# Educational outcomes and disadvantage gaps in Rochdale

July 2022

EDUCATION POLICY INSTITUTE

EPI local authority analysis and evaluations

KPMG

# About the Education Policy Institute

The Education Policy Institute is an independent, impartial and evidence-based research institute that promotes high quality education outcomes, regardless of social background. We achieve this through data-led analysis, innovative research and high-profile events.

Education can have a transformative effect on the life chances of young people, enabling them to fulfil their potential, have successful careers, and grasp opportunities. As well as having a positive impact on the individual, good quality education and child wellbeing also promotes economic productivity and a cohesive society.

Through our research, we provide insight, commentary, and a constructive critique of education policy in England – shedding light on what is working and where further progress needs to be made. Our research and analysis spans a young person's journey from the early years through to entry to the labour market.

Our core research areas include:

- Benchmarking English Education
- School Performance, Admissions, and Capacity
- Early Years Development
- Social Mobility and Vulnerable Learners
- Accountability, Assessment, and Inspection
- Curriculum and Qualifications
- Teacher Supply and Quality
- Education Funding
- Higher Education, Further Education, and Skills

Our experienced and dedicated team works closely with academics, think tanks, and other research foundations and charities to shape the policy agenda.

This work was produced using statistical data from ONS. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

This report has been commissioned by KPMG.

# About KPMG

KPMG LLP, a UK limited liability partnership, operates from 22 offices across the UK with approximately 15,300 partners and staff. It is a member of a global organisation of independent professional services firms providing Audit, Legal, Tax and Advisory services.

For over 150 years the firm has been supporting businesses to grow, supporting its people to achieve, and supporting its communities to thrive. The firm's heritage is in the UK regions and this informs the place-based approach it takes to targeting areas of greatest need, improving social mobility, and harnessing the power of education to drive opportunity.

Across its communities the firm works collaboratively with charity partners, other businesses, and local government to address challenges and priorities in unique, local contexts. Data driven insights also shape the firm's approach to local provision, and this has meant that 28% of KPMG's community beneficiaries are from UK social mobility cold spots.

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# Foreword

Christine Hewson, Partner and North Region Chair at KPMG

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, regional inequality across the UK continues to be a major concern. The UK needs to be rebalanced, and long-term efforts to level up by supporting, empowering, and connecting people and places can deliver growth and prosperity.

Our Corporate Responsibility strategy is central to our firm's mission: to support the UK in a connected world. We focus on the areas material to us where we believe we can have the most impact – boosting social mobility, tackling disadvantage through our charitable work and taking positive climate action.

We take a place-based approach to target areas where we can have the greatest impact working collaboratively with our charity partners, other businesses and local governments to address the needs that are unique to them.

28% of our community beneficiaries last year were from areas across the UK which have the greatest challenges in terms of social mobility outcomes, our 2022 target is 30%.

Our aim is to pursue opportunities that are priorities for the local area. We use data to determine what interventions are needed and we deploy a multi-agency approach to consult with stakeholders on the ground and corroborate what the data is showing us.

Since 2020 we have had a focus on supporting Rochdale. KPMG is the anchor lead for the Business in the Community Place campaign in Rochdale, working in cross-sector collaboration alongside local stakeholders and other multinational organisations to develop a long-term roadmap to address local inequality.

KPMG commissioned this data report by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) to assess education outcomes and disadvantage gaps in Rochdale, as part of our needs analysis research. The purpose is to help us understand where the greatest challenges lie and where Rochdale is most successful in reducing the attainment gap.

This data will be shared across the collaboration to help inform our strategy in Rochdale, with a focus on Skills and Education, and allow us to tailor our interventions to the needs of the borough.

As someone who has lived local to Rochdale my whole life, I feel very strongly that we have a responsibility as an organisation to provide support to areas like Rochdale, to see how we can support and enhance the valuable work already underway throughout the Borough.

If you have any questions at all about the data or KPMG's place-based work in Rochdale, please contact:

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# Introduction

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has been commissioned by KPMG to help understand how successfully early years providers, schools and further education settings are able to support young people and close the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest in the local authority of Rochdale. Through this report, we set out the current position of the disadvantage gap across multiple phases of education in Rochdale, and how this has changed over the past decade to 2020. We position the Rochdale gap alongside the national average for England, as well as the wider Greater Manchester region (where Rochdale is located), to provide more context on how well Rochdale enables disadvantaged children to achieve.

# Executive Summary

## Early years

**Overall attainment at age 5 is lower in Rochdale than the national average**. In 2019 Reception pupils in Rochdale had an average total point score of 33.2 on the early years foundation stage profile compared to 34.6 nationally (on a scale from 17 to 51). For Greater Manchester as a whole, the average was 33.8.

**Reception pupils in Rochdale are more likely to be disadvantaged than across England nationally** but the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to Greater Manchester**.** The share of pupils aged 5 in Rochdale who were eligible for free school meals was 17.3 per cent in 2019, compared to 14.0 per cent nationally and 17.5 per cent in Greater Manchester.

The **disadvantage gap at age 5 in Rochdale and Greater Manchester has been consistently higher than the national average** but **both Rochdale and Greater Manchester have made good progress in closing this gap**. In 2013 the early years gap was 6.9 months in Rochdale and 6.0 months in Greater Manchester – considerably higher than the national average gap of 4.7 months. However, the difference between these areas and the national average is now small: by 2019, the national average disadvantage gap was 4.6 months, compared with 4.7 months in Rochdale and 4.9 months in Greater Manchester.

## Key stage 2

As with early years, **pupils in Rochdale at the end of primary school have lower attainment than the national average.** In Rochdale the average scaled score in reading and maths at key stage 2 was 102.5 in 2019, below the national average of 103.2 and the wider Greater Manchester average of 103.0. To put these figures in context, the highest scoring local authority was Richmond upon Thames with an average score of 107.9 and the lowest was Hackney with an average score of 100.8.

**Rochdale primary pupils are also more likely to be disadvantaged than the national average but have a similar level of disadvantage to those living in Greater Manchester**. The share of disadvantaged pupils has declined overall in all three areas since 2016 but more markedly in Rochdale. In 2019 the share of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 was 35.3 per cent in Rochdale, 35.1 per cent in Greater Manchester and 30.5 per cent in England, down from 38.1 per cent, 37.1 per cent and 31.6 per cent in 2016.

The **disadvantage gap at the end of primary school is higher in Rochdale than in England**, at 10.0 months compared to 9.3 nationally. Until 2016, the Rochdale gap fluctuated around the national average. However, in 2017 it increased sharply, mirroring an increase in the share of disadvantaged pupils in that year. **Since 2017 the Rochdale gap has been decreasing but is still above the England – and Greater Manchester – average**.

The Greater Manchester disadvantage gap is consistently slightly below the national average, whilst having a higher share of disadvantaged pupils.

Rochdale and Greater Manchester have a similar share of persistently disadvantaged pupils by the end of primary school. These are pupils who have been eligible for free school meals for at least 80 per cent of their school lifetimes. In 2019 the share of persistently disadvantaged pupils was 13.3 per cent in Rochdale and 13.8 per cent in Greater Manchester. This compares to 10.9 per cent nationally. The share of persistently disadvantaged pupils has been declining in all three areas over the period 2011 to 2019 but more markedly in Rochdale.

As with the headline disadvantage gap, **the persistent disadvantage gap at the end of primary school is larger in Rochdale** (12.7 months) **than the national average** (12.1 months). Rochdale was close to the national gap until 2017 when there was a sharp increase. **The persistent disadvantage gap has been decreasing in Rochdale since 2017** and is once again close to, but still above, the national average. The persistent disadvantage gap in Greater Manchester has consistently been slightly below the England average (measuring 11.6 months in 2019).

The success of Greater Manchester in having consistently smaller disadvantage and persistent disadvantage gaps than England as a whole – despite having a more disadvantaged pupil population (which looks close to that of Rochdale) – indicates this could be a useful area for exploring best practice.

### Key stage 4

**Overall GCSE attainment is lower in Rochdale than in England**. The average GCSE grade in English and maths in 2020 was 4.6 in Rochdale compared to 4.9 nationally and 4.8 in the wider Greater Manchester region.

As in early years and key stage 2, **a larger proportion of pupils (31.6 per cent) are disadvantaged at the end of secondary school in Rochdale than in England** (24.1 per cent) and Greater Manchester (29.7 per cent).

However, this is not the case for pupils in long-term poverty. Rochdale and Greater Manchester have both moved from a situation where a greater proportion of their disadvantaged pupils are persistently disadvantaged than is typical nationally to being broadly in line with the England average. This has come about both through a reduction in persistent disadvantage locally and an increase nationally.

Historically **Rochdale's disadvantage gap in GCSE English and maths has been close to the national average and lower than the Greater Manchester gap.** This has also been the case for the persistent disadvantage gap.

However, **in recent years the disadvantage gap in Rochdale has increased** (to 1.32 grades in 2020) **relative to England** (1.24 grades) and **is now close to the Greater Manchester average** (1.34). There

is no evidence that the national gap has substantially changed in 2020 as a result of major changes to the way GCSE grades were awarded due to COVID-19.

**It is a similar picture for the persistent disadvantage gap** which, in Rochdale, has increased from being below the national average in 2018 (1.59 grades compared to 1.63 nationally) to being above it (1.71 compared to 1.60 nationally) and now matches the persistent gap in Greater Manchester.

Although these differences are small, it is the case that the Rochdale disadvantage gap is increasing slightly and is now above, rather than level with, the national disadvantage gap. This means that **Rochdale's disadvantaged pupils are falling slightly further behind their peers nationally at the end of secondary school** and are now **faring similarly to those in Greater Manchester.** These patterns are also mirrored for Rochdale's persistently disadvantaged pupils.

Rochdale ranks 89 out of 149 local authorities based on the size of its GCSE disadvantage gap – with a higher rank indicating a smaller gap. The best performing – based on having the smallest gap or highest rank – is Kensington and Chelsea (with a gap of 0.10 grades). The lowest performing – with the biggest gap or lowest rank – is Knowsley (1.76 grades).

These gaps are partly explained by differing levels of persistent disadvantage across the country and taking this into account can considerably alter the geographic picture. However, when we account for Rochdale's levels of persistent poverty, we find that it still ranks 89 out of 149 local authorities. This means its local demographics are not necessarily driving its relative gap performance – it is broadly doing similarly well once we factor in its local levels of long-term disadvantage.

## 16-19 education

A **slightly higher proportion of 16 and 17 year-olds** in Rochdale (88 per cent) participate in education and training compared to the national and Greater Manchester average (87 and 85 per cent). **Fewer young people in Rochdale are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)** than in Greater Manchester or England**.**

**Upon completion of 16 to 18 study, about twice as many young people from Rochdale then go on to further education** compared to Greater Manchester and England. **Fewer Rochdale students go to higher education or employment.**

Comparing disadvantaged young people in Rochdale with non-disadvantaged young people in Rochdale who have completed 16-18 study, **fewer disadvantaged young people progress to higher education** and more progress to further education. **Disadvantaged young people were twice as likely to fall into the 'unsustained' category**, meaning they had participated in education, an apprenticeship or employment but completed less than six months or were known to be claiming out-of-work benefits at some time during the destination year.

**In Rochdale barely half (51 per cent) of young people achieve level 2 by age 16** – a crucial threshold for further progression – and 78 per cent do so by age 19. In England 60 per cent of young people reach this threshold by 16 and 88 per cent by 19. In Greater Manchester the proportions are 57 per cent by 16 and 86 per cent by 19. The low share of Rochdale's students achieving level 2 by age 16 has failed to improve since 2012 and likely explains some of the differences in progression highlighted above.

About 900 students per year take A levels in Rochdale. Prior to 2020, the average grade of A level students in Rochdale was below, or similar to, the national average. However, in 2020 average A level grades increased in both Rochdale and nationally following widespread grade increases under teacher assessments, though Rochdale has now fallen behind the national average.

Our 16-19 disadvantage gap includes a wider range of qualifications in addition to A levels. **In 2020, disadvantaged students in Rochdale who sat Level 3 qualifications achieved the equivalent of 3.3 A level grades lower than their peers.** The gap in England and Greater Manchester was 3.1 A level grades.

## Next steps

In summary, through our analysis of the characteristics, attainment and disadvantage gaps of learners in Rochdale, we show that in many respects the local challenges appear to be greater than in other parts of the country. This research aims to help policy makers and practitioners to understand the nature and scale of these challenges, but also the opportunities, and to help inform appropriate, evidence-based responses. In taking these findings forward, we highlight the following issues as potentially worth further exploration by KPMG in its next phase of work with Rochdale stakeholders:

- Rochdale has made good progress in closing the early years gap in recent years and by 2019, its gap was slightly smaller than in Greater Manchester and close to the national average. What could be driving that?
- Rochdale experienced a spike in its share of disadvantaged pupils at age 5 in 2017, and a smaller increase among pupils aged 11. Could better free school meal reporting explain these patterns and if so, what led to this and could it be replicated in other areas?
- By age 11, Greater Manchester has similar levels of disadvantage (including levels of persistent disadvantage) as Rochdale but performs better for its poorer pupils, with below-average KS2 gaps. Is there best practice that Greater Manchester can share on supporting primary-aged disadvantaged pupils to achieve?
- Rochdale has a slightly higher participation rate among its 16 to 17year olds in education and training than England as a whole and a lower incidence of young people NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). However, Rochdale performs less well in terms of progression to higher education and into employment. Should policymakers be looking more closely at Greater Manchester's success in supporting disadvantaged students to progress into higher education and employment?
- This may reflect that in Rochdale, young people are less likely to be qualified to level 2 by age 19 than in England or Greater Manchester, but virtually all of this gap has already opened up by age 16. This highlights the importance of earlier interventions during key stage 4 (and even younger ages) in driving post-16 outcomes.

# Data and Methodology

In this report, we set out the disadvantage gap in Rochdale from early years to post-16 education, and consider how this has gap changed over the past decade. We position the Rochdale gap alongside the average for England as a whole, as well as the wider Greater Manchester city region.

2020 was an exceptional year in education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A national lockdown and restrictions to in-person teaching led to assessments being cancelled in 2020 for early years and key stage 2, and the cancellation of exams for GCSEs, A levels and other post-16 qualifications. Instead, the higher of students' grades predicted by an algorithm or assessed by their teachers determined final grades for these qualifications. Under this approach of 'centre assessed grades' (CAGs), students' grades were consequently much higher than in previous years.

For early years (end of Reception year) and key stage 2 (KS2, end of primary school), the cancellations of assessments in 2020 means we are unable to estimate how the disadvantage gap in Rochdale has been impacted by the pandemic. Instead, we have summarised the current position up until 2019, the last year available.

We calculate the disadvantage gap by comparing the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Specifically using data on pupils' assessment results, we order pupils by their results and assign them a rank. We calculate the average rank of the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupil groups and then subtract the latter from the former. This is the mean rank difference. Finally, we convert this into months of learning, enabling us to reach an intuitive measure of how far behind poorer pupils are from their peers.

We define a pupil as disadvantaged if they have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years, and non-disadvantaged if they have not, using the same definition as the Department for Education. For early years we do not have a six-year history of FSM eligibility so instead we measure disadvantage by whether they are eligible for FSM in the current academic year.

For key stage 4 (GCSE, KS4, end of secondary school), we present two gap measures. Our first is based on months of learning for the pre-pandemic period, 2011 to 2019, consistent with our approach at earlier key stages outlined above. Our second is a GCSE grade gap measure for 2020, with 2019 and 2018 also presented for comparison. We provide commentary on how to interpret the 2020 findings in light of the markedly different approach to awarding grades in that year. The use of CAGs was the key difference compared to previous cohorts (whose grades were based on exams), given that most of the learning had already taken place by late March 2020 when schools switched to remote teaching.

For key stage 2 and key stage 4, we also consider disadvantage gaps for persistently disadvantaged pupils. These are calculated in a similar way to the headline gap. We define a pupil as persistently disadvantaged if they are eligible for free school meals for more than 80 per cent of their school life. This measure is not available in the early years.

For post-16 outcomes, we also present further analysis using publicly available data alongside our own analysis of the 16-19 disadvantage gap.

With the exception of our analysis based on public datasets, all results are drawn from the National Pupil database.

Note that in constructing subnational gaps, in each case we rank the (persistently) disadvantaged pupils in the local area relative to the *national* mean rank of those who are not disadvantaged. We do this rather than express the rank in terms of the difference between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils *within* the area to allow for a consistent reference point across areas.

The one exception is where we estimate GCSE disadvantage gaps at subject level where we do compare the attainment (or participation) of disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale to their non-disadvantaged peers in the same subject in Rochdale. And unlike the headline gap measure for GCSE English and maths combined, these subject level gaps relate only to pupils taking those subjects and do not account for non-entries.

Throughout our analysis we classify geographical breakdowns based on pupil residence instead of the location of the school they attend. We do this because local authorities are not accountable for all schools within their area. This makes attainment more comparable across phases and between local authorities, as the geographical breakdowns are not influenced by differential secondary school admissions policies which can result in transfers of pupils across LA boundaries, thereby risking the introduction of bias into our estimates of the disadvantage gap.

# Trends in early years attainment and disadvantage gaps

## 2.1 Early years: attainment and characteristics

This section looks at pupil attainment and characteristics in the early years for pupils in the local authority of Rochdale and the Greater Manchester city region as a whole, compared with the national average. The attainment and gap measures in this section are based on attainment in the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP). This is a teacher-led assessment of a child's progress towards 17 early learning goals measuring social, behavioural and cognitive development in the final term of the year in which they turn 5.

In 2019 the national average point score was 34.6 (on a scale from 17 to 51) and the average in Rochdale was 33.2. In England, the highest scoring LA was Richmond upon Thames with an average score of 39.3 and the lowest was Middlesbrough with an average of 32.3. The Greater Manchester average in 2019 was 33.8. A graph showing average attainment in the early years, along with the highest and lowest local authority averages in each year is shown in Figure 2.1.1. We omit results before 2013, as they are based on the previous EYFSP and therefore not comparable with later years.

**Figure 2.1.1: Average score in the EYFS profile assessment for Rochdale, the England average and the highest and lowest LA averages**

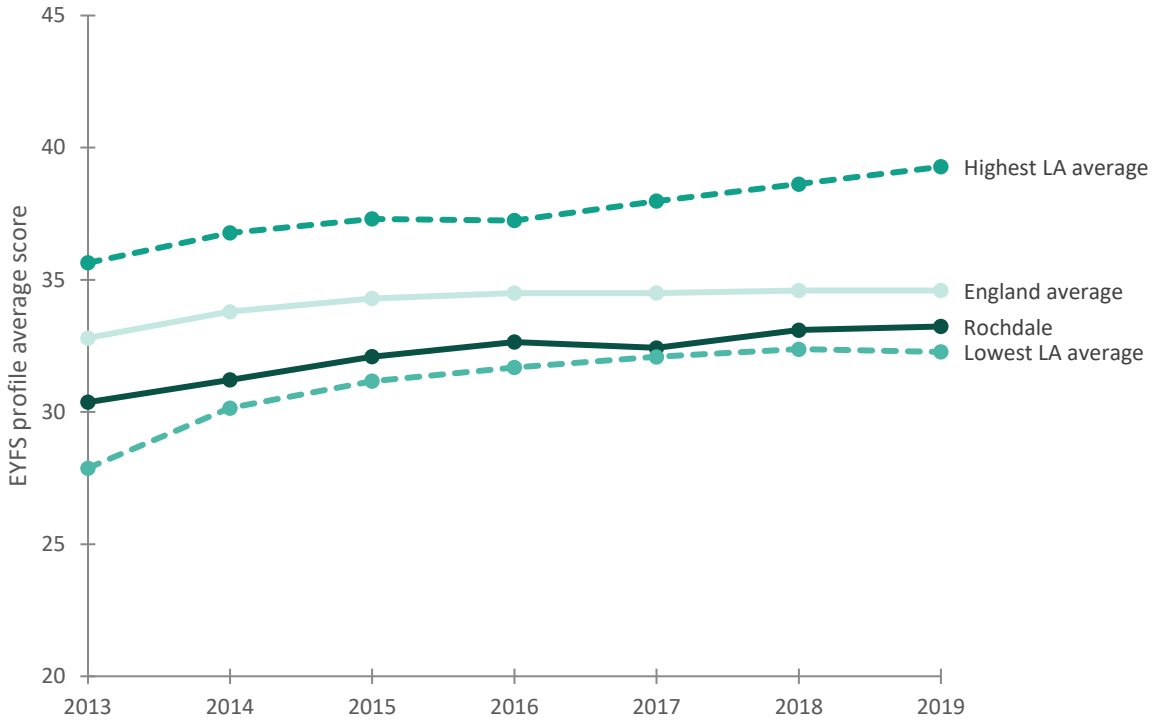



Figure 2.1.2 shows how Rochdale ranks on the EYFSP compared to other local authorities in England, where 1 is the local authority with the highest average score and 149 is the local authority with the lowest average score. Three local authorities – Rutland, the Isles of Scilly and City of London – are excluded due to low pupil counts.

Figure 2.1.2 shows that, while Rochdale is generally at the lower end of average attainment ranking, its position has improved in recent years. This is mirrored by Figure 2.1.1, which shows Rochdale moving away from the score achieved by the lowest scoring LA and towards the national average.

**Figure 2.1.2: Ranking of Rochdale vs other local authorities on average score in the EYFS profile, 2013-2019**

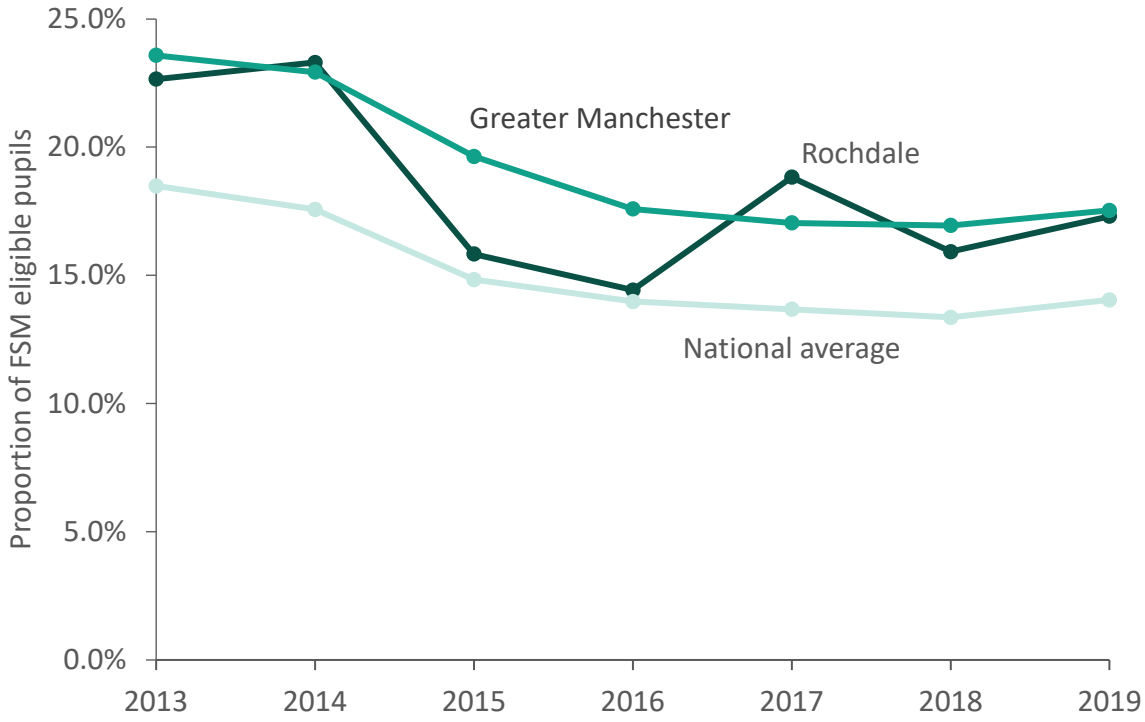
| Year | Average EYFS score | | Rank, of 149 LAs[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rochdale | England average | |
| 2013 | 30.4 | 32.8 | 141 |
| 2014 | 31.2 | 33.8 | 144 |
| 2015 | 32.1 | 34.3 | 144 |
| 2016 | 32.6 | 34.5 | 139 |
| 2017 | 32.4 | 34.5 | 144 |
| 2018 | 33.1 | 34.6 | 135 |
| 2019 | 33.2 | 34.6 | 130 |

We now consider the numbers and proportions of early years pupils who are disadvantaged. We define a pupil as disadvantaged if they are eligible for free school meals (FSM) in the current academic year, as we do not have a history of FSM eligibility at early years as we do for later key stages. On average, there are around 3,000 pupils in Reception year in Rochdale, with between 400 to 700 defined as disadvantaged. These figures are around ten times as high in Greater Manchester.

As shown in Figure 2.1.3, Rochdale and Greater Manchester consistently have a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than the national average. In 2019, 17.3 per cent of Reception pupils were disadvantaged in Rochdale, 17.5 per cent in Greater Manchester and 14.0 per cent across England. Rochdale has tended to have a lower proportion than Greater Manchester, but recently the difference has been very small. Between 2013-2018 the proportion of disadvantaged pupils fell both nationally and in Greater Manchester, followed by a slight increase in 2019. For Rochdale there was a large increase in 2017 followed by a decrease in 2018 and small increase in 2019.

[1] The exact number of local authorities varies slightly from year to year as a result of administrative changes. Rutland, the Isles of Scilly, and City of London are excluded due to low pupil counts.

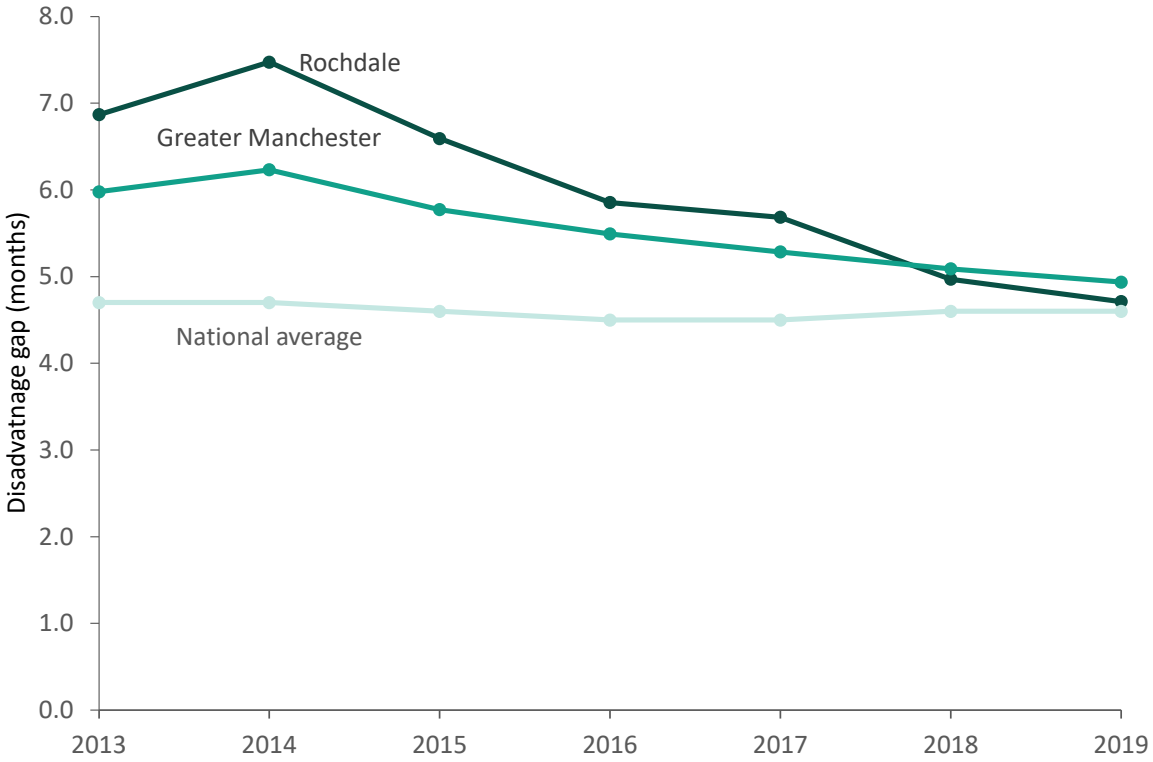
**Figure 2.1.3: Share of EYFS pupils eligible for Free School Meals in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2013-2019**




## 2.2 Early years: disadvantage gap

Figure 2.2.1 shows the early years disadvantage gap. That is, how far disadvantaged pupils have fallen behind their non-disadvantaged peers at age 5, as measured in the EYFS profile.

**Figure 2.2.1: Disadvantage gap, in months, for Early Years pupils in Rochdale and Greater Manchester compared with the national average**




Nationally, the disadvantage gap has been broadly stable. However, since 2014 both Rochdale and Greater Manchester have substantially reduced their early years disadvantage gap. Rochdale started with a larger gap than Greater Manchester (6.9 months versus 6.0 months in 2013) but has made more progress in reducing the gap and now has a smaller gap than Greater Manchester (4.7 versus 4.9 months in 2019). Rochdale and Greater Manchester now have an early years disadvantage gap only slightly above the national average, which in 2019 was 4.6 months.

# Trends in key stage 2 attainment and disadvantage gaps

## 3.1 Key stage 2: attainment and characteristics

This section considers pupil attainment and characteristics at the end of primary school, key stage 2 (KS2). This is measured using the average scaled score in reading and maths at key stage 2. Only reading and maths are included to ensure consistency over time (there have been changes in the writing assessment framework). Raw attainment data for primary is only available from 2016, when the new KS2 assessments were introduced.

In Rochdale the average scaled score in reading and maths was 102.5 in 2019, below the national average of 103.2 and the Greater Manchester average of 103.0. The highest scoring local authority was Richmond upon Thames with an average score of 107.9 and the lowest was Hackney with an average score of 100.8. Figure 3.1.1 shows the average attainment at the end of primary school in Rochdale, England and the highest and lowest performing local authorities in each year for the period we have consistent data, 2016 to 2019.[2]

**Figure 3.1.1: Average KS2 scaled score in reading and maths in Rochdale, England and the highest and lowest LA averages**

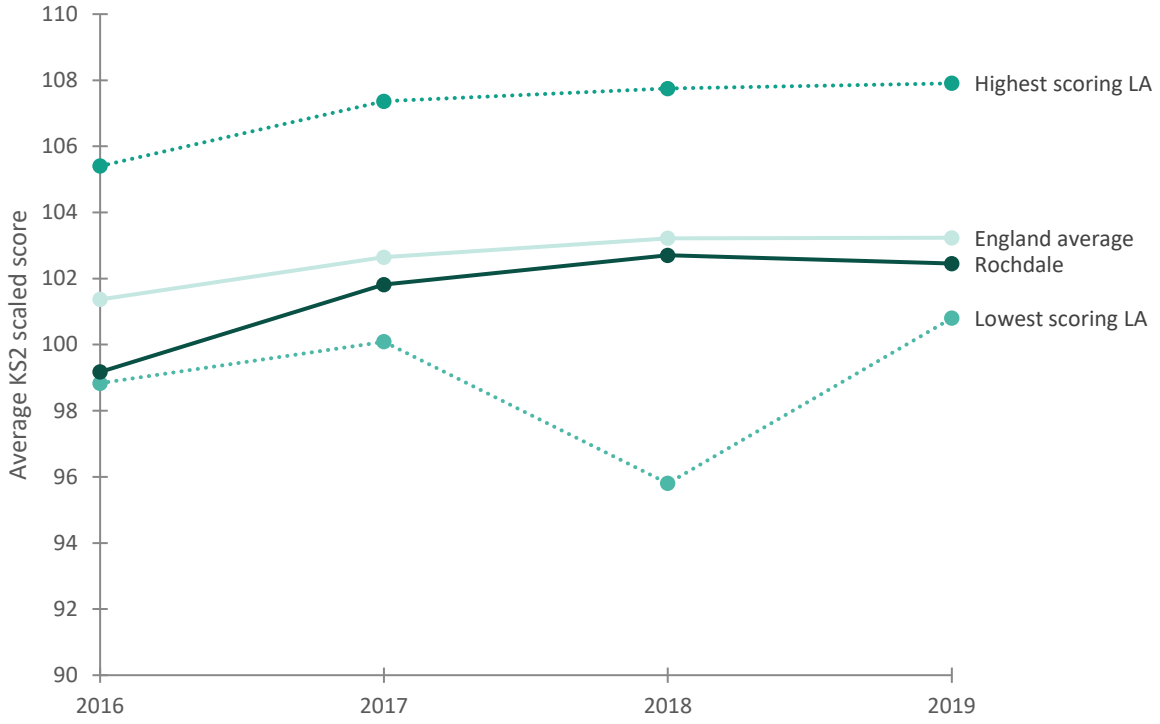



Figure 3.1.2 shows how Rochdale ranks at the end of key stage 2 in recent years compared to other local authorities in England, where 1 is the local authority with the highest average score. Rochdale appeared to do less well than other local authorities in adjusting to reforms to primary teaching and

[2] Reforms to the key stage 2 National Curriculum were introduced in 2014 and the first of the new assessments were sat in 2016 – the earliest year shown in Figure 3.1.1. In the current assessments, pupils scoring at least 100 have met the expected standard on the test. Previous assessments are not directly comparable. However, we present timeseries of the gap going further back (to 2011) because they are based on the average rank of pupils as opposed to their absolute attainment scores.

assessment and ranked particularly poorly in 2016, the first year of the new primary curriculum assessments. Rochdale is still in the bottom third of local authorities for key stage 2 attainment, but its average score is now closer to the England average than in previous years.

**Figure 3.1.2: Ranking of Rochdale vs other local authorities on average scaled score in reading and maths at KS2, 2011-2019**

| Year | KS2 scaled score | | Rank, of 149 LAs[3] |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rochdale | England average | |
| 2011 | 27.2 | 27.6 | 109 |
| 2012 | 27.9 | 28.3 | 112 |
| 2013 | 28.1 | 28.4 | 105 |
| 2014 | 28.5 | 28.7 | 90 |
| 2015 | 28.2 | 28.7 | 123 |
| 2016 | 99.2 | 101.4 | 147 |
| 2017 | 101.8 | 102.6 | 115 |
| 2018 | 102.7 | 103.2 | 104 |
| 2019 | 102.5 | 103.2 | 120 |

Figure 3.1.3 compares the share of pupils in Rochdale who are disadvantaged at the end of primary school with the national and Greater Manchester averages in recent years. Unlike at early years, we define a pupil as disadvantaged if they have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years and non-disadvantaged if they have not, using the same definition as the Department for Education.[4] The number of pupils at the end of KS2 in Rochdale (used to calculate the shares) has risen from around 2,500 to around 3,000 pupils in the 2011-2019 period. For Greater Manchester the number has risen from around 30,000 to around 35,000.

Rochdale consistently has a slightly higher share of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 than Greater Manchester and both Rochdale and Greater Manchester have a noticeably higher share than England as a whole. In 2019 the share of disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 was 35.3 per cent in Rochdale, 35.1 per cent in Greater Manchester and 30.5 per cent in England. For all regions the share of disadvantaged pupils has declined since 2016. This decline has been more pronounced in Rochdale and in 2019 the share of disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale was only very slightly above the Greater Manchester average.

[3] The exact number of local authorities varies slightly from year to year due to administrative changes. Rutland, the Isles of Scilly and City of London are excluded due to low pupil counts

[4] The DfE allocates the deprivation component of the pupil premium on this basis.

**Figure 3.1.3: Share of pupils at the end of KS2 who are disadvantaged (solid lines) and persistently disadvantaged (dashed lines): Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2011-2019**

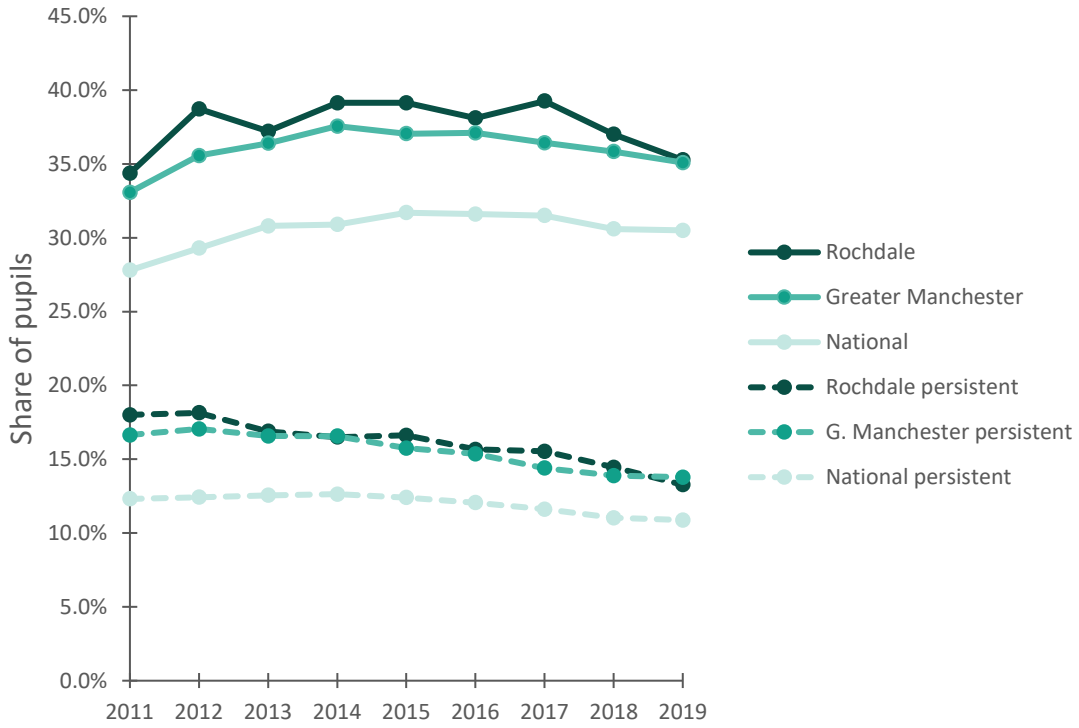



Figure 3.1.3 also shows an additional measure of disadvantage: pupils who are persistently disadvantaged. These are the subset of disadvantaged pupils who have been eligible for FSM for at least 80 per cent of their school life. We create this longitudinal measure using school census data to track the length of time that pupils are eligible for FSM. Between 400-450 pupils are persistently disadvantaged in Rochdale at the end of primary school each year, and just under 5,000 in Greater Manchester.

Rochdale and Greater Manchester have a similar share of persistently disadvantaged pupils. The share of persistently disadvantaged pupils both regionally and nationally has been slowly declining. In 2019 the share of persistently disadvantaged pupils was 13.3 per cent in Rochdale and 13.8 per cent in Greater Manchester, down from 18.0 per cent and 16.6 per cent in 2011. The national share of persistently disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 was 10.9 per cent, down from 12.3 per cent in 2011.

## 3.2 Key stage 2: disadvantage gaps

Figure 3.2.1 compares the disadvantage gap at the end of KS2.

In 2019 the disadvantage gap was 10.0 months in Rochdale, 9.0 months in Greater Manchester and 9.3 months nationally. We find that until 2016 the disadvantage gap in Rochdale fluctuated around the national average. However, in 2017 it increased sharply, mirroring an increase in the share of disadvantaged pupils (see Figure 3.1.3). Since 2017 the gap in Rochdale has been slowly decreasing but remains above the Greater Manchester and England averages.

The Greater Manchester disadvantage gap is consistently slightly below the national average. The gap in Greater Manchester and across England as a whole decreased between 2011 and 2018, but then rose in 2019.

**Figure 3.2.1: Disadvantage gap in months at end of KS2 for pupils in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England national average, 2011-2019**

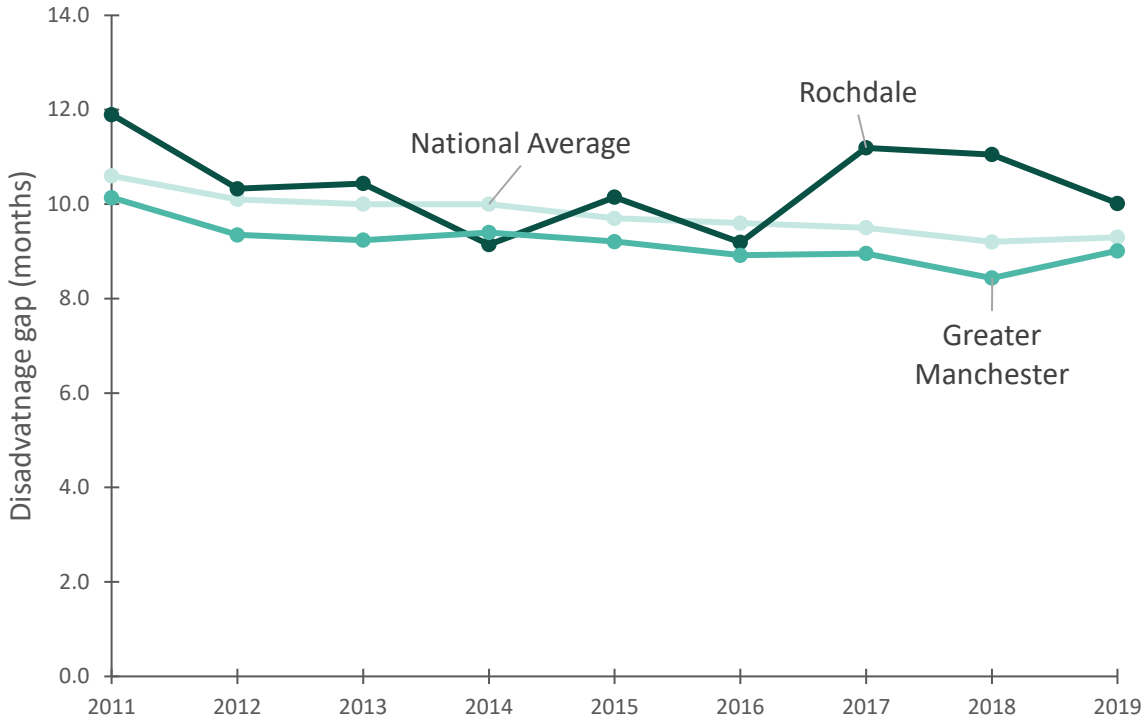
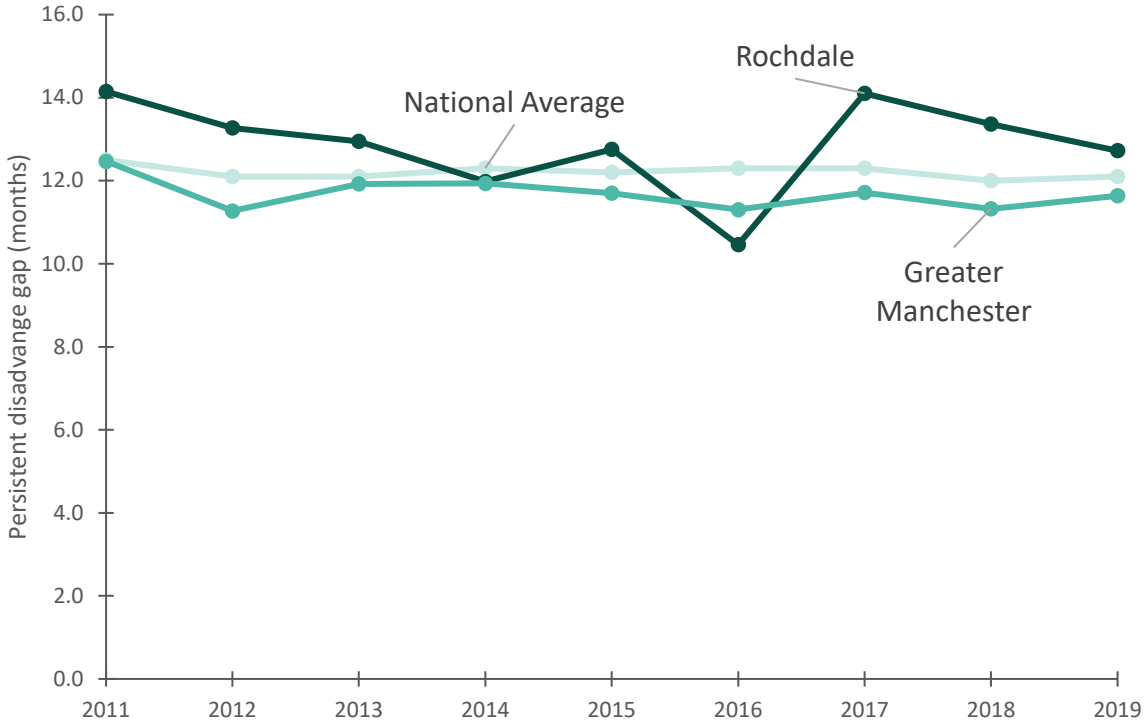



Figure 3.2.2 illustrates the persistent disadvantage gap in months at the end of KS2. In 2019 the persistent disadvantage gap at the end of KS2 was 12.7 months in Rochdale, 11.6 months in Greater Manchester and 12.1 months nationally. As with the headline disadvantage gap, we find that Rochdale was near the national average until 2017 when there was a sharp increase. The persistent disadvantage gap in Rochdale has been descreasing since then and is once again close to, but still above, the national average. The persistent disadvantage gap in Greater Manchester has consistently been slightly below the England average.

Overall, Rochdale has a larger share of disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS2 than England and Greater Manchester. These disadvantaged pupils tend to finish primary school further behind their more affluent peers, compared to other disadvantaged pupils nationally. In 2019 across England nationally disadvantaged pupils finish primary school 9.3 months behind their peers. In Rochdale disadvantaged pupils are a *further* 0.7 months behind. For persistently disadvantaged pupils the national gap is 12.1 months, whilst Rochdale pupils are an additional 0.6 months behind.

Greater Manchester as a whole tends to have a smaller disadvantage gap than the national average, whilst having a larger share of disadvantaged and persistently disadvantaged pupils. The share of disadvantaged and persistently disadvantaged pupils in Greater Manchester is close to Rochdale. This suggests there are disadvantaged areas of Greater Manchester performing well for their disadvantaged primary pupils who may be able to share best practice with Rochdale.

**Figure 3.2.2: Persistent disadvantage gap, in months, at end of KS2 for pupils in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2019.**



# Trends in key stage 4 attainment and disadvantage gaps

## 4.1 Key stage 4: attainment and characteristics

This section considers pupil attainment and characteristics at the end of secondary school, key stage 4 (KS4). We use average GCSE grade in English and maths as our headline measure, as it is the most consistent measure of attainment over time, though we do also include some figures for completeness for the average GCSE grade across all subjects.

Whereas data is only available to 2019 for early years and key stage 2, here we also report data to 2020 – the first year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction section of this report gives context for how different key stages were impacted by the pandemic and how we adjust our GCSE disadvantage gap calculation to reflect this.

In summary for our key stage 4 analysis, we present two disadvantage gap measures. Our first is based on months of learning for the pre-pandemic period, 2011 to 2019. We do this by comparing the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Specifically, we rank pupils by their GCSE exam results and then calculate the average rank of the non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupil groups. The difference between the two is the mean rank difference. We then convert this rank difference into months of learning, as a more intuitive measure of the disadvantage gap. Our second measure is a GCSE grade gap for 2020, with 2019 and 2018 also presented for comparison. This simply compares the average GCSE grade of the non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupil groups. As for earlier key stages, we define pupils as disadvantaged if they have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years, and non-disadvantaged if they have not.

Overall GCSE attainment is lower in Rochdale than in the wider Greater Manchester region and England as a whole. In 2020, the average grade in Rochdale was 4.6 for all subjects, as well as across GCSE English and maths. In Greater Manchester, the average grade was 4.8 (for all subjects, as well as GCSE English and maths), whilst nationally it was 4.9 (again for both).

Across the country, 2020 grades were consistently higher than in pre-pandemic years. This reflects the switch to teacher assessments for awarding 2020 grades compared to exams in previous years. For this reason, 2020 data are not directly comparable with earlier years – though it is still possible to compare the relative attainment positions of different local areas over time (or pupils' relative position within the distribution – which is the basis for how we calculate the gap in the next section).

With that caveat in mind, Figure 4.1.1 shows how the average grade in English and maths GCSE in Rochdale has changed since 2017 – the first year of the new 1-9 grade scale for reformed GCSEs. Between 2017 and 2019 the Rochdale average remained broadly steady and consistently lower than for Greater Manchester and England as a whole. In 2019, the average GCSE grade in Rochdale was 4.1 for all subjects and 4.3 for English and maths. For Greater Manchester the average grade was 4.3 in all subjects and 4.4 in English and maths. Nationally the average score was 4.5 in all subjects and 4.6 in English and maths.

Figure 4.1.2 shows how Rochdale ranks against other local authorities based on its GCSE English and maths performance. On this measure, Rochdale is typically in the bottom third of local authorities nationally.

**Figure 4.1.1: Average GCSE grade in English and maths in Rochdale, England and the highest and lowest LA averages, 2017-2020**

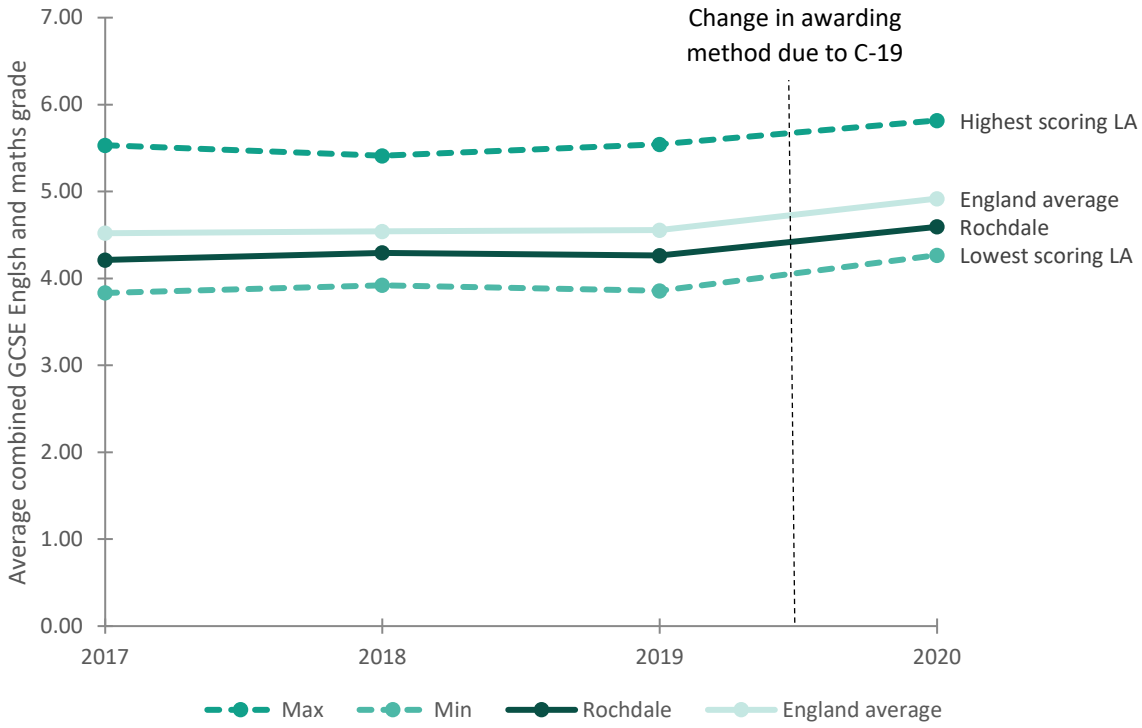



**Figure 4.1.2: Ranking of Rochdale vs other local authorities on average GCSE grade in English and maths, 2011-2020**

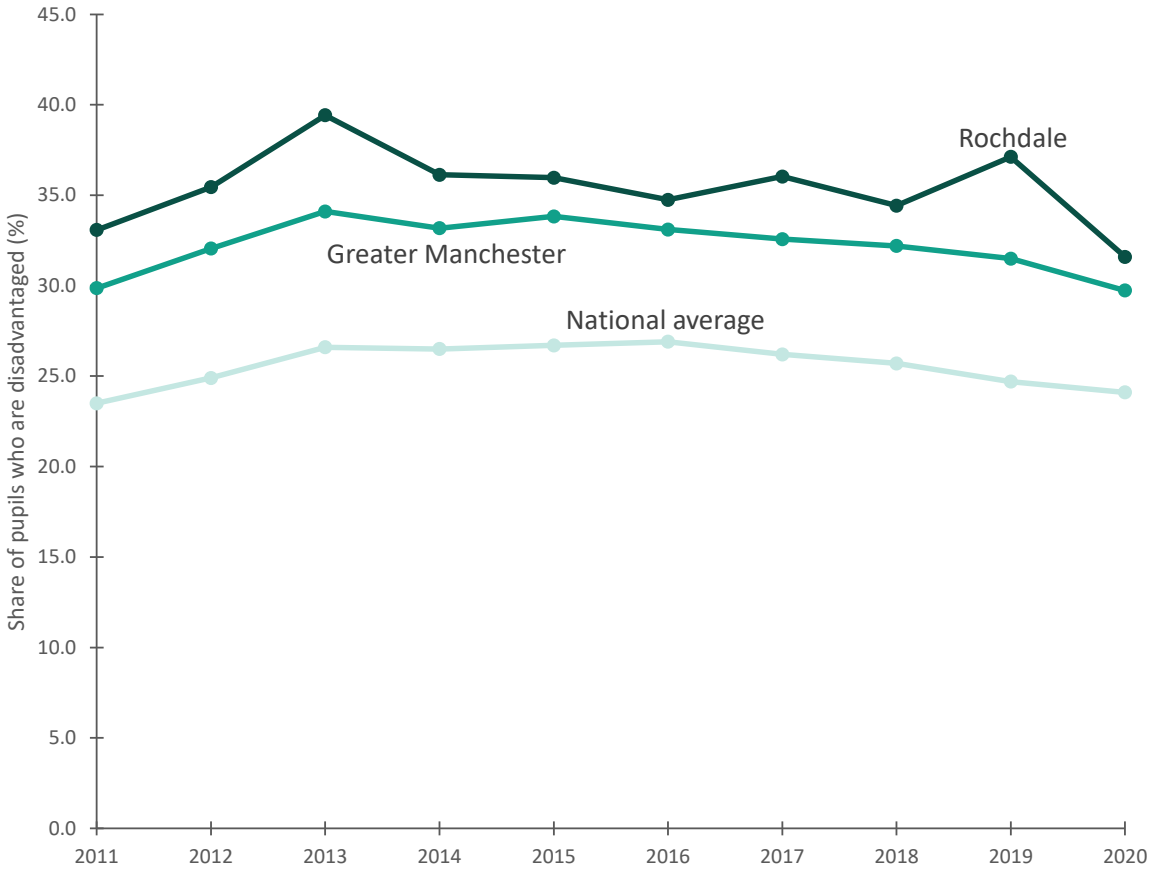
| Year | Maths and English GCSE points | | Rank, of 149 LAs[5] |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rochdale | England average | |
| 2011 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 105 |
| 2012 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 111 |
| 2013 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 112 |
| 2014 | 4.0 | 4.3 | 118 |
| 2015 | 4.0 | 4.3 | 124 |
| 2016 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 99 |
| 2017 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 120 |
| 2018 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 116 |
| 2019 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 123 |
| 2020 | 4.6 | 4.9 | 129 |

We now look at the level of disadvantage in Rochdale compared with Greater Manchester and England nationally. As at key stage 2, we define a pupil as disadvantaged if they have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point in the last six years and non-disadvantaged if they have not. In Rochdale, there are around 800-1,000 disadvantaged pupils using this definition. For Greater Manchester the count is ten times as large, at roughly 9,000-10,000.

[5] The exact number of local authorities varies slightly from year to year due to administrative changes. Rutland, the Isles of Scilly and City of London are excluded due to low pupil counts

As in early years and key stage 2, Figure 4.1.3 shows that a larger than average proportion of Rochdale pupils are disadvantaged at the end of their GCSEs. In 2020, 31.6 per cent of pupils at the end of secondary school in Rochdale were disadvantaged, compared with 24.1 per cent nationally and 29.7 per cent in Greater Manchester.

**Figure 4.1.3: Share of pupils at the end of KS4 who are disadvantaged, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2011-2020**




Over time, the share of disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale has broadly followed the national and Greater Manchester trend, although it spiked in 2013 and 2019. For Greater Manchester and England, the share of disadvantaged pupils rose slightly between 2011 and 2013 and since then has gradually decreased.

## 4.2 Key stage 4: disadvantage gaps

We now look at disadvantage gaps in key stage 4 attainment. Because of differences in the way GCSE grades were awarded in 2020, we present two gap measures: one based on months of learning for the pre-pandemic period, 2011 to 2019 (consistent with our approach at earlier key stages); and a second based on a GCSE grade gap measure for 2020, with 2019 and 2018 also included on this basis for comparison.

Focusing first on the pre-pandemic period 2011 to 2019, Figure 4.2.1 shows that in 2019 the disadvantage gap for GCSE English and maths was 19.1 months for Rochdale, 19.3 months for Greater Manchester and 18.1 months for England. Since 2014, the Greater Manchester gap has

consistently been slightly higher than the England average. The Rochdale gap has varied around the national average and currently sits above it, near the Greater Manchester average. For Rochdale, its smaller pupil count means its gap is more volatile.

**Figure 4.2.1: GCSE English and maths disadvantage gap in months, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2011-2019**

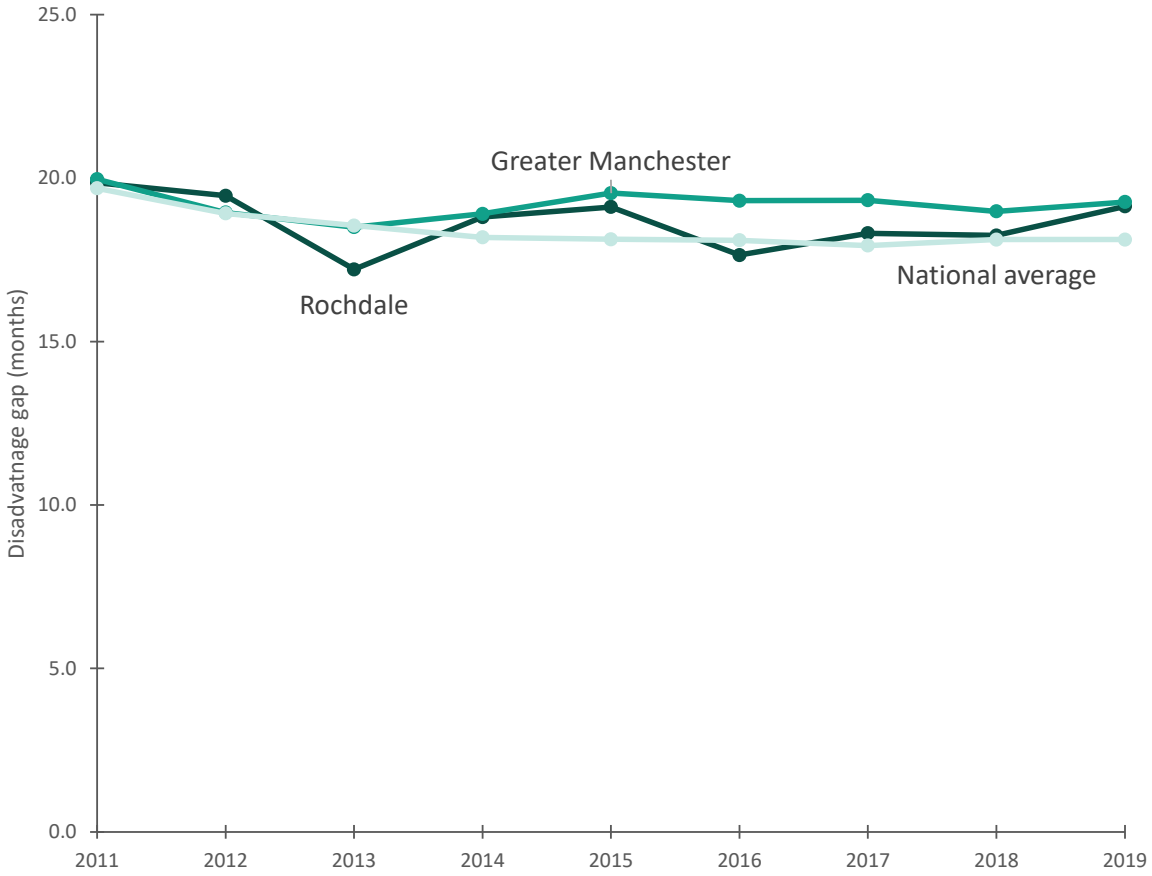



Figure 4.2.2 uses our new grade gap measure to estimate the disadvantage gap after the disruption to GCSE exams in 2020. The disadvantage grade gap in Rochdale in GCSE English and maths in 2020 was 1.32 grades, compared with the national average of 1.24 and a Greater Manchester average of 1.34. If we compare this with how the grade gap would look if we apply the same method to 2019, this represents a slight widening of the gap in Rochdale, a slight narrowing of the gap nationally and a steady gap in Greater Manchester.

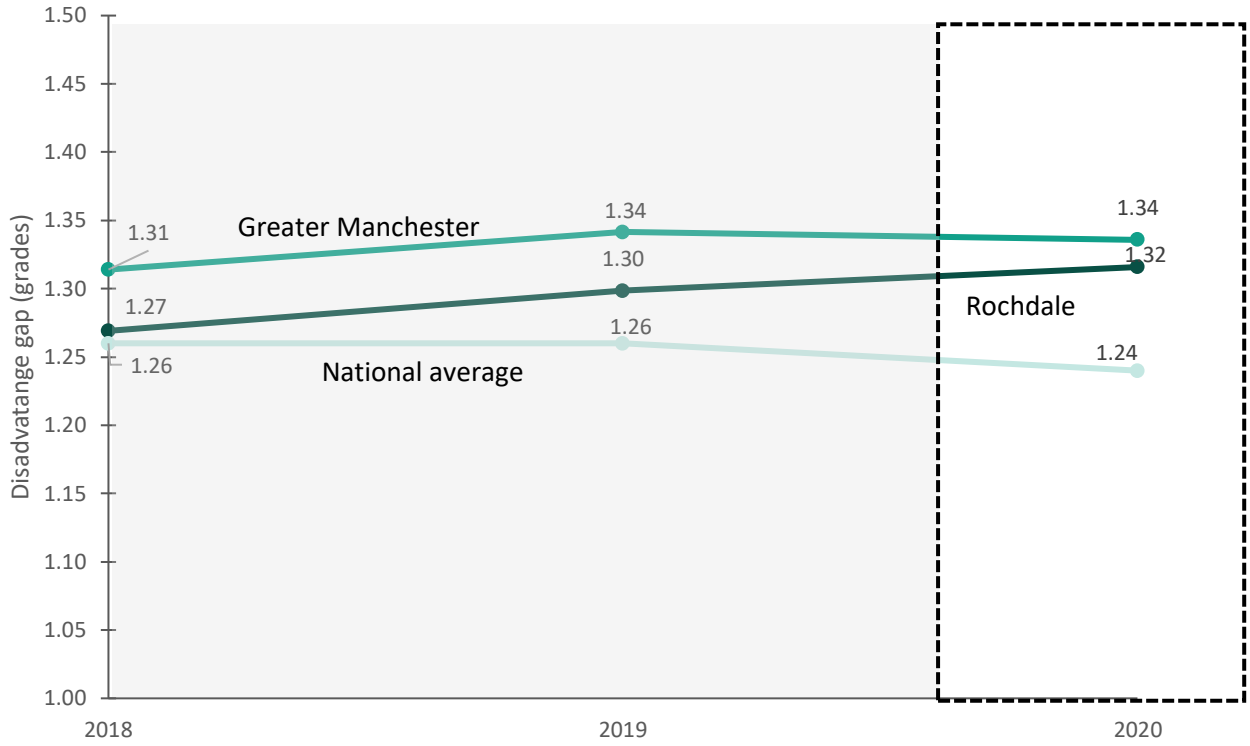
Despite being an extraordinary year, the national GCSE disadvantage gap in 2020 is similar to recent years. We do not find evidence that the national disadvantage gap has substantially changed as a result of changes to the way GCSE grades were awarded as a result of COVID-19.

The grade gap differences in Figure 4.2.2 are small but nevertheless, the finding that the Rochdale disadvantage gap remains above the national average and appears to have slightly increased is a concerning indication that the GCSE disadvantage gap in Rochdale may still be widening, as it has done each year since 2016.

To summarise the picture at key stage 4, Rochdale has a greater share of disadvantaged pupils than both the England and Greater Manchester average. Despite this, Rochdale has traditionally had

disadvantage gaps positioned between the England and Greater Manchester average, meaning that disadvantaged pupils are further behind their peers than in England as a whole but less far behind than in Greater Manchester. However, more recently, the Rochdale gap has increased slightly while the Greater Manchester gap has held steady so the difference between the two has decreased. Where ideally the Rochdale gap would diminish to meet the national average we are instead seeing it rise towards the Greater Manchester average.

**Figure 4.2.2: Disadvantage GCSE grade gap (mean difference in average grades achieved in English and maths) in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2020 (2018 and 2019 for comparison only)**




## 4.3 Key stage 4: subject-level disadvantage gaps

In this section we look at how the disadvantage gap varies by subject at GCSE level in Rochdale and Greater Manchester relative to England in two ways. Figure 4.3.2 shows the GCSE disadvantage grade gap for each subject in 2020, looking at the difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in each subject. Figure 4.3.3 shows the 2020 relative participation gap. This is the relative likelihood of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils taking certain subjects, calculated by taking the percentage point difference between the entry of non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupils within a given subject and dividing by the percentage entry of non-disadvantaged pupils. Figure 4.3.1 combines these two measures graphically to give an overall sense of the most and least unequal subjects in Rochdale based on their participation and grade gaps.

Note that unlike our earlier headline measure for GCSE English and maths combined, these are within-area gaps for each GCSE subject. That is, they compare disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale (Greater Manchester) to non-disadvantaged pupils taking that same subject in Rochdale (Greater

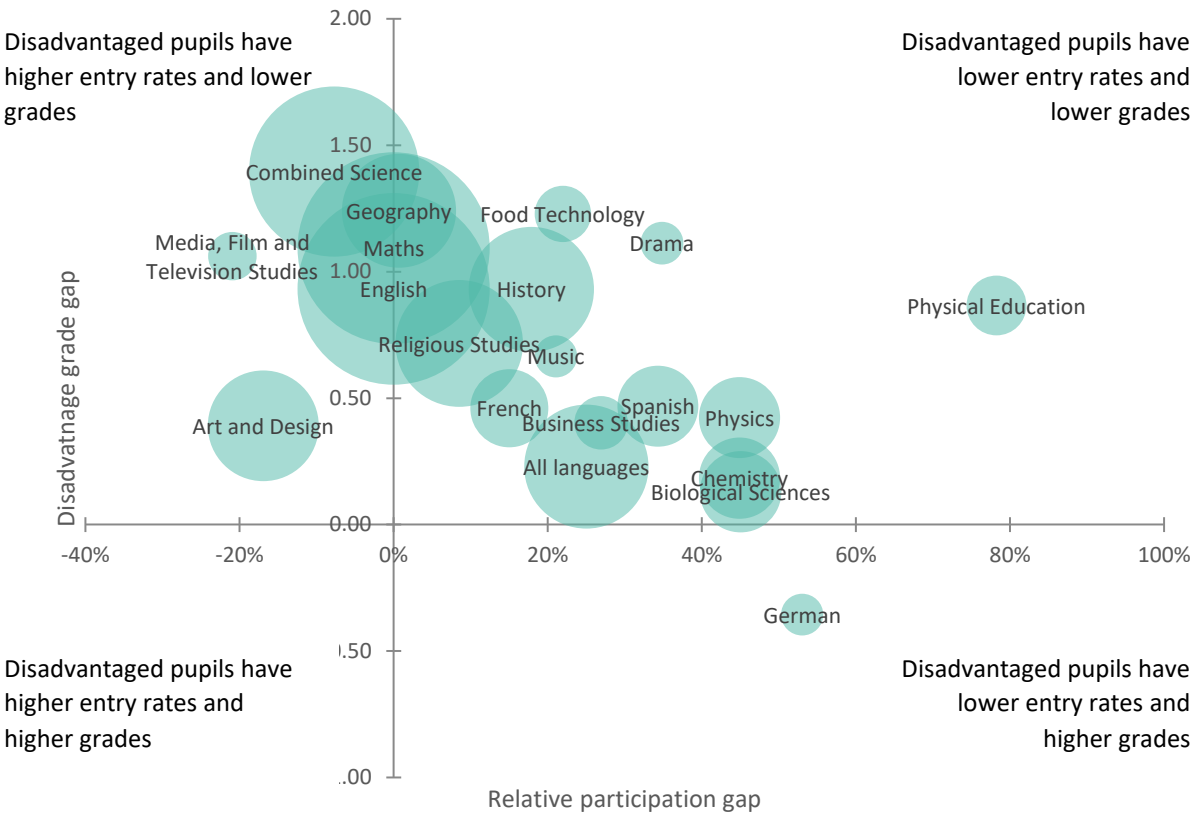
Manchester), as opposed to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. They also look only at students who are entered for each subject whereas the headline gap takes into account non-entries.[6]

Combined science has the largest grade gap in Rochdale: on average, disadvantaged pupils score 1.40 grades lower in combined science than their peers. Combined science is taken by a large number of pupils (2,125 in Rochdale in 2020, behind only English and maths at 2,703 and English literature at 2,601) so a large number of pupils are affected. The negative participation gap (-8 per cent) shows that disadvantaged pupils are more likely to enter combined science than their peers. The separate science subjects all have large, positive participation gaps (45 per cent), indicating better off pupils are more likely to be entered for these, although the difference in Rochdale is less pronounced than in Greater Manchester or nationally.

Within Rochdale, geography, food technology, drama and media, film and television studies all have disadvantage grade gaps larger than one GCSE grade. Of the larger GCSE subjects, media, film and television studies and art and design both have negative participation gaps, meaning disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale are more likely than their peers to enter these subjects at GCSE. PE has a large positive participation gap (78 per cent) meaning better off pupils are substantially more likely to enter this subject. At the extreme ends of both positive and negative participation gaps, Rochdale tends to have larger gaps than in Greater Manchester and nationally, suggesting GCSE entry in Rochdale is more polarised than elsewhere.

[6] This means the subject level gaps for English and maths have a different average in this table than the earlier headline measure, where we looked at the combined English and maths disadvantage gap. The average of the subject level gaps in Rochdale is lower than the headline measure (1.01, compared to 1.32 grades) and smaller than the national gaps (when this relationship is reversed for the headline measure). This may indicate that non-entry contributes to the headline disadvantage gap in Rochdale (as well as non-disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale doing worse in these subjects than across England as a whole).

**Figure 4.3.1: Subject-level participation and grade gaps in Rochdale, 2020**




Bubble size proportional to number of entries; subjects with fewer than 100 entries in Rochdale in 2020 removed; English Literature also removed to aid interpretation (overlaps significantly with English)

**Figure 4.3.2: GCSE subject-level disadvantage grade gaps in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England, 2020, subjects with more than 100 entries in Rochdale**

| | GCSE disadvantage grade gap | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rochdale | Greater Manchester | England |
| Maths | 1.09 | 1.31 | 1.33 |
| English | 0.93 | 1.18 | 1.16 |
| | | | |
| Combined Science | 1.40 | 1.74 | 1.61 |
| Geography | 1.24 | 1.24 | 1.35 |
| Food Technology | 1.23 | 1.10 | 1.10 |
| Drama | 1.11 | 1.14 | 1.11 |
| Media, Film and Television Studies | 1.06 | 1.10 | 0.89 |
| History | 0.93 | 1.34 | 1.26 |
| English Literature | 0.92 | 1.08 | 1.05 |
| Physical Education | 0.87 | 1.15 | 1.16 |
| Religious Studies | 0.72 | 0.99 | 0.93 |
| Music | 0.67 | 1.41 | 1.37 |
| Spanish | 0.47 | 0.78 | 0.78 |
| French | 0.46 | 0.68 | 0.81 |
| Physics | 0.42 | 0.70 | 0.82 |
| Business Studies | 0.40 | 0.91 | 0.95 |
| Art and Design | 0.39 | 0.80 | 0.92 |
| All languages combined | 0.23 | 0.56 | 0.73 |
| Chemistry | 0.18 | 0.59 | 0.77 |
| Biological Sciences | 0.13 | 0.88 | 0.93 |
| German | -0.36 | 0.56 | 0.91 |

**Figure 4.3.3: GCSE subject-level disadvantage participation gaps in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England, 2020**

| | GCSE participation gap | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Rochdale | Greater Manchester | England |
| Media, Film and Television Studies | -21% | 16% | 9% |
| Art and Design | -17% | -14% | -5% |
| Combined Science | -8% | -9% | -15% |
| Maths | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| English | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Geography | 1% | 15% | 20% |
| English Literature | 3% | 5% | 5% |
| Religious Studies | 9% | 19% | 14% |
| French | 15% | 37% | 34% |
| History | 18% | 13% | 11% |
| Music | 21% | 29% | 39% |
| Food Technology | 22% | 13% | 6% |
| All languages combined | 25% | 32% | 33% |
| Business Studies | 27% | 33% | 31% |
| Spanish | 34% | 29% | 29% |
| Drama | 35% | 17% | 18% |
| Physics | 45% | 55% | 53% |
| Chemistry | 45% | 56% | 53% |
| Biological Sciences | 45% | 51% | 51% |
| German | 53% | 56% | 58% |
| Physical Education | 78% | 57% | 49% |

## 4.4 Key stage 4: persistence of disadvantage

In this section we look into how persistent disadvantage might affect educational outcomes in Rochdale. In our key stage 2 section, we divided pupils into:

- Non-disadvantaged, who are not eligible for free school meals at any point during in the last six years
- Disadvantaged, who are eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years
- Persistently disadvantaged, who are a subset of the disadvantaged group and are eligible for free school meals for at least 80 per cent of their schooling

In this section we subdivide disadvantaged pupils into five finer-grained groups, based on their duration of free school meal (FSM) eligibility:

- Up to 19 per cent of school life (low persistence)
- 20-39 per cent of school life (low-medium persistence)
- 40-59 per cent of school life (medium persistence)
- 60-79 per cent of school life (medium-high persistence)
- 80-100 per cent of school life (high persistence i.e. persistently disadvantaged)

We are also able to identify a sixth group, which is a subset of the fifth group:

- Pupils eligible for free school meals for 100 per cent of their school life ('always disadvantaged') – these are a subset of the high persistence (or persistently disadvantaged) group.

Figure 4.4.1 shows how degree of persistence has changed for disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale. The underlying number of children in each persistence category can be found in the Annex. Until 2019 the proportion of disadvantaged children that were high persistence had been declining. However, this proportion increased from 35.6 per cent in 2019 to 40.9 per cent in 2020. The other category which has seen a large change is medium persistence (pupils eligible for FSM for 40-59 per cent of their school life). This category has grown from 15.8 per cent of disadvantaged pupils in 2011 to 23.4 per cent in 2020.

Figure 4.4.2 shows how the proportion of pupils in different persistence categories compares with Greater Manchester and the national picture over time. Rochdale and Greater Manchester typically have a higher proportion of persistently disadvantaged pupils than England as a whole and, before 2015, Rochdale's proportion was larger than Greater Manchester. However, the gap between Rochdale and Greater Manchester has closed over time and Rochdale now has a slightly smaller share of persistently disadvantaged pupils. In 2020, 41 per cent of disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale were persistently disadvantaged, compared to 42 per cent in Greater Manchester and 39 per cent nationally. Due to a recent increase in the national proportion of persistently disadvantaged pupils, Rochdale and Greater Manchester are now close to the national share.

As discussed above, there has also been an expansion in the share of pupils experiencing medium disadvantage persistence. By 2020, Rochdale had a greater share of pupils in the medium persistence category and fewer in the low-medium and low persistence categories than Greater Manchester and the England average.

**Figure 4.4.1: Persistence of disadvantage among disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS4 in Rochdale since 2011**

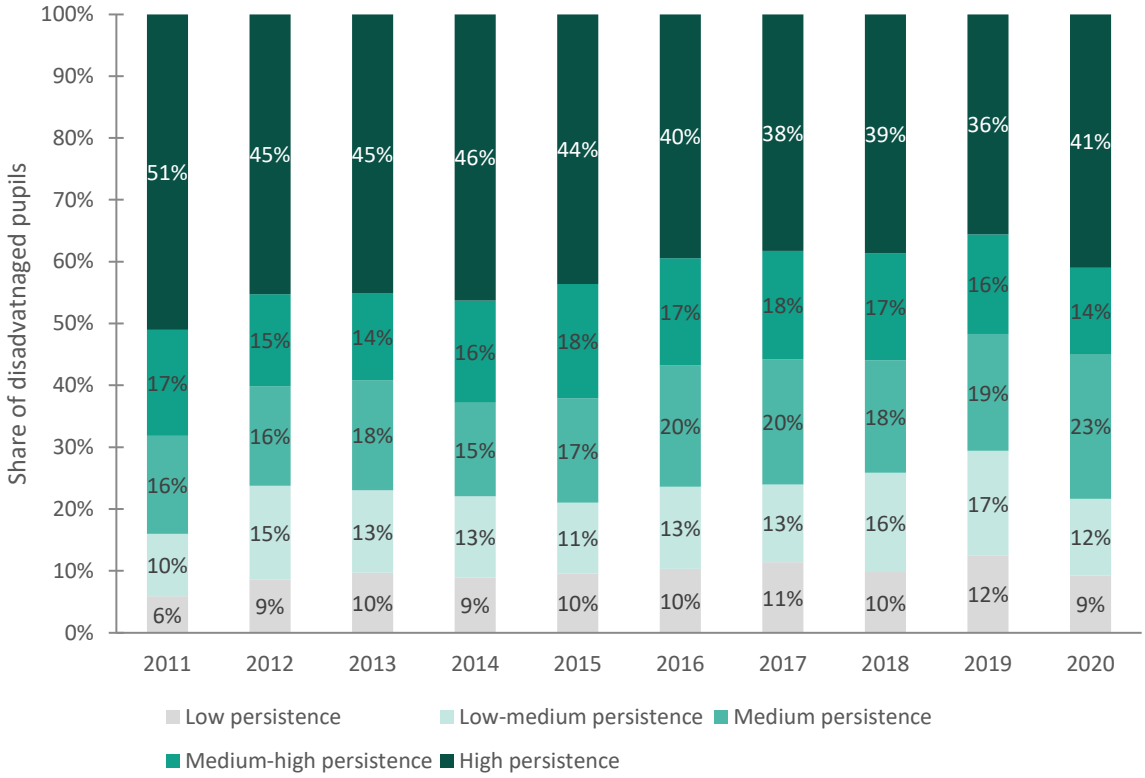


**Figure 4.4.2: Persistence of disadvantage among KS4 disadvantaged pupils, 2011 –2020**

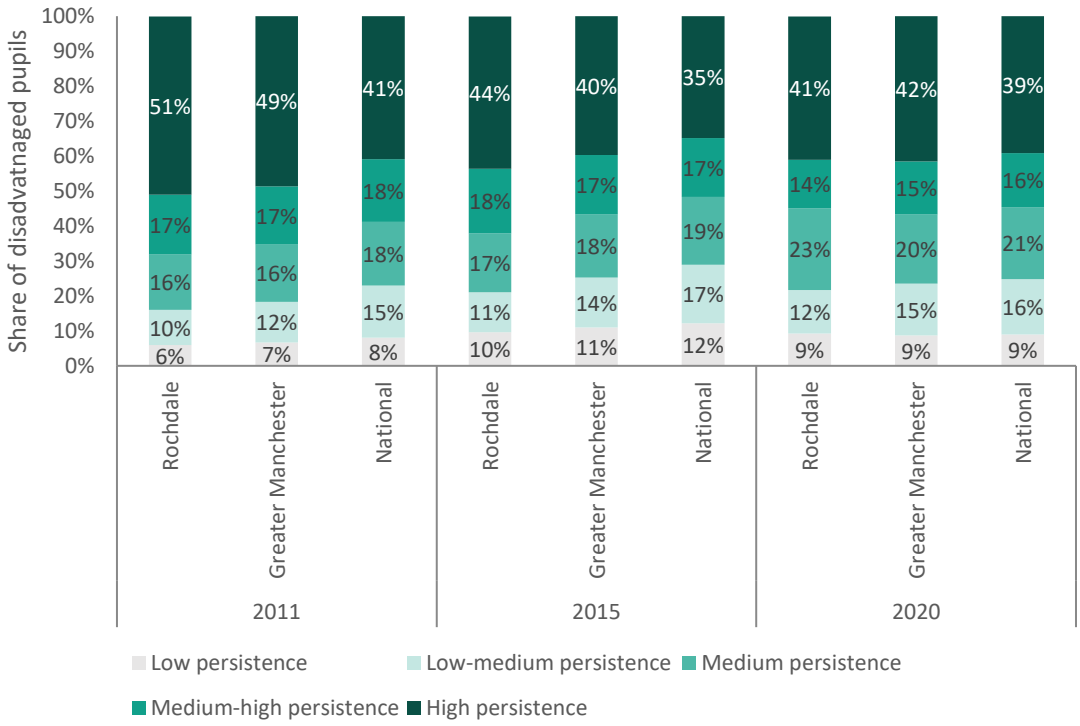
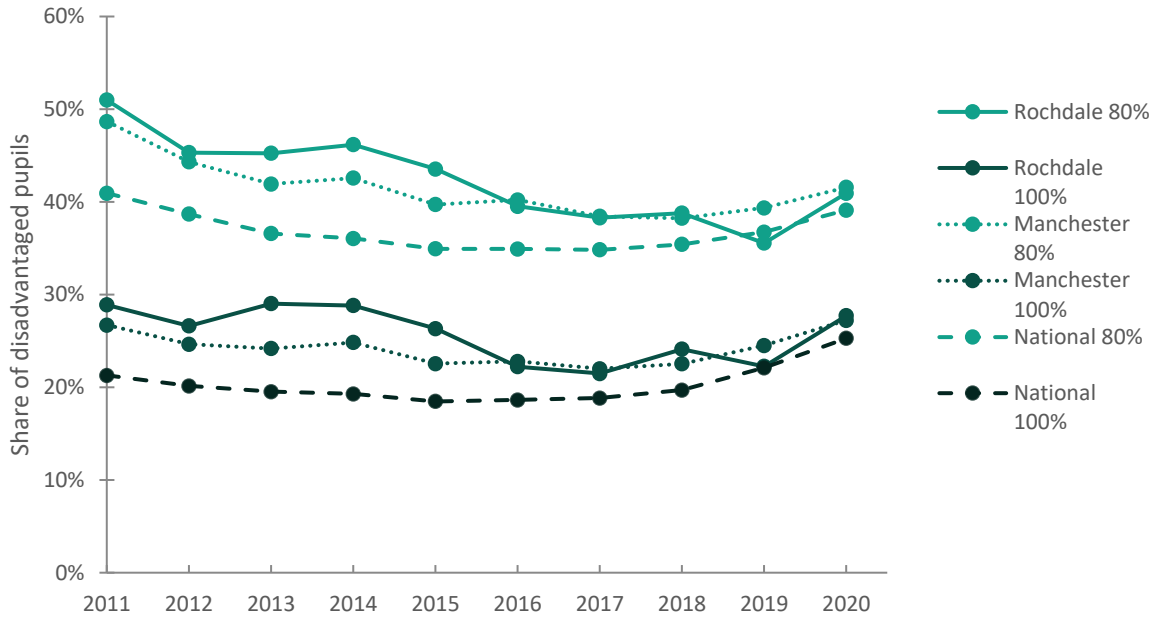



Figure 4.4.3 looks specifically at the two most disadvantaged groups: pupils eligible for free school meals for at least 80 per cent of their school life (high persistence) and the subset of those pupils who have been eligible for free school meals for their entire school life (always eligible). For both Rochdale and Greater Manchester the broad trend from 2011 to 2019 was for the proportion of persistently and always disadvantaged pupils to fall. This trend reversed in 2020 such that 28 per cent of disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale were always disadvantaged at the end of secondary school, compared to 27 per cent in Greater Manchester and 25 per cent nationally. Despite this recent increase, the overall trend is that the proportion of persistently and always disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale and Greater Manchester is moving closer to the national average. This has come about both through a reduction in persistent disadvantage locally and an increase nationally.

Part of this recent increase in persistent disadvantage may be linked to changes in criteria for claiming FSM with the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). Protections put in place with the roll out of UC mean that any child eligible for FSM in 2018 (and subsequently eligible) will retain this until at least 2022. This potentially affects the persistently disadvantaged group who, over time, capture more of those who are eligible for FSM due to protections rather than their financial circumstances. However, it is also the case that the pattern of rising poverty within the overall disadvantaged group is consistent with wider evidence showing rising poverty among young children prior to the pandemic – indicating these patterns are not solely an artefact of benefits eligibility changes altering the composition of disadvantaged pupils.

**Figure 4.4.3: Proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS4 who are persistently or always disadvantaged, 2011-2020, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England**




## 4.5 Key stage 4: persistent disadvantage gaps

We now look at the attainment of persistently disadvantaged pupils compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. As previously, we categorise as persistently disadvantaged any pupil who has been eligible for free school meals for 80 per cent or more of their school life, including those always eligible. Figure 4.5.1 shows the persistent disadvantage gap in Rochdale over time. From 2011-2019 the gap is measured in months. For all GCSE subjects, the gap decreased by 6 per cent between 2011 and 2019, from 25.0 months to 23.5 months. Looking just at English and maths the gap in Rochdale decreased by less (just 2.5 per cent) but was the same absolute magnitude in 2019 as for all GCSE subjects, 23.5 months.

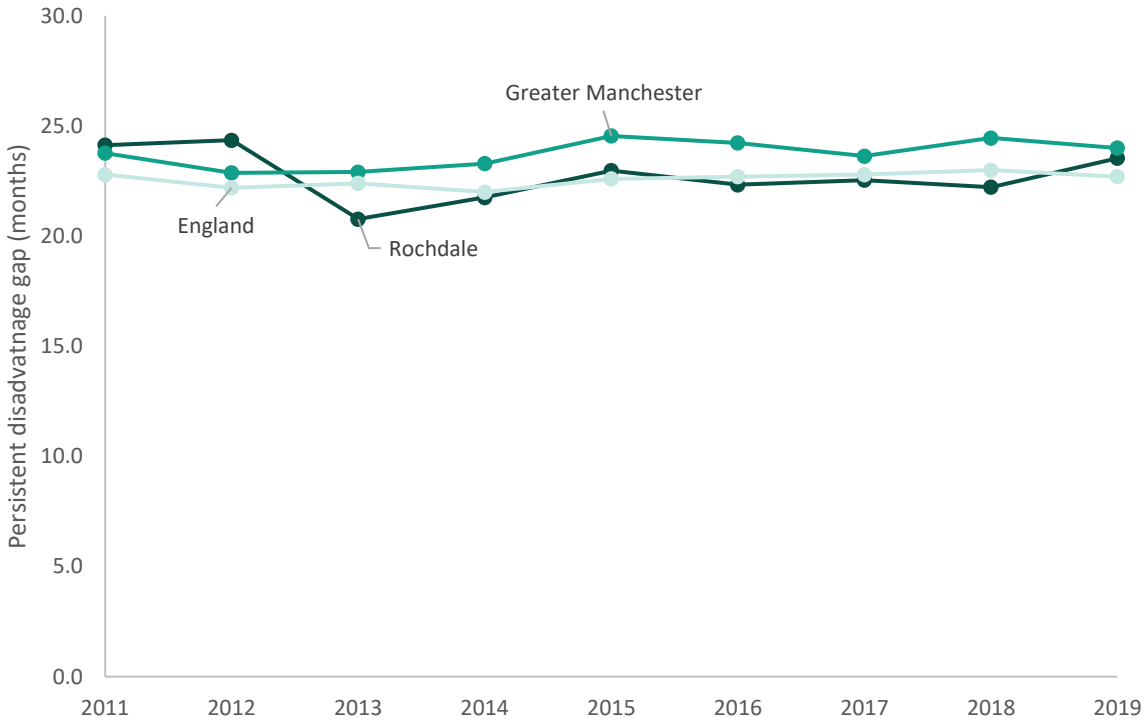
**Figure 4.5.1: Trends in the size of the GCSE persistent disadvantage gap since 2011, Rochdale**

| | GCSE all-subject gap in months | GCSE English and maths gap in months | GCSE all-subject gap in grades | GCSE English and maths gap in grades |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 25.0 | 24.1 | | |
| 2012 | 24.9 | 24.4 | | |
| 2013 | 21.1 | 20.8 | | |
| 2014 | 22.7 | 21.8 | | |
| 2015 | 23.4 | 23.0 | | |
| 2016 | 24.3 | 22.3 | | |
| 2017 | 21.5 | 22.5 | | |
| 2018 | 22.1 | 22.2 | 1.56 | 1.59 |
| 2019 | 23.5 | 23.5 | 1.63 | 1.65 |
| 2020 | | | 1.65 | 1.71 |
| 2019-2020 change (%) | NA | NA | 1.0% | 3.7% |
| 2011-2019 change (%) | -6.0% | -2.5% | NA | NA |

Figure 4.5.2 shows the persistent disadvantage gap for GCSE English and maths in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England over time. In 2019 the persistent disadvantage gap at the end of KS4 was 23.5 months in Rochdale, 24.0 months in Greater Manchester and 22.7 months across England. Across the timeseries (from 2011 to 2019) the number of persistently disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale was between 466 and 329 and about 10 times greater in Greater Manchester.

For England and Greater Manchester the persistent disadvantage gap has stayed broadly stable since 2011 (23.8 months to 24.0 months in Greater Manchester and 22.8 to 22.7 months nationally). The gap in Rochdale has been more volatile, as would be expected from a smaller geographic area. The persistent disadvantage gap in Rochdale has historically been close to the national average and currently sits between the national and Greater Manchester average.

**Figure 4.5.2 GCSE English and maths persistent disadvantage gap, in months, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2011-2019**




As for the headline GCSE disadvantage gap measure, we recalculate the persistent disadvantage gap for 2020 as a gap in grades rather than months, to reflect the fact that grades awarded in the absence of exams may not be a good guide to some students' underlying learning in 2020. The methodology is also applied to historic data for comparison. Figure 4.5.3 shows how the persistent disadvantage gap in Rochdale in 2020 compares with Greater Manchester and England.

The persistent disadvantage grade gap in Rochdale and Greater Manchester is 1.71 in 2020, compared with 1.60 nationally. This means that, on average in 2020, persistently disadvantaged pupils in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England achieved more than one and a half GCSE grades less than their peers per subject (based on English and maths). The difference between the Rochdale and Greater Manchester gaps and the national gap is slightly larger on this measure than for the grade gaps for all disadvantaged pupils, reported in Section 4.2. The persistent disadvantage gap in Rochdale has increased from being below the national average in 2018 to being in between the national and Greater Manchester average in 2019, to matching the Greater Manchester gap in

2020. However, this trend should not be over-interpreted given the fairly small number of pupils used to calculate the gap and the change in the way GCSEs were awarded in 2020.

**Figure 4.5.3: GCSE English and maths persistent disadvantage grade gap, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2020 (2018 and 2019 for comparison only)**

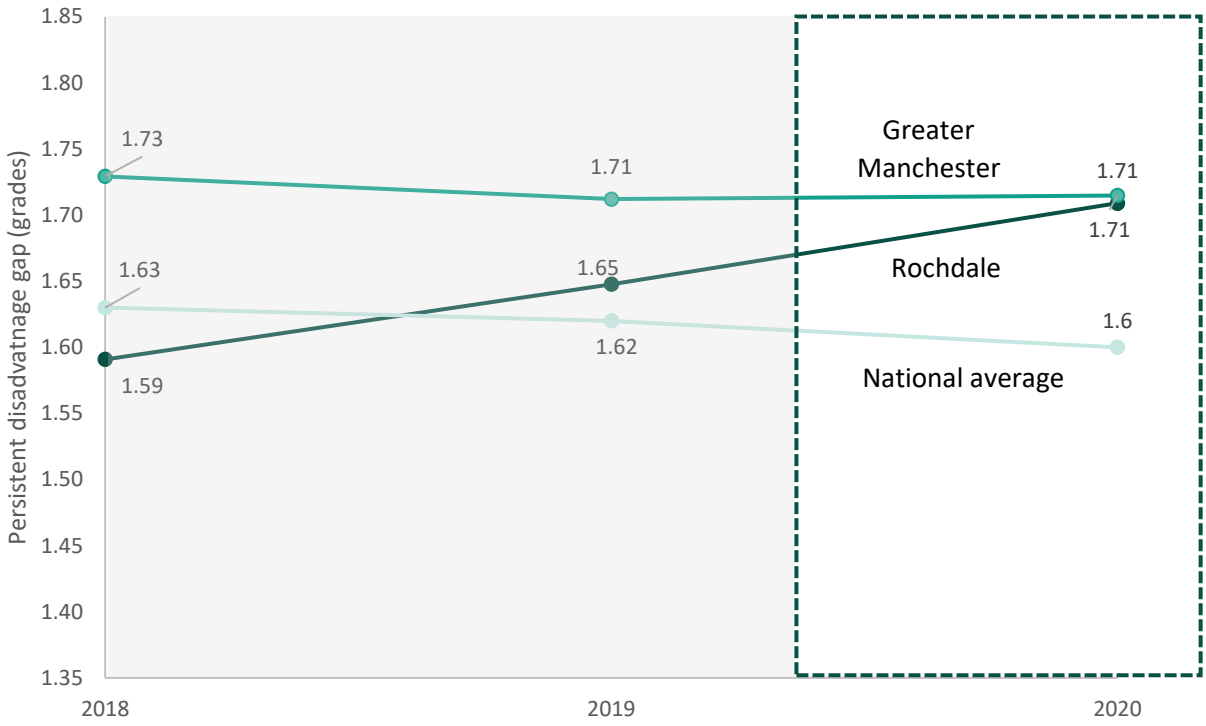



Figure 4.5.4 shows the size of the KS4 persistent disadvantage gap for pupils in different persistence categories in Rochdale. As the underlying pupil counts tend to be small (see Annex), Figure 4.5.4 is somewhat erratic but the general pattern is that the disadvantage gap increases as pupils are eligible for FSM for a greater proportion of their school life.

**Figure 4.5.4: GCSE English and maths disadvantage gap in months by level of persistence, 2011-2019, Rochdale**

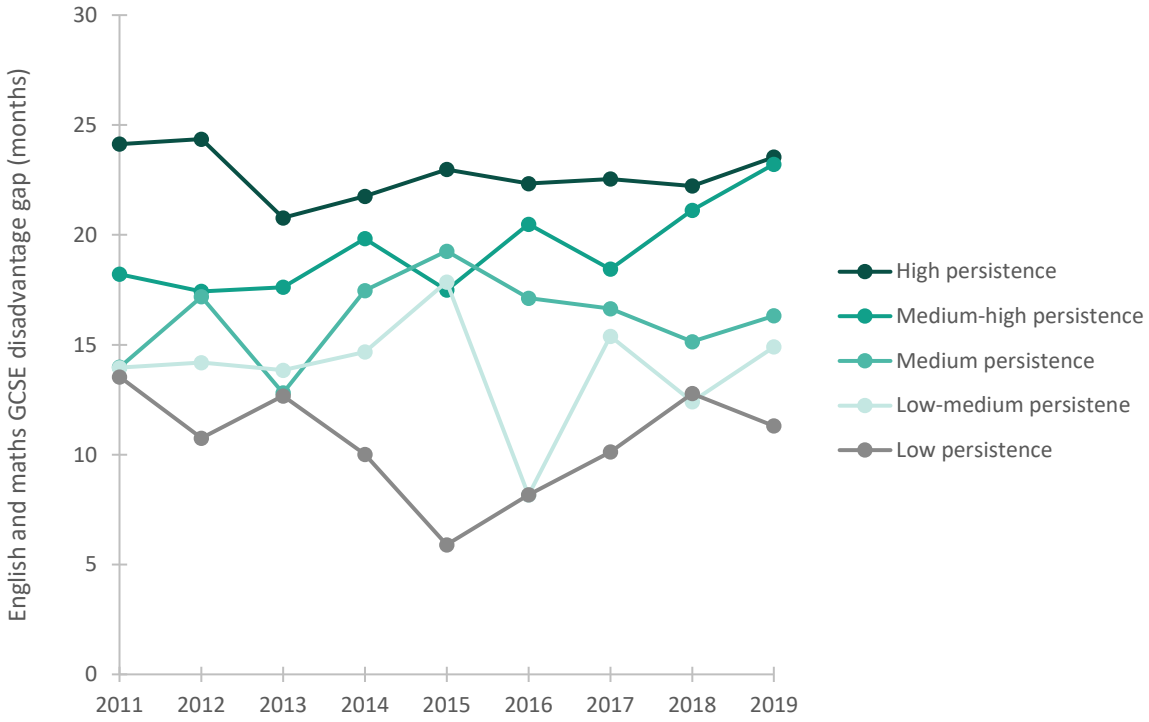
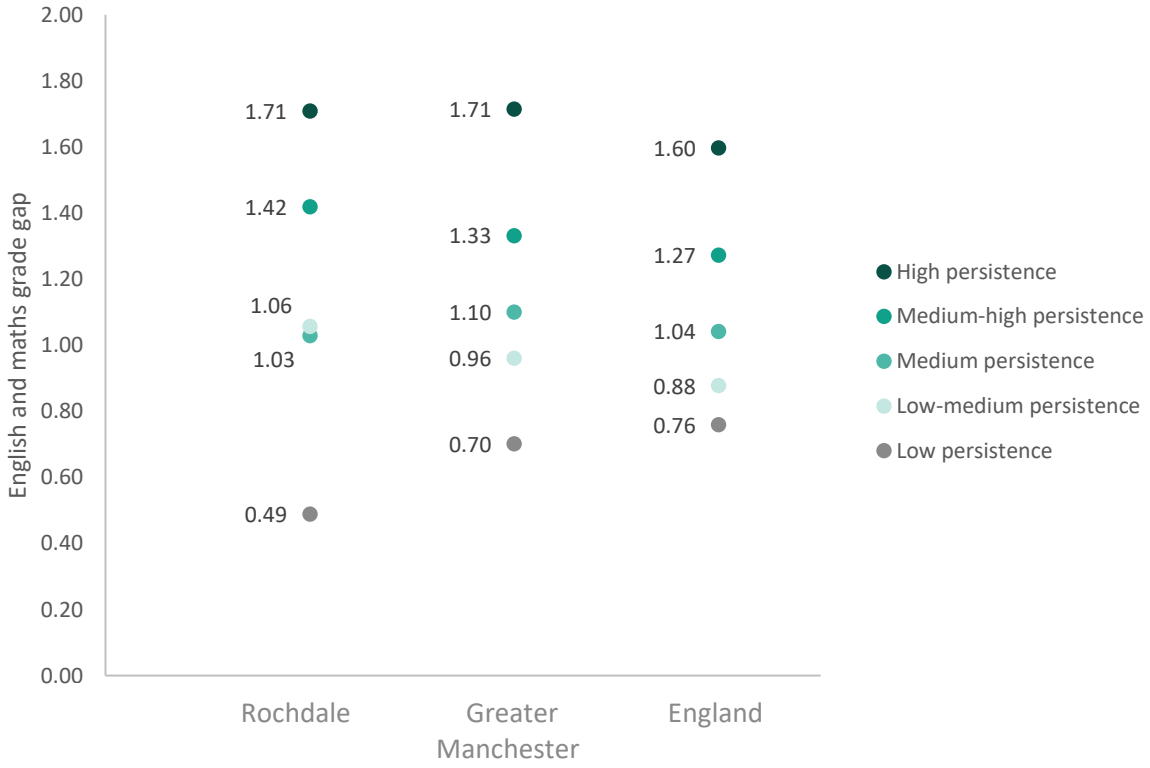



Figure 4.5.5 shows the size of the GCSE English and maths gap by persistence of disadvantage for Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England. Gaps in Rochdale are more dispersed: pupils facing the lowest levels of disadvantage (eligible for FSM at some point, but for less than 20 per cent of their school life) have a smaller disadvantage gap in Rochdale than in Greater Manchester or England. However, pupils that have been eligible for free school meals for longer than this typically have a greater gap in Rochdale than the England average, and similar sized gaps to equally disadvantaged pupils across Greater Manchester.

**Figure 4.5.5: GCSE English and maths disadvantage gap in grades by level of persistence, 2020, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England**



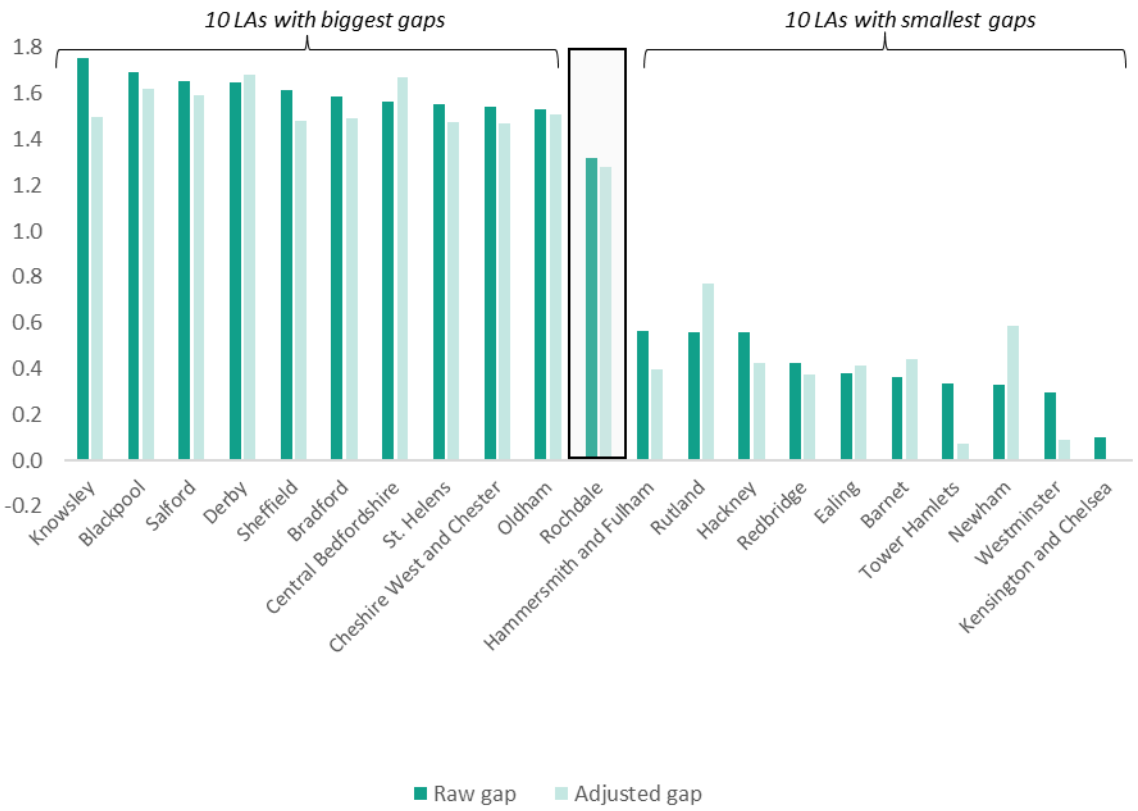

## 4.6 Key stage 4: disadvantage gaps adjusted for persistence

Earlier in this report we saw that there is sizeable geographic variation between local authorities in terms of overall attainment, at both key stage 2 and 4. We have also seen that areas differ in their levels of disadvantage and that the size of the GCSE gap can be related to the persistence of disadvantage that pupils face. In this section we consider how the size of the disadvantage gap is affected if we explicitly adjust for local persistence of disadvantage.

Our 'adjusted' disadvantage gap is what the measured grade gap would be if a given area had the same level of persistent disadvantage among its disadvantaged pupils as England as a whole. It is based on a regression model which allows us to strip out the effects of local demographics on the 'raw' gap so that comparisons of educational outcomes across local areas are more meaningful.

Figure 4.6.1 shows the local authorities with some of the biggest and smallest 'raw' GCSE disadvantage gaps in the country. The five local authorities with the largest gaps in 2020 are: Knowsley (1.76 GCSE grades), Blackpool (1.69), Salford (1.66), Derby (1.65) and Sheffield (1.61). The smallest gaps are found in Kensington and Chelsea (0.10), Westminster (0.29), Newham (0.33), Tower Hamlets (0.34) and Barnet (0.36). Indeed, London heavily dominates the list of areas with the smallest disadvantage gaps – a widely reported phenomenon known as the 'London Effect'. Rochdale ranks 89 among this list of 149 local authorities (with 1 being the largest gap in Knowlsey) with a raw gap of 1.32 grades.

**Figure 4.6.1: How Rochdale compares to the 10 local authorities with the biggest and smallest (raw) disadvantage gaps in GCSE English and maths in 2020[7]**




We find that adjusting for the persistence of disadvantage in a locality can have a significant impact on the disadvantage gap, and on the relative ranking of local authorities in England. The gap narrows for half of local authorities and widens for the other half (and by construction, the national gap is unaltered). The adjusted disadvantage gap narrows for areas with relatively high levels of persistent poverty among their disadvantaged pupil population, and it worsens the gap for areas with relatively low levels of persistent poverty.

Looking again at the local authorities included in Figure 4.6.1 we see that in some areas – like Knowsley and Tower Hamlets – their adjusted gaps are lower than their raw gaps. This means that once levels of disadvantage among their local pupil populations are taken into account, their relative position improves. In other words, they are not doing as badly as the raw ranking suggests, given the profile of disadvantage they are dealing with. Meanwhile in places like Newham and Rutland the reverse is true: their disadvantage gaps tend to worsen once we account for their local pupil profiles. So conditional on the profile of students they cater for, these areas are not doing as well as their raw gaps suggest.

Rochdale, by contrast, has a ranking of 89 on both its raw and adjusted gap measures. That is, its adjusted gap is little different to its raw gap. This means its local demographics are not necessarily

[7] City of London and Isles of Scilly suppressed due to low pupil counts

driving its relative gap performance – it is broadly doing as well as the national average once we factor in its local levels of disadvantage.

# Trends in 16-19 participation, outcomes, attainment and disadvantage gaps

This section provides a statistical roundup of post-16 educational outcomes in Rochdale, compared with England and Greater Manchester for regional context. These measures are mostly drawn from publicly available figures, and cover:

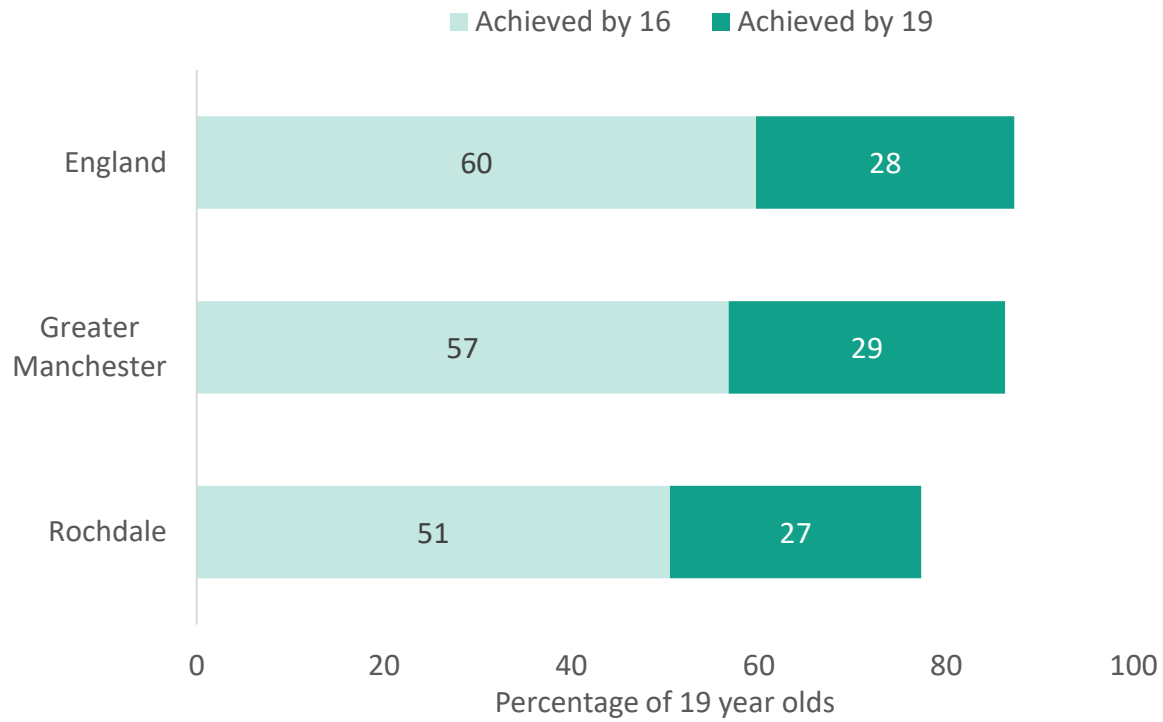
- Headline attainment for 16 and 19 year olds
- Participation of 16- and 17-year-olds in education, employment or training
- Destinations of 16-to-18 students going into apprenticeships, education and employment destinations
- An analysis of the 16-19 disadvantage gap.

## 5.1 Headline attainment for 16 and 19 year olds

Figure 5.1.1 looks at the proportion of 16 and 19-year-olds qualified to at least Level 2 (5 GCSEs or equivalent, including English and maths). Across England, 60 per cent of young people achieve this threshold by 16 and 87 per cent by 19. In Greater Manchester slightly fewer young people achieve this by 16 (57 per cent) or by 19 (86 per cent). In Rochdale 51 per cent of young people are qualified at Level 2 (including English and maths) by age 16 and 78 per cent by 19. Rochdale ranks 135 of 149 local authorities for the percentage of students achieving this threshold by age 16 and 89 out of 149 for the additional percentage of students achieving this milestone by 19.

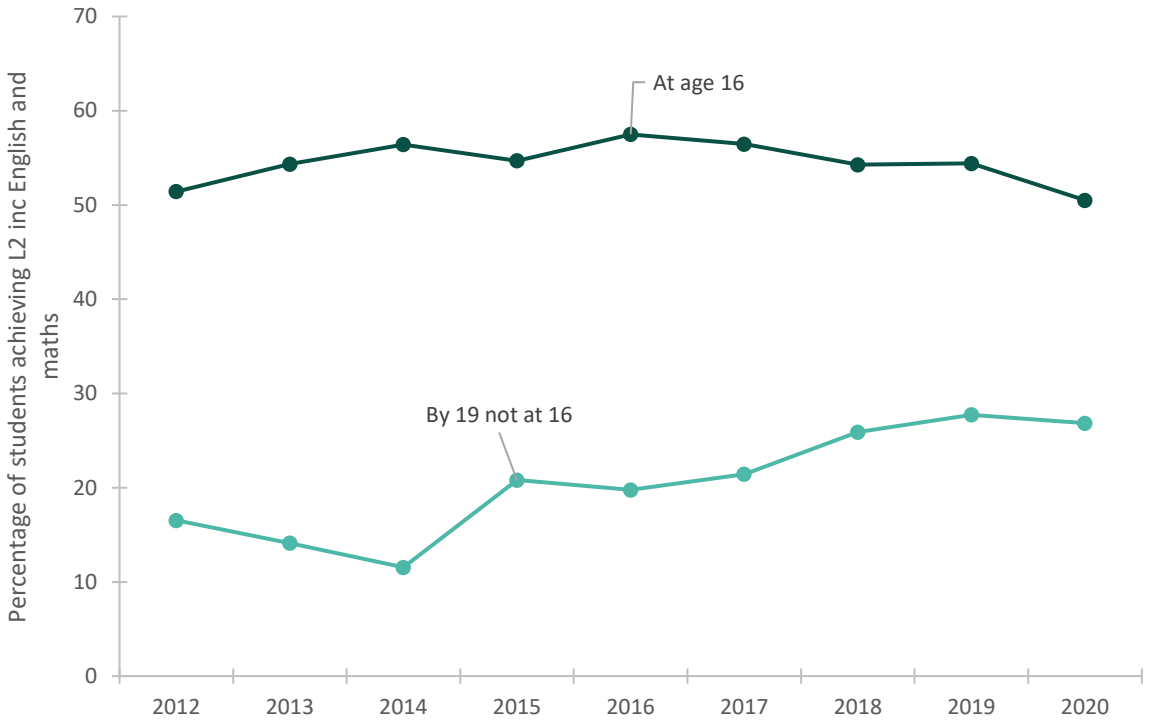
Figure 5.1.2 shows how this metric has changed over time. In 2012 the proportion of 16 year olds qualified at Level 2 (including English and maths) in Rochdale was 51 per cent. This rose to 57 per cent in 2016 and has since fallen back to 51 per cent. However, the additional proportion of young people who have not achieved this milestone at 16 but go on to achieve it by 19 has risen, from 17 per cent in 2012 to 27 per cent in 2020. Rochdale's ability to help young people 'catch-up' during the 16-19 phase has improved.

**Figure 5.1.1: Proportion of young people qualified to Level 2, including English and Maths, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England 2020[8]**




[8] Figure 5.1.1 and Figure 5.1.2 use data from the DfE "Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2020": https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19-in-2020

**Figure 5.1.2: Proportion of young people qualified to Level 2 (including English and maths) in Rochdale at age 16 and at age 19 who were not qualified at this level at age 16**[9]

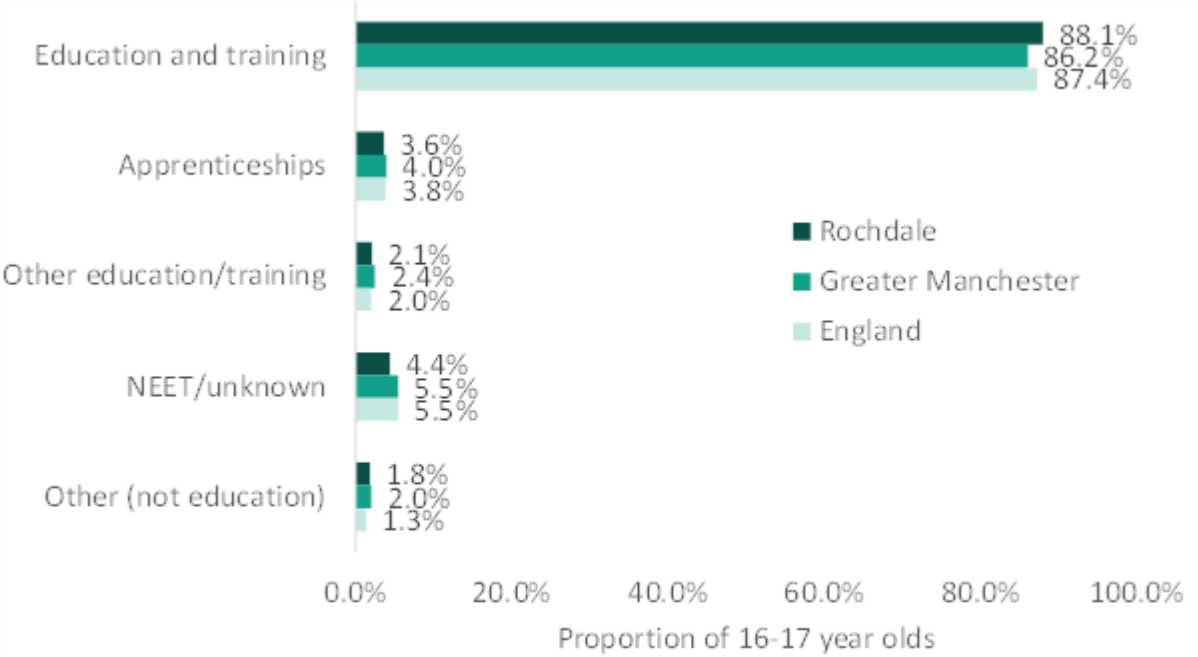



## 5.2 Participation of 16- and 17-year-olds in education, employment or training

Figure 5.2.1 shows the participation rates of 16 and 17 year-olds in Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England. This shows where Rochdale pupils progress after key stage 4. Data for 18 year-olds is only available at a national, rather than local authority level.

[9] Figure 5.3.1 uses data from the DfE "Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2020": https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19-in-2020

**Figure 5.2.1: Participation of 16- and 17-years olds, 2021[10]**

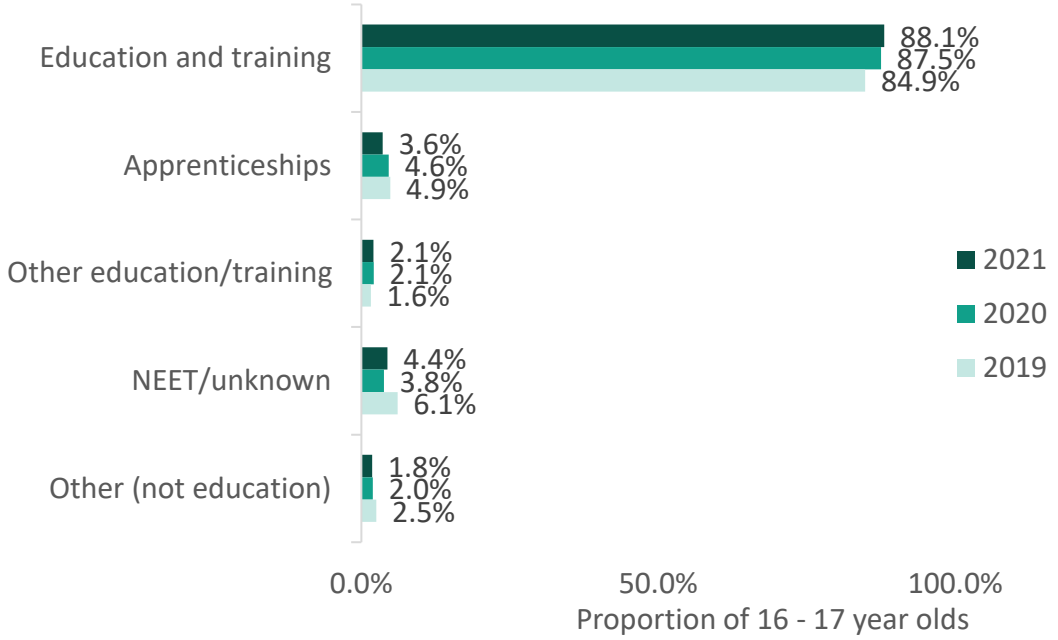



A slightly higher proportion of 16 and 17 year-olds in Rochdale participate in education and training compared to the national and Greater Manchester average. The proportion of young people progressing to an apprenticeship matches the national average but is slightly below the Greater Manchester average. Fewer young people in Rochdale, on average, are NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training).

Figure 5.2.2 shows the how the participation rates of 16 and 17 year-olds in Rochdale has changed over the last three years. Between 2019 and 2021 the proportion of 16 and 17 year-olds participating in education and training has increased and the number undertaking apprenticeships has decreased – these changes are largely in line with the national average. The proportion of young people not in Education, Employment or Training fell from 2019 to 2020 but rose slightly in 2021 (6.1 per cent in 2019, 3.8 per cent in 2020, 4.4 per cent in 2021).

[10] Figures 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 use data from the DfE "Participation in education and training and employment" statistical release: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-and-training-and-employment/2020

**Figure 5.2.2: Participation of 16- and 17-years olds in Rochdale, 2019-2021**




## 5.3 Destinations of 16-to-18 students

Figure 5.3.1 shows the destinations of young people in Rochdale and Greater Manchester who have completed 16 to 18 study. About twice as many young people from Rochdale progress to further education after 16-18 study, compared to Greater Manchester and England. Fewer Rochdale students go to higher education or employment.

Figure 5.3.2 shows how the destinations of young people leaving 16-18 study have changed from 2018 to 2020. For simplicity only the national average is shown as a comparator. The proportion of students progressing to higher education has increased from 29 per cent in 2018 to 32 per cent in 2020. The proportion of students progressing to an apprenticeship or employment has fallen slightly (10 per cent to 9 per cent progressing to an apprenticeship and 22 per cent to 19 per cent progressing to employment).

**Figure 5.3.1: Destinations of students leaving 16 to 18 study, 2020[11]**

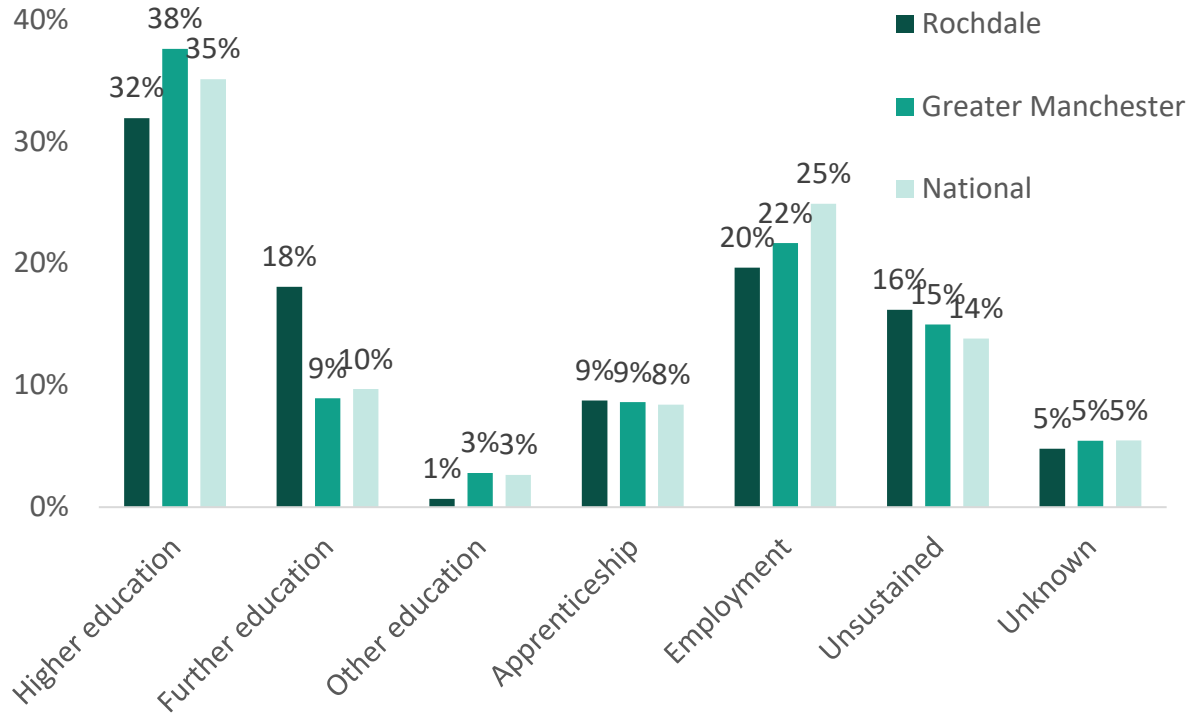
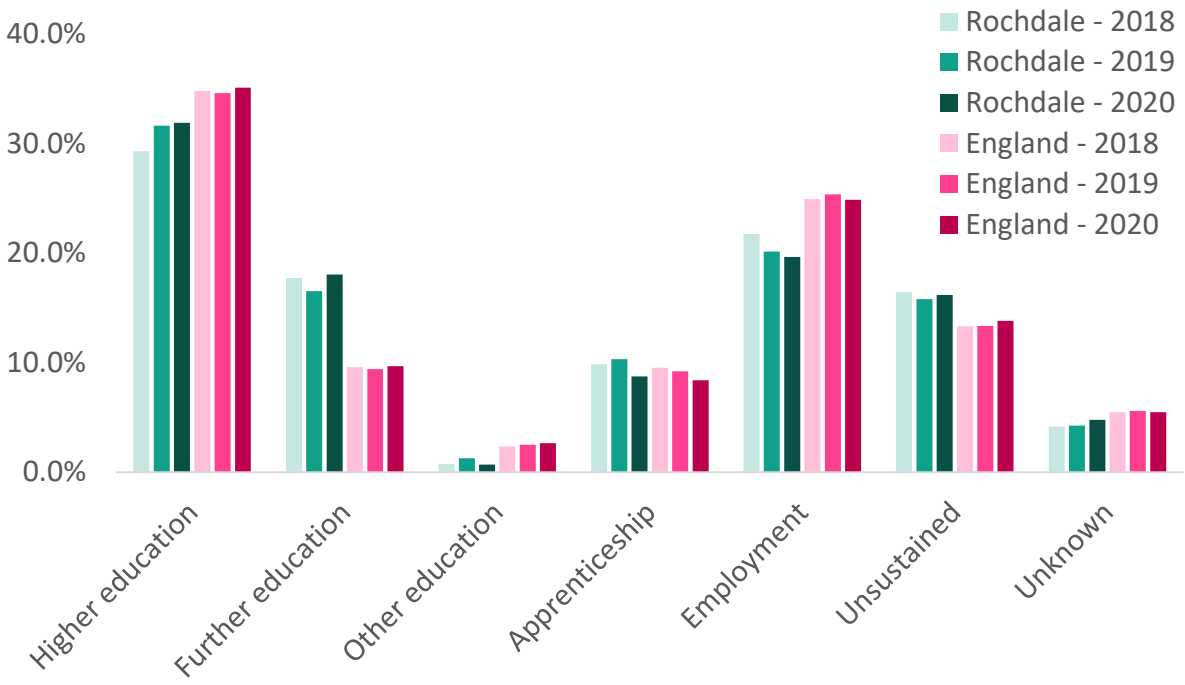


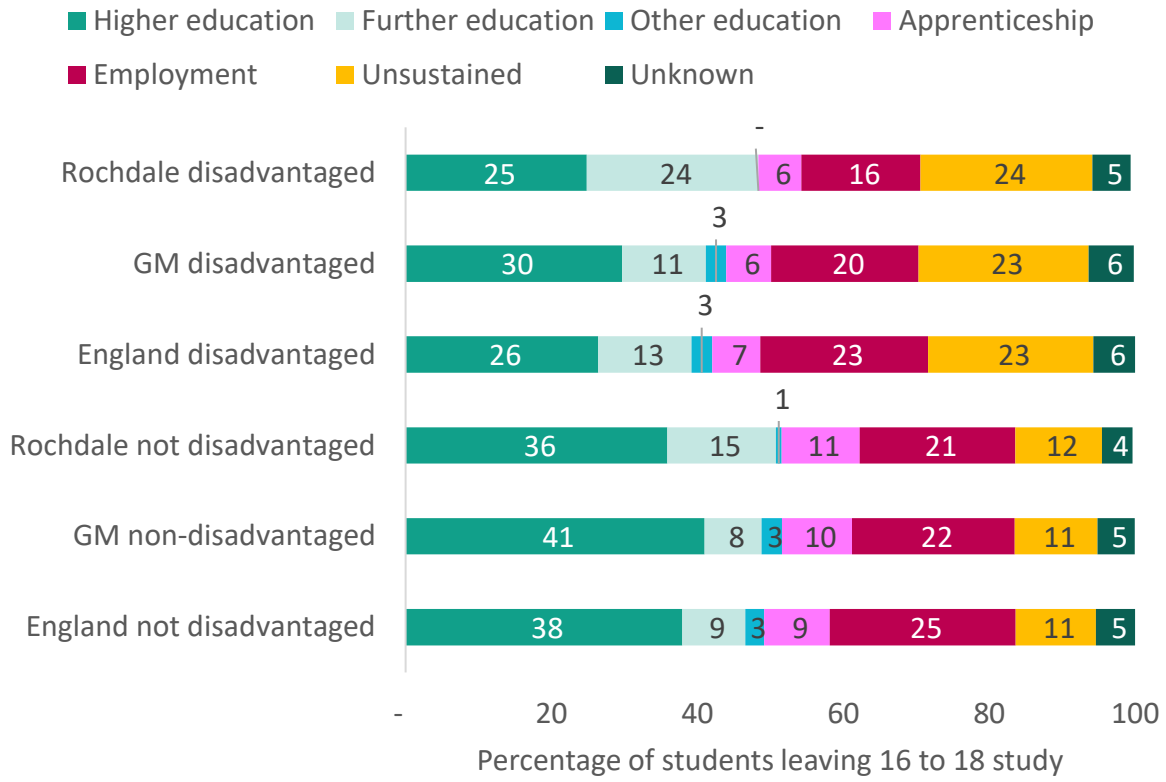

**Figure 5.3.2: Destinations of students leaving 16 to 18 study, 2018 – 2020**




[11] Figures 5.3.1 – 5.3.3 use data from the DfE "16-18 destination measures": https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/16-18-destination-measures

Figure 5.3.3 shows how the destinations of young people leaving 16 to 18 study varies by disadvantage status. Fewer disadvantaged young people in Rochdale progress to higher education (25 per cent disadvantaged and 36 per cent non-disadvantaged), broadly mirroring the national picture. More disadvantaged young people in Rochdale progress to further education (24 per cent disadvantaged and 15 per cent non-disadvantaged). Fewer disadvantaged young people progress to employment (16 per cent disadvantaged, 21 per cent non-disadvantaged). Disadvantaged young people were twice as likely to fall into the 'unsustained' category, meaning they had participated in education, an apprenticeship or employment at some point during the academic year but did not complete the required six months of sustained participation or were known to be claiming out-of-work benefits at some time during the destination year (24 per cent disadvantaged, 12 per cent advantaged).

**Figure 5.3.3: Destinations of students leaving 16 to 18 study, by disadvantage status, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and England, 2020**




There are some clear differences comparing the destinations of disadvantaged young people in Rochdale to disadvantaged young people across England. The largest differences are that disadvantaged young people in Rochdale are again much more likely to go on to further education after 16-18 study (24 per cent of Rochdale disadvantaged young people compared with 13 per cent of disadvantaged young people nationally). They are also less likely to go into employment (16 per cent of disadvantaged young people in Rochdale compared with 23 per cent of disadvantaged young people nationally).

Comparing Rochdale's average with the wider Greater Manchester average, all pupils (both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged) in Rochdale are less likely to progress to higher education. Across Greater Manchester disadvantaged pupils are more likely to go into higher education and

employment than disadvantaged young people in Rochdale, who again are far more likely to go into further education.

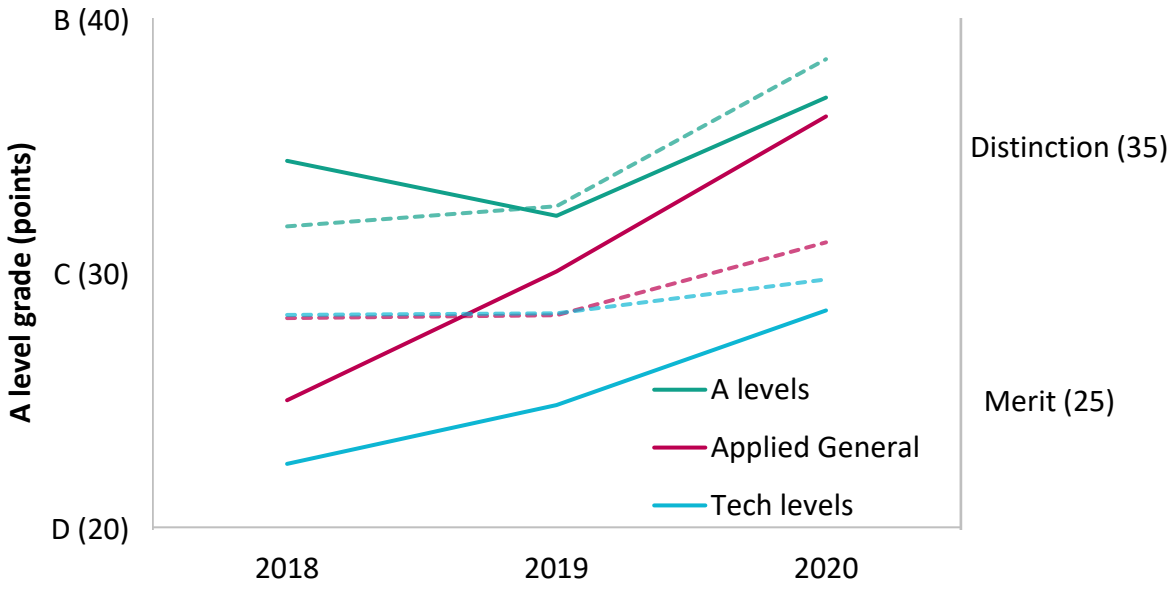
The next two figures report attainment for 16-19 education. Attainment figures broken down by local authority are not yet available for the 2021 academic year, hence figures are shown for 2020 only.

## 5.4 Attainment at Level 3

Figure 5.4.1 looks at the average grade achieved by young people in Rochdale in their Level 3 qualifications. The dotted lines show the national average. A levels are taken by about 900 pupils per year in Rochdale. In 2018 the average grade in Rochdale was higher than the national average, sitting closer to a B than a C. In 2019 the Rochdale average grade fell while the national average slightly improved so that they were closely matched at slightly above a C grade. Following changes to the way grades were awarded in 2020, the average A level grade increased in both Rochdale and nationally, but the increase in Rochdale was more modest. The Rochdale average is now about half a grade below the national average and sits about halfway between a B and a C.

Applied General and Tech level qualifications are taken by much fewer pupils, although they have increased in popularity from 40 to 94 pupils for Applied Generals and from 28 to 44 for T levels between 2018 and 2020. Care should be taken not to over-interpret changes in average grade for these qualifications as they are based on small numbers and may reflect a change in the types of pupil being entered rather than quality of teaching. The average grade in Applied Generals has increased by about a grade, from halfway between a D and a C to halfway between a C and a B. This is a larger increase than the national trend and Rochdale's average grade is higher than the national average for these qualifications. For Tech levels, the average grade has risen from just above a D to just below a C, also a faster rate of increase than nationally but the Rochdale average remains below the national average.

**Figure 5.4.1: Average grades in level 3 qualifications, 2018 – 2020, dotted lines = national average[12]**




## 5.5 16-19: disadvantage gaps over time

Using data from the National Pupil Database we create a measure of the disadvantage gap for 16-19 education. The methodology is different to that used to determine disadvantage gaps for younger pupils such that this measure is not directly comparable with disadvantage gap measures for key stage 4 or younger pupils. Instead of reporting a disadvantage gap in terms of months of progress or grade per qualification, for the 16-19 phase we report the gap as the average difference in equivalised A level grades for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils across students' best 3 qualifications (or equivalent in size to 3 A levels). As there is no formal measure of pupil disadvantage beyond 16 we count as disadvantaged those pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals in any of the six years prior to finishing key stage 4. This means there is a slight lag in identifying pupils as disadvantaged at this educational stage.

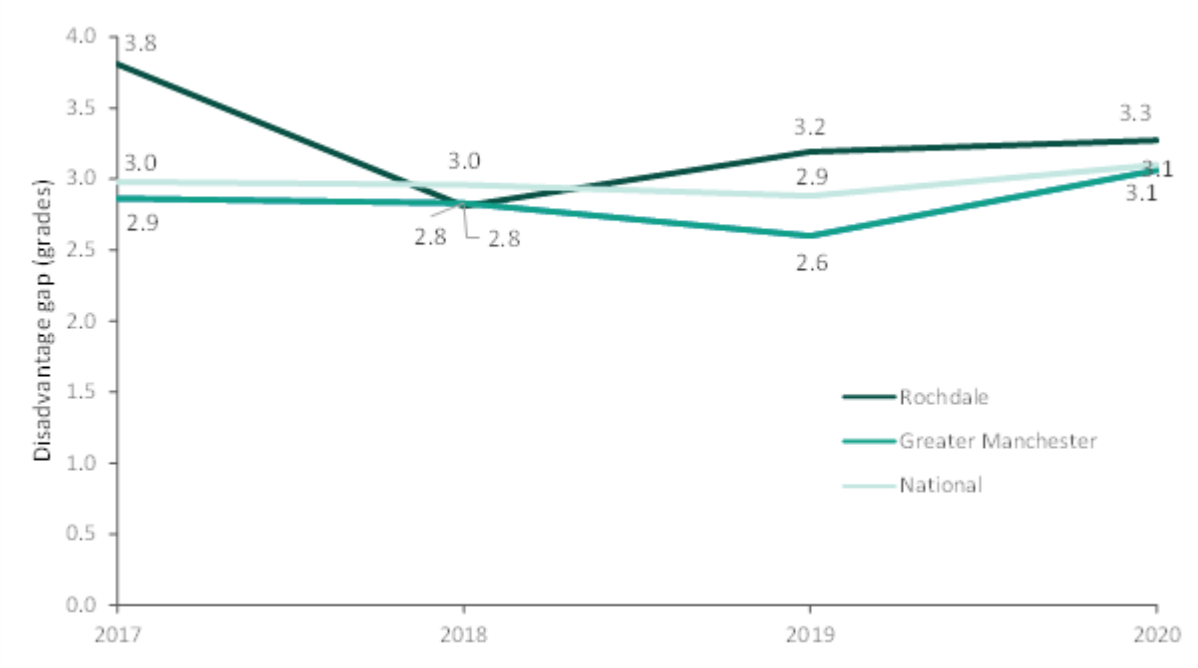
For more details on the methodology used see the EPI report "Measuring the disadvantage gap in 16-19 education".

Figure 5.5.1 shows how the 16-19 disadvantage gap has changed in Rochdale over the last four years. Exam results for 16-19 year olds were disrupted in 2020, as for GCSEs. Overall grades increased for most institution types and student characteristic groups compared with 2019, but not all benefited from increased grades to the same extent. In particular, students at colleges (excluding sixth form colleges) received very similar grades to the previous cohort whilst those at other institution types saw an increase. Differences in outcomes in Rochdale may therefore be driven by a different mix in institution types compared with England and further analysis would be required to determine this.

[12] Figure 5.3.2 uses data from the DfE "A level and other 16 to 18 results": https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2019-20

Each year around 700 disadvantaged students in Rochdale sit qualifications we include in our calculation of the 16-19 disadvantage gap. For Greater Manchester that figure is about 8,000 (increasing to 8,800 in 2020). As fewer students are included in the Rochdale calculations we would expect more volatility in the gap, which we see. However, generally the gap in Rochdale is above the national average, which is above the Greater Manchester average. For 2020 disadvantaged students in Rochdale who sit Level 3 qualifications achieve the equivalent of 3.3 A level grades lower than their peers. The gap across England and Greater Manchester was 3.1 A level grades.

**Figure 5.5.1: 16-19 disadvantage gap, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and national average, 2017-2020**



# Annex

**Figure A.1: Number of pupils at the end of KS4 in each persistence category in Rochdale, 2011-2020**

| Year | Total FSM eligible pupils | Low | Low-medium | Medium | Medium-high | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 864 | 51 | 87 | 137 | 148 | 441 |
| 2012 | 921 | 79 | 140 | 148 | 137 | 417 |
| 2013 | 1032 | 100 | 138 | 183 | 145 | 466 |
| 2014 | 938 | 84 | 123 | 142 | 155 | 434 |
| 2015 | 899 | 86 | 103 | 152 | 166 | 392 |
| 2016 | 852 | 88 | 113 | 167 | 148 | 336 |
| 2017 | 876 | 100 | 110 | 177 | 154 | 335 |
| 2018 | 827 | 81 | 133 | 150 | 143 | 320 |
| 2019 | 925 | 115 | 157 | 175 | 149 | 329 |
| 2020 | 854 | 79 | 106 | 200 | 119 | 350 |

**Figure A.2: Count of pupils experiencing highly persistent disadvantage in Rochdale, 2011-2020**

| Year | Number of high persistence pupils | Number of always eligible pupils | Share of high persistence pupils always eligible |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 441 | 250 | 57% |
| 2012 | 417 | 245 | 59% |
| 2013 | 466 | 299 | 64% |
| 2014 | 434 | 271 | 62% |
| 2015 | 392 | 237 | 60% |
| 2016 | 336 | 189 | 56% |
| 2017 | 335 | 188 | 56% |
| 2018 | 320 | 199 | 62% |
| 2019 | 329 | 206 | 63% |
| 2020 | 350 | 237 | 68% |