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A REVIEW OF THE ADDITIONAL DATA THAT THE LSC REGULARLY ASKS FROM PROVIDERS –

a response to the Providers' perceived data burden caused by unscheduled reporting requests

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1 BACKGROUND

To understand, review and publish a review of the additional data that the LSC regularly asks from Providers, a study of the patterns and sources of the remarks was commissioned in May 2009 from Gecko Programmes Limited.

2 METHODOLOGY APPLIED

The methodology of the survey is to use case-studies to investigate the perceptions of data burden that were identified by providers in their responses to the Oakleigh research consultants. These regional case-studies will be placed in the context of the contemporary demands of the National Office, responding to changing priorities in the current economic climate, and in the context of improving management information systems and interfaces.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations to the LSC are to refine procedures that contribute to the effectiveness of the business planning process, and a further recommendation to monitor the effectiveness of these changes by continuing to evaluate the perceptions of the LSC´s relationship with Providers concerning data collections.

The recommendation is to enhance the national business planning processes with stronger inputs from MI teams.

The recommendation is that the National Office lead on this matter by offering a decision to all Regions on the reports to be used to support the allocations process, and offering less flexibility to Regional teams.

The recommendation is that the LSC designs a method of surveying the satisfaction levels of Providers concerning data collections; baselining and collating their responses so that progress towards improvement targets can be charted.

Research report structure

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 In 2008 *the Information authority* surveyed learning Providers to gain a greater understanding of the administrative burden placed on them by third party requests for data. This report identified that Providers had concerns with the amount of effort required to support LSC policies and practices.

1.2 The LSC responded to this report in September 2008 and agreed at *the information authority* board to draft an action plan to address Provider remarks, committing to better transparency, predictability and control over data requests.

1.3 To understand, review and publish a review of the additional data that the LSC regularly asks from Providers, a study of the patterns and sources of the remarks was commissioned in May 2009 from Gecko Programmes Limited – the contractor.

1.4 More than a study of the Providers' perceptions, the study has added views from LSC partnership teams in LSC Regional Offices, from policy teams in LSC National Office, and sought the views of the Association of Colleges and that of the Data Service.

1.5 The study seeks to identify the sources of additional data requests, and the organisational developments – as strategies, protocols and procedures – that have been designed and implemented by the LSC as events since the original *information authority* survey, and as plans for further improvements.

2 TASKING AND DELIVERABLES

2.1 Through case studies of two Partnership Teams in different regions in the LSC structure, the contractor has worked with them to catalogue all the recurring data requests of learning Providers outside of the standard Individualised learner Record (ILR) collections. These case studies have provided the LSC with a view of the type and frequency of the additional data collected outside of the established data collections managed by the FE Data Service.

2.2 The case studies have also provided a descriptive examination of the purpose of these additional collections. This has enabled the LSC at a national level to understand more comprehensively the information that the business needs from its learning Providers, and the importance of the reports that are produced for LSC Partnership Teams, Regional Office and National Office teams.

2.3 The intention of these case studies is to aid the LSC in communicating its data requirements to providers and to identify better practice from the current activities being undertaken across the Regions.

2.4 In addition, the contractor is working with the LSC, seeking to understand the underlying business drivers for these collections, and establish whether they support, local, regional or national processes. We are seeking to identify and understand the distance travelled requirement between the policy driver generated by the LSC National Office, and the activities that follow.

2.4 This survey report details the responses of the two regions, and linking with contributing variables from the National office teams.

This includes:

a) A description of the information being requested, taking account of regional and national variables.
b) A summary of the data collection purpose, use and application to the business
c) The frequency and regularity of these data collections, if any beyond the event.
d) A summary of the methods and formats of data collection, and information about the end users.

This results in an identification of the reports requested, detailing what is requested by whom.

Recommendations for reporting will be produced, based upon the 2009-2010 academic year.

3 BUILDING ON THE METHODOLOGY OF THE OAKLEIGH RESEARCH

3.1 The methodology of the survey is to use case-studies to investigate the perceptions of data burden that were identified by Providers in their responses to the *information authority's* research consultants, Oakleigh. This research elicited responses that were, when recorded, confined to general remarks that did not cite details of the events.

3.2 The incidence of the remarks concerning data burden said to be generated by the LSC totalled 38. This comment from a General FE College is offered as an example of how these remarks are presented,

> "Other point made in passing was that whilst they appear to get a wide range of ad hoc data requests, they still honour many of these, even if they are not 'statutory' requests – rationale for this (e.g. in the case of ad hoc LSC data requests) is to keep the LSC (as primary funder) 'on side'. Issue re: behaviour of providers driven by ultimate importance of 'relationship management' with key funding bodies, however 'irrational' the data demands of the latter might be."

3.3 This example remark typifies the number of statements that refer to data requests without a clear reason for the demand. This remark also provides the rationale for providers to respond to such requests by honouring them as they are requests made by the primary funder.

3.4 Due to this relationship, the identity of each participating organisation is not recorded in the information provided to the LSC in the Oakleigh Report. Consequently it is not possible to return to that provider to request clarification of the remarks.

4 OAKLEIGH AND FURTHER ANALYSIS

4.1 There is an opportunity to expand on the analysis and findings of the Oakleigh study. The LSC shares the information authority´s concern that Providers are recorded as presenting perceptions of data burden. We are applying research methods that allow the LSC to identify the opportunities to plan and implement improvements.

4.2 The data held by the Oakleigh research team did include more information on the location of the 38 providers that recorded their view of the LSC generating such a data burden. The Oakleigh team provided information on the LSC region in which each of the 38 providers was located. The geographical source of the remarks, by LSC region, is recorded in the following table:

LSC Region	Remarks
North West	7
Yorkshire & Humberside	7
East of England	6
South West	6
London	3
South East	2
East Midlands	1
North East	0
West Midlands	0
National organisations	4
Data unavailable	2
	38

4.3 As Oakleigh have undertaken to protect the identity of providers participating in their survey, it is not possible for them to provide a complete listing of providers that can be analysed for geographical spread. We do not know how many providers were consulted in each region.

4.4 Without this information, it is not reasonable to conclude that the geographical pattern of the sources of remarks is an effect of an uneven geographical spread of the reported ad-hoc data requests.

4.5 The remarks of the providers, and the geographical sources of the remarks, are both resistant to further scrutiny within the Oakleigh study.

4.6 Our chosen research methods are to identify the gaps between the policy drivers and the activities, and the actual, rather than perceived, data requests that are integral to these processes. This allows the LSC to respond to the perceptions within the Oakleigh study, identifying the opportunities for the LSC to improve

4.7 Further research needs to seek to identify regional differences – or opportunities for cross-regional consistency – when the LSC is communicating its data requirements to providers and identifying better practice from the current activities being undertaken across the Regions.

5 METHODOLOGY APPLIED

5.1 The methods applied to this research need to be able to reveal the full nature of the stated ad-hoc data requests, which reveals both the cause and the gravity of the burden. It is neither appropriate nor possible to drill-down into the results held within the Oakleigh study, to provide more information on the data requests and the reasons for the requests.

5.2 The chosen methods need to involve the staff in Regional Offices, asking what has been requested that has been outside of an agreed data collection, and why this was so.

5.3 As many of the comments from providers in the Oakleigh study also refer to the National Office of the LSC as a sole or joint source of the request, this survey also needs to include a view of channelled data requests, from the National Office, through Regional Offices, and onto Partnership Teams.

5.4 Since the Oakleigh study, there have been opportunities for the LSC to improve systems so that data collections were expected, and to introduce improvements to methods of collecting so that requests were reduced. The chosen methods need to chart these changes, and identify the improvements made, and recommend where more improvements are possible.

5.5 The methodology of the survey is to use case-studies to investigate the perceptions of data burden that were identified by providers in their responses to the Oakleigh research consultants. These regional case-studies will be placed in the context of the contemporary demands of the National Office, responding to changing priorities in the current economic climate, and in the context of improving management information systems and interfaces.

5.6 The survey of Providers, as the primary source of information in the Oakleigh study, proved to produce limitations in their own and our belated scrutiny of this information. The sample size, the geographical differences, and Providers' concern that they be identified each negate any reason to include further Provider views in this research. The primary source of information in this research are the LSC teams, and this information is compared with the views of Providers, as articulated through the Oakleigh study.

5.7 An external perception of the nature and cause of perceived ad-hoc data requests was requested of, and provided by, the Association of Colleges, providing an insight into how and when such requests are perceived by the FE sector. This has assisted the analysis, and the arrival at conclusions.

6 CASESTUDY 1 – Yorkshire and Humberside LSC Regional Office

6.1 The purpose of interviewing Regional Office staff was to determine how, if at all, Regional Office requests through Partnership Teams within the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level.

6.2 The Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Office provided a response through a Partnership Manager, focusing upon data requested to inform the parts of the business cycle. This was provided for illustrative purposes, and as part of a process to evaluate and improve the way in which information is managed.

6.3 The response was a collation of sets of data requests to Providers, which replied to an earlier e-mail request from the information authority, asking this Regional Office to capture some detailed examples of ad-hoc data request. This original request was built upon by telephone interviews and a face-to-face interview.

6.4 This Regional Office response includes requests for reports made to Providers since the publication of the Oakleigh study, providing a contemporary view of data requests that may be perceived by Providers as a burden.

6.5 In response to expectations that Regional Offices would fully deliver Train to Gain targets in 2008-09, telephone weekly reports were to be requested of Providers.

6.6 This fresh method to collect data was communicated to College Principals as an intention, and provided a rationale that explained why the LSC was intending to change the reporting methods. This was communicated two weeks in advance of the first request.

6.7 As only headline data was requested, Providers were offered no further guidance, and were able to produce timely and accurate data. This demonstrated the robust nature of the Providers´ MI systems, and suggests that the data requests were not onerous.

6.8 Within the last year, there was a change in the way Apprenticeship completion targets were to be agreed and monitored, dis-aggregating achievement data into level 2/3 and age bands of 16-18, 19-25, and 25 plus. This change arose because the LSC was informed nationally that ministers wanted to monitor performance in this way. Actual data is tracked via the ILR, but an additional request was made to providers for targets to be disaggregated in this way.

6.9 This was a one-off request, and Providers were provided with the rationale for the request and given sufficient guidance on how to provide this simple data return.

6.10 This WBL data collection was an unscheduled collection, and the LSC has now integrated this collection into PAMS, with a process that is managed by the National Apprenticeship Service.

6.11 During the last year Providers were requested to accept a new methodology to calculate fees targets. Again, this was a LSC National Office development that was to applied through Partnership Teams.

6.12 Before Partnerships Teams were able to provide a rationale to Providers and provide a briefing on the clarity on the calculations and expectations, the Partnership Teams needed to receive this themselves from the LSC National Office. This process was lengthier than expected – comprehensive guidance was given, but there were difficulties around the methodology used to derive the data - and resulted in the Providers only having the remaining one week to complete their responses to the data request.

6.13 This has been stated to be a one-off exercise. This was an incidence of an unscheduled data request that place a data burden upon Providers. So that this is not repeated as a data burden upon Providers, and further changes to the methodology to calculate fees targets will need to consider the distance to be travelled between the policy change at National Office and the implementation with Providers.

6.14 Further data requests were made of Providers to complete the Planning and Modelling System (PAMS) and AMPS. It is notable that there is no national system for the collection of data required to complete the allocations system such as monthly and quarterly profiles. Each area team devises its own arrangements for this collection.

6.15 There are no National Office direct request for data from Providers, but PAMS is designed so that it is fully complete. This process requires Partnership Teams to collect this data so that the allocations process can be complete.

6.16 This process is steered by LSC National Office, requiring that various stages are completed to deadlines set by National Office and reflected by Regional Offices. This has resulted in data requests with minimal notice – as little as 2 to 3 days turnaround in some instances.

6.17 This process, with the recognised absence of national leadership on the additional data to be collected and the formats to be used, has placed data burdens upon Providers.

7 CASESTUDY 2 – East of England LSC Regional Office

7.1 The purpose of interviewing Regional Office staff was to determine how, if at all, Regional Office requests through Partnership Teams within the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level.

7.2 The East of England Regional Office provided a response through the Data and Analysis Manager and a Partnership Manager, focusing upon data requested to inform the parts of the business cycle. Other key members of staff were consulted in the region, and there responses collated.

7.3 The response was a collation of sets of data requests to Providers, which the Data Analysis Manager considered may have been a source of a past data burden, and was built upon by the Train to Gain team, identifying data requests that were additional to ILR returns.

7.4 The response identified that there had been data requests prior to may 2008 that were crucial to the business cycle, providing data that was not collected through the ILR, that would be used to identify performance and calculate allocations.

7.5 This was a data burden placed upon Providers, but since FO2 and FO3 data collections have become mandatory, this is no longer an unscheduled data collection. It is still the case that the LSC does not hold the most up-to-date data that is used to support the allocations process.

7.6 This has led the Region to request reports on the Learner Numbers with Funding (LNwF) Report from the LIS, intended to support the planning dialogue.

7.7 This Region, along with all other, moved to collecting Train to Gain performance data on a monthly basis. This required the College Providers to report in a manner that was beyond ILR collections. This was a planned change, and the rationale was communicated to all Providers.

7.8 The Train to Gain team regularly ask for "pipeline learners", and this has become part of the routine of contract management, and is not an unscheduled data request.

7.9 Train to Gain Providers have been supported to track employer referrals with a bespoke system (Employer Tracking System) developed and offered by this Regional Office. This is an additional data collection system, that has the support of Providers.

7.10 Field L42 (non-mandatory) is used on the ILR, and has been completed inconsistently. This may be considered by some Providers as a data-burden, even through the field is part of a planned collection.

7.11 Providers have been asked for information concerning their capacity to deliver the developing learning offer, often reflecting the quality of the service they provide. Such collections have included Matrix accreditation status, an organisational Skills for Life checklist, updating the list of qualifications offered, capacity to deliver Units and Thins under Train to Gain Flexibilities, and in some cases, organisational development plans.

7.12 These collections of management information have supported robust contact management, and are not considered to be unscheduled data requests. These reporting requirements reflect the quality of the partnership working with Providers.

7.13 Train to Gain Providers have been asked to provide monthly performance data that will be used to support future funding allocations, because AMPS is based on Standard Learner Numbers collected quarterly.

7.14 This data collection, along with the LIS Report referred to in 7.6, reflects the potential data burden that continued whilst there is an absence of national leadership on the reports to be collected that support the allocations process.

8 CASESTUDY 3 – National Office Train to Gain

8.1 The purpose of interviewing National Office staff from this team, was to determine how, if at all, National Office requests to Regional Offices of the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level.

8.2 Historically, there have been events of data capture that have been additional to the ILR. In May 08 Train to Gain performance data was being requested on a weekly basis. At the close of 07/08, weekly reports were being given each week over the phone. This information produced provider level performance data, which was retained within the Regional Offices. Since then, there have positive changes to the manner in which is data is collected and used.

8.3 The ILR method of collecting data (from design to delivery over a period of 22 months), did not collect what was required to gather monthly performance data, and to constantly review and manage allocations and the financial commitment.

8.4 The National Team developed an allocation toolkit which was made available to Regional Offices, for calculating contract values, associated volumes, and for completion of the Summary Statement of Activity.

8.5 Overall modelling for Train to Gain is undertaken nationally. There are two levels to this. Longer term modelling is undertaken that that provides forecasts and overall trajectories for agreement with DBIS for the Annual Statement of Priorities. The National Office Train to Gain Team also undertakes tactical modelling that is based upon monthly changes in performance. The retrieval of monthly performance figures from providers is routine for the use of this mechanism.

8.6 This tactical reporting is contained within the Tactical Reporting Solution (TRS), and provides reports that include data on providers, employers (including size and sector), the Skills Pledge, and links to local initiatives such as Local Employer Partnerships and participation with the Director Development Programme.

8.7 The need to gather more data than initially collected by the ILR has been addressed by changes to the ILR and the development of the TRS.

8.8 Provider performance is measured at the regional level, which feeds into the Planning and Modelling System (PAMS into AMPS). The TRS is used to measure progress towards national targets, but as yet is not linked to AMPS, that would access provider performance profiles within a single system. Such a system would support the management of change amongst providers, as either growth or restriction, as has been required in the last two years.

8.9 Currently, data is being transferred into the Data Warehouse, held by the Data Service. This will be completed by March 2010. Financial profiles, as a consequence of performance, are held only at provider level.

9 CASESTUDY 4 – National Office OLASS

9.4 The purpose of interviewing National Office staff from this team, was to determine how the National Offender Management Services and National Office requests to Regional Offices of the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level.

9.5 In addition to data collected through ILRs, data is also collected that provides information on the participation rates and activities in institutions. This is collected on the OL1 (Offender Learning) and YOL1 (Youth Offender Learning). These mechanisms and the reports they produces are planned activities.

9.6 The OL1 and YOL1 reports are produces monthly. So that these can be reconciled on a monthly basis with ILR data, addition data requests are returned monthly on the X/ILR. This is addition data collection, but planned for and expected by providers.

9.7 The provision of education and training, and the enhancement of employability, is the prime responsibility of the LSC within a partnership that provides development, support and social services to offenders. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS), seeks to produce a "balanced scorecard" that charts progress on numerous pathways.

9.8 The LSC contribution to the NOMS is the Individual Numerical Upload, which is generated through the reconciled OL1/YOL1 data plus X/ILR data. This system is not generating any unexpected ad-hoc reporting.

9.9 As OLASS operates within the context of NOMS, there is a requirement to respond to information requests from the Independent Monitoring Boards regarding learning programmes and the management of services. These requests, together with requirements to contribute to responses to Parliamentary Questions, have generated some unscheduled information requests.

10 CASESTUDY 5 – National Office ESF

10.4 The purpose of interviewing National Office staff from this team, was to determine how, if at all, National Office requests to Regional Offices of the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level.

10.5 Both providers and the LSC east of England casestudy had made reference to ESF, but only in the context of Train to Gain.

10.6 There had been an additional requirement for providers to re-enter codings, to support the identification of Train to Gain with matching ESF provision. This had occurred in 07/08, at the advent of Train to gain matched to ESF, and has not been repeated.

10.7 The number and frequency of data returns with any ESF contract is agreed by providers and LSC alike to require more attention than other contracted provision.

10.8 The contracted data return requirements of completing ILRs, generating POL returns, and reconciling summative outputs within a closure and evaluation report, are all expected activities.

10.9 The National office ESF team collect data on policy and priority strands. This data is collated from that which is already held, and does not contribute to any ad-hoc requests from providers.

10.10 There is no evidence of any unscheduled data requests being made of providers.

11 CASESTUDY 6 – National Office and Integrated Employment and Skills

11.4 The purpose of interviewing National Office staff from this team, was to determine how JCP and National Office requests to Regional Offices of the LSC had generated unscheduled data requests at a local level. This team plan and support the delivery of programmes that are a conceptual integrated service, between LSC and JCP, together with the nextstep Service

11.5 The Employability Skills Programme (ESP) is funded under the Employer Responsive payment system. The programme, although funded as a learning programme by the LSC, operates in conjunction with the JobCentre Plus Service, commencing with referral from this Service.

11.6 Monthly reports are collated from ILR data, and produced by the Data Service. Data that is additional to that collected through the ILR, is collected from providers each month by LSC regional leads. The information authority Board had agreed to these additional data collections.

11.7 A range of MI systems/interfaces which are operated by providers are used for the ESP monthly submissions. From the advent of ESP, this process has not produced any requests for ad-hoc data requests.

11.8 As of the LSC's response to the economic downturn, the Response to Redundancy Programme, commenced in April 09**.** This programme will use CMA/CMR with a range of interfaces as the means of reporting. This will be expected by providers, as the process will be contained within the contracting arrangements.

11.9 The Training Offer for those Unemployed for Six Months, an offer for JSA customers aged 19 and above, is also a new programme, which is delivered by FE Colleges. All participating colleges were asked to provide a profile from April/May 09.

11.10 As a consequence, colleges have been asked to provide data on actual enrolments to these programmes in these starting months. Participating colleges are expected to provide performance data returns each month, which is additional to the ILR collection.

11.11 The amount of data requested each month has been added to by requests from the DWP/JobCentre Plus Service in the North East and East Midlands LSC Regions. Further enhancements have been requested by DWP as case-study data in specific districts. These requests are received by the National Office team, and distributed to LSC Regional Offices.

11.12 The Training Offer for those Unemployed for Six Months has the potential to become a source of ad-hoc reporting requests.

12 CASESTUDY 7 – Adult Advancement & Careers Service (aacs)

12.1 The purpose of interviewing National Office staff from this team, was to determine how, if at all, National Office requests to nextstep providers had generated unscheduled data requests at a regional level.

12.2 The aacs team fund the nextstep face to face information, advice and skills assessment service, along with the Careers Advice Service, the national telephone helpline. The Careers Advice Service has its own Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) from which monthly MI reporting occurs. The nextstep Service is an integral part of the Integrated Employment Service (IES).

12.3 Since August 2008, the LSC has had ten regional nextstep prime contractors. Each of these providers has their own CRM system. The monthly batch upload includes individuals' post codes and dates of birth, but not name and address.

12.4 There is not a single CRM system to underpin the nextstep service. Prime contractors are contractually obliged to provide a CRM system that is capable of the tracking of individuals and capable of completing monthly batch uploads to the national Management Information (MI) System.

12.5 The national MI system enables the production of a regional report, which provides volume data on the number of individuals seen, the number of interventions, and the progress towards learning and employment, along with data regarding age, ethnicity and situational data.

12.6 The advent of the IES Trials had increased the burden of data required, having required a manual count of IES flags showing on the records for each learner, and the recording of "informed consent" before an individual's action plan can be shared with the Jobcentre Plus Service.

12.7 It is notable that this data is not considered learner data, as this concerns the information, advice and guidance given, to support individual progression. Reports on this activity are not included in the Data Services "Data Book" of standard reports

12.8 To achieve the result of having the capability of producing reports that track an individual's progress at given monthly intervals, the team have reversed their decision on holding unique identifier information – names and addresses – and are in the process of implementing this change.

12.9 Revisions to the national MI system effected on 1st October 2009 will reduce the data burden on prime contractors. There is a review of the current circumstances and risks regarding the collecting and management of information. Prime contractors will input customer data into the national MI system which will then export data to their CRM systems. From 1st August 2010 a single CRM system will underpin the three channels of the aacs.

12.10 This area of activity was not a source of data burden at the time of the Oakleigh study. The potential for this new area of activity, with new prime contractors, to become a source of data burden to providers has been recognised and acted upon by the team, moving towards a robust national MI system.

13 CASESTUDY 8 - Connexions and LLSCs

13.1 The Oakleigh study detailed a number of claims of a data burden generated by the LSC that was associated to the tracking of young people who have received advice and guidance from the Connexions Service.

13.2 Young people's transition from compulsory education to employment or further training is supported by the Connexions Services. Each of these services is a separate legal entity. These data requests were to chart the progression of young people, into either further learning or employment, including Apprenticeships.

13.3 So that the Connexions Services were able to access this progression data, in each LSC region, the Connexions Services have requested that LSC Partnership Teams provide this information to them. Such a report requires the use of two data-sets, which is beyond that held by the LSC within ILR data. Also, the Connexions Services contact Providers directly.

13.4 It was recognised by the LSC that such requests did place a burden on Providers. It was also noted that there were regional and sub-regional differences in the data requested and the formats used. As Providers deliver learning to young people who reside in different Connexions Service locales, some Providers may be asked to provide a number of reports to Connexions Services.

13.5 It is also recognised that the requests for data would be improved by offering a consistent format for reporting, and by providing a schedule for reporting.

13.6 This reporting format is a track of a young person receiving IAG from the Connexions Service, and into further learning. This is also used to identify NEETs.

13.7 As the data-set is beyond that collected by the LSC within the ILR, and held by the Data Services, it is the information authority that has undertaken to identify a solution. This should be in place for August 2010.

14 CONCLUSIONS

14.1 The conclusions to be drawn from this research, having used different methods and sources from the Oakleigh study, should be expected to produce different conclusions.

14.2 The case-studies show that there have been occasions of unscheduled data requests that have placed data burdens on Providers. There are three patterns that are identifiable.

14.3 There have been occasions when data has been requested with Regions as a result of an absence of an agreed set of protocols and procedures. This reflects an issue of timeliness and completeness in the rolling out of new programmes, such as IES and Response to Redundancy. The LSC has responded by developing the protocols and procedures, albeit late. The policy and funding initiative generating at National Office is acted upon by contacted delivery partners before operational data controls are agreed. This suggests that programme level success criteria have not identified at the programme implementation description stage. The example of the national Train to Gain development of the Tactical Reporting Solution demonstrates how the LSC is able, ultimately, to create a mature reporting system that is appropriate to a changing and emergent programme.

14.4 There have been, and continue to be data requests of providers that are made to support the allocations process. The regional and sub-regional differences to these data collections are a second level of burden to the Providers. The Association of Colleges describe a further level of data burden, as the LSC Partnership Teams preparation to negotiate requires the internal generation of last-minute reports by Providers that are used to challenge data held by the LSC that is considered incomplete or invalid. The National Office of the LSC has led on the systems that record the conclusion of this allocations dialogue and the actions that follow in contracting and making payments. The National Office has not led on the data reports to be used in preparation for this dialogue with Providers. This is evidenced by the statements from Partnership Teams that have created their own methods, by the absence of agreed reports in the Data Service´s Catalogue of Reports, and reflected by the inconsistent geographical spread of the Providers´ remarks in the Oakleigh study. In tandem with this research, Regional Data Managers together with a National Office Information Management consultant, from have been considering which data reports would support the allocations dialogue. This are given in Appendix 1.

14.5 There have been some data requests that have occurred due to data requests at ministerial and government department levels. There have been some data requests that have occurred due to immediate planning needs in response to changing priorities, as occurred with Train to Gain in 2008. In all case, the LSC has sought to reduce the burden on Providers by communicating a rationale.

14.6 All three of these potential sources of data burden occur outside of a customer relations management framework. Neither the Oakleigh study nor this research are a replacement for ongoing customer (Provider) satisfaction surveys.

15 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 My recommendations to the LSC are to refine procedures that contribute to the effectiveness of the business planning process, and a further recommendation to monitor the effectiveness of these changes by continuing to evaluate the perceptions of the LSC´s relationship with Providers concerning data collections.

15.2 As new programmes are created at National Office that respond to the emergent needs of the economy and our skills requirements, the options for reporting crucial data and the methods to be employed, should be considered at the earliest stages of programme development. There is a need to address the potential instabilities and difficulties that could be presented by new policies and objectives when they are rolled-out as programmes of activities. By giving earlier consideration to MI reporting, this additional planning will have positive impacts upon both the commissioning process and Providers capabilities. The recommendation is to enhance the national business planning processes with stronger inputs from MI teams.

15.3 To truly support the allocations process, including the ability to conduct positive dialogues with Providers, there is a timely opportunity for the National Office to provide leadership on the remainder of the allocations process, by determining the reports to be used in preparation for this, and shared with Providers. This has been a topic of discussion for a number of different groups in both the National and Regional Offices of the LSC. The recommendation is that the National Office lead on this matter by offering a decision to all Regions on the reports to be used, and offering less flexibility to Regional teams. Consequently these reports will be included in the Data Services catalogue, and where it is appropriate, the generation of these reports by Regional staff can be quality assured by the Data Service. In rolling-out such a national initiative, is essential to support the change by supporting the people who will be making the change – taking the rationale and the coaching to the current Partnership Teams and Employer Responsive Teams before they are fully transferred to the YPLA and SFA. This is a recommendation to the appropriate YPLA and SFA designate governance.

15.4 A further recommendation is to develop methods of collecting information concerning the satisfaction levels of the Providers concerning data collections. Such a CRM system needs to be developed within a context. The LSC is an organisation that responds to the needs of the economy, developing new programmes to address the changing priorities, that each has targets and success criteria. One of the criteria for the successful implementation of a programme is the satisfaction of Providers. In developing such a system, the LSC is also enhancing its plans to improve – creating action plans with targets, which are consistent with the LSC improvement culture. The recommendation is that the LSC designs a method of surveying the satisfaction levels of Providers concerning data collections; baselining and collating their responses so that progress towards improvement targets can be charted. This will become a satisfaction survey of the YPLA and the SFA.

16 NEXT PROJECT STEPS AND EVAUATION

Upon the consideration and acceptance of recommendations 15.2, 15.3 and 15.4 by the LSC, and the appropriate designate governance of the YPLA and SFA, the next steps will be the construction of project plans that identify the criteria for success and how each project will be evaluated.

The advent of a CRM system that identifies the satisfaction levels of Providers concerning data collections will be intrinsic to the evaluation of the other actions recommended to the LSC.

Appendix 1

Suggested standard data reports to support allocations

Adult Learner Responsive

1. Priority/Developmental by Learning Aim, and including SLN and funding for each Aim.
   Purpose – to support dialogue on which provision is Priority or Developmental
   Source – FO5 (07/08), LO2 (08/09), LO1 (09/10). Excludes ALS £

2. LLDD with Developmental by Learning Aim, and including SLN and funding for each Aim.
   Purpose – to identify the % of provision that is Developmental Learning and may need protection and to support allocations
   Source – FO 5 (07/08). Excludes ALS £

3. Priority/Developmental Leaning by priority category (FL2, FL3, FLT, SfL)
   Purpose – used to inform allocations
   Source – FO5 (07/08). Excludes ALS, SLN and Learners by Fully and Co Funded

Young People

4. E2E; current and previous year of delivery, and £ including bonuses. Actual stay.
   Purpose – used to inform allocations
   Source – LO1, LO2, LO5

5. YP Apprenticeships; 12 month data starts and £, with previous year. Success rates and MCV.
   Purpose – to support allocations and review previous performance
   Source – ILR

6. YP Learner Retention; start to achieve ratios, SLNs and funding for previous year, and Learners in current LO1.
   Purpose – Calculates retention rate and identifies trends/patterns and provides a factor that can be used to estimate the outcome for 09/10 from the LO1 (09/10).
   Source – ILR, LO1 (09/10), FO5 and F01 (08/09)

Employer Responsive

7. Apprenticeships (disag 19-24 and 25+) and Train to Gain; current and previous year delivery, performance management framework (TRS), and Success Rates (Ofsted v LSC methods to be solved)
   Purpose – funding allocation
   Source – ILR

Appendix 2

Staff consulted

LSC

Brenda Hubbard	Business Consultant, Information Management, NLSC
Caroline Kempner	Director Analysis and Management Information, NLSC
Christine Ingall	Senior Policy Manager, Skills for Life, NLSC
Geraldine Glenister	Senior Policy Manager, Learning Programmes, NLSC
Greg Dean	Planning and Performance Director, Skills Group, NLSC
Harvey Starns	Head of Commissioning and Procurement, NLSC
Helen Wooldridge	Partnership Manager, LSC Y&H
Jagvir Banning	Senior Policy Manager, FE Simplification and Collaboration, NLSC
Janet Meenaghan	Partnership Manager, LSC EoE
Karen Milner	Senior Policy Manager, Adult Advancement and Careers Service, NLSC
Liam Sammon	Regional Funding, Planning and performance Director, LSC EoE
Michael Dean	Director Planning and Performance, LSC EoE
Paul Hart	ESF Policy Manager, NLSC
Peps Gharu	Data and Analysis Manager, LSC EoE
Richard Mole	Senior Policy Manager, Skills for Employers, NLSC
Tim Barrett	Stakeholder Change Manager, Information Management, NLSC
Tom Beresford	Data and Analysis Manager, LSC WM
Val Chiesa	Strategic Commissioning Director, ALSEG, NLSC

Data Service

Chris Bradley	Senior Account Manager
Andy Cooke	Management Information Development Manager

Association of Colleges

John Perks	Policy and Practice Manager

Information Authority

Paul Kelman	Change Manager