

Minutes

Date	3 rd March 2010
Subject	<i>the information authority</i> board
Location	Technocentre, Coventry
Time	10:00 to 13:00
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present **Board members / alternates:** Jo Baty (LGA/REACT), Malcolm Britton (DCSF), Jon Collis (ALP), Ruth Curry (BIS), Mario Ferelli (HEFCE), Julian Gravatt (AoC), Graham Jones (Chair), Mary Joyce (LLUK), Martin Lamb (YPLA), Julie Nugent (Skills Funding Agency), Robert Pike (Ofsted) and Ian Pryce (Bedford College)

Others: Pete Ashton (*information authority*), Anne Fessi (*information authority*), David Matthews (*information authority*), Peter Millard (*information authority*), John Perks (*information authority*), Tynan Rodgers (LLUK), Tim Smith (Framework for Excellence) and Ian Thomson (BIS)

Apologies Apologies were received from:
Emma Cochrane (Ofqual), Caroline Miller (Learning Provider),
Bob Powell (HOLEX) and Robert Spano (GoSkills)

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The chairman welcomed attendees and alternates and gave apologies. He introduced new board members Julie Nugent of the Skills Funding Agency and Ruth Curry from BIS who will serve as an alternate for Susan Pember.

Item 2. Minutes of the last meeting and Action Log

2.1 Graham Jones asked for comments on the minutes of the meeting on 2nd December 2009 and none were noted. The minutes were approved.

Anne Fessi discussed the following points from the Action Log:

- 11/08-01 - SFA colleagues providing an update for the June *information authority* board.
- 11/08-02 - SFA colleagues providing an update for the June *information authority* board.

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- 12/08-06 - This action is now closed.
- 03/09-02 - ESF colleagues providing an update for the June *information authority* board.
- 03/09-13 - Tim Allen from the LGA will attend the board meeting in June as a new member.
- 06/09-11 – This action is now closed. Tim Smith providing an update at this meeting.
- 09/09-01 – This action is now closed.
- 09/09-13 - Update provided today for board members by Anne Fessi.
- 12/09-04 – An update on progress against communications targets will be reported to the board in June.

Item 3. Matters arising

- 3.1 In relation to Page 3, Action Point 3.9, Jo Baty informed the group of a high level guide REACT is producing which will be distributed to *information authority* board members on 15/03/2010.

Action 03/10-01: Graham Jones asked for the action point to be updated once the report had been distributed.

Item 4. Late ILR Change Requests

- 4.1 The Chairman clarified for the board that late change requests would be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Identifying Large Employers:

- 4.2 Pete Ashton outlined the first request; that of identifying learners funded at lower rates - the preferred solution being automation and using the employer identifier already recorded in the ILR. Other issues in relation to identifying large employers, include concern over franchises, parent/subsidiary companies (providers' confusion over "company size") and redundancies (if this caused a company to fall below a threshold level).
- 4.3 The preferred automated solution would be implemented for 2010/11. If this was not possible then providers would be asked to "flag" the "large employer" field on the ILR, based on a list of large employers supplied by the Skills Funding Agency.
- 4.4 Julie Nugent clarified this approach was undertaken to avoid audit problems in the future, although she did have concerns over how this would work for 2010/11.
- 4.5 Jon Collis felt that clear definitions of employer size, franchising and "multi-depot" companies would help providers. Both the rationale and the list of large employers should be published so providers so they would then know what to look for, for internal budgeting purposes.
- 4.6 Julie, when asked by Graham, was not aware at this point in time whether large employers would know if they were on the list. Ian Pryce stated that the economies of scale point meant that employers did not have to know if they were on the list.

- 4.7 In response to Mario's question as to how the list could be managed, Julie replied that it would be updated annually (rather than on a "rolling" basis), which would help limit bureaucracy and confusion.
- 4.8 Malcolm Britton informed the board that the Office for National Statistics has a list of large employers for use and they manage who is on the list which ensures impartiality.
- 4.9 Overall, Board members felt that this approach was a pragmatic one and were generally content with this solution.
- 4.10 Mario Ferelli had concerns about extending the scope of the ILR to cover employers, but felt this would be justified where a provider is involved with that entry.

Volunteer Providers Send Data for Un-funded Apprentices:

- 4.11 Pete Ashton then discussed unfunded apprentices and "volunteers", with the latter not clearly defined. Pete stated that the employer responsive data collection was built to collect data on LSC-funded learners, but how the system would process data for unfunded learners (or those funded via other Government sources) is undefined.
- 4.12 To collect this data it would be necessary to enter fields (in the ILR), but this would corrupt MI. There are also legal implications in relation to data protection. Clarification has been sought from the legal department within the LSC on this issue, but no response yet obtained.
- 4.13 Pete identified three types of unfunded learners:
- 1) Those where a provider is contracted to deliver a mixture of funded and unfunded learners;
 - 2) Public sector funded learners/apprentices (especially those in the NHS); and
 - 3) Apprentices and Train to Gain (TtG) learners (being) unrelated to other learners.
- 4.14 Ian Pryce was concerned over the use of the word "pilots", and questioned whether the board was being asked to approve a change to the ILR for a pilot policy change that would then not go forward. Pete clarified that use of the word "pilots" referred to the solution being put in place and not the policy change itself.
- 4.15 The general consensus was that there was a lack of clarity on capturing data for unfunded learners. The board was concerned that any voluntary arrangements would not provide a full picture.
- 4.16 Board members were content for further work to be undertaken on this issue. It did not agree to any change for 2010/11.

Action 03/10-2: Julie Nugent to publish the definitions methodology and make this available to board members.

Action 03/10-3: SFA to liaise with Office for National Statistics to see if this list could be used.
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Action 03/10-4: Pete to report to the board in June once clarity has been ascertained on the further work Pete is completing on extending the scope of the ILR to cover employers.

Item 5. Learner Data Strategy – verbal update

Pete Ashton provided an update:

- KPMG were appointed mid-December 2009 to complete the Learner Data Strategy;
- 69 interviews with 22 organisations have been completed;
- The Learner Data Strategy Project Board met for the second time on 22nd February 2010, chaired by John Landeryou (DCSF);
- Stakeholder workshops are being held week commencing 8th March 2010;
- The final Project Board (including the Skills Funding Agency, the YPLA, BIS, DCSF and Ofsted) is being held on 12th April 2010;
- Providers will be consulted in validation workshops;
- A “roadmap” and recommendations will be produced from findings for the board to ratify; and
- A communications plan will also be produced.

Item 6. Data Standards Framework Development

Peter Millard presented his paper to the board.

- 6.1 The paper sets out the journey to define “quality” and how standards relate to data quality. Development of a software interface will help people to find relevant data standards. The overall purpose of the paper is to raise data quality levels for individual as well as cross-over records.
- 6.2 Pete Ashton elaborated by saying that the overall objective is to have a map of how data fits together including “where fields go to”, and why fields are important.
- 6.3 Graham Jones raised the important point that “standards” and “quality” are constantly interchangeable terms and maybe new words ought to be used to avoid any confusion.
- 6.4 Ruth Curry asked for BIS’ involvement in future work on this area to which Peter agreed. Peter informed *the information authority* board that findings and reports will be available on *the information authority* website for all to view. John Perks added that this work links in with the activity of the Information Standards Board.

Item 7. Update on current plans for Framework for Excellence (FfE)

Tim Smith presented his paper on Framework for Excellence (FfE).

- 7.1 There are changes to the 2010 FfE (from the 2009 FfE). One of the paper’s proposals is to include schools in the FfE from 2010/11. The school sixth form pilot is being completed and has gone well. Tim has also been working for the past three years with

Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) who have been delivering further education. HEIs will be brought into the scope of the FfE.

- 7.2 Tim was asked by the Chairman whether FfE had managed to maintain its clarity of purpose. Tim's response was to say that FfE is a set of national standards for all organisations of varying size and type against which they can be compared fairly and meaningfully. Tim stated that from June 2010 it can be used by learners to choose a provider, based on performance, out of a number of providers.
- 7.3 Ian Pryce pointed out that FfE figures do not reflect reality, in that students successful at Level 2 (post-16) are actual failures at GCSE level when the exams were first taken.
- 7.4 Julie Nugent felt FfE would help "glue" together the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA. Jo Baty asked if FfE information could be made available via the 14-19 prospectuses to help develop an integrated approach and therefore schools need to be involved.
- 7.5 Tim finished by bidding farewell to the board as he was moving to a new post in the SFA. The Chairman thanked Tim for his regular contributions to the board and wished him well for the future.

Item 8. Specification for LLUK's SIR for 2010/11

Tynan Rodger provided a presentation on behalf of LLUK.

- 8.1 In 2008 there was a 90% response to the SIR from colleges, although this decreased to 80% in 2009 (possibly due to the SIR response not being mandatory in 2009). Tynan said that exit survey outcomes were positive and that respondents found the whole process helped reduce the data burden.
- 8.2 Launched in February 2009, OLAP brings benefits to providers that will encourage them to complete the SIR. Tynan said that 50% of colleges have indicated that they will use the tool. Tynan then spoke of the benefits of OLAP, which include:
- Ability to update legacy data onto OLAP (records have been kept for the last 18 years);
 - Comparisons of provider and sector data;
 - Like-for-like benchmarking;
 - Providers exporting files and changing them locally;
 - Uploading of data for comparison with the SIR;
 - Local authority statistics and Census data can be uploaded; and
 - Ability to overlay data for visual comparisons.
- 8.3 Tynan then stated the work priorities for LLUK for the rest of 2010, which include:
- A proposal to BIS for other data sources for them to use in their collection;
 - A proposal for SIR to become mandatory (via legislation if required); and
 - Removal of four burdensome fields from the SIR.
- 8.4 The general consensus for SIR was that selling its benefits would be far more effective in increasing usage rather than introducing a mandatory requirement to do so, which board members opposed.

- 8.5 Mary Joyce (LLUK) felt that the OLAP tool would help to bring benefits for providing SIR data and prevent it feeling “burdensome”.
- 8.6 Ian Pryce suggested that it would be useful for colleges to be able to compare themselves with similar institutions i.e. statistical benchmarking.
- 8.7 Jon Collis asked Tynan if work-based learning (WBL) had been all but forgotten by LLUK. 13 fields of WBL data are captured; compared with 32 sets of data captured for FE. Tynan replied that this was a “chicken and egg” issue. Providers first had to inform LLUK of the data they wanted capturing, which could then be used for planning purposes. A new strategic approach was required and LLUK had already contacted a number of providers on this issue.
- 8.8 Tynan asked if linking the SIR with the ILR would be useful. Julian Gravatt and Ian Pryce both felt it would be useful.

Item 9. Employer Contributions Data

Pete Ashton introduced this paper.

- 9.1 The aggregate return consists of two elements; firstly the money passed to employees and secondly the “in-kind” contributions. There are two possible approaches to collecting in-kind contributions. One is to rely on an estimate of value and the other to use a fixed menu of value for each sort of in-kind contribution.
- 9.2 Neither of the two approaches to this issue were felt suitable. It was felt that the “estimate approach” would be too inconsistent and would not allow for solid comparisons and secondly the “menu-based approach” would be bureaucratic and open to audit. The Skills Funding Agency agreed with the consultation and to support with reservations the approach described at Appendix B.
- 9.3 John Collis raised a concern that some employers provide up to 10 times the value of Apprenticeship funding they receive and asked whether (and how) this should be reflected. Pete Ashton replied that this would be accommodated.
- 9.4 Ruth Curry supported John’s view and added that there was a huge gap in information about fees and contributions from “non-college providers”. Ruth notified *the information authority* board that initial findings from an “independent review of FE fees and co-funding” report will be published in the summer.
- 9.5 Julian Gravatt felt it would be helpful to include numbers and not percentages in Appendix B.
- 9.6 The Chairman asked board members whether it would be fair to have an amplified addition to the financial return, which the board said they were happy to accept.
- 9.7 **Decision:**
- 1 To approve an amendment to the financial return.

Item 10. Connexions data set

Anne Fessi presented this paper and reported to the board the following:

- 10.1 The processing of data sharing and also the amount of data needs to be justified. Connexions have asked *the information authority* to revisit the data set, which Paul Kelman (*the information authority*) will do alongside YPLA colleagues and Connexions.
- 10.2 Connexions are very keen to use the data set and to collect the data centrally, which some *information authority* board members felt was a big step in the right direction.
- 10.3 Martin Lamb was concerned that duplicate work may be performed in relation to Lesley Longstone's 14-19 RPA (Raising the Participation Age) activity. Malcolm Britton indicated that he was a member of the 14-19 board chaired by Lesley Longstone and would check.
- 10.4 Julian Gravatt felt that money was being wasted by having a monthly data collection for Connexions and a November data return for colleges and that the two collections should be amalgamated.
- 10.5 Martin Lamb stated Connexions hold data on non-learners; which is not available via any other source. Jon Collis went on from this point (and Julian's point above) and contended that monthly data collections are a necessity and described the NEETs data collection as "tricky" due to young people not disclosing part-time work or part-time courses they perform or attend.
- 10.6 Ian Pryce felt that providers could be motivated to supply Connexions data if offered the benefits of receiving useful data in return.
- 10.7 Graham Jones concluded that a two-way street with Connexions (on data sharing) would be helpful and also that a discussion with 14-19 colleagues would be seen as both proactive and useful.

Action 03/10-5: Malcolm Britton to liaise with Lesley Longstone.

Action 03/10-6: Secretariat to report progress back to the board in June 2010.

Item 11. FE Data Management Group

- 11.1 Graham Jones briefed the Board about the work to date of the Further Education Data Management Group (FE DMG). *the information authority* set up the FE DMG to enable providers to take action regarding inconsistent practice with provider success rate reporting that had been found during an investigation carried out by the LSC, Ofsted and KPMG.
- 11.2 From the two meetings thus far, principles of reporting and also principles against which to measure practice have been established.

- 11.3 The groups' findings will be published in September and *the information authority* board will be kept informed of progress made. ALP and HOLEX each have two representatives on the group.
- 11.4 Graham asked whether *the information authority* board was happy to assume responsibility for the FE DMG, which they were.
- 11.5 **Decision:**
2 *the information authority* board agreed to assume responsibility for the FE Data Management Group.

Item 12. Secretariat report

Process for dealing with late change requests:

- 12.1 Pete Ashton outlined that change requests must have the support of the respective *information authority* board member before they are submitted. The request will also be sent to Graham before being properly submitted.
- 12.2 John Perks pointed out that there has to be a timeframe and a process in place for ILR changes to be incorporated into software.
- 12.3 Mario Ferelli asked if there could be a risk assessment of late changes making it clear what the outcome would be if they were/were not implemented.
- 12.4 Pete Ashton explained that the criteria for all changes already incorporates an assessment of the risks and benefits and asked if something more formal was required?
- 12.5 Mario Ferelli confirmed that in the case of late changes it would be useful as a board member to see exact risks more clearly.
- 12.6 Mario Ferelli asked for the date to be communicated when changes could no longer be accepted. Martin Lamb asked if John Perks and Pete Ashton could also provide this information to Ministers.
- 12.7 Allied to this, Malcolm Britton felt it would be helpful to publicise the additional data collection "vehicles" with which to provide information to Ministers in areas in which they have an interest. Pete Ashton confirmed that he is working on a list of such "vehicles" as part of the learner data strategy.

Action 03/10-7: John Perks stated that the late change process would be tabled at the next *information authority* board meeting in June.

FO5 hard close review:

- 12.8 John Perks spoke on the final FO5 hard close, which has been successfully implemented. On the subject of “genuine administrative errors” a sensible approach should be found for reparation. John felt it would be beneficial to have a “window” where genuine errors could be captured, which maintained the hard close deadline, but which could be implemented before work on data processing commences.
- 12.9 Malcolm Britton suggested speaking with colleagues in his department about similar experiences and sharing best practice. Mario Ferelli stated that HESA could also provide suggestions regarding the processing of data errors.
- 12.10 Mario Ferelli also suggested a penalty system for using the “window”.
- 12.11 John Perks went through the DashBoard, which encompasses the ILR change process. John highlighted stakeholder concerns; firstly, potential political change in the next few months (which could also mean stakeholder change) and secondly technological change where XML schemes (for example) could be seen.
- 12.12 On a final note, Anne notified board members of the new ILR change request review panel which will meet on 7th July 2010 and the Terms of Reference were circulated for comment.

Date of next meeting

- 12.13 The next meeting is on 16th June 2010.
- 12.14 Meeting closed.

Meeting chair	Graham Jones
Minute taker	David Matthews
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