

Chapter 1 Building Employability

Educational achievement is key to future employment success. People without qualifications find it much more difficult to get a job than those with. Fewer than 4 out of 10¹ ethnic minority people without a qualification find work. In London, for example, ethnic minorities with no qualifications are almost 35 percent more likely than the white population to be unemployed, even after all other factors affecting employment chances are taken into account².

Some ethnic minority groups do better than others. Many pupils from Indian and Chinese ethnic groups do well in school and gain high qualifications. Many Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils however gain no or low qualifications and Black Caribbean boys are often the least successful in school.

DfES' work to build employability through raising the educational attainment of under achieving ethnic minority pupils is bearing fruit. Compared to the average increase in 5 A* - C GCSE³ or equivalent in 2004 of 1.2 percentage points, Pakistani has the biggest increase - up 3.7 percentage points to 45 per cent followed by Black Caribbean - up 2.8 percentage points to 35.7 per cent.

Progress to date

In March 2005 the National Curriculum Assessment of GCSE and equivalent attainment data⁴ was issued. This showed that the gap between Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils and all pupils at GCSE and equivalent was closing. (See Annex A)

The Aiming High strategy, focusing on raising the achievement of ethnic minority pupils in schools, has been the key lever to raising the attainment of ethnic minority pupils. The strategy focuses on key areas:

Black Pupils – The Black Pupils Achievement programme was rolled out in October 2005. This programme is based on effective practice developed within the Aiming High project initially involving 30 schools. Findings from the pilot phase indicate that the programme has focused the professional development of some head-teachers to help them raise African-Caribbean achievement and race equality issues more generally. The programme will provide support to schools to develop leadership capacity to lead a whole school approach to raising Black achievement and to equip teachers with the necessary skills to respond to the needs of Black African, Black Caribbean and mixed

¹ LFS analysis, four quarters to spring 2005

² Internal DWP ELMD analysis based on 2004 LFS data

³ The Statistical First Release National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and equivalent attainment and Post-16 attainment by pupil characteristics, in England, 2004. Data available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000564/index.shtml>

⁴ The Statistical First Release National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and equivalent attainment and Post-16 attainment by pupil characteristics, in England, 2004. Data available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000564/index.shtml>

heritage pupils.

There are currently 85 schools in the programme and plans are being developed to extend the programme nationally to approx 100 schools next year. Three project directors have been appointed to drive the work. Emerging findings indicate that the programme has focused the professional development of some head-teachers to help them raise African-Caribbean achievement and race equality issues more generally. Although there has been an increase in the GCSE pass rate for black pupils in some of the schools since the start of the project, it is too early to attribute success to the Aiming High project.

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Turkish & Somali pupils - Regional network meetings have been held to target support for senior management in schools with high numbers of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Turkish and Somali pupils. There has generally been good progress and collaboration between key personnel in schools and local education authorities (LEAs) to ensure appropriate plans and systems are in place. However, work continues to improve practices in schools and local authorities to strengthen and embed strategies.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) - In April 2004 guidance on effective use of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) was published. An English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme, within the Primary National Strategy, has been introduced, led by two Regional Directors. This involves provision of EAL consultants in 20 LEAs each working with 10 schools to draw up an intensive professional development programme involving up to 8 sessions per academic year for mainstream staff. Fifty LEAs are also participating on an associate basis.

Higher Education

Ethnic minority groups are, overall, over-represented in higher education (HE), although there is evidence to suggest that they do not study at as wide a range of institutions as they might. The DfES and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), through the Aimhigher Programme, aim to raise aspiration and attainment levels amongst groups from backgrounds currently under-represented in HE. Examples of how Aimhigher reaches out to ethnic minorities can be seen in an Action on Access publication, *Work with Specific Widening Participation target groups* (see www.actiononaccess.org)

The DfES and HEFCE aim to revise their joint HE Race Equality Impact Assessment by March 2006. This will provide an update on the implications of HE policies for ethnic minorities and how the impact of these policies will continue to be monitored.

Skills

One of DfES's aims is to tackle the skills gap experienced in some ethnic minority communities through the Skills for Life Strategy (SfL) with its increased emphasis on access to training for hard to reach groups and the development of literacy, language and numeracy in the workplace.

DWP has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to increase the employment rate of the 15% lowest qualified people. Low levels of qualifications or skills is an issue which affects a large proportion of the DWP client group and DWP is currently working closely with DfES to

ensure that both departments work together to achieve that shared objectives on skills and work.

DWP evidence suggests that the “work-first” approach, combined with basic skills training and ESOL provision, is the most appropriate means to improve the employment prospects of those with no qualifications. The proposed strategy recognises the importance for people to have the opportunity to gain skills but the evidence suggests that this is more effective once people are in work rather than whilst they are on benefits. There is a need to engage with the National Employer Training Programme to ensure that those with low levels of skills or qualifications are given the opportunity to develop skills once in work.

DfES has identified the following five policy areas as key to building on the progress that has already been made:

- i. Narrowing the achievement gap for ethnic minorities in schools* through the Aiming High strategy.
- ii. Raising aspiration and participation of ethnic minorities in Higher Education* through the Widening Participation in HE strategy.
- iii. Improve the skill levels of ethnic minorities* through continuing to roll out the Skills for Life strategy.
- iv. Working towards a more representative school workforce; and*
- v. Increasing the recruitment of ethnic minorities to the childcare workforce.*

DfES’s 5 Year Strategy seeks not only to address historic weaknesses, but will also improve every aspect of education and skills chances of children from ethnic minority background, including in the early years. The Childcare Bill introduced November 2005, seeks to place a duty on local authorities to improve the outcomes of all children under 5 and close the gaps between those with the poorest outcomes and the rest, by ensuring early childhood services are integrated, proactive and accessible.

By providing support early, DfES hope to break the cycle of deprivation and this will impact on the education and employment of ethnic minority children.