

## This Month

### News from *the information authority*

- *information authority* acts on data burden findings
- Protocol with Single Voice
- ILR F05 closing date brought forward
- LSC and Ofsted to agree success rates
- Roll out of Framework for Excellence endorsed
- Agreement on staff data collection
- Board responds to ‘Raising Expectations’ consultation

### News from the Data Service

- Data Service has ‘vital role’
- Head of Data Service appointed
- Website goes live

### News from MIAP

- Unique Learner Numbers top 2 million
- Introducing MIAP to Wales
- Improved Learner Registration Service launched

### News from *the information authority*

*The information authority* was established as an independent organisation in October 2006 to set and regulate data standards for all organisations involved in further education and training in England.

#### *information authority* acts on data burden findings

*The information authority* is working closely with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and with awarding bodies to reduce what independent research has shown to be unnecessary data collection demands being placed upon further education and training providers.

Oakleigh Consulting was appointed by the authority to determine the amount of administration required of providers to meet external data requests. A number of criteria were used to identify unnecessary burden, including lack of consistency and transparency in requests, tight deadlines and lack of relevance to the provider.

The research identified a number of areas of concern:

- Ad hoc data demands by the LSC which duplicate data already supplied, including that collected through the Individualised Learner Record

- Inconsistencies in LSC data audit requirements and lack of standardised requirements across its regional audit teams
- Variations in awarding body specifications and data format requirements, such as inconsistencies in exam entry data requirements
- Inconsistencies in data and format requirements and unclear reasons for requirements across different Connexions local offices
- The volume of data collection required for European Social Fund and Train to Gain funding. Issues raised included the range of fields not used by providers for their own management information purposes; the perceived bureaucracy of the audit process; and the particular burdens placed upon lead providers in consortia with data management responsibilities
- The perceived shortfalls in targeted guidance for front-line provider staff and local LSC staff in administering and managing data requirements

The LSC has now been asked by *the information authority* to provide a formal response to the issues in its control and a formal request has also been made through the Federation of Awarding Bodies for proposals to tackle inefficiency caused by the inconsistent requirements of its members.

“*The information authority* has the remit for setting and regulating data standards and for reducing the burden of data collection placed upon further education and training providers in England,” said Graham Jones, the authority’s Chairman. “Our board thought it was extremely important to commission this independent research because, prior to this, there was no agreed view about the extent or causes of data burden.

“We have already begun to work closely with the Learning and Skills Council and with the awarding bodies to identify solutions to the problems that have been highlighted and will be initiating discussions with the Connexions service with the aim of establishing data governance and standards.”

## Protocol with Single Voice

*The information authority* will be one of the signatories to a protocol setting out how it will work with the The Single Voice, the organisation which is jointly owned and managed by the main groups representing further education colleges and training providers in England.

The Single Voice represents the collective view of the sector on regulatory matters through strategic dialogue with Government and its agencies, and is viewed by the authority as important partner in helping to set and regulate data standards for further education and to reduce unnecessary information related bureaucracy.

“We are dependent on the support and input from providers to help us carry out our work and we intend to increase our involvement with them in the coming months. The Single Voice will play a very important part in this,” said Graham Jones, authority Chairman.

“The contribution of providers is critical to our success and we look forward to a strengthened relationship through the Single Voice. This joint protocol reflects the increasing collaboration between the groups and the Single Voice, and we look forward to further benefits from continued co-operation.”

Other signatories to the protocol, which will be signed in July, include the Bureaucracy Reduction Group; the Communications Gateway Panel; the FE Reputation Strategy Group; and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

## 2007/08 ILR F05 closing date brought forward

The closing date for 2007/08 F05 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns will be 6 February 2009. No returns will be possible after that date. This change will bring FE data reporting more in line with other education sectors in England.

This is advantageous to providers as earlier publication allows DIUS and funding bodies to make a more timely case for the funds the FE system needs. It should also remove the confusion that is caused by using success rates based on data sent at different times.

For further information you can download [full details on the change to the 2007/08 collection timetable](#).

## LSC and Ofsted to agree success rates

The LSC and Ofsted have agreed in principle to use the same data and algorithms to measure success rates and will be working with *the information authority* to make improvements.

“The organisations had already begun work on this but recognised that there were still discrepancies that needed to be addressed,” said Una Bennett, Head of *the information authority*. “We will be working with the LSC and Ofsted to help resolve these discrepancies on behalf of providers and learners.”

## Roll out of Framework for Excellence endorsed

The information authority board has endorsed the roll out of Framework for Excellence in 2008/09, including mandatory employer and learner web- based surveys.

Members, who met on June 4<sup>th</sup>, welcomed the work undertaken by the Framework for Excellence team in simplifying the data collection requirements but recommended that guidance for providers easier to read before publication.

This phase of Framework for Excellence will apply to further education colleges and most work-based learning training providers funded by the Learning and Skills Council. More details can be found at <http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk>, including a definition and the purpose of Framework for Excellence.

## Agreement on staff data collection

*The information authority* board unanimously endorsed the principle of staff data collection after Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) presented its current proposals for the Staff Individualised Record collection to the June meeting.

Members recognised the importance of the data for workforce planning and funding of staff development, but advised that LLUK should consider whether all data fields were necessary in future and should communicate more extensively on the staff data collection.

David Hunter, chief executive of the sector skills council for the professional development of staff in the lifelong learning sector, gave his commitment to this.

## Board responds to 'Raising Expectations' consultation

*The information authority* board has responded to the consultation document 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver'. The DCSF / DIUS proposals include the set up of the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency, and new responsibilities for local authorities for education and training of 16 -18 year olds. For further information please download [the information authority's response to Raising Expectations](#).

## News from 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. 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 of Innovation, Universities and Skills and supported by the Learning and Skills Council 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.

## Data Service has 'vital role'

The new Data Service, working closely with *the information authority*, will have a vital role to play to helping to ensure the enormous changes taking place across further education are a success.

Speaking at the official launch of the service at an event in Coventry on June 6<sup>th</sup>, Graham Jones, Chairman of *the information authority* said: "the changes to the landscape of FE present a huge and difficult task – but failure is not an option.

"Our job and that of the Data Service is to concentrate on the task of ensuring that the sector is not overburdened unnecessary data demands. People are fed up to the teeth with multiple requests for the same bits of information from many different organisations. There must be no more multiple requests and no more inconsistencies.

"I have no doubts about the benefits the new service will bring and I look forward very much in helping to shape the way this is achieved."

The launch event at Coventry's Techno Centre officially recognised the transfer responsibilities for the collection and dissemination of further education information from the Learning and Skills Council to the new separately managed organisation.

Guest speakers at the gathering attended by more than 50 people included Susan Pember, Director of the DIUS Further Education and Skills Performance Group, David Russell, Director of Finance and Resources at the LSC and Richard Field, the LSC's Director of Information.

Susan Pember said: “People recognise that the information authority has made a real impact and I know the same will be true for the Data Service. We need consistent and accurate data in order to operate effectively.

## **Head of Data Service appointed**

Richard Williams has been appointed Head of the Data Service. Richard has an extensive background in service delivery having established shared services in the power industry for E.ON UK. He also has significant experience in change management and leadership together with a background in data management and systems delivery.

## **Data Service website goes live**

The Data Service website went live in June at [www.thedataservice.org.uk](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk) . Initially containing background and contact details along with latest news and service information, the site will develop over the coming months to provide a more comprehensive range of functions.

## **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 will 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.

## **Unique Learner Numbers top 2 million**

A big influx of post -16 education and training providers registering with MIAP combined with April’s huge upload of school pupil details from the National Pupil Database has taken the number of students issued with Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) above the two million mark this month.

“Post-16 providers have really got on board since the MIAP Learner Registration Service was officially launched in February 2008,” said Tim Barrett, MIAP Stakeholder Change Manager with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). “We jointly set a target of reaching 1.7 million registered ULNs by March 2008 to benefit schools, colleges and training organisations and we have exceeded that by more than 300, 000,” said Tracey Matkin, MIAP Stakeholder Manager at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

“The recent issue of almost 1.5 million ULNs to school pupils taken from the National Pupil Database means that colleges receiving applications from students currently in school will now be able to find their details on the MIAP Learner Registration Service,” added Tim.

“The MIAP Service is now performing as we would have hoped and expected ready for September 2008 when the majority of further education colleges will be enrolling their students.”

## Introducing MIAP to Wales

The MIAP implementation team headed for Wales in to introduce the service to learning providers involved in piloting the Welsh baccalaureate and the Qualifications and Credit Framework tests and trials.

The Welsh Assembly Government has consented to the adoption of the MIAP Unique Learner Number (ULN) by organisations involved in the delivery of education and training in Wales, as we reported in the last issue.

MIAP held two workshops for Welsh learning providers, in Newport on June 6<sup>th</sup> and in Wrexham on June 19<sup>th</sup>.

“This was our first real foray into Wales and we have been bringing people up to speed about what has been happening and telling them how to access the Learner Registration Service to get Unique Learner Numbers for their students,” said Lynne Thomas, MIAP implementation consultant.

“It is extremely good news that the Welsh Assembly Government has given the go ahead for MIAP to be evaluated there and we very much look forward to working more extensively in the future with Welsh providers to pave the way for the use of the ULN in Wales.”

## MIAP launches improved Learner Registration Service

The newly updated version of the MIAP Learner Registration Service is now live, offering users several new benefits.

These include:

- Improvements to the learner search, with more fields that can be submitted and greater accuracy in search results.
- Updates to the Learner Registration Service password policy.
- Background improvements to file structures that will lay the groundwork for the service to become fully compatible with the UK Register of Learning Providers.

The changes have enabled the latest upload of almost 1.5 million school children from the National Pupil Database.

For more information about the new Learner Registration Service and how it can benefit your organisation, please contact the service helpdesk on 0845 602 2589, or email [miapserviceteam@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:miapserviceteam@lsc.gov.uk)



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

[www.theinformationauthority.org.uk](http://www.theinformationauthority.org.uk)

[www.thedataservice.org.uk](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk)

[www.miap.gov.uk](http://www.miap.gov.uk)