

inform

Issue 32 – December 2009

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.

Data in the wider FE and Training Sector Conference 2009

The information authority and the Data Service hosted a one-day conference on Thursday 3 December at Aston Business School, Birmingham. The aim of the conference was to highlight changes, plans and implications for data collection, use and regulation in the wider FE and training system.

Keynote speakers included Ian Pryce, Principal of Bedford College, Mike Davis, HMI, Ofsted, Mark Kaczmarek, Deputy Director FE Performance and Quality, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Rich Williams, Head of the Data Service.



For more details on the conference and the outcomes of the day visit the [conference website](#), this was updated throughout the day with news updates, videos, photos and blogs.



Ian Pryce opened the conference



Rich Williams delivered the final keynote speech



Mark Kaczmarek, BIS, delivered the opening keynote speech

This month:

Data in the wider FE and Training Sector Conference 2009

News from *the information authority*:

- December board meeting outcomes
- Out and about
- ILR Data Management FAQs
- Feconnect upgrade
- Success Rates newsletter now available to download

News from the Data Service:

- Latest SFR published
- Success Rates reports and MLP reports now available
- Qualification journey – accreditation to publication on LAD
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Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year from all at *the information authority* and the Data Service

News from *the information authority*

December board meeting - outcomes

The information authority board met on 2 December, for its quarterly meeting.

The Chairman, Graham Jones, welcomed several new board members to their first meeting, including Emma Cochrane (Ofqual), Mary Joyce (LLUK), Robert Spano (GoSkills) and Martin Lamb (YPLA). Graham also thanked Margaret Coleman for all her hard work as a long-standing and very active member of the board - Margaret is stepping down due to the dissolution of the LSC.

Items on the agenda included updates on progress made on data management issues and queries arising from a recent letter to providers from the Chief Executive of the LSC, progress on commissioning the Learner Data Strategy, agreement of the 2009/10 communications strategy and the collection and reporting impacts of the Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF).

Board members also received a presentation on the new Single Account Management System (SAMS), which is being launched in April next year and will give providers and account managers access to funding and contracting information securely over the web. SAMS is being developed in four phases between 2008 and 2013 and is one of a number of web-enabled programmes that will simplify access and support and streamline FE administration and working practices. Board members were given the opportunity to comment and raise any concerns about changes to arrangements and future ways of working that this may bring about.

The next board meeting will be in March 2010.

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

Out and about in January 2010

The information authority and the Data Service will be holding a joint workshop for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in Sheffield on 19 January 2010.

The aim of the workshop is to promote the work of the Data Service and *the information authority* and to also highlight the work we are doing in partnership, and how we work with BIS. A further update on the outcomes of this workshop will be included in the January issue of *inform*.

ILR Data Management FAQs

Following [Geoff Russell's letter to providers](#) earlier this year about good data management practices and principles, *the information authority* has received some specific queries about recording particular circumstances and other more general queries about the rules for ILR recording.

We have set up a web page to publish answers to these questions. This is now available at <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/datamanagement/faq/>.

This page will continue to be updated in coming weeks when additional guidance is finalised. If you wish to be alerted to changes to this web page, please sign up to our [email alert service](#). Existing subscribers can log in and amend their settings to receive alerts for this new page.

Feconnect upgrade

Feconnect, the online community portal from *the information authority*, is being upgraded.

As part of the upgrade process, **feconnect** members need to re-register for a fresh account and password.

You can still use your previous username and email address, but please note that the new platform does not allow certain characters that may have been part of your old username, for example the '@' symbol, full stops and underscores, in which case you will have to modify your username.

Once re-registered, you can edit your profile and change your Display Name (how your username is displayed throughout the site).

Re-register your **feconnect** account at <http://forums.theia.org.uk/register/>.

Success Rates newsletter now available to download

The cross-organisation [Data Harmonisation Group](#) is continuing to make significant progress on the harmonisation of success rate methodology and in making the processes involved more transparent for both learning providers and data users.

A newsletter was sent to FE and training providers on 15 December 2009 to highlight some of the areas of work that have been progressed and where further details can be found. This newsletter is available to download from [the information authority website](#).

News from the Data Service

Latest Statistical First Release (SFR) published

The Data Service has published its latest Statistical First Release (SFR) on Post-16 Education and Skills: learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held.

The SFR shows the latest performance against the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on adult attainment and apprenticeships.

This SFR covers the number of people aged 16 and over who are not in school or university in England and who have taken a course funded by the Learning and Skills Council.

Final figures show that in the academic year 2008/09:

- ❖ there were 239,900 apprenticeship starts and 143,400 apprenticeship framework achievements. This represents the highest number of apprenticeship starts and achievements ever in an academic year. This means that the PSA target to reach 130,000 apprenticeship completions by 2010/11 has been achieved two years early
- ❖ overall apprenticeship success rate was 70.9%. This is significantly higher than the target of an apprenticeship success rate of 65% in 2008/09
- ❖ there were 817,400 Train to Gain starts and 543,100 Train to Gain achievements. This means that learners have started over 1.4 million Train to Gain courses since the scheme was launched in April 2006, and achieved over 850,000 qualifications through Train to Gain.

Between 2000/01 and 2008/09 (provisional data), 3.24 million working age adults have improved their basic skills. BIS has achieved its PSA target of improving the basic skills of 2.25 million working-age adults by 2010, three years ahead of the target completion date.

Provisional figures show that in the academic year 2008/09 there were:

- ❖ 1,442,600 learners participating on Skills for Life courses.
- ❖ 1,254,300 learners participating on full level 2 courses.
- ❖ 794,300 learners participating on full level 3 courses.
- ❖ 4,756,600 learners participating in LSC-funded Further Education.

Additional supporting data for apprenticeships and Train to Gain showing breakdowns by age, gender, ethnicity, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, level, region, local authority and parliamentary constituency are also available.

To read the full commentary and access the Microsoft Excel tables please refer to the [Statistics section](#) of the Data Service website.

Success Rates reports and MLP reports now available

The year end Employer Responsive (ER) Qualification Success Rates (QSR) reports for 2008/09 Apprenticeships and Train to Gain, along with Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) reports are now available to download from the [Provider Gateway](#).

The 2008/09 Learner Responsive (LR) QSR reports and the Learner Responsive MLP first interim reports are also available to download from the Provider Gateway.

If you have a query about these reports please contact the **Service Desk on 0870 267 0001**.

Qualification Journey – Accreditation to Publication on LAD

The Data Service has been working closely with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to produce a guide on '[The Qualification Journey – Accreditation to Publication on LAD](#)'. This guide describes the process, organisations and timescales involved in an accredited qualification acquiring approval and funding information and being published on the Learning Aims Database (LAD).

It is intended to provide short-term information on the current organisation and processes, pre-April 2010, when efficiencies, improvements and regulatory changes will alter the current business.

The intended audience for this note are further education stakeholders particularly providers and awarding organisations, to understand how the different teams within the LSC are involved in the process (and particularly the difference between the Section 96 and Section 97 processes). LSC staff should continue to report LAD issues through the usual route (LSC Central Services Help Desk)."

This guide is available to view on the [LSC](#) and [Data Service](#) websites.

If you have any other queries on this guide please contact the **Service Desk on 0870 2670001**.

Learner Responsive methodology 2008/09 and Guidance Information

The [Learner Responsive methodology](#) for the academic year 2008/09 is now available on the Data Service website.

For more information and guidance on Learner Responsive (LR) Qualification Success Rates (QSR) please refer to the [guidance notes](#) on the Data Service website. The guidance notes explain the basic principles of the reports and how the reports are structured. These guidance notes and more detailed guidance on how success rates have been calculated can be found in the technical definitions section of the [Data Dictionary](#).

Provider Gateway Access Problems

A small number of providers are experiencing issues in uploading or downloading/reading documents on the Provider Gateway. Examples of these are Train to Gain, Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) and Self Assessment Reports (SARs).

This is now a known problem relating to security access for certain funding documents and a technical solution is being worked on.

Should you experience this problem then please log a call to the Service Desk on servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk. Each call will be investigated and if the root cause is the known problem there is a workaround.

If you have problems uploading a document file size of 5MB or under, please send this file to the [Service Desk](#) and they will upload this on your behalf. If you have problems downloading a file the Service Desk can check the file size. If it is under 5 MB then the Service Desk can download and forward to you.

There are no workarounds at present for file sizes over 5MB as this is the maximum size that the Data Service's email system will allow.

If you have any queries please contact the **Service Desk on 0870 2670001**.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set and regulate data standards for organisations involved in 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.