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LEVEL 2 AND 3 ATTAINMENT BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENGLAND MEASURED USING MATCHED ADMINISTRATIVE DATA: ATTAINMENT BY AGE 19 IN 2008 (PROVISIONAL)

INTRODUCTION

1. This SFR reports on whether we have met the Department's PSA target to "increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least level 2 by three percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008, and increase the proportion of young people who achieve level 3".
2. It also shows progress towards the Department's PSA targets of increasing the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least level 2 to 82 per cent by 2011, and increasing the proportion of young people who achieve level 3 to 54 per cent by 2011.
3. The PSA targets are measured by matching together several administrative datasets containing information on qualifications achieved by young people. Estimates reported in this SFR include achievements in and up to the end of 2007/08 and show attainment to level 2 and 3 by individual age for eight different cohorts: people who were or will be aged 19 in each year between 2004 and 2011.
4. This SFR updates and replaces figures published in February 2008 in SFR 04/2008.

KEY POINTS

LEVEL 2 ATTAINMENT (Table 1)

5. In 2008, 76.7 percent of people aged 19 were qualified to at least level 2.
6. In 2006, the proportion qualified to at least level 2 by age 19 was 71.4 per cent, which became the baseline for the second part of the PSA target. Therefore the 2008 target is 73.4 percent of people aged 19 in 2008 to be qualified to at least level 2. This SFR shows that the target has been exceeded by 3.3 percentage points.

LEVEL 3 ATTAINMENT (Table 2)

7. In 2008, 49.8 per cent of people aged 19 were qualified to level 3, an increase of 1.7 percentage points on those people aged 19 in 2007.
8. The proportion of people aged 19 qualified to level 3 has risen by 7.9 percentage points since 2004.

LATEST OUTTURNS BY COHORT AND AGE

9. Tables 1 and 2 below show the proportion of young people in each cohort qualified to level 2+ and level 3.

Table 1: Proportion of young people qualified to level 2 or higher, by age and cohort

Young people aged:	Age:						Population**
	16*	17	18	19	20	21	
19 in 2004	49.2%	56.2%	62.0%	66.3%	69.0%	70.9%	615,000
19 in 2005	50.3%	58.6%	64.9%	69.2%	71.8%	73.5%	618,000
19 in 2006	52.2%	60.2%	67.1%	71.4%	73.9%	75.8%	632,000
19 in 2007	53.0%	61.9%	69.7%	74.0%	76.5%	-	652,000
19 in 2008	55.4%	64.5%	72.5%	76.7%	-	-	645,000
19 in 2009	57.2%	66.7%	74.8%	-	-	-	656,000
19 in 2010	58.2%	67.9%	-	-	-	-	662,000
19 in 2011	59.7%	-	-	-	-	-	659,000

Table 2: Proportion of young people qualified to level 3, by age and cohort

Young people aged:	Age:						Population**
	16*	17	18	19	20	21	
19 in 2004	0.1%	11.8%	36.3%	42.0%	44.8%	46.5%	615,000
19 in 2005	0.1%	15.0%	39.0%	45.4%	48.2%	49.9%	618,000
19 in 2006	0.1%	15.2%	40.1%	46.7%	49.6%	51.4%	632,000
19 in 2007	0.1%	15.8%	41.2%	48.1%	51.4%	-	652,000
19 in 2008	0.1%	16.0%	42.1%	49.8%	-	-	645,000
19 in 2009	0.1%	17.2%	43.4%	-	-	-	656,000
19 in 2010	0.1%	16.9%	-	-	-	-	662,000
19 in 2011	0.1%	-	-	-	-	-	659,000

*Estimates at age 16 differ from other published figures on the attainment of pupils aged 15 in schools and colleges because there are slight differences in the methodologies used in calculating the numerators and denominators.

**The population is the size of the cohort at academic age 14, taken from the January termly count for the relevant year. For example, the 19 in 2008 population (people aged 18 on 31 August 2007) is the number of pupils aged 14 on 31 August 2003.

10. Table 1 shows that 59.7 per cent of the cohort that will be 19 in 2011 had already reached level 2 by 2008, when they were 16. Therefore an additional 22.3 per cent of the cohort need to pass the level 2 threshold in order to meet the PSA target for 2011 of 82 per cent. For comparison, there was an increase of 21.3 percentage points between the ages of 16 and 19 for the cohort that was 19 in 2008.
11. The proportions of people at all ages reaching levels 2 and 3 have increased with every cohort with the exception of a slight decline in the level 3 at 17 measure for the latest year, although this follows a larger than average increase the previous year.

QUALIFICATION TYPE BREAKDOWN

12. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the qualification types by which young people achieve level 2 between 16 and 19, for those aged 19 in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.
13. The proportions of 19 year olds reaching level 2 or higher by age 16 and the proportion of the cohort reaching level 2 between 16 and 19 have both increased year on year between 2004 and 2008.
14. The proportion of 16 to 19 year olds achieving via Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQs) has risen each year. VRQs are the most common way of reaching level 2 post-16.
15. The proportion of 19 year olds achieving level 2 via Apprenticeships fell by 0.3 percentage points between 2007 and 2008. This was the first year that a year on year fall has been observed in this data.
16. Table 4 shows the proportion of people at age 19 in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 qualified to level 3 by the qualification type they achieved to reach that level.
17. A-Levels remain by far the most common qualification type for 19 year olds to reach level 3 despite falling by 1.5 percentage points between 2004 and 2008. The proportion of 19 year olds reaching level 3 via VRQs has increased by 8.2 percentage points over the same period, standing at 10.4 percent in 2008.

Table 3: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to level 2 or higher, by qualification type at which level 2 was achieved and cohort

Young people aged:	Achieved by 16: Proportion achieving Level 2 by 16; All qualifications	Achieved post-16, Qualification Type:							Total Population with a Level 2 by age 19	Proportion achieving a Level 2 by age 19
		5 GCSEs	Apprenticeship	NVQ Level 2	VRQ Level 2	GNVQs or a combination of GNVQs and GCSEs	Level 3 Qualifications	Combination of qualifications		
19 in 2004	49.2%	1.4%	3.0%	4.2%	1.0%	3.3%	3.9%	0.3%	408,000	66.3%
19 in 2005	50.3%	1.3%	3.6%	3.5%	3.1%	3.1%	4.0%	0.3%	428,000	69.2%
19 in 2006	52.2%	1.3%	3.9%	3.1%	4.5%	2.5%	3.7%	0.2%	451,000	71.4%
19 in 2007	53.0%	1.6%	4.1%	3.3%	6.5%	1.9%	3.4%	0.2%	482,000	74.0%
19 in 2008	55.3%	1.5%	3.8%	3.5%	7.9%	1.2%	3.2%	0.2%	495,000	76.7%

Table 4: Proportion of 19 year olds in England qualified to level 3, by qualification type at which level 3 was achieved and cohort

Young people aged:	Qualification Type:					Total Population with a Level 3 by age 19*	Proportion achieving a Level 3 by age 19
	AS, A-Levels, AVCEs or Advanced GNVQs	Advanced Apprenticeship	NVQ Level 3	VRQ Level 3	International Baccalaureate		
19 in 2004	38.5%	0.5%	0.9%	2.2%	0.0%	258,000	42.0%
19 in 2005	38.4%	0.5%	0.9%	5.6%	0.0%	281,000	45.4%
19 in 2006	38.0%	0.7%	1.0%	6.8%	0.2%	295,000	46.7%
19 in 2007	37.6%	0.8%	1.2%	8.3%	0.3%	314,000	48.1%
19 in 2008	37.0%	0.8%	1.3%	10.4%	0.3%	322,000	49.8%

*Includes a very small number of individuals achieving via a combination of qualifications.

NOTES TO EDITORS

BACKGROUND

18. Estimates reported in this SFR are derived from matched administrative data. The first publication of figures from this methodology was in February 2005, when a provisional PSA baseline was established.
19. Previously attainment by young people was monitored on an annual basis using the Autumn Labour Force Survey (LFS). In February 2005 the LFS was used to report the outturn to the Spending Review 2002 target (see SFR06/2005) and should no longer be used to measure performance against the PSA target.
20. The matched data methodology was introduced on the recommendation of a National Statistics Quality Review¹. Advance warning of the switch was made in SFR 48/2004 in December 2004. This SFR also explained some of the key benefits of the measure and its differences from the LFS.

METHODOLOGY

21. Several data sources are matched together at an individual level, using personal identifiers such as name, date of birth, gender and home postcode where available:
 - Pupil level Schools Census database containing information on the participation and personal characteristics of pupils in maintained schools, collected by DCSF.
 - Awarding Body data collected as part of the Achievement and Attainment Tables exercise.
 - National Information System for Vocational Qualifications (NISVQ) database containing information on people's vocational achievements at all institutions, collected by DCSF from awarding bodies.
 - Individualised Learner Record (ILR) database covering participation and qualifications obtained in Further Education (FE) and Work-based Learning (WBL), collected by the LSC from learning providers.
22. Achievement records from Awarding Body data, NISVQ and ILR are used to calculate the numerators. Results are only published at an aggregate level to protect the confidentiality of individuals.

QUALIFICATIONS COUNTED

Achievements in the following qualifications are counted at level 2+:

- 1 Advanced Extension Award equals 5%
- 1 free standing maths qualification at level 3 equals 10%
- 1 Key Skills pass at level 3 equals 20%
- 1 short GCSE at grade A* to C equals 10%
- 1 full GCSE at grade A* to C equals 20%
- 1 Double Award GCSE (including VGCSEs) at grade A* to C equals 40%
- 1 part 1 intermediate GNVQ equals 40%
- 1 full intermediate GNVQ equals 80%
- 1 AS level (including VCE) at grade A to E equals 50%
- 1 A/A2 level (including VCE) at grade A to E equals 100%
- 1 Advanced GNVQ pass equals 100%
- 1 Advanced Pilot 6 unit GNVQ equals 100%
- 1 NVQ pass at level 2 or higher equals 100%

¹ The final report is available at www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/quality_review/education.asp

- 1 'full' VRQ² pass at level 2 or higher equals 100%
- 1 International Baccalaureate pass equals 100%
- 1 Apprenticeship pass equals 100%

23. Achievements in the following qualifications are counted at level 3:

- 1 Advanced Extension Award equals 5%
- 1 Free Standing Maths Qualification at level 3 equals 10%
- 1 Key Skills pass at level 3 equals 15%
- 1 AS level (including VCE) at grade A to E equals 25%
- 1 A/A2 level (including VCE) at grade A to E equals 50%
- 1 Advanced Pilot 6 unit GNVQ equals 50%
- 1 Advanced GNVQ pass equals 100%
- 1 NVQ pass at level 3 or higher equals 100%
- 1 'full' VRQ³ pass at level 3 or higher equals 100%
- 1 International Baccalaureate pass equals 100%
- 1 Advanced Apprenticeship pass equals 100%

24. Combinations of qualifications at different levels are allowed where their parts add up to 100 percent for that level. For example a candidate with 3 full GCSEs at grades A* to C (20% each) and 1 AS level (50%) would be deemed to have attained a level 2 (60% + 50% = 110%).

25. GCSEs and GNVQs are subject to discounting, as are AS and A/A2 levels. For example, say a learner gains 1 short GCSE (10%) in 2000 and 1 full GCSE (20%) in the same subject in 2001. Correct discounting means the person has 10% of a full level 2 in 2000 and then 20% in 2001 as the short GCSE is replaced by the full one.

26. In tables 3 and 4 people are assigned to qualification types in the following order:

- Level 2: 5 GCSEs; Apprenticeships; NVQ; VRQ; GNVQs or a combination of GNVQs and GCSEs; Level 3 Qualifications; Combination of qualifications.
- Level 3: AS, A-Levels, AVCEs or Advanced GNVQs; Advanced Apprenticeship; NVQ; VRQ; International Baccalaureate.

REVISIONS TO PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED FIGURES

27. This SFR reports revised figures compared to last year. The main causes of revisions are:

- **Numerator adjustment changes.** Some level 3 qualifications are excluded from counting in the level 2 numerator – see “Numerator Adjustment” section below. In previous years this discounting was only applied at age 19. This year, the discounting has been applied each year from when the young person achieved the level 3.
- **Historical revisions to VRQ lists.** It was found that in some cases young people completed an accredited VRQ but were awarded the certificate after the accreditation end date, so the achievement was not counted. The list of VRQs was amended so it reflected the certification end date.
- **More up-to-date 2006/07 data.** Final Awarding body data and FE ILR data for 2006/07 has been used in this year's estimates; last year's estimates were based on provisional data.
- **Re-matching between data sources.** Each year the data is re-matched and this can alter the level 2 and level 3 attainment figures slightly (either increasing or decreasing them). Previously there may have been a small number of cases where there was double-counting for the same person (i.e. two records for the same person when there should have been one), or where one record should have been identified two people in the matched data.

² A complete list of 'full' VRQ qualification codes used in the measure is available on request.

NUMERATOR ADJUSTMENTS

28. Increases in the proportions of young people reaching level 2+ or level 3 can come from more people reaching those levels or from population decreases e.g. if there is more outward migration. A key adjustment is made to the level 2+ numerator to account for this problem – people that have been recorded as having reached level 3 but without having any level 2 achievements or learning are excluded from the level 2+ numerator as they are assumed to be inward migrants i.e. people who were not in school at age 14. They are included in the level 3 numerator. For further information see section 3 of the Quality Review report.

MATCHING ACCURACY AND DATA COVERAGE

29. The level of matching between data sources is very high, helped in part by the amount of overlaps in the data sources e.g. both NISVQ and ILR contain data on NVQ and VRQ achievements. However, the matching process is not perfect – we estimate that errors may overstate the total number gaining a level 2 or higher qualification by ± 0.1 percentage points.

30. For the 19 in 2008 cohort, there was a 4.3 percentage point increase in L2 attainment from age 18 to age 19 i.e. people who gained qualifications in 2007/08. Some of this increase may be attributed to new qualifications – such as the growth in the number of VRQs. However, our assessment suggests this has a very small impact: we know that 1.2 percentage points of the increase between ages 18 and 19 comes from people who gained full VRQs in 2007/08, but of these very few gained VRQs that were new in 2007/08.

Attainment by institution type and region

31. In previous years the SFR has also contained tables showing attainment at 19 by institution type and by region, and local authority tables were available at the same time via a link to the LSC website. This year, due to issues with institutional data, these tables will be published at a later date as additional tables.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

SFR 04/2008 – Level 2 and 3 Attainment by Young People in England Measured Using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2007 (Provisional)

SFR 02/2009 – GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2007/08 (Revised)

SFR 01/2009 – GCE/VCE/Applied A/AS and equivalent results in England 2007/08.