



Software Development Forum (SDF): 17 October 2019

The recorded minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2019

Meeting minutes

Date of issue: 30 January 2020
Version: 1.1

Audience	Members of the Software Development Forum (SDF), including the Welsh Government, software suppliers of school information management systems and limited local authority representatives.
Overview	This document is provided by the Welsh Government as an official account of the SDF meeting held on to support software suppliers in developing their school information management systems and to support local authorities ensure that they, and their schools in Wales, are able to submit data required to comply with statutory duties.
Action required	Members of the SDF are suggested to read this official recording of the meeting held and to action any issues as required.
Further information	<p>Enquiries about this document should be directed to:</p> <p>Information Management Strategy Data Collections Team School Information and Improvement Branch Education Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ</p> <p>Tel: 0300 062 5014 E-mail: IMS@gov.wales</p> <p> @WG_Education</p> <p> Facebook/EducationWales</p>
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the SDF pages of DEWi .
Related documents	All relevant documentation relating to the meeting and other development documents can be found on the SDF pages of DEWi .

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1. Attendees

Welsh Government		
Gareth Thomas (GT) (Chair)	Head of School Workforce Statistics	Workforce Data
Gav Elias (GE)	Senior IMS Programme Manager	School Information Branch
Carys Percy-Denning (CPD)	IMS Programme Manager	School Information Branch
Alastair Birch (AB)	Professional Advisor Home Education	Support for Leaners Branch
Carol Mooney (CM)	Head of Pupil Wellbeing Branch	Support for Learners Branch
Bethan Milton (BM)	Post 16 Quality and Effectiveness	Further Education and Apprenticeships
Melanie Brown (MB)	Principal Statistician- Head of Cross-cutting Education Stats	Knowledge and Analytical Services
Sarah Angel (SA)	Senior Pupil Information Policy Manager	School Information Branch
Steve Hughes (SH)	Head of School Statistics	Knowledge and Analytical Services
Karen Bathgate (KB)	EOTAS Senior Policy Manager	Support for Learners Branch
Bethan Cowan (BC)	ALN Senior Policy Manager	Support for Learners Division
Local authorities		
Mike Jones (MJ)	City and County of Swansea Council / Capita SIMS User Group	
John Tratnik (JT)	Rhondda Cynon Taff / Capita ONE User Group	
Luke Howells (LH)	Carmarthenshire County Council / RM User Group	
Mark Weaver (MW)	Cardiff Council / Capita SIMS User Group	
Rodel Currie (RC)	Cardiff Council	
Rhian Rickard-Frost (R-RF)	Cardiff Council	
Software suppliers		
Yvonne Killick (YK)	Capita	
Deborah Green (DG)	Capita ONE	
Tom Osbourne (TO)	Capita ONE	
Luke Pibworth (LP)	Capita ONE	
Jim Haywood (JH)	Capita SIMS	
Ruth Vincent (RV)	Capita SIMS	
Paul Walton (PW)	Capita SIMS	
Sarah Chandler (SC)	Go4Schools (Hyperspheric Solutions Ltd)	
James Hornby (JH)	Method4	
Justin Denney (JD)	Ceredigion County Council / Teacher Centre	
Adam Irvine (AI)	Ceredigion County Council / Teacher Centre	
Sarah Irvine (SI)	Ceredigion County Council / Teacher Centre	

2. Introductions and apologies

GT ran through introductions and housekeeping as well as apologies. The apologies were:

Apologies	
James Boyd	Cardiff Council / Capita SIMS User Group
Sue Roundtree	Sum Total Systems
Ceri Davies	Cardiff Council / Capita SIMS User Group
Ian Romeo-Smith	Capita
Graham Simpson	Frontier Software
Michael White	Zellis (NGA Human Resources (Northgate))
Nicola Giles	Welsh Government
Beth Phillips	Welsh Government
Jayne Thomas	Neath Port Talbot Council / Capita SIMS User Group

All attendees introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

GT made the group aware of the sad news relating to John Ashworth from Capita and put on record the Welsh Government and the Group's condolences to his family and colleagues and expressed the groups gratitude for all his significant efforts and contribution over a number of years.

3. Minutes and matters arising from the meeting on 4 July 2019

The recorded minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2019 were agreed by all as an accurate record.

4. Updates on outstanding actions

GT went through the open actions and provided the following additional information:

- **SDF-267:** Update on early years census. Action to be left open as this is ongoing;
- **SDF-358:** ULN issue still ongoing and the Welsh Government may be required to seek guidance and advice from Independent Commissioners Office.
- **SDF-371:** Bethan Milton to create a workshop for Post 16. This will be arranged for 2020, following the completion of 2019 Post 16.
- **SDF-387:** the Welsh Government to view pupils who come in from England census. There is no update since the last meeting and therefore this will be added to future agendas.
- **SDF-389:** PLASC/EOTAS – This will be completed in next round of Technical Completion Notes.
- **SDF-390:** ALN to consider code set option for pending and appeals relating to IDPs. This is still ongoing.

- [SDF-391](#): the Welsh Government to share SDF development cycle in MS project format – slight delay in this with IT rollout. This will be distributed before next SDF in November.
- [SDF-393](#): Welsh Government to consider whether it is feasible to move exclusions data from PLASC into attendance collection. This is an ongoing action.
- [SDF-394](#): The Welsh Government to consider whether schools can resolve queries rather than relying on local authorities. This is still ongoing.
- [SDF-396](#): Capita to explore and resolve issue of a bug in the summary reports for PLASC.
- [SDF-402](#): Capita to confirm when the delete teacher function will be available to local authorities. Request update for November meeting.
- [SDF-410](#): SA to confirm when the QiW website is complete. Changes which are awaiting testing which should be completed by end of next week
- [SDF-411](#): Welsh Government, suppliers and local authorities to agree dates to extract data from QiW to ensure harmonisation. Extract awaiting testing. See above. (SDF-410)
- [SDF-412](#): Welsh Government to pass feedback on workshops to QiW colleagues. See above. (SDF-410/ SDF-411)

5. Performance reporting

SA provided an updated stating that SH has released provisional stats and currently working on data packs with the team. School packs are first up and there have been a number of recent changes required to the local authority data packs to align with the evaluation and assessment changes in Wales and changes made to performance measures. SA/SH are still looking at the way the base data file works with school systems, working on the principle that the QiW system is to be imported in to systems. This is limited to qualifications that have been approved for delivery in schools in Wales.

SA confirmed that actions [PR-001](#), [PR-006](#), [PR-010](#), [PR-012](#), [PR-013](#), [PR-014](#) and [SDF-407](#) have been actioned and resolved so can be closed.

These actions are all related to discounting and qualifications information. Whilst the way base data is used in systems are still being looked at, it is expected that the information held in QiW is to be used in schools systems as this is the source of which we would have control. All discounting data and performance measure value information can be found on QiW, except where there are multiple syllabus variations within a single QN/QWAD code, in which case the discount codes for these variations can be found in a spreadsheet published on the Welsh Government web pages.

All information on the revised KS4 performance measures (interim measures) and how we are planning to provide this data to schools has been communicated and published in the guidance released on 30 June 2019.

SA confirmed that actions [SDF-410](#), [SDF-411](#) and [SDF-412](#) remain open.

The interface work for QiW has been updated. The extract has changes which are awaiting testing which should be completed by end of next week. Work with developers is ongoing to the search functionality, to bring up to date with interim measures.

PW queried how long would it take to get the development underway? This could take a few months for the developers to book it in their schedule of work. If it's just the qualification, some cases are automated and some cases are a tick box, but there are instances where bulk changes need to be applied and we will rely on QiW for this. PW uses QiW data in SIMS, but are not at the point where they take that extract and would like assurance that this will be up to date, a deadline date is being discussed.

The group discussed whether it would be good to meet to discuss further how this can be managed. April has been agreed to be a good time to update with the suggestion of SC requesting a quarterly update.

SDF-413: PW has raised that extracts are not reflecting accurate data in the current situation by being out of date. SA has requested examples of this.

Issues around changes/flags for science qualifications are also being raised which shows an issues in timings of releases. This doesn't always show which QiW flag is accurate and currently have to hard code around it. Audits will run around April/June and October with an update that qualifications have been agreed. This has been added to the action log.

RV raised Post 16 information to update QWADS are only able to update at certain points of the year and requested June would be a good date to implement this due to September being the date the return is required by.

SA agreed extracts for the June date scheduled and possibly September.

MJ discussed the issue with QiW is certain, qualification and BTECS and issues with grading structure has failed because the grade set do not match. The results on results day do not match the grade set.

PW suggested a resolution via an API but this only works if the data is accurate or if an interface is used. At the moment this is an issue which is long winded and could be resolved.

SH reassured that QiW is a young system and discussions on grading structures have taken place and the bulk of reviews have been completed.

SA confirmed the review for 14-19 on QiW website contains a clear timetable for further information. It has been agreed to keep everyone up to date and align evaluation and improvement arrangements with the reformed curriculum. New research in to how information is used and the use of information should support new arrangements throughout school system at pre-16. The review will take a couple of years before recommendations and reports are available.

Capped 9 measures will remain and the slots will not be changed this year. A national level of legacy measures information has been published in the last academic year.

SDF-414: MJ raised a query on the SSSP with issues in requests coming in that converted to Excel and sent back. SH has confirmed that there are changes to IT and would look into this.

6. School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

GT gave a brief overview of where the Welsh Government are with SWAC.

There are only two weeks until implementation date. Discussions with local authorities are still ongoing. The Welsh Government have received a significant number of queries, although a large number cover the same issues, e.g. roles, agency staff, mid-day supervisors, curriculum and individuals querying whether it is mandatory for them to provide their personal information. The queries have been fed in to an FAQ document which have been published online to accompany the Technical Completion Notes.

GT confirmed the timetable for SWAC with local authorities submitting their pay, HR and absence return from 5 November 2019 and then the schools window for submission of the school return will open on 28 November 2019 in order to minimise validation issues.

It was queried whether local authority HR contacts would need to validate queries and errors before school data was returned. Local authority HR contacts would need to correct any issues in their data and re-submit returns. It was agreed that cross-DEWi validations be reviewed as returns came in to review the number of validations across returns were triggered. The issues identified could be fed back to schools as a way of cleaning the data in school systems in time for the 2020 census.

LH agreed that referring validation issues back to schools would be a positive result. It was agreed that the schools should submit their data as well as review and correct any errors/missing data.

MJ provided a pilot update and stated that they had a number of questions that had been raised. Some of the questions had been addressed by the FAQs document but there were around 15 that were not included. The pilot proved to be a lot of work for them and data for only one school was able to be uploaded as so many queries and errors were being triggered.

JD/AI stated that Ceredigion tested Teacher Centre and it mirrored what was expected. Data matching was a concern as to who would fix any issues from HR data from the local authority but this did not match with various schools. Concerns were raised as to who's responsibility to fix these errors but confirmation was given that this is a pilot and cross DEWi validations could be analysed.

A concern was raised about exploring Post-16 validation issues overrunning into SWAC. LH provided an example of an error for Post-16 relating to Welsh Baccalaureate. Method4 had fixed the issue but when the file was re-submitted the previous errors were not removed.

SDF-415: JH agreed to look at this as this has not happened previously.

MJ queried if there is a date after the 18 December that errors need to be validated by. It was confirmed that the SWAC window is scheduled to close on 18 December but there will need to be some flexibility this year with the potential for another window in March to correct data. Although, this would risk SWAC overrunning into PLASC.

Discussions on the pilot continued. JT from RCT did not take part in the pilot, but liaised with Cardiff to train throughout the summer getting the systems ready.

Cardiff confirmed out of 130 schools, 20% were actively engaged raising queries with the local authority. However, the local authority has discussed with all schools and headteachers.

RC stated that there was a lack of communication between HR and schools.

SC explained schools are stretched and do not always have the capacity to train and input this information on to SIMS, especially if the school are spread across different sites. It was agreed that the intention is to hold workshops with local authorities and schools to review the implementation and process after SWAC window is closed.

Outstanding issues that have been raised included:

- QTS route triggering errors for all members of staff;
- teacher number missing error triggered for non-teachers; and
- missing curriculum errors triggered for all staff.

These were all known issues that should be addressed in the next xslt release which is due soon.

SDF-416: JH/RV to send Method4 a sample file.

SDF-417: MJ Swansea agreed to send a list of the 15 additional queries mentioned above. GT agreed we will share those wider.

7. Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

BC delivered an update on ALN.

The [ALN and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) ("the ALN Act") will replace the current special education needs (SEN) system with a unified system and legislative framework. All children and young people who have

ALN will have a statutory support plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP). As long as the learner continues to need it, the IDP will follow throughout their education. IDP's will be prepared and maintained by a school, college or local authority depending on their needs/requirements and where the learner is.

There will be a Statutory Code ("the Code") and Regulations to support this legislation, which also includes independent schools. The Code and ALN Regulations will be approved in 2020.

JH queried if this will be recorded on systems in parallel or in addition to current data? GE confirmed that instead of introducing a new data item, it is most likely that the code set for the current SEN data items will be expanded to account for IDPs.

The intention is to work with DfE to ensure IDPs can be included for CTF 2021.

The first collection to collect the new data would be PLASC 2022.

JH has queried how the validation will work in the system for mistakes that are input when the collection takes place. Concerns were raised as to whether the switch will cause issues when recording the information and collecting data.

JT raised a discussion on portal technology. It does work but not tailored to Wales at the moment. Attempts are being made to make this more efficient but other local authorities will possibly see issues with this. By 5 November 2019 the pilot portal will also be available where local authority and consortia will meet to discuss the scale of the issue and to tailor the technology for. There are also GDPR issues with colleagues and one of the consortias in Wales is looking in to this.

SDF-418: DG will liaise with the local authority on how to manage this.

8. Post-16

BM and MB delivered an update on Post-16.

Less returns have been submitted to date than expected, however queries have reduced this year. Some new validations were added and may be causing some problems, which is something we may need to explore further once the data collection is completed.

GE confirmed that an action already listed to set up a Post-16 workshop after the collection is recorded in our actions list and an update will be provided.

9. Welsh National Tests (WNT) and National Data Collection (NDC)

GE provided an update on WNT and NDC. The main update is that the second paper test is being replaced by an online assessment this year, and so the English and Welsh reading paper tests will be removed from the collection this year.

SDF-419: GE to confirm score range and update spec if necessary.

PW highlighted that this year's return is also including last year's data for some reason.

SDF-420: GE to check if there is a problem with the validation rules.

JH stated that action SDF-420 would not be necessary after checking his laptop. JS stated that it should flag up an error if last year's data is included. JH confirmed that all references to all papers were removed from the code, and therefore this would not be a problem on DEWi nor within the supplied XSLTs.

10. Elective home education (EHE)

CM and AB provided an update on ongoing work related to elective home education.

Using existing legislation, being [Section 29 of the Childrens Act 2004](#), the Welsh Government are scoping a possible proposal to establish local authority databases for all compulsory school aged children. CM stated that they are hoping to go out and consult on draft regulations soon, which will provide further details of considerations.

The hope is that the proposal would come in to force around May 2020.

CM also noted that revised guidance on home education is currently out for consultation and does include the issue of "off-rolling" and what the guidance is around this. CM also told the group that Estyn will be publishing a [report](#) on 25 October 2019 about this issue.

If a child is home educated we want to make sure it is for the right reason and they are not disadvantaged by the choice of the parents.

GE raised that this may impact S2S and this is how it is used may affect other work being looked at, such as the development of a Wales-only S2S equivalent.

SDF-421: CM to arrange a breakout group to discuss further outside SDF.

11. Attendance and pupil registration

KB provided an update on attendance.

A standard approach to registering pupils that is more comprehensive to provide more robust data is being considered. KB states that policy would like to have more accurate data that reflects where pupils are as quite often, pupils can be single registered at a school where in reality they may be being educated at another provision.

GE clarified that the enrolment status and the attendance code are different, so there needs to be clarity on which we are looking at amending.

RV stated that the DfE went down a similar route for England but she believes they then abandoned it due to it not providing what was hoped for.

SDF-422: RV volunteered to see why they abandoned collecting data on alternative provision in England to share with the group and KB.

12. Vulnerable learner groups

GE provided an update on this as policy colleagues were unavailable to attend. Arrangements will be made for them to attend the next SDF meeting.

There is some scoping work happening within the Welsh Government which is looking at how to improve data on vulnerable groups, such as young carers, service children and adopted children. It is being looked at how this data can be collected in the future and the mechanism for doing so, where PLASC is a part of considerations.

A comment was made that in England they do collect service children data but it has been known to be inaccurate despite have the pupil premium that follow service children, which obviously provides an incentive for schools to be proactive.

GT confirmed that the Welsh Government is in contact with Ministry of Defence and the Office for National Statistics to see what data may already be available. As we believe legislation would need to be amended to collect this data via PLASC, and with the Welsh Government pursuing legislative solutions as a last resort to resolve issues, there will be a full appraisal of all options and a consultation before any changes are formally progressed.

13. Any other business

The local authority members of the group noted that the lack of the M code for year groups in some areas is causing unnecessary extra workloads as without it each year groups needs to be recorded individually.

Details of the next SDF were confirmed as taking place on 14 November 2019.