

Learning and Skills

Headlines

Educational attainment is influenced by family socio-economic status together with the quality of the schools that children and young people attend. Their attainment at 16 is a powerful indicator of their chances of achieving future health and economic wellbeing.

Educational attainment (measured by 5 A* to C GCSEs) continues to improve in Kirklees. However, in 2012, there was a gap between the best and worst performing localities of 21% at five and 23% at 16, both of these had widened since 2010. Across Kirklees, a complex pattern existed of inequalities between different ethnic groups, different communities and different schools. Girls' attainment was higher than boys throughout all stages of formal education up to 16.

Kirklees improved in the levels of residents with higher and intermediate qualifications compared with our Yorkshire neighbours. However, Kirklees still suffered from a high level of residents with no qualifications. This was currently estimated to be 12.2% of the working age population (around 28,000).

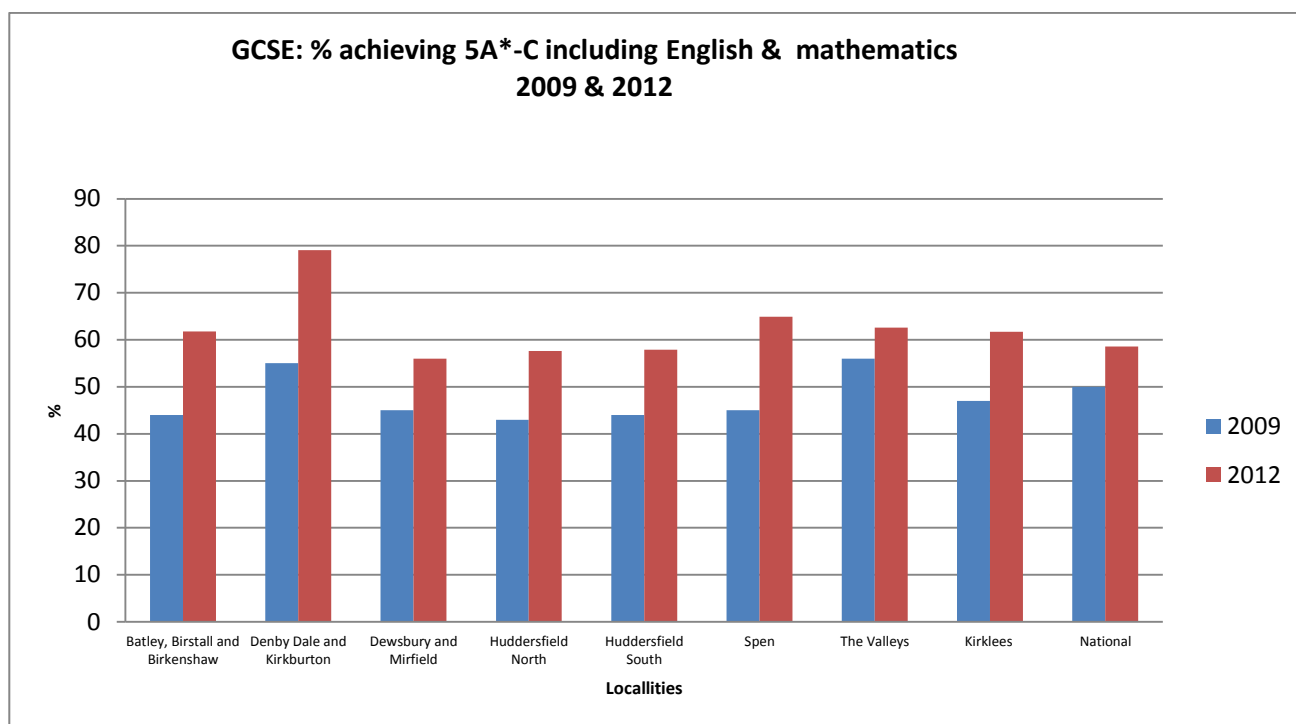
Why is this issue important?

A skilled workforce enables businesses to compete regionally, nationally and globally creating a stronger and more resilient economy. Skills are the biggest determinant of success for cities, and are critical to the life chances of individuals and sustainable future.

A child's physical, social, and cognitive development during the early years strongly influences their school readiness and educational attainment, economic participation and health. Higher educational attainment is associated with healthier behaviour during childhood and into adult life¹ People with low educational attainment are more likely to experience disadvantage throughout their lives across a wide range of issues including income, employment, housing, healthy behaviours and health. Educational attainment is a strong predictor of life expectancy and disability free life.¹

Early Years Foundation Stage (age five)²

In the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2012, nearly 7 in 10 (69%) pupils achieved the expected standard, compared with 6 in 10 (64%) nationally. This built on good improvements in the past few years across all localities. The gap between the lowest attaining 20% of children and the rest continued to be narrow.



Key Stage 4 (age 16)⁴

At Key Stage 4 in 2012, 6 in 10, (61%) of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs grades A*-C including English and maths, increasing in each of the last five years to above the national average. Almost all pupils (99%) left KS4 with at least one qualification. Levels of persistent absence (pupils with 85% attendance or less) continued to fall and there was provision of alternative full-time education for pupils who are excluded from school

Key Stage 5 (age 19)

There were improvements in young people's achievement of qualifications at 19. Attainment at A-level or equivalent continued to improve and was above the national average⁴. 95% of young people stayed in education at 16. The number of young people achieving level 2 and level 3 by 19 increased year on year but performance remained below the national average.

Gains in level 3 achievement at 19 have not increased at the same rate for young people who were entitled to free school meals at age 15. The gap between the numbers of young

people entitled to free school meals achieving a level 3 qualification and those who are not entitled to Free School Meals increased from 26% in 2007/8 to 27% in 2010/11.

What significant factors are affecting this issue?

A wide range of interacting factors impact on a child's educational attainment. These include:

- Social factors, such as parental income, education and socio-economic status, postnatal depression, parental education, parental support and parent/child relationships.
- School/peer factors, such as the nature of the school and its population.
- Individual child factors, including low birth weight, being read to every day, attendance at school, having a regular bed time at age three and individual children's ability, measured primarily in terms of prior attainment.

The most significant of these is the socio-economic status of the family.¹

Many factors impact on workplace learning. These include: availability of training budgets, increased employer investment in skills, workplace culture and capacity; understanding the benefits of skills and how these link to business growth, employee factors, such as an individual's prior experience of learning and access to information, advice and guidance about training. The numbers of adults taking up learning and skills opportunities outside the workplace is also affected by the availability of opportunities, fees and levels of support available.

Which groups are most affected by this issue?

Ethnicity

At the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils of Asian Pakistani heritage were the lowest performing group, with just over half (52%) achieving the expected level compared with 3 in 4 (74%) for white pupils². However, by the end of secondary school, trends were improving for this group with half of all pupils (51%) attaining five or more A* - C GCSEs, including English and maths. They remain lower than nationally for Asian Pakistani heritage pupils and lower than the average for all pupils. Exactly half (50%) of mixed white and black Caribbean heritage pupils achieved the expected level compared with 63.5% of white British heritage pupils⁴.

Low income

For pupils eligible for free school meals, educational attainment was lower across all key stages. Over 1 in 3 (39%) of pupils who were eligible for free school meals achieved the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 4 compared with nearly 2 in 3 (61%) of their peers. This was similar to nationally⁴.

Looked after children

In 2012, the educational attainment of looked after children was lower than the national average. Achieving five or more A* to C GCSEs at Key Stage 4 including English and maths was 7% compared with 11% for care leavers in England.⁵ This was linked partly to instability in placements, poor attendance prior to coming into care and a range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs.

Low skilled employees in low skilled jobs

Individuals who are in low skilled jobs generally find it harder to understand the benefits, have the investment required and access the skills development options they need to make progress on the ladder of opportunity. ¹ Out of the 28,000 of the working age population who we knew had no qualifications, many were either under-employed or unemployed. ⁷ There could be as many as 14,500 working residents without qualifications in Kirklees who are struggling to access the training they need to enable them to become socially mobile.

Where is this causing greatest concern?

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- At Early Years Foundation Stage, attainment was lowest in south Huddersfield (58%). It was highest in Denby Dale and Kirkburton (80%)².
- In 2012, 44% of all pupils in Dewsbury failed to achieve five or more GCSEs grades A*-C including English and maths, compared with 21% in Denby Dale and Kirkburton.
- There is wide variation across Kirklees for Asian Pakistani heritage pupils. 66% of Asian Pakistani pupils in Huddersfield North achieved five or more A* - C GCSEs, including English and maths compared with 46% in Dewsbury

What could commissioners and service planners consider?

- Continuing to improve the universal provision of educational opportunities for all children and young people, whilst targeting resources at specific groups based on need (proportionate universalism).
- Developing a stronger early intervention and prevention focus. This would ensure the root causes of poor attainment could be addressed and specific groups who were struggling would be identified early and supported appropriately.
- Continuing the success already seen in reducing the variation between schools and groups. The development of school to school support and intervention should be targeted at schools likely to under perform.
- Delivering a clear message to business highlighting the benefits of investing in the workforce and how this links to business growth and resilience
- Working with strategic partners to develop a network of workplace learning advocates who create the right culture for learning
- Working with our employment and skills providers to provide clear information and advice for individuals and business.

References

1. Marmot, M. *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010*. <http://www.marmot-review.org.uk/>
2. Foundation Stage Profile 2012 Data Collection.
3. Department for Education Key Stage 2 return 2012.
4. Key Stage 4 DFE Results 2012.
5. Department for Education Performance Tables 2012
6. Kirklees Poverty Needs Assessment 2012.
7. CLIK Survey 2012, Kirklees Council, 2012.

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