**School Workforce data collection – SDF (1st June 2016)**

1. Background- Why do we need a School Workforce Census for Wales?

At present, the Welsh Government (WG) does not collect or hold any individual level information on the school workforce or any data on teachers’ pay and conditions in Wales. It is widely acknowledged that a greater level of detailed information on the school workforce is required on annual basis to provide better and more efficient analysis of the workforce landscape and to support the development of a pay and conditions forecasting model for Wales.

An annual workforce collection in Wales is required as;

* The data from a school workforce collection will allow better financial modelling and aid the development of a school teachers’ pay forecasting model for Wales.
* More detailed demographic data on the school workforce is required to help inform the development of new polices and to allow for effective workforce and succession planning.
* Evidence provided to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) is based mainly on information regarding the workforce in England, with supporting evidence based on aggregated data derived from PLASC for Wales. An annual workforce collection will improve the quality and diversity of the evidence provided, ensuring that the Welsh perspective is accurately reflected during the STRB’s deliberations.
* Currently, a variety of data and information requests are aimed at schools and Local Authorities (LAs) by a range of bodies. These tend to ask for data at different times of the year and use a variety of definitions and formats. Rationalising these collections (collecting standard items once and sharing appropriately) would reduce the impact of data collection on schools and LAs and improve the quality and timeliness of available data.
* This type of collection would improve the quality and efficacy of workforce information held in school systems allowing for better workforce management at both a local and national level.
* In some circumstances, data transfer from schools to LA’s is still a predominantly paper based exercise (for example with teacher sickness absence returns) which is extremely resource intensive and has associated data accessibility and quality issues. For this collection, adopting a secure web-based collection tool (similar to the one used by DfE) that is electronic and automated, would help to reduce burden placed on the data providers in the longer term.

A similar model to the SWC is being proposed for Wales, whilst alternative options to a full census have been considered including an individual survey to a sample of schools and local authorities or the collection of aggregated level data. Whilst these may present less burden to respondents in the short term, an individual level census of the teaching population is considered as the optimum form of data collection in terms of the quality of information it provides to enable the accurate modelling of the pay bill and to enable improved management of the school workforce in the longer term.

Work is currently ongoing to estimate the associated costs of establishing system/s capable of facilitating this level of collection. These associated costs will be further explored in the regulatory impact assessment document briefly mentioned below.

1. **Plans for statutory regulations.**

The submission of school workforce returns for England, including a set of individual staff records, is a statutory requirement on schools and LA’s by virtue of regulations made under section 114 of the Education Act 2005. The sections have been commenced but not yet acted upon for Wales. In February 2016, Ministerial approval was given for the commencement of drafting regulations on the ‘Supply of information on the school workforce in Wales’, in conjunction with a full privacy impact assessment.

The current proposal is to run a public consultation on the draft regulations from September 2016 for 6 weeks. Responses from this consultation will be analysed alongside information gained from ongoing wider stakeholder engagement and further scoping with interested parties and data providers.

Alongside the consultation, a regulatory impact assessment is being prepared as to the likely costs and benefits of complying with the regulations. Depending on the timing of the consultation, the current intention is that the regulations making this a statutory collection for Wales will come into force from January 2017.

1. **Understanding the current landscape**

The School Workforce Data branch have met with several LA’s to further our understanding of the current landscape including; data item availability, the capabilities of current IT systems and the associated processes for handling school HR and pay data. Additionally, a questionnaire was issued to LA’s via the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). For information on systems by LA, please see ‘*Annex A – System Matrix’.*

**3.1. IT systems**

From questionnaire responses, it’s clear that there is significant variation in the HR systems adopted across Wales, with several LA’s using their own unique systems. Some observations are as follows:

* There is a diverse range of HR systems currently in use across Wales, with some adopting integrated HR/payroll systems and others using a multiple system approach. Of those using multiple systems, some authorities have future plans to move to one integrated system (a .net self service) in the near future.
* Itrent is used in several LAs, other HR systems employed include; Capita 1, Northgate, Oracle, SAP, Vision, Digi Gov, CHRIS21 and Resource Link. Some HR systems already have education workforce modules capable of holding the required fields, however these are currently un-populated.
* In most cases where the HR and payroll systems are independent, data can be linked together to provide overall employee and employment information. The EWC teacher number (DfEs number) is commonly used as the unique identifier for record matching purposes.

As would be expected, different systems have varying capabilities of extracting workforce information. In some cases data can be extracted from the system relatively easily; however report generation can be complex, difficult and resource intensive. In most cases responding LA’s reported no significant issue with extracting the workforce data currently held, and in many cases established reporting process are already in place. Nonetheless, significant work would be required to standardise data items, categories and recording practices across the board.

One significant issue identified is that some systems have no capacity to store additional information not currently held/collected (for example qualifications data that is predominantly held by schools only). These systems will need significant development to accommodate the requirements of an individual level workforce census.

* 1. **Planned development of LA HR systems**

There are varying plans to develop HR systems across regions. The predicted timing of developments also vary considerably with some LAs currently running HR self-service pilots with selected schools and others considering longer term system developments. As previously mentioned, there are several LAs with plans to move away from separate HR and payroll tools to fully integrated systems. Others may have recently have done so and are therefore yet to fully explore the newly available system functionality.

Developments across regions include;

* *“Utilising the latest system enhancements and developments based on the software’s development roadmap.”*
* Various pilots are running with selected schools trailing self service system to record teacher sickness absence.
* Ongoing work to update school systems- including looking at the ways data can be exported from sims- (one LA is looking at this in the context of exam entries).
* Local government reform- ongoing talks regarding system merging.

1. **Data items**

**4.1 Data requirements**

Ongoing stakeholder engagement with data suppliers (LAs and schools), policy teams within WG and other interested parties are aiding to refine the list of potential data items. Items availability and necessity is being fully explored alongside the policy justification for each item.

The data collection cover both teachers and (some level of) support staff. For a more detailed description of the staff categories please see *Annex B- ‘Potential staff categories’.*

For a full list of data items please see ‘*Data Requirements workbook’*.

However, the data collection is likely to include:

* Standard school identifiers;
* Unique teacher identifier (EWC number for teachers, NI for support staff);
* Teacher contract and service details (\*including salary and allowances);
* Curriculum information;
* Qualifications;
* Staff personal details (demographic information, name, age, gender etc.);
* Sickness absence
* Welsh language proficiency
* Vacancy/Recruitment information

The data collection will need to cover all local authority maintained schools, including:

* Nursery Schools
* Primary schools;
* Middle schools;
* ‘Through schools’
* Secondary schools;
* Special schools; and
* Pupil Referral units (PRU)

As previously mentioned, evidence indicates that the procedures and processes utilised in maintaining education workforce data varies considerably across LAs and furthermore are also likely to vary considerably between schools.

**4.2 Where are data items currently held?**

In England, DFE recognise that not all the data is available from one source. LAs often hold data on behalf of the schools and some data items, (for example detailed information on recruitment and retention) is maintained primarily by schools and would need to be collected directly.

It has not yet been fully established whether the data would be supplied primarily by LAs or schools. This will depend on the relative ability and burden for LAs and schools to provide the data. It is currently proposed that this data collection will be a combination of LA HR systems and school MIS systems (similar to the SWC in England). However, talks with LAs have suggested that in the circumstance where data is available from both sources, LA’s will provide the data in the first instance, to decrease the burden on schools where possible.

For each broad data category, whether the data items currently are available at a LA or school level is identified in the following table.

**4.3 School ‘opting out’ of LA HR services.**

In general, payroll is managed by the local authority. However, there are a few instances identified of schools are opting out of LA managed HR and payroll services. In the teacher sickness absence collection conducted by WG, this has lead to increased difficulty in LAs to provide this information within the prescribed timescales. Therefore, it seems likely that any data collection system developed will require the flexibility to allow LAs or, where appropriate, schools to submit the required information.

1. **Other sources**

**5.1 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)**

Some aggregated data on the education workforce is collected as part of PLASC. It is likely that a school workforce collection will replace the collection of this information for data items such as headcount, FTE, welsh language, and recruitment and retention. Due consideration will be given to any dependencies on PLASC including the calculation of pupil teacher ratios and class size estimates.

In England, the pupil numbers used to calculate the pupil teacher ratios are taken from the January Pupil Census (Similar timing to PLASC in Wales). It is not thought that the difference in the timing of the two censuses affects the accuracy of ratios produced.

**5.2 The Education Workforce Council (EWC)**

School and LA’s receive a significant number of requests for workforce information from a range of organisations. It is important that any data collection does not needlessly duplicate work, and does not unnecessarily increase the burden placed on providers.

For example, where information is already collected by the EWC, and is of sufficient coverage and quality to meet the required purpose. Data items collected by the EWC register include; demographic information (ethnicity, disability, national identity), qualifications, and welsh language ability.

Work is ongoing to examine the suitability of these data items as making use of existing administrative data sources is a key data collection principle. Careful consideration must be taken over the most appropriate source with due regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

1. **Timing of a workforce data collection**

The census day for DfE SWC is in November each year. The WLGA questionnaire asked for preferences regarding the potential timing of a Welsh workforce collection. The majority of responses received suggested that considering the timing of other education collections (PLASC, National Tests, TA’s etc.) autumn would be the most appropriate time of year for this collection.

Reasons included the following:

* *“Traditionally the end of the autumn term is less demanding on the HR and Payroll sections. In addition to year end requirements during the spring term, there is also generally an increase in recruitment processes. During this time most consultations on possible redundancies occur, as does completion of the annual service return and other pension related forms. By the end of the autumn term the staffing structure situation in schools stabilises placing less demands on the HR Service.”*
* *“November- although need to consider if this would create any anomalies when comparing with PLASC pupil numbers (i.e. for pupil teacher ratios etc.)”*
* *“August/September/October –This would also coincide with the end of the academic year”.*

Alternatively, April/May was suggested as a potential census date. This would coincide with the timing of some existing workforce information requests, therefore ensuring data consistency and avoiding unnecessarily duplication of effort. However, if a system of automatic extraction directly from LA and HR systems was developed this would then be less likely to be an issue, although ample time does need to considered for data querying and cleansing prior and immediately following any census period.

* *“Run the report as of 31st March as this would be the same for things like the data unit and other end of year reports so figures and data would be consistent.”*
* *“Data recorded as at 1st March seems sensible. This is half way through the school academic year; therefore staff changes should be fairly stable.”*
* *“May would potentially be a good time from a local authority perspective, as it’s when a lot of data is already collated and reported on (depending on the similarity of the data currently collected and what we are requesting )- to avoid duplication of effort, save time and resource.”*

Although general consensus from an LA perspective seems to be an autumn census day, this is likely to be a question posed as part of the official consultation on the draft regulations, so that the opinions of schools and other key stakeholders can be considered. The best time of year to collect the information needs to be carefully considered alongside the schedule of other large collections including ‘December to February’ for PLASC and ‘April to June’ for NDC and National Tests.

1. **Next Steps**

* Continued stakeholder engagement to refine data requirements and further understanding of current IT systems and the procedures and processes used to collate and maintain workforce data.
* Public consultation on draft regulations– September 2016.
* Go into schools to understand workforce data management process, further understanding of MIS systems, resource constraints and any other issues likely to impact the feasibility of this collection.
* Ongoing work to estimate the associated costs of establishing system/s capable of facilitating this level of collection.