Ask the Expert on Productivity: Breakfast Podcast Series

08:30 - 09:00 | 27/04/2026 | Online

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Join the Productivity Institute for National Productivity Week's daily live episodes of the Productivity Puzzles podcast

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Daily, 27 April – 1 May, 8:30-9:00am

Start your day with expert insights from thought leaders on productivity during National Productivity Week.

Join **The Productivity Institute** for a series of short live, interactive, podcasts bringing together leading experts to discuss the key drivers of productivity in the UK economy. Each morning from **8:30–9:00am**, **Bart Van Ark**, Managing Director of The Productivity Institute, will host a 15-minute conversation with a guest expert followed by a live audience Q&A.

The series, framed around **"Ask the expert on…"**, will explore

different dimensions of the productivity challenge – from regional growth and skills to workplace health and economic participation.

Bart will have conversations throughout the week with

- **Philip McCann** (Sir Terry Leahy Chair in Urban and Regional Economics, Alliance Manchester Business School)
- **Chander Velu** (Associate Professor in Innovation and Economics, University of Cambridge)
- **Diane Coyle** (Bennett Professor of Public Policy, University of Cambridge)
- **Duncan Ivison** (President and Vice-Chancellor, The University of Manchester)
- **Charlie Mayfield** (Chair, Get Britain Working).

Register once to attend the whole series.
When you sign up, you will receive **one link that gives you access to all five sessions** across the week, to allow you to watch or listen along each day.

Each session will be broadcast live and you can submit questions ahead of time or during the podcast. You have the opportunity to put your questions in during registration to be sure the expert will know them in advance to consider their answers.

Monday 27 April:

Ask the expert on… regional productivity and place-based growth

Guest: Philip McCann, Sir Terry Leahy Chair in Urban and Regional Economics, Alliance Manchester Business School, The University of Manchester

Productivity varies widely across regions, shaping economic opportunity and growth. In this conversation, we explore with Philip McCann why these regional productivity gaps emerge and what effective place-based policy can do to address them. Drawing on international evidence and Philip's extensive research on regional development, the discussion will consider how cities and regions can strengthen their economic

performance and contribute to national productivity growth.

Tuesday 28 April:

Ask the expert on… making digital technologies deliver productivity

Guest: Chander Velu, Professor in Innovation and Economics, University of Cambridge

Despite unprecedented advances in digital technologies, productivity growth has stalled, revealing a striking paradox: innovation is abundant, but its benefits are not. We discuss with Chander Velu why the issue lies not in the technologies themselves but in the failure to redesign how organisations create and capture value when adopting automation, digital fabrication, or quantum technologies. We also examine the implications for organisational strategy in the digital economy.

Wednesday 29 April:

Ask the expert on…what is productivity?

Guest: Diane Coyle, Bennett Professor of Public Policy, University of Cambridge

Productivity is a fundamental measure of how effectively people, firms and places transform resources into improved living standards. Diane Coyle will show why understanding productivity depends on improved economic measurement, including more accurate valuation of intangible, natural and digital capital. She also explains why the effects of technologies such as digitalisation and AI remain difficult to capture in traditional statistics, with significant implications for policy and how we judge economic progress.

Thursday 30 April:

Ask the expert on… skills, education and regional productivity

Guest: Duncan Ivison, President and Vice-Chancellor, The

University of Manchester

Skills are central to regional economic performance, but translating the supply of graduates into broader workforce productivity remains a challenge. In this session, Duncan Ivison will discuss the relationship between higher education, further education and place-based development. Using Greater Manchester as an illustration and drawing on international examples, the conversation will explore how policy can strengthen skills systems, support graduate retention and migration, and better connect education with regional economic growth.

Friday 1 May:

Ask the expert on… keeping Britain working: health, work and productivity

Guest: Charlie Mayfield, Chair, Keep Britain Working Review, and Former Chairman, John Lewis Partnership

Rising economic inactivity linked to health has become a major challenge for the UK economy. In this discussion, Charlie Mayfield will draw on insights from the *Keep Britain Working* review to explore the role employers can play in supporting people to remain in work. The conversation will examine how workplace practices, health support and collaboration between employers, government and communities can help strengthen workforce participation and productivity.