



Department  
for Education

# **FE Workforce Data Collection**

**Government consultation response**

**February 2020**

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## Ministerial Foreword

It is critical that the further education (FE) system in England is driven by strong leaders and excellent teachers with the right skills, knowledge and experience to deliver high-quality educational outcomes and financial sustainability. Robust data and evidence is an important part of enabling this.

The FE sector does vital work to help learners acquire the skills they need for well-paid jobs in the modern economy. Without a full and informed picture of those who make up the FE workforce, our ability to shape policy in ways that best serve the sector is restricted. FE providers make a real difference to the prospects of learners and local communities. To support them with policy intervention, Government needs an evidence base that is comprehensive and complete.

To that end, this consultation aimed to gauge the sector's opinion on our proposals to improve data on the FE workforce. We were pleased to get a good response covering lots of different voices from the providers, sector representatives and individuals. As a result, we intend to press ahead by introducing a workforce data collection from the 2020/21 academic year, which will be mandatory from the 2021/22 academic year. This will enable policy makers and representative organisations to ensure that proposals which may affect teachers and leaders are based on high-quality and accurate data. This improved evidence will provide a number of benefits such as a better understanding of:

- the implications of government policy reforms and their impact on the composition of staff and their specialisms;
- the factors affecting staff recruitment and retention; and,
- skills strengths and gaps.

This document sets out a roadmap for working in partnership with the sector to implement a data collection that benefits those providers that will be required to make returns. This Government will ensure transparency of FE workforce data and will seek to ensure that providers can benchmark themselves against one another.

We will not be designing an FE workforce data collection from scratch. We will draw lessons from practice in existing collections. These changes will give FE workforce data the same status as that of schools and higher education, where we have near full coverage across our workforce datasets. We will work with FE providers and sector bodies as we implement this collection to ensure it provides them with the information they need to manage and plan their workforce effectively and target investment where it is needed most. We will develop the new collection collaboratively with the sector through user testing to minimise burden and to make sure the approach meets a wide range of needs.

This is one of a range of ways that this Government will continue to support the FE sector to raise the quality and prestige of education and training. FE providers are autonomous institutions, however, and so it is collaboration between the sector and government that

will help to deliver improvement. I am grateful for the way in which respondents have engaged positively with our proposals. I am delighted that most respondents agreed that our proposals were an encouraging development. We have listened carefully to respondents, drawing also on the findings from the [Call for Evidence](#)<sup>1</sup> we undertook in 2018. We have noted where concerns have been raised, and this has directly informed the response outlined in this document.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michelle Donelan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

**Michelle Donelan MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

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<sup>1</sup> Summary report published online here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-further-education-workforce-data-call-for-evidence>

## Introduction

1. The Department for Education (DfE) published a set of proposals in March 2019 on the collection of data on the further education (FE) workforce in England. This consultation covered the following areas:

- Quantity and quality of data available on the FE workforce;
- Scope of the data items for inclusion in the collection;
- Mandating data collection returns from FE providers;
- Identifying those providers within the scope of the data collection;
- Identifying staff types within the scope of the data collection;
- Methodology for data collection;
- Support and benefits for providers;
- Timing and frequency of the data collection; and,
- Timeframe for implementing the data collection.

2. The proposals were subject to a public consultation which began on 20 March 2019 and ended on 11 June 2019. A [document](#)<sup>2</sup> describing the proposals was published on the gov.uk website and consultation platform, with responses invited through the consultation platform, by email or post.

3. The department requested comments and views on these proposals to improve the quantity and quality of data available on the FE workforce.

4. This document is the government's response. It sets out: the direction of travel for FE workforce data collection; what is required for implementation; and how we will work with the sector to take this work forward.

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<sup>2</sup> Document published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fe-workforce-data-collection>

# Part 1: Overview of responses received and the government's response

## Key facts

5. We received 40 responses, all of which were submitted online. Individual FE providers that responded included: independent training providers, sixth form colleges, local authorities and FE colleges. In addition, a number of sector bodies, some of whom represent FE providers or FE staff, responded to the consultation. Other respondents included interest groups, as well as data solutions and analysis providers and a research/academic institution. Furthermore, two anonymous respondents submitted answers.
6. The majority of responses were from organisations rather than individuals.
7. This government response is the result of a detailed analysis of all the responses received, carried out on our behalf by Pye Tait Consulting. The response also draws on the [Call for Evidence](#) we undertook in summer 2018. We recognise that the responses received to this consultation may not be representative of the entire FE sector. As such, no percentages are used to report the feedback we received.

## Our response

8. Overall, respondents supported the case for change that we set out in the consultation [document](#), agreeing that the sector needs to improve the quality and quantity of workforce data so that policy-making at a local, regional and national level can be based on accurate and high-quality data. The quality of teachers and leaders is a major factor in determining outcomes for learners<sup>3</sup>. It is, therefore, critical that we are able to understand how these staff are recruited, retained, deployed and developed.
9. **We will introduce a single DfE-led data collection of the FE workforce.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will undertake this collection as it has an established route to collect data from providers through its existing portal. This collection will sit alongside and complement the other collections that the ESFA is responsible for, such as submissions of learner data, and the functionality will be co-designed with the sector to offer coherence to those inputting data. Collecting data in this way will make best use of existing systems, reducing administrative burdens on providers and will mean that the collection will provide value for money for both the government and providers.

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<sup>3</sup> Mckinsey (2017): How the world's best performing school systems come out on top

10. We recognise that collecting information on the entire FE workforce from all FE providers is a complex ask. Therefore, the ESFA will lead an extensive programme of user testing with the sector in the lead up to launch, to make sure the collection avoids duplication. This will reduce the need for some other existing collections.

11. Responses to the consultation were in agreement with the broad scope of data that we propose to collect. **The ESFA will refine the proposed broad data headings into a detailed data item specification through user-testing processes.** This work will aim to ensure that the collection is complementary with existing FE provider management information systems wherever possible. The FE sector is diverse and so are the staff roles within it. We will continue to speak to FE staff and sector representatives about how best we can capture and reflect this diversity through the collection. We will conduct the necessary assessments to ensure the data is collected, processed and stored in line with all existing legislation.

12. **We will mandate data returns for providers within scope** (set out in paragraph 14) from the second year of collection onwards (the 2021-22 academic year). We appreciate that mandatory collection from September 2020 would have proven challenging for some providers. We will work towards using existing legislation and the contracts and grant agreements the ESFA holds with FE providers to do this. We will continue to consider how this approach might be applied to the same providers that are funded by Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) or the Greater London Authority (GLA) and do not also receive funding from the ESFA.

13. **This data return requirement will be underpinned by reasonable and proportionate sanctions to address non-compliance.** A majority of respondents agreed that it is important the collection obtains representative, high-quality data, which we believe can only be achieved through mandating returns and, where necessary, the considered use of escalating sanctions; these could include a letter from the DfE ministers, and being publically named on the DfE website. The better quality data that mandated returns will deliver will allow providers to benchmark their own performance more accurately, and will allow more effective monitoring of workforce changes over time. We will work with the sector to establish a clear and fair framework for the introduction of sanctions, which will include a right to reply.

14. The FE workforce data collection will be mandatory for those providers (colleges, independent learning providers, local authorities<sup>4</sup> and others) that receive funding directly from the ESFA. This funding will come through one or more of the following funding models: 16-19 (excluding Apprenticeships); adult skills; apprenticeships; community learning; European Social Fund (ESF), other adult and/or other 16-19). We agree with

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<sup>4</sup> We will not be including maintained school sixth forms funded via local authorities' grant funding agreements.



the views expressed by some respondents that there is value in collecting this data from a wider group of providers than those within this initial scope. In later years, our intention is to work to bring sub-contractors into scope. In the meantime, we will explore options for sub-contractors to participate in the collection on a voluntary basis.

15. Based on the responses we received to the consultation, our intention is that **the data collection will encompass all staff working within insitutions that are in scope**. Our policy focus remains predominantly on those staff delivering and managing learning provision, such as teachers, trainers, assessors, leaders and learning support staff. However, it is clear that respondents would like data to be available across all staff groups to ensure they can plan, and carry out benchmarking and modelling which considers the entire workforce. The feasibility of this scope will need to be tested by the ESFA through user-testing processes. We will make sure our definition of 'staff' is both clear and holistic so that it includes as many staff across different groups as possible, for example, agency, part-time, zero-hours and other casual staff that meet pre-determined qualifying criteria.

16. In addition, our collection will look to gather data related to governors and governance professionals, whom play a key role in the leadership and oversight of FE providers. We recognise that not all FE providers have this role, so it may not be possible to collect it in all cases. Some respondents raised concerns about collecting this data, noting that governors operate in a voluntary capacity, however there was broad recognition of the importance of the role, and, therefore, **the ESFA will assess the feasibility of collecting some data on governors as part of the user-testing process**.

17. FE providers currently collect data in a range of formats and use a variety of systems to manage information. **The ESFA will assess the feasibility and accessibility of different options for providers to submit data through the user-testing process with a view to implementing a flexible range of options**. It will work with providers to identify which approach, or combination of approaches, will provide the necessary coverage with the least additional administrative burden.

18. Respondents held mixed views on the collection period for the data. Some supported a census approach (where all staff in post on a given day are counted). Other respondents supported a data collection which spanned the whole academic year (where all staff who had been employed by the provider during the course of a full year were recorded). As there was no clear consensus, **the ESFA will consult further with the sector through the user-testing process on the collection period**. It will work with those in the FE sector to weigh up the benefits of each approach, and determine which will be most effective

19. We recognise the importance of support and assistance in making sure providers are able to complete the data collection efficiently and accurately. **We will make sure that there is a package of support available during collection periods each year.** This will include detailed guidance, specifications, and a help desk.

20. This data collection will provide new opportunities for both government and the sector. We know from the previous [Call for Evidence](#) that workforce data is used by the sector for a range of planning activities. **We will produce and publish a series of timely reports for providers and sector bodies to use for their own purposes. We also intend to make the data available for research and Official statistics purposes, compliant with Government Statistic Service (GSS) standards.** The ESFA will work with the sector to confirm the content and timescales for these reports. One of the benefits of a high quality and comprehensive workforce data collection is that it can replace the need for multiple collections each meeting the needs of individual collectors. To that end, **we will aim to make the DfE-led collection as relevant as possible to as many collectors and users of the data as possible** – making it a collection for the sector and reducing the need for other collections.

21. There was substantial support for an annual data collection. **We will collect the data annually to minimise burden, ensuring that the data is up-to-date and relevant.**

22. There was no unified agreement about the time of year this data should be collected. Respondents suggested a range of alternatives. There was also a mixed response regarding the duration of the window for submitting data. Some respondents expressed concern about the proposed length of two months window during which the data could be submitted, whereas others were confident that a window of this length would be sufficient if suitable support were in place. As there was no consensus on a suitable timeframe, the **ESFA will look further into the possible implications of the timings for the collection, and will work with the sector to determine the best solution through the user-testing processes.**

23. **We will introduce the collection from the academic year 2020/21 onwards.** Most of the responses received supported the proposed timings. We recognise that the sector will need time to prepare for these changes. Data returns in the 2020/21 academic year will, therefore, not be mandatory though we will strongly encourage as many providers as possible to participate to help shape and develop our collection systems as we move towards the mandatory requirement. We will aim to mitigate any potential issues and make the data collection as accessible as possible, while minimising any additional administrative burden.

## Next Steps

24. This response is part of a longer-term programme of work on FE workforce data. Within this document, we have set out the key decisions we have made following the consultation and outlined how we are going to work with the FE sector towards the implementation of a mandatory data collection. We have identified the areas where there was no clear consensus from respondents and will work to address this in the next stage of our work.

25. If these proposals are to be implemented with the support of the sector and have the anticipated impact, significant work needs to happen in anticipation of the launch. We are committed to ensuring that FE providers have support and guidance to implement the proposals.

26. The ESFA will now undertake a period of extensive user testing to develop a detailed specification for the collection prior to the 2020-21 academic year according to the following phases.

### Discovery Phase (until March 2020)

27. This phase is about understanding in more detail the problems that the data collection needs to address.

28. That means reviewing and identifying in detail:

- The needs of FE providers;
- any constraints on the collection;
- how the collection can meet the needs of government; and,
- opportunities to improve things.

### Alpha Phase (March 2020 until August 2020)

29. This phase will be an opportunity to try out different solutions to the problems we learnt about during the discovery phase. This could include building prototypes and testing different ideas for collecting the data with users in order to explore new approaches.

### Beta Phase (July 2020 until November 2020)

30. In this phase we will take our best solution from the alpha phase, start building the service for real and prepare for the transition to the live phase by rolling out it to FE providers in order to make sure we understand how they use the system so we can support them.

## **Live Phase (December 2020 onwards)**

31. The system is launched to all providers and fully operational ready for the collection commence.

## Part 2: Detailed analysis of responses

This section provides an analysis of the qualitative responses to the online consultation. Sector bodies referred to in the text are those organisations that represent FE providers and their workforces, including unions.

### Question 1

**Given the recognised need for improved and comparable data across the FE workforce, is a single DfE-led data collection, tailored to the sector, the best way to achieve this? Please state the reasons for your response.**

In the consultation document we stated that our intention is to carry out a single annual DfE-led, mandatory data collection, which would consolidate other workforce data collections. We set out an aim to reduce burdens on FE providers, maximise value for money and achieve full data coverage.

### Your response

A majority of respondents saw the proposal of a single, DfE-led collection as a positive step forward. The main advantages of a single collection were identified as obtaining a definitive, and widely comparable set of data with full coverage that can be used for workforce planning. Avoiding duplication and reducing the burden on providers to respond to multiple collections were also factors that were cited.

Independent training providers pointed to their differences with FE colleges, suggesting that the idea of a single DfE-led collection is more complex than it first appears. They also expressed a concern that the exercise would be tailored for FE colleges.

The issue of the current low response rates to other workforce data collections was confirmed by sector bodies and FE providers, though it was noted that improvements have been made in existing collections over recent years. Nevertheless, several sector bodies cautioned about the complexity of the task and recommended working closely with providers on developing and launching a collection. One sector body was unsure that a single collection could replace the other collections currently undertaken by the sector.

### Question 2

**Do you foresee any issues providing [the types of data indicated in the consultation document]? Please state the reasons for your response.**

Within the consultation we provided examples of the types of data items we had considered collecting for staff in scope (as applicable). These were:

<b>Data headings</b>	<b>Examples of relevant data</b>
<b>Provider level information</b>	UKPRN, provider type, standard contracted hours for staff
<b>Demographic information</b>	Age, date of birth, gender, other personal characteristics
<b>Job role information</b>	Job role classified against a common set of definitions, time in post, time at organisation
<b>Working arrangements</b>	Contract type
<b>Pay</b>	Salary, full time equivalence
<b>Qualifications and experience</b>	Highest qualification, technical qualifications, teaching qualifications, professional status
<b>Curriculum</b>	Spread of subjects taught, main subject taught
<b>Vacancy data</b>	Number of vacancies, persistent vacancies

We acknowledged that the data items held by providers will vary, so we would need to undertake further work with users to identify those items that are readily available and those items we may not be able to collect. The list was, therefore, indicative to show respondents the type of data we might collect.

## Your response

This question received mixed responses, though around half of respondents did not foresee any major issues with the examples provided.

Several providers across different provider types were confident they could provide data, but explained they would need to know the full details of the data item specification before they could be sure they could meet all requirements. This position was supported by several sector bodies who thought that providers should be able to return these types of data.

Some FE colleges said they do not have the required data readily accessible in one place or file. Therefore, these providers called for early guidance and clear specifications on which data items should be collected or made accessible. This position was echoed by some sector bodies. Some providers were also concerned about the resources that may be needed to complete this type of data return. Sector bodies suggested a phased implementation and expansion of the data specification could make the launch of the collection more manageable for providers.

In addition, some providers remarked on the diversity of the sector, particularly considering that some staff have to fulfil multiple tasks, and as respondents, they queried what this would mean for a data collection. The lack of universal definitions for things like full time equivalence (FTE) or standard work contracts were also identified as potential obstacles.

Some respondents (such as independent training providers and local authorities) expressed concerns regarding the proposed data collection and asked whether the proposed collection could be carried out in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### Question 3

**Full participation from all providers in scope is clearly important. Do you agree with the principle of an escalating sanctions policy for those in scope providers who fail to comply with the requirement to make a data return? Please state the reasons for your response.**

We stated that maximising the coverage of workforce data must be a key aim of any future collection. In order to support this we proposed that all in-scope providers would be expected to make a return in accordance with the specified deadline. We proposed that those who fail to comply should be subject to escalating sanctions, including a letter from a DfE minister, and being named on a gov.uk website.

### Your response

Over half of respondents agreed with the principle of escalating sanctions to ensure high participation.

Some FE colleges raised a concern in relation to the plan to name non-compliant providers and queried the impact this could have on their reputations. Some colleges also suggested that sanctions might undermine the positive benefits from a data collection exercise.

Sector bodies were broadly supportive but noted some concerns, arguing that sanctions should not be introduced in the short to medium term while the collection is still new. These bodies also argued that no monetary penalties should be applied and also suggested the introduction of an appeals procedure.

Some providers felt sanctions would be disproportionate and/or counterproductive. Some felt that a voluntary data collection was preferable.

A local authority suggested using a pilot year to test which types of data could be reasonably provided and claimed that this would help to support providers.

## Question 4

**Do you agree with the proposed initial scope of providers [to be included in the collection] and what, if any, issues do you foresee? Do you have any possible solutions?**

We proposed that initially the FE workforce data collection will cover those providers receiving funding directly from the ESFA, (colleges, independent learning providers, local authorities etc.) through one or more of the following funding models: 16-19 (excluding Apprenticeships), adult skills, apprenticeships, community learning, European Social Funding (ESF), other adult and/or other 16-19). While we did not state an intention to include them at first, we noted that we may seek to increase the coverage in the future to include sub-contractors as well.

### Your response

Most respondents agreed that our initial scope was appropriate.

An independent training provider argued that they should not be in scope as FE colleges and independent training providers are not, in their view, comparable.

Some sixth form college responses and an anonymous response anticipated difficulties with the proposed intention to consider including subcontractors in future data collections. A claim was made that data from sub-contractors with multi-provider contracts could cause confusion.

There was a mixture of responses from sector bodies. Some sector body and provider responses advocated the inclusion of the entire FE sector irrespective of the funding model, saying that the focus of directly-funded providers is too narrow.

Some sector body and provider responses made the case for the collection to align with those currently undertaken elsewhere, for example in higher education, where providers pay a subscription (to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)) for a workforce data collection to be undertaken on their behalf, and to take account of the sub-contracting arrangements held by providers.

## Question 5

**Do you agree with the scope of staff types to be included within the data return? Please state the reasons for your response.**

We stated our intention to require all in-scope providers to supply individual-level data on



all staff working in their organisation, if they are in regular services<sup>5</sup>. Each individual would be engaged to work within the provider under arrangements that must be recordable as either a contract of employment or a contract for services. We acknowledged there will be some organisations where publicly-funded training is only part of their overall offer. In these cases we would require a return on those staff who are directly or indirectly involved in providing or supporting publicly-funded work.

## Your response

The majority of respondents agreed that all staff should be included if they have fulfilled a 28-day regular service requirement before the end of their contract with a given institution. Those supporting this proposal came from a range of provider types.

Local authority and sector body responses emphasised that some staff may have multiple roles which should be fully reflected in any new collection. A local authority response pointed out that salaried staff may also work as tutors, learning support officers, invigilators, admissions staff or Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) staff. Similarly, it was reported that job roles and titles may vary considerably across the FE sector and that the term ‘teacher’ may, therefore, not be fully accurate in all situations.

Some respondents argued for a more holistic definition that would include all staff across different groups, expressing concerns that the regular service requirement may exclude agency, part-time, zero-hour and other casual staff.

## Question 6

**Do you agree that data collected on the FE workforce should include FE governors, governance professionals, and others in equivalent roles? What sort of data should be collected for this group?**

We stated we would like to consider including elected members of FE providers' governing bodies in this data collection. The function of governors and other non-executive leaders, while different from staff providing their services under contract or through a service agreement, does form a key part of a college's leadership, about which data could be captured. Not all the information we are proposing to collect for paid staff would be relevant.

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<sup>5</sup> We suggested mirroring the school workforce census guidance for 2018 to define this, which states: “Staff are in regular service if they have completed service of 28 days or more with the school, or are expected to do so, before the end of their contract or service agreement.”

## Your response

The responses to this question were mixed. Around half of respondents agreed outright that governors should be included in the DfE-led collection and that the data to be collected from this group should include demographic data on ethnicity, qualification levels and occupations, in addition to hours served and skills.

Sector bodies largely agreed that data on governors could be useful, but that workforce data should be prioritised. One sector body suggested including non-elected governors as well, and suggested that DfE should establish which kind of demographic data can be collected in the first year, and include governors later based on the outcome.

Across college respondents, views were mixed. Several stated that no data should be collected on governors as they usually operate in a voluntary capacity and are, therefore, not part of the workforce, which it was claimed should be the focus of the DfE-led data collection. Another questioned the value of the data as most colleges set the appointment criteria for governors independently. Others felt that capturing data on this group would be valuable, noting the significant role they play in the sector. Responses indicated that analysis from this data could be used to put in place support and training for governors and help inform how they are recruited.

One respondent requested a choice to opt-out of this part of the collection, highlighting that governance arrangements may differ for some providers.

## Question 7

**What systems are you able to accommodate for the proposed data collection?  
What issues do you foresee and what might the solutions be?**

We stated we want to create systems and processes that make providing FE workforce data returns as simple as possible. We referred to responses to the [Call for Evidence](#), which indicated that, although the sector regards workforce data as important, data accuracy and the time and resource required to complete returns were key concerns. A 'flexible approach' for collecting the data was suggested, to accommodate the different management information systems used by providers. For example, providers could submit their data either via:

- Automated reporting systems that draw existing data from payroll or management information to populate a data return. This would make use of existing databases. We will provide a specification to enable providers to code and pre-populate data into agreed formats; or,
- Datasheets that enable providers with systems that do not support automated transfers to extract, collate and record data in a consistent template for submission.

## Your response

Some respondents supported the ability to use both options, including several providers. It was sometimes claimed that this kind of data is not being collected by providers at present or that IT systems are not optimised for collecting FE workforce data.

One sector body was confident that the majority of providers could use an automated collection system. However, this respondent suggested that providers would need clear specifications on the data to be collected. They also proposed that a considerable number of providers might need IT upgrades necessitating government investment.

A minority group of respondents including several colleges expressed a preference for using a datasheet. They indicated that present IT systems would not be able to support an automated data extraction.

## Question 8

**What is your view regarding the timeframe for collection? Should we focus on one day in the year, a week, or the data for a complete academic year?**

Regarding the timeframe of the data collection, we referred to the current School Workforce Census, which collects data regarding a single day in the academic year, and the ETF-led Staff Individualised Record (SIR) collection, which collects retrospective data across a complete academic year. We acknowledged there are pros and cons to both approaches. The user testing process will be key to identifying the type of collection that provides the most robust, representative and accurate data.

## Your response

Although a considerable portion of respondents gave no clear preference for either option, data collection across a full academic year received the most support, and was supported by a range of providers and most sector bodies. These respondents felt that data collected over a full academic year would be more comprehensive than a census-style approach. In addition, it would allow the inclusion of data on staff that have not been employed over a full academic year, such as casual staff, which may be missed by a single-day census-style collection. Other reasons given included that many providers, especially independent training providers, do not have a 'typical' day, so a single-day collection may not accurately represent their staffing levels. Additionally, a collection over an academic year may be more familiar to FE providers as it is similar to the SIR.

A handful of respondents were in favour of a single-day collection citing the consistency of a census-style approach and that a single-day collection would have a lower administrative burden and be less time consuming for providers. It was also pointed out

that some providers may not operate on the basis of an academic year, and that the similarity with the School Workforce Census may also be an advantage.

## Question 9

### **What support would you need to complete a data collection?**

We emphasised the range of support available in existing DfE data requests, including a help desk for technical support and policy advice. As part of user testing for a DfE-led collection, we explained that we will look to create a support system tailored to provider needs.

### **Your response**

Respondents emphasised the need for clear specifications of the data to be provided as well as user guides, with a suggestion that the use of webinars may be helpful. Several respondents indicated the need for a helpdesk. A standard lexicon for job titles in different institutions was also requested. The need to check the quality and consistency of the data submitted was also highlighted, along with the need for investment in IT infrastructure.

## Question 10

### **What outputs from the data returns would you find useful?**

It is also important to exploit all the opportunities this new data collection could create for both government and the sector. The outputs from the collection must have value for the sector to justify its implementation.

### **Your response**

Around half of respondents saw benchmarking of salary, staffing, and job roles as key outputs. Some emphasised the need for information on skills gaps. Other requests for outputs from the data returns were quite specific to individual respondents. In this context, several respondents focused on the scope of data they would like rather than the nature of the output.

Sector bodies emphasised the need for demographic data, numbers of staff, pay data, recruitment and retention figures, CPD/training budgets, qualifications and experience levels. They also suggested an option for providers to access and analyse the data themselves for their own purposes, with an interest group and a sixth form college requesting a search function and the ability to sort by geographic locations and provider type.

A dashboard which allows providers to compare each other by provider types and workforce sizes was also felt to be useful.

## Question 11

### **Do you agree with the proposed frequency of the data collection?**

Based on the responses to the [Call for Evidence](#) 2018, we proposed an annual collection (i.e. once per year).

### **Your response**

There was widespread support for the DfE-led collection taking place once per year.

## Question 12

### **Do you agree with the proposed timing and duration of the data collection?**

Based on the responses to the [Call for Evidence](#) 2018, we proposed a collection over the duration of two months, to take place in February and March of each year.

### **Your response**

A slim majority of respondents agreed with the two-month window of February/March. Those that disagreed had concerns over both the timing and duration, but there was no consensus on an alternative.

For the timing, February and March coincide with the end of the financial year, which it was reported could cause problems for some providers. A sixth form college indicated that March is a common recruitment period for providers, which may affect the data collection. Other respondents, including an independent training provider, had concerns that the timings would clash with other data requirements. Other alternatives suggested were dates that ranged between Spring and December, with a few colleges supporting collection at the end of the academic year, to allow data collectors to consider and reflect the developments of the academic year.

There were some concerns that a two-month window would not be long enough, with three months being preferred. However, with additional support for providers from the ESFA, a two-month window was seen as achievable.

## Question 13

**What, if any, issues do you foresee with the proposed timetable for implementation?**

We stated that we are keen to implement these changes as soon as possible, while recognising the FE sector needs time to adapt and prepare. We therefore proposed bringing in these changes from the academic year 2020/21 onwards.

### Your response

Around half of respondents said they did not foresee any timing-related issues.

Sector bodies that supported the timetable indicated that they hoped this collection would replace several other collections, emphasised the importance of user testing and suggested an awareness-raising campaign involving sector body conferences and the media. The importance of early and clear collection specifications was emphasised by a sector body, that agreed with the timetable but suggested starting with a limited data scope in the first year, and then expanding gradually.

Further support for this timetable was offered by a college, on the condition that the collection is not mandatory from the beginning.



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