



**Community
Foundation**
Tyne & Wear and Northumberland



County Durham and Darlington's Vital Issues 2017

Learning

1 Learning

1.1 Overview

Much has been done to improve the ranking of schools in the NE region in the past few decades, and standards are now at, or above, the national average in many parts of the region. However, there are still issues with pupils eligible for free school meals not performing as well as their counterparts, and with fewer young people from the region applying for and gaining places at the best higher education establishments.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation's education strand ranks the 326 local authorities by their number of LSOAs that fall into the 10% most deprived. On this basis, Darlington falls into the 30% most deprived educationally, and County Durham is in the 40% most deprived (see table 40), making them the least educationally deprived areas in the south of the region.

Table 40 – standings according to the IMD Education strand, 2015ⁱ

Local Authority District name	Education, Skills and Training - Proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally	Education, Skills and Training - Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally	Decile (1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived)
County Durham	8%	126	4
Darlington	14%	75	3

1.2 Early years

Table 41, below, shows that in both Darlington and County Durham, at least as many 3 and 4 year olds access pre-school provision as the national average. For 2 year olds, both areas have higher attendance than the national average. However, across all ages the NE average is higher than either Darlington or County Durham.

Table 41 - Percentage of pre-school population attending funded early years provisionⁱⁱ

	All providers - percentage of population								
	2-year-olds			3-year-olds			4-year-olds		
	2015	2016	change	2011	2016	change	2011	2016	change
County Durham	62	74	19%	93	94	1%	98	98	0%
Darlington	57	76	33%	100	96	-4%	100	97	-3%
North East	65	78	20%	96	97	1%	99	99	0%
England	58	68	17%	92	93	1%	96	97	1%

Ofsted inspects and rates pre-school provision. The quality of services in County Durham is exceptionally high, with 95% of providers rated good or outstanding (compared to the England average of 86%) and no inadequate ratings. Darlington services are also better than the England average with 89% good or outstanding.

1.3 Key Stage 2

At Key Stage 2, again more pupils reach the expected standard in County Durham and Darlington than the national average, with Durham again edging ahead of Darlington. However, in common with all areas of the country, those pupils who are

eligible for free school meals lag behind their counterparts in terms of academic achievement. The attainment gap is 24% in County Durham and 25% in Darlington, 3-4% above the national average (see table 42).

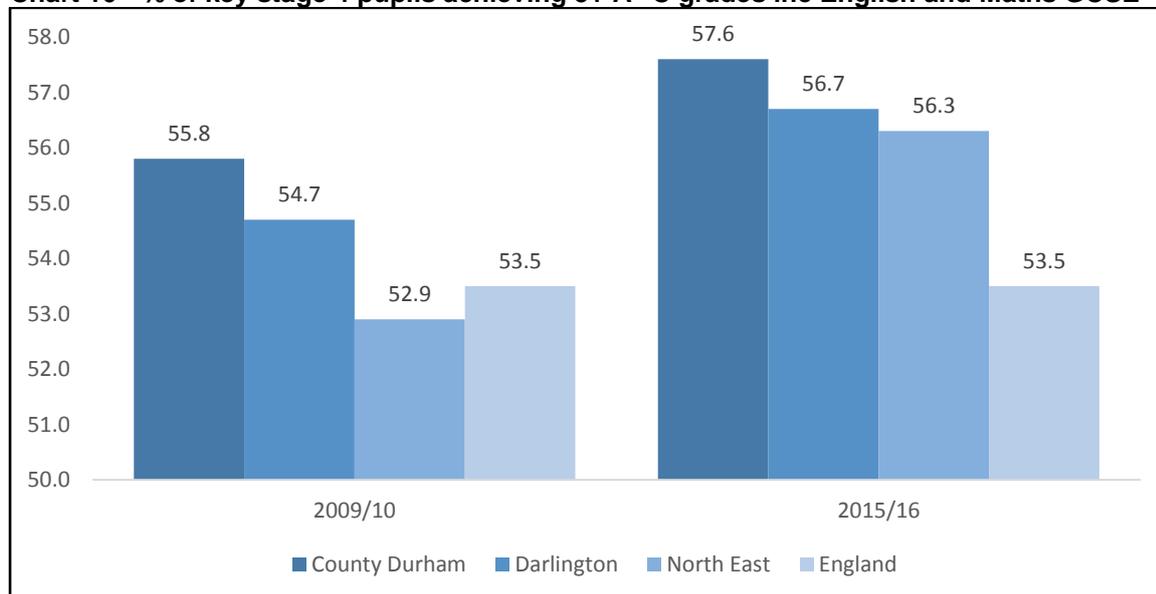
Table 42 - Attainment of pupils at key stage 2 by free school meal eligibility, 2016ⁱⁱⁱ

	County Durham	Darlington	North East	England
Pupils with free school meals				
% pupils eligible for free school meals	19%	17%	20%	16%
Number of pupils	1,027	211	5,590	90,680
% reaching the expected standard	40%	36%	39%	36%
All other pupils				
Number of pupils	4,343	1,018	22,280	490,378
% reaching the expected standard	64%	61%	62%	57%
Gap in attainment	24%	25%	23%	21%
All pupils				
Number of pupils	5,370	1,229	27,870	581,058
% reaching the expected standard	59%	56%	57%	54%

1.4 GCSE performance

At GCSE level, County Durham pupils are still edging ahead of Darlington pupils, and both areas are still ahead of both the NE and national average performance. Encouragingly, both areas have also managed to maintain an overall improvement in their performance over the past 10 years, whereas England-wide success rates appear to have reached a plateau.

Chart 10 - % of key stage 4 pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades inc English and Maths GCSE^{iv}



1.5 Absence from school

Table 43, below, shows the rates of authorised and unauthorised absence from school at primary and secondary level. At primary level, the rates for County Durham and Darlington are virtually identical, with slightly higher than average rates of overall absence, this being authorised absence (i.e. for illness, pre-agreed appointments etc.). One slight worry at primary level is that the percentage of pupils

who are persistent absentees is a third higher than the national average in County Durham.

At secondary level the picture is similar, with slightly higher overall absence, this being authorised absence for the most part.

However, the rate of persistent secondary school absentees in Darlington is 60% above the norm at 8.7%. This means that more than one in 12 secondary pupils in Darlington is away from school for 28 days or more each academic year. This is a concern, being disruptive to both the individual's education and that of their classmates, as the teachers are then obliged to spend more time helping the absentee to catch up. There is also a growing body of evidence that absenteeism from school is linked to poor educational achievement and an increased chance of ending up NEET (not in education, employment or training – see section 6 – Work)^v.

Table 43 - Pupil absence from schools, 2014-15^{vi}

	Darlington	Durham	North East	England
Primary				
Absence	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%	4.0%
Authorised absence	3.4%	3.4%	3.2%	3.1%
Unauthorised absence	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
% pupils persistent absentees	2.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%
Secondary				
Absence	6.2%	5.5%	5.6%	5.3%
Authorised absence	4.6%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%
Unauthorised absence	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.3%
% pupils persistent absentees	8.7%	5.6%	5.9%	5.4%

The reasons for absence from school include illness (58% of absence) and family holidays (11%)^{vii}, as well as truancy which may result from bullying, inability to cope with schoolwork, or undiagnosed emotional or behavioural disorders^{viii}.

1.6 Post 16

Table 44, below, provides a breakdown of the destinations of those students who choose to stay on at school to age 18.

Table 44 - Destinations of Key Stage 5 students^{ix}

	Durham	Darlington	North East	England
Further education college or other provider	10%	14%	12%	10%
Sixth form	3%	3%	4%	3%
Apprenticeships	7%	5%	7%	5%
UK higher education institution	65%	58%	60%	58%
Top third of HEIs	22%	20%	20%	26%
<i>Russell Group (incl. Ox. and Cam.)</i>	19%	18%	17%	17%
Education / employment / training combination destination	2%	x	1%	1%
Destination not sustained	7%	8%	8%	7%
Destination not sustained / recorded NEET	2%	x	2%	2%
Activity not captured in data	5%	9%	7%	13%

In County Durham, more than average of these young people go on to higher education, and of those 22% get into the top third of higher education institutions, and 19% get into the Russell Group institutions. This is higher than both the NE and national averages.

In Darlington, more young people are likely to go to an FE or sixth form provider at age 18 (17%, compared to the national average of 13%). 58% of students will go into higher education, but again, a higher proportion of Darlington pupils than the national average gets into Russell Group institutions (18%, compared to the national average of 17%).

However, when the data is broken down into those pupils who had free school meals in secondary school and those who did not, the gap in performance shown at KS2 persists. In County Durham, young people who were not eligible for free school meals are almost three times more likely to end up in higher education than those who were eligible, and three and a half times more likely to go to a top level higher education institute. In Darlington, the difference is about the same for going into higher education, but even wider for top level HEIs, with those not on free school meals four and a half times more likely to access these places.

Table 44 – Eligibility for free school meals and entry into higher education^x

	Pupils with Free School Meals			Pupils without Free School Meals			Gap	
	Top 33% HEIs	Other HE	Not in HE	Top 33% HEIs	Other HE	Not in HE	Top 33% HEIs	Other HE
County Durham	2%	10%	88%	7%	27%	66%	5%	17%
Darlington	2%	11%	87%	9%	32%	59%	7%	21%
England	4%	19%	77%	12%	28%	60%	8%	9%

This finding reinforces the need to provide additional support to children and young people who are eligible for free school meals to ensure they can perform as well as their counterparts, and have the same levels of expectation and aspiration regarding continuing into good quality higher education.

1.7 Adults' skills

Across the North East region, rates of literacy and numeracy are low compared to other regions.

The period 2003-11 saw an increase in people in the NE with the very lowest levels of both numeracy and literacy.

In terms of literacy, there was a substantial increase in the number of people with the highest skills, but the region remained 8th in the league of 9 regions (a slight improvement from 9th in 2003).

In terms of numeracy, there was a slight decrease in the proportion of the population with higher skills, in line with the English trend, and the NE retained its position as 8th out of 9 regions.

Table 45 - Literacy and Numeracy by region, 2003 and 2011^{xi}

	UK		North East		North East rank	
	2003	2011	2003	2011	2003	2011
Literacy						
Entry Level 1 or below	3%	5%	4%	9%	2	2
Entry Level 2	2%	2%	4%	1%	1	9
Entry Level 3	11%	8%	14%	7%	1	4
Level 1	40%	28%	41%	31%	4	1
Level 2 or above*	44%	57%	37%	52%	9	8
Numeracy						
Entry Level 1 or below	5%	7%	6%	8%	1	2
Entry Level 2	16%	17%	22%	23%	1	1
Entry Level 3	25%	25%	27%	24%	3	7
Level 1	28%	29%	25%	27%	9	9
Level 2 or above*	25%	22%	21%	18%	8	8

Level 2 is equivalent to GCSE grade A-C

This is clearly an area where the NE region needs to improve, but there is a dearth of statistics at any level below regional, making it difficult to identify sub-regional variations.

Table 46, below, provides a breakdown of the highest educational achievement of adults in both County Durham and Darlington.

Both areas have seen a reduction in the number of working-age adults with no qualifications, and an increase in the number at each level of qualification, implying that the workforce is becoming more skilled. Darlington has historically had a higher level of people with qualifications than County Durham at each level, and this is still the case, with Darlington's rate of qualifications increase exceeding the NE average.

Table 46 - Highest educational attainment population aged 16-64, 2011 and 2016^{xii}

	% with NVQ4+		% with NVQ3+		% with NVQ2+		% with NVQ1+		% with no qualifications	
	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016	2012	2016
County Durham	25%	30%	42%	51%	66%	72%	83%	84%	12%	10%
Darlington	27%	33%	47%	54%	69%	74%	82%	84%	11%	8%
North East	26%	31%	46%	52%	69%	74%	82%	85%	12%	9%

In parts of County Durham there is still an issue with lack of digital skills, particularly among the older generation, who are often reliant on young people to undertake tasks like making on-line bookings or admin work, filing governmental returns etc. There is a need for ongoing support and training to equip these older people to be able to gain the skills and confidence to be able to do this for themselves.

Potential roles for philanthropy

In general, children, young people and adults all perform as well as or better than the national average in terms of education and skills. However, there are three areas where there could be a role for philanthropy in improving educational standards:

- Pupils eligible for free school meals still perform less well than their counterparts in schools throughout Darlington and County Durham and fewer access the best higher education establishments. It would be helpful to understand why this and then support targeted actions to enable all young people eligible for free school meals to reach their full potential.
- In Darlington, there is a worrying level of persistence absence, starting in primary school and increasing at secondary level. Again, it would be helpful to understand the reasons for this and to support actions to address this issue.
- In rural areas, there is a need for training and support for older people to be able to engage confidently with the digital world.

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