**Minutes of the Software Development Forum meeting**

**4 November 2013**

**Cathays Park, Cardiff**

**Present:**

Ceri Davies (CD) Cardiff/ SIMS user group

James Boyd (JB) Cardiff/ SIMS user group

Robert Davies (RD) Neath Port Talbot/ ONE user group

Kenny Barker (KB) Advanced Learning

Tony Selby (TS) RM

Jim Haywood (JH) Capita

Caryl Harding (CHa) Capita

Sam Hooker (SHo) Capita

Phil Jones (PJ) Capita

Claire Horton (CHo) WG

Jenna Arnold (JA) WG

Lindsay Lewis (LL) WG

Steve Hughes (SHu) WG

Tom Hume (TH) WG

Arfon Owen (AO) WG

Andy Milne (AM) WG

Sara James (SJ) WG

Anthony Jordan (AJ) WG - pm

Geoff Hicks (GH) WG - am

Bethan Milton (BM) WG - am

**1. Apologies and introductions**

Eileen Baxandall Wrexham/ SIMS user group

Mike Jones (MJ) Swansea/ ONE user group

Glyn Thomas (GT) Cardiff/ ONE user group

Luke Howells Carmarthenshire

Jerry Howells (JHo) WG

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

**2. Minutes, actions of meeting on July 1st 2013 and matters arising**

The group agreed that the minutes were a true record of the previous meeting. LL then went through the outstanding actions list.

Action 60: LL explained that Marian Jebb had confirmed the qualification period is 6 weeks.

Actions 63, 64: on the agenda.

Action 67: JH confirmed that Capita have changed their method of calculating exclusions, to allow for the possibility of finishing in the morning. The software has now been updated. He confirmed that a paragraph would be sent to WG to explain the changes made.

**Action: JH to send an update on recording exclusions in SIMS to WG**

Action 68: this was confirmed to be in progress. JH noted that as Cardiff and Swansea LAs are Capita customers, that this could be improved as noted above.

Action 33: LL confirmed that Kara Richards has left her role, and that Judith Inker and Averil Petley are now contacts for Attendance collections and exclusions. There is no update to dual registration guidance at present.

Action 41: any updates would be distributed when provided.

Action 56: this action was closed and will be considered again for the 2015 specification.

**3.1 Post-16 Collection 2013/14**

LL introduced BM and GH to the forum and distributed the Post-16 specification to the group.

BM introduced the specification and highlighted the reasons for the change. These were to allow performance measures to be more consistent between schools and colleges which would in turn allow parents to make comparisons.

BM added that no new fields would be needed as it would be based on the previous Post-16 collection, which would assist WG in monitoring completion rates. For the 2013/14 academic year, BM explained that a pupil-level collection similar to the Post-16 PLASC would be required in summer 2014.

GH then stated he had issued a request to LAs for them to complete a spreadsheet by the end of November. A similar process would happen in March 2014, November 2014 and March 2015. He explained that high-level data was required for these collections (for planning purposes), i.e. numbers of students registered on programmes rather than pupil-level data. A question was asked on whether schools would be contacted. GH replied that the requests are sent to LAs who would then probably need to contact schools to get the required information.

JH asked if it would be known how schools would populate the spreadsheet. CD replied that making a SIMS.net report could be an option for Capita schools.

There was a discussion around whether it is easier for schools and LAs to provide detailed data at pupil level and for this to be aggregated centrally for planning purposes. This will be considered further for the November 2014 ‘spreadsheet’ collection.

JH stated that in order for the Post-16 2013/14 collection to take place in summer 2014 this would have to be included in Capita’s spring release. He added that if the unreleased 2013 collection was used, it would be feasible (especially as they possess the coding for the previous Post-16 censuses), but if completion rates were needed as part of a larger census, then it would be difficult to deliver such a large project within the short period of time proposed. However, he added, the proposed collection would return better quality data.

JH proposed for the development to be included in their summer release for 2014, for schools to complete on their return in September, looking retrospectively at the 2013/14 academic year. TS also confirmed this would be feasible for RM. BM agreed that this would be acceptable.

AO stated that collections had to take into account mergers and school changes and proposed that the collection could be in early July. TS noted that this would be too short notice, while LL added that the WG’s XSLT development was already complete for summer 2014. BM added that the collection was a ministerial priority as part of the Review of Qualifications and therefore it was important for the collection to be undertaken without delay.

SHu asked when a specification would be needed if a standalone September 2014 collection was wanted to gather prospective data for 2013/14. KB, TS and PJ agreed that a specification would be needed by the end of November 2013.

JH suggested that another meeting might be needed as the work needed on a Post-16 collection would be significant. CHo asked when suppliers would need the XSLT. JH answered that it would be needed by late January, adding that an early version would be preferred before a later version was finalised. It was agreed that the Post-16 team would be in contact with SIIB to discuss requirements.

**Action: Post-16 and SIIB to discuss XSLT requirements**

**Action: Draft specification for a September 2014 collection to be presented to SIIB by the end of November 2013**

**Action: XSLT to be provided to suppliers by the end of January 2014**

**Action: Consider whether pupil or aggregate data is more efficient for November 2014 planning data**

**3.2 Post-16 Collection 2014/15**

GH explained that an annual Post-16 collection would be required in July each year to collect data at a pupil-level based on programme of study. He also undertook to provide programme identifier codes to the SDF in February. He stated that guided contact hours would be collected at programme level instead of at learning activity level as is currently the case.

GH answered JH’s query on non-accredited hours by saying that the new collection has allowances for non-accredited hours and that programme hours would be collected. GH also confirmed that activities were linked to programme codes.

AM asked if the proposed changes to the collection would be considered an extra burden on LAs and schools. GH replied that feedback had indicated it was less of a burden as programmes and not hours were the key indicator.

JH enquired whether the pupils could study more than one programme and therefore whether this new collection will need to allow for this. GH answered that in FE this would be possible due to part-time pupils, but school pupils would usually only have one programme of study to follow. He stated that a decision will need to be made about the allowance of more than one programme of study per pupil as soon as possible as this would have big implications on the software development.

**Action: GH to confirm if pupils can only have one programme of study.**

LL proposed a working group in January, GH concurred. A draft specification can then be produced based on discussions at this meeting.

**Action: WG to arrange a workshop to discuss Post-16 2015 in January 2014**

LL asked if programme codes needed to be in systems or if it was too late to add in for a 2015 collection. JH replied that they could be added in. PJ added that they would be coded by April and would need to be in the summer release.

TS asked if suppliers could have a copy of the spreadsheet issued by GH. CHo agreed to supply this.

**Action: CHo to provide suppliers with a copy of the spreadsheet**

**4. Enterprise data in PLASC**

This was not discussed as JHo sent apologies. It was agreed that this item would be rolled forward to the next meeting.

**5. National Data Collection (NDC) 2014 and National Tests Update, including comments on v1.0 of the NDC specification**

AJ thanked the forum for their work on the National Tests. He explained that the test window would be staggered across two weeks, 7-13th May, to reduce the likelihood of learners being absent. He went on to talk about external marking of some tests and explained that as the marking of the numerical reasoning tests is more challenging and burdensome on teachers’ time, WG is investigating the possibility of contracting for them to be marked externally. Discussions are still taking place about the method for returning marks to schools for them to submit as part of NDC.

MIS suppliers asked if a separate file with external marks would be provided to schools. If so the specification was needed immediately as Capita’s code cut-off is before Christmas.

LL confirmed that all the test results would be submitted in one file and that DEWi will perform the calculations of standardised and progress scores. It was also confirmed that live standardisation would take place on all tests next year after sufficient data is received from schools in June.

JA then introduced the specification and went through the changes. CHa asked if schools were able to download age equivalent scores. CHo answered that whilst they had been provided by NfER in 2013 for the numeracy tests, this was never the intention and schools will not be provided with age-equivalent scores in 2014. LL highlighted that raw scores were not included in the import file in 2013, but that they will be included along with the test paper sat to make it easier for schools to check if the raw score has been changed before importing the progress and age standardised scores.

CHo confirmed that there will be no requirement in 2014 for re-importing the import file. One final import file will be provided via DEWi containing final data. The group confirmed that they were happy for the import file to include the raw score but that this needed to be specified. CHo noted that it would be added to the specification. It was confirmed that this file should flag an error on import where raw scores did not match the original held in MIS but not overwrite. AJ would communicate this to schools and LAs.

**Action: SIIB to provide updated specification and import file structure**

**Action: WG to confirm if an external marks file specification is to be provided**

CHo advised that the raw score ranges had been added into A\_COMP and Validation CBDS, adding that there was a possibility that the ranges would change up until December 19th. TS declared that this would not be an issue as long as suppliers could know the full range. PJ added it would be easier from a supplier’s perspective if the range narrowed as opposed to widened.

TS asked if pupils would take both the Welsh and the English numeracy tests and whether both should be included in the return. CHo replied that WG only requires one result per test for the numeracy test and that it will be up to schools to manage this and ensure only one valid result is submitted per test.

RD pointed out that last year many schools had entered test dates outside the test window. CHo noted that the test window is in validation CBDS and so any repeat of this would not pass validation from 2014.

CHo confirmed that a new fileset would be released in the week following the meeting.

**Action: WG to issue new fileset**

CHo then ran through the key dates, highlighting that the date on roll would be at the end of the test window. LL raised the issue that last year many schools prioritised the national tests over teacher assessments. This could potentially be exacerbated next year where separate deadlines have been specified for NDC and WNT. CD noted that LAs could possibly alleviate this by setting one deadline for their schools to adhere to. It was confirmed that standardised and progress scores would hopefully be returned from DEWi before the summer holidays.

CHa asked how long translations would take if submitted to the WG. It was confirmed that, depending on the size of the required translation, they could be returned within a day.

**6. EYDAF**

AJ then introduced the Early Years Development Assessment Framework (EYDAF). He explained that it would facilitate development from 0 years upwards and would be rolled out in two tranches - September 2014 and summer 2015.

PJ asked if there would be an Early Years census. LL replied that there were no immediate plans for this and AJ added that plans for data collection are being considered.

LL asked if there was any intention to capture On Entry data from September 2014. AJ stressed that September 2014 would be a national pilot with a view for it to be refined for September 2015. LL suggested that EYDAF should be on the agenda for future SDF meetings for the group to follow progress. AJ added that a representative would attend.

**Action: WG to ensure EYDAF is a standing agenda item**

**7. Any Other Business**

CHa asked if Wales would follow England’s recent changes to early entry. SHu responded that there would be no changes in 2014 as the Review of Qualifications at Key Stage 4 suggested that early entry should be generally discouraged.

TS asked whether Wales would consider Data Exchange as has been proposed in England. LL replied that there were no immediate plans to do this.

CD tabled a question on behalf of Yvonne Davies (Flintshire LA/ SIMS User Group) regarding parents who supplied information on Welsh Spoken at Home but who did not want it to be recorded. CHo replied that there was no ‘Information Refused’ option as for Ethnicity or First Language, but would review this.

**Action: CH to investigate adding an ‘Information Refused’ option for Welsh Spoken at Home.**

CD then tabled a question from Eileen Baxandall (Wrexham LA/ SIMS User Group) regarding teacher declarations on DEWi. CHo responded that for National Tests a tick box or something similar is being considered to verify if the data has been checked, and suggested that, if successful, this could be rolled out to other collections where applicable. JH advised that in SIMS, other returns could not be authorised until ticked by the headteacher and that this could be an option to be considered.

**Action: CHo to investigate electronic data declarations for summer 2014 onwards**

CHo responded to RD’s question about an electronic special schools Attendance return by saying that there would not be one in 2014.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 11th February, 2014. The group requested for meetings to not be held on a Monday or a Friday. A separate working group on Post-16 would be held in January, with the date to be advised. LL confirmed that next year’s meetings would be included in the updated SDF cycle.