

16-18 level 3 qualifications



Leading learning and skills

January 2009

Information Service

Purpose: This document forms the 16-18 level 3 qualifications section of the South West Strategic Analysis 2008. The Strategic Analysis is the annual 'stock-take' analysis and considers labour market intelligence, performance information and Government policy to develop a full strategic picture of current education and training marketplace. The analysis is supported by national skills research (including Skills in England Report 2007, National Employer Skills Survey and Working Futures). The stock-take provides the intelligence to confirm our strategies and priorities.

Theme: 16-18 level 3 qualifications

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Contents

Key Points	4
The need for higher level skills and qualifications	4
Policy context	6
What do the targets mean for the South West?	7
Figure 1: Level 3 qualifications of the 16-19 year old population by region.....	7
Figure 2: Level 3 qualifications of the 16-19 year old population by age.....	8
Figure 3: Progress in Level 3 attainment; Percentage increase 2004 to 2007 in the regions	9
Figure 4: Level 3 attainment trends at age 19, 2004-2007 and projections at current rate of progress; South West and England compared.	10
Figure 5: Level 3 attainment trends at age 19 by region, 2004-2007	11
Figure 6: Level 3 attainment trends by age 2004-2007; South West and England compared.....	12
Figure 7: Proportion of 16-19 year old population qualified to Level 3 by eligibility for Free School Meals by Local Authority Area.	14
Figure 8: Trends in the attainment gap between those eligible/not eligible for Free School Meals by Local Authority Area 2005-2007.	14
Figure 9: Level 3 attainment in Local Authority areas at 19 in the South West relative to statistical neighbours.....	15
Figure 10: Trends in Level 3 attainment in Local Education Authority, 2004- 2007	16
Routes to Level 3 attainment: Academic study	16
Figure 11: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to Level 3 by qualification type at which level was achieved	17
Figure 12: Qualifications studied for by LSC funded learners at Level 3 by age-band; percentages	18
Figure 13: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to level 3, by institution type where Level 3 was achieved and cohort	18
Figure 14: Level of study in school sixth forms; numbers and percentages of learners at each level.....	19
Figure 15: Subjects studied at Level 3 in Sixth Forms; percentages.....	20
Figure 16: Distribution of pupils in Sixth Forms studying for Level 3 qualifications which directly contribute to the PSA target; numbers and percentages	21
Figure 17: Ethnicity of pupils in Sixth Forms studying for Level 3 qualifications which directly contribute to the PSA target; percentages.....	22
Figure 18: Average point score per pupil by LEA in post 16 schools and colleges	23
Figure 19: Trends in average point score per pupil by LEA in post 16 schools and colleges 2006-2008.....	24
The academic route to Level 3: Sixth Form Colleges	24
Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)	24
Higher Education	25
The vocational route to Level 3: Further Education Colleges	26
Figure 20: Number and proportion of students studying for Level 3 and above at FE Colleges in the South West by Local Authority area	27
Figure 21: Number and proportion of enrolments at Level 3 and above by subject at FE Colleges in the South West	28
Figure 22: Proportion of enrolments at different levels by subject at FE Colleges in the South West	29

Figure 23: Reasons for enrolling at Level 3 given by LSC funded learners in England (Percentages giving each response).....	30
The vocational route to Level 3: Apprenticeships	30
Figure 24: Apprenticeship starts at Level 3 by age, 2007/08	31
Figure 25: Number of apprenticeships among 16-18 year olds by level, 2004 – 2007/08 with comparative figures for all starts/all ages.....	31
Figure 26: Number of 16-18 year old South West residents starting apprenticeships at Level 3 by SSA	32
The demand for young people in the labour force	32
Figure 27: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months.....	33
Figure 28: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months by size of employer	34
Figure 29: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months by SSC.....	35
Figure 30: Employers' views of work readiness of young recruits in the region	36
Figure 31: Employers' views of skills lacking in young recruits in South West	37
Figure 32: Main skills lacking among young people aged 16 recruited directly from education; South West and England compared	38
Figure 33: Main skills lacking among young people aged 17-18 recruited directly from education; South West and England compared.....	39
Figure 34: Involvement in Apprenticeships by size of establishment; percentages	40
Figure 35: Recruits to Apprenticeships in the South West by sector (percentages)	41
Annex 1 – POLAR Maps	42
Annex 2.....	46

Key Points

- > The need to raise the achievement of young people up to the age of 19 has been set out in two Public Service Agreements. PSA10 requires 54% of young people to be qualified to Level 3 by 2011 and PSA11 seeks to narrow the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.
- > The South West has a relatively well qualified young population with 50.2% having attained Level 3 by the age of 19, well above the national average of 48.0%.
- > Nevertheless progress towards the PSA target has been below average in recent years so that the gap between the South West and other regions has narrowed since 2004.
- > Within the region highest attainment is recorded by young people in Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire, Poole and Gloucestershire and lowest in Plymouth and Swindon.
- > Only 21% of those claiming Free School Meals in the South West attained Level 3 – less than half the average of 50%.
- > Although local figures are not available, national data shows that those of Black (42.4%) and White (43.7%) ethnic groups are least likely to attain Level 3, contrasting markedly with people of Asian origin who have the highest overall attainment (57.9%).
- > The vast majority of students attaining Level 3 do so through academic study via A levels.
- > 85% of young people studying at sixth forms are involved in learning which directly contributes to the Level 3 target. Many of these young people will continue to Higher Education and data shows that around 30% of 18-19 year olds from the region progress to Higher Education. This proportion varies significantly according to where people live.
- > In 2007 almost 70,000 young people were studying at FE Colleges in the region, of whom 58% were studying for Level 3 qualifications.
- > Apprenticeships amongst 16-18 year olds account for only a small proportion of Level 3 study within the region. Of the 10,702 young apprentice starts in 2007/08, just 2,564 were at Level 3.
- > On average, 38% of employers in the region have recruited staff aged 16-24 in the past 12 months. Employers most likely to recruit young people were from the retail, hospitality and tourism, leisure and food and drink manufacturing sectors.
- > Most employers with experience of recruiting young people viewed their work readiness positively although a significant minority (26%) were dissatisfied with young people's skills and attitudes.

The need for higher level skills and qualifications

In recent decades, the UK economy has undergone some fundamental changes. One of the most significant and consistent trends has been a fall in the proportion of employment accounted for by the manufacturing and primary sectors and a rise in service sector employment. Accompanying this trend, **the demand for skilled workers has grown**, reflecting shifts in the occupational and industrial structure; new

technology; the development of new working practices and intense global competition from the rising economies of India and China.

The changes have been dramatic and in the last two decades the numbers of jobs in low-skilled and elementary jobs have fallen by a quarter. Over the same period, the number of employees in professional, associate professional and managerial roles has increased by 35%. These long-term trends are set to continue and it is clear that, 'no longer do we have an economy where a third of school leavers can find low skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector.'¹ The rising demand for higher level skills and fall in demand for unskilled and unqualified labour suggest that by 2012 **two thirds of jobs (new and existing) will require at least Level 3 qualifications**².

Although the focus of the Leitch Review³ was on adult skills, Leitch underlined the vital role of **effective education for young people** and the need for 'world class attainment' amongst the young. To this end a whole series of changes have been introduced which dovetail with the Leitch recommendations and aim to expand participation and raise achievement. Key measures include:

- > A Target for 90% participation of 17 year olds by 2015 – up from 76% at present.
- > Reforms to the 14-19 curriculum
- > A major expansion of work-based learning
- > The introduction of Educational Maintenance Allowances for the less well-off
- > A 'September Guarantee' of an offer of a suitable learning place for every Year 11 leaver who wants one
- > Integrated support services
- > Learning Agreement Pilots to motivate young people in jobs without training to participate in learning and Activity Agreement Pilots to engage those classed as NEET.

Central to the reforms have been the proposal to raise to 18 the age at which young people must participate in schools, colleges and WBL from 2013 and the introduction of 14-19 Diplomas.

Current economic uncertainty brings a new urgency to these policies. Unemployment is growing fastest amongst 18-24 year olds and in the light of a highly competitive jobs market graduates are being urged to consider taking on lower status, lower paid jobs rather than face unemployment. The consequences for younger people lower down the qualifications chain and those classed as NEET are clear. In response, the government has published a review of the apprenticeship system, announced funding for an additional 35,000 apprenticeships, and made proposals to expand apprenticeships to ensure that they become a mainstream option for 16-18 year olds, alongside other education and training routes.

Latest data on youth unemployment and apprenticeship take-up in the South West are included below.

¹ Raising Expectations, Staying in Education and Training post 16, March 2007.

² Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work, March 2005 DFES, p18

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

Policy context

There are now targets for achievement at every level of the secondary system to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills they need for further learning and employment. The priorities for improving achievement and participation among 11-19 year olds are to:

- > Renew the focus on core subjects
- > Raise expectation of achievement and participation levels at 19
- > Secure continuing progression for all pupils
- > Narrow the gap in educational achievement, with a focus on provider quality led by the LSC to deliver quality outcomes in every area.

Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

To give impetus to the Government's vision for skills, there are two new Public Service Agreements (PSA10 and 11) which are of relevance here:

PSA10 aims to, '**raise the educational achievement of all children and young people**'. Indicator 6 requires **54% of young people to be qualified to at least full Level 3 by 2011**; up from the latest position of 48%. The indicator is intended to build on improvement in A level achievement and will, in addition, focus on raising the conversion of those achieving Level 2 at 16.

PSA 11 seeks to **narrow the gap** in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Clearly, the Government does not expect action in relation to PSA 10 to divert attention from those with lower achievements.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

Further local impetus is given the achievement of national/regional targets by the inclusion of relevant targets in the National Indicator Set from which Local Authorities identify up to 35 key indicators for their Local Area Agreements. **National Indicator 80** specifically relates to the '**achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19**' and **National Indicator 81** relates to the '**Inequality gap in the achievement of a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19**'.

Analysis of the latest round of LAAs in the South West shows that of the 16 Unitary Authorities/County Councils, just South Gloucestershire has adopted NI 80, although Plymouth and the Isles of Scilly have both identified Local Performance Indicators relevant to Level 3.

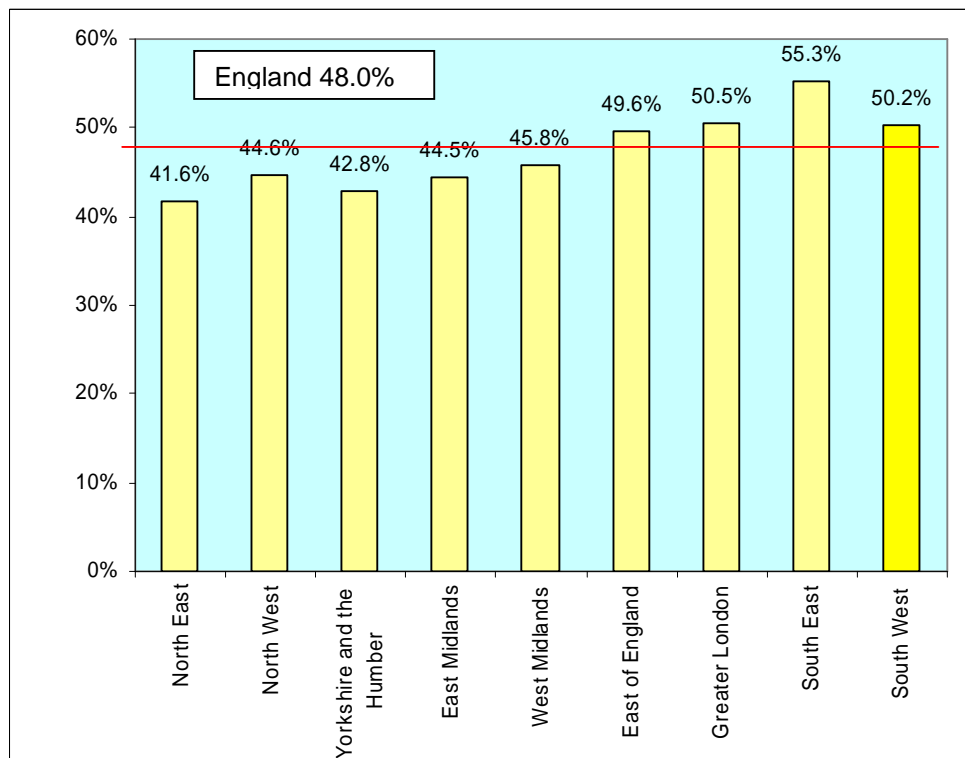
What do the targets mean for the South West?

The current position

The South West region has a well qualified young population with the largest proportion of people aged 19 with Level 3 qualifications outside London and the South East.

Latest available data shows that 48.0% of the English population aged 19 are qualified to Level 3 and above, compared with **50.2%** in the South West.

Figure 1: Level 3 qualifications of the 16-19 year old population by region



Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

In the South West, the population aged 19 in 2007 is estimated to be 64,508. Of these, **32,383 are qualified to Level 3** and above (2007 data). The table below shows the cumulative numbers who have reached Level 3 by the age of 19 in each year. Figures in bold are the cumulative percentages, for example, in 2007 32,383 or 50.2% of the cohort had reached Level 3 – most of those attaining that level (43.8%) had reached Level 3 by the age of 18:

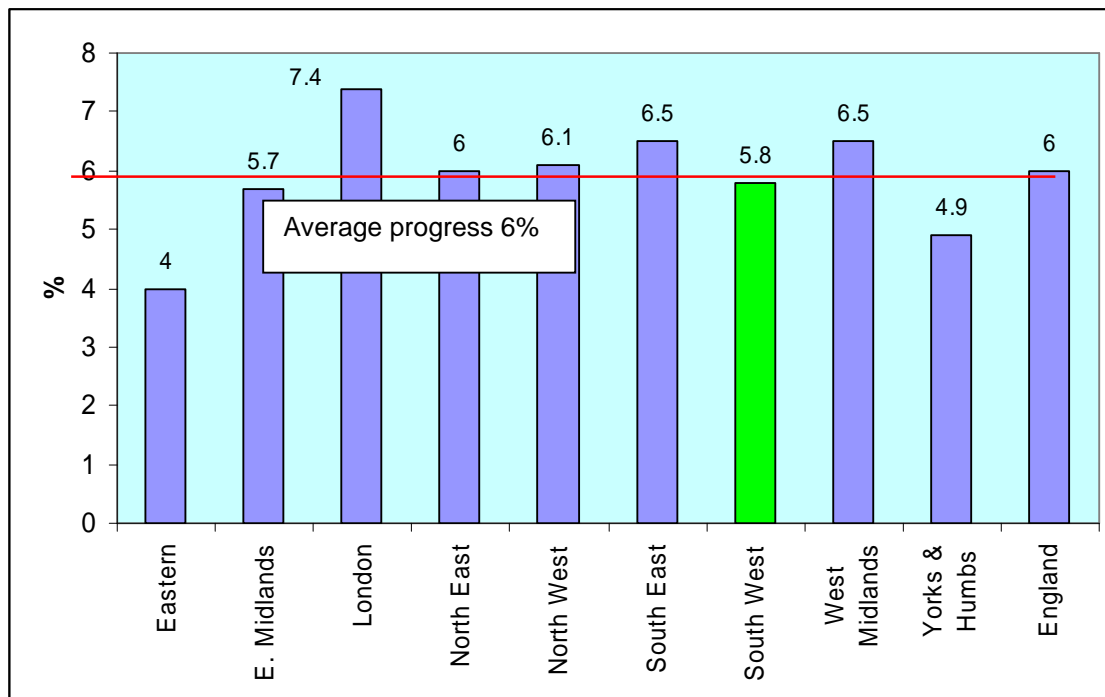
Figure 2: Level 3 qualifications of the 16-19 year old population by age

Learners in the cohort who had reached Level 3 by:	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Age 16	119	121	124	129	64	65	65
	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Age 17	7,157	9,370	9,428	9,805	9,825	11,211	
	12.0	15.5	15.2	15.2	15.3	17.2	
Age 18	23,200	25,571	26,610	28,255	27,933		
	38.9	42.3	42.9	43.8	43.5		
Age 19	26,481	29,319	30,642	32,383			
	44.4	48.5	49.4	50.2			
Size of cohort	59,641	60,452	62,029	64,508	64,213	65,183	64,848

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

By 2010, the PSA target requires that 54% or **35,018** young people in the South West will be required to achieve Level 3 if the target is to be met. This means that on average, an additional 800-900 young people per annum will need to qualify to this level, equivalent to a **1.3% annual increase** - far below the improvements required in most other regions. However, the recent rate of improvement in the South West has been well below this and in 2006/07 there was just a 0.8% increase in Level 3 attainment. Clearly there will need to be concerted action to boost numbers to achieve the rate of attainment required. To date, only Yorkshire and Humberside, the East of England and East Midlands have made slower progress than the South West:

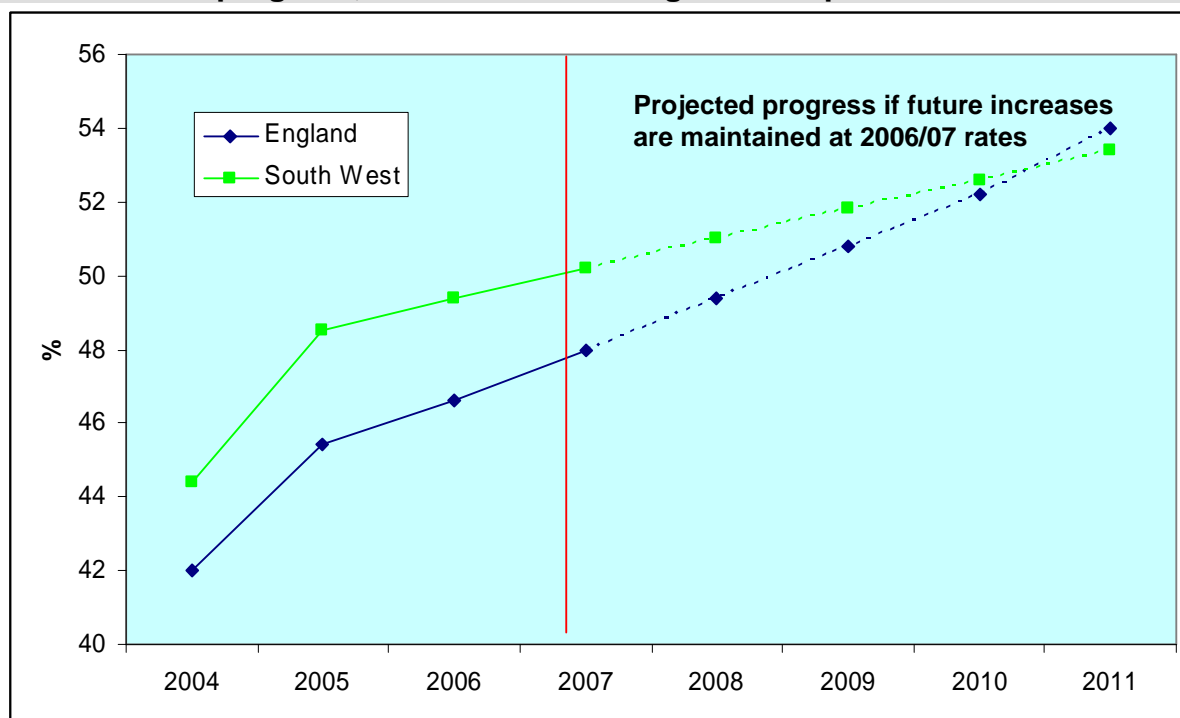
Figure 3: Progress in Level 3 attainment; Percentage increase 2004 to 2007 in the regions



Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

As a consequence of below average rates of improvement, the gap between attainment in the South West and the national average has narrowed somewhat in the past two years. Accordingly, unless progress **accelerates** the South West will fall short of the Target, despite the region having started in a favourable position:

Figure 4: Level 3 attainment trends at age 19, 2004-2007 and projections at current rate of progress; South West and England compared.



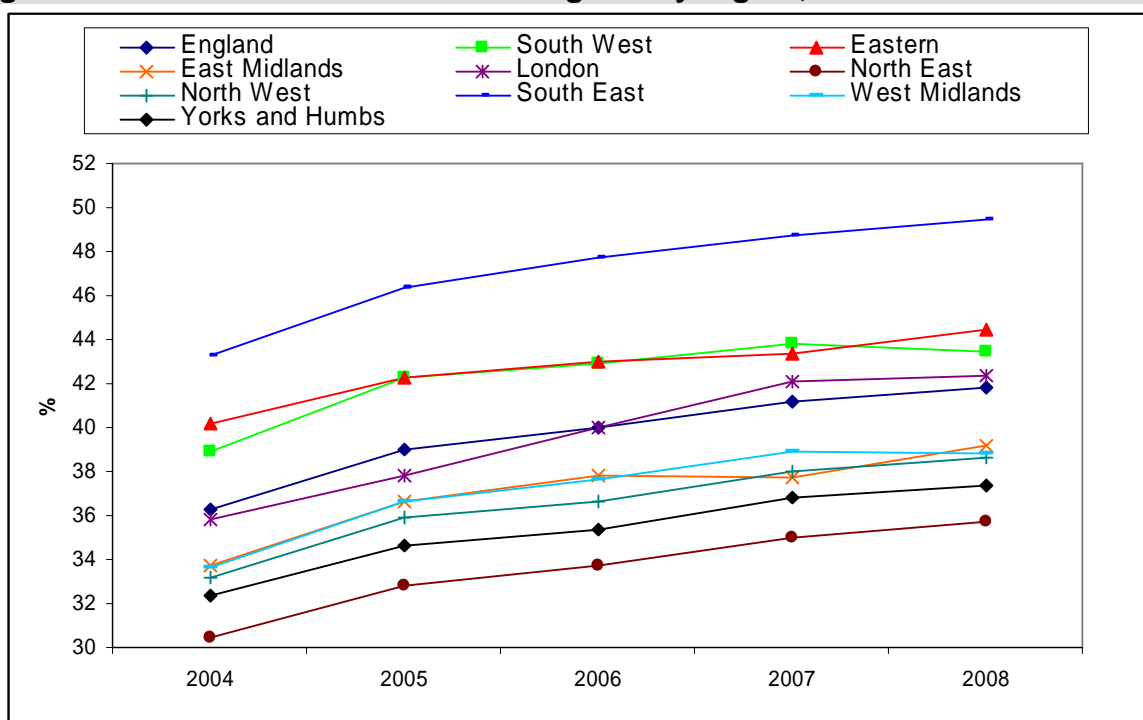
Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

Background figures

Since the achievement of the target largely depends on attainment to the age of 18 it is useful to explore in more detail recent trends in the performance of 16-18 year olds. Figures supplied by the DCSF show that already in 2008, 27,933 young people under 19 possessed Level 3, equivalent to 43.5% of the cohort. However, unlike the national position this represents a **fall** in the proportion possessing this level by the age of 18, marginally down from 43.8% in 2007. In only one other region (the West Midlands) has progress up to the age of 18 stalled in the past year.

In fact, since 2004/05 the rate of increase in attainment of Level 3 among 17-18 year olds in the South West has been 1.2% in total, less than half the national rate of increase of 2.8%, so while the recent fall might be considered no more than a blip, overall progress has been slow year on year.

Figure 5: Level 3 attainment trends at age 19 by region, 2004-2007



Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

More detailed examination of recent trends (see table below) shows that:

- > At the age of 17, the proportion of 17 year olds qualifying to Level 3 in the South West is in line with the national picture at around 17%.
- > By the age of 18, the South West consistently outperforms the country but since 2004/05 the extent of advantage has narrowed year on year.
- > Between the ages of 18 and 19, a greater proportion of 19 year olds in England convert to Level 3 than in the South West. For example, in 2006/07 the proportion holding Level 3 in England increased from 41.2% at 18 to 48.0% at 19 (+6.8%) compared with an increase of 6.4% between the ages of 18 and 19 in the South West. This suggests that there is scope to improve the conversion of qualifications from Level 2 to Level 3 between the ages of 18 and 19:

Figure 6: Level 3 attainment trends by age 2004-2007; South West and England compared.

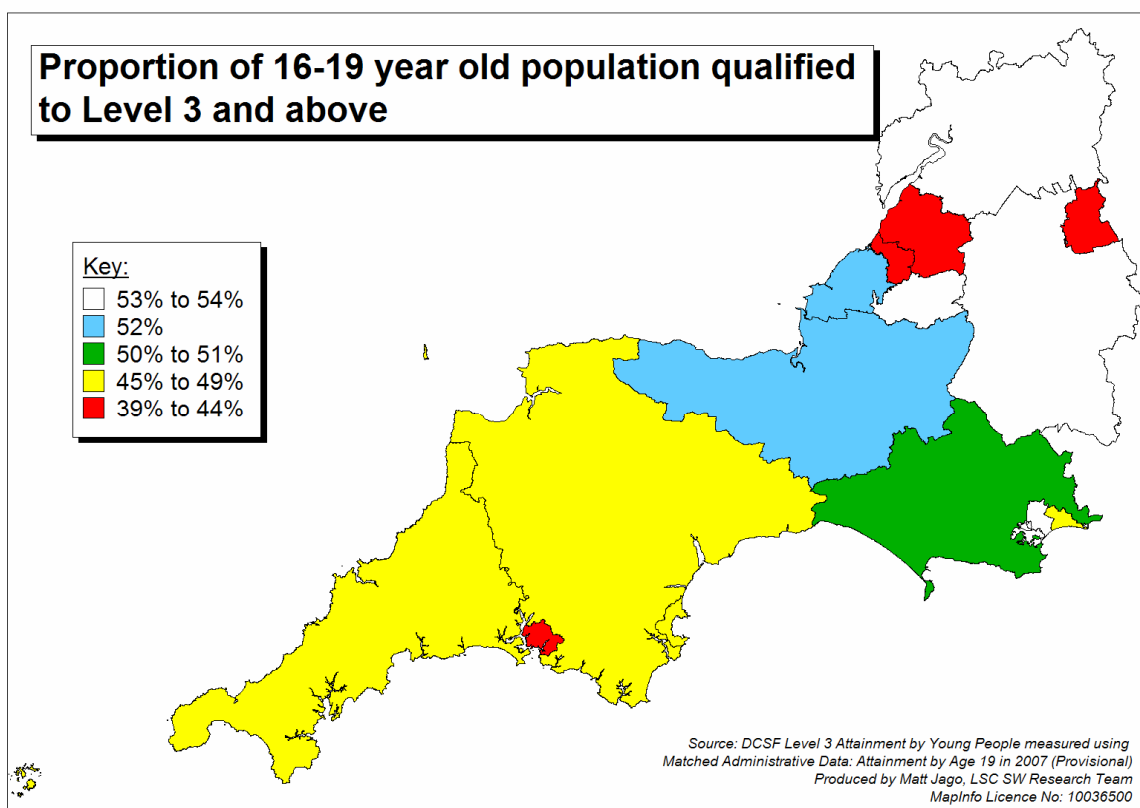
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
17 yr olds SW	12	15.5	15.2	15.2	17.2
17 yr olds England	11.8	15.0	15.2	15.8	17.1
18 yr olds SW	39.0	42.3	42.9	43.8	43.5
18 yr olds England	36.3	39.0	40.0	41.2	41.8
19 yr olds SW	44.0	48.5	49.4	50.2	
19 yr olds England	42.0	45.4	46.6	48.0	

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

Level 3 by Local Authority area

As may be expected, there are significant differences in baseline positions within the region. It can be seen that:

- > There are 16 percentage points difference in achievement across the region between Plymouth and Swindon with the lowest figure at 39% and Bath and North East Somerset the highest at 55%.
- > The more rural counties in the north and east of the region such as Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset have some of the highest positions.



Narrowing the gap

To a large extent these differences in the qualifications base reflect the different socio economic characteristics of the population, with major differences in attainment by gender, ethnicity, household income and gender. Thus, national data shows that:

- > Females are more likely to attain Level 3 by the age of 19 (53.4%) than males (42.8%);
- > Those eligible for Free School Meals (23%) are half as likely to attain Level 3 as those who are not;
- > Those in the most deprived quartile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation are 34% less likely to gain Level 3 than those in the upper quartile;
- > Those of Black (42.4%) and White (43.7%) ethnic groups are least likely to attain Level 3, contrasting markedly with people of Asian origin who have the highest overall attainment (57.9%).

Comparative data for the South West is not available below the national level with the exception of Free School Meals data. This shows that:

- > In 2007, 21% of 16-19 year olds eligible for Free School Meals in the South West attained Level 3.
- > Trend data for 2005 to 2007 shows little overall change in the past three years.
- > The proportion attaining Level 3 varied from lows of 12% in Bristol and 17% in Plymouth and Gloucestershire to highs of 28% in Poole and Bath and North East Somerset. However, attainment by FSM can be variable from year to year, particularly for small Local Authorities, where the size of the FSM eligible group may be relatively small, and can change from year to year, causing large changes in percentage attainment levels.
- > The attainment gap between those eligible for Free School Meals in the South West was greater (29%) than in England (25%). Again, there are caveats with the data in that the regional calculation differs from the national estimates which use numerators based upon all young people, not just those with FSM records on the school census. This can have a significant bearing on figures by Local Authority, particularly those in which a large number of pupils attended independent schools at age 16, because records of FSM eligibility are not obtained from independent schools.

Figure 7: Proportion of 16-19 year old population qualified to Level 3 by eligibility for Free School Meals by Local Authority Area.

	Achieved L3 at 19 in 07 (Not FSM eligible)	Achieved L3 at 19 in 07 (FSM eligible)	Gap in percentage points
Isles of Scilly	*	*	*
Bath and North East Somerset	52%	28%	24%
City of Bristol	37%	12%	24%
North Somerset	57%	20%	36%
South Gloucestershire	46%	23%	23%
Dorset	51%	24%	26%
Poole	52%	28%	24%
Bournemouth	50%	22%	27%
Wiltshire	55%	21%	34%
Swindon	43%	19%	24%
Devon	48%	24%	24%
Plymouth	43%	17%	26%
Torbay	52%	27%	24%
Cornwall	48%	25%	22%
Gloucestershire	56%	17%	39%
Somerset	53%	21%	31%
South West	50%	21%	29%

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

Figure 8: Trends in the attainment gap between those eligible/not eligible for Free School Meals by Local Authority Area 2005-2007.

	Attainment gap (ppts)		
	19 in 05	19 in 06	19 in 07
Isles of Scilly	*	*	*
Bath and North East Somerset	34%	21%	24%
City of Bristol	23%	22%	24%
North Somerset	32%	37%	36%
South Gloucestershire	28%	30%	23%
Dorset	31%	28%	26%
Poole	31%	31%	24%
Bournemouth	24%	29%	27%
Wiltshire	37%	37%	34%
Swindon	31%	30%	24%
Devon	25%	28%	24%
Plymouth	29%	27%	26%
Torbay	32%	28%	24%
Cornwall	23%	25%	22%
Gloucestershire	37%	37%	39%
Somerset	32%	32%	31%
South West	30%	30%	29%

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).


The Government is clear that action to improve Level 3 attainment should not be at the expense of those who have lower levels of achievement and PSA Target 11 seeks to ensure that in tandem with improvements in attainment at Level 3 there should be a narrowing of the gap between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

In order to compare performance on a more equitable basis, data from the Fischer Family Trust, has been matched with other authorities have which share their statistical make-up. On this basis it can be see that 7 of the 16 Education Authorities in the South West outperform their statistical neighbours.

Figure 9: Level 3 attainment in Local Authority areas at 19 in the South West relative to statistical neighbours.

	UA/County	NFER comparator
Bath and North East Somerset	54.6	51.3
Bournemouth	46.7	49.9
Bristol	40.4	42.7
Cornwall	45.1	47.7
Devon	46.8	48.5
Dorset	49.8	51.2
Gloucestershire	53.5	51.1
Isles of Scilly	51.6	50.3
North Somerset	52.2	49.5
Plymouth	38.6	41.5
Poole	54.0	47.8
South Gloucestershire	42.4	49.6
Somerset	52.2	48.7
Swindon	38.9	45.5
Torbay	45.1	43.4
Wiltshire	54.2	51.7

Source: Fischer Family Trust / Matched Administrative Database.

 Above the comparator

Trend data shows that typically those areas with low attainment levels also tend to have made below average progress since 2003/04 with Bristol and Plymouth in particular showing little change in four years.

Figure 10: Trends in Level 3 attainment in Local Education Authority, 2004- 2007

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Change 03/04- 06/07
Plymouth	37%	39%	39%	39%	1%
Swindon	34%	39%	39%	39%	5%
Bristol	39%	40%	41%	40%	1%
South Gloucestershire	39%	43%	44%	42%	3%
Cornwall	38%	42%	44%	45%	7%
Torbay	41%	46%	43%	45%	4%
Bournemouth	41%	48%	47%	47%	5%
Devon	41%	45%	46%	47%	5%
Dorset	46%	49%	49%	50%	4%
South West	44%	49%	49%	50%	6%
Isles of Scilly	40%	59%	53%	52%	12%
Somerset	44%	50%	51%	52%	8%
North Somerset	44%	52%	51%	52%	9%
Gloucestershire	47%	51%	52%	53%	7%
Poole	48%	53%	51%	54%	6%
Wiltshire	47%	51%	53%	54%	7%
Bath and North East Somerset	50%	53%	54%	55%	5%

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

Routes to Level 3 attainment: Academic study

At the age of 16 the reality across the country is that young people with 5 or more good GCSEs continue with their academic education, typically at school or sixth form and those who do not reach this level opt for employment or vocational learning through college based provision. Most of this college-based provision is not delivered at Level 3 and the overwhelming majority of Level 3 attainment is derived through **A Levels**.

The data below illustrates this; it shows the proportion of people aged 19 qualified to Level 3 by the qualification type they achieved to reach that level (Data is from 2004 to 2007). The data is national but it is not considered that the South West will be significantly different. As can be seen, A-Levels remain by far the most common qualification type for 19 year olds to reach Level 3. This is despite the proportion gaining A levels falling by 0.8 percentage points between 2004 and 2007. The proportion reaching Level 3 via vocational related qualifications remains negligible even through the proportion of young people attaining Level 3 through VCRs has increased by 6% over the same period.

Figure 11: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to Level 3 by qualification type at which level was achieved

Qualification type	AS, A-levels, AVCEs or Advanced GNVQs	Advanced Apprenticeships	NVQ 3	VRQ 3	International Baccalaureate	Proportion achieving level 3 by age 19
Percents of 2007 cohort	37.7	0.8	1.2	8.1	0.3	48.0

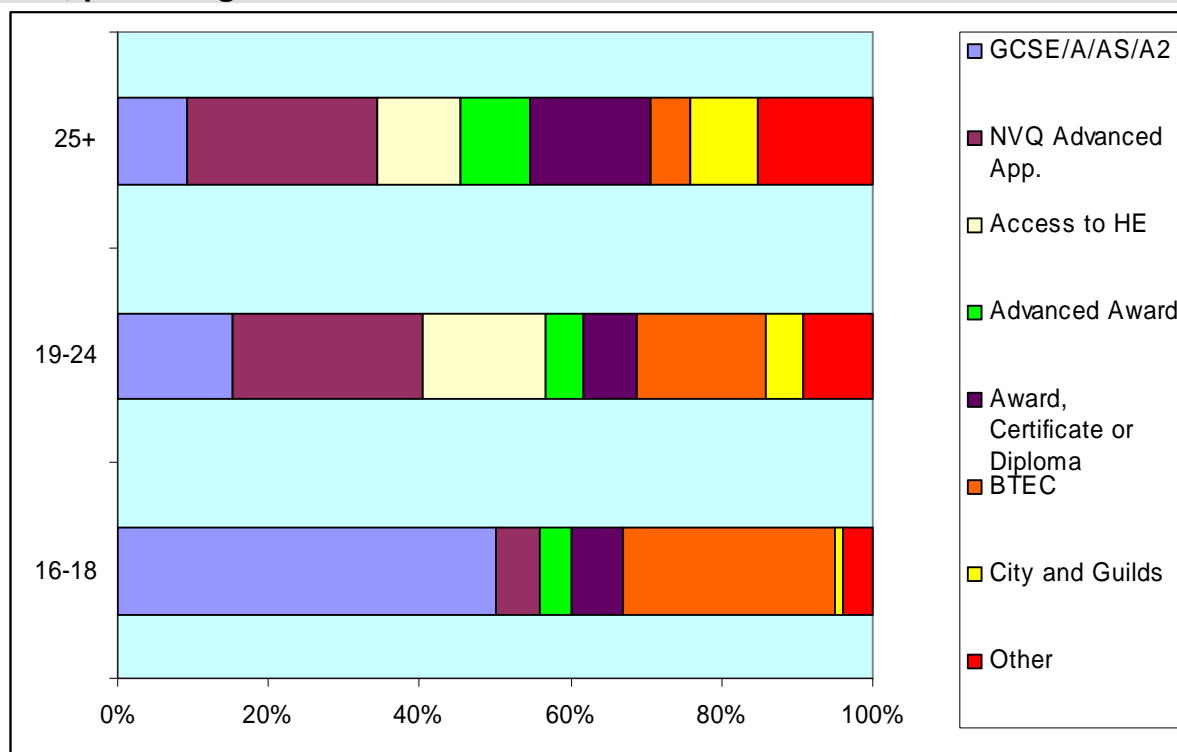
Source: SFR04/2008

These findings are given further weight by the National Evaluation of LSC funded Level 3 learners⁴ which provides a series of analyses from which it is possible to profile those in FE (including School Sixth Forms) and WBL who are currently undertaking qualifications at Level 3 (as opposed to those who have already qualified to Level 3 (above)). The research was based on 8,630 learners nationwide, including 702 from the South West and relates to learners from the latest academic year. It is not possible to separate out findings for the South West but given the robustness of the overall sample the results are likely to be just as relevant for the region as they are nationally.

The statistics show the significant differences in the type of qualifications being undertaken by age. The data indicates that even young people learning through the FE/SSF system/WBL have a strong bias towards GCSE/A/ASA2 levels compared with the more vocational routes chosen by older learners.

⁴ See: Evaluation of L3 Provision at <http://research.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation/published/>

Figure 12: Qualifications studied for by LSC funded learners at Level 3 by age-band; percentages



Source: Interim Evaluation of Level 3 Wave 1 Report, LSC October 2008

Other findings show that 69% of those studying for a Level 3 qualification are progressing from Level 2. The remaining 31% are already qualified to Level 3 or above and therefore further study among this group will not have any impact on PSA target achievement.

Level 3 by institution

Most young people gain Level 3 qualifications through the academic route via maintained schools, independent schools and Sixth Form Colleges (Note: the data relates to England) and this position has remained relatively unchanged through time:

Figure 13: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to level 3, by institution type where Level 3 was achieved and cohort

19 in....	Maintained schools	Independent schools	Sixth Form college	Other FE	WBL	Other	CTCs/ Academies	Proportion achieving level 3 by age 19
2004	18.5	5.2	6.9	9.8	1.1	0.3	0.2	42.0
2005	18.3	5.1	7.4	12.2	1.3	0.8	0.2	45.4
2006	18.7	5.1	7.6	12.9	1.5	0.7	0.2	46.6
2007	19.1	5.1	7.9	13.5	1.4	0.7	0.3	48.0

Source: SFR04/2008

Of the total 48%, it can be seen that the LSC is responsible for funding just under half the Level 3 attainment via Sixth Forms (7.9%), other FE (13.5%) and WBL (1.4%).

The academic route to Level 3: School Sixth Forms

PLASC data shows the extent to which schools are geared to Level 3 for 16-18 year olds and above. 85% of all resident learners in sixth forms in the South West are involved in learning which directly contributes to the Level 3 target through students gaining 2 or more A levels. Fewer than 10% are engaged in studying for qualifications below Level 3; an additional 3.7% are studying on Skills for Life courses and around 2% studying for qualifications which do not directly contribute to the Level 3 threshold, for instance 1 A-level or AS level:

Figure 14: Level of study in school sixth forms; numbers and percentages of learners at each level

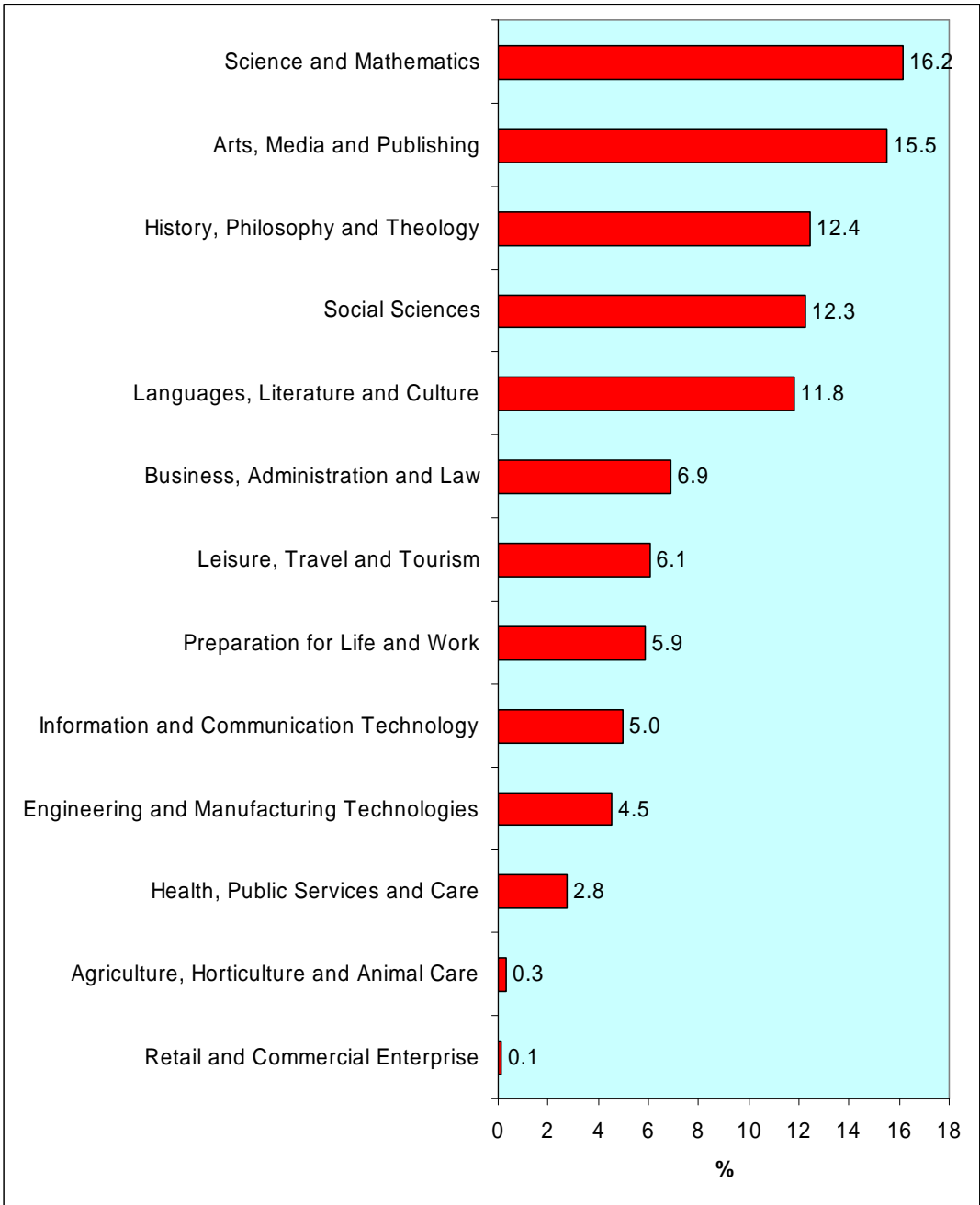
	Nos	%
Foundation Learning Tier	951	2.5
Level 2 - Directly contributes to full level 2 threshold	1530	4.0
Level 2 - Does not directly contribute to full level 2 threshold	640	1.7
Level 3 - Directly contributes to full level 3 threshold	32,657	85.0
Level 3 - Does not directly contribute to full level 3 threshold	883	2.3
Level not classified	334	0.9
Skills For Life	1411	3.7
	38,406	100.0

Source: Autumn Census 2007

The data includes pupil numbers in academies but excludes those in independent schools so overall numbers studying for A levels in the region will undoubtedly be higher.

Main subject areas for study are the traditional 'academic' subjects of Science and Maths, Arts, History, Social Sciences and Languages and literature.

Figure 15: Subjects studied at Level 3 in Sixth Forms; percentages



Source: Autumn Census 2007

Characteristics of pupils studying for Level 3 at school sixth forms

- > There are slightly more girls in school sixth forms (53%) studying for A-levels than boys (47%).

- > Almost 1 in 5 pupils in the sixth forms live in Gloucestershire (18.6%) and there are sizeable numbers in Devon (13.1%) and Dorset (11.4%). In contrast, Swindon and North Somerset have very few pupils studying at sixth forms:

Figure 16: Distribution of pupils in Sixth Forms studying for Level 3 qualifications which directly contribute to the PSA target; numbers and percentages

Authority	Pupils (nos.)	%
Bath and North East Somerset	1342	4.1
Bournemouth	1032	3.2
City of Bristol	1851	5.7
Cornwall	1901	5.8
Devon	4280	13.1
Dorset	3739	11.4
Gloucestershire	6069	18.6
Somerset	1679	5.1
North Somerset	662	2.0
Plymouth	2114	6.5
Poole	1382	4.2
South Gloucestershire	1894	5.8
Swindon	373	1.1
Torbay	1111	3.4
Wiltshire	3228	9.9
	32,657	100.0

Source: Autumn Census 2007(Residence based)

- > By ethnicity, the most significant finding is that far fewer A-level students (91.2%) are White compared with the population as a whole (96.1%). Because there are significant numbers of 'not knowns' it is not possible to reliably say which Ethnic groups are over-represented relative to the wider population, other than there are evidently more young people of Mixed race within the younger cohort studying for A levels than in the wider population:

Figure 17: Ethnicity of pupils in Sixth Forms studying for Level 3 qualifications which directly contribute to the PSA target; percentages

	16-18 year old studying for A- levels	South West total population
White: British	88.0	93.1
White: Irish	0.2	0.7
White: Other White	2.9	2.3
All White	91.2	96.1
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.3	0.3
Mixed: White and Black African	0.2	0.1
Mixed: White and Asian	0.5	0.3
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.6	0.2
All Mixed	1.5	0.9
Indian	0.6	0.7
Pakistani	0.2	0.3
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.1
Other Asian	0.3	0.2
Asian	1.2	1.3
Black Caribbean	0.1	0.3
Black African	0.4	0.4
Other Black	0.1	0.1
Black	0.7	0.8
Chinese	0.5	0.5
Other	0.4	0.4
Not known	4.9	0.4
All Groups	100	100

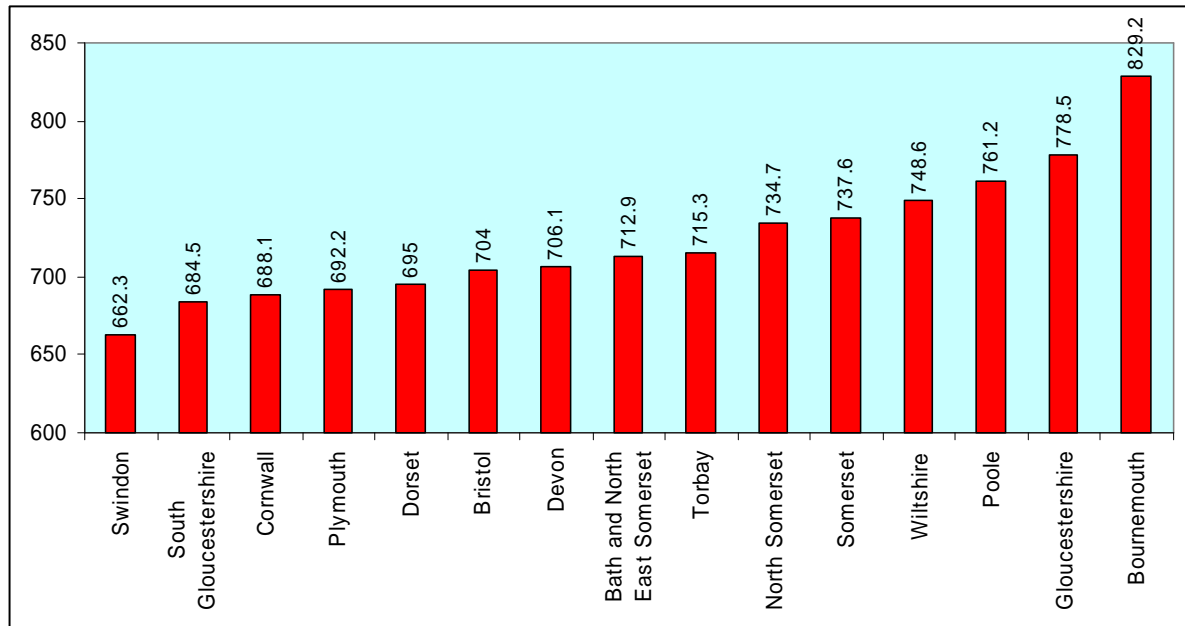
Source: Autumn Census 2007

Quality – attainment scores

There is a wide range of attainment across the region as measured in average point score per pupil from Swindon with 662.3 points per pupil to Bournemouth with 829.2 points per pupil.

Four of the Authorities recorded attainment above the English average of 739.8 in 2008 – Wiltshire, Poole, Gloucestershire and Bournemouth:

Figure 18: Average point score per pupil by LEA in post 16 schools and colleges



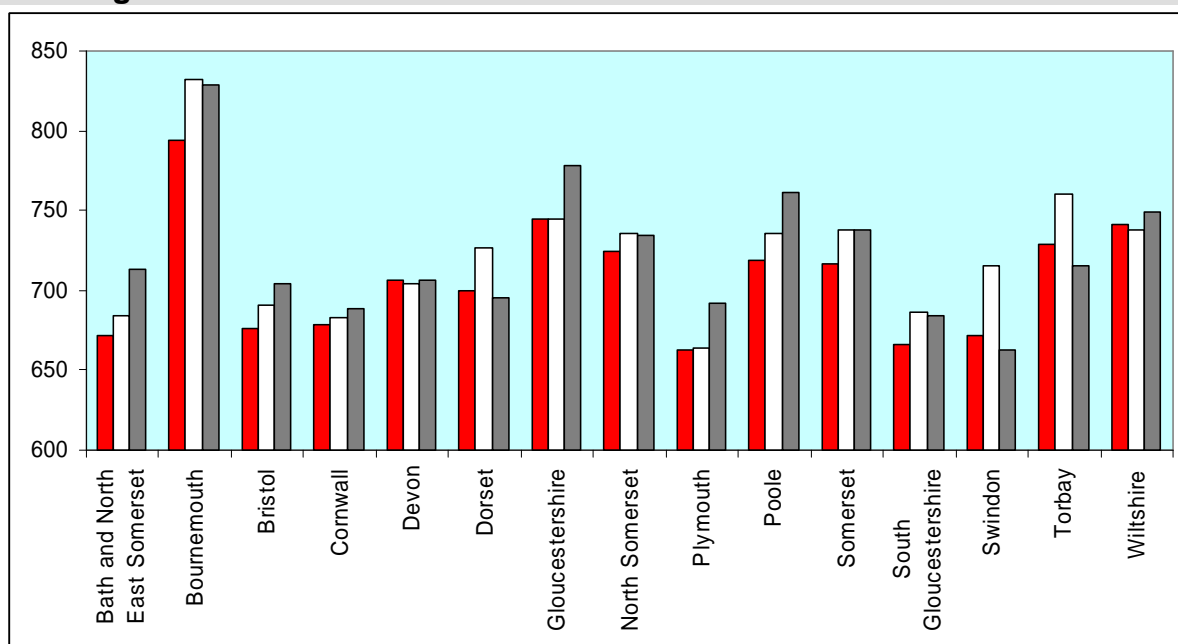
Source: School and College (post 16) Achievement and attainment tables 2008

Whereas the average point score per pupil has risen steadily across England from 721.5 in 2006 to 731.2 in 2007 and 739.8 – an increase of 18.3 points; local progress has been more volatile. This is likely to reflect small base numbers in some Local Authority areas where small differences in achievement can show as large percentage changes in average attainment. It can be seen that in many Local Authority areas, 2007 was a high point in attainment, since when progress has fallen back in Dorset, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon and Torbay.

Between 2006 and 2008, seven Local Authorities have recorded improvements above the national average of 18.3, these include:

- Poole +42.6
- Bath and North East Somerset +41.6
- Bournemouth +34.8
- Gloucestershire +34.3
- Plymouth +29.6
- Bristol +28.0
- Somerset 21.3

Figure 19: Trends in average point score per pupil by LEA in post 16 schools and colleges 2006-2008



Source: School and College (post 16) Achievement and attainment tables 2008

The academic route to Level 3: Sixth Form Colleges

There are just two Sixth Form Colleges in the region – Richard Huish and St Brendan's. ILR data show that they have expanded year on year from 2,647 students in 2004/05 to 3,093 students in 2006/07. Of the two colleges Richard Huish has slightly more students (1,699) than St Brendan's (1,394).

As may be expected, A levels predominate, and most learners (96%) are enrolled at Level 3 or above. Most popular subjects at Level 3 are Science and maths (28% of enrolments); Arts media and Publishing 17% and ICT accounting for 10% of enrolments.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)

There have been widespread concerns in the UK that the country faces an increasing skills gap due to the falling proportion of young people studying for STEM subjects at and beyond the age of 16. Since A-levels are the most common route into STEM subjects at HE there is particular concern that despite a rising trend in A-level entries overall, STEM subjects have declined.

Thus, nationally, between 1992–2006, against an all subject increase in entries by 10%:

- Chemistry is down 6%
- Physics is down 34%
- Maths and further maths is down by 13%
- Biology is the only subject to show an increase - up by 13%

There are particular concerns about the gap between school or college level study of maths and HE centred around two main issues:

- > a lack of fluency in basic mathematical skills
- > the fact that A level syllabuses now exclude topics relevant to certain first degrees courses that were previously covered.

In response, the South West RDA has identified STEM as one of four priority issues that need to be addressed if the economic potential of the region is to be realised. A new project currently under development by the SW RSP and RDA has adopted a two pronged approach involving (1) research to monitor demand and supply; and (2) the establishment of a STEM Information Centre to co-ordinate information about STEM activities which will enhance and enrich pupils' STEM experience and targeted interventions to inspire, engage and support young people in STEM subjects. Work is in progress to also improve STEM subject take-up on the vocational side.

Higher Education

Figures from HEFCE suggest that **30%** of young people from the South West region aged 18-19 go on to HE. This proportion is in line with the national participation rate, somewhat below that of London (36%) and the South East (33%).

Further analysis of the data by HEFCE shows that one of the most striking features of participation in HE is that inequality between the sexes has risen steadily through time. By the end of 2000:

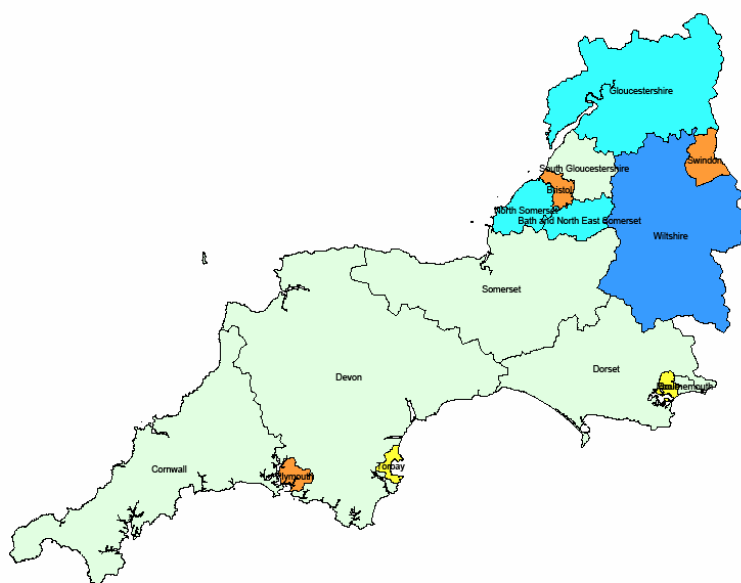
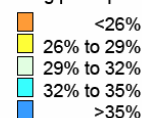
- > Young women in England were 18% more likely to enter HE than young men. This inequality is more marked for young men living in the most deprived areas.
- > Young men are less likely to successfully complete their courses and gain qualifications.
- > There are 'broad and deep divisions' according to where people live. Young people living in the most advantaged 20% of areas are 5-6 times more likely to enter HE than those in the least advantaged 20%.
- > Nationally Bristol South is one of the four parliamentary constituencies in the country with the lowest participation rates, where people have a 1 in 10, or worse, chance of entering HE.

The map below shows above average participation in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset contrasting with Plymouth, Swindon and Bristol, where as noted earlier, achievement of Level 3 is much lower than average for the region.

Young participation by LEA: South West

HEFCE

Young participation



POLAR series / September 2002 / Mark Carver / www.hefce.ac.uk/polar / Copyright (c) 2002 Higher Education Funding Council for England.
Map shows proportion of children from each area who left school between 1991-1997 and entered UK FT degrees/ND/NVQ within 4 years.
Boundaries derived from data provided with support of ESRC/USC copyright ED-LINE consortium. Analysis partially supported by ESRC studentship R0242834096 / Mark Carver.

Source: POLAR series (www.hefce.ac.uk/polar). Copyright Higher Education Funding Council for England. Some boundaries derived from data provided with the support of ESRC/JISC copyright ED-LINE consortium.

The vocational route to Level 3: Further Education Colleges

69,638 young people are enrolled at the 34 Further Education Colleges in the South West. 58% of them are studying for Level 3 qualifications, with the remainder studying for Level 2 (26%) and Foundation Tier qualifications (16%). Of course, not all those enrolled on Level 3 courses will contribute to the Level 3 target since many students may be enrolled for just one A level or one module at Level 3 which will only indirectly contribute towards the target.

The number of learners at local FE colleges has risen in the past year and through time there has been a steady rise in the number and proportion of learners studying of Level 3 qualifications from 37,868 (56.1%) in 2004/05 to 40,496 (58.2%) in 2006/07.

Around the average of 58% there are considerable differences in the proportions of students enrolled at Level 3 ranging from 36.9% in Plymouth to 66.8% in Somerset:

Figure 20: Number and proportion of students studying for Level 3 and above at FE Colleges in the South West by Local Authority area

	Total studying for Level 3	Total no. of students	% in each LA area studying for L3	% of total learners studying at L3
Bath & NE Somerset	1,052	1,828	57.5	2.6
Bournemouth	1,129	1,955	57.7	2.8
City of Bristol	2,866	5,616	51.0	7.1
Cornwall	5,862	9,230	63.5	14.5
Devon	6,037	10,063	60.0	14.9
Dorset	2,000	3,941	50.7	4.9
Gloucestershire	3,552	6,143	57.8	8.8
North Somerset	1,866	3,003	62.1	4.6
Plymouth	1,044	2,833	36.9	2.6
Poole	733	1,364	53.7	1.8
Somerset	6,208	9,293	66.8	15.3
South Gloucestershire	1,786	3,101	57.6	4.4
Swindon	2,610	4,129	63.2	6.4
Torbay	700	1,686	41.5	1.7
Wiltshire	3,051	5,453	56.0	7.5
Grand Total	40,496	69,638	58.2	100.0

Source: ILR FE05 2006/07

As with school sixth formers, Level 3 students are dominated by females with 55% of the total accounted for by women and 45% by men.

Main subject areas at Level 3 tend to be the traditional academic subjects of Arts, Science and Maths. Between them, these account for 43% of enrolments at Level 3 suggesting that even in the FE sector, A levels are the main route to Level 3 attainment (Note: Data by subject is only available in relation to enrolments not learners):

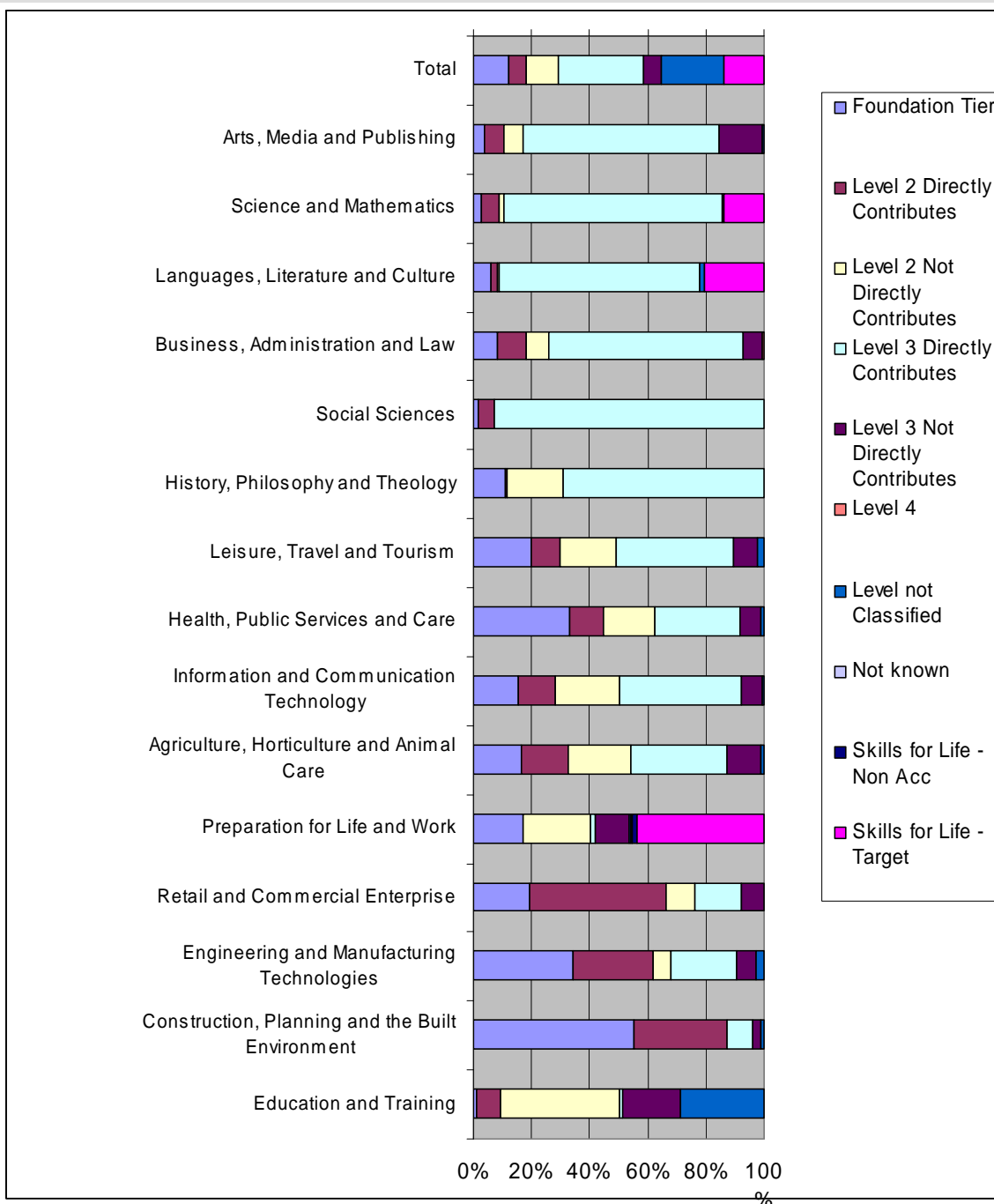
Figure 21: Number and proportion of enrolments at Level 3 and above by subject at FE Colleges in the South West

	All L3+	%
Arts, Media and Publishing	17,773	22.3
Science and Mathematics	16,450	20.7
Languages, Literature and Culture	7,562	9.5
Business, Administration and Law	6,730	8.4
Social Sciences	6,364	8.0
History, Philosophy and Theology	4,967	6.2
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	4,904	6.2
Health, Public Services and Care	4,711	5.9
Information and Communication Technology	3,467	4.4
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	1,968	2.5
Preparation for Life and Work	1,515	1.9
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	1,435	1.8
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	1,364	1.7
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	433	0.5
Education and Training	3	0.0
Not known	1	0.0
Grand Total	79,647	100.0

Source: ILR FE05 2006/07

An analysis of the level of learning by subject area reveals that, without exception, in the more vocational subject areas such as Health, Leisure and Tourism, and Agriculture more enrolments are at Foundation Tier and Level 2 than at Level 3.

Figure 22: Proportion of enrolments at different levels by subject at FE Colleges in the South West

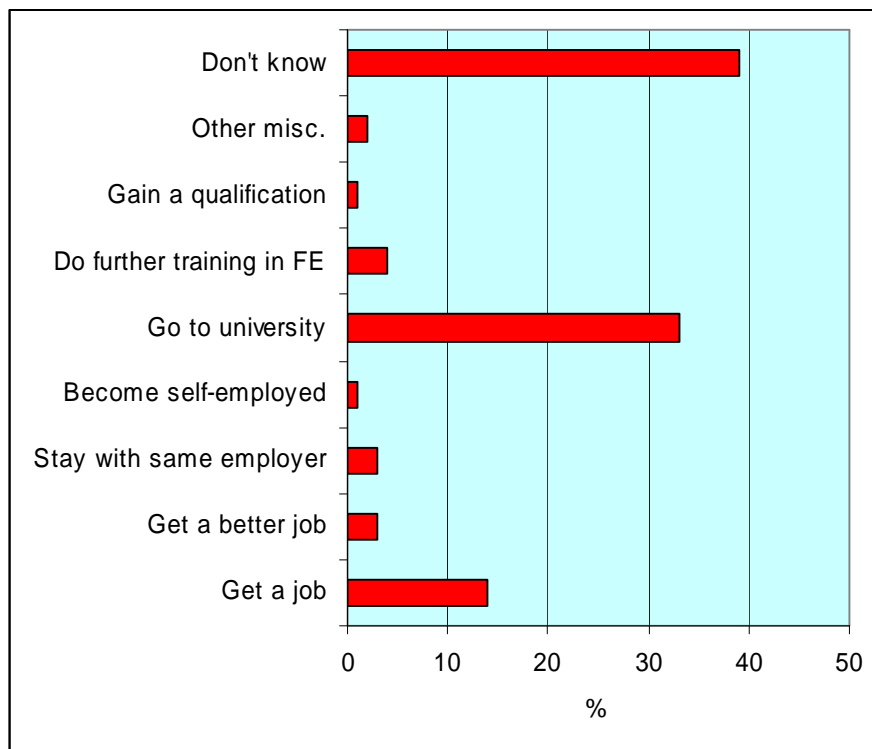


Source: ILR FE05 2006/07

Analysis from the National Evaluation of LSC funded Level 3 learners bears this out and shows that young learners enrolled on Level 3 courses were most likely to have enrolled on their course with the **longer term view of progressing to HE**. 33% of all 16-18 Level 3 LSC funded learners aspired to HE, rising to 42% among those studying

for A levels (although 39% of young people did not know what they would do at the end of their course) Just 14% of Level 3 learners were enrolled with a view to getting a job at the end of their training:

Figure 23: Reasons for enrolling at Level 3 given by LSC funded learners in England (Percentages giving each response)



Source: Interim Evaluation of Level 3 Wave 1 Report, LSC 2008

Thus, it would appear that, notwithstanding rises in Level 3 enrolments, such learning is predominantly academic rather than vocational and as such, is more likely to be a stepping stone to further learning rather than adding to the supply of young people with higher level skills entering the workforce.

The vocational route to Level 3: Apprenticeships

It was noted earlier that Work-Based Learning or Apprenticeships make a very small contribution to Level 3 targets accounting for less than 1% of the total. Figures for the South West illustrate this clearly:

- > 2,564 16-18 year olds people in 2007/08 started apprenticeships at Level 3. This is the lowest figure since 2004/05 and accounts for just 24% of all starts among this age group.
- > Alternative analysis shows that just over one third of Level 3 apprenticeship starts made by SW residents are in the 16-18 category. There is considerable in-region variation around this average, however, with over half of Level 3 starts being made by 16-18 year olds in Somerset and South Gloucestershire, and less than one quarter in Cornwall and Torbay.

Figure 24: Apprenticeship starts at Level 3 by age, 2007/08

	16-18	19-25	Over 25	Total	16-18 share (%)
Bath & NE Somerset	66	69	11	146	45.2
Bournemouth	37	82	14	133	27.8
City of Bristol	160	184	36	380	42.1
City of Plymouth	134	152	66	352	38.1
Cornwall	205	433	263	901	22.8
Devon	333	437	220	990	33.6
Dorset	374	599	63	1036	36.1
Gloucestershire	268	358	84	710	37.7
North Somerset	108	114	51	273	39.6
Poole	57	82	10	149	38.3
Somerset	361	286	67	714	50.6
South Gloucestershire	167	143	32	342	48.8
Swindon	77	97	28	202	38.1
Torbay	47	89	63	199	23.6
Wiltshire	170	237	56	463	36.7
Grand Total	2564	3362	1064	6990	36.7

Source: WbL ILR P10 2007/08

Trend analysis shows that whereas apprenticeships overall have risen by 16% since 2004/05 (see final row in table below), in part reflecting the broadening of the eligibility criteria, the total number of 16-18 residents starting apprenticeships has fallen by 903 or 8% between 2004/05 and 2007/08, with those starting Level 3 apprenticeships falling somewhat faster.

Figure 25: Number of apprenticeships among 16-18 year olds by level, 2004 – 2007/08 with comparative figures for all starts/all ages

Starts	YEAR				Change 04-08 (nos.)	Change 04-08 (%)
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08		
Level 2 Directly contributes	8789	7569	8824	8121	-668	-8
Level 3 Directly contributes	2811	2635	2781	2564	-247	-9
Level 4	5	7	7	15	+10	
Level not Classified			27	2		
Grand Total	11,605	10,211	11,639	10,702	-903	-8
All Apprenticeship starts (all levels, all ages)	19,435	19,299	20,841	22,528	+3,093	+16

Source: WbL ILR P10 2007/08

Factoring in a 69% success rate for 16-18 year old Advanced Apprenticeships suggests that around 1,770 young people attained Level 3 through WBL in the South West in 2007/08.

In terms of sector subject area, three [1st tier] SSAs (Engineering & manufacturing technology, Retail & commercial enterprise and Construction, planning & the built environment) account for two thirds of all starts at Level 3 by SW resident 16-18 year olds.

The only subject to show an increased number of starts at Level 3 between 2004/05 and 2007/08 was Retail and commercial enterprise. Engineering & manufacturing technology has shown the greatest decrease.

Figure 26: Number of 16-18 year old South West residents starting apprenticeships at Level 3 by SSA

SSA Tier 1	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	63	88	72	75
Arts, Media and Publishing	8	6	4	3
Business, Administration and Law	207	183	198	207
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	262	258	369	252
Education and Training	2	4	2	0
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	1420	999	1231	1172
Health, Public Services and Care	173	203	180	166
Information and Communication Technology	214	479	223	193
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	155	74	106	146
Preparation for Life and Work	17	0	0	0
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	228	244	337	271
Science and Mathematics	0			
Not defined	62	97	59	79
	2811	2635	2781	2564

Source: WbL ILR P12 2004/05, WbL ILR P12 2005/06, WbL ILR P12 2006/07, WbL ILR P10 2007/08

The demand for young people in the labour force

Recruitment of young people

Data from the National Employers Skills Survey 2007 (NESS07) throws some light on the extent of employer demand for young people and their perceptions of the work readiness of young recruits.

On average, 38% of employers in the region had recruited staff aged 16-24 in the past 12 months. A quarter of employers (25%) had recruited at least one young person under the age of 24 to their first job on leaving education. This includes those taking on 16 year olds straight from school, 17-18 year olds straight from school/Further Education College or young people aged under 24 straight from higher education. These percentages are in line with the national position and little changed from findings two years ago:

Figure 27: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months

	Recruitment in last 12 months	
	South West	England
Any 16-24 year old recruited at all	38	40
Any under 24 year olds recruited straight from education	25	26
16 year olds recruited straight from school	8	7
17-18 year olds recruited straight from school or college	12	12
Under 24 year olds recruited straight from HE	9	10

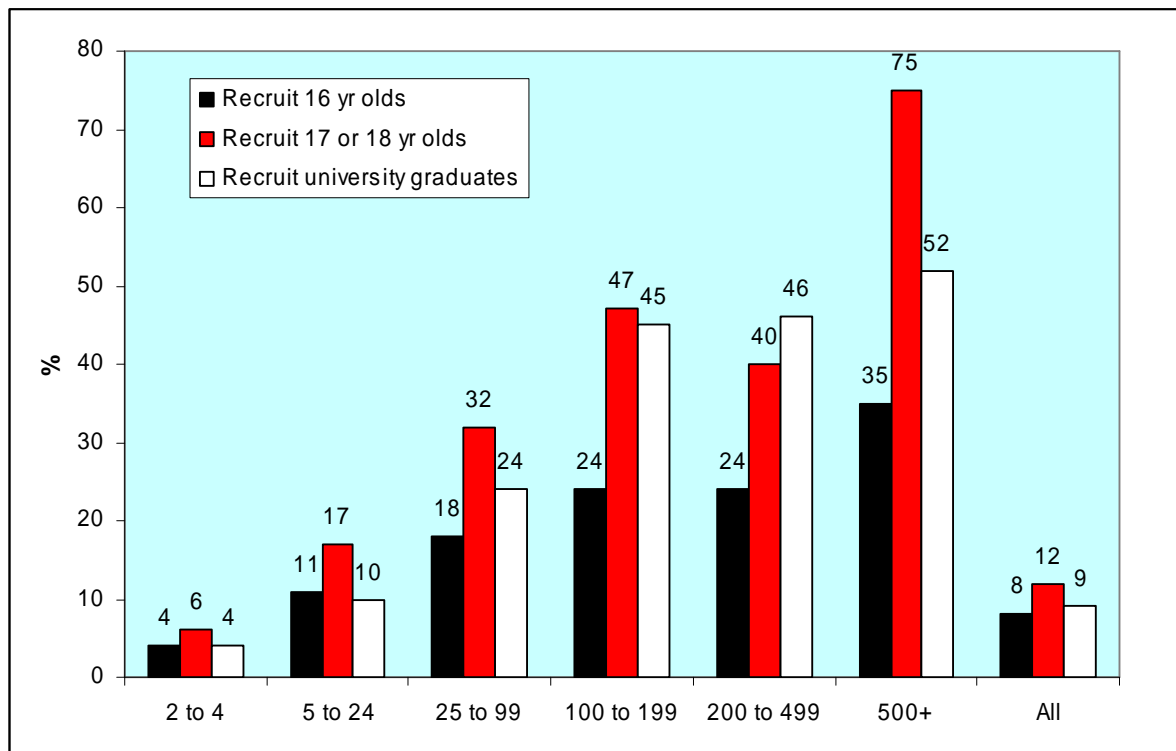
Source: NESS07

As in 2005, school and FE leavers aged 17 and 18 were the group of young people most likely to have been recruited straight from education (recruited by 12% of employers). Around one in ten employers had recruited an HE leaver under the age of 24 in the last 12 months and just 8% had recruited at least one 16 year old straight from school, underlining the limited jobs market for those who leave school at the earliest opportunity.

Matching the trend in recruitment activity generally, the recruitment of young workers from education increases with the size of the establishment and there are marked differences by firm size:

- > Those with fewer than 100 staff were more likely to recruit young people straight from school or college education than they were to recruit graduates from Higher Education.
- > Larger establishments (200-499) were more likely to have recruited recent graduates than they were to have taken on 17 -18 year olds.

Figure 28: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months by size of employer



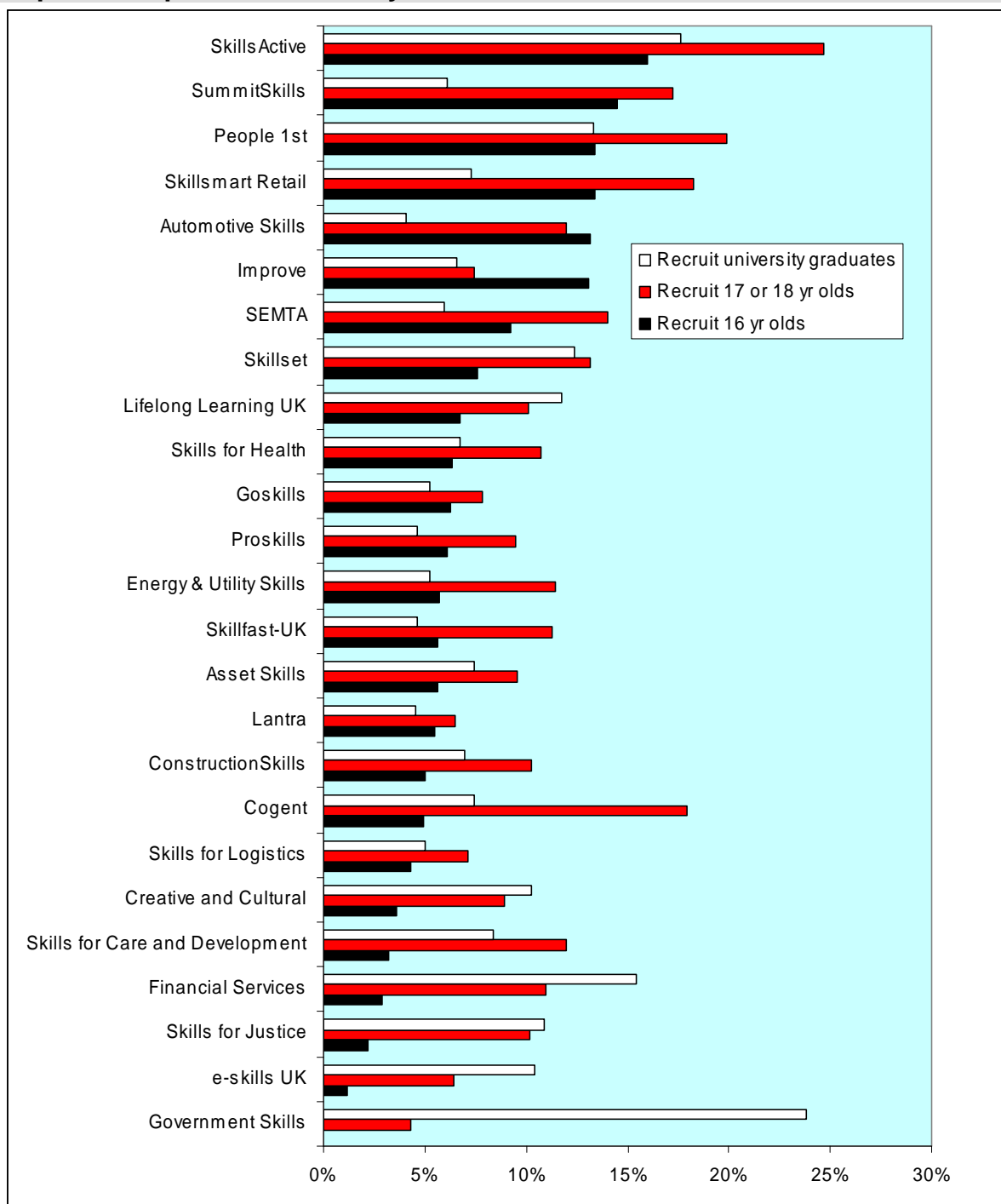
*Caution: '500+' sub sample based on fewer than 100 cases and may not be statistically reliable
Source: NESS2007*

By sector, NESS07 shows that demand for young recruits centres on the retail sector, hospitality and tourism, leisure and food and drink manufacturing sectors covered by:

- > SkillsActive
- > SummitSkills
- > People 1st
- > Skillsmart Retail
- > Automotive Skills
- > Improve

Cogent employers also have a high demand for 17-18 year old school and college leavers, but the sub-sample on which these findings are based is small.

Figure 29: Percentage of employers in the South West who have recruited young people in the past 12 months by SSC



Source: NESS2007

In turn, these findings translate into high proportions of the workforce in People 1st, SkillsActive and Skillsmart Retail being made up of young people, which overall account for around one third of the workforce in those sectors.

Unsurprisingly these sectors, with the exception of SkillsActive, also tend to have some of the poorest qualified staff in the regional economy with above average

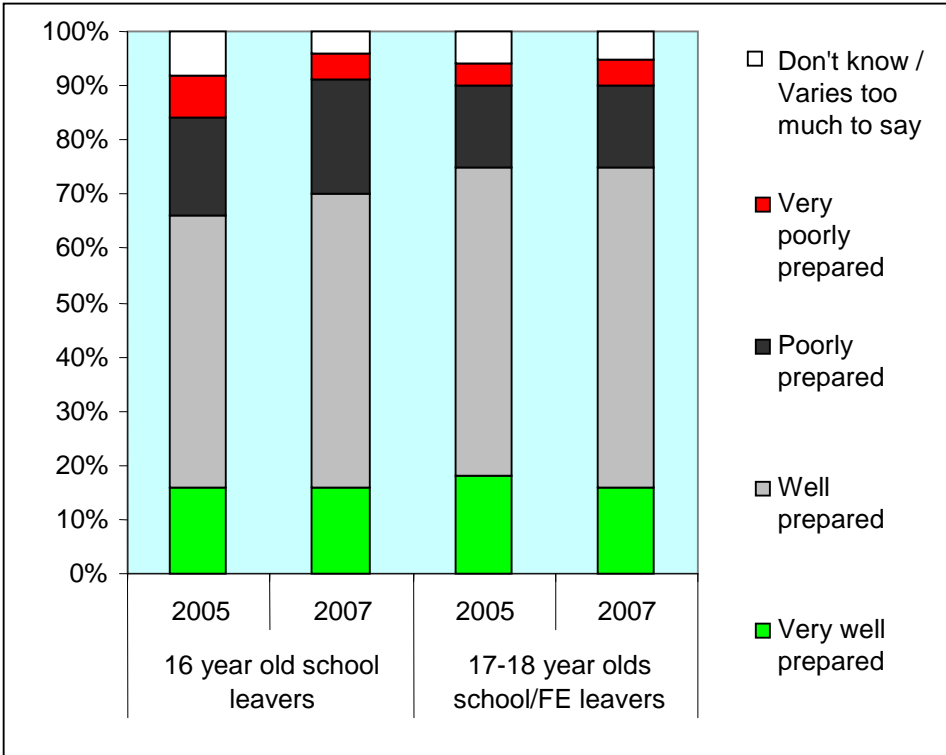
proportions qualified to below Level 2. Allied to this, People 1st and Skillsmart Retail between them account for 1 in 3 skills gaps recorded in the region.

Perceived work readiness of young people

Employers who had taken on young people direct from education were asked to assess how prepared for work they considered their recruits to be. In 2007 as in 2005, employers were far more likely to consider that each of the groups was well prepared rather than poorly prepared for work, and the perceived work-readiness increased with the amount of time recruits had spent in education.

In respect of 16 year olds, employers’ views expressed in the most recent survey paint a mixed picture – more employers than in 2005 considered their recruits to be very well or well prepared (70% re 66%), but there was also some increase in those who considered that 16 year olds were poorly prepared (up by 3 percentage points). In relation to 17 and 18 year olds opinions remained broadly the same between 2005 and 2007.

Figure 30: Employers’ views of work readiness of young recruits in the region



Source: NESS 2007

Overall, although the findings are positive, significant minorities of employers remain of the view that young recruits from school or FE are poorly prepared for work. Just over a quarter (26%) considered 16 year olds to be poorly prepared and 20% were dissatisfied with the work-readiness of 17-18 year olds. This is not just a regional issue; findings for the country as a whole were very similar (27% dissatisfaction with 16 year olds and 21% dissatisfaction with 17-18 year olds).

When asked which skills young school/college leavers lacked, responses tended to vary by age group:

Figure 31: Employers' views of skills lacking in young recruits in South West

	16 year olds	17-18 year olds
Poor education / general knowledge / no skills (unspec.)	19	13
Lack of life experience/experience of working world	16	13
Lack of motivation/enthusiasm/commitment (inc. only interested in money)	15	21
Oral communication skills / Communication skills (unspec.)	14	12
Experience (inc. business, practical)	12	10
Literacy skills	10	7
Customer service skills	10	2
Other	9	6
Numeracy skills	8	7
Time keeping skills / Punctuality (inc. attendance)	8	12
Social/People skills	7	2
Poor attitude (inc. manners, respect)	7	6
Common sense	6	7
Work ethic / Poor attitude to work	6	8
Technical and practical skills / Job specific skills	4	13
Interview skills (inc. preparation, technique)	3	*
Initiative	3	2
Confidence	3	3
Responsibility (unspec.)	2	2
Basic IT/Computer skills	1	*
Written communication skills	*	3
Organisational skills	*	2
Working long hours / Hard work (inc. 9-5, 5 days a week)	*	5
Discipline (unspec.)	*	1
Personal appearance / Presentation	*	4

Source: NESS07

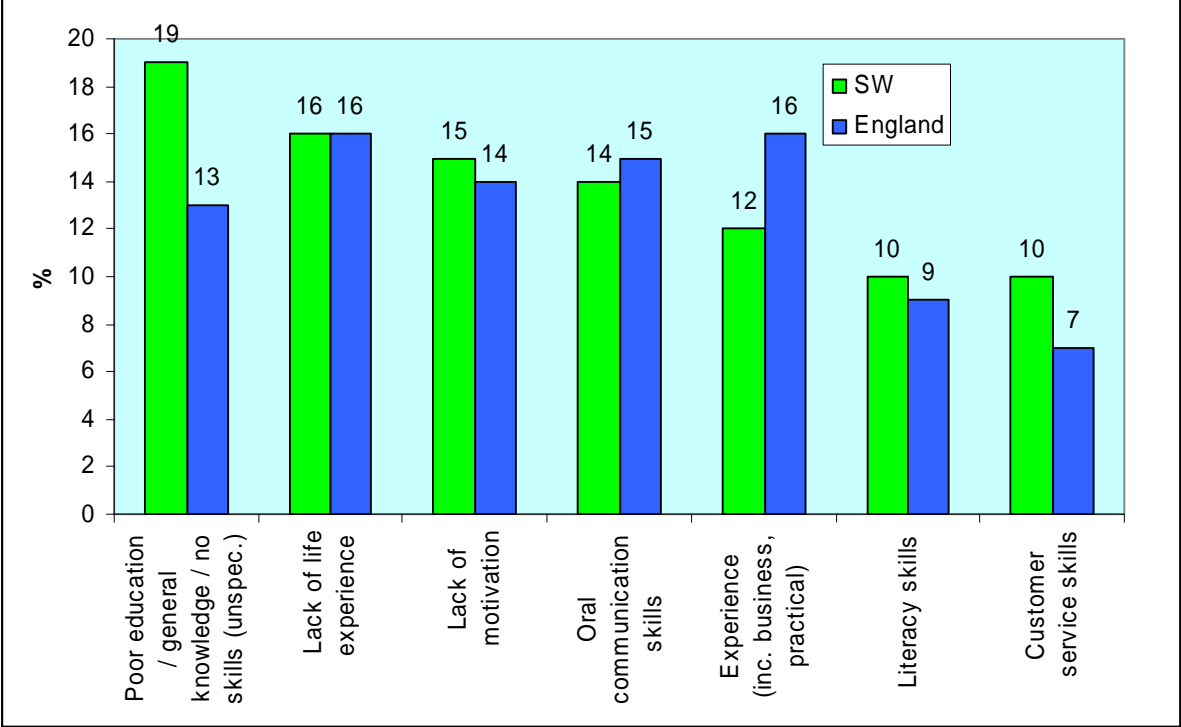
For **16 year olds**, views on a lack of work readiness clustered around issues to do with experience and maturity and to some extent personal attributes such as a lack of motivation far more than skills and competencies. Of the skills identified, 'communication skills' and literacy were most commonly cited.

For **17 and 18 year olds** the deficiencies were different. Most significant was a lack of motivation or commitment mentioned by 21% of employers dissatisfied with young people's work readiness. Evidently employers have different expectations of older school and college leavers and a perceived lack of technical and practical skills was far more significant among this group.

Small sub-samples for the South West mean that comparisons with national data should be treated with caution, but do appear to indicate that in respect of 16 year olds, employers in the region were far more dissatisfied with the general education of their young recruits than nationally, but less concerned with their lack of work

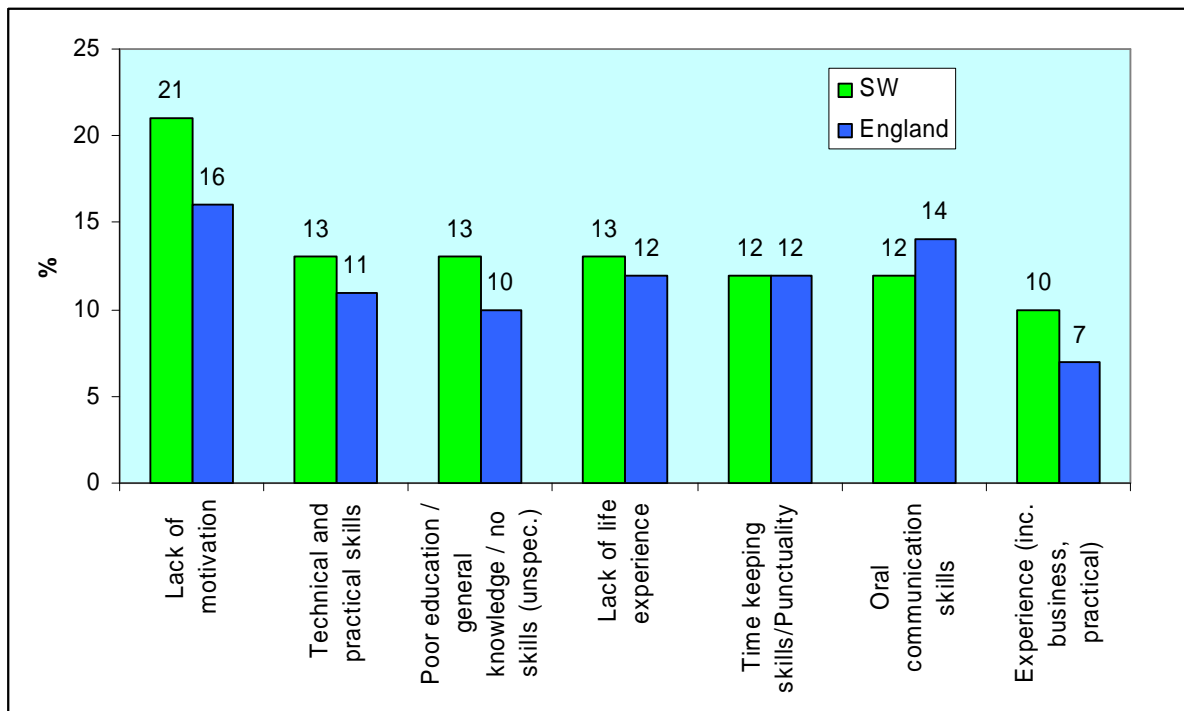
experience. For 17 and 18 year olds the main difference is the greater proportion in the region that identified 'motivation' compared with the country as a whole.

Figure 32: Main skills lacking among young people aged 16 recruited directly from education; South West and England compared



Source: NESS07

Figure 33: Main skills lacking among young people aged 17-18 recruited directly from education; South West and England compared



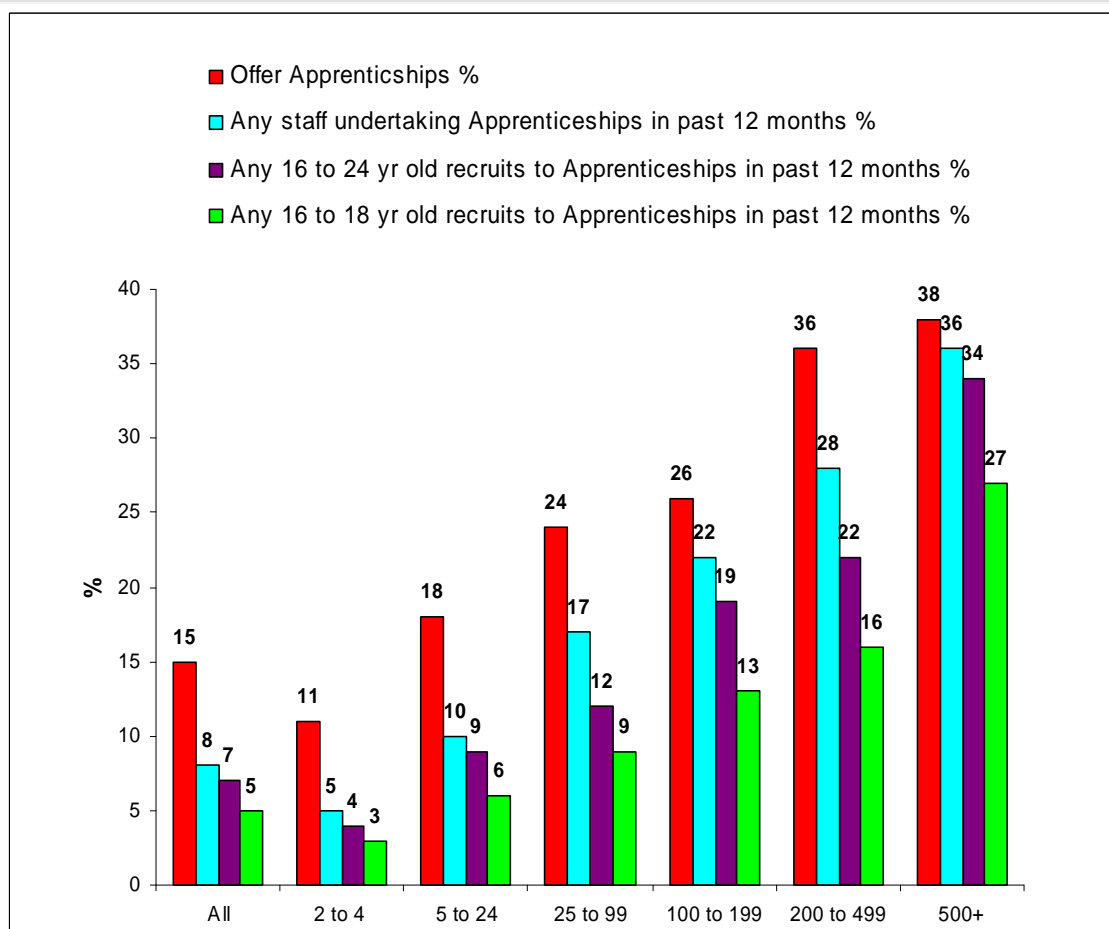
Source: NESS07

Employers' demand for Apprenticeships

Earlier findings showed the small numbers of young people undertaking Advanced Apprenticeships. Figures from NESS07 bear this out and in the South West, as in England as a whole, the survey showed that just 5% of employers recruited 16-18 year olds to Apprenticeships with little variation by sub-region.

As may be expected, involvement with Apprenticeships increases by size of establishment. Employers with more than 500 employees are more than three times as likely to offer Apprenticeships than small, micro businesses. This distribution reflects the national pattern.

Figure 34: Involvement in Apprenticeships by size of establishment; percentages



Source: NESS07

There are significant variations in the use of Apprenticeships by sector⁵. Employers in sectors relating to manufacturing and construction - where there is a well established tradition of Apprenticeships - are those most likely to offer them. Amongst most other SSCs involvement with Apprenticeships is negligible.

⁵ Link to list of SSCs and the sectors they cover (Worksheet 2)

Figure 35: Recruits to Apprenticeships in the South West by sector (percentages)

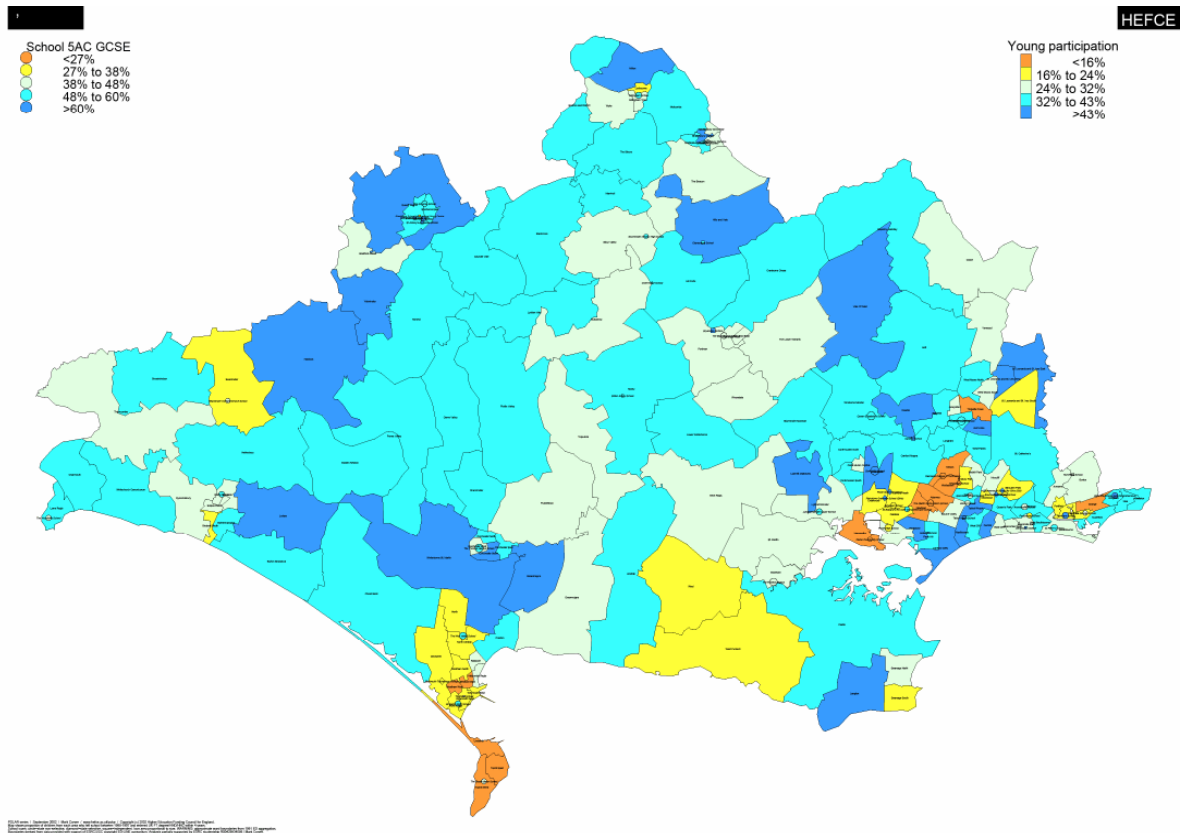
SSC	Any 16-18 yr old recruits to Apprenticeships per cent
SummitSkills	28
Automotive Skills	16
ConstructionSkills	9
SEMTA	7
SkillsActive	6
<i>Energy and Utility Skills*</i>	6
Lifelong Learning UK	5
Skills for Health	4
Skills for Care and Development	4
Non SSC	4
People 1st	4
Financial Services Skills	4
Lantra	3
Asset Skills	3
GoSkills	3
Skills for Logistics	3
e-skills	3
Improve Ltd	3
Skillsmart Retail	2
Cogent	2
Skillset	1
Creative and Cultural	1
Proskills	1
<i>Skills for Justice*</i>	0
<i>Government Skills*</i>	0
Skillfast UK	0
All	5

Source: NESS07

* SSCs where regional sample sizes are below 100 and findings should be treated with caution

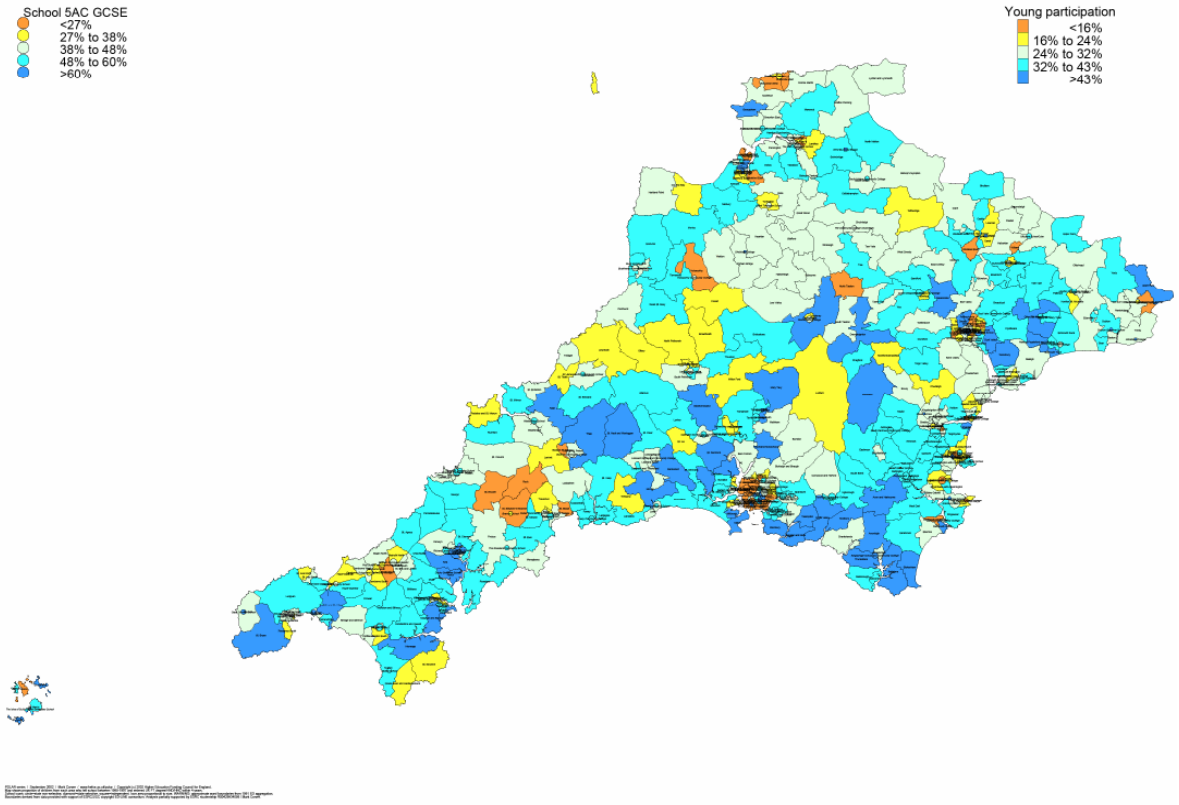
It is possible that employers in some sectors tend to prefer older, experienced staff and that their lack of involvement with Apprenticeships simply reflects their low level of recruitment of young people. However, it can be seen that some key sectors which recruit high proportions of school leavers such as People 1st and Improve Ltd make little use of Apprenticeships to improve school leavers' skills.

Annex 1 – POLAR Maps



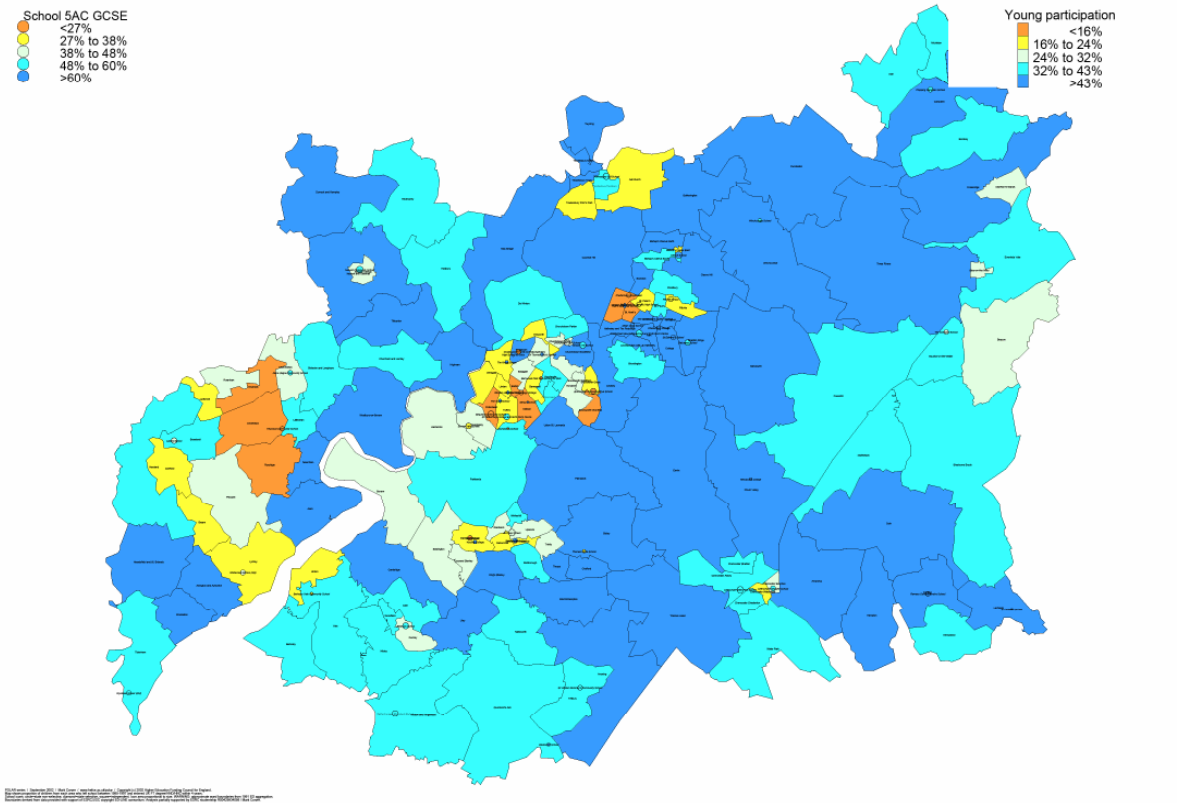
Young participation by electoral wards (1998) with secondary schools: Devon and Cornwall

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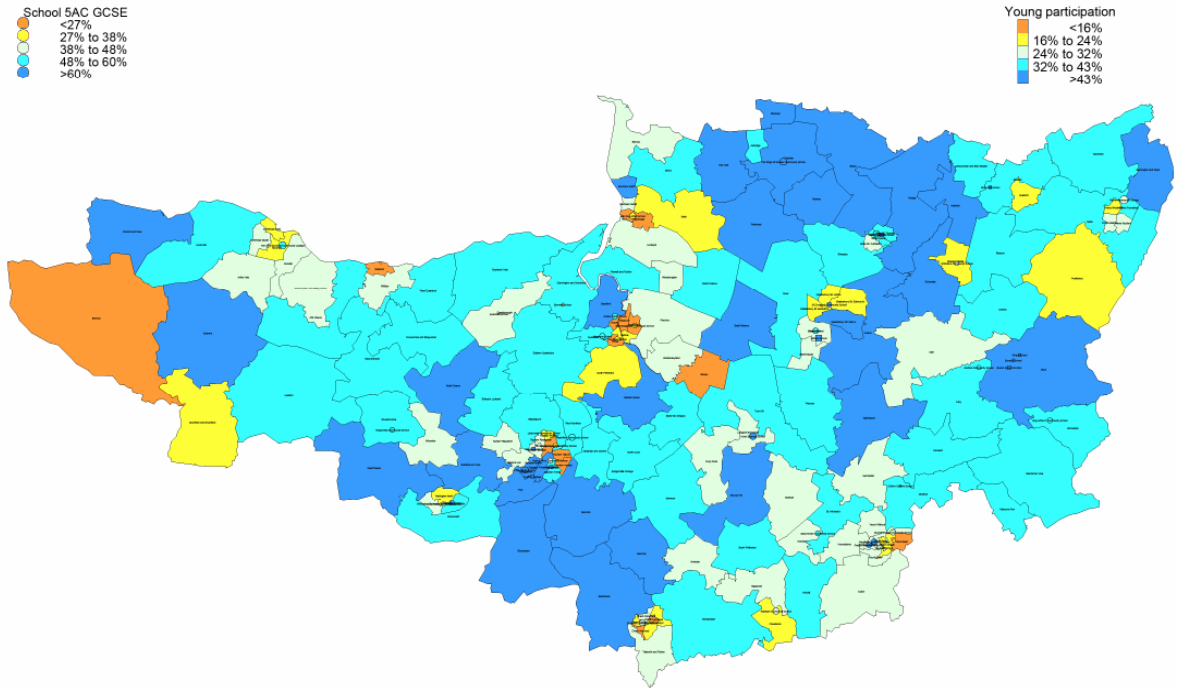
Young participation by electoral wards (1998) with secondary schools: Gloucestershire

HEFCE



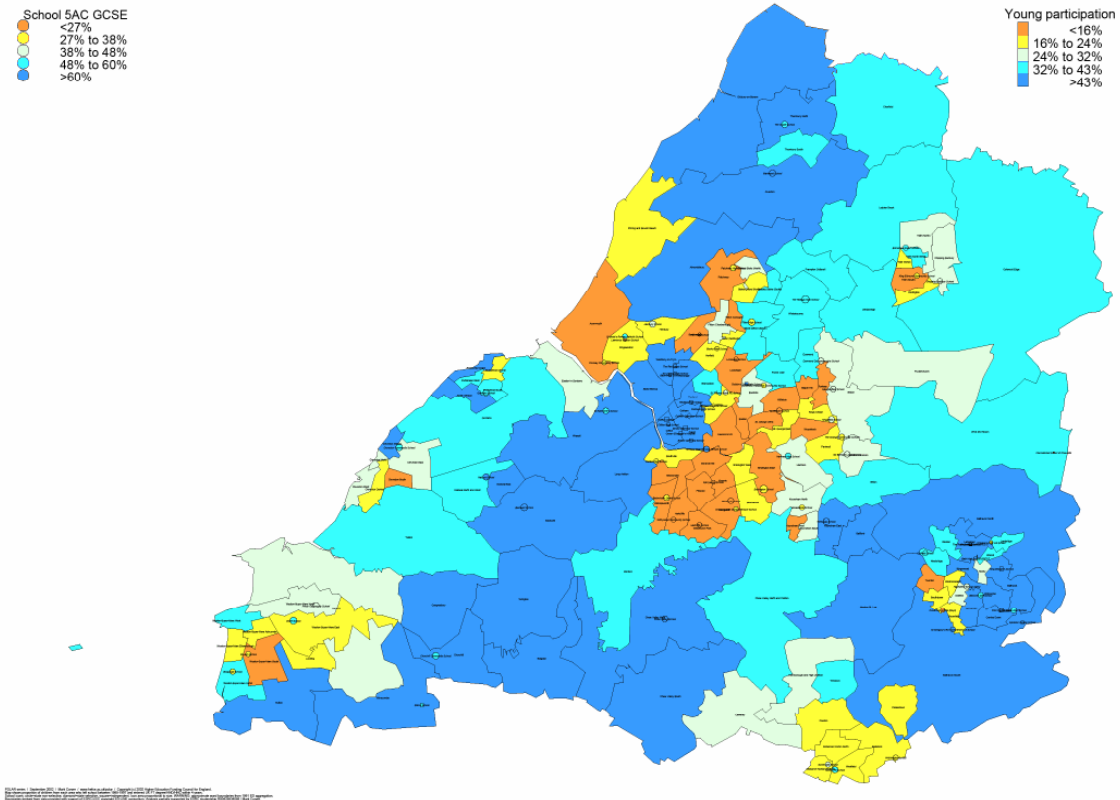
Young participation by electoral wards (1998) with secondary schools: Somerset

HEFCE



Young participation by electoral wards (1998) with secondary schools: West of England

HEFCE

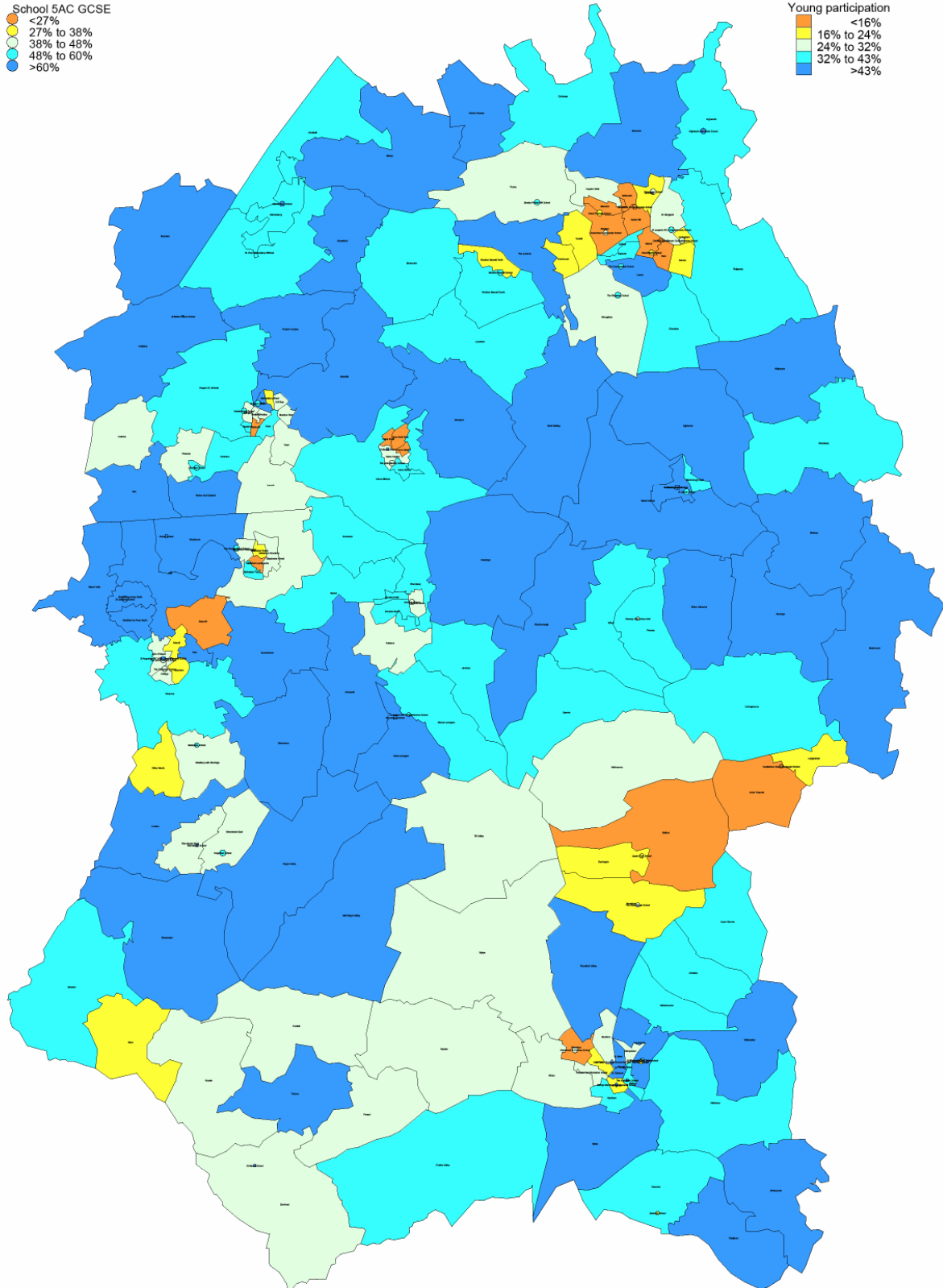


Young participation by electoral wards (1998) with secondary schools: Wiltshire and Swindon

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School 5AC GCSE
 <27%
 27% to 38%
 38% to 48%
 48% to 60%
 >60%

Young participation
 <16%
 16% to 24%
 24% to 32%
 32% to 43%
 >43%



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Annex 2

Proportion of 16-19 year old population qualified to Level 3 and above by Local Authority Area.

	2006/07
Plymouth	39%
Swindon	39%
Bristol	40%
South Gloucestershire	42%
Cornwall	45%
Torbay	45%
Bournemouth	47%
Devon	47%
Dorset	50%
Isles of Scilly	52%
Somerset	52%
North Somerset	52%
Gloucestershire	53%
Poole	54%
Wiltshire	54%
Bath and North East Somerset	55%

Source: DCSF Level 3 Attainment by Young People measured using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional).

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