



University  
of Exeter

South-West Social  
Mobility Commission

# TURNING THE TIDE

## **SWSMC Annual Report 2024**

**June 2024**

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## Acknowledgements

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- **Great South West**
- **Somerset Council**
- **University of Exeter**

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We would like to thank 'A' and Bella Dash for providing the examples of young people's experiences included in this report.





# Foreword

**The South-West Social Mobility Commission (SWSMC) was set up a year ago to actively improve social mobility in the region. Its establishment was a response to the disturbing evidence powerfully set out in the report ‘Social Mobility in the South West’ (Sim and Elliot Major, 2022). The compelling evidence there revealed that the South West had the lowest social mobility of any region in England. None of us who live in the region – to which we are passionately devoted – could conceivably accept that state of affairs. Thus the Commission has always been, and will always be, ambitious to change the facts on the ground. We want to be proud of our region, not just of its landscape and history but also its ambition and social mobility.**

To make this possible, the Commission brought together leaders from education, civil society and business who together could act to make a difference – to enhance aspirations, to challenge the low-skill, low-wage traditions of the South-West economy, to strengthen education across the age ranges, and across the region, and to change business recruiting and staff development practices to ensure opportunity and progression for all those willing to continuously develop themselves. In other words, success will depend on fundamental culture change.

This year’s report shows that, in spite of the commitment and changing practices of many institutions across the region, there has been little progress yet in changing those stubborn facts. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged 11-year-olds leaving primary school with expected levels in reading, writing and maths remains barely unchanged, at just 38%. None of us ever thought this would be easy.

More positively, there are signs that some of the necessary building blocks are coming into place.

- At our major event last summer circa 120 business and other civic leaders assembled to discuss practical ways businesses can support the social mobility agenda: from offering T-level placements and apprenticeships to reducing the need for unnecessary qualifications.
- Education leaders are focusing more sharply on disadvantage as the message has been communicated through presentations reaching over 3000 people in the sector. We have also developed an ‘equity scorecard’ which we are piloting with five schools in the peninsula to collect and analyse new data (such as rates of attendance at parents evening) to strengthen the ways in which they support students from under-resourced backgrounds (page 44).
- Our pioneering quality-focused, free-to-schools tutoring scheme has scaled this year, reaching around 350 pupils through a partnership with Next Step South-West; a cohort of participating pupils attended a ‘graduation ceremony’ at the University of Exeter where they received certificates from Sir Ben Bradshaw (page 43).
- Building on our Tech Frontier report, we are working on a pilot with the Cornwall and Devon Careers Hubs and other key tech and education partners benefitting over 2000 students through 30 secondary school tech workshops and 7 tech work experience schemes (pages 45 to 50).
- In the Early Years, we have been developing an agenda for improvement; one Council has already said that they will reconsider how they promote nutritional standards in early years settings (page 43).
- Each of the Commissioners has been involved in projects which provide local solutions to local issues – from transport to homelessness to skills shortages – looking beyond education to think more broadly about how to improve the life-chances of infants, children and young adults by creating opportunities and pathways (like new apprenticeships) that did not previously exist (pages 35 to 40).
- Examples include:
  - CELT is looking to offer HE qualifications to their own support staff to become Early Years practitioners within their school settings – an example of improving life outcomes for adults as well as children (page 37).
  - Young Devon is supporting the upskilling of young people who might otherwise be experiencing homelessness by providing them with accommodation and helping them to access and progress into training and employment. £2.7m of government funding has



enabled the creation of 50 one-bedroom units to support this initiative (page 40).

- Somerset County Cricket Club has developed a programme called Bridging the Gap for talented young cricketers – girls and boys – from state schools; this provides extra hours of coaching for them through the winter so they can keep up with their private school peers (page 35).

- Petroc is consulting on the establishment of a new Northern Devon Sixth Form to enable and encourage young people to study A-levels or alternative academic qualifications locally (page 40).

- New apprenticeship routes have been established to help local young people gain the skills they need for well-paid jobs: from NHS Somerset's nursing and healthcare apprenticeship at Bridgwater and Taunton College (part of an ambition to deliver a Healthcare Academy for Somerset) to new degree apprenticeships at the University of Exeter in digital, engineering, finance, management and healthcare (pages 36 and 37).

All this is just the beginning. It's not enough. It's not nearly enough. We will only succeed in changing the stubborn facts, by mobilising the entire region. Its people and especially its leaders need to believe in the possibility of transformation. The economy of the South West is changing with the emergence of 21st century businesses in, for example, sectors such as environment, digital, engineering and energy; now people and communities need to change too so they are able to seize the opportunities that will surely result.

For the SWSMC that means that in the year ahead we need to accelerate change, develop more telling examples of what can be done and, through vibrant and continuous advocacy shift the culture. By the time of our 2025 annual report we will need powerful stories of measurable improvement in social mobility in every sector and growing evidence that the culture of the region is changing – higher aspiration for every individual, greater belief in the possibility of progress and, above all, a palpable and growing sense that the human potential of the South-West region is at least as great as that of any region in this country, or indeed regions anywhere else in the world.

**Sir Michael Barber**

*Chair, South-West Social Mobility Commission*



# Executive Summary

## New evidence from the region's educational outcomes data shows that the South West is the lowest-performing region in the country for young people from under-resourced backgrounds.

- From the early years to higher-level education, children from the lowest-income backgrounds in the South West are the furthest behind across a number of key measures.
- As in previous years, headline outcomes for all children and young people mask the very poor outcomes being achieved by those from poorer backgrounds.
- The sharpest year-on-year decrease in the proportion of disadvantaged young people obtaining a level 3 qualification by age 19, meaning the region now has the lowest proportion achieving this qualification – **34% compared with 42% nationally**.
- The lowest proportion of disadvantaged young people going on to higher level (level 4+) qualifications – **51% compared with 68% nationally**.

The latest education data shows that in comparison to other English regions, the South West has:

- The lowest proportion of Free School Meals (FSM)-eligible 5-year-olds reaching expected levels of development across Early Years Foundation Stage goals – **46% compared with 50% of children nationally**.
- The lowest proportion of disadvantaged 11-year-olds reaching expected levels in reading, writing and maths – **38% compared with 44% nationally**.<sup>1</sup>
- The highest school absence figures in the country for the autumn term of 2023/24 – including a **12%** overall absence rate across primary and secondary levels for FSM-eligible students, **compared with 10% nationally** – largely driven by authorised absence.<sup>2</sup>
- A lower proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving a grade 4 or above in English and maths GCSE than the England average – **40% compared with 44% nationally**, making it the third-lowest performing region of nine English regions.
- The joint-lowest proportion of disadvantaged young people attaining level 2 qualifications in English and maths by age 19 – **52% compared with 57% nationally**.

This year, we have also examined data from multi-academy trusts as part of our analysis (pages 28 to 34). At the highest-performing trust in the country, in London, 60% of disadvantaged pupils achieved both English and maths GCSE at grade 5 or above. This compares to 34% at the highest-performing trust in the South West. Whilst context will play a significant role in these differences, the analysis suggests that there are lessons from trusts performing well on these measures.

Ultimately, this is not about education alone, but about the challenges of social mobility in what is the most coastal and most rural of all English regions. This is about often-overlooked rural poverty, working poor families and issues of geographic disconnection in the South-West peninsula. To improve outcomes requires all civic leaders – across the public, private and voluntary/charitable sectors – collectively prioritising and tackling these challenges.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these stark challenges, the Commission's work highlighted in this report points to the beginning of a more positive future for young people across the region.

1 In the data we present, 'disadvantaged' refers to the Department for Education's definition of disadvantaged students as those who are "eligible for free school meals at any point within the past six years and students looked after by the local authority".

2 Authorised absence is when a pupil misses (or is absent from) at least one possible school session with the permission of a teacher or other authorised school representative. One session is equivalent to half a day.

3 We detail the challenges for the region in our 2022 report 'Social Mobility in the South West' (Sim and Elliot Major, 2022).



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# Introduction

**This is the second annual report of the South-West Social Mobility Commission.<sup>4</sup> In the report, we present a summary of the latest data relating to social mobility, with the aim of holding the region to account.**

The Commission was set up in 2023 to tackle the poor education and early career outcomes being faced by children and young people from under-resourced backgrounds across the South-West peninsula. These systemically poor outcomes are both unfair for those children and young people born by happenstance into less well-off families, as well as a serious challenge to the region's future stability and prosperity. The region's social mobility issues need to be addressed, collectively and urgently. The Commission brings together a group of civic leaders and a dedicated strategy unit to drive action across the region to address these issues.

At the start of our second year, we want to write a new story for the region. For decades, the peninsula has been thought of as a place of seascapes, sleepy villages, tourism and second homes. But this is changing. Exciting large-scale developments requiring a skilled workforce are transforming the landscape: from space exploration and lithium mining in Cornwall, to floating offshore wind and submarine building in Devon, to nuclear energy and battery production in Somerset. Meanwhile creativity and entrepreneurialism abound, as highlighted by our forthcoming Annual Event and recently published 'Tech Frontier' report.<sup>5</sup> These developments represent opportunities for both regional economic growth and social mobility – potentially offering young people routes to secure, well-paid, skilled employment in the region.

But these opportunities won't automatically benefit young people from under-resourced backgrounds. As the experiences written by young people in this report viscerally demonstrate, without concerted efforts by employers, education providers and other civic leaders to address the large and systemic barriers that currently exist in the region, accessing these opportunities remains difficult if not impossible for many young people. We urgently need to level the playing field at every opportunity, so that all young people have the knowledge, exposure, resources, guidance and connections to discover, access and then thrive within this new landscape.

In this report, we present work that's helping to drive change: from our Commissioners leading action within and beyond their organisations and sectors to the practical

research and recommendations set out by our Commission Strategy Unit, which is working to drive piloting and embedding of its recommendations across key actors. We showcase highlights from our recently published report, 'The Tech Frontier', which presents recommendations for getting more young people, especially those from under-resourced backgrounds, into tech jobs – with lessons for rural areas that can be applied across other sectors.

We have a plan, but there is a long way to go. Evidence from the region's educational outcomes based on published government data is stark. And new data presented from multi-academy trusts show that across a range of secondary-level attainment measures, low-income pupils in the region perform significantly worse than elsewhere.

Employment and pay data show a more mixed picture, but worth recognising is the fact that, whilst pay figures aren't the worst in the country, they massively lag the rest of the South of England – despite the fact that housing and the cost of living are comparable to elsewhere in the South, and particularly so in the peninsula.

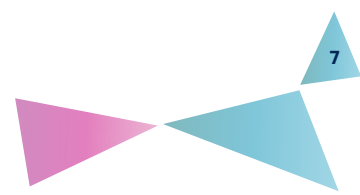
These issues aren't down to education providers alone to solve. Underlying poor education outcomes are barriers that range from a low-wage economy and the impact of poorly paid jobs on the lives of children growing up in working poor families; to geographic disconnectedness and the significant barriers young people and families face in accessing education and other services; to a lack of impetus for change with some school leaders, communities and politicians believing things are 'fine' and the absence of a strong political voice at the national level advocating on behalf of the region.<sup>6</sup>

We need everyone in the region – employers and education providers along with public and third sector organisations – pulling in the same direction to prioritise social mobility. In the first instance, we propose that everyone, across the region, applies a 'social mobility lens' to decision-making: asking yourself whether you're considering young people from under-resourced backgrounds in your decisions and whether what you're doing is supporting those young people to thrive.

<sup>4</sup> Our 'Introductory Report' last year set out our vision shortly after the creation of the South-West Social Mobility Commission (Sim, Bickford Smith and Elliot Major, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Sim and Elliot Major (2024).

<sup>6</sup> As outlined in more detail in the 2022 report 'Social Mobility in the South West' (Sim and Elliot Major, 2022).



# Barriers to opportunity: young people's experiences

## Bella Dash, from North Devon

This time last year I held an offer to study Geography at the University of Oxford. Unfortunately, despite my hard work, I didn't meet the conditions of the offer.

Since I lost the offer, I have looked for other opportunities within the geography field, however I haven't been able to find any in my area, particularly because I don't have a degree.

To add to this, I haven't been able to find much support with deciding what to do next. I've been told my grades are "too good" for my college to pay for my retakes. I got BBD but there is very little I can use them for and unfortunately I can't afford to retake, which would have made a massive difference to the university I can go to.

Because of the lack of meaningful employment in North Devon, I still work in housekeeping, and I honestly don't know when I'll be able to go to university.

I've never been the type of person to give in but sometimes it feels like everything is stacked against me.

While at college I joined the Student Union, as Environmental Officer, then President. I sat on the Board of Governors, gave talks about applying to Oxbridge, became a senior Exeter Scholar, started mapping for the Red Cross, joined Zero Gravity, joined an extra-curricular for sustainability, and spoke at this Commission but I've seen no benefit.

In September of 2023 I bought a broken old van and moved into it. I felt I needed to move out and start afresh. Since then, it has leaked profusely, caught on fire and now it's not starting but I've persevered.

Recently I've received an offer from the University of Reading to study Geography in 2025. I've decided I'm going to take some more time before going to university. I've just gotten a new job as an Outdoor Pursuits instructor working with children, which I'm incredibly excited about, and in my free time I'm hoping to travel around the UK and Europe.



## A, 26, from Devon

I was born in Plymouth in 1998 to a teenage mum with mental health problems and a father with substance abuse issues. After my sister was born, when I was around four years old, my parents separated.

We moved around a lot, mostly between council estates all over Devon, meaning I went to five different schools. At the first two schools I was badly bullied and experienced a lot of violence. Despite these challenges, I was naturally quite bright and got moved up a class. I think part of this was down to my mum's love of reading and getting read to a lot when I was little, and reading a lot myself.

I remember feeling poor, especially in my third primary school, which was in a nicer area so I had wealthier peers. They would talk about their trips abroad or have great costumes for World Book Day. There were times I would have to look for change behind the sofa cushions to try and get £5 to put on the electric key. Or run out of good food and just have cereal to eat for a few days until more money came in from welfare. I had free school meals in primary school which helped.

At secondary school, I relied on my mum driving me for transport and due to her health issues my attendance was around 50%, and I began to fall behind. Midway through Year 7 I moved to a more local school. Our subjects got limited to "core subjects" so my favourite subjects became unavailable at GCSE.

When I was 14, I ran away from home due to an increasingly stressful home life. I started sofa surfing at friends. I then spent over a year living in my dad's caravan independently, using the child benefit my dad gave me to buy groceries and pay for the bus fare to school. The journey took more than two hours each day.

But I had a great time at college doing A-levels! For the first time, I had great friends and was really enjoying my studies in world development, geography and business. My predicted grades then slipped to C D D in second year because I was focusing too much on my event management business with friends. Then, after one particular night at a friend's place, some kind of epiphany struck me. I realised I didn't want to spend my life like my dad chasing hedonistic pleasures. The next day, I turned off my phone and began studying relentlessly. In six weeks, I went from C D D to A\* A\* A grades.

I got accepted to all of my UCAS options and had great universities to choose from. However, seeing how debt has crippled people growing up I opted to defer. I never followed up. I did the maths and realised I couldn't afford to go to university in the UK and didn't want to take on an expected £45,000 debt.

I decided not to go to university straight away. After travelling, I moved to the Netherlands at the age of 20 to begin my BSc in International Development Management. I paid just 1000 euros for the first year of tuition and 2000 euros for each subsequent year. Because I worked 56 hours a month alongside my studies, the Dutch government gave me a subsidy of an additional 400 euros. I also received 1600 euros from ERASMUS to do six months of studies in Norway. I found it crazy how foreign countries offered more support than my own.

Once I graduated, I moved back to the UK. All of my friends from Europe went into high-paid jobs and interesting careers in International Development. I sent over 50 job applications but the only one I was eventually able to get was a minimum-wage traineeship as a surveyor in Warwickshire. After a year, I left and moved back to Devon. I get the same hourly rate to move boxes and drive a van part time.

I have very skilled and educated friends who are massively underemployed. Everyone I know feels burnt out from work and can barely afford a room in a shared house and food. Most of my friends have taken to living in vans and caravans to avoid the rent trap. Many have just given up and chase alcohol and drugs.

My current plan to create stability and have the option for social mobility is to move to Canada on a two-year youth mobility visa, followed by New Zealand and Australia. My few friends here that graduated university are all planning to leave to Canada, Australia and New Zealand so I see a massive brain drain occurring. This pathway seems much more possible and interesting than trying to make it in the UK, whose economy doesn't work for workers and which only seems to hold back aspirations.



# Key outcomes data for the region

The following chapter explores social mobility in the South West at four different life stages, **aligned to the Commission's four life-stage goals**: the early years (0-5), school, 16-18 education and training, and early adulthood/adulthood. We present the latest available data, providing an update on the key measures reported upon in previous reports<sup>7</sup> - with the aim of holding the region to account on its social mobility record.

This year we report on some new metrics too: the loss of nursery and childcare places and school absence figures.

In 2023, data was presented at the local authority district level. This year, where it has been possible to do so, the data is presented at the parliamentary constituency level to give a greater degree of geographic detail.<sup>8</sup>

As identified in previous reports, the South West is the lowest-performing region in the country for those from under-resourced backgrounds on various key measures. This poor performance is masked by headline attainment rates for all students, which tend to be roughly in line with national averages.

Within each of the four life stages outlined the South West faces unique challenges both within and beyond education and employment. Some of these, as identified in previous reports, relate to the challenges posed by rurality and poor transport links, the implications of an economy with many low-paying jobs and a lack of impetus for change<sup>9</sup>. Altogether, the evidence from this and previous reports is clear: **we urgently need collaborative action across the region to change the dial on the region's social mobility performance.**

## Early Years

### Early Years Foundation Stage Goals – aged 5

In the Early Years, a key outcomes measure is the proportion of children reaching expected levels of development across Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) goals – a series of assessments carried out at the end of children's Reception year. The performance of infants in the South West living in deprivation (as measured by FSM eligibility) has remained static, with **only 46.1% of FSM-eligible infants reaching the expected standard** across all EYFS goals.<sup>10</sup> This means around 3,600 disadvantaged infants in the region met these developmental goals, while over 4,200 didn't. **Last year, the South West was the third worst of all English regions on this measure: this year, it is the worst.**

This contrasts sharply with the picture for all children, where the South West performed above the England average, with 68.5% of children achieving the expected standard across all EYFS goals. This is an improvement compared to last year's 66.3% and puts the South West ahead of six other English regions on this measure.

Whilst these headline figures present a positive picture of improvement, they mask the underperformance of disadvantaged children. The gap between the percentage of all children meeting EYFS expected standards and the percentage of FSM-eligible children meeting the same standards is 20.7 percentage points, which is bigger in the South West than in any other English region – and 0.5 percentage points bigger than this gap was in the South West last year.

<sup>7</sup> These are: Social Mobility in the South West (2022) and the South-West Social Mobility Commission's Introductory Report (2023).

<sup>8</sup> This is based on the 2010-2024 parliamentary boundaries. See Appendix for a map of South-West peninsula constituencies.

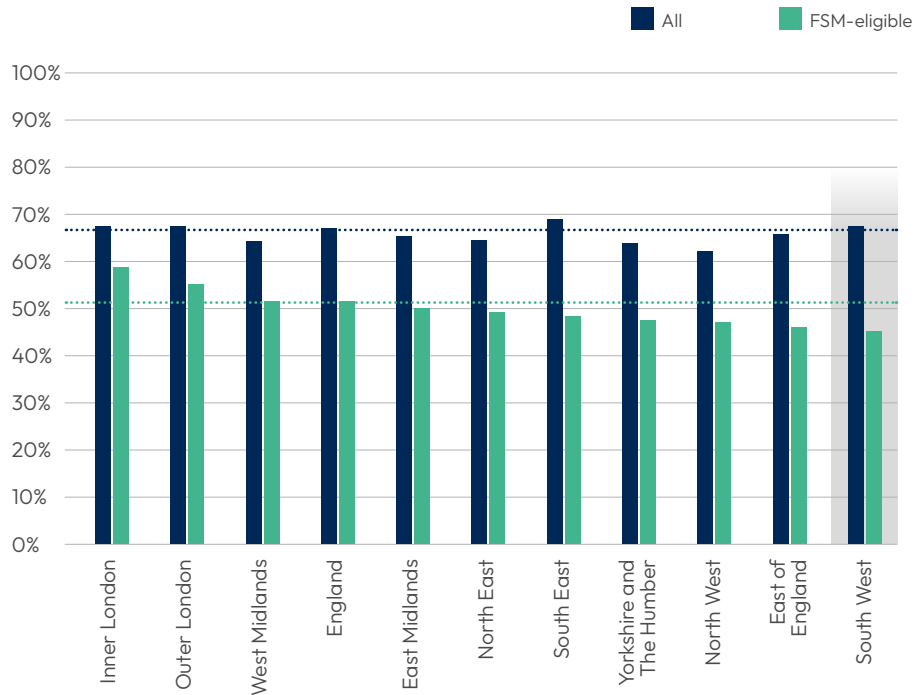
<sup>9</sup> Sim and Elliot Major (2022).

<sup>10</sup> Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, Department for Education, March 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-early-years-foundation-stage-profile>.



**Figure 1** Percentage of infants meeting EYFS goals (2022/23), by region

Source: DfE, April 2024



**Figure 2** Percentage of FSM-eligible infants meeting EYFS goals (2022/23), by parliamentary constituency

Source: DfE, April 2024

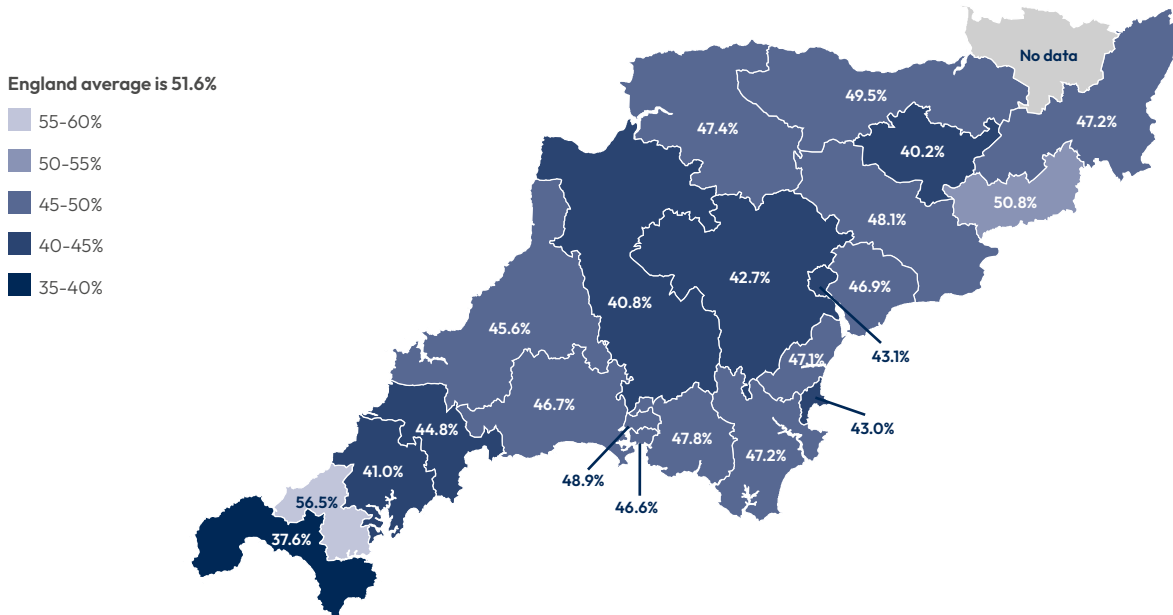


Figure 2 presents this same data broken down by South-West peninsula parliamentary constituency and this reflects a similar story: **22 out of 23 constituencies are below the England average when it comes to disadvantaged children meeting expected levels of development.**<sup>11</sup>

Only Camborne and Redruth (56.5%) outperformed the England average.

St Ives has the lowest percentage of FSM-eligible children meeting the expected level of development (37.6%).

When looking at all children, 11 out of 23 South-West parliamentary constituencies are above the England average. Torbay has the lowest percentage of all children meeting EYFS goals (61.3%) overall.

<sup>11</sup> Freedom of Information request response (FSM eligible pupils meeting EYFS goals), Department for Education, March 2024.



### Childcare places lost – ages 0 – 4

This year, we have included a new measure: childcare places lost.<sup>12</sup> In the 12-month period from August 2022 to August 2023, the number of childcare places in each South West local authority area declined.<sup>13</sup>

Plymouth lost the biggest percentage of childcare places during this period – 6.2% (which represented a decrease of 296 places).

In terms of overall numbers, Devon (-376) and Cornwall (-355) lost the most childcare places during this period.

This represented a 3% decrease in Devon and a 4.1% decrease in Cornwall.

Torbay (-4 places or a decrease of 0.2%) lost the fewest places in this period, but this must be seen in the context of Torbay having already lost a substantial number of childcare places prior to August 2022, meaning that it has the fewest overall.

Figure 3 demonstrates the percentage of childcare places lost in each South-West local authority area, compared to the England average of 0.4%.

**Figure 3** Percentage of childcare places lost (2022/23), by local authority area

Source: DfE, April 2024

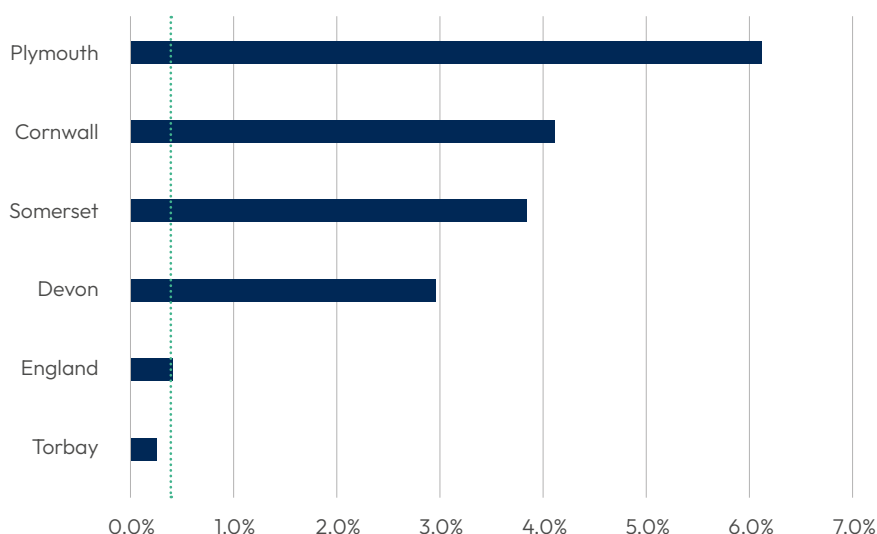


Figure 4 shows the number of childcare places left in each local authority area, as of August 2023, the 0-5 years population and the number of children per

available childcare place.<sup>14</sup> This shows that Torbay, which has the fewest places overall, also has the highest child:place ratio (1:5).

**Figure 4** Childcare places left in each local authority area, as of August 2023

Source: DfE and ONS, April 2024. SWSMC analysis of children per place

Local authority area	Childcare places left (as of August 2023)	0-5 Population (2021 census)	Children per place
England	1,263,184	3,735,639	2.9
Devon	12,677	43,396	3.4
Plymouth	4,519	16,150	3.6
Cornwall	8,607	31,339	3.7
Somerset	8,925	33,043	3.7
Torbay	1,622	7,441	4.6

12 Childcare places are an important measure both as an indication of the direct support available to families with infants and a more general reflection on the state of the early years sector in a locality.

13 Childcare and early years provider survey, Department for Education, March 2024. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey>.

14 A caveat here is that children start primary school at around aged 5: they can begin to attend from the September after turning aged 4 but must begin at the start of the term following turning aged 5.



## School

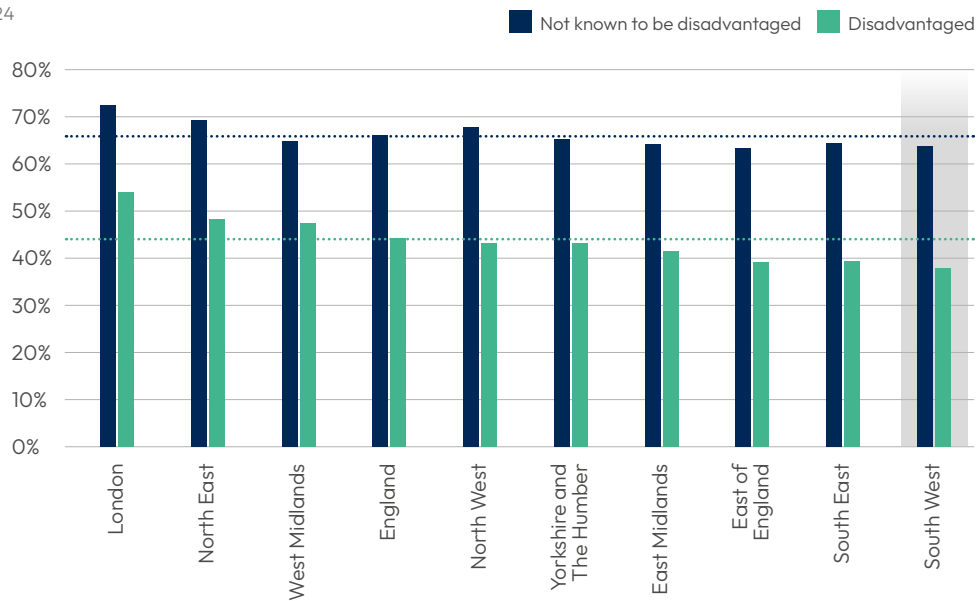
### Primary school outcomes

Figure 5 shows that **the South West continues to be the lowest-performing region in England for the percentage of disadvantaged children<sup>15</sup> reaching expected standards in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2).**

It is six percentage points below the England average on this measure. Whilst there has been a slight increase on 2021/22 (from 37% to 38%), the region continues to perform worse than it did in 2018/19. This means around 10,000 of the region's 16,000+ disadvantaged 11-year-olds left primary school without basic reading, writing and maths.

**Figure 5** Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard at KS2 in reading, writing and maths (combined) (2022/23), by region

Source: DfE, April 2024

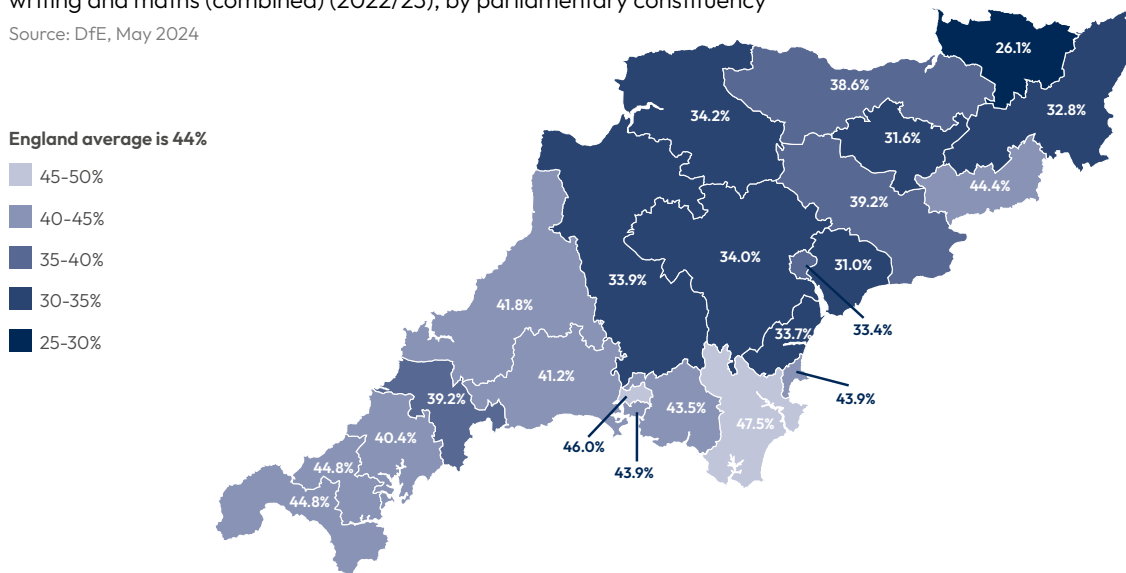


At an intra-regional level, Figure 6 shows that there is a smaller percentage of disadvantaged key stage 2 pupils meeting reading, writing and maths targets in Wells (26.1%) than any other parliamentary constituency.<sup>16</sup> The best performing constituency on this measure was Totnes (47.5%).

Only five South-West peninsula parliamentary constituencies were above the England average of 44%. In addition to Totnes, these were Plymouth Moor View (46%), Camborne and Redruth (44.8%), St Ives (44.8%) and Yeovil (44.4%).

**Figure 6** Percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard at KS2 in reading, writing and maths (combined) (2022/23), by parliamentary constituency

Source: DfE, May 2024



<sup>15</sup> In the data we present, 'disadvantaged' refers to the Department for Education's definition of disadvantaged students as those who are "eligible for free school meals at any point within the past six years and students looked after by the local authority".

<sup>16</sup> Freedom of Information request (percentage of disadvantaged key stage 2 pupils meeting reading, writing and maths targets), Department for Education, March 2024.



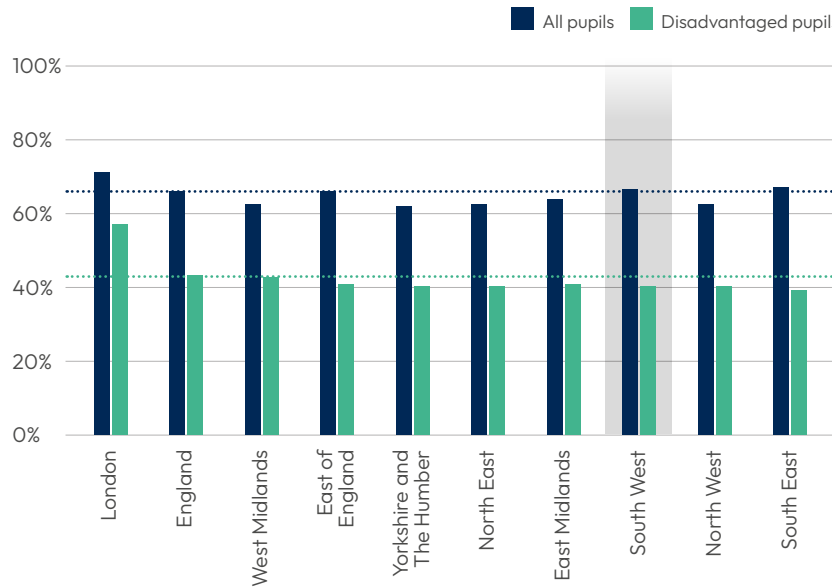
**Secondary school outcomes**

**In 2022/23, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils in the South West achieving grade 4 or above in GCSE English and maths (40.3%) was lower than the England average of 43.7%.** This means over 7,000 of the roughly 12,000 disadvantaged 16-year-olds in the region didn't attain these foundational qualifications at GCSE. As Figure 7 shows, the South West performed worse than all but two other English regions on this measure.

The region's below-average performance for disadvantaged pupils is concealed in headline measures: the South West performed roughly in line with the England average for the percentage of all pupils achieving a grade 4 or above in GCSE English and maths (65.6% in the South West compared to 65.4% in England).

**Figure 7** Percentage of all pupils achieving grades 4 or above in GCSE English and maths (2022/23), by region

Source: DfE, April 2024

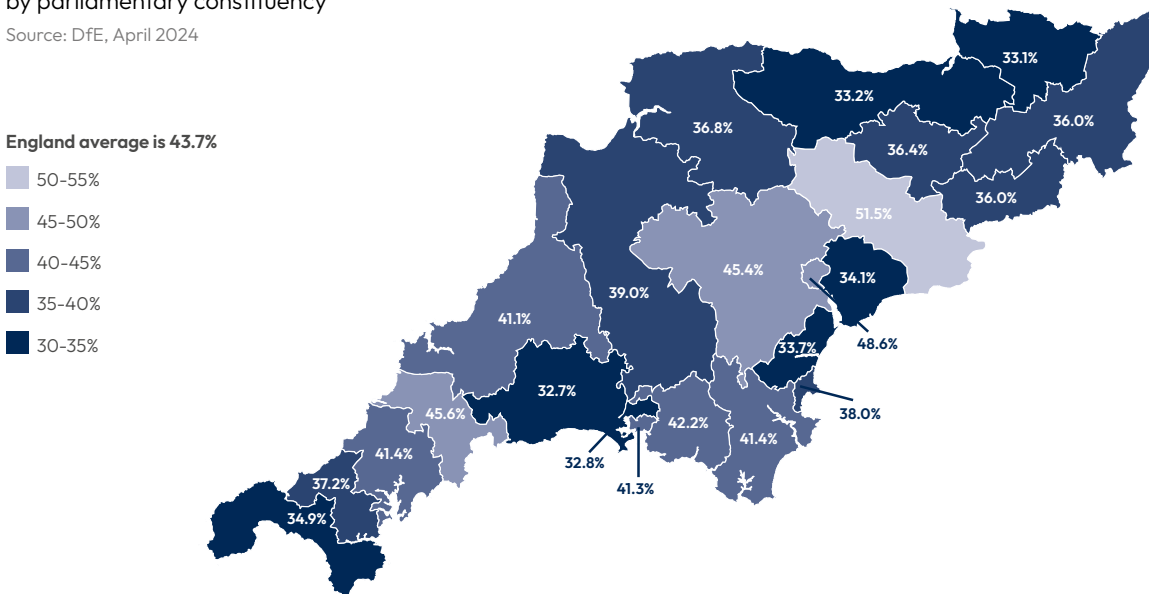


From an intra-regional perspective, Figure 8 shows that Somerset performs particularly poorly on this measure.<sup>17</sup> There is a mixed picture across Devon and Cornwall with Tiverton and Honiton, Exeter,

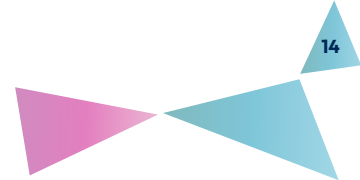
St Austell and Newquay and Central Devon outperforming the England average - but many others performing poorly, in particular Plymouth Moor View and South East Cornwall.

**Figure 8** Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grades 4 or above in GCSE English and maths (2022/23), by parliamentary constituency

Source: DfE, April 2024



<sup>17</sup> Freedom of Information request (Percentage of KS4 pupils (disadvantaged) achieving grade 4 (or above) in GCSE English and maths), Department for Education, March 2024.



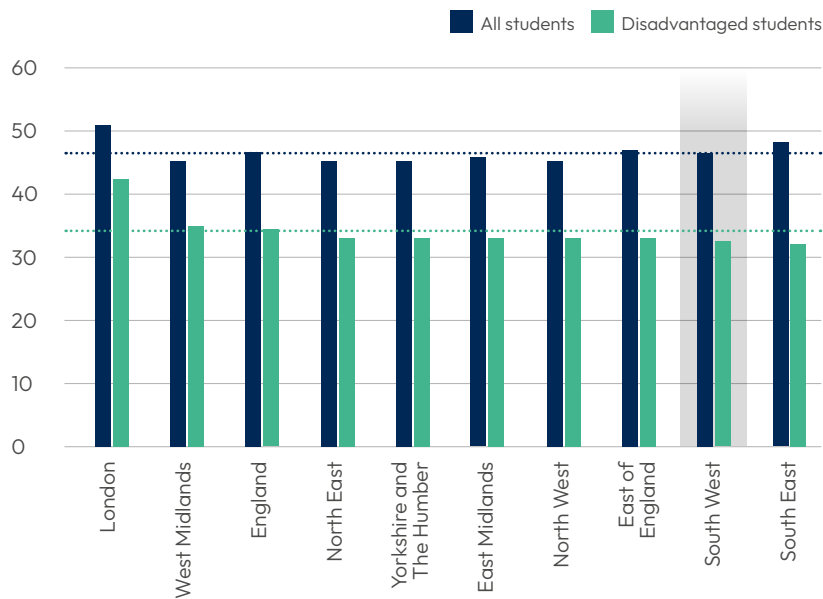
Similarly, whilst the overall average Attainment 8 score in the South West was only 0.1 points below the England average, the average score for disadvantaged pupils was 2.0 points below the England average – as shown in Figure 9.

Whilst the region performed better than five of the nine English regions on this measure for all pupils, it had the second-lowest average score for disadvantaged pupils.

Figure 10 shows that in 17 out of 23 South-West peninsula constituency, the average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils was lower than the England average of 35.1, with a similar distribution to outcomes for English and maths at grade 4 and above.<sup>18</sup>

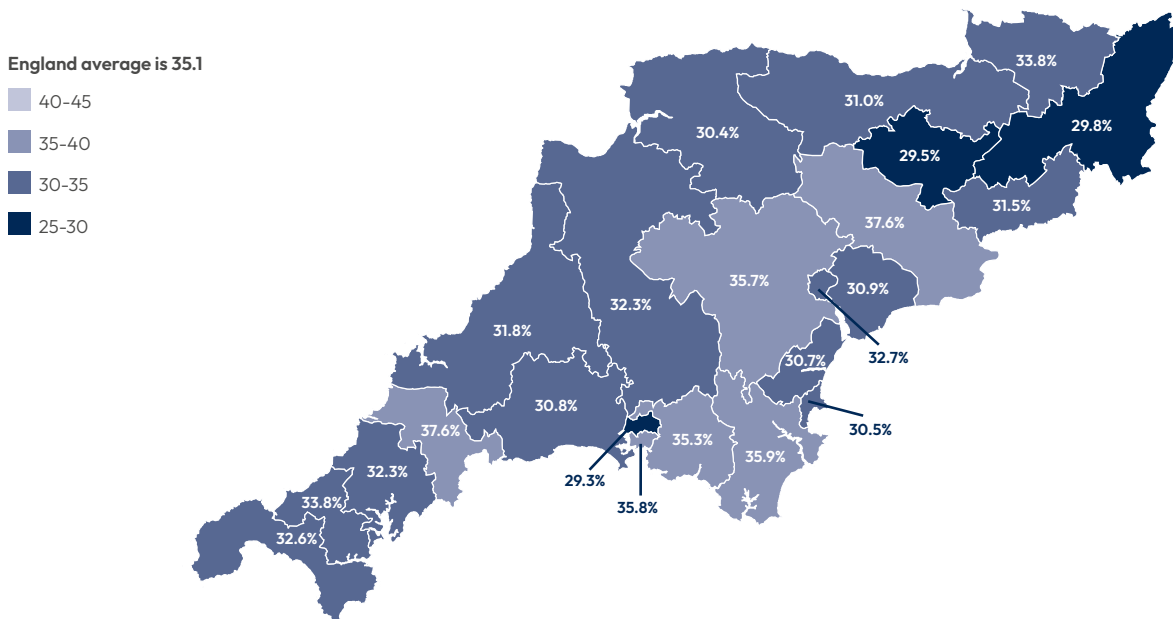
**Figure 9** Average attainment 8 score (2022/23), by region

Source: DfE, April 2024

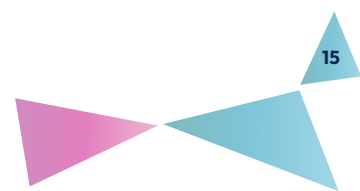


**Figure 10** Average Attainment 8 score at KS4 among disadvantaged pupils (2022/23), by parliamentary constituency

Source: DfE, April 2024



18 Freedom of Information request (average Attainment 8 score by disadvantage), Department for Education, March 2024.



### Absence rates

This year, we have chosen to report on absence rates in school – both because of the sharp rise in absence rates post-pandemic and because absence rates are disproportionately higher for disadvantaged students across the country.

**In autumn term 2023, the South West had the highest absence rate for students eligible for FSM (12.0%) as well as the highest absence rate for non-FSM eligible students (5.8%)** – as shown in Figure 11. The national averages for this metric were 10.4% and 5.4% respectively.

Broken down by age phase, at secondary level the South West had the highest regional absence rate for FSM-eligible students for the third year running, with a rate in Autumn Term 2023 of 16.3%. The region

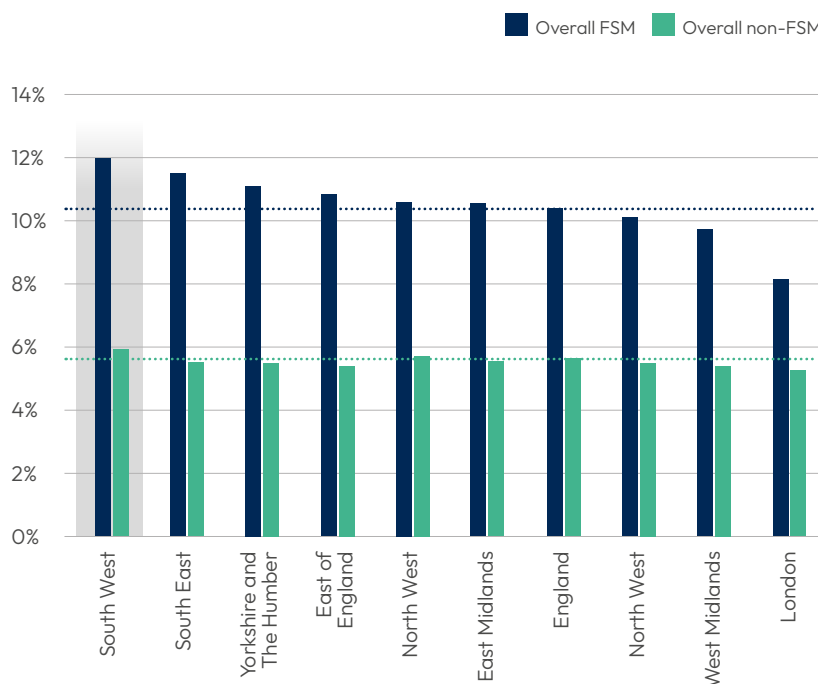
also had the highest absence rate for non-FSM eligible students at secondary (7.4%).<sup>19</sup>

At primary level, the South West had the second highest regional absence rate (8.4% compared to 8.5% in the South East) for FSM-eligible students. The absence rate for non-FSM-eligible students at primary was highest in the North East (4.6% compared to 4.4% in the South West).

These high overall absence rates in the South West are driven by authorised absence. The region has the highest percentages of authorised absence of any region for both FSM-eligible and non-FSM eligible students, and this is at both primary and secondary level.

**Figure 11** Overall absence rates (autumn term 2023), by region

Source: DfE, April 2024

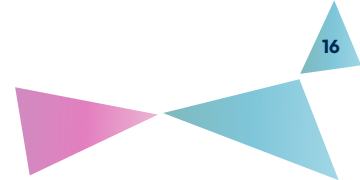


At the intra-regional level, absence rates for FSM-eligible students at secondary level were particularly high in Torbay (18.1%), Devon and Somerset.

At primary phase, absence levels were also highest in Torbay (8.6%).

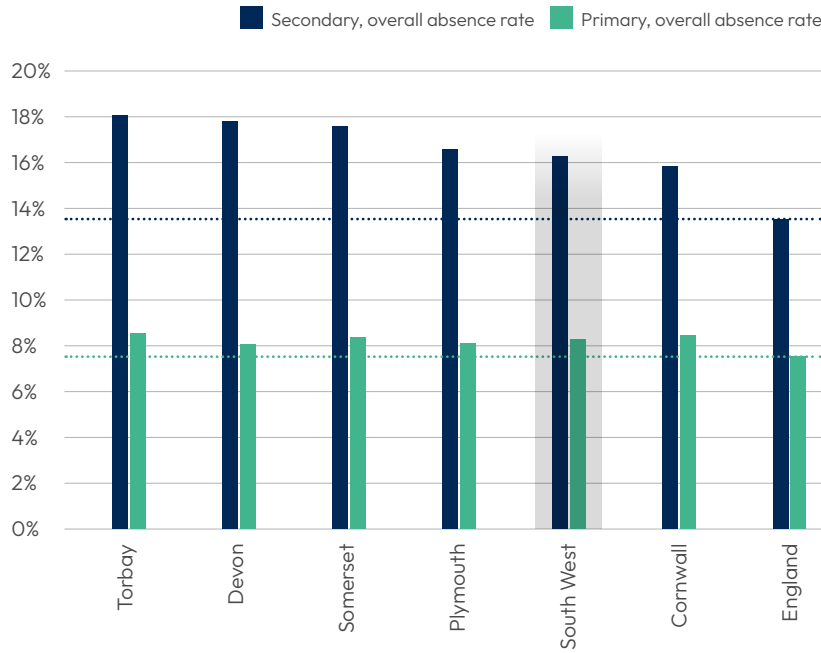
<sup>19</sup> Pupils attendance and absence, Department for Education, March 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>





**Figure 12** Overall absence rates among FSM-eligible pupils (autumn term 2023), by local authority area

Source: DfE, April 2024



**Key Stage 4 Destinations**

Since 2013, it has been compulsory for young people finishing secondary school to continue into post-16 education or training (if not otherwise in employment).

In 2021/22 (the latest year for which we have data), there was a drop in the proportion of young people in apprenticeships or education in every region of the country (Figure 13). In the South West, though,

the decline was bigger than in any other region (-3 percentage points).

This decline was even larger for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, where previously rates had increased since 2015/16 (Figure 14).<sup>20</sup> All regions saw a decrease, but the drop was worst in the South West and the South East (-4.2 percentage points).

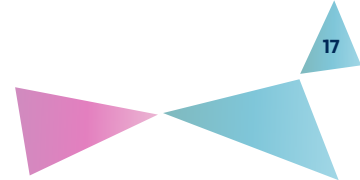
**Figure 13** Percentage of young people going into sustained apprenticeships or education in 2015/16, 2020/21 and 2021/22 – by region <sup>20a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



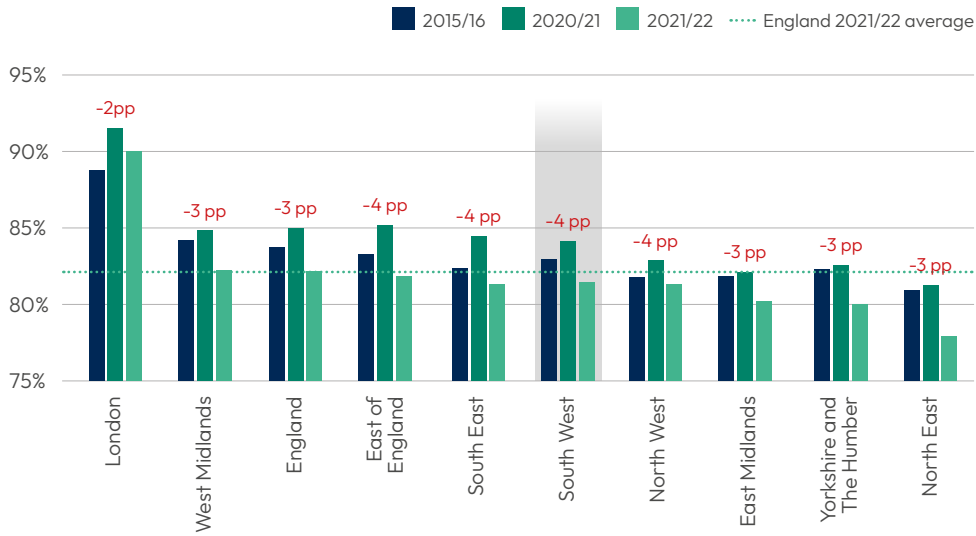
<sup>20</sup> 2015/16 used as a pre-COVID comparison.

<sup>20a</sup> Red data labels in the chart represent the year-on-year change between the latest and previous year's percentages.



**Figure 14** Percentage of disadvantaged young people going into sustained apprenticeships or education in 2015/16, 2020/21 and 2021/22 – by region <sup>20a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis

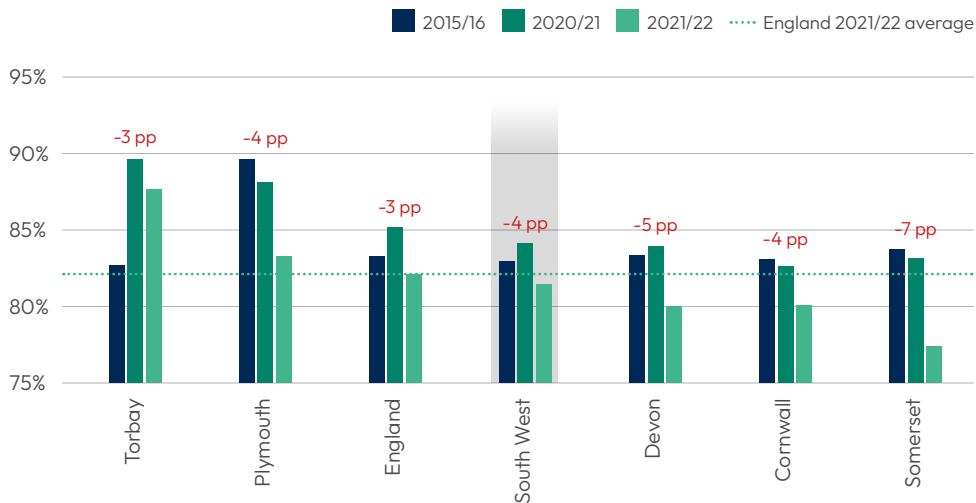


Intra-regionally, Somerset experienced the greatest reduction in disadvantaged young people going on to post-16 education and training (-7 percentage points)

and had the lowest number of disadvantaged young people in apprenticeships or further education overall (77%).

**Figure 15** Percentage of disadvantaged young people going into sustained apprenticeships or education in 2015/16, 2020/21 and 2021/22 – by local authority area <sup>20a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



20a Red data labels in the chart represent the year-on-year change between the latest and previous year's percentages.



## 16 – 18 education and training

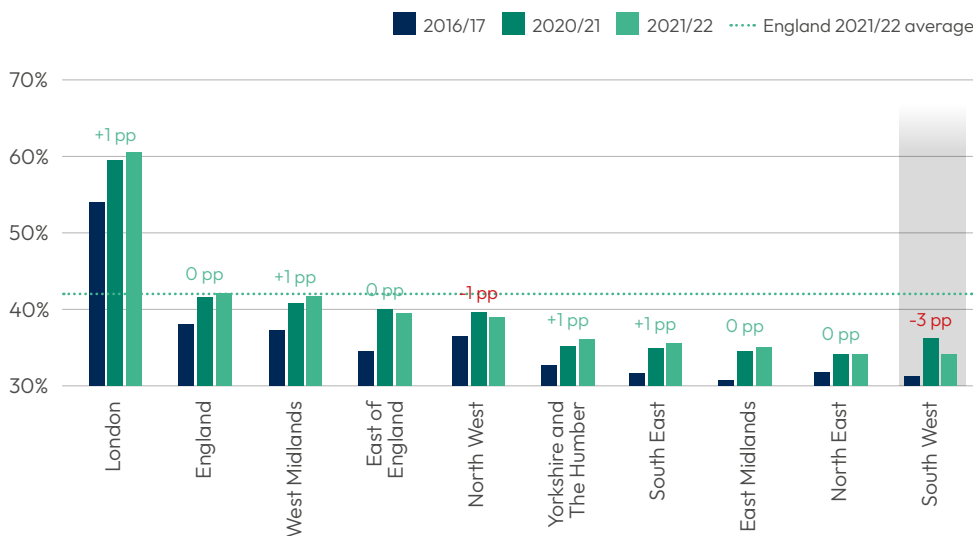
### Level 3 qualification by age 19

**The South West has seen the largest drop in disadvantaged students obtaining a Level 3 qualification by aged 19 of any English region, such that in 2021/22, it had the lowest proportion of disadvantaged students achieving a Level 3 qualification** (Figure 16). This means around 3,500 disadvantaged students in the region achieved a Level 3 qualification, while over 6,800 didn't.

By contrast, the number of all young people achieving a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 has steadily increased in every region of the country, including the South West. The South West has the fourth-highest number of all students obtaining a Level 3 qualification (by aged 19) of all nine English regions (after London, the East of England and the South East).

**Figure 16** Proportion of disadvantaged young people achieving a L3 qualification by age 19 by region (2016/17–2021/22)<sup>21 21a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis

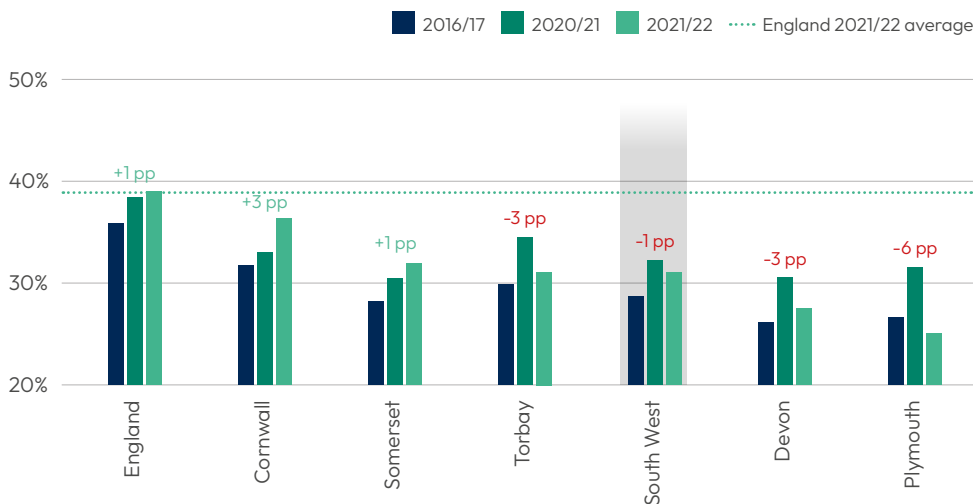


Intra-regionally, there is a mixed picture. Cornwall and Somerset saw an increase in FSM-eligible students

obtaining Level 3 qualifications by 19, but Devon, Plymouth and Torbay all experienced a steep decline.

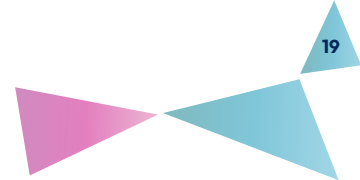
**Figure 17** Proportion of young people eligible for FSM achieving a L3 qualification by age 19 by South-West local authority (2016/17–2021/22)<sup>21a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



21 2015/16 is the oldest data available for comparison.

21a Red and green data labels in the chart represent the year-on-year change between the latest and previous year's percentages.



### Level 2 English and maths by age 19

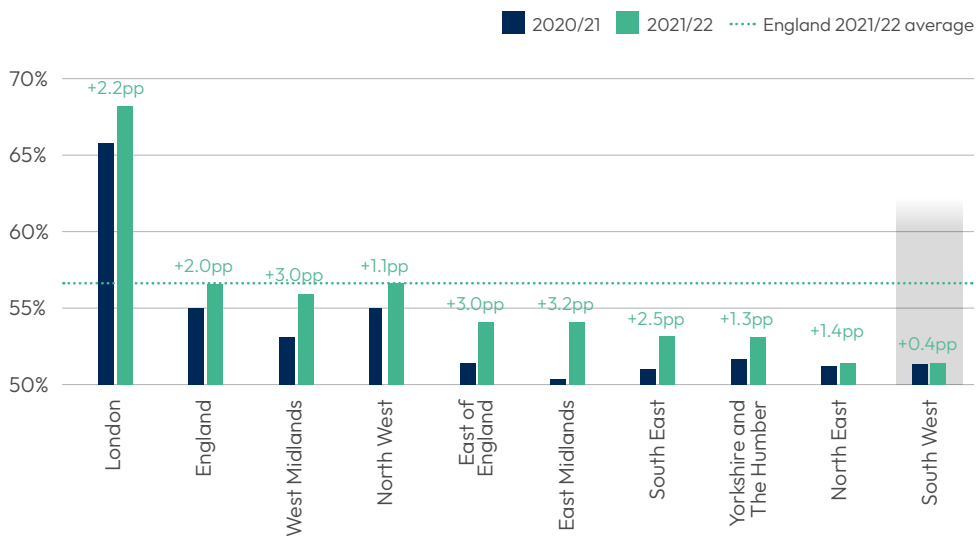
**The percentage of disadvantaged young people in the South West achieving Level 2 English and maths by aged 19 remained static from 2020/21 to 2021/22 at 52%.**

As Figure 18 shows, this was the **joint-lowest proportion of any English region** (together with the North East, where the figure was the same). This means around 5,500 disadvantaged students in the region achieved Level 2 English and maths, while just over 5,000 didn't.

When looking at all young people, the South West has seen an increase in the proportion achieving Level 2 English and maths qualifications by aged 19. 75% of young people in the South West obtained these qualifications in 2021/22 (a 3 percentage point increase on the previous year).

**Figure 18** Percentage of disadvantaged young people achieving a Level 2 English and maths qualification by aged 19 (2016/17- 2021/22), by region<sup>22 22a</sup>

Source: DfE, April 2024

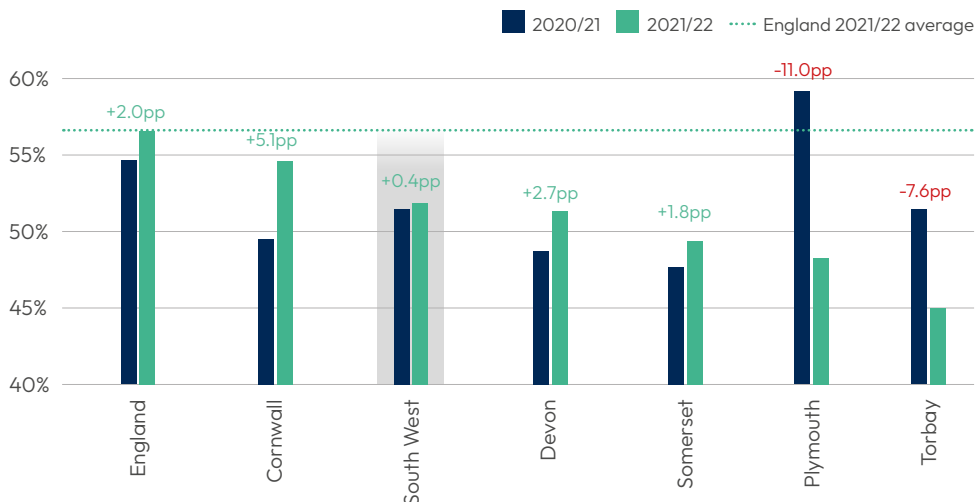


Within the South West, the proportion of disadvantaged young people obtaining Level 2 English and maths by age 19 declined in Plymouth (-11 percentage points) and Torbay (-7.6 percentage points). Torbay and Plymouth

were the only local authority areas where fewer than 50% of disadvantaged young people obtained a Level 2 English and maths qualification by 19.

**Figure 19** Proportion of disadvantaged young people achieving a L2 Maths & English qualification by age 19 by South-West Local authority (2016/17-2021/22)<sup>22b</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



22 2015/16 is the oldest data available for comparison.

22a Green data labels in the chart represent the year-on-year change between the latest and previous year's percentages.

22b Red and green data labels in the chart represent the year-on-year change between the latest and previous year's percentages.



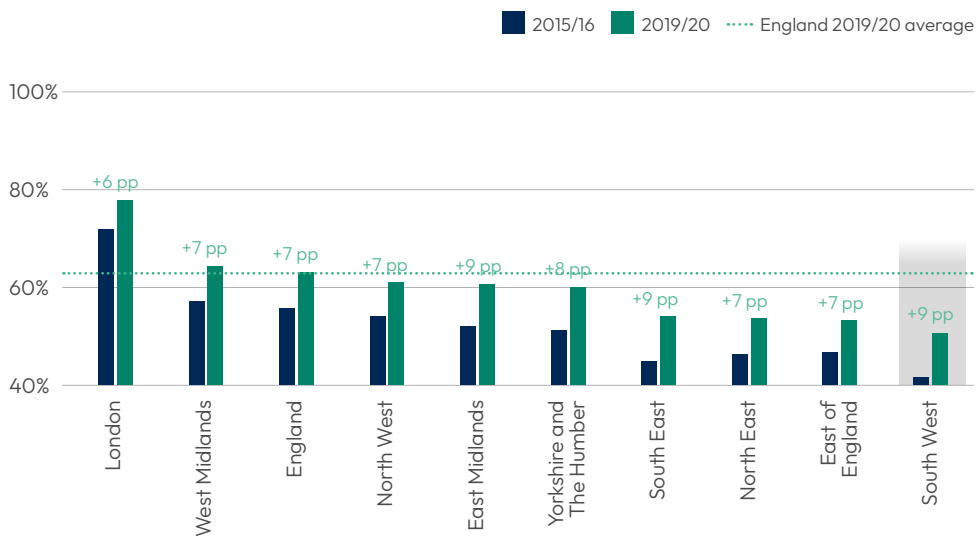
**Progression to higher level (level 4+) qualifications**

**The proportion of disadvantaged students from the South West entering higher education or training has steadily increased but remains lower than all other English regions.<sup>23</sup>**

Amongst all students, all English regions saw an increase in the proportion of young people progressing to higher level (level 4+) qualifications between 2015/16 and 2019/20 – but the percentage of young people from the South West of whom this is true is consistently lower than all other regions.

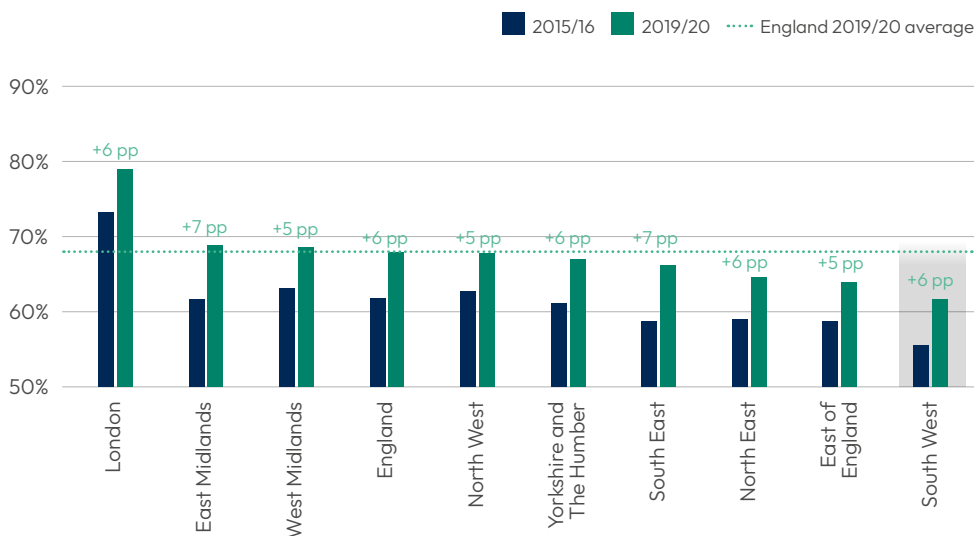
**Figure 20** Proportion of disadvantaged young people progressing to level 4 or higher education destination by region (2015/16–2019/20) <sup>23 23a</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



**Figure 21** Proportion of all young people progressing to a level 4 or higher education destination by region (2015/16–2019/20)<sup>23b</sup>

Source: Gov.uk; SWSMC Analysis



23 2015/16 is the oldest data available for comparison.

23a Green data labels in the chart represent the change between the latest year's and 2015/16 percentages.

23b Green data labels in the chart represent the change between the latest year's and 2015/16 percentages.



## Early career outcomes

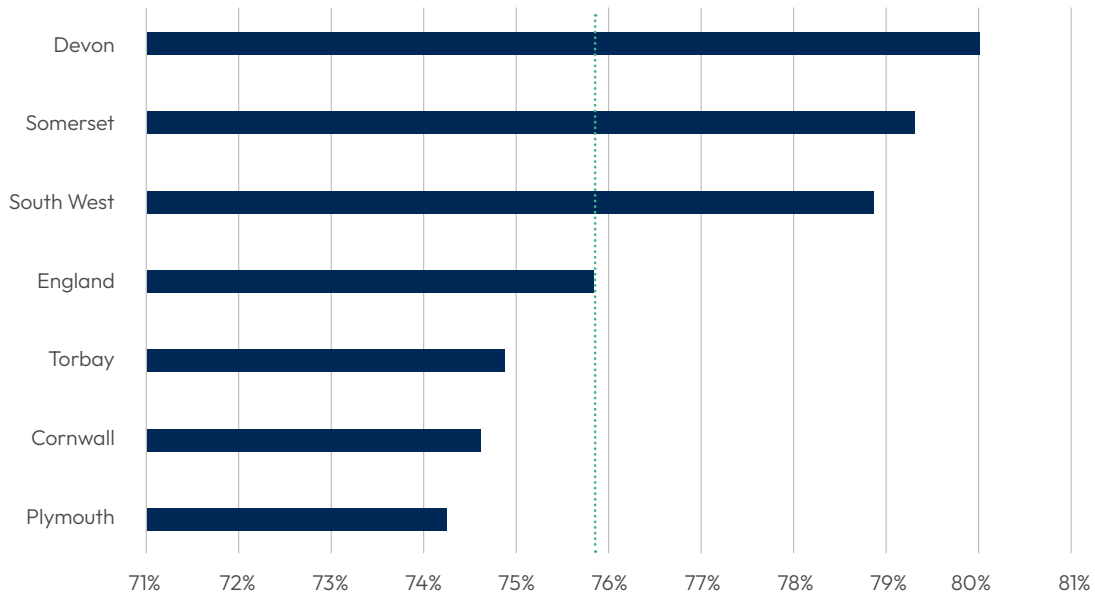
### Youth employment and NEET

**The South West performs well in terms of the number of young people (aged 16-64) in employment** and is second only to the South East out of all nine English regions. There are, however, some disparities between local authority areas as Figure 22 shows.

Whilst Devon has employment rates among 16-64 year-olds that are higher than the England average (and edge towards 80%), rates are lower than the England average (and below 75%) in Plymouth, Cornwall and Torbay.

**Figure 22** Employment rate (16-64), by local authority area

Source: Nomis - official census and labour market statistics, March 2024



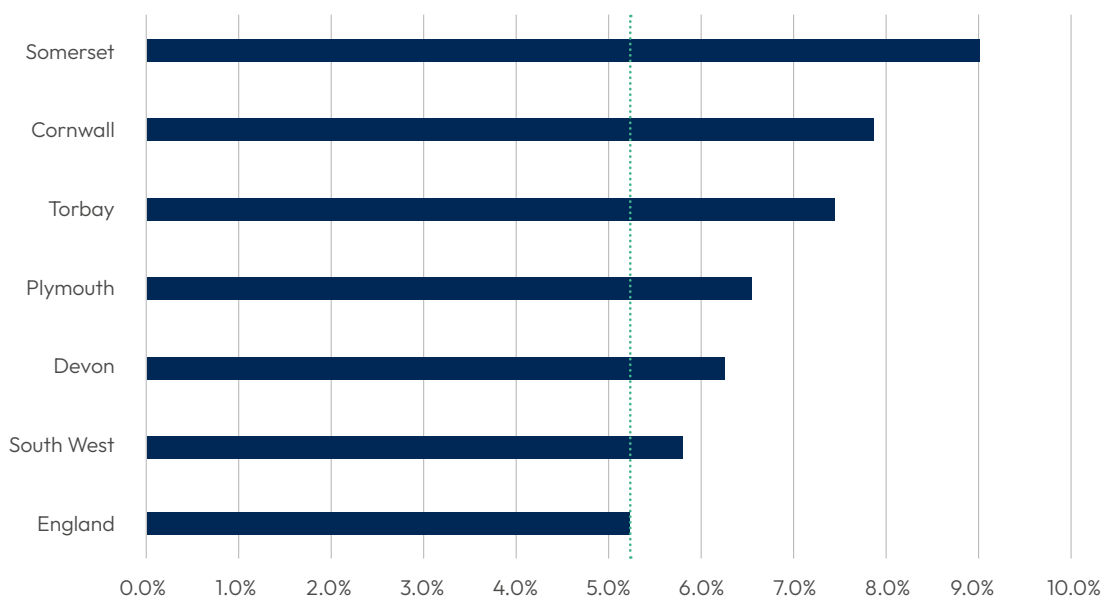
Whilst the employment rate for 16-64 year olds in the South West is high, so too is the NEET rate (the percentage of 16-17 year olds not in employment, education or training). **At 5.8%, the South West has the third highest percentage of NEETs in England** (after the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber).

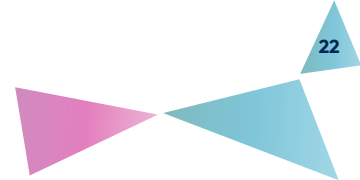
This is 0.6 percentage points higher than the England average and equates to 6,810 16-17-year-olds in the region.

As Figure 23 demonstrates, all five peninsula local authority areas are above the England average. The highest NEET percentages are in Somerset and Cornwall (close to or exceeding 8%).

**Figure 23** 2023 NEET rate, by local authority area

Source: Nomis - official census and labour market statistics, March 2024





**Jobs profile**

As identified in previous Commission reports, much of the South-West peninsula has a lower proportion of managerial and professional jobs and a higher proportion of service and elementary jobs than elsewhere in the country.

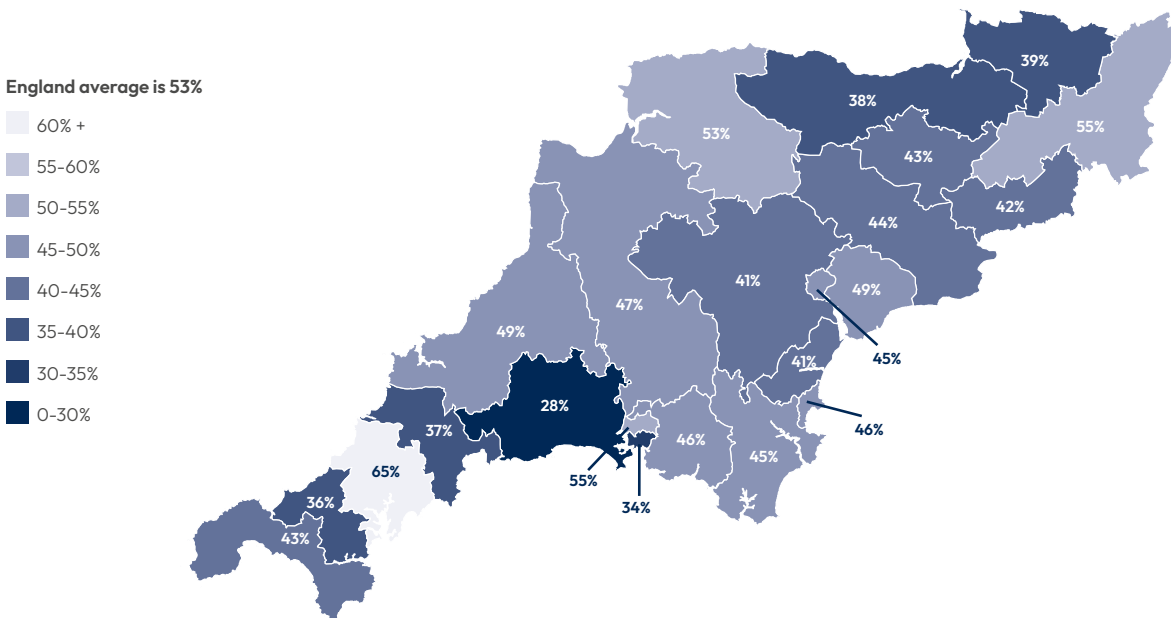
In our 2023 report, we showed that according to the 2021 census, all 30 parliamentary constituencies in the South-West peninsula had higher rates of young adults (aged 25 to 34) in unskilled work than the England average.<sup>24</sup> Areas where rates of unskilled work were particularly high were Bridgwater and West Somerset (44%), North Cornwall (42%), South Dorset (40%),

St Austell and Newquay (40%), Torbay (39%) and Camborne and Redruth (39%). These compared with an England average of 28%.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 24 shows (that according to the latest data) **only four of the 23 South-West peninsula parliamentary constituencies meet or exceed the England average for the percentage of managerial and professional jobs** as a percentage of all jobs. By contrast, 11 parliamentary constituencies meet or exceed the England average for caring, sales and services jobs and 16 constituencies meet or exceed the England average for the percentage of job roles classified as elementary or process roles.

**Figure 24** Percentage of managerial and professional roles, by parliamentary constituency

Source: Nomis - official census and labour market statistics, March 2024



**Pay**

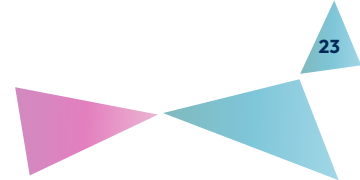
Median weekly pay in the South West (£663.70) is marginally below the England average (£682.40), but there is significant variation across the region when median pay is broken down by parliamentary constituency.

The median weekly pay in three South-West parliamentary constituencies (South West Devon,

Truro and Falmouth, and East Devon) is higher than the England average, reaching £708.70 at the upper end of the scale. However, **20 out of 23 parliamentary constituencies have a median weekly pay that is below both the England average and the South West average.** At the lower end of the scale are Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (£560.30) and Torbay (£579.60).

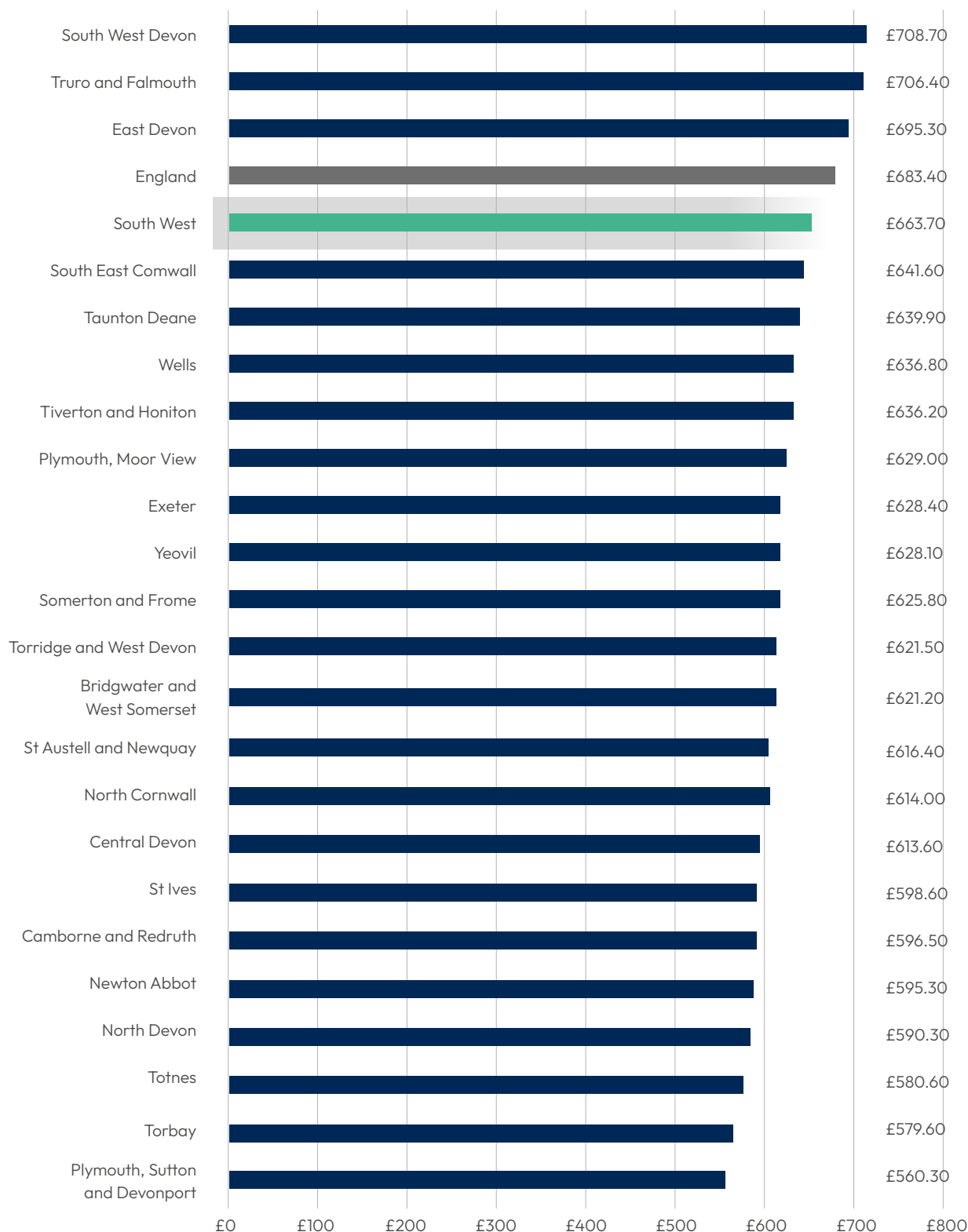
24 Data for the 2023 report included Dorset parliamentary constituencies.

25 Sim, Bickford Smith and Elliot Major (2023).



**Figure 25** South West median gross weekly pay (2023), by parliamentary constituency

Source: Nomis - official census and labour market statistics, March 2024



Gross weekly pay for low-paid workers (those in the 25th percentile) in most South-West peninsula constituencies is below both the England average (£519.50) and the South West regional average (£512.60). **Only two peninsula constituencies have a low-pay rate that is higher than the England average.**

Torbay has a particular low pay problem, ranking as the 20th worst local authority in the country for the number of employee jobs paid below the Living Wage, in April 2023. 21% of full-time male employees were in jobs that paid below the Living Wage, equivalent to 10,000 of the area's 47,000 full-time male employee jobs.<sup>26</sup>

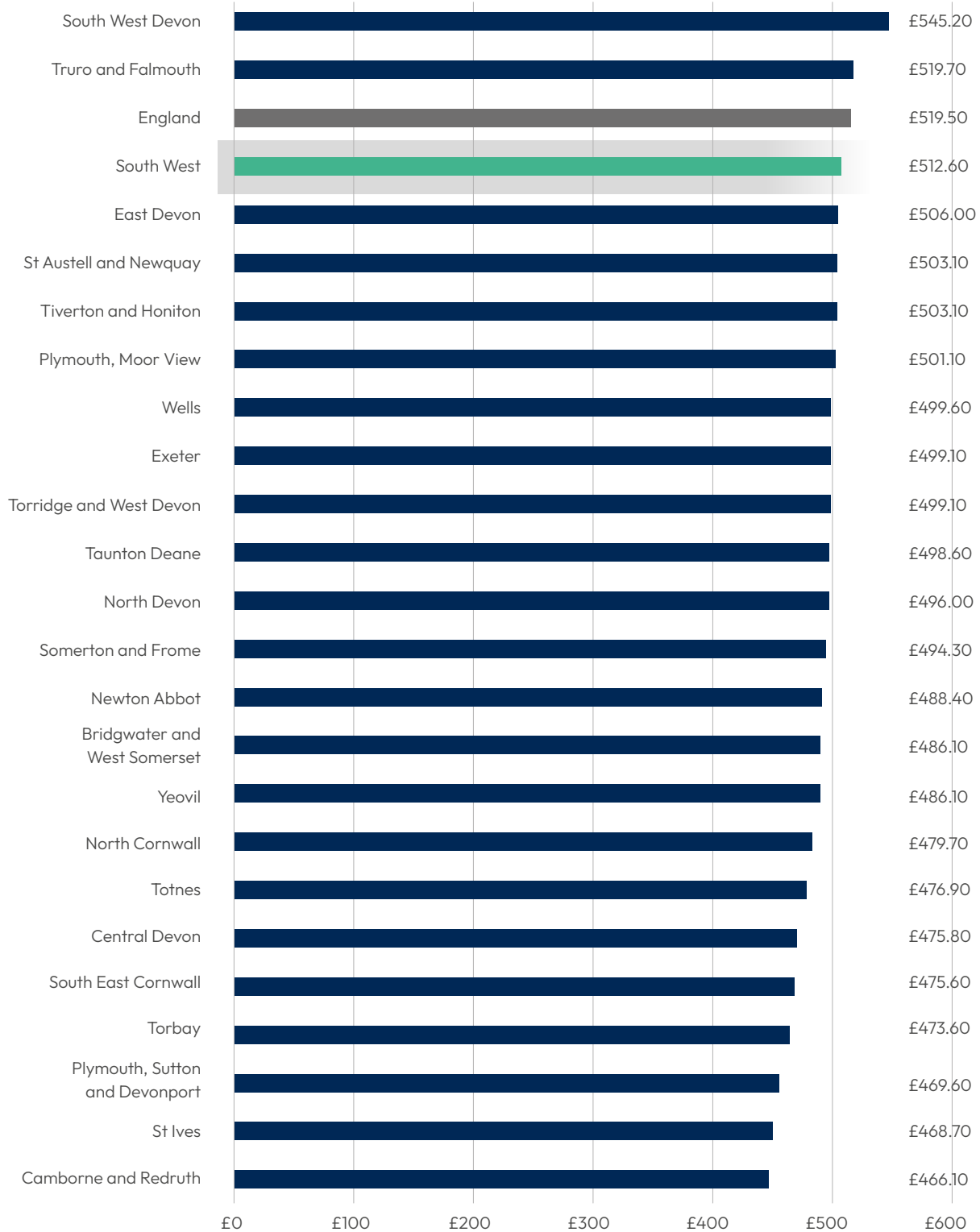
26 Employee jobs paid below the Living Wage: 2023 Joe Richardson & Ana Witteveen, Living Wage Foundation February 2024. Employee Jobs Below The Living Wage\_V7.pdf





**Figure 26** South West median gross weekly pay for low-paid workers (2023), by parliamentary constituency

Source: Nomis - official census and labour market statistics, March 2024



**Housing and the Cost of Living**

Below-average pay in the South West, whilst not the worst in the country, needs to be set in contrast with the region’s cost of living indicators. The cost of housing and rent alongside other price increases mean the South West is almost comparable to London and the South East in terms of cost of living – in sharp contrast to incomes, which are not in line with the rest of the South of England.

Figure 27 demonstrates that housing affordability in the South West varies between local authority areas, with some comparable to London and others closer to the England average.<sup>27</sup> Most, though, are above the England average for affordability: **only three South-West peninsula local authorities have an affordability rating below the England average.**

27 Sinnott et al (2023).



**Figure 27** Housing affordability ratio and rankings – South West, by local authority area and with English regional comparisons

Source: Sinnott et al (2023)

Local authority	Affordability ratio		House price		Annual earnings	
		Rank	£	Rank	£	Rank
Cotswold	15.75	1	408,000	1	25,910	23
<b>London</b>	<b>12.97</b>		<b>515,000</b>		<b>39,716</b>	
South Hams	12.56	2	352,998	3	28,096	17
Dorset	12.22	3	330,000	4	26,999	18
Bath and North East Somerset	12.15	4	368,000	2	30,296	7
West Devon	11.96	5	290,000	15	24,247	29
Teignbridge	11.40	6	280,000	16	24,558	28
Mendip	11.22	7	298,500	14	26,612	22
Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole	11.17	8	325,000	5	29,095	13
<b>South East</b>	<b>11.12</b>		<b>365,000</b>		<b>32,810</b>	
Cornwall	10.99	9	275,000	18	25,013	27
East Devon	10.88	10	317,500	6	29,176	11
Forest of Dean	10.62	11	275,000	18	25,883	24
North Somerset	10.58	12	300,000	11	28,353	16
Cheltenham	10.55	13	310,000	9	29,371	10
<b>East</b>	<b>10.53</b>		<b>325,000</b>		<b>30,867</b>	
North Devon	10.46	14	280,000	16	26,766	21
Torridge	10.34	15	265,000	22	25,629	26
Wiltshire	10.32	16	300,000	11	29,069	14
Stroud	10.27	17	315,000	7	30,680	5
<b>South West</b>	<b>9.97</b>		<b>290,000</b>		<b>29,080</b>	
Bristol	9.70	18	315,000	7	32,470	3
Mid Devon	9.29	19	270,750	21	29,144	12
Exeter	9.22	20	275,000	18	29,827	8
Somerset West and Taunton	9.16	21	260,000	23	28,384	15
Tewkesbury	9.15	22	301,000	10	32,896	2
<b>England</b>	<b>9.05</b>		<b>285,000</b>		<b>31,480</b>	
Sedgemoor	9.00	23	243,000	25	26,987	19
Torbay	8.90	24	230,000	27	25,854	25
South Gloucestershire	8.82	25	300,000	11	34,010	1
South Somerset	8.80	26	259,600	24	29,516	9
<b>East Midlands</b>	<b>7.78</b>		<b>221,000</b>		<b>28,416</b>	
Swindon	7.69	27	241,950	26	31,471	4
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>7.50</b>		<b>225,000</b>		<b>30,000</b>	
Gloucester	7.34	28	223,000	28	30,389	6
Plymouth	7.27	29	195,000	29	26,820	20
<b>North West</b>	<b>6.43</b>		<b>190,000</b>		<b>29,529</b>	
<b>Yorkshire and The Humber</b>	<b>6.42</b>		<b>185,000</b>		<b>28,808</b>	
<b>North East</b>	<b>5.45</b>		<b>150,000</b>		<b>27,515</b>	

■ Mainly rural  
 ■ Largely rural  
 ■ Urban with significant rural  
 ■ Urban city and town

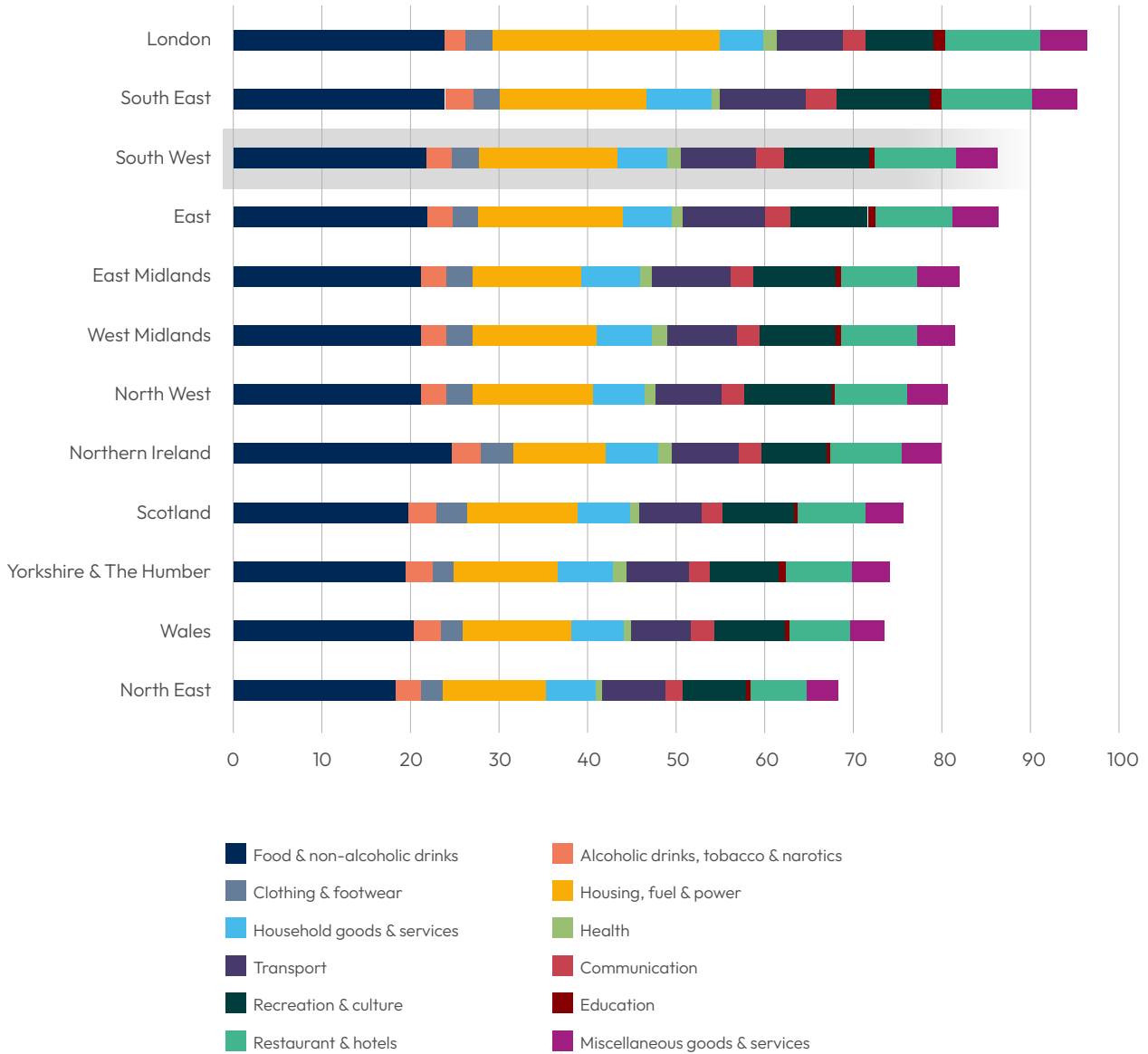


Looking at consumer prices more generally, **the South West is predicted to see the third-highest increase in prices in 2024** compared to other English Regions,

Scotland and Wales. Only London and the South East are predicted to see higher price rises.

**Figure 28** Expected price increases (pounds per week) in 2024, by region – broken down by consumer category

Source: ONS, April 2024





- The predicted weekly expenditure increase in the South West is estimated to be £86.19, bigger than every English region other than London (£96.04) and the South East (£95.18).<sup>28</sup>
- The biggest price increase, when broken down by age group and by expenditure type, relates to housing, fuel and power costs for those under the age of 30, who are predicted to experience a £24.52 per week increase in these costs in 2024.<sup>29</sup>
- In 2023, the average rent per calendar month in the South West was £1,058 – an 8.8% increase on the previous year. This was the third smallest increase in the UK (after Northern Ireland (3.2%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (7.8%)), but the South West already has the fourth-highest per calendar month rental costs (after London, the South East and the East of England) in the UK.
- Between 2022 and 2023, the average household electricity bill in the South West increased from £1,190 to £1,282. This was higher than the UK average of £1,264 but lower than the south England average of £1,285.
- Between 2022 and 2023, the average household gas bill in the South West increased from £1,143 to £1,335. This was higher than the UK average of £1,328 but marginally lower than the south England average of £1,336.

Social mobility in the South West will be hindered by sharp increases in the cost of living, particularly surrounding housing costs which are predicted to increase most severely for young people. Housing affordability and weekly expenditure increases in the South West are comparable to London and the South East, but incomes in the South West are not comparable to these other regions.

## Conclusion

The data in this section reports on progress made in the South West at four stages: the early years, school, 16–18 education and training, and early adulthood/adulthood. Across each of these, we see a host of reasons to be concerned about social mobility in the South West, particularly for those from the lowest-income backgrounds.

Amongst peninsula local authorities, Torbay stands out as an area of particular concern across the datasets: in the Early Years, it has the lowest percentage of all children meeting EYFS goals and the highest child:childcare placement ratio; at both primary and secondary-level it has the highest school absence rates among FSM-eligible pupils; and it has the lowest proportion of disadvantaged young people obtaining a Level 2 English and maths qualification by aged 19 (just 45%).

Despite the picture this data presents, there are also reasons to be optimistic about the region's future social mobility, as we outline later in this report.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.money.co.uk/cost-of-living/cost-of-living-statistics>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



# School accountability: multi-academy trusts and disadvantage

**In this chapter, we present additional data summarising the performance of multi-academy trusts for disadvantaged pupils at Key Stage 4 (GCSE). Multi-academy trusts (MATs), which run more than one academy, are becoming an increasingly important feature of the educational landscape and the government's stated ambition is that all schools be part of a MAT by 2030. Whilst we need to be cautious when interpreting the data, this analysis of trusts across the region and country reveals significant variation in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, suggesting there is much to learn from trusts performing relatively well when it comes to equity.**

This work aims to provide pointers to multi-academy trusts (MATs) about which trusts are on average performing relatively well in their region for disadvantaged pupils according to current government attainment measures. It builds on the recommendation in our 2022 report 'Social Mobility in the South West' to adopt a sharper focus on disadvantage in the education system, amid persistent attainment gaps between pupils from under-resourced backgrounds and their more privileged peers.<sup>30</sup>

A core argument of the 2022 report is that more explicit focus is required in regional and national education policy to shine a light on the progress and results of children from under-resourced backgrounds, who face a range of cultural and material barriers to their learning. In this analysis of national data, we use a measure of disadvantage collected in government statistics known as 'ever FSM6' – pupils who have at some point qualified for free school meals (FSM) in the last six years. While we believe that 'disadvantage' is far broader than free-school meal eligibility, this remains one of the only readily available indicators by which we can analyse current data.

The tables we present relate to 216 eligible Multi-academy trusts (MATs) across the country for which 2023 attainment data was recently released by the government.<sup>31</sup> This accounts for approximately 16% of MATs in England.<sup>32</sup> To be eligible for inclusion in this

data set, MATs must have at least three academies with 2022/2023 results at the relevant key stage, and those academies must have been with the MAT for at least three academic years. The number of MATs and academies included in the MAT performance measures will likely therefore grow year on year as the sector matures.<sup>33</sup>

We present analysis according to three measures currently available in the data. These are:

- Proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 and above in English and maths GCSE (known as a 'strong pass').<sup>34</sup> One of the goals of the South-West Social Mobility Commission is that every child in the region finishes school with foundational English and maths, which we define as achieving at least a grade 4 in English and maths GCSE.<sup>35</sup> This is widely acknowledged as serving as a gateway to A Levels, equivalent Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, and jobs.<sup>36</sup> However, the government has moved to reporting at grade 5 and above and this is therefore the metric we use in this analysis.
- Proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). This is defined as a student achieving a grade 4 or above in all of the following GCSEs:<sup>37</sup> English (both literature and language), maths, the sciences (either combined science or three single sciences), geography or history and a language (ancient or foreign).

<sup>30</sup> Sim and Elliot Major (2022).

<sup>31</sup> Data available: Key stage 4 performance, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK ([explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)), analysis own.

<sup>32</sup> Department for Education How multi-academy trusts are involved in school inspections – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)) accessed 01 March 2024, 'there are 1,346 multi-academy trusts in England, as of 30 January 2023'.

<sup>33</sup> The rapidly evolving nature of the system is also the reason why we present current single-year data rather than three-year averages (which would be standard best practice).

<sup>34</sup> Elliot Major and Parsons (2022).

<sup>35</sup> Sim, Bickford Smith, and Elliot Major (2023).

<sup>36</sup> Elliot Major and Parsons (2022).

<sup>37</sup> Department for Education Secondary accountability measures: guide for maintained secondary schools, academies and free schools ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)) accessed 12 April 2024.



This measure is one attempt at monitoring whether students are receiving a ‘broad curriculum’, which forms a part of the South-West Social Mobility Commission’s goals. The government’s current aim is to see 90% of pupils in England studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE by September 2025.<sup>38</sup>

- Average Attainment 8 point score for disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (weighted average). This measures pupil attainment across eight qualifications including: maths, English, three qualifications that count in the EBacc and three further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications.<sup>39</sup> Each pupil’s Attainment 8 score is calculated by adding up the points for their eight subjects, with English and maths counted twice.<sup>40</sup> Average Attainment 8 is therefore scored out of a possible 90.0. This is another means of measuring attainment together with curriculum breadth.

For the South West and seven other regions<sup>41</sup>, we identify a selection of ten MATs who performed well in 2023 on the indicator of disadvantaged pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE. Given our strong belief that narrow attainment measures do not show the whole picture, we list the ten MATs alphabetically and present other contextual measures including the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the trust and comparisons to ‘non-disadvantaged’ pupils’ attainment. While some noticeable trends emerge, it is important to note that MATs can look very different according to the measure used.

## Cross-Trust lessons

We must tread carefully when inferring conclusions from these comparisons because of the range of contextual factors that shape the outcomes for multi-academy trusts. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the combination of factors leading to greater progress for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes are shaped by a multitude of influences inside and outside schools across a trust, some of which will be within the control of schools and trusts, and others which won’t. The aim here is to highlight groups of trusts within a similar part of the country that have been doing relatively well on one measure. This indicates that their strategies and approaches may be having some success, and that they are worth investigating as possible approaches by other trusts.

We hope this report will help lead to more cross-trust learning both within regions and across regions when it comes to the key aim of helping pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. These comparisons are important given that the education sector in England is moving increasingly to a trust-led system.

The published MAT performance measures do try to take some account of a MAT’s and its schools’ context – they are weighted based on the number of pupils in each school, as well as on the (capped) number of years for which they have been part of the trust. They do not include schools that have been part of the trust for less than three years. The three-year period aims to take into account that some MATs have more sponsored academies (schools required by the Department for Education to join after a period of underperformance), while others may have more converter academies who actively chose to convert to academy status.<sup>42</sup>

Within the analysis, we also present each trust’s average proportion of disadvantaged pupils (at the end of Key Stage 4). This provides useful contextual information about the level of disadvantage across a trust – although it doesn’t show variation across schools within a trust.

An important point to note is that regions vary significantly in their level and maturity of academisation. For example, Yorkshire and Humber currently has only one eligible trust (and therefore we have excluded them from our analysis), in comparison to the West Midlands which has 57. This may affect the range of performance outcomes we see in different regions.

## Findings

### Levels of disadvantage

At the end of KS4, just under 3 in 10 pupils included in these performance measures, (28% of the pupil population) within the 216 MATs included in this analysis were eligible for free school meals (FSM) in the last six years. This is slightly higher than disadvantage figures in the pupil population at large, with the most recent data (2022/23) stating that 24.9% of pupils in England in year 11 at state funded secondary schools have been eligible for free school meals at any time during the past six years.<sup>43</sup>

38 Department for Education Reforms to encourage more students to take up language GCSEs - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) accessed 27 February 2024

39 Department for Education (2024) accessed 12 February 2024 Secondary accountability measures: guide for maintained secondary schools, academies and free schools ([publishing.service.gov.uk](http://publishing.service.gov.uk))

40 Department for Education GCSE results (Attainment 8) - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures ([ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk](http://ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk)) accessed 15 February 2024

41 Our analysis includes eight of the nine English regions. We have excluded Yorkshire and the Humber from this analysis as it has only one eligible MAT

42 FFT education data lab Secondary school and MAT performance tables 2023: What have we learned? - FFT Education Datalab, accessed 8 February 2024

43 Data available <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/33c08817-6673-4385-cabb-08dc5ed676e1> accessed 19 April 2024



This national average masks variation by region. In the South West, 24% of students were classified as disadvantaged compared with 35% in the North West and 33% in London and the North East. The highest percentage of disadvantaged students at any one MAT in the South West was 47% compared with 64% at one MAT in the West Midlands.

These differences highlight the very different contexts within which different MATs are working. However as previous Commission analysis has demonstrated, we need to be careful around over-interpretation of these figures. In the South-West peninsula for example, low numbers of pupils eligible for Free School Meals belie broader indications of poverty and disadvantage.

### Achievement gaps

The overall achievement gaps in this dataset mirror those for schools in England as a whole.

In these MATs, while 50% of non-disadvantaged pupils achieved a 'strong pass' or above in GCSE maths and English (grades 5-9), for disadvantaged students that proportion was roughly half – just 24%.

Meanwhile, only 12% of disadvantaged students in MATs achieved grades 9-4 in the English Baccalaureate compared to 27% of their non-disadvantaged peers.

Similarly, the average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged students was 35.6, compared with 49.4 for non-disadvantaged pupils.

### Variations in performance

It is noticeable that there are significant variations both across regional averages and within regions for the range of measures presented. While context is likely to drive some of this variation, it is also suggestive that some MATs listed might be adopting more successful strategies and approaches for disadvantaged learners.

#### Inter-regional variation

London is the only region where, amongst the MATs analysed, more than a quarter of disadvantaged students, 37.2%, achieved both English and maths GCSE at grade 5 or above. The South West was the lowest-performing region on this measure, with only 20.1% of disadvantaged students from eligible MATs achieving this, closely followed by the South East, where the average was 21.8%. The figure for the highest-performing trust in the country on this measure (based in London) was 60%, while for the highest-performing trust in the South West it was 34%.

Across the 216 MATs in this analysis, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate

was lowest in the South West, at 8.1%. The South West saw the second-lowest average, at 9%. London was the highest-performing region in this metric, with 25.3% of disadvantaged students obtaining a 9-4 pass across EBacc subjects. The highest performance of any one trust in the South West was 16%, while in London it was 56%.

The highest regional average point score for Attainment 8 for disadvantaged students was 42.4 in London, whilst the lowest was 33.6 in the South West. This was followed by the South East with 33.8. In the South West, the highest average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged learners at any one MAT was 40.5. At the highest-performing trust on this measure (based in the West Midlands), the average Attainment 8 score was 55.1.

#### Within-region variation

With all the metrics analysed in this report, there are significant differences between trusts within regions. In the South West the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving grade 5 or above in both English and maths GCSE varies from 5% to 34%. In London, this same metric ranges from 20% to 60%.

For disadvantaged pupils achieving the EBacc with 9-4 passes, MATs in the South West ranged from 1% to 16% between the lowest and highest-performing trusts (the smallest within-region range). MATs in London showed the largest range in outcomes on this metric, from 5% in the lowest-scoring MAT to 56% in the highest-scoring.

For average Attainment 8 scores for disadvantaged pupils, of the MATs included in this metric, the East Midlands had the smallest range between the 'best' and 'worst' performing trusts, ranging from 30.2 to 42.0. The West Midlands saw the largest range between trusts, from 27.4 to 55.1. In the South West the range was significant but with lower performance overall, spanning 23.5 to 40.5.

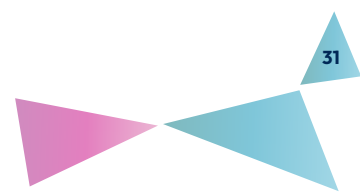
These variations in results suggest that there is a lot of good practice to learn from trusts performing well for under-resourced pupils, even taking into account their different contexts.

### Regional top tens

We identify ten MATs in each region, **ranked in alphabetical order**, that have performed well in terms of the proportion of their disadvantaged students achieving a grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE. Alongside this, we present other key metrics:

- Number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (NP)
- Proportion of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 who are disadvantaged, included in performance measures (%6FSM)





- Proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving a 9-5 ('strong pass') in both English and mathematics GCSEs, weighted average (%EMpass)
- Proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving a 9-5 ('strong pass') in both English and mathematics GCSEs, weighted average (%EMpassNon)
- Proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving the English Baccalaureate with 9-4 passes, weighted average (%EBpass)
- Proportion of non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieving the English Baccalaureate with 9-4 passes, weighted average (%EBpassNon)
- Average Attainment 8 score per disadvantaged pupil at the end of Key Stage 4, weighted average (Att8score)
- Average Attainment 8 score per non disadvantaged pupil at the end of Key Stage 4, weighted average (Att8scoreNon)

## Top Ten Trusts per region in alphabetical order

### South West

Total number of eligible trusts: 29

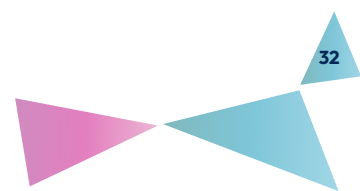
Trust Name (South West)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Athena Learning Trust	492	28 %	26 %	50 %	13 %	28 %	31.6	45.9
Cornwall Education Learning Trust	851	21 %	24 %	48 %	8 %	23 %	39.7	50.9
E-Act	2,217	47 %	27 %	43 %	8 %	13 %	35.3	44.7
Education South West	524	22 %	24 %	48 %	16 %	23 %	35.6	48.8
Greenshaw Learning Trust	1,549	33 %	34 %	55 %	13 %	22 %	40.4	52.3
Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership	926	20 %	27 %	56 %	14 %	30 %	39.0	51.5
The Athelstan Trust	666	14 %	30 %	55 %	13 %	29 %	36.1	50.7
The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust	897	30 %	25 %	60 %	13 %	43 %	35.1	52.3
Uffculme Academy Trust	540	21 %	26 %	60 %	4 %	19 %	40.5	53.3
Westcountry Schools Trust	1,406	17 %	28 %	50 %	12 %	27 %	35.7	48.5

### North East

Total number of eligible trusts: 15

Trust Name (North East)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Advance Learning Partnership	632	35 %	23 %	50 %	9 %	25 %	37.4	51.6
Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust	658	27 %	32 %	57 %	20 %	38 %	41.6	56.0
Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education	776	23. %	28 %	50 %	19 %	43 %	40.2	52.3
Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education	1,098	25 %	25 %	51 %	15 %	33 %	35.3	50.3
Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education	1,187	16 %	37 %	64 %	22 %	40 %	43.8	56.0
Eden Learning Trust	646	36 %	25 %	51 %	9 %	28 %	39.6	51.9
Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy	554	39 %	24 %	51 %	8 %	24 %	31.8	47.8
North East Learning Trust	927	25 %	29 %	58 %	13 %	36 %	41.3	53.3
Northern Education Trust	2,018	43 %	35 %	63 %	16 %	37 %	37.3	52.3
Outwood Grange Academies Trust	3,994	33 %	23 %	51 %	10 %	27 %	31.4	48.0
The Gosforth Federated Academies	801	28 %	29 %	64 %	16 %	49 %	38.7	55.9





## East Midlands

Total number of eligible trusts: 22

Trust Name (East Midlands)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Archway Learning Trust	713	48.0 %	28.0 %	45.0 %	13.0 %	20.0 %	38.3	48.8
East Midlands Education Trust	1,163	16.0 %	25.0 %	61.0 %	9.0 %	32.0 %	34.7	54.1
Landau Forte Charitable Trust	495	26.0 %	31.0 %	49.0 %	14.0 %	22.0 %	42.0	49.3
Lionheart Educational Trust	1,303	19.0 %	31.0 %	59.0 %	24.0 %	47.0 %	39.4	53.3
Nova Education Trust	1,381	29.0 %	26.0 %	55.0 %	8.0 %	26.0 %	34.8	50.9
Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust	689	17.0 %	34.0 %	59.0 %	18.0 %	39.0 %	41.4	53.9
St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust	645	23.0 %	30.0 %	45.0 %	9.0 %	21.0 %	37.2	47.8
St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi Academy Trust	800	15.0 %	30.0 %	56.0 %	12.0 %	35.0 %	40.5	53.9
The Spencer Academies Trust	1,931	22.0 %	27.0 %	57.0 %	13.0 %	29.0 %	38.2	52.9
Tove Learning Trust	1,299	29.0 %	25.0 %	49.0 %	4.0 %	17.0 %	37.0	48.2

## East of England

Total number of eligible trusts: 27

Trust Name (East of England)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Academies Enterprise Trust	3,671	35 %	24 %	46 %	10 %	21 %	34.6	46.6
Bmat Education	696	31 %	34 %	45 %	16 %	23 %	38.3	44.5
Chiltern Learning Trust	1,312	28 %	38 %	56 %	21 %	32 %	43.4	52.1
Danes Educational Trust	718	14 %	25 %	68 %	17 %	48 %	39.3	57.4
East Anglian Schools Trust Ltd	764	17 %	25 %	50 %	7 %	16 %	35.0	50.0
Enrich Learning Trust	737	18 %	24 %	53 %	14 %	37 %	37.5	51.7
Inspiration Trust	1,179	30 %	33 %	57 %	17 %	36 %	37.5	50.0
Saffron Academy Trust	886	14 %	24 %	51 %	10 %	41 %	35.4	51.2
Sapientia Education Trust	774	15 %	29 %	53 %	13 %	30 %	39.1	50.9
Scholars' Education Trust	564	16 %	34 %	64 %	13 %	34 %	41.2	55.7
The Diocese Of Westminster Academy Trust	1,183	15 %	33 %	61 %	27 %	40 %	44.7	56.1



## London

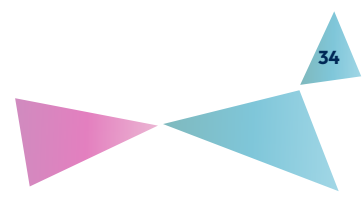
Total number of eligible trusts: 20

Trust Name (London)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Avanti Schools Trust	318	13 %	46 %	70 %	40 %	55 %	47.6	57.4
City Of London Academies Trust	1,034	55 %	40 %	60 %	29 %	45 %	44.7	52.8
Community Schools Trust	607	49 %	50 %	71 %	37 %	50 %	49.2	58.5
Harris Federation	4,676	38 %	37 %	57 %	29 %	46 %	44.0	53.3
Loxford School Trust Limited	971	30 %	40 %	53 %	24 %	39 %	43.2	50.8
Mulberry Schools Trust	400	56 %	46 %	67 %	30 %	51 %	48.0	58.6
Partnership Learning	1,136	33 %	37 %	53 %	30 %	45 %	42.3	51.0
Russell Education Trust	747	15 %	37 %	69 %	21 %	42 %	42.0	58.3
The Cardinal Hume Academies Trust	523	31 %	50 %	61 %	34 %	45 %	50.4	56.6
The Rosedale Hewens Academy Trust	271	34 %	46 %	57 %	21 %	22 %	43.3	51.2
Twyford Church Of England Academies Trust	611	23 %	60 %	79 %	56 %	77 %	54.1	66.2

## North West

Total number of eligible trusts: 24

Trust Name (North West)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	Att8 score	Att8 score Non
Education And Leadership Trust	661	56 %	37 %	53 %	28 %	51 %	45.3	52.8
Education Partnership Trust	413	28 %	37 %	50 %	14 %	20 %	41.5	46.9
Northern Schools Trust	395	54 %	24 %	43 %	5 %	4 %	36.9	47.2
Prospere Learning Trust	925	47 %	31 %	63 %	15 %	41 %	37.7	53.6
Star Academies	2,183	39 %	46 %	64 %	29 %	44 %	44.9	54.7
The Bishop Fraser Trust	653	26 %	29 %	58 %	6 %	24 %	35.0	52.9
The Challenge Academy Trust	851	24 %	25 %	52 %	17 %	22 %	38.2	51.4
The Co-Operative Academies Trust	2,339	45 %	23 %	40 %	9 %	15 %	34.1	45.2
The Laurus Trust	922	18 %	28 %	63 %	10 %	15 %	40.8	56.1
The Learning Trust	398	21 %	25 %	59 %	14 %	35 %	37.9	54.6



## South East

Total number of eligible trusts: 21

Trust Name (South East)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	A#8 score	A#8 score Non
Acer Trust	548	14 %	20 %	57 %	7 %	26 %	32.5	52.0
Activate Learning Education Trust	647	21 %	20 %	38 %	1 %	11 %	32.5	42.5
Bohunt Education Trust	1,501	15 %	20 %	57 %	11 %	35 %	33.0	52.3
Coastal Academies Trust	412	32 %	36 %	63 %	6 %	23 %	40.0	56.8
Leigh Academies Trust	2,229	23 %	28 %	46 %	13 %	23 %	37.1	47.8
Maiden Erlegh Trust	505	16 %	35 %	65 %	23 %	44 %	40.6	56.7
River Learning Trust	961	15 %	24 %	66 %	7 %	30 %	35.8	56.0
South East Surrey Schools Education	611	18 %	20 %	53 %	9 %	34 %	32.3	52.4
The Thinking Schools Academy Trust	937	27 %	20 %	57 %	11 %	38 %	30.4	51.6
Weydon Multi Academy Trust	686	10 %	24 %	63 %	7 %	34 %	34.9	57.1
Xavier Catholic Education Trust	725	8 %	43 %	76 %	17 %	42 %	48.3	62.7

## West Midlands

Total number of eligible trusts: 57

Trust Name (West Midlands)	NP	% 6FSM	% EM pass	% EM pass Non	% EB pass	% EB pass Non	A#8 score	A#8 score Non
Batley Multi Academy Trust	520	32 %	33 %	46 %	15 %	28 %	39.4	48.6
Central Learning Partnership Trust	542	37 %	34 %	43 %	1 %	2 %	45.2	51.6
Dixons Academies Trust	1,238	36 %	37 %	52 %	28 %	39 %	41.5	50.4
King Edward VI Academy Trust Birmingham	1,331	28 %	58 %	88 %	35 %	58 %	55.1	70.6
Mercia Learning Trust	512	27 %	31 %	72 %	19 %	50 %	40.5	58.8
Summit Learning Trust	729	64 %	35 %	47 %	24 %	36 %	41.2	48.7
The Futures Trust	574	34 %	36 %	51 %	12 %	20 %	41.5	50.0
The Gorse Academies Trust	1,198	31 %	37 %	66 %	24 %	45 %	42.0	57.3
The Mercian Trust	818	25 %	35 %	64 %	18 %	43 %	38.6	57.0
Thomas Telford Multi Academy Trust	682	30 %	30 %	50 %	16 %	30 %	39.7	50.1



# Commissioner updates

**This section summarises some the work undertaken by individual Commissioners who act as advocates and convenors for social mobility across a number of sectors.**



## **Sir Michael Barber – Chair of the Commission**

As a Commissioner and Chair, there are three things I have contributed to social mobility in the South West over the past year.

1. As Chair, in addition to chairing meetings of the Commission, I have been a constant advocate of its mission in the business community and among social enterprises as well as in the education sector.
2. In my role as Adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education during 2023, I vigorously promoted the economic and educational development of the South West in Westminster and Whitehall. This included highlighting examples from the region on both the occasions I reported to the Cabinet.

3. As Chair of Somerset Cricket, I strongly supported the extension of the County's work with children and young people in state schools and personally funded and supported a programme - 'Bridging the Gap' - that ensured state school students in the pathway to professional cricket, both girls and boys, got extra coaching to help them keep up with peers in private schools. The growth of cricket in Somerset and across the South West of cricket played by girls and women was also a major advance during the year.



## **Kate Kennally, CEO, Cornwall Council**

Cornwall Council through the Good Growth programme in 2023/24 has made a £12.5m investment in people and skills as it continues its mission to provide opportunities for all and to address disadvantage and promote greater levels of social mobility.

The package includes £2.5m to support more than 1,200 disadvantaged young people aged 16-24 to help them progress. It will especially cater for those who are not in education, employment or training, and help in key areas like employability, mental health, and financial wellbeing.

£4m is also being invested in providing skills in growth areas of Cornwall's economy.

£2m of this will help to upskill people for the future green economy, including domestic and commercial renewable energy systems, electric vehicles, and the floating offshore wind industry. And another £2m is being invested in providing digital skills in areas including Artificial Intelligence, immersive technology, software and data.

To help people navigate the range of support available with employment, training and qualifications, a further £6m is being invested in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly People Hub. Cornwall Opportunities, a searchable database of jobs, apprenticeships and courses has also been launched following a £257,000 grant from the Government's G7 Legacy Fund, which aims to make it easier for residents to access information and work opportunities.

This allows residents of Cornwall and Scilly aged 16+ to access comprehensive employment and skills support via a single point of contact, in much the same way the Good Growth Programme has funded the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Growth Hub as a single contact point for local businesses.



### **Lisa Roberts, Vice-Chancellor, Exeter University**

The University of Exeter is committed to the principle that anyone with the potential to benefit from Higher Education should have an equal opportunity to do so, and we believe that fair access to Higher Education is a fundamental enabler of social mobility, which improves life opportunities and outcomes for individuals, and benefits society and the economy. Our Access and Participation Plan places a focus on widening participation, and we actively support school attainment in the South West, including our Exeter Tutoring Model that sees Undergraduate students provide free tutoring for Year 8 students in local schools. This programme has yielded such positive results that it is now being rolled out in other parts of England. Engaging school

pupils early will be a key aspect of driving change, and one example of this is the We Are The Ocean project, developed as part of our COP 28 activity. The project saw 400 school children from our region collaborate with children in Dubai, Sharjah, and Abu Dhabi to explore ocean health and ecosystems, resulting in an anthology of poetry. The project gave these young people a voice, as well as providing a global experience, and a lesson in the importance of collaboration.

Another area that speaks to our social mobility commitments is Degree Apprenticeships. Our University was an early adopter of Degree Apprenticeships, and we have seen a notable increase in engagement with groups that are underrepresented in Higher Education through these programmes. Our approach to Degree Apprenticeships supports people from non-traditional educational routes to upskill, and we are providing new career pathways into areas such as digital, engineering, finance, management and healthcare. Acting on our position to be a force for tremendous good in the South West, we have also recently formed the South West Think Tank with our partners, the University of Plymouth and Falmouth University. Working together in closer collaboration and drawing upon our joint expertise and resource, the SW Think Tank will produce evidence-based policies and recommendations that respond to regional challenges. One of our first pieces of work will be to address the skilled workforce shortage in the region, and to tackle the issues that prevent upskilling, such as poor transportation and housing.



### **Paul Crawford, CEO, LiveWest Ltd**

As the largest social landlord working across the South West, LiveWest is well placed in understanding many of the barriers that are impacting on educational attainment, developing the skills, creating job opportunities, and promoting economic prosperity of young individuals across our region.

Over the past year we have reflected on the work of the South-West Social Mobility Commission and the role LiveWest can play in ensuring that much of our work is aligned to the goals of the Commission's work. In particular, our focus has been on defining social mobility in a way that is meaningful to our work as a social landlord

and the role we play in communities across the South West. This has involved engaging with our work colleagues and involved residents group, InFocus to share our definition of social mobility, as well as share our commitments for 2024 which include providing opportunities to:

- Young people in education via work experience and apprenticeships within LiveWest
- Our 1,700 colleagues so that they can access training and professional qualifications to support their career ambitions
- Our 80,000 customers via job opportunities, work experience and apprenticeships.

In support of our approach, we have also set stretching targets to measure our activity against these priorities and will share our experience later in the year.



### **Paul von der Heyde, Chair, NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board**

As well as being a health care provider, it is recognised that the NHS is an anchor institution across the South West providing employment and opportunities for a significant proportion of the population and businesses. However, it can be that the full range of opportunities which the Health and Care Sector offers for young people is not apparent. As well as providing opportunities through higher education and degree courses, the opportunities for further education to enable pathways to fulfilling careers are being developed locally. One example is the nursing and healthcare apprenticeship course being delivered by Bridgwater and Taunton College aligned with the ambition

to deliver a Healthcare Academy for Somerset. It has been recognised that offering courses locally where participants can continue to live locally has enabled people to develop skills and careers while balancing other family and life commitments and can offer second careers. Helping careers advisers to understand the breadth of opportunities available which may seem more accessible and less daunting to some young people will enable pathways to achievements not currently imagined.



### **Lisa Mannall, CEO, Cornwall Education Trust (CELT)**

Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT) has been focused on improving outcomes for our disadvantaged pupils from its inception in 2019. Based on 2023 results, CELT has the highest P8 score for disadvantaged pupils across the South West.

We are constantly working on ways to ensure all CELT pupils are given equality of opportunity and have three main focuses moving forward.

CELT is working in partnership with REACH Foundation on Cradle to Career, a two-year project aimed at developing cradle-to-career models of support, anchored in great schools. The focus is to provide a seamless 'pipeline' of support for children from birth to positive post-school destinations and maximise the potential of being all-through in terms of curriculum, quality of teaching and relationships with children and families.

We are working in partnership with Cornwall Council to deliver "The Hub". This alternative learning opportunity allows those students with barriers to attendance, or near to suspension, to access a more bespoke educational package. This offer includes structured teaching, work experience, PSHE and face-to-face interactions in a safe and secure environment.

Through the most recent school to join CELT, Bodmin College, we offer HE courses. We are now looking to offer our invaluable support staff the opportunity to study, through a workplace scheme, to achieve a formal Early Years teaching qualification. CELT's long term goal is to use this new and dynamic work force to enable every setting to offer wrap around care to our families. This is a need identified through our community listening work carried out as part of the Cradle-to Career project.

At CELT we believe that it is by doing additional, different, and better, we will be able to improve outcomes for all young people in mid Cornwall.





### **Alice Thomson, Associate Editor, The Times**

For too long the South West has been ignored in the press. There is a lazy supposition that Cornwall, Devon and Somerset are all just about tourism, second homes and agriculture. The people who live in the West Country, their needs, concerns and frustrations are forgotten. The media focus on the North South divide, the South East and the Red Wall when discussing England, particularly when talking about politics. In part, this is due to the lack of lobbying by the MPs in the area who are more fragmented in their outlook but also because until now there has not been enough focus on the region and analysis available to present their case. This is why the South-West Social Mobility Commission is invaluable for journalists because it gives this unique area another voice and shows its strengths and weaknesses. I think it's vital that we flag up the challenges facing the South West across all media platforms, particularly concerning the young, education and job opportunities. As a columnist for The Times, Associate Editor and interviewer I have long written about the need to focus on the South West and for politicians, in particular, to take its concerns more seriously, as well as recognising its huge potential. My role as Commissioner helps me champion the region and introduce the Commission to a wider audience and more media outlets.



### **Brendan Staniforth, Strategy Delivery Director, Devonport Royal Dockyard (Babcock International)**

Some of our most important capabilities and operations reside in the South West where we create employment for over 19,000 people within our organisation and across the supply chain. Our work is focussed on a long-term commitment with a national impact, therefore addressing the social mobility challenges in the region is not only a critical enabler to us and our customers, but also critical in securing a better future for the communities within which we operate. In the last year we've focussed on delivering incremental changes to allow us to adopt and deploy the emerging SWSMC strategy. Examples include;

- Setting clear long term work plans and workforce requirements;
- Working as part of a regional response to the national skills gaps as part of the Nuclear Skills Task force and Destination Nuclear;
- Establishing a Babcock Skills academy with local and regional academic partnerships;
- Extending our reach and impact in the community through partnerships such as the Plymouth Argyle Community trust and our wider supply chain on employability, travel to work;
- Realigning our practices to improve capacity for community volunteering;
- Increasing our STEM activities;
- Creating a more relevant and inclusive workplace across our multiple networks.

Our next step is to create a regional-city plan, which delivers the social mobility outcomes we need with our customers, partners and civic leaders. The next year offers a significant opportunity for Business and Government departments to collectively play a critical role in implementing the strategy we've set and make a generational difference to the people living in the communities across the South West.



**Karl Tucker, Chair of Yeo Valley Farms, Chair of Great South West, Chair of South Bristol Youth**

I chair South Bristol Youth, a charity that runs intervention programmes in both primary and secondary schools within Bristol and Somerset. The aim of these programmes at primary level are about reducing the risk of persistent absence in secondary school through helping young people to gain confidence in themselves and the skills to allow them to participate in education positively and regularly using a combination of workshops, mentoring and visits. At the secondary level the programmes are focussed on giving students the knowledge about pathways beyond school into Further and Higher Education as well as apprenticeships again using a combination of visits to employers and academic institutions, workshops on resilience and personal development, team building and confidence building, mentoring and public speaking skills development.

Through my role as Chair of the Great South West, the pan regional partnership for Devon, Somerset, Cornwall and Dorset, I am seeking to drive economic growth and investment into the region to provide increased opportunities for our young people. The significant opportunities that we have in our region will create thousands of new high value jobs, it's imperative that we develop the workforce of the future to fill these jobs. This requires a systemic approach that looks at many factors including; housing availability and affordability, transport and connectivity as well as the educational attainment at all stages of a young person's life from primary school through to college, university or apprenticeship to provide a workforce with the skills required in the future.



**Tony Rowe CBE, Hon LLD, Chairman and Chief Executive, Exeter Rugby Club**

Exeter Rugby Club has a long history of creating pathways to Further and Higher education through the medium of elite sport. Our academy structure is built into the fabric of the education system in the region, stretching across Devon and Cornwall, and has opened doors to college and university qualifications for individuals who otherwise may have felt these options out of reach.

In the past five years the successful framework developed by our men's elite academy is now being duplicated for our newly formed women's pathway, affording opportunities to girls combining sporting prowess with formal education. The relationships which we have developed alongside key partners including Truro College, Exeter College and the University of Exeter have been vital in delivering these programmes and I have no doubt that we now offer one of the finest academy pathways in the country, with learning and education at its core, ensuring that we are preparing our young people not just for professional sport, but the wider world beyond.

Alongside this, my work has expanded to include a thorough review of our regional transport infrastructure alongside the MP for East Devon, Simon Jupp. Our work will focus on ensuring that lack of adequate transport does not create a barrier for young people to access further education, opening new travel routes connecting our centres for learning with the wider rural community.





### **Sean Mackney, Principal and CEO, Petroc**

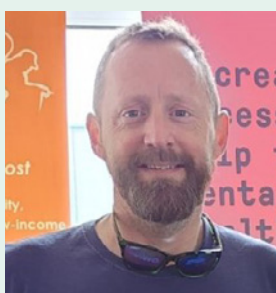
I joined the South-West Social Mobility Commission in March 2023 in the capacity as the Principal and CEO of Petroc, but also an ardent systems thinker and member of the local community with ambitions to achieve equity in educational and employment opportunities across Northern Devon, as well as the wider South West.

Key developments at Petroc have included the brand development of the University Centre for Northern Devon and its curriculum areas; Digital & Creative; Health & Community; and Sustainability, Marine & Maritime. With a greater focus on green and marine opportunities, the rebranding aims to accelerate recognition of the benefits of having a University Centre at the heart of the North Devon Biosphere and establish

a clear trajectory to high-skilled employment in the South West. By removing barriers to higher education, the University Centre positions itself as an accessible HE provider in the community, offering clear progression routes for young people and adults, both new and returning to education.

Additionally, Petroc has begun initial consultations for a Northern Devon Sixth Form (NDVI) with its local feeder schools, the Education Futures Northern Devon Partnership (EFNDP) board, and multi-academy trusts. NDVI aims to provide each learner with a personal roadmap for success, enabling the study of a full suite of high-quality A-levels and alternative academic qualifications, allowing ambitious young people to explore and extend their personal potentials. Working with its partner schools, NDVI would continue to develop the college's current methods of engagement to stretch and engage learners aged 11-16 through a bespoke programme of activity based on the schools' needs.

I have remained active in my role as the chair of the Northern Devon Futures (NDF) board, overseeing the development of its 2024-2029 strategic goals. The NDF board is ambitious in its approach to championing social mobility through its subgroups: Climate and Environment; Communities and Place; Children and Young People; Health and Wellbeing; and Economy, Innovation and Skills. These groups are led by systems leaders across the region and guided by a number of strategic pillars. The NDF strategy and its website are expected to be launched in June 2024.



### **Andrew Moreman, CEO, Young Devon**

Young Devon has built partnerships with a range of other local young people's charities and, in doing so, has successfully bid for more than £2.7 million of government funding to support young people in Devon and Plymouth over the next few years. The major part of this funding will enable the provision of more than 50 one-bedroomed units of supported accommodation for young adults; these will have a strong element of supporting young people who might otherwise have been homeless in finding stable accommodation and, crucially, being able to access and

progress into training and employment. In addition, we will be expanding our mental health services to support young people in North Devon and Torbay, especially looking to support those for whom engaging with school is a real challenge because of their mental wellbeing.



# Overview of the Commission Strategy Unit's work

**The Commission Strategy Unit is a small, dynamic strategy-and-research unit that aims to produce practical, evidence-led recommendations and tools for supporting social mobility in the region and beyond. Our intention is to catalyse action by civic leaders across the region in key areas affecting children and young people from under-resourced backgrounds.**

We have a portfolio of seven Strategic Projects at different stages of development. These projects have been selected because we believe they have high potential for impact, whilst collectively they address the Commission's four life-stage goals between birth and early adulthood.

The focus of our Strategic Projects is in the early years, education and employment spaces.

Wider factors – in particular, improvements to housing affordability, transport, and investment and funding to the region – are crucial factors to social mobility. While they are currently outside of the research remit of the Commission Strategy Unit, as a Commission we will advocate strongly for improvements in these areas, and will be producing policy positions on them over the next year.

### University-led tutoring service

Delivery and scale-up of a high quality, sustainable model of tutoring for children struggling with basic literacy provided by undergraduate students and free at the point of use for schools

### School-led cradle-to-career (c2c) models

Case study evaluation of a partnership looking to embed school or trust-led c2c models in their locales, and the enablers and barriers to effective models

### Early Years report

Recommendations to address key issues in the 0-5 life phase, with scoping of potential pilots for North Cornwall

### Equity scorecard for schools

Scorecard for measuring how well schools are doing for under-resourced pupils, with recommendations for policymakers and Ofsted

### Tech careers

Recommendations and pilots for how to get more young people from under-resourced backgrounds in the region into tech jobs, supporting social mobility and economic growth

### Major infrastructure projects

Development of a 'blueprint' for how large infrastructure projects can effectively build local pipelines for jobs from school onwards - with case studies from major projects in the region

### Employer best practice

Guidance for employers to embed good practice in organisational socioeconomic diversity with case studies examining how to effect organisational change





## Strategic Projects in relation to our four life stage goals

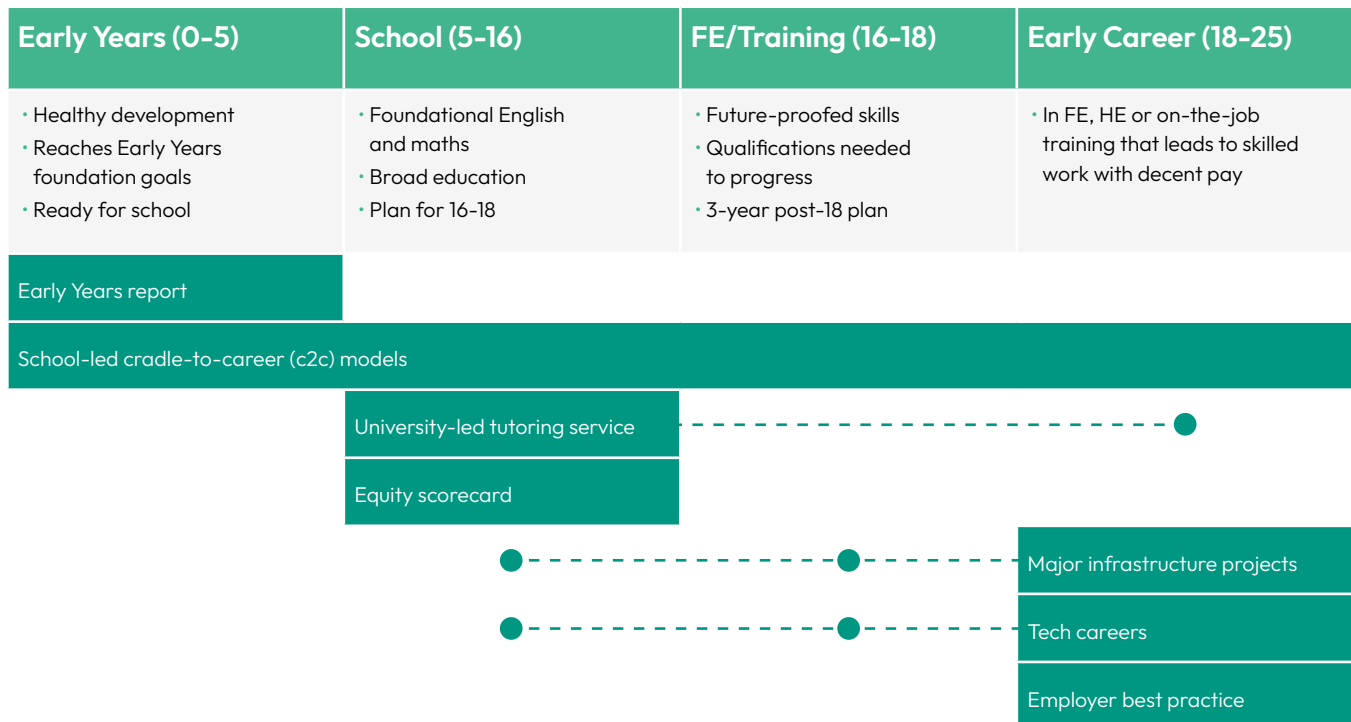
In our Introductory Report from 2023, we stated our 2050 goals as follows:

Goal 1:	Goal 2:	Goal 3:	Goal 4:
<p><b>Early Years (0-5)</b> Every infant* develops healthily and meets Early Years foundation goals so that they are ready for school.</p>	<p><b>School (5-16)</b> Every child* finishes school with foundational English and maths, a broad education** and a plan for 16-18 study or training.</p>	<p><b>FE/training (16-18)</b> Every young person* is equipped with the skills employers need now and in the future, the qualifications required to progress and a plan for the next three years.</p>	<p><b>Early Career (18-25)</b> Every adult* is working towards a further or higher level qualification or in a job with training that lead to skilled employment with decent pay.</p>

\* Individual differences may mean this is not possible for every person. However a realistic goal might be 95-100%.

\*\* Reference to a broad education addresses our belief that although we have a focus on foundational English and maths in this goal, we don't think this outcome should be pursued at the expense of other subjects (for example, by narrowing the curriculum), and that different skills and qualifications including vocational ones should be valued.

## Our seven Strategic Projects aim to address these goals



Some projects address the core issues within a selected life stage and system – for example our, school accountability and employer best practice projects. Our early years report addresses one life stage but spans health and local government to promote better practice across systems. Other projects meanwhile span multiple life stages. For example, our university-led tutoring scheme focuses on school pupils but links pupils to undergraduate student tutors who gain employability skills and credits towards their degree.

Our major infrastructure projects and tech careers projects take the employment sphere as their starting point but make recommendations for addressing earlier life stages, promoting meaningful collaboration between employers, schools and support services. Cradle-to-career models meanwhile span the whole 0 – 25 pipeline.

Altogether, we think that these projects have the potential to drive significant impact in social mobility across the South-West peninsula and beyond.



## University-led tutoring service

Our university-led tutoring model is the most established of our projects. The Exeter Tutoring Model is a high-quality approach to tutoring with the potential to transform thousands of young lives across the country. Using a dedicated foundational literacy programme, undergraduate tutors boost the basic literacy of school pupils, gaining work experience and credits towards their degree, forming invaluable relationships with pupils falling behind in class while considering a career in teaching. We call it the 'win win win' scheme.

This university-led scheme is scalable, sustainable and low cost. Unlike other programmes, it is free for schools. An initial pilot showed a significant improvement in pupils' basic writing skills. This year, a scale-up of the programme is underway with Next Steps South West and other Uni Connect partners in the South West and North East. This scale-up involves students from several universities delivering tutoring to up to 350 pupils from Cornwall to Northumberland. This will yield more evidence on the impact of the scheme, whilst refining the model for further expansion. A full report will be published in autumn 2024.

We are currently exploring ways of expanding across the region, thinking about service-learning within universities and possible delivery by FE colleges. We are also working on expanding the model to university partners nationally, developing a 'toolkit' to help other universities embed tutoring within their curricula. The programme has attracted widespread interest among policy makers.

## School-led cradle-to-career (c2c) models

Cradle-to-career models are based on a recognition that good outcomes for children neither begin nor end with school, and that supporting children, parents and communities beyond the school gates is as crucial to in-school attainment as good quality teaching and learning. School-led c2c models use the school's central place in a community to coordinate and facilitate access to a range of initiatives that address disadvantage, such as accessible antenatal classes and family support. Initiatives are typically provided by delivery partners rather than the school itself. The school's role is in building strong, long-term relationships with children and parents as well as community actors to understand community needs and assets and how these might be brought together.

We are working with the Reach Foundation to document learnings from their c2c partnership that has been making waves across the South West and North of England. Through a series of case studies, we examine the scope of possibilities afforded by school-led c2c models – from school-grown community hubs to partnerships with the local authority on the government's Family Hubs programme. We describe the unique journey each school or trust has been on in developing their c2c model, enablers to success and key learnings they have picked up along the way. These findings will be published in a report in autumn 2024.

## Early Years report

Later this year, we will be publishing our recommendations on what interventions can improve social mobility in the early years (0-5 years) and what barriers to social mobility currently exist. Early years practice is unlike other areas that the SWSMC has focused upon, in that it combines education and health interventions to give infants the best possible start in life. Through a combination of expert interviews from across education, health and local government and reviewing the existing literature, the report makes recommendations in four distinct areas:

- Childcare and School Preparedness;
- Nutrition;
- Health Visiting; and
- Mental Health.

The report will present the views of professionals in local government, childcare and healthcare regarding the implementation of these recommendations. The report will reflect upon the practicalities of making these recommendations a reality, including:

- Asking who should be involved and when;
- Considering the limits imposed by travel, finance and staffing;
- What organisational changes might need to occur to deliver them; and
- How local government can fund some of these proposals.

It will also present the views of professionals from different organisations on how they best speak to national government, with a single voice, in lobbying for more money and changes to policy.



## Equity scorecard for schools

Our forthcoming ‘Developing an equity scorecard’ report builds on the recommendation made in the 2022 report ‘Social Mobility in the South West’ to adopt a sharper focus on disadvantage in the education system, amid stark attainment gaps between pupils from under-resourced backgrounds and their more privileged peers.

We will set out proposals for changing school inspections to incorporate assessments on how well secondary schools serve their pupils from under-resourced backgrounds. Prioritising the needs of students from under-resourced backgrounds and embracing a system- and community-centric approach to school accountability, we believe would introduce powerful incentives for schools to drive more equitable outcomes.

The report contributes to a wider national debate about the future shape of the inspection framework in England. At the heart of our proposals lies a conviction that school accountability can act as a potential catalyst for more equitable outcomes in education. Current inspections by Ofsted do not place sufficient emphasis on this vital aspect of schools’ work. At a time of widening inequalities in society and persistent socio-economic gaps in school achievement, current school inspections provide a narrow and unrealistic view of what teachers and schools do. Our proposal for an ‘equity scorecard’ aims to change this.

We are currently trialling the scorecard with schools in the South West to refine our approach and demonstrate how this could work for schools in general.

## Tech Careers

In the chapter that follows, we present highlights from our most recently published report, ‘The Tech Frontier: Shaping the Future of the South-West Peninsula’. The report reveals tech to be a rapidly growing sector in the region, with a shortage of skilled talent that represents both a threat to the industry’s growth and an opportunity for social mobility should the right interventions be put in place. The report identifies young people’s awareness of, and interest in, tech careers as a key barrier and presents recommendations for addressing this, with particular consideration paid to young people from under-resourced backgrounds. The report provides lessons for rural areas that can be applied across other sectors.

Most importantly, in this and other projects we don’t just stop at producing a report. In order to drive action, we are now actively working with key stakeholders to pilot and embed our recommendations. In particular, we are supporting the Cornwall and Devon Careers Hubs to set-up, run and evaluate pilots for Tech Work Experience and Employer-led Workshops – two of the recommendations within the report – with an implementation report on these pilots due in December 2024.

## Major Infrastructure Projects and Employer Best Practice

In our next Annual Report, we will present updates from our other Strategic Projects. They include:

- Major infrastructure projects: we are kicking off work to gather learnings from large-scale projects happening in the region, with the aim of producing a blueprint on how organisations can effectively think about and do long-term, place-based workforce development from school onwards.
- Employer best practice: we are working with a number of organisations within the South West and nationally to share best practice around adopting a ‘social mobility lens’ to improve socioeconomic diversity and inclusion in the workplace.



# The Tech Frontier

This is an excerpt from the SWSMC report 'The Tech Frontier: Shaping the Future of the South-West Peninsula', published in April 2024.

The UK's tech industry is booming, yet it faces a critical shortage of skilled talent – and nowhere more so than in the South-West peninsula. If we could support more young people – especially those from under-resourced backgrounds – into tech careers, we could simultaneously secure the continued growth of this vital industry and address the region's stark social mobility issues. This report investigates how we might do this. It outlines the current landscape and challenges and charts a course for collective action. It urges strategic collaboration between industry professionals, educators and others to invest in building accessible pathways to tech jobs in the region that will benefit young people, the industry and the wider South-West economy.

## Why This Matters Now:

- **Tech's Pivotal Role in the South-West:** The economic impact of just two tech employers in the South-West surpasses the entire output of the region's fishing industry, underscoring the sector's critical importance to the local economy.
- **Rapid Growth in Tech:** The South-West peninsula's tech sector is on a trajectory to expand its workforce by 26% from 2022 to 2027, significantly outpacing the growth rate of any other sector in the South-West.
- **The Talent Challenge:** The region's tech companies cite finding skilled talent as their primary growth obstacle, highlighted by the South-West having the lowest uptake in level 3 IT qualifications.
- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** The disparity in access to tech education and work experience hits under-resourced communities hardest, highlighting a pressing need for equitable digital inclusion.

## What The Issues Are:

In the South-West peninsula, three key barriers are hindering development of a skilled tech workforce:

- **Awareness & Interest:** Lack of awareness and interest in tech careers amongst young people is a significant issue. Efforts highlighting the sector's exciting and rewarding opportunities need intensification to attract the next generation.
- **Tech Skills & Qualifications:** There is a disconnect between the tech qualifications young people earn

and the skills employers seek. Prioritising level 4 and 5 employer-driven qualifications, supporting young people to develop personal tech portfolios, and focusing on the development of vital soft skills are essential to align education with industry needs.

- **Tech Employment:** The traditional pathways to tech employment are evolving yet approaches to supporting access have not evolved. Strengthening education-employer links and capitalising on social media for recruitment are critical for modernising tech employment strategies.

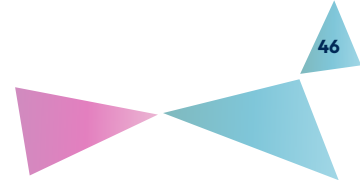
## What Should We Do:

We have **identified eight key initiatives** across the three issues identified above. We have prioritised initiatives ①, ②, ④ & ⑥ as "best bets" because they present the optimal balance between estimated impact and ease of implementation.

## Awareness & Interest

- ① **Year 10 Tech Work Experience Programmes:** Scalable hands-on work experience opportunities for Year-10 students across the Peninsula
- ② **Year 7-11 Employer-led Workshops:** Interactive tech workshops in secondary schools, led by industry professionals and designed by workshop specialists
- ③ **Secondary School 'Tech Days':** Dedicated day where lessons link each subject to technology, supported by learning materials provided by a governing body





### Tech Skills & Qualifications

- 4 Sixth Form Provision of Level 4 & 5 Tech Foundation Courses:** Sixth forms in 'coldspot' areas to partner with local colleges and universities with existing level 4 and 5 tech courses to offer these programmes across a wider geography
- 5 Universally Offered Level 4 & 5 Employer-Led Tech Courses:** Pledge by all colleges to provide level 4 or 5 tech foundation courses in the most in-demand tech areas (software development, network engineering and network support)
- 6 Tech Mentorship Scheme:** A mentorship programme pairing tech professionals with sixth form and college students to guide their career development and skills enhancement

### Tech Employment

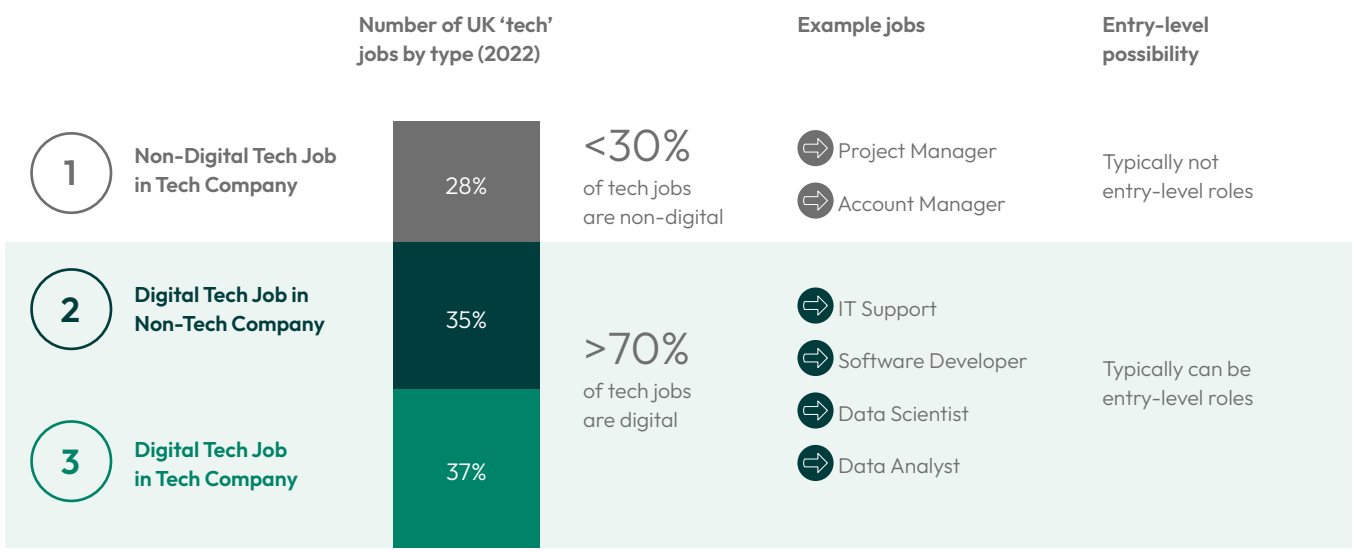
- 7 Tech Talent Marketplace:** A process to create quarterly databases of the roles for which tech employers are recruiting and the profiles of students on tech courses in order to improve recruitment pathways
- 8 LinkedIn Coaching in Schools:** Programmes to teach students how to use LinkedIn effectively for professional networking and job searching

This report serves as a blueprint for unlocking the full potential of the region's tech sector. We are working with key partners to take our priority recommendations forward – supporting social mobility and tech in the South-West peninsula and presenting a model for action for other industries in the region and across the UK.

*This project focuses primarily on the digital roles within both tech and non-tech companies (2 & 3 below)*

Tech jobs can be categorised into three distinct types:

- 1. Non-digital roles in tech companies** (e.g. Project Managers): comprise about 28% of total UK tech jobs and are usually not entry-level positions
- 2. Digital roles in tech companies** (e.g. Software Developers): make up approximately 37% of the tech job market and often offer entry-level opportunities
- 3. Digital roles in non-tech companies** (e.g. IT Support positions): represent around 35% of tech jobs in the UK and are typically accessible as entry-level roles



Source: Glassdoor Economic Analysis, Tech Nation people and skills report 2022

# 1 Year 10 Tech Work Experience Programmes

**Objective:** Ensure all Year 10 students in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset can access high-quality work experience in software development, network engineering and network support – the three most in-demand tech roles in the region

**Overview:** Run nine work experience programmes a year with good geographic coverage across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset

**Rationale:** There is low awareness of, and interest in, tech careers amongst young people in the South-West peninsula. A well-designed, fun and exciting work experience programme could foster interest in a tech career and awareness of locally available opportunities at a crucial stage in young people’s development

## Proposed Year-10 Work Experience Schemes



Cornwall



Devon



Somerset



### Software Engineering

#### Mission to Mars<sup>1</sup>

Navigate a Martian landscape by coding a Mars rover, employing teamwork and tech skills to command rovers in a dynamic simulation



### Network Engineering

#### Disaster Network

Create a resilient and rapidly deployable network system for disaster-stricken areas to ensure continuous communication to save the most amount of people



### Network Support

#### Tech Detective

Solve a series of network-related mysteries in a simulated company scenario to find the criminal, using clues to troubleshoot and fix hidden issues within the network

**These three tech job groups represent >70% of the tech demand in the South West Peninsula**

<sup>1</sup> Already run by Software Cornwall (very successful scheme)



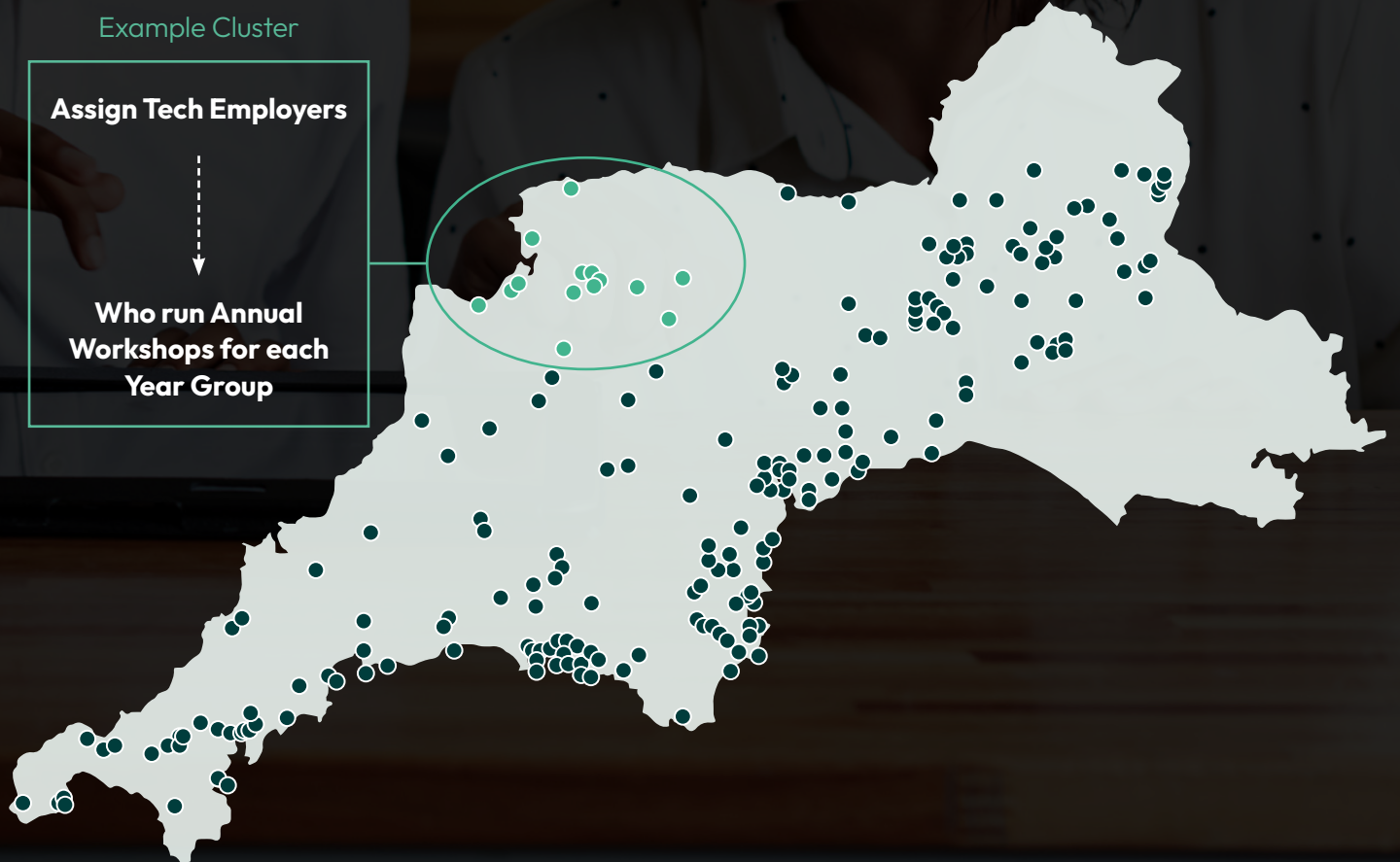
## 2 Year 7-11 Employer-led Workshops via Secondary School Clusters

**Objective:** Ennsure all Year 7-11 students in the South-West peninsula have a meaningful interaction with a tech employer every year throughout their secondary school journey

**Overview:** Group secondary schools into clusters, pairing each cluster with five local tech employers. Employers conduct five workshops a year with each cluster, one for each year group. Workshop content and delivery is supported by a body specialising in delivering in-school workshops

**Rationale:** Students do not currently get enough exposure to or meaningful interactions with tech employers. Rurality is a significant barrier to employers reaching more isolated schools in the South-West peninsula. Grouping schools into a manageable number of clusters has the potential to ensure that every student in the region receives this crucial exposure and interaction

Map of secondary schools in South West peninsula



## 4 Sixth Form Provision of Level 4 & 5 Tech Courses

**Objective:** Ensure all students can access a level 4 or 5 tech course without the need to travel an excessively long distance

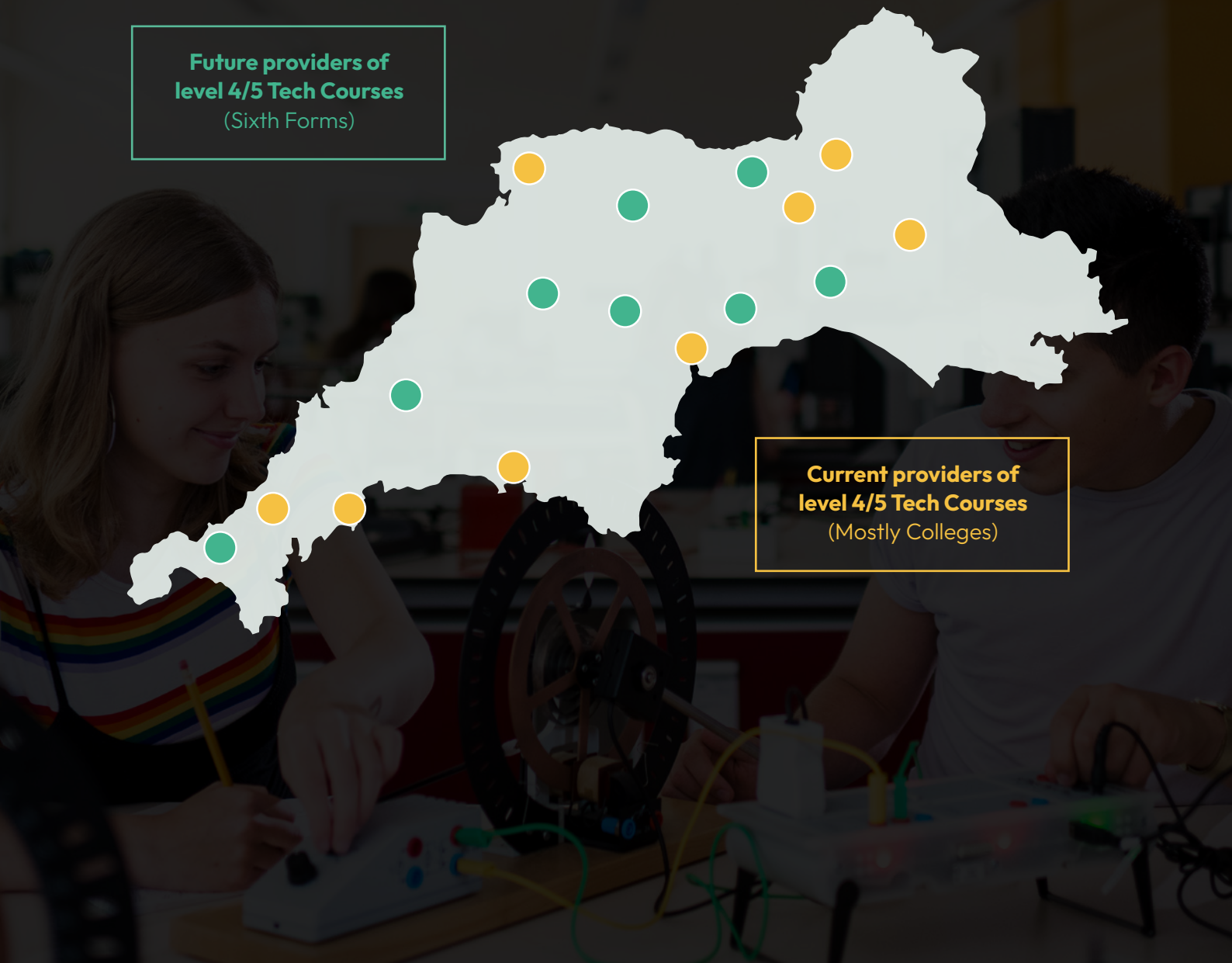
**Overview:** Get sixth forms in 'coldspot' areas to partner with local colleges and universities with existing level 4 and 5 tech courses to offer these programmes across a wider geography. Students access some of their learning via sixth form teachers/tutors and some of their learning online with the support of the college/university programme

**Rationale:** The distribution of level 4 and 5 tech courses is currently too sparse across the peninsula. Supporting existing sixth forms to provide these courses could help address this geographic issue

### Breakdown of current and future level 4 & 5 tech qualifications in the South West peninsula

**Future providers of level 4/5 Tech Courses (Sixth Forms)**

**Current providers of level 4/5 Tech Courses (Mostly Colleges)**





## 6 Tech Mentorship Scheme

**Objective:** Ensure students who are interested in a tech career are given the support to create a personal tech portfolio and gain the soft skills needed to enter the industry

**Overview:** Skilled technical volunteers assign projects to tech-interested young people and provide weekly mentorship throughout each project, enabling young people to create a personal portfolio and develop soft skills in the process

**Rationale:** Personal tech portfolios and good soft skills are highly sought after by tech employers, yet can be challenging for young people and especially those from under-resourced backgrounds to acquire. To level the playing field, dedicated support needs to be provided



**Tech Expert**  
(Volunteer)



**Student**  
(Successful Applicant)



### Next steps

Often, reports get written, read and talked about but no real action happens. We want this report to have the opposite effect. Our objective for the rest of 2024 is to set-up, run and evaluate pilots for the Tech Work Experience and Employer-led Workshops. To achieve this, we will focus on three critical areas:

1. **Create Impactful and Scalable Programmes** – We have already assembled “The Tech Frontier Team” which includes various stakeholders in the South West (Tech Cornwall, Cognition Learning, CYNAM, EVO Agency, Tech South West, The Careers & Enterprise Company) to create impactful work experience and workshops that we will pilot at the end of the year with students in Cornwall and Devon

2. **Secure Funding** – We will explore different funding sources and secure enough funding for investment and on an on-going basis. For example, we are currently in the final stages of securing £125k of public funding
3. **Organise and Evaluate Pilots** – We will collaborate with schools in more deprived areas to run these pilots in October 2024 and then evaluate the impact of the schemes after the pilots to prepare for future scaling across the peninsula



# Conclusion

The work of the South-West Social Mobility Commission aims to motivate key actors in the region to think seriously and strategically about enhancing the life chances of children and young people from under-resourced backgrounds.

In this report, we have reflected the most recent available data relating to key educational, health, housing and cost-of-living indicators. Much of this data paints a picture of the South West as a region with notable challenges, with many parts of the peninsula below the England or regional average on multiple fronts. But there are also positives indicating where improvements have been made already – and where there is the potential to do more.

The summaries from our Commissioners show the work that is happening across different sectors to spearhead change. The Commission Strategy Unit's work meanwhile provides evidence-informed recommendations for how different sectors can individually and collaboratively address key challenges. As shown in the example of tech careers, it also sets out practical steps – which have been informed by experts and practitioners in the region – for kickstarting change.

The Commission's work is driving change in practical ways, across different sectors. The challenges we have identified are not educational alone – and our approach to improving life chances in the region encapsulates health, culture and other social services too. We are committed to working together with partners across the region to bring to life our recommendations for a more equitable South West region.



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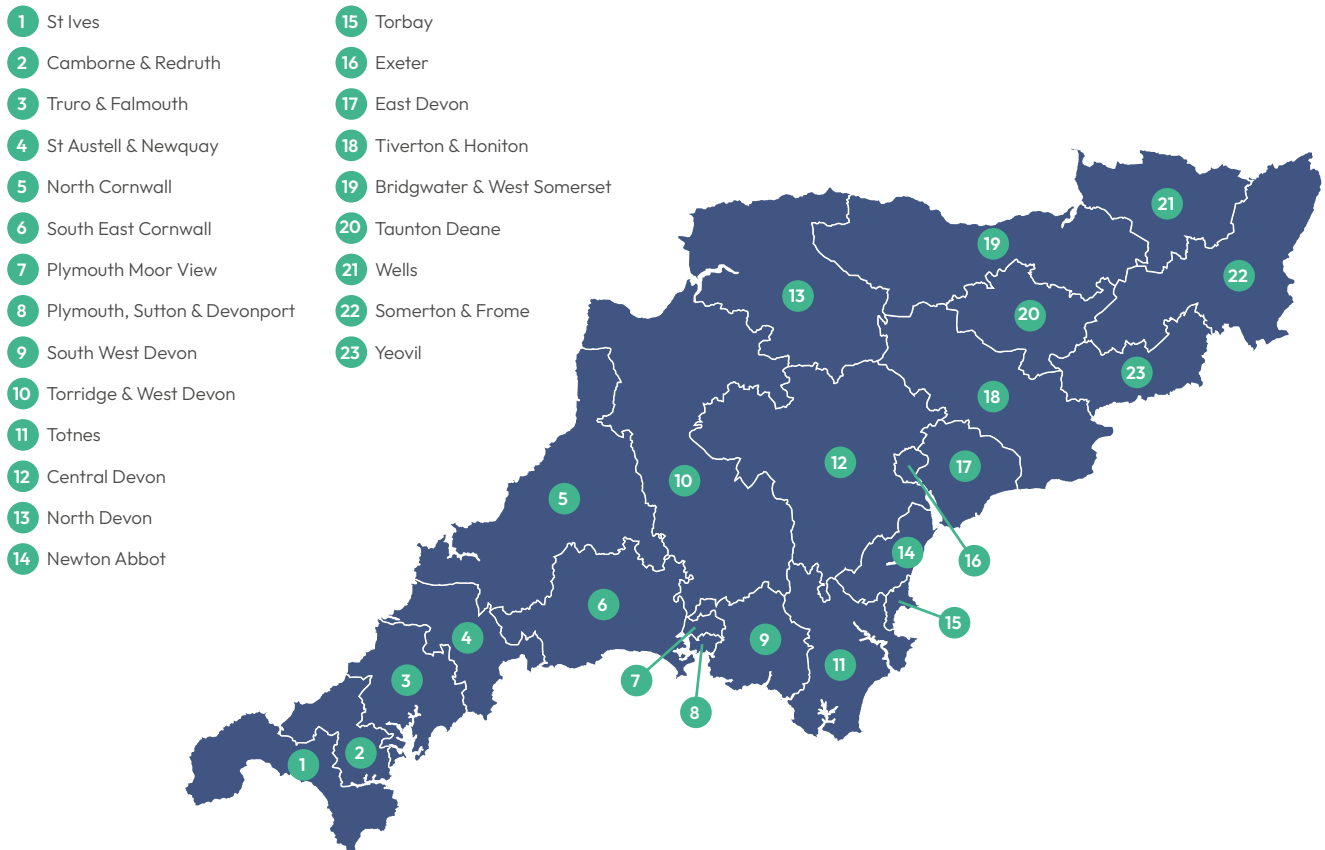
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# Appendix

## South-West peninsula parliamentary constituencies

The parliamentary constituencies referred to in this report are those that were in effect from the 2010 boundary review to the general election of 2024. Future reports will refer to these new constituencies.







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