# 6. Module 6: Engaging with Networks to develop LMI

Group Size: max 8   **Time:** 3 hours

This module is useful for anyone who has the task of bringing together people or organisations with an interest in gathering, promoting or sharing LMI. The module does not address in detail the technology that may be required. It does not provide a blueprint/roadmap of the ongoing maintenance of up to date LMI or staffing requirements. Some of these issues may be discussed by the network members.
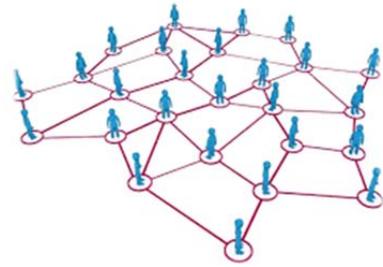
Target group: Manager

Aims

The purpose of this module is for managers to be confident when setting up or reinvigorating a network for LMI. The module deals with two different approaches to setting up a LMI Network:

- Setting up a physical network with meetings for the network members;
- Setting up an online network using online meetings, forums or sharing of resources. This network group would rarely, if ever, physically meet together.

Learning Outcomes

- To understand what current LMI networks exist and why;
- To know how to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to develop LMI;
- To know how to set up a new network for LMI;
- To understand how social media can be used in a range of ways to grow an online network;
- To be able to measure the success of the network.

Skills, experience or knowledge required: The managers should have a good understanding of LMI from various sources; it is useful if they are a competent user of ICT, familiar with the internet, some knowledge of social media.

Equipment required: Flipchart or white/smart board to write on, computer and projector with a screen, access to the internet. If possible, every attendee has the use of a computer with access to the internet.

Module 6: Self-assessment

Complete this self-assessment before commencing Module 6 using scale A. Repeat this assessment after completing Module 6 to measure your progress using scale B.

Your current assessment	Grade how your current understanding/competence 1 = Basic to 6 = Expert
I know what current LMI networks exist and why (online and offline).	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6
I know how to work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to develop LMI.	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6
I am confident being the lead person to set up a network for LMI.	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6
I know how to set up a new network for LMI.	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6
I can use Social Media to create and grow an online network.	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6
I can introduce a measure to evaluate the success of the network.	A 1............2............3............4............5............6 B 1............2............3............4............5............6

6.1. For what purposes does the guidance community need to network?

Preparation: read the following extracts from the ICT and LMI in Lifelong Guidance case studies.

Networking can take many forms. Some can be formal and organised by a business or organisation. Other networks evolve as individuals recognise they have a common identity, common interest or goal. Sometimes a network group will come into existence out of a need for information or service that is not being met in any other way such as a central LMI resource.

The following are some examples of LMI networks in different countries.

Bib-wiki (Online LMI articles uploaded by practitioners/contributors)

The initial idea of the bib-wiki platform emerged from practitioners in the field of educational guidance primarily working with adults almost 15 years ago. In a complex and rather scattered provider landscape, an impartial knowledge-sharing tool for educational counsellors was developed in collaboration with a steering group consisting of educational counsellors.

The networking approach pursued by the initiative (by means of the online platform itself and the bib-wiki cafés) facilitates mutual exchange among counsellors and knowledge transfer across organisations active in this field, which again tends to help in improving the service quality in the domain more generally.

Since then the platform has been further developed in an incremental manner. Initially, it was designed as an online-wiki exclusively accessible by registered expert users (educational counsellors). The responsibility for populating the online wiki with content also rested exclusively with the expert community. In 2013, the platform was partly opened up to the public and an editorial team was set up to support the expert community in generating and editing platform content.

The bib-wiki initiative is managed by in-between, which also contributes the editorial team. The implementation and maintenance of the technical infrastructure is subcontracted to a commercial provider.

National Careers Service (UK) (local networking for gathering LMI)

The localisation of the National Careers Service means that stakeholders and their roles vary depending on locality. Local Authorities have their own local priorities that feed into what the National Careers Service centres offer. This also depends on what kind of public services and/or community centres exist in the area. Nevertheless, contractors are expected to develop strong relationships with national, regional and local stakeholders with the objectives of increasing:

- the number of customers using the National Careers Service as a result of referrals from partner organisations;
- the proportion of the public who are aware of the National Careers Service;
- awareness among stakeholders of the National Careers Service;
- the quality of the service.

The strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement and coordination strategies is beneficial to any career organisation that works on referrals from partners. It is also important where provision of

career guidance is varied and has the potential to overlap with other practices. Advisers must be willing to network with other stakeholders and build long lasting relationships for mutual benefit.

LMI for All (Central online source of real-time LMI)

The LMI for All database is an open access data service, which makes its LMI information freely available to any web developers. It was developed through a shared need for robust, consistent LMI data, required across multiple government departments, education providers, third sector organisations etc. Crucially the web portal can be freely accessed; this means that developers are able to make use of the data's potential to build applications that work for the specific needs of certain target groups (e.g. Y7 students, adults, HE or FE students).

LMI for All has strong partnership arrangements with a wide range of stakeholders across the UK and internationally. The wider national stakeholder community of LMI for All is defined as careers organisations, developers, schools, further education colleges, higher education institutions, recruitment agencies and jobsites. Raising awareness of the service has been a key element of the project to ensure that career providers invest in developing apps specific to their own needs. Other stakeholders include those collecting LMI data that feeds into the central database. There was a long period of negotiation with data providers before they agreed for their data to be collated into a single portal.

Activity: Establish the purpose of the group.

Task	Action	Time
Please introduce yourself, your interest in LMI, if you use LMI (how)	Everyone in the group introduces themselves.	20 mins
How do/can you contribute to local LMI?		
How can you share that information with colleagues?	Discuss in team meetings, e-mail colleagues, team newsletter	
What does networking mean to you?	Group discussion and write the answers on flipchart.	
How or where can networking take place?	This is to get more detail than question 2. Looking for physical network meetings or online.	
What LMI networking currently takes place?	Write on flipchart	
Are you involved in any other networks?	These people could be useful in the following discussions.	

Activity: Why engage with networks to develop LMI.

Task	Action	Time
If some people engage with LMI networks ask: **What are the advantages of linking with the network?** **Are there any disadvantages?**	Write the answers on flipchart	15 mins
If no one currently engages with LMI network groups or ask the others member who do not attend a network meeting, **"How do you get your LMI? Would networking offer any further advantages?"**	Write the answers on flipchart	

6.2. Setting up a network for LMI

You have decided to set up a LMI network, as you are not getting a complete picture of local LMI conditions. There is no overall government department, local authority or other central resource providing this information. You need to bring together organisations who have the hard data, trade sector organisations, others with informal data and those who need access to the data.

Your task is to set up the network. Today you DO NOT need to plan the logistics such as date and venue, etc. See below for a guide of the topics you need to consider.

Break into groups of four. Use a flipchart or a computer to record your thoughts.

(Trainer – each group is free to choose if they want to plan a physical network group or an online group it will be very useful if one of the groups can incorporate some thinking about how an online network would work, as this is probably a future way of working as technology changes. See the table for topic suggestions)

Task	Action	Time
Who has the data?	List the organisations and if possible name the relevant contact.	30 Mins
Who needs the data?		
Will this be a network for one organisation or is it open to anyone needing or providing LMI?	Can the group agree on a Mission Statement for the network?	
Who can influence the decision to be involved in the network? Who can instruct staff to comply or attend? **Will each organisation have a named 'champion' for the network?**		
How will LMI be shared?	Paper/email/online – who and how?	
How will you ensure LMI is accurate, up to date, impartial and independent?		
How will you ensure that the LMI provided is what clients and practitioners want/need?		
How will you measure the impact of the network group?	Client or practitioner questionnaires.	

Additional questions if there is sufficient time:

What role do employers have in contributing to a LMI network?	
How do you regulate promotion of one person's idea over facts?	

Conclusion:

Trainer, "Who now can see a need for a local LMI Network or to become involved with an existing group?" (Ask for a show of hands)

Trainer, "Who now wants to set up a local network group?" (Show of hands)

Trainer, "Are there any people in this group who could work together to get a LMI network organised?"

6.3. Setting up an online networking group

Discuss why it may be advantageous to set up an online group. Has anyone experience of setting up a group? It can be any online group for any purpose.

Use a flipchart to record the answers.

Time: 10 mins

Geography	May only want a small input
Everyone cannot meet at the same time/day	Can contribute/ upload at anytime
Pressure of work	Not a regular meeting
Can pick and choose topics of interest	

Activity: Ask: how they can set up an online group? What tools / websites / social media could they use? Make a list on the flipchart.

Time: 5 mins

Facebook	LinkedIn
Twitter	Wiki.com
Google+ circle	www.thecdi.net & other career related sites
Quora, Instagram, Yelp, MeetUp, Listly	Government and local government websites
Amazon workdocs	Yammer/SharePoint/Office365
Google Hangouts (video chat with up to 100 people)	Team Blogging
MediaWiki	Free Forums
bbPress (by WordPress)	

(Note in the above list we have focused on no cost or low cost tools. Other commercial tools are available.)

Written activity: Now explore the positives and negatives of each of the above suggestions. Which of these would you use?

Time: 30 mins

Who is the network for? Who else can join the network?

Is the group an open group where anyone can join or is it by invitation only?

Who will be the organiser, group owner, administrator or content editor?

How to promote the group - Ask the trainees for ideas, e.g. use a Survey Monkey questionnaire to get people to state what they want from the network / how they can contribute. People who are interested in forming a group should email their contacts to promote the group.

Do you already have colleagues who are interested in LMI? How can you engage them in the network?

6.4. Networking Action Plan

Time: 30 Mins

- Decide on a steering group / action committee;
- Decide what you want to achieve;
- Who will contribute?
- Who will use the site?
- Technical considerations – will it be a forum, blog etc.?
- Will it be on a free hosted site or a paid for hosted site? Who pays for it?
- Who will be responsible for the technical side of the project?
- Who will be responsible for the content?
- Who can monitor or delete posted items?
- Who will be responsible for publicising the network?

Time: 15 Mins

Commercial – as these sites have to make money they use good / appropriate styles. There is a lot to learn from looking at these sites.

Commercial sites

http://forums.moneysavingexpert.com see the forum section. This clear and simple format can be easily adapted to LMI topics.
http://www.hotukdeals.com/

Some General Network Organisations:

- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network http://www.elgpn.eu/
- EUROGUIDANCE - European portal to guidance: Euroguidance is the European network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance. http://www.euroguidance.eu/
- XING German business network https://www.xing.com/

See the following examples of how Europass uses social media to network.

- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/europasseurope
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/europasseurope
- YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/c/Europass-European-Union
- Pinterest+: https://gr.pinterest.com/europass/
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/europasseurope/