

## Business Leaders 'Deep Concern' Over Rise In Midlands Jobless Figures

Wednesday 17 July, 2013

Business leaders expressed "deep concern" following the announcement that unemployment in the West Midlands has increased again, although the national trend was downwards.

The figures revealed that 268,000 people were jobless in region between March and May. This represented an unemployment rate of 9.8 per cent, an increased from 9.4 per cent last month, and means the West Midlands is second only to the North East, where 10.4 per cent were out of work.

At the national level, unemployment fell by 57,000 to 2.51 million in the three months.

Steve Brittan, president of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, said: "This trend is of deep concern to us, given that our region suffers from a chronic skills shortage.

"Apprenticeships will be a crucial component in the bid to supply students with the skills required by companies in the region. The Chamber has been working with the National Apprenticeship Office to encourage businesses to take on apprentices.

"We are also working on a skills campaign to forge a better dialogue between business and schools, and to increase the awareness of students to the range of job prospects in the region.

"However, we do believe that the government should do more to incentivise businesses to take on more staff. This will only be done by increasing confidence through economic measures are red tape, particularly that associated with taking people on."

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