



Department  
for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**ADULT FURTHER EDUCATION**

**Consultation: Outcome Based  
Success Measures – The Next  
Stage**

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

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# Contents

<b>Outcome Based Success Measures – The Next Stage .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Foreword from the Minister for Skills .....	5
2. Executive Summary .....	6
3. How to respond .....	8
4. Confidentiality & Data Protection .....	9
5. Help with queries.....	9
6. The proposals .....	10
Aims and context.....	10
The Measures .....	11
Qualification level data .....	14
Contextual Information .....	14
Accountability – at the national level.....	14
Accountability – at the local level.....	19
Presenting and publishing the measures.....	20
7. What happens next? .....	24
8. Consultation questions .....	25
Annex 1: Minimum Standards framework.....	26
Annex 2: Examples of how Minimum Standards framework would work in practice .....	27
Annex 3: Possible content of provider scorecard.....	31
Annex 4: Consultation principles .....	32
Annex 5: The Response Form for Outcome Based Success Measures – The Next Stage .....	33

# Outcome Based Success Measures – The Next Stage

In August 2014 we consulted on proposals for developing and using a new set of outcome based success measures of performance for publicly funded post-19 education and skills, including apprenticeships but excluding higher education. These measures focussed on three areas: learner destinations (into employment or further learning), progression within learning and earnings. They would be used alongside existing measures of achievement to give a more rounded picture of provider performance, to inform learner and employer choice, and ultimately as part of Government's performance management of the post-19 education and skills sector.

The proposals were set in the context of the need to improve the quality and relevance of post-19 education and training, to deliver the skills the country needs to flourish.

In December 2014 we published the Government response to the consultation. This confirmed the intention to proceed with the measures and promised a further consultation on more detailed proposals for using and publishing the measures.

This consultation sets out more details proposals and invites views on these. The intention is to begin using the measures formally from summer 2017.

New experimental data on these measures at provider level has been published alongside this consultation and can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2013)

Issued: 30 September 2015

Respond by: 2 December 2015

Enquiries to:

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This consultation is relevant to businesses of all sizes, Further Education colleges and training providers, learners, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Careers Information Advice and Guidance professionals, Trade Unions and Further Education representative bodies.

## 1. Foreword from the Minister for Skills



Our new outcome based success measures are designed to measure what is really important in further education – the outcome for the learner. Achieving the qualification is and will remain important. But it is not the end of the story. The really important part comes next. The real value of vocational education lies in whether learners make progress into or within employment or further learning.

In December 2014 I confirmed my intention to proceed with the new adult (19+) learner outcome measures for further education, to complement the qualification achievement measure we already use: destinations (into employment, apprenticeship or further learning), progression within learning and earnings. The new measures have been developed using data from across government, matched robustly and securely.

This consultation sets out detailed proposals on how the measures will be used by central government for accountability and intervention, alongside achievement rates as part of Minimum Standards. It also looks ahead to the place of outcome measures in a new world of increased local accountability. And it discusses how we might best present and publish the measures to help prospective learners, employers, LEPs and providers themselves.

These new outcome measures will give prospective learners better information about vocational qualifications and about the performance of colleges and other providers to help them make informed choices about what and where to study. The measures will also give others such as employers and LEPs, and providers themselves, better data on the performance of individual providers and how they compare with similar providers.

I encourage learners, employers, LEPs, providers and others to contribute to the development of the measures by responding to this consultation. With your input, we can ensure that outcome measures improve outcomes for learners to the benefit of all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Boles'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

**Nick Boles**

Minister for Skills

## 2. Executive Summary

1. In August 2014 we consulted on proposals for developing and using a new set of outcome based measures of performance for publicly funded post-19 education and skills, excluding higher education<sup>1</sup>. The proposals were set in the context of the need to improve the quality and relevance of post-19 education and training, to deliver the skills the country needs to flourish.
2. The measures would be used alongside the existing measure of qualification achievement to give a more rounded picture of provider performance, to inform learner and employer choice, and ultimately as part of Government's performance management of the post-19 education and skills sector.
3. The new outcome measures focus on three areas:
  - learner destinations (into further learning and into or within employment including apprenticeships),
  - learner progression (to a higher level qualification), and
  - earnings following completion of the course.
4. In December 2014 we published the Government response to the consultation<sup>2</sup>. This confirmed the intention to proceed with the measures and promised a further consultation on more detailed proposals for using and publishing the measures.
5. This consultation:
  - Confirms that we will produce and publish outcome measures at both qualification and provider level routinely. The aim is that this information will help inform learner and employer choice and support local areas in agreeing local outcome agreements.
  - Provides an update on the development of the measures since the last consultation, including a proposal for a new progression measure.
  - Reports on work done to look at the impact of local economic indicators on outcomes.
  - Sets out detailed proposals for using outcome measures as part of central government's Minimum Standards framework for accountability and intervention purposes. It covers the principles for extending the framework, what it would look like, how it would be used and how unemployed and disadvantaged learners might be reflected. The aim is to extend the current Minimum Standard framework based on qualification achievement rates to include the new destination measures.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-how-do-we-measure-success](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-how-do-we-measure-success)

<sup>2</sup> See link in Footnote 1.

- Looks ahead to the place of outcome measures in a world of increased local accountability where LEPs/Local Authorities establish local area outcome agreements in conjunction with providers about the outcomes expected for their area.
  - Looks at how we can most usefully present and publish the outcomes data – for prospective learners, employers, LEPs, providers and others who may wish to use the data. It proposes developing a widget to display the data on providers' websites and FE performance tables focussed on apprenticeships and higher level learning. It also proposes greater transparency in the link between Minimum Standards and individual provider performance.
6. The measures are produced by matching data sets that the Government already holds. This makes them cost effective to produce and robust. The matched data is still being developed and is therefore experimental. We have published further experimental data on 2011/12 and 2012/13 learners alongside this consultation to inform responses to the consultation.
  7. The intention is to use the destination measures formally as part of the Minimum Standards framework from summer 2017 when the data will no longer be experimental. From summer 2016 there would be a period of shadow running with the new Minimum Standards framework to help us refine the methodology.
  8. The comments of those who respond to the consultation will help us to develop the outcome measures further and finalise plans for using them and presenting and publishing them. We would particularly welcome the views of prospective or current learners, employers, LEPs, local and combined authorities and individual FE colleges and training providers.
  9. The consultation runs from 30 September to 2 December 2015.

### 3. How to respond

10. When responding please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents by selecting the appropriate interest group on the consultation form and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.
11. The consultation opened on 30 September 2015. Responses must be submitted by 2 December 2015.
12. The consultation response form can be found at Annex 5 to this document. It is also available electronically on the consultation page:  
[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-measuring-success-detailed-proposals](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-measuring-success-detailed-proposals) (until the consultation closes).

The form can be submitted by email or by letter or fax to:

Email: [FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

Felicity Moore  
Vocational Education Directorate  
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13. In addition to submitting a written response, you can participate in one of the events being run during the consultation period. Details of these are available from the contact above. There is also a short survey on the publication proposals available through the National Career Service website.
14. If you are unhappy with the way the consultation is being run, please refer to Annex 4 for information on [Consultation principles](#) and how to complain.
15. You may make printed copies of this document without seeking permission.
16. BIS consultations are digital by default but if required printed copies of the consultation document can be obtained from the contact in paragraph 12.
17. Other versions of the document in Braille, other languages or audio-cassette are available on request.



## 4. Confidentiality & Data Protection

18. Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want information, including personal data that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.
19. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

## 5. Help with queries

20. Questions about the policy issues raised in the document can be addressed to:

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1 Victoria Street  
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## 6. The proposals

### Aims and context

21. In August 2014 we launched a consultation on new outcome based success measures. These would measure employment and learning destinations of learners, progression within learning and earnings. The aim was to measure what was really important in FE – whether learners make progress into, or within, employment or further learning. The qualification is and will remain important, but it is the means to an end rather than the end in itself.
22. The consultation set this need for a greater focus on outcomes in the wider context. To succeed in the global race, this country needs high quality post-19 education and training that provides:
- the skills that employers and businesses need and value,
  - the skills individuals need and value to gain employment, change employment and progress in work,
  - the strategically important skills the nation needs, and
  - value for money for businesses, individuals and the state.
23. The new outcome measures can contribute to this in a number of ways:
- informing performance management of the FE sector and of individual training providers to ensure that poor performance is swiftly dealt with, protecting the interests of learners, employers and taxpayers;
  - improving the usefulness and relevance of provision by giving providers more information to help in self-improvement and curriculum planning;
  - giving wider information to customers on the impact teaching and learning and different qualifications have on learners, businesses and communities; and
  - enabling learners and employers to make more informed choices about where and how they invest public, and increasingly their own, money.
24. The measures are a cost effective and efficient way of doing this. They re-use data that Government already collects so there is no cost burden on providers in collecting new data.
25. In December 2014 we published the Government response to the consultation. This confirmed our strong belief in the value of the measures. We said that we would:
- continue to develop the measures;
  - use them alongside qualification achievement rates as the basis for Minimum Standards, in a way that was fair, proportionate and straightforward;

- consult further on the detail of how the measures are used for accountability, recognising concerns about this;
  - consider how best to present the measures (for example what information should sit alongside them) and publish them (for example a widget on providers' own websites); and
  - set out a plan and timetable following the next consultation for developing the measures further and publishing them.
26. This consultation sets out detailed proposals for using outcome measures as part of the Minimum Standards framework, for accountability and intervention purposes. The aim is to extend the current Minimum Standard framework rather than to radically change the approach (see paragraphs 52 and 53 and Table 1 in Annex A for information about the current Minimum Standards framework). Minimum standards remain that – a minimum acceptable level of performance that triggers government intervention. Providers should be monitoring their own performance and taking action to improve well before they get near the minimum standard. The measures will also be used by Ofsted to inform inspection decisions.
27. The consultation also explores presentation and publication of the data for users, including prospective learners, LEPs, local and combined authorities, employers and providers.
28. Publication options for outcome measures will need to take account of the closure of the FE Choices website from October 2015. The key indicators published on the website – learner satisfaction, employer satisfaction, qualification achievement rates and (until the outcome measures are formally adopted) learner destination (via survey) will continue to be available on GOV.UK and the National Career Service website. We will also be encouraging third parties to re-use the data currently on FE Choices and the new outcome measures data we publish.
29. Since the last consultation, the landscape in FE has begun to change. Local devolution is gathering pace and an extensive programme of area reviews is under way. This consultation therefore also sets outcome measures in the context of the wider landscape and looks at the role outcome measures could play in an FE sector with a more local focus.
30. Alongside the consultation, to inform discussion, we have published further experimental data on the destinations of 2011/12 learners and 2012/13 learners.  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2013](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2013)

## The Measures

31. As confirmed in the December 2014 Government response, we will produce and publish outcome measures data at both qualification and provider level routinely.

### *The Destination Measures – Definition*

32. The destination measures as proposed in the August 2014 consultation remain unchanged. The headline measure will show the proportion of learners moving into a sustained employment and/or learning destination. Below this there will be three breakdowns of the measure:
- i. **Sustained employment:** The proportion of adult learners who are in employment in five of the six months between October and March of the academic year following completion of their course.
  - ii. **Sustained learning:** The proportion of adult learners who are in learning (regardless of whether they are also in employment) in all six months within the October to March period in the academic year following completion of their course.
  - iii. **Sustained employment for benefit learners:** The proportion of adult learners in sustained employment claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance in the Work Related Activity Group (ESA) the day before the start of their training.
33. We have not proposed any change in the reference periods for the measures. We believe there is value in having a reference period that is consistent with that used by the Department for Education (DfE) for its destination measures, and there was support for this during the last consultation. However, there was also concern that a rigid reference period for the learning measure would exclude a substantial amount of FE provision – shorter courses and courses not tied to the academic year. We have explored how we could best capture the more flexible nature of FE provision while retaining the sustained learning measure and are proposing to introduce a new progression measure. This is described in paragraph 35 below.
34. In the previous consultation there was a request to look at how we show more clearly those who were unemployed before the learning and employed after it. There is already a measure showing those who were on JSA and ESA before, and in employment after, the course. We can only match those learners who are recorded on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) databases as in receipt of either of those unemployment benefits. We will give more prominence to this measure to give a better picture of the number of unemployed learners going into employment.

### *A New Progression Measure*

35. In the last consultation, we set out a proposal for measuring the proportion of learners that progressed to a qualification at a higher level than their existing highest level of attainment, initially covering only 19-20 year old learners. Due to greater than expected complexity with creating the required data from the available sources, it has proved impractical to continue with this measure. In view of the demand for a learning measure with a less rigid reference period we propose to replace the previous progression measure with a more broadly based progression measure. The intention is that this will measure any learning at a higher level than the learning completed in the previous 12 months. As it is not tied to the academic year it should capture more employer responsive provision and other types of flexible FE provision. It will not however capture learning at the same level but in a different subject.

## Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed new progression measure?

### *The Earnings Measure*

36. Earnings data will provide valuable information for learners to help them choose between different subject areas and qualification routes. We published earnings data in January 2014 showing earnings up to 3 years after study for those completing full level qualifications. Earnings data may have many uses, in particular for informing choice.

### *Learners included within the Measures*

37. The group of learners falling within the scope of the measures initially was all adult (19+) skills learners and all adult (19+) apprenticeship learners funded through the Adult Skills Budget.

38. We are now able to match data for 16-18 year old apprenticeship learners and will aim to include these learners in future publications of outcomes data. Learners funded through 24+ Adult Learning Loans will also be included in the outcome measures.

39. Currently the measures show destinations into paid employment. A learner will not be shown as employed if they solely paid tax through the self-assessment system (ie they were self-employed). For the majority of learning this will not be significant, as self-employment will account for a small proportion of destinations. However, for some sectors such as construction it is believed to have a much larger impact. Self-employment data is more complex and we are working with HMRC to understand the most appropriate source to measure self-employment, ensure it is linked to our learner data and incorporate this information into our measures to give a complete picture of employment. We are in the early stages of assessing the options available. We are aiming to have an approach for accounting for self-employment that is fully tested and ready for use by the time we publish data (on 2014/15 learners) in summer 2017.

40. It remains our ambition to publish information on outcomes for those funded through the Community Learning budget. National objectives focus this funding on disadvantaged learners so that adults of all ages and backgrounds can take part in informal learning, with individuals contributing to the costs according to their means. We will continue to explore whether it is meaningful to measure outcomes for these learners using our outcome measures. To reflect fully the range of likely outcomes for Community Learning may well require a more broadly based measure produced in a different way.

41. It is our aspiration to measure outcomes for offender learners. However, there is a question as to whether our sustained employment and education measures are right for offender learners as a group. The Ministry of Justice is working on wider outcome measures for prisoners. We therefore propose to continue working with the Ministry of Justice on the best way to measure outcomes for offender learners.

### *Measuring achievement in English and Maths GCSE*

42. The last consultation asked for views on measuring achievement in English and maths. We think the proposed new progression measure could be a useful way of measuring of progression in English and maths, and we will explore this further. We will also look at how we can give English and maths outcomes more prominence when we publish data.

## Qualification level data

43. Many respondents to the last consultation felt that it would be useful to publish the outcome measures data at qualification level. Information about qualification outcomes will help prospective learners choose between different qualification routes in a subject area or between different subject areas. It will help providers in their curriculum planning so they are better able to respond to local needs.
44. Qualification level data is also valuable to inform more strategic decisions on qualifications. For example, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Review of Digital Skills Qualifications is reviewing the make-up and take-up of publicly funded digital skills qualifications in FE, with a view to recommending how qualifications can support the development of up-to-date digital skills which are responsive to the needs of learners and employers. The information gained through the review will then be used to inform the type of digital skills qualifications that will be needed as part of a professional and technical education system in the future. Outcomes data has a role to play there.
45. We published national level data for about 1000 qualifications in March 2015 (available [here](#)). We are aiming to publish further qualification level data later this year. We will keep under review the way we group qualifications when we publish them to ensure we present them in the most useful way.

## Contextual Information

46. In response to the first consultation, many respondents suggested that learner outcomes would be affected by external factors such as local unemployment rates or levels of deprivation. They felt that local contextual information had to be presented alongside the outcome measures to give a fair reflection of a provider's performance.
47. Working with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), we have looked carefully at the correlation between outcomes data and local indicators covering qualification levels, overall unemployment levels, length of unemployment and weekly pay. Our initial analysis shows very little or no relationship between our destination measures and this set of contextual information. For example, areas of high unemployment do not appear routinely to have lower sustained employment outcomes than areas of low unemployment. This suggests that it is not necessary to show local contextual information alongside the outcome measures to aid interpretation of provider scores. However, this is a complex area and we intend to investigate some of these indicators further during the course of the consultation and over the shadow running period.
48. This is not to say that some other information about the provider should not sit alongside the outcome measures when these are presented to prospective learners, employers and other users, to give a more rounded picture of the provider (for example, the mix of provision, areas of specialisation, learner and employer satisfaction ratings).

## Accountability – at the national level

49. The new destination measures will be part of a new more broadly based Minimum Standards framework. The new Minimum Standards framework will continue to be one

of the three triggers for provider intervention, alongside financial health and the Ofsted rating.

50. By introducing Minimum Standards for learner outcomes, we expect to provoke transformational improvements in the provision that is delivered and will want them to be seen as having “bite”. Where providers are not delivering provision that gets positive outcomes, they should face intervention action and be in scope of the formal intervention policy. This may include a referral to the FE Commissioner.
51. The new measures will also be used by Ofsted, both at individual provider level and at a more aggregated level for broader analysis:
- for inspection, to inform inspection judgements and contribute to judgements on outcomes and also leadership and management, and
  - more widely for analysis and contribution to speeches and annual reporting by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector and to support the work of regional directors.

### *The current Minimum Standards framework*

52. Minimum Standards based on qualification achievement rates are not a target to aim for but are typically set below the levels that a good or average performing provider is achieving. They are used to identify providers with a significant proportion of learners who do not achieve their qualifications.
53. National average achievement rates for different types of qualifications vary due to a number of factors including the size of a qualification. Therefore, qualifications are grouped by types and Minimum Standards are set separately for each type – eg Apprenticeship Framework, A levels, GCSE English and Maths, Diplomas, Certificates and Units. The thresholds for each qualification type are reviewed annually. The current Minimum Standards framework based on qualification achievement rates is at Table 1 of Annex 1.

### *The new Minimum Standards framework – underpinning principles*

54. We are proposing to extend the current Minimum Standards framework to include the new destination measures as a basis for intervention decisions. The aim is for the new framework to be:
- **Simple and transparent:** It should be easy for providers and others to understand. We propose to use the measures and compare them against a defined threshold, without complex exemptions or weightings.
  - **Proportionate:** Only providers who demonstrate failure over a significant volume and proportion of their provision should be in scope of intervention.
  - **Rigorous:** The standard should be achievable for most providers but should nevertheless be rigorous in defining when government needs to intervene.

55. Our proposal uses the existing framework and process as a basis and the key principles are unchanged:

- The standards are a minimum. We would expect to set them below the level that a good or average provider is achieving. They are an indicator of significantly poor performance rather than performance that is not quite up an average or norm. Most providers therefore will continue to be well above Minimum Standards.
- Providers will be given data about their performance against Minimum Standards to help them identify potential problems and take action to address performance issues.
- Falling below Minimum Standards would not always result in intervention action; consideration would be given to the scale of the provision affected in relation to the provider's overall provision and to a very small number of other factors.

### *What would the new framework look like?*

56. For the destination measures framework, we are proposing to group provision into “type of learning” rather than type of qualification. This grouping seems more relevant for destination measures as similar types of learning are likely to have similar expected outcomes. Minimum Standards would be set for each type of learning. The proposed Minimum Standards framework using outcome measures is at Table 2 of Annex 1.

57. The framework would use a sustained positive destination measure, comprising sustained employment and sustained learning destinations, as this is the most complete measure. Minimum Standards would be set for the sustained positive destination for each type of learning. The provider's sustained positive destination score would be assessed against the Minimum Standard for that type of learning. Providers would also see individual destination measures to help with self-assessment (see Annex 3).

58. We are not proposing to use the new progression measure as part of the Minimum Standards framework. Using the two sustained destination measures gives equal weight to employment and learning destinations and avoids additional complexity. We are also not proposing to use the earnings measure, which we believe is more appropriate for informing choice.

59. It is proposed to set Minimum Standards based on the distribution of sustained positive destination rates and the distance from the average. This will identify more clearly those providers that are significantly underperforming. In setting the distance from the average we will also consider the average rate across all learners, to overcome the fact that some large providers can account for the majority of provision in some cases.

60. Annex 2 gives a few fictional examples of provider sustained positive destination scores using the proposed new Minimum Standards framework.

**Question 2: Do you agree with the principles and features underpinning the extended Minimum Standards framework?**



### *How would the new Minimum Standards framework be used?*

61. If a provider fell below the minimum standards on either qualification achievement rates or positive destinations, government would expect to apply its intervention arrangements to determine whether action was warranted. If a provider fell below on both, there would be a presumption that action was warranted and intervention would be accelerated.
62. Intervention decisions using the destination measures framework would be based primarily on a time sequence of data rather than a single year. This would ensure that temporary dips in destination scores would not normally trigger intervention action. We are still exploring how best to achieve this. It could be done on the basis of looking at the previous years' data for a provider that has fallen below the Minimum Standards to see whether the fall is a temporary dip or part of a downward trend. Alternatively it could be done by calculating and comparing the average positive destination scores for providers over say 3 years. We would reserve the right, however, to investigate a substantial fall in destination scores from one year to the next as this could indicate a major drop in performance rather than a temporary dip.
63. A very small number of factors would also be considered to determine whether intervention action was warranted in particular cases. In line with current practice, it is proposed that intervention action is unlikely to be warranted in the following cases:
- the type of learning on which the provider has fallen below the Minimum Standard forms a small part of their overall provision;
  - the provision is no longer delivered;
  - the provision was delivered under a sub-contract that has been terminated;
  - it is niche provision for which there is no reasonable alternative.
64. So far, we have not seen evidence of a correlation between outcome scores and key local indicators (eg unemployment rates). It does not therefore appear that there is a case for building into the system a way of taking account of local contextual information. However, we will keep this under review in light of responses to the consultation and further work before and during the shadow running period.
65. Intervention decisions based on qualification achievement rates are made early in the year when the rates for the previous year are published (eg early 2016 for the 2014/15 academic year). It is expected that the destination measures will initially be published in the summer for the cohort of learners before the last one (eg in summer 2016 for 2013/14 learners). As we are proposing to base intervention decisions on destination measures and qualification achievement rates together, carrying out two separate processes is not a feasible option.
66. The two main approaches for dealing with the time difference are:
- i) take intervention decisions in the summer when the most recent set of destination measures is published, or

ii) maintain the current timing and use the destination measures from the previous summer as the basis for intervention decisions.

67. On balance, ii) seems the better option. The normal time lag for the destination measures, and the fact that we are proposing to look at a time series of data rather than just an individual year, means that it is less crucial to use the measures for intervention purposes as soon as they are available. There is more of an impetus to use qualification achievement rates as soon as they become available as they relate to the immediately preceding academic year.
68. It is inevitable that some providers will have merged, demerged or otherwise changed their corporate identity in the period between a particular cohort completing their course and their outcomes data being matched and published. We will consider how best to reflect changes in identity in the outcomes data so that a year-on-year comparison of the data is not misleading or unfair.
69. We have not yet explored what levels of threshold for Minimum Standards would be appropriate. We also need to consider whether we adjust the threshold every year based on the annual data or whether we use the same threshold for say three years of trend data, reviewing the Minimum Standards only once every three years. We would need to allow for the option of changing more frequently if there were significant changes in national performance.
70. Provider level Minimum Standards reports tell providers when they are below or getting near the minimum standard to assist with self-assessment and improvement and in future will include the destination measures.

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposals for how the new Minimum Standards framework would be used?**

### *Treatment of unemployed learners and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities*

71. We recognise the importance of ensuring that using the destination measures as part of the Minimum Standards framework does not unfairly penalise providers that offer opportunities to particular groups of learners. We do not want to discourage provision to the unemployed or to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities because of a concern that those learners might adversely affect the provider's destination scores. At the same time, we do not want to accept poor outcomes for those learners.
72. Our modelling indicates that unemployed learners as a group fare significantly worse on sustained positive destinations than other learners (more so on sustained employment than on sustained learning). Including these learners in the provider's sustained positive destination score would reduce the score and could discourage it from offering provision to the unemployed. Therefore we are proposing to give separate scores for benefit learners, treating learning for the unemployed as a "type of learning" in the framework with its own positive destination score where we are able to identify it. This would also be more informative for users as it would enable providers and others to benchmark performance in delivering sustained destinations for the unemployed.
73. The picture is different for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Their destination scores differ less from providers' overall scores. Currently, the SFA does not

make any special allowance for those learners in the Minimum Standards framework. Providers must assess the needs of their learners and plan learning to take any special needs into account through the choice and level of aim or framework, the additional learning support provided and any learning aids or assistance provided during exams or assessments. The achievement rates of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are not noticeably different from the average. If lower achievement rates are observed for these learners, this should signify that providers are not planning learning to meet the needs of the learners.

74. We should also expect the proportion of positive destinations for those learners to be similar to those for other learners, given that any special needs have already been accounted for in the teaching and learning or assessment support provided. We will explore further whether this is indeed the case, or if there are differences whether they are significant in terms of sustained positive destination scores and the level at which the Minimum Standards are set. Our inclination at this time is that no allowance needs to be made in respect of sustained learning or sustained employment for learners in a new Minimum Standards framework.
75. A separate Equality Impact Assessment discusses the possible impact of the outcome measures on disadvantaged learners. [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-measuring-success-detailed-proposals](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-measuring-success-detailed-proposals)

**Question 4: Is the proposal for treating learning for the unemployed as a separate type of learning for the purpose of Minimum Standards a fair way of accounting for those learners?**

**Question 5: What is your view on whether we need to make any special allowance for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in the destination measures Minimum Standards framework?**

## Accountability – at the local level

76. Outcome measures will be important for both local and national accountability. Over the Parliament we plan to devolve responsibility for commissioning skills provision to localities. Outcome based success measures will play a key role in helping local commissioners assess quality. The area review process will also put a new emphasis on local accountability. If these developments are to deliver real improvements in provision for learners and employers, they will need to be underpinned by local outcome agreements between LEPs, local authorities and providers, for example as proposed by UKCES and AoC in their recent paper<sup>3</sup>. Local outcome agreements should provide a framework for new local arrangements by setting out the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the parties involved. And they should set out how the impact of the new arrangements will be monitored.
77. Local devolution is likely to deliver different outcomes in different areas, and each area will have its own priorities. Some of the measures on which impact is monitored will therefore also differ. However, there will be a need for a core set of measures used in all

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<sup>3</sup> *Local action, national success: how outcome agreements can improve skills delivery*. Published 29 June. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-action-national-success-how-outcome-agreements-can-improve-skills-delivery](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-action-national-success-how-outcome-agreements-can-improve-skills-delivery)

cases, to allow comparison and benchmarking between areas and providers as well as to measure the impact of qualifications and providers within areas. The outcome measures are ideally placed to provide this core set. They are cost-effective to produce, taking advantage of data matching with HMRC and DWP to re-use data that Government already collects; they are flexible; and they make it easy to compare providers delivering the same type of provision locally and nationally.

78. We aim to begin using the destination measures as part of central government's Minimum Standards framework from summer 2017. By then we would also expect to see outcome measures being embedded in local outcome agreements.

**Question 6: Do you agree that the outcome measures should form a core set of measures for local outcome agreements?**

**Question 7: In order to inform local outcome agreements, what other information is needed alongside the outcome measures data?**

## Presenting and publishing the measures

79. The new outcome measures will increase transparency and provide useful information for all users. They will help prospective learners make more informed choices which should lead to better outcomes for them. They will give LEPs, employers and other local stakeholders more information to help them decide where to spend money on training and support local areas in agreeing local outcome agreements. They will help providers themselves with self-improvement and curriculum planning.

80. There was no clear view in response to the previous consultation on how best to present and publish information. We said we would consider this further and that we would look in particular at presenting information on providers' own websites using a "widget" and at performance tables. The widget would be a tool by which a core set of information, drawn down from a central data source and up dated automatically, would be presented in a consistent way (HE providers already have a widget on their websites).

81. We have done some work with providers to draw on their experience of presenting information to prospective learners. And we have looked at current thinking on behavioural insights and what this can tell us about how best to present information to inform choice. We have also considered the information needs of providers themselves; given they will be an important user of the outcome measures data.

82. In line with the Government's digital strategy, we would expect to make the data available on GOV.UK as Excel spreadsheets and in a format that encourages re-use of the data by third parties. The outcome measures would also be included on the National Careers Service website. But beyond that, it is clear that there can be no "one size fits all" approach in the way information is presented. We hope that the information will be re-used by third parties and presented in different ways to suit different groups of users.

83. For all users, we think it is sensible to present the outcome measures alongside the other performance information that central government collects and publishes: qualification achievement rates, learner and employer satisfaction ratings alongside Ofsted ratings.

### *Information for prospective learners, employers and others*

84. The outcome measures will give prospective learners, employers and others more information to help them choose the best learning option and the best provider for them. Over time it should become more “normal” to look at this information when making a choice of provider and course, and the information will come to play a role in informing that choice. Providers will come to expect this and take account of it.
85. We are very aware of the fact that FE sits alongside both schools and universities. FE students may be doing A levels, or they may be studying for an HE degree. Some level of commonality in information across the three education sectors is desirable, particularly to encourage a more informed choice between qualification routes through FE and HE. BIS and DfE have a joint project that is exploring what joint measures matched data can support, for informing choice and other purposes.

#### The Widget

86. We know that prospective learners take a number of factors into account in choosing where and what to study – some factual, some qualitative and some intuitive. Providers’ own websites are a key source of information for prospective learners, particularly for factual information. It is important to embed performance information alongside the factual details on providers’ website. We are therefore proposing to proceed with the idea of a widget for providers to host on their websites.
87. We propose that a widget would include the outcome measures and other key data for post-19 provision such as qualification achievement rates and learner and employer satisfaction levels (which will continue to be available on GOV.UK and the National Careers Service website following the closure of the FE Choices website in October).
88. In developing a widget, we will apply the following key principles:
- the information and presentation must be simple and straightforward;
  - the information and presentation must be consistent and comparable but this should not mean it is inflexible;
  - we must take account of experience of a widget in HE and plans for one by DfE; and
  - a widget must be low cost for government to develop and cost neutral or low cost for providers to host.
89. There are a number of issues to be worked through. How can providers that do not control their own websites display a widget? At what level should the information be shown? The HE widget is shown at course level. This may be unrealistic for FE as it has a much larger range of courses than HE and we cannot show outcomes data for small cohorts of learners. Provider level or sector subject level may be more workable. Or the widget could focus on one or more types of provision where the decision on what and where to study is more significant and the prospective learner might be expected to be more interested in performance information – apprenticeships is the obvious example.

90. We are proposing to convene a small working group of representatives from providers and other key stakeholders to explore these and other issues and inform a more detailed plan for a widget.

### FE Performance Tables

91. The other presentation approach we said we would consider is an FE performance table. Performance tables are widely used for schools and also for HE. FE colleges' 16-18 provision is already included in DfE performance tables alongside schools. Transparency is important and increasingly so as more prospective learners (and employers) invest their time and increasingly their money in training. We therefore feel that there is a strong case for performance tables especially in apprenticeships and for higher level skills, where new providers are entering the market e.g. National Colleges and Institutes of Technology.

92. We therefore propose to explore further a performance table showing apprenticeship provision and other provision at higher levels. We will work with DfE on this to ensure a consistent approach to 16-18 year old apprenticeship outcomes.

### *Publishing Minimum Standards information*

93. Currently, the Minimum Standards for qualification achievement rates and the provider results are published on GOV.UK but are presented in two different places. This contrasts with the practice for schools where DfE publishes providers' achievement scores against the interim Minimum Standards in the same document. We think this same transparency should apply in FE and we will consider how best to link provider achievement and destinations data with Minimum Standards as we develop our publication strategy.

**Question 8: Do you support the idea of a widget sitting on providers' own websites with a consistent set and presentation of data?**

**Question 9: Do you support the idea of an FE performance table focused on apprenticeships and higher levels of learning?**

### *Information for LEPs and other local stakeholders*

94. LEPs and other local stakeholders such as local authorities and combined authorities are more sophisticated users of data about FE providers. They receive data about individuals in publicly funded learning directly from the SFA and have access to the National Qualification Achievement Rate Tables on GOV.UK. Outcome measures data will be particularly important for LEPs and other local stakeholders in the context of local devolution and local outcome agreements.

95. We will work with LEPs and others during and after the consultation to ensure that the outcome measures data meets their needs in terms of detail and presentation.

### *Information for providers*

96. The outcome measures will give providers useful information about their own performance and we expect them to use the data for a number of purposes, including benchmarking, self-improvement, curriculum planning and sharing with key partners.
97. We are starting with three assumptions:
- i) providers will want at least the destination measures data and qualification achievement rate data on which Minimum Standards are based presented to them in a single package rather than separately (and perhaps other data government collects about their performance – learner and employer satisfaction scores);
  - ii) they will want a similar level of detail for the destination measures as they now receive in respect of qualification achievement rates; and
  - iii) they will want to compare their performance to other providers but will not need this ability integrated with the presentation of their own data.
98. Our proposal is to present each provider with its own information using a “scorecard” approach. The front page would show the key headline figures for destination measures and qualification achievement rates. This would be set against the relevant Minimum Standards and perhaps a comparison against national average or local scores. For each measure, there would be the facility to explore detailed breakdowns of the data. The scorecard could also include the provider’s learner and employer satisfaction survey scores, Ofsted ratings and contextual information.
99. A more detailed suggestion of information that could be shown in a provider scorecard is set out at Annex 3.
100. This approach of giving each provider its own scorecard would be more efficient than, for example, setting up a new website that would show data for all providers. It could allow some comparison to an average score but it would not allow providers to compare their scores to those of other individual provider. However, providers would be able to do this by using the outcome measures data that will be published on GOV.UK.
101. We will work with providers and other key parties such as Jisc, UKCES and the sector membership bodies to take forward the scorecard approach.

**Question 10: Do you agree that individual scorecards will provide a useful tool for both providers and the key local stakeholders with whom they are working?**

## 7. What happens next?

102. We will aim to publish the Government response to this consultation early in 2016. This will set out a detailed plan and timetable for use and publication of the outcome measures. Our intention is to use the measures for accountability purposes formally from summer 2017, with a period of shadow running from summer 2016. The table below summarises the key milestones in this process:

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Action</b>
September – December 2015	Consultation on detailed proposals for use of measures as part of Minimum Standards framework and presenting and publishing measures
September 2015	Publish experimental destinations data for 2011/12 learners and 2012/13 learners
By end 2015	Publish further qualification level destinations data
Early 2016	Publication of Government response to consultation
Spring 2016	Achievement rates published for 2014/15 learners
Summer 2016	Destinations data published for 2013/14 learners
Summer 2016 – Spring 2017	Shadow running for Minimum Standards framework using destinations measures
Spring 2017	Achievement rates published for 2015/16 learners
Summer 2017	Destinations data published for 2014/15 learners
Spring 2018	Achievement rates published for 2016/17 learners
Spring 2018	Destinations data used for intervention purposes



## 8. Consultation questions

**Question 1:** Do you agree with the proposed new progression measure?

**Question 2:** Do you agree with the principles and features underpinning the extended Minimum Standards framework?

**Question 3:** Do you agree with the proposals for how the new Minimum Standards framework would be used?

**Question 4:** Is the proposal for treating learning for the unemployed as a separate type of learning for the purpose of Minimum Standards a fair way of accounting for those learners?

**Question 5:** What is your view on whether we need to make any special allowance for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in the destination measures Minimum Standards framework?

**Question 6:** Do you agree that the outcome measures should form a core set of measures for local outcome agreements?

**Question 7:** In order to inform local outcome agreements, what other information is needed alongside the outcome measures data?

**Question 8:** Do you support the idea of a widget sitting on providers' own websites with a consistent set and presentation of data?

**Question 9:** Do you support the idea of an FE performance table focused on apprenticeships and higher levels of learning?

**Question 10:** Do you agree that individual scorecards will provide a useful tool for both providers and the key local stakeholders with whom they are working?

## Annex 1: Minimum Standards framework

**Table 1 – Qualification Achievement Rates Framework**

Qualification Type	Minimum Standard – Achievement Rate
Apprenticeship Framework	
Access to HE	
A Levels	
AS Levels	
Award	
Certificate	
Diploma	
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	
Functional Skills/ Maths and English	
GCSE Maths and English	
GCSE Other	
Other Non-regulated	
Other Regulated	
QCF Unit	

**Table 2 – Destination Measures Framework**

Type of Learning	Minimum Standard – Sustained Positive Destination
Provision for Benefit learners	
Apprenticeships – Advanced and Higher	
Apprenticeships – Intermediate	
Traineeships	
Access to HE	
Full Level 3 and above	
Other Level 3 (not full)	
Full Level 2	
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	
English and Maths	
Foundation learning (below Level 2)	

## Annex 2: Examples of how Minimum Standards framework would work in practice

1. The examples in this Annex are based on real data and common scenarios but they are not examples of actual providers or actual situations. They have been produced for illustrative purposes to provide a clearer picture of how the Minimum Standards framework using destination measures (as shown in Table 2 of Annex 1) would work in practice.
2. The new destination measures framework will show for each provider the proportion of provision below the Minimum Standards thresholds for each type of learning within the framework.

**Table 1 – Example summary for a provider at framework level**

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Sustained Positive Destination Rate</b>	<b>Provision below MS threshold</b>
Benefit learners	1,200	52%	X%
Apprenticeships – Advanced and Higher	-	-	-
Apprenticeships – Intermediate	-	-	-
Traineeships	-	-	-
Access to HE	300	81%	X%
Full Level 3 and above	800	70%	X%
Other Level 3 (not full)	100	63%	X%
Full Level 2	1,000	69%	X%
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	100	58%	X%
English and Maths	800	68%	X%
Foundation learning (below Level 2)	1,300	60%	X%
<b>Total of all provision</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>X%</b>

3. We can also show, at the headline level, the overall proportion of provision that is below the Minimum Standards threshold, based on the sustained positive destination measure.

**Table 2 – Example headline summary for a provider**

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Sustained Positive Destination Rate</b>	<b>Provision below MS threshold</b>
Total of all provision	5,500	82%	X%

4. Table 1 above shows a summary of information but the actual calculations would happen at a finer level of detail. The objective is to compare “like with like” as much as possible, to

avoid the impact of differing provision mix between providers which would otherwise strongly influence the destination rates.

**Example A: Provider with high numbers of benefit learners**

**Table 3 – Example calculation within each framework category**

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Sustained Positive Destination Rate</b>	<b>Provision below MS threshold</b>
Benefit learners	800	44%	X%
Apprenticeships – Advanced and Higher	-	-	-
Apprenticeships – Intermediate	-	-	-
Traineeships	-	-	-
Access to HE	-	-	-
Full Level 3 and above	100	66%	X%
Other Level 3 (not full)	100	64%	X%
Full Level 2	400	65%	X%
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	-	-	-
English and Maths	-	-	-
Foundation learning (below Level 2)	100	66%	X%
<b>Total of all provision</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>X%</b>

5. This provider does a mix of non-apprenticeship provision, predominantly at Full Level 2 and below, and about half of their learners are benefit learners. Overall their sustained positive destination rate is 54%; compared to the rest of providers puts them at the lower end. However, when separating out benefit learners, the rest of their provision is much more comparable to the average. Further, for benefit learners their outcomes are actually higher than average. In this situation, intervention action would not be expected.

*Example B: 'Average' provider***Table 4 – Example calculation within each framework category**

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Sustained Positive Destination Rate</b>	<b>Provision below MS threshold</b>
Benefit learners	-	-	-
Apprenticeships – Advanced and Higher	-	-	-
Apprenticeships – Intermediate	-	-	-
Traineeships	-	-	-
Access to HE	-	-	-
Full Level 3 and above	100	71%	X%
...	...	...	...
<b>Total of all provision</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>X%</b>

6. This provider predominantly focusses on one learning aim at Full Level 3 and has an overall destination rate of 71%. Although this may appear high, it is actually one of the lowest rates for all providers offering this type of provision. In this situation, further investigation would be expected (for example looking at a time sequence of data for the provider) which could lead to intervention action (particularly if qualification achievement rates were also low).

*Example C: 'High' provider that is underperforming in some areas***Table 5 – Example calculation within each framework category**

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Sustained Positive Destination Rate</b>	<b>Provision below MS threshold</b>
Benefit learners	1,200	52%	X%
Apprenticeships – Advanced and Higher	-	-	-
Apprenticeships – Intermediate	-	-	-
Traineeships	-	-	-
Access to HE	300	81%	X%
Full Level 3 and above	800	70%	X%
Other Level 3 (not full)	100	63%	X%
Full Level 2	1,000	69%	X%
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	100	58%	X%
English and Maths	800	68%	X%
Foundation learning (below Level 2)	1,300	60%	X%
<b>Total of all provision</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>X%</b>

7. This provider has a wide mix of provision with a high proportion of benefit learners. Their sustained positive destination rate of 82% is relatively high and is also consistently above average across nearly all levels of provision that they offer. In this situation, intervention action would not be expected.

## Annex 3: Possible content of provider scorecard

1. In paragraphs 96 to 101 we propose a “scorecard” approach for presenting destination measures and other performance data to providers. This annex suggests what information the scorecard might contain, for illustrative purposes.
2. Suggested information for front page of scorecard
  - The provider’s positive destination score for each type of learning in the destination measures Minimum Standards framework, alongside the Minimum Standard for that type of learning.
  - The provider’s score for each type of qualification in the qualification achievement rates Minimum Standards framework, alongside the Minimum Standard for that type of qualification.
  - Most recent Learner Satisfaction score.
  - Most recent Employer Satisfaction score.
  - Comparison to national and/or regional average.
3. Possible detailed breakdown of information. This takes as a starting point the information currently available in the qualification achievement rates reports compiled for providers by the SFA.

### *Outcome based success measures*

- The provider’s scores for the sustained employment and learning destination measures for each type of learning.
- The provider’s scores and numbers of learners for each of the two destination measures, in the following breakdowns, where minimum group size allows:
  - Types of courses/qualifications
  - Sector subject area
  - Level
  - Age group
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

### *Qualification Achievement Rates*

- The provider’s scores and number of learners in the following breakdowns (individually and in combination):
  - Types of qualifications
  - Sector subject area
  - Level
  - Age group
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Learners with difficulties and disabilities
  - Retention and pass rates

## Annex 4: Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance)

If you wish to comment on the conduct of this consultation or make a complaint about the way this consultation has been conducted, please write to:

Angela Rabess  
BIS Consultation Co-ordinator,  
1 Victoria Street,  
London  
SW1H 0ET

Telephone Angela on 020 7215 1661  
or e-mail to: [angela.rabess@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:angela.rabess@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

However if you wish to comment on the specific policy proposals or ask a question about them, you should use the contact details in section 3 and section 5.



## Annex 5: The Response Form for Outcome Based Success Measures – The Next Stage

The department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available, on public request, individual responses.

**The closing date for this consultation is 2 December 2015.**

Please return completed forms to:

Email: [FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

Felicity Moore  
Vocational Education Directorate  
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Tel: 020 7215 6313  
Fax: 020 7215 5155

When responding please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

I am responding as an individual

I am responding on behalf of an organisation

What is your name?

What is your email address?

What is the name of your organisation (if appropriate)?

What is your job title?

Please tick a box from a list of options in the table below that best describes you as a respondent. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents by selecting the appropriate interest group in the table below and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

	Business representative organisation/trade body
	Business
	LEP
	FE sector representative organisation/trade body
	FE College
	FE private training provider
	Other education (please describe)
	Local Government
	Trade union or staff association
	Charity or social enterprise
	Student representative body
	Individual
	Other (please describe)

**Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed new progression measure? (see paragraph 35)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 2: Do you agree with the principles and features underpinning the extended Minimum Standards framework? (see paragraphs 54-59)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposals for how the new Minimum Standards framework would be used? (see paragraphs 61-70)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 4: Is the proposal for treating learning for the unemployed as a separate type of learning for the purposes of Minimum Standards a fair way of accounting for those learners? (see paragraphs 71-72)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 5: What is your view on whether we need to make any special allowance for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in the destination measures Minimum Standards framework? (see paragraphs 73-74)**

Comments:

**Question 6: Do you agree that the outcome measures should form a core set of measures for local outcome agreements? (see paragraphs 76-78)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 7: In order to inform local outcome agreements, what other information is needed alongside the outcomes measures data? (see paragraphs 76-78)**

Comments:

**Question 8: Do you support the idea of a widget sitting on providers' own websites with a consistent set and presentation of data? (see paragraphs 86-90)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 9: Do you support the idea of an FE performance table focused on apprenticeships and higher levels of learning? (see paragraphs 91-92)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**Question 10: Do you agree that individual scorecards will provide a useful tool for both providers and the key local stakeholders with whom they are working? (see paragraphs 96-101)**

Yes

No

Not sure

Comments:

**If you have other comments about the consultation that do not fall within one of the questions, please include them here.**

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

At BIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be okay if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No



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