise in claimants has been higher for men, by 16% across Cheshire and Warrington compared to an 11% rise for women.
- There has been at least a 13% rise in male claimants across all areas rising to 18% in Ellesmere Port and Macclesfield, and 19.5% in Congleton. The split by area is not dissimilar to the overall split although Warrington make up a slightly higher proportion of male claimants at 25%.
- Each areas has seen at least a 9% rise in female claimants rising to 14-15% in Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port which combined make up over a quarter of the rise in female claimants over the last year. Only slight difference in the share of overall claimants is that Crewe makes up a slightly higher proportion at 21.4% of female claimants and 20.4% of male claimants, nonetheless Crewe and Warrington combined make up almost half of total claimants for both men and women.



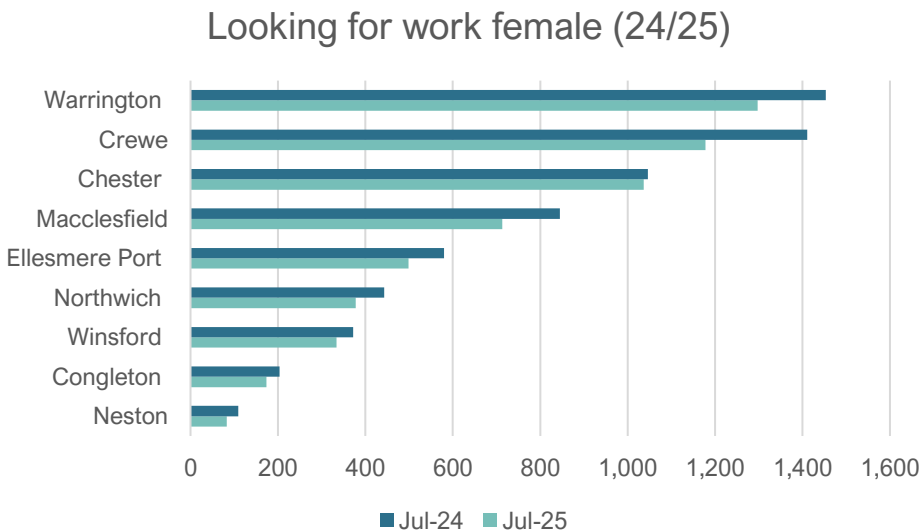
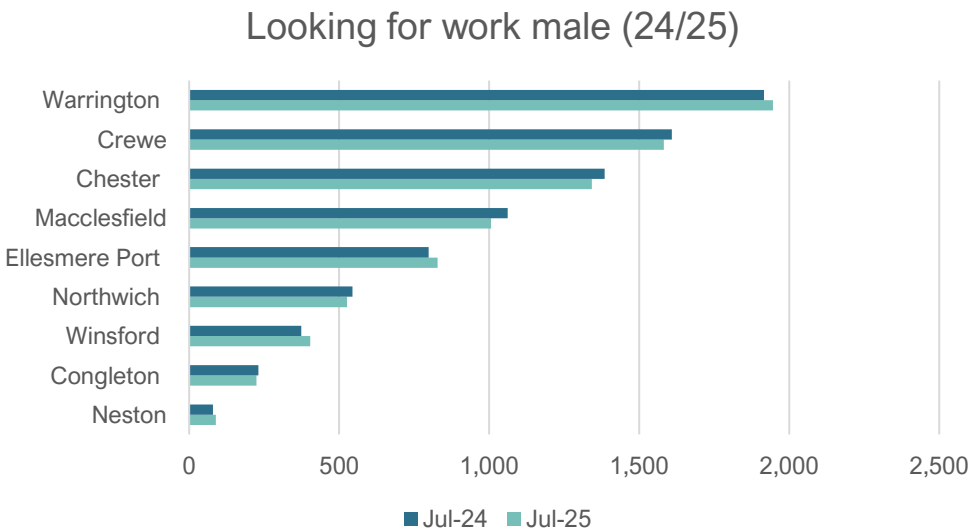
# Universal credit claimants – looking for work

- UC claimants looking for work has fallen over the last year across all areas of Cheshire and Warrington across all UC regimes.
- Between July 2024 and July 2025 total claimants looking for work has fallen by 6% from 14,450 to 13,635, with all areas within Cheshire and Warrington seeing a fall, although this has been more subdued in Winsford, Chester and Warrington. Those claiming UC and looking for work only make up 15% of total UC claimants.
- In Macclesfield, Ellesmere Port, Congelton, Northwich and Congelton there has been a fall of at least 8%. Crewe and Macclesfield account for over half the fall in claimants.
- Although the overall split is not dissimilar to total UC claimants share across Cheshire and Warrington, Macclesfield and Chester make up a higher proportion of claimants looking for work than total UC claimants.
- Across Cheshire and Warrington only 15% of total UC claimants are looking for work – this is slightly higher in Macclesfield and Chester but lower in Winsford, Neston, Congelton, Northwich and Ellesmere Port.



# Universal credit claimants – looking for work male/female

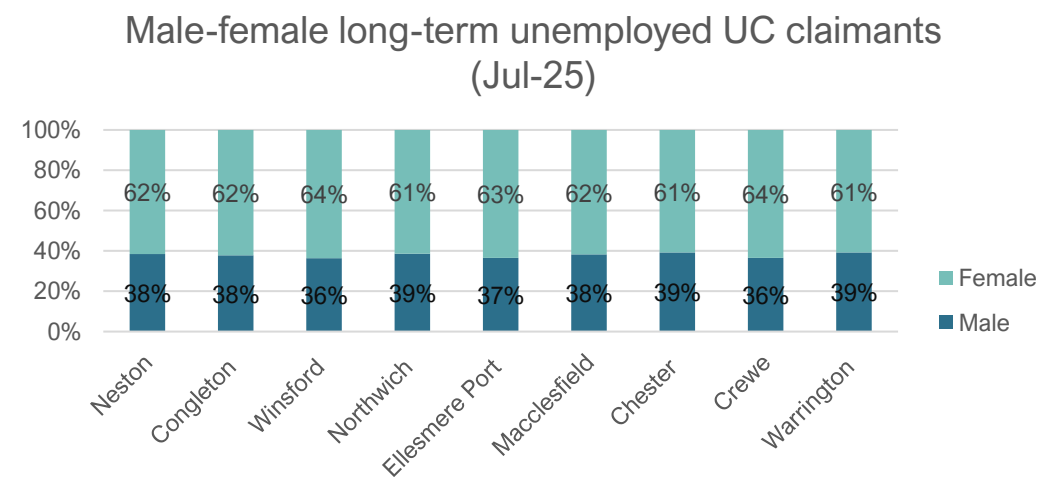
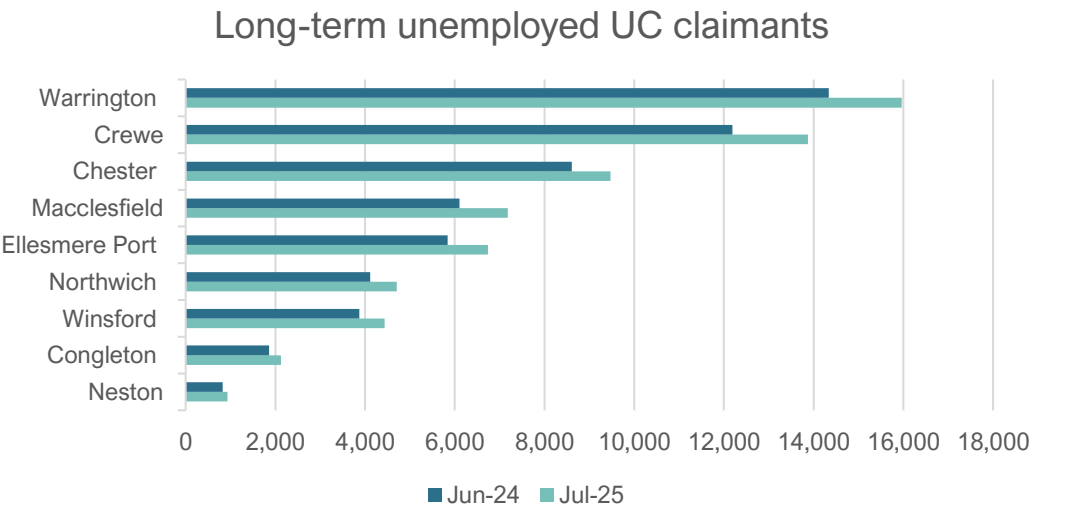
- There has been a fall by 12% in female UC claimants looking for work. Apart from Chester which has only seen a slight fall, there has been at least a 10% fall in female UC claimants looking for work in all other areas. This varies from a 10-11% fall in Winsford and Warrington to a 24% fall in Neston, although this is from a relatively low base.
- Whereas there has been little overall change in male UC claimants looking for work across Cheshire and Warrington. This does vary with rises in Neston, Winsford, Ellesmere Port and Warrington, whereas there have been slight falls in other areas, the strongest of which in Macclesfield of 5%.
- However overall the fall in UC claimants looking for work appears to be from a fall in the number of female UC claimants looking for work.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025)

# Long-term unemployed claiming universal credit

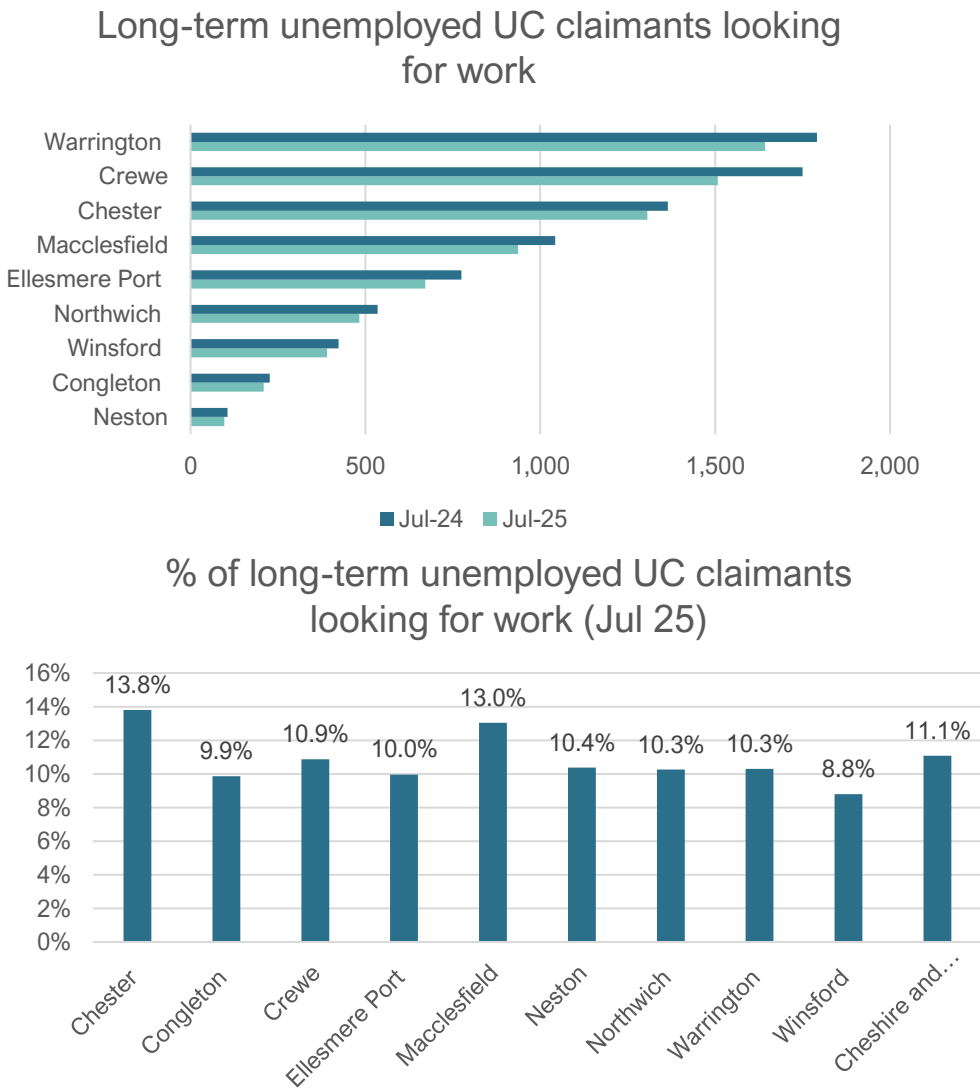
- There has been an increase of over 7,000 UC claimants who are long-term unemployed to 65,400 across Cheshire and Warrington.
- This refers to people claiming UC who have been unemployed for more than 12 months across all regimes (*Searching for work (intensive)*; *Planning for work*; *Preparing for work*; *Working – with requirements (light-touch)*; *Working – no requirements (working enough)*; and *No work requirements*).
- Warrington makes up around a quarter of total of long-term unemployed UC claimants, a fifth from Crewe, Chester and Macclesfield combined another quarter of claimants.
- Women make up 62% of long-term unemployed across Cheshire and Warrington and this is fairly consistent across all areas, slightly higher in Winsford and Crewe.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025)

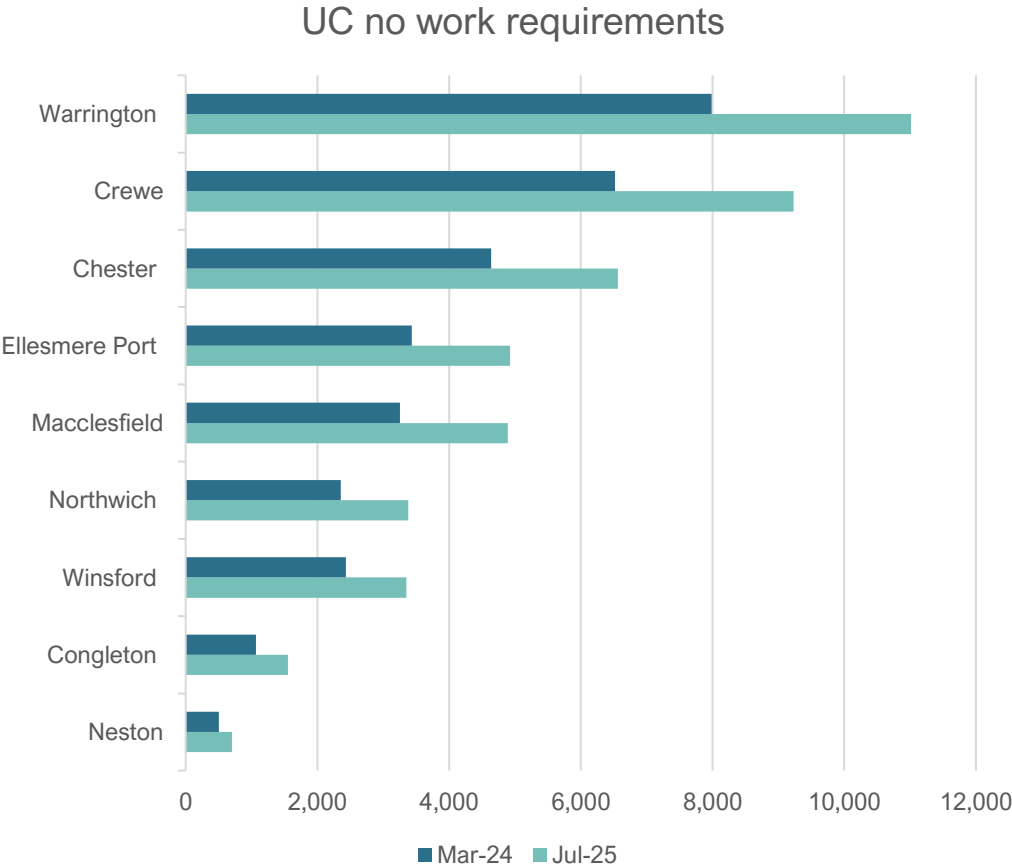
# Long-term unemployed UC claimants looking for work

- All areas have seen a fall in long-term unemployed UC claimants who are looking for work particularly in Crewe which made up nearly a third of the fall in long-term unemployed UC claimants looking for work across Cheshire and Warrington.
- Across all areas most of those who are long-term unemployed are not looking for work.
- Only 11% of UC claimants who are long-term unemployed are looking for work, the highest is in Chester and Macclesfield with 13-14% of UC claimants who are long-term unemployed looking for work but 10% or lower in Winsford, Congelton, Ellesmere Port, Warrington, Northwich and Neston.



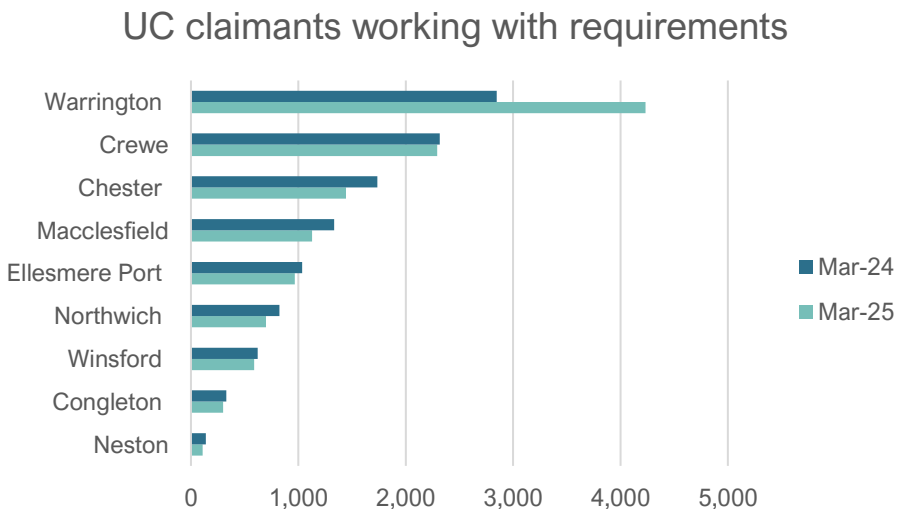
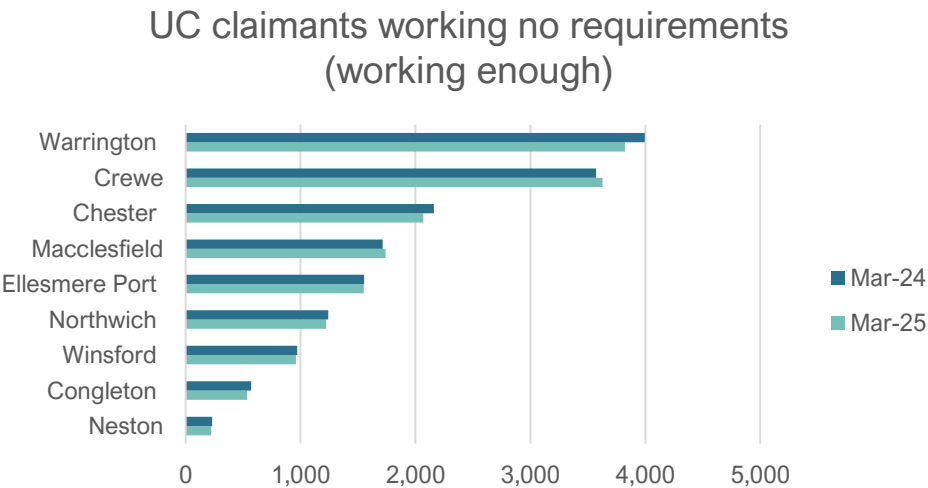
# Universal Credit claimants no work requirements

- There has been a rise in the number of UC claimants with no work requirements to 45,600 across Cheshire and Warrington, over half of total UC claimants. *Those with no work requirements are not expected to work at present. Health or caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work. Those with no work requirements is by far the largest UC claimant regime group within Cheshire and Warrington*
  - UC regimes are Searching for work (intensive); Planning for work; Preparing for work; Working – with requirements (light-touch); Working – no requirements (working enough); and No work requirements.
- All areas have seen a rise in UC claimants with no work requirements.
- Very similar proportions to overall UC claimants which makes sense given no work requirement makes up over half of total UC claimants.
- Warrington and Crewe make up nearly half of total UC claimants with no work requirements, Warrington around quarter of UC claimants with no work requirements and Crewe a fifth of claimants.
- Part of this rise is explained by the six legacy benefits transiting into UC including income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Housing Benefit (HB), Income Support (IS).



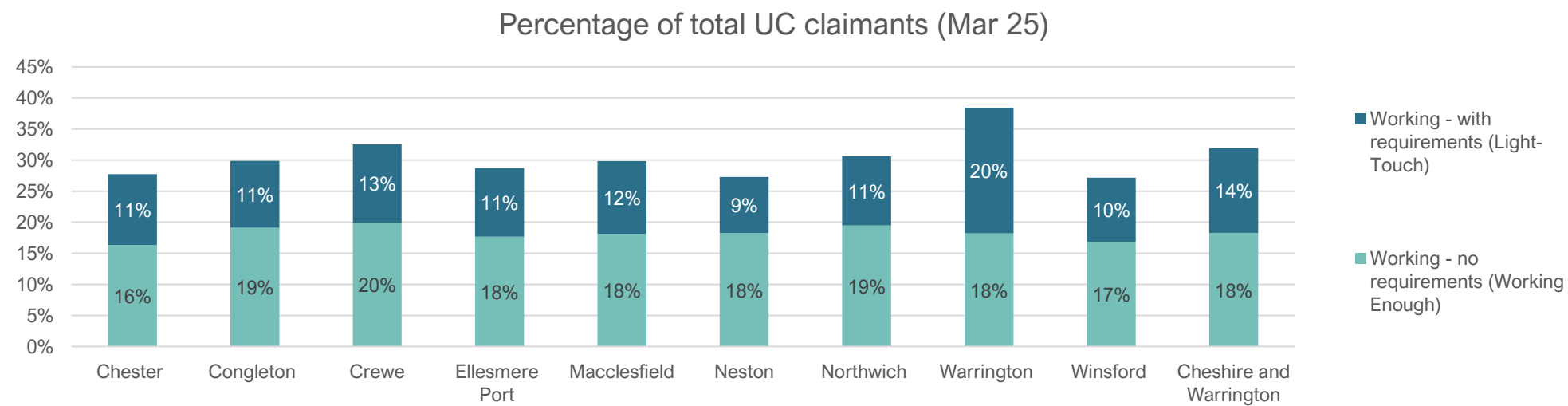
# Universal credit claimants – working

- Working no requirements: individual or household earnings over the level at which conditionality applies. Required to inform DWP of changes of circumstances, particularly if at risk of decreasing earnings or losing job
  - A slight fall over the last year most of which has been in Warrington. There are 15,750 claimants in this group
- Working with requirements (light-touch): in work but could earn more, or not working but has a partner with low earnings.
  - An increase of 600 claimants over the last year to 11,750 claimants although most areas have seen a fall, only Warrington has a rise in claimants which explains the overall rise across Cheshire and Warrington
- Both these regimes, claimants are not required to go into the job centre. Working with no requirements are likely to have been claiming tax credits.
- Therefore, there are around 27,500 UC claimants who are working but not required to go into the job centre and therefore may be more difficult to target to help provide more tailored support to help fill vacancies in Cheshire and Warrington and/or help to upskill to improve job quality.
- Half of the 27,500 claimants who are working are from Warrington (29%) and Crewe (21%)



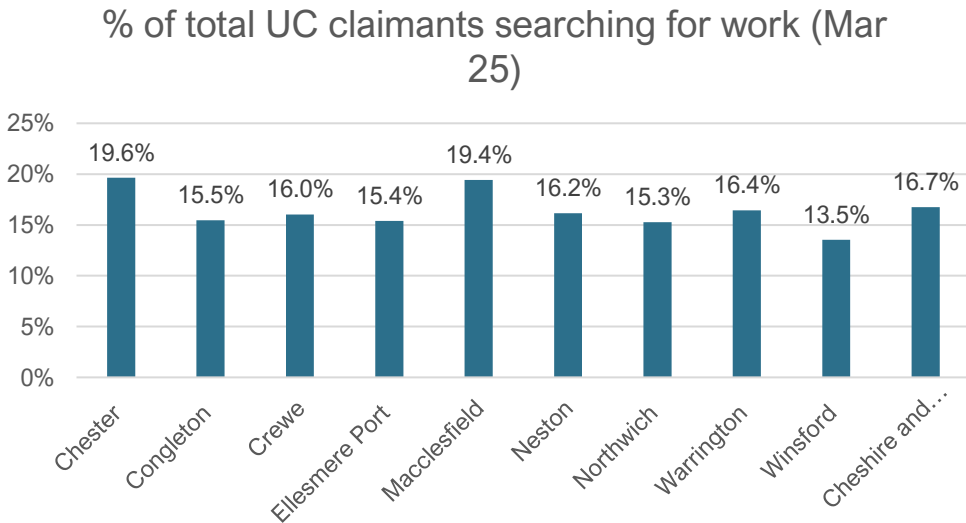
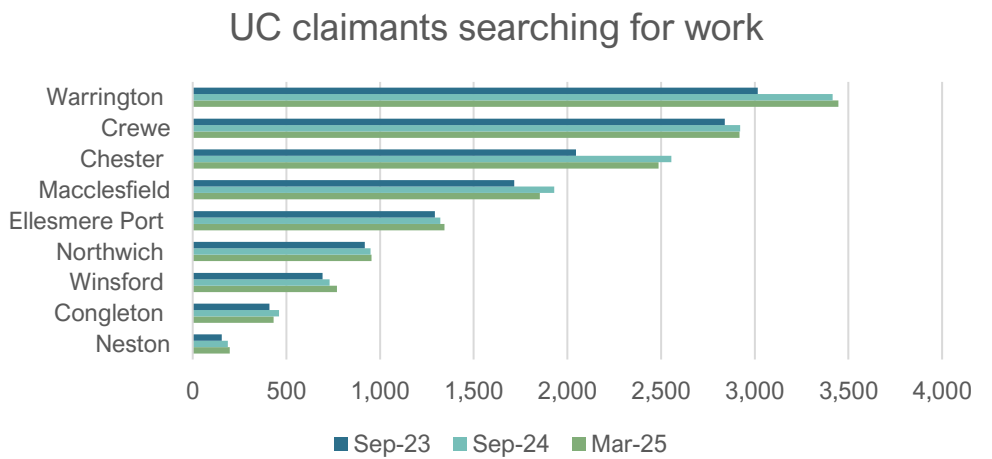
# Universal credit claimants – working

- Across Cheshire and Warrington 32% of UC claimants are working with or without requirements. This varies with Warrington the highest at 38% of claimants particularly with a high number of UC claimants working with requirements, to 30% or below in Winsford, Neston, Chester, Congelton and Ellesmere Port.
- Therefore most UC claimants are not working – 58,700 UC claimants across Cheshire and Warrington are not working with over two thirds of these with no work requirements.



# Universal credit claimants – searching for work

- Searching for work: Not working, or with very low earnings. Claimant is required to take action to secure work - or more / better paid work. The Work Coach supports them to plan their work search and preparation activity.
- There has been an increase in the number of UC claimants who are searching for work (intensive) since September 2023 but little change since September 2024. Data has not been included for March 2024 as there was a significant increase in Northwich, likely explained by the transition of legacy benefits coming under UC before levels returned more towards previous levels.
- 17% of UC claimants are in the searching for work (intensive) cohort across Cheshire and Warrington. This is closer to a fifth in Chester and Macclesfield but lower in Winsford, Northwich, Congelton and Ellesmere Port – this is the same to what has been presented in looking for work on slide 62.

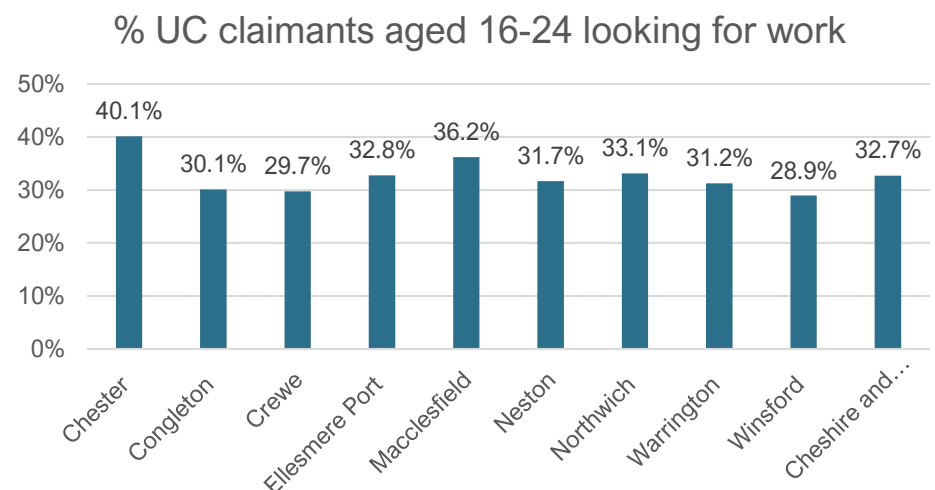
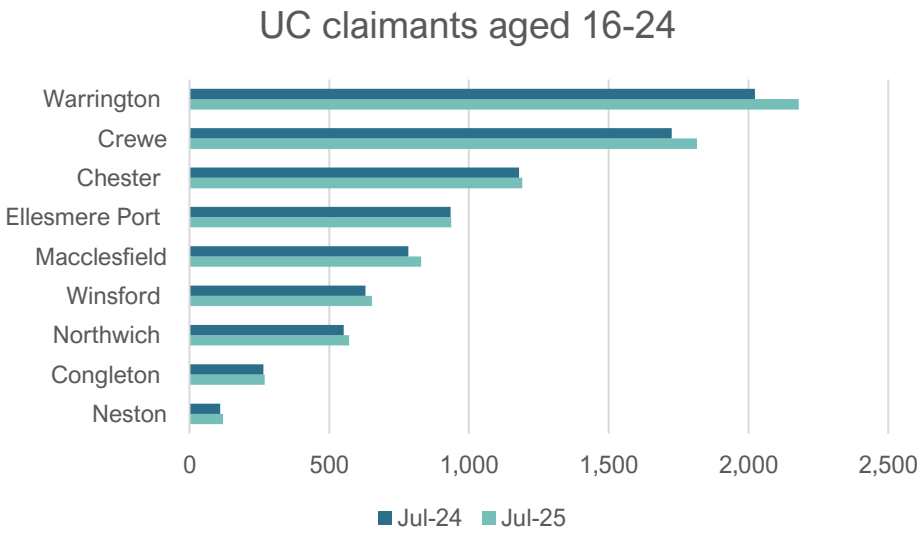


# Universal credit claimants – planning/preparing for work

- Planning for work: Expected to work in the future. Lone parent / lead carer of child aged 1. Claimant required to attend periodic interviews to plan for their return to work.
  - There are 1,000 claimants across Cheshire and Warrington, over half coming from Crewe and Warrington.
- Preparing for work: Expected to start preparing for future even with limited capability for work at the present time or a child aged 2. The claimant is expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for work including Work Focused Interview.
  - There are 4,000 claimants across Cheshire and Warrington, over a quarter from Warrington.
- These regimes combined account for only a small proportion of total UC claimants in Cheshire and Warrington – 6% of 88,000 total UC claimants in March 2025, the smallest groups of total UC claimants although an important group to target to ensure barriers are removed from a transition period from leaving the workforce to look after children to then looking to return to work.

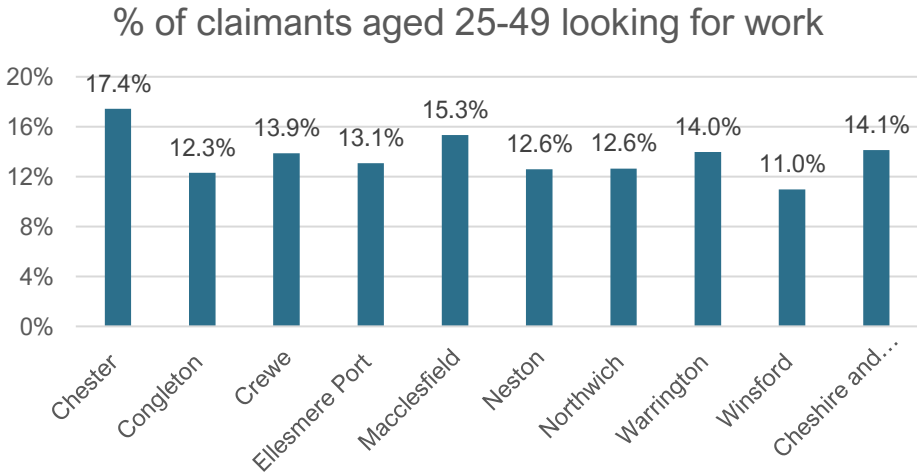
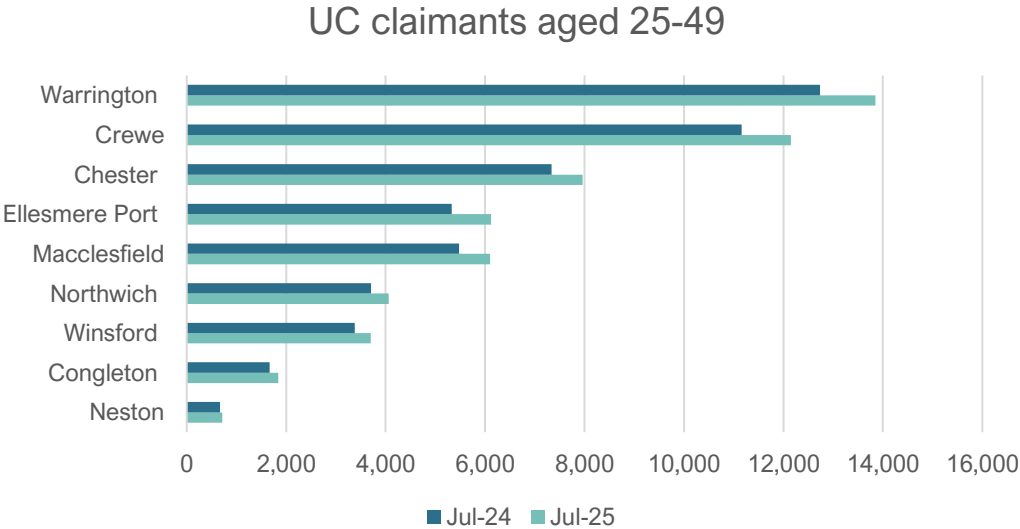
# Universal credit claimants – 16-24

- There has been an increase of 350 UC claimants aged 16-24 across Cheshire and Warrington with an increase across all areas apart from Ellesmere Port and Congleton, and only a very minor rise in Chester.
- The rise in total claimants aged 16-24 has mainly been in Warrington and Crewe – two thirds of overall rise (43% in Warrington and 25% in Crewe).
- Share of 16-24 claimants similar to total UC claimants
- Around a third of UC claimants aged 16-24 are looking for work across Cheshire and Warrington, above or around a third in Chester, Macclesfield, Northwich and Ellesmere Port, lower in Winsford, Crewe and Congleton the proportion of claimants looking for work is much higher than other age groups
  - A rise in 200 claimants looking for work over the last year.
- A fairly even split between men and women of claimants aged 16-24 across all areas, although the proportion looking for work is not as even
  - 64% of men and 36% of women UC claimants looking for work and this rises to two thirds of those looking for work who are men in Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield and Northwich.



# Universal credit claimants – 25-49

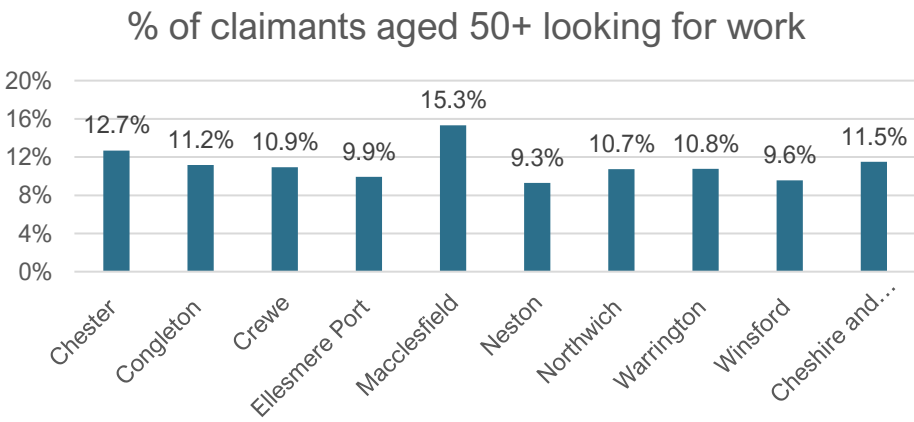
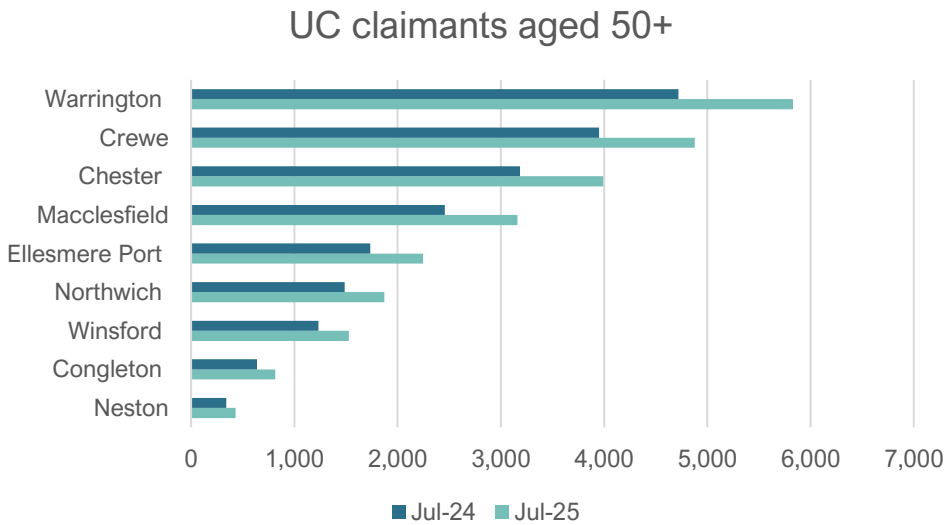
- There has been a rise of 5,000 UC claimants aged 25-49 to 56,500 with a rise across all areas.
- However there has been a fall of 900 UC claimants who are looking for work across all areas with Crewe, Macclesfield and Warrington making up nearly two thirds of this decline.
- Across Cheshire and Warrington only 14% of UC claimants aged 25-49 are looking for work, this is slightly higher in Chester and Macclesfield but lower in Winsford, Congleton, Neston, Northwich and Ellesmere Port.
- Across Cheshire and Warrington 61.5% of claimants aged 25-49 are women and this is fairly consistent across all areas.
- A slightly higher proportion of UC claimants looking for work are men (56%) across Cheshire and Warrington highest of which is in Ellesmere Port at 60% although apart from in Neston, there are slightly more claimants aged 25-49 looking for work who are men – in total there are 4,500 claimants aged 25-49 looking for work who are men, 3,500 women.



Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2025)

# Universal credit claimants – 50+

- There has been a rise of 5,000 UC claimants aged 50 and over to 24,750, a rise of 25% over the last year compared to a 10% rise for those aged 25-49 and 4.5% rise for those aged 16-24.
- There has been a rise in UC claimants aged 50 and over across all areas.
- 11.5% of UC claimants aged 50 and over are looking for work across Cheshire and Warrington, higher in Macclesfield but below 10% in Neston, Winsford and Ellesmere Port.
- A fairly even split of UC claimants between men and women across all areas – 13,100 female claimants aged over 50 and 11,700 men.
- A higher proportion of claimants aged 50 and over who are looking for work are men, over 60% of total claimants. The proportion of UC claimants aged 50 and over who are men are high in Chester. Warrington, Neston and Congleton.



# Service Mapping

## Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity

The **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** sets a long-term goal to ensure that every resident, regardless of health, background or geography, can participate in the economy. This is echoed by local strategies such as **Cheshire West’s Inclusive Economy Strategy**, which identifies key barriers including poverty and poor health. The region-wide **All Together Fairer Plan** also places fair employment at the heart of efforts to reduce health inequalities and economic exclusion.

### Cheshire & Warrington

- **Connect to work:** Launching Autumn 2025, to help disabled people, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment to find work.
- **Work and Health Programme:** For people with health conditions and disabilities looking for work. Early Access for targeted groups including ex-offenders, carers, homeless, HM Forces, drugs/alcohol, care leaver, refugee, gang member and victim of domestic violence.
- **IPS in Drug and Alcohol Services:** Supports people accessing substance misuse services (VIA provision) who want to move into paid employment.
- **Recovery works:** Supports individuals facing complex barriers such as addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness. The programme collaborates with substance misuse services to assist participants in retraining, studying, volunteering, or finding employment as part of their recovery journey.
- **IPS Severe Mental Health:** Supports people with severe mental health difficulties to find and sustain meaningful paid work.
- **Restart:** An employment support programme commissioned by DWP aimed at improving employment outcomes for recipients of universal credit/job seekers allowance that have been unemployed for 9 months. Delivered locally across all boroughs, by FedCap in Cheshire East and Seetec Plus in Cheshire West and Warrington.
- **Employment Advisors in Talking Therapies:** Specialist Employment Advisors who work alongside therapists to offer a broad range of tailored support.

Cheshire West & Chester

**Defining Futures:** Support economically inactive individuals in career readiness to progress into/towards employment

**Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care (IPSPC):** Supports people who are accessing Primary Health Services (eg GP) and wanting support to move into or remain in work (to be replaced by Connect to Work)

The **Supported Employment Service** is aimed at helping adults aged over 18 years, with learning disabilities and/or autism find and sustain employment by building confidence, developing skills and matching these with job opportunities..

Cheshire East

**Inspiring Futures:** Support people with health conditions find a job and stay in work by matching skills to promote to local employers.

Warrington

**Warrington's Employment Development Team** supports individuals with health conditions in securing employment. They offer tailored services to enhance job hunting and employability skills.

Live working draft

# NEET young people and engagement pathways

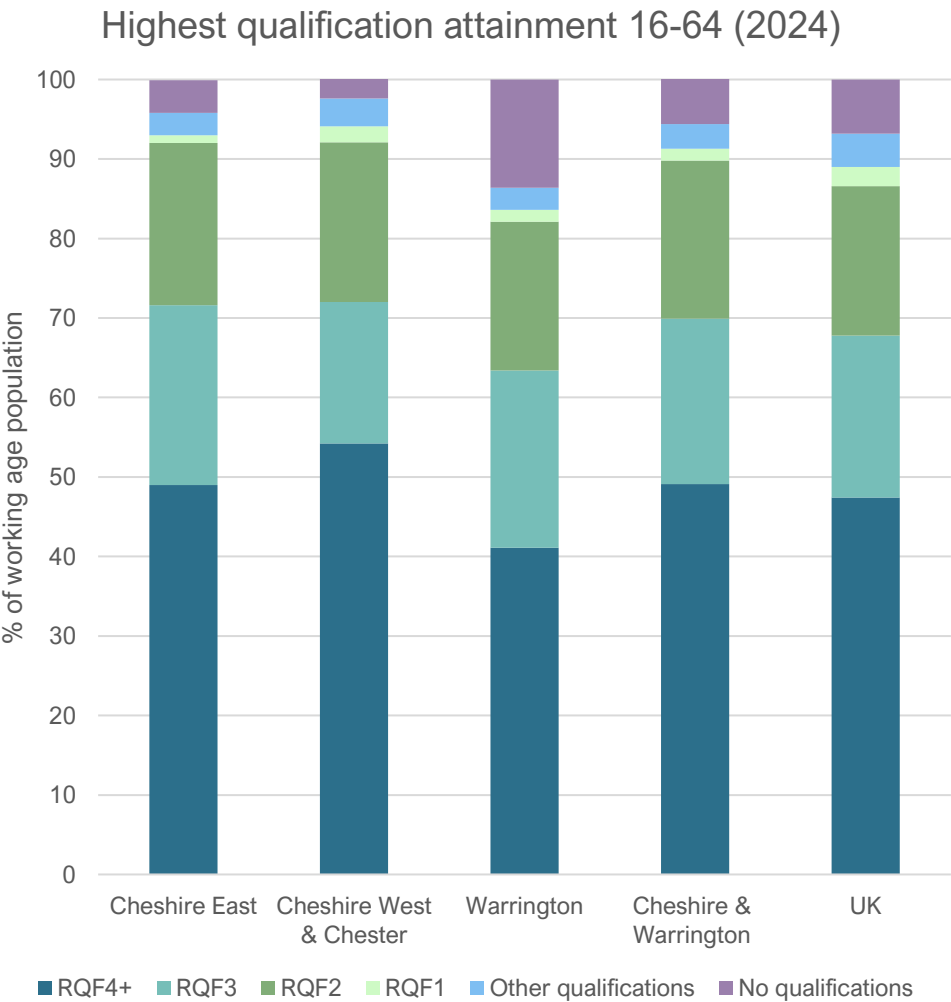
# Qualifications attainment

While there are strong top end skills across the region, gaps remain in foundational attainment, particularly in Warrington.

Overall, qualification levels in Cheshire and Warrington are slightly above the UK average: 49.1% of working-age adults (16–64) hold RQF4+ qualifications, compared to 47.4% nationally. Cheshire West & Chester has the highest proportion with 54.2%, while Warrington lower at 41.1%.

There is notable variation between areas. Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester have relatively high proportions of residents qualified to RQF3 and RQF4+. In contrast, Warrington has a significantly higher share of adults with no qualifications, at 13.6% - more than double the UK average of 6.8%, and well above neighbouring areas (Cheshire East: 4.1%, CWAC: 2.5%).

This suggests challenges in progression for some groups and points to **uneven education outcomes** across the sub-region that may limit access to higher-skilled employment. Previous reports and engagement have raised concerns over insufficient progression pathways for residents from Level 2 upwards.



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (2025)

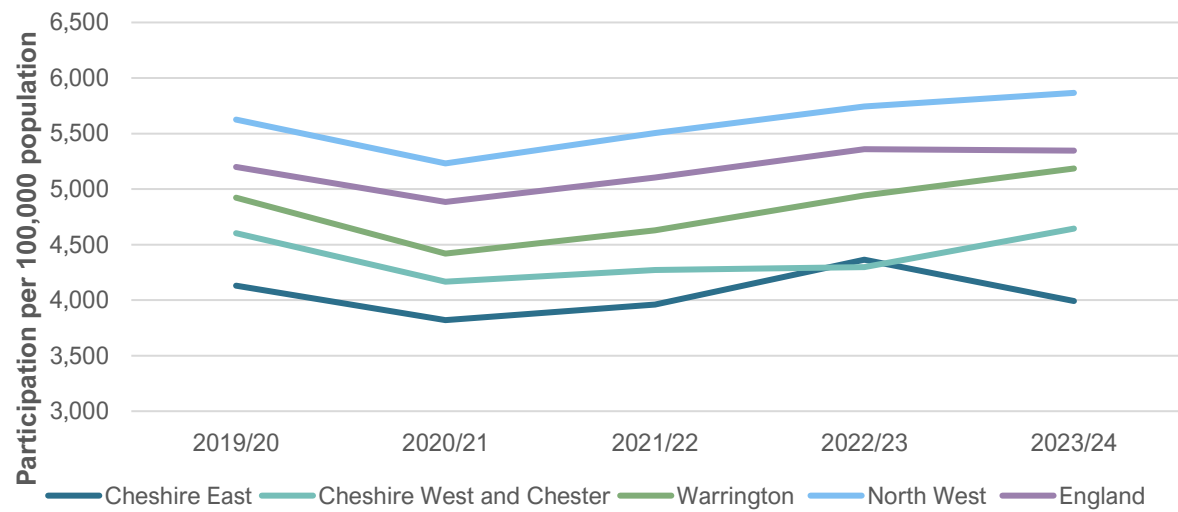
# Further Education

Further education and training participation and achievements remain relatively low compared to regionally and nationally

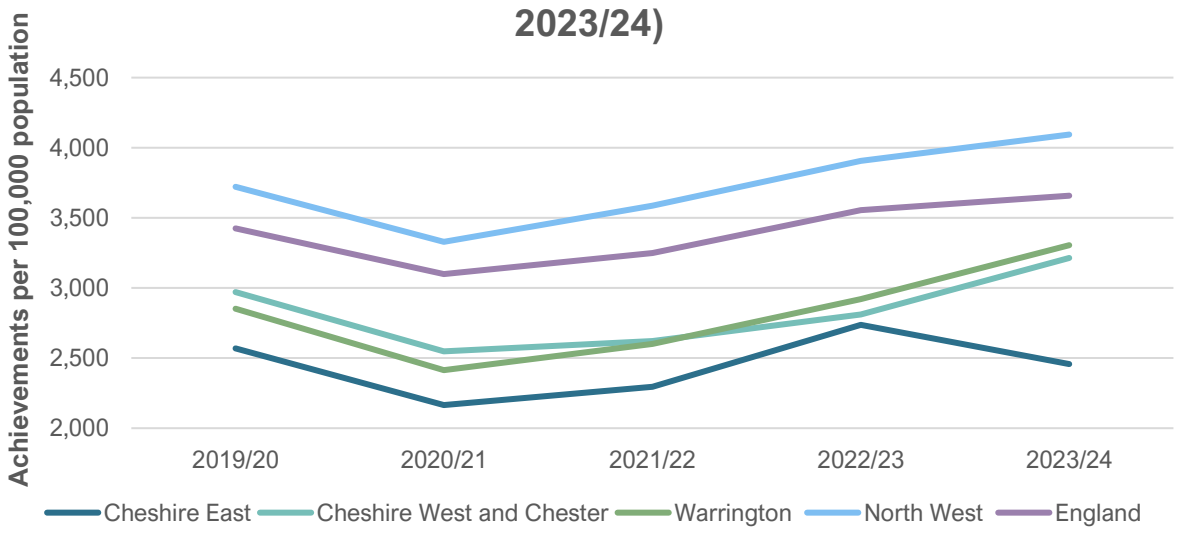
Cheshire and Warrington has consistently had low participation and achievements across further education and skills over the last 5 years. This varies somewhat by area, with Warrington seeing a strong rise particularly in achievements per 100,000 population by 16% compared to 10% regionally and 7% nationally – Warrington has the closest FE participation and achievement rates compared to the national average of the three authorities.

Cheshire West and Chester has also seen a rise in achievements by 8% although participations are only just back to pre pandemic levels. Cheshire East has seen a drop in FE participation and achievements, countering trends seen regionally and nationally – Cheshire East is furthest away from the regional and national FE participation and achievement rates.

Further Education Participation rate (2019/20 - 2023/24)



Further Education Achievement Rate (2019/20 - 2023/24)



Source: DfE Further education and skills (2023/24)

# Apprenticeship achievement

**Focusing on apprenticeships, achievements are high in Warrington and growing across Cheshire and Warrington**

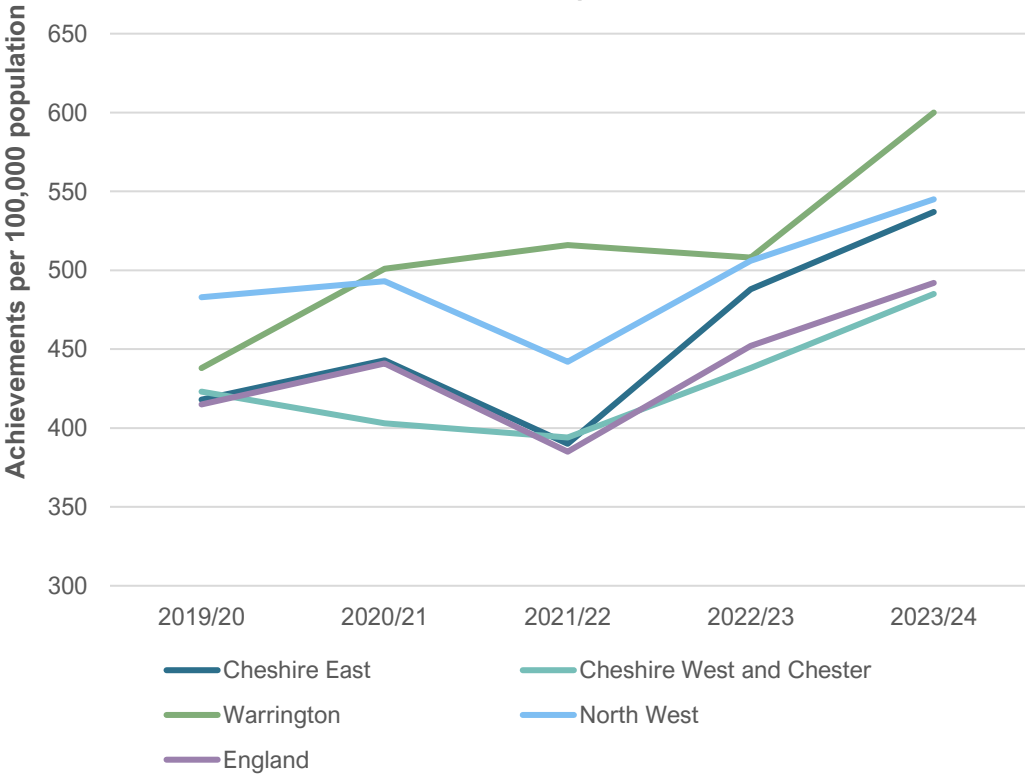
Within Further Education, apprenticeship achievements come out strongly in Cheshire and Warrington. Across all areas, there have been average growth of 3% in achievements since 2019/20, above the regional average of 2.4%.

Warrington has seen the strongest growth of 6.5% on average and has the highest apprenticeship rate of all areas with a strong rise over the last academic year. Warrington is the only area above the regional apprenticeship achievement rate.

Cheshire East has also seen strong growth in achievements by an average of 5%, moving from a point in 2019/20 where achievements were around the national average to above and around the regional average.

Cheshire East is the only area significantly below the regional average despite growth in achievements of 3%, and is around the national average.

Apprenticeship achievements (2019/20 - 2023/24)



Source: DfE Further education and skills (2023/24)

# Level of apprenticeships

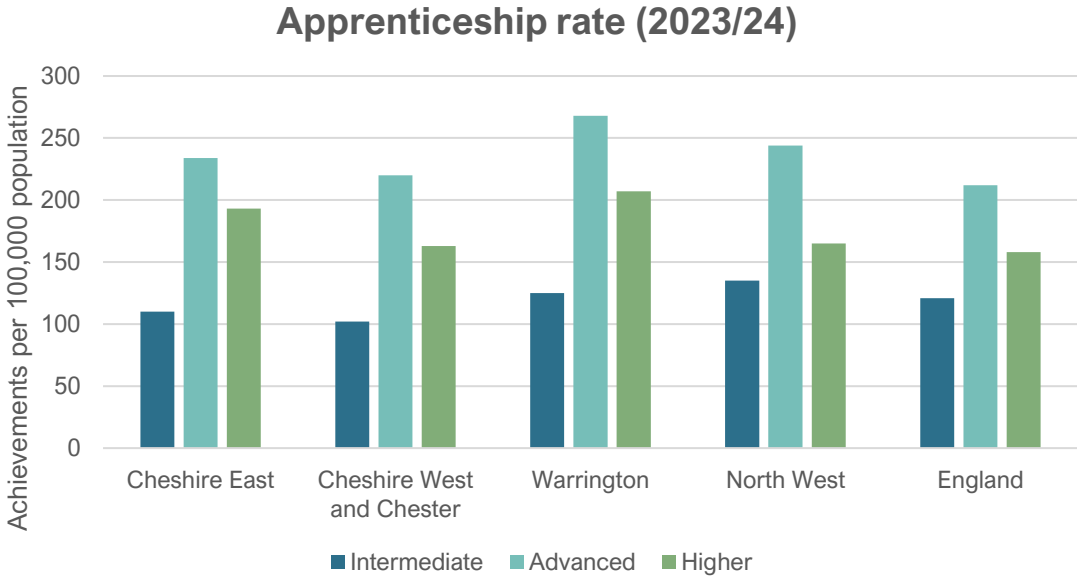
Growth in apprenticeship achievements in Cheshire and Warrington has been driven by higher-level apprenticeships, while intermediate-level achievements have declined.

The chart to the right shows how apprenticeship achievements have changed by level in Cheshire and Warrington, regionally and nationally between 2020/21 and 2023/24. The overall rise in achievements is largely driven by higher-level apprenticeships across all areas. In Cheshire and Warrington, the higher achievement rate increased by 113% over the period, above rises seen regionally and nationally with all areas at or above the regional higher apprenticeship achievement rate.

Advanced-level achievements have seen growth of +7% overall, with all areas seeing growth above regional and national advanced achievement rates, although only Warrington has a higher advanced apprenticeship achievement rate

Intermediate-level achievements have declined by 17%, reflecting a trend seen across the North West and England. This decline is consistent across all local areas within Cheshire and Warrington.

Source: DfE Further education and skills (2023/24)



Achievement rate by level 2023/24 (growth since 2019/20)			
Area	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher
Cheshire East	110 (-4%)	234 (+2%)	193 (+23%)
Cheshire West and Chester	102 (-9%)	220 (+1%)	163 (+27%)
Warrington	125 (-5%)	268 (+4%)	207 (+27%)
North West	135 (-7%)	244 (+1%)	165 (+24%)
England	121 (-7%)	212 (+2%)	158 (+26%)

# The number of young people who are NEET has grown

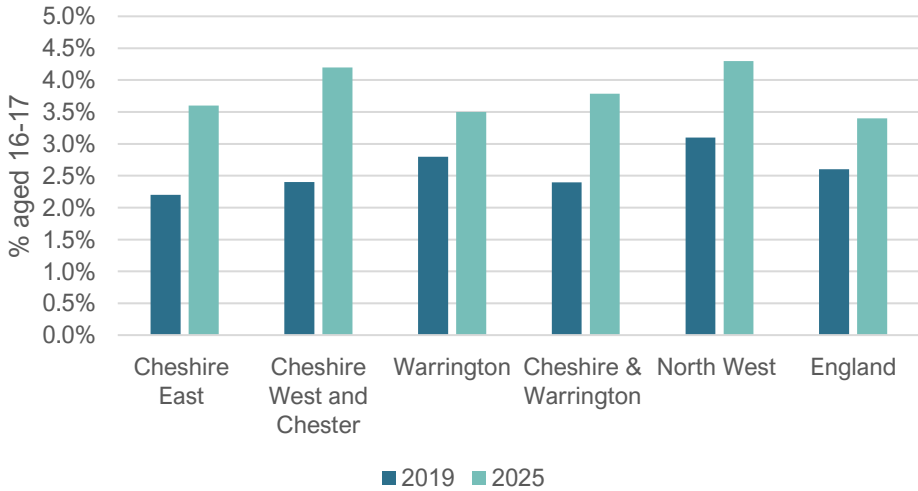
Over 800 16–17-year-olds in Cheshire and Warrington are NEET, rising over recent years.

- Since 2019, the proportion of 16–17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has increased across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington.
- Across the sub-region, the combined Cheshire and Warrington rate stands at 3.8%, above the national average but remaining 0.5pp below the regional average.
- Cheshire West and Chester has seen the sharpest rise, reaching 4.6% in 2024 before dropping back to 4.2% in 2025, in line with the regional average
- Cheshire East has seen a sharp rise over the last year from 2.8% to 3.6%.
- Warrington has seen also seen a rise over the last year from. 3.0% to 3.5%. Both Warrington and Cheshire East are in line with the national NEET rate.

NEET rate (2019-25)



Proportion of 16-17 year olds who are NEET (2019 and 2025)



Source: DfE Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority (2024/25)

# 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 800 16-17 year olds in Cheshire &amp; Warrington are NEET, equal to 3.8% of this age group, above the national average.</li> <li>Risk factors include poverty, SEND, care leavers and rural isolation</li> <li>There are a lack of reengagement routes or sustained outreach in some areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pledge Partnership Careers Hub</li> <li>Fresh Start</li> <li>Total people</li> </ul>
Falling out of work due to health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rising long-term sickness is a key driver of inactivity</li> <li>Includes mental health, MSK and other chronic illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid-Life MOT</li> <li>Restart</li> <li>IPS Severe Mental Health</li> </ul>
Leavers from institutional systems (e.g. prison, military)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High risk of disengagement after structured institutional life</li> <li>Complex needs, including housing, mental health, addiction and stigma</li> <li>Limited integration with integration services and low levels of employer engagement in targeted hiring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breaking the Cycle: Tempus Novo support for ex-offenders</li> <li>The Armed Forces community support hub</li> </ul>

# Service Mapping

## Neet young people and engagement pathways

The **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy** sets a clear ambition to ensure “no young person is NEET by 2045.” **Cheshire West Inclusive Economic Strategy** and the region’s **All Together Fairer Plan** echo this goal, recognising youth NEET status as both a symptom and driver of inequality. Efforts are underway to close these gaps.

### Cheshire & Warrington

- **UKSPF:** The region is expanding access to traineeships, pre-apprenticeship bootcamps, and youth mentoring through UKSPF-funded provision. Programs support residents to take steps towards employment who are not eligible on other supported employment programmes, this includes those aged 16-18.
- **People Plus – People, Skills, Jobs:** ESF-funded program designed for unemployed individuals ages 16 and over receiving benefits/ inactive but are close to entering the workforce. The programme aims to support participants in progressing into sustainable employment, apprenticeships, or further education.
- **Youth Fed tailored support:** Working with young people (aged 14–25) who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET; supporting young people with barriers to work.
- **Talent Match:** An employability programme that supports young people aged 15-29 who have been out of work, training or education for 12 months, offering intensive support through a dedicated Mentor who develops a personalised pathway programme for each young person; targeted at those with complex barriers to work.
- **King’s Trust Team Personal Development Programmes:** 12 week programmes, delivered by CFRS staff across several Cheshire locations in Chester, Crewe, Macclesfield, Halton and Winsford. This programme supports NEET young people aged 16-25 years to develop confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and employability skills.
- **VCSE organisations** play a key role with charities like PETTY Pool offering supported internships for young people with special educational needs, while other providers deliver life skills and employability programmes targeted at NEET learners.

### Cheshire West & Chester

**Fresh Start** project offers support for 16-19 disengaged from education, to progress towards meaningful work or further education.

**Better start:** Support young people, many of whom experience both health-related and other complex barriers to employment.

**Site Smart:** Aims to break down barriers for care-experienced and NEET young people who are interested in entering the construction industry, delivered by Procure Plus.

### Cheshire East

**Work and Health Plan Pilot:** Targeted at 16-18 young people in Crewe at risk of dropping out during transition from schools to college.

**Youth Support Service:** Open access, targeted Youth Work, outdoor education focused support for NEET, support to young people who have an EHC plan, and transitional planning for targeted young people preparing for adulthood.

### Warrington

**Warrington Youth Zone:** Supported by Warrington Council, hosts several programmes to support disadvantaged young people with training and work placements, including the Youth Unemployment Hub.

# Service Mapping

## Careers information, advice and guidance

CIAG is one of the key priorities outlined in the **LSIP**, reflecting the concern that careers advice may not reflect local opportunities and progression routes available. Initiatives aim to ensure sufficient access to information regarding local opportunities, as well as exploring how more meaningful experiences within the workplace can be created, and the application of what is taught in the curriculum in the workplace. **The Warrington Skills Commission** Report highlights that better CIAG is essential to address skills mismatches, support young people into meaningful careers, and guide adults looking to change sectors or return to work.

### Cheshire & Warrington

- **Cheshire & Warrington Opportunities Portal:** A comprehensive digital hub that lists local jobs, apprenticeships, and courses across the sub-region. users can search by location or sector to find opportunities nearby. The portal also provides information on the region's key industries and links to guidance.
- **Pledge Partnership Careers Hub:** The Pledge links 100+ secondary schools and colleges with employers and training providers to enhance careers education. It facilitates initiatives like: frequent employer engagement in schools, industry insight events, and skills competitions; Careers Hub meetings for school career leaders to share best practices; and region-wide events such as the annual C&W Careers Festival. The Cheshire and Warrington Pledge Partnership hosted their first SEND Specific Careers fair 'Your Future', bringing 269 students from 15 SEND schools and colleges, meeting with 50 exhibitors.
- **National Careers Service:** NCS advisers operate out of Jobcentres and community venues in all three boroughs. Around 3,000 residents per year utilize this service in Cheshire & Warrington.
- The DWP **Youth Task Force** in Cheshire & Warrington is a collaborative initiative aimed at helping young people aged 16–24 overcome barriers to employment, education, or training, and attend all meetings in the 3 Local Authority areas. The Task Force delivers targeted support, shares best practice, and coordinates resources to ensure that young people in the region have the opportunities and guidance they need to achieve positive outcomes.

### Cheshire West & Chester

**Skills and Employment Hubs** in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich Employment mentors provide one to one support to help find employment.

**Employment Directions** is a service that provides all-round employment support to adults with a physical or mental health condition. Helping people to find, stay in, or return to work.

**Young Chamber:** Chamber of Commerce initiative, to benefit local schools and colleges, to bridge the gap between business and education.

### Cheshire East

**Springboard work hubs:** Operates Work Hubs including locations in Macclesfield, Crewe, Congleton, and Alsager offering personalised support to individuals aiming to enhance their employment prospects. Springboard also provides a range of educational and vocational courses designed to support personal and professional development

### Warrington

**Warrington LIFE:** A careers information, advice and guidance service offering practical support in looking for work as well as information and advice on education, employment and training. The team offer a range of support programs targeted at various groups, including young people, with post 16 and 19 education support.

Live working draft

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