Information Authority
Status 22 October 2007

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Background and introduction

1. This report provides an update on the programme of work that was initiated in response to recommendations contained in the FE White Paper; the Learning and Skills Council's agenda for change programme of reforms; and the Foster Report. The key deliverables from this programme are:

- The setting up of a FE system-wide Information Standards Agency (the information authority) to set sector-wide standards for data including collection cycles, derived variables, management information reports, timetables and a data quality framework.
- The setting up of a separate Data Service (DS) to provide an efficient, accountable service to sector stakeholders, including providers, the LSC, HEFCE, the DIUS, DCFS, Ofsted, ALI, QIA, Sector Skills Councils and Regional Development Agencies, based on agreed requirements and service level contracts.
- The Establishment of a Learner Registration Service (LRS) to provide a Unique Learner Number (ULN) available for every student aged 14 and above in education. This will include the creation of a lifelong learner record to record attainment and participation again a ULN. In addition, the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme is delivering the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP).

2. The outcomes will be:

i. Improvements in the quality and use of information in support of effective decision-making by all stakeholders in the sector, e.g. the relevance, consistency, timeliness, accuracy, etc.
ii. Reduction in bureaucracy across the FE system, significantly to release time, resources and energy for front line services.
iii. Improvement in accountability to customers and sponsors for the quality of service in the provision of data and statistics.
iv. Achievement of efficiency gains and service improvement gains in learning and advice providers.

**Purpose**

3 This report provides an update on the set up of the information authority, the Data Service and MIAP.

**Key points/issues**

**Status – information authority**

4 The information authority was established as a ‘Stakeholder Advisory Group’ in October 2006 through the signing of a FE-wide protocol in response to a ministerial request for the sector to work together to reform FE data. The information authority has the remit to set and regulate data and collection standards for all organisations involved in further education and training.

5 A decision making Board has been established, made up of senior representatives from across the education and training sector and headed by an independent chair - Graham Jones. The independent chair was formally appointed on 3 July 2007.

6 The information authority Board receives its authority from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and is empowered by further education and training organisations through the signing of a protocol. All Board members have signed up to the protocol.

7 The Board has met on four occasions:
   a. 2 October 2006
   b. 18 December 2006
   c. 13 April 2007
   d. 26 September 2007

8 Membership of the board is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graham Jones</td>
<td>Independent Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Pember</td>
<td>DIUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Miller</td>
<td>Learning Provider (Newcastle City Learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Powell</td>
<td>HOLEX – the national network of local adult learning providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel Nisbet</td>
<td>Qualifications and Curriculum</td>
</tr>
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The Board is supported by a Secretariat of eight. The Secretariat of the information authority prepares information for the Board and ensures that decisions of Board members are acted upon. It will, eventually, work closely with the data service in administering the specification and publication of standards.

The duties of the Board are to:

- Assess new requests for data and balance need against burden before making decisions.
- Receive representations from further education organisations on the practicality and workability of standards, collection and dissemination processes.
- Publish and promote the agreed standards.
- Work with organisations and departments across the education system in setting and regulating common standards.

Recruitment for all positions in the Secretariat was completed at the end of August 2007. The new (permanent) Head of the information authority Secretariat is Una Bennett. Other posts include:

a Standards & Quality Manager
b Community and Stakeholder Manager
c Change Managers (2)
d ILR Team (3)

The current priority work for the information authority is the FE sector-wide consultation process leading to the specification of the Individual Learning Record (ILR) 08/09. The ILR is a collection of data about learners and their learning aims. It is collected from providers that are in receipt of Further Education, Work Based Learning, or Adult and Community Learning funding, and from providers funded by some kinds of European Social Fund. ILR data is used to inform funding decisions and quality assessments. The recommended specification will be submitted to the Board on 5 December 2007.

The next steps for achieving a fully operational information authority are:
a Completion of induction, training and knowledge transfer to new members of the Secretariat.
b Develop operational standards and methods of working.
c Develop a website to support collaborative networking.

Status – Data Service
14 Field work on requirements for a pilot Data Service was conducted with 29 providers in a local North London pilot during the summer of 2007. The findings have resulted in the following group of work streams that will start in November 2007:
- Set up a customer relationship function that will deal with provider data queries.
- Harmonise LSC and OfSTED performance reports.
- Remove unnecessary data burden on providers.
- Clarify LSC reports and data processes.
- Create new benchmark reports that will meet provider as opposed to agency needs.
- Evaluate improved use of data and the benefits that can accrue from that.

15 In the meantime, preparations have started for implementing a full sector data service that will be operational from April 2008.

Status - MIAP
16 Logica CMG was awarded the contract for the development of MIAP services in January 2007 and has made significant progress in the creation of the Learner Registration Service (LRS) and the revision of the existing UK Register of Learning Providers.
- The MIAP test and trials have been successfully completed, during which time over 26,000 unique learner numbers (ULN) were created.
- The Live learner registration service has been completed and delivered to the LSC and is currently being used by a group of 60 learning providers during an “early adopters” phase intended to bed down the system and service prior to allowing general use.
- 33 Learning providers have registered as “Learner Registration Bodies” with the ability to register learners with the learner registration service.
- The live learner registration service has successfully created new unique learner numbers.
- Planning to incorporate Diplomas, Qualification Credit Frameworks and the Offender Learning and Skills Service underway.
- Redevelopment of the UK Register of Learning Providers to start in 2008.

Financial and governance implications
17 The 2006/07 budget for creation of the information authority was £1.2M. The 2006/07 budget for the new data service is £750K, though this remains highly speculative pending agreement on what level of service can/will be provided.
The 2007/08 budget for the information authority currently sits within the LSC’s FE Systems Data (FESD) programme. The information authority is now moving into a ‘business as usual’ state and is expected to be separated fully from the FESD by 1 January 2008. At that point, the information authority budget will be segregated, and will be fully managed by the Head of the information authority Secretariat on behalf of the information authority Board.

Clearance
This paper has been cleared by David Russell, Director of Resources.

Legal implications
The information authority is a non-statutory body which is not a legal entity. Although the budget for the information authority sits with the LSC and the LSC employs the staff it is independent of the LSC. The protocol is not intended to be legally binding and the LSC is not legally obliged to be bound by the decisions of the information authority.

Communications
The information authority communicates to DIUS and LSC stakeholders via the governance structure of the FESD Programme.

Communication to all FE System stakeholders is via the information authority web site (http://theinformationauthority.org.uk) and the monthly Inform newsletter.

Risk management
The information authority has used the FESD Programme governance process for the set-up phase of the project.

Risks are considered at each project board meeting as a standing agenda item. The purpose of these meetings is to:

a) Confirm new project risks
b) Consider progress against previously identified risks
c) Assess likely impact of project risks on other projects
d) Identify high level project risks that will go into the FESD programme risk register and brought to the attention of the programme board

Where an urgent risk is identified in between risk/board meetings, the project manager escalates the risk to the programme manager to be managed at FESD programme level.

There are no ‘red’ risks associated with the set-up phase of the information authority.