

# Opportunities Hub Review

## Executive Summary





## Context

The Opportunities Hub is an online portal that provides holistic advice, guidance, opportunities, and services, aimed at supporting long-term unemployed young people to develop towards, and into employment, education and/or training.

The Opportunities Hub went live in July 2014 with the aim of supporting *Greater Manchester Talent Match* Talent Coaches in their role as a coach and mentor to young people who are seeking to develop towards and into employment.

Future plans aim to subsequently develop the Opportunities Hub to become a Greater Manchester wide resource, to be utilised by the general public following *Greater Manchester Talent Match* (post 2018).

In line with the test and learn element of the programme, using a specific group of users for this resource (Talent Coaches), enables the project team to continuously develop the Opportunities Hub in line with their feedback, and monitor its volume and purpose of use.

This data can then be used to understand the effectiveness of the Opportunities Hub to inform its future use in supporting youth employment across Greater Manchester.

## Introduction

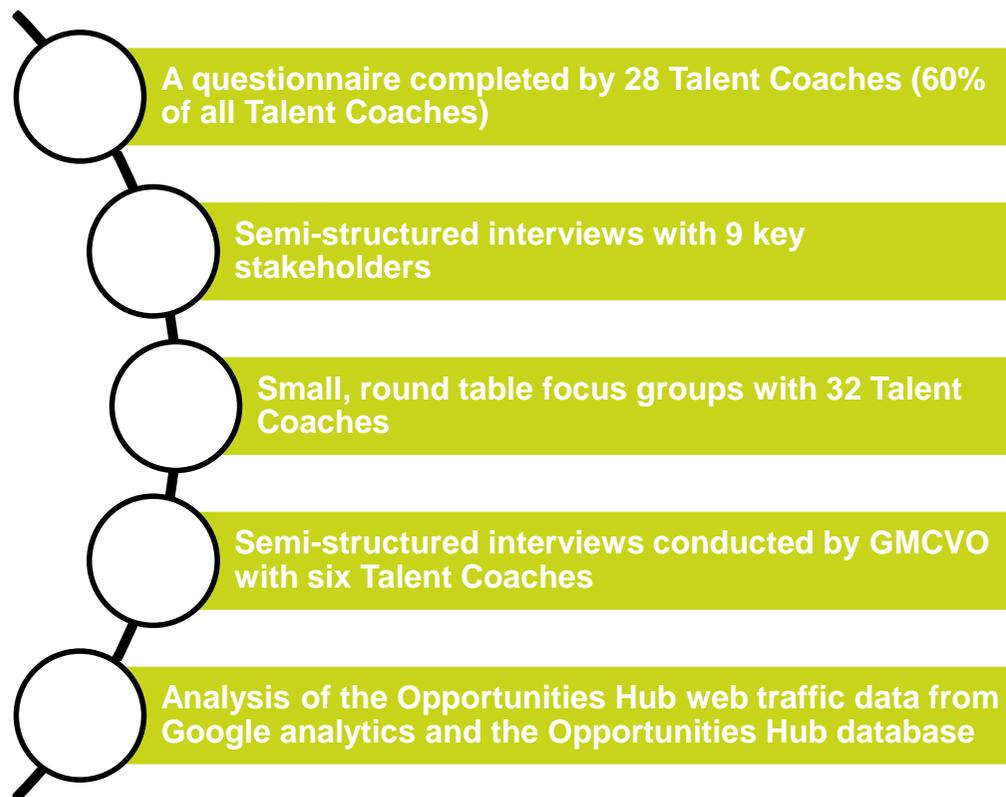
This report presents a review of the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* Opportunities Hub. The purpose of the review is to understand the usage and user experience of the Opportunities with a view to identifying areas for improvement to increase usage by internal and external customers.

To achieve this, the review proposes to identify the following:

- The Opportunities Hub's current usage: frequency of use; how it is used; and by whom it is used
- User experience of the Opportunities Hub
- Areas for further development

# Methodology

To meet the outcomes of the review, a mixed method approach was selected which incorporated five elements as follows:

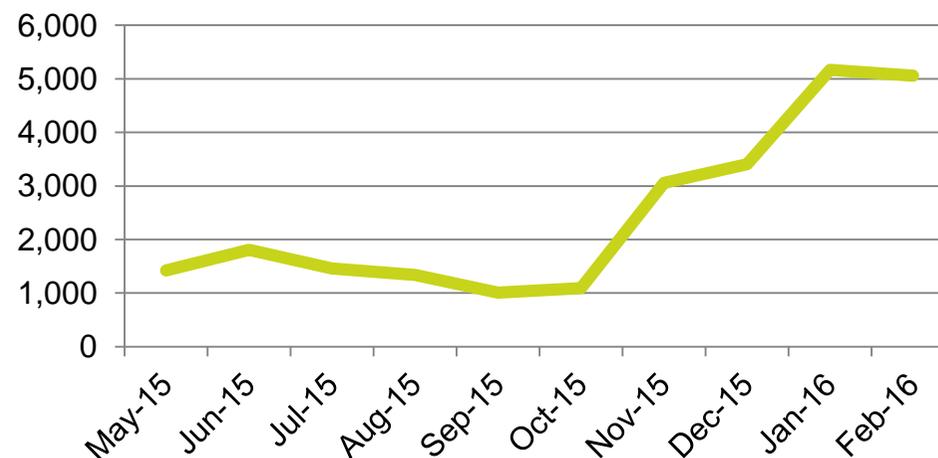


Each element aimed to uncover customer usage and experience; and recommendations for improvement.

# Opportunities Hub Usage

Since its subscription to Google Analytics in May 2015, the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* website has received 12,941 users. This has increased over the period of delivery, reaching its peak in January 2016 (n=5,166).

**Greater Manchester Talent Match Website Usage**



The majority of users accessed the website via a desktop computer/laptop (81%), followed by a mobile phone (14%), and a tablet (5%). Over the duration of the programme, mobile and tablet usage increased, most notably in the past two months, with mobile devices the more popular of the two.

As expected, the majority of users are UK based (85%); however 3,816 users accessed the site from other countries (15%). Of the UK traffic, 42% of users were from Greater Manchester, with the majority from Manchester (26%). Second to Manchester, the highest volume of usage took place in London (16%). Sheffield and Liverpool also had a high volume of usage, particularly in comparison to the Boroughs of Greater Manchester, for which the Opportunities Hub is designed to support.

This highlights the use of the Opportunities Hub by external customers and the reach of the Opportunities Hub.

Due to the data collected, it is not possible to provide Opportunities Hub usage by internal and external customers exclusively; however as a proxy measure of this, users have been identified as to whether they log in to indicate internal/external use. When reviewing the number of users who logged in whilst using the site, only 10% were logged in (n=2,540), which seems particularly low, given that the resource is aimed at Talent Coaches who have log in details. There are many aspects of the Opportunities Hub however which do not require users to log in to access.

Another indication of external customers, are 'new users' to the site. Across the programme delivery the Opportunities Hub has consistently received a high number of new users, receiving the highest number in January 2016 (n=2,419), highlighting the continuous reach of *Greater Manchester Talent Match* to new customers.

As one may expect, new user browser behaviour differs to returning users, focusing predominantly on the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* homepage, in addition to Opportunities and service details. Returning users however visit the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* homepage less frequently, and tend to have a high number of visits to the user log in page, followed by Opportunity details. This is likely to be Talent Coaches and project team members.

To uncover Talent Coach usage specifically, Talent Coach usage data is gathered on a monthly basis, and highlights that whilst Talent Coaches use the Opportunities Hub frequently, particularly to view Opportunities, very few Opportunities are utilised on a monthly basis, particularly in line with the number of Opportunities available.



## User Experience

Talent Coaches reportedly see the benefits of the Opportunities Hub, namely in having Opportunities, services and support tools all in one place, which is thought to save time and make their job simpler.

## General Usage

Despite this, Talent Coaches display reluctance to using the Opportunities Hub more frequently due to the difficulties experienced, particularly around functionality and user friendliness.

Some Talent Coaches suggest it is sometimes quicker and simpler to use their own knowledge and resources rather than the Opportunities Hub for example.



In line with the nature of their role, Talent Coaches need to access the Opportunities Hub 'on the go', and suggest therefore for the Opportunities Hub to be developed into a mobile friendly site, and/or for an application to be developed which enables users to access the different elements of the Opportunities Hub from their mobile phone, including the 'Coaches Network' and the latest Opportunities feed.

## Search Mechanism

One of the largest barriers Talent Coaches experience in using the Opportunities Hub is the search function, used when looking for Opportunities.

For many Talent Coaches this is particularly unreliable and time consuming as often the search returns a large number of non-relevant Opportunities which one must look through to find a relevant one, or the search does not return any Opportunities, stating there are not any available.

*"When you're searching on the hub for an opportunity, there's a bit where you can search a keyword, e.g. 'BBC'... Sometimes it comes up; 'sorry this opportunity isn't available' even though I know it is because I've reviewed it in the past."*

This makes it difficult to know whether the Opportunities searched for are available but are not being returned by the search, or whether they are simply not available. It is due to this that many Talent Coaches regularly utilise the latest Opportunities feed, and experience this as a particularly positive aspect of the Opportunities Hub.

## ‘Opportunities’

The data extracted from the Opportunities Hub database suggests that Talent Coaches view on average 12 Opportunities per month, however review only 1 Opportunity per month.

This suggests Talent Coaches are looking for Opportunities, however the number of Opportunities subsequently utilised are low. This may be due to a number of reasons highlighted by Talent Coaches; not least the aforementioned search mechanism.

The Opportunities available were discussed in a number of interviews with Talent Coaches, many of which focused on highlighting the gaps experienced on the Opportunities Hub.

Many recognised for example, that whilst the majority of young people will require Opportunities and services that enable them to develop towards employment in the first few months of engagement, as their confidence grows, they are then looking for paid employment, and therefore more paid employment Opportunities should be available on the Opportunities Hub.

This is particularly the expectation of the employers who engage with *Greater Manchester Talent Match*, that they should provide increased paid Opportunities.

Other comments regarding the Opportunities provided by *Greater Manchester Talent Match* employers suggest more should be offered locally, rather than just in Manchester, as young people’s attendance at these Opportunities will be dependent on their confidence in using public transport.



Opportunity sector was also raised, suggesting that whilst there are a number of Opportunities in sectors such as construction, catering and customer service, there are few Opportunities outside of these sectors, in particular in car mechanics or health and social care.

Despite the lack of Opportunities experienced however, there was some acknowledgement that the Opportunities on the Hub are getting better and Talent Coaches acknowledged that when they do have requests, project team members respond very positively.

The presentation of Opportunities on the Opportunities Hub was also raised in a number of the interviews, with Talent Coaches commenting that the information displayed is “not very easy on the eye”. This is due predominantly to providing too much text/information. Talent Coaches described the need to have short, concise information that can be accessed at a glance.

## Reviewing ‘Opportunities’

Many Talent Coaches understood the monitory purpose of reviewing Opportunities, however questioned whether there were additional purposes such as capturing the quality of the Opportunity in addition to providing this information to prospective Opportunity users- although this information is not currently available on the Opportunities Hub.

In line with the purpose of the reviews, Talent Coaches suggested that the questions asked should be amended to capture more valuable data such as, ‘what did the young person get out of the Opportunity?’. Talent Coaches, it was suggested, should also be able to provide their own feedback regarding the Opportunity by way of a rating system. This information should then be published on the Opportunities Hub next to the Opportunity as a ‘TripAdvisor’ style review.

## Career Tools

Although Talent Coaches described their difficulties in the previous sections, they did report use all of the aforementioned aspects of the Opportunities Hub. When asked about the Career Tools section however, 61% stated they did not use this. This may be partly due to their existing knowledge of careers advice, however comments suggest this is also due to the user friendliness of this section and the usefulness of the tools.

One Talent Coach suggested they would use this section as a visual tool with young people if it were most useful. Another Talent Coach suggested providing “more in depth vocational screen tools like ‘careerscape’”.

## Summary

The Opportunities Hub receives a high number of visitors from both internal and external customers which shows promise for developing this to be a wider tool utilised across Greater Manchester.

Use of the Opportunities Hub by both groups is predominantly for searching for Opportunities and services in Greater Manchester; however it is also utilised as a tool to support Talent Coaches in their role.

The use of the Opportunities Hub suggests it is fit for purpose in terms of providing Opportunities, services and support for young people seeking to develop towards employment, the data presented within this report however questions how often such Opportunities are subsequently used.

Talent Coaches reportedly see the benefits of the Opportunities Hub, namely in having Opportunities, services and support tools all in one place, which is thought to save time and make their job simpler.

Despite this, Talent Coaches display reluctance to using the Opportunities Hub more frequently due to the difficulties experienced, particularly around functionality and user friendliness.

# Recommendations

In the time that the research has taken place and this report has been produced, a number of recommendations have either been implemented, or are in the process of being implemented. Additional recommendations are:

- To modernise the look and feel of the Opportunities Hub to make it more user intuitive to provide a better user experience.
- To provide young people with log in details to enable them to access the Opportunities Hub.
- To develop an application to enable Talent Coaches and young people to access all necessary aspects of the Opportunities Hub via their mobile phone.
- To amend the search function to enable Talent Coaches to search for Opportunities and services based on the needs of the specific group of people they are working with, e.g. young offenders.
- To develop a suggestion box on the Opportunities Hub for Talent Coaches to request and highlight Opportunities which are not currently available.
- To provide a more interactive, engaging careers site which incorporates tools that Talent Coaches can use with their young people. E.g. 'careerscape'.
- To conduct further research across Greater Manchester in year four of delivery to understand the Opportunities Hub reach, and its use by external customers with a view to providing evidence to recommend the future of the Opportunities Hub post *Greater Manchester Talent Match*.

