

3. CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE LAA

Introduction

Central Bedfordshire became a unitary authority in April 2009 and brought together the two district authorities of Mid-Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire. In 2007, it had a total population of 252,100 and a working age population of 159,200 – so constituting around 4% of the region's population.

Impact of the Economic Recession

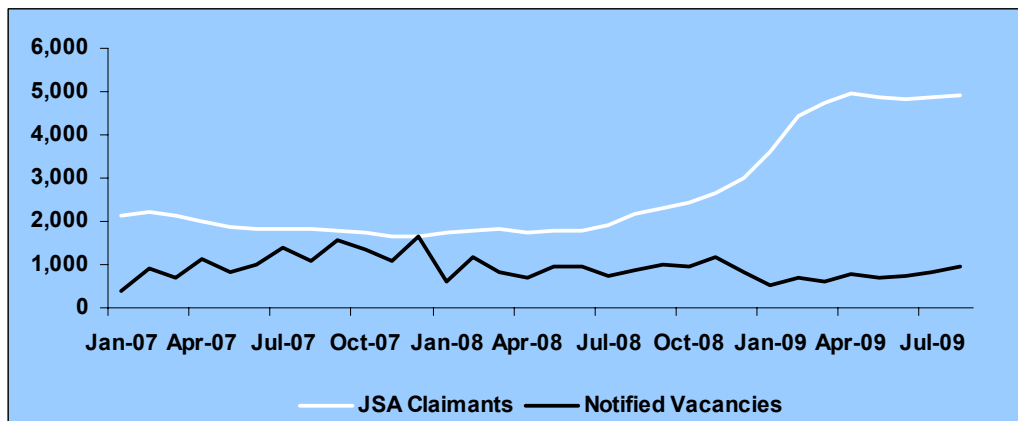
The most robust and up-to-date statistical data available at LAA and district authority levels are notified vacancy data and Job Seekers Allowance claimant data. As a result, these two sources will be used to assess the impact of the economic recession on Central Bedfordshire. However, it is also important to appreciate the wider impact the recession has had in terms of the number of jobs decreasing and redundancies increasing.

Vacancies against JSA Claimants

Before analysing vacancy and JSA claimant data in greater depth, Figure A3.1 provides an overview of how the labour market has changed.

- Overall, the key finding is that the gap between the number of JSA claimants and notified vacancies has grown over the last 12 months. This means an increasing number of JSA claimants are competing for fewer vacancies.
- Looking specifically at August 2009 data, there were 4,910 JSA claimants in Central Bedfordshire competing for 965 notified vacancies.

Figure A3.1: Notified Vacancies and JSA Claimants, January 2007 to August 2009



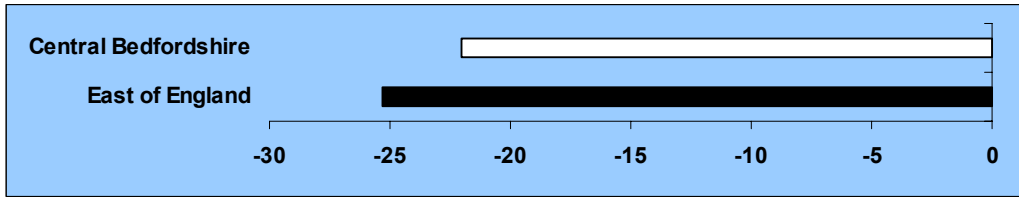
Source: NOMIS Claimant Count Data and Jobcentre Plus Vacancy Data

Vacancies

Vacancies can be used as a proxy for the changing employment base and labour market demand. Figure A3.2 charts the percentage change in vacancies between January-June 2008 and January-June 2009. It shows:

- Central Bedfordshire has been more resilient than the East of England. Notified vacancies have decreased by 22% in Bedford, compared with 25% across the region.

Figure A3.2: % Change in Notified Vacancies, January-June 2008 to January-June 2009

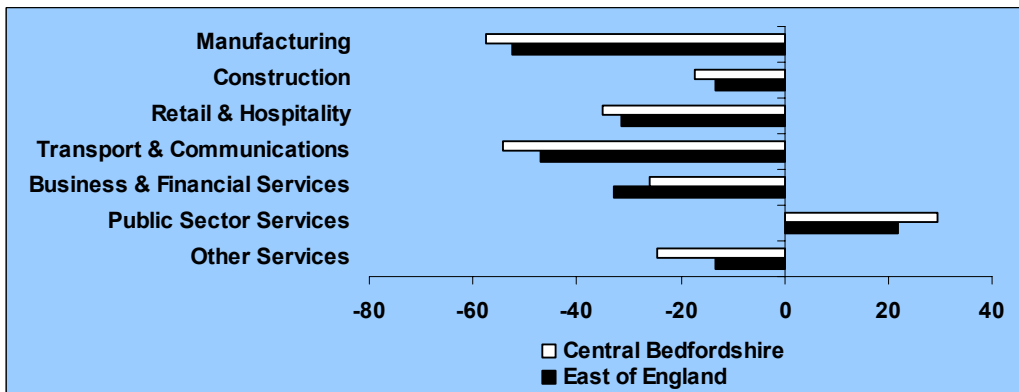


Source: NOMIS Jobcentre Plus Vacancy Data

By industry, Figure A3.3 shows that in Central Bedfordshire:

- The greatest percentage reduction in vacancies has been in manufacturing and transport and communications.
- All industries have seen a decrease in the number of vacancies with the exception of public sector services, which saw a 30% increase in vacancies compared with a 22% increase across the East of England.

Figure A3.3: % Change in Notified Vacancies by Industry, January-June 2008 to January-June 2009

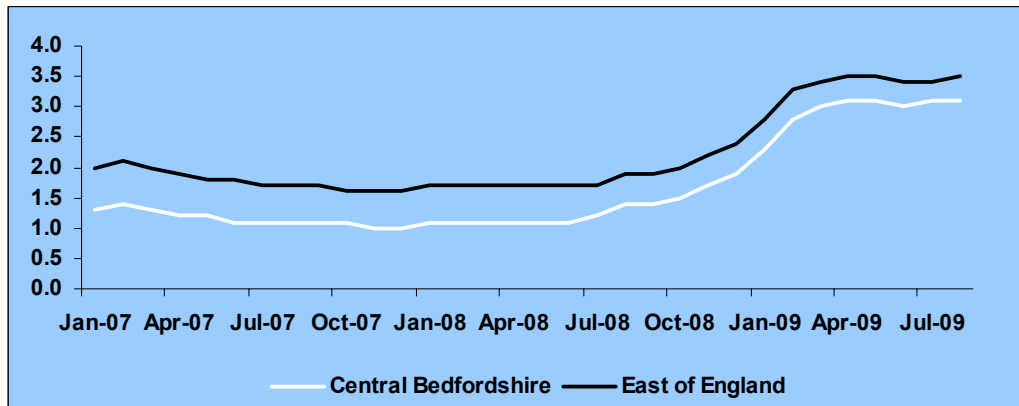


Source: NOMIS Jobcentre Plus Vacancy Data

JSA Claimants

The impact of the economic recession in terms of economic participation can most clearly be seen in the JSA Claimant Count rate. Between August 2008 and August 2009, the number of JSA claimants has more than doubled – increasing from 2,190 to 4,910 JSA claimants. Figure A3.4 shows the increase in the corresponding JSA claimant rate for Central Bedfordshire compared with the East of England. The pattern is broadly identical, albeit the gap between Central Bedfordshire's and the East of England average has narrowed in the last 12 months.

Figure A3.4: JSA Claimant Count Rate (%), January 2007 to August 2009

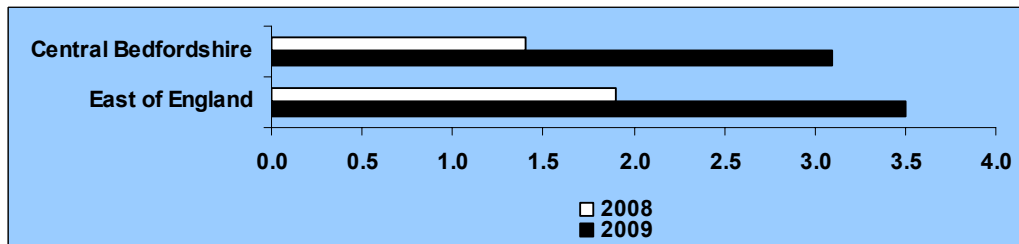


Source: NOMIS JSA Claimant Count

Figure A3.5 takes a further look at the Figure A3.4 data by showing how the JSA Claimant Count rates have increased between August 2008 and August 2009.

- In August 2008, Central Bedfordshire had a rate of 1.4% but this has risen to 3.1% in August 2009.
- In the East of England, the rate has increased from 1.9% to 3.5%.

Figure A3.5: JSA Claimant Count Rate (%), August 2008 and August 2009

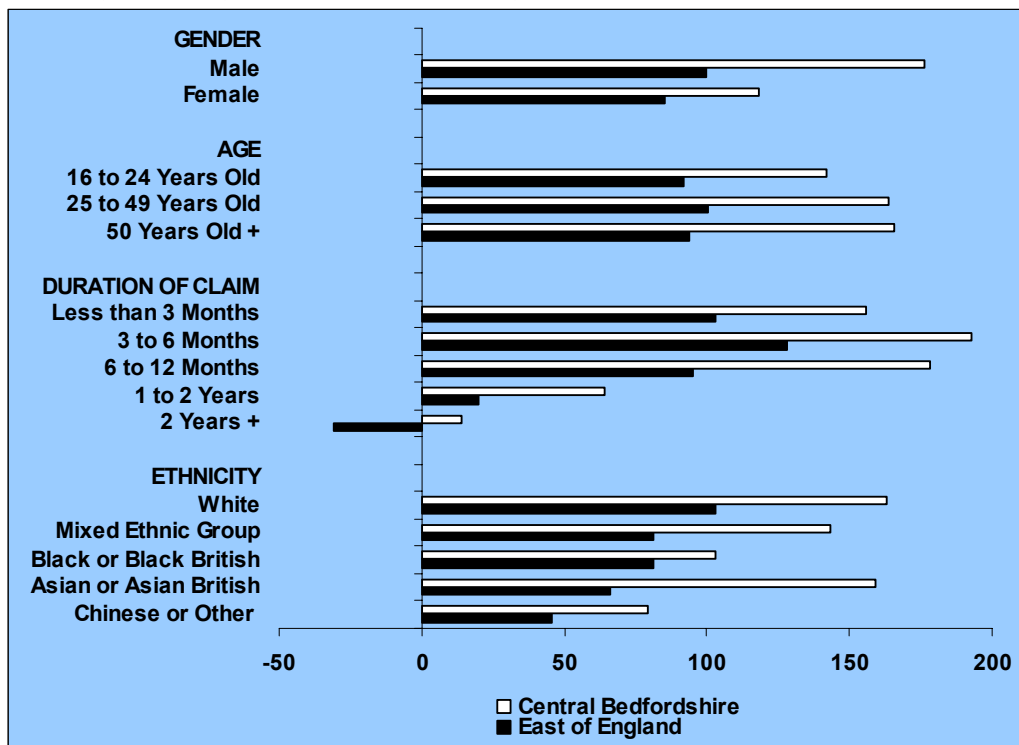


Source: NOMIS JSA Claimant Count

Finally, Figure A3.6 looks at the gender, age, duration of claim and ethnicity characteristics of the JSA claimants by comparing the JSA claimants of January-June 2008 (pre-recession) and January-June 2009 (during recession). It shows:

- **By gender.** The percentage increase in male JSA claimants far exceeds the increase in female JSA claimants.
- **By age.** The 25 to 49 year old and 50 year and over age groups have seen the biggest percentage increases at over 160% between January-June 2008 and January-June 2009. However, 18-24 year olds saw a similar percentage increase at 145%.
- **By duration of claim.** The greatest percentage increases have been in JSA claimants of up to 1 year, with a 195% increase in Central Bedfordshire claimants of between 3 and 6 months claim.
- **By ethnicity.** White JSA claimants and Asian or Asian British JSA claimants have seen the greatest percentage increases in Central Bedfordshire at over 150%.

Figure A3.6: % Change in Number of JSA Claimants by Gender, Age and Ethnicity, January-June 2008 to January-June 2009



Source: NOMIS JSA Claimant Count

Overview of Economic Participation

The summary table of Figure A3.7 shows Central Bedfordshire LAA's performance against the East of England average over the last five years.

- Central Bedfordshire performs above or very close to the East of England average on all indicators.
- Over the last five years, Central Bedfordshire's performance relative to the East of England average has been strong – particularly in terms of the employment rate and qualifications indicators.

Figure A3.7: Summary Table of Economic Participation Indicators

Indicator	2003	2008	% of East average 2003	% of East average 2008	Progress against East trend 2003-08
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION					
Employment Rate (%)	83	84	106	109	▲
W/Age Benefits Claimants as % of W/Age Population	8	10	75	78	▼
16-18 yr olds NEET (%)	7	6	104	94	▲
% in Employment Self-Employed	13	13	99	99	—
VAT Registrations per 10,000 adults	46	49	112	113	▲
Lower Quartile Earnings as % Average Earnings	64	56	108	98	▼
EDUCATION AND SKILLS					
% W/Age Population with NVQ Level 4 or above	25	29	106	110	▲
% W/Age Population with NVQ Level 3 or above	45	50	110	114	▲
% W/Age Population with NVQ Level 2 or above	68	70	111	111	—
Functional Literacy (%)	92		106		
Functional Numeracy (%)	82		106		
ILL HEALTH AND DISABILITY					
W/Age Population with a Disability (%)	15	16	94	89	▲
W/Age Population with Limiting Long-Term Illness (%)	10		84		
BARRIERS SPECIFIC TO YOUNG PEOPLE					
16-17yr olds Participation in Education & Training (%)	83	86	108	105	▼
19 yr olds Achieving NVQ Level 3 Qualifications (%)	44	51	96	98	▲
RURAL GEOGRAPHY					
Population Density (People per km sq)		348		119	
INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION					
% of LSOAs in England's 20% most deprived		0		0	

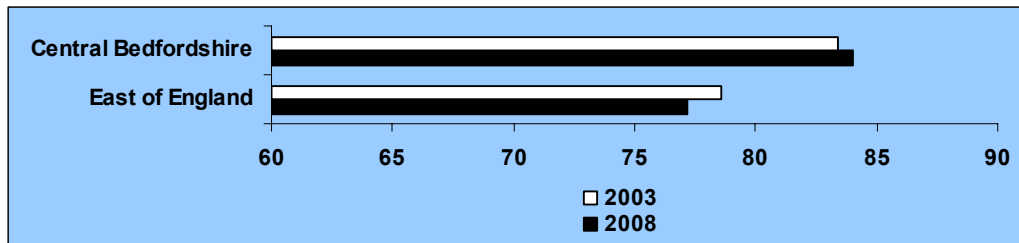
Note: Shading indicates where a low value is good

Rounding of values mean absolute change figures do not always add up

Headline Indicators

Economic participation levels in Central Bedfordshire are amongst the highest in the East of England. Using the employment rate, Figure A3.8 shows that 84% of Central Bedfordshire's working age population are in employment, which is an increase on the 83% in 2003 and well above the East of England's 2008 rate of 77%.

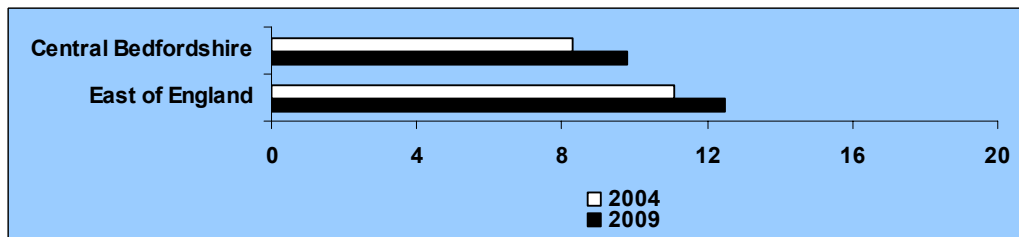
Figure A3.8: Employment Rate (%), 2003 and 2008



Source: Annual Population Survey; Labour Force Survey

As of February 2009, there were 15,580 working age benefit claimants in Central Bedfordshire, which equates to 10% of the working age population. This is well below the East of England average of 13% and second only to Cambridgeshire in the region.

Figure A3.9: Working Age Benefits Claimants as a % of Working Age Population, 2004 and 2009



Source: DWP Work and Pensions Longitudinal Survey.

Note: Data refers to February figures.

Connectivity

With no large population centres in the LAA, Central Bedfordshire has no distinct labour market. Using travel to work data from the 2001 census:

- 50% of Central Bedfordshire residents work in Central Bedfordshire.
- 15% work in Hertfordshire.
- 11% work in Luton.
- 5% work in Bedford.
- 9% work in the South East region.
- 7% work in London.

Barriers to Economic Participation

Figures A3.8 and A3.9 show that Central Bedfordshire's economic participation rates are amongst the highest in the East of England. The following section provides an overview of key thematic indicators to identify what factors may be contributing to Central Bedfordshire's economic participation levels.

- **Education and Skills**
 - Central Bedfordshire has a strong skills profile with the LAA having higher proportions qualified to NVQ Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications than the regional average. For example, 29% of the working age population are qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above compared with the regional average of 26%.
- **Ill Health and Disability**
 - Central Bedfordshire has a smaller proportion of its working age population with a disability or a limiting long-term illness than the East of England average.
- **Young People**
 - The education indicators focussed on young people are only available at Bedfordshire level and not for Central Bedfordshire alone. Using this data, Bedfordshire performs well on all indicators.
 - In 2008, Bedfordshire had 5.8% of its 16-18 year olds 'NEET', a smaller proportion than the East of England's 6.2%.
 - 86% of Bedfordshire's 16-17 year olds were participating in education or training in 2007; above the East of England's 82%.
 - Attainment was also strong with 51% of 19 year olds achieving NVQ Level 3 qualifications; above the East of England's 52%.

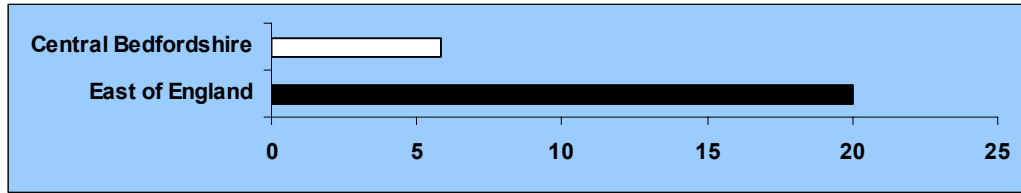
Deprived Neighbourhoods

Transforming Places; Changing Lives: A Framework for Regeneration (DCLG, 2008) considers the priorities for regeneration to be those lower super output areas (LSOAs) that fall within England's 10% most deprived. However, both using the 10% and 20% **national benchmarks**, none of Central Bedfordshire's 154 lower super output areas (LSOAs) fell in England's 20% most deprived LSOAs.

Using a **regional benchmark**, deprived neighbourhoods in the East of England context can be identified that fall outside national benchmarks. Figure A3.10 shows the proportion of LSOAs that fall within the East of England's 20% most deprived.

- Only nine or 6% of Central Bedfordshire's LSOAs fall within the East of England's 20% most deprived.

Figure A3.10: % of Lower Super Output Areas in East of England's 20% Most Deprived, 2007



Source: DCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007

Overall Assessment

Central Bedfordshire has amongst the highest economic participation levels in the East of England and performs well on the indicators around key potential barriers. This is reflected in the small number of neighbourhoods that have high levels of deprivation.

4. ESSEX