



A partnership for success

Sharon Greenhead is Senior Information Systems Officer in Kent County Council's EIS team, which provides SIMS support for over 700 schools. Earlier this year Kent's schools were becoming familiar with SIMS Assessment; Sharon and her colleague Marian Wheeler thought that the time was right to build on the software's new features, to enhance support for schools in their use of performance data held in SIMS. Sharon explained: "We thought we could capitalise on the interest in SIMS Assessment to track pupil progress, and for the self evaluation required for the completion of the SEF prior to inspection. The Capita Professional Development courses Tracking Pupil Progress and An Inspector Calls seemed to hit these buttons, so we booked Capita Consultants to deliver these for our Head Teachers".

"Bringing in Capita Professional Services Development Consultants to deliver 'Tracking Pupil Progress' and 'An Inspector Calls' for our Head Teachers has led to very positive developments - some unexpected!"

Sharon Greenhead
Senior Information Systems Officer,
Kent County Council EIS team.

"It was a risk - EIS is a self funding business unit, and we had to 'sell' the courses ...but we targeted the heads and their Assessment Co-ordinators, using Capita's Professional Development brochure. This uses the context of school improvement which rings bells with heads". Sharon booked a Consultant initially for in-house training for EIS staff on both courses, before 'going live' with the schools. The initial courses delivered to the schools proved popular, and Marian added that "doing the courses ourselves meant that we were able to sit in with the heads and add a local

context to the Consultant's agenda. **The Consultants were great at using our local knowledge to personalise the training!**"

The word soon spread amongst heads, that the courses were good value and extremely relevant, and Sharon was asked to facilitate more and more days from Capita's Consultants.

Things developed from this point...especially with the Advisory Team!

Sharon explained: "Like many SIMS support teams - especially in large LAs, we have very little time to liaise internally with Kent's Advisory Team. They are also in a different directorate, and are based in a different location. Our SIMS Support Manager Ralph Gardner approached the advisers, and as a result they were shown what the schools had experienced. Their reaction can be summarised as **'We didn't know SIMS could do that!'** The templates for tracking individual and group progress were of great interest to primary and secondary Assessment Advisers, especially when they saw how Marian could customise them for the schools. The fact that SIMS holds information about all aspects of pupils and groups also impressed - so that the performance information could be contextualised against, for example attendance and free school meals data. This functionality was a very pleasant surprise for some. Kent's Early Years Adviser quickly realised that Marian could produce templates for Foundation Stage Tracking - previously a difficult issue at this key stage - and they worked together to produce over one hundred templates. Marian: "They also could see the benefit of Capita's relationship with the QCA and National Strategies, so that any changes would be incorporated by SIMS, and forwarded to us immediately".

"We produced 106 templates for Early Years Tracking - the Adviser thought this was wonderful!"

We asked Sharon and Marian to summarise the benefits they felt that EIS had gained from the work with Capita's Consultants:

The heads - EIS's customers - liked:

- Capita's consultants working alongside the EIS staff they knew - so that the courses had a local flavour
- evaluations from each session were quickly used to 'tweak' the programme
- becoming familiar with the wealth of tracking tools held in their SIMS data, and gaining the confidence to start using the data
- seeing how contextual data held in SIMS could be used to enhance the data
- EIS was able to create transfer templates, to move data held locally (for example in other Marksheets) into the CES Tracking Marksheets
- the analysis functions in Marksheets - RAISEonline matched filters creating tracking grids supporting National Strategies.

For our EIS team:

- we organised the delivery of professional development from the SIMS Consultants that our customers, the schools, rated as very good quality and value
- the courses also brought our team up-to-date - and we were able to feed back suggestions to Capita via the Consultants
- we have demonstrated what the SIMS data offers schools to the advisers - they now see how we can work together as a 'joined-up' service e.g. the production of the Foundation Stage templates
- we have developed our own primary training data set, so we have real but anonymised data to use in the future.

Additional (paid!) work for us followed and more is planned:

- we have been out to individual schools to further personalise the templates and marksheets - and to run courses for groups of teachers on using their SIMS data
- many of the first tranche of courses were targeted at primaries - but secondary heads have heard good news about the programme, and in conjunction with advisers we will be developing similar resources for them next year
- we have been booked to run courses for advisers in the Autumn.

SIMS Manager Ralph Gardner summed up: "I suppose booking the courses was a bit of a financial risk - but it more than paid off. Our school customers rated them highly and we will continue to gain more income from repeats. And we have worked with the Kent Advisory Team to the benefit of schools. We can build on this relationship for the benefit of both teams, but more importantly, Kent's schools!"

Head Teachers' quotes:

An Inspector Calls Primary

"The delivery of training was outstanding. Excellent pace, very clear. Thank you."

"The course trainer was very good - it was the most informative and understandable course regarding SIMS Assessment that I have attended. I would willingly recommend the course to others."

"This course is extremely useful to Head Teachers. I look forward to teachers being able to access SIMS through Kent LearningZone".

An Inspector Calls Secondary

"An excellent course and delivery which has enabled me to make good use of the existing data and the services of the school's data management person".

Tracking Pupil Progress

"Thoroughly enjoyed the course - was very worthwhile as it opened up lots of possibilities for excellent analysis".

"Very valuable to see what is 'do-able' and available".

