

APPENDIX A

Progress against targets - Communication Action Plan 2009/10

Target 1: To increase awareness of *the information authority* and our work within the FE and training sector

Key issues
<p>Our 2009 perception survey highlighted that 90% of respondents were aware of <i>the information authority</i> before taking the survey, an increase of 32% on last years survey (58%). This is encouraging news especially amongst colleges and independent providers who were the key respondents in the 2009 survey. We need to therefore further engage with other FE providers to continue to increase our awareness amongst providers such as local authorities, government agencies and employers. However, we recognise that we also need to do more - 32% of respondents felt that we'd made no beneficial impact to their organisation in relation to data issues, so we must work harder to consult with our colleagues to seek out the issues that matter, and to drive forward solutions – either through our own influence, or by bringing relevant organisations together.</p>
Actions taken:
<p>In December 2009 we held a joint conference with the Data Service to highlight key issues on Data in the FE Sector as well as reinforcing the work of <i>the information authority</i> and developing brand credibility amongst our target audience of stakeholders and providers.</p> <p>We continued to engage with stakeholders in the sector, both through this conference and attendance at the AoC NILTA conference, plus 27 other conferences in the FE Sector. In the main this included speaking at the conferences, running workshops and/or sponsorship to maximise value for money.</p> <p>We also held a one-off advisory group meeting for local authorities, at their request which focused how the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will work with local authorities. This meeting attracted representation from over 50 local authorities.</p>
Progress made:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing efforts in positioning <i>the information authority</i> brand as independent within the IM Services• Development of internal relationships with IM Services to promote the role of <i>the information authority</i>.• Six advisory groups established, with around 15 members at each meeting, 27 advisory group meetings have been held in 2009/10 to date.• We have had 214,972 hits to <i>the information authority</i> website in 2009, with 181,355 hits between Jan – May 2010.• Over 730 subscribers to inform, our monthly external newsletter, up from 677 in Jan 2010.• We have 376 registered users on the new feconnect site (re-launched in December 2009), with an average of 601 unique visitors per month, i.e. 225 un-registered users still view the site – 18,193 visits to feconnect in 2009 and 7,721 hits to date in 2010.• Weekly blogs to keep feconnect users up to date on the work of <i>the information authority</i>, and to consult with the provider community e.g. Consultation on the Timeliness of Employer Responsive Data.

- We engaged with providers and stakeholders to generate change requests for the 2010/11 ILR. Sixty requests to change the 2010/11 ILR were received and considered by *the information authority*. None of the authority's decisions were appealed against.
- Having launched the 2011/12 ILR Change request process we are currently actively engaging with providers and stakeholders to submit gather requests.
- Workshops held with sector stakeholders to gather input for the development of the Learner Data Strategy.
- Development and launch of **ILR Online** through consultation with the sector.

Planned activity:

- **'A New Horizon - Opportunities and Challenges for Data in the FE Sector' Conference 2010** – A joint conference with *the information authority*, the Data Service and the Learning Records Service to be held on 17 September, this conference will highlight the next steps for the FE Learner Data Strategy, commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), and explore what it will mean for data collection and use in the FE Sector.
- Hosting two joint workshop-focused regional conferences in December.
- 'Get it in, Get it right campaign' aimed at providers to encourage timely submission of the new F05 hard close date of November 22 for the 09/10 ILR submission.
- Campaign to highlight changes to the 2010/11 ILR specification.
- Speaking at the following conferences to communicate the progress of the Learner Data Strategy:
 - Summer College Data Conference – 17 June
 - AoC IDT Conference – 24 June

Target 2: Engagement with new organisations, such as the YPLA and the SFA

Key Issues:

To capitalise on the Machinery of Government changes, we need take a proactive role in engaging with the new successor bodies, the YPLA and the Skills Funding Agency, to actively promote the work of *the information authority*. To identify and target key colleagues within these organisations, to identify the new communication channels and points of contact for both these organisations to enable us to raise our profile and facilitate good working relationships.

Action taken:

With the new successor bodies now in place, we have identified key contacts for Communications within the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA and started to formulate working relationships. The agency has a dedicated Communications team for provider communications and we are working with them to identify a slicker communications process that will enable *the information authority* to continue its independent communication efforts as well as addressing SFA concerns/issues. Both organisations are still in a period of formulating communication processes and embedding these to ensure consistency in communications across the organisations.

Progress made:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have identified dedicated communications contacts and started to build relations. • We are working collaboratively to identify a process that works for IM Services as a whole, but which makes clear the independent status of <i>the information authority</i>. • Incorporating the use of both organisations bulletins as a communications channel, both internally and externally, to promote the work of <i>the information authority</i>.
Planned activity:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Skills Funding Agency and YPLA to discuss a pragmatic approach towards / joint separate communications activities, and put in place robust processes. • To hold joint workshops with IM Services aimed at both the agency and the YPLA to raise the profile of <i>the information authority</i> and the work we are involved in. • We have approached both organisations to speak at our 'New Horizons Conference' in September, offering them a platform to communicate their priorities and to engage with providers, and to better understand the role of <i>the information authority</i>, and to build good working relationships. • To invite the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA to host feconnect online 'hotseats'.

Target 3: To increase stakeholder engagement in our activities and gather useful feedback

Key Issues:
To be seen as the key organisation for consultation and collaboration on data and collection standards for the FE and training system through effective stakeholder engagement. The 2010/11 ILR change consultation process resulted in 60 change requests being submitted. Through the use of key communication channels we want to engage actively with new and existing stakeholders to reiterate the processes for requesting ILR changes, and to enable providers and data users to contribute and influence the decisions made on the requests.
Action taken:
2011/12 ILR Change request process is underway and we have solicited feedback from providers and stakeholders through the advisory group meetings as well as consultation through our online community portal, feconnect. Closing date for submission of change requests is 18 June.
Progress made:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory groups held to consult with stakeholders and gauge input into the ILR change process as well as gathering early change requests for the 2011/12 ILR. • Consultations via feconnect, regular blogs to promote the 2011/12 change process and gauge provider feedback. • Development and launch of ILR online through consultation with the sector.

Planned activity:

- Consultation with stakeholders in June after close date for change request submissions, to discuss changes requested and options developed with stakeholders. Consultation will take place via **feconnect**, meetings and other communication channels.
- Review group meeting with stakeholders to discuss ILR change requests that meet criteria.
- ILR change consultation event.

Target 4: To engage effectively with BIS and DFE policy makers**Key Issues:**

Having developed relationships with key colleagues at BIS and DFE over the last year, we need to focus our efforts on putting in place key channels for communication post Machinery of Government and to create advocates for our work.

Action taken:

DFE (formerly DCSF) was formed in May 2010, currently we are not aware of any change to our relationships but will be keeping an eye on any upcoming changes. 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 tele-kits; set up a team-site online for the DCSF Star Chamber to share information and documentation.

Progress made:

- Workshop held at BIS offices to promote the work of *the information authority* and the 2010/11 ILR changes.
- 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 *the information authority* and both departments.

Planned activity:

- Invitations sent to both BIS and DFE to speak at our 'New Horizons conference' in September 2010 – providing a platform to engage with providers and stakeholders to communicate policy changes post election.

Target 5: To take an active role in the development and promotion of communications activities within the new shared services function.

Key Issues:
As a new function, it is important that <i>the information authority</i> is involved in the development of communications activities as well as working to proactively engage and develop relationships with key colleagues at IM shared services.
Action taken:
With a new IM Services Communications Manager now in post, we are working together to develop a cohesive relationship to ensure joined up communication activities where appropriate, identify joint communications opportunities and where appropriate to streamline communication activity. We meet regularly with the IM Communications Manger to communicate the role of <i>the information authority</i> within the shared services function, to <i>establish the information authority</i> brand as an independent function in relation to the other elements of shared services.
Progress made:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in the IM Services away-day. • IM Services Comms managers have arranged a working group that will meet bi-monthly to share best practice, communications updates and ways of working. • Regular input into IM Briefings with presence at IM Briefing meetings. • Development o a shred IM Communications planner. • Joint communications by <i>the information authority</i>, the Data Service and Learning Records Service in progress. • New LRS Comms Manager in post, where we have started to build good working relationships and supported the re-branding of MIAP.

Target 6: To ensure that *information authority* staff are kept informed and consulted

Key Issues:
To continue to work as a unified team, with the Community and Stakeholder Team working effectively with the Quality and Standards Team to ensure a good standard of information flow and co-operation is created and maintained.
Action taken:
We continue 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. The CST now meets on a weekly basis to discuss and inform other team members of their priorities.

Progress made:

- Development of a skills matrix - to see where experience / knowledge is being underused.
- Cross-team working on key projects – e.g. ILR change request process requires effective working from the CST with the Quality and Standards team to ensure we achieve the desired outputs, collaboration, consultation and communication.

Target 7: To increase brand recognition of *the information authority* and Data Service at a regional and national level**Key Issues:**

To be recognised as two separate brands, distinct in identity and roles, working towards a common goal of servicing the data requirements of the FE and training sector. To continue to raise awareness of both brands, their roles and their work.

Action taken:

We now have in place reciprocal arrangements with partner organisations regarding placing news and articles in other's online and offline publications; we have 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).

Progress made

- Joint working to produce and launch the new 'Hands on Guide to Post-16 Performance and Data' – joint branding.
- Joint collaboration on event sponsorship and input - both *the information authority* and the Data Service will be speaking at the Summer College Data Conference and the AoC IDT Conference in June.
- Working in partnership to host joint one day conference, 'New Horizons' in September 2010.
- Joint working to develop ILR e-learning module.
- Regular news contributions in the AoC/ALP newsletters, coverage in the BIS FE Skills newsletter and the DCSF DSP Bulletin; weekly updates on the LSC website and internal bulletin (now making contributions into the Skills Funding Agency newsletter where appropriate); monthly contributions to the BSU bulletin;
- Raising profile and promoting the work of both organisations by presenting at the AoC regional principals meetings and AoC regional MIS Managers meetings.
- Hosted a joint workshop at BIS to promote the work of both organisations.

Target 8: To increase our media coverage / general profile

Key Issues:

To engage proactively with key media in the 'FE' and training system, to raise the public profile and build brand recognition for *the information authority* amongst stakeholders and wider audiences.

Action taken:

News updates are published after each *information authority* 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 *the information authority* corporate website (www.theia.org.uk). Direct contact was made with national education media regarding our 2007-08 and 2008-09 Annual Reports, but no interest was forthcoming.

Progress made:

- Weekly blogs on feconnect to update the sector on our work.
- Maximising conference attendance for building our profile by running informative and relevant workshops e.g. AoC conference, joint conference.
- General profile has increased (source: 2009 Perception Survey results), but media profile has not increased.

Planned activity:

- To develop inroads with key media producing FE supplements e.g. The Guardian, Independent and the Observer.