



# The Research Centre



## Achievement of Ethnic Minority Groups in Further Education

Final Report

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### APPENDIX 1

Questions put to staff at City College Norwich, and used as the basis of interviews with support staff at the two general further education colleges visited.

### APPENDIX 2

A range of questions asked of students during focus group and interview sessions.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This project was funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) from the Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant (EMSAG) and was commissioned to determine whether there are differences, by ethnic group, in the relative achievement of Further Education (FE) students at City College Norwich (CCN) that require addressing.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative and quantitative research methods included:

- Initial contact with 11 other FE colleges.
- Statistical analysis of student performance data from CCN and seven FE colleges.
- Further communication and liaison with two FE colleges whose performance data suggested 'good practice'.
- A review of published and electronic evidence.
- Communication with key members of staff at CCN.
- Semi-structured surveys with CCN students.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In response to the overall aim of the project, the research has found that at CCN differences in 'achievement' amongst FE students do exist by ethnic group. More specifically, the research has highlighted the following points:

- Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British, and Chinese students are achieving far lower rates of success in completion and achievement of their learning aims than 'White' students.
- Gender is also feeding into issues of achievement, with females across most ethnic groups achieving relatively higher than males. Black/Black British females, however, are achieving less well than females in other ethnic categories.
- Differences in retention levels between genders, and between 'All White' and 'All Black' CCN students was not significant in 2002-03. Nonetheless, 7% fewer learners who did not declare their ethnicity failed to complete their learning aims. A more detailed breakdown of trends in 2003-04, however, indicated that Asian/British Asian learners were 7% less likely to complete than White British learners at 70% vs. 77%. Retention rates for Black/Black British and Chinese learners were also below the rate for 'ALL' learners, being 5% lower.
- In terms of age, 19+ FE learners tend to perform better than 16-18 year olds at CCN. However, differences are largely accounted for by the better levels of achievement by All White learners. Differences in performance between All Black learners by age are not statistically significant - and remain below results achieved by All White learners. This indicates that the pattern of educational disadvantage may already be established before the age of 16, and will be likely to continue in post-compulsory education.
- Statistical bias (due to the low number of some ethnic groups) and the proportion of students whose ethnicity is not known were also problems encountered with the analysis of performance datasets at CCN and some other colleges.
- Possible reasons for the lower achievement by ethnic minority students at CCN may result from a range of reasons (in addition to those of gender, statistical bias and non-disclosed ethnicity noted above):

- A pattern of educational disadvantage experienced in earlier education leading to the need for students to demonstrate greater progress and thus average or above average achievement in Further Education.
- Issues of student support and resources.
- Issues of extra-curricular activities.
- It should be noted that these are suggested 'possible' reasons as they represent the only areas highlighted by some staff and students at CCN as requiring attention.
- Racism is not an issue at CCN and is therefore is unlikely to be feeding into reasons for lower achievement.
- Best practice in the literature and from communication with other colleges suggests that the following are key to raising achievement:
  - Effective attendance monitoring.
  - Student mentoring schemes.
  - Successful communication and liaison with parents, where appropriate, and minority ethnic organisations.
  - Staff training, for example, in relation to highlighting and breaking down subconscious stereotyping with respect to ethnicity.
  - A culture of high expectations which includes strong supportive measures at home and in school, particularly for those at most risk of achieving less well.
  - An anti-racist policy that is properly implemented and communicated to all staff.
  - Positive role models within and outside the educational establishment.
  - Good relationships between tutors and students based on mutual respect and trust.
  - An inclusive approach to learning that actively welcomes all students, both within the classroom and generally in the college, including the delivery of a curriculum that reflects and incorporates the diversity of the student and local population.
  - An awareness of the differing cultural and religious needs or sensitivities of students from various ethnic backgrounds and a willingness to adapt teaching and support to meet these needs on an individual basis.
  - Recognising student achievement on an individual or group level. This can relate to highly achieving students as well as those who may, on comparison, show lower attainment but greater progress.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Two key areas for consideration are highlighted as requiring attention to raise the attainment of groups of FE students that are performing less well. These relate to examples of good practice that CCN needs to consider carefully as worthy of implementation at the college, as well as issues warranting further research. A brief summary of these recommendations are as follows:

- The provision of future college statistics whereby 'White Irish' and 'White Other' groups are counted as minority ethnic groups in their own right.
- Consideration of categories for 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' in future ethnic monitoring exercises.
- The continuation of mentoring schemes, particularly the 'Study Buddy scheme'.
- A commitment to collect the full contact details, including e-mail address and mobile telephone number, if available, for ALL students during the enrolment process.
- Effective attendance monitoring for ALL students throughout the college which is managed and implemented in a standardised format.

- Development of the means by which recognition is made of student achievement and progress.
- Continued support for the Enrichment Programme (as well as the Enrichment Officer).
- A review of the policy that precludes members of staff communicating with parents of students over the age of 18.
- The adoption, throughout the college, of a regular course review process, taking place midway through each course or each term. This recommendation is born out of a discussion with a group of students who felt very strongly about the positive impact this would have if their feedback on courses and the college could be regular and acted upon.
- Further contact and liaison with colleges demonstrating examples of best practice.
- Mapping and analysis of achievement in relation to social indicators such as social deprivation.
- Further work to evaluate the achievement and retention of specific ethnic groups, (e.g. Gypsy Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage, ESOL students).
- A review of entry level qualifications and Key Stage test scores by ethnic group and gender is required to determine the impact of students' learning experiences and attainment prior to college on their achievement in FE.
- An evaluation of the nature and extent of links the college has with minority ethnic organisations.
- An extensive review of student opinion on their needs as regards further equipment, books and other resources and associated research into the level of student awareness regarding support mechanisms at the college.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This project was funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) from the Ethnic Minority Student Achievement Grant (EMSAG) and was commissioned to determine whether there are differences, by ethnic group, in the relative achievement of Further Education (FE) students at City College Norwich (CCN) that require addressing.

The ethnic group categories currently used in England are given in Table 1.1 and are based on those used in the 2001 census for England and Wales, which were extensively tested prior to use. For reasons of comparability, these ethnic groups are fixed categories, although it should be acknowledged that ethnic groups are multi-faceted and can change over time (HMSO, 2003). BME groups should constitute all ethnic groups that are not classified as 'White British', (*i.e.* pertaining to those individuals who identify themselves as belonging to the following categories: 'Asian/Asian British', 'Black/Black British', 'Chinese or Other Ethnic Group' and 'Mixed'). Individuals in the sub categories 'White Irish' and 'White Other' should also be considered as belonging to a minority ethnic group. In many instances sub-category ethnic groups are aggregated in datasets and only the main categories are given. Further information on the use and background to current ethnic group categories in England is given in HMSO (2003).

<b>White</b> - British - Irish - Any Other White Background	<b>Black or Black British</b> - Caribbean - African - Any Other Black Background
<b>Mixed</b> - White and Black Caribbean - White and Black African - White and Asian - Any Other Mixed Background	<b>Chinese or Other Ethnic Group</b> - Chinese - Any Other
<b>Asian or Asian British</b> - Indian - Pakistani - Bangladeshi - Any Other Asian Background	

Table 1.1: Ethnic group categories and sub-categories currently used in England and Wales, presented in the order in which they appeared on the 2001 census (HMSO, 2003).

There is a perception in Norfolk that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups may be achieving less well in FE than White British students as a whole. The issue of educational achievement according to ethnic group has been the subject of detailed British research for at least the last 40 to 50 years and therefore the literature that exists on the subject is extensive. However, prior to this research project it was not clear what patterns of differential achievement by ethnic group were in fact occurring in FE at CCN or indeed in Norfolk as a whole. The research sought to address this issue and explores the following themes to do so:

- A short discussion of National and Regional demographic trends.
- A brief introduction to City College Norwich.
- A review of published evidence to explore issues of educational achievement.
- An analysis of statistical performance data for City College Norwich and other FE colleges.
- A synopsis of good practice in raising achievement.

## **2. PROJECT AIMS**

The overall aim of the project is to determine whether the relative achievement of FE students at CCN differs by ethnic group. This aim is to be met by achieving the following objectives:

- To identify if there are differences in retention and achievement rates between white and ethnic minority FE students at CCN.
- To ascertain if any apparent differences in achievement rates between ethnic minority groups may result from other factors, (e.g. differential achievement by gender, statistical bias, the non-disclosure of ethnicity).
- To learn from best practice in the literature and through communication with other colleges whose FE student performance rates, particularly for ethnic minority groups, are above those for CCN.
- To provide recommendations on how best to improve the existing support system for FE students and particularly to resolve areas where issues of lower achievement and retention require attention.
- To disseminate research findings through a Final Report and by publication in the CCN 'Research & Development Bulletin' and the Research Centre website (<http://www.theresearchcentre.co.uk>)

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

A range of qualitative and quantitative methods were used throughout the period of research to address the project aims. These included:

- Initial contact with 11 other colleges within and beyond the Eastern Region.
- Statistical analysis of performance data from CCN and six other colleges.
- A review of evidence and data concerning educational achievement and demographic trends.
- Further communication and liaison with two colleges within the Eastern Region.
- Interviews and electronic communication with various members of staff at CCN.
- Surveys and focus groups conducted with students at CCN.

### **3.1 INITIAL CONTACT WITH OTHER COLLEGES**

Eleven colleges within and beyond the Eastern Region were invited to participate in the research by supplying performance data for their FE students, disaggregated by gender and ethnic group. Enquiries were also made to these colleges regarding the findings of any relevant research they may have carried out on issues surrounding educational achievement.

### **3.2 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE DATA**

Seven colleges, largely from the Eastern Region, supplied student performance data. Data was supplied in a number of different formats, and not all was directly comparable. Only four other colleges supplied achievement data for 2003-04 by both gender and ethnicity. This data proved particularly valuable in assessing comparative performance by individual BME groups, in addition to assessing achievement of ethnic minority learners versus White British students. Results from other colleges were recorded in tabular form, alongside success rates for City College Norwich learners.

### **3.3 FURTHER COMMUNICATION AND LIAISON WITH COLLEGES**

Visits to and electronic communication with two colleges, whose FE performance rates for ethnic minority students are above those of CCN, were made to discuss with relevant members of staff how they were raising achievement amongst ethnic

minority students. This involved meeting with the following individuals: a member of Senior Management, two student liaison officers, an ESOL/EAL manager (English for Speakers of Other Languages/ English as an Additional Language) and an Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator. The information gathered during this process was used to inform examples of Best Practice discussed in Section 7.

### **3.4 A REVIEW OF PUBLISHED & ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE**

A review of electronic and published resources was made to identify demographic trends of relevance to the project, but more importantly to highlight the key issues in current and recent research surrounding the nature of differential educational achievement by ethnic group and the reasons for this.

### **3.5 COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF AT CCN**

Qualitative research with staff at City College Norwich was conducted to assess aspects of current practice in relation to support for students in College and to elicit attitudes towards, and experiences of, issues affecting retention and achievement of FE learners. Key personnel interviewed included the College's Management and Diversity Development Manager, the International Student Adviser and two of the eleven Student Liaison Advisers. Additionally, 20 tutors across the College were contacted and asked to respond to a series of questions relating to their experience in teaching and supporting students, particularly BME students; six tutors, with a range of teaching and support experience including tutors of ESOL, FE and HE, responded. These questions are detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.

### **3.6 FOCUS GROUPS AND SURVEYS WITH STUDENTS AT CCN**

Four focus groups and ten interviews were held with a total number of 23 students at CCN. Questions asked of students during these sessions are presented in Appendix 2. The aim of these sessions was to:

- Learn of students' expectations of, experiences at and reasons for coming to college.
- Understand what enables students to learn best.
- Clarify how students measure achievement.

A range of students were invited to participate, including individuals from both 'White British' backgrounds and ethnic minority groups, in order that i) no group should be discriminated against, and ii) to identify whether ethnic groups raised different issues relating to educational achievement. At no point was the issue of differential achievement or treatment by ethnic group raised by the researchers so as not to influence unfairly the student responses.

It should be noted that the information gathered during this process is not necessarily representative of the student population as a whole but does provide an insight into student opinions on the learning process at CCN.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONCERNS**

To adhere to good research practice, subjects interviewed during the course of the research who expressed their personal opinions or views were first asked for their informed consent and were provided with a participant information sheet. Information provided by all stakeholders, whether expressing personal opinion or not, has been treated confidentially and is reported here anonymously. One college is identified by name as some information it provided was already available in the public domain; permission was also granted to cite other unpublished material.

## **4. ISSUES OF ACHIEVEMENT: A REVIEW OF THE PUBLISHED EVIDENCE (DATA TRENDS & LITERATURE SEARCH)**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this section is to review the published evidence concerning issues of educational achievement amongst ethnic minorities at national and local level. Primarily concerned with Further Education, the discussion will focus on attainment at post-16 level but will also refer to material relating to primary and secondary pupils where relevant (*i.e.* Key Stages 1 – 4) and to Higher Education. The reason for doing so is to take into account the overall factors affecting the progression of students throughout their education, including those issues leading up to their experiences of Further Education and those which may shape their progression into Higher Education. Themes covered in this section will include discussion of the origins of British research into educational achievement, key terminology and national figures and/or research into educational achievement by social class and gender and in compulsory and post-compulsory education.

### **4.2 EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND**

Published in 1985 'Education for All' (irrespective of a person's ethnic origin) was the title and message behind the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups (Swann, 1985), commonly known as the 'Swann report'. The Committee was set up in 1979 in response to 'the frequently expressed concerns about "underachievement" that have dominated discussions of race and education for almost twenty years' (CRE, 1985, p. 1). The Swann report marked a key point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century British education system, highlighting and advocating the need to address the educational 'underachievement' of certain ethnic minority groups, particularly pupils of 'West Indian origin' (*i.e.* 'Black/Black British Caribbean'). This issue 'dominated debates' during the 1970s and 1980s (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, p. 10) and led to much research in this area.

In the intervening years since the Swann report, the so called 'underachievement' of certain ethnic groups in education has persisted, so that it remains as significant a problem today (e.g. see Education Commission, 2004) as it was twenty or thirty years ago:

*"The English schooling system has produced dismal academic results for a high percentage of Black pupils for the best part of 50 years."* (Education Commission, 2004, p. 9).

*"Closing the gaps in educational attainment between social groups has been widely acknowledged as a pressing concern of national importance."* (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 7).

The reasons for this appear to be complex and relatively lower achievement cannot be attributed simply to all ethnic minority groups to the same degree, or to individuals, because they are from a minority ethnic group. The following discussion offers an insight into some of these issues as presented in key publications, such as Gillborn & Gipps (1996) which provided a comprehensive summary of research published in the ten years after the Swann report. More recent syntheses would be those by Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003), DfES (2005a) and Gillborn & Mirza (2000). For further information, reference should be made to the primary sources. It should be noted that the number of publications in this subject area is extensive and therefore the discussion concentrates primarily on key literature published in the last ten years.

### **4.3 THE TERMS 'ACHIEVEMENT', 'UNDERACHIEVEMENT' AND 'PROGRESS'**

Measures of achievement during different stages of the British compulsory education system are usually based on test results taken at Key Stage (KS) 1 (age 7), 2 (age 11), 3 (age 14) and 4 (age 16). KS4 equates to GCSE level. Post-compulsory education consists of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). Further Education covers A levels and certain vocational qualifications, for example NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications), National Diplomas, AVCEs (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) or Apprenticeships. Higher Education qualifications include degrees, foundation degrees, HNDs/HNCS (Higher National Diplomas or Certificates) and DipHEs (Diplomas in Higher Education). A BTEC (Business & Technician Education Council) qualification can range from entry level to post-graduate level and therefore spans both FE and HE and there are other short course qualifications offered in post-compulsory education, such as those by the Open College Network.

Quantitative measures of 'achievement' normally rely on examining the percentages of students of a given population who have attained a certain level of qualification. For example, achievement at GCSE (KS4) is measured against the percentage of students who have gained at least five GCSEs at grade A\*-C.

However, EOC (1998, p. 2) make the salient point that in many cases:

*"The term 'underachievement' can lead to confusion. It contains no indication of what achievement is measured against."*

Indeed, as Runnymede Trust (1997, p. 33) also point out:

*"The most frequently used measures [of educational attainment] concentrate upon high attaining pupils. These methods often create sharp differentiations within student groups."*

Thus there is a general reluctance in recent literature to use the term 'underachievement' as it can be laden with negative connotations:

*"The concept [of 'underachievement'] is widely misunderstood and may now play a part in reproducing familiar stereotypes. It can lead to lowered expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. It may also shift responsibility away from the education system and onto students and their families. We would assert that the failure is in the underachievement of the system in providing for black students." (Runnymede Trust, 1997, p. 33).*

*It is often assumed, for example, that the reason for 'underachievement' must lie with the pupils and/or their families rather than the education system itself. It has also been argued that the notion of 'underachievement' undermines ethnic minority efforts to succeed and desire to do well, masking their true achievements and alternative educational practice. As several writers have emphasised, the notion of 'underachievement' has too often become a stereotype. What began life as a useful concept, meant to identify an inequality of opportunity, has sometimes slipped into a pervasive 'discourse of despair' among and about ethnic minorities." (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 7).*

A preference now exists to examine the 'relative achievement' of students of different ethnic backgrounds and to think of those students who were once described as 'underachieving' as experiencing 'educational disadvantage' (e.g. Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, p. 11; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 7; Runnymede Trust, 1997, p. 33).

Furthermore, a distinction must be made between the terms 'achievement' and 'progress' which relate to entirely different measures of performance. As Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 36) state:

*"In its most basic sense, progress refers to the difference in a pupil's performance between two time points."*

Therefore, for example, pupil A might show greater progress than pupil B as a measure against a previous attainment but pupil B may have started at a higher level of attainment originally and ultimately demonstrate greater achievement in terms of academic qualification(s).

#### **4.4 ACHIEVEMENT, SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER**

As already highlighted, social class plays a key role in educational achievement. For example, Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 16) state that:

*"When information on pupils' social class background is collected, there is usually a direct relationship with academic achievement; the higher the social class, the higher the achievement."*

Additionally, Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003, p. 21) comment:

*"Socio-economic factors are paramount in affecting the educational attainment of certain minority ethnic groups. Poverty and/or low occupational status of parents will impact on children's progress."*

Educational attainment can also have implications for an individual's future success in the employment market (thereby feeding into issues of social class). Fitzgerald *et al.* (2000) note that of 264 young (aged 18-30 years) black men interviewed in their research that:

*"Those with GCSE or higher qualifications were 108% more likely to have had a successful labour market outcome [i.e. those in full time or part time work or education] than those without any GCSEs."*

Gender also seems to play some role in educational achievement. According to EOC (1998) females tend to outperform males in all areas at Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stages 2 and 3. At Key Stage 4 (GCSE/SCE Standard Grade) females are also achieving relatively higher than males (see Table 4.1).

Subject	Number thousands	Per cent A* to C	
		girls	boys
Mathematics	686.9	46	46
English	667.4	65	48
English Literature	484.5	69	54
Science Double Award	464.4	49	48
French	395.6	55	41
Geography	316.3	56	50
History	248.3	60	52
Art and Design	239.4	67	49
Design/Technology	169.5	52	37

Table 4.1: Attainment at GCSE/SCE by gender and subject, 1996.  
Source: EOC (1998, p. 2)

In post-compulsory education, males and females tend to perform as well as one another in most subjects, although at A level 'more men than women achieve higher level grades in certain subjects' (EOC, 1998, p. 3).

However, Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 17) note that the relative performance of males vs. females can vary by ethnic group and that 'whatever the pupils' gender or ethnic origin, those from the higher social class backgrounds do better on average.' This is explored in greater depth below.

Gender biases for certain subject areas are evident at GCSE and in Further and Higher Education: females dominate Arts subjects at GCSE and A-level; correspondingly males dominate the Science subjects; with Social Sciences showing a more mixed representation by gender (EOC, 1998). In FE, mathematical sciences, agriculture or engineering and technology tend to be studied by males whereas females are more likely to take subjects related to medicine, the social sciences or creative arts, with hairdressing, secretarial studies and health and social care predominantly chosen by females (EOC, 1998). Work based learning attracts more white males than any other group (Wiseman *et al.* 2004). At HE level, more males than females are taking Engineering and Technology subjects and this situation is reversed for Education and the Humanities (EOC, 1998). Such gender stereotyping by subject area has important implications for the future career paths and employment possibilities of males and females as discussed by EOC (1998).

Males and females also respond positively to different styles of teaching. For example, EOC (1998) note that males prefer a more structured and "rule-bound" approach whereas girls react better in contexts of discussion and collaboration based learning. In response to this, the benefits of single sex teaching in a co-educational context are available in Younger & Warrington (DfES 2005b).

Gillborn & Gipps have recognised that social class, gender and ethnicity are inter-related factors in explaining the differential achievement rates for those in education:

*"Both social class and gender are important variables when considering pupils' GCSE achievements. Nevertheless, it is exceptional to find studies of achievement by ethnic minority pupils that give full attention to **both** these factors."* Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 16).

Despite this, a review of recent literature reveals that the following statement made by EOC (1998 p. 5) is still applicable today:

*“One of the most important omissions is the lack of good quality, accurate data on the qualifications, performance and employment experience of young people disaggregated, at the very least, by gender and preferably also by ethnicity and social class.”*

One exception would be the research carried out by Gillborn & Mirza (2000) in which the implications of both social class and ethnic background together on GCSE examination results have been examined over a period of nine years (1988-1997). Social class was considered in terms of ‘manual’ or ‘non-manual’ background (*i.e.* respectively these would equate with traditional categories of ‘working class’ and ‘middle class’). Ethnic groups were categorised as White, Black, Indian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi. Key findings (Figure 4.1) demonstrated that despite social class being an important factor in the relative achievement of pupils from different social backgrounds, ethnicity played a significant role as well. So, although those from non-manual backgrounds tended to be more successful than those from manual backgrounds, in some cases:

*“Social class factors do not override the influence of ethnic inequality: when comparing pupils with similar class backgrounds there are still marked inequalities of attainment between ethnic groups”*(Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 21).

This is most true of Black pupils (Figure 4.1):

*“Inequalities of attainment are now evident for Black pupils regardless of their class background. African-Caribbean pupils from manual backgrounds fell behind other working class peers in levels of attainment during the late 1980s and 1990s.”* (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 20)

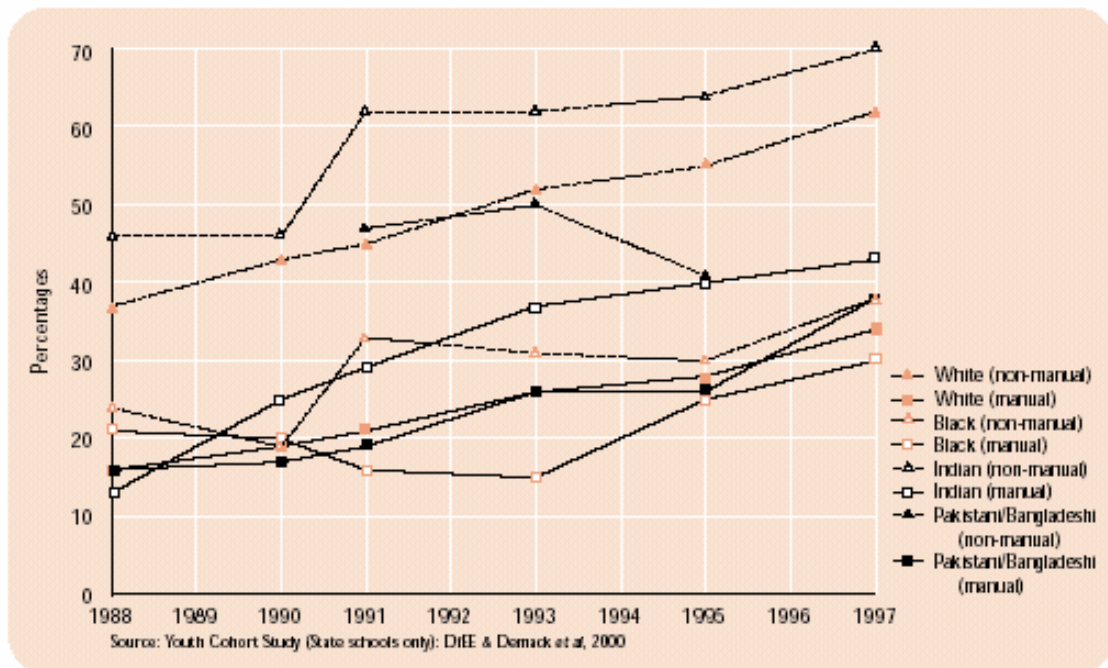


Figure 4.1: Gillborn & Mirza (2000, p. 20, Figure 6). GCSE attainment by social class and ethnic origin. England and Wales 1988-1997 (those achieving five or more grade A\*-C passes).

#### 4.5 THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Educational achievement by ethnic group can vary nationally, regionally and by LEA or school. So a group that may be perceived as performing less well at national level may buck this trend in other, smaller populations. Such variation highlights the fact that 'the reasons for such relative 'underachievement' are multiple and patterns of inequality are not fixed' (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 7).

Therefore, generalisations may be applicable in the national context but not with other smaller populations. Indeed, Owen *et al.* (2000, p.1) commented:

*"The experience of minority ethnic groups is not uniform, the accepted picture of minority disadvantage ignores the evidence of considerable progress and achievement by people from some minority ethnic groups in examination results, job creation and career progression."*

To illustrate this point, Gillborn & Gipps (1996) highlighted the fact that Bangladeshi pupils tend to perform less well in education than other ethnic groups. In one London borough they noted that the Bangladeshi group was in fact the highest achieving of all major ethnic groups. More recently, Bangladeshi pupils in Birmingham schools have demonstrated greater *progress* between Key Stage 3 and GCSE than any other ethnic minority group (The Birmingham Post, May 8, 2004, p.2).

Therefore any discussion of achievement should take into account these regional and local variations. Nevertheless, discussing the national framework for relative educational achievement by ethnic group is important to place this research in context and to provide a necessary benchmark for CCN statistics.

##### 4.5.1 COMPULSORY EDUCATION

In 2000, Owen *et al.* noted that 'White' pupils tended to outperform most ethnic minority pupils overall but do less well at GCSE than those from Indian and 'Other'

ethnic groups. Further detail about Key Stage 4 results is discussed below. The percentage of pupils by ethnic group achieving the expected level at each Key Stage in 2003 is summarised in Table 4.2.

According to Gillborn & Gipps (1996), during the early key stages, African Caribbean pupils appear to perform less well than their 'White' peers (although this trend is not always so clear cut). More recent data (DfES, 2005a) shows this still to be the case on average (see Table 4.2). Pupils of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage tend to show lower than average attainment and it has been suggested that this may be influenced by the group having less fluency in English on average.

ETHNIC GROUP	KEY STAGE 1: % EXPECTED LEVEL		KEY STAGE 2: % EXPECTED LEVEL		KEY STAGE 3: % EXPECTED LEVEL		KEY STAGE 4: % EXPECTED LEVEL	
	Reading	Writing	English	Maths	English	Maths	Science	5+ A*-C GCSEs
<b>White</b>	85	82	76	73	70	72	70	51
White British	85	82	76	73	70	72	70	51
Irish	84	81	82	78	75	75	73	60
Traveller of Irish Heritage	28	28	23	19	49	49	45	42
Gypsy/Roma	42	38	30	27	33	35	35	23
Any other White background	80	78	74	72	66	70	65	52
<b>Mixed</b>	85	82	77	72	69	69	67	49
White and Black Caribbean	83	79	73	67	62	62	60	40
White and Black African	86	83	77	72	69	68	68	48
White and Asian	88	85	81	78	78	78	76	65
Any other mixed background	85	82	79	75	71	71	68	52
<b>Asian</b>	80	78	69	67	66	66	59	53
Indian	88	86	79	77	77	79	72	65
Pakistani	76	73	61	58	57	55	47	42
Bangladeshi	75	73	68	63	58	57	48	46
Any other Asian background	82	80	73	74	70	75	69	59
<b>Black</b>	78	74	68	60	56	54	51	36
Black Caribbean	79	74	68	59	56	53	51	33
Black African	77	73	67	62	56	55	50	41
Any other Black background	79	75	71	62	58	55	54	34
<b>Chinese</b>	90	88	82	88	80	90	82	75
Any other ethnic group	74	71	63	67	59	64	58	46
Unclassified	76	73	69	66	63	67	65	47
<b>All pupils</b>	84	81	75	72	69	71	68	51

Source: National Curriculum Assessment and GCSE/GNVQ Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England, 2002 (final) and 2003 (provisional), Statistical First Release 04/2004.

Table 4.2: Attainment through Key Stages 1-4 by ethnic group (2003). Source: DfES (2005a, p. 10, Table 1).

The most recent national (England) figures for attainment at GCSE level (Table 4.2) show that:

*“Indian, Chinese, White/Asian and Irish pupils are more likely to gain five or more A\*-C GCSEs compared to other ethnic groups [and that] Gypsy/Roma pupils, Travellers of Irish Heritage, Black Caribbean and White/Black Caribbean pupils are amongst the lower achieving pupils at Key Stage 4”.* (DfES, 2005a, p. 2)

These trends have been noted in the past by others, for example, Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003), Owen *et al.* (2000) and Gillborn & Gipps (1996). Indeed, Gillborn & Gipps (1996), based on a review of research concerning achievement and analysis of data provided by various LEAs on the attainment of minority ethnic pupils, highlighted the following key points at GCSE level:

- Indian pupils seem to outperform their peers of other South Asian ethnic groups
- On the whole, Pakistani students tend to perform less well than Whites
- Bangladeshi pupils, who tend to be less fluent in English and face more poverty than other South Asian groups, are achieving less well than pupils of other ethnic backgrounds
- The average achievement of African Caribbean students, particularly males, in many LEAs is lower than that of other groups and this performance gap, in some instances, is widening.

Related to this last point are the two comments highlighted below:

*“African-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils have drawn least benefit from the rising levels of attainment: the gap between them and their white peers is bigger now than a decade ago.”* (Gillborn & Mirza 2000, p. 14).

*“Where statistics allow distinctions to be made, pupils of Black African background often achieve relatively higher results than their peers of Black Caribbean origin. It seems that both social background and gender play a part in this.”* (Runnymede Trust 1997, p. 34).

Findings such as these are based on national averages. Some studies have sought to examine the experiences and achievement of minority ethnic pupils in more specific contexts. For example, Cline *et al.* (2002) studied the situation of minority ethnic pupils in ‘mainly white schools’ (where only 4-6% of the population were from BME backgrounds). Their sample size consisted of 34,000 pupils from 35 LEAs. The findings are of direct relevance to City College Norwich in which the FE student minority ethnic population as of February 24<sup>th</sup> 2005 measured 4% (all non-White categories) or 8% (all non-white British categories). Key findings from the research were:

- White pupils in mainly white schools outperformed their peers in urban multi-ethnic schools (those with a high proportion of BME students) at Key Stage 2 and GCSE. This is attributed to mainly white schools being found in ‘socially more advantaged areas’.
- Pupils of Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani heritage in mainly white schools also outperformed their urban peers at GCSE but not at the end of Key Stage 2:

*“Children from minority ethnic backgrounds shared in whatever educational advantages were available in these [mainly white] schools to the same degree as children from a White background in secondary school but not in primary school.”* (Cline *et al.* 2002, p. 1)

- Ethnicity was an important aspect of self-identification for the pupils but there was a mixed response to how far they would welcome more overt expression made of this identity.
- Verbal racist abuse at school or on the way to and from school was a common experience of a significant proportion of minority ethnic pupils.

#### 4.5.2 POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Wiseman *et al.* (2004) studied the factors that influence participation and achievement in learning amongst two cohorts of students, those aged 16-19 and 'adults'. These factors were broken down into three key categories:

1. Individual (referring to the learner and including 'demographic profile, attitudes and aspirations')
2. External (pertaining to 'the nature of the labour market')
3. Internal (concerning the 'post-16 system of qualification and education').

The authors stress that the factors between and within categories are inter-related. Of most interest here was the research findings into the 'Individual' category which highlighted that positive influences on participation and achievement at age 16-19 include:

*"pre-16 attainment, parental influence and (higher) social class."* (Wiseman *et al.* 2004, p. 3).

Thus, not surprisingly, we might surmise that a student's achievement in Further and Higher Education will be influenced to some extent by his or her experiences and attainment during compulsory schooling. For example, if a student enters FE with a lower than average level of attainment (e.g. at GCSE) the educational disadvantage an individual may have already experienced could mean that he or she would have to progress further to meet average or above average measures of achievement.

Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003) and Gillborn & Gipps (1996) note that students from ethnic minorities are more likely to continue into and participate in the Further Education sector than their White peers, irrespective of gender and social background (Table 4.3). Furthermore, compared to White students, minority ethnic groups are more likely to be studying for a qualification (Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003). In 1996 Gillborn & Gipps noted that this was particularly seen with Asian students who tended to study traditional 'academic' courses and were emerging at age 18 as the most highly qualified of any ethnic group. Additionally they pointed out that African Caribbean students were tending to take up vocational courses. More recently, Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003), based on 2002 data, has shown that Black Africans are the most likely ethnic group to be studying for a qualification, although there are variations in the proportion of an ethnic group studying for a particular qualification. For example, Black African students are less likely to be studying for A-levels than students from other ethnic groups but are more likely than White, Pakistani or Black Caribbean students to be studying for a degree or equivalent (Table 4.3). Interestingly this suggests that whilst certain BME groups seem to experience greater educational disadvantage in compulsory education, they are for some reason 'more committed to staying on in education after the age of 16' (Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003, p. 24).

	Full time education (%)	Government supported training (%)	Full time job (excl GST) (%)	Part time job (%)	Out of work (%)	Something else / not stated (%)
White	71	10	8	4	6	3
Black	83	4	3	2	7	2
Asian	84	4	1	2	5	5
Indian	91	2		3	2	1
Pakistani	78	6	1		7	7
Bangladeshi	77				9	8
Other	91					4
Other ethnic group	82	4	4	2	6	2
Not stated	65	12	8	2	7	6

Table 4.3: Main activity of 16 year olds, by ethnic group (2004). Source: DfES (2005b, compiled from Table C).

In 1996 Gillborn & Gipps commented that achievement at HE level by ethnic group could not be examined as such information is not available. This still seems to be the case (e.g. see Connor *et al.* 2004, Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003, HEFCE, 2005). However, admission data is able to indicate that proportionally greater numbers of ethnic minority students are entering HE than Whites:

*“Ethnic minorities now represent almost one in six home undergraduates in England, a higher share than in the population at large. Their HE participation rate (the likelihood of entering higher education by the age of 30) is 56%, substantially higher than the 38% for the white population and exceeding the government target of 50%.”* (Modood & Connor 2004).

This is a continuing trend since recently ‘a rise in the proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds has been recorded at all levels of higher education’ (HESA 2004). In 2002/03 15% of all students in HE in the UK were from an ethnic minority background (HESA 2004) compared with 12% in 1996/97 (Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003). The reasons for this are not wholly clear.

The most recent extensive research into ethnic minorities in HE is that by Connor *et al.* (2004) of which there is a brief summary by Modood & Connor (2004). Interestingly, despite the comments made above, Modood & Connor (2004) report that that participation by ethnic group and gender in HE can in fact vary significantly (Table 4.4). For example:

- Participation figures range from 39% for Bangladeshi to over 70% for black African, Indian and some other Asian groups.
- A lower proportion of ethnic minority students is found in the more selective universities and in some subjects (e.g. some sciences and humanities).
- Bangladeshi women and black Caribbean men demonstrate lower than average participation levels.
- Ethnic minority students are “generally doing better in accessing HE than their socio-economic class would suggest ... [but as graduates] feel disadvantaged by the recruitment practices of many large employers.”

	Working towards a qualification (%)	Degree or equivalent (%)	HE qualification (below degree level) (%)	GCE 'A' level or equivalent (%)	GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent (%)	Other qualification (%)
<b>All</b>	18	28	8	20	14	30
White						
<b>White British</b>	17	26	98	21	14	30
<b>Other White</b>	21	42		14	6	30
Mixed						
<b>White &amp; Black Caribbean</b>	32				35	
<b>White &amp; Black African</b>						
<b>White &amp; Asian</b>	28					
<b>Other Mixed</b>						
Asian						
<b>Indian</b>	24	39	7	21	13	21
<b>Pakistani</b>	21	30		23	20	23
<b>Bangladeshi</b>	19					
<b>Other Asian</b>	27	38		18		28
Black						
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	23	22		20	17	33
<b>Black African</b>	44	36	11	8	16	28
<b>Other Black</b>	37					
<b>Chinese</b>	35	64				
<b>Other ethnic groups</b>	29	40		15		35

Table 4.4: Percentage of working age people currently working towards a qualification by ethnic group in the UK, 2002. 'working age' = males aged 16-64; females aged 16-59. Source: Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003, p.25, Table 5)

## **4.6 FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT**

Apart from the key issues of social class and gender already highlighted, other factors may play a part in influencing the relatively lower achievement by some ethnic groups in education. These are explored in detail below and have been taken mainly from qualitative research publications based on case studies of specific populations in both compulsory and post-compulsory education.

### **4.6.1 EAL/ESOL**

A lower level of English fluency can disadvantage individuals in terms of educational performance:

*“Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) perform, on average, less well than pupils whose first language is English.”*  
(Bhattacharyya et al. 2003, p. 22).

Dale & Jackson (2005, p. 24) also noted that EAL children faced ‘particular problems of isolation’ and that teachers were not always aware of this.

### **4.6.2 AN INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM: BATTLING ISOLATION**

Isolation can be a problem faced by ethnic minority students in general, as Dale & Jackson discuss (2005, p. 23):

*“Learners from college settings felt that a learning environment where they were one of many, rather than the only one, helped them to feel more comfortable.”*

The importance of a multi-cultural curriculum in promoting inclusion and thus achievement has been suggested:

*“Teachings based on unfamiliar cultural norms, histories and points of reference [may have the potential to affect the educational attainment of certain minority ethnic groups].”* Bhattacharyya et al. (2003, p. 22).

*“Several pupils expressed the view that they would like to see more Black History in the curriculum.”* Education Commission (2004, p. 7).

As a related point, NIACE (2003) note that a key recommendation made by the McPherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence was to broaden the National Curriculum to include cultural diversity.

### **4.6.3 EXCLUSIONS**

Bhattacharyya et al. (2003) report that Black Caribbean pupils are about three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than white pupils. Additionally, boys are far more likely to be excluded than girls. These are trends that have been noted elsewhere (e.g. Education Commission 2004, EOC, 1998, Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, Ofsted, 2002, ONS, 2004, Runnymede Trust, 1999). Indeed, in addition to Black Caribbean pupils, Dale & Jackson (2005) also note that the exclusion rate for students of mixed ethnicity, Travellers of Irish heritage or Gypsy Roma are very high, although few numbers for the latter two groups exist. The implications of permanent exclusion on a pupil’s education can be far reaching:

*“Two out of every three pupils who are permanently excluded never return to full-time mainstream education.”* (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, p. 4).

Higher exclusion rates amongst black pupils may result from a misinterpretation of their behaviour by teaching staff (EOC 1998) or as 'one symptom of disengagement and friction' (Dale & Jackson, 2005, p. 17):

*"For several black boys, once a black pupil had a "reputation" for behaving badly, it was very difficult to convince teachers of genuine change for the better."* (Education Commission, 2004, p. 7)

*"Whereas exclusions are commonly associated with very serious offences such as violence or threatening behaviour, there is some evidence to suggest that less obvious conflict with teachers may lead to disproportionate expulsions of black pupils."* (Runnymede Trust, 1997, p. 34).

Detailed recommendations on how to reduce school exclusion figures, taking the issue of ethnicity into account, are presented in Runnymede Trust (1999).

#### **4.6.4 A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

This is often cited as being fundamental to raising achievement (e.g. Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003, Ofsted, 2002) and, importantly, needs to stem from both parents and the educational establishment, with a clear emphasis on strong leadership by senior managers.

Indeed, parental involvement and support has been highlighted by several studies (e.g. Education Commission, 2004, Figueroa & Nehaul, 1999, Ofsted, 2002) as being a key factor in influencing the educational success or otherwise of children and young people:

*"Low expectations and aspirations of parents or pupils themselves and lack of parental engagement in the children's education have been cited as factors in lower attainment, but there is little evidence that this is specifically related to ethnicity."* Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003, p. 21).

However, Education Commission (2004, p.8) found that:

*"African-Caribbean pupils were the least likely of all groups to believe that they received good levels of support and encouragement from home most of the time. These results suggest that African Caribbean parents need to identify more clearly the ways in which their children need to be supported and encouraged in their schoolwork."*

It should be noted that this comment is specific to the feedback from that research and is not necessarily a representative illustration of all African Caribbean parents or students.

Commenting on the results of a study into the achievement of Black Caribbean pupils based in six secondary schools in England with at least 10% of Black Caribbean pupils, Ofsted (2002) said:

*"Results indicated that black Caribbean students can do well in good schools [and] establishing high expectations was fundamental to the schools' work."*

Good communication links between educational establishments and parents are essential too, although this may be more relevant in the situation of compulsory education.

#### 4.6.5 TUTOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP AND STUDENT SUPPORT

In raising achievement, related to the high expectations of tutors is the need to build a solid relationship between students and tutors based on one of mutual respect and understanding. Many studies note this to be lacking in certain situations, especially with regard to African Caribbean learners:

*“Consistent with the focus group findings, in the pupil questionnaire, the most significant differences between African-Caribbean boys and boys from other ethnic groups hinged around pupil teacher relationships. The degree of care experienced by African-Caribbean pupils from their teachers, the quality of communication with their teachers and levels of conflict with teachers, was all less positive for African-Caribbean boys than for boys from other groups.”* (Education Commission, 2004, p. 8).

*“In comparison with African Caribbeans, teachers often have more positive expectations of Asians – as relatively quiet, well behaved and highly motivated.”* (Gillborn & Gipps 1996, p. 4).

Effective and intensive support of students involves ‘close oversight of their academic and personal progress’ and this needs to be ‘backed up by pertinent additional teaching and generous extra-curricular activities’ (Ofsted, 2002, p. 3).

Reporting on a longitudinal study assessing the impact of study support by MacBeth *et al.*, Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003, p. 23) commented that:

*“Out-of-school-hours learning such as drop in support, subject-focused support, sport and aesthetic activities ... improve academic attainment, attitudes to school and attendance at school. The positive impact is large ... These measures were shown to be particularly effective for minority ethnic groups and had most impact on the attainment of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi girls.”*

Other support issues raised as being key to raising the attainment of Black Caribbean learners included focus on attendance, providing mentoring support for students and implementing a ‘broader range of strategies for liaising with minority organisations and parents’ (Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003, p. 22). These initiatives could be equally applicable to other BME groups experiencing educational disadvantage.

#### 4.6.6 RACISM

As already noted in Section 4.5.1, unfortunately racism in Britain is still very much an issue today and one that will have detrimental and far reaching effects on a pupil’s academic performance (e.g. Bhattacharyya *et al.* 2003, Dale & Jackson, 2005, Education Commission, 2004, Gillborn & Gipps, 1996):

*“Many Black pupils in the focus groups reported that they were experiencing racism in varying forms in school and were receiving little support for addressing this ... Pupil questionnaire comments, in response to being asked whether Black pupils had different experiences to white pupils, indicated that racism was the most significant factor.”* (Education Commission, 2004, pp. 7-8)

*“The incidence of bullying and violence in schools is notoriously difficult to research ... qualitative studies illustrate that harassment, whether verbal or physical, is not always recognised as such by teachers, who may interpret*

*such conflicts as simple boisterousness. Additionally, qualitative studies suggest that racist harassment is influenced by a variety of stereotypes: pupils of minority background do not appear to suffer harassment in equal measure; the most common victims are usually South Asian pupils.”* (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, p. 50)

#### **4.6.7 A LACK OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELS AND NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING**

The need for greater numbers of ethnic minority teachers and tutors in the education system has been advocated most recently by Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, in response to the findings of the Education Commission (2004):

*“A major effort will be necessary to address this gross under-representation of London’s diverse communities in the teaching profession ... the composition of the teaching staff, governors and other professions dealing with the education of our children must change dramatically to fully reflect the diversity of London’s children.”* (Ken Livingstone, Education Commission, 2004).

The frequency of negative and stereotyped media images of black youth has been cited by the Education Commission (2004) for its negative influence on the academic achievement of black pupils in particular. Furthermore, Dale & Jackson (2005, p. 29) encountered examples of stereotyping in their research:

*“Learners had experience of expectations of them that confined recognition of their talents to being good at sports and music.”*

## **5. NORFOLK AND CITY COLLEGE NORWICH: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section is organised in two parts, firstly discussing various demographic trends (e.g. the ethnic makeup of the population, social class and the labour market) in Norfolk in relation to the national context. In the second part a brief introduction to City College Norwich is presented, covering the nature of qualifications offered by the college and an overview of the FE student population by ethnic group.

### **5.2 NORFOLK DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS WITH REFERENCE TO NATIONAL STATISTICS: ETHNICITY, SOCIAL CLASS AND THE LABOUR MARKET**

According to ONS (2004), based on the 2001 census, nationally BME groups constitute 7.9% of the UK population. The largest ethnic group is Indian (1.8%) followed by Pakistani (1.3%), Mixed ethnicity (1.2%), Black Caribbean (1.0%), Black African (0.8%) and Bangladeshi (0.5%). Between 1991 and 2001, the non-white ethnic population in the UK increased by just over a half to 4.6 million (ONS, 2004). Indeed, in 1996 The Runnymede Trust commented that:

*“it has been estimated that by about the year 2020 the number [of individuals from ethnic minority groups] will have doubled”*  
(The Runnymede Trust, 1996, p. 16).

In 2001, the population of Norfolk was 796,700 (NCC, 2004a) and based on more recent estimates (mid 2003), measures 810,700 (NCC, 2005a). According to NCC

(2005b) Gypsy Travellers represent one of the largest minority ethnic groups in Norfolk, although their numbers appear to be vague, perhaps due to problems associated with monitoring such a mobile population. It is known that 'there are approximately 1,000 school aged Gypsy Traveller children living in, or resorting to Norfolk in any one year' (NCC, 2005b). A breakdown of the Norfolk population by ethnic group is given in Table 5.1 and presented in Figure 5.1. The 2001 census also indicated that in the Eastern Region people from ethnic minority groups (*i.e.* those of non-White British heritage), constituted 8.6% of the population (NCC, 2005c). For Norfolk this figure was just 3.8% (NCC, 2005c), highlighting that the ethnic minority population here is lower than the regional and national average. Nevertheless, the BME population has risen in recent years and there is no reason to suggest that it will not continue to do so in the future, as indeed the overall Norfolk population is expected to rise to almost 900,000 by the year 2025 (The Economic Development Partnership for Norfolk, 2000, p. 12, Fig. 1). Correspondingly, Norfolk is in the category with the lowest minority ethnic school population in England (*i.e.* <5%) compared with the national (England) average of 17% (DfES, 2005a, p. 5).

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>784687</b>	<b>98.5</b>
British	766664	96.2
Irish	4043	0.5
Other white	13980	1.8
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>4781</b>	<b>0.6</b>
White & Black Caribbean	1198	0.2
White & Black African	625	0.1
White & Asian	1491	0.2
Other mixed	1467	0.2
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	<b>2845</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Indian	1419	0.2
Pakistani	442	0.1
Bangladeshi	340	0.0
Other Asian	644	0.1
<b>Black or Black British</b>	<b>1561</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Black Caribbean	542	0.1
Black African	717	0.1
Other Black	302	0.0
<b>Chinese or other ethnic group</b>	<b>2833</b>	<b>0.4</b>
Chinese	1399	0.2
Other ethnic group	1434	0.2
<b>Total population</b>	<b>796707</b>	

Table 5.1: The population of Norfolk by ethnic group, 2001. Source: NCC (2004b, p.2, Table 1). Percentage data added from researchers' calculations.

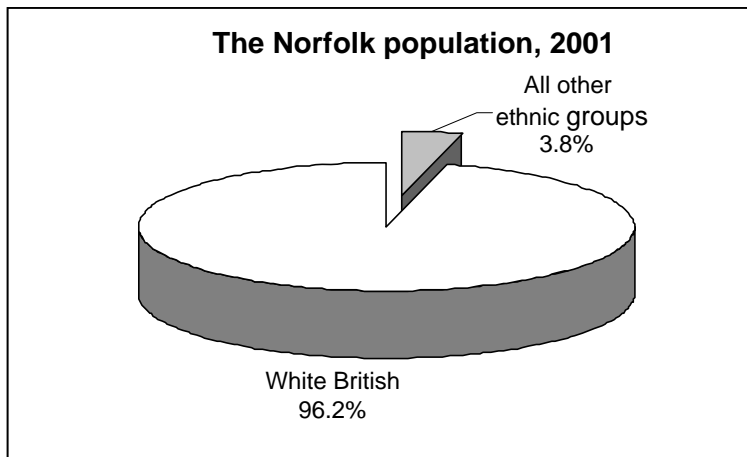


Figure 5.1: The population of Norfolk by broad ethnic group, 2001, White British vs. All Other Ethnic Groups.

The greater likelihood of people from certain minority ethnic groups living in lower income households has long been acknowledged (e.g. DfES, 2005a, p. 6, ONS 2004). Additionally, the 2001 census indicated that both men and women from non-White ethnic groups experience greater unemployment than White people (ONS 2004, p. 12). For example, for Bangladeshis, unemployment in 2001 stood at  $\geq 20\%$ , at least four times higher than that for White British or White Irish (ONS 2004, p. 12). People from Indian and Chinese ethnic groups show relatively low unemployment figures (Owen *et al.* 2000). Higher rates of eligibility for free school meals in England, often used as an indicator of lower income households, is seen amongst Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black groups and children of White/Black Caribbean heritage as well as with Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma groups (DfES 2005a, p. 6). Research reported already (Section 4.4) has highlighted that educational achievement is closely related to social class and parental employment.

Table 5.2 shows the unemployment rate by ethnic group for 2002/03 in the East of England, compared with National (English and UK) figures. Data for Norfolk have not been reported because the numbers of ethnic minorities here make calculations unreliable. These figures demonstrate that whilst unemployment in the East of England for both the 'White' and 'Non-white' populations is lower than national averages, unemployment for the 'Non-white' group in the East is nearly three times higher than that for the 'White' group.

	All		White		All Non-white	
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	5.1	$\pm 0.1$	4.7	$\pm 0.1$	11.0	$\pm 0.7$
<b>ENGLAND</b>	5.0	$\pm 0.1$	4.5	$\pm 0.1$	11.0	$\pm 0.7$
<b>EAST</b>	3.9	$\pm 0.4$	3.6	$\pm 0.4$	9.0	$\pm 2.5$

Table 5.2: Unemployment rate by ethnic group for 2002/03 in the UK, England and Eastern Region. Source: ONS (2005, Table 4.1).

Despite this, according to The Economic Development Partnership for Norfolk (2000, p. 12):

*“Analysis of economic data demonstrates that over the past four years [i.e. since 1996] Norfolk’s economy has grown on a par with the UK as a whole, but somewhat less strongly than the East of England.”*

Furthermore, in accordance with national trends, rates of unemployment in Norfolk have declined steadily over recent years (The Economic Development Partnership

for Norfolk (2000, p. 14). Based on 2003/04 data, of those classed as belonging to the economically active population, 4.2% are unemployed (NOMIS, 2005). This compares with 3.8% for the Eastern Region and 5.0% nationally (NOMIS, 2005).

However, according to a recent report prepared by Norfolk County Council:

*“Norfolk as a whole has above average deprivation: it is ranked between fourth and tenth most deprived of the 34 non-metropolitan Counties in England according to which measure is taken.”* (NCC, 2005d, p. 3)

Measures of deprivation are based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2004 (IMD 2004) which is ‘produced as a composite score from seven domain indices’:

- Income
- Employment
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training
- Barriers to housing and services
- Crime and disorder
- The living environment (NCC, 2005d, p. 7).

The higher the IMD 2004 score, the greater the deprivation. In order to analyse deprivation geographically, the country is divided into SOAs (Super Output Areas), each of which has a minimum population size of 1,000 and comprises either a whole ward or sub-divisions of a ward used in the 2001 census. Norfolk is divided into 530 SOAs and in England there are 32,482 SOAs with 3,550 SOAs in the Eastern Region. Therefore Norfolk’s SOAs comprise 1.6% of the total number in England and 14.9% of the total number in the Eastern Region. SOAs are ranked in order from most deprived (1<sup>st</sup>) to least deprived (32482<sup>nd</sup>).

According to the IMD 2004, about 10% of Norfolk SOAs are in the most deprived 20% of SOAs in England yet the extent of deprivation for Norfolk rises significantly for certain sub-domains, such as those in ‘Education, skills and training’. For example, in relation to a lack of qualifications in terms of skills<sup>1</sup> and a lack of attainment among children<sup>2</sup>, respectively 19% and 16% of Norfolk SOAs are in the most deprived 20% of SOAs for England.

This is represented in Figure 5.2 which, according to NCC (2005d, p. 34) highlights

*“the relatively large number of the more deprived SOAs in the extreme western parts of the county; plus quite high levels of deprivation in most other parts [including Norwich].”*

Although Key Stage 3 results for Norfolk indicate an average point score higher than the national (England) average for the last two years running, this is not the case with Key Stage 2 results (Table 5.3). This suggests that children in Norfolk primary schools are achieving less well than the national average. As far as the authors are aware, Key Stage results for Norfolk disaggregated by ethnicity are not available in the public domain and therefore it is not possible to evaluate the educational achievement of different ethnic groups amongst Norfolk pupils prior to FE. According

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<sup>1</sup> Indicator used relates to the Proportions of working age adults (aged 25-54) in the area with low or no qualifications.

<sup>2</sup> Indicators used are i) Average points scores of children at the end of Key Stages 2, 3 & 4, ii) Proportion of young people not staying on in school or non-advanced Further Education above 16, and iii) Secondary school absence rate.

to a source at Norfolk County Council such data could be made available for research purposes but it should be noted that the ethnicity of a large proportion of school age pupils is not known, either because the information is not sought or because parents decline to provide it. Nevertheless, examination of this data would be worthy of future research.

		<b>Average Point Score KS2</b>	<b>Average Point Score KS3</b>
<b>England Average</b>	<b>2003</b>	27.4	34.3
	<b>2004</b>	27.5	34.1
<b>Norfolk LEA Average</b>	<b>2003</b>	27.3	34.5
	<b>2004</b>	27.1	34.4

Table 5.3: Average Point Score for KS3 Results in England and Norfolk, 2003 and 2004. Source: DfES (2005c).

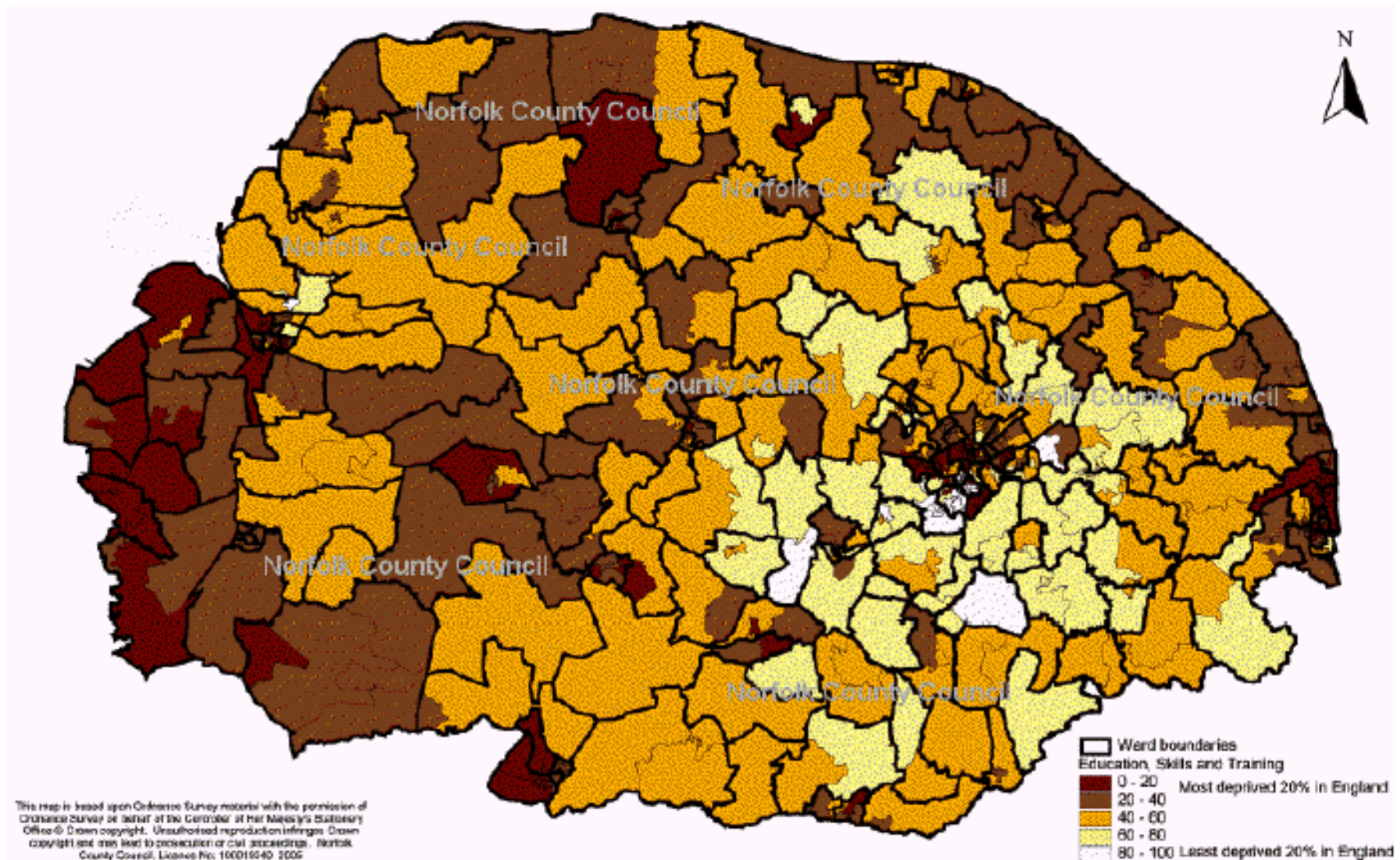


Figure 5.2: Indices of Deprivation 2004: Education, Skills and Training. The darker SOAs represent greater deprivation. Source: NCC (2005d, p. 35).

### 5.3 CITY COLLEGE NORWICH: AN INTRODUCTION

City College Norwich is a college of Further and Higher Education. As regards FE, City College operates in all 14 of the LSC's Areas of Learning (AoLs) apart from Land Based provision. The college offers qualifications at GCSE and at A level and in National Diplomas, National Certificates, Vocational A levels (AVCEs), Intermediate GNVQs and National Diplomas, National Vocational Qualifications and City & Guilds. Work based learning is available through apprenticeships, the Entry to Employment (E2E) and ESkills4Industry schemes.

In terms of HE, City College offers Access Courses, Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees and Postgraduate awards in the following subject areas: Business, Computing and Information Systems, Construction and Engineering, Education, English, Cultural Studies, Psychology and Psychosocial Studies, Health, Social Care and Early Education, Hotel School and Media and Multimedia. City College is a partner college of Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) and as such most of its degree programmes are conferred by APU, although some are validated by the University of East Anglia (UEA).

As of February 24<sup>th</sup> 2005, the total number of students at City College Norwich numbered 18,050. Of these 17,152 were enrolled in Further Education and 898 in Higher Education. There are currently approximately 330 ESOL students enrolled at the College, a figure that has risen ten fold since the last academic year (2003/04). The ratio of male to female FE learners is 0.8 : 1.0 (44% cf. 56%). A breakdown of current FE student numbers by ethnic group as of February 24<sup>th</sup> 2005 is given in Table 5.4 and represented in Figure 5.3.

ETHNIC GROUP	No. of students	%
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>		
Bangladeshi	48	0.3
Indian	52	0.3
Pakistani	19	0.1
Any other Asian	77	0.4
<b>Black or Black British</b>		
African	90	0.5
Caribbean	30	0.2
Any other Black	16	0.1
<b>Chinese</b>	57	0.3
<b>Mixed</b>		
White and Asian	31	0.2
White and Black African	32	0.2
White and Black Caribbean	26	0.2
Any other Mixed background	57	0.3
<b>White</b>		
British	14808	86.3
Irish	99	0.6
Any other White background	517	3.0
<b>Any other</b>	148	0.9
<b>Not known/not provided</b>	1045	6.1
<b>Total</b>	17152	100.0

Table 5.4: The FE student population at CCN by ethnic group, based on a headcount summary as of 24/2/2005.

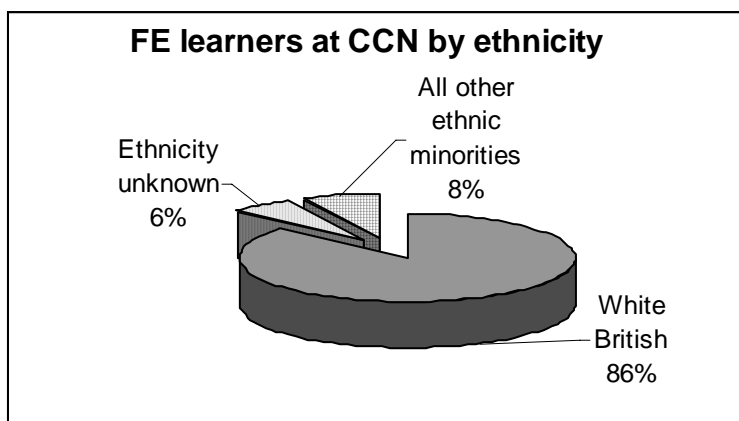


Figure 5.3: The proportion of minority ethnic groups to the White British population at City College Norwich, rounded to whole figures.

'All other ethnic minority groups' cover non-white British ethnic groups. The largest of these (*i.e.* those measuring <0.5%) are 'White - Any Other' (3.0%), 'Any Other' (0.9%) and White – Irish (0.6%), see Table 5.4.

It should be noted that most college statistics aggregate 'White British', 'White Irish' and 'White Other' together to form a 'White' majority ethnic group. In this instance, the ethnic minority population at the college (*i.e.* all non-White categories), based on data from Table 5.4, would equate to 4%.

Notably, BME students in FE at City College Norwich comprise 8% of the FE population, proportionally higher than the county average. However, with 6% of FE learners of 'unknown' ethnic background, the actual percentage of BME FE learners may be higher or lower than 8%.

A recent Ofsted inspection (February 2005) of City College Norwich is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 6. ISSUES OF ACHIEVEMENT: A REVIEW AND FURTHER ANALYSIS OF STATISTICAL PERFORMANCE DATA

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The original project brief was focused upon achievement, and the question of perceived 'underachievement', among black and minority ethnic learners in further education. In the context of statistical analysis several issues and questions are immediately raised:

- 1) What is achievement measured against, and how is it measured? In this context learner performance is measured against the previous year's performance in terms of success. Those performing less well than the average can be considered to be 'underachieving'. Additionally, learners at City College Norwich are measured against national benchmarks produced by the Learning and Skills Council from cumulative performance results derived from FE colleges nationally.
- 2) Terminological issues were immediately raised. 'Underachievement' has negative connotations, and therefore the authors have largely adopted the term 'relative achievement'. This also reflects trends in the literature which indicate a move away from value laden terminology (Section 4.3).
- 3) Are black and minority ethnic learners achieving less well than other learners, specifically in relation to White British learners?

Reference to the statistical analysis of achievement among City College Norwich FE students in this section of the report indicates that there are three minority ethnic groups which are achieving far lower rates of success in completion and achievement of their learning aims than their white counterparts. These are: Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, and Chinese students.

However, is this underachievement a factor of ethnicity or is it more closely linked to other issues – notably gender and social deprivation?

Gender has been found to be a significant factor. While females generally outperform males across the ethnic spectrum, Black/Black British females at City College have particularly poor success rates.

The fact that educational achievement can be linked to social class is widely recognised. However, the authors were unable to relate BME learners at City College Norwich directly to their socio-economic status, and their area of residence, in order to establish links between relative deprivation and performance. Notwithstanding data protection issues, this is a potential area for further research.

- 4) Is the pattern of relative achievement found across all black and ethnic minority groups at City College Norwich, and is this finding consistent across the Eastern region, and nationally?

Within this report research and analysis is concentrated on issues around the relative achievement of black ethnic minority learners. Ethnic minority groups do not necessarily have more in common with each other than with the majority white population. In the context of the demographic structure of the Norfolk population, other (white) minority groups including Portuguese and Eastern European economic migrants and Gypsy Travellers are of significance, since these groups have a variety of specific learning and language needs which affect achievement.

- 5) Do the available statistics provide a clear picture?

Some specific statistical problems relate to issues raised above in points 3-6 above: i.e.:

- Lack of data relating to ethnicity by gender for national and regional comparison.
- Lack of data relating to achievement of learners from 'Other White' backgrounds.

Additionally, problems derive from:

- The small number of black and minority ethnic students at CCN and in the wider Norfolk population, making statistical analysis potentially unreliable. Norfolk, which is the major catchment area for City College Norwich, has a relatively small BME and white minority ethnic group population. For this reason much data about the relative performance of different minority ethnic groups is of questionable reliability and statistical significance.
- Use of enrolment data, and learning aim performance, rather than data relating to individual student achievement may distort results if learners are enrolled on more than one course.
- Non-disclosure of ethnicity resulting in over, or under, counting. The rate of non-disclosure of ethnicity at CCN stood at 8% in 2002-03. It should be noted that this issue is currently being addressed. Previous research conducted by Foster & Mazey (2005) at City College Norwich examined reasons for non-disclosure, and made recommendations on how best to improve the rate of ethnic origin disclosure which are being acted upon;

- Use of different classifications/categories of ethnic groups making comparisons, over time, and with national benchmarks difficult and/or potentially erroneous. The move towards use of standard classifications, as recommended by HMSO (2003), and as used in the 2001 Census is reducing ambiguity. Nonetheless, not all national benchmarking data on achievement provided by the LSC was not directly comparable with City College Norwich statistics. Further, the inclusion 'Other White' within a broader 'White' category can effectively conceal white ethnic minority groups – including 'Eastern Europeans' and 'Gypsy Roma' within the statistical data.

## **6.2 PERFORMANCE OF FE STUDENTS AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH, BY ETHNICITY**

This section of the report draws upon data from the City College Norwich Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report 2002-03 (Chadwick, 2004), data from the previous year's monitoring report (2001-02) and preliminary/summary statistics for the academic year 2003-04. Further analysis of the data has been carried out, for comparative purposes.

Statistical analysis has also been used to compare the performance of learners at City College Norwich with the performance of learners both regionally and nationally. For this reason concentration is predominantly given to the academic year 2002-03 as benchmarking data for 2003-04 had not been released at the time of writing. Additionally, the success rate rather than the pass rate is now utilised as the measure of comparative achievement.

The meaning of the terms 'retention', 'pass' and 'success', as used in this context, and as defined by the Learning and Skills Council are detailed below:

**Retention = Learning Aims Completed/Learning Aims Started**  
**Pass Rate = Learning Aims Achieved/Learning Aims Completed**  
**Success Rate = Learning Aims Achieved/Learning Aims Started =**  
**Retention x Pass Rate**

### **6.2.1 COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF FE LEARNERS AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH, BY ETHNICITY**

#### **All ages - overview**

An overview of retention, pass and success rates in terms of learning aim performance is presented in Table 6.1 below highlighting the significant deviation from average performance among black learners, with, for example, only 74% passing, versus the average for all CCN FE students of 86%.

	Retention		Pass Rate		Success Rate	
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'
All	73	0	86	0	63	0
Male	73	0	84	-2	61	-2
Female	72	-1	88	+2	64	+1
All White	73	0	87	+1	63	0
All Black	72	-1	74	-12	53	-10
Ethnicity not declared	66	-7	86	0	56	-7

Table 6.1: City College Norwich: Learning Aim Performance Outcomes 2002-03: CCN Excl Ufi (University for Industry), All Ages

Differences in retention levels between males and females are not statistically significant. However, there is a four percentage point difference in pass rates between the genders, favouring female performance and female students are also more likely to succeed in their studies.

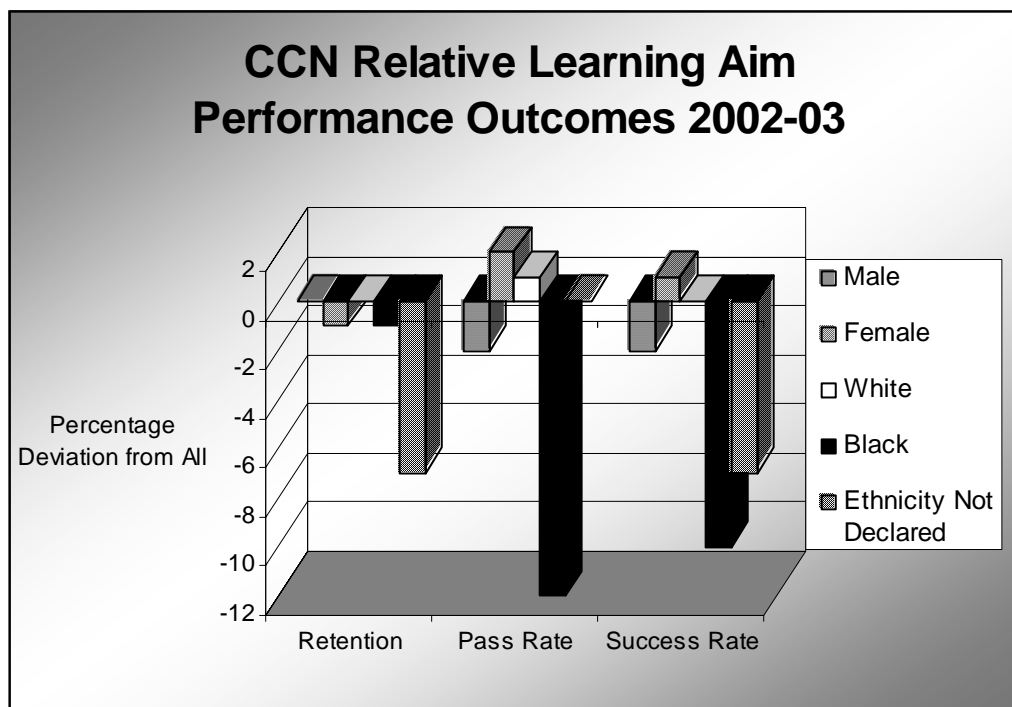


Figure 6.1: Relative Learning Aim Performance at CCN, by gender and by Ethnicity, 2002-03

Analysis of success rates by ethnicity reveals a ten percentage point difference in performance between black and white students, favouring the latter group. Differences in retention levels are not significant by broad ethnic grouping, (*i.e.* Black vs. White, in 2002-03). Table 6.2 shows trends in retention between 2002-03 and 2003-04.

	2002-03		2003-04		Percentage point change 2002-03 – 2003-04
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	
All	73	0	77	0	+4
Asian or British Asian	69	-4	70	-7	+1
Black or Black British	69	-4	72	-5	+3
Chinese	72	-1	72	-5	0
Mixed	79	+6	76	-1	-3
White**	73	0	77	0	+3
* Excl Ufl (University for Industry) students					
** Incl British, Irish and Any Other White					

Table 6.2: City College Norwich: Retention levels, by ethnicity, 2002-03 and 2003-04, All ages\*

Retention levels overall increased by four percentage points between the two years. However, while growth in retention rates was registered among White students (+3) and Black or Black British (+3), Mixed heritage students were less likely to complete learning aims (-3).

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 detail performance in terms of pass and success rates, by broad ethnic group, over the most recent two year period for which comparable data from City College Norwich was available.

	2002-03		2003-04		Percentage point change 2002-03 – 2003-04
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	
All	86	0	87	0	+1
Asian or British Asian	67	-19	67	-20	0
Black or Black British	70	-16	78	-8	+8
Chinese	78	-8	71	-16	-7
Mixed	79	-7	84	-3	+5
White**	87	+1	87	+1	0
* Excl Ufl (University for Learning) students					
** Incl British, Irish and Any Other White					

Table 6.3: City College Norwich: Pass rates, by ethnicity, 2002-03 and 2003-04, All ages\*

Interestingly, while retention of Mixed heritage students was down year on year, pass rates for this group were up significantly (+5%). Nonetheless, pass rates for all non-white students (in terms of learning aims) are well below those for whites. Differences are greatest between White and Chinese students (respectively 87% vs. 78%, and 87% and 71% for the two years in question).

	2002-03		2003-04		Percentage point change 2002-03 – 2003-04
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	
All	63	0	66	0	+3
Asian or British Asian	46	-17	47	-19	+1
Black or Black British	48	-15	56	-10	+8
Chinese	56	-7	51	-15	-5
Mixed	62	-1	64	-2	+2
White**	63	0	67	+1	+4
* Excl Ufl (University for Learning) students					
** Incl British, Irish and Any Other White					

Table 6.4: City College Norwich: Success rates, by ethnicity, 2002-03 and 2003-04, All ages\*

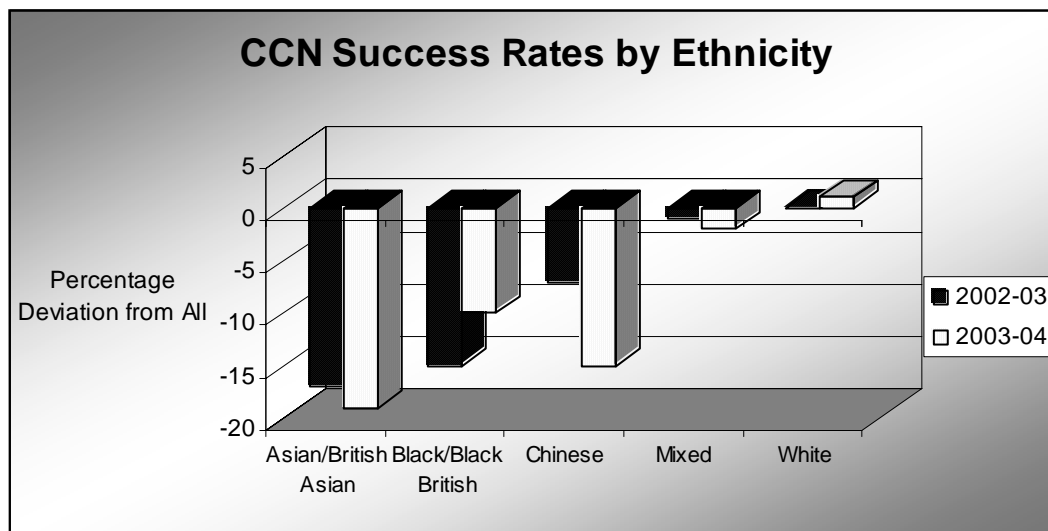


Figure 6.2: Success Rates at CCN, by Ethnicity, 2002-03 and 2003-04

Over the two year period 2002/03-2003/04 success rates in all broad ethnic minority categories increased, with the exception of Chinese students who achieved 5% fewer learning aims. However, differences in achievement levels between ethnic minority and other learners effectively widened due to higher levels of achievement among White learners (+4%). Additionally, the Chinese ethnic minority group is a very small ethnic category at City College Norwich, and conclusions about trends in achievement over a relatively short period can only be drawn cautiously.

### 6.2.2 COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF FE LEARNERS AT CITY COLLEGE, BY AGE GROUP

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 examine retention and performance of FE learners, by broad ethnic group, in terms of the two different age cohorts: 16-18 year olds, and the 19+ group.

	Retention		Pass Rate		Success Rate	
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'
All	74	0	82	0	60	0
Male	72	-2	77	-5	55	-5
Female	76	+2	85	+3	64	+4
All White	75	+1	82	0	61	+1
All Black	75	+1	73	-9	54	-6
Ethnicity not declared	68	-6	83	+1	57	-3

Table 6.5: City College Norwich: Learning Aim Performance Outcomes 2002-03: CCN Excl Ufi, 16-18 year olds

Focusing on performance in terms of success it can be seen that the 19+ age group (Table 6.6) perform far better than their 16-18 year old counterparts (Table 6.5), with the older age group successfully completing 64% of their learning aims as opposed to 60% among 16-18s. However, this difference is accounted for by White learners; differences in performance between All Black learners by age are not statistically significant. Reference to the literature review in this report (Section 4) indicates that many, but not all, BME learners will already be educationally disadvantaged by the time they reach Year 12 and that this pattern is likely to continue throughout further education.

	Retention		Pass Rate		Success Rate	
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'
All	72	0	88	0	64	0
Male	74	+2	87	-1	64	0
Female	71	-1	89	+1	63	-1
All White	73	+1	89	+1	65	+1
All Black	71	-1	74	-14	53	-11
Ethnicity not declared	64	-8	87	-1	56	-8

Table 6.6: City College Norwich: Learning Aim Performance Outcomes 2002-03: CCN Excl Ufi, 19+

Increased levels of achievement among White 19+ learners, compared with White 16-18 learners, result in a greater divide in success rates between All White and All Black students, with Whites achieving success in 12% more learning aims.

### **6.2.3 COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF FE LEARNERS AT CITY COLLEGE, BY ETHNICITY AND BY GENDER**

The higher level of achievement by female learners was detailed above (Section 6.2.1). Table 6.7 presents a comparative overview of performance in 2002-03 by ethnic minority learners vs. all White learners.

	Retention		Pass Rate		Success Rate	
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'
All	73	0	86	0	63	0
Ethnic minority performance	72	-1	74	-12	53	-10
- male	73	0	70	-16	51	-12
- female	71	-1	77	-9	55	-8
White performance	73	+1	87	+1	64	+1
- male	74	0	84	+2	62	+1
- female	73	0	88	+2	64	+2

Table 6.7: City College Norwich: Learning Aim Performance Outcomes 2002-03, by ethnicity and gender

While there is little difference in rates of retention, differences in performance and achievement by ethnicity by gender are outstanding. On average ethnic minority learners pass 12% fewer learning aims than their white counterparts, but this difference increases to 16% among males. Ethnic minority males similarly have far lower success rates, 12% below the performance rate for the whole College.

Further detail on performance by ethnicity by gender is presented below (Table 6.8), with a more detailed breakdown by ethnic group.

	Retention		Pass Rate		Success Rate	
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'
All	73	0	86	0	63	0
White performance	73	0	87	+1	64	+1
- male	74	+1	84	-2	62	-1
- female	73	0	88	+2	64	+1
Asian or Asian British	69	-4	67	-19	46	-17
- male	68	-5	64	-22	43	-20
- female	69	-4	69	-17	48	-15
Black or Black British	69	-3	70	-16	48	-15
- male	76	+3	68	-18	52	-11
- female	64	-9	71	-15	45	-18
Chinese	72	-1	78	-8	56	-7
- male	67	-6	81	-5	54	-9
- female	76	+4	75	-11	57	-6
Mixed	79	+6	79	-7	62	-1
- male	85	+13	70	-16	60	-3
- female	75	+2	85	-1	64	+1

Table 6.8: City College Norwich: Learning Aim Performance Outcomes 2002-03, comparative performance by ethnicity and gender

Relative performance by ethnicity and gender in terms of learning aim outcomes reveals that females outperform males in terms of both pass and success rates across the ethnic spectrum. Differences are particularly marked for:

- Mixed heritage learners: with 70% of males passing compared to 85% of females and 64% of females achieving success vs. just 60% of male learners.
- Asian/Asian British category: females have both higher pass rates than males (69% vs. 64%) and higher success rates (48% vs. 43%).

However, two exceptions are evident:

- Chinese male learners achieve a higher pass rate, although in terms of success rates females outperform males;
- The situation is reversed in the case of Black or Black British learners, with females achieving higher pass rates but males in this group being far more likely than females to succeed (52% vs. 45%).

Table 6.9 presents success rates by ethnicity and by gender for 2002-03 and 2003-04. While success rates improved for all ethnic groups, with the exception of Chinese students, there are significant variations in performance by gender.

	2002-03		2003-04		% change 2002/03- 2003/04
	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	%	Percentage point variation from 'all'	
All	63	0	66	0	+5
White performance	64	+1	67	+1	+5
- male	62	-1	64	-2	+3
- female	64	+1	69	+3	+8
Asian or Asian British	46	-17	47	-19	+2
- male	43	-20	35	-31	-19
- female	48	-15	55	-11	+15
Black or Black British	48	-15	56	-10	+17
- male	52	-11	59	-7	+13
- female	45	-18	52	-14	+16
Chinese	56	-7	52	-14	-7
- male	54	-9	50	-16	-8
- female	57	-6	52	-14	-9
Mixed	62	-1	64	-2	+3
- male	60	-3	65	-1	+8
- female	64	+1	63	-3	-2

Table 6.9: Success rates at City College Norwich, comparative performance by ethnicity and gender, 2002-03 vs. 2003-04

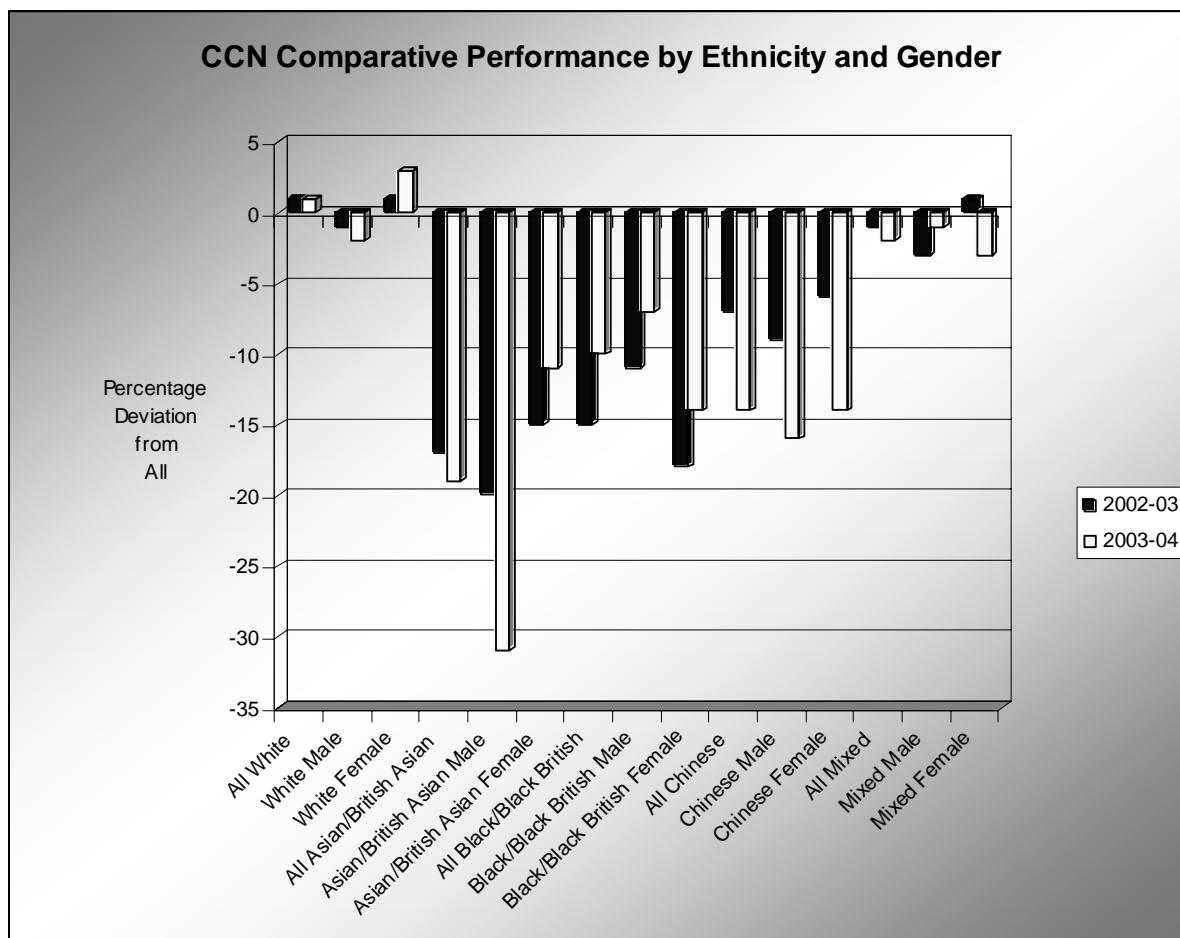


Figure 6.3: Comparative Success Rates at CCN by Ethnicity and Gender, 2002-03 and 2003-04

White female learners were the only category to achieve above average performance in 2003-04. Analysis of changes in performance over the two year period indicates that the following student groups are causes for particular concern:

- Asian or Asian British males. Success among this group declined dramatically in 2003/04 to stand at 35%, well below the level for all FE learners in College of 66%. Asian or Asian British males achieved success in 19% fewer learning aims in 2003/04 than in the previous year, while performance among Asian or Asian British females increased by almost 15%. Reference to Section 6.3 below highlights the poor performance of Asian/Asian British learners at City College Norwich, with success rates significantly below regional and national levels;
- Black or Black British students. Success in this group is 10 percentage points below the rate for All FE learners. Achievement among female Black or Black British students was particularly poor in 2003/04, at 52%, although it did show an improvement over 2002/03;

Chinese students are also underachieving, in comparison with their White counterparts. Success rates for both males and females declined between 2002/03 and 2003/04. This ethnic minority group has a success rate almost 15% below the

College average. While this can be seen to be against national trends, small numbers of Chinese students at City College Norwich will tend to skew findings.

### **6.3 PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN FE, BY ETHNICITY – THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PICTURE**

Data on performance of students in FE by ethnicity, both nationally and in the eastern region was supplied by the Learning and Skills Council. The data are detailed in Tables 6.10 and 6.11, in terms of success rates, by actual number of learning aims successfully achieved, and success in percentage terms (achievement as a percentage of starts) for each ethnic group.

	National Success Rates			East Region Success Rates			Norfolk Success Rates		
	2001/02	2002/03	% change 2001/02 - 2002/03	2001/02	2002/03	% change 2001/02 - 2002/03	2001/02	2002/03	% change 2001/02 - 2002/03
Bangladeshi	27,728	34,902	+25.9	1,867	2,410	+29.1	41	68	+65.9
Black African	79,028	97,989	+24.0	3,429	4,209	+22.7	69	92	+33.3
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	<b>53,033</b>	<b>58,019</b>	<b>+9.4</b>	<b>2,245</b>	<b>2,754</b>	<b>+22.7</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>+41.2</b>
<b>Black Other</b>	<b>19,612</b>	<b>19,361</b>	<b>-1.3</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>+9.8</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>-3.2</b>
Chinese	26,221	32,587	+24.3	1,558	2,263	+45.3	99	134	+35.4
Indian	87,170	95,354	+9.4	3,780	4,232	+12.0	89	101	+13.5
Mixed	28,109	44,758	+59.2	1,856	3,607	-5.7	280	347	+23.9
Other Asian	47,377	54,065	+14.1	1,445	2,164	+49.8	117	127	+8.5
Pakistani	81,476	90,563	+11.2	4,823	5,242	+8.7	31	29	-6.5
<b>White</b>	<b>2,791,022</b>	<b>3,110,003</b>	<b>+11.4</b>	<b>220,903</b>	<b>261,666</b>	<b>+18.5</b>	<b>51,237</b>	<b>55,781</b>	<b>+8.9</b>
Any other	86,554	90,600	+4.7	5,793	5,071	-12.5	219	381	+74.0
Unknown	498,733	290,562	-41.7	40,757	19,060	-53.2	5,635	3,742	-33.6
<b>All</b>	<b>3,826,063</b>	<b>4,018,763</b>	<b>+5.0</b>	<b>289,450</b>	<b>313,769</b>	<b>+8.4</b>	<b>57,930</b>	<b>60,934</b>	<b>+5.2</b>

Source: LSC unpublished data

Table 6.10: Comparative success among FE learners, by number of learning aims, nationally, in the eastern region and in Norfolk, 2001/02 and 2002/03

Analysis in terms of actual numbers of learning aims successfully achieved highlights the relatively small numbers of ethnic minority learners across the Eastern region and specifically within Norfolk. Nationally, for example, in 2002/03, success among White learners accounted for 77% of the total with ethnic minority learners accounting for just 13% of total success rates. Within Norfolk, however, the differences are even greater: 88% versus 1.5% (Table 6.10).

Examination of trends over the two year period within Norfolk indicate that success rates have increased significantly among many ethnic minority groups, reflecting the

greater numbers of learning aims started and successfully completed. Exceptions are for Pakistani and Black Other learners, among whom numbers of learning aims successfully achieved declined between 2001/02 and 2002/03. Greatest increases are noted among success rates for Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and Chinese students. However, caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions as numbers in these groups, particularly Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean, are small, and therefore not statistically robust (Table 6.10).

Table 6.11 presents success rates by ethnicity. The Index for 2002/03 allows comparison to be made between the All National Success rate for the year, (*i.e.* 67%=100) and performance within individual ethnic groupings in the Eastern region and in Norfolk, specifically. The Index provides a measure of the relative change in a group of variables, in this instance different ethnic groups, when compared to the base or norm equal to 100.

	National Success Rates			East Region Success Rates			Norfolk Success Rates		
	2001/02	2002/03	Index for 2002/03*	2001/02	2002/03	Index for 2002/03*	2001/02	2002/03	Index for 2002/03*
Bangladeshi	60%	66%	99	58%	62%	93	60%	58%	87
Black African	55%	62%	93	44%	59%	88	61%	59%	88
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Black Other</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>82</b>
Chinese	62%	65%	97	62%	65%	97	73%	61%	91
Indian	64%	67%	100	60%	65%	97	74%	70%	104
Mixed	60%	60%	90	60%	63%	94	72%	71%	106
Other Asian	60%	64%	96	57%	58%	87	62%	56%	84
Pakistani	59%	63%	94	62%	62%	93	66%	66%	99
<b>White</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>106</b>
Any other	60%	63%	94	61%	63%	94	68%	65%	97
Unknown	64%	64%	96	56%	59%	88	68%	64%	96
<b>All</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>104</b>

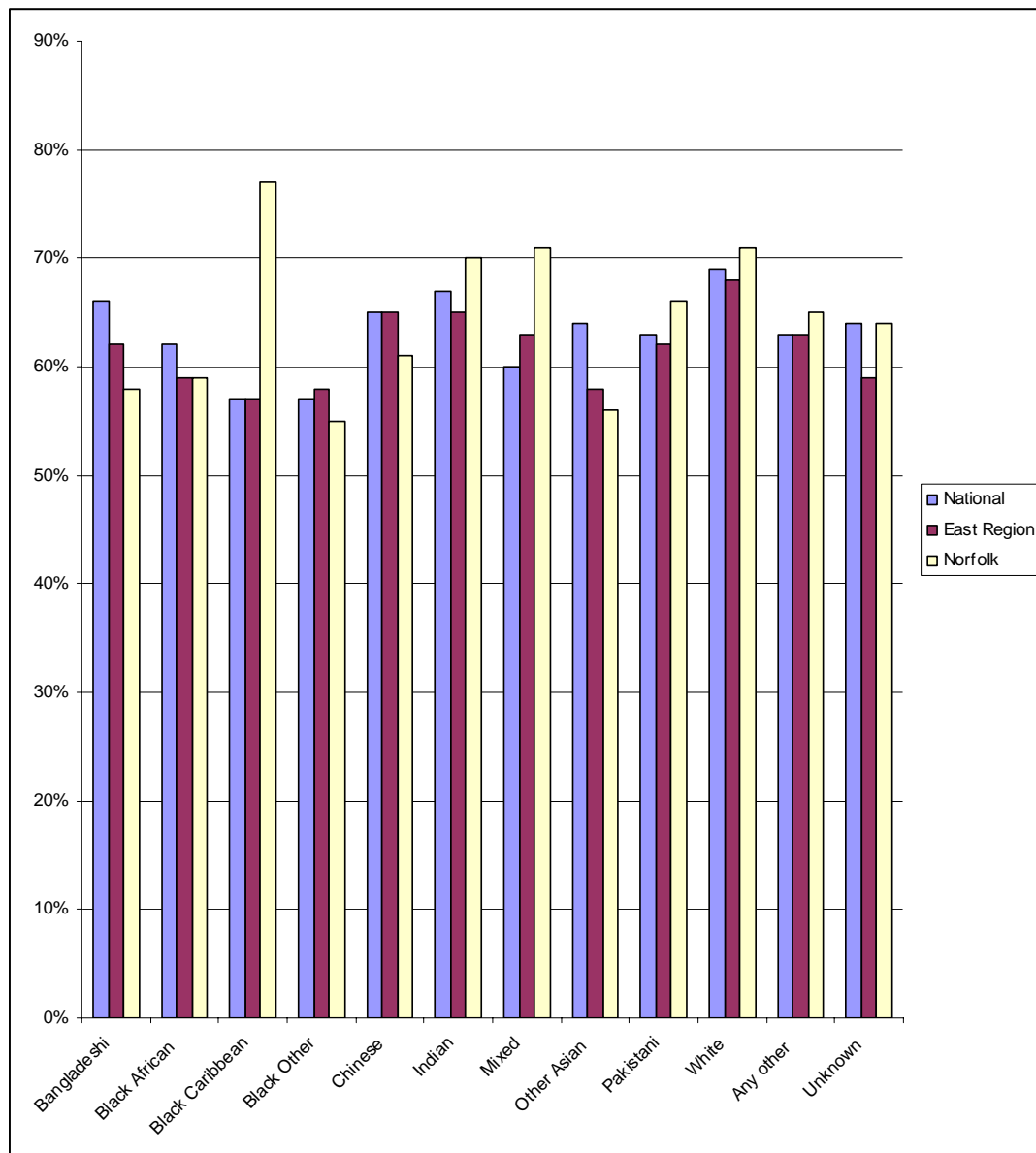
\* Index based on All National Success Rate of 67%=100

Source: LSC unpublished data

Table 6.11: Comparative Achievement Among FE learners, by Learning Aim Success, in the Eastern Region and in Norfolk, 2001/02 and 2002/03, by percentage

Benchmarking performance against the National Success Rate it can be seen that White learners have the highest level of achievement. The one exception to this is for Black Caribbean learners in Norfolk, 77% of whom achieved success versus the national average of 67% and the Norfolk average of 70%. Within Norfolk relatively poor performance was demonstrated by Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Other and Other Asian learners. Success rates in these groups were up to 18 percentage points below the All National Rate.

Data from Table 6.11 is presented graphically in Figure 6.4 below.



Source: LSC unpublished data

Figure 6.4: Comparative Success Rates Among FE Learners, Nationally, in Eastern Region and in Norfolk, by Ethnic Group, 2002/03

#### 6.4 BENCHMARKING PERFORMANCE OF FE LEARNERS AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH

National performance statistics for the academic year 2003/04 were not available at the time of writing, therefore comparative analysis with CCN data is restricted to the most recent year, (*i.e.* 2002/03). Additionally, the focus of statistics from the Learning and Skills Council in relation to achievement is limited to success rates.

In order to benchmark achievement by ethnicity at City College Norwich against national performance various ethnic groups have been combined, as follows:

- White = White British + White Irish + Any other White
- Mixed = White & Asian + White & Black African + White & Black Caribbean + Any other mixed
- Asian/Asian British = Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi + Asian or Asian British – Pakistani + Asian or Asian British – Indian + Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
- Black/Black British = Black or Black British – African + Black or Black British – Caribbean + Black or Black British – any other Black background

Table 6.12 and Figure 6.5 detail comparative success rates, by these aggregated ethnic groups.

	CCN	Norfolk	Eastern Region	National
	%	%	%	%
White	64	71	68	69
Asian/Asian British	46	61	62	65
Black/Black British	48	62	58	60
Chinese	56	61	65	65
Mixed	62	71	63	60
All	63	70	66	67
* excl Unknown/Not Provided				
Source: Learning and Skills Council/City College Norwich				

Table 6.12: Success rates among FE learners by ethnicity, 2002/03\*

Performance, in terms of success rates, at City College Norwich is below the All National rate in all ethnic groupings. The only exception is Mixed Heritage where performance just exceeds the national average but is below that in both Norfolk as a whole, and the level set by the Eastern region. Relative achievement of Asian/Asian British, and Black/Black British students at CCN is particularly poor, with learners these BME groups achieving success in 19% and 12% fewer learning aims, respectively, than the standard achieved nationally.

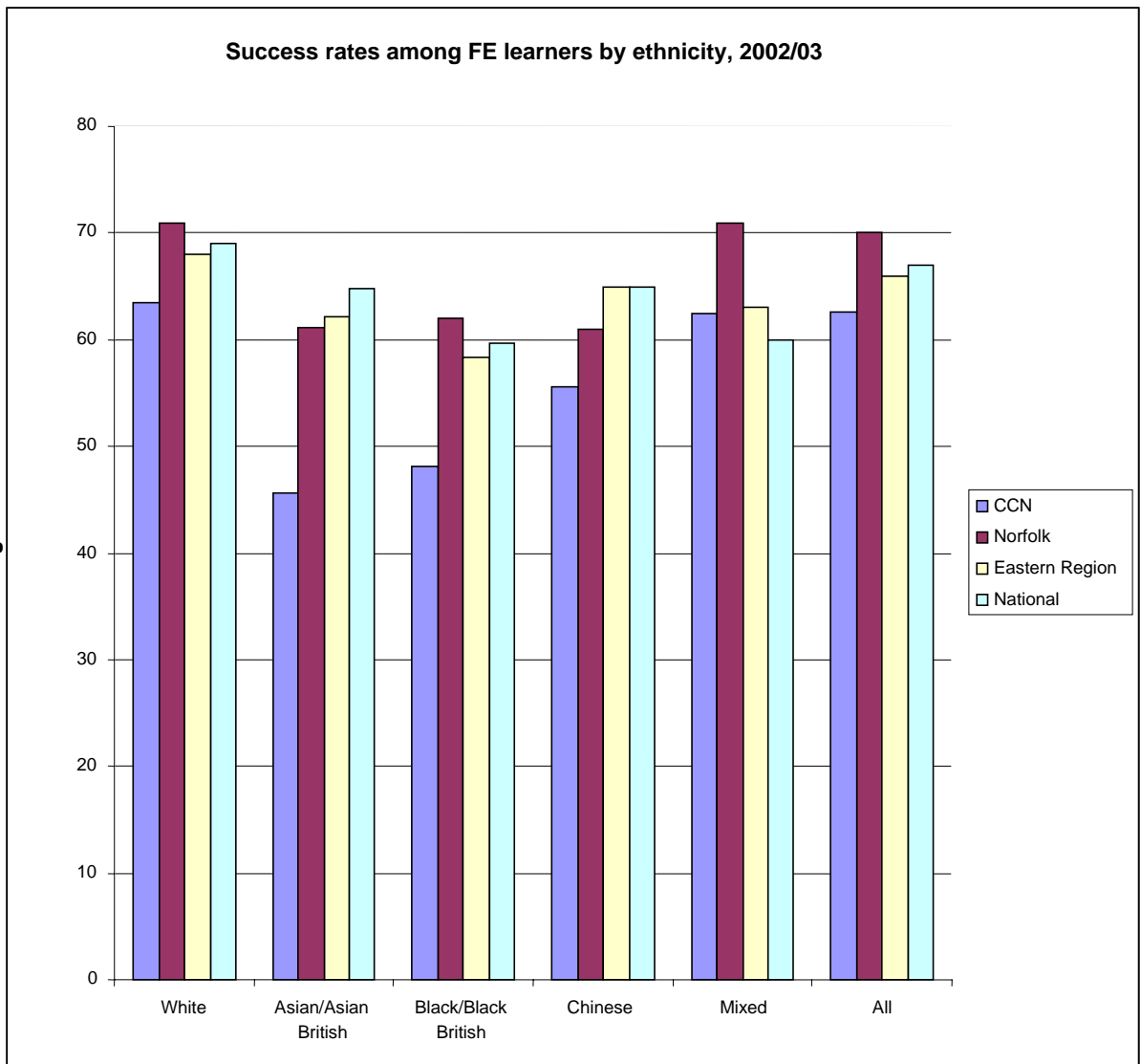


Figure 6.5: Comparative Success Rates Among FE Learners, by Ethnicity, CCN vs. the Regional and National Picture, 2002/03

Table 6.13 provides a more detailed breakdown of success rates in the Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British ethnic minority groups, indicating the relative performance at City College Norwich by reference to performance regionally and nationally.

	CCN	Norfolk	Eastern Region	National
	%	%	%	%
Asian or Asian British	46	61	62	65
Bangladeshi	35	65	62	66
Indian	57	70	65	67
Pakistani	53	66	62	63
Any other Asian	42	56	58	64
Black or Black British	48	62	58	60
African	43	58	59	62
Caribbean	74	77	57	57
Any other Black	37	55	58	57
Chinese	56	61	65	65
Mixed	62	71	63	60
Other	54	65	63	63
White	64	71	68	69
Total	63	70	66	67
* excl not known/not provided				
Source: Learning and Skills Council/City College Norwich				

Table 6.13: Comparative Success rates, City College Norwich, Norfolk, Eastern Region and National, by Ethnic group, 2002-03\*

Concentrating on these two groups, in the context of City College Norwich, both of which exhibited success rates well below national benchmarks, it is evident that there is considerable variation in performance within ethnic groupings. Within the Asian/Asian British group, for example, Bangladeshi learners exhibited particularly poor success rates in terms of learning aims achieved. However, success rates of Black/Black British Caribbean learners at City College in 2002-03 were higher than national rates despite the fact that performance of ALL Black/Black British learners was lower.

### **6.5 COMPARATIVE SUCCESS AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH AND OTHER REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COLLEGES, BY ETHNICITY, 2003/04**

In order to examine further the relative performance of learners by ethnicity at City College Norwich comparative data from other colleges was sought. The majority of general further education colleges in East Anglia were asked to participate in the project and additionally data was requested from a few other colleges (nationally) which were known to have either carried out research on the relative achievement of learners by ethnicity, or were believed to represent good practice. Relative performance, in terms of success rates are presented here. As far as possible statistical data which was received from the participant colleges has been utilised. In some instances data was supplied/collated in a different format to that at City College Norwich, and where possible results have been aggregated to indicate relative achievement. Unfortunately few colleges were able to supply data on performance in terms of ethnicity by gender.

Performance data from participating colleges is detailed in Table 6.15, and displayed graphically in Figure 6.6. Conclusions about the peaks in performance evident at College G for a number of ethnic minority groupings should be drawn extremely tentatively, as numbers of ethnic minority students are particularly small at this college. Concentration is therefore given to the comparative performance between City College Norwich and Colleges 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Success rates at City College Norwich in four ethnic minority groups are just 50% or less. These are:

- Mixed heritage: white and black African, and rates are significantly higher at Colleges 3 and 6, at 67 and 69%, respectively, versus 50% at CCN.
- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi peaking at College 6 with 81% versus just 44% at CCN.
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani among whom success rates fall to just 33% at College 5, but peak again in Colleges 6 and 4 at 82% and 70% respectively versus 45% at CCN.
- Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian students exhibit relatively low levels of success at a number of colleges surveyed, but performance peaks in College 3 at almost three quarters (73%).

	CCN	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5	College 6
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
White							
White British	68	71	62	75	71	65	69
White Irish	76	100	64	66	86	45	85
Any other White	55	86	72	77	75	70	85
Mixed							
Mixed White & Asian	60	0	61	68	59	78	93
Mixed White & Black African	50	40	43	67	61		69
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	64	100	53	67	56	70	79
Mixed any other mixed	73	65	47	80	62	71	63
Black/Black British							
Black or Black British - African	58	61	62	73	59	88	57
Black or Black British - Caribbean	53	100	55	81	57	82	74
Black or Black British - any other Black	50	100	54	66	51	59	71
Asian/Asian British							
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	44	100	55	45	61		81
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	45		64	63	70	33	82
Asian or Asian British - Indian	54	50	60	73	77	53	87
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian	45		70	73	69	33	59
Chinese	51	67	59	84	56	67	79
Any other	53	80	72	66	66	25	73
Unknown	63	86	65	80	69	60	80

Table 6.14: Comparative Colleges' Performance Data - Success By Ethnicity, 2003/04

### Comparative FE success at selected colleges, 2003-04

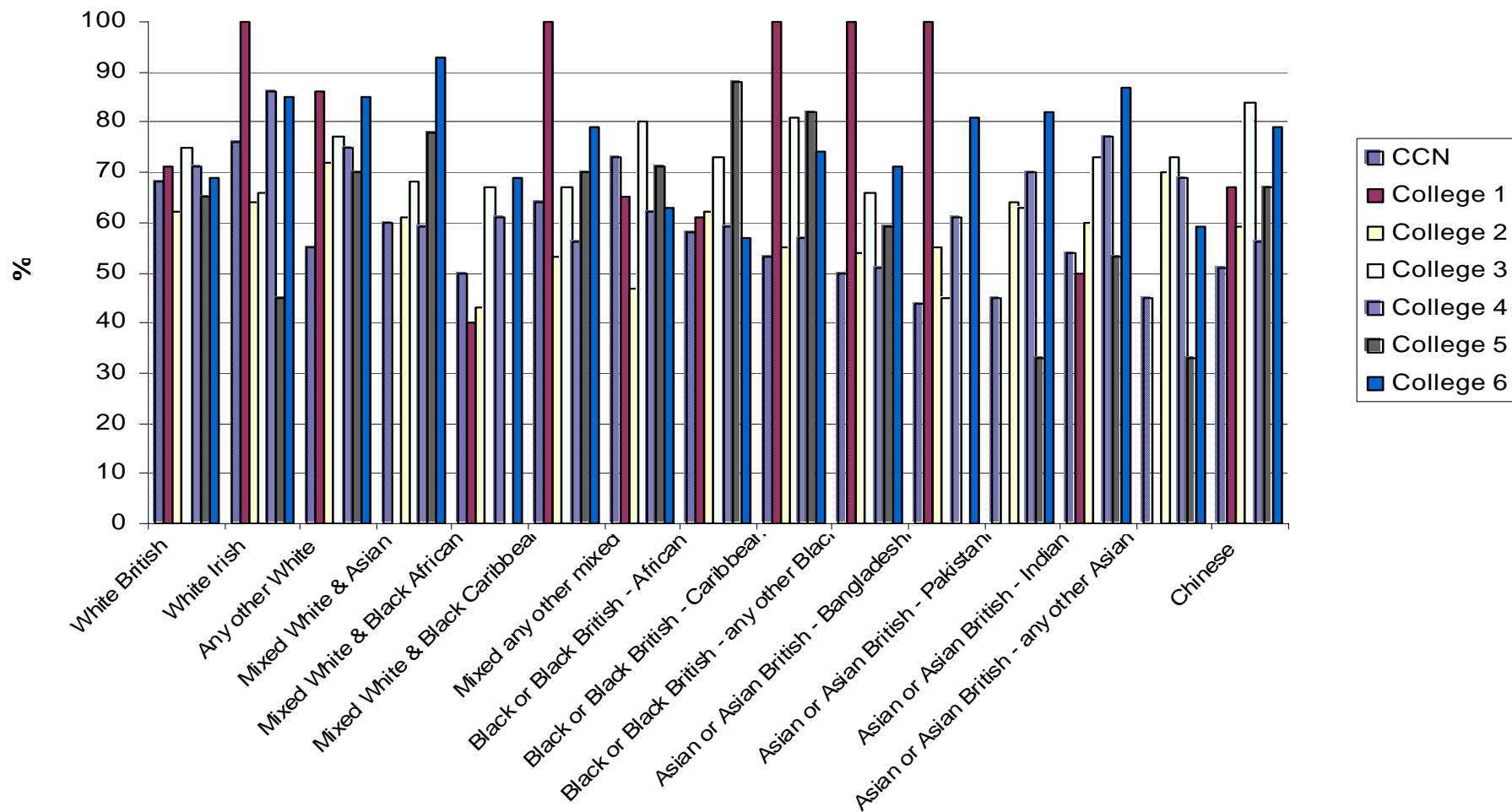


Figure 6.6: Success by Ethnicity at Selected FE Colleges, 2003/04

	CCN		College 2		College 7		College 6		College 3	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
White										
White British	68	69	63	61	77	74	69	68	77	76
White Irish	72	81	57	71	71	67	80	86	64	64
Any other White	58	49	71	74	69	71	73	91	79	75
Mixed										
Mixed White & Asian	63	53	54	67	86	60	100	92	73	64
Mixed White & Black African	45	64	56	25	64	71	64	100	50	83
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	57	75	55	50	69	62	70	89	63	80
Mixed any other mixed	80	64	44	51	69	46	50	67	78	86
Black/Black British										
Black or Black British - African	52	62	64	58	46	48	63	45	74	73
Black or Black British - Caribbean	43	60	57	53	53	64	83	57	50	83
Black or Black British - any other Black	60	40	58	48	69	59	67	75	55	85
Asian/Asian British										
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	57	29	68	44	85	84	100	81	33	100
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	56	27	65	60	80	50		82	56	70
Asian or Asian British - Indian	57	48	65	51	65	63	85	87	82	69
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian	51	31	71	70	82	81	55	61	75	74
Chinese	52	50	48	65	76	83	86	33	80	100
Any other	63	45	74	71	72	74	56	79	61	73
Unknown	68	58	64	66	63	54	72	84	83	79

Table 6.15: Comparative Colleges' Performance Data - Success, All Ages by Gender by Ethnicity 2003-04

The pattern of response by gender and ethnicity reveals an extremely mixed picture. In several ethnic minority groups at CCN female students significantly outperform males. Notable examples are Mixed heritage – white and Asian students (females achieved 10 percentage points more learning aims than males) and all Asian/Asian British categories (e.g. Bangladeshi, females +28 percentage point higher success rate). However, Black or Black British African males display higher success rates than their female counterparts at City College.

Gender differences at the other colleges which supplied data revealed some similarities, with for example, Asian British Bangladeshi females outperforming males in all colleges apart from College 3, and in the Mixed White & Asian group females achieved a higher level of success in all colleges apart from College 2.

Male students in ethnic minority groups at Colleges 3 and 6 showed a higher propensity to outperform females, and overall success rates tended to be higher in several ethnic minority learner categories at these two colleges. College 3 and 6 are located in the Eastern region and were visited by the project researchers in order to further investigate similarities and differences in practice with regard to BME learners in FE.

## **7. EXPLORING ACHIEVEMENT AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH AND OTHER COLLEGES**

### **7.1 GOOD PRACTICE**

Analysis of performance at City College Norwich and other regional and selected national general further education colleges highlighted differences in achievement among learners, by ethnicity. Consideration of the differences involved exploration of practice at other colleges and some comparison of actions and practice at City College Norwich. While the subject is complex and solutions are not only multi-dimensional but also vary according to the context, higher and/or relatively consistent performance across ethnic groups in some colleges would suggest 'good practice'. Findings from colleges where retention and/or performance among BME learners has improved are included, as are examples of practice at some colleges nationally which have been awarded Learning and Skills Beacon status for their performance in equality and diversity.

General conclusions arising from observation at colleges exhibiting relatively good practice and performance indicate that the size of a college may play a role in fostering a supportive environment for the ethnic minority learner. City College Norwich is one of the country's largest providers of post-16 education, offering a wide spectrum of courses for its broad base of students and has good support services and practices in place. With a large number of staff, specialist needs can be catered for. Nonetheless, the two regional colleges visited were both smaller in size than City College and as a consequence appeared more familiar with their individual students, and potentially were able to offer them a more personal service.

#### **7.1.1 ESOL AND LANGUAGE**

Numbers of ESOL students in FE colleges in the Eastern region have increased significantly during the last year. Several colleges reported that from having just twenty or so ESOL students at the beginning of 2004, courses were attracting 200-300+ a year. This is a direct result of the accession to the EU of several Eastern European countries. Nearly 28,000 people have come to East Anglia from Eastern Europe over

the last year since their countries became part of the European Union. Within East Anglia over 9,500 took up work in administrative or managerial posts and 6,800 are employed in agriculture (Eastern Daily Press, 2005). Many are working in manual posts despite having professional qualifications due to language problems and non-acceptance of foreign qualifications.

Staff at the regional colleges which were visited in order to investigate good practice commented that the language barrier can be isolating, but special efforts are made to include those whose first language is not English. Initiatives include offering extra help before students ask for it; some never do! Additionally students will only be asked to enrol after they have attended the course for about two weeks and by then they have generally shown commitment.

Awareness of numbers and performance of learners for whom English is not a first language is an issue for good practice. At City College Norwich English language capabilities are monitored at enrolment and to some extent prior to this at interview. However, the recording of the ESOL student's first language is not made and thus analysis of performance can not be gauged according to first/other language, only by nationality. Using nationality to gauge the first spoken language of foreign nationals would not be advisable as this could involve making wrongful assumptions.

It was commented that the commitment to learning the English language to academic rather than just conversational level does tend to be very strong among ESOL students, particularly among those who are highly qualified (to the equivalent of Level 4 or above). Economic migrants are as likely to be attracted by skills shortages in the UK, as by adverse economic conditions in their country of origin. This factor was also noted by Lenford White (unpublished) in the case of Polish dentists attending ESOL classes in South Nottingham, and is supported by unpublished research from CCN which indicates that some 36% of ESOL students are qualified to at least first degree level.

Anticipated changes in the fees structure at FE colleges from autumn 2005 is likely to have implications on supply and demand for ESOL courses and may impact on motivation to complete. To date most ESOL courses have been available free of charge to EU nationals and spouses of British nationals resident in the UK on a long term basis, and also to asylum seekers and refugees.

### **7.1.2 SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION**

A need for specialist support services was recognised in Lenford White's study on supporting BME students in FE colleges (Lenford, unpublished). These specialist services may typically involve greater investments in time in supporting individual learners than many traditional student service departments will be able to provide, and are likely to be of benefit to learners with specific needs, such as asylum seekers and refugees:

*“Whilst such learners would be directed to student services in the average college, a discreet service enabled continuous and expert advice in a number of areas that had a clear bearing on learner experience such as benefits, immigration issues and housing.”*

Together with City College Norwich, staff at the regional colleges visited in the course of this research acknowledged the importance of offering a high level of support to students, and recognised that many ethnic minority learners are likely to have specific needs. At City College Norwich individual support and advice, on a range of study

related, financial and personal matters, is available from personal tutors and student liaison officers. Additionally, the International Student Adviser provides advice and support for foreign students and arranges a social programme designed to foster friendships and social integration:

*“International students experience a range of difficulties. For refugees and migrant workers, for example, fees and employment are issues which tend to affect study. For other international students social and psychological problems may arise – international students tend to be a little older than UK students, and age and language can create isolation. Usually tutors who know help is available will flag up problems and I’m able to point the student in the right direction, or in some cases I will provide individual support. Students can get too reliant on me, you have to encourage them to mix, socially, with others in the same age group.”*

The Essential Skills Support Team at City College Norwich offers specialist support for certain ‘Home’ ESOL students, (i.e. those defined in Section 7.1.1 above as being entitled to free ESOL courses). The Team has observed that a number of ESOL students who needed additional support in 2004/05 were not recognised in time and has put in motion an action to encourage tutors to send new students enrolling in September 2005 to the Learner Centre so they can be assessed during the first week or two of term.

On the issue of supporting BME students the following comment was received from one of the colleges exhibiting good practice:

*“With some foreign and ethnic minority students...you do have to encourage them to approach you with their problems. We try to be proactive. In general we find male students are also slightly less keen to ask for help.”*  
-Head of Student Support Services, East Anglian FE college

Mentoring is also a very effective way of supporting learners and one that is recommended in the literature. City College Norwich has extended the Study Buddies scheme to support its ethnic minority students. This programme is focused on supporting learners with their studies, from language help to reading through coursework and revision. However, feedback suggests that the success of the scheme is in no small part derived from the social and emotional support students receive from their mentors. Additionally, specially tailored social activities, such as regular football games, have been established as a direct result of the scheme. The City College Norwich Study Buddies mentoring programme was introduced as a result of observing good practice at other colleges nationally, notably at Lewisham College, London. Best Practice in the literature also promotes the development of such schemes. One of the regional colleges visited expressed interest in introducing a similar college-wide mentoring scheme.

Communication issues in supporting BME learners have been highlighted in the literature, through discussions with, and research papers received, from other regional and national further education colleges. In large colleges, such as City College Norwich, effective communication can be particularly difficult to achieve and maintain. Students must be made aware of the support services available to help them with their studies and social/personal life whilst at college. However, as important is the communication between higher management and tutors/support staff within college; for dissemination of information on equality and diversity and for effective working of college support mechanisms.

Plymouth College, which is also a large general further education college with a very small ethnic minority population and a catchment which includes some of the most deprived areas in the country, won a Learning and Skills Beacon Award in 2002 for high performance in equality and diversity by addressing issues of communication and responsibility for equality and diversity. By changing operating and monitoring systems and recognition of the importance of a 'cascade of responsibility' for equality practice, all staff have been encouraged to take ownership of the College's equality and diversity policy and practice. Incorporating these into their work and into the provision, development and delivery of courses has resulted in growth in widening participation and inclusiveness.

### **7.1.3 TEACHING DELIVERY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Barnfield College has achieved national acclaim for its research and good practice with regard to participation and performance of particular ethnic groups which were found to be underachieving relatively to other groups in the college. Among the teaching initiatives introduced was female only groups set up to attract Moslem women students. A recommendation was also made to consider sending letters out to parents in different languages to elicit more effective home-support for 16-18 year old students. (Barnfield College, 2004).

### **7.1.4 PROMOTING ACHIEVEMENT**

Barnfield College is also proactive in promoting the achievements of its students. For example, via its website there is information devoted to 'Student Achievement', detailing the achievements and recognising the hard work of individuals and groups of students that have done particularly well.

## **7.2 STUDENT & STAFF FEEDBACK: ISSUES AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT**

In the course of research for this project, through both literature searches and analysis of performance and good practice at other general further education colleges, discussed above, a range of issues potentially affecting achievement emerged. These are outlined within this section in the context of qualitative research conducted among staff and students at City College Norwich. Notably students of all ethnicities raised similar issues; these were not ethnic group specific.

### **7.2.1 RACISM AND INCLUSIVITY**

Reference to the literature indicates that racism continues to be an issue inhibiting learning among BME students, thus it was important to investigate whether or not this was an issue at City College Norwich. Interestingly institutional racism was recognised to exist in at least two of the communities served by colleges researched, although in both instances ethnic minority students considered the colleges within these communities to be welcoming and inclusive.

City College Norwich is similarly found inclusive by its students. In fact all students surveyed commented very positively on the inclusiveness of the college. There was not one negative response to this point.

The number of formal complaints relating to racist incidents is a tangible measure of the inclusivity of the College. Since September 2003 only three racist incidents have been officially recorded at City College Norwich, one of which was reported via the Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council. The first two of these incidents concerned ethnic minority students, one of which was reported in December 2003, the other in March 2004. The introduction of a Harassment Incident Reporting procedure enables

senior management to monitor any outstanding incidents, which remain at an encouragingly low level.

### 7.2.2 INTEGRATION

Ethnic minority learners can feel isolated in learning environments such as City College Norwich where the student population is mainly white. However, in some instances students make more effort to integrate when they are the only, or one of a small minority, be it a minority in terms of ethnicity, gender or age. Staff at City College Norwich were asked their opinions about this and responses were mixed. In classes where learners were all ESOL students it was not felt to be an issue:

*"[ESOL students] integrate excellently with one another, and take advantage of this as a support and social network."*

- Tutor, City College Norwich

However, tutors in other curriculum areas were aware of potential or existing problems. For example:

*"I support a [Level 3] ethnic minority female student with essay writing, note taking and study skills. In my experience this student has not integrated well, and this of course has had a huge impact on her learning and development. Interaction with peers is a huge part of learning in further education...."*

- Tutor, City College Norwich

Yet two students commented:

*"I think tutors respond better and more politely to older students. Lecturers are good at including international students and often the rest of us feel ignored!"*

- Male, White British student

*"There is one older, black student on our course. He isn't treated differently. He likes to work on his own, but if he needs help he'll ask us or he'll ask the tutor."*

- Male, White British student

Opinion was divided on the impact of age differences in the classroom environment. Again, the Level/learning context is significant, as is a sensitivity towards the specific needs of these students at both ends of the age spectrum:

*"Age can be an issue for all students, particularly at the Level 1 and Level 2 stage. It appears much less of a problem at Level 3."*

- Tutor, City College Norwich

*"My students can range from [age] 20-60 in one group and I have never noticed anything other than mutual support. Obviously 'cliques' form, but this has not seemed an issue in terms of age difference."*

- Tutor, City College Norwich

*"I think age is more a factor than [gender] in this context. I have had two or three older students [aged 40-50] who felt awkward/stupid due to being amongst younger people who were often higher achievers."*

-Tutor, City College Norwich

*"[Younger] Asylum Seekers and refugees may have [more] difficulties or be disadvantaged in the classroom – [particularly] unaccompanied under 18s who need support."*

- Tutor, City College Norwich

Interestingly an individual from a group of more mature students surveyed said that she learnt best by being with peers of a similar age.

### **7.2.3 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

On the whole students indicated that they found practical work, or a combination of practical ('interactive') and theory work, preferably in small groups, the best way to learn:

*"[I find] one-to-one with the teacher and having the opportunity to give them feedback [the best way to learn]. I have had the chance to do this because there are only 5 in our class. The lecturer has been able to tailor their teaching to the group."*

- Female, BME, non-British student

*"One-to-one and in groups [is good] ... covering theory and practice."*

- Female, BME, non-British student

*"Small group discussion with lecturer [works for me]. Visual input is good ... practical too."*

- Female, White British student

*"[I like] watching things, like on TV, and I (get a lot out of) demonstrations."*

- Male, White British student

*"I can't learn from books, I'm better when I'm practising or doing things with my hands."*

- Male, White British student

*"We have whole days of theory, and that's boring. I don't learn much like that."*

- Male, White British student

*"Sometimes there are too many people in a group. When we started there were 17 (there are 10 now) and just one tutor; it was impossible to get (his) attention."*

- Male, White British student

On the subject of learning styles, in findings from Lenford White's research for NIACE on supporting BME students in FE colleges (White, Lenford, unpublished) comment was made:

*"Most colleges...use questionnaires to assess student-learning styles ... there was some concern expressed over these tests and it did seem to be ambitious to expect all learners to be aware of their own learning styles, particularly as many adults are not aware of how they learn."*

Both staff and students noted that lack of a common meeting area for students in general was detrimental to integration. Other students were dissatisfied with the leisure facilities. Lack of Internet access in the college at the weekend after the library was

closed was also cited as a negative factor and one likely to affect international and ethnic minority students who may be far away from family/friends and possibly resident in on-site college accommodation or living alone within Norwich. Students very commonly said:

*“Somewhere to go at lunchtime. Everything is locked at lunchtime and we tend to sit under the stairs!”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“There is nowhere nice to go and eat like a common room.”*

*- Female, White British student*

*“We need more room for breaks ... a common room”.*

*- Female, White British student*

*“A football pitch would be good.”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“Broadly it’s been OK. I’m not satisfied with the sports or other leisure facilities. UEA is much better.”*

*- Female, BME, non-British student*

#### **7.2.4 MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT**

There is a clear, and positive, relationship between motivation and expectations of achievement and actual achievement.

The bulk of ethnic minority students are highly motivated. This point was reinforced by comments from the City College Norwich students and staff, as well by staff at other regional FE colleges visited in the course of research for this project:

*“I have found that the students in my groups from Chinese or Middle Eastern backgrounds are more motivated than many White British students.”*

*- Tutor, City College Norwich*

*“Most minority ethnic students are highly motivated. However, from experience black males tend to have less motivation, although this (observation) is based on experience of relatively few Black African students who did not complete their courses.”*

*- Head of Student Support Services, East Anglian FE college*

*“I was previously working in accounting but couldn’t get a promotion with the qualifications I had. To get on I needed a degree.”*

*- Female, BME, non-British student*

*“You learn more at College. You are doing something you want to do. Not like at school.”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“I hope to get some formal qualifications – hopefully a degree in the end, and I’m hoping to get my Duke of Edinburgh awards before I get too old!”*

*- Male, BME, non-British student*

Indeed, the reason why some students were so well-motivated was because they were clear about their plans after college and how their studies were going to fulfil those plans. In answer to the question, 'what motivates you to do well?' they said:

*"To fulfil my ambition of working on a cruise ship"*  
- Female, White British student

*"To get a good job at the end of it."*  
- Female, White British student

*"To get the grades that I want."*  
- Male, BME, non-British student

Encouragement from friends, family and or tutors was also posited as enabling self-motivation to study and do well. Interesting responses from students were obtained on the subject of 'achievement'. For example, many students reported that they monitored their own achievement by measuring their attainment against that of their peers, but also as a measure of their progress over time:

*"I look at what/how well other people are doing. With our oral presentation – I judged myself by what other people got [e.g. As, Bs]. I judge myself against my own targets – I know I must get B grades this year."*  
- Male, White British student

*"[I measure my achievement by] looking at what I've done so far. I write down what I need to do and then tick it off."*  
- Female, White British student

*"[I measure myself] by my task sheet, but I compare myself against my mates."*  
- Male, White British student

*"I will judge myself on my qualifications at the end of the course. I do also look at the results of my class mates."*  
- Male, BME, non-British student

*"[I measure my achievement] with grades and comparison of grades in the past. I work towards a slow, steady improvement over time. I have my own pace."*  
- Male, White British student

Students reported that achievement was measured on their course mainly by whether they had passed or failed assessments, either coursework or exams based. On the whole they did not think achievement could be measured in any other way, however:

*"There is a recognised standard but lecturers very much try to look at 'progress'. Some students are verbal, some quiet but it would be good if a percentage of marks were drawn from class participation."*  
- Female, White British student

*"What we do in class could be measured. At my previous school reports were also based on class participation and class behaviour was noted. A mixture of both participation and written results would be fairer."*  
- Male, White British student

Although the benefit of class participation as a measure of achievement was raised by a handful of learners, there were exceptions to this:

*“I don’t think you could measure students’ participation in class – some people would just talk nonsense. I do learn from the comments some people make in class though.”*

*- Male, BME, non-British student*

## **7.2.5 SUPPORTED LEARNING AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

In response to the question ‘Are there some students who are less, or more keen to ask for help?’ several staff members at City College Norwich commented on the reluctance among some BME students in particular to seek out additional help with their studies. Interestingly, tutors in different curriculum areas ascribed reluctance to ask for help to gender as well as ethnicity, with some citing males and others citing females as the least likely to seek out help when they need it.

*“In my experience, non-European women are the quietest and are not always used to the modern-day teaching of learner centred-ness and independent learning. They tend to check less for understanding and look more towards the teacher as a leader, not a facilitator. This may affect achievement rate more than retention.”*

*-Tutor, City College Norwich*

*“I found that one male Middle Eastern student was very loath to ask for help initially, but this changed once he had ‘tried’ Learning Support.”*

*-Tutor, City College Norwich*

*“Many students are resistant to getting help outside of the classroom, but those who do go to Learning Support appreciate the help and make the most of it. Probably females are better at asking for help than males.”*

*-Tutor, City College Norwich*

This commentary reinforces the findings cited in Section 7.1.2 (Support and Communication) where colleges exhibiting good practice noted the need to be proactive in offering support to BME students whose problems may be learning-related, or associated with their social/economic position.

At City College, problems have been identified in relation to the effective support of students who have not been attending college. For example, two student liaison advisers stated:

*“Lots of tutors don’t ask me to do anything until it’s too late, when students have been absent for weeks. Follow up needs to be quick.”*

*“Students with different personal and course tutors get lost in the system if they don’t attend. If a student has the same personal and course tutor then their tutor is more likely to pick up absentees. Course tutors are supposed to inform a student’s personal tutor and/or me if a student hasn’t been attending. This doesn’t always happen. Students don’t always turn up for tutorials, even though these are compulsory, and there can be a breakdown of communication between the personal and course tutors if a student has not been attending.”*

As regards the college's absence policy, which is available on the intranet, some tutors are not always aware of how best to support students that are not attending college:

*"Although it [the policy] is very good, I think tutors find it too complicated. They read it and then forget it".*

Furthermore, attendance monitoring across the college is not achieved in a standardised format. This is partly due to the fact that different courses and individuals (depending on whether they are receiving certain government funding) have varying attendance requirements, but even so, it seems that a more common approach to monitoring attendance would be beneficial.

The use of on-line registers is being piloted in The Academy but this is proving to be problematic. Registers are not always being kept up-to-date and there is a lack of crossover between the registers and records of students who call in their absence.

Research is planned to be undertaken this summer in The Academy to explore the reasons for student withdrawals and absenteeism. Possible influential factors to be examined will include late student induction, social background (by postcode), travelling distance to college and entry level qualifications. It will be interesting to see the results of this research and to feed the findings positively into raising future attendance levels.

One area where this could be achieved more easily concerns the recording of student contact details. There is a worrying number of students whose correct e-mail address and/or contact telephone number, if at all, is not recorded in the student record system, 'Education Business System' (EBS). As a result, student liaison advisers can find it extremely difficult to contact students who are absent without reason. This clearly needs to be addressed in the future.

CCN students themselves recognise the importance of effective support throughout their studies. By far the most common answer to the question: 'what is the most important issue for you in helping you to learn and progress further in your studies' was 'tutor support and encouragement'. For example, students said:

*"Tutor support [is the most important]. In one of my lessons the tutor says 'you've got the book' [i.e. get on with it]. In other lessons the tutors will talk you through the topic and help you in that way. Some tutors give more support than others."*

*- Male, White British student*

*"Your tutor is the most important thing."*

*- Male, White British student*

Only a few students expressed dissatisfaction with a tutor, for example:

*"At my old school, each week we had two one-hour sessions with our tutor. Here tutorials only last about five minutes. It's a bit of a joke – we meet with our Personal Tutor every week and they don't really know what they should be going through with you. We should have longer sessions, and we should have meetings with course tutors about our work. I do go to the Learning Support Centre to get my essays proof-read – they are very helpful but it would be good to talk to someone who knows your subject."*

*-Male, White British student*

This perhaps represents an isolated example. All other students surveyed spoke of tutorial sessions that were put to effective use in supporting their learning programmes. The only other negative comments were:

*"We don't seem to learn from one tutor."  
- Female, White British student*

Her companion who also had the same tutor commented:

*"There is one class I'm not particularly keen on. The teacher is quite rude and only goes over things once. You never know if she is going to be in a funny mood that day or not."  
- Female, White British student*

It should be noted that there were a number of students who commented very favourably on their tutors:

*"The tutors here are quite good."  
- Female, White British student*

*"I'm dyslexic, so I struggle to read from the board. The tutors are very helpful, and they give me class notes. I write/take notes on my lap-top and I check them against the class-notes afterwards. In my electronic classes we have self-taught, computer-based tutorials, in small groups. You can ask the technician for help, and I get on OK with that."  
- Male, White British student*

*"I was one of the slowest workers at school. Here they help you, but you do have to put the work in yourself as well."  
-Male, White British student*

### **7.2.5 PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

Nearly all students cited that they were well supported and encouraged by their parents to continue studying and that a 'good education' was important to them:

*"Education is important where I come from. It is regarded as the norm ... that once you have the opportunity you should take it. It is an investment in yourself."  
-Female, BME, non-British student*

*"Yes, it's important [that I do well] – or they [his parents] will think I've failed."  
-Male, White British student*

In many cases, the decision to enter Further or Higher Education had been left to the student, with the parents fully supporting whatever the individual chose to do:

*"It is [important], although they say it's my decision where I go. They knew I wanted to go into the RAF, and I could have done my A Levels when in the RAF. I will finish them at a local college."  
- Male, White British student*

One member of staff commented:

*“Even if we give them [students] all the support at college, if they don’t have parental support, they struggle.”*

*- Student liaison adviser*

Indeed, the importance of parental support in positively influencing educational achievement has been highlighted already (Section 4.6.4). It was interesting to hear the views of two members of staff concerning ‘barriers’ to communication with the parents of some students at City College. Staff are prevented from communicating with a student’s parents if s/he has reached the age of 18. They noted that other colleges asked their students to sign a declaration allowing staff members to communicate with their parents should the need arise. It was pointed out that the supposed reason why this was not done at City College was because students were being treated as adults. However both members of staff found that this policy did not work in their favour, or indeed that of the student:

*“It would make like so much easier if we could talk to parents.”*

*-Student liaison adviser*

*“Parents often phone up worried about their child but we can’t talk to them [because s/he is over the age of 18].”*

*-Student liaison adviser*

#### **7.2.6 BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

Unsurprisingly, some students raised the issue of financial strain being a barrier to learning:

*“Finances are a difficulty ... although there is a bursary I still need a loan. Students have large debts.”*

*- Female, White British student*

Others also pointed out the strain that tutors in general were under and that they required greater administrative support so that they could spend more time preparing for classes:

*“There should be less pressure for teachers...They need more support... They just get the lecture done and can’t personalise it because they have no preparation time. They should also ask students more about the facilities they need to aid learning. We have been given some audio-visual equipment but it doesn’t get used. Half the lecturers don’t know how to use it. They spent thousands of pounds on it and yet there aren’t enough books in the library.”*

*- Female, BME, non-British student*

*“Teachers have too much paperwork and not enough preparation time.”*

*- Female, BME, non-British student*

Indeed, a lack of equipment and disorganisation were other factors that students cited as frustrating them, and in some cases, preventing them from progressing as quickly as they would have liked.

As regards disorganisation they commented:

*“The Personal and Key Skills tutor is good....but we did start a bit late [into the year] as there wasn’t a tutor for us. We just had very long lunch breaks.”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“The course only started this year. Organising my placement in art specialism has been a problem. Tutors have been very supportive though.”*

*- Female, White British student*

*“It’s just a shame that they’re [the college] not a bit more organised. At the beginning we had lots of classroom and timetable changes.”*

*- Female, White British student*

As regards a lack of equipment they pointed out:

*“Generally I haven’t had any problems with teaching. Some computers are a bit slow for ‘Flash’, and [the college] could do with more computers for general use. Maybe students should have a [specified] time to long-on, for example one hour at a time per student on the library machines. Some computers should just be designated for just work, not using the Internet.”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“[We need] more tools. There are only two ratchets between about ten of us and we have to wait in turn to use it.”*

*- Male, White British student*

One student studying for a qualification in Beauty Therapy also suggested that:

*“I think they could advertise for beauty therapy clients to come in more. It’s hard to get clients.”*

*- Female, White British student*

It should be noted that students were generally very positive about the college. One example would be:

*“Yes [I enjoy being at college]. There’s a good atmosphere here. I like the student bar! I like the hours and organising my own time – I have time to do leisure things. Here you are on first name terms [with tutors]. You can get help from lots of different lecturers. I can get a second opinion on my work [when I need it].”*

*- Male, White British student*

## **7.2.7 STUDENT TREATMENT BY TUTORS**

Most students believed that tutors treated all students in the same way:

*“Tutors are mostly very fair. Ability is the most important thing.”*

*- Male, BME, non-British student*

There were exceptions to this however:

*“No. They favour the good ones.”*

*- Male, White British student*

*“The tutor treats the ONE girl on our course differently to the boys. She likes the attention.”*

*- Male, White British student*

Encouragingly, with one exception, students did not raise ethnicity as a reason for different treatment by teaching staff, either in their past or current experience. This is a very positive finding for the college. The one student who did bring up the subject of ethnicity said:

*“Lecturers give more attention to some English students. Asian students get less attention. Age and gender aren’t an issue.”*

*- Male, BME, non-British student*

It should be noted however that this student was living in City College accommodation and using college facilities but was affiliated to another University and was reporting of his experiences in education in London.

### **7.3 VALUING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND ENCOURAGING ACHIEVEMENT: INITIATIVES, SCHEMES, AND ORGANISATIONS IN NORFOLK AND AT CCN**

A range of initiatives, schemes and organisations exist in Norfolk and at CCN aimed at supporting the needs of BME groups and/or with the objective of raising student achievement. ‘A broad range of strategies for liaising with minority organisations’ has been highlighted by Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003) and others (e.g. Education Commission, 2004) as important with regards this. A sample of organisations and programmes is listed below as a point of reference.

#### **7.3.1 NORFOLK**

- Caribbean and African Network (CAN).
- Norfolk African Community Association (NACA).
- East of England Black and Minority Ethnic Network (MENTER).
- The BMET project: Promoting Black and minority ethnic trainers and consultants.
- ‘Norfolk Roots of the Future’ exhibition and ongoing project, produced by the Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council (NNREC) to celebrate the ‘achievements of the black communities in the County’ (BBC, 2005).
- Black History Month activities (held annually in Norfolk, October-November).
- Norwich and Norfolk Asian Society.
- Norwich International Youth Project (supporting the needs of young asylum seekers, refugees and other foreign nationals).
- The Irish Society of East Anglia.
- The Norfolk Philippine Support Group.
- Norwich Black and Asian Women’s Network.
- West Norfolk and District Chinese Association.
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Norfolk County Council (Education), working in partnership with schools and parents to:

*“Enable mainstream services to meet the needs of our diverse community, raise the achievement of minority ethnic children, including refugees and asylum-seekers and prepare all young people to participate fully in the culturally diverse society in which we live.” NCC (2005e)*

- English Language Support Service, Norfolk County Council (Education) which ‘offers support for pupils for whom English is an additional language including refugees and asylum seekers prioritising those pupils at most risk of under-achievement’ (NCC, 2005f).
- Norfolk Traveller Education Services, Norfolk County Council (Education), providing guidance on school admissions and attendance for Traveller Children.
- ‘Achieving Excellence 2003-2007’ a document relating to the aims of Norfolk’s Education Service in raising attainment in education. Part of their vision statement for Norfolk LEA is to ‘promote high standards of achievement for all learners’ (NCC, 2005g).
- The Norfolk County Council (Education) Race Equality and Achievement Group (REAG) whose purpose it is to:

*“Ensure co-ordination and planning between branches and services in relation to children from minority ethnic groups to ensure equality of opportunity and raised achievement.” (NCC, 2005h).*

### 7.3.2 CCN:

- Mentoring schemes
  - The ‘Study Buddy scheme’ in which mentors are available to ethnic minority students.
  - ‘M8’ Peer Mentoring scheme open to all students.
  - ‘FE to HE’ aimed at students in the transition from FE to HE.
- Learner Services, a drop-in centre which can also be contacted via telephone and e-mail and is open to all students at the college, aimed at supporting their individual needs.
- Counselling Services and the Inclusive Learning Support Team.
- Enrichment programme, offering extra-curricular activities, such as film evenings, organised debates, careers advice sessions, presentations by external speakers/organisations, international student lunches, celebrations in aid of Black History Month and events to recognise Refugee Week.
- ‘The Extra’, a college publication for students regarding the Enrichment programme.
- International Student Adviser supporting the needs of foreign national students.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

### **8.1 DIFFERENCES IN RETENTION AND ACHIEVEMENT: WHITE VS. ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS. ISSUES OF GENDER, STATISTICAL BIAS AND NON-DISCLOSURE.**

One of the primary aims of this project was to establish whether there are differences in retention and achievement rates between white and ethnic minority FE students at City College Norwich do exist, before going on to explore the reasons for any differences. Reference to section 6 of this report which presents and analyses student performance data reveals that Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British and Chinese students are achieving far lower rates of success in completion and achievement of their learning aims than their white counterparts. Gender is a significant factor influencing rates of success and across the ethnic spectrum female learners in FE tend to outperform males. Asian/Asian British males, for example, achieved just 35% of learning aims in 2003/04, well below the 66% rate for all students. Overall, however,

counter to this trend Black/Black British females at City College Norwich also exhibit poor success rates (52%).

Difference in retention levels between genders and between All White and All Black CCN students was not significant in 2002-03. Nonetheless, 7% fewer learners who did not declare their ethnicity failed to complete their learning aims. A more detailed breakdown of trends in 2003-04, however, indicated that Asian/British Asian learners were 7% less likely to complete than White British learners at 70% vs. 77%. Retention rates for Black/Black British and Chinese learners were also below the rate for 'All' learners, being 5% lower.

Differential rates of achievement between BME learners and white learners can also partially be attributed to statistical issues. Notably, this relates to the small size of the BME population in East Anglia, and specifically Norfolk, which is the major catchment area for City College Norwich. This is reflected in numbers of BME learners within the college. For example, while concern may be expressed due to poor performance rates for Chinese students (declining five percentage points between 2002/03 and 2003/04) the fact that the Chinese student cohort accounted for just 0.3% of all learners (2003/04) means that analysis cannot be regarded as statistically robust.

Non-disclosure of students' ethnicity, which in 2003/04 accounted for 5.5% of all admissions, similarly has a negative influence on the reliability of monitored performance rates. Previous research conducted by Willemstyn (2005) and Foster & Mazey (2005) at City College Norwich identified the issue of non-disclosure, and recommendations made in Foster & Mazey (2005) are being implemented to help address this problem.

An area for further investigation, related to apparent differences in achievement by FE learners at City College Norwich by ethnicity, is how far this pattern has already been established prior to entry into post-16 education. Reference to literature indicates that in many instances BME learners will already be educationally disadvantaged by the time they reach Year 12, and will thus have to work far harder than White British learners in order to achieve equal results (Section 4.5.2). Although in terms of age, 19+ FE learners tend to perform better than 16-18 year olds at CCN, differences in performance between All Black learners by age are not statistically significant - and results remain below those achieved by All White learners.

Related to the ability to offer equality of opportunity to succeed in FE, attention should be drawn to the question of measuring achievement and what is measured. Different ways of measuring success, in terms of qualification success, is currently an issue under development by the LSC for use in both FE and work-based learning. Among other initiatives the LSC are proposing are the reporting of success separately for long and very short courses and they will be examining relationships between success rates and socio-economic factors. Additionally, for some categories of learner 'Achievement Tracker' reports will be introduced which focus on both 'Value Added' and 'Distance Travelled' enabling progress as a measure of achievement to be recorded.

## **8.2. POSSIBLE REASONS FOR UNDERACHIEVEMENT AMONGST SOME GROUPS**

It is very hard to define why certain minority ethnic groups at the college are achieving less well than others. As already noted, there are a number of caveats to be aware of, for example the 5.5% of students that are not disclosing their ethnicity, the low numbers of ethnic minority students at the college and the differential achievement by

gender are all issues worth bearing in mind. It is possible that for some groups of students the pattern of educational disadvantage is already set before they enter further education but the true extent of this cannot be gauged without further research.

It is also possible that certain students are not being supported as effectively as possible. By no means is this statement meant to devalue the hard work and efforts of a committed team of student support staff and tutors at the college. What appears to be an issue *in some cases* is a breakdown of communication between relevant members of staff as regards students potentially at risk of withdrawing from their course or struggling with their studies because they have not been attending classes. This clearly needs to be addressed so that not only is there is a standardised procedure in place as regards attendance monitoring, but this policy is adhered to by all schools in the college. A review of student awareness of other student support mechanisms may also be beneficial. One student commented:

*"It would be really good for me if someone would check my coursework for English language [e.g. grammar, spelling] before I handed it in. This would be a good system for college to set up for students that want that sort of help."*

*- Male, BME, non-British student*

Such support is already available through Learner Services but clearly this student was not aware of this.

Given the very low number of racist incidents reported in the last 18 months, racial harassment appears not to be an issue at the college, although it should be noted that generally in society the extent of racist abuse can sometimes be under-reported. Although it can be very difficult to assess the extent of subconscious racism amongst staff, the responses of students polled suggest that is not an issue at City College. All students were very positive about the inclusiveness of the college and not one student studying at the college that was surveyed raised ethnic discrimination to be a problem. Thus, on a very encouraging note, it would seem that lower achievement by certain ethnic groups cannot be attributed to institutional racism.

The provision of extra-curricular activities through the 'Enrichment Programme' at City College suggests that student social and integration needs are being met. However, there may be room to expand or improve the current situation as regards some sports clubs and a common area in which students can meet during their spare time.

*"It's boring sometimes. There aren't many extra-curricular clubs such as for sports. They are all in the evening when classes are over and students go home."*

*- Male, BME British student*

This would be especially beneficial to students living on site, a good proportion of who are likely to be foreign nationals.

A lack of resources in some areas may also be inhibiting student progress to some degree, although this is not suspected to be a widespread problem. Further administrative support for teaching staff may demonstrate that tutors in some instances are able to concentrate more fully on teaching. As regards students, ensuring that there is sufficient and correct equipment, such as tools and books and the plenty of opportunity for vocational students to apply practical skills would be beneficial.

### **8.3 EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE: RAISING ACHIEVEMENT**

Best practice in the literature and from communication with students and staff at CCN and other colleges suggests that the following points impact positively on raising educational attainment:

- Effective attendance monitoring.
- Student mentoring schemes.
- Successful communication and liaison with parents, where appropriate, and minority ethnic organisations.
- Staff training, for example in relation to highlighting and breaking down subconscious stereotyping with respect to ethnicity.
- A culture of high expectations which includes strong supportive measures at home and in school.
- Related to the above point: a solid support network for all students and particularly for those at most risk of achieving less well, (e.g. ESOL students, those with learning difficulties *etc*). Prompt, clear and consistent communication amongst staff, students and parents, where necessary, is key to maintaining the highest level support for all students.
- An anti-racist policy that is properly implemented and communicated to all staff.
- Positive role models within and outside the educational establishment.
- Good relationships between tutors and students based on mutual respect and trust.
- An inclusive approach to learning that actively welcomes all students, both within the classroom and generally in the college. This includes the teaching of a curriculum that reflects and incorporates the diversity of the student and local population.
- Following on from the above point: an awareness of the differing cultural and religious needs or sensitivities of students from various ethnic backgrounds and a willingness to adapt teaching and support to meet these needs on an individual basis.
- Recognising student achievement on an individual or group level. This can relate to highly achieving students as well as those who may, on comparison, show lower attainment but greater progress.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations reported here take the form of two key areas to be addressed. These relate to certain systems at City College that need to be changed, developed or implemented in line with best practice, as well as the need for further research into issues of importance raised during this research.

### **9.1 ADVISABLE PRACTICES FOR CONSIDERATION AT CCN**

- The provision of future college statistics whereby 'White Irish' and 'White Other' groups are not aggregated into a general 'White category' that includes 'White British' but are counted as minority ethnic groups in their own right.
- If deemed appropriate, the inclusion in future ethnic monitoring exercises of categories for 'Gypsy/Roma' and 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' to aid in assessing both the numbers of individuals in these categories, their achievement and retention and their specific needs.
- The continuation of mentoring schemes, particularly the 'Study Buddy scheme' which at present is threatened by a lack of funding. Mentors and mentored Study Buddy students have reported very positively on the value

of the scheme, particularly in improving progress made in English fluency for ESOL students and in integration into the college community.

- A commitment to collect the full contact details, including e-mail address and mobile telephone number if available, for ALL students during the enrolment process to facilitate the work of student liaison advisers and other members of staff in supporting and monitoring the progress of students.
- Effective attendance monitoring for ALL students throughout the college which is managed and implemented in a standardised format. The results of research in The Academy into reasons for student withdrawal and absenteeism should be considered when the findings are made available as they will feed positively into realising this recommendation.
- Development of the means by which recognition is made of student achievement and progress. This is already being achieved in many ways, for example through the media and at the Royal Norfolk Show where some students will be displaying the skills they have acquired during their time at college. However, raising the profile of relevant students or groups of students could also be made via the college website, as practised at Barnfield College.
- Continued support for the Enrichment Programme (as well as the Enrichment Officer) which is a resource of great benefit in the integration of students across the college and one that fosters a sense of belonging to and ownership of the college community.
- A review of the policy that precludes members of staff communicating with parents of students that are over the age of 18. Offering the most effective support to students needs to be weighed carefully with the desire to treat all students as adults so that what is in the best interests of the students can be achieved. It would be possible to introduce a system in which a student could sign a declaration allowing the college to contact his/her parents. This would not necessarily have to be made compulsory but could be decided upon by each individual student.
- The adoption, throughout the college, of a regular course review process, taking place midway through each course or each term. This recommendation is born out of a discussion with a group of students who felt very strongly about the positive impact this would have if their feedback on courses and the college could be regular and acted upon:

*“Evaluation forms at the end of the year are a paper exercise. It needs to be more meaningful.”*

*- Female, White British student*

Further contact and liaison with colleges demonstrating examples of best practice. For example, Barnfield College had identified the need to implement policies for:

- Increased parental involvement involving the provision of letters to parents in different languages to elicit more effective home support.
- The structuring of some teaching delivery groups according to student needs (e.g. female only groups to attract Moslem women).
- Giving consideration to major religious festivals when planning key course deadlines (Barnfield College, 2004).

Learning of the progress and effectiveness of these changes will be of interest to City College.

## 9.2 FURTHER RESEARCH ISSUES

- Mapping and analysis of achievement in relation to social indicators such as social deprivation is vital to assess the impact of social class on the achievement of FE learners at the college and if this is an area that requires addressing through further support for certain groups of students.
- Further work is needed to evaluate the achievement and retention of specific ethnic groups, such as Gypsy Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage who represent one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Norfolk but at present whose numbers in the college, or their needs as a group, are not monitored by CCN. Other groups of relevance here are ESOL students whose numbers are expected to rise dramatically in the short and medium term. As a growing cohort of students, evidently with specific language support needs, the importance of assessing issues of their retention and achievement would be realised by a separate research study.
- To determine the impact of students' learning experiences and attainment prior to college on their achievement in FE, a review of entry level qualifications and Key Stage test scores by ethnic group and gender needs to be undertaken. This would resolve whether certain groups are already educationally disadvantaged on entry to City College and where support would need to be focused. The need for further research on the issue of student qualifications on entry, as well as on student progression and aspirations and performance trends by gender has been identified by Barnfield College (Barnfield College, 2004). City College needs to follow up the progress of this research.
- An evaluation of the nature and extent of links the college has with minority ethnic organisations could highlight any possible areas for improved liaison between these organisations and City College which would feed positively into increasing diversity awareness and valuing the various cultures of British and international students.
- An extensive review of student opinion on their needs as regards further equipment, books and other resources would bring to light where the college needs to concentrate future funding in this area. Associated research could investigate learners' awareness and understanding of support mechanisms available at City College Norwich, with a view to recommending action to raise the profile of such support services if there are groups of learners who appear unaware of what is on offer and/or unwilling to avail themselves of these services.

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## APPENDICES

### **APPENDIX 1**

**Questions put to staff at City College Norwich, and used as the basis of interviews with support staff at the two general further education colleges visited.**

“We are running a project in the Research Centre examining the achievement of FE students by ethnic group and gender. Interesting trends are emerging from the data, eg certain ethnic groups are achieving less well than others, and in some ethnic groups males are achieving less well than females, and this trend is reversed in other groups.

Drawing on your teaching/support experience, we would really welcome your thoughts on issues of retention and achievement with respect to particular groups of students.”

Key questions we would we welcome your response to are:

- 1) In your experience, are students from particular ethnic minority groups more likely to withdraw from College than students from other ethnic groups? If so, which groups, and why might this be?
- 2) What support are you able to offer students who may be having difficulties with the course?
- 3) Are there some students who appear either less, or more keen to ask for help when they need it? Who are they likely to be – and is gender or ethnicity an issue here?
- 4) How well do ethnic minority/international students integrate in the classroom?
- 5) Do you feel integration and/or isolation is an issue in learning? And in your experience is a male student in a class of females (or visa versa), or a single ethnic minority/international student in a class of White British students likely to achieve better or worse results than his/her majority counterparts.
- 6) Similarly, in your experience, can age be a barrier to learning in the classroom environment if the majority of learners are significantly younger than the ethnic minority/international student?

“In anticipation of your response, thank you for your help with this project,  
Claire Willemstyn and Harriet Foster.”

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **A range of questions asked of students during focus group and interview sessions.**

#### *Entering FE: reasons, expectations and experiences*

- What subject(s) are you studying?
- What made you decide to come to college?
- Do you enjoy studying / being at college?
- What do you enjoy most about college?
- What do you enjoy least about college?
- What did you expect to get out of college (and have you)?
- Has your time at college lived up to your expectations?
- How well do you think you will do in your course?
- What are your plans after college?
- Is it / was it important to your parents that you receive a 'good education'?
- Do/did your parents expect you to carry on with studying? Did they encourage you and/or support your decision to come to college?

#### *Enabling learning*

- How do you think you learn best? (e.g. one-to-one, small group work, lecture-based etc.)
- What motivates you to do well?
- Are there any improvements that could be made at the college (generally and on your course) to help your learning progress further?
- What is the most important issue for you in helping you to learn and progress in your studies? (e.g. tutor support/good teaching, books/other resources, recreational facilities)
- Do you feel that there are any barriers to learning at the college?
- In your experience, do you think tutors (and previous teachers) respond to all students in the same way? (e.g. irrespective of a person's age, gender, disability, ethnicity etc.)
- Do you think the college is an inclusive place?
- Has there been anything at school/college that has prevented/prevents you from achieving your potential?
- Distinguishing between personal tutorials and course tutorials – what do you do in these? Do you think they could be better designed to support your learning/personal development at CCN? If so, how?

#### *Measuring achievement*

- How do you measure your own achievement?
- How is 'achievement' measured on your course?
- Do you think achievement could be measured in other ways? If so, what should be measured?