

# inform

Issue 34 – February 2010

Inform is a monthly newsletter from *the information authority* and the Data Service, providing you with regular news and updates on our work. To subscribe to inform email: [informnewsletter@theia.org.uk](mailto:informnewsletter@theia.org.uk).

## 2011/12 ILR change process underway

The change process for the 2011/12 ILR is now underway, amended [criteria](#) and a new [change request form](#) have been developed. These are now available from the [Request for Change section](#) of *the information authority* website. The 2011/12 process will also see the introduction of a stakeholder panel as part of the sector consultation process.

Further information on the change process, including the full [timetable](#) for developing and publishing the 2011/12 ILR Specification, can be found in the [Request for Change pages](#).

The closing date for change requests is **18 June 2010**.

## Limited Service from the Data Service and *the information authority*, Monday 15 March

Staff from the Data Service and *the information authority* will be attending a training event on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Please note that the Service Desk will be operating with limited staffing levels from 8:30am to 5:00pm. We therefore advise customers to contact us on this date only if your request is urgent.

Alternatively, please visit the [FAQs](#) section of the Data Service website, or call back after this date. For other assistance, please visit the [ILR support pages](#) on *the information authority's* website or access peer support on our online forum: [feconnect](#).

### This month:

- **Limited Service from the Data Service and the information authority, Monday 15 March**

### News from *the information authority*:

- 2011/12 ILR change process underway
- ILR Data Management FAQs
- Additional data collections
- ILR Specification online
- March board meeting
- Advisory Group meetings
- 2009/10 ILR Specification updated

### News from the Data Service:

- Period 6 Employer Responsive QSR reports now available
- March Statistical First Release
- Employer Data System Transition Project
- E-learning for providers – your views count
- Improving data quality, supporting providers

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## News from *the information authority*

### ILR Data Management FAQs – further information published

Following the [letter from Geoff Russell to providers](#) about good data management practises and principles, *the information authority* published the [ILR Data Management FAQs](#) to address queries raised by the letter.

Feedback received via our online community, [feconnect](#), has been taken on board by *the information authority* secretariat, and additional FAQs and information have now been published to further clarify the guidance. An 'outstanding issues' section has also been added, to highlight the areas that we are still working on.

The FAQs page will continue to be updated when additional guidance is finalised. Subscribers of our [web alert](#) service can sign up for notifications of when this page is amended

### Additional data collections

In October 2009, *the information authority* board agreed to two additional data collections. The specifications for these should be available in March 2010:

- The purpose of the first data collection is to help the YPLA plan learning provision. It only applies to 16-18 Learner Responsive provision and is a headcount of YPLA-funded learners.
- The purpose of the second collection is to gather information on employer contributions towards Employer Responsive learning provision. Feedback from providers is that whilst financial contributions will be easy to report, any 'in kind' contributions (such as an employer providing training facilities) are more difficult to capture. *The information authority's* recommendations will be reviewed at its next board meeting in March.

Following the board review, a further update will be available in the March issue of Inform.

### ILR Online – coming soon

*The information authority* is in the process of developing an 'Online ILR specification' that is more responsive to provider needs. This will allow greater flexibility in the viewing and printing of this document. The 'ILR Specification online' will initially be based on the 2009/10 ILR, but with a view to also publishing the 2010/11 ILR Specification in this interactive format. It will allow providers to have a 'web-help' type view of the specification by return type, and will also allow a provider to download and view the ILR Specification field requirements for each type or return.

*The information authority* anticipate a release date in Quarter 2 this year. Further updates will follow in future issues of Inform.

## March board meeting – what's on the agenda

The next meeting of [the information authority board](#) will be held on 03 March 2010.

Items on the agenda include discussing a late ILR change request and the process for dealing with late requests, updates on the Learner Data Strategy and the Data Standards Framework.

The board will also be asked to comment on the current plans for Framework for Excellence, and to comment on the proposal for an annual provider level data collection of employer contributions.

The outcomes and minutes from this board meeting will be published on our website shortly after this meeting.

Please follow the links to view [minutes](#) and [papers](#) from previous board meetings.

## Advisory Group meetings

*The information authority* hosted another round of advisory group meetings in January and February. Some of the key issues covered at each group included:

- Consulting learning providers on how to record employer contributions (both financial and in-kind)
- A further update on the [Electronic Learner Records Project](#)
- Plans and timetable for the redevelopment of the Learning Aims Database (LAD)
- Information on MIAP services and Skills Accounts
- Discussing data management issues raised following [Geoff Russell's letter to providers](#)

The outcomes for the following meetings are now available to view on *the information authority* website:

- [Own Software Writers Group](#) - Wednesday 20 January
- [Software Suppliers Group](#) - Wednesday 27 January
- [Learner Responsive Group](#) - Wednesday 3 February

The outcomes from the following meetings will be available to view on the website shortly, [web alerts](#) will be sent out when these are published:

- [Data Users Group](#) - Thursday 18 February
- [Adult Safeguarded Learning Group](#) - Monday 22 February

There will be an Employer Responsive group meeting on 19 March 2010.

If you would like more information on the advisory groups, or are interested in joining, please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk).

## 2009/10 ILR Specification updated

The information authority published [Version 4 of the ILR Specification 2009/10](#) on 10 February 2010. Changes have been made to the following sections:

- Learner data set
- Learning aim data set
- HE data set

This version is now available to download from [the information authority website](#).

## News from the Data Service

### Period 6 Employer Responsive QSR reports now available

The Employer Responsive (ER) Train to Gain and Apprenticeships Qualification Success Rate (QSR) reports for Period 6 are now available for providers to download from the [Provider Gateway](#). The reports use 2009/10 data up to and including period 6.

Each provider can download their own data from the Provider Gateway. For ER QSR (Train to Gain and Apprenticeships) the zipped files will contain:

- a summary report covering success rates for all Regions and for each Region and Local Authority in which the provider has a delivery centre
- detailed separate reports for all Regions, Regions and Local Authorities (where applicable, relating to this provider)
- a Microsoft excel file of success rates details for all learners (relating to this provider)
- QSR guidance notes.

For more detailed guidance on how success rates have been calculated refer to the [QSR Methodology](#) which is available in the Data Dictionary on the Data Service website. To assist providers further, we have created [Quick Reference Guides](#) on success rate calculations, designed to complement and be used in conjunction with the methodology and [Guidance Notes](#). Both documents aim to aid the provider's understanding of the methodology for calculating success rates. These sources of information should help providers to answer the majority of queries on the reports.

Alternatively, providers can resolve queries by referring to the excel/csv extract (located within the provider's QSR zip files). The extract details all learner records used in the production of the QSR/MLP reports. Providers can check the data in this extract against their own MI systems to reconcile any discrepancies. Details of how to use the extract can be found in the guidance notes issued with the reports.

If providers are not able to resolve their query after following the above steps, or referring to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) they can contact the Service Desk on Tel: **0870 2670001** or email [servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk). When logging a query with the Data Service please provide a detailed explanation of the query being raised, the UPIN the report relates to, and details of the section of the report being queried. Please also note that it may take longer to resolve queries in this way as they may need to be reviewed by different members of the Harmonisation Group.

### March Statistical First Release (SFR) coming soon

The Data Service will be publishing its next SFR on 25 March. This SFR will be produced by the Data Service in consultation with statisticians from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Previous Statistical First Releases are available on the [Data Service website](#).

## Employer Data System (EDS) – Transition Project

The EDS system was originally a custom built database built for Train to Gain in 2006. Since then the system has grown and a number of other users have started to use EDS. This data is now increasingly important to a host of different policy units.

It has been agreed to transition EDS into the Data Service and manage this system as a core business resource that meets the emerging needs of the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA.

The EDS system has now being managed by the Data Service. A regular monthly Steering Group has been convened with representatives from the Data Service, *the information authority*, and many policy units including Train to Gain, NAS and NES.

Two new releases went live on Monday 22 February. This included changes to the help desk reporting process and to the Public Sector flag. The latter will be used by the downstream MI systems used internally within the LSC.

A central mailbox has been set up to manage policy and help desk queries, and to also act as a central point of contact and ensure a co-ordinated and coherent customer experience.

If you have any concerns or questions about the future of EDS please email [edsenquiries@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:edsenquiries@lsc.gov.uk)

## E-learning for providers– Your views count

Following the successful launch of the ILR e-learning module, and feedback gauged from providers on e-learning, The Data Service is now in the process of commissioning further e-learning modules.

The Training Needs Analysis conducted in November 2009 identified a provider need to develop new e-learning modules on the following:

- Learning Aims Database (LAD)
- Learner Information Suite (LIS)

These modules will be developed to assist both new users and more experienced users of the LAD and LIS.

If you are working with the LAD/LIS and would like to shape the content of the new e-learning modules please take a few minutes to complete the [online questionnaire](#), and give us your feedback on shaping these new modules.

## Improving Data Quality, Supporting Providers

Working in partnership with *the information authority*, the Data Service is launching a new support service to help their providers improve the quality of their ILR data. From March 2010, *the information authority* will be reviewing providers' performance against the standards set out in [Appendix P of the ILR documents](#). Over the coming months, those providers whose data falls significantly below the standards set out in Appendix P will be contacted by the Data Service's Service Desk. The purpose of this exercise is to help identify and understand any issues the provider may be having in meeting the data quality standards, and to provide practical advice and guidance on how to improve ILR data quality.

In the first instance the Data Service will send an email to those providers identified as requiring significant improvement in their data to let them know that they will be contacted by the Service Desk.

If you have any queries please contact the Service Desk on 0870 2670001 or email [servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk)

## About us

### *The information authority*

*The information authority* was established in October 2006 to set and regulate data standards for further education and training provision 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.