

THE UNIQUE LEARNER NUMBER

The Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) programme in England has been running since 2002. It is run by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Wales has had a watching brief since 2002 and participated in decision making over principles and direction of travel.

The aim of the programme is to improve the information environment in England around Post 16 (non HE) learning, summed up by the mantra to “Use once, use many times, use by all” applied to learner and learning activity data. Wales used some of the early thinking of MIAP and, through the Lifelong Learning & Skills Group of the Welsh Assembly Government, streamed data collection and linked it to funding in 2003, with the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) system.

MIAP has delivered a UK Register of Learning Providers that includes all learning institutions in Wales, allocating them a Unique Provider Number. In addition MIAP has delivered a key enabler to efficient data use with the development of a Common Data Definition dictionary.

MIAP has developed a Learner Registration Service, run by the Learning and Skills Council in England, which will support every learner to build a record of their participation and achievements. The supply of the MIAP ULN by the LSC to Wales was approved by Ministers in April 2008.

This service contains a Unique Learner Number (ULN) that will be allocated to every person in England undertaking education and training. The 10 digit number will remain with them for life and will not be recycled. It is designed to ensure that no meaning can be inferred from its structure.

The Learner Registration Service (LRS) is responsible for issuing and holding a unique number for each eligible learner. The registration service is an internet accessible facility that allows the storage of all details (up to twenty variables, with a minimum of five mandatory) pertaining to a learner’s identity in a single place, indexed by a Unique Learner Number.

Learners will be able to examine their details held by the registration service at any time and can make corrections if necessary using a dedicated help desk, after proving their identity. This information sharing only takes place with the consent of the learner, or to enable statutory bodies to carry out their functions.

Data and information governance and assurance has been a key consideration of the MIAP programme from its inception. The Information Commissioners Office has been closely involved in designing and agreeing the governance procedures to protect the learner and their data.

The ULN will be used in England for new Diplomas from September 2008. In Wales we will be piloting its use for the Welsh Baccalaureate from September

2008. School MIS systems will be extended to allow storage of ULNs in pupil records from academic year 2008/09.

Although there is currently no extensive use made of ULN data in Wales, where this information is available as part of a pupil's Common Transfer File it is possible for this data to be transferred into a school MIS for pupils moving from England to Wales.