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## **News from *the information authority***

### Annual Perception and Awareness Survey 2009

*The information authority* is conducting a [Perception and Awareness Survey](#) for the second year running and is hoping to get a wide response from learning providers, data users and policy makers within FE and training to help it become more effective in setting and regulating data standards and collections.

Head of *the information authority*, Una Bennett said: "Our survey last year showed that at least half of respondents were aware of our work and that they had a good understanding of our role. This year we also hope to get an indication of how effective our stakeholders think we have been both in setting data standards, and improving data quality."

Over the last 18 months since being fully operational *the information authority* has been responsible for earlier publication of the ILR, giving providers more time to prepare systems and processes; improvements to the ILR specification; and earlier reporting of learner responsive outcome data.

We have also worked with the Information Standards Board to develop a standard for ethnicity data across the education sector; and our Data Burden report highlighted the need for harmonisation of success rate data, which key bodies are now working together to resolve.

Please take the time to complete our [online survey](#) and to forward it on to other colleagues who may find it relevant. The link to the survey is:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ME\\_2fxeR\\_2fzT\\_2bUwpeTlcHh1pQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ME_2fxeR_2fzT_2bUwpeTlcHh1pQ_3d_3d)

### Chairman completes visits to regional college principals' groups

*The information authority's* Chairman, Graham Jones, has just ended a short tour of regional college principals' meetings.

Over the last couple of months Graham has been invited to speak to principals' groups in the South West, East Midlands, West Midlands and Eastern Regions to talk about the work of *the information authority* and our achievements so far, as well as taking the opportunity to discuss any concerns about data that principals may have.

Graham said: "I hope that I was able to provide colleagues in the sector with a useful introduction to the work of the authority, and what we have been doing over the last 18 months since we have been fully operational. Much of our work is focussed on trying to reduce the data burden on providers, so it is always useful to meet colleagues face to face to explain what we do, and pick up some of the burning issues firsthand."

The regional principals' meetings are organised by the Association of Colleges (AoC) – thanks to our colleagues in the AoC for co-ordinating Graham's attendance.

## Feconnect Hot Seat events

[Feconnect](#), *the information authority's* online community portal, is putting senior colleagues in the FE and training system in the 'Hot Seat'.

The first guest was our very own chairman, Graham Jones, and this week Mike Davis HMI from Ofsted has been answering your questions. You can view both of these Hot Seat discussions in the [Hot Seat area](#) on **feconnect**.

Our next guest will be confirmed shortly via our [blog](#).

If you would like to suggest any guests that you would like to see featured in the Hot Seat in future, or would like further information, please contact *the information authority's* [Community and Stakeholder Team](#).

## Board meeting outcomes

*The information authority* board held its most recent meeting on 10 June and agreed ILR changes to enable earlier reporting of achievement data – see *next article for full details*.

The board reviewed the LSC's response to the reducing paper burden report and asked the LSC to undertake further work to address the issues identified in the authority's investigation into the burden of paper learner records, and in particular to consider the use of electronic records and other material as audit evidence.

The board also endorsed plans for the next phase of [Framework for Excellence](#) and gave its support for the continuing work of the [Data Harmonisation Group](#) on Qualification Success Rates.

The outcomes and minutes from this board meeting will be available shortly on [the information authority website](#).

Please follow the links to view [minutes](#) and [papers](#) from previous board meetings.

## Changes to the arrangements for collecting final Learner Responsive ILR returns for 2008/09 and 2009/10

A number of organisations have asked *the information authority* secretariat to change the arrangements, in particular the timetable, for collecting final Learner Responsive ILR returns for 2008/09 and 2009/10.

At its meeting on 10 June 2009 *the information authority* board considered a paper setting out the case for changing the arrangements. Based on this it decided:

- to confirm the hard close date for the final ILR for 2008/09 as 15 January 2010;
- set the hard close date for the final ILR for 2009/10 as the fourth Monday in November 2010 (22 November 2010).

*The information authority* will be writing directly to all providers that make Learner Responsive ILR returns with more details on the new arrangements. Look out for these letters in the post.

### Closing date for requests to change the 2010/11 ILR

The closing date for requesting changes to the 2010/11 Individualised Learner Record was **Friday 26 June 2009**. The changes will initially be considered by the secretariat using the assessment criteria agreed by the board. Those that meet the criteria will be taken forward for consultation over the summer.

Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Paul Kelman, said: “We have received a number of change requests and now need to assess them against our criteria to see which will be taken forward. We will publish all of the requests on our website in the next few weeks and then begin our consultation. In the meantime, I would encourage people to subscribe to our [web alerts](#) to keep in touch with the development of the 2010/11 ILR.”

For full information on the process please see the [requests to change the 2010/11 ILR](#) pages on our website. If you have any queries, please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk) or telephone 024 7682 5658.

### ILR 2009/10 data quality project update

ILR Data Quality work moves on this month, and we are now calling for providers to share their data quality best practice – *see next article for more details*.

We have also initiated work, alongside our partners in the Data Service, on a computer-based training package for providers. Initial consultation with stakeholders indicated that content should include the basics of ILR data capture and return, as well as specifics of the 2009/10 specification changes.

Enhancements to the provider Credibility Reports are in hand. These reports, which give providers a snapshot view of crucial quality indicators in their ILR returns, will be used by the Service Desk at the Data Service to target areas of quality requiring additional support.

A technical author will be joining *the information authority* on 29 June to overhaul the ILR Provider Manuals - in response to feedback from providers - with the aim of issuing a new edition in September.

### Share your good ILR practice with colleagues

We are asking providers to share [examples of good practice](#) in ILR data capture and collection with the rest of the FE and training system. We're looking for case studies focusing on demonstrably good business processes recording the learner journey, from enrolment to achievement.

Has your organisation made notable improvements in particular aspects of your ILR returns? If so, we'd like to share them with other providers to encourage improved quality and better practice. Studies should ideally be no more than 1,000 words in length and will

be branded to your organisation. We will provide a suitable format, and *the information authority* will pay your organisation reasonable expenses incurred in the production of the study up to a maximum of £250.

To register your interest in producing a case study for us, please send us the following information:

- Name
- Role
- Organisation
- Phone number
- Email address
- Proposed case study focus

Please send this information to [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk) or phone 024 7682 5858.

### Advisory groups update

*The information authority* regularly holds consultation workshops and advisory groups to canvass opinions on our ongoing work, and also as a way for stakeholders to raise issues.

The following advisory group meetings will be held in July:

- Adult Safeguarded Learning Group – 3 July
- College Information Group – 8 July
- Employer Responsiveness Group – 9 July
- Local Authority Group – 24 July

Further details on these meetings can be found on our [Advisory Group and Stakeholder Meetings page](#).

### Out and about

*The information authority* and the Data Service jointly sponsored the **AoC NILTA CIS annual conference** on 25 June at the Lakeside Conference Centre in Aston, Birmingham.

The conference focussed on the data and funding implications of Machinery of Government changes resulting in the creation of the YPLA and SFA in April 2010. Presentations from *the information authority*, Ofsted and the Data Service outlined the Data, Quality and Funding landscape post-LSC and keynote speeches were given by the authority's chairman, Graham Jones, and the Head of the Data Service, Rich Williams.

*The information authority* will be exhibiting at the **LGA Conference** in Harrogate on 30 June – 2 July. The Local Government Association represents councils in England and Wales, and its annual conference brings together around 2,000 colleagues from councils, central government, partners and business.

*The information authority* will also be exhibiting at the **14-19 Reform Conference** 2009 in London on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. This conference will throw light onto developments in diploma

development, take up and IAG whilst identifying both the opportunities and difficulties faced by stakeholders in implementing the reforms and participating in the delivery.

## **News from the Data Service**

### **Latest Statistical First Release (SFR) published**

On 25 June the Data Service published its latest Statistical First Release (SFR) on Post-16 Education and Skills: learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held.

The SFR shows the latest performance against the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on adult attainment and apprenticeships. It includes 2007/08 estimates of LSC funded participation, achievement and success rates for post-16 education in England. It also includes a part-year data for 2008/09 participation and achievement under the new demand led funding system. This includes FE and Skills participation for the six months, skills for life participation and achievement data for the first six months and apprenticeship and Train to Gain starts and achievements for the first three quarters.

It includes key statistics on the level of highest qualification held by adults in England from 2001 to 2008, taken from the Labour Force Survey.

Additional supporting data will be available shortly after 25 June showing breakdowns by age, gender, ethnicity, learners with learning difficulties and/or difficulties, level, region, local authority, parliamentary constituency and funding stream.

To read the full commentary and access the Microsoft Excel tables please refer to the [Statistics section](#) of the Data Service website.

### **In-year success rate reporting for Train to Gain**

The in-year Qualification Success Rates (QSR) reports for 2008/09 Train to Gain are now available on the [Provider Gateway](#).

Each provider will be able to download their own data in a zipped file which contains:

- QSR reports
  - a summary report covering success rates for England, Regions and Local Authorities (where applicable, relating to this provider)
  - detailed separate reports for England, Regions and Local Authorities (where applicable, relating to this provider)
- guidance information

If you have a query about these reports please contact the Service Desk on 0870 2670001 (6473).

## **Other FE and training news**

### **New government department for Business and Skills**

The government has created a new [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills \(BIS\)](#) whose key role will be to build Britain's capabilities to compete in the global economy. The department has been created by merging BERR and DIUS.

This has created a single department committed to building Britain's future economic strengths, which will put the UK's Further Education system and universities closer to the heart of government thinking about building now for the upturn.

### **MIAP seeks new head of service**

The Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) is a set of services built on the principle of collect once, use many times and used by all that are entitled to do so. It offers three key services to enable data sharing across the education sector: the [Learner Registration Service](#), the [Personal Learning Record Service](#) and the [UK Register of Learning Providers](#).

The programme has been a major success, exceeding targets in all areas with over 6.5 million Unique Learner Numbers issued to learners; over 4,300 learning providers and other organisations being accredited to register learners, and with 2.1 million individuals now able to access their Personal Learning Record.

MIAP is now looking for a leader in education to transform this programme into a pivotal service in education. The challenge is to build on the success of the programme and to expand its services to provide an information infrastructure to the UK education sector: from schools through higher education to lifelong learning, together with a personal service for every individual to be able to access information on their learning achievements.

Remuneration for this role reflects its challenges, with a basic salary of £85,000 pa and a substantial benefits package. The position will be based in Coventry. To find out more about the role, visit: [www.lsc.gov.uk/vacancies](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/vacancies) and search for 'MIAP'.

## **About us**

### ***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 authority has a decision-making board headed by an independent chairman and made up of senior representatives from across the education and training system in England. This is supported by a small operational secretariat.

### **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 Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) 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.theia.org.uk](http://www.theia.org.uk)  
[www.thedataservice.org.uk](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk)