Apprentices Aiming Higher

Workbased Learning Progression Framework

2008-2010 Report
Contact Information

This report has been compiled by the Aimhigher Greater Manchester Co-ordination Unit Work Based Learning Team in order to share information and good practice between partners and other stakeholders. For further information, or to discuss any aspect of this report, please contact:

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Cheadle and Marple 6th Form College  
SETA Training  
Tameside College  
Age UK Ltd  
Trafford College  
Venture Learning  
Wigan and Leigh College  
ProCo  
YMCA (Salford)  
Stockport College
Executive Summary

Context

The aim of the Aimhigher Greater Manchester workbased learning (WBL) progression framework is to motivate, build confidence and raise aspirations to progress to higher education (HE) amongst non-traditional groups, in particular Apprentices. There is a shortage of data on rates of progression to HE by Advanced Apprentices and other work based learners. However, research suggests that a high proportion of adults in work, including Apprentices, have low aspirations and lack an understanding of the benefits and opportunities in higher level qualifications, and consequently progression to HE is low (estimated at around 3% on average).\(^1\) It is unlikely that Apprentices will progress to HE in any great numbers unless there is a shift in aspirations and opportunity is put within reach of this hard to reach cohort.

The WBL progression framework is delivered by Aimhigher through a network of Aimhigher Partner Providers who are either private workbased learning training providers or workbased learning departments in colleges in Greater Manchester. The framework provides a coherent sequence of developmental opportunities for people in the target groups. Each intervention is designed to build on previous experience in order to develop aspirations, awareness, confidence and motivation to progress to HE. A range of resources have been developed to support Apprentices through and beyond their Apprenticeship Framework. Information includes part-time higher education courses, finance and application procedures. Aimhigher Greater Manchester have trained Partner Provider staff to use Aimhigher resources with their own Apprentices and provide ongoing support to enable providers to integrate the Aimhigher ethos into their Apprenticeship delivery.

A partnership steering group oversees the work on the strategy. The group consists of representatives from WBL providers, Universities, FE colleges, National Apprenticeship Service, Greater Manchester Learner Provider Network, Local Authorities and Aimhigher Borough Co-ordinators. The group reports regularly to the Aimhigher Greater Manchester Area Partnership Committee.

Activities and Take-Up

The network of Partner Providers who deliver the Aimhigher WBL progression framework has expanded from ten in July 2009, to twenty-two at the end of July 2010. A cohort comprised of Young Apprentices, Apprentices and Advanced Apprentices has been identified and tracked through the activities. At the time of writing this report 3,302 beneficiaries have had at least one intervention to encourage progression on to the next stage of learning. **856 Apprentices** from different training providers are in the named cohort for ongoing participation in Aimhigher activities.

As might be expected, introductory sessions ('Opportunities for Apprentices') account for the largest volume of activity within the WBL progression framework, and 135 sessions have been delivered across all Partner Providers. There have been 31 enrichment activities (not including centrally delivered Action Days), with 455 participants, and some 105 individual support sessions.

One of the opportunities is the Step-In to HE module which builds Advanced Apprentices’ confidence in their ability to progress to HE. It is a Level 4 module worth 10 HE credits, validated by the University of Bolton and delivered over 7/8 weeks. The course covers research skills, personal development planning and writing techniques. 66 learners

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\(^1\) An analysis of the progression of Advanced Apprentices into HE in England, Vic Seddon, UVAC, 2005
completed the Step-In module in the pilot stage with a further 56 learners who successfully completed the Step-In to HE module in 2009/10.

Outcomes

Results are encouraging and indicate that Apprentices are more informed, motivated and confident to progress to the next level of learning. In realising the value of their Apprenticeship they are able to focus on progression and lifelong career opportunities beyond completion of their Apprenticeship.

The WBL Progression Framework meets the needs of Apprentices at different stages in their learner journey (including pre-16) and for many there is still some way to go before they reach the stage of being able to apply to higher education. Evaluating overall outcomes and impact is therefore a long term process. Through experience it has been determined that even with this support Apprentices will only progress a few years after completing their Apprenticeship and so the impact measurements include ‘intention to progress after 1-2 years’.

‘Step-In to HE’ has returned some impressive progression data. Over a quarter (26%) of the learners who completed the Step-In to HE module up to 2009 have progressed on to HE, and a further 46% from the these cohorts said they intend to progress in future. Of those completing the course during 2009/10, 32% intend to progress to HE during 2010/11 and a further 39% intend to progress to HE within the next 1-2 years. Overall as of Summer 2010 around three-quarters (72%) of all Step-In to HE module completers have either gone on to HE or intend to do so.

Further benefits accrue to the parents and family of Apprentices, whose awareness of Apprenticeship pathways into higher qualifications has increased, and to learning providers. The latter are enthusiastic supporters and essential partners, finding increasingly innovative ways to deliver the message to Apprentices and using the programme to boost recruitment and retention of Apprentices.

The WBL strategy will continue to be a key part of the Aimhigher Greater Manchester programme. In order to increase the number of Apprentices that benefit from Aimhigher interventions Aimhigher Greater Manchester will need to continue to increase the number of WBL Partner Providers, continue to support the delivery of Aimhigher WBL activities and update and develop new resources to support that delivery.

"The questions raised by the learners and the fact that 2 out of 3 completed a client record to get a 1-1 appointment with a careers adviser means that they have all learnt more and clearly are now interested in progression as they can see the benefits to HE.” (Aimhigher Partner Provider)

"taught me to always aim to achieve and challenge myself”
“Team work and communication are so important”
(Engineering Apprentices)

“it motivated me towards achieving a high level of education and qualifications”
“I learnt about what options are available to me and how I can afford university”
(Age Concern Apprentices)
1. INTRODUCTION

The Aimhigher Greater Manchester Workbased Learning (WBL) Progression Framework strategy that supports transition to Higher Education (HE) by Apprentices has been recognised as being innovative and important work. This includes a National Aimhigher award 2009 and Aimhigher activity award 2010. This report provides a review of the strategy including activities and outcomes delivered in 2008-2010. The findings will be of interest to individuals and organisations with an interest in supporting Apprentices in Greater Manchester to make the most of their workbased learning opportunity including progression to higher education. It is also relevant to other policy makers and practitioners in considering progression opportunities for Apprentices, particularly those involved in widening participation within the higher education sector and Aimhigher partnerships nationally.

1.1 Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1 – Introduction.** Outlines the partnership arrangements, approach to the development of a learner progression framework for workbased learners in Greater Manchester, how the strategy has developed and been delivered over the last two years.

- **Section 2 - WBL Progression Framework Activities 2008 – 2010.** Describes the activities and take-up. It includes a description of the Apprentices groups included in the Aimhigher WBL cohort. Feedback on activities is reviewed here.

- **Section 3 – Partner Provider Support.** Reviews the staff development activities which underlie the delivery of the approach.

- **Section 4 - Assessing Outcomes and Impact.** Provides information on the achievements and outcomes of the programme, particularly in terms of the benefits to Apprentices and the extent to which Apprentices have been supported to consider higher education.

- **Section 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations.** Presents overall findings and conclusions, and sets out recommendations for the future.

1.2 Apprenticeships: A strategic approach to HE progression

The Greater Manchester sub-region encompasses well over 2.5 million residents, across 10 local authority districts. WBL is a key part of the education and training sector, with over 44 workbased learning providers, including workbased departments within further education colleges operating within the Greater Manchester sub-region. On average, there are well over 15,600 Apprentices, including Apprentices, Advanced Apprentices and Higher Level Apprentices on programme per year\(^2\). Several Greater Manchester boroughs including Manchester, Wigan, Bolton and Stockport had high numbers of new Apprentice starts in 2008/09, including well over 4,000 overall at Level 3 (Figure 1).

Source: Greater Manchester National Apprenticeship Service

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\(^2\) Source; Greater Manchester National Apprenticeship Service
The Aimhigher Greater Manchester partnership is part of the national initiative to raise aspirations to progress to higher education (HE) amongst non-traditional groups. Research suggests that a high proportion of adults in work, including Apprentices, have low aspirations and lack an understanding of the benefits and opportunities in higher level qualifications, and consequently progression to HE is low (estimated at around 3% on average). It is unlikely that Apprentices will progress to HE in any great numbers unless there is a shift in aspirations and opportunity is put within reach of this important cohort.

Aimhigher Greater Manchester has been working with Apprentices over many years, and since 2008 has been implementing a Workbased Learning (WBL) Strategy, which aims to raise the aspirations of Apprentices, whilst ensuring Aimhigher activities are delivered in the most appropriate and cost effective way, through working in partnership with local WBL providers. The approach covers Young Apprentices (pre-16), Apprentices at Level 2, and Advanced Apprentices. Progression to higher education by vocational learners is traditionally low, and the strategy targets Apprentices in sectors where there is a definite need for Aimhigher intervention, in line with the future skills needs of the sector and where traditionally Apprentices and Advanced Apprentices do not usually progress to Higher Education. Key sectors identified by the strategy include: Child Care; Adult Care; Hair and Beauty; Food and Drink; Manufacturing; Financial Services; Customer Care; Retail and Logistics; Hospitality; Engineering and Construction Trades; Automotive Engineering and Health. Labour market projections estimate a Level 4/5 management skills gap in all of these sectors in Greater Manchester up to 2021.

The WBL team within the Aimhigher Greater Manchester Co-ordination Unit leads on the implementation of the strategy, under the steer of the WBL Partnership Group. Members of the WBL Partnership Group include representatives from 10 WBL Providers, 4 universities, 1 FE college, National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), GM Learner Provider Network, 2 Aimhigher Borough Coordinators and Union Learn. By meeting regularly the strategy continues to move forward and deliver a first class provision for this hard to reach cohort. The National Apprenticeship Service, Sector Skills Councils and the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) also work closely with Aimhigher Greater Manchester to ensure a joined up approach in the delivery of the Aimhigher WBL Strategy.

1.3 Outline of the Progression Framework Approach

The Aimhigher Greater Manchester WBL Strategy provides for a learner-centred progression framework which provides a coherent sequence of developmental opportunities for people in the target groups. Each intervention is designed to build on previous experience in order to develop aspirations, awareness, confidence and motivation to progress to HE. A range of activities have been developed, as shown in Figure 2, which together are designed to support Apprentices through and beyond their Apprenticeship Framework of learning. The key stages of the framework are as follows:

1. **Introductory stage**: introducing higher education as part of the Apprentice learner journey;
2. **Consolidation stage**: providing further information and support through group and individual sessions;
3. **Pre-HE taster**: the chance to try out university level study;
4. **Ongoing**: provision of information though newsletters, and recognising success through events for achievers.

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3 An analysis of the progression of Advanced Apprentices into HE in England, Vic Seddon, UVAC, 2005
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of LPF</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>How used</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory stage</td>
<td><strong>Opportunities for Apprentices</strong> (formerly Introduction to Aimhigher)</td>
<td>A presentation which can be used to motivate and encourage Apprentices to think about the value of the Apprenticeship route and the benefits of progression to HE.</td>
<td>To introduce HE at inductions, off-the-job training sessions or on a one to one basis</td>
<td>Led by providers to integrate with their own sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Openings Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>Providing information at school parents’ evenings</td>
<td>To support young people in making options choices</td>
<td>Specific to two providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation</td>
<td><strong>Subject Specific Masterclasses</strong></td>
<td>Job-related experiences that add value to the Apprenticeship</td>
<td>To support the content of the Framework and motivate to stay in learning</td>
<td>Either Partner Provider led or central WBL team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Provider Enrichment:</strong></td>
<td>Motivational activities linked to the content of the Framework, which have included visits to high tech sites and companies to see additional opportunities that could be available to them.</td>
<td>To motivate by showing what progression routes are possible, and to build confidence about progressing to the next level</td>
<td>Partner Provider led tailored to Apprentice group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Action Days</strong></td>
<td>Motivational activities linked to the content of the Framework, which have included visits to high tech sites and companies to see additional opportunities that could be available to them.</td>
<td>To motivate by showing what progression routes are possible, and to build confidence about progressing to the next level</td>
<td>Partner Provider led tailored to Apprentice group</td>
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<td>Partner Provider led tailored to Apprentice group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Action Days:</strong></td>
<td>An interactive event which included workshops held at the weekend plus an exciting activity to encourage Apprentices to attend.</td>
<td>To give information about HE locally and support decision making, mainly relevant to Advanced Apprentices</td>
<td>Led by central WBL team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>As part of review process or as a separate session</strong></td>
<td>As part of review process or as a separate session</td>
<td>As part of review process or as a separate session</td>
<td>Partner Provider staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Session with Apprentice talking about their experience of HE and the benefits of progression</strong></td>
<td>Session with Apprentice talking about their experience of HE and the benefits of progression</td>
<td>Incorporated into off-the-job training sessions or as a separate session</td>
<td>Either Partner Provider led or central WBL team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Step-In to HE</strong></td>
<td>A short course aimed at building the confidence and study skills of Apprentices to enable them to progress to relevant HE qualifications. The courses are run at five delivery centres throughout Greater Manchester – Wigan and Leigh College, Skills Solutions in central Manchester, Bury College, Stockport College and Oldham College.</td>
<td>It enables the Apprentice to have a taste of studying HE and to see how good they are.</td>
<td>Central WBL team in conjunction with delivery centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Newsletter</strong></td>
<td>A regular and informative newsletter which is sent to all Apprentices on the cohort.</td>
<td>To reinforce key messages, provide information on options/activities and individual success stories.</td>
<td>Produced by WBL project leader in the central team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td><strong>Apprentice Achievers event:</strong></td>
<td>An awards evening held at a university to recognise the achievement of Apprentices and to encourage progression.</td>
<td>To encourage progression to the next level of learning and to provide information</td>
<td>Led by central WBL team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Recognising success</strong></td>
<td>An awards evening held at a university to recognise the achievement of Apprentices and to encourage progression.</td>
<td>To encourage progression to the next level of learning and to provide information</td>
<td>Led by central WBL team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td><strong>CPD event for WBL staff from training providers and workbased learning departments in FE colleges who support Apprentices.</strong></td>
<td>CPD event for WBL staff from training providers and workbased learning departments in FE colleges who support Apprentices.</td>
<td>To provide information and materials for staff to use to support Apprentices to progress.</td>
<td>Led by central WBL team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As far as possible, the model seeks to embed the ownership of the activities within WBL provider organisations themselves; Aimhigher trains staff on how to use the Aimhigher resources and integrate them into their processes. The WBL strategy encompasses the “Step-In to HE” module which was developed in partnership between Aimhigher Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) to give Apprentices the opportunity to study a short course at HE level.

1.4 Delivering the Workbased Learning Progression Framework

Delivery of the approach in the early stages after 2008 involved the use of “Aimhigher WBL Champions” who were hosted from within ten WBL Providers, one in each of the Greater Manchester local authority districts. Each WBL Champion was responsible for identifying a targeted Apprentice cohort and supporting them through a range of activities that inform, motivate and build confidence such as one to one sessions, master classes/enrichment activities. The Aimhigher WBL Champions identified had differing roles within their organisations, e.g. training consultant, learner support, retention and achievement officer. All roles had access to groups of learners. During the first year the Champions developed their knowledge of higher education and progression routes which was underpinned by an ongoing resource development programme to support activity delivery.

Throughout the first year it became apparent that in order to widen the message to Apprentices about the benefits of HE more providers would need to be involved. Champions were very good at working with Apprentices within their own organisation but time restraints did not enable them to work in other workbased learning organisations within their borough. Other organisations were also asking how they could be involved. A new method of working with providers was developed – the Aimhigher Partner Provider model. By the end of the 2009/10 academic year, the network had expanded with formal agreements in place with 22 Partner Providers across further education, voluntary, public and private sectors and covering a wide range of Apprentice Frameworks. All Partner Provider organisations receive a training session developed by Aimhigher Greater Manchester (see section 3 for further information on provider support).

Most activities in the introductory stage of the WBL progression framework are open to a wide group of learners, identified and recruited by the Partner Providers. Apprentices who express a particular interest in finding out about HE progression are encouraged to join the Aimhigher WBL cohort. Being part of the cohort enables Apprentices to engage with an ongoing series of activities, receive regular updates, and enables Aimhigher to track participation in activities and progression. A nominated co-ordinator from each Partner Provider acts as the link with Aimhigher. Their role is to make sure that activities take place with the Apprentices, and to input activity, cohort and evaluation data onto the central online database system. Training is provided to ensure data is systematically recorded.

Providers are supported to run enrichment activities which motivate Apprentices to do well in their Apprenticeship and progress to the next level of learning. All Apprentices in the cohort are also offered the opportunity to attend Action Days and any other centrally organised events. Over time, additional activities have been organised centrally by Aimhigher which have been communicated to providers for promotion to their Apprentices including Action Days and Apprentice Achiever events. Partner Provider staff development has also been extended to include an annual CPD event (see below).
2. WBL PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK ACTIVITIES 2008-2010

This section outlines the WBL progression framework activities and take-up by Apprentices over the last two years. The main data source is the WBL Partner Provider database, which is reliant on regular and accurate data input directly by the co-ordinators in the Partner Provider organisations.

Many Partner Providers carry out activities with relatively large numbers of Apprentices from their own organisations, particularly in the introductory stage. At these activities Apprentices with a particular interest in higher education register their interest with the Aimhigher Greater Manchester coordination unit. ‘Cohort’ refers to the group of Apprentices who have completed a registration form and whose individual details are entered onto the central database held by the coordination unit. ‘Beneficiaries’ refers to the overall numbers of Apprentices who have taken part in activities regardless of whether or not they have completed a registration form. A review of feedback on the activities from all the participants is included.

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Activities

The network of Partner Providers within the WBL Progression Framework has expanded from ten in July 2009, to reach twenty-two by the end of July 2010. As might be expected, introductory sessions (‘Opportunities for Apprentices’) account for the largest volume of activity within the WBL progression framework, and virtually all Partner Providers have held sessions (Table 1). These sessions are the starting point for the WBL Aimhigher journey, which is usually offered as part of the training provider induction or off-the-job training, either in a group or one-to-one. Enrichment action days are the next most prevalent activity, involving around half of Partner Providers, followed by individual support sessions.

Table 1: Activities Delivered 2008-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of activities</th>
<th>Number of Partner Providers</th>
<th>Total Number of Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Apprentices</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openings Opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-Specific Masterclasses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment activities (not including centrally delivered Action Days)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the Advanced Apprentice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Support Sessions</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-In to HE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2 Cohort Registrations

The number of Apprentices registered to the WBL cohort has expanded from 274 in 2008/09 to 582 in 2009/10 academic year, as shown in Figure 3.

Overall, although fewer took part in an ‘Opportunities for Apprentices’ session in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09, proportionally more beneficiaries completed a registration form to join the WBL cohort (over 90% compared to under 30% the previous year).
2.2 Learners on the Aimhigher WBL Cohort

2.2.1 Profile

Since 2008, some 856 Apprentices have been registered on the WBL cohort. Over half (52%) are on Advanced Apprenticeships (Figure 4), reflecting the focus of attention on learners at Level 3 who are closest to higher education. However, the WBL progression framework is offered across the range of Apprenticeships including 13% who are young Apprentices within compulsory schooling. The profile of registrations has been fairly consistent across the two years of the programme. The volume of registrations increased in the second year as more Partner Providers got involved, with a peak in registrations after January 2010.

Apprenticeship frameworks targeted by the Aimhigher WBL progression framework are those which sit within the definition of ‘lower socio-economic groups’ in the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). Construction Craft Apprentices represent the largest group within the cohort, and the majority in this sector are studying at advanced level (75%) (Figure 5). Anecdotal evidence suggests that interest in higher education amongst Construction Apprentices is on the increase, possibly driven by current labour market conditions. Learners registered to the Aimhigher cohort in construction trades are drawn from across the range of Apprenticeship frameworks, although there is a concentration in Carpentry and Joinery, Heating/Ventilation and Plumbing (Figure 5).
Engineering Craft, Childcare and Administration Apprentices represent the next largest group of learners on the Aimhigher WBL cohort after construction. The proportion at Level 3 in these group varies widely from 64% in Engineering to 29% in Admin Support.

The majority of adult Apprentices who register on the Aimhigher WBL cohort have no previous HE experience. Over two-thirds of young people on the cohort (under 18 years of age) have no higher education background within their family. (Figure 7).

A valid postcode was obtained for 92% of registered learners. Well over half (54%) of those with a valid postcode were living in areas within the 40% most deprived on the index of deprivation. Some 12% came from outside Greater Manchester.

2.2.2 Take-Up of Activities

Over half (57%) of learners registered to the cohort at July 2010 had taken part in an introductory session only (Figure 8). Around a third (31%) had benefited from an introduction plus one other activity, and 11% had taken part in 2-3 other activities.

\[4\] Figures exclude newsletters.
Some 1% of the cohort had more than three other activities (in addition to the introduction).

Figure 8

Proportionally more learners on Advanced Apprenticeship Frameworks compared with Level 2 Apprentices, had been involved in several sessions, 38% in the advanced group had been on at least one other session (including 13% who’d been on 2 or more other sessions), compared to 36% and 4% respectively of the Level 2 group. Young Apprentices were most likely to have been involved in several sessions – 83% had been on at least one other session in addition to the introduction, and 31% of these had been on 2-3 other sessions – although the Young Apprentice group represents only a small proportion of the overall cohort (Figure 9). Young Apprentices are more likely to receive more than one session as it is easier to arrange visits/activities during their off-the-job training.

Figure 9

2.3 Activity Details and Feedback

2.3.1 Opportunities for Apprentices Sessions

Some 135 introductory ‘Opportunities for Apprentices’ sessions have been logged since 2008, with a total of 1,589 beneficiaries involved. The group size averaged 12 participants, although introductory sessions ranged from one to over 50 people. Two Partner Providers have included sessions for younger learners within schools and colleges as part of their local Aimhigher offer (Opening Opportunities for Apprentices). This usually includes promotion of the Apprentice route and progression afterwards to young people and parents. Some 769 beneficiaries were recorded for such activities across 11 events in 2009/10.
Feedback is summarised in Figure 10. Following the session over 90% of Apprentices understood more how achieving an HE qualification could benefit them in their job roles after completing their Apprenticeship. As this is the first of the interventions, the activities following will build on that awareness.

Figure 10

Feedback on Introductory Sessions (out of 966 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>I know more about progression routes into HE suitable for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>I understand more about how a HE qualification could help me to get an interesting and well paid job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>I’m definitely more interested in progressing to a higher level of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>I’m confident that I will be able to take the next steps towards a higher level of learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments after some of the introductory sessions at various providers:

"I learnt about the different job opportunities HE can offer”

"I can advance myself and work at the same time”

“That there is more you can do after level 3”

Case Study: Introductory Session at SETA

Twelve Apprentices took part in the introductory session at SETA in December 2009. In feedback, most agree that they had found out about progression routes. The comments suggest that the session had opened up ideas about progression routes which might not otherwise have been considered. For example, one person said they’d learnt it can be easier to progress to higher education than they had previously thought, and another person said: “I am (now) much more motivated towards HE”.

The Apprentices saw an ongoing role for Aimhigher; including:
- Providing more information about action days and other opportunities;
- Giving advice on the ‘best’ qualifications, courses and colleges;
- General advice about careers.

2.3.2 Subject-Specific Masterclasses

There were ten subject specific masterclasses held between August 2009 and July 2010 involving 121 learners across six providers (compared to two events at one provider for a total of 68 learners in the previous year). The activities have become increasingly focused on cohort learners (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Subject-specific Masterclasses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback is summarised in Figure 11. Eight out of ten (80%) said that participation in a masterclass had enhanced their understanding of progression routes and led to increased interest in progression to HE. Comments included:

"Aimhigher is giving me more information and helping me to choose the right path"

"I am considering university after this course following the chat with Aimhigher"

(Advanced Apprentices, Construction)

When asked what they’d learnt from the subject specific masterclasses, comments from participants identified a range of learning points including: learning about different universities; learning about HE study and student life; progression routes into HE; skills specific to the topic. One tutor commented:

"The questions raised by the learners and the fact that 2 out of 3 completed a client record to get a 1-1 appointment with a careers adviser means that they have all learnt more and clearly are now interested in progression as they can see the benefits to HE”.

**Case Study: Subject-specific Masterclass at Cheadle and Marple College**

A talk by the Practice Educator from Bolton Hospital in January 2010 to child care Apprentices inspired discussions amongst the group. The different roles in paediatric nursing were described including the progression routes in nursing. After the session several Apprentices asked the Aimhigher co-ordinator about courses that they could do and comments included;

"How different other peoples jobs are and where I can go when I have finished my NVQ eg Nursing.”

“Aimhigher has helped to answer questions about courses I am interested in”

(Advanced Apprentices, Child Care)

### 2.3.3 Enrichment Activities

2009/10 has seen an increasing number of Partner Providers making full use of the funding for enrichment activities (see Table 3). Many different opportunities have been made available to the 3 levels of Apprentices – Young Apprentices, Apprentices and Advanced Apprentices. All activities have included a presentation about progression routes and the benefits of HE. Partner Providers have also used this opportunity to recruit Apprentices on to the cohort.
Table 3: Enrichment Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th></th>
<th>2009/2010</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of</td>
<td>All Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>No of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central enrichment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider led</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enrichment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partner Providers supplied brief reports on the activities that were carried out. A range of framework sectors and types of activities have been included as shown in Box 1. The benefits of Aimhigher enrichment activities for Apprentices can be seen in different aspects:

- Activities designed to provide information on options have played an important IAG role and raised awareness. For example, 23 Sports Global Young Apprentices visited UCLAN to see what university life is about and what courses are on offer after school and college. The learners enjoyed talks from a student and the head of the sports department and had a university tour. Most agreed that they would like to progress to further education after leaving school, and one Young Apprentice commented:
  "I have learnt more about the path I want to take".
  There have also been benefits for HE – of the five Apprentices who went to Reaseheath College of Agriculture and Horticulture in Nantwich, two of the Apprentices are considering moving into HE on completion of their Apprenticeships as a result of the day.

- Enrichment activities involving visits to employers have given participants new insights into how their Apprentice training could be used in practice (see for example case study below). Feedback from participants suggests that learners have understood the employability benefits, and they are more motivated as a result. Typical comments included:
  "Taught me always to aim to achieve and to challenge myself";
  "Team work and communication are so important";
  "Inspirational to watch the cutting techniques"
  (Engineering Apprentices following visit to Jaguar factory and Hairdressing Apprentices following visit to Ethos hairdressing salon, Stockport College).

- Comments from learners involved in enrichment related to their area of occupation/ professionalism suggest that a key benefit of these types of activities is to find out about training and employment opportunities and widening their views on what is possible within their chosen field. This includes higher education options, typical comments from participants included, for example:
  "It motivated me towards achieving a high level of education and qualifications";
  "I learnt about what options are available to me and how I can afford University"
  (Apprentices with Age Concern following enrichment session).
**BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visits linked to professional development in occupational areas:</th>
<th>Finding out about occupations and employment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hairdressing:</strong> 80 Apprentices visited the Hair and Beauty Festival at the Winter Gardens where they received updates on higher studies, CPD, employment law, health and safety and saw demonstrations of the latest hairstyles (Wigan and Leigh College). Eight advanced Apprentices went to ETHOS Hairdressing Salon in Manchester where the North West Hairdresser winner 2008 and 2009, Sharon Peak, gave a personal training session (Stockport College).</td>
<td><strong>Beauty Therapy:</strong> Spa Advanced Apprentices sampled a luxury spa in Cumbria, met staff members and found out about professional development and promotion opportunities, qualifications, welfare etc (Wigan and Leigh College).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Care:</strong> Apprentices visited the Early Years, SEN and Education exhibition in Manchester where they experienced different childcare resources, and discussed progression routes with universities offering a variety of full and part time courses (Tameside College).</td>
<td><strong>Business Administration:</strong> Five Young Apprentices visited Manchester Crown Court, including speaking with a judge, to give them a better understanding of job roles and qualifications in the legal system. They visited Manchester Airport to learn about roles and progression opportunities in the travel industry (Cheadle &amp; Marple 6th Form College).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sports and Recreation:</strong> 23 Young Apprentices went to UCLAN to see what university life is about and what courses are on offer (Sports Global).</td>
<td><strong>Sports and Recreation:</strong> 16 Young Apprentices went to Sport City to get an insight into National Sport and how the vision has made a local and national impact. They learnt about career routes for amateurs and professionals and the different opportunities available (Cheadle and Marple 6th Form college).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horticulture:</strong> 5 Apprentices went to the specialist Reaseheath College in Nantwich where they were advised on Level 3 qualifications, full time options and courses in specialist occupational areas (YMCA Salford).</td>
<td><strong>Engineering:</strong> Nine Apprentices went to the Mach 2010 exhibition in Birmingham, UK’s premier manufacturing technologies event. They had the opportunity to see the world of manufacturing technologies and a glimpse of CNC machinery in action. It allowed them to focus on future career opportunities (OTC).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Confidence/motivational activities:**

- Challenge 4 Change is an indoor assault course with rooms available for presentations. The activities teach effective communication skills, team skills, inspires confidence and motivation and enables people to overcome their perceived barriers in order to progress. Employers see these skills as vital for their workforce.
- Groups of Apprentices from different sectors have attended from SETA Training, Skills Solutions, Stockport College, Cheadle and Marple 6th Form College and Alliance Learning. The time spent at the indoor centre also included hearing about information on progression routes, HE, and how to achieve their goals.
- 52 Apprentices heard a motivational presentation encouraging them to identify and work towards their goals from Jayne Lawton (‘Entrepreneur of the Year’ and ‘Working Mum of the Year’ award winner). Apprentices who had progressed, including those who have progressed to university, gave presentations about their experiences (Age UK Ltd).

**Employability skills related activities:**

- Business Administration Apprentices (newly employed and mostly in their first job) had a two day session to build their professional image within the workplace and give them greater confidence in their ability to succeed (Oldham College).
- Health and Social Care: 18 Young Apprentices attended a 1 day workshop to equip them with skills and tools to feel more confident in their placements, and in particular, to be more effective in communicating with residents with dementia (Positive Steps, Oldham).
- 8 Apprentices had a session to build their professional image within the workplace and give them greater confidence in their abilities (YMCA Salford).
- 60 Apprentices participated in different activities with employers, an Apprentice who had gone to university plus a representative from the University of Bolton who advised on the HE opportunities. The day was rounded off with an awards ceremony attended by the Mayor of Bolton, who had been an Apprentice himself and spoke of the value of the Apprenticeship for individuals and employers (Training for Today).
Case Study: Enrichment Case Study – Salford City College

A group of 24 Advanced Apprentices in Plumbing from Salford City College were taken to Worcester Bosch Training Centre in Bradford. They attended a presentation on the latest innovations followed by a tour of the training facilities, gaining an insight into the very latest boilers, solar energy and ground source equipment in working situ. The importance of lifelong learning was emphasised during the visit. Feedback was very positive, comments included:

"...We have learnt about these subjects in class but when we can see it, it makes it more understandable rather than just seeing pictures"...."Aimhigher (gave) me the opportunity to learn more about different forms of energy resources"

The Plumbing Apprentices also had the opportunity to go to Electric Mountain in Wales. The comments suggest that the trip met it’s aim in enhancing their learning experience and gain an appreciation of the innovative technology being used in situ:

"I learnt about hydro power and oversized pipework which is the future and I could progress to become part of this new initiative"...."At electric mountain it was very educational about how we can use natural things to provide electricity on a vast scale"

- Comments from participants in motivational and challenging activities highlight the benefits in terms of developing personal skills and commitment. These participants were encouraged to think about how they had pushed themselves physically and mentally throughout the activities and relate it to how they can push themselves in their work and aim for a higher level of education. One participant commented:

  "...I can get my level 3 then go to University just by aiming higher"
  (Apprentice participants in Challenge 4 Change)

- Activities have also incorporated an aspect of increasing employability opportunities. For example, as part of the two-day session organised by Oldham College, the first day included interactive sessions on communication techniques, first impressions, presentation and interview skills. The second day provided sessions on professional imaging including styling, make-up and hair advice, delivered by Glass Slipper company. Feedback comments stated the event had been memorable, enjoyable and helpful not only in learning about how to act and behave in the workplace but also how different people perceive you. The majority felt that the activities helped them gain interview skills and more information about what HE has to offer an Apprentice.

‘Achieve more in life; never give up your dream’
‘I learnt how to get into University and the things needed’

‘How to aim high and the different paths that I could go and get a well paid job.
‘How to look good with only a bit of make-up and what colours suit me and how to dress for an interview.’

Feedback on enrichment action days is summarised in Figure 12. The largest group of respondents said that as a result of participation they understand more how HE could help them get an interesting and well paid job.
Case Study: Action Day

The second Aimhigher WBL Action Day for Advanced Apprentices took place in May 2010 at the Chill Factore (an indoor artificial ski slope). A group of 26 Advanced Apprentices spent their Sunday afternoon finding out more about the benefits of higher education. The Apprentices were split into 3 groups and went to different workshops on a rota system, which worked well in maintaining interest amongst the Apprentices.

The 4 workshop sessions on offer were: a presentation on “What is HE?”, which featured the range of university-level study options with an emphasis on the part-time options; “What next?” Quiz, based on a DVD showing examples of the different progression routes available; Student Finance session, on the grants available for students who attend part time HE courses; and Step-In to HE interactive session on the benefits of attending the Step-In to HE course. At the end of the workshops all the groups came back in for a group evaluation and a showing of the ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’ DVD. Afterwards the Apprentices (and staff) had the chance to have a taster lesson for skiing or snowboarding.

Comments from learners suggest that finding out about different routes to HE and the financial aspects were key: Comments from the Apprentices on what they learnt included:

- “about finance” “…about part time finance”
- “…how to move on to higher level qualifications”
- “…how to progress in my future”
- “…moving into HE and what needs to be done to achieve it”

The event appears to have been successful in dispelling some myths about HE, e.g. costs and that part-time grants are available:

- ‘…next step into uni isn’t that bad’
- ‘…education is the future’
- “…that there many steps to Higher Education and options to suit all”
2.3.4 Individual Support Sessions

The number of individual support sessions almost doubled in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09, although not all providers have been able to offer individual support sessions to learners. Half (49%) of individual support sessions were with Advanced Apprentices, and around two-fifths (39%) were with Young Apprentices.

Table 4: Individual Support Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Providers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Beneficiaries</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback on the individual support sessions have shown they are an excellent way of giving information and help on such topics as finance, completing applications for courses and signposting to career paths (particularly for the Young Apprentices):

"Explained the different routes I could take"
(Young Apprentice with Sports Global)

"The information about furthering my career after my Level 3 has been very good"
(Cheadle and Marple 6th form college Advanced Apprentice)

Figure 13

2.3.4 Apprentice Achiever’s event

This evening event for Apprentices, their parents, employers and Partner Provider staff, took place at Manchester Metropolitan University. Members of the Greater Manchester Learner Provider Network were invited to put forward Apprentices who had recently achieved. Young Apprentices, Apprentices and Advanced Apprentices were all represented in different occupations. 23 Apprentices were recognised for their achievement from 8 Greater Manchester WBL Training Providers.

The event aimed to raise the profile of the Apprenticeship route and encourage participants to carry on learning. Positive feedback was received from all who attended, and both Apprentices and provider staff recognised the value of progression through the Apprenticeship route. Caps and gowns were hired for the evening and the Apprentices had the opportunity to have a professional photograph taken which all added to the impact of this prestigious event.

"I learnt more about what’s next, I did not know there was anything higher"

"There are more courses out there for Apprentices, not just NVQs"
3. PARTNER PROVIDER SUPPORT

Aimhigher Greater Manchester has developed resources and a training session which is delivered to provider staff who have direct contact with Apprentices, i.e. assessors, training advisors/consultants. The aim of the session is to show how provider staff can use the Aimhigher resources and integrate them into their interactions with their Apprentices, in so doing to support their Apprentices to progress to the next level of learning. All the Aimhigher progression resources are made available for use and Aimhigher regularly update providers and their Apprentices with the WBL newsletter. To date over 200 staff have received training in the use of Aimhigher resources. The availability of up-to-date resources which provider staff can be used with Apprentices has been important in helping to get buy-in from WBL staff. One Partner Provider said this about the resources being made available through Aimhigher:

"These [resources] are of extremely high quality and enable workbased learning providers to embed Aimhigher activities within Apprenticeship programmes in a manner which is professional and achievable for their staff. The high quality resources educate staff and Apprentices".

Ongoing support is provided by the WBL Central Unit and regular meetings are held for representatives from Partner Providers to attend. These meetings report back on the activities, cohort numbers and any new resources that are available. They have proved to be a useful tool in communicating good practice amongst the different providers. Guest speakers are also invited to talk on relevant topics such as the part-time application process and finance.

The WBL Partnership Group suggested that a CPD event for work based learning staff would be beneficial in promoting the message of progression for Apprentices to WBL staff. The ‘Don’t Stop Me Now’ event was organised and successfully ran in April 2010.

‘Don’t Stop Me Now’ CPD event

This staff development event was organised by Aimhigher Greater Manchester and was aimed at all staff who support Apprentices from workbased learning providers, either private providers or work based learning departments in colleges within Greater Manchester. Information about the event held at the Reebok Stadium in Bolton was sent to all WBL providers that are Aimhigher Partner Providers and also via the GMLPN network. Additionally a list of providers from NAS which included providers who do not have their head office in Manchester were also contacted to promote the event.

Colleagues from 14-19 Partnerships, Aimhigher Borough Coordinators and Aimhigher Area Directors and staff were also invited in order to showcase and disseminate the Aimhigher Greater Manchester WBL Progression Strategy approach for the benefit of Apprentices.

On the day 93 delegates attended from a variety of private work based providers and work based learning departments in colleges, plus staff from 14-19 departments in local authorities and representatives from other Aimhigher areas5. Heather Green, the Chair of the Aimhigher WBL Partnership, introduced the day and chaired the Q&A Panel. Taking part in the panel were Steve Whitehead of Alliance Learning, Barry Curran of Cruden Construction, Jon Legg of Student Finance England and Vic Leyden of Aimhigher Greater Manchester. Workshops were designed to inform and motivate attendees to support

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5 There were 89 on the original list of delegates, which included a group of 7 staff from Iceland who were investigating work based learning in England.
Apprentices to progress (see Box 2). Aimhigher supporting materials were given to delegates throughout and at the end of the event to underpin the Aimhigher message and help delegates to support Apprentices to progress to the next level of learning.

There were 75 evaluations received from delegates and the feedback was generally very good. Overall the rating on the day was very good: 85% recorded a score of 8 and above (out of 10). Importantly the comments from participants suggest that they will use the information and ideas received with their own Apprentice groups:

“inspiring”
“useful and informative day”
“the event has encouraged me to talk more to Apprentices about progression to HE”

Box 2 - Don’t Stop Me Now Event Workshops

A plan for the day was drawn up and 4 workshops were developed that allowed delegates to understand the benefits of progression to HE for Apprentices and employers. The workshops were intended to demonstrate how Aimhigher Greater Manchester were supporting Apprentices to progress to the next level of learning. They were also designed to empower delegates to take the Aimhigher message back to their organisations and support their Apprentices to progress.

One of the workshops included presentations from Apprentices who talked about their own experiences of HE. These included: a Childcare Apprentice who had completed the Step-in to HE module and progressed to a Foundation Degree in Early Years; an HE student doing an HNC in Building Services after completing a Plumbing Apprenticeship; and an Apprentice in Management who has completed a Foundation Degree in Management. Feedback showed that 91% rated this workshop very highly. Typical comments were: “Great to hear the Apprentice’s views”, “Apprentice presentations were excellent”, “excellent session which it made it real and achievable”.

One workshop also highlighted employers perspective on supporting Apprentices to HE (Cruden Group). Feedback on this workshop was quite mixed, and comments suggest that some people felt the employer might not be representative of all employers.

Another workshop provided information on the grants available for part-time learners and compared it to that available for full time students and potential debts (Finance England). For some staff the information was totally new although others had heard about part time grants before (and this was reflected in the feedback scores).

A workshop on the Aimhigher Step-In to HE module attracted good feedback and several participants gave comments on how they would be interested in this being available for their Apprentices. The programme allowed each delegate to attend all the workshops to gain a rounded perspective of issues and solutions facing progression for Apprentices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Feedback On Don’t Stop me Now Event (out of 75 responses)</th>
<th>Rated at least an 8</th>
<th>5 or below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please rate the day overall</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful was the info about apprentices into HE</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful was the info about employers supporting apprentices into HE</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful was the info about Student Finance</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful was the info about Step-In to HE</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. ASSESSING OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Feedback from participants in WBL framework activities suggest that we are succeeding in raising many Apprentices’ aspirations to go on to HE study. Overall, 84% agreed that they were definitely more interested than before in progressing to a higher level of learning as a result of Aimhigher activities (of which two-fifths (38%) strongly agreed). Where Apprentices have accessed a range of support they have been more likely to consider making the transition to HE, as in the case study at Tameside College.

Case Study: Apprentices Aimhigher at Tameside College

Three Apprentices in Early Years are progressing on to Higher Education (HE) in September 2010 after they have completed their Advanced Apprenticeships. As a result of the intervention and support of the Aimhigher Partner Provider co-ordinator, Gill Westbrook, Tameside College Training Supervisor, all 3 were introduced to the opportunities and benefits of progressing to HE by an Aimhigher presentation that Gill gave during a training session. They signed the registration form which enabled their personal details to be input on to the database and to receive further support and information about opportunities available to them. Gill arranged for a group of Advanced Apprentices to attend the Open Day at University Campus Oldham.

The three learners have received personal and group support during their training and have attended various Aimhigher activities:

- Zoe attended the Action Day at the Chill Factore which further encouraged her to complete her Advanced Apprenticeship in Early Years and look at qualifications that she could do afterwards. Gill continued to support her and encouraged her to complete the Step-In to HE module. Her main reason to do HE was to get a better job. She also received an individual support session from the co-ordinator when she received help in how to apply for funding. After the session Zoe said she would have struggled with knowing how to access the relevant people. She said: “Aimhigher has helped with choosing the right course, introduced me to studying HE (by completing the Step-In) and accessing funding”
  
  As a result of the advice and support she has received Zoe has been accepted on to the Early Years Foundation degree at University Campus Oldham, studying part time and continuing to work in early years.

- Amie signed up to the Aimhigher cohort, and attended the visit to University Centre Oldham. At this visit the group had a site tour and had discussions with the Early Years tutors about the full time and part time courses, entry requirements and funding. After this visit she was encouraged to go on the Step-In to HE module and has now completed it. Amie was inspired to look at the options and now has an unconditional place for the full time BA Hons Social Work degree course at Huddersfield, Glasgow and Newcastle and is deciding which institution is best for her.

- Alex signed up to the cohort and went on the visit to the Open Day at the University Campus Oldham. Following encouragement to consider HE, she is due to start her NVQ level 4 in Early Years with a local training provider once she has completed her Advanced Apprenticeship.

Across the board, the Apprentices we are working with vary in terms of their proximity to HE – depending on the stage/level they are at in workbased learning. It would not be expected that Apprentices would progress to HE until after they had completed an Advanced Apprenticeship. Feedback from Advanced Apprentice completers suggest that many are also looking to have a break from learning on completion, depending on professional and personal circumstances, before continuing in education.
Feedback from learners suggests that just under a quarter (23%) are interested in immediate progression to HE, and that well over half of the remainder see HE as either a medium or longer term objective (Figure 14).

Figure 14

We are tracking those involved and aim to update our records on progression to HE over time, through capturing data from providers and through following up Aimhigher learners, particularly Advanced Apprenticeship leavers completing the Step-In to HE module. The initial results are very positive, with just over a quarter (26%) of the learners who completed the Step-In to HE module up to 2009 having progressed on to HE, and a further 46% from the two initial cohorts saying they intend to progress. Of those completing the Step-In the HE module during 2009/10, 32% intend to progress to HE during 2010-11 and a further 39% intend to progress to HE within the next 1-2 years. Overall as of Summer 2010 around three-quarters (72%) of all Step-In to HE module completers have either gone on to HE or intend to do so.

Where learners expressed a preference, the vast majority of learners expressed the intention to progress to part-time HE study. Only 5 learners who completed the course in 2009-10 expressed the intention to progress to full-time study in 2009-10 and 3 of these learners wished to change their career paths rather than continue to work in the occupational area attached to their Apprenticeships.
Where learners cited a specific reason for applying to HE, the most popular reason was to improve career and earning prospects. There is, therefore, a significant link between progression to HE and improved career and earning potential in the perceptions of Advanced Apprentices.

Where learners cited specific reasons preventing them from applying to HE, the most popular reasons were finance and lack of time. There is a lack of awareness about the financial support available for part-time study among Apprentices with whom Aimhigher has engaged both through the Step-In to HE module and other kinds of activities. Many learners perceive HE as a route which may accrue considerable debts, yet for learners who “earn and learn” without moving away from their present homes, part-time HE study can be an affordable option.

The courses to which learners progressed to include:

- Degree in Accountancy
- CMI Diploma in Management
- Certificate in Education
- HNC in Construction, Building Services or Mechanical Engineering
- HND in Mechanical Engineering, Construction and Property, Civil Engineering, or Electrotechnical Technology
- FD Early Years
- BSc (Hons) in Civil Engineering with a foundation year
- BA (Hons) Social Work unconditional offer
- Nursing (course not specified)
- Sports Science (course not specified).

**Ofsted**

One of the additional benefits of becoming a Partner Provider has been illustrated by the interest shown at inspection by Ofsted. Inspectors are asked to consider before making judgement whether `careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies and training`. Partner Providers can actively demonstrate how they are supporting their Apprentices to progress to the next level of learning.

**Quotes from recent Ofsted reports of Aimhigher Partner Providers:**

“Strong partnership working with Aimhigher has successfully increased the number of Apprentices progressing into Higher Education”

“The organisation promotes Apprenticeships well and is involved in raising learners ambitions through Aimhigher projects”
Case Studies

1. This Apprentice has now progressed through to HE

After school, Amy Clifford went to Stockport College where she completed an Apprenticeship in Hairdressing and then an Advanced Apprenticeship in Accounts. Amy has always wanted to be a hairdresser, with her own business, and subsequently completed an Advanced Apprenticeship in Hairdressing. During this time her college advisor recommended that she take part in the Step-In to HE module. As a hairdresser she felt that she was not as academic as others and found she really benefited from the course. She learnt about the techniques needed to study at the next level such as note taking and referencing when writing essays. This has been particularly useful as she is now completing her Cert Ed qualification. Amy says that the Step-In to HE module gave her the confidence to progress to the next level. Having gained the skills to manager and teach others, Amy is putting these into practice by taking on her first Apprentice.

2. This Apprentice is pursuing full-time HE

Kyle completed his Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship in Joinery with Oldham College. He worked for his dad’s company, CCK Joinery, for 5 years having started straight from school. During school he preferred qualifications in practical skills rather than purely academic subjects. He always wanted to go to university so he decided to take the practical route as he did not have the academic qualifications. After hearing a presentation from the Aimhigher champion at Oldham College he attended the Open Day at University Campus Oldham. He explained to one of the tutors that he had completed his joinery Advanced Apprenticeship and was told that his practical skills would be very advantageous. He was supported in his application by the Aimhigher co-ordinator at Oldham College, who also explained how to apply for a grant. Kyle has left his job as a joiner and is now on a full time Building Construction Foundation degree course at University Campus Oldham working part time in a warehouse to support himself. He is enjoying the course and has been able to transfer the knowledge that he gained from his time as an Apprentice to his studies, for example on topics like constructing a building. Although he found it hard initially to study full time he has stuck at it with the help of tutors.

3. This Apprentice intends to apply to HE in future

Mary is pursuing her career in a predominantly male environment and is demonstrating true grit and determination to complete her Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering. Mary joined Alliance Learning, an Aimhigher Partner Provider, on a Programme Led Apprenticeship, starting her career off for no wages in the hope of getting a position once she completed that part of her training. APPH, an engineering manufacturer in Bolton, recognised Mary’s commitment and drive and soon employed her on a full time basis. She completed an Apprenticeship at Level 2 in double quick time and then moved onto the Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering. Mary has taken advantage of a number of Aimhigher activities which have informed, motivated, built confidence and raised her aspirations to progress to the next level of learning. She completed the Aimhigher Step-In to HE module which allowed her to experience university learning first hand and demonstrate to herself and others that she is more than capable of progressing. Mary intends to complete her Advanced Apprenticeship in August 2011 and then progress to HE. She said, “Aimhigher has allowed me to realise just how good I am. I always thought higher education wasn’t for me, now I know higher education is an opportunity that I don’t want to miss out on. The Step-In to HE module has opened up a number of possible opportunities that I will explore and take advantage of”.

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5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Apprentices and a high percentage of adults in work lack aspirations and understanding of the benefits and opportunities in higher level qualifications. Apprentices and indeed adults will never progress to higher education in any great numbers unless the mould is broken and opportunity is put within reach of this lost cohort.

We are now 2 years into the WBL strategy and the evidence clearly demonstrates that progress is being made with this difficult to reach group. The Partner Provider approach is starting to pay dividends in terms of reaching relatively large volumes of learners and offering a continuum of support. The Partner Provider delivery model is key to increasing the number of work based learning providers delivering Aimhigher activities within the WBL progression framework. The availability of high quality resources has been important in helping to embed the messages in Apprenticeship provision. In order to increase the number of Apprentices that benefit from Aimhigher interventions Aimhigher Greater Manchester will need to continue to increase the number of WBL Partner Providers, continue to support the delivery of Aimhigher WBL activities and update and develop new resources to support that delivery.

Data returns show a pattern of activities that suggest that not all providers are fully engaged with the range of activities within the framework. This ranges from completing only the ‘Opportunities Presentation’ to delivering the full suite of activities on offer plus additional enrichment activities and master classes. During 2010–2011 Aimhigher will endeavour to consolidate and encourage full framework delivery across all existing Partner Providers that will in turn increase the number of Apprentices that benefit from the Aimhigher programme of activities.

Feedback across the whole range of the activities offered within the WBL progression framework is consistently good. However, analysis of the feedback for different types of activities suggests that the individual support sessions have the biggest impact on Apprentices’ confidence to progress, and their understanding of the progression options (Figure 15). Aimhigher will encourage and support Partner Provider staff to provide this additional support to a greater number of Apprentices in 2010–2011 thereby allowing Apprentices across Greater Manchester to benefit from this proven intervention.

Figure 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback by Type of Activity (% who agree or strongly agree with statements)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know more about progression routes into HE suitable for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand more about how a HE qualification could help me to get an interesting and well paid job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m definitely more interested in progressing to a higher level of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m confident that I will be able to take the next steps towards a higher level of learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enrichment activities | Individual support | Introductory sessions | Subject specific masterclasses |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Outcomes from the WBL progression framework are very positive. The Step-In to HE module is particularly successful in encouraging Advanced Apprentices to progress to HE. Importantly, Apprentices in the WBL progression framework are accessing a range of HE progression options including various sectors and full- and part-time provision.

The Step-In to HE module is proving to be very successful in building confidence and raising aspirations of Apprentices to progress onto HE. However, most of the modules take place at delivery centres in ‘twilight’ hours which means that Apprentices attend after a full day at work. Aimhigher will be working with one of the colleges who deliver the Step-In to HE module to timetable the module into their off-the-job-training for pilot groups of Advanced Apprentices in 2010/2011. It will be interesting to evaluate the success of this new approach.

The WBL strategy will continue to be a key part of the Aimhigher Greater Manchester programme since evidence shows that the activities are having an effect on building the confidence of Apprentices about progression and opening up a wider choice of options for Advanced Apprentices to consider. As provider staff become more confident in the use of the resources they are able to provide information to signpost the Apprentices to the possible options that HE can offer them.

Sustainability is a key issue and the independent research project which has been commissioned by Aimhigher into the Partner Provider model is due to report on its findings in autumn 2010. This will inform the sustainability plan.

It is hoped that the network will expand over the coming year and consolidate its successes. For instance, there has also been interest shown by large employers in using the WBL framework for their own Apprentices, ie, two of the Greater Manchester councils. Aimhigher will be working with these Councils and other large employers to support their Apprentices to progress which will give us even further access to this hard to reach group.
### Annex 1: Activities and Take-up 2008-10*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>2008/09 academic year</th>
<th>2009/10 academic year</th>
<th>2008-2010</th>
<th>2008-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of activities</td>
<td>All Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>No. of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Opportunities for Apprentices</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openings Opportunities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject specific masterclasses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment activities (including Action Days)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the Advanced Apprentice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Support Sessions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-In to HE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36*/30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals | 86 | 1254 | 378 | 123 | 2048 | 1056 | 209 | 3302 |

*36 Advanced Apprentices completed the Step-In to HE module in 2007/2008
Aimhigher Greater Manchester Report Series

This is a series of reports on topics of relevance to widening participation in Greater Manchester.

2009/10

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