

B2B Options Appraisal

Introduction and Context

Capita One was introduced around 8 years ago in order to provide a central repository of School Management Information System (MIS) data within the Local Authority. As a central repository, the system requires regular information to be provided from School systems to the Local Authority. While this can be accomplished via manual processes, the easiest way to achieve this is through the use of an add-on to the Capita One system called B2B. B2B is installed on a school machine and regularly polls the school MIS service automatically transferring any updates from the school system.

The initial installation and commissioning of the B2B product was funded by the Local Authority and ran as a project over the course of a year. The project required a long period of 'snagging' largely due to the poor quality of the B2B system which was recognised as a larger issue nationally.

In late 2012 B2B was identified as not operating correctly in all schools. Additionally, a need to refresh the Information Sharing Agreement between schools and the Local authority was identified as a piece of work. (Both issues to some extent relating to the changes in the school estate prompted by the formation of academies as new legal identifies).

In early 2013, schools were asked to use their schools support service to maintain the B2B system in place. To date, this has not been successful, given that schools have an excess of demand of IT support and do not prioritise support for the B2B system/service.

Currently, around 20% of sites do not make returns via B2B, which has resulted in the Local Authority having a limited understanding/awareness of the school estate. This impacts many Local Authority services which require this information to deliver an effective service, for example Schools Organisation, Admissions and Education Welfare services.

Summary of Options

Moving forward, there are a number of options relating to the use of B2B, these include:

- **Do nothing**
The do nothing option would see schools encouraged to adopt support for B2B through their existing support provider. Given that this has been the default option over the past 5 years, the likely outcome would be a continued gradual decline of operational B2B installations across the school estate. The impact of this would largely become felt by client services within the Children and Families department who would have an increasingly parochial view of only those schools whose B2B system operated correctly. Currently around 20% of installations are non-operational, with that number likely to rise over time.
- In order for services to make operational use of the demographic, attendance, attainment and exclusions data held within the ONE system they require confidence that this information is accurate, complete and up to date. The impact of slowly letting B2B decline into disuse will effectively mean that the data becomes unusable, as partially correct/accurate data cannot be used to make business decisions. The impact of this is outlined in the 'cease use option below'.

- **Cease the use and support for B2B**

Given that the product is currently not effectively supported, it is possible to consider making a proactive decision about ceasing use and support of the product. This would maintain a more coherent and managed environment across the schools estate and would also provide a less confused response regarding what information is held by the Local Authority regarding schools. The obvious downside to this approach is that the Capita One system would hold very little information regarding schools and consequently would impact on client services.

- Without the B2B feed updating the ONE system, the prime data source into the system would be the mass import of statutory census data. As the last year has shown, for those schools that have stopped feeding B2B data into the system, the census data is not sufficient. Census data imports are between three to six months in arrears and for academies do not contain attendance or exclusions data. A large number of services dealing with schools require timely, accurate pupil information to undertake their work. The appendix provides detailed feedback on how this data is used by each service, but the key impact would be:

- Significantly increased administration cost for both LA staff and School/Academy staff for the manual collection of this data, multiple times per term. Potentially schools would be contacted multiple times for the same data,
- Data will be subject to the data quality issues associated with manual entry/multiple data sources etc. at present prior to being imported into ONE all B2B data goes through numerous data quality checks, missing fields are rejected/queried, duplicates are merged, addresses are geo-coded etc.
- Numerous Services will not be able to effectively undertake their business practices. Details are given in the appendix, but those services most impacted will be Education Welfare, Admissions, Family Community Teams, School Improvement Services and Quality & Commissioning.
- There are safe-guarding risks and statutory responsibilities associated with services not having the most accurate and up-to-date information about pupils they are working with, particularly with regards to Children in Care.
- There is the potential for losing funding for Early Intervention Projects such as the Priority Families Project that require this data to evidence outcomes and secure Payment by Results funding from central government. This funding can be in the region of £4,000 per family.

- **To adopt B2B support within the Local Authority**

The Education Directorate has an under-spend of £36,800 that can be used to allocate staff time/resources from within the Schools IT Traded Service. This would enable the service to allocate staff as required to the resolution of the identified issues and to provide support and maintenance for a 12month period. Throughout this period an evaluation would need to be made of the likely on-going support costs and a new business case put forward to the Children & Families IT Strategy Board to secure funding for support & maintenance of the B2B links post Jan 2016.

- B2B is a key component of the Capita ONE system. Without data flowing into the system from schools and academies the functionality of the system and the Local Authority's ability to use it deliver services and make strategic decisions regarding schools and academies is severely compromised.
- Data that should be collected via the B2B interface will still be required, but will need to be collected manually, this will result in a significant additional administrative burden to both schools and the Local Authority. The efficiencies gained in the collection and quality assurance of data via the B2B process will likely offset the on-going support and maintenance costs post Jan 2016, a detailed business case will need to be submitted to confirm this.

Appendix A – Feedback from Services on the Impact of Reduced B2B Functionality in 2013.

- Any address changes or parent details that are changed by the school cannot be seen by the **Education Welfare Service, Family Community Teams and Safe-Guarding** teams that use the system. These teams could therefore be operating based on incorrect, outdated information. There are safe-guarding risks attached to inaccurate data for those pupils being supported by these services.
- **The Education Welfare Service (EWS)** are unable to provide the Magistrates' Court with updated information when cases have been adjourned to test compliance. The service has approximately 300 cases in Court per year. The SIMS schools have always been aware that we can access and print off the attendance certificates for ourselves. Over several months without access to view we have had to be requesting that schools send us the information. Requests are constantly made because cases are all at different stages. Schools are not pleased with EWS continually having to request data, often multiple times and certainly feel that this is a matter for the LA to address. It is getting increasingly difficult for these services to request data from schools, whose resources are already stretched.
- There are currently significant pressures on available places in city schools. The **Admissions Service** requires up to date information to ensure that all places are filled as quickly as possible and that no pupils are left waiting for placement at schools within the city. Schools also often require up-to-date information from the Admissions Service before they can allow a child to be placed at school, not having this data places additional time pressures on this process. The admissions service also require up-to-date information to effectively monitor fixed term exclusions, which they are currently required to seek manually from schools.
- For the last few years academies have not been required to release attendance data to Local Authorities as part of the statutory census collection process. This has meant that for those academies that are not successfully submitting data via B2B, no attendance data has been collected within Capita ONE. This loss of data impacts significantly on the LA's ability to undertake strategic planning with regards to attendance and exclusions issues. This lack of data impacts most heavily on the work of the **School Improvement Services and the Quality and Commissioning Service** that are required to report and deliver strategic reviews based on this information.
- The LA is required to report on the attendance and educational attainment of **Children in Care**, the ability to do this is significantly impaired by not having attendance data fed into the ONE system via B2B.
- Collection of data required for upcoming **Ofsted inspections** has been hampered by not having the information readily available within the ONE system.

- Up to date information on attendance and attainment is one of the key indicators for the **Priority Families Programme**. Troubled To identify Priority Families, the LA needs to be able to identify children that have 15% unauthorised absence across the last 3 terms, or 3 fixed exclusions, or one permanent exclusion.
Once identified and allocated to a worker, we also need to be able to monitor the reverse of this to claim payment by results. So if their attendance improves to below 15% unauthorised absence, fewer than 3 fixed exclusions, etc, then we can count that as a “success” in terms of their attendance.
The Priority Families analyst has had to manually review census files, liaise with practitioners and schools to gather this data, much of which is still missing and impacts directly on the Local Authority’s ability to claim an attachemnt(funding) fee for these families. The payment by results funding that can be claimed per family is in the region of £4,000. The LA will be working with 600 families over the course of the project, providing a feasible funding sum of £2.4 million that could potewntially be claimed given the availability of appropriate data and achievement of success criteria.