



Impetus

Research Briefing 5:

The Employment Gap in the West Midlands

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CENTRE FOR
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION
RESEARCH



National
Institute of
Economic and
Social Research

KPMG

Impetus transforms the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring they get the right support to succeed in school, in work and in life. We find, fund and build the most promising charities working with these young people, providing core funding and working shoulder-to-shoulder with their leaders to help them become stronger organisations. In partnership with other funders we help our charities expand and we work to influence policy and decision makers so that young people get the support they need.

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Disclaimer: The statistics shown in this report are based on data outputs prepared by CVER researchers, with financial support by Impetus. By publishing this work, CVER and Impetus aim to improve our understanding of the situations affecting disadvantaged young people, their education choices and labour market outcomes and to elicit comments and further debate. The views expressed are solely those of the author(s) and therefore, do not represent the position of CVER or NIESR or other organisations involved.

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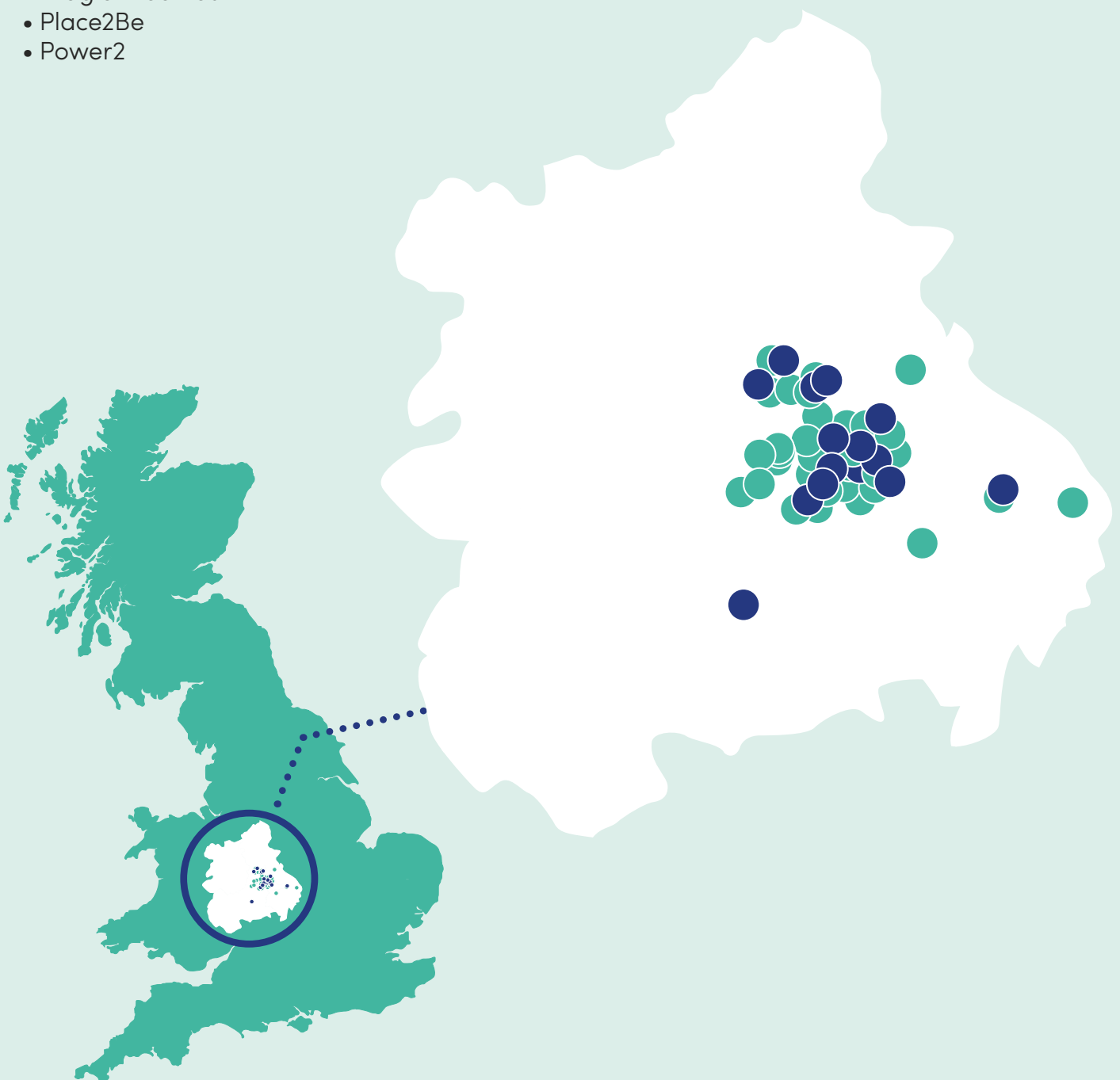
Where we work

Impetus' charity partners are backing thousands of young people in the West Midlands to succeed at school and work. Our charity partners in the area:

- The Access Project
- Action tutoring
- Magic Breakfast
- Place2Be
- Power2

KPMG run mentoring, skills workshops, and work experience across the area to help young people explore and understand their options for work or further education.

- KPMG locations and activities
- Impetus locations



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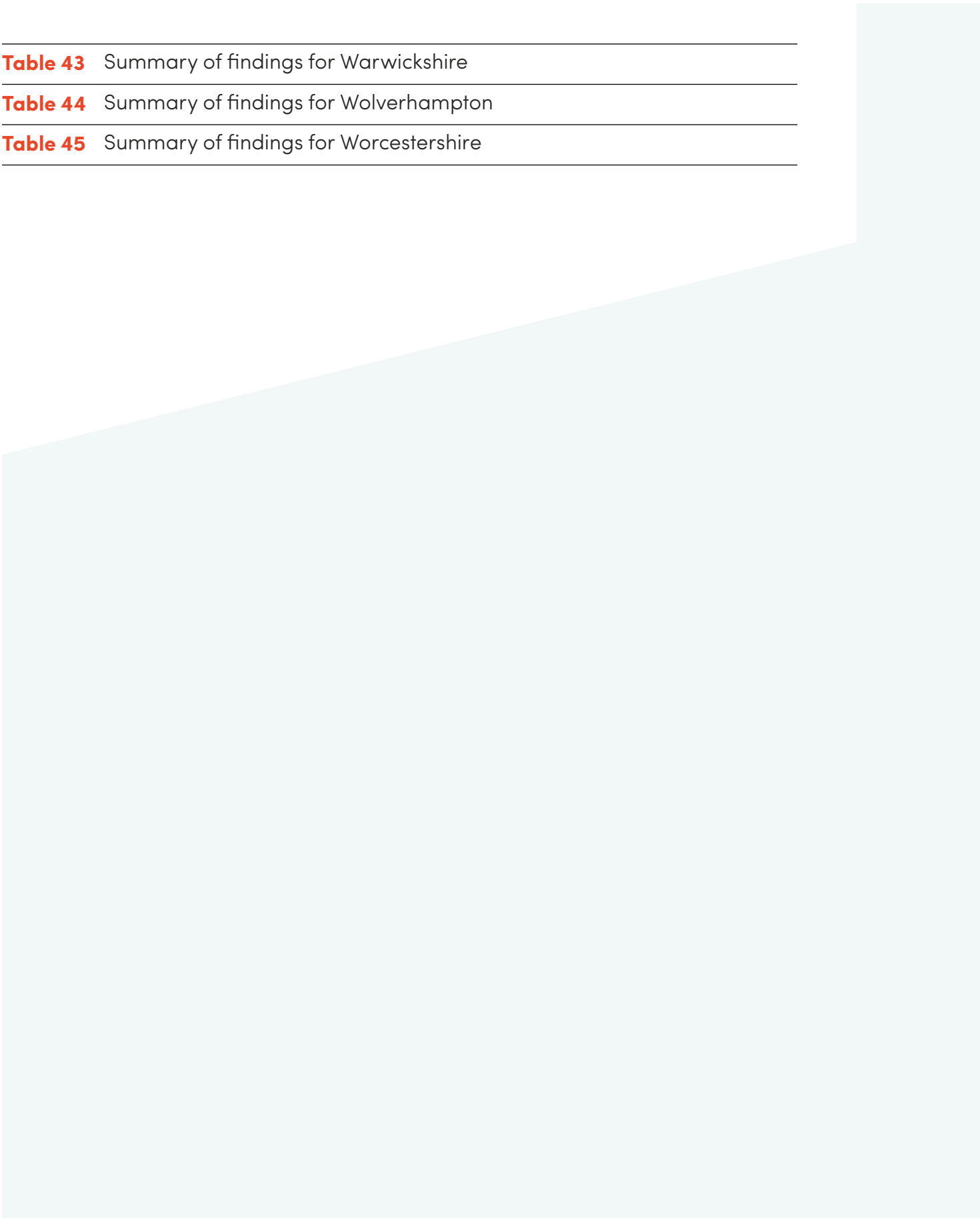
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Foreword



Sam Windett
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KPMG, Midlands
Regional Chairman

Our first three reports in our Youth Jobs Gap series revealed, for the first time, the true picture of youth employment across the UK.

Since then, we've delved deeper, looking not just at the differences between the regions but the differences *within* the regions too.

This report explores young peoples' transitions from education into work in just one region. We provide the first accurate statistics on the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training in each local authority in the West Midlands.

And what we've found is a complex picture of local differences.

Take Sandwell and Warwickshire for example. Twice as many young people are NEET in Sandwell as in Warwickshire. And in Wolverhampton, 72% of disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs access university, but only 45% of equally well qualified young people from Shropshire do.

Identifying differences like these is our first step towards being able to address them. It will take commitment from all of us tackling youth unemployment, whether charities, businesses or policy makers, to solve these problems. And with these insights, we stand a greater chance.

The West Midlands is experiencing rapid transformation. The regional skills deal agreed between the West Midlands Combined Authority and Department of Education last year reflects the strategic importance of our region in delivering a successful and inclusive Industrial Strategy.

However, investment alone isn't enough to solve the education and skills challenges we face. As this report shows, inter-regional variances in outcomes and gaps exist between young people from low socio-economic backgrounds and their peers – be it in employment or in accessing Higher Education and Apprenticeships.

Businesses and local communities must continue to shout about successes and work together to be the best we can be. This involves prioritising skills and education so that we can make the most of our talent, drive productivity and ensure prosperity.

While KPMG works closely with stakeholders in the West Midlands to do this, wholesale structural change cannot be achieved in isolation. Businesses need to agree on the skills we need – be it improvements in digital learning, or creating a culture of lifelong learning – and work with schools and policy-makers to develop a system which ensures a fairer future for everyone.





“Identifying differences like these is our first step towards being able to address them. And with these insights, we stand a greater chance.”

Executive summary

The Youth Jobs Gap research series uses previously unseen Longitudinal Education Outcomes data to present new insights into disadvantaged young people's transition from compulsory education into employment. The first three national reports looked at NEET rates, higher education, and apprenticeships respectively. These national reports have also looked at differences between regions – but differences *within* the regions are often greater than the differences *between* regions.





72%

of disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs from Wolverhampton access university

This report looks at the West Midlands region, including the combined authority area. It presents findings at local authority area level, for the measures developed in the first three national reports.

We find twice as many young people are NEET in Sandwell as Warwickshire. Young people from Solihull are more than twice as likely to do an apprenticeship as young people from Coventry – both are parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Some of the most interesting findings come when looking at people with similar qualifications. We find that, in terms of NEET rates, it is better to be better-off than have better qualifications in places like Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Stoke-on-Trent. Similarly, the gap in NEET rates between disadvantaged young

people and their better-off peers is twice as big in Worcestershire as in Birmingham. And while 72% of disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs from Wolverhampton access university, only 45% of equally well qualified young people from Shropshire do so.

We can also factor in the underlying rates of qualification and disadvantage, to consider which groups are most under or over represented. So disadvantaged young people from Worcestershire are more overrepresented among those

who are NEET than any other local authority area. In some local authority areas disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among apprenticeship starters by over 10%, whereas in others they are underrepresented by more than 20%.

Finally, we bring together the main findings on a local authority area by local authority area basis. We hope it will be useful for those working in specific local authority areas in the West Midlands region to have a summary of how their specific area is performing on different measures and relative to others. After all, local and combined authorities can have a sizeable impact on the outcomes for young people who are NEET, but to do so they first have to understand the challenges facing these young people.

It would be easy to assume that this area by area analysis would show that some local authority areas are performing better (or worse) than others. This is an oversimplification. Instead, what we find is that every local authority area has its own story – areas of strength, where it is among the best ranked local authority areas in the West Midlands; but also areas of weakness, where it isn't.

And this is the most important point for policymakers: the findings really show the need to consider the issues on a granular, local level. The question of whether the West Midlands is “good” or “bad” at something isn't really meaningful – the answer differs in different places. And the same is true for the West Midlands

Combined Authority – even where the area as a whole does well on a particular measure, there are often local authority areas within it where the opposite is true. Undoubtedly, there are differences within local authority areas – especially larger ones like Birmingham – but this is not something our data can shed light on.

If we are to tackle the challenges faced by disadvantaged young people in transitioning from school to work, we need to understand how the picture varies in a granular, local way. This report aims to support the development of evidence-based policy solutions. We need decision makers, businesses, and young people themselves to come together to tackle these issues.

In some local authority areas disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among apprenticeship starters by over 10%, whereas in others they are underrepresented by more than 20%

Introduction

In April 2019, Impetus launched the first *Youth Jobs Gap* report, *Establishing the Employment Gap*.¹

It found that, nationally:

- Disadvantaged young people are twice as likely to be out of education, employment and training (NEET) as their better-off peers.
- Half this gap can be explained by qualification, and half cannot.
- The group having low qualifications and from disadvantaged backgrounds are doubly disadvantaged, and most likely to be locked out of the labour market when aged 18–24.

This report explores those variations at local authority area and combined authority area level in the West Midlands and provides the most thorough picture to date of disadvantaged young people's progress from education into adult life in the region. Details about the areas included in this study can be found at the end of this chapter.

In Chapter 1, we build directly on *Establishing the Employment Gap* to explore NEET rates in the West Midlands. We can measure NEET rates at local authority area level, including broken down by qualification and disadvantage, and also an analysis of the composition of the group of young people who are NEET.

In Chapter 2, we focus on the transition to higher education, fleshing out data analysed in the second *Youth Jobs Gap* report *Research Briefing 2: Higher Education*², investigating issues around access to university for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the region.

In Chapter 3, we focus on apprenticeships in the West Midlands detailing the data initially analysed in the third *Youth Jobs Gap* report *Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships*.³ We explore issues around access to apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people in the region.

Finally, Chapter 4 provides a breakdown of the available data for each local authority area rather than by theme. This will enable decision makers in local areas, and the combined authority area, to have a complete picture of the disparities in each place.

This report covers one combined authority area and 14 local authority areas:

- The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), consisting of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton local authority areas.
- The local authority areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Stoke, Telford and Wrekin, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

The following table lists these areas, along with the number of young people from each area included in our study (Table 1):

Table 1: Population of young people in Youth Jobs Gap study (nearest 100) for each local and combined authority area

Authority	Population
WMCA	199,900
Birmingham (WMCA)	75,100
Staffordshire	59,700
Worcestershire	37,300
Warwickshire	36,500
Dudley (WMCA)	23,800
Sandwell (WMCA)	22,100
Coventry (WMCA)	21,900
Walsall (WMCA)	21,700
Shropshire	19,600
Solihull (WMCA)	18,600
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	16,700
Stoke-on-Trent	16,200
Telford and Wrekin	12,900
Herefordshire	11,700
West Midlands total	393,700

This briefing takes advantage of the new Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data. LEO is the most complete data available on the education and labour market participation of young people and offers better insights than we've had from any previous datasets. From it, we can see how things differ for young people based on whether they are from a disadvantaged background, what qualifications they have, and where they went to school. The approach taken is summarised on the inside back cover, and full details of the methodology used can be found in the accompanying document, *Methodology for the Youth Jobs Gap*. This includes a discussion of caveats associated with the new LEO dataset.

As with government reports based on LEO, these are experimental statistics and feedback on methodology is welcome. Contributions, engagement and comments are encouraged, via info@impetus.org.uk

We're also keen to see how the findings laid out in this report are taken forward by local and combined authorities. Please let us know how and where we've helped inform your work.

For reference, the figures provided in Table 1 are also provided broken down by disadvantage, qualification, and both.



Disadvantaged young people are twice as likely to be out of education, employment and training (NEET) as their better-off peers

Table 2: Population of disadvantaged young people in Youth Jobs Gap study (nearest 100) for each local and combined authority area

Local authority area	Total young people	Total disadvantaged young people	Disadvantage (%)
WMCA	199,900	48,000	24%
Birmingham (WMCA)	75,100	25,600	34%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	16,700	3,500	21%
Walsall (WMCA)	21,700	4,400	20%
Stoke-on-Trent	16,200	3,200	20%
Sandwell (WMCA)	22,100	4,300	20%
Coventry (WMCA)	21,900	4,200	19%
Telford and Wrekin	12,900	2,300	18%
Dudley (WMCA)	23,800	3,800	16%
Solihull (WMCA)	18,600	2,200	12%
Worcestershire	37,300	3,500	9%
Staffordshire	59,700	5,300	9%
Herefordshire	11,700	1,000	8%
Shropshire	19,600	1,600	8%
Warwickshire	36,500	2,800	8%

Table 3: Population of low qualified young people in Youth Jobs Gap study (nearest 100) for each local and combined authority area

Local authority area	Total low qualified young people	Total mid qualified young people	Total high qualified young people	Low qualified (%)
WMCA	91,200	48,300	60,400	30%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	6,600	3,900	6,300	37%
Sandwell (WMCA)	8,400	5,500	8,200	37%
Stoke-on-Trent	6,500	4,000	5,800	36%
Walsall (WMCA)	9,400	5,100	7,300	33%
Coventry (WMCA)	9,800	5,300	6,800	31%
Birmingham (WMCA)	35,600	17,900	21,700	29%
Telford and Wrekin	6,400	3,100	3,400	26%
Solihull (WMCA)	9,500	4,400	4,600	25%
Worcestershire	19,500	8,500	9,200	25%
Staffordshire	28,500	17,000	14,200	24%
Herefordshire	6,100	2,900	2,800	24%
Dudley (WMCA)	12,000	6,300	5,500	23%
Warwickshire	19,600	8,700	8,200	22%
Shropshire	10,200	5,100	4,300	22%

Table 4: Population of disadvantaged and low qualified young people in Youth Jobs Gap study (nearest 100) for each local and combined authority area

Local authority area	Low qualified		Middle qualified		High qualified	
	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged
WMCA	11%	19%	6%	18%	7%	39%
Birmingham (WMCA)	13%	15%	9%	15%	11%	36%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	12%	26%	5%	18%	5%	35%
Walsall (WMCA)	11%	22%	4%	19%	5%	38%
Stoke-on-Trent	11%	25%	5%	20%	4%	35%
Sandwell (WMCA)	10%	27%	5%	20%	5%	33%
Coventry (WMCA)	10%	21%	4%	20%	5%	40%
Telford and Wrekin	8%	18%	5%	20%	5%	45%
Dudley (WMCA)	7%	16%	4%	22%	4%	46%
Solihull (WMCA)	6%	19%	3%	21%	3%	48%
Worcestershire	5%	20%	2%	21%	2%	50%
Herefordshire	4%	19%	2%	22%	2%	50%
Staffordshire	4%	20%	3%	26%	2%	46%
Warwickshire	4%	19%	2%	22%	2%	52%
Shropshire	4%	18%	2%	24%	2%	50%

The Employment Gap

Local authority areas: The headlines

Local and combined authorities can have a sizeable impact on the outcomes for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

From devolved skills policy, to Local Industrial Strategies, to local employment support schemes supporting young people, there's an increasing focus on the amount of positive activity that can be undertaken at a local level.



ment



But there is a lack of helpful, quality data on 18-24 NEET figures at a local level, to help inform where we should focus our efforts. National statistical data provides only headline regional figures. And while data such as the claimant count can provide an insight into unemployment, the broader NEET data covers those who aren't claiming benefits and are economically inactive.

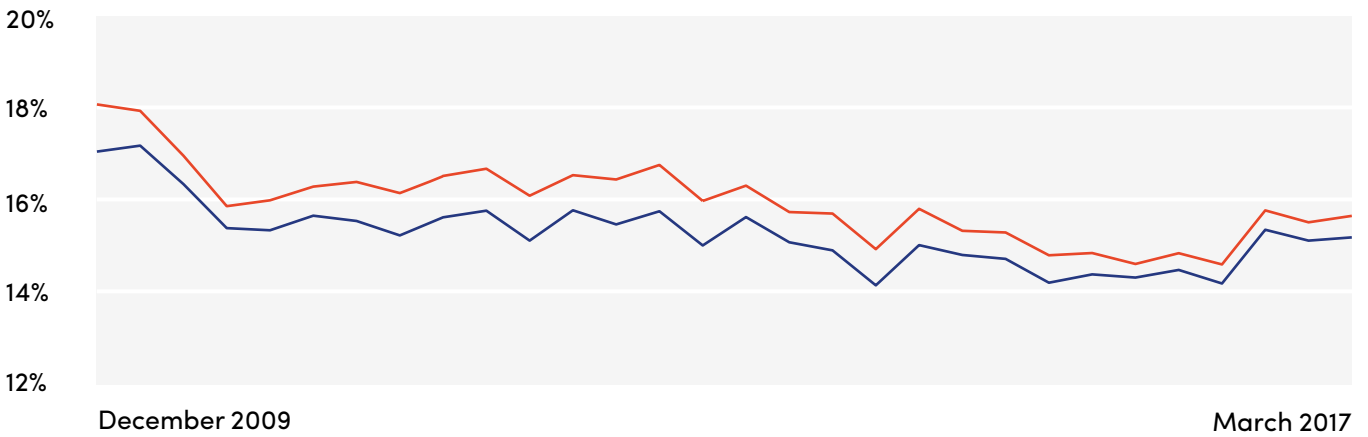
As noted in *Establishing the Employment Gap*, the West Midlands has a slightly higher NEET rate than England as a whole, by roughly 0.5-1 percentage points but by just under 0.5 percentage points since September 2015 (Chart 5):

Chart 5: The NEET rate in the West Midlands is consistently higher than the national NEET rate, though the gap has closed in recent years

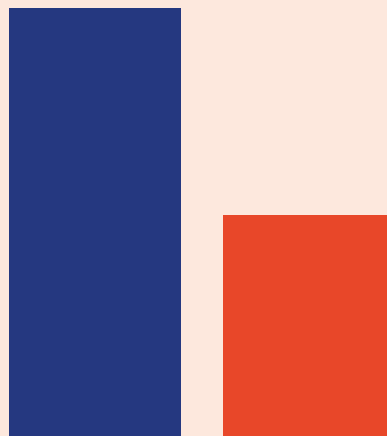
NEET rate vs time

— National — West Midlands

NEET rate



Young people from Sandwell are around twice as likely to be NEET as those in Warwickshire



For the first time, we can provide a picture of how the NEET rate varies by local authority area (Table 6):

In *Establishing the Employment Gap*, we found that the NEET rate in different regions varied by a few percentage points. Here we see for the first time the stark differences within the region, with young people from Sandwell around twice as likely to be NEET as those in Warwickshire. This sizable variation is not just within the West Midlands, but within the West Midlands Combined Authority itself, with young people from Sandwell still 75% more likely to be NEET than those from Solihull. These differences within the combined authority area are a theme that emerges throughout our analysis.

Table 6ⁱ: Twice the proportion of young people are NEET in Sandwell as in Warwickshire

Local authority area	NEET rate
WMCA	17%
Sandwell (WMCA)	20%
Walsall (WMCA)	18%
Stoke-on-Trent	18%
Birmingham (WMCA)	17%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	17%
Dudley (WMCA)	16%
Telford and Wrekin	15%
Coventry (WMCA)	15%
Herefordshire (1)	15%
Worcestershire	13%
Shropshire (2)	13%
Staffordshire	13%
Solihull (WMCA)	12%
Warwickshire	11%



There are significant differences between different parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority

ⁱ Data in this chapter is based on figures for March 2017, and is restricted to 21 year olds (i.e. the 2011 cohort). Figures for Herefordshire and Shropshire come with additional caveats, which are explained in the methodology reference section at the back of the report.

The Employment Gap

Our previous report, *Establishing the Employment Gap* measured the noticeable difference in NEET rates between young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their better-off peers. In March 2017, nationally there is an “Employment Gap” of around 13 percentage points, with 26% of disadvantaged young people NEET, compared to 13% of their better-off peers.

In the West Midlands, the Employment Gap is slightly larger than the national figure – by around half a percentage point (Chart 7). Both the NEET rate for disadvantaged young people (Chart 8) and the NEET rate for non-disadvantaged young people (Chart 9) are slightly higher in the West Midlands than nationally, but the rate for disadvantaged young people is higher by a larger amount.



The Employment Gap is around half a percentage point bigger in the West Midlands than in England

Chart 7: The Employment Gap in the West Midlands is consistently slightly larger than the gap across England

Employment gap vs time

— National — West Midlands

Employment Gap

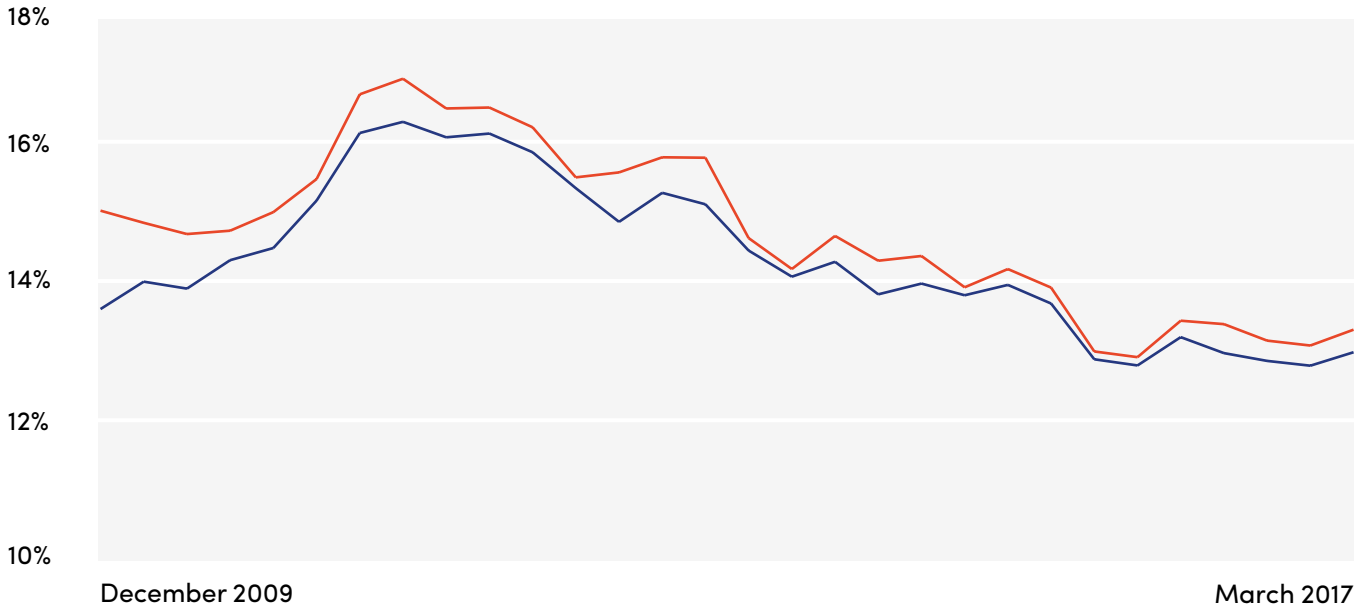


Chart 8: NEET rates for disadvantaged young people in the West Midlands are slightly higher than in England

NEET rate (disadvantaged young people) vs time

— National — West Midlands

NEET rate (disadvantaged young people)

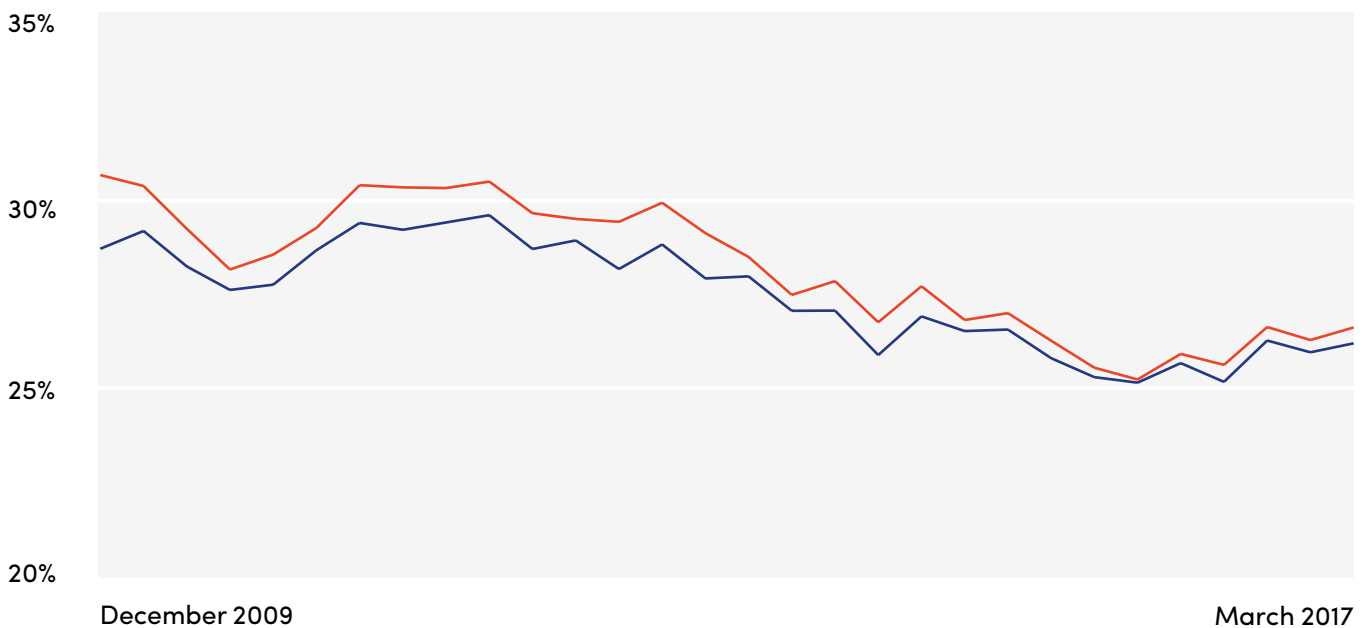
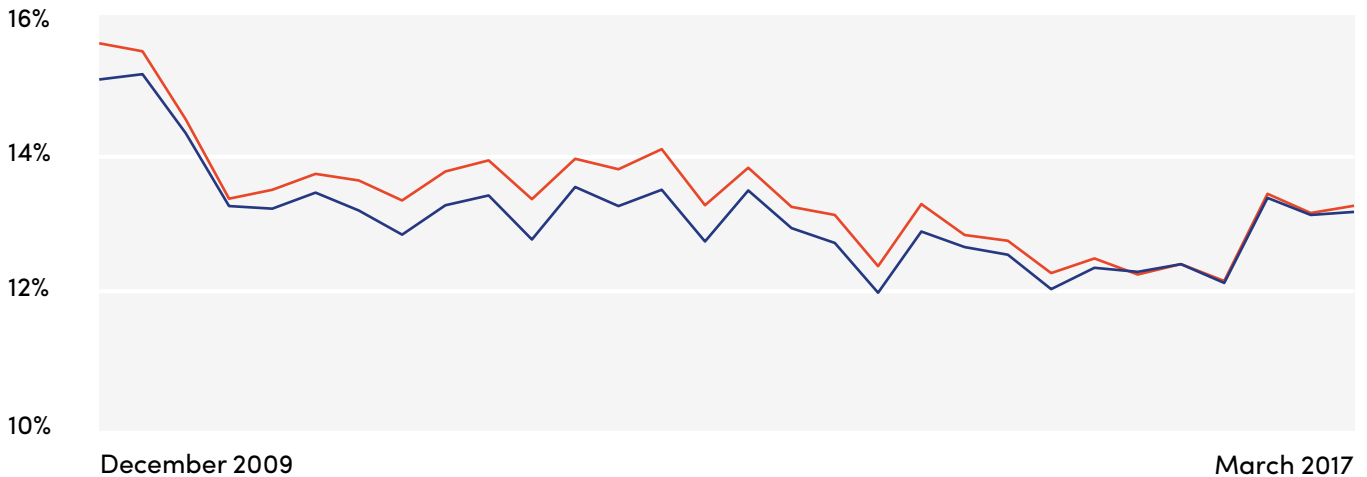


Chart 9: NEET rates for non-disadvantaged young people in the West Midlands are very similar to those across England

NEET rate (non-disadvantaged young people) vs time

— National — West Midlands

NEET rate (non-disadvantaged young people)



The Employment Gap is twice as wide in Worcestershire as in Birmingham. There are also noticeable differences between Dudley and Birmingham, which are caused only by the higher NEET rates for disadvantaged young people in Dudley. There are two important points to be made.

First, this again underscores the levels of variation within the West Midlands Combined Authority – it would be a mistake to focus only on the top line overall figure.

Second, authority areas that might superficially appear similar may have important differences that are easy to overlook from afar. The Dudley and Birmingham examples are a case in point. In Table 6, they sit near each other in the top half of the table, with NEET rates of 17% and 16% respectively. Now they've diverged, due to their very different outcomes for disadvantaged young people.

It is important not to let a single measure be the sole consideration when looking at local authority area outcomes. It follows that not all young people are the same, and they can't be treated as a homogeneous block. Chapter 4 presents a rounded summary of different measures.

More generally, the local authority area NEET rate for disadvantaged young people is not especially well correlated with the equivalent NEET rate for their better-off peers (Chart 11). While most local authority areas are either above or below the average on both measures, some are above for one and below for the other. Even among those that are either above or below average on both measures, often one measure is much closer to average than the other.

Table 10: The Employment Gap is twice as wide in Worcestershire as in Birmingham

Local authority area	Disadvantage NEET rate	Non-disadvantage NEET rate	Gap (%pts)
WMCA	25%	14%	11
Herefordshire (1)	32%	13%	19
Worcestershire	29%	11%	18
Telford and Wrekin	29%	13%	16
Stoke-on-Trent	31%	14%	16
Dudley (WMCA)	29%	14%	15
Staffordshire	26%	11%	15
Sandwell (WMCA)	32%	17%	14
Walsall (WMCA)	29%	15%	14
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	27%	14%	13
Solihull (WMCA)	22%	10%	12
Coventry (WMCA)	25%	13%	12
Warwickshire	22%	10%	12
Shropshire (2)	23%	12%	11
Birmingham (WMCA)	23%	14%	9

To be more explicit: a low Employment Gap does not automatically mean a low NEET rate, and a low NEET rate does not necessarily mean a low Employment Gap. Policymakers will care about both, and will often be able to make decisions that help reduce both measures. But the evidence suggests you cannot assume that focussing on one will be enough to improve the other. After all, Wolverhampton and Solihull both have very low employment gaps, but NEET rates are far higher in the former than the latter. While the two measures are clearly correlated, the correlation is not as strong as might be expected.

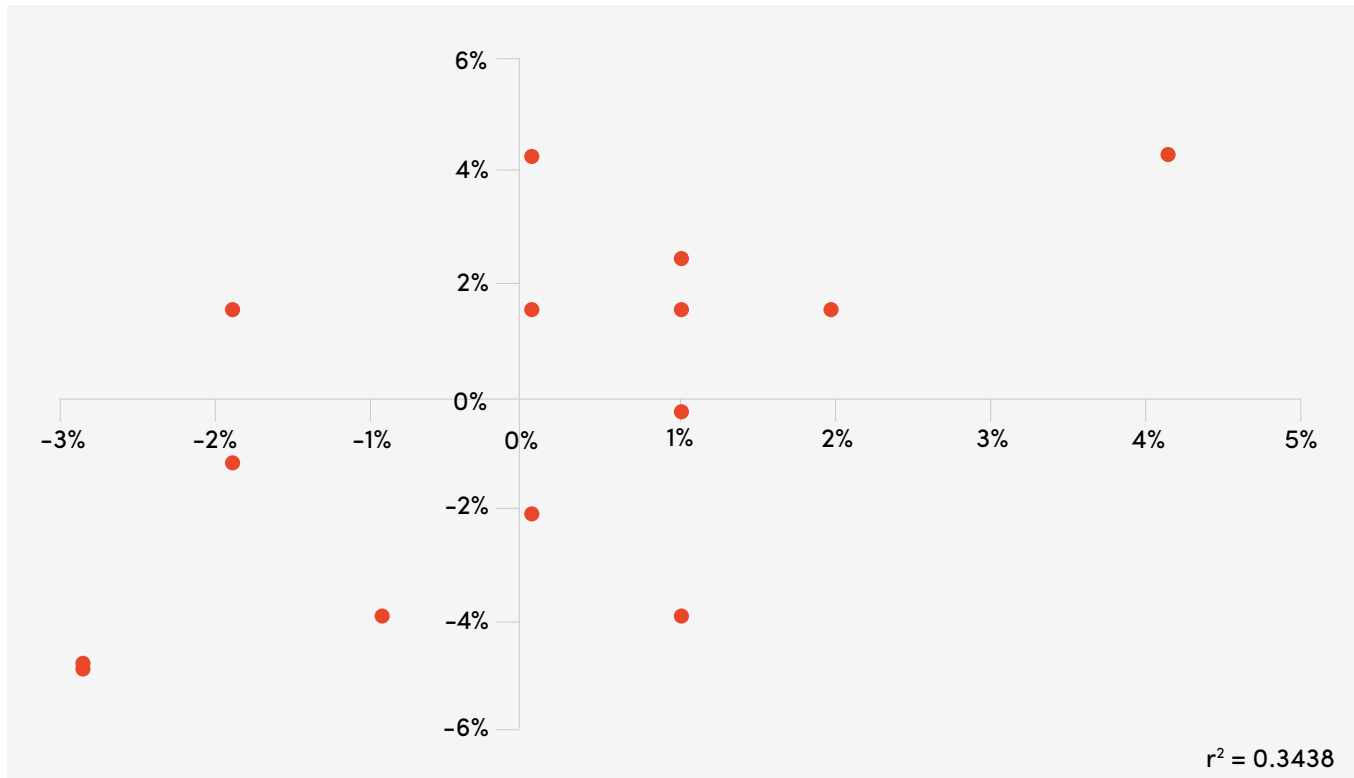
It is important not to let a single measure be the sole consideration when looking at local authority area outcomes

Chart 11: NEET rates for disadvantaged young people and non-disadvantaged young people are not especially closely related

Difference between disadvantaged NEET rate in local authority area and the average disadvantaged NEET rate for local authorities in the West Midlands

vs

Difference between non-disadvantaged NEET rate in local authority area and the average non-disadvantaged NEET rate for local authorities in the West Midlands



There is a bigger variation in outcomes for disadvantaged young people than their better-off peers



Finally, when looking at the NEET rates for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people, another theme emerges: the variation is bigger for disadvantaged young people than for non-disadvantaged young people. This is another recurrent theme in our analysis.

Understanding the NEET population in the West Midlands

So far, we have looked at outcomes for disadvantaged young people and analysed the proportion who become NEET. We can also look at young people who are NEET and determine the proportion that are disadvantaged. In *Establishing the Employment Gap*, we found that 26% of NEET young people in England were from disadvantaged backgrounds (compared to 15% of young people), as were 30% of NEET young people in the West Midlands (compared to 17% of young people). We can now extend this analysis to look at the different local authority areas (Table 12).

Once again, the differences are stark, with twice as many young people who are NEET in Birmingham coming from disadvantaged backgrounds as Solihull. We also see the differences between city and metropolitan areas. Warwickshire County Cricket Club play most of their games at the Edgbaston ground in Birmingham. But while half of young people who are NEET near the ground are from disadvantaged backgrounds, this is true of only one in six young people who are NEET from the county area.

Table 12: Nearly half of NEET young people in Birmingham are from disadvantaged backgrounds, but in others it's under a sixth

Local authority area	Proportion of NEET young people who are disadvantaged
WMCA	38%
Birmingham (WMCA)	47%
Walsall (WMCA)	37%
Stoke-on-Trent	36%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	36%
Telford and Wrekin	34%
Coventry (WMCA)	33%
Sandwell (WMCA)	32%
Dudley (WMCA)	29%
Worcestershire	24%
Solihull (WMCA)	24%
Herefordshire (1)	21%
Staffordshire	21%
Warwickshire	16%
Shropshire (2)	16%

Table 13: NEET young people are disproportionately disadvantaged everywhere, but almost doubly so in Worcestershire compared to Birmingham

Local authority area	Disadvantage (Population)	Disadvantage (NEET young people)	Overrepresentation of disadvantaged young people
WMCA	24%	38%	1.58
Worcestershire	9%	24%	2.52
Herefordshire (1)	8%	21%	2.48
Staffordshire	9%	21%	2.34
Warwickshire	8%	16%	2.13
Solihull (WMCA)	12%	24%	2.02
Shropshire (2)	8%	16%	1.97
Telford and Wrekin	18%	34%	1.90
Walsall (WMCA)	20%	37%	1.85
Dudley (WMCA)	16%	29%	1.83
Stoke-on-Trent	20%	36%	1.81
Coventry (WMCA)	19%	33%	1.73
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	21%	36%	1.72
Sandwell (WMCA)	20%	32%	1.64
Birmingham (WMCA)	34%	47%	1.37

Of course, this analysis does nothing to factor in the differing levels of disadvantage that local authority areas have in their underlying population of young people. We know from Table 2 that fewer than one in ten young people in many of the county council areas in the West Midlands are from a disadvantaged background, compared to one in three from Birmingham. By comparing the proportion of young people who are NEET who are from a disadvantaged background to the proportion of the underlying population, we can see to what extent disadvantaged young people are overrepresented in the NEET group (Table 13).

The NEET population is disproportionately disadvantaged everywhere. But while disadvantaged young people are overrepresented in the NEET population of Worcestershire by a factor of 2.52, in Birmingham they are only overrepresented by a factor of 1.37.

This still partly reflects levels of disadvantage – for Birmingham to match Worcestershire’s figure of 2.52, disadvantaged young people would need to make up 86% of young people who are NEET. Nonetheless, there is more than a clear difference between the two.

NEET young people are disproportionately disadvantaged everywhere, but doubly so in Worcestershire, compared to Birmingham

Birmingham
1.37

Worcestershire
2.52

The role of qualifications

In *Establishing the Employment Gap*, we found that the low qualified group (who do not have five GCSEs at A*-C, or equivalent by age 18) are around twice as likely to be NEET as middle qualified young people who do (but who do not have A-levels or equivalent).

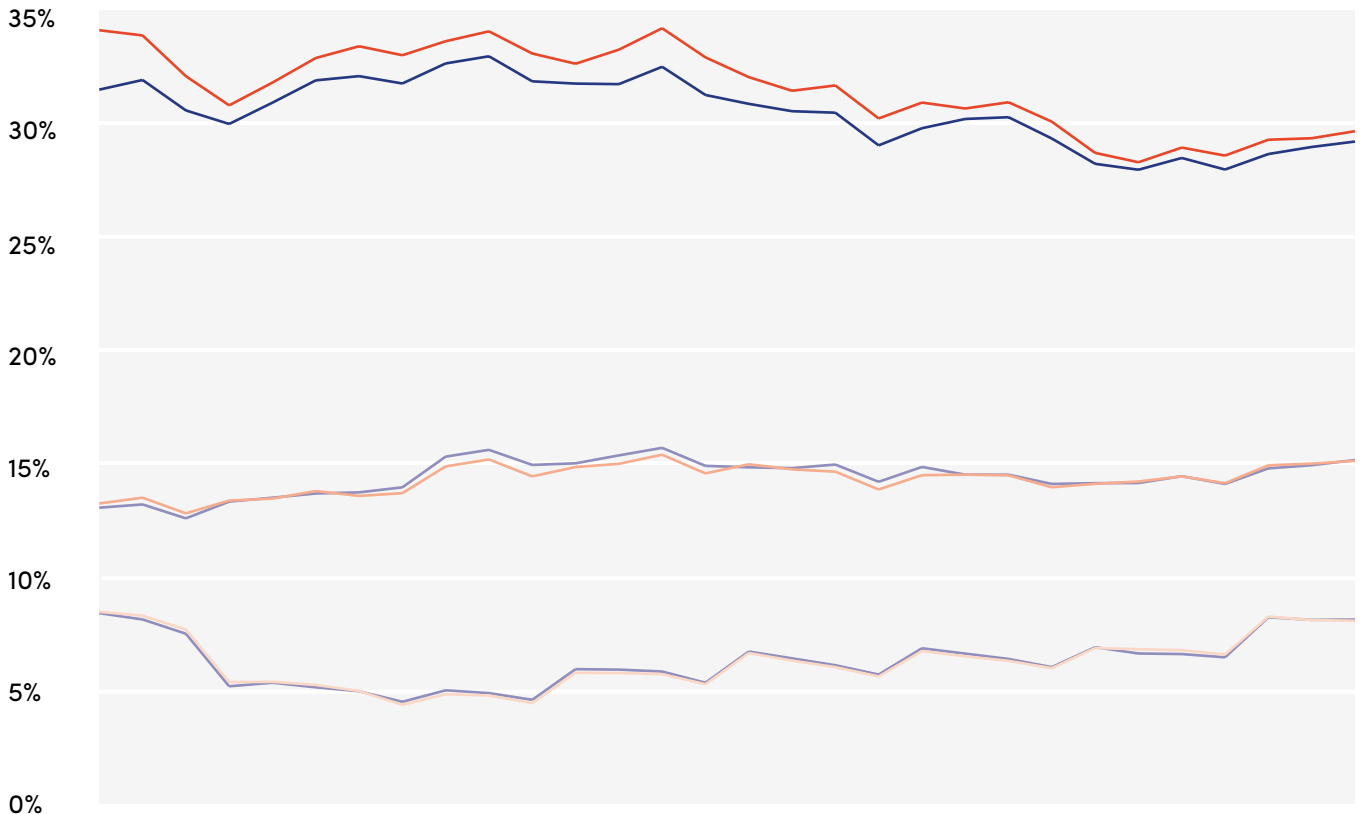
By comparing the national NEET rate for each of our three qualification groups to the NEET rate in the West Midlands for each, we can see that the higher overall NEET rate (Chart 5) is driven by a higher NEET rate for low qualified young people (Chart 14). A low qualified young person is slightly more likely to be NEET if they are from the West Midlands, although possibly not significantly so.

Chart 14: Low qualified young people in the West Midlands are more likely to be NEET than in England as a whole, but this is not true for middle or high qualified young people

NEET rate for each qualification group vs time

— Low qualified, National — Low qualified, West Midlands — Mid qualified, National
— Mid qualified, West Midlands — High qualified, National — High qualified, West Midlands

NEET rate



December 2019

March 2017

As before, we are able to see for the first time how this NEET rate varies across different parts of the West Midlands (Table 15).

Table 15: Low qualified young people are 50% more likely to be NEET in Dudley compared to low qualified young people in Solihull

Local authority area	NEET rate Low qualified	NEET rate Mid qualified	NEET rate High qualified
WMCA	31%	15%	8%
Dudley (WMCA)	36%	22%	8%
Walsall (WMCA)	35%	17%	8%
Sandwell (WMCA)	34%	19%	12%
Birmingham (WMCA)	32%	19%	10%
Telford and Wrekin	32%	18%	7%
Coventry (WMCA)	32%	10%	9%
Stoke-on-Trent	31%	17%	8%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	30%	16%	8%
Staffordshire	27%	13%	7%
Worcestershire	27%	15%	7%
Warwickshire	25%	12%	6%
Shropshire	25%	13%	(2) 9%
Herefordshire	24%	14%	(1) 11%
Solihull (WMCA)	23%	10%	7%

It is better to be from a certain local authority area and only be mid qualified, than from another area and high qualified

In many respects, what we see here is what might be expected. The jump from low to middle qualification level has a bigger impact than the jump from middle to high qualified. There is more variability in the NEET rate for low qualified young people than the high qualified groups. And the order of the local authority areas is comparable to the order they appear when looking at the overall NEET rates.

Nonetheless, geographical variation is interesting and nuanced. Young people in Dudley are much more likely to be NEET than their similarly qualified counterparts in Solihull – both parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority area. But specifically, they are 50% more likely to be NEET if low qualified, more than twice as likely to be NEET if mid qualified – but scarcely any more likely to be NEET if high qualified.

And there are some examples where it is better to be from a certain local authority area and only be mid qualified, than from another area and high qualified – the NEET rate for high qualified young people from Sandwell and Birmingham is higher than the mid qualified group in Coventry and Solihull. Again, these are all parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Coming from a disadvantaged background affects people wherever they live, but it affects young people differently depending on where they live. The same is true of qualification, and the impact of geography is nuanced.



Understanding the NEET population in the West Midlands

Instead of looking at the proportion of young people with different qualifications who end up NEET, we can look at the group of NEET young people and ask – what qualifications do they have? In *Establishing the Employment Gap*, we found that around half of NEET young people are low qualified, both nationally and in the West Midlands. Once again, this hides significant variation (Table 16).

The pattern of variation continues, with six in 10 young people in Herefordshire who are NEET being low qualified, compared to fewer than four in 10 in Shropshire. This is not simply a reflection of differing levels of qualification outcomes in different local authority areas. We saw in Table 3 that Herefordshire and Shropshire are both towards the bottom end in terms of levels of young people with low qualification. Stoke, however, is second in Table 16 and third in Table 3. Clearly, we need to control for this, by looking at how overrepresented low qualified young people are in the NEET population, compared to the population of young people at large (Table 17).

Table 16: While 60% of young people who are NEET in Herefordshire are low qualified, it's fewer than 40% in Shropshire

Local authority area	Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified
WMCA	51%
Herefordshire (1)	64%
Stoke-on-Trent	59%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	59%
Walsall (WMCA)	58%
Coventry (WMCA)	58%
Sandwell (WMCA)	54%
Telford and Wrekin	49%
Birmingham (WMCA)	48%
Solihull (WMCA)	48%
Staffordshire	47%
Warwickshire	45%
Worcestershire	45%
Dudley (WMCA)	43%
Shropshire (2)	38%

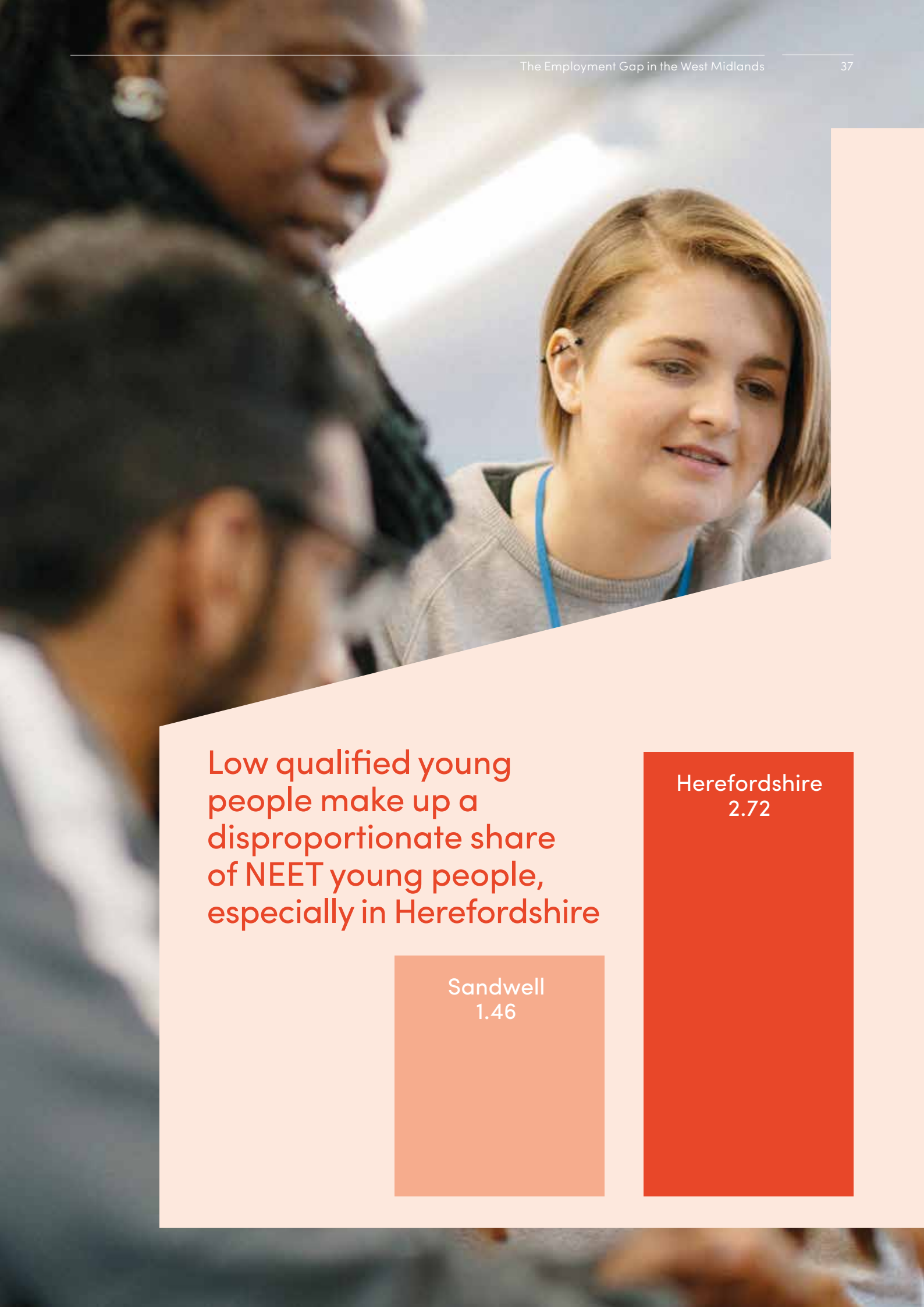
Table 17: Low qualified young people make up a disproportionate share of NEET young people, especially in Herefordshire

Local authority area	Low qualified (Population)	Low qualified (NEET young people)	Overrepresentation of low qualified young people
WMCA	30%	51%	1.70
Herefordshire (1)	24%	64%	2.72
Warwickshire	22%	45%	2.02
Staffordshire	24%	47%	1.99
Solihull (WMCA)	25%	48%	1.91
Telford and Wrekin	26%	49%	1.87
Dudley (WMCA)	23%	43%	1.87
Coventry (WMCA)	31%	58%	1.87
Worcestershire	25%	45%	1.83
Walsall (WMCA)	33%	58%	1.74
Shropshire (2)	22%	38%	1.73
Stoke-on-Trent	36%	59%	1.66
Birmingham (WMCA)	29%	48%	1.66
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	37%	59%	1.57
Sandwell (WMCA)	37%	54%	1.46

There is some uncertainty over the exact figure here for Herefordshire, but they top this table – the available data is sufficient to say that the correct figure is between 2.64 and 2.81.

We see that while young people who are NEET are disproportionately low qualified everywhere, they are overrepresented by a factor of over 2.5 in Herefordshire, compared to only 1.46 in Sandwell.

And while some local authority areas have moved from one extreme to the other – Wolverhampton from top three to bottom three – it is not the case that the story changes for every local authority area when you factor in context. Telford and Wrekin, for example, sits mid-table in both tables 16 and 17, while Herefordshire, as noted, tops both.



Low qualified young people make up a disproportionate share of NEET young people, especially in Herefordshire

Sandwell
1.46

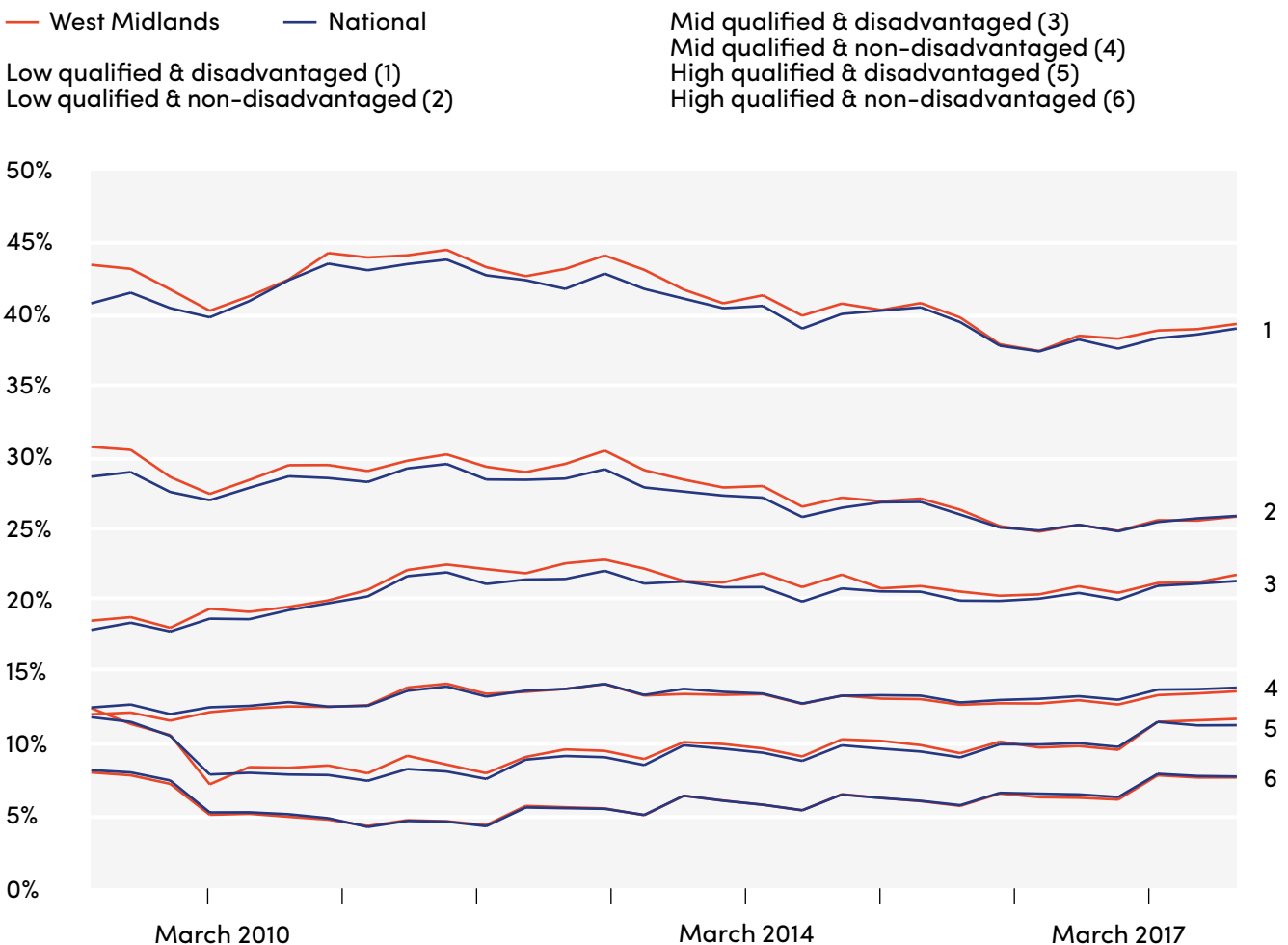
Herefordshire
2.72

Bringing together disadvantage and qualification

Our *Establishing the Employment Gap* report found that the “doubly disadvantaged” group – young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with low qualifications – are not accessing the labour market and should be of concern to policymakers.

The data divides into six distinct groups based on qualification and disadvantage combined. We can compare the national NEET rate for each of these qualification/ disadvantage groups to the NEET rate in the West Midlands for each group.

Chart 18: The doubly disadvantaged group of low qualified young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is the main driver of the higher NEET rate in the West Midlands than nationally
NEET rate for each qualification and disadvantage group vs time



The significant variation between better and worse performing local authority areas continues here as elsewhere.

We find that the higher overall NEET rate (Chart 5), which in the previous sections was driven by a higher NEET rate for low qualified young people (Chart 14), is driven roughly evenly by both doubly disadvantaged young people, and those who are low qualified but not disadvantaged. We also see that the disadvantaged but mid qualified group contributes, and this probably leads to the slightly higher Employment Gap (Chart 7) as it is not replicated among the mid qualified, but the better-off group. The NEET rates for the other groups are almost identical to national figures (Chart 18).

The doubly disadvantaged group of low qualified young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is the main driver of the higher NEET rate in the West Midlands

This table contains a multitude of important findings.

Table 19: Doubly disadvantaged young people, those from disadvantaged backgrounds with low qualifications, are most likely to become NEET

Local authority area	Low qualified		Middle qualified		High qualified	
	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged	Non-disadvantaged ↓ Disadvantaged
WMCA	38%	28%	22%	15%	13%	8%
Sandwell (WMCA)	44%	30%	26%	16%	19%	11%
Worcestershire	43%	22%	23%	13%	12%	7%
Telford and Wrekin	43%	27%	27%	16%	13%	7%
Herefordshire	43%	19%	32%	12%	(1)	11%
Walsall (WMCA)	42%	30%	21%	16%	13%	7%
Stoke-on-Trent	41%	26%	30%	14%	12%	8%
Staffordshire	40%	24%	18%	12%	11%	6%
Dudley (WMCA)	40%	33%	32%	20%	14%	7%
Coventry (WMCA)	40%	28%	14%	9%	12%	8%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	37%	27%	26%	12%	12%	7%
Birmingham (WMCA)	37%	29%	22%	17%	12%	9%
Warwickshire	35%	22%	15%	12%	9%	6%
Shropshire	34%	23%	22%	12%	16% (2)	9%
Solihull (WMCA)	31%	20%	13%	9%	14%	7%

Not far short of half of doubly disadvantaged young people become NEET in Sandwell, compared to only a third in Solihull or Shropshire. Sandwell and Solihull are both parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Even in top performing Solihull or Shropshire, a higher proportion of young people become NEET from this group than from any other group in any other authority.

Disadvantage is such a crucial factor in outcomes that in some local authority areas, such as Telford and Wrekin, disadvantaged young people with five GCSEs are still more likely to be NEET than their better-off but worse qualified peers from places like nearby Shropshire or Warwickshire.

And in Worcestershire, Stoke-on-Trent, and Herefordshire, this is true even in the same local authority area – it is better to be better-off than to have better qualifications. GCSEs are not as protective against chances of being NEET as might be expected, disadvantage can impact young people's outcomes even moreso.

In Worcestershire, Stoke-on-Trent, and Herefordshire it is better to be better-off than have better qualifications



The doubly disadvantaged group is a sizeable proportion of all young people who are NEET in most of the West Midlands (Table 20).

One quarter of young people who are NEET in Walsall or Birmingham are doubly disadvantaged, compared to one in eight in Warwickshire and Shropshire. As with previous sections, analysis that factors in different levels of double disadvantage among young people are essential to fully understand the picture that the LEO data presents (Table 21).

Table 20: One quarter of NEET young people in Walsall and Birmingham are doubly disadvantaged, compared to one in eight in Warwickshire

Local authority area	Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged
WMCA	23%
Walsall (WMCA)	27%
Birmingham (WMCA)	26%
Stoke-on-Trent	25%
Coventry (WMCA)	24%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	23%
Telford and Wrekin	21%
Sandwell (WMCA)	20%
Dudley (WMCA)	17%
Solihull (WMCA)	17%
Worcestershire	17%
Herefordshire (1)	14%
Staffordshire	14%
Warwickshire	12%
Shropshire (2)	9%

Table 21: Doubly disadvantaged young people are more than three times as prevalent in Worcestershire's NEET population as the overall population

Local authority area	Low qualified disadvantaged (Population)	Low qualified disadvantaged (NEET young people)	Overrepresentation of low qualified and disadvantaged young people
WMCA	11%	23%	2.17
Worcestershire	5%	17%	3.48
Staffordshire	4%	14%	3.46
Herefordshire (1)	4%	14%	3.37
Warwickshire	4%	12%	3.18
Solihull (WMCA)	6%	17%	2.88
Telford and Wrekin	8%	21%	2.62
Coventry (WMCA)	10%	24%	2.52
Dudley (WMCA)	7%	17%	2.46
Shropshire (2)	4%	9%	2.43
Walsall (WMCA)	11%	27%	2.42
Stoke-on-Trent	11%	25%	2.36
Sandwell (WMCA)	10%	20%	2.05
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	12%	23%	1.99
Birmingham (WMCA)	13%	26%	1.95

This table illustrates the significance of double disadvantage. In Worcestershire and Staffordshire, this group of young people makes up 3.5 times the share of NEET young people as the population. There are four local authority areas where doubly disadvantaged young people are over three times as prevalent in the NEET population as the overall population. What we see is that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with low qualifications are being locked out of the opportunities that are open to their better-off and better-qualified peers in the West Midlands.

Doubly disadvantaged young people are more than three times as prevalent in Worcestershire's NEET population as the overall population

Higher Education

In principle, measures of disadvantage should be based on individual circumstances, and not an area measure. Whilst area measures have their advantages if you are looking to provide solutions that can only be provided at an area level, in general, the risk is better-off people living in a disadvantaged area benefit – while disadvantaged people in better-off areas miss out.





This is a concern that applies to the go-to metric for measuring access to higher education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – the Participation of Local Areas measure (POLAR).

This has several consequences:

- Areas where lots of young people go to university are not considered a priority – even if it's better-off young people going, with disadvantaged young people left behind.
- Areas where lots of young people go to university are not considered a priority, no matter how many disadvantaged young people they have in the area. For example, London is “classified as an almost universal ‘high participation’ area, thus the participation, or not, of white students who by other measures could be classified as coming from a lower socio-economic background cannot be examined using this data.”⁴

- It is possible to improve outcomes as measured by POLAR without improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people – as all local people in the POLAR area are treated the same.

In general, there are too few higher education statistics published based on free school meals (FSM). In part, this reflects the fact that this is, by its nature, a very school-centric measure. But it does make it hard to compare pre-16 education data, where FSM is invariably provided, with higher education data. The rest of this chapter uses the LEO data to explore access to higher education based on free school meals.

The Access Gap in higher education

In line with the national figure, 42% of young people across the 2007-2012 cohorts in the West Midlands are recorded as having started a higher education (HE) course.ⁱⁱ But only 30% of disadvantaged young people have started a HE course, compared to 46% of their better-off peers – an access gap of 16 percentage points.

Of course, the main bar to entry into HE is qualifications, and while 70% of those with top GCSEs (five A*-C including English and maths) have started a HE course, only 15% of those without good GCSEs (fewer than five A*-C grades at GCSE, including missing at least one of English and maths) have started HE. These two qualification groups account for around 90% of HE starters in the West Midlands, and it is these two groups (top GCSEs/without good GCSEs) that provide enough data for a local authority area level analysis to be meaningful.

We know that disadvantaged young people are less likely to achieve top GCSEs, and we know from *Research Briefing 2: Higher Education* that this explains a big part of the access gap.

65% of disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs start a HE course, compared to 70% of their better-off peers, an access gap of five percentage points. This is like the gap found nationally for this qualification group, which was four percentage points. For the group without good GCSEs, the equivalent figures are 15% and 15%, with no access gap and again in line with national figures.

These gaps may not be unexpected, but they are now measurable. And even in a field like higher education, where qualification is such a crucial prerequisite, it is not enough to explain why disadvantaged young people are less likely to go to university.

ⁱⁱ by the 2016/17 academic year, which applies throughout the chapter

Disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs are still much less likely to go to university than their better-off peers



Local differences in access to higher education

Different local authority areas see a significantly different proportion of young people going to university (Table 22).

Table 22: Half of young people from Birmingham go to university, compared to a third of young people from Sandwell

Local authority area ⁱⁱⁱ	University Access rate (both groups)	University Access rate (without good GCSEs)	University Access rate (top GCSEs)
WMCA	45%	18%	72%
Birmingham (WMCA)	50%	22%	76%
Solihull (WMCA)	48%	14%	71%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	45%	19%	77%
Warwickshire	44%	9%	67%
Staffordshire	43%	13%	68%
Worcestershire	43%	11%	67%
Coventry (WMCA)	42%	16%	69%
Dudley (WMCA)	41%	12%	66%
Walsall (WMCA)	41%	14%	71%
Telford and Wrekin	40%	11%	68%
Stoke-on-Trent	35%	13%	68%
Sandwell (WMCA)	35%	16%	67%
Herefordshire (3)			65%
Shropshire (4)			64%

ⁱⁱⁱ As explained in the methodology at the back of this report, it is not possible to look at disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs progressing to university from Herefordshire or Shropshire, due to the low numbers of young people affected.

Birmingham and Solihull are noticeably the top performers, with Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent standing out for the opposite reason. Except for Stoke-on-Trent, these are all part of the West Midlands Combined Authority. It is unhelpful to think about whether the combined authority area has high or low levels of access to higher education – the truth is the answer differs in different parts of the authority.

There is still significant variation in similarly qualified young people's likelihood of enrolling at university in different places. Those without good GCSEs in Birmingham are about twice as likely to start a HE course as those from Warwickshire or Worcestershire. Among top performers at GCSE, you are still over 10 percentage points more likely to go to university if you are a young person from Wolverhampton than Sandwell.

We can also look at the proportion of university starters by qualification (Table 23). We know that young people with top GCSEs are much more likely to go to university, and unsurprisingly they outnumber students without top GCSEs dramatically (when comparing the two groups). Nonetheless, the extent to which this story is true is also highly variable.

Those without good GCSEs in Birmingham are about twice as likely to start a HE course as those from Warwickshire or Worcestershire



While just 8% of university starters from Warwickshire left school without good GCSEs, the figure for Sandwell is 28% – a quarter of Sandwell’s subsequent university starters had this level of qualification at 16. The West Midlands Combined Authority has areas where very few university starters left school without good GCSEs, and areas where a sizable minority do.

Of course, as we saw in Table 3, young people without good GCSEs are much more common in Sandwell than in Warwickshire. How does the share

of university students with such qualifications compare to the share of the underlying population? We know that those with top GCSEs will be overrepresented, but we can see to what extent this is true (Table 24).

Of course, as we are looking at just the two groups (those with top GCSEs and those without good GCSEs), the converse is also true: young people without good GCSEs are obviously underrepresented among university starters, but they are most underrepresented in Stoke-on-Trent and least in Shropshire.

Table 23: Three times the proportion of university starters from Sandwell as Warwickshire didn’t have good GCSEs at 16

Local authority area	Proportion of university starters without good GCSEs	Proportion of university starters with top GCSEs	Ratio
WMCA	20%	80%	4.07
Warwickshire	8%	92%	11.19
Worcestershire	11%	89%	8.44
Solihull (WMCA)	12%	88%	7.33
Staffordshire	13%	87%	6.84
Dudley (WMCA)	13%	87%	6.45
Telford and Wrekin	14%	86%	6.33
Walsall (WMCA)	18%	82%	4.59
Coventry (WMCA)	19%	81%	4.30
Birmingham (WMCA)	22%	78%	3.65
Stoke-on-Trent	23%	77%	3.36
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	24%	76%	3.24
Sandwell (WMCA)	28%	72%	2.60
Herefordshire (3)			
Shropshire (4)			

Table 24: Young people with top GCSEs are more likely to go to university than those without good GCSEs – but especially in Stoke-on-Trent, and least in Shropshire

Local authority area	Proportion of university starters with top GCSEs	Proportion of young people with top GCSEs	Ratio
WMCA	80%	43%	1.88
Stoke-on-Trent	77%	33%	2.31
Sandwell (WMCA)	72%	32%	2.29
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	76%	36%	2.11
Walsall (WMCA)	82%	40%	2.04
Telford and Wrekin	86%	45%	1.94
Coventry (WMCA)	81%	42%	1.92
Herefordshire (3)	92%	50%	1.83
Dudley (WMCA)	87%	47%	1.83
Worcestershire	89%	49%	1.82
Staffordshire	87%	48%	1.80
Birmingham (WMCA)	78%	44%	1.77
Warwickshire	92%	52%	1.75
Solihull (WMCA)	88%	52%	1.71
Shropshire	92%	54%	1.69

Disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs in Birmingham are almost four times as likely to start a HE course as those from Warwickshire



Warwickshire



Birmingham

As well as looking at the overall access rate and the breakdown for the two qualification groups, we can also look at the impact of disadvantage (Table 25).

These figures are much lower than those in Table 22, reflecting the fact that disadvantaged young people are much less likely to go to university than their better-off peers. But we also see a subtly different picture for disadvantaged young people compared to young people in terms of geography.

First, Solihull has dropped from a clear second place into the middle of the pack (though still in the top half). It's been overtaken by Sandwell, who ranked last in Table 22.

Second, the variation in similarly qualified young people's likelihood of enrolling at university in different places is much wider. Disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs in Birmingham are almost four times as likely to start a HE course as those from Warwickshire. And disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs are almost 30 percentage points more likely to go to university if they are from Birmingham or Wolverhampton as Shropshire.

Even in the sphere of access to higher education, where qualifications are well known to be a significant barrier to entry, disadvantage still seems to be a critical factor.

Table 25: Disadvantaged young people from Birmingham are twice as likely to go to university as disadvantaged young people from Warwickshire

Local authority area	University access rate (disadvantaged, both groups)	University access rate (disadvantaged, without good GCSEs)	University access rate (disadvantaged, top GCSEs)
WMCA	33%	18%	69%
Birmingham (WMCA)	39%	22%	72%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	29%	16%	72%
Coventry (WMCA)	28%	16%	67%
Sandwell (WMCA)	25%	15%	65%
Solihull (WMCA)	24%	12%	59%
Walsall (WMCA)	22%	11%	63%
Dudley (WMCA)	21%	10%	53%
Staffordshire	20%	9%	54%
Telford and Wrekin	19%	8%	55%
Stoke-on-Trent	19%	11%	61%
Worcestershire	19%	7%	53%
Warwickshire	18%	6%	52%
Herefordshire (3)			52%
Shropshire (4)			45%

Understanding the student population

Across the West Midlands around 12% of young people who start a higher education course are from disadvantaged backgrounds, higher than the 10% national figure. This is unsurprising, given that 75% of young people at university have top GCSEs – which we know disadvantaged young people are much less likely to secure

– and only 14% did not have good GCSEs at 16. These figures are skewed slightly towards those without good GCSEs, by 2-3 percentage points, compared to national figures.

As Table 26 demonstrates, these headline figures disguise wide variation across the West Midlands.

Table 26: A quarter of students from Birmingham are from disadvantaged backgrounds, compared to only 3% of those from Warwickshire

Local authority area	Proportion of university starters from disadvantaged backgrounds (both groups)	Proportion of university starters from disadvantaged backgrounds (without good GCSEs)	Proportion of university starters from disadvantaged backgrounds (top GCSEs)
WMCA	17%	33%	13%
Birmingham (WMCA)	26%	45%	21%
Sandwell (WMCA)	14%	24%	11%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	13%	23%	10%
Coventry (WMCA)	12%	28%	9%
Stoke-on-Trent	11%	21%	8%
Walsall (WMCA)	10%	23%	8%
Telford and Wrekin	8%	18%	6%
Dudley (WMCA)	8%	21%	6%
Solihull (WMCA)	6%	17%	4%
Staffordshire	4%	10%	3%
Worcestershire	4%	11%	3%
Warwickshire	3%	9%	3%
Herefordshire (3)			3%
Shropshire (4)			2%

In all cases, we see that disadvantaged young people are a much larger share of the university starters without good GCSEs than with top GCSEs, reflecting their greater likelihood of having the lower qualifications.

Birmingham stands out, with large minorities of its university starters coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Of course, much of this variation is related to differences in the numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to start with. Controlling for this, a different picture emerges (Table 27).

In some parts of the West Midlands Combined Authority area, disadvantaged young people make up roughly the same

share of university starters as they do young people with similar qualifications overall.

But this is less true outside the combined authority area, where disadvantaged young people often make up under 80% of the expected proportion of university starters, based on their share of similarly qualified young people.

And in general, disadvantaged young people are most underrepresented among university starters without good GCSEs. Given most disadvantaged young people fall into this group, this is the crucial area when looking at looking at disadvantaged young people being underrepresented overall.

Table 27: In Birmingham, Coventry and Sandwell, disadvantaged young people are better represented among university starters, compared to other parts of the West Midlands

Local authority area	Underrepresentation of disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs)	Underrepresentation of disadvantaged young people (top GCSEs)
WMCA	1.01	0.95
Birmingham (WMCA)	1.00	0.95
Coventry (WMCA)	1.00	0.96
Sandwell (WMCA)	0.95	0.97
Dudley (WMCA)	0.85	0.80
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	0.84	0.93
Solihull (WMCA)	0.84	0.83
Walsall (WMCA)	0.79	0.88
Stoke-on-Trent	0.79	0.89
Staffordshire	0.70	0.80
Worcestershire	0.70	0.79
Telford and Wrekin	0.69	0.81
Warwickshire	0.64	0.77
Herefordshire (3)		0.87
Shropshire (4)		0.70

Final observations

Access to university is only part of the story. As we saw in *Research Briefing 2: Higher Education*, places at top third universities that are particularly prestigious are even more disproportionately taken up by young people achieving top GCSEs at 16, and therefore, take up by disadvantaged young people is lower.

Similarly, the main benefit of university is graduating with a degree, something that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to do, even when they do access university.

On both measures, there are too few young people with these characteristics in some local authority areas to be able to measure variances within the West Midlands in a meaningful way.

Nonetheless, this issue should not be overlooked, nor should it be assumed that simply closing the university access gap will be enough to address the gaps in access to a top third university and overall pass rates.

Access to apprenticeships

Apprenticeships policy has changed significantly over the last decade. From the introduction of standards to replace frameworks, to the Apprenticeship Levy, the system in 2017 was very different to that in 2007.

As we saw in *Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships*, this has led to noticeable differences in experience for the 2012 cohort, compared to the 2007 cohort. While overall, 7% of young people in England start an apprenticeship, there has been a growth in the share of disadvantaged young people starting an apprenticeship, from 4% of the 2007 cohort to 10% of the 2012 cohort.^{iv}

^{iv} We cannot be sure this truly represents growth in take-up of apprenticeships over time, though published data on starts for this period finds this. Strictly, what we have here is a growth in take-up of apprenticeships in later cohorts.



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Apprenticeships in the West Midlands

The West Midlands has above average take-up of apprenticeships. Overall, 7% of all young people undertook an apprenticeship, including 11% of disadvantaged young people in the 2010 cohort, which is a sizeable minority.^v

We know the growth in apprenticeships has disproportionately been from disadvantaged young people, but what does it look like in terms of qualification? In the West Midlands, the bulk of the growth in apprenticeships has been among the 41% of young people without good GCSEs: 7% of the 2007 cohort without good GCSEs started an apprenticeship, compared to 16% of the 2010 cohort. By contrast, there is no increase in apprenticeship starts among the 46% of young people with top GCSEs. Indeed, young people without good GCSEs make up 66% of apprenticeship starters, and it is this group that provides enough data for a local authority area level analysis to be meaningful.^{vi} 12% of this group start an apprenticeship, a figure that varies by local authority area.

Table 28: Young people from Solihull without good GCSEs are twice as likely to undertake an apprenticeship as those from Coventry

Local authority area	Proportion of young people without good GCSEs starting an apprenticeship
WMCA	9%
Solihull (WMCA)	15%
Stoke-on-Trent	13%
Warwickshire	13%
Shropshire	12%
Staffordshire	12%
Dudley (WMCA)	11%
Telford and Wrekin	10%
Worcestershire	9%
Sandwell (WMCA)	9%
Birmingham (WMCA)	8%
Walsall (WMCA)	8%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	8%
Coventry (WMCA)	6%

^v By the 2016/17 academic year, which applies throughout the chapter.

^{vi} We are also only analysing the 2008 to 2012 cohorts. 2007 is excluded due to the lower take-up of apprenticeships. We have also excluded Herefordshire from this chapter due to the lack of data.

We see significant variation by local authority area, with young people from Solihull without good GCSEs twice as likely to go on to an apprenticeship as those from Coventry with the same qualifications. As we have seen repeatedly, these are two areas from within the West Midlands Combined Authority area that are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

These figures can also be broken down by disadvantage. While 12% of disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs go on to an apprenticeship in the West Midlands, some local authority areas see a far higher proportion of disadvantaged young people do so (Table 29).

Similarly to the headline findings, we see large variation, with the same local authority areas at the top and bottom. Just 6% of disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs from Coventry go down an apprenticeship route. Amongst Silhillians, with the same qualifications, it's 20%. Local authority areas within the West Midlands Combined Authority are mostly near the bottom of the list, but Solihull's top spot reinforces the point that different areas face different challenges.

Table 29: Disadvantaged young people from Solihull without good GCSEs are three times as likely to do an apprenticeship as those from Coventry

Local authority area	Proportion of disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs starting an apprenticeship
WMCA	10%
Solihull (WMCA)	20%
Stoke-on-Trent	17%
Warwickshire	17%
Staffordshire	15%
Shropshire	13%
Dudley (WMCA)	13%
Worcestershire	12%
Telford and Wrekin	11%
Sandwell (WMCA)	10%
Birmingham (WMCA)	10%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	10%
Walsall (WMCA)	9%
Coventry (WMCA)	6%



Apprenticeship growth is concentrated among those without good GCSEs, not those with top GCSEs

Looking at apprentices in the West Midlands

As we saw in *Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships*, when looking at the 2007 cohort, disadvantaged young people are underrepresented among apprentices, whereas by 2012 they are overrepresented. This trend continues in the West Midlands, with disadvantaged young people growing from a 15% share of apprentices (of the 2007 cohort) to a 23% share of apprentices from the 2010 cohort.

We can also look at the qualifications of apprentices, without considering the disadvantage angle. Overall, 66% of apprenticeship starters are those without good GCSEs. This group represents 41% of all young people, so these young people are disproportionately undertaking apprenticeships. By contrast, 20% of apprenticeship starters are young people with five A*-C at GCSE, including English and maths, far less than the 46% of all young people with this level of qualification. This last group is too small to meaningfully analyse at local authority area level, so we look at the group without good GCSEs (Table 30).

Of course, part of the reason Birmingham tops this list and Shropshire is bottom, is because there are many more disadvantaged young people in the former than the latter. Controlling for this, we can see the extent to which disadvantaged young people are over (or under) represented among apprentices.

Table 30: Disadvantaged young people make up almost half of apprentices from Birmingham without good GCSEs, but fewer than a sixth of those from Shropshire

Local authority area	Proportion of apprenticeships started by disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs
WMCA	31%
Birmingham (WMCA)	45%
Stoke-on-Trent	28%
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	27%
Walsall (WMCA)	24%
Telford and Wrekin	24%
Dudley (WMCA)	24%
Sandwell (WMCA)	23%
Solihull (WMCA)	23%
Coventry (WMCA)	22%
Worcestershire	16%
Staffordshire	15%
Warwickshire	15%
Shropshire	14%

Table 31: In some places, disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among apprentices. In others, the opposite.

Local authority area	Proportion of young people who are disadvantaged	Proportion of apprenticeship starters who are disadvantaged	Over/under representation of disadvantaged young people
WMCA	33%	31%	0.93
Solihull (WMCA)	20%	23%	1.11
Warwickshire	13%	15%	1.10
Worcestershire	15%	16%	1.07
Staffordshire	14%	15%	1.07
Stoke-on-Trent	27%	28%	1.04
Shropshire	14%	14%	1.01
Birmingham (WMCA)	45%	45%	0.99
Wolverhampton (WMCA)	28%	27%	0.98
Dudley (WMCA)	25%	24%	0.96
Telford and Wrekin	26%	24%	0.92
Sandwell (WMCA)	25%	23%	0.90
Walsall (WMCA)	29%	24%	0.86
Coventry (WMCA)	28%	22%	0.77

In some places, noticeably Solihull and Warwickshire, disadvantaged young people are disproportionately likely to be apprentices. In others, such as Walsall and Coventry, they are disproportionately unlikely. There are seven areas where disadvantaged young people are underrepresented and six where they are overrepresented; though with the exception of Coventry, all are within +/- 15 percentage points of parity.

A quarter of those from the 2010 cohort who went on to apprenticeships were from disadvantaged backgrounds

Final observations

Access to apprenticeships is only part of the story. As we saw in *Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships*, historically, progression to Level 3 apprenticeships has also varied based on disadvantage and prior qualification. There has been much change in the landscape between 2007 and 2017, but this must not be at the expense of disadvantaged young people. Pathways for young people to reach intermediate or higher level skills are vital, and policymakers across national and devolved government must ensure that there is both access and appropriate progression routes in the West Midlands when considering future apprenticeship reforms.



Findings by local authority area

This chapter presents 25 of the key findings from earlier parts of this report for each local authority area in turn.

It also provides the rank for each finding within the West Midlands region. This is out of 14, and so positions 1-5 are the top third of local authority areas, 6-9 are the middle third of local authority areas, and 10-14 are the bottom third of local authority areas.

For local authority areas that are also part of the West Midlands Combined Authority area, the rank within the combined authority area is also listed, out of seven.



urity

Local authority area	Page
Birmingham	64
Coventry	66
Dudley	68
Herefordshire	70
Sandwell	72
Shropshire	74
Solihull	76
Staffordshire	78
Stoke-on-Trent	80
Telford and Wrekin	82
Walsall	84
Warwickshire	86
Wolverhampton	88
Worcestershire	90

Birmingham

Birmingham is often described as the largest local authority area in Europe. One of the main findings of the *Youth Jobs Gap* report series is that the differences between areas that are very close together can be stark, and there is no doubt that if data were analysed at a more local level, differences would emerge between, say, Edgbaston and Sparkhill.

High levels of disadvantage feed in to a high NEET rate, but the NEET rate for disadvantaged young people is very low. While bigger shares of NEET young people in Birmingham are disadvantaged (or doubly disadvantaged) than almost anywhere else in the West Midlands, this only reflects high levels of these characteristics in the population.

Birmingham is ranked in the top three on all higher education measures, but relatively low proportions of young people start apprenticeships.

Table 32: Summary of findings for Birmingham

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	75,100	1	1
Level of disadvantage	34%	1	1
Level of low qualification	29%	6	5
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	13%	1	1
NEET young people			
NEET rate	17%	4	3
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	23%	12	6
Employment Gap	9%	14	7
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	47%	1	1
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.37	14	7
NEET rate (low qualified)	32%	4	4
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	48%	8	5
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.66	12	5

Table 32: Summary of findings for Birmingham *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	37%	11	6
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	26%	2	2
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.95	14	7
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	76%	2	2
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	22%	1	1
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	72%	1	1
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	22%	1	1
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.95	3	3
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	1.00	1	1
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	8%	10	4
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	10%	10	4
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	45%	1	1
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.99	7	2

Coventry

Coventry is a midsized local authority area, with middling levels of disadvantage and low qualification. The NEET rate for disadvantaged young people is low, and so is the Employment Gap and the extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among the NEET population.

Access to higher education is very high compared to other local authority areas in the West Midlands, but access to apprenticeships is very low, with Coventry the lowest ranked area within the West Midlands Combined Authority on all apprenticeship measures, and second lowest in the region on most measures overall.

Table 33: Summary of findings for Coventry

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	21,900	7	4
Level of disadvantage	19%	6	5
Level of low qualification	31%	5	4
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	10%	6	5
NEET young people			
NEET rate	15%	8	6
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	25%	10	5
Employment Gap	12%	11	6
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	33%	6	4
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.73	11	4
NEET rate (low qualified)	32%	6	5
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	58%	5	3
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.87	7	3
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	40%	9	4

Table 33: Summary of findings for Coventry *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	24%	4	3
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.52	7	2
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	69%	5	5
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	16%	3	3
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	67%	3	3
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	16%	3	3
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.96	2	2
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	1.00	2	2
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	6%	13	7
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	6%	13	7
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	22%	9	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.77	13	7

Dudley

Dudley is a slightly larger than average local authority area, with relatively low levels of low qualification (the lowest of any West Midlands Combined Authority local authority area) and average levels of disadvantage (but the second lowest of any West Midlands Combined Authority local authority area). Most NEET measures are in the middle of the table, but the NEET rate for the relatively few low qualified young people is higher here than anywhere else in the West Midlands.

Nonetheless, they are a smaller part of the overall NEET population than almost anywhere else.

Higher education start rates are low, and young people without good GCSEs do better in Dudley, relative to other local authority areas in the West Midlands, than those with top GCSEs. Dudley is consistently the lowest ranked local authority area in the West Midlands, in all bar one case. On apprenticeships, Dudley sits in the middle of the rankings.

Table 34: Summary of findings for Dudley

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	23,800	5	2
Level of disadvantage	16%	8	6
Level of low qualification	23%	12	7
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	7%	8	6
NEET young people			
NEET rate	16%	6	5
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	29%	4	2
Employment Gap	15%	5	1
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	29%	8	6
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.83	9	3
NEET rate (low qualified)	36%	1	1
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	43%	13	7

Table 34: Summary of findings for Dudley *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.87	6	2
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	40%	8	3
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	17%	8	6
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.46	8	3
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	66%	12	7
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	12%	9	7
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	53%	10	7
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	10%	8	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.80	11	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.85	4	4
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	11%	6	2
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	13%	6	2
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	24%	6	4
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.96	9	4

Herefordshire

Herefordshire is the smallest local authority area in the West Midlands and has very low levels of disadvantage and low qualification. In particular, there are too few disadvantaged young people starting apprenticeships to be able to look at in detail; too few disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs starting higher education to analyse; and part of the NEET figures are estimated – see the notes in the methodology section.

Herefordshire has the highest NEET rate for disadvantaged young people of any local authority in the West Midlands and the highest Employment Gap. Although a relatively low proportion of NEET young people are from disadvantaged backgrounds, they are more overrepresented in Herefordshire than anywhere else (bar one). NEET rates for low qualified young people are low, but they are still overrepresented, making up almost two thirds of NEET young people. Access to higher education, for young people with top GCSEs, is very low.

Table 35: Summary of findings for Herefordshire

Local authority area facts

Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)

Population	11,700	14
Level of disadvantage	8%	12
Level of low qualification	24%	11
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	4%	11
NEET young people		
NEET rate	15%	9
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	32%	1
Employment Gap	19%	1
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	21%	11
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.48	2
NEET rate (low qualified)	24%	13
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	64%	1

Table 35: Summary of findings for Herefordshire *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.72	1
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	43%	4
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	14%	11
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	3.37	3
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	65%	13
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)		
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	52%	12
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)		
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.87	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented		
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)		
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)		
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people		
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices		

Sandwell

Sandwell is a midsized local authority area with a very high proportion of low qualified young people and the highest NEET rate of any local authority in the West Midlands. The Employment Gap is high, compared to other parts of the combined authority area. The NEET rates for low qualified young people and doubly disadvantaged young people are high, but these groups are less overrepresented among NEET young people in Sandwell than almost anywhere else.

Access to university for young people with top GCSEs is low, but Sandwell ranks well in all other higher education measures, though West Midlands Combined Authority local authorities generally dominate these statistics. Therefore, Sandwell's high performance in a regional context is average if considered only alongside other areas within the combined authority area. Sandwell is generally among the middle third of West Midlands local authorities on apprenticeship measures.

Table 36: Summary of findings for Sandwell

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	22,100	6	3
Level of disadvantage	20%	5	4
Level of low qualification	37%	2	2
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	10%	5	4
NEET young people			
NEET rate	20%	1	1
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	32%	2	1
Employment Gap	14%	7	2
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	32%	7	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.64	13	6
NEET rate (low qualified)	34%	3	3
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	54%	6	4
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.46	14	7
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	44%	1	1

Table 36: Summary of findings for Sandwell *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	20%	7	5
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.05	12	5
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	67%	11	6
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	16%	4	4
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	65%	4	4
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	15%	4	4
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.97	1	1
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.95	3	3
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	9%	9	3
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	10%	9	3
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	23%	7	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.90	11	5

Shropshire

Shropshire is a mid-sized local authority area, but has some of the lowest levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. As a result, there are too few disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs starting higher education to be able to analyse in more detail, and part of the NEET figures are estimated – see the notes in the methodology section.

NEET measures are generally among the lowest few scores, with a lower proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged, low qualified or double disadvantaged backgrounds than any other local authority area.

The available data on higher education shows it is the lowest ranked in the region, reflecting very low rates of progression to university compared to other regions in the West Midlands. Apprenticeship take up is stronger and Shropshire is generally in the top third ranked local authorities on this measure, although the proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people is lower than any other region, mostly reflecting the fact there are very low levels of disadvantage to start with.

Table 37: Summary of findings for Shropshire

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Population	19,600	9
Level of disadvantage	8%	13
Level of low qualification	22%	14
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	4%	14
NEET young people		
NEET rate	13%	11
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	23%	11
Employment Gap	11%	13
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	16%	14
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.97	6
NEET rate (low qualified)	25%	12
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	38%	14

Table 37: Summary of findings for Shropshire *continued*

Local authority area facts	Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.73	10
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	34%	13
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	9%	14
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.43	9
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	64%	14
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)		
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	45%	14
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)		
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.70	14
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented		
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	12%	4
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	13%	5
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	14%	13
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.01	6

Solihull

Solihull is a fairly small local authority area, with slightly below average levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage in the context of the region overall. However, within the combined authority area, it is in the bottom two on all these measures.

NEET rates are very low – the NEET rate for low qualified young people is the lowest of any – but they are still overrepresented among NEET young people, more so here than any other

part of the combined authority area. Access to higher education is generally in the top half of local authority areas in the region, without being in the top three – although West Midlands Combined Authority local authority areas dominate these measures, and Solihull is generally in the bottom half of these local authorities.

Solihull has a strong track record in apprenticeships, topping three out of four measures.

Table 38: Summary of findings for Solihull

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	18,600	10	6
Level of disadvantage	12%	9	7
Level of low qualification	25%	8	6
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	6%	9	7
NEET young people			
NEET rate	12%	13	7
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	22%	13	7
Employment Gap	12%	10	5
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	24%	10	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.02	5	1
NEET rate (low qualified)	23%	14	7
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	48%	9	6
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.91	4	1
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	31%	14	7

Table 38: Summary of findings for Solihull *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	17%	9	7
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.88	5	1
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	71%	4	4
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	14%	5	5
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	59%	7	6
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	12%	5	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.83	8	6
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.84	6	6
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	15%	1	1
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	20%	1	1
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	23%	8	6
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.11	1	1

Staffordshire

Staffordshire is second only to Birmingham in terms of size, but unlike Birmingham has low levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. NEET rates are low, as is the proportion of NEET young people with any of these characteristics, although they are more overrepresented among NEET young people than in almost any other local authority area.

On access to higher education measures, Staffordshire is ranked slightly on the low side. On apprenticeship measures, Staffordshire is ranked slightly on the high side. Only on one of these measures is Staffordshire in the top or the bottom three – a very low proportion of apprenticeship starts are by disadvantaged young people.

Table 39: Summary of findings for Staffordshire

Local authority area facts

		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Population	59,700	2
Level of disadvantage	9%	11
Level of low qualification	24%	10
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	4%	12
NEET young people		
NEET rate	13%	12
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	26%	9
Employment Gap	15%	6
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	21%	12
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.34	3
NEET rate (low qualified)	27%	9
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	47%	10
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.99	3
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	40%	7
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	14%	12

Table 39: Summary of findings for Staffordshire *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	3.46	2
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	68%	8
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	13%	8
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	54%	9
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	9%	9
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.80	10
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.70	9
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	12%	5
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	15%	4
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	15%	11
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.07	4

Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent is one of the smaller local authority areas in the West Midlands, with above average levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. NEET rates are higher than average, especially for young people with low levels of qualification, though they are less overrepresented among NEET young people compared to other areas in the West Midlands, as are doubly disadvantaged young people.

On higher education measures, Stoke-on-Trent is among the middle third of local authorities in the West Midlands; on apprenticeship measures Stoke-on-Trent is generally the second ranked local authority.

Table 40: Summary of findings for Stoke on Trent

Local authority area facts

**Rank within
West Midlands
(out of 14)**

Population	16,200	12
Level of disadvantage	20%	4
Level of low qualification	36%	3
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	11%	4
NEET young people		
NEET rate	18%	3
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	31%	3
Employment Gap	16%	4
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	36%	3
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.81	10
NEET rate (low qualified)	31%	7
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	59%	2
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.66	11
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	41%	6
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	25%	3

Table 40: Summary of findings for Stoke on Trent *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.36	11
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	68%	7
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	13%	7
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	61%	6
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	11%	7
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.89	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.79	8
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	13%	2
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	17%	2
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	28%	2
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.04	5

Telford & Wrekin

Telford and Wrekin is the second smallest local authority area in the West Midlands. The Employment Gap is high compared to other local authority areas, as is the NEET rate for low qualified young people. But most other NEET indicators sit in the middle third of local authority areas.

Similarly, on higher education and apprenticeships, Telford and Wrekin is ranked among the middle third of local authority areas on most measures. That said, higher education access for young people without good GCSEs is low compared to many local authority areas, with disadvantaged young people particularly underrepresented among young higher education entrants with the same qualifications.

Table 41: Summary of findings for Telford and Wrekin

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Population	12,900	13
Level of disadvantage	18%	7
Level of low qualification	26%	7
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	8%	7
NEET young people		
NEET rate	15%	7
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	29%	6
Employment Gap	16%	3
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	34%	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.90	7
NEET rate (low qualified)	32%	5
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	49%	7
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.87	5
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	43%	3

Table 41: Summary of findings for Telford and Wrekin *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	21%	6
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.62	6
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	68%	6
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	11%	10
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	55%	8
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	8%	10
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.81	9
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.69	11
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	10%	7
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	11%	8
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	24%	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.92	10

Walsall

Walsall is an average sized local authority area, with above average levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. The NEET rate here is higher than almost everywhere else, as is the share of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This largely reflects the high levels of disadvantage – this group of young people is only averagely overrepresented among NEET young people in Walsall.

Access to apprenticeships is low compared to other local authority areas in the West Midlands, and access to higher education is low relative to other West Midlands Combined Authority areas. Although, in the context of the West Midlands region as a whole, most higher education measures are in the middle third.

Table 42: Summary of findings for Walsall

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	21,700	8	5
Level of disadvantage	20%	3	3
Level of low qualification	33%	4	3
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	11%	3	3
NEET young people			
NEET rate	18%	2	2
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	29%	5	3
Employment Gap	14%	8	3
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	37%	2	2
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.85	8	2
NEET rate (low qualified)	35%	2	2
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	58%	4	2
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.74	9	4
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	42%	5	2

Table 42: Summary of findings for Walsall *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	27%	1	1
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.42	10	4
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	71%	3	3
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	14%	6	6
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	63%	5	5
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	11%	6	6
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.88	6	5
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.79	7	7
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	8%	11	5
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	9%	12	6
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	24%	4	3
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.86	12	6

Warwickshire

Warwickshire is one of the larger local authority areas in the West Midlands and has among the very lowest levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. As a result, NEET levels and Employment Gaps are low – but these groups are much more overrepresented among the NEET population compared to most other local authority areas.

On higher education measures, Warwickshire generally scores among the lowest third of local authorities and disadvantaged young people are underrepresented among higher education entrants. On apprenticeship measures, Warwickshire is ranked near the top on three out of four measures. Nonetheless, very few Warwickshire apprentices are from disadvantaged backgrounds, reflecting the low levels of disadvantage among young people overall.

Table 43: Summary of findings for Warwickshire

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Population	36,500	4
Level of disadvantage	8%	14
Level of low qualification	22%	13
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	4%	13
NEET young people		
NEET rate	11%	14
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	22%	14
Employment Gap	12%	12
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	16%	13
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.13	4
NEET rate (low qualified)	25%	11
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	45%	11
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.02	2
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	35%	12

Table 43: Summary of findings for Warwickshire *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	12%	13
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	3.18	4
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	67%	9
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	9%	12
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	52%	13
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	6%	12
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.77	13
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.64	12
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	13%	3
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	17%	3
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	15%	12
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.10	2

Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton is a smaller local authority area, the smallest in the West Midlands Combined Authority, and has among the very highest levels of disadvantage, low qualification and double disadvantage. This inevitably leads to a fairly high share of NEET young people being from these backgrounds, although they are actually less overrepresented among NEET young people in Wolverhampton than almost anywhere else, because NEET rates themselves are among the middle third of local authority areas.

Wolverhampton is in the top third of local authority areas on all higher education measures, and among the top two on most. Wolverhampton is a lower ranked local authority area on access to apprenticeships, but still a high share of apprentices are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table 44: Summary of findings for Wolverhampton

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Population	16,700	11	7
Level of disadvantage	21%	2	2
Level of low qualification	37%	1	1
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	12%	2	2
NEET young people			
NEET rate	17%	5	4
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	27%	8	4
Employment Gap	13%	9	4
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	36%	4	3
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.72	12	5
NEET rate (low qualified)	30%	8	6
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	59%	3	1
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.57	13	6
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	37%	10	5

Table 44: Summary of findings for Wolverhampton *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)	Rank within WMCA (out of 7)
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.99	13	6
Higher education			
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	77%	1	1
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	19%	2	2
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	72%	2	2
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	16%	2	2
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.93	4	4
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.84	5	5
Apprenticeships			
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	8%	12	6
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	10%	11	5
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	27%	3	2
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	0.98	8	3

Worcestershire

Worcestershire is one of the larger local authority areas in the West Midlands and has a particularly high Employment Gap, with disadvantaged (and doubly disadvantaged) young people more overrepresented among NEET young people here compared with anywhere else in the region. Relatively speaking, very few NEET young people are low qualified.

Access to higher education measures rank Worcestershire in the bottom third, although not at the very bottom; on apprenticeships Worcestershire ranks among the middle third of local authority areas on everything except the extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented as apprentices, where they are third.

Table 45: Summary of findings for Worcestershire

Local authority area facts

**Rank within
West Midlands
(out of 14)**

Population	37,300	3
Level of disadvantage	9%	10
Level of low qualification	25%	9
Level of low qualification and disadvantage	5%	10
NEET young people		
NEET rate	13%	10
NEET rate (disadvantaged)	29%	7
Employment Gap	18%	2
Proportion of NEET young people from disadvantaged backgrounds	24%	9
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	2.52	1
NEET rate (low qualified)	27%	10
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified	45%	12
Extent to which low qualified young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	1.83	8
NEET rate (low qualified and disadvantaged)	43%	2
Proportion of NEET young people who are low qualified and disadvantaged	17%	10

Table 45: Summary of findings for Worcestershire *continued*

Local authority area facts		Rank within West Midlands (out of 14)
Extent to which low qualified and disadvantaged young people are overrepresented among NEET young people	3.48	1
Higher education		
University start rate (young people with top GCSEs)	67%	10
University start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	11%	11
University start rate (disadvantaged young people with top GCSEs)	53%	11
University start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	7%	11
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (with top GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.79	12
Extent to which disadvantaged young people (without good GCSEs) are underrepresented	0.70	10
Apprenticeships		
Apprenticeship start rate (young people without good GCSEs)	9%	8
Apprenticeship start rate (disadvantaged young people without good GCSEs)	12%	7
Proportion of apprenticeship starts by disadvantaged young people	16%	10
Extent to which disadvantaged young people are over/underrepresented as apprentices	1.07	3

Methodology reference notes

The following is a summary of the terminology used in this briefing for reference. We have also published a full methodology document, *Methodology for the Youth Jobs Gap*.

Cohort – a group of students who all sat their GCSEs in the same year, from 2007 to 2012 (six cohorts), included in our analysis.

Disadvantage – eligible for free school meals (FSM) in Year 11.

Local authority area and region – where young people went to school. This briefing only covers young people who were in mainstream English schools in Year 11, and about whom disadvantage status is known.

Qualification (Chapter 1) – high (A-level or equivalent), middle (five GCSEs A*-C or equivalent), low (fewer than five GCSEs). Based on highest qualifications at age 18.

Qualification (Chapter 2-3) – in Chapters 2 and 3, qualification categories are based on highest qualifications at age 16. The categories are:

1. No qualifications
2. Some qualifications, not enough to fit into categories three to five (usually referred to in this report as “without good GCSEs”)
3. A*-C in English and maths GCSEs, but NOT five A*-Cs in total
4. Five A*-C GCSEs, but missing at least one of English and maths
5. Five A*-C GCSEs, including English and maths (usually referred to in this report as “top GCSEs”)

In each case, the qualifications are GCSEs or equivalents.

EET – young people recorded as being in education, employment or training (EET) at a point in time. Due to limitations with LEO at the time of developing this project, self-employment is not included as a form of EET.

NEET – not EET for at least three consecutive months up to and including the NEET reference points we use, namely December, March, June and September of any given year, from December 2009 to March 2017.

Access to higher education – based on whether there is any recorded enrolment in higher education between academic years 2009/10 and 2016/17 inclusive.

Access to top third universities – based on whether there is any recorded enrolment in top third universities between academic years 2009/10 and 2016/17 inclusive. Top third is based on entrants with the highest UCAS point score, and matches the DfE definition.

University success – based on whether young people have achieved their degree between academic years 2009/10 and 2016/17 inclusive.

Age – approximate age, based on the year young people left school and the point in time NEET or EET is being measured at. This is based on academic age and therefore academic years (see below). Every young person in the same cohort is the same age; age acts as an intuitive measure of ‘how long since the cohort left school.’

Caveats noted in data tables

(1) In Chapter 1, figures for Herefordshire are an estimate. This is because we have no data for highly qualified disadvantaged young people. There are around 50 in each cohort, and given the relatively low NEET rates for young people with high qualifications, there are too few for our analysis. Instead, we use an estimate. We know there are between 0 and 10, so we use five, the midpoint. This is such a small part of many figures (e.g. the overall local authority NEET rates) that it actually makes no difference whether it’s between 0 and 10.

(2) In Chapter 1, figures for Shropshire are based on June 2017 rather than March 2017. For local authorities with both sets of figures available, there are generally very small differences, and on average no differences, between the two figures.

(3) In Chapter 2, figures for Herefordshire are only available for one cohort of young people without good GCSEs. This cohort is obviously not typical, so we make no analysis for this qualification group. Data is also missing for one cohort of young people with top GCSEs. As this cohort is atypical, our analysis uses the available five cohorts of data, and the 2008 cohort are excluded entirely.

Cohort	Year EET / NEET observed							
	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
2007	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
2008		18	19	20	21	22	23	24
2009			18	19	20	21	22	23
2010				18	19	20	21	22
2011					18	19	20	21
2012						18	19	20

(4) In Chapter 2, figures for Shropshire are only available for three cohorts of young people without good GCSEs. Analysis is based on these three cohorts. Analysis of national figures suggests that the differences from cohort to cohort are minimal, and so it is reasonable to consider these figures are sufficiently representative of the overall picture.

(5) In Chapter 3, Herefordshire is excluded. We only have data for the three most recent cohorts. However, one of the main findings about apprenticeships is that due to the growth in apprenticeship starts, more recent cohorts are different to earlier cohorts. It is therefore not appropriate to use these figures in comparison to other local authorities.

¹ Impetus, *Establishing the Employment Gap*, April 2019

² Impetus, *Research Briefing 2: Higher Education*, May 2019

³ Impetus, *Research Briefing 3: Apprenticeships*, June 2019

⁴ NEON, *Working Class Heroes*, February 2019



Impetus