Stay Nimble

UK Labour Market Briefing

Current Conditions and Forward Outlook

July 2026

Executive Summary

Three things happened to the figures this month before anything that actually happened in the labour market was reported. ONS revised Labour Force Survey data back to January to March 2020 after a seasonal adjustment review. Its two main measures of employee numbers moved in opposite directions over the same quarter, the survey up 115,000 and the tax records down 30,000. And a collection error in May required its own impact assessment. This is the second briefing running in which a figure we published has since moved. Revisions of this kind mostly affect quarterly readings, so this briefing leans on annual comparisons.

On the quarter, unemployment fell 0.1 percentage points, employment rose 0.1 and inactivity fell 0.1. All three point mildly the right way, all three sit inside the range where a revision could reverse them, and we draw no firm conclusions from them. The useful reading is in the composition.

Youth unemployment rose again, from 15.9% to 16.4%, and is now more than two points above where it was a year ago. Vacancies at businesses with one to nine employees are down 9.3% over the year, while employers with 2,500 or more are up 3.2%. Hospitality and retail have lost more than 140,000 employees. Where vacancies are growing, they are growing in education and construction, sectors that generally require a qualification or a licence to enter. The first rung is not only crowded, it is being removed. Real regular pay grew 0.3%, and private sector real wages have fallen since October. Alan Milburn's recommendations on young people and work have slipped again, to early autumn, close to a year after the review was commissioned.

The most useful finding sits underneath the headline. Recruitment survey data shows permanent placements close to stabilising, while total demand for staff fell at its quickest rate since January. Both can be true. Candidate availability is still rising, largely because of redundancies, while vacancies keep falling, which makes each remaining vacancy easier to fill. What has improved is matching, not hiring. It also matters who that reaches. Matching recently redundant people into fewer roles helps those who were in work weeks ago, and can worsen the position of someone out of work for a year by putting stronger applicants in the same queue. That gives the divide we described in June a mechanism rather than only a pattern. Two measures would have to move before we would be suggesting a positive turn: total demand for staff, and permanent vacancies. Both are still falling.

Career Allies and the Stay Nimble platform continue to scale as set out previously, and this month's evidence sharpens that argument rather than changing it. Coaching outcomes this period took months, and in some cases years, to arrive. We also correct two observations from earlier issues.

Reading this month's data

The Labour Force Survey has been revised back to 2020. ONS completed a review of seasonal adjustment and applied the results in this release, revising the series back to January to March 2020. This is part of a rolling programme rather than a response to a fault. Claimant Count was revised back to January 2023 on the same basis in April, and average weekly earnings comes under review in August, which ONS say may revise that entire historical series.

It is worth being clear about what a review of this kind can and cannot tell us. Seasonal adjustment governs where within a year a movement gets recorded, not how much movement there was. The underlying unadjusted data does not change. Revisions like this therefore mostly affect quarter-on-quarter readings and leave annual comparisons largely intact, so it is better to reference the year columns in the table that follows rather than the quarter columns.

We are not concluding that the market has been running better or worse than previously reported because of the revisions. There are two changes visible to us. The unemployment-to-vacancy ratio a year ago now reads 2.3 rather than the 2.2 we published in June, which makes last year slightly worse than we described and the deterioration since slightly smaller. Vacancies for March to May now read 710,000 against the 707,000 published at the time, which points the other way. Both movements are small, and neither supports a conclusion about six years of data.

The two main employee measures contradict one another. Over March to May, the Labour Force Survey recorded 115,000 more employees while comparable tax records recorded 30,000 fewer. ONS notes the pattern holds in both seasonally adjusted and unadjusted data, so it is unlikely to be caused by seasonality, and says it will assess whether the divergence persists next month. Its current position is that the tax records remain the more reliable measure of employee numbers.

A collection error occurred in May. Under-resourcing in survey telephone collection prompted a published impact assessment. ONS found minimal effect on headline estimates and a small but noticeable effect on average hours worked.

None of this means the data is unusable. It means single-month and single-quarter movements carry volatility, so care is needed with any point-in-time measurement. We made the same point last month. Across six briefings we have found the durable trends more useful for planning than any individual release, and this month shows why.

Sources: ONS, Labour market overview, UK: July 2026; ONS, Labour Force Survey quality update: July 2026; ONS, Vacancies and jobs in the UK: July 2026.

Current position: July 2026

Headline indicators

Indicator	Mar–May 2026	On the quarter	On the year
Employment rate (16–64)	75.1%	+0.1pp	-0.1pp
Unemployment rate (16+)	4.9%	-0.1pp	+0.2pp
Economic inactivity rate (16–64)	20.9%	-0.1pp	-0.1pp
Youth unemployment (16–24)	16.4%	up from 15.9%	up from 14.2%
Payrolled employees (Mar–May, LFS-comparable)		-30,000 (0.1%)	-90,000 (0.3%)
Payrolled employees (June early estimate)	30.3m	-4,000 on the month	-71,000 (0.2%)
Vacancies (Apr–Jun 2026)	712,000	-7,000 (0.9%)	-18,000 (2.5%)
Unemployment-to-vacancy ratio	2.5	unchanged	up from 2.3
Regular pay growth (nominal)	3.4%		public 5.5%, private 2.9%
Real regular pay growth (CPIH)	0.3%		
Claimant Count (June 2026)	1.689m	up	down

Sources: ONS, Labour market overview, UK: July 2026; ONS, Vacancies and jobs in the UK: July 2026; Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026. Labour Force Survey data revised back to January to March 2020 following a seasonal adjustment review. Youth unemployment is Learning and Work Institute analysis of the 16–24 rate. The Learning and Work Institute report the headline unemployment rate as 5.0% against the ONS figure of 4.9%; we use the ONS figure throughout.

What has changed since June

The vacancy decline has slowed. Vacancies stand at 712,000 for April to June, down 7,000 on the quarter and 18,000 on the year. The annual rate of decline was 4.2% in our June briefing and is 2.5% now. Vacancies remain 77,000, or 9.7%, below their level before the pandemic. The quarterly change of 7,000 sits well inside the survey's confidence interval of plus or minus 32,000, so the quarterly figure carries little information on its own. The slowing annual rate is the more useful reading, and it comes from a business survey rather than the household survey.

Small employers account for the fall, and the largest employers are adding. Businesses with one to nine employees cut 8,000 vacancies over the quarter, the largest quarterly fall of any size band, and are down 10,000 or 9.3% over the year. Businesses with 10 to 49 employees account for the largest annual fall, down 12,000 or 10.6%. Employers with 2,500 or more added 4,000 vacancies over the quarter and 7,000, or 3.2%, over the year. Feedback to the ONS Vacancy Survey suggests some small firms are not recruiting because of increases in labour costs and other operating expenses. The Learning and Work Institute reach the same conclusion. The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) point to National Insurance, National Minimum Wage rises and the Employment Rights Act together, and their chief executive attributes part of the rise in youth unemployment to National Insurance costs.

Independent survey evidence is mixed. The KPMG and REC UK Report on Jobs, covering June, found permanent placements falling at their softest pace in three months, and temporary billings rising at their fastest rate since April 2023. Against that, total demand for staff fell at the quickest rate since January, driven by a steeper drop in permanent vacancies, and redundancies were widely cited again. The forward outlook section sets out how both of those can be true at once.

Pay is holding its shape. Regular pay growth is 3.4% in nominal terms and 0.3% in real terms. Public sector pay is growing at 5.5% against 2.9% in the private sector, where the Resolution Foundation note real wages have been falling since October. The Work Foundation calculate private sector real weekly earnings at £1.75 lower than a year ago, and find around one in five businesses planning pay rises that beat inflation this year.

Sources: ONS, Vacancies and jobs in the UK: July 2026; KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs, July 2026; Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026; Work Foundation and REC responses via FE News, 21 July 2026.

Entry-level and youth labour market

Youth unemployment is the one indicator moving consistently in one direction while the rest move within a band. The Learning and Work Institute put it at 743,000 young people, or 16.4%, up from 715,000 and 15.9% last quarter, and up from 631,000 and 14.2% a year ago. The Work Foundation describe this as an eleven-year high. Indeed describe it as the highest since late 2014.

The Youth Futures Foundation add that around one in seven economically active young people not in full-time education are unemployed, which is 14.3% or around 469,000 people. A further one in five of that group, 20.9% or around 869,000 people, are economically inactive. Compared with a year ago, that is 57,000 more young people unemployed and 67,000 more economically inactive. They argue that both measures have to be read together to see the scale of the problem, and estimate that matching Dutch youth participation rates would add around £86bn to the UK economy over the long term.

The official NEET count reached 1,012,000 young people aged 16 to 24 in January to March 2026, or 13.5% of the age group, up 89,000 on the year. This is the first time the figure has passed one million since October to December 2013. Some published commentary this month uses a figure of around 1.3 million, which is the broader measure of young people not in employment or full-time education. We use the official count here.

The recommendations have slipped

Alan Milburn's interim report in May was a diagnosis, and a strong one. His recommendations were expected this summer and are now expected in early autumn. The government commissioned the review in November 2025, so by the time it has anything to act on, close to a year will have passed since the work began, and youth unemployment will have risen through every quarter of that period.

This is not a criticism of the review, which has done serious work on a problem successive governments have failed at. But the interval matters. Anyone designing youth provision now is doing so without the framework that is meant to shape it, and the young people counted in this briefing are not waiting on the publication date.

Where the first rung has gone

Hospitality and retail have lost more than 140,000 employees over the past year, with employment down 3.6% and 1.5% and vacancies down 10.8% and 6.9%. Bank of England analysis cited by the Learning and Work Institute finds that workers leaving hospitality are increasingly likely to become unemployed rather than move into other work. The Work Foundation calculate that starter job vacancies have fallen by almost half over the past decade, with the sharpest shortages in the North East and East Midlands.

These are the sectors that have historically supplied first jobs, part-time work alongside study, and the early work history that later applications are judged against. Their contraction is not the same event as a general fall in hiring, and it will not necessarily reverse on the same timetable.

Where vacancies are growing, the entry conditions are different. Education vacancies are up 10.6% over the year and construction up 11.3%, while health and social work vacancies are down 10.4% despite the sector still adding staff. Growth is concentrated in sectors where entry generally requires a qualification, a licence or a training place. That matches the point the Learning and Work Institute made last month about young people who are NEET facing barriers tied to qualifications and access to training, not only to a shortage of vacancies.

Sources: Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026; ONS, Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: May 2026; Youth Futures Foundation, Work Foundation and Indeed responses via FE News, 21 July 2026; Youth Employment UK, May 2026 quarterly NEET data; DWP, Young People and Work Report: Call for Evidence.

Supply-side effort against a demand-side constraint

The Learning and Work Institute make the demand-side argument directly this month. The Youth Guarantee and its eight trailblazers are largely supply-side, intended to improve employability and routes into work, and without stronger labour demand progress is likely to stay slow. The Work Foundation reach the same conclusion, arguing that improving education and employment support will only go so far without action to create more good jobs.

The clearest illustration is Connect to Work. The Learning and Work Institute report investment of over £1 billion and a business case expecting 14,000 people to achieve an employment outcome in the 2025/26 financial year. DWP figures show 1,644 people received first earnings from employment over that period.

We would treat that gap as evidence about the market before it is evidence about the programme. Where the binding constraint is the number of available jobs, the same quality of support produces fewer employment outcomes inside a fixed window than it would in a looser market. Any target set against earlier conditions will look increasingly unreachable as those conditions persist. Our own coaching outcomes this period, set out below, took months and in some cases years to arrive.

The practical implication is for anyone setting or being held to outcome targets. Targets written against a 2024 market are now measuring something other than the quality of what was commissioned.

Sources: Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026; Work Foundation response via FE News, 21 July 2026.

2026 Durable Trends

The conditions holding steady across the first half of the year remain a better guide than any single data release. Two of the trends we have reported previously need correcting, one because the underlying data has been revised and one because we over-read a small movement.

Competition for work has plateaued at a bad level, rather than intensified further. In March we reported 5.4 people out of work and wanting a job for every vacancy. In June we reported 5.5 and described competition as having only intensified. It reads 5.4 this month. One interpretation is that competition rose sharply through 2025 and into early 2026 and has since held at a historically poor level. The plateau is the new trend, and it is more accurate than the worsening we were highlighting previously.

The self-employment observation needs withdrawing. In June we reported 177,000 self-employed jobs created between December 2025 and March 2026, accounting for over two thirds of job growth, and treated it as evidence of a shift toward insecure work. Workforce jobs data now shows self-employment jobs up 177,000 on the quarter but down 127,000, or 2.9%, on the year. ONS is bringing forward its annual seasonal adjustment review of workforce jobs because of emerging evidence of changing seasonal patterns, which are strongest in self-employment. The quarterly rise may substantially be a seasonal effect. Zero-hours contract growth still stands, but we are withdrawing the self-employment observation until the revised series is published in September.

The opportunity base is shrinking more slowly. The annual rate of decline in vacancies has eased from 4.2% to 2.5% since June. The pool remains 9.7% below its level before the pandemic, and the composition has shifted toward larger employers, so a smaller rate of decline is not the same as recovery in accessible openings.

The market is still stuck rather than crashing. Employment, unemployment and inactivity have moved within a narrow band all year. Recruitment survey evidence suggests permanent placements may be close to a floor, but demand for staff is still falling and the growth reported is in temporary work.

Real wages remain weak across every timescale. Real regular pay grew 0.3% over the year. The Work Foundation put private sector real weekly earnings £1.75 below a year ago. The Learning and Work Institute calculate average weekly earnings around £269 below where the pre-financial-crisis trend would have put them.

Young people have borne the brunt throughout, and the gap is widening. Youth unemployment has risen in every issue we have published this year, while the headline rate has moved sideways.

Source: Stay Nimble analysis of ONS, Learning and Work Institute, Resolution Foundation, Work Foundation, Indeed Hiring Lab and Youth Employment UK data, February to July 2026.

Forward outlook

Our expectation is continuation. The annual rate of vacancy decline has eased, and recruitment survey data shows permanent placements close to stabilising, so a further sharp deterioration looks less likely than it did in the spring. We would not go further than that. The same survey shows total demand for staff falling at its quickest rate since January, and the growth it does report is in temporary and contract work rather than permanent hiring.

Both findings can be true at once. A placement happens when a vacancy meets a candidate. Candidate availability is still rising sharply, largely because of redundancies, while vacancies keep falling. That makes each remaining vacancy easier to fill, so placements can stabilise while the pool of openings shrinks. What has improved is matching, not hiring. KPMG point the same way, attributing part of the improvement to recruitment resuming after the Iran conflict paused it. That is deferred activity catching up, not new activity.

Either way, it matters who benefits. If placements are improving because a large pool of recently redundant people is being matched into a smaller set of roles, the improvement is reaching people who were in work a few weeks ago. It does nothing for someone out of work for a year, and it may worsen their position by adding stronger-looking applicants to the same queue. This is the divide we described in June, now with a mechanism attached rather than asserted.

Two further signals need care. Candidate availability is still rising sharply, as above, but at its least pronounced rate in four months, and that slowing reads as improvement. The report attributes part of it to people being more hesitant to look for new roles. Some of it is people withdrawing rather than being hired. Starting salaries rose at their fastest rate since January, which the report links to competition for candidates with sought-after skills, though growth stayed slower than the survey's long-run norm. That is targeted competition for particular skills rather than general wage pressure, which fits the qualification-gated growth set out earlier.

Two measures would have to move before we would call this a turn: total demand for staff, and permanent vacancies. Both are still falling. We will report against them next month.

There are two risks to that view. The Resolution Foundation warn that renewed inflation over the second half of the year would push real pay back into decline. Indeed note that renewed tensions in Iran are putting upward pressure on global oil prices. The Learning and Work Institute suggest the continuing conflict in the Middle East has dampened business confidence further, and that this may be behind the weaker hiring.

For people looking for work, slower deterioration is worth very little on its own. Competition sits at 5.4 people wanting work for every vacancy. The openings that are appearing are concentrated with larger employers and in sectors with qualification requirements at the door. A market that stops falling has not started producing the entry points that people who are not in work need.

Sources: KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs, July 2026; Resolution Foundation, July 2026; Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026; Indeed response via FE News, 21 July 2026.

What we are seeing in current delivery

Three patterns in this period's coaching outcomes speak directly to the analysis above.

How long these outcomes have taken. One Kingston member has secured an IT Support role with an advertising company, having been out of work since arriving in the UK in 2019. Another had been unemployed since November 2025, a third since last year, and a fourth graduated in 2025 and has only now secured her first part-time role. Every one of those would have been recorded as a non-outcome by a programme measuring at six or twelve months. Every one of them arrived because support was still there when the opening finally came.

The work behind each one has also increased. Coaching for a Kingston member who secured a Junior Merchandiser role covered CVs and cover letters tailored for applicant tracking systems, reframing technical data experience, structured competency answers, presentation delivery, techniques for managing anxiety, and targeted use of LinkedIn. In a looser market that outcome would have taken a fraction of the work. The support required per outcome is now part of what the market is doing, and it does not show up in an outcome rate at all.

How people are getting in. The member out of work since 2019 gained Microsoft and Python certifications alongside the coaching. Where this issue finds vacancy growth concentrated in sectors that require a qualification to enter, a qualification was the route in. The 2025 graduate reached work through volunteering and persistence with her supporting statements. One member ran his own job search as a sales process, cold calling the hiring manager and following up by email, and used therapy, DWP and Stay Nimble together to keep going. Several of these members reached work by going around the standard application channel rather than through it, which is what we would expect where that channel no longer carries reliable signals.

Place is doing similar work. A member with poor transport links near her secured a Project Administrator role that suits her because it is local. The opportunity set someone can actually reach is narrower than the national vacancy count implies.

Support that adapts to the person. A community hub member using Ask.Nim to develop a new business described the early experience as overwhelming, with more options and material generated than she could act on. She told Nim she has ADHD and asked it to recommend where to start. She reported that it distilled the material down and identified a clear starting point, that the system had come to understand how she works best, and that it works well for her as a thinking partner.

That distinction matters more as generic AI tools become universally available. Volume of output is not the constraint most people are under, because most arrive already able to produce more material than they can use. Knowing which thing to do first is the harder problem, and it depends on the tool holding some understanding of the person.

Sources: Stay Nimble coaching observations and Ask.Nim engagement, January to July 2026.

How we are responding

Nothing in this month's data changes the shape of our response. The findings on entry points sharpen where it is pointed.

Career conversations as community infrastructure

Foundations in Career Conversations is our microcredential for people whose work brings them into contact with others at a point of transition, and completing it confers the Career Ally mark. It is built on the Career Conversations Competency Framework, which is published under a Creative Commons licence so other organisations can build training against it without coming through us. The approach has reached 30 organisations, with over 100 people enrolled and more than 20 certified. Industry bodies are engaging with the framework, which matters for the credibility of a standard meant to be adopted widely.

In Kingston, the next phase is underway with Public Health, upskilling social prescribers and link workers so career conversations can happen inside the health and community contact people already have. Where entry to growing sectors runs through a qualification or a training place, the people best placed to raise that are the ones already in the room. We are also at an early stage with Citizen Hub on taking the same capability into communities at greater scale.

Access that lasts

Much of the access we provide is funded through social value commitments made by large organisations when they win public contracts, and through direct funding. Working with partners such as Accenture, those commitments become lifetime access to the platform rather than a fixed period of activity. This has evidenced over £500k of social value at a blended SROI of around 6:1. Through Accenture's Regenerative AI programme, which recently passed one million people supported in the UK with digital and AI skills, thousands of people now hold lifetime access and hundreds have been supported into work. A first step with the Simplon Foundation and Accenture will reach hundreds more nationally.

This month's evidence is the argument for that design. Coaching outcomes are arriving after months and in some cases years. Access that expires before the market moves is access that expires before the outcome.

Investment in tools

Three capabilities have been added to Ask.Nim. Career Explorer helps members find directions that fit their skills. Course Finder surfaces relevant learning online and in person. Skills Finder helps members identify and articulate what they can already do.

We are also integrating the Essential Skills framework through our partnership with Skills Builder Partnership, giving members and partners a shared language for these strengths that underpin all work.

Employer-ability and equitable access

Applications used to carry implicit signals. A neat CV suggested conscientiousness, a tailored cover letter suggested effort, an unbroken record suggested stability. Those signals were always partly unjust, because a gap usually meant caring, health or life rather than risk. AI has now made the documents they were read from close to free to produce. Several of the members described earlier in this briefing reached work by going around the application channel rather than through it. We are building infrastructure that regenerates employer-useful signals from verified behaviour rather than polished documents, so that visibility to employers does not depend on the ability to pay for expert support or on an established network.

Implications for employability investment

The cycle, and what it returns to

The June report closed on the argument that labour markets are cyclical, that this one will eventually move, and that infrastructure built now will convert outcomes faster than a cold start. We would keep that and add a distinction that this month's evidence points to.

Part of what has happened to entry-level work is cyclical. Employers who are cautious about cost and confidence have stopped recruiting, and they will recruit again. Part of it is compositional. Hospitality and retail have contracted as employers, starter vacancies have halved over a decade, and the sectors currently adding vacancies require a qualification to enter. A recovery in hiring returns the first part. It does not automatically return the second.

That makes the case for standing infrastructure stronger rather than weaker. If the entry structures people used to rely on are being rebuilt rather than paused, there is less to go back to. More of the work of getting people into work then has to be done by something that persists: someone who knows them, a route to a qualification, and a way of showing capability that does not depend on a track record they were never given the chance to build.

Measuring in this market

Our position on measurement has not changed since June. The wider evaluation literature supports it, and it is worth setting out because it is stronger evidence than our own argument.

Card, Kluve and Weber pooled over 200 evaluations of employment programmes. They found average impacts close to zero in the short run, turning positive two to three years after a programme ends. The largest gains came from provision that builds skills and qualifications, and from participants who entered from long-term unemployment. They also found programmes more likely to show positive impacts in a recession than in a strong market.

Every one of those findings points the same way. Support in a weak market is worth more than it appears, and a short measurement window will understate it. Connect to Work is this month's illustration of the same point.

One distinction we should keep. That literature shows short-window measurement understates the value of support in a weak market. It does not show that our own four tests, of whether the infrastructure is in place, reaching the right people, operating at quality and adapting, predict whether outcomes convert when conditions ease. We have not demonstrated that. It remains the proposition we are arguing, and the basis on which we think investment should be judged.

Sources: Learning and Work Institute, Labour Market Briefing: July 2026; Card, Kluve and Weber, What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations, Journal of the European Economic Association, 2018.

Reference: Key Data Points

Indicator	Data
Unemployment rate	4.9% (Mar–May 2026); up 0.2pp on the year, down 0.1pp on the quarter
Employment rate (16–64)	75.1%; up 0.1pp on the quarter, down 0.1pp on the year
Economic inactivity rate (16–64)	20.9%; down 0.1pp on year and quarter
Youth unemployment (16–24)	16.4% (743,000); up from 15.9% last quarter and 14.2% a year ago
Young people not in full-time education and unemployed	14.3% (around 469,000); 57,000 more than a year ago
Young people not in full-time education and economically inactive	20.9% (around 869,000); 67,000 more than a year ago
NEET (16–24)	1,012,000 (Jan–Mar 2026); 13.5% of the age group; first time above one million since Oct–Dec 2013
Payrolled employees	-85,000 (0.3%) May 2025 to May 2026; +3,000 on the month
Payrolled employees, June early estimate	30.3m; -71,000 on the year, -4,000 on the month
Vacancies (Apr–Jun 2026)	712,000; -7,000 (0.9%) on the quarter, -18,000 (2.5%) on the year; 77,000 (9.7%) below pre-pandemic
Vacancies by employer size	1–9 employees -8,000 on the quarter and -9.3% on the year; 10–49 employees -10.6% on the year; 2,500+ employees +4,000 on the quarter and +3.2% on the year
Unemployment-to-vacancy ratio	2.5; unchanged since Jul–Sep 2025, up from 2.3 a year ago
People wanting work per vacancy	5.4
Hospitality and retail	140,000+ employees lost over the year; employment -3.6% and -1.5%; vacancies -10.8% and -6.9%
Education and construction vacancies	+10.6% and +11.3% over the year
Health and social work vacancies	-10.4% over the year, the largest fall of any major sector
Regular pay growth (nominal)	3.4%; public 5.5%, private 2.9%
Real regular pay growth	0.3% (CPIH); private sector real wages falling since October 2025
Average weekly earnings against pre-crisis trend	around £269 below
Claimant Count (June 2026)	1.689m; up on the month, down on the year
Connect to Work	£1bn+ invested; 14,000 outcomes expected 2025/26; 1,644 received first earnings

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