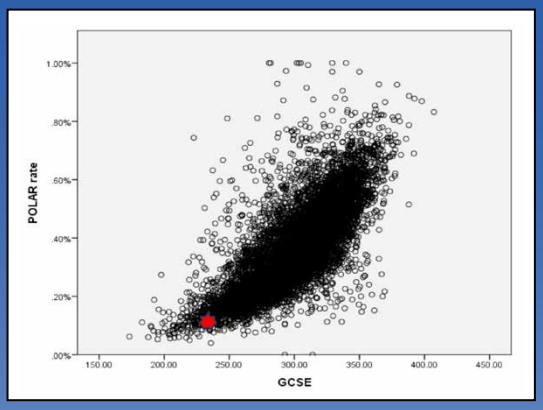
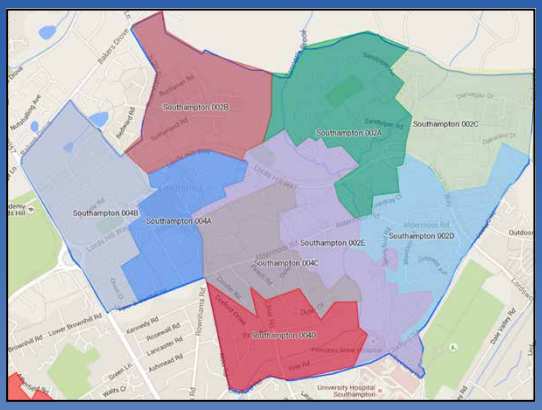
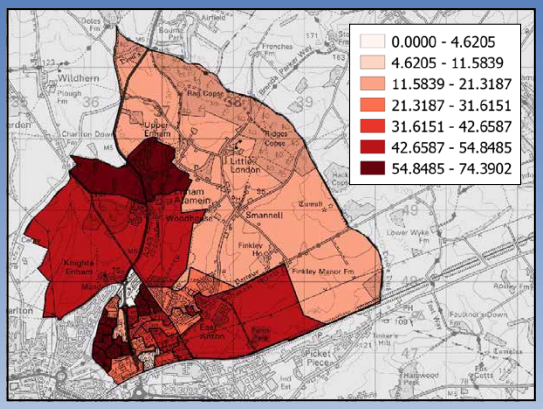
Localised Widening Participation Strategies

– a data-based approach







Parameter	ONS Table	Comments
GCSE	GCSE and Equivalent Results for Young People by Gender, Referenced by Location of Pupil Residence	Only available from ONS at LSOA level
% Born in the UK	Country of Birth (detailed), 2011 (QS203EW)	Available at ward level from ONS
Unemployment Rate	Economic Activity, 2011 (QS601EW)	Available at ward level from ONS but needs calculating: (count unemployed / count all economically active)
% Social Housing	Tenure - Households, 2011 (QS405EW)	Available at ward level from ONS but needs calculating: (count households all social rented / count all households)
% Adults with L4 Qualifications (or Higher)	Highest Level of Qualification, 2011 (QS501EW)	Available at ward level from ONS but needs calculating: count Level 4 Qualifications and above / all usual residents aged 16 and over

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Localised widening participation strategies – a data-based approach

Introduction

In 2015 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) published a map http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/gaps/ identifying wards that had an unexpectedly low progression to higher education given the GCSE grades of students and the ethnic composition of the wards. In response, the Southern Policy Centre (also operating as ODI Hampshire) proposed a deeper data analysis to throw light on the HEFCE data. If successful, this might assist in the development of more localised widening participation strategies to close this 'participation gap'. The project was funded by HEFCE and GuildHE. and supported by the Southern Universities Network. Solent University was the accountable Higher Education Institution (HEI). The project was undertaken by staff at the SPC, Ceri Nursaw (Nursaw Associates) and Mark Frank (graduate student Southampton University).

In consultation with these partners and local authorities, five wards across central southern England were identified for study: Alamein (Hampshire), Newport South (Isle of Wight), Coxford (Southampton), Paulsgrove (Portsmouth) and Newtown (Poole).

This executive summary outlines the data sets used in the study and their application to the five wards. It takes account of the improvements needed to close the 'participation gap' and new targets recently set by government. It also makes suggestions for localised participation strategies based on this analysis, and on best evidence based practice. These strategies have been further informed by local stakeholder interviews.

The project

The limits of a data-based analysis

A data-based analysis can only hope to better inform local widening participation strategies. It can focus sharp questions about why current outcomes are as they are; it cannot establish beyond doubt the causes of problems or areas for improvement. It is also possible that available data are wrong, misleading, or capable of misinterpretation. Care must be taken in drawing firm conclusions from the data published here without first seeking the views of local stakeholders and practitioners. Local strategies also need extensive local engagement before being implemented.

Targets for participation

Following the commencement of the project in July 2015 there were two significant developments in national policy.

HEFCE announced the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) to fund local higher education networks to work in targets wards to bring participation up to the 'expected' levels. Government has set ambitious targets to increase participation in higher education by students from the 20% of wards with the lowest current rates of participation (known as POLAR Q1). Building on improvements in participation over the past decade, Ministers hope to double the participation from these wards by 2020, to achieve an overall

rate of 28%. Government targets have not been established for individual wards, but we have explored possible interpretations of the targets for each ward.

In this study we have estimated the improvement required to achieve three different ward targets:

- to close the HEFCE identified 'participation gap'
- to bring the ward participation rate up to the overall government target of 28%
- to double the current participation rate in each ward

In each case, we set out the current cohort size and the additional numbers of students who would be entering higher education if the targets were achieved. The HEFCE gap is measured on a different basis to the POLAR Q1 participation measures, with the former reflecting only maintained schools and the later including independent schools. For simplicity, our graphs show all data in POLAR terms. The text however uses the HEFCE data used to derive the 'participation gap', or the POLAR data, as needed to define the appropriate target.[1]

Targets and the ambition for improvement

Multiple targets may initially seem confusing, but they give a useful measure of how much local change is required for different levels of improvement. By definition, it should be possible to close the participation gap without requiring any improvement in GCSE results (however desirable that may be). The more stretching targets may require greater change across education, community and employment. In some cases government targets imply a level of participation that is currently not achieved in any English wards with the demographics of our study ward.

Many people working in schools, local authorities and other stakeholders in our study wards are well aware of the challenges that their communities face. They have been and remain committed to improvement. Far from criticizing their efforts, the aim of this data analysis is enable all involved to have a realistic understanding of how little or how much further change is required, and to help focus any available effort or resources in the right place.

The data analysis – the methodology

A detailed toolkit on accessing the data used in our study is being made available alongside this report. Here we summarise the use of the main categories of data.

1. Ward comparisons

We have constructed a database of every ward in England by higher education participation rate and key indicators: GCSE results, ethnicity, social housing, parental education, and unemployment. The comparison

1. HEFCE's most common measure of participation rates for an area is POLAR (an acronym of Participation Of Local AReas). For a given area POLAR measures the proportion of the relevant cohort of children that go on to higher educa-tion. It includes all types of school in the area. An important part of this report is HEFCE's estimate of the expected par-ticipation rate for each ward given the GCSE results and ethnic profile of the ward. This is a detailed model that works at the level of the individual child. It uses the national pupil database to identify the ethnic profile and GCSE results of each child in the ward in the relevant cohort and tracks whether they go on to Higher Education. Data at this level of detail is only available for children in maintained schools, so the resulting participation rate (known as GAPS) is likely to differ from the POLAR rate which takes into account children at all types of school in the area. Also POLAR cohort sizes will typically be larger than GAPS cohort sizes as they include children from independent schools although as they are aver-ages over slightly different periods the POLAR cohort size may be the same or even slightly lower for small populations.

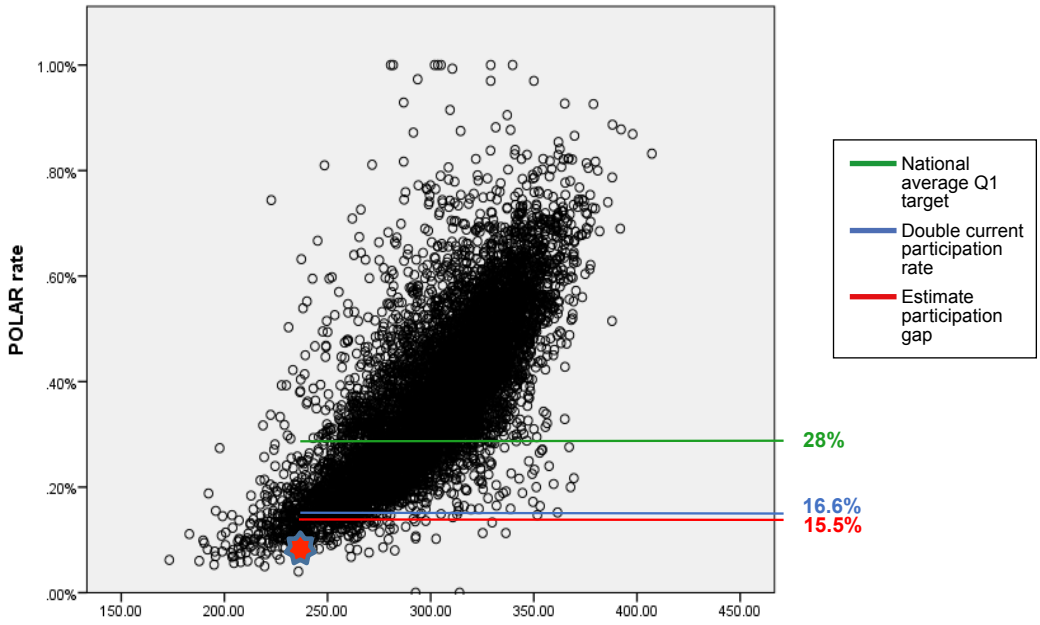
   A large difference between the estimated GAPS rate and the actual GAPS rate for a given ward indicates that GCSE results and ethnic profile are insufficient explanations for low participation in that ward. However, the estimated GAPS rate should not be interpreted as an expected POLAR rate. We have estimated the expected POLAR rate given GCSE results and ethnic profile by multiplying the actual POLAR rate by the same ratio as the expected GAPS rate and the actual GAPS rate.

with our study wards is shown in scattergrams. The scattergrams show the position of the study ward and the HE participation increases required to meet national targets.

These examples show how this analysis may prompt new approaches to localised participation.

Participation by GCSE

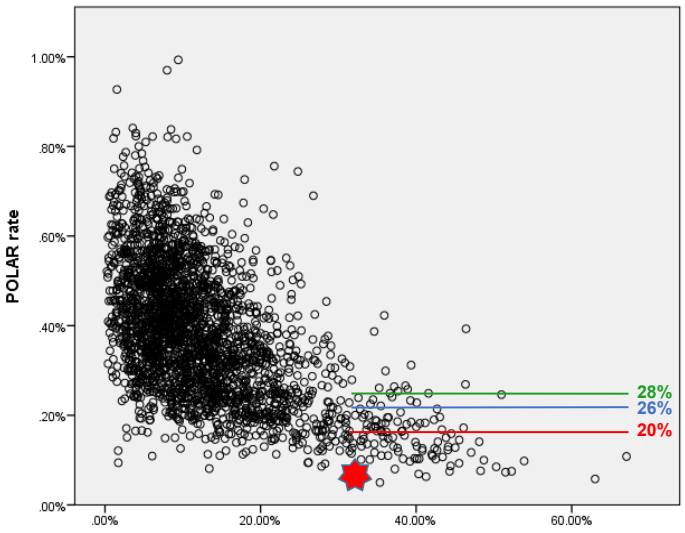
This example from Paulsgrove shows that, while both closing the participation gap and doubling participation would not be out of line with the achievements of similar wards, raising participation to 28% would be very challenging with current GCSE results.



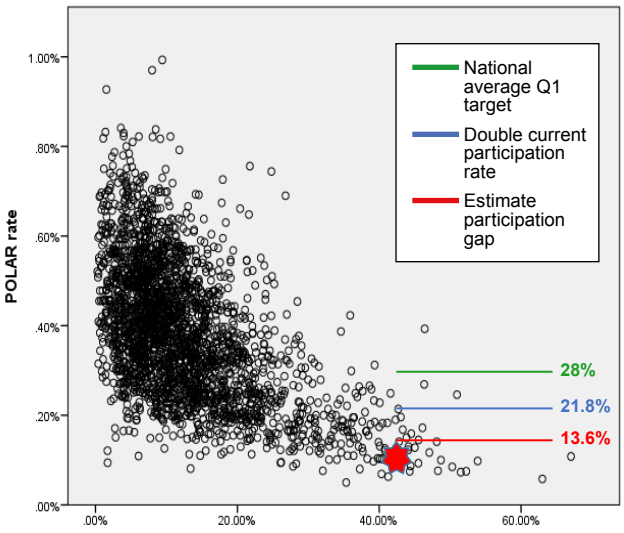
GCSE – PAULSGROVE

Social housing

Both Alamein and Coxford have higher than average levels of social housing. However, there are a significant number of similar wards to Coxford with higher levels of participation. There are very few comparator wards to Alamein. This data suggest that both wards should focus on social housing providers and tenants but achieving the most demanding targets in Alamein may be more challenging.

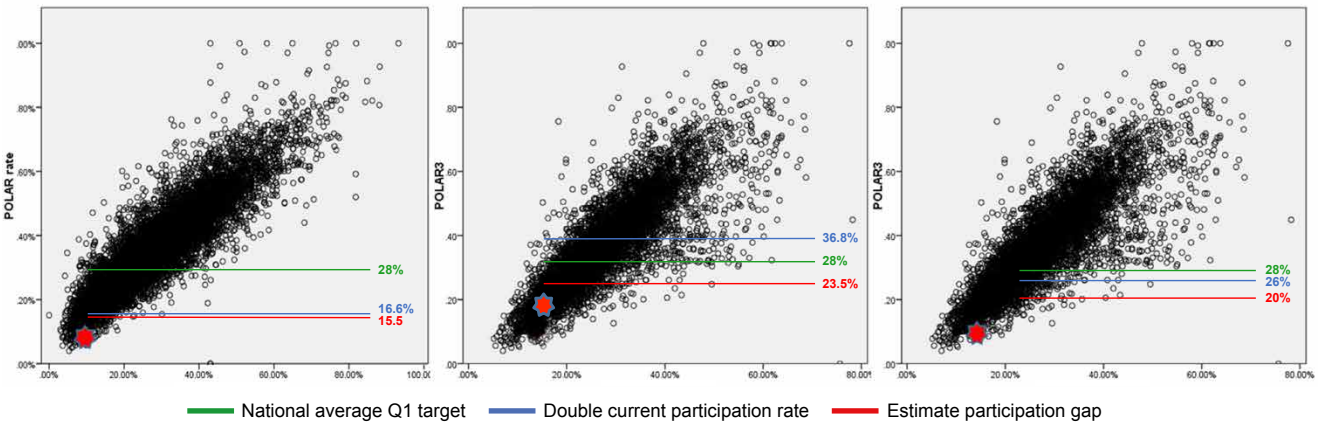


% SOCIAL HOUSING – COXFORD



% SOCIAL HOUSING – ALAMEIN

Parental education



GRADUATE PARENTS PAULSGROVE | **% ADULTS L4 NEWTOWN** | **% ADULTS L4 COXFORD**

Level of parental education correlates strongly with higher education participation, but these wards still perform badly compared with other wards with low levels of parental education.

2. Ward level school and college data

At ward level HEFCE data show how many ward students attend different secondary schools (and the proportion of them within each school). The Family of Schools database produced by the Education Endowment Foundation enables these schools to be compared with schools serving similar catchment areas. Local authority data identifies the destinations of post-16 students to college, work, training or unemployment. This data may inform potential participation strategies in a number of ways.

In some cases, local secondary schools are already the best-performing schools in their 'family of schools'. This may temper hopes of major rapid further improvement. Local secondary schools may highlight parental 'opt-outs' as taking bright students away and lowering overall performance. A geographical approach focuses attention on all the students from that ward, not just those in the largest or most local school.

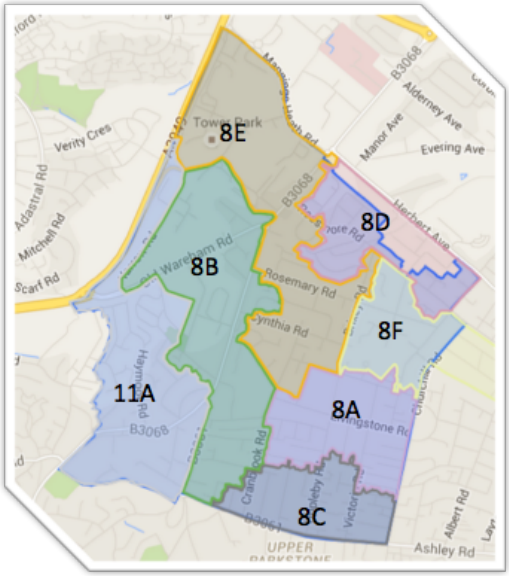
In several cases, the performance of pupil premium students lags well behind others. While this may not affect the achievement of the HEFCE target, any further improvement is likely to require a concerted effort to close this gap.

Post-16 data held by local authorities may highlight where the more able students are not following a route to higher education In our study wards, entry into post 16 education varied from under 70% to over 90%. This data can also highlight the fall out from post-16 education.

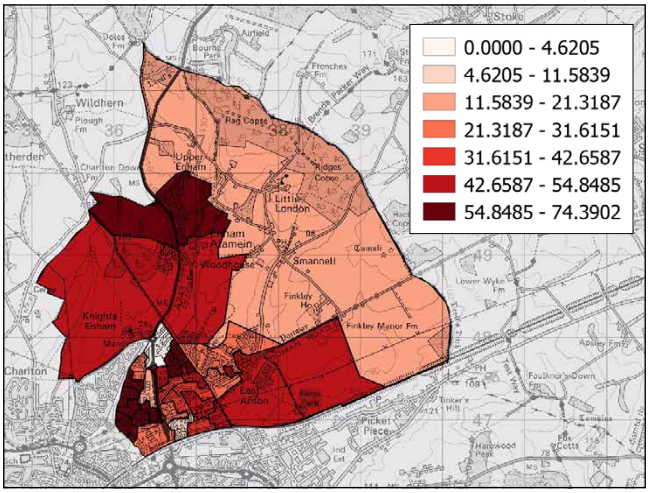
3. Local area (LSOA) data

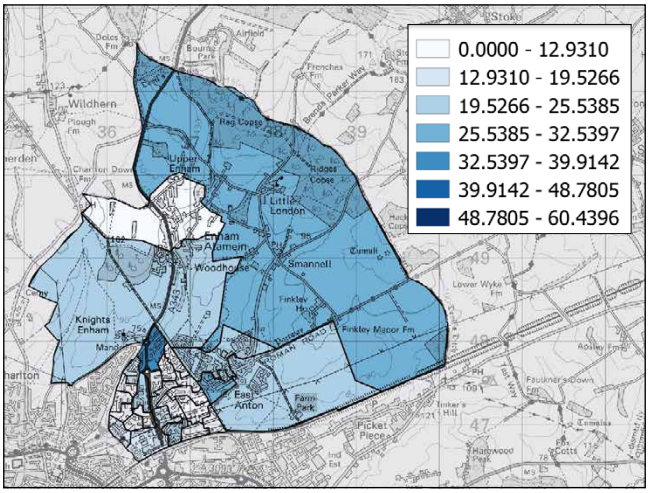
Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) allows a more fine-grained analysis of each ward. This is particularly valuable when, for example, a single ward covers both urban and rural areas, or has housing of markedly different value and tenure. It also enables a more localised examination of demographic factors including deprivation, social housing, low income, parental qualification, staying on rates post-16, higher education entry by 21 and Level 2 and GCSE and KS2 results.

The smaller the area studied, the more volatile data is likely to be and the more likely that small changes will produce apparently large swings in performance. It is important that LSOA data is seen as raising questions for further local examination before deriving firm conclusions.



Localised data can suggest that strategies might be usefully focused at sub ward level.





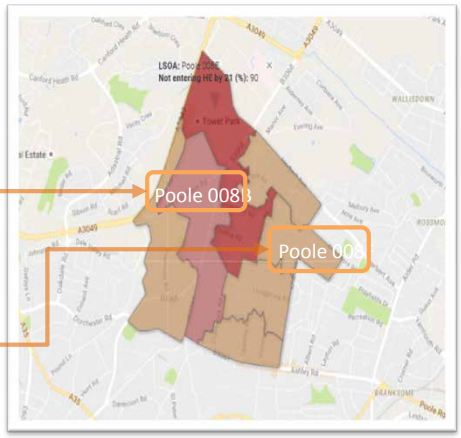
SOCIAL HOUSING IN ALAMEIN

Non-degree holding adults (post 21) in Alamein

This graphic highlights to correlation between lower levels of adult qualification and social housing. A similar map would illustrate the correlation between social housing and higher education participation.

This data can also highlight local variations in HE participation that would not be predicted by Level 2 or GCSE results. This might prompt strategies aimed at community engagement rather than focusing exclusively on school performance.

LSOA	Not staying on post 16 % (2010)	Not entering HE by 21 % (2010)	Avg KS2 score (2014)	Avg GCSE points (2013)
Poole 008A	0.16	0.75	26.6	397.2
Poole 008B	0.4	0.86	27.5	341.6
Poole 008C	0.27	0.78	27.8	411.9
Poole 008E	0.43	0.9	26.9	355
Poole 008F	0.38	0.75	27.8	304.7
Poole 011A	0.3	0.73	27.7	267.7
Poole 008A	0.21	0.79	29.6	360



This table highlights two LSOAs with almost identical GCSE results but wide differences in higher education participation

Correlations between social housing and low participation, for example, may suggest strategies working with social housing providers to raise parental aspirations. With further local discussion, these might focus simply on engaging parents/carers in supporting their children, but could involve broader attempts to engage parents in their own further education and skills development.

4. Employment and qualification data

ONS data holds the levels of qualifications held by residents and their occupations. It also holds information on the employment/occupation of residents. Comparision can be made with other parts of local authorities and the rest of England.

5. LSOA families

Towards the end of the study, Ordnance Survey proposed a new insight into the local data. By creating families of most similar LSOAs based on non-education factors of deprivation, housing etc; these aimed to shed light on the educational performance of our study wards compared with similar LSOAs across England. One is illustrated below.

	Entering FE	Entering HE	Holding any Qualification	Holding L2 Qualification	Holding L4 Qualification	Not in Social Rented Housing	Not in Lone Parent Housing	Foundation (Good) Achieved	KS4 A–C Achieved
Test Valley 002A	1	6	10	10	7	5	5	7	5
Test Valley 002B	8	2	9	7	3	2	3	10	1
Test Valley 002C	5	3	10	5	3	1	2	4	1
Test Valley 002D	1	2	9	7	4	4	5	1	1

There was insufficient time to incorporate this analysis into our ward strategies. It highlights issues worth further examination. In this case, GCSE performance in three LSOAs is in the lowest decile of similar areas in England, despite much better KS2 outcomes.

6. Data limits and quality

The available data has limitations. Ideally (from an analytical view) it would be possible to trace individual students through school, college and university, and understand how cohorts from small geographical areas achieve in different schools, colleges and beyond. Data privacy rightly restricts individual data, and there is often a discontinuity between the collection of geographical and institutional data that prevents the latter. In principle we believe this data could be derived (on an anonymised basis) from the National Pupil Database. As the new emphasis on localised strategies develops, HEFCE might consider the possibility of providing this data to local widening participation networks.

Secondly some data is old and most data sets contain data collected at different times. Even the targets are based on data that is at least five years old. Our study used the most recently available data. While current schools data (for example) cannot provide a causal explanation of historic patterns of HE participation, it is more valuable to local stakeholders to focus on current performance and most recent outcomes. The limits of the available data underline the need for local discussion, interpretation and understanding of this data before drawing firm conclusions about local challenges and implementing local strategies.

7. Localised widening participation strategies

HEFCE and government targets will require a focus on young people from particular geographical areas. Some essential interventions will be in the community, with parents, social housing providers and employers. To close the participation gap all local students predicted to get good GCSEs need to identified and supported on their pathway through school, college and, hopefully, higher education. More stretching widening participation targets will often require improving school outcomes for the area, particularly for pupil premium students, across several different schools.

Most existing widening participation strategies do not have a local geographical focus. They are more likely to engage an individual school or school cluster than all the students from a particular area. Parental and

community engagement strategies do not necessarily focus on smaller geographical areas. Post 16, most providers have little awareness of the geographical origins of their students, even though this is where some of the most critical student interventions might take place.

The data on each ward was used to devise possible local WP strategies. Interviews with local stakeholders, typically from schools, local authorities, and local councillors, were used to gain further insight into the wards and to test the insights gained from the data.

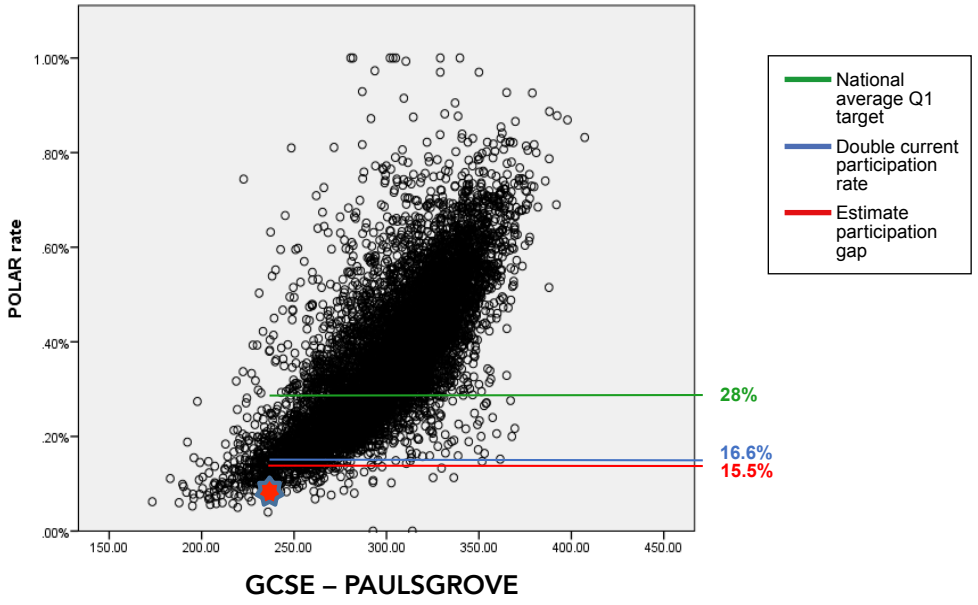
These confirm that the data analysis provides a sound basis for initiating local discussion on WP. While some data and conclusions will inevitably be contested, the overall impact is a more sharply local focus on the challenges of each area. The outline strategies presented here have significant differences despite applying to wards that superficial might seem quite similar.

We conclude that data analysis can play a valuable role in developing localised strategies.

Paulsgrove Summary

Paulsgrove is among the wards in England with the lowest proportion of students progressing to higher education, at less than 10%. It also has the lowest number of residents with Level 4 or above qualifications (15%). This is a significant challenge for all partners. Higher education participation is low by all measures, but when compared with other wards across England with similar GCSE profiles and ethnic composition it is one of the poorest performers in the country.

Given its GCSE attainment profile and its ethnic composition, HEFCE have estimated that for maintained schools to close the participation gap an additional 20 students per year (from a cohort of 234) would be entering higher education. This would also more or less double the participation rate in the ward. However, to achieve the national target of a 28% participation rate this would mean an additional 46 students entering higher education, which is a challenging target.[2]



This target is significant, but has been achieved by many similar wards. Within Paulsgrove there is a sizeable cohort with which to work (234 students in maintained schools residing in Paulsgrove) and the opportunity to effect real change. We recommend that partners work together to focus attention on Paulsgrove.

Developing a local widening particpation strategy for Paulsgrove

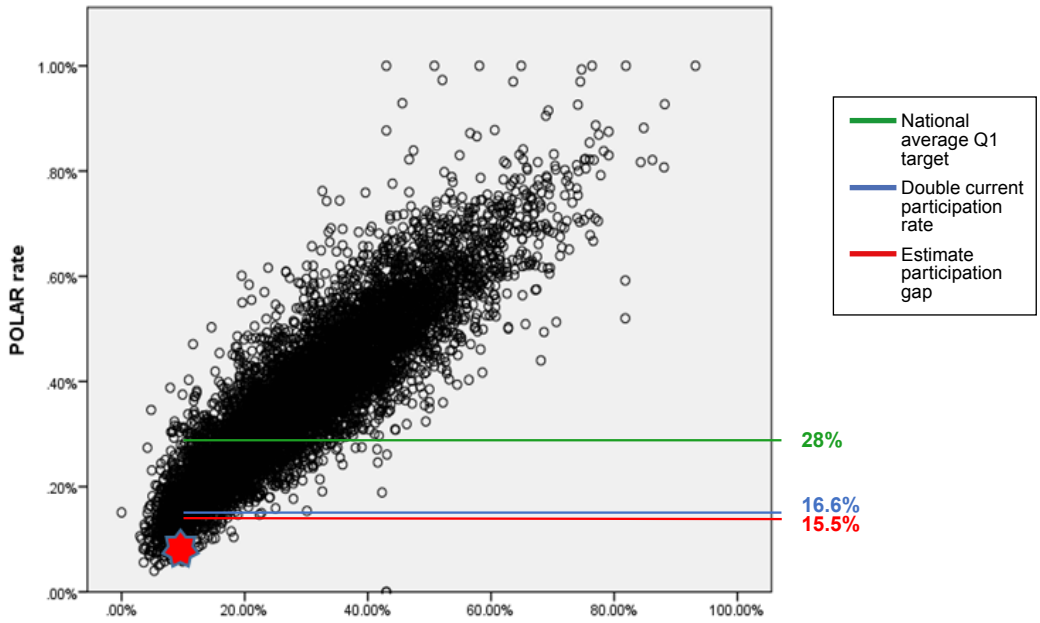
Socio-economic features of Paulsgrove

Paulsgrove has relatively good levels of economic activity (70%) that compare well to the Portsmouth average of 68.9% and to the national average of 76.8%. However, employment is predominately in unskilled 'elementary' occupations. Access to unskilled work and relatively low housing costs (due to the high level of social housing), may have reduced the need to seek higher-level qualifications and better paid employment. It may also suggest that it is relatively easy for young people to access work rather than participate in further or higher education.

Parental education and engagement

There is strong correlation between parental education levels and higher education participation within Paulsgrove. There are few graduate parents, and a very low proportion of parents with Level 4 or above qualifications. High numbers have with Level 1 and 2 qualifications suggesting some past engagement and interest in learning. The lack of experience and understanding of higher education by families may be hampering the young people's progression.

2. As set out in the footnote to the introduction, the HEFCE participation gap is based on different data to the POLAR date used in government targets. For simplicity of presentation we have estimated the participation gap as a POLAR figure.



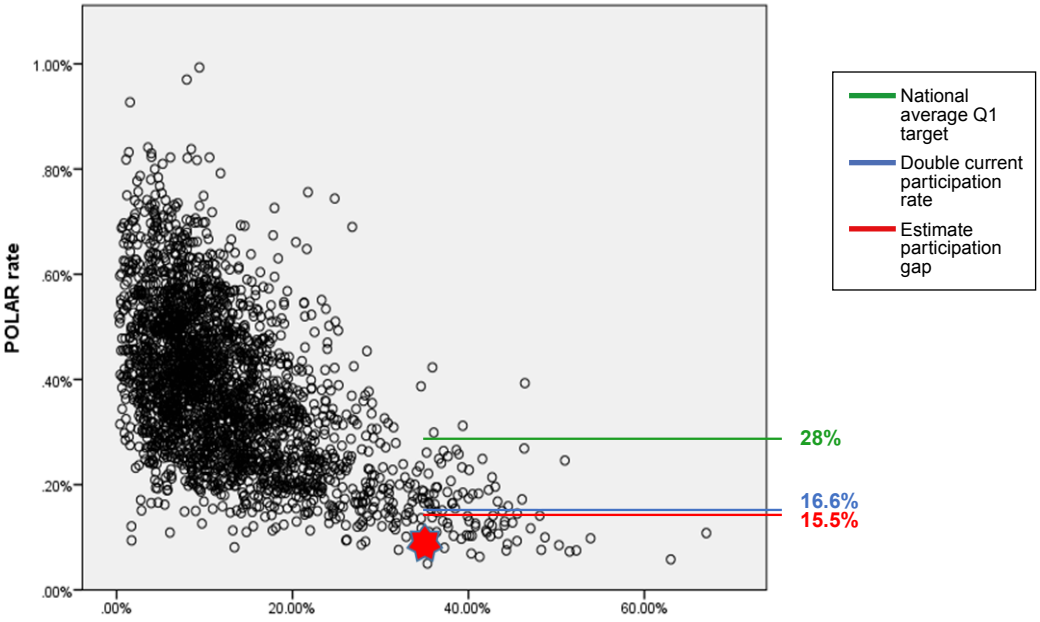
GRADUATE PARENTS – PAULSGROVE

A local strategy should support increased parental support for higher education. This could include building on King Richard School's engagement with parents with a programme to increase parental aspirations for their children, which includes:

- regular communication with parents, targeting those from Paulsgrove
- a commitment to parents forums
- accessible literature, targeted at parents
- an individualised response, meeting with parents from Paulsgrove, enabling parents to assist in their child's education.

This should be extended to all schools serving the area. Paulsgrove has a higher level of social housing than most English wards and one of the lowest participation rates for similar wards.

Consideration should be given to creating additional parental involvement through community organisations and social housing providers.



% SOCIAL HOUSING – PAULSGROVE

A significant number of residents have no qualifications (32.3%) and only 15% have Level 4 or above qualifications. A local strategy should create a more visible further and higher education presence. Further and higher education should work more with local employers and social housing providers in the area to provide qualifications and raise aspirations to further study higher education. This could include vocationally oriented programmes at Level 3 and above such as apprenticeships leading to degree apprenticeships, skills competitions and role models and mentors.

Closing the 'participation gap'

There are currently a significant number (about 20 per year) of young people within Paulsgrove who are achieving GCSEs that could enable them to progress to Level 3 and then higher education who are not currently doing so. To close the HEFCE participation gap, schools and post-16 colleges should identify this cohort of young people and to pay particular attention to raising their aspirations towards further and higher education.

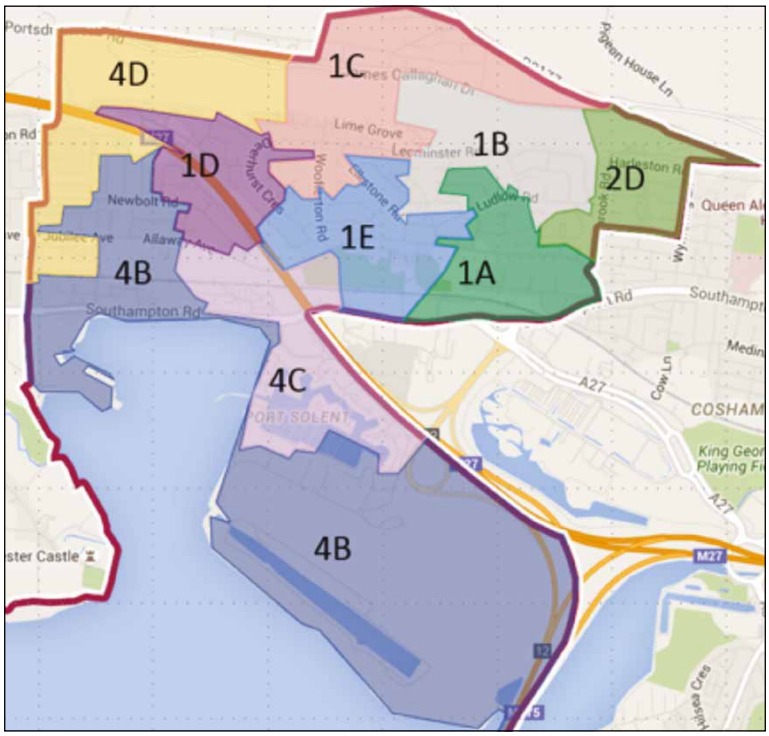
School outcomes for low-income students

Moving towards the more challenging target of a 28% participation rate would, to judge by other English wards, require a significant improvement in secondary school outcomes. Paulsgrove Community School that educates 32% of Paulsgrove students is already the best performing (on GCSE results for all students) of its most similar family of schools. 74% of Paulsgrove students attend King Richard School, which according to Ofsted requires improvement. Around 56% of King Richard students qualify for pupil premium (56%). It has a large gap in attainment between those receiving pupil premium and those not. For non-pupil premium students 52% achieve 5 A*–C, whilst for the pupil premium students this stands at only 28.6%. However, it performs well in its family of schools for average score best 8 GCSEs and is ranked third in its family for performance of students on pupil premium in this measure.

Local stakeholders are keen to stress the efforts already been made to improve this performance. A priority for a more ambitious widening participation strategy (beyond closing the HEFCE participation gap) would be to provide King Richard School with additional support in its efforts.

Local area data and issues

The Paulsgrove ward is comprised of nine lower layer super output areas (LSOAs).



Two of the nine LSOAs (004B and 004C) demonstrate more affluent characteristics, and have significantly higher qualification levels and progression to higher education.

Figure 1: **Educational achievement in Paulsgrove by LSOA**

LSOA	Avg KS2 Score Boys (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Boys (2013)	Avg KS2 Score Girls (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Girls (2013)
001A	27.9	342.9	27.3	316.2
001B	27.5	262.4	27.8	338
001C	23.4	294.7	28.7	272.6
001D	27.2	221.1	26.4	295
001E	28.1	246.5	26.8	323.5
002D	27.3	220.6	28.5	339
004B	28	327.7	28.3	308
004C	22.5	257	27.8	359.9
004D	27.2	269.3	29.4	314.4

The data in the table raises a number of issues about gender outcomes and progression. Here we highlight one just characteristic that needs further local examination. LSOA 004D has significant deprivation. Students have the best Key Stage 2 results of the LSOAs and then perform averagely (when compared to the other LSOAs) at GCSE. 40% do not stay on post-16 (the highest in the ward), yet 24% progress to higher education.

By contrast LSOA 001A also faces significant deprivation. Only 8% go on to higher education despite having the highest average GCSE point score of the LSOAs. 28% do not stay in education post-16.

Local study might be able to identify the factors influencing these very different outcomes. (It may be interesting that LSOA 001A has the best boys GCSE performance in Paulsgrove but very low higher education participation. Other factors might include local aspirations and the nature of post 16 provision. Post-16 provision appears to be making a significant difference to higher education participation in some areas of the ward.)

Post 16 outcomes and destinations

Post-16 participation is low. Of the nine LSOAs, seven had 30% or less going onto post-16 study (with one LSOA only 14%). Increasing the number going onto post-16 study should be a target for partners.

LSOA	Not Staying On Post	Not Entering HE by 21	% L4 Qualification	Avg LS2 Score	GCSE (5A*–C)
001A	28%	92%	9.36%	27.6	50%
001B	30%	93%	10.55%	27.6	37%
001C	17%	92%	11.33%	26.9	39%
001D	24%	91%	9.79%	26.8	21%
001E	22%	91%	7.73%	27.7	29%
002D	34%	94%	8.57%	27.8	48%
004B	14%	71%	20.05%	28.2	50%
004C	20%	77%	38.48%	25.1	55%
004D	40%	76%	16.37%	28.7	40%

There is a significant drop off with students as they move through further and higher education. In 2016 only 21 students progressed to higher education following their post-16 study.

16–18 year old destinations (Portsmouth City Council May 2016)

Current Destinations	Y12	Y13	Y14	Total
College/Sixth Form	183	120	60	**363**
Higher Education	0	0	21	**21**
Apprenticeship/Job with accredited training	18	36	38	**92**
Job without accredited training	10	13	58	**81**
Training – non employed	6	1	2	**9**
Unemployed – seeking	8	9	18	**35**
Unemployed – not available	1	8	11	**20**
Unknown	1	4	2	**7**
TOTAL	**227**	**191**	**210**	**628**

We propose targeted engagement with post-16 providers who do not have high progression rates to higher education, with a particular focus on students from this ward. This will include:

- supporting teachers and staff in schools and colleges to understand current higher education provision and opportunities
- supporting Year 12 students to make the transition to Year 13 and continue studies
- summer schools and mentoring
- application support
- guidance and advice

Summary

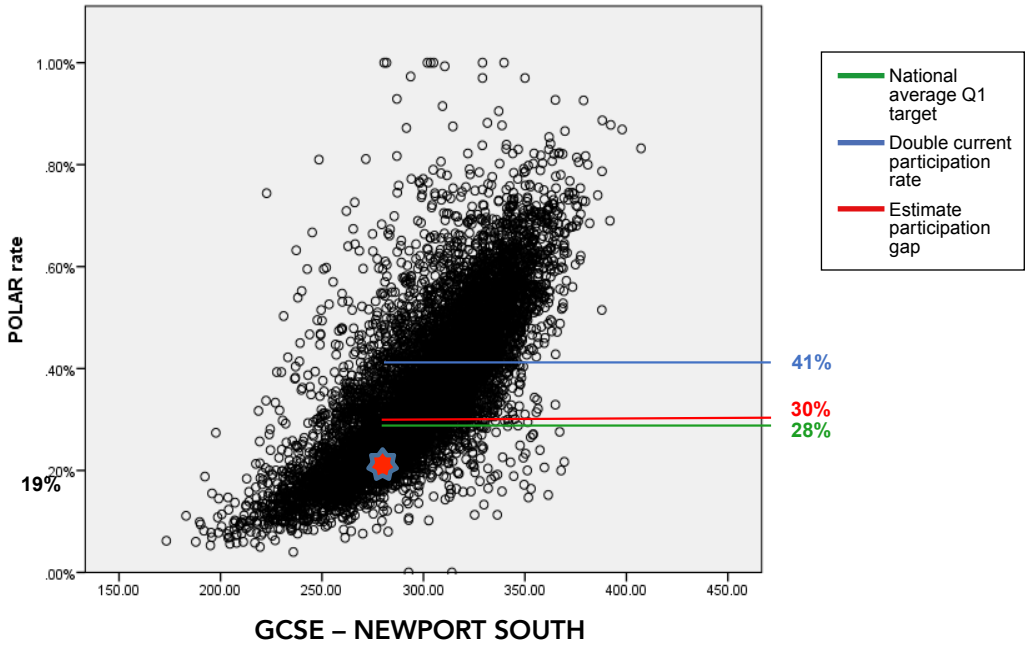
Around 20 more young people would go the university each year from Paulsgrove if the 'participation gap' was closed. A focus on the local cohort of students who expected to get good GCSE results through school and college, together with engagement with parents through schools, community organisations and social housing providers can help close the gap.

It will be challenging to meet the most demanding government targets given how few similar wards in England achieve high participation rates. Nonetheless further progress should be possible particular if the weak performance of poorer students can be challenged.

Newport South Summary

Newport South is the smallest ward included in this study, and the number of students is relatively small. Its higher education participation rate is below that expected given its GCSE and ethnic profile, but the rate is high compared to others within the same quintile of index of multiple deprivation.

Given its GCSE attainment profile and its ethnic composition HEFCE have estimated that to close the participation gap, 3–4 additional students per year would be entering higher education (from a cohort of 38). This would also take the ward's POLAR participation rate to 28%. However, it appears unrealistic to aim to double the progression rate in Newport South as the area performs relatively well in terms of number of young people progressing to higher education given its socio-economic circumstances.[3]



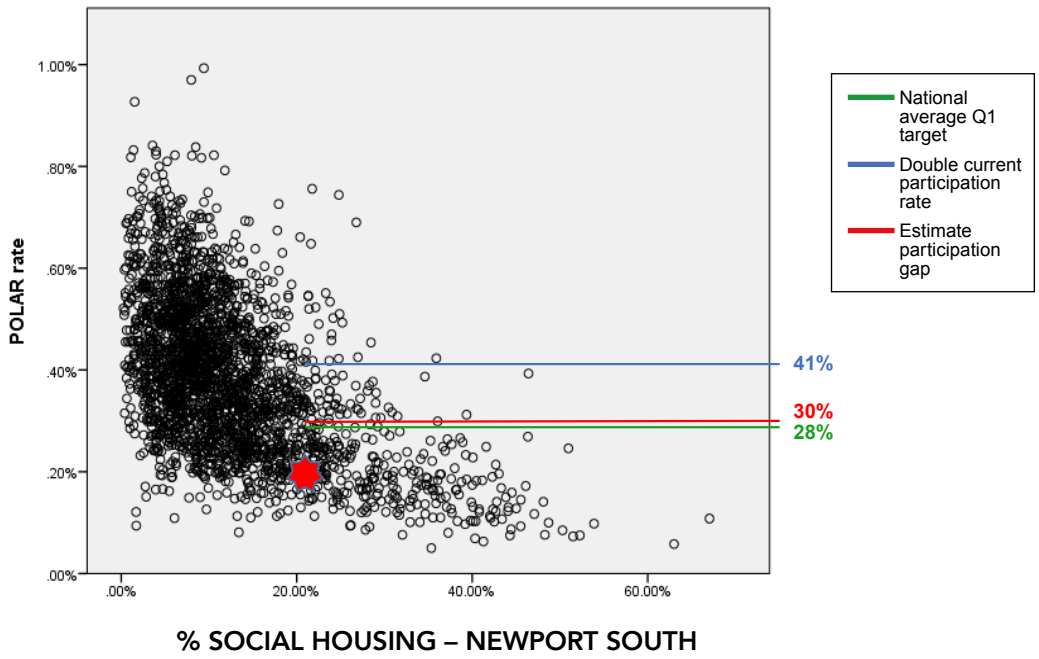
It should be possible to achieve or exceed a 28% participation rate with focused effort on students and families in this ward. Aiming significantly beyond this target may require significant effort for only marginal gains.

Socio-economic features

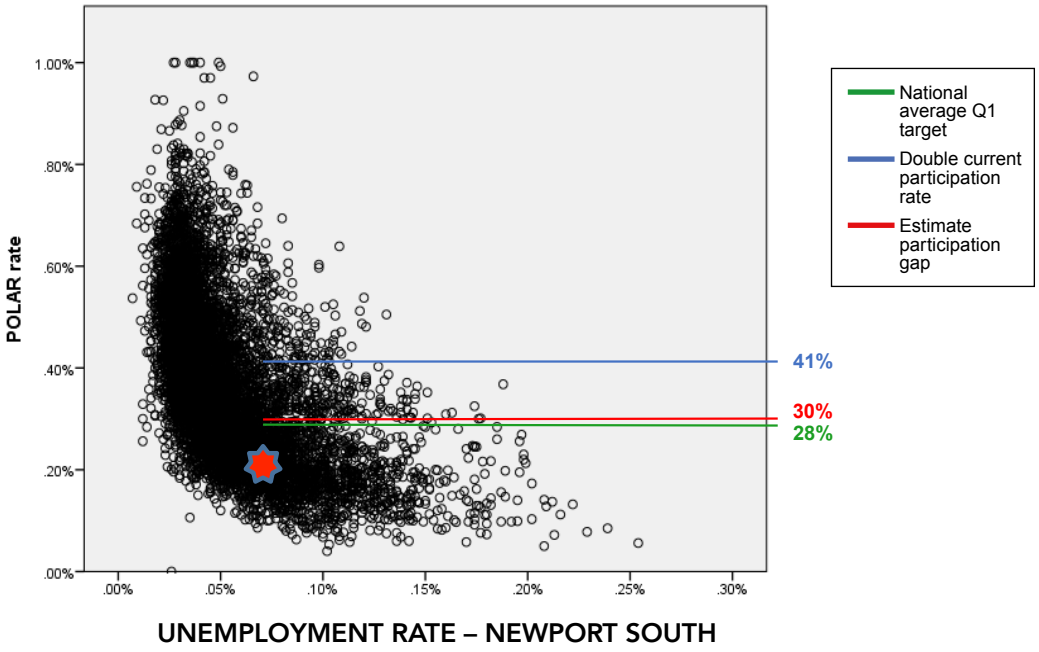
The Isle of Wight has lower levels of economic activity and parental education than England as a whole. While this is reflected in Newport South it does not particularly stand out from the rest of the island. Newport South has relatively good economically active rates (67.6%) compared to the Isle of Wight (64.4%), (but against a national average of 76.8%.) Adults in Newport South are engaged in a good mix of occupations, including those in higher socio-economic classifications (including professional and administration roles) again comparing well with the rest of the Isle of Wight though less well than in England as a whole.

Newport South has 20.5% of residents within social housing. Many wards across England have the same proportion of social housing and achieve higher participation in higher education. In this ward it is not likely that social housing is a particular factor in low participation.

3. As set out in the footnote to the introduction, the HEFCE participation gap is based on different data to the POLAR date used in government targets. For simplicity of presentation we have estimated the participation gap as a POLAR figure.



% SOCIAL HOUSING – NEWPORT SOUTH



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE – NEWPORT SOUTH

Compared to many other wards across England with similar unemployment rates Newport South performs poorly in terms of higher education participation rates.

Parental education and engagement

Adults have low qualification levels within Newport South, reflecting levels within the Isle of Wight. Newport South has fairly low levels of children with graduate parents (18.5%) although this is higher than many other wards. It has low levels of residents with L4 or above qualifications (20.5%) but this is higher than other areas we have considered in our study.

We recommend further work with parents, to raise their aspirations for their children and understand higher education. Building on existing work with parents we recommend a programme for parents throughout secondary school to encourage their participation in their child's education and allay concerns regarding further and higher education. A partnership with IntoUniversity should be encouraged.

The programme would:

- Establish regular communication with parents, targeting those from Newport South, who have boys
- Commit to parents forums
- Have accessible literature, targeted at parents
- Provide an individualised response, meeting with parents of boys from Newport South
- Enable parents to assist in their child's education
- Build representation in the schools from parents in Newport South, acting as ambassadors.

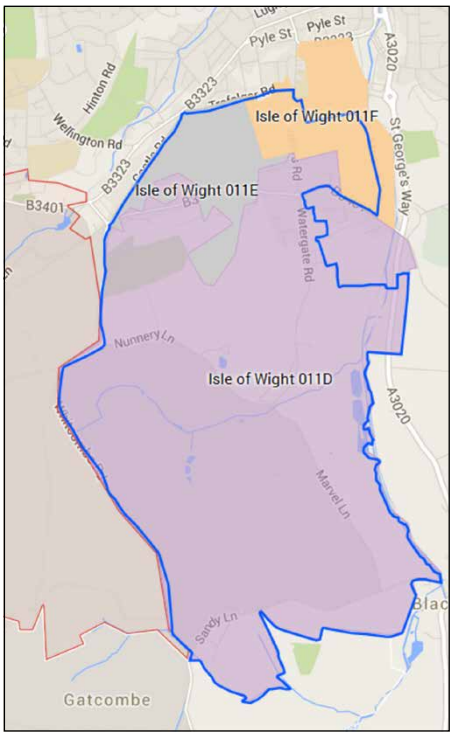
School and college outcomes

The secondary schools serving the area are improving rapidly (as recognised by Ofsted), which may improve the GCSE attainment rates, and subsequent progression to higher education. The gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium student outcomes is small.

There is a wide range of provision beyond the secondary level and, overall, post-16 retention is good. The majority of the students at Year 12 are in post-16 study (81%). This reduces to 72% in Year 13, which is a good retention rate and may show that the majority of the students are completing Level 3 programmes that could open up the possibility of higher education.

Local area data and issues

In Newport South, LSOAs are not coterminous with ward boundaries and take in areas outside the ward boundaries. Our analysis looks at the three LSOAs that wholly or partly cover the ward.



Two areas show data that requires further examination. In LSOA 011F, nearly half (49%) of its students do not stay on post 16. Girls perform particularly badly at GCSE. Despite this, 24% of students have entered HE by age 21. In LSOA 011E 94% of students stay on post 16 but only 12% have entered HE by age 21.

Through discussion with local stakeholders, it should be possible to establish whether the data can be associated with local factors, including choice of secondary school, housing tenure, or college performance, or whether the data is in error or misleading due to date of collection etc.

A targeted local strategy

Our analysis of the data, and the relatively small number of students in each cohort, suggests that intervention in Newport South should be highly targeted and individual students and their families. This is likely to be more productive and cost effective than the broader strategies that might be appropriate in areas with wider and more systemic challenges.

There is well established evidence that one to one support can support an individual's educational performance and progression. The targeted programme should include:

- additional academic support through activities such as weekly study support sessions, revision classes, academic tracking and liaison with the year head
- enrichment activities
- celebration events with parents
- summer school residentials
- mentors
- lifecoaching
- caseworker for the family.

Those residing in LSOA 011F should be offered intensive support to build aspirations and attainment. Any families within the 'Strengthening Families Programme' could have additional education progression support.

It would also be valuable to identify those students who enter post 16 study from LSOA 011E but who do not progress. Using local knowledge about pathways at post-16 it should to identify and support appropriate individuals in the right institutions.

We recommend a targeted and tailored programme aimed at those who have (or predicted) good GCSEs from Newport South. The intervention needs to promote post-16 study and encourage students to understand the opportunities and benefits of further and higher education study. The programme should include:

- mentoring
- work placements, in graduate level roles
- summer schools
- enhanced career guidance.

The intervention should involve universities from the mainland to encourage aspirations and awareness of higher education.

Funding should be available to cover the cost of university visits including transport and accommodation.

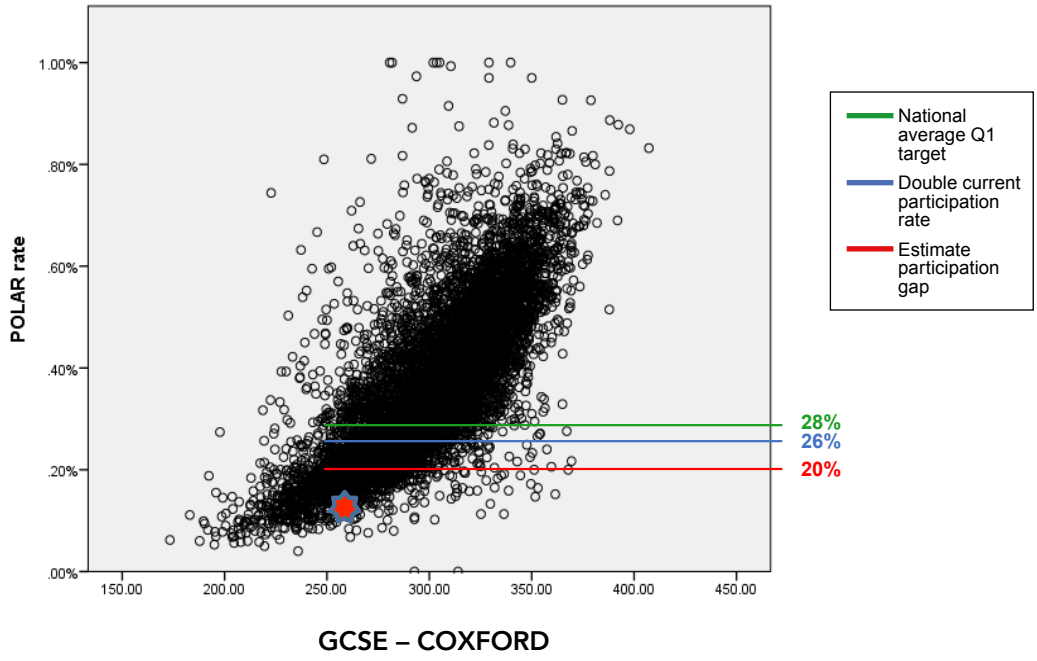
Conclusion

With targeted individual and family support in key areas of the ward, and attention to progression through post 16 education for students predicted to get average to good GCSEs, Newport South should be able to close the 'participation gap' and make further progress to raising the higher education participation rate.

Coxford Summary

Coxford's participation in higher education is below that expected given its GCSE and ethnic profile. To close the HEFCE participation gap would require an additional 14 students per year to enter higher education (from a cohort of 191 from maintained schools), a participation rate of around 21%.[4] A significant number of English wards with similar GCSE profiles achieve greater than 20% participation in higher education.

The government aims to raise the average participation rate for low participation wards like Coxford to 28%, representing a doubling of the current participation rate across England's target wards. The government has not set a target for each ward. To double the current rate in Coxford would equate to an additional 23 students per year, a participation rate of 26%, To achieve a target of 28% would mean an additional 26 students entering higher education each year. Both will be challenging targets and would make Coxford one of the highest participation wards in England with its current educational and social characteristics.



Given the current GCSE level of attainment, the quality of schooling and its location within a 'university city', Coxford should be able to double its higher education participation with appropriate support from partners.

Developing a local widening participation strategy for Coxford

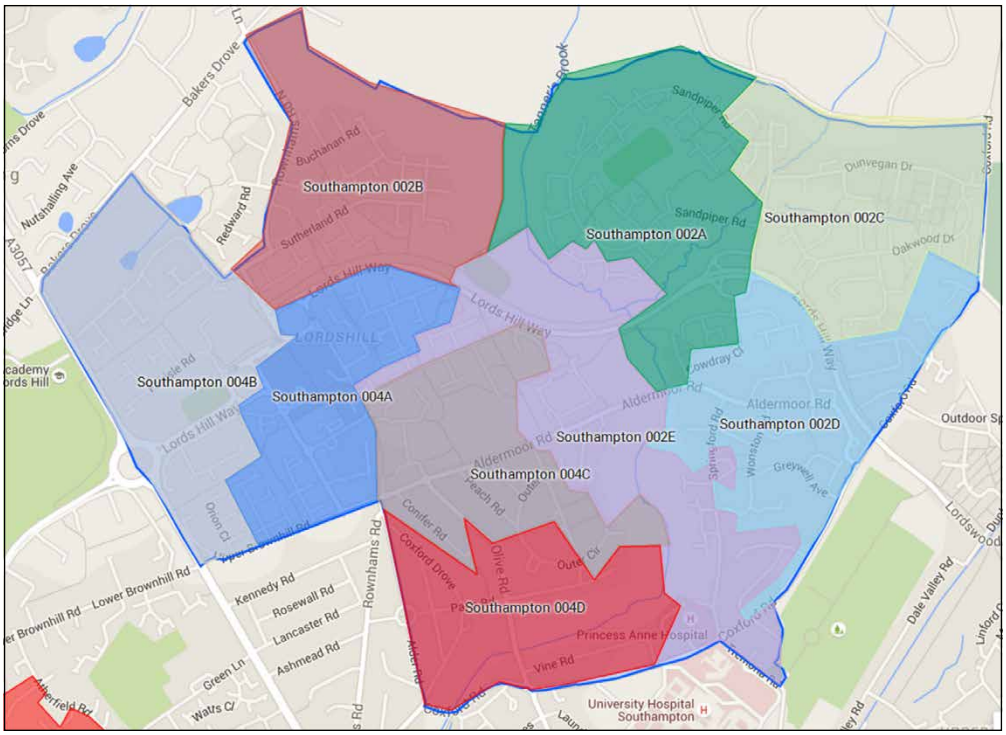
Socio-economic features of Coxford

There are significant differences between different parts of the ward, which comprises nine LSOAs. Two LSOAs, 002A and 002C, are relatively well off (in the 8th decile of multiple deprivation) while the rest of the ward is of below average deprivation with three LSOAs in the bottom 20%. By and large education and higher participation outcomes reflect this sharp divide.

For simplicity we use ward wide data here, but ward averages may understate the concentration of challenges in the poorer parts of the ward.

Coxford has good economically active rates (71.9%) that compares well to the Southampton average of 68.4% and to the national average of 76.8%.

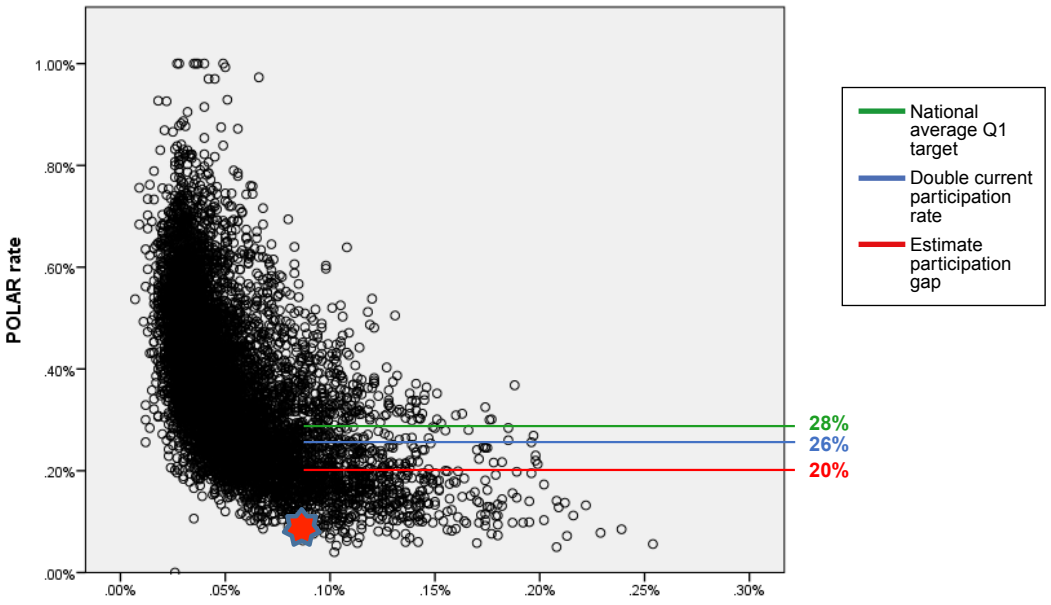
4. As set out in the footnote to the introduction, the HEFCE participation gap is based on different data to the POLAR date used in government targets. For simplicity of presentation we have estimated the participation gap as a POLAR figure.



Employment is typically in personal services, process plant and machine operatives and unskilled 'elementary' occupations (such as warehousing, distribution, cleaners and refuse workers). In terms of process plant and machine operatives there is nearly twice the national average of residents working in this area. There is below average participation in professional, associated professional and managerial roles.

Compared to other wards across England with similar unemployment rates Coxford performs poorly in terms of higher education participation rates (see Figure 1).

Unemployment (2011)

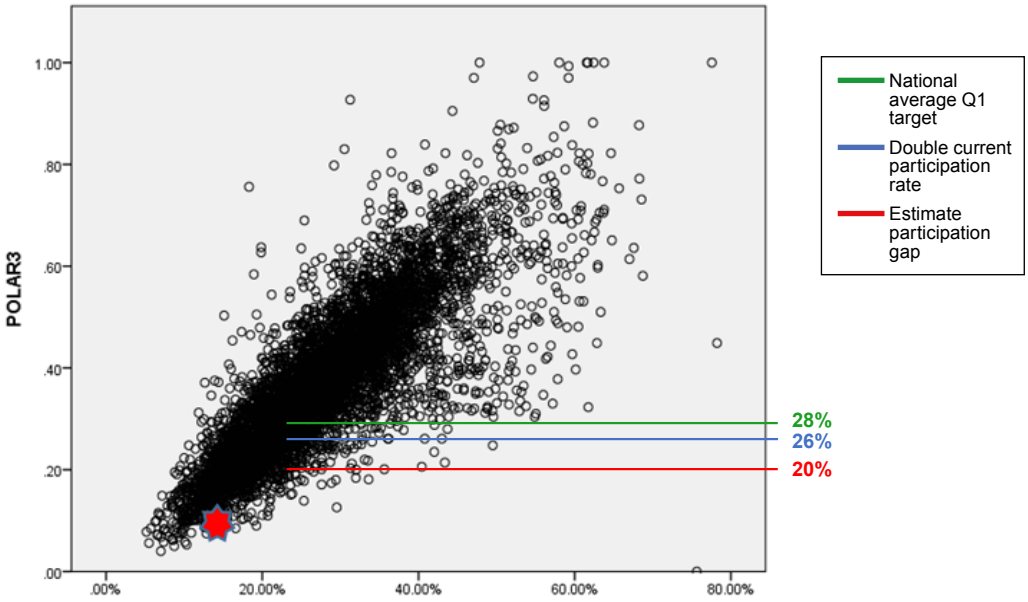


UNEMPLOYMENT RATE – COXFORD

The ward has a high level of social housing by national standards. There are relatively few wards to provide a benchmark but most perform better than Coxford. The preponderance of social housing suggests that housing providers should be engaged in widening participation strategies reaching parents and children.

Parental education and engagement

There are a significant number of residents who have no qualifications (30%) and only 17.4% with Level 4 or above qualifications. There is a strong relationship between the education levels of adults and higher education participation rates. Nonetheless, Coxford has particularly low higher education participation rates for its current level of parental education.



We recommend that higher education enhance their work with the employers in the area (particularly those offering machine and plant process operative opportunities) to provide in-house qualifications and to raise aspirations to further study higher education. This could include:

- apprenticeships leading to degree apprenticeships
- skills competitions
- role models and mentors.

Alongside this we recommend that social housing providers develop opportunities for employees and tenants to learn at Level 2 and beyond. This should involve higher education and consider vocationally orientated programmes.

We recommend that partners build on existing work with parents to support their aspirations for their children. Involving the schools, community organisations, higher education and local employers the programme would engage parents throughout secondary school to encourage their participation in their child's education and allay concerns regarding further and higher education. A partnership with IntoUniversity should be encouraged. The programme would:

- establish regular communication with parents, targeting those from Coxford, who have boys
- commit to parents forums
- have accessible literature, targeted at parents
- provide an individualised response, meeting with parents of boys from Coxford
- enable parents to assist in their child's education
- build representation in the school from parents in Coxford, acting as ambassadors.

Closing the participation gap

Most wards in England with similar GCSE results see significantly more students enter higher education. While it is important to raise parents' aspirations and engagement it is also important to see direct intervention from partners with those students from Coxford in secondary school with the potential to achieve good GCSEs to encourage their continued further and higher education progression. Alongside there should be an organisation/person with the sole responsibility for transition and moving students through education and on to university. The programme should include:

- enhancing the role of Into University
- supporting Year 11 students to make the transition to Year 12 and continue studies.
- summer schools
- mentoring
- benefits of further and higher education study
- role models who have attended college and/or university.

Improving school outcomes

The secondary schooling in the area is considered 'good' by Ofsted. The majority of students attend Oasis Academy Lord's Hill and The Mountbatten School, both these schools, and several other schools serving the ward, show significant performance gaps for those students who receive pupil premium funding compared to the rest of the school cohort. This gap is also high when compared to their family of schools and most similar school. To enable Coxford students to make further progress including to higher education, action to close the pupil premium attainment gap will be important.

Education performance declines from Key Stage 2 to GCSE, significantly for boys. The girls out-perform the boys at GCSE (even when the boys had outperformed the girls at Key Stage 2.

LSOA	Avg KS2 Score Boys (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Boys (2013)	Avg KS2 Score Girls (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Girls (2013)
002A	31.3	410.7	30.8	394.1
002B	29.3	318.0	30.0	490.3
002C	27.8	331.4	28.5	442.0
002D	27.7	316.9	27.7	393.1
002E	29.0	314.9	29.0	421.0
004A	27.2	289.4	30.4	328.4
004B	30.9	233.3	25.1	384.3
004C	30.6	265.9	28.8	390.0
004D	28.8	300.2	29.3	341.3

We recommend that further support should be given to boys in receipt of pupil premium within Coxford. A targeted plan should be implemented by the schools, drawing in higher education and other partners (such as IntoUniversity) to support individuals:

- mentoring
- study support (IntoUniversity could assist here)
- workshops and aspiration raising activities from Year 7
- consideration of more vocationally oriented provision, including tone of the curriculum.

Local data and issues

The most deprived LSOA (004D) has only 4% of people up to the age of 21 entering higher education, although it does not have the lowest Key Stage 2 or GCSE results. Performance by girls at GCSE is significantly lower in this LSOA.

Discussion with local stakeholders should try to establish the factors behind this particularly low participation area, and to put appropriate measures in place. It would seem appropriate to aim to improve the performance of girls within this LSOA by working with the schools the girls attend to provide:

- mentoring
- subject enrichment activities
- one to one academic support

Data from 2013 showed girls from LSOA 002B (a relatively deprived ward) gaining better GCSE results than boys or girls in any other LSOA. Further discussion with stakeholders should examine whether this is a statistical anomaly, an isolated spike or reflecting more substantive factors on the ground.

Post-16 outcomes

The two colleges that take the great majority of Coxford students are both rated 'good' by Ofsted. However, only 59% of students attend college or sixth form, with 31% moving into employment/apprenticeship. This suggests a ready availability of work but may also confirm the views of local stakeholders that there is only limited aspiration towards higher education and family support for early entry to education.

16–18 year old destinations (Southampton City Council, May 2016)

Current Destinations	Years 12, 13 and 14
College/Sixth Form	293
Higher Education	23
Apprenticeship/Job with accredited training	82
Job without accredited training	78
Training – non employed	6
Unemployed – seeking	13
Unemployed – not available	12
Unknown	7
TOTAL	**514**

Further improvements in entry to higher education may be assisted by the local promotion of higher-level apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships, building on the significant number of students currently taking apprenticeships.

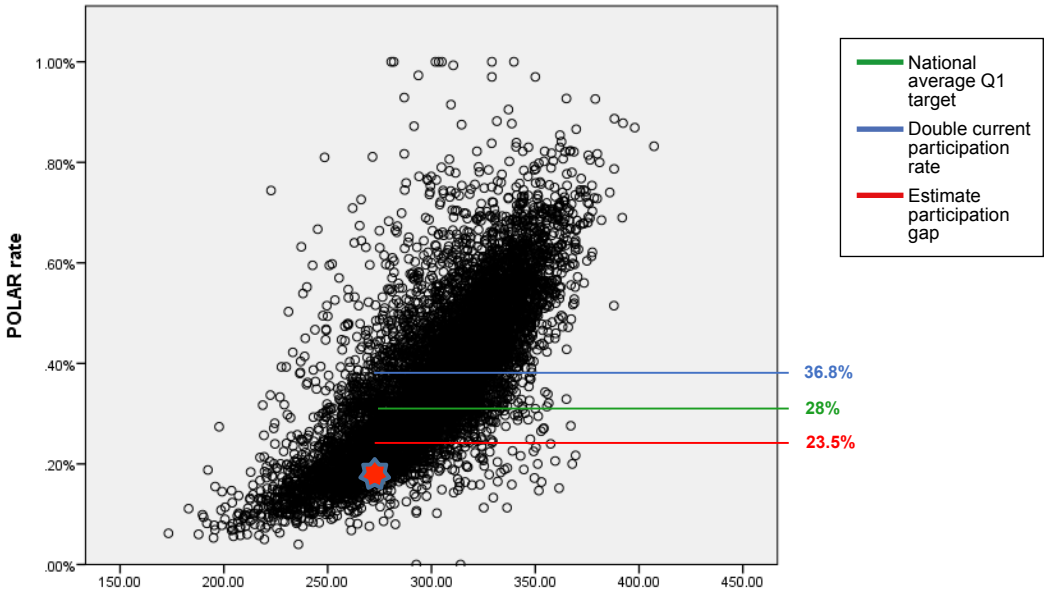
Conclusion

Coxford has a low higher education participation rate given current GCSE outcomes, parental education and levels of unemployment. Making improvements does not require fundamental transformation of local school performance although action should be taken to improve results for the poorest students. Data analysis and local stakeholders highlight the importance of wide ranging measures to raise understanding of and aspiration toward higher education amongst students and parents.

Newtown Summary

Newtown's participation in higher education is below that expected given its GCSE and ethnic profile. HEFCE have estimated to close the participation would require an average 8 additional students a year to enter higher education (from a cohort of 150 in maitained schools).

The government aims to raise the average participation rate for low participation wards like Newtown to 28%, representing a doubling of the current participation rate across England's target wards. The Government has not set a target for each ward. To double the current rate in Newtown would take it to 36.8%, and would equate to 24 additional students a year above current rates. This would be a challenging target and would make Newtown one of the highest participation wards with its educational and social characteristics. However, a 28% participation rate – an additional 13 students – should be attainable.[5]



Given its current GCSE profile Newtown should be able to increase significantly the number of students attending higher education, given the current performance of comparable wards.

Developing a local WP for Newtown

Newtown is one of the more complex wards included in this study. Local stakeholders describe the ward as covering three distinct communities. A complex mix of schools serves the ward and colleges and the most important of these have and are undergoing significant change and improvement.

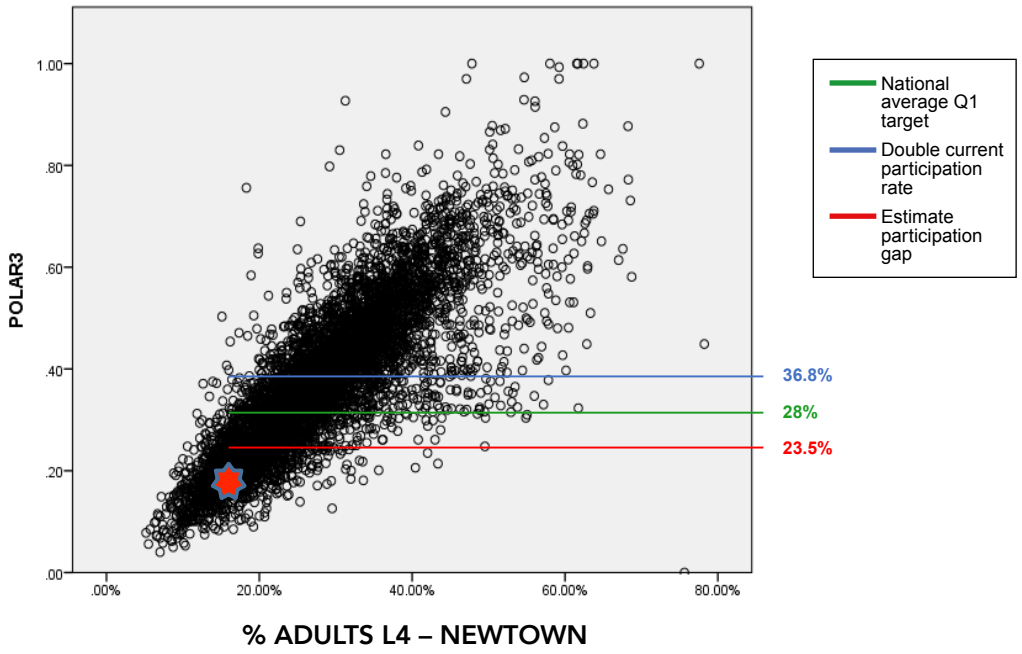
The data analysis suggests several areas for closer consideration and action but it will be particularly to test historic data against the current situation and to target interventions in ways that use local knowledge of individual communities.

Socio-economic features of Newtown

While most of the ward is more deprived than the national average, none of the LSOA areas is in the bottom quintile nationally on the index of multiple deprivation. Unemployment is below the national average and only just above the very low average rate for Poole. Within Newtown there is 5.7% unemployment which places it amongst the lowest rates for its social profile (as determined by POLAR). Only 15% of the ward is social housing.

5. As set out in the footnote to the introduction, the HEFCE participation gap is based on different data to the POLAR date used in government targets. For simplicity of presentation we have estimated the participation gap as a POLAR figure.

Parental education and engagement



Nationally there appears to be a strong relationship between the educational level of adults and higher education participation rates. Newtown has low levels of children with graduate parents (12.9%) and people with Level 4 or above qualifications (17.6%).

By comparison with Poole as a whole, Newtown residents are less well qualified and work in lower skilled jobs. Local stakeholders report an increase in part time adult study at higher levels but in general aspirations to higher education are said to be low.

Employment by occupation (2011)

	Newtown (%)	Poole (%)	England (%)
Managers and senior officials	8.7	11.6	10.9
Professional	12.6	16.5	17.5
Associate professional and technical	9.8	12	12.8
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	11.2	11.8	11.5
Skilled trades	16.1	13.1	11.4
Personal services	11.8	9.3	9.3
Sales and customer services	10.3	9.1	8.4
Process plant and machine operatives	8	6.6	7.2
Elementary occupations	11.5	10	11.1

Highest level of qualification gained (2011)

	Newtown (%)	Poole (%)	England (%)
Level 4 qualifications and above	17.6	25.5	27.4
Level 3 qualifications	12.2	12.5	12.4
Level 2 qualifications	16.6	16.6	15.2
Level 1 qualifications	16.3	14.4	13.3
Apprenticeships	5.1	4.9	3.6
Other qualifications	5.0	4.7	5.7
No qualifications	27.1	21.4	22.5

However, the proportion of residents with Level 3 qualifications (12.2%) is at the national average (12.4%) and significant numbers of residents do hold qualifications. Supporting the next educational steps, including to Level 4, and which may involve more flexible and part-time study, should be made available to the residents of Newtown.

It would also be valuable to increase the availability of mature and part-time degree courses for residents, including degree apprenticeships, linked to current occupations. These should be promoted by local higher education providers, with engagement through schools to interested parents, community groups and a presence in the community centre.

Individualised family support should be available to encourage education progression.

Closing the participation gap

Newtown could achieve better higher education participation rates with its current GCSE profile. There are a high proportion of 16 year old students who do not progress to further education. 58% go to college or sixth form with 27% moving into employment. Of those that are progressing to employment approximately half (47%) are in roles with no embedded training. Higher education participation is likely to rise if more students with average to good GCSE results enter further education, and if those that do are offered more targeted support.

16–18 year old destinations (Poole Unitary Authority, May 2016)

Current Destinations	Years 12, 13 and 14
College/Sixth Form	210
Higher Education	31
Apprenticeship/Job with accredited training	51
Job without accredited training	46
Unknown	3
NEET	19
TOTAL	**360**

We recommend a targeted and tailored programme aimed at those who have (or predicted) good GCSEs from Newtown. The intervention needs to promote post-16 study and encourage students to understand the opportunities and benefits of further and higher education study. It should include higher education and the local further education college. The programme should include:

- Mentoring
- Work placements, in graduate level roles
- Summer schools
- Advice regarding university options
- Building student's social capital (through for example inspirational speakers)
- Bursaries and financial support to those that progress to higher education.

School outcomes and performance

For all the secondary schools serving the area, there is very little difference in performance (when compared to the family of schools) between those who receive pupil premium and those who do not. This suggests that there does not need to be direct intervention on those receiving pupil premium. However, at St Aldhelm's, which is amongst the weakest performing schools in its family of similar schools on the most recent published A*–C data, a whole school approach is needed to support improvement in GCSE results.

Significant changes are taking place within the local secondary schools with improved management. Improvements may well effect participation rates over time. With rapid change, schools may not have had time to develop the necessary depth of engagement with higher education and establish role models and ambassadors.

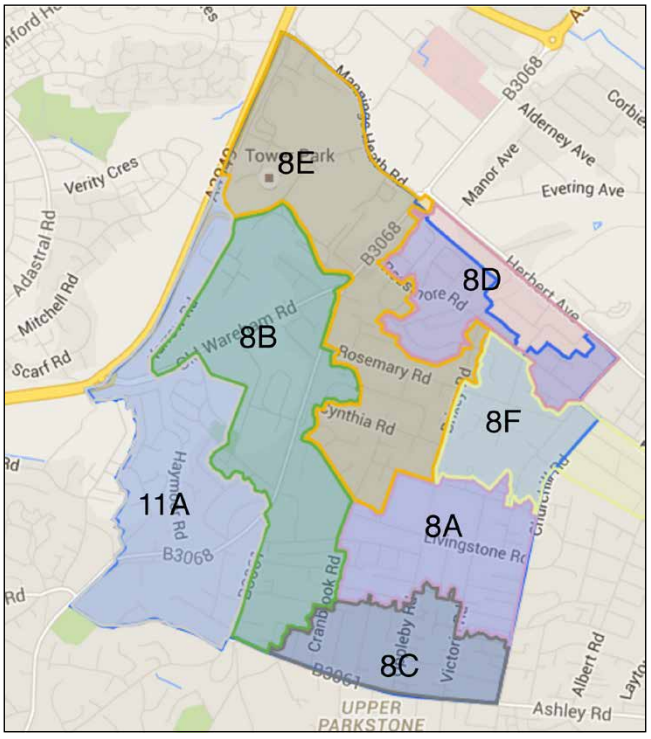
Higher education institutions should work closely with these schools to further support the implementation of the seven building blocks of success. This includes supporting the:

- School ethos
- Quality of teaching
- Use of data to inform
- Behaviour and attendance
- Meeting of individual needs
- Leadership ethos
- Staff deployment

The universities should partner with schools using their business school, education departments, and human resource and management teams to support the schools, including further training and support on higher education admissions for sixth form staff.

Local area data and issues

There are seven LSOAs in the Newport ward (with only part of 008D included).



It appears that in LSOAs 008E and 008F the poor performance of the boys is significantly lowering average GCSE scores. In both of these LSOAs there is a large proportion of students not staying on post-16 (38% and 30% respectively). However, a comparatively large proportion of students do move on to higher education by age 21, implying that nearly half of those who enter post-16 study progress to higher education.

Subject to engagement with local stakeholders, it would seem appropriate to target higher education outreach activities to boys in these parts of the ward. We recommend that partner universities should establish their own outreach targets for boys, outreach activities from an early age that work with boys and involve male role models and ambassadors. Foundation years in some science, engineering and technical subjects may be attractive to boys from the ward

LSOA	Avg KS2 Score Boys (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Boys (2013)	Avg KS2 Score Girls (2014)	Avg GCSE Points Girls (2013)
Poole 008A	25.8	395.8	28.3	399.6
Poole 008B	25.7	326.3	28.4	353.9
Poole 008C	28.2	423.5	27.4	400.4
Poole 008D	26.6	322.2	27.2	434.7
Poole 008E	26.8	272.4	28.5	327.7
Poole 008F	29.8	212.8	26.5	357.0
Poole 011A	30.0	380.7	28.9	342.8

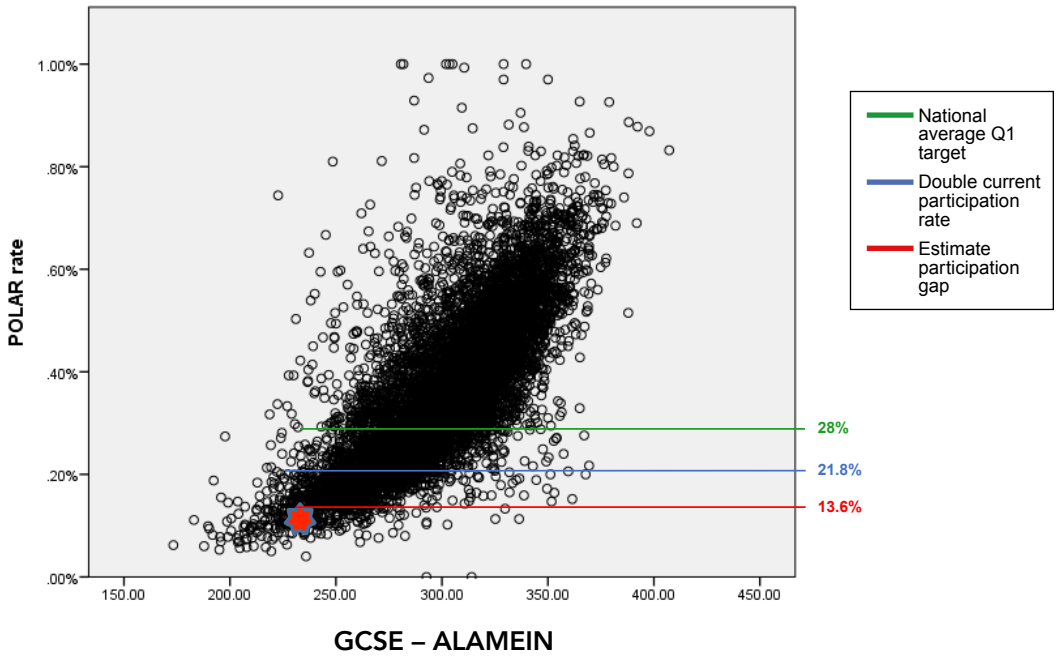
Conclusion

Newtown's higher education participation rate has been disappointing, comparing poorly with similar wards elsewhere in England. However, it has significant opportunities to improve drawing on a population with a relatively large number of skilled and semi-skilled workers and parents with wide past engagement in education. Significant changes are underway in local schools offering the possibility of improved outcome. Targeted action on progression to and through post-16 education, and support for boys' education in key parts of the ward will be required.

Alamein Summary

Alamein's participation in higher education is below that expected given its GCSE and ethnic profile. HEFCE have estimated that to close the participation gap an average additional 4 students per year would need to enter higher education (from a cohort of 124 in maintained schools). This would take the current participation rate to 13.6% (estimated POLAR figure).[6] A significant number of English wards with similar GCSE profiles achieve greater than 20% participation in higher education.

The government aims to raise the average participation rate for low participation wards like Alamein to 28%, representing a doubling of the current participation rate across England's target wards. The Government has not set a target for each ward. To double the current rate in Alamein would equate to 21.8% or 14 students. However, to achieve a target of 28% would mean an additional 21 students entering HE each year. This would be a challenging target without a significant improvement in GCSE performance and, even so would make Alamein one of the highest participation wards in England with its current levels of parental education and level of social housing.



With appropriate interventions, Alamein should be able to close the 'participation gap' and go further towards doubling its current participation rate. Reaching the average national target of 28% would be very challenging.

Socio-economic features of Alamein

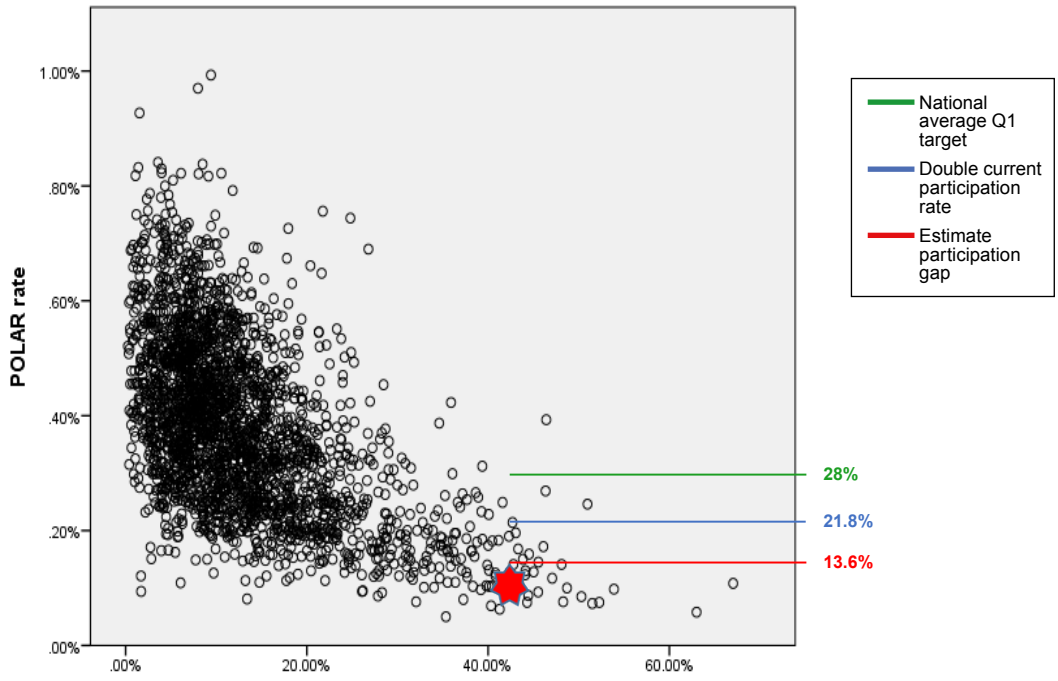
Alamein is the largest ward in the Test Valley and the most deprived. (However, only one LSOA is in the bottom quintile of deprived wards nationally and most of the ward is either just above or below average deprivation). Alamein has above average number of economically active residents and is close to the national average for unemployment (7.9%).

Most residents are employed in elementary occupations (such as warehousing, distribution, cleaners and refuse workers) or as process plant and machine operatives. There is significantly below average participation in professional, associated professional and managerial roles. This is particularly stark when we consider the Test Valley as a whole, where residents hold highly skilled roles and are above the England average for managers and senior officials (13.4% against 10.9%), professional (18.2% against 17.5%) and associate professional and technical roles (13.2% against 12.8%).

6. As set out in the footnote to the introduction, the HEFCE participation gap is based on different data to the POLAR date used in government targets. For simplicity of presentation we have estimated the participation gap as a POLAR figure.

Alamein has markedly different characteristics to the surrounding local authority area, a judgment reinforced by the perception of local stakeholders. Residents of Alamein should feel fully part of the opportunities within the wider Test Valley. Higher education providers should lead a partnership with the local authority, schools, colleges and social housing providers to work with employers to ensure the residents of Alamein access the higher skilled opportunities. Long-term employment initiatives to encourage young people at school to gain qualifications and move into more skilled employment. Apprenticeships, leading onto degree apprenticeships should be one strand

New development will change the demographics of the ward, although it may not change the communities captured in this study.



By national standards Alamein has a particularly high level of social housing. Although HE participation rates are low, it is difficult to identify many wards that have higher participation rates. This suggests it will be important to engage social housing providers to reach parents and children.

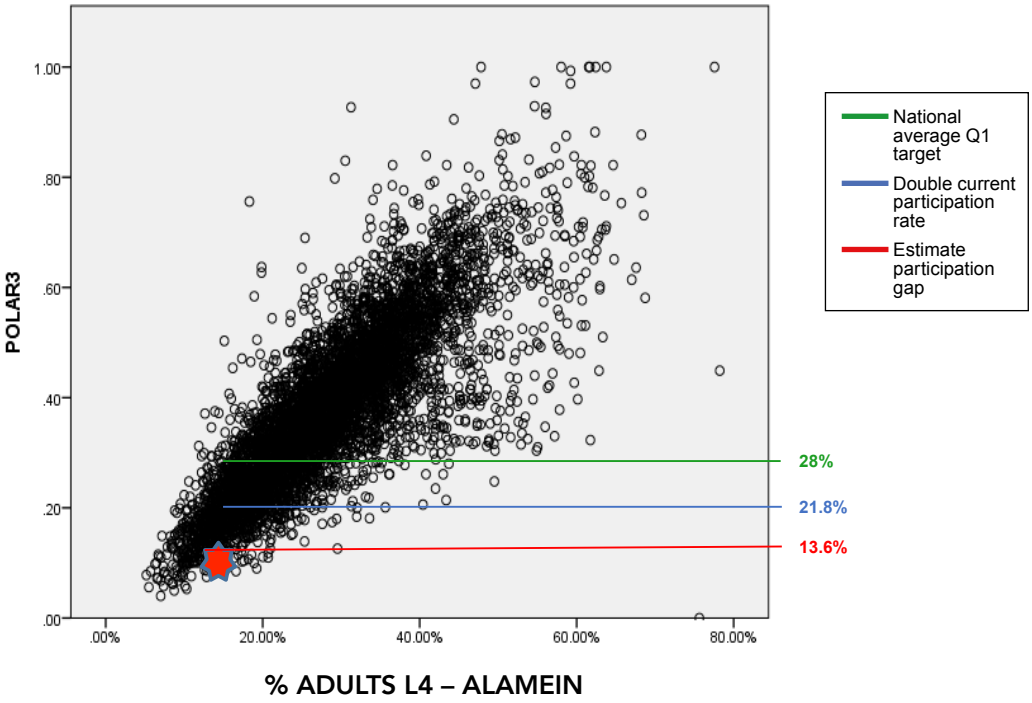
Parental education and engagement

The level of parental education correlates strongly with the higher education participation rates for young people. The proportion of graduate parents within Alamein stands at 8.7%. This is particularly low, even within similar wards demonstrating the same or similar socio-economic profiles (as described by POLAR3). Alamein has only 15.5% of residents with Level 4 or higher qualifications, compared with 30.5% in the surrounding Test Valley area (and 27.4% in England). A significantly higher number of residents have taken apprenticeships (9.2%) than the national average (3.6%).

However, at Level 3 residents have approximately the same proportion of qualifications (13.3%) as the Test Valley (14.6) and the England national average (14.5). This suggests that these residents do no wish or see the need to progress to higher qualifications.

We recommend a programme to increase parental aspirations for their children within Alamein. Led by the schools and involving community organisations, higher education, social housing providers and local employers, the programme would engage parents from Alamein throughout secondary school to engage them in their child's education and allay concerns regarding higher education. This would build on what we know works from national research and include:

- targeted communication with follow up visits
- parent ambassadors from the area



Closing the 'participation gap'

To close the gap and to make further progress we recommend a targeted and tailored programme for students from Alamein across all the schools and colleges that serve this ward.

Alamein has a high number of students progressing to post-16 study. However, there are significant numbers not progressing to higher education with some parts of the ward showing only 4% going on to university. The apparent social and economic isolation of the ward from the surrounding area provides particular justification for a geographically targeted intervention. The programme should reach those who have (or are predicted) good GCSEs from Newtown. The intervention needs to promote post-16 study and encourage students to understand the opportunities and benefits of further and higher education study.

We recommend targeting sustained activity to encourage progression to higher education programmes for young people within Alamein, ensuring the schools are identifying young people from Alamein and they are placed on long-term intervention programmes. This would include the University of Southampton alongside the University of Winchester and the local further education colleges and sixth form colleges. The programme should include:

- mentoring
- work placements, in graduate level roles
- summer schools
- advice regarding university options
- building student's social capital (through for example inspirational speakers)
- on-going events and activities through school from year 9.

There should also be greater engagement to raise aspirations to higher education from primary school.

School outcomes for low-income students and for boys

The three schools primarily attended by Alamein students – Harrow Way, Park House and Winton Community – all show significant gaps between the performance of students on pupil premium and other students. [National research suggests there are often significant performance gaps for students attending schools were there are a small number of disadvantaged students. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who make up a neither large nor very small proportion in the school do not perform as well as other students within the school.]

Other schools in this study have shown only small differentials in the performance of poorer students and it will be important for schools and their partners to analyse why disadvantaged students are falling behind and make a coordinated and sustained intervention.

We recommend schools to monitor the performance of students from Alamein, targeting resources and support to include homework space, after school clubs and learning resources (such as the provision of books or computers).

Boys perform significantly worse than girls at GCSE. The under-performance of boys at GCSE is apparent throughout the ward. There is a significant 'falling off' between Key Stage 2 and GCSEs. The engagement of boys in their secondary education is essential if we are to address participation in higher education.

We recommend a partnership between the schools and further and higher education to improve boys' attainment and aspirations to higher education. This includes, targeting boys within outreach programmes and providing:

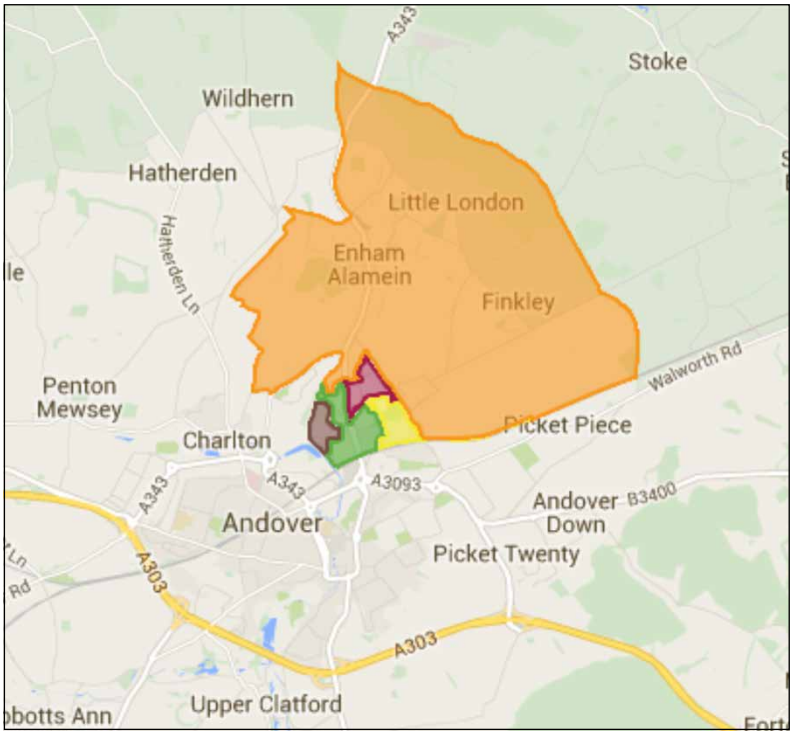
- male role models
- technical and science orientated higher education programmes
- more vocationally oriented provision

Local data and issues

There are five LSOAs in Alamein. The rural ward 003A is significantly better off and shows higher achievements at GCSE and participation in higher education.

It is worth noting that the Key Stage 3 results in 003A are no better than in other areas, but that the urban areas subsequently achieve markedly poorer results at GCSE and in university entry.

There is a strong case for targeting interventions on the urban LSOAs and with students of secondary school age.



LSOA	Not Staying On Post 16	Not Entering HE by 21	% L4 Qualification	Average KS2 Score	GCSE (5A*–C)
003A	0.17	0.68	23.77%	27.4	65.10%
002A	0.34	0.86	14.77%	29.1	50.00%
002B	0.38	0.92	10.39%	28.3	33.00%
002D	0.38	0.92	11.54%	27.1	27.80%
002C	0.27	0.96	9.57%	28.6	28.00%

Post-16 outcomes

Unlike areas where many school leavers enter work directly, 90% of Alamein students move into post-16 study at college or sixth form for Year 12. This figure drops significantly at Year 13, with 68% at college or sixth form. The majority of students attend good or outstanding colleges. Andover College is rated good and has 70% of Alamein students attending (73 students). Peter Symonds College is rated outstanding and has 13% of Alamein students attending (14 students).

The high participation post 16 creates an opportunity for partners to engage at Year 12 to encourage continued progression within further and (ultimately) higher education. This should focus initially on Andover College and would particularly focus on those with 'good' GCSEs who could then move onto higher education. This will include:

- work placements, in graduate level roles
- mentoring
- summer schools

Conclusion

With appropriate targeting of students and engagement with parents it should be possible to close the participation gap and then double the participation rate from Alamein. Opportunities clearly exist to improve the school performance of students eligible for pupil premium and boys in the urban part of the ward. The context must be a wide-ranging effort involving employers, social housing organisation, schools, colleges and higher education providers along with the local authority and Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure than the opportunities of the wider Test Valley are open to Alamein residents.

National Context

In February 2016, the Government set out new challenges for higher education to double the proportion of university entrants from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2020. To do this they expect higher education to further build partnerships with schools and other organisations to support neighbourhoods with low participation rates (such as the five wards we have identified). Universities will be expected to bring to bear the resources that they have allocated under the Access Agreement but additional funding has also been allocated to a new programme – the National Collaborative Opportunities Programme (NCOP). The NCOP will build further partnerships with schools and colleges to target neighbourhoods with low higher education participation rates and raise aspirations and increase access.

In addition to 'traditional' routes, universities have been encouraged to provide degree apprenticeships. Launched last year they allow students to study for an undergraduate degree, or masters whilst working. Both the Universities of Winchester and Southampton Solent already offer degree apprenticeships.

There is increasing research regarding how to improve academic aspirations and achievement and participation in higher education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Research has shown that family income and social class are by far the most significant correlations for a student's success at school (Mongon and Chapman, 2008). Nearly six out of ten disadvantaged children in England do not achieve 5 A*–Cs at GCSE (including English and mathematics) compared to only one in three children from more advantaged backgrounds (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014)). Whilst many research studies will show that the effects start at early years, studies also point to an effect at secondary school with a widening of the socioeconomic gap during English children's educational careers, particularly at key stage 4 (Whitty and Anders, 2014).

This then leads on to effects at higher education, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds being three times less likely to go on to university (Office for Fair Access and HEFCE, 2014). The country's leading universities still have an over-representation from those from more advantaged backgrounds and private schools (Boliver, 2011).

Schools have a crucial role to play in improving the social mobility of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to achieve success at GCSE the Department for Education (2015) commissioned researchers to produce a briefing for school leaders. They identified seven building blocks for success:

- Whole-school ethos of attainment for all
- Addressing behavior and attendance
- High quality teaching for all
- Meeting individual learning needs
- Deploying staff effectively
- Data driven to respond to evidence
- Clear responsive leadership.

The research (DfE, 2015) also set out how schools can respond to the complexity of disadvantaged pupils' needs and suggested that the challenge should be tackled at three levels:

1. 'A whole-school approach promoting learning which sets high aspirations for all pupils
2. Strategies to identify and support under-performing pupils (not just low attainers)
3. Strategies specifically targeted at supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It's not just what you do; it's also the way that you do it. Schools can improve their effectiveness by focusing on the depth and quality of their support strategies.'

It appears that in many secondary schools, the poor performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is masked by the generally strong performance of other students. The research shows that those eligible for free school meals do best in secondary schools where they make up either a very small or large proportion of the total number on roll. They do worst in those schools where they are in the middle range (Ofsted, 2013).

Within the cohort of students from disadvantaged backgrounds there is particular concern with low achievement and poor progress made by too many white British pupils from low-income backgrounds (King and Welch, 2012 and Sharples et al, 2011). White British boys and girls entitled to free school meals each have the lowest attainment for their gender (Mongon and Chapman, 2008).

Female participation in higher education overtook boys in the mid 1990s (HESA, 1997). The gap has continued to grow. In 2013–14 the proportion of first time higher education degree entrants stood at 42% of men and 51% of women (DBIS, 2015b).

Within our work we found consistently across the wards that the performance of boys particularly from Key Stage 2 through to GCSE lagged behind girls and was a significant factor in the low rates of participation within higher education. In particular the wards we analysed were overwhelmingly white and, as recognised by the recent HEPI report (2016) poor white men have the worst record of underachievement than any other group. As HEPI state 'tackling the underperformance of young men is essential if we are to tackle other dismal higher education performance indicators'.

Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, showed that that white disadvantaged young people are more likely than others to 'indicate that the best jobs did not necessarily go to those who had been to university' and to 'believe that university wasn't for people like them'. UCAS found that only around 10% of white British men from the most disadvantaged backgrounds go into higher education. The progression to higher education from disadvantaged groups appears to focus on men as they found that among applicants who have been in receipt of free school meals, young women are 51% more likely to enter higher education. They also found that entry rates for disadvantaged boys are also relatively worse compared to non-disadvantaged boys than the equivalent picture for girls.

As we found in our study, there is a 'falling off' of boys at secondary school age. The OECD (2011) found that boys spend less time reading for enjoyment 'in 2000, 60% of boys and 77% of girls read for enjoyment; by 2009, these percentages had dropped to 54% and 74%, respectively. Within the UK this was 51 per cent to 70 per cent'. Another study by the OECD (2015) found that boys in the UK spend over one hour less per week on homework than girls (5.5 hours versus 4.2 hours).

HEPI (2016) considers what works and can help their achievement. HEPI recommends several interventions, which are directed at disadvantaged young men:

- A Take Our Sons To University Day modelled on 'Take Your Daughter To Work Day', with schools, colleges and employers encouraged to provide time off.
- Male role models are involved in all activities aimed at widening participation in higher education.
- Young men could benefit from not being rushed into full undergraduate study immediately on leaving school or college. This might mean encouraging the take up of foundation years of the sort already used to help international students enter higher education and to broaden access to medical schools.

Alongside this they recommend that more higher education institutions consider setting themselves targets for the recruitment of more male students.

Parental involvement in school, and their aspirations for their children, emerged as some of the most important factors associated with lower educational achievement, even controlling for family background (Goodman and Gregg 2010). Goodman and Gregg (2010) found that students from disadvantaged

backgrounds have parents with lower educational aspirations for their children. Ethnicity plays a role here, with parental aspirations of white British children significantly lower than those in minority ethnic groups (Sodha and Margo 2010). As Bowes et al (2015) reported parents of white disadvantaged pupils were also more likely to believe that leaving school at 16 did not necessarily limit an individual's career opportunities and aimed for their child to begin an apprenticeship or full-time work at the end of Year 11.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) identify five elements for effective engagement with parents, which involve the senior team within a school:

- Embedding parental engagement in the school's strategic plans
- Providing sustained support including resources
- Being involved at all levels within the school
- Providing continual review and evaluation
- Providing a supportive network that promotes the sharing of experience and understanding

They go on to suggest that the programme must run for at least three years.

The mechanisms for engagement are important. Park (2008) found that formal encouragement targeted at parents is more effective in more affluent socio-economic groups, resulting in further inequality. Sharples et al (2011) identified several initiatives that worked which involved regular communication with parents and in particular targeting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, use of parent forums to gain feedback and encouraging parents to join in their children's learning.

The research indicates that an individualised approach to parents is essential. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) found greatest impact from tailored strategies to engage parents and from schools not accepting lack of parental involvement. It suggests 'considering meeting parents on neutral ground outside of the school, finding creative ways of getting those who did not have a good experience at school themselves to engage and helping parents to be effective in supporting their children's learning'.

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