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News from *the information authority*

Outcomes of September's board meeting

The main item of business at the autumn board meeting on Wednesday 30 September was the consideration of proposed changes to the individualised learner record (ILR) for 2010/11.

In the main, the recommendations put forward were agreed by board members, although the secretariat was asked to work with the SFA to undertake a pilot to support a future change request to collect information about carers enrolling on learning programmes.

The meeting also covered progress on the LSC's investigation into unscheduled data requests and an update on an innovative project to pilot the use of paperless learner records with learning providers.

Board members also agreed the ILR specification timetable for 2011/12, which outlines the dates by which proposed changes to the ILR need to be submitted, when they will be consulted upon, and the date that they will be considered by the board. A similar timetable will be followed to that for the 2010/11 ILR specification.

The board supported further work to reform the ILR following a review – next steps include consultation with providers and a wide range of data users.

The board also welcomed an update on the work of the Data Service from Rich Williams. The Chairman, Graham Jones, said: "I'm very pleased that we are continuing to develop such a good working relationship with our sister organisation, the Data Service. Close co-operation between the two organisations around data standards, collection and transformation can only benefit learning providers and data users as we are faced with the task of meeting the needs of the new agencies."

Both a log of the board's decisions and a complete record of changes to the 2010/11 ILR will be published over the next few days on [the information authority's website](#). Minutes from the meeting will also be published on the [website](#) once agreed.

Annual report 2008-2009

The *information authority's* second annual report will be available to download from our website in mid October.

The annual report takes a look back at the work the *information authority* has been involved in over the last academic year, priorities for the coming year 2009-2010, how we have performed and who we work with to achieve our aims.

Kevin Brennan MP, Minister for Further Education and Skills, acknowledges the good work of *the information authority* in his opening statement in the report: "It is good to know that *the information authority* is working on behalf of the whole further education and training system in its role to regulate data standards and collection. I support its efforts to improve data quality and reduce the time spent on administration, and I encourage colleagues involved in data collection, transformation and reporting to collaborate actively with *the information authority*."

For a hard copy of the annual report please email: cst@theia.org.uk.

2009/10 ILR Data Quality project - update

The 2009/10 ILR Data Quality project is moving successfully into 'business as usual' with the delivery of a set of products and publications aimed at supporting providers with their forthcoming ILR returns.

The Data Service's e-learning module on the ILR will be launched mid October, following a test launch to provider organisations, the Association of Colleges and the Association of Learning Providers. When live, this module will be available on the [Data Service website](#).

The first good practice case studies produced by providers are about to be published on [the information authority's website](#) covering the basic processes of regular data checking and the accurate capture of prior attainment levels.

The new edition of the overhauled provider manuals is currently in review prior to publication in the autumn.

Also coming in October and November is the extended functionality of the Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (DSAT) and the credibility reports, allowing providers to identify, monitor and improve data quality issues both before and after ILR collection.

In the new year, the Service Desk at the Data Service will be launching its provider contact service to enable follow-up and resolution of quality issues.

This work is now being co-ordinated by the Data Quality Delivery Group, which brings together the LSC, the Data Service, the *information authority* and representatives from provider organisations to work jointly on quality issues. The group is being chaired by the *information authority's* Data Quality Improvement Manager, Adele Dixon.

Moving on – head of *the information authority*

Una Bennett, head of *the information authority* secretariat, has been appointed as the Head of Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) service with effect from 1 November 2009.

In the two years since her appointment, Una has worked hard to establish *the information authority* as a respected and credible organisation in further education, which has brought transparency and a consultative approach to decisions about data.

The information authority is looking for someone to fill the role of head of *the information authority* and recruitment for this role will begin on Tuesday 6th October 2009. Keep an eye on the [LSC website](#) for more details.

In the interim period Anne Fessi will be 'acting up' as head of *the information authority*. To contact Anne call 024 7682 3325 or email anne.fessi@theia.org.uk.

Advisory group meetings - update

Over the next couple of months *the information authority* will host meetings for each of its [advisory groups](#). *The information authority's* Paul Kelman said, "By the time these meetings take place, the board will have met to agree what will be collected in the 2010/11 ILR.

“It’s useful to give software suppliers and learning providers an early indication of any key changes so that they can begin amending software systems and enrolment processes. We find hosting group meetings to be very valuable. It is always helpful to hear how things are working in practice and discuss how data collections in the FE system can be improved.”

Presentations and key outcomes from all of the advisory group meetings will be published on *the [information authority website](#)*. If you would like to find out more about the groups or are interested in joining, please email cst@theia.org.uk.

Data Conference 2009

The information authority and the Data Service will be hosting a Data Conference on Thursday 3 December 2009.

The conference is aimed at independent training providers and the purpose is to share information on a range of FE data issues including ILR changes and plans for the Data Service. It is being held at Aston University in Birmingham on 3 December. The theme of the conference is ‘Data in the wider FE sector.’

Further details on the conference will be made available on the [information authority website](#) in October.

Chairman attends government ‘bureaucracy summit’

The chairman of *the information authority* board, Graham Jones, attended a ‘bureaucracy busting summit’ meeting with government ministers recently.

The meeting, which was chaired by FE Minister Kevin Brennan, was a response to government concerns that the skills training system, and the funding streams associated with it, are widely seen as too complex and even off-putting for many employers, particularly smaller ones.

The government has put in place a number of arrangements designed to improve and simplify the system, including setting up *the information authority*. The big question put to the summit group was whether the government should continue to improve things incrementally or whether a radical new approach, sweeping away much of the old system, would be needed.

The overall view of the group, which included ministers, employers and other involved organisations, was that the current system had strengths, but that a new approach was necessary. Their views and suggestions will be fed into a new skills White Paper due out this autumn, which will set out the way forward for the national training and funding framework.

Graham Jones said: “Although the direction of the summit moved outside the direct remit of *the information authority* it was useful to be present, to have the opportunity to influence major new developments and to hear the minister’s views on our work. Whatever new system emerges, data will be at the heart of it, and we will have made a substantial contribution to its success.”

News from the Data Service

Service Desk rollout

The Service Desk at the Data Service is currently supporting over 750 providers in the North East and West Midlands regions. The Service Desk is the first point of contact for questions across the sector, and responds to requests for analysis and data, amongst other questions.

On 1st September 2009 the Service Desk was rolled out to the London region, now providing support to an additional 600+ providers.

Following consultation with the remaining six regions (2,750 providers), the Data Service has now finalised dates for the roll-out as shown below:

Region	Service Desk roll-out date	Region 1st Key Contact Person	Data Service 1st Key Contact Person	Estimated Provider Numbers
London	Tuesday September 1st	Tracy Brennan	Sue Guinivan	600
South West	Monday 5th October	Margaret Jones	Sue Guinivan	289
North West	Monday 12th October	Wendy Tang	Jane Ludlow	294
South East	Monday 19th October	Becci Gott	Ushma Gill	518
East Midlands	Monday 26th October	Chris Bayne	Ushma Gill	421
Yorkshire	Monday 2nd November	Barbara Bayley	Sue Guinivan	320
East of England	Monday 9th November	Kirsty Williams	Jane Ludlow	310

Contact the [Service Desk](#) on 0870 2670001 or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk for further details.

ILR e-learning for providers

Following an update in last months issue of inform, the Data Service, working with the *information authority*, held two test launch events, for the ILR e-learning module, with the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of Learning Providers (ALP).

The aim of these events was to introduce the ILR e-learning module to the AoC and the ALP, as key users for this product, and to also gauge their feedback.

The events were very productive and feedback from these organisations is being incorporated into the module, with a planned release date of mid October 2009.

For further details on the e-learning project please contact the [Service Desk](#).

Other further education and training news

Dragon launches National Enterprise Academy

Peter Jones has launched the first ever education institution solely focused on teaching 16-19 year olds enterprise and entrepreneurship.

The telecoms entrepreneur, and co-star of popular TV show Dragons Den, says the National Enterprise Academy (NEA) will give young people the skills and mindset to succeed in the modern business world.

NEA will offer brand new qualifications in enterprise and entrepreneurship at Levels 2 and 3, which have been developed in partnership with awarding body Edexcel. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has also invested up to nine million pounds, matched by employers, to help NEA enrol almost 18,000 learners in its first five years.

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 further 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 for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 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
www.thedataservice.org.uk