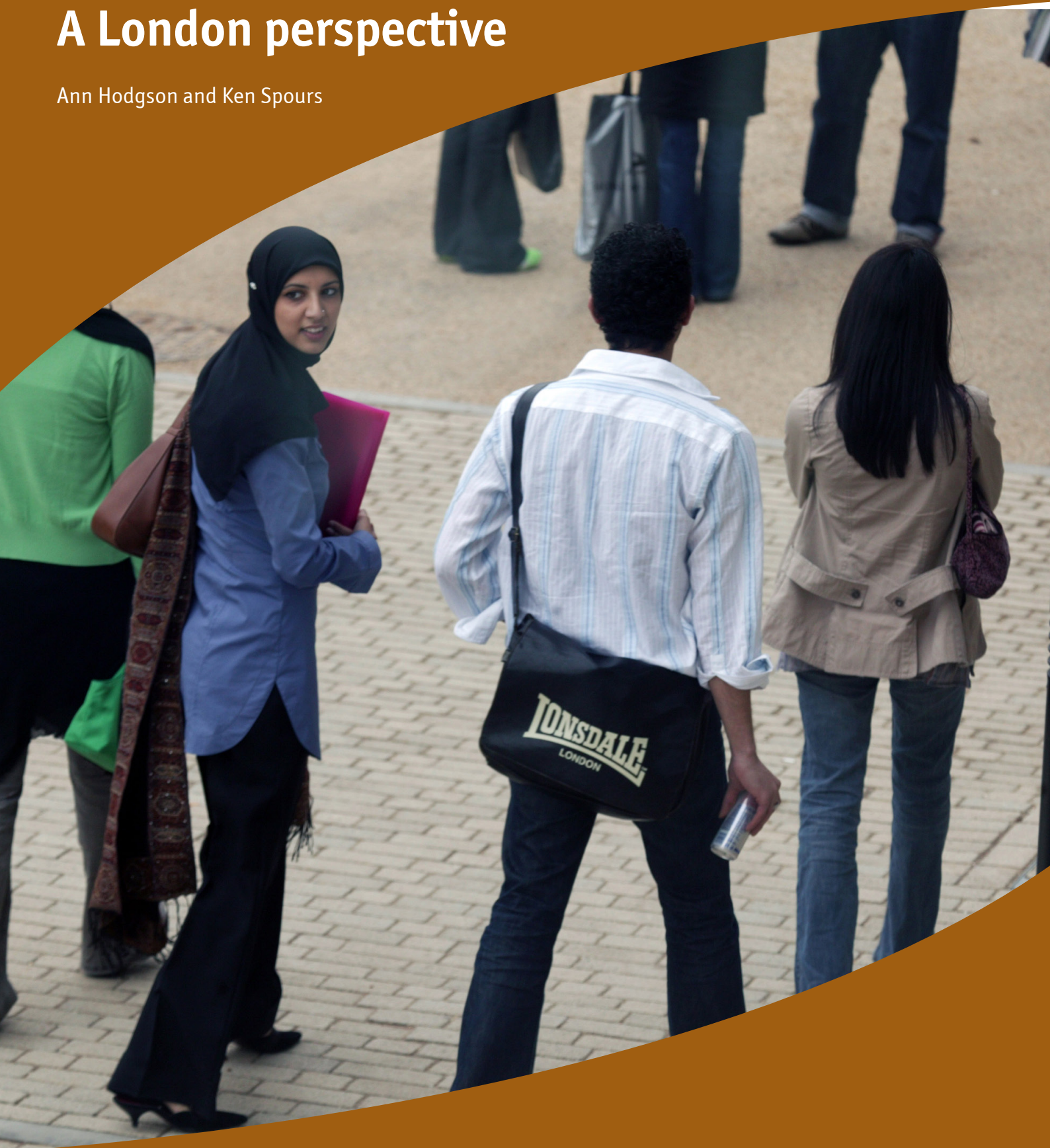


Young people's participation, progression and transition to higher education and work: **A London perspective**

Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours





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Young people's participation, progression and transition to higher study and work: A London perspective

(12 June 2012)

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Executive summary

1. This report provides an initial exploration of issues related to young people's 14+ participation, progression and transition across London and the role of education providers, employers and the youth labour market in this process. The report was commissioned by London Councils' Young People's Education and Skills Board and its findings endorse the priorities identified in *London – Being the Best: The Vision for Young People's Education and Skills in London*. The report uses a range of national and international literature, national data and, where available, London-specific data and reports, including those published by London Councils, to tease out key messages for policy-makers and practitioners. It also identifies areas where action needs to be taken to improve the education and life-chances of young Londoners, in particular 14-19 year olds, and where further research is required.

2. London is a complex city - economically, geographically and socially - which is reflected in opportunities for education and outcomes not only for Londoners as a whole, but for different groups of young people within the Capital. In several parts of the report we make a distinction between the performance of boroughs with high and low levels of multiple deprivation. These two perspectives suggest both a pan-London approach to economic and labour market issues and focused action on specific areas within the Capital.

3. Despite these differences, London 14-19 education has made significant progress in recent years - not only in GCSE attainment at 16 but also in Level 3 outcomes at 19 and in reducing the effects of poverty on education for 14-19 year olds. This has been the result of considerable investment and policy focus - notably London Challenge, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and flexibilities at Key Stage 4.

4. However, a closer look at London trends suggests a more unsettling picture, which includes:

- a continued borough and intra-borough variability of performance at Key Stage 4;
- a dip in performance at 17+ related to problems of retention and attainment in AS/A Level;
- the recent lack of expansion of vocational provision post-16;
- low apprenticeship involvement by 16-18 year olds despite their recent growth in the Capital;

- problematic labour market access for young Londoners because of the influx of highly qualified migrants from other parts of the UK and abroad and the relative absence of jobs for young people.
5. The balance of gains and inherited problems could be decisively tipped by current government reforms at each stage of the 14+ participation, progression and transition process – changes to qualifications, institutional autonomy and diversity, the removal of the EMA, higher education fees and continuing austerity.
6. There is a need, therefore, for a more textured analysis, looking more closely at the recent progress of young people in boroughs with high levels of deprivation, how they are faring under current arrangements and their potential vulnerabilities in the new policy context.
7. At the same time, it is also important to be more systemic and London-wide in consideration of potential solutions, such as:
- the organisation of a pan-London careers education, information, advice and guidance [CEIAG] entitlement;
 - creating a curriculum for London that explicitly promotes the skills and knowledge required for the future;
 - the development of vocational provision across the Capital;
 - the nurturing of progression routes to overcome existing barriers;
 - consideration of new forms of partnership that harness the energy and commitment of education professionals and social partners (e.g. education providers, voluntary and community organisations, employers, local authorities and regeneration agencies) that integrate 14-19 education and training more closely with employment opportunities, Apprenticeship and higher education.
8. The overall aim for the various social partners, working with London Councils, should be to collaborate in building an even better knowledge base of what is happening across London. On the basis of this shared understanding there could be a greater willingness to commit to the building of a 14+ high opportunity and progression education and training system across the Capital so that London can move decisively towards being a learning and employment city for all its young people. The suggestions of areas for action, consultation and further research outlined below offer a starting point in this direction.

9 **Key areas for further consultation and action**

Curriculum, performance and provision

- a. What curriculum and support measures can be put in place to improve attainment for all 14-19 year olds in London?
- b. Should there be a London Curriculum Entitlement for 14-19 year olds?

CEIAG, progression and destinations

- a. Should there be a pan-London approach to CEIAG and work-related learning and if so, who should be involved, in what and how?
- b. How can we develop a pan-London progression strategy that particularly strengthens vocational education in the Capital?
- c. What measures can be taken by social partners to improve employment opportunities for young Londoners?

Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration

- a. Is the 14+ Progression and Transition Board suggestion a useful one for London?
- b. If so, what and who would determine the membership, scope and geographical reach of each 14+ PTB and what would be the role of the YPES Board?

10. **Key areas for further research**

Curriculum, performance and provision

- a. Some boroughs with high levels of students eligible for free schools meals are performing better than others. What are they doing to achieve these outcomes?
- b. What are the effects of current government policy on curriculum, provision and performance at Key Stage 4 and post-16?

CEIAG, participation, progression and destinations

- a. What type of CEIAG and work-related learning provision is there in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and FE colleges to support young people into employment as well as higher education at the key progression and transition points of 17 and 18?

- b. Which types of work-related activities and work experience and at what points have the maximum impact on young people's choice of provision, progression to further/higher study and transition to the London labour market?
- c. What are the internal progression/transition patterns of the 16-19+ phase in different parts of London and London as a whole (e.g. 17+ drop out, the take-up of Level 3 qualifications, completion rates in FE up to 19 and transition to employment)?
- d. To what extent does poverty play a role in post-16 performance in London and in what ways?

Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration

- a. What are the effects of institutional arrangements in London on young people's 14+ participation, progression and transition?
- b. What is the impact of current partnership working in the Capital on 14+ participation, progression and transition?

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides an initial exploration of issues related to young people's 14+ participation, progression and transition across London and the role of education providers, employers and the youth labour market in this process. The report was commissioned by London Councils and its findings endorse the priorities identified in *London – Being the Best: The Vision for Young People's Education and Skills in London*. It uses both national and, where this is available, London-specific data and reports, including those published by London Councils, to tease out key messages for policy-makers and practitioners. It also identifies areas where action needs to be taken to improve the education and life-chances of young Londoners, in particular 14-19 year olds and where further research is required.

1.2 However, while commenting on London-wide trends we are alert to differences within the Capital as a result of several intersecting polarising trends. These form a very significant part of the London dynamic. We focus not only on pan-London trends, but also on performance and issues in boroughs with differing degrees of multiple deprivation. London is a very rich environment, both economically and in terms of opportunity, but also contains significant levels of poverty and worklessness. With others, we are concerned about differences and the effects these have on London as a learning city¹.

1.3 We also start from an appreciation of what has already been achieved in London. A huge amount of investment and effort in the Capital during the previous decade has produced very promising overall baselines and a culture for learning from Key Stage 4 through to higher education. Much of the improvement came through policies pursued between 2003 and 2010 – more diverse vocational provision at Key Stage 4; a focus on attainment in GCSE Maths and English; more accessible A Level qualifications; strategies and funding for widening participation in HE; considerable financial investment in infrastructure and pan-London initiatives such as London Challenge.

1.4 Despite these advances, there are shared concerns that post-16 performance in London has not thus far matched pre-16 attainment, creating problems of progression for some learners.

¹ The issue of poverty in London has been widely researched and has been recently summarized in *London's Poverty Profile*, MacInness *et al.*, The London Trust and the New Policy Institute, 2011.

1.5 Moreover, the factors that brought about these positive changes are being challenged by the new policy and economic context. It is important for those concerned with the education and training of young people in London to be able to understand more precisely the picture in the Capital and how best to respond both to the legacies of the previous government and the new context.

2. London as a global city – wealthy, dynamic and polarised

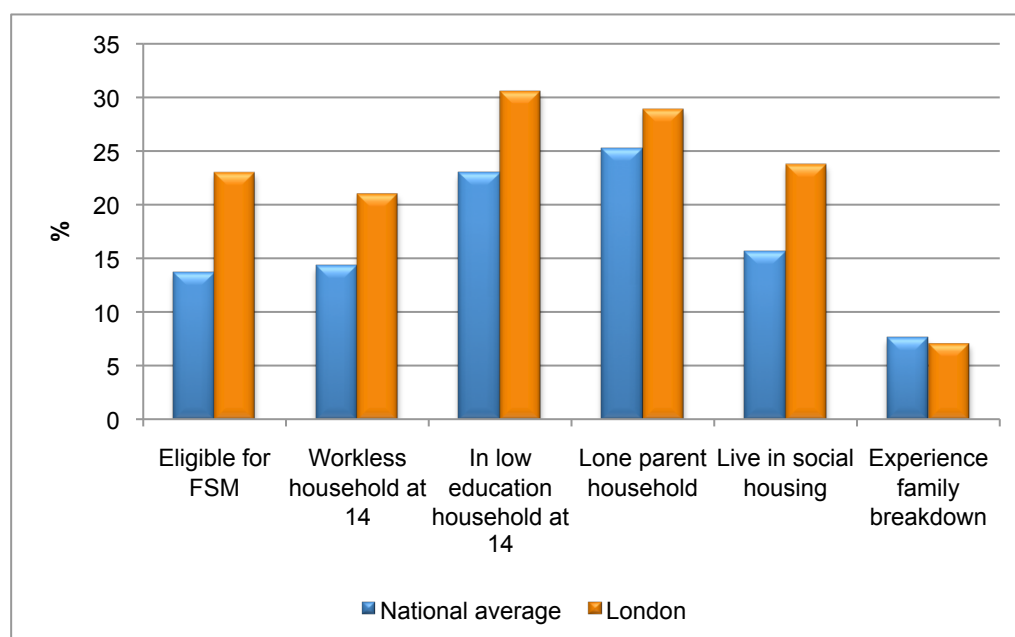
2.1 London can be rightly regarded as a top economic global city. It is a financial as well as travel hub and is able to attract highly qualified and talented individuals, not only from the UK but also from around the world. It is an exceedingly wealthy city and the level of affluence generated by London ripples out across the South East of England more generally. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that fee-paying independent schools play a far greater role in London than elsewhere in the UK (see Section 5).

2.2 Like all cities in the UK and in large parts of Continental Europe, London has been adversely affected by the economic downturn and by austerity measures. However, because of its economic diversity and the size of the private sector it continues to experience some economic growth, although the production of additional jobs looks uncertain².

2.3 At the same time, however, London has the highest proportion of families in poverty (28% compared with 22% nationally) and these are concentrated in certain boroughs and in parts of boroughs. There are also relatively low levels of labour market engagement and high levels of worklessness among London residents (see Section 5). As Figure 1 shows, higher proportions of young Londoners come from low income and deprived families compared with the national average.

² LSEO, 2010

Figure 1. London's vulnerable young people



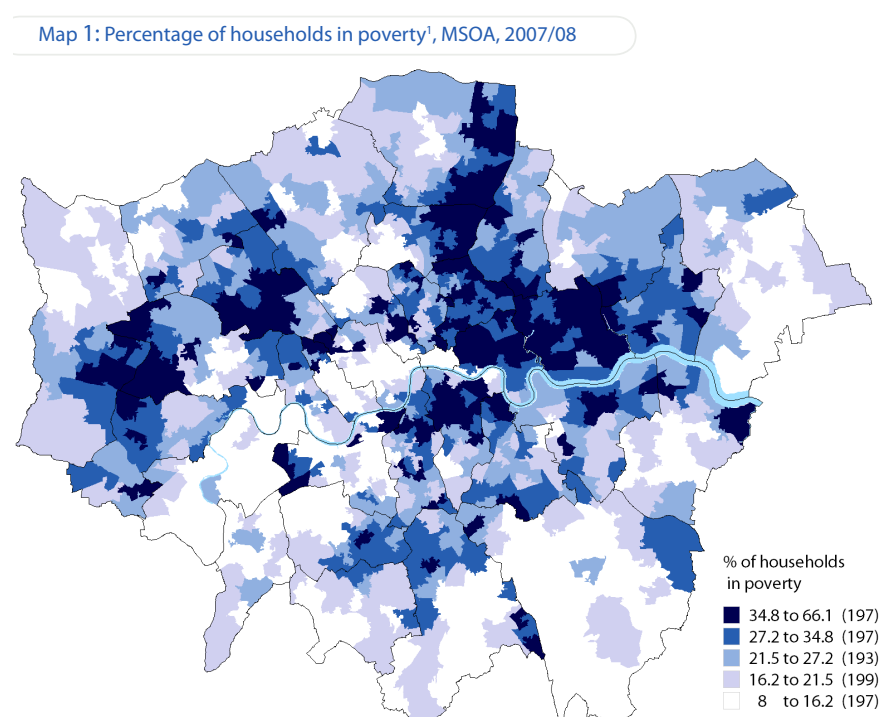
Source: *The educational and occupational experiences of London's youth*, Duckworth, IOE 2012

2.4 This is in part a reflection of the economic structure, dominated by a financial sector, in which there has been a polarisation of employment (high and low skill) with a squeezing of the middle. These patterns are also evident in the polarisation of qualifications attainment, with over 40 per cent of residents gaining Level 4 or above after 19, but with proportionately fewer at Level 2 and Level 3 when compared nationally (see Section 5). The polarisation of the labour market has also been accompanied by an inward migration of qualified people from abroad and the UK, leading to high levels of competition for jobs. In addition London, like other metropolitan cities, is the focus of mass commuting. The combined effects of these factors have been that some residents and communities in London are being left behind.

2.5 Patterns of inequality are reflected spatially across the Capital. As Figure 2 shows, households in poverty are concentrated in certain areas –inner city boroughs such as Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham, but also Southwark south of the Thames and parts of Ealing and Hounslow in the West. The concentration of deprivation also moves northwards to the outer rim through parts of Haringey and Enfield. Affluent boroughs are either concentrated in the centre or at the periphery, particularly in the South West (e.g. Richmond, Sutton and Kingston upon Thames). The distinction between inner and outer London, while still relevant, has become increasingly complex and blurred.

2.6 London as a whole is an aggregation of these trends in wealth and education opportunity. While it is important to understand the Capital as a whole, it is equally important to comprehend its inner dynamics and inter-dependencies, in which the extremes of wealth and poverty co-exist

Figure 2. Percentage of London households in poverty 2007/8



Source: *Focus on London 2011: Poverty: The hidden city*, GLA Intelligence Unit

2.7 Despite these divisions, over the past decade London has become a city achieving higher levels of post-16 education participation compared nationally. This has been in part a response to the economic situation. Improvements in educational participation are also a reflection of high aspirations across different communities in the Capital and the huge amount of investment and professional effort that has taken place over the last decade in particular.

3. The 14-19 phase - purposes, policy and dynamics

3.1 Behind this paper lies an aspiration for a universal, extended, diverse and coherent upper secondary phase³ that provides opportunities for all young people to participate in and progress through meaningful programmes of study so that they can make effective transitions to adult and working life. This suggests a longitudinal and system-wide approach to the examination of the participation, progression and transition of young people and the importance of thinking in terms of 14+ rather than 14-19.

3.2 We start by providing a brief overview of national policy because of the role that it plays in shaping the educational landscape for young people and the professionals who work with them. However, it is also important to note that the way each locality and the providers within it mediate national steers will have an important effect on the 14+ participation, progression and transition opportunities for young people in that area.

3.3 Since the election of the Coalition Government in May 2010, we have seen reforms in almost every aspect of 14-19 policy. In terms of curriculum and qualifications, *The Importance of Teaching* White Paper⁴ stressed the role of traditional general education, with the introduction of the English Baccalaureate performance measure at Key Stage 4⁵, the move towards more linear assessment and external examinations and a focus on grammar, spelling and punctuation. At the same time, the Wolf Review of 14-19 Vocational Qualifications⁶ and the subsequent government response⁷ emphasised the value of apprenticeships, work-based learning and internship; strongly criticised many of the vocational/applied qualifications that schools and colleges had been using with 14-19 year olds; highlighted the value of programmes of learning, advocated the continuation of English and Mathematics in the 16-19 phase and called for an end to the use of equivalences between general and vocational/applied awards in performance tables

³ The term upper secondary education is one that is used in international, comparative literature to describe the 14-19 phase. The argument for a universal and unified upper secondary phase is made in Hodgson and Spours, forthcoming

⁴ DfE, 2010

⁵ To achieve the EBacc performance measure requires A*-C grades in GCSE English, maths, the sciences, a language (other than English) and either history or geography. The performance measure was introduced in 2010 – (<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/theenglishbaccalaureate>)

⁶ Wolf, 2011

⁷ DfE, 2011 (<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/w/wolf%20review%20of%20vocational%20education%20%20%20government%20response.pdf>)

at 16+. All of these measures, which were swiftly acted upon by the Department for Education, effectively reversed the policies of the previous government and have meant significant upheaval for curriculum planners in schools, colleges and work-based learning providers, as well as major changes to learner programmes of study in Key Stage 4.

3.4 The institutional landscape has changed significantly too with an acceleration of the academies programme, the introduction of Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools and a greater emphasis on competition between providers. Further education colleges are also having to radically rethink their role within the learning and skills landscape as they consider the options available to them under the greater autonomy offered by policies emanating from the *New Challenges, New Chances*⁸ agenda. With greater institutional autonomy has come a sharper focus on accountability – new inspection frameworks and a wider range of challenging performance measures.

3.5 While local authorities are still statutorily responsible for ensuring that there is adequate 14-19 provision for the whole range of learners in their area and have a central role in supporting the Raising of the Participation Age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015, they are having to seek new ways of carrying out these functions. The Local Government Association, for example, has suggested that local authorities have a role ‘to make sure that competition is fair and maximises efficiency; to facilitate the development of new provision; and to manage market failure and act as a provider of last resort’⁹.

3.6 Almost inevitably with a new administration there has been reform in terms of the government departments that make policy – now the Department for Education (DfE) up to the age of 19 and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for education and training beyond the age of 19. This has been matched by changes to the agencies that fund and oversee education and training providers; out with the Young People’s Learning Agency, for example, and in with the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Services for 14-19 year olds have been reformed – Connexions has gone, for example, with the introduction of an all-age careers service and schools being given responsibility via the Education Act 2011¹⁰ for providing their students with the careers guidance they require to make choices

⁸ BIS, 2011 (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/f/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan>)

⁹ Local Government Association, 2012:4

¹⁰ Education Act 2011 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents/enacted>)

about what and where they study; and the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been replaced by a smaller pot of more targeted funding to support 16-19 year olds (the 16-19 Bursary Fund).

3.7 Finally, and perhaps most significantly, these changes are being made against a background of economic uncertainty and the government's commitment to reducing the deficit in public finances, which are putting enormous pressure on youth employment.

3.8 In this changing context David Raffe's concept of participation 'push' and 'pull' factors¹¹ helps us to understand the dynamics of 14+ participation, progression and transition. We identify five potential 'push' factors:

- legislation;
- an accessible and motivational curriculum;
- collaboration between education institutions to offer a wide range of provision in a locality;
- high quality Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG);
- and financial rewards for remaining in education and training.

It is possible to argue that while national policy supports the first of these, through its statutory commitment to the Raising of the Participation Age, the other four 'push' factors are not necessarily assured. The picture is also concerning in relation to the three major 'pull' factors:

- access to higher education,
- entry to a coveted apprenticeship place and
- getting a good job.

Policies to increase and widen access to higher education over the past 20 years have undoubtedly brought a university education within the reach of substantial numbers of young people and have encouraged many to stay on in school or college to gain the necessary qualifications. It remains to be seen whether the increase in higher education fees from September 2012 will make this option less attractive to young people. High quality Apprenticeship places, despite successive governments' best efforts, are not available in large numbers for 16-19 year olds either nationally or in London. Perhaps most concerning of all are the depressingly high unemployment

¹¹ Raffe, 1988

figures for 18-25 year olds in England and particularly in some parts of London (see Section 5). Philip Brown and colleagues eloquently argue in *The Global Auction*¹² that the promise of staying on in education to get the qualifications that lead to a good job has been broken.

3.9 In this context, effective 14+ participation, progression and transition either nationally or within London will rely heavily on localities and education providers, working collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. parents, employers, voluntary and community organisations and regeneration agencies), to create positive learning and employment opportunities for all young people in their area. This is particularly important to tackle the increasing problem of those young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)¹³.

3.10 Moreover, there are features of the current English education system that do not actively promote successful participation, progression and transition for learners through the 14-19 phase. A number of factors at national and institutional levels have combined to create a situation in which the focus becomes attainment, performance and competition rather than progression, transition and collaboration. In a sense we still have a major break at 16 despite the active promotion of a 14-19 phase under the previous government¹⁴.

- a. From 2002 the Key Stage 4 curriculum was opened up to include applied and vocational qualifications as well as GCSEs, which did not necessarily provide students with the knowledge and skills to move on to the full range of post-16 Level 3 qualifications. The mismatch between Level 2 BTECs taken in Key Stage 4 and A Levels has become a recognized problem,¹⁵ but colleges have also contended that applied qualifications taken in schools did not provide the vocational knowledge and skills to allow direct progression onto a Level 3 BTEC course¹⁶.
- b. At the same time as these more mixed curriculum arrangements were being put into place in schools, A Levels were made more rigorous through a reduction in coursework, the increase in synoptic assessment and the introduction of an A* grade so the gradient between Level 2 and Level 3 study became more acute in the post-16 academic track. This has clearly had an

¹² Brown *et al.*, 2011

¹³ Sissons and Jones, 2012

¹⁴ Hodgson and Spours, 2012

¹⁵ e.g. Wolf, 2011; Hodgson and Spours, 2011 (NE Lincs); Hodgson *et al.*, 2011 (NUT/UCU study)

¹⁶ Hodgson *et al.*, 2011 (NUT/UCU study)

impact on how successful young people are likely to be at AS Level and is one of the major factors contributing to 17 year olds either reducing their programmes of study, moving to applied alternatives, or simply dropping out.

- c. In a competitive environment and one in which inspection has focused heavily on performance in GCSE and equivalent qualifications at Key Stage 4, schools have been incentivized to focus on attainment rather than progression pathways for students. Moreover, as the Wolf Report¹⁷ clearly stated, some of the decisions about introducing applied and vocational qualifications, which carried high equivalence values, were undoubtedly made for institutional rather than learner benefit. While this latter problem has been to some extent addressed through changes to vocational qualification points scores¹⁸, the broader problem of trade-off between attainment and progression has not. A different scenario may now be developing as schools rush to follow the new EBacc performance measure (see Section 5), which again may be introduced for the benefit of the school rather than for the individual learner and her/his intended progression route.
- d. Schools and colleges set their own admissions criteria for entry to post-16 provision and this can vary not only from locality to locality but also within an area. It will depend on the local institutional arrangements as to how the qualifications that the student has gained in Key Stage 4 are viewed by the post-16 providers in the area and thus what programme of study s/he gains admission to post-16. Progression is not automatically guaranteed, particularly for middle and lower attainers who require more support and often more tailored provision. A system that focused on progression would require much greater dialogue and collaborative working between pre-16 and post-16 providers to ensure that the knowledge and skills for successful progression were built in during Key Stage 4 and built on post-16.
- e. Provision is not evenly spread geographically. In localities with high numbers of school sixth forms, which primarily offer A Levels, there is likely to be an oversupply of this provision and a corresponding lower supply of qualifications at Level 2 and below (see Section 5).

¹⁷ Wolf, 2011 (<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>)

¹⁸ DfE, 2011

(<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/c/consultation%20response%20on%20qualifications%20for%2014-16-year-olds%20and%20performance%20tables.pdf>)

- f. Intensive competition between providers, particularly in areas with falling rolls, also encourages recruitment of students at all costs. In this type of scenario, as a number of national studies¹⁹ have shown impartial CEIAG is unlikely to occur; students are prevented from learning about the full range of post-16 opportunities, particularly the more vocational and work-based programmes. This lack of impartial IAG appears to be already on the increase according to a recent AoC study²⁰ and is likely to grow as a result of schools taking on the responsibility for this area of work, especially if they are building up their own sixth forms. Without clear post-16 goals, the 14-16 phase is unlikely to provide young people with a properly prepared transition.
- g. Finally, the work-based route and apprenticeship still play a very small role in the English system. There is less knowledge among education professionals about these pathways or the type of employment they lead to than about more traditional academic pathways, employers are not actively tied into the system as they are in countries that have a stronger social partnership approach²¹; the focus in school sixth forms and sixth form colleges has historically been primarily on preparation for higher education and even in further education colleges, which often do have a more direct relationship with local employers, funding incentives privilege retention on a course rather than progression to the workplace²². It is possible that the role of the work-based route will increase, not only as a result of government policy on apprenticeships, but also because of the reduced attraction of higher education discussed elsewhere in the report.

3.11 Having outlined some of the national issues affecting 14+ participation, progression and attainment, we turn to the picture in London to examine their effects and to highlight those that need to be addressed most urgently in the Capital as part of London Councils' 'Call to Action'.

¹⁹ OFSTED, 2010 (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/moving-through-system-information-advice-and-guidance>); AoC, 2012 (<http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/research/aoc-surveys-and-research/information-advice-and-guidance-iag.cfm>)

²⁰ AoC, 2012 (<http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/research/aoc-surveys-and-research/information-advice-and-guidance-iag.cfm>)

²¹ Clarke and Winch, 2007 describe how in European countries, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark, employers, trade unions and education providers work together with the government to design vocational education and training.

²² Spours *et al.*, 2009

4. Curriculum, performance and provision

4.1 As we have seen above, since 2000 there has been a great deal of change in qualifications and curriculum at both Key Stage 4 and post-16, which has had a major effect on the provision available for young people nationally and in London.

4.2 These changes cannot be seen in isolation from the main policy levers that are used to hold education providers to account in the 14-19 phase – funding, inspection and key performance measures at 16+ and 18+ (e.g. EBacc) - because these too have a major affect on the type of provision that schools, colleges and work-based learning providers are able or willing to offer. Moreover, the pace of change and the time lag for institutions between a new policy or qualification being introduced and implemented means that they are often working in a hybrid manner with new and old qualifications and reform agendas. Given this context, it would be impossible to provide a detailed account of the impact of all of these changes on the curriculum and provision of institutions in London. For the purposes of this report we have focused initially on GCSE and equivalence performance at Key Stage 4 and for 16-19 year olds on Level 3 provision and performance and routes into higher education and employment.

4.3 These have been chosen either because they have arisen in reports and documentation from London Councils, have been highlighted in the press or have been raised as issues in London-related events, seminars and conferences held by London-wide networks, such as the Post-14 London Region Network. In each case we will explore recent evidence that is available nationally and on London.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

4.4 Despite widespread poverty in London, it is widely recognised that in recent years London has seen marked improvement in GCSE performance²³. This appears to have fed through to higher than average levels of post-16 education participation, particularly in the full-time mode.

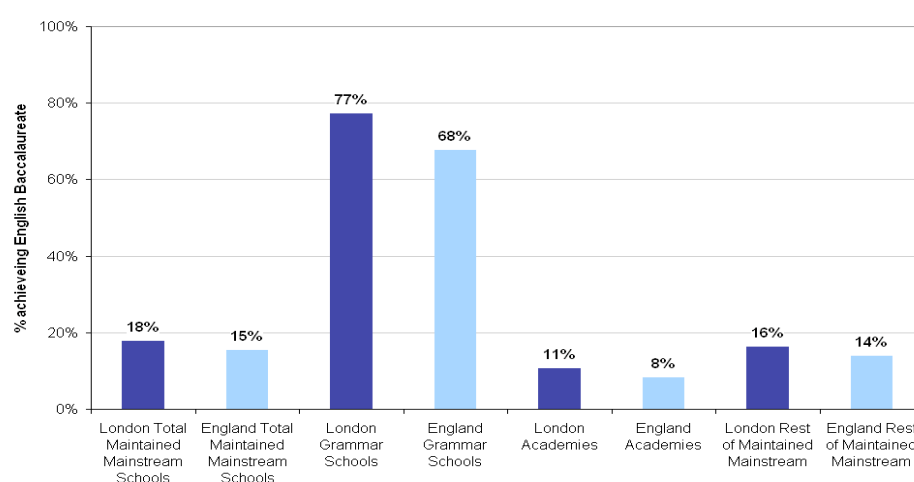
4.5 Data show that London performs relatively strongly at Key Stage 4 in terms of the main benchmark of GCSE attainment. In 2011/12 a total of 62 per cent of Year 11s attained five A*-C grades or equivalent including English and maths compared with 58 per cent nationally. In terms of a broader measure of attainment at Key Stage 4 – five GCSE A*-C grades or equivalent, London performance was 82 per

²³ e.g. Wyness, 2012

cent compared with 81 per cent nationally and in comparison with other regions the Capital found itself mid-table²⁴.

4.6 With regards to the EBacc performance measure, as Figure 3 shows, London state schools performed slightly above the national average. In London in 2010/11, 25 per cent of 14-16 year olds were entered for EBacc subjects compared with 22 per cent nationally and 18 per cent met this measure compared with 15 per cent nationally. We do not know the current uptake of EBacc subjects in 2011/12, but we assume that it will remain above the national average.

Figure 3. Eligibility for the EBacc in London and nationally 2010/11

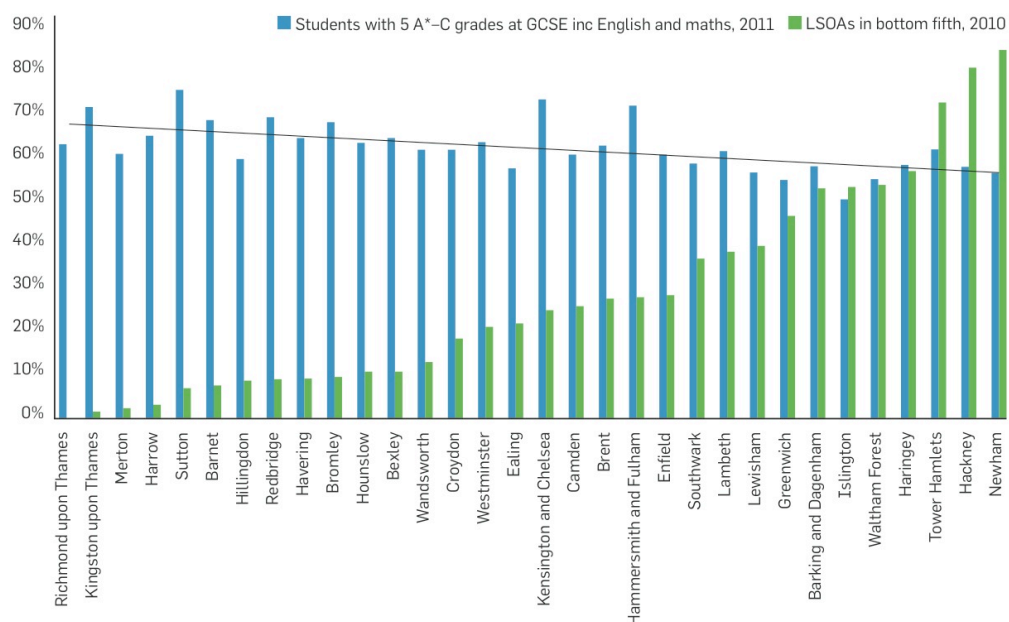


Source: DfE 2011 cited in Mayor's Inquiry First Report

4.7 London schools do particularly well with those from deprived areas in terms of meeting the Level 2+ benchmark (5 A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths). Figure 4 shows that even in those boroughs where poverty indicators climb sharply, GCSE performance does not tail off in the same way.

²⁴ London Data Store, 2011

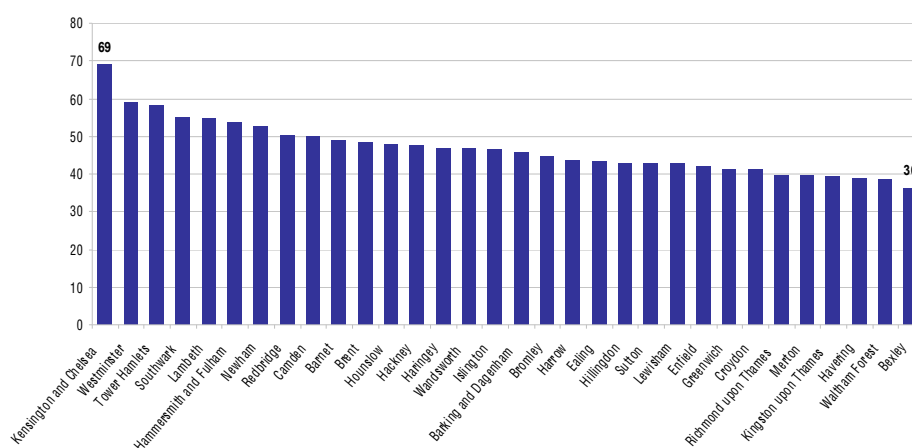
Figure 4. GCSE performance and poverty indicators



Source: *Young Londoners, social mobility and access to higher education*, Evans & Whitehead, 2011

4.8 The picture holds when GCSE performance is measured against the proportion of students eligible for free school meals (FSM). Figure 5 suggests that inner city boroughs have become adept at supporting students from low-income households to reach the Level 2+ benchmark.

Figure 5. GCSE performance and eligibility for free school meals (FSM)



Source: Department for Education cited in *Mayor's Education Inquiry First Report*, 2012

GCSE performance and variability across London

4.9 Nevertheless, across London there are still significant borough variations in terms of Level 2+ performance.. There is, for example, a 16-point difference between highest and lowest borough performance (73% in Richmond and 57% in Camden). In terms of groups of boroughs that share deprivation characteristics the difference is almost as great – an average of 57 per cent in those with high levels of deprivation compared with 70 per cent in those at the other end of the spectrum²⁵. As the previous section shows, variability around EBacc attainment may be the same or even greater.

4.10 This internal variation remains in terms of the wider five GCSE A*-C grade or equivalent measure, without English and maths (Level 2). There is an 18-point difference between the highest and lowest performance (90% in Sutton and 72% in Lewisham). However, in terms of groups of boroughs with similar deprivation characteristics, the picture is very different. The gap between these two types closes considerably with an average of 77 per for those with high levels of deprivation and 78 per cent for the more affluent boroughs²⁶. In this particular case, the use of vocational equivalent qualifications at Key Stage 4 may be a factor in blurring the effects of social class on Level 2 attainment. It could be argued, therefore, that differences between borough performance could be explained as much by the use of GCSE equivalences at Key Stage 4 as by the social backgrounds of pupils.

4.11 Variability related to deprivation factors appears to increase with a narrowing of GCSE performance measurement as shown in the table below:

Qualifications achieved	Level of borough deprivation	
	Low deprivation	High deprivation
GCSE & equivalent (Level 2)	78%	77%
GCSE including maths and English (Level 2+)	70%	57%
English Baccalaureate entry rate 2010/11	30%	15%

²⁵ London Data Store, 2011a

²⁶ London Data Store, 2011a

The stark difference in initial EBacc performance across the different types of boroughs may reflect the prevalence of selective schools. National data showed that when the EBacc measure was introduced in 2010, the students most likely to attain it were in independent and grammar schools, typically 80+% in these schools²⁷.

Post-16 performance (Level 3)

4.12 There is widespread recognition (including in London Council reports) that post-16 performance in London has not so far matched pre-16 attainment. In this section and the next we interrogate the data about this dip in performance.

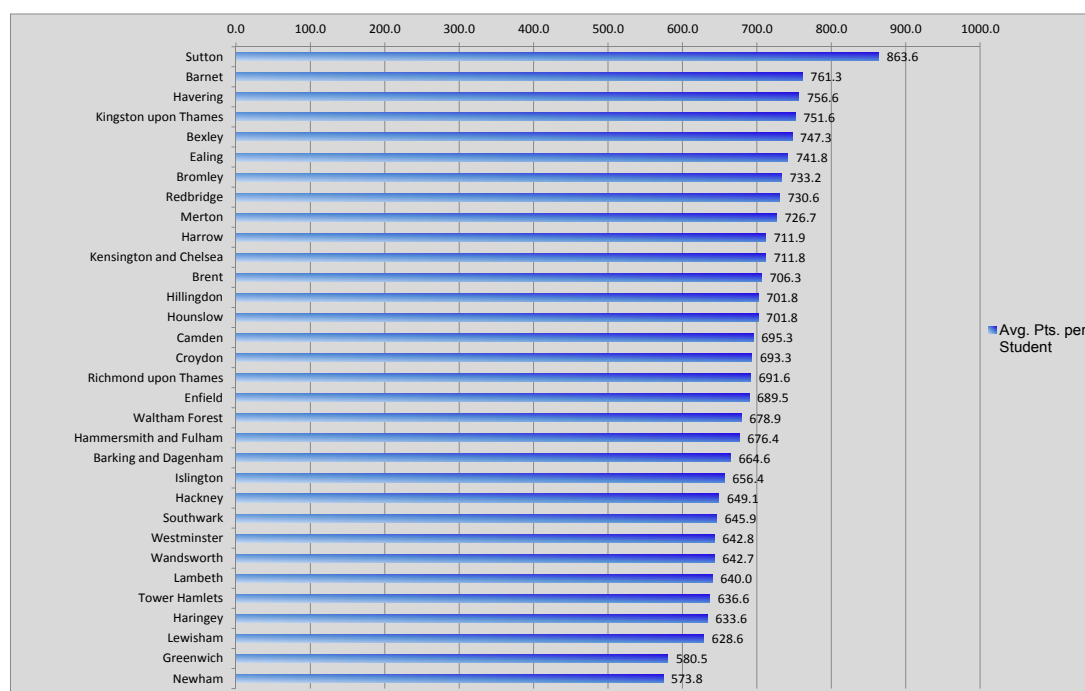
4.13 Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) A Level points scores per London student are below the national average despite having higher than national average GCSE attainment²⁸. In 2011, London was the lowest of all the regions - 690 points compared to 721 nationally. However, the average point score per entry was just above the national average (212 compared to 211). This suggests that London students are as effective in attaining A Level grades but more likely to have smaller programmes of study.

4.14 Only eight London boroughs performed above the national average in terms of cumulative scores, all of which have low levels of multiple deprivation. As Figure 6 shows, there is significant inter-borough variation, ranging from 570 points in Greenwich to 866 points in Sutton. In terms of boroughs with high and low levels of deprivation, the range remains significant, with a selection of those with low levels scoring an average of 770 and a group with high levels, an average of 617. The magnitude of the problem can be highlighted by a comparison with a region such as the North East (regarded as a Level 2 economy and the site of inter-generational deprivation) that scored 57 per cent at Level 2+, but managed to achieve 707 QCDA points at A Level. On this particular measure some London boroughs remain 90 points adrift of what could be regarded as a statistical neighbour.

²⁷ BBC, 2011

²⁸ London Data Store, 2011b

Figure 6. A Level scores per student – London boroughs 2011



Source: *Travel to Success*, LPUK 2012

4.15 This can be partly explained by AS/A Level failure rates. The LSC reported in 2009 that the data showed higher A Level failure rates in London (5% compared with 3% nationally) and particularly at AS Level (18% compared with 13% nationally). The LSC speculated that this could have been due in part to low previous attainment on entry to A levels. Failure rates for AS and A levels for students under 40 points at GCSE was 30 per cent and nine per cent respectively, suggesting that many are not yet ready for Level 3 learning²⁹. The support for A Levels amongst teachers, higher education providers and employers remains undiminished so that qualification, despite its problems, is likely to continue to be popular with young people and particularly their parents³⁰.

4.16 At the same time, some London schools enjoyed success at the upper end. In 2010/11, the most popular subject at advanced level in London was mathematics³¹, suggesting a small but significant proportion of confident learners and sufficient schools with a focus on this very important subject. London also fared

²⁹ LSC, 2009

³⁰ Higton *et al.*, 2012

³¹ LPUK, 2012

better than the national average (11% compared to 10%) with those learners who achieved three A Levels at A grade³².

4.17 A different story emerges at 19+. By aged 19 London has moved above the national average in terms of Level 3 attainment (in 2009/10 56% compared with 52% nationally)³³. This measure includes not only A Levels but also broad vocational qualifications such as BTEC National. These data suggest that after a problematical start at 17+, London performance begins to pick up again, with broad vocational qualifications and further education colleges playing an increasingly important role as they take learners through Level 2 and 3 courses. In 2009 the LSC reported a steady rise in FE completion rates at Levels 2 and 3 in London at around 70 per cent and in line with the national average³⁴. By 2009, AoC London reported that the success rate for 16-18 year olds had risen to 78 per cent in FE colleges³⁵.

Summary and questions

4.18 As we have seen, through extensive mixing of study at Key Stage 4, involving BTEC awards and to a lesser extent the Diplomas, many more young people were able to meet the basic Level 2 performance measure (over 80 per cent by 2010) and more than half the cohort gained the narrower, but arguably more important Level 2+ measure for progression. At the same time, initiatives such as London Challenge focused attention on school improvement and raising attainment across the whole cohort including those eligible for FSM. These measures improved not only attainment but also aspirations to continue study post-16 regardless of social background. By the end of the decade London had established a clear lead over other regions in terms of GCSE results and staying on in education and training at 16 became almost universal (99%)³⁶.

4.19 However, data thus far suggest that the type of progress made at Key Stage 4 has not been maintained post-16. There are areas of very high post-16 attainment in London in terms of the proportion of its young people gaining three A grades at A Level or the proportion undertaking subjects, such as maths and science, valued by research intensive universities. However, the post-16 performance landscape at Level 3 looks much more divided, and it is this level of division, which brings down overall performance across the Capital. The most notable indicators of this problem

³² London Data Store, 2011b

³³ DfE, 20011a

³⁴ LSC, 2009

³⁵ AoC, 2011 London Colleges: What you need to know.

³⁶ DfE, 2011b

are the comparatively low A Level scores per student and relatively high AS failure rates.

4.20 Local studies outside London suggest that the problem of post-16 performance may be the result of what might be termed the ‘middle attainer syndrome’³⁷:

- raised aspirations to study post-16 and to take A Levels in particular (fuelled by parental pressure);
- mixed general and vocational programmes at Key Stage 4 not always providing the skill basis for effective progression to A Level study at 16 (nor as we will see does the absolute baseline of five GCSE A*-C grades or equivalent including maths and English);
- 11-18 schools keen to offer places in their sixth forms and able to entice learners without sufficient commitment to A Level study to stay on (these learners have been termed ‘comfort zoners’ in another local study because of motivation to stay on based on ‘familiarity’ with the institution)³⁸;
- a noticeable break between learning demands in GCSE and AS study, making the gradient between Year 11 and 12 particularly steep, with a disproportionate effect on those learners who have just managed to ‘matriculate’ at Key Stage 4;
- relative lack of mixed Level 3 provision or broad vocational provision in schools that could ease the progression gradient between Levels 2 and 3;
- selective practices by 11-18 schools in particular to weed out weaker A Level students at the end of the AS year.

4.21 Many London institutions will be vulnerable to this syndrome, not least because of the relative success at Key Stage 4 amongst a wide range of students who may not have sufficient ‘educational capital’ to sustain progress in a much harsher A Level environment.

4.22 Coalition Government policy on A Level reform could increase difficulty with these progression issues unless considerable energy is placed on academic skill building across the cohort and not just on the EBacc groups.

4.23 *Curriculum, performance and provision: areas for consultation and action:*

³⁷ KAPP Project Discussion Papers 9 onwards discuss these issues

³⁸ KAPP, 2011

- a. What curriculum and support measures can be put in place to improve attainment for all 14-19 year olds in London?
- b. Should there be a London Curriculum Entitlement for 14-19 year olds?

4.24 *Curriculum, performance and provision: areas for further exploration:*

- a. Some boroughs with high levels of students eligible for free schools meals are performing better than others. What are they doing to achieve these outcomes?
- b. What are the effects of current government policy on curriculum, provision and performance at Key Stage 4 and post-16?

5. Careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG), progression and destinations

5.1 Much has been written about the way that young people make decisions about whether to remain in education or not and which courses and career options to take³⁹. Common themes have been the importance of the family and school environment in influencing young people's choices; the issue of young peoples' 'agency' (i.e. the extent to which they have the power and knowledge to exercise choice) and to what extent they act as 'rational actors'⁴⁰ or make more pragmatic decisions based on circumstances⁴¹; as well as discussion about the nature and quality of the CEIAG they experience. Several leading analysts and academics have stressed the important role of the educational marketplace on the way that young people make choices, the effects of their location, both physically and socially, and the continuing influence of class-based and gendered decision-making⁴². The wider contexts within which young people make decisions are, therefore, important in determining their outcomes, whether these are concerned with social expectations or the effects of external factors such as the labour market⁴³.

5.2 Ensuring that young people have access to high quality information, advice and guidance is a hot topic not only in the UK but internationally too⁴⁴. Much of the

³⁹ e.g. Fosskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Payne, 2003; White, 2007, Spielhofer *et al.* 2009

⁴⁰ Goldthorpe, 1996

⁴¹ Hodgkinson and Sparkes, 1997

⁴² e.g. Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Fosskett and Hesketh, 1997; Ball *et al.*, 2000; Kintrea *et al.*, 2011

⁴³ Vaitlinden, 2009

⁴⁴ e.g. OECD, 2009; Symonds *et al.*, 2011

UK literature on young people and post-compulsory education and training in the 1990s focused on 16+ participation and the factors that encouraged or prevented young people from staying on in education. While this is still an important element, the emphasis more recently has shifted towards young people's choices in terms of course and institution⁴⁵.

5.3 In this context the role of high quality, up-to-date and impartial CEIAG has never been more critical – a point that is made in almost all of the literature in this area and highlighted specifically in the Wolf Review of Vocational Education⁴⁶. This report heavily criticised the way that some young people are advised to take qualifications and courses that serve the needs of the provider in terms of performance scores or funding rather than those of the student. Nowhere is it more vital than in relation to vocational qualifications, work-based learning and apprenticeship, which are far less well understood by young people, their parents and teachers than the traditional GCSE/A Level route⁴⁷. Moreover, as Mann⁴⁸ pointed out, their lack of knowledge about the nature and requirements of employment in the 21st century means that mismatches can occur between the qualifications that young people choose or are advised to take and the jobs that are subsequently open to them.

5.4 This is a vast territory that it is not possible to explore in any great depth here and that has already been well covered in relation to London in the literature review undertaken by the London Skills and Employment Observatory (LSEO) report on *Careers Guidance in Schools – the emerging picture in London*⁴⁹. For the purposes of this report, the discussion will be confined to two areas – the organisation, provision and quality of CEIAG and the role of work-related learning. Both are topical because of recent changes in government policy and a heightened sense of the need for stronger connections between education and employment.

5.5 The current economic context, which has hit 16-25 year olds nationally and in London very hard⁵⁰, makes this a particularly important topic for discussion. Studies by Yates and colleagues in England⁵¹ and Staff and colleagues in US⁵² both

⁴⁵ e.g. White, 2007; Batterham *et al.*, 2011

⁴⁶ Wolf Report, 2011

⁴⁷ Batterham *et al.*, 2011; Loudhouse, Colleges' week 2011 available at: <http://feweeek.co.uk/2011/09/26/aoc-research-finds-half-let-down-by-careers-advice/>

⁴⁸ Mann, 2012 (Work experience publication)

⁴⁹ LSEO, 2012

⁵⁰ Presentation by Kathryn Duckworth - IoE London Consultative meeting, 25 April 2012

⁵¹ Yates *et al.*, 2010

⁵² Staff *et al.*, 2010

highlighted the problems of young people having either unrealistic or uncertain occupational aspirations, suggesting a link with NEET status in the former case and with lower wage outcomes in the latter. Lanning⁵³, citing a survey of young people undertaken for IPPR by YouGov, reported that while the majority (70%) of young Londoners have high aspirations, 46 per cent are concerned about their employment prospects overall and 60 per cent are worried about being to get the job they desire in the future. Her analysis, which also draws on the work of Ben-Galim and colleagues on the nature of the London labour market,⁵⁴ suggested that this concern was justifiable:

*'The decline of skilled routes into work for school-leavers and a growing reluctance among employers to hire them means that they increasingly compete with more experienced workers for the same jobs, in addition to competing with more highly qualified young people. The labour queue is likely to be compounded for some groups and explains why disadvantaged groups are disproportionately represented among the unemployed.'*⁵⁵

The organisation, provision and quality of CEIAG

5.6 The Education Act 2011 repealed the careers education duty and has moved responsibility for careers guidance from local authorities to schools. National statutory guidance⁵⁶ has been issued that explains exactly what they are required to do. In addition, in April 2012 a new National Careers Service was launched which will provide universal electronic and telephone advice and guidance but not face-to-face support for 13-19 year olds. These changes were extensively debated while the Education Bill was making its way through Parliament and have attracted considerable criticism from well-respected and long-standing commentators, such as Tony Watts, and from organisations such as CEGNET, as well as from teacher union and professional associations⁵⁷. Hooley and Watts⁵⁸ summed up many of the concerns that have been echoed through professional events. They criticised the speed with which reform was carried through, with insufficient information or support for transition arrangements, the loss of valuable expertise as local authorities

⁵³ Lanning, p. 13

⁵⁴ Ben-Galim *et al.*, 2011

⁵⁵ Lanning 2012, p. 13

⁵⁶ DfE, 2012 (<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00205755/statutory-guidance-for-schools-careers-guidance-for-young-people>)

⁵⁷ Notes from a 14-19 Alliance meeting held at the IoE on 7th February, 2012

⁵⁸ Hooley and Watts, 2011

managed funding cuts for this area of work and Connexions services shed staff, and the loss of a universal face-to-face service for young people. They also questioned what the quality and extent of the offer for young people would be given the new regulations, what capacity schools had to discharge their new responsibilities, and even whether they were willing to undertake this role given the lack of dedicated funding at a time of cuts.

Current CEIAG arrangements

5.7 It is difficult to capture a comprehensive picture of what is happening nationally to the provision of CEIAG because policy changes have been so rapid and the move to the new system where schools become responsible for careers guidance does not come into effect until September 2012. Indeed the long awaited statutory guidance⁵⁹ for schools and local authorities was only released in April 2012. So at this point in time the system is in a hybrid state and the situation is likely to change further in September 2012. In their national survey of local authorities undertaken in 2011, Hooley and Watts⁶⁰ divided local authority careers work strategies into five major categories:

- a. Extreme cutting (at least 12 local authorities)
- b. Focusing solely on vulnerable young people (at least 49 local authorities)
- c. Wait and see (at least 49 local authorities)
- d. Working to sustain universal career guidance (at least 15 authorities)
- e. Not possible to classify

5.8 The recent LSEO report⁶¹ identified that seven London boroughs fell into category a, six into category b, nine into category c, one into category d and 10 into the final category. It also contained evidence of a survey of most local authority 14-19 Lead Officers, undertaken in February/March 2012, which indicated that nearly as many thought the level of careers guidance would remain the same or increase in their borough as thought that it would decrease. However, 14-19 Lead Officers commented on the unevenness of provision across individual schools and on who would be accountable for the level and quality of provision. Moreover, concerns have been expressed nationally for some time about the amount and quality of CEIAG available in schools⁶² and the loss of a universal entitlement, so retaining the

⁵⁹ DfE, 2012 (<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00205755/statutory-guidance-for-schools-careers-guidance-for-young-people>)

⁶⁰ Hooley and Watts, 2011, p.1.

⁶¹ LSEO, 2012 p. 16

⁶² e.g. Delorenzi and Robinson, 2005; OFSTED, 2010; McCrone *et al.*, 2010

current level of provision in London is not necessarily a guarantee that all young people will receive the CEIAG they need. With school budgets being tight and no additional funding for this area of activity, the level and quality of the service must remain an area of concern.

The issue of impartial CEIAG

5.9 The biggest question that has arisen for those involved in 14-19 education and training, however, is whether it is likely or possible for schools to offer the informed and impartial CEIAG that young people require. This was an issue that was raised in the first report of the Mayor's Education Inquiry⁶³ and a thematic Ofsted report in 2010⁶⁴

'When careers education was provided by the schools themselves, its quality varied considerably and the provision was perfunctory in some of the schools visited. Not all the staff teaching it had enough knowledge or experience to do this effectively. The provision of information, advice and guidance about the options available to students at the age of 16 was not always sufficiently impartial.'

5.10 A recent national survey carried out by the Association of Colleges in March 2012⁶⁵ indicated that practices in some schools, particularly those with sixth forms, were designed to ensure that young people did not have access to full and impartial information. This was relatively a small-scale survey and did not provide London-specific data. However, given the rapid increase of new sixth forms and academies in London, and the effects that these will have on the institutional landscape suggests that the impartiality of IAG may be an area that warrants further investigation London-wide. It is certainly one that has been hotly debated in pan-London events, such as those organised by the Post-14 Network and AccessHE.

5.11 Two London-specific reports⁶⁶ made recommendations for improving the level and quality of CEIAG across the Capital. The Lanning report⁶⁷ suggested that the Mayor should have a strategic role in commissioning IAG and that the Greater London Authority should host a guide for 16-19 education, including destinations data, as a way of ensuring both that young people receive adequate information and

⁶³ Mayor's Education Inquiry, 2012

⁶⁴ Ofsted, 2010, p.6

⁶⁵ AoC, 2012

⁶⁶ Lanning 2012; LSEO, 2012

⁶⁷ Lanning 2012, 28

as a way of monitoring whether provision (particularly vocational courses) is adequate and effective.

5.12 The LSEO report⁶⁸ contained a range of recommendations for the different partners involved in CEIAG in London. For schools it suggested:

- working towards a quality award offered by an organisation that is committed to the Quality in Careers Standard;
- that they offer impartial advice early enough to ensure that students are able to make informed choices at Key Stage 4;
- that those responsible for CEIAG in the school keep abreast of best practice and that they should consider working in a consortium to enhance quality and value for money.

Local authorities were recommended to play a role as careers services champions through strategies such as developing a framework of approved careers guidance providers and setting up CEIAG improvement networks. At a pan-London level the recommendations very much echoed those contained in the Lanning report and raised as a possibility in the Mayor's Education Inquiry⁶⁹. The Mayor and London Councils are recommended:

- to develop a pan-London 'Vision for Career Guidance';
- working in partnership with providers to develop a pan-London 'Careers Guidance service for young people';
- and to lobby government to reverse its decision to withdraw funding for CEIAG.

Recommendations were also directed at the Treasury and the DfE, Ofsted and National Careers Service in relation to resources and monitoring of standards.

5.13 Neither of these reports considered specifically the provision and quality of CEIAG in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges or further education colleges or their role in the process of decision-making by 16-19 year olds in the context of the Raising the Participation Age. All have an important role to play in CEIAG. Traditionally sixth forms and sixth form colleges have focused much more heavily on preparation for higher education than on transition to the labour market, to reflect the

⁶⁸ LSEO, 2012

⁶⁹ The Mayor's Education Inquiry, 2012 p. 50

majority destination for their students. In the current economic and political environment, this approach will need to be reconsidered as more young people may be wanting to enter an apprenticeship or employment at 17 or 18+ rather than applying to university. The nature of CEIAG programmes and services in post-16 providers will need to be reviewed for their appropriateness in this context, particularly in light of the large number of young people who change course or institution at 17 in London.

5.14 Examining the approach that further education colleges in London take to CEIAG also emerges as an area for further investigation, because they contain a high proportion of London's 16 -19 year olds, share some provision with schools, play a leading role in offering vocational provision and thus sit in the frontline of supporting young people into employment at 17 and 18+.

5.15 LSIS undertook a two-year study of CEIAG in colleges in 2009-10⁷⁰, which led to the development of a guide for college leaders and a diagnostic tool to be used to assess the quality of this area. While this offered some useful pointers for development, the policy and economic context has changed since the report was published and it is not London-specific, so a return to this topic is timely.

5.16 This section of the report has so far taken a generic approach to 14-19 year olds. However, there will be certain groups of young people, particularly the most disadvantaged educationally, socially or in terms of learning difficulty or disability (LDD), who are likely to need more support in terms of CEIAG. The Connexions service was designed to provide just this type of service. Given the reforms that are taking place as a result of the Education Act 2011, it will be important for local authorities and pan-London organisations, such as the Young People's Education and Skills Board (YPES), to monitor the effects of these changes on vulnerable groups of young people in particular.

5.17 Some work has already been undertaken in this area via a working session for senior leaders across London organised jointly by the Greater London Authority, London Councils and the Association of London Directors of Children's Services in March 2012. This event was part of the consultation by the YPES on its 14-19 vision for young people to 2015. It took the form of a scenario-setting workshop in which leaders were asked to focus on the key issues arising from and actions required to effect change in the approach to youth transitions to adulthood for three groups of

⁷⁰ LSIS, 2010

young people – NEETs, young offenders and learners with LDD. The report of the event⁷¹ highlighted the importance of a focus on the individual young person, developing a ‘destination culture’, engagement with employers, a coalition of leadership and highlighting areas of good practice in transition planning.

5.18 Information and advice about further study and career options can only go so far in supporting young people to make informed and appropriate choices for the future. As Wolf argued⁷² in her report on 14-19 vocational education, having direct experience of or interaction with work-places has a powerful influence on young people’s decision-making and their ultimate school-to work transitions. It is to this that we now turn.

⁷¹ Report on pan-London YPES event on scenario-building

⁷² Wolf, 2011

Work-related learning

5.19 Developing stronger links between education and employment and attempting to devise an education curriculum that better serves the needs of the economy has been an abiding theme in political debates in this country for decades. The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative for 14-18 year olds in the 1980s and its Extension phase in the early 1990s is perhaps one of the most obvious examples of this approach and has left its own legacy on the English education system - CEIAG and work-related learning, including work experience, are two such strands.

5.20 In common with CEIAG, work-related learning as part of the school curriculum has also experienced recent changes. In 2004 a statutory requirement for work-related learning at Key Stage 4 was introduced and supported by funding. In March 2011 this legislation was repealed. From April 2011, therefore, schools had to find the resources from within their own budgets if they wished to continue these activities. Evidence from a review of costs undertaken by the Education and Employers' Taskforce in 2009/10 suggested that the average cost of a two-week placement organised through an Education Business Partnership (EBP) in one local authority was about £62. If the EBP covered two or more authority areas, the cost dropped to £55. This compared with a cost of £138 if the provision was organised by a single school. Here is a clear case where collaboration is the most cost-effective way forward if schools wish to continue to offer work experience.

5.21 Recent evidence from the Education and Employers' Taskforce⁷³, echoing the Wolf Report⁷⁴, highlighted the important role that 'employer-engagement' activities, such as work experience, internship, part-time work, careers talks or mentoring by an employer, can play in supporting young people into appropriate further study and work. In particular, it emphasised the access that these activities provide to the social networks that are an important part of school-to-work transitions and more readily accessible to young people from advantaged backgrounds. The evidence it collected from a representative survey of 986 young Britons aged 19-24 about their education experiences and transition into the labour market revealed that the seven per cent of adults who recalled four or more 'employer contacts' were five times less

⁷³ Mann, 2012a

⁷⁴ Wolf, 2011

likely to be NEET and earned on average 16 per cent more than peers who recalled no such activities⁷⁵.

5.22 While the work of academics, such as Kintrea and colleagues⁷⁶ and Schoon and Silberreisen⁷⁷, reminds us about the powerful influence that environmental, familial and wider socio-economic factors play on the choices and life-chances of young people, some of the issues they raise, such as the mismatch between career aspirations, attainment and local labour market opportunities, according to Mann⁷⁸, can be tackled through employer-related activities, such as work experience. This is a similar message to that contained in the work of Raffo⁷⁹. Moreover, young people themselves, according to a recent study by City and Guilds, see an employer visit as the best source of information about work and careers⁸⁰. Mann's review of the evidence indicated that work experience can have an effect in four areas – clarifying career intentions, getting into university, academic attainment and developing employability skills or, for some, getting a job. He suggested that the benefits are more obvious for 16-19 year olds but that there are also clear advantages for 14-16 year olds. He also noted that: 'young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have most to gain from work experience which is managed and personalised to stretch aspirations, rather than fall back on comfort zones'⁸¹.

5.23 The importance of work experience was recognised in the recent government proposals for 16-19 programmes of study⁸², but there has been no such policy steer in relation to Key Stage 4 provision, despite teachers' strongly articulated concerns about employment prospects for the young people they teach⁸³. It has been left up to schools to decide what they do in this area. Given this context and tight budgets, it would be useful to know more about when and which types of work-related activities and work experience have the maximum impact on young people's choice of provision, progression to further/higher study and transition to employment in the London labour market. In order to ensure that there is an equitable approach for all young Londoners, it will also be important to monitor the provision of work-related activities in the different boroughs across London, assess their quality and

⁷⁵ Mann, 2012b

⁷⁶ Kintrea *et al.*, 2011

⁷⁷ Schoon and Silberreisen, 2009

⁷⁸ Mann 2012a.

⁷⁹ Raffo, 2003 and 2006

⁸⁰ City and Guilds, 2012

⁸¹ Mann 2012b, p.36

⁸² DfE, 2011

(<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Study%20Programmes%20for%2016-19%20year%20olds%20v2%20-%20consultation%20document.pdf>)

⁸³ Princes Trust/TES, 2012

effectiveness and consider ways of collaborating to make the London offer more cost-effective.

5.24 CEIAG and work-related education – areas for further consultation and action:

- a. Should there be a pan-London approach to CEIAG and work-related learning and if so, who should be involved, in what and how?

5.25 CEIAG and work-related education - areas for further research:

- a. What type of CEIAG and work-related learning provision is there in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and FE colleges to support young people into employment as well as higher education at the key progression and transition points of 17 and 18?
- b. Which types of work-related activities and work experience and at what points have the maximum impact on young people's choice of provision, progression to further/higher study and transition to employment in the London labour market?

16-19 participation, progression and destinations

Discussing participation, progression and destinations

5.26 The English education system has experienced historic problems of sustained participation in education beyond 16, with a tendency for it to decline significantly at 17 and 18. This situation has improved nationally in recent years, but lower levels of 17+ participation remain a concern, because this is the major indicator of whether young people are succeeding in a two-year programme post-16 and gaining Level 3 outcomes. Moreover, the inability to gain outcomes greater than those achieved at the end of lower secondary education is viewed internationally as a symptom of 'early school leaving'⁸⁴. In the UK, however, we tend not use this terminology and choose to talk instead of post-16 participation rates. This may change as a result of the Raising of the Participation Age to 18 years of age by 2015.

5.27 The term 'progression' has been frequently used over the last 20 years to refer to movement between different stages of education, between types and levels of qualifications, the organisation of learner 'routes', as a part of the discussion about

⁸⁴ European Commission, 2012

individual advice and guidance, learner 'destinations' following secondary and post-compulsory education, and transitions from schooling to the labour market⁸⁵. These definitions suggest a longitudinal approach over the 14-19 phase that link student aspirations, attainment at important junctures, their ability to move effectively upwards between qualifications levels, to undertake sustained participation in post-compulsory education and to make a successful transition to higher education or the labour market.

5.28 Unfortunately not all learners are able to enjoy a seamless progression experience. For many 14-19 year olds that do not do well at Key Stage 4 and are not on the academic route or in an apprenticeship, progression within education and training and access to employment can be hazardous⁸⁶. This is becoming an increasing concern for a diverse group referred to as the 'overlooked middle', that occupy provision between these two high status poles⁸⁷.

5.29 Furthermore, the education system has tended not to focus on learner progression. Despite the widespread use of the term, remarkably little is known about patterns of progression in the 14-19 phase and no national data is collected on this process. Instead, the system has concentrated on amassing performance data linked to institutional accountability– attainment, retention and successful completion. In effect the education system focuses on the 'components' or prerequisites of progression rather than the process of progression that the learner experiences.

5.30 In this section, therefore, we will discuss the components of progression – participation, attainment and retention - because there are the data available to us. In the conclusion of the paper, however, we attempt to link the different components in a longitudinal process to make more sense of the progression experience of young Londoners.

16-19 participation rates

5.31 In England, post-16 full-time participation rates have risen sharply in recent years as a result of 14-19 reforms under the previous government, notably more mixed study at Key Stage 4 and the role of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). By 2010 those participating in education and training at 16 nationally had reached 96 per cent, of which 88 per cent were in full-time education. However, at 17+ this declined to 87 per cent, of which 76 per cent were in full-time education.

⁸⁵ Spours *et al.*, 2009

⁸⁶ Sissons and Jones, 2012

⁸⁷ The concept of the overlooked middle is explored in IOE discussion paper by Spours *et al.*, 2012

The biggest change in education participation takes place at 18, declining to 61 per cent with 49 per cent in full-time education⁸⁸.

5.32 Nationally, the work-based route continues to play a relatively minor role in terms of post-16 participation. Throughout years 16-19, as full-time education participation declines, there is a small increase in engagement with the work-based route and labour market, from eight per cent at 16 to 14 per cent at 17 and 19 per cent at 18 in 2010. Worryingly, however, as the phase proceeds so does the proportion of young people in jobs without training (20%) or NEET (12%) by 18⁸⁹.

5.33 As attainment has risen in Key Stage 4 so the type of post-16 participation by level has changed. By 2010 national education participation at 16+ was mainly at Level 3 (64%) of which 51 per cent was accounted for by A Level study and 13 per cent by broad vocational qualifications. Level 2 comprised 13 per cent, most of which was accounted for by vocational qualifications. Only 8 per cent of young people were studying at Level 1 or below. Work-based learning accounted for four per cent, although there has been an increase in apprenticeships in 2011⁹⁰.

5.34 More specifically at 17+, Level 3 full-time participation had dropped to 61 per cent in 2010. The biggest contributor to this decline was participation in A Levels – down from 51 per cent at 16 to 43 per cent at 17. On the other hand, the role of vocational qualifications had increased to 18 per cent, suggesting that some of the students that had dropped out of A Level during or after the AS year took up a programme such as BTEC National.

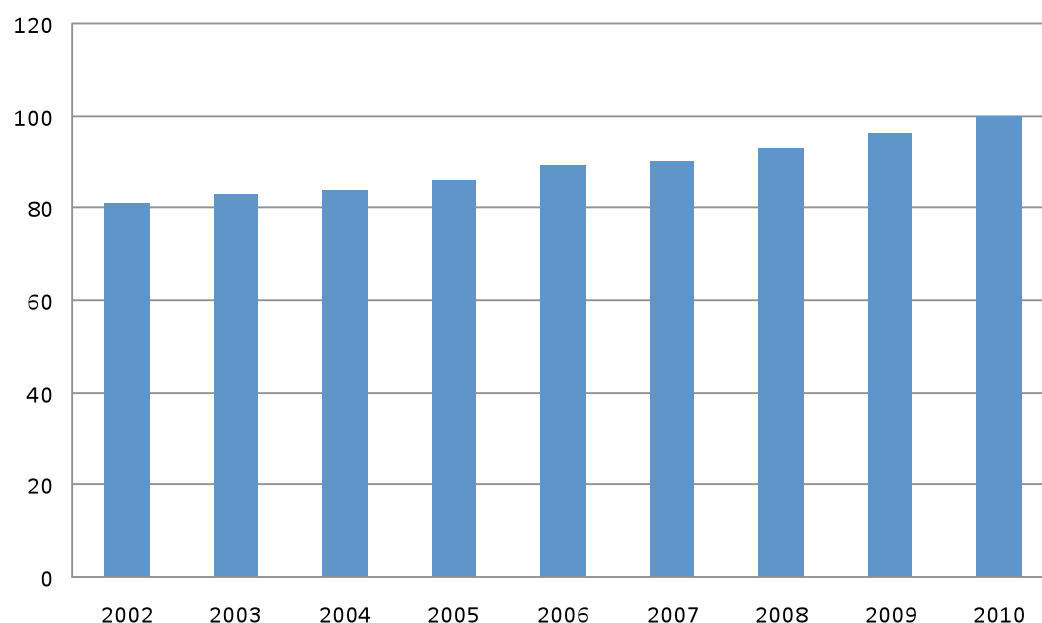
5.35 Despite the rising role of Level 3 study, participation in Level 2 and Level 1 programmes still accounted for a significant proportion of young people at 16 (21%) of which 13 per cent were studying Level 2 in 2010. Participation at these levels declined to 12 per cent at 17 as young people qualified at this level, a minority of whom graduated to Level 3.

⁸⁸ DfE2011d

⁸⁹ DfE 2011a

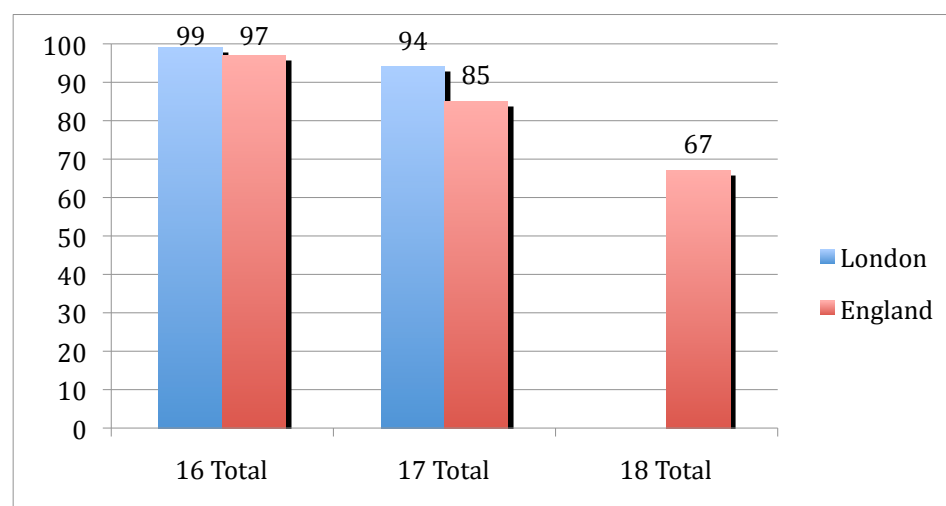
⁹⁰ BIS, 2012, Table 8.1

Figure 7. Participation in education and work-based learning of 16 & 17 year olds (London)



Source: SFR18/2010

Figure 8. 16-18 participation in London and nationally (2010)



Source: SFR15/2011(18+data for London is an estimated figure)

5.36 As Figure 8 shows, in 2010 London has fared far better in terms of post-compulsory education participation when compared to the national average. Figure 7 indicates that this part of a recent trend in which post-16 participation in all forms of education and training grew steadily from 2004 onwards. In 2010, participation in all

forms of education and training at 16 in London totalled 99 per cent, whereas the national figure was 97 per cent. Participation at 17 dropped to 94 per cent, but was still substantially above the national figure of 85 per cent. At 18, the England figure was 67 per cent and there was no published data for participation in London, but we believe that its performance would be likely to be above the national figure. However, participation in work-based learning in London was half the national average at 16 and 17 (3% compared with 6%)⁹¹.

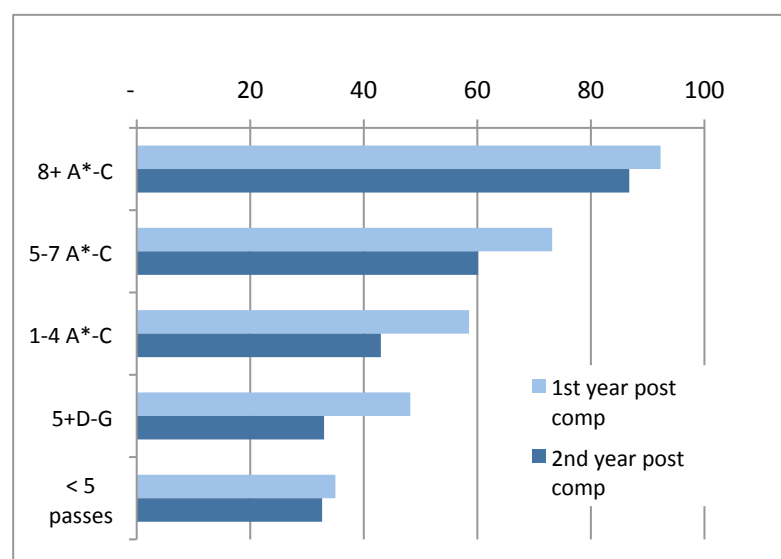
5.37 What we do not know presently is the detailed internal dynamics of 17+ participation across London – what young people are studying, where and how exactly they progress. Our assumption so far is that participation in schools declines at 17, as more young people transfer to colleges to study broad vocational awards. Throughout, the work-based route plays a minor role. The following sections begin to explore the inner workings of 16-19 education and training in London compared nationally.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 and post-16 participation

5.38 Thus far discussion around improvements in GCSE performance has focused largely on the effects of vocational qualifications and their role as GCSE equivalents in performance tables, with the finding that mixed programmes of study tended to raise aspirations to stay on post-16 but did not always provide the skill base to succeed in Level 3 programmes. Figure 9 delivers another message: the achievement of the Level 2+ baseline, which includes maths and English, is not in itself a guarantee of spending two years in post-16 education. Only 60 per cent of those with five to seven GCSE A*-C grades participated in two-year programmes (that is Level 3). Improved chances of participating in Level 3 study requires a higher GCSE attainment baseline.

⁹¹ DfE, 2011b

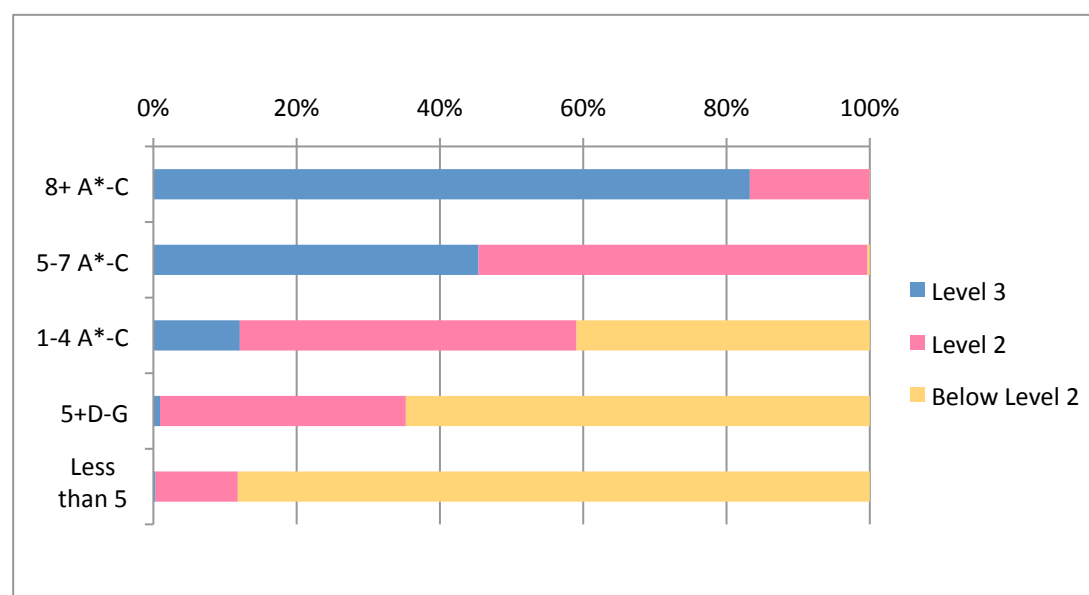
Figure 9. Duration of participation in post-16 education based on prior GCSE attainment



Source: DCSF Statistical Bulletin B01/2009, *Youth Cohort Study & Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 17 year olds: England 2008*, Table 5.1.1

5.39 Figure 10 presents a more severe picture: less than half of those gaining five to seven GCSEs A*-C grades will achieve Level 3 with the rest repeating attainment at Level 2. Chances of success increase dramatically for those with a stronger Key Stage 4 profile of 8+ GCSEs. The importance of having more than the basic Level 2+ baseline is also reflected by the fact that many A Level admissions tutors require a B grade in the subject to be studied post-16. This suggests that either the selection thresholds for A Level study need to be set much higher to ensure successful completion, that there needs to be more focus on building progression skills into Key Stage 4 programmes, or that the importance of alternative learning routes should be acknowledged.

Figure 10. Level of attainment post-16 based on prior GCSE attainment



Source: DCSF Statistical Bulletin B01/2009, *Youth Cohort Study & Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 17 year olds: England 2008*, Annex A

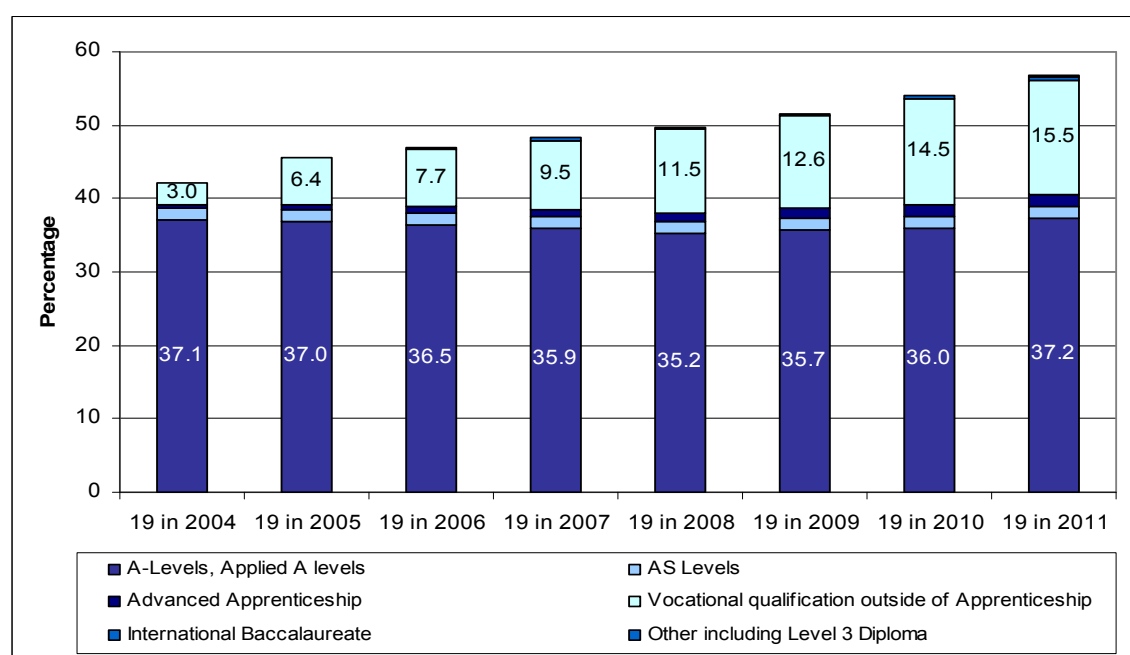
Outcomes at 19 and the role of vocational qualifications

5.40 While the previous section explored problems of progression pre- and post-16, this section looks at patterns of participation and attainment up to 19 and, particularly the role of broad vocational qualifications. Attainment at Levels 2 and 3 nationally increases significantly at 19 compared with 16. In terms of Level 2 qualifications, by 2010 a total of 81 per cent of young people had gained Level 2 by 19 compared with 59 per cent at 16. At Level 3 the total by 19 was 54 per cent, compared with 45 per cent at 16⁹².

5.41 The main contributors to increases in performance within the 16-19 phase at Level 2 (21%) were overwhelmingly vocational qualifications/programmes – Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) (10%); Apprenticeships (4%) NVQs (3.5%) and Level 3 type qualifications (3%). At Level 3 the picture was more complex. As Figure 11 shows, the contribution of different types of qualifications to post-16 Level 3 attainment has changed in recent years. While A Levels remain the main contributor (37%), an increasing role is also being played by vocational qualifications and experiences - RVQ Level 3 (13%), NVQ (1.5%) and Advanced Apprenticeship (1.3%).

⁹² DfE, 2011b Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people in England measured using matched administrative data: attainment by age 19 in 2010 (provisional) *Statistical First Release 04/2011*

Figure 11. The role of different qualifications to outcomes at 19 (2004-2009)



Source: *Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people in England*, SFR 5/2012, DfE

5.42 It is interesting to note that national participation in A Levels at 16 has risen from 40 to 50 per cent over the past eight years⁹³, but the contribution of A Levels to outcomes at 19 has remained firmly rooted at 37 per cent. This suggests an increasing wastage rate in A Level study over the period and a substitution by vocational qualifications.

5.43 In terms of London, attainment rates at Level 3 at 19 progressed faster than the national average between 2005 and 2009 (see Figure 12) and by 2010, London had maintained a four-percentage point lead it established at 16 (see Figure 13). However, there are questions to be asked.

- Why are student's cumulative A Level scores low in London?
- What are the consequences of higher national average AS failure/drop-out rates in London?
- What role do broad vocational qualifications play in the maintenance of the London lead at 19?
- What will be the impact of government policy on London performance at 19?

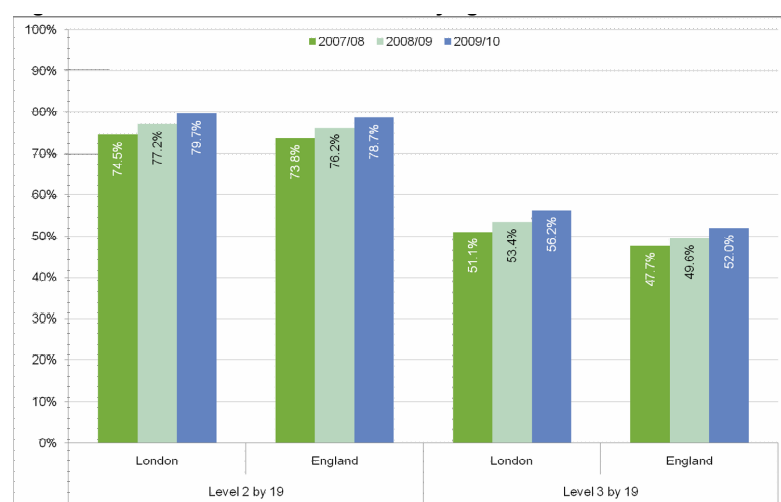
⁹³ This figure is compiled from several DCSF/DfE Statistical First Releases on 16-18 participation - 2004-2010.

Figure 12. Level 3 achievement by 19 (2009)

	London (%)	England (%)	London difference (%)	London number of 19 year olds
19 in 2005	45.3	45.4	-0.1	79,890
19 in 2006	48.1	46.7	1.4	81,648
19 in 2007	49.8	48.1	1.7	84,654
19 in 2008	51.0	49.8	1.2	84,144
19 in 2009	53.2	51.4	1.8	85,589
19 in 2010				85,706
19 in 2011				86,168
19 in 2012				84,836
Change 2004–05 to 2008–09	7.9	6.0	1.9	

Source: LSEO 2011, Table 2.2

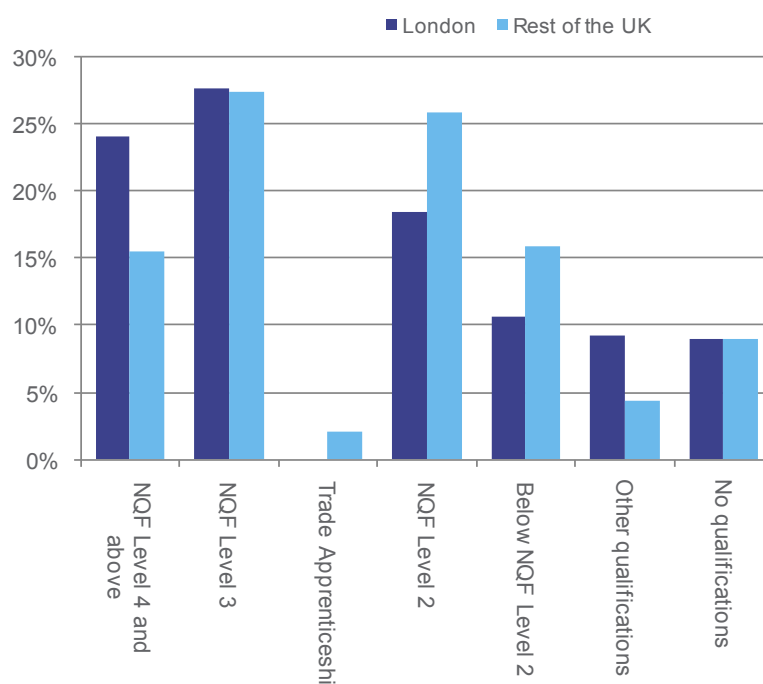
Figure 13. Achievement at Levels 2 and 3 London and England 2009/10



Source: *Young People in London Evidence Base* p.11

5.44 When comparing attainments of 16-24 year olds Figure 14 shows that London compares well with the rest of the UK at Level 4 due to near national average outcomes at 19, the positive role that higher education plays in London and the inward migration of highly qualified adults. However, London lags at Levels 3 and 2, which are important in relation to youth employment. Moreover, a total of 30 per cent of people of working age in London have not achieved Level 2.

Figure 14: Proportion of young people by highest qualification held 2009/10

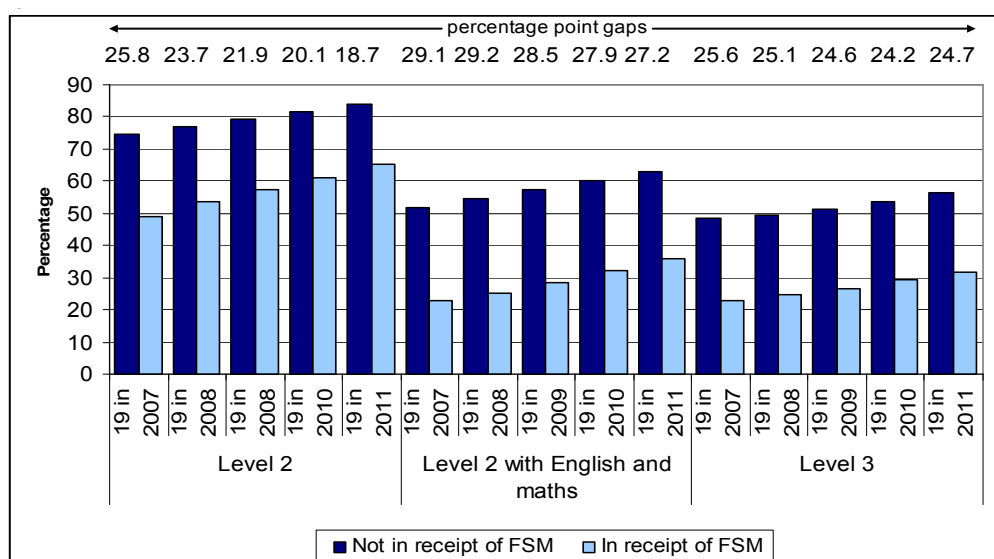


Source: The skills and employment of young people in London, LSEO 2011⁹⁴

5.45 However, viewed nationally these gains are not enjoyed across all social groups. Figure 15 suggests that the ‘poverty penalty’ persists throughout the 14-19 phase. The influence of poverty on attainment continues from GCSE through to Level 3. At 19 nationally the FSM attainment gap remains wide at Level 3 (25 points compared to 27 at 16). However, the poverty penalty is only three per cent in relation to Level 3 vocational qualifications, which suggests that it is much greater in A Levels compared to GCSE (vocational qualifications account for a third of Level 3 study post-16).

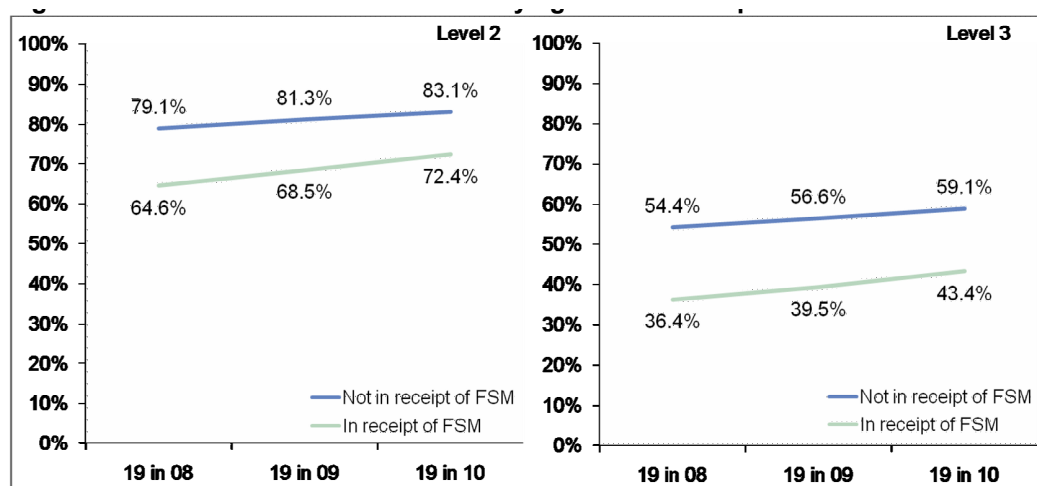
⁹⁴ The term ‘Trade Apprenticeship’ in Figure 14 refers to an employment-based apprenticeship.

Figure 15. Level 2 and Level 3 performance nationally by receipt of FSM at 16



Source: Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people in England, SFR 5/2012, DfE

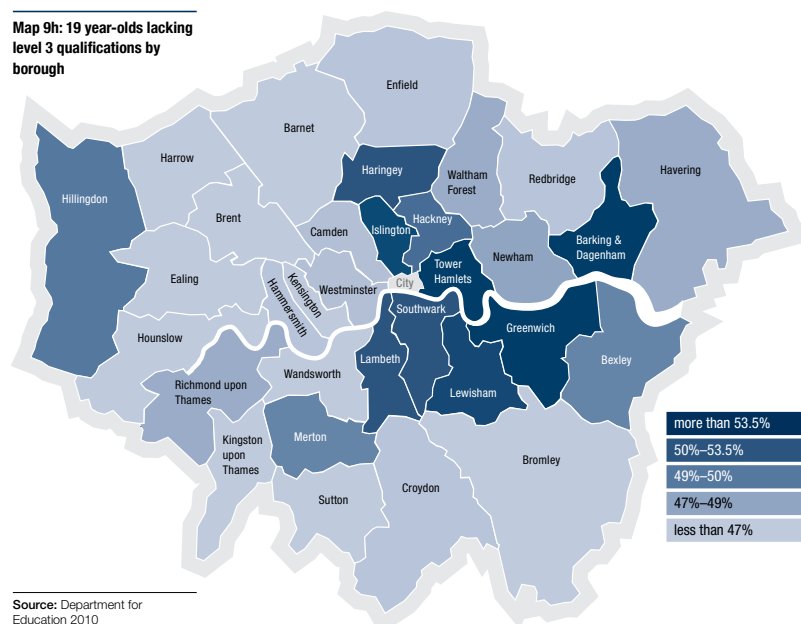
Figure 16. Performance at 19 in London by receipt of FSM at 16



Source. Young people in London Evidence Base p. 12

5.46 As Figure 16 shows, London has managed to narrow the poverty penalty in Level 2 and 3 at 19 by 2010. However, progress has been slower at Level 3. Figure 17, illustrates the continuing disparity of Level 3 attainment across London boroughs, ranging from nearly 60 per cent in Barking and Dagenham of young people without a Level 3 qualification to only 35 per cent in Sutton. We need to know more about the internal dynamic of this data (e.g. the disaggregation of the Level 3 figure to analyse the respective roles of A Levels and broad vocational qualifications post-16 and their effects on different groups of learners).

Figure 17. 19 year olds lacking a Level 3 qualification by borough in 2010



Source. *London's Poverty Profile* p. 83

Apprenticeships, the work-based route and the youth labour market in London

5.47 A range of symptoms suggests a weak vocational system in London.

- a. In 2009 London Region LSC reported under-provision of Level 2 vocational courses in London⁹⁵.
- b. London Councils reported that over the period 2007-10, Level 3 enrolments in vocational courses decreased from 44 to 42 per cent and were below the national average⁹⁶.
- c. The number of 16-18 year olds involved in apprenticeships is low nationally and very low in London (1.6% of 16-18 year olds in London compared to 3.6% nationally).
- d. However, the internal composition and effectiveness of Apprenticeships for those under 19 years of age has been changing when measured nationally. The number of Level 3 Apprenticeships increased from 150,000 – 220,000 between 2005/6 and 2010/11 and over the same period completions have

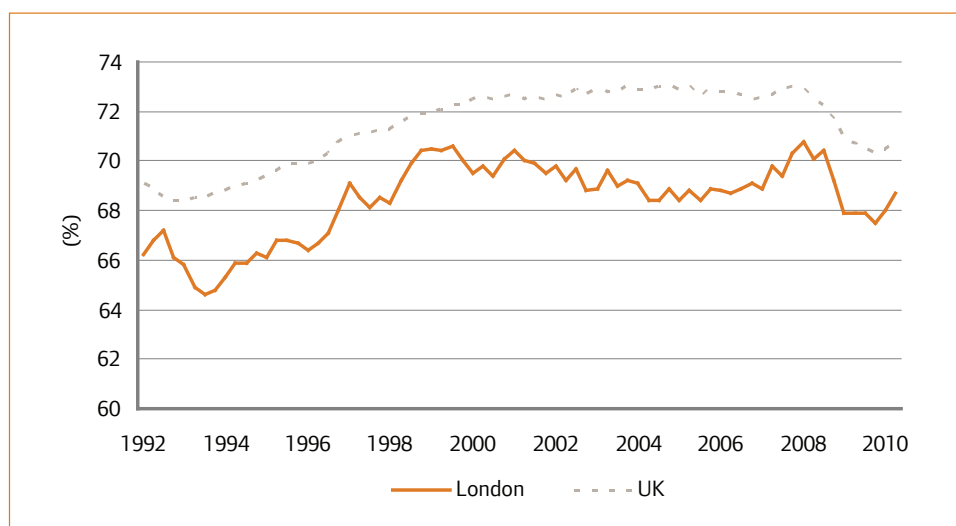
⁹⁵ LSC, 2009

⁹⁶ London Councils, 2011

improved from about 70 to 80 per cent⁹⁷. London Councils reported increases in completion rates, reflecting this wider national trend.

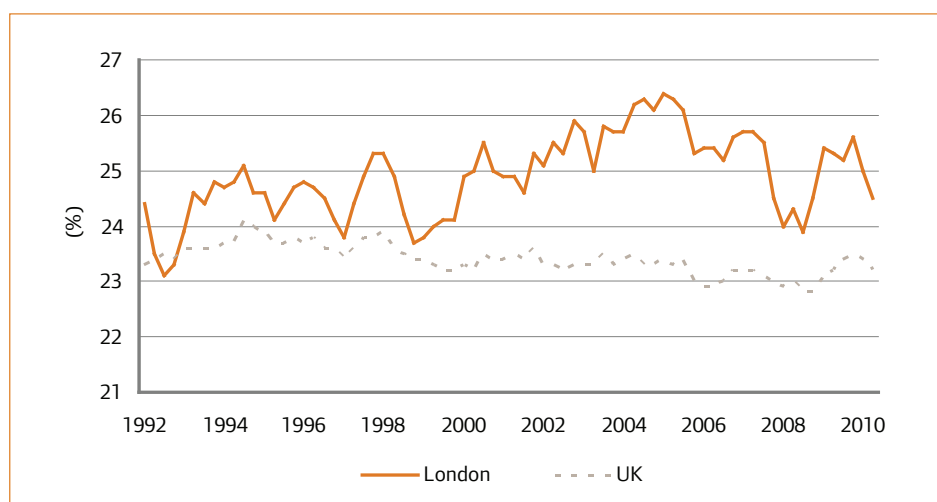
- e. Economic activity and employment rates of Londoners have consistently been lower than the national average and young people enter the labour market later than elsewhere in the country (see Figures 18, 19 and 20).

Figure 18. Employment rate in London



Source: Ben Galim *et al.* 2011:

Figure 19. Economic inactivity in London



Source: Ben Galim *et al.* 2011: 5

⁹⁷ BIS (2012) *Post-16 Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held* DS/SFR 14, London: BIS

Figure 20. Young people (16-24 year olds) in employment and learning 2010



Source: LSEO 2012

5.48 London Councils reported that in 2009/10 a total of 176,000 16-19 year olds were involved in schools and colleges post-16, whereas only just under 8000 started an Apprenticeship and just over 7000 on Entry to Employment (E2E). This suggests that 2.3 per cent were on Apprenticeships, slightly higher than the 1.6 per cent reported for 16-18 year olds.

5.49 London Councils also reported the most popular Apprenticeship Frameworks across London. As Figure 21 shows, these have been in Childcare, Business, Hairdressing and IT and align to some degree with employment patterns across London, although not closely. In this respect, Public Services and Hospitality and Catering are under-represented. Given this context, it will be important to assess the contribution that the Mayor's focus on boosting apprenticeships for young people in London has on increasing the number of apprenticeship places available in the Capital⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ see (http://www.london.gov.uk/media/press_releases_mayoral/mayor-urges-firms-boost-apprenticeship-opportunities-young-londoners)

Figure 21. Participation in Apprenticeship Frameworks in London 2009-11

Framework	2009/10 Full Year	Framework	Year to Date 2010/11 (P3)
Child Care Learning & Dev	1,117	Child Care Learning & Dev	488
Business Administration	996	IT & Telecoms Profession	395
Hairdressing	961	Hairdressing	376
IT & Telecoms Profession	629	Bus Administration	354
Active Leisure & Learning	557	Active Leisure & Learning	248
Vehicle Maintenance & Repair	402	Vehicle Maintenance & Repair	206
Construction	383	Construction	203
Customer Service	280	Sporting Excellence	191
Hospitality & Catering	236	MES Plumbing	146
MES Plumbing	227	Electrotechnical	128

Source: Apprenticeships Quarterly MI report, Quarter 1 2010/11, National Apprenticeship Service

Source: London Councils 2011, Figure 3.

5.50 Despite the fact that Londoners are more qualified at Levels 4 and above compared nationally, they are not always able to prevail in a highly competitive London labour market. The Capital is able to attract even more qualified migrants from the rest of the UK and abroad; the economic structure of London with the predominance of the financial and service sectors is not orientated towards apprenticeship and the level of deprivation in some communities means that some young Londoners are also having to look after their family or home⁹⁹.

Higher education participation

5.51 London has a relatively good record in terms of access to higher education, although divisions remain, according to dated but the most recent information available:

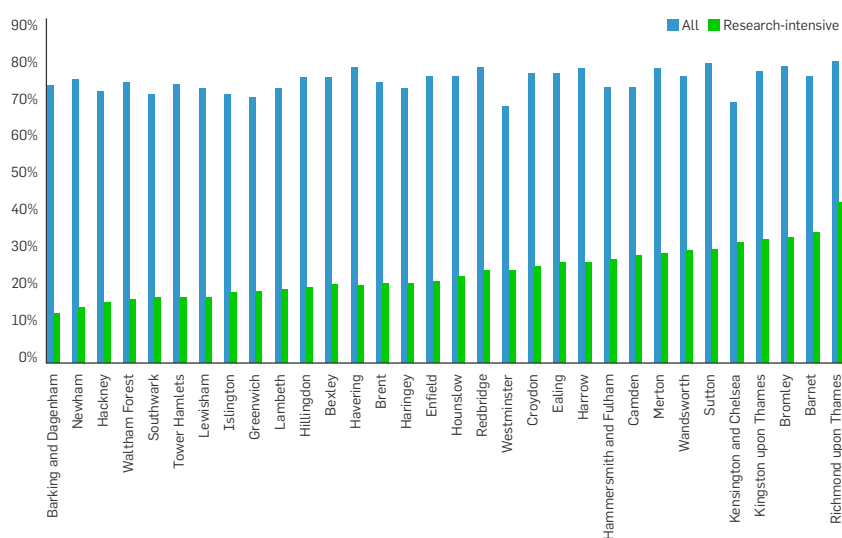
- In 2007 a total of 74 per cent of London applicants were accepted in all types of higher education and there was not a wide borough variation (see Fig 22).
- However. There were significant differences in the proportions of those accessing research-intensive universities (12% in Barking compared to 42% in Richmond).

⁹⁹ GLA, 2010 cited in Lanning, 2012

- c. Students are less likely to be studying at Level 4 and in applied learning in London (another symptom of the Capital's weak vocational system).
- d. In 2006 (last recorded borough data on HE) there was a large variation in the percentage of 19-21 year olds in higher education, ranging from 60 per cent in Harrow to 15.6 in Camden¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ London Data Store, 2010

Figure 22. The transition to higher education in London

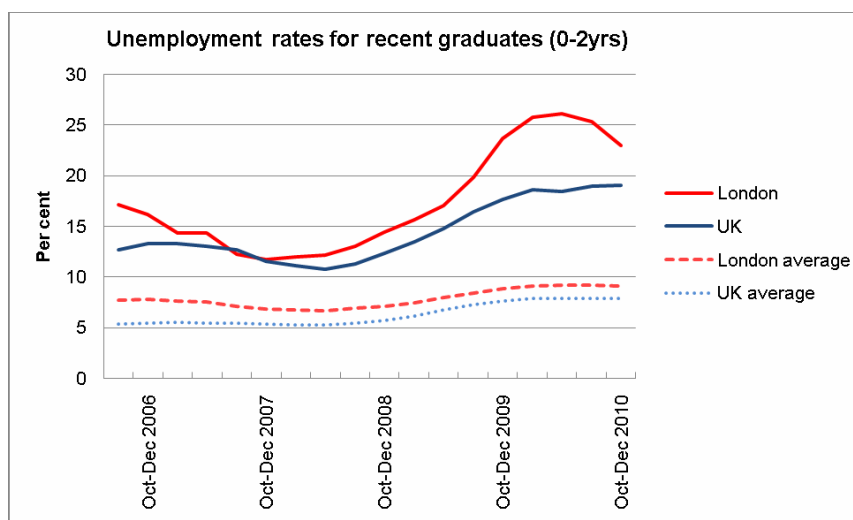


Source: *Young Londoners, social mobility and access to higher education*, Evans & Whitehead, 2011

5.52 The Demos report by Evans and Whitehead¹⁰¹ suggests that there is an institutional factor at work in London – some institutions are better than others at getting young people from a wide range of social backgrounds into HE.

5.53 Following graduation from higher education, London's labour market problems persist with residents experiencing higher levels of graduate unemployment than nationally (see Figure 23 below).

Figure 23. Graduate unemployment rates London and national



Source: *Graduates and young people in the labour market*, Office for National Statistics Briefing Note, 2011

¹⁰¹ Evans and Whitehead, 2011

Summary and questions for London

5.54 The 14+ progression and transition picture in London looks highly complex, although it is possible to identify several related trends:

- the underlying issue of impartial CEIAG in a highly competitive institutional market;
- the problem of progression to A Level study from Key Stage 4, particularly for the middle attaining group, which contributes to the '17+ dip';
- the possible persistence of the 'poverty penalty' attached to A Levels;
- the compensatory role of broad vocational qualifications at 18 and 19 which helps raise London's Level 3 performance to just above the national average;
- the strong performance of higher education in London and London under-graduates and
- the weak role of work-based opportunities and the London labour market which affects all levels of provision, including higher education.

These factors combine to produce a London learning system that is relatively strong in terms of education participation but less developed in terms of vocational provision and economic activity.

5.55 Moreover, these aggregate trends do not reflect the social and educational divisions between more and less affluent boroughs. These appear deeper post-16 than pre-16 except for participation in higher education where post-1992 institutions, aided by the widening participation policies of the previous government, focused on the higher education needs of a wide range of Londoners.

5.56 *Progression and destinations: areas for consultation and action*

- a. Is it possible to develop a pan-London progression strategy that particularly strengthens vocational education in the Capital?
- b. What measures can be taken by social partners to improve employment opportunities for young Londoners?

5.57 *Progression and destinations: areas for further research*

- a. What are the internal progression/transition patterns of the 16-19+ phase in different parts of London and London as a whole (e.g. 17+ drop out, the take-up of Level 3 qualifications, completion rates in FE up to 19 and transition employment)?
- b. To what extent is the 'poverty penalty' evident in national statistics reflected in London post-16 provision and in what ways?

6. Institutional arrangements, partnerships and collaboration

The institutional market in London

6.1 Patterns of collaboration in London are shaped by the institutional configurations across the Capital. A distinctive aspect of London's provision is the role of school sixth forms at 16. According to London Councils and AoC London¹⁰²:

- There are 331 maintained school sixth forms and 121 independent school sixth forms in London; 38 FE colleges and 12 sixth form colleges
- One in five young people in London attends an independent school compared with one in 10 nationally
- 46 per cent of 16 year olds participate in schools in London compared to 33 per cent nationally
- At 17 this drops to 36 per cent compared to 28 per cent nationally
- At 16 and 17 FE and sixth form colleges play less of a role in London compared nationally but over the 16-19 phase are the dominant provider (101,345 compared with 74,748 in school sixth forms and Academies)
- Only 7,884 young people were involved in Apprenticeship starts in 2010
- In 2009/10 participation rose 10 per cent in schools/Academies but remained static in FE and sixth form colleges.

¹⁰² LSC, 2009; AoC, 2012; London Councils, 2012

6.2 At the national level, the various providers make different types of contribution to attainment at Levels 2 and 3 in 2010. Those making the main contribution to post-16 Level 2 attainment were FE colleges (12.5%), work-based learning (3.5%), maintained schools (3%) and sixth form colleges (1.5%). On the other hand, the main contributors to Level 3 attainment were maintained schools (22%), FE colleges (15.5%), sixth form colleges (8.6%) and independent schools (5.4%). Work-based learning only contributed 1.5 per cent¹⁰³.

6.3 Given the figures cited in 6.1 and 6.2, the problem for London appears to be that participation is increasing in those types of institutions (schools) that find it difficult to support a wide range of learners through the whole 14-19 phase and the more inclusive providers later in the phase (colleges) face a more static recruitment situation.

Travel-to-learn patterns across London

6.4 The picture of competition and collaboration is complicated by extensive travel-to-learn patterns across the Capital¹⁰⁴:

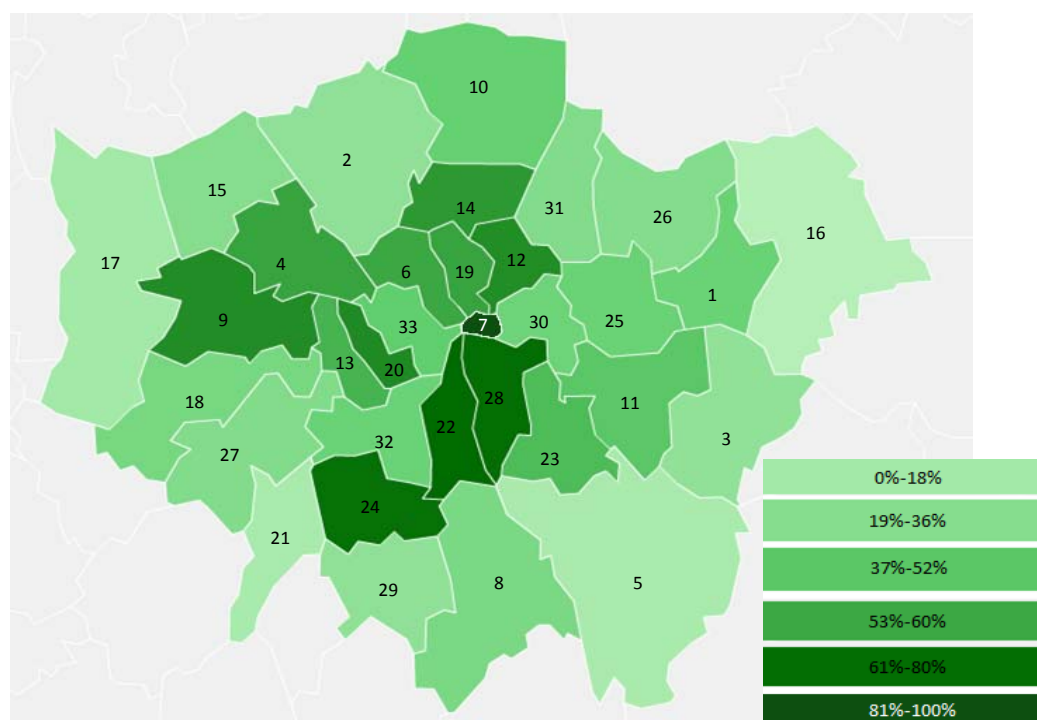
- About 50 per cent of young people travel out of borough – often for vocational provision.
- Some boroughs are strong importers, others strong exporters, although the highest level of mobility appears to be focused on the inner London boroughs (see Figure 24).
- There is also movement between London boroughs and the wider South East region, particularly in relation to some outer London ones.
- Reasons for travel can have positive or negative effects on post-16 participation – choice can increase motivation to study while complicated journeys can harm successful completion¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰³ DfE, 2011b

¹⁰⁴ LPUK, 2012; Watson and Church, 2009

¹⁰⁵ The import/export status of each borough changes over time.

Figure 24. Incidence of post-16 travel to learn in London 2011



Source: *Travel for Success*, LPUK 2011

Approaches to partnership and collaboration

6.5 The schools, colleges and various work-based learning providers who offer provision for 14-19 year olds in London, just as their counterparts in the rest of the country, are involved in a whole range of collaborative arrangements both between themselves and with other social partners, such as universities, employers, local authorities, social services and voluntary and community organisations. For the purposes of this report, we will confine discussion to collaboration and partnership related to the support of 14+ participation, progression and transition to higher education or employment.

What type of partnerships exist and for what purposes?

6.6 Although collaboration between schools, colleges and their wider social partners is not new, it increased dramatically under the previous government when it was actively encouraged, resourced and legislated for in some areas; whereas now the policy is that institutions have greater freedom and flexibility in determining the partnership relationships that best serve the needs of their students.

6.7 Baird and colleagues¹⁰⁶, undertaking research into 14-19 reform in 18 case study areas across England during 2009-2010, identified four types of partnership working:

- *Trading centres* – partnerships that existed purely for the buying and selling of services (e.g. Connexions advisers, specific vocational provision in colleges);
- *Responsive joint planning* – schools and colleges coming together at a particular time to address a shared need (e.g. staff development or provision for students);
- *Systemic partnerships* – deeper and more strategic partnerships that responded jointly to problems as they arose;
- *Joint venture* – more formally linked partnerships with aspects of or total joint governance.

6.8 These studies appear to be identifying a continuum from relatively weak engagement at one end to strongly collaborative arrangements at the other and to have discovered that there were more partnerships working at the weaker end of the spectrum. Both studies raised concerns about the sustainability of 14-19 partnership working and about their relatively narrow focus on education rather than on links with employers and the labour market.

6.9 These findings are consistent with the Nuffield 14-19 Review's characterisation of the English education and training system as having 'weakly collaborative local learning systems'¹⁰⁷. Pring and colleagues¹⁰⁸ suggested that this was not only the result of the considerable practical difficulties of partnership working (e.g. geographical barriers and transport difficulties, funding, the competitive relationships between 14-19 providers), but also of government policy at the time. Inspection, performance targets and tables and an active encouragement for schools to open sixth forms in areas that already had sixth form colleges and further education colleges offering provision for 16-19 year olds, all increased competition between providers and, in many cases, made collaboration very difficult, even though it was part of the policy message.

6.10 The policy climate has moved even further in this direction under the Coalition Government. The statutory 14-19 Entitlement has been withdrawn; funding for

¹⁰⁶ Baird *et al.*, 2010

¹⁰⁷ Hodgson and Spours, 2006, 332; Pring *et al.*, 2009 p. 171

¹⁰⁸ Pring *et al.*, 2009

partnership initiatives, such as Aimhigher, 14-19 Diploma development, 14-19 partnerships, work-related learning and CEIAG has ceased; performance measures and inspection have got tougher and actively promote a focus on individual institutional examination success; and there is a major emphasis on increasing the number and diversity of providers, such as academies, studio schools, University Technical Colleges, free schools and school sixth forms. Now, competition and, where appropriate, collaboration are intended to support choice.

Examples of partnership working in London

6.11 In this context, it is difficult to track what is happening to partnership working, although it is an issue that the Mayor's Education Inquiry¹⁰⁹ highlighted as an important one for London.

6.12 From a LEACAN survey¹¹⁰ of its local authority members with responsibilities for 14-19 education (including those in London), undertaken in 2010 and reported in 2011, it appeared that at that point the majority of local authorities still had a small number of staff who had specific responsibility for 14-19 education, that they saw their role as working strategically with 14-19 partnerships and education and business link organisations and that these were still operational. According to this survey, their focus was primarily on making provision available for a wide range of learners, including those with LDD, introducing Diplomas, using data for quality assurance purposes and providing CPD focused on Foundation Learning, Key Stage 4 Engagement, English and Maths. Even at the time of the survey, however, the respondents were expressing concerns about how much longer they would be able to provide support in this area and what the effects of the changes to 14-19 policy would be under a new administration.

6.13 Given the dearth of recent comprehensive data about patterns of partnership working across the Capital, here we have simply pieced together London examples that illustrate three of the four types of partnership working identified in the study by Baird and colleagues, with an example of the fourth just outside London.

¹⁰⁹ Mayor's Education Inquiry, 2012

¹¹⁰ LEACAN, 2011

a. Trading partners

All London boroughs buy into the services of Learning Plus UK to support them in analysing and using performance data about the 16-19 year olds in their area in order to inform their improvement strategies.

b. Responsive joint planning

The London Education Partnership Awards ceremony which took place in 2011¹¹¹ provided examples of outstanding partnerships to support preparation for and access to higher education; to promote STEM subjects; to use the arts to inspire young people in deprived parts of London; to create links with business to support more young people to take up employment opportunities within the City of London; to work with voluntary and community organisations to improve opportunities for refugees and their families; and to boost attainment at Key Stage 4.

c. Systemic partnerships

Two recent conferences organised by the London Region Network and held at the Institute of Education in February and April 2012 indicated that, despite reductions in local authority 14-19 capacity, partnership working was alive and well in parts of London, but that in other areas it had almost ceased and there was real concern about future sustainability. Examples were given of a college in the West of London working with schools to improve the delivery of both vocational provision in Key Stage 4 and A Level delivery in new sixth forms; a local authority providing leadership in relation to the Raising of the Participation Age and another 14-19 co-ordinator working within her borough and with other local authority 14-19 leads on a quality assurance tool for provision. In all cases these might be seen as 'systemic partnerships'.

d. Joint venture

There is an example of a 'joint venture' partnership just outside the London area. Barnfield College in Luton is a confederation of two secondary academies, one free school, one studio school and five feeder primary schools all led by Barnfield College. Since this type of partnership or federation is being actively promoted by the Gazelle Group of further

¹¹¹ LEPA booklet, 2011

education colleges¹¹², it is likely that London colleges will be actively considering this sort of joint venture arrangement.

6.14 Taking into account the issues that have been identified for young people in London, many of which require collaboration, and the lack of systematic data on what is happening to 14-19 partnerships across the Capital, it would be useful to track more closely what types of partnership working are taking place across the Capital and to consider their effects on young people's chances in relation to 14+ participation, progression and transition to higher education and employment.

What effects does partnership working have on opportunities for young people in terms of provision, progression and transition?

6.15 Research evidence¹¹³ over the last decade has suggested that collaborative arrangements can:

- increase the range of provision for 14-19 learners at different levels, particularly in high cost vocational areas;
- open up new or enhanced progression routes and make them more transparent;
- extend advanced level choices and protect minority subjects;
- enhance the quality of provision through joint quality assurance systems;
- support the transition from school or college to higher education;
- promote active links between education and the world of work;
- open up opportunities for staff to work together on improvement strategies;
- increase opportunities for student recruitment;
- support fundraising and financial savings.

6.16 However, studies by Fletcher and Perry¹¹⁴, the Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training¹¹⁵ and Baird and colleagues¹¹⁶ also pointed out the limitations of partnership working. These lie not only in the practical difficulties of this type of collaboration and the less than conducive current policy environment, but also the

¹¹² Gazelle Global booklet, 2012

¹¹³ e.g. Principal Learning 2003; O'Donnell *et al.* 2006; DfES 2005; Hodgson & Spours, 2003 & 2006; Passy and Morris, 2010 (*Evaluation of Aimhigher: learner attainment and progression. Final report.* Bristol: HEFCE); Hill, 2008; LPUK/IOE publications; Mann, 2012a&b; Higham and Yeomans 2005, 2006 & 2010; Baird *et al.*, 2010

¹¹⁴ Fletcher and Perry, 2008

¹¹⁵ Pring *et al.*, 2009

¹¹⁶ Baird *et al.*, 2010

fact that partnership working can have negative as well as positive effects. This is more likely to be the case if the partnership is primarily set up in the interests of the institutions involved rather than in the interests of learners. Too often, Fletcher and Perry commented, 'there are serious reservations about their [partnerships'] capacity to tackle difficult issues'¹¹⁷. They have in mind here issues such as removing small sixth forms, locating expensive vocational facilities or closing non-viable provision. As they went on to assert:

*'the sorts of partnerships that are needed are those that can deliver an appropriate learning entitlement to all those in an area; not ones that simply allow local leaders to meet and share views, nor those which provide an excellent service for the best but forget the rest, nor ones which have a splendid vision but cannot deliver it.'*¹¹⁸

6.17 The discussion in this report suggests that to these features of positive partnerships outlined by Fletcher and Perry, we should also add 'and those that ensure active engagement with employers to support transitions to the labour market'.

14+ Progression and Transition Boards

6.18 One initiative that has caught the imagination of a number of local authorities in England is the idea of a 14+ Progression and Transition Board (14+ PTB). Initially developed by the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education for one local authority, the 14+ PTB idea is now being discussed more widely as a way of moving 14-19 Partnerships on in the new political and economic context.

6.19 It is suggested that local authorities and consortia need to consider refashioning their partnerships to ensure that they are appropriate for the more diverse 14-19 progression routes that are emerging from current policy and that they focus more actively on transitions to the labour market and work-based route at 17 and 18+, while still supporting access to HE. This implies a movement from lateral collaborations between schools and colleges to deliver a greater choice of provision to more vertically integrated networks that actively encompass a wider range of social partners, including employers and higher education institutions, than has typically been the case in recent years.

¹¹⁷ Fletcher and Perry, 2008 p. 32

¹¹⁸ Fletcher and Perry, 2008 p. 33

6.20 A 14+ PTB, as its name implies, has the prime aim of promoting the progression of young people both within the education and training system and their transition to the labour market, apprenticeship, further and higher education. This extended notion of progression leads to the use of '14+' rather than '14-19'. Moving to more vertically integrated arrangements around progression and transition, requires 14+ PTBs to involve a wide range of education and training institutions, employers,, local and regional regeneration agencies, voluntary and community organisations and local authority support services for young people.

6.21 The key aims of a 14+ PTB are to promote:

- a better balance between the concern about education progression within the 14-19 phase and a greater focus on work-based and labour market transitions at 17 and 18+;
- strong communication between the key stakeholders about the needs of all young people for education, training and employment opportunities and the needs of employers for better prepared young local employees;
- shared data on young people's attainment, progression and destinations and on local and regional labour market opportunities;
- a focus on joint action to improve outcomes for young people, education providers, local and regional employers and to actively contribute to the civic life of the area more generally.

6.22 The 14+ PTB could also function as an umbrella for a range of specific projects and networks to co-ordinate local and sub-regional efforts rather than to duplicate them. It is envisaged that a 14+ PTB could provide a forum for joint action as well as for information sharing, discussion and deliberation. It could:

- Extend high quality courses and programmes at all levels throughout the 14-19 phase with an emphasis on progression;
- Assist the formation of coherent pathways for all learners at 14+, with a particular focus on those who are not following a traditional GCSE/A Level route;
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and the professional dialogue between pre- and post-16 providers;
- Support the development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills of all 14-19 year olds;

- Undertake intelligence gathering and communication about progression and destinations for all learners;
- Share information about short- and long-term local and regional labour market opportunities;
- Develop systems for high quality and impartial CEIAG and work-related learning;
- Secure greater opportunities for apprenticeships and employment;
- Establish a convincing and motivational civic and economic narrative for the locality.

6.23 The major indicators of the effectiveness of the 14+ PTB will be improved participation and attainment post-16 and more young people gaining the confidence and skills to participate effectively in higher study and to make a successful transition to apprenticeship and employment.

6.24 If London is to consider developing these types of formations, and the issues highlighted in this report suggest this may be a fruitful way forward, the question is, how many and with what geographical reach? As we have seen earlier, travel-to-learn patterns in London are complex, so this would need to be taken into account when assessing the nature and capacity of 14+ PTBs in the Capital.

Summary and questions for London

6.25 14-19 partnerships are under pressure from government policy as competition between institutions reaches new levels.

6.26 At the same time, there are continuing pressures to collaborate in order to attain economies of scale in post-16 provision; to overcome problems of progression and the new challenges in terms of linking with employers and the labour market.

6.27 Practitioners are looking for ways forward and in the new context innovative ideas about partnerships are emerging that attempt to address the considerable challenges facing young people, particularly related to progression and transition. 14+ PTBs are one particular initiative that might provide new forms of provider collaboration with wider social partners.

6.28 *Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration: areas for further consultation and action include:*

- a. Is the 14+ Progression and Transition Board suggestion a useful one for London?
- b. If so, what and who would determine the membership, scope and geographical reach of each 14+ PTB and what would be the role of the YPES Board?

6.29 *Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration – areas for further research:*

- a. What are the effects of institutional arrangements in London on young people's 14+ participation, progression and transition (14+ PPT)?
- b. What is the impact of current partnership working in the Capital on 14+ PPT?

7. Conclusion and key areas for further consultation, action and research

7.1 London is a complex city - economically, geographically and socially - which is reflected in opportunities for education and outcomes not only for Londoners as a whole but for different groups of young people within the Capital. As such, we think that it is important both to dissect the intricate dynamics of London, rather than seeing London solely as the aggregation of these tendencies and, at the same time, to think of London as a holistic entity when considering potential solutions.

7.2 Closer scrutiny of London trends suggests that London performance has been enhanced by a large number of high performing selective schools that are concentrated in boroughs with low levels of deprivation. Beyond this, however, there is considerable variation, which is closely (though not exclusively) aligned with the incidence of family deprivation.

7.3 Despite these differences, as we have seen above, London 14-19 education as a whole has made significant progress in recent years – not only in GCSE attainment at 16 but also in Level 3 outcomes at 19. It is arguable that much of this can be laid at the door of considerable financial investment and policy focus - notably

London Challenge – together with aspects of the 14-19 strategy of the previous government, such as greater curriculum flexibility at Key Stage 4; increased institutional partnership working to improve provision and to offer broad vocational courses, work-based learning activities and CEIAG; more accessible and mixed programmes of study post-16; EMA; improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of colleges and widening access to higher education. One important result has been that London institutions (schools pre-16 and colleges in particular post-16) have reduced the ‘poverty penalty’ in 14+ participation, progression and transition (PPT).

7.4 However, a closer look at London trends and the various stages of 14+ PPT suggests a more unsettling picture – continued borough and intra-borough variability of performance at Key Stage 4; a dip in performance at 17+ related to AS retention and to A Level achievement measured by total points score per student; the apparent lack of expansion of vocational provision post-16; very low apprenticeship engagement and problematic labour market access by young people. Furthermore, London has a complex and potentially under-performing institutional structure. It relies heavily on small providers at 16 -school sixth forms – that appear to have a very variable record of promoting sustained participation 16-19 and yet are becoming more popular; a medium sized and increasingly effective FE sector that is growing less popular; the relative absence of deep employer engagement with young people and an HE sector that may be rapidly polarising.

7.5 This balance of positive and negative trends could be decisively tipped by Coalition Government policy at each stage of the 14+ participation, progression and transition process through increased institutional autonomy and more self-interest in relation to CEIAG and work-related activities; changes to GCSE which could reduce the exam performance of the middle attainer; similar effects at 16+ with the prospect of A Level reform; the lack of policy sympathy for broad vocational qualifications that currently play a positive role post-16; the abolition of the EMA which could reduce the mobility of some young people travelling to specialist provision; pressures on 14-19 partnerships that facilitate a greater offer of vocational provision, improvement partnerships, CEIAG and work-related activities; the rise in HE fees which could deter poorer Londoners from considering university and, finally, the policy of austerity which continues to depress the labour market and particularly the youth labour market.

7.6 At present, however, it is difficult to fully predict policy impact because London is still experiencing the effects of the reforms of the previous government and only part way into the effects of those of the current government – giving rise to what might be seen as a hybrid state. The factors described above, therefore, have yet to fully impact on the lives of young people.

7.7 There is a need, therefore, to be far more textured when analysing what is taking place in the Capital and to look more closely at how different groups of young people are faring under current arrangements and their potential vulnerabilities under what is coming. In particular, we need to examine:

- attainment profiles at Key Stage 4 to identify more precisely the skills required to effectively progress to Level 3 post-16;
- the anatomy of performance in A Levels in London and what happens at 17+;
- the take-up and performance of vocational qualifications 16-19;
- patterns of under- and over-supply of provision;
- the role that different institutional configurations play in relation to different groups of young people;
- the patterns of access and exclusion in relation to the work-based route and labour market.

7.8 What this indicates is the importance of seeing progression from the individual learner's point of view and as a longitudinal process that:

- prioritises developing and recognising their aspirations;
- helps them attain as highly as possible at each stage and builds skills for progression to the next;
- assists them with decision-making at key transition points (particularly at 16+);
- ensures that they have embarked on appropriate provision;
- encourages sustained educational participation post-16;
- creates opportunities for building educational and social capital to assist them in the vital transition to the London labour market.

For some young people these progression and transition stages are unproblematical, not only because of their previous attainment, but also by the extent of family and institutional support they receive. Others, however, will experience more fractured and difficult transitions. It is these young people that will need both education

professional and employer support and a clearer progression and transition system across the Capital as a whole.

7.9 Given this analysis, there is a strong case for a systemic and London-wide approach to potential solutions, such as

- the organisation of a pan-London CEIAG entitlement;
- creating a curriculum for London that explicitly promotes the skills and knowledge required for the future;
- the development of vocational provision across the Capital;
- the nurturing of progression routes to overcome existing barriers;
- consideration of new forms of partnership that integrate 14-19 education and training more closely with the labour market.

7.10 The overall aim for the various social partners, working with London Councils, should be to collaborate in building an even better knowledge base of what is happening across London. On the basis of this shared understanding it is more likely that there will be a greater willingness to commit to the building of a 14+ high opportunity and progression education and training system across the Capital so that London can move decisively towards being a learning and employment city for all its young people. The suggestions of areas for further research, consultation and action contained below offer a starting point in this direction.

Key areas for further consultation and action

7.11 Curriculum, performance and provision

- a. What curriculum and support measures can be put in place to improve attainment for all 14-19 year olds in London?
- b. Should there be a London Curriculum Entitlement for 14-19 year olds?

7.12 CEIAG, participation, progression and destinations

- a. Should there be a pan-London approach to CEIAG and work-related learning and if so, who should be involved, in what and how?
- b. Is it possible to develop a pan-London progression strategy that particularly strengthens vocational education in the Capital?
- c. What measures can be taken by social partners to improve employment opportunities for young Londoners?

7.13 *Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration*

- a. Is the 14+ Progression and Transition Board suggestion a useful one for London?
- b. If so, what and who would determine the membership, scope and geographical reach of each 14+ PTB and what would be the role of the YPES Board?

Key areas for further research

7.14 *Curriculum, performance and provision*

- a. Some boroughs with high levels of students eligible for free schools meals are performing better than others. What are they doing to achieve these outcomes?
- b. What are the effects of current government policy on curriculum, provision and performance at Key Stage 4 and post-16?

7.15 *CEIAG, participation, progression and destinations*

- a. What type of CEIAG and work-related learning provision is there in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and FE colleges to support young people into employment as well as higher education at the key progression and transition points of 17 and 18?
- b. Which types of work-related activities and work experience and at what points have the maximum impact on young people's choice of provision, progression to further/higher study and transition to employment in the London labour market?
- c. What are the internal progression/transition patterns of the 16-19+ phase in different parts of London and London as a whole (e.g. 17+ drop out, the take-up of Level 3 qualifications, completion rates in FE up to 19 and transition to employment)?
- d. To what extent is the 'poverty penalty' evident in national statistics reflected in London post-16 provision and in what ways?

7.16 *Institutional arrangements, partnership and collaboration*

- a. What are the effects of institutional arrangements in London on young people's 14+ participation, progression and transition (14+ PPT)?
- b. What is the impact of current partnership working in the Capital on 14+ PPT?

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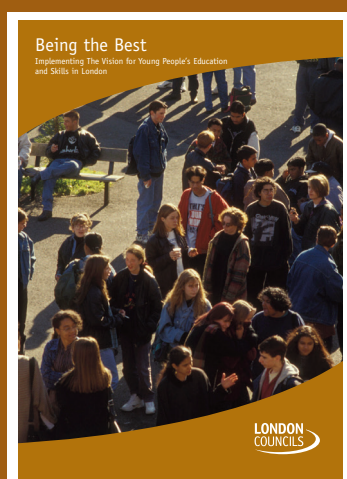
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