

**This Month****News from *the information authority***

- Board agrees key areas of work
- FAB support for reducing data burden
- Improved online community forum
- Providers needed for advisory groups

**News from the Data Service**

- Statistics show big improvements
- New appointments to key roles
- Learner Information Suite update
- And finally

**News from *the information authority*****Board agrees key areas of work**

*The information authority* board met on 03/12/2008 and made decisions that will guide the work of the authority over the coming months.

Head of *the information authority* secretariat, Una Bennett, said: “The decisions made at the December board meeting will allow us to take forward a number of key areas of work over the next few months. For example, we are going to be able to link more closely with the Federation of Awarding Bodies to help them address some of the data burden issues that have been raised by learning providers, and start our preparations for earlier consultation around the ILR change process next year.”

Items on the agenda included an update from Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) on progress on developments of the staff individualised record and an update from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on the implementation of ‘the service layer’ for the Qualification and Credit Framework.

The board agreed that the Individualised Learner Record timetable for 2010/11 would be similar to that operated for 2009/10 with a final date for change requests at the end of June and publication of the specification at the end of November.

Organisations requesting change would be encouraged to submit requirements at an early stage to allow sufficient consultation. The board also signalled that the specification timetable for 2011/12 is likely to be brought forward.

The board asked the secretariat to work with DIUS, the LSC, the Data Service and other groups on developing and agreeing a timetable for changes to funding guidance and system changes.

## **FAB support for reducing data burden**

The Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) made a presentation to the board around its response to *the information authority* commissioned study into the burden of data demands placed upon education and training providers and reiterated its support for resolving the identified issues.

The board agreed to support the development of data standards in this area, including funding, and agreed that the Head of *the information authority* should join the qualifications working group set up to look at some of the issues.

## **Improved online community forum**

*The information authority's* online community portal, Feconnect, has been upgraded, rebranded and moved to <http://forums.theia.org.uk/> to encourage increased cross-sector discussion on data issues. .

“Software improvements now mean we have the ability to create online communities,” said Paul Kelman, Stakeholder Engagement Manager. “There are real benefits in peer groups having an area to meet and discuss issues. In the New Year we will be looking to establish and support online communities for several stakeholder groups.”

Those who registered on the previous site can continue to use the same login. Please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk) if you experience any problems or have any comments on the new site.

## **Providers needed for advisory groups**

Large and small employer responsive learning providers are being encouraged to join *the information authority's* advisory group. This will ensure full representation from the sector.

The authority has a number of advisory groups of stakeholders who help resolve and improve data issues by providing feedback and suggestions on data collections, software used in preparing them, audit issues and the impact of all these processes on learning providers.

There are groups for College Management Information staff, Employer Responsive learning providers, Adult Safeguarded Learning providers, Commercial Software Suppliers and providers who write their own software. Each meets three to four times a year. Further information on these groups can be found at <http://www.theia.org.uk/meetings-events>

Meetings take place in Coventry and generally last half a day. If you are interested in joining, please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk)

## News from the Data Service

### Statistics show big improvements

The Data Service published a Statistical First Release, *Post-16 Education: Learner participation and outcomes in England, 2007/08* on Thursday 18th December. Key findings of the publication, which can be viewed in full at [www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics), show that:

For young people

- 16 to 18 participation (excluding schools and higher education) increased by 2.3 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08
- The number of 16 to 18 year olds starting apprenticeship frameworks increased by 1.9 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08, although provisional data show that the number of 16 to 18 year olds starting apprenticeships in the first quarter of 2008/09 is around 16 per cent lower than the first quarter of 2007/08
- Provisional data also show that the number of young people achieving full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications continues to increase.

For adults

- 90,100 19 to 24 year olds started apprenticeships in 2007/08 (up 14.6 per cent from 2006/07) and 27,200 25 year olds and over also started apprenticeships (up from 300 in 2006/07)
- Provisional data show there were over 330,000 Train to Gain starts in 2007/08, an increase of over 60 per cent from 2006/07
- Over 3 million learners participated in post-16 education (excluding higher education). The number of learners taking full level 2 (up 23.7 per cent), full level 3 (up 18.5 per cent) and Skills for Life (up 5.5 per cent) continues to rise.
- Provisional data show that almost 300,000 learners achieved full level 2 qualifications in 2007/08

For all ages

- 224,800 people started apprenticeships in 2007/08, up 21.9 per cent from 2006/07
- 112,600 people successfully completed apprenticeship frameworks in 2007/06, up 0.7 per cent from 2006/07

Apprenticeship framework completion rates for 2007/08 were 63.7 per cent, a 4.9 percentage point increase from 2006/07.

## New appointments to key roles

Sue Aspinall has been appointed Management Information Director, completing the Data Service senior leadership team. Sue, formerly with the LSC, joins Darren Bassett, Service Director and Alan Billingham, Production and Quality Director.

Other recent appointments include Ruth Mahon to the post of Senior MI Developer and David Simcoe, who takes on the role of Data Collection Coordinator.

“I am delighted at the progress we have made in recruiting to senior positions in such a short time,” said Rich Williams, Head of the Data Service. “We still have a number of posts to fill until we are up to full strength and our recruitment drive will continue in the New Year, when we also hope to appoint our first apprentice.”

## Learner Information Suite update

A software patch has been released on 18 December 2008 which updates functionality in version 16.02 of the Learner Information Suite (LIS) software.

This software patch is intended to be installed on a PC which already has version 16.02 of the LIS installed.

The patch contains the following changes:

- Additional reports for learner responsive provision:
  - Funding Claim,
  - Actuals by Summary Statement of Activity category
  - Funding Included and Excluded by ILR Export
- Fixes to some errors in Individualised Learner Record validation functionality
- Fixes to the report filter on the export of Employer Responsive Indicative Occupancy data.

The software and release guide are available to download from the LIS v16.02 software page <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/Data/Software/LIS/LIS16-02.htm>

There are some outstanding issues which will be addressed in a future LIS release for 2008/09. In particular, there are known issues with the calculation of funding for Entry to Employment provision. It is currently planned that a final version of LIS for 2008/09 will be released in March 2009 to address these issues.

## And finally

Staff from *the information authority* and the Data Service would like to wish you all a very happy and restful Christmas and look forward to working with you again in the New Year.

## The information authority

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

## 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 of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) 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.



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

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