

APPENDIX B: Progress against targets - Communication Action Plan 2008/09

Target 1: To increase awareness of the information authority and our work with stakeholders

Key issues

Needed a higher percentage of stakeholders who feel well informed / quite well informed. We carried out a **stakeholder perception survey in 2008** and received 134 responses in total, mainly from government departments or agencies, HE providers and Local authorities. Encouragingly, 58% of respondents were aware of *the information authority* before completing the survey and 62% of the respondents had some awareness of the work we do. However, 64% of respondents did not realise that we were responsible for agreeing the changes to the ILR for the last two years; and most respondents felt that they could not say how effective we had been in improving the setting and regulation of data standards.

Actions taken

A Communications and Marketing Manager was appointed to work across *the information authority* and the Data Service. A Community Facilitator was appointed to develop our online presence and communities. The vacant post of Stakeholder Engagement Manager was filled, allowing the CST team to take over the running of the Advisory Groups. We made regular contributions to all stakeholder newsletters (FE Skills, LSC bulletin, AoC, ALP, DSP bulletin etc.), we improved our publicity materials, distributed a Calendar to all providers / stakeholders and an Annual Report to key audiences. We improved our presence at conferences through sponsorship / workshop hosting / contributions to delegate bags (rather than just exhibiting).

Progress made

Perception survey results:

200 responses were received in the **2009 perception survey**. 65% of respondents were from FE colleges or independent providers, with 9% and 13.5% being from local authorities and government departments/agencies, respectively. Software developers represented 2.5% of respondents and 1.5% were from employers. The outstanding 7% originated from "others".

- 90% of respondents answering the question, were aware of *the information authority*
- 94% of respondents answering the question felt they had some understanding of the role of *the information authority*. Of this, 62% felt they mostly understood the role of *the information authority*.
- Of the respondents answering the question, 86% felt *the information authority* had to some degree been successful in introducing change to the sector regarding the setting and regulating of data standards
- 69% of respondents (67% of FE colleges and independent training providers) answering the question felt *the information authority* had a beneficial impact on their organisation in relation to data issues.

Other indicators

- Increase in use of **feconnect** - there has been a 129% increase in visits to <http://forums.theia.org.uk> .
- Increase in website hits - there has been an increase of 45% in visits to www.theia.org.uk
- Increase in numbers of subscribers to *inform* newsletter: there has been an 11% increase in numbers of subscribers

Target 2: To increase stakeholder engagement in our activities and gather useful feedback

Key Issues:
Need to use the feedback on the ILR consultation process 2009-2010 to make improvements to the way that we carry out consultation with our stakeholders and elicit their views. This will include improving the channels used, making contributors feel more comfortable with the processes and raising awareness that providers and stakeholders can get involved and their views will lead to changes.
Action taken
We solicited feedback on the ILR consultation process via advisory groups, workshops, 2-minute online survey to give us qualitative and quantitative data that we could use to inform our processes. Suggested improvements were fed back to the board in December 2008. We also commissioned Ambay Software to make improvements to our online community, feconnect , to make it easier for users to participate.
Progress made
Increase in use of feconnect (129% increase in usage over the year), high interest in some groups (LA group in particular), increase in visits to advisory group web pages, good response to ILR changes online via feconnect , attendance at some advisory groups patchy (e.g. CIG group).

Target 3: To effectively engage with local authorities

Key Issues:
A greater focus is needed on communicating and establishing a dialogue with local authorities. This is to ensure that we have relevant communication channels in place to support the impending Machinery of Government changes and to create 'advocates' for our work.
Action taken
We presented at the ICES conference, contributed articles to the DSP bulletin, met with the DCSF Star Chamber to discuss future ways of working and drafted and signed up to a joint Memorandum of Understanding. We also attended other events as identified appropriate for local authority audiences (e.g. LARIA conference)
Progress made
Our LA advisory group received a lot of interest from LA representatives (around 50 registered an interest in attending) and we had two good meetings, issues raised and pursued on behalf of the group. Received useful feedback from ICES conference.

Target 4: To engage effectively with DCSF and DIUS policy makers

Key Issues:
A greater focus is needed on communicating and establishing a dialogue with key stakeholders, such as college principals and policy leads in DIUS and DCSF. This is to ensure that we have relevant communication channels in place to support the impending Machinery of Government changes and to create 'advocates' for our work.
Action taken
Introduced a monthly update for these key audiences via e-mail; engaged with the DCSF Data Services Group (DSG); held 'lunch and learn' sessions at BIS; updated our information on the BIS intranet and website; regular contact with BIS colleagues via meetings and telekits; set up a team-site online for the DCSF Star Chamber to share information and documentation.
Progress made
Good relationships established, currently have more regular contact with BIS, but partnerships are developing well, with an increase in named contacts in both departments. Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the DCSF Star Chamber. Relevant documents / meeting notes shared between <i>the information authority</i> and both departments.

Target 5: To raise awareness and engage with colleagues at the LSC

Key Issues
Some colleagues within the LSC national and regions are still not aware of our work, or clear about what we do, making it more difficult to work effectively with them. A more pro-active stance is to be taken with regards to promoting the work of the authority among LSC colleagues. This includes utilising the services and advice of the LSC's Internal Communications Team to raise our profile via internal news items; e-mail lists; face to face meetings; workshops / sessions etc. to raise our profile and facilitate good working relationships.
Action taken
Regular contribution of items to the LSC weekly bulletin; held Lunch and Learn events at LSC national office with a revised focus on our role within the 'changing FE landscape' / MoG; attended sessions with teams within the LSC to explain our work and discuss how we can engage; contributed monthly items to the Information Management Directorate staff briefings (including featured 'Spotlight' items; took an active role in departmental communications; contributed materials to wider events (such as SFA and YPLA regional events); inclusion of LSC senior management team in monthly briefing note;
Progress made
Increased awareness and understanding of <i>the information authority</i> , our work, aims and objectives amongst LSC colleagues at national office, inclusion of <i>the ia</i> at relevant meetings, and invitations to chair relevant groups (e.g. the new Data Groups.)

Target 6: To ensure that data users and providers are able to engage with relevant teams effectively (i.e. *the information authority*, Data Service, MIAP and LSC Funding Policy Team)

Key Issues:

Need strong central management and co-ordination of communications – and need staff engaged in projects with overlapping target audiences to work together. Liaise with colleagues within teams carrying out related strands of work to ensure that we communicate to our customers and stakeholders in a ‘joined up’ manner where possible. Take forward the issues identified for action during the meeting on September 2008 between *the information authority*; the Data Service, MIAP and LSC Funding Policy.

NOTE: Some progress was made on this work, but this has now been absorbed into the communications and stakeholder engagement streams in the development of the Shared Service unit. We continue to take an active role.

Target 7: To ensure that *information authority* staff are kept informed and consulted

Key Issues:

Information authority employees need to work together as a cohesive unit – in particular the Community and Stakeholder Team need to work effectively with the Quality and Standards Team and ensure that a good standard of information flow and co-operation is created and maintained.

Action taken

Continued to hold weekly ‘buzz’ sessions for the team to informally share updates; encouraged all team members to get involved in outreach sessions, workshops, attendance at conferences etc.; held Monthly Team meetings; used the Team-site effectively for collaboration; held team away-days to develop skills and facilitate team-building (especially for the benefit of new team members); held occasional social events.

Progress made

A survey held before the July team training day showed that:

- most members of the team felt that they were able to describe *the information authority*’s vision, that they had the information needed to do their job, and that their opinions counted.
- two members of staff did not agree that information was shared effectively across the organisation, so we have since ensured that all areas of the team have regular meetings with close colleagues, in addition to our whole team meetings.
- most team members felt that they had good working relationships with their colleagues and that we worked well together.
- several members of staff were unsure or disagreed with the statement that we made good use of skills, knowledge and experience - this is being addressed by creating a 'skills matrix' to see where experience / knowledge is being underused.

Target 8: To increase brand recognition of *the information authority* and Data Service at a regional and national level

Key Issues:
To ensure that our service users / providers / data users etc. are aware of <i>the information authority</i> and Data Service brands and work towards those brands being associated with quality and good service. To raise awareness of the services and work carried out by the respective brand owners.
Action taken
Worked with communications partners to put in place reciprocal arrangements regarding placing news and articles in each other's online and offline publications; made good use of conferences and events to disseminate information and display our branding (including sponsorship and holding our own joint Data Conference for independent providers); contributing to a new book " <i>The hands-on guide to post-16 data and performance</i> "; updated branding and editorial guidelines to ensure that publications etc. are consistent.
Progress made
Have had regular coverage in partner newsletters and on partner websites, including: monthly news items featured in the AoC and ALP newsletters; coverage in the BIS FE Skills newsletter and the DCSF DSP Bulletin; weekly updates on the LSC website and internal bulletin; monthly contributions to the BSU bulletin; brand building and awareness raising through exhibiting at conferences: AoC Nilta, FAB, LGA, AoC annual conference, ICES conference, LARIA, ALP conference; raising profile and promoting the work of both organisations by presenting at the AoC regional principals meetings and AoC regional MIS Managers meetings

Target 9: To increase our media coverage / general profile

Key Issues:
To increase the public profile of <i>the information authority</i> across key stakeholders and wider audiences. An article published in FE Focus in Feb 2007 named <i>the information authority</i> as a new "quango". We need to be vigorously counteracting this view and publicising our work, aims and successes.
Action taken
News updates were published after each <i>information authority</i> board meeting, we worked with our partners to put in place reciprocal arrangements regarding placing news and articles in each other's online and offline publications, we updated news stories frequently on <i>the information authority</i> corporate website (www.theia.org.uk). Direct contact was made with national education media regarding our 2007-08 and 2008-09 Annual Report, but no interest was forthcoming.
Progress made
General profile has increased (source: 2009 Perception Survey results), but media profile has not increased.