

**This Month****News from the FE System Data Programme**

- **Minister to introduce new services**
- **Nationwide workshops to explain new services**
- **Talks on new ILR process**
- **ILR specification published**
- **Ways of working with the ISB**

**News from MIAP**

- **Review of LRS implementation guide**

**News from the FE System Data Programme**

The FE System Data Programme involves the creation of an independent *information authority* and a national Data Service. The authority will set and regulate data standards for all organisations involved in further education and training in England. A full Data Service will collect, handle and disseminate information across the further education system. Working in tandem, the two organisations will streamline and improve the way information is collected and shared.

**Minister to introduce new information services**

Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, will be the keynote speaker at the introduction of *the information authority* and Data Service and the official launch of the MIAP Learner Registration Service (LRS) at an event in London next month.

Representatives from across the sector will be attending the gathering on February 14<sup>th</sup> at Westminster Hall to explain Government improvements to information services for education.

The *information authority*, which was formed last year, is an independent organisation responsible for setting and regulating information standards for further education with the aim of reducing the burden of collection on providers.

The Data Service is due to be launched in April this year and will act as a central point for the collection and dissemination of information in further education.

The MIAP Learner Registration Service will allow people to build a lifelong record of participation and achievement which they can access through the internet using their Unique Learner Numbers as a key.

"I welcome the support of Minister Bill Rammell at this event as a recognition of the good start *the information authority* has made to its task of reducing burdens and increasing the efficiency of data collection and reporting," said Graham Jones, Chairman of the authority.

"The Minister's presence will reinforce our awareness of the importance of the work we are doing and provide an incentive to move forward with even greater determination."

Bobbie McClelland is the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills' Senior Responsible Owner for the MIAP programme. She said: "The fact that the Minister will be attending the event is a mark of the importance with which these three new services are viewed. They will all play a vital role in improving the way information is collected, handled and shared."

## Nationwide workshops to explain new services

The *information authority* and the new Data Service are linking with the MIAP programme to run a series of regional workshops for colleges and work based learning providers throughout England.

The 20 events to promote the new services and explain their roles are being organised by the Association of Colleges and the Association of Learning Providers between February and May and are expected to attract more than 1,000 management information specialists from across the further education sector.

"These events will be an extremely useful platform to promote these new services and to raise the profile of the *information authority*," said Lucy Madahar, *information authority* Stakeholder Manager. "They will also allow us to identify how we can reduce the data burden and improve the quality of data for colleges and learning providers."

"Sharing these events with the Data Service and MIAP will reinforce our message that we are all here to establish best practice for data collection and reporting that will meet the needs of the sector as a whole."

Tim Barrett, MIAP Stakeholder Manager for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), added: "We want to make sure that everybody who will need to use the MIAP Unique Learner Number by September enrolment has the opportunity to discuss any concerns and are introduced to sources of further help and advice should they require it."

"The purpose of doing this jointly with *the information authority* and Data Service is that MIAP is one change among many to improve data collection and handling across the sector. We want to give providers a coherent picture of the changes that are taking place before the start of the next academic year."

## Talks on new ILR process

*The information authority* will be meeting further education stakeholders from across the country from the end of next month to discuss ways in which the process for making changes to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) can be made more transparent.

Data providers, users and software suppliers will be invited to a series of workshops to give their views on proposals to streamline the ILR collection. Among topics for discussion will be:

- ILR collection dates
- The option of bringing forward the publishing date for future ILR specifications
- The best format for data support and ILR manuals for providers
- Proposals for a single ILR collection for all types of data providers

Paul Kelman, Change Manager with the authority, said: "I think it's essential that the information authority can engage effectively and directly with those who work hands on with FE data.

"We also want to promote the idea of online engagement which will enable anyone to make suggestions and get involved in our consultations. Feedback from events like these and our online engagement should certainly help shape future developments of the ILR.

Anyone interested in attending the workshops should contact Paul by email at [paul.kelman@theia.org.uk](mailto:paul.kelman@theia.org.uk) or by telephone on 02476823597. A full list of workshops venues and dates will be published shortly on the *information authority* website.

## ILR specification published

The full specification of the 2008/09 Individualised Learner Record has now been published six weeks ahead of the normal annual date and is available on the [information authority website](#).

The publication has been brought forward because of the introduction of Demand Led Funding (DLF) from August this year, which has resulted in considerably more change to the ILR than usual. The advanced publication date gives providers and their software suppliers more time to effect necessary changes.

Changes to the 2008/09 ILR were authorised by *the information authority* board at its meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2007. The main changes are:

- To collection names, arrangements and timetables to be consistent with and support DLF
- A reduction in the data collected for learners on European Social Fund (ESF) projects - eight data fields are removed
- Removal of three fields and the addition of four across the learner and learning aim data sets. Of the additions, two are to collect data already returned in a more effective and robust way and two are to collect entirely new data for qualifications
- A learning aim data set is requested for programmes that comprise a coherent and defined group of learning aims, for example apprenticeships and 14-19 diplomas
- Alignment of the Higher Education (HE) data set with changes introduced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to the HE learner record for 2007/08.

## Ways of working with the Information Standards Board

Graham Jones has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Information Standards Board (ISB), setting out how it will work with *the information authority* to develop and approve standards.

The ISB is a non-statutory advisory body responsible for governing and approving data and information standards for the education, skills and children's services

system. The *information authority* is an independent body that sets and regulates data standards for all organisations involved in further education.

Both organisations have responsibility for England alone. The ISB works with the devolved administrations, across the UK, across Government and internationally via BSI British Standards in promoting standards. Both organisations look at the international implications of decisions and have a common interest in promoting the use of data and information standards across the UK and beyond.

“For learners, further education is one stage of their lifelong educational journey. At *the information authority* our remit is FE. However, we are keen that common data standards are adopted to ensure good communication between different parts of the education sector and to provide consistent information,” said Una Bennett, Head of the *information authority*.

“The ISB is the ideal body through which to agree such common standards and resolve any discrepancies. We are committed to working closely together as shown in the recently agreed memorandum of understanding.”

The *information authority* board is expected to ratify the memorandum of understanding at its meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> and the ISB will do the same on 29th January

## [News from MIAP](#)

Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) is about streamlining how information on learning and achievement is collected, handled and shared across the education sector so that excellent services are made available to individuals, employers and communities.

MIAP will be capable of issuing every person in education and training with a Unique Learner Number and enable the collation of a lifelong record of their participation and achievements that can be accessed through the internet. It will support this by delivering Common Data Definitions that can be used by everyone in the sector; and giving access to the UK Register of Learning Providers, containing details of individual training organisations and the services they provide.

## [Review of LRS implementation guide](#)

The final workshop for MIAP Early Adopters early next month will review the Learner Registration Service Implementation Guide to ensure that it is ‘fit for purpose’ for wider roll-out across the sector.

The step-by-step guide tells organisations how to become a Learner Registration Body and how to implement the Unique Learner Number. It will be available in the spring.

If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter, register your contact details at [fesystemdataprog@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:fesystemdataprog@lsc.gov.uk)

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