



Software Development Forum (SDF): 7 February 2023

The recorded minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Meeting minutes

Date of issue: 27 March 2023

Version: 1.0

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.
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 is available on the SDF pages of DEWi .

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1. Attendees

Welsh Government		
Gareth Thomas (GT) (Chair)	Head of School Workforce Statistics	Workforce Statistics Branch
Gavin Elias (GE)	Senior IMS Programme Manager	Workforce Statistics Branch
Annie Rose Pickup	Higher Statistical Officer	Workforce Statistics Branch
Sam Fallick	Statistical Officer	Workforce Statistics Branch
Marcela Csikosova	Statistics Placement	Workforce Statistics Branch
James Gilbert (JG)	IMS Programme Manager	Workforce Statistics Branch
Mike Maher (MM)	School Data Officer	Workforce Statistics Branch
Andrea Melvin (AMe)	Head of School Information and Improvement Branch	School Information and Improvement Branch
Sarah Angel (SA)	Snr. Pupil Information Policy Manager	School Information & Improvement Branch
Catrin Morris (CMo)	Senior Welsh in Education planning Officer	Welsh in Education Planning Branch
Steve Hughes	Principal Statistician-Head of School Statistics	KAS
Geraint Turner	Senior Statistical Officer	KAS
Catherine Singleton	Statistical Officer	KAS
Louise Brown (LB)	Head of Additional Learning Needs Branch	ALN Transformation
Richard Chivers (RCh)	Senior ALN Policy and Evidence Manager	ALN Transformation
Rachel Thomas	ALN Policy Manager	ALN Transformation
Rebecca Sayce	ALN Policy Manager	ALN Transformation
HM Government		
Gerard Hassett (GH)	Department for Education	
Local authorities and other government departments		
Meiwah Farrow (MWF)	Cardiff Council	
Rodel Currie (RC)	Cardiff Council	
Rhian Rickard-Frost	Cardiff Council	
Justin Denney (JD)	Ceredigion Council	
Adam Hampson	Denbighshire	
Jayne Thomas (JT)	Neath Port Talbot	
Deniz Kilic	Powys	
Kevin Price (KP)	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
John Tratnik (JTr)	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
Aled Rees	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
Antonia Thomas	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
Mike Jones (MJ)	City and County of Swansea Council	

Sara Herbert	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Software suppliers	
Sam Chatburn-Jones	Access
Dan Searle	Arbor Education
Marcus Le Brocq (MLB)	Caci
Phil Jones (PJ)	Capita ONE
Pete Bradbury	Capita ONE
Victor Sanam	Capita ONE
Ian Ashcroft (IA)	Capita ONE
Niranjan Yedamakanti	Capita ONE
Sarah Chandler (SC)	Go4Schools
Bev Thompson	Iris
James Hornby (JHo)	Method4
Divya Padipura (DP)	Oracle
Jim Haywood (JH)	ParentPay
Paul Walton (PW)	ParentPay
Ruth Vincent (RV)	ParentPay
Yvonne Killick (YK)	ParentPay
Mark House	RM Compare
Chris Wilson	Wonde
Diana Nemethne Tolvaj	Zellis

2. Introductions and apologies

GT opened the meeting.

GT informed the forum attendees the meeting would be recorded.

GT informed the meeting that Curriculum for Wales (CfW) colleagues were unable to attend and therefore the agenda item would be added to the Performance Reporting update for other colleagues to provide an update and field questions on CfW.

AOB will contain discussion on Transitional Protection.

3. Minutes of 11 October 2022 meeting and actions

The minutes of the previous meeting from 11 October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record by the forum.

GT gave updates on the open actions from previous meeting:

Actions **SDF- 441, 444, 445, 448, 454, 456, 457, 458, 459, 462.**
– are open

JH raised a query on the requirement for a timeline document – GH confirmed JH was to provide the document, DfE have since provided a copy of their timeline document for reference.

GE asked MJ for more details/examples to assist with SDF-444.

SDF-445 – GT confirmed not implemented yet. Provide update on development in the coming months.

SDF-448 – CfW currently in implementation phase, not due to publish any additional guidance in the near future.

SDF-454 – GE has been in discussion with ALN colleagues. Ongoing work within the new ALN system and a resolution should be proposed within the new system.

Group confirmed no missing actions from the list displayed and discussed by GT.

New Action – SDF-463: GE to create timeline document.

4. 2223.2.n development update

GE PLASC and EOTAS started January 17 – there have been no significant queries or issues.

4.1 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)

No general or fundamental issues raised. Group happy to move onto next item.

4.2 Educated Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS)

PJ an issue had been identified affecting students at PRUs and some students with an exclusion – a hot fix had been released.

GE asked to be informed early if it appeared that LAs might miss the deadline.

5. 2223.3.n development update

GE XSLT files had previously been released, an updated spec for attendance due to be released by end of week. XSLT files and specs for both collections should be available by end of the week.

5.1 Attendance data collections

Testing complete and released the XSLT files to suppliers. Specs and XSLT files available.

GE attendance collection going ahead for both secondary and primary in the same way that it would have done pre-pandemic - the collection window for secondaries will be end of May to end of July and for primaries will be end of July to mid-September.

5.2 National data collection (NDC)

GE - Testing complete and released the XSLT files to suppliers. Specs and XSLT files available.

GE NDC will be going ahead but with no baseline data collection - only Key Stage 3 data (except special schools).

No NDC return at all for special schools.

6. 2324.1.n development update

GE currently working on the dev request. The software spec for post 16 was released this morning and the SWAC is about to be released if it hasn't been already - this week at the latest.

WG are hoping to release XSLTs to suppliers within the next month or so.

6.1 Post-16

GE a standard rolling forward, though some corrections have been made to the specs. WG have corrected some of the issues such as, the expected end dates, we inadvertently left it to be defaulted to the end of July. Now corrected that initial spec to be the end of August as the validation rule states.

A modular CBDS will be released within the next month for the next academic year, which will have the updated QWAD list from Q etc. The QWAD list will continue to be updated probably all the way up until September. So may be updated once every 6 to 8 weeks between now and September - to ensure there are no missing QWAD numbers or courses on there for suppliers.

JH in future will you be always releasing it as part of modular CBDS? GE yes as is within modular CBDS on the P16 tab.

6.2 School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

GT SWAC school completed - much earlier than in the previous years.

Still working with a couple of LAs to finalise their upload of their SWAC HR files, and part of those issues came up because of the delays to the teachers pay award and changes needed to the system to account for teacher pay.

Going forward Welsh Government not intending to introduce any new data, but there are a couple of potential adjustments to make on the SWAC school side, there was feedback from local authorities regarding the supply module of that data and schools were struggling to complete that in terms of accuracy and definition of the information required. Welsh Government is reviewing how the supply data is collected in SWAC. WG will confirm ahead of Easter break.

Any decision should not impact on the XSLT significantly. Some validations to do with this module may be turned off - rather than deleting them completely.

On the SWAC HR side, no intention to add any new fields, the only adjustments again would be reviewing the validation rules that are triggered in DEWi – Welsh Government will engage with local authorities.

JH Is it your intention to take out the part of PLASC that overlaps with with SWAC?

GT we are hoping to do so and will provide an update as soon as possible.

GT the Office of Statistical Regulation were asked to do a review and compliance check on the SWAC collection to look at the value of it and how it may be improved.

This has been completed and the findings published in a letter on their website:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/mark-pont-to-stephanie-howarth-school-workforce-annual-census-statistics/>

Welsh Government are also conducting an internal review looking at the data being collected and whether there any improvements that can be made to SWAC.

ACTION SDF-464: WG to circulate OSR findings letter and engage with LAs on findings of both reviews.

7. Performance Reporting Update

AMe Key Stage 4 measures that were paused as a consequence of Covid in 2019/20 will now resume with no changes on a temporary basis.

All-Wales Core Data Sets will be produced for schools – how they will be presented is currently being reviewed.

Welsh Government will be dropping all the legacy measures that appeared previously in 2019 and the All-Wales Core Data set and will remove any performance data that related to 2019 or earlier. The information will be published on My Local School.

For further information see:

[Written Statement: School improvement and the information landscape \(19 January 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)

MJ queried if there would be any changes in terms of discounting rules etc?

SA confirmed all arrangements would be, as was in place in 2019 and would update the group with all the points information and any discount codes that are needed.

PW queried if there would be fixed points in the year when QiW data would be as up to date as possible and if so, would there be a date list for the coming year?

SA confirmed it was intended to take the same approach, but the dates had not been fixed yet.

ACTION SDF-465: Andrea/Sarah/Paul QiW update schedule to be confirmed and circulated.

SA gave an update on the information needs for stakeholders within the school system in Wales and the information ecosystem.

For further information see:

[Research exploring a new information system for schools | GOV.WALES](#)

SA the report identified specific gaps in available data and a need for improvements within particular areas of data such as Key Stage 4, a working group including practitioners and delivery partners is being established to address this and other issues in the short term prior to the establishment of the new information ecosystem.

PW for key stage 4 will there be significant changes from current arrangement and when will they be introduced?

SA, we want the new short term arrangements to be in place for the new exams for reporting in 2027 - what they will be is currently under discussion.

ACTION SDF-466 SA to circulate details of working group on short term issues.

8. Welsh language categorisation

SA gave an update. The categories will be changing for the language medium of schools and there'll be a new code set for the Welsh medium school item. This we need this to be a repeatable within the collection because schools can identify as more than one category - first one being mandatory, any subsequent ones being optional and reporting one or more of the new code sets.

If a school has more than one category there is no need to identify which phase of school sits in which category.

Pupils would not sit in more than one category.

Welsh government would like schools to be able to record the new category from September 23 and collect via PLASC in January 2024.

There are no current plans to change any pupil level data on Welsh language, but it's likely there will be a review of the Welsh language data for pupils in the medium term – the school medium categories should not change again but Welsh language data at the pupil level may be linked in some way to the school medium, the school level item at that time.

Schools may want to be able to identify which of their pupils are in which stream - but Welsh Government is not looking to collect that information currently, though it may be considered as part of a review of pupil level data.

JH requested that if the schools will need to identify the individual pupils at these levels, then that forms part of CBDS.

RV asked when do you think the requirement will be finalised and how will you communicate it to us?

GE we are intending to issue a modular CBDS for the next academic year within the next month and will be working to incorporate into that modular CBDS - the specs will be updated for any post September collection affected by the changes.

This will then be confirmed in the documentation.

SA added that further consideration will be given to how the SWAC, and Post 16 collection may be affected, and an update will be provided.

9. Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (“the ALN Act”) implementation update and the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021

GE informed the meeting that ALN colleagues were new or relatively new in post and may be unable to give immediate answers to detailed questions.

JH requested that it's made clear whether what's being talked about is for LAs or for schools or for both.

R Ch gave an overview of what's happening at the moment. Research has been commissioned to give an evaluation over a four year period of ALN implementation and whether or not policy objectives are being realised. Including a review of the data landscape, what the objectives are and how they're going to be measured, what data is out there and also what data is not being collected but will need to be collected – which has a potential impact on data requirements.

The future data requirements of PLASC and ALN are uncertain - by January 2025 SEN related fields will disappear from the PLASC forms. ALN and whether an IDP will be fields on the form, but not much more is known at the moment.

A working group is being put together to look at data issues and consider what impact removing the fields potentially has and the time constraints involved in building any changes into the PLASC system. Also, what other information at a minimum should be captured - not just from a Welsh Government perspective, but also from the needs of local authorities and from schools.

MJ queried what fields might be removed?

GE there are four options being considered by ALN colleagues all the way from removing them entirely to keeping them as they are for now while working out what we want to change them to – this is something that would be considered by the working group.

Nominations to join the working group were invited by emailing: Gavin.Elias2@gov.wales or IMS@gov.wales.

ACTION SDF-467: GE to email SDF outlining scope of working group and inviting participation.

LB gave an update from a meeting with stakeholders regarding the online IDP system - future changes to the IDP specification would be managed via this SDF group.

GE it may be useful to have a subgroup of SDF including suppliers and LAs with a direct involvement in the IDP.

JT there is a need for school involvement in the subgroup, direct this communication to Directors of Education and Directors of Social Services regarding IDPs and further guidance from Welsh Government.

10. Curriculum for Wales

See performance reporting.

11. Sex and gender identity related data

GE Welsh Government has been discussing sex and gender identity data elements with DfE, ONS, GEO and others as part of the work as well as with various internal stakeholders within the Welsh Government.

Welsh Government is in the process of drafting advice for the Minister which will go to the Minister shortly, because of legal implications and the sensitivities around the data this requires a ministerial decision on the approach to be taken - though what is being considered is changing the data elements from gender to sex and collecting male and female values (Welsh Government is clarifying if that would be birth certificate sex).

As soon as the advice is submitted, and a decision is made further information will be circulated.

GE asked if defining a secondary data element for gender identity to be used in a standardized format. If suppliers and schools wish to use it would be useful - though it was not intended for Welsh Government to collect the data.

JD there is a need on a MIS level to record it.

GH there may be a legal requirement to be able to record both sex and gender identity.

12. Any other business

JH queried whether the end date for transitional protection for FSM would be moved to further into the future as has happened in England.

Gav Elias, we have been discussing this with colleagues – no decision has been made though we expect to move the date forward but are unsure of the new end date.

12.1 DEWi update

GE, we have recently begun to look at the future options for DEWi.

Currently we define specifications, we provide XSLTs and then suppliers use them within their systems and XML gets extracted, uploaded into DEWi – we are reviewing the entire process in light of more modern technologies.

We are reviewing whether that is still fit for purpose and scoping options such as web services, APIs etc.

This is still an internal discussion at the moment but expect to reach out to suppliers and other stakeholders in due course.

We are not considering removing DEWi but looking at the newer technologies available and how they can improve and simplify the data exchange process within DEWi.

12.2 Next meeting

The next meeting is currently scheduled for 08 June 2023 and will take place between 13:30 and 15:00.

We are currently exploring the feasibility for the next SDF to be a hybrid forum, with both physical and virtual attendees. To be held at the Welsh Government buildings, Cathays Park. This is subject to change and a meeting invite will be sent when the date and time is finalised.