



**The Five Year  
Strategy for Children  
and Learners:  
Maintaining the Excellent  
Progress**



# Foreword by the Secretary of State



Two years ago we published our Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, setting out our ambitions for education and children's services, and how we planned to use the resources allocated to us from the 2004 Spending Review. As we move toward the Comprehensive Spending Review, now is a good time to pause and take stock of what we have delivered, and to look at how we take the Strategy forward to 2009 and beyond.

The record is impressive. There has been progress on all fronts: better results in our schools, more and better quality affordable childcare, a revolution in services for children, greatly improved training and vocational education, and more students than ever before entering Higher Education.

We have made rapid and decisive progress in delivering the commitments in our Strategy, with, for example, the 1,000th Children's Centre due to open

this month (September 2006), greater independence for our schools backed by investment in the frontline, a reform of 14-19 qualifications and provision, a bigger role for employers in shaping the design and delivery of training, and the implementation of our reforms to student funding. We will shortly be publishing a Green Paper on children in care aimed at transforming prospects for some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

This is a record of which we can be proud. We – the Department, our partners in Local Authorities and elsewhere, and the frontline – should take a moment to celebrate our achievements.

But challenges remain, and pressure from globalisation, demographic change, and the rapid pace of technological advances make it vital that we address them urgently. Even to stand still will be to fall behind.

Looking ahead, I believe we need to focus on five clear priorities where, if we fail to make a difference, we put our continued success at risk. These are:

- Closing the gap in educational attainment between those from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers;
- While at the same time continuing to raise standards for all across the education system;
- Increasing the proportion of young people staying on in education or training beyond the age of 16;
- Reducing the number of young people on a path to failure in adult life; and
- Closing the skills gap at all levels – from basic literacy and numeracy to postgraduate research – to keep pace with the challenge of globalisation.

I want our performance to be judged on how we deliver against these priorities.

These problems are complex and they each connect with one another.

Addressing them will mean moving from thinking about what we do on a service by service basis to thinking about the user's journey through our services – how all we do adds up to more than the sum of all its parts. After all, the users of our services – children, families, learners and employers – don't use one service or another, but use a number of services simultaneously or in succession. Their interest – which should be our goal – is that services work together to help them thrive in 21st century society.

Another reason for taking stock at this point is to seek views on the approach we are taking as we prepare for the Comprehensive Spending Review. Our intention is to publish a new strategy next year, following the conclusion of the CSR, setting out how we plan to make use of our settlement. We want to use this opportunity to give partners, the frontline and users an opportunity to help us shape our approach. We are keen to hear your response to this document, and my Ministerial team and I will be hosting events in each region over the next few months to listen to the debate. I encourage you to contribute.



**Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP**

## INTRODUCTION

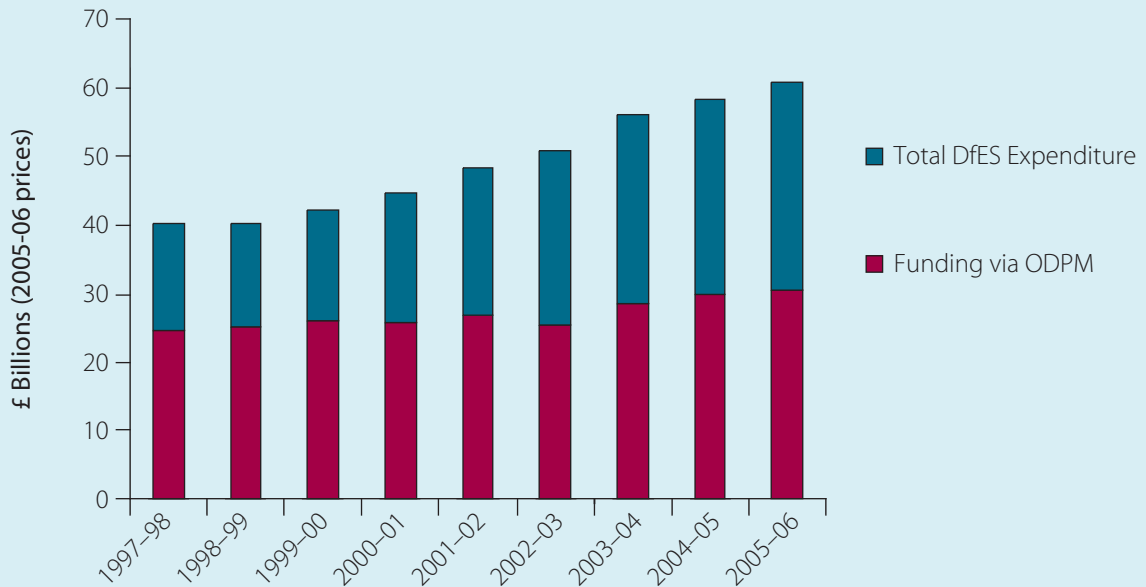
1. Investing in children and learners has been a top priority for this Government. This investment has paid off in improvements across the whole range of education and children's services, with the best ever results in our schools; for the first time an integrated system of children's and young people's services, including childcare and early learning as part of the welfare state; more people than ever before staying on after the school leaving age and more going on to attend universities; and the quality and quantity of training rising rapidly after a long period of decline and under-investment.
2. In July 2004, the Government published a Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, setting out an ambitious programme of reform across the whole range of education and children's services.
3. This document provides a report on delivery of the Strategy two years on, setting out the rapid progress already made. It then looks ahead to how the Strategy will be taken forward to 2009 and beyond, and sets out the priorities on which the Department and our partners will focus, and against which our success should be measured. Finally, this document sets out lessons for the Department and our partners for meeting the challenge of delivering on these priorities.
4. Above all, this document reflects the fact that the users of our services – children, parents, learners and employers – are looking to us to deliver:
  - A just society, where outcomes are determined by aptitude and ambition, not by circumstances of birth;
  - A safe, cohesive society, with young people entering adulthood able to make a positive contribution; and
  - A prosperous society, successful in a globalised economy and able to support excellent public services.
5. We can only deliver against the challenges we face if we work with our partners in delivery, with service providers at the front line, and with users of these services. For that reason, we are keen to know what people think of this document. We will be holding a series of events in each region from September 2006 to the end of the year to engage with partners, the front line and those who use our services. Comments can also be sent direct to us by 31 January 2007 at the following address:

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## INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Government invested £61 billion on education, training and children's services in 2005-06 compared to £40 billion in 1997-98 in equivalent prices.

### Trend in total expenditure on education, training and children's services

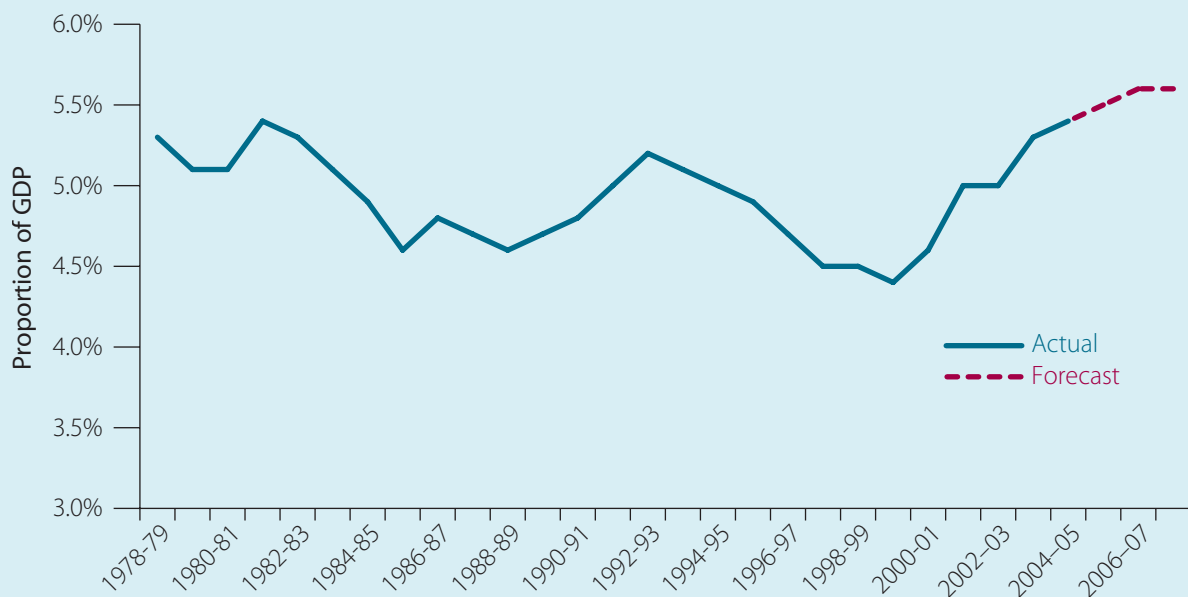


Source: Departmental Report 2006

£56 billion was invested in education and training in 2005-06, £24 billion more than in 1996-97. This is a real term increase of over 50%, or 5% each year. Spending on education in England in 2005-06 prices is set to be £68 billion in 2007-08.

The proportion of national income spent on education has risen substantially from 4.7% in 1996-7 and is forecast to be 5.6% in 2007-08.

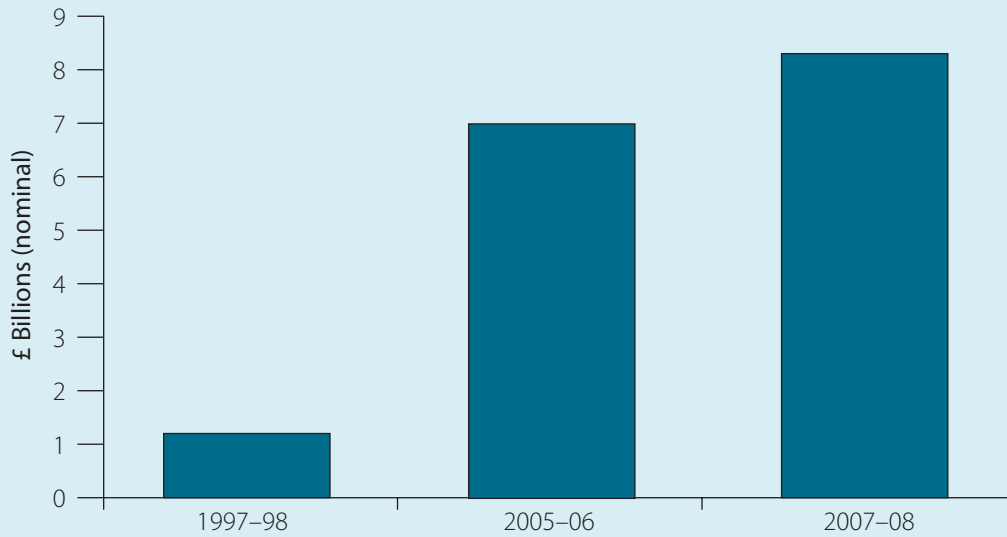
### Public spending on education and training as a proportion of national income



Source: DfES 2006

Capital investment in education and skills in England will rise from approximately £1.2 billion a year in 1997-98 to £8.3 billion by 2007-08, a seven fold increase, of which around £1.3 billion will be funded through the private finance initiative.

**Capital investment 1997-8 to 2005-06 in £ Billions**



Source: DfES 2006



## PART 1: DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

### A. Children's services and early years

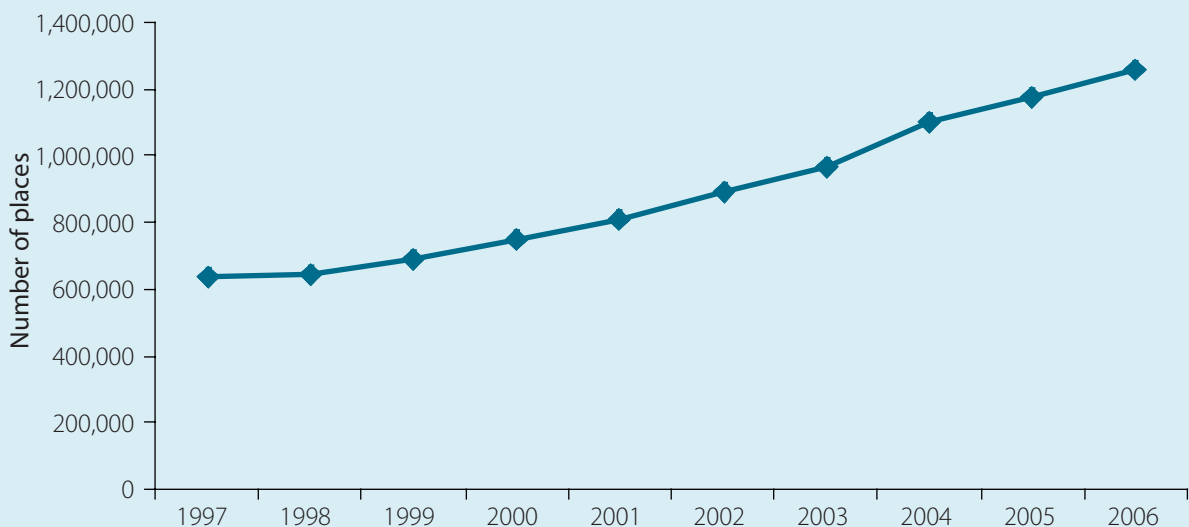
6. For **children's services** and **early years** we proposed a radical transformation of the quality, structure and scale of provision to provide the best possible start in life for all children; more effective support for children, young people and families facing difficulties; and improved

safeguarding and child protection. These commitments were developed in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, the 10 Year Childcare Strategy, the first ever Childcare Act and in the Youth Green Paper *Youth Matters*.

#### CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EARLY YEARS – THE STORY SINCE 1997

Annual expenditure on early years and childcare services has risen dramatically from £1.2 billion in 1997-98 to £4.2 billion in 2005-06. Payments to parents to help them with childcare costs have risen from £30 million in 1997-98 to over £700 million in 2004-05, supporting choices about balancing work and family life by making childcare more affordable. The supply of registered childcare places has almost doubled since 1997. The number of registered childcare places has risen from one place for every eight children under the age of eight years, to one place for every four children.

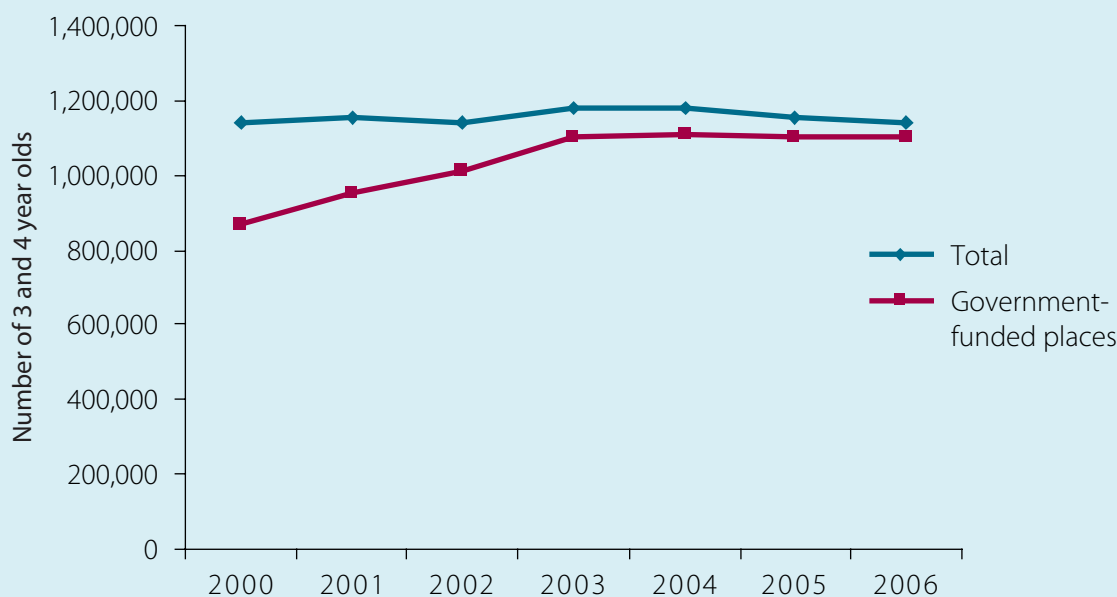
#### All registered childcare places



Source: 1997-2002 LA Returns, 2003-present: Ofsted Registered Stock

Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of 3 and 4-year olds in England benefiting from free early years education increased from 78% to 98%.

### Number of 3 and 4 year olds in early years education in England, 2000-2006



Source: DfES SFR 32/2006 Provision for Children under 5 years of age in England, January 2006 (final).

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Study (EPPE) found that pre-school children who had enjoyed two years of early education were 4-6 months ahead of those brought up entirely at home by the time they started primary school. In addition, those with three years of quality pre-school provision – who started in nursery at two – could be up to 10 months ahead of their contemporaries in educational attainment at the start of primary school. Pre-schoolers maintain an advantage through the early years of primary school until the age of 7.

The transformation of children's services set out in *Every Child Matters* in 2003 is still at a relatively early stage, but there has been rapid progress in delivering more effective and better integrated services:

- Recent success in bringing down the rate of teenage conception in leading Local Authorities illustrates the impact that more effective, well-focused coordination across services can have, with the highest performing quarter of local children's services reducing teenage pregnancy rates by an average of 23% between 1998 and 2004;
- Schools offering extended services report measurable impacts on attainment, attendance, exclusions and behaviour; and
- Local Authorities pioneering new ways of working have seen improvements in outcomes for children and young people. For example, Telford and Wrekin have seen their best ever Key Stage 2, GCSE and A level results in 2005; a 58% reduction in permanent exclusions since 1998; a 6% increase in post-16 staying on rates since 2001; 81% of their Looked After Children engaged in post-16 education, employment and training; and a 16% reduction in under-18 conceptions since 2003.



7. To ensure that the services families need are readily and straightforwardly accessible, we are on target for *the 1,000th Children's Centre to open in September 2006*, with 2,500 centres open by March 2008, and 3,500 centres by 2010. These centres offer high quality, one-stop support for childcare, parenting, health, employment and training and services for families and children.
8. The Government has set itself the goal of ensuring all children have the best possible start in life, supporting parents in the choices they make about *balancing work and family life*. The first ever Childcare Act, which received Royal Assent in July 2006, will place duties on Local Authorities from April 2008 to *secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents*, and to *improve the outcomes for all children up to the age of 5 and reduce inequalities*.
9. The Work and Families Act, which received Royal Assent in June 2006, will *create opportunities and support for parents to stay at home with their children if they want to* by extending paid statutory maternity and adoption leave from 6 to 9 months from April 2007. This is a big step towards the goal of a year's paid maternity and adoption leave by the end of this Parliament. The Act also gives fathers a right to an additional 26 weeks paternity leave, some of which could be paid leave if the mother returns to work. From April 2007 the first cohort of three and four year olds will receive *15 hours free early education and care*, up from 12.5 hours at present, with all children receiving this by April 2010.
10. To provide a breadth of experience for children and young people, and to strengthen the place of schools at the heart of their communities, we have set ourselves a goal that *every primary and secondary school will provide access to a range of "dawn to dusk" extended services by September 2010*, with half of primary and a third of secondary schools offering these services by September 2008. Extended schools can provide extra opportunities for learning, study support, participation in music and sport as well as providing access to a range of specialist support services for pupils, and open their facilities to the wider community for recreation and learning. We have already made substantial progress towards this target so that *from this month, 2,500 schools will be offering the full range of extended services*.
11. Bringing together services for children and young people – health, education, youth justice, youth services – will help prevent the catastrophic systemic failure that led to the death of Victoria Climbié in February 2000 from happening again in the future. It will also support radical innovation at a local level to reshape services around the needs of children, young people and families. We have set in train a transformation in services for children and young people by creating *Children's Trusts to bring together all those who provide services for children and families in each local area* to improve the quality and flexibility of provision. Local Authorities and partners are developing initiatives such as *budget-holding lead professionals* who can purchase

customised care packages and join up services from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

12. Neglect and abuse blight lives. Safeguarding children and young people is absolutely fundamental to the Department and our partners. We have introduced the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill to strengthen arrangements that *prevent unsuitable adults from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults*, implementing recommendation 19 of the Bichard Inquiry following the Soham murders. Since April 2006, statutory *Local Safeguarding Children Boards have been working in every Local Authority* to bring together all partners involved in working with and protecting children. Earlier this year we revised and re-issued guidance for people working in services for children, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.
13. We will shortly be publishing a *Green Paper on children in care* that will propose comprehensive reforms to transform prospects for these children, from more effective early intervention when they are identified as at risk of entering care to better provision when they leave.
14. Following consultation on the Green Paper, *Youth Matters*, in July 2005, Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds were established in April 2006 to give *young people a direct say in the things to do that are available to them locally*. We will launch a *Youth Opportunity Card* in a number of Local Authorities to encourage young people to engage in constructive activities. The Education and Inspections

Bill is seeking Parliament's approval for a new duty on Local Authorities to ensure young people have access to a wide range of activities, with national standards for quality. We have set ourselves a goal *to reform radically support services for at risk young people and their families by 2008*.

## B. Schools

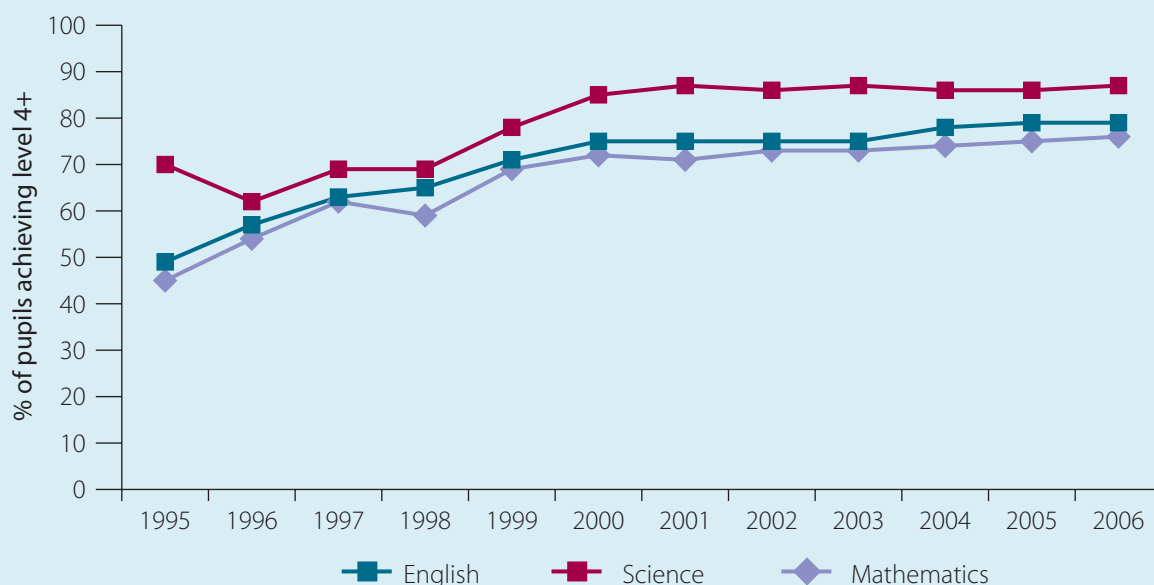
15. In the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners we proposed a series of reforms to schools that would drive up attainment through measures to improve teaching and learning; through investment in technology and the school environment; through smarter, sharper performance management; and through

greater autonomy for successful schools to manage themselves and establish their own ethos. We developed these in the White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils* published in October 2005 and the Education and Inspections Bill currently before Parliament.

### SCHOOLS – THE STORY SINCE 1997

Since 1997 there have been dramatic and sustained improvements in attainment throughout the school system. The number of children reaching the expected standard (level 4) in their Key Stage 2 test results – taken at age 11, the end of primary school for most children – have risen so that now 16 more children in every 100 reach this level in English and 14 more in Maths than in 1997.

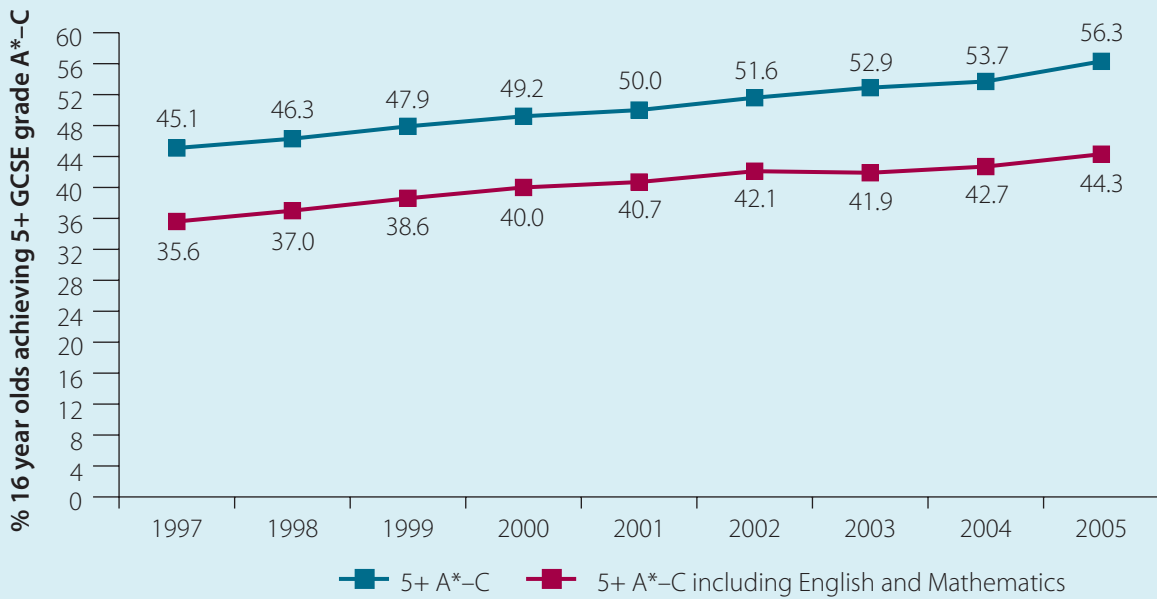
#### Attainment at level 4 and above in Key Stage 2 tests



Source: DfES SFR31/2006

GCSE results have shown a similar improvement, with an extra 11 children in every 100 gaining 5 GCSEs at grade C or above (or their equivalent) than was the case in 1997, and an extra 9 gaining 5 GCSEs at grade C or above or equivalent including English and Maths.

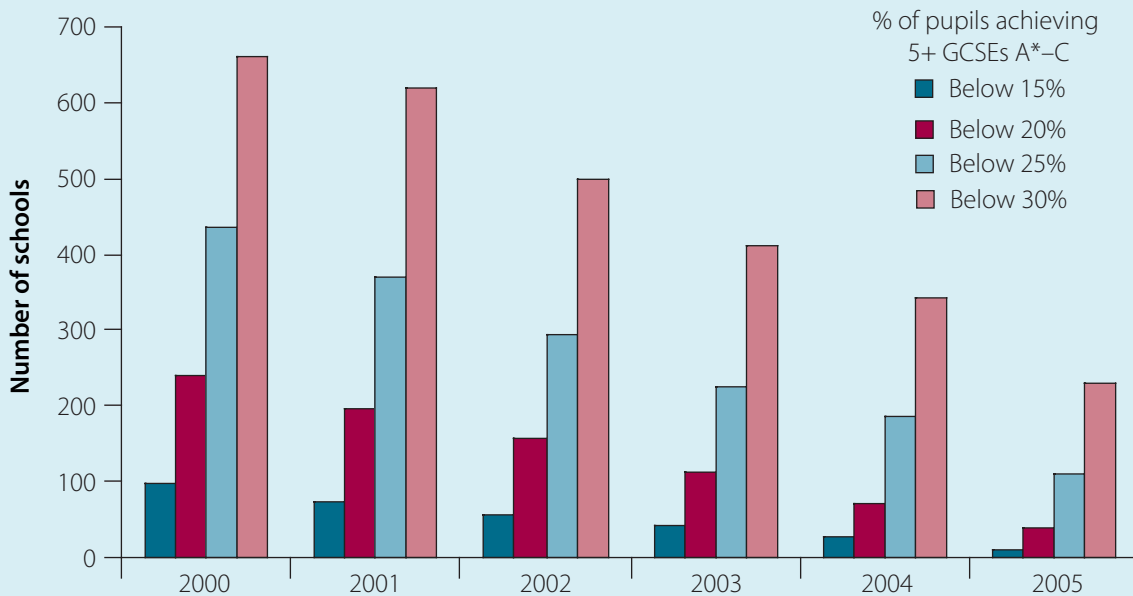
### Proportion of 16 year olds achieving at least five good GCSEs (grade A\*-C) or equivalent



Source: DfES SFR: GCSE and equivalent results and associated value added measures in England

We have also seen a significant reduction in the number of schools with low proportions of pupils achieving expected standards at primary and at secondary level. By 2005, the number of schools in which fewer than 30% of students achieved five good GCSEs (or their equivalent) fell by almost two-thirds.

### Number of schools in which low proportions of pupils achieve at least 5 good GCSEs



Source: DfES SFR: GCSE and Equivalent Results and Associated Value Added Measures in England

We have also invested in the schools workforce. Teacher numbers have grown by 36,200 since 1997. There are now 435,400 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers in the maintained schools sector in England, the highest level since 1981. Support staff numbers have also risen with 287,100 FTE support staff in schools, including 152,800 teaching assistants, an increase of 162,800 since 1997.

Attendance has also improved. Although unauthorised absence rates have risen slightly, authorised absence rates have fallen over the period. Ofsted inspection results for 2004/05 show that behaviour was judged to be good or better in 92% of primary and 74% of secondary schools.

**16. *A renewed Primary Framework for Literacy and Mathematics will be available from September 2006.***

This framework raises expectations for children's progress during primary school, building on improvements in teaching since 1997. It provides teachers with more detailed support and guidance, based on the latest advice on best practice. Following recommendations in Jim Rose's independent review of teaching of early reading, the framework recommends that schools use a programme of high quality phonic work. We will be providing every school with up to 14 days training on the new framework and early reading in particular. We have extended the Key Stage 3 Strategy to cover Key Stage 4 too, providing support to improve teaching in English, maths, science and ICT throughout the secondary years. We have also provided schools with support to raise attainment across all subjects, for example with advice and guidance on assessment for learning, and using ICT to support personalised learning.

**17.** We announced *an additional £500 million this year to support the development of personalised learning, and which will be increased by a further £490 million next year* bringing total resources for personalisation in schools to £990 million. The Primary and

Secondary National Strategy will provide support for schools to personalise learning. We have asked Christine Gilbert to lead an expert team to look further ahead at teaching and learning in 2020, making recommendations to the Secretary of State at the end of this year.

- 18.** We have continued to invest in technology. *95% of primary and 99% of secondary schools have interactive whiteboards*, and by December 2006 every school in the country will have a high speed broadband connection to the internet.
- 19.** We have cut red tape in school accountability and reduced the inspection burden without lessening expectations for improvement. From this month *every secondary school will be supported by a school improvement partner (SIP)*, 70% of whom will have had experience as a secondary head. Every primary school will have a SIP by April 2008.
- 20.** Ofsted's *shorter notice, shorter duration and more frequent inspections* have been running since September last year. Initial evaluation of the almost 6,000 inspections to date shows schools, parents, pupils and local authorities are positive about the new system, and most schools feel that it has reduced bureaucracy and contributed to school improvement. From September 2006

*high achieving schools will get a lighter touch inspection*, and there will be *additional monitoring of schools causing concern or with pockets of underperformance*. The Education and Inspections Bill contains proposals to sharpen Local Authority powers to issue improvement notices to schools at risk of failure, including those schools which are coasting with unacceptably low pupil progress, so that they can correct problems and reverse decline before they fail an Ofsted inspection.

21. We believe that giving greater autonomy to excellent providers across the education system will deliver higher standards and better services. We have provided schools with more independence, within a framework of fair admissions and full accountability. *82% of secondary schools now have specialist status*, which puts us on track to see every school a specialist school by 2008. We created a *fast track route for secondary schools to acquire foundation status* in August 2005, and extended it to primary schools from August 2006, allowing them to own their own assets, employ their own staff, and forge partnerships with outside sponsors and educational foundations. 31 schools have already decided to take advantage of this.
22. The proposals for *Trust Schools* in the Education and Inspections Bill extend this commitment, with schools making partnerships with charitable foundations and other partners, while at the same time introducing safeguards to *ensure fair access and clear accountability and challenge*. The first *Trust Schools*

*Pathfinders* were announced in September 2006. These schools will begin establishing long term relationships that will support them in strengthening leadership, providing opportunities for pupils, and creating a distinctive ethos. The *new Schools Commissioner*, Sir Bruce Liddington, in his capacity as the national champion of diversity, choice and fair access, will promote and support the development of Trust Schools.

23. As part of their wider responsibilities for children and young people, *local authorities will have a new duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school places and school transport*. This will be supported by a new network of choice advisers and extending the rights to free school transport for children from poorer families.
24. This month, *19 more Academies will open, bringing the total to 45*, and we are confident that we will meet the 2010 target of 200 open or in the pipeline. Academies are improving GCSE results at 3 times the national average, and there are three applications for every place in an academy.
25. To enable schools to plan better, all schools are benefiting for the first time *from multi-year budgets, and three year budgets will be introduced in 2008*. On top of the guaranteed annual minimum per-pupil increases in funding, the Government has set itself the long term goal of raising average per-pupil funding in state schools to the level in private schools.



26. We are committed to creating *more places in good schools in response to parental demand*. We have introduced a requirement for *a competition whenever a new secondary school is needed*, with the first competition taking place in September 2007. The Education and Inspections Bill will extend this requirement to new primary schools. In August 2005 we introduced a *fast track schools expansion process for all secondary schools except grammar schools*, underpinned by a strong presumption in favour of expanding popular and successful schools. The Schools White Paper proposed creating a capital fund for successful non-selective schools (including primary schools) that wish to expand.
27. We are *providing record levels of capital investment* to improve school buildings, which will reach over *£8 billion a year by 2010-11*. *Building Schools for the Future (BSF) will renew all secondary schools* in fifteen waves of investment which started in 2005-06, and the Primary Capital programme aims to *renew at least 50% of all primary schools in fifteen years* starting in 2008-09. We are encouraging the creative use of BSF to develop stronger Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, including links between special and maintained schools.
28. To support *good discipline* in all schools, we have included a *statutory power to discipline, and provisions to strengthen arrangements for excluded pupils and parental accountability* in the Education and Inspections Bill to give heads the power to deal with trouble-makers.
29. To ensure that every child in primary school should have the choice of playing music, an additional *£30 million has been committed to support music in primary schools* from 2006 to 2008. 13% of Key Stage 2 pupils are now learning an instrument, more than double the 2003 figure. *56% of schools are delivering or planning to deliver a language programme*, and we are working with Local Authorities where little progress has been made toward the target of every child having the opportunity by 2010. We will meet our target for *75% of 5-16 year olds doing at least 2 hours a week of high quality PE and school sport* by the end of 2006.
30. We have *continued to invest in the transformation of the schools workforce*, improving school leadership, the professionalism of teachers and creating a whole school team with new and important support staff roles. Our *ground-breaking social partnership* with our employer and union workforce partners has been critical to success. We have implemented our commitment that *every teacher should have 10 per cent of their time to plan and prepare lessons and assess work*, and created the new *Excellent Teacher Status* to reward our most experienced classroom teachers for developing their colleagues. To address shortages of teachers in particular subjects *bursaries of £9,000 per year will be available for maths and science trainees from September 2006*.
31. We have acted to encourage children to eat healthily by introducing from September 2006 *tough, statutory*



*nutritional standards for all food provided in schools*, supported by *£220 million a year to improve school meals*.

We also announced *a long-term programme to embed the improvement of school food and tackle childhood obesity, with an additional £240 million from 2008 to 2011* to subsidise the cost of ingredients in school lunches.

32. Following the publication of our Special Educational Needs (SEN) strategy, *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, more resources are going to schools to support earlier intervention for children with SEN. *The attainment of vulnerable groups of learners, including many children with SEN, is improving*; in the past 2 years, the proportion of children achieving Level 2 and above in Key Stage 1 maths has improved by 1% and the proportion of children achieving Level 3 and above at the end of Key Stage 2 increased by 0.3%. Our forthcoming response to the recent report on SEN from the Education and Skills Select Committee will set out the action we will take to improve prospects for children with SEN by building capacity in the children's workforce, making better use of data and strengthening accountability and challenge, encouraging Local Authorities to offer a flexible continuum of provision to meet the full range of children's individual needs, and to strengthen partnerships with and support for parents.

### C. 14-19 education and training

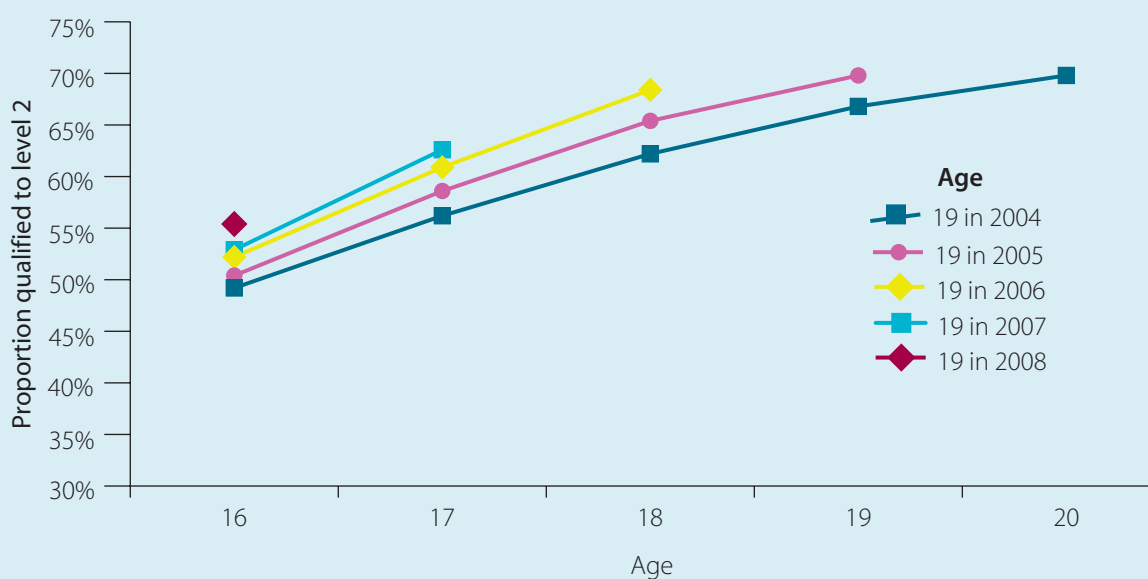
33. The Five Year Strategy identified our internationally low staying on rates beyond the age of 16 and continuing low attainment amongst substantial numbers of young people as key

challenges. We set out reforms to address them in the White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills*.

#### 14-19 – THE STORY SINCE 1997

Attainment at age 19 has risen since 1997, with a larger proportion of pupils achieving level 2 (5 GCSEs at grade C or above) and level 3 (two or more A levels) than ever before.

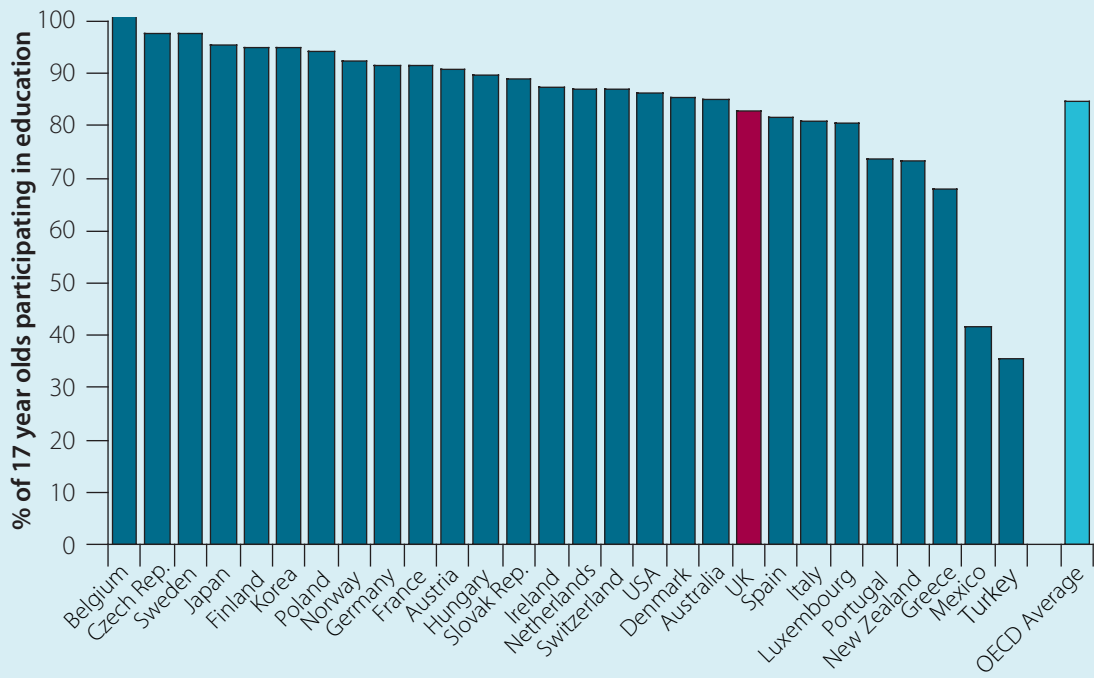
#### Proportion of young people qualified to level 2 or higher between ages 16 and 19, by age cohort



Source: Matched Administrative Data Set

However, post-16 participation rates remain low by international standards.

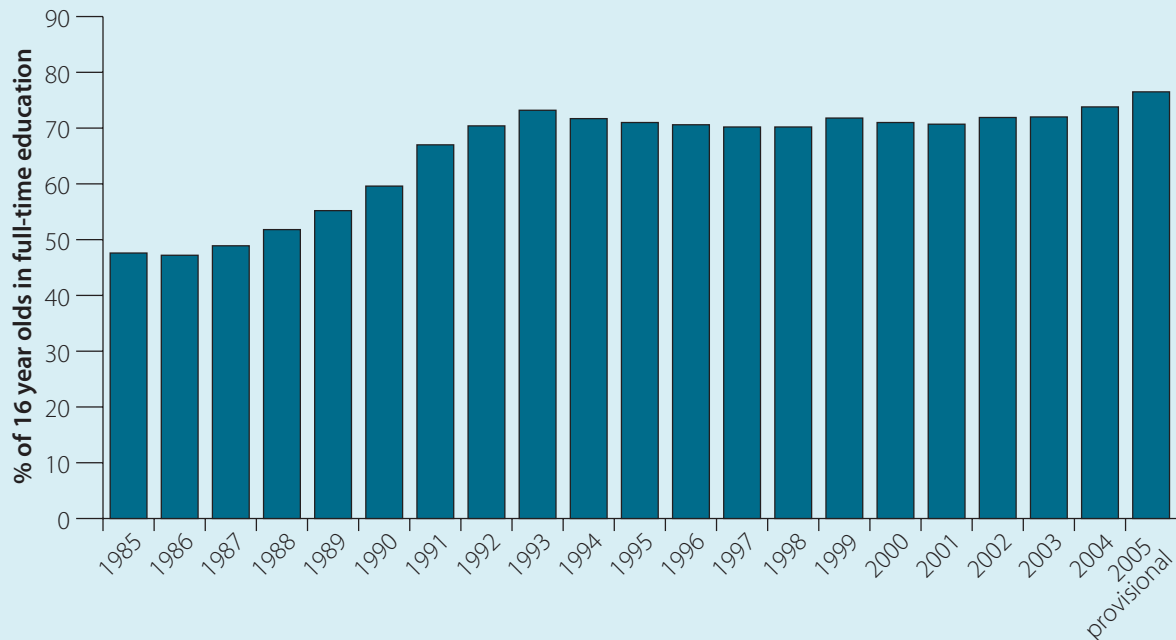
**Participation at age 17 by OECD members, 2004**



Source: Education at a Glance 2006 Table C1.3

However, we have seen the first increase in participation rates for a number of years.

**16 year olds' participation in full time education, 1985-2005**



Source: DfES SFR "Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England"

34. Our target was for an increase in the number of 19 year olds achieving level 2 qualifications of 3% between 2004 and 2007. In fact we achieved a 3% increase by 2005. Building on this, *our ambition is that 90% of 17 year olds will participate in education or training by 2015, and 85% of 19 year olds will achieve at least a level 2 qualification by 2013*. There has also been the *first significant increase in participation rates at ages 16 and 17 in over a decade*, supported by the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowances.
35. The number of young people participating in *apprenticeships* has risen from 75,000 in 1997 to a record number of over 250,000, meeting our target. We are well on our way to our target for increasing the number of people completing apprenticeships by 75% to 75,000 in 2007-08.
36. We are *reforming curriculum and qualifications* so that all young people are engaged by learning and pursuing opportunities which prepare them well for life. Employers and the Higher Education sector are leading the design of *new specialised Diplomas at 3 levels, which combine theoretical and practical learning as a basis for further study, higher education and employment*. The first 5 specialised Diplomas will start to be taught in September 2008; by 2010 all 14 Diplomas will be widely available and there will be an entitlement for every young person to have access to any of the 14 Diplomas by 2013.
37. There are now 14-19 partnerships operating in every part of the country, offering *greater curriculum choice* to students in their areas. These partnerships are developing local prospectuses that will provide the basis for young people to make decisions about learning. A new £15m flexible funding pot and a new capital fund for schools and FE Colleges will support the development of new provision. *A quarter of 14-16 year olds (320,000) already undertake some applied education*, and we expect that to increase to up to 40%. More young people are studying in Further Education than ever before and *the level of investment in FE for young people and adults has gone up by 48% in real terms since 1997*.
38. To increase choices about where to study, *47 Vocational Specialist Schools are now open*. 15 of the first 17 schools eligible under the presumption that *excellent schools should be able to create sixth forms* have expressed an interest in doing so; and we are introducing a similar presumption for excellent FE Colleges.
39. We are placing more emphasis on all young people attaining functional skills in English and Maths. In 2007 we will be trialing the content and assessment methods for *new functional skills qualifications in English, Maths and ICT* with a view to incorporating them into Diplomas from 2008 and then into GCSEs and Apprenticeships. From this year the *Achievement and Attainment Tables will report performance in English and Maths*.

40. To *stretch and challenge* all pupils, we are piloting a new *extended project* from this month, together with *more stretching materials for A levels*. We are developing *new programmes of study at Key Stage 3* which will be introduced from 2008 and which will allow greater space in the curriculum for those who have fallen behind to catch up and to allow those who can to progress faster.
41. We have set out a programme for *reforming advice services* for young people to help them with the course, career and personal choices they face, with budgets devolved to local authorities, schools and colleges and new national quality standards.

## D. Adult Skills

42. The Five Year Strategy included plans to provide many more adults with the qualifications and skills they need for sustained employment and further learning, for engaging employers in training, and for accelerating the improvement in standards in Further

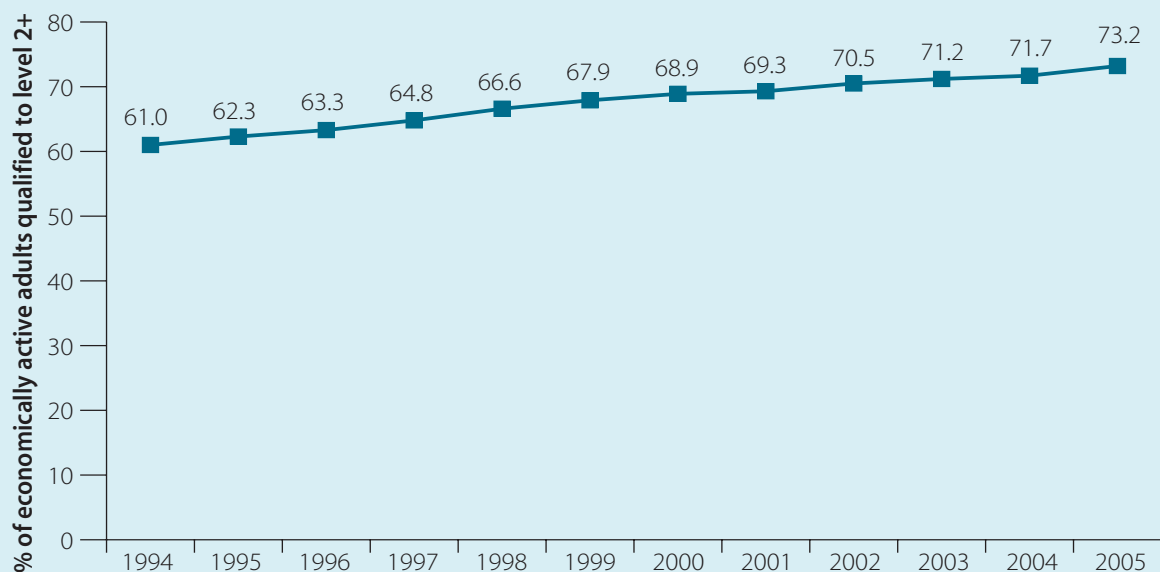
Education – vital to both 14-19 reform and adult skills. Subsequently, we set out our plans in more detail in the White Papers, *Skills: Getting on in Business*, *Getting on at Work* and *FE Reform: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*.

### ADULT SKILLS – THE STORY SINCE 1997

Over a million people have been helped to improve their basic literacy, numeracy and language skills. From April 2001 to July 2005, 1,275,000 adults achieved a qualification in one of these three areas.

We are on track to meet our target of one million adults to have achieved a first level 2 qualification (5 GCSEs at grade A\*-C or equivalent) between 2003 and 2006. The proportion of adults in the workforce with at least this level of qualification has risen by 12% to around 73%.

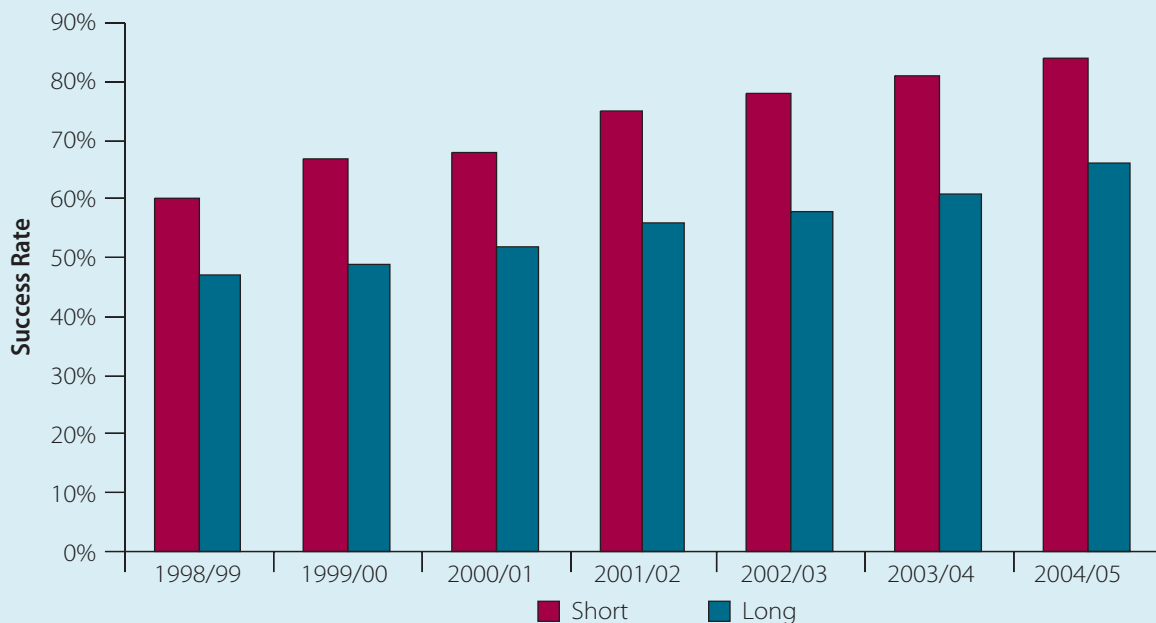
#### Proportion of economically active adults qualified to at least Level 2



Source: Adults in England, autumn quarters, Labour Force Survey

We have also seen improvement in success rates – the proportion of students who start a course and go on to achieve a qualification in it – in Further Education:

#### FE Success rates by qualification length



Source: DfES FE Book of Facts 2006

43. We have given top priority to providing more help to those with low or no skills and qualifications to improve their employability and access to further learning. On top of the existing entitlement to free tuition for people learning basic skills, from September 2006 we are putting in place *a national entitlement to free tuition for all adults seeking their first level 2 qualification* (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade C or above). From 2007-08 we are also rolling out nationally a new *Adult Learning Grant supporting those studying full-time for a first full level 2 or first full level 3 qualification*. On top of this, we announced in the FE White Paper that we will introduce *a new entitlement to free tuition to help young adults (19-25 year olds) gain a first level 3 qualification*, putting them on a par with 16-19 year

olds seeking the qualifications needed for entry to Higher Education. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will shortly be responding to Peter Little's review of *provision for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties*.

44. We have put employers in the driving seat of training and skills development. From summer 2006 *a new national programme, Train to Gain, is offering employers fully subsidised training for low skilled employees up to a first level 2 qualification and support for progression to level 3*, allowing employers to shape the design and delivery of training. Results from pilot schemes means we expect 175,000 full level 2 qualifications each year to be achieved through Train to Gain, working with 50,000 employers. *All 25 Sector Skills Councils are now in place* ensuring employers have their say



over the training and qualifications needed in their sector. There are now over *14,000 Union Learning Representatives to engage adults in learning opportunities*.

45. We are developing world class expertise in vocational learning, driven by the needs of employers. We now have a network of *386 Centres of Vocational Excellence* in place, and will raise the bar for accreditation and require a more direct role for employers in the next phase of the programme. The first four *National Skills Academies* opened in 2006, with a further eight to open by 2008. Working with the Learning and Skills Council, we will *increase the proportion of the adult FE budget that is driven directly by the choices of learners and employers* so that the majority is demand led by 2015.
46. We are *simplifying quality assurance and improvement* with the creation of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and the merger of Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate. In December 2006 the QIA will issue the first ever *national strategy to support improvement and higher standards* in FE. We will introduce, with the Learning and Skills Council, complementary work to deal with underperformance based on our goal of *eliminating poor provision by 2008* and also a new *performance management framework*. We will set out our vision for *personalised learning in FE* and have asked the QIA to extend its national reform programme for teaching and learning to a wider range of subjects.
47. We are tackling the reform of initial teacher training, introducing Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status and developing Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training. We will continue to support the *professionalisation of the workforce*, with a new qualification for college principals, a requirement for continuing professional development and support for Skills for Life teachers. We will also introduce measures to *support staff recruitment and retention* including the Give Something Back programme offering technical and vocational specialists opportunities to teach; the Make a Difference and Business Talent programmes to encourage high-flying graduates and talented people from other sectors to make a career in FE; and Business Interchange to help teachers and trainers update their industry experience.
48. We have set out plans to *encourage new providers of training to enter the market to improve and increase options for employers and individuals and to sharpen incentives for improvement* by increasing competition in contracting for work-based provision, and, from January 2007, by testing how we can use competitions to replace poor quality in all provision, to create new provision and to encourage innovation.

## E. Higher Education

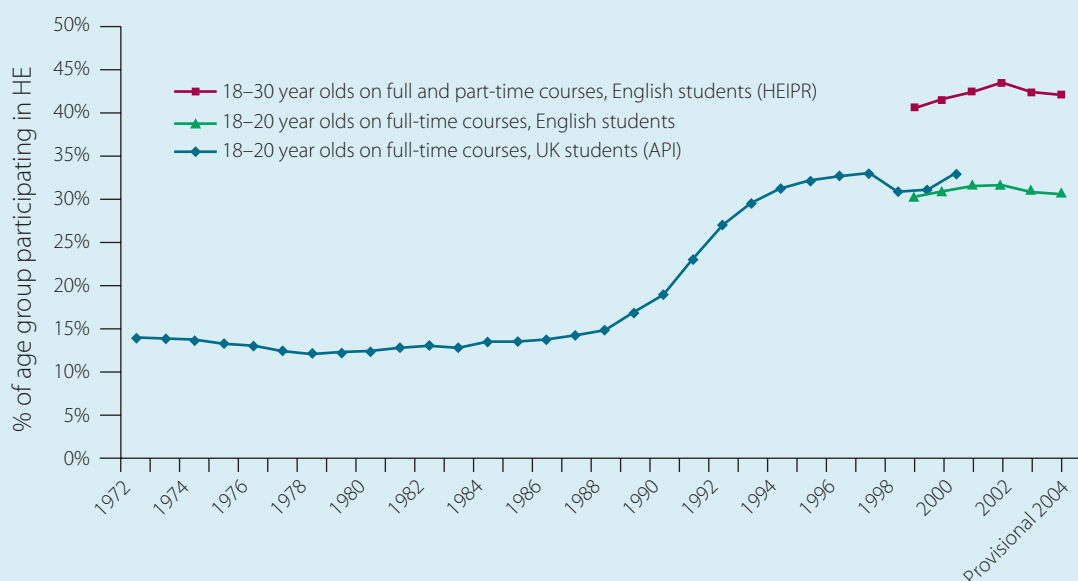
49. Higher Education is of critical importance to the economy, and society. The Higher Education Act 2004 tackled the need for increased funding for Higher Education Institutions through radical changes to

student and university funding, while recognising the autonomy of the Higher Education sector and widening access to Higher Education.

### HIGHER EDUCATION – THE STORY SINCE 1997

Participation in Higher Education has risen since 1997 in terms of the number of students and as a proportion of 18-30 year olds in the population.

#### Proportion of people participating in Higher Education (1972–2004)



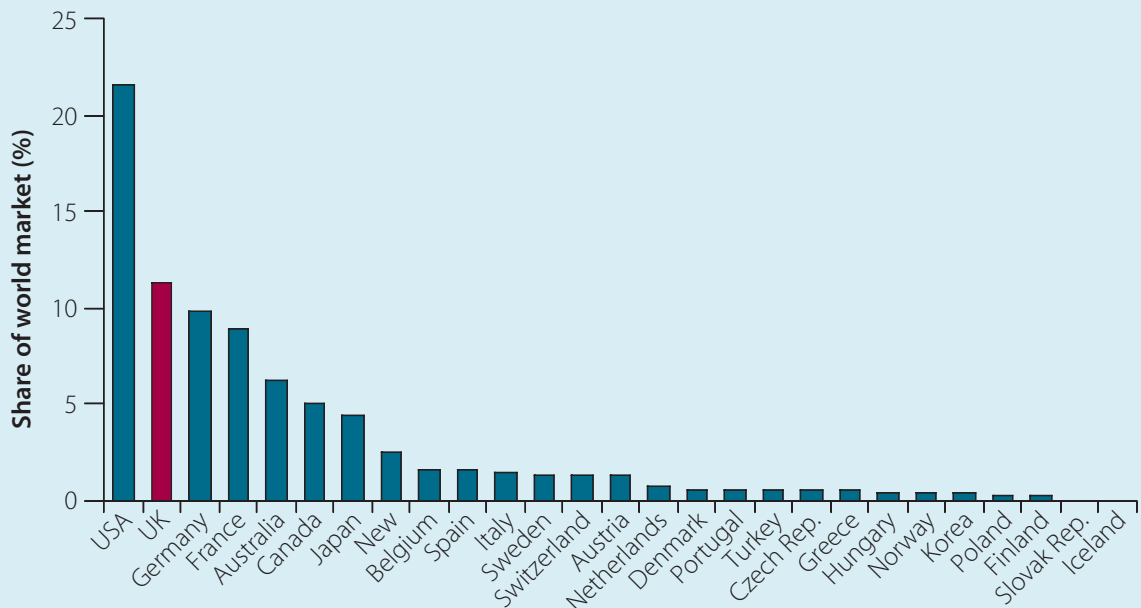
Note: Comparable data in terms of coverage and methodology are not available for all years to 2004. In 1999/2000, the Age Participation Index (API) was replaced by the Higher Education Institution Participation Rate (HEIPR) to monitor increasing participation in HE among 18–30 year olds.

Source: HESA

The proportion of young HE entrants coming from state schools has risen from 82% in 1997/98 to 87% in 2004/05. While the proportion of young entrants from low socio-economic groups has remained fairly stable at around 28% since 1997/98, with a falling proportion of the population in these groups, this is likely to reflect an increasing participation rate. The proportion coming from low participation areas has increased from 12% to 14% over the period.

The international standing of the UK HE sector is high. Comparisons of papers and citations per head of population put the UK on a par with the United States. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in this country attract large numbers of overseas students, and have the second largest share of the world HE market.

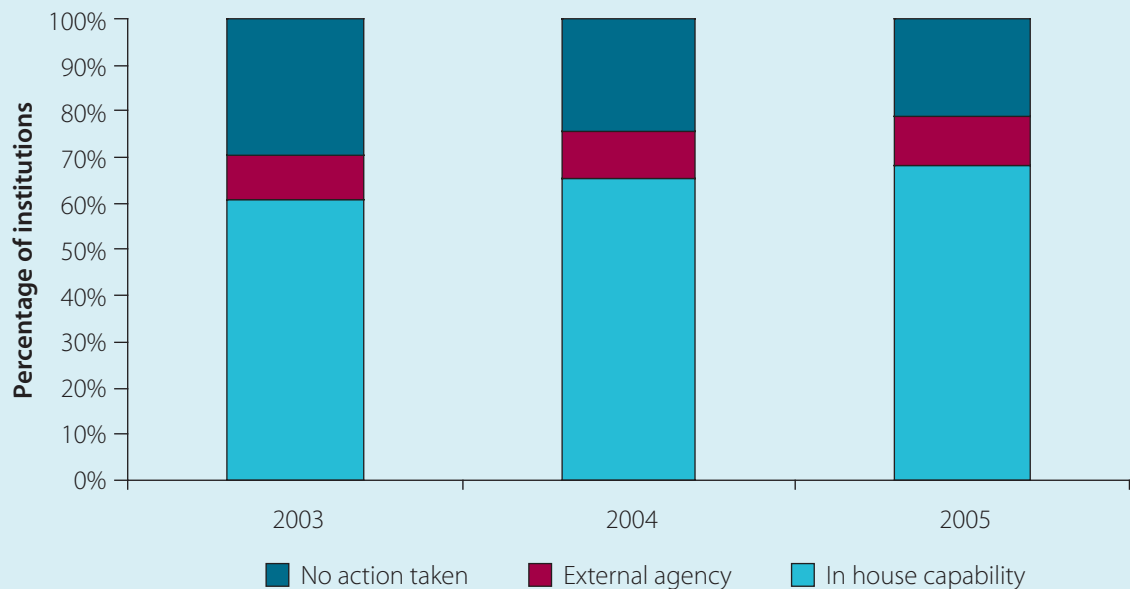
### Market Share of overseas higher education, by country (2004)



Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2006

Exploiting innovation will be critical to maintaining global competitiveness. Higher Education Institutions are boosting their capacity to identify and market the ideas they generate.

### Proportion of Higher Education Institutions with the capability to seek out licensing opportunities



Source: HEFCE: Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey

50. To be confident that Higher Education is accessible to those who would benefit from it, we have unified our *Aim Higher activities to raise attainment and aspiration* into a coherent national

outreach programme operating most intensively in areas of disadvantage. We are providing *grants of up to £2,700 to students that need them* alongside loans for living costs; *an end to up-front*

*fees; and a fair way for graduates to contribute to the cost of their course.*

Through access agreements, Higher Education Institutions are offering *bursaries worth £300 million to support new full-time students, mainly from lower income families.* The Office for Fair Access promotes and safeguards access to higher education for under-represented groups in the light of the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07.

51. We have introduced a *package of support for part-time students* in 2006, increasing the support for low income part-time students towards their tuition fees to a maximum of £1,125 per year, and increasing the *Access to Learning Fund available to part-time students* from £3 million to £12 million. We are supporting the *provision of HE qualifications through Further Education colleges.*
52. We have supported the continued enhancement of high quality, flexible teaching and learning in HE with a range of targeted initiatives such as the creation of the *HE Academy*, and the opening of *74 Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning* to share best practice. We are funding five HE institutions to develop and test models of flexible provision from 2006-07, including piloting compressed 2 years honours degrees.
53. A strong research base is essential for our continuing economic competitiveness. As part of a £1 billion investment increase set out in the Government's 10 Year Science and

Innovation Investment Framework, *the Department will be investing nearly £400 million extra a year by 2007-08 in university research and knowledge transfer compared with 2004-05.* We will announce *reforms to the way we evaluate and fund research* by the end of the year.

54. We are working with HEIs to increase *employer engagement* in higher education to help boost innovations and skills, and to introduce foundation degrees, developed and supported by employers. Nearly *47,000 students were studying for foundation degrees in 2005/06*, and we are on track to meet our target of 50,000 foundation degree students by the end of the year. From 2006 we are introducing a *higher education element of the Train to Gain initiative* in three pathfinder regions to meet the HE skills needs of employers. We are working with the higher education sector to promote *more flexible delivery to meet employers' needs*, including more work-based learning.
55. We are helping universities meet the challenge of greater international competition for students. Under the Prime Minister's Initiative for international education, universities met their target to recruit *an extra 50,000 international students by 2005, two years ahead of schedule.* A second phase – PMI2 – launched in April this year, has a wider international agenda which encompasses the promotion of international partnerships, improving the international student experience, and increasing student recruitment.

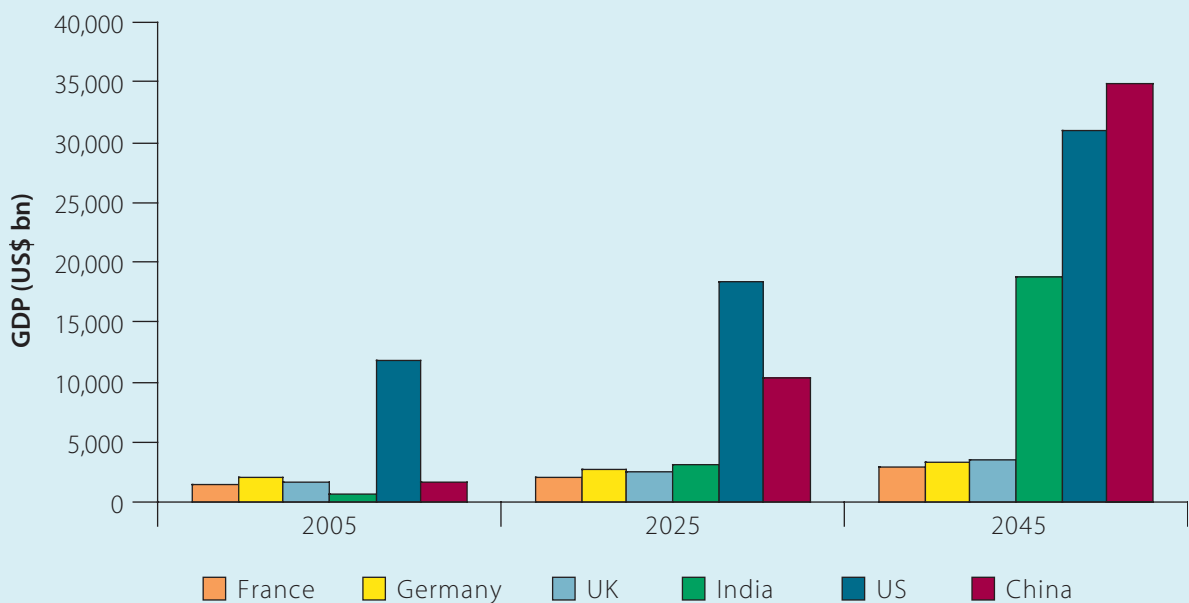
## PART 2 – TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD TO 2009 AND BEYOND

56. We and our partners have achieved a great deal since the Five Year Strategy was published in 2004, with a lot more in the pipeline. But, now we have delivered or are about to deliver on the commitments made in the Strategy, we need to think about where we next focus our efforts. This is particularly important ahead of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review which will set budgets for 2008-09 to 2010-11.
57. The way we take the Strategy forward must reflect what we know about the challenges and opportunities presented by:
- globalisation, and in particular the rapid economic growth in China and India;
  - demographic changes, with an ageing population, internal migration and changing patterns of immigration; and
  - the rapid pace of technological change which will change learners' expectations, the way services can be delivered and make ICT skills ever more important for employability.

### GLOBALISATION

The dramatic growth in developing economies, particularly in China and India, will transform the economic environment in which we operate.

#### GDP in 2005, 2025 and 2045



Source: Goldman Sachs 2003, Global Economics Paper No. 99: Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050

Competition will become more intense at all levels, particularly as developing economies move into higher value sectors of the market.

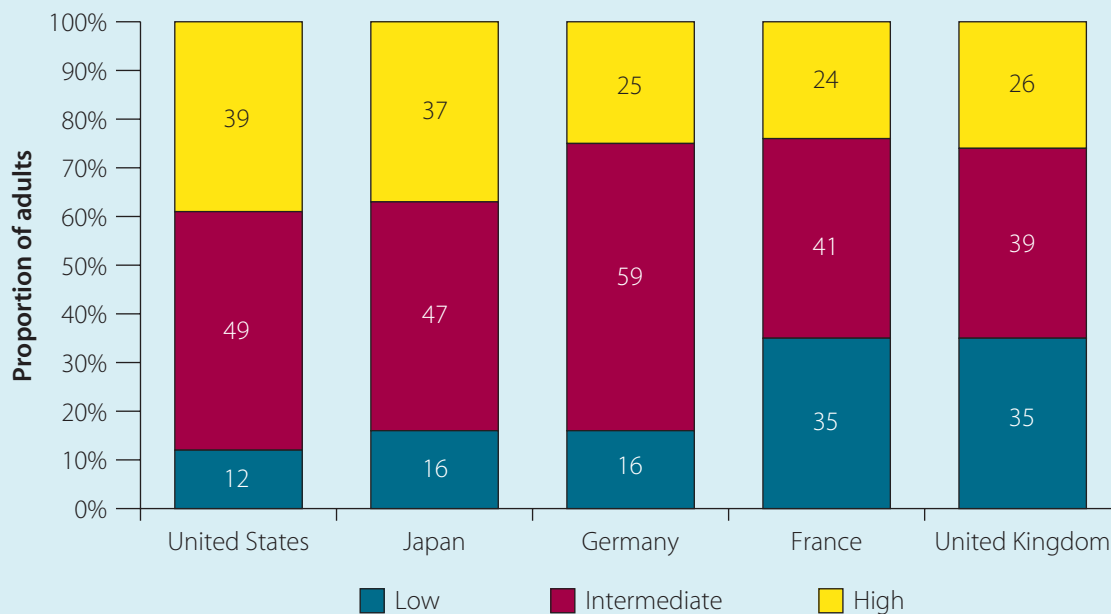
**Developing & emerging countries' share in manufactured exports by technological category, 1981 and 2000**



Source: UNIDO

Keeping pace with this challenge will mean developing our skill base at all levels.

**International comparisons of adult skills**



Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2006

We already lag behind our competitors in the proportion of our workforce with intermediate and high level qualifications. The rapid growth in the number of graduates in developing economies means we need also to build the proportion of our workforce with high level qualifications. Between 1985 and 2003 data from the Chinese Ministry of Education show the number of graduates increased from 0.3 million to 1.9 million per year. As enrolments continue to rise rapidly, we estimate the number of graduates in China will reach around 4 million per year in 2006, compared to 300,000 graduates in the UK.

58. It is also vital that we reflect the lessons we have learnt about how best to drive improvements in services for children and learners.
59. In our ambition for improvement, we should not lose sight of the fact we are doing well. In many areas services are world class, and elsewhere they are rising to that standard. The challenge is, having recovered from failure, to make the good better. Indeed, given the challenge of globalisation standing still means we will fall behind.
60. Our priority as a Department, working with our partners and the rest of Government, must be to identify and to tackle early and head-on the obstacles that jeopardise our continuing success, and to seize the opportunities for making faster progress.
61. Many of these obstacles are deep-rooted and social – the legacy of under-investment in our skill base or under performance in schools, or communities neglected – and will take time to address. But the rapidly changing environment sharpens the need to act, and provides us with fresh means and opportunities to do so. We believe that, by identifying root causes and by targeting effectively, Government action can decisively address these issues and transform people’s lives.
62. We believe there are five things that we must achieve if we are to maintain our position as a prosperous, civilised society:
- Closing the gap in educational attainment between those from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers;
  - While at the same time continuing to raise standards for all across the education system;
  - Increasing the proportion of young people staying on in education or training beyond age 16;
  - Reducing the numbers of young people on a path to failure in adult life; and
  - Closing the skills gap at all levels – from basic literacy and numeracy to postgraduate research – to keep pace with the challenge of globalisation.
63. These should be the priorities that guide us and our partners in the coming years. Progress against them should be the yardstick against which our success is judged. The extent to which programmes and budgets contribute to delivering against them should determine where we invest time and resources.

### Our priorities

64. **Closing the gap in educational attainment between children from lower income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers**, while at the same time raising standards for all. The attainment gap has been a significant factor in reduced social mobility in our society. International comparisons show that the size of the gap is not inevitable. We need to close it for three reasons: first, to promote social justice; second, to end a waste of talent we can’t afford; and third, to break a cycle of under-achievement, poverty and



low aspiration that risks becoming entrenched from generation to generation.

65. We know that the attainment gap starts early, *so we will need to ensure that early years provision reaches out to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families* and all children reach primary school prepared and able to learn. *The boost from effective early intervention needs to be sustained through school* as we know that disadvantaged children with a given level of attainment are less likely to make the same progress as their peers.
66. *Extended services in schools, which can broaden horizons and experience, will need to be accessible to all.* We know that the biggest influence on a child's success is their parents, and we will need to work with parents to ensure *home is a place where learning is supported.*
67. We need to *raise aspiration*: parents expecting more from their children, teachers expecting more from their pupils and children and young people expecting more from themselves. We will need to understand better *how factors such as gender, disability and*

*ethnicity link to attainment* in developing our approach.

68. We know that tackling issues outside the classroom such as health, or difficulties at home, or neglect and abuse, are critical to unlocking potential so *we will need to be sure services work together to identify problems and intervene early.* And we know that we cannot give up on people who have failed to achieve by the time they become adults, which is why we *need to offer training in the basic skills that secure employability* to help them, and to secure a better start for the next generation.
69. Second, ***continuing to raise standards for all across the education system.*** Individual success and success as a nation depends on everyone achieving all of which they are capable. We *will refresh our literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools*, with a systemic use of phonics, ensuring pupils grasp the basics, such as times tables, earlier. Many children don't achieve their potential because of problems outside the classroom, so *we will ensure that children's services and schools work together effectively.* We will need to

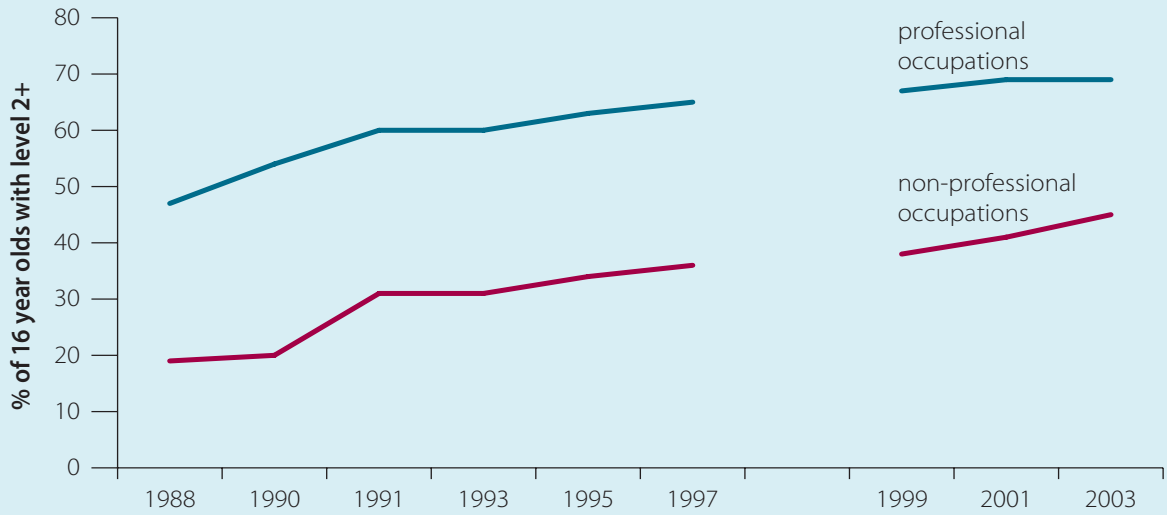
## SOCIAL MOBILITY

Recent research has suggested that social mobility has declined over the last 30 years, with today's thirty-somethings more likely to have a low income if their parents were poor than the generation before them. This is in contrast to Canada and the Nordic countries (Blanden, Gregg and Machin, 2005).

The gap in educational attainment that exists between children from low income groups (and other disadvantaged groups) and their peers is a key factor in determining social mobility. Educational attainment is an important predictor of a young person's prospects as they enter adulthood, and is likely to become increasingly so in a global economy.

The attainment gap has remained fairly stable since 1997. This in itself is an achievement, as actions to improve standards in school tend to have most impact on those children already well placed to benefit and will often widen attainment gaps. However, we want to go further because we do not believe the size of the gap is inevitable.

**Percentage of cohort achieving at least 5 GCSEs grade A\*-C by parents' occupation**

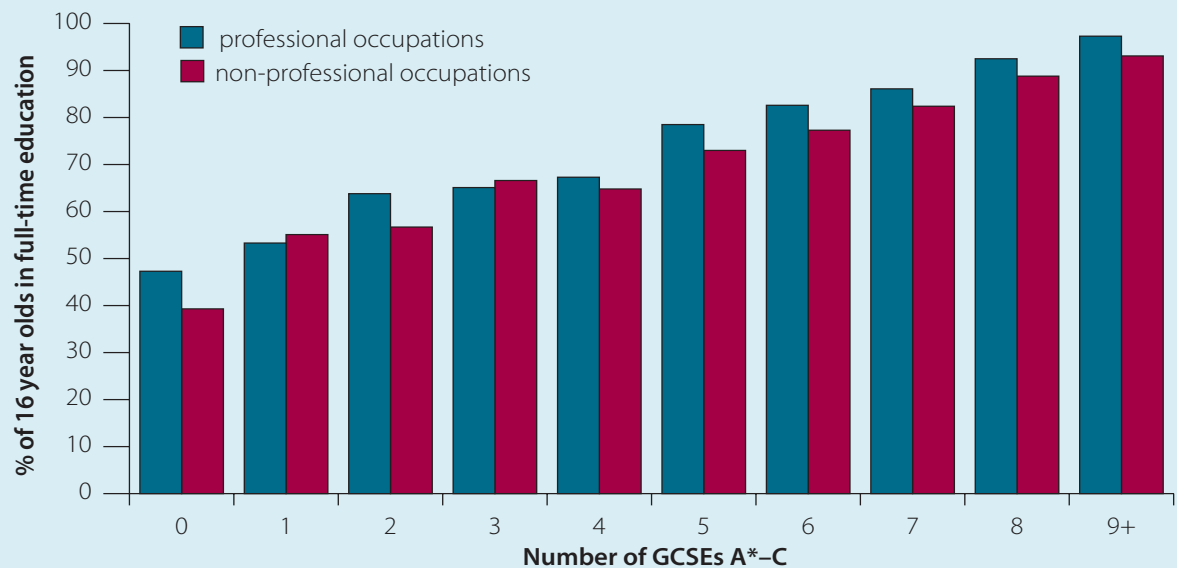


Note: Discontinuity exists between 1997 – 1999 because of a change in the classification of social class from SEG to NSSEC. Manual and non-manual categories have been constructed by grouping more detailed breakdown of social class groups. The narrowing of the gap from 2001 is not statistically significant.

Source: DfES internal analysis, Youth Cohort Study cohorts 4-12, sweep 1

The impact of aspiration and expectation is critical. For example, a child with parents in non-professional occupations is less likely to remain in education after age 16 than their peers with exactly the same level of attainment.

**Participation rates of students in full time education at age 16 by parents' occupation**



Source: YCS Cohort 12

*focus on transitions between primary and secondary education*, and on *maintaining momentum in the first few years of secondary school* where too many children make little progress and begin to disengage from learning. We will work with schools and colleges to *embed personalised learning* to develop and stretch everyone's potential and to *exploit technological developments*. We will *invest in workforce, leadership and buildings* to improve teaching and learning. We will *act decisively and quickly to turn round or replace schools and colleges which are coasting or failing*. We will *tackle poor behaviour and disruption*.

70. Third, we must **increase the proportion of young people staying on in education or training after age 16**. We will need to ensure *the curriculum throughout secondary education is relevant and engaging*, that it *develops the potential of all young people*, and provides equivalent levels of *challenge across the whole range of subjects and qualifications*. We have set challenging targets for participation and achievement at age 19. Failure to meet these targets will make it far harder to meet the global economic challenge.
71. Fourth, we must **reduce the number of young people on a path to failure in adult life**. Problems such as low achievement, persistent unemployment, repeat offending and drug use, once entrenched, are costly and difficult to resolve. They affect the next generation, with the children of these adults more likely to experience similar difficulties.

They affect those around them, whether it is through poor behaviour or disruption in school, or through criminality and antisocial behaviour in our communities.

72. We need to take action, working across different services, both to turn round young people already on this path and, critically, to prevent these problems developing in the first place. We will work with partners at the frontline and in the Voluntary and Community Sector in *developing effective early interventions*, identifying and acting decisively with children at risk to strengthen protection and *build resilience*.
73. The multiple problems faced by these young people are complex and don't fall neatly under one service, and won't be addressed by a traditional service-based approach. Therefore, we will support and encourage *innovative approaches to working across service boundaries*, such as multi-disciplinary teams and devolving budgets to lead professionals, and spread best practice about what works. We are determined to see *a step change in the prospects for children in care*, whose prospects are so much worse than almost any other group of children and young people. We will also work together with the rest of Government in actions to address *disadvantaged and disaffected adults and communities, where the next generation of children are most at risk of failure*.
74. Finally, **we need to close the skills gap at all levels to keep pace with the challenge of globalisation**. We already lag behind our competitors on basic and

intermediate skills levels, on the proportion of our workforce with low or no skills, and the numbers of young people leaving education with few or no qualifications. We are determined to see a step change in skill levels in the workforce so that we keep pace and more with our international competitors. As Lord Leitch has shown in his review of skills, simply achieving our current targets will not be enough. While the UK presently compares well at graduate level, the increased number of graduates in India and China means growing our supply of high level skills – particularly in science and technology – will be a priority.

75. We will *work with employers through Sector Skills Councils and the new Train to Gain programme* to encourage them to maximise their investment in skills and to *increase further employers' role in the design and delivery of training*. We will *press on with our reforms of Further Education and training*, so that we have a system that achieves consistently high standards, where teaching and learning carries real credibility with employers, and where provision is more responsive to the needs of employers and learners. We will develop *alternative ways to achieve to HE level qualifications*. HEIs will need to *promote innovation and knowledge transfer* and *maintain their world-class position in research* to keep pace with our competitors. We look forward to the final Leitch report as a vital contribution to the step change in UK skills levels we need to remain competitive and successful in dealing

with the opportunities and challenges of the future.

76. Underpinning all of these priorities must be a clear focus on **safeguarding the young and vulnerable**, ensuring they are safe in the services we and our partners offer them, and that they are not at risk of neglect or abuse in the home. If we fail to do this, we cannot hope to see children or young people achieving their full potential. We will do this working across government and with partners, and with children and young people themselves. We must not lose sight of this fundamental obligation, which is a hallmark of a civilised society.

## PART 3 – RISING TO MEET THE CHALLENGE

77. These priorities each connect with one another. Failure in the early years increases the likelihood of failure in school and in later life. Children and young people are less likely to thrive if they are not safe and healthy. Children from low income families are less likely to achieve their full potential, and are disproportionately represented among school leavers with no or few qualifications, and among young people on a path to failure. Addressing these challenges means looking at the journey users make through our services, rather than at individual elements in isolation. It will also mean looking beyond our Departmental boundary to the key part played by other Government Departments and services.

78. This should not come as a surprise: it reflects the experience of those who use our services. Parents, children, learners and employers don't use schools *or* colleges *or* childcare. They use these services in combination, consecutively and simultaneously. Their interest is in how the parts add up to help them to be healthy and safe and to prosper and thrive in 21st century society. By putting the user first, our focus becomes how all our services work together over people's lives – how the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

79. Building on the Five Year Strategy, three things will be critical to success in delivering on our priorities:

- First, **putting the user's experience at the heart of all we do**, ensuring that programmes work together and

build on one another, reinforcing and sustaining impact as the user passes from one service to another;

- Second, **continuing to improve performance across each part of the system** – colleges, schools, universities, children's services;
- Third, **working more effectively with our partners in delivery and with other Government Departments.**

### The user's experience at the heart of all we do

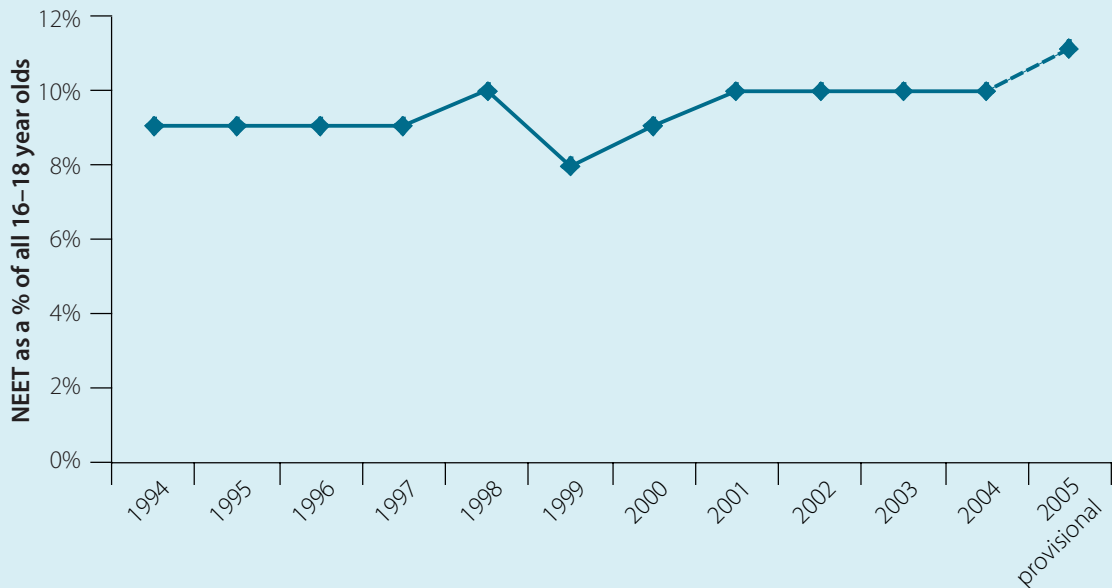
80. Tackling these challenges means addressing complex problems. Further significant progress in raising standards and closing the attainment gap, for example, cannot be delivered in the classroom alone. It will mean sustaining the impact of effective early interventions, coordinating effort across services where the child and family require additional support, and tailoring actions more closely to the particular needs of the child, parent or learner.

81. Personalised learning, the reform of 14-19 qualifications and provision, the development of the children's centres and extended schools in the 10 Year Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Act 2006, and the revolution in children's services following *Every Child Matters* and the Children Act 2004, have all pointed the way forward. These programmes have reconfigured services across traditional boundaries to create provision that is shaped around the user's needs.

## PROBLEMS IN THE TEENAGE YEARS

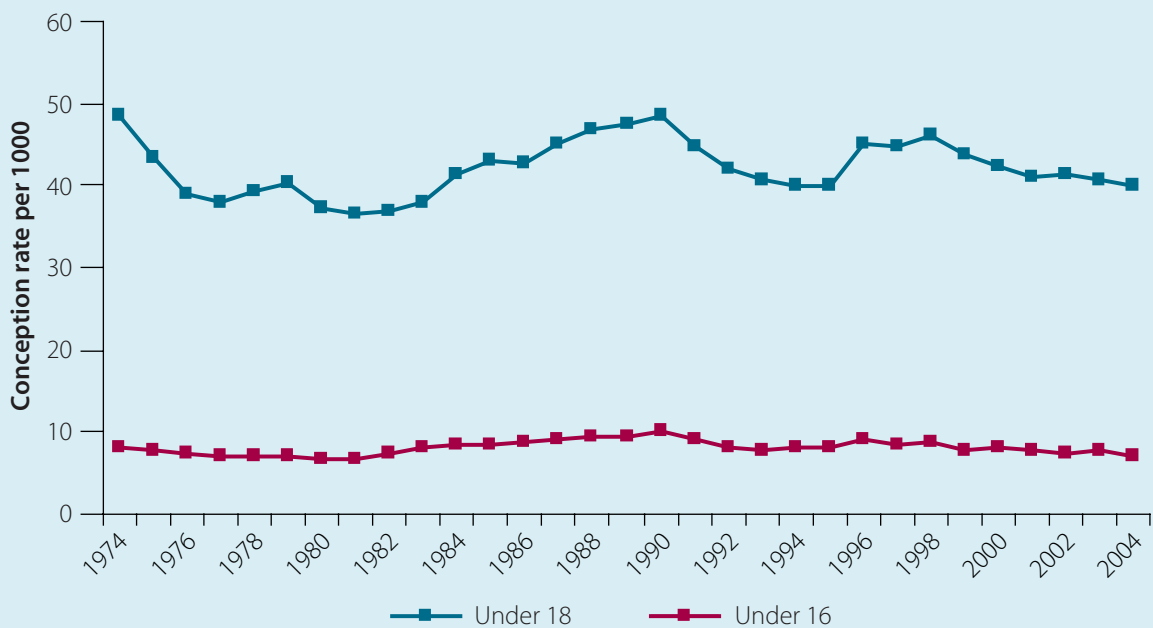
Adolescence is for many young people a period of experimentation and risk-taking. For a minority, this can be a time when serious problems emerge or earlier difficulties escalate. Young people are more at risk of homelessness, unemployment and crime than the rest of the population. In 2005 over 10% of all pupils aged 11-15 said they had taken drugs in the last month. 42% of all first time offenders are 18-20 year olds. Although teenage pregnancy rates are coming down, they remain high compared to other EU countries. And the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training remains stubbornly high.

### Proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS)



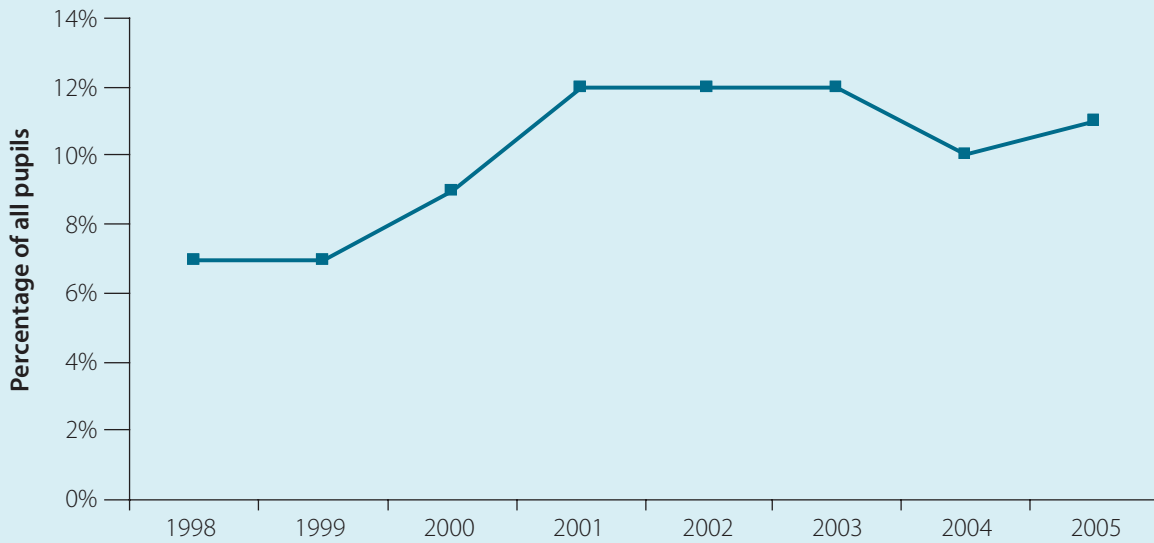
Source: DfES SFR 21/2006

### Teenage pregnancy – Conception rate of females



Source: ONS and Teenage Pregnancy Unit, 2006

### Percentage of 11-15 year olds who have taken drugs in the last month

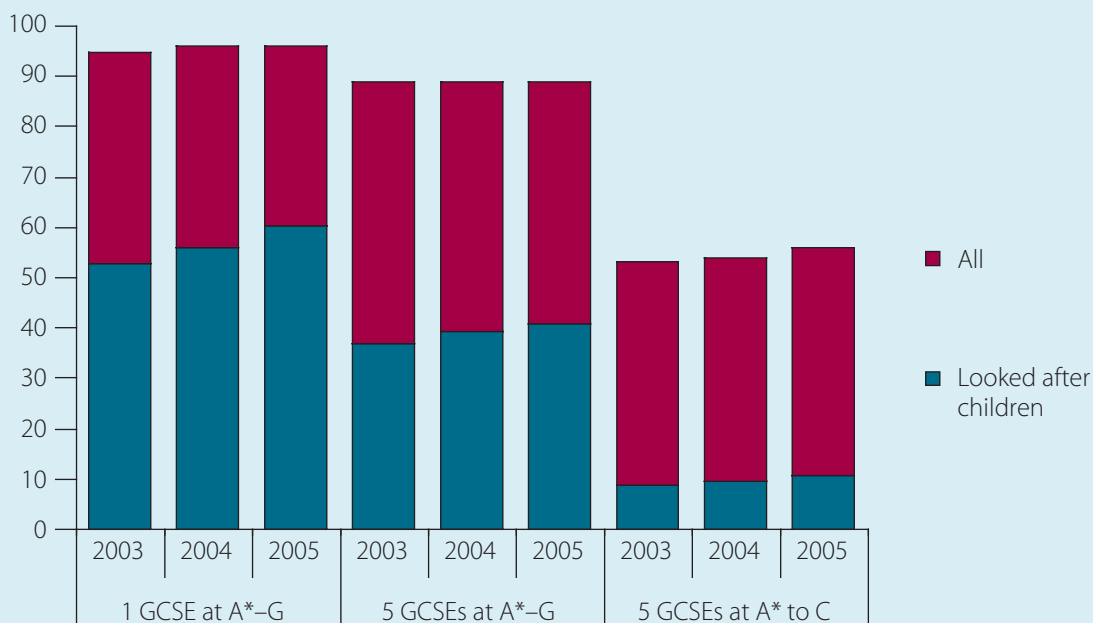


Source: Drug use, smoking and drinking among young people in England (2000-2005)

These risk factors overlap, compounding problems for the child and making it harder to act to turn their lives round. Young people who truant are three times more likely to offend. Children born into the most deprived households are one hundred times more likely to face multiple problems as teenagers than their more affluent peers.

Looked after children are particularly likely to have multiple problems. For example, 45% of looked after children aged 5-17 years old have mental health problems, a rate four times higher than the average for all children. Educational attainment, critical in determining prospects for success in adult life, is significantly worse for looked after children than for their peers, and while their attainment has been rising it hasn't been rising as rapidly as that of other children.

### GCSE attainment of looked after children compared to all children



Source: DfES, Outcome Indicators for Looked after Children, Twelve months to 30 September 2005 – England



82. This isn't a wholly new approach: it reflects best practice on the frontline – in schools, colleges, local authorities and in the voluntary and community sector – where successful user-focussed approaches have been pioneered for some years. However, while these new approaches have achieved a great deal, it has often been a struggle to join up services, perhaps because of inertia and lack of understanding, or because rules and red tape get in the way. The next stage of reform needs to make it much easier to join up and innovate within a clear framework of priorities and accountabilities, placing a greater responsibility on providers to adapt services to meet the needs of all potential users, rather than simply serve those already well-placed to make use of the service they provide.
83. Putting the user experience at the heart of all we do is not the same as saying we simply respond to user demand. Our and our partners' role is to prioritise, ensuring resources are used efficiently and effectively in the wider public interest. We need also to be aware that service users have very different capacities to shape services. We must avoid creating a situation in which those less able to articulate their own needs and less able to navigate the system lose out to those who can.
84. The key lesson for taking forward the Five Year Strategy is this: failing to understand users in the way we design and deliver services means we are less likely to deliver aggregate improvements in outcomes across the system because we are less likely to be meeting the needs of individual service users.
85. *To reflect the user "journey" through our services, and to deliver on the Five Year Strategy, we believe we need to rethink our Departmental objectives.* Presently our objectives are structured along service lines. While this provides clarity of accountability, it can act as an obstacle to effective joined up working across services. To help embed the focus on the user experience, we need to recast our objectives around the user journey, defining success, and what it is we ask from our service providers, against the outcomes the user is looking for from the whole system.
86. We propose adopting a new set of objectives to express more clearly what it is we are trying to achieve as a whole, telling a story of progression, with each element building on the last. A new framework for setting objectives is set out in the diagram below.
87. This framework moves us away from thinking about the system in terms of service providers or by age. While "getting the basics right" is an issue for early years and primary education, it is also an issue for young people who have not achieved their potential or who are at risk, and for adults without basic skills in literacy and numeracy. "Developing potential" similarly extends beyond compulsory schooling to cover all who have not achieved the minimum we believe is necessary for successful participation in the labour market or as citizens. Finally, "Sustaining success"

## A new framework for setting objectives



covers the actions necessary to maintain our position as a prosperous and civilised nation. This will include childcare to support parental choice and to give the best start for the next generation as well as action to close skills gaps and strengthen our research base.

88. This framework builds on the “five outcomes” set out in *Every Child Matters*, setting objectives and expectations for services on the basis of the outcomes we want to see for children. Our new framework will inform our approach to the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007 and the renegotiation of our Public Service Agreement.

### Improving performance across the system

89. In focusing on the user experience and how services fit together, we will be able to define more clearly what it is we expect from individual services. We will set expectations, targets and standards

by looking at the contribution each service makes to the bigger whole, rather than defining success in terms of what it is the service presently provides.

90. However this does not lessen the need for us to remain focused on **driving improvement** across the system. We believe that the best way to improve services is by granting providers operational autonomy and space to innovate, to respond to local and user needs, to define their own ethos and to own their own improvement, within a clear framework of targets and accountability. Intervention should be in inverse proportion to success. However, we will continue to drive out poor performance, with swifter and sharper intervention. Coasting and failing schools, colleges and poor quality services blight people’s futures.
91. We will continue to mobilise and intensify the full range of levers for driving improvement across our services:

- Empowering and enabling service users to shape services and drive improvement;
- Building capacity in our services through investment, by developing workforce and leadership, and through the rapid spread of effective practice;
- Creating choice and diversity of provision better to meet needs and to sharpen incentives for improvement; and ensuring that service users are empowered and enabled to shape services around their needs; and
- Using smart performance management that gives school, college and other service leaders operational autonomy and space to innovate and adapt within a clear framework of priorities, but which responds rapidly and decisively to underperformance.

92. We need also to **ensure that existing budgets and programmes are being put to the best possible use**. The substantial extra investment in education and children’s services over the last decade has to continue to yield a return in improved services and outcomes. We will be rigorous in ensuring value for money and efficiency in all we do, in order that we can sustain the achievements of the last decade while releasing resources to meet new priorities.

### Working more effectively with partners and across Government

93. The Five Year Strategy identified a role for the Department as the national

“strategic leader” of education and children’s services. The further refocusing of our strategy around service users and outcomes for the whole system only reinforces this importance of getting this role right.

94. Experience in the last two years has helped us refine our understanding of what it means to be a strategic leader. Being strategic means working through partners and delegating responsibility to the front line – but it cannot be simply saying what we want and then sitting back and hoping it happens. Our role is to lead continuous improvement in outcomes for children, parents, learners and employers by:

- Knowing what it is we want to achieve, and communicating this clearly and unambiguously to partners and providers;
- Creating systems that will deliver, starting from the user and building out from there, rather than from the Department down, with roles clearly defined and responsibility delegated as close to the user as possible within a smart performance management framework;
- Working with our partners to ensure the resources, workforce and leadership capacity are there to deliver what we have promised; and
- Having the information and insight about what is happening on the ground to know that these systems are working.

95. This means working closely with partners – our non-departmental public bodies, the Inspectorates, Local Authorities and service providers, stakeholders and users – learning from them and engaging them in designing a system that works. It means ensuring that we know what is happening on the ground so that we:
- have confidence in delivery;
  - know that poor performance is being swiftly addressed; and
  - know when we need to act to provide resources, build capacity or change legislation to remove obstacles in the way of effective delivery.
96. As with our approach to driving improvement at the front line, our relationship with our partners needs to be based on a principle of clearly defined roles, trust and intervention in inverse proportion to success.
97. It will also mean working effectively across Government, extending the user focus across Departmental as well as service boundaries. This will build on the role for the Department set out in *Every Child Matters* and in the creation of the Minister for Children, Young People and Families to coordinate policy, ensuring a coherent approach and consistent priorities across Government Departments.
98. This document outlines how we will take forward our Strategy. It identifies the priorities against which our performance should be judged, and sets out how we will set objectives, expectations and ambitions for services. It recognises that we can not deliver without working in partnership. We are confident that the approach in this document will mean that our record of success over the last decade will continue to 2009 and beyond.



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