

Briefing Paper – Skills Levels, Rochdale Borough July 2005

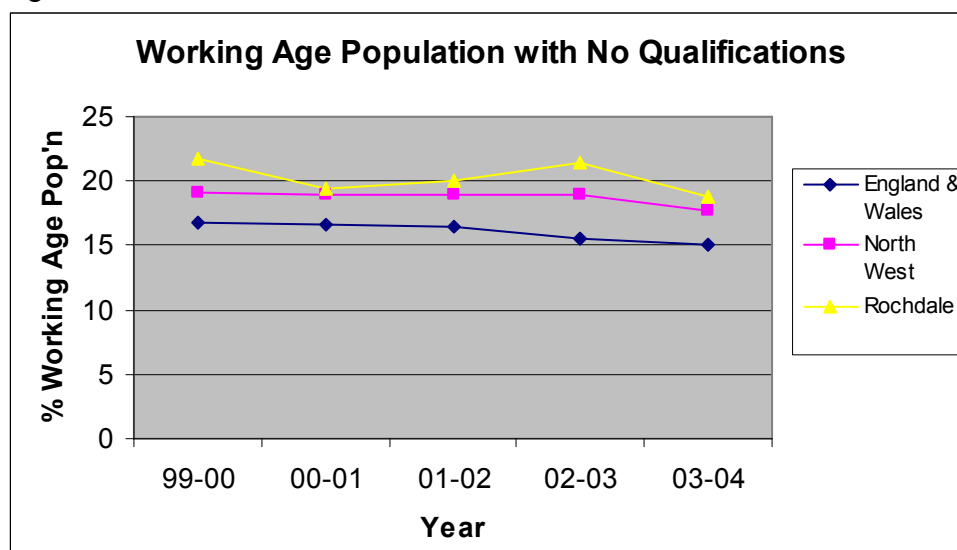
This paper analyses skills levels in Rochdale Borough using data from the Labour Force Survey and the 2001 Census.

Skills Levels

Skills levels in Rochdale borough's working age population are lower than national and regional averages (see appendix 1 for a definition of skills levels).

Between 1999 and 2004 a greater proportion of Rochdale's population had no qualifications than both the North West and England and Wales as a whole (Figure1).

Figure 1



Source: Labour Force Survey, Crown copyright 2003

A decline in the proportion of the population with no qualifications has been seen nationally and regionally since 1999.

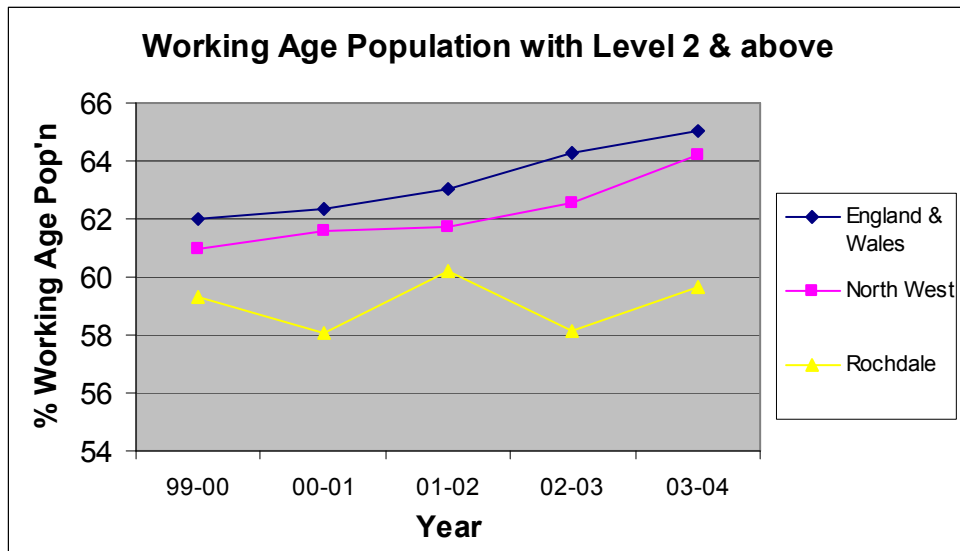
Note: Problems with interpreting the Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey is based on a sample of the working age population. In Rochdale borough in 2003-04 the sample size was about 1,500. We can never know for sure how closely data from a sample matches the real value in the population because of sampling variability. However, 95% confidence intervals can be calculated. These give a range around a value which shows where the value would lie in 95 out of a 100 samples. So we can be confident that the real value lies within this range.

In Figure 1 the percentage of the working age population with no qualifications in 2003-04 is 18.8%. The confidence interval is $\pm 2.3\%$, which gives a range of 16.5% to 21.1%. We can be confident that the real value lies within this range. Most of the year-on-year fluctuations in Rochdale borough are within this range, so we cannot say that real change has occurred.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of the working age population with Level 2 and above qualifications (see appendix 1 for a definition of Skills Levels).

Figure 2

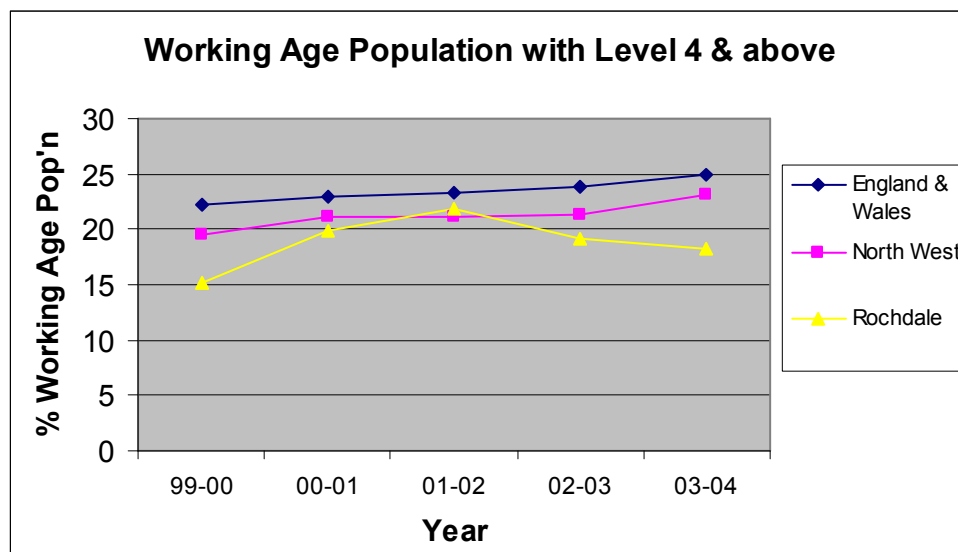


Source: Labour Force Survey

Since 1999 nationally and regionally the numbers of people gaining level 2 and above qualifications have been increasing. Rochdale Borough over this same period has seen considerably more variation. This variation may be due to sampling error. Like the data for no qualifications the confidence intervals for 03-04 in Rochdale Borough are far higher than those of the North West and England and Wales.

Figure 3 shows trends in the numbers of people with Level 4 qualifications and above.

Figure 3



Source: Labour Force Survey

Again, over this 5 year period national and regional trends have seen an increase in the number of people with Level 4 or above qualifications. Rochdale Borough has not seen the same trend over this period. The number of people with Level 4 or above qualifications peaks in 2001-02, and has declined since this time. Again, the confidence intervals for Rochdale Borough's data show these results to be less reliable than the regional and national figures, which may account for the variation seen at a local level.

Education deprivation data from IMD2004

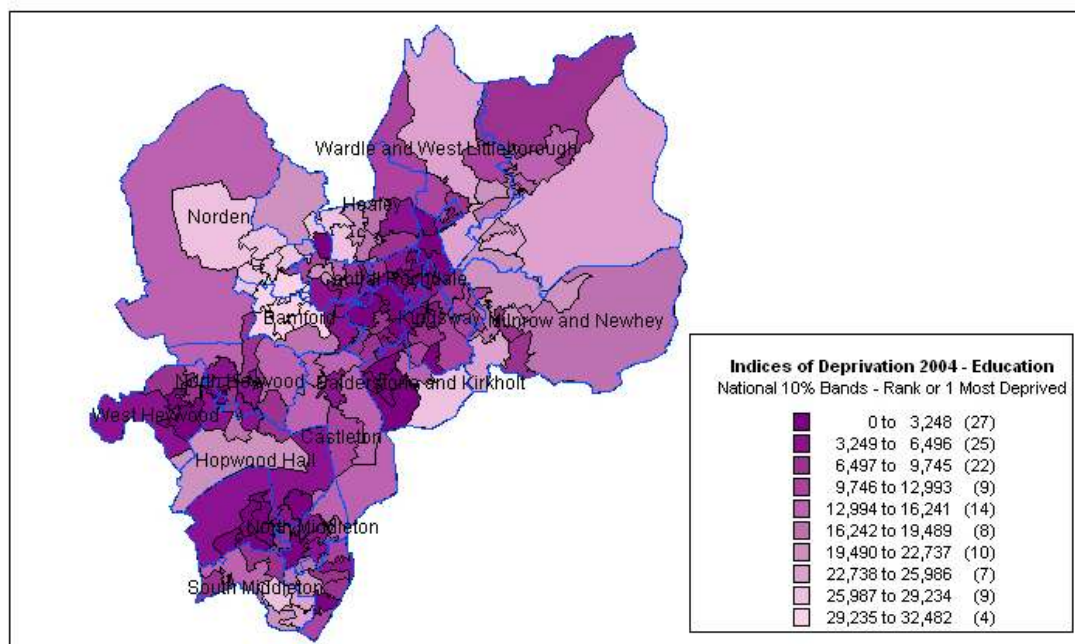
The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD2004) is a measure of multiple deprivation at super output area level. Seven domains are used to make up the Indices, one of which is Education, Skills and Training. This domain uses two key areas as indicators;

1. Education deprivation for children/young people
2. Lack of skills and qualification in the working age population.

Using these indicators each super output area in England is ranked, where 1 is the most deprived. There are 135 super output areas in Rochdale Borough, the super output areas vary in geographical area however each has approximately the same population size.

Figure 4 shows education deprivation in Rochdale Borough, split into 10% national bands, and showing ward boundaries.

Figure 4



Source: Indices of Deprivation 2004

27 of Rochdale Borough's 135 super output areas are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England (20.6% of the borough's population live in these super output areas). A further 25 super output areas (18.6% of the population) are amongst the 20% most education deprived nationally.

Areas of very high education deprivation (10% most deprived super output areas) are concentrated in parts of the borough. High concentrations are found in the inner Rochdale wards, namely Milkstone & Deepdish, Central Rochdale, Smallbridge & Firgrove, Kingsway and Spotland & Falinge. Other areas of high education deprivation are found in North and West Heywood wards, West, North and East Middleton.

Wards with super output areas amongst the 20% most deprived are also concentrated in the inner Rochdale wards, Heywood and Middleton wards, and spreading further into Hopwood Hall, Bamford, Healey and Castleton wards.

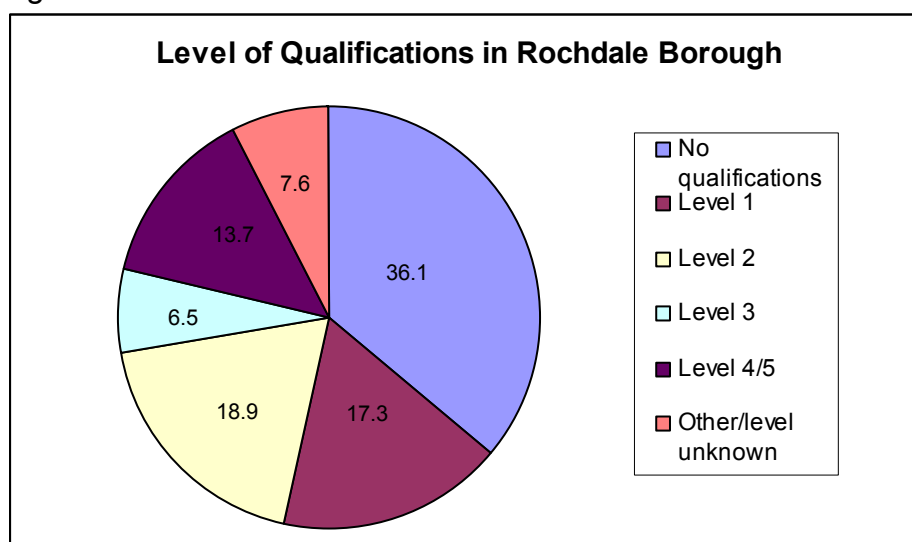
Only 3.0% (6,210 people) of Rochdale Borough's population live in the four super output areas ranked in the 10% least education deprived. A further 9 super output areas in the borough are ranked in the 20% least deprived nationally. 14,054 people (4.9% of the population) live in these areas. Areas of low education deprivation are concentrated in many of the less populated, out-lying wards in the borough such as Norden and Bamford. Other wards containing super output areas ranked amongst the 20% least deprived are South Middleton, Healey and Balderstone & Kirkholt.

Analysis of Skills Levels for Different Groups and Areas

The following data is taken from the 2001 Census, which allows detailed analysis of skills information by sub-groups. As different data sources are being used, no direct comparisons in skills levels should be made between the Census data and that shown previously taken from the Labour Force Survey. Census information on skills levels is derived from only a couple of questions on the census form. The Labour Force Survey draws information from a long series of questions about skills and qualifications, with the result that respondents are less likely to forget or undervalue their true skills levels. So the real level of skills is better represented in the Labour Force Survey. However, the 2001 Census allows us to look at skills levels in different demographic groups and at small area level.

Figure 5 shows a percentage breakdown of skills levels in the borough, taken from the 2001 Census.

Figure 5



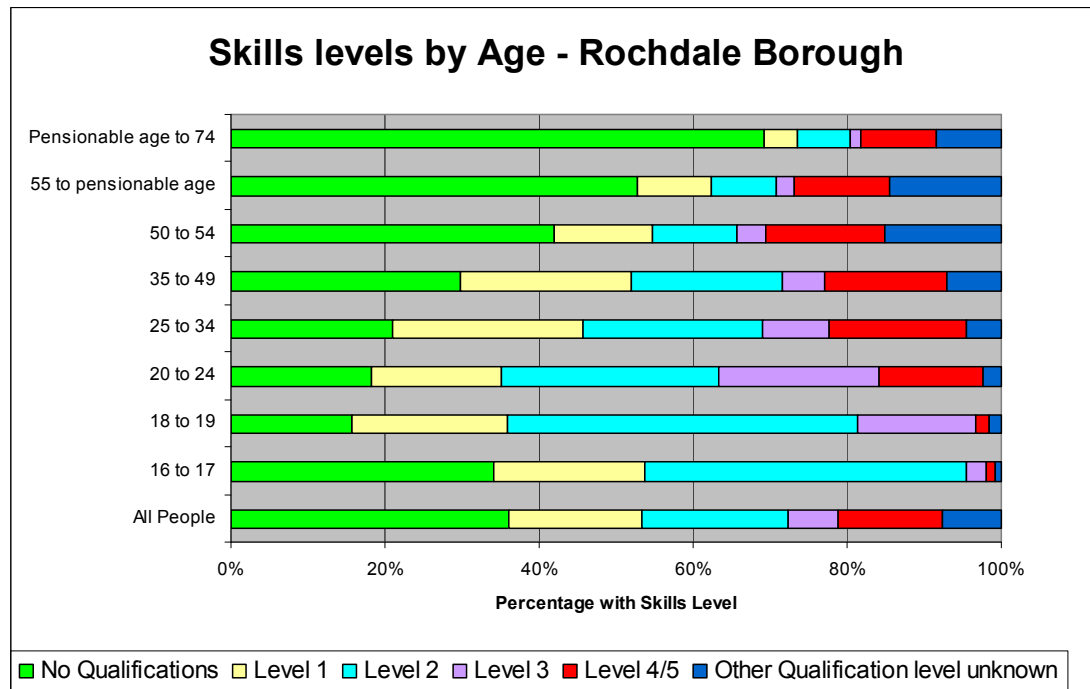
Source: Census 2001, Crown copyright 2003

The largest proportion of the population of Rochdale (36.1%) has no formal qualifications. Only 13.7% hold level 4/5 qualifications.

Skills levels by Age

Significant variation in skills levels exist between age groups living in Rochdale Borough (Figure 6)

Figure 6



Source: ONS, Census 2001, Crown Copyright 2003

A greater proportion of older people in the borough have no qualifications than the younger age groups, with 69% of people of pensionable age to 74 having no qualifications compared to only 16% of 18-19 year olds.

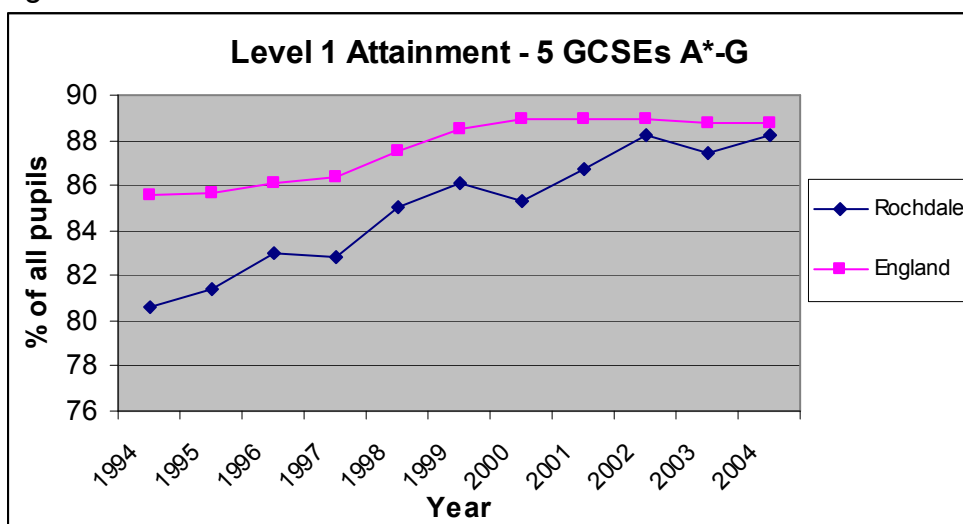
The greatest proportion of people with level 4/5 qualifications is in the 25-34 age group (18%), and the least in the two youngest age groups, where only 1% and 2% of the population has level 4/5 qualifications. This can be explained by their age, given that this level of qualification is equivalent to degree level, the majority of these younger age groups will still be at school, and therefore will not yet have been involved in any higher education training.

Over recent years Rochdale Borough has seen a general trend of decline in the numbers of people with no qualifications, and increasing numbers of young people participating in education and training. These trends are set to continue. As more of Rochdale Borough's young people continue to gain more qualifications and higher levels of qualifications and enter employment markets, and as older people with lower skills levels leave the working population, Rochdale will gradually see increasing skills levels throughout the borough's working age population.

GCSE attainment by Rochdale borough school pupils

Figure 7 shows Level 1 (5 GCSEs A*-G) attainment in the borough.
 NB: The Department for Education and Science defines Level 1 as equivalent to 5 GCSEs at A*-G, but in the Labour Force Survey and 2001 Census, Level 1 is defined as 1 GCSE at A* - G.

Figure 7

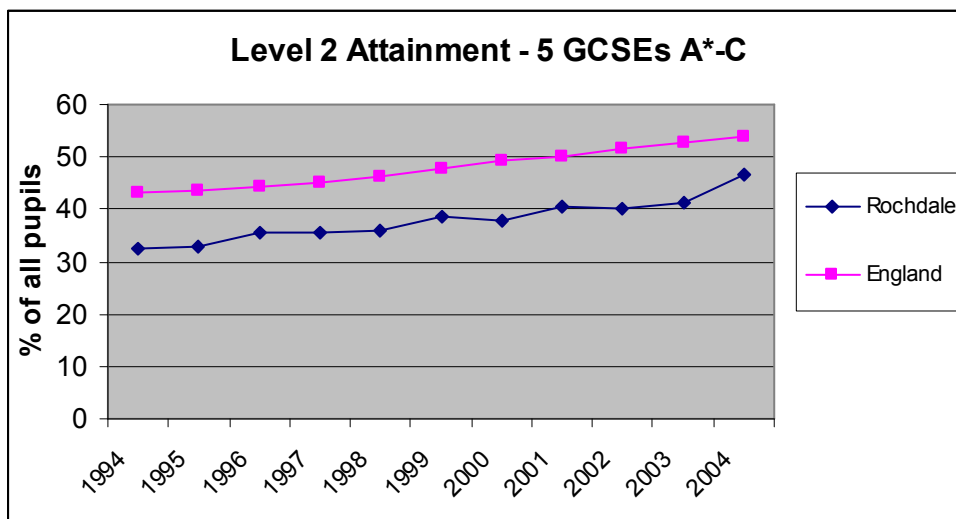


Source: Dept for Education & Skills

The proportion of pupils achieving Level 1 qualifications in Rochdale has increased from 80.6% in 1994 to 88.2% in 2004. Nationally the proportions of pupils attaining level 1 qualifications has also increased over this 10 year period, although this growth has not been as great as that seen in the borough. Rochdale Borough's level 1 attainment has increased so much over this period to the point where level 1 attainment almost matched the national average in 2004 (88.2% and 88.8% respectively).

Level 2 (5 GCSEs A*-C) attainment has also increased in Rochdale Borough since 1994 (Figure 8).

Figure 8



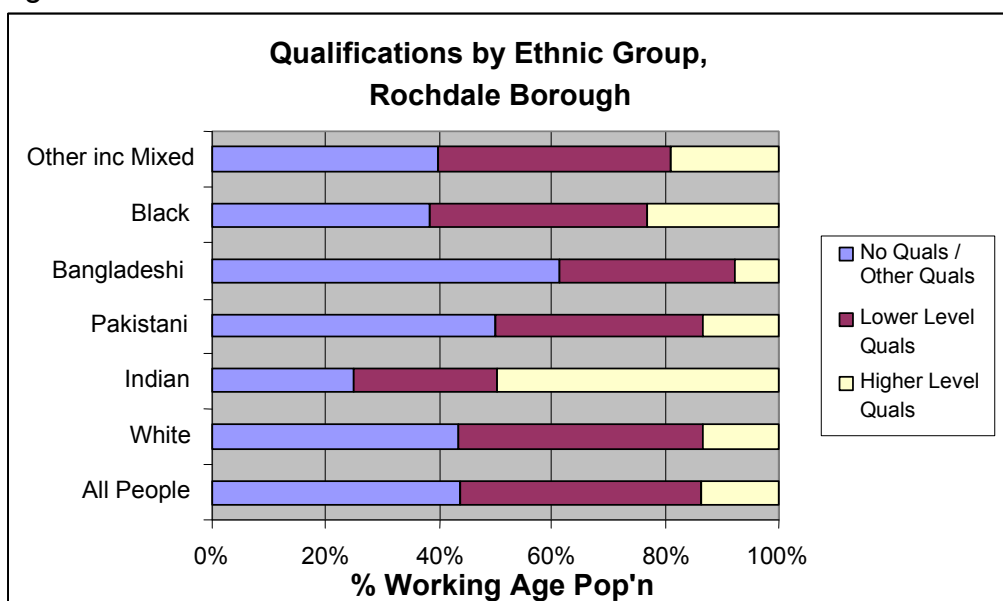
Source: Dept for Education & Skills

Rochdale Borough's steady increase in level 2 attainment reflects national trends over this 10 year period. Again the gap between Rochdale Borough's and the England average level 2 attainment has decreased, although much more slowly than for Level 1 attainment. In 2004, 46.7% of pupils achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs in the borough, compared to 53.7% in England.

Skills levels by ethnicity

Variations in skills levels between the ethnic groups resident in Rochdale Borough are also evident. Again, this data is provided from the 2001 Census to allow detailed analysis by sub-groups. The numbers of people in the Black, Indian and Other groups (the Other group includes "mixed") are relatively small so results for these ethnic groups may therefore be misleading.

Figure 9



Source: ONS, Census 2001, Crown copyright 2003

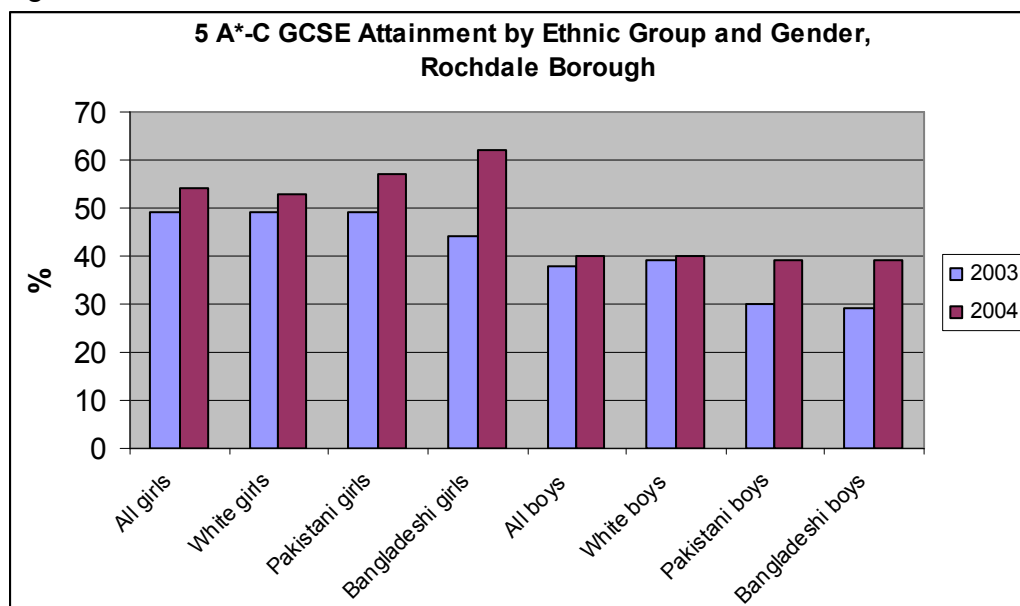
All ethnic groups in Rochdale Borough have relatively high levels of people with no qualifications (these figures also include people with “Other qualifications”). The Indian population has the smallest proportion with no qualifications / other qualifications (24.9%) and the Bangladeshi population has the greatest at 61.2%. The Pakistani population also has relatively high numbers of people with no qualifications / other qualifications at 50.1%. The White, Black and Other ethnic groups all have around 40% of working age people with no qualifications.

A greater proportion of the White population hold lower level qualifications than any of the other ethnic groups (43.3%). Only 30.9% of the Bangladeshi population has lower level qualifications.

Half of the Indian population has higher level qualifications (49.7%), a much greater proportion than any of the other ethnic groups, although the numbers of people involved are small. The Bangladeshi population has far fewer people with higher level qualifications than the other ethnic groups (7.9%).

The Bangladeshi population has a large proportion of working age adults with no qualifications, and relatively low levels of people educated to both higher and lower levels. However, the trends are very different at GCSE level (Figure 10).

Figure 10



Source: RMBC Education Information and Planning

Although data for only two years is shown, so no definite trends can be identified, all the sub-groups saw an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A*-C GCSE grades.

In both years, for all ethnic groups fewer boys than girls attained level 2 (5A*-C) qualifications. The lowest attainment rate of 39% 5 A*-C grades was seen in the Bangladeshi and Pakistani boys.

In 2003 both White girls and Pakistani girls had the greatest percentage gaining level 2 qualifications, at 49%. In 2004, the highest recorded level was 62% of Bangladeshi girls.

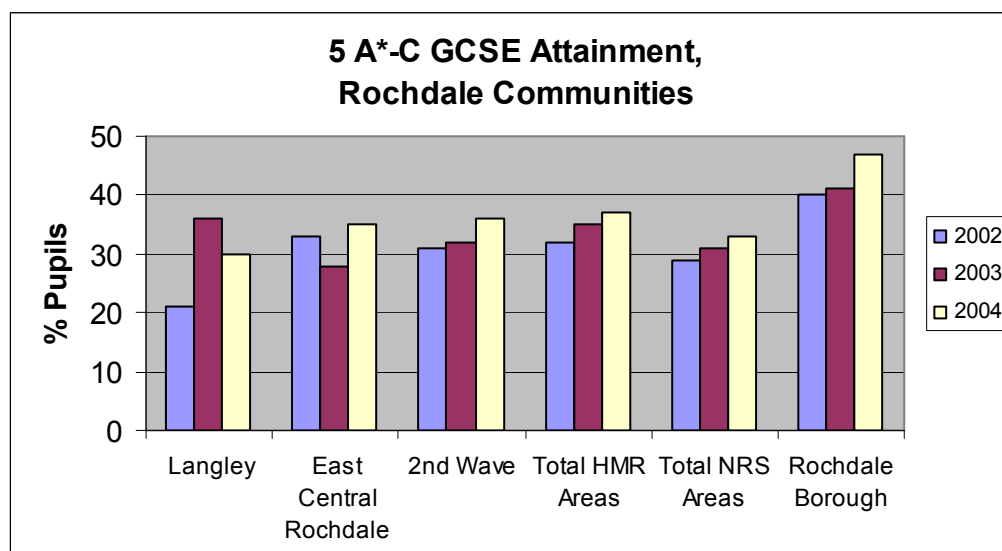
In both the boys and girls the Bangladeshi pupils saw the greatest level of improvement from 2003 to 2004. It should be noted however that numbers in these groups are particularly small. White boys and girls saw least improvement.

Assuming such trends continue, it is likely to have a gradual impact on raising skills levels as these youngsters age and enter the working population, particularly raising skills levels in the Asian populations.

Skills Levels by Geographical Area

GCSE attainment in Rochdale Borough varies by geographical area. Analysis of the IMD2004 data (see Figure 4) has shown large areas of the borough are suffering from high levels of education deprivation, and relatively few super output areas in Rochdale are ranked in the 20% least education deprived. Accordingly, GCSE attainment levels are generally lower in the more deprived communities in the borough than in other areas. Figure 11 shows the percentage of pupils attaining level 2 qualifications in some of the most deprived areas of the borough. The graph shows Langley and East Central Rochdale Housing Market Renewal neighbourhoods. It also shows the 2nd Wave and total Housing Market Renewal areas, and a total for all the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy areas in the borough.

Figure 11

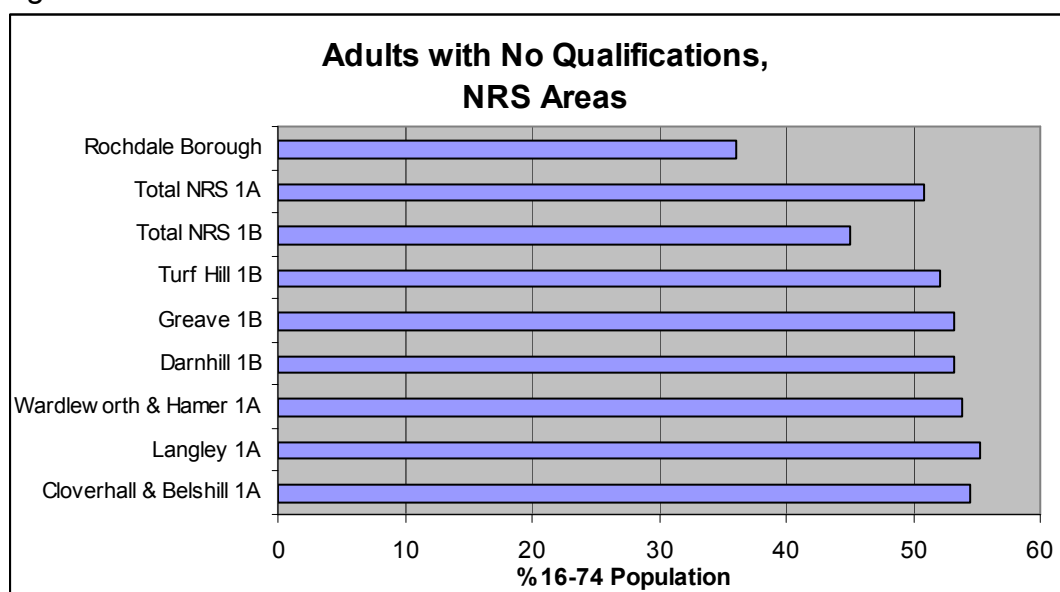


Source: RMBC Education Information and Planning

Langley and East Central Rochdale are neighbourhoods within the borough, with relatively small numbers of pupils taking GCSEs which may explain the fluctuations in attainment shows. The graph also shows groupings of neighbourhoods, e.g. Total HMR areas and Total NRS areas, with larger numbers of pupils overall and therefore more reliable data. These all show increasing attainment at GCSE in the last three years. However, there is clearly a big gap between attainment at borough level and in these more deprived areas, particularly in the total NRS area which covers the most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough.

Adult education levels in Rochdale's most deprived communities are also lower than the borough average. In all 22 of the NRS areas the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications is higher than the borough average (see Figure 12). Approximately 29% of 16-74 year olds in Rochdale Borough live in NRS areas.

Figure 12



Source: ONS, Census 2001, Crown Copyright 2003

A greater proportion of people living in NRS areas 1A and 1B have no qualifications than the borough average (36.1%). 50.8% of the population living in NRS 1A areas have no qualifications, and 45.0% of 1B population.

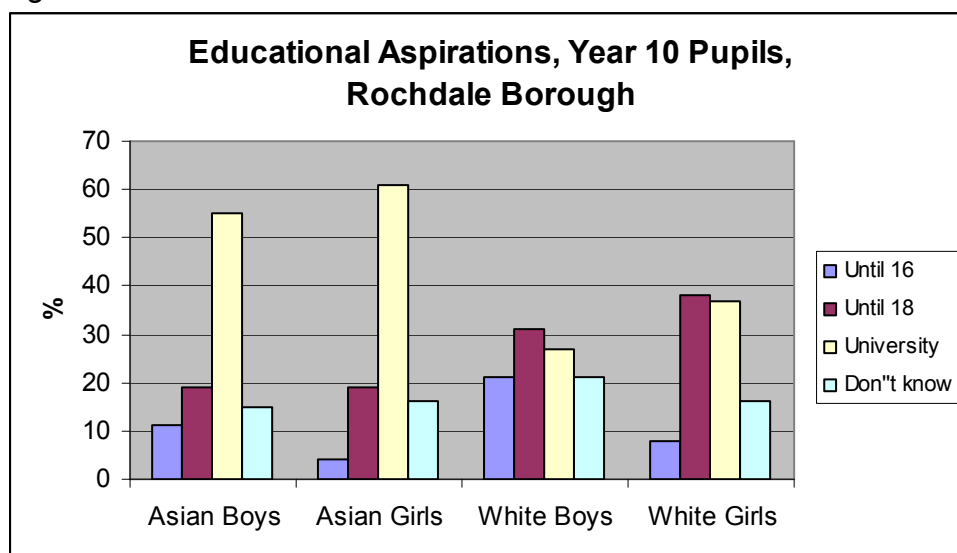
As the figures for the total 1A and 1B areas are averages, 3 neighbourhoods from each area have been graphed to highlight how great the proportions of people with no qualifications are in some of the borough's most deprived communities.

All 6 of the neighbourhoods graphed have more than 50% of the 16-74 population with no qualifications. Langley has the greatest proportion at 55.3%.

Given that almost a third of the borough's population live in the NRS neighbourhoods it is of particular concern that such large proportions of the population have skills levels lower than the borough average, which in turn is lower than the regional and national averages.

Learning aspirations – gender/ethnicity

Figure 13



Source: Rochdale Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Team

Figure 13 shows the educational aspirations of Year 10 school pupils in Rochdale Borough by ethnic group and gender.

Higher levels of White boys and girls said that they would only stay on in education until they were 18. On the other hand more Asian boys (55%) and girls (61%) aspired to university level education, compared to only 27% of White boys and 37% of White girls.

Levels of pupils which responded 'don't know' are about the same for all the sub-groups (around 16%), with the exception of White boys (21%).

Educational aspirations clearly vary significantly between Asian and White pupils. Assuming aspirations continue to remain higher in the Asian populations, Rochdale Borough is likely to see a far greater proportion of the Asian populations with higher qualification levels in the future. The earlier findings on GCSE attainment (Figures 10 & 11), show that already Rochdale Borough is seeing the greatest level of attainment in Asian girls and improvement in both Asian boys and girls. As these pupils age and enter the employment market, the borough is likely to see a gradual improvement in overall skills levels in the working age population.

Educational aspirations of people living in Rochdale may be influenced by the lack of a higher education institute in the borough. Some providers of higher education are available locally, but are not specifically dealing with higher

education provision, and therefore do not offer the wide range of courses seen at most universities. For many people living in Rochdale Borough the travelling required to access many higher education courses may be a problem, the costs involved may be significant and perhaps the time required to participate in a course outside the borough may make it difficult for people to attend.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁽¹⁾ into higher educational experiences of those people from disadvantaged backgrounds found many factors can act as inhibitors to higher education for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and also offers some explanation for low educational aspirations amongst those school pupils from disadvantaged communities.

The key findings of this research showed students from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to drop out of higher education or forego opportunities to progress onto more advanced courses. Such students were also more likely to follow complicated paths such as gap years, and switching or re-starting courses for non-academic reasons.

Significant barriers exist which can make the higher education experience more difficult for people from deprived backgrounds. The lack of familiarity with the higher education system can cause problems, as can a lack of funding and the fear of debt. Feelings of cultural isolation both within the higher education community and isolation from the student's own community can also inhibit a student's success or willingness to participate.

Future Demand for Skills

As Rochdale Borough's employment structure changes, with declining traditional industries, and an increase in growth sector industries, the demand for skills in the borough will also change. In order to attract key growth industries, the borough must be able to provide a local workforce suitably skilled for new employment sectors.

Growth industry sectors are likely to require employees with generally higher skills levels, and specialist skills in certain industries. Key growth sectors in the North West are the financial and professional services, education, retail and health and social care.

It has previously been shown skills levels in the borough are generally lower than the national average, Rochdale Borough will therefore not only require increasing skills levels to support specific growth industry sectors, but levels of generic skills will also be needed to increase to improve employment opportunities to many of the borough's residents. Key generic skills to be improved in the borough are basic literacy and numeracy, communication and customer care skills and business management training.

Conclusions

- In Rochdale Borough's working age population skills levels are lower than national and regional averages. Large proportions of the population have no qualifications, and below average numbers of people hold both level 2+ and level 4+ qualifications.
- Levels of GCSE attainment in the borough have risen considerably since 1994. Level 1 attainment (5 A*-G) has risen so much over the last 10 years, that Rochdale has almost matched the national average. Level 2 attainment (5 A*-C) has seen considerable improvement over this period, however in 2004 a gap still existed between Rochdale Borough's attainment level and the national average.
- The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 has shown there are some areas of the borough suffering from very high levels of education deprivation. Education deprivation is concentrated in the inner Rochdale wards, North and West Heywood wards and West, North and East Middleton wards.
- 20.6% of the population live in super output areas ranked amongst the 10% most deprived nationally. A further 18.6% of the population live in the 20% most deprived super output areas.
- Only 7.9% of the population live in super output areas ranked amongst the 20% least deprived nationally. The least educationally deprived are located in the more rural, affluent areas of the borough.
- Skills levels in Rochdale's older population are clearly an area of concern. A large proportion of the older age groups have no qualifications. The proportions of younger people with all levels of qualification are higher than those in the older age groups. Generally, the proportions of the population gaining qualifications are increasing in the younger age groups. Assuming these trends continue overall skills levels in Rochdale Borough's working age population will increase as younger people move into the labour market, and older people retire.
- Skills levels vary considerably between the different ethnic groups living in Rochdale Borough. The small Indian population is the most highly skilled, with almost half of the population holding higher level qualifications. The Bangladeshi and Pakistani population have the lowest skills levels in the borough, with more than half of both populations having no qualifications / other qualifications.
- A relatively small proportion of the White population (13.5%) holds higher level qualifications and 43.1% has no qualifications / other qualifications.
- Ethnic variations in GCSE attainment in Rochdale Borough do not reflect the skills levels seen in the working age population. 5 A*-C GCSE attainment improved in both sexes in all the ethnic groups from 2003 to 2004. Attainment levels were higher in girls than boys in all the ethnic

groups. The most improvement in attainment over this period, in both the girls and the boys was in the Bangladeshi pupils, and the least improvement in both sexes was in the White pupils. If such trends continue and more pupils attain level 2 qualifications, skills levels in the borough will gradually improve.

- Considerable variation in the education aspirations of year 10 pupils in Rochdale exists between ethnic groups. The majority of White boys and girls intended to remain in education until 16 or 18, but aspirations in Asian boys and girls are much higher. More than half of the Asian pupils aspired to university level education, compared to 37% of White girls and only 27% of White boys.
- The proportions of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades in the borough's more deprived communities is lower than attainment levels in the borough as a whole. Despite a general trend of improvement in attainment in Rochdale Borough's more deprived communities, overall levels of attainment remain lower than the borough average.
- Adult skills levels are lower in the NRS areas than the borough average, in many of these neighbourhoods around 50% of the population has no qualifications. Approximately 29% of the 16-74 year old population live in these areas, and in all 22 the proportion of adults with no qualifications is higher than Rochdale Borough average.
- The future demand for skills in Rochdale Borough will change as shifts in the employment market take place. Rochdale will need to be able to provide a suitably skilled local workforce if it is to attract and retain key growth sector industries to the borough.

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Appendix 1 – Highest Level of Qualification

Level 1: 1+ O Level passes, 1+ CSE/GCSE any grades, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ

Note: Discrepancy in Level 1 Definitions

The Office for National Statistics (Census and Labour Force Survey) defines Level 1 as 1 GCSE/CSE pass grade A* - G, but The Department for Education and Skills defines Level 1 as 5 GCSEs at A* - G grades.

Level 2: 5+ O level passes, 5+ CSEs (grade 1), 5+ GCSEs (grades A* to C), School Certificate, 1+ A levels/AS levels, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ

Level 3: 2+ A levels, 4+ AS levels, Higher School Certificate, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ

Level 4/5: First degree, Higher degree, NVQ levels 4 and 5, HNC, HND, Qualified Teacher status, Qualified Medical Doctor, Qualified Dentist, Qualified Nurse, Midwife, Health Visitor

Reference

- (1) Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003), *Socio-economic disadvantage and access to Higher Education*