

LLN

Lifelong Learning Networks: Analysis of 2008 monitoring reports by HEFCE



Background

1. In 2004, HEFCE launched the Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) programme, inviting bids from higher education institutions (HEIs) in partnership with local further education colleges (FECs) to improve progression opportunities for learners following vocational pathways. To date, HEFCE has committed approximately £105 million and over 15,000 additional student numbers (ASNs) to support the work of 30 LLNs nationwide.
2. The first five LLNs were funded in 2005, a further sixteen LLNs were funded in 2006, seven in 2007, and the final two LLNs were funded in 2008. Further information on all LLNs can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Widening participation/Lifelong Learning Networks/Existing LLNs/List of funded LLNs.
3. In April 2008, HEFCE published the interim report of the progress of Lifelong Learning Networks, conducted and produced by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information. One of the key recommendations of the report was for HEFCE to develop a more standardised form of reporting for LLNs, allowing consistent financial data and activity to be captured. Acting upon this recommendation, HEFCE introduced a standardised monitoring procedure in August 2008.
4. LLNs had previously been submitting a fully qualitative report and monitoring dates were dispersed across each year, linking to the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) approval date.



5. The new monitoring requirements for LLNs brought reporting dates into line, requiring all LLNs to report to HEFCE by 31 October each year. The key purpose of the monitoring strategy is to enable HEFCE to monitor the progress of LLNs against the milestones and targets set out in their original SDF business cases. However, the new requirements also allow HEFCE to collect similar and comparable data from all LLNs in order to assess the progress of the programme as a whole.

6. It is anticipated that the data provided in the new monitoring returns will feed into HEFCE's overview of the progress of LLNs as part of the main monitoring and evaluation strategy. It is also anticipated that LLNs will find the collection of such data useful in their own evaluation of the achievements made against their original SDF business case.

7. The first monitoring returns from LLNs under the new requirements were made at the end of October 2008. This report sets out key findings from the monitoring returns and uses case studies to illustrate the ways in which LLNs are working in the key areas. LLNs were asked to report on:

- a. Finance and expenditure.
- b. Progression agreements.
- c. Curriculum development and employer engagement.
- d. Staff development.
- e. Information, advice and guidance (IAG).
- f. Defining and measuring the learner constituency.
- g. Further education (FE) – higher education (HE) progression links.

8. In addition, LLNs were also asked to include a qualitative commentary as an annex to the template, expanding on the quantitative data, and assessing their progress against milestones and targets in their original business plan, LLN-related work and any further examples of working with employers. LLNs were also asked to address the contribution



made to supporting institutions in ensuring equality and diversity legislation. LLNs were not specifically requested to comment on their work in relation to the 14-19 agenda, however this is an area where LLN work is increasing, and LLNs will be asked to include a reference to this in the next monitoring return. Similarly, LLNs were not asked to comment on their plans for sustainability after their HEFCE funding period finishes – we will also be asking LLNs to include this in their next reports.



Key findings

Finance and expenditure

9. This section of the report allowed HEFCE to continue checking the progress of LLNs against their payment profile, but also enabled us to build up a picture of how much expenditure is committed to each key LLN process.

- The reports demonstrated that progression agreements and curriculum development were the activities on which LLNs spent most and plan increased expenditure over the next academic year. In some cases, LLNs were able to attribute staff costs to the key activities; however in other networks this was not possible due to the multi-faceted roles within the partnerships. Table one below shows estimated amounts from each LLN for core LLN activities and processes, and shows planned expenditure for the year ahead.
- Other key categories of expenditure were evaluation, research and dissemination, and development project costs.
- Overall in 2007-08, LLNs received £1,038,001 from other sources. The main sources of additional funding to support projects undertaken by the LLNs were the Learning and Skills Council, Aimhigher, Train to Gain, regional development agencies, and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). This figure also includes funding provided by HEFCE to LLNs to undertake five pathfinder projects for 14-19 diplomas, but does not include any other figures attributed to HEFCE (i.e. 'HEFCE contribution as per bid') in order to avoid double counting.

Table one: expenditure 2007-08 and planned expenditure 2008-09

LLN activities and processes	Expenditure in reporting year: 2007-08	Planned expenditure in next reporting year: 2008-09
Progression agreements (including staff costs)	4,356,292	5,325,178
Curriculum development (including staff costs)	5,435,030	7,604,409
IAG (including staff costs)	3,599,490	4,731,244
Marketing (including staff costs)	1,185,788	1,966,975
Staff development (including staff costs)	797,983	1,328,768
Employer engagement (including staff costs)	1,407,600	2,556,155
Salaries and staff costs (if not included in the above)	4,019,099	4,742,993

Progression agreements

10. Progression agreements form a key part of LLN activity. They are based on the shared understanding and judgement of staff in different types of institutions, and provide a clear pathway to HE for vocational learners.

11. The reports show us that the key area in which LLNs are working to clarify and create progression routes is through BTEC qualifications. The monitoring returns also show that LLNs are working to ensure not only progression into HE but through HE, particularly from foundation degrees. LLNs were diverse from their conception and as such have taken different approaches to developing progression agreements, tailoring approaches to meet identified local need. The figure in Table two shows the total number of progression agreements and includes:

- overarching agreements signed by all partner institutions
- region-wide agreements
- agreements covering a range of courses into a single programme
- agreements covering a single course into a range of programmes
- single-institution and multi-institution agreements.

Table two: key figures for progression agreements

Indicative figure for the total number of progression agreements in place	1,697
Draft	787
Individual signatures	488
Expected number of learners per year	32,844

12. It is important to remember that progression agreements often relate to clusters of pathways, not individual pathways – one progression agreement could include hundreds of individual pathways. For example, at one LLN the 13 signed progression agreements involve a total of 57 different progression routes. Another LLN has facilitated the signing of 81 progression agreement documents linking 257 programmes. Other networks have put in place over 50 progression agreements and have used these to develop overarching regional progression agreements. One network has implemented 52 progression agreements, but 15,000 pathways sit below it. This demonstrates the breadth of opportunity available to vocational learners. The case study below provides more information about progression agreements.

13. Although LLNs have focused on progression from BTECs, they are beginning to tackle progression agreements from qualifications which are more difficult to map, including work-based learners taking NVQs, Advanced Apprenticeships and 14-19 Diplomas. Furthermore, a number of LLNs are developing network-wide and regional progression agreements. For example, the North East Higher Skills Network has developed regional progression agreements for engineering, health and social care, and leadership and management. These are searchable on the [iwant2b](http://www.iwant2b.org/) web-site at www.iwant2b.org/. Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull LLN and Staffordshire, Shropshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford and the Wrekin LLN are developing network-wide progression agreements for their curriculum areas. A number of LLNs are developing progression agreements across networks including Higher York, Yorkshire and Humber East LLN, Higher Futures, West Yorkshire LLN, and Leap Ahead, the LLN for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



14. Table three gives an indication of the types of level 3 and 4 courses for which LLNs are developing progression agreements.

Table three: progression agreements by selected sending courses

Sending course*	Implemented	Draft
BTEC	819	362
NVQ	55	8
Apprenticeship	12	5
Foundation degree	230	114
Access	120	52
14-19 Diplomas	17	23

* A number of the sending courses were amalgamated (for example, NVQ/BTEC), these have not been included.

Progression agreements case study

The Cumbria Higher Learning LLN has developed 30 progression agreements so far, which have secured over 1,500 potential routes from level 3 into named higher education courses in all four HE partner institutions. The estimated number of potential learners that could directly benefit from these new agreements is in excess of 2,000. The progression agreements seek to offer either guaranteed interviews or guaranteed places to those learners who meet all of a programme's entry requirements. They focus on work-based learners holding nationally recognised level 3 qualifications, learners with experience in the workplace, but who do not hold level 3 qualifications, and 14-19 diplomas.

Curriculum development and employer engagement

15. A core process of LLN work has been to work with FECs, HEIs, and employers to develop and align curriculum for progression at level 3 to level 4 and beyond. As a result of this work, LLNs have reported that they have agreed over 700 new or modified courses (the split is around 50:50 for new and modified) to facilitate progression. Work in this area has ranged from developing new foundation and undergraduate degrees to developing continuing professional development (CPD) and access courses. In many cases, LLNs have helped establish new modules on undergraduate-level courses to facilitate vocational progression from level 3.

16. Around three quarters of this new or modified provision has been undertaken with the involvement of employers, and to a slightly lesser extent has involved SSCs. This demonstrates how for many LLNs the involvement of employers in designing curriculum is crucial, particularly for work-based learners. For example, one LLN worked with the ambulance service to develop a foundation degree for practising paramedics. Another LLN has worked with professional bodies to support the development of a foundation degree in construction management. Many LLNs have also stated that they are supporting partner institutions to deliver the wider employer engagement agenda.

17. There has, however, been a limited amount of engagement with progression to professional qualifications – this is an area where we would be keen to see LLNs increasing activity.

18. In the case of progression agreements, where LLNs have worked with partner institutions to align curriculum for vocational progression, curriculum development has also been a key aspect of their development.

Curriculum development and employer engagement case study one

The Hereford and Worcestershire LLN has developed 32 new courses at all levels from a certificate of HE to masters, as well as CPD modules. Virtually all curriculum has been developed with assistance from local employers, and much will be delivered part time, or through flexible or blended learning. All partners are committed to sustaining the courses once developed.

Curriculum development and employer engagement case study two

The North East Higher Skills Network has engaged extensively with employers, employer cluster bodies, and SSCs. The network has engaged 412 employers through network activities and by July 2008 LLN employer engagement staff had secured over £500,000 of new business for HEIs in the south of the region. All 57 new courses and modules have been developed with employer engagement.

Staff development

19. Staff development has enabled LLNs to up-skill key staff in partner institutions as well as external agencies and in schools.

20. LLNs reported that they had delivered over 350 staff development events and activities, estimating that over 16,000 staff in total had been involved. Staff development activities and events have been targeted at key personnel in institutions and further afield. The main target for a large proportion of activity was admissions staff and tutors in FE and in HE, arranging events to raise awareness of progression agreements, and progression pathways for vocational learners. LLNs have arranged some staff development events for senior management teams in colleges, for teachers, careers advisors, and for employers. The events have usually focused around progression agreements, employer engagement, and the new 14-19 diplomas. LLNs are using staff development events to link to improving IAG for vocational learners, through careers officers and teachers in schools, and Connexions advisors. LLNs have also been working with key school advisors to improve their knowledge of the UCAS system and assist vocational learners in applying and progressing to HE.

21. A large number of events have focused on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, credit, and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. It is clear from the reports that LLNs are targeting the key admissions staff in institutions. Clearly, the key to sustaining the work and activities of the LLNs is to ensure that culture change is encouraged, accepted, and embedded at all levels of institutions, including senior management teams. Although there is some evidence of this engagement in the reports, and we recognise that there are challenges in this engagement, this is an area which must be a key area of focus for LLNs.

22. Table four shows the main targets of staff development events – please note: results have been aggregated into general categories and not all different categories of staff have been included for ease of reporting.

Table four: staff development events

Target of staff development	Number
Academic staff	3,756
Admissions staff	1,769
IAG staff	1,597
Employers and/or staff involved in employer engagement	748
FE and HE staff	849
Teaching staff and/or tutors	1,415
Student support staff	241
Practitioners (LLN and related)	1,475
Senior management teams	100

23. A further 250 events and activities have been held for the benefit of LLN staff. These events have covered work across the local region with other LLNs to share best practice, vocational progression, admissions, foundation degrees, and the 14-19 diplomas.

Staff development case study

The Sussex Learning Network has invested considerable time and resources in staff development as a vehicle for raising the profile of the Sussex Learning Network and its ‘brand’. This activity includes disseminating information about its work, and enabling individuals to widen their networks across organisations and institutions.

The LLN has focused staff development work on IAG and overall staff development events have engaged IAG advisors, Train to Gain brokers, Nextstep advisers, Union Learning Representatives, college personal tutors, teachers, admissions staff and wider practitioners.

Large events led by the LLN included the LLN annual conference, foundation degree symposium events and an admissions event. Since September 2006, 1,211 people have attended the events organised by the LLN.

Information, advice and guidance

24. From their inception LLNs were tasked with improving current IAG available to vocational learners, and they have also worked towards developing new forms of IAG to provide vocational learners with comprehensive information for progression.

25. The monitoring reports showed that in developing IAG, LLNs are:

- being responsive to local need
- identifying gaps
- recognising that the sustainability of tools and activity are central to IAG development
- careful not to re-invent structures that already exist. (A considerable amount of IAG – face-to-face and web-based – has been developed, hosted or distributed with partners including Aimhigher, Connexions, SSCs, Foundation Degree Forward and Unionlearn. This has also included securing funding and commitment for web-based IAG from partners.)

26. LLNs have evolved in diverse ways to meet local need and as such have viewed the core progress of IAG differently. Some LLNs have developed separate online IAG tools; others have contributed to existing tools in partner institutions.

27. Most LLNs that have developed web-based IAG have focused on general course finders or course finders that are based on specific progression agreements. Seven LLNs have live course finders based on progression routes and nine LLNs are developing these. In Sussex, learners can access an online directory of courses and the progression routes available. They can then download a personalised version of the progression agreement which they can take along to interviews. In the North East Higher Skills Network, learners can identify a personalised progression route from their current level of qualification and experience to further career levels, or routes into other disciplines. They can also access online information on specific careers and courses through case studies based on real learners.

28. Other web-based IAG includes personal learning packs, e-portfolios, taster modules, frequently asked questions and case studies.



29. Table five below shows the main types of IAG activity and the estimated number benefiting: please note – activities have been aggregated for this purpose and the figures are broad estimates. LLNs have undertaken further activities, such as production of paper-based information materials and subsequent distribution, but it is very difficult to estimate how many people have benefited.

30. LLNs have undertaken IAG training for staff in partner institutions with a view to ensuring that this strand of work becomes embedded and sustainable. From the reports, this area of work has been communicated as a key priority.

Table five: IAG activity and numbers benefiting

Type IAG	Numbers benefiting (approximate figures to give an indication)	Examples of activity
One-to-one (inc telephone)	20,075	Interviews with workplace learners; working with other agencies such as Next Step and Connexions to facilitate one-to-one interviews
Group support	36,654	Group sessions looking at completing UCAS forms; workshops for level 2 learners on progressing to HE
Web-site	211,833	Web-based IAG tools; course finders



IAG case study: Web-based IAG

The Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) has developed GMSA Pathways, an online enquiry service which maps progression routes into higher education from level 3. GMSA has considered sustainability from the outset which is evident from the design of GMSA Pathways, and the engagement and role of partners in supporting the development.

Pathways provides an online search tool for BTEC, foundation degree, the Association of Accounting Technicians and Higher National Certificate learners linked to progression agreements. Learners can search almost 15,000 local higher education opportunities through GMSA Pathways. Pathways has been developed based on a database which ensures that in the long-term partners can add to it. The database also allows the sharing of data with other LLNs or other IAG services. From 2009, partners will be able to enter data for new agreements via a web-based form which aims to make the process simpler.

IAG case study: IAG tracking systems

West Yorkshire LLN has developed a learner tracking system for the monitoring and evaluation of IAG interventions across further and higher education institutions. The system, 'IAGnow' is password-protected. This enables numerous organisations to securely input and track individuals' learner data, IAG history, and search for previous IAG interventions. The system also has an area where resources to support IAG interventions are stored, and a facility to support and encourage networking of IAG practitioners across the network.

'IAGnow' was launched in March 2008 and currently there are 40 users of the system across 16 partner institutions. The next phase of the project will enable the automated transfer of learner information from partner institutions in receipt of ASNs, learners benefiting from progression agreements and IAG to support the collation of information for the HESA and HESES returns, and West Yorkshire LLN reporting requirements.

In the longer term, it is anticipated the information within the system will provide a valuable insight into the influence and effect IAG has on a learner's decision to progress into and through HE.

Learner constituency

31. LLNs were asked to define their learner constituency. This sought to establish a baseline of provision from which to assess progress.

32. LLNs took different approaches to measuring the learner constituency. Most have identified the number of students on a range of 'target programmes' for the LLN and begun to track changes over time; others have recorded the number of learners entering identified programmes with *vocational* qualifications. The most significant differences in approach however relate to the basis on which the programmes to be monitored have been selected. Some LLNs have taken a narrow view and included only new programmes associated with the work of the LLN; others have identified a wider range of programmes associated with the core occupational groups on which the LLN focuses; some have identified a very much wider range, presumably because they believe that progression can and should be across all (or a very significant number) of the courses offered by HE providers in the network.

33. We anticipated a range of responses because we invited LLNs to define the boundaries around relevant programmes in the way that they saw appropriate, and we hope that the information generated will be useful for individual networks.

34. However, it does not provide the basis for comparisons across LLNs or a way of measuring progress by LLNs as a whole. Given the additional burden of collecting data for monitoring purposes we will review the usefulness of asking about the 'learner constituency' in this way. The problem, in essence, remains the same: how to assess progress in facilitating progression into and through HE? One measure is the extent to which LLNs fully use the ASNs awarded to them, and the data about students taking up these places.

35. There is a time delay between learners commencing courses and HESA data being returned – for example, the 2006-07 HESA data was not available until early 2008. We are currently finalising an analysis of HESA data for learners entering in the 2006-07 academic year and will extend this analysis to learners recorded on the HESA 2007-08 return. Early results from this analysis demonstrate that:

- a larger proportion of LLN students for the 2006-07 intake were female (56 per cent as opposed to 44 per cent male)
- LLN learners are more likely to be from the 20-29 age group
- the majority of learners describe themselves as coming from a 'white' background (75 per cent)



- the majority of learners were qualified to level 3 on entry (A-level/Higher/NVQ/GNVQ or level 3 National Certificate/diploma)
- a large majority of LLN learners were first-time starters in HE (59 per cent)
- the majority of learners were aiming for a foundation degree qualification (44 per cent), followed by a first degree (28 per cent).

36. In addition to analysing HESA data on ASNs and other flagged LLN learners, we clearly need a measure of the wider impact LLNs have on the recruitment of learners with vocational qualifications across the courses and programmes offered by HE providers in the network. We will, therefore, talk to LLNs and to the practitioner forum to see if (a) there is a manageable (low-burden) way of tightening definitions about the learner constituency so that data are at least broadly comparable or (b) a focus on other measures of the wider impact of LLNs is more appropriate.

37. The two case studies below examine the way that LLNs have approached measuring and defining the learner constituency.

Learner constituency case study one

VETNET LLN included a dataset which showed the percentage of the total cohort composed of students entering level 4 courses from vocational backgrounds. The LLN aggregated courses into course areas and asked 11 partner institutions to provide the numbers of students entering with vocational qualifications, and the total number of students in the cohort.

The LLN used the data to show how the percentages of vocational learners had increased or decreased the year after the LLN began. The LLN gave a baseline figure for each course area for the year before it started operating in order to demonstrate changes. The data showed that in some course areas there was a small decrease in the number of vocational learners (this was no more than 5 per cent) but in other course areas there were significant increases (for example in equine-related foundation degrees the percentage of vocational learners had risen from 20 per cent in 2006-07 to 43 per cent in 2007-08). Such datasets will be a valuable tool for the LLN to measure change during its funding period and beyond.

Learner constituency case study two

Kent and Medway LLN purchased data from HESA that will provide intelligence about progression from Kent and Medway FECs to universities nationally. This provided the network with data that accurately quantify the learner constituency.

The LLN included data that showed:

- the total numbers of learners in their final year on **full-time level 3** vocational programmes in FECs in Kent and Medway, of which specifically targeted learners are counted in the progression agreement spreadsheet
- learners on LSC-funded **full-time level 4+** vocational programmes in FECs in Kent and Medway
- total numbers of learners in their final year on **part-time level 3** vocational programmes in FECs in Kent and Medway, of which specifically targeted learners are counted in the progression agreement spreadsheet (includes LSC-funded level 3 adult education provision)
- learners on LSC-funded **part-time level 4+** vocational programmes in FECs in Kent and Medway
- learners on HEFCE-funded **full- and part-time HE** provision like HNDs, foundation degrees, degrees at FECs and HEIs in Kent and Medway that are covered by progression agreements.

The data showed that since the start of the LLN, numbers in all areas had increased in the last year – in particular where the LLN had linked programmes to progression agreements.

The LSC has provided the LLN with ILR data for 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08.

This has provided the figures that accurately quantify the learner constituency in the monitoring report. This data also provides learner details by course and college and will be tracked into their LLN HEIs in December 2008. The LLN intends to use the tracking to provide robust statistics relating to overall progression rates. By focusing on progression for programmes covered by progression agreements, it will provide a measure of the LLN's impact.

FE-HE partnership links

38. The monitoring reports show that LLNs have taken a number of different approaches to building progression and partnership links between their FE partners and partners in HE. The core ways in which they have achieved this has been the formation of operational groups with members from both FE and HE. These groups include:

- curriculum and sector groups – to discuss and implement curriculum development and alignment, progression agreements, and research projects
- credit agreement groups to discuss and implement a common approach to credit.

39. The outputs for most FE-HE activity are progression agreements, improved communication between the two sectors on progression, and credit and curriculum alignment. Other examples include:

- meetings of groups to map the curriculum
- one-to-one interviews and small focus-group meetings to inform research
- employer engagement groups
- 14-19 curriculum groups.

40. LLNs have used the area of FE-HE progression links to instigate culture change in institutions, to alter attitudes towards the capabilities of vocational learners. This is an achievement that cannot be quantified and one that is happening across all LLNs. Case study one below gives an example of this type of work.

41. There is an overlap in FE-HE links with staff development in the case of a number of LLNs, and we would fully expect to see this – staff development in partner institutions is central to sustaining the core processes of the LLN.



FE-HE partnership links case study one

Progress South Central LLN (working in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey) facilitated a growing range of partnership arrangements and associated work which are complementary and go beyond our initial targets. They are also seeking to tie activity to work which will be sustained through the partnership, or elements of the partnership, beyond their initial funding period. Wherever appropriate, funding is tied to planning for longer-term sustainability.

They have also agreed to develop our sector-specific work in strategically targeted ways. This will ensure maximum value for money over the lifetime of the funded LLN, and support longer-term sustainability. The LLN has brought together key staff in HEIs and FECs with stakeholders such as Train to Gain and employers to discuss curriculum developments. This collaboration aims to promote the work of the LLN and its partners among employers and to ensure support for the delivery of the LLN business plan. The LLN has also brought HE and FE partners together with Aimhigher partnerships and local 14-19 diploma delivery partnerships to ensure strong working relationships are built and to develop progression agreements for the diplomas where needed.

FE-HE partnership links case study two

The Coventry and Warwickshire LLN aims to develop and embed sustainable collaboration between partners. The purpose of this is to provide transparent and guaranteed routes of progression for vocational learners to programmes developed in response to employer demand. The LLN saw the starting point for this as the building of partnerships to develop and implement progression agreements, and this has led to some joint working and the sharing of learning opportunities and materials. The Coventry and Warwickshire LLN has also brought together those interested in developing work-based learning at Coventry University. In addition to the latter, the LLN feels that it is now timely to encourage more collaborative activity, centred upon foundation degree development, which is responsive to employer demand and will see the joint development of learning materials.

The LLN has mostly facilitated such partnership working through operational groups. These comprise departmental heads at FE and HE institutions, SSCs and admissions staff who discuss, map and align curriculum, share learning materials, and promote CPD for key staff involved in facilitating vocational progression.

Further progress made by LLNs

42. There are other areas of work where LLNs have also made considerable progress. One key area is the work LLNs currently undertake to ensure eased progression from the newly introduced 14-19 diplomas to HE.

43. A vital component of the LLN monitoring reports as SDF-funded projects is to ensure that LLNs are meeting the targets and milestones set out in their original business cases. This is an area where LLNs are continuing to excel and many are broadening the original targets to include new areas of work (in particular 14-19 diplomas) while still reaching their original milestones.

44. Many LLNs are also working across their regional areas to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort. In particular, the LLNs in London have secured funding to develop a demonstration site for London from Skills for Health, the sector skills council for health-related occupations, and have worked with Foundation Degree Forward to develop a foundation degree prospectus. The four LLNs in the South East of England have received funding from SEEDA and from the LSC to develop an online IAG tool, the 'Learners at Work Information Service', which will be rolled out across the region. Such enterprises ensure that technology developed is sustained as well as avoiding developing numerous separate systems with the same purpose.

Conclusion

45. The monitoring returns have provided HEFCE with a much clearer insight into the progress being achieved by LLNs. By introducing a more standardised approach to monitoring, we are able to gain a snapshot of all LLNs at the same time.

46. As the programme matures, the data returned in the monitoring reports provides us with a clearer evidence base on which to assess and promote the progress of the programme as a whole. It also provides both HEFCE and individual LLNs with data that can feed into evaluation.

47. The 2008 return has demonstrated the important and positive work that is being achieved by LLNs. It also shows the volume, particularly in the core processes of progression agreements, curriculum development and alignment, and IAG.

48. As suggested above, we are currently undertaking analysis of learners flagged on the 2006-07 HESA return, and will undertake a similar analysis for LLN learners flagged on the 2007-08 return in due course. We will incorporate the data gathered from this analysis into our analysis of the next monitoring reports. The analysis of the characteristics of LLN learners flagged on the 2006-07 and 2007-08 return will also be published online shortly.



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