

Paper 5 - The Data Service - achievements and priorities

Date of issue	16 September 2009
Audience	<i>The information authority</i> board
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Background and introduction

- 1 The Data Service offers a number of products and services that are critical to the FE system. These include the systems to facilitate the collection of ILR data, plus tools to support this collection. The Data Service works in partnership with *the information authority* to deliver improvements in the collection, transformation and reporting of FE data.
- 2 At its inception, it was anticipated that the Data Service would be fully operational by Summer 2010. The definition of “fully-operational” would be that the scope of the Data Service was either being met, or that work was in hand to deliver this requirement.

Purpose

- 3 The purpose of this paper is to highlight the progress made by the Data Service to date and its priorities for the next twelve months.
- 4 The Data Service scope was published in May 2008 and has been used to baseline the current position of the Data Service and to outline its strategic vision. The Strategic Plan is being produced to support both the continuous improvement of the Data Service and its strategic partners. The rationale behind this plan is to deliver, and measure, the progress made by the Data Service and the return on the investment made.
- 5 This plan was presented to the Data Service Steering Group on 18 September 2009 for information and discussion.

Recommendation

- 6 This paper has been submitted to the *information authority* board for information purposes.

Key points

- 7 At its inception, it was anticipated that the Data Service would be fully operational by Summer 2010. The definition of “fully-operational” would be that the scope of the Data Service was either being met, or that work was in hand to deliver this requirement.
- 8 Through our governance arrangements, we aim to be an exemplar of progress towards sector self-management and sector self-governance. By 2011 we will have evolved into an independent organisation working alongside *the information authority* and acting in the interests of the further education sector as a whole.
- 9 Within this there are some key areas for consideration. As its key strategic aims the Data Service intends to:
- Have sector-led governance: strategy and policy direction will come from a governance board that has both sector and *information authority* Board representation
 - Have sole responsibility for collection and dissemination across the sector of learner and funding data against standards set by *the information authority*
 - Hold a central catalogue of core services to the sector delivered through Operating Level agreements (OLAs) with the *information authority* and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with key sector partners
 - Have a self-financing ad-hoc service outside the core catalogue delivered within an agreed governance framework
 - Publish regular Statistical First Releases (both figures and commentary) as currently published by the LSC, taking on board any changes proposed by ongoing Statistical First Releases review
 - Provide central collection, sector-wide processing, storage and dissemination of sector and sector-related data providing a “single agreed version of the truth”.

Achievements to date:

- Implementation of SFR review
- Recruitment of all vacant posts

- Operational Service Desk, which is currently supporting over 750 providers in the North East and West Midlands regions, has now rolled out to London (September 1st 2009 -additional 600 providers)
- Agreed SLA's with LSC and Ofsted
- Engagement with increasing numbers of customers
- Develop team and initiate recruitment of team members in line with original Data Service design, include transition of Derived Variables & MI Views team into Production & Quality from LSC in addition to original Data Service design
- PIMS, Learner Aims Database & Learner Information Suite rel1, Online Systems & Data Management, MI Views rel1&2 delivered to scheduled release dates
- Quality statements added to all new ILR standard files and datasets from 17th Sept
- Initial Quality Assessment developed using *information authority* data standards—first issue 2009/10 ER W01 (to be published on web)
- Draft Known Issues documentation published on web
- Team ways of working established
- Large amounts of ad-hoc delivery to a wide cross sector of customers
- Employer Responsive QSR layout made more consistent across funding streams
- December 2008, March 2009 and June 2009 SFR published on time
- All requested SFR supplementary tables were published within three months of the main SFR in March, reducing to two months in June
- Quality assurance process established including data quality statements on all products and effective QA process
- Better ways of working established with customer managers
- Corporate incident tracking system now being used to track all MI team activity
- Support for data quality colleagues in embedding data quality into MI aspects of the data service
- Planning tool developed to allow efficient workflow and dynamic re-prioritisation
- Success rates for Employer Responsive (TTG and Apprenticeships) produced on time for Period 9 and Period 12 2008/09
- Success rates for Learner Responsive 2008/09 planned and in development
- MI to support provider allocation 2010/11 project developed and reports are in development
- Requirements for YPLA and SFA planned and early stages of development
- SFR Quality Assurance process has been developed and has improved the production of the tables
- Very good working relations have been developed with BIS colleagues for the SFR
- Set up governance board and task and Finish Groups

- Provided resource to support FFE in delivering VA and DT measures for 2008/09 using prototype system
- Undertaken current state analysis and provided estimate for delivery of strategic solution for 2009/10 for YPLA.
- Train to gain MI - Project adopted from LSC IM Programme
- 09/10 ILR and Success Rate changes applied
- Business Analysis under way to assess governance required to manage non ILR data.

Priorities for next 12 months:

- Investigation of Self-Financing Service
- Analysis of FE sector data sources and ownership
- KPI and SLA Development
- Continued Service Desk roll-out (completed by end 2009)
- Development of training materials
- Profile/ Brand credibility and awareness
- Web based training for providers to be launched end September
- Gathering and documentation of SFA and YPLA MI requirements
- Measurement of FESD programme benefits
- Development of memorandum of understanding/ways of working protocols with appropriate organisations (*information authority*, SFA, YPLA, DBIS)
- Implementation of a central Data Service Customer Relationship Management application
- Review of existing Data Service documentation
- Review of existing service catalogues
- Completion of recruitment in line with Data Service original planned headcount plan, minimising reliance on contractor resource where possible
- Redevelop team structure, role grading and get it accepted by staffing panel to meet the requirements of the evolving Data Service business needs
- Ensure PIMS, LAD & LIS rel2 , OS&DM, MI Views rel3 scheduled for October 09 are delivered according to planned timescales
- Work with *the information authority* to identify, develop and specify ILR 10/11 requirements for inclusion in the Data Service systems
- Commence early start preparation of rollover of the Data Service systems to ensure they are ready 10/11 ILR collections cycle, ensuring the maximum time for system and user testing
- Work with the new MOG structures to ensure all Data Service systems and processes are able to accommodate the MOG changes with the minimum of disruption to existing services.
- Work with Settlements & QCF programs to understand their implications for existing Data Service systems, OS&DM, LAD, PIMS & LIS
- Continue development of Data Quality assessment, credibility tools, MI summary views, and DQ governance for inclusion in the Data Service systems and processes

- Develop MI Production Team (formerly known as MISOS) to have a streamline take on of additional scheduled business reporting
- ER QSRs Period 15 – apprenticeship and train to gain QSR reports
- ER MLP reports - apprenticeship and train to gain MLP reports
- LR QSRs/MLP reports – QSR reports for learner responsive provision in readiness for F05 return
- Development of reports and datasets in support of both SFA and YPLA allocations processes
- Design and build of data warehouse as single source of data for the Data Service
- Support of tactical MI solution to meet short term business needs and migration to strategic solution
- SFR October - Producing the SFR with near final 2008/09 data including supplementary tables
- SFR December - Producing the SFR with early 2009/10 data including supplementary tables
- Launching the MI Library which will contain key fact information to answer regular report and adhoc requests from all customers
- Providing data and information in response to parliamentary questions and freedom of information requests to the specified timetables

Risks and issues

10 The key risks are as follows:

- Political change impacting on the strategic direction of the Data Service
- Fragmentation of the Learning and Skills Council, impacting on the client base
- Implementation of SFA Settlements System will have an as yet unknown impact upon the Data Service.

11 The major issues are as follows:

- Increasing scope of services expected from the Data Service and the constraints of the original headcount design of the Data Service will create pressure and the inability to deliver all requirements to the standards required unless additional resource is made available
- A lack of funding to pay for strategic enhancements to technology particularly in a year of public sector spending constraints
- Accommodation at Cheylesmore House may become an issue depending on the outcome of MoG.

Implications for the FE Sector

12 The FE system is a complex market that is heavily reliant upon large volumes of transactional data. The market consists of a potential 5,000+ customers for the Data Service, including:

- Approximately 4,000 FE sector providers, delivering training such as apprenticeships, Train to Gain and other qualifications to improve the skills levels of the nation
- Government departments, including our sponsor the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and increasingly the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Agencies, particularly the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the emerging Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
- 150+ Local Authorities on behalf of the YPLA
- Provider and qualification bodies, including Ofsted and QCA
- Software Suppliers, who deliver tools to FE sector providers to enable them to facilitate their data requirements
- Media organisations
- Research and Academic institutions

13 The **Machinery of Government** changes that were announced in June 2007 have created a large amount of uncertainty in the sector, and made it difficult to understand the roles and responsibilities of various organisations. This is exacerbated within the LSC, which will cease to exist on 31 March 2010.

14 We have a large number of customers, and this has the potential to increase significantly with our remit to span the FE sector. The market the Data Service delivers to can be segmented into two groups with similar service needs. Sometimes the customer is in one group, some customers are in both;

- Group 1 – Customers who submit data to be processed for funding, contracting and monitoring
- Group 2 – Customers who wish to receive analytical data sets and reports

15 This identification suggests that the Data Service needs to maintain its array of services to meet the needs of these customers. Within these segments there are further differences between the requirements of the customers. It may be beneficial to adopt distinct service strategies for these segments which are designed to meet the level of service the customers require.

Author Richard Williams
Date created 16 September 2009
Version Final