

Minutes

Date 2 December 2009
Subject *The information authority* board
Location Hotel Russell, London
Time 10.00 - 13.00
Publication intent PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present **Board members / alternates:** Jo Baty (LGA), Malcolm Britton (DCSF), Emma Cochrane (Ofqual), Jon Collis (ALP), Margaret Coleman (LSC), Mario Ferelli (HEFCE), Julian Gravatt (AoC), Graham Jones (Chair), Mary Joyce (LLUK), Martin Lamb (YPLA), John Landeryou (BIS), Caroline Miller (Learning Provider), Paul Moore (Ofsted), Bob Powell (HOLEX), Robert Spano (GoSkills)

Others: Pete Ashton (*information authority*), Adele Dixon (*information authority*), Leighton Ernsberger (LSC), Anne Fessi (*information authority*), Helen Karabatos (*information authority*), Selvy Kasparis (*information authority*), Paul Kelman (*information authority*), Steve Woods (LSC)

Apologies Apologies were received from:
Rob Pike (Ofsted), Ian Pryce (FE College Provider) Comments received by Ian Pryce via email on the day of the board were noted.

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The chairman welcomed attendees and alternates and gave apologies. He introduced new permanent board members Emma Cochrane of the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) who replaces Fiona Pethick; Mary Joyce of Life Long Learning UK (LLUK) who replaces Ivor Jones; Martin Lamb of Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA); and Robert Spano of GoSkills (replacing Chris James of Asset Skills). Serving as alternate was Paul Moore of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The chairman announced that an appointment has been made for the position of Head of *the information authority* secretariat and that an official announcement would be forthcoming. The chairman also noted that as a result of the dissolution of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) this

would be the last board meeting attended by Margaret Coleman on behalf of the LSC. He and the board members thanked her for her work and wished her well for the future.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 Graham Jones asked for comments on the minutes of the meeting on 30 September 2009 and none were noted. The minutes were approved.

Item 3. Matters arising and actions from the last meeting

- 3.1 Under matters arising (page 2 Action item 09/09-1) Margaret Coleman (LSC) raised the issue of the early aggregate return for Learner Responsive data, which had been considered and agreed at the board meeting on 30 September as one of DCSF's ILR Change Requests. Further consideration of the request by the YPLA (which has only recently started shadow working in preparation for the new agency), led to the conclusion that an aggregate collection 6-8 weeks before the F01 return would be far more useful than the November return (approx 2-3 weeks before the F01 return) previously agreed as this would give an early, broad indication of the numbers of learners, which would help planning and budgeting.
- 3.2 There was a discussion on the impact that this would have on providers and concerns that it would make additional demands on providers at such a busy time of year. It was agreed out that the data would be readily available and that providers were being asked to provide four numbers in total, which shouldn't be too onerous.
- 3.3 The chairman stressed that the data would have a significant margin of error and that it should not be used for any other purpose than providing an estimate of the number of learners. The LSC / YPLA accepted this, and the board agreed that the collection date for the aggregate return could be brought forward to the first week in October.
- 3.4 Decision:**
- 1 The board agreed to an early return in October 2010 on the condition that the numbers are only used to provide an estimate of learner numbers to assist planning and budgeting and not be used for any other purpose.
- 3.5 Page 10: correction made to item 4.28 'L129A' to read 'S139A'.
- 3.6 Page 18 Action item 09/09-15: Margaret also provided an update on the Paperless Learner Records Pilot Project being carried out by the LSC and advised the board that there would be a Stakeholder Engagement Meeting on 10 December 2010. Anne Fessi circulated a written update from Debbie Watson (LSC) about the project.

- 3.7 Page 18: Action 09/09-16: The board agreed that it would be useful to ask Peter Newsom (LSC) to attend a future board meeting to clarify single audit arrangements for providers.
- 3.8 Action 06/09-13: Jo Baty updated the board on the Local Government Authority (LGA) position with regard to attending the board and signing the protocol. She indicated that Tim Allen (Head of Research) at the LGA had been identified as the most appropriate person to progress the signing of the protocol and that Anne Fessi was advised to liaise with him directly.
- 3.9 Action 03/09-14: Jo Baty will provide a written update to the board on evolving structures in local authorities (LAs) to support the Machinery of Government (MoG) transition. Now that the Act has gone through, a range of training and development events are being planned to explore the LAs new statutory duties and powers. A national training and development programme is being rolled out nationally to be chaired by REACT. Jo asked if an *information authority* representative could attend the workshops.
- 3.10 The board asked what was being done to support LSC transferees. REACT indicated that they are ensuring that LSC transferees are in attendance at each workshop to act as 'champions' by disseminating the materials.
- 3.11 Board members queried if the Data Service would be attending the workshops and observed that the local authorities would be a good audience for the computer-based training module on the ILR that had recently been released by the Data Service (in collaboration with *the information authority* secretariat). Bob Powell (HOLEX) advised that 90 local authorities had adult education services employees that may be willing to assist with the induction of LSC transferees into local authorities.
- 3.12 Jo advised board members that queries about any aspect of this work could be directed to her personally.

3.13 Decision:

- 2 The board agreed that it would be preferable for both the Data Service and *information authority* to be represented at the workshops and that dissemination of the e-learning tool across local authorities should be investigated.

Action 12/09-1: The secretariat to work with REACT and the LGA in support of the MoG transition workshops and to liaise with the Data Service to secure its attendance.

Item 4. LSC letter on Data Management

- 4.1 Pete Ashton introduced the paper on activities that had been instigated by the KPMG / LSC investigation into college data management and the LSC Chief Executive's subsequent letters to learning providers on 23 September 2009. Pete indicated that *the information authority* was currently working with the LSC and Ofsted to provide clarified advice and guidance for providers.
- 4.2 The secretariat has been taking some action as noted in section 6 of the paper including tightening the language in the ILR specification, collecting questions directly from provider member groups, providing second line support to the Data Service help desk and offering support with software providers to establish a systematic comparison of ILR returns. Pete Ashton asked the board members for their input and if they could see any other ways in which *the information authority* could be providing assistance.
- 4.3 The board discussed whether there was a way to extract the information about the differences between ILR returns from data directly rather than visit learning providers. It was agreed that at this point in time on-site visits were required. Pete Ashton added that software suppliers were being encouraged to develop systems that will help providers to check their own returns.
- 4.4 It was suggested that two project groups be set up to oversee issues raised in the letter. Bob Powell (HOLEX) expressed a concern that the ASL sector should not be excluded from groups / initiatives that were set up to improve success rates data, and requested that any group should include ASL providers.
- 4.5 The board considered whether one large group would better suit the needs of the project or the two proposed separate groups established to deal with separate needs of college (Association of Colleges - AoC) and non-college (Association of Learning Providers - ALP) institutions with Graham Jones acting as chair in each.
- 4.6 The chairman agreed that ASL should be represented. He indicated that a college data group was in the process of being set up at the instigation of the AoC, but that such a group for independent providers may identify separate issues and have a different focus / remit.
- 4.7 Decision:**
- 3 The board agreed an initial preference for the creation of two learner data strategy groups to facilitate both ALP and AoC organisations in progressing their data quality improvements, but that this would be discussed and decided at the first of the groups to meet (College Data

Group – 17 December). It was agreed that ASL would be included and that the group(s) would make updates to the board.

Action 12/09-2: The secretariat is to help organise and support one / two project group(s), which will convene and seek to improve data management in the ILR and update the March 2010 board.

Item 5. FE Learner Data Strategy – progress update

- 5.1 A broad review of the ILR recommended *the information authority* to develop a learner data strategy outlining what data is required for further education and training for the foreseeable future and how it might be delivered over time. After consultation with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), the secretariat prepared a brief and has placed invitations to tender to secure consultants to develop the strategy. The final strategy is planned for delivery by 12 March 2010 informing the 2011/12 ILR changes process and development of the Settlements Account Management System (SAMS).
- 5.2 The project to develop the strategy will be steered by a project board with members from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BUS), Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Skills Funding Agency (SFA), YPLA, *the information authority*, the Data Service, a Local Authority, Ofsted, Management Information Across Partners (MIAP), and the Single Account Management System (SAMS). A weekly meeting with the contractor will take place and in some instances via teleconference. Components would include an ILR data model, ILR purpose and collection criteria, data matching, collections with unique learner number (ULN) and personal learning record (PLR) considerations, and quality standards.
- 5.3 The board agreed that an FE learner strategy was needed and should reduce bureaucracy. It asked how the regional agencies would access the data and whether issues would arise within a weekly basis. (Pete Ashton noted that the weekly sessions would serve as a marker even if no new business had transpired.) It was agreed that involvement from local government representatives would add value. The board asked how we use both national and local systems and save money. Consistent and accurate access to information and data is required.
- 5.4 The chairman asked the board to keep in mind that there are limited resources available in *the information authority* secretariat and that each new project stretched these further.
- 5.5 Comments were received on this item via e-mail from Ian Pryce (Bedford College) who asked that:

- the strategy take into account the principle that agencies should only request a subset of the data needed by a well-run provider to manage its own business
- the project group include provider representatives.

Action 12/09-3: Jo Baty (LGA) to discuss and return to the secretariat with information as to whether the LGA can provide assistance via a strategic overview on the Learner Data Strategy board.

Item 6. *the information authority's* Communication Strategy for 2009/10

- 6.1 Anne Fessi presented the paper on 2009/10 communication strategy measures and targets to the board. She also provided a summary of progress against communication activities and specific measures for 2008/09. Areas for development and eight prioritised targets were outlined in the proposal. The board was asked to agree with the proposals and to note that progress will be reported back throughout the year.
- 6.2 The board asked about local government involvement during and after the MoG transition and handover to YPLA/SFA. Anne advised that a temporary LA data users group has been picking up issues so far and that future communications would now be channelled via appropriate YPLA groups. The board noted that communications via various web portals might be considered and a suggestion was made to look at DCSF's Darlington office, which has a CRM database of local authority contacts and may be able to share resources in this area.
- 6.3 Decision:**
- 4 The board approved the 2009/10 communication strategy targets with reports of progress and key achievements to be made to the board and key stakeholders via regular review.

Action 12/09-4: *the information authority* is to provide an update on the 2009/10 communication strategy targets at the next board in March 2010.

Item 7. Collection and reporting impacts of QCF

- 7.1 Leighton Ernsberger presented information to the board on progress of the LSC's implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and its further development. The board was asked for their comments and considerations.
- 7.2 Leighton gave the background to the QCF via the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme (VQRP) which introduced changes to vocational

qualifications. The QCF implementation will include a regulated framework with specifications for units and qualifications. He then outlined a variety of projects under the UKVQ programme. Research on unit funding trials is taking place now and up to March 2010.

- 7.3 The board was asked to review the report and appendices and provide comment and feedback. Key points included Project A: Planning, Funding and Performance in its role with the SFA, and Project 5: Delivery of the Service Layer. The QCF would be rolled out in stages with 2010/11 delivering development and tactical changes and 2012/13 bringing in fuller implementation. Based on a report by GHK consultancy this is where use of the unique learner number (ULN) would be critical to encompass commissioning and performance measurement and data harmonisation for the incremental building of a qualification.
- 7.4 The chairman asked the board to consider unit funding versus qualification funding. The board commented that although emphasis is on qualification funding at the moment, unit funding would play a larger role in future - with the movement of offenders, for example. The board was mindful that this would probably increase bureaucracy and budgets would come under pressure for some providers. This implementation was a few years away yet. Consideration was to be given to whether providers might only look at learners just prior to finishing a qualification to get funded. A holistic approach with the learner in mind must be taken into account.
- 7.5 Leighton accepted the board's comments for consideration. He pointed out that data collection did not need to be prescriptive and that providers could adopt ways of collecting data that were most appropriate to their business models. The QCF will be supported by guidance and embedded advice provided via the service layer.

Item 8. Single Account Management System (SAMS) data collection options

- 8.1 Steve Woods (LSC) presented on the SAMS system which would be accessible via the internet. It would streamline accounts; improve business efficiency by improved sharing of information between the provider and departments and agencies; funding streams would be simplified and it is cost effective. The information is visible to many at the same time and can span geographical fields while, at the same time offering protection to funding and legal parameters that govern its use and distribution. The system will be rolled out in stages to better manage quality and performance. A roadmap of delivery dates was presented to the board including a mock-up dashboard of several screen shots.
- 8.2 The board commented that the system looked user-friendly and would encompass many useful attributes for providers, learners and agencies.

- 8.3 Steve further stated that the contract management system is stable now and that it was being built upon in stages. Expansion is possible where and when the need is found to be of benefit, as well as functionality being assigned where best suited.

Item 9. *The information authority* – Data Quality Framework

- 9.1 Adele Dixon (*the information authority*) presented a summary of the main points identified in the Data Quality Framework paper. Emphasis will be on 'best practice' to improve data quality. Accuracy will mean more informed decisions. Best practice includes not only advice and guidance, but methods and techniques to develop and maintain a data quality management system. The board was asked to approve the framework and support *the information authority* within the FE and training systems.
- 9.2 The board asked by definition what was or was not good data; how can compliance be ensured; would the 'real world' be represented? Are there other compliance measures already in place? Although it is a good idea to have a framework, is it the remit of *the information authority* or another agency to carry it forward? Could the work be evolving at the same time elsewhere and resources shared? The framework could also potentially be an assessment tool for providers. Additionally, quality assurance in the area of data protection needs to be considered.
- 9.3 Peter Ashton said *the information authority* was responsible for setting the standards and quality of data collection, whilst the Data Service is responsible for data assurance which is then passed on to funding bodies. A data management framework will be set up to coincide with data quality framework.
- 9.4 Decision:**
- 5 The board agreed that it supported the framework. In carrying out further work duplication must be avoided; key principles are to be introduced; choices offered and a guidance document to be provided.

Action 12/09-5: The Data Management Framework will be presented to the next board meeting in March 2010.

Item 10. Connexions dataset

- 10.1 Paul Kelman (*the information authority*) presented his paper to the board proposing a standard specification and collection timetable for FE providers and training systems to submit data to Connexions services. He also asked if the board would welcome the Data Service providing a service to collect, process and disseminate Connexions data. Paul identified the information

needs of the Connexions services. He added that in consultation providers indicated a preference to the Data Service handling the information.

10.2 Generally the board agreed with the specification proposed and that tracking was needed, but raised concerns regarding the dissemination of Connexions data. The board asked if individually agreed upon LGA college contracts meant participation would be at their discretion; are there legal regulations that apply to the transfer of the data; would the Data Service have the capability to deal with such vast amounts of data and still be cost effective?

10.3 Decision:

6 The board endorsed the Connexions data specification with due regard to legal permissions and fair processing and agreed that there should be an investigation into the Data Service providing this service to Connexions partnerships. Any resulting recommendations should incorporate:

- a) Steps to avoid duplication of data
- b) Steps to avoid multiple / double enrolment
- c) Legal aspects of the service

Action 12/09-6: Paul Kelman (*the information authority*) to carry out further investigation concerning Connexions data collection, processing, and dissemination by the Data Service, including estimation of costs. Outcomes to be presented to the March 2010 board meeting.

Item 11. Publication of timetable of returns and systems updates

11.1 Selvy Kasparis updated board members on efforts to publish a timetable of important business and system release dates that could be shared with stakeholders, providers and software suppliers to assist in their planning activities. Selvy asked the board to agree that the secretariat should continue to publish a returns timetable, but that instead of pursuing the LSC for business cycle dates she proposed that future efforts focus on interaction with the YPLA and the SFA. Additionally, she asked for the board to agree that the secretariat works with the Data Service to agree and publish the Learner Information Suite (LIS) and Learning Aims Database (LAD) release dates at least six months before they are due.

11.2 Decision:

7 The board agreed to the continuation of publishing the returns timetable and the approach of not pursuing the publication of LSC deadlines, but to work with the YPLA and SFA instead. The board also agreed that the

secretariat should work with the Data Service to agree and publish dates.

Item 12. *The information authority* secretariat report

12.1 Anne Fessi presented a paper updating the status of the work of *the information authority* secretariat. The board were asked to agree some proposed amendments to the ILR Change Request process, in order to make it more effective.

These are as follows:

- i) That the change request form should be revised to reflect the revised assessment criteria and to assist requestors in providing all relevant detail.
- ii) That all requests should be reviewed by a panel (with no decision-making powers) of sector stakeholders, including *the information authority*.
- iii) That the agreed closing date for 2011/12 ILR change requests should be brought forward by one week (to 18 June 2010) to facilitate this amended sifting and panel investigation process.

12.2 A second item for the board's consideration is to note that the LGA requested an amendment to paragraph 10 of the Protocol which is at present unsigned. The secretariat would like a representative from the LGA in attendance at the board.

12.3 Anne provided further updates to the board concerning progress of setting up the College Data Group; the forthcoming distribution of a Success Rates Harmonisation newsletter; improvements to our online community (**feconnect**) which include moving to a cheaper, more flexible software; the December 2009 joint data conference which is fully booked; the publication of the annual report and *the information authority* spend.

12.4 Decision:

- 8 The board agreed to the revisions concerning the ILR change request process, including bringing the close date forward to facilitate the convening of a review panel. It was agreed that the panel meet in person and meeting outcomes and further consultation be followed-up virtually via the internet.
- 9 The board agreed to the amendments proposed by the LGA for *the information authority* board protocol.

Item 13. Any Other Business

13.1 The chairman thanked the members, presenters and other attendees and extended a special thank you to Anne Fessi as acting interim Head of *the*

information authority secretariat now and up to the date of handover to the newly appointed Head in future.

Date of next meeting

13.2 The next meeting is on 3 March 2010.

13.3 Meeting closed.

Meeting chair	Graham Jones
Minute taker	Helen Karabatos
Date created	7 December 2009
Document ref.	G:\Organisational Data\Information Authority\IA Board\Actions Papers and Minutes\2009\September 2009\the information authority-theinformationauthorityboard-publicminutes-02dec2009.doc