

Minutes

Date	10 June 2009
Subject	<i>The information authority</i> board
Location	Techno Centre, Coventry
Time	10.30 - 13.30
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present **Board members / alternates:** Alan Clamp (Ofsted), Jon Collis (ALP), Margaret Coleman (LSC), Mario Ferelli (HEFCE), Julian Gravatt (AoC), Chris James (Asset Skills), Graham Jones (Chair), John Landeryou (BIS), Caroline Miller (Learning Provider), Fiona Pethick (Ofqual), Bob Powell (HOLEX), Ian Pryce (FE College Provider)
Others: Pete Ashton (*information authority*), Una Bennett (*information authority*), Mike Coulson (MIAP), Mike Davis (Ofsted), Anne Fessi (*information authority*), Steve Finnemore (LSC), Helen Karabatos (*information authority*), Caroline Kempner (LSC), Tynan Rodger (LLUK) via conference call, Fazia Saleem (*information authority*), Tim Smith (LSC), Ian Thomson (BIS)

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Jo Baty (LGA), Malcolm Britton (DCSF), Melanie Hunt (Ofsted), Ivor Jones (LLUK)

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The chairman welcomed attendees, gave apologies and noted that due to travel difficulties Tynan Rodger of LLUK was to present via telephone conference.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 Graham Jones asked for comments on minutes of meeting on 4 March 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.

3.2 Updates to the following actions were presented to the board by Una Bennett:

Action 10/08–1: The action to accelerate the removal of redundant fields from the ILR was closed as this is being included in other work.

Action 10/08–7: It was proposed that this action (to include a change from the cessation of learning due to the dissolution of a consortium) be closed. Margaret Coleman reported that she had asked for feedback and that there was nothing new to report.

Action 03/09–4: No progress to date has been made on how the new funding agencies might be brought together to encourage good practice on data collection and data sharing. John Landeryou was asked for support in resolving this issue.

Action 03/09–08: An update had been provided by the Institute for Learning (IfL) on where IfL data is shared. IfL provides information to employers giving the names of registered members, membership numbers, grade and joining date for people at their institution. Ofsted receives the number of members at each grade in an institution but no identifying information.

Jon Collis raised a concern as to whether there was still some overlap in data collection between IfL and Standards Verification UK (SVUK). The action was closed.

Action 03/09–11: No response has been received from Bobbie McClelland to date on how the recommendations on reducing paper learner data records would be fed into the SFA set up. John Landeryou agreed to support resolution of this issue.

Action 03/09–13: Jo Baty will facilitate signing of the *information authority* protocol by the LGA once the new version of the protocol is agreed.

Action 03/09–14: Jo Baty will provide a written update to the board on evolving structures in local authorities (LAs) to support the MoG transition.

3.3 Margaret Coleman stated that there was a concern that data sharing might be more difficult in the new funding body arrangements. The board was asked to use its position to ensure data sharing is adequately addressed in the processes between the new bodies and DCSF / BIS.

3.4 It was suggested that the Cross Systems Information Services Governance Board which operates across DCSF and BIS might be able to help.

Action 06/09 -1: The chairman is to write formally to both DCSF and BIS to ensure more consideration is given to enabling appropriate data sharing post the MoG transition.

3.5 The board queried whether there had been an interest in data from DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government). Margaret Coleman confirmed data was being asked for to support reporting against Multi or Local Area Agreements. However, the main customer for local authority data might actually be the Audit Commission.

3.6 The board asked the secretariat to investigate further the extent of DCLG's interest in FE and training data.

Action 06/09–2: The secretariat is to investigate DCLG's interest in FE data and agree any future relationship e.g. whether DCLG should be invited to join the board.

Item 4. The secretariat report

4.1 Una Bennett presented the *information authority* secretariat report.

Protocol and terms of reference

4.2 The proposed changes to the protocol and terms of reference were highlighted. These related to more clarity on the types of data in scope and the addition of the Government Statistical Service as an additional relationship.

4.3 The board asked that wording was added to include data collected and shared with Job Centre Plus around integrated employment and skills. The board also asked that it be made clear that sixth form college data collection remained in scope as these colleges will still submit data via the individualised learner record (ILR) to the Data Service. The reference to PCDL also needed to be updated to Adult Safeguarded Learning.

Decision: the board agreed the proposed changes to *the information authority* protocol and terms of reference, and asked for further changes to reflect data required for integrated employment and skills and to make it explicit that sixth form colleges remain in scope.

Action 06/09–3: The *information authority* secretariat to amend the protocol and terms of reference as directed by the board and circulate for final agreement.

Data quality – case studies

4.4 The secretariat presented a proposal to pay a small fee (£250 maximum) to providers for reimbursement of costs in providing case studies to support data quality improvements. After some discussion, the board agreed this was appropriate.

Decision: The board agreed to the payment of up to £250 to individual providers to cover the cost of supplying case studies to support data quality improvements. Total spend is limited to £2500.

Reporting on the work of the secretariat

4.5 The secretariat asked the board for feedback on the circulated 'dashboard' reporting work of the authority and to confirm whether they wanted it more frequently than the current quarterly reports to the board.

Action 06/09–4: Board members to provide feedback to the secretariat on format and usefulness of the ‘dashboard’, and to advise how frequently they would like to receive it (monthly or quarterly).

Feedback on work of *the information authority*

4.6 Una Bennett reported to the board that the Office of Government and Commerce (OGC) had recently completed a final review of the project which set up the *information authority*. This independent review was very complimentary of the work of the board and secretariat.

Action 06/09-5: The secretariat to circulate to board members the OGC report into the set up of *the information authority* once it is available.

Item 5. Workforce data collection

5.1 Tynan Rodger explained that initially LLUK had struggled to make the case to colleges for the staff individualised record (SIR) collection. LLUK’s new data benchmarking service, OLAP, has been designed to provide tangible benefits to colleges.

5.2 The chairman asked if colleges were using OLAP and whether the data was proving useful as this would help make the case for collecting staff data from independent training and adult and community learning providers. Tynan Rodger replied that OLAP had only been launched in April 2009 and more showcasing was needed to let colleges know of its availability.

5.3 The board commented that a pre-published timetable was required for the workforce data specification with publication of the specification six months in advance of the academic year to ensure that data can be collected efficiently. Currently specifications are published late or after the end of the academic year which makes it difficult to collect data particularly for part-time / short-term staff.

5.4 Tynan Rodger agreed that there should be more notice of a data collection specification but it had to be an evolutionary process.

5.5 The board asked when a common data set would be collected from colleges and other training providers. Tynan’s view was this was two or three years away.

5.6 John Landeryou commented that although the OLAP tool adds value for benchmarking, it does not give the required national picture to support BIS’ investment in workforce recruitment. Additional numbers of returns are required especially on those delivering apprenticeships and Train to Gain.

5.7 Jon Collis commented that more effort was required in explaining the benefits of the collection. Professionalism of the workforce was a key issue for

independent training providers and there are currently worries about how the data might be used.

- 5.8 Tynan Rodger welcomed further input from BIS and *the information authority* on the development of the collections. He hoped that Ofsted would become involved in promoting the benefits of the OLAP tool to providers.

Action 06/09-6: LLUK to work with ALP on improving the engagement with independent training providers.

Action 06/09-7: Ofsted (Alan Clamp) to brief inspectors about promoting the use of LLUK's OLAP tool when carrying out inspections of FE and training providers.

- 5.9 The chairman offered assistance from the board particularly in support of LLUK's change advisory board. Fiona Pethick expressed an interest in LLUK's work from an Ofqual perspective.

Action 06/09-8: Tynan Rodger from LLUK to speak to the secretariat about further support particularly for the change advisory board.

Action 06/09-9: Tynan Rodger to contact Fiona Pethick at Ofqual

Item 6. LSC response to learner paper burden report

- 6.1 Caroline Kempner gave an overview of the paper and acknowledged that the funding methodology is complex and therefore there will be some complexity in the documentation. However, there had been significant improvements in contracts and guidance. It was now an issue as to what the LSC could achieve for 2010/11 prior to the transfer to the new agencies. Overall, the LSC accepted the principles related to documentation recommended by *the information authority* except for the removal of secondary references. If this was done the documentation would be excessively long. [The key principles recommended by *the information authority* in March 2009 were:

- define clearly what is required of each party, listing evidence of funding records required and acceptable methods of record storage.
- articulate funding calculations in simple terms.
- remove secondary references to other documents.
- use clear and unambiguous language which is easily understood by the intended audience.
- issue documents in a version controlled environment, including listing changes to sections of the released document.
- provide documentation well in advance of the large volume of enrolment periods or the start of the contract period.]

- 6.2 The chairman asked that the LSC reconsider its position on secondary references in documents as in general they add to confusion rather than providing clarity.

- 6.3 Steve Finnemore accepted that audits can present a burden but there is a need to ensure that public money is well spent. The LSC were keen to require as little as possible from providers to achieve this. Improvements in funding guidance could be used to reduce qualifying evidence. At the moment there is not a substitute electronic signature to negate the need for paper signatures. Any solution must be reliable and incorruptible. If this was possible, then the LSC would be happy to accept.
- 6.4 The board queried whether paper signatures were needed at all and in fact can in themselves be forged. Steve Finnemore agreed but pointed out that there was a need to establish the existence of learners and electronic signatures could also be scanned and forged.
- 6.5 All parties agreed that the key is to find a way to establish uniqueness and existence of the learner. Jon Collis suggested that the Unique Learner Number might be an alternative to a signature, and the board agreed that this should be investigated.
- 6.6 Margaret Coleman pointed out that the LSC's special investigation unit is working on increasing numbers of suspected cases of fraud and therefore the system must be robust. Mario Ferelli asked that the LSC look at a wide range of ways of confirming the existence of the learner e.g. payment of a fee, award certificates, learning plan etc.
- 6.7 The board overall expressed disappointment at the slow progress in resolving these matters. They were not expecting high cost electronic solutions and there must be choices for providers which fit with how they operate their business. The board also considered that lessening the provider guidance would reduce providers' dependency on so much documentation, which would free them up to act rather than relying on lists of what they can and cannot do. Maintaining data quality throughout still remains a priority.
- 6.8 Steve Finnemore and Caroline Kempner agreed to take back the board's comments.
- 6.9 The chairman on behalf of the board asked the LSC for a clear progress report with firm timescales on how learner paper records would be reduced including audit evidence requirements by the September board meeting.

Action 06/09-10: The LSC to provide a progress report with firm timescales to the board on how it is addressing the issues in reducing learner paper records including audit evidence requirements by 30 September 2009.

Item 7. Recent developments in the Framework for Excellence (FfE)

- 7.1 Tim Smith presented an overview of the paper to the board. In particular he asked the board to note the proposed performance indicators in the annex to

the paper. Some of these are being introduced because of the inclusion of schools in FfE.

- 7.2 Resource efficiency is proposed to replace three other measures including 'provider level unit cost'. For 16-18 success rates for Full Level 2 and Full Level 3, a lot of work is needed to obtain the information for work based training so this measure is not included until 2010/11. Other new measures are particular to schools, for example 'contextual value added at level 3'. The social and educational inclusion measures are being added to give context to the overall rating.
- 7.3 The board expressed concern that some of the clarity of FfE is being lost with the addition of the new indicators, and preferred a small number of robust measures rather than adding more indicators. In particular, a key aim is to be able to compare directly all 16 -19 provision and it is not clear whether this will be achieved.
- 7.4 The board was supportive of ensuring that providers were being responsive to the needs of all learners. However, there were concerns about the robustness of the social and educational inclusion measures and particularly whether they could be accurately measured for an individual provider. It was suggested that the FfE team look at experience elsewhere, for example the indicators used by local authorities or the approach taken by Ofsted around social exclusion.
- 7.5 The chairman concluded that overall the board continues to be supportive of Framework for Excellence and asked that the FfE team take into account the board's comments on the additional measures.

Action 06/09–11: Tim Smith to continue to report further development of FfE to the board.

Item 8. Update on MIAP services

- 8.1 Mike Coulson outlined progress on the development of the MIAP services to the board. MIAP was set up to improve information sharing and is now being established as an operating service with a permanent team being recruited. Expansion of the service is, however, constrained by the budget. Priorities include ensuring new developments make good use of the infrastructure created e.g. the use of the Learner Record in the Qualification and Credit Framework.
- 8.2 The board welcomed the content of the paper but noted a concern that learners cannot currently control the sharing of their own learner record. Mike Coulson said the ambition is that learners should take control of their record themselves. This functionality will also be available via Skills Accounts. The learner would be able to challenge information they might feel was inappropriate or incorrect. MIAP was working with UCAS so an applicant can

access their record online and decide what aspects to share with higher education institutions.

- 8.3 The board asked whether MIAP records might be used as reliable, robust information on the existence of that learner. Mike Coulson said matches could be made back to information about earlier schools attended, date of birth, etc. However, we are still two to three years away from using a combination of the Unique Learner Number and the Learner Record for identity assurance.
- 8.4 It was commented that the name 'Managing Information Across Partners' was confusing and it was more important to give visibility to the components of the service (the Learner Record etc.). Mike Coulson agreed to feed this into consideration of future branding.
- 8.5 John Landeryou asked if there was enough control of the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) to ensure all providers listed were legitimate. Mike Coulson advised that there are proposals to merge the existing three registers of providers and to tighten up the registration process for the UKRLP.
- 8.6 The chairman thanked Mike Coulson for the update on MIAP.

Item 9. Harmonisation of success rate data

- 9.1 Mike Davis outlined the work of the Data Harmonisation Group and the need for a unified methodology for measuring success rates. One of the group's achievements has been the development of consistent reporting of apprenticeship success rates across the LSC and Ofsted. Communications activity on the work of the group and the new reports is being supported by Anne Fessi of *the information authority*.
- 9.2 Contact is also being made with the Schools Star Chamber to see if data can be obtained to align school sixth form success rates with those used in further education. These in turn could be used in Framework for Excellence.
- 9.3 Mike Davis highlighted that funding of the success rate harmonisation work may be an issue going forward as it is all being done within existing budgets.
- 9.4 Further work is being done on Train to Gain success rates with the aim of agreeing a single methodology. As part of this it is proposed that there should be more focus on the accurate setting of 'planned end dates'.
- 9.5 The board particularly welcomed the work on planned end dates and expressed support overall for the work on harmonising success rates.
- 9.6 John Landeryou asked if the apprenticeship success rate reporting for 2008/09 could be made available more quickly at a national level to support work on Minimum Levels of Performance and contracting for 2010/11. Mike

Davis said that there were some challenges in this but would try and bring this work forward.

Decision: The chairman confirmed that the board and BIS fully supported the work on success rate harmonisation and were pleased with progress.

Action 06/09–12: Mike Davis to attempt to bring work forward on apprenticeships success rate reports to support MLP reporting at a national level based on 2008/09 data.

Item 10. Reporting of achievement data

10.1 Peter Ashton presented to the board on proposed changes to the 'hard close' date for reporting of learner responsive achievement data through the ILR. This supports earlier publication of data on FE outcomes and decisions on planning and commissioning of provision.

10.2 The proposed changes were:

- a 'hard close' date of 15 January 2010 for 2008/09 data
- a hard close date of 22 November 2010 for 2009/10 data
- the setting up of a group to monitor the sending of 2009/10 data from awarding organisations
- contingency measures that would allow the 22 November 2010 date to be set back if circumstances meant this was necessary to ensure good quality ILR data.

10.3 Fiona Pethick expressed surprise at the number of awarding bodies used by further education providers as Ofqual only regulates 150 out of the 255 used. She commented that Ofqual's new powers would allow for regulated awarding organisations to be required to report results data quickly.

Action 06/09 – 13: Fiona Pethick to consider whether it might be appropriate for Ofqual to mandate the timely return of results data by regulated awarding organisations.

Action 06/09 – 14: Pete Ashton to provide Fiona Pethick at Ofqual with information on all the awarding organisations used by further education providers and to discuss if there is any other support Ofqual can provide around achievement reporting e.g. around communication to awarding bodies.

10.4 Julian Gravatt agreed that the changes in reporting dates were right and that it was sensible to phase in an earlier reporting date. He pointed out that there might be a small drop in success rates from this change. In particular it was important that there was an effective communication plan for this change. On behalf of the AoC, Julian offered to find people to sit on the monitoring group.

Action 06/09 – 15: Julian Gravatt to identify suitable people through the AoC to sit on the monitoring group considering the reporting of achievement data from 2009/10 academic year.

10.5 Caroline Miller pointed out that the effect on some specialist, adult learning providers of late receipt of achievement data might be significant, and this would need to be taken into consideration in judging performance.

10.6 The board asked the secretariat to propose arrangements for the monitoring sub-group with membership to include awarding organisations. The board's preference was for the full board to take any decision on change of the reporting date for 2009/10 data rather than delegating it to the sub-group.

Decision: The board agreed to:

- confirm the hard close date for the final ILR for 2008/09 learner responsive data 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) subject to:
 - the board establishing a sub-group to monitor any issues arising during summer and autumn 2010.
 - the board having the option, on advice of the sub-group, to agree a new later final close date in the light of experience.
 - the secretariat informing providers by 30 June 2009 of the new arrangement and the need to set realistic end dates in the light of this new arrangement.
 - the secretariat informing awarding bodies by 31 July 2009 of the new timetable and the importance of delivering results to providers in sufficient time for them to meet this new timetable.

Action 06/09–16: *The information authority* secretariat to devise a comprehensive communications plan for the changing of reporting dates for achievement dates and in particular to advise providers by 30/6/09 and awarding organisations by 31 July 2009.

Action 06/09–17: *The information authority* secretariat to propose membership of the sub- group to monitor any issues in reporting of achievement data in summer and autumn 2010.

Action 06/09 – 18: The secretariat to document the governance arrangements for the sub-group advising on reporting of achievement data for 2009/10.

Action 06/09 – 19: The secretariat to recommend to the board the close date for reporting of achievement data from 2010/11 by 30 September 2009.

Item 11. ILR Data Quality

11.1 Peter Ashton presented a paper to the board on the work being done by *the information authority* in conjunction with the LSC and the Data Service to improve ILR data quality. These include improvements to provider guidance, additional provider training and enhancements to tools such as the credibility reports and the Data Self assessment Toolkit.

Decision: The board agreed that it is content with the work being undertaken by the secretariat as outlined in this paper.

Item 12. Any Other Business

12.1 The chairman advised members that *the information authority's* second annual perception survey was being undertaken and asked for their support in encouraging their contacts to respond.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on 30 September 2009 at the Russell Hotel, London

Meeting chair Graham Jones

Minute taker Helen Karabatos

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