Software Development Forum (SDF):
5 March 2020

The recorded minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 in the Caernarfon Room at Cathays Park, Crown Building, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Meeting minutes

Date of issue: 29 June 2020
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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	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Information Management Strategy Data Collections Team School Information and Improvement Branch Education Directorate Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ Tel: 0300 062 5014 E-mail: IMS@gov.wales @WG_Education Facebook/EducationWales
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.

Contents

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
Mike Maher (MM)	School Data Officer	School Information Branch
James Gilbert (JG)	IMS Programme Manager	School Information Branch
Rachel Thomas (RT)	IMS Programme Manager	School Information Branch
Rachel Shepherd (RS)	School Workforce Statistical Officer	Workforce Data
Beth Milton (BM)	Senior Further Education Performance Manager	Post-16 Quality and Data Management
Marian Jebb (MJ)	Head of Post-16 Quality	Post-16 Quality and Data Management
Geoff Hicks (GH)	Head of Post-16 Funding	Post-16 Funding and Planning
Jon Ackland (JA)	Head of Cross Cutting Education Statistics	Education and Skill Statistics
Tom Lines (TL)	Senior statistical Officer	Education and Skill Statistics
Local authorities		
Mike Jones (MJ)	City and County of Swansea Council / Capita SIMS User Group	
Rhian Rickard-Frost (RRF)	Cardiff Council	
Sarah Irvine (SI)	Ceredigion County Council / Teacher Centre	
Jayne Thomas (JT)	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council / Capita SIMS User Group	
Sara Herbert (SH)	Vale of Glamorgan Council	
Mark Weaver (MW)	Cardiff Council	
Schools		
Geraint Williams (GW)	Crickhowell High School (Powys)	
Software suppliers		
Jim Haywood (JH)	Capita SIMS	
Ruth Vincent (RV)	Capita SIMS	
James Hornby (JHo)	Method4	
Neil Tonks (NT)	iTrent	

2.   Introductions and apologies

GT ran through introductions and housekeeping as well as noting that the apologies would be included within the minutes. The apologies and those who the apologies.

All attendees introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

3.   School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

GT opened up the discussions and reviewed the current SWAC process and position post collection. GT wanted to start discussing, as per the agenda, what went well and what didn't go so well.

3.1   SWAC - What went well and what could be improved?

GT provided an overview of the current position with regards to the 2019 SWAC collection. By the deadline 1,492 out of 1,502 (99.3%) schools had submitted their SWAC school returns by the deadlieThere was only a few LA'S outstanding near the deadline.

All LA'S had uploaded their SWACHR file. However, some LA's had a large number of errors outstanding. GT explained that this would be accounted for when reviewing the list of validation rules in the validation CBDS

GW requested if it would be possible to provide a simple guide for schools on what info is required for each level & return. GE stated that this should be covered in the guidance documents previously provided and available via WG website.

LAs stated that there was some confusion regarding the recording of hours worked in the school return. There were instances where staff were being recorded as part time hours by schools in error due to hours being recorded net (of breaks) instead of gross hours. An additional issue was that different schools and LAs worked to different full-time equivalent hours for different posts. Therefore, asking schools to record hours was not relevant in all instances. GT acknowledged that capturing the number of hours worked did not provide the information necessary to be able to accurately calculate full-time equivalence for individuals and that how it is captured is being reviewed and would be picked up in the discussion on new data items for SWAC.

Attendees stated there were some initial complaints from schools about the time it took to collect the data. Some LAs also had to seek legal advice regarding requests from a small number of schools regarding their right to withhold information from the return. Following discussions with individuals and sharing the privacy notice these requests were not progressed further by the individuals concerned.

Schools and LAs reported that the workload was heavy because it was the first year – although this was somewhat expected, and they understand that going forward the workload in collecting this data will be much less.

JT stated that the pilot didn't go so well – issues with IP addresses getting onto DEWi – and were disappointed that they were not able to fully test the end-to-end process. GT accepted that at the time of the pilot, not everything was properly in place to be able to fully pilot the collection. However, GT stated that the testing that did take place was very helpful and the feedback received from the LAs that were able to participate helped identify key issues

within the development which could be addressed before the collection went live.

The first collection was a pilot, outcome of the cross validation will be part of the pilot.

NT stated that they had put considerable work into developing tools within the Itrent HR systems to enable LAs to extract the required information in the correct format and produce xml files to upload to DEWi. However, LAs generally chose to extract directly into CSV files. NT asked whether the intention was to still provide contingency spreadsheets for LAs to submit their data. GT confirmed that contingency spreadsheets will still be provided as not all software suppliers have developed tools within their sytems to extract the data in xml format and there are some "opted-out" schools who are required to return their own pay and HR data.

GT confirmed that WG are not proposing any changes to the SWAC HR file structure and format for the 2020 collection.

Midday supervisor – lots of Teaching Assistant's also act as midday supervisors – clarity also needed on Cover Supervisors – some ambiguity as to what this means. Is it the person arraning the cover or ther person performing the cover?

LAs stated that leading zeros on teacher reference numbers were being removed by SIMS on extraction trigerring a validation error. This was accounted for in DEWi by adding in leading zeroes where the numbers were shorter than 7 characters.

3.2   Open discussion

JH stated that they received complaints around Christmas regarding validations where the expectation was for cross validations to run between the SWAC School and SWAC HR returns. GE stated that a decision was taken to not run the cross-DEWi validations once it was apparent that not all LAs would not be able to submit their SWACHR return in the first 2 weeks of the submission window and that this was communicated to LAs and software suppliers before the SWAC school submission window opened and at the SIMS user group meeting on 20 November 2019.

GT explained that the cross-DEWi validations will be run once the SWAC collection is closed on DEWi. GT and GE explained that schools will not need to re-upload files when the cross validations are run. GE explained that WGwill feed back outstanding issues to LAs after the running of cross validations so changes can be made within school and / or LA systems in preparation for next years' collection.

> **Action SDF-428**: WG to provide a summary of outstanding issues and errors triggered when running the cross-validations to LAs

GE explained that WG are currently looking at using Slack to use as a means for communicating updates and issues to stakeholders in real time.

GT discussed the summary reports and how some schools stated that they were confusing and did not allow them to easily review and approve data returns. Main issue was that individuals with multiple roles were double-counted in the headcount. GT explained that the summary reports were being reviewed and would be amended to make it easier to review returns. JH says nothing was wrong but it was description of the table that was causing confusion. People didn't know what they were supposed to be showing.

JHo reminded the meeting that the Curriculum summary report is produced as a separate report on DEWi due to its size and complexity.

JH explained that from experience there is potential for confusion by including too much information within the management reports. JH also noted that overall compared to England's implementation the SWAC implementation was relatively better in terms of issues.

There was some confusion because different systems record hours differently - eg with or without breaks. GE notes that we used the same guidance as in PLASC for teachers. As discussed previously attendees stated that hours worked did not accurately reflect how the workforce is deployed within schools and that FTE would provide a much better, and easier to record, measure.

JT explained that they had not received any complaints from schools that they needed to continue recording workforce data in PLASC still as it was explained to them in the training. MJ echoed this and that they actually find workforce data useful in PLASC eg they tell if there are enough staff for their number of classes.

Training in schools - JT described how they sent email to heads and one person had to attend workshops. They also provided presentations to headteacher groups as well as presentations for other individuals involved. Training was 6 schools at a time, mapped to their databases and would make the return so they could go back to schools with the return made. They also produced a comprehensive guidance document.

In Ceredigion they produced a guide and offered to do training but were stopped by education department because they didn't want (or couldn't afford for) people to be coming out of schools, to attend the training session.

There was a clear difference in the level of support across different local authorities with issues of level of training made available for schools being unequal. GW stated that that they did not receive any training due to resource issues within their LA. SIMS is complex and difficult to work with if you're not an expert, and it's very difficult if you can't ask someone in the LA for help. Potential missing link in LAs.

GW asked whether it would be possible to provide a simple 1 side of A4 on what info is needed and to give to admin staff to add in. Technical completion

notes are too large, especially where there is not a data manager. Probably lots of this stuff is there but hasn't been passed on to schools.

Action SDF-429: WG to produce a brief summary guide for schools on completing SWAC.

JT - one issue was that there was no data collection forms from Capita, needed it earlier and in Welsh (bilingual). GW stated that they had not received any data capture form to help capture information. GE explained that some LAs had produced a data capture form to check and collect missing information.

MJ asked whether SWAC is likely to be used for funding decisions? GT explained it will be used in discussions in relation to teachers pay award agreements and calculating cost of developing and implementing education policies which may include some funding decisions. Information will not feed directly into revenue settlement funding at the moment.

MJ explained that Swansea did their own internal development for cretaing the xml file for the SWACHR return.

JT that their HR system software supplier had not realised the importance of the SWAC return and copied English return initially which resulted in a large volume of data errors which required addressing and re-submitting files.

JT - Mapping of lookup tables took the most time, especially roles.

GE provided an update on reviewing ethnicity codes for PLASC and SWAC. ONS have now completed the survey work to inform agreement of ethnicity questions for 2021 census. This will inform WG considerations for review of codes. The current code set used causes some problems due to conflation between nationality and ethnicity. GE explained that a revised code set will not be ready for next collection but hopefully for the following collection in 2021. It will be key to look at how information alreadty in SIMS could be mapped across to any new code set rather than do a re-collection as this will provide significant workload to capture new information for all pupils and staff members. JH emphasised that there will be a need to consider any impact it will have on CTFs. A clean break might be best. GE stated that will be included as an item at the next SDF meeting.

Action SDF-430: WG to include ethnicity on agenda for next SDF meeting

3.3 New Data Items for SWAC 2020

GT stated that it was important to keep the number of changes for SWAC 2020 to a minimum. However, following feedback from schools and LAs during the first SWAC collection 3 new data items were proposed for 2020. These were: 'FTE'; Status' and 'ThirdParty'.

FTE - GT explained that the feedback and queries received indicated that schools did not find it easy to capture 'Hours worked' against roles and did not accurately reflect how the workforce is deployed within schools.

GT presented 3 options including: a) capture **FTE** and hours worked against main roles; b) change 'Hours Worked' to 'FTE'; c) remove 'Hours worked' and add in data item for 'FTE'.

All agreed the capturing 'Full time equivalent' to replace hours for main roles would be easier and provide more accurate data.

> **Action SDF-431**: Add FTE against main roles in SWAC 2020

All agreed it's not worth recording actual hours worked and remove this data item.

GT confirmed that valid values would be between 0 and 1.0, but need to consider that some work over 1.0, though these are very few. MJ stated a preference to keep it simple and anyone working as >1.0 should be entered as 1.0.

GT confirmed that there would not be direct validation of FTE in SWaC school returns against against contract data for FTE in SWACHR return.

Some staff such as invigilators will on average work 1 hours a week and will be <0.1 so need to consider how these can be recorded. GT confirmed that the FTE data item would be captured to 2 decimal places to allow for those working less than 0.1 FTE.

LAs stated that it will be key that there is clear guidance provided on how to record FTE and some examples included in the technical completion notes would be helpful.

3.4   Status

GT explained the recommendation to add a new data item to identify individuals on maternity, secondment or other long-term absence from the school. This would help avoid double counting of staff when reporting and reduce the number of validations trigerred for records with no curriculum records for example.

This item would default to blank and scholls would select a code from the code set if the individual was on a long term absenc / leave.

> **Action SDF-432**: Add Status data item in SWAC 2020

3.5   Third party staff

This would include supply agency, employed though other organisations which are not LA. This will be recorded against the individual and would

identify individuals to be excluded from the cross-validation rules with SWACHR data and help minimise the number of errors triggered.

> **Action SDF-433**: Add 'ThirdParty' data item against workforce member in SWAC 2020

3.6 Review of staff roles

The recording of staff roles generally worked, but there were some recurring queries raised by schools and LAs about certain roles that did not have specific codes

Recording of Midday Supervisors was probably the most common query received. Attendees stated that midday supervisors should only be included if there's a need for them and if so it would be helpful to have a specific code for them. Following the discussion there was agreement that it should be added to the code set.

There was some confusion about who should be included under the role 'cover supervisor' - is it the person providing cover or organising cover? GT explained that this was intended to capture those organising the cover. Attendees queried whether 'Cover manager' might be clearer if want person organising cover.

> **Action SDF-434**: Expand on guidance for recording cover supervisors and consider re-naming code description to 'Cover Manager'

GT that while only 1 query was received regarding 'Estate managers' Wg were asked to consider its inclusion in the staff role code set. Attendees stated that it's inclusion may cause some confusion as there was potential for caretaker roles – which aren't included in SWAC -would be recorded under this, as they are advertised in this way and may cause more confusion than usefulness given the small numbers involved. Attendees agreed not to add 'Estate Managers' as a specific role.

3.7 Review of SENCo role

A small number of schools submitted returns with individuals with only an 'Additional' role of 'Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator' recorded against them, with no 'Main' role reported. In querying these instances, schools stated that the individuals concerned were employed solely as a SENCo within the school and they did not find that any of the 'Main' roles provided described their role appropriately. The guidance provided for recording SENCo's for the 2019 SWAC collection stated that the 'Main' role which best reflects the role of the individual should be selected along with the number of hours worked per week as well as the 'Additional' role of SENCo.

For example, if the role of SENCo is undertaken by the head teacher, the 'Main' role 'Head teacher' should be selected and the 'Additional' role of 'SENCo' should also be selected.

In the case where the individuals sole role is as a SENCo the guidance provided to schools was to record the individual with a role of 'Other Support staff' along with the number of hours. In addition, the 'Additional' role of 'SENCo' should be selected. However, LA representatives stated that the role of 'Other Support staff' did not accurately reflect the individuals roles and given the importance and status of the role.

A number of options were discussed for how to record SENCo. These included:

- Continue to include SENCo as an 'Additional' role only
- Move SENCo to list of 'Main' roles
- Allow schools to record SENCo as a 'Main' or 'Additional' role

Attendees stated a preference for keeping SENCo as an additional role only as per SWAC 2019 collection.

(Following workshops held later in March it was agreed to include 'SENCo' as a 'Main' role whilst also keeping 'SENCo' as an additional role with a need for clear guidance on when and how each code should be used)

3.8   Review data validation rules

GT stated that all validations would be reviewed with the main purpose of refining the validation rules with the view to reduce the number of erroers and queries triggered.

GT provided an overview of the main validation issues that were being triggered.

In addition to the refining of validation rules there will be some new validation rules for the new data items to be introduced.

3.9   Implementation of phase 2

GT provided a brief overview of the plan for implementation of phase 2 of SWAC. The intention is to keep the amount of changes to SWAC to a minimum, with the changes discussed in the meeting the only additions to the new modules to be introduced for 2020 i.e. recruitment, retention, supply for SWAC school and absences for SWACHR.

GT stated that the census date for SWAC 2020 would be Tuesday 3 November 2020.

JH ststed that there was currently nowhere to record recruitment and retention data in SIMS and that, as with PLASC, the information is manually entered. JH stated that if there was a need by customers to record information directly into SIMS they could look into it.

WG to have a conversation with Capita to explore potential to include in SIMS.

SI confirmed that Teacher Centre had developed the ability to record recruitment and retention data by schools and that they can only end a role by filling out retention details.

Attendees stated that capturing Supply information would be different and more complicated to the other data modules as it is not routinely captured by schools currently. The information may be held in various formats by schools, whether in a spreadsheet or on paper.

JT stated that schools have to produce reports every term and therefore would hold the data already.

SI stated that Teacher Centre has a section for supply where schools can add it as its happening.

Attendees stated that there would need to be clear guidance on how schools should record supply data and that there may some quality issues in the first year of collection.

> **Action SDF-435**: Produce detailed guidance on how schools should record supply data

(In light of the current situation in relation to Covid-19 and the re-purposing of schools and the re-prioritisation of resources within schools and LAs, Welsh Government announced that all remaining data collections for this academic year would be cancelled. In addition, it was announced that the new data modules to be introduced as part of phase 2 (i.e. recruitment, retention, supply and absences) would be delayed until November 2021).

4.   Post-16

There was a discussion about adding a September/October collection, which would capture data at the start of the term/year. This would give a starting point, and continue with the current, final return with concluding data as per usual? The Welsh Government, local authorities, schools and software suppliers may discuss this again in future and potentially investigate further.

There are instances where a data manger changes roles or leaves a school and doesn't inform the local authority until late that the resources may not be available to complete the return. This has the potential to be a huge risk as the return may not be completed in time or accurately.

QWAD code are sometimes duplicated in some disciplines and makes things difficult when analysing the data. A discussion took place and everyone agreed to add a new discount code data element to be paired with the QWAD so that subject areas can be easily identified.

> **Action SDF-436**: The Welsh Government to add a new <DiscountCode> data element to the Post-16 collection for autumn 2020.

There are issues with some AS activities where they have a completion of over 100%, which is impossible.

> **Action SDF-437**: The Welsh Government to explore Post-16 activities that are coming in with a completion of over 100% and how this could be rectified.

5.   Any other business

Following agreement by all attendess, the next SDF is scheduled for 4 June 2020. The Welsh Government will confirm venue and timings once arrangements are made.