



Walsall Worklessness Briefing Note

August 2011
Issue 12

Worklessness as defined by the Social Exclusion Unit is 'all those of working age who are not employed', this includes people who are seeking work as well as people who are not seeking work. The measure used is the Department for Work and Pensions' Working Age Client Group, males and females aged 16-64.

The Worklessness Briefing is based on benefit data which is supplied quarterly by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with a lag of six months, it shows data from February 2011 which is available at August 2011 and relates to claimants on Jobseekers Allowance, Lone Parents, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance and Other Income Related Benefits.

Table 1 - Worklessness Figures as at February 2011

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Claimant Rate	Number	Claimant Rate	Number	Claimant Rate
England	2,176,200	12.8%	1,851,750	11.0%	4,027,950	11.9%
West Midlands	262,470	15.2%	212,870	12.3%	475,340	13.7%
Black Country	66,540	19.5%	52,750	15.3%	119,290	17.4%
Walsall	15,460	19.8%	12,480	15.6%	27,950	17.7%

Source: DWP/ONS

Please note that these figures have been calculated using the working age population taken from the mid-year ONS population estimates and this provides an indicative trend. It is different to the former national indicator 152 as this is based upon a rolling four quarter average of the working age population and this data is provided directly by Central Government.

Key Points:

- Worklessness in England stood at 4,027,950 individuals as measured by the DWP Working Age Client Group in February 2011, equating to 11.9% of the working age population.
- The worklessness rate for the West Midlands region was recorded at 13.7% (475,340 individuals)
- The Black Country area recorded a worklessness rate of 17.4% (119,290 individuals)
- The number of residents claiming a workless benefit in Walsall was 27,950. This equates to a worklessness rate of 17.7% of the working age population.

Table 2 - Worklessness Figures in Walsall and neighbouring authorities as at February 2011

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Claimant Rate	Number	Claimant Rate	Number	Claimant Rate
Birmingham	67,380	20.2%	54,550	16.1%	121,930	18.1%
Dudley	15,310	15.9%	11,520	12.0%	26,840	13.9%
Sandwell	19,330	21.2%	15,450	16.6%	34,780	18.9%
Walsall	15,460	19.8%	12,480	15.6%	27,950	17.7%
Wolverhampton	16,440	21.5%	13,290	17.5%	29,720	19.5%
Black Country	66,540	19.5%	52,750	15.3%	119,290	17.4%

Source: DWP/ONS

JSA Claimant Count

JSA claimant count released on a monthly basis records the number of people claiming JSA and National Insurance credits at Jobcentre Plus local offices. This is not an official measure of unemployment, but it is the only indicative statistic available for areas smaller than Local Authorities.

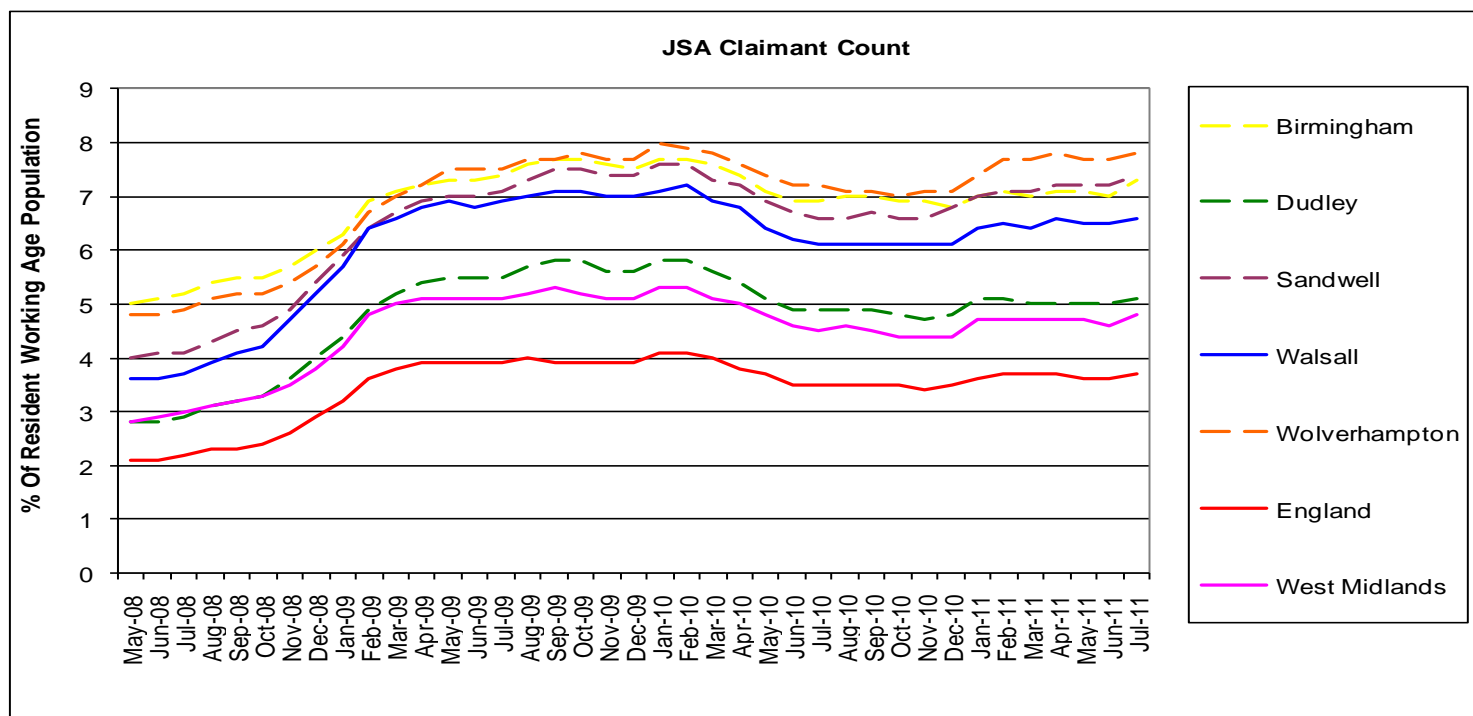
Table 4 – JSA claimant count figures (Rates are % Of Resident Working Age Population)

Month	Walsall		West Midlands		England	
	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate
May 2008	5,640	3.6%	98,232	2.8%	693,870	2.1%
August 2008	6,115	3.9%	108,349	3.1%	766,178	2.3%
November 2008	7,335	4.7%	121,455	3.5%	878,047	2.6%
February 2009	10,047	6.4%	166,448	4.8%	1,217,446	3.6%
May 2009	10,947	6.9%	177,467	5.1%	1,311,683	3.9%
August 2009	11,068	7.0%	181,511	5.2%	1,333,857	4.0%
November 2009	10,999	7.0%	176,696	5.1%	1,307,139	3.9%
February 2010	11,319	7.2%	183,246	5.3%	1,370,285	4.1%
May 2010	10,121	6.4%	164,443	4.8%	1,238,928	3.7%
August 2010	9,581	6.1%	157,953	4.6%	1,187,867	3.5%
November 2011	9,610	6.1%	152,214	4.4%	1,156,394	3.4%
February 2011	10,233	6.5%	163,810	4.7%	1,253,469	3.7%
May 2011	10,299	6.5%	161,708	4.7%	1,234,189	3.6%
July 2011	10,489	6.6%	164,797	4.8%	1,259,484	3.7%

Source: DWP/ONS

- Walsall's JSA figure in July 2011 stood at 10,489 claimants, which was a 86% increase since May 2008 when the economic downturn started, which is much higher than the figure for the West Midlands Region (67.8%) and England (81.5%)
- This suggests that Walsall has been relatively worse hit by the downturn than both the West Midlands Region and England.
- Despite some fluctuations Walsall's JSA figure of 10,489 in July 2011 is similar to the March 2009 figure of 10,399.
- Walsall's Claimant Count rates are not as high as Birmingham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton

Chart 1 – JSA Claimant Count Rates



Source: DWP/ONS

Maximising Opportunities Events July 2011

'The Economy' is one of Walsall Council's three corporate priorities, and in July 2011, partners attended the **'Maximising Opportunities'** events, which highlighted the challenging state of Walsall's economy. The drafting of three key documents namely: Local Economic Assessment, Worklessness Assessment and Child Poverty Assessment, has helped us to build a greater understanding of the key challenges and opportunities for Walsall's economy and communities.

Key Findings from the events were:

- **A need for collective responsibility in tackling economic issues**

The Regeneration Directorate needs to be supported by a range of key players, including other council directorates and public sector bodies, the voluntary sector and other partners to address a complex set of problems and support private sector growth.

- **Raising aspirations and motivation of people and businesses is essential**

Building the confidence levels of young people, those out of work, and residents in general will help them aspire to take an active role in the local community and economy. Business confidence also needs to be nurtured, encouraging ambition and an enterprising spirit in the borough. Increased resilience in our economy and workforce will help to overcome future economic difficulties and minimise business failure.

- **Understanding and overcoming barriers to participation**

There are complex reasons why residents are living in poverty or are unable to access work opportunities, and these need to be fully explored and addressed. Solutions for some families may be relatively simple and require a minimal level of support, while others might have a more multi-faceted set of requirements.

- **Links between employers and education providers are vital**

Many connections already exist, but these need to be strengthened and go much further to ensure the right match of skills to business needs, and to encourage the development of a more entrepreneurial curriculum. The curriculum and course offer should support the development of relevant employment skills at all ages.

- **Developing and promoting a 'brand image' for Walsall**

Presently clarity is lacking about what makes Walsall unique and distinctive from elsewhere and why it is a place for business. Focusing on providing a coherent message will help strengthen pride in the borough as a place for people to work and do business, and also attract investment. It is important that this is supported by a strong offer to business – including appropriate infrastructure, business land and accommodation, expertise, a skilled workforce and business support.

Positive feedback on the events has been received from many attendees, and despite the findings of the assessments highlighting the weak state of Walsall's economy, there were many new and innovative ideas put forward with some valuable opportunities already identified for tackling these issues.

Next Steps

- The feedback provided from the workshop is now being shaped into the solutions and priorities for the future, which will become part of our Economic Framework / Strategy.
- The workshops are envisaged to be the start of an ongoing process of consultation and joint working, in which colleagues from across the council and its partners recognise that strengthening our economy will have a positive impact across all services, and that collaborative solutions and actions are needed to make this happen.

Links with the council's Working Smarter programme are clear:- if a vibrant economy can be developed we can reduce dependence on the council and its partners. Further information is available at:-

http://www.walsallobservatory.org.uk/wpo-maximising_opportunities_2011