

# Minutes

<b>Date</b>	27 January 2011
<b>Subject</b>	Data Users Group
<b>Location</b>	Cheylesmore House, Coventry
<b>Time</b>	11:00
<b>Publication intent</b>	INTERNAL DOCUMENT

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**Present** Shabana Parkes (Sector Skills Councils), Nicola Bibby (DWP), Debbie Blythe (DfE Star Chamber and local authority rep), David Goody (YPLA), Tony Mahon (YPLA), Helen Bray (DfE), Paul Moore (Ofsted), Carole Morley (Learning Records Service), Mike Wicks (Data Service), Jane Ludlow (Data Service), Pete Ashton (*the information authority*), Selvy Kasparis (*the information authority*), Anna Nathwani (*the information authority*), Anita Holcroft (*the information authority*), Rosie Coleman (*the information authority*)

## **Item 1. Welcome and introductions**

1.1 The group were informed that John Perks was unable to chair the meeting and Pete Ashton was replacing him. The attendees then briefly introduced themselves.

## **Item 2. Review of the action log**

2.1 The group went through the action log which has been updated accordingly.

## **Item 3. Matters arising**

3.1 Shabana Parkes gave an update on the issues surrounding data sharing and obtaining information from the Data Service. Sector Skills Councils are working with the Skills Funding Agency to agree data purpose and will be meeting on 14 February to finalise the agreement.

## **Item 4. Essential 2011/12 ILR changes**

4.1 Anita Holcroft talked through the exceptional requests to make changes to the 2011/12 individualised learner record (ILR). Anita explained that *the information authority* board agreed to consider exceptional requests from the

funding agencies to make essential changes to the ILR to deliver policies announced through recent publications such as the Skills Investment Strategy. The group were informed that the board were meeting on 28 January to make these decisions.

- 4.2 The group were given a hard copy of the new ethnicity categories that will be introduced in the 2011/12 academic year. They replicate the 2011 census ethnicity categories, which the group agreed was useful for data sharing purposes. Although, it was pointed out that for time-series analysis, it would be useful to have the categories in the same order. Pete Ashton explained that the Office of National Statistics have done a lot of research on what order ethnicity categories should be put in and this order is based on their advice.
- 4.3 The group asked whether the identification of LLDD in specialist placements (requested by the YPLA) could be changed in-year. Pete said that this was not consistent with the requirement for the 2011/12 academic year. The wording would also be revised to make this clear if this change request is agreed by *the information authority* board.
- 4.4 On capturing the employment status of learners on benefits (requested by BIS) and how changes in the receipt of benefits in-year would be dealt with as it would be difficult for a provider to find out if the learner has a change in circumstances. Pete said the aim is to only collect this information at the start of the learning aim. However if the provider is informed of a change by the learner, they can change the status in-year.
- 4.5 It was mentioned by the group that the national learning aim monitoring field (A46) in the ILR is being used for too many different reasons. Pete Ashton explained that the essential changes are thoroughly thought out but will have to reside in temporary places because *the information authority* does not want to introduce any new fields at this stage. Some consideration will be given to the structure and use of A46.

**Action: *the information authority* to consider restructuring the codes used in field A46.**

#### **Item 5. The single, restructured learner record in XML**

- 5.1 Pete Ashton gave a presentation on the single, restructured learner record in XML. Pete clarified that the SRLR in XML will not replace the name of the ILR, it is a name for the change process. Pete also explained that the data collection portal will remain open for the whole year and that there will be an expectation that learning providers will continue to submit data ahead of key dates in-year to be used for specific purposes, for example, statistical first releases (SFRs) and funding calculations. It is also expected that there will be a 'wrap up' collection in November to gather outcome and achievement data. *The information authority* secretariat is currently working with data users to agree what the key data collection dates will be for 2011/12. The secretariat will put a recommendation to *the information authority* board meeting in March 2011.

- 5.2 The group were concerned that a single collection would mean that all data would have to be collected for every type of learner. Pete explained that certain fields will still only be required in certain situations.
- 5.3 Ofsted currently use collection type in generating their management information.

**Action: PA to talk to Ofsted regarding how this will affect them.**

- 5.4 The group were concerned that the data model may be difficult to understand and use. Pete assured the group that after some familiarisation it is not difficult to understand, will give a lot more flexibility and reduce maintenance costs. It also aligns with schools, higher education and the government's e-gif data standards. The group asked to see examples of how the model will work in reality.

**Action: LM to get examples to the group.**

- 5.5 There was some concern in the group regarding the difference between a full data file and an update data file. If a provider accidentally overwrites their information instead of updating, there could be profound implications. How can this be avoided or 'backed up'? Pete explained that there would be full communication on how this process will work, providers will be responsible for their own data and *the information authority* doesn't want to facilitate several 'versions of the truth'.

## **Item 6. Data Service system re-platforming**

- 6.1 The Data Service's Alan Billingham gave a presentation on the system re-platforming project. The main driver for this project is to enable the Data Service to self-maintain its systems. Currently the Data Service incurs high costs each time there are changes. Alan highlighted that the project at the outset was very ambitious. Time and financial constraints have meant that the deliverables for 2011/12 are not as extensive as they could have been.
- 6.2 The data collection portal will be implemented to collect ILR data in XML in 2011/12. To assist providers in making returns in XML, the Learner Information Suite (LIS) will be redeveloped to include a tool to convert a flat file into XML. The convertor will only be available in the 2011/12 academic year. The converter may be separate to or integral to the LIS. This is not yet decided.
- 6.3 Concerns were raised by the group regarding the funding calculation on the new platform. Alan explained that all the relevant people have been on 'rules engine' training, including someone from the funding team. Several scenarios have been run through the system and the Data Service is confident that it can deal with the more complex funding calculations. It is also possible to

test funding calculations at desktop level, which means testing will also be easier.

- 6.4 The group asked if LARA will be capable of showing the progress of an aim. Alan said that it would and that it would be more responsive to changes and easier to manage.

### **Item 7. Update from the Learner Records Service**

- 7.1 Carole Morley gave an update from the Learner records Service (LRS). Carole informed the group that release 5 will be available at the end of March 2011. The look and feel will be quite different and more like Next Steps. It will make exceptional handling easier and quicker. There will also be web services for every part of the website, including QCF, rules of combination and an enhanced validation tool.
- 7.2 The LRS are working closely with Awarding Organisations on the All Age Careers Service. In addition, LRS are working with Wales' and Northern Ireland's FE bodies to take on the Unique Learner Number (ULN) and help expand the remit of the All Age Careers Service.
- 7.3 There are now over 11 million ULN's and over 6 million Learner Records published. The group asked if there were plans for historical information to be included. Carole said there are no plans to do that yet since the LRS are still building on current learner records.
- 7.4 Carole concluded by mentioning the UCAS ULN pilot which is now underway, to help bridge the gap between FE and HE.

### **Item 8. Any other business**

- 8.1 Gary Seaman informed the group that Connexions have been working with IBM on a prediction model. The model predicts which young people may be in more danger of not being in education, employment or training (NEET), using learner details. Michael Gove has shown interest and Brenda Alexander at DfE is pleased with the model and how it works.
- 8.2 If colleagues are interested in further details, Gary will be happy to provide a full presentation.

**Action: *The information authority* will review the information and gather feedback on whether data users are interested in this information. If data users are interested, this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.**

### **Item 9. Date of next meeting**

- 9.1 The next meeting of the Data users group will take place on 2 June 2011 (provisional).

<b>Meeting chair</b>	Pete Ashton
<b>Minute taker</b>	Rosie Coleman
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