

Minutes

Date	30 September 2009
Subject	<i>The information authority</i> board
Location	Russell Hotel, London
Time	10:00 to 15:00
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present	<p>Board members / alternates: Malcolm Britton (DCSF), Jon Collis (ALP), Margaret Coleman (LSC), Mario Ferelli (HEFCE), Julian Gravatt (AoC), Graham Jones (Chair), John Landeryou (BIS), Caroline Miller (Learning Provider), Rob Pike (Ofsted), Bob Powell (HOLEX), Ian Pryce (FE College Provider)</p> <p>Others: Pete Ashton (<i>information authority</i>), Una Bennett (<i>information authority</i>), Pat Cross (LSC), Anne Fessi (<i>information authority</i>), Helen Karabatos (<i>information authority</i>), Caroline Kempner (LSC), Lisa Macdougall (<i>information authority</i>), Ian Thomson (BIS), Debbie Watson (LSC), Rich Williams (LSC),</p>
Apologies	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Jo Baty (LGA), Chris James (Asset Skills), Mary Joyce (LLUK), Fiona Pethick (Ofqual)</p>

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 The chairman welcomed attendees and gave apologies. He introduced Rob Pike of Ofsted who replaces Melanie Hunt as a permanent board member. He noted that Mary Joyce of LLUK replaces Ivor Jones. The chairman announced that Una Bennett, Head of *the information authority* secretariat, would be leaving that post as of 1 November and that Anne Fessi would be assuming the position on an interim basis. The process of securing a permanent replacement was underway.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 Graham Jones asked for comments on the minutes of the meeting on 10 June 2009 and none were noted. The minutes were approved.

Item 3. Matters arising and actions from the last meeting

- 3.1 There were no matters arising and the board noted progress on closing actions from the last meeting.
- 3.2 Julian Gravatt raised an associated issue (to closed action item 06/09-12) regarding Train to Gain budget pressures and related communications from the LSC locally and regionally that might threaten data management integrity.

Item 4. Changes to the Specification of the Individualised Learner Record for 2010/11

- 4.1 Lisa Macdougall presented to the board the proposed specification changes to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) for 2010/11. The paper included all the requests received and the secretariat's recommendations to the board. She said that a significant number (60) of requests were received this year including removal of fields; more extensive data collection; code changes; a Higher Education (HE) field change; aggregate provider collections and increased field validation.

Bringing forward the date of F01 returns to November

- 4.2 The proposed changes to the first Learner Responsive data collection, the F01 return, were highlighted. The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) proposed an earlier return date to facilitate the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) National Commissioning Framework and aid planning so that allocations to local authorities and providers could be made earlier. Three options had been investigated: 1) a new aggregate return for YPLA part and full-time learners in mid-November, 2) bringing forward the F01 return date to the third Monday in November, or 3) two separate learner returns with 16-18 provision in mid-November and adult provision at a later time.
- 4.3 The pros and cons were discussed by the board including the data quality issues with early returns; whether an increase of returns was necessary; and the problems of different data being collected for the YPLA, local authorities and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
- 4.4 The board accepted that there was a need for earlier data to support the YPLA process. There was also a discussion about whether an aggregate return would suffice instead of the F01 for all provision. It was confirmed by the secretariat that the proposed aggregate return would be simple and expected to consist of no more than four numbers.

Decision:

- 1. The board agreed that providers should make an aggregate learner numbers return on the third Monday in November from 2010**

onwards, which would indicate the number of full and part-time YPLA funded enrolments. This aggregate return is in addition to the first Learner Responsive return, F01.

Action 09/09-1: The secretariat is to undertake further work on investigating whether the first Learner Responsive ILR collection, the F01 return, would still be required in addition to an aggregate return for 2011/12 onwards.

Alignment of ASL collection dates with the Learner Responsive timetable

4.5 The board discussed the proposal to align Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) collection dates with the Learner Responsive (LR) timetable. Issues were highlighted regarding changes to the ASL collection dates such as difficulties in collating data to coincide with the November deadline; data quality concerns; possible delays in receipt of data; keeping burden to providers to a minimum, etc. The board accepted that the aim should be to align the ASL timetable with LR and agreed with the secretariat proposal for a phased approach. This would also mean that any changes resulting from the White Paper on Informal Adult Learning could be accommodated.

Decision:

- 2. The board agreed to an interim date of mid January for the final ASL return, C05, for 2010/11 data, with a view to an earlier close in the future to align with Learner Responsive (LR) provision.**

Shorter Data Collection Windows

4.6 The background to this change request was outlined, which included that currently the Data Service data portals can be open for several months and there is confusion as to which copies of data are being used for which reports. The proposal is that for LR and ASL returns: 1) they are open from the day following the reference date until the end of the day on the return date; 2) they are 'hard closed' at the end of the day on the return date; 3) the dates for opening and closing the data collections systems are published along with the reference date and return date.

Decision:

- 3. The board agreed proposals for shorter data collection windows for LR and ASL ILR returns with hard close dates being aligned with the return date for 2010/11 returns, and to make the time of day for the close clear to providers.**

Action 09/09-2: The secretariat is to plan early communication activity around the change to return dates to include college principals and other heads of learning provider organisations.

Renaming of Learner and Employer Responsive Collections

4.7 *The information authority* had been asked by the LSC and the Data Service (DS) to rename ILR returns to reflect LR and employer responsive (ER)

terminology. The secretariat proposed that LR returns be renamed with an 'LR' prefix and employer collections renamed with an 'ER' prefix.

Decision:

- 4. The board approved name changes of 'F' to 'LR' for Learner Responsive and 'W' to 'ER' for Employer Responsive for ILR returns from 2010/11 onwards.**

Collection of employer responsive contributions in an annual provider level collection

- 4.8 The LSC had requested further data on levels of fee contributions from employers. The data was not easily gathered when assigned to specific learners so the secretariat proposed to consult further on a separate annual aggregate collection of employer contributions at provider level to provide the correct data. The board pointed out that for colleges, income from employers was identifiable in the annual accounts.

Decision:

- 5. The board confirmed that data on employer contributions should not be collected in the ILR but that a mechanism by which the data can be collected should be identified.**

Action 09/09-3: The secretariat and the LSC will propose details of an annual provider level data collection of employer contributions following consultation, at the next board meeting in December.

Collecting ILR Returns from Independent Specialist Colleges

- 4.9 The LSC had requested and secured board approval in 2008 to pilot collection of ILR data from independent specialist colleges (ISCs) for learners with learning difficulties/disabilities. Although the pilot continues this seem to be progressing well. The secretariat consulted with NATSPEC about extending the pilot and they were supportive. The secretariat advised the LSC to provide significant additional support to ISCs to ensure timely and complete returns for 2010/11.

Decision:

- 6. The board approved the collection of ILR data from all Independent Specialist Colleges from 2010/11 onwards.**

Removing low value fields

- 4.10 Through the secretariat's ongoing review of the ILR to identify low value fields, six were considered for removal (Contract/ Allocation type, field L02; Contract/ Allocation type field, field A02; Franchised out and partnership arrangement field, field A21; Broker contract number field, field A54; and Local monitoring fields, fields L41 and A47). After consultation with

providers and data users, the secretariat made a number of recommendations to the board which were accepted.

Decision:

- 7. The board agreed to the removal of the Contract/ Allocation type field, field L02; Broker contract number field, field A54 and the Franchised out and partnership arrangement field, field A21; and the removal of all codes from the Contract/ Allocation type field, field A02 except the MOD code.**

- 8. The board approved the removal of Local monitoring fields, fields L41 and A47, from the ILR from 2011/12 onwards having given data users the opportunity to request a change to the ILR for 2011/12.**

Collection of University for Industry (Ufi) Returns within the Learner Responsive ILR collection

- 4.11 As the University for Industry (Ufi) will be brought into the Learner Responsive methodology from 2010/11 it is proposed that Ufi submits ILR data with other providers on the 2010/11 return. The Data Service has raised concerns about processing times because of the numbers of learner files. Ufi has to assess if their systems are capable of implementing the proposed changes.

- 4.12 The board queried whether Ufi learners were independent of FE colleges or whether Ufi was a subcontractor and therefore was there an element of double counting.

Decision:

- 9. The board approved an approach of aligning Ufi returns with LR returns subject to feasibility work with the Data Service and Ufi, and final agreement by *the information authority* chairman prior to publishing the ILR specification for 2010/11.**

Action 09/09-4: The secretariat is to complete feasibility work with the Data Service and Ufi to determine whether Ufi can submit returns in line with the LR timetable. As part of this, the secretariat will confirm that there is no double counting of learners between Ufi and FE colleges.

Requests Requiring New Data Fields or Extending the Use of Existing Fields

Changes to support funding of learners via the new agencies post-Machinery of Government (MoG) changes

- 4.13 Four requests were made by the LSC to make changes to the ILR to support funding and budget management post-MoG when the SFA and YPLA agencies come into being. In summary the changes are to name and code fields used in the funding stream to enable the funding model and organisation to be identified.
- 4.14 The board was also asked to consider the addition of a new field to facilitate recording of SFA funding regions or local authorities. The secretariat would work with the LSC and SFA teams to agree a coding system for SFA contract identification prior to the publication of the ILR Specification for 2010/11 in November 2009.
- 4.15 The board discussed and considered that although difficult, the change requests were required. The front-line collection of the information may put some added burden on the operational processes and clear guidance would be required. The ongoing need for recording of regional contracts needed to be confirmed especially during the transition of the LSC to the SFA and YPLA.

Decision:

10. The board approved the change of name and codes used in the LSC funding stream field, field A10, and the extended use of the Sources of Funding field, field A11, to enable the funding model and funding organisation to be identified.

11. The board agreed the inclusion of a new field at learning aim level to capture the SFA funding region or local authority.

Action 09/09-5: The secretariat is to work with LSC and SFA colleagues to agree a coding system for SFA contract identification prior to the publication of the ILR Specification for 2010/11 in November 2009. In particular, the SFA operational board is to be asked to clarify how contracts are to be managed to ensure data is collected appropriately.

Action 09/09-6: The secretariat is to consider specific and clear guidance on data recording for capture of funding organisation and / or funding region.

New field to record entitlement to 16-18 funding for Employer Responsive (ER) funded apprenticeships

- 4.16 The LSC funding policy team and LSC West Midlands regional team have requested a new field to capture funding entitlement information for some ER funded apprenticeship learners who are 19+ but eligible for 16 –18 funding because of specific circumstances.
- 4.17 The board was supportive of this change if there were sufficient numbers of learners in this category to justify a change.

Decision:

12. The board agreed in principle to a new field in the learning aim data set in which to record eligibility for 16-18 ER funded apprenticeships. This is subject to there being sufficient numbers of learners to justify recording this data and a final decision by the chairman.

Action 9/09-7: The secretariat is to ascertain the numbers of learners that would be affected by a change to recording of entitlement to 16-18 funding for ER-funded apprenticeship learners, and confirm with the chairman that this justifies a change.

Collection of National Insurance Number for all adults

- 4.18 The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) had requested that National Insurance numbers be collected more widely in the ILR adult LR returns. This data would link to and assist HMRC and DWP in studying skills and employment relationships.
- 4.19 Consultations within the sector did not support this initiative. It had also been confirmed that there was no current legal basis for additional collection of NI numbers.

Decision:

13. The board confirmed that the collection of the NI number could not be extended further in 2010/11 as there was no legal basis for additional collection.

Changes to main delivery method field, field A18

- 4.20 The LSC funding policy team requested extended use of the Main delivery method field, field A18, to include different modes of delivery in Employer Responsive provision such as distance and/or blended (mix of traditional, distance, open, or e-learning) learning. Additionally, a new code would be added for learning in the workplace. No concerns had been raised in consultation and the change was recommended for implementation in

2010/11 to support the setting of funding rates by future funding policy teams.

- 4.21 The board raised queries about whether there were clear definitions and whether data on modes of delivery could be used with confidence. Jon Collis made the point that assumptions about the relative costs of face-to-face delivery versus e-learning should not be made without study. The chairman wanted further information on whether similar data collected for Learner Responsive provision had proved to be meaningful.

Decision:

14. The board did not agree to the collection of data about the delivery method for employer responsive provision in the ILR from 2010/11 onwards. This was due to concerns about the value of similar data collected currently for LR provision.

15. The board gave authority to the chairman to agree the requested change for 2010/11 if these concerns can be resolved by the end of October.

Action 9/09-8: The chairman is to confirm whether the collection of data about the delivery method for Employer Responsive provision in the Main delivery method field, field A18 in the ILR should be implemented for 2010/11. This decision is to be made by 31/10/09 and based on further information provided by the secretariat on the value of similar data collected for LR provision.

Recording of carers in the ILR

- 4.22 The LSC requested that the ILR be used to collect data on learners who are 'carers' using the Department of Health (DoH) definition. The LSC and successor bodies would then be able to analyse participation, retention, and achievement data for carers. This data would also be used to monitor that providers are meeting the legal requirements under the Carers Equal Opportunities Act (2004) so carers are not disadvantaged. Carers will 'self-declare' their status. BIS had advised that consideration is being given to additional fee remission for carers possibly to be made in 2010/11. Consultation within the sector was generally supportive of the addition of a new field to the ILR. The secretariat advised there was some benefit to collecting this data nationally but had asked the board for a final decision.

- 4.23 The board had a number of concerns around the validity of the data; whether the ILR was the right method to collect this information rather than survey; and whether national monitoring was the right way to ensure provision for carers. In particular, board members were concerned that this pre-empted the new Equalities Act which might have a different definition of carers. Although board members were supportive of the aim to help carers,

the general feeling was that this change was premature pending the new Equalities legislation.

- 4.24 A vote was taken with two members in favour of the change (John Landeryou from BIS and Margaret Coleman of the LSC) and the others voting against.

Decision:

16. The board rejected a request to collect data on carers in the ILR. It was agreed that a pilot could be undertaken to support a further change request.

Action 9/09-9: The LSC is to undertake a pilot of collecting information about carers to justify a future change to the ILR. Support was offered by Bob Powell of HOLEX.

Requests Requiring Changed Codes in Existing Data Fields

Changes to recording of Learner Support Reasons in field L34

- 4.25 Two changes were recommended which had been submitted by the LSC learner support directorate. These were that: 1) the terminology used for code 32 in the Learner support reasons field, field L34, be changed from 'career development loans' to 'Professional and Career Development Loan'; 2) a new code be added to the Learner support reasons field, field L34 to allow for the adult education bursary to be recorded on the ILR. No concerns were raised during consultations.

Decision:

17. The board agreed to the change in terminology for Professional and Career Development loans and to the addition of a new code in the Learner support reasons field, field L34 to record the adult education bursary.

Record Ministry of Defence Level 3 Entitlement

- 4.26 The LSC funding policy team requested an additional code be added to the Source of Tuition fees field (A57) to record learners whose fees are paid by the MoD. This would enable all service leavers with over six years' service to have the opportunity to attain their first full level three qualification without tuition fees. Consultation had yielded no concerns.

Decision:

18. The board agreed to add a new code to the Source of Tuition fees field, field A57, to record those fees paid by the MoD to enable free

provision to service leavers with over six years' service for achievement of their first full level three qualification.

Recording of learners who have an S139A Learning Difficulty Assessment in the Additional Learning Support field, field L29

- 4.27 The LSC requested the ability to correctly identify which agency is to fund learners who have an S139A Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) and are then assessed as needing additional learning support. After MoG changes any additional learning needs of these learners will be funded by the YPLA including those learners aged 19+ who have an S139A LDA. Other aged 19+ learners who do not have an S139 LDA will be funded by the SFA.
- 4.28 The secretariat proposed that a new category be added to the Additional learning support field, field L29, to identify those learners who have undertaken an L129A LDA so their additional learning support costs are funded by the appropriate agency from 2010/11.

Decision:

19. The board agreed to the addition of a new code in the Additional learning support field, field L29 to identify learners with an S139A Learning Difficulty Assessment.

Allocation of unassigned codes in some ILR fields

- 4.29 The LSC funding team requested an increase in the number of unassigned codes to collect information on, as yet, unannounced new funding arrangements. An identical request submitted last year for consideration by *the information authority* board resulted in agreement to use unassigned codes in field A14 (learning aim field) and A49 (special projects and pilots field) which provide management information.
- 4.30 The LSC request this year asked the board to re-consider allowing unassigned codes in three other fields: field L28 (Eligibility for enhanced funding field), field 15 (the Programme type field) and field A18 (Main delivery method field). Late allocation of codes in these fields affects validation of other fields and would mean late changes to Data Service and provider systems to calculate funding. The secretariat had recommended that the change was rejected because of the significant adverse impact on cost and data quality.

Decision:

20. The board re-confirmed the decision made last year, to not include unassigned codes in the Eligibility for enhanced funding field, field L28; the Programme type field, field A15, and the Main delivery method field, field A18.

Introduction of a process to allocate unassigned codes in ILR fields

- 4.31 The LSC requested a process be developed to assign values to unassigned codes and for in-year validation rule changes to allow this. The proposal asked that a timetable be produced for release and publication of unassigned codes, and that unassigned codes remain inactive and unavailable for use until they have been unassigned. This would improve transparency and changes could be published in a controlled way.
- 4.32 In-year authorisation and validation of monitoring codes requires significant changes to current systems and the Data Service has requested further work with the secretariat to see how best to implement the proposal and whether it would be an option for 2010/11.

Decision:

21. The board gave authority to the secretariat to develop and make a final decision on a process for governing and implementing unassigned codes in ILR fields from 2010/11 onwards.

Identify learner breaks

- 4.33 The LSC proposed an amendment to the Completion status field, field A34, so that they can identify and map learner breaks in all types of learning provision. Presently providers are only able to record learner breaks through Employer Responsive provision though they may occur within any type of learning. Recording learner breaks would not affect the way in which funding is paid to a provider under the LR model, but would improve data accuracy.
- 4.34 Bob Powell asked that a clear definition was developed for 'learner break' to enable this change.

Decision:

22. The board approved the amendment of the Completion status field, field A34, to allow the recording of learner breaks for all types of learning provision. This is subject to clear definition of learner breaks.

Action 9/09-10: The secretariat is to develop a clear definition of 'learner break' to support the amendment of the Completion status field, field A34, to allow the recording of learner breaks for all types of learning provision.

Identify uncashed AS levels

4.35 The LSC and Ofsted had asked to be able to record AS Levels that are achieved but uncashed. These qualifications have been sufficiently completed by the learner for a certificate to be issued but no certificate is claimed by the learner from the awarding body. This recording will help to closely align the methodology for success rates between School Sixth Forms (SSFs) and FE colleges. Ofsted would like to exclude uncashed AS Levels from success rates from 2010/11 onwards and this ILR change would support that aim. This may have an impact on success rates for AS Levels for many providers.

Decision:

23. The board approved the inclusion of a separate category of uncashed AS level recording in the ILR from 2010/11 to enable comparison with school sixth forms. It was acknowledged that there is an unknown impact on success rates of this change.

Other changes

Code amendment in Reason for full funding/co-funding of learning aim field, field A14

4.36 The LSC had requested that the tax relief for vocational programmes code (12) be removed from the Reason for full funding/co-funding of learning aim field, field A14, as it is no longer a valid category.

Decision:

24. The board agreed the removal of code 12 from the Reason for full funding/co-funding of learning aim field, field A14.

Increased validation of the Unique Learner Number

4.37 The LSC requested that the Unique Learner Number (ULN) becomes mandatory and validated against the Learner Registration Service. Stronger validation rules for the ULN will result in reliable matching of the ILR to other data sources such as the Apprenticeships Vacancy Matching System and Skills Accounts.

4.38 The secretariat consulted with the LSC, the Data Service and MIAP and proposed that the ULN validation be increased:

- with a rejection of data if the learner started before a specified period, eight weeks for example and the ULN returned on the ILR does not exist within the MIAP system;
- a warning message will notify the provider that the same ULN is being used on more than one ILR record within the same ILR return;

- to accept ULNs with temporary 9999999999 numbers producing a warning to advise the provider to obtain a ULN within a certain time period – eight weeks for example or the learner record would be rejected.

4.39 The board was supportive of increased ULN validation to realise the benefits of its capture. However, there were concerns that the validation checks might disadvantage providers of ESF and ASL provision in circumstances where there is no current requirement for a ULN to be recorded.

Decision:

25. The board approved increased validation of the ULN for 2010/11 including the rejection of data where a valid ULN is not provided eight weeks after the learning start date. Increased validation is subject to ensuring that ESF and ASL providers are not disadvantaged.

Action 9/09-11: The secretariat to develop increased validation for capture of the ULN which does not disadvantage ASL and ESF providers.

Increased validation of the Employer Reference Number

4.40 The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) wants to ensure that the Employer Data Service (EDS) number entered in the Employer identifier field, field A44 is valid. This will increase accuracy and enable the NAS to have improved data on types of employers they are currently working with and identify any possible weaknesses in some areas of business.

4.41 It is already mandatory to include an EDS number in field A44 of the ILR for all Employer Responsive provision. This change would increase the validation of the recorded number. To aid providers obtaining numbers from EDS, *the information authority* has proposed that the LSC enhance the EDS system with a web service interface which could then be integrated with the provider's own MIS enabling easier verification of information.

4.42 The board supported the requirement for validation as long as it catered for situations when an employer was removed from the EDS after learning had commenced.

Decision:

26. The board agreed increased validation of employer numbers against the EDS database for 2010/11, subject to adequate operational processes being in place when an employer was removed from the EDS after learning had commenced.

Changes to HE Data Set

- 4.43 This change to the ILR for 2010/11 will update the coding frame used in the Highest qualification on entry field, field H11 to align with the HESA specification for 2009/10 onwards. The change would allow for better monitoring of qualifications on student entry.

Decision:

- 27. The board approved the updating of the HE data set in line with the HESA specification specifically to update the coding frame used in the Highest qualification on entry field, field H11, to monitor better the qualifications on entry of students.**

Changes that were recommended for rejection, have been withdrawn or were not recommended for implementation in 2010/11

- 4.44 The board reviewed a number of ILR change requests which had been recommended for rejection, had been withdrawn or were not recommended for implementation in 2010/11.

Recording and generating payments for job outcomes via the ILR and associated funding and payment systems

- 4.45 The Employment outcome field, field A68, had been created following the exceptional request for 2009/10 to record job outcome to generate payments to providers. The secretariat had not recommended any further change to this field.
- 4.46 Margaret Coleman asked for further refinement of the information captured on job outcomes. The secretariat pointed out that there was now a mechanism to make payments on job outcomes and it was not clear what further information might be captured in the field nor what value it might add.
- 4.47 After a vote all board members except for Margaret Coleman agreed that no further change should be made to field A68 to record job outcomes.

Decision:

- 28. The board agreed that no further change should be made to the Employment outcome field, field A68.**

Mechanism to identify Apprenticeship framework pathways

- 4.48 The LSC had requested a mechanism to enable funding at differential rates for apprenticeships pathways. However, the National Apprenticeships

Service had not been consulted about this change. Therefore the request was recommended for rejection

- 4.49 Margaret Coleman asked that this change be re-considered. Other board members confirmed that they were concerned about lack of input from NAS, and about the potential systems costs of such a change.
- 4.50 After a vote, all board members except for Margaret Coleman confirmed that a request for a mechanism to identify Apprenticeship framework pathways should be rejected.

Decision:

29. The board rejected a request to introduce a mechanism to identify Apprenticeship framework pathways.

- 4.51 The board confirmed that they were content with all other recommendations on ILR changes which were to be rejected or were not recommended for implementation in 2010/11.

Decision:

30. The board confirmed rejection of a number of ILR changes and that some others should be the subject of further study for implementation beyond 2010/11. (See board paper 4 of September 2009 meeting for further details).

Action 9/09-12: The secretariat is to work with a number of organisations on proposed ILR changes which require further work before submission to the board for implementation beyond 2010/11.

- 4.52 The board thanked Lisa Macdougall for the clarity of the paper which had covered some complex proposals.

Item 5. The Data Service – achievements and priorities

- 5.1 Rich Williams presented on the achievements and priorities of the DS. He found it significant and helpful that a number of board members of *the information authority* and of the Data Service steering group were the same.
- 5.2 The chairman commented that as sister organisations *the information authority* and the Data Service were working well together. Ian Pryce (chairman of the Data Service steering group) noted the work of the Data Service including a comprehensive website and the functions of the help desk. He had been surprised at the amount of support the helpdesk was giving to data users e.g. in requesting reports. He also pointed out that there is a lot of material produced by the Data Service which would be useful to

providers e.g. for benchmarking. Ian also asked that *the information authority* board should have more information on the operational implications of its decisions.

- 5.3 The chairman said that the Data Service had set ambitious goals and wished them success and asked that they continue to preserve the relationship with *the information* authority secretariat and board. Comments from the board included that there further opportunities to benefit from the relationship between MIAP services and the Data Service. Malcolm Britton also commented that a workshop was being planned to look at improving links between the Data Service and DCSF's Data Services Group.

Item 6. The LSC response to the report of additional data requests

- 6.1 Caroline Kempner introduced Patrick Cross of Gecko Programmes Ltd. Patrick had been asked by the LSC to follow up the issue identified in the Oakleigh report on data burden regarding the LSC making unscheduled data requests of providers. In this study Patrick had worked with LSC regional staff to identify areas where their work may be perceived as ad-hoc or non-standard.
- 6.2 The conclusions of the study confirmed that the LSC have made three 3 types of data requests for new programmes such as Train to Gain where they are in development prior to the roll-out of standard operational processes to support the funding allocations process and for data requests at ministerial and government level. Recommendations to the LSC were:
- to refine business planning procedures and to monitor the effectiveness of these changes with providers
 - to enhance the national business planning processes with stronger inputs from MI teams
 - for LSC's National Office to confirm to regions which reports are to be used to support the allocations process, and offering less flexibility to regional teams.
 - to design a method of surveying provider satisfaction levels concerning data collections
- 6.3 Caroline Kempner welcomed the Gecko report and commented that the recommendations would need to be taken forward by the two new funding bodies – the SFA and the YPLA. Specifically, the SFA will have nationally-consistent processes and is endeavouring to define its data and MI requirements early. On the YPLA side, to ensure consistency of approach there will be work with local authorities (LAs) to agree common data processes.
- 6.4 Una Bennett commented that the Gecko report had identified a number of regular data collections which had not been agreed by *the information*

authority board. There was, therefore, a need for the new funding bodies to confirm which regular collections were likely to continue and for these collections to be scrutinised by the board. Malcolm Britton asked whether the schools principle could apply, which is that every data collection is confirmed as statutory / mandatory / voluntary or funding related.

Action 9/09-13: Caroline Kempner to work with the SFA and YPLA to determine which regular data collections are expected to continue.

Action 9/09-14: The secretariat to consider a process for assessing and agreeing existing and proposed regular data collections and present a proposal at the December board meeting.

6.5 Caroline Miller said that the proposal for an additional satisfaction survey should be resisted, and other board members agreed. Other board member comments were that there needed to be clear communication through the data collection chain as to why data was being collected and how it would be used.

Item 7. Update from the LSC on reducing paper burden

- 7.1 Debbie Watson presented this paper as a report on progress made since the June 2009 board meeting by the LSC in tackling the issues identified in the report on 'Reduction of Learner Data Paper Records'. Progress was being made in three areas:
- development of new funding and compliance guidance for the SFA and YPLA for 2010/11
 - a pilot of the use of electronic records by providers which would satisfy audit requirements
 - a joint audit code of practice setting out how SFA, YPLA and LAs will take assurance on audits from each other and therefore minimise impact on providers.
- 7.2 The board felt progress was being made. With regard to improvements to funding guidance, Una Bennett made the point that this needed to be an end-to-end review to include documents such as contracts and audit guidance.
- 7.3 On electronic evidence, Bob Powell offered to recommend a local authority provider for involvement in the pilot as the audit requirements would be different. The board made reference again to whether hardcopy or electronic signatures necessarily confirmed the existence of the learner. This paper did not address fully the other options for validating a learner. The board further added that it is not within the remit of *the information authority* to make decisions on the acceptability of signatures or electronic records. The board's interest is in ensuring that the data burden is reduced.

7.4 The board asked to be included in communications on progress in electronic records. The chairman asked if there would be further progress to report at the next board meeting. Debbie confirmed this and said that a stakeholder event would be taking place between now and December.

Action 9/09-15: Debbie Watson is to provide a further update to *the information authority* board on the electronic records pilot by December 2009.

7.5 The board commented on the apparent doubling-up of audit assurances in the paper on audit code of practice. The chairman asked for clarification as to whether there would be two separate audits for the SFA and YPLA – or would there be one audit for both bodies. Caroline Kempner replied that the principle was that there would be only one audit. John Landeryou noted that the new Bill did not cover this but the intention was to obtain agreement from all local authorities through the National Commissioning Framework.

Action 9/09-16: Caroline Kempner is to obtain clarification from Peter Newsome that the principle is that each provider would have one audit which would provide assurance for other users.

Item 8. ILR Specification Timetable for 2011/12

8.1 Pete Ashton presented a paper on the proposed ILR specification timetable for 2011/12. He acknowledged that there had been some difficulties with the current timetable. However, the proposal was to continue with a similar timetable while introducing some improvements to the 2011/12 specification process. A change to the timetable was not recommended as during the next year the Machinery of Government changes are being implemented, and it would be difficult for data requesting organisations, particularly the SFA and YPLA, to meet an earlier timetable. This could be re-visited in future years.

8.2 Proposed changes to the process supporting the ILR specification timetable included:

- receiving and working on requests throughout the year
- making a further attempt to gain commitment from organisations making requests to deliver requests on an ongoing basis and not to leave sending them to the secretariat until immediately before the close date
- returning any request that contains incomplete information or is not in the format supplied by the secretariat
- asking requestors to describe and discuss their requests at a secretariat provider consultation group shortly after the close date to establish quickly how closely each request meets the published criteria.
- reviewing all requests immediately after the close date for receiving them and rejecting all those that are ill defined so that resource can be dedicated to taking forward well defined requests

- 8.3 The board were supportive of the proposals. It was noted that there might always be the need to deal with exceptional requests outside the timetable particularly going into an election year.

Decision:

31. The board agreed a similar timetable for the specification of the ILR for 2011/12 as has been operated for 2010/11 with some mitigating actions to make the process more efficient.

Action 9/09-17: The secretariat is to consider how to improve communications with senior stakeholders on the ILR specification timetable.

Item 9. Individualised Learner Record review

- 9.1 Una Bennett presented a summary of the main points identified in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) review and recommendations for further work relating to the ILR.
- 9.2 Una explained that *the information authority* had been asked by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to undertake a broad review of the ILR and establish how well the ILR is meeting the needs of the department. The investigation had established that the ILR continued to meet its original objectives of recording learner characteristics, participation and achievement. The ILR was, however, less good at recording processes which happened outside the period of learning e.g. prior attainment and progression. It was also recognised that a number of developments were or would affect the collection of learner data in the sector such as the MIAP learner record and the SFA's settlement system. At this point there was not a clear, integrated strategy which looked at the totality of this change.
- 9.3 As a result of the ILR review, three recommendations were made:
- That a learner data strategy should be developed outlining what data is required for further education and training for the foreseeable future and how it might be delivered over a period of time. Delivery mechanisms would include the ILR and inform developments such as the settlement system. This strategy would build on work already completed or being progressed by organisations such as *the information authority*, for example the data model.
 - *The information authority* should work with the Data Service, the LSC (and its successors), other data users and providers on developing a single, combined ILR specification for all types of provision. This would significantly reduce the complexity of the specification and require fewer compromises when specifying new requirements. The move to a single specification would require a longer planning period than annual ILR changes so implementation could be no earlier than 2011/12.

- The ILR is a rich data set and there may be ways of exploiting the information held more effectively rather than collecting additional data to inform new policies. It is recommended that as part of the design of data requirements for a new policy that consideration is given to this option. *The information authority* with the support of the Data Service will build this into its advice for policy makers.
- 9.4 Next steps in taking work forward include consultation with a wider group of stakeholders in particular with learning providers.
- 9.5 The board was asked to support the recommendations for further ILR-related work. Some concerns were expressed about the potential scope of the learner data strategy; if it is too wide, then there might be difficulty in delivering the work.
- 9.6 Malcolm Britton advised that DCSF was sending out an Invitation to Tender for the development of a data and statistics strategy for DCSF. This work and the development of a 14-19 MI strategy might overlap with the proposed learner data strategy and therefore the work should be co-ordinated.

Action 9/09-18: Malcolm Britton will forward a copy of the ITT to the secretariat. The secretariat is to work with DCSF to ensure that the proposed learner data strategy does not overlap with DCSF's data and statistics strategy.

Decision:

32. The board endorsed further work to reform the ILR following a review. Next steps include consultation with providers and a wider range of data users. Specific work includes development of a learner data strategy; a move to a single, combined ILR specification for 2011/12; and work to improve the use of data already collected.

Item 10. *The information authority* secretariat report

- 10.1 Una Bennett presented to the board a number of items for decision, a summary of progress and asked for endorsement of *the information authority's* work plans for the next 18 months and confirmation that the board was content with progress.
- 10.2 Items discussed including the proposed terms of reference for a sub-group to monitor any issues with the earlier close of the final Learner Responsive ILR data collection for 2009/10. It was agreed that a local authority which undertakes learner responsive provision should be added to the group. It was also noted that the Common Application Process for 14-19 applications was being developed and it potentially had an impact of data for further education and training providers.

Action 9/09-19: The secretariat to include a local authority that undertakes Learner Responsive provision in the sub-group for monitoring the earlier close of the final Learner Responsive ILR data collection for 2009/10.

Action 9/09-20: The secretariat to consider how best to inform / consult the board regarding any data implications from the development of the Common Application Process.

Decisions:

The board agreed:

- 33. That the board should act as the ultimate governance of data definitions and derived variables and the secretariat should establish a group to manage this process.**
- 34. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Schools' Star Chamber Scrutiny Board covering areas of mutual interest.**
- 35. Terms of reference for a sub-group to monitor any issues with the earlier close of the final learner responsive ILR data collection for 2009/10.**
- 36. The close date for the 2010/11 final learner responsive ILR data collection should be 28 November 2011. (This is to be reviewed if there are significant issues for 2009/10 data).**
- 37. The workplan for *the information authority* for the next 12- 18 months which supports a budget submission for 2010/11.**

Item 11. Any Other Business

11.1 The chairman thanked the members, presenters and other attendees with a special thank you to Una Bennett for her work for *the information authority* secretariat.

Date of next meeting

11.2 The next meeting is on 2 December 2009.

Meeting chair	Graham Jones
Minute taker	Helen Karabatos
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