**Minutes of the Software Development Forum**

**2 February 2017**

**Cathays Park, Cardiff**

**Present:**

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| Niranjan Yedamakanti (NY) | Capita One | James Boyd (JB) | Cardiff LA/ SIMS user group |
| Jim Haywood (JH) | Capita SIMS | Lindsay Lewis (LL) | Welsh Government (WG) – Chair |
| Caryl Harding (CH) | Capita SIMS | Janine Yearsley (JY) | WG |
| Luke Howells (LH) | Carmarthenshire LA/ Teacher Centre User Group | Aly Jamal (AJ) | WG |
| Cara Jones (CJ) | Carmarthenshire LA/ SIMS User Group / Teacher Centre User Group | Sarah Angel (SA) | WG |
| Alan Morris (AMo) | Ceredigion LA / Teacher Centre | Cath Mitchem (CM) | WG |
| Mike Jones (MJ) | Swansea LA/One User Group | Gareth Thomas (GT) | WG |
| Fiona Tang (FT) | RM | Ian Davies (ID) | WG |
| Simon Chilvers (SC) | RM | Steve Hughes (SH) | WG |
| Jayne Thomas (JT) | Neath Port Talbot LA/SIMS user group | Andy Milne (AM) | WG |
| Justin Denney (JD) | Ceredigion LA / Teacher Centre |  |  |

1. **Introductions and apologies**

Apologies were received from Glyn Thomas (Cardiff LA/One User Group), Paul Walton (Capita SIMS), John Ashworth (Capita SIMS) and Deborah Green (Capita One).

1. **Minutes, actions and matters arising from the meeting on   
   15 November 2017**
   1. The minutes from the meeting held on 15 November 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.
   2. LL went through the open actions and provided the following additional information:

**Action 238** - WG to provide QAN list for specific qualifications that satisfy the literacy, numeracy and science requirements of measures. CH queried if WG will continue to report the CSI measure and how then to identify qualifications that will count towards the CSI as the updated QiW system no longer flags this. SA confirmed that CSI will no longer be reported as one of the suite of headline measures but it will still be calculated and provided to schools and LAs for the purpose of self-evaluation, until new measures have bedded in. This was welcomed by MJ and JT who find it a useful measure, particularly for pupil tracking. There will be no change to the basis on which the CSI will be calculated.

It was confirmed that WG had provided a list of those science subjects that will count towards science components of measures in 2017 on 01/02/2017.

**Action 241** - WG to provide confirmation of points allocation to DfE grades 1-9 GCSEs for inclusion in Wales’s performance measures where these qualifications are approved/ designated for delivery to learners in Wales. CH asked if this is referring to future years (2017 onwards) and SA confirmed that no instances of these awards will occur for inclusion in Wales figures until 2018 at the earliest.

**Action 265** - Suppliers to report any issues with file sets immediately so that they can be corrected at the time. It was proposed that this action is closedas it is an ongoing reminder rather than a specific action. This was agreed.

**Action 266** - WG to clarify process for getting a URN and ensure this is as efficient as possible. JH raised concerns that the URN may have implications for the School Workforce Collection as it is the only reliable way to track legal identity. This concern was noted and will be taken account of when reviewing the process.

* 1. LH raised an issue regarding errors and queries following the 2016 Post-16 collection. LL stated that WG are looking to build the rules that were used to provide the reports that followed the 2016 collection into xslt and to release that in time for the 2017 collection. A validation report is likely to also be provided – this may be a DEWi report rather than xslt. Capita have previously confirmed that the rules could be incorporated in their software and released to schools in time for the collection.
  2. LH also enquired about an error in reporting, which JH stated was caused by a mistake in the code which has now been resolved.
  3. SA informed the group that to avoid confusion with the existing unique identifier of qualifications, the QAN (or QN) code, we will adopt the abbreviation of QWAD number for the new Qualifications Wales allocated unique reference for qualifications approved/ designated for delivery in Wales.

1. **School performance reporting update – Sarah Angel**
   1. Discussion on length and format of discount codes (relates to Action 270). SA/ SH confirmed that in Wales we will need to adopt a new format for new discount codes as we cannot risk the potential duplication if trying to use a subset of the four digit codes still in use in both England and Wales.
   2. Concerns had been raised around the new code format that WG has introduced and suppliers had indicated that this does not align with the JCQ file format definitions used for base data files, which are in turn used by awarding organisations and feed into school systems. This is resulting in discount codes not being imported into school software, which then excludes those qualifications with new codes allocated from being included in performance measure calculations.
   3. Suppliers and LA representatives confirmed that codes can be overwritten in school systems so WG could identify replacement four digit codes to use in the immediate future whilst the new format issue is resolved. WG will confirm four digit codes to use with the new mathematics GCSEs for 2017 but will deal with any other instances on an ad hoc basis. These will need to be agreed with DfE before confirming to ensure there is no duplication. CH stated that Capita will be able to provide guidance to schools for adding new discount codes into the ‘base data’. SA informed JT that once the codes are confirmed they will communicate this to schools.

**Action 284**: SH to confirm four digit codes for the new mathematics GCSEs and feedback to the group.

**Action 285:** Capita to produce guidance for schools for adding new discount codes into the ‘base data’.

* 1. CH requested removal of the discount code spreadsheet published on WG web pages as this is now out of date and could be misleading.   
     SA confirmed that discount codes are now published on QiW but that functionality does not yet exist in that system to allow publication of multiple syllabus codes for a single qualification and where different discount codes are allocated to different syllabus codes. Until this is updated in QiW a spreadsheet will need to continue to provide this information.
  2. Capita colleagues asked about timescales for confirming the introduction of the new discount codes format into systems for 2018. Suppliers advised WG that they would need confirmation by November in order to incorporate into systems in time. Capita suggested contacting Tim Wakefield from Pearson when making contact with JCQ on the matter.

**Action 286**: WG to contact JCQ and contacts at the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

* 1. Action 270: SA confirmed that the new discount code format being proposed was up to 9 characters, and where any leading zeros/ pad zeros exist, these will be included in the exported data from QiW.
  2. Action 271: WG still to confirmthe length of time that the QiW system will retain qualification records for.
  3. Action 272 **-** WG still to provide data definition document for QiW for performance information attached to qualifications. WG will raise with Qualifications Wales the request from suppliers for definitions for other data fields that exist in QiW.
  4. MJ informed the group that some qualifications on the QiW database were missing points data.

**Action 287:** MJ to send details of specific examples to the group.

* 1. CH informed the group that invalid grade sets were reported on QiW for some qualifications, which do not match to the ones defined by JCQ. SH informed the group that Qualifications Wales will be performing a data cleansing exercise and would be grateful if any invalid grade sets could be flagged to WG to raise with QW.

**Action 288:** CH/ MJ or others to advise WG of any invalid grade sets identified in QiW.

* 1. **Capped Points Score Reporting** - WG is not yet able to provide a specification for calculation of the revised capped point score (‘Capped 9’) so there is no expectation for suppliers to build this functionality at the current time. SA informed the group that WG will develop and provide to schools a tool to assist with this and will make clear to the sector that it is not a shortcoming of school systems.
  2. SH advised the group that Gwion Dafydd from Ceredigion LA has a spreadsheet which may help greatly with this exercise. MJ also advised that Pembrokeshire had a spreadsheet, possibly the same one.

**Action 289:** WG to speak to Gwion Dafydd about possible use of a Capped Points Score spreadsheet.

* 1. MJ asked how much emphasis there will be on Capped 9. AM and SA advised that the Capped 9 is one of a suite of measures provided for the purpose of self-evaluation and there is no single measure being reported as a headline measure.
  2. **Post-16 Consistent Performance Measures** – a reminder of the current consultation was given and members were encouraged to respond.

1. **School Workforce update – Gareth Thomas** 
   1. A detailed update paper had been provided prior to the meeting and GT talked through the key points at the meeting. He noted that proposed legislative changes were currently out for consultation, with a planned implementation date for the changes in July 2017. Data collection is still planned for November 2019.
   2. JH asked about the scope of the proposed collection with regard to staff who may be centrally employed by the LA and working across schools. GT confirmed that data for all staff would be collected whether centrally employed or not.
   3. GT stated that from his investigations, data may come from multiple sources and that these may be different in different LAs, e.g. school, LA, contracted out HR. Since we may not know who is sending what data from what source, the validation may be limited. There also may be some difficulties with 3rd parties such as HR system suppliers being able to provide data in specific formats e.g. may only want to provide CSV and not XML files. JH suggested the use of an XML convertor to help with this.
   4. LH observed that some schools would like more staff information than they currently have. GT advised that part of the work would be to look at what reports and information could be provided back to schools, although LH thought that this may be limited as if the majority of the data will not come from the schools themselves.

* 1. MJ asked if staff information would be removed from the PLASC collection to avoid duplication. GT responded that there may need to be an overlap for the first two years until we are confident in the accuracy of the data that is being collected. MJ also observed that this could impact on the current cross validation of staff data with classes data.
  2. LH queried the proposed November timing for the collection and GT advised that there is no real consensus from LAs. LL informed the group that detailed consideration needs to be given to this in due course to ensure a workable fit in the collection cycle.
  3. AMo raised a concern that where there is a lot of movement of teachers between schools, and cross overs with PRUs, that information gathered in this collection could be misleading. He agreed to feed these concerns into the consultation.
  4. MJ asked about the role that PRUs will play in this collection, and GT advised that while they will have to collect data they will have to do so in less detail.
  5. AMo was of the view that 2019 was unrealistic for data from HR suppliers. However, this may depend on the proposed process, and whether files would be sent from school to LA to WG as with all other collections, from LA to school to WG, separately by school and by LA to WG, or some other combination.
  6. AMo thought that there were a number of challenges to achieving accurate data, including whether data will be required or available for agency staff, potential difficulty with getting HR to take a lead, and partnership working across schools which makes it very difficult to match back sickness records.

* 1. The SDF group has a remit to discuss the operational impact of proposed future changes to data collections and a number of attendees drew attention to the likely load that this collection will place on LA staff, both in the implementation stage and on an ongoing basis.
  2. JH observed from experience with DfE that many staff were reluctant to provide some data, especially date of birth, and that some data was hard to get particularly for supply teachers. They also had to implement a number of specialist data items in their systems to support the collection.
  3. As the consultation for the new legislation will be closing in March 2017, it was agreed by the group that it would be an appropriate time once the responses have been analysed to hold an SDF workshop, as recorded in a previous meeting as Action 245, to explore the proposed collection in more detail. It may be helpful for SDF members to attend with their HR/ payroll colleagues if appropriate.

1. **PLASC and EOTAS 2018 Draft Specifications – Lindsay Lewis**
   1. A paper on the ‘Potential Changes for PLASC 2018’ had been circulated prior to the meeting. The following information was provided in addition:
   2. Data for breakfast club leaders would not be required.
   3. In some schools, the number of pupils taking at least one free breakfast submitted in PLASC is greater than the number of pupils on the register. JH suggested that a reminder prompt could be added into the code to ask the user if they are sure about the entry. It was agreed to add this as a suggestion to the specification, and also to consider adding a check against numbers on roll.

**Action 290**: Consider adding a suggestion for a prompt message in the specification and in systems (WG & Suppliers)

**Action 291**: Consider adding a validation rule to try and alert schools to invalid free school breakfast data if 2017 PLASC data still shows some issues.

* 1. JT raised a query about being able to add more detail into the SEN field as the ‘N’ code is currently following students even when they no longer fall under the ALN category. It was agreed that this was more appropriate for the user group.

**Action 292**: WG to consider adding validation to stop invalid combinations of SEN needs. e.g. ALD and SLD.

* 1. MJ asked why Catholic schools need to undertake the PLASC collection and the separate Catholic School census. Capita agree to provide MJ with a list of all common questions.

**Action 293**: Provide common PLASC/ Catholic School census questions (Capita)

**Action** **294:** Investigate if PLASC/Catholic School census data can be combined or shared (WG)

* 1. Pupil gender – JH advised that DfE were revising their codes, but are now referring back to the Information Standards Board (ISB) as they do not believe the ISB definitions are workable. The new codes that DfE proposed were not in line with ISB standards.
  2. LH asked if there was a response to the query about validation rule ‘750Q’ and provided example school numbers for this to be investigated.

**Action 295:** Respond to query about the application of this rule in two schools.

* 1. The EOTAS specification has no significant changes. JH noted an error in the specification at point ‘2’ as Free Breakfast is ‘prior’ to census week and then it is subsequently referred to as ‘during’ census week.

**Action 296**: Amend specification to clarify if free breakfast data is ‘prior’ or ‘during’ census week.

* 1. Class size exception status – The proposed change to record the number of new exceptions each year was discussed in detail with the conclusion that this would place a considerable burden on schools. It was suggested that if this data was needed perhaps LAs could more readily provide it as they will have had to authorise the exceptions.

**Action 297**: Consider further with the policy lead (WG).

1. **Attendance 2018 Draft Specification – Lindsay Lewis** 
   1. LL asked if suppliers use the Summary XSLT provided by WG, and all suppliers confirmed that they use these reports within their systems.
2. **AOB**
   1. AMo asked if it was possible to receive the 2018 Science spreadsheet as SA had circulated the 2017 spreadsheet.

**Action** **298**: 2018 Science spreadsheet to be circulated (WG).

* 1. XSLT versioning and schedule – To follow - no further information was provided at this meeting.

1. **Date of next meeting and close**

To be confirmed.