MIAP (Managing Information Across Partners): the learner perspective

The National Learner Panel met on 17th April 2007 to discuss the implications of MIAP (Managing Information Across Partners) from the learner perspective. Dominic Knight and Tim Barrett (from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the LSC respectively) gave an initial presentation to provide the panel with an overview of the reasons behind the introduction of MIAP as a system.

1. Introduction

MIAP was initially developed to simplify and enhance the accuracy of the process by which data about learners’ achievements is collected and stored. At the moment, data about learner achievements is often collected in a repetitive way over different time periods and used in a limited manner by each collector. MIAP was established to address these problems and to reduce the burden on everyone involved. One of the key elements of MIAP is the development of a system of Unique Learner Numbers that will provide learners, providers and other authorised organisations with access to an individual’s Learner Record.

The panel divided into 3 subgroups to discuss the implications MIAP in more detail, in particular they looked at the following questions:

- What might be the benefits for learners of an individual learner record?
- What else might learners like MIAP to do for them?
- What information or reassurance would learners need to engage their support of MIAP?
2. Questions and Answers

The presentation prompted the following questions, requests for clarification and reassurances regarding data protection from the panel:

i) If I was applying for a job, who would be able to access the information held on my learner record?
This would be within the learner’s control. Each learner will be able to ask MIAP to send a copy of their learner record to any email address entered by the learner. The record would be sent in a pdf format from the MIAP system. Employers will not have access to the MIAP system.

ii) I currently have to go through piles of form-filling for each course I sign up for, which bears no relevance to the course itself, will MIAP help to reduce this?
It is likely that MIAP will be able to help with some of this, as some information will be held on learning records rather than on separate forms for each course. However it is not likely that MIAP will stop it altogether.

iii) Why is it necessary to hold a learner’s address?
MIAP will not need to hold a learner’s current address – MIAP refers to the address it holds as the Last Known Address and holds a date with it indicating when it was entered. The postcode part will be mandatory as it will be used to form part of the basic information set stored in order to support identification.

iv) Once this system of learner records is up and running, could new information be added to my learner record in future without my consent?
No. If any change is deemed necessary, MIAP will always request permission from you. The law is very restrictive about what information can be held about individual learners.

There is a fixed set of information that we can hold about you that has been agreed. This is made up of sub set of information that must be collected in order to register, and a wider set that remains optional.

v) Who is responsible for allocating and communicating my Unique Learner Number?
Your learning provider will have the primary responsibility for obtaining a ULN for you on your behalf and should ensure that you are fully aware of your number and the record associated with it. Awards and documentation for learners’ achievements are likely to carry your unique learner number. We are keen that you are aware of your number and understand what it can do for you.

vi) Will this Unique Learner Number (ULN) replace all other numbers in different systems?
We expect this to happen over time. MIAP can’t immediately force organisations to give up their own numbering systems and, for a while, these may continue to run along side the new one. Eventually though there will be only one system.
vii) What will happen about allocating numbers to adults not currently in education?
Individuals will only be allocated a ULN when they are actively participating in learning – they will receive a new number when they return, but the history of their learning will only be captured from the day of the allocation.

viii) When the system goes live, will the history of an individual’s learning be automatically recorded and captured?
For the vast majority of learners, data about their achievement and participation will only be captured from the day of the launch. For those learners however who have a history of learning available to us from the National Pupil Database (which spans the last 4 years only for MIAP purposes) we will incorporate this information. The sharing of this information is subject however to the same consent as previously discussed and is under the learner’s control.

ix) Do you require consent to update details of prior learning?
Any user of the system will have the capability to ‘challenge’ data that is displayed where they believe it to be inaccurate. MIAP will facilitate the resolution of that challenge and manage it to a conclusion. Where any challenge is raised it may be necessary for evidence to be supplied to support the case. It will not be possible at the outset for learners to add learning to their record that is not currently in scope. However, MIAP is currently looking at this functionality and hopes to include it in later versions. The scope of MIAP at the outset is for GCSE, A Level, NVQ’s, GNVQs, Access Courses, and other level one, two and three qualifications in England. We are planning to extend this to QCF, Specialised Diploma and Higher Education learning and are also working with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
3. Panel response

**What are the potential benefits of an individual learner record from a learner’s perspective?**

- It will be much more convenient for us, because we won’t need to hold on to paper certificates to prove our qualifications any more – this provides a practical and long-lasting alternative.

- It should speed up the process for us when applying to University or for other learning courses, because our achievements will be immediately recognised.

- We also feel it could simplify the recruitment process for employers, because it will act as a single authoritative record of our achievements.

- It will act as a reminder for us of the courses and qualifications we have actually undertaken – especially those modules or short courses that are sometimes easily forgotten.

- It will link our achievements across all learning environments, and this will give providers, employers and other interested parties a broader overall picture of our learning to date.

- It will provide an internationally accessible record of a learner’s British-accredited learning.

**As a learner, what else might you like MIAP to do for you?**

- Generate a certificate for printing, if required

- Career profiling

- Provide reference authentication

- Provide an optional template for generating a CV, which could perhaps be personalised by adding aspirations.

- Enable us to add any historical learning (but we acknowledge that this would have to be properly verified)

- Record non-accredited or non-academic courses (e.g. first aid courses, other awards etc)
As a learner, what further information or reassurance would you require to engage your support of MIAP?

- Reassurance that learners will have control over whether or not to include courses we don’t necessarily complete. It can be important for providers to see all of a learner’s learning history (including the non-successful and incomplete) in order to support them in making the best choices for future learning.
  
  **MIAP response:** The learner will always be able to personalise what is seen (e.g. by an employer) but the default will be to display completed successful learning only.

- More information about how this will work for international students e.g. how can they go about accessing information in future?

- More clarity about what we can add about our own learning (and what the validation process will be) – and what counts as learning i.e. what is it legitimate to include? Work-based courses etc? If so, which ones?

- Reassurance on the technical security of the information.

- More information about how the profile of learner records will be raised with work-based learners.

- More information on who is responsible for keeping the record updated. What will get added automatically, and what will we be expected to update ourselves?

- Reassurance that the information being held on these records won’t inadvertently affect funding.
  
  **MIAP response:** MIAP should not impact negatively impact upon funding, but should help to validate funding by reducing fraudulent “ghost registrations.”