

GM Labour Market Insights Pack

Autumn 2025

Collaborating

Empowering

Delivering

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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Economic Summary

- **At the Autumn 2025 budget, the OBR projected the UK's real GDP growth at 1.5% in 2025** – more than was predicted in March but tempered this with lower forecasts in the coming years.
- **Inflation remains above the Bank of England's 2% target** – in the 12 months to October 2025, it sat at 3.6%
- **The National Minimum Wage will see another increase in April 2026** to £12.71/hr - taking the effective salary for a full-time worker to just under £25,000.
- For the latest period (between July-Sept 2025) the **unemployment rate rose slightly to 5.1% in the North West of England** (compared with 5% in the UK) – around 200,000 people.
- The most recent quarterly data suggested **around 68,700 people in Greater Manchester were unemployed**.
- **Pay growth remains fairly strong** – with annual increases of 6.6% and 4.2% for the public and private sectors respectively.

Key upcoming events:

- **December 2025** – Launch of Get GM Working Plan, GM Local Growth Plan.
- **April 2026** – Start of next financial year, reforms to tax, growth and skills levy, new devolution arrangements
- **June 2026** – Release of GM Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- **Summer 2026** – Release of Milburn NEET Review.

Further reading:

GMCA – [Greater Manchester Strategy](#)

Government – [Post-16 White Paper](#) / [National Industrial Strategy](#) / [Keep Britain Working](#) / [UK Budget 2025](#)

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

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

Key Insights

General:

- GM's economy **remains healthier than the wider UK.**
- Business **confidence has remained fairly stable in GM.**
 - Services businesses are generally reporting higher levels of confidence than Manufacturing or Construction.
- **Rising costs and persistent inflation remain the top concerns** of many GM businesses.
- **Support for business planning & innovation remained the top** reported need for businesses.
- **More businesses are starting to adopt AI** – 42% in GM report they have adopted it in some form, with the highest area of use in data processing and analytics.
- **The impact of US tariffs can be seen in UK trade data in the form of reduced activity** – with both imports down approx. £1bn and exports down approx. £800m per month.

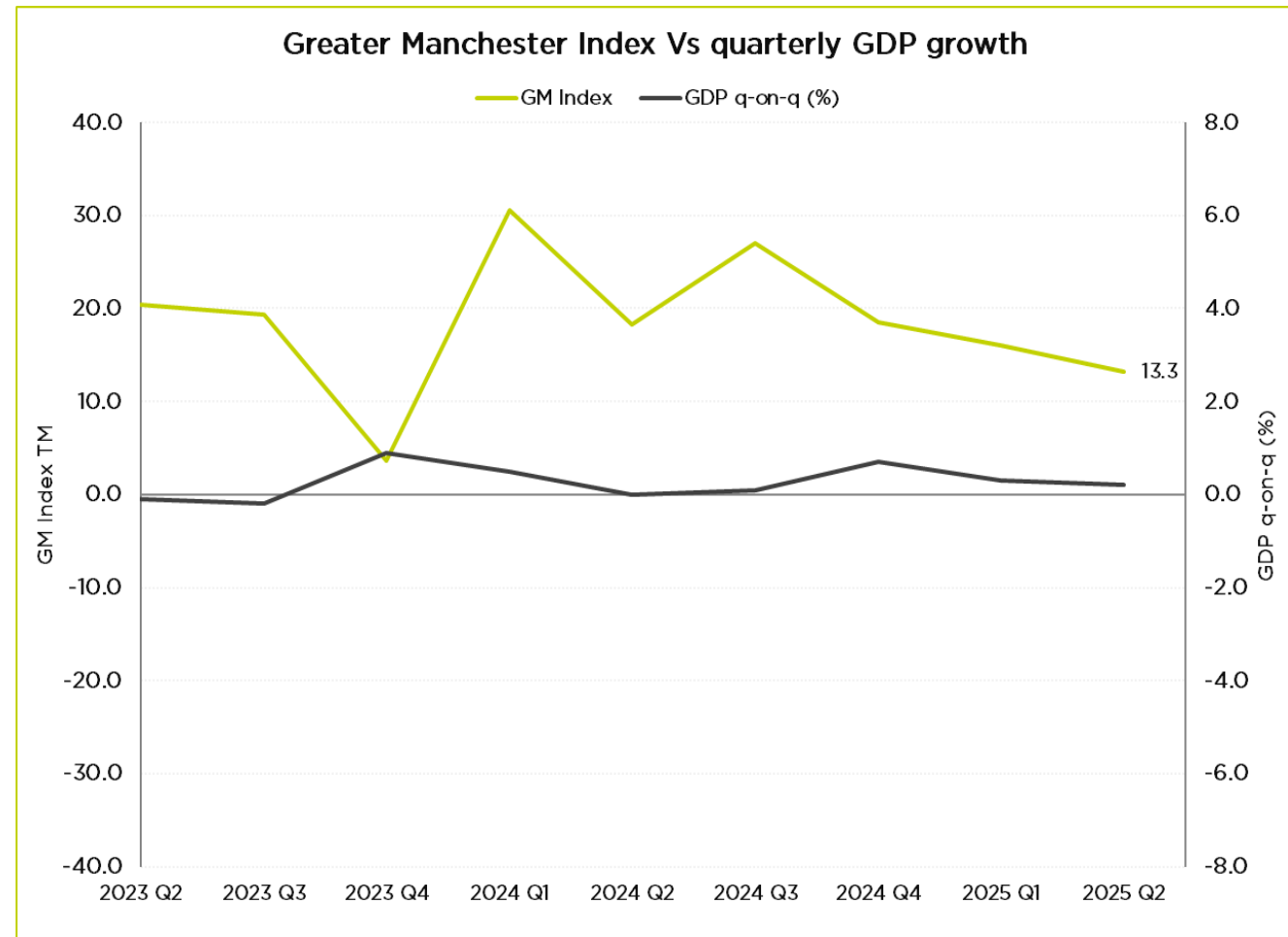
Labour Market:

- **Unemployment levels have reached a 20-month high** – as businesses report higher employment costs due to National Insurance and Minimum Wage rises in April 2025.
- **The number of economically inactive residents in GM remained fairly stable in 2025** – 440,000 working age people are “inactive”, 80,000 of which want to work but can't.
- **Both the volume and proportion of workers employed in GM's public sector hit record highs at 357,000 jobs (26.6%)** as schools, health settings, and local government recruit strongly.
- **GM's real pay growth has been higher than the national average for several years**, with latest data suggesting 2025 pay in GM was 8.9% higher than in 2008, compared to 6.0% nationally (adjusted for inflation).
- **The proportion of workers earning below the real living wage has dropped over the long term** - 14.4% vs. 23% a decade ago.

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. Q3 2025 findings:

- **GM Index in Q3 2025: 13.3** (↓ 5.3pts since Q1 2025)
- Weakening seen in July and August – many businesses were pessimistic ahead of the Autumn Budget.
- Latest PMI indices also show a slowdown (sentiment above 50 indicates expansion, below 50 contraction)
 - Services **50.8** (→ with Q1 2025)
 - Manufacturing **46.9** (↑ from Q1 2025)
 - Construction **44.6** (↑ from Q1 2025)
- Lower levels of recruitment across most sectors compared to last year – a likely impact of higher employment costs and cooling domestic demand.
- Business investment remains relatively low, possibly due to uncertainty in run up to the Autumn Budget.



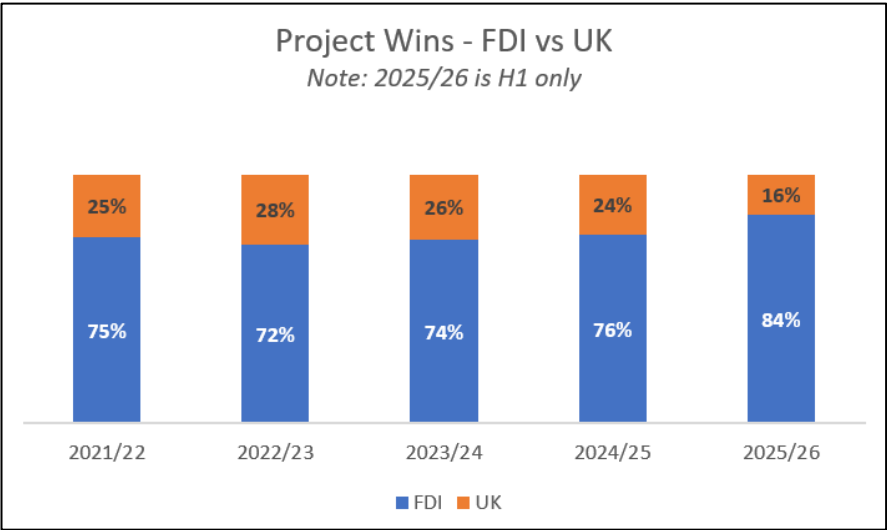
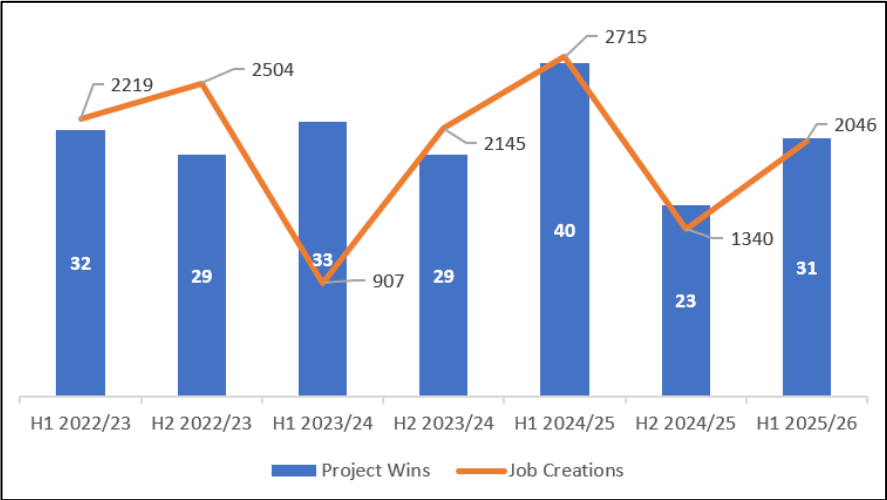
GROWTH, BUSINESS CONFIDENCE AND INVESTMENT	MAIN IMPACTS AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE	FUTURE BUSINESS CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT NEEDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GC Business Confidence Index (GC-BCI) for September 2025 stood at 7.2 out of 10, down slightly from 7.3 in August. Confidence levels are above average for Business Financial & Professional Services, Construction, DCTs and Hospitality, and lower than average in Retail, Green Tech, Life Sciences, and Engineering. ➤ Current sales. 16% (unchanged) of firms reported an increase in sales, and 10% (vs 11%) reported decreased sales in the ➤ Investment. 33% (vs 31%) of firms expect to increase capital expenditure in the year ahead. The most optimistic sectors include Engineering, Green Tech, Hospitality, Manufacturing, and Retail. ➤ Workforce Development. 30% (vs 32%) of firms plan to increase investment. Sectors more likely to report an increase are Retail, Education, and Health Care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Main impacts. 27% (vs 30%) reported rising costs as the main impact, followed by cashflow issues 12% (vs 11%), staff shortages due to recruitment difficulties 9% (vs 8%), and minor supply chain challenges 8% (unchanged). ➤ Cash reserves. 61% of firms (vs 58%) report having cash reserves to last over 6 months. Reserves were highest in Education, Construction, Engineering, Hospitality, Manufacturing, and Retail, and lowest in Green Tech and Logistics. ➤ Cashflow. 12% (vs 11%) of firms reported cashflow problems. Micro-sized firms (<10 employees) were more likely to face cashflow challenges than larger SMEs (50–249+ FTEs), with higher risk reported in DCTs, Manufacturing, and Hospitality. 2% (unchanged) of firms reported late payments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The main challenges for businesses in the near term are accessing new domestic sales, 48% (vs 51%). This challenge is more acute in DCT, BFPS, Healthcare, Construction and Green Tech. The next most common challenges are developing new products & services 33% (vs 31%), business model change 32% (vs 31%), finances 27% (vs 25%). ➤ International trade. 22% of firms (unchanged) export goods/services, with 17% (vs 16%) expanding into new markets, a trend particularly notable in the DCTs, Engineering, Manufacturing, Green Tech, and Life Sciences. 12% (vs 11%) of firms engaged in overseas trade are looking to expand in their current markets. ➤ Future support. The main areas where firms seek future support are business planning 36% (unchanged), sales & marketing 31% (vs 32%), innovation 33% (vs 32%), workforce development 30% (vs 29%) and financial advice 24% (vs 21%).
RECRUITMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ISSUES	RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION	SOCIAL VALUE AND GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruitment: 26% (vs 28%) of firms are currently recruiting new staff. Recruitment rates (% recruiting) are higher amongst SMEs (50 to 250+ employees). ➤ Workforce skill gaps. 41% (vs 44%) reported that their existing workforce skills are fully aligned with their business plan objectives. 46% (vs 43%) indicated that skills are only partially at the required level, and 2% (unchanged) stated that their workforce skills are not at the right level (11% said 'don't know'). ➤ The main technical skill gaps: Specialist technical skills 29% (vs 30%), advanced IT skills 16% (vs 14%), solving complex problems 8% (vs 10%), and knowledge of specific products/services 8% (vs 9%). ➤ The main people and practical / personal skill gaps: Sales and selling 23% (unchanged), motivating staff 14% (vs 13%), customer handling skills 11% (unchanged), and time management 9% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Innovation activities in last year. 35% (vs 33%) have invested in new / significantly improved services, 29% (vs 27%) in R&D, 21% (vs 20%) new business practices, 14% (vs 19%) introduced new / significantly improved goods, and 12% (vs 11%) have invested in improved production methods. ➤ Digital innovation. 10% (unchanged) have invested in the acquisition of digital products, and 5% (unchanged) made investments in the acquisition of new machinery especially, in the Manufacturing and Engineering sectors. ➤ AI Adoption: 43% (vs 44%) have adopted AI into business. Firms were most likely to have implemented AI in data processing and analytics, sales and marketing, replacing customer support, and automating routine processes. 	<p>Organisations were asked if they had/or intended to have the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Paying employees the Real Living Wage. 51% of firms (vs 55%) paid the RLW, while 30% (vs 24%) indicated they are likely to implement it in the future. ➤ Investing in leadership. 45% (vs 44%) said that they are investing in leadership, while 39% (vs 37%) indicated they are likely to do so in future. ➤ Promoting healthy work practices. 44% (unchanged) said this currently applies, while 30% (vs 28%) indicated they are likely to do so in future. ➤ Looking to increase the diversity of the workforce. 39% (unchanged) of firms said this currently applies, 37% (vs 34%) said likely to include this in the future.

Inward Investment Landscape

The first half of 2025/26 has seen the successful closure of 31 inward investment projects, with 2,046 corresponding job creations.

Inward investment projects were recorded across all of MIDAS’ broad focus sectors, though the majority of projects were in advanced manufacturing and life sciences. In particular, life sciences service providers formed the leading subsector for projects, while the leading subsector for job creations was aerospace.

In H1 2025/26, 61% of investment projects have been from new investors with no prior presence in Greater Manchester. This is a higher proportion than has typically been seen over the last 5 years (average 48%). 26% of investors were new to Greater Manchester and the UK, i.e. they selected Greater Manchester as their UK entry point. This is a significantly higher proportion than has typically been seen over the last 5 years (average 16%). 84% of investment projects so far this year have been from foreign owned companies – a higher proportion than usual (average 76%). The largest foreign source markets were United States, India, Spain and Ireland.



Inward Investment roles created YTD

Role	%
Tech/ Digital	22%
Engineering	15%
Other	13%
Admin/ Customer Services	13%
Manufacturing/ Construction	11%
Scientific/ Research/ Product Development	9%
Internal Supply Chain/ Logistics	6%
Executive Leadership	5%
Business Development/ Marketing	3%
Creative/ Media	2%
Strategy/ Policy	1%
Professional Services (e.g. Lawyers, Bankers, Consultants)	1%
Internal Finance/ Accounting	0%

Breakdown of job creation by role, based on client feedback, April 2025 – October 2025.

- **The shape of GM’s workforce continues to change over 2025.** Estimates from the Annual Population Survey reveal where jobs are being created:
 - Some sectors are losing workers as automation and market trends impact them – Manufacturing (down 4,000 on last year), Utilities (down 2,000).
 - Other sectors continue to grow strongly due to private and public investment – Construction (up 6,000), Banking, Finance, and Insurance (up 6,000), and Public Admin, Education & Health (up 57,000).
- Comparing GM with other regions:
 - GM has a **higher concentration of Financial, Business, and Professional Services** workers – 19%, compared with Liverpool (17%), West Midlands (15%), but lagging far behind London (27%).
 - GM has a **lower concentration of Manufacturing workers** – around 6.6%, compared with stronger areas like West Yorkshire (9%), or West Midlands (10%)
- **Public Services employ a growing proportion of workers in GM at around 1 in 3 (35.3%),** across health, education, emergency services, and local government. This is roughly comparable with other regions, except London at only 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.
- **The rate of self-employment has turned a corner and started growing again – though 34,000 fewer people are self-employed since the pandemic.**
- GM’s **Hospitality and Retail sectors shows some signs of recovery, adding 2,000 jobs in the past year** – however there are around 50,000 fewer workers than 2019.

GM Workforce Overview

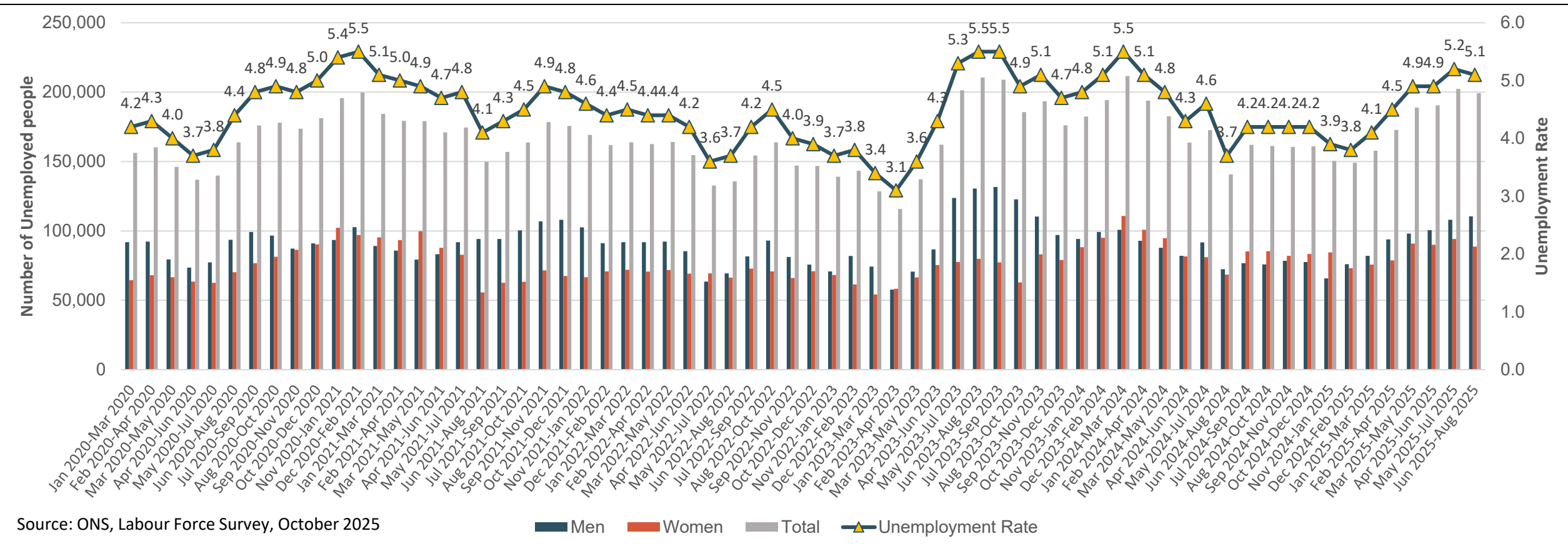
Industry (SIC)	Approx. Number of Jobs	Proportion (%) of jobs
A: Agriculture & fishing	2,300	0.2%
B,D,E: Energy & water	13,000	1.0%
C: Manufacturing	88,600	6.6%
F: Construction	81,500	6.0%
G-I: Wholesale, retail, hotels & restaurants	211,500	15.7%
H-J: Transport, Digital & Communication	138,900	10.3%
K-N: Banking, finance & insurance etc.	251,700	18.7%
O-Q: Public admin, education & health	475,800	35.3%
R-U: Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	78,700	5.8%
Total	1,349,600	100.0%

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS, Jun 2025

Further detail: [GMCA Labour Market and Skills Dashboard](#)

Unemployment

Unemployment, number and rate (16+), North West (NW), Jan-Mar 2020 – Jun-Aug 2025



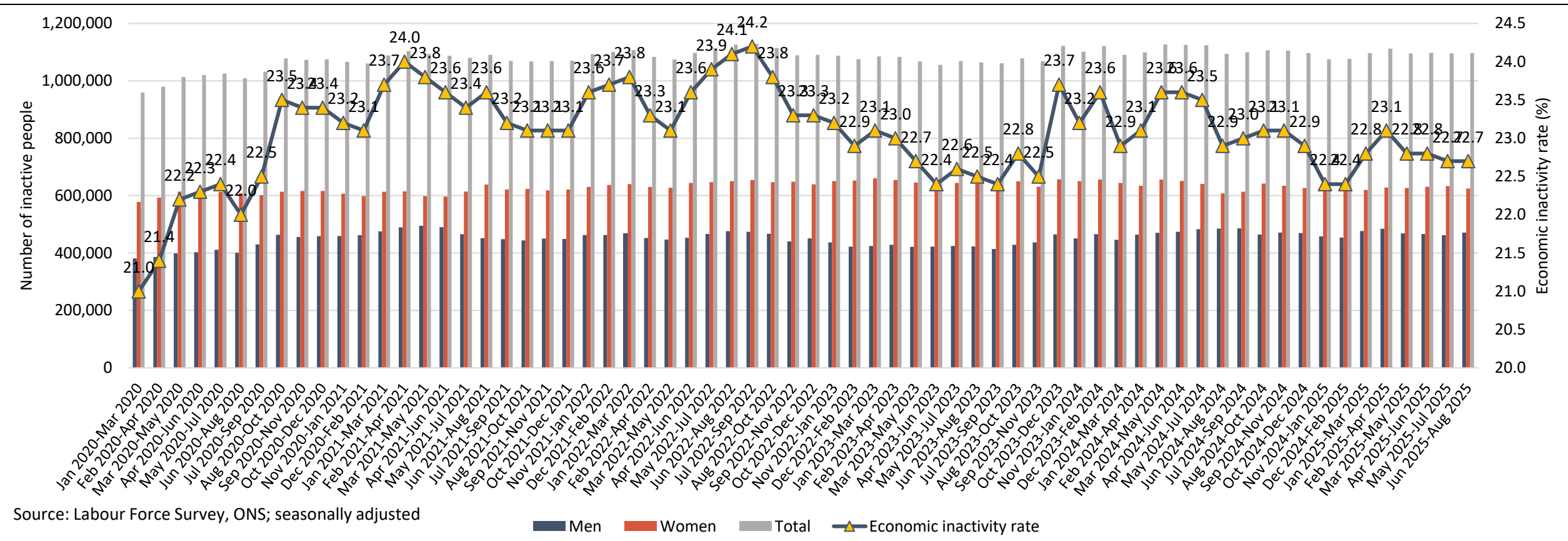
Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey, October 2025

For the latest period (between Jun – Aug 2025) the unemployment rate fell slightly to around 5.1% in the North West of England (compared with 4.8% in the UK) – representing approx. 200,000 people. However, the unemployment rate has been increasing in recent months, falling from a low of 3.8% at the beginning of 2025. The most recent quarterly data suggested around 68,700 people in Greater Manchester were unemployed.

Revised data from the Labour Force Survey suggests that in the North West, unemployment for men has generally dropped from recent peaks in mid-2023 and early 2024 (from roughly 130,000 to around 110,000). In GM, approximately 43,700 men and 25,000 women were unemployed.

Economic Inactivity

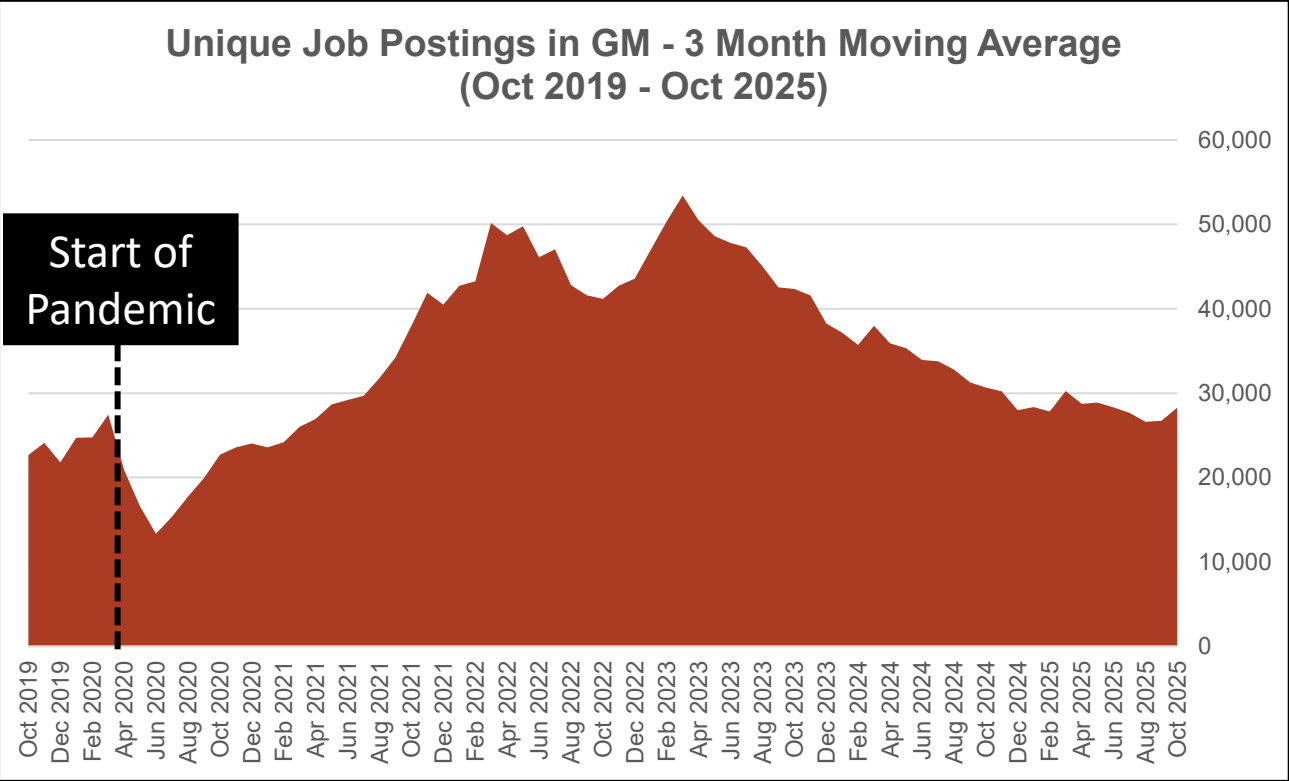
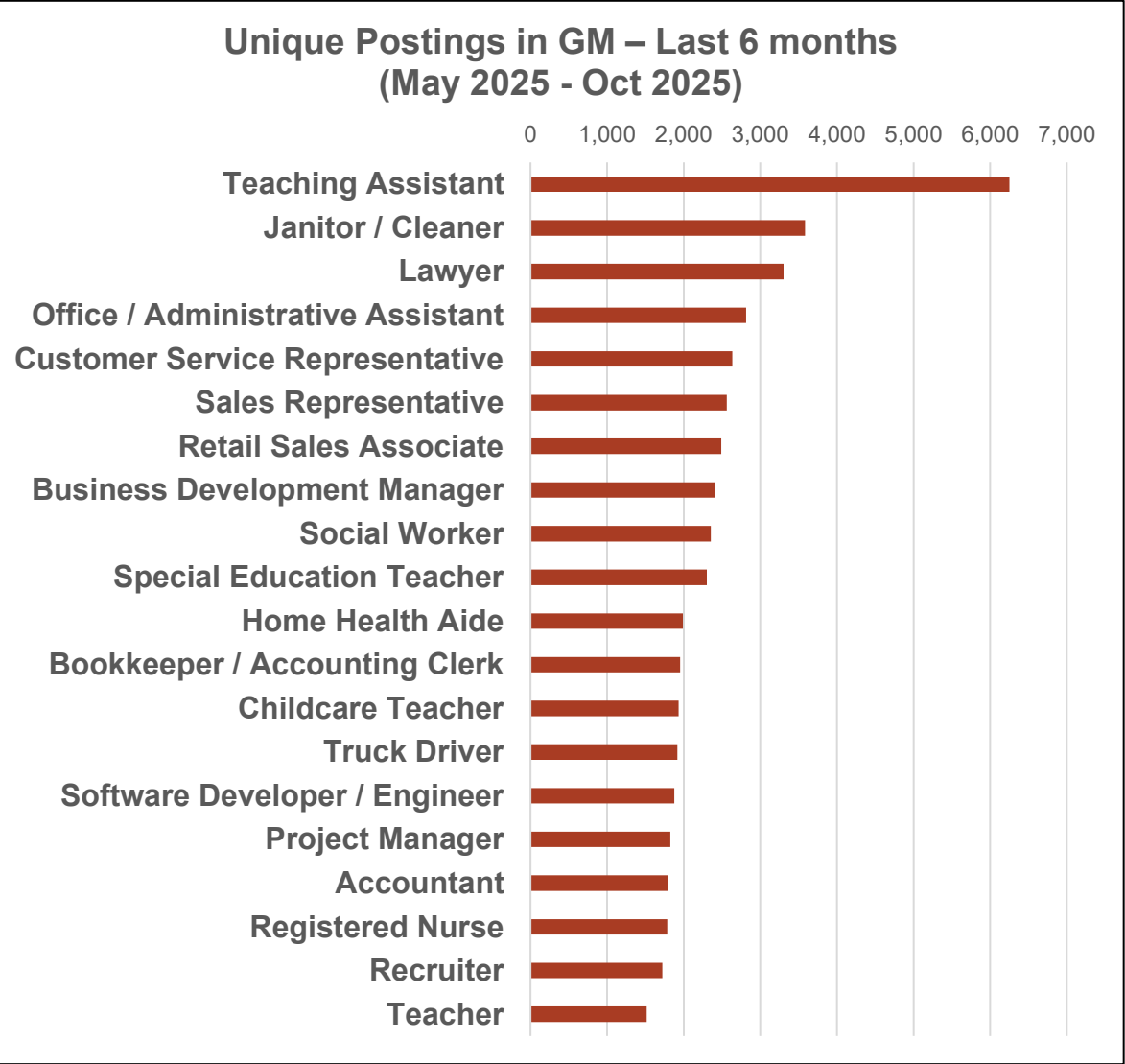
Economic inactivity number and rate (16-64), North West (NW), Jan-Mar 2020 – Jun-Aug 2025



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 was unchanged in the latest period (Jun-Aug 2025) at 22.7% - representing around 1.1m of the 4.8m aged between 16 – 64. Around 444,800 of GM’s 16-64 population are economically inactive – 79,600 of which want a job. There are around 137,000 more economically inactive people in the North West than before the pandemic – with around 90,000 more men and 47,000 women.

GM Vacancy Market



- GM’s job market remains relatively healthy – with 168,000 postings in the last 6 months, across 13,000 employers.
- Levels of job postings have levelled off after a decline in demand throughout 2023 – 2024, sitting around pre-pandemic levels.
- Teaching Assistant remains the top most posted role – with over 6,000 unique vacancies advertised.

Overview

Development in GM continues to outstrip the national picture – since 2010, Construction output has grown by 2.6% per year, compared with 1.8% for the UK.

- Since the pandemic, this has accelerated, with the sector recording 9% average growth since 2020. Planning applications in GM are up around 50% in the past decade.
- Recent work on the Construction Pipeline Analysis conducted by the Chamber of Commerce projected a verified pipeline of around £36bn in the next 4 years.

Labour demand for the sheer scale of development in GM is far more than the existing workforce can manage – demand is expected to peak in 2026 at around 200,000 workers, double the amount that work in the sector in GM. This is likely to result in workers from across the North West travelling to GM to work on these projects.

Greater Manchester's Integrated Investment Pipeline continues to take shape throughout 2025, with many housing, energy, and infrastructure projects being added to a [map of the city region](#) to show where development will be happening.

Further detail has been released following the announcement in March of the £600m Construction Skills Package. It will include a range of interventions, including the ramp up of foundation apprenticeships, incentive grants for employers, and funding for FE Colleges.

Along with the Local Authorities and stakeholders like GMCC, Colleges, and GC, GMCA have led the development of a Construction Workforce Plan, to ensure the sector is able to respond to the scale of demand in GM and direct the skills package funding in the most effective way. It focuses on improving provision, social value, data, workforce health, and entry routes into the sector.

Continued reform to apprenticeships has been treated with some cautious optimism among employers in the sector. Foundation apprenticeships due to launch in 2026 may provide shorter routes for learners to become qualified. Plans are underway in several GM boroughs to test the Foundation Apprenticeship model.

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 half of the jobs posted in the last 6 months were in Manchester.

Main roles in GM (May 2025 – Oct 2025)

- Estimator / Quantity Surveyor (1,104) ←
- Construction Site Manager (991) ←
- Civil Engineer (824) ↑
- Surveyor (709) ↓
- Carpenter / Joiner (695) ↑

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.

Professional roles like civil engineering, architecture, project management, and surveying all usually require higher level qualifications – L4/5 or degree equivalent.

In-demand skills include:

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

Overview

After the launch of the [Infrastructure Strategy](#) in June, Ministers came to Rochdale to announce the details of the **£2.5bn Greater Manchester will receive from the Transport for City Regions scheme until 2030, including**

- A long-awaited extension of the Metrolink to Stockport,
- More Metrolink stops in Oldham and Bury around new housing sites,
- New transport interchanges in Leigh, Bury, and central Manchester.

A new line linking Liverpool and Manchester, previously announced as a part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail project, **faced some delays, despite £15bn committed from the Treasury for transport infrastructure in the North.**

Greater Manchester's Bee Network continues to set the bar for devolved transport.

- Around a fifth of GM's 1,600 buses are now zero-emission, with more due to roll out towards the end of 2025.
- Performance metrics for buses continue to improve – with average punctuality, capacity, and patronage all rising in 2025.

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.

Manchester Airport continues to grow strongly both as the third largest airport in the UK, but also as a key employment site in the city region. Passenger numbers were up around 4% from April – September 2025 compared with a year earlier, with 18.4m travelling through the site.

A key part of the rail supply chain – **Lucchini Unipart Rail (LUR) opened a major new facility in Manchester in October, as part of a £7.5m investment.** The Wheelset Repair Facility in Trafford Park will support the expansion of their existing site, bringing engineering and manufacturing jobs.

In-demand Occupations

Roles are concentrated in Manchester city centre (particularly in rail) – around a third of the total adverts. Jobs are also seen in transport hub areas like Stockport, Bolton, and Wigan advertising a relatively high number of vacancies.

Main roles in GM (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Automotive Service Technician / Mechanic (658) ←
- Heavy Equipment Mechanic (374) ←
- Van / Taxi / Shuttle Driver (328) ←
- Transport Manager (210) ↑
- Customer Service Representative (168) ↓

Skills Requirements

Customer-facing roles are often difficult to recruit to and see high levels of turnover – not many understand the reality of the role. These roles take careful customer service and organisational skills.

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.

In-demand skills include:

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

Overview

The UK saw the impact of the US tariffs in the form of lower export and imports. By Autumn, imports were down approx. £1bn and exports were down approx. £800m per month. A cyber-attack on JaguarLandRover is thought to have contributed to these decreased exports a significant amount due to lower production rates.

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.

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.

The role of air freight is increasing as the airport expands – freight traffic was up nearly 9% in the 12 months to October 2025, compared with 5% growth of passengers. Additional warehousing and freight facilities are being constructed around the airport to support, in addition to the expansion of passenger terminals.

Increases to minimum wage are supporting a lot of workers in the sector – particularly drivers and warehousing staff. Advertised salaries are up 27% over the past 5 years (vs. 15% for the wider GM economy).

- Employers report that they are creating more higher-paid roles as well, particularly around digital platforms and automation in the sector.

Although part of the foundation “everyday” economy, logistics businesses are adopting new technology. **Logistics UK, the sector body, recently published a Logistics Innovation Opportunities Map, which highlights how automation and process improvement are creating savings and growth within the sector.**

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. Supermarkets are recruiting a lot delivery drivers – Tesco are the largest single business recruiting drivers.

Main roles in GM (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- HGV Truck Driver (1,916) ↑
- Labourer / Warehouse Worker (1,104) ↑
- Sales Delivery Driver (1,098) ↑
- Forklift / Pallet Jack Operator (708) ↑
- Light Truck Delivery Driver (642) ↑

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.

Employers report a small but increasing need for workers who can work on and operate vehicles which are alternatively fuelled – low-emission and electric vehicles.

In-demand skills include:

- Digital Warehousing / Reverse Logistics.
- Transport planning / Fleet Management.
- Warehousing & Supply Chain management
- Software Skills
- Forklift truck operation
- Mechanics

Overview

GMCA is released its [Creative Industries Sector Plan](#) setting out priorities, opportunities, and how it will drive targeted investment and activity so GM can maximise the economic potential of our thriving creative ecosystem.

- It highlights the strength of GM's grassroots organisations in developing creative talent.
- Higher and Further Education also play a key roles – with the School of Digital Arts at MMU, The Royal Northern College of Music, and ADA all providing excellent provision for developing people into creatives.
- Increasingly important are the venues which make GM competitive in the sector – Coop Live, the Lowry and the AO Arena along with various high-capacity football stadiums.

Released as part of the Industrial Strategy, the UK Creative Industries Sector Plan aims to develop the sector, doubling the investment in the sector to £35bn by 2035. It has a strong emphasis on clusters like Greater Manchester.

- **As part of the Industrial Strategy development, Greater Manchester will receive a boost of £25m to support the growth of the Creative Industries.**
- From April 2026, the funding will be shaped by the Creative Sector Development Plan, and will support creative firms to grow, innovate, and train up the next generation.

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.

September saw the [announcement of the winners](#) of funding through the Collaborate Fund – a £300,000 boost for innovation and inclusion in GM's cultural sector. The projects should support education and skills development alongside this.

One issue still facing the sector is the prevalence of freelancing for many creatives. Around 30% of the workforce operate on a freelance basis – far higher than most other sectors. This effects the stability and opportunity for work – around two-thirds of these have reported a decline in work since the pandemic.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Coach (682) ↑
- Graphic Designer (262) ↑
- Interpreter / Translator (186) ↓
- Writer (121) ↓
- Media Director (118) ↑

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

Overview

Retail is still seeing drops in footfall as consumer behaviour changes. Total footfall in the UK was down 0.7% year on year in October – the sixth monthly decline in a row. This is seen differently in different parts of GM – with many preferring local town centres over retail parks and the city centre for shopping.

Despite this, ONS data showed that retail sales remain fairly healthy in Autumn 2025 – total volumes are hitting their highest points since 2022, driven by growth in clothing, household goods, and electronics sales (often from “non-store” online outlets).

The occupancy rate for hotels in Greater Manchester in September was 81% - slightly above the rate of 80% in the city centre. These were slightly below the same period in 2024 (83% and 82% respectively).

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.

Therme Manchester began construction in September – a leisure and wellbeing facility at TraffordCity which, when completed, will be the largest in the UK. When operational, it should create 650 direct jobs on the site.

Sector bodies estimate that Hospitality is one of the worst hit sectors due to increases in employment costs at the start of the financial year as NMW and NICs both increased – with UKHospitality estimating that around half of the job losses have been from hospitality employers as they make cost-cutting measures.

The economic impact of the Oasis reunion tour was noticeable in consumer spending activity. In the week of the Manchester concerts, spending on accommodation was up 242% and spending on bars and nightlife was up 126% - a boost for the whole of GM.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Janitor / Cleaner (3,582) ↑
- Retail Sales Associate (1,635) ↑
- Retail Manager (1,498) ↑
- Sales Representative (1,211) ←
- Bartender (967) ←

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 hospitality often have unsociable shift patterns, physically demanding duties, and long-hours, but there are many opportunities for those who stay and develop a career in the sector. Skilled bar staff and chefs can often find many roles.

In-demand skills include:

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

Overview

September saw the announcement of the Defence Industrial Strategy – reaffirming the government’s ambition to use defence spending to drive growth. It comes with £182m of workforce spending – much of which will go towards the foundation of Defence Technical Excellence Colleges across the UK.

In Rochdale, **work began on the Sustainable Materials and Manufacturing Centre (SMMC)** – a facility dedicated to innovation, job creation and growth across one of GM’s frontier sectors. It will sit in the heart of Atom Valley and support businesses to start up and scale up, featuring lab space, workshops, design studios, training spaces, and office space.

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).
- **[MIX Manchester](#) – the Manufacturing Innovation Exchange** - progressed another step towards full development throughout 2025, 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.

[Analysis by sector body MakeUK](#) suggested:

- **46,000 vacancies in the sector are unfilled**, which costs the sector £4bn in lost output each year, despite these largely being paid above average wages.
- 70% of businesses in the sector said they were exploring automation and robotics as a solution to this and to tackle wider cost pressures. However, this is largely concentrated in large and medium size manufacturers – smaller firms find it difficult to afford these improvements.

Recognising the strength of engineering talent in the city region and wider North West, Sizewell C opened an office in Manchester – the project has already delivered £168m of value to supply chain partners in the North of England.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Manufacturing Machine Operator (1,080) ←
- Mechanical Engineer (838) ↑
- Electrical Engineer (777) ←
- Quality Inspector (559) ↑
- Engineering Manager (494) ↑

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

Overview

Consumer trends, changes to law and regulation, and technology adoption continue to reshape the FPBS sector. More roles in the sector are becoming purely tech roles – cyber security, developers, and AI specialists are increasingly popular.

Research by Lloyds bank found that half of UK financial institutions planned to increase their investment in AI in the next year, and 60% have found improved productivity as a result of existing changes they've made.

The Financial Services sector in GM continues to expand as it consolidates its position the centre of the sector outside London:

- In November, the Manchester Building Society opened their first branch in the city centre, bucking the trend of FS firms reducing their physical presence on the high street.
- Zopa bank have unveiled plans for a 500-strong office in Manchester.

Financial Services and Professional & Business Services were listed as separate sectors of focus in the plans for the UK's Industrial Strategy. Each has received its own sector plan – highlighting important but distinct roles in driving economic growth. 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 – overall job postings are roughly the same as pre-pandemic, though still well below their peak demand seen in 2022-23. There has been a larger drop in entry level roles like bookkeeping. However, in Greater Manchester, legal roles are the 2nd most advertised type of role behind Teaching Assistants.

Firms in various parts of Financial, Business and Professional Services are gearing up to changes to the Apprenticeship levy, which will stop employers using their levy to fund higher level 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.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Lawyer (3,303) ↓
- Bookkeeper / Accounting Clerk (2,007) ←
- Accountant (1,788) ↑
- Project Manager (1,777) ↑
- Financial Manager (1,368) ↑

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

Overview

In June, **UK Government released the Digital and Tech Sector Strategy as part of the Industrial Strategy**. It aims to develop the sector along 6 areas – R&D, financing, skills and workforce, infrastructure, regulation, and global engagement.

The skills and workforce element of this **aims to address a low level of digital skills** in many workers, alongside the wider need for advanced skills in the growing parts of the digital sector itself.

“AI Growth Zones” will be developed across the UK – freeing up planning and developing clean energy sources for the AI processing power needed to develop advanced models. A flagship project has been announced in North Wales.

After a surge in demand over the course of the pandemic, demand in the sector has dropped to a more stable level. **Job adverts in digital roles peaked in May 2022 at just over 7,500 and have since dropped back in October 2025 to 1,900.** 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”*.

- The **race for AI development talent continues** however – the number of specific roles advertised has doubled in the past year.

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

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Software Developer / Engineer (1,879) ↓
- Computer Support Specialist (1,034) ←
- Computer Systems Engineer (815) ←
- Cyber Engineer (597) ↑
- Mobile Apps Developer (553) ←

Skills Requirements

Early career roles in the sector mostly require a high level of skills – in the shift to AI-powered software development, there are fewer entry level positions available, so they have become more competitive.

Development roles usually require programming languages (SQL, Javascript, Python, C++) or familiarity with large suites of digital cloud infrastructure (Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services). Progression within the sector is often linked to improved technical skills, project management, and leadership opportunities.

In-demand skills include:

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

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.**

The 10-year plan announced this year for the NHS focused on shifts from Hospital to community care; from analogue to digital and from treatment to prevention.

- **However staffing challenges are stark. Around 18,000 NHS staff roles are being cut in England as part of a major reorganisation.** A £1bn Treasury deal will allow the NHS to overspend this year to cover redundancy pay-offs. Within GM, around 400 jobs are expected to be cut from the ICB by the end of this financial year.

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust in GM was ranked 3rd in the country in a league table of the performance of NHS trusts across 7 different metrics. The Christie is the largest radiotherapy provider in the NHS and leads research on nuclear medicine in the UK.

GM continues to expand in Health Innovation – a new round of the Manchester Health Series meetings kicked off in Autumn at CityLabs 1.0, which tries to foster collaboration between innovators, small businesses and the healthcare system.

Awareness of T levels has risen across the sector with primary care, hospital trusts, social care and voluntary sector organisations all now hosting placements. There are clinical and non-clinical (business, finance, estates and facilities, digital) placements within the sector offering younger people broader learning opportunities and exposure to more of the 350+ different job roles within HSC.

A new Skills for Care report suggests the adult social care workforce is 75,000 within GM and 3,300 current vacancies (a reduction of 24% from the previous year). 79% of the workforce is female with an average age in the workforce of 43.7 years old. Turnover has reduced but remains high at 20.7 %.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Family / School / General Social Worker (2,352) ←
- Home Care Assistant (1,989) ↓
- Registered General Nurse (1,786) ↓
- Carer (1,432) ↑
- Doctor (1,293) ←

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. This reflects the

In-demand skills include:

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

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.

In October, the [5 Civic Universities of Greater Manchester](#) released a refreshed set of priorities for their role in the city region. It outlines their contributions to the Opportunity, Culture, Environment, and Wellbeing of GM.

- The **impact of the international student levy** may be significant in places like GM – many UK universities rely on international student recruitment to increase revenue as fees for domestic students are frozen or have barely risen since introduction.

Over the past 6 years, **some areas of the sector are seeing much higher levels of demand than others as the demands from the sector changes**. Since October 2019, the number of job adverts for Computing Teachers is 16 times higher, the number of Early Years Teachers is roughly double, but demand for Drama and Art Teachers has nearly halved.

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

Government has delayed the reform of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision until 2026 – after planning to publish this autumn. It is weighing the rapid rise in demand for SEND provision with fiscal pressures on national and local government, and a system which the National Audit Office called “broken”.

The first of the newly launched Technical Excellence Colleges were announced in August. Focusing on Construction, Wigan and Leigh College was designated at the North West TEC and will drive up standards in further education and apprenticeship provision in the region.

In-demand Occupations

Staff with industry skills and experience to be able to teach higher level qualifications are in very high demand in most education settings. Retention of staff is difficult – and worsening, with only 60% expecting to remain in the profession for the next 3 years.

Main roles in GM (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Teaching Assistant (6,253) ↑
- Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher (2,301) ↑
- Early Years Teacher (1,932) ↑
- Tutor / Teacher (1,517) ↑
- Primary School Teacher (1,279) ↑

Skills Requirements

Education recruitment is highly seasonal – since the last seasonal report (Nov 24 – Apr 25), Teaching Assistant posts are 3 times as common and SEND teaching posts have doubled as schools and education recruit additional posts for the year. Generally, the levels of demand are comparable to 2024.

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

Overview

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service has 41 fire stations, 52 fire engines, and the service employs thousands of personnel, of which 1,200 are frontline firefighters.

- A new [Fire Plan for 2025 – 2029](#) was launched in May – highlighting prevention, response times, developing firefighters with improved training provision, and pushing for financial efficiencies to provide better value for money.

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.

- The improvement journey for GMP continues – with a review of spend underway to address budget pressures, improvements in response times, and new systems for managing digital evidence and paperwork making the force more efficient.

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

- It is served by around 7,000 staff including paramedics, MERIT Doctors, and dispatchers, and is supported by 1,200 volunteers like community first responders.

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 experience higher levels of sickness absence than many sectors and staff are more likely to be physically assaulted or experience verbal abuse when working.

Recruitment into the sector varies – demand is largely driven by public investment and regulation. Job postings data over the last 6 years shows a focus on fire safety – with 5 times more Fire Safety Specialists and 3 times more Fire Inspector roles than in 2019 – driven by the Building Safety Regulator and changes brought in after the Grenfell disaster.

AI, data analytics, and the increased quality of video surveillance are all growing trends in the sector. This means the type of experts needed to work on criminal cases and in forensics has changed significantly in the past decade.

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 (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Security Officer (439) ↓
- Safety Specialist / Coordinator (179) ↑
- Dispatcher (89) ↑
- Police Officer (69) ←
- Forensic Technician (64) ↓

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 and fraud 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

Overview

The Clean Energy Sector Plan was released as part of the Industrial Strategy, underlining a commitment to reaching Net Zero. It focuses on energy security to reduce the amount of energy the UK buys and aims to double the amount of public and private investment going into the sector by 2035.

DESNZ released its [Clean Energy Jobs Plan](#) in October. It included a commitment to establishing five Clean Energy Technical Excellence Colleges, delivering £100m in an Engineering Skills Package and providing £2.5m for Regional Skills Pilots, which in the North West will be led by Cheshire and Warrington.

Government activity to support the workforce in the sector has continued to accelerate:

- In September, the winners of the [Warm Homes Skills Programme](#) were announced, with 9,000 retrofit courses being subsidised.
- In October, research was published on the motivations and barriers for students in electricity network jobs.
- In November, a new expert group was founded around future water industry jobs.

October saw the release of GM's Hydrogen Strategy – as Bosch opened its Hydrogen operations in the UK with the establishing of an HQ in Greater Manchester. With Government targeting 10GW of capacity by 2030, the industry is still relatively small but fast-growing.

The first half of 2025 saw a record number of small-scale renewables installation across the UK – with solar panels and heat pump installations both growing well, but battery storage stealing the spotlight with a 130% increase year-on-year. Many of these interventions benefit from government subsidy.

GM's Business Growth Hub has a Green Economy arm, which in 2024-25 supported nearly 500 businesses across the city region with consultancy and growth advice, workforce development and decarbonisation efforts.

In-demand Occupations

Roles in the Green Economy well paid in comparison to the broader labour market in GM – job postings have around £40,000 median salary.

Main roles in GM (May 2025 – Oct 2025):

- Sustainability Specialist (93) ↓
- Environmental Planner (84) ←
- Safety Manager (62) ↑
- Green Technologies Electrician (46) ←
- Safety Specialist (38) ←

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 – May 2025 – Oct 2025

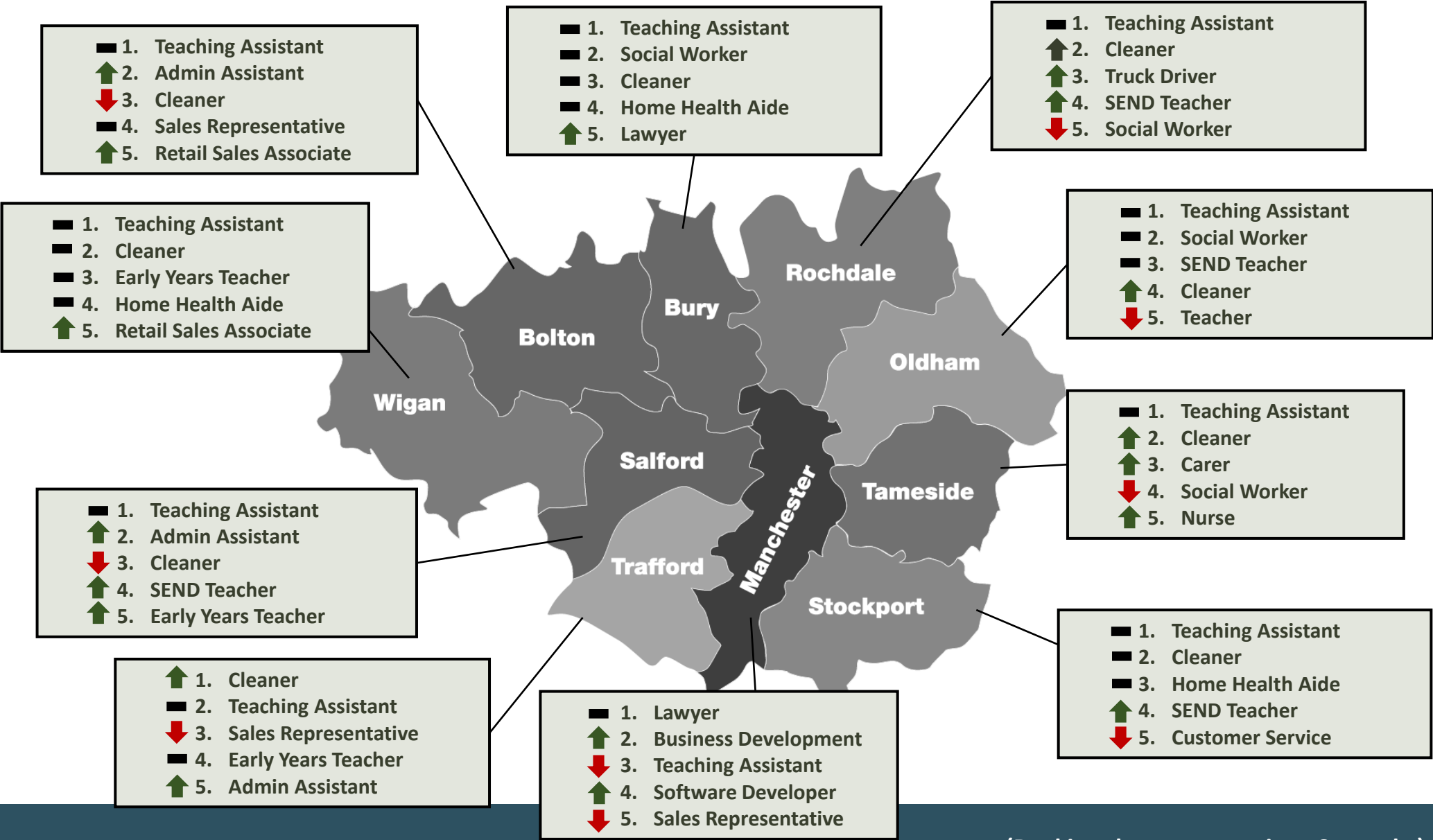
The top 5 occupations across GM reveal a little about the specific employment profile in each borough. Some foundational roles like Cleaner and Carer appear in most.

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

Schools recruit over the summer – SEND teachers have also been in high demand, though the levels of demand are lower than in 2024.

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 adverts for Truck Drivers now 3rd most common.



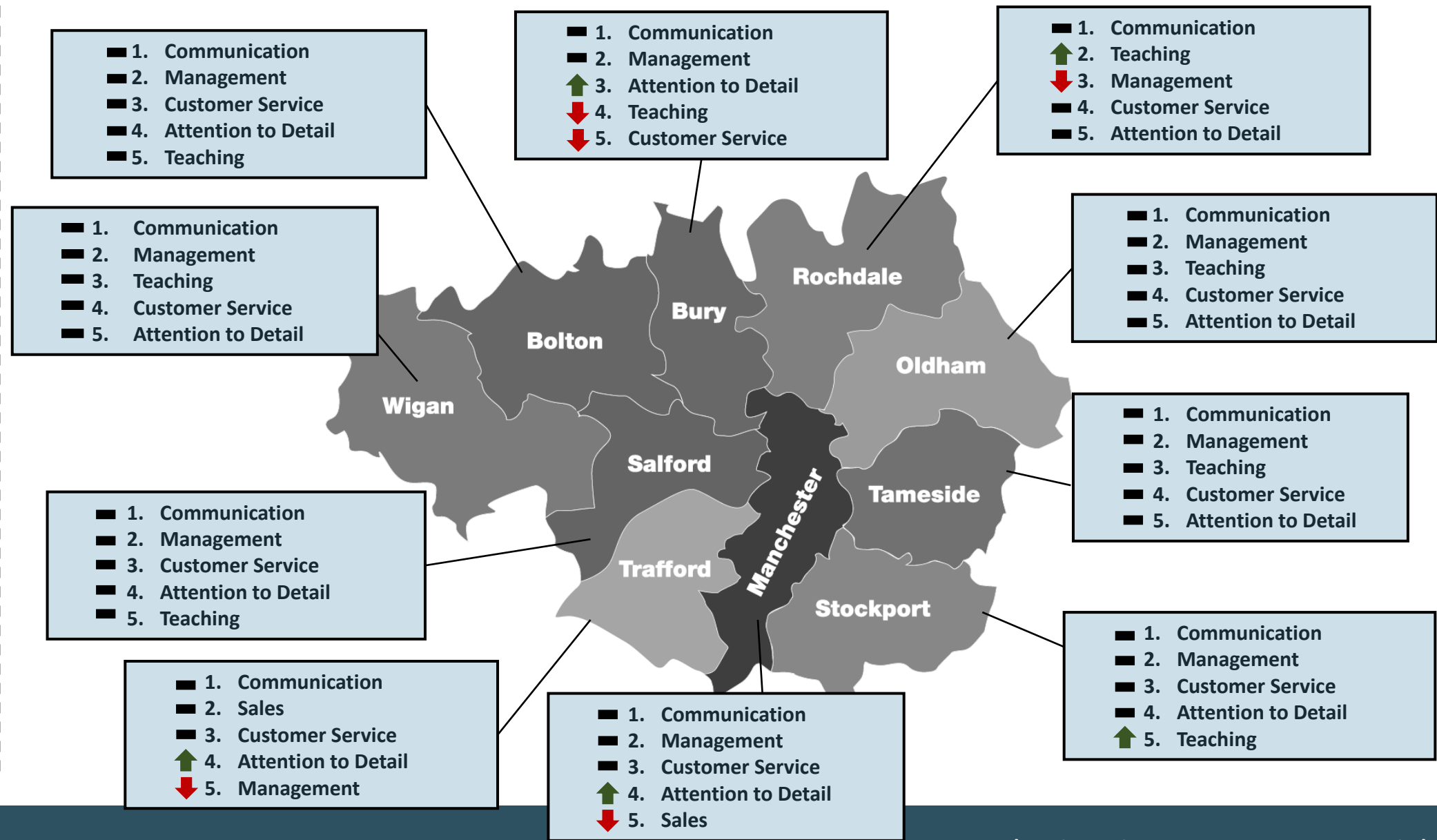
GM In-demand Common Skills – May 2025 – Oct 2025

The top 5 common skills are largely the same across the whole of Greater Manchester – employers see Communication skills and Management skills as particularly important.

Attention to Detail has been increasingly popular in the past 6 months – as more employers recruit to roles which require it.

Though less popular than previously, skills in sales and customer service are important across many sectors – not just retail and hospitality.

Teaching remains in the top 5 skills in many areas – though this is almost exclusively driven by the sheer scale of recruitment into the Education sector, with 1,000 primary and 250 secondary schools in GM.



GM In-demand Specialist Skills – May 2025 – Oct 2025

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

The importance of Mental Health Awareness continues to increase – though these are primarily in health, many management positions now require this, given its rising prevalence among staff.

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

Continuous Improvement is rising in many areas – postings mentioning it are up 70% since 2019.

Working with Children is visible in some areas – there are 4 times as many postings mentioning it since 2019.

