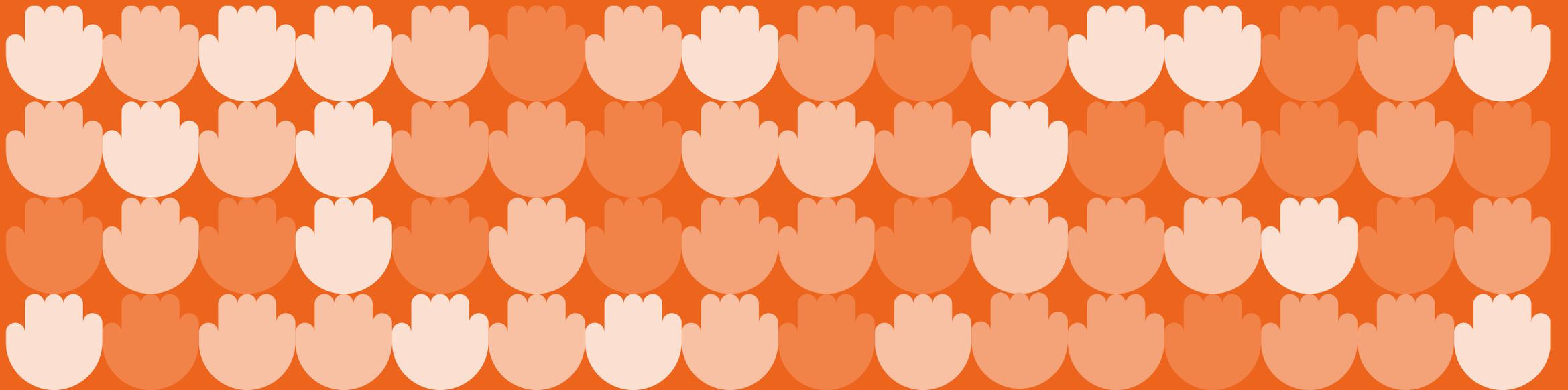




# GM Labour Market Insights Pack

Spring 2025



# Purpose of Pack

This pack collates Labour Market Information and Sector Insights from various sources, which is reviewed and corroborated by the GM Labour Market Insights Unit.

The purpose of the pack is:

- To provide a unified evidence base for GM's devolved policy and programme development.
- To inform the skills and employment ecosystem in provision development, adaptation, and refinement.
- To supplement existing insights and data sources which are signposted for deeper research.

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# Summary Findings

## Economic Headlines

- **Inflation in the UK remained at 2.6%** in the 12 months to March 2025. The Bank of England lowered interest rates to 4.25% in May.
- **The National Minimum Wage increased in April** to £12.21/hr - taking the effective salary for a full-time worker to around £24,000.
- **Estimated GDP for 2024 rose by 1.1%** – monthly GDP increases in early 2025 were around 0.1%.
- For the latest period (between Jan – March 2025) the **unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.1% in the North West of England** (compared with 4.5% in the UK) – 151,000 people.
- The most recent quarterly data suggested **around 68,700 people in Greater Manchester were unemployed**.
- **Tariff rates were announced by the US Government** causing a lot of confusion in global markets as they were removed and amended. A flat rate of 10% applies to many goods exports to the US.

### Key upcoming events:

- June 2025 – Announcement of new Spending Review
- July 2025 – Launch of refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy.
- Summer 2025 – Skills England – Next Report
- Summer 2025 – National Industrial Strategy

### Further reading:

[GM Chamber of Commerce](#) – Quarterly Economic Survey

[Business Growth Hub](#) – GC Business Survey

[Edge Foundation](#) – *“Building Bridges Between HE and Employment: Learning from practically-based higher education”*

[IPPR](#) – *“Regional economies: The role of industrial strategy as a pathway to greener growth”*

# Key Insights

## General:

- GM's economy **remains healthier than the wider UK.**
- **Business confidence is dropping slightly in GM.**
  - This is partly down to the impact of new Employers' NI contribution coming into force alongside increases in minimum wage **causing cost pressures.**
  - On the sales side, exporters are concerned by the **volatile global political landscape.**
- **Rising costs remain the top concern** of many GM businesses.
- **GM is fairly insulated against rising tariffs** for goods exports – though exports around £750m of goods to the US every year.
- **Support for business planning & innovation remained the top** reported need for businesses.
- Government announced **£600m additional funding for Construction workforce development** at the end of March.

## Labour Market:

- **Unemployment levels are stable, and overall vacancy levels have settled near the pre-pandemic level.**
- **Some of this drop is caused by increases in Economic inactivity** – around 136,000 more North West residents are economically inactive since the start of 2020.
- **Some impacts of the budget are expected to cause a tightening of the labour market** – with increases in minimum wage and employers' NI contributions cooling demand.
- **Public sector hiring has remained fairly strong into mid-2025 – as has Hospitality.**
- **Government's ambition is to reach an 80% employment rate** – up from 70.9% in Greater Manchester.
- **The median advertised wage in Greater Manchester sank slightly in Spring** – to around £33,200 for a full-time worker.

# Quarterly Economic Survey

The Quarterly Economic Survey is run by the GM Chamber of Commerce and includes results from hundreds of businesses across the city region. 2025 Q1 findings:

- **GM Index in Q1 2025: 18.5**
- Businesses are seeing a particular weakening in international and labour demand.
- 0.1% monthly GDP contraction in Jan 2025, but stronger figures since then. A lot of variability in the global economy in addition to domestic policy impacts is worrying business.
- Latest PMI indices also show a slowdown
  - Services **51**
  - Manufacturing **46.9**
  - Construction **44.6**
- Consumer confidence showed a slight improvement in the early months of 2025.



# Business Survey

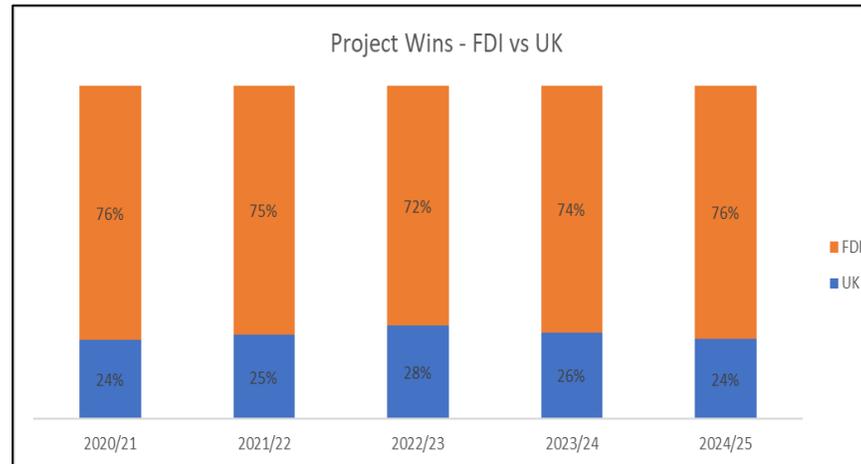
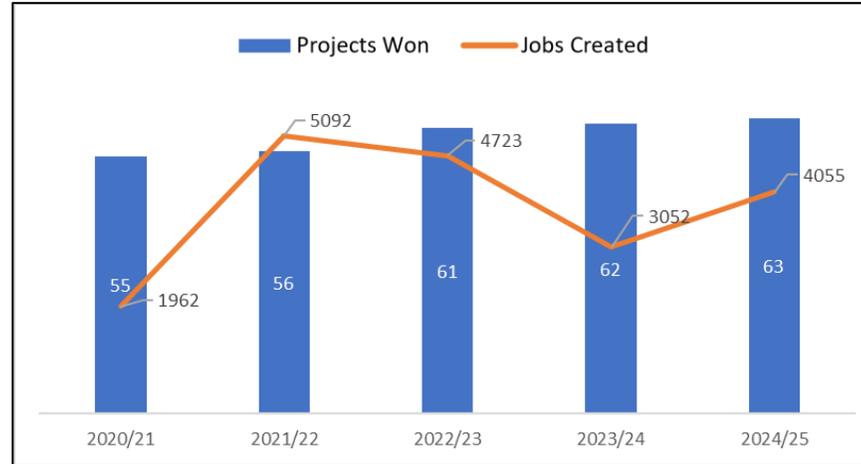
GROWTH, BUSINESS CONFIDENCE AND INVESTMENT	MAIN IMPACTS AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE	FUTURE BUSINESS CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>GC Business Confidence Index (GC-BCI).</b> A ranking of how confident businesses are on their growth prospects for the year ahead. This currently stands at 7.3 out of 10, similar to the previous quarter (7.4), and similar to the average for the last year. GC-BCI is higher than average for all organisations within Life-sciences, Engineering, GreenTech, and Banking &amp; Insurance sectors.</li> <li>➤ <b>Sales and profits.</b> 20% (vs 29% previously) of firms reported that they experienced an increase in sales in the latest quarter, and 61% expect profits to increase in the year ahead (vs 66%). Just 2% (vs 2%) expect profits to decrease. The main sectors expressing an increase in future sales were Manufacturing, Digital &amp; Creative Technologies, Retail, and Green Technologies.</li> <li>➤ <b>Investment.</b> 45% (vs 52%) of firms expect to increase cap-ex spend in the year ahead. Green-Tech, Manufacturing, CDT are most likely to state they intend to increase cap-ex overall.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Main impacts.</b> The main impacts of the current economic climate that have affected firms are rising costs 43% (vs 41% previously), cashflow issues 19% (vs 22%), and minor supply chain issues 16% (vs 18%).</li> <li>➤ <b>Cash reserves.</b> 68% (vs 72%) of firms report that they have cash reserves to last over 6 months. 41% of SMEs with 10-249 employees have cash reserves to last over 6 months. Reserves were highest in DCT, Manufacturing, and Green Tech. The biggest increase in reserves was reported by Manufacturing, and larger SMEs.</li> <li>➤ <b>Cashflow.</b> 20% (vs 22%) of firms said they had cashflow problems. Micro-size firms (&lt;5 employees) were more likely to report cashflow issues compared to SMEs (10-249 FTEs). Cashflow risks were more likely to be reported by Health care, Creative Industries (a sub-sector of Creative and Digital Technology), and Hospitality &amp; Tourism. Late payments were reported by 6% of firms – the same as last quarter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The main pressing challenges facing business in the immediate future are access to new domestic sales opportunities 58% (vs 54%) - highest in Creative and Digital Technology, Manufacturing, Green Tech, developing business model 42% (vs 44%), managing business finances 40% (vs 43%), developing new products / services 40% (vs 35%), and addressing workforce development/skills 28% (vs 27%).</li> <li>➤ <b>International trade.</b> 9% (vs 10%) of firms undertaking overseas trade said they were looking to expand in current markets. 7% of micro-size firms (0-9 employees) want to expand in new markets - and mainly those firms within Retail &amp; Wholesale, and Manufacturing.</li> <li>➤ The main areas of future support. Looking further to the year ahead, the main support areas identified are innovation at 40% (vs 36%), business planning at 34% (vs 41%), marketing at 31% (vs 35%), workforce development at 30% (vs 30%), financial advice at 29% (vs 34%), and addressing environmental impact at 20% (vs 15%).</li> </ul>
RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ISSUES	RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION	SOCIAL VALUE AND GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Recruitment.</b> 27% (vs 27% previously) of firms surveyed are currently recruiting new staff, and 12% (vs 12%) said they had difficulties recruiting staff.</li> <li>➤ <b>Workforce skill gaps.</b> 45% (vs 46%) of firms said that their existing workforce skills are only 'partly' at the level to meet business plan objectives for the year ahead.</li> <li>➤ The main technical skill gaps (and broadly similar to last quarter) relate to specialist technical skills 32% (vs 30%), knowledge of products / services 12% (vs 12%), advanced specialist IT skills 12% (vs 7%), and solving complex problems 10% (vs 17%).</li> <li>➤ The main people and practical / personal skill gaps are selling 19% (vs 23%), motivating staff 11% (vs 17%), and customer handling skills affecting 11% of organisations (vs 10%).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Innovation activity.</b> 30% (27% previously) have invested in new / significantly improved services, 27% (24%) of firms introduced new / significantly improved goods, 22% (vs 28%) implemented new business practices, and 16% (14%) introduced new methods for production / supply of goods / services.</li> <li>➤ <b>Digital innovation.</b> 11% (vs 10%) of firms have invested in the acquisition of digital products or digital services specifically for innovation during the quarter; and 8% (5%) had made investments in the acquisition of advanced machinery or equipment - specifically for innovation.</li> <li>➤ The main barriers to growing innovation. 19% (vs 29%) said availability of finance, and 14% (vs 24%) cited direct innovation costs are too high</li> </ul>	<p>Businesses are asked the extent to which they have or would consider implementing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Guarantee at least 16 hours of work per week.</b> 70% (68% previously) said this currently applies, and 15% were likely to in future.</li> <li>➤ <b>Pay the Real Living Wage.</b> 62% (vs 71%) said this currently applies, and 26% said they were likely to include in future.</li> <li>➤ <b>Offer flexible working options to employees.</b> 54% (51%) said this currently applies, and 22% said they were likely to include in future.</li> <li>➤ <b>Involve employees in the overall direction of the business.</b> 39% (34%) said this currently applies. 30% said they were likely to do in future.</li> <li>➤ <b>Actively look to increase the diversity of the workforce.</b> 42% (43%) said this currently applies, and 32% said likely to include in future.</li> <li>➤ <b>Actively promote healthy work practices.</b> 48% (45%) said this currently applies, and 33% said they were likely to include in future.</li> </ul>

# Inward Investment Landscape

The 2024/25 volume of inward investment project wins (businesses moving into and expanding in GM) remained steady on the past 2 years, with **corresponding job creations by these inward investors experiencing a 33% YoY increase**. This increase in job creations was driven by an increase in the number of larger job projects closing.

2024/25 saw project wins and job creations across a range of sectors. Greater Manchester was popular with businesses in the **Manufacturing, Digital and Life Sciences** sectors, all of which saw large volumes of corresponding job creations. Other sectors such as Green Economy, Creative and Construction saw large job creations despite fewer projects.

**Foreign investors made up 76% of GM inward investment projects in 2024/25**. This proportion is slightly higher than last financial year and is a composition typical of the past 5 years. The leading FDI source markets in 2024/25 were the United States and Ireland, followed by large European countries (Germany, France and Switzerland), as well as Australia and Singapore.



Planned job creations over 3- year post-landing Period	
Greenfield Inward Investment into GM Between April 2024 – Mar 2025	
Role	Total
Tech/ Digital	808
Engineering	692
Manufacturing/ Construction	532
Admin/ Customer Services	389
Other	278
Professional Services (e.g. Lawyers, Bankers, Consultants)	238
Business Development/ Marketing	224
Scientific/ Research/ Product Development	168
Internal Supply Chain/ Logistics	162
Creative/ Media	96
Internal Finance/ Accounting	81
Executive Leadership	80
Strategy/ Policy	68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,816</b>

Source: Feedback from MIDAS supported inward investors. It was not possible to gather feedback from every investor.

# Greater Manchester Workforce

- Greater Manchester's **workforce is deep and broad**, and shares similarities with many other city regions – while showing a unique mix of strengths and no outstanding weaknesses.
- Comparing GM with other regions:
  - GM has a **higher concentration of Financial, Business, and Professional Services** workers – 19%, compared with Liverpool (17%), West Midlands (16%), but lagging far behind London (27%).
  - GM has an **average concentration of Manufacturing workers** – around 6.6%, compared with stronger areas like South Yorkshire (9%), or West Midlands (10%)
- The Public Sector **employs around 1 in 3 workers in GM (34.6%)**, across health, education, emergency services, and local government. This is roughly average compared with other regions – vs. Liverpool (37%) or London (30%)
- Around **1 in 5 workers in GM are employed on a part-time** basis – but this varies hugely by sector, locality, age, and gender.
- In a trend towards more secure employment, fewer workers are self-employed** – the numbers are down by around 15,000 in GM.
- GM's **Hospitality and Retail sectors never fully recovered from the pandemic** – there are around 65,000 fewer workers across the sectors than in 2019.
- The **share of workers in service sectors has grown** as the primary utilities and manufacturing workforce has shrunk – from 81% to 85% in the past 10 years.

## GM Workforce Overview

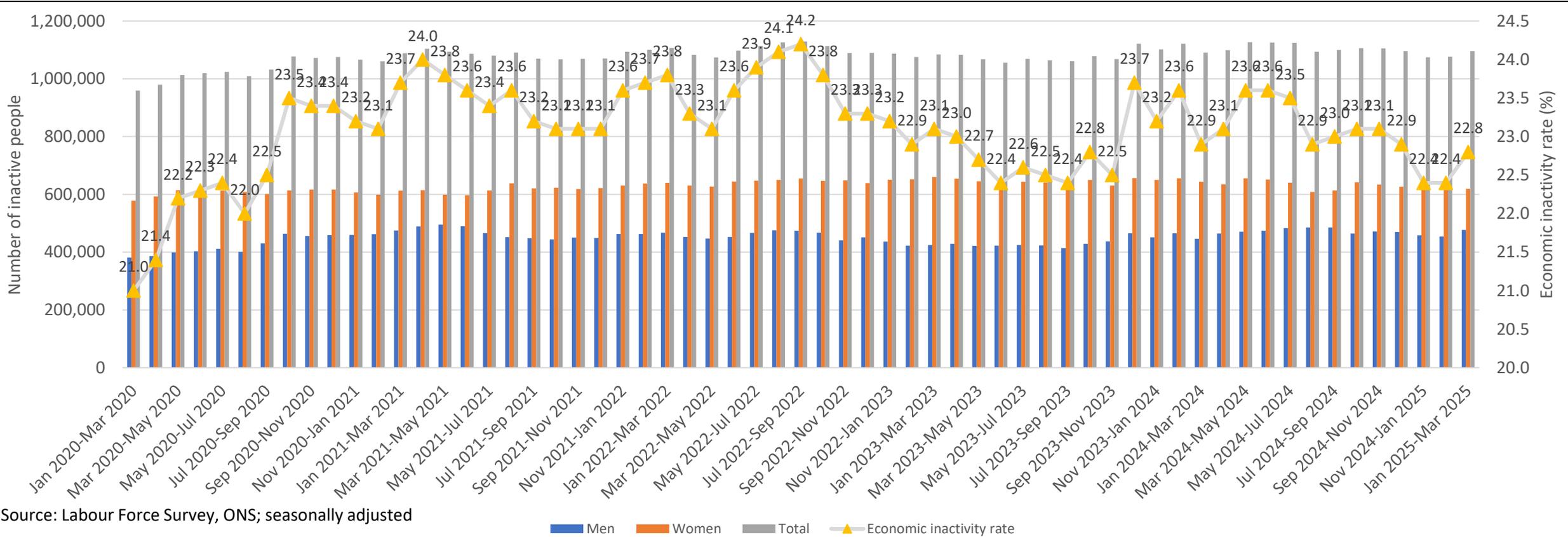
Industry (SIC)	Approx. Number of Jobs	Proportion (%) of jobs
A: Agriculture & fishing	2,800	0.2%
B,D,E: Energy & water	16,800	1.3%
C: Manufacturing	87,700	6.6%
F: Construction	79,300	6.0%
G-I: Wholesale, retail, hotels & restaurants	202,800	15.2%
H-J: Transport, Digital & Communication	142,400	10.7%
K-N: Banking, finance & insurance etc.	252,400	19.0%
O-Q: Public admin, education & health	459,900	34.6%
R-U: Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	75,800	5.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,330,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS, Dec 2024



# Economic Inactivity

Economic inactivity number and rate (16-64), North West (NW), Jan-Mar 2020 – Jan-Mar 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS; seasonally adjusted

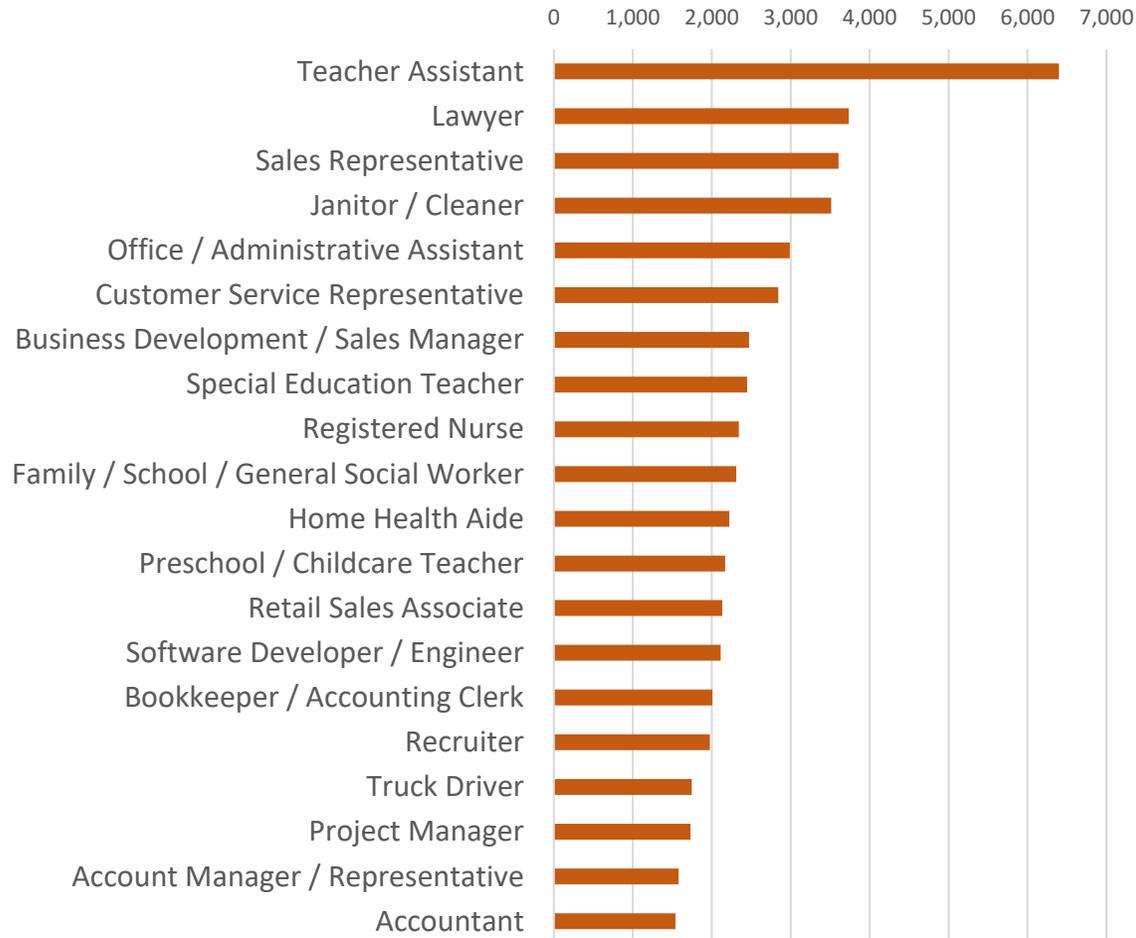
Economic inactivity refers to people who are not participating in the labour market: they are neither working nor seeking employment. The reasons for inactivity are varied, but the high levels are being driven by long-term ill-health among lower-paid workers and early retirement among higher-paid workers.

The revised Labour Force Survey Data suggested that Economic Inactivity in the North West rose slightly in the latest period (Jan-Mar 2025) at 22.8% - representing around 1.1m of the 4.7m aged between 16 – 64. Around 452,000 of GM’s 1.8m 16-64 population are economically inactive – 85,000 of which want a job.

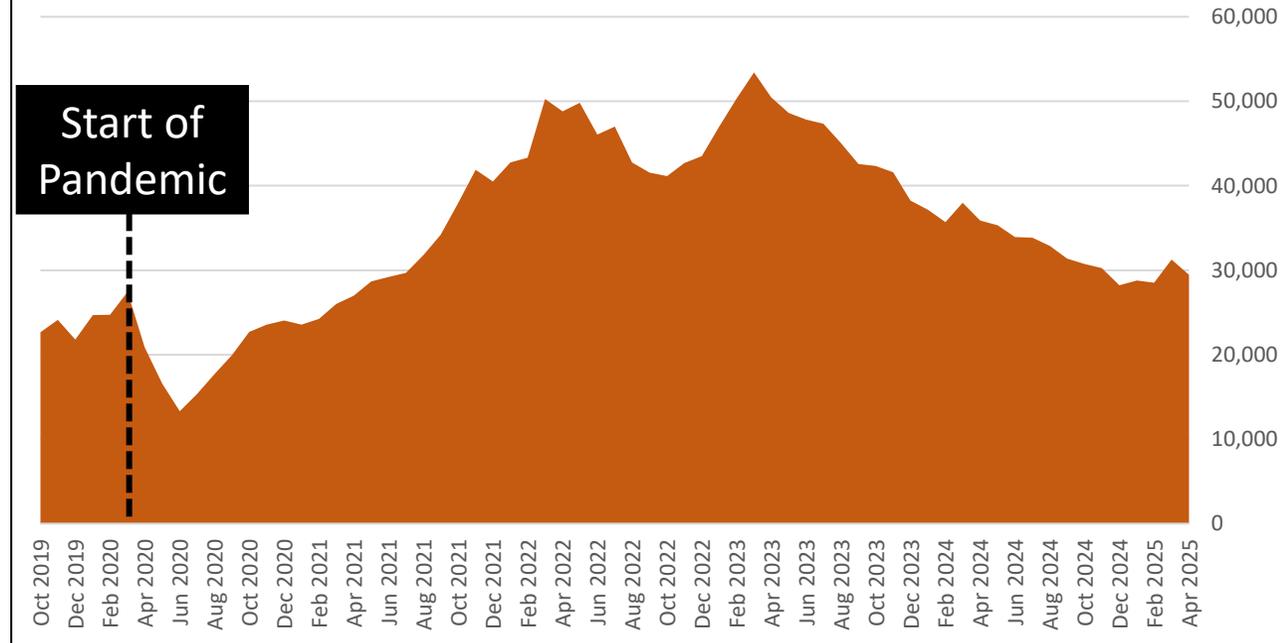
There are around 137,000 more economically inactive people in the North West than before the pandemic – with around 95,000 more men and 42,000 women.

# GM Vacancy Market

**Unique Postings in GM – Last 6 months  
(Nov 2024 - Apr 2025)**



**Unique Job Postings in GM  
3 Month Moving Average (Oct 2019 - Apr 2025)**



- The start of 2025 saw slight increases in job vacancies being advertised in GM – levels are roughly the same as pre-pandemic.
- Declining demand for digital occupations, while some professional occupations (Lawyer / Accountant) are in rising demand.
- Teaching Assistant remains the top advertised role over the 12 months to March 2025

# Sector Insights – Construction

## Overview

**Construction has been recognised as a critical enabling sector and given special attention in the form of an announcement towards the end of March** – bringing £600m new funding to develop the workforce and opportunities for young people across the UK.

**May saw the release of Tameside Council’s development vision to 2042** – featuring plans for 10,000 new homes and 2 new railway stations to be constructed in the borough.

- **The Holt Town development in Manchester also proceeded to the next stage following a public consultation** – the regeneration project will deliver 4,500 new homes in the east of the city.

**Deloitte’s Crane Survey in early 2025 highlighted the resilience of the sector in Manchester and Salford**, both of which are seeing strong levels of commercial and residential development. The pipeline of development in the urban core of Manchester alone is estimated to be around £14.5bn over the next 5 years.

- The **value of office space in the city centre also reached a record high** - £48 per sq. ft. at St. Michael’s on Albert Square.

The National House Building Council (NHBC) and Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) announced **joint investment at the end of 2024, totalling £140m to develop training centres close to live construction sites.**

**Reforms to apprenticeships announced in February 2025 have largely been welcomed by construction employers** – particularly the removal of English and Maths requirements for adult learners, and the potential shortening of many pathways. Apprenticeships well-respected as a path into the sector, but entry level routes have declined.

**RICS released [some analysis](#) on the rollout of digital technology in Construction** – it continues to grow in importance for most firms. Digital tools are particularly important in *Enhancing progress monitoring and Health, Safety and Wellbeing*, and in *Cost estimation, prediction, planning and control*.

## In-demand Occupations

Manchester City Centre, Bolton, Stockport and Salford have the highest number of Construction vacancies. Construction within a mile of the city centre is significant – around 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the jobs posted in the last 6 months were in Manchester.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)

- Estimator / Quantity Surveyor (1,193)
- Construction Site Manager (986)
- Surveyor (836)
- Civil Engineer (739)
- Electrician (601)

## Skills Requirements

Entry level roles have some strict site safety requirements (usually H&S cert or CSCS card) – for site labouring or general maintenance roles.

Progression is often linked to ongoing CPD to learn new trades or equipment, additional “cards” and certifications, including plant machinery licences, installer safety certifications and additional site H&S certs.

In-demand skills include:

- Electrical engineering
- Structural fabrication and steel erection
- Construction process/project management
- Site engineering, quantity surveying, retrofitting.
- Digitalisation

# Sector Insights – Transport

## Overview

**Greater Manchester and Liverpool announced the formation of the Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board**, bringing leaders across both regions together to ensure the opportunity is maximized to drive economic development and job creation.

**£415m was also announced in March 2025 for the Transpennine Route Upgrade**, enabling better connectivity between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds, and York.

**The continued expansion of the Bee Network** saw 3 major developments:

- **The launch of the third tranche of Bus Franchising** covering the southern boroughs of GM and completing coverage of the whole city region with publicly-controlled buses.
- **Plans to bring 6 rail commuter lines into the network also progressed** – with 64 stations planned to join the network by 2028.
- **A “tap-and-go” style system was introduced in March 2025**, enabling passengers smoother journeys and cheaper fares across the Bus and Tram networks.

**The National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR) [workforce survey](#) is live until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.** Last years revealed the critical shortages in the sector – with an estimated 90,000 people due to retire and leave the sector by 2030.

**The average age of workers in transport is around 44 years old.** Attrition and replacement demand are significant factors in all areas of the sector – keeping qualified staff is particularly difficult, and historically there has been a lot of competition between operators as demand has been so high.

**Manchester Airport continues to recover well from the pandemic** – passenger numbers in March 2025 was around 2.2m people, 7% higher than in 2024.

**Planning permission was approved for the development of a new railway connection in Wigan.** The £32m Golborne station is expected to be completed by 2027 and should reduce the length of the journey into Manchester by 30 minutes.

## In-demand Occupations

Roles are concentrated in Manchester city centre (particularly in rail), with employers in other transport hub areas like Stockport, Bolton, and Wigan advertising a relatively high number of vacancies.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Automotive Service Technician / Mechanic (756)
- Heavy Equipment Mechanic (327)
- Van / Taxi / Shuttle Driver (307)
- Customer Service Representative (229)
- Transport Manager (213)

## Skills Requirements

Employers report skills shortages in project offices, transport planning roles, and engineering & other technical roles. These roles often have lower numbers of applications and limited resource.

Customer-facing roles are often difficult to recruit to and see high levels of turnover – not many understand the reality of the role.

In-demand skills include:

- Vehicle Maintenance and Inspection
- Steel-fixing and metal-workers
- Driving and operation
- Project Management
- Electrical engineering
- Communication Network specialists

# Sector Insights – Logistics

## Overview

Early 2025 saw continued headwinds for the logistics sector – as **the US led an increase of trade barriers in the form of tariffs, hampering global supply chains**. Although it cooled towards the end of April, the impact will still be felt across the sector as less international shipping takes place and goods imports and exports fall.

**Some trade publications point to AI and Machine Learning as a key area of development for the sector in the next year.** It can be used to great effectiveness in Logistics, optimising delivery routes, analysing large data sets, and improving processes in warehousing. As a result, demand for digital skills within the sector is rising.

**Two key employment sites in GM’s Growth Locations saw progress in early 2025:**

- **Plans to progress Port Salford (part of the Western Gateway Growth Location) were approved by the City Council in early 2025.** The project will explore the creation of a Mayoral Development Zone to channel investment to the area, to develop “tri-modal” capability – covering water, rail, and road freight.
- Additionally, plans to **develop warehousing and manufacturing space to employ 20,000 people were submitted to the relevant local authorities** covering The Northern Gateway in Atom Valley on the Bury/Rochdale border,

While **tariffs are expected to have a serious impact on parts of the logistics sector**, the year to March 2025 saw growth in some parts of GM. Over the last year, the tonnage being shipped by air freight at Manchester Airport was up 22%.

**Pay signals from the sector indicate fairly high levels of demand** – advertised salaries are up 27% over the past 5 years (vs. 15% for the wider GM economy). Though this could be largely driven by the increases to National Minimum Wage.

**Online shopping trends remain high** – online purchases make up 1 in 3 clothing/footwear purchases, increasing demand for logistics and “reverse logistics” where goods are returned to the seller – many online retailers offer this at no cost.

## In-demand Occupations

Roles tend to be clusters in transport-accessible areas – industrial parks, areas used for warehousing and goods production – close to road, rail, or air freight depots.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- HGV Truck Driver (1,747)
- Labourer / Warehouse Worker (1,069)
- Sales Delivery Driver (1,014)
- Forklift / Pallet Jack Operator (659)
- Scheduler / Operations Coordinator (493)

## Skills Requirements

In addition to the core driving roles central to the sector, businesses also report a high demand for Mechanics, Transport Planners, Logistics Administrators, Transport Managers and Transport Co-ordinators.

The data shows that there is consistent high demand and skills shortages in the infrastructure around driving & transport operation roles themselves.

In-demand skills include:

- Digital Warehousing / Reverse Logistics.
- Transport planning / Fleet Management.
- Warehousing & Supply Chain management
- Software Skills
- Forklift truck operation
- Mechanics – Technicians that can operate and repair electric and alternatively fuelled vehicles.

# Sector Insights – Creative, Culture, and Sport

## Overview

**In April, Rochdale was named as GM's Town of Culture for 2025**, bringing £50,000 and a year-long celebration of Rochdale's vibrant cultural scene, uniting communities through creativity, music, heritage, and art, with exciting events throughout the year.

**GMCA is developing a Creative Industries Sector Plan, to be published in June 2025.** This plan will provide an overview of the sector as it is and where, with targeted investment and activity, we can maximise the economic potential of our thriving creative ecosystem.

The **GM Inspire Fund** provides **grants of £500 – £2,000 for freelance and independent artists, and small organizations** – it will reopen in September 2025.

**The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) continued to convene their Local Skills Accountability Board (LSAB)** aiming to address the skills needs within the sector.

- Their work highlights a shortage of people who hold coaching, personal trainer, and swimming teaching qualifications.
- Additionally, there is a growing demand from the NHS for “pre-hab” type provision for patients who increasing their fitness before a major operation.

**Manchester United's stadium was the focus of a new development plan released in March.** The stadium designs would expand the venue to hold 100,000 fans and include a wider master plan of development for the rest of Old Trafford.

**The Central Cluster Growth Location which is located in Manchester and Salford is planned to create 90,000 new jobs in digital/creative/media and professional services with strong links to universities.** There are overlaps with the digital sector where GM has large employers with diverse opportunities like the BBC and those that work at MediaCity.

**January 2025 saw the opening of a £3.5m artist development hub under the HOME arches**, which will provide free co-working spaces, rehearsal spaces and exhibition space.

## In-demand Occupations

Most creative and cultural roles are found in the city centre, but sport roles are widespread across clubs, leisure centres, and sports facilities across GM.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Interpreter / Translator (733)
- Coach (617)
- Graphic Designer (235)
- Writer (121)
- Photographer (110)

## Skills Requirements

Many sectors see a growing need for workers with digital art and design tool skills. Despite recent turbulence, games development is a growing area in Greater Manchester with studios moving to the region.

Physical fitness along with dealing with customers are often key skills required for most sporting roles. Additionally, employers in the sector look for mental resilience, teamwork and communication, strategic thinking and enthusiasm.

In-demand skills include:

- Marketing
- Social media
- Project management
- Sales
- Teamwork
- Creativity

# Sector Insights – Retail and Hospitality

## Overview

**Business confidence in retail dropped in the early part of 2025** – the usually buoyant Christmas period showed only a modest increase in December 2024. Confidence in the sector is now at a 2-year low. Retail sales continued a 6 month decline into March 2025.

**The British Retail Consortium expected the sector to be among the hardest hit by the increases to employers' NI contributions and the National Minimum Wage** – with an expected cost of £5bn a year for businesses to take on.

**Inflation still plagues the sector**, with retailers and hospitality providers raising prices several times each year. Although the overall rate of inflation (CPI) has come down significantly over the past 18-24 months, the prices of food & drink are once again rising at a higher rate than other products.

- The cost of The Food Foundation's "Basic Basket" of goods has increased by nearly 30% in the last 3 years.

**January 2025 saw the launch of a GM Visitor Economy Strategy to boost Retail and Hospitality.** It contains 5 major targets – including making GM the most visited city region outside London, and top 20 in Europe, and boosting the economic impact of the sector from around £10bn in 2025 to £15bn in 2030.

**Key venues like Coop Live, the AO Arena, and Manchester Central are all reasonably confident they will have a successful 2025.** Manchester Central forecast in February that they'd have a record-breaking year, welcoming conventions and conferences which will see 500,000 visitors – a 13% increase on 2024.

**Changes to the immigration system may have a big impact on hospitality:**

- New immigration rules came into force in Spring 2025, raising the threshold for a skilled worker visa by nearly 50% from £26,200 to £38,700.
- Visas granted for chefs, butchers and other hospitality workers dropped by 73% in late 2024, making it harder for businesses to find workers in key occupations.

## In-demand Occupations

Roles are heavily concentrated in Manchester City Centre and regional town centres, with other hubs like the Trafford Centre and Retail Parks seeing many opportunities.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Janitor / Cleaner (3,511)
- Retail Sales Associate (1,303)
- Retail Manager (1,277)
- Chef (1,028)
- Waiting Staff (801)

## Skills Requirements

Entry level roles are often open to many, with on-the-job training provided as part of induction. Management and team leader roles are common after workers have enough experience.

Roles within the sector are often difficult, with unsociable shift patterns and long-hours, but there are many opportunities for those who stay.

In-demand skills include:

- Customer service
- Sales
- Communication
- Food safety and sanitation
- Teamwork and adaptability
- Food preparation

# Sector Insights – Engineering and Manufacturing

## Overview

The new government released **plans for a new Industrial Strategy in October 2024**, with strong support for growing the manufacturing sector to be outlined. A full version of the National Industrial Strategy will be released in summer of 2025.

**National business confidence was shaky** – the UK Manufacturing Purchasing Manufacturers Index (PMI) hit an 18-month low in March 2025 but started to recover in the following months. In part, this was driven by global events like the increase in tariffs particularly for the automotive and food manufacturing sectors – both large in the UK.

### Plans continue for several key projects for the sector in GM:

- **The creation of [Atom Valley](#)**, a vast manufacturing and machinery innovation mega-cluster, covering sites across Bury, Oldham and Rochdale, with three key development locations (Northern Gateway, Stakehill and Kingsway) which will include the Sustainable Materials and Manufacturing Centre (SMMC), supporting the growth of the sector.
- **[MIX Manchester](#) – the Manufacturing Innovation Exchange** - progressed another step towards full development in late 2024, as the city council signed off the regeneration framework. The site is next to Manchester Airport – with £1bn worth of development for workspace and laboratories.

As an innovative sector, **commercialisation is one of the skills lacking in many early-stage manufacturing businesses**. Understanding potential, writing growth cases, and knowing where and how to access financing is critical. The existing innovation ecosystem run out of the Higher Education institutions – including Royce Institute, NERIC, the GEIC, PrintCity, and ID Manchester – all support businesses to innovate to improve production and develop new products.

**The Made Smarter programme, covering Greater Manchester and the North West** – launched a new £1m funding round to support the rollout of digital and technological solutions in SME manufacturers. The match-funded grants of up to £20,000 will support businesses adopt new technology and upgrade their processes and equipment.

## In-demand Occupations

While there is a sizeable concentration of other businesses in the city centre, manufacturing firms are spread across GM. Wigan, Rochdale, Stockport, and Tameside all have large numbers of manufacturing firms.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Manufacturing Machine Operator (1,022)
- Electrical Engineer (730)
- Mechanical Engineer (717)
- Engineering Manager (591)
- Quality Inspector (502)

## Skills Requirements

Entry level production roles have low requirements, but roles are generally unskilled and poorly paid. Workers can progress by learning to use additional tools and equipment, specialising in the likes of mechanical, electrical, welding, or machining.

Some staff are supported on engineering training programmes if they want to develop – cross-skilling of mechanical and electrical engineers is desirable.

In-demand skills include:

- Welding
- Industrial electrical trades
- Green energy, lean manufacturing, sustainability
- Robotics and automation
- Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) software, digitalisation, electronics engineering technicians

## Sector Intelligence

**The Financial Services sector in GM continues to expand** – in the first part of 2025, Bank of New York (BNY) who employ around 2,000 already in the city region, took new office space at NOMA, increasing their footprint by 40%.

Consumer trends towards online banking has led to a persistent closure of physical branch locations – **research in January 2025 suggested around 50 bank branches had been closed across GM in the last 3 years**. Some providers are sensing a gap in the market – with the likes of the Manchester Building Society announcing plans to open more to serve customers who prefer face-to-face financial services.

**Financial Services and Professional & Business Services were listed as separate sectors of focus in the plans for the UK's Industrial Strategy**, to be developed for Summer 2025. New analysis by the ONS showed that about 70% of the Financial Services sector is made up of “in-demand” occupations – the highest of any sector.

**Demand in the sector is mixed. Job postings overall are around 23% lower in April 2025 compared with 12 months earlier**. However certain occupations have seen healthy rises in the number of adverts – job postings for Tax Specialists have doubled and risen by about 40% for Auditors.

**Firms in various parts of Financial, Business and Professional Services await the final decision about Level 7 Apprenticeships**. Skills England are expected to stop employers using their levy to fund these qualifications, which include the widely used Accountancy and Taxation Professional (L7), and the Solicitor (L7) Apprenticeship. While it may cause an initial dip, there was a healthy commercial market for these qualifications pre-Levy.

Almost a **third of employers across the FBPS sector are struggling to recruit** due to widespread skills shortages and fewer workers choosing the sector. There is a perception in the sector that it is “losing out” to digital employers who can offer higher wages.

## In-demand Occupations

Most roles in financial services like insurance, wealth management and private equity are advertised in the sector are in Manchester city centre, but each area of GM has some accountancy and legal firms.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Lawyer (3,733)
- Bookkeeper / Accounting Clerk (2,007)
- Project Manager (1,689)
- Accountant (1,538)
- Financial Manager (1,216)

## Skills Requirements

Progression within the sector is fairly structured and often heavily linked to further accredited qualifications:

- Accountancy: ACCA, ACA, CIMA, CIPFA, CTA
- Financial Services: IOC, IMC, CII, CFA
- Law: LLB, LPC, CILEX

There is increasing emphasis on soft skills as well as technical skills required to work in the sector, in particular:

- Communication (strong oral and written)
- Teamwork
- Attention to detail
- Curiosity & commercial awareness
- Problem solving
- Analytical skills

# Sector Insights – Digital and Tech

## Overview

After a surge in demand over the course of the pandemic, demand in the sector is dropping. **Job adverts in digital roles peaked in May 2022 at just under 8,000 and have since dropped back in April 2025 to just over 1,600.** The GMLSIP update recognised this was not just GM – *“this decline in the sector’s vacancies is not unique to GM alone, but the same applies across the entire country”*. However, demand for digital skills in all occupations remains high.

**Central Government departments are playing a role in growing the digital ecosystem in GM.** February 2025 saw approval given for the development of a Manchester Digital Campus, tying together the digital teams of different departments with a presence in GM like DWP, DSIT, DfE, and HMRC. The Government Property Agency projects 7,000 digital civil services jobs being created in the coming years.

**GM continues to build an advantage in the development of AI** = the Turing Innovation Centre at The University of Manchester’s released an AI Catalyst Report showing the scale and growth of the sector in GM. AI firms in GM have grown quickly – their value growing fivefold since 2020 to reach a valuation of £3.2bn

- This is apparent in job posting data as businesses recruit specialists like Natural Language Processing (up 1,400% in 5 years) and AI Engineers (up 400%) and start to embed the technology through roles like Digital Transformation Managers (up 350%).

[Manchester Digital’s 2025 Sector Insights report](#) revealed key details on the sector in GM:

- **64% of tech leaders feel positive about growth**, but economic uncertainty, regulatory hurdles, and funding challenges remain key barriers.
- AI adoption is accelerating, with **80% of tech leaders prioritising AI skills development.**
- Retention is a growing challenge – **40% of leaders cite career progression and salary competition as key factors driving talent movement.**
- Diversity at senior levels remains a challenge, with only **9% of tech employees from lower socioeconomic** backgrounds.

## In-demand Occupations

Digital specialists needed in wider sectors include data analysis, digital marketing, digital finance, cyber and information security. Most dedicated roles are in Manchester and Salford, but many firms now need in-house digital experts.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Software Developer / Engineer (2,112)
- Computer Support Specialist (1,028)
- Computer Systems Engineer (760)
- Mobile Apps Developer (597)
- Web Developer (447)

## Skills Requirements

Progression within the sector is often linked to improved technical skills, project management, and leadership opportunities. Mid-senior digital specialists are hard to recruit – experienced workers can access a huge range of well-paid opportunities.

Development roles usually require programming languages (SQL, Javascript, Python, C++) or familiarity with large suites of digital cloud infrastructure (Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services). AI developers are an emerging area.

In-demand skills include:

- Communication
- Agile Methodology
- Problem-solving
- Automation
- Web Development
- Machine Learning and Large Language Models

# Sector Insights – Health and Social Care

## Overview

Health and Social Care remains the largest sector in GM by workforce and must continue to grow to keep up with increasing demand on services. **The sector directly employs over 200,000 people, nearly 1 in 6 in GM. Hundreds of thousands more residents take up roles as unpaid carers and volunteers.**

**March 2025 saw Government announce reforms to scrap NHS England and absorb more responsibility into the Department for Health and Social Care.** For the governing body in Greater Manchester – NHS GM – this means a budget cut of around £41m.

**GM's Healthcare sector has responded well to the call for industry placements for students across technical routes like T Levels and NVQs.** With placements a trusted route for students to get experience of the workplace, March 2025 saw the start of the placements for the first Midwifery T Level learners in GM through Oldham College.

The national NHS Workforce strategy, and the GM Integrated Care Partnership People and Culture Strategy both highlight the need to attract more staff and from a variety of routes, and there is ongoing **collaborative work between stakeholders to best strengthen technical routes and career pathways.**

**Tighter rules on immigration announced in May 2025 may put additional pressure on the Social Care workforce.** While the number of people applying under the specified routes has fallen since the peak in August 2023, providers recruited an estimated 42,000 workers in 2024/25 through “health and care” visas which will no longer be available.

**Overall levels of demand on the Health and Care sectors are still high.**

- Although the number of patients waiting for elective surgery continued to fall into early 2025, there are still around 3m more people on waiting lists since before the pandemic.
- Adult and Children's Social Care takes up around 30% of local authority budgets - the proportion of local authority expenditure used for adult social care has increased from around 12% in 2010/11 to 17% in 2023/24

## In-demand Occupations

Health and Social Care is the largest single workforce in GM – employing around 14-15% of workers. However, many settings have an ageing workforce with concerns about how some of this knowledge will be replaced. Jobs are found across GM, with big concentrations around hospitals and care trusts.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Registered General Nurse (2,343)
- Family / School / General Social Worker (2,309)
- Home Care Assistant (2,221)
- Residential Carer (1,432)
- Doctor (1,220)

## Skills Requirements

Personal values are often more highly prized than skillset by employers – compassion / empathy / good communication skills / personal resilience. Values based recruitment is becoming popular for some roles

Public Health skills and preventative advice is needed in all roles – not just specialist ones – to reduce strain on the service.

In-demand skills include:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Basic Clinical Skills
- Personal Care
- Social Work
- Clinical Governance

# Sector Insights – Education and Early Years

## Overview

The Education sector is a huge employer within Greater Manchester with around **120,000 people working directly in education**. At post-16 age, the sector currently faces a population bulge – with the 16-18 cohort growing by an estimated 10,000 people over the remainder of the decade.

Over the past 5 years, **some areas of the sector are seeing much higher levels of demand than others**. Since May 2019, the number of job adverts for Computing Teachers is 11 times higher, the number of Early Years Teachers is 3 times higher, but demand for Music Teachers has nearly halved.

**GM's HE institutions continue to The University of Manchester has been ranked the fourth highest academic institution in the UK for the total number of spinout companies generated**. Between 2011 and January of this year, there were 114 spinout companies.

**Over the last 12 months, 32 schools have been part of a pilot for the [Manchester Baccalaureate \(MBacc\)](#)** – a mayoral initiative to smooth pathways into jobs for young people, raise aspirations for working in GM's growing "gateway" sectors, and raise the profile of technical education options

The expansion of the early education entitlement funding expected in September 2025 means the sector will need to grow further to accommodate additional placements. **A 12-month recruitment and retention campaign was launched in October 2024** to celebrate and value the existing workforce, highlight the personal impact of practitioners and raise awareness of the impact of early education and childcare on early child development.

With early education, all localities are reporting a **shortage of Level 3 qualified staff**, with increased turnover in more experienced workforce. This is impacting on quality of provision and ability to identify and meet additional need. There is a **general lack of inclusive early education provision** for children with additional needs due to workforce pressures and inability to operate at capacity.

## In-demand Occupations

Within FE, those with industry knowledge – dual professionals – are hard to recruit and it can affect which subjects are being offered to students. Career leads have also proved difficult to recruit. Jobs are fairly evenly spread across GM – though with obvious clusters of demand around the HE institutions.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Teacher Assistant (2,888)
- Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher (930)
- Early Years Teacher (718)
- Learning Support Assistants (689)
- Primary School Teacher (644)

## Skills Requirements

Staff with industry skills and experience to be able to teach higher level qualifications are in very high demand in most education settings. Additionally, languages teachers and teachers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths roles are in high demand.

FE teaching roles do not require the same formal teaching qualifications as schoolteachers but sometimes do not have the same parity of pay either. Early Years Educators similarly see lower wages than schoolteachers.

In-demand skills include:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) awareness
- Mathematics
- Learner Support - particularly around mental health
- Safeguarding and child protection
- Careers leads

# Sector Insights – Emergency Services

## Overview

**Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service** has 41 fire stations and the service employs thousands of personnel, of which 1,200 are frontline firefighters.

- Their role covers traffic accidents, fires, and rescue incidents like drowning. Traffic accidents tends to be the biggest area of incidents – at around 2,000 a year.

**North West Ambulance Service** serve more than seven million people, including residents of Greater Manchester, across approximately 5,400 square miles.

- They receive approximately 1.3 million 999 calls and respond to over a million emergency incidents each year.
- Although the service is facing increasing pressures, in 2024/25 – their performance for Category 2 callouts was the best in the country.

**Greater Manchester Police** is the third largest of 43 police forces in the country – employing around 8,000 officers and around 5,000 support staff.

- 2024 was a good year for GMP – recorded crime was down 8% with 30,000 fewer incidents, and arrests were up by 5.6%.

The emergency services still see difficulties due to **large increases in demand and an ageing population, a lack of funding, and widespread workforce shortages**. The services experiences higher levels of sickness absence than many sectors and staff are more likely to be physically assaulted or experience verbal abuse when working.

**Almost 20,000 people work for the GM emergency services.** There is good awareness amongst young people about police officer, paramedic and firefighter roles and these score highly as popular career choices. There are clear pathways, well established technical routes and high numbers of applicants.

**AI, data analytics, and the increased quality of video surveillance are all growing trends in the sector.** With it, this brings an increased need for cybersecurity to work hand-in-hand with physical security.

## In-demand Occupations

Roles are concentrated around police stations, ambulance depts, and fire stations – Manchester, Salford, Stockport, and Bolton see higher demand than other areas. Private Security roles are largely concentrated in the city centre around venues.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025):

- Security Officer (460)
- Safety Specialist / Coordinator (135)
- Dispatcher (80)
- Police Officer (71)
- Forensic Technician (54)

## Skills Requirements

Primary front-line roles need exceptional people skills – empathy and compassion are critical for most of the duties performed on the front-line.

Digital skills both in using new equipment and in combatting different emergencies – as crime moves online, the need for cybercrime specialists is growing in most police forces across the UK.

In-demand skills include:

- Preventative measures
- Leadership skills
- Resilience
- Community engagement including BSL and other language skills;
- Health and wellbeing (including mental health expertise)
- Physical fitness

# Sector Insights – Green Economy

## Overview

The [Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan](#) was released towards the end of 2024 – setting out more activity and strategy for reaching Net Zero goals. Among a wide range of activity, it sets out ambitions for an expansion of renewable energy generation, additional retrofitting of residential and public buildings, and the creation of green jobs for GM residents as the sector grows.

**There are positive signs that the sector is growing rapidly:**

- Work from the Confederation of British Industry suggested that the UK’s Net Zero sector grew by 10% in 2024 – much faster than the economy as a whole.
- Employers are advertising more “green jobs” related to sustainability, environment, and low carbon transport / buildings. The number of green jobs advertised rose 3 times faster than the overall labour market.
- Sales of ground and air source heat pumps – low carbon heating sources used to retrofit homes and provide low-carbon heat – grew by 63% in 2024.

**Sustainable Ventures began work to replicate their extensive London ecosystem in GM,** with the acquisition of 3 floors of space in the Renold building in the Innovation District in the city centre. They hope to attract dozens of innovators, entrepreneurs and startups into a co-working and events space.

**The sector still faces a serious mismatch of skills supply and employer demand.**

- Polling by Indeed found that around 27% of employers faced shortages for filling sustainability roles – yet 27% of job seekers cited there were too few roles available.
- Interestingly, there is a clear moral imperative for workers to move into the sector – around a quarter of workers said they would take a pay cut to work in a “green job”.

**Early 2025 saw planning for HyNet start in earnest.** Government committed the funding in October of 2024 - £22bn over a long-term project to develop the pipeline which combines Hydrogen and Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS). It will be critical for the decarbonisation of industry across the North West, reaching Trafford Park in the 2030s.

## In-demand Occupations

Roles in the Green Economy are fairly well spread across GM – roles relating to buildings and energy are broadly distributed.

Main roles in GM (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)\*:

- Sustainability Specialist (133)
- Environmental Planner (90)
- Safety Manager (50)
- Recycling / Waste Worker (38)
- Civil Engineer (37)

\*methodology under review

## Skills Requirements

Skills needed for the Green Economy are broad. The size of sector will grow greatly as GM and wider UK moves towards Net Zero targets. Adoption of technology like low carbon heating and electric vehicles are already growing rapidly.

Innovation, digital skills, and creativity will drive adoption and optimisation of new technology. Various senior roles in many occupations and subsectors go unfilled, some skillsets are in very high demand.

In-demand skills include:

- Management
- Sales
- Project Management
- Carbon Literacy
- Construction trade skills are critical in several areas
- Natural environment – waste and water management

# GM in-demand occupations (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)

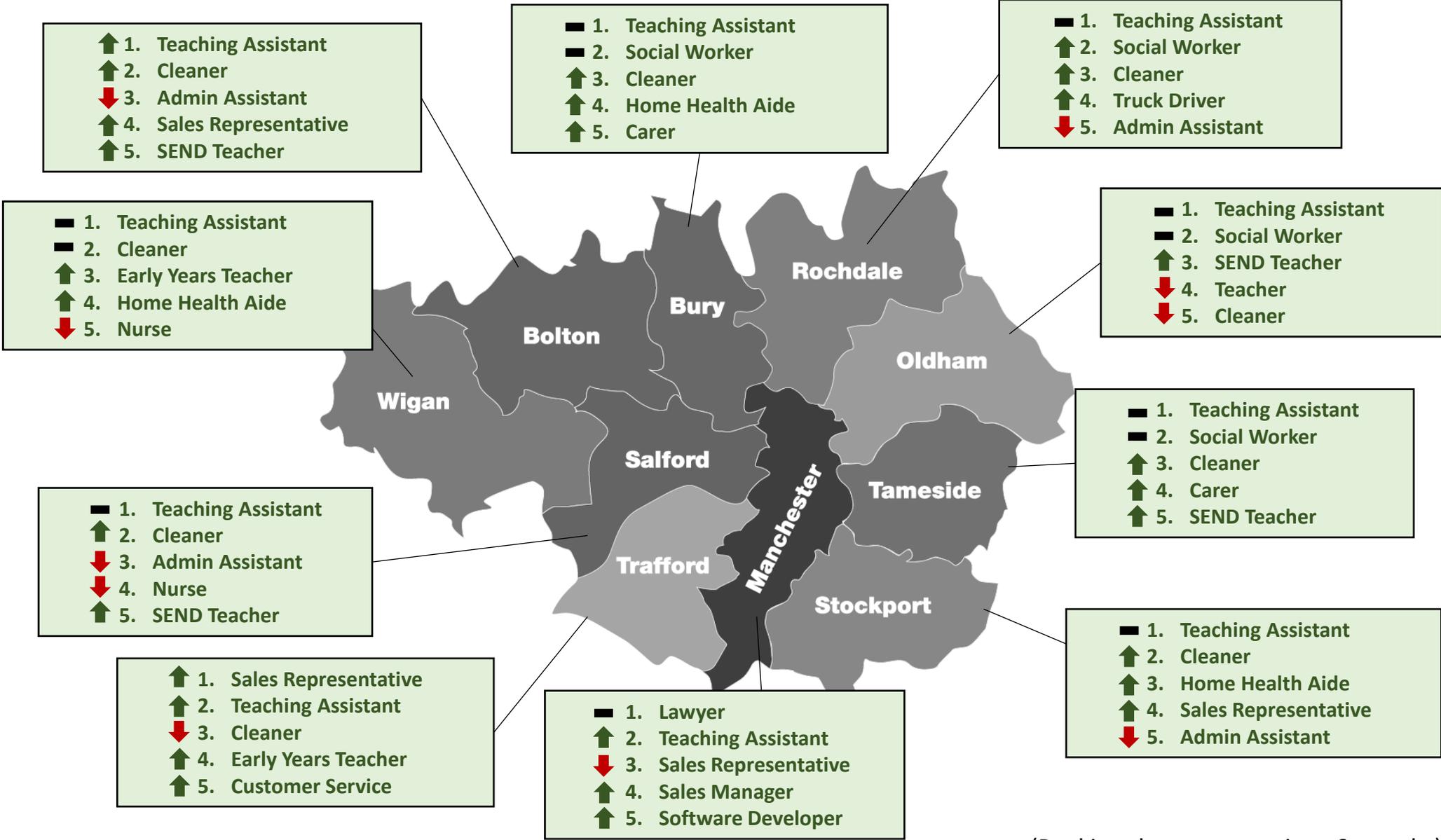
The top 5 occupations across GM reveal a little about the specific employment profile in each borough. Some foundational roles like Cleaner and Carer appear in most.

Teaching Assistant vacancies remain the highest across every Local Authority area bar Trafford and Manchester.

SEND Teachers have crept into the top 5 in several boroughs as more young people enter education with additional needs. Early Years Teachers are similarly on the rise.

Manchester sees legal roles top – with other “head office” roles like Sales Manager and Software Developers in the top 5.

Rochdale’s central role as a logistics hub can be seen – with job adverts for Truck Drivers the 4<sup>th</sup> most common.



(Ranking shown vs. previous 6 months)

# GM in-demand common skills (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)

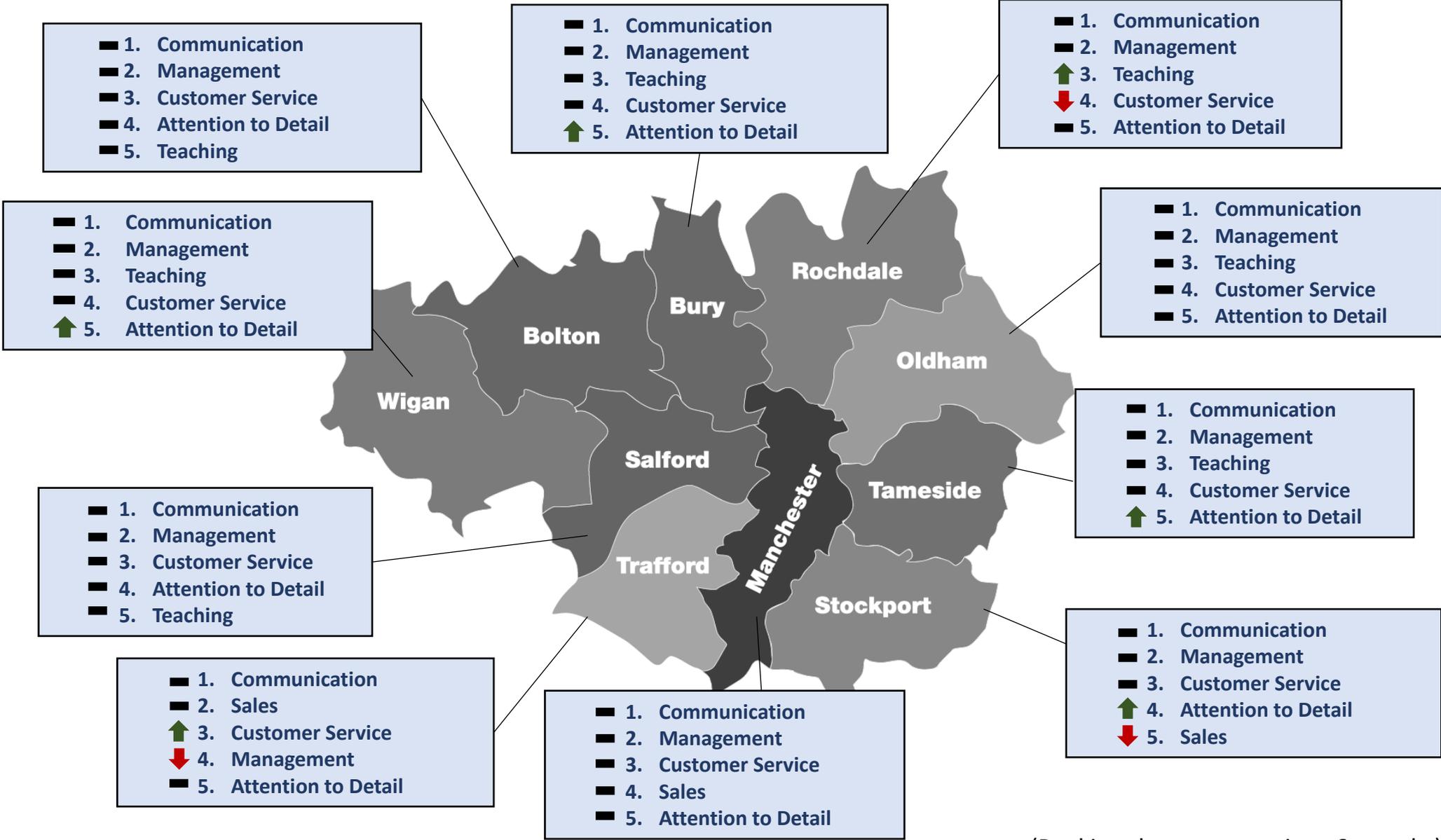
Demand for most common or “soft” skills rarely changes – the rankings in many places are identical year to year.

Effective Communication skills remain top in every borough of GM – unsurprising given their prevalence in a huge range of job roles.

Some boroughs see Teaching in their top 5 – hinting at the stable and growing demand from the education sector.

Sales and Customer Service skills can also be seen in boroughs like Stockport, Manchester and Trafford which contain a high number of head offices.

Management is seen in the top 5 of all 10 boroughs – again unsurprising given how many roles contain supervisory elements and the need for good management.



(Ranking shown vs. previous 6 months)

# GM in-demand specialist skills (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)

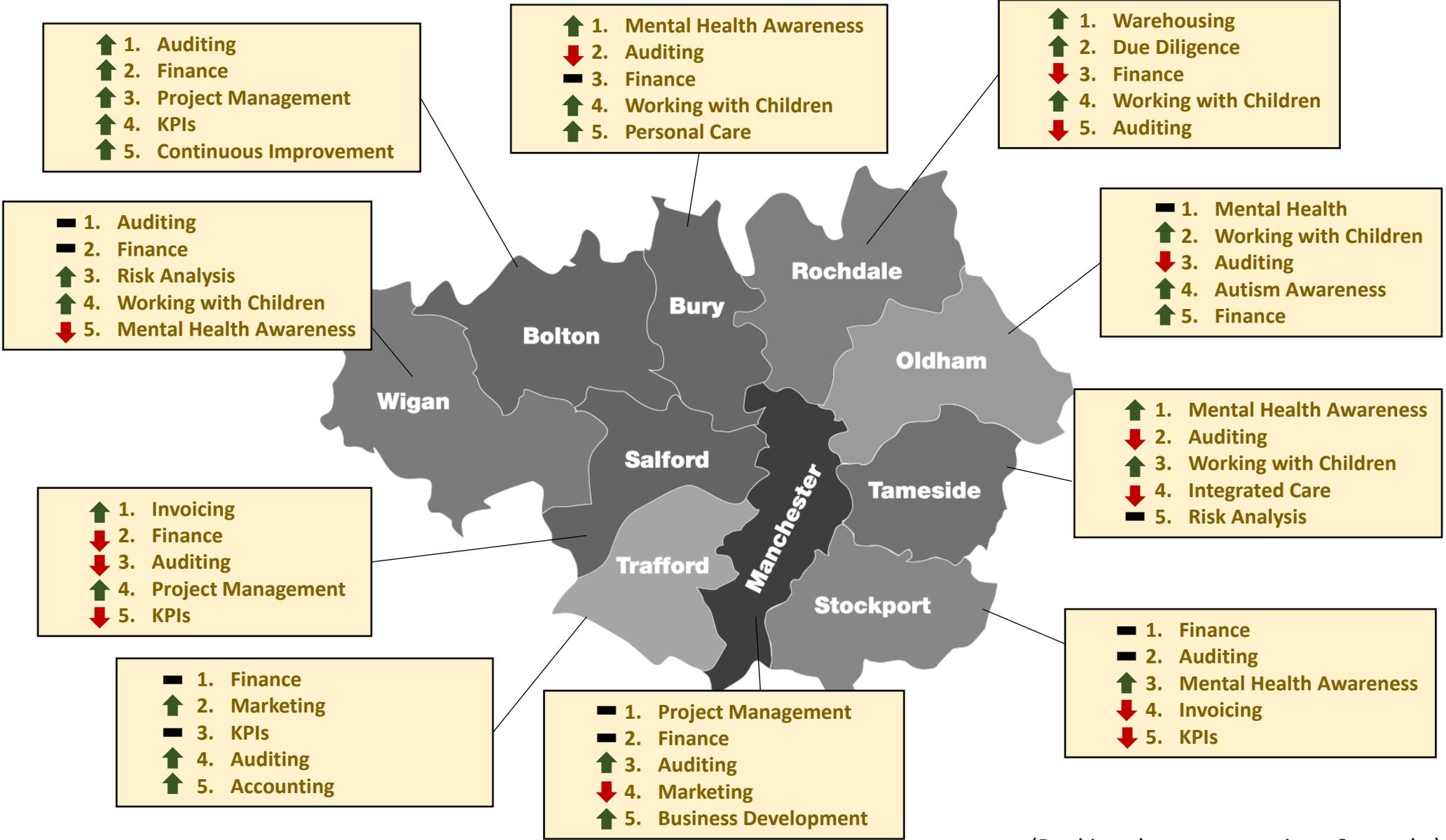
The top 5 skills on job adverts varies frequently and shows a more unique flavour to the different types of roles more in demand in each borough.

Auditing, Invoicing and Finance appear frequently – many managers are expected to have strong financial skills for managing budgets, orders and payments.

Health related skills are particularly needed for many roles in Oldham and Tameside, where there are large health and social care sites.

Project Management features in several areas as employers favour structure – it’s twice as popular as pre-pandemic.

Job adverts seeking experience working with children has risen across many areas – as demand for Early Years Teachers escalates.



(Ranking shown vs. previous 6 months)