Children and Young People Today

Evidence to support the development of the Children's Plan

department for
children, schools and families

Foreword

By the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

The world in which our children and young people are growing up is changing fast. New technologies and new ways of communicating are creating great new opportunities. Today's children are making connections, travelling and learning in ways their parents and grandparents would never have dreamed possible. But these new opportunities, alongside rapid economic and social change, are also throwing up new risks and challenges for all of us. The pace of change can sometimes feel quite bewildering, and make life difficult for some young people and their families.

Over the past few months, we have spoken to and heard from thousands of children and parents in preparation for our country's first ever Children's Plan. This Plan will be published in December by my new department, the Department for Children, Schools and Families. We have listened to the views of young people and their families on the issues facing children and young people today through our Time to Talk consultation. We have also asked experts in the world of children's services to help us develop our thinking. And we have established the National Council for Educational Excellence to advise us on strategies to achieve world-class education.

As a foundation for the Children's Plan, this report assembles hard facts and figures about current wellbeing of children and young people in England, analysing them to help generate understanding of the challenges facing delivery of outcomes for children and young people. It looks at past trends and where we are now and makes international comparisons. Placed alongside the key messages that children, young people and their families have fed back through the Time to Talk consultation, this report paints a rich and detailed picture of life as a child or young person today.

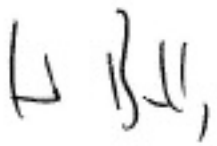
The overall findings of this review are positive – that for most children things are good. Despite recent reports to the contrary, virtually all children say that they are happy, healthy and cared for by their families. They are enjoying their childhood and are increasingly well-educated. Most are engaged, motivated and making a positive contribution. There is much to be proud of about the experiences and opportunities for children and young people in England today.

But this report also highlights that the modern world presents new challenges for families. Many parents say they need more support and information. And it shows we need to do more for a minority of children who are not seeing the benefits of change and investment.

This evidence brings to light the areas that we need to tackle in order to achieve our goal of delivering world class services for children and young people. We need to improve the quality and reach of early years provision. We need to maintain our focus on raising standards in education, working to ensure that all children progress. We know that the involvement of parents in their child's education is of crucial importance, but levels of involvement remain low, particularly in secondary schools. Despite their importance, it's clear that some children and young people are not developing the personal, life or employability skills that they need in order to become happy and successful adults, and some are engaging in risky behaviour. And throughout the report the gap between good outcomes for most children and poor outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds stands out as a major challenge for us all.

I am pleased to publish this evidence today, alongside the reports from the Time to Talk consultation. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to get involved and we will now use their input together with the evidence in this report to inform our forthcoming policy proposals.

Our consultation has convinced me that this is the right time to respond to these new opportunities and pressures by setting out our ambitions for children and young people in our first ever national Children's Plan. Based on this evidence, and the views of children and parents, teachers and professionals from across the country, it will set out what we need to do together so that every child can have a good start in life, every young person can make the most of their talents and all our children can be healthy, happy and have fun.



Ed Balls
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Summary

Most children and young people say that they are happy, healthy and cared for by their families. They are enjoying life, achieving good results at school and in college and are making a positive contribution to society. Children and young people, more than almost any other group, have grasped the potential of new technologies. The majority of children enjoy taking regular part in a variety of cultural and sporting activities. More young people than ever are seizing the opportunity of going into further and higher education. However, across a range of outcomes there are some children and young people whose potential is not fulfilled. The effects of poverty and disadvantage can be seen in the evidence on health, safety and educational attainment. And the effects of economic, social and technological change create risks and challenges for all children and young people growing up in England today.

This report draws on recent research and statistics to describe the experiences of children and young people in England. It also incorporates their views, and the views of parents and others involved in working with them, collected through research and during the 'Time to Talk' Children's Plan consultation. The report is structured around the Department's Strategic Objectives, focusing particularly on evidence about the wellbeing of children and young people. It begins with a chapter setting out some general facts and figures about children and young people, and ends with a further summary against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Profile of children and young people

Children and young people form around 20% of the population in England today, and almost one in five are from an ethnic minority. Families are diverse and while the majority of children live in couple households, one in ten families are step families, one in four are lone parent families and nearly 200,000 children do not live with their parents at all. Most children have siblings and the majority live in a house owned by their families.

A sizeable number of children receive help from social services, and almost 150,000 children are themselves carers for other family members. It is estimated that nearly 5% of children are disabled and nearly one in five pupils have an identified special educational need, whilst one in ten have a clinically diagnosed mental disorder.

Children are involved in a wide range of activities, especially sport. Their leisure time is varied but on average over two hours per day is spent watching television, DVDs or videos. Older children now see the internet as more important than the television. The cultural activities they most enjoy are art activities such as painting, writing stories or playing a musical instrument. Around four in five have access to a home computer and over half are able to access the internet at home.

Securing the wellbeing and health of children and young people

In a large scale survey of children and young people conducted this year, the overwhelming majority said that they are happy about life, and the quality of their family relationship is centrally important to young people. Children generally do not see changing family structures as a problem, and their families are in the main seen by children in a positive light. At the same time many younger children report being worried about friendships or being bullied, whilst many older children worry about exams and their future. Increasingly wide access to media and especially the internet provides many positive opportunities for children, but exposure to commercial pressures and inappropriate material is a concern for many parents.

Many of the wellbeing and health issues discussed here are related to social disadvantage. The evidence on mental health is mixed: recorded conduct disorders increased substantially during the eighties and nineties, but more recent data suggests that rates of mental disorder in children are stable. The prevalence of suicide in the UK is low by international standards. Levels of divorce have declined recently but remain relatively high, and half of all domestic violence cases involve families with children.

Overall, the vast majority of children and young people say that their general health is good. Infant mortality rates in the UK have fallen since the 1990s but are high compared to similar countries and are strongly linked to the socio-economic background of their parents. The UK also has a relatively high incidence of children with low birth weight and low rates of vaccination. However, there is an upward trend in prevalence of incidence of breast feeding, although there remains scope to improve the length of time for which babies are breast fed. Among older children obesity rates are rising and there is evidence that British children eat less healthy food than their international peers – although the majority are eating several portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

Children watch slightly more television on average than children in other developed countries but physical activity rates are high by international standards. Access to PE and school sport has increased in recent years. However, there has been a decline in the proportion of children walking to school and an increase in traffic generally which can have a detrimental effect on health.

Safeguarding the young and vulnerable

Children in England say they feel safe. They are aware of many of the potential threats they face but the evidence shows that children today are safer in many ways than previously. Rates of death from injury have fallen and good progress has been made in reducing road traffic accidents, although more progress is needed to cut the rates for 16-19 year olds. Child homicide rates have not increased in recent years. However, a minority of children are at risk from neglect and abuse. And safety levels generally vary according to levels of disadvantage, with accident rates higher for children from poorer backgrounds.

New technologies have increased the potential for 'cyberbullying', and parents report concerns about the risks of unsupervised access to the internet. Children worry more about their safety on public transport and in their local area than when they are at school, and home is generally seen as a very safe place. However, a worrying minority of children do not feel safe even at home. The most common forms of crime against children and young people are assaults without injury. Older children worry about risks posed by other teenagers.

Safety is a primary concern for parents. There has been a decrease in children's independent mobility, which partly reflects this concern. There has been an increase in the proportion of children driven to school and this relates to parental attitudes as well as an increase in car use. Children are less likely to play outside unsupervised, although this partly reflects changing leisure interests as well as safety concerns. Both children and parents say they want more access to public spaces.

Achieving world class standards in education

Recent research has demonstrated the impact that high quality early years provision can have on cognitive and behavioural development, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are significant differences between individual pre-school settings and their impact on children, with some more effective than others in promoting positive child outcomes. Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress. The supply and quality of early year provision has improved over the last five years, although this has not yet been translated into clear improvements in measured outcomes at age 5.

In schools, teacher assessments of seven year olds have been relatively stable, but test results for children at ages 11, 14, and 16 have risen significantly over the last decade. These increases have coincided with a range of policies and interventions to improve literacy and numeracy and boost attainment. Attainment is also influenced by the effectiveness of teachers and the involvement of parents in their child's education. The number of schools with very few pupils achieving target levels of attainment has decreased significantly, although there is scope for further improvement and there are still a number of pupils who are not making the progress of which they are capable. There have been marked improvements in the rate of A-level successes and the achievement of qualifications by 19 year olds, and university entry rates have risen significantly in recent years. However, participation in education to 18 is relatively low in the UK compared to other countries.

Inspections identify very few schools with unsatisfactory behaviour, but pupils and teachers continue to perceive it as a concern. Absenteeism is falling, and a small number of individuals account for a disproportionate number of absences. Overall, relatively few pupils report being unhappy with school although English children do say they feel the pressure of school work and exams. They start school relatively early, and while there are no clear links between starting age and attainment, age within year can affect attainment with 'summer born' pupils doing less well in their early years of education. There are marked gender gaps in attainment in different subjects, mirroring international patterns, and at GCSE girls have consistently outperformed boys in recent years. The international evidence suggests that whilst standards have risen strongly, further improvement is needed to achieve a truly world class education for all pupils in England.

Closing the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

However, there is a strong correlation between levels of disadvantage and poor educational attainment. The number of children in relative poverty has fallen over the last decade by 600,000, but this proportion is still relatively high by European standards. Babies born into poverty are more likely to be premature and have low birth weight and this is strongly linked to health and developmental difficulties. As they develop, poverty influences many outcomes but has a significant impact on educational achievement and the potential to acquire important

non-cognitive skills. There is evidence that by the time children finish primary school, the effect of socio-economic status is more important than early ability at 22 months. While achievement has been rising in schools and colleges, children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to do less well than their peers, and our tail of under-achievement is longer than in some other countries. There have been significant improvements in the results for schools in deprived areas over the last ten years. However, this has not led to clear reductions in the attainment gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils.

The impact of deprivation helps explain why pupils from some minority ethnic groups achieve lower results than white pupils. Some minority ethnic pupils are concentrated in certain schools. Attainment at school is particularly low for pupils from Gypsy or Traveller families. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) tend to make less progress than their peers, but they are also more likely to be from deprived backgrounds than children without SEN. Looked after children achieve particularly poor attainment levels. However, the proportions of looked after children remaining in full-time education after year 11 is increasing, as is the proportion in education, training or employment at 19. There are significant gaps in participation in full-time education and training, based on gender, ethnicity, social class and region. However, there are early signs that neighbourhoods with little tradition of university participation are starting to supply more students.

Ensuring young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond

Participation in post-compulsory education is relatively low in England compared to similar countries. A notable minority of young people are not in education, employment or training and this has not improved significantly over the last ten years. However, full-time participation in education has been increasing year on year, partly due to rising levels of earlier attainment, and partly due to the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowances. Entry to key science and mathematics subjects at A-levels show signs of increasing after falls at the beginning of the decade. However, the existing 14-19 curriculum and qualifications are not meeting the needs of all young people and entry into certain qualifications is still split on gender grounds, with implications for later progression and earnings potential.

Keeping children and young people on the path to success

Outside school, most young people are enjoying positive leisure activities or structured activities. A high proportion are involved in community activities and significant numbers are involved in formal and informal volunteering, which can help lead to positive employment outcomes. A minority are involved in no positive activities outside school, although this may partly reflect issues of access. Young people's involvement with crime and anti-social behaviour has remained broadly stable over the last few years, and there has been a recent fall in the overall rate of juvenile reoffending.

Teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are falling steadily, although they do remain high compared to similar countries. Rates of sexually transmitted infections are increasing. Research evidence on whether UK teenagers are more likely to smoke is mixed, but there has been a decrease in the number of young people smoking regularly since the mid-nineties. Figures also suggest a downward trend in the proportion of young people taking drugs, although cannabis use remains

high compared to other developed countries. The prevalence of alcohol consumption has not increased much since the late 1980s, but those who do drink are consuming larger amounts on average. A mixture of factors will be contributing to engagement in risky behaviour, but certain vulnerable groups of children such as looked after children, young parents and those not in any education, employment or training are more likely to be involved.

Conclusion

The detailed evidence set out in the rest of this report is designed to provide an informative background for further discussion on the way Government and others who work with children and young people should respond to the key issues affecting wellbeing. It highlights the importance of parents, families and wider communities and shows how educational progression and engagement in positive outcomes can be fostered by early years settings, schools, colleges and employers. It shows where progress has been made in ensuring most are on the path to success. It also points to the areas where some children and young people are not yet developing the personal, life or employability skills that they need in order to become happy and successful adults.

Chapter 1
Profile of children and young people

Summary

1.1 Children and young people form around 20% of the population in England today, and almost one in five are from an ethnic minority. Families are diverse and while the majority of children live in couple households, one in ten families are step families, one in four are lone parent families and nearly 200,000 children do not live with their parents at all. Most children have siblings and the majority live in a house owned by their families.

1.2 A sizeable number of children receive help from social services, and almost 150,000 children are themselves carers for other family members. It is estimated that nearly 5% of children are disabled and nearly one in five pupils have an identified special educational need, whilst one in ten have a clinically diagnosed mental disorder.

1.3 Children are involved in a wide range of activities, especially sport. Their leisure time is varied but on average over two hours per day is spent watching television, DVDs or videos. Older children now see the internet as more important than the television. The cultural activities they most enjoy are art activities such as painting, writing stories or playing a musical instrument. Around four in five have access to a home computer and over half are able to access the internet at home.

1.4 There are currently 12.4 million young people aged 0 to19 and this is projected to rise to almost 12.8 million by 2017. Children make up around 20% of the population of England, and this proportion is forecast to be similar in 2017. Over this period, the number of children aged 0-7 is forecast to increase from around 4.7 million to 5.4 million and the number of 14-19 year olds to decrease from 4 million to 3.5 million[1].

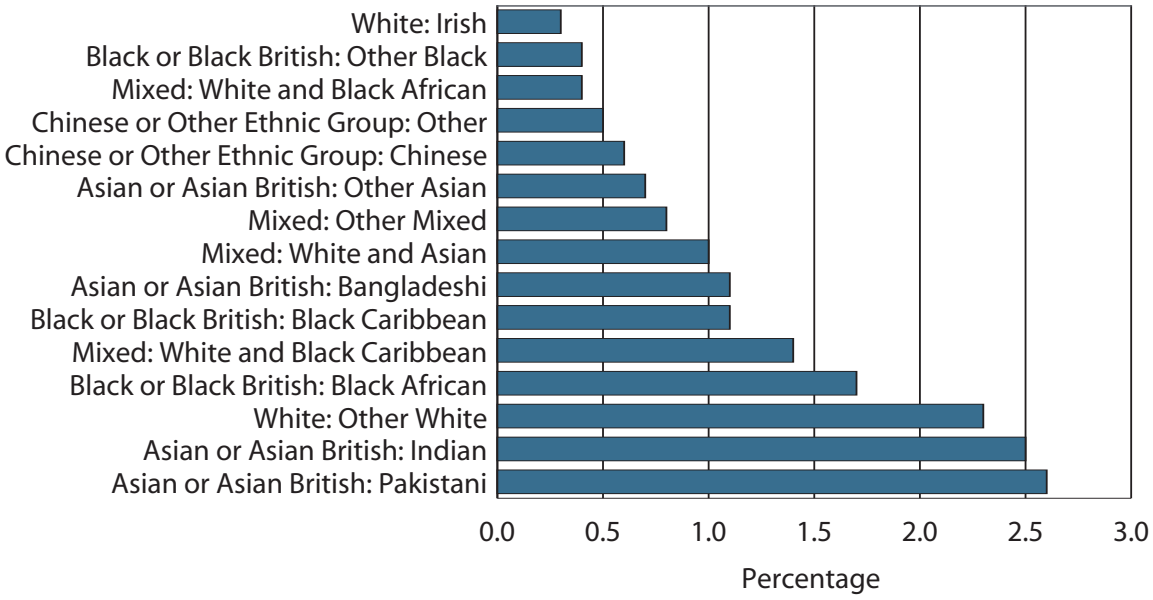
Chart 1.1: Population of England, 2006 based mid-year projections

Source: Government Actuary Department, 2006-based Principal projection

Almost one in five young people are from an ethnic minority…

1.5 83 per cent of 0 to19 year olds are White British. The remaining 17 per cent can be broken down into the following groups[2].

Chart 1.2: Breakdown of 0-19 year olds in minority ethnic groups, England, 2005



Source: Office of National Statistics, 2007, experimental statistics

Where do children and young people live?

1.6 In 2005 the proportion of resident 0-15 year olds was similar across all regions, but was lowest in the South West (18.3%) and highest in the West Midlands (19.9%)[3]. The pattern of migration between urban and rural areas varies according to the age of children with 0-14 year olds tending to move from urban to rural areas, and 15-19 year olds moving from rural to urban, probably due to the effect of both university residency and entry into the labour market[4].

Most children live in a house owned by their families

1.7 In England in 2006 nearly four in five couples with dependent children (79%) lived in their own home, but this proportion was much lower for lone parents with only just under two in five (37%) being an owner occupier. Most children lived in semi-detached or terraced housing (38% and 30%) while just over one in five (22%) lived in detached houses[5].

Families are diverse, with many children living with one parent, or in step families…

1.8 In 2006 there were 24.2 million households in Great Britain of which around three in ten (29%) contained at least one dependent child. The majority of families with children had two or more children (73%), with nearly three in ten having three or more children[6].

1.9 Around three quarters of households with children were couple households, with the remaining children living in lone parent households. More than ten percent of all families with dependent children in Great Britain in 2005 were step families. In the 2001 census, nearly two in five (38%) cohabiting couple families with dependent children were stepfamilies compared with just under one in ten (8%) of married couple families with dependent children[7].

…and others not living with their parents at all

1.10 A proportion of children do not live with their parents. In 2001 139,000 (1.2 per cent) children under 16 were living in households in England and Wales with adults or other relatives who were not their parents. An additional 52,000 (0.4 per cent) children under 16 lived in communal establishments such as children's homes[8].

Some children are themselves carers for other family members

1.11 The 2001 Census recorded a total of almost 150,000 young carers in England and Wales, approximately 1.2 per cent of under-18 year olds. These are children and young people under the age of 18 who have caring responsibilities for another family member who is either unwell or disabled. This may be an underestimate of the total number of children caring for family members.

Children are involved in a wide range of activities…

1.12 In 2000, apart from time related to school or sleeping (just under 14 hours), children aged 8-15 spent on average over two hours per day watching television or videos (139 minutes). About an hour and a half was spent on hobbies and games (94 minutes) and just under half

an hour on sports and outdoor activities (29 minutes). A significant proportion of their time (76 minutes) was spent on travelling, mainly either to school, to visit friends or relatives, or shopping. Just under two hours (114 minutes) was spent eating, washing or dressing[9]. Parents are also spending more time with their children, an average of 99 minutes a day compared with 25 minutes in 1975[10].

1.13 In 2006/07, nearly all children (aged 11-15) had taken part at least once in a cultural activity such as an arts event or activity, an active sport or a visit to an historical site. Over three in five children (61%) had engaged in cultural activities at least once a week with only around 8% engaging less than 3 times a year. Although levels of enjoyment were similar for most activities, children most enjoyed arts activities such as painting, writing stories or playing a musical instrument[11].

…especially sport

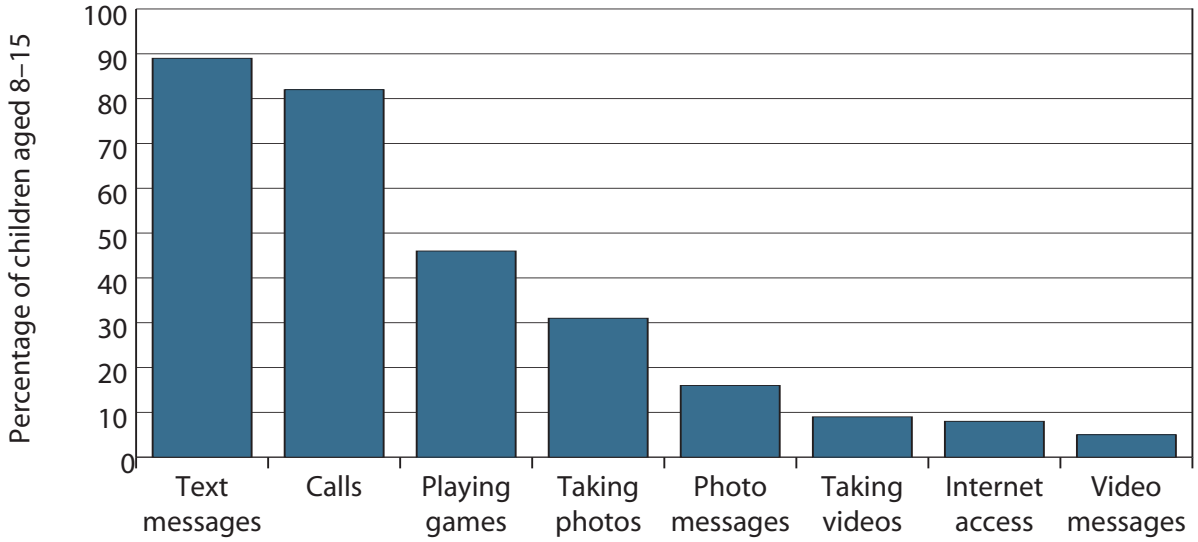
1.14 In 2006/07, the vast majority of children (95%) had participated in an active sport during the last four weeks and nearly 9 in 10 (89%) had participated outside of school lessons. The most common type of active sport was football (58%) followed by swimming or diving (38%) and basketball (31%). Outside of school, football and swimming were still the top two most common sports, and cycling was third most popular.

1.15 However, as children get older an important minority of young people, around one in four, do not participate in constructive activities outside of school or work. See chapter 7 for further discussion.

Their use of technology is high, particularly for older children

1.16 In a 2007 survey in the UK, over four in five 5-15 year olds had access to a home computer and almost three-quarters were able to access the internet at home. Internet usage is higher for older children with 77% using the internet at home compared to 46% of 5-7 year olds. For the 12-15 age group, use of the internet is the most important technology in their lives – more important than television.[12] Ownership of a mobile phone was lower than access to computers, but still nearly three quarters of 12-15 year olds said they used their mobile phone everyday (87% of 12-15 year olds owned a mobile) compared to under one in ten 5-7 year olds (15% ownership)[13]. In a different survey, children aged 8-15 mainly use their phones for text messages (just under nine in ten children) with nearly one in two children (45%) saying that they play games on their mobile[14] .

Chart 1.3: Children's use of mobile phones, 2005



Source: Ofcom

And they spend most of their money on food and drink

1.17 In 2003/04 children aged 7-15 spent on average around £13.00 per week. Both boys and girls were both most likely to spend their money on food and non-alcoholic drinks (37% boys' spending and 34% girls'). Following this, boys were more likely to spend their money on games, toys, hobbies or pets (20% boys' spending) such as computer games, CDs and videos. This was particularly the case for boys aged 7-9 who spend 35% of their money on this, compared to 13% of 13-15 year olds. Older girls (13-15) were more likely to spend money on clothing and footwear (25%) whereas 7-9 year old girls were more likely to spend their money on games, toys, hobbies or pets (17%)[15].

A sizeable number of young people receive help from social services….

1.18 In February 2005 nearly 400,000 children and young people in England (approximately 4% of 2005 child population) were on the books of children's social care services, of whom over half had received help from social services during that week[16].

	Children in need receiving services in census week in February 2005[1]	Children in care at 31 March 2007[2]
Total	**234,700**	**60,000**
0-7	88,700	17,700
8-13	72,500	19,300
14-18	66,800	23,000
19 +	6,700	0

1 Source: DfES, Children in Need Census 2005

2 Source: DfES, SSDA903 collection on Looked After Children, year ending 31 March 2007

1.19 At 31 March 2007, 27,900 children and young people under the age of 18 years were on the Child Protection Register, of whom the majority were under 10 years of age[17].

1.20 A disproportionate number of mixed ethnicity and Black children are represented on the Child Protection Register. The rate of registrations also varies considerably by region. The North East has the highest rate of registrations, whilst the South West has the lowest rate.

…and there are also children with care and other special needs…

1.21 It is estimated that there are 570,000 (4.9 per cent) disabled children aged 0 to18 year[18] in England, of whom 100,000 (0.9 per cent) have complex care needs.

1.22 In January 2007, 229,100 (or 2.8 per cent of) pupils across all schools in England had statements[A] of Special Educational Needs (SEN). There are also an additional 1.3 million pupils (16.4 per cent) with identified SEN but without statements[19].

1.23 In 2004, 10 per cent of children and young people in Great Britain (aged 5 to16) had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder[20], including emotional disorders, conduct disorders and hyperkinetic disorders.

…including children in custody

1.24 Nearly 3,000 children were held in custody in England and Wales in March 2007. Of these, approximately 2,400 15-17 year olds were held in juvenile establishments in the prison estate, and the remaining were accommodated either in secure homes or secure training centres. Around 80 children were placed by local authorities into secure children's homes because of concerns about their welfare . The proportion of children in custody appears to be high compared to our European neighbours, although accurate international comparisons are hard to make. It should be noted that the age of criminality in England and Wales is much lower than the European average – ten years of age, compared to thirteen[22].

A This is a legal document describing a child's learning difficulties and setting out the provision to meet the learning difficulties

Chapter 2
Securing the wellbeing and health of children and young people

Summary

2.1 In a large scale survey of children and young people conducted this year, the overwhelming majority said that they are happy about life, and the quality of their family relationship is centrally important to young people. Children generally do not see changing family structures as a problem, and their families are in the main seen by children in a positive light. At the same time many younger children report being worried about friendships or being bullied, whilst many older children worry about exams and their future. Increasingly wide access to media and especially the internet provides many positive opportunities for children, but exposure to commercial pressures and inappropriate material is a concern for many parents.

2.2 Many of the wellbeing and health issues discussed here are related to social disadvantage. The evidence on mental health is mixed: recorded conduct disorders increased substantially during the eighties and nineties, but more recent data suggests that rates of mental disorder in children are stable. The prevalence of suicide in the UK is low by international standards. Levels of divorce have declined recently but remain relatively high, and half of all domestic violence cases involve families with children.

2.3 Overall, the vast majority of children and young people say that their general health is good. Infant mortality rates in the UK have fallen since the 1990s but are high compared to similar countries and are strongly linked to the socio-economic background of their parents. The UK also has a relatively high incidence of children with low birth weight and low rates of vaccination. However, there is an upward trend in the incidence of breast feeding, although there remains scope to improve the length of time for which babies are breast fed. Among older children obesity rates are rising and there evidence that British children eat less healthy food than their international peers – although the majority are eating several portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

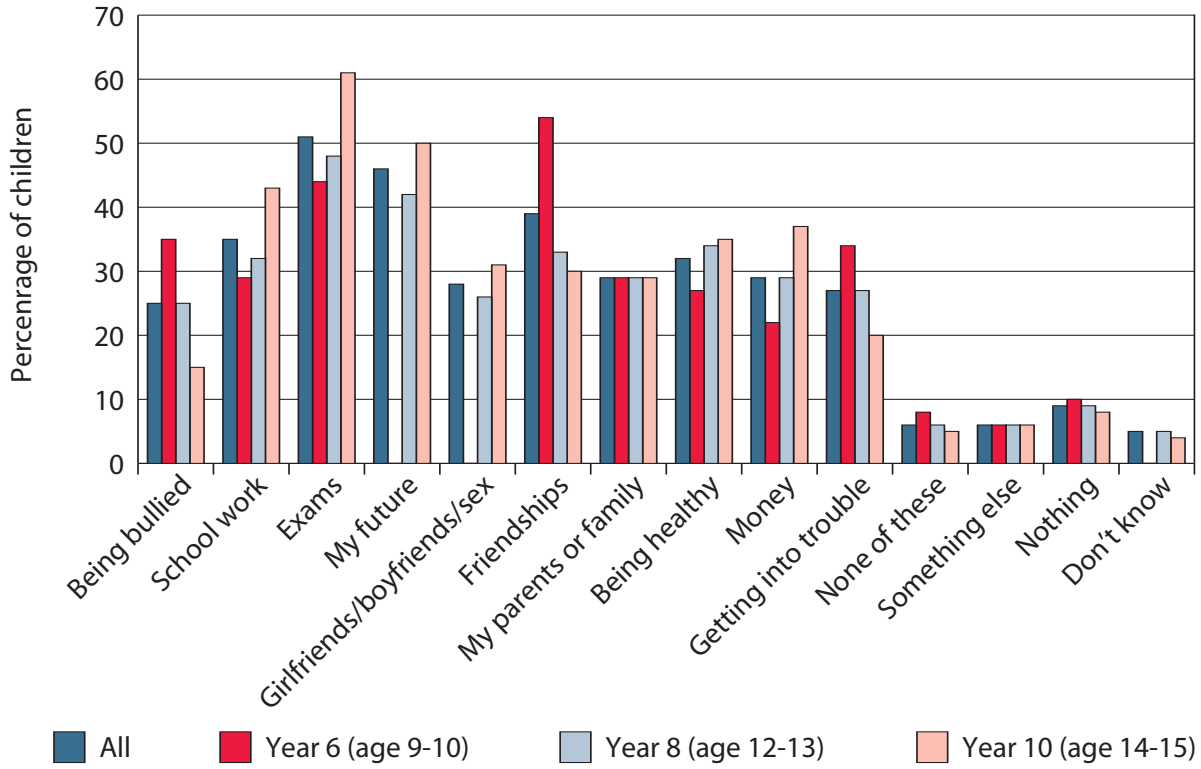
2.4 Children watch slightly more television on average than children in other developed countries but physical activity rates are high by international standards. Access to PE and school sport has increased in recent years. However, there has been a decline in the proportion of children walking to school and an increase in traffic generally which can have a detrimental effect on health.

Surveys of happiness in children suggest that most children are happy

2.5 In the 2007 TellUs2 survey, which collected the views of over 110,000 pupils, the majority of children (93%) said that they felt happy about life at the moment (to varying degrees), with only a small minority (7%) reporting feeling unhappy[B]. This finding was reflected in the 2004 Family and Children Study[24], with 89% of 11-15 year olds reporting feeling happy about life as a whole (to varying degrees) and only 7% feeling unhappy (again to varying degrees)[C].

2.6 Although the evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of children in England are happy, results indicate that nearly one in four (23%) children worry a lot and nearly two in five (37%) said it was a 'bit true' that they worried a lot[25]. Chart 2.1 shows which (if any) of a set of possible things children worried about most[D]. The most common worry was about exams, particularly for secondary school pupils in Year 8 and Year 10. For those in Year 6, the main worry was about friendships. Fear of being bullied was highest amongst children in Year 6, with 35% saying this was the thing they worried about the most. This was the third most common concern for this age group. The level of concern about bullying decreased with age, with 25% of Year 8 pupils and 15% of Year 10 pupils saying this was their main concern. Of all the factors listed, for these two Year groups this was the least common worry.

Chart 2.1: Which of these factors, if any, children worry about the most



B It should be noted that these surveys are not directly comparable, so cannot be used to draw a time trend between 2004 and 2007.
C The remaining 3% felt neither happy or unhappy
D Participants were asked to choose only one response

Development of social and emotions skills is crucial to a number of key outcomes

2.7 Families are a key factor in the development of social and emotional skills in children[26] and it's known that children with better social skills experience enhanced outcomes, including improved educational and employment outcomes, more positive peer relationships, and better mental and physical health[27]. Children with good social and emotional skills are less likely to be bullied and they show lower levels of risky behaviour – they are less likely to commit crimes, smoke or become a teenage parent. Social and emotional skills therefore impact upon the long term outcomes of children – for example children with behavioural problems at age 11 are less likely to be employed, or more likely to earn a lower wage, at age 42[28].

2.8 Currently, around three in ten (29%) Foundation stage children are not working securely within social and emotional learning goals[29]. By age 7, gaps in social abilities have emerged between socio-economic groups, particularly in externalising behaviours such as fighting which is the strongest predictor of antisocial behaviour[30]. And an estimated 6% of young people aged 10 to 19 belong to a delinquent youth group[31 32]. The impact of poor social and emotional skills is particularly evident when looking at peer relationships – bullying and peer rejection is common, with around 10-20% of children experiencing bullying.[33] The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme in schools was introduced in primary schools in 2005 and initial findings were positive; a fuller evaluation of the impact is currently under way.

Family functioning is more relevant to child wellbeing than family status

2.9 The links between family functioning and children's wellbeing are well established – for example, studies show consistently that parental involvement is a significant factor in shaping educational outcomes [34]. Recent qualitative research suggests that although children feel that their families can restrict their freedoms, this is crucial to making them feel protected and loved, teaching them respect and keeping them safe[35]. Speaking generally, young people themselves do not see changing family structures as a problem: 70 per cent agree that one parent can bring up a child as well as two, nearly double the proportion of adults[36]. The quality of family relationships is difficult both to define and measure. Two measures that can be used as proxies for this are the incidence of family meals (the UK is placed fourth bottom among OECD countries) and the incidence of young people whose parents spend time just talking to them (the UK is mid-placed)[37].

The quality of relationships in the family is particularly important

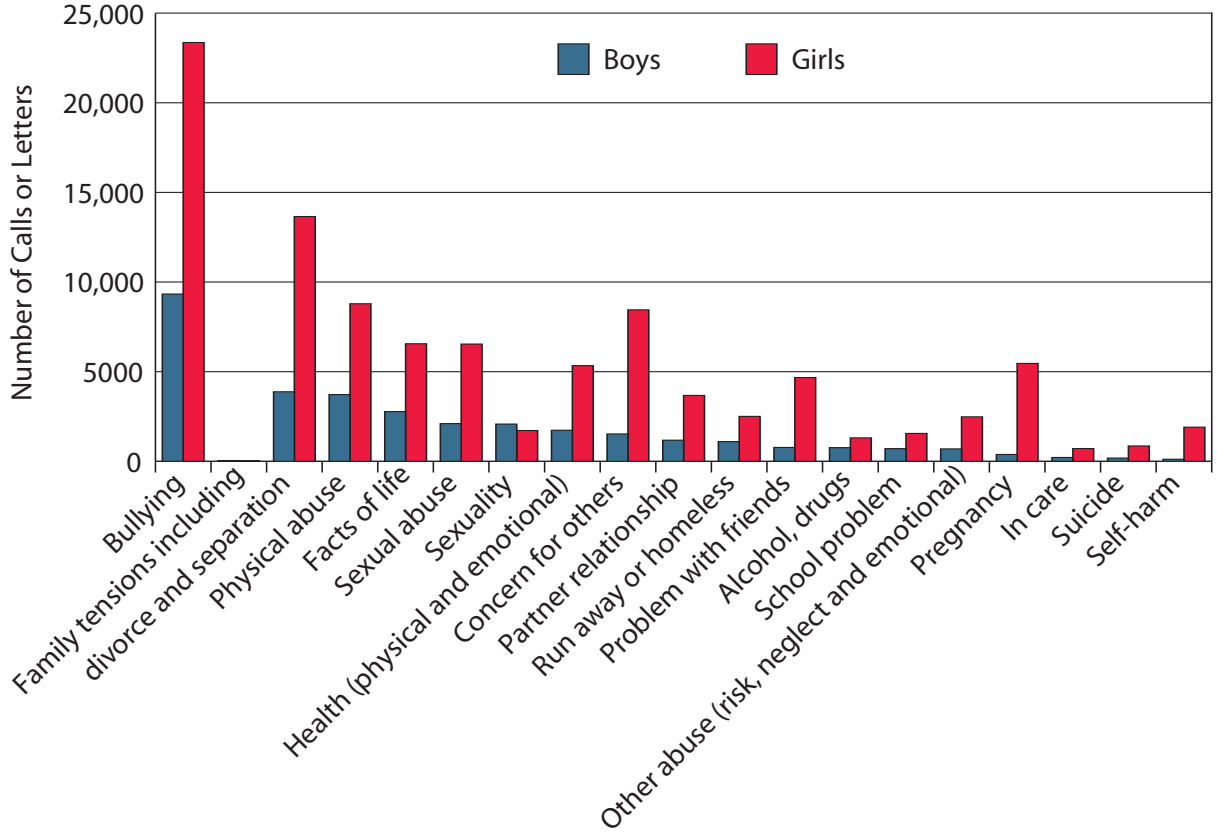
2.10. Inter-parental conflict is a strong predictor of, and risk factor for, poor child adjustment regardless of whether a child is living with their parents, or in a divorced or step-family[38]. The number of children aged under 16 in England and Wales who experienced the divorce of their parents peaked at 176,000 in 1993, but fell to 136,000 in 2005. One-fifth of children who experienced the divorce of their parents in 2005 were under five years old and nearly two-thirds were aged ten or under[39]. Separation more generally can lead to the creation of stepfamilies and in 2005 more than 10 percent of all families with dependent children were stepfamilies[40]. Family break-up translates to instability in children's lives[41] and children experiencing parental separation experience an approximate 2-year adjustment period where psychological problems such as sense of loss often feature[42]. Children whose parents

have separated are less likely to obtain high qualifications and more likely to experience partnership dissolution themselves[43].

...and this is reflected in children's views

2.11 In the recent TellUs2 survey, 87% of children reported that their parents and family 'look out for them' and a further 10% reported that this was a bit true. And nearly 30% of children report that they worry about family the most[44]. The second most common reason for children contacting Childline related to family tensions[45].

Chart 2.2: Calls and letters to Childline: by type of problem/concern and sex, United Kingdom 2005



But domestic violence continues to be an issue

2.12 The 2006/07 British Crime Survey, which reports individuals' experience of crime, suggests that about 0.5% of adults aged 16+ have been the victim of domestic violence at least once, although the actual rate may be much higher than this. Historical research based on the 1995 British Crime Survey suggested that half of domestic violence cases between partners or ex-partners were in households containing a child. Overall, 29% of these children reported that they were aware of what was going on and children were much more likely to witness violence against women than men, with 45% of abused women saying that children were aware of the last incident.[46]

Friendship is important to children's wellbeing

2.13 Friendship is a key protective factor and can support resilience and coping with bullying, divorce and family instability. It can also protect from anxiety and depression, now and in later life. Popularity with peers is associated with good social skills and peers can help each other develop pro-social behaviour. This was supported by data in which children and young people reported that they would be most likely to talk to a friend if they needed help with a problem (46%), followed by a parent (35%). However, more worryingly, a third of children (33%) felt they wouldn't have someone to talk to if they needed to ask for help[47].

2.14 The majority of peer relationships in the UK are positive and healthy as reported by children themselves. The vast majority of children say it's true that they have one or more good friends (90%), and nearly all remaining children (7%) reported that this was a bit true[48]. Over three in five children (63%) say that having friends helps make them happy at school, while 14% said that what made them unhappy at school was falling out with their friends[49]. However, not all children think their peers are 'kind and helpful' in the context of their classroom environment – the OECD international comparisons of young people (aged 11, 13 and 15) suggested that only around 43% of English children say this.[50]

2.15 Rejection of children by their peers can also lead to unhappiness, with a Home Office study showing that 12% of children aged 8 – 15 had contact with friends less than once a month or never and one in fifty (2%) had no social contact at all. 7% of children in the UK agreed with the statement "I feel like an outsider or left out of things". Peer rejection is also strongly associated with other negative indicators such as low academic achievement, unemployment and mental illness.

The evidence on changes in mental health in Great Britain is mixed

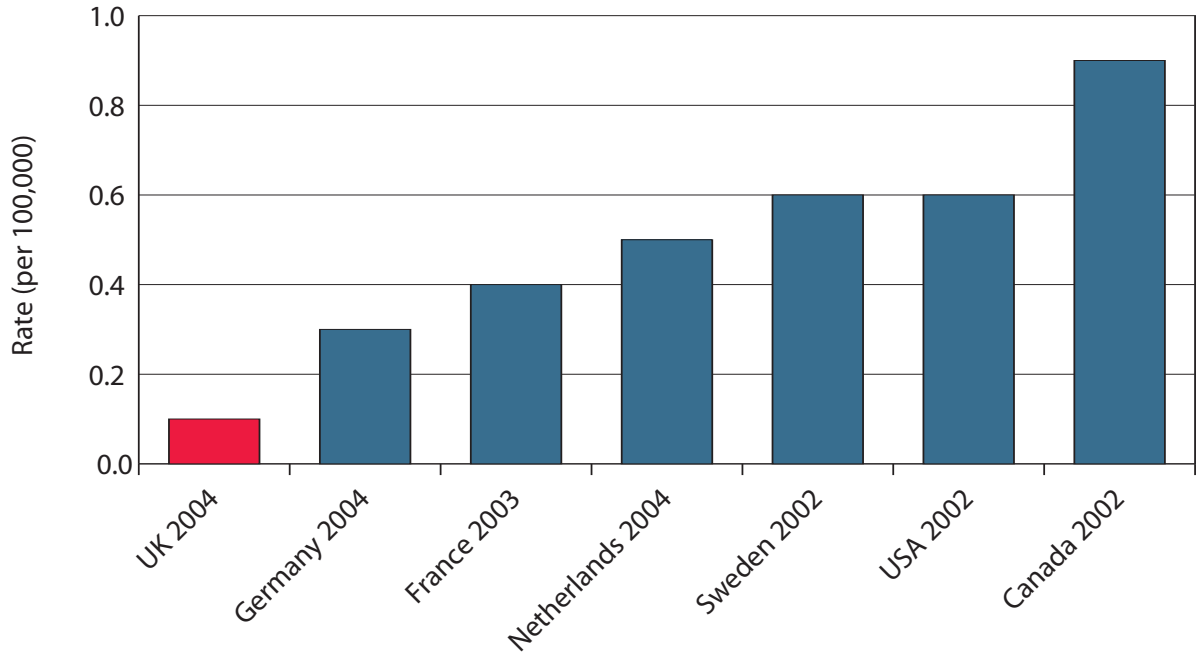
2.16 The late 1990s and early 2000s suggest a flattening off in the decline in mental health – in Great Britain the prevalence of mental disorders for children aged 5 to 10 was not statistically different between 1999 (8.2%) and 2004 (7.7%)[51]. Owing to a lack of consistent time trend evidence it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions from this.

2.17 Survey evidence indicates that the prevalence of conduct disorders (indicating behaviours such as fighting, bullying or theft) more than doubled between 1974 and 1999 (from 7.6% to 16.7%). The proportion of young people with hyperactive or emotional problems has also increased significantly.[52] This increase may not reflect an increase in incidence, but rather greater awareness of conditions due to media attention, increased diagnosis, development of effective treatment, or other factors. Recent research to test whether intake of artificial food colour and additives (AFCA) affected childhood behaviour suggests that certain artificial colours and a particular type of food preservative can cause increased hyperactivity in children[53].

Prevalence of suicide amongst young people is low in the UK by international standards

2.18 The figures that are available suggest that although there have been minor fluctuations, the suicide rate has remained fairly constant at around 5 per 100,000 population for 15 to 19 year olds and around 0.25 per 100,000 population for children under 15 years[54 E]. International comparisons are available for 5 to 14 year olds (Chart 2.4) and show the UK suicide rate to be comparatively low.

Chart 2.3: 5-14 year old suicide rate (per 100,000)



Source: *WHO Country Reports*, www.who.int

Environment is one factor that affects mental health …

2.19 It's known that access to green space (i.e. parks, play areas and natural habitats) helps to facilitate relaxation and recovery from mental fatigue and stress.[55] Time spent in green space has particular value for children with symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, benefiting their concentration and self-discipline[56]. But there are some safety issues that impact upon children's access to green space – see chapter 3.

…as is nutrition

2.20 Nutrition, particularly in the short-term, is believed to affect individual behaviour, (e.g. concentration, activity levels). These behaviours have the potential to affect school performance and interaction with peers, and to compromise self-esteem. For example, lack of thiamine (Vitamin B) in the diet appears to have a causal relationship with behavioural problems in adolescents, such as irritability, aggressive behaviour and personality changes[57].

E 3-year average mortality rates from intentional self-harm and injury of undetermined cause

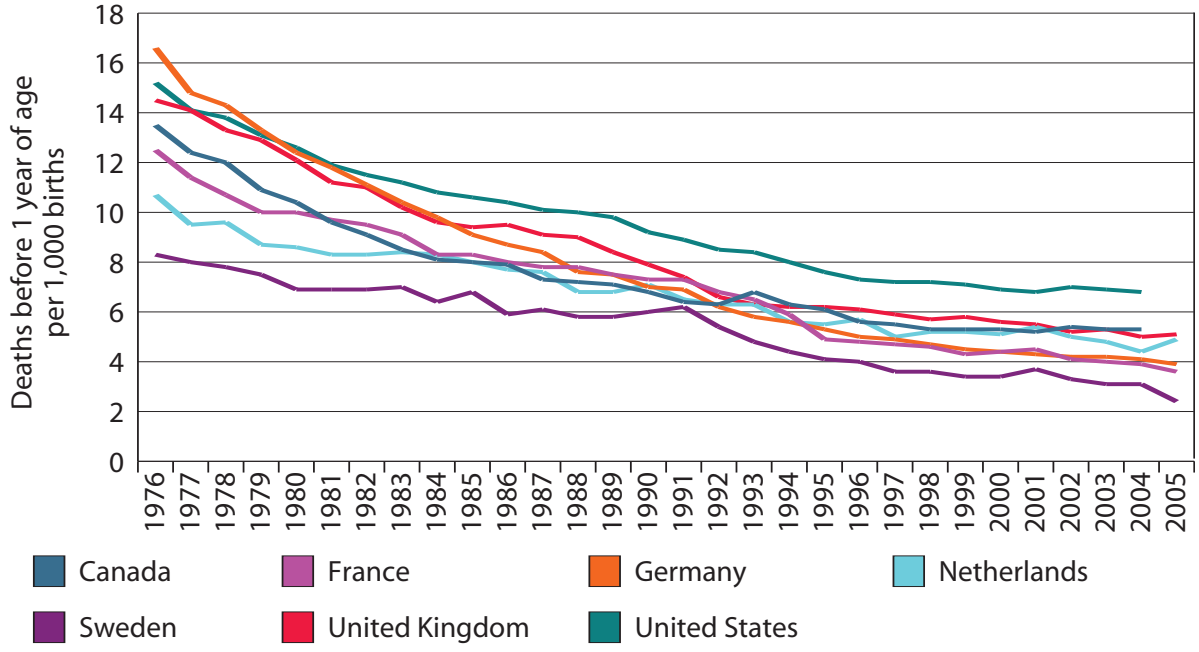
The vast majority of children say they are physically healthy

2.21 In England, nearly all children and young people aged up to 15 say they are generally healthy. In the 2005 Health Survey for England, 94% of boys and 96% of girls said that their general health was either good or very good. When asked about their health in the two weeks prior to the survey, just over one in ten children (12% boys and 11% girls) said that they had had to cut down on things they usually did because of an illness, injury or disability. Around 20% of boys and 16% of girls reported they had a longstanding illness – but only 8% of boys and 5% of girls felt this limited their activities in any way[58].

Infant mortality rates are falling but still relatively high in the UK…

2.22 Infant mortality is a commonly used indicator for comparing standards of health between countries. Good progress has been made on reducing infant mortality rates in the UK – chart 2.5 shows that the infant mortality rate has been falling since the 1980s. However, it is still high compared to other countries and the association with socio-economic status is strong in the UK. In 2004, of 25 OECD nations the United Kingdom had the 6th highest infant mortality rate, at 5.1 deaths per 1,000 live births under the age of 1 year. This compares to only 3.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in Sweden.

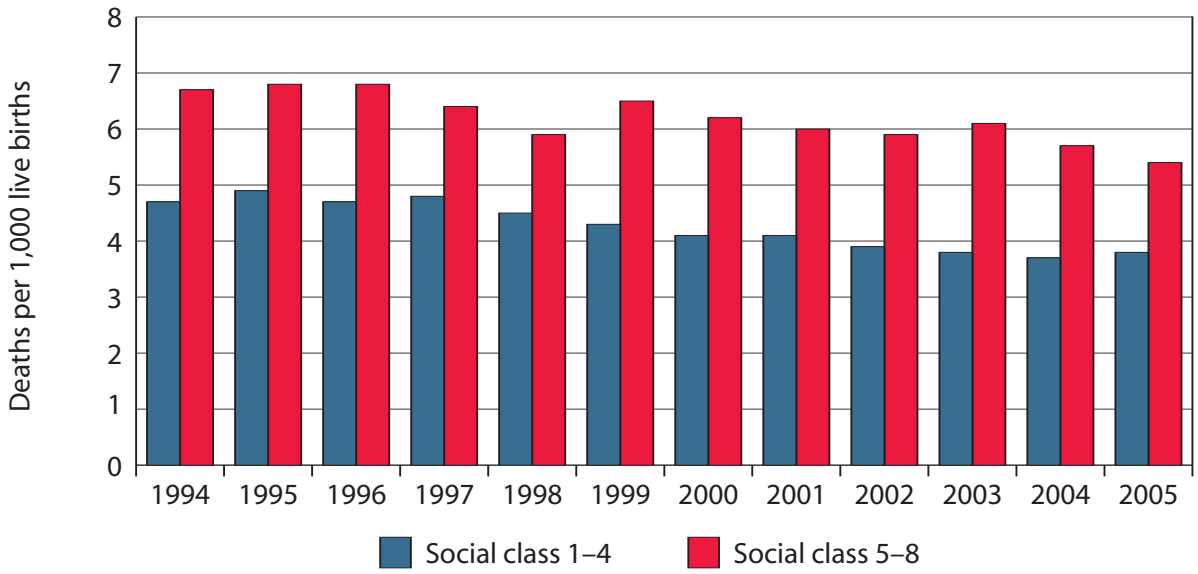
Chart 2.4: Infant Mortality Rate



Source: OECD Health Data 2007

2.23 Although the infant mortality rate has fallen since the mid 1990s for all social groups, the gap between the rates experienced by the higher and lower social groups persists.

Chart 2.5: Number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births



Source: Childhood, infant and perinatal mortality statistics, DH3, ONS; England and Wales; updated April 2007

The UK also has relatively high rates of low infant birth weight

2.24 In the early 2000s, the UK had the 5th highest rate of low birth weight[F] of 25 OECD countries[59]. The rate is currently rising – this is particularly the case for babies registered solely by the mother, which in 1996 was 9.5%, and in 2004 it was 10.6%. There is also a difference according to social class. For social classes 1 to 4 it is 6.6% but for social classes 5-8, it is 8.2%[60].

2.25 Negative impacts that can result from a low birth weight include impaired immune function, increased risk of disease and a higher incidence of diabetes, heart disease in later life and even a reduced chance of survival beyond infancy. Children born underweight also tend to have a lower IQ[61], which impairs their performance in school and their job opportunities as adults.

However, more mothers are breast feeding their babies

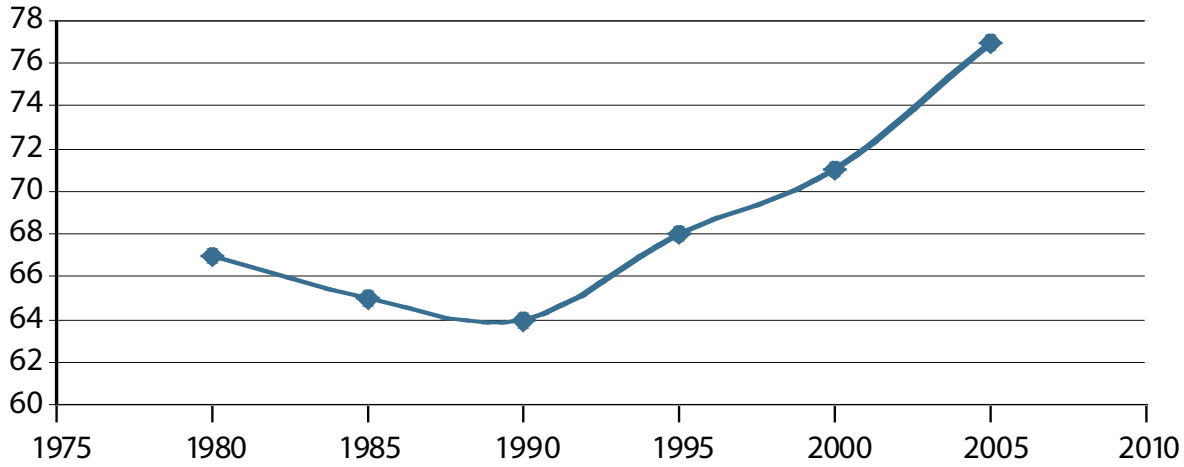
2.26 Breastfeeding is important as it has been found to reduce the risk of disease in babies – eg gastro-intestinal infections, respiratory infections, allergic disease (e.g. eczema, asthma) and certain types of diabetes. Therefore a very positive development has been the increase between 1990 and 2005 in the incidence of breast feeding[G] which rose from 64% to 77% in England and Wales. However, this has to be set against the fact that only 63% of mothers who started breastfeeding were still breastfeeding six weeks later.

2.27 Two maternal factors which may be driving the increase in incidence of breastfeeding (because they are associated with a higher likelihood of breastfeeding) are that women are, on average, having children later in life and are more highly educated.

F Low birth weight rate is measured as the % of births less than 2500g

G Incidence of breast feeding is defined as the proportion of babies who were breastfed initially. This includes all babies who were put to the breast at all, even if this was on one occasion only.

Chart 2.6: Incidence of breast feeding in England and Wales



Source: *Infant Feeding Survey 2005*, NHS Information Centre, www.ic.nhs.uk

But we may need to do more on vaccination

2.28 Vaccination is often used as a proxy for how well a country performs in preventative healthcare. International data on vaccinations show the UK is performing poorly compared to other OECD countries. However, a large part of this was due to only 80% of children being vaccinated for measles in 2002, during the scare about possible side effects of the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. This suggests that the UK's poor performance might not be due to a lack of availability of vaccines but instead due to some parents choosing not to vaccinate their children despite the strong evidence on the benefits of doing so[62]. In England in 2006-07, by their second birthday 94% of children had been immunised against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough and haemophilus influenzae b (Hib). Eighty five percent had been immunised against measles, mumps and rubella and 93% had been immunised against meningitis C[63].

2.29 The vaccination rate for children in care in England was similar to those for all UK children at 79.5% in 2006, having risen steadily from 73.3% in 2004.

Children are eating some fruit and vegetables…

2.30 Daily consumption of vegetables in England is around the international average and consumption of sweets is not significantly above the average[64]. Also, according to the NHS Information Centre, the mean consumption per day of fruit and vegetables by 13 year olds is 3.4 portions – only 4% have less than one portion per day. The picture is similar for 5-15 year olds as a whole[65]. Support provided by Children's Centres and a focus on healthy behaviours in schools are intended to help promote healthier lifestyles which should improve rates of obesity among children.

…but could eat more

2.31 There are some areas that could be improved. International survey evidence[66] suggests our 11, 13 and 15 year olds consume fewer pieces of fruit than average, more soft drinks and a lower proportion have breakfast every day compared to 34 other developed countries.

Eating disorders are relatively rare...

2.32 Hospital data shows that 318 0-14 year-olds were admitted for treatment relating to eating disorders in 2005/6, an increase from 273 in 2002/3[67]. About four fifths of these patients were female. These relatively low figures may hide a larger problem of undiagnosed and untreated eating disorders – Mind estimate that as many as 1 woman in 20 suffers from some form of "eating distress"[68].

2.33 Poor health outcomes from eating disorders include infertility, osteoporosis, dental problems, heart and renal failure, self harming behaviour, drug addiction, alcohol abuse, tranquilliser addiction, suicide, and high mortality rates[69].

...but obesity rates are rising

2.34 Government has committed to making a significant impact on the problem of obesity, and has a long term national ambition by 2020 to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children. Obesity is a serious health challenge for children, and is linked to a number of poor health outcomes including type 2 diabetes, adverse social and psychological consequences, coronary heath disease, some cancers, and osteoarthritis[70]. The biggest risk factor is family lifestyle: in families where both parents are overweight or obese, children are six times more likely to overweight or obese compared to children whose parents are of a healthy weight. In addition, there are some smaller differences associated with ethnicity, socio-economic class, education level and inner-city living.

2.35 Obesity in children has risen by almost 50% in England since 1997. In 2005 for 2-15 year olds, nearly one in five (18%) both boys and girls were obese. This compares to 13% and 12% respectively in 1997.[71] According to a 2001/02 survey[72], England had the third highest proportion of 13 year olds who were obese compared with 34 other developed countries[73]. Children from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to be obese[74].

And take up of school lunches is still too low

2.36 Government has developed a comprehensive programme of work to help families lead healthier lives, and this includes regulating to put in place tough new nutritional standards for school food in England. However, levels of take up of school lunches have been falling recently – latest data show that take up of school meals in primary schools was 41%, down one percentage point from 2005-06 (42%). In secondary schools, take up was 38%, down five percentage points from 2005-06 (43%) [75]. While these findings suggest that the downward trend in take up in primary schools may have ceased, the downward trend in take up in secondary schools is continuing.

Physical activity rates are improving

2.37 Much progress has been made in England to improve physical activity rates among young people, and we score well by international standards. OECD data shows that in England on average 11, 13 and 15 year olds reported spending more time being physically active per week[H] (4.2 days) than in 19 other OECD countries (3.9 days). More recent evidence shows that the percentage of 5-16 year olds participating in at least two hours high quality PE and school sport each week has increased from just over 60% to over 85% between 2003/04 and 2006/07[76]. There is scope to increase activity levels even further – WHO guidelines suggest that children should be physically active for at least one hour per day.

2.38 In addition to this there have been long term decreases in the proportion of children with low physical activity levels:

Table 2.1: Proportion of children with low physical activity levels

Age Group/Gender	1997	2002
2-10 year old boys	37	26
2-10 year old girls	44	30
11-15 year old boys	33	29
11-15 year old girls	59	44

Source: *Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet, England 2006*, www.ic.nhs.uk

But more children are now driven by car…

2.39 The proportion of 5-10 year olds walking to school has declined from 53% in 1996 to 49% in 2005. For 11-16 year olds, the proportion has remained roughly constant [77]. The proportion of 5-16 year olds driven by car is still lower than the proportion walking, despite a rise of around 3 percentage points between 1996 and 2005 to 32%. However, in research conducted in forty schools 45 per cent of pupils stated that they wanted to cycle to school but just 3 per cent were doing so. Similarly, of the 35 per cent of children travelling to school by car, almost half would prefer not to be driven.[78]

… and traffic levels can have a detrimental influence on health.

2.40 One particularly significant impact on child health is the proximity of a child's home to traffic: children living within 500 metres of a major road for a sustained period of time (eight years), were found to have substantial deficits in lung function compared with children living at least 1,500 metres away.[79] UK traffic levels increased by 10 per cent between 1994 and 2004 and the trend is set to continue.[80] A survey of schoolchildren in Boston, USA, showed that during air pollution episodes children who are overweight experience an 11% fall in lung function, compared with a 2% fall in those children of normal weight[81].

H in the previous or typical week

Media also impacts on physical activity

2.41 Despite undertaking more physical activity than other OECD countries, the UK's teenagers watch more television compared with many other developed countries. A 2001/02 study found that English teenagers spend slightly longer than average watching television. For example around 32% of English 13 year old girls watch 4 hours or more of television a day on weekdays, compared to an average of around 27% for 35 developed countries[82]. Other research has found that more than 1 in 10 children spend more than 25 hours a week watching TV, and spend more than 20 hours online, while 1 in 5 also watch more than 15 hours of videos[83].

And this is linked to obesity…

2.42 There is no clear evidence to link increased obesity levels in children with sedentary activity although there is a correlation between heavy media use and increased obesity[84]. Those with heavy media use habits are less likely to spend time on health promoting activities such as playing sport or exercising[85].

Media advertising and commercial pressures can also affect children's self-esteem

2.43 It is difficult to understand the impact of the media and commercial environment on young people's development, but it's known that advertisers increasingly target children, for example through increased use by food manufacturers of online promotion and advertising via social networking sites.[86] There is evidence that advertising affects children's purchasing decisions, although the extent of its influence and the duration of its effects are contested in the academic literature.[87] Research suggests that commercial messages are associated with child dissatisfaction and parent-child tensions, possibly harming child wellbeing[88]. Some academics argue that children exposed to commercial pressures are more likely to become depressed, suffer from anxiety, or experience low self-esteem, although there is little supporting UK evidence[89].

2.44 Children are increasingly engaged with the market, and define themselves, their aspirations and values in connection with purchases and brands.[90] Recent research has also indicated that parents feel increasingly pressurised by children to buy them material goods. This causes parents to feel they should work harder to pay for material goods – which creates tension, as children also stated that they would like to see more of their parents[91].

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Most participants in the Children's Plan deliberative events felt that parents (including carers and foster parents) are the most important influence in ensuring a happy, healthy and safe childhood. The quality of family relationships emerged in various strands of the consultation: children themselves, for example, talked in the video diaries about the need create more opportunities for families to talk and connect with each other. Contributors felt that parents need to take responsibility for children's wellbeing and can act as good role models themselves. There was support for more advice and parenting classes, although some feel there is a risk of too much government intervention in family life.

A relatively high proportion of those consulted felt there was scope to improve health services in certain areas. Some respondents mentioned the need to provide more help for first time mothers, support from nurses and therapists in schools and access to specialist assessments. However, others singled out for praise the support they had received from school nurses. Some parents with disabled children feel under particular pressure and would like as much support as possible.

Almost all the children consulted showed a strong awareness of healthy lifestyles. The role of schools in educating children about healthy eating and providing opportunity for sport and exercise was emphasised. However, experiences of healthy food provision in schools have been mixed. Participants in the deliberative events felt that the media has an important influence and that advertising could be more restricted. However, respondents also felt that parents are primarily responsible for the amount of media consumed by their children.

Chapter 3 Safeguarding the young and vulnerable

Summary

3.1 Children in England say they feel safe. They are aware of many of the potential threats they face but the evidence shows that children today are safer in many ways than previously. Rates of death from injury have fallen and good progress has been made in reducing road traffic accidents, although more progress is needed to cut the rates for 16-19 year olds. Child homicide rates have not increased in recent years. However, a minority of children are at risk from neglect and abuse. And safety levels generally vary according to levels of disadvantage, with accident rates higher for children from poorer backgrounds.

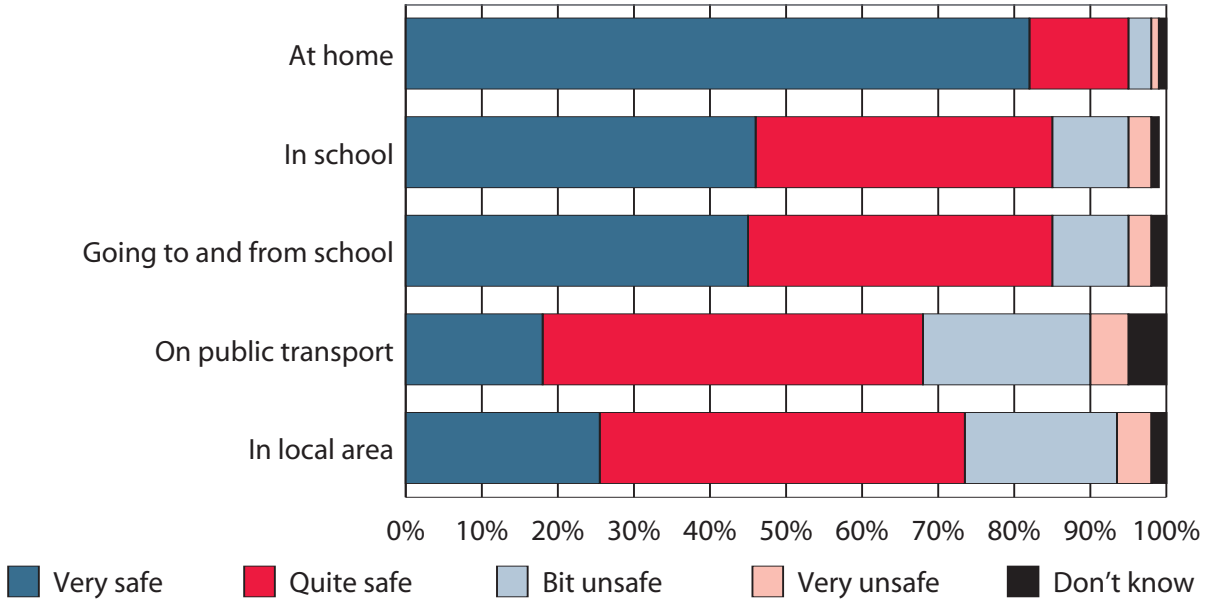
3.2 New technologies have increased the potential for 'cyberbullying', and parents report concerns about the risks of unsupervised access to the internet. Children worry more about their safety on public transport and in their local area than when they are at school, and home is generally seen as a very safe place. However, a worrying minority of children do not feel safe even at home. The most common forms of crime against children and young people are assaults without injury. Older children worry about risks posed by other teenagers.

3.3 Safety is a primary concern for parents. There has been a decrease in children's independent mobility, which partly reflects this concern. There has been an increase in the proportion of children driven to school and this relates to parental attitudes as well as an increase in car use. Children are less likely to play outside unsupervised, although this partly reflects changing leisure interests as well as safety concerns. Both children and parents say they want more access to public spaces.

Most children say they feel safe but are very aware of potential threats

3.4 Children's own perceptions of their safety, show that of those surveyed, most children reported feeling safe from being hurt by other people (Chart 3.1)[92]. However, around one in four children feel at least a bit unsafe in their area and, in the Children's Plan consultation, young people said they were particularly worried about their own safety, especially when out and about in the community and can feel at risk from violence, theft, gangs and bullying. 41% of children and young people were concerned about their personal safety (violence, crime and weapons), 21% were concerned about bullying and 4% specifically mentioned gangs as a key concern[93]. A small but worrying proportion of young people (around 4%) say they do not feel safe in their own home.

Chart 3.1: How safe or unsafe from being hurt by other people do you feel?



But safety is a primary concern for parents

3.5 One of the challenges that has been reported by parents and children is the tension between letting children and young people explore their boundaries whilst ensuring that their environment is safe[94]. There was enthusiasm for supervised activities outside of school as these were felt to be 'safe' environments but there were concerns about letting children participate in unsupervised activities. Parents generally felt that there had been a significant change in the safety of their children's environment, compared with when they were young, and they did report that they had curtailed the freedom that they gave their children.

This concern is reflected in a decrease in children's independent mobility

3.6 One study found that the proportion of 10/11 year old children that travel unaccompanied to school fell from 94% in 1970 to 47% in 1998, and suggested that this was linked to increased car use[95]. This trend is not just restricted to the UK. A study in Denmark found that the number of children aged 6-10 years old taking the car to school doubled from 1978 to 2000, and that the number walking fell by 40% over the same period. Around half of this change is explained by attitudes and perceptions, as opposed to increased car use or other factors.

3.7 There are also inequalities in independent mobility between children with different characteristics. Not unexpectedly, research consistently finds that girls' independent movement is more restricted than boys' and children in high density urban settings have less freedom to move around than in lower density new towns.

3.8 While there has not been specific research on the impact of this trend for children's outcomes, it is known that children who play regularly in 'natural areas' do show a statistically significant improvement in motor fitness with better coordination, balance and agility. This is because children's play tends to be more vigorous outdoors than indoors and, in contrast to traditional playgrounds, the rough surfaces of natural environments provide

greater movement challenges[96]. Indeed, it is notable some research suggests that children are more active (and hence burn more calories) when they are playing compared with when they are engaged in structured activities[97].

3.9 Research shows that play also produces a number of other important developmental benefits for children. In particular there is a body of evidence to show that play is important in developing resilience, a key aspect of children's wellbeing[98]. Play is also important to interpersonal processes, such as empathy[99]. Access to green space such as parks or play areas helps facilitate relaxation and recovery from mental fatigue and stress[100]. Opportunities for children and young people to play and travel independently outdoors are a vital part of developing the ability to manage risk, to think through decisions and to develop self confidence[101]. These are the sort "self-management" skills that employers have reported as lacking in the school-leavers they recruit[102].

3.10 When considering these findings, it must be borne in mind that there are many factors which affect children's independent mobility other than safety, for example the enrichment of activities in the home (such as pets and computers), and also the increasingly structured social lives of some young people.

But play and access to public space is obviously important

3.11 Research for Playday 2006 showed that 80% of children surveyed preferred to play outside[103] Along with parents, peers and school, public space is a key driver which influences children's experiences and outcomes. When asked what Government could do to help them, one of the key things that parents and carers identified was the creation of spaces for families to interact – particularly supervised spaces – and the need for resources to make local parks, communities and their local areas safe[104]. One result of parents' concerns is that children are less likely to play outside unsupervised, with a particular impact on the under 12s. This is partly due to parental fears, but other factors such as an increase in car use, the lack of the child's voice in public space design[105] and a hardening of adult attitudes to children have all contributed. As a result, one of children's most common complaints is also of a lack of places to go and things to do[106] – adults and children broadly agree about the need for more safe space and constructive activities.

3.12 Children and adults' views of good play spaces differ, with adults generally preferring play spaces that are safe, orderly and easily visible, whereas children more often prefer environments with disorder, cover and loose materials. A recent report suggests that if children are to be made more welcome in the public realm, the design of both play areas specifically for them and the built environment in general should take their views into account[107]. Case studies suggest that this is achieved successfully when a range of people with an interest, including planners, architects, youth workers, the police and young people themselves come together to redesign public space.

Parents also report concern about the internet

3.13 As children age they begin to spend more time on the internet, and make heavier use of mobile phones. This is an important way in which the world has changed for all children and families in the last decade. These tools are now a popular part of older children's lives, and

integral to the way in which many children learn about the world, and socialise with their friends. Yet this rise of the internet means children are spending more time in less regulated media environments[108] and this is causing parents concern[109].

3.14 This concern is backed up by evidence – children are likely to encounter "age inappropriate" content, both inadvertently and deliberately. 57% of 9-19 year olds who use internet weekly have seen pornography online. 22% of children have been to sites with "violent or gruesome" pictures[110]. Children are more likely to encounter this material as they age, linked with the lessening of parental regulation and engagement.

3.15 In the Children's Plan consultation, many people felt that parents need to bear some responsibility for the media consumed by their children. Three-quarters of participants expressed concern about children and young people having unsupervised access to the internet [111]. This could be impacting on children's spatial mobility, as some parents have expressed concerns about allowing children to go around to friends' houses when they didn't know how other parents were controlling access to the internet[112]. Somewhere between 1 in 10 and 1 in 4 children have met a stranger – normally another child – in real life having first met them online[113].

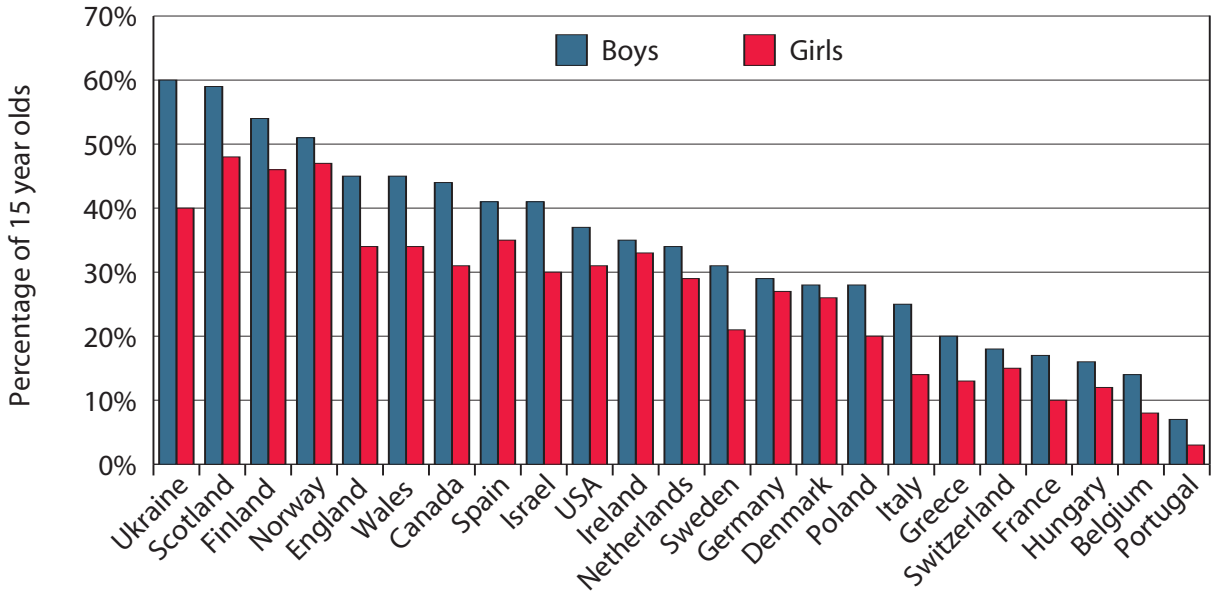
Peer groups can contribute to risky behaviour…

3.16 Older children in the UK appear to be spending more time in the company of peers, often unsupervised[114]. For example, 45% of 15-year-old boys spend most evenings out with their friends, compared with 17% in France, 53% of children aged 11 to 15 who meet friends outside the home say they are never accompanied by an adult. However, spending unsupervised time in the company of peers is not automatically problematic – it is lack of direct supervision combined with a lack of more long term monitoring by parents and carers that is associated with problems later in adolescence.

3.17 Evidence suggests that close association with peer groups with poor social norms can contribute to involvement in risky behaviour and poor outcomes for UK children. For example, over three-quarters of pupils who had ever smoked had tried their first cigarette with friends[115], and the association of meeting with friends and smoking is stronger for older children[116], with 13-year-olds spending time with friends being more likely than 11 year olds to start smoking, become drunk or regularly drink. The association is even stronger for 15 year olds.

3.18 Conversely, having friends not involved in delinquent behaviour reduces the likelihood of otherwise high risk individuals engaging in it.

Chart 3.2: Proportion of 15-year-olds spending time with friends four or more evenings a week



Source: Freedom's Orphan's IPPR

Bullying has been consistently reported by children and young people as a safety concern…

3.19 In the TellUs2 survey, 30% of children said that they had been bullied in school in the last four weeks, with 5% of all children saying that they were bullied on most days. Estimates of the prevalence of bullying vary from 31% to nearly 70%.[117] At the Children's Plan consultation events, bullying was a key concern, with young people worried that bullies can make school (and school buses) feel unsafe[118] – this worry was reflected in the TellUs2 survey with around one in four children saying that their most common worry is about bullying. Bullying is also picked up in the concerns of children contacting Childline, with the main reason for both boys and girls being recorded as bullying[119].

3.20 New technologies like the internet and mobile phones extend the reach of bullying. Recent research conducted by the Anti-Bullying Alliance identified that 22% of 11-16 year olds had been victims of 'cyberbullying' at least once.[120]

… with some children particularly at risk

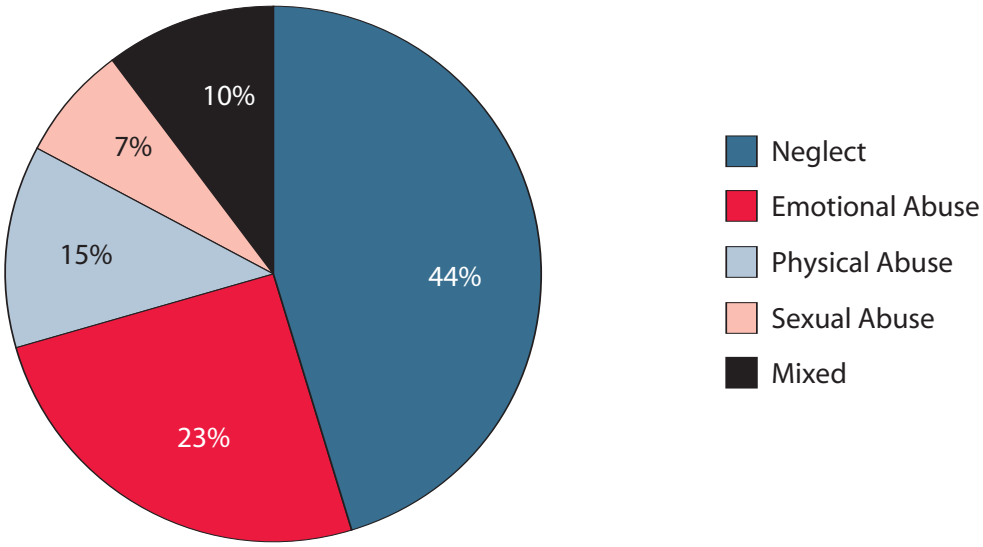
3.21 Children in care are sometimes bullied because they live with foster carers[121]. One recent study found that 65% of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people say that they experience bullying at school[122]. In mainly white schools, 25% of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced racist name-calling within the last week.[123] One survey found that more than two in five (41%) parents whose children had autism reported that their children have been bullied, with the figure rising to 59% for children with Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism.[124]

3.22 The latest international evidence on bullying is from a 2001 survey[125]. Looking at the proportion of children reported being bullied two or three times in the last couple of months, England was roughly mid-table. However, when looking at children's involvement in physical fighting, England was in the top quartile of countries for all age groups.

A minority of children are at risk from neglect and abuse

3.23 Most children and young people, when asked about their safety, do not list abuse as a main worry, and feel safe from abuse where they live.[126] However, a minority of children are at risk of abuse or neglect[127]. In a census week in 2005, of nearly 235,000 children and young people in England who received a service from children's social care services, nearly 87,000 were in need because of abuse or neglect[128]. At 31 March 2007, around 45% of the 27,900 children and young people on the Child Protection Register were on there due to concerns about neglect [I] [129].

Chart 3.3: Category of registration, Child Protection Register, 2007



3.24 The number of referrals to children's social care services has fallen in the last five years but the number of children subject to a child protection plan or on the child protection register has increased over the same time period[130]. However, not all cases of abuse and neglect are reported to social care services, and there is hence little evidence on whether the prevalence of abuse and neglect of children has changed over time.

3.25 There is also a lack of data to allow international comparisons because different countries measure abuse and neglect differently (the UK is fairly advanced in its measurement of child abuse and neglect compared to most other countries). However, the real extent of maltreatment may be higher than our administrative data collections identify.

I Defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development

3.26 Those who abuse children are most often someone the child or young person knows, and are frequently family (immediate or wider) or friends. Abuse by strangers is rare, and according to one study, only 5% of sexual abuse was carried out by an adult stranger or somebody the victims had just met.[131] Some children and young people do fear being kidnapped or abducted by strangers and although they may realise the chances of this happening are small, it is still something that concerns them greatly.[132]

3.27 In 2003, approximately 25% of people convicted for sexual offences were aged between 10 and 24.[133] Some groups of children and young people asked about safety thought that there was good protection in place nowadays from the risk of abuse by adults, but not from the risks posed by other children and young people.[134]

Child homicide rates have remained relatively constant

3.28 Where maltreatment is very serious, children and young people are at risk of death. Whilst the number of child homicides fluctuates by year, the overall rate of child homicide has remained relatively constant, neither significantly increasing nor decreasing. There has been an average of 79 victims of child homicide per year, over the last 30 years. In 2005/06 those most at risk of homicide were boys under one year of age, followed by young men aged 16-29. Boys are more likely to be the victims of homicide than girls, and on average around two in three child homicides are committed by the parents[135].

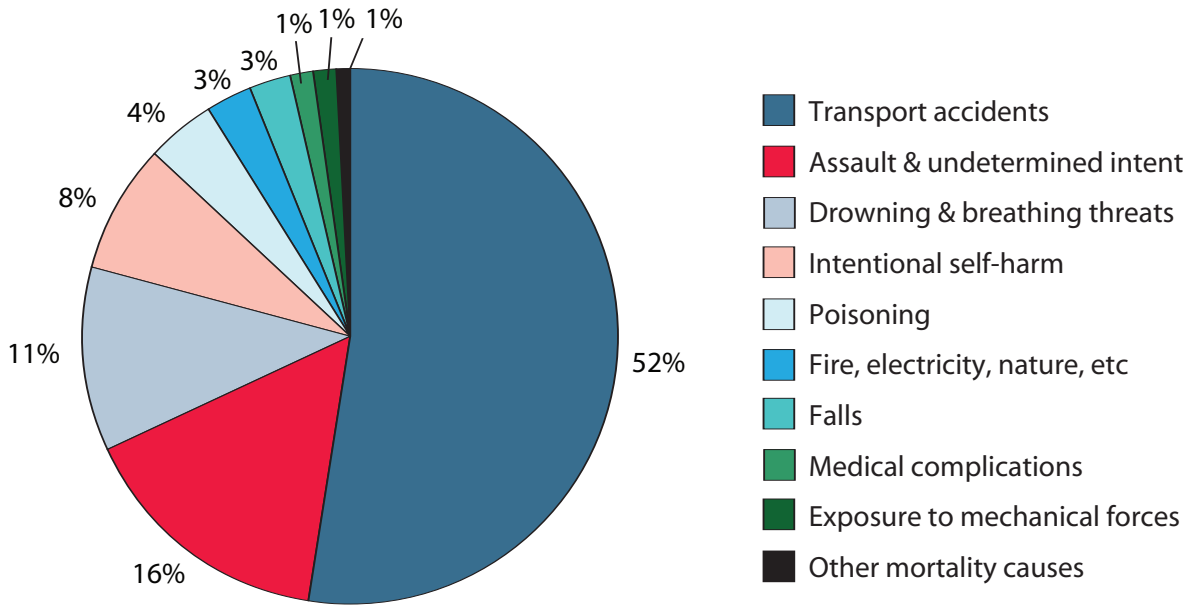
3.29 There is wide variation across Western countries in the number of deaths attributed to maltreatment, with the UK ranking in the middle of the range[136].

Children today are safer in many ways than previously…

3.30 Rates of deaths from injury fell from 11.1 deaths per 100,000 children per year around the 1981 census to 4.0 deaths per 100,000 children per year around the 2001 census. When compared to 23 other OECD countries, the UK is second only to Sweden in terms of protecting children under 19 from death due to accident, suicide, violence or murder[137]. Overall, and for every age group, child injury death rates in England and Wales are less than half those in the US.[138]

Road traffic deaths are reducing but remain high for 16-19 year olds

Chart 3.4: Underlying external causes of child injury deaths, aged 0 to 19, in 2005. (Source ONS, Table 2 series DH2 no.32)



3.31 Transport accidents are the most common cause of child injury death. However, good progress has been made in reducing road traffic accidents involving children. While child pedestrian deaths in the UK remain higher than in many other countries, the gap between the UK and the top performing countries is narrowing. In 2006, the number of children aged 0-15 killed or seriously injured in road accidents in Great Britain had fallen by 52% compared to the 1994-1998 baseline. However, progress has been slower with the 12-15 age group than with 0-11 year olds, and the number of 16-19s killed in 2006 was actually higher than the 1994-98 baseline.

Accident rates are higher for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

3.32 Whilst overall the rates of accidents amongst children and young people have been falling over recent years, those from poorer backgrounds remain most vulnerable. They are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury, and 37 times more likely to die as a result of exposure to smoke, fire or flames[J]. They are 3 times more likely to be hit by a car[K] and children in the lowest socio-economic group are 5 times more likely to die in a pedestrian accident than those in the highest socio-economic group[139].

Children are affected by crime and anti-social behaviour

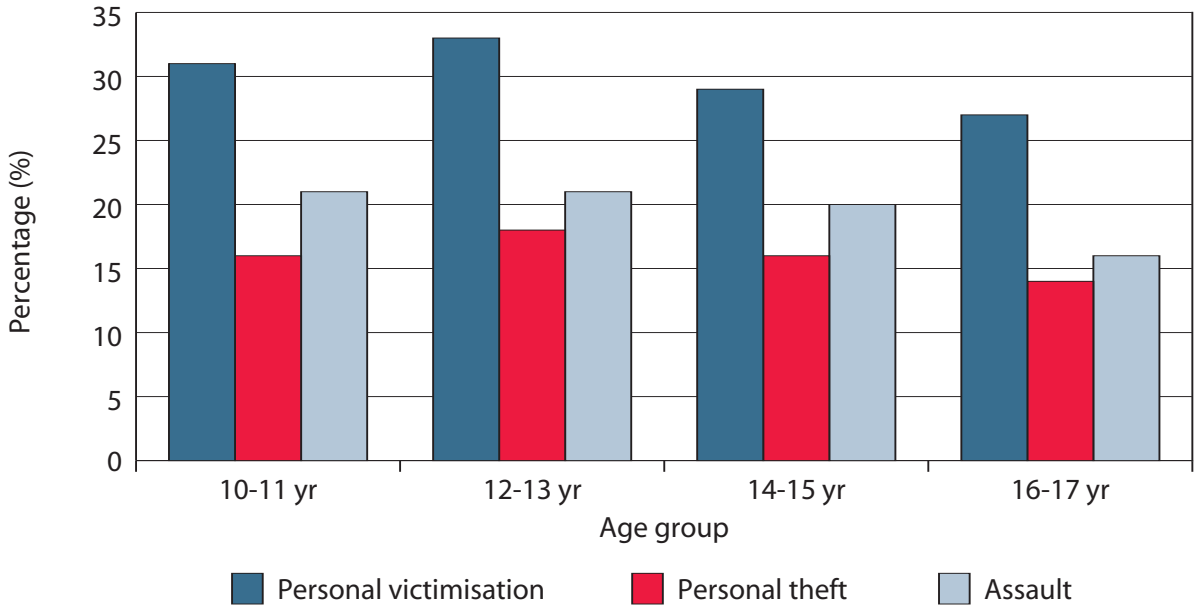
3.33 The most common forms of personal crimes against children and young people were assaults without injury – most of which take place at schools (10 to 15 year olds) – followed by theft, most of which involved stationery and sports equipment[L]:

J Children of parents who have never worked or who are long term unemployed compared to children of parents in higher managerial or professional occupations

K Children in the 10% most deprived wards compared to children in the 10% least deprived wards

L Data is not available to how many assaults and thefts are treated as bullying rather than crime.

Chart 3.5: Proportion of young people aged from 10 to 17 who were victims of crime once or more in the last 12 months, by age



Source: Adapted from *Young People and Crime: Findings from the 2005 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey* (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/06, December 2006), p.67

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Participants at the deliberative events feel there are more risks and challenges for children and young people now than for previous generations. Parental neglect is regarded as the greatest potential threat and the community as a whole was felt to have a responsibility to act on any warning signs. Young people worry about violence, crime and weapons and there is a desire for more police and better security both in local communities and in schools. There was a concern that bullying is taking new forms, for example through email and text messaging. There should be no toleration of bullying and young people should be encouraged to speak out about incidents.

Chapter 4
Achieving world class standards in education

Summary

4.1 Recent research has demonstrated the impact that high quality early years provision can have on cognitive and behavioural development, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are significant differences between individual pre-school settings and their impact on children, with some more effective than others in promoting positive child outcomes. Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress. The supply and quality of early year provision has improved over the last five years, although this has not yet been translated into clear improvements in measured outcomes at age 5.

4.2 In schools, teacher assessments of seven year olds have been relatively stable, but test results for children at ages 11, 14, and 16 have risen significantly over the last decade. These increases have coincided with a range of policies and interventions to improve literacy and numeracy and boost attainment. Attainment is also influenced by the effectiveness of teachers and the involvement of parents in their child's education. The number of schools with very few pupils achieving target levels of attainment has decreased significantly, although there is scope for further improvement and there are still a number of pupils who are not making the progress of which they are capable. There have been marked improvements in the rate of A-level successes and the achievement of qualifications by 19 year olds, and university entry rates have risen significantly in recent years. However, participation in education to 18 is relatively low in the UK compared to other countries.

4.3 Inspections identify very few schools with unsatisfactory behaviour, but pupils and teachers continue to perceive it as a concern. Absenteeism is falling, and a small number of individuals account for a disproportionate number of absences. Overall, relatively few pupils report being unhappy with school although English children do say they feel the pressure of school work and exams. They start school relatively early, and while there are no clear links between starting age and attainment, age within year can affect attainment with 'summer born' pupils doing less well in their early years of education. There are marked gender gaps in attainment in different subjects, mirroring international patterns, and at GCSE girls have consistently outperformed boys in recent years. The international evidence suggests that whilst standards have risen strongly, further improvement is needed to achieve a truly world class education for all pupils in England.

The quality of pre-school education influences intellectual development…

4.4 The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project found that pre-school experience of high quality education has long term benefits for child outcomes. The study showed that centre-based early education had a positive effect on children's all round development when they started school and through the early years of primary school to age 7 (the end of Key Stage1). At age 7, high quality pre-school provision combined with longer duration had the strongest effect on cognitive and social behavioural development. However, in terms of longer term benefits at age 10, it was the quality of pre-school education that made the critical difference. With the exception of pro-social behaviour, the effects of simply attending a pre-school, low quality provision or those of duration of attendance were no longer sufficient at age 10 to ensure better cognitive development.

4.5 Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings. However, quality was higher overall in settings integrating care and education and in nursery schools. Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress. Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all round progress.

… and the quantity of childcare provision has been expanding and its quality improving

4.6 The number of registered childcare places has more than doubled since 1997 from 638,000 to 1.29 million at September 2007 so that there is now a registered childcare place for 1 in 4 children under 8[140]. Growth has been concentrated in full day care and out of school provision and whilst the number of childminders declined between 1997 and 2002, levels have largely stabilised since then. Quality of childcare provision has improved over the last five years. A recent study[141] shows that the quality of provision for 3 to 5 year olds has improved across all sectors, particularly the voluntary sector, although maintained sector settings still provide the high provision quality.

So far there is no clear evidence of significant improvements in the early years of schooling

4.7 The very latest data on the Foundation Stage Profile[142] records an increase between 2006 and 2007 in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Foundation stage (age 5). Prior to this, the data had shown an apparent decline. At least some of the earlier decrease is likely to be due to assessment and moderation inconsistencies (the FSP was only introduced in 2003). Overall it is not possible to draw firm conclusions on the trends for this age group from this data. At age 7, the end of Key Stage 1[M] , the proportion of children reaching the expected level or above (level 2+) since 2000 has been relatively stable[N], although the figures rose in the initial period between 1997 and 2000. The proportions achieving the expected level in 2007 in reading, writing and maths were 84, 80 and 90 per cent respectively.[143]

M The Key Stage structure in English schools, starting with the Foundation Stage, is explained in an Annex to this report.

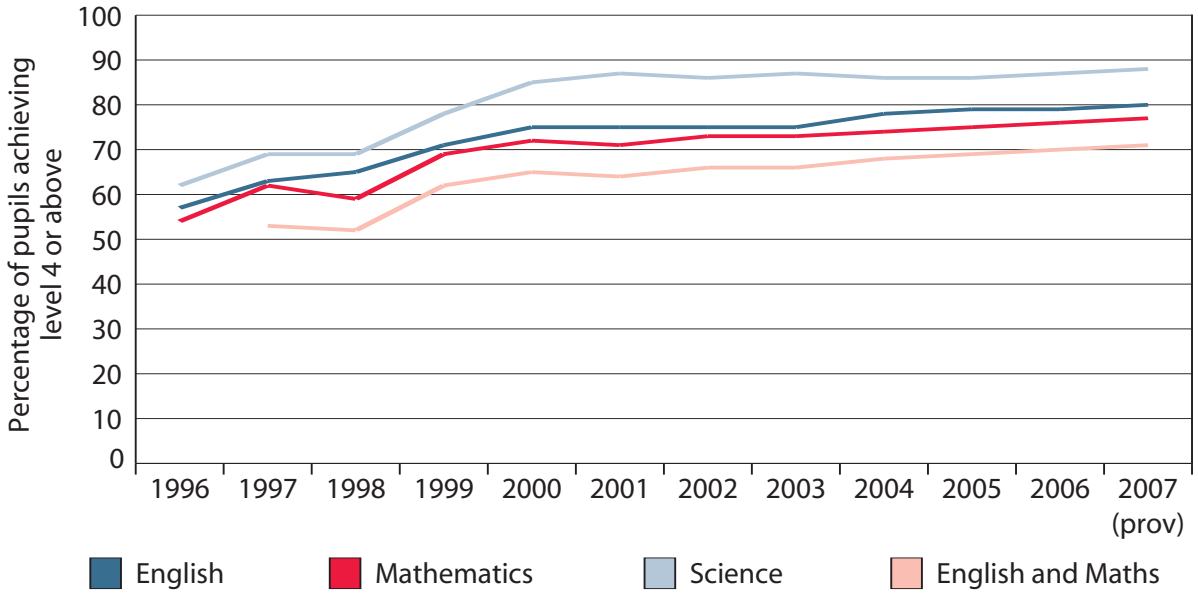
N Until 2003, KS1 scores were based on test data, just as for KS2. In 2004 some schools piloted teacher assessment of scores only, and in 2005 all schools moved onto a teacher assessment (TA) system.

But there have been significant improvements in test results for 11 year olds…

4.8 Most pupils progress two national curriculum levels between Key Stage 1 and 2 (81% in English and 73% in Maths). However, new national targets have been set to improve these rates in 2011 by 9 and 11 percentage points. At the end of Key Stage 2, results now stand at their highest ever levels: English – 80 per cent, maths – 77 per cent and science – 88 per cent achieving the expected level.[144] A new Public Sector Agreement indicator has been introduced that measures attainment of Level 4+ in English *and* mathematics. This currently stands at 71 per cent and has recently been rising at one percentage point a year. The target for 2011 is 78%, which will require a seven percentage point gain in four years.

4.9 Attainment at Key Stage 2 rose strongly in the initial years of the tests. Since 2000 there have been steady improvements, for example the proportion achieving both English and Maths at Level 4+ having increased by 6 percentage points. Many factors will have influenced these increases including rising levels of school resources and so it is difficult to isolate the effect of individual causes or policies. The direct effect of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies on standards is therefore hard to isolate, but the evaluation concluded that these programmes had had a substantial positive impact on the quality of teaching[145].

Chart 4.1: Achievement at Key Stage 2[146]



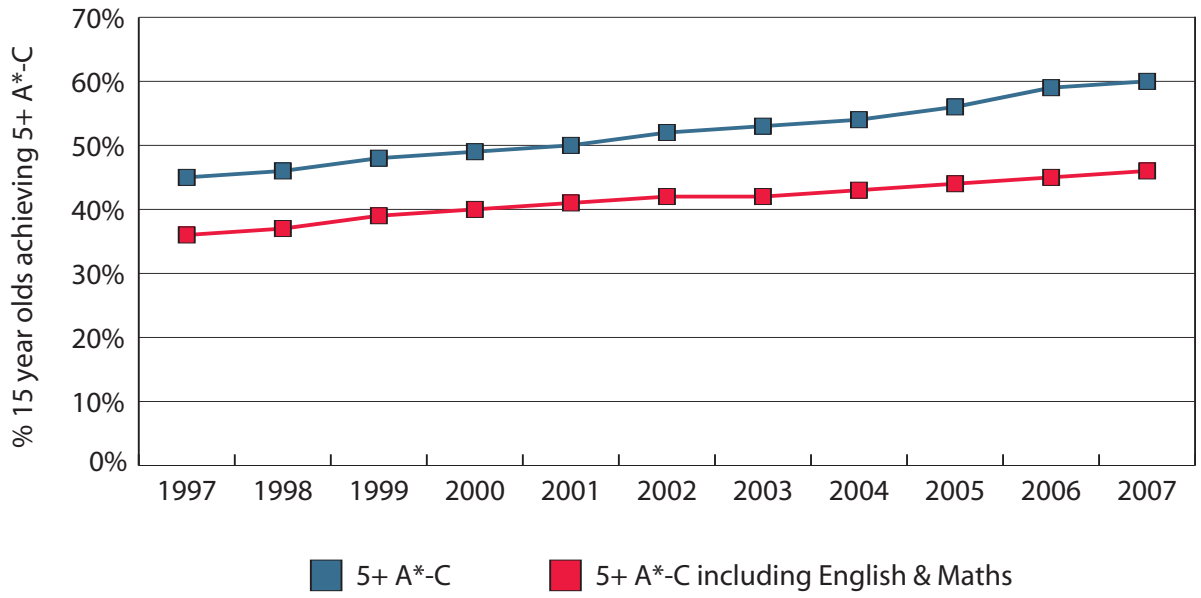
… and improvements in attainment for secondary school pupils

4.10 At Key Stage 3 there have also been steady improvements in recent years. The provisional results for 2007 show that there has been a rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at Key Stage 3 in English (74 per cent – up one percentage point), science (73 per cent – up one percentage point) and ICT (74 per cent – up three percentage points). 76 per cent of pupils reached the expected level in mathematics (down one percentage point)[147]. Results in the tests have risen steadily in recent years and some of these increases may be attributable to the various strands of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and subsequently the Secondary Strategy (Ofsted concluded that the Strategy has had a significant impact[148]).

4.11 The new Key Stage 3 target for 2011 is 74% of pupils achieving level 5+ in English and maths. This proportion currently stands at 67% and has recently been rising at a rate of around one percentage point a year (although there was no change between 2006 and 2007). Reaching the target will require a rise of seven percentage points over the next four years. There are also new targets for an increase in the proportions progressing significantly between Key Stage 3 and 4 (15 percentage points in English and 13 percentage points in Maths, on top of the current figures of 56% and 27%[O]).

4.12 At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving at least 5 A*-C has increased significantly over the last ten years, as has the proportion of pupils who achieve at least 5 A*-Cs including English and Maths GCSEs. At the end of key stage 4, 46.5% of pupils currently achieve 5+ A*-Cs including English and maths[P]. This has recently been rising at a rate of just under one percentage point a year, and diverging slightly from the overall 5 A*-C figure (as the chart shows). The target for 2011 is 53% which will require an increase of 6.5 percentage points over the next 4 years. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have benefited from a range of initiatives and targeted support. For example the provision of study support has helped boost results for some children: research found that pupils receiving this kind of support achieve on average one more A-C pass than other similar pupils[149].

Chart 4.2: Achievement at GCSE



O Progression between Key Stage 3 and 4 have been defined in terms broadly equivalent to the 'two levels' progress at earlier Key Stages: see HM Treasury (2007) *PSA Delivery Agreement 11*.

P This statistic, which is provisional, is defined on a different basis to the '15 year old' figure shown in the chart.

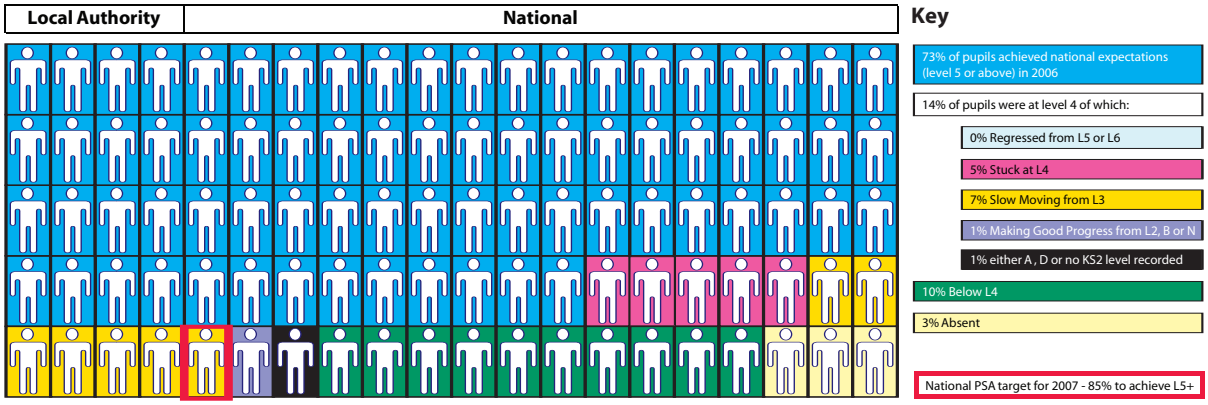
… although these improvements are not necessarily reflected in public perceptions

4.13 When parents and the public have been asked their opinion of education, around half thought the standard of primary school provision is good or very good, but this proportion was lower for secondary schools, at around a third. When asked whether 'exam results are now the best ever' only a minority agreed (35% of those interviewed in June 2006). Just over a quarter of those interviewed agreed that "standards in schools are the best ever" and "there are fewer poor performing schools"[150].

Results are improving, but some pupils are making slow progress

4.14 The chart below represents the cohort of pupils who took Key Stage 3 English in 2006, with each small figure representing 1 pupil in every 100. Most achieve the Level 5+ threshold. But of the fourteen pupils who achieved Level 4, seven had progressed only one level, from Level 3, and five were 'stuck' at the same level they had achieved at age 11. A further ten pupils achieved below Level 4. The chart also shows the proportion of those below the expected level who were in certain groups: FSM (entitled to free school meals), Statemented SEN (special educational needs), boys, and BME (from a Black or Minority Ethnic group). These figures show, for example, that a relatively small proportion of those not progressing to the expected level in 2006 had a statement of SEN, indicating that there is scope to improve progression rates at Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils progressing two curriculum levels between Key Stages 2 and 3 are 30% in English and 62% in mathematics (note, however, that the 'expected' rate of progress is one and a half levels over this three year period). New national targets for 2011 envisage increasing these percentages by 16 and 12 percentage points respectively.

Chart 4.3: Key Stage 3 English performance 2006



Summary	%L5+
National	73
National	73

Proportion Below Expected Level Who Are:	%
FSM	27
Statemented SEN	13
Boys	67
BME	18

And the reasons for this can relate to both school and pupil factors

4.15 Research as part of the Key Stage 3 Strategy found that pupils 'stuck' at Level 4 had become 'disappointed and demoralised. Throughout Key Stage 3, they were never really fully engaged or motivated by school. Some of them truanted from lessons, though not from

school as a whole. Some of them asked to be moved down a set; and of these, a surprising number then asked again, and a handful were in free fall through the sets'[151]. Such pupils would have liked some rewards and more attention from a mentor or a teacher who knew them well and in the round.

Pupils at different ages and with different educational needs progress at different speeds

4.16 Pupils born in the summer months achieve on average lower results at each key stage than pupils born in the autumn[152]. They are also more likely to be given special educational needs (SEN) status. Pupils with SEN have lower levels of performance at all Key Stages than non SEN pupils. This culminates in very few achieving 5 or more A* to C GCSEs or equivalent at Key Stage 4. Of those identified with SEN, those with statements have lower levels of performance than those without, reflecting their often higher level of need.[153]

Variations in teacher effectiveness strongly influences attainment levels

4.17 Research has shown that teaching is a key influence on attainment and that effective teachers can significantly influence pupil progress. For example, research into mathematics teaching in Tennessee showed that pupils who experienced three years of effective teaching were, on average, 50 percentile points ahead of similar pupils who experienced three years of poor teaching, and also ahead of those who received a mixture of good, average and poor teaching – indicating that consistently effective teaching is a strong independent influence on achievement.[154]

4.18 There is not a single set of teacher attributes and behaviour that is universally effective for all types of learning environments and pupils. However, a consistent finding is that effective teachers are intellectually capable and able to think, communicate and plan systematically[155]. Research has found that effective teachers typically: ensure pupils receive significant amounts of direct instruction, or teacher supervision when working in groups; set clear learning goals and provide carefully constructed feedback on pupils' progress towards those goals (including formative assessment); model new tasks or skills to promote independent learning; focus on, and train pupils in, cognitive and meta-cognitive skills; differentiate teaching according to individual pupil needs; and provide opportunities for well-planned group work and group discussion[156].

4.19 Positive relationships have been found between teachers' academic qualifications and pupil achievement. A recent review found a positive connection between teachers preparation in their subject matter and student performance but also noted that there appears to be a threshold of subject matter knowledge necessary for effective teaching beyond which higher levels (as measured by academic qualifications) are not associated with student gains[157]. Research has revealed a range of skills and attributes that contribute to teacher effectiveness. Variation in teacher effectiveness over time is not simply a consequence of age or experience but is influenced by their professional life phase, their sense of professional identity, their commitment and resilience, leadership and continuing professional development[158].

And parental involvement has a significant impact

4.20 In the early years, parental involvement has a significant impact on children's cognitive development and literacy and numeracy skills[159]. Parental involvement in a child's schooling for a child between the ages of 7 and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family and level of parental education[160], and parental involvement has a significant effect on pupil achievement throughout the years of schools[161]. Conversely, educational failure is increased by lack of parental interest in schooling[162].

4.21 The benefits of successful programmes of family learning result in a number of benefits including improved standards in numeracy and literacy, positive behavioural and attitudinal changes, and enhanced confidence and self-esteem[163].

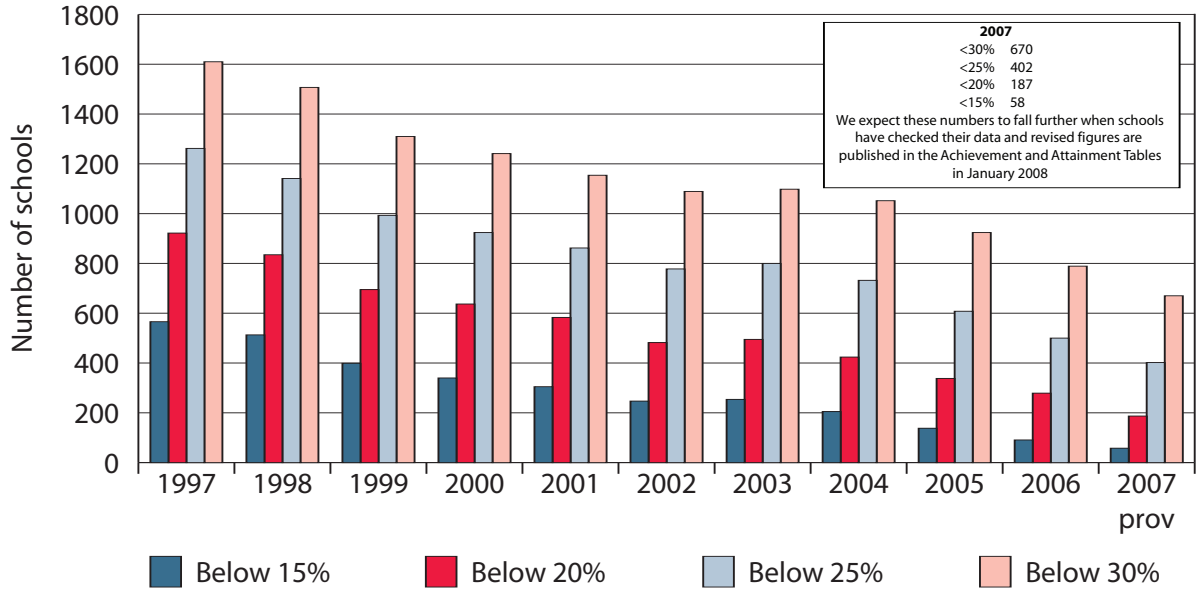
Although parents would like to be involved more

4.22 In England in 2001, approximately one in three parents (29%) felt very involved in their child's school life, but more than seven in ten parents (72%) agreed that they wanted more involvement in their children's education. When asked about barriers to becoming involved, parents cited the competing demands in their lives such as work commitments, demand of other children, childcare difficulties and lack of time generally. Primary school parents were more likely to feel involved than secondary school parents – this may be because secondary schools were seen as less welcoming than primary schools, although there was little evidence of dissatisfaction with the way these schools communicate. There was strong support for extra-curricular initiatives that enable parents to help out but also recognition that these projects would place extra demands upon schools.[164]

The proportion of schools achieving low results has fallen significantly

4.23 Since 1997, the proportion of primary schools where fewer than 65% of pupils achieve level 4 and above in English has fallen from 50 per cent to 12 per cent in 2007. Similarly for Maths, the proportion of primary schools where fewer than 65% of pupils achieving level 4 and above in maths has fallen from 47% in 1997 to 16% in 2007. There is a similar story at GCSE – in 1997, 51% of secondary schools had fewer than 30% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C including English and maths. In 2007, this had fallen to 22% of schools. Various policies have targeted these deprived schools – for example, Excellence in Cities, the London Challenge and the Academies programme – and evaluation evidence suggests that they have helped improve results[165]. However, at the end of October 2007 there were still 43 secondary schools and 184 primary schools in special measures. And there are still some schools with persistent low performance, e.g. 123 primary schools where fewer than 65% of pupils have achieved level 4 and above in both English and maths in every single year since 2001.

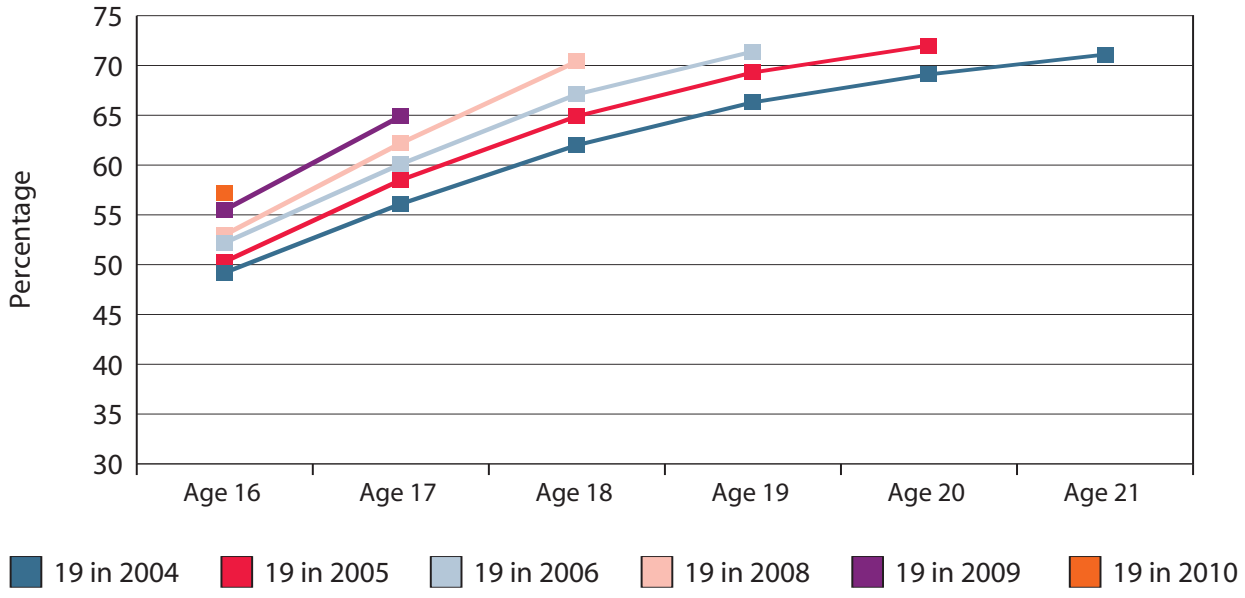
Chart 4.4: Schools attaining below certain thresholds for the proportion achieving 5 or more GCSEs including English and mathematics



Attainment is rising for students in post-compulsory education

4.24 Participants' success in A-levels has continued to rise. In schools and sixth form colleges in England in 1996, 85.6 per cent of 16-18 yrs entrants achieved a pass (grade A to E) and 16.2 per cent got an A. These had risen to 97.3 per cent and 25.2 per cent respectively by 2007[166]. More generally there have been increases in the proportions of young people age 19 achieving full level 2 and level 3 qualifications[167]. In 2004 two thirds of 19 year olds (66 per cent) had a full level 2; by 2006, as the chart here show, this had risen to 71 per cent. At level 3, attainment at 19 has increased from 42 per cent in 2004 to 47 per cent in 2006.

Chart 4.5: Proportion of young people qualified to level 2 or higher, by age and cohort

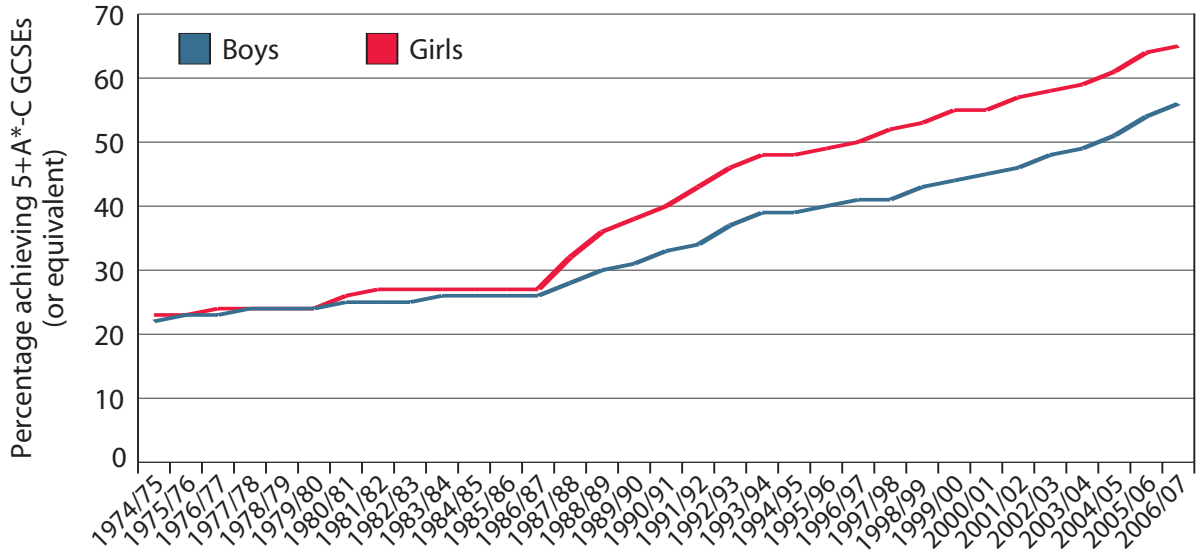


4.25 Success rates in FE and, in particular, Apprenticeships have increased substantially in recent years. In FE Colleges, course success rates for 16-18 year olds have risen from 63 per cent in 2002 to 75 percent in 2006. Success rates in Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds have risen from 27 per cent to 54 per cent over the same period[168].

However, there are gender gaps in attainment in schools and colleges

4.26 The attainment gap by gender is marked at Key Stage 4, and widened dramatically in favour of girls between 1986 and 1998. Provisional figures for 2007 show 65 per cent of girls reached the threshold of five or more GCSEs at A*-C, compared to 56 per cent for boys.[169] There is some recent evidence of a slight narrowing of the attainment gap between boys and girls on this measure but on the 5+ A*-C including English and Maths threshold, the gap has widened slightly. Girls also do better in the majority of GCSE subjects. Subsequently, girls are more likely to be in post-compulsory education and training, and the gap between boys and girls has widened in recent years, now standing at over 5 per cent at age 16. Higher attainment for girls explains at least part of this.[170]

Chart 4.6: Attainment of 5+A*-C GCSEs or equivalent by gender



4.27 The gender gap in English in favour of girls has been wide and persistent over five decades of exam records, and from the Foundation Stage through to GCSE. In contrast, the narrower gender gap in Maths has shifted from a male advantage up to the mid-1990s to a slim female advantage from 1997 to the present. There is also evidence of a very slight narrowing of the attainment gap at level 2 at age 19 years, from 10.3 percentage points in 2004 to 10.1 percentage points in 2006.[171] Other attainment gaps are discussed in the next chapter.

Inspection results show very few schools with unsatisfactory behaviour, although pupils and teachers continue to report it as a major problem

4.28 OFSTED reports that standards of behaviour are good or better in the overwhelming majority of schools. And the very small proportion of schools at which behaviour is judged unsatisfactory is lower than in 1997. In 1997/98 2% of primary and 6% of secondary schools were judged unsatisfactory on behaviour. In 2006/07 those figures were less than half of one percent and 2%.[172]

4.29 In a survey of UK pupils,[173] 86 per cent said their learning was hindered to some extent by the disruption of classes by other students, whilst 28 per cent suggest that noise and disruption occur in most or all of their lessons.

4.30 31 per cent of teachers identified pupil behaviour and discipline as one of the main de-motivating factors that they experienced at work[174] and 34 per cent of teachers leaving the profession cited it as a major contributory factor for leaving[175]. There is an issue here about perceptions of unsatisfactory behaviour versus actual levels of unsatisfactory behaviour. When asked about standards of behaviour, the public had a better perception of behaviour in schools locally than in schools generally. In June 2006 38% thought that standards of behaviour in their local schools were getting better or staying the same, compared to only 19% when behaviour in schools generally was considered[176]. However, it is clear that where unsatisfactory behaviour does exist that, is detrimental to learning.

Absenteeism in schools is falling, and a small proportion of individuals account for a disproportionate number of absences

4.31 School absenteeism measured as proportion of half days missed has fallen. In primary schools, unauthorised absence has been fairly stable since 1996/97; latest annual figures show that 0.45% of all absences were unauthorised. Authorised absence, reduced from 5.6 per cent in 1996/7 to 5.0 per cent in 2004/5 then rose slightly to 5.3 per cent in 2005/6 as a result of unusually high levels of sickness. Research suggests that interventions may have an impact on non-attendance in primary school[177]. Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilots pointed to reductions in unauthorised absence in some groups of schools.

4.32 In secondary schools, there has been an overall decline since 2000 in the authorised and total absence rates, with the exception of rises in 2000/01 and 2005/06 (the latter resulting from unusually high levels of sickness). The unauthorised absence rate has, however, shown a slight increase since 1997.[178] In 2005/06, 7% (215,000) of secondary pupils were 'persistent absentees' – pupils absent for 20% or more of the school year. These persistent absentees accounted for 30% of overall absence and 61% of unauthorised absence[179]. Schools have recently been encouraged to focus on overall and persistent absence. The latter is a better indicator of 'problem absence' than unauthorised absence, which can rise as a result of schools taking a tougher line on whether or not to authorise absence.

English pupils report feeling more pressurised than those in other countries

4.33 Fewer English pupils report that they 'like school a lot' and they feel more pressurised by school work than pupils in other countries. Only one in five (19%) of English children reported that they 'like school at lot' compared to an average of 23% in 21 OECD countries in 2001/02[180]. In the same survey, a higher proportion of 11, 13 and 15 year olds in England reported feeling pressurised by schoolwork than the average of 35 developed countries[181].

4.34 However, it is unclear whether this is due to the pressure of taking exams themselves. The Netherlands has the lowest proportion of young people who report feeling pressurised by schoolwork, but around 80 to 90% of children take national tests at the end of primary school. France has compulsory national testing at age 8 and 11 and also has a low proportion of young people feeling pressurised[182]. However, results from the TellUs2 survey suggest that the most common worry for children was exams (see chapter 2).

4.35 In 2001/02, English 11 year olds and 13 year olds reported spending a lot less time doing homework. (E.g. under 7% of English 13 year old boys spend 3 hours or more doing homework on weekdays, compared to an average of around 15% among 34 developed countries). However, by the age of 15 the proportion in England spending 3 hours or more on homework on weekdays is equal to the average.

But relatively few pupils report being unhappy with school work

4.36 In the 2004 Families and Children Survey (FACS)[183], only 11% of British 11 to 15 year olds reported being unhappy (to varying degrees) with their school work. However, although always fairly low, this does increase with age. For 15 year olds, it is 17% compared to 8% for 11 year olds. The survey does not show how much of this is due to increased pressure of work.

Children in England start school at a relatively young age

4.37 Pupils in England start school at a relatively early age compared to other European countries. The table below shows the wide range of starting ages for full-time compulsory education.[184]

Age Children Start Compulsory Full-time Schooling

Age 4	Age 5	Age 6		Age 7
Luxembourg	Latvia	Belgium	Italy	Denmark
Northern Ireland	Hungary	Czech Republic	Cyprus	Estonia
	Malta	Germany	Lithuania	Poland
	Netherlands	Greece	Austria	Finland
	Great Britain	Spain	Portugal	Sweden
		France	Slovenia	Bulgaria
		Ireland	Slovakia	Romania
		Norway	Iceland	

Source: EURYDICE

4.38 In developed economies, there are broadly two approaches to early childhood education[185]. The 'school readiness' model (US, UK, France, Netherlands) focuses on learning and skills, especially in areas useful for school readiness and is mainly teacher directed. The 'social pedagogy' or 'Kindergarten' model (Scandinavia, Central Europe) focuses on working with the whole child, where developmental goals as well as learning are pursued and formal schooling typically commences later, around age 6-7.

4.39 An in-depth comparison of the two approaches comes from OfSTED's review of 6-year old education in England (school readiness), Denmark and Finland (social pedagogy). This qualitative study notes that Finland consistently out-performs the UK and Demark in international tests, such as PISA. However, on the surface, Finland and Demark have very similar education systems in early primary settings, so the differences in attainment may relate to other factors in these countries' educational systems and attitudes to education[186].

Overall, international evidence on educational attainment is mixed

4.40 Whilst measured against the English school curriculum, standards of attainment have risen over a number of years, wider tests of pupils' literacy in reading, mathematics and science present a mixed picture of our international performance. In 2003 TIMSS (the Trends in International Mathematics and Science study) ranked England 7th best performing out of 46 countries for Grade 8 (13 to 14 year olds) Science. For Grade 8 Maths, the picture was not so positive. England was 18th highest performing country of 46 and of the 14 OECD countries who took part in the survey, England came only 10th. For Grade 4 maths (9 to 10 year olds) there were 25 countries taking part and England ranked 10th of these 25 (Scotland ranked 18th). Of the 25 countries, 14 were non-OECD members, leaving 9 plus England and Scotland. Of this last group of 11 OECD countries, England ranked 4th. New results from PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading and Literacy study) will be available shortly.

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Nearly one in three respondents to the consultation surveys agreed that a good education is important in ensuring children are "happy, healthy and safe". In terms of local services, schools emerged as providing the best service, with respondents mentioning both their role in achieving good grades and their broader support role. Teachers were praised for helping pupils with health and other problems outside school. Both parents and teachers consulted for the Children's Plan felt that greater parental involvement could create positive experiences of education. There was a concern that parents can feel marginalised in secondary schools, only able to speak to teachers at parents' evenings.

Respondents felt that children need to be treated as individuals with a home life and not simply looked at in terms of their attainment level. One in ten of the respondents to the consultation surveys thought that there was too much emphasis on testing in schools. There was a concern that children focus on exams and academic subjects at too early an age and that there needs to be more emphasis on life skills. It was suggested that the school entry age be raised to six in line with practice in other countries. Some respondents suggested class size reduction and the creation of more quiet spaces for study could improve schooling.

Chapter 5 Closing the gap in educational achievement for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

Summary

5.1 The number of children in relative poverty has fallen over the last decade by 600,000, but this proportion is still relatively high by European standards. Babies born into poverty are more likely to be premature and have low birth weight and this is strongly linked to health and developmental difficulties. As they develop, poverty influences many outcomes but has a significant impact on educational achievement and the potential to acquire important non-cognitive skills. There is evidence that by the time children finish primary school, the effect of socio-economic status is more important than early ability at 22 months. While achievement has been rising in schools and colleges, children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to do less well than their peers, and our tail of under-achievement is longer than in some other countries. There have been significant improvements in the results for schools in deprived areas over the last ten years. However, this has not led to clear reductions in the attainment gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils.

5.2 The impact of deprivation helps explain why pupils from some minority ethnic groups achieve lower results than white pupils. Some minority ethnic pupils are concentrated in certain schools. Attainment at school is particularly low for pupils from Gypsy or Traveller families. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) tend to make less progress than their peers, but they are also more likely to be from deprived backgrounds than children without SEN. Looked after children achieve particularly poor attainment levels. However, the proportions of looked after children remaining in full-time education after year 11 is increasing, as is the proportion in education, training or employment at 19. There are significant gaps in participation in full-time education and training, based on gender, ethnicity, social class and region. However, there are early signs that neighbourhoods with little tradition of university participation are starting to supply more students.

The number of children in poverty is falling…

5.3 Average household income in the UK has risen strongly over the last 15 years, with income for households with children rising faster than for the population as a whole. And child poverty, on all measures, has been falling over the last decade. In particular, the proportion of children living in relative (low income) poverty, the most common measure, has fallen by around 17 per cent since 1996/97[187]. The Government objective is to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. In 2005/06 the number of children living in relative poverty had fallen by 600,000[188] compared to 1998/99; the target is to reduce numbers of children living in poverty from 3.4 to 1.7 million by 2010.

…but remains a significant problem

5.4 Despite this progress, 2.8 million children[189] are living in relative income poverty, 22 per cent of the total, and children are still more likely to be in a low-income household than the population as a whole, with some groups, such as those in workless households, particularly vulnerable. The proportion of children under-16 living in working-age workless households in Great Britain has fallen in most years since 1997, standing at 16 per cent in 2007 quarter 2 compared with 18.7 per cent in 1997[190]. However, Britain still has one of the highest proportions of children living in workless households in the EU.

5.5 Poverty is relatively evenly split between children in lone parent and couple families. Although living in a lone parent or workless household are associated with a higher proportionate risk of poverty, the majority of the 2.8 million children judged to be in poverty are from couple households, 1.7 million, and the majority of these are in a household where at least one person works, some 1.1 million.[191]

Poverty can blight every aspect of a child's life

5.6 Babies born into poor families are more likely to be premature and have low birth weight. This can often lead to impaired development and health problems in adult life. Children in poorer families are more likely to suffer from respiratory infection, gastro-enteritis, dental caries and tuberculosis. Poverty can also affect the quality of a child's diet. In terms of mental health, there is evidence that children from unskilled, working-class backgrounds are three times as likely to have a mental disorder as children from professional backgrounds (14.5% compared to 5.2%). The rate for families where the parents had never worked was 21.1%.

5.7 Children of parents who have never worked or are long term unemployed are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die from exposure to fire. Children from lower socio economic groups are five times as likely to die in a pedestrian accident, and there are large socio-economic differences in death by homicide.

5.8 Children from poor families and backgrounds are less likely to do well in school, achieving low or no qualifications, and they are less likely to participate in further or higher education or training. Poverty can affect a child's social confidence and relationships with peers: children report that being seen to be poor carries a great stigma and fear of being excluded by their better off peers. People living in poverty are more likely to live in poor quality housing and in a worse physical environment. Poverty can limit children's opportunities to play safely and their access to leisure opportunities. There is lower participation in constructive activities from social groups C2, D and E, with a quarter of 12-18 year olds not participating in any constructive activity.

5.9 Children raised in poverty and material deprivation are at higher risk of living in poverty as adults, and of experiencing negative outcomes such as teenage parenthood, poor housing, disaffection, alcohol or drug abuse, anti-social or criminal behaviour, and unemployment or low wages.

Home environment is more important than disadvantage in the early years

5.10 The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project found that the quality of the learning environment of the home (where parents are actively engaged in activities with children) promoted intellectual and social development in all children. Although parents' social class and levels of education were related to child outcomes the quality of the home learning environment was more important and the home learning environment is only moderately associated with social class[192].

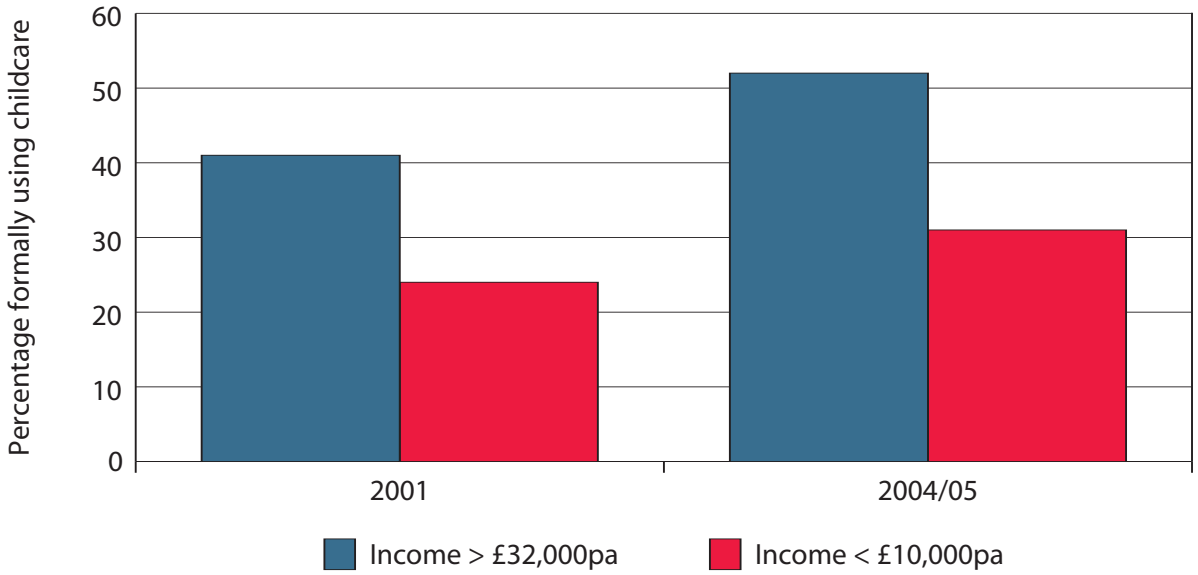
However, disadvantaged children do benefit from good quality pre-school education...

5.11 The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project found that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially where they are with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds. The project also showed that one in three children were 'at risk' of developing learning difficulties at the start of pre-school, but this proportion fell to one in five by the time they started primary school, suggesting that pre-school can be an effective intervention for the reduction of special educational needs, especially for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children[193].

...Although their take-up of childcare is relatively low

5.12 Disadvantaged children tend to attend pre-school for shorter periods of time than those from more advantaged groups (around 4-6 months less)[194]. Lower income groups, families in disadvantaged areas, some black and minority ethnic groups and families with children with disabilities and special needs all use formal childcare less. While families in all income groups have increased their use of formal childcare since 2001, the greatest increases have been in the higher income groups[195]. In the UK, ALSPAC (a study of children born in the early 1990s) compared centre based childcare, other paid-for childcare (such as by child minders), and unpaid care (such as by friends and relatives). It found that, up to age 4, long hours of care (20 or more hours a week) by unpaid carers was associated with poorer cognitive development, and up to age 2, it was also associated with worse behaviour[196]. However, some other studies have found no negative effects from the use of informal childcare[197].

Chart 5.1: Use of formal childcare by income level



5.13 There are also variations in use of childcare by ethnic groups. Just over 40% of white families use formal childcare, whereas the figure is higher for Black Caribbean families (54%). Pakistani (38%), Indian (34%) and Bangladeshi (29%) families are the ethnic groups least likely to use childcare and this could prove to be a further issue, since they are the ethnic groups that are more likely to be living in poverty[198].

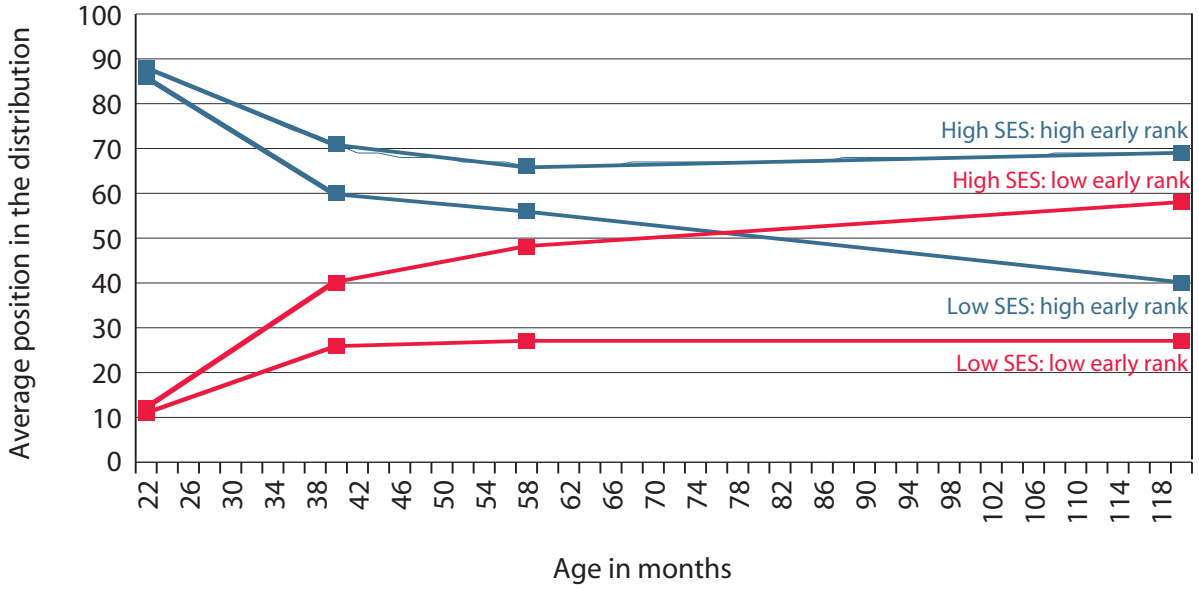
And take-up is lower in deprived areas

5.14 Take up of childcare remains lower in the most deprived areas. Overall supply of childcare places is increasing, for example through the activity of Sure Start Children's Centres (80% of childcare places provided in children's centres are located in the most disadvantaged areas). Between 2005 and 2006 there was a large growth in the number of out of school and holiday club places but a substantial decline in the number of full day care and sessional places. It is likely that there are both supply and demand issues contributing to these declines.

Social class starts to have an early effect and its impact is cumulative...

5.15 Research shows that social class impacts on early development and by the time children reach the end of primary schooling, it may be more influential than early ability measured at 22 months[199]. This is shown in Chart 5.2, where a group of children's ability levels were assessed at four time points. The results imply that during primary schooling, the low ability children from families in the high Socio Economic Status (SES) group overtook the high ability children from families in low SES families.

Chart 5.2: Social Class and Development



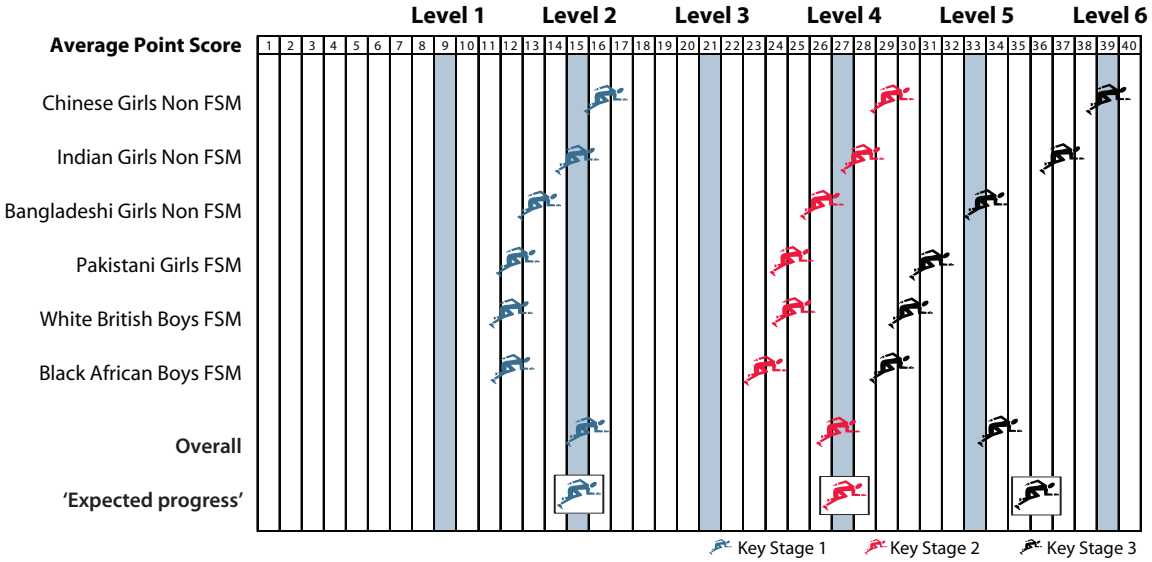
Source: Feinstein (2003) "Inequality in the Early Cognitive Development of British Children in the 1970 cohort", *Economica*, p73-97.

5.16 Although this research uses 1970 British Cohort Study, it is supported by more recent evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study[200]. Vocabulary scores of the sons and daughters of graduates were 12 months ahead of those with the least-educated parents by the age of three. A second 'school readiness' assessment measuring understanding of colours, letters, numbers, sizes and shapes found a gap of 13 months between the two groups. The equivalent gaps for children in families living above and below the poverty line used by the researchers were 8 months for vocabulary and 9 months for school readiness.

and progression rates vary between different groups of pupil…

5.17 The chart shows the average point score attained at the end of each key stage by certain subgroups of pupils. The chart shows that attainment gaps between different groups are already large by the time children are nine years old at Key Stage 1. The gaps then become more pronounced by age 14 at Key Stage 3. Boys entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) from Black African families, for example, were only achieving at age 14 the standards achieved at age 11 by girls from the Chinese ethnic group not entitled to FSM.

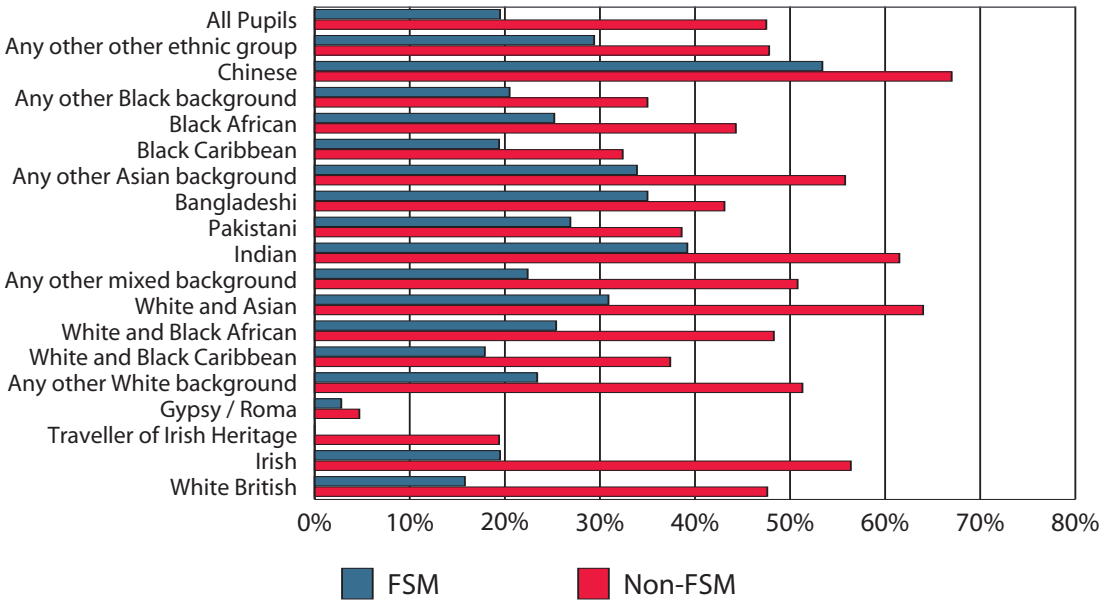
Chart 5.3: 2006 mean average point score at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 for the 2006 KS3 cohort



…resulting in attainment gaps by ethnic group

5.18 Since 1997, whilst total pupil numbers have barely changed, the BME group has increased in size by nearly one-third.[201] Indian, Chinese, Irish and White and Asian pupils consistently have higher levels of attainment than other ethnic groups across all Key Stages and attainment at 19[202]. In contrast, Travellers of Irish Heritage, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils consistently have lower levels of attainment than other ethnic groups across all the Key Stages and Gypsy/Roma pupils do particularly badly.[203] Variations in attainment for the different ethnic groups are partly attributable to different levels of deprivation. The chart here shows that the difference in attainment between FSM and non-FSM pupils is larger for White British pupils than for some of the other minority ethnic groups.

Chart 5.4: Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more grades A*-C including English and Maths at GCSE and equivalent in 2006 by ethnicity and free school meal



5.19 Controlling for prior attainment and other family background variables, most ethnic groups make more progress than White British pupils with similar characteristics and levels of prior attainment. The exceptions tend to be Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage pupils. During primary schooling, Pakistani and Black Caribbean pupils also make less progress after controlling for prior attainment and family background. Research suggests that some of the greater progress by non-White pupils may be explained by additional neighbourhood characteristics and the attitudes of pupils and parents.

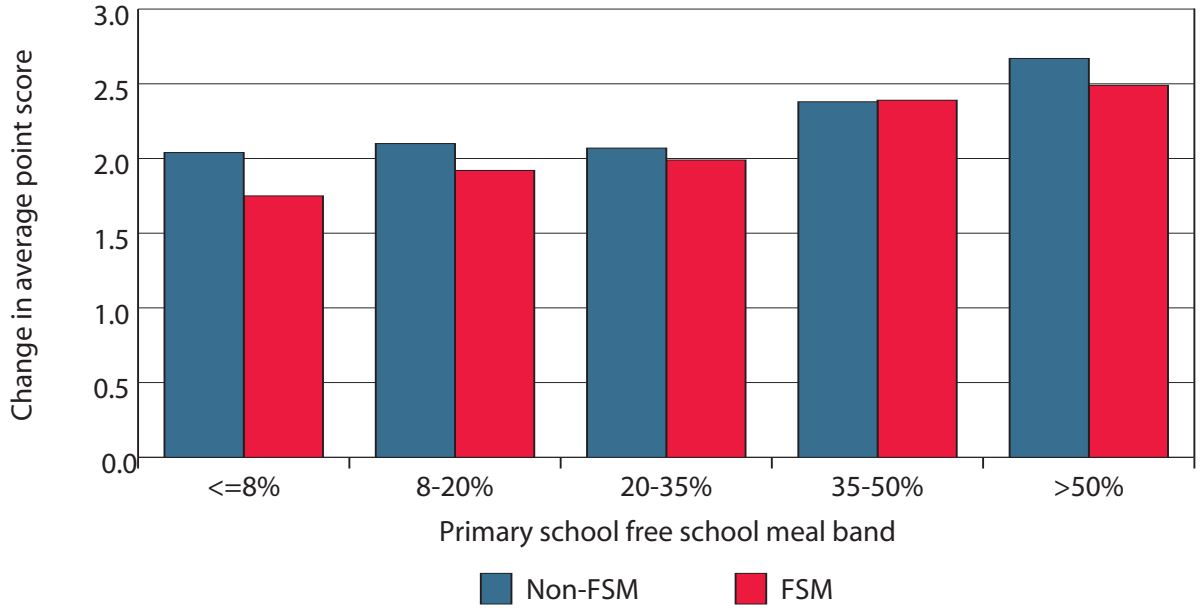
Residential and school segregation for ethnic minorities can affect community cohesion

5.20 There is segregation at residential and school level of Pakistani pupils within local authorities. Some schools are more segregated than the residential area in which they are based, while some are less segregated. Research among young Bangladeshis has shown that many of them feel that segregation leads to a lack of cultural understanding[204]. They felt it was important to learn about different cultures at school and many felt their education had been segregated. On the other hand, research has found that 48% of Muslim parents would prefer to send their child to a Muslim school.

There are attainment gaps by social class and levels of deprivation

5.21 Although headline standards have risen and the performance of schools in deprived areas has improved faster than in more affluent areas, there has been limited progress in narrowing attainment gaps for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (when using Free School Meals (FSM) as a proxy for disadvantage). The chart here divides pupils into groups based on the proportion of FSM pupils in their schools (called FSM bands). It shows that Key Stage 2 results in schools with the most FSM pupils are estimated to have increased the most since 1998. However, in almost all bands, it is the non-FSM pupils whose results have increased the most on average.

Chart 5.5: Change in KS2 average point score for schools by FSM status and school band 1998 – 2006



Source: DCSF analysis of the National Pupil Database

5.22 At age 16, the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils has not narrowed on the threshold measure of achieving five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at A*-C, although there has been a slight narrowing on the broader measure ("Level 2") that does not include English and mathematics. At age 19 the equivalent Level 2 attainment gap has narrowed by 0.6 percentage points between 2005 and 2006. The gap also narrows substantially between ages 16 and 19. For the cohort aged 19 in 2006, the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM fell from 30.5 percentage points at age 16 to 26.6 percentage points at age 19.[205]

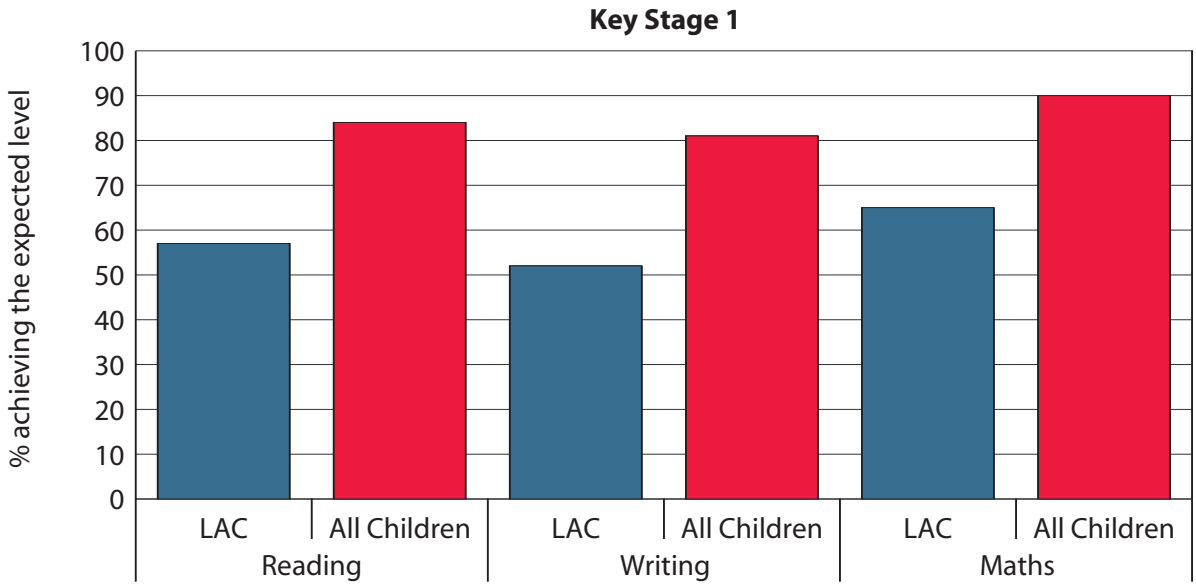
Deprived pupils with special educational needs have relatively low levels of attainment

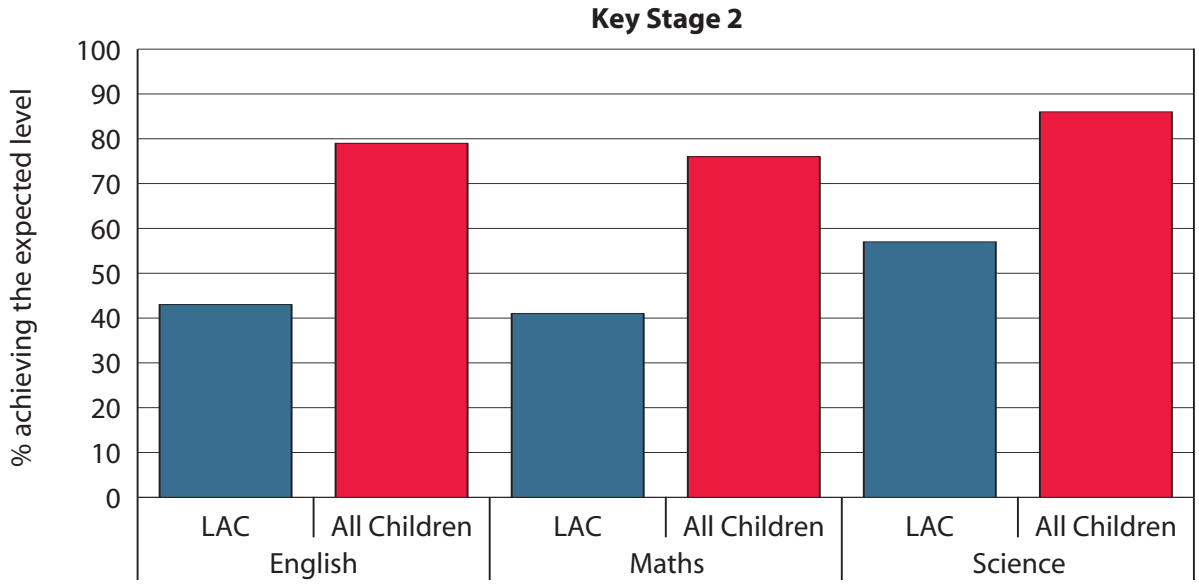
5.23 Deprived pupils are more likely to have special education needs. The proportion of FSM pupils is much higher for pupils with SEN than for those pupils with no SEN. In January 2007, some 28 per cent of pupils with SEN (with and without statements) were known to be eligible for free school meals in primary schools compared with around 13 per cent of pupils with no SEN. In secondary schools the comparable figures were almost 25 per cent for pupils with SEN and almost 11 per cent for pupils with no SEN[206]. Among SEN pupils in maintained schools, those entitled to FSM have on average lower attainment in the Key Stage tests[207].

Children in care also have lower attainment levels

5.24 Children in public care have very poor levels of attainment – 47% of looked-after children (LAC) achieved the expected level at Key Stage 2, compared with 81% for all children. Sixty six per cent of looked after children in year 11 sat at least one GCSE or GNVQ in 2006, up from 59 per cent in 2004[208].

Chart 5.6: Achievements at Key Stage 1 and 2 by Looked after Children[209]





And children with caring responsibilities find it more difficult to achieve in school

5.25 Research to date on children with caring responsibilities has been limited, and this is an area about which we need to find out more. However, the research that has been carried out indicates a high level of concern among professionals in education and other services about the education of young carers. The key educational difficulties identified through research on young carers include absence, lateness, tiredness, bullying, restricted peer networks in school, poor attainment, anxiety, behavioural problems and poor quality homework[210].

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to develop important non-cognitive skills

5.26 Analysis of social mobility shows that the strong relationship between parental income and children's educational attainment can partly be ascribed to the influence of non-cognitive skills which influence education outcomes[211]. Non-cognitive or social skills are strongly dependent on family background and other characteristics of the home learning environment. However, research suggests that social skills may be more impressionable than cognitive skills, which suggests there is scope for education policy to affect them[212].

Parental aspirations can affect post-compulsory participation

5.27 Parents and families provide important role models to young people and are a key influence on their values and aspirations. Parents tend to develop aspirations for their children based on their own experiences: for example, parents from lower social classes or with lower qualification levels are more likely to think their children will 'peak' at GCSEs than those from higher social classes or with higher qualifications[213]. There is scope to develop a better understanding of how and why positive aspirations are transmitted from parents to children.

Some groups remain underrepresented in further and higher education

5.28 There are significant and sustained gaps in participation in post-16 full-time education and training, based on gender, ethnicity, social class and region. For example, all ethnic groups are more likely to be in education and training than white students at 16, and therefore less likely to have entered the labour market, and apprenticeships are a much more popular route for white 16 year olds than any other ethnic group.[214] There is a significant and sustained social class gap in participation in full-time education and training. Much, but not all, of the social class gap in participation can be explained by differences in prior attainment.[215] When it comes to higher education, there are differences in which institutions young people apply for and are accepted into. In 2004/05, 19.5% of young full-time first degree entrants in Russell Group[Q] institutions were from the bottom four socio-economic groups, compared to 28.2% of all young full-time first degree entrants in UK higher education institutions[216].

5.29 There are clear regional differences in participation in full-time education and work-based learning. For example, the North East has the second lowest rate of participation in full-time education at 69 per cent, but the highest rate in terms of work-based learning at 11 per cent.[217] There are early signs that neighbourhoods in which there is little tradition of university participation are starting to supply more students: the proportion of young people from low participation neighbourhoods has increased from 11.4 per cent to 13.5 per cent between 1997/98 and 2005/06[218].

5.30 At the end of school year 11 in 2005/06, 64 per cent of children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months remained in full-time education compared to 78 per cent of all school-leavers.[219] The proportion of care-leavers known to be in education, employment and training at age 19 has increased from 46 per cent in 2002 to 63 per cent 2006. Only 6 per cent are at university aged 19. Twenty seven per cent of the adult prison population have had experience of care. Those who have spent some time in care are over-represented in the country's homeless population[220, 221].

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Inequality came through as a major theme in the video diary strand of the Children's Plan consultation, with children and young people highly aware of how financial pressure can put strain on their parents and affect opportunities. Working parents felt they were in need of particular support in order to afford childcare and give enough time to their children. Children and young people can have low expectations – it was suggested that more could be done to boost self-esteem. Some people felt that community cohesion and neighbourliness should be improved, seeing the local community as particularly important in offering guidance and helping young people. There was also a feeling that schools could do more to make children aware of cultural and other equality issues.

Q An association of leading UK research-intensive Universities committed to maintaining the highest standards of research, education and knowledge transfer.

Chapter 6
Ensuring young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond

Summary

6.1 Participation in post-compulsory education is relatively low in England compared to similar countries. A notable minority of young people are not in education, employment or training and this has not improved significantly over the last ten years. However, full-time participation in education has been increasing year on year, partly due to rising levels of earlier attainment, and partly due to the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowances. Entry to key science and mathematics subjects at A-levels show signs of increasing after falls at the beginning of the decade. However, the existing 14-19 curriculum and qualifications are not meeting the needs of all young people and entry into certain qualifications is still split on gender grounds, with implications for later progression and earnings potential.

There are substantial benefits to young people becoming more qualified...

6.2 A number of studies show that more qualified people earn more, are more employable, are more likely to receive workplace training, are more likely to get promoted and are more likely to undertake further learning. Wage returns[R] to key academic qualifications are substantial: around 26-29 per cent for a degree, around 14 per cent for 2 or more A-levels and around 9-11 per cent for good GCSEs[222].

6.3 The benefits of learning are wide-ranging, extending well beyond qualifications and economic success. It can have positive causal effects on well-being, with research showing that adult possession of at least "O" Levels reduces the risk of depression[223]. It has a positive effect on health, with US data showing that, for individuals born between 1931 and 1941, an additional year of education significantly improves the probability of reporting good health[224]. Positive attitudes are also associated with higher levels of education. For instance,

R A wage return refers to the average percentage increase in wages as result of holding a particular qualification compared to other people with similar characteristics who do not hold it.

participation in adult learning has beneficial effects on race tolerance, authoritarian attitudes, political cynicism and political interest[225]. Education also improves behaviour, with some educational interventions being shown to reduce crime levels[226].

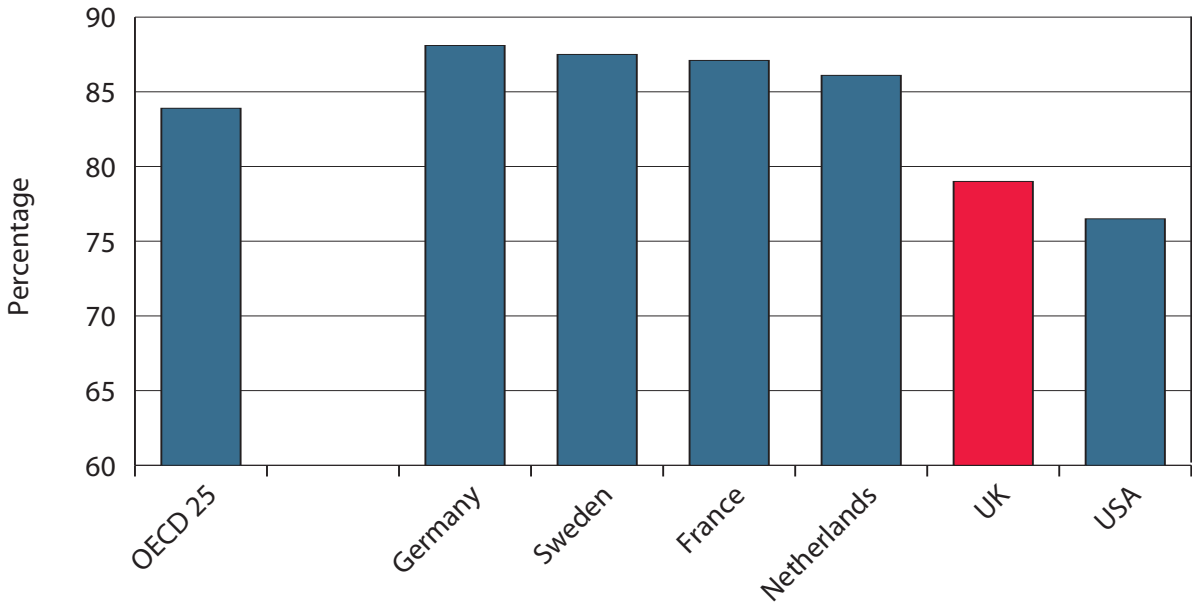
…however, negative school experiences are reflected in decisions to remain in education

6.4 There is consistent evidence that young people who dislike school are less likely to stay on in education or training post 16. Research has shown that young people who chose work based routes, mentioned negative experiences at school as an important motivation for this decision, whereas positive attitudes towards school were linked to the decision to stay on in full-time education at 16[227].

Post compulsory participation showing strong recent progress after a long level period, but is still low in international terms

6.5 Our education participation rate post-16 is relatively low by international standards – the UK is ranked 24th out of 29 OECD countries for participation in education at age 17.[228]

Chart 6.1: % of 15-19 year olds in full time or part time education in 2004



6.6 The rate of full-time participation in education of 16 and 17 year-olds was relatively flat in the 1990s and early part of this decade, despite consistent increases in the number of young people getting 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent in year 11. There has been an upturn in participation in full-time education among 16 and17 year olds in the last few years, with a marked year on year improvement since 2004, driven in part, the research suggests, by the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowance[229, 230, 231]

6.7 School sixth forms are only one route for post compulsory education. In 2006, 78.1 per cent of 16 year olds were in full-time education; 30.4 per cent were in maintained schools, 6.5 per cent in independent schools, 10.6 per cent in 6th form colleges and 30.5 per cent in Further

and higher education institutions. An additional 5.7 per cent were in work based learning (Apprenticeships), and 6.2 per cent in employer funded or other types of training – giving a total participation rate in post-compulsory education of nearly 90 per cent.[232]

And participation in vocational routes remains split on traditional gender lines…

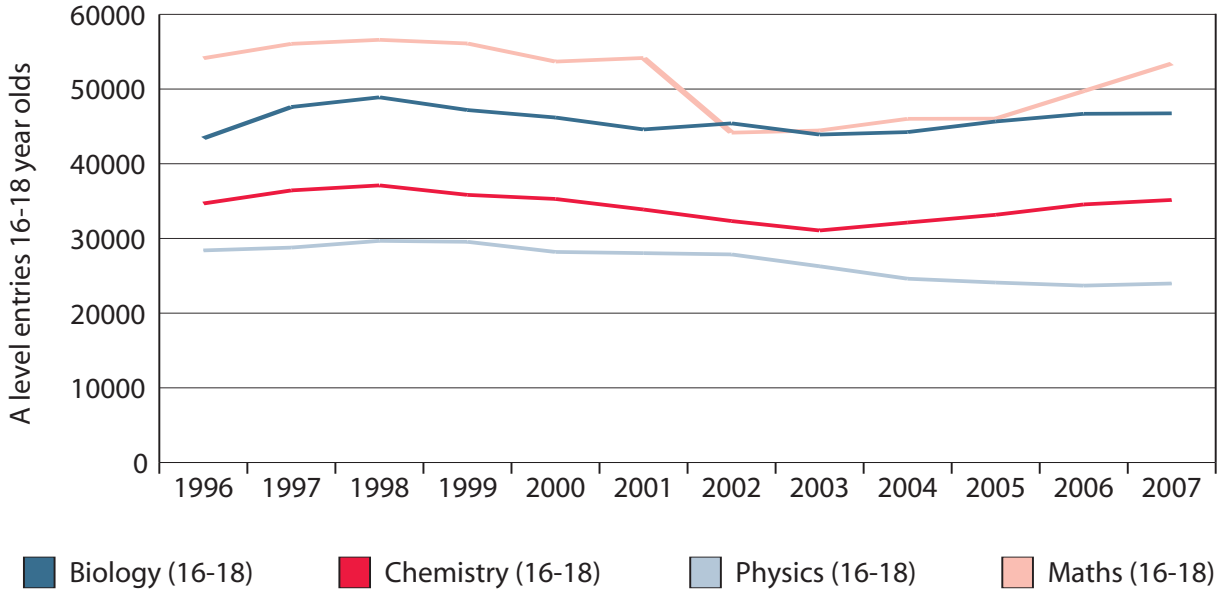
6.8 Whilst girls are more likely to participate in post compulsory education and training overall, boys are much more likely to undertake work-based learning (WBL). Only 37 per cent of WBL learners aged 16 to18 were female in 2006 – the same proportion as in the previous year[233]. However, this masks large gender-variations by sector: female apprentices dominate a handful of sectors such as health, public services and care; retail and commercial enterprise; business, administration and law.

6.9 On average female apprentices in 2005 earned around £40 per week (26%) less than their male counterparts, partly reflecting the tendency for female apprentices to be concentrated in the lower paid sectors[234]. However, internal analysis (in the former DfES) to investigate the gender pay gap found that even controlling for sector (alongside other factors affecting pay), female apprentices still earned on average 9 per cent less than males.

Entry for mathematics and science A levels declined, but there are signs this trend is reversing...

6.10 The government has outlined an ambition to increase the number of young people taking physics, chemistry and mathematics A level. Over recent years entries for physics A level have declined steadily although provisional 2007 results indicate a slight reversal of this trend, with entries increasing to 23,973 (a rise of 316). Entries for chemistry A level fell between 1998 and 2003, although there has been a rise since 2003. Entries for maths A level fell dramatically in 2002 following the introduction of curriculum 2000. However, since 2005 there has been a large increase in entries. In 2007 53,416 pupils attempted maths A level, a rise of 3,611 on 2006 figures.

Chart 6.2: A level entries by science subject



Nevertheless there remain significant differences in entry patterns by gender

6.11 A level entries by gender also differ dramatically by subject with girls being particularly under-represented in physics (78% of entrants in 2007 were male). Females are also slightly under-represented in maths with 60% of entrants being male. However, in biology females form 59% of the entrants and chemistry A level is taken by an equal number of males and females.

There are various drivers of post-16 participation

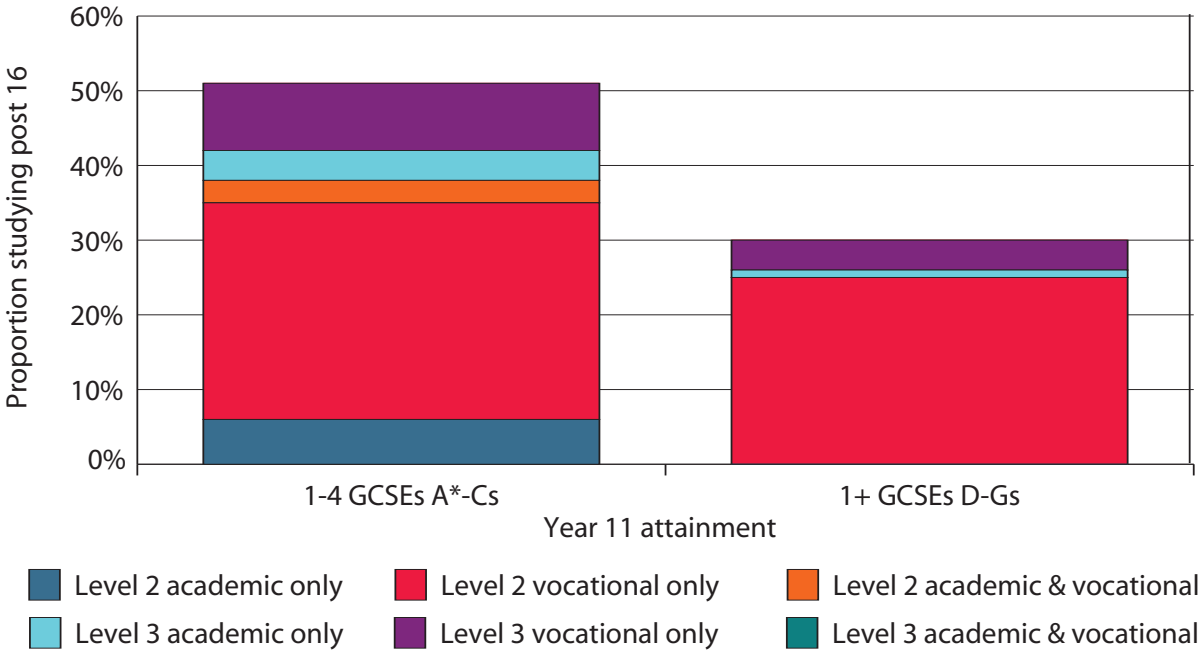
6.12 Prior attainment is the main driver of participation in post-compulsory education. Research suggests that other key predictors relate to ethnicity, truancy and exclusion from schools, parental qualifications, regional unemployment and population size[235]. The acquisition of non-cognitive skills is also important.[236]

6.13 Up until 2004 the increases in performance at KS4 had not fed through to increases in participation post-16. One possible explanation is that all of the growth in attainment at KS4 over this period had been driven by an increase in the number achieving equivalent qualifications such as GNVQs and vocational GCSEs. The rate of conversion from vocational qualifications to post-16 participation is lower than that for general qualifications. However, since 2004, participation among 16 and 17 year olds has been increasing year on year, driven by rising participation in full-time education. Research suggests this is partly due to the impact of the Education Maintenance Allowance[237].

6.14 Curriculum reform is a key lever to drive participation, particularly for lower-attaining groups, as evidenced by the introduction of the GCSE qualification. The new 14-19 diplomas are designed to meet this ambition. There are two main ways in which curriculum reform can increase post-16 participation.

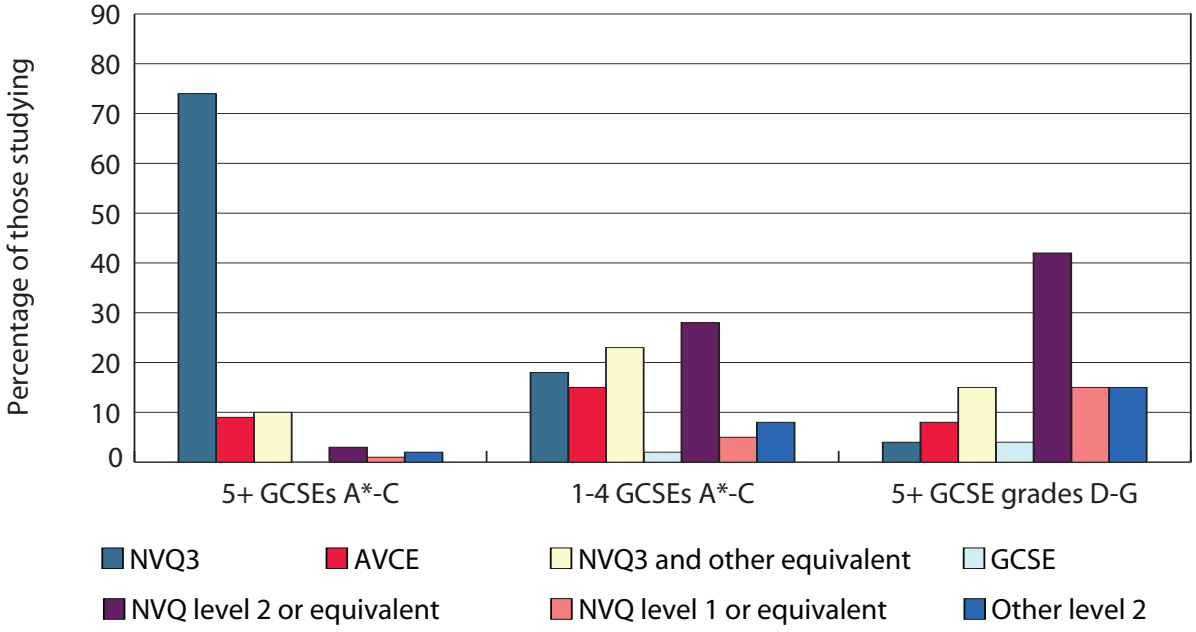
6.15 The first effect of reform is to offer a wider range of qualifications from earlier ages. The majority of young people who achieve level 2 between 16 and 18 do so by a vocational or applied route. Ensuring a wider offer earlier is central to encouraging more young people to remain engaged in the learning process. Evidence from the Increased Flexibilities Programme (IFP), which provides vocational learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds who can benefit most, shows that this was positively associated with the attainment of participants (but that this varied by the type of qualification undertaken). Young people who took NVQs and GNVQs did better than expected, given their prior attainment. Those taking vocational GCSEs achieved at levels broadly in line with expectations. The majority (87 per cent) of young people on the IFP were reported by their schools to have continued in education or training after year 11.

Chart 6.3: Post 16 study type by year 11 attainment



6.16 The second way in which curriculum reform can increase post-16 participation is through simplification of routes. There is a clear academic route to A-Level for high achievers but for lower achievers, particularly those below Level 2, there is a broad (and potentially confusing) offer to choose from. The introduction of the 14-19 diplomas will provide a more coherent route to Level 2, HE and employment that will combine theoretical and applied learning.

Chart 6.4: Main study aim in 2005 at 17 by year 11 attainment

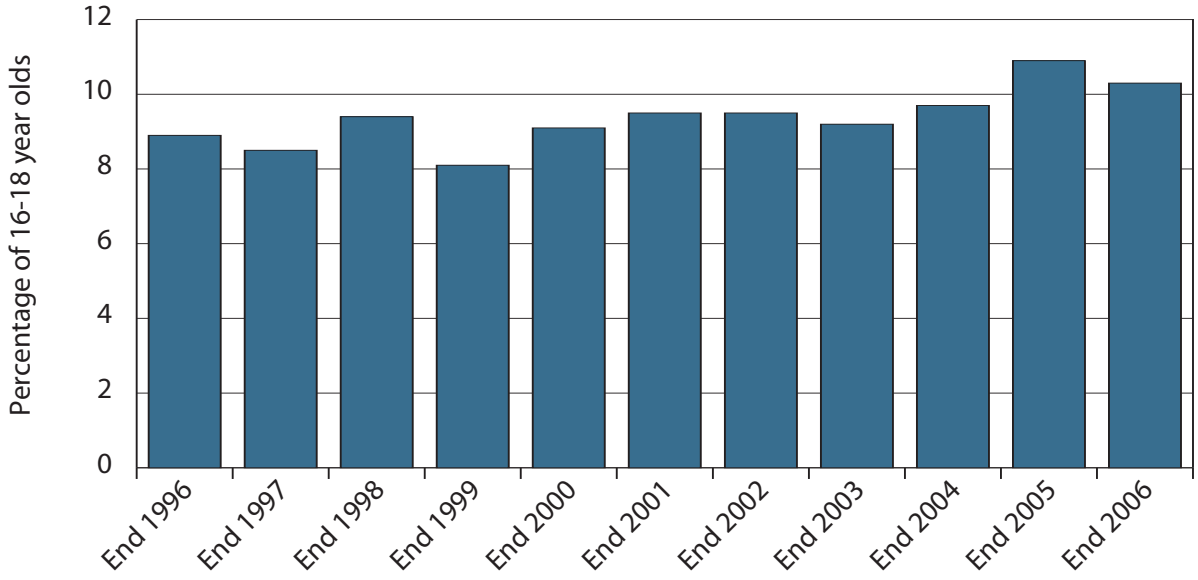


Source: YCS

After the end of compulsory schooling, one in ten pupils is not in education, employment or training…

6.17 Despite participation in education and training amongst 16-18 year olds rising consistently since 2003, causing the proportion of the Not in Education and Training (NET) group to fall, the proportion of the cohort who were NEET *rose* in the period 2003-2005, due to a rise in the proportion of the NET group who were unemployed or economically inactive. The latest data shows a welcome fall in the NEET rate to 10.3%.

Chart 6.5: % of 16-18 year olds NEET, England



Source Statistical First Release (SFR) 'Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England'

6.18 Despite the stability of the aggregate NEET rate, there is a lot of churn in the NEET population. Only 1% of young people appeared to be NEET continuously through ages 16, 17 and 18 on the basis of annual surveys. However, 20% of young people were found to be NEET at one of these points[238].

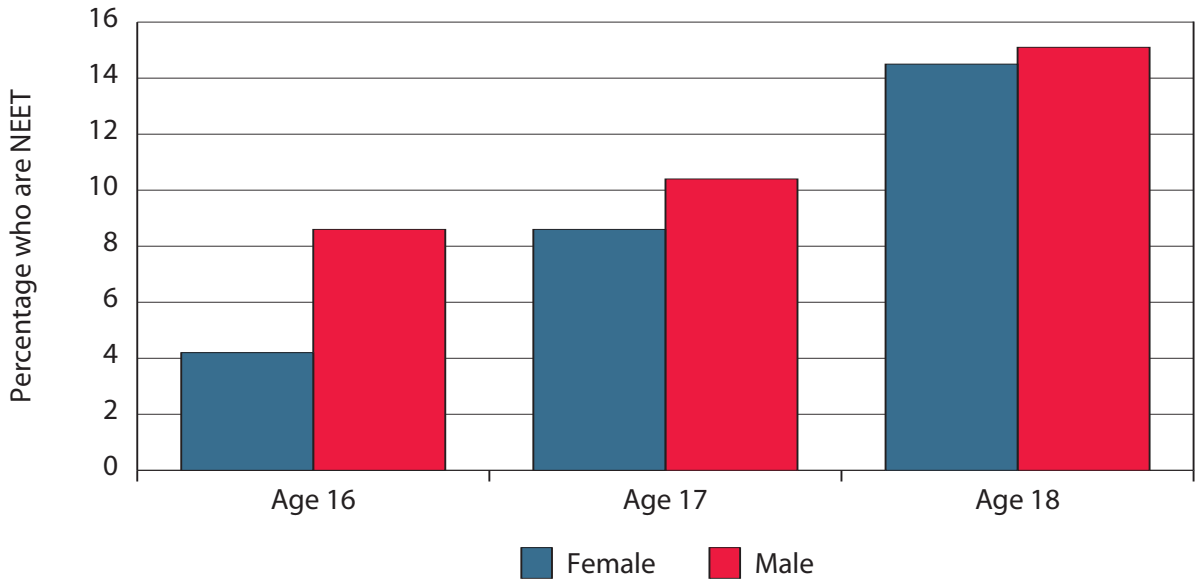
… and this is high by international standards

6.19 International comparisons show that compared to the OECD average of 7.3%, the proportion of 15-19 years olds not in employment or education in the UK in 2005 was high at 9.3%[239]. If the figures are ranked from lowest to highest, the UK is in 23rd place out of the 26 countries where data is available. For 20-24 year olds along the same measure, the UK improves its position to 19th out of 27, with a not in education or employment rate of 16.8%.

There are gender differences in the proportions who are NEET…

6.20 Gender differences in NEET rates for England show that there are proportionally more male than female NEETs at ages 16 and 17, but by age 18, the number of mothers caring for their children means that the gap between male and female NEETs has closed considerably.

Chart 6.6: Percentage of young people NEET by age and gender

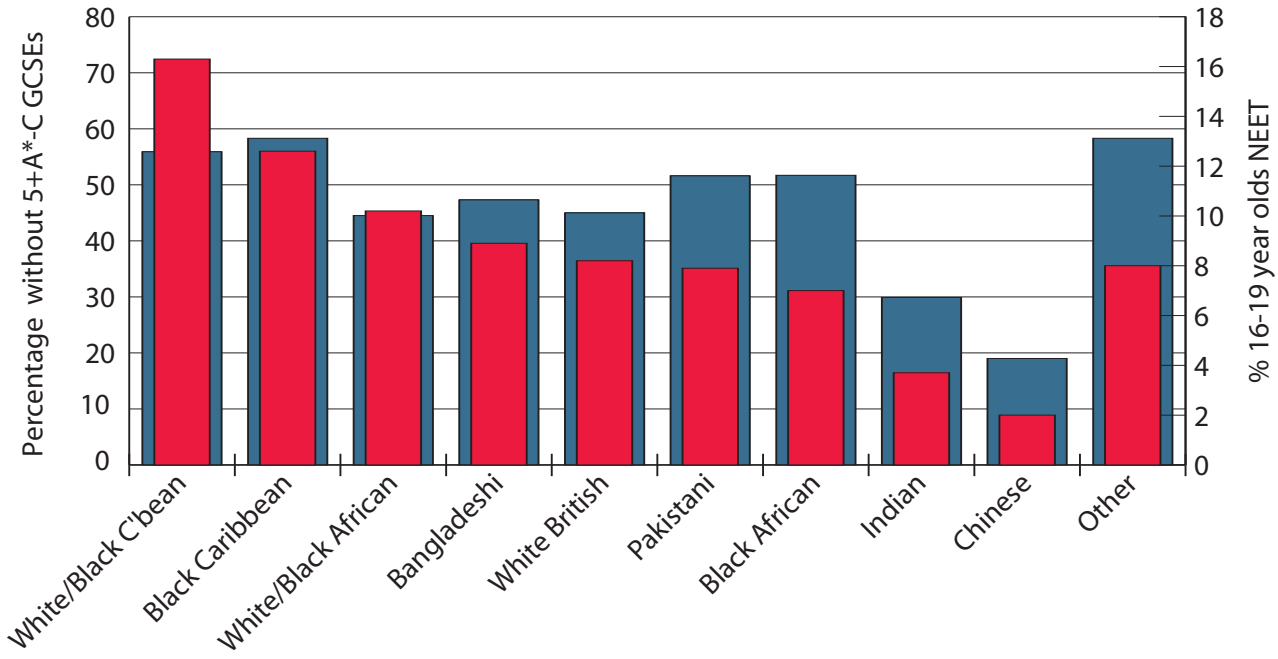


Source: DfES SFR 21/2006, Participation in education, training and employment by 16-18 year olds in England: 2004 & 2005

… and differences by ethnic group

6.21 Differences between ethnic groups' NEET rates in England, given their GCSE performance are shown in Chart 6.7.

Chart 6.7: 16-19 Year Olds NEET and GCSE Performance

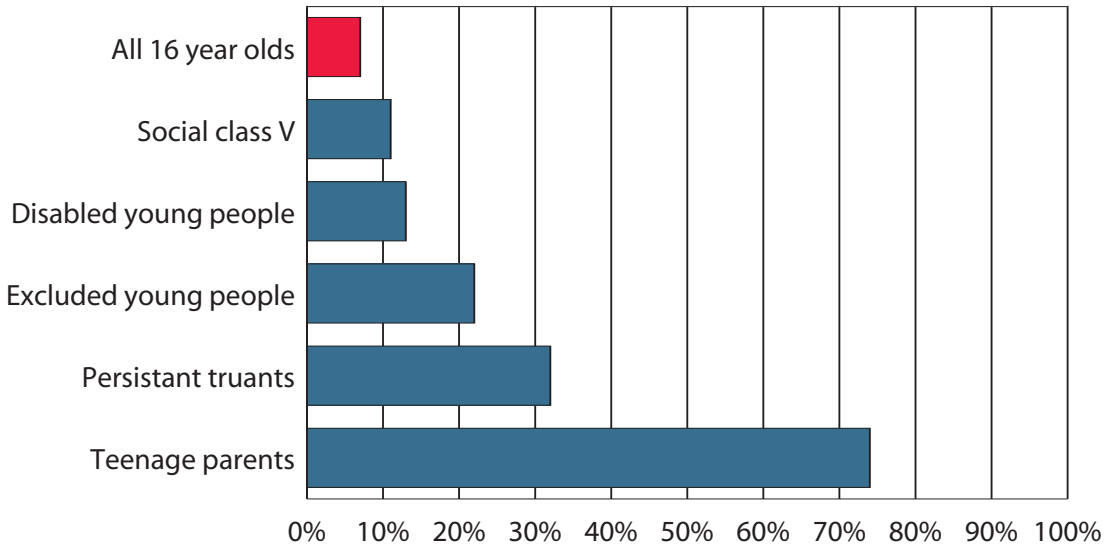


Source: *Connexions CCIS data and National Pupil Database*

Young people become NEET for a variety of reasons

6.22 Many are unemployed, but others may be in transition between education and training options, have caring responsibilities, or suffer illness or severe disabilities that prevent them from being active in the labour market. Care leavers are twice as likely to become NEET as the general 16-18 population, although this does not necessarily imply a causal relationship. Chart 6.8 shows groups at higher risk of being NEET. There is a high likelihood that teenage parents will not be in employment, education or training; the issue of teenage pregnancy is discussed further in the next chapter.

Chart 6.8: Percentage of at risk groups NEET



Source: YCS

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Respondents to the consultation mentioned a range of issues with schools which could impact on the decision to stay on in education. For example, it was suggested that there needs to be more access to vocational courses for children over the age of thirteen. Respondents to the consultation showed a high awareness of Education Maintenance Allowances, which have helped boost participation, although some young people not currently in receipt felt there should be more access to this support.

Chapter 7 Keeping children and young people on the path to success

Summary

7.1 Outside school, most young people are enjoying positive leisure activities or structured activities. A high proportion are involved in community activities and significant numbers are involved in formal and informal volunteering, which can help lead to positive employment outcomes. A minority are involved in no positive activities outside school, although this may partly reflect issues of access. The involvement of young people's in crime and anti-social behaviour has remained broadly stable over the last few years, and there has been a recent fall in the overall rate of juvenile reoffending[240].

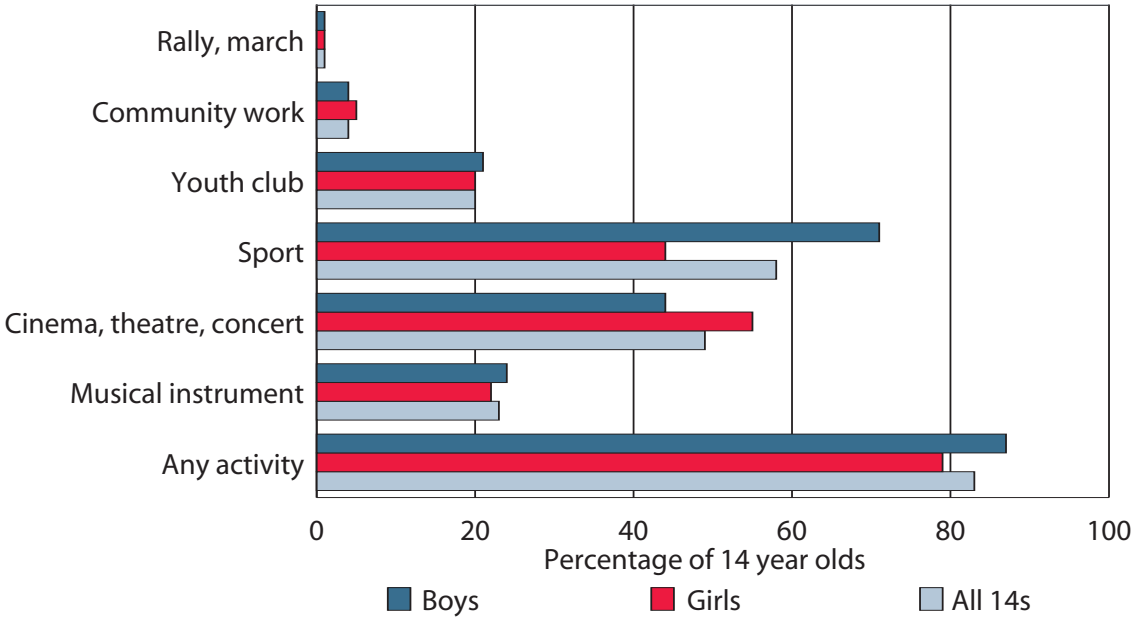
7.2 Teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are falling steadily, although they do remain high compared to similar countries. Rates of sexually transmitted infections are increasing. Research evidence on whether UK teenagers are more likely to smoke is mixed, but there has been a decrease in the number of young people smoking regularly since the mid-nineties. Figures also suggest a downward trend in the proportion of young people taking drugs, although cannabis use remains high compared to other developed countries. The prevalence of alcohol consumption has not increased much since the late 1980s, but those who do drink are consuming larger amounts on average. A mixture of factors will be contributing to engagement in risky behaviour, but certain vulnerable groups of children such as looked after children, young parents and those not in any education, employment or training are more likely to be involved.

Most young people are enjoying, engaged, motivated and making a positive contribution[S]

7.3 Recent research suggests that the majority of 14 year olds (83%) participate in positive leisure activities. Sports were the most common activity, followed by visits to the cinema, theatre and concerts and boys were more likely than girls to participate (87% compared to 79%). Only a minority of 14 year olds attended youth clubs (around 20%)[241] but nearly three in four (73%) 12-19 year olds had participated in a structured out of school activity in the last 6 months[242]. A similar proportion (86%) of 11-18 year olds had participated in at least one community activity in the last 12 months (e.g. fundraising, collecting for charity etc)[243]and over three in five (63%) young people had given help to a group, club or organisation[244].

S For example volunteering, helping in the community, peer mentoring

Chart 7.1 participation of 14 year olds in positive activities



Nevertheless, some young people are not participating in positive activities outside school

7.4 An important minority of young people (about one in four) do not participate in constructive activities outside of school or work[245] and participation is lower among older young people and among those from the lower social classes. The age factor does appear to be significant – participation rates in sport and physical activity among 16-19 year olds, while relatively high compared with other age groups, have declined by 10 percentage points from 87% in 1990/91[246]. Only half of all 16-19 year olds who were not in education had taken part in at least one of the 'participation' activities, compared to 70 per cent of those in education. These findings suggest that education can play a role in activity rates, and that leaving education can serve as a barrier to participation for some of the older age group[247].

There may be issues of limited access to positive activities

7.5 This is one of the key areas where both parents and young people would like to see action – 60% of 11-18 year olds and 80% of parents recently reported there not being enough things for young people to do in their area[248], and this point was also made clearly in the Children's Plan consultation discussions [249] One route for young people to access positive activities is through local youth services, but data for England shows that these have a limited reach. A National Youth Agency audit shows that in 2003/04 these services only reached one in four (24%) young people aged 13-19.

7.6 Where some form of provision exists, young people often cite lack of time, lack of interest and lack of popularity among friends as reasons for not engaging in existing services[250].

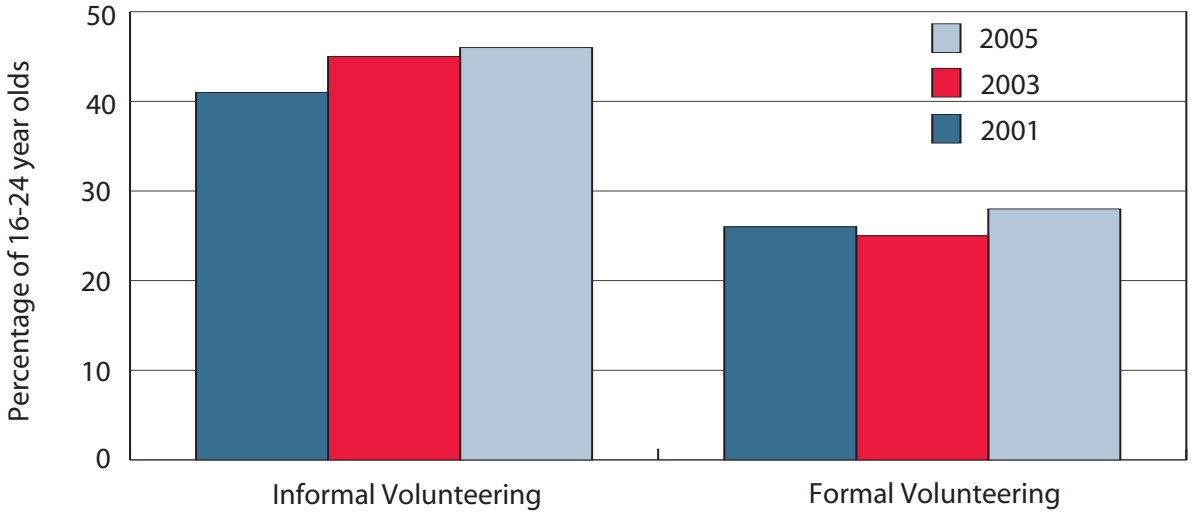
7.7 There are a number of problems that result from a lack of access to appealing positive activities[251]. These include teenagers 'hanging around', a behaviour which is reported as being the most common local feature of anti-social behaviour. In 2005 32% of adults perceived this as being a very or fairly big problem in their area, and over two in five

reported that they feel very or quite worried for their personal safety when they are out in their local area and see groups of teenagers hanging about the street. Things that particularly cause worry are teenagers being loud or rowdy (38%) and drinking (33%). And this concern is also reflected by children and young people (see chapter 3).

However, rates of volunteering among young people remain strong…

7.8 International data on levels of volunteering are not available but data for England alone shows that rates of volunteering among young people remain strong. In 2005 close to half (46%) of 16-24s were providing informal help within their communities while just over a quarter (28%) were formal volunteers (chart 7.2)[252].

Chart 7.2: Volunteering among 16-24 year olds



And positive employment outcomes are associated with volunteering

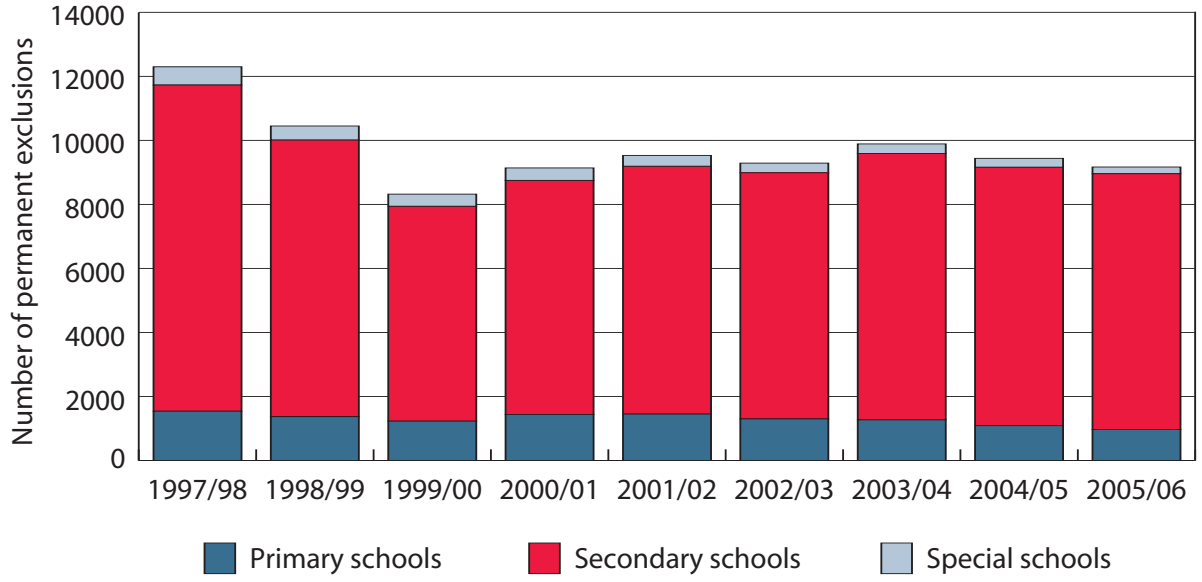
7.9 88% of those looking for work believed volunteering would enhance their chances and Job Seeker's Allowance claimants who volunteer are 12% more likely to find work[253] than those who don't. Another survey[254] of young people aged 12-15, revealed that the significant personal incentives for providing unpaid work were social (for 60%) or career related (for 39%).

7.10 Girls were more likely than boys to have given regular help in the home or to relatives – 68% compared to 57%. Young people from all ethnic groups were more likely than their white counterparts to offer this form of help; 78% and 77% of Black African and Indian respondents have said they have given help, compared to 61% of white respondents. Mixed race young people were more likely to help out with their families than any other ethnicity. Most respondents from the survey received some money in exchange for this.

A small but significant proportion of children are excluded from school

7.11 In England, there were 9,330 permanent exclusions from primary, secondary, City Technology Colleges, Academies and all special schools in 2005/06[255], which represents 0.12 per cent of the number of pupils in schools. Compared with the previous year, the number of permanent exclusions has decreased by almost 3 per cent. Exclusions from both special and primary schools have steadily reduced since 1997.

Chart 7.3: The total number of permanent exclusions of maintained mainstream schools from 1997/98 to 2005/06



7.12 Of all permanent exclusions recorded in 2005/06, the overwhelming majority were boys (80%). This has been the case since the late nineties. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) (both with and without statements) are more likely to be excluded than those pupils with no SEN. In 2005/06, 39 in every 10,000 pupils with statements of SEN and 43 in every 10,000 pupils with SEN without statements were permanently excluded from school. This compares with 5 in every 10,000 pupils with no SEN.

7.13 Fixed period exclusions are used by schools as part of their package of available sanctions, to tackle poor behaviour before it reaches the 'crisis' point of permanent exclusion. In 2005/06, the mean duration of a fixed period exclusion was 3.5 days. Complete datasets have only been available since 2003/04. Nevertheless they highlight an increasing incidence of fixed period exclusions at three types of school, most notably for secondary schools.

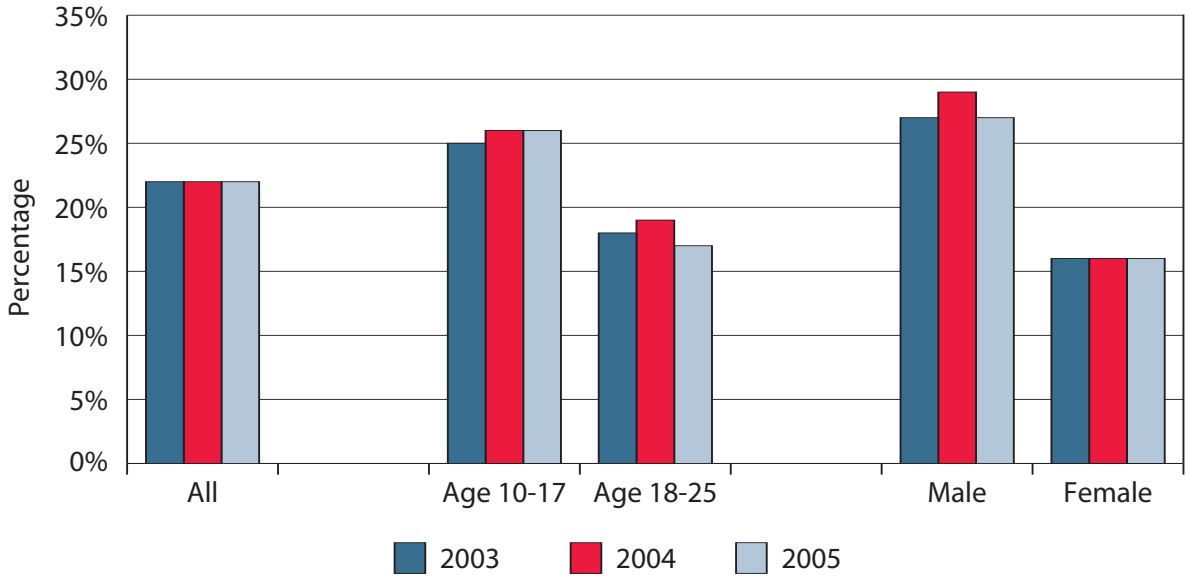
Young people's involvement with crime and anti-social behaviour has remained broadly stable over the last few years

7.14 Recent data shows that one in four 10-25 year olds (25%) report committing an offence in the last year and just under a quarter (23%) report committing anti-social acts. Younger teenagers, those aged 10-15 are more likely than 16-25s to have been involved in a crime, whether as a victim or offender (43% compared to 36%)[256].

7.15 Around 3,000 10-17 year olds are being held in custody[257] – the proportion of children in custody in England and Wales appears to be high compared to our European neighbours, although accurate international comparisons are hard to make. However, there has been a slight fall in the overall juvenile one year re-offending rate for 10-17 year olds. This fell from 43.3% in 2000 to 40.8% in 2005[258]. The number of first time offenders was 97,300 in 2005/06[259].

7.16 Perhaps surprisingly, younger teenagers (aged 10-15) are more likely than 16-25s to have been involved in crime, whether as a victim or offender (43% compared to 36%)[260]. And evidence suggests that offending and being a victim appear to be linked: over half (52%) of those who committed an offence in the last 12 months had also been a victim, compared to just one in four (23%) non offenders.

Chart 7.4: Trends in committing a 'core' offence in the past 12 months, 2003-2005 by Age and Gender



7.17 Surveys show that overall, the proportion of young people carrying a knife decreased from 4% in 2004, to 3% in 2005[261] Males were significantly more likely than females to have carried a knife (5% versus 2%) but there were no differences between 10- to 17-year-olds and 18- to 25-year-olds. There was no difference in the (very small) proportion of young people who had carried a gun between 2004 and 2005.

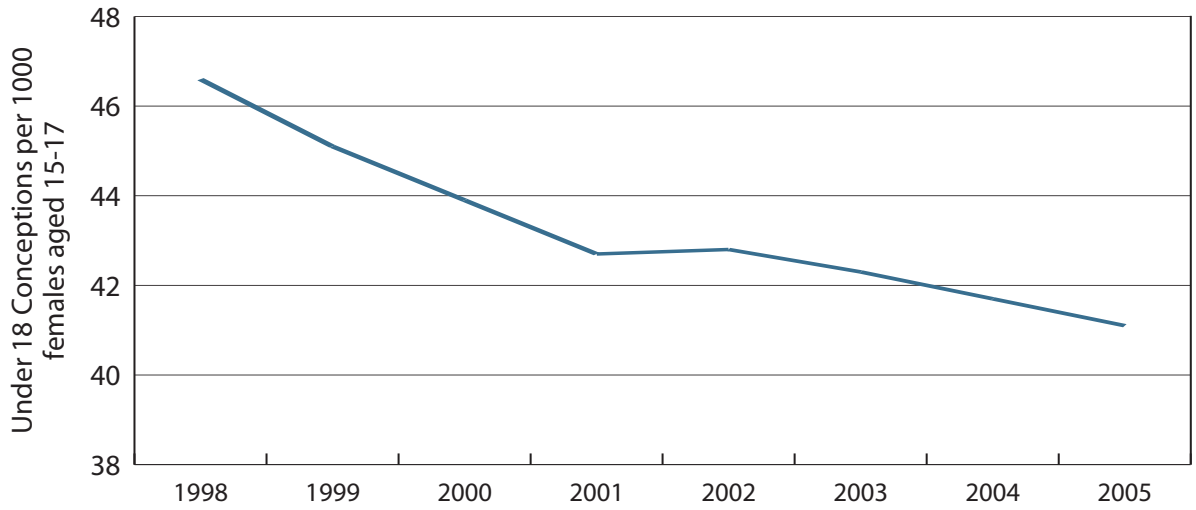
7.18 Carrying a knife may not be linked to any criminal intent, as over eight in ten (85%) of those who said they had carried a knife claimed the main reason for doing so was for protection; less than one in ten people carrying a knife (9%) said it was in case they got into a fight and 6% mentioned another reason. Less than one in ten (7%) of those who had carried a knife in the last 12 months had used it to threaten someone.

7.19 International data[262] on the percentage of all offenders accounted for by minors show that out of 30 countries (for which on average 12.5% of offenders are minors) the UK is ranked as 11th poorest in terms of performance, with 11.2% of offenders being minors.

Teenage pregnancy rates are high but falling

7.20 Although the UK's teenage pregnancy rate is internationally high – being 5 times higher than the Netherlands, 3 times higher than France and 2 times higher than Germany in 1998 – it has fallen steadily since this time, from around 47 15-17 year old girls per thousand in 1998, to just over 41 per thousand[263].

Chart 7.5: Rate of conceptions per 1000 15-17 year old girls



Girls in certain vulnerable groups are more likely to become pregnant while teenagers

7.21 Low achieving women are more likely to become teenage parents, with 29% of sexually active girls who leave school at 16 with no qualifications becoming parents before 18 compared to only 1% of sexually active girls who leave school with qualifications aged 17 or over. They are also more likely to have an abortion before the age of 18 (12% compared to 4%). School excludees are also more likely to become teenage parents[264]. Nearly 50% of young women leaving social care (where they have been looked after) become mothers within two years. There are also intergenerational effects, with the children of teenage parents being twice as likely as other individuals to become teenage parents themselves.

7.22 As well as being correlated to poor attainment and labour market outcomes, teenage mothers are also more likely than older mothers to suffer poorer mental health in the first three years after their child's birth.[265]

Rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are increasing

7.23 Recent trends in common sexually transmitted infections (excluding HIV) in the UK show an increase in the number of diagnosed cases in 16-19 year olds of over 100% between 1997 and 2006 (from c.26,700 in 1997 to c.53,350 in 2006), which is a far higher increase than for other age groups [266]. The highest rate of increase[T] was in new episodes of chlamydia infection which rose by nearly 200% from 9,900 cases in 1997 to 29,500 in 2006. Evidence on groups at especially high risk of STIs suggests[267] that young women living in urban areas

T Excluding syphilis, which rose from 6 new episodes to 112.

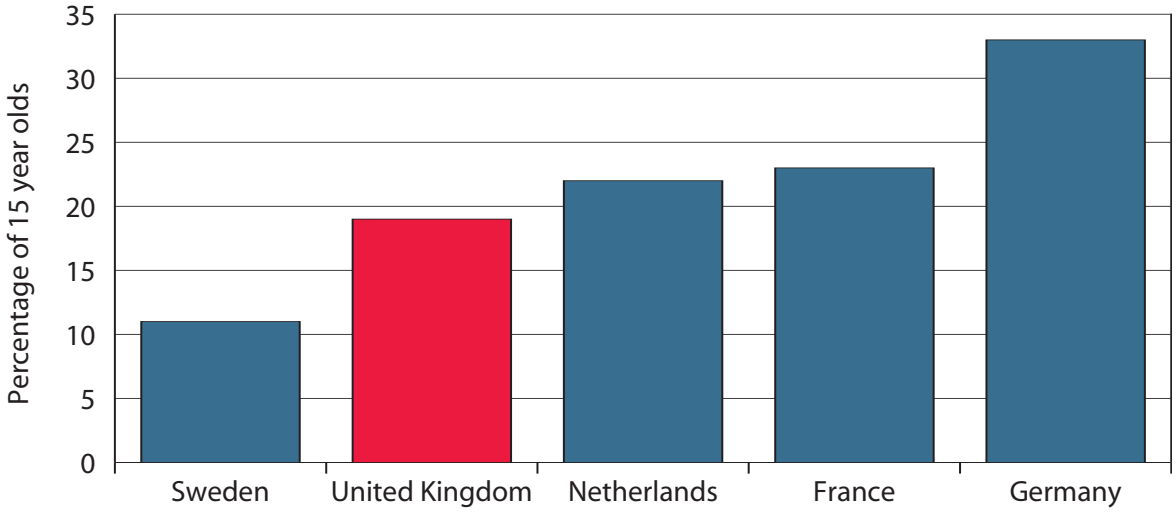
are more likely to contract an STI. Although routine recording of STIs does not (with the exception of HIV) include information on ethnicity, a study in London and Leeds suggested that young people from black and minority ethnic groups are more at risk of contracting an infection. More generally, data on the ethnicity of patients diagnosed with HIV shows that men and women of Black African ethnicity are far more likely have contracted HIV through heterosexual sex than other ethnic groups[268] and that the majority of Black Africans with HIV in England are believed to have contracted HIV in their home countries before arriving in the UK.

7.24 Trends in sexual behaviours of young people that have been highlighted in studies as drivers for the increase in STIs (and also, presumably, high teenage pregnancies)[269]. This include a lower than average age of first intercourse, a higher acquisition rate of new partners than other age groups, an increased likelihood of being involved in two or more sexual relationships simultaneously and inconsistent condom use. This evidence also suggests a higher rate of acquiring new sexual partners from outside the UK than other age groups, although there is no reason to indicate this drives high teenage pregnancy.

Comparisons of the proportions of young people smoking in the UK compared to other countries gives a mixed message

7.25 OECD data shows that in 2001/02, compared to other countries England had a slightly higher than average proportion of 11, 13 and 15 year olds who smoked every day (13% compared to a mean of 11% for 21 OECD countries). According to the 2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD), the United Kingdom has a lower proportion of 15 year olds who are regular smokers compared with the majority of European countries.

Chart 7.6: % 15 year olds who smoked 1 or more cigarettes in the last 30 days



Source: *ESPAD Report Alcohol and Other Drug Use among Students in 35 European Countries,* 2003
Germany: Limited geographical coverage

7.26 Over time, there has been a slight downward trend in the proportion of 11 to 15 year olds in England smoking regularly[U] since a peak in the mid-1990s. In 1994 it was 12% but by 2006 it had fallen to 9%. However, between 2004 and 2006 the level has remained fairly constant[270]. Similarly, evidence suggests the proportion of 15 year olds who started smoking every day at the age of 13 or younger has fallen in the UK from 20% in 1999 to 13% in 2003.[271]

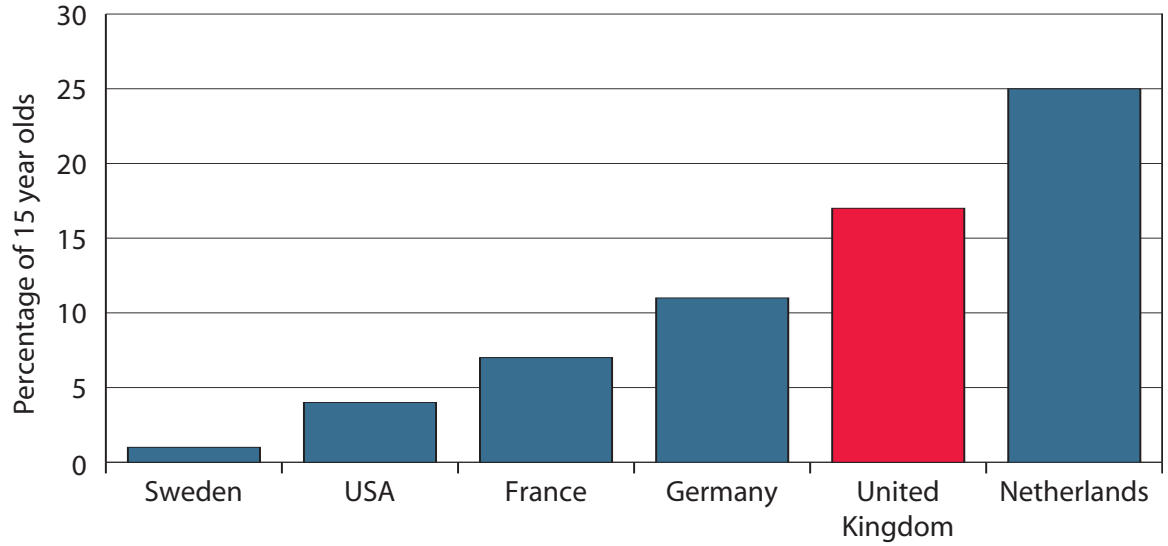
There has been an increase in the proportion of children drinking large quantities of alcohol

7.27 Although the prevalence of alcohol consumption amongst 11 to 15 year olds has not increased much since the late 1980s – and indeed there has been a downward trend since 2003 – those who do drink do so in much larger quantities[272]. Survey evidence suggests that alcohol consumption for this group has more than doubled – in 2006 those who reported drinking alcohol in the past week drank an average of 11.4 units. In 1990, this figure was less than half of this at 5.5 units and in 2000 it was 10.49 units.

7.28 These findings are of concern – a separate study shows that binge drinkers have been found to be at increased risk of accidents and alcohol poisoning[273]. Other problems associated with alcohol consumption amongst 15 year olds (ESPAD) included engaging in sex they regretted the next day, having unprotected sex, and getting in trouble with police.

7.29 And although the proportion of young people consuming alcohol has been decreasing, both the 2001/02 HBSC and 2003 ESPAD reports show that in comparison to other countries our teenagers' alcohol consumption is extremely high. In the HBSC survey, for each of 11, 13 and 15 year olds, England has one of the top 3 highest proportions who drink alcohol weekly. Chart 7.7, below, from the ESPAD report[274] shows that a large proportion of UK 15 year olds reported drinking alcohol 10 times or more during the last 30 days.

Chart 7.7: % of 15 year olds who drank alcohol 10 times or more during the last 30 days



Source: *ESPAD Report Alcohol and Other Drug Use among Students in 35 European Countries*, 2003
Germany: Limited geographical coverage. USA: Limited comparability.

U at least one cigarette a week

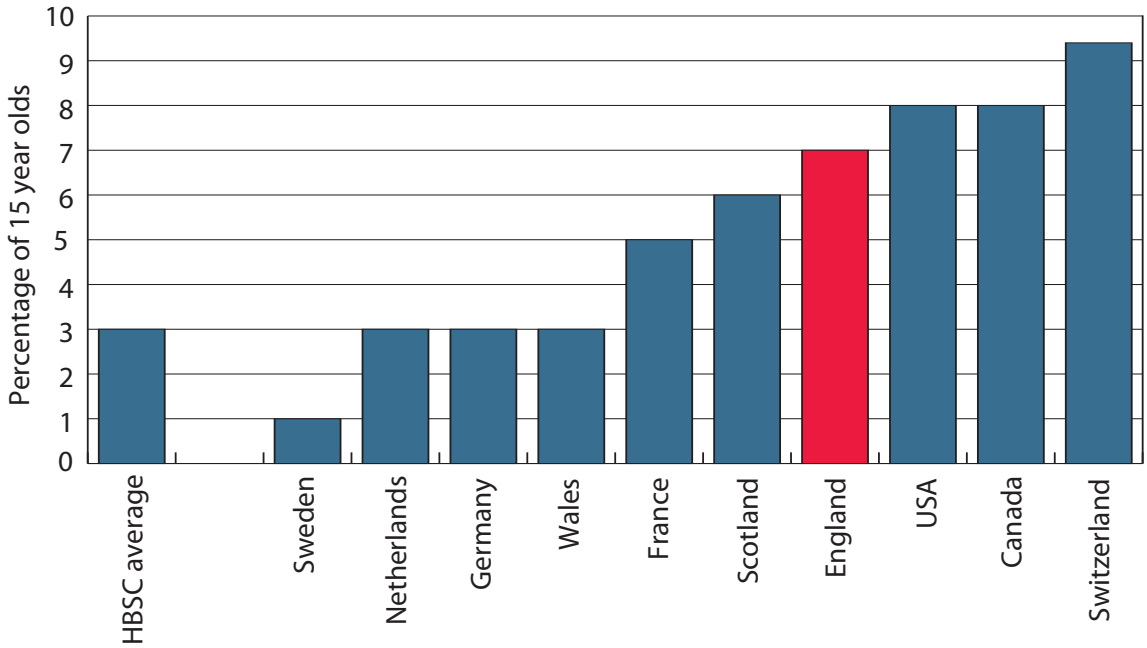
Over recent years there has been a downward trend in drug use amongst 11 to 15 year olds

7.30 In 2003, over one in five (21%) 11 to 15 year olds had taken drugs in the last year. By 2006, this figure had fallen to 17%. Likewise cannabis use has also started to fall. In 2003 13% reported having taken cannabis in the last year, compared to 10.1% in 2006. This is despite cannabis being re-classified to Class C at the beginning of 2004[V]. There has been little change in the use of Class A drugs. 4% had used taken Class A drugs in the last 12 months in both 2003 and 2006[275].

However, particularly for cannabis use, England still performs poorly compared to other countries

7.31 In the 2001/02 HBSC survey England had the 4th highest proportion amongst 34 developed countries of 15 year old heavy users[W] of cannabis. The average is 2.8% compared to 7.1% in England.

Chart 7.8: % of 15 year olds who are heavy users of cannabis



Source: 2001/02 HBSC *Young People's Health in Context*

7.32 Similarly, in the 2003 ESPAD survey the UK has the third highest proportion amongst 35 European countries of 15 year olds who have used cannabis 6 times or more in the last 30 days (8%). 5% of 15 year olds in the UK reported experience of an illicit drug other than marijuana or hashish during the last 12 months, compared to the ESPAD average of 4%.

V In practice the penalties for those dealing in cannabis or young people in possession of cannabis changed little. Possession remained an arrestable offence and the charges for supplying Class C drugs were upgraded to those of Class B drugs

W A heavy user is defined as someone who has used cannabis 40 times or more in the last 12 months.

What are the drivers for high levels of risky behaviour?

7.33 It is hard to identify specific drivers. One possible driver identified in the 2003 ESPAD survey include easier availability, with a higher proportion (58%) of 15 year olds in England perceiving marijuana or hashish as 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to obtain compared to an average for ESPAD countries of 35%. This is not the case for alcohol, despite consumption amongst teenagers being high. However, it should be noted that evidence [276]suggests drugs have recently declined in availability in England (with the proportion of school pupils ever having been offered drugs falling from 42% in 2001 to 35% in 2006). This evidence also shows that the attitude of school pupils in England towards drugs are changing for the better, with a fall in the proportion of 11-15 year olds who think it is OK for someone their age to try cannabis from 17% in 2003 to 9% in 2006.

7.34 A further driver is lower perceptions of risks associated with certain substances. UK 15 year olds' perceptions of the risks of harming themselves by using alcohol and cannabis were significantly lower than the average over all ESPAD countries (21% of UK 15 year olds perceived 5+ drinks each weekend as a 'great risk' compared to the ESPAD average of 37%, and 46% perceived regular marijuana use as 'great risk' compared to an average of 70%). This corresponds to high consumption of these particular substances in the UK compared to other countries. For other drugs, including, cigarettes, LSD, cocaine or crack drugs by injection, the perceived risk is close to the average and UK consumption is not so high in comparison.

7.35 In addition to the specific drivers above, several groups of children and young people in the UK are at a high risk of becoming drug users, although it should be noted this does not imply that being in these groups causes drug use, it simply shows a correlation[277]. These include children of persistent problem drug users (estimated 250-350,000)[278], persistent absentees and school excludees[279], looked after children, youth offenders – with 50% of those in custody reporting Class A drug use, homeless young people, young people abused through prostitution, teenage mothers, and young people not in education and training.

Smoking, drinking and drug use could adversely affect mental health

7.36 Statistics from 1999 show a strong correlation between smoking, drinking and cannabis use amongst 11 to 15 year olds and the incidence of mental disorders. Regular smokers are over 5 times as likely (41%) to suffer from a mental disorder than those who have never smoked (7%). In addition, those who drink more than once a week are 3 times as likely (24%) than those who have never had an alcoholic drink (8%) and those who use cannabis at least once a month are almost 5 times as likely (49%) than those who have never used cannabis (10%).[280]

7.37 Although this does not necessarily suggest these activities *cause* mental illness, evidence on cannabis use does suggest that (particularly in adolescence) it can cause mental illness including schizophrenia[281].

Views from the Time to Talk consultation

Improvements in education were identified by parents in the consultation as a means of keeping young people out of trouble and on the path to success. The role of parents in preventing children and young people from getting into trouble was emphasised in various strands of the consultation, but this was tempered with the need to show respect and listen to children's views. Participants in the deliberative events felt that it was important to set boundaries for children and young people to teach them right from wrong. Behavioural problems can start early and some respondents to the consultation stressed the importance of increasing investment in early preventative measures, along with more policing and stronger discipline in schools. There was some support for stricter laws on drugs, drinking and smoking.

A common topic raised by young people and parents at the deliberative events was the need for things to do in the evenings and weekends, with access to facilities and activities that are local, affordable and inclusive. Suggestions made in the wider consultation included more youth clubs, sports halls, computer centres, skateboard parks, football clubs and volunteer holiday camps. Some participants in the Children's Plan consultation felt that there were insufficient out of school activities for children with special educational needs.

Annex A Summary of evidence against the Every Child Matters outcomes

This report is structured around the seven Departmental Strategic Objectives and findings from these are summarised below, shaped around the five Every Child Matters outcomes in order to provide an overview of all dimensions of child wellbeing. This provides an oversight of the wellbeing of children and young people today, identifying areas where progress is being made or where good levels of performance have already been reached and those areas where more work is needed.

	Going well	More work needed
Be healthy	• Most children are happy (but scope to improve); • Prevalence of suicide is low; • Incidence of breast feeding is increasing; • Physical activity rates are improving; • Teenage pregnancy rates are high – but they are falling; • There has been a significant decrease in the smoking rates among children (and this has remained constant for the last three years); • There has been a downward trend in drug use among 11-15 year olds.	• Infant mortality rates are relatively high; • Relatively high rates of low birth weight; • Obesity rates are rising; • Take up of school lunches is falling • Rates of sexually transmitted diseases are increasing; • There has been an increase in the proportion of children drinking large quantities of alcohol; • Levels of cannabis use are high internationally.

	Going well	More work needed
Stay safe	• 95% of children feel very or quite safe at home and 85% at school; • Rates of deaths from injury are falling; • Good progress has been made in reducing road traffic accidents involving children.	• Nearly 30% of children feel unsafe on public transport; • And nearly one in four feel unsafe in their local area; • Decrease in children's independent spatial mobility; • Bullying is consistently reported as a safety concern; • A minority of children are at risk from neglect and abuse; • Child homicide rates are relatively unchanging; • Numbers of road deaths remain high for 16-19 year olds; • Those from poorer backgrounds remain most vulnerable to accidents.
Enjoy and achieve	• Significant improvements in test results for 11 year olds; • Improvements in attainment for secondary school pupils; • The proportion of schools achieving low results has fallen significantly; • Attainment is rising for students in post-compulsory education; • Inspection results suggest very few schools with unsatisfactory behaviour (but pupils and teachers remain concerned); • Absenteeism is falling; • Relatively few pupils report being unhappy with school work; • The performance of schools in deprived areas has improved faster than in affluent areas;	• No clear evidence so far of improvements in early years of schooling; • Some pupils are continuing to make slow progress; • A small proportion of individuals account for a disproportionate number of absences; • Pupils in England feel more pressurised by school work than in other countries; • Educational achievements for looked after children are increasing but they still have relatively poor levels of attainment;

	Going well	More work needed
Enjoy and achieve – *continued*	• The number of permanent exclusions has decreased overall.	• There continue to be gaps in academic performance between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, some minority ethic groups, and pupils with SEN – compared to all pupils; • There are significant gaps in participation in full-time education and training, based on gender, ethnicity, social class and region; • Post compulsory participation still low in international terms.
Make a positive contribution	• The majority of young people are making a positive contribution; • And rates of volunteering among young people remain strong.	• We need to improve access to positive activities • Young people's involvement with crime and anti-social behaviour is broadly stable.
Achieve economic wellbeing	• Access to and quality and use of childcare is increasing; • The number of children in poverty is falling.	• Levels of child poverty remain high; • Access to childcare is variable for different groups; • Take up of childcare is lower in deprived areas; • Numbers of NEETs are not reducing.

Annex B
The National Curriculum, Key Stage tests and Levels

The National Curriculum provides an entitlement to a number of areas of learning for all pupils in maintained schools regardless of background and ability. The main phases of education in England are set out below. Note that there is not an exact match between ages and Key Stages: some pupils may complete Key Stages at different ages depending on their progress. Independent schools do not need to operate the National Curriculum or the Key Stage tests.

Foundation stage (age 3-5)

The Foundation Stage is a learning and development framework for staff to help them plan activities to meet the needs of children aged 3-5 in schools (including the reception year at primary school), nurseries, playgroups, pre-schools and childminder networks providing Government funded free nursery education. In 2002 the National Curriculum was extended to cover this age group and the six areas of learning[X]. The Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) was introduced into schools and settings in 2003 as a tool for teachers to assess, through observation, how each child is progressing in relation to the 6 areas of learning. The FSP involves teachers observing children in their play-based learning activities during the year in which the child turns 5 (their reception year).

Key Stage 1 (age 5-7)

This covers Year 1 and Year 2 in primary schools, with pupils assessed at the end of Year 2 when most are 7 years old. The national curriculum specifies learning across ten subjects such as history, art and information technology, but the three core subjects are English, mathematics and science. Pupils take tests in reading, writing and mathematics, but since 2005 these tests have only been used to inform overall teacher assessments – the marks have not been collected centrally. Attainment is assessed against a range of 'levels': Level 2 is considered the 'expected level' for pupils by age 7 and most pupils achieve this.

X These are: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; creative development.

Key Stage 2 (age 7-11)

Twice the length of Key Stage 1, this takes pupils from Year 3 to Year 6, up to the age of 11 which is usually seen as the end of 'primary education': the following year most pupils in maintained schools move to secondary schools. Pupils study ten National Curriculum subjects and at the end of the four years pupils are assessed by teachers and take tests in English, mathematics and science. Attainment is again measured in Levels, with a maximum Level 5. There is an 'expectation' that pupils will achieve Level 4 by age 11 and targets have been set to increase the proportion that do this.

Key Stage 3 (age 11-14)

This covers the first three years of secondary schooling (Year 7 to Year 9). The Key Stage 3 National Curriculum covers 12 subjects, with teacher assessment and tests in English, mathematics and science. At Key Stage 3 the maximum test level is Level 7 in English and science, Level 8 in Mathematics. Expected attainment would is between Levels 5 and 6 (targets have been set for the proportion achieving at least Level 5).

Key Stage 4 (age 14-16)

This covers the final period (Year 10 and 11) of compulsory schooling during which pupils are working towards a range of academic and vocational qualifications, partly assessed via coursework. Every young person has to study English, maths, science, ICT, citizenship and PE as part of the core National Curriculum. They also have access to four entitlement areas, the arts, design and technology, languages and humanities. Most of the assessment is at the end of Year 11. The qualifications are set by various independent awarding bodies. The main qualification is the GCSE (which is graded G up to A and then A*) but there are also a very wide range of other qualifications which can be taken by this age group. Targets have been set for the proportion achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades C or above. This achievement level or its equivalent is also known as 'Level 2' (Level 1 being the acquisition of basic skills equivalent to 5 or more GCSEs at grades G or above). The latest target is for the proportion achieving 5 or more *including English and mathematics* at C or above.

Key Stage 5

After the age of 16 many, but not all, pupils stay on in full-time education. Those that do, study a range of academic and vocational qualifications, both in schools and separate colleges. The main academic qualification taken after two years (i.e. mainly by 18 year olds) is the A level; the AS level is similar but is equivalent to half an A level. Students may be working towards qualifications at Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3. Achievement of Level 3 entails gaining two or more A-levels at any grade or, the equivalent in other qualifications.

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