

Report

Paper 10: Connexions dataset

Date of issue	5 November 2009
Audience	The information authority board
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Background and introduction

- 1 Oakleigh Consulting was appointed in April 2008 by *the information authority* to determine the amount of administration required of providers to meet external data requests. Oakleigh's report identified that data demands and learner tracking requests from Connexions services are perceived as a burden by many providers. The report's recommendations were to look at the feasibility of:
 - A standardised format and collection timetable for Connexions data.
 - Aligning Connexions definitions of learners with those required by LSC.
 - Defining clear rationale for need for / proposed use of data requested.

Purpose

- 2 This document proposes a standard specification and collection timetable for learning providers in the further education (FE) and training system to submit data to Connexions services.

Key points/issues

Identifying the information needs of Connexions services

- 3 The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) has a steering group made up of representatives from Connexions services. Through that steering group *the information authority* was provided with a list of key information that Connexions services need from learning providers in the FE system.

- 4 The main reason Connexions services need information is to enable them to ensure that the September Guarantee is met. (The September Guarantee is an offer, by the end of September, of a place in learning to all young people completing compulsory education.) The guarantee was extended to 17-year-olds in 2008 to give those who enrol on one year or short courses, or who leave the activity they chose when leaving school, further opportunities to engage in learning.
- 5 Connexions services would like this information from learning providers fortnightly from the start of May until the end of September. The earlier that offers made to learners are recorded by Connexions, the more time Personal Advisers have to identify and work with young people who are still unsure what their next step will be.
- 6 After September, Connexions need to be informed immediately of any learners that drop out so that they can take steps to get them back into learning or training.
- 7 Connexions services would like in-year updates on all learners in November, February and May. It may be possible to use existing ILR data to meet this requirement.

Developing the specification

- 8 Early in 2009, *the information authority* met with colleagues from the DCSF to discuss the recommendations from the Oakleigh report and work on agreeing a data specification for the information that Connexions need. It was agreed that a fortnightly report would be needed. A draft specification for the fortnightly report was put together using the ILR data definitions that learning providers will have on their systems.
- 9 *The information authority* has consulted its learning provider and software supplier advisory groups on the draft specification given in Appendix A. The groups were asked to comment on whether a specification was needed, whether the proposal was feasible and if they would prefer to carry on with existing data submission processes or use the Data Service for data collection. The feedback from the groups was clear that:
 - Learning providers are very supportive of the proposed specification and collection timetable for Connexions data
 - It would be very straightforward to amend provider MI systems to produce the required data / report
 - The dataset is made up of information that providers already gather as part of their own enrolment processes
 - Providers would prefer to submit data centrally using the Data Service's data collection systems.

Data collection and the Data Service

- 10 The expectation is that providers will continue to use existing arrangements with their Connexions service to submit the data. However, there would be

benefits in the Data Service taking on responsibility for the collecting, processing and disseminating the data. Using the Data Service would:

- provide data support to learning providers through its Service Desk
- enable the returns to be submitted securely with basic validation checks to help ensure good quality data
- add further derived variables if necessary
- have a central Connexions data repository that would enable it to generate reports back to Connexions services based on postcodes or local authority area
- enable colleges with campuses in more than one local authority area and national providers to submit all their data centrally.
- reinforce its role as the central source of FE data

Benefits

- 11 There are many benefits in using a standard dataset and collection timetable. It should reduce the burden on learning providers because software houses could build Connexions reports into provider systems so that the required information can be more easily generated. It should also improve data quality as the requirements are clear.
- 12 The DCSF has suggested that the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will need an earlier cut of ILR data to help local authorities to plan for the following year's provision. If the reports submitted by learning providers at the end of September are robust, then local authorities may be able to access aggregated Connexions data to give a snapshot what further education young people in their area are studying.

Other Connexions data issues

- 13 Many specialist colleges, national providers and learning providers with campuses in various authority areas want to submit national level information to Connexions. This does not happen at present and so these providers may receive information requests from various Connexions services.

Some key assumptions

- 14 Local Connexions services are legally entitled to ask for information that they need from learning providers and so this specification cannot be mandatory. Some ad hoc requests may still be needed.
- 15 *The information authority* would be responsible for the ongoing management of the data specification and will work with Connexions services, learning providers and software houses to ensure that information needs are being met with minimal bureaucracy.

Recommendation

- 16 The board is invited to agree the Connexions data specification at its meeting on 2 December 2009. This timescale will enable the secretariat to publish a specification so that learning providers, software houses and Connexions services can use the dataset to record offers made to learners starting in September 2010.
- 17 The board is invited to indicate if it would like the secretariat to undertake further work to gauge whether the FE system would welcome the Data Service collecting, processing and disseminating Connexions data. If this would be welcomed, then funding for this service would need to be found.

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Version

Appendix A

Draft specification and collection timetable.

Learners in scope

All 16-18 year olds.

The proposed collection dates

The expectation is that fortnightly collections take place from May until the end of September to provide Connexions services with information on offers.

Report specification

The specification for the fortnightly reports would use definitions given in the ILR. The ILR specification can be downloaded at:

http://www.theia.org.uk/downloads/ilrdocuments/ilrdetail2009_10.htm

Information	Proposed data specification
Learner Surname	Field L09 in the ILR
Learner Forenames	Field L10 in the ILR
Date of Birth	Field L11 in the ILR
Known As (or other names)	Not in the ILR but field will be the same set up as L10 (field length: 40 and field type: alphabetic)
Unique Learner Number	Field L45 in the ILR
Learner's current address including postcode	Fields L18, L19, L20, L21, L17 in the ILR
Student's home telephone number	Field L23 in the ILR
Student's mobile telephone number (if available)	Not in the ILR but field will be the same set up as L23 (field length: 15 and field type: Alphanumeric)
Ethnicity	Field L12 in the ILR
Course details	Fields A09, A15 in the ILR
Course level (such as AS Level/ GCSE/ GNVQ etc.)	The expectation is that is derived this from learning aims as specified in 'Course details'
Centre at which young person studying (if more than one campus/site)	Fields A23, A56 in the ILR Possibly with information added from the UK Register of Learning Providers
Prior attainment level	Field L35 in the ILR
Mode of Study (full time, part time FE or WBL)	The expectation is that is derived this from learning aims as specified in 'Course details'
Expected Course End Date	Field A28 in the ILR
Expected start date	Not in the ILR but field will be the typical date format (field length: 8 and field type: Date DDMMYYYY) Can be a generic date for the cohort
Start Date	Field A27 in the ILR To be completed once the learning has begun
Actual End Date	Field A31 in the ILR
If learner is a year 11 leaver, have you made an offer of a place? (for September Guarantee)	Not in the ILR but the DCSF suggest this is a yes or no flag, which software developers / providers can add to MI systems

