MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVE KEY QUALIFICATION LEVEL

Level 2 attainment at 19 rises by 5.1 percentage points

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A large increase in the number and proportion of young people achieving level 2 qualifications - five GCSEs grades A*-C or the vocational equivalent - has been announced today.

In 2004, 66.3 per cent of 19 year olds had reached level 2, but official statistics released today show that 71.4 per cent achieved this level last year – surpassing the target of 69.3 per cent.¹

Level 2 provides a crucial platform of skills for employability. The increase means that the equivalent of over 40,000 more 19 year olds have achieved better prospects for good careers, compared to those who turned 19 in 2004².

Congratulating young people, teachers and lecturers on their success, Minister for 14-19 Learning, Jim Knight said:

“This is fantastic news for the thousands of young people who have knuckled down and committed to hard work to gain these qualifications. It not only means that they can look forward to a brighter future, but that employers will benefit through a more highly skilled workforce – making the UK more competitive and productive.”

¹ The 2004 figures are based on official statistics released today. ² The figures for 2004 are based on official statistics released today.
“These results are crucial both helping young people prepare for life and meeting the country’s raised aspirations for skills outlined in the Leitch report. We are building on these improvements in developing a new system of 14-19 education.

“The new Diplomas, along with provision of the right guidance and support, sufficient, appropriate provision offered to all young people, and a better taught, more engaging curriculum will ensure young people will have the skills and qualifications they need to succeed at work and in their future learning.”

The results mean that the Department for Education and Skills and Learning and Skills Council have met their targets to increase the number of 19 year olds achieving level 2 by 2006. An increasing proportion of 19 year olds has also qualified to Level 3 – equivalent to 2 A levels.

By achieving the key level 2 qualifications, young people can look forward to:

- A higher starting salary – of £1,700 more a year, compared to those without five good GCSEs or the vocational equivalent.iii
- An 88 per cent higher chance of skilled employment.iv
- A far higher likelihood to be working for an employer who will invest time and money in their development. v

Melanie Hunt, National Director of Learning at the Learning and Skills Council, said:

“Meeting this target is a real achievement for young people and everyone involved in the learning sector. It should be welcomed by all those who care about young people’s futures. The lecturers and teachers in further education as well as employers who offer Apprenticeships and other work-based learning have done a
fantastic job in ensuring that young people get the learning and training they need to achieve these qualifications.

“We also know that education professionals, along with parents and the media have played a crucial role in helping us raise awareness of the need for young people to get level 2 qualifications in order to improve their life chances.

“These figures also suggest that the traditional financial barrier to participation after 16, experienced by young people in the past, is now being tackled, thanks in part to schemes such as Education Maintenance Allowance.”

Jim Knight concluded:

“These results are a significant milestone but the numbers of young people needing to gain level 2 qualifications needs to go on increasing. As the Leitch Review highlighted, we will need around 90 per cent of people skilled to this level by 2020.

“We are committed to meeting the needs of both young people and the economy and have set ourselves an aspiration that 85 per cent of 19 year olds should reach level 2 by 2013. We will build on the excellent progress made to date to increase performance further to meet our aspirations and implement our ambitious proposals for 14-19 education.”

The new data also reveals that the number of 19 year olds achieving level 3 qualifications – such as A-Levels or their vocational equivalents – has risen by 4.7 percentage points since 2004 to 46.8 per cent in 2006, also in line with government targets.
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Notes to Editors
This press notice applies to England only.

Level 2 and 3 Attainment by Young People in England Measured Using Matched Administrative Data: Attainment by Age 19 in 2006 was published on 27 February 2007
(http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000710/index.shtml)

This announced the outturn of the 2006 PSA target - measured using matched administrative data, and set the baseline for the 2008 target.

- 71.4 percent of people aged 19 in 2006 were qualified to at least level 2
- This means we are 5.1 percentage points ahead of where we were in 2004 and we have exceeded the 2006 target of 69.3 percent by 2.1 percentage points.
- The baseline for 2006 is now set at 71.4 percent and the target for 2008 is 73.4 percent.
- An increasing proportion of 19 year olds are qualified to level 3 – 46.8 percent of people aged 19 in 2006 compared with 45.6 percent of people aged 19 in 2005.

Raising Attainment Now

Our ambition is to improve the system for those who are in it now. We are building on the recent improvements in level 2 and 3 attainment at 19 so that year on year more young people will achieve level 2 or 3 by the age of 19 and far fewer will drop out before the age of 18. We will achieve this by:

- working towards our aspiration that 90% of 17 year olds will be participating in education or training by 2015; participation figures published in June 2006 show that we are currently at 76%;
- increasing the numbers that get a level 2 and level 3 by ensuring they get the right guidance and support to make the transition into post-16 learning;
- ensuring sufficient, appropriate provision is in place to meet their needs and guaranteeing the offer of a learning place by the end of September – the ‘September Guarantee’ – which will be in place in all areas by September 2007.
- introducing a post-16 progression measure to recognise and incentivise schools to support young people to make choices at 16 which lead them to achieve success. We
are currently consulting on introduction of the measure at www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations;

- continuing the drive to raise standards in our schools and colleges, focusing particularly on the quality of teaching and learning;

- enabling early intervention for those young people who are likely to drop out by having systems in place to track them through their educational experience and the right provision in place for them to move in to;

- increasing the numbers who complete apprenticeships thereby giving them better opportunities to progress in work now and in the future; and

- reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training, by: improving information, advice and guidance; intervening early to prevent those at risk of disengagement pre-16; improving financial support for 16-19 year olds; and guaranteeing the offer of a learning place by the end of September through the ‘September Guarantee’.

LSC
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Apprenticeships
- There are currently over 250,000 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 180 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce

- Apprenticeships provide 16-24 year-olds with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they are being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated young people

- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
  - ‘Apprenticeships’, equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
  - ‘Advanced Apprenticeships’, equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,810 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for the EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site www.direct.gov.uk/ema for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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*SFR 06/2007, 27 February 2007. For the full statistical release, please visit www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000710/index.shtml*
ii 407,500 in 2004 and 451,200 in 2006 – an increase of 43,700.
iii The Learning and Skills Council commissioned YouGov to independently question 412 employers online between 21st-24th July 2006.
iv 47 per cent of employers would offer people without Level 2 an unskilled job, compared to 25 per cent who’d offer a similar unskilled job to people with Level 2 (LSC employers research, July 2006).
v 32 per cent of employers said they would invest in someone with Level 2, compared to just 2 per cent who said they’d invest time and money in someone without Level 2 (LSC employers research, July 2006) – a 1,500 per cent increase.
vi In a study of adults who dropped out of education or training at 16, over half (54 per cent) did so because they wanted to earn money while over a quarter (26 per cent) did so because they felt they simply couldn’t afford to stay on. The LSC commissioned YouGov to interview a sample of 2,183 individuals online, representative of the adult population of Great Britain, between 2nd and 4th August 2005. 825 of the respondents did not stay in education or training after 16.