

Minutes

Date	16 June 2011
Subject	ER provider group meeting
Location	Cheylesmore House, Coventry
Time	10:30am to 3:30pm
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

Item 3. Feedback on the 'User Experience'

3.1 Fraser Hamilton attended the previous ER group meeting to talk to the group and visited numerous learning providers. Since then he has produced a series of typical job profiles to demonstrate common data roles that exist within organisations. He also briefly documented the way each role type works and the challenges they face when accessing the various software systems and funding information. This work is feeding into a number of IM Services initiatives to improve the user's experience of data systems.

Item 4. Skills Funding Agency funding policy

- 4.1 Nick Chomyk from the Skills Funding Agency spoke to the group. Nick is responsible for writing documents on learner eligibility and the funding calculation.
- 4.2 Nick gave the group an idea of what to expect from [Guidance Note 8](#). This included more information on Outcome Incentive Payments. The agency wants to link payments to the achievement of job outcomes for specific groups of learners.
- 4.3 Nick talked about the need to better define work place learning and class room based learning. He also explained how the recently announced Access to Apprenticeships would work. The aim is for training providers to get learners, who have been NEET for at least 13 weeks, started on apprenticeships. Training providers will have six months to find an employer to take the learner on as an apprentice.
- 4.4 Nick commented that he was pleased to see that electronic evidence was specifically mentioned in Guidance Note 7. He suggested that more guidance

will be produced but it will be very short. The agency is likely to adopt the HMRC's approach - learning providers will be left to develop systems that work for them. The Agency does not want to be too prescriptive.

- 4.5 The group discussed the cumbersome requirements to store stamped and certified copies of certificates. There was some debate around whether copies needed to be certified. Nick commented that the guidance from the agency does not require certified copies. The group suggested to Nick that the agency should interact directly with the awarding organisations regarding learners that have been awarded qualifications.
- 4.6 There was further discussion about the requirements for apprentices to apply for their certificates. This is causing quite a burden in the sector. Nick explained that this requirement came directly from the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning act. He pointed out that providers can apply for certificates on behalf of learners if they have evidence, such as a signed form, that the learner has agreed to this. Nick offered to look into any specific problems that this is causing providers.
- 4.7 Nick described 2011/12 as a transitional year and suggested that things will be better by 2012/13. Given the number of changes and new initiatives that Nick had described, there was some scepticism from the group that funding was likely to be any simpler in the near future.

Item 5. Data Service system re-platforming

- 5.1 Alan Billingham from the Data Service gave a presentation on the Data Service's project to re-platform its data collection systems. This includes redevelopment of the online data collection systems (OLDC), the Learner Information Suite (LIS) and replacing the Learning Aims Database (LAD) with the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA).
- 5.2 Alan gave a brief summary of the Data Service's blueprint which was agreed several years ago. As the Data Service inherited a number of bespoke systems which are very expensive to maintain and amend, they decided to move to more flexible, cost effective systems.
- 5.3 Another of the aims is to make the systems more automated so that LARA can import information directly from 'approved' organisations. Currently aims are checked and uploaded manually. This led to a debate about the status of many apprenticeships. Spreadsheets published by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) suggested that a couple of hundred apprenticeships have been approved for funding but several months later, these qualifications are still not on the LAD. The reason for this delay seemed to be that although the qualifications had been approved as eligible for funding, the Data Service was waiting for information which qualifications would actually be funded and at what rate.
- 5.4 It was suggested that NAS, the funding agencies and the Data Service should work more closely together to ensure that they each pass on the correct message to the sector.
- 5.5 Alan talked about the new functionality being added to the LIS. For 2011/12, the LIS will convert flat files into XML. It will also amalgamate files and be

able to handle any combination of flat files and / or XML files. LIS will process XML files and so providers should be aware that errors will use the XML terminology rather than the L or A codes.

- 5.6 The group expressed some frustration at the current arrangements for dealing with funding problems caused by data issues. Recent problems with the Additional Learning Support and bonus payments for E2E provision were cited as examples. Providers are told to talk to their agency account manager but often find that the account managers are completely unaware of published known issues.

Item 6. The single ILR in XML

- 6.1 Lisa Macdougall informed the group that the [Provider Support Manual](#) for the single ILR was about to be published and talked through some of the areas that have proved challenging to combine. For example, employment status has historically been collected in a variety of L and A fields but has now been combined. It is likely that there will be further work done to simplify employment status in future years.
- 6.2 Lisa gave an overview of the new capability that will be in LIS 19. It will be able to amalgamate learner records, so where learners have more than one learner record, their records will be merged to create a single ILR for that learner.
- 6.3 The data collection timetable was discussed. In short, colleges and local authorities are expected to return data quarterly (although if they are offering 16-18 apprenticeships then monthly data will be required). All other providers should return data monthly.
- 6.4 Data extracts will be taken on the published dates. These extracts will be kept to enable organisations such as the funding agencies and Ofsted to compare a provider's datasets over a period of time.
- 6.5 Lisa briefly reminded the group of the [key changes for 2011/12](#).
- 6.6 The group queried whether mid-year estimates will still be required by the Young People's Learning Agency.

Action: Paul to check with the YPLA.

- 6.7 The group also asked how often the postcode data on the online data collection system (OLDC) is updated. Some providers are having problems getting postcodes accepted by OLDC, even though Royal Mail has confirmed that the postcode is correct. This issue frustrates is frustration at the queried

Post-meeting update: *the information authority* is looking into this issue as part of the development of the 2012/13 ILR.

Item 7. Employer contribution collection

- 7.1 Lisa Macdougall talked the group through the Employer contribution collection. It is recognised that putting a value on in-kind contributions such as making training facilities available is not straightforward and that it will be difficult to ensure that providers complete this consistently. Lisa confirmed that the figures returned should be the provider's best estimate. The

information will not be audited. Some providers commented that in their experience there are very few contributions from employers.

- 7.2 The group highlighted that a lack of guidance for this return may have a detrimental effect on data quality. Lisa said that she was aware that the Skills Funding Agency were working on a second version of the guidance and that this should be published in the next month or so.

Action: Paul to ensure that any further guidance is published on *the information authority* website and circulated to the group.

Item 8. Learning Records Service update

- 8.1 Mike Coulson from the Learning Records Service (LRS) spoke about some of the benefits in version 5.1 of the Learner Registration Service. It now fully supports the Qualification and Credit Framework, credit transfers and has improved workflows for possible ULN matches.
- 8.2 Mike explained that the LRS is working to reduce the number of possible matches and duplicates. This includes creating a test environment so that they can improve the matching algorithm. Mike's view is that the vast majority of possible match cases should not need further input from the learner.
- 8.3 The LRS is involved in producing an online identification verification system, known as the Learner Passport. This will enable learners with internet access to identify themselves online. It could replace the need for learners to have to show passports or driving licenses to learning providers. It should be possible for software suppliers to access plug in services to access this.
- 8.4 There was also a discussion about the LRS's continuing efforts to get more awarding organisations to populate Personal Learning Records with timely achievement data.

Item 9. Group discussion – Initial Assessments and ILPs

- 9.1 Due to time pressures, this agenda item was not discussed.

Item 10. Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (DSAT) feedback

- 10.1 Diane Rogers from the Skills Funding Agency sought feedback from the group the Data Self-Assessment Toolkit. Diane has run a number of sessions for learning providers to discuss any suggestions that they have for improving DSAT.
- 10.2 There was positive feedback on the [DSAT e-learning module](#). The group said it would be helpful if there were additional modules aimed at more experienced staff, because the current module is only aimed at first time users.
- 10.3 It was also suggested that providers should be informed if / how other agencies such as Ofsted use DSAT reports.

Item 11. Developing the 2012/13 ILR

- 11.1 Paul Kelman gave the group a very brief reminder of *the information authority's* ILR change process and the assessment criteria used to decide

which requests would be taken forward. *The information authority* will look to consult the sector about the changes over the summer.

Item 12. Any other business

12.1 The group would like to discuss the use of the EDRS system at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting date has been rearranged and will take place on **Thursday 8 December 2011**.

Meeting Attendees on 16 June 2011

Name	Organisation
Claire Naughton	Training Plus Merseyside
Dawn Pembery	Wiltshire & Somerset Colleges' Partnership
Dipa Ganguli	Croydon Adult Learning
Donna MacManus	TQ Training
Gary Richardson	Community Training Services Ltd
Irene Booth	St Helens Chamber
Janet Smart	Training Plus Merseyside
Jo Grenfell	Wiltshire College
Julia Emm	First4Skills
Julie Byrne	Knowsley Community College
Lee Higgins	Newcastle College
Lisa Macdougall	<i>The information authority</i>
Liz Hardy	Community Training Services Ltd
Louise Pettimore Southern	Toni & Guy
Lynn Law	Seetec
Mia Bousfield	Wiltshire & Somerset Colleges' Partnership
Nick Chomyk	Skills Funding Agency
Paul Kelman	<i>The information authority</i>
Paul Rogers	YMCA Training
Paul Taylor	Manchester Solutions
Peter Hancock	Adult Education in Gloucestershire
Ria Lawton	First4Skills
Richard Luke	Toni & Guy
Tracy Tennant	Community Training Services Ltd