

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

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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. A full Data Service is expected to 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.

Data Service to launch next year

A new national Data Service will be established in April 2008 to take responsibility for collecting and disseminating further education information in England.

Work is now underway to determine how the service will operate and how it can improve on the current collection and dissemination processes of the Learning and Skills Council.

“We want to develop a customer focused organisation that will work with the sector and the *information authority* to provide a service that people want and which helps to improve the use of information across the further education system,” said Reg Basimi, Programme Manager.

“We have been running a pilot exercise in North London to find out what the priority requirements are. This has clearly identified a desire for more clarity and better information about existing reports as well as the need for a reliable point of contact to help people understand the statistics that come out of these reports.

“We aim to start delivering a number of requirements in advance of the new Data Service becoming operational.” These include:

- Establishing a customer service function to help with data queries
- Improving the understanding of available LSC reports
- Investigating how comparative performance reports can be improved
- Harmonising LSC and OfSTED reports

Workshops explore scope of new service

Three studies have been commissioned to determine how data is currently collected and disseminated by the LSC; how an initial Data Service should operate; and what the functions of the Data Service might be in the longer-term.

Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) is undertaking the work to define how the new service should operate in its early days and has held a series of workshops with key stakeholders, including the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council, as part of that study.

“We have set out to determine the interim arrangements needed to get the service up and running in April 2008,” said Deborah Talbot, PWC Engagement Manager. “By mid October, we will produce a report highlighting the steps that need to be taken to establish a separate Data Service within the LSC.”

The study to define present LSC data collection and dissemination methods is being undertaken by Xansa, while the David Mason Consultancy is examining ways in which the service might operate in the longer term.

Top appointments at *information authority*

Una Bennett has been appointed as new Head of the *information authority* Secretariat and will succeed consultant Steven Dale, who has held the interim position, in mid-October.

Una has undertaken several roles in the financial services sector and, since 1993 she has been leading initiatives to build new capability and to establish or improve businesses and services. She has recently been working for Barclaycard to establish new operations and systems and set up credit card businesses with high street retailers.

Other new starters with the authority in October will be Peter Ashton, current Management Information and Data Delivery Manager with the Learning and Skills Council, who will become Quality and Standards Manager; Lucille Madahar, who will join as Stakeholder and Community Manager; and David Briggs and Paul Kelman, who have been appointed Change Managers.

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.

Ufl joins MIAP early adopters

The University for Industry (Ufl) has become the largest single provider to join the 60 early adopters of the MIAP Learner Registration Service and will send through its entire intake of students for the period from September to December 2007.

Ufl, which enrolls more than 300,000 distance learning students on business skills courses each year, runs the learndirect service - the largest e-learning network of its kind in the world.

It also manages the UK Register of Learning Providers on behalf of MIAP and will operate the learner help desk for the MIAP Learner Registration Service from next March.

During the last seven years, more than two million learners have gained new skills and new opportunities with learndirect. Around 200,000 businesses have used the service to improve the skills of their workforces, and more than 30 million advice sessions have been provided through the online and telephone advice services.

“It is great news that Ufl has joined the early adopters as the number of students it enrolls will provide a real test of how the Learner Registration Service handles high volumes”, said Tim Barrett, MIAP Sector Change Manager with the Learning and Skills Council.

“One thing that Ufl will certainly bring is a test for the MIAP student matching algorithm, as the organisation has several hundred students with the same surnames.”

Test and trials close

Tests and trials of the prototype MIAP Learner Registration Service officially ended on August 24th, bringing an end to a year-long process of defining how the live service should operate.

Organisations that took part in the tests and trials included Manchester 14-19 partnership; Brighton and Hove 14-19 partnership; S-Cool Ltd, working with younger and adult learners, mainly in the South West region; Lewisham FE College; QualDat, representing OCR, Edexcel, AQA and City and Guilds Awarding Bodies; UCAS; QCA; the Nextstep service and the DCSF Data Services Group.

“We would like to say a big thank you to all of the participants who helped us reach the position of being able to launch the live service,” said Mike Coulson, MIAP Strategy Manager. “We have been absolutely delighted with the cooperation we have received.”

Transition to 'live' service completed

The transition of learner information from the prototype Learner Registration Service (LRS) was completed successfully before the new service went live for early adopter organisations on September 3rd.

The prototype registration service has been available since August 2006 to demonstrate, in practice, the benefits of improved control of access to learner records and secure data sharing. It was used and tested by 74 organisations in schools; colleges; Awarding Bodies, unitary and vocational; and partnerships.

Precious IgbinoBaro from Lewisham College, London, was the first person to be registered with a Unique Learner Number on September 6th 2006. By August 24th 2007, more than 25,500 ULNs were transferred from the prototype to the new live service.

Early adopters of the live service now have access from Monday to the LRS Helpdesk, which will be manned during office hours. They are also being provided with online support materials and process guides through a new area of the website.

Stakeholder event takes shape

The latest gathering of MIAP partners will be held at the Techno Centre, Coventry on Tuesday, October 2nd.

The second stakeholder event of 2007 will feature a demonstration of the new Learner Registration Service and future plans for its adoption along with workshops to discuss new analysis tools; the data challenge process through which learners can highlight changes that need to be made to their records; and the future of the UK Register of Learning providers.

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.theinformationauthority.org.uk

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