



Research Facts

September 2008

Fact Sheet 01

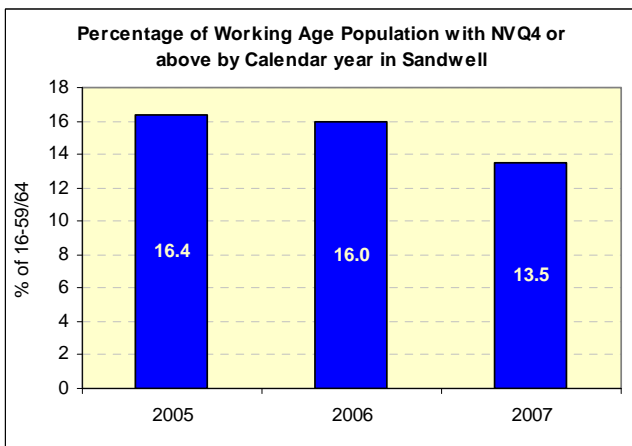
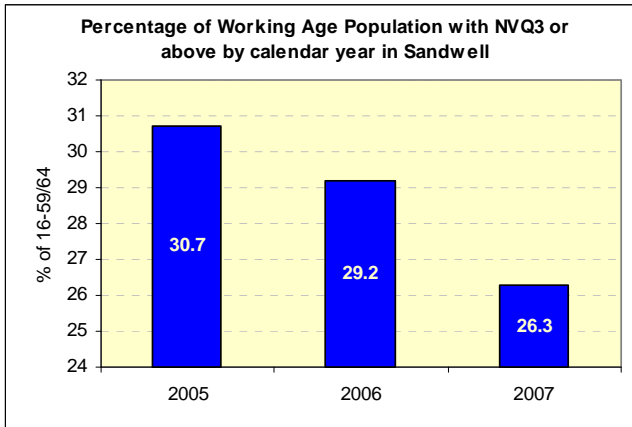
PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SANDWELL

The information presented in this memorandum is consistent with the following assumptions:

- 1. That access to higher education in terms of geographical provision is not an issue, but that Sandwell's residents are experiencing barriers which is keeping participation in HE relatively low.**
- 2. The signs are that participation is increasing despite currently falling NVQ3+ qualification levels. As qualification levels begin to improve again under Sandwell's LAA commitments, demand for university places will presumably increase.**
- 3. If a local university were available, this might even act as a pull factor on young people's aspirations at college and school level, creating positive feedback between secondary, further and higher education.**
- 4. There is increasing speculation nationally that students are generally staying closer to home when they choose universities and large numbers in Sandwell seem to prefer local provision, with over two thirds of Sandwell's students choosing to study in the West Midlands.**
- 5. Sandwell students appear to access vocational courses such as nursing and teaching more than academic subjects (such as history or mathematics).**

NVQ attainment

- The number of people of working age with NVQ3 or NVQ 4 has been dropping significantly over the past three years.
- Although there is some discussion over whether this survey-based data is representative of what is really happening in Sandwell, the data suggests that within the working age population, those who are more highly qualified are moving away from the borough.



Source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS 2008

Year 11 destination choices

- The proportion of Sandwell's year eleven children going on to full-time education is lower than that for England & Wales, whereas the proportion going on to non-employed work-based learning is higher.
- There is no evidence gathered as yet by SMBC on the hypothesised notion that bright children living in Sandwell tend to go to good schools over the borough boundary, and that the possibility that these children are not accounted for in the figures for school leaver destinations is behind Sandwell's lower levels of engagement in higher education.

Year 11 destinations (% of all year 11 leavers)

Destination	Sandwell	Eng & Wales
Full Time Education	75	80
Work based learning (non-employed)	6.7	2.9
Employment with Training	2.7	6.5
Full Time Employment without training	3.8	2.1
Voluntary and part-time activities	0.7	?
NEET - Active in the labour market	7.8	?
NEET - Not active in the labour market	0.9	0.7
Unknown	2.4	2.4

Source: Connexions 2008

- SMBC Data Intelligence Team are confident that once data sharing agreements are in place with our local authority neighbours, this question can be addressed.
- Evidence does exist that children moving from primary to secondary schools may be showing this behaviour: when grammar schools, independent schools and single sex schools are included in the analysis, Sandwell is a net exporter of pupils, but when these school types are excluded, Sandwell is a net importer of pupils.

Student numbers as a proportion of 15-24 year-olds

- Sandwell has fewer students as a proportion of its population of young people than its Black Country neighbours. However, looking at the patterns of change in student numbers over the past four years, Sandwell has the fastest growing student population of the BC boroughs. We are currently awaiting applications and enrolment data in order to be able to examine whether this increase is due to more people applying for university

Total student numbers as a proportion of all 15-24 year olds in 2007

LA	People aged 15-24 ('000s)	Total students	Ratio of students to young people
Wolverhampton	32.5	7632	23.5%
Dudley	37.6	7429	19.8%
Walsall	33.8	6323	18.7%
Sandwell	39.1	6710	17.2%

Source: 2007 HESA statistics (2008), University of Wolverhampton; Office for National Statistics Mid Year 2007 Population Estimates (2008)

Change in registered students over the past four years

Academic Year	Sandwell	Dudley	Wolverhampton	Walsall	Total
2003/4	6,406	7,230	7,294	6,075	27,005
2004/5	6,521	7,269	7,442	6,244	27,476
2005/6	6,673	7,391	7,627	6,279	27,970
2006/7	6,710	7,429	7,632	6,323	28,094
% increase 2004-2007	4.7%	2.8%	4.6%	4.1%	4.0%

Source: HESA statistics 2008, University of Wolverhampton

places, or whether other factors (such as drop-out rates, for example) are the principal cause of this change.

Destination choices for Sandwell students

- Of the 6,710 students registered in 2007 with home addresses in Sandwell, 26% attended the University of Wolverhampton, 17% Birmingham City University, and 9% the University of Birmingham. Over two thirds of all Sandwell students attend universities within the West Midlands region.

All students registered in the top nine Universities chosen by Sandwell students

Institution	Student Numbers	Percentage of all students
The University of Wolverhampton	1720	25.6%
Birmingham City University	1155	17.2%
The University of Birmingham	568	8.5%
The Open University	500	7.5%
Coventry University	328	4.9%
Aston University	279	4.2%
Newman College of Higher Education	191	2.8%
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies	171	2.5%
The University of Worcester	138	2.1%

Source: HESA statistics 2008, University of Wolverhampton

- The most popular courses amongst Sandwell residents are Nursing, Education and Business Studies. This pattern is similar for all BC boroughs.

Top 15 subjects chosen for study by Black Country students

Course Chosen	Sandwell	Dudley	Wolverhampton	Walsall	Total
(B7) Nursing	9.7	10.6	9.2	10.0	9.8
(X3) Academic studies in education	8.0	8.6	7.2	7.4	7.9
(N1) Business studies	5.9	4.4	4.9	4.5	5.1
(G4) Computer science	4.3	3.2	5.2	3.8	4.3
(N2) Management studies	3.4	2.8	4.2	3.2	3.5
(L5) Social work	3.2	2.6	2.9	2.6	2.9
(C8) Psychology	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.9	3.0
(X1) Training teachers	3.0	4.2	2.7	3.8	3.3
(M1) Law by area	3.0	1.8	4.0	3.1	2.9
(Y0) Combined	3.0	3.4	2.6	3.3	3.0
(W2) Design studies	2.8	3.2	4.2	2.5	3.4
(B9) Others in subjects allied to medicine	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.6
(M2) Law by topic	2.6	1.8	1.8	2.2	2.0
(N4) Accounting	2.1	1.4	2.0	1.8	1.8
(Q3) English studies	2.1	3.2	2.4	2.8	2.6
Total enrolled students	6710	7429	7632	6323	28094

Source: HESA statistics 2008, University of Wolverhampton

Further research

The following further research might be usefully undertaken for the expression of interest, given appropriate time and resources:

- Analysis of movements of pupils in the transition between year 11 and year 12, linked to levels of academic achievement.
- Linking the data presented here to income and deprivation levels to assess the impact of economic factors on accessibility of higher education (e.g., examining the relationship between living in social housing and the likelihood of progressing to university).
- Matching information about young adults leaving year 13 of school with social classification information (e.g. MOSAIC)
- Obtaining more detailed information on student numbers and enrolment details to allow a finer-grained understanding of the issues surrounding access and choice.
- Qualitative work to assess aspirations and perceived barriers to accessing higher education amongst Sandwell residents.
- Economic assessment of sectors most likely to adopt *Train to Gain* programme: examine employer barriers and issues.

For more information, please contact:

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