

Greater Manchester Search and Apply

Evaluation Report | August 2016



Contents

Executive Summary	4
Section B	10
1. Introduction and Background	10
1.1. Introduction	10
1.2 Scope of the Project	11
1.3 Background	11
1.4 The Project Delivery Partnership	12
2 Policy Context and Policy Developments.....	13
2.1 Raising Participation.....	13
2.2 Improving Careers Education.....	13
2.3 The Search and Apply Process in Greater Manchester	14
2.4 Apprenticeship Policy.....	15
3. Introduction to UCAS Progress	17
3.1 The UCAS Progress Platform	17
Section C	19
4. Engagement and Progress Across Greater Manchester	19
4.1 Project Activity	19
4.2 Progress in adopting Search and Apply	19
4.4 Key Findings	23
4.5 Recommendations	24
5. Progress in individual Local Authority Areas.....	26
5.1 Bolton.....	26
5.2 Bury	26
5.3 Manchester	27
5.4 Oldham.....	28
5.5 Rochdale.....	28
5.6 Salford	28
5.7 Stockport.....	29
5.8 Tameside	29
5.9 Trafford	29
5.10 Wigan	30

Section D	31
6. Apprenticeships and Traineeships	31
6.1 Apprenticeships and Traineeships	31
6.2 Baseline Assessment	31
6.3 Project Activity Undertaken to Date	33
6.4 Progress and Outcomes	34
6.5 Key Findings and Recommendations	36
6.6 System Enhancements	37
7 Pilot Activity with Young People in Years 12 and 13.....	39
7.1 Introduction	39
7.2 Project Activity	39
7.3 Progress to Date.....	39
7.4 Key Findings and Recommendations	40
Section E.....	41
8. The UCAS Progress System in Action	41
8.1 Current use of the System in Greater Manchester	41
8.2 Using the UCAS Progress System (Young People	42
8.2 Using the UCAS Progress System (Post-16 Providers)	42
8.3 UCAS Progress Functions for Providers	43
8.5 UCAS Progress – Feedback from Key Stakeholder Groups	44
8.6 Using UCAS Progress: Detailed Issues and Lessons Learnt	47

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Greater Manchester Search and Apply process for school and college leavers has formed an important part of the sub-region's ambition to increase participation in post-16 education and training and to raise the awareness, understanding and take up of Apprenticeships amongst young people in Greater Manchester.
2. The project, which was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub at the beginning of 2015, has helped to extend the use of the UCAS Progress system into a third of Greater Manchester's secondary schools and academies and has helped to support more than 10,000 young people, primarily in Year 11, search and apply for post-16 learning and training opportunities through a single, integrated online prospectus and application process.
3. The project has been delivered by Career Connect, in partnership with the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) and Positive Steps. The project has been overseen by a Steering Group which is chaired by Salford City Council and made up of representatives from the Combined Authority, the ten local authorities, further education and sixth form colleges, schools, independent training providers and UCAS.
4. Prior to the start of the current project, the UCAS Progress system was already being used by a number of secondary schools, colleges and training providers in Greater Manchester, most notably in the Bolton and Salford areas. However, through the delivery of this project, the level of engagement amongst young people has increased by more than a third, whilst the number of post-16 education and training providers listing their course information and receiving applications from prospective learners through the UCAS Progress system has more than doubled.
5. At the end of April, nearly 15,000 applications had been submitted through the system by young people in Greater Manchester, with more than a third of the sub-region's secondary schools and academies promoting the system to their pupils in Years 10 and 11. Over 60 post-16 education and training providers from Greater Manchester had received at least one application (or an *Expression of Interest* in respect of Apprenticeships) from a prospective learner through the system.
6. The primary aim of the Search and Apply project has been to extend the use of the UCAS Progress system across Greater Manchester, with a particular emphasis being placed on supporting those areas and/or schools where historical engagement with the system and process has been low. At the outset of the project, schools from five of the local authority areas had had some previous involvement with the process, with the highest levels of activity and engagement amongst schools in the Bolton and Salford areas. As a consequence of the project, engagement levels across Greater Manchester have increased significantly, with at least one school using the system to support their pupils with applications to post-16 learning and training in nine of the ten local authority areas.

7. As a consequence of the project, and the incentive to meet Government requirements, the vast majority of post-16 providers in Greater Manchester have recognised the benefits of making their course provision visible to young people via UCAS Progress. The system now holds comprehensive post-16 course information for nearly every major post-16 provider operating in Greater Manchester, including the vast majority of Apprenticeship opportunities.
8. Despite this, use of the UCAS Progress system as a recruitment mechanism has varied considerably across the different local authority areas. Levels of engagement have been much more substantial in those local authority areas where the largest post-16 providers have committed to use the system to receive and process applications or where the local authority has been an active supporter of the system and has helped to promote the process to their schools and post-16 provider base.
9. Progress has been most significant in the Bolton, Oldham, Salford and Wigan areas, where the major post-16 providers including the local further education and sixth form colleges have engaged with the process and have promoted the system to their schools and prospective learners. In Bolton and Salford, the local authorities have also helped to register pupils on the system, which has provided increased accessibility to young people and encouraged more schools to promote the system to their pupils in Year 11. In Wigan, the local authority has championed use of the system with their schools, significantly improving levels of engagement.
10. Local authorities and their relevant IAG services have also been able to use the system to better track the intended destinations of their resident Year 11 learners and to identify those that may be at risk of not participating in education, employment or training (NEET) post-16. This is a statutory requirement for local authorities, which the system has been able to support. However, the vast majority of post-16 providers have not recorded offer and enrolment data on the system. This means that its potential to support these statutory processes has not been fully utilised. Colleges, in particular, have highlighted compatibility issues with their own systems as the main barrier to supplying this information.
11. Progress in areas where the largest post-16 providers have chosen to use their own systems to receive and process applications has been much more modest, resulting in very low levels of engagement within certain schools in the affected areas. This is particularly evident in areas such as Rochdale and Tameside, where the major post-16 providers have yet to adopt the system to accept applications from young people in schools. As a consequence schools in those areas have been hesitant to adopt the system due to the restrictions and limitations their pupils may have experienced when trying to search and apply for opportunities through the UCAS Progress system.
12. In addition engagement activity in certain areas has been limited because of issues raised by schools and/or the local authority regarding data sharing arrangements. In particular, concerns were raised about the legality or necessity to share pupil data

with a third-party system supplier (i.e. UCAS) to set up pupil accounts. This resulted in some schools, either directly or under the advice on their local authority, choosing to not register their pupils on the UCAS Progress system. In some circumstances, pupils were able to use the system if they self-registered for an account, but support from their school or local authority IAG service was limited because of their restricted access to information.

13. In areas where the local authority has not actively promoted the system to schools very few have engaged with the project. This is most notable in Bury, Stockport and Trafford. Albeit within these areas support has been made available to both schools and post-16 providers by the project delivery partners.
14. In some areas where direct local authority support was limited, colleges were proactive in promoting the resource to their schools. This was particularly evident in Oldham, where progress has been substantial because both the further education and sixth form college combined to promote the use of the system to their prospective students via their websites, prospectuses and school liaison activities. Similar arrangements were also undertaken by the colleges in Bolton, Manchester, Salford and Wigan with local authority support.
15. In addition to extending the general use of the UCAS Progress system in Greater Manchester, the GM Search and Apply project has also had a specific target to increase the number of young people submitting an expression of interest to take up an Apprenticeship via the UCAS Progress system.
16. Prior to the inception of the project there was clear recognition of the disparities between schools in the way in which Apprenticeships and Traineeships were promoted to young people as well as some systematic barriers preventing young people from registering an interest in taking an Apprenticeship at the same time as being able to apply to a college or sixth form. One of the significant weaknesses was that many of the Apprenticeship opportunities available were not included on the UCAS Progress system. Substantial progress has been in respect of this issue and the vast majority of available Apprenticeship opportunities are now included. In addition they are now presented in a more consistent and user friendly manner.
17. As a consequence, the proportion of young people submitting expressions of interest has increased by more than a third when compared to the same point last year. This year Apprenticeship expressions of interest accounted for 12% of the total applications submitted by learners in Greater Manchester through the UCAS Progress system compared to just 9% in 2014/15.
18. The use of the system with young people in Years 12 and 13 has been piloted in a small number of post-16 providers, but technical limitations have restricted the use of the system for this age group as it has been specifically designed for use by Year 11 pupils.

Conclusion and recommendations

19. The UCAS Progress system continues to be the market leader for common application process software in the UK, with around 90% of post-16 courses offered to young people aged 16-18 in England and Wales being displayed on the system during the 2015/16 academic year. Whilst there has been an emergence of other similar products and services to rival the UCAS Progress system in recent months (e.g. UniFrog, U-Explore), the fact that the system is already well-established in most parts of Greater Manchester and facilitates the most comprehensive range of post-16 course information makes it the most appropriate system for continuing to deliver the Search and Apply process in Greater Manchester.
20. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that alternative systems and products are available in Greater Manchester, including those developed and/or procured by Rochdale MBC and the 'Pathways to Productivity' project, which primarily help to support young people to search and apply for Apprenticeship opportunities in their respective areas. Although it is recommended that a licence extension is secured from UCAS to enable the bulk of the Search and Apply process to be delivered through the UCAS Progress system in 2016/17, it is also recommended that closer consultation is carried out with the other local projects and processes to examine how Search and Apply could be improved in the future, with the potential to explore the procurement of a more comprehensive system for delivering the Search and Apply process in Greater Manchester from 2017/18.
21. However, critical to all of this is the retention of funding to support the delivery and expansion of the Search and Apply process in Greater Manchester over the next academic year. During the past year, dedicated funding acquired from the Apprenticeship Hub (via the City Deal) has been used to deliver and implement the process in Greater Manchester, as well as pay for the software licence from UCAS, which will cease in July 2016. This is likely to result in a significant gap in support for schools and providers, which will hinder further progress and expansion in Greater Manchester, potentially resulting in a reduction in the number of schools and young people using the system to search and/or apply for their post-16 opportunities.
22. The software licence, which provides local authorities with accurate and timely applicant data, as well as enabling post-16 providers to receive and process applications through the UCAS Progress system, also needs to be renewed. Consultation has already been carried out with some local authorities and colleges regarding possible contributions to the licence costs proposed for 2016/17. However, the software licence for Greater Manchester has historically been secured and paid for at a sub-regional level through programmes and initiatives such as the City Deal and GM Challenge, which has enabled all young people, schools and post-16 providers in Greater Manchester to have access to the system, irrespective of whether their local authority or area partnerships have supported and/or directly invested in the system and process.

23. The Search and Apply process continues to support a number of Greater Manchester's strategic ambitions for improving the quality and consistency of information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided to young people and has evidently enabled more young people to search and apply for Apprenticeship opportunities than in previous years. To help secure this ambition, we would recommend that the GMCA promotes the requirement for all post-16 providers to list their post-16 course information on the UCAS Progress system in 2016/17 (for entry in September 2017) as a minimum requirement within the Greater Manchester RPA and Apprenticeship strategies. This will help to ensure Greater Manchester benefits from having a comprehensive directory of post-16 provision that can be accessed and utilised by young people, their parents/carers and advisers when searching for post 16 learning and training in the sub-regional area.
24. In addition, we would also expect local IAG service providers, principally Career Connect and Positive Steps, to continue to act as champions for the system and process in Greater Manchester. The project has helped to build capacity and expertise within these organisations and it is recommended that the legacy and sustainability of the project becomes embedded within each service's core IAG offer to schools.
25. The outcomes of the Area-Based Review, alongside national reforms to Apprenticeship provision and higher education, will lead to significant post-16 re-organisation taking place in Greater Manchester. For young people, parents/carers and schools, the need to have a better understanding of the changing post-16 landscape will be critical in helping to inform appropriate and realistic decision making. The Search and Apply process has already demonstrated its potential to support and add-value to current the offer of careers information, advice and guidance and it is therefore recommended that a business case for continuation is developed and presented to the AGMA Wider Leadership Team for consideration.
26. The majority of schools engaging with the GM Search and Apply project have been positive about their experience of using the UCAS Progress system and recognise both the current and potential benefits of creating a single, integrated online prospectus that can support their learners to search and apply for learning and training opportunities in the Greater Manchester area.
27. However, the engagement of post-16 providers has been more varied. Most recognise the benefits of including their organisation's offer in a system and process that supports young people to access more independent and impartial information on post-16 course opportunities. A number have been reluctant to use the system for processing applications, especially where they consider their existing system to be functioning effectively and/or where additional investment is required to support greater compatibility between UCAS Progress and their own management information system (MIS).
28. Over the course of the project, significant progress has been made to address these barriers and has resulted in twice as many providers using the system to promote

opportunities and receive applications from young people in 2015/16 compared to the previous year. However, more needs to be done to improve the perceptions held by those providers not currently engaging with the system, including better support for integrating management information systems, inputting course information onto system and managing applications and expressions of interest from prospective learners. Although some central support functions are offered to providers by UCAS (as part of the licence agreement), it is recommended that a local support function is retained in Greater Manchester to help improve and sustain provider relationships and support better system integration.

29. Effective tracking is critical to fulfilling a local authority's statutory duties for promoting the effective participation of young people in their area and can be used to help identify those young people who may be at risk of disengaging post-16 and becoming NEET. At present, the UCAS Progress system is being used by a small proportion of local authorities and/or IAG services as a tool for capturing intended destination data, but the absence of timely and robust information on offers and enrolments means that the full potential to track young people's destinations through the system is not being fully exploited.
30. The Department for Education is expected to announce new measures that will strengthen the requirements for local authorities to accurately capture and record destination data in autumn 2016 and it is therefore recommended that a select group of local authorities (or IAG services with tracking responsibilities), colleges, MIS suppliers and UCAS work together to design and develop a process for sharing appropriate offer and enrolment data through the UCAS Progress system, which can be adopted across Greater Manchester.
31. In addition, local authorities should also be encouraged to register all of their Year 11 pupils on the UCAS Progress system, to help improve young people's accessibility to an independent source of impartial information on the post-16 course opportunities offered in their area. Currently, only Bolton and Salford undertake this function *en masse*, with other areas passing the responsibility to pre-register pupils onto their schools. Concerns relating to the legality of this process have been raised by some local authorities and it is recommended that a data sharing protocol is developed to support and underpin this process. If consensus can be sought, then it is also recommended that all local authorities in Greater Manchester carry out the bulk registration of Year 11 pupils to the UCAS Progress system, in order to improve young people's accessibility to impartial IAG and to assist with the local authority's facilitation of the September Guarantee process.
32. The limitations that have restricted young people in Years 12 and 13 from accessing the system have caused some frustration amongst the project's main stakeholders. With more young people now staying on in learning until at least their 18th birthday and more employers seeking to recruit college leavers into Apprenticeships, it is recommended that UCAS makes enhancements to the UCAS Progress system to enable young people to search and apply for post-16 opportunities, and in particular Apprenticeships, beyond Year 11.

SECTION B

1. Introduction and Background

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1 The Greater Manchester's Search and Apply process for school and college leavers forms an important element of the Greater Manchester Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) Strategy with the aim of increasing overall participation in post-16 learning and reducing NEET. Search and Apply contributes by:

- Improving the breadth, depth and accessibility of information available to young people and parents;
- enabling young people to see all that is on offer post-16;
- positioning Apprenticeships alongside other more recognised progression opportunities;
- developing a standardised approach for young people to make applications;
- helping Local Authorities manage both RPA and tracking of young people's destinations at 16.

1.1.2 To help achieve this ambition the New Economy on behalf of the Apprenticeship Hub commissioned a project which aimed to extend the use of the UCAS Progress system to support Greater Manchester's strategic priorities for improving young people's information, advice and guidance (IAG) and increasing the number of young people taking an Apprenticeship.

The aims of the project are to:

- Help providers to list their course information on UCAS Progress in an appropriate and compliant format that meets the new EFA requirements;
- encourage more providers to engage with the UCAS Progress system, by accepting applications and expressions of interest for their post-16 education and training opportunities including Apprenticeships and Traineeships;
- increase the numbers of young people searching and applying for opportunities via UCAS Progress by actively promoting and supporting the use of the system in local secondary schools and academies;
- support and develop a system whereby young people interested in taking an Apprenticeship can express an interest at the same time as making other applications.

1.1.3 The Search and Apply Steering Group, which has been in place for a number of years, provided overall direction to the project. The group was made up of representatives from New Economy, local authorities, sixth form colleges, further education colleges, training providers (GMLPN) (see membership Appendix A).

Delivery of the project was led by Career Connect in partnership with the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network and Positive Steps who are working with schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges and independent providers to extend usage of the UCAS Progress System.

1.2 Scope of the Project

- 1.2.1 The project operated across the whole of Greater Manchester and all schools with young people in Years 10 and 11 were eligible to engage with the project including local authority schools, academies, free schools and independent schools. All post-16 providers delivering in Greater Manchester were eligible to engage with the project. Normally post-16 providers pay an annual licence fee to UCAS Progress. However, for the duration of the project the licence fee was paid centrally by the local authorities facilitating free access for all post-16 providers.

1.3 Background

- 1.3.1 The concept of developing a common and consistent search and apply process in Greater Manchester is not new. Under the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 14-19 reform agenda, every local authority was required to have an area-wide prospectus (AWP) and common application process (CAP) in their area and by 2009, all ten GM local authorities had developed an AWP and had agreed to work towards a collaborative CAP system using funding supplied through the GM Challenge programme.
- 1.3.2 Although the collaborative system was procured and implemented in 2010, a change in Government resulted in the compulsion for local authorities to have an AWP and CAP in their area was repealed. Funding limitations and changing priorities for the teams and services involved with the initial implementation resulted in the majority of the Greater Manchester local authority areas discontinuing their development and support for the process.
- 1.3.3 Because of the contractual arrangements agreed with the software supplier, UCAS Progress the AWP and CAP system procured by the ten GM local authorities remained available for use until the end of the 2013/14 academic year. The local authorities in Bolton and Salford took advantage of this and continued to use the UCAS Progress system to deliver a search and apply process for young people in their areas. In the 2013/14 academic year over 6,000 young people used the system to search and apply. The GMCA then decided to expand the use of the UCAS Progress system as part of its plans to test and develop an alternative application process for Apprenticeships.
- 1.3.4 Following this decisions, the GMCA extended its licence with UCAS Progress until the end of the 2015/16 academic year, to coincide with the delivery of the GM Search and Apply project.

- 1.3.5 At the outset of the project over 40 providers delivering post-16 provision in Greater Manchester had their course provision listed on the UCAS Progress catalogue. Usage of the system varied considerably amongst providers as did the quality of their information. Some organisations were using the facilities available within the system to manage the end-to-end recruitment and selection process whereas many others were simply using the Prospectus to advertise their courses but then directing young people to their own application processes.

1.4 The Project Delivery Partnership

- 1.4.1 Led by Career Connect three organisations have been involved in the project. Career Connect undertook management of the overall project and led on engagement with young people, schools and local authorities. They deliver Connexions services in Salford where Search & Apply adoption is advanced; and have extensive experience of running major careers focused projects.
- 1.4.2 Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) is a network organisation of 100 independent training providers, colleges and other stakeholders delivering skills provision Greater Manchester. GMLPN led on the training provider engagement aspects of the project.
- 1.4.2 Positive Steps are currently the largest provider of IAG services in Greater Manchester and the lead organisation for two major CEIAG initiatives across the sub-region, namely, the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship IAG and Greater Manchester Inspiring IAG projects. They led on the engagement of schools in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside.



2. Policy Context and Policy Developments

2.1 Raising Participation

2.1.1 The Greater Manchester Combined Authority Strategy published in 2013 [Stronger Together - Greater Manchester Strategy | GMCA](#). This sets out an intent to prevent and reduce youth unemployment and in so doing drive the ambition that all young people choose to participate in outstanding education and training based on high quality information and guidance so that they leave education and training with the broad skills sets, qualifications, technical abilities and ambition to progress into a well-chosen pathway to employment. By securing and aligning GM investment funds and working with major stakeholders the intention is to support learning institutions and key partners to think and act strategically with regard to raising participation to achieve increased and sustained participation by 2020. The ambition is that all young people will:

- Have better access to high quality, impartial, information, advice and guidance to develop;
- make sound employment aspirations and make informed education and training choices, including Apprenticeships;
- leave education or training with the basic 'employability skills' that employers seek;
- participate in learning until at least age 18 and achieve a level 2 in English and maths by 19 years of age;
- be better able to progress from classroom based vocational learning to training delivered in the workplace, primarily Apprenticeships; and are able to access an increased number of jobs, Apprenticeships and work experience openings.

2.1.2 A key dimension of the Search and Apply project is to ensure that young people and their advisers have access to comprehensive information in respect of their post-16 options from a single readily accessible and reliable source. The current project has demonstrated that the use of a system such as UCAS Progress has the potential to deliver critical element of a strategic GM-wide CEIAG strategy capable of delivering the objectives set out above.

2.2 Improving Careers Education

2.2.1 In March 2015 the Government published *Careers guidance and inspiration in schools* [Careers Guidance in Schools Guidance](#). The Guidance sets out a clear expectation that every child should leave school prepared for life in modern Britain and that they should have access to: *high quality, independent careers guidance is also crucial in helping pupils emerge from school more fully rounded and ready for the world of work. Young people want and need to be well-informed when making subject and career decisions.*

- 2.2.2 The guidance also directs schools to widen access to advice on options available post-16, for example, Apprenticeships, entrepreneurialism or other vocational routes alongside the more traditional A-Levels and university route. This should also include giving other post-16 providers opportunities to engage with pupils on school premises.
- 2.2.3 Simultaneously Government announced the establishment of a new post-16 courses database to help young people make informed decisions about their post-16 options. The course data contained in the database is populated by post-16 providers, as part of new duties set out in their EFA funding agreements for 2015/16. This data is available to organisations wishing to present the data to young people, parents and schools in a more attractive and user-friendly way since September 2015.
- 2.2.4 The Department for Education issued Operational Guidance setting out how all providers of education and training for 16-19 year olds should fulfil the expectation, set by the Secretary of State that they make available data on the Government funded courses that they plan to offer by placing it on a national course database. This is to help young people make informed choices about their post-16 options. The Operational Guidance is located here: [Post-16 courses database: operational guide - Publications - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.2.5 For the new national database to be fully and accurately populated with up-to date course information, all post-16 providers funded by the EFA were expected to submit their 16-19 course data to government between June and the 30 September 2015. This expectation was set out in the [Advice: funding regulations for post-16 provision - Publications - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.2.5 In Greater Manchester, it has been agreed through the work of the Apprenticeship Hub that the UCAS Progress system will be used to present this data on local course information. In turn it supports providers to meet their new duty by providing regular and accurate course content directly to UCAS Progress, which in turn will populate the Government's central course database.

2.3 The Search and Apply Process in Greater Manchester

- 2.3.1 The rationale for developing a search and apply process post-16 application process for young people in Greater Manchester is in direct response to concerns raised about the quality and effectiveness of careers guidance provision in schools and the limited access many young people have to appropriate and relevant information on Apprenticeships.
- 2.3.2 In their review of careers guidance provision in schools, published in September 2013, Ofsted reported that the quality of provision was generally considered to be poor, with only one in five schools delivering provision that ensured their pupils were in receipt of an appropriate and effective level of careers information, advice and guidance (IAG). According to the report, very few schools promoted vocational

training and Apprenticeships effectively, with the A-Level route being considered as the “gold standard” for young people, their parents and teachers. [Careers Guidance Schools Guidance.pdf](#)

2.3.3 A recent comprehensive House of Lords Report has identified that at present the current post-16 education and training system is failing to meet the needs of a significant proportion of young people. The report is also critical of the range, depth and quality of careers education information and advice received by young people. [Overlooked and left behind](#). In particular a number of those providing evidence have made mention of the need for an **UCAS-style system**. In the context of the evaluation of the merits of the current project it is worth noting that the following evidence was submitted (paragraphs 229-231)

- Some of our witnesses told us that there would be value in a UCAS-style system for other progression routes. Professor Gregg told us that a UCAS-style system would tell young people “ This is the range of qualifications and places. This is how you apply for them’—something that works along the lines of what UCAS does successfully for the graduate routes, available locally.”
- The Challenge told us that “the absence of a UCAS-style direct channel linking schools and employers, and facilitating the take-up of Traineeships and Apprenticeships by young people” causes “miscommunication and information gaps.” Without information about alternatives, it stands to reason that young people are guided towards higher education as it is a transition with a clear process underpinning it.
- In part, this problem has been recognised by the Government. Mr Boles (Minister of State for Skills) told us that the Government was in “conversation with UCAS about the possibility of including higher-level courses in FE colleges but also Apprenticeships in their system.” We welcome the recognition that the process for applying for non-university routes needs to be clearer than it is and as accessible as possible. Apprenticeships and high-level courses cannot be the only ones included. It is important to help as many young people as possible navigate the system. For this to be the case, information on how to apply for all courses post-16 needs to be equally available.

2.4 Apprenticeship Policy

- 2.4.1 Expanding the overall volume and quality of Apprenticeships has been a key feature of the Government’s skills, employment and productivity strategies for several years.
- 2.4.2 In response to this the Greater Manchester City Deal which was agreed in 2012, committed to the creation of a City Apprenticeship and Skills Hub. A £6 million City Deal programme, supported by the Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, was designed to ‘gap fund’ the Apprenticeship Hub to address identified market failures in Greater Manchester. A detailed

Apprenticeship Hub Delivery Plan was been produced, following extensive consultation with local authorities, employers and providers. [GM Apprenticeship Hub](#)

- 2.4.3 The second key objective of the Hub's activity is to improve information, advice and guidance services for young people and has a specific objective to increase the proportion of 16-18 year olds that participate in learning through Apprenticeships and Traineeships with a focus on delivering better IAG. It was also recognised that at the inception of the project there was limited availability of impartial information, advice and guidance for young people that is restricting demand amongst learners.
- 2.4.4 The Search and Apply project is one of a suite of projects specially designed to address this issue by making available comprehensive information on the Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities available in Greater Manchester. In addition the project is specifically designed to increase both the number and proportion of young people seeking to pursue an Apprenticeship or Traineeship at the end of Year 11.



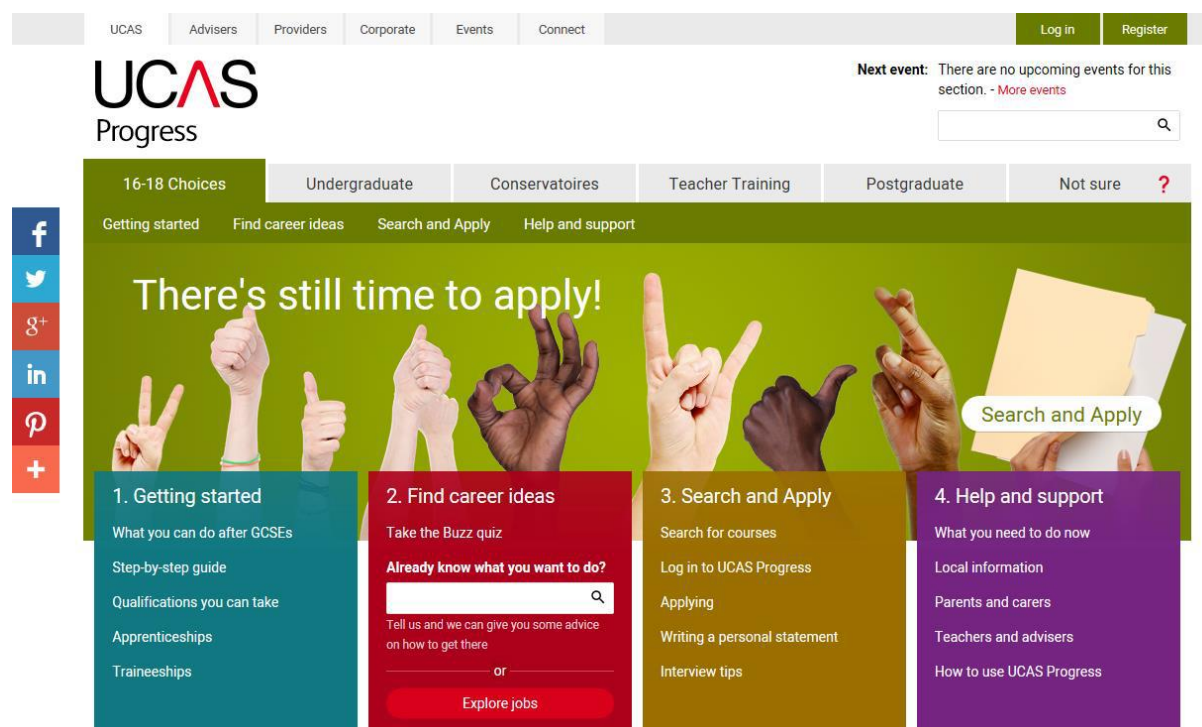
3. Introduction to UCAS Progress

3.1 The UCAS Progress Platform

- 3.1.1 UCAS Progress is one of the services provided by UCAS best known for their management of the undergraduate application service on behalf of UK Universities.
- 3.1.2 The UCAS Progress system is an on line portal embracing a fully-searchable UK-wide comprehensive prospectus of 16-19 course opportunities that enables young people to search and apply for their post-16 education and training through a single, seamless online process. The prospectus includes academic and vocational courses (such as A-Levels and BTECs), as well as Apprenticeship and Traineeships.
- 3.1.3 In addition the system provides a number of search tools, and free information and advice directed at various audiences, including Year 11 pupils, parents and legal guardians of applicants, school, further education college staff and independent providers involved in helping students apply for post-16 work and education-based training courses. The portal is free for students and schools. In Greater Manchester the portal is currently free to use by post-16 providers.
- 3.1.4 UCAS Progress also helps schools, colleges, and local authorities to monitor transition and post-16 participation as well as enabling them to meet statutory obligations resulting from the raising of the age of participation which legally obliges students to remain in full-time education or work-based training until the end of the academic year that they turn 18.
- 3.1.4 The UCAS Progress system continues to be the market leader for common application process software in the UK, with around 90% of post-16 courses offered to young people aged 16-18 in England and Wales being displayed on the system during the 2015/16 academic year. There are a number of other similar systems available to both schools and post-16 providers (e.g. UniFrog, U-Explore). A small number of schools have purchased these systems and a number of post-16 providers are using them. In some cases the systems are being used for post-16 students. However, the UCAS Progress system is already well-established in most parts of Greater Manchester and the majority of post-16 providers are actively uploading their profiles and courses/Apprenticeship opportunities onto the system.
- 3.1.5 Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that alternative systems and products are available in Greater Manchester, including those developed and/or procured by Rochdale MBC and the 'Pathways to Productivity' project, which primarily help to support young people to search and apply for Apprenticeship opportunities in their respective areas. Although it is recommended that a licence extension is secured from UCAS to enable the bulk of the Search and Apply process to be delivered through the UCAS Progress system in 2016/17, it is also recommended that closer consultation is carried out with the other local projects and processes to examine how Search and Apply could be improved in the future, with the potential to explore

the procurement of a more comprehensive system for delivering the Search and Apply process in Greater Manchester from 2017/18.

- 3.1.5 The UCAS home page (graphic below) provides access to the full suite of UCAS products including university and post graduate applications. Young people in Year 11 are directed to the 16-18 pages.



SECTION C

4. Engagement and Progress across Greater Manchester

4.1 Project Activity

4.1.1 The principle project activities have involved:

- Providing support to schools and local authorities to register and train school staff in the use of UCAS Progress
- Undertaking briefing and coaching sessions with groups of young people supporting them to access the system, complete their profile, search for post-16 option & courses and to make applications
- Through a series of training sessions, one-to-one briefings and good practice guides supported post-16 providers to register users, upload their provider profiles & course information and to improve application handling processes.
- Reporting on progress and identifying and communicating emerging issues to the Search and Apply Steering Group.

4.2 Progress in adopting Search and Apply

4.2.1 The overall number of schools engaged with the UCAS Progress system has almost doubled from 40 in 2014/15 to 84 in 2015/16. The growth has varied considerably between local authority areas and the factors impacting upon this are set out in more detail in Section 5. At the outset of the project schools in five local authority areas were involved. This has increased to nine of the ten Greater Manchester local authority areas.

Table 1

Schools Actively Engaged in the UCAS Progress Pilot												
Local Authority Area	Bury	Bolton	Manchest	Oldham	Rochdale	Salford	Stockport	Tameside	Trafford	Wigan	Other LAs	Total
Total Schools in LA area (LA, Academies Independent, free. UTCs and studio schools and not including special schools and PRUs)	17	23	45	18	14	23	24	16	20	19	x	219
Total Schools 2014/15 (Baseline)	0	23	1	4	0	11	0	0	0	1	X	40
Additional schools engaged in the pilot project	1	2	9	4	4	5	0	7	2	10	X	44
Total schools using the system by 31 July 2016	1	25	10	8	4	16	0	7	2	11	X	84

4.2.3 As additional schools have become involved the number of young people using the system has increased substantially. The total number of registrations has increased by 56% from 7537 (May 2014/15) to 13368 currently registered as of July 2016,

equating to 44.5% of the total number of young people in Year 11 in Greater Manchester. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the numbers of young people engaged in each of the ten local authority areas.

- 4.2.4 The most significant growth has occurred in Manchester and Wigan where the number of schools engaged has increased significantly.

Case Study - Case Study - Wigan

In Wigan at the inception of the project the Local Authority 14-19 team responded by hosting an event which brought together schools, the further education college, the sixth form colleges and colleagues from Career Connect and GMLPN. As a consequence a number of schools indicated their willingness to become engaged in order to enhance their careers information, advice and guidance activity. The three largest post-16 providers: Wigan and Leigh College, St John Rigby and Winstanley were either existing users or indicated a commitment to use the system. This combined interest resulted in rapid progress and 10 schools becoming engaged.

- 4.2.5 Supported by school staff and project advisers the number of young people registering, enabling their accounts and using the system to make applications has increased substantially. The growth has been most significant in those areas where schools have engaged because of perceived added value stemming from the fact that the system enables their students to submit applications. In those areas where post-16 providers are not using the application functions progress has been more modest.
- 4.2.6 Whilst this growth is welcomed a lower proportion of those registering have actually gone on to submit applications. This is almost entirely explained by schools registering pupils to use the system in anticipation that post-16 providers would become engaged and then reverting to existing systems because post-16 providers had decided to maintain dependency on their existing application processes. This occurred with schools in Manchester, Rochdale and Tameside in particular.

Table 2

Use of UCAS Progress by young people in each Local Authority Area	Bury	Bolton	Manchester	Oldham	Rochdale	Salford	Stockport	Tameside	Trafford	Wigan	Other LAs	Total
Learners Registered in 2014/15	8	3555	399	1064	92	2137	6	9	2	265	x	7537
Learners Registered 2015/2016	162	3488	1880	1607	882	2172	2	1168	212	1797	x	13368
Self Registered Learners	19	141	35	48	17	31	2	10	8	16	x	327
Learners with live accounts 2015/2016	154	3024	1043	1190	345	1929	0	389	209	1657	x	9940
Learners with Sent applications 2014/2015	4	2583	13	746	27	1131	0	3	1	140	x	4648
Learners with Sent Applications 2015/2016	126	2346	356	874	81	1500	0	30	179	1189	x	6681

4.2.7 In addition to young people registering via their school 327 young people have self-registered. Whilst this number is modest when compared with the overall total it reflects the fact that some young people are adopting a proactive approach to managing their future. This number includes young people who attend schools which have not formally adopted the system but have become aware of UCAS Progress. In other cases young people have been made aware of the system by the school and have then taken the initiative to register themselves before the process managed by the school has taken place.

4.2.8 We are also aware of young people resident in other local authority areas, which in some cases are a considerable distance from Greater Manchester who in the knowledge that they (and their family) are relocating to Greater Manchester at the end of Year 11, have used UCAS Progress to apply to Greater Manchester post-16 providers

4.2.9 The main thrust of activity has been with mainstream secondary schools and there has been only limited engagement with special schools. In the limited number of schools where there has been some activity teachers and advisers reported that pupils required one to one support from staff in order to use the system effectively.

4.3 Progress in Engaging Post-16 Providers

4.3.1 During the pilot project all post-16 providers operating across Greater Manchester have had free access to the UCAS Progress System which can be utilised to handle the main stages of the 'end-to-end' application and enrolment processes. Post-16 providers have direct user access to the UCAS Progress on line portal and are able to upload their organisational profile and also their course information which sits

within the on line prospectus. They have direct access to their own section of the portal and can amend their organisational profile and course information at any stage.

4.3.2 During the lifetime of the project, the number of post-16 providers with significant learning and training activity in Greater Manchester registered as users of UCAS Progress has increased from **28 in 2014/15 to 73 in 2015/16**.

4.3.3 The main factors in determining whether providers have actively engaged in the project include:

- The number of schools in their area of operation which use or have indicated that they intended to use the system.
- Providers becoming aware that UCAS Progress provides a low cost marketing and communications platform.
- Access in 2014/15 and 2015/16 has been free as a consequence of the Greater Manchester licencing arrangement.
- Training and support has been provided to post-16 providers in relation to - updating their profiles and course information.
- Encouragement and advocacy by local authorities.
- Greater awareness of the system amongst providers and in particular Apprenticeship providers.

4.3.4 Use of the end-to-end system varies considerably. At present all 10 further education colleges are using the system at least in part and all ten have uploaded at least some of their course information. Use by the 12 sixth form colleges is more mixed. In Bolton, Oldham, Stockport and Wigan all of the sixth form colleges are now engaged and all use the system to list their courses on UCAS Progress and to accept applications. The picture in other areas is much more mixed. A number of the sixth form colleges list their courses but do not accept applications via the system. Four sixth form colleges in Greater Manchester do not currently use the system.

4.3.5 At the outset of the project use of UCAS Progress amongst independent training providers varied very considerably. Through a series of project briefings and written communications providers were informed as to the potential of the system to promote Apprenticeships and Traineeships. The response has been positive and an additional **26** providers have become engaged. In addition existing providers have improved the quality of the information held in the on line prospectus and importantly many have improved their internal processes for responding to *Expressions of Interest*. Further detail is provided in Section 10

4.3.6 Engagement and use of the system by 11-18 school with sixth forms has been more limited but is still significant. Of the **50** schools with a sixth form **19** have their organisation profile and course information on the system. It is worth noting that some 11-18 schools use the system to promote their post-16 provision externally but do not use UCAS Progress with their Year 11 pupils.

- 4.3.7 New Charter Academy is an 11-18 academy situated in Ashton-Under-Lyne, Tameside. They utilise UCAS Progress on three fronts: Firstly, although they operate a sixth form the system is used by their Year 11 learners to search and apply for their post-16 options. Secondly, they promote the provision delivered by the sixth form on UCAS Progress and accept applications. This has led to applications from schools outside their traditional catchment area. Finally, they are also using the system for their Year 13 leavers to search and apply for Apprenticeship options. This is an example of a school embracing the system and embedding the process for their students.
- 4.3.8 When considering use of the system some 11-18 schools have expressed concerns that if they give their Year 11 pupils access to the UCAS Progress system this might potentially impact upon recruitment to their own school sixth form with young people opting to choose an alternative provider.

4.4 Key Findings

- 4.4.1 The critical factor in determining whether individual schools will commit to using UCAS Progress is the use of the system by the further education college(s), sixth form college(s) and sixth forms which provide the majority of the post-16 provision accessed by the majority of their Year 11 pupils. In almost every case where schools have not yet utilised the system this issue has been identified as a factor in making their decision. For post-16 providers the reverse is the case if they know that a significant number of schools in their area are intending to use the system they are more likely to make this facility available.
- 4.4.2 Local Authority involvement and support has been an important factor contributing to the participation of 'sending' schools in the project. In Bolton and Salford the local authorities have been directly involved in the project and have encouraged school participation. In addition they have provided practical support by uploading pupil information to the UCAS Progress system to facilitate the registration process. They have also supported schools in using the system and importantly advised schools on the associated information sharing and data protection requirements and protocols. In Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Wigan the local authorities have been supportive and have encouraged schools to participate.
- 4.4.3 In addition to UCAS Progress **all** post-16 providers have their own individually tailored application and recruitment processes. These range from paper based application forms to sophisticated on line interactive web- based systems. In some cases these systems allow young people to pre-arrange an interview or a visit to the provider and also to access additional advice and guidance. In an increasing number of cases these link to the providers own learner management systems. The decision to engage with UCAS Progress or otherwise has been significantly influenced by the provider's perception of the compatibility of UCAS Progress with their own applications processes and systems and importantly the investments they have made in those systems. This is an issue which has been referred to UCAS and they

have been working with the main suppliers of further education management information systems. In recent weeks there has been progress on this and Tribal who supply EBS used by many colleges have created additional bolt on functionality which will allow for the direct import of both UCAS and UCAS Progress data. UCAS also considering how they can improve the functionality so that receiving providers are able to populate the destination fields

- 4.4.4 Another important factor in organisational decision making is the extent to which the current development will be maintained. Both schools and post-16 providers have expressed the view that if there was a longer term commitment across the Greater Manchester area to investment in search and apply they would be much more likely to make the necessary changes and adaptations to their own systems.
- 4.4.5 During the lifetime of the project post-16 providers operating in Greater Manchester have enjoyed free access and use of the UCAS Progress system. This has proved to be attractive and has enabled organisations to trial use of the system and has been a factor in encouraging some organisations to become involved. If an extension to the current arrangement were to be successfully negotiated with UCAS Progress and post-16 providers continued to have free access for a further year this would provide a considerable opportunity to embed the current system and encourage existing users to remain engaged.

4.5 Recommendations

- 4.5.1 There is clear evidence from schools that UCAS Progress is providing young people, their advisers and schools with a comprehensive careers education and information tool which currently encapsulates the vast majority of post-16 opportunities and provision available. There is an opportunity for schools, post-16 providers across Greater Manchester to add significant value to careers education, information advice and guidance by securing a collective commitment to engage with a single system across Greater Manchester.
- 4.5.1 During the life time of the project steady progress has been made in increasing the number of schools and post-16 providers in utilising UCAS Progress. There is clear evidence that more schools would engage if there was a clear commitment from post-16 providers to use the system. The recommendation is that it would be useful to have local authority area meetings where schools and post-16 providers could collectively decide how they wish to proceed well in advance of each academic year.
- 4.5.2 The pattern of post-16 destinations is becoming increasingly complex with significant numbers of young people moving across local authority boundaries to access post-16 provision. Schools and local authorities have a regulatory requirement to track post-16 destinations. Experience of recent Ofsted inspections indicates that schools are being scrutinised in respect of the destinations of their leavers. At present very few post-16 providers are completing the enrolment fields within UCAS Progress. The recommendation is that the use of UCAS Progress post-16 providers should be

strongly urged to complete the post-16 of the enrolment fields. This would in turn help to substantially reduce the time and resources required to track post-16 destinations.

- 4.5.3 The majority of further education colleges, sixth form colleges and independent providers have developed and implemented their own on line application and enrolment systems. One of the important factors which has determined whether receiving providers will adopt UCAS Progress is the extent to which they can interconnect their own software with the UCAS Progress system. The recommendation is that UCAS need to priorities this as part of their overall system development.
- 4.5.4 During the lifetime of the project considerable progress has been made in engaging with schools and post-16 providers in terms of engagement and use. An important factor in achieving the progress has been the fact that direct support has been made available by the project delivery partners. There is a risk that without the availability of central support the current levels of engagement may reduce and overall momentum lost. Active consideration needs to be given to how Search and Apply can be sustained.



5. Progress in individual Local Authority Areas

The extent of overall engagement in each of the local authority areas varies considerably. This reflects both post 16 provider engagement and the degree of local authority enthusiasm or otherwise to adopt a common post-16 application within a local authority area as part of a wider strategy to raise post-16 participation. A summary of progress for each of the 10 local authority areas is set out below.

5.1 Bolton

- 5.1.1 In Bolton, the use of UCAS Progress is well established with all 23 ‘mainstream’ schools using the system. The local authority actively promotes UCAS Progress and supports schools in uploading their data to the system to assist the registration process. With the prospect of significantly increased number of academies and schools moving out of local authority control consideration will need to be given to how best to sustain these processes and the support which local authorities will be able to provide in the future. This is an issue which applies to all local authorities.
- 5.1.2 Both Bolton College and Bolton Sixth Form College have embedded the system as a key aspect of their recruitment process. School staff are conversant with UCAS Progress and the system is effectively embedded within schools.
- 5.1.3 Investment has been made by the post-16 providers in their internal MIS software which enables them to undertake bulk downloads of pupil information from UCAS Progress which is then used to populate their internal systems.

5.2 Bury

- 5.2.1 In Bury adoption of UCAS Progress has been limited. The local authority has been briefed on the project but has not actively promoted use of the system to schools. The main post-16 provider Bury College utilises UCAS Progress but predominantly for applications from young people at school in Bolton and Salford where the system is embedded. The college prefers to operate their own application system for young people at school in Bury and other local authority areas.
- 5.2.2 Within the scope of the current project Prestwich Arts College (school) has piloted use of the system. A very high percentage (84%) of their learners have both registered on the system and subsequently submitted at least one application compared with the Greater Manchester average of 51%. The school catchment area includes Manchester, Salford, Bury and Rochdale with good transport to all those areas. The school was really keen to get every student to apply to at least two Providers. Collectively young people at the school have submitted applications to 22 post-16 providers across Greater Manchester.

Case Study: Prestwich Arts College

Prestwich Arts College, signed up to using UCAS Progress as part of the GM Search and Apply Pilot following the New Economy Conference for schools in July 2015.

Recognising the potential of UCAS Progress as a key aspect of CEIAG to the school following activity took place:

- A School assembly was arranged to explain the UCAS Progress system to young people.
- Off timetable training sessions for pupils and staff were organised
- Student data was uploaded to the system
- The project team at Career Connect delivered a series of one hour sessions to groups of 25, these included: A UCAS Progress presentation detailing how the system worked; the issue of usernames and passwords to students to log in and start creating their UCAS Progress Profiles; and an overview of how to search and apply for post-16 opportunities.
- Additional staff training was provide regarding using UCAS Progress to track where students are with their applications (learner manager function.)

The result was that a significant number did complete their applications, on the day. In cases where students preferred providers were not accepting applications via UCAS Progress, students were still able to use the search function to compare providers and courses to be able to make an informed choice on whom to apply for.

The UCAS Progress journey has been a success with positive feedback received from Prestwich Arts College regarding the system and the level of support provided to them.

5.3 Manchester

5.3.1 In Manchester prior to the inception of the current project engagement of schools was limited. From the outset staff in Manchester City Council have been both enthusiastic and supportive and have encouraged adoption of the system amongst Manchester schools. Ten schools have been engaged to date and have uploaded their pupil data to trigger the registration process. Five schools are now actively using the system to submit applications. During the lifetime of the project Manchester College has increased its active usage of the system and Connell Sixth Form College have recently added their profile and course information and now accept applications.

5.3.2 A particular issue which has been cited by a number of Manchester based schools as a major factor in them deciding whether they utilise the system or not is the fact that two of the largest sixth form colleges located in Manchester are somewhat unusual in that they do not currently have a profile and course information on the system.

5.4 Oldham

- 5.4.1 Oldham College and the Oldham Sixth Form College collectively agreed to adopt UCAS Progress as part of their application and enrolment processes. As a direct consequence, and with the support of Positive Steps, use by schools has increased significantly in the last two years. The local authority has also supported the broad aims of the project and the take up and usage of UCAS Progress by schools and post-16 providers.

5.5 Rochdale

- 5.5.1 In Rochdale both Hopwood Hall College and Rochdale Sixth Form College are using UCAS Progress to provide substantial information about their colleges and list up to date comprehensive information on their courses but do not currently accept applications. The local authority is actively engaged and has supported the Search and Apply project.
- 5.5.2 Four 11-16 schools are using the system to a limited degree. In a number of cases young people are using UCAS Progress to make applications to providers in neighbouring local authority areas where post-16 providers are accepting applications.
- 5.5.3 In the schools where Positive Steps were invited to actively deliver and support guidance sessions (as an alternative to a Year 11 assembly) the number of students who having been registered then logged on and used the system was significantly higher. The number of young people actively using the search and apply functions the number was impacted by the main providers in the local authority not accepting applications. However, students did benefit by looking at the wider range of options across GM.
- 5.5.4 In Rochdale the Local Authority in partnership with the Rochdale network of Apprenticeship and Traineeship providers operate a well-used borough-wide Apprenticeship application process. The system which is unique to Rochdale is managed by the Local Authority and the main Traineeship and Apprenticeship providers in Rochdale are actively using the system to post their Apprenticeship vacancies and Traineeship opportunities. As part of the project we have compared the features of the system with UCAS Progress and the key points are set out in Section 10 of this report.

5.6 Salford

- 5.6.1 In Salford the use of UCAS Progress is well established with the overwhelming majority of schools and post-16 providers using the system. The Local Authority actively promotes UCAS Progress and assists schools by uploading pupil data to support the registration process. In 2014/15 11 Salford schools were actively engaged and using the UCAS System with a further six now using the system in 2015/16 bringing the total to 17.

- 5.6.2 A number of schools in Salford have reported that because their students' progress to post-16 institutions outside Salford which are not operating UCAS Progress their students are required to use a number of different application processes including both paper and on line based systems.

5.7 Stockport

- 5.7.1 In Stockport, Stockport College has embraced use of the system. Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College is also utilising the system in parallel with their own application process. Both organisations are receiving applications from young people in schools in neighbouring local authorities both within Greater Manchester but also from schools based in Derbyshire and Cheshire who use UCAS Progress. Aquinas College has a profile on UCAS Progress and lists their courses within the prospectus but does not currently accept applications.
- 5.7.2 The Local Authority has not actively promoted the Search and Apply project. At present no schools in Stockport are using the system. It is also interesting to note that of the total of 1935 EOIs submitted by young people to Apprenticeship providers across Greater Manchester none of those were from young people resident in Stockport.

5.8 Tameside

- 5.8.1 In Tameside, Tameside College has only recently begun to upload their profile and course information and are committed to accepting applications via UCAS Progress. Ashton Sixth Form College uses the system to promote the college and list their course information but does not currently accept applications. The Local Authority is supportive and whilst activity to date has been limited a number of schools have expressed considerably interest in becoming involved and are willing to use the system if it is adopted by the post-16 providers.

5.9 Trafford

- 5.9.1 In Trafford progress is limited. The Local Authority has adopted a relatively passive approach and has not actively promoted use of UCAS Progress. Trafford College have updated the provider profile, list their course information and do accept applications. However, they use this in addition to their existing application processes.
- 5.9.2 Two schools have engaged with the project and are using the system as part of their overall CEIAG. Over two hundred young people have been registered on the system, however, few if any; have then used the system to submit applications because the major post-16 providers in Trafford are not actively using the system as their mainstream recruitment process.

5.10 Wigan

- 5.10.1 In Wigan the Local Authority championed use of the system and in the spring of 2015 hosted a meeting of schools, post-16 providers and other stakeholders to promote use of the system. Two of the sixth form colleges based in Wigan were already using the system and the decision of the further education college to use the system for 2016 summer leavers has been instrumental in a number of schools engaging in the project. With the support of Career Connect and Local Authority colleagues half (10) of the twenty mainstream secondary schools in Wigan are now actively using the system with a further five committing to use the system next year.
- 5.10.2 Schools in Wigan would ideally like the system to be used by post-16 providers in the neighbouring local authority areas which provide post-16 opportunities including, for example, Carmel College in St Helens and Priestley College in Warrington and colleagues from UCAS are in dialogue with these organisations

6. Apprenticeships and Traineeships

6.1 Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- 6.1.1 An important facet of the Greater Manchester Work and Skills strategy is to increase the number of people undertaking a high quality Apprenticeship. The Search and Apply project is designed to contribute to this ambition by supporting and developing a system whereby young people interested in taking an Apprenticeship can submit an **Express an Interest** (EOI) at the same time as making applications to other post-16 full time courses and other opportunities.
- 6.1.2 Despite considerable Government promotion and investment the number of young people, aged 16-18, starting an Apprenticeship in Greater Manchester has remained relatively consistent over the last 3 years (2012/13 to 2014/15) at slightly over 8,000 equating to approximately 9% of the total population of 16-18 year olds. This proportion has remained relatively stable despite the availability of Apprenticeship opportunities for young people and Apprenticeship providers reporting significant levels of unfilled vacancies. Encouragingly there is emerging evidence that in 2015/16 there has been a recognisable increase.
- 6.1.3 The long term trend, apparent over the last decade, has been for an increasing proportion of young people to remain in full time education at 16 with a corresponding decrease in the numbers going directly into Apprenticeships. At present one in twenty young people progress to an Apprenticeship at the end of Year 11. However, it is also apparent that some young people who stay in full time education for a further one or two years are seeking to make the transition to an Apprenticeship (or Traineeship) at age 17 and/or 18.

6.2 Baseline Assessment

- 6.2.1 In July 2014 the New Economy published 'Explaining Patterns in Apprenticeships.' One aspect of this report sought to identify what was contributing to the limited take up of opportunities. The report identified a number of factors one of which one was the variability of the information, advice and guidance which young people were receiving regarding the Apprenticeship option when compared with other post-16 options. Subsequent studies and Ofsted reports have also endorsed this finding.
- 6.2.2 A major weakness of the current Apprenticeship recruitment cycle for young people in Year 11 is that employer vacancies are often not made available when young people are considering their post 16 options. A recent City and Guilds report [Making Apprenticeships Work](#) highlighted an endemic issue in the recruitment cycle which is well understood by practitioners. Young people need to be able to apply for and secure an Apprenticeship from autumn to around May of their expected final year, with a view to starting between July and October.

- 6.2.3 Because young people in Year 11 are not able to apply for existing job vacancies they use UCAS Progress to search for Apprenticeship **opportunities** made available by Apprenticeship training providers which will become available once they leave school. To do this they submit ***Expressions of Interest (EOIs)*** to the Apprenticeship training providers. Apprenticeship training providers are then expected to engage with them, to assess their suitability for an Apprenticeship and then to subsequently make them aware of actual Apprenticeship vacancies to which they can apply. This process can take several months.
- 6.2.4 Prior to the inception of the project schools, careers advisers and local authority colleagues were reporting considerable variability in the way that training providers and colleges were responding to *Expressions of Interest* submitted by young people to become Apprentices. In response to the concerns raised concerning the variability in handling EOIs GMLPN has been working with Apprenticeship providers to identify, enhance and share good practice. At the outset of the project GMLPN spoke to a significant number of providers through meetings and task groups and it was clear that there was considerable variability in the way which these processes operated.
- 6.2.5 In response the following objectives were established which sought to:
- Increase the number of providers with high quality comprehensive organisational information and the Apprenticeship opportunities they have available in Greater Manchester.
 - Improve the receipt and handling of Expressions of Interest submitted by young people.
 - Enhance the support provided to young people to assist them in making applications to Apprenticeship vacancies.
 - Improve the feedback provided to young people, parents and school staff regarding the outcome of Expressions of Interest.
- 6.2.6 During the project inception phase it became apparent that there were a number of weaknesses with the presentation of Apprenticeship opportunities to young people and school staff advising young people.
- There was a lack of comprehensive information in a readily accessible format available to young people in respect of Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
 - Many of the 350+ organisations delivering Apprenticeships within Greater Manchester did not have a profile on UCAS Progress and as a consequence the actual extent of Apprenticeship opportunities in Greater Manchester was significantly under represented.

6.2.7 In addition a number of issues directly related to the UCAS Progress System were identified

- Providers are responsible for their course information and the profile of their organisation. It was very apparent that this varied considerably in terms of the range and quality of the information presented and in a number of cases it was presented in a manner which did not appeal to young people.
- Some national providers had opportunities in Greater Manchester but these ***were not showing up in the search results because UCAS Progress search functions are predominantly driven by the location of the provider and the providers were not listing venues in Greater Manchester.***
- When using the search function if a provider did not list a training venue in Greater Manchester then they did not appear when young people were using the search functions which are based on the geography.
- Young people can apply for up to 15 courses simultaneously with a single provider which can include BTECs, A-Levels and Apprenticeships. They can also make applications to a number of providers. Should the young person then wish to submit a later application with the same provider they are unable to do so. This has particular implications for Apprenticeships. To facilitate this within the UCAS Progress System colleges have been encouraged to list two 'accounts' one for full/part time courses and one for Apprenticeships (and Traineeships).

6.3 Project Activity Undertaken to Date

6.3.1 The following activities have been undertaken or co-ordinated by GMLPN to support providers:

- Four GM-wide UCAS Receiving Provider training events were undertaken attended by staff responsible for managing the system from colleges and training providers.
- 25 organisations have received one-to-one training sessions.
- A total of 94 individuals from receiving providers have received training delivered by UCAS or GMLPN.
- Two Good Practice guides were issued produced, the first to support providers in enhancing the presentation of their provider profile and course information on the UCAS Progress prospectus and the second to improve the handling of Expressions of Interest. Both of these guides have been revised to include lessons learnt during the lifetime of the project.
- Two task groups of post-16 users were established to inform the project activities.

6.3.2 The following case study provides an example of how an Apprenticeship provider is handling Apprenticeship EOIs and the enhancements that they have made as a result of Search and Apply project.

Handling Apprenticeship EOIs

Babington Training were part of the task group which supported the development of a Good Practice Guide for handling Apprenticeship EOIs. They have in place a range of activities which are used to engage, maintain contact and support young people to make applications.

These include:

- Having in place a dedicated person who accesses UCAS Progress on a regular basis and responds to young people very soon after they submit an EOI.
- Allocating a Learner Support Advisor to each applicant who maintains contact with a young person.
- Hosting briefings and open days for young people which explain the Apprenticeship opportunities which will be available to them and how the recruitment process works
- School liaison staff who sustain engagement with schools and learners.
- Alerting young people to vacancies and utilising Learner Engagement Consultants to support young people to make actual applications to vacancies.
- Using recruitment consultants to provide learners with details about the vacancy and the employer and the interview process and provide feedback after the interview.
- Assisting unsuccessful young people via Support Advisors who discuss other opportunities and provide advice and guidance and signpost them to further IAG if required.

As a result of engaging with the Search and Apply project, Babington have introduced a number of enhancements with a particular focus on maintaining contact with young people and directing them to Apprenticeship vacancies.

These include:

- Sending out electronic communications to young people focussing on the sector they are interested in, along with good news stories, revision tips, and sector specific activities.
- More frequent meetings with young people.
- Supporting young people by organising mock employer interviews.
- Enhancing the information which parents receive regarding Babington and the Apprenticeship recruitment process so that they understand what will happen and when.

6.4 Progress and Outcomes

- 6.4.1 At present there are over 350 individual organisations delivering Apprenticeships in Greater Manchester. At present two thirds of the top 30 providers (in terms of 16-18 starts) who deliver over 75% of the Apprenticeship starts in GM are using the system. This number includes nine of the top ten Apprenticeship providers who collectively deliver almost 40% of the total starts are now using the system. Nine of the ten further education colleges who collectively delivered 27% of Apprenticeship starts in Greater Manchester are using the system. Apprenticeship providers continue to approach GMLPN for support. Over 1700 Apprenticeship EOIs have been submitted to 37 different providers.

Table 3

Table 4 – Apprenticeship EOIs	2014/2015	2015/16
Total Number GM Applications	10841	15539
Total Number EOIs	1026	1935
Total % applications EOIs	9.46%	12.45%

6.4.2 During the lifetime of the project we have also identified a number of providers which had a profile on the system but the reality was that some of the opportunities listed within the prospectus were unlikely to be filled by 16 year old school leavers due to licence to practice requirements etc. and as a consequence of the project these opportunities have been removed.

6.4.3 There has been a very significant increase in the total number of *EOIs* submitted by young people as set out in Table 4. Interestingly the number of EOIs for Apprenticeship as a proportion of the total applications submitted **has increased from 9% in 2014/15 to 12% in 2015/16.**

6.4.4 A breakdown of Apprenticeship EOIs based on the residency of the young person is set out in Table 5. This demonstrates the considerable variation which exists in each local authority area. In all of the areas where a significant number of young people are using the system the proportion of EOIs as a proportion of total applications has increased year on year and ranges between 9% (Bolton) 17% (Salford).

6.4.5 At present no schools in the Stockport area are using UCAS Progress and as a direct consequence no EOIs were submitted by young people resident in that local authority area.

Table 4

Apprenticeship EOIs by LA	Bolton	Bury	Manchester	Oldham	Rochdale	Salford	Stockport	Tameside	Trafford	wigan	Self with no LA
2014/15											
Total number Applications submitted	6698	8	24	1316	32	2385	0	2	0	376	93
Total number of Apprenticeship EOIs	591	0	1	34	0	359	0	0	0	29	3
% Applications EOIs	8.82%	0%	4.76%	3%	0%	15%	0%	0%	0%	7.71%	3.22%
2015/16											
Total number Applications submitted	5492	263	903	1580	166	3563	0	45	480	2787	80
Total number of Apprenticeship EOIs	568	18	112	187	19	620	0	9	42	348	12
% Applications EOIs	9.66%	6.85%	11.28%	11.84%	11.45%	17.40%	0%	20%	8.75%	12.48%	15%

6.4.6 As a consequence of the training events and the production and dissemination of a good practice guide there has been a very considerable improvement in:

- The content and presentation of provider profiles and course information with increased use of video clips, case studies, testimonials and embedded links to provider's own websites;
- use of language which is more engaging to young people;
- greater consistency in the descriptions of Apprenticeship opportunities.

6.5 Key Findings and Recommendations

6.5.1 As part of the project GMLPN used a variety of techniques including task groups, surveys and good practice guides to engage with Apprenticeship providers. This included an on line survey. Over thirty organisations have received EOIs and of these more than half have been involved in the tasks groups, workshops and/or responded to the on line survey.

6.5.2 The vast majority of survey respondents have reported:

- Once they had received training they indicated that it was easy or very easy to upload provider and course information (80%) with none finding it very difficult.
- They have revised their profile and course information – (90%).
- Two thirds reported that they had received an increased volume of EOIs.
- They are very positive about the use of UCAS Progress as an Apprenticeship recruitment tool with 90% finding it good or better. However, few providers recognised it as a useful tool for the recruitment of Traineeships.

6.5.3 Apprenticeship providers have identified a number of benefits from using UCAS Progress as a mechanism to promote Apprenticeships to young people. Survey responses included:

- *Made students aware that the college offers Apprenticeships*
- *We believe the system has given us more exposure within schools and allowed us to be considered by students at the same time as they are applying to colleges*
- *We have had more enquiries this year*
- *Another avenue to engage young people*
- *It has provided additional applications*

6.5.4 Whilst providers are using the system to receive and acknowledge EOIs, less than half are using the messaging features preferring to use other their own systems including e-mail, twitter etc. Only one in four were using it to make offers. This may, in part, be explained by the fact that the majority of EOIs are submitted by March in Year 11 before the majority of actual employer Apprenticeship vacancies, as opposed to when opportunities, become available.

- 6.5.5 In line with the practice amongst the majority of post-16 providers the tracking functions of UCAS Progress are not currently being used by Apprenticeship providers and additional development work with providers will be required to encourage them to use these functions.
- 6.5.6 The current project has led to improvements in the way that providers both present their Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities and how they respond to the receipt of EOIs submitted by young people. A key issue identified at the outset of the project was the variability in the way in which providers responded to EOIs submitted by young people and how they maintained contact throughout the year. Responses to the survey identified wide variability when surveyed in May 2016 in relation to EOIs submitted to that point. A quarter of respondents were reporting that they were still actively engaged with young people but more than half of the respondents were in contact with less than half the young people.
- 6.5.7 Throughout the course of the project Apprenticeship providers have identified maintaining contact with young people as a key issue and concern for their organisation and this is an issue which merits further investigation and development work. Many of the issues identified are not specific to UCAS Progress and relate to a lack of response by young people to e-mails/telephone/texts etc. However, a number of providers have reported instances where the young person has inputted the wrong information into the system.
- 6.5.8 Apprenticeship providers new to UCAS Progress have welcomed and responded positively to the help and support they have received in helping them to register users and access the system. During the lifetime of the project it has become apparent that business continuity is an issue in some organisations. Where staff changes have occurred new staff have needed external support to enable them to use the system effectively.
- 6.5.9 Young people, school staff and careers advisers value the opportunity to search for Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities when considering other post-16 options.

6.6 System Enhancements

- 6.6.1 During the course of the project through our task groups, discussions groups and the on line survey Apprenticeship providers have identified a number of potential enhancements to the functionality of the UCAS Progress System which would make it more attractive to them as a recruitment tool. In turn this would make them more likely to invest time and resources in listing their opportunities as they would be promoting them to a larger group of potential applicants.
- 6.6.2 These system enhancements include:
- Keeping the system 'open' after the end of Year 11. Increasing numbers of young people stay in full time education after Year 11 and subsequently seek Apprenticeship opportunities at a later date.

- Making the system accessible to young people in Years 12 and 13.
- Using the system to promote actual Apprenticeship vacancies. These facilities are available on some other search and apply application portals which access the information held on the Government's *Find An Apprenticeship* site.

6.6.3 Enhancing the UCAS Progress System so that it could handle both direct applications to Apprenticeship vacancies and Expressions of Interest would encourage more young people to opt for Apprenticeships and would generally improve the quantity and quality of applicants for employers.

6.6.4 In addition to the recommendations derived from the project activity other organisations have called for similar developments including the City and Guilds Industry Board—an influential group of employer



7. Pilot Activity with Young People in Years 12 and 13

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The main purpose of UCAS Progress is to provide a search and apply function for Year 11 learners to choose their post-16 options. However, it is also recognised that the system can perform a similar role for Year 12 and Year 13 leavers who are looking for alternatives to university particularly Apprenticeships.
- 7.1.2 The aim of this pilot activity is to find out whether the search and apply process as well as the UCAS Progress system are suitable for Year 12 and/or 13 leavers. The intention was to have 500 Year 12/13 leavers registered on the system with 400 submitting applications including 320 EOIs for Apprenticeships.

7.2 Project Activity

- 7.2.1 The project team are testing the system with small groups of FE College, Sixth Form College and School Sixth Form leavers who are considering progressing to an Apprenticeship at the end of their current course.
- 7.2.2 The vast majority of Advanced Apprenticeship provision across Greater Manchester is already visible on UCAS Progress because Apprenticeship providers have displayed both Level 2 and Level 3 provision for post-16 learners to submit EOIs to.
- 7.2.3 The GMLPN have identified the Apprenticeship providers who have deliver Higher Apprenticeships across Greater Manchester and already utilise UCAS Progress for their Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships. The GMLPN have encouraged those providers offering higher level Apprenticeships (Level 4+) to add the provision to UCAS Progress for the benefit of attracting Year 13 leavers.
- 7.2.4 The GMLPN have also suggested to UCAS that degree Apprenticeships should be included within the course information as they are an attractive proposition to Year 13 leavers as an alternative to traditional degrees. This is under active consideration by UCAS Progress. At present the indications are that UCAS are actively considering including this information within the University under graduate platform as it is primarily used by young people in Years 12 & 13.
- 7.2.5 The project team has sought to engage with FE colleges, sixth form colleges and school sixth forms to promote the system for use by Year 13 leavers. Colleagues at Career Connect and Positive Steps have then worked with those organisations to identify leavers who are looking for Apprenticeship opportunities and to support those learners to register, search and to submit Apprenticeship EOIs.

7.3 Progress to Date

- 7.3.1 To date five school sixth forms have piloted this activity with Year 13 learners. Numbers registered to use the system have been low due to the low numbers of learners identified and there have been few applications made at this stage.

Although some FE Colleges showed an interest for its use with their students, none have yet to identify a cohort or agreed to a fixed plan to deliver training sessions for their learners to use UCAS Progress to be able to search and apply for Apprenticeship opportunities.

7.4 Key Findings and Recommendations

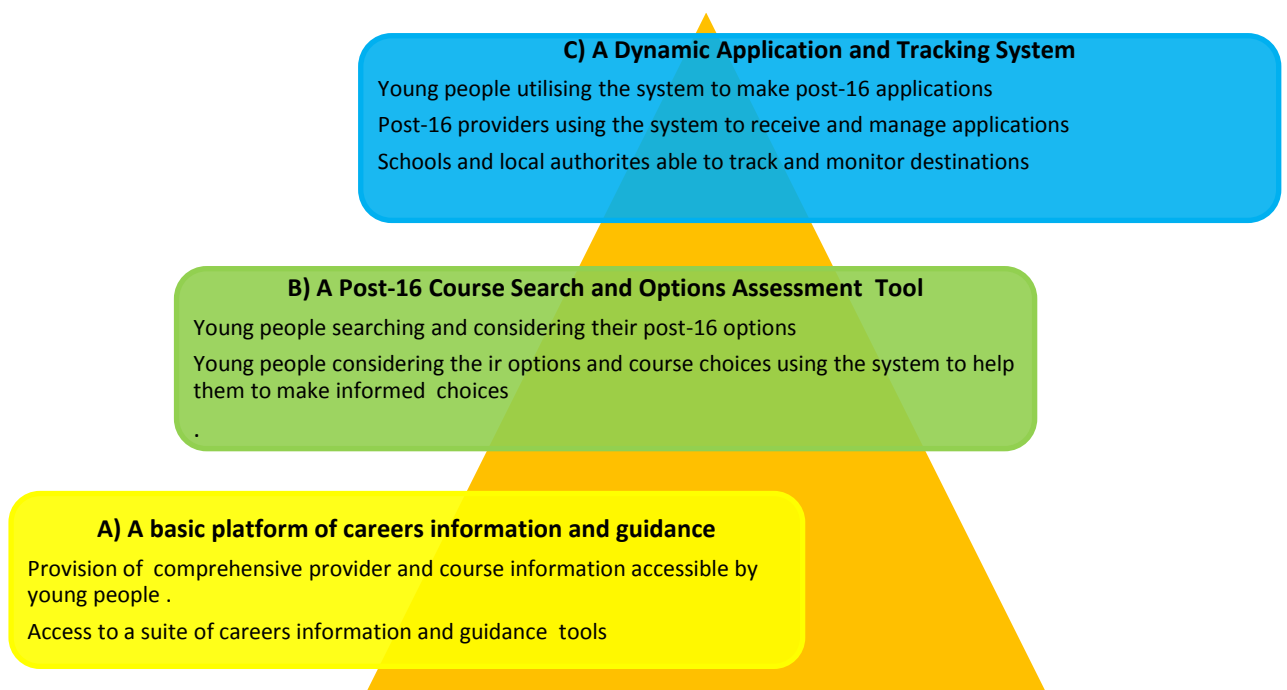
- 7.4.1 Receiving providers highlighted that some of the Higher Apprenticeship provision is only available to their existing learners who have progressed from an Advanced Apprenticeship with the same employer. Therefore, their Higher Apprenticeships would not be available to Year 13 leavers.
- 7.4.2 Other providers have indicated that they don't deliver a high volume of Higher Apprenticeships and have concerns that when promoting this provision on UCAS Progress they could be potentially be attracting EOIs for only a handful of opportunities.
- 7.4.3 Some FE colleges have indicated that as they themselves have sufficient progression opportunities for their learners they are have not perceived any added value from using UCAS Progress. Therefore, they are not motivated to encourage the use of UCAS Progress for their Year 13 students until the internal progression opportunities have been exhausted.
- 7.4.4 Furthermore, some sixth form colleges and school sixth forms indicated that they would only encourage use of the system by their Year 13 leavers as they would seek to retain the majority of their Year 12 learners on their own programmes.

SECTION E

8. The UCAS Progress System in Action

8.1 Current use of the System in Greater Manchester

8.1.1 Within the context of the Greater Manchester Search and Apply project the delivery partners have identified that the UCAS Progress system as it is currently utilised across Greater Manchester is operating at three distinguishable levels. The schematic below describes these.



8.1.2 At present there are no local authority areas where all of the features and functionality of UCAS Progress is being fully utilised to its maximum potential. During the lifetime of the project considerable progress has been made to populate the provider/course prospectus and as a consequence young people, schools and advisers now have access to an up to date comprehensive, accessible and searchable database of the vast majority of the post-16 provision across the Greater Manchester area.

8.1.3 In those schools where either Career Connect/Positive Steps and/or the schools own advisers delivered sessions where pupils were taught and supported to log in and develop their UCAS Progress profile it was evident that they were significantly more likely to submit applications using the system and the ratio of those registered and those submitting applications was higher. In moving forward it is important that this activity is sustained if we are to maximise the potential benefits of the system.

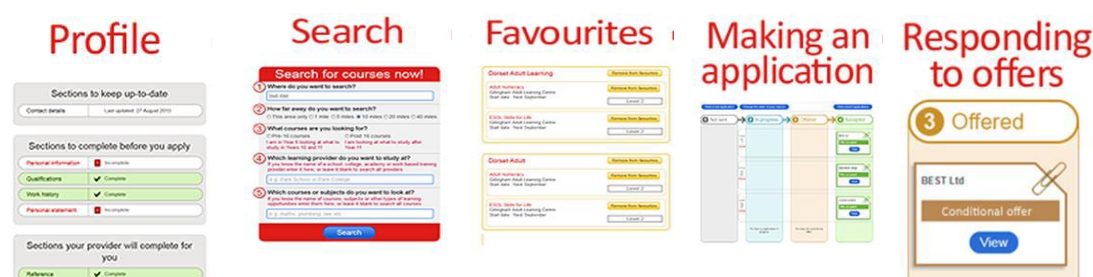
8.1.4 Whilst an increasing number of post-16 providers are now accepting applications via the portal only a very few are subsequently completing the

necessary enrolment fields which would enable schools and local authorities to track destinations. If all post-16 providers were to do so then the process of tracking post-16 destinations would be hugely simplified enabling resources which currently go in to costly tracking exercise to be released to focus on those young people who had not continued in learning at 16.

8.2 Using the UCAS Progress System (Young People)

- 8.2.1 Once registered by their school, local authority (or individually) each young person is provided with a personalised log on and password. Young people are then able to use the UCAS Progress system to build their own profile which includes personal details, personal statements, their work experience, qualifications already gained and their predicted GCSE grades. Young people are able to use the search facility to look for providers and specific courses and to save these as favourites. The young person is then able to use the system to submit (and revise and withdraw) applications to receiving post-16 providers and to respond to offers. The system has an embedded on line messaging system which allows the young person to interact with post-16 providers.

UCAS Progress Functions for Young People



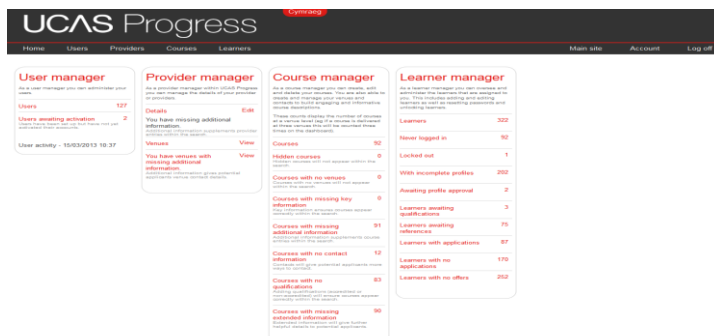
8.3 Using the UCAS Progress System (Post-16 Providers)

- 8.3.1 Once a provider's account has been created along with user log ins, the provider is able to add their provider information and course information. Young people can then find the provider and then to their 'favourites' so an application can be submitted. Once an application or EOI is submitted providers are then able to acknowledge the application and use the application information to input into their own systems. Once an application has been reviewed the provider uses UCAS Progress to either mark the application as unsuccessful or make an offer (conditional or unconditional). The final stage, if a young person accepts an offer, is enrolment; once a young person has started in full time education or their Apprenticeship. Throughout the application process the provider is able to maintain engagement with the young person by using the internal messaging system.

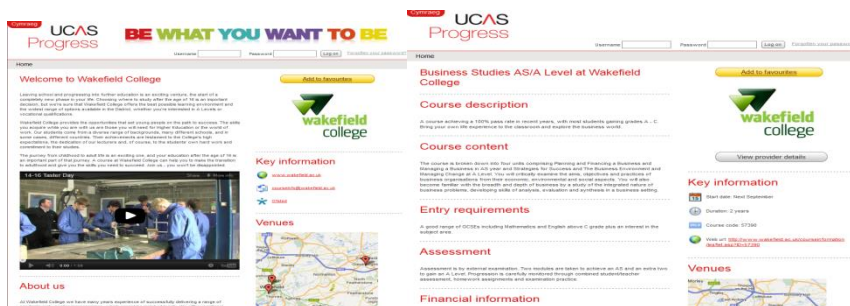
8.4 UCAS Progress Functions for Providers

8.4.1 Screenshots of the UCAS Progress portal below describe the key functions which post-16 providers access and complete when using the system:

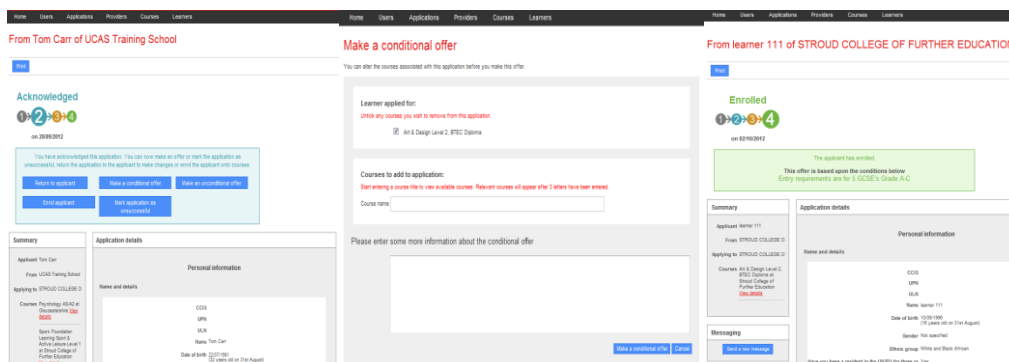
8.4.2 Account created



8.4.3 Create provider and course information pages



8.4.4 Handling Applications



8.5 UCAS Progress – Feedback from Key Stakeholder Groups

8.5.1 Throughout the lifetime of the project staff working with young people, schools and post-16 providers have recorded issues when using the UCAS System. In addition colleagues from Career Connect and Positive Steps have sought direct feedback from schools and young people and they also recorded issues which their advisers have noted when working directly with young people. These are set out in the subsequent Tables.

8.5.2 Key Issues Identified by Young People

8.5.2 Key Issues Identified by Young People
<p>UCAS Progress has been in use for a number of years and the majority of young people, once trained, are able to use the system effectively with the number of applications submitted in Greater Manchester increasingly steadily year on year.</p> <p>The following issues were identified by young people as a consequence of using the system.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The process of registering and completing the required fields was, in some cases, felt to be too long winded. As a consequence some young people simply submitted direct applications using the college and other post-16 provider own individual application systems.• The auto generated passwords issued by UCAS Progress are in complex formats leading to miss keying and a degree of frustration amongst some young people.• Lost or forgotten passwords are a common occurrence amongst young people. Where young people lose or forget their passwords they are unable to re-register directly and they have to go via the member of the school staff responsible to obtain their password.• When logging on for a second or subsequent occasion some young people navigated to other UCAS portals – for example the undergraduate portal and became confused.• Some young people felt that the pages were ‘too busy’ and that the language used by post-16 providers was overly complex• Some young people felt that the process was too long and complex.

8.5.3 Key Issues Identified by staff in schools

8.5.3 Key Issues Identified by Staff in Schools
<p>Schools are using the features of UCAS Progress in four main ways in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide information to their students in Years 10 & 11 regarding the range of post-16 opportunities available to them including post 16 providers, types of courses, subject & occupational areas and alternative pathways.• Enable young people to submit applications to post-16 providers.• Monitor the activity of young people and to check whether young people are actively managing their future learning options.• Track the post-16 destinations of young people.

<p>8.5.3 Key Issues Identified by Staff in Schools</p> <p><u>Overall Experience</u></p> <p>The majority of school teachers and advisers from within schools are positive about their experience of using UCAS Progress. Once trained, school staff have found the system straightforward to use. They recognise the value to young people of having easy access to comprehensive up-to-date information about both post-16 providers and their courses in a single location which also allows them to make direct applications.</p> <p>They also reported that the majority of young people found the system relatively accessible and straightforward to use but less able young people, young people with learning difficulties and some young people with English as a second language needed additional time and support in using the system. School staff have recommended that the publication of single sheet step by step user guides with screen shots would be really helpful both to them and students.</p> <p><u>Support provided</u></p> <p>Some schools were encouraged to become involved when they became aware that their local authority would upload the pupil data on their behalf</p> <p><u>Use by post-16 providers</u></p> <p>They have indicated that the system would be considerably enhanced if all post-16 providers were using it. If providers could be encouraged to use similar formats for personal statements and references this would also result in considerable benefits and efficiencies within schools.</p> <p>The level of enthusiasm to adopt and actively use the system was, in the majority of cases, directly related to the extent of use by post-16 providers. For very obvious reasons schools are reluctant to use the system if post-16 providers are not using it.</p> <p><u>Destination Tracking</u></p> <p>Staff members in a significant number of participating schools are frustrated that there is inconsistent use of the 'conditional offer or unconditional 'offer' and 'enrolment' functions by post 16 providers. If these functions are not completed schools are unable to use the system to track student progress and destinations and the functions of UCAS Progress are not being used to maximum effect. As a consequence schools (and LAs) have to make use of alternative time consuming and costly alternatives. Given the increasing number of post-16 providers and the ever increasing complexity of tracking post-16 destinations across multiple providers' adoption of a single system across Greater Manchester would result in very real efficiencies and cost savings.</p> <p>In addition staff working with young people identified the following additional issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The search functions are considered to work well and course information was felt to be accessible and relevant. In some instances the search functions were felt to be too sensitive and the following issues arose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Searches with minor misspellings yielded 'no results'. ○ Post-16 provider did not always list all courses available. ○ It was not always clear that for Apprenticeships applications were to the provider and not to specific vacancies.
--

8.5.4 Key Issues Identified by Careers Advisers Working with Schools

8.5.4 Key Issues Identified by Careers Advisers Working with Schools
<p>Colleagues in both Career Connect and Positive Steps are generally positive about utilising using the UCAS Progress. They are using the system in three principle ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provision of basic and useful IAG concerning post-16 options. This includes self-awareness activities and also the opportunity to work with young people to research career ideas as well as tips about preparing a personal statement, interview tips etc. There are Lesson Plans already available in the resources section - so in essence it is a ready-made careers education programme (particularly for Year 10s and 11s) offering some impartial information.• An opportunity to search the local landscape using one site that encompasses. Further Education; Apprenticeships and Traineeships and provides descriptions of the providers and also links to their individual websites and further background information.• An opportunity to use one application process allowing young people to make applications or to register their interest with several providers.
<p>The following additional benefits for young people were identified by careers advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The opportunity for young people to experiencing searching for learning and employment opportunities across a range of sites.• Gaining valuable experience of using on line web-based application processes which are increasingly the norm by learning providers, employers and employment agencies
<p>Careers Adviser also made a series of suggestions as to how the system might be enhanced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The embedding of links to other application processes for example the Rochdale Apprenticeship website.• Localising some of the content.• Enhancing the system so that young people age 17+ are able to access and use it to support their transition to further learning and/or Traineeships and Apprenticeships. This would considerably enhance the functionality and once young people have developed their initial profile they would be able to amend it and importantly use it for several years.

8.6 Using UCAS Progress: Detailed Issues and Lessons Learnt

8.6.1 Throughout the duration of the project the delivery partners have identified and recorded issues which have arisen as young people, schools, advisers and post-16 providers have used the system. In the subsequent table these issues have been identified and recommended actions included.

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by young people (and schools)		
Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
Creating an account for a school to become a sending provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A set of key information is required from the school or provider and these are inputted into UCAS Progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the GM Search and Apply pilot Career Connect have been creating new <i>sending school accounts</i> and supporting providers to register. Recommendation: Consideration needs to be given to how this function will be sustained moving forward and a transitional plan put in place.
Registration of young people And Initial Log In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a number of ways that Year 11s are registered. If their school is participating they will have their details sent by the school. In Salford and Bolton this function is currently undertaken by local authorities. Log in details are then provided to the Year 11s with support in using the system by Career Connect and Positive Steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the pilot phase schools have benefitted from the third party support provided by Career Connect to upload their data. There are risks that without ongoing support some schools may be reluctant or lack the capability to undertake this function. Recommendation: Consideration needs to be given to how this function will be sustained moving forward and a transitional plan put in place. Some schools and local authority colleagues have been unsure what they need to do in terms of data protection issues and the need to obtain consent. Recommendation: It would be helpful if a guidance note could be produced to advise both schools and local authorities across Greater Manchester on the data protection/consent requirements. In some cases the UCAS Progress auto generated log in details and passwords are complex. Whilst this complies with recommended password protection issues it often leads to keying in mistakes by young people leading to frustration. Inevitably young people mislay or forget their log in and password details and resetting these is not straightforward. A simpler password and log in reset facility would be helpful

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by young people (and schools)

Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
Young person completes their personal profile which will be sent to post-16 providers when they make an application or an expression of interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This process often forms an important element of careers education sessions and is supported by school staff and external advisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-16 providers are able to specify if they require particular information for example: predicted grades, references and personal statements. These vary considerably. For example when asking for references/referees the format and content requested can vary. If post-16 providers could agree on a more standard format this would reduce the work involved for both young people and schools.
Year 11 search for provider and courses and then add to favourites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This process often forms an important element of careers education sessions and is supported by school staff and external advisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of young people once trained are able to use the system largely unsupported Advisers working in schools have commented that less able young people and in some cases those for whom English is not their first language have needed support when using the UCAS Progress system and the importance of ensuring that young people are made aware that support is available and where and when to access that support. Because the search function works on the basis of either the provider's name or a search for courses within a specified distance from a given location we have identified that in the case of Apprenticeship the outputs from a particular search may not identify the full range and volume of opportunities available. Examples of this are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities in Greater Manchester made available by providers who do not list a training venue in Greater Manchester are not visible when a person searches using location/distance. Some providers were only listing their head office or main training location. Slight misspellings or 'typos' in the search function lead to 'nil' returns
Year 11 submits 'application' to provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This process often forms an important element of careers education sessions and is supported by school staff and external advisers. At this stage a school learner manager can review the application(s) before it is submitted. School learner managers can track the status of applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some schools there is a very significant difference between the numbers of pupils registering on the system and the number who actually submit applications. There are several factors which have contributed to this: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have registered pupils and then become aware that post-16 providers in their local authority are not using the system to accept applications. Young people once briefed have not been supported to use the system as part of a structured process and have been 'left to get on with it'. Staff changes have led to discontinuity of support.

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by young people (and schools)		
Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where school managers are checking applications on a regular basis they are able to identify young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who have not made any applications. Who are making multiple applications to different types of course and may benefit from additional guidance.
Post-16 provider then responds to the young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-16 providers use the messaging system within UCAS Progress to both check applications and to acknowledge the fact that they have received an application and tell the young person what will happen next.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is variability amongst post-16 providers in the extent to which they use the messaging system and the frequency by which they check and respond to applications. At the outset of the project there was considerably variance between the responsiveness of post-16 providers and in particular independent providers responding to Apprenticeship Expressions of Interest.
<p>Young Person has the opportunity to accept an offer if a conditional or unconditional offer has been made</p> <p>Young person may be asked to submit additional information and/or references</p> <p>Young person may withdraw an application</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is clear from the data that young people are making applications to more than one provider. At present those applications are submitted without prioritisation. Recommendation should be given to include preferences so that school advisers are able to advise young people on the best option for their chosen course/provider/career path.
Young person has been enrolled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The post-16 provider has the option of completing the 'enrolled' field within UCAS Progress. School Learner Managers (registered as users of the UCAS Progress system) are able to generate intended and actual enrolment reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a minority of providers are using this function. As a consequence staff in schools (and local authorities) are unable to systematically use the report functions within UCAS Progress to monitor destinations. They then rely on alternative arrangements. For schools with pupils who progress to a wide range of post-16 providers this is a costly and time consuming exercise. Recommendation – If local authorities and /or the Combined Authority are to pay for the continuation of UCAS Progress as a free to use service by post-16 receiving providers then completion of the 'offer' and enrolment functions should be very strongly encouraged.

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by post-16 ‘receiving providers’.		
Post-16 Providers		
Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
Provider account is created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key information is required for account set up along with users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have been examples where changes in personnel have led to discontinuity. In some cases this has resulted in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider and course information not up-to-date. Applications/EOIs not being acknowledged. During the lifetime of the GM Search and Apply project providers who have wished to engage or who have had staff changes have had ready access to local one-to-one support to train new staff.
Provider adds content to provider information and course information – this included full-time courses through to Apprenticeship frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-16 provider adds key information for provider and course sections of UCAS Progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For new providers once trained the exercise has been relatively straightforward albeit time consuming. In the main providers have been able to undertake this exercise in a relatively short timescale. Providers have found the training provided by both UCAS and GMLPN useful and effective Once populated the process for revising the information is relatively straightforward.
Provide receives application or Apprenticeship EOI from a young person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The young person submits their applications and EOIs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people can apply for up to 15 courses simultaneously with a single provider which can include BTECs, A-Levels and Apprenticeships. They can also make applications to a number of providers. Should the young person then wish to submit a later application with the same provider they are unable to do so. This has particular implications for Apprenticeships. To facilitate this within the UCAS Progress system colleges have been encouraged to list two ‘accounts’, one for full/part time courses and one for Apprenticeships (and Traineeships). Young people are only allowed to submit one application to an individual post-16 provider. Recommendation: All post-16 providers offering both full time programmes and Apprenticeships should list separate ‘accounts’ so that young people can pursue a twin track approach at the point they are considering their post-16 choices and submitting applications.

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by post-16 ‘receiving providers’.		
Post-16 Providers		
Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some post-16 providers require written references from the school and/or others. Providers transfer information into their own data management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At present there is considerable variety in terms of the additional information which post-16 providers are seeking. If some broad principles could be agreed amongst post-16 providers this would help to simplify the process for both young people and advisers. Where colleges, sixth form colleges, sixth forms and large independent providers are receiving large volumes of applications via UCAS Progress they are keen to integrate the UCAS Progress system with their own CRM and information management systems which have been developed at considerable expense. This has not always proved straightforward. In a number of cases this has been identified as a key barrier. In some cases providers have needed to print off the individual applications (or EOI) and manually entered the information into their own system which is both time consuming and costly. UCAS Progress is working with CRM software suppliers to improve the interconnectedness. Where CRM software suppliers have developed solutions which can be applied at a reasonable cost then post-16 providers are far more likely to adopt UCAS Progress.
Provider acknowledges and then reviews the application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider selects ‘acknowledge’ option within young persons’ application in UCAS Progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receiving providers have indicated that where young people amend their original application, submit further information or update their profile the changes are not highlighted this then requires them to compare the revised submission with the original to identify changes which is time consuming. Providers have also indicated that when young people submit a query or request using the messaging system the system does not alert them so they are constantly having to access the system to check whether they have unread messages.

8.6.2 – Issues arising from the use of UCAS Progress by post-16 ‘receiving providers’.

Post-16 Providers

Key Stage	Activity	Issues and Lessons Learnt
Provider makes an offer, an unconditional offer or marks applications as unsuccessful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers complete the necessary fields with UCAS Progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the point of submission of applications post-16 providers have no way of knowing whether they are the first second or third preference and whether the young person will actually enrol. If young people accept a number of enrolment offers providers are able to see the order of preference. Both schools and CEIAG providers have indicated that where providers complete the conditional and unconditional offer fields early this enables them to target their September guarantee activity with young people who have not yet received an offer. Providers would find it useful if they were able to access an anonymised report of the actual post-16 destinations of young people for all of those who submitted an application to them.
If a young person accepts the offer then the provider marks application as enrolled when they have started their course or in the case of Apprenticeships when employment commences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The post-16 provider has the option of completing the ‘enrolled’ field within UCAS Progress. School Learner Managers (registered as users of the UCAS Progress system) are able to generate intended and actual enrolment reports. Providers complete the ‘enrolment’ filed within the UCAS Progress System. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of this function is at present extremely limited and as a consequence the vast majority of post-16 tracking undertaken by schools and local authorities to meet their statutory duties is undertaken by alternative processes. Colleges, sixth form colleges and other large volume post-16 providers have indicated that if this requirement could be semi-automated by linking UCAS Progress to their own CRM/data management software then they would be more likely to use it. Whilst several providers are using this approach to bulk upload learner data from the application information submitted via UCAS Progress to their system we have not found an example of where this is being achieved in reverse to populate the enrolment /destination fields.

THE GM SEARCH AND APPLY PROJECT

STEERING GROUP

Carl Birchall	The Manchester College
David Berry	Tameside Council
Nicola Davies	Bolton Council
Susan Gilmore	Wigan Council
Angela King	UCAS
Richard King	Wigan Council
Sally Lawton	Oldham College
Jack Loughlin	Chair
Nicola McLeod	New Economy
Emma Morrison	Manchester City Council
Lisa Quigley	New Economy
Michelle Royle	Oldham College
Rhianne Sweeney	Manchester City Council
Andy Turner	Rochdale Council
Anita Turner	The Manchester Growth Company
Geraldine Whitehead	Bolton Council
Rebekah Wilkins	Salford City College

PROJECT DELIVERY

Julie Riley	Career Connect
Brendan Prendergast	Career Connect
Diane Sproson	Career Connect
Sarah Scanlan	Career Connect
Kelly Baxendale	Positive Steps
Steve Murphy	Positive Steps
Andy Fawcett	GMLPN
Matthew Leigh	GMLPN
Ruth Thompson-Davies	GMLPN