

Paper

Paper 4 - LSC Letter on Data Management

- for information

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Audience the information authority board

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Introduction

- 1 This paper describes data management issues around the individualised learner record (ILR) and work to address them.

Background

- 2 The chief executive of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Geoff Russell, sent a letter to all providers on 23 September 2009 setting out the findings from a piece of work undertaken by the LSC with the college sector. Copies of the letters are attached at the annex to this paper. The secretariat contributed to the drafting of these letters.
- 3 In summary the letter:
 - identified that colleges adopt different approaches to completing the ILR
 - confirmed these approaches could affect success rates
 - confirmed the importance of particular instructions contained in the ILR specification
 - proposed establishment of project groups including representatives of the sector and chaired by the chairman of *the information authority* to oversee issues raised in the letter
 - contained an annex setting out principles and key points relating to ILR data management.
- 4 During the week commencing 2 November 2009 a 15 page summary of the LSC ILR Fact Finding Review was released on the parliamentary website at: <http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2009/DEP2009-2679.doc>

- 5 As steward of the ILR specification and upholder of its reputation the secretariat has been involved throughout the analytical part of the investigation, advising the investigators, management consultants KPMG and LSC, about how data should have been completed and helping with interpretation of results. The secretariat was not involved in the visits to colleges other than to provide information to those making the visits about the specification and how it is applied.
- 6 Since the report the secretariat has been:
- tightening the language in the ILR specification to be more directive about how it is completed
 - collecting the hard questions directly from members of our provider groups and providers aware of the role of the secretariat, at conferences and through the Data Service's service desk. There are some grey areas based on the wide range of provision offered in FE. Some of the questions are not covered by existing guidance in which case we are developing proposed answers and working with stakeholders to agree them. Agreed answers are being published on *the information authority* website
 - providing second line support on questions arising to the Data Service's service desk and to LSC auditors
 - establishing the project groups mentioned in Geoff Russell's letter. Graham Jones is to chair them.
 - encouraging and offering support to anyone willing to establish systematic comparison of ILR returns, one software supplier is already developing such a product
 - discussing the Geoff Russell letter and its contents at secretariat-run provider groups and at conferences for providers run by other organisations.

Implications for the FE system

- 7 The letter and report have already resulted in two articles in the FE Focus section of the Times Education Supplement (TES). The data management practices identified and their effect on success rates represent a risk to the reputation of the sector.

Recommendations

- 8 The board is invited to:
- note the information in this paper and comment on it
 - suggest ways in which *the information authority* can further contribute to the work resulting from identification of data management issues.

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