

inform

Issue 49 – June 2011

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.

Are you ready for the move to a single ILR collection for 2011/12?

To accommodate changes to FE funding arrangements, the single Adult Skills Budget and minimum contract values, *the information authority* and the Data Service have reviewed data collection arrangements. For 2011/12 this means providers may need to do some preparation in order to ensure that enrolment and data return processes still proceed smoothly once they are implemented:

- **Single ILR data collection** - *the information authority* is introducing a [single ILR](#) collection for providers to submit a single data return.
- **Strategic replatforming of data collection systems** - the Data Service is introducing [new data collection processes](#) by replacing old technology. These changes support new funding and payment arrangements and the platform for the single ILR.

A fact sheet on the changes to data collection arrangements for 2011/12 is available from [the information authority](#) and [the Data Service](#) websites.

Website survey



As part of our commitment to providing a quality service, both *the information authority* and the Data Service would welcome your feedback on your experience of using our websites.

The next time you visit [the information authority](#) and/or [the Data Service](#) websites please take a few minutes to complete the website user survey.

This month:

News from *the information authority*:

- Are you ready for the move to a single ILR collection for 2011/12?
- Website survey
- 2011/12 - ILR XML file compression
- Provider support manual
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- 2012/13 ILR change process update
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- 2011/12 LIS 19 – final beta
- Replatforming of LIS and LARA – Release 1
- FE in HE data
- Use of proxy aims in Employer Responsive Provision for 2010/11
- Publication of June Statistical First Release
- 2010/11 Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rates methodology due to be published
- Changes to 2011/12 Provider Funding Reports

News from *the information authority*

2011/12 - ILR XML file compression

For the academic year 2011/12 *the information authority* and the Data Service recommend that providers upload their ILR returns using compressed files. Compressed files, which are sometimes referred to as archives or zip files, contain a version of the ILR data that is significantly smaller than the uncompressed XML file. Upload times are shorter, which benefits all providers and contributes to maximum reliability of the service.

The required compression format is based on the Deflate algorithm and is commonly known as a zip file. This can be generated from several standard software packages and some operating systems. The software package used to compress files should be compatible with WinZip version 8.0, which will be used to de-compress the file on receipt. If your software supports more than one type of compression, please ensure that only basic compression is selected (i.e. do not submit files of type .zipx or equivalent).

Each compressed file should contain one ILR XML file only. The file should not be encrypted or password protected. The name of the zip file should be the same as the name of the XML file, but with the extension .zip instead of .xml (see the 2011/12 ILR Specification, version 2, paragraph 47, p 8). If you have any queries on the above, please check with your IT Support or MI system supplier. Details of WinZip 8.0 can be found on the [product's web site](#).

2011/12 Provider Support Manual published

Version 1 of the Provider Support Manual for 2011/12 has been published. In previous years there was a Provider Support Manual for the separate return types of Learner Responsive, Employer Responsive, Adult Safeguarded Learning and ESF Short Record. With the introduction of the single ILR one provider support manual has been produced containing advice and guidance for all providers on how to make single ILR returns in the 2011/12 year.

The Provider Support Manual includes information on the structure of the single ILR and the 2011/12 collection timetable. It also includes a quick reference guide, which maps the flat file field numbers to the single ILR fields.

The [manual is now available to download](#).

Advisory group in July

The information authority will be facilitating the Learner Responsive advisory group on 14 July.

The agenda items at this meeting will include an update on the [single ILR](#) in XML, [replatforming of data collection systems](#) and the [2012/13 ILR change request](#) process.

[Further information](#) is available on our website. If you are interested in joining any of the groups, please email cst@theia.org.uk.

2012/13 ILR change process update

The closing date for submitting change requests for the 2012/13 ILR was **24 June**. Shortly after the closing date, *the information authority* will publish all of the change requests that it has received. Change requestors are reminded that sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Request for Change form will be published and used to consult the sector. Therefore, requestors should take particular care in ensuring that they make clear in those sections why the FE sector should support the change.

Over the summer, the sector will be consulted to gather views on any changes that have met the initial assessment criteria. More information on the consultation will be made available through [Inform newsletter](#), [feconnect](#), and [the information authority website](#). In the meantime, if you have any queries on the change process or require any further information, please email cst@theia.org.uk.

Data cleansing and changes to the ILR Specification for 2011/12

The information authority is giving providers early notification of changes that are required for 2010/11 ILR data to ensure that the first ILR return of 2011/12 can be returned without producing business rule errors.

The published [table of changes](#) to the ILR Specification 2011/12 gives an early indication as to which fields within the ILR return should be investigated by providers in preparation for the first ILR return of 2011/12. It contains some of the changes that have been made to the ILR Specification that will impact on the migration of 2010/11 ILR data to 2011/12 data. It also includes the addition of new business rules that could affect the return of valid ILR data.

The annual data migration process for 2011/12 will be carried out on ER and ESF data transmitted using the Provider Online (POL) system only. Batch providers will need to ensure that their own systems have been updated.

The ILR Specifications for 2011/12, business rules and migration specification (Appendix B) are all available to download from http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/201112_ilrdetail.htm.

Single ILR and strategic replatforming – training

With the move to a [single ILR](#) data collection and the [replatforming of data collection systems](#), *the information authority* and the Data Service will be providing training material and support documentation to assist learning providers.

Training materials on single ILR/LIS/OLDC/LARA will be available at:

- <http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/training>
- <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/singleilr/>

Details on training sessions for providers will be made available on *the information authority* and the Data Service websites in due course.

Outcomes of the June 2011 board meeting

The information authority board met on Wednesday 15 June 2011 in London.

The first item on the agenda was a paper from the secretariat proposing that a contingency plan is put in place in case late changes were required to the ILR for 2012/13 due to major changes to funding that won't be finalised by the YPLA and Skills Funding Agency until later in the year.

It was decided that, whilst only minor late changes would be considered, it would be preferable to put a plan in place to deal with this eventuality. The proposed timetable was amended slightly to allow two extra days for change submissions, then agreed by the board.

The board also discussed updating its Terms of Reference and Protocol, which were put in place when *the information authority* was first set up in 2006. It also considered a proposal to adopt a formal policy for reviewing board membership. Once the content of these documents has been agreed to the board members' satisfaction the chairman will take them forward with our government sponsors and, if necessary, ministers, before they are ratified.

Other items on the agenda included a presentation on the MiDES system, which has been commissioned by the AoC, and which uses colleges own data to produce internal reports that help them make management decisions.

FE Data Quality plan

In response to a request from *the information authority* Board and following extensive consultation with stakeholders, a Data Quality plan has been developed for 2011. The purpose of the Data Quality plan is to set the direction to be followed in maintaining and improving FE data quality going forward. It concentrates on the following main areas:

1. Establishing Common Data Quality Standards across the FE Sector
2. Resolving Data Quality Issues affecting Departments and Agencies
3. FE Sector Data Quality Reporting
4. Resolving Data Quality Issues affecting FE Sector Providers
5. Dealing with the Impact of non-FE Sector Data Quality on FE Sector Data Quality

In addition, the plan outlines the process to be followed when raising new data quality issues and risks for consideration and action by the Data Quality Board.

You can download the [Data Quality plan](#), which will be reviewed and updated annually.

The information authority would welcome suggestions for items to be included in future versions of the plan. These suggestions and any potential data quality issues or issues should be addressed to Richard Cookson, *the information authority's* Data Quality and Improvement Manager (richard.cookson@theia.org.uk).

News from the Data Service

Publication of 2011/12 learning aims funding data

The 2011/12 learning aims funding data for 16-18 Learner Responsive and Adult Learner Responsive provision are now available in the Learning Aim Database (LAD).

The Data Service is in the process of uploading the 2011/12 Employer Responsive Other funded learning aims..

The Data Service is currently awaiting delivery of the Employer Responsive Apprenticeship funded learning aims from the National Apprenticeships Service. These are due for delivery to the Data Service at the end of June, and will be available in the LAD in July.

The 2011/12 learning aims will also be replicated in the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA) when this goes live in July 2011.

For data collections, providers should ensure that they are able to interface with LARA for the 2011/12 new academic year, as the LAD will not hold key data going forward.

How to access the 2011/12 learning aims funding data in the LAD

As the Learning Aim Database (LAD) is to be replaced by the [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#) in July, a 2011/12 dropdown option has not been built into the LAD. Therefore to view the funding data for 2011/12 in the Learning Aim Database (LAD), users will need to:

- go to the LAD search screen, leave the Teaching Year drop-down as 2010/11, select a funding/collection option, specify Start Date and End Date values just below of 01/08/2011 and 31/07/2012, enter any other appropriate search criteria and press the search button; or
- if known, key in the learning aim reference number, leave the Teaching Year drop-down as 2010/11 and press the search button.

Examples:

1. Aim ref 10032678

<http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/aims/aimKeyDetails.asp?LAR=10032678>

If you look on the 1618_LR and Adult_LR tabs, this qualification has a change in SLN value (it was "unlisted" in 2010/11 and has a specified SLN value in 2011/12)

2. Aim ref 50020171

<http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/aims/aimKeyDetails.asp?LAR=50020171>

This shows a change in the ER_TTG (Train to Gain) SLN rate for 2011/12. (Note that the terminology of "Train to Gain" will be changed in LARA for 2011/12).

All of the 2011/12 learning aims funding data will be available in LARA, within the teaching year '2011/12' drop down option, when LARA is launched in July 2011.

For any queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk

2011/12 LIS 19 – final beta

Following user feedback on the 2011/12 LIS 19 beta, the Data Service will now issue a final beta for learning providers and software suppliers to test on **15 July** in order to fully capture bugs/errors. This final beta is expected to contain conversion, amalgamation and some reports as well as the Funding Calculation modules. A full LIS 19 release for providers will be published at the end of July, which is expected to contain fixes for any Funding Calculations errors that were raised in the final beta testing.

Replatforming of LIS and LARA – Release 1

The Data Service is working to introduce more efficient data collection business processes by replacing old technology that is costly to maintain and change.

These include changes to data collection systems (LIS/OLDC) and replacing the Learning Aim Database (LAD) with the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA)

The **Learner Information Suite (LIS)** is undergoing an overhaul to ensure it can support providers with the move to a single ILR by combining and converting separate ILR flat files to a single ILR in XML format. Release 1 of LIS 19 is scheduled to be made available to providers for **end July 2011**. This release will include:

- functionally to convert a 2011/12 flat file format ILR to a single ILR file in XML format as well as merge two or more files in either format into one single ILR file in XML format.
- validate both single ILR file in XML format and flat format ILR files.
- to include the rules engine, to enable greater flexibility in the maintenance of the funding calculation and synchronisation with the OLDC system.
- LIS reports will be updated in line with any policy changes and will be published through two releases. The reports will accommodate the 2011/12 single ILR field names.

The **Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA)** is being developed to replace the Learning Aim Database (LAD). This will be implemented with minimum disruption as LAD and LARA will run alongside each other for a defined period. Key changes for **Release 1** of LARA due to go live end July 2011 includes:

- new look, new location, new platform and technology
- 2011/12 learning aims funding data
- data not relevant to the 11/12 data collection will be removed
- new data will be added to cater for:
 - Changes to the Agencies' funding systems
 - Units as Learning Aims
- similar facilities to those in the LAD allowing users to search for learning aims, view and download the results of a search, view and print details for learning aims and view frameworks and a list of aims within a framework.

For any queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk

FE in HE data

The Data Service and *the information authority* have been working with HESA, HEFCE, YPLA and the Skills Funding Agency to more closely align the ILR and HESA Student Record.

Historically the Further Education (FE) in Higher Education (HE) data has been deemed to be unsuitable for use in key business processes such as success rate calculations and allocations. At a meeting in May both FE and HE agencies agreed that a review of the current way of working was required. The key outcomes from this meeting were for:

- the Data Service to specify its requirements from the HESA dataset
- HESA to commit to considering implementing these requirements from academic year 2012/13

As a result, the Data Service is now consulting with the Skills Funding Agency and YPLA to collate a list of required fields and changes to feed into the HESA student record change consultation for year 2012/13, which closes on 02 August.

Use of proxy aims in Employer Responsive Provision for 2010/11

The Skills Funding Agency Funding Policy team have advised the Data Service that proxy aims should not be used for Employer Responsive (ER) funded aims, and that any proxy aims currently being returned in the ILR must be replaced with correct learning aim references as a priority.

Since Employer Responsive provision is directly linked to the data, including dates, held in the Learning Aim Database (LAD), proxy aims should not be used in any ER ILR data.

Where providers are currently using proxy aims because some aims are not currently available on the LAD, providers should contact the Data Service, listing the learning aims for which they are currently using proxy aims. The Service Desk will then investigate where these aims are within the qualification journey and advise accordingly.

If you have any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk

Publication of June Statistical First Release

The Data Service published the [June Statistical First Release \(SFR\)](#) on 23 June 2011 that includes final data for the 2009/10 academic year, and provisional data for the first nine months of the 2010/11 academic year. This data will be revised and updated in the October 2011 SFR, where provisional data for the full 2010/11 academic year will be presented.

It shows key statistics on the level of highest qualification held by adults in England from 2001 to 2009, calculated from Labour Force Survey (LFS) data. These include attainment rates for specific priority groups of adult learners in the population that are of key interest within BIS and the Skills Funding Agency.

2010/11 Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rates methodology due to be published

The Data Service will be publishing the 2010/11 Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rates methodology's business rules in mid July 2011, a preview of these are available on [the Data Service website](#).

Key changes made to the 2010/11 methodology, compared with the 2009/10 methodology include:

- Introduction of a secondary measure to include Functional Skills;
- Adopting an approach to consistently deal with AS Level qualifications across the sector;
- Further harmonisation between the Learner Responsive and the School and Academy Sixth Forms methodology.

This methodology will be available to download from [the Data Service website](#), and will be followed later in the year by the full syntax, description of data items, guidance notes, frequently asked questions and quick reference guide.

For any queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk

Changes to 2011/12 Provider Funding Reports

For 2011/12 Provider Funding Reports (PFRs) will continue to be available for Employer Responsive (ER) provision only. PFRs provide information relating to providers ILR returns used in funding calculations to determine actual earnings for a providers Employer Responsive delivery.

Key changes to the 2011/12 PFR will remain similar to the current year in terms of data and figures - The main changes relate to the format and layout of the reports.

- **Adult Skills Grouping** – All adult skills funding streams have been grouped together in one section to reflect the adult skills flexibility. This will assist providers with managing their adult skills single budget.*
- **TPS Grouping** - All TPS funding claims have been grouped together in one section (rather than separately against each funding stream). This will allow providers to review all TPS claims in one place.*
- **New Funding Streams** – New funding streams have been added to reflect the 2011/12 provision - These include Adult Skills (Training Organisations, Employers and College's) and Joint Investment Programme.*

* (These may be subject to change dependant on delivery of development work)

These reports will be available in the Learner Information Suite V.19 and have been renamed. These will now be called:

- ER Indicative Volume and cash Summary
- ER indicative Occupancy List

For any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set data standards and govern data collection and use 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 Data Service is a fully operational service provider, and acts as a single, central point of information for further education.