



The information authority

Paper 10: *The information authority secretariat report*

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1 What are we asking the board to do?

This paper gives a status update on the work of *the information authority* secretariat. Decisions are required on four items; the remainder of the paper is for information.

2 Introduction

This status report covers work by the secretariat since the board meeting on 3rd December 2008 and that planned before the next meeting on 10th June 2009.

3 Decisions to be taken / items to be noted by the board

The following decisions are required:

3.1 Protocol and terms of reference

The protocol and terms of reference for *the information authority* require updating. Revised versions are attached at Appendix B.

The main differences from previous versions include: in the protocol, a definition of the types of data standards which will be developed and in the terms of reference, more clarity on the types of data within scope and a reference to the appeals procedure.

The board is asked to provide feedback on and agreement to the proposed changes to the terms of reference and protocol for *the information authority*.

3.2 Performance criteria for *the information authority*

It was agreed at the board meeting in March 2008 that the authority's performance against the criteria would be reviewed twice a year (in March and September) and that a formal review of the criteria would take place in March 2009.

An explanation on actual performance against each of the criteria is detailed in Appendix C.

The board is asked to confirm the performance criteria for 2009/10 and progress against the criteria to date.

3.3 Changes agreed to the ILR for 2009/10

An issue has arisen in relation to an item agreed for the ILR specification for 2009/10.

The board agreed to the use of a more coherent set of codes approved by LSC governance in the LSC number of funding LSC field, field L25, subject to the approved new codes being confirmed to the secretariat by 10th October 2008. To date an agreed list has not been available.

The secretariat is asking the board to agree that it publishes by 6 March 2009 the list of codes to be used in 2009/10 in the LSC number of funding LSC field. If no further list is supplied by the LSC by that date then the list will be the same as that used in 2008/09. If the LSC supplies another list by that date then that would be used.

3.4 In-year changes to the ILR for 2008/09 and late changes for 2009/10.

The secretariat is currently investigating two urgent change requests for the ILR specification related to responses to the current economic climate. A separate note will be distributed to the board for consideration and decision at the meeting on 4th March.

The board is asked to note the following items:

3.5 Earlier reporting of achievement data

The project to examine the possibility of earlier reporting of achievement data continues. Requirements gathering has been completed and research on the options and practicalities continues. A full report and proposals will be provided at the June board.

3.6 Improving data quality for 2009/10

A feasibility report has been produced on the project to improve further the quality of ILR data for 2009/10. This proposes a number of measures including improved guidance and training for providers making an ILR return and increased provision and use of provider self assessment tools e.g. DSAT, Credibility Reports. The report also proposes some longer term work e.g. development of an overall measure for data quality.

3.7 Awarding data standard

The authority hosted a meeting on 11th February on development of a common data standard for data for qualification entry and results notification. The attendees included representatives from DIUS, DCSF, Ofqual, Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB), Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), Examination Officers' Association (EOA), and ISB. All gave their support to the development of a common data standard for awarding data.

Development of a standard will commence via the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF) through which JCQ has started work. In parallel, advice will be sought from DCSF/DIUS CIO Group on the infrastructure and technology implications including investment implications across the education system.

3.8 Development of the Staff Individualised Record

LLUK has produced an update for the board on the development of the staff individualised record. This is attached at Appendix D.

3.9 Workplan of the information authority

The current version of the authority's workplan is at Appendix E. It provides an up to date status on key activities and deliverables as agreed with the board in October 2007 and those identified since.

3.10 Information authority spend

The spend against budget for 2008/09 and the forecast spend for 2009/10 are attached (Appendices F and G). The board is asked to note the underspend in 2008/09 due to delays in recruitment of staff and slower expected run rate on some projects. The board is asked to provide any comment on the proposed areas of spend for 2009/10.

4 Further information

The appendices to this report include:

- Progress report and key activities for the period October 2008 to June 2009 (Appendix A)
- Revised protocol and terms of reference for *the information authority* (Appendix B)
- Performance measurement six monthly review (Appendix C)
- Update on the LLUK Staff Individualised Record (Appendix D)
- *The information authority* work plan (Appendix E)
- Financial performance for 2008/09 (Appendix F)
- Financial forecast breakdown for 2009/10 (Appendix G)
- Risks and issues (Appendix H)

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Appendix A

Progress report

Activities for last period (January – February 2009)

1. Stakeholder engagement

Events held:

- Advisory Groups – including software suppliers, colleges, own software writers and employer responsive providers, to address current data issues and clarify any queries regarding the 2009/10 ILR.
- Workshop hosted on 5th December 2008 with interested parties on the possibility of using the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF) for awarding data
- Meeting hosted on 11th February 2009 on awarding data issues with DCSF, DIUS, Ofqual, Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB), Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), Examination Officers' Association (EOA), and ISB. This group supported of a common data standard for awarding data.

Other meetings / contacts:

- A meeting with the DCSF Star Chamber was held on 15th January. It was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding would be of benefit for guiding the work of the two organisations and this is being drafted.
- DIUS regular contacts
- Self regulation - regular contacts and seminars
- Success rates harmonisation group – monthly meetings
- LLUK – regular meeting
- LSC – regular contacts
- React (LGA) – initial contacts with this group about the use of data by local authorities
- Bureaucracy Reduction Group – 16th January
- Ofsted, meeting with Melanie Hunt – 20th January
- Information Standards Board (ISB) – 27th January
- Qualifications Reform & Delivery England Board – 30th January
- Data Service – regular contacts including Steering Group
- Various provider visits

Website and community portal

- FE Connect has moved to local hosting arrangements giving the secretariat more control over the availability and performance of the service.
- The new Groups function has been set up and the authority will be promoting use of this over the next few weeks.

2. Secretariat team

- The secretariat has now received approval from the LSC job evaluation panel for all new roles. The recruitment process is currently underway.

- The Community and Stakeholder Team successfully recruited to the new post of Community Facilitator (start date 23rd February 2009) and the vacant post of Stakeholder Engagement Manager (start date 2nd March 2009).
- Contract resource continues to be deployed to supplement the permanent team pending recruitment of new staff. Specifically, this contract resource is leading on the projects on data quality and earlier reporting of achievement data.

3. Quality and standards

- The validation rules for 2009/10 have now been completed and associated guidance published on 30th January 2009.
- The outputs from the review of the ILR change request process has been pulled together and a plan for the recommended improvements is now in place.
- The calendar for the change request process for 2010/11 has been published on the corporate website.
- Work has been commissioned via the ISB on the development of an ethnicity data standard for use across education which fits with ONS census definitions. A draft standard is to be delivered by the end of March. The cost of this work will be a maximum of £50K.
- Following general support for the development of a common data standard to support examination entry and results notification, the authority will contribute to its development and encourage involvement from all interested parties.
- An appendix to the ILR specification was published on 30 January 2009 containing for each data field a data quality standard, data owner, main stakeholders and a map to main reporting areas. This is the first time such information has been published.

4. Governance

- The information authority's first Benefits Report has been produced and will be circulated to all board members.
- The six monthly performance measurement review is included in this report and can be found at Appendix C.

5. Budget

- Spend to date and forecast for this year (2008/9) is detailed at Appendix F. There is an expected under spend against budget of £295k resulting from lower than expected staff costs, reduced marketing costs and slower than expected run rate on project costs.

6. Work in progress

- Key risks and issues for *the information authority's* work are listed at Appendix H.
- The budget for 2009/10 is £1,390,151 and the forecast breakdown is shown at Appendix G.

Activities planned for next period (March 2009 – June 2009)

7. Stakeholder engagement

- The chairman of *the information authority* board meets with Sion Simon MP, (Minister for Further Education) on 25th February to discuss our work and direction over the coming year.
- *The information authority* will present at the Information about Children, Education and Schools (ICES) conference on 27th February 2009.
- *The information authority* will present at the AoC examinations officers' conference on 27th February 2009.
- Promotion of the ILR Change Request engagement / consultation process for 2010/11
- Wider promotion of the community portal and new 'groups' function.
- Publicity of board decisions taken in March.
- Contributions to stakeholder newsletters – including the DSP bulletin issued by the DCSF and FE News distributed by DIUS.
- Exhibiting at the LARIA (Local Authority Research and Information Association) conference March 30th – 1st April 2009 in partnership with the Data Service.
- Main sponsor of the AoC Nilta CIS conference on 25th June 2009.

8. Secretariat team

- Following agreement of role descriptions, recruitment is underway and outstanding posts are due to be filled in the next few months.
- Once all posts have been filled a team building event will be organised to support effective working of the expanded team.

9. Quality and Standards

- Standards advice and support will continue to be provided to various FE initiatives.
- Continued contribution to working groups of the Information Standards Board.
- Standards development with LLUK on the Staff Individualised Record
- The secretariat is currently working with Connexions on agreeing a standard data set for their collections.
- Work to publish the ILR support manuals for 2009/10 by the end of March 2009 continues.
- Work is currently underway to determine the feasibility of providing a comprehensive set of timetables to enable providers to complete their planning processes more efficiently and effectively. The secretariat is engaging with the relevant departments to determine if and how this could be achieved.

10. Governance

- Work will continue on embedding governance arrangements and working practices between *the information authority* and the Data Service.

Appendix B – Protocol and Terms of Reference

Protocol

A protocol agreement signed by stakeholder organisations gives the board the authority to deliver reforms to further education data.

The Protocol - its development and stages

1. By signing this protocol, we are committing to the FE data reform objectives and to working together to deliver them.

2. We support the development of data, collection and reporting standards across the FE system and we support the development of a process for agreeing those standards. The scope of these standards includes, but is not limited to:
 - Data relating to learners, learning participation, achievements and staff in the FE sector, qualifications and awards.
 - Definitions and meta data related to data collected, data derived from collected data and algorithms to transform data for all information and data used by more than one stakeholder, including learning providers.
 - Data quality.

Commitment to the objectives

3. By signing this protocol, we are committing to reform by balancing the burden on learning providers of data collection and reporting, while ensuring that providers and data users have the most useful information about learners, learning and about the performance of learning providers.

4. We are committed to:
 - Improving the quality and use of information in support of effective decision making by all stakeholders in the sector.
 - Significantly reducing bureaucracy across the FE system to release time, resources and energy for the front line services.
 - Improving accountability to learners, learning providers and data users for data standards, collections and reporting.

Commitment to working together to deliver the objectives

5. We are committing to working together with all FE system stakeholders to deliver these objectives.

6. By signing this protocol, we are committing to:

- Reducing the quantity and variation of different data requests to learning providers by working through an independently-chaired FE *information authority* as a single gatekeeper for setting information, collection and reporting standards.
- Abiding by a set of data standards, collections and reporting standards collectively negotiated and resolved with and through *the information authority* - to the wider benefit of the sector.
- Championing *the information authority* principles to ensure that use of data is maximised and burden minimised

Establishing authority

7. By signing this protocol, we have established the authority of *the information authority*. Government Ministers have asked the sector to work together to reform FE data. That Ministerial remit, the appointment of an independent chair to *the information authority* board and our agreement to this protocol give *the information authority* the authority to deliver reforms to data systems.

Relationships

8. *The information authority* must work within existing standards and structures. These include Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Information Standards Board (ISB), the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme (notably the Common Data Definitions component) and the Schools Star Chamber. *The information authority* must also recognise the reciprocal arrangements governing FE in Higher Education (HE) and HE in FE.

What we expect from *the information authority* and the reforms

9. In return for committing to the objectives, and to working together under *the information authority*, we expect the chair, board and secretariat to:

- Take our requirements seriously - recognising the independence and different missions of signatory organisations and other stakeholders. Deliver transparent criteria and processes for assessing and balancing data requests.

- Recognise the core of information required by an effective learning provider for their own management.
- Make sure we have better data - more frequent, more up-to-date, more accurate, more relevant, more responsive, more consistent, more complete.
- Ensure we still have access to data - raw detailed individual level data to develop and pilot new algorithms, methodologies and measures. These developments and flexible analyses must be encouraged and flourish. What we are committing to is consulting and agreeing these within *the information authority* before they go live.
- Deliver the reforms - demonstrate and prove that requirements are being met from new arrangements before old collections and reports are switched off.
- Defend and represent the wider interests of the sector, not just the interests of their own organisations. Stakeholder views must be heard and decisions must be transparent.
- Publish standards, make them readily available and encourage their use.
- Give stakeholders early warning of any plans or initiatives that may impact on data standards, collections and reports.

Priorities

10. As signatories, we are emphasising that agreement on the algorithms, derivations and methodologies for producing performance and quality measures is the most important issue. Such agreement (and publicising and promoting them) would mean that the burden of reconciling and validating performance and quality measures in reports would be significantly reduced. If that issue is addressed, it matters less who collects and reports on the data.

Commending *the information authority* approach

11. There are a wide range of FE system stakeholders - including the learning providers and learners themselves. Practically, not all stakeholders can be signatories to this protocol. However, as signatories, we are commending *the information authority* approach to all FE system stakeholders - and asking them to work with *the information authority* on information, collection and reporting standards with the objective of reforming FE data, maximising benefits and minimising burden.

Terms of Reference

The Government White Paper 'Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' identified a need to bring together the information needs of all the organisations that request information from the Further Education (FE) system and to agree what will be required from all providers, based on common standards. Data is to be collected once and used for a variety of purposes. The intent is to ensure that only priority information is collected and that reports are presented in a standard format.

This has led to the establishment of a single mechanism, or gatekeeper, for setting information standards and data and reporting requirements, *the information authority*.

The information authority board's decisions will reform data and information across the FE system. We are working with the Data Service, which is responsible for the collection and dissemination of data and for streamlining data collection and use.

Authority

The information authority's powers come from;

- Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) Ministers asking the sector to work together to reform FE data.
- The ministerial appointment of an independent chair to *the information authority* board and the cross-system membership of the board.
- A protocol agreement signed by stakeholder organisations, agreeing to work together to deliver the authority's objectives, to reform FE data.

Relationships

The information authority will work within existing standards and structures. These include Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Information Standards Board (ISB), the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme (notably the Common Data Definitions component) and the Schools Star Chamber. *The information authority* will also recognise the reciprocal arrangements governing FE in Higher Education (HE) and HE in FE.

Overall objective

The board will oversee key data and information reforms across the FE system by directing the overall strategy for data collection and reporting, and determining data definitions and standards.

Range of decisions

The board will take decisions on:

- The data standards that will be used in collection and reporting.
- The data items to be collected.
- What information will be made available and disseminated and the rules for its use, e.g. the use of 'early findings' reports; the purpose of data sharing; and how data might be shared.
- How frequently data will be collected and reported.
- Data quality: The cycle, timetable and processes for changes to collection and reporting – including receiving, assessing and ruling on proposals for new data collections and fields within the individualised learner record (ILR).

In making those decisions, the board will take account of:

- The principles of *the information authority* that use of data is maximised and burden is minimised.
- The wider interests of the FE system as a whole – and not just the interests of their own organisations.
- Representations from the system, through the secretariat, so that data user and data provider stakeholders can influence board decisions.
- The need for stability and appropriate notice of change to FE data standards.

Scope of decisions

The main scope of the board's decisions will be:

- Post-16 learning across the English FE system – including FE colleges, FE learning through other institutions, work-based learning, Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) – but not including HE.
- Data about learners and their learning and other types of data e.g. data on staff, awarding data as it affects providers, and data covered by the Framework for Excellence, will be in scope.

The board will have an interest in (and influence on) data standards, collections and reporting about and in school sixth forms, HE and in other UK countries. However, while working to ensure that the data needed from those systems is available to the FE system, the board will not have primary responsibility.

Operation of board meetings

Board meetings will operate as follows:

- Board members are primarily the organisations that have signed *the information authority* protocol. Wherever possible decisions will be reached by consensus. If a formal vote becomes necessary, each organisation shall have one vote. The chairman shall have a second 'casting' vote in the event of a tied decision.
- Each protocol signatory has a named representative for board meetings. Substitutes will need to be agreed in advance with the chairman.
- The quorum for board meetings is the chair plus four board members.
- Additional attendees will need the agreement of the chair. The head of the secretariat is a permanent attendee.
- The secretariat will distribute papers to board members at least one week in advance of the meeting so that members have time to prepare.

A separate operating procedure has been agreed for the Appeals Process.

Appendix C

The *information authority* – detailed performance criteria

The performance criteria for *the information authority* (covering both the board and the secretariat) are described below. Performance against the criteria will be reviewed twice a year (in March and September) by the board, and the criteria will be reviewed annually. These criteria were approved by the board in March 2008 and it was agreed that the board would complete a formal review of the criteria in March 2009.

2. Criteria and performance

2.1 Develop a transparent process for data changes

The information authority secretariat will:

- Publish a clear and transparent process for data changes
- Specify unambiguous assessment criteria for changes
- Support stakeholders in the development of business cases for changes
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for debating and challenging proposed changes. (These will include face to face groups and online communities)
- Present balanced recommendations on proposed changes to *the information authority* board.

The information authority board will:

- Take transparent decisions on change requests based on balancing provider burden versus the provision of useful information for providers and data users

Measures and performance:

- The publication of an agreed data change process, ILR change timetable for 2009/10, and change assessment criteria by 31st March 2008. **Complete for 2009/10 and 2010/11. An appeals process has been agreed and published.**
- Publication of board papers showing how decisions were reached. **Complete / ongoing**
- The delivery of ongoing improvements in processes as agreed with stakeholders. **Feedback on the ILR change request process was sought from providers in November 2008. An action plan has since been agreed and is currently being executed for the 2010/11 change process.**
- Feedback from stakeholders on support and communication mechanisms. **The information authority communications strategy was commented upon and endorsed by the FECG (Further Education Communications Gateway Panel) at their January 2009 meeting. Feedback was very positive and some good suggestions were made.**

2.2 Agree clear standards for FE data with alignment between schools and HE

The information authority will:

- Set and communicate clear standards for FE data ensuring these are available to all interested parties
- Adopt any common data standards wherever possible
- Resolve any potential conflicts with HE and / or schools. In the first instance resolution will be through the appropriate body (HESA or the Schools Star Chamber), or if necessary via the Information Standards Board (ISB)

- Participate fully with the ISB, as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies

Measures and performance:

- Publication of data standards on *the information authority* website with links to other standards where appropriate. **ILR standards published and improved; more work to be done on linking to other standards.**
- Adoption of agreed data standards by the Data Service, and increasing uptake by other users in the FE system **In progress.**
- Feedback from stakeholder groups including the ISB, HESA and the Schools Star Chamber on collaborative working enabling the adoption of common standards, and on the clarity / usefulness of standards. **Good working relationships in place with these groups. Memorandum of Understanding with the ISB has been reviewed and updated. Work is due to start on a MOU with the Schools Star Chamber.**

2.3 Develop effective and wide engagement with stakeholder groups

The information authority will:

- Establish wide and deep networks across the FE system
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for engaging with stakeholder groups e.g. for consultation or promulgation of standards
- Ensure that the views of all stakeholder groups are considered in developing its work
- Develop an effective mechanism for tracking issues and incorporating them into *the information authority* workplan

Measures and performance:

- Development and implementation of a comprehensive stakeholder and communication plan. **Plan in place and being implemented – endorsed by the Board and the FECG ; perception survey indicates more to do in profile raising.**
- Provision of face to face groups, teleconferences, and a user-friendly community website for stakeholder engagement. All to be in place by March 2008. **Complete and ongoing with new Data Users group established from March 2009.**
- The set up of a clear, easy to navigate website which provides easy access to documents, information and help to be in place by March 2008. **www.theia.org.uk continues to be well-used and improvements continue.**
- In conjunction with the Data Service, provision of a responsive Customer Relationship Management function. **The Data Service helpdesk is being piloted and supported as appropriate by *the information authority*.**
- Feedback from stakeholders as to effectiveness of engagement. **Generally good feedback received when interactions have occurred – our communications strategy includes actions to target specific audiences, such as local authorities and college principals that we currently do not reach.**

2.4 Eliminate data duplication

The information authority will:

- Undertake a complete review of data captured in the ILR to reduce data duplication

- Consider for all new change requests whether data is already captured or can be combined with an existing collection
- Challenge any proposals where data is to be collected which is already captured elsewhere
- Encourage the review of existing data collections to remove data duplication
- Rationalise data algorithms and reporting so that discrepancies in interpretation are eliminated

Measures and performance:

- Review the key aspects of the ILR for 2009/10 to eliminate data duplication; with remainder to follow. **Complete for 2009/10; work planned for 2010/11.**
- Development and application of an appropriate assessment criterion (to prevent data duplication) for any proposed change request, to be in place by 31st March 2008. **Complete; assessment of effectiveness has been completed with an action plan now in place for improving the 2010/11 process.**
- Deliver an agreed approach for harmonising success rate reporting by LSC / Ofsted by June 2008. **FE success rates are now aligned; work ongoing through harmonisation group to resolve issues with employer responsive provision.**
- Identification of data collections / reporting mechanisms within the FE system and the provision of support for their review to remove data duplication or discrepancies. **Ongoing; significant support provided to LUK on staff data collection.**
- The establishment of standards to be adopted by the Data Service to eliminate data duplication and discrepancies in algorithms / reporting. **To be developed.**

2.5 Focus on data for key FE performance metrics

The information authority will:

- Work with government departments / agencies and the FE sector to identify key performance areas
- Set standards for key FE performance metrics within priority areas
- Evaluate the standards being proposed for new / improved performance measurement mechanisms to ensure consistency, clarity and the minimising of data burden

Measures and performance:

- Adoption of priority areas for *information authority* work: 1) learner data, 2) awarding data, 3) staff data. **Complete and ongoing**
- The specification of standards for key collections /reports within the priority areas, commencing with the ILR. **Complete for key part of ILR specification for 2009/10; ongoing.**
- Development and implementation of clear data standards for performance management tools such as Framework for Excellence and Minimum Levels of Performance. **This work has yet to be planned.**

2.6 Reduced set of standard reports

The information authority will:

- Specify a standard set of reports for key FE data
- Define data access rules for FE data (including Data Protection issues)

Measures and performance:

- Evaluate through the Data Service which reports are currently produced, and propose a rationalisation of these reports; initial phase by October 2008. **Not yet started due to lack of resource.**
- Develop and publish clear, data access rules for the Data Service covering all agencies / departments / providers for April 2008 operation by June 2008. **Determined that this is the responsibility of the data owners e.g. LSC.**
- Establishment of a Data Protection champion within *the information authority* by May 2008. **Expertise sourced from within the LSC to provide Data Protection guidance for providers; training of staff within *the information authority* to be undertaken.**

2.7 Perceived to act with integrity and add real value

The information authority will:

- Act to reduce bureaucracy wherever possible, balancing the data need vs. burden
- Establish clear and transparent assessment criteria for all change requests
- Communicate clearly how decisions have been taken
- Take decisions in the interests of the FE system as a whole including learners (and wherever possible act for the benefit of the wider education system)
- Deliver 'value for money'

Measures and performance:

- Feedback from stakeholders on reduction of burden and quality of decisions. **Initial feedback positive; more to be done.**
- Rationale for decisions to be published on *the information authority* website **Complete and ongoing.**
- Measurement of reduction in burden following initial benchmarking exercise (to be completed by May 2008). **Initial measurement taken; to be reviewed bi-annually.**

3. Next steps

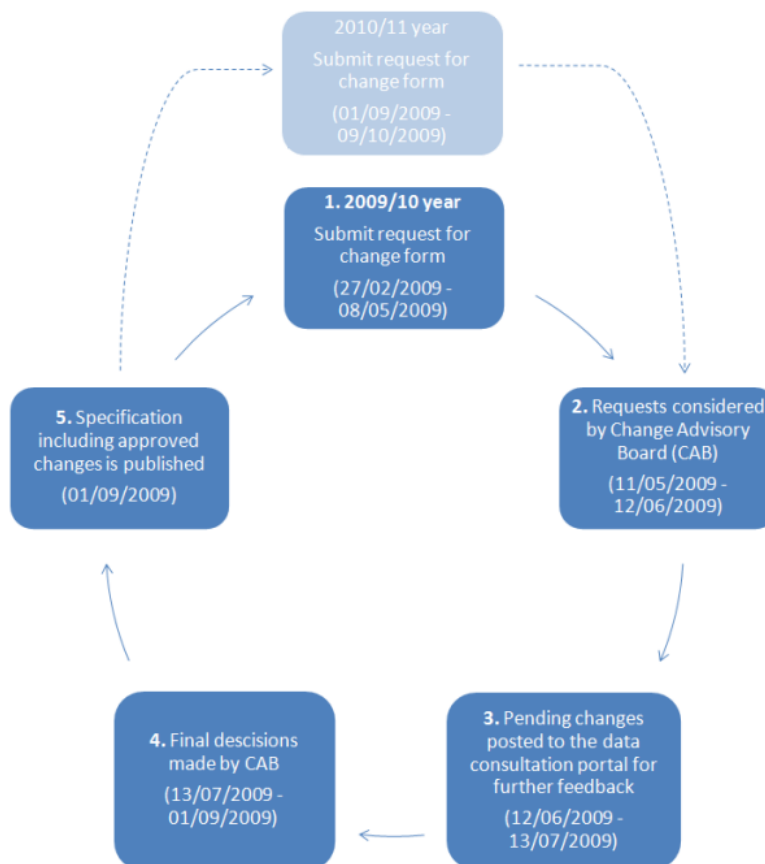
The board is asked to provide further feedback and guidance on performance to date, and whether any adjustments should be made to the performance criteria.

Appendix D

Update for *the information authority* Board on data collections for the Staff Individualised Record, and workforce data from adult and community learning providers and from work based learning providers

- The 2008/9 specification for SIR was published in December and is available for download from the Lifelong Learning UK website: <http://www.lluk.org/sir-17-data-collection-fe-sector.htm>
- Lifelong learning UK is consulting on the content of the 2009/10 specification and welcomes feedback from all interested parties. Consultation is taking place through an online portal <https://sirdatacollection.lluk.org/consultation/>
- The process for changing the Staff Individualised Record is as follows:
 1. Stakeholder, Provider or HR software provider submits a [request for change form](#).
 2. Requests for change are considered by a Change Advisory Board (CAB), and applicability determined using the criteria detailed below.
 3. Changes initially approved by the CAB will be posted to the data consultation portal for further feedback.
 4. Following further feedback the CAB will make final decisions on the requested change.
 5. Approved changes will be published via the Specification.

The following diagram provides an overview of this process with timelines:



Request for change, judgment criteria

The criteria that will be used to judge if a request for change is adopted or not is based on *the information authority* best practice and asks:

- Is it a well defined request with a robust business case?
 - Does the benefit of making the change outweigh the burden created?
 - What will providers have to do to initiate this change?
 - Can the change requested be delivered in the required time?
 - Can the data requested be collected within the required collection period?
 - Is the change requested consistent with common data standards, for example, the Common Data Definition?
 - Is the SIR the appropriate means for collecting the data requested, or should the data be collected by a different means?
 - Is the resulting data return likely to meet its business objective?
 - Has there been sufficient consultation around the requested change?
 - What are the associated costs and risks of the requested change?
-
- *The information authority* is invited to nominate two members to sit on the Change Advisory Board who will consider requests to change the specifications.

Appendix E

The information authority – Work Plan

1. Work plan

The work plan for the authority was presented to the board in October 2008, providing an outline of the key areas of work for the secretariat. The following section provides an update on progress being made on each of the key activity areas.

2. Progress

2.1 Addressing Data Burden

Since the publication of the provider data burden report in June 2008, *the information authority* has been working with stakeholders to ensure that each of the key issue areas identified in the report are being addressed.

Progress is being made in all areas and the following summarises some of the key plans and activities in place seeking to reduce the level of burden place on providers across the FE Community for 2009/10 and beyond.

Progress to date

Ad-hoc Data Demands by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The LSC has appointed Caroline Kempner as the lead for the piece of work to address these data demands, and there is a separate report at this board.

In the meantime, *the information authority* is developing a formal process to capture feedback and evidence from providers relating to ad-hoc data requests.

Inconsistencies in LSC data audit requirements

Supported by the LSC, *the information authority* has been leading on the piece of work that addresses the issues providers raised around the inconsistencies in data audit requirements, including the need for paper based learner records. (See separate paper presented to the board).

Variations in awarding body specifications and data format requirements

In response to the concerns raised around awarding body variations, *the information authority* has been taking forward work with the awarding bodies and other interested parties.

The current position is that a meeting was hosted by the authority on 11th February 2009 attended by representatives from DCSF, DIUS, Ofqual, FAB, JCQ, ISB and the Examination Officers' Association.

- The outcome was that all supported the development of a common data standard for awarding data across all types of qualification.

- It was agreed that development of a standard would take place via SIFA at this point (given that JCQ has begun work through this route) and that the various organisations would contribute to this development (where appropriate).
- In parallel, advice will be sought from DCSF/DIUS CIO Group on the infrastructure and technology implications including investment implications across the education system.

The authority will contribute to the development of the data standard and continue to encourage contribution from awarding bodies, providers, MIS suppliers, projects such as QCF etc.

Inconsistencies in data/format requirements across Connexions local offices

The information authority met with colleagues at the DCSF in 2008 to discuss the possible standardisation of Connexions data. It was agreed that in the shorter term the introduction of a common data set would be feasible and that a comprehensive standardised data set might be a longer term goal.

The information authority has recently received a draft set of requirements from DCSF with a view to making that an agreed Connexions data set. Feedback on the draft has been provided to the DCSF. A meeting is being set up with the stakeholders to agree the best way forward.

Volume of data collection required for ESF and Train to Gain

ESF

A number of fields were removed from the ESF section of the ILR. In addition, the introduction of the ESF short record has gone some way to reducing the level of burden on providers in the collection of this data. This area is being reviewed by the LSC.

Train to Gain

The Bureaucracy Reduction Group has reviewed the data requirements for Train to Gain funding. The authority is also providing input to the Train to Gain team on documentation intended to reduce provider burden. An update is provided in the LSC's response to the provider data burden report.

2. 2 Setting Data Standards

2.2.1 Defining common data standards for FE data to allow different agencies to work together – *The information authority* is working with the Information Standards Board to address the following areas: Ethnicity; Address and Geographic Location; and Disability, Learning Difficulties and Statement of Education Needs. A draft standard on ethnicity is to be delivered by end March 2009.

2.2.2 Define common data standards Phase II – Staff Individualised Record (SIR) – The update on the development of the WBL and ACL specifications, along with confirmation on the availability of the FE College Specification for 2009/10 is being provided at this March board meeting.

2.2.3 Define common data standards Phase III – Awarding Bodies – The authority is working with the ISB, awarding bodies etc. on developing a set of common data definitions and standards. Timescales are yet to be agreed.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Phase I of the data collection and analysis piece and the high level mapping is now complete and was published at the end of January. There is now a requirement to establish the view of Phase I and to determine how this has met the expectations of the board and wider FE community. A longer term strategy is now required to address for example; NAVMs, Skills Accounts and QCF.

In addition, the secretariat will, together with the Data Service, consider the outputs of the study on information needs within the sector being completed by David Mason.

A paper outlining the key issues and future options for consideration on data collection and analysis will be presented to the board in June 2009.

2.4 Data Reporting

2.4.1 Review key standard reports from the ILR

The authority is working with the Data Service to determine the requirements for standards reports. Significant progress is dependent on recruitment in to vacant posts.

2.4.2 Define rights and limitations on data access

The Data Service is leading on this work with support from the information authority as required.

2.5 Data Service Support

Una Bennett has a seat on the Data Service steering group and the authority has an ongoing role on the Data Service's Change Advisory Board.

2.6 Communications and Engagement

2.6.1 Development of the interactive website (FE Connect)

The new Groups function has been set up and the authority will be promoting use of this over the next few weeks via various newsletters and websites etc. The interactive website has also been re-styled so that it more closely resembles *the information authority's* corporate website and provides a more 'seamless' experience for the user.

Statistics showing the use of the FE Connect Forum last year, indicate a significant peak in activity during the during the ILR change process consultation period, which indicates that it was well-used as a consultation tool. The forums are to be increasingly used as a way of engaging audiences with specific issues, and we will also be promoting them as a way of engaging audiences with our advisory groups.

2.6.2 Stakeholder engagement to identify and build consensus on opportunities for improvements in FE data management

The secretariat intends to continue gaining input from all stakeholder groups via a number of methods (advisory groups, meetings, online etc.) to identify and take forward improvements.

2.6.3 Data definitions to be provided in XML format on *the information authority* website to enable users to customize their own guidance.

This project is in progress and discussions are taking place with two suppliers to ensure that we can commission both a suitable back-end system and an interface that will enable ease of use both for *information authority* employees inputting the data, and for providers seeking to access the guidance needed.

2.7 Performance Management

The information authority's first benefits report was completed in early January 2009 and circulated to the board and the programme board which set up the authority.

It was agreed at the board meeting in March 2008 that the performance against the criteria would be reviewed twice a year (in March and September) and that a formal review of the criteria would take place in March 2009.

An explanation on actual performance against each of the criteria is detailed in Appendix E.

2.8 Reacting to Machinery of Government changes

The authority will continue to respond to changes in particular to ensure it is engaging with the successor bodies to the LSC including local authorities.

2.9 Self Regulation

The authority will continue to co-ordinate plans with the Bureaucracy Reduction Group and the other sector-led groups, as well as contributing to self regulation development where appropriate.

2.10 Data Security

As directed by the board in December 2008, *the information authority* should have limited involvement in data security issues, although signposting providers to related guidance has been endorsed.

The authority has since published Data Protection guidelines produced by the LSC on its website, and is asking providers for their views on the guidance document. The secretariat is also feeding into the review of data handling security guidance for schools, currently being led by Becta, to cover all sectors of the education system. The authority will encourage wider FE system involvement in this piece of work.

2.11 Provision of timetables for providers

Following feedback from consultation groups in November 2008, the authority is now examining whether a calendar can be developed to include planned changes such as

issue of funding guidance and updates to the Learning Aims Database (LAD) as well the ILR specification.

Appendix F

Financials – 2008/09 – Revised forecast outturn. (as at 24.02.09)

Cost item	Original Budget 2008/9 (£k)	Actual spend to date	Forecast outturn Feb-March	Revised Outturn 2008/9 (£k)	Variance against budget (£k)
Permanent Staff Costs	456	307	93	400	-56
Non project temporary resource	124	107	23	130	6
Recruitment costs	25	0	5	5	-20
Training, Travel and incidentals	34	24	10	34	0
<u>Total Staff Costs</u>	639	438	121	569	-70
Marketing costs	138	80	34	114	-24
Meeting costs	13	7	6	13	0
<u>Projects</u>					
Data Standards	75	50	35	85	10
Paper Based Learner Documentation	100	39	3	42	-58
Legal Costs	16	0	0	0	-16
Data Quality	44	17	27	44	0
Awarding Body standards	50	0	0	0	-50
Information Standards Board definitions work	50	0	50	50	0
Unallocated	24	0	0	0	-24
Revenue Total	1,149	631	286	927	-232
CAPITAL					
Buildings and Services					
Staff Support costs	63	46	12	58	-5
IA Portal Development and support	87	9	20	29	-58

Capital Total	150	55	32	87	-63
Total Budget	1,299	686	318	1014	-295

Forecasting Assumptions:

- Forecast staff costs were based on all vacant posts being filled by March 2009, therefore a further under spend is very likely as some posts may not be filled to the new financial year, or may be filled in late March 2009.
- Temporary staff costs had increased as a result of the community facilitator role not being permanently filled. The successful candidate for this role starts on 23rd February 2009.
- Capital forecast outturn has reduced as a result of the additional six staff support costs not being incurred until February/March and for some roles, in the new financial year.
- The *Paper Based Learner Documentation* project is still awaiting review of the recommendations circulated in January 2009. Further spend on this project will not be incurred in this financial year.
- The *Data Quality* Projects consider costs being incurred for this financial year. However, there will be additional costs for continuing with these activities which will be included in the budget for 2009/10.

Appendix G - Breakdown of budget for 2009/10

Cost item	Budget 2009/10	Forecasting Assumptions
REVENUE		
Staff Costs		
Permanent Staff (previously LSC)	78,005	3 staff transferred to <i>the information authority</i> November 2007
Permanent Staff (08-09)	637,459	6 current staff plus 6 additional roles filled in 2008/9
Contractors/Temporary Staff		
Recruitment costs		
Training Costs/Travel and conference	45,000	
Total staff costs	760,464	
Stakeholder Engagement		
Materials	35,000	
Conferences	25,000	
Workshops	10,000	
Publications	20,000	
Communications Consultancy	30,000	
Total Engagement costs	120,000	
Information Authority Board	10,000	4 x meetings @ 2500 per meeting
Projects		
Project Support Resource	60,000	3 days per week for support
Qualification Success Rates	50,000	
Guidance for new providers	40,000	Technical Author specialist to complete this work
ISB Standards	20,000	
Ofsted Requirements	20,000	
Standards	22,000	Work commenced in 2008 – to be completed at the end of May 2009
Data Quality	22,000	Work commenced in 2008 – to be completed at the end of May 2009
ILR Reform – Strategy	50,000	
Unallocated	20,687	
Total Project costs	304,687	
Revenue Total	1,195,151	Original Budget £1,195,151
CAPITAL		
Buildings and Services		
Existing Staff (from LSC)	27,000	Support for 3 staff who transferred from LSC
Existing staff 08-09	108,000	Support for remaining 12 staff
New staff 09-10		
IA Portal Development	40,000	To support stakeholder consultation and engagement
IA Portal Service and Support	20,000	To support stakeholder consultation and engagement
Capital Total	195,000	Original Budget £260,000
Total Budget	1,390,151	Original Budget £1,455,151

Appendix H

Risks and issues

Key Issues

No.	Issue	Action
01	Machinery of Government changes. There is a need to assess how this might affect <i>the information authority</i> in future.	Ongoing dialogue with DIUS with requirements having been advised to the department.
02	<i>The information authority</i> needs to determine how it will engage with local authorities in the future, as a result of MoG and the changes to FE funding	LGA board representative to provide advice and support. Existing DIUS links continue to be investigated. DCSF currently engage with LAs on a formal basis via the ICES group. <i>The information authority</i> has a slot at the ICES group in February 2009 in order to raise awareness of the authority and the role it will play under the future MoG structure.
03	There are a number of resource gaps within <i>the information authority</i> . This is having an impact on the ability to deliver the work plan for 2008/9.	The new <i>information authority</i> structure has been approved and roles advertised. It is hoped that all vacancies will be filled in the next few months. In the meantime, temporary resource is in place to take forward specific pieces of work. (These are Data Quality and Data Standards)
04	Provider feedback has been that early delivery of the ILR Specification is insufficient in isolation. There is a requirement to publish timetables for LAD/LIS etc. In order to progress with this there is a requirement for commitment from the LSC/DIUS etc. to deliver the requirements at the right time.	<i>The information authority</i> to commence dialogue with LSC, DIUS, DCSF and the Data Service. Some preliminary work has commenced with various programmes and departments within the LSC to determine the feasibility of publishing timetables. Further discussions and detailed analysis work is required.

Key Risks

No	Risk Description and Impact	Mitigating Actions
01	There may be too much confusion between LSC, Data Service and the <i>information authority</i> . This could result in a duplication of effort, an inconsistent approach being adopted and reduced confidence amongst the stakeholder community.	Ongoing work with DS/LSC to clarify roles and responsibilities. Joint communication activity is being planned. The information authority and Data Service will employ a shared communications manager to ensure there is minimum duplication.
02	Stakeholder data users and FE System circumvent <i>information authority</i> decisions or do not come to <i>the information authority</i> for changes in information.	Continue with the programme of work to engage with stakeholders. Maintain relationships and interaction through the Community Website, Stakeholder events and ongoing communication activities.
03	There is a risk that data standards are not agreed, resulting in the continuing mismatch of data requirements. An example currently under discussion is ethnicity codes.	<i>The information authority</i> has agreed to contribute a maximum of £50k towards the Ethnicity data standards work being led by the ISB Technical Services Group (TSG). A draft agreement between the TSG (Becta), Atkins Management Consultancy and <i>the information authority</i> is in place and work has now commenced. This piece is scheduled for completion by the end of March 2009.

04	<p>The outputs from the Data Burden Study are not addressed by the appropriate owners, recommendations are not achievable, or other LSC priorities result in the inability to address issues in timely manner.</p>	<p><i>The information authority</i> is working with different stakeholders to agree firm actions plans. Where these are not forthcoming, the secretariat will escalate to the board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The “Reducing the paper burden on providers” piece of work is currently being led by the authority. -The LSC lead on this is currently pulling together an action plan for addressing the issues around ad-hoc data demands. This is to be presented to the board in March 2009. - Agreement in principle to a common standard on awarding data has been achieved; further work and encouragement is required. - The Bureaucracy Reduction Group is addressing the Train to Gain issues. - <i>The information authority</i> is currently working with Connexions to determine how data demands can be streamlined.
05	<p>(Related to issue 4). Failure to resolve this issue could result in there being even more confusion when the two new agencies (SFA and YPLA) are up and running.</p>	<p>Determine what is feasible within the next 12 months and start developing relationships with new bodies as they are formed. Recommendations for moving forward currently in progress.</p>
06	<p>There is a risk that <i>the information authority</i> could be viewed as being part of the LSC, as its relationship with the Data Service (seen as part of the LSC) strengthens. It could lose its reputation for being an independent authority and therefore threaten the confidence of the FE community.</p>	<p>Continue to draw on the cross -system experience of <i>the information authority</i> board and act as neutrally as possible.</p>