**Minutes of the Software Development Forum meeting**

**11 February 2014**

**Cathays Park, Cardiff**

**Present:**

Ceri Davies (CD) Cardiff/ SIMS user group

Luke Howells (LH) Carmarthenshire/ RM user group

Kenny Barker (KB) Advanced Learning

Tony Selby (TS) RM

Jim Haywood (JHa) Capita

Niranjan Yedamakanti (NY) Capita

Sam Hooker (SHo) Capita

Claire Horton (CHo) WG

Lindsay Lewis (LL) WG

Steve Hughes (SHu) WG

Tom Hume (TH) WG

Arfon Owen (AO) WG

Natalie Hughes-Owen (NH) WG

Cath Pickett (CP) WG - am

Jerry Howells (JHo) WG - am

David Heath (DH) WG - pm

Geoff Hicks (GH) WG - pm

Bethan Milton (BM) WG - pm

**1. Apologies and introductions**

Eileen Baxandall Wrexham/ SIMS user group

Mike Jones Swansea/ ONE user group

Glyn Thomas Cardiff/ ONE user group

Caryl Harding Capita

Matthew Skermer WG

Jane Douglas WG

LL welcomed all to the meeting, introduced the new members to the group and thanked representatives for attending.

**2. Minutes, actions of meeting on November 11th, 2013 and Post-16 workshop on January 30th, 2014; and matters arising**

The group agreed that the minutes of November 11th 2013 were a true record of the previous meeting. The group also agreed that the notes of the Post-16 workshop on January 30th, 2014 were a true record. TS suggested that the notes should emphasise GH’s absence and how decisions were stalled as a result.

**Action: Post-16 workshop notes to record the impact of GH’s absence**

LL then ran through the actions.

Actions 73, 74: on the agenda.

Action 80: on the agenda.

Action 82: this has been investigated and deferred.

Action 41: on the agenda, covered under AOB.

Action 56: CHo noted that there were no changes, and this would be carried forward. It was confirmed that KR had left her role. JHa noted that code D might become an issue for federated schools. LL stated that no further guidance is yet available on dual registration.

Action 67: JHa advised that SHo would provide a paragraph on the calculation of exclusions.

Action 68: SHu stated that WG would compare data from January 2013 with January 2014 to investigate this issue. He added that the Local Authority spreadsheet collection would be dropped once WG is content with the quality of the data being collected through PLASC.

**3. PLASC and EOTAS 2015 Draft Specification**

CHo presented the draft PLASC and EOTAS 2015 specifications.

*EOTAS*

There were no changes to the specification from the 2014 version, with the exception of dates and dates of birth being rolled forward.

*PLASC*

Along with dates and dates of birth had been rolled forward from the 2014 specification, Study Welsh codes 3 and 4 have been removed for 2015. Additionally, Basic Skills data has been completely removed after being optional for 2014. It was noted that schools do not have to record Basic Skills as pupils are now assessed and data recorded using a new online system. LL added that the change was implemented a year ago but was too late to remove for 2014 PLASC.

CHo then presented a mapping table for changes to infant class size exception codes. JHa remarked that the proposed change would not be too difficult for Capita SIMS and would be relatively easy to match the codes. CHo noted that there was no expectation for suppliers to match backwards, and confirmed that this is a mandatory change to codes for 2015. Suppliers confirmed that the code changes were feasible for them to incorporate for 2015.

**Action: CHo to release mapping table with version 1.0 of PLASC 2015 spec**

*Dual-registration exclusions*

An query regarding how to record a 5-day exclusion of a dual-registered pupil on a school’s MIS has been raised by a Local Authority. JHa advised that there was a part-time exclusions button in Capita software, so that schools could report the start and end date and the correct number of days for the exclusion. JHa agreed to show WG Capita’s guidance on the issue and also agreed that customers could be referred to Capita to resolve any issues on this. RM and Advanced Learning agreed to also confirm whether part-time exclusions can be recorded on their systems.

**Action: Suppliers to provide confirmation of whether part-time exclusions can be recorded on their MIS.**

CHo asked whether triple registration (one main and two subsidiary) can be reflected in MIS. This mainly occurred in Post-16. JHa stated that Capita’s functionality applied to multi registration and not just dual registration.

**Action: Although not requested in the meeting, it would be helpful if other suppliers could confirm whether their systems can cater for triple (or more) registration.**

A discussion was held on the requirement for LEA Designated Special Classes data from special schools. LL confirmed that WG is content for MIS software to assume that all special schools’ classes are LEA Designated Special Classes, and that the relevant validation rule and the specification would be changed to reflect this. This would eliminate the need for special schools to add special class details for all of their classes. SHu advised that as a result, three items in the specification would no longer be needed for special schools in 2015. CHo confirmed that the policy team would be consulted before confirming this action.

**Action: WG to confirm proposal with the relevant policy team.**

**Action: WG to amend validation and the PLASC specification for LEA Designated Special classes.**

CD then raised a query regarding the recording of class sizes in their system and queried whether it should be split into junior and foundation. SHu replied that data is required for infants and junior classes and is not dependent on which curriculum is taught in those classes.

**4. Enterprise data in PLASC**

JHo outlined the need for enterprise activities in schools to be monitored (as detailed in the papers supplied)*.* A discussion was then held on data requirements (*see Appendix 1*).

It was agreed that suppliers and user group representatives would feed back by the next SDF to allow WG to identify data items for Modular CBDS for release in April.

**Action: SDF to provide feedback on enterprise data in PLASC by March 18th.**

**5. Governance data in PLASC**

CP outlined the recent changes with regards to federated governing bodies in schools (as detailed in the papers supplied). A discussion was then held on governance data requirements *(see Appendix 2).* CP confirmed that legislation allowing local authorities to federate their schools will be brought in in spring 2014, and this is expected to lead to a significant increase in federations.

It was suggested after the discussion that a flag to identify a federation with a field for a name and number would be feasible, and suppliers agreed that this could be delivered for January 2015 PLASC.

**Action: CHo to add requirement to version 1.0 of PLASC 2015 spec**

**6. Post-16**

GH apologised to SDF for his absence from the Post-16 workshop on 30th January due to an unexpected appointment that he was unable to postpone, and appreciated that conclusions could not be reached at that meeting as a result.

GH confirmed that the collection in September 2015 which is to collect the previous academic year’s data will cover the items he needs with one possible addition required. A discussion was then held on the data requirements for 2016 onwards *(see Appendix 3)*.

Suppliers advised that it was not possible to confirm if the requirements for 2015 were feasible until further details were available. KB replied that it was possible, but details were needed as soon as possible, such as activities and start & end dates. JH commented that Capita’s summer release had begun and therefore nothing substantial could be delivered in that release. TS added that a draft xml and validation rules would be ideal to assist development. CHo agreed that this could be delivered to suppliers by the end of February 2014 and suppliers agreed that they would be able to confirm if the changes were possible for 2015.

**Action: Draft xml and validation rule for 2015 to be provided to suppliers**

LH asked if an Activities to Programmes map would be provided to schools for reference. GH agreed that this was a possibility.

**Action: GH to provide a mapping table for Activities to Programmes.**

AO asked how the Activities List could be updated for 2014. GH suggested that in the future, QAN codes could be used. CD noted that if the Activities List was to be updated, this would need to be with LAs by March. It was agreed that this would be discussed further outside the meeting.

**Action: WG to agree how and when the Activities List for 2014 will be updated.**

**7. Early Years Development and Assessment Framework (EYDAF) and Curriculum Review**

DH introduced himself to the group as the new head of the Assessment Branch. He informed the group that he will be providing regular updates to SDF on the EYDAF and changes to data collection and reporting as a result of the Curriculum Review, and will work closely with the SDF on these future developments. He added that he would return to the next SDF on March 18th for further discussion and details on Phase 2 of the review. LL confirmed that the in the next few months the draft NDC specification would be released, and that the SDF in June should be focussed on assessment developments.

**Action: DH to attend SDF on 18th March to provide details of phase 2 of the Curriculum Review**

**8. Attendance 2015 Draft Specification**

CHo introduced the draft Attendance 2015 specification, adding that there were no changes to the 2014 specification with the exception of dates and dates of birth being rolled forward.

LL confirmed that the end of the supplier review period for the PLASC, EOTAS and Attendance specifications was March 5th.

**9. SDF 2014/15 Cycle**

CHo presented the draft SDF cycle, adding that the only change was to Post-16 dates. CHo invited suppliers to review the Cycle and report any comments at the SDF on March 18th, 2014. It was requested that the Cycle is also provided in alternative format to MS Project.

**Action: SDF Cycle to be provided in alternative format**

**10. Response Times**

CHo noted the current protocol for queries from suppliers, where queries should be acknowledged within 24 hours, and a resolution or update provided within five working days. In order to try and improve response times, she asked for the urgency of the query to be included in the subject line of the email e.g. ‘urgent’, ‘action required’, ‘routine’, ‘for information’. CHo also requested all emails to be sent to the IMS mailbox for internal distribution rather than to named individuals.

This approach will be reviewed after three months to make sure enquiries are being dealt with effectively.

**Action: Revised approach to be reviewed in 3 months.**

The possibility was raised of using the issues log on the SDF DEWi site as this had been developed and implemented for this purpose in 2010/11. It was agreed that this would be reviewed.

**Action: WG to investigate the use of the issues log within DEWi for supplier queries.**

**11. Any other business**

The Hwb handout was distributed. It was agreed that updates from Hwb were still useful and therefore the SDF should continue to receive updates.

CHo requested an update on a Freedom of Information Request requiring a response from Capita. SHo and JHa stated that the matter was with senior management and would be returned to WG in due course.

The issue of fileset numbering was raised. CHo noted that discussions were ongoing with Method4 with regards to improvement and this will be brought to the next SDF.

**Action: Proposals for fileset numbering to be added to the agenda for the next SDF meeting**

**12. Dates of next meetings**

18th March 2014, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

4th June 2014, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

**Appendix 1**

**Enterprise data in PLASC**

*Data required*

* Only enterprise activity in schools required (i.e. not home learners etc.)
* Currently only looking at secondary schools, although ideal to include FE colleges, and possibly special schools in due course
* Ideally collect at pupil-level, although some would have to be batch-entry (e.g. data for a whole school year)
* If the pupils move, the data would have to be aggregated
* Hours of learning or sessions preferred for reporting duration of the activity, although full-day also acceptable. Could use the exclusions approach to recording, i.e. recording a start and end date
* Likely to be small groups of pupils who undergo long-term enterprise activities, with the short-term activities often undertaken by large numbers of pupils
* Activities in one year for a pupil averages more than one (i.e. number of activities greater than cohort size), although these could be half-days
* Short-term data similar to an attendance register, longer-term data with more emphasis on attainment
* No pre-defined list of activities as there are many different potential activities, but indicators can be provided
* Potential issue with indicators: comment could be added to identify and not included in the return, but this could cause recognition issues over the long-term if customers return to the pupil record on the MIS at a later date

*Incentives/ benefits*

* No real benefits for schools
* If no incentives for schools, accuracy can often be an issue
* However, it is statutory (linked to careers and world of work, Welsh Bacc, etc) and also linked with teacher placement opportunities etc. so some incentives for schools

*Method*

* Credibility check could be implemented at a regional level
* Issues on data accuracy if the data was collected spanning multiple years and ‘exclusions style’ start and end date was used
* Data always collected in arrears - looking at January 2017 for 2015/16 school year

**Appendix 2**

**Federated schools / Governance data in PLASC**

*Suggestions*

* Field to input name of federation and names of other schools within the federation
* Tick-box to indicate federated governance with school numbers of other schools in the federation. This could however lead to problems with data- unique identifier preferred (must be unique within the LA)
* LA will know which schools are federated, although WG policy team might not as there is no legal requirement to inform WG. Legal requirement might not necessarily ensure return of data to WG in good time
* Number preferred for a unique identifier as opposed to free input of names
* Issue of who in the federation records the governance
  + could be collected at LA level
  + could, for the purpose of PLASC, nominate one school and head teacher to record - but who polices if they have recorded or duplicated data? Additionally, there could be sensitivities if the LA nominates the school
* Possible for schools to federate across sectors
* DEWi-level validation to see which federations have uploaded

**Appendix 3**

**Post-16**

* The 2015 specification should be rolled forward with the addition of one item, namely a flag at activity level for main or other subjects.
* Programme codes will be provided for 2016
* Information needed: learner, programme (one per learner), activity
* If a learner drops one activity as part of a programme, the programme will change
* JH - activity could be recorded first, adding the programme at a later stage. Back-dating a possibility

*Codes*

* GH - QAN codes preferred to learning activity codes
* SHu - discount codes currently acquired from DfE, with one code discarded if two codes are similar
* Further discussion needed as QAN codes can often be incorrect
* Could take a subset (around 250) of the QAN codes, with other codes to be retrieved from DAQW if needed. JH confirmed this is the case in Northern Ireland.
* Main, core and CLIF codes are different for different pupils
* GH - could set defaults for codes that would cover most pupils
  + Main & Other suggested, changing to Welsh Baccalaureate and Other in due course