

inform

Issue 30 – October 2009

Inform is a monthly newsletter from *the information authority* and the Data Service, providing you with regular news and updates on our work. To subscribe to inform email: informnewsletter@theia.org.uk.

Data in the Wider FE and Training sector Conference 2009


The *information authority* and the Data Service will be hosting a [Data Conference](#) on Thursday 3 December 2009.

The conference is aimed at independent training providers and the purpose is to share information on a range of FE data issues, including ILR changes and plans for the Data Service. It is being held at Aston University in Birmingham.

To register to attend this conference and for further details please visit the [conference website](#), or [the information authority](#) or [Data Service](#) websites.

Web alerts from the Data Service

Users of the [Data Service website](#) can now sign up to a web alert service that will let them know when new pages are published, or existing pages are updated.

You can sign up to this service now via the [web alerts page](#) - you will be asked to enter your name, a valid email address and a password. A confirmation email will be sent to this email address, so please ensure that you have entered it correctly. You will be able to choose which areas of the site you would like to receive web alerts for. If you wish to change this at a later date, you can either sign in to amend your subscriptions, or subscribe to additional areas of the site by clicking on the 'subscribe' icon  at the top-left of the page.

If you have any queries regarding the web alert service please contact the [Service Desk](#) at the Data Service on 0870 2670001.

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News from *the information authority*

ILR data management guidance on the way

The information authority secretariat has received several questions from providers about how to complete the ILR as a result of the recent letter sent by the chief executive of the LSC, Geoff Russell, to providers about ILR data management.

The secretariat is working closely with the LSC and Ofsted to confirm the responses, and will inform providers when these are made available on [the information authority website](#).

Staff Individualised Record Change Advisory Board

Members of *the information authority* secretariat attended the Workforce Data Collection Change Advisory Board on 15 October 2009. This board provides governance around the specification of the staff individualised record (SIR).

The board reviewed the changes requested to the SIR for 2009/10. The secretariat provides advice to the board on data standards, ways to minimise the burden on providers of data collection and encourages the use of other data sources where available.

Second annual report published

The *information authority's* [second annual report](#) is now available to download.

The annual report takes a look back at the work *the information authority* has been involved in over the last year, priorities for the coming year 2009-2010, how we have performed and who we work with to achieve our aims.

It has been busy year for the authority – our work has covered the development of new data standards, earlier reporting of learner data and 'hard closing' for data returns; supporting the LSC to tackle unscheduled data requests; working with our partners to address the 'data burden' on learning providers and managing the ILR change request process for 2010/11. In addition, our chairman has met with government ministers to contribute to discussions about simplifying the processes involved in the delivery of FE and training.

Kevin Brennan MP, Minister for Further Education and Skills, acknowledges the good work of *the information authority* in his opening statement in the report: "It is good to know that *the information authority* is working on behalf of the whole further education and training system in its role to regulate data standards and collection.

"I support its efforts to improve data quality and reduce the time spent on administration, and I encourage colleagues involved in data collection, transformation and reporting to collaborate actively with *the information authority*."

For a hard copy of the annual report please email *the information authority* at cst@theia.org.uk

Event proves popular with adult learning providers

The information authority recently hosted a one-off event for members of HOLEX, the national network of local adult learning providers.

Speakers were invited from *the information authority*, the Data Service, Framework for Excellence, Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP), Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

The event was attended by 50 training providers from the mainly adult safeguarded learning sector. The various presenters addressed the issues raised by the delegates and offered opportunity for questions, including updates on developments in the Framework for Excellence and future relationships between the new agencies and training providers.

At the end of the day, the Chief Officer of HOLEX, Bob Powell, thanked the presenters and *the information authority* for an event that the delegates found valuable.

feconnect hotseat - quiz the Head of the Data Service

The information authority is giving you the opportunity to question Richard Williams, Head of The Data Service, in the latest of our [hotseat](#) events. This is the fourth in a series of events which has also featured [Graham Jones](#) (*the information authority*), [Mike Davis](#) (Ofsted) and [Caroline Kempner](#) (LSC).

The hot seat interviews give you the opportunity to ask questions directly to experts in the world of further education data.

Please post your [questions for Richard](#) by 6 November 2009 and he will respond from 9 November 2009.

The information authority's Paul Kelman said: "We're really pleased with the way these hotseats are going. There have been some interesting discussions and our web statistics show that a lot of people read the hot seat forums."

Advisory groups update

In October *the information authority* hosted meetings for a number of its [advisory groups](#). Some of the issues covered at each of the meetings were:

- an [overview of the 2010/11 ILR changes](#)
- a demonstration of the Data Service's new e-learning module on the ILR
- an update on the LSC's pilot of paperless systems.

Over the next month or two, we are hosting meetings for local authorities (30 October), Data Users (12 November) and Employer Responsive providers (11 December).

Presentations and key outcomes from all of the advisory group meetings will be published on [the information authority website](#). If you would like to find out more about the groups or are interested in joining, please email cst@theia.org.uk.

Dates for your diary

The information authority and the Data Service will be holding a number of key events over the coming months as well as being present at key conferences. See the table below for key dates for your diary.

Event	Date
information authority board meetings	02/12/2009
	03/03/2010
	16/06/2010
	29/09/2010
	01/12/2010
Data Service Steering Group meetings	20/01/2010
	14/04/2010
	14/07/2010
	13/10/2010

Out and About

Event	Date and location	Detail
Data in the Wider FE and Training Sector Conference 2009	03/12/2009 Aston Business School, Birmingham	<i>The information authority</i> and the Data Service will be hosting a Data Conference on Thursday 3 December 2009. To register to attend this conference and for further details please visit the conference website , or the information authority or Data Service websites.
AoC annual conference and exhibition 2009	17 - 19 November 2009 ICC, Birmingham	<i>The information authority</i> will be exhibiting at the AoC annual conference and exhibition 2009. The Data Service will be running a workshop on how to deliver data requirements and the importance of data quality.
Federation of Awarding Bodies Conference	4 - 5 November 2009 Ricoh Arena, Coventry	<i>The information authority</i> and the Data Service will be exhibiting at this event.

News from the Data Service

Important notice about ILR closure dates

The information authority has provided clear guidance to providers about the dates that ILR returns are due to be returned to the Data Service. The [returns timetable](#) is available to view on [the information authority](#) website.

The Data Service will keep the Data Collections systems open for a period to ensure that all providers have a sufficient opportunity to return data.

- The 2008/09 F04 collection will close at 6pm on Wednesday 18 November 2009
- The F05 collection closes at 6pm on Friday 15 January 2010
- The W13 collection closes at 6pm on the 13 Nov 2009

As data from these final collections will be used to underpin a number of critical LSC business processes, including allocations and minimum levels of performance, providers are encouraged to return data as early as possible.

The Data Service will be contacting providers in the run-up to hard close dates to assist with any issues they may be experiencing with submitting data.

If you have any queries or require assistance with submitting returns please contact the [Service Desk](#) on 0870 2670001.

Latest Statistical First Release (SFR) published

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

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

This SFR covers the number of people aged 16 and over who are not in school or university in England and who have taken a course funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Provisional figures show that in the academic year 2008/09:

- A record 234,000 people started apprenticeships in the 2008/09 academic year;
- 126,900 people completed apprenticeships during the same period, representing the highest number of starts and completions ever in an academic year;
- 1,446,600 people took skills for life courses in literacy, numeracy or English;
- 1,268,500 people took courses leading to a full level 2 qualification (equivalent to five good GCSEs);
- 794,000 people took courses leading to a full level 3 qualification (equivalent to 2 A-levels);

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

Data Service credibility reports – coming soon

Providers making data submissions to the Data Service can download a credibility report for each submission. The reports provide key summaries of the submitted data, along with key summaries of derived variables calculated on the data by the Data Service. The reports are part of a suite of complementary products, including the Learner Information Suite and the Data Self-Assessment Tool, designed to help providers improve and maintain the quality of their individualised learner record (ILR) data.

Credibility reports are being updated for 2009/10 to include RAG colour-coding on key ILR learner fields to indicate the completeness of these fields based on *information authority* data standards ([ILR Appendix P: Data quality, standards and field ownership](#)). The reports will provide an overview of a provider's data which may highlight areas of concern with the collection, and enable discussion on the accuracy and completeness of the provider's data.

The new reports will be available from the Data Service Data Collections website from November 2009.

Changes to learning aim mapcodes

Annually the Data Service produces a Learning Aims Database (LAD) hierarchy file. The LAD hierarchy file contains details of all learning aims that are used to generate qualification success rates (QSR) and minimum levels of performance (MLP) reports within Learner Responsive funding (previously Further Education).

Learning aims contained in the file are aggregated by mapcodes. Where learning aims are within the same notional level, sector subject area and appear to be the same subject then they are attributed the same mapcode. Each year as new learning aims are loaded onto the LAD they need to be assigned either to existing mapcodes or have new ones generated. This is a manual process and over the last couple of years only new A-levels (including AS and A2) and GCSEs have been assigned mapcodes.

For 2008/09 The Data Service, in consultation with OFSTED, LSC, *the information authority* and government departments, have agreed a change to the application of mapcodes.

For further details on this visit the [Data Service website](#).

The impact of changing Learner Reference Numbers (field L03)

The Data Service is aware of an issue relating to Qualification Success Rate reports where some providers may have changed their Learner Reference Number (field L03 in the ILR) for one or more learners. This applies to learners who have planned or actual end dates for funded learning aims in the academic years 2005/06 through to 2008/09. Any changes may affect the reporting of success rates.

An email and mapping spreadsheet was sent to identified providers w/c 19th and 26th October from the Data Service asking providers to identify any changes that may have been made to the L03 field during the learners period of study and the reason for the change.

For more details on this please visit [the Data Service website](#) or contact the Service Desk on 0870 2670001.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set and regulate data standards for organisations involved in further education and training provision in England.

The authority has a [decision-making board](#) headed by an independent chairman and made up of senior representatives from across the further education and training system in England. This is supported by a small operational [secretariat](#).

The Data Service

The Data Service was established in April 2008 to collect and disseminate information as the first single source of data for the further education system in England. It will work closely with *the information authority* to streamline and improve the way information is collected and shared. Key principles of the service are to eradicate duplication; improve collection and sharing; increase efficiency; assure quality and; provide new levels of customer service.

Funded primarily by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) at its inception, the new separately managed organisation will have developed by 2011 into a fully operational service provider working in the interests of the sector as a whole.