

Regional Strategic Analysis: North East

Young People

September 2009

For individuals and organisations interested
in learning and skills

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Introduction

- 1 From April 2010, responsibility for securing sufficient education and training provision for all young people aged 16–19, and 19–25 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as juveniles in custody, will pass from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to Local Authorities.
- 2 To support the transition, LSC North East has aligned its approach to the 2009/10 business cycle to the national *Commissioning through Transition* framework. This approach is designed to build understanding and capacity within Local Authorities ahead of the new arrangements for the planning and funding of young people's learning.
- 3 Strategic analysis is the first stage in the annual business cycle. It provides the evidence base from which commissioning priorities are identified for the following academic year.
- 4 In the transition year 2009/10, the LSC's local 16–19 teams are working with Local Authority colleagues in each area to undertake a local strategic analysis. These will support the refresh of local 14–19 plans by 14–19 Partnerships and the identification of local commissioning priorities for the 2010/11 academic year, set out in Local Area Statements of Need.
- 5 The Regional Strategic Analysis is intended to add value to, rather than aggregate the local analyses. It highlights issues in 16–19 participation and attainment at the regional level while identifying significant variations across the region and particular 'hotspots'. It is set in the context of 14–19 Reform with a particular focus on Raising the Participation Age, the 14–19 entitlement and 'narrowing the gap'. It also considers the regional economic context and how this needs to play into planning for young people's education and training.
- 6 This regional analysis, together with the 12 Local Area Statements of Need, will help to shape a Regional Commissioning Statement for young people for 2010/11 and will inform dialogue with providers on the mix and balance of provision in each local authority area.

The national policy context

7 The 14–19 Reform programme aims to transform the services and opportunities available to young people by reforming qualifications, broadening the curriculum offer and ensuring that the right support is in place so that every young person can learn in a way that engages and motivates them and puts them on a path to success. This was articulated in *Delivering 14–19 Reform: Next Steps*¹ as the ambition to provide a **14–19 entitlement** for all young people, comprising:

- a choice of learning programme from one of four routes, including Diplomas, Apprenticeships, Foundation Learning and General Qualifications, underpinned by functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills, and
- strong support to access learning, including both financial support such as the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and non-financial support including impartial and effective information, advice and guidance (IAG), a 14–19 Prospectus and Common Application Process, and the September Guarantee.

Progress towards meeting the 14–19 entitlement in the region is discussed in paragraphs 126–169.

8 The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislates for all young people to remain in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 by 2013, and by 2015, until the age of 18. This commitment to **Raising the Participation Age** is a key part of the Government’s ambition that all young people reach adulthood equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and that are essential for a highly skilled workforce able to compete in the international economy. Local authorities will have a duty to promote effective participation of all young people in their area and will need to ensure that there is the provision and support to cater for all possible ways to participate.

Given current levels of participation, raising the participation age represents a major challenge for the North East, as discussed in paragraphs 49–54.

9 Social class is still the strongest predictor of educational attainment. The gap in attainment opens up by the age of 22 months, and a child eligible for Free Schools Meals has around three times worse odds of achieving good school outcomes than a non-eligible child at *every critical point* in their education². **Narrowing the Gap** in educational achievement between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers continues to be a key Government priority. In the North East, the most recent analysis suggests that the gap in some parts of the region may be widening rather than closing.

It is important to note the focus on Narrowing the Gap is broad-ranging, encompassing the need to address all barriers to participation and

¹ DCSF (2008) *Delivering 14–19 Reform: Next Steps* (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/delivering_14-19_reform.pdf).

² DCSF (2009) *Breaking the Link between Disadvantage and Low Attainment: Everyone’s Business* (<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00357-2009.pdf>).

attainment. It is not solely focused on those young people identified through measures of deprivation.

- 10 The 14–19 policy agenda is far-reaching in scope. Effective local 14–19 Partnerships in the region will be critical to the delivery of reform. They will play a pivotal role as the link between consortia delivering on the ground and Local Authorities as strategic leaders of 14–19 reform through their role of commissioning provision.

The economic context

- 11 The Leitch Review of Skills³ articulated the scale of the economic challenge facing the nation, and the considerable increase in investment and skills required to tackle this. The North East faces a huge challenge just to keep up with the national position. Historically, the region's economy has performed at a relatively low level in comparison to other regions and nationally.

- 12 The Regional Economic Strategy (RES)⁴ articulates the vision for sustainable economic growth in the North East. It sets out the regional ambition to drive up regional GVA to 90 per cent of the national average by 2016. Achieving this requires, among other things, increasing labour market participation among working-age people, and raising the skills levels of the labour force.

The RES recognises that the skills and qualifications of young people are a key determinant of the long-term skills profile of the region's economy and highlights the need to raise the aspirations and attainment of young people in order that they achieve their potential.

- 13 Over the last decade, there has been significant progress made in strengthening and diversifying the North East economy. The region's economy has been growing at a faster rate than nationally and there has been a narrowing of the gap in employment rates. This put the region in a much stronger starting position going into the recent recession than was the case in previous recessions of the 1980s and 90s.
- 14 Nevertheless, the recession has had a significant impact on the North East, as it has nationally. While the recession originated in the financial services sector, with knock-on effects on construction and property related industries, the impact soon spread across a wide range of sectors and occupations.
- 15 All parts of the region have seen rising unemployment, although some have been harder hit than others. In July 2009, the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) was 70 per cent higher than in July 2008, and at 7.1 per cent the regional claimant count rate is above the national rate of 4.8 per cent⁵. Employment opportunities for young people have been affected – the number of young people claiming JSA rose sharply between August 2008 and February 2009, and while now falling again, remains considerably higher than before the recession. The impact of the recession on participation by young people is explored further in paragraphs 79–84.

³ See http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/leitch_review_index.htm

⁴ One NorthEast (2006) *Leading The Way: The Regional Economic Strategy* (<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/res.cfm>).

⁵ ONS Claimant Count, July 2009.

- 16 The regional economy is now showing tentative signs of recovery. Positive output growth is predicted for the end of 2009 and into 2010, but it is difficult to predict the strength of this recovery with any certainty. Unemployment in the region continues to rise, albeit much less rapidly than at the height of the recession, and there continue to be significant redundancy announcements both by private sector and public sector employers in the region.
- 17 While the focus of the region in the short term has been to respond to the recession, the longer term aim remains for the North East to continue to close the gap with national performance in productivity.
- 18 The structure of the economy is a key determinant of economic performance. Despite significant decline in employment in manufacturing over the last three decades, the sector remains important to the economy, although the nature of jobs in the sector continues to change as it diversifies into new areas such as renewables. The public sector (health and social care, education and public administration) is a major employer in the region. Business services and retail are big employers although less important to regional employment than nationally.
- 19 Employment projections for the region suggest that over the next decade, employment in manufacturing and production sectors is projected to continue to decline, while service sectors are projected to continue to expand. The number of jobs requiring intermediate and higher level skills is projected to grow, while the number of jobs in craft level occupations and in occupations with low skills needs is projected to fall.
- 20 It is also important to consider strategic priorities for the region and economic development aspirations which may impact on investment decisions and therefore future employment opportunities. The RES identifies nine key sectors as drivers of increased economic participation and productivity growth in the region⁶. The region will also respond to the Government's Industrial Activism agenda which identifies four major areas for targeted support for the development of new activities⁷.
- 21 There will be continuing employment demand in all sectors and occupations over the next decade, including those that face decline in overall employment terms, because of the need to replace staff lost through turnover and retirement. This is a particular issue in sectors with an ageing workforce. Total replacement demand in the North East is estimated to be over 10 times as great as the demand from new jobs.
- 22 It is important that young people, and those from whom they seek advice (such as parents and IAG providers), are equipped with robust information on the range of opportunities available across sectors and occupations. The provision of labour market information is one responsibility of the re-licensed Sector Skills Councils.

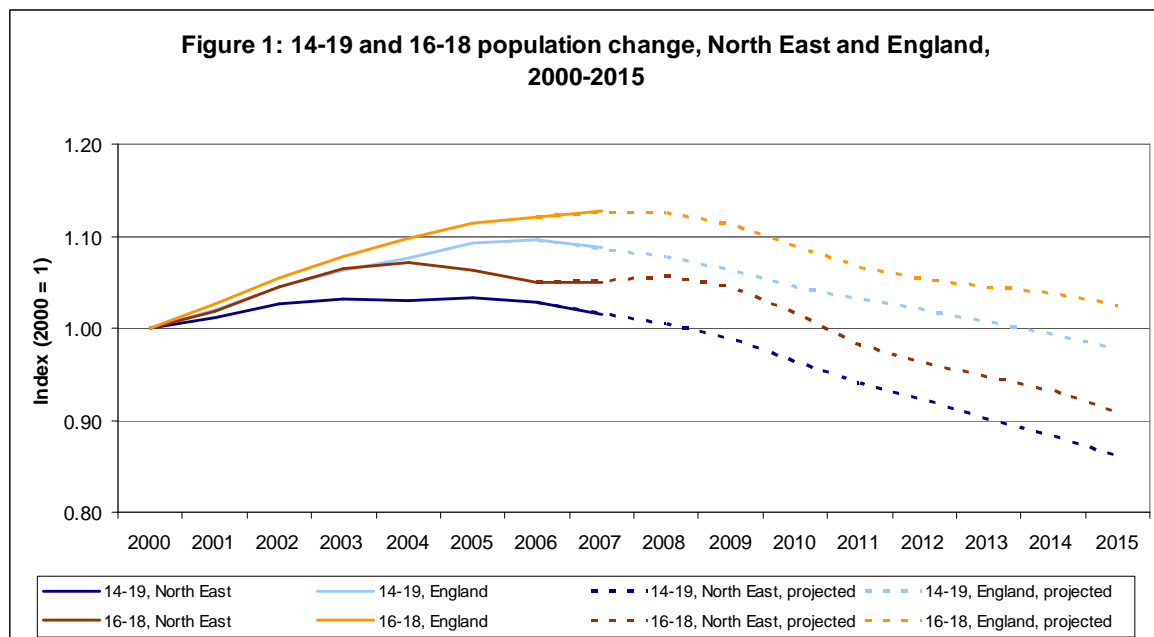
⁶ Including chemicals and pharmaceuticals, automotive, defence and marine, food and drink, energy (renewables and low carbon technologies), knowledge intensive business services, tourism and hospitality, commercial creative, and health and social care.

⁷ Including electric vehicles, offshore wind, the process industries and printable electronics.

The demographic context

Population profile

- 23 In mid-2008, the North East was home to an estimated 165,900 young people aged 14–19 years old, including around 102,700 aged 16–18 years old. 51 per cent were male and 49 per cent female⁸.
- 24 The 14–19 population began to shrink in 2006, and projections suggest this decline will continue. The decline will be more significant in the North East than in England. By 2015, the 14–19 cohort in the region is projected to be less than 86 per cent of its size in 2008⁹.



Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, ONS 2006-based Subnational Population Projections

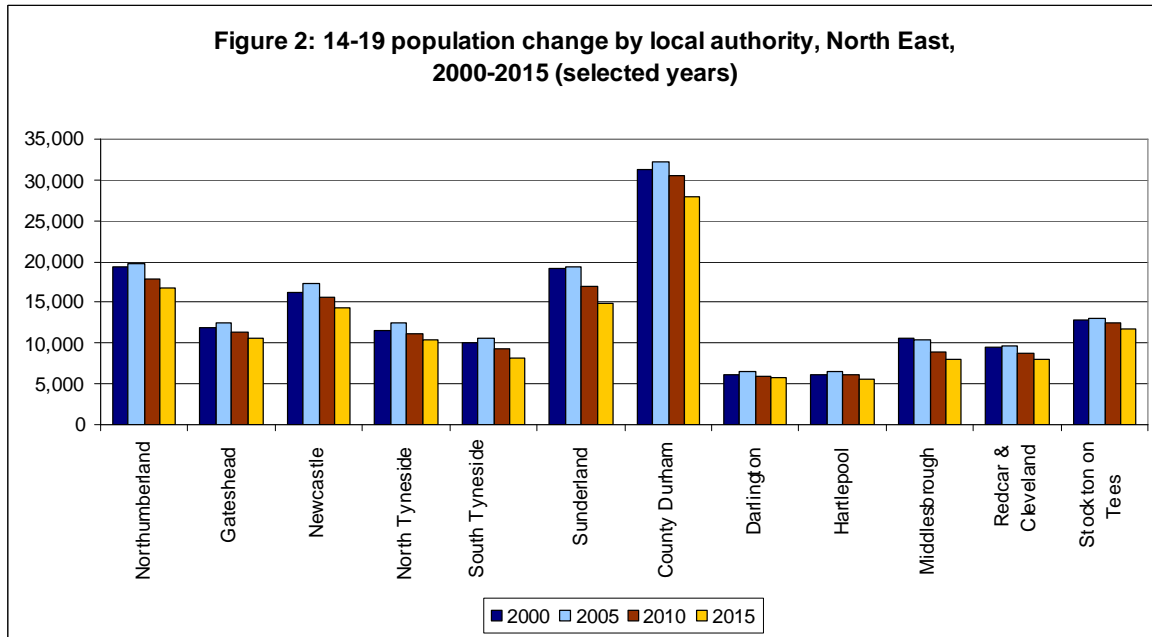
- 25 Projections suggest a similar trend among 16–18 year olds, with decline from 2009. There are expected to be around 98,500 16–18 year olds living in the North East in mid-2010.

Broadly, this is the number of young people expected to be available to post-16 learning in the North East at the beginning of the 2010/11 academic year¹⁰. Some will continue courses started the previous year, or progress to a new course, and others will enter post-16 learning for the first time. It is likely to be difficult to engage a minority in post-16 learning.

⁸ ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2008 (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106>).

⁹ ONS 2006-based Subnational Population Projections (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=997>).

¹⁰ It is difficult to estimate the number of young people living in the region due to variations between the available data sources.



Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, ONS 2006-based Subnational Population Projections

26 14–19 population change is not expected to be uniform across the region. In relative terms, decline is expected to be greatest in Sunderland, where the cohort in 2015 is projected to be 80 per cent of its size in 2008. The 14–19 cohorts in South Tyneside and Middlesbrough in 2015 are projected to be 82 per cent of their size in 2008.

The smallest relative decline is expected in Gateshead, Darlington, and Northumberland, where 14–19 populations in 2015 are projected to be 89 per cent of their size in 2008. The cohorts in Stockton-on-Tees and Hartlepool are projected to be 88 per cent of their size in 2008.

27 Cohort changes will have significant implications for planning of 14–19 provision. Planning will need to focus on suitable and appropriate provision in each area within the context of reduced learner volumes. At institution level, the mix and balance of provision, continued collaboration (making best use of current infrastructure) and travel to learn will be critical.

Ethnicity

28 According to the best available survey-based estimate, between 3.7 and 4.9 per cent of 16–19 year olds living in the North East are from non-white ethnic minority backgrounds¹¹.

Alternative administrative sources tend towards the lower of this range. Administrative sources are subject to a greater degree of uncertainty than survey-based estimates, however, as non-disclosure means that the group whose ethnicity is not known is often larger than the group whose ethnicity is identified. Connexions data, for example, suggests that 3.4 per cent of 16–18

¹¹ ONS Annual Population Survey Jan–Dec 2008. The survey suggests that 4.3 per cent of 16–19 year olds are from BME backgrounds, but this point estimate is associated with a confidence interval of ± 0.6 percentage points.

year olds are from non-white ethnic minority backgrounds, but the ethnicity of 7.7 per cent of 16–18 year olds is unknown¹².

- 29 The percentage of young people who are from ethnic minority backgrounds varies by local authority. It is lowest in the more rural parts of the region (Northumberland and County Durham), and highest in Middlesbrough and Newcastle¹³.
- 30 Robust survey data on young people's particular ethnic backgrounds is not readily available¹⁴. Administrative data suggests that there are more young people from Asian or Asian British backgrounds living in the North East than those from other minority ethnic backgrounds¹⁵.

Learning difficulties and disabilities

- 31 Different data sources offer varying pictures of learning difficulties and disabilities among young people. According to Connexions data, for example, 5.7 per cent of 16–19 year olds living in the North East in December 2008 had learning difficulties and/or disabilities, slightly below the national average (6.4 per cent). Connexions identifies a young person as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities if they were identified as having special educational needs (SEN) during compulsory schooling¹⁶.

In contrast, DCSF data suggests that 19.4 per cent of the North East cohort aged 19 in 2009/10 have a learning difficulty and/or disability, compared with 20.0 per cent in England. As well as taking account of SEN status while at school, this data also reflects self-disclosure among young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in post-16 education and training¹⁷.

- 32 The proportion of young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies by local authority. It is highest in Middlesbrough, and lowest in Northumberland and Stockton-on-Tees.

¹² DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, December 2008.

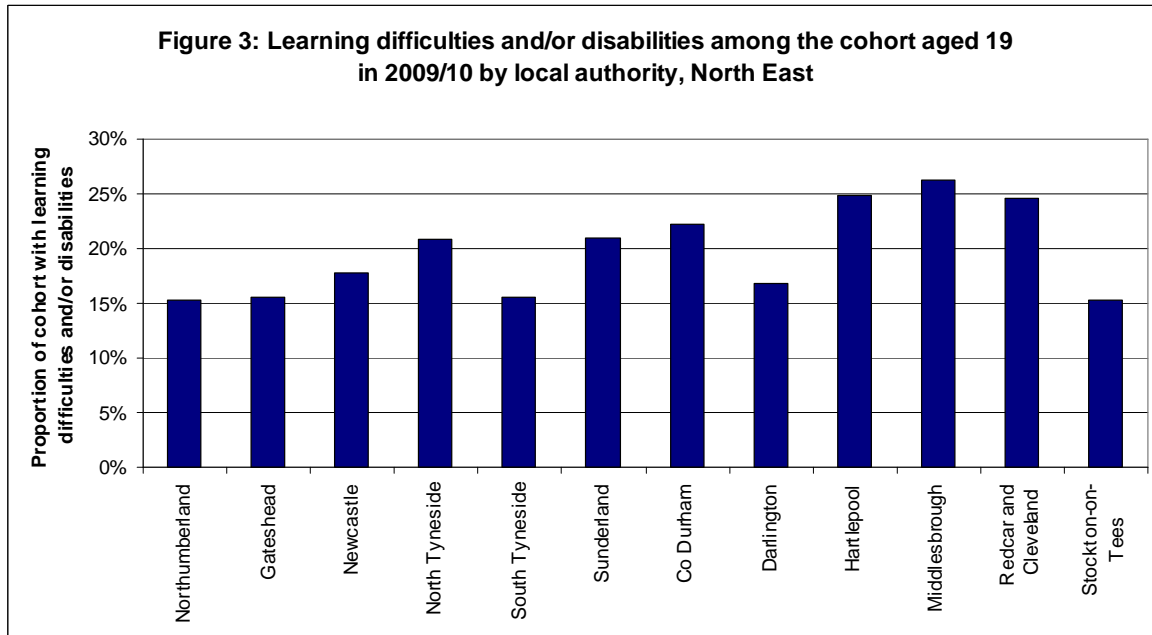
¹³ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, December 2008.

¹⁴ The most recent data relating to 14–19 year olds is from the 2001 Census.

¹⁵ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, December 2008; DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data 2006/07.

¹⁶ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, December 2008. There appear to be issues with the identification of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Connexions data, with significant variation from cohort to cohort not seen to the same extent in other data sources.

¹⁷ DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data 2006/07. The cohort aged 19 in 2009/10 is the youngest cohort for which data on learning difficulties and/or disabilities is available. Fields on learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this dataset combine PLASC data on SEN status at school with self-disclosed LLDD status from the ILR.



Source: Young People's Matched Administrative Data 2006/07

- 33 The most common learning difficulties and disabilities among young people are moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, dyslexia and other (unspecified) disabilities¹⁸.

The proportion of young people with moderate learning difficulties appears to be increasing. The proportions with other specific conditions tend to be more consistent over time.

Looked after children and care leavers

- 34 In the year ending 31 March 2008, there were 490 looked after young people aged 16 and over in the North East. A further 340 young people ceased to be looked after during the year¹⁹. Looked after children include those who are the subject of a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis. They can be placed in children's homes, foster homes or at home with their parents or other relatives.

Deprivation

- 35 There is a high level of deprivation in many parts of the North East, particularly in densely populated areas. Gateshead, Newcastle, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Middlesbrough are all among the 20 per cent most deprived local authorities in England according to all six measures in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007²⁰.
- 36 Some 32,300 young people in the North East – around 20 per cent of the population – live in areas ranked among the 10 per cent most deprived in England. In several local authorities – most notably Redcar and Cleveland,

¹⁸ DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data.

¹⁹ DCSF Children Looked After in England (Including Adoption and Care Leavers) Year Ending 31 March 2008 (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml>).

²⁰ CLG Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007.

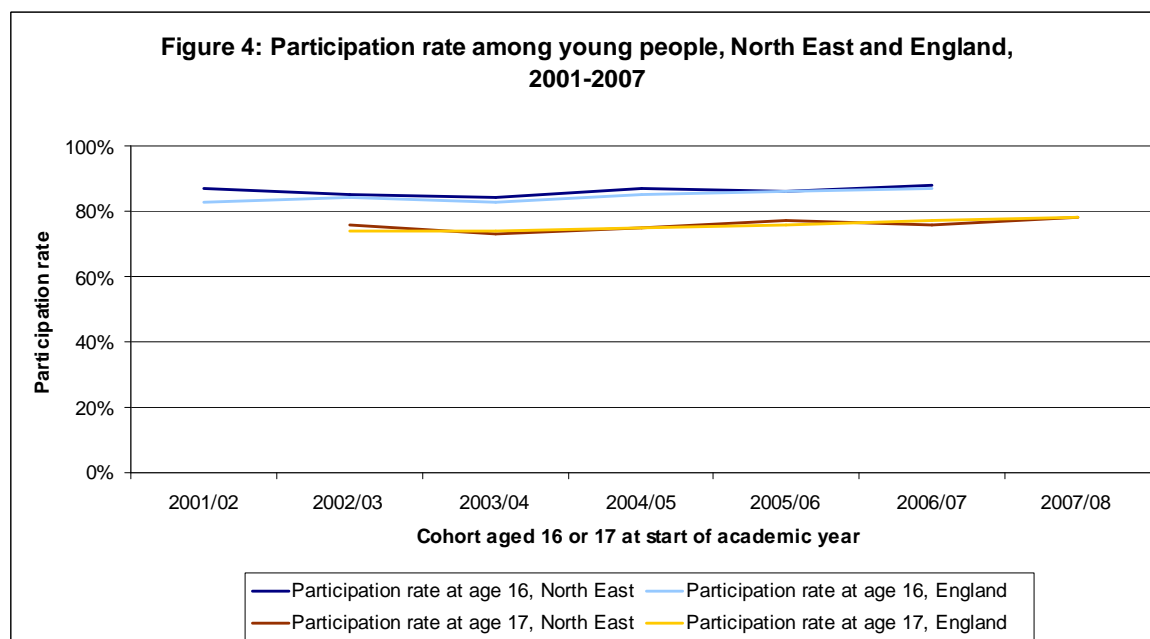
Newcastle, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough – even higher concentrations of the 14–19 population live in particularly deprived areas²¹.

- 37 There are close correlations between densely populated urban areas with high levels of deprivation and areas with low qualification levels, low participation in learning and low economic activity rates among the adult population. Participation among young people also tends to be lower in more deprived areas. There is a reasonably strong correlation between participation among young people and adult qualification levels, with fewer adults qualified to Level 2 or above in areas where participation rates among 16–18 year olds are low.
- 38 Different aspects of deprivation, meanwhile, may affect those in more sparsely populated areas which often appear less deprived in overall terms. In particular, young people living in rural areas may have far more limited access to a range of services, including learning provision.

Participation in learning

Participation at ages 16 and 17

- 39 DCSF statistics indicate that overall participation rates in further and continuing education and training among young people in the North East compare favourably with the national average²².



Source: DCSF Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England

²¹ CLG Index of Deprivation 2007, ONS Census of Population 2001. The Index of Deprivation 2007 predates recent local government restructuring and covers 354 Local Authorities in England, including former districts now merged into unitary authorities.

²² DCSF Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000849/index.shtml>).

- 40 Participation rates fluctuate slightly from year to year. In broad terms, since lows in 2003 there has been a steady upward trend in participation among young people.

Retention in learning

- 41 Some 88 per cent of the North East cohort aged 16 at the start of the 2006/07 academic year (the year after Year 11) were participating in further and continuing education and training at the end of 2006. A year later, just 78 per cent of the same cohort were in learning. The drop-out rate between ages 16 and 17 is similar to that seen nationally. Connexions data suggests a greater drop-out at age 18.
- 42 In relative terms, the drop-out from learning between ages 16 and 17 is greatest from state-maintained School Sixth Forms (more so among young women than among young men), followed by FE college provision (more so among young men than among young women). There is also some drop-out from Sixth Form colleges.
- 43 Conversely, there is a slight increase in participation in Work Based Learning between ages 16 and 17. There is also an increase in participation in part-time education, particularly among young men. The extent to which these increases are due to the movement of learners from one type of provision to another is not clear, but it is likely that such movement accounts for at least some of the change.
- 44 The opportunities for earning offered by Work Based Learning and part-time education, which are not available in full-time education, may be a factor. Evidence suggests that some young people complete a planned learning programme between ages 16 and 17, and then move into paid employment in preference to further learning.

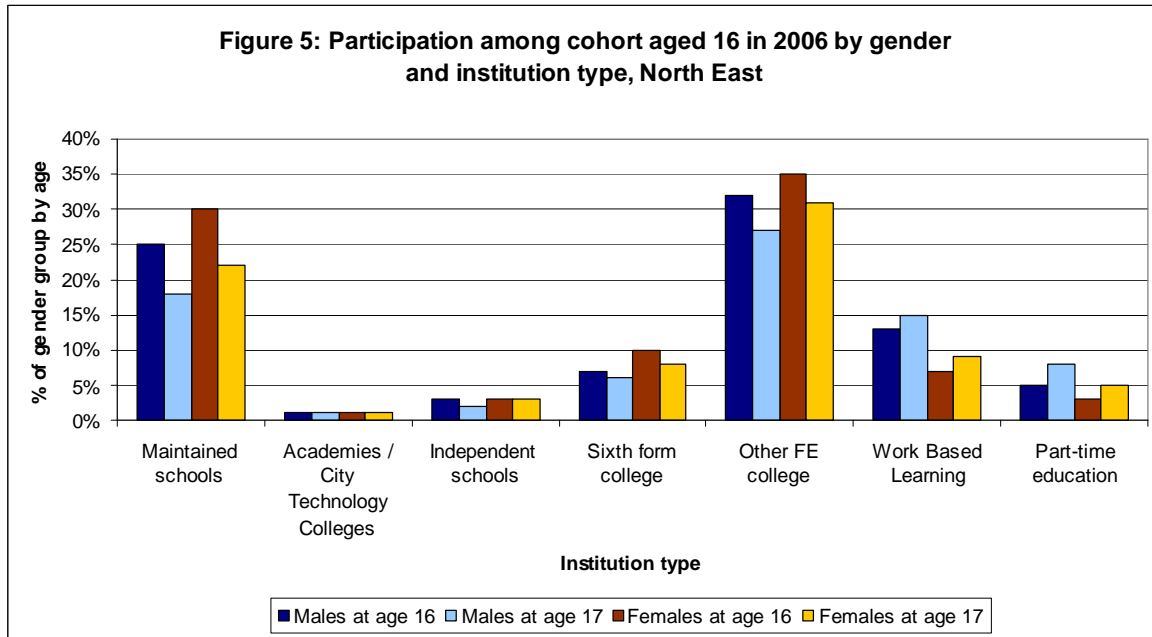
Patterns of participation

- 45 Reflecting differences in the structure of post-16 provision, as well as preferences among young people, patterns of participation among 16 and 17 year olds in the region differ from those seen nationally. Compared with the picture in England, young people in the North East are less likely to be in full-time education, and less likely to be in maintained and independent School Sixth Forms or Sixth Form colleges. They are more likely to be in other Further Education college provision.

Young people in the region are more likely than average to be in Work Based Learning. Historically, participation rates in Work Based Learning among 16 and 17 year olds have been higher in the North East than in any other region.

- 46 Patterns of participation differ by gender. Within the region, young men are generally less likely to learn in full-time education than young women²³. Young men are more likely than young women to be in Work Based Learning or part-time education.

²³ There is little difference in participation rates between young men and young women in Academies and City Technology Colleges, or in independent School Sixth Forms.



Source: DCSF Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England

- 47 Between 2001 and 2007, there was a rise in participation in state-maintained School Sixth Forms and in FE colleges among young people. At the same time, participation in Work Based Learning and part-time education fell. These trends reflect those seen nationally. Growth in full-time education in the region, however, has not been as strong as that seen nationally. The decline in participation in Work Based Learning and part-time education, meanwhile, has been more significant in the North East than in England.

Raising the participation age

- 48 The Education and Skills Act 2008 places a duty to participate until the age of 18 on all young people without a Level 3 qualification. This will be implemented in two stages. In 2013, the participation age will be raised to the end of the academic year in which a young person turns 17. In 2015, the participation age will be raised again, to the young person's 18th birthday. A milestone target has also been set for 86 per cent of 17 year olds to be participating in 2010/11.

Measuring participation

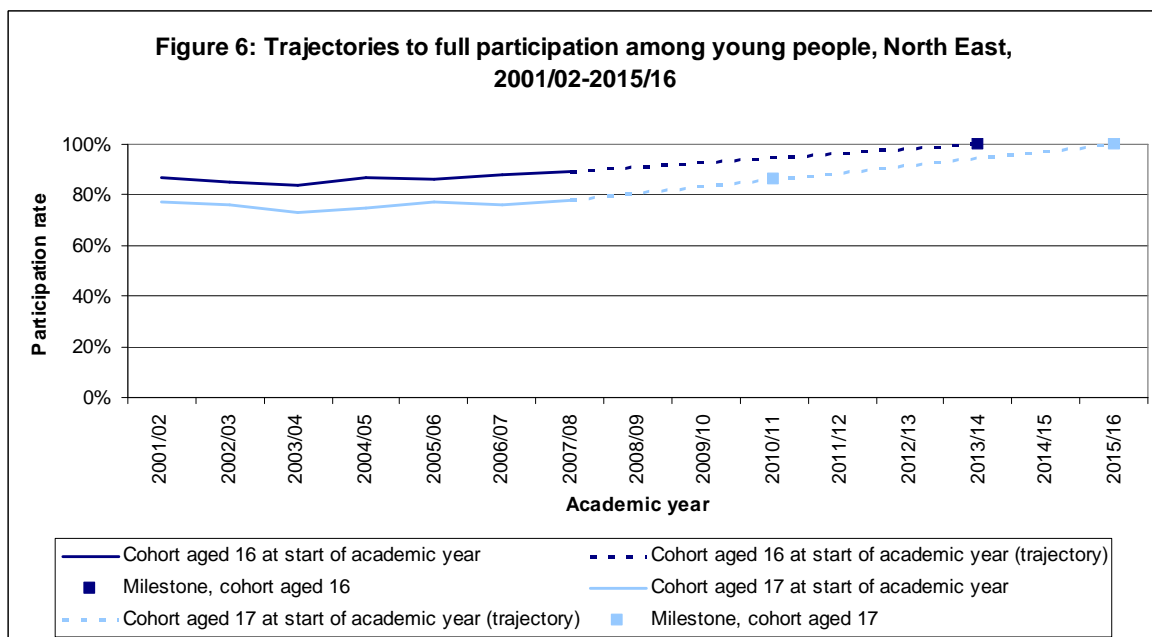
- 49 At present, measuring participation in terms of the duty to participate is problematic. Local authorities are charged with maintaining up-to-date and accurate information on young people's activities, and it is likely that new measures of participation which fully reflect the duty to participate will be developed.
- 50 The best available measure currently available is DCSF data which measures participation among the cohorts aged 16 and 17 at the start of the academic year:
- Data on the cohort aged 16 at the start of the academic year measures participation among those who turn 17 during the academic year, broadly in line with the 2013 ambition.

- Data on the cohort aged 17 at the start of the academic year measures participation among those who turn 18 during the year, and therefore includes some young people who have already reached their 18th birthday. Although this data therefore does not quite reflect the duty to participate until the age of 18, it does reflect the need to plan for continuing participation until the end of the academic year²⁴.

51 Neither of these measures takes account of young people who achieve a Level 3 qualification before their 18th birthday. Some 35.9 per cent of the North East cohort aged 19 in 2007/08 had achieved a Level 3 before the end of the academic year in which they turned 18 (though not necessarily by their 18th birthday). 12.8 per cent of this cohort had achieved a Level 3 before the end of the academic year in which they turned 17²⁵.

Trajectories towards full participation

52 Meeting the Government’s ambitions for full participation among young people requires a sharp rise in participation in the region. The interim target for 86 per cent of 17 year olds to be in learning in 2010/11, for example, requires an 8 percentage point increase in participation rates between 2007 and 2010.



Source: Derived from DCSF Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England

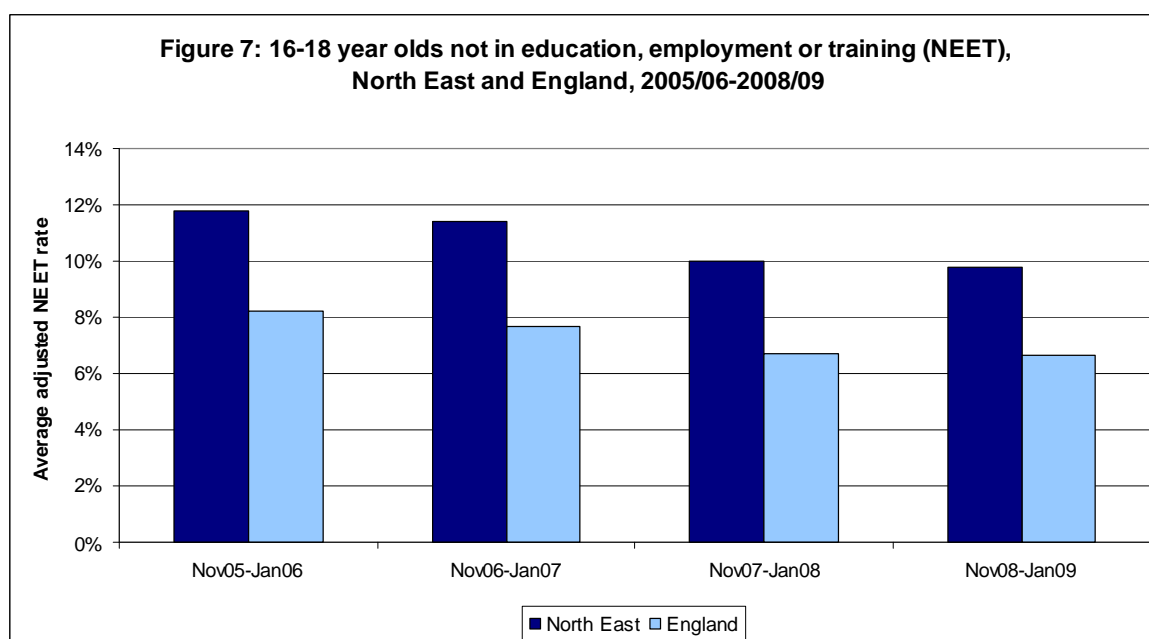
²⁴ Connexions data which measures participation among a birth-year cohort is also available. This could be used to measure participation among young people aged 17 at the point of measurement (rather than among a cohort based on academic age, only some of whom will be aged 17), broadly in line with the 2015 ambition. However, Connexions data fluctuates seasonally in its coverage, with significant peaks in the size of the Not Known group corresponding with falls in the size of the group whose activity is known (the EET+NEET group, the denominator on which participation rates are based). Because of these seasonal variations, we have opted not to use Connexions data in plotting trajectories towards full participation.

²⁵ DCSF Young People’s Matched Administrative Data 2007/08.

- 53 Raising the participation age will increase the demand for learning among young people, though this will be moderated by the anticipated decline in the population. Modelling suggests that between 2007 and 2010, raising the participation age will lead to net growth of at least 4.3 per cent in the number of learners aged 17 at the start of the academic year, with further growth of 9.2 per cent between 2010 and 2013²⁶. Increases in learner numbers are not likely to be focused in a particular funding stream, but will have a varying impact across different provider types.

Young people not in education, employment or training

- 54 The proportion of young people in the North East who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is above the national average. An average 9.8 per cent of 16–18 year olds in the North East were NEET in the period November 2008–January 2009, compared with 6.7 per cent in England. The NEET rate in the North East remains higher than in any other region²⁷.
- 55 The NEET rate in the North East fell by 0.2 percentage points over the previous year. Nationally, the NEET rate was unchanged. The gap between the NEET rate in the region and the national average is therefore closing, though slowly.



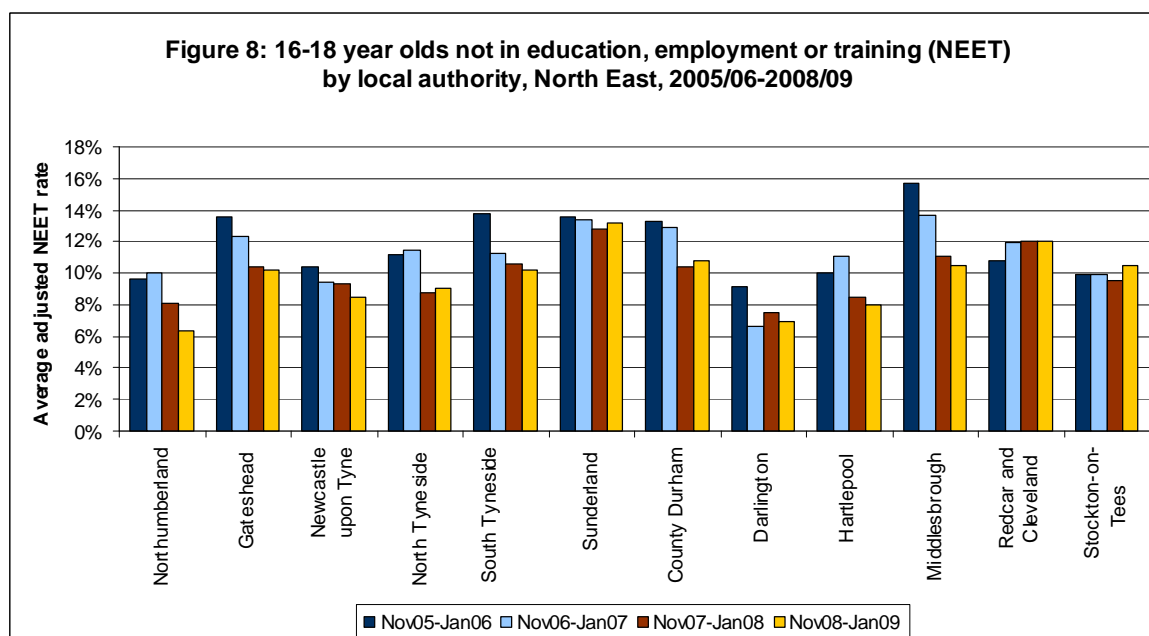
Source: DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System

²⁶ Derived from DCSF Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 Year Olds in England and ONS 2006-based Subnational Population Projections. Modelling based on DCSF population projections suggests more significant growth. For a more detailed analysis, see LSC North East (2008) *The 14–19 cohort in 2009/10 and beyond* (<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthEast/Aboutus/strategic-analysis/>).

²⁷ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System. These figures are consistent with National Indicator 117, which measures the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training at local authority level. The national figures quoted here do not reflect the methodology used to measure progress against the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by 2 percentage points between 2004 and 2010. Regional and local figures based on the PSA target methodology are not available.

- 56 16 year olds make up 11 per cent of the NEET group in the region, reflecting the relatively high participation rate among this age group. The numbers of 17 and 18 year olds who are NEET are considerably higher²⁸. There is a large inflow to the NEET group at each of these ages among young people who leave learning or who fail to progress. There is also a considerable shift at ages 17 and 18 into employment without training at Level 2 or above.
- 57 There is significant turnover among the NEET group in the region, with large numbers of young people becoming NEET or entering education, employment or training at different times of the year. There is also a large core of young people who have been out of education, employment and training for extended periods, particularly among 18 year olds.

Tackling the NEET churn and reducing long-term NEET each pose significant challenges. Targeted and locally defined and delivered provision is most successful in engaging young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. ESF-funded Youth Participation projects (see paragraph 102) offer differentiated provision in each local authority in the region.



Source: DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System

- 58 The proportion of young people who are NEET is falling in most local authorities. The NEET rate is most persistent in Sunderland, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.
- 59 All local authorities in the North East have set targets to reduce the proportion of their young people who are not in education, employment or training. Achieving these targets would mean that the NEET rate across the whole of the North East would fall to around 8 per cent in 2010/11. The

²⁸ Connexions, May 2009.

resulting increase in learner numbers, however, would not in itself be sufficient to raise participation rates to meet Government ambitions²⁹.

Young people whose activities are not known

- 60 At any time, the activities of some young people are not known, for example because they have reached a transition point (such as the end of a course) and their subsequent activities have not yet been identified, because they cannot be contacted by Connexions, or because they refuse to disclose their activity when contacted. In June 2009, the activities of 4.0 per cent of 16–18 year olds in the North East weren't known, in line with the national average of 4.1 per cent³⁰.
- 61 At regional level, the proportion of young people whose activities aren't known is falling year-on-year. This trend, however, is not consistent across different local authorities. The proportion of young people whose activities aren't known has seen recent increases in some local authorities, most notably in South Tyneside.
- 62 There are also seasonal patterns in the proportion of young people whose activities aren't known, with peaks in the summer months coinciding with the end of one academic year and the beginning of the next. This reflects the approach to recording young people's activities in some local authorities, where young people reaching the end of the academic year are automatically recorded as 'not known'. This approach is not uniform across the region.

Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in participation

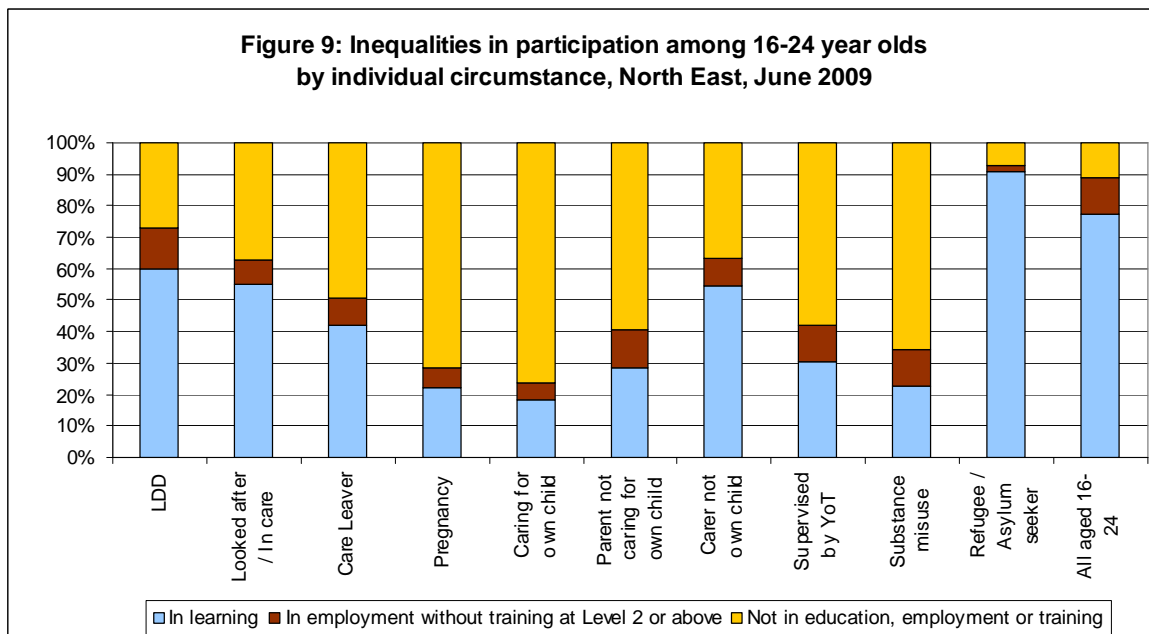
- 63 Participation among young people can be influenced by a variety of personal circumstances³¹.
- 64 Young men are less likely to be in learning than young women, though the gender differential is not significant (less than three percentage points). Young men are slightly more likely than young women to be in a job without training. They are also more likely to be NEET.
- 65 Participation rates vary significantly among different ethnic groups. Participation is lower than average among young people from mixed heritage White and Black Caribbean backgrounds, Bangladeshi backgrounds or Black Caribbean backgrounds, and especially among those from Gypsy and Roma backgrounds.

²⁹ LSC North East (2008) *The 14–19 cohort in 2009/10 and beyond* (<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthEast/Aboutus/strategic-analysis/>).

³⁰ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, June 2009. Young people whose activities are not known do not affect the calculation of participation rates or NEET rates. These rates are calculated using a denominator which is the sum of young people in education, employment or training and those who are NEET, and which ignores young people whose activities aren't known. That said, *adjusted* participation rates and NEET rates do attempt to take account of those young people whose activities are recorded as 'not known' because the currency of their records has expired through lack of recent contact with Connexions, by applying assumptions as to the proportion who are in learning or employment, and the proportion who are NEET. Lapsed records generally account for around half of the 'not known' group in the North East, though fewer during the summer months when the size of this group is at its peak.

³¹ See LSC North East (2009) *Inequalities in participation in learning among young people in the North East* for a more detailed analysis.

Figure 9: Inequalities in participation among 16-24 year olds by individual circumstance, North East, June 2009



Source: Connexions, June 2009

- 66 Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are more than twice as likely to be NEET as those without learning difficulties or disabilities. 16–18 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also more likely to be out of education, employment and training for long periods.
- 67 Looked after young people are significantly more likely than average to be NEET. They are also more likely to be in employment without training to Level 2.
- 68 Young people who have left public care are also more likely than average to be NEET. Indeed, they are more likely to be NEET than looked after young people.
DCSF statistics show that in the year ending 31 March 2008, 29 per cent of young people in the North East who had been looked after at age 16 were NEET at age 19, in line with the national average. 22 per cent were in further higher education (compared with 30 per cent in England), while 44 per cent were in employment or training (compared with 31 per cent in England)³².
- 69 Participation among young people with non-parental care responsibilities is well below average. Those who are NEET are more likely than average to be out of education, employment and training for long periods.
- 70 Young people who are supervised by Youth Offending Teams are far less likely to participate in learning than young people in general. They are more likely than average to be NEET.
- 71 Participation rates among young people who misuse substances such as drugs and alcohol are lower than in any other specific group identified by Connexions, with the exception of those with parental responsibilities. More than half of young substance misusers are NEET.

³² DCSF Children Looked After in England (Including Adoption and Care Leavers) Year Ending 31 March 2008 (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml>).

- 72 Participation in learning among young refugees and asylum seekers is well above average.

Parental responsibilities and participation

- 73 Parental responsibilities have a significant impact on participation. Of the groups identified by Connexions, participation in learning is lowest among young people who are pregnant or who are parents caring for their own child.
- 74 Young people with parental responsibilities are far more likely to be NEET than to participate in learning or work. They are also more likely than average to be out of education, employment and training for long periods. More than two in every three young parents are NEET. Around two in three of those who are NEET have been out of education, employment and training for six months or more.
- 75 Young women are disproportionately represented among young people who are caring for their own child. Connexions data tends not to identify young fathers as parents, regardless whether they are caring for their own child or not, and regardless whether they are NEET or not.
- 76 Some young mothers may also be 'hidden' within Connexions data because they are coded in other groups, or simply not identified as parents at all. This may be more likely where the young people concerned are participating in learning (in which case NEET rates among young parents, calculated using this data, may be exaggerated)³³.
- 77 Connexions believe they are in contact with around 72 per cent of the Department of Health's estimate of the number of teenage mothers in the North East³⁴. Anecdotal evidence suggests that issues with sharing personal data between different organisations may restrict Connexions Services' ability to identify and/or contact individuals in this or other vulnerable groups.

The impact of recession on participation

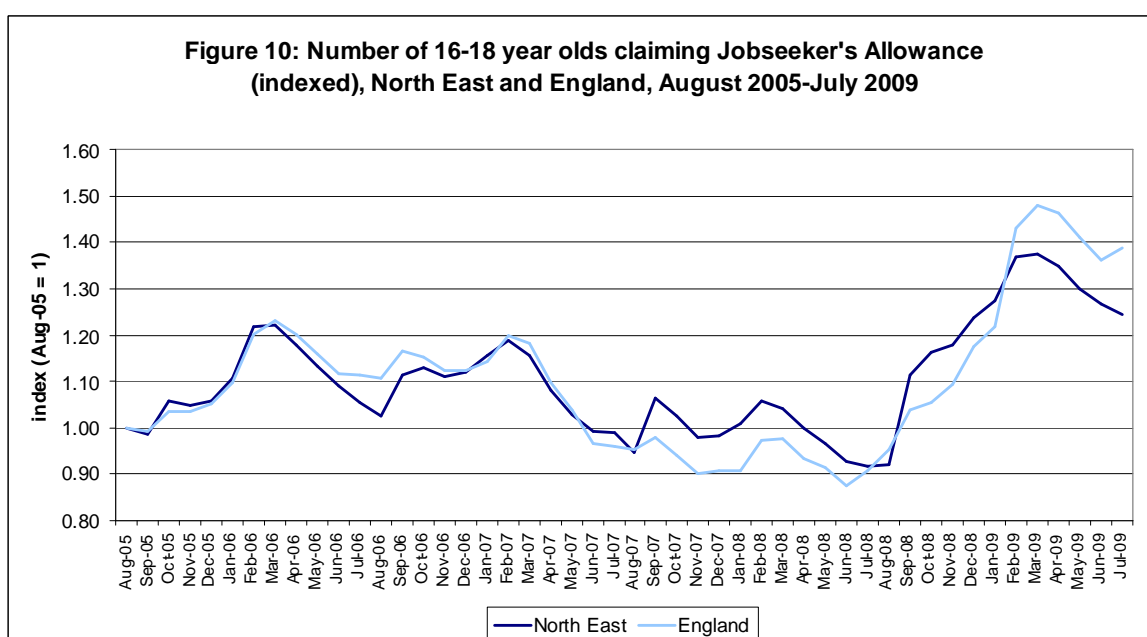
- 78 Overall, the recession does not appear to have had a significant negative impact on participation in learning among young people. Some groups, however, have been more adversely affected than others.
- 79 Throughout the recession, there have continued to be small year-on-year falls in the proportion of 16–18 year olds in the North East who are NEET, and increases in the proportion of young people who are in education, employment or training. The scale of these changes has tended to be smaller than before the recession took hold in the region.

This trend is clearer among 16 and 17 year olds than among 18 year olds. Indeed, between November 2008 and June 2009 there were small year-on-year falls in the proportion of 18 year olds in the region who were in education, employment or training, while the proportion who were NEET showed small increases.

³³ Issues apparent in the identification of young parents in Connexions data are discussed in more detail in LSC North East (2009) *Inequalities in participation in learning among young people in the North East*.

³⁴ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, December 2008.

- 80 The proportion of 16–18 year olds in employment without training at Level 2 has continued to fall. This is a long-term trend, though the decline appears to have speeded up during the recession.
- 81 The recession also appears to have impacted on employment with training at Level 2 or above. Since September 2008, year-on-year falls have become apparent in the proportion of 16–18 year olds employed in Apprenticeships, and in the proportion of young people in other employment with training at Level 2 or above.
- 82 Reflecting the impact of recession on employment among 16–18 year olds, the number of young people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance rose sharply between August 2008 and February 2009, driven by an increase in the number of 18 year old claimants³⁵. Claimant numbers have since begun to fall, though they remain higher than before the recession.



Source: ONS Claimant Count by Age

- 83 While the recession has had a clear impact on employment among young people, both with and without training at Level 2 (including Apprenticeships), participation in education and training outside of employment appears to have increased. Year-on-year increases in the proportion of 16–18 year olds in learning are most significant in sixth form colleges and general FE colleges. Participation also shows year-on-year increases in Entry to Employment and in Government-supported training that is not funded by the LSC (such as New Deal programmes), though the rises here are not as significant.

³⁵ ONS Claimant Count by Age. Few 16 and 17 year olds are eligible for Jobseeker’s Allowance, and there has been no significant increase in the number of 16 and 17 year old claimants.

Participation in LSC-funded learning

84 The number of 16–18 year old resident learners participating in mainstream LSC-funded provision³⁶ in the North East increased by almost 2 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08. Trends in 16–18 resident learner numbers broadly reflect those seen nationally.

Route	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 ytd (L03/Period 12)
Learner Responsive in FE	38,239	39,098	39,846
Apprenticeships ³⁷	18,015	17,418	16,195
Entry to Employment	5,852	6,566	5,674
School Sixth Forms	15,883	16,216	17,355
Total	77,989	79,194	74,512
<i>Academies</i>	<i>457</i>	<i>437</i>	<i>507</i>

Source: LSC Individualised Learner Record

- 85 2007/08 saw an increase in resident participation in **Learner Responsive provision in FE** of about 2 per cent (compared with 3 per cent nationally). The latest data for 2008/09 indicates that growth continues.
- 86 The number of North East residents in **School Sixth Forms** increased by around 2 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08. The latest data for 2008/09 suggests a further significant growth in participation in School Sixth Forms.
- 87 Some of the increase in participation in FE and School Sixth Forms has been at the expense of Apprenticeship numbers, but we have also seen some reduction in the number of young people who are NEET. Several local authorities also report evidence of young people choosing to stay in learning rather than seek employment which may be attributed to the recession. Analysis of Connexions data appears to substantiate this, particularly for 16 and 17 year olds (see paragraphs 79–84).
- 88 Participation of resident young people in **Entry to Employment** increased by 12 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08 (compared with 10 per cent nationally).
- 89 Recruitment to E2E continues to be high in 2008/09. This is partly because of active efforts made by Connexions Services to meet the September Guarantee – for many non-participants, E2E is the only suitable first step into learning. The reduction in low-skilled jobs due to the recession may also be leading to increased demand for E2E places. Growth in the E2E programme

³⁶ Including Learner Responsive, School Sixth Forms, Apprenticeships and E2E. Not including ESF. In addition, there will be a small number of 16–18 year olds in Adult Safeguarded Learning provision.

³⁷ Apprenticeship numbers quoted here are calculated using the Demand Led Funding methodology.

is planned for 2009/10. Work continues with providers to move provision to Foundation Learning.

- 90 The number of 16–18 residents participating in **Apprenticeships** fell by 3 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08, in line with the fall seen nationally. Despite the overall fall, participation in Advanced Apprenticeships has increased.
- 91 The latest data for 2008/09 indicates that 16–18 Apprenticeship participation is not growing at the rate required to achieve national targets. This reflects a number of factors including rising achievement at age 16 and encouragement to stay in learning and progress to Higher Education, and schools increasingly becoming the ‘default’ option at 16 (particularly in rural areas).
- 92 The key factor, however, continues to be limited opportunities, reflecting insufficient employer take-up across the region. Employer engagement in 16–18 Apprenticeships is proving a particular challenge in the current economic climate and some apprentices have been made redundant. A number of strategies are being put in place to address this in the short to medium term.

Sectors that have been particularly hard hit include construction, manufacturing and engineering and, to a lesser extent, retail. Every effort is being made to ensure that Apprentices who are made redundant are able to complete their programme successfully through the introduction of a number of different flexible approaches.

Participation by level

- 93 Across all funding streams in 2007/08, the majority of 16–18 year old resident learners (54 per cent) were engaged in Level 3 programmes. 28 per cent were undertaking Level 2 programmes while 17 per cent were engaged in Entry Level and Level 1 programmes.
- 94 Since 2006/07, there has been a small shift in participation towards Level 3, particularly in Apprenticeships. This shift is likely to continue as we see continued improvements in Level 2 attainment at age 16. Nevertheless, we must ensure that there is a sufficient offer below and at Level 2 to support increased participation and progression.
- 95 Participation in full Level 2 and full Level 3 provision in FE increased between 2006/07 and 2007/08, reflecting national trends, as providers continue to shift to a more full-time, full-year offer in response to Government priorities. Full Level 2 learners now account for 20 per cent of all learners, full Level 3 learners account for 39 per cent. The latest data for 2008/09 suggests that the increase in full Level 2 and full Level 3 participation continues.

Skills for Life provision

- 96 In 2007/08, North East resident young people were enrolled on over 53,000 approved Skills for Life learning aims across all funding streams³⁸. This represented a small decrease (4 per cent) from 2006/07, in line with the fall of 5 per cent seen nationally.

³⁸ Including ESF provision, but excluding School Sixth Forms.

- 97 Half of the approved learning aims taken up were numeracy courses. The majority of these were Key Skills in the Application of Number (at both Level 1 and Level 2). There were also a significant number of young people enrolled on the Certificate in Adult Numeracy.
- 98 49 per cent of aims taken up were literacy. These were mostly Key Skills in Communication at Level 1 and Level 2, although a significant number of learners were enrolled on the Certificate in Adult Literacy. The remainder were ESOL courses or were not assigned to a Skills for Life category.
- 99 **Functional skills** qualifications in English, maths and ICT are currently being piloted and will be available nationally from September 2010. They will be incorporated into the secondary curriculum, the new GCSEs, Diplomas, Foundation Learning and Apprenticeships (where they will replace Key Skills), as well as being available as standalone qualifications.

ESF-funded provision

- 100 Almost 11,000 resident young people started on ESF-funded programmes in 2007/08, a fall from 14,000 in the previous year³⁹.
- 101 Between 2008 and 2010, the focus for ESF funding for young people is the **Youth Participation projects**. £12 million funds 12 projects, one in each local authority area, which are intended to support the engagement of 10,000 young people across the region. The projects form a key part of the strategy to reduce NEET in the region, with four strands of activity focused on Progression, Prevention, Transition and Reengagement. Although the projects have taken some time to get off the ground and to date relatively low numbers of young people have been engaged, numbers are expected to increase as the projects become established.

Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- 102 Some 12,200 16–24 year olds in mainstream LSC-funded provision in 2007/08 considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability⁴⁰. 9,100 were aged 16–18 years old, and 3,100 were aged 19–24.
- 103 Around 11 per cent of all 16–24 year olds in Learner Responsive provision in FE in 2007/08 considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability (6,400 learners).
- 104 The number of 16–24 year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Apprenticeship provision decreased between 2006/07 and 2007/08, reflecting the overall fall in Apprenticeship numbers in the region. Some 2,300 apprentices in 2007/08 considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability, 9 per cent of all apprentices.

³⁹ It is difficult to establish from the available data how many of these learners also participated in mainstream LSC-funded provision within the same year and so are also included in the LSC-funded participation numbers above.

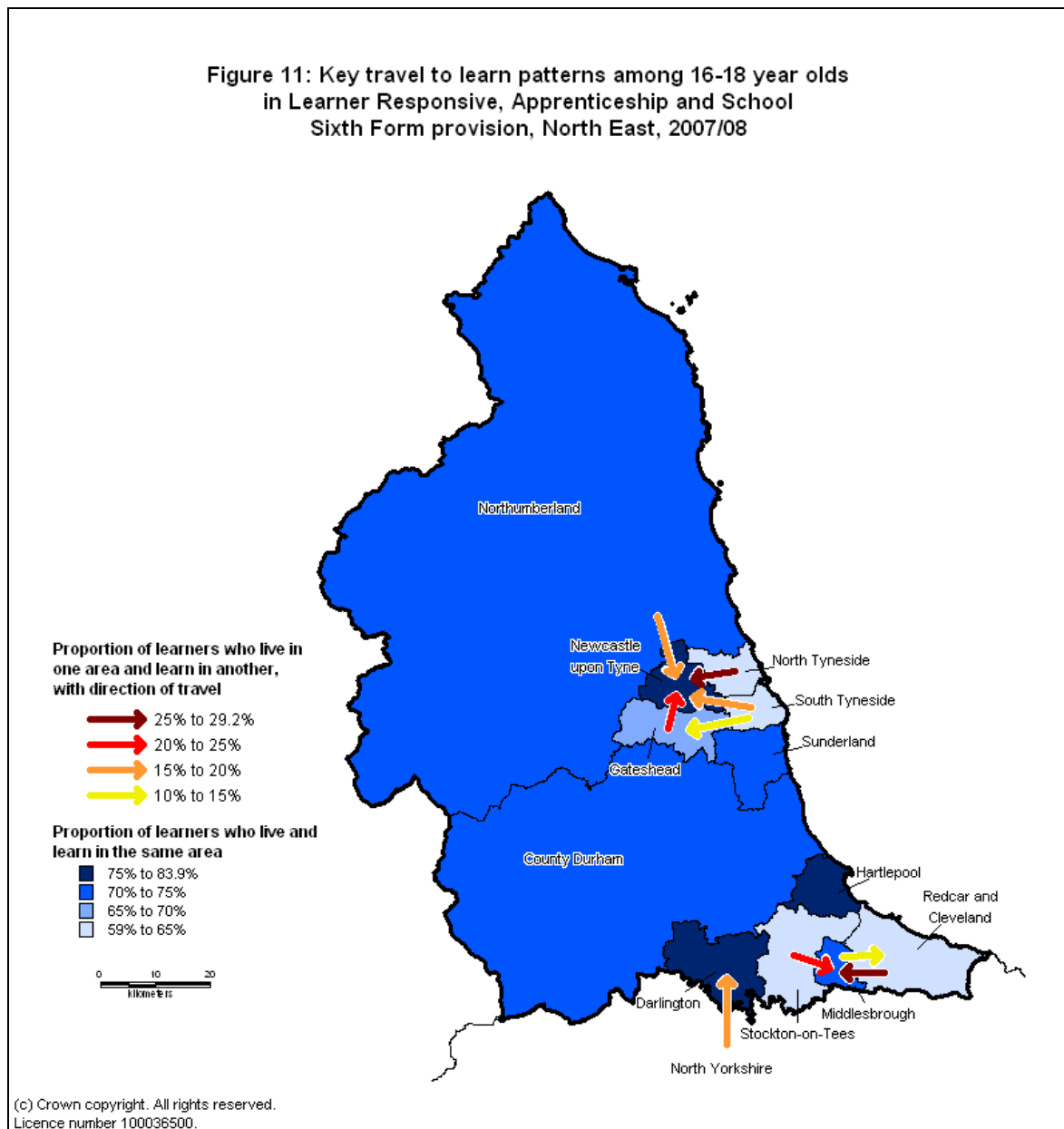
⁴⁰ It is difficult to make accurate observations about the number of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD) in mainstream learning (particularly in FE) due to the variable quality of reporting in the Individualised Learner Record. Reporting relies on self-declaration by the learner. There are a number of records where LLDD status is unknown, as well as a number of cases where a learner is flagged as having a learning difficulty and/or disability but no further information on the specific nature of their condition is supplied.

- 105 The number of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in School Sixth Forms rose between 2006/07 and 2007/08, reflecting the overall increase in participation. 5 per cent of all learners in 2007/08 considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- 106 Some 33 per cent of E2E learners in 2007/08 considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- 107 A small number of 19–24 year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities access Train to Gain provision.
- 108 Both FE and Apprenticeship provision caters for learners with many types of learning difficulty and/or disability. However, there are significant variations in participation among learners with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities across different providers. Nevertheless, there is a developing capacity in some providers to meet a range of needs associated with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which might see these providers acting as a sub-regional resource.
- 109 There is a clear need to ensure a smooth transition for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from school to post-16 or post-19 provision, through clear and effective identification of needs and the transfer of information between all involved.
- 110 The number of referrals for **independent specialist provision** has increased year-on-year, resulting in an overall increase of 11 per cent between 2005/06 and 2009/10. While 19–24 year olds account for the majority of referrals (74 per cent) in 2009/10, the relative increase in the number of requests for placements for 16–18 year olds means that this age group now make up a greater share of all referrals (26 per cent compared to 17 per cent in 2008/09). Gateshead, South Tyneside and Durham account for the majority of referrals for 16–18 year olds at 23 per cent, 19 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.
- 111 Learners requiring specialist support for autistic spectrum disorders or Asperger's syndrome continue to be the largest group referred to specialist provision (55 per cent of referrals). There is also significant representation of learners with Downs Syndrome and severe learning difficulties (35 per cent), sensory impairments (24 per cent) and complex needs (19 per cent).
- 112 Targeted capacity-building activity in mainstream FE and Apprenticeship provision has increased the number of learners with autistic spectrum disorders in Durham, Tees Valley, Newcastle, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. Despite this, learners from Durham and South Tyneside account for a significant proportion of those accessing specialist provision in 2009/10.
- 113 Similarly, targeted capacity-building in relation to sensory impairments (Tees Valley and Newcastle), moderate learning difficulties (North Tyneside), profound and multiple learning difficulties (South Tyneside), mental health needs (Durham, Tees Valley, Sunderland and North Tyneside) and social and emotional difficulties (Sunderland and Tees Valley) has not significantly reduced the number of referrals to specialist providers.
- 114 Development funding for 2009/10 will be used to continue to build capacity in the FE sector to respond to local needs. In addition, work preparation and

employment related activities will be expanded to ensure learners progress and participate in the labour market.

Travel to learn patterns

115 The number of young people who live in the North East but travel out of the region to learn is slightly lower than the number living outside the North East but travelling into the region to learn, resulting in a small net inflow across all funding streams.



Source: LSC Individualised Learner Record 2007/08

116 The latest data suggests that travel to learn outside of the region is largely young people accessing Apprenticeship provision. All the Apprenticeship frameworks being accessed outside the North East are available within the region, and although a number of learners are with National Employer

Service providers, the majority appear simply to be choosing alternative provision.

- 117 The most significant flow of learners into the region is young people resident in North Yorkshire travelling to learn in Darlington.
- 118 There are significant learner flows across local authority boundaries within the region. Travel to learn patterns are influenced by many factors, including the availability of transport, the provision and facilities offered, and learner preferences.
- 119 Differences are evident by type of provision. For young people in Learner Responsive provision in FE, travel to learn largely takes place within SRG boundaries. One exception is learners resident in County Durham travelling into Darlington.

Within the Tyne and Wear/Northumberland SRG, key learner flows are into Newcastle (from North Tyneside, Northumberland and South Tyneside). Within the Tees Valley SRG, key learner flows are between Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough, and from Stockton to Middlesbrough.

- 120 The travel patterns for young people in Apprenticeship provision are more complex, although again travel largely takes place within SRG boundaries. Within the Tyne and Wear/Northumberland SRG, key learner flows are from Gateshead, North Tyneside and Northumberland into Newcastle. Within the Tees Valley SRG, key learner flows are from Redcar and Cleveland or Stockton into Middlesbrough.
- 121 There is little movement across local authority boundaries among young people learning in School Sixth Forms. Sunderland residents travelling to School Sixth Forms in County Durham are a notable exception.

Participation in provision delivered in the North East

- 122 Since there are only small flows of learners in and out of the region, participation in provision delivered within the North East broadly reflects that by the region's residents. Differences are more significant at local level, particularly in areas where there are large inflows or outflows of learners.
- 123 Regionally, the slightly higher numbers seen in Learner Responsive provision in FE reflect the small net inflow into FE providers in the region. The slightly lower numbers seen in Apprenticeship provision delivered in the region reflects the small net outflow of residents (although Apprenticeship travel patterns are more difficult to define).

Route	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 ytd (L03/Period 12)
Learner Responsive in FE	41,284	42,601	43,868
Apprenticeships	16,056	15,405	14,721
Entry to Employment	5,992	6,740	5,856
School Sixth Forms	16,215	16,197	17,338
Total	79,547	80,943	77,116
<i>Academies</i>	467	437	509

Source: LSC Individualised Learner Record

124 In addition to the learner numbers above, 1,000 young people participated in learning in **Youth Offending Institutions** in the region, including Castington Juvenile Institution in Northumberland (570 learners), and Deerbolt (400 learners) and Low Newton (30 learners) in Durham. There were also a small number of 18 year olds in learning with Probation Services in the North East.

The young person's entitlement

Progress towards the curriculum entitlement

125 The Government's strategy for 14–19 qualifications sets out a vision of a streamlined qualifications system based on four nationally available qualification routes, with the expectation that from 2013 the majority of young people will follow learning programmes that fall within one of these routes:

- Diplomas
- GCSEs and A-levels
- Apprenticeships, and
- Foundation Learning.

126 Meeting the curriculum entitlement for young people, particularly the Diploma entitlement, presents a key challenge for Local Authorities and 14–19 Partnerships in the region. Cross-boundary working will be necessary to ensure access to the full entitlement for all young people and to deliver economies of scale.

127 14–19 Partnerships will also need to consider the impact on recruitment onto existing programmes of the Diploma entitlement and aspirations for increased engagement of young people in Apprenticeships in the light of a declining cohort. Again, Partnerships may need to explore collaborative delivery to maintain quality and the efficient delivery of particular programmes.

⁴¹ Learner Responsive and School Sixth Form figures are based on main provider location. Apprenticeship figures are based on delivery location. There will be some missing Apprenticeship records due to poor recording of delivery postcodes. E2E figures are based on funding from LSC North East due to the unreliability of delivery location postcodes. Figures exclude ESF provision. Figures also exclude the small number of 16–18 year olds in Adult Safeguarded Learning provision delivered in the NE.

Diplomas

- 128 From 2013, 14–19 year olds will have a statutory entitlement to study a Diploma. 14–16 year olds will have a statutory entitlement to study a Diploma from a choice of the first 14 lines, and 16–19 year olds from a choice of 17. Foundation and Higher Diplomas are expected to be available for Key Stage 4 students, and all three levels of Diploma for 16–19 year olds.
- 129 Good progress has been made in the North East in securing approvals to deliver Diplomas through the Gateway process. All 14–19 Partnerships have been approved to deliver at least one Diploma line in each local authority area in 2009; Sunderland has been approved to deliver all 14 lines by September 2010, one of only six consortia nationally to do so. Engineering, Construction, Creative and Media, IT and Society, Health and Development Diplomas will be delivered in all 12 local authorities in the region by 2011.
- 130 Diploma delivery to date has raised a number of issues:
- Take-up has been lower than planned. The actual number of learners on Diploma programmes in September 2008 was 35 per cent of that planned, and in some local authorities was as low as 24 per cent. Current data on intended destinations suggests that the ratio of actual learner numbers to projected numbers will be lower in 2009/10.
 - Some local authorities are supporting extremely small class sizes.
 - Delivery is focused on pre-16 Level 2. Post-16 Diploma delivery is low, as is pre-16 delivery at Level 1.
 - There are very few full progression routes available through all pre-16 and post-16 levels within given delivery consortia in 2008/09. There are *no* full progression routes planned from September 2009.
 - It is proving difficult to bring forward the Manufacturing and Product Design, Land Based and Environment, and Public Services Diploma lines. Government Office are currently involved in pilot activity with partnerships looking at delivery models for the Public Services Diploma.

General qualifications (GCSE/A-level)

- 131 General qualifications are a well established route for young people. There is a comprehensive offer of GCSEs and A-levels across the region, delivered through Learner Responsive provision in FE and in School Sixth Forms.

Apprenticeships

- 132 From 2013, every suitably qualified young person will have an entitlement to an Apprenticeship place. To deliver this entitlement, the Government has the aim of one in five young people starting an Apprenticeship before their 18th birthday by 2020.
- 133 Apprenticeships have historically engaged a high proportion of young people in the region (22 per cent of mainstream LSC-funded participation in 2007/08, compared with 16 per cent nationally). The region benefits from a broad provider base which has seen an increase in success rates to 66 per cent in 2007/08 (compared with 64 per cent nationally).
- 134 Nevertheless, meeting the Apprenticeship entitlement for 2013 and stretching regional and local targets for Apprenticeship starts pose significant

challenges. A key task for the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) in the region is to expand Apprenticeship opportunities for young people by driving up employer engagement.

- 135 An Employer Engagement Plan and 16–18 Action Plan are being developed to direct NAS activities for 2009/10. Reducing the number of 16–18 year olds currently in employment but not in training and targeting young people not in education, employment or training for whom an Apprenticeship may be appropriate are key focuses of both plans.
- 136 The public sector, as a major employer, is one sector which presents a significant opportunity for engagement with Apprenticeships. Many Local Authorities in the region have already made a commitment to increased Apprenticeship recruitment. The health and education sectors are also key to efforts to grow the Apprenticeship market in 2009/10 and beyond.

Foundation Learning

- 137 A sufficient and coherent offer at Entry Level and Level 1 is crucial for supporting increased engagement, participation, achievement and progression of young people. The aim of Foundation Learning is to provide the framework for such an offer to ensure personalised learning programmes support individual progression.
- 138 It is expected that all areas will deliver some Foundation Learning for 14–19 year olds by 2010/11 – with Local Authorities and 14–19 Partnerships leading this process – on a trajectory to Foundation Learning being the primary offer for all learners below Level 2. 2009/10 is expected to be the last year of the Key Stage 4 Engagement and Entry to Employment programmes, with subsequent provision offered through Foundation Learning.
- 139 In 2007/08, some 13,000 16–18 year old resident learners (around 17 per cent of all learners) were engaged at Entry Level and Level 1 in Learner Responsive provision in FE and Entry to Employment.
- 140 In 2008/09, 25 providers in the North East have been involved in developmental delivery of post-16 progression pathways. Pilot activity has provided promising messages in terms of the potential impact of Foundation Learning on young people, though the sample size was small and therefore not fully representative of all learners who will engage in FLT in the future. 16 providers participated in a regional evaluation which confirmed that 136 young people have engaged in developmental progression pathways in 2008/09.
- 141 Provider planning volumes for 2009/10 indicate that many providers are planning to increase delivery of Foundation Learning from September 2009. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service will continue to deliver their workforce support programme to help ensure that areas are progressing on the trajectory to full FLT implementation.
- 142 A number of local authorities in the region are involved in the 14–16 Foundation Learning pilot led by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Learner Support

Education Maintenance Allowance

- 143 The Education Maintenance Allowance provides financial support to young people from lower income families to encourage and reward participation in post-16 learning. National evaluation shows that EMA has a positive impact on participation, retention and achievement among young learners from disadvantaged backgrounds⁴².
- 144 EMA take-up is growing faster in the North East than in any other region. Between August 2007 and August 2008, the number of eligible young people taking up EMA in the North East increased by 5.8 per cent (to more than 33,800 learners), compared with an average increase of 4.5 per cent across England. Increases in take-up were particularly significant in E2E and Programme-led Apprenticeships.
- 145 EMA take-up among young people in the North East is above the national average, though take-up declines with age:
- 49 per cent of 16 year olds in the region received EMA in 2007/08, compared with 39 per cent in England.
 - 38 per cent of 17 year olds received EMA, compared with 31 per cent in England.
 - 12 per cent of 18 year olds received EMA, compared with 11 per cent in England.

The decline in take-up reflects declining participation rates by age.

- 146 The North East has the smallest proportion of any region of providers with stoppage rates outside the expected 5–15 per cent. Stoppage rates identify the percentage of learners who are not receiving their EMA payment each week, and provide a useful proxy indicator of learner attendance.
- 62 per cent of providers in the region had stoppage rates outside the 5–15 per cent range at the end of August 2008, compared with the national average of 73 per cent⁴³.

Care to Learn

- 147 The North East has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy of any region. Teenage pregnancy rates are particularly high in parts of Tees Valley and parts of Tyne and Wear⁴⁴. Teenage pregnancy and parental responsibilities are among the most significant reasons why young people – predominantly young women, but including a small number of young men identified as parents – who are NEET are not available to the labour market, and typically lead to lengthy periods out of education, employment and training.

⁴² RCU (2007) *Evaluation of the EMA National Roll-out* (<http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation-reports>); Institute for Fiscal Studies (2007) *Education Maintenance Allowance: Evaluation with Administrative Data* (<http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation-reports>).

⁴³ LSC Education Maintenance Allowance Take-up Report – North East, August 2008. Providers have the flexibility to set their own attendance criteria for receipt of EMA, within national guidelines.

⁴⁴ ONS Conception Statistics 2007 (Provisional) (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=15055>).

- 148 Care to Learn gives financial support to teenage parents (including fathers) who want to continue their education or training and need help with the cost of childcare. National evaluation suggests that Care to Learn is very important in supporting young parents in learning, as well as having positive impacts on achievement and progression to further learning and employment. Some 88 per cent of those receiving Care to Learn in 2004/05 said they would not have gone on a course without the support it provided. Only 2 per cent said that the funding they received made no difference to their learning⁴⁵.
- 149 In 2007/08, 21 per cent of teenage mothers in the North East were supported through the Care to Learn scheme. Take-up was the highest in the country (equalled by the North West and London regions), and well above the national average of 16 per cent⁴⁶.
- 150 There are signs, however, that take-up may be slowing. In comparison with take-up in 2007/08, just 16 per cent of teenage mothers in the North East were supported through Care to Learn between September 2008 and June 2009. While this was in line with the national average, it was some way below the level of take-up in the North West (21 per cent) and London (20 per cent).

Information, advice and guidance

- 151 Information, advice and guidance is an integral element of the young person's entitlement and is key to ensuring young people remain engaged. We expect the imminent publication of a national IAG strategy and are keen to explore how we can take forward key aspects in the region.
- 152 Local partnerships are taking forward a wide range of activity to ensure high quality information, advice and guidance is available to all young people. Local Authorities have a 14–19 Prospectus in place and a number of pilot models are being developed for the Common Application Process in advance of the deadline for implementation of 2011.
- 153 The 14–19 Commission's IAG sub-group has developed a model for sharing good practice and plan to roll this out based around 'communities of practice'. In addition, One NorthEast is working with Local Authorities to develop effective mechanisms for the dissemination of labour market information to young people, parents and IAG providers.

September Guarantee

Performance against the 2008 Guarantee

- 154 In September 2008, an offer of a place in education and training had been made to 95.0 per cent of 16 year olds in the North East, compared with the national average of 94.1 per cent⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Institute for Employment Studies (2006) *Impact of Care to Learn: Tracking the Destinations of those Young Parents Funded in 2004/05* (http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Care_to_Learn_Main_Report_FINAL_2_.pdf).

⁴⁶ LSC Care to Learn Regional Take-up Report, August 2008. Take-up is measured among teenage mothers since robust data on the number of teenage fathers with childcare responsibilities is not available.

⁴⁷ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, September 2008.

- 155 An offer was regarded as inappropriate at the current time for 2.1 per cent of 16 year olds in the region, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. Most young people for whom an offer was regarded as inappropriate were going into employment without training at Level 2, or were prevented from applying for learning by personal circumstances such as illness. Smaller numbers were regarded as not ready for formal learning, or were not made an offer for other reasons.
- 156 Young people for whom an offer under the Guarantee is not appropriate may be offered Personal Development Opportunities (PDOs). PDOs are informal, non-accredited learning opportunities which provide stepping stones into formal education and training. Often delivered by the voluntary and community sector, PDOs may include activities to raise confidence or self-esteem, provide work tasters, or improve life and social skills.
- Young people whose offer is a PDO remain entitled to an offer of formal education or training when they are ready to progress. In addition, 16 year olds will be entitled to an offer the following September, under the Guarantee for 17 year olds.
- 157 No offer had been made to 2.9 per cent of 16 year olds in the region, in line with the national average (2.7 per cent). Many had not applied for learning, or had made an application but were awaiting the outcome. No suitable provision was identified for a small number of 16 year olds, with 17 learners affected.
- 158 An offer of a place in education and training had been made to 87.4 per cent of 17 year olds in the North East in September 2008, above the national average of 79.7 per cent.
- 159 An offer was regarded as inappropriate at the current time for 5.7 per cent of 17 year olds in the region, below the national average of 9.6 per cent. As with 16 year olds, most were going into employment without training at Level 2, or were prevented from applying for learning by personal circumstances. Smaller numbers were regarded as not ready for formal learning, or were not made an offer for other reasons.
- 160 No offer was made to 6.9 per cent of 17 year olds in the region, in line with the national average (7.2 per cent). The majority had not applied for learning, while others were awaiting the outcome of an application. No suitable provision was identified for 15 learners.

Performance to date against the 2009 Guarantee

- 161 Some 93.0 per cent of current Year 11 pupils in the North East say they intend to stay in learning after they complete compulsory education, compared with the national average of 92.3 per cent⁴⁸.
- 162 As at August 2009, the Guarantee status of 94.2 per cent of current Year 11 pupils in the North East was recorded. An offer of a place in education and

⁴⁸ DCSF/Connexions National Client Caseload Information System, August 2009.

training had been made to 96.2 per cent of these (90.6 per cent of the cohort)⁴⁹.

- 163 An offer was regarded as inappropriate at the current time for just 0.8 per cent of Year 11 pupils in the region whose Guarantee status was recorded, mainly due to learners' personal circumstances.
- 164 An offer had not been made to 2.9 per cent of Year 11 pupils in the region whose Guarantee status was recorded. More than half of these were awaiting the outcome of an application, though one in five had not applied for learning. No appropriate provision had been identified for 7 learners.
- 165 As at August 2009, the Guarantee status of 88.2 per cent of 17 year olds in the North East was recorded. An offer of a place in education and training had been made to 91.5 per cent of these (80.7 per cent of the cohort)⁵⁰.
- 166 An offer was regarded as inappropriate at the current time for 4.0 per cent of 17 year olds in the region whose Guarantee status was recorded. Most 17 year olds for whom an offer was deemed inappropriate were going into employment without training at Level 2, or were prevented from applying for learning by personal circumstances.
- 167 An offer had not been made to 4.5 per cent of 17 year olds in the region whose Guarantee status was recorded. More than a third were awaiting the outcome of an application, while a quarter had not applied for learning. Appropriate provision had not been identified for 63 learners.
- 168 There is little evidence of young people being unable to find a suitable place in learning, though the increase between 2008 and 2009 in the number of 17 year olds for whom appropriate provision has not been identified may be a concern. There is a risk that as courses fill up, the demand for learning opportunities may begin to outstrip supply. The robust process in place in the region to manage the September Guarantee, including monitoring arrangements with the LSC, Local Authorities and Government Office North East, will ensure that all young people are offered a suitable learning opportunity that they are able to take up should they choose to.

Achievement

Level 2 attainment by age 19

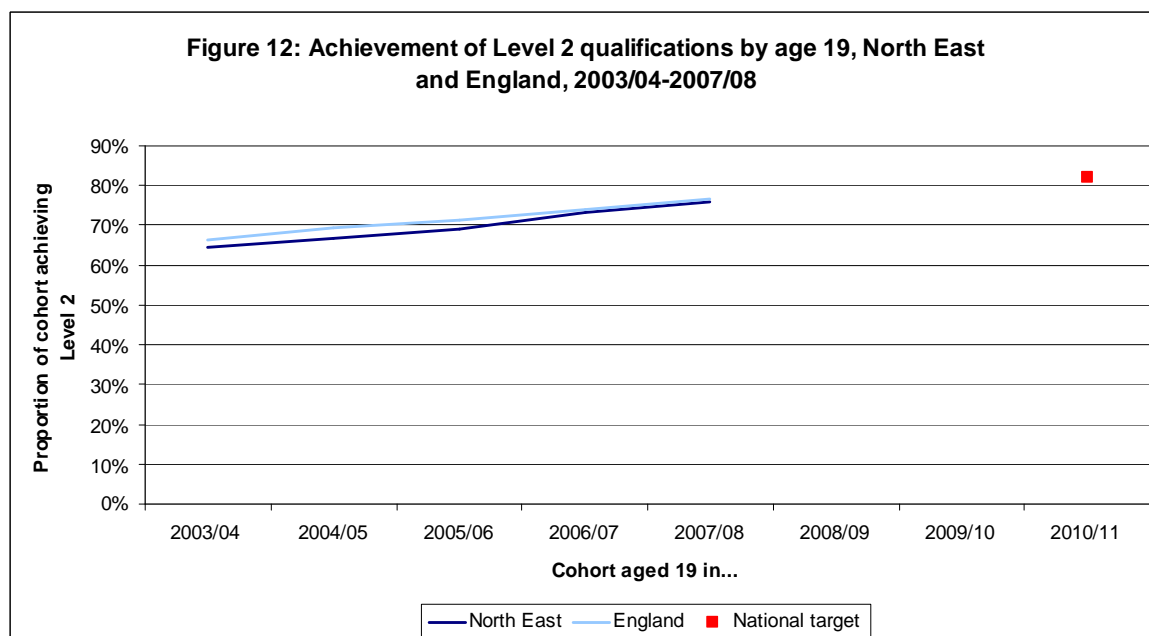
- 169 Until recently, fewer young people in the North East achieved a Level 2 before their 19th birthday than in any other region. Attainment in the North East saw a significant improvement between 2005/06 and 2006/07 and has

⁴⁹ Connexions report that nationally, the Guarantee status of 97.3 per cent of current Year 11 pupils was recorded by August 2009. 93.4 per cent of Year 11 pupils whose status was recorded (90.9 per cent of the total cohort) had been offered a place in education and training. However, data issues in some local authorities outside the North East mean that the proportion of the cohort whose status is recorded, and the proportion who have been made an offer, may be overstated.

⁵⁰ Nationally, the Guarantee status of 93.8 per cent of 17 year olds was recorded by August 2009. 88.6 per cent of 17 year olds whose status was recorded (83.1 per cent of the total cohort) had been offered a place in education and training. Again, data issues in some local authorities outside the North East mean that these proportions may be overstated.

continued to improve at a rate similar to that seen nationally. Attainment is now close to the national average.

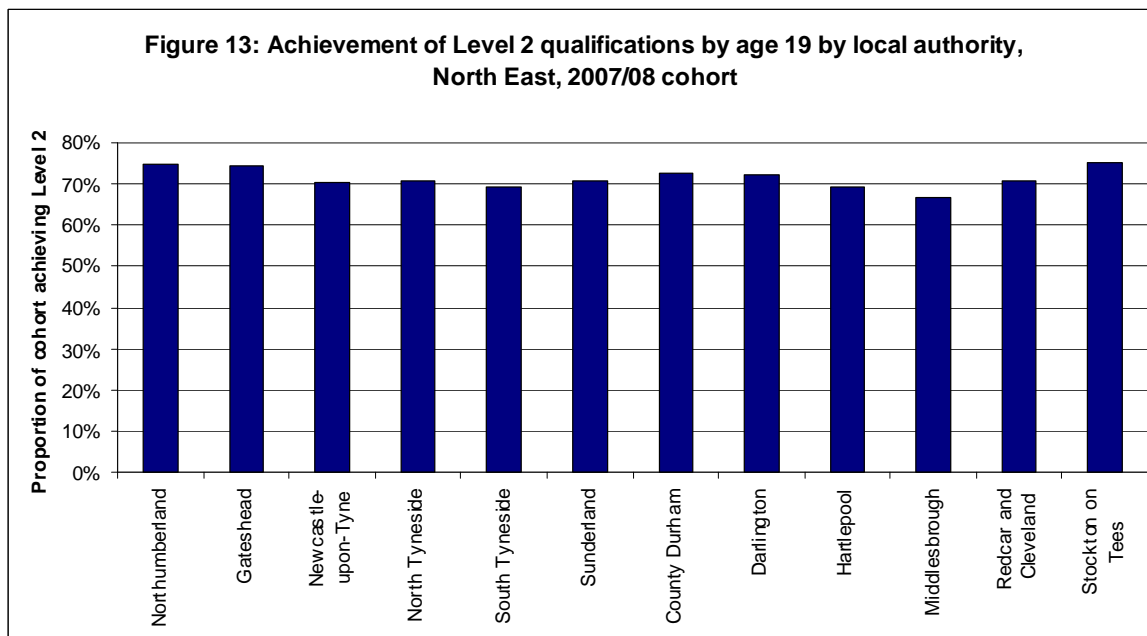
Some 75.9 per cent of the North East cohort aged 19 in 2007/08 had achieved a Level 2 by the time they turned 19, compared with 76.7 per cent in England⁵¹.



Source: DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

- 170 Attainment of Level 2 qualifications by age 16 remains lower in the North East than in many other regions. 53.4 per cent of the regional cohort aged 19 in 2007/08 had achieved a Level 2 by their 16th birthday, compared with 55.4 per cent in England. Attainment by age 16 is improving faster in the North East than nationally.
- 171 The proportion of young people who achieve a Level 2 between ages 16 and 19 has historically been higher in the North East (22.5 per cent of the cohort aged 19 in 2007/08) than in all other regions. This 'conversion rate', coupled with rising attainment at age 16, means that the attainment gap between the North East and England is closing.
- 172 Despite rising attainment, however, around 8,000 young people in the North East – almost a quarter of the regional cohort – reached their 19th birthday in 2007/08 without achieving a Level 2 qualification.

⁵¹ DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data, 2007/08.



Source: DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

- 173 Level 2 attainment by age 19 varies by local authority. Historically, fewer young people in Middlesbrough have achieved a Level 2 before their 19th birthday than in other areas.
- 174 Since 2003/04, however, attainment in Middlesbrough has improved at a similar rate to the average across the region. Improvement has been slowest in North Tyneside, and fastest in Sunderland. Between 2003/04 and 2007/08, the performance gap in attainment at Level 2 by age 19 among local authorities in the North East has narrowed from 11.3 percentage points to 8.4 percentage points.

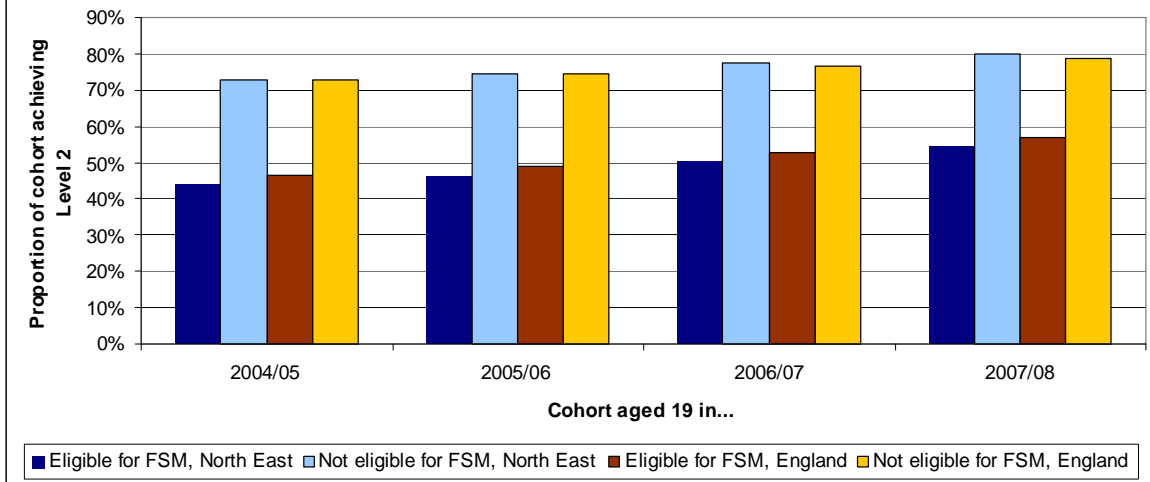
Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in Level 2 attainment by age 19

- 175 Historically, young men have been less likely to achieve a Level 2 than young women. Young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are less likely to achieve a Level 2 than those without. Attainment also varies by ethnicity, though the small numbers of young people from different minority ethnic backgrounds in each cohort means it is difficult to identify clear trends⁵².
- 176 Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are far less likely than average to achieve Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19. Among the North East cohort aged 19 in 2007/08, an estimated 54.3 per cent of those eligible for free school meals in Year 11 had achieved a Level 2 by age 19, compared with 80.0 per cent of those not eligible⁵³.

⁵² The data currently available relating to the cohort aged 19 in 2007/08 does not support analysis by characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or learning difficulty and/or disability. This summary of inequalities in attainment is largely based on analysis of previous datasets.

⁵³ Derived from DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data, 2007/08. Data on attainment according to eligibility for free school meals has not been published at regional level. Our analysis here is based on regional figures derived from data at local level. For consistency, we have used the same methodology to calculate national comparisons.

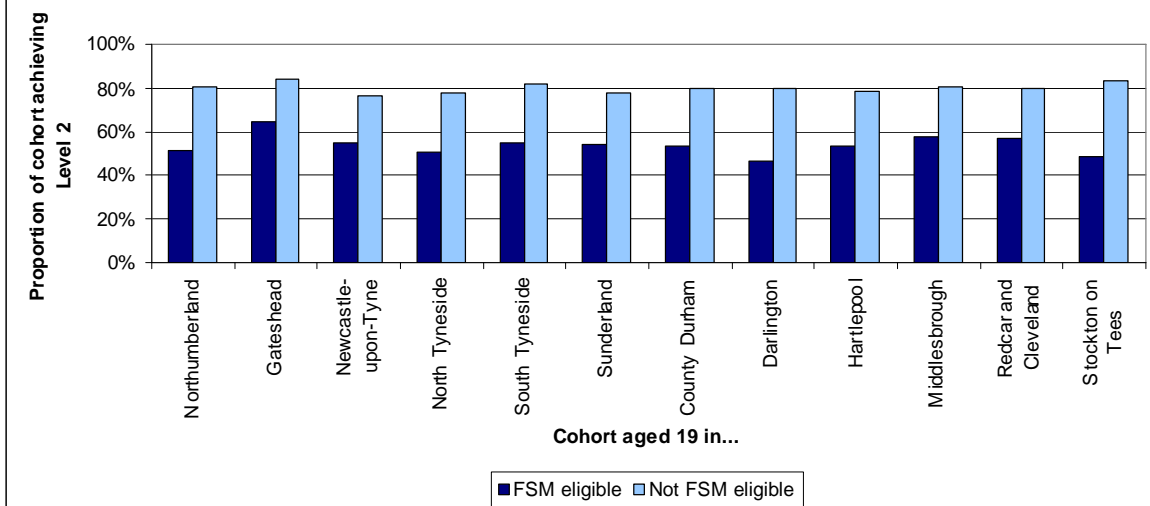
Figure 14: Achievement of Level 2 qualifications by age 19 among young people eligible for free school meals in Year 11, North East and England, 2004/05-2007/08



Source: Derived from DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

177 The inequality gap between young people who were eligible for free school meals in Year 11 and those not eligible is closing, though it remains significant, at an estimated 25.7 percentage points. The region's inequality gap does not appear to be narrowing as quickly as the gap seen nationally.

Figure 15: Achievement of Level 2 qualifications by age 19 among young people eligible for free school meals in Year 11 and local authority, North East, 2007/08 cohort



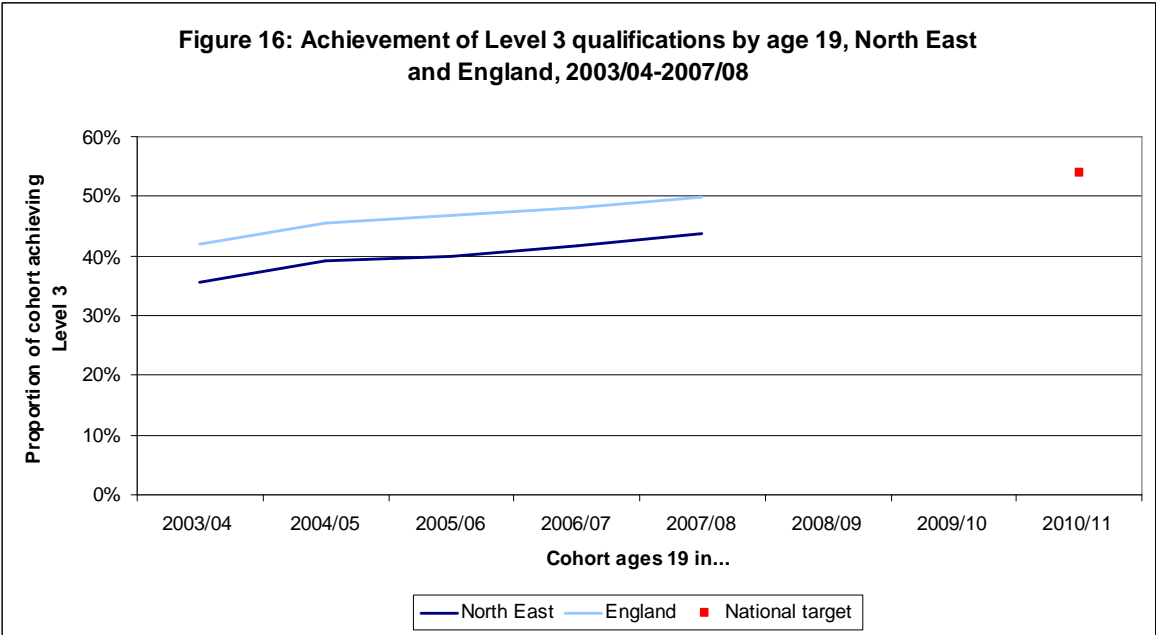
Source: DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

Because of differences in the way that attainment is calculated at local and national levels, our figures are not directly comparable to national figures published by DCSF. Not all pupils affected by poverty and deprivation are eligible for free school meals, but the free school meals indicator is recorded by all maintained schools and provides a useful proxy measure.

178 Attainment at Level 2 by age 19 among young people who were eligible for free school meals in Year 11 also varies by local authority. Among the cohort aged 19 in 2007/08, attainment was highest in Gateshead (65.6 per cent), and lowest in Darlington (46.6 per cent). Local trends can be difficult to ascertain, however, partly because of statistical effects related to the relatively small number of young people eligible for free school meals in any one cohort at this geographical level⁵⁴.

Level 3 attainment by age 19

179 Fewer young people in the North East achieve a Level 3 qualification by age 19 than in any other English region. Some 43.7 per cent of the North East cohort aged 19 in 2007/08 had achieved a Level 3 by the time they turned 19, compared with the national average of 49.8 per cent.

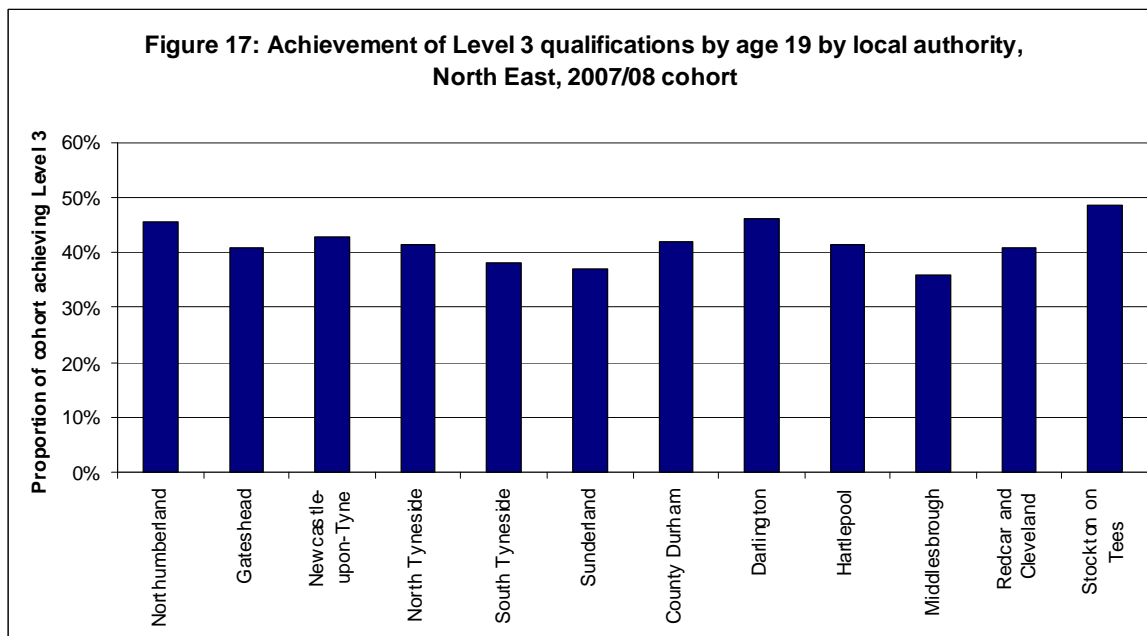


Source: DCSF Young People’s Matched Administrative Data

180 In recent years, attainment of Level 3 qualifications by age 19 has improved at a slightly faster rate in the North East than in England. The gap between regional and national performance is beginning to close, but only slowly.

181 Although a growing proportion of young people achieve a Level 3 before they turn 19, it remains the case that most do not. Almost 18,600 young people in the North East reached their 19th birthday in 2007/08 without having achieved a Level 3.

⁵⁴ Analysis is also problematic in areas with relatively high numbers of young people attending independent schools, who do not record information on eligibility for free school meals.



Source: DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

182 Level 3 attainment varies considerably by local authority. Historically, fewer young people in Middlesbrough have achieved a Level 3 by the age of 19 than in other areas. Since 2003/04, however, Middlesbrough (along with Hartlepool) has seen the greatest improvement in attainment at Level 3 by age 19. Improvement has been slowest in North Tyneside.

Between 2006/07 and 2007/08, Gateshead saw a fall in the proportion of the cohort achieving Level 3 qualifications, while Sunderland saw no improvement in attainment.

183 Between 2003/04 and 2007/08, the performance gap in attainment at Level 3 by age 19 among local authorities in the North East has narrowed from 16.5 percentage points to 12.8 percentage points.

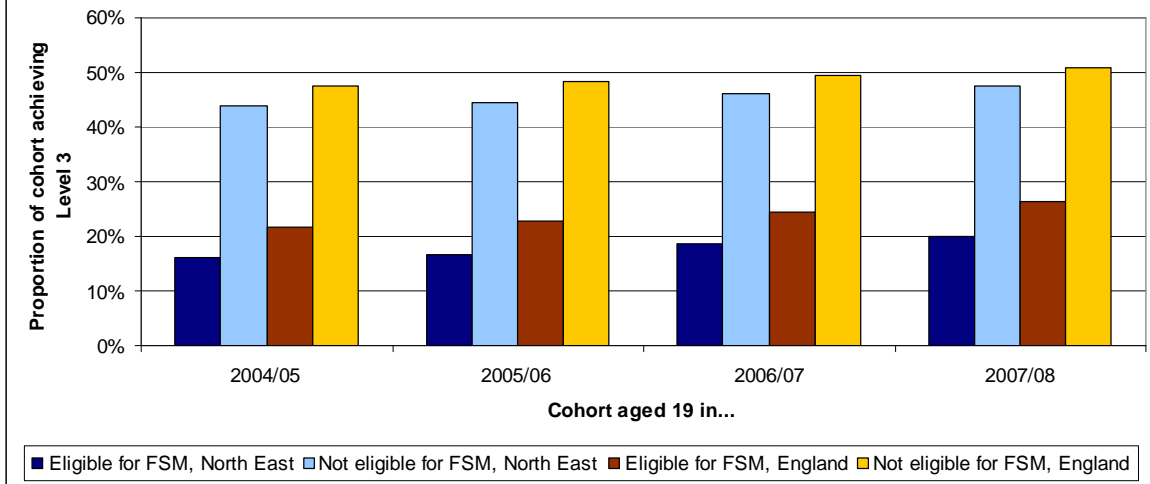
Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in Level 3 attainment by age 19

184 Historically, young men have been less likely than young women to achieve a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19. Young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are significantly less likely to achieve a Level 3 than those without. Attainment varies by ethnicity, but as at Level 2, the small numbers of young people from different minority ethnic backgrounds in each cohort means it is difficult to identify clear trends.

185 Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly less likely than average to achieve a Level 3 qualification by age 19. Among the North East cohort aged 19 in 2007/08, an estimated 19.9 per cent of those eligible for free school meals in Year 11 had achieved a Level 3 by their 19th birthday, compared with 47.6 per cent of those not eligible⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Derived from DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data. Data on attainment according to eligibility for free school meals has not been published at regional level. Our analysis here is therefore based on regional figures derived from data at local level. For consistency, we have used the same methodology to calculate national comparisons.

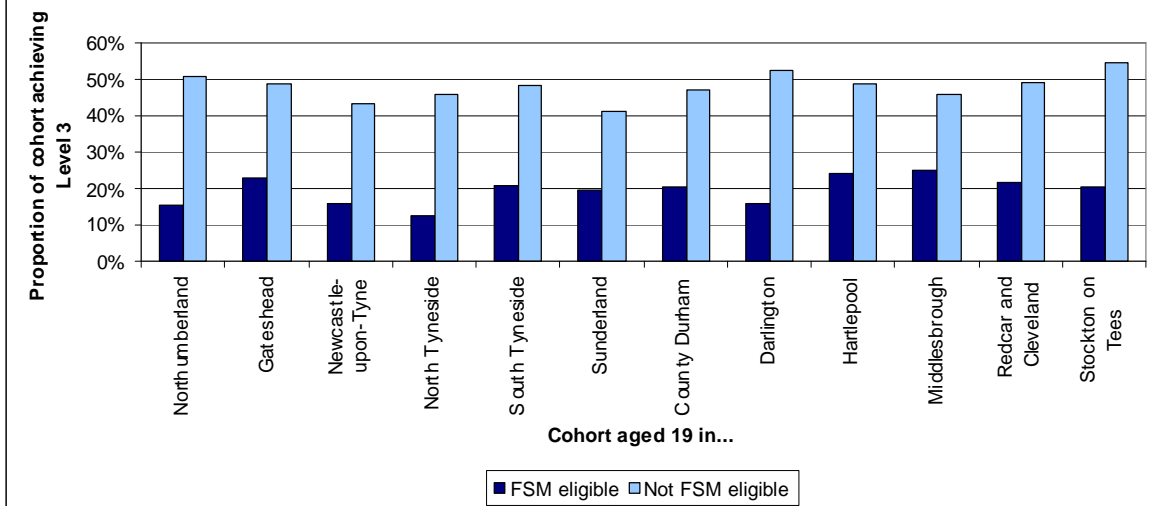
Figure 18: Achievement of Level 3 qualifications by age 19 among young people eligible for free school meals in Year 11, North East and England, 2004/05-2007/08



Source: Derived from DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

186 Attainment at Level 3 in the North East is improving no more quickly among young people who were eligible for free school meals in Year 11 than among those not eligible. The inequality gap between the two groups in the region is not closing.

Figure 19: Achievement of Level 2 qualifications by age 19 among young people eligible for free school meals in Year 11 and local authority, North East, 2007/08 cohort



Source: DCSF Young People's Matched Administrative Data

187 Attainment at Level 3 by age 19 among young people eligible for free school meals in Year 11 varies by local authority. Among the cohort aged 19 in

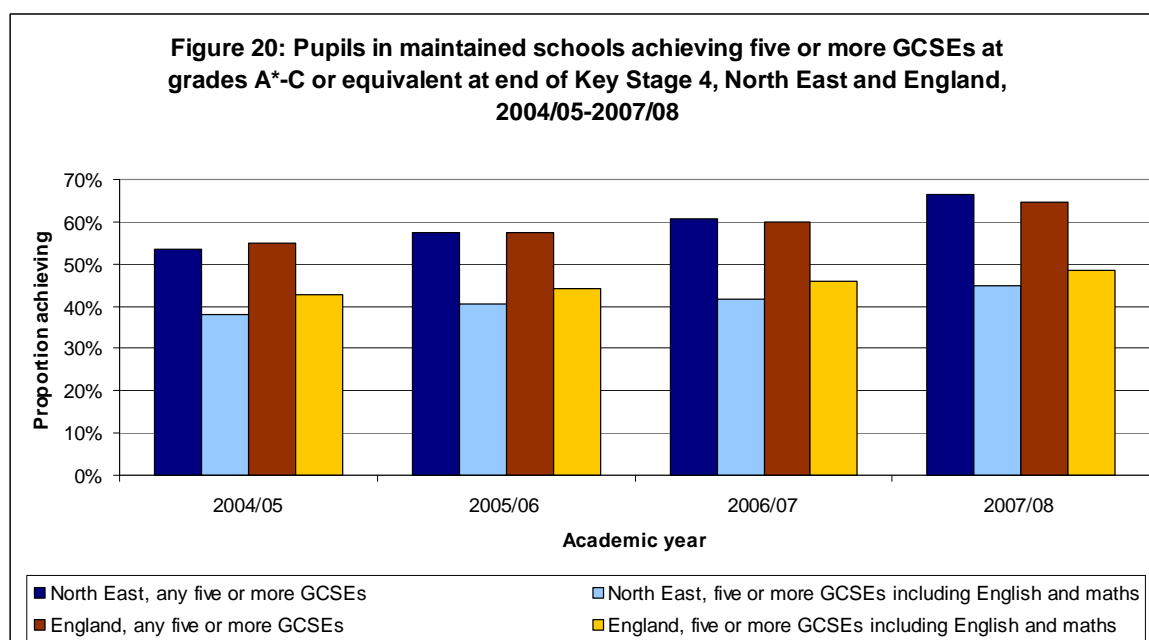
Because of differences in the way that attainment is calculated at local and national levels, our figures are not directly comparable to national figures published by DCSF.

2007/08, attainment was highest in Middlesbrough (25.1 per cent), and lowest in North Tyneside (12.4 per cent). As at Level 2, however, local trends can be difficult to ascertain, partly because of statistical effects related to the relatively small number of young people eligible for free school meals in any one cohort at this geographical level⁵⁶.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

188 In recent years, attainment in Key Stage 4 has improved faster in the region than in England. Pupils in maintained schools in the North East are now slightly more likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent at the end of Key Stage 4 than the national average.

Some 66.4 per cent of North East pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in maintained schools in 2007/08 achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent, compared with 64.5 per cent in England⁵⁷.

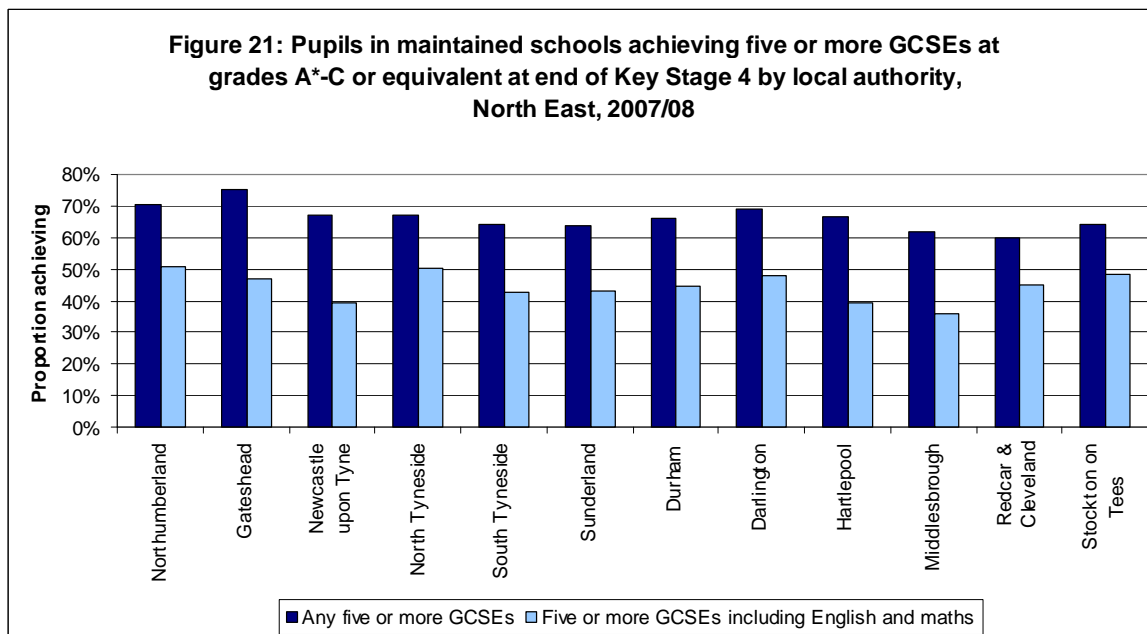


Source: DCSF GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Revised)

189 Attainment of five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent including English and maths has not improved as quickly as attainment generally. Some 44.9 per cent of North East pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2007/08 achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent including English and maths, compared with 48.3 per cent in England.

⁵⁶ Analysis is also problematic in areas with relatively high numbers of young people attending independent schools, who do not record information on eligibility for free school meals.

⁵⁷ DCSF GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Revised) (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000826/index.shtml>). Data on attainment at regional and local level relates to maintained schools and maintained special schools only. For consistency, national figures in this section also relate to maintained schools and maintained special schools only.



Source: DCSF GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Revised)

190 GCSE attainment varies by local authority. Pupils in maintained schools in Gateshead were most likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C in 2007/08. Those in Redcar and Cleveland were least likely to do so.

Pupils in Northumberland and North Tyneside were most likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and maths. Those in Middlesbrough were least likely to do so.

191 Improvements in attainment mean that few young people achieve no GCSEs or equivalent at the end of Key Stage 4 in maintained schools. In 2007/08, 2.0 per cent of pupils in the North East achieved no passes at GCSE or equivalent, compared with 1.7 per cent in England.

Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in attainment at Key Stage 4

192 GCSE attainment among boys remains lower than among girls. Some 62.1 per cent of boys in the North East achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent in 2007/08, compared with 70.9 per cent of girls.

193 GCSE attainment varies by ethnicity. Pupils from Black or Black British backgrounds are less likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C than pupils from other ethnic minority backgrounds.

Pupils from Asian or Asian British communities or from Chinese backgrounds are more likely than average to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C.

194 Attainment among pupils who do not speak English as their first language is mixed. Pupils in the North East who do not speak English as their first language were more likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C than pupils speaking English as their first language. They were less likely, however, to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and maths.

- 195 Pupils with special educational needs are less likely to achieve GCSEs than those with no identified SEN. Pupils with SEN are significantly less likely than those without to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C. This is especially true among pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- 196 Looked after children are far less likely than average to achieve GCSEs. Just 17 per cent of looked after children in the North East achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C or equivalent in 2007/08⁵⁸.
- 197 Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely than average to achieve GCSEs. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals are significantly less likely to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C than those not eligible. Pupils in maintained schools located in more deprived areas are generally less likely to achieve GCSEs than those attending schools located in less deprived areas.
- 198 Pupils in schools located in the most sparsely populated rural areas are less likely to achieve GCSEs than those living in more densely populated areas.

A-level attainment

- 199 The proportion of young people in maintained schools, City Technology Colleges and FE colleges in the North East who achieve two or more A-levels or equivalent qualifications is in line with the national average. 95.3 per cent of 16–18 year old candidates in the region achieved two or more A-level passes in 2007/08, compared with 94.9 per cent in England⁵⁹.
- 200 Fewer young men than young women in the North East were entered for A-level or equivalent qualifications. Male candidates were less likely to achieve two or more A-levels or equivalent than females.

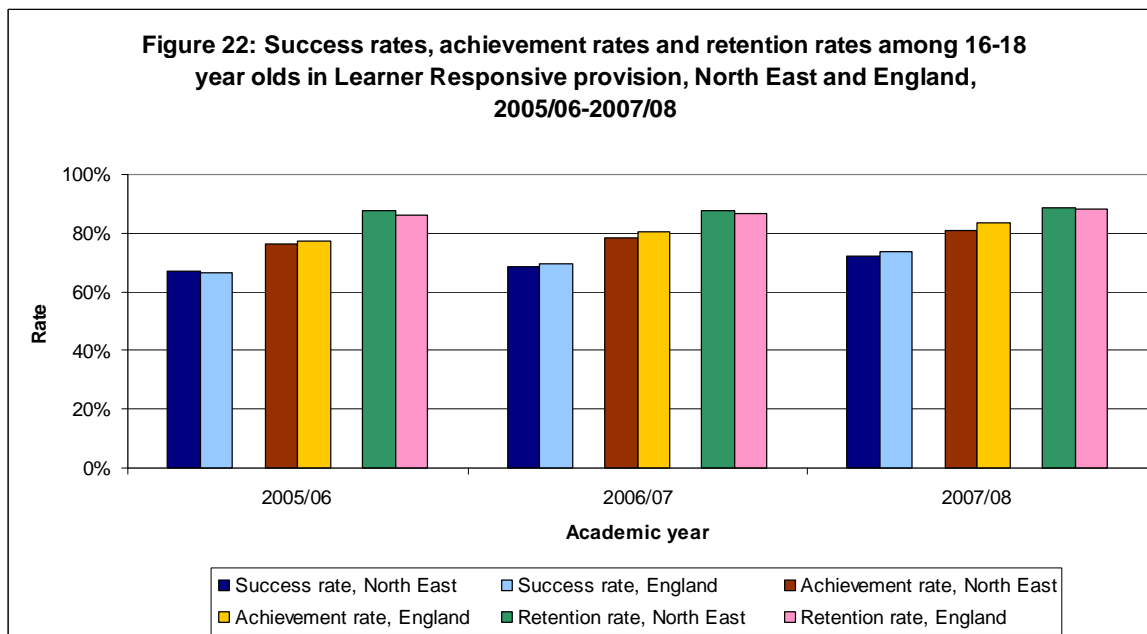
Success rates in Learner Responsive Provision

- 201 Success rates among 16–18 year olds in Learner Responsive provision funded by LSC North East continue to improve, though at a slightly slower rate than in England as a whole.

The success rate among 16–18 year olds in Learner Responsive provision in the North East in 2007/08 was 72.0 per cent, compared with the national average of 73.5 per cent.

⁵⁸ DCSF Statistical First Release on Outcome Indicators for Children Looked After, Twelve months to 30 September 2008 – England
(<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000842/index.shtml>).

⁵⁹ DCSF GCE/VCE/Applied A/AS and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Revised) (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000827/index.shtml>). Data on attainment at regional and local level relates to maintained schools and maintained special schools only. For consistency, national figures in this section also relate to maintained schools and maintained special schools only.



Source: LSC Individualised Learner Record

- 202 Improvements in success rates are driven in particular by improvements in the underlying achievement rate. The achievement rate in the North East in 2007/08 was 81.0 per cent, compared with 83.6 per cent in England.
- 203 Retention rates are also improving, though there is less room for growth and improvement is therefore slower. The retention rate in the North East in 2007/08 was 88.8 per cent, compared with 87.9 per cent in England.
- 204 Success, achievement and retention rates among 16–18 year olds undertaking full Level 2 qualifications are close to the average among all young learners. Recent improvements have been more significant among those undertaking full Level 2 qualifications than among all learners.
- 205 Success, achievement and retention rates among young learners undertaking first full Level 2 qualifications are also close to average, having seen significant recent improvements. Historically, performance among 16–18 year olds undertaking first full Level 2 qualifications have been below average.
- 206 Success rates among 16–18 year olds undertaking full Level 3 qualifications are close to the average among all young learners. Retention rates are slightly above average, while achievement rates are slightly below average. Success, achievement and retention rates among young learners undertaking full Level 3 qualifications all show similar improvements to those seen among all 16–18 year old learners.
- 207 Success, achievement and retention rates among young learners undertaking first full Level 3 qualifications show a similar picture. Recent improvements in performance among young learners undertaking first full Level 3 qualifications have been smaller than improvements in performance among all 16–18 year olds in Learner Responsive provision in the region.

Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in Learner Responsive success rates

- 208 The gender gap in success rates among 16–18 year olds in Learner Responsive provision funded by LSC North East is reducing, and is not significant (less than 1 percentage point).
- 209 Similarly, there is no significant gender difference in success rates among 16-18 year olds undertaking full Level 2 qualifications. Success rates among young women undertaking first full Level 2 qualifications, however, are a little lower than success rates among young men.
- 210 Success rates are slightly higher among young women undertaking full Level 3 qualifications than among young men. Currently, the gender gap is not significant, but success rates are improving faster among young women and the gap may widen in future.
- Success rates among 16–18 year olds undertaking first full Level 3 qualifications are also slightly higher among young women than among young men.
- 211 Historically, Learner Responsive success rates have generally been higher than average among 16–18 year olds from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There is, however, significant variation in success rates between different ethnic groups. The gap between the highest and lowest success rates by ethnicity in 2007/08 was 24.0 percentage points, wider than in 2006/07.
- 212 Success rates are generally higher than average among young learners from BME communities undertaking full Level 2 qualifications. Success rates are improving more quickly among young learners from BME communities than among young white learners.
- Success rates among young learners from BME communities undertaking first full Level 2 qualifications, however, are lower than average.
- 213 Broadly speaking, success rates are slightly higher among young learners from BME communities undertaking full Level 3 qualifications in Learner Responsive provision in the North East than among young white learners. A similar picture is seen among 16–18 year olds undertaking *first* full Level 3 qualifications.
- 214 In 2007/08, success rates were slightly higher among 16–18 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than among those without. Nationally, the opposite was true.
- 215 There are significant differences in success rates among learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, according to their particular needs. The gap in success rates among 16–18 year olds with different learning difficulties and/or disabilities was 17.1 percentage points in 2007/08. This gap appears to be narrowing, though it is difficult to draw firm conclusions due to large year-on-year fluctuations in success rates among some small groups of learners (such as those with profound complex disabilities).
- 216 Success rates are slightly lower among young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities undertaking full Level 2 qualifications than

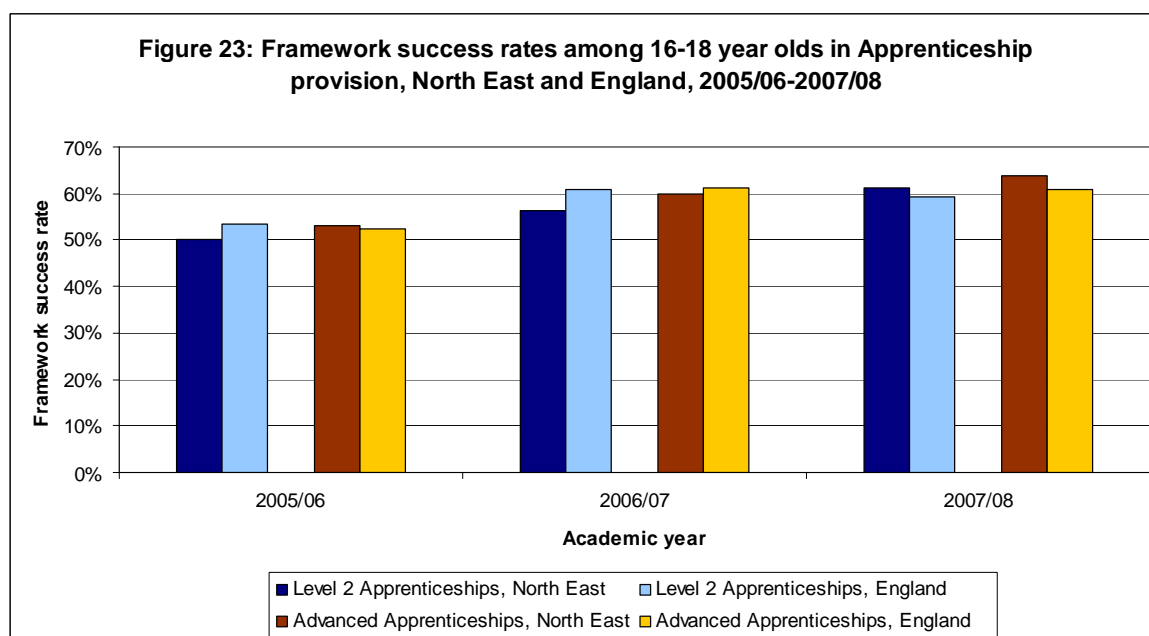
among those without. The gap between the two groups is not yet significant, but appears to be widening.

Success rates among young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities undertaking first full Level 2 qualifications are similar to success rates among those without learning difficulties or disabilities.

- 217 Success rates are slightly lower among young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities undertaking full Level 3 qualifications than among those without learning difficulties or disabilities. A similar picture is seen among 16–18 year olds undertaking first full Level 3 qualifications.

Apprenticeship success rates

- 218 Apprenticeship framework success rates among 16–18 year olds resident in the North East continue to improve. Nationally, success rates showed no improvement between 2006/07 and 2007/08, and success rates in the region are now above the national average.



Source: LSC Individualised Learner Record

- 219 The framework success rate among young resident learners in Level 2 Apprenticeships in the North East in 2007/08 was 61.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 59.2 per cent.

The framework success rate among 16–18 year old residents in Advanced Apprenticeships in the region was 63.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 61.0 per cent.

Narrowing the gap: Inequalities in Apprenticeship success rates

- 220 Framework success rates were slightly higher among 16–18 year old females in Level 2 Apprenticeships in the North East in 2007/08 than among males. Success rates in Advanced Apprenticeships were also higher among young women.

- 221 Success rates are slightly higher among young women undertaking first Level 2 qualifications in Apprenticeship provision than among young men. Success rates are also higher among young women undertaking first Level 3 qualifications in Apprenticeship provision.
- 222 The small number of young learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who are undertaking Apprenticeships in the North East makes analysis of trends in framework success rates difficult. Success rates among 16–18 year olds from BME backgrounds who are undertaking Level 2 Apprenticeships appear to be above average, having improved significantly in recent years. Success rates among young learners from BME communities in Advanced Apprenticeships appear to be below average.
- 223 Reflecting the national picture, framework success rates among young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Apprenticeship provision in the North East are significantly lower than among learners without learning difficulties or disabilities. This is particularly true in Level 2 Apprenticeships, but is also true in Advanced Apprenticeships.

Entry to Employment

- 224 Just under 4,400 learners left E2E programmes funded by LSC North East in 2007/08. 54.9 per cent progressed to positive outcomes, in line with the national average (54.8 per cent)⁶⁰.
- 225 Progression rates are lower than average among learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, among female learners and among learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 226 42 per cent of leavers who progressed to positive outcomes went on to Further Education, compared with the national average of 38 per cent. 26 per cent of positive progressions were to Work Based Learning, well above the national average (19 per cent).
- 32 per cent of positive progressions were to employment, below the national average (42 per cent). Just 26 per cent of those progressing to employment went on to a job with training, compared with 32 per cent across England.

Progression to Higher Education

- 227 Almost 18,500 people aged 18–29 from the North East applied to UCAS for a place on a full-time higher education course starting in 2008/09. Some 82 per cent were accepted, the highest number of accepted applicants on record.
- This was a sharp increase in applications (and accepted applications) compared with 2007/08, in line with national trends. Growth was especially noticeable in the number of applicants from more deprived areas, and in the number from lower socio-economic groups. In particular, there was a significant increase in applications from the ‘semi-routine occupations’ group, which is now well-represented among accepted applicants. Other lower socio-economic groups remain under-represented⁶¹.

⁶⁰ LSC Individualised Learner Record.

⁶¹ Universities for the North East, 2009.

228 The latest data on the inequality gap in progression to higher education among young people from low income backgrounds and their peers suggests that there was little improvement in the North East between 2005/06 and 2006/07, though progress varied across different local authorities.

Within the region, Northumberland saw the largest decrease in the gap between progression to higher education among 18 and 19 year olds who were eligible for free school meals at age 15 and progression among those not eligible. In contrast, several local authorities saw the gap widen⁶². The subsequent growth in applications from deprived areas and from lower socio-economic groups suggests a narrowing of the gap in 2007/08.

The regional learning infrastructure

229 16–18 learning provision in the region in 2008/09 is delivered by:

- 15 general FE and tertiary colleges
- 5 sixth form colleges
- 1 specialist art, design and performing arts college
- 65 school sixth forms
- 4 academies and 1 City Technology College
- some 80 Apprenticeship providers funded by LSC North East⁶³, which have delivery locations (but not necessarily head offices) in the region
- a number of Apprenticeship providers that are not directly funded by LSC North East, including those funded by the National Employer Service, that have delivery locations in the region
- 37 E2E providers
- the 12 local authorities, and
- 4 specialist LLDD providers.

230 The structure of the provider base varies across the region. For example, the Northumberland 16–18 offer is delivered mainly through sixth form provision in 15 high schools. Tyne and Wear is characterised by medium sized and large general FE colleges. In Tees Valley, there are few school sixth forms but there are sixth form colleges in each of the five local authorities.

231 Four new academies with provision for 16–18 year olds are planned across the region⁶⁴. It will be important to monitor the effect of this new provision on recruitment to existing learning providers.

Specialisation

National Skills Academies

232 National Skills Academies are led by employers from an occupational sector who work with Government and training providers to shape the training and qualifications that will help them compete in global markets. National Skills

⁶² CLG Hub/Floor Targets Interactive. This measure of the gap in progression between those eligible and those not eligible for free school meals is consistent with National Indicator 106. The associated PSA target measures the gap in terms of progression from different socio-economic groups.

⁶³ Apprenticeship provision, like other Employer Responsive provision, will move to single national contracts from 2009/10.

⁶⁴ One of these is already in operation, but not yet delivering 16–18 provision.

Academies are currently operating in 12 key sectors of the economy⁶⁵. A further three are in development⁶⁶.

- 233 One of the key components in the development of National Skills Academies is to establish a network of specialist providers who are recognised both by the academy and employers as offering quality provision that meets the needs of the sector. National Skills Academies can therefore play a key role in engaging employers through working collaboratively with 14–19 consortia.

Quality of provision in the region

Minimum levels of performance

- 234 The LSC introduced Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) in 2006/07 as part of its drive to raise the quality of publicly-funded provision. In 2008/09, the MLP threshold for FE provision was set at 60 per cent for long qualifications, 75 per cent for short qualifications and 75 per cent for A-level provision, measured using 2007/08 success rates.
- 235 Ten colleges in the region had more than 15 per cent of their short qualifications with success rates below MLP. Two of these colleges also had over 15 per cent of their long qualifications with success rates below MLP.
- 236 The application of nationally agreed exceptions meant that only two colleges in the region were issued a Notice to Improve in April 2009. By comparison, 7 colleges were issued with Notices to Improve in April 2008.
- 237 The MLP threshold for Apprenticeship provision in 2008/09 was set at 50 per cent, also measured using 2007/08 success rates. Any provision with success rates below 50 per cent but above 45 per cent was subject to contractually binding indicators to be applied in 2009/10.
- 238 12 Apprenticeship providers in the region received notification in March 2009 that the LSC would withdraw funding from one or more areas of underperforming provision from 2009/10.
- 239 This has affected 17 separate areas of provision, over 14 Sector Frameworks, in 9 Sector Subject Areas. The sectors most affected are Retail and Commercial Enterprise, and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.
- 240 The number of learners affected by the removal of underperforming provision was relatively small (83 learners in 2008/09, compared with 951 learners in 2007/08), indicating that the application of MLP policy over the past two years has resulted in a significant decrease in the amount of underperforming provision in the region.

Inspection

- 241 Between 1 September 2008 and 1 July 2009, Ofsted carried out 49 inspections or monitoring visits in the region. No providers were awarded a

⁶⁵ Including construction, creative and cultural, financial services, food and drink manufacturing, hospitality, manufacturing, materials, production and supply, nuclear, process industries, retail, sport and active leisure, and enterprise.

⁶⁶ Including fashion, textiles and jewellery, IT, and social care.

Grade 4 (Inadequate) for their Overall Effectiveness. Only one provider received a Grade 4 at inspection for their Capacity to Improve.

- 242 The North East now has five General FE and Sixth Form Colleges with a Grade 1 (Outstanding) for Overall Effectiveness. Four of these have a Grade 1 for all aspects inspected. The fifth has Grade 1 for four out of six key areas and Grade 2 (Good) for the remaining two areas.
- 243 From September 2009, a number of changes are being made to how providers are notified and graded. Notification of an inspection by Ofsted will now be reduced to 2–3 weeks for all providers. Grades will be categorised as previously, but there will now be *limiting grades* that may affect a provider's Overall Effectiveness grade. These limiting grades will be judgements made on safeguarding and on equality and diversity. It will be important to monitor the impact this new focus has on inspection outcomes.

Framework for Excellence

- 244 The Framework for Excellence is the Government's performance assessment tool for FE colleges and other post-16 education and training providers funded by the LSC. The Framework has been designed in consultation with the learning and skills sector and partners, including the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Department of Children, Schools and Families, Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service.
- 245 Through ongoing discussions with the sector we have taken on board and addressed comments and concerns, in particular with regard to the planned publication of limited Framework results in 2009. The LSC will not publish individual provider results in 2009. The LSC has, however, published some national headlines from the 2008/09 assessment exercise, which the sector can use for comparison and benchmarking purposes⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ See LSC (2009) *Framework for Excellence: Headline Outcomes in 2009* (http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Framework_for_Excellence_Outcomes_-_FINAL.pdf).

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