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Introduction

Welcome to the third issue of the monthly electronic newsletter *inform*, updating you on joint programmes and projects being delivered on behalf of partners.

We hope you find this latest news about data and information related work useful. Please pass the newsletter on to colleagues if you feel it may be of interest to them. If they would like to subscribe, they should register their interest by providing their contact details to fesystemdataprog@lsc.gov.uk

News from the FE System Data Programme

The FE System Data Programme involves the creation of an independent *information authority* and a pilot to test the concept of a national Information Service. The authority will set and regulate data standards for all organisations involved in further education and training. A full Information 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.

Sector empowers *information authority*

Organisations from across further education are now signing up to the protocol that empowers the *information authority* to set and regulate data and collection standards for the sector.

Recent signatories include the Association of Colleges (AoC); the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED); the Learning and Skills Council (LSC); the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

Graham Jones, recently appointed independent Chair of the *information authority* board, said support from across the FE system underlined the important role the organisation has to play in simplifying and streamlining the way information is collected and shared.

"Without the willingness of partners and stakeholders to work with us and recognise our role as a single FE data gatekeeper, the *information authority* would have no authority to speak of," he said.

"That's why the news that so many crucial organisations have signed our protocol is so significant. It is a vital first step in establishing the trust and confidence in the *information authority* model that will be needed if we are to bring the anticipated benefits to data users and providers alike."

The *information authority* was established by Department for Education and Skills Ministers in October 2006. Its board comprises senior representatives from across the further education system.

Timetable agreed for 2008/09 ILR

The *information authority* board has now released the timetable for publishing the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) specification for 2008/09.

The timetable for consulting on change requests will begin earlier than in previous years to accommodate new initiatives and allow more time for requirements gathering and consultation with a wider group of stakeholders.

Initial requirements gathering will take place from June to August 2007 with the closing date for change requests fixed for August 24th. The ILR specification will be confirmed by the *information authority* in December. [View the ILR Specification Timetable](#)

ILR data about learners and their learning aims is collected from providers in receipt of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding and from those receiving European Social Funding. Each year, key stakeholders are consulted about changes to the ILR which will improve the collection and reporting of learner data.

Full details of how to request changes to the ILR for 2008/09 will be published soon on the *information authority* website www.informationauthority.org.uk. The site will also keep stakeholders regularly posted on progress throughout the consultation, change request and decision making process.

If you would like to discuss future data requirements before submitting an ILR change request, contact Lisa Macdougall by email Lisa.Macdougall@theia.org.uk or telephone on 024 7682 3722.

New roles to be advertised

New senior roles within the *information authority* Secretariat and the Information Service Pilot have now been agreed and adverts will appear within the next couple of weeks in The Guardian and Sunday Times, as well as on the *information authority* and LSC websites.

The new Secretariat posts are:

- Head of the *information authority* Secretariat
- *information authority* Standards and Quality Manager
- *information authority* Community and Stakeholder Manager
- *information authority* Change Manager

The new 'pilot' posts are:

- Head of Pilot
- Customer Development Manager
- Customer Manager (3 roles)
- Service Manager

We look forward to receiving applications for these important roles from people working across the further education and training system.

Secretariat implementation strategy

Steve Dale, Interim Head of the *information authority* Secretariat, has developed a proposed implementation strategy covering start-up and development through to full operation. The strategy will be published in the coming months.

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.

Forty early adopters for MIAP

Around 40 education and training providers and organisations are expected to become the first to use the new MIAP Learner Registration Service, which is on course for launch in September.

Each of these 'early adopters' will register at least 1,000 learners by submitting files to the service containing student information. In return, they will receive back a file

containing their student data along with a Unique Learner Number (ULN) for each student, which they will incorporate into their management information systems and report in the Individualised Learner Record.

“We expect to have the 40 early adopters on board this month and, by mid October, anticipate that more than 100,000 ULNs will have been issued,” said Tim Barrett, MIAP Sector Change Manager for the LSC.

Among the first to use the MIAP service will be Lewisham College; Stratford-upon-Avon College; Luton Sixth Form College and the Cheshire 14-19 Partnership.

Early adopters will, at first, be able to submit a batch file to the MIAP Learner Registration Service and receive a batch file back. A system to system interface will be introduced from October in the second phase of development. This will allow users to upload information automatically.

Nextstep sets the pace

The Nextstep service, which joined the MIAP tests and trials just three months ago, has now registered more than 1,300 people with Unique Learner Numbers.

The service focuses on adults over the age of 20 who have few or no qualifications and are difficult to attract into learning. Its trials of the ULN are themed and concentrate on three geographical areas:

- Hereford & Worcester – with a focus on rural provision
- West of England – with a focus on those adults turning 20
- Greater Merseyside – with a focus on offenders and ex-offenders

The inclusion of unique numbers for learners in local Nextstep records enables the service to track the participation and progress of its clients more easily.

Manchester College of Arts and Technology, another of the trialists, has recently uploaded 582 ULNs, bringing the total number of ULNs now held on the prototype Learner Registration Service to 6,100.

ULN may become mandatory

Early discussions are underway between the LSC and the *information authority* to explore what will be required to make the MIAP Unique Learner Number a compulsory field in the 2008/09 Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

The authority, which is now responsible for setting and regulating information standards for further education, will decide whether the ULN should be included after determining whether the benefits outweigh the burden of collection.

The experiences of the MIAP early adopters will be used to weigh the pros and cons before the LSC decides whether to make the application. If it does, the authority will make its decision in November.

Earlier this year, the *information authority* approved 23 changes to the ILR for 2007/08. A summary of these is available at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/Data/Datacollection/ILR/>.

Changes authorised by the authority's board were made after it received 107 requests for alterations to the ILR from further education and training organisations. These were put through a challenge process to ensure they were defined; supported by a good business case; and supported by further education sector targets and goals.

If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter, register your contact details at fesystemdataprog@lsc.gov.uk

To find out more about the information authority and MIAP, visit:

www.informationauthority.org.uk

www.miap.gov.uk