

forms of higher education, further education and apprenticeships. The Government should ask UCAS how such a portal could be designed and implemented. (Paragraph 260)

We agree that it is important that students have the necessary information to consider all of their options, not just the academic route. We are making sure that all Government careers information is available in one place on a new National Careers Service website. Online resources will include information on routes into apprenticeships, including higher and Degree Apprenticeships, and T Levels.

We are improving the functionality of the post-16 course directory. This provides information about all the courses that a young person might choose at 16. It highlights, for example, what engineering courses are available within 10 miles radius of a particular location. It can be used via the National Careers Service website. We will consider what further action might be helpful in ensuring that young people are able to make informed decisions about their education, training or career options.

We have considered whether apprenticeships should be included in a centralised application system (either at age 16+ or at 18+). Our discussions with employers have made it clear that they value having their own recruitment processes and so would not welcome an attempt to standardise the process.

The Government's 'Find an Apprenticeship' website allows individuals to search and apply for live vacancies. We are working with a range of partners to ensure that vacancies are also advertised on partner sites. We announced recently the launch of a vacancy snapshot on the 'Find an Apprenticeship' website that will provide information on some of the most prestigious employers who recruit apprentices and a look behind the scenes of their recruitment practices. We are also providing free sessions for schools and students on how to search and apply for vacancies and to help to prepare them for the apprenticeship recruitment process.

UCAS advertises higher-level apprenticeships but also links through to employers' websites rather than allow applicants to apply through a standardised application form.

The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding is considering how we can help young people make effective choices between academic, technical and vocational routes after the age of 18.

Student Loan Design

We recommend that the interest rate charged on post-2012 student loans should be reduced to the level of the ten-year gilt rate (currently 1.5 per cent). This is fairer for students as it means that they only pay an interest rate, which is equivalent to the Government's cost of borrowing money. Interest should not be charged on loans until students have graduated. (Paragraph 275)