



Community
Foundation

Tyne & Wear's Vital Issues 2017

Learning

Learning

1.1 Overview

There are signs of progress, both in terms of attitudes to learning and levels of attainment. However, at all levels it is apparent that people are not achieving their full potential. This is a key issue for a region that will need a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to compete both nationally and internationally.

There is considerable variance in educational attainment within the sub-region. The IMD Education Score reflects the level of attainment of both adults and children. With the single exception of North Tyneside the deprivation scores for Tyne & Wear are all worse than for England as a whole:

Table 28 - IMD Education score (2015)

Sunderland	30.31
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	29.58
Gateshead	26.15
South Tyneside	25.75
North Tyneside	20.48
England	24.54

However, the figures for local authorities can conceal wide variances at neighbourhood (LSOA) level. Thus even in the best performing local authority, North Tyneside, there are neighbourhoods ranked in both the worst and best 2% nationally.

1.2 Pre-school provision

The percentage of the pre-school population attending funded early years provision is high compared to the UK as a whole.

Table 29: Percentage of 2, 3 and 4-year-olds benefitting from funded early education places, 2017

	2	3	4
Gateshead	78	101	99
Newcastle	92	94	95
North Tyneside	83	97	99
South Tyneside	83	96	98
Sunderland	75	97	95
UK	71	93	96

The quality of provision, as indicated by Ofsted ratings, is good. The % of provision rated Outstanding or Good is higher than the national average across the sub-region, and with the exception of Sunderland the figures for Inadequate provision are also very satisfactory.

Table 30 - Ofsted ratings of provision for 3-4 year olds, 2016ⁱⁱ

	Outstanding		Good		Satisfactory / Requires Improvement		Inadequate	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gateshead	1370	31	2612	59	463	10	0	0
Newcastle	1568	25	4354	71	241	4	0	0
North Tyneside	1663	37	2764	61	82	2	8	0
South Tyneside	855	28	2005	65	209	7	0	0
Sunderland	1367	22	4262	68	378	6	257	4
England	276,520	23	772,892	63	145,867	12	25,679	2

1.3 Key stage 2 (ages 7-11)

Attainment at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and maths is just higher than the national average, and here we can see the effect of deprivation on attainment by factoring in the figures for children receiving free school meals:

Table 31 - Attainment of pupils at key stage 2, and by free school meal eligibility, 2016ⁱⁱⁱ

	% pupils attaining required standard	% pupils on free school meals attaining required standard	Difference
Gateshead	65	46	-19%
Newcastle	62	41	-21%
North Tyneside	60	36	-24%
South Tyneside	62	42	-20%
Sunderland	65	44	-21%
England	57	36	-21%

Overall the sub-region does better than the national average, whilst there are some significant variations in how well local authorities appear to do in helping poorer children in bridge the attainment gap.

1.4 GCSE performance (key stage 4)

At age 16, levels of attainment are at, or above, the UK average. Given what we know about Key Stage 2, it is interesting to speculate as to how much better the sub-region might do if it could close the gap between young people from poorer backgrounds and their peers.

Table 32 - % of KS4 pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades inc English and Maths GCSE, 2010-16^{iv}

	2009/10	2015/16
Gateshead	54	59
Newcastle	57	56
North Tyneside	53	63
South Tyneside	54	58
Sunderland	53	54
England	54	54

1.5 Absence from school

At both primary and secondary school the level of absence is generally either in line with, or better than, the regional and national picture.

Table 33 - Pupil absence from schools, 2014-15^v

	Tyne & Wear	England
Primary		
Absence	4%	4 %
Authorised absence	3%	3 %
Unauthorised absence	1%	1%
% pupils persistent absentees	2%	2 %
Secondary		
Absence	5%	5 %
Authorised absence	4%	4 %
Unauthorised absence	1%	1 %
% pupils persistent absentees	6%	5 %

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

Persistent absence deserves a closer look, as in some local authority areas it is far higher than average. Looking at the secondary school figures, for example, it is higher than the national average of 5% in Gateshead (6%); Newcastle (6%); South Tyneside (6%) and Sunderland (7%). In 2011, the government reported that much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving them at a considerable disadvantage to their peers.

- Of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, only 3% manage to achieve five A* to Cs, including English and maths
- Of pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school, only 35% manage to achieve five A* to C GCSEs, including English and maths
- Of pupils who miss less than 5% of school, 73% achieve 5 A* to Cs, including English and maths.

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)^{viii}.

Again there are likely to be disparities between pupils from different backgrounds, hidden by this generally positive picture. The rate of overall absence for those pupils eligible for free school meals (8.4%) remains significantly higher than that for all pupils (5.8%).^{ix}

1.6 Post-18 destinations

Table 18 suggests that the progression prospects for 18-year olds in Tyne & Wear are not markedly different from those for their peers in England. It is notable that apprenticeships are more popular choices and that, although less go to the top third Universities, slightly more go to the Russell Group than for England as a whole.

Table 34 - Destinations at 18^x

	Tyne & Wear	England
Further education college or other provider	11%	10%
Sixth form	5%	3%
Apprenticeships	7%	5%

UK higher education institution	62%	58%
Top third of HEIs	20%	26%
<i>Russell Group (incl. Ox. and Cam.)</i>	18%	17%
Education / employment / training combination destination	1%	1%
Destination not sustained	6%	7%
Destination not sustained / recorded NEET	3%	2%
Activity not captured in data	6%	13%

The difference in prospects for students from poorer backgrounds is again worth highlighting: only 3% of whom in the sub region as a whole go to the top third universities^{xi}. Raising attainment for all the sub-region's bright young people is one way to improve this situation. However, it is not the only factor: low aspirations, limited knowledge and advice and negative perceptions of elite / highly selective universities can cause many well-qualified students from all backgrounds to rule-out applying to the best universities^{xii}. Could more be done to encourage them to do so?

1.7 Skills for work

A major problem is the deficit in skills relevant to employment. Obviously this can be overcome by attracting those with qualifications and experience into the region. Whilst this isn't necessarily a bad thing, it does mean that local people could miss out on the benefits of economic growth.

Raising levels of educational attainment, and getting more Tyne & Wear young people into the best universities, is a key aspect of addressing this problem. A further challenge will be to encourage more young people to see the attractions of those areas of employment where skills shortages are likely to occur – notably construction, engineering, manufacturing and the creative industries. This will require the development of progression routes, particularly in STEM subjects, to lead into them.

In the immediate future adult skills remains a concern. Across the North East as a whole, rates of adult literacy and numeracy are low compared to elsewhere in the UK. Below is data on levels of qualification as at December 2016. This shows the nature of the skills deficit in the sub-region. In most areas, except South Tyneside, attainment to level 2 (e.g. GCSE) is broadly in line with the national picture. Thereafter things start to tail off, and by the time we get to level 4 (e.g. BTEC) it is generally considerably lower with the exception of Newcastle. And a substantial proportion have no qualifications at all in all local authority areas, especially Newcastle and South Tyneside.

Table 35 – % of 16-64 year olds with the specified qualification levels or above^{xiii}

	NVQ 4	NVQ3	NVQ2	NVQ1	None
Gateshead	30	54	76	87	8
Newcastle	39	61	76	86	10
North Tyneside	34	53	78	88	8

South Tyneside	27	48	72	85	10
Sunderland	26	57	74	85	8
UK	38	57	74	85	8

The implications of this adult skills deficit is summarised by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership in these terms: *“Only half of the area’s working age population has level 3 or above qualifications. This is lower than many comparator regions and reduces our relative competitiveness.”*^{xiv}

Potential roles for philanthropy

- Closing the educational attainment gap between people from poor and better off communities emerges as a key priority. The voluntary sector has an important role to play in supporting both young people and adults with philanthropic support.
- Encouraging and supporting young people to have aspirations, overcome challenges and achieve their full potential as learners is an area where philanthropic funding could have an enormous positive impact on individual lives. This needs to involve creating a stronger connection between education and the wider world of work to address local skill shortages.
- Supporting young people who fail to engage with learning, above and beyond the work of statutory services, could help prevent a core of persistent absentees from experiencing lifelong disadvantage.
- Community and voluntary agencies can provide a “route back” for adults who have been failed by mainstream education. Free of the pressure to constantly demonstrate attainment, charitably funded services provide a great first step towards re-engaging with learning and becoming better qualified for employment.

ⁱ **Dept for Education (2016)**, *Education Provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2016*, Office of National Statistics, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2017>

ⁱⁱ **Dept for Education (2016)**, *Education Provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2016*, Office of National Statistics, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2016> 20/6/17 07:42

ⁱⁱⁱ **Dept for Education (2016)**, *National Curriculum Assessments: key stage 2, 2016 (revised)*, Office for National Statistics, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2016-revised>

^{iv} **Dept for Education (2017)** *Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2015 to 2016*, Office for National Statistics, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2015-to-2016> 3/6/17 10:32

^v **Dept for Education (2016)** *Pupil absence in schools in England: 2014 to 2015, Local Authority Tables*, ONS, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2014-to-2015> 28/6/17, 11:52

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- vi **Kershaw, A (2012)** *Truant pupils miss 3.7m school days*, Independent, downloaded from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/truant-pupils-miss-37m-school-days-7851065.html>, 30/6/17 13:16
- vii **Morrisey, B (2015)** *What to do if your child is playing truant*, downloaded from: <http://www.safekids.co.uk/what-do-if-your-child-playing-truant.html> 30/6/17 13:21
- viii **Dept for Education (2012)** *Improving attendance at school*, accessed from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-attendance-at-school>, 6/7/17 15:33
- ix **Dept for Education (2011)** *New data highlights true picture of school absence*, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-data-highlights-true-picture-of-school-absence>, 30/6/17 13:12
- x **Dept for Education (2015)** *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2014, Key Stage 5 local authority tables*, ONS, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-ks5-pupils-2013-to-2014> 28/6/17 12:42
- xi **Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (2015)** *Free school meals by local authority: progression to higher education*, downloaded from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/free-school-meals-pupil-progression-to-higher-education>
- xii **Department of Education (2014)** *School and College-level Strategies to Raise Aspirations of High-achieving Disadvantaged Pupils to Pursue Higher Education Investigation* at <https://www.gov.uk>
- xiii **NOMIS** *Local Authority Profile, Northumberland* at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk>
- xiv **NELEP(2014)** *Skills* <http://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Skills.pdf>