

inform

Issue 38 – July 2010

Inform is a monthly newsletter from *the information authority* and the Data Service, providing you with regular news and updates on our work. To subscribe to inform email: informnewsletter@theia.org.uk.

How you can help to develop good data management principles

Over the last few months *the information authority* has worked with the FE Data Management Group to develop guidance for the FE sector in addressing data issues, so that users of the data can be assured of the quality and reliability of information relating to further education.

The Group worked with *the information authority* to answer several [FAQs on ILR completion](#) that were raised by the sector as a result of the LSC letter.

It has also worked with us to develop [Six Data Management Principles](#) for inclusion in the ILR guidance documents that will assist providers in developing consistent data reporting practices. These were approved for consultation by *the information authority* board on at its meeting on the 16 June and are now out to the sector for comment.

These principles, once given final approval by the FE Data Management Group and *the information authority* board, will be 'sector-owned'.

We need [your comments on these principles](#) to take back to the group meeting in September. Click on our [online feedback form](#) to give us your views on these six principles.

The group is also working with *the information authority* to develop four 'good practice' principles for funding bodies, which will be reviewed in September after further discussion and consultation with the agencies involved.

Find out more:

Visit our online survey to [read and comment on the six principles](#).

Visit our website to find out more about the [FE Data Management Group](#) and its work.

This month:

News from *the information authority*:

- FE data management principles
- Period 12 ER ILR return – urgent action
- 2010/11 ILR Online – coming soon
- 2011/12 ILR consultation
- 2010/11 ILR spec – Version 3
- Advisory group meetings update
- Autumn College Data Conference
- YPLA to fund FE and sixth form colleges
- ULN requirements – are you prepared?
- Annual perception and awareness survey 2010
- Cancellation of joint Data Conference

News from the Data Service:

- LR QSR Methodology 2009/10 published
- LR National Success Rate Tables published
- Large employer reduction in rates
- LIS 18.02 - update
- Data Quality Dashboard Report Application - Coming soon!



News from *the information authority*

Urgent action required for period 12 ILR returns for ER (including POL users)

There are currently a large number of records that will not migrate into the 2010/11 database for the start of period 1. This is of particular importance for POL users. The records will not migrate because they do not meet the new ILR data standards and validation rules for certain fields. POL users must correct the data held in POL before the period 12 return close date.

The following action must be taken before **05 August 2010**, the close date for your period 12 return.

Field A44

- All apprenticeship main aims must have either a valid employer number from the EDS system or contain 999999999. All Train to Gain aims must have a valid employer number. Learning aims containing text or an invalid number will be rejected and will not migrate into 2010/11
- To obtain a new employer number you will need to contact Blue Sheep on either 01242 545 346 or by emailing eds@bluesheep.com

Field A22

- If the learning aim is delivered by a partner or sub-contracted provider, you must enter a valid UKPRN number for this provider into field A22. If this field contains an invalid number then the learning aim will be rejected and will not migrate into 2010/11.

Known Validation Issues

- There is a known issue with one of the A44 validation rules (A44_4) that has occurred during migration testing. If you have received notification of this rule violation you will need to check that you have a valid employer number by visiting <http://edrs.lsc.gov.uk>.
- If you have checked the employer number and it is valid, then you can disregard this error as this is likely to be a validation error on our part. No further action is needed in these cases and this issue should be resolved for migration of period 12 data and the 2010/11 data returns.
- There is a known issue with Rule A04_A14_A16_AD04_1. This rule is incorrectly giving errors in the following circumstance - if the learner started an apprenticeship programme aged 18 and then started one of the learning aims within that programme aged 19+. In this circumstance field L28 does not need to be set to "eligible for enhanced funding". Field L28 should remain coded as 99 99. This will mean that when your data is migrated into the 2010/11 database, new field A69 will be set correctly to code 99.
- Field L28 should only be set to code 15 if the learner has returned to a programme aged 19+ which they had already started aged 16-18 for example after a break in learning.
- Rule A04_A14_A16_AD04_1 will be removed for migration of period 12 data and the 2010/11 data returns.

If you have any queries contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata.service.org.uk

2010/11 ILR Online - Coming soon!

The information authority is launching its online version of the 2010/11 ILR specification shortly, following the release of the 2009/10 online version in May 2010.

The aim of ILR Online is to make the ILR specification more accessible and easier to navigate. It has been created following requests from learning providers to make the ILR specification more intuitive to use.

Providers will have the option to choose whether they view the whole of the ILR specification or only the fields that are relevant to the ILR return type.

If you have any queries about the online ILR please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**.

2011/12 ILR change request consultation

The information authority secretariat has liaised with policy teams to scope and assess 38 requests for change for the 2011/12 ILR.

As part of the review and consultation process, *the information authority* facilitated an [ILR Change Request Review Group meeting and a Stakeholder Consultation event](#) for members of our advisory groups to begin the consultation process and assess the further education system's views on the proposed changes. These meetings have helped us to compile specific questions for this year's online consultation.

In a new approach, we will be consulting via SurveyMonkey this year to gain insight into key areas for each change request, as well as making it easier for stakeholders to respond.

A full list of changes, comprising detailed proposals and progress summaries, is available to view on the [Request for Change pages](#) of *the information authority* website, as well as a summary document that outlines each request.

The following change requests are ready for you to comment on **now**. Please click each link to read and respond.

- [Change request 3: Unfunded Employer Responsive provision](#)
- [Change request 19: Additional codes for Discretionary Learning Support](#)
- [Change request 20: Collect email addressed in Contact Details](#)
- [Change request 25: Removal of UPIN and making UKPRN mandatory](#)
- [Change request 28: Remove low value fields](#)
- [Change request 36: Identify learners who are carers](#)

Further consultations will be uploaded in coming weeks – please subscribe to our [web alerts](#) to receive news updates when these consultations go live.

The consultation period will close on **Friday 03 September**. We will review all responses received and consider them in making our final recommendations to *the information authority* board on Wednesday 29 September.

If you have any queries, please email the Community and Stakeholder Team at cst@theia.org.uk.

2010/11 ILR Specification– Version 3 now available

The information authority has published Version 3 of the 2010/11 ILR Specification. This is available as a pdf version of the full specification or as separate pdf versions for each type of return.

Key changes to this version include: revised validation rules and guidance for the Unique Learner Number fields, field L45 and A55; updated guidance for recording of Foundation Learning Programmes and a standard for data timeliness has been added for employer responsive returns. Updated guidance on the Learning Aim reference number field, field A09 has also been included and Appendix A has been revised.

Guidance has also been revised for the recording 16-18 and 19+ Apprenticeships in the Reason for full/co-funding of learning aim field, field A14 and eligibility for enhanced ER funding field, field A69. Validation rules and guidance for the Employer ID field (A44) have also been revised,

Advisory Group meetings – update

The [Employer Responsive Advisory Group](#) met on 08 July 2010. The agenda included presentations from the National Director of Provider Financial Assurance and Lifelong Learning UK. There was also some discussion on the Skills Funding Agency's [Guidance Note 4](#), the limitations of the Learning Aims Database for 2010/11 and [2010/11 ILR changes](#) which come into operation in August 2010. The outputs from this meeting will shortly be available on *the information authority* website.

The information authority has provisionally organised a meeting for members of HOLEX on 11 November 2010. Further details of this meeting will follow in future issues of **inform**.

Autumn College Data Conference

Following the success of the [Spring](#) and [Summer](#) College Data Conferences, the Pearson Group will be holding an [Autumn College Data Conference](#) on 20 October 2010. The conference is aimed at FE College providers, and will focus on the F05 hard close date, preparing providers for this return, the importance of good quality data and reiterating key messages on ULN validation. *The information authority* and the Data Service will be speaking at this event.

Further details on this event will follow in future issues of **inform**.

YPLA to fund FE and sixth form colleges

In July 2010 it was announced that the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) would be [funding FE and sixth form colleges](#) directly, rather than through local authorities. This has an impact on the accuracy of information that is due to be returned in 2010/11 Learner Responsive ILR returns in field A70. The YPLA and *the information authority* are exploring potential options as there are implications wider than the ILR. Once a suitable outcome has been reached we will update providers through **inform** and our websites. .

ULN becomes mandatory – are you prepared?



[Changes to the ILR Specification for 2010/11](#) will come into effect on 01 August 2010. Full details of changes are available on [the information authority website](#).

These include changes to the requirements for the Unique Learner Number (ULN):

- **ULN requirements**

- For LR01, ER01, ER02 and ER03 collections, a validation warning will be generated for all funded learning aims for which the learner does not have a ULN and where the learning start date is more than 60 calendar days before the reference date for the return.
- For subsequent ILR returns (LR02 and ER04 onwards), all funded learning aims (with a planned or actual duration of 14 days or more) where the learning start date is more than 60 calendar days before the reference date for the return **must have a valid ULN – otherwise, the learning aim will not be validated (will be rejected).***

*For OLASS learners, there may be exceptional circumstances where the offender is in custody and cannot be registered for a ULN, in this case the provider can use 9999999999.

If you have any queries on this please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**.

ULN best practice guide – coming soon!

Working in partnership, *the information authority*, the Data Service and the Learning Records Service (formerly MIAP) will be releasing a ULN best practice guide in mid-August and will be available from the Learning Records Service website. Further details to follow in the next issue of **inform**.

Annual awareness and perception survey 2010

The information authority is conducting its annual [awareness and perception survey](#) for the third year running and is hoping to get a wide response from learning providers, data users and policy makers within FE and training to help it become more effective in setting and regulating data standards and collections.

John Perks, Head of *the information authority* said: “Last year’s survey indicated that over 86% of respondents felt that we had to some degree been successful in introducing changes to the sector regarding the setting and regulating of data standards. We have worked hard over the last twelve months to improve on this further, and we hope that this years survey results will reflect this.”

Please take the time to complete our [online survey](#). The link to the survey is:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2010informationauthorityawarenesssurvey>

Cancellation of joint Data Conference

Due to a government freeze on marketing and advertising spend, this year’s joint Data Conference from *the information authority*, the Data Service and the Learning Records Service has been cancelled. We apologise for the inconvenience this may have caused and will refund delegates who have already paid to attend this.

News from the Data Service

Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rate Methodology 2009/10 published

The Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rates Methodology for the academic year 2009/10 was published on [the Data Service website](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk) on Wednesday 28 July 2010. The methodology can be viewed here:

<http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/datadictionary/technicaldefinitions/derivedvariables/0910/index+0910.htm>

Please note that Annex A (the Mastertrim fields) and Annex B (the SQL code) will be added to this document in late autumn 2010. The Data Service and *the information authority* will notify providers when these additions are ready to view.

The table below lists changes made to the 2009/10 methodology, compared to the latest 2008/09 methodology.

Description	Reason for Change	Impact of Change	Date
Reinstate the A27 field in the minimum level of matching when merging together different ILR years. This is for records that are returned in 2009/10 onwards	To allow more accurate matching of records. This was not included in the 2008/09 QSR methodology due to data quality issues	Enables more accurate reporting of success rates.	20/07/2010
Removal of methodology for 2004/05 and addition of methodology for 2009/10	To take account of 2009/10 data	Reporting reflects current year	20/07/2010

Please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk with any queries



Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables – academic year 2008/09 available

Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables (previously known as benchmarking reports), associated guidance document, [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQs), and links to the archive of previous years' tables were published in a dedicated section of the [Data Service website](#) on 22 July 2010.

National Success Rates Tables (NSRT) are produced annually in arrears of the Learner Responsive collections cycle, and are used by providers, and the sector as a whole. They comprise summary indicators of overall performance, on an average and a percentile ranking basis. Their publication allows providers to assess their performance, and assists the planning of action programmes to improve the success, retention and achievement rates of their learners. The tables also provide information used in performance reviews by various funding and standards organisations.

The release of these Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables (previously known as Benchmarking reports) replace the data for 2005/06 to 2007/08 published in summer 2009. The data used in the latest release complements the information made available in the [June 2010 Statistical First Release supplementary tables](#).

Most NSRT queries can be resolved by referring to the guidance documents and frequently asked questions (FAQs) in the NSRT section of the website: [Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables - Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

Please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk with any queries.

Large employer reduction in rates for 19+ learners to take effect from 1 August 2010

The Skills Funding Agency introduced a 25% rate reduction for all 19+ Employer Responsive provision delivered to and by large employers. This reduction will take effect from 1 August 2010.

Large employers are defined as those with 1000 or more employees in their company, subsidiaries or group. The funding rate reduction will be applied to all 19+ Employer Responsive learners. This will include carry over learners into 2010/11 as well as new learners in 2010/11.

A [list of Employer Numbers](#) (open the zip file and select the Large Employer text file) for all employers defined as large, is available from the Data Service website. Names of employers are not published due to the commercial arrangements the Skills Funding Agency has with the list provider. When one of the listed Employer Numbers is used in the Employer identifier field, field A44, in the ILR the funding calculation will automatically apply the 25% reduction.

If you have any queries on this please view the [FAQs](#) on the Data Service website. If you cannot find an answer to your query please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**.

LIS 18.02 (2010/11) beta test version

The Data Service has issued a beta test version of the Learner Information Suite version 18.02 (2010/11) to assist software writers and providers in writing their own ILR software. LIS 18.02 beta requires 2010/11 ILR test data to run and is intended to help developers of systems producing ILR data.

This version contains an early version of the 2010/11 Learner Responsive calculation module. Also in this version are standard LR reports for validation and funding results as well as the Funding Claim report, the Summary of LR funding by Contracting Organisation, Access to HE report and a 16-18 Planning Volumes report. Additional Employer Responsive reports present in the v18.02 beta are the ER Indicative Volume and Cash Summary report and the ER Indicative Occupancy List export.

Please note that these early versions are still in development and undergoing testing, we therefore cannot assure the accuracy or reliability of the calculation and its components. **Users are advised to not use this functionality to calculate funding totals for 2010/11.**

The Data Service is currently testing this beta version with software writers which will inform the final version due for release mid Sept 2010.

Data Quality Dashboard Report Application – Coming soon!

The **Data Quality Dashboard Report Application** for providers is due for release on 18 August. The reports application provides dashboard views of the provider's data against [the information authority data quality standards](#) and in comparison to national, regional, local authority and provider type averages.

The first release of the reports application will cover the Employer Responsive W12 collection. Report applications for other collections will be progressively rolled out throughout August. The reports will be available from the Document Exchange within the Provider Gateway, under the "Provider Data Quality Reports" folder. If you do not have access to the Document Exchange, please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**, or email servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set data standards and govern data collection and use for further education and training provision in England.

The authority has a [decision-making board](#) headed by an independent chairman and made up of senior representatives from across the further education and training system in England. This is supported by a small operational [secretariat](#).

The Data Service

The Data Service was established in April 2008 to collect and disseminate information as the first single source of data for the further education system in England. It will work closely with *the information authority* to streamline and improve the way information is collected and shared. Key principles of the service are to eradicate duplication; improve collection and sharing; increase efficiency; assure quality and; provide new levels of customer service.

Funded primarily by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) at its inception, the new separately managed organisation will have developed by 2011 into a fully operational service provider working in the interests of the sector as a whole.