



# Black Country Business and Labour Market Intelligence May 2021



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## Introduction

Welcome to the May 2021 edition of the Black Country Business and Labour Market Intelligence report, produced by Black Country Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU). This is the second report of this kind produced, aiming to provide the Black Country LEP Board, other local forums and local partners with real-time intelligence on the Black Country business environment and labour market.

Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative insight, the analysis summarises key recent challenges and opportunities for Black Country businesses, while depicting the current status of local labour markets across sectors.

The production of this report reflects a collaborative local approach on business intelligence and engagement in the local area. Insight has been collated through multiple channels, including direct Growth Hub business engagement and through conversations with business groups and trade bodies (e.g., UK Metals Council, MakeUK). The Labour Market Information aspect uses data downloaded through the EMSI platform, providing live job vacancy data locally.

The intelligence provided is intended to influence policy and decision-making across relevant Black Country forums and those at the regional and national level. By utilising real time business insight and labour market data, we can more easily navigate key challenges and opportunities without the problem of data lags. This is particularly important in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU.

This May edition builds upon and extends the previous March report, providing a more comprehensive live picture reflective of both qualitative business insight and relevant quantitative data. There are three key sections:

- 1) Monthly Economic Context** – providing an overview of the current economic environment locally, as Covid-19 restrictions begin to ease and the vaccine roll-out continues.
- 2) Black Country Business Intelligence Summary** – collating the challenges, issues, opportunities and trends arising from engagement with Black Country businesses in the last month. Insight is collated from direct feedback from Black Country Growth Hub and in conjunction with other business group / trade body partners.
- 3) Black Country Labour Market Information** – summarises job vacancy data across the economy and within sectors, utilising the EMSI data platform. This provides a live picture of what roles Black Country businesses are looking for and the skills they require.

We are aiming to continue building on the content within this report so that it covers a wider set of data and insight collection.

## Summary of May 2021 Findings

### ● Economic Context

- Following the easing of lockdown, key regional indicators are showing the start of a return to normal or suggesting increased confidence.
- This includes the West Midlands Business Activity Index increasing from 51.5 in February to 60.7 in March.
- There have also been positive signs from labour market and skills data, even related to the pandemic period: in 2020, the employment rate in the Black Country was 71.9%, compared to 75.7% for England overall. This has increased by 1.5 percentage points (pp) compared to a 0.3pp decrease nationally since 2019.
- Despite these improvements, the Black Country remains behind the national average across key measures long-term, and the full short-term impact of the pandemic is yet to be witnessed.

### ● Business Intelligence

- The easing of lockdown has provided a much-needed boost to many businesses and local economies, with positive reports from high streets and business overall. This has translated in a reduction in Covid related enquiries to the Growth Hub.
- However, many businesses can still not operate or open as normal due to Covid – for example in the conference and events sector or indoor hospitality.
- Many firms also continue to report cash flow problems, supply shortages and continued uncertainty about the way out of lockdown / normality.
- There is a continued inability for businesses to plan ahead and forecast for opportunities and challenges. Given the period of uncertainty and the challenges they have faced with the pandemic, forecasting for the next year accurately is proving to be a challenge.
- Another key area of concern came from established Black Country businesses feeling a lack of confidence in attracting new customers and marketing their business in a digital world.
- Black Country enquiries about EU Exit still remain relatively low, but some firms are clearly still being impacted by new trading rules and documentation. This is felt particularly in manufacturing, in which almost three-quarters (74%) of companies have experienced or are experiencing delays in the past 3 months according to MakeUK.
- It is important to bear in mind that many businesses and researchers feel as if it is currently impossible to separate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from impacts of exiting the EU.
- There is continued and increasing appetite for normal (pre-Covid) business support grants. Businesses across all sectors looking to obtain grant funding for machinery, equipment and property renovations.

### ● Labour Market Intelligence

- Demand is beginning to increase across most Black Country priority sectors – with a notable rebound in construction and advanced manufacturing.
- Sectors such as environmental technologies, the public sector and retail are struggling in the third lockdown, with job postings levels remaining at similar levels to those seen in the first lockdown.
- Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the pandemic there was significant growth in demand both health and the public sector roles in the lead up to the lockdown; particularly around nursing, care workers, social workers and teaching professionals.
- Analysis of locale shows that demand is highest (by volume) in Sandwell, followed by Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

## 1) Monthly Economic Context

Following the easing of lockdown, key regional indicators are showing the start of a return to normal or suggesting increased confidence<sup>1</sup>:

- Footfall statistics indicate that people are more comfortable with leaving home, but the majority of people still feel the pandemic is having a worrying effect on their lives.
- The West Midlands Business Activity Index increased from 51.1 in February to 60.7 in March, which is the sharpest rate of expansion in output in seven months and also outperforms the national average.
- The West Midlands Future Activity Index increased from 76.1 in February to 80.2 in March – reaching the highest level since January 2017.
- The Midlands has seen a rebound in hiring activity with vacancies rising at the fastest rate for over two-and-a-half years. According to the latest KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs: Midlands, permanent staff appointments rose for the first time in three months and at the steepest rate since July 2018.

### West Midlands Business Activity Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



Source: IHS Market/NatWest, April 2021

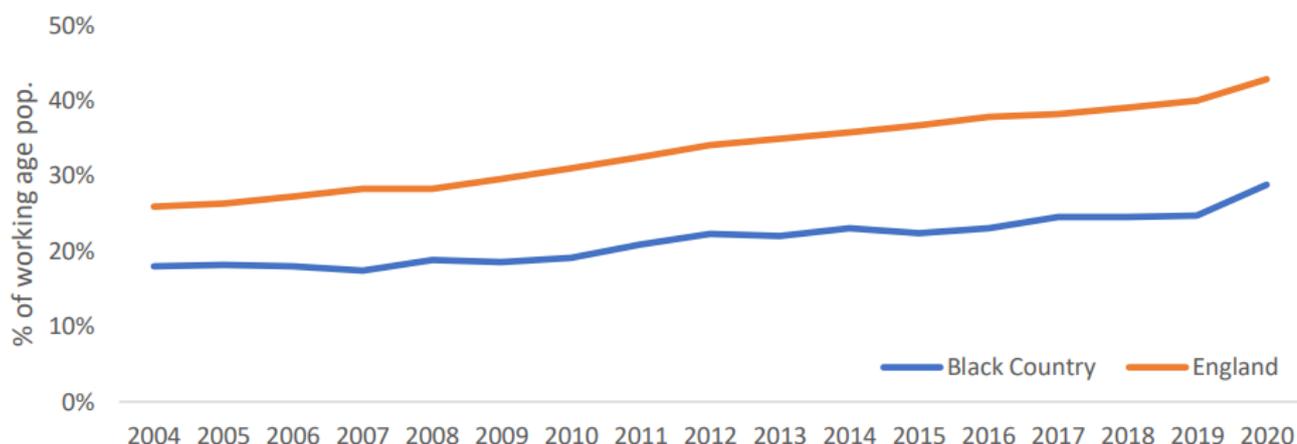
There have also been positive signs from labour market and skills data, even related to the pandemic period<sup>2</sup>:

- In 2020, the employment rate in the Black Country was 71.9%, compared to 75.7% for England overall. This has increased by 1.5 percentage points (pp) compared to a 0.3pp decrease nationally since 2019.
- In 2020, the unemployment rate in the Black Country was 5.5%, compared to 4.8% for England overall. This has decreased by 0.3pp compared to a 0.8pp increase nationally since 2019.
- In the Black Country, NVQ Level 4+ qualifications increased by 16.8% (+30,300) over the year to 210,600 people (from 180,300 in 2019) compared to a national increase of 7.2%.

<sup>1</sup> <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/cityredi/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2021/04/Monitor-wk-52-v2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.the-blackcountry.com/economic-intelligence-unit/black-country-intelligence-reports/intelligence-briefings>

## % of working age population with NVQ4+ qualifications, Black Country & England, 2004-2020



Despite these improvements, the Black Country remains behind the national average across key measures long-term, and the full short-term impact of the pandemic is yet to be witnessed. This is largely due to the continuance of government support: for example, the most recent data reports over 60,000 Black Country employees are still on furlough.

Furthermore, in research that further highlights the region's skills issue, the [Centre for Progressive Policy](#) has recently outlined the places in England with the highest employment cost of place-based inequality in basic skills coverage. The ten highest modelled estimates of the employment uplift associated with reducing the basic skills gap with the top 10% of local authorities includes three of the four Black Country local authorities (Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell) as well as Birmingham.

## 2) Black Country Business Intelligence Summary

Local, front-line business issues, challenges and opportunities are best understood by engaging directly with businesses in tandem with background data. The below sections summarise recent challenges and priorities raised by Black Country businesses or through representative bodies or research.

### Outlook

The easing of lockdown has provided a much-needed boost to many businesses and local economies. A general feeling of **entrepreneurial spirit** has been reported, with businesses returning to more "normal" activity. Business advisors are now dealing with pre-COVID type day to day requests for support rather than the fire-fighting witnessed in the middle of the pandemic.

There has been **positive reports of high street activity** from across the West Midlands region, including specifically in the [Black Country and Staffordshire](#). Shops and hospitality are thrilled to have welcomed back customers.

The short-term buoyancy is reflected in local and national outlooks for the year. The UK's economic **growth prospects for 2021 have been significantly upgraded** in the [EY ITEM Club's Spring Forecast](#), published on 26<sup>th</sup> April: The EY ITEM Club now expects the economy to grow 6.8% this year rather than the 5% growth expected in January. The upgraded forecast primarily reflects the UK economy's

resilient performance in the lockdown-affected fourth quarter of 2020 and first quarter of 2021, providing a better-than-expected platform for growth through the rest of this year.

However, businesses in the region have expressed **concern of potential job losses** once the Governments furlough scheme finally comes to an end in September. And it is important to remember that **many businesses can still not operate or open as normal – for example in the conference and events sector or indoor hospitality**. It is estimated that only around 30% of pubs are actually open currently, largely due to a lack of outdoor space.

So it is important to be cautiously optimistic while remembering the struggle many local businesses are still in. Analysis by insolvency and restructuring business advisory firm [Begbies Traynor](#) bring the impact of Covid to life: the firm's latest Red Flag Alert data shows that **more than 17,000 businesses in the West Midlands found themselves in 'significant' financial distress during the first three months of 2021, an increase of 51 per cent since the first quarter of 2020**. While all had significant year-on-year increases, Birmingham and Wolverhampton fared worst, with both reporting 52 per cent growth over the past 12 months. Birmingham's increase saw the number of ailing firms reach more than 11,000, while Wolverhampton's rose above 2,000 for the first time.

According to analysis by [BusinessRescueExperts](#), the West Midlands had the **4th highest Corporate Insolvency Ratio in 2020** (1 in 173), at greater risk of company closure compared to the national average (1 in 207).

## COVID-19

While the economy is beginning to re-open, there are **still many firms unable to open fully or are incurring increasing costs for new ways of working**. Key concurrent Covid-related issues highlighted by local business in recent weeks include:

- Sectors such as events/conference are really struggling and have no clear roadmap as to when they will be able to trade again.
- Some businesses are struggling with the short term cashflow issues whilst bringing back staff and preparing to restart. Some of these are delaying the reopening of business, particularly restaurants.
- Many SME's still awaiting outcomes from underwriting from late applications to the CBILS loans scheme. Not a clear picture yet from loan providers on the new Recovery Loan scheme that has replaced CBILS and BBL's.
- Dramatic increases in rents whilst surviving on grants.
- Uncertainty about the way out of lockdown and the short timescales that is driving this approach – causing hesitancy to make investment decisions.

Additionally, relatively new Covid-19 related issues include:

- Supply Chain Disruption Delays – reflected by Jaguar Land Rover factory closures.
- Costs for SMEs increasing due to the specific COVID measures needed in place to trade
- Lack of clarity around COVID testing protocols/lack of space to carry out testing on site.
- The government needs to run a public confidence campaign to support the cultural sector by encouraging people to return to cultural venues once they fully open.
- A lack of support for businesses in the hospitality supply chain.

Many of the issues described reflect a **continued inability for businesses to plan ahead and forecast for opportunities and challenges**. Given the period of uncertainty and the challenges they have faced with the pandemic, forecasting for the next year accurately is proving to be a challenge. This was a recurring topic of concern within the most recent Black Country LEP Business Voice Advisory Group.

A similar inability to plan ahead was identified in relation to the wider economic recovery. The Group commented that there are lots of ideas from Government about ways in which the economy could rebuild and move forward, but little follow up of investment in actions to make it a reality. **Local businesses would like to see clear objectives and actions being fed by the government into local areas.**

Another key area of concern came from established Black Country businesses feeling a lack of confidence in attracting new customers and marketing their business in a digital world. **They feel platforms such as Zoom lacked the personal element and this made relationship building challenging.**

Despite issues remaining severe for some sectors, and the long-term effect of Covid likely to impact many businesses, there is positive signs of business activity returning to some kind of normality. This is also reflected in a reduction in Covid-19 related enquiries reported by the Black Country Growth Hub:

#### BGCH Enquires by Nature of Enquiry – Q1 2021 and Change from Q4 2020

Nature of Enquiry	Q1 2021	%	Change from Q4 2020	% Change
Funding	304	36.2%	+7	+2.4%
Start-Ups	87	10.4%	+17	+24.3%
Development	75	8.9%	+44	+141.9%
Covid-19	69	8.2%	-41	-37.3%
General	65	7.7%	+29	+80.6%
Mentoring	60	7.2%	+18	+42.9%
EU Exit	37	4.4%	+37	
Energy Efficiency	27	3.2%	+11	+68.8%
International Trade	26	3.1%	+17	+188.9%
Training & Skills	24	2.9%	0	0.0%
Digital	22	2.6%	+18	+450.0%
Innovation	22	2.6%	+2	+10.0%
Property	13	1.5%	+4	+44.4%
Regulations	6	0.7%	+6	
Supply	2	0.2%	-4	-66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>+165</b>	<b>+24.5%</b>

## EU Exit

Over **15,000 businesses** have received free advice from the [West Midlands' Growth Hubs](#) following the UK's departure from the EU – and that is set to continue. A 14-week project run by Growth Hubs throughout the region working with the West and East Midlands Department for International Trade (DIT) was launched to ensure companies had the most up-to-date information and advice to make the most of the new trading opportunities. Growth Hubs, including BCGH, continue to support firms adapting to the new rules, of which are still creating issues for some firms:

- **Rising import costs** have meant renegotiating contracts with customers.
- Organisations are still finding the **increase in steel prices are now affecting the automotive, Rail and construction supply chain**
- Materials from EU suppliers is taking longer than expected **causing UK delivery delays**
- Continued delays with shipments of exported goods and imported parts and supplies. One example discussed highlighted a **1-week process now takes 2 months.**
- **Import VAT complications** are still an issue and demand for support regarding this is desired

In recent weeks though, there does appear to have been a **reduction in businesses seeking support with EU Exit related issues, although the number of enquiries in the Black Country has remained generally low all the way through.** This may reflect that businesses are now more able to adapt to the initial “teething problems” earlier in the year.

However, the impact on trade in 2021 is stark, as identified by the British Chambers of Commerce’s [Trade Confidence Outlook for Q1](#). The survey of more than 2,900 UK exporters revealed that the percentage of firms reporting decreased export sales had increased to 41%, up from 38% in the previous quarter. The percentage of businesses reporting increased export sales fell to 20%, down from 22% in Q4 2020. 40% reported no change in their export sales. Overall, **four in ten UK Exporters reported decreased Sales in Q1.**

This negative trade impact has been felt hardest by some sectors in particular:

- Inconsistent and increasingly burdensome **post-Brexit bureaucracy is blighting food and drink sales to the EU**, the sector warned as it published analysis showing exports to the bloc were down 40 per cent in February compared with a year earlier. The [Food and Drink Federation \(FDF\)](#), which represents more than 800 companies, said the statistics showed that food and drink **exports to the EU in February were worth £578.7m, down from £1bn in February 2020**
- Manufacturers are still struggling to cope with **crippling delays moving goods in and out of EU** according to [Make UK research](#):
  - Almost **three-quarters (74%) of companies have experienced or are experiencing delays** in the past 3 months
  - 1 in 3 (28%) are experiencing delays of between 1 to 2 weeks
  - Over half (51%) say this has led to **increased costs**
  - Over a third (35%) have lost revenue with one in five losing potential business
  - Manufacturers have cited various Government interventions that would help mitigate the impacts – from **assistance with export documentation, better trained customs staff and clearer guidance on import/export paperwork.**

Additionally, research into large companies in the region found that the most common EU Exit related concerns raised were **those outside the control of individual businesses, primarily macroeconomic factors including price-rises, unemployment, and ongoing weakening of the pound.**

Many leaders in the survey felt it is currently **impossible to separate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from impacts of exiting the EU**, which is important to bear in mind. For some companies, the immediate crisis presented by the pandemic has dwarfed any consideration of exiting the EU, including disrupting contingency plans or pivoting business priorities.

## Programmes and Enquiries

- **Start Up referrals** feature highly again as those out of work looking to start businesses to generate an income.
- There is continued and increasing appetite for **normal (pre-Covid) business support grants.** Businesses across all sectors looking to obtain grant funding for machinery, equipment and property renovations.
- **Peer Networks and Networking** – Increased interest in Peer to Peer networks programmes and general networking opportunities. Business looking to learn from other successful and similar companies in order to recover.
- In line with the picture in 2020 overall and Q4, **access to funding was the most common BCGH enquiry in Q1 2021:** 304 enquiries, comprising 36.2% of all enquiries in this quarter. This

proportion has increased from 44% in Q4 2020, with the following enquiry types becoming more increasingly important:

- **Development** – there were 44 more (+141.8%) enquiries about this in the first quarter of 2021, 75 enquiries in total and the third most common enquiry type.
- **EU Exit and International Trade** – There were 37 EU Exit-specific enquiries in Q1 2021, a significant increase from the zero reported in the last quarter of 2020. Additionally, the number of international trade enquiries increased by 189% to 26. EU Exit and International Trade made up 7.5% of all enquiries in Q1 2021, up from 5% across the whole of 2020.
- **Digital and Start-Ups** – There were 22 enquiries specific to digital in Q1, up considerably from the previous quarter (+18). Start-up enquiries also remain a common enquiry type (10.4% of enquiries in the latest quarter).
- **Mentoring** – This type of enquiry has continued its increase into 2021, with BCGH reporting 60 enquiries in Q1 2021, reflecting 7.2% of the total. This proportion has doubled compared with the whole of 2020. This can somewhat be explained by the peer-to-peer networks.

## New Investment Deals and Opportunities

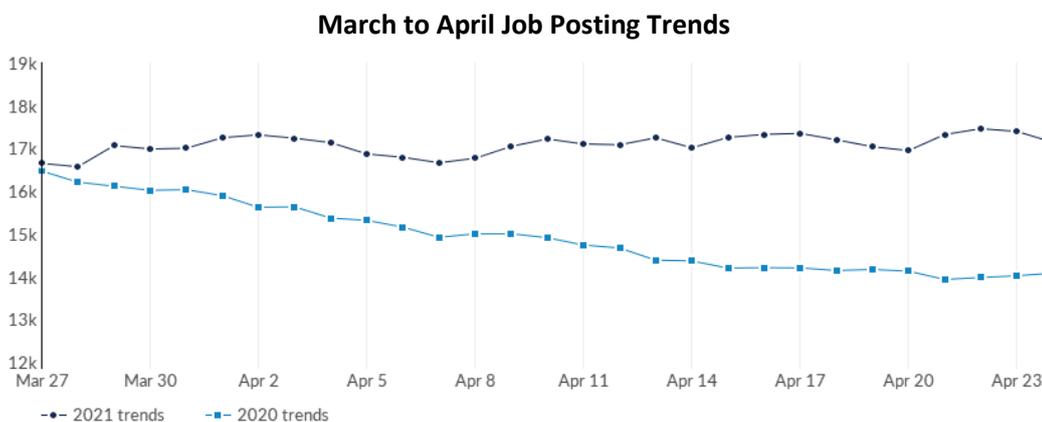
NEW INVESTMENT, DEALS AND OPPORTUNITIES			
COMPANY	LOCATION	SECTOR	DETAIL & SOURCE
<a href="#">Ibstock</a>	Walsall	Construction	Clay bricks and concrete products group Ibstock is making a £60 million investment in production at its two sites in Aldridge as demand for building products soars with the UK recovery from the coronavirus pandemic stepping up.
<a href="#">HBD / Walsall Council</a>	Phoenix 10, Walsall	Development	Around 1,000 jobs are expected to be created when the Phoenix 10 site, next to the M6 off Reservoir Place, is cleaned up and around 620,000 sq. ft of employment space created in its place.
<a href="#">The Grand Theatre</a>	Wolverhampton	Entertainment	Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has been awarded £568,357, which comes on top of £1.2 million it was given by the Cultural Recovery Fund last year.
<a href="#">Red by Night / Stage Audio Services</a>	Dudley	Art/ Music	Two music firms in the Black Country have welcomed new funding as part of the Government's Culture Recovery Fund. Red By Night, at Brierley Hill's Waterfront, and Wordsley's Stage Audio Services received almost £400,000 between them.
<a href="#">Ikea</a>	Wednesbury	Retail	More than 40 new jobs could be created at the IKEA Wednesbury store as the furniture giant looks to expand to meet online demand. The firm has submitted proposals to Walsall Council to provide temporary lockers for its click and collect (C&C) service as more people turn to internet shopping as a result of Covid.
<a href="#">Tim Hortons</a>	Wednesfield and Oldbury	Food & Drink	Canadian fast food brand Tim Hortons is opening two drive-thru restaurants in the Black Country. It is to open a unit at Bentley Bridge Retail Park, Wednesfield (40 jobs) and at the 2,800 sq. ft unit at the former Toys R Us site in Oldbury.

### 3) Black Country Labour Market Information

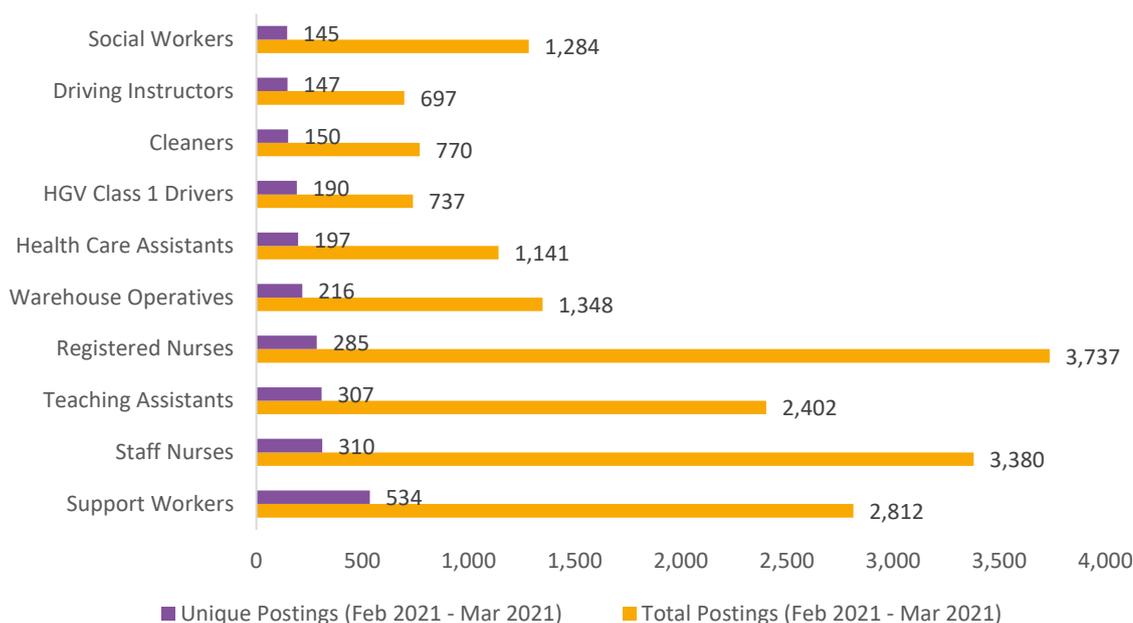
Using the EMSI data platform, this section summarises job vacancy data across the whole economy and within sectors. This provides a live picture of what roles Black Country businesses are looking for and the skills they require.

#### Sector Demand (March 2021 – April 2021)

- Demand is beginning to increase across most Black Country priority sectors – with a notable rebound in construction and advanced manufacturing.
- Sectors such as environmental technologies, the public sector and retail are struggling in the third lockdown, with job postings levels remaining at similar levels to those seen in the first lockdown.
- Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the pandemic there was significant growth in demand both health and the public sector roles in the lead up to the lockdown; particularly around nursing, care workers, social workers and teaching professionals.
- Analysis of locale shows that demand is highest (by volume) in Sandwell, followed by Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall.



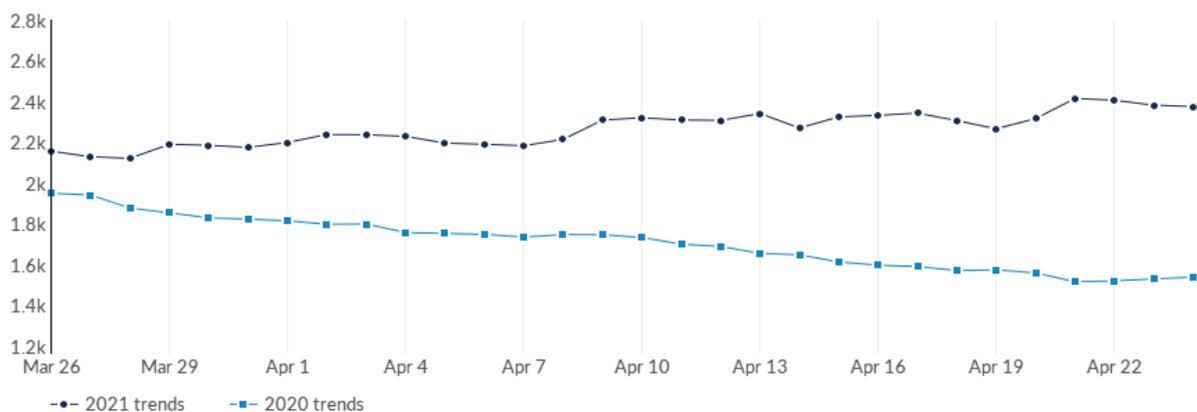
#### Top job titles



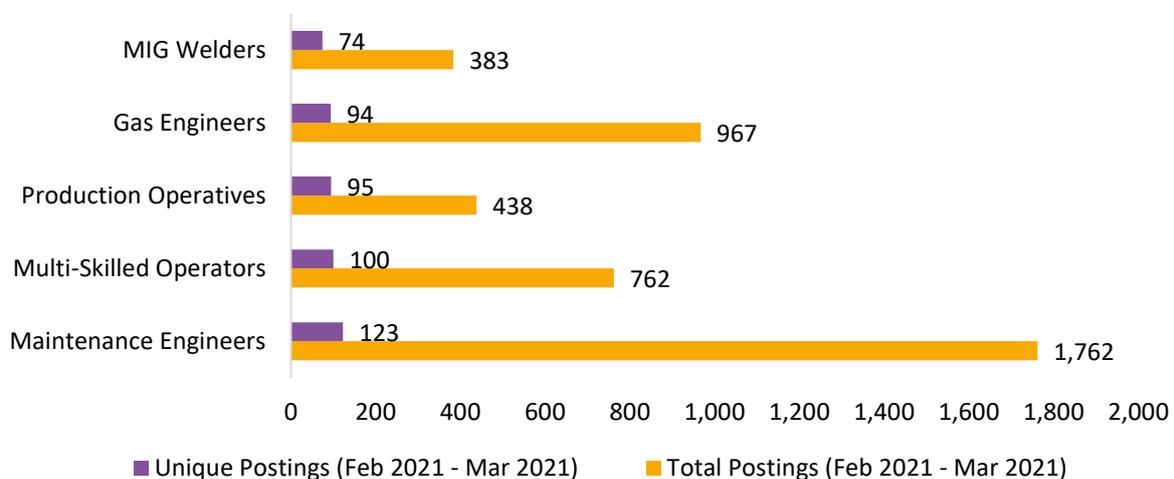
## Advanced Manufacturing:

- In February to March 2021 there were 26,142 total job postings and 4,199 unique job postings in the Advanced Manufacturing sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, matching the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 32 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £13.69 an hour.
- Job postings are now 54% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded well since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for metal working production and maintenance fitters occupations at 7,074 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 8-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for design and development engineers at 1,373 postings but a posting intensity of 10-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for maintenance engineers with 1,762 total postings and a posting intensity of 14-to-1.
- Metal inert gas welding, mechanical engineering and engineering drawings were the top hard skills requested, with MIG welding having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 7% of all postings but not in any workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and customer service were the 3 top common skills requested.

March to April Job Posting Trends



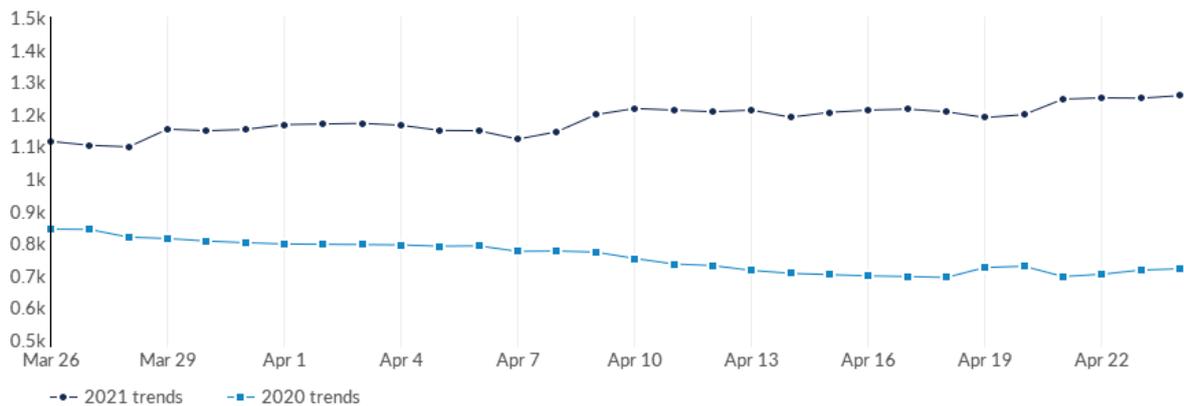
Top job titles



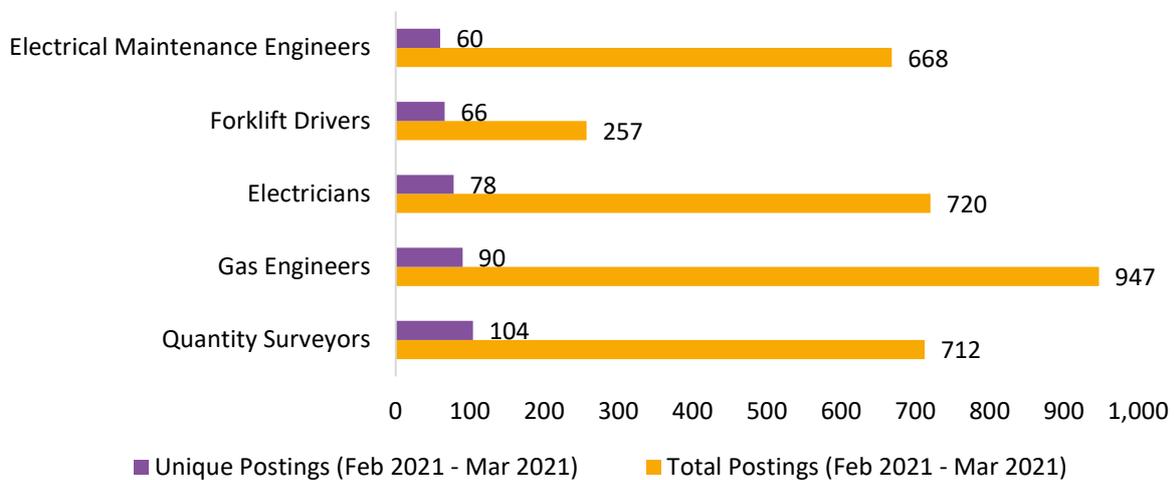
## Building Technologies:

- In February to March 2021 there were 11,721 total job postings and 2,075 unique job postings in the Building Technologies sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, matching the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 31 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £15.60 an hour.
- Job postings are now 75% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for electricians and electrical fitters occupations at 2,763 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 8-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for quantity surveyors with 712 total postings and a posting intensity of 7-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for gas engineers and electrical maintenance engineers with an 11-to-1 posting intensity.
- Carpentry, plumbing and boilers were the top hard skills requested, with carpentry having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 7% of all postings and 2% of workforce profiles.
- Management, communications and customer service were the 3 top common skills requested.

### March to April Job Posting Trends

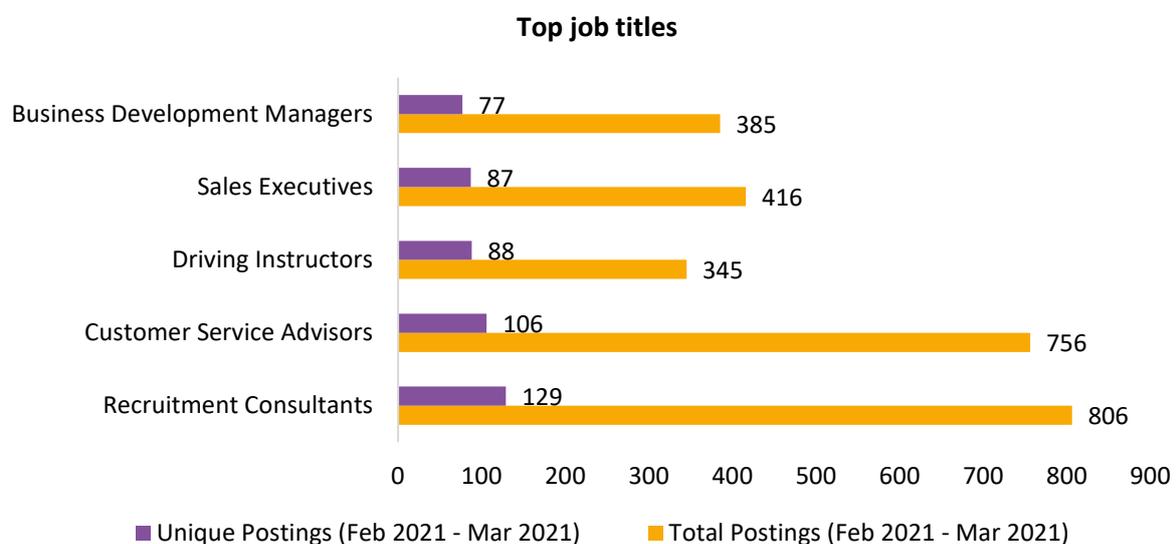
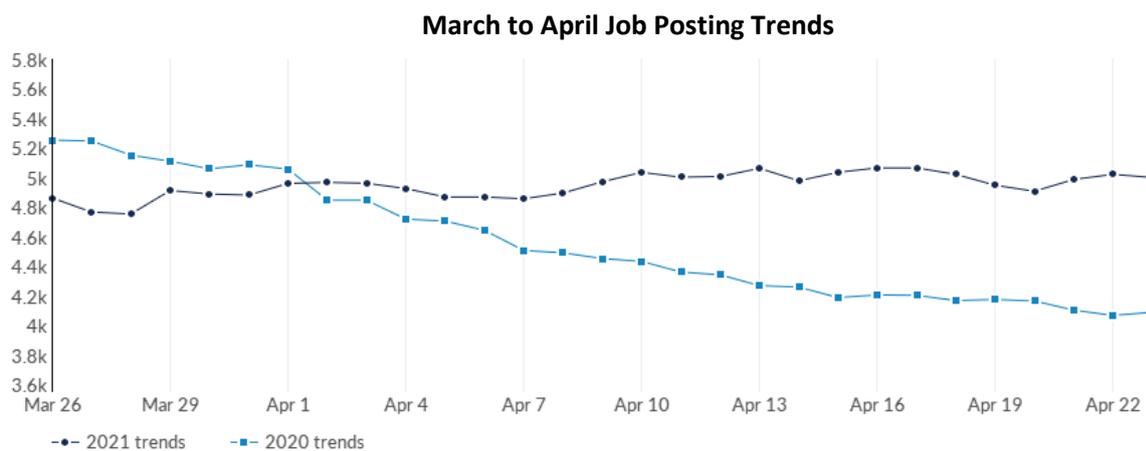


### Top job titles



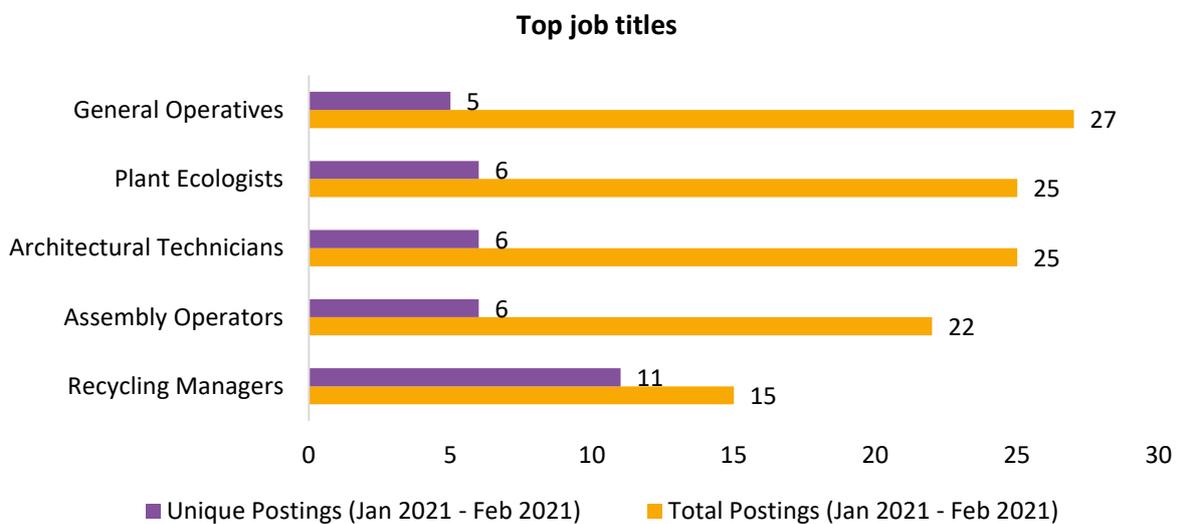
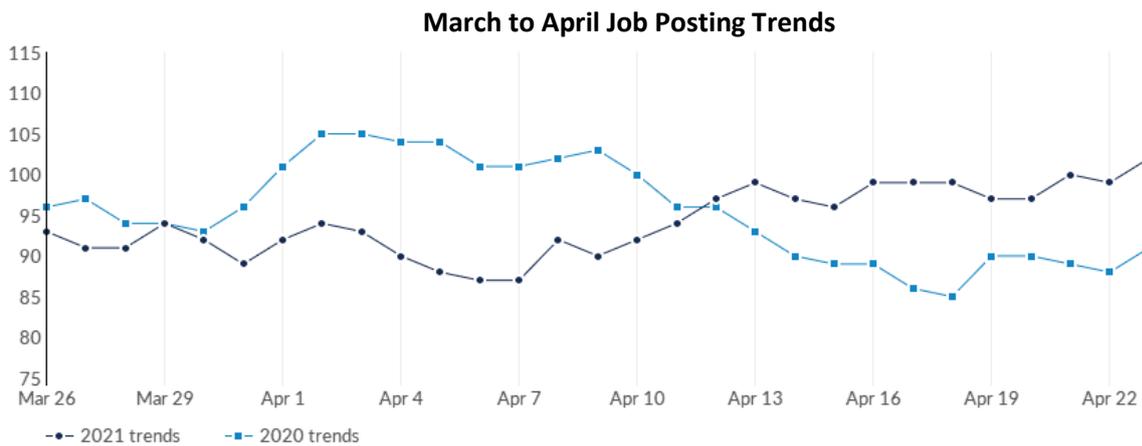
## Business Services:

- In February to March 2021 there were 50,656 total job postings and 9,336 unique job postings in the Business Services sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, matching the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 27 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £13.09 an hour.
- Job postings are now 20% above levels seen this time last year as the sector had rebounded since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for other administrative occupations n.e.c. occupations at 3,710 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 6-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for business and financial project management professionals at 1,751 postings but a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for recruitment consultants with 806 total postings and a posting intensity of 6-to-1. Customer service advisors had 756 total postings and a 7-to-1 posting intensity.
- Accounting, auditing and business development were the top hard skills requested, with accounting having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in % of all postings but only in 4% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, sales and management were the 3 top common skills requested.



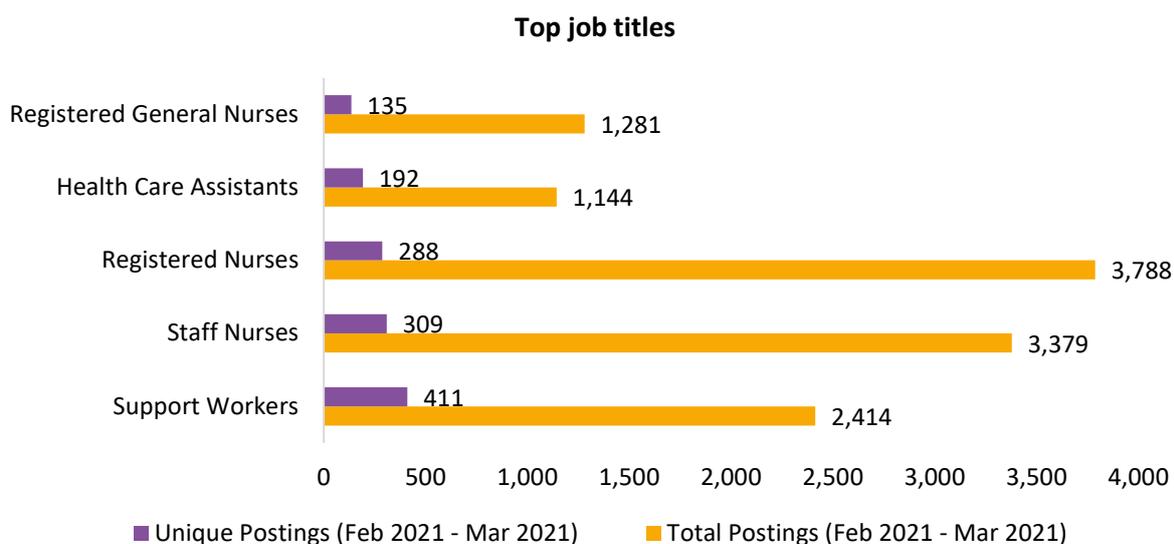
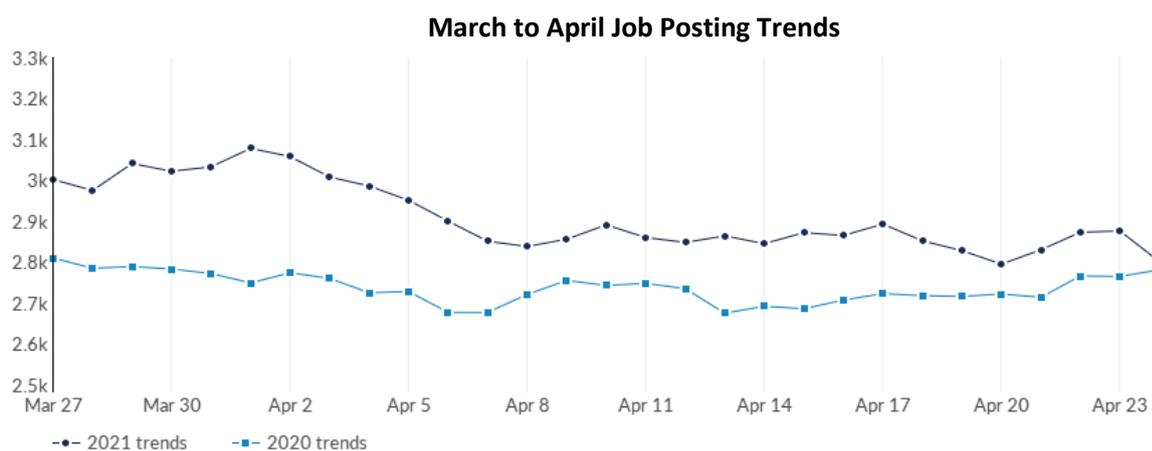
### Environmental Technologies:

- In February to March 2021 there were 687 total job postings and 177 unique job postings in the Environmental Technologies sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 4-to-1, lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are not putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 23 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £12.03 an hour.
- Job postings are now 9% above levels seen this time last year, suggesting the sector has not rebounded well since the first lockdown last year.
- Demand via job postings was highest for refuse and salvage occupations at 149 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 3-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for gardeners and landscape gardeners at 150 postings but a posting intensity of 11-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for recycling managers with 18 total postings and a posting intensity of 2-to-1. But the job title with the highest posting intensity was for gardeners at 28-to-1 with a total of 111 job postings.
- Ecology, risk analysis and landscaping were the top sought after hard skills in the sector, with ecology having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 7% of all postings and only 1% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and planning were the 3 top common skills requested.



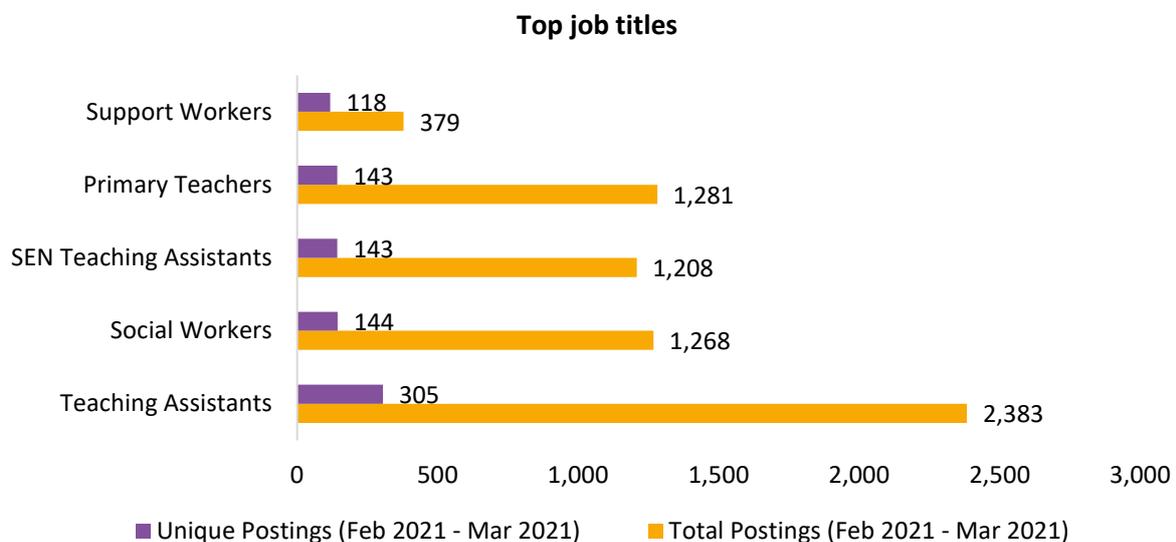
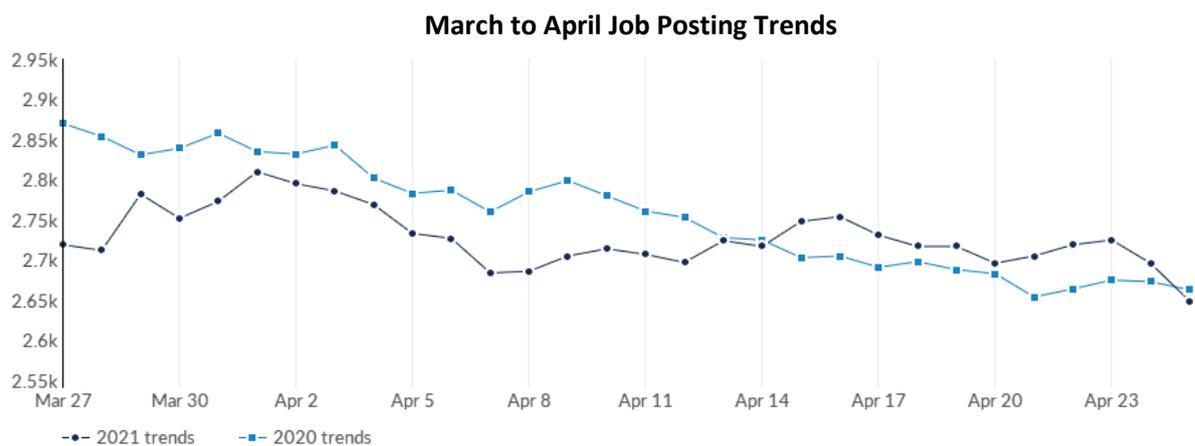
## Health and Care:

- In February to March 2021 there were 39,082 total job postings and 6,015 unique job postings in the Health sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, matching the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 32 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £16.35 an hour.
- Job postings are now 2% below levels seen this time last year as the sector had balanced itself out after the huge surge in demand in the early stages of the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for nursing occupations at 20,450 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 8-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for support workers with 2,414 total postings and a posting intensity of 6-to-1. The job title most in demand was registered nurses at 3,788 total job postings and a posting intensity of 13-to-1.
- Nursing, mental health and learning disabilities were the top hard skills requested, with nursing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 22% of all postings and in 3% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, management and enthusiasm were the 3 top common skills requested.



## Public Sector including Education:

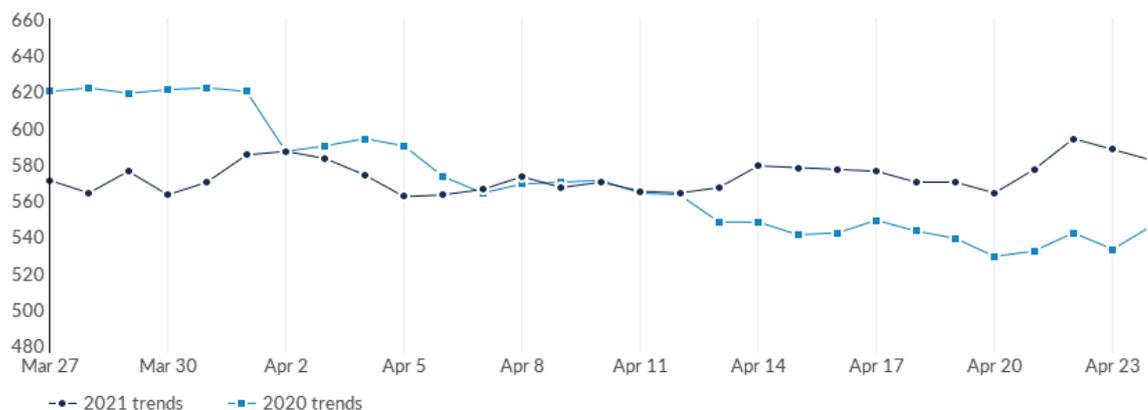
- In February to March 2021 there were 25,598 total job postings and 4,663 unique job postings in the Public Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, slightly lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 31 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £12.95 an hour.
- Job postings are now 1% below levels seen this time last year as the sector rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for primary and nursery education teaching professionals' occupations at 7,636 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 6-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for teaching assistants at 6,246 total postings and a posting intensity of 7-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for teaching assistants with 2,383 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for primary teachers at 9-to-1 and 1,281 total posts.
- Social work, autism spectrum disorders and classroom management were the top hard skills requested, with social work having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 11% of all postings but only in 2% of workforce profiles.
- Teaching, enthusiasm and communications were the 3 top common skills requested.



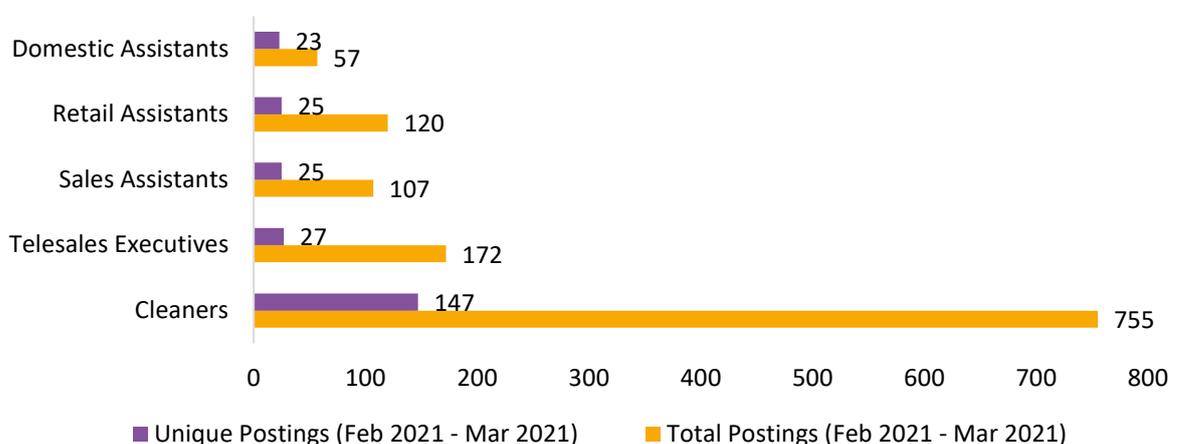
## Retail:

- In February to March 2021 there were 5,452 total job postings and 1,203 unique job postings in the Retail Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, slightly lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in slightly less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 23 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £9.28 an hour.
- Job postings are now 4% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for cleaners and domestics occupations at 1,530 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 4-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for managers and directors in retail and wholesale at 731 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for cleaners with 755 total postings and a posting intensity of 5-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for telesales executives at 6-to-1 and 172 total postings.
- Warehousing, telemarketing and mopping were the top hard skills requested, with warehousing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 8% of all postings but only in 1% of workforce profiles.
- Customer service, sales and communications were the 3 top common skills requested.

March to April Job Posting Trends

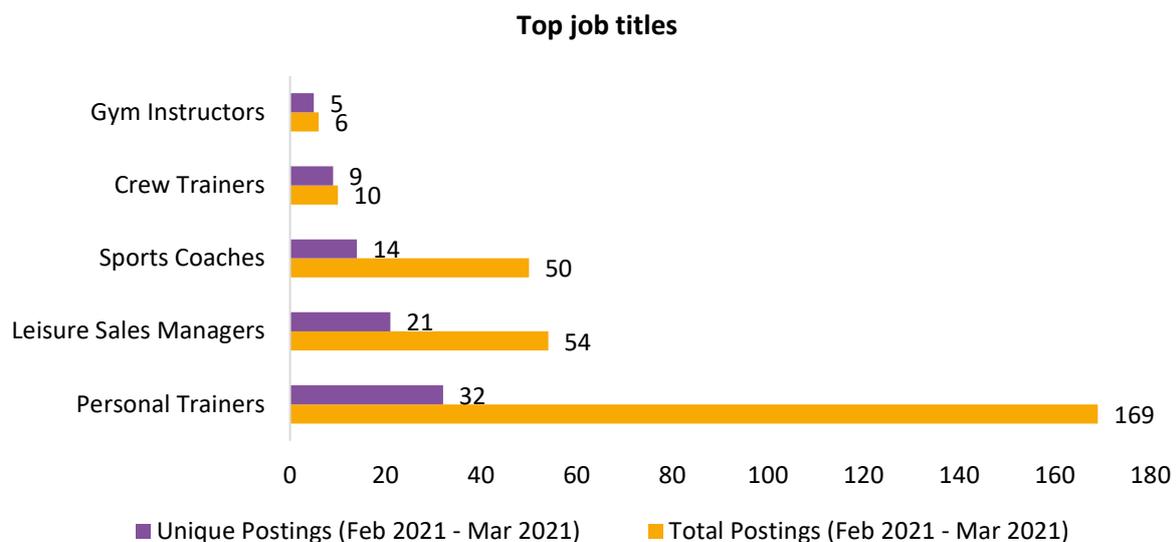
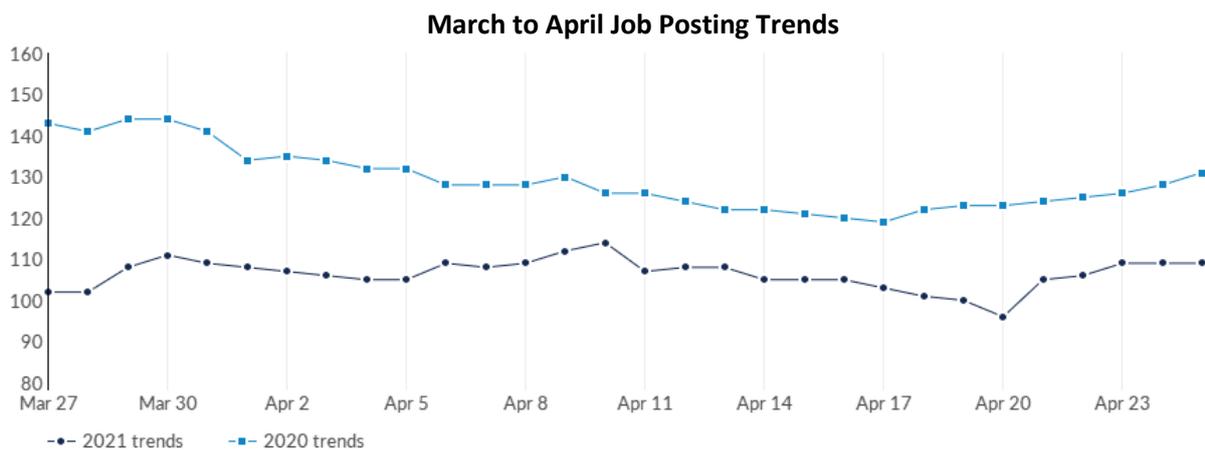


Top job titles



## Sports:

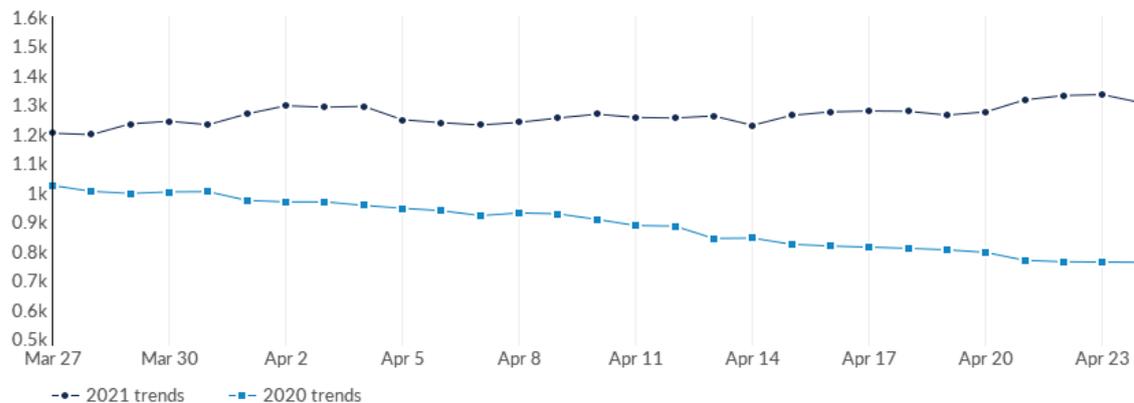
- In February to March 2021 there were 581 total job postings and 165 unique job postings in the Sports Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 4-to-1, lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 28 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £9.32 an hour.
- Job postings are now 17% below levels seen this time last year as the sector has failed to recover since the pandemic began.
- Demand via job postings was highest for fitness instructors' occupations at 346 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 4-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for personal trainers with 169 total postings and a posting intensity of 5-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for nutrition coaches at 14-to-1 and 54 total postings.
- Instructing, customer experience and circuit training were the top hard skills requested, with instructing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 8% of all postings but appearing in no workforce profiles.
- Management, enthusiasm and first aid were the 3 top common skills requested.



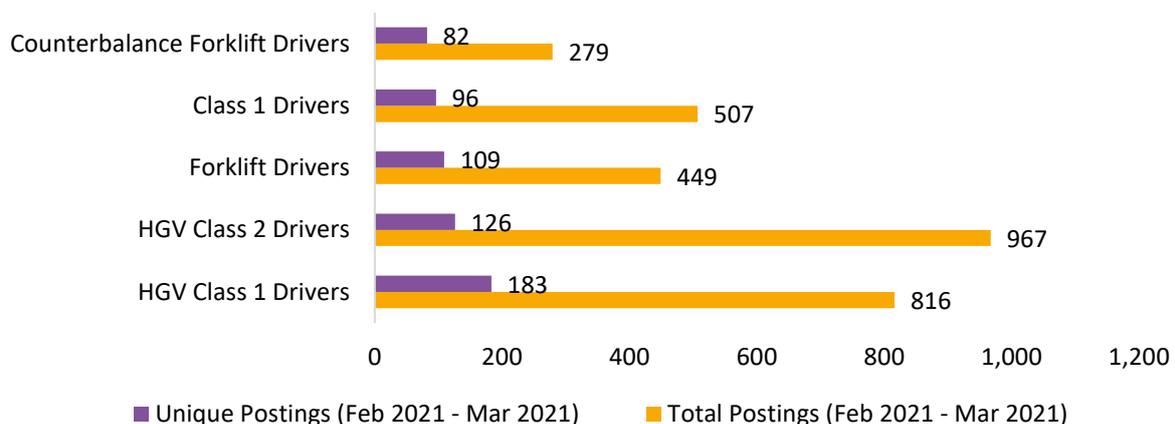
## Transport Technologies:

- In February to March 2021 there were 10,914 total job postings and 2,238 unique job postings in the Transport Technologies Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 5-to-1, slightly lower than the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in slightly less than average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 29 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £11.80 an hour.
- Job postings are now 71% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for van driving occupations at 3,725 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 5-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for vehicle and parts salespersons and advisers at 468 total postings and a posting intensity of 8-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for HGV Class 1 drivers with 816 total postings and a posting intensity of 4-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for HGV Class 2 drivers at 8-to-1 and 967 total postings.
- Warehousing, mechanics and forklift truck were the top hard skills requested, with warehousing having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 11% of all postings but only in 3% of workforce profiles.
- Customer service, communications and management were the 3 top common skills requested.

March to April Job Posting Trends



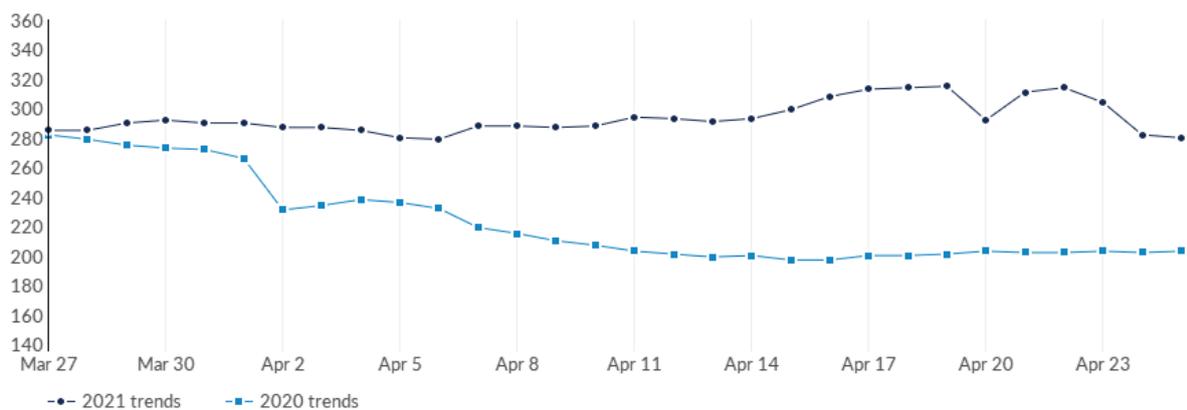
Top job titles



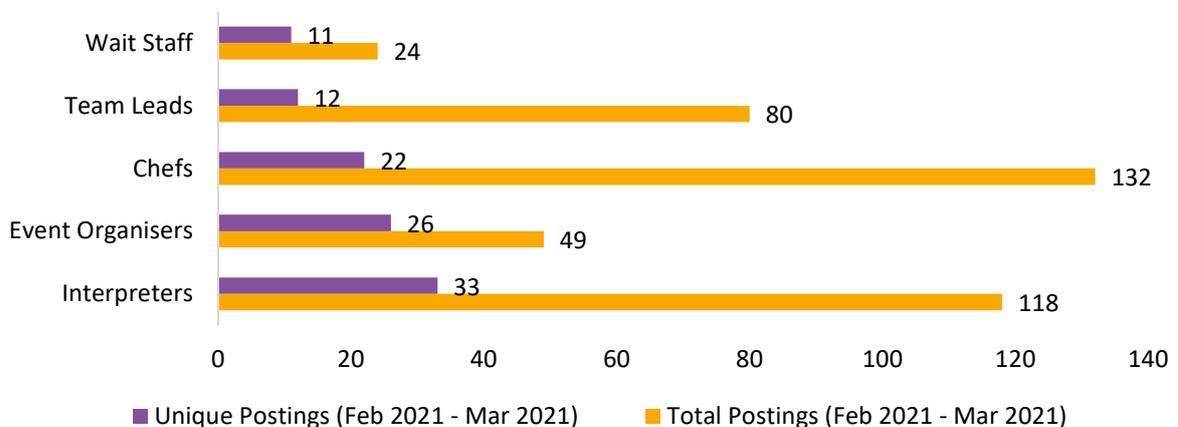
## Visitor Economy:

- In February to March 2021 there were 2,461 total job postings and 438 unique job postings in the Visitor Economy Sector across the Black Country.
- The posting intensity was 6-to-1, same as the regional posting intensity of 6-to-1 suggesting that employers are putting in average effort towards hiring for positions.
- The average posting duration was 22 days compared to a regional average of 30 days.
- The average salary was £10.55 an hour.
- Job postings are now 38% above levels seen this time last year as the sector has rebounded to levels seen before the pandemic.
- Demand via job postings was highest for chef occupations at 448 total postings in the past month and a posting intensity of 4-to-1, but the largest effort was put into hiring for catering and bar managers at 693 total postings and a posting intensity of 26-to-1.
- The job title most sought after was for interpreters with 118 total postings and a posting intensity of 4-to-1. The highest posting intensity was for team leads at 7-to-1 and 80 total postings.
- Restaurant operation, language translation and cooking were the top hard skills requested, with restaurant operation having the largest skills gap at present, occurring in 18% of all postings but only in 2% of workforce profiles.
- Communications, enthusiasm and management were the 3 top common skills requested.

**March to April Job Posting Trends**



**Top job titles**





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