UK Tech Town Index 2019

**THE BEST PLACES IN THE UK
FOR IT PROS TO LIVE AND WORK**

Where are the best places in the UK for IT professionals and what sets those cities apart?

Armed with job data, CompTIA set out to better understand the tech landscape in the UK. Using a formula based on the number of IT job ads posted in the last year, job demand and cost of living, as well as projected IT job growth, we arrived at a list of 10 metropolitan areas that are desirable for current as well as prospective IT workers in the UK and are strong magnets for tech companies and entrepreneurs.

While several large, obvious cities are contenders for the title of the top tech town, they face increasingly stiff competition from other spots around the UK where the innovation economy is thriving and cost of living is lower. This seems to point to greater industry trends like remote working and increased—or at least shifting—social mobility, but it also paints a picture of a UK in which IT talent is more evenly spread across the region. Today's software developer is just as likely to find highly paid work in Reading as she is in Edinburgh and is just as likely to work for one of the world's largest and most successful technology companies there, too. Prominent disruptors in fields like AI and robotics are setting up shop in unlikely places in the UK, attracting uniquely talented people and growing local economies in places like Reading and Bristol.

Much like Silicon Valley in the US, London remains the epicenter of the UK's IT scene, but the opportunities to find and grow in an IT career are more geographically widespread than ever before. The UK's largest city leads the list in terms of sheer volume of employers and number of IT job postings, but the high cost of living suggests that other locations may be enticing options for IT talent. Several areas once thought of as commuter towns for London made the list, proving that they can compete on their own merits. A few medium-sized cities are the "wildcards" of the list, and it will be exciting to see in the coming years whether heavy investment from major global companies, as well as entrepreneurial locals, can propel cities like Leeds and Reading even higher up the list.
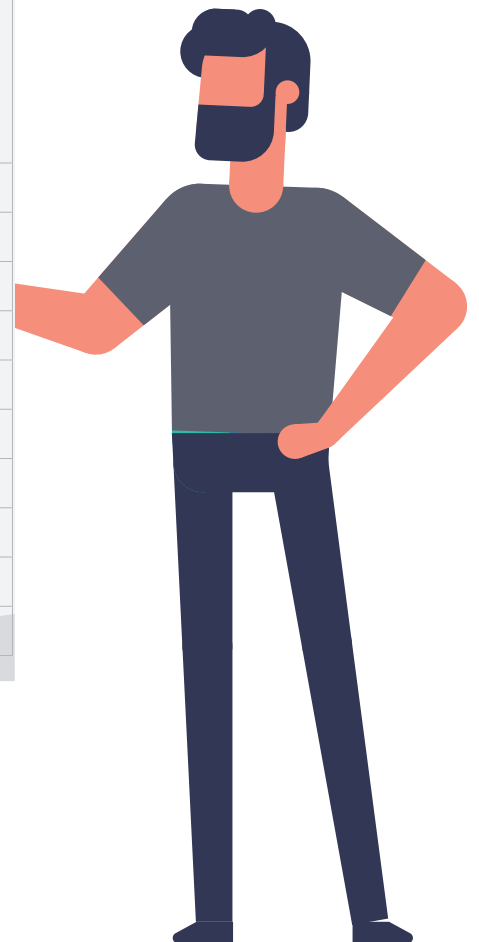
This list should prove inspiring for both IT professionals and tech employers. No matter where you are in the UK, your skills and training (as an employee or a manager) will need to be even sharper, even more relevant and timelier than ever before. Those seeking work as a programmer or software developer; IT business analyst, architect or systems designer; or an IT user support technician have the most opportunities available to them, with more than 420,000 job vacancies posted in the last year across those occupations around the UK.

Across all jobs though, the top skill requirements include not only specialized tech skills, but also "soft" skills such as communication and problem solving, meaning a rounded education with emphasis on continued learning and an adaptable mindset remains fundamental for people entering the IT workforce.

Ultimately, the list is encouraging. The UK is a dynamic and exciting place to work, both for today's IT professionals and for those entering the workforce. Options for where to live and find employment in the IT space are seemingly endless. And the situation for businesses is similarly exciting, with a thriving entrepreneurial landscape and tremendous growth opportunities in once-unlikely places.

EDINBURGH

LEEDS

MANCHESTER

BIRMINGHAM

CAMBRIDGE

READING

BRISTOL

LONDON

BASINGSTOKE

BATH

Travel to Work Areas	Tech Town Rank	# IT Jobs Ads Rank	Cost of Living Rank	1-year % IT Job Growth Rank
Manchester	1	2	1	3
Bristol	2	5	5	1
Leeds	3	7	2	4
Birmingham	4	3	3	7
London	5	1	10	2
Cambridge	6	4	6	5
Edinburgh	7	6	4	8
Bath	8	10	8	6
Basingstoke	9	9	7	10
Reading	10	8	9	9

Primary data sources: Burning Glass Technologies Labour Insights | Emsi | UK Office for National Statistics. For full methodology, turn to the CompTIA UK Tech Town Index Backgrounder on page 16.

No. 1

MANCHESTER

The UK's top tech town is a title we don't give lightly, and this city has worked hard to earn it. The second-largest work area in the UK, home to some 2.7 million people, according to the ONS, has become a magnet for industry. Not, of course, the kind of smoky industry that gave it something of a troubled reputation at the turn of the 20th century, but the kind that powers global trade and technological innovation. Companies like Cloud Technology Services (CTS), entertainment and media brand LADbible Group, major tech player IBM and wi-fi provider Purple are among the area's thriving establishments.

Software development engineers and .Net developers are in hot demand in Manchester, with around 2,000 active job postings for both titles over the past year. Tech Nation shares that between 2006 and 2016, this city saw a 130% rise in the number of businesses formed per year, making for a healthy innovation and networking landscape.

26,277
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

Set amongst 22 universities, all within one hour's drive of the city, it's understandable that Manchester came to be a hub for technology and the exchange of ideas. Its international airport and relative proximity to London (just over two hours by train) keep this city bustling and internationally relevant.

1.3%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with 700 new positions to be added.

The cost of living is **25% lower** than the national average and IT pros get paid **£11,432 more** per year.

The other side to the Manchester growth story is, unfortunately, that although its cost of living is currently a fraction of London's (the median cost of a home in Manchester is £172,186 compared to £466,824 in London), things may be about to change. Manchester's city centre—one of the fastest growing in Europe—has seen a massive spate of newly built warehouse conversion homes and new-build apartment buildings. Around 80,000 new residents are expected to move into new Manchester quarters by 2024, The Guardian reports, and it's uncertain whether this will remain a comparatively affordable area to live. For now, the low cost of living here is a strong factor in Manchester sitting at the top of our list. In addition, median wages are £41,152, which is 38% higher than the median wage for all occupations in the UK (£29,720).*

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. National Health Service
2. TalkTalk Telecom Group
3. University of Manchester
4. The Hut Group Limited
5. IBM Corporation
6. Co-Operative Group Limited
7. KPMG
8. Raytheon UK
9. Manchester Metropolitan University
10. Lloyd's Banking Group

£41,152
Median salary for IT pros

*There are many factors to consider when reviewing wage data. The median wage represents the midpoint, or 50th percentile, on the wage continuum. For example, workers just starting out earn wages at the 10th percentile, and then with experience and additional training and certification, move up through the higher wage levels. (See more about wage information here.)
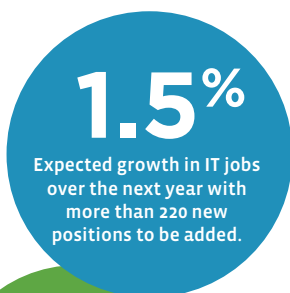
No.
2

BRISTOL

Information Age reports that this southwestern city "punches well above its weight" in terms of digital tech productivity, which is estimated at around £2.44 billion. Bristol's tech accolades are numerous and a quick scan of the 13,626 jobs advertised here in the past year alone make it clear that the city has become a haven for IT minds from around the world. Entities like Blackfinch Ventures and the Bristol Private Equity Group keep fresh financial resources flowing through this Somerset/Gloucestershire city and incentivise new startups.

Bristol's median IT wage is £41,216, but after being adjusted for cost of living, is actually the highest on our list at £46,311, showcasing the earning potential for IT professionals in this part of the country. A higher median wage is good news for prospective homeowners in Bristol, who are looking at a median housing price of £274,121, which is in line with higher prices in the rest of southern England.

13,626
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

1.5%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with more than 220 new positions to be added.

Major players like Oracle, Amazon and Sony have already set up shop here, as have world-class technology innovators like The National Composites Centre—an advanced training and manufacturing lab that tests composite materials for use in industries like aerospace. Also doing its part to keep Bristol on the cutting edge of technology is the Bristol Robotics Laboratory, a university-powered hub of artificial intelligence research and perhaps the most authoritative voice of AI in the UK today. Open Bionics is another local leader in the space, employing people who are dedicated to improving medical prosthetics through technology.

The cost of living is **19% higher** than the national average and IT pros get paid **£11,496 more** per year.

Smart Internet Lab has trialed end-to-end 5G networking capabilities in Bristol, in partnership with a network of nationally ranked universities. The University of Bristol alone graduates some 5,000 computer science and software engineering students each year. Globally renowned aerospace corporation Boeing, which is among the city's largest employers, has a major strategic partnership with the University of Bristol to support unmanned aerial vehicles, among other things.

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. **University of Bristol**
2. **National Health Service**
3. **MBDA**
4. **Computershare Limited**
5. **Lloyd's Banking Group**
6. **University of the West of England, Bristol**
7. **Boeing**
8. **British Telecom**
9. **Babcock International Limited**
10. **General Electric Company**

£41,216
Median salary for IT pros

No. 3

LEEDS

From the perspective of the speed of its sector expansion alone, Leeds is in a league of its own. Information Age reports that from 2011 to 2016 the city saw 138% growth in new digital businesses and contributes some £6.5b to the economy. Adding to the city's reputation as a tech magnet is the hugely popular Leeds Digital Festival—the largest of its kind in the North, boasting 20,000 attendees annually.

This area of the country benefits from a strong mix of urban and rural housing options, with the average house costing £185,231, compared to the UK average of £230,292. Also on offer in Leeds are strong transport links and an array of collaborative workspaces and tech networking meetup groups that focus on gender diversity and greater inclusivity in IT.

Over 28,000 companies call Leeds home, which stacks up well against its city population of 250,000 and work area population of more than 800,000. Leading employers here include NHS Digital, the city's biggest digital employer, and agencies Epiphany and Branded3, both among the top 10 digital agencies in the UK. Russell Group member Leeds University, one of the largest in the UK educating 38,000 students each year, ensures fresh IT talent is routinely available. The university itself posted the second-most IT job listings in the area last year.

IT job seekers in Leeds will find a robust mix of roles here, with .Net developers, software developers, Java developers, solutions architects, front end developers and computer support engineers all well-represented in job ads over the last year. Nearly 11,000 IT roles were advertised in Leeds in the last year alone, so qualified job seekers hoping to focus their search on Leeds have a good chance of finding gainful employment.

10,943
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

1.3%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with 270 new positions to be added.

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. National Health Service
2. University of Leeds
3. Cortland
4. Leeds City Council
5. HSBC Holdings
6. Jet2 Limited
7. Lowell Group
8. KPMG
9. British Sky Broadcasting
10. ASDA

The cost of living is **20% lower** than the national average and IT pros get paid **£11,266 more** per year.

£40,846
Median salary for IT pros

No.
4

BIRMINGHAM

This city has many claims to fame that have nothing to do with its proximity to London, but it doesn't hurt that new rail routes within the next 7 years plan to reduce travel time between the cities to just 49 minutes—nearly half the current travel time. According to research from the University of Sheffield, Birmingham will be a plural city by 2024, with ever-growing cultural diversity and healthy financial investments helping it along. Future plans aside, Birmingham today offers an exceptional cost of living, with our data showing it as the third most affordable UK city for housing. The median home cost here is £185,359, compared to the £230,292 UK average.

23,809
IT job postings between
August 2018-July 2019

The entrepreneurial spirit in Birmingham is alive and well. According to a report by the Centre for Entrepreneurs Birmingham, this city has topped the nation's list for highest number of new startups outside London for five years in a row. And according to the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, there was an 11% rise in the number of software development and programming businesses alone in the region in 2018. The city's Diversity in Digital festival is a month-long initiative aimed at closing diversity gaps in the digital sector. This year's focus, for example, is on improving the scene for women in technology (#DIDFest2019).

£40,913
Median salary for IT pros

The cost of living is
20% lower
than the national average
and IT pros get paid
£11,193 more
per year.

Eighteen universities within an hour's drive give this West Midlands city a big boost in terms of the diversity of companies setting up shop here. From major banks like HSBC to professional services firms like KPMG, the influx of people and companies in just a few years is staggering. Tech Nation reports that over 6,000 people moved from London to Birmingham in 2017 alone. A new HMRC regional hub is creating some 3,000 new jobs in 2019, and Advanced Computer Software Group added its fair share with 400 new jobs. The National Health Service remains the city's biggest employer.

A wide array of IT roles make up the job ads landscape in Birmingham, with strong representation spanning everything from network engineers to solutions architects and .Net developers. A low cost of living in Birmingham makes up for slightly lower IT wages of £40,913. Once adjusted for cost of living, IT wages sit at a much more respectable £45,459.

.9%
Expected growth in IT jobs
over the next year with
more than 160 new
positions to be added.

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. National Health Service
2. University of Birmingham
3. SCC Ltd.
4. Serco Group
5. Aston University, Birmingham
6. ZF Friedrichshafen AG
7. Advanced Computer Software Group
8. West Midlands Combined Authority
9. KPMG
10. Avanti Corporation

No.
5

LONDON

London is indisputably one of the most technologically advanced cities in the world, with a vast communications infrastructure and countless financial transactions occurring daily. From the sheer diversity and number of employers and jobs alone, London should top the list, but a punishingly high cost of living (the cost of housing here is over twice the UK average) and difficult commuter routes keep expectations in check. Still, its vast geographical area and countless startup enclaves and business districts make London an exciting and vibrant place for IT workers. If you've got the wallet to live here, the sky's the limit. In the last year in London, there were 7,563 job postings for Java software developers alone. Software development engineers, front end developers and data analysts were also highly sought after, with several thousand job postings for each.

Whilst the looming Brexit has posed interesting questions about the future of the IT sector in the British capital (some companies have opted to preempt the move and head to cities in continental Europe), it is now thought that an increasingly remote IT workforce has the potential to offset worrying trends. That is also good news for those who may choose to live here and work from home, or those who hope to avoid the high cost of opening an office in this major metropolis. Brexit aside, Tech Nation research shows that this city still managed to attract around £1 billion more than its continental counterparts Paris and Amsterdam in 2017.

London's exciting IT employers include successful startups like Revolut, disruptors like Deliveroo, and household names like IBM. Looking to the future, mega corporation Apple is set to take over renovated offices in the iconic Battersea Power Station, which will bring a surge of new talent and IT jobs to the area. London's top employers posting IT jobs, however, are the National Health Service and KPMG.

"Silicon Roundabout" near East London's Old Street tube station, showcases the volume of technology companies that call London home. In this part of the city, startups and well-heeled new ventures sit alongside established giants like Cisco, Facebook and Google. Companies like Virgin Atlantic Airways, HSBC, solutions provider CGI, PwC, Royal Dutch Shell, Unilever and Barclays all call London home, as do too many others to name.

With some 40 universities and higher education institutions here serving students from every country on earth, new ideas and innovation are always at home in this city. The prestigious University of London, with its 17 independent member institutions, educates around 120,000 students alone.

168,371
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

The cost of living is **103% higher** than the national average and IT pros get paid **£22,532 more** per year.

1.3%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with more than 4,000 new positions to be added.

£52,252
Median salary for IT pros

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. National Health Service
2. KPMG
3. HSBC Holdings
4. Deloitte
5. JPMorgan Chase
6. EY
7. Amazon
8. Accenture
9. PwC
10. Capgemini

No.
6

The cost of living is
28% higher
than the national average
and IT pros get paid
£15,335 more
per year.

CAMBRIDGE

Northern California may have Silicon Valley, but Cambridge has "Silicon Fen" (sometimes known as the Cambridge Cluster). This small, intellectually savvy city has become a tech powerhouse in its own right with a diverse array of tech companies, some of which are affiliated with its world-class university, calling Cambridge home. Tech Nation data puts Cambridge (with a work area population of just over 700,000) on the same level as Istanbul (home to nearly 15 million people) in terms of the scale of investments made in the last five years.

The University of Cambridge reports that today the city is Europe's largest technology cluster, with 57,000 people employed by more than 1,500 tech-based firms, yielding a combined annual revenue of over £13 billion. Resident companies include cybersecurity firm Darktrace, coding education charity Raspberry Pi Foundation, biomedical behemoth AstraZeneca, and web network and analysis firm Cambridge Intelligence. A well-heeled startup and angel investor scene keeps fresh money flowing to the ideas with demonstrable potential, and there's no shortage of those here. A total of 15,528 IT roles were advertised over the last year in Cambridge—more than in the capital of Scotland.

Unfortunately, there's another side to the Cambridge coin, as soaring housing prices keep this small city's tech appeal in check. Private rents in Cambridge and the surrounding area are among the highest in the country and the median home price sits at £294,375 (nearly 28% higher than the national average) meaning many bright minds and prospective workers are simply priced out of living here. Still, the city's location just 45 minutes from London by train means it's a doable commute for workers and business travelers alike.

Whatever the real estate landscape looks like, IT passion is a must for workers in this city. Highly driven job seekers here might have a chance to work for startups like Improbable, a virtual reality endeavour founded by two Cambridge University computer science students, to tap the potential of gaming to solving some of the world's biggest challenges. In Cambridge, innovation is king.

£45,055
Median salary for IT pros

1.3%
Expected growth in IT jobs
over the next year with
270 new positions
to be added.

15,528
IT job postings between
August 2018-July 2019

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. **University of Cambridge**
2. **AstraZeneca PLC**
3. **National Health Service**
4. **Raytheon UK**
5. **Amazon**
6. **Cambridge Assessment**
7. **Worldplay Limited**
8. **Abcam**
9. **Cambridge Wireless Limited**
10. **Johnson Matthey PLC**

No.
7

EDINBURGH

In terms of talent pool, this diverse and exciting northern city remains a beacon for local and international students, as well as new talent from overseas, all vying for coveted spots each year. Six universities call Edinburgh home, while the University of Edinburgh alone educates 31,000 students, including 11,000 international students from over 130 countries.

Edinburgh is undeniably going through a housing crisis of its own, which prevents it from being higher up on our list. It is the least affordable city in Scotland, and the BBC reports that rents rose some 42% in just eight years, while incomes remained fairly stagnant. Median annual wages for IT pros in the Edinburgh work area sit at £42,698, but when adjusted for the cost of living, wages fall to £39,546, putting it lower on the list than locations like Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester for earning potential. Much like London, though, if you can secure work here and navigate your way around the cost of living, locals will tell you that it is one of the best places in the world to live and work.

The University of Edinburgh's renowned School of Informatics, the Amazon Development Centre Scotland and Microsoft's UK Technology Centre are a few of the area's most exciting global employers. Other companies with an Edinburgh presence include high-performers Skyscanner and FanDuel, and massive financial providers Royal Bank of Scotland Group and Lloyd's Banking Group.

The city has big tech ambitions for the future, with a goal of becoming the Data Capital of Europe. It may not be far-fetched, as Tech Nation reports that the period between 2014-2017 saw some threefold growth in digital jobs over the UK average.

This region has also made a concerted and inspiring effort to improve gender representation in IT. Scotland's tech sector is comprised, the British Computer Society's 2017 Diversity Report tells us, of 20% women employees. Bittersweetly, this makes it a better performer than any other area in the UK (17% being the national average) in terms of gender representation in IT. The 2019 Women in Tech Scotland event in Edinburgh celebrated the women trailblazers driving the Scottish economy, like Melinda Matthews-Clarkson, CEO of CodeClan; Urchana Moudgil, co-founder and COO of tech provider Upgrade Pack; and Toni Scullion, founder of non-profit dressCode, which aims to close the gender gap in computer science.

.8%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with nearly 150 new positions to be added.

12,411
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

The cost of living is **14% higher** than the national average and IT pros get paid **£12,978 more** per year.

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. University of Edinburgh
2. Royal Bank of Scotland
3. National Health Service
4. Lloyd's Banking Group
5. Amazon
6. Standard Life
7. Leonardo Group Limited
8. Scottish Government
9. Computershare Limited
10. HSBC Holdings

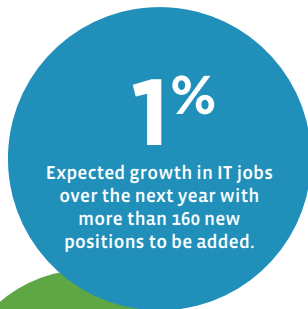**£42,698**
Median salary for IT pros

No.
8

BATH

You might say that Bath is to Bristol as Basingstoke is to London—although the comparison doesn't do justice to either of the smaller cities—but it's true that many IT professionals employed in Bristol have chosen to call Bath home. Others have realised that Bath is much more than a commuter town, and not just because of its world-renowned Roman ruins and spa.

A report by the Bath and North East Somerset Council shows above-average levels of employment in creative, digital and IT, making Bath an exciting place to work. The city's top employers posting IT positions include the University of Bath, the National Health Service and BMT Defence Services Limited. Promising tech startups Pervasive Media, Brightpearl and Second Sync are also based here. Interestingly, the Council's report shows that some 42% of jobs in Bath are part-time (10% higher than the national average), perhaps indicating that residents here prefer dipping in and out of the gig economy, and enjoy a healthy work-life balance... that is, if they can afford to live here. Bath has the third highest cost of living of the cities on our list, with only Reading and London being higher, and the median home cost in Bath sitting at £327,059 (compared to the £230,292 UK average).

For the lucky ones who call this ancient city home, there is a thriving cultural scene and several world-class universities on Bath's doorstep, including Bath Spa University and the University of Bath. While the presence of universities alone is enough to give Bath a boost, there's also financial gravity to the university scene in this part of England. Tech Nation reports that an enterprise partnership between the universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Southampton and Surrey has helped 2,500 UK startups raise around £1.5 billion of investment.

Encouragingly, 2,436 IT roles were advertised here in the last year, with a ratio of 27 jobs posted for every 1,000 people employed—meaning this is a small work area with a comparatively big IT jobs landscape that's making a profound impact. Bath-based Pure Planet, for example, was featured by The Sunday Times as one of '10 Ones to Watch' in the UK's Tech Track 100 for their work in digital-first clean energy, reflecting the strong sense of innovation and purpose among Bath IT workers. It will be exciting to watch Bath's unique growth story unfold over the coming months and years.

2,436
IT job postings between
August 2018-July 2019

1%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with more than 160 new positions to be added.

The cost of living is
42% higher
than the national average and IT pros get paid
£11,471 more
per year.

£41,191
Median salary for IT pros

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. University of Bath
2. National Health Service
3. BMT Defence Services Limited
4. Rotork PLC
5. Future PLC
6. Good Energy Group
7. Actual Experience Limited
8. GCI Group Limited
9. BAE Systems
10. Royds Limited

No.
9

BASINGSTOKE

As London's commuter belt widens, it's not unheard of for Basingstoke residents to make the hour and 20-minute train trip in and out of the city each day. But spending nearly three hours a day on a train—even one with Wi-Fi—doesn't appeal to everyone. Thanks to an entrepreneurial bunch of locals and a particularly appealing business climate, this Hampshire town in England's southeast has become a tech magnet in its own right. Some 7,000 businesses now reside in Basingstoke, with names like Sony, Barclays and Fortune 500 solutions-provider Tech Data among them. A thriving startup culture here has yielded a much healthier 5-year outlook for new ventures than the national average.

Shared and rented workspace providers like locally headquartered Absolutely Offices make it easy for entrepreneurs and remote workers to find office space that doesn't cost a fortune, and the nearby University of Winchester keeps a steady flow of fresh ideas and talent on-tap for local businesses. Relatively affordable housing prices allow people to build a life in the desirable southeast of England, within easy reach of London, but without the sticker shock.

Even though the cost of living in Basingstoke is far lower than in London (as many residents who moved here to escape city house prices will tell you), just being somewhat close to London can have a big impact on cost of living, when compared to the rest of the country. While the IT median wage here is an impressive £46,598, once adjusted for cost of living it drops to £39,336. The median home cost in Basingstoke (£312,562) is also reflective of overall prices in the south of England, and although much lower than London, is still well above the UK average.

But despite the cost of living, the tech outlook for this UK town is positive. To give a sense of the scale of Basingstoke's investment landscape, Tech Nation likens it to Prague, Strasbourg and San Jose. And opportunity abounds for job seekers—Basingstoke saw 3,542 IT vacancies posted in the last year, with a large number of software development engineer roles advertised.

3,542
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

The cost of living is
36% higher
than the national average and IT pros get paid
£16,878 more
per year.

£46,598
Median salary for IT pros

0%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with the total number of positions likely to remain virtually unchanged.

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. Virgin Media
2. The Automobile Association
3. Fujitsu Limited
4. CenturyLink
5. Barclays
6. Boeing
7. MasterControl
8. National Health Service
9. Visa
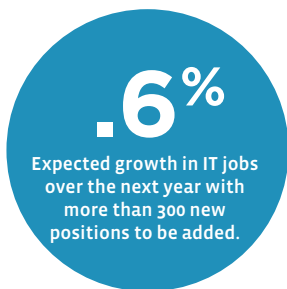10. Reassure Limited

No.
10

READING

Another sprawling London commuter town, or a thriving tech town in its own right? Thriving tech town, the people who choose to live and work in this Berkshire hub on the Thames, seem to think. With the new Elizabeth Line of Crossrail scheduled to open at the end of this year and dramatically improve transport links here, the vast potential of this town hasn't gone unnoticed by investors. While Reading is number 10 on our list for IT alone, EY has announced that Reading is forecast to be the UK's fastest-growing location for economic growth overall until 2021—an exciting prospect for investors and people looking to move here.

Reading is already home to multinational companies like Oracle, Cisco Systems and Microsoft. Everything from newbie startups to major conglomerates are represented in the town's sparkling Thames Valley Science Park, which is now used by some 70 companies, including Sage People, Clasado BioSciences and BioInteractions.

Artificial intelligence, it seems, may be a big part of Reading's future. DataSift, a company founded here in 2010, was acquired by San Francisco-based Meltwater in 2018. This move will, Tech Nation reports, propel the company's status to one of the leading providers of AI-powered competitive intelligence. This is a huge deal for not only Reading, but also for the future of the UK as a contributor to global economic growth. In a recent PwC report, it's speculated that AI alone will provide as much as a 14% boost to global GDP by 2030.

While it may be punching at city weight in terms of contributions to the global tech economy, with a population of 230,000, Reading is not actually a city, but is officially the largest *town* in England (the population of the Reading work area is more than 550,000). It is also the home of the 150-year-old University of Reading—one of the leading research universities in the UK—and within easy reach of a vast array of others.

Undeniably, Reading's location west of London and short distance to London Heathrow Airport make it an attractive IT spot. That attractiveness is backed up by a digital tech business turnover of £13.6 billion in 2017 alone, according to Tech Nation. A strong array of coworking spaces and networking groups, combined with a lower-than-London cost of living, make Reading a hot pick for tech workers and businesses alike.

.6%
Expected growth in IT jobs over the next year with more than 300 new positions to be added.

The cost of living is
43% higher
than the national average and IT pros get paid
£17,140 more
per year.

£46,860
Median salary for IT pros

9,574
IT job postings between August 2018-July 2019

Who's hiring IT pros?

1. **Microsoft**
2. **Oracle**
3. **National Health Service**
4. **John Lewis Partnership**
5. **Ultima Business Solutions**
6. **SSE PLC**
7. **University of Reading**
8. **Thames Water**
9. **CenturyLink**
10. **AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment)**

CompTIA UK Tech Town Index Backgrounder

Overview

CompTIA's UK Tech Town Index is a snapshot created to provide some guidance on locations to consider a tech job. It is not meant to measure everything. It gives a unique look into key locations as it goes beyond number of jobs and considers factors such as job postings, projected job growth and cost of living. CompTIA recognises that there are many ways to assess places to live and work. Some people may place more emphasis on culture and entertainment, while some place more emphasis on family friendly locales, etc. CompTIA's assessment takes one approach that emphasizes the relative strength of the opportunity, along with cost of living.

The initial top 10 travel to work areas (TTWAs or 'work area' as referred to throughout the report) are selected based on location quotient (LQ) using Burning Glass data, i.e. the number of job postings over the last 12 months per 1,000 people employed in that work area.

A **location quotient** is a measure of concentration, comparing local concentrations to the national level. All 10 of these work areas have a higher demand than average as far as number of job postings by number of people employed in comparison to the UK.

Additional factors are then considered to develop CompTIA's ranking among these 10 work areas, including actual number of job ads, projected job growth and cost of living (CoL).

Which variables are included in CompTIA's ranking?

CompTIA's Index is based on variables for each of three main factors: hiring demand over last 12 months (IT job postings), projected IT job growth and cost of living.

Variables	Data Sources
Number of IT Job Ads (over last 12 months)	Burning Glass
1-Year IT Job Growth (percent change 2019-2020)	Emsi	ONS
Cost of Living	ONS

Note: Location quotient is the primary factor in determining initial list of 10 work areas to assess, i.e. number of IT job ads per 1,000 people employed.

How is CompTIA's ranking determined?

After the pool of 10 work areas is determined using location quotient data from Burning Glass, CompTIA ranks each of the three variables above from 1st to 10th for each work area. The mean average is then figured among all three variables per work area. The resulting mean average, or score, per work area then determines the overall ranking for CompTIA's final list.

Additional Notes

CompTIA's Index is based on data available as of August 2019. The availability of data was a factor in the output.

On the occasion when the mean average ties, the work area with the lower cost of living is ranked higher.

CompTIA's Index is based on core information technology (IT) occupations. This covers positions such as the following:

IT and telecom directors	**Web design and development professionals**
IT specialist managers	**IT operations technicians**
IT project and programme managers	**IT and telecom engineers**
IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	**Other IT and telecom professionals**
Programmers and software development professionals	

In addition to Burning Glass information on job postings, they provide "postings/people employed in a given area and location quotients. Together, these can help make sense of raw posting counts, and provide a picture not just of how job postings are distributed across geographies, but how particular types of jobs are concentrated relative to the average, nationwide distribution and where a particular job is advertised more frequently than one would expect given the size of the employed population."

Job posting data is a useful, but an imperfect proxy for job demand. Not every posting translates to a new job; hiring firms may change their plans, post multiple times for the same job, hire internally, try different approaches to find the right candidate and so forth. Also, one ad may be posted for multiple openings. CompTIA recommends using job posting data in conjunction with employment data to get a more complete picture of labour dynamics for a given occupation category.

CompTIA subscribes to numerous data sources including Burning Glass and Emsi. In addition to these sources, the report incorporates UK government data such as from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Additional information highlighted in this report is complementary and not directly used in the rankings.

The cost of living for the UK is primarily determined by the average price of housing as provided by the ONS Housing Price Index. The UK might not have as many cost of living differences as a larger region such as the US may have, hence CompTIA's use of house pricing as a leading indicator for differences across the region.

CompTIA rolls up data available at the county/unitary authority level to respective work areas as needed. Still, there are more than 200+ work areas in the UK.

There are many factors to consider when evaluating wages. In addition to location, wages vary based on occupation, industry, company size, etc., as well as areas of expertise, job experience and education. A skilled employee in a hot field such as artificial intelligence, working for a large company, will earn on average far more than a tech worker in an established field, working for a small business in a rural area.

Median wages highlighted throughout this report are for IT positions overall and would vary by job role. For example, the median wage in the UK for IT specialist managers (£50,474) is 53% higher than for web developers (£32,895).

In terms of wage percentiles, a programmer may start out with £26,847 at the 10th percentile, and work her way up to the 25th percentile (£34,813), 50th percentile or median (£45,630), 75th percentile (£57,915), and 90th percentile (£73,679).

Sampling of IT occupations and wage percentiles:

	10th Percentile	25th Percentile	50th Percentile| Median	75th Percentile	90th Percentile
Support Tech	£20,398	£24,690	£31,348	£40,276	£51,806
Programmer	£26,847	£34,813	£45,630	£57,915	£73,679
IT Project Mgr	£30,142	£41,150	£54,378	£67,124	£85,547

For additional UK IT labour market insights, see CompTIA's quarterly UK IT Employment Snapshot at comptia.org.

For more information about CompTIA's UK Channel Community, visit comptia.org.

UK Channel
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