

## Paper 12: The information authority secretariat report

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### Background and introduction

- 1 This paper gives a status update on the work of *the information authority* secretariat. Decisions are required on two items; the remainder of the paper is for information.
- 2 This status report covers work by the secretariat since the board meeting on 30 September and its meeting on 2 December 2009, and work planned for the next period.

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

- 3 The following decisions are required:

#### Requests for additions to the ILR Change Process

- 4 A review of the lessons learned this year highlighted that change requesters did not take account of *the information authority's* published criteria and that change requesters did not define their request with enough information for consideration. As a result the secretariat recommends adapting the process to include the following changes:
  - The request for change form is revised to better reflect the assessment criteria and requesters will be given an opportunity to provide further clarification with a short deadline as part of an initial sifting process
  - Previously rejected change requests will not be considered unless circumstances have significantly changed

- Before going out to consultation, change requests will be reviewed by a panel of sector stakeholders, including the secretariat. (NOTE: this panel would have NO decision-making powers). The terms of reference for the panel will be agreed by this board at its meeting on 3 March 2010.

The board agreed that the closing date for 2011/12 ILR change requests would be Friday 25 June 2010. In previous years, almost all requests have been submitted on the closing date, which means that time that should be used for consultation is actually taken up sifting and investigating the requests. Therefore, it would be helpful to bring the closing date forward by one week.

The secretariat hopes that these changes will make the process more effective as:

- The change requests will be better defined early in the process
- A panel of peers reviewing the request means issues affecting the change are explored early in the process and the limitations of consulting the sector during the holiday period are addressed
- The change requesters commitment to the change is adequately challenged by the panel
- The consultation period with the sector will be longer and better informed.

***The board is asked to approve the process changes and bring forward the closing date by one week to 18 June 2010.***

#### **Amendment to the protocol**

- 5 Board members are asked to note that the LGA has requested a small amendment to paragraph 10 of the Protocol. This is as follows:

“10. As signatories, we are emphasising that agreement on the algorithms, derivations and methodologies for producing performance and quality measures is ~~the most important~~ a crucial 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.~~”

***The board is asked to approve this amendment to the Protocol.***

The following items are for noting by the board:

#### **College data group – success rates**

- 6 At the previous meeting the board noted that a data quality group was being set up to address the data quality issues in FE colleges. The chairman of *the information authority* has been asked to chair this group, which will report on progress to *the information authority* board. Terms of reference have now been agreed, nominations have been received and the first meeting is being arranged.

## Success rates harmonisation newsletter

- 7 The secretariat is producing a newsletter for the FE and training system, which highlights recent progress made by the Data Harmonisation Group. The newsletter will be distributed early in December and explains how the group has tackled issues that were faced by both learning providers and data users regarding success rates data, bringing greater transparency and understanding for all the organisations involved. This includes the way that methodologies are put in place at the start of the process, and the way that different organisations use the resulting data.

## Online community (feconnect) improvements

- 8 The community portal, **feconnect**, is due to move to a WordPress environment and new hosting arrangements on 04 December 2009. This will allow for greater flexibility, ease of use and provide better value for hosting and support arrangements. Board members are invited to view the new site at: <http://forums.theia.org.uk>

## December joint data conference

- 9 Board members are asked to note that *the information authority* and Data Service joint conference, "Data in the wider FE and training sector", being held on 03 December 2009 has now sold out and we are considering holding a follow up event next year.

## Annual Report

- 10 The board is asked to note that *the information authority's* second annual report has been published and was posted out to all board members and other key stakeholders in mid-November.

## Information authority spend

- 11 The spend to date for the secretariat is summarised within *the information authority* dashboard, set out in Appendix C. Spend is within forecast with some underspend due to timing differences.

## Further information

- 12 The appendices to this report include:
- Appendix A – Progress report and key activities for the period (September 2009 – November 2009)
  - Appendix B – Activities planned for the next period (December 2009 – February 2010)
  - Appendix C - Performance dashboard 2009/10

## Contact Details

- a. Author: Anne Fessi
- b. Job Title: Acting Head of *the information authority*
- c. Department/ Organisation: *The information authority*
- d. Email address: Anne.Fessi@theia.org.uk

# Appendix A

## Progress report

### Activities for last period (September – November 2009)

#### 1. Stakeholder engagement

- The following Advisory Group meetings took place:
  - Local Authorities - 30 October 2009.
  - College Information group - 16 October 2009.
  - Software Supplier group - 7 October 2009.
  - Own Software Writers group – 21 October 2009.
- Approval of the draft MoU with the DCSF School's Star Chamber Scrutiny Board
- Workshop for HOLEX members took place on 19 October 2009.
- Exhibited at the national AoC Conference on 17-19 November 2009.
- Exhibited at the FAB Conference on 4-5 November 2009.

#### Website and community portal

- Use and functionality of both sites continues to improve. The attached dashboard provides the trend data on visitors to both feconnect and the corporate website, since January 2009.
- **Feconnect** hosted 'hot seat' with Rich Williams, Data Service, in October/ November.

#### 2. Secretariat team

- A follow-on team training day took place on 6 November 2009 to support team building following the recruitment of a number of new staff.

#### 3. Quality and standards

- The Data Quality Delivery Group has been set up to support implementation of Data Quality initiatives.
- *The information authority* continues to lead on the development of ways of working for moving forward with Data Quality initiatives. This will consider how the secretariat, the Data Service, the YPLA and SFA will work together beyond April 2010, and the scope and terms of reference will be defined for approval by February 2010.
- The Data Quality Framework has been circulated to the board for comment prior to the board on 02 December 2009.
- Standards advice and support will continue to be provided to various FE initiatives, including for harmonisation of success rates.
- Continued contribution to working groups of the Information Standards Board.
- The secretariat continues its work with Connexions on agreeing a standard data set for their collections – presentation to December board.

- The team followed up on the ILR Changes that were agreed by the board, and changes were published on the corporate website and have been incorporated into the 2010/11 specification. A 'lessons learned' exercise was undertaken with key stakeholders and to those who submitted change requests.
- Engagement with the Single Account Management System (formerly the settlement system) programme continues and a paper is being presented at the December 2009 board meeting.
- The team has led on taking forward many of the actions resulting from a letter sent by the LSC's Chief Executive about data management. A paper is being presented at the December 2009 board meeting.
- The team supported LLUK in the process for agreeing the 2009/ staff individualised record (SIR) by attending a change advisory board on 12 October 2009.
- Advice about data standards is being supplied to the LSC team developing and implementing a national database of learning providers and provision – a replacement for the Hot Courses directory.

## **5. Budget**

- The budget and spend for this financial year (2009/10) is set out in *the information authority* dashboard as outlined in Appendix B. The revenue budget for 2009/10 is £1.2m. An additional £86k of staff budget (for three posts transferred from the LSC in October 2007) is also included in this forecast. This covers salary, training, travel and other associated costs.

# Appendix B

## Activities planned for next period (December 2009 – February 2010)

### 7. Stakeholder engagement

#### Communication

- The joint Data Service and *information authority* conference on 03 December 2009 is now sold out and there is a waiting list for delegates.
- Advisory groups / events to be held / attended:
  - Employer Responsive (11 December )
  - Adult Safeguarded Learning (10 December )
  - Data Users Group (07 December)
  - Last meeting of the Local Authority Group will be on 25 February 2010 as YPLA will be taking over this piece of work. Any interested parties can attend our existing Data Users Group.
- *The information authority's* new desktop calendars are being mailed out at the end of November.
- A newsletter about the work of the Success Rates Harmonisation Group is being produced by *the information authority* for distribution early December.

#### Website and community portal

- The community portal, feconnect, is due to move to a WordPress environment and new hosting arrangements on 04 December 2009. This will allow for greater flexibility, ease of use and improved (and better value) hosting and support.

#### SFA and YPLA engagement

- The Chairman is meeting Peter Lauener, Chief Executive Designate of the YPLA, and Les Walton, YPLA Chair, after the board meeting on the 02 December 2009.

### 8. Secretariat team

- Recruitment of the Head of *the information authority* is ongoing. Final interviews are scheduled for the end of November.

### 9. Quality and Standards

- The ILR specification will be published on 27 November 2009. We will continue to revise related documentation such as the validation rules, remaining annexes to the specification and support manuals.
- We will continue to develop clear answer to queries raised by the data management letter, gain approval for them and publish them.

- Commencement of the development of the two aggregate returns agreed at the last board meeting. Note: further discussions with the YPLA have indicated that a late change request to the 2010/11 ILR specification may be required in relation to the timing of the autumn 2010 early aggregate return of learner numbers.
- Procurement of the consultancy for the learner data strategy and management and support of that consultancy project with BIS.
- Development of a plan to promote the Data Quality Framework if it receives board approval.
- Continue to share the Data Model with providers and software suppliers in order to validate it.

## **10. Governance**

- *The information authority* is drafting a Data Definitions process to be adopted with our partner organisations going forward. This process will replace the LSC's Data Definitions Group and will have a wider scope.

# Appendix C – Dash Board - Separate attachment