

Minutes

Date	1 December 2010
Subject	<i>the information authority</i> board
Location	The Grand Connaught Rooms, 61-65 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DA
Time	10.00am to 1.00pm
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present Board members and alternates: Malcolm Britton (MB) (DfE); Jon Collis (JC); Ruth Curry (RC) (BIS); Julian Gravatt (JG) (AoC); Mario Ferelli (MF) (HEFCE); Graham Jones (GJ) (Chairman); Caroline Kempner (CK) (YPLA); Andrew King (AK) (Skills Funding Agency); Caroline Miller (CM) (Newcastle City Learning); Rob Pike (RP) (Ofsted); Ian Pryce (IP) (Bedford College) and Sally Walters (Alliance of Sector Skills Councils).

Presenters: Pete Ashton (PA) (*the information authority*); Anne Fessi (AF) (*the information authority*); Terry Knowles (TK) (ISB) and John Perks (JP) (*the information authority*).

Others: David Matthews (DM) (*the information authority*); Anna Nathwani (AN) (*the information authority*) and Heather Neufville (HN) (ISB).

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Bob Powell (BP) (HOLEX); Julie Nugent (JN) (Skills Funding Agency); David Pye (DP) (LGA) and Robert Spano (RB) (GoSkills).

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees and alternates and gave apologies for those unable to attend.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 CK suggested improvements to the previous minutes.
- 2.2 GJ asked the secretariat to make the required amendments to the minutes and republish them with the requested changes.

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2.3 The Action Log was reviewed and updated.

Action 01/12 - 01: AF and DM to revise the minutes of the 29th September 2010 board meeting and re-distribute to board members.

Item 3. Matters arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

Item 4. Implementing a Single Restructured Learner Record in XML

4.1 PA presented the first paper for this agenda item, entitled "Progress on Developing a Specification and Implementation Approach (Part A)."

4.2 AF presented the "Part B" paper for this agenda item, entitled "Provider Impact Assessment."

4.3 PA informed members that since the last board meeting, the secretariat had established a Design Authority, which has met twice, to determine the principles underpinning the data collection. All risks have been identified and logged and mitigations planned for the Single Restructured Learner Record (SRLR) project if it does not proceed.

4.4 Meetings with MIS suppliers have taken place, from which useful technical feedback has been gathered. The secretariat is working on a specification for the SRLR to go to the Data Service by 31 December 2010. This will then be redrafted to a higher standard and sent to providers by the end of February 2011. The secretariat also intends to share the draft specification for the Data Service with software suppliers.

4.5 *The information authority* and the Data Service's proposed joint implementation approach is as follows:

- For the 2010/11 collection the current flat-file format will be used;
- For the 2011/12 collection providers will be able to return data in the old format as well as the new format and make the transition to the new format during the course of the year; and
- For the 2012/13 collection the new SRLR in XML format will be used.

4.6 The board discussed the paper and raised the following

- Would there be any increase in frequency of data returns for providers;
- Many providers would be reticent to send data in advance of current return dates because of their fear incomplete data would be used by the funding agencies to make decisions. It was agreed PA would speak to colleagues in the agencies about this concern;
- There would be a need to make clear the different timetables for sending data for 16-18 learners and 19+ learners;
- They were reassured that the data to be send in flat file format and SRLR are fundamentally the same and the move to the SRLR does not represent a step change in the extent or nature of data collected;

- The board agreed the need to make further changes to the specification of the ILR for 2011/12 essential to implementation of the Skills Investment Strategy and Education White Papers both of which were published in November 2010;
- It was recognised that there was a need to provide extra support for providers which write their own management information systems (MIS); and
- The level of risk around the timescale for implementation of the SRLR was accepted.

Action 01/12 - 02: PA to speak with Skills Funding Agency and YPLA colleagues regarding addressing provider concerns about sending data in advance of published dates

4.7 The board made the decisions described below.

Decision: The board confirmed it supports implementation of the SRLR for 2011/12.

Decision: The board supports publication of the specification of the SRLR for 2011/12 to providers by the end of February 2011.

Decision: The board supports the current preferred approach to handling transition to the SRLR during 2011/12, described in paragraphs 12 to 15 in paper A.

Decision: The board supports publication of the 2011/12 flat file ILR specification as soon as possible. The specification to contain a statement that the specification is subject to change to reflect the Skills Investment Strategy and Education White Paper and describe the timescale for publishing a revised specification.

Decision: The board supports the timetable, at paragraph 20 in paper A, for processing further requests to change the data collected for 2011/12 resulting from the need to support policies described in the Skills Investment Strategy and Education White Paper in that year.

Decision: The board supports the work with stakeholders to agree a name for the new data collection.

Item 5. ILR specification – Review of Process for 2011/12

5.1 PA presented this agenda item.

5.2 The secretariat has reviewed the process for developing 2011/12 specification and feedback from providers and other stakeholders taken into account. The review has provided valuable insight in relation to the change process from the perspective of providers. Thirty-eight responses were received.

- 5.3 There has been an increased participation in consultation regarding change requests. A consultation forum was used once again this year; in addition an online survey was used for the first time. This allowed respondents to indicate their preferences anonymously rather than in the public arena. Over 550 responses were received on the online survey alone and useful metrics were obtained.
- 5.4 Most change request business cases were well written, however a small number were not. Poorly presented business cases can undermine otherwise sound feedback on changes that need to be made. This year the secretariat, in trying to be helpful, made changes to one or two requestors' change request business cases but only after trying to contact them, unsuccessfully. Next year the change process will make clear to requestors that it is their responsibility to prepare a clear business case and that the secretariat will not improve business cases without reference to requestors.
- 5.5 Various options for the timetable for agreeing the specification of the ILR have been considered in each of the last two years, each of which has strengths and weaknesses. For the 2012/13 year, PA recommended the board agreed to use the same timetable adopted for the previous two years.
- 5.6 MB stated that the board should be aware of the Coalition Government's impending data burden review for schools, which may impact on the timetable for data collection. RC suggested that the ILR timetable should be fed into the review, to ensure the data collection process is not disturbed.

Decision: The board approved the proposal to use the current collection timetable used in each of the last two years for 2012/13 and to keep the forthcoming data burden review for schools in mind.

- 5.7 PA described two changes to the Assessment Criteria. These are included at Appendix B of his paper. The word "target" in Assessment Criteria 4 has been removed. A new Criteria 10, which states that the Data Service will assess each change request to ensure that it can be delivered within permitted costs and timeframes has been added.

Decision: The board approved the amended assessment criteria as described in Appendix B.

Item 6. Final report from the FE Data Management Group

- 6.1 PA presented this agenda item.
- 6.2 The final meeting of the FE Data Management Group (FE DMG) took place on 12 November. PA stated that two changes had been made to the ILR data management principles (highlighted in red). GJ said the changes were made for clarification purposes.
- 6.3 CK asked if Principle 3 refers to Skills Funding Agency requirements and whether it also applied to the YPLA. PA replied that data for the YPLA is collected through the learner responsive return in which timeliness is defined in a different way to the employer responsive return. The final sentence of Principle 3 applies only to employer responsive returns.

6.4 The board was asked to approve the ILR Data Management Principles for release to the sector.

Decision: The ILR Data Management Principles were approved by the board for publication to the sector.

6.5 PA stated that the answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been available online for some time. The board's attention was drawn to the advice agreed by Ofsted about curriculum structure for nested qualifications at appendix B to the paper.

6.6 There was discussion and further clarification of the answers to FAQs.

6.7 PA updated the board on progress in developing ILR Principles for Funding Bodies and Agencies. The board identified the need to review the principles regularly to ensure they remain relevant.

6.8 The board was asked to approve the publication of the ILR Principles for Funding Bodies and Agencies to the sector.

Decision: The ILR Principles for Funding Bodies and Agencies were approved for publication as they currently stand and would apply, until the extra work on encompassing a wider range of data collected from providers has been completed.

Item 7. *The information authority's communication strategy for 2010/11*

7.1 AF presented this agenda item.

7.2 AF drew the board's attention to the targets and objectives for this year, which are broadly similar to last year's. It was noted that the Government freeze on marketing expenditure (implemented after the election this year) has resulted in the secretariat undertaking communications through low-cost channels, which have proved very effective.

7.3 For 2011, the secretariat aims to demonstrate the rationalisation of processes and alignment with Government policies (the transparency and efficiency agendas). The secretariat will also demonstrate that it has a wider remit than solely the ILR.

7.4 AF indicated that a narrative on overall progress against priorities and a summary on targets, including performance statistics, is provided in Appendices B and C, and that progress had been good, with most targets exceeded.

7.5 AF requested feedback from the board including suggestions to improve the communications activities where they felt it was applicable. CK thanked AF for the appendices and stated that the YPLA and the Department for Education (DfE) will support *the information authority* in its future work. AF suggested holding events with DfE and YPLA colleagues to help them better understand the work of *the information authority*.

Decision: The board endorsed the secretariat communications plan for 2011 and noted progress against priorities and targets for the previous year.

Item 8. Learning Records Service Prior Attainment Update

- 8.1 JP presented this agenda item on behalf of the Learning Records Service (LRS).
- 8.2 JP gave the context to the paper arriving from concerns at the last board meeting regarding the need to realise the benefits of qualifications on entry from the Personal Learning Record (PLR). The Learning Records Service (LRS) paper acknowledges that the benefits of providing prior attainment data have yet to be realised, mainly because not all Awarding Organisations (AOs) are submitting data to the new LRS interface via the Personal Learning Record (PLR).
- 8.3 JG questioned why schools data cannot be presented to the LRS more quickly, since UCAS receive AO data four days prior to release of results to centres.
- 8.4 JC said that AOs should be reminded of the value to the learner in accrediting units/qualifications to the PLR. He volunteered to participate in a working party to seek ways to resolve AO's reticence in submitting data to the PLR.
- 8.5 GJ suggested the secretariat consider creating a working party to include AoC, ALP, *the information authority* and the LRS. The group would make recommendations to *the information authority* board on the considerations in the LRS paper.

Action 01/12 – 03: The secretariat to convene a meeting to evaluate the feasibility of the formation of a working party to approach to resolving the issue of prior attainment with AOs.

Item 9. *The information authority* secretariat report

- 9.1 JP provided commentary on the secretariat report, which includes Appendix A at the back.
- 9.2 Appendix B includes budget spend to date and that projected to the end of the financial year. JP stated that even if the current freeze on marketing expenditure was relaxed, the secretariat would still report an underspend.
- 9.3 It was noted that the management of risks and mitigation of issues had been successful, which is illustrated by the dashboard risk register.

Item 10. ISB Update (Verbal update)

- 10.1 TK updated board members on the recent work of the Information Standards Board (ISB) and briefly recapped the history of the ISB, which was set up in 2007 by (then) DIUS and DCSF to take an active role in developing data standards that could be applied across the whole of 14-19 education, and that would 'fit together.'
- 10.2 ISB have developed standards for learning opportunity; qualifications/awards; ethnicity (sponsored by *the information authority*) service provision and attendance monitoring.

- 10.3 TK went on to say that the benefits of such data standards can only be realised if they are implemented and that the ISB is currently working to increase the support and take up of existing standards.
- 10.4 ISB is providing support for organisations adopting the standards and they are now seeking a level of adoption by *information authority* partners; JCQ and other AOs. JP confirmed that he has been working very closely with ISB (as one of its board members) to ensure that standards are convergent and that a pragmatic way forward is sought.
- 10.5 CK asked for an overview of current priorities for the ISB and an indication of confidence that these ISB priorities align with coalition priorities. TK explained that priorities include:
- a review of the ethnicity standard to align with the 2011 Census Codes;
 - a review of learners' address standards; and
 - disability and learning difficulties.
- 10.6 HN confirmed that the ISB were expecting a response to a note to David Bell (Permanent Secretary for Education) for support in getting the business to adopt and conform to ISB standards.

Item 11. Chairman's address

- 11.1 GJ gave a brief speech at the end of the meeting to mark his final chairing of an *information authority* board. GJ said that the board had performed its work effectively, in a high pressure environment, between two sets of competing interests (policymakers and providers). GJ thanked the small and effective secretariat team for the work it has performed and he also gave recognition and thanks to board members for their dedication and high level of productivity.

Meeting closed.

Item 12. Date of next meeting

- 12.1 The next board meeting will take place on Wednesday 2nd March with the venue to be confirmed.
- 12.2 There is the possibility of an extraordinary board meeting in January. Details to follow.

Meeting chair	Graham Jones
Minute taker	David Matthews
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