



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Evaluation of the Scottish Exchange of Educational Data (ScotXed) Partnership

Education



EVALUATION OF THE SCOTTISH EXCHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL DATA (ScotXed) PARTNERSHIP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Scottish Executive has an aim of continuous improvement in the quality of services for children and young people. The flow and presentation of information between schools, local authorities, the Scottish Executive and SQA is an important element in achieving this aim.

In August 2001, the National MIS Project was relaunched as ScotXed. This was to create a consistent means of electronic data exchange. ScotXed is a partnership programme involving all parties in the Scottish school education system. It aims to support and promote the electronic exchange of information through effective and secure systems for the exchange of data and by providing access to high quality information for educational partners in Scotland.

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement in the quality of services, the Scottish Executive identified a need to conduct an evaluation of the ScotXed Partnership. There were a number of key questions for the evaluation to address and these were:

- The extent to which the ScotXed partnership has supported and promoted the electronic exchange of data;
- The extent to which the partnership has minimised the bureaucratic burden;
- To ascertain views and perceptions of partners in the partnership in terms of their contributions to the Programme, their understanding of the Programme and so on;
- To assess available evidence on publishing benchmarks, the monitoring of the impact of educational policies, etc;
- To examine evidence to ascertain the role of ScotXed in policy development in Scotland.

METHODOLOGY

A staged approach was adopted for this evaluation. An initial quantitative phase provided robust statistical data that have been used to measure and monitor awareness and usage of ScotXed, attitudes towards ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership. A subsequent qualitative phase allowed for the exploration of a range of issues in an in-depth manner. In the initial quantitative phase of semi-structured telephone interviews, a total of 319 interviews were conducted with schools and local authorities (126 headteachers, 127 school admin / support staff and 66 local authority staff). This was followed by 15 in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholder organisations with an involvement or interest in ScotXed such as HMIE, LTS, SQA and the Scottish Executive, and 20 focus groups with local authority staff, headteachers and school admin / support staff from across Scotland.

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER VIEWS'

Of the stakeholder organisations included in this evaluation, some were involved in working directly with data from ScotXed, some indirectly, some were involved in policy development and were likely to drive requests for new and different data, and some had been involved in ScotXed from a co-operative or developmental viewpoint.

Almost all of those interviewed were positive about ScotXed, the types and amount of data generated and the use to which it was being put. Stakeholders also had an appreciation of why data requests are made and their fit with policy developments. In general, ScotXed was viewed more as a data collection framework that reacts to and evaluates policy rather than as a mechanism for driving policy forward.

Where stakeholders had had direct contact with the ScotXed Unit, views were positive. Those who had worked with the team had found them to be professional and easy to work with and responsive to requests.

Most stakeholders did recognise that secondary schools benefit more from ScotXed than primary schools, primarily because of the availability to secondary schools of Standard Tables and Charts (STACs).

Most stakeholders did not view schools, local authorities and the ScotXed Unit as forming an equal partnership. Indeed, most would not have described this relationship as a partnership. Most perceived the Scottish Executive as being a dominant partner. They viewed the ScotXed Unit as driven by, and reactive to, policy developments and regarded the role of schools and local authorities as providers of data when requested. There was awareness that data would be analysed and interpreted at a local level, but stakeholders tended to focus on the data available at a strategic level and the process by which data were collected and analysed. There were concerns from one or two stakeholders about the ability of some school staff to interpret data and most were aware of, or assumed, that schools worked closely with local authority staff in interpreting ScotXed data.

Looking to the future, almost all stakeholders perceived interconnectivity and the sharing of information across different children's services to be an important development, although there were some queries as to how this would be funded and how issues such as the sharing of information can be overcome. One stakeholder noted that ScotXed offers a standard model that could be adopted by other agencies.

MAIN FINDINGS

The following paragraphs report the main findings of the research primarily from a school and local authority perspective.

ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA

- The concept of electronic data exchange is supported by schools and local authorities across Scotland and use of MIS has increased in recent years. Furthermore, the quality of data collected for, and available from, electronic MIS is perceived to have increased hugely in recent years.
- A range of different MIS is currently utilised across Scotland, although the two key MIS used are Phoenix and SEEMIS.
- A majority of respondents claim to be familiar with the MIS systems used in their schools or local authority. The qualitative findings show that there is still a degree of reliance on MIS providers or local authority staff to provide support, training and guidance.

- A number of bespoke systems and applications have been developed across different local authorities in order to produce data specific to a school or local authority.
- The wide range of different MIS used, has led to some comments that there are inconsistencies in MIS across Scotland as a whole and that this can lead to inconsistent provision of information in schools and local authorities.
- There were some calls for the Scottish Executive to take the lead in introducing a common MIS across all schools and local authorities.

USAGE OF AND INVOLVEMENT WITH SCOTXED

- A range of roles is attributed to ScotXed. There is highest awareness of its roles among local authority staff and less understanding among school staff, particularly those in an admin / support role. Key roles attributed to ScotXed relate to the collection, collation and / or dissemination of data, although notable proportions of school staff are unable to attribute a specific role to ScotXed. While stakeholder organisations acknowledge the role of ScotXed in data collection, they primarily view ScotXed as a tool utilised for policy development.
- There is little perception of a ScotXed Partnership, particularly among schools where the focus of relationships is with local authority staff. This means that for many users of ScotXed, there is a sense of remoteness with the website and others within the Partnership as well as an inequality between different partners in the Partnership. Some local authority staff and many school staff see themselves as purely being providers of data.
- ScotXed is one of a number of channels used to provide or receive data, and the qualitative data show that there is a degree of confusion over MIS used, how ScotXed sits with other MIS and how the two interrelate. School staff accessing or providing data to ScotXed via SEEMIS or Phoenix are likely to attribute data exchange to SEEMIS or Phoenix rather than ScotXed.
- Staff in primary schools primarily interface with ScotXed to provide data or to download information for school handbooks. Within secondary schools, there are higher levels of usage, particularly for STACs.
- Local authority staff play a significant role in working alongside schools with STACs data. Among secondary school users some issues were highlighted regarding STACs in terms of its presentation and comprehensibility, particularly for those who do not have a statistical background.
- There appear to be some tensions between different users of ScotXed. For example, some local authority staff may disagree with policy makers as to what data to prioritise and some school staff perceive a contradiction between statistical measurement of performance and introducing more flexibility and innovation into the curriculum.

THE IMPACT OF SCOTXED

- Views from stakeholders, local authority and school staff on the impact of ScotXed are largely positive about the concept of electronic data exchange and respondents comment that data collection has become much easier in recent years, although this is not attributed purely to ScotXed. Stakeholder organisations tend to focus on the strategic role played by ScotXed in providing data for policy development. Many stakeholders are particularly enthusiastic about its achievements.
- There was a perception that ScotXed has helped to make data collection easier than previously, but that requests for data have increased. So while the bureaucratic burden of data collection and provision is seen to have decreased, many respondents perceived workloads in relation to additional data collection and provision to have increased, albeit that some data requests will come from other sources and not ScotXed. The quantitative and qualitative data also show that the bureaucratic burden on teachers has decreased and this has shifted to school administration staff.
- Views from those commenting on the impact of ScotXed are largely positive, although relatively high proportions of respondents – particularly those in schools – are unable to comment constructively on its impact across a number of dimensions, including its impact on the effectiveness of decision making within local authorities, its impact on policy development at a local authority level, its responsiveness to changing policy requirements, its usefulness in generating new types of data and so on. This is largely because these respondents view ScotXed purely as a mechanism for the collation and provision of data.
- When assessing a range of potential impacts of ScotXed, notable proportions of admin / support staff were unable to provide comment.

BARRIERS TO USAGE OF SCOTXED

- ScotXed's overall achievements regarding the quality and ease of data exchange and use – about which many, although not all, expressed positive views – are at the same time shadowed by a number of considerations.
- There are a number of resource based barriers which manifest themselves in a lack of available training (for example, on how to interpret ScotXed data or how to use ScotXed) and / or a lack of time (for example, to take up training, to find information or to input data), a lack of cover, and a lack of IT support. For many respondents, there is a lack of understanding of how they can optimise use of the data available via ScotXed and this can be reinforced by the use of external parties to provide MIS.
- One cluster of barriers relates to direct usage of ScotXed by some schools and local authorities and concerns comprehension of information and the consequences when comprehension is limited. These include:
 - Some reports of poor understanding as to how to use the data accessible via ScotXed, and a related reliance on others to help interpret and analyse data;
 - Irregular usage of and a degree of ignorance as to the capabilities of the website.

- Other more general barriers are the consequences of:
 - ScotXed's weak branding among school users and how this can sometimes become confused with other applications of MIS. Therefore ScotXed sometimes fails to gain credit for its achievements;
 - Some educators' attitudes towards making statistics an important focus in education;
 - IT outsourcing, which can serve to exacerbate the disconnect between ScotXed and school users;
 - Within schools the local authority is the conduit for news and information, and so there may be little or no direct connection made between ScotXed and its outputs or communications.

- Ways barriers can be overcome include:
 - Increased resources such as more time to provide data to ScotXed as well as more time to work with the data available via ScotXed;
 - Increased training opportunities, for example, on how to work with ScotXed data or time for greater numbers of staff to become familiar with the data available via ScotXed. Training also needs to be delivered at a point in time when it can have greatest impact on understanding and usage of ScotXed;
 - Increased support to schools – both from local authority staff and the ScotXed Unit at the Scottish Executive;
 - Promotion of the role played by ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership – as well as a more pro-active role for the ScotXed Unit;
 - Widening out of the data held by ScotXed to create more benefits (rewards) for primary schools in particular;
 - Ensuring that the debate on the relative importance of statistical collections within education continues and is welcomed as part of the process of educational development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

- For schools, connection to ScotXed can be indirect as local authority staff are the main channel of communication with and about ScotXed. All ScotXed guidance is tailored by local authorities to reflect local circumstances.

- Local authority attitudes towards ScotXed are more positive as they have direct involvement with the ScotXed Unit, ScotXed outputs and so on. The evaluation emphasises the importance of local authority staff to schools as the channel of communication.

- Local authority staff are generally happy with the information they receive from the ScotXed Unit and via meetings or involvement in Task Groups.

- Views on existing forms and channels of communication are largely positive, although there is a need to ensure that information reaches all those who need to receive it.

- Some school headteachers and admin / support staff would like different information channels to be used, depending on the nature of the information being provided.

TRAINING

- This evaluation indicates a number of areas where more training could be provided to help further ScotXed's aims, to help increase awareness and usage of the available outputs and increase understanding as to how collections inform educational policy and practice.
- A wide range of different forms of training was suggested, although all should be written in plain English and be easy to understand and comprehensible.
- Many respondents within schools express a preference for face-to-face training in an interactive environment. There are also some requests for training on how to interpret data produced by ScotXed. Opportunities for interactive questioning or examples of practical application of ScotXed, such as those provided by roadshows, would be welcomed, although attendance may not be a priority for many.
- The time at which training is delivered is important as lack of usage directly after training means that familiarity with ScotXed outputs can be lost.

THE FUTURE FOR SCOTXED

- The primary role of ScotXed is perceived to be the provision of data, and with the exception of stakeholder audiences, there is little emphasis on the strategic role it plays. Many in schools and local authorities associate ScotXed with statistical data alone, and this makes it less salient in some minds than some other educational initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence.
- Furthermore, ScotXed is perceived by some to lack coherence with other educational initiatives because of its emphasis on statistical data, although some stakeholders do perceive this to be complementary to current educational initiatives.
- In addition to those already mentioned above, a number of other potential improvements were suggested by respondents including:
 - Possible adoption of a more direct advisory role for the ScotXed Unit, although there would be a need to agree this with local authority staff and stakeholders, so as not to alienate audiences that promote use of ScotXed;
 - A need to ensure that data is more useful to schools and that schools understand both how to use it and why they are asked to provide it;
 - Changes to the data that can be produced within ScotXed;
 - Provision of a STACs equivalent for primary schools.
- There are also suggestions for a need to raise the profile of ScotXed.
- Longer term, many respondents see ScotXed playing an important role in joining-up children's services as a whole. Most support the concept of interconnectivity, although some have concerns over how practical this will be, particularly in the short term. Data protection, ethical and professional issues are all seen to impact upon the potential for joined-up children's services.

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation indicates that ScotXed is achieving many of its objectives. Of particular note is:

- The support and promotion of electronic data exchange between schools, local authorities and the Scottish Executive;
- The contribution that regular ScotXed collections are playing in increasing overall MIS use and familiarity within schools;
- How many of those involved in the partnership such as stakeholders and local authority personnel are finding the data, and range of data provided, increasingly useful, especially for providing help with internal and external benchmarking, self-evaluation, and monitoring and improving pupil and staff performance;
- The appeal to educators of STACs, despite some issues with its format and difficulties in understanding its use and output by some users;
- Increasing confidence in ScotXed data itself, which users and most providers consider very reliable and solid.

Less success is evident in relation to:

- Delivering a concept of partnership within ScotXed, as many of those involved in collections, particularly at school and local authority level, perceive themselves as servicing ScotXed requirements, and frequently have little insight as to how their collections are directly affecting policy debate and decisions. ScotXed is not seen to be a driver in policy development, rather providing the necessary data in response to policy makers and their requirements;
- Communicating the full range of possible applications for the data, so that schools particularly may begin to see themselves as users, not just sources, of data.

There is mixed evidence as regards:

- ScotXed's success in reducing the bureaucratic burden on schools. The burden has clearly shifted to admin / support staff from teaching staff, and it is easier to collate data for ScotXed. However, increased demand for data, and for new and different kinds of data, from a range of different sources, appear to be cancelling out some of these benefits for admin staff.
- There is a need for the remoteness from ScotXed felt by some to be overcome and a need to improve communication with end users in order to ensure that all relevant parties understand the benefits of working with ScotXed.
- The role of the local authority as the main or often the only conduit, interpreter and controller of ScotXed information, data and advice to schools appears to amplify the impressions of some that ScotXed and the Scottish Executive operate far from the everyday business of a school.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

The Scottish Executive has an aim of continuous improvement in the quality of services for children and young people. The flow and presentation of information between schools, local authorities, the Scottish Executive and SQA is an important element of each school year. There are a number of regular points in time in each school year where schools are required to provide information to the Scottish Executive; this includes, attendance, absence and exclusions data, the school census, the staff census and leaver data. Over and above this, there will be requests for ad hoc pieces of information primarily from the Scottish Executive and local authorities.

The Scottish Executive, in order to have a consistent means of electronic data exchange, relaunched the National MIS Project as ScotXed in August 2001 on a Scotland-wide basis. This is a partnership programme involving all parties in the Scottish school education system. It aims to support and promote the electronic exchange of information through effective and secure systems for the exchange of data and providing access to high quality information among educational partners in Scotland. An expectation of ScotXed was that it would help to create an arena in which local authorities examined their data management at a strategic level as well as looking at ways in which the exchange of data could be facilitated between different local authorities. Expected outcomes were:

- That those handling management data would look for new and better ways to measure progress in order to monitor the impact of policy and other initiatives to inform decision making;
- An overall reduction in relation to the workload of data gathering and management and a concurrent shift from teaching to administrative staff;
- A reduction in the bureaucratic burden.

Since its inception, an internal system of annual reviews and the production of annual Overview Plans has taken place. For example, the Annual Review of 2006 outlined 6 key strands and commented on progress for each of these. Each strand of the ScotXed Programme outlines key objectives, current tasks managed by the Scottish Executive and the obligations of partners.

After 5 years of operation, ScotXed is now responsible for a core of key data exchanges across Scotland. Through ScotXed, the Scottish Executive holds and publishes statistics and benchmarks for use by schools and local authorities in self evaluation. Key outcomes to date are:

- A capacity for a greater breadth of analysis to monitor policies targeting individual groups;
- An improvement in the quality of information in schools' management information systems;
- A reduction in school bureaucracy and streamlined administration;
- Annual reviews and improvements in the Scottish Executive's flagship benchmarking tool STACs (Standard Tables and Charts).

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement in the quality of services, the Scottish Executive identified a need to conduct an evaluation of the ScotXed Programme.

George Street Research was commissioned to undertake this evaluation and this report focuses on the effectiveness of ScotXed in achieving its mission to promote and implement a system of electronic data exchange among education partners, capable of meeting the information needs required to manage, monitor and improve school education services in Scotland. In other words, this evaluation has assessed the process of the development and operation of the partnership and the outcomes for partner organisations in relation to the stated aims of the programme.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There were a number of key questions for the evaluation to address and these were:

(a) Supporting and promoting the electronic exchange of data

To what extent and in what ways has the ScotXed partnership:

1. encouraged and enabled schools in keeping their MIS up to date?
2. promoted the better use of MIS in schools and local authorities?
3. supported the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data?
4. increased the speed, ease and accuracy of data exchanges?
5. increased the range / scope of the data exchanged in Scottish education?
6. made technical information sufficiently clear and accessible?
7. provided sufficient resources to take forward implementation?
8. learned from its mistakes, with reference to the monitoring and review process within the partnership?

(b) Minimising Bureaucratic Burdens

To what extent and in what ways has the ScotXed partnership:

1. minimised bureaucratic burdens on educational establishments and local authorities (within the context of data collection, exchange and use)?
2. shifted the burden of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff?
3. shared only data that educational establishments and local authorities use 'as a matter of course in their day-to-day operation'?

(c) Partnership

To what extent do partners in the ScotXed partnership feel:

1. that their contributions are valued?
2. that they are well informed?
3. that they are able to contribute to the decision making processes?
4. that they understand the reasoning behind the decisions that are made?
5. that they have access to educational information to monitor and improve services?
6. that the notion of partnership has been fundamental to the achievements of ScotXed?

(d) Benchmarking

What evidence is there to suggest that the ScotXed partnership has:

- 1 published worthwhile benchmarks?
- 2 allowed the monitoring of the impact of educational policies at local and national level?
- 3 improved the timeliness and quality of data available nationally and locally?
- 4 reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within the Scottish Executive?

(e) Policy Development

What evidence is there to suggest that the ScotXed partnership has:

1. made the process of decision-making more effective?
2. resulted in a better quality of policy-making?
3. implemented a system that responds to changing policy requirements/generates new types of data?

The following chapter examines the approach adopted for this evaluation and chapters 3 to 9 examine the emerging findings. Chapter 10 then provides concluding comments.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACH

In order to meet the research questions posed, a staged approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, to this evaluation was adopted. Specifically, a stage of quantitative interviews provided robust statistical data that has been used to measure and monitor awareness and usage of ScotXed and attitudes toward ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership. A subsequent qualitative stage allowed for the exploration of a range of issues in an in-depth manner, providing highly detailed material and has provided a valuable contextual setting to help enhance the understanding of quantitative data.

2.1 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Interviews among local authority staff were completed across all 32 local authorities. For interviews among school staff, the sampling frame used was the Scottish Executive schools database. Quotas were set on school type (early years / pre-school, primary, secondary and additional support for learning) and local authority area. Broadly speaking, the number of interviews achieved reflected the number of schools within each local authority area.

A total of 319 semi-structured telephone interviews was completed among staff in schools and local authorities. Of these, 126 were conducted among headteachers or their nominated representative (nominated representatives included depute heads, acting heads and principal teachers), 127 conducted among admin / support staff within schools, and 66 conducted among local authority staff. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 provide the profile of sample achieved.

Table 2.1
Sample Profile Achieved - Schools

	%	No		%	No
Type of School			Respondent Type		
- Early Years / Pre-School	6	15	- Headteacher	50	126
- Primary	43	110	- Admin / support staff	50	127
- Secondary	45	113	Gender		
- Additional Support for Learning (ASfL)	6	15	- Male	30	76
Number of Pupils			- Female	70	177
- < 50	15	39			
- 50 - 100	10	25			
- 101 - 500	41	104			
- 501 – 1,000	20	51			
> 1,000	13	34			

Base: All school based respondents (253)

Table 2.2
Sample Profile Achieved – Local Authority Staff

	%	No		%	No
Involvement in ScotXed			Gender		
- Policy / strategic level	35	23	- Male	58	38
- Use ScotXed on day-to-day basis	27	18	- Female	42	28
- Designated LA ScotXed rep	38	25	Years worked with ScotXed		
			- < 1 year	6	4
			- 1 – 2 years	18	12
			- 3 – 4 years	26	17
			- 5 years	50	33

Base: All LA respondents (66)

All respondents who participated in this element of the study were asked if they would be prepared to participate in a further stage of qualitative research and those saying yes formed the sampling frame for the subsequent qualitative research.

All telephone interviews were conducted between 29 November 2006 and 21 December 2006. Copies of the questionnaires used are appended to this report.

2.2 QUALITATIVE SURVEY

A total of 15 in-depth telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted across a wide range of stakeholder organisations. These included HMIE, the Scottish Executive, SQA and LTS as well as other organisations with an interest or involvement in ScotXed.

A total of 20 focus group sessions were held among local authority staff, headteachers and their nominated representatives and admin / support staff (see table 2.3). In each of 4 different local authority locations, including representatives from a range of local authorities across Scotland, the following groups were held:

Table 2.3
Profile of those attending focus group sessions

Admin / support staff in primary schools	1 group
Primary Headteachers / nominated representatives	1 group
Secondary Headteachers / nominated representatives	1 group
Admin / support staff in secondary schools	1 group
Local authority staff involved in ScotXed either on a day-to-day basis, as designated ScotXed representative or involved in ScotXed at a strategic or policy level	1 group

One issue that became apparent during the course of the qualitative discussions was that across the admin / support staff included in our survey, there was a wide range of roles and responsibilities. In some schools, those who attended focus groups were in a relatively senior role within their schools and these included Business Managers and Cluster Admin Managers. In other schools, those attending focus groups were in a relatively junior / clerical position. As such, admin / support staff had differing levels of understanding of the school operation and brought this experience to the discussions.

All qualitative discussions were conducted between 26 January and 26 February 2007. Copies of the topic guides used in discussions have been appended to this report.

CHAPTER 3: ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA

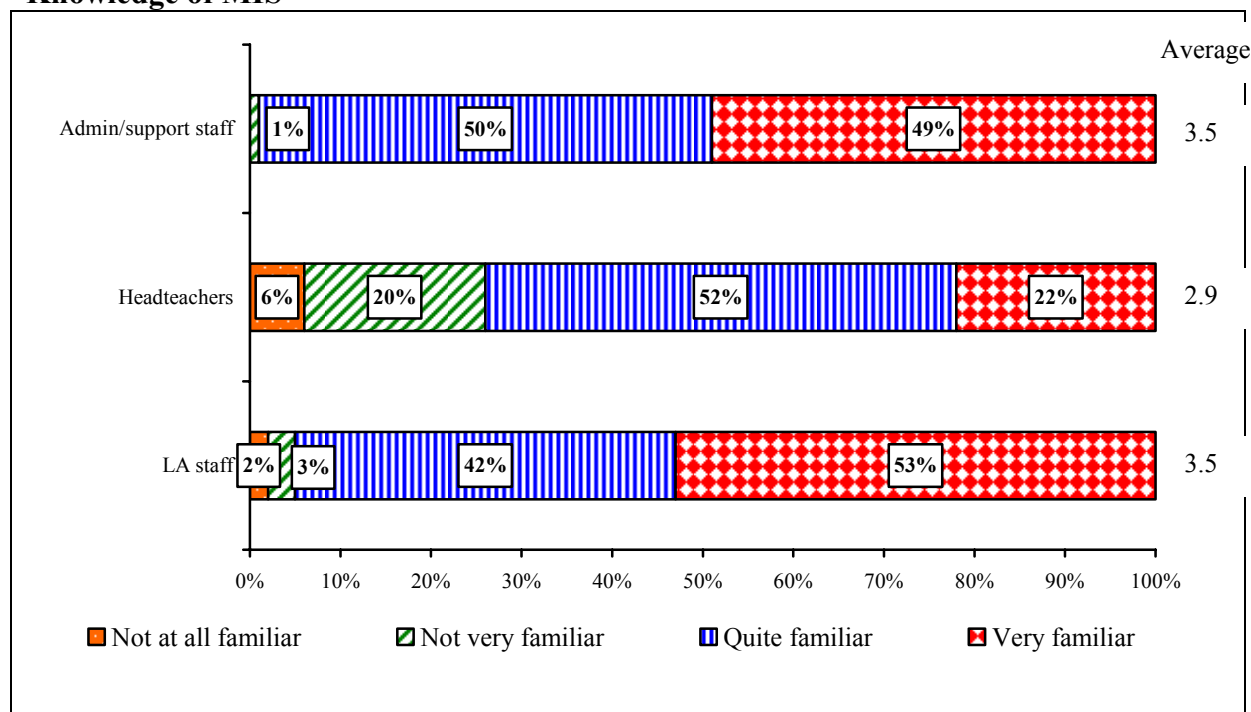
Before examining understanding and usage of ScotXed specifically, it is important to understand views on management information systems (MIS) and the ways in which these are utilised by schools, local authorities and stakeholder organisations in Scotland.

3.1 ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIS

Having ascertained which MIS were used in schools and local authorities, all school and local authority staff were asked to say how they would rate their own knowledge of Management Information Systems used. As shown in chart 3.1, 74% and above claimed to be “very” or “quite” familiar with MIS. While around one in four headteachers (26%) claimed to be “not very” or “not at all” familiar with their MIS, differences between respondents in primary and secondary schools were statistically significant; 85% of secondary heads claimed to be familiar with their MIS in comparison to only 60% in primary schools.

There were also statistically significant differences between headteachers (74% claimed to be familiar with their MIS) and admin / support staff (99% claimed to be familiar with their MIS), although this would be expected given that admin / support staff work more regularly with MIS as part of their job. In examining familiarity of MIS by type of school, the majority of staff across all school types claimed to be “very” or “quite” familiar with MIS, although these figures were lowest in Additional Support for Learning (ASfL) and primary schools.

Chart 3.1
Knowledge of MIS



Source: Q2 (schools) & Q5 (LA)

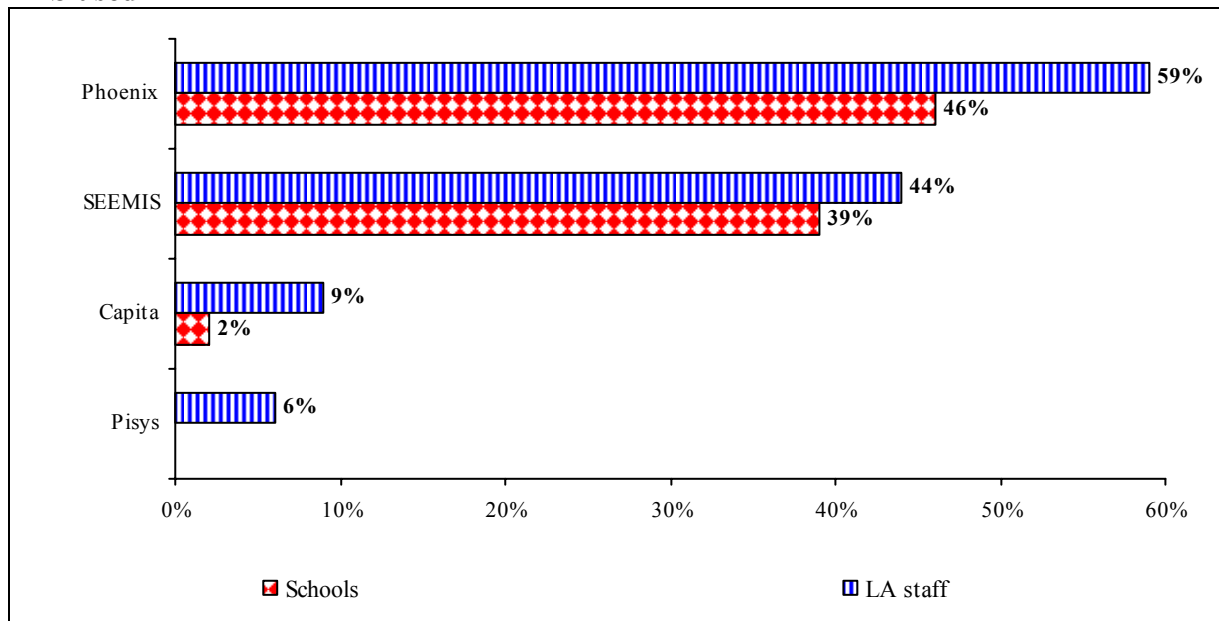
Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

3.2 USAGE OF MIS

Respondents were supportive of the concept of electronic data exchange, and 98% of local authority respondents noted that all schools in their local authority area were using some form of MIS. The quantitative data shows that a range of different MIS were used across schools and local authorities in Scotland. As can be seen from chart 3.2, the two key MIS used by respondents were Phoenix and SEEMIS. Phoenix was the system used by the greatest proportions of respondents (59% of local authority staff and 46% of schools), followed closely by SEEMIS (44% of local authorities and 39% of schools).

Data from the local authority interviews shows that 8 of the 32 local authorities used more than 1 MIS system, although the qualitative data suggests that this may be due to a point in time where some local authorities are currently in the process of changing over their MIS from one system to another. A slightly higher proportion of secondary schools were using Phoenix (55% compared to 45% primary schools); conversely slightly higher proportions of primary schools were using SEEMIS (42% compared to 38% of secondary schools).

Chart 3.2
MIS used



Source: Q1 (schools) & Q2 (LA)

Base: Schools (253); LA staff (66)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

The qualitative discussions showed that in recent years MIS have become an important part of school life in terms of data collection and provision, and most respondents were very supportive of the concept of electronic exchange of data. Furthermore, many noted that MIS systems have become easier to work with and used more frequently in recent years. This, in turn, has helped to increase confidence in working with MIS in general. One secondary headteacher commented,

“People are much more willing now to view a spreadsheet on screen and then extract what they want from it and they have got more comfortable with it.”

That said, there were some comments, particularly from local authority staff, that the lack of consistency in MIS used across different local authorities means that data cannot always be compared readily across different areas, although in most instances the provider of MIS offers some level of support to users of their system.

Many of our qualitative respondents noted that they worked with bespoke systems or applications that had been developed over time by their local authority and this range of different MIS had led to further inconsistencies in data provision across Scotland as a whole. One secondary headteacher commented,

“We’ve tried PPNS. It actually didn’t work for what we wanted to do, so we only ran it for a year, but we’ve got our own system set up and the staff are much happier now It also means a lot less paper is being used.”

Aside from bespoke systems developed within local authorities, a number of systems were named by respondents including SEEMIS, Phoenix, Click and Go (SEEMIS) and AMPS. In most instances, respondents only had experience of working with one system and often attributed this system to any statistical outputs or reports.

This inconsistency in MIS led to some calls for the Scottish Executive to take the lead in introducing a common form of MIS across all schools and local authorities. However, schools using bespoke programmes or applications would not necessarily respond favourably to surrendering any advantages these have provided; so an audit of these advantages would be useful were a single system to be adopted.

“I very often come back to why are they doing this? Is this adding value? Not for me. Not for my school. It’s an exercise we go through each year. The data I am really interested in I will get from my existing MIS system.”

(Primary Headteacher)

All respondents participating in the qualitative discussions noted that the quality of data available to them has improved in recent years. That said, some were still reliant – at least to a degree – on support and guidance from providers of their MIS. Many school based staff also had regular contact with local authority staff with queries on the collation or interpretation of data.

In summary,

- The concept of electronic data exchange is supported by schools and local authorities across Scotland and use of MIS has increased in recent years. Furthermore, the quality of data collected for, and available from, electronic MIS is perceived to have increased hugely in recent years;
- A range of different MIS is currently utilised across Scotland, although the two key MIS used are Phoenix and SEEMIS;
- A majority of respondents claim to be familiar with the MIS systems used in their schools or local authority, although the qualitative findings show that there is a degree of reliance on MIS providers or local authority staff to provide support, training and guidance;

- A number of bespoke systems and applications have been developed across different local authorities in order to produce data considered useful on an individual basis;
- Current inconsistencies in MIS utilised lead to a lack of consistent information at a local level across Scotland.

CHAPTER 4: USAGE OF AND INVOLVEMENT WITH SCOTXED

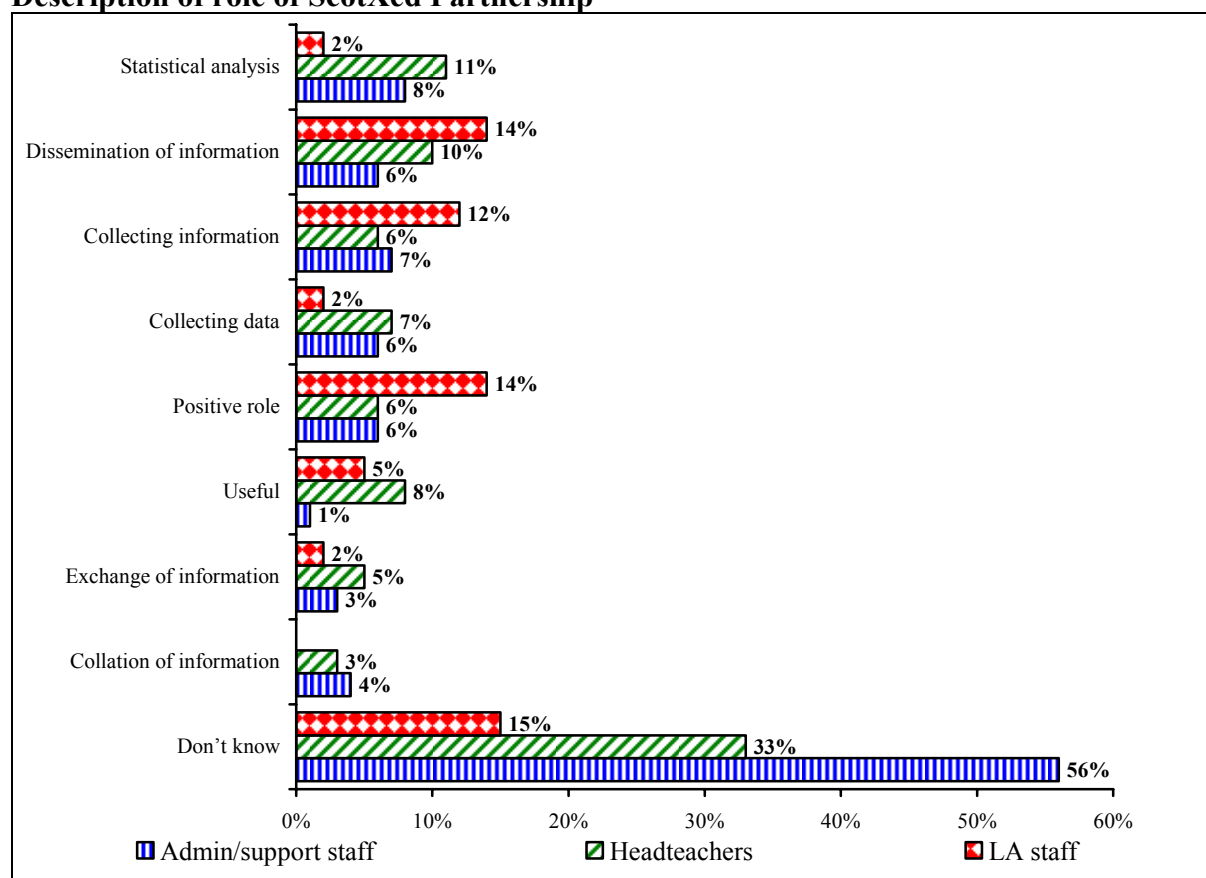
Having ascertained attitudes towards, and usage of, MIS in general, it is important to understand views on ScotXed specifically, the ways in which this is used in schools and local authorities and attitudes towards ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership.

4.1 UNDERSTANDING OF ROLE OF SCOTXED

All respondents participating in the telephone interviews were asked to describe spontaneously the role of the ScotXed Partnership. As can be seen in chart 4.1, a range of roles was attributed to the ScotXed Partnership and these focused primarily on the collection, collation and / or dissemination of data. From these data however, understanding of the partnership appears to be limited, with a significant proportion of respondents unable to say what they believed to be the role of the ScotXed Partnership (56% of admin / support staff, 33% of headteachers and 15% of local authority staff).

Across different school types, higher proportions of secondary and primary school staff were able to say what they believed the role of the ScotXed Partnership to be, in comparison with Early Years and ASfL schools.

Chart 4.1
Description of role of ScotXed Partnership



Source: Q4 (schools) & Q6 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

Most of the local authority staff participating in the qualitative discussions had a clear understanding of the role of ScotXed and worked regularly in providing data to the ScotXed Unit or in utilising data from ScotXed. The clearest view of ScotXed came from designated ScotXed representatives. Within schools, many of the admin / support staff and even some of the headteachers had no clear understanding of how the data they collect for ScotXed is used in policy-making or how they themselves might apply it. As would be expected, the most complete understanding of the role of ScotXed came from those working within secondary schools i.e. those working within secondary schools are much more likely to be using STACs or other outputs of ScotXed on a regular basis.

Across the different stakeholder organisations participating in this evaluation, a key role attributed to ScotXed was the collection and collation of data for use by a wide range of different organisations. However, stakeholders also recognised the use of ScotXed outputs at a strategic level in policy development and some focused on this as the primary role of ScotXed.

The qualitative research also indicates that the workings of ScotXed may seem remote, especially from users in schools. Many of those involved with ScotXed data collections did not perceive their relationship with ScotXed as a “partnership”. Many of our respondents, including those within local authorities, were unaware even of the *concept* of “partnership” in relation to what happens between them and ScotXed, and showed some surprise at the use of this word to describe the relationship. Even those local authority staff regularly in touch with the ScotXed Unit at the Scottish Executive, while they acknowledged that electronic data exchange involves joint working between different organisations, still did not generally perceive there to be a ScotXed Partnership per se or necessarily understand what is done with the data. In considering the concept of working in partnership, one local authority member of staff noted,

“I think initially everybody did see themselves as partners but certainly events over the past couple of years have seemed to indicate that it tends to be a one way partnership where the Scottish Executive, ScotXed can drive things through, not just drive things but force things through. If through the consultation process at local authorities level there is a disagreement of one direction, the Scottish Executive can more or less force it through.”

Another local authority respondent noted that,

“The majority [of power] is with the Executive. They are dictating more or less what they want. At an authority level, we have a wealth of data but there is less power at school level, so the power is skewed.”

This sometimes led to a sense of remoteness among those in schools, although this was by no means universal. It can be amplified in cases where there is no named local authority ScotXed contact for people to deal with or build a relationship with, or where MIS support comes from a third party like SEEMIS or is outsourced. In comparison, those in local authorities who dealt with ScotXed often praised the Unit for its attitude and helpfulness.

What this remoteness and disconnect may mean for schools is that the tasks, time and manpower involved in providing ScotXed with its data may become construed as a source of

low-level resentment, as they are perceived as requirements, handed down from above, rather than something being supplied to a partner for mutual benefit.

For schools especially, almost all contact relating to ScotXed involved local authority staff only, although they acknowledged that the data they provide to the local authority gets passed onto the Scottish Executive. Therefore, many schools considered the ScotXed Unit as somewhat distant, since their primary focus was on relationships with local authority staff.

Local authority staff understood that they are the conduit between schools and the Scottish Executive and, as such, had more regular contact and generally better developed relationships with the ScotXed Unit. These respondents perceived themselves to work with the Scottish Executive, with schools and, to a lesser extent, with other organisations involved in electronic data exchange. Yet again they did not perceive there to be a partnership per se, which probing revealed to imply more of a sense of inequality between the parties. Instead, most perceived ScotXed to be their boss or client, who had to be pleased. They perceived themselves as service and data providers - providing data to the Scottish Executive, and then disseminating this data within their local authority.

Some respondents were using ScotXed without realising it. For some of our respondents, particularly primary administrative staff and primary headteachers, there was little understanding as to how MIS systems used within schools worked alongside ScotXed and how the two interrelated. So, for example, some respondents were aware that information provided to SEEMIS or Phoenix is then transferred to ScotXed, but others simply referred to using their existing MIS to obtain information without understanding fully that the information in question has been fed back to them through ScotXed. Therefore, for some respondents the positive benefits that ScotXed may be bringing to education were attributed to the MIS itself or to their MIS provider.

This misperception may become further reinforced because some school staff perceived MIS providers to be their first point of contact if they had a problem or query in relation to MIS or ScotXed.

Regardless of the level of understanding of ScotXed, virtually all qualitative respondents agreed that data collection and provision had improved in recent years, both in terms of ease of access, greater levels of consistency in information collected and therefore availability, and the overall quality of data.

4.2 USAGE OF / INVOLVEMENT WITH SCOTXED

All respondents were asked to say how regularly they utilised different channels of electronic data exchange to perform a variety of different tasks. Across all audiences, some contact, provision or receipt of information was conducted **not** using ScotXed. Given their role as a conduit between schools and the Scottish Executive, local authority staff generally had more frequent contact across the range of tasks than headteachers or admin / support staff (see table 4.1).

The quantitative data shows that ScotXed was not used exclusively as a data channel but that other channels were still used to provide or receive data and this is not surprising given the wide range of MIS that respondents claim to be using. For example, local authority staff

claimed to receive benchmark or performance data from schools using ScotXed on average 4 times a year; in comparison to receiving benchmark or performance data from schools not using ScotXed on a frequency of 13 times per year. Across different school types, the quantitative data shows that secondary schools used MIS to perform tasks more frequently than their counterparts in primary schools, although these data were not consistent for all tasks under consideration (see table A in appendix A).

Table 4.1
Average number of times per year respondents

	LA staff	Headteachers	Admin/support staff
	N=66	N=126	N=127
Browse for data/information	72	24	18
Have contact with local authority ScotXed staff/representatives	79	6	8
Have contact with the Scottish Executive ScotXed Unit	18	3	1
Provide staff within school/the Scottish Executive with benchmark or performance data using ScotXed	N/A	8	3
Provide staff within school/the Scottish Executive with benchmark or performance data not using ScotXed	7	16	10
Receive benchmark or performance data from local authority/the Scottish Executive using ScotXed	18	7	2
Receive benchmark or performance data from the Scottish Executive not using ScotXed	13	N/A	N/A
Provide schools with benchmark or performance data using ScotXed	10	N/A	N/A
Provide schools with benchmark or performance data not using ScotXed	9	N/A	N/A
Receive benchmark or performance data from schools using ScotXed	4	N/A	N/A
Receive benchmark or performance data from schools not using ScotXed	14	N/A	N/A
Provide benchmark or performance data to LA using ScotXed	N/A	5	5
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools / local authorities using ScotXed	5	1	1
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools / local authorities not using ScotXed	4	1	1
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA using ScotXed	5	4	1
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA not using ScotXed	11	2	1

Source: Q5 (schools) & Q7 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

The qualitative data also showed that local authorities often had their own internal systems of data collection that were introduced prior to ScotXed and which are still used alongside ScotXed. Also, given that some school staff found it difficult to differentiate between ScotXed and other MIS usage, it is possible that some respondents have claimed to use sources other than ScotXed simply due to misunderstanding. An example provided in the qualitative discussions came from respondents in one local authority who noted that SEEMIS offer comparative data between SEEMIS authorities, based on a product called “SEEMIS Vision”, and credited SEEMIS Vision with providing statistical outputs. Some admin / support staff participating in the qualitative discussions were aware of ScotXed but claimed to have little or no contact with the website.

Having ascertained how frequently specific tasks were conducted, all respondents in schools were asked to say what types of information they had mainly provided to ScotXed or used ScotXed to obtain and all local authority staff were asked to say what they had mainly used ScotXed for. Table 4.2 provides data combining all responses (spontaneous and prompted). At an overall level (spontaneous and prompted), a majority of all respondents were using ScotXed to either provide or obtain information on the school / pupil census, the staff census, attendance and absence and exclusions in EA schools.

Table 4.2
Types of information provided to ScotXed or used ScotXed to obtain

	LA Staff	HTs	Admin / supp staff
	N = 66	N = 126	N = 127
	%	%	%
School/ Pupils Census	85	72	73
Staff Census	85	67	73
Attendance, Absence and Exclusions in EA Schools	85	75	62
School Attainment (STAC's) (secondary school staff only)	N/A	91	52
School Leavers (winter and summer, secondary and special schools)	86	51	47
Exchanging leavers from secondary schools and special schools data with Careers Scotland	70	N/A	N/A
Scottish Candidate Number Administration File	N/A	38	50
School Meals Survey	47	29	43
Leavers from secondary and special schools	N/A	31	29
Pupil Leaving/ Enrolling Files and Messages	N/A	30	24
Pre School and Day Care Census	N/A	22	15
School Placing Requests	24	15	20
Collecting/transferring Children Looked After Survey data	47	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring child protection data	26	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring social work staffing & vacancies	8	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring budgeted school running costs data	39	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring survey of children educated outwith school data	36	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring school estates core facts data	21	N/A	N/A
Collecting/transferring provision of physical education data or collecting/transferring S1/S2 class size survey data	56	N/A	N/A
Collecting / transferring schools openings & closures data	56	N/A	N/A
Other	48	16	10
None	2	7	14
Don't know	-	-	1

Source: Q6a/b (schools); Q8a/b (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

Notes to chart: N/A indicates that the type of information was not included in the question. For example, school attainment (STACs) provision or use was not asked of local authorities

Some of those participating in the qualitative discussions, particularly admin / support staff in primary schools, were unaware that data provided or collated related to ScotXed. One member of staff noted that they used SEEMIS for everything, yet still misunderstood that s/he was gaining entry to ScotXed data via the SEEMIS portal. Confusion over sources of information can also be exacerbated by local authority staff who may be producing reports for schools so that some usage of ScotXed is “second hand”.

For most admin / support staff in primary schools, contact with ScotXed was primarily to download information for their school handbook. Most headteachers in primary schools had little by way of contact with ScotXed as this was not perceived to offer useful information for them to utilise at school. For example, most secondary headteachers were using ScotXed to obtain data on school performance and comparator performance but an equivalent is not available to primary headteachers within the ScotXed site. Indeed, primary headteachers in one local authority noted that they have an internal system set up by their local authority that they can access in order to obtain attainment data.

Some secondary heads noted that it is STACs they use to get comparison data, rather than using other ScotXed outputs and were keen to differentiate between these. Again, instances were noted where other systems had been introduced to produce specific data; one headteacher had devised with his MIS provider and staff a system of looking at exclusions that he considered far more useful than the official program and more relevant in the way the data were expressed. Another local authority was introducing a new package (SAP) for all staff reporting.

As often happens between governmental organisations with a strategic remit and those implementing and disseminating policy and programmes at operational levels, certain strands of tension were evident from the qualitative interviews. These tensions existed in a number of areas:

- First, in the manner in which changes to policy at the strategic level can cause operational difficulties at implementational levels. Time and manpower are required to understand, implement, explain and disseminate information, but this time may not be readily available. This is a particular problem when changes are seen as frequent;
- Next, policy changes may also cause resentment in those who have worked hard to implement a change only to see it supplanted or amended for reasons they are not able to see or appear to arise from political considerations alone;
- Third, some local authority respondents may disagree with policy makers as to what the data priorities are or what the requirements should be to best facilitate operations;
- Fourth, some local authorities are clearly more protective of their independence from the Scottish Executive, and wish to retain their authority over schools and data gathered without interference from the Scottish Executive;
- Finally, and most evident amongst headteachers, there clearly is a lively and important debate in education circles as to how much numerative measuring is consistent with, useful in, or good for a system seeking to broaden from attainment-orientation to something more broad based and inclusive.

Respondents tended to express these reservations and ideas in a mild form rather than as outright opposition; but there was clearly a range in the strength of respondents' views.

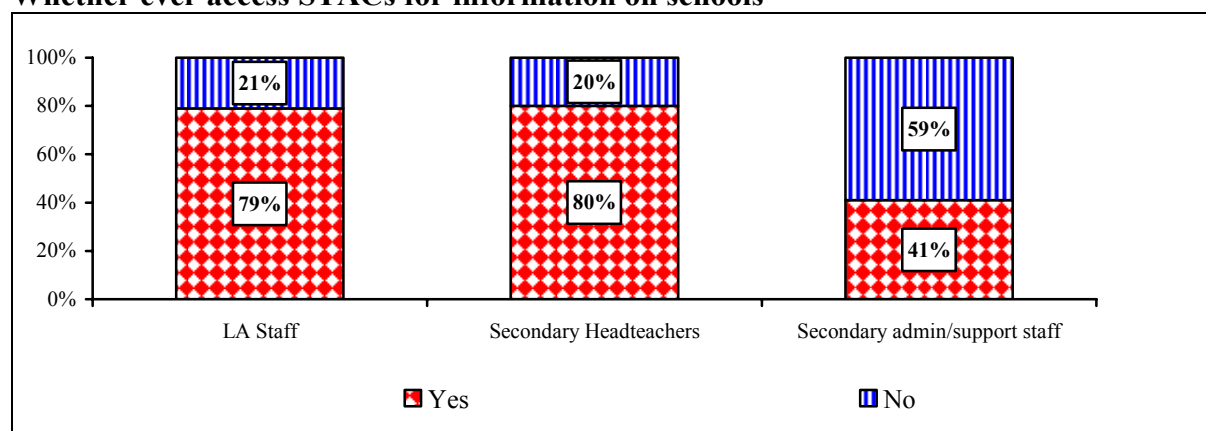
4.3 USAGE OF STACs

4.3.1 Accessing STACs

As part of the ScotXed programme, the Scottish Executive's flagship bench-marking tool, STACs (Standard Tables and Charts) is available and is constantly reviewed and improved. STACs has the facility of providing an overview or allowing users to look at specific information in detail, such as at departmental level. All respondents in secondary schools and local authorities were asked to say if they ever access STACs for information and as shown in chart 4.2, the highest proportions accessing STACs were secondary headteachers (80%) and local authority staff (79%), with only 41% of secondary admin / support staff accessing this.

Chart 4.2

Whether ever access STACs for information on schools



Source: Q17a (secondary schools) & Q30a (LA)

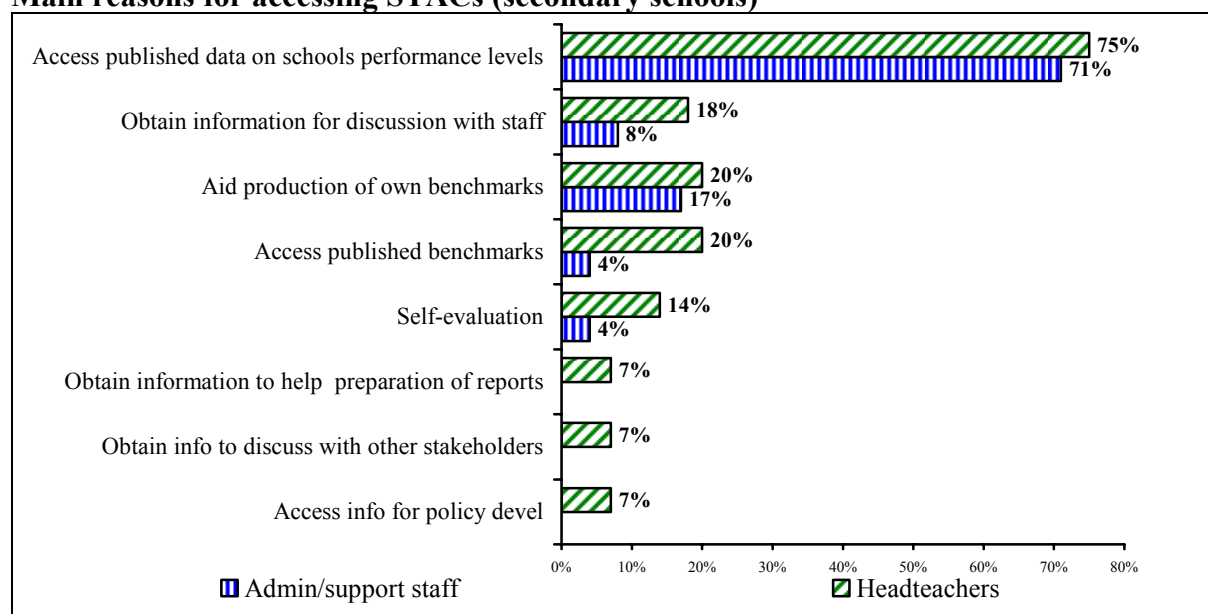
Base: LA Staff (66); Sec HT (55); Sec Admin/support staff (58)

Within local authorities, the highest proportions of those accessing the ScotXed website to obtain information on STACs were reported as colleagues within their education department (94%), schools within their local authority (85%), colleagues within other departments of the local authority (17%) and a consultant / other third party (36%).

4.3.2 Reasons for Accessing STACs

All secondary school respondents were then asked to state spontaneously their main reasons for accessing STACs (see chart 4.3). A wide range of reasons were referred to, although the key reason cited by 75% of headteachers and 71% of admin / support staff was to access published data on school performance levels. Smaller proportions of respondents noted that it was to obtain information for discussion with staff, to aid production of their own benchmarks, to access published benchmarks, for self-evaluation, to obtain information to help with preparation of reports or to obtain information to discuss with other stakeholders.

Chart 4.3
Main reasons for accessing STACs (secondary schools)



Source: Q19 (secondary schools)

Base: All who access STACs for information

HT (44); Admin/support staff (24)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

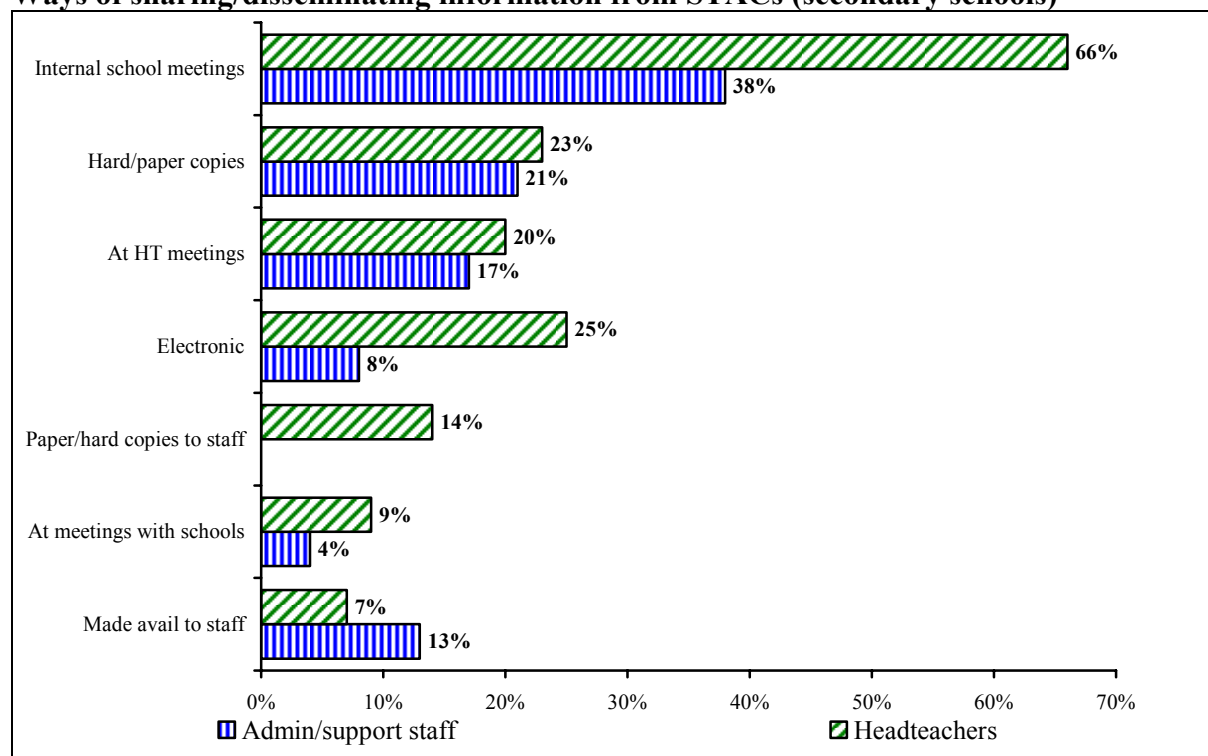
As well as understanding the reasons for accessing STACs, it is important to understand the ways in which this information is used and all secondary school staff were asked to say the ways in which information from STACs was shared or disseminated to others.

As shown in chart 4.4, not surprisingly higher proportions of secondary headteachers claimed to be using this information for any purpose than admin / support staff. The highest proportion of headteachers (66%) claimed to be using this at internal school meetings, although smaller proportions also claimed to be using this at headteacher meetings (20%) or at meetings with schools (9%). Very small proportions also referred to using this information at meetings with local authority staff or at cluster meetings.

This information was also being shared or disseminated in a variety of ways, with specific reference to hard / paper copies and electronic versions.

Chart 4.4

Ways of sharing/disseminating information from STACs (secondary schools)



Source: Q20 (schools)

Base: All who access STACs for information

HT (44); Admin/support staff (24)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

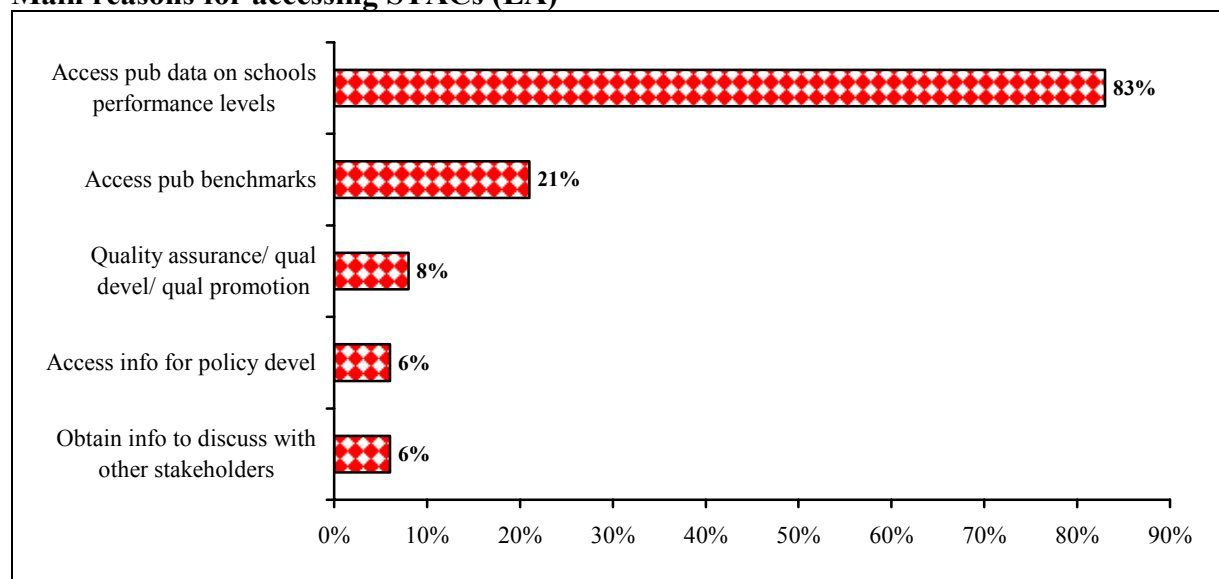
Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

Respondents participating in the qualitative discussions also noted the importance of sharing ScotXed data with others in their school. Most secondary headteachers noted that they would use this for meetings with colleagues, either on a one-to-one basis to discuss departmental or individual progress or at staff meetings and also when discussing data with local authority staff and / or other organisations such as HMIE. Most admin / support staff in schools claimed to be using ScotXed only to provide information or to download information for school handbooks. While all respondents noted the importance of self-evaluation, it was only secondary headteachers who noted that STACs data is an important element in self-evaluation.

Secondary headteachers using ScotXed commented that their primary use of ScotXed was to access STACs and this is only relevant at a certain point in time during the school year. Across users of STACs there were some references to difficulties in understanding and interpreting the data and this issue will be covered in chapter 6 of this report.

Within local authorities, the key reasons for accessing STACs were to access published benchmarks or to access published data on schools' performance levels (see chart 4.5) although there were also references to accessing data for quality assurance purposes, for policy development or for discussions with other stakeholders.

Chart 4.5
Main reasons for accessing STACs (LA)

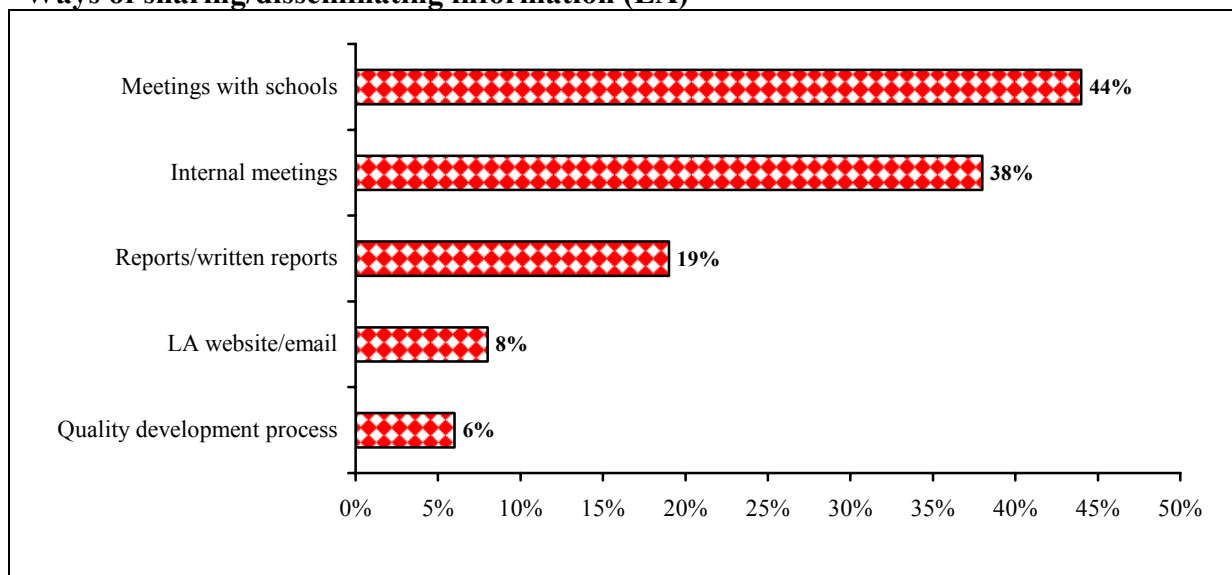


Source: Q31 (LA)

Base: All LA staff who access STACs for information (52)

Local authority staff noted a number of ways of sharing or disseminating information and key ways were meetings with schools (44%) or internal meetings (38%). Again, electronic and paper reports were used in sharing this information (see chart 4.6).

Chart 4.6
Ways of sharing/disseminating information (LA)



Source: Q32 (LA)

Base: All LA staff who access STACs for information (52)

Local authority staff participating in the qualitative discussions noted the importance of STACs data in their dealings with schools. Both headteachers and local authority staff noted the role that local authority staff play in using STACs data to work with schools to help identify subject strengths and weaknesses and to compare and contrast their performance with comparator schools. Some headteachers noted difficulties in accessing and / or

understanding all the information available, and in many instances, local authority staff were responsible for producing school reports and in then helping schools to understand and interpret these data. In some instances, schools and local authorities were utilising consultants to help them produce reports, understand the data and present this to colleagues. The following quotation from a member of staff within a local authority noted,

“ ... it [STACs] is an incredible amount of information. A headteacher doesn't have time to go through everything and detect the main issues to be raised for their school. So you need a synthesised view of what STACs tell us this year and we prepare a one page summary for each school.”

A secondary headteacher also noted,

“We all have STACs. In our authority we use [name of consultancy]. They kind of look further at the STACs and produce a more exclusive report which saves you doing one yourself. Really what you get is a product you can sit down immediately with the department and say 'well, there's the analysis done for you', so from that point of view, that's a good use of consultants.”

While the concept of STACs was welcomed by all respondents, it was perceived to be useful only to secondary schools. Many primary headteachers were aware of STACs but had no experience of using STACs, although some noted that they would welcome an extension of STACs that would incorporate attainment data in primary schools. That said, some headteachers in primary and secondary schools expressed reservations about an extension within STACs to allow primary schools to obtain attainment data. One or two of the primary headteachers noted that they had access to attainment data on MIS set up by their own local authority. There were many requests for a return to 5-14 national assessment data and this will be discussed in chapter 9 of this report. While a few noted that the SSA (Scottish Survey of Achievement) can provide access to some data, it is not compulsory to participate in this. Furthermore, some respondents noted that there were a number of shortfalls associated with the SSA and that the data it produces lack credibility.

For most of those using STACs, the concept of comparator information was welcomed, although one or two secondary headteachers noted that they do not use comparator school data. The move from using free school meal data to a broader range of criteria in order to identify comparator schools was generally welcomed, although some respondents were critical of some of the criteria being used or commented that the criteria were too subjective. Information provided via STACs was also being used by schools to feed into ongoing self-evaluation and benchmarking. Secondary headteachers also highlighted the important role these data play prior to and during the HMIE inspection process. One or two of our respondents also noted that they preferred to visit local schools that were identified as being good in a specific subject area in order to get tips on how to improve upon this subject in their own school, rather than simply using comparator data.

Good Practice Examples – Schools Use of STACs

Good Practice Example 4.1 – Schools Use of STACs

A headteacher in a secondary school noted that he used STACs data to obtain an overall view of the performance of the school. He also used this for meetings with staff in order to make them think critically about their own teaching practice and their departmental performance.

Another headteacher noted that he would present general information in relation to school performance at all staff meetings as well as meeting with individual teachers in order to discuss their progress and their department's progress. The way in which the STACs data can be presented meant that staff would perceive these as credible and use them constructively in their teaching practice.

Good Practice Example 4.2 – Schools Use of STACs

A secondary headteacher noted the usefulness of the regression graphs produced in STACs. By examining the graph, he felt it was possible to identify who the school children were and use this to help understand why their performance might not be as good as expected and use this to plan for future performance.

Good Practice Example 4.3 – Schools Use of STACs

A secondary headteacher noted that he has saved time since the introduction of STACs. He used STACs for trend information, so that he could look at performance in one year and how that might impact on the next. Previously he had needed to refer to different sources of information that could not be collated over time.

Good Practice Example 4.4 – Schools Use of STACs

A secondary headteacher noted that when analysing STAC data, he had examined the data from every department that had consistently good results over the last four years or so, or from any department that had had a significant improvement. Staff in these departments were then asked to say, on a single page of A4, what had contributed to their department's performance. What emerged was the importance of learning and teaching relationships as well as some curricular related issues in terms of how the curriculum was taught to some children. In every case there were general conclusions that could be drawn, that were not related to subject content. The headteacher felt that without this additional layer of analysis, they could not have drawn these conclusions together.

This headteacher also noted that ScotXed has helped him and his colleagues to recognise that they have access to a wide range of data and that they can analyse these in a number of different ways. An example he provided was using them to examine the wider catchment area and community in which they were based. He felt that ScotXed had helped to broaden their horizons in terms of data analysis.

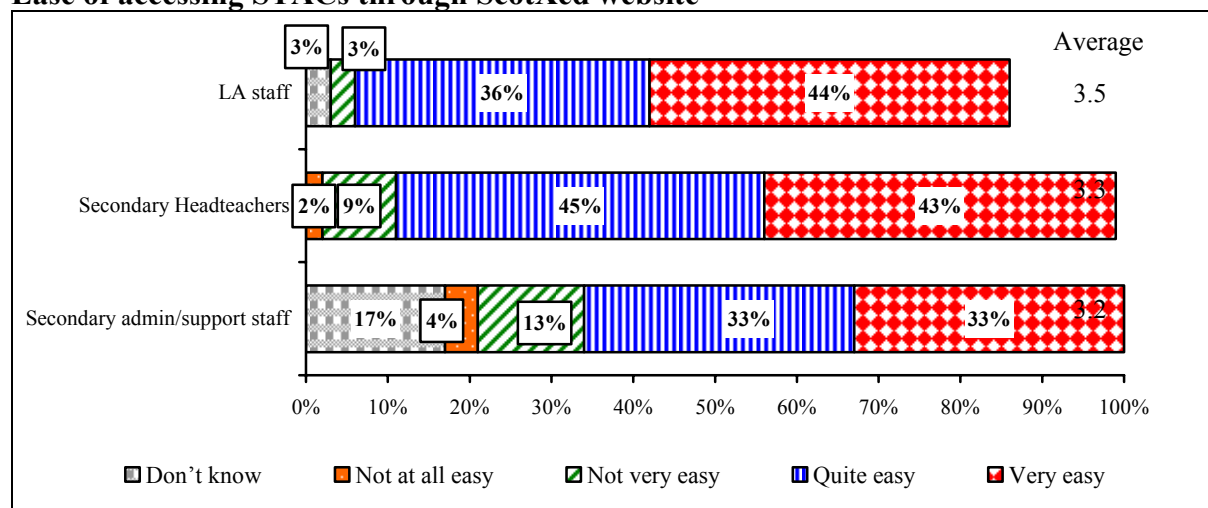
4.3.4 Ease of Access to STACs

During the course of the telephone interviews, respondents were asked to say how easy they found it to access STACs through the ScotXed website (see chart 4.7).

Secondary headteachers were the most positive, with 88% claiming that it is “very” or “quite” easy to access STACs through the ScotXed website (in comparison to 80% of local authority staff and 66% of school admin / support staff). Among admin / support staff, just under one in five respondents (17%) claimed it was not easy to access STACs through the ScotXed website, although a further 17% provided a “don’t know” response.

Within local authorities, slightly higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives (88%) claimed STACs was “very” or “quite” easy to access compared to 72% of those who are involved in using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis and 78% of those who are involved in its use at a policy or strategic level, but these differences are not statistically significant.

Chart 4.7
Ease of accessing STACs through ScotXed website



Source: Q21 (secondary schools) & Q34 (LA)
Base: All who access STACs for information
LA staff (52); HT (44); Admin/support staff (24)

The 2 local authority staff who had noted that it was not very easy or not at all easy to obtain STACs data were asked to say what could be done to make the process of obtaining STACs information easier. They both noted that the data could be placed on an easier site, and one noted the need for an easy link from the Scottish Executive website.

A substantial group of respondents participating in the qualitative discussions also noted that there were some accessibility issues due to the presentation and comprehensibility of data. There are two issues here: one relating to the tone and design of the STACs web-portal, and the other to its statistical complexity and mathematics-style presentation. Less statistically-minded users reported comprehension difficulties which can lead to irritation and reluctance to use the site. One headteacher noted that he had a mathematical background and found it easy to understand STACs data; another at the same group noted that they generally discussed the data with local authority staff to clarify its meaning before presenting this to staff; another respondent noted that he had used consultants to present this data to staff. In some instances, while headteachers may be the main users of STACs data, they will often

work with other colleagues such as deputy heads or SQA co-ordinators to access and present these data.

Other problems arise with how the data are expressed on the tables due to the fact that some of the statistics are presented in ways that heads or staff do not perceive as relevant.

Another factor impacting on this is that usage of STACs tends to be limited to certain points in time and that irregular and / or infrequent use of STACs means that staff may not have enough opportunities to familiarise themselves with the data or how to manipulate them.

4.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCOTXED

During the course of the telephone interviews, all respondents were asked to give their level of agreement with a number of statements in relation to support and promotion of electronic data exchange and the benefits that ScotXed brings to this (using a scoring system where 1 was “extremely unsuccessful” to 10 “extremely successful”). Overall, views were largely positive across all statements (see table 4.3).

When we examine responses of local authority staff specifically, there are no statistically significant differences, with the exception of the statement relating to “*ScotXed provides sufficient resources to take forward implementation*”, where designated ScotXed representatives were less positive than those involved on a day-to-day basis (average score of 5.4 compared to 7.3).

There were no statistically significant differences between primary and secondary headteachers, although higher proportions of primary headteachers provided “don’t know” responses to each of these statements. Respondents in secondary schools were more positive than those in primary schools.

Table 4.3**Agreement with statements in relation to support and promotion of electronic data exchange (based on score of 1-10)**

	LA staff	Head teachers	Admin/supp staff
	N=66	N=126	N=127
	Average	Average	Average
ScotXed encourages schools to keep their MIS up to date	8.2	7.2	7.6
ScotXed encourages local authorities to keep their MIS up to date	8.7	N/A	N/A
ScotXed enables schools to keep their MIS systems up to date	6.8	6.8	7.3
ScotXed enables local authorities to keep their MIS up to date	7.3	N/A	N/A
ScotXed promotes better use of MIS in schools	7.5	6.6	6.9
ScotXed promotes better use of MIS in local authorities	8.0	N/A	N/A
ScotXed supports the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data	8.6	7.8	7.8
ScotXed increases the speed of data exchanges	8.3	7.7	7.7
ScotXed increases the ease of data exchanges	7.9	7.3	7.7
ScotXed increases the accuracy of data	8.2	7.5	7.8
ScotXed increases the range / scope of the data exchanged in Scottish Education	8.2	7.5	7.5
ScotXed makes technical information clear and accessible	7.4	6.5	7.0
ScotXed provides sufficient resources to take forward implementation	6.1	6.4	6.6
ScotXed has acted upon issues arising from previous monitoring and reviews	7.9	6.7	7.2

Source: Q13 (schools) & Q23 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

The qualitative research supported the evidence that ScotXed has had success in achieving many of its aims and objectives in terms of improving the information flow and quality between the Scottish Executive, local authorities and schools.

Respondents felt, in the main, that they were able to fulfil ScotXed annual requirements, and, in the process, were improving electronic record-keeping and data delivery overall. There is no question – although much of the evidence is indirect and subtle – that fulfilling ScotXed’s annual requirements has improved and benefited school management and governance, and has played a role in better, more useable, more comprehensive, more accurate and up-to-date school and MIS data. However, one or two respondents in schools noted that even though electronic data collection has become easier, they still rely on hard copy information in some instances. For example, pupil information is kept in hard and electronic copy in case of fire drill exercises or to have information on parental contact in case of a failure in IT systems.

As with respondents within schools and local authorities, stakeholder organisations were largely positive about the benefits brought about in electronic data exchange by ScotXed and those who were working with ScotXed outputs commented that they are easy to work with.

However, there was still some reluctance on the part of staff within schools to give ScotXed credit for its part in the better management of their school data, and a tendency to credit improvements and better management to their own initiatives with their MIS systems, rather than seeing how these issues are inter-connected.

In summary:

- A range of roles are attributed to ScotXed, although there is highest awareness of its roles among local authority staff and less understanding among school staff, particularly those in an admin / support role. Key roles attributed to ScotXed relate to the collation, collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical data;
- There is little perception of a ScotXed Partnership, particularly among schools where the focus of relationships is with local authority staff. This means that for many users of ScotXed, there is a sense of remoteness from ScotXed and an inequality between different partners in the Partnership. Some local authority staff and many school staff see themselves as purely being providers of data;
- ScotXed is one of a number of channels used to provide or receive data, although it would appear that there is a degree of confusion in the relationship between MIS used and ScotXed. Some local authorities have developed bespoke MIS;
- Given this confusion over MIS, some respondents are using ScotXed without realising it and the positive benefits that ScotXed may be bringing to education are attributed to other forms of MIS or other providers of MIS;
- Local authority staff and secondary headteachers use STACs and views on STACs are largely positive. Most primary headteachers were aware of STACs, and many requested a STACs equivalent that would incorporate attainment data in primary schools. In some instances, local authorities have set up some form of bespoke attainment data MIS for primary schools. Stakeholders were also positive about the benefits and impact of ScotXed and those utilising ScotXed outputs were positive about these and the ease with which they can be used;
- Local authority staff play a significant role in working alongside schools with STACs data and noted the importance of STACs data in their dealings with schools in terms of working with schools to help identify subject strengths and weaknesses and to compare and contrast performance with comparator schools. There are some issues in relation to a lack of understanding of STACs in terms of its presentation and comprehensibility, particularly from those who do not have a statistical background.
- Views are largely positive in relation to the support and promotion of electronic data exchange and the benefits that ScotXed brings to this. Qualitative data confirms that ScotXed has had success in achieving many of its aims and objectives in terms of improving the information flow and quality between the Scottish Executive, local authorities and schools.

- Virtually all qualitative respondents agreed that data collection and provision had improved in recent years, both in terms of ease of access, greater levels of consistency in information collected and therefore availability, and the overall quality of data.

CHAPTER 5: THE IMPACT OF SCOTXED

The previous chapter examined usage of ScotXed. This chapter now focuses on specific impacts that can be attributed to ScotXed, either directly or indirectly.

5.1 IMPACT ON SPECIFIC TASKS

In the previous chapter, we noted reasons why respondents had involvement with ScotXed and, for each element of involvement, they were asked to say whether ScotXed had made the task easier, harder or had made no difference. As can be seen in tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, for most of these tasks across all respondent types, a much higher proportion of respondents claimed that ScotXed had made tasks easier rather than harder or making no difference. This pattern is the same when we examine headteachers within secondary and primary schools and admin / support staff within secondary and primary schools.

Table 5.1
Whether ScotXed has made tasks easier, harder or made no difference to perform (tasks common to all respondents)

	LA staff			Headteachers			Admin/support staff		
	%			%			%		
	Easier	No diff	Harder	Easier	No diff	Harder	Easier	No diff	Harder
Attendance, Absence and Exclusions in EA Schools	77	11	5	58	25	11	47	42	5
School/ Pupils Census	71	9	11	63	19	9	53	29	12
School Leavers (winter and summer, secondary and special schools)	65	18	4	69	17	5	55	35	8
Staff Census	59	11	20	59	19	11	53	23	16
School Placing Requests	56	31	6	47	42	0	52	36	0
School Meals Survey	45	35	0	50	36	0	47	45	2

Source: Q6c (schools) & Q8c (LA)

Base: All who specified tasks at Q6a/b (schools) and at Q8a/b (LA)

Table 5.2
Whether ScotXed has made tasks easier, harder or made no difference to perform (LA tasks only)

	%		
	Easier	No difference	Harder
Collecting/transferring social work staffing & vacancies	80	20	0
Collecting/transferring child protection data	65	29	0
Collecting/transferring school estates core facts data	64	21	7
Exchanging leavers from secondary schools and special schools data with Careers Scotland	52	22	4
Collecting/transferring Children Looked After Survey data	52	23	6
Collecting/transferring survey of children educated outwith school data	46	33	0
Collecting/transferring provision of physical education data or collecting/transferring S1/S2 class size survey data	41	35	5
Collecting/transferring budgeted school running costs data	38	35	0
Collecting/transferring schools openings & closures data	38	46	3

Source: Q8c (LA)

Base: All who specified tasks at Q8a/b (LA)

Table 5.3
Whether ScotXed has made tasks easier, harder or made no difference to perform (school tasks only)

	Headteachers			Admin/support staff		
	%			%		
	Easier	No diff	Harder	Easier	No diff	Harder
School Attainment (STACs)	66	17	7	58	27	4
Scottish Candidate Number Administration File	56	19	2	56	35	0
Leavers from secondary and special schools	62	21	3	46	35	11
Pupil Leaving/ Enrolling Files and Messages	61	26	0	65	26	3
Pre School and Day Care Census	54	43	4	63	26	0
Independent School Census and Grant Aided Special Schools	57	29	14	50	25	0
Independent School Leavers and Grant Aided Special School Leavers	57	29	14	33	33	0

Source: Q6c (schools)

Base: All who specified tasks at Q6a/b (schools)

Where local authority staff had noted that a task had been made easier or harder with the introduction of ScotXed, they were asked to give their reasons for this. Regardless of the task under consideration, a number of key themes emerged as to why each had been made easier.

These included:

- Electronic data exchange is good;
- Easier to access / use (quicker, more efficient);
- Better quality of data;
- Good to have information in central location.

While most comments were positive about tasks undertaken via ScotXed, it is also worth noting that a small proportion of respondents noted the need for guidelines to be provided by the ScotXed Unit to help with its smooth running.

From the small number of LA staff who claimed that specific tasks were made harder, the key reasons were that:

- This involves more work or creates more work for staff;
- More data is involved in ScotXed;
- It produces additional information that schools and local authorities will not use.

Comments made during the qualitative discussions echoed those from the telephone interviews and almost all respondents – including stakeholders with experience of working with ScotXed outputs – participating in the qualitative element noted that ScotXed had helped to make tasks easier. Again, views were positive about electronic data exchange and this was seen as quick, efficient and effective. However, one issue noted by most of these respondents was that while tasks have become easier, the number of tasks has increased, so the overall workload associated with ScotXed has increased in recent years and this has implications for resources, training and so on. These issues will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

A number of headteachers noted that ScotXed has helped to ensure common standards and guidelines across local authorities. One primary headteacher noted that ScotXed had forced a common standard and clear guidelines for all schools.

A member of staff within a local authority also noted that ScotXed had made education authorities and schools more accountable and unified in the way in which data is captured and information provided.

While most stakeholders were not involved in the collection of data for ScotXed, there was a perception from some that the number of tasks has increased in recent years and that while the quality of the data collected has improved in recent years, that workloads for school admin staff may have increased.

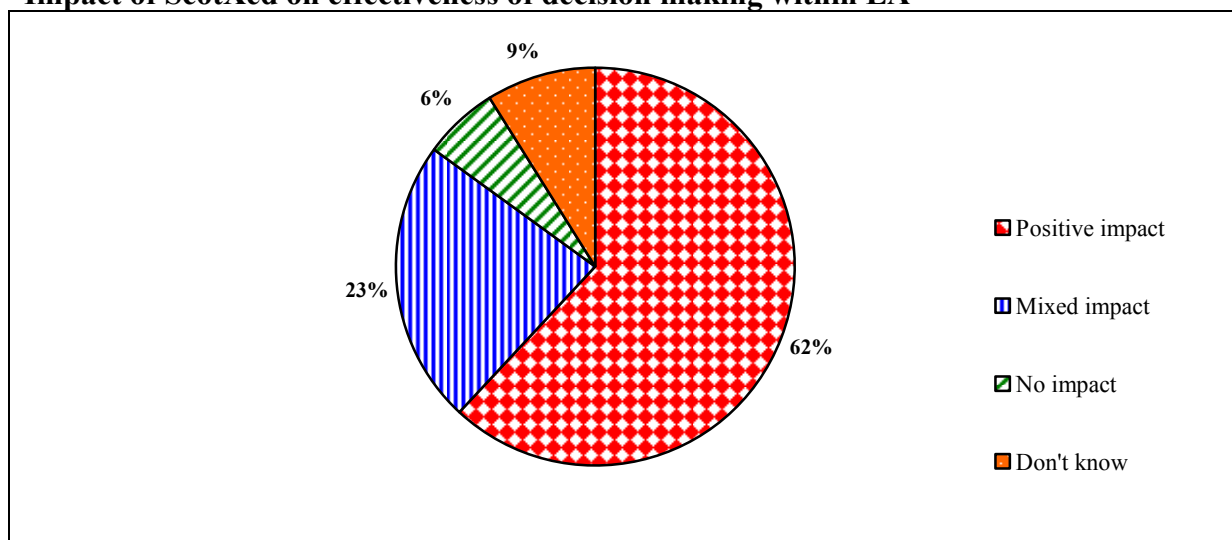
5.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1 Impact of ScotXed on Effectiveness of Decision Making within Local Authority

All local authority staff participating in the telephone interviews were asked to say what impact ScotXed has had on the effectiveness of decision making within their local authority (a positive impact, mixed impact, negative impact or no impact). As can be seen in chart 5.1, a majority of local authority staff (62%) claimed that the impact has been positive, 23% that this has been mixed. None claimed that this had had a negative impact and only 6% claimed that there was no impact at all. Those involved in the use of ScotXed at a policy or strategic level within their local authority were most positive (78%).

Chart 5.1

Impact of ScotXed on effectiveness of decision making within LA



Source: Q15 (LA)
Base: LA staff (66)

The 41 local authority staff attributing a **positive** impact were asked to explain why, and key themes emerging were:

- Better quality information / better quality of information when making policy decisions / more information available / more reliable information (49%; 20 respondents);

- Easier access to data (20%; 8 respondents);
- Has helped to improve processes / QA within local authority (12%; 5 respondents);
- Positive comments on STACs (7%; 3 respondents).

Key themes identified by the 16 local authority staff noting a **mixed** impact were:

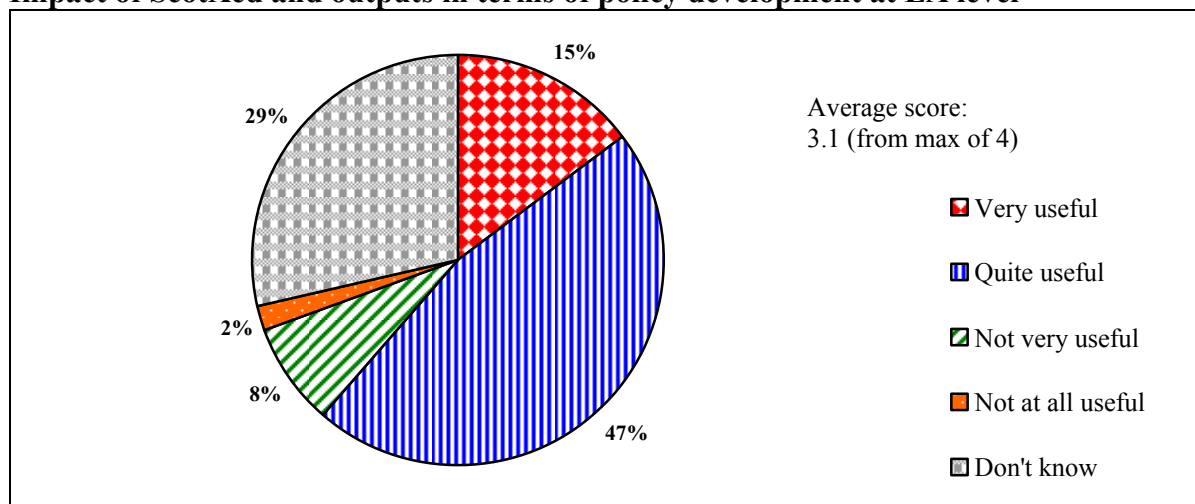
- Positive impact on some areas but not others (40%; 6 respondents) – the qualitative data suggested a positive impact in that ScotXed has made the collection of data easier, but there were also perceptions that increasing numbers of requests for new and different data have created heavier workloads;
- Depends on source of information (13%; 2 respondents);
- Data readily available but usefulness questionable (13%; 2 respondents);
- Creates burden of collecting additional information local authorities can't use (13%; 2 respondents).

5.2.2 Impact of ScotXed on Policy Development at a Local Authority Level

All local authority staff were also asked to say how useful the ScotXed Partnership and its outputs have been in terms of policy development at a local authority level (see chart 5.2). Overall, 62% of staff claimed that this has been “very” (15%) or “quite” (47%) useful and only 10% that it has not been useful to any extent. However, 29% of local authority staff provided an answer of “don’t know” and this was highest among those involved in using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis for the electronic exchange of data (44%).

Chart 5.2

Impact of ScotXed and outputs in terms of policy development at LA level



Source: Q17a (LA)

Base: LA staff (66)

Again, the 41 local authority staff who felt that impacts had been useful were asked to give their reasons for this and key themes emerging were:

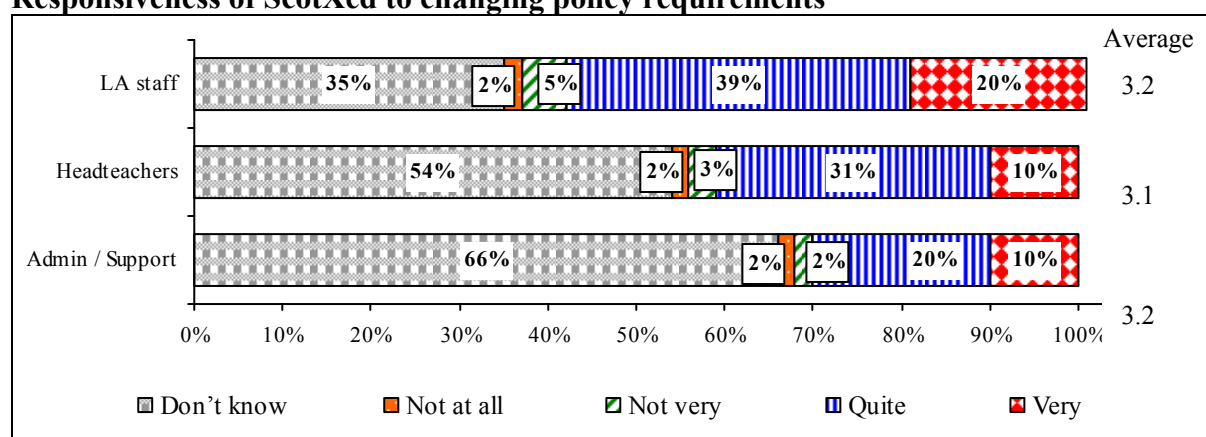
- Helps us to improve our focus / processes / drive agenda for policy making (41%; 17 respondents);
- Good quality / reliable data (34%; 14 respondents);
- Positive comments re STACs (22%; 9 respondents).

The key reason emerging from the 6 respondents who felt that impacts had not been useful was a lack of appreciation by the ScotXed Unit of the amount of work done by local authorities (33%; 2 respondents).

5.2.3 Responsiveness of ScotXed to Changing Policy Requirements

All respondents were asked to say how responsive they believed ScotXed was to changing policy requirements and, of those providing a response other than “don’t know”, views were largely positive, with a majority claiming that ScotXed has been “very” or “quite” responsive (see chart 5.3). However, significant proportions of all respondents were unable to comment on this specific question (35% of local authority staff, 54% of headteachers and 66% of admin / support staff). In examining sub-groups, higher proportions of headteachers and admin / support staff based in primary schools provided a “don’t know” response than did their counterparts in secondary schools.

Chart 5.3
Responsiveness of ScotXed to changing policy requirements



Source: Q9 (schools) & Q17c (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

Key themes emerging from local authority staff (n = 39) as to ways in which ScotXed has been responsive to changing policy needs related to:

- ScotXed keen to work in partnership / listen to our views / provide support (62%; 24 respondents);
- ScotXed responds quickly to changes (13%; 5 respondents);
- Help us to review our policies (5%; 2 respondents).

Only 4 local authority staff commented that ScotXed had not been responsive to changing policy needs and 3 of these noted that the ScotXed agenda is based on Ministerial requirements, not that of the local authority; one commented that ScotXed do not respond to problems.

The qualitative discussions showed that most respondents in schools viewed ScotXed primarily as a source to access statistical data. Some respondents within local authorities noted that ScotXed data is utilised for changing policy requirements and / or for developing policy, although there was still a focus from some on the application of data for school performance.

Some stakeholders were very positive about using ScotXed in relation to development of policy, although this related very much to their role within their organisation. Some stakeholders participating in the qualitative discussions noted that there are two distinct and different demands on the use of ScotXed; one related purely to changing policy and often involved very in-depth and sophisticated levels of analysis that will provide data as to whether a specific policy is working; the other related to the need for measurements of quality within Scottish education.

5.2.4 Monitoring the Impact of Education Policies at a School, Local and National Level

When asked to say how the ScotXed Partnership has allowed monitoring of the impact of education policies at a school, local and national level, a range of comments emerged, each made by small proportions of respondents (see table 5.4). However, high proportions of headteachers (44%), local authority staff (45%) and admin / support staff in schools (85%) were unable to provide a response to this question.

Table 5.4
How the ScotXed Partnership has allowed monitoring of the impact of education policies

	LA staff	Headteacher	Admin/support staff
	N= 66	N=126	N=127
	%	%	%
Obtaining comparative data / monitoring	24	12	3
Improved data / comprehensive data	8	11	1
Measurement / monitoring of STACs	8	3	-
Data used for reporting / planning	9	5	2
Has not done it at all	8	13	6
Don't know	45	44	85

Source: Q28 (schools) & Q39 (LA)

Base: LA Staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

While the qualitative data echoes themes emerging from the quantitative interviews, this also highlighted some key issues that impacted on views of ScotXed and its role within policy development. While respondents were very positive about ScotXed and electronic data exchange, many noted that in relation to policy development, they received (or claimed to receive), little or no rationale for what is collected or explanations about how collected data are informing policy or initiatives. This was particularly the case for school based staff but some local authority staff also felt a degree of remoteness, and some respondents queried why data were requested and what they would be used for. There was often an assumption that information had been requested by the Minister. Some stakeholders involved in policy development noted that explanations were not provided as to why specific data were being requested and that this can serve to reinforce remoteness on the part of school staff in particular.

This remoteness on the part of respondents can engender a level of disassociation from ScotXed. For primary schools where ScotXed is perceived to be of little direct benefit or to not offer much by way of rewards for their time spent collating and providing data, the level of remoteness was more so than in secondary schools. One local authority member of staff noted,

“Secondary schools can see an immediate benefit of the big push they have in September to collect and send the data in, although it is a big effort to provide that information and it’s very hard to give an incentive to a school to put in all of this effort if they don’t get anything in return. Secondary schools know that they get STACs. Primaries get the school handbook data ... but it’s a bit more of a distance for primaries.”

Overall the evidence suggests that this aspect of ScotXed’s role is less salient than may be desirable in helping engender a sense of partnership and cooperation between the parties involved.

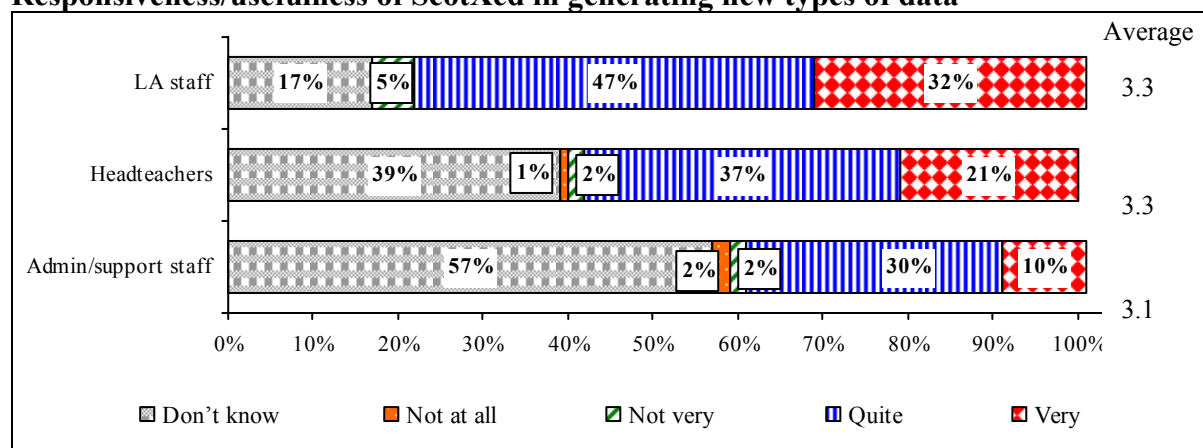
5.2.5 Responsiveness / Usefulness of ScotXed in Generating New Types of Data

All school staff were asked to say how responsive they believed ScotXed was in generating new types of data and local authority staff were asked to say how useful they believed ScotXed is in generating new types of data.

As shown in chart 5.4, of those providing a response other than “don’t know”, views were largely positive, with a majority claiming that ScotXed has been “very” or “quite” responsive. However, significant proportions of all respondents were unable to comment on this specific question (17% of local authority staff, 39% of headteachers and 57% of admin / support staff). In examining sub-groups, higher proportions of headteachers and admin / support staff based in primary schools provided a “don’t know” response than did their counterparts in secondary schools.

Chart 5.4

Responsiveness/usefulness of ScotXed in generating new types of data



Source: Q10 (schools) & Q19 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

A range of comments was provided, each by small numbers of local authority staff, as to why ScotXed has been useful in generating new types of data. These can be summarised as follows:

- Quality of data / ease of use of data = 38%, 20 respondents;
- Provides good support to LAs / schools = 15%, 8 respondents;
- Positive comments re ScotXed Unit = 13%, 7 respondents;
- Good range of information = 10%, 5 respondents;
- Good comparative / benchmarking data = 10%, 5 respondents;

- Access to STACs / statistics = 4%, 2 respondents.

Comments from respondents participating in the qualitative research included:

“ScotXed has really improved the quality of data available to us.”

Secondary headteacher

“This has created a reduction in what used to be a very onerous task. It is much quicker to produce statistical returns.”

Admin / support staff in secondary school

“ScotXed has forced a common standard and clear guidelines for us, although there is a big resource issue.”

Admin / support staff in secondary school

Good Practice Examples – Benefits of ScotXed

Good Practice Example 5.1 – Benefits of ScotXed

One member of admin / support staff within a secondary school noted that ScotXed data had been used to help develop awareness of absences within their school, which in turn has led to changes in behaviour management. The school had developed a behaviour management spreadsheet and introduced home link officers and corridor patrols. In this way, they prevented children wandering around school corridors when they should have been in class. Additionally, they were able to chase up non attendees at school much more quickly than previously. The school noted a reduction in the level of pupil absenteeism.

Good Practice Example 5.2 – Benefits of ScotXed

Another member of admin / support staff noted that using ScotXed had enabled them to set up a system whereby they could easily track pupil attendance at their school. In monitoring pupil attendance they had introduced a system of texting parents when a child was absent to find out why. They noted that levels of absenteeism had declined as the children were aware that they would be chased up for non attendance.

Good Practice Example 5.3 – Benefits of ScotXed

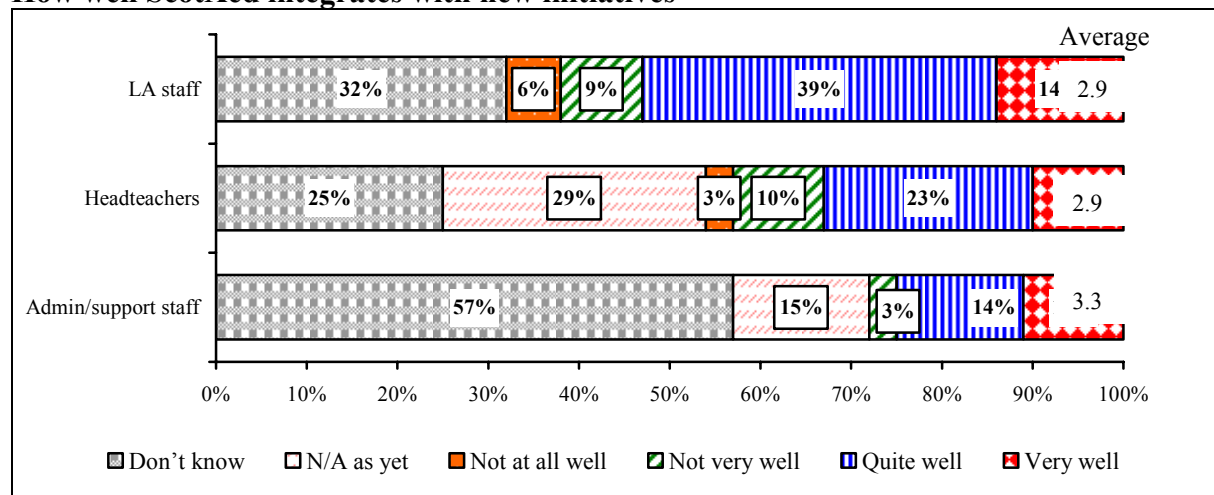
A member of admin / support staff in a secondary school noted that the teacher census had provided them with valuable data within the school. When the census was being undertaken, the information collected was put into a database. They found out that some teachers had qualifications about which the school had previously been unaware and these qualifications had been utilised when cover was needed for other classes. The benefit of having this information together in a single source was noted.

5.2.6 Integrating with New Initiatives

All respondents were asked to say how well ScotXed integrates with new initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence, Literacy and Numeracy, Assessment is for Learning and so on.

Once again, of those providing a response other than “don’t know”, views were largely positive, with more claiming that ScotXed integrates well rather than not well with these initiatives (see chart 5.5). Again, significant proportions of all respondents were unable to comment on this specific question (32% of local authority staff, 25% of headteachers and 57% of admin / support staff). Slightly higher proportions of headteachers than admin / support staff (33% compared to 25%), claimed that ScotXed integrates well with new initiatives, although high proportions of respondents were unable to provide an answer or noted that it is not applicable as yet. Local authority staff were most positive about how well ScotXed integrates with new initiatives. Staff in secondary schools were slightly more positive than those in primary schools.

Chart 5.5
How well ScotXed integrates with new initiatives



Source: Q11 (schools) & Q21 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

Qualitative discussions showed that for many respondents, particularly admin / support staff and / or those in primary schools, ScotXed was seen only as a channel from which to provide or obtain statistical information. On this basis, any relationship between ScotXed and other initiatives was seen to be very tenuous. There was little comment from these respondents over the extent to which ScotXed was seen to complement other educational initiatives and some respondents felt unable to comment on this issue. Stakeholders were more positive about the integration between ScotXed and other educational initiatives.

That said, most respondents felt that both ScotXed and any new initiatives are there to help bring about higher standards within education. A number of respondents in the groups and stakeholder interviews too referred to policies that had changed – most notably, to changes to the way schools deal with comparisons when pupils are bi-lingual and the way that the basis for comparing schools has shifted away from using only free school meal entitlement data, both of which changed in response to feedback from schools – but still did not tend to attribute the policy changes either to ScotXed or to their own role within the partnership process.

There were comments from a small number of respondents that ScotXed can work against the objectives of other education initiatives and cited A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE) as a specific example of this. Their view was that ACfE is designed to encourage innovation and flexibility in teaching, such as new approaches to problem solving which cannot be measured statistically, while ScotXed only measures the ability to provide statistical data based on examinations. The aim of one was seen by some to contradict the other and priority was given to A Curriculum for Excellence over and above ScotXed. However, this was not a view shared by all stakeholders. One noted,

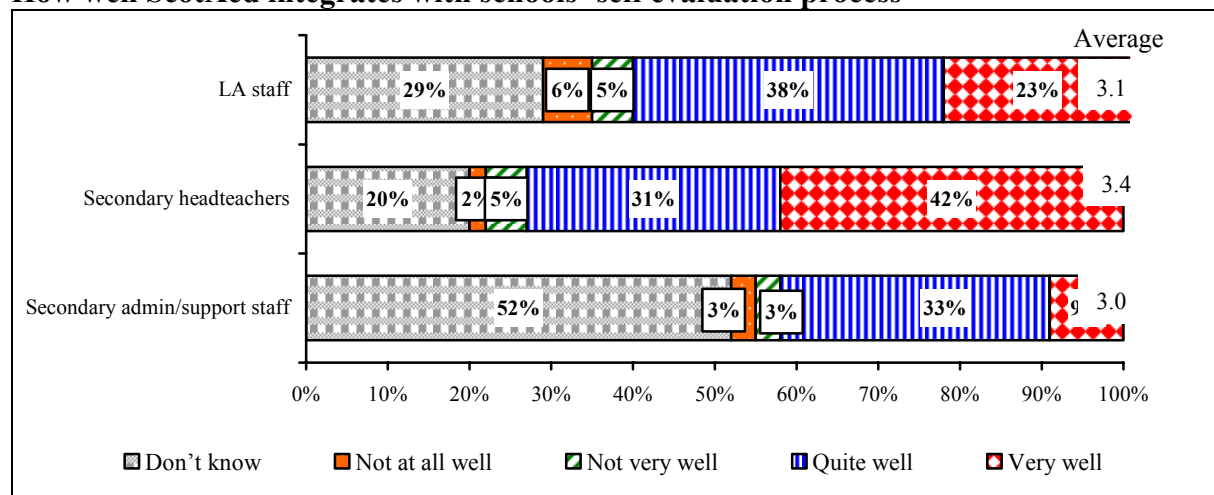
“With A Curriculum for Excellence coming onstream and Assessment is for Learning, we would hope that the information which is collected would be consistent with the principles of the new policy direction.”

5.2.7 Integration with Self Evaluation

In considering how well ScotXed integrates with schools’ self evaluation processes, higher proportions of secondary headteachers agreed that ScotXed integrates well with their school’s self evaluation process than did secondary admin / support staff (73% compared to 42%) (see chart 5.6). Secondary headteachers were also more positive than local authority staff (73% compared to 61%).

Among local authority staff, higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives believed that ScotXed integrates well with schools’ self evaluation processes than those involved with ScotXed on a day-to-day basis or at a strategic level (68% designated ScotXed representatives compared to 61% day-to-day involvement and 52% at a strategic level), although this difference is not statistically significant.

Chart 5.6
How well ScotXed integrates with schools’ self evaluation process



Source: Q12 (schools) & Q22 (LA)
Base: LA staff (66); HT (126); Admin/support staff (127)

From the qualitative interviews, there were comments that self-evaluation has increased in importance in recent years and ScotXed is seen to provide important and useful data to feed into this process. Secondary headteachers in particular were accessing STACs data for self-evaluation purposes and using these data for discussions with other school staff, local authority staff and external bodies such as HMIE during inspections. Local authority staff

were also accessing STACs data and using this for discussions with schools as part of their self-evaluation process. There were some comments that improvements in the timings of the release of data have helped with self-evaluation. One local authority member of staff noted,

“I think schools see this [ScotXed data] as a management tool. I think if you were to ask class teachers, they probably hate it but I think that as an improvement tool, it provides information to headteachers. It’s the same as a personal appraisal at work, you’re never going to be shocked by bad results as it tends to reinforce expectations of departments. We’ve had many conversations about the results in a particular subject about the school and someone will say right away ‘oh that’s because of this and that.’ It reinforces the management knowledge of the school.”

5.3 MINIMISING BUREAUCRATIC BURDEN

One of the key objectives of ScotXed is a reduction in bureaucratic burden and this was one of the issues covered during the course of telephone interviews and qualitative discussions.

All those participating in telephone interviews were asked to say how successful on a scale of 1 to 10 the ScotXed Partnership has been in minimising the bureaucratic burden placed upon local authorities (a score of 1 denoted “extremely unsuccessful” and 10 denoted “extremely successful”).

Table 5.5 shows that there are some differences between sub-groups. Within local authority staff, higher proportions of those at a strategic level gave a score of 7 or more than did ScotXed designated representatives or those using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis. The difference between the 2 former groups is statistically significant.

Within schools, higher proportions of headteachers in secondary schools than in primary schools gave a score of 7 or more and this difference is statistically significant. Similarly, admin / support staff in secondary schools were slightly more positive. However, across both these groups, relatively high proportions of respondents provided an answer of “don’t know”.

Table 5.5
Success of ScotXed in minimising bureaucratic burden

	Score awarded (%)				% Don't Know	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3		
Strategic LA staff	4	60	13	4	17	6.9
Designated ScotXed representatives	-	32	60	8	-	5.6
Day to day	-	39	45	6	11	5.8
Secondary HTs	4	40	16	9	31	6.6
Primary HTs	2	18	33	20	27	5.1
Primary admin / support staff	-	16	26	10	49	5.3
Secondary admin / support staff	3	24	25	9	38	5.8

Source: Q24a (LAs); Q14 (schools)

Base: All respondents (LAs = 66; schools admin / support staff = 127; schools headteachers = 126);

Comments made by respondents in both the telephone and qualitative surveys were that the quality of data produced by ScotXed has improved and that data transfer is easier with less duplication than previously. However, as the following quotation from a member of staff at a local authority illustrates, there were also comments that there are requests for new and different information and, because of this, the workload (including that demanded by ScotXed) has been seen to increase, particularly for admin / support staff who are primarily responsible for collecting and providing information. So, while the use of electronic data exchange in a central location is seen to be quicker and easier, overall there is a perceived increase in workloads.

“I think the level of information and amount of detail is only going to grow. We are going to soon have to add on disabilities in different databases and different systems. It’s just going to continue and the range of information is just going to grow to a ridiculous level. And the burden on office staff and school staff to update these databases will grow so that they end up spending all day doing them.”

A headteacher in a secondary school commented,

“It [ScotXed] has definitely eased the burden and with electronic timetabling systems it does mean they [school staff] should be getting accurate and up to the minute information. But it has centralised the burden from a member of senior management to a member of office staff.”

Some respondents – particularly those in primary schools – also noted that they do not always understand why they are asked to provide specific information and this lack of understanding may lead staff to query information requests. This may in part relate to the wide range of staff who may be involved in working with ScotXed. For example, administrative staff in a managerial position (such as Business Managers or Cluster Admin Managers) generally felt that they understood why specific information was being requested. However, explanations were not always then provided to more junior clerical and administrative staff who may be actually collecting the data.

There were also comments that, internally within schools, there can still be difficulties in collecting information from other teaching staff (for example, for the staff census), particularly when there is no clear explanation as to the purpose of the data collection or its benefit to those providing the data. One stakeholder noted,

“We do think it’s important that Scottish school teachers have an understanding, have a broader picture themselves of how policy is arrived at in Scottish education, and obviously ScotXed is part of that process, so it’s important that they have an explanation That’s why we think more work needs to be done in terms of promoting the work of ScotXed.”

Likewise, collecting and correcting data from parents can be time-consuming for staff; and many admin / support staff responsible for accuracy had doubts about the accuracy of the data as a whole when they could see how difficult it was to keep their own input correct and up-to-date.

All respondents participating in the telephone interviews were asked to say how successful the ScotXed Partnership has been in moving the burden of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff (a score of 1 denoted “extremely unsuccessful” and 10 denoted “extremely successful”). As shown in table 5.6, around half or more respondents provided a score of 7 or more, although higher proportions of admin / support staff provided a “don’t know” response. The difference in responses between headteachers and admin / support staff is statistically significant. The difference in responses between primary and secondary headteachers is not statistically significant.

Across local authority staff, higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives (76%) gave a score of 7 or more than did those using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis or those at a strategic level. The difference between those using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis and designated ScotXed representatives is statistically significant.

When we compare the views of designated local authority ScotXed representatives with those of primary and secondary headteachers, differences are statistically significant.

Table 5.6
Success of ScotXed Partnership in moving the burden of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff in schools

	Score awarded (%)				% Don't Know	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3		
HTs	12	42	21	19	8	6.5
Admin / support staff	13	41	15	5	26	7.3
Secondary HTs	15	44	18	18	5	6.8
Primary HTs	9	38	20	22	11	6.1
Secondary admin / support staff	19	45	13	9	14	7.4
Primary admin / support staff	7	42	15	2	35	7.3
Designated ScotXed representative	12	64	12	-	12	7.9
Day-to-day involvement	-	67	17	6	11	6.8
Strategic involvement	13	43	21	-	22	7.4

Source: Q15 (schools); Q25 (LAs)

Base: All respondents (schools = 253; LAs = 66)

The qualitative research suggested that admin / support staff have, to an extent, removed some of the bureaucratic burden of data collection from teaching staff and adopted a higher level of responsibility for data collection within their schools. The increased use of electronic data exchange has also made data collection and provision easier. However, many respondents, including some stakeholders, felt that the number of requests for new and different types of information had increased in recent years, albeit that the process of collecting data had been made simpler and easier.

All local authority staff were also asked to say what had been the main benefits of the ScotXed Partnership to teaching staff in schools in their local authority. Key comments were as follows:

- Access to better quality information = 32%, 21 respondents;
- Benefit of access to STACs = 14%, 9 respondents;

- Burden moved from teaching to admin staff = 11%, 7 respondents;
- Teachers not involved in process = 9%, 6 respondents.

These themes were echoed by the qualitative research, where respondents perceived the burden of data collection as sitting with admin and support staff rather than teaching staff. Again, from the quantitative data there were acknowledgements from local authority staff that the main drawback to administrative staff in schools was increased burden / workload (cited by 55% (n=36) of local authority staff). Other drawbacks, cited by small numbers of respondents were:

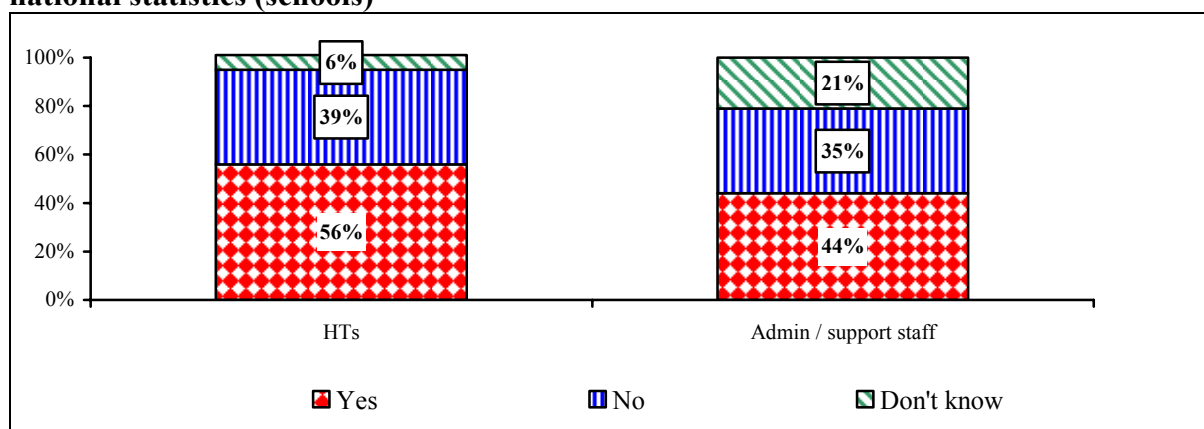
- Having to teach / educate / train staff = 11%, 7 respondents;
- Lack of training = 3%, 2 respondents;
- Lack of money / funds = 3%, 2 respondents;
- Lack of guidance / unclear guidance from ScotXed = 3%, 2 respondents.

5.4 REDUCING THE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN OF PRODUCING NATIONAL STATISTICS

Views on whether the ScotXed Partnership has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within schools were relatively polarised, with 56% of headteachers and 44% of admin/support staff agreeing this is the case, compared to 39% of headteachers and 35% of admin/support staff disagreeing (see chart 5.7). That said, 21% of admin/support staff and 6% of HT provided a “don’t know” response. Headteachers in secondary schools were more positive than those in primary schools (75% compared to 36%). Views of admin / support staff were similar, regardless of school type. Differences between the numbers of secondary headteachers and secondary admin / support staff saying “yes” are statistically significant.

Chart 5.7

Whether ScotXed Partnership has reduced administrative burden of producing national statistics (schools)



Source: Q31 (schools)

Base: All headteachers (126) and admin / support staff (127)

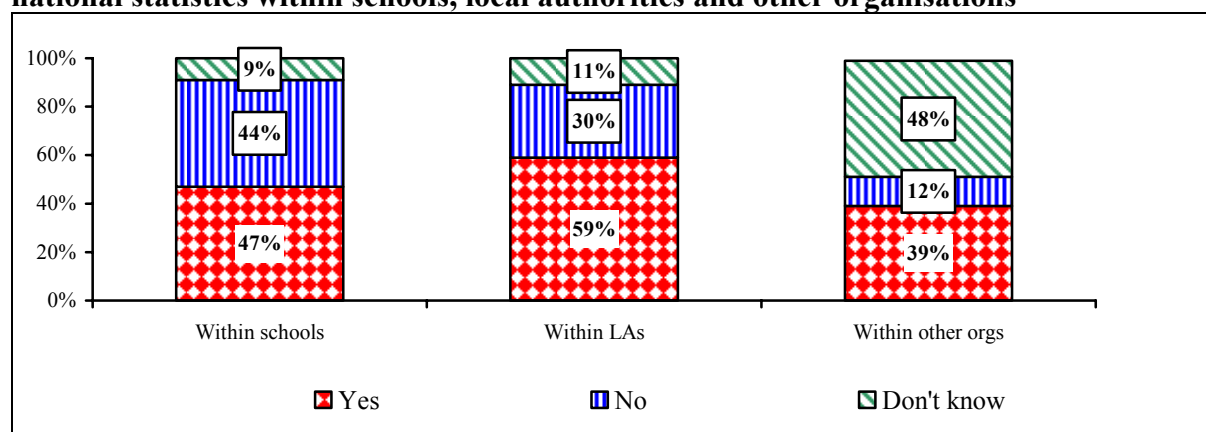
All local authority staff were asked if they believed that the ScotXed Partnership has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within schools, local authorities and other organisations (see chart 5.8). Again, views were relatively polarised particularly for

schools with 47% saying yes and 44% saying no. Views on whether the ScotXed Partnership had reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within local authorities were more positive, with 59% saying yes and 30% saying no.

Whether the ScotXed Partnership has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within other organisations was relatively positive (39% saying yes; 12% saying no), although 48% provided a “don’t know” response. Differences between those saying “yes” are not statistically significant.

Chart 5.8

Whether ScotXed Partnership has reduced administrative burden of producing national statistics within schools, local authorities and other organisations



Source: Q42 (LAs; n = 66)

When we examine the role of different local authority staff, there are some differences. Higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives than those with day-to-day or strategic contact with ScotXed, claimed that ScotXed has not reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within schools (60% compared to 39% involved on a day-to-day basis and 30% of those at a strategic level). Similarly, higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives also claimed that ScotXed has not reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within local authorities (44% compared to 22% strategic and day-to-day). Conversely, higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives claimed that ScotXed has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within other organisations (48% compared to 28% of day-to-day and 39% of strategic).

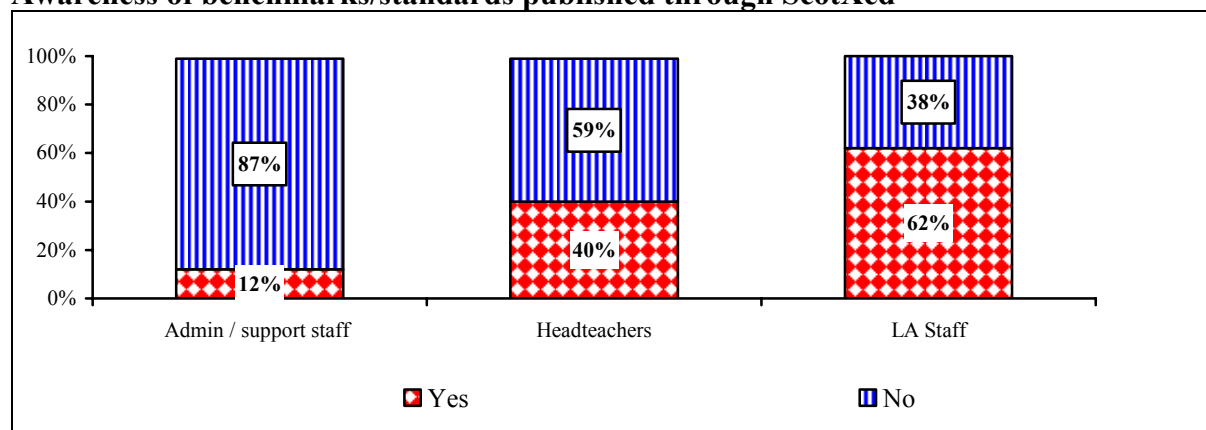
Local authority staff who claimed that ScotXed had not reduced the burden of producing national statistics within schools, local authorities and other organisations were asked to say why. The key reason given related to an increased burden of collecting data, primarily because of an increased number of data requests, although there were also some mentions of inconsistency in MIS / problems with MIS or a need for more resources.

5.5 BENCHMARKING

All respondents participating in telephone interviews were asked if they were aware of any benchmarks / standards that have been published through ScotXed, and 62% of local authority staff, 40% of headteachers and 12% of admin / support staff said they were aware (see chart 5.9).

Chart 5.9

Awareness of benchmarks/standards published through ScotXed



Source: Q23 (schools); Q36 (LAs)

Base: All headteachers (126) and admin / support staff (127); all LA staff (66)

There was little by way of difference in responses between headteachers or admin / support staff in primary or secondary schools. Within local authorities, the highest proportions of those aware of benchmarks / standards were designated ScotXed representatives (76% compared to 61% of those involved on a day-to-day basis and 48% of those at a strategic level).

While respondents referred to using a wide range of benchmark data, the highest proportion (22% of headteachers, 53% of admin/support staff and 20% of LA staff) were unable to remember which benchmarks/standards were used. The highest levels of recall from school staff were for SQA analysis, attainment data, comparative data and attendance figures; highest levels of recall from local authority staff were for attainment data, comparative data, STACs and attendance figures or data relating to their local authority specifically. This lack of recall may be due to schools using benchmark data produced by local authority staff or consultants rather than accessing data directly from ScotXed. Not surprisingly, higher proportions of headteachers were using benchmarks than admin / support staff.

When asked their reasons for using benchmarks, the key reason emerging was for performance comparison. Other reasons provided included the monitoring of performance, for provision of internal reports or for improvements.

All respondents who had used any benchmarks / standards produced by ScotXed were asked to rate these on a scale where 10 denoted “extremely valuable”. Views of school staff were less positive about benchmarks than some other aspects of ScotXed, although the views of local authority staff were positive, with 80% awarding a score of 7 or more.

Table 5.7
Rating of benchmarks / standards published by ScotXed

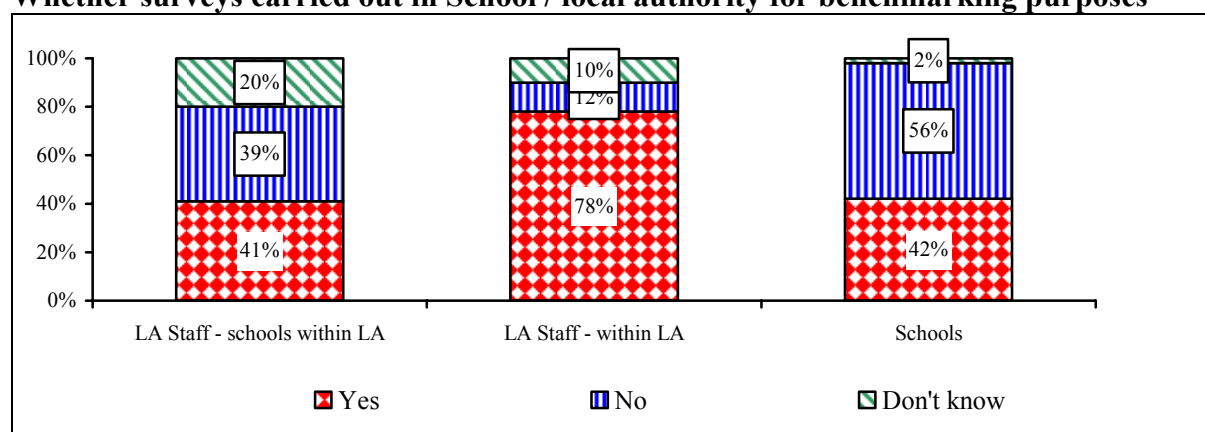
	Score awarded (%)				% Don't Know	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3		
HTs	10	34	32	12	14	6.3
Admin / support staff	13	33	13	7	33	7.1
Secondary HTs	10	39	34	10	10	6.7
Primary HTs	9	39	31	12	9	6.1
LA Staff	27	53	7	-	12	8.2

Source: Q26 (schools); Q37c (LAs)

Base: All respondents (schools = 66; LAs = 41)

All respondents were also asked to say whether they carry out surveys within their school or local authority for benchmarking purposes. As shown in chart 5.10, overall 42% of school staff (62% of headteachers and 23% of admin / support staff) claimed to carry out surveys at school for benchmarking purposes. Within local authorities, 41% of staff claimed that schools in their local authority carry out their own surveys for benchmarking purposes and 78% claimed to carry out surveys within their local authority for benchmarking purposes.

Chart 5.10
Whether surveys carried out in School / local authority for benchmarking purposes



Source: Q27 (schools); Q37d & Q38 LAs

Base: All respondents– schools (253); All in LA aware of benchmarking (41)

Higher proportions of headteachers claimed that surveys are carried out in their schools for benchmarking purposes (62%) compared to admin / support staff (23%). Within local authorities specifically, higher proportions of strategic staff claimed that schools in their local authority carry out their own surveys for benchmarking purposes (64% compared to 45% of day-to-day staff and 26% of designated ScotXed representatives).

5.6 SHARING DATA

All respondents participating in the telephone interviews were asked how successful the ScotXed Partnership has been in sharing data that schools and local authorities use as a matter of course in their day to day operation (a score of 1 denotes “extremely unsuccessful” and 10 denotes “extremely successful”).

As shown in table 5.8, within schools specifically, headteachers were more positive than admin / support staff (52% awarding a score of 7 or more compared to 37%); secondary headteachers were more positive than primary headteachers (60% awarding a score of 7 or more compared to 46%). However, these differences are not statistically significant.

Local authority staff were more positive than school staff, although designated ScotXed representatives were less positive than those involved with ScotXed on a day-to-day or strategic basis. Again, these differences are not statistically significant. Differences between all types of local authority staff and primary headteachers are statistically significant; this is also the case for local authority staff and primary admin / support staff.

The qualitative findings show that agreement on this dimension varied in relation to respondents' direct involvement with ScotXed and other users of data provided by ScotXed.

Table 5.8
Success of ScotXed Partnership in sharing data that schools and local authorities use as a matter of course in their day to day operation

	Score awarded (%)				% Don't Know	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3		
HTs	5	47	24	11	14	6.5
Admin / support staff	6	31	26	4	35	6.6
Secondary HTs	4	56	24	8	9	6.9
Primary HTs	7	39	25	13	16	6.3
Secondary admin / support staff	10	27	31	2	29	6.8
Primary admin / support staff	2	37	21	6	35	6.4
Designated ScotXed rep	12	56	32	-	-	7.4
Day-to-day involvement	17	72	6	6	-	7.8
Strategic involvement	4	78	9	4	4	7.4

Source: Q16 (schools); Q29 (LAs)
 Base: All respondents (schools = 253; LAs = 66)

The role that local authorities and / or consultants play in producing reports can also serve to suppress positive views of the success of ScotXed in sharing data. Furthermore, reports produced by authorities may well have a different perspective in line with policy requirements or changes at a local authority level.

All school staff participating in the telephone interviews were also asked to say how they would rate the effectiveness of sharing data / information with local authority staff and with school staff through ScotXed on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 denoted "not at all effective" and 10 denoted "very effective".

As shown in table B in Appendix A, in terms of sharing data / information with local authority staff, views were largely positive, with little by way of difference between sub-groups. Of key relevance here, is that significant proportions of staff provided an answer of "don't know".

Scores were similar in terms of the effectiveness of sharing data / information with school staff (see table C in Appendix A).

Local authority staff were asked to comment on how they would rate the usefulness of sharing data or information through the ScotXed Partnership, again using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 denoted “not at all useful” and 10 denoted “very useful” (Table 5.9). Views were largely positive in terms of the usefulness of sharing data / information through ScotXed with 82% of local authority staff providing a score of 7 or more. In terms of the usefulness of sharing data / information with school staff, 78% provided a score of 7 or more. However, a significant proportion of local authority staff (35%) were unable to comment on the sharing of information with other organisations.

Table 5.9
Local authority staff views on usefulness of sharing data / information through ScotXed with

	Score awarded (%)				% Don't Know	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3		
Local authority staff	26	56	15	2	3	8.2
School staff	27	51	10	5	8	8.0
Other organisations	9	35	22	-	35	7.2

Source: Q33 (LAs)

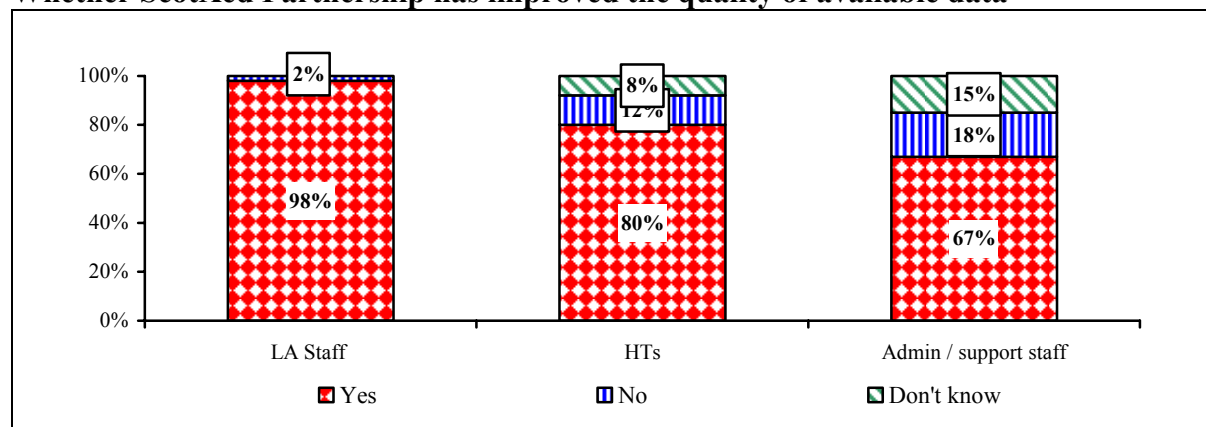
Base: All respondents = 66

5.7 WHETHER SCOTXED PARTNERSHIP HAS IMPROVED THE QUALITY OF AVAILABLE DATA

Views on whether the ScotXed Partnership has improved the quality of available data were largely positive, with 98% of LA staff, 80% of headteachers and 67% of admin/support staff claiming that this was the case (see chart 5.11). Across school type, staff were most positive within secondary schools. Headteachers in secondary schools were more positive than those in primary schools (95% compared to 65%).

Chart 5.11

Whether ScotXed Partnership has improved the quality of available data



Source: Q29 (schools); Q40 (LAs)

Base: All respondents; HTs (127); admin / support staff (126); LA staff (66)

When asked what works well in the whole concept of the ScotXed Partnership and the data exchange process, local authority staff noted a range of different aspects and key themes are summarised as:

- Good/effective communication / consultation = 36%, 34 respondents;
- Accessibility to data = 27%, 18 respondents;
- Opportunities provided to share data = 12%, 8 respondents;
- Whole process / concept works well = 11%, 7 respondents;
- Good quality of data = 9%, 6 respondents;
- Range of data available = 8%, 5 respondents;
- Good website = 5%, 3 respondents.

In summary:

- Views on the impact of ScotXed are largely positive in terms of electronic data exchange and respondents commented that data collection has become much easier in recent years. This is not attributed purely to ScotXed but also to other forms of MIS being utilised;
- There was a perception that ScotXed has helped to make data collection easier than previously, but that requests for data have increased. So while the bureaucratic burden of data collection and provision is seen to have decreased, many respondents perceived workloads in relation to additional data collection and provision to have increased, albeit that some data requests will come from other sources and not ScotXed. The quantitative and qualitative data also show that the bureaucratic burden on teachers has decreased and this has shifted to school administration staff;
- When assessing a range of potential impacts of ScotXed, notable proportions of admin / support staff were often unable to provide comment;
- Many respondents view ScotXed purely as a mechanism for the collation and provision of data and, as such, do not consider or at times perceive its impact on policy, decision making and so on. This is particularly true of those working within schools, many of whom did not feel they were provided with a rationale as to why specific data is being collected or explanations as to how this data is informing policy. Respondents who did view ScotXed as contributing to policy and decision making were stakeholders who were using data produced by ScotXed to inform their decision making;
- Because of the view from many that ScotXed is a mechanism for data collection, notable proportions of respondents – particularly admin / support staff and some headteachers within schools – find it difficult to comment on issues such as how the ScotXed Partnership has allowed monitoring of the impact of education policies, or how this integrates with initiatives such as Curriculum for Excellence;
- Given a lack of understanding on the part of some respondents, there is a sense of remoteness from ScotXed and lack of involvement within the ScotXed Partnership, particularly on the part of school staff;

- Views on STACs are positive from users, and many primary school headteachers requested a STACs equivalent be introduced;
- Across the range of possible benefits of ScotXed, perceptions are largely positive from those offering a view. However, for many of these benefits, significant proportions of respondents were unable to provide a view. In general, local authority staff were most positive about the impacts of ScotXed across a wide range of different aspects such as integration with other education initiatives, reducing bureaucratic burden, sharing data, improvements in the quality of available data and so on. Secondary headteachers are generally more positive than secondary admin / support staff, primary headteachers and primary admin / support staff. However, in a number of instances notable proportions of respondents (particularly admin / support staff and primary headteachers) are unable to provide comment on the impact of ScotXed;
- Views on whether the ScotXed Partnership has improved the quality of available data were largely positive, with 98% of LA staff, 80% of headteachers and 67% of admin / support staff claiming that this is the case.

CHAPTER 6: BARRIERS TO USAGE OF SCOTXED

Previous chapters have demonstrated that involvement with, and usage of, ScotXed is variable and during the course of interviews and discussions respondents noted a number of barriers to usage of ScotXed. This chapter examines these barriers and ways in which these can be overcome.

6.1 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE USE OF SCOTXED

All respondents participating in telephone interviews were asked to say spontaneously what they felt were the main barriers that their school or local authority faced in using ScotXed effectively. Significant proportions of school admin / support staff (48%) claimed there were no barriers or that they did not know of any barriers. Only around one in five headteachers (19%) claimed there were no barriers or that they did not know of any.

Across each respondent group, highest proportions of respondents cited a lack of resources such as staff time, a lack of training and a lack of ICT support (see table 6.1). Within schools higher proportions of headteachers cited each of these barriers than did admin / support staff. Most respondents only cited one barrier.

While 29% of headteachers made any reference to a lack of resources, a number of factors came under this umbrella, each of which was mentioned by only a small proportion of respondents. These included a lack of staff time to access ScotXed (6%), the time needed to input data (2%), the time needed to find information (2%), that it is too time consuming (12%). These separate factors were also cited by local authority staff and admin / support staff in schools.

Overall, 29% of headteachers made some reference to a lack of training and a wide range of issues were covered here. These included training needed to use ScotXed (17%), a need to get more people familiar with the system (2%), a lack of knowledge / understanding (5%), personal skills required to be able to understand statistics (2%). Again, these issues were also noted by local authority staff and admin / support staff in schools.

Higher proportions of local authority staff focused on a lack of ICT support or ICT problems, and the key issue was in relation to the standardisation of MIS.

Table 6.1
Barriers to effective use of ScotXed

	LA Staff	Headteachers	Admin / support staff
	N=66	N= 126	N=127
	%	%	%
Lack of resources eg staff time	23	29	19
Lack of training	23	29	17
Lack of ICT support / ICT problems / lack of standardised MIS	18	10	4
Lack of user information	6	4	2
Information overload	6	6	4
Lack of LA support	5	-	1
Access to ScotXed information	2	10	6
None / no problems / no barriers	14	12	20
Don't know	11	7	28

Source: Q32 (schools); Q43 LAs

Base: All respondents; LA (66); Headteachers (126); admin / support staff (127)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

The qualitative data highlighted a number of barriers to use of ScotXed and in the main these corresponded to those emerging in the quantitative data.

Many respondents cited a lack of resources, in terms of staff time to collate and provide data and also in terms of time for training on how to use ScotXed effectively and for the necessary staff cover. Without the resources available to train or become familiar with ScotXed, individuals may avoid using the site unless a specific need arises to spend the time required to learn about its use, which is easier for the more computer literate. So unfamiliarity with ScotXed may lead to little and / or infrequent usage among those in schools. Without full understanding of ScotXed, respondents may continue to use this only when necessary. In line with this, provision of more training may serve to help reduce barriers to usage. It is no surprise, then, that a number of respondents in schools noted a need for training on how to use ScotXed. Even those respondents, who had already received some training, noted that they would like more.

One member of staff attending a local authority focus group noted that there are financial issues over who pays for any statutory changes through ScotXed. They commented that in the early days of the programme funding came via project funds, but that funding was then re-directed through an alternative source, although they claimed to have seen no evidence of this re-directed funding. This person also referred to ScotXed as having created problems in terms of the resources needed and the abilities of schools and local authorities to respond to ScotXed requirements.

“[Resources?] People and time and cash and finances because there is still very much a disagreement in terms of who pays for any statutory changes through ScotXed. In the early days of the programme it was funded from project funds but a couple of years ago that was dropped. So there is a problem in terms of who finances the developments.”

Some respondents – primarily secondary headteachers using ScotXed for reporting – did not understand how to achieve outputs from ScotXed and relied on local authority staff or consultants to produce reports for schools. Some noted that ScotXed outputs are not user friendly. In some instances, headteachers were able to download basic reports on school performance but would then look to local authority staff to manipulate the data further. Finally, not all respondents understood how to interpret data, and therefore used local authority staff or consultants to help them understand data produced from ScotXed. Irregular usage of ScotXed allied with ongoing usage of other MIS also curbs awareness of ScotXed and what it can do, as this creates confusion over the role of ScotXed vis a vis other MIS used in schools. Furthermore, while historically a wide range of different MIS have been used, new MIS applications and sub-brands are still being introduced in some local authorities (Click and Go was cited by respondents in Glasgow and in the West). There were suggestions that if investment has been made in alternative forms of MIS, there may continue to be a reluctance to use ScotXed.

Another barrier, evident among headteachers, was attitudinal. Some heads, both secondary and primary, expressed reservations about whether the emphasis on statistical collections and manipulation was an appropriate and valuable trend in education as a whole, whether the emphasis should be on teaching and other kinds of achievements by schools rather than so much upon what can be enumerated. There is a need to ensure that the debate on the relative importance of statistical collections within education continues and is welcomed as part of the process.

A related concern within schools was whether the increasing demands for more and different statistics were taking time and resource away from the real work of schools. This point clearly relates to issues of ScotXed but also to a wider educational debate.

6.2 HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO USAGE

Having been asked to identify barriers faced in using ScotXed effectively, all respondents were then asked to say how these barriers could be overcome and again the same themes emerged (see table 6.2). Key comments related to a need for training, more guidance and support, increased resources and better IT. The following table provides a summary of comments made by respondents.

Table 6.2
How to overcome barriers to usage

	LA staff	Headteacher	Admin/support
	%	%	%
Need for training	28	32	24
More guidance / support	22	19	22
Increased resources	26	5	9
Better IT	20	11	10
Simplify process / make data easier to work with	18	16	15
Give more time / more deadlines / extend flexibility	16	7	3
Don't know	4	11	15

Source: Q33 (schools) & 43b (LA)

Base: All who noted barriers to effective use of ScotXed

LA staff (50); HT (105); Admin/support staff (68)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category.

Comments made by small numbers of respondents not necessarily included in chart

Again, the qualitative findings echoed these issues. Aside from issues relating to more training, increased resources, more guidance and support, some secondary headteachers noted that one previous barrier had been that of the timings of the release of data, in that data was provided too late in the academic year to be of much use to them. However, these respondents also noted that timings have changed recently and thus one barrier to usage has already been overcome.

Given the involvement of local authority staff in helping schools to interpret data, deal with technical issues, produce reports and so on, schools perceived themselves to have a relationship with their local authority rather than ScotXed. In this way, it is likely that the involvement of local authority staff can, in effect, serve to detract from ScotXed “branding”, despite the ScotXed Partnership. Communication from the ScotXed Unit goes to schools via local authorities and many local authorities (if not all) then re-write this communication. So, some schools may be using ScotXed very infrequently and have no direct contact of any sort with the ScotXed Unit or feel part of the ScotXed Partnership. In the words of one local authority,

“With STACs, we do analysis of reports at a school and local authority level and the standard publications [we get from the ScotXed Unit] are rewritten into our local authority perspective.”

In a small number of cases, where the local authority had outsourced IT support to a third party such as BT, school staff reported this had further exacerbated their sense of distance from ScotXed.

This lack of direct contact means that only a few of our respondents who handled information to and from the Scottish Executive construed the relationship as a partnership. Those who would describe it as a partnership were only within local authorities and many of these saw this more as a one-way partnership with ScotXed making demands and themselves as fulfilling its requirements. A great many within schools did not see themselves or their schools as *users* of ScotXed data. Further reminders of how ScotXed can benefit a wide range of potential users and the opening out of ScotXed to handle data that can benefit primary schools would help overcome this issue. One local authority member of staff noted that the information available from ScotXed was most useful to local authority staff.

“The teacher census is crucial at the local authority level and in many respects a lot of the [school] census data is essential information for the local authority. This is useful for the schools but not essential to them.”

Direct contact from the ScotXed Unit with schools was considered by some to be one means of rectifying this issue, although local authority staff were unhappy about the idea of being by-passed in the process, particularly as their focus on specific issues or policy changes may differ.

In summary:

- Key barriers to effective usage of ScotXed include a lack of resources (for example, lack of staff time to access ScotXed, the time needed to input data, the time needed to find information or that it is too time consuming), a lack of training (for example, on how to

use ScotXed, on how to interpret the data, a need to familiarise more staff with ScotXed), a lack of ICT support and a lack of understanding of how to optimise use of the data available via ScotXed. This is reinforced by the use of external parties to provide MIS.

- Furthermore, among some respondents there may be some attitudinal barriers in terms of the perception of making statistics an overly important focus in education and the apparent conflict this can have with the flexibility of other initiatives such as Curriculum for Excellence.
- Because, for schools, the local authority is effectively the link between them and the ScotXed Unit, there is little or no direct communication between the ScotXed Unit and schools and this reinforces a sense of remoteness on the part of schools and a lack of a sense of partnership.
- Ways to overcome these barriers include increased training; increased support from local authorities (and the ScotXed Unit indirectly); increased resources and better IT and simplifying processes. Training also needs to be delivered at a point in time when it can have greatest impact on understanding and usage of ScotXed.
- Widening out of the data held by ScotXed to create more benefits (rewards) for primary schools in particular and provision of clear explanations as to why specific data are being requested were identified as a further way of reducing barriers.

CHAPTER 7: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

A number of respondents in both schools and local authorities noted the need for more guidance and support in order to build awareness and usage of ScotXed. As such, communication is an issue that is important for the ScotXed Unit and Partnership.

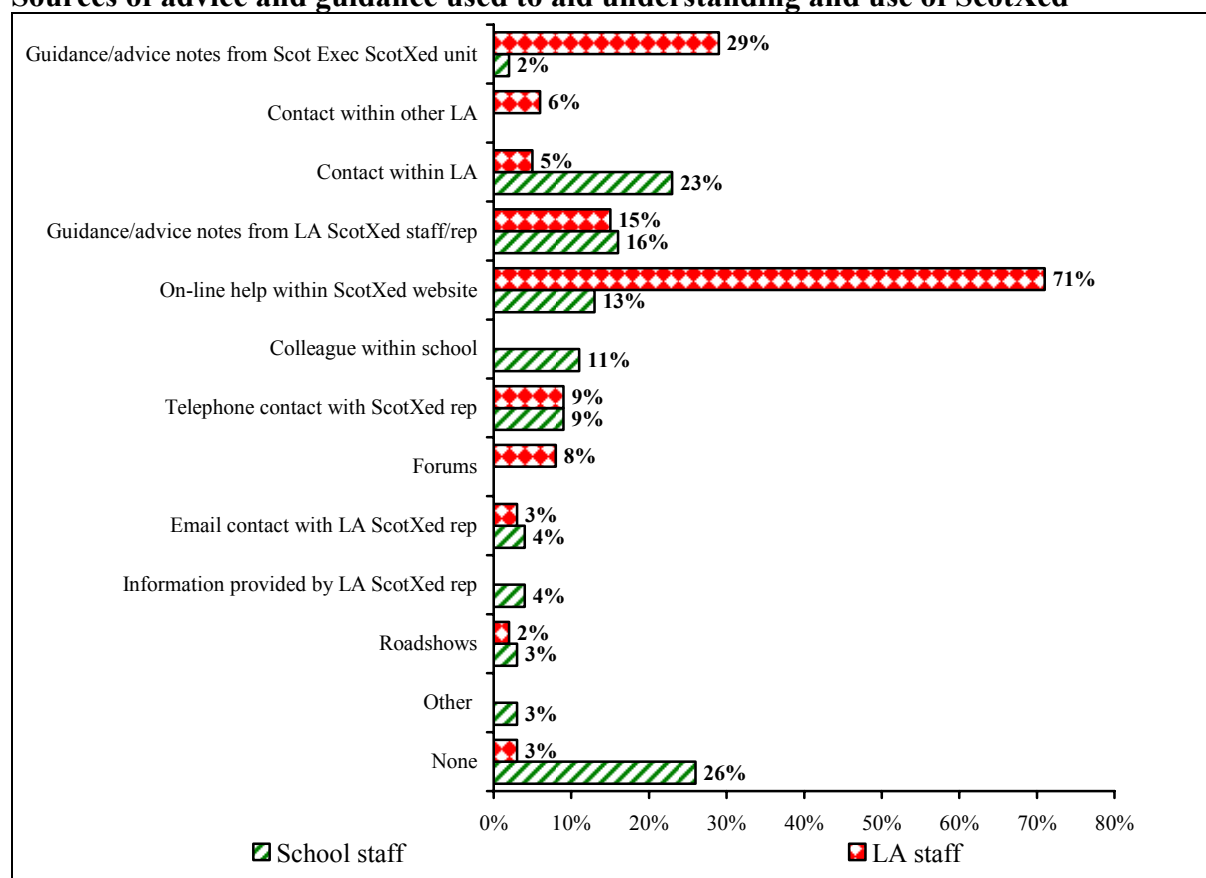
7.1 WAYS IN WHICH INFORMATION ON SCOTXED IS CURRENTLY RECEIVED

All respondents were asked to say the ways in which they currently received information on ScotXed and as can be seen in chart 7.1, key channels for local authority staff were on-line help within the ScotXed website (71%) and guidance / advice notes from the Scottish Executive ScotXed Unit (29%).

Data from the telephone interviews with schools emphasise the importance of local authority staff, with the two highest mentions being a contact within the local authority (cited by 23%) or guidance / advice notes from local authority ScotXed representatives / staff (cited by 16%). There was little by way of difference in responses from headteachers and admin / support staff.

Chart 7.1

Sources of advice and guidance used to aid understanding and use of ScotXed



Source: Q7 (schools) & Q11 (LA)

Base: LA staff (66); School staff (253)

Notes to chart: numbers may not add to 100% as respondents could respond to more than one category

7.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION / INFORMATION CHANNELS

Staff in local authorities were largely happy with information and communication they received from the ScotXed Unit. In particular, designated ScotXed representatives had regular ScotXed meetings where they were given opportunities to hear about new developments, potential developments and provide their opinions on ScotXed. As such, local authority staff generally felt they had a good understanding of how ScotXed worked. Most of our qualitative respondents within local authorities noted that the ScotXed Unit is responsive to requests or queries and keen to listen to their views.

While the ScotXed Unit at the Scottish Executive provides regular guidance and support to local authorities, data from the qualitative discussions showed that most local authorities will take this and use it as a basis for providing their own guidance and support to staff in schools. One respondent noted *“we take what the ScotXed Unit produce and turn this into local authority speak.”* As such, very little guidance and support or training materials produced by the ScotXed Unit directly reaches staff in schools.

Another way in which respondents in schools received information about ScotXed was through CAMs (Cluster Administration Managers) based within secondary schools who are responsible for meetings with primary school admin / support staff within their cluster in order to explain information required by ScotXed. Those within cluster schools noted the importance of this level of contact, although some CAMs themselves noted that they do not always have the necessary resources to meet with cluster schools as regularly as they might like.

Some schools used a SEEMIS / Phoenix representative in preference to local authority staff or the Scottish Executive Unit, although this did not appear to be because they felt that these representatives will provide better information than their local authority, rather that they have long standing relationships with these representatives.

Most of the schools participating in the qualitative discussions claimed to be happy with information coming out from the local authorities and, in some instances, local authorities had also provided training on ScotXed. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

While most respondents were happy with information received on ScotXed, there were some requests for more guidance and support to be issued to ScotXed users and potential users. Some respondents asked for basic guidelines on how to access the website; others wanted more information on how to manipulate and interpret data.

7.3 PREFERENCES FOR RECEIVING INFORMATION

While most of our qualitative respondents were relatively happy with the information they received on ScotXed, there were requests for a variety of different channels to be utilised in delivering this information.

If information to be provided is basic, easy to understand and factual with no need for discussion or further explanation, then written documentation is an acceptable means of providing this information.

Conversely, if information to be provided is likely to need further discussion or practical experience, then most of our respondents had a preference for face-to-face meetings. For example, those who had attended roadshows found these to be a useful way of obtaining information on how ScotXed can be used to maximum effect. Roadshows also provide an interactive environment offering opportunities for questions to be raised and clarified. An additional advantage is that they offer opportunities for individuals from the ScotXed Unit to meet with users and present a pro-active and friendly face. This can help to reduce the sense of remoteness and the lack of partnership working felt by many schools.

Given preferences from many for more direct – face-to-face – contact, there were some requests for more roadshows or forums to be set up. That said, some of our respondents noted that they had previously had an opportunity to attend a roadshow and had not gone because of a lack of time. Particularly for those in primary schools, for whom ScotXed can be perceived as increasing workloads because of information requests, with little by way of providing useful information in return, attending training on ScotXed is not necessarily a priority. Furthermore, there is often an issue of obtaining extra staff cover.

There is also a need to ensure that the correct information reaches the correct individual. In local authorities and some stakeholder organisations there is a designated individual who has involvement in ScotXed, and there do not appear to be any problems over the receipt of information, particularly as there are regular meetings with the ScotXed Unit for many of these individuals. However, within schools (particularly larger schools where there could be a number of admin / support staff wishing to access ScotXed), it is important to ensure that information reaches all of these individuals. While communication to schools is largely the remit of local authority staff, there is potential for the ScotXed Unit to provide more guidance to local authorities on how to present and distribute information.

7.4 COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP

While this chapter focuses primarily on issues of information provision and communication, it is important to understand views on communication across the Partnership and how effective this is. All local authority staff participating in the telephone interviews were asked to say to what extent they felt they were involved in a number of aspects of ScotXed (a lot, adequately, not enough or not at all).

As chart 7.2 shows, a large majority of local authority staff felt they were involved either adequately or a lot across all aspects of ScotXed. Designated ScotXed representatives have more regular contact with ScotXed than do those in a day-to-day or strategic role and this was borne out by the data. Of local authority staff:

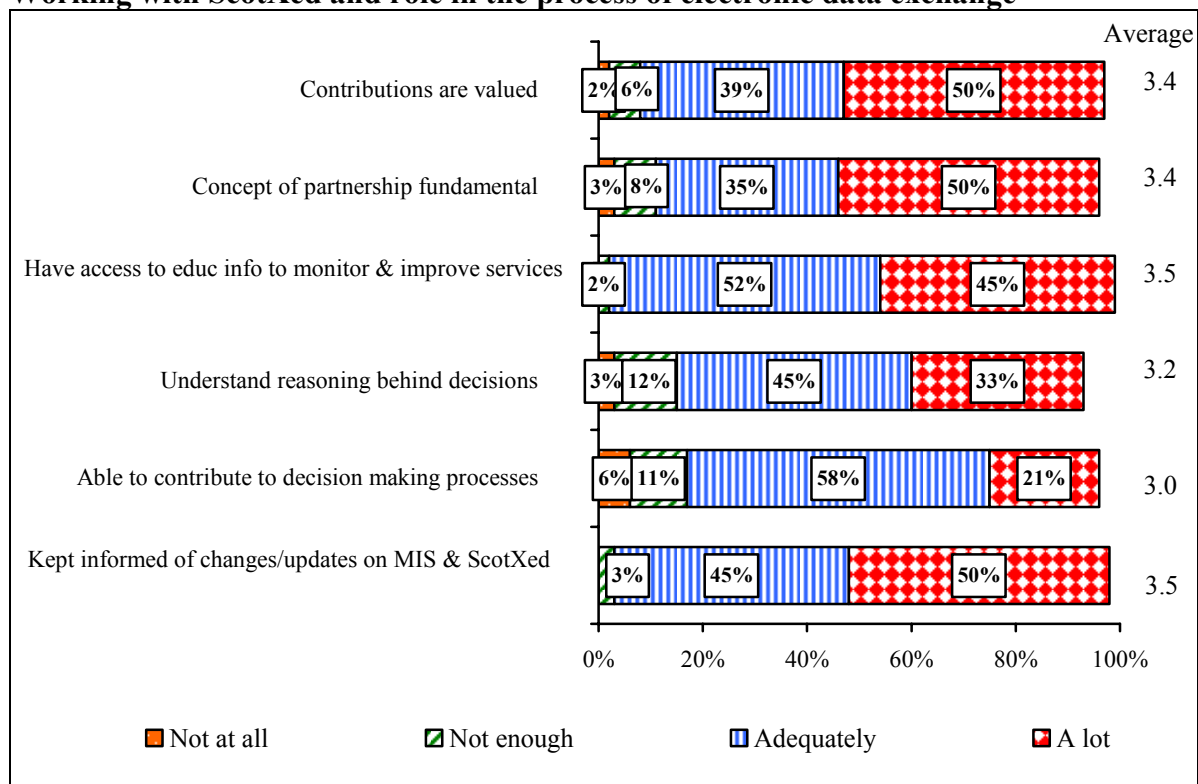
- 97% felt they have access to educational information in order to monitor and improve services;
- 95% felt they are kept well informed about any changes / updates in relation to MIS and ScotXed;
- 89% felt that their contributions are valued;
- 85% felt the concept of partnership has been fundamental to the achievements of ScotXed;
- 79% felt they are able to contribute to the decision making processes undertaken with ScotXed;

- 78% felt they understand the reasoning behind decisions within ScotXed that are made.

With the exception of “having access to educational information in order to monitor and improve services”, slightly higher proportions of designated ScotXed representatives agreed that they had adequate or a lot of involvement in each element of ScotXed, than did those in a day-to-day or strategic role within the local authorities.

Chart 7.2

Working with ScotXed and role in the process of electronic data exchange



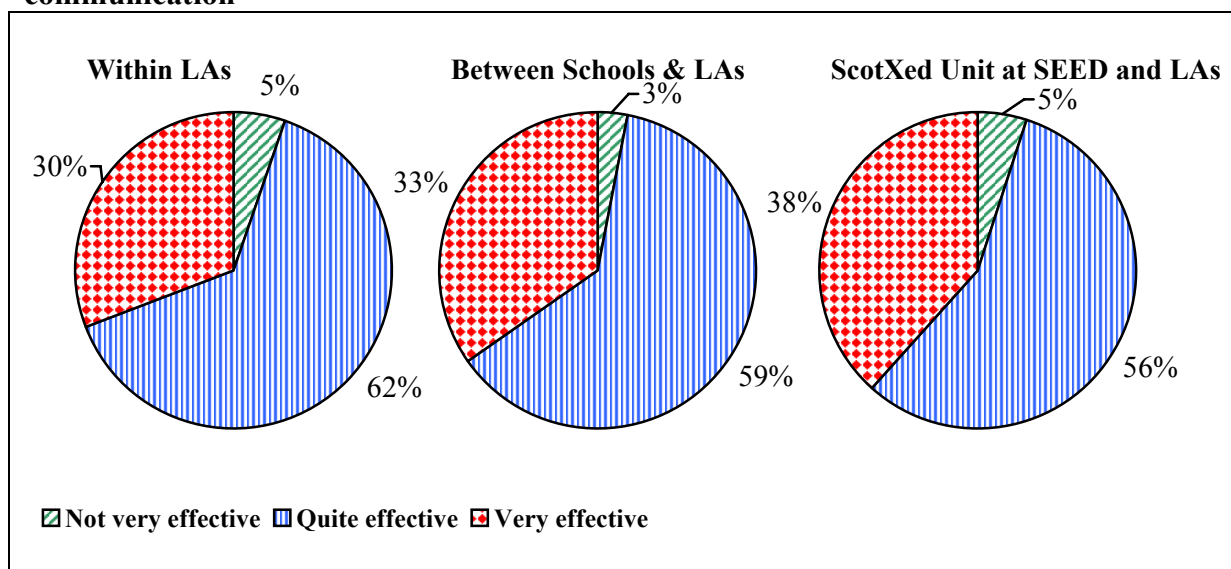
Source: Q12 (LA)
Base: LA staff (66)

It is important to ensure that communication between all those involved in the ScotXed Partnership is as effective as possible. All local authority staff participating in telephone interviews were asked to say how effective they felt communication is between schools and local authorities in relation to ScotXed; how effective communication is between local authorities and the ScotXed Unit at the Scottish Executive and how effective communication is within local authorities in relation to ScotXed.

As shown in chart 7.3, almost all respondents claimed that each channel of communication was either “very” or “quite” effective. While communication is an issue that needs to be borne continually in mind by both local authority staff and the ScotXed Unit, views on the current effectiveness of communication were largely positive. There is no evidence from the results of this evaluation that communication is considered to be poor or ineffective by those in schools or local authorities.

Chart 7.3

Local authority staff views on working with ScotXed and effectiveness of communication



Source: Q13 & 14a/b (LA)

Base: LA staff (66)

Stakeholders participating in the qualitative discussions were positive about the effectiveness of channels of communication with ScotXed.

In summary:

- The findings emphasise the importance of local authority staff as a channel of communication and information for schools. Little guidance produced by the ScotXed Unit directly reaches schools; rather that produced by the ScotXed Unit is reinterpreted and issued to schools in order to reflect local circumstances;
- Local authority staff are generally happy with the information they receive from the ScotXed Unit and via meetings or involvement in Task Groups;
- While views on existing forms and channels of communication are largely positive, there are requests for a number of different information channels to be used, depending on the nature of the information being provided. Opportunities for interactive questioning or practical application of ScotXed such as those provided by roadshows are welcomed, although attendance may not be a priority for many;
- Views on the effectiveness of communication channels utilised are positive, although there is a need to ensure that information reaches all those who need to receive it;
- A large majority of local authority staff feels involved in all aspects of ScotXed and a majority also claims that each channel of communication is effective.

CHAPTER 8: TRAINING

8.1 WAYS IN WHICH TRAINING IS CURRENTLY RECEIVED

Of the respondents participating in the qualitative element of this study, it was local authority staff who had received most training on using or working with ScotXed. Many local authority respondents were involved in ScotXed forums or working groups and, as such, had a relatively good understanding of how to use ScotXed to optimal impact. This regular contact with the ScotXed Unit acted as a form of informal training for these individuals. Indeed, some of the designated ScotXed representatives had been selected because of their skills in working with statistical data.

For respondents based within schools, training appears to have been more haphazard and irregular and a few noted that they had had no formal training at all, either via their local authority or directly from the ScotXed Unit. In some instances training had been delivered to a Business Manager or more senior member of the admin / support team, but this had then not been passed onto more junior clerical staff who were involved in actual data input. Yet training is very important in schools, because there are some, particularly teaching staff, who embrace technology and statistics and some who lag behind or have less aptitude. Many important applications for the data demand a degree of competency in both areas.

Some secondary heads noted that they have some members of staff who lack confidence in using IT and will support moves by these staff to improve their confidence and competence in these areas.

Of those within schools who had received training on ScotXed, this had come from a variety of sources. In some instances, training had been delivered directly by the ScotXed Unit at roadshows or meetings, although not all respondents had taken the opportunity to attend a roadshow. It appeared to be primarily headteachers who had attended roadshows, although some admin / support staff were positive about the idea of attending a roadshow. In some other instances, training had been delivered by local authority staff, either on a one-to-one basis while visiting a school or on a group basis to staff from a number of different schools. In some instances, admin / support staff within a cluster had been responsible for delivery of informal training, acting in the capacity almost of a helpline. In a small number of instances, and because of longstanding relationships, respondents' initial point of contact for information was a SEEMIS or Phoenix representative.

8.2 PREFERENCES FOR TRAINING

Across local authority staff, headteachers and admin / support staff there were preferences for face-to-face training wherever possible. Opportunities for members of the ScotXed Unit or for local authority staff to demonstrate specific aspects of ScotXed and provide opportunities for clarification of questions was seen to be the most effective means of offering training. The interactive environment of roadshows was preferred by many respondents.

Over and above face-to-face contact, there were calls for easy to use manuals (including step by step practical examples) to be provided to all users of ScotXed. Some who had attended

roadshows noted that their irregular use of ScotXed after training meant that they had forgotten a lot of what had been learnt on the day.

While online guidance was regarded by some as a sensible means of providing training for an online service, not all respondents had a preference to access training via the website in the first instance. Although web help and training guides are available on ScotXed and in STACs, some respondents in schools were not aware of this.

There were also expectations that when there are changes to ScotXed or its outputs, users will be informed about these or provided with updated training manuals and guidance.

The point in time at which training is delivered is relatively important. For example, most secondary headteachers use ScotXed once exam results are available early in the new school year and so training delivered later in the year is likely to be forgotten.

Another issue to bear in mind is that many respondents did not consider ScotXed to be a priority in their working lives, and so some invited to attend roadshows had declined on the basis that they did not have the available time. Admin / support staff generally welcomed opportunities to attend a roadshow and obtain first hand information, although some noted that a lack of staff cover might make this impossible.

Specific training requests made by respondents covered basic usage of ScotXed (including accessing data), downloading data, producing reports and advanced manipulation and interpretation of data. While ScotXed and local authorities were perceived to deliver training on basic usage, downloading data and producing basic reports, neither was seen to be providing training on how to interpret the data or manipulate this to take full advantage of all the information held on ScotXed.

Finally, while this chapter focuses primarily on training and preferences for training, it is also worth noting that many respondents requested information and clear explanations as to the reasons for specific informational requests. Within primary schools in particular, ScotXed was seen by some respondents to increase workloads without bringing any direct benefit to respondents or their schools. Because understanding how these efforts relate to the whole is fundamental to keeping people motivated, it is certainly worth asking whether this disconnect contributes to depressing ScotXed usage in schools generally.

In summary:

- There are preferences for face-to-face training in an interactive environment for many respondents as this offers opportunities for questioning and practical application;
- A wide range of different forms of training was suggested, although all should be written in plain English and be easy to understand and comprehensible;
- The time at which training is delivered is important as lack of usage directly after training means that familiarity with ScotXed will be lost;
- While respondents called for more training and support and guidance, ScotXed is not a priority for all respondents and some may not have the time to attend training sessions.

- For admin / support staff in all schools and some headteachers (mostly in primary schools), without clear explanations as to why specific data is requested, ScotXed is perceived to increase workloads without bringing any direct benefit to respondents. This lack of awareness or understanding may well serve to contribute to depress usage of ScotXed in schools generally.

CHAPTER 9: THE FUTURE FOR SCOTXED

9.1 INTEGRATION WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Local authority staff, stakeholders and, to a slightly lesser extent, schools, perceived ScotXed as having an important role in the provision of data to schools, local authorities, other stakeholder organisations and the Scottish Executive. For most, it was seen primarily as a means of obtaining or providing statistical data, rather than having a strategic role in the development of education in Scotland. The small number of respondents allocating a more strategic role to ScotXed, in terms of policy making, were stakeholders who themselves were involved in policy development. Even then, their view tended to be that ScotXed responded to requests for data to feed into policy changes, rather than being instrumental in the development of policy changes. While the data obtained was seen to be important, and ScotXed was credited by many as having improved the quality of statistical data, many respondents, particularly those based in schools, did not perceive ScotXed as having a role within educational initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence, Assessment is for Learning and so on.

There was some expectation that ScotXed will be available via GLOW once this is up and running; but some were reserving judgement about GLOW's contribution until it is in place, and others were sceptical about whether GLOW will get the IT support and training resource it needs to work effectively.

Some respondents, mainly those in local authorities or involved in a ScotXed Task Group, were aware of the work being done on development of the School to School System and welcomed this. The broad aims of the School to School Transfer System (the 'Transfer System') are:

- to ensure that any pupil under school leaving age leaving a Scottish school enrolls at another school, and
- to enable the electronic transfer of pupil details between schools where such a facility is not currently available.

It is intended that this will both improve the safety of Scottish pupils and reduce the administrative burden on schools when a pupil whose details could only previously be passed in paper form arrives at a school.¹

9.2 INTERCONNECTIVITY

Given the increased importance of the provision of children's services across health, education, social work and so on, some respondents noted the need for ScotXed to interconnect with other data sources. Initiatives such as GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) serve to reinforce the importance of interconnectivity across and between different data sources.

1

<https://www.scotxed.net/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/ScotXed/Task%20Groups/School%202020School/Guide%20to%20S2S.doc>

There was an awareness of the need for interconnectivity between broader children's services by most respondents and enthusiasm and a will to tackle the issues among the majority. However, most people saw this as a medium to long term issue and ethical and data protection issues were mentioned by some, as well as perhaps cultural issues in data sharing to be overcome. There were, however, some examples from the qualitative fieldwork of health, education and social work services working together to share data at local authority level.

Despite agreement about the need for interconnectivity, there was a degree of scepticism as to how likely this is, particularly in the short term and this was attributed to a number of key issues:

- First, many other children's services are still developing data sources and at this point in time, it was felt that most do not currently have the capacity to interconnect;
- Second, data sources have developed in an ad hoc way utilising a range of different MIS and are not necessarily interconnectable;
- Third, funds will be required to develop data sources that can interrelate. Indeed, one local authority respondent noted that interconnectivity was an issue they had been examining recently but that there was little hope at this point in time in being able to link 8 different data sources together;
- Fourth, there were some issues over data protection and what information can be shared between different parties;
- Fifth, some senior educators believed that the various organisations involved have much work yet to do vis a vis developing shared working models/assumptions, ethics, language and processes before real connectivity can be achieved;
- Finally, there were concerns that local authorities will continue to develop their own data sources which could serve to heighten confusion at a national level.

Most respondents assumed that interconnectivity across a range of services including education, health, social work, the police and so on would be a medium to long term aim rather than something that is achievable in the short term. One local authority respondent commented,

“There is a working group in [local authority] that deals with the technical possibility of sharing data between different management information systems. And it looks like it is a big job but it's not infeasible with a lot of investment and with the central data storing that is already in existence. It is possible but we need the legal feasibility of sharing information.”

A stakeholder noted,

“There is a big policy drive on towards integrated services and integrated community schools and joining up services in the interests of children and we would be broadly supportive of that principle.”

A secondary headteacher, while supportive of the concept of interconnectivity, commented,

“I can’t see how you can create a common management information system across education and social work when you have quite distinctive professional ethics.”

Positively, some of our local authority and stakeholder respondents held ScotXed up as an example of a high quality system of data capture which should be utilised across other children’s services. In the words of one stakeholder,

“My view would be that as we are moving more and more to uniform systems in dealing with the different agencies involved in the community of a school, it would be useful if there was a standard model and it would seem to me that the ScotXed model offers a very reasonable way forward.”

9.3 SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS / CHANGES TO SCOTXED

9.3.1 Improvements to ScotXed and the electronic data exchange process

When respondents were asked to say what improvements they felt could be made to ScotXed and the electronic data exchange process, a wide range of comments was made, again echoing many of the themes already noted. These themes included a need for more training and more communication (for example, roadshows or forums). However, a large proportion of headteachers (75%) and admin / support staff (76%) were unable to make any specific suggestions for improvements and any individual suggestions for improvements were cited by 6% or less respondents.

When asked what could be done to improve the quality of available data at a school level, locally and nationally, a range of suggestions were made, each by small proportions of respondents. These included simplification of data or making the data more user friendly, changes to training / guidance available, provision of more support or resources and so on.

From the qualitative work a number of suggestions were made as to ways in which improvements could be made to ScotXed and these are outlined below.

There were some suggestions that rather than simply being a mechanism for data capture and provision, the ScotXed Unit should adopt an advisory role. Examples provided were in helping schools understand how they can manipulate their data to achieve maximum usage; helping to define areas where support is needed and working more closely with local authorities on this; or using the data to help define areas with relatively high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and introduce initiatives to prevent increased numbers of individuals not in education, employment or training. However, there were some arguments that this would work directly against the devolvement of decision making at a local level and the data suggest there could be a degree of resistance from local authority staff to such a move. Any changes made to the role of the ScotXed Unit would have to be made in conjunction and agreement with local authorities in order to prevent antagonism. There were also one or two suggestions that the ScotXed Unit should demonstrate how ScotXed indicators can be used, for example, to help implement National Priorities and other policy decisions.

Most of our qualitative primary headteachers requested a mechanism (similar to STACs) aimed specifically at primary schools that would enable them to obtain data relating to

attainment (“*why can’t they bring back 5-14 for primary schools?*”). This would give primary schools a reason to be more involved in ScotXed. However, because of a lack of ready data via ScotXed, some local authorities and schools have already created their own means of measuring and benchmarking 5-14 attainment because this is not available elsewhere. While there is a National Assessment Bank that includes tests that teachers can use, this was not perceived to be a particularly credible source of data by some respondents. Primary reasons given for this lack of credibility related to the perceived poor quality of the 5-14 National Assessments.

There were some queries raised regarding the inflexibility of ScotXed and its outputs. For example, one stakeholder noted that pupils taking exams early in S3 (rather than S4)² do not show up in the STACs data and reduce the figures for the number of pupils who have passed exams, thus deflating performance of a school. Another stakeholder noted that pupils are lost if they attend college and school as ScotXed data are based on one institution only, although this will be rectified in STACs 2007.

One local authority respondent noted that there may well be instances where local authorities at their discretion will have a different slant on some policy issues from the Scottish Executive.

“One point in instance is the reason for absence or the reason why children are late for school. My authority will always encourage children to come to school regardless of how late they are, so they will record lateness differently from the Scottish Executive guidelines. So, there are issues like that where things need to be specific to an authority’s approach and a school’s approach.”

Some respondents noted that the presentation of types of certain data collection may need to be changed to be useful to schools. One example cited was that of exclusions in Scotland and the same respondent noted that headteachers do not really need or want to know the total exclusions for Scotland but that local or their own school figures on a month by month basis are more important. Most respondents in schools were not aware of any processes by which they could feed back their views or requirements on the usefulness of specific outputs. For example,

“...Where there’s clearly a gap is... attendance categories, I’m sorry...this (ScotXed) is nonsense. They’re either in school, or they’re out of school. That’s the only thing I’m interested in and don’t even start with the holidays.”

Secondary Headteacher

Given the key role played by local authority staff as the conduit between ScotXed and schools, it is perhaps not surprising that some respondents – primarily those in schools but also a small number of local authority staff – noted a need to raise the profile of ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership. For school staff, the most effective way of managing this and reaching school users was perceived to be through direct contact, rather than simply via local authorities, although as already noted, this may not be welcomed by all

² In fact, S3 awards are taken into account, although this respondent’s perception was that they were not. This may be an instance of a need for further training

local authority staff. From some local authority staff, there were suggestions for meetings and roadshows to be held jointly by members of the ScotXed Unit and the local authority.

In line with this, there were further calls for more training, guidance and support to users and some suggestions that this should be delivered jointly by the ScotXed Unit and local authority staff. This would help to raise the profile of ScotXed in general and forge good working relationships between all elements of the Partnership.

Finally, there were some requests to make the website and its outputs more user friendly and relevant to users. There were some requests for guidance providing examples to be produced for all end users and showing a range of ways in which ScotXed outputs can be utilised. There are in fact some training guides available on the website and in STACs as well as web help, although many respondents appeared to be unaware of this.

In summary:

- The primary role of ScotXed is perceived to be the provision of data, with little emphasis on the strategic role it plays;
- ScotXed is perceived by some to lack salience with other educational initiatives because of its emphasis on statistical data;
- There is concern over how different data sources from education, health, social work and so on can be interconnected, particularly in the short term;
- A range of potential improvements were suggested by respondents including:
 - More training, guidance and resources;
 - ScotXed taking on more of a direct advisory role, although there will be a need to agree this with local authority staff and stakeholders;
 - Changes to the data that can be produced within ScotXed such as a capacity to record information on peripatetic teaching staff;
 - Provision of a STACs equivalent for primary schools;
 - A need to ensure that available data are useful to schools;
 - Raising the profile of ScotXed, the ScotXed Unit and the ScotXed Partnership.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS

10.1 KEY FINDINGS

There were a number of key questions for the evaluation to address and these were:

- The extent to which the ScotXed partnership has supported and promoted the electronic exchange of data;
- The extent to which the partnership has minimised the bureaucratic burden;
- To ascertain the views and perceptions of partners in the partnership in terms of their contributions, their understanding and so on;
- To assess available evidence on publishing benchmarks, the monitoring of the impact of educational policies, etc;
- To examine evidence to ascertain the role of ScotXed in policy development in Scotland.

This evaluation indicates that ScotXed is achieving many of its objectives especially as to:

- The extent to which the partnership has supported and promoted electronic data exchange between schools, local authorities and the Scottish Executive;
- The contribution that regular ScotXed collections are playing in increasing overall MIS use and familiarity within schools;
- How many of those involved in the partnership such as stakeholders and local authority personnel are finding the data, and range of data provided, increasingly useful, especially for providing help with internal and external benchmarking, self-evaluation, and monitoring and improving pupil and staff performance;
- The appeal to educators of STACs, despite some issues with its format and difficulties in understanding its use and output;
- Increasing confidence in ScotXed data itself, which users and most providers consider, overall, very reliable and solid.

Less success is evident in delivering a concept of partnership, as many of those involved in collections, particularly at school and local authority level, perceive themselves as servicing ScotXed requirements, and frequently have little insight as to how their collections are directly affecting policy debate and decisions. ScotXed is not seen to be a driver in policy development, rather simply providing the necessary data in response to policy makers and their requirements.

There is a need to communicate the full range of possible applications for the data, so that schools particularly may begin to see themselves as users, not just sources, of data.

There is evidence as regards ScotXed's success in reducing the bureaucratic burden on schools. Additionally, the burden has clearly shifted to administrative from teaching staff, and it is now easier to collate data for ScotXed. However, increased demand for data, and for new and different kinds of data, from whatever sources, appear to be cancelling out some of these benefits.

Among the most salient barriers to achieving the Partnership ideal, one is inherent within the current structure of the exchange. The role of the local authority as the main or often the only

conduit, interpreter and controller of ScotXed information, data and advice to schools appears to amplify impressions that ScotXed and the Scottish Executive operate far from the everyday business of a school.

Much remains to be done in getting all potential partners to understand where policies are coming from and how they are being driven by data from the chalk-face. This makes thinking about future modes of communication and how to create communication and feedback channels among all parties - channels that complement and supplement local authority efforts without undermining their sense of control and autonomy over their schools - a priority area.

Training is also a priority, partly to help with understanding and using ScotXed systems and output, but also because training itself could provide an avenue for increasing the sense of partnership. Evidence from this research suggests that those with the most contact with ScotXed personnel retain the greatest sense of partnership and relationship.

10.2 ISSUES FOR SCOTXED

This report has identified a number of barriers to increased usage of ScotXed and these need to be overcome if the profile of ScotXed is to increase in the future. The ScotXed Unit at the Scottish Executive has primary contact with local authority staff but is little known to respondents within Scottish schools and there is a need to increase the profile of the Unit. Furthermore, many respondents would not describe their relationship with ScotXed as being one based on an equal partnership; neither do they perceive themselves to be part of the ScotXed Partnership.

While ScotXed is credited with having improved the quality of statistical data in recent years, some credit is also given to local authority staff and / or other forms of MIS as being instrumental in improving the quality of data.

In essence, the benefits of ScotXed and STACs are most clear to those who use them most. But there remains a caveat: many headteachers are clear that they wish that the debate on the appropriate role of statistical collections within education to remain open and fluid, and that other ways to look at how schools work with pupils remain an important part of any national assessment process. With the exception of some stakeholders, the collection of statistical data for performance measurement is not seen to sit readily with some educational initiatives, most specifically with A Curriculum for Excellence, which is perceived to be based much more on flexibility and innovation within the curriculum.

10.3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Many school-based staff feel a degree of remoteness from ScotXed and use the website rarely. This means that in many instances there is a lack of buy-in to ScotXed. For example, while there is widespread awareness of ScotXed, and a majority of respondents perceive ScotXed to have made data collection tasks easier, significant proportions of school-based respondents – particularly admin / support staff – were unable to comment on a number of potential impacts of ScotXed.

There is a need to increase communication with end users in order to emphasise the direct benefits of ScotXed to schools. However, this needs to be done in conjunction with local authority staff who are currently the major channel of communication between the Scottish Executive and Scottish schools as there is a risk that if the ScotXed Unit communicates directly with schools, they may alienate staff within local authorities. Area Officers and local authority staff need to work closely together.

However, increased communication alone is unlikely to convince some users and potential users of ScotXed. Many primary schools feel their role is to provide data and that there is little or no useful feedback to them. As such, there were some requests for a STACs equivalent for primary schools.

There are also a number of different MIS in operation in schools and local authorities across Scotland. In many instances, bespoke software and applications have been developed that can provide the information and data that schools require. In the short term, while schools feel their informational needs are being met by other sources, they are unlikely to prioritise use of ScotXed.

In the words of one stakeholder,

“They have a selling job to do. Not why the system is irresistible but why it is useful, how to interpret the data it provides and what its uses are.”

Appendix A

Table A
Average regularity of use of ScotXed for (by type of school)

	Early years/ pre-school	Primary	Secondary	ASfL
	N=15	N=110	N=113	N=15
Browsing for data/information	87.1	16.5	18.0	8.7
Provide staff within school/the Scottish Executive with benchmark or performance data not using ScotXed	7.1	14.4	9.2	35.5
Provide staff within school/the Scottish Executive with benchmark or performance data using ScotXed	2.3	4.3	6.3	17.3
Have contact with the Scottish Executive ScotXed Unit	1.6	1.8	2.0	1.0
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools not using ScotXed	1.6	1.0	1.1	0.4
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA using ScotXed	1.3	3.1	1.7	1.7
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA not using ScotXed	1.3	0.8	2.0	1.5
Provide benchmark or performance data to LA using ScotXed	1.3	6.1	4.2	2.0
Have contact with local authority ScotXed staff/representatives	0.8	7.0	8.7	2.5
Receive benchmark or performance data from schools/the Scottish Executive using ScotXed	0.8	4.5	4.6	1.5
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools using ScotXed	0.0	0.6	1.0	0.1

Source: Q5 (schools)

Base: All school based respondents - Early years/pre-school (15); Primary (110); Secondary (113); ASfL (15)

Table B**Effectiveness of sharing data / information through ScotXed with local authority staff (schools)**

	Score awarded (%)				%	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3	Don't Know	
HTs	6	46	19	6	25	7.0
Admin / support staff	6	38	17	4	33	7.1
Secondary HTs	7	49	18	2	22	7.4
Primary HTs	5	47	14	6	27	7.1
Secondary admin / support staff	12	37	22	4	22	7.2
Primary admin / support staff	2	44	12	4	38	7.1

Source: Q22 (schools)

Base: All Headteachers = 126; all admin / support staff = 127)

Table C**Effectiveness of sharing data / information through ScotXed with school staff (schools)**

	Score awarded (%)				%	Ave
	10	7-9	4-6	1-3	Don't Know	
HTs	6	50	19	9	14	6.7
Admin / support staff	4	43	21	3	27	7.0
Secondary HTs	4	70	13	6	7	7.2
Primary HTs	11	37	21	11	20	6.6
Secondary admin / support staff	5	51	24	3	17	6.9
Primary admin / support staff	4	44	18	2	29	7.2

Source: Q22 (schools)

Base: All Headteachers = 126; all admin / support staff = 127)

Appendix B

5387 ScotXed Partnership Evaluation (Local Authority) **Final Questionnaire**

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

This questionnaire is the property of George Street Research Limited, 24 Broughton Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3RH. Telephone 0131 478 7520.

Respondent's Name

Job Title

Service/ Department

Address

.....

Postcode Telephone Number

Interviewer Name Date of Interview

CLASSIFICATION

Sex		Number of years worked with ScotXed	
Male	1	Less than 1 year	1
Female	2	1-2 years	2
		3-4 years	3
Current role in relation to ScotXed		5 years (since implementation)	4
Strategic	1		
Day to day	2		
Designated ScotXed rep	3		
Local Authority			
Aberdeen City	1	Inverclyde	17
Aberdeenshire	2	Midlothian	18
Angus	3	Moray	19
Argyll & Bute	4	North Ayrshire	20
Clackmannanshire	5	North Lanarkshire	21
Dumfries and Galloway	6	Orkney Islands	22
Dundee City	7	Perth & Kinross	23
East Ayrshire	8	Renfrewshire	24
E Dunbartonshire	9	Scottish Borders	25
East Lothian	10	Shetland Islands	26
East Renfrewshire	11	South Ayrshire	27
Edinburgh City	12	South Lanarkshire	28
Falkirk	13	Stirling	29
Fife	14	West Dunbartonshire	30
Glasgow City	15	West Lothian	31
Highland	16	Western Isles	32

Introduction

Good morning / afternoon My name is and I am an interviewer calling from George Street Research. We are carrying out an independent evaluation on behalf of the Scottish Executive Education Department. **The aim of this evaluation is to examine the data exchange programme ScotXed and its effectiveness as a system of electronically exchanging data across education partners.** It is important to understand how ScotXed is currently working in order to improve on its future operation.

I would like to reassure you that all the information which you would provide us with will be confidential and our findings will be reported on in aggregate format only.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: REASSURE RESPONDENT OF MRS CODE OF CONDUCT ALONG WITH CONFIDENTIALITY.

Would you be willing to spend up to 30 minutes of your time to participate in the research?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
Yes willing but inconvenient now	2	ARRANGE ANOTHER TIME AND RECORD OR THANK AND CLOSE
No – Refusal	3	THANK AND CLOSE

Who else within your local authority is involved in ScotXed in any way or uses ScotXed? WRITE IN NAMES, JOB TITLES & PHONE NUMBERS BELOW

INTERVIEWER NOTE: Schools use a variety of software to help manage and organise the large range of electronic data now available. The main systems used by schools and local authorities to hold this data are known as Management Information Systems or MIS.

ASK ALL

Q1 Please can you tell me which of the following best describes the way in which you have any involvement in ScotXed? **READ OUT OPTIONS.**

I do not have involvement with ScotXed on a day-to-day basis but am involved in its use at a policy or strategic level	1
I am involved in using ScotXed on a day-to-day basis for the electronic exchange of data between my local authority, schools and SEED	2
I am the designated local authority ScotXed rep	3
I have no involvement with ScotXed	CLOSE

Q2 What current Management Information Systems are used within your local authority? **READ OUT OPTIONS. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

SEEMIS	1
Phoenix	2
Capita	3
Pisys	4
Other (write in)	5

Q3 Are these Management Information Systems used within every school in your local authority?

Yes	1
No	2

Q4 What proportion of schools within your local authority are using each type of Management Information System? **ASK FOR EACH SCHOOL**

	SEEMIS	Phoenix	Capita	Pisys	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Early Years/ pre school					
Primary					
Secondary					
Independent					
ASfL					

ASK ALL

Q5 How would you rate your own knowledge of Management Information Systems which are used within your local authority and its schools? Would you say you are**READ OUT OPTIONS AND SINGLE CODE**

Very familiar with MIS	1
Quite familiar with MIS	2
Not very familiar with MIS	3
Not at all familiar with MIS	4

SCOTXED

READ OUT: I am now going to ask you some questions in relation to ScotXed specifically.

Q6 How would you describe the role of the ScotXed Partnership for your local authority? **PROBE FULLY AND WRITE BELOW**

The ScotXed programme aims to promote quality improvement in Scottish education, by supporting the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data and providing access to high quality information. It is a partnership programme, involving all parties in the Scottish school education system.

Q7 How regularly do you personally....READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND SINGLE CODE FOR EACH

	Daily	Wkly	Fntly	Mthly	2-3 mths	Less Often	Never
Browse ScotXed for data/information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have contact with local authority ScotXed staff/ representatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have contact with the SEED ScotXed Unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide benchmark or performance data to SEED not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receive benchmark or performance data from SEED using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receive benchmark or performance data from SEED not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide schools with benchmark or performance data using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide schools with benchmark or performance data not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receive benchmark or performance data from schools using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receive benchmark or performance data from schools not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other Local Authorities using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with local authorities not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other organisations such as HMIE, SQA not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q8a What have you mainly used ScotXed for? **SPONTANEOUS. CIRCLE ALL WHICH APPLY**

Q8b From the options I am about to read out, can you tell me if you have used ScotXed to undertake each. **READ OUT ALL CODED AT Q8a. CIRCLE ALL WHERE SCOTXED HAS BEEN USED TO UNDERTAKE TASK** **NOT**

Q8c Can you tell me whether ScotXed has made the following tasks which are undertaken within your local authority easier to perform, harder to perform or made no difference at all. **ASK FOR EACH MENTIONED AT EITHER Q6a / 6b ASK FOR ANY CODED AT Q8a OR Q8b.**

		Q8a		Q8b		Q8c		
		Used Spont	Used Prompt	Easier	No diff	Harder	Don't know	
1	Exchanging attendance, absence & exclusions in EA schools data with SEED	1	1	1	2	3	4	
2	Exchanging School/ Pupil Census Data with SEED	2	2	1	2	3	4	
3	Exchanging Staff Census Data with SEED	3	3	1	2	3	4	
4	Exchanging School Leavers from Secondary and Special Schools data with SEED	4	4	1	2	3	4	
5	Exchanging Leavers from Secondary Schools and Special Schools data with Careers Scotland	5	5	1	2	3	4	
6	Collecting/ transferring Children Looked After Survey Data	6	6	1	2	3	4	
7	Collecting/ transferring child protection data	7	7	1	2	3	4	
8	Collecting/ transferring social work staffing & vacancies (annual & quarterly) data	8	8	1	2	3	4	
9	Collecting/ transferring school placing requests data	10	10	1	2	3	4	
10	Collecting/ transferring budgeted school running costs data	11	11	1	2	3	4	
11	Collecting/ transferring survey of children educated outwith school data	12	12	1	2	3	4	
12	Collecting/ transferring school estates core facts data	13	13	1	2	3	4	
13	Collecting/ transferring school meals survey data	14	14	1	2	3	4	
14	Collecting/ transferring schools openings & closures data	15	15	1	2	3	4	
15	Collecting/ transferring provision of physical education data or collecting/ transferring S1/S2 class size survey data	16	16	1	2	3	4	
16	Other (write in)	17	17	1	2	3	4	

ASK IF SAID EASIER AT Q8c (CODE 1). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q10
Q9 In what ways has the ScotXed Partnership made these tasks easier to perform. **WRITE IN BELOW STARTING WITH STATEMENT NUMBER**

NO. _____

REPEAT QUESTION FOR EACH TASK MADE EASIER TO PERFORM

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

ASK IF SAID HARDER AT Q8c (CODE 3). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q11
Q10 In what ways has the ScotXed Partnership made these tasks harder to perform. **WRITE IN BELOW STARTING WITH STATEMENT NUMBER**

No. _____

REPEAT QUESTION FOR EACH TASK MADE HARDER TO PERFORM

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

No. _____

Q11 What sources of advice and guidance do you make use of to help you understand and utilise ScotXed? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

Guidance/ advice notes produced by local authority ScotXed staff/ reps	1
Guidance/ advice notes produced by SEED ScotXed Unit	2
Roadshows	3
Directors update	4
Telephone contact with a contact within ScotXed who is local authority ScotXed staff/ rep	5
Telephone contact with member of SEED ScotXed unit	6
Email contact with a contact with an individual who is local authority ScotXed staff/ rep	7
Email contact with member of SEED ScotXed unit	8
A contact within your local authority (who)	9
A contact in another local authority (who)	10
On-line help within ScotXed website	11
Other (write in)	12
None	13

PARTNERSHIP

ScotXed is a partnership programme involving all aspects of the educational community in Scotland, led by SEED.

Q12 To what extent do you feel that...**READ OUT EACH STATEMENT. SINGLE CODE FOR EACH** Would you say a lot, adequately, not enough or not at all?

	A lot	Adeq	Not en	Not at all	DK
You are kept well informed about any changes/ updates in relation to MIS and ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5
You are able to contribute to the decision making processes undertaken with ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5
You understand the reasoning behind decisions within ScotXed that are made	1	2	3	4	5
You have access to educational information in order to monitor and improve services	1	2	3	4	5
The concept of partnership has been fundamental to the achievements of ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5
Your contributions are valued	1	2	3	4	5

Q13 How effective is communication between schools and local authorities in relation to ScotXed? **PROBE FULLY**

Q14a How effective is communication between local authorities and the ScotXed Unit at SEED?

Q14b How effective is communication within local authorities in relation to ScotXed?

	13	14a	14b
Very effective	1	1	1
Quite effective	2	2	2
Not very effective	3	3	3
Not at all effective	4	4	4
Don't know	5	5	5

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Q15 What impact has ScotXed had on the effectiveness of decision making within your local authority? **READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE**

Positive Impact	1
Mixed Impact	2
Negative Impact	3
No Impact	4
Don't know	5

ASK ALL CODED 1, 2 or 3 AT Q15. ALL OTHERS GO TO Q17

Q16 What reasons do you have for saying it has a impact **READ OUT IMPACT AT Q15. WRITE BELOW**

Q17a How useful has the ScotXed Partnership and its outputs been in terms of policy development at a local authority level? **READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very useful	1
Quite useful	2
Not very useful	3
Not at all useful	4
Don't know	5

Q17b In what ways has the ScotXed Partnership and its outputs been In terms of policy development at a local authority level **READ OUT OPTION FROM Q17a? WRITE IN BELOW**

Q17c How responsive do you believe ScotXed is to changing policy requirements? **READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very responsive	1
Quite responsive	2
Not very responsive	3
Not at all responsive	4
Don't know	5

Q18 How has ScotXed been.....**READ OUT OPTION FROM Q17** to changing policy needs? **WRITE IN BELOW**

Q19 How useful do you believe ScotXed is in generating new types of data? **READ OUT OPTIONS SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very useful	1
Quite useful	2
Not very useful	3
Not at all useful	4
Don't know	5

Q20 And why do you say that ScotXed has been in generating new types of data? **PROBE FULLY AND WRITE BELOW**

Q21 Overall, how well do think that ScotXed integrates with new initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence, Literacy and Numeracy, Assessment is For Learning and other initiatives? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very well	1
Quite well	2
Not very well	3
Not at all well	4
Don't know	5

Q22 How well does ScotXed integrate with the self evaluation process within schools? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very well	1
Quite well	2
Not very well	3
Not at all well	4
Don't know	5

SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA

Q23 A variety of different organisations operate within the ScotXed Partnership. These include schools, local authorities, the SEED ScotXed Unit and MIS providers. I would now like you to focus on this range of different organisations while I read out a number of statements concerning the support and promotion of the electronic exchange of data specifically in relation to the ScotXed partnership and would like you to tell me the extent to which you agree with each on a scale of 1-10 where 1 means you disagree strongly with the statement and 10 means you agree strongly. **ROTATE ORDER OF STATEMENTS. SINGLE CODE FOR EACH**

	Disagree strongly					Agree strongly					DK
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
ScotXed encourages schools to keep their MIS up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed encourages local authorities to keep their MIS up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed enables schools to keep their MIS up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed enables local authorities to keep their MIS up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed promotes better use of MIS in schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotEx promotes better use of MIS in local authorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed supports the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the speed of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the ease of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the accuracy of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the range/ scope of the data exchanged in Scottish Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed makes technical information clear and accessible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed provides sufficient resources to take forward implementation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed has acted upon issues arising from previous monitoring and reviews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

MINIMISING BUREAUCRATIC BURDENS

Q24a How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in minimising the bureaucratic burden placed upon local authorities where 1 is extremely unsuccessful and 10 is extremely successful. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

IF RESPONDENT HAS AWARDED SCORE OF 6 OR LESS AT Q24a, ASK

Q24b In what ways, if any, has the ScotXed Partnership helped to reduce the bureaucratic burden placed on your local authority?

Q24c How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in minimising the bureaucratic burden placed upon schools where 1 is extremely unsuccessful and 10 is extremely successful. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

IF RESPONDENT HAS AWARDED SCORE OF 6 OR LESS AT Q24c, ASK

Q24d In what ways, if any, has the ScotXed Partnership helped to reduce the bureaucratic burden placed on schools within your local authority?

ASK ALL

Q25 How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in moving the task of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff in schools in your local authority where 1 is extremely unsuccessful and 10 is extremely successful. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

IF RESPONDENT HAS AWARDED SCORE OF 6 OR LESS AT Q25, ASK

Q26 In what ways, if any, has the ScotXed Partnership helped to move the bureaucratic burden of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff in schools within your local authority?

ASK ALL

Q27 What have been the main benefits of the ScotXed Partnership to teaching staff in schools in your local authority? **WRITE IN BELOW**

Q28 What have been the main drawbacks of the ScotXed Partnership to administrative staff in schools in your local authority? **WRITE IN BELOW**

Q29 Overall, how successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in sharing data that schools and local authorities use as a matter of course in their day to day operation. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

STANDARD TABLES AND CHARTS (STACs)

Q30a Do you ever access STACs for information?

Yes	1
No	2

Q30b Who else within your local authority accesses the ScotXed website to obtain information on STACs: **READ OUT OPTIONS. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

Colleagues within education dept of local authority	1
Colleagues within other depts of local authority	2
Schools within local authority	3
A consultant/ other third party	4
Other (write in)	5
Don't know	6

IF RESPONDENT CODED 1 AT Q30a, ASK. ALL OTHERS GO TO Q33

Q31 What are the main reasons for accessing STACs? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

To access published data on school performance levels	1
To access published benchmarks	2
To access information for policy development	3
To obtain information to discuss with a specific school	4
To obtain information to discuss data with another local authority	5
To obtain information to aid preparation of reports	6
To obtain information to discuss with other stakeholders such as HMIE, SQA etc	7
Other (write in)	8

Q32 How is this information shared/ disseminated to others? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

At internal meetings within local authority	1
At meetings with other local authorities	2
At meetings with schools	3
At seminars / conferences	4
At road shows	5
Other (write in)	6

Q33 Overall how would you rate the usefulness of sharing data/ information through the ScotXed Partnership with (**READ OUT EACH OPTION**) on a scale of one to ten where 1 is not at all useful and 10 is very useful? **CIRCLE ONE FOR EACH OPTION**

	Not at all useful							very useful			
Local authority staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
School staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
With other organisations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Q34 How easy do you find the process of accessing STACs through the ScotXed website? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very easy	1	GO TO Q36
Quite easy	2	
Not very easy	3	GO TO Q35
Not at all easy	4	

ASK ALL THOSE WHO SAID THEY THOUGHT THE PROCESS TO BE NOT VERY EASY OR NOT AT ALL EASY Q35 (CODE 3 & 4). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q36

Q35 What could be done to make the process of obtaining STAC information easier? **WRITE BELOW**

BENCHMARKING

ASK ALL

Q36 Are you aware of any benchmarks/ standards which have been published through ScotXed?

Yes	1	GO TO 37a
No	2	GO TO Q39

ASK ALL THOSE WHO SAID YES AT Q (CODE 1). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q37a

Q37a Please specify which benchmarks/ standards you have used? **WRITE BELOW**

Q37b What you have used benchmarks for? **WRITE BELOW**

Q37c Overall, how would you rate the benchmarks/ standards which have been published by ScotXed on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is not at all valuable and 10 is extremely valuable? **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

Not at all valuable					extremely valuable				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q37d Do any schools in your local authority carry out their own surveys for benchmarking purposes?

Yes	1
No	2

ASK ALL

Q38 Do you carry out surveys within your local authority for benchmarking purposes?

Yes	1
No	2

ASSESSMENT

Q39 In what ways, if any, has the ScotXed partnership allowed monitoring of the impact of education policies at a school, local and national level? **WRITE IN BELOW**

Q40 Do you believe that the ScotXed Partnership has improved the quality of available data at school level, locally and nationally?

Yes	1	GO TO Q41
No	2	GO TO Q40b

ASK ALL THOSE WHO SAID NO AT Q40b (CODE 2). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q41

Q40b Why do you feel that the ScotXed Partnership has not improved the quality of available data at school level, locally and nationally? **WRITE IN BELOW**

ASK ALL

Q41 What more could the ScotXed Partnership do to improve the quality of available data at school level, locally and nationally?

Q42 Do you believe that ScotXed has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within the following establishments? **SINGLE CODE FOR EACH OPTION**

	Yes	No
A. Schools	1	2
B. Local authorities	1	2
C. Other organisations	1	2

ASK ALL WHO SAID NO FOR SCHOOLS AT Q42 (CODE A2). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q42c

Q42b Why do you feel that ScotXed has not reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within schools?

ASK ALL WHO SAID NO FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES AT Q42 (CODE B2). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q42d

Q42c Why do you feel that ScotXed has not reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within local authorities?

ASK ALL WHO SAID NO FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS AT Q42 (CODE C2). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q43

Q42d Why do you feel that ScotXed has not reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within other organisations?

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF SCOTXED

ASK ALL

Q43 What do you feel are the main barriers which local authorities face in using ScotXed effectively?

Q43b How do you feel such barriers could be overcome?

Q44 Concerning the whole concept of the ScotXed Partnership and the data exchange process, what do you feel works well?

Q45 Finally, what improvements do you feel could be made to ScotXed and the electronic data exchange process?

Q46 Finally, what further comments would you like to make on the ScotXed Partnership and data exchange or on any of the questions I have asked you here today? **PROBE FULLY**

Q47 Would you be willing to take part in further discussions on any of the issues raised in this survey, or in further research? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Yes	1
No	2

Thank you for taking part in this research, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that all the answers you have given are completely confidential and nothing you have said will be relayed to any third parties with your name attached or any other identifiable information. If you have any queries regarding this research you can contact the Market Research Society (0500 396 999) or Joe Kerr (quote ref: 5387) at George Street Research (0131 478 7543)

**CHECK CLASSIFICATION
THANK AND CLOSE**

Declaration

I declare that this interview was conducted by me with the above named respondent in accordance with survey instructions and MRS code of conduct.

Signed

Date

Introduction

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is and I am an interviewer calling from George Street Research. We are carrying out an independent evaluation on behalf of the Scottish Executive Education Department. **The aim of this evaluation is to examine the data exchange programme ScotXed and its effectiveness as a system of electronically exchanging data across education partners.** It is important to understand how ScotXed is currently working in order to improve on its future operation.

I would like to reassure you that all the information which you would provide us with will be confidential and our findings will be reported in aggregate format only.

INTERVIEWER NOTE: REASSURE RESPONDENT OF MRS CODE OF CONDUCT ALONG WITH CONFIDENTIALITY.

Would you be willing to spend around 15 minutes of your time to participate in the research?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
Yes willing but inconvenient now	2	ARRANGE ANOTHER TIME AND RECORD OR THANK AND CLOSE
No – Refusal	3	THANK AND CLOSE

INTERVIEWER NOTE: Schools use a variety of software to help manage and organise the large range of electronic data now available. The main systems used by schools and local authorities to hold this data are known as Management Information Systems or MIS.

Q1 Which current Management Information System is used within your school?
READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY

SEEMIS	1
Phoenix	2
Capita	3
Pisys	4
Other (write in)	5
Other (write in)	6

Q2 How would you rate your own knowledge of Management Information Systems which are used within your school? Would you say you are**READ OUT OPTIONS AND SINGLE CODE**

Very familiar with MIS	1
Quite familiar with MIS	2
Not very familiar with MIS	3
Not at all familiar with MIS	4

Q3 Other than yourself, how many teaching and administrative staff within your school use this Management Information System? **WRITE IN ACTUAL NUMBER**

TEACHING STAFF _____

ADMINISTRATIVE/ SUPPORT STAFF _____

SCOTXED

READ OUT: I am now going to ask you some questions in relation to ScotXed specifically.

Q4 How would you describe the role of the ScotXed Partnership? **PROBE FULLY AND WRITE BELOW**

The ScotXed programme aims to promote quality improvement in Scottish education, by supporting the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data and providing access to high quality information. It is a partnership programme, involving all parties in the Scottish school education system.

Q5 How regularly do you **personally....READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND SINGLE CODE FOR EACH** Would you say daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, every 2-3 months or less often?

	Daily	Wkly	F'ntly	Mthly	2-3 mths	Less Often	Never
Browse ScotXed for data/ information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have contact with local authority ScotXed staff/ representatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have contact with the SEED ScotXed Unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide staff within school with benchmark or performance data using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide staff within school with benchmark or performance data not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receive benchmark or performance data from local authority using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Provide benchmark or performance data to local authority using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other schools not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other stakeholder organisations such as HMIE, SQA using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Share benchmark or performance data with other organisations such as HMIE, SQA not using ScotXed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q6a What types of information have you mainly provided to ScotXed or used ScotXed to obtain? **SPONTANEOUS. CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY**

Q6b From the options I am about to read out, what other types of information have you mainly provided to ScotXed or used ScotXed to obtain? **READ OUT ALL NOT CODED AT Q6a. CIRCLE ALL WHERE SCOTXED HAS BEEN USED TO UNDERTAKE TASK**

Q6c Can you tell me whether ScotXed has made the following tasks which are undertaken within your school easier to perform, harder to perform or made no difference at all. **ASK FOR EACH MENTIONED AT EITHER Q6a / 6b AND ROTATE ORDER OF THE STATEMENTS**

	Q6a Used ScotXed Spont	Q6b Used ScotXed Prompt	Q6c Easier	Q6c No diff	Q6c Harder	Q6c Don't know
1	Attendance, Absence and Exclusions in EA Schools	1	1	2	3	4
2	School/ Pupils Census	2	1	2	3	4
3	Staff Census	3	1	2	3	4
4	School Leavers (winter & summer: secondary and special schools)	4	1	2	3	4
5	Leavers from secondary and special schools	5	1	2	3	4
6	School Attainment (STAC's)	6	1	2	3	4
7	School Placing Requests	7	1	2	3	4
8	School Meals Survey	8	1	2	3	4
9	Pre School and Day Care Census	9	1	2	3	4
10	Independent School Census and Grant Aided Special Schools	10	1	2	3	4
11	Independent School Leavers and Grant Aided Special School Leavers	11	1	2	3	4
12	Pupil Leaving/ Enrolling Files and Messages	12	1	2	3	4
13	Scottish Candidate Number Administration File	13	1	2	3	4
	Other (write in)	14	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

Q7 What sources of advice and guidance do you make use of to help you understand and utilise ScotXed? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

Guidance/ advice notes produced by local authority ScotXed staff/ reps	1
Roadshows	2
Guidance/ advice notes produced by SEED ScotXed Unit	3
SEED Directors update	4
Telephone contact with an individual who is local authority ScotXed staff/ rep	5
Telephone contact with member of SEED ScotXed unit	6
Email contact with an individual who is local authority ScotXed staff/ rep	7
Email contact with member of SEED ScotXed unit	8
A contact within your local authority (who/job titles)	9
A colleague within school	10
On-line help within ScotXed website	11
Information provided by local authority ScotXed representative	12
Other (write in)	13
None	14

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

NO Q8

- Q9 How responsive do you believe ScotXed is to changing policy requirements?
READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Very responsive	1
Quite responsive	2
Not very responsive	3
Not at all responsive	4

- Q10 How responsive do you believe ScotXed is in generating new types of data?
READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Very responsive	1
Quite responsive	2
Not very responsive	3
Not at all responsive	4

- Q11 In general, how well do think that ScotXed integrates with new initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence, Literacy and Numeracy, Assessment is For Learning and other initiatives? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very well	1
Quite well	2
Not very well	3
Not at all well	4
N/A as yet	5

- Q12 How well does ScotXed integrate with the self evaluation process within your school? **READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very well	1
Quite well	2
Not very well	3
Not at all well	4

SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA

Q13 A variety of different organisations operate within the ScotXed Partnership. These include schools, local authorities, the SEED ScotXed Unit and MIS providers. I would now like you to focus on this range of different organisations while I read out a number of statements concerning the support and promotion of the electronic exchange of data specifically in relation to the ScotXed partnership and would like you to tell me the extent to which you agree with each on a scale of 1-10 where 1 means you disagree strongly with the statement and 10 means you agree strongly. **ROTATE ORDER OF STATEMENTS. SINGLE CODE FOR EACH**

	Disagree strongly						Agree strongly				DK
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
ScotXed encourages schools to keep their MIS up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed enables schools to keep their MIS systems up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed promotes better use of MIS in schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed supports the use of effective and secure systems for the exchange of data	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the speed of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the ease of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the accuracy of data exchanges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed increases the range/ scope of the data exchanged in Scottish Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed makes technical information clear and accessible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed provides sufficient resources to take forward implementation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
ScotXed has acted upon issues arising from previous monitoring and reviews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

MINIMISING BUREAUCRATIC BURDENS

- Q14 How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in minimising the bureaucratic burden placed upon local authorities where 1 is extremely unsuccessful and 10 is extremely successful. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- Q15 How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in moving the burden of data gathering and management from teaching to administrative staff in schools where 1 is extremely unsuccessful and 10 is extremely successful. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- Q16 How successful on a scale of 1-10 has the ScotXed Partnership been in sharing data that schools use as a matter of course in their day to day operation. **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely unsuccessful					extremely successful				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

STANDARD TABLES AND CHARTS (STACs)

Q17a Do you ever access STACs for information on a school level?

Yes
No

1 – GO TO Q18
2 – GO TO Q22

Q18 Who within your school accesses the ScotXed website to obtain information on STACs? **READ OUT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

Myself	1
Headteacher (if applic)	2
Deputy Head / Principal Teacher	3
Other teaching staff	4
Administration staff	5
A consultant/ other third party	6
Other (write in)	7
Don't know	8

Q19 What are the main reasons for accessing STACs? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

To access published data on schools performance levels	1
To aid production of our own benchmarks	2
To access published benchmarks	3
To access information for policy development	4
To obtain information for discussion with staff within school	5
To obtain information for discussion with staff in other schools	6
To obtain information to aid preparation of reports	7
To obtain information to discuss with local authority when they visit school	8
To obtain information to discuss with other stakeholders such as HMIE, SQA etc	9
Other (write in)	10

Q20 How is this information shared/ disseminated to others? **DO NOT PROMPT. MULTICODING PERMITTED**

At internal meetings within school	1
At headteacher meetings	2
At meetings with local authority	3
At meetings with schools	4
Cluster meetings	5
At seminars / conferences	6
At road shows	7
Other (write in)	8

Q21 How easy do you find the process of accessing STACs through the ScotXed website? **READ OUT OPTIONS. SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very easy	1
Quite easy	2
Not very easy	3
Not at all easy	4

ASK ALL

Q22 Overall how would you rate the effectiveness of sharing data/ information though ScotXed with **(READ OUT EACH OPTION)** on a scale of one to ten where 1 is not at all effective and 10 is very effective? **CIRCLE ONE FOR EACH OPTION**

	not at all effective					very effective				
Local authority staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
School staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

BENCHMARKING

Q23 Are you aware of any benchmarks/ standards which have been published through ScotXed?

Yes	1	GO TO Q24
No	2	GO TO Q27

ASK ALL THOSE WHO SAID YES AT Q23 (CODE 1). ALL OTHERS GO TO Q27

Q24 Please specify which benchmarks/ standards you have used? **WRITE BELOW**

Q25 What you have used benchmarks for? **WRITE BELOW**

Q26 How would you rate the benchmarks/ standards which have been published by ScotXed on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely invaluable and 10 is extremely valuable? **CIRCLE ONE ONLY**

extremely invaluable							extremely valuable			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

ASK ALL

Q27 Do you carry out surveys within your school for benchmarking purposes?

Yes	1
No	2

Q28 How has the ScotXed partnership allowed monitoring of the impact of education policies at a school, local and national level? **WRITE IN BELOW**

Q29 Do you believe that the ScotXed Partnership has improved the quality of available data both a school, locally and nationally?

Yes	1	GO TO Q30
No	2	GO TO Q31

Q30 What more could the ScotXed Partnership do to improve the quality of available data both a school, locally and nationally?

Q31 Do you believe that ScotXed has reduced the administrative burden of producing national statistics within your school? **SINGLE CODE FOR EACH OPTION**

Yes	1
No	2

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF SCOTXED

ASK ALL

Q32 What do you feel are the main barriers which your school faces in using ScotXed effectively?

Q33 How do you feel such barriers could be overcome?

Q34 What improvements do you feel could be made to ScotXed and the electronic data exchange process?

Q35 Finally, what further comments would you like to make on the ScotXed Partnership and data exchange or on any of the questions I have asked you here today? **PROBE FULLY**

Q35 Would you be willing to take part in further discussions on any of the issues raised in this survey, or in further research? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Yes	1
No	2

Thank you for taking part in this research, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that all the answers you have given are completely confidential and nothing you have said will be relayed to any third parties with your name attached or any other identifiable information. If you have any queries regarding this research you can contact the Market Research Society (0500 396 999) or Jo Kerr (quote ref: 5387) at George Street Research (0131 478 7543)

**CHECK CLASSIFICATION
THANK AND CLOSE**

Declaration

I declare that this interview was conducted by me with the above named respondent in accordance with survey instructions and MRS code of conduct.

Signed

Date

5387 ScotXed Evaluation

Final Topic Guide – Local Authority Staff

The following question areas have been developed to provide a framework for discussion. All topic areas of relevance should be covered at some point in the discussion but should be addressed in an order that facilitates easy and relaxed conversation. Be sure to allow opportunities for respondents to raise new or different issues that they consider significant to the core subjects

**REFER TO COMPLETED TELEPHONE INTERVIEW(S) PRIOR TO DISCUSSION
KEY TOPICS TO BE COVERED ARE COMMUNICATIONS, TRAINING, ADVICE
& GUIDANCE AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE ISSUES
ASK RESPONDENTS TO GO ONLINE IF POSSIBLE TO DEMONSTRATE USAGE
OF SCOTXED**

Background / Warm-Up

- Respondent role in local authority; extent to which they are involved in using MIS as part of their job;
- Ways in which MIS/IT is used in provision of information to schools in LA / colleagues in local authority / colleagues in other local authorities / SEED etc; roughly what proportion of data provision uses non MIS/IT systems and why are non MIS/IT systems used;
- Regularity of provision of data to schools in LA / colleagues in local authority / colleagues in other local authorities / SEED etc using any form of electronic data exchange;
- Extent to which use of MIS/IT has increased in recent years; impact of any increase on respondent role within LA / on teaching staff in schools / on non teaching staff in schools / on relationship with SEED;

Usage of ScotXed

- How / when first introduced to ScotXed; Impact of introduction of ScotXed on respondent role / schools in LA / colleagues in local authority / colleagues in other local authorities / SEED etc; impact of ScotXed in terms of provision of information to other third parties;
- What information is provided to ScotXed (regular and ad hoc);
- Extent to which respondent / schools in LA / colleagues in local authority / colleagues in other local authorities accesses information from ScotXed (remember to differentiate between ScotXed generally and STACs in particular); what type(s) of information is accessed via ScotXed and what is this used for (probing, accessing benchmark / performance data for internal use / to share with schools in LA / to discuss with

colleagues etc); who else within the local authority uses ScotXed to access information at a school level, locally or nationally;

- Is ScotXed used to access information via STACs - what type(s) of information is provided and how useful is this to respondent / schools in LA / colleagues in local authority / colleagues in other local authorities / SEED etc; to what extent is information used to access published benchmarks / use to compare with other schools or LAs / used for internal discussions / used for external discussions etc;
- How easy is it to access information via STACs and to find required information; are external consultants used to access STACs and why;
- Views on development of STAC programmes; awareness of development of PCA to derive comparator schools (instead of FSM); how useful is this and why / why not;
- How would respondents describe the process of obtaining / providing information (eg efficient, effective etc); to what extent is information accessed via ScotXed used to help produce internal reports containing statistics / benchmark data that can be used internally within LA;

Impact of ScotXed

- What impact has ScotXed had on minimising bureaucratic burdens for teaching staff / admin & support staff in schools / staff in LA / in terms of the amount of time spent collating information / ease of providing information via ScotXed / reducing workloads / timing of requests for information / volume of data collected etc;
- How responsive is ScotXed in terms of responding to policy requirements & changes / in generating new types of data; To what extent has ScotXed allowed for a greater breadth of analysis to monitor policies targeting individual groups;
- In what ways has ScotXed brought about an improvement in the quality of information in schools' LA management information systems;
- How does ScotXed impact on / fit with other initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence / AifL / Literacy & Numeracy etc; How well does ScotXed respond to the introduction of new initiatives;
- What impact does ScotXed have on the self-evaluation process in schools / LAs and how does it fit with the self-evaluation process in schools / LAs;
- To what extent has the ScotXed Partnership improved the quality of available data at school level, at local authority level and nationally; to what extent does STAC (Standard Tables and Charts) allow for improved data to be provided / accessed;

Understanding of the ScotXed Partnership

- Who / what organisations form the ScotXed Partnership; how well do these work together and reasons; what impact does the Partnership have on use of MIS in schools / data exchanges between different organisations / accuracy of data exchange / range & scope of data available via ScotXed etc;
- What is the role of each organisation within the Partnership;
- What type of contact does respondent have with others in the Partnership and what prompts this contact;
- What are the contributions of different elements of the Partnership to ScotXed and how well do these fit together; what is respondent's understanding of their role in ScotXed;

Sources of advice & guidance on ScotXed

- Which sources of advice & guidance have been used;
- How effective is each, together with reasons;
- Preferences for sources of advice & guidance, and why;
- What types of training, if any, have been provided on usage of ScotXed and STACs and how effective has each type of training been; who has provided training; is training ongoing; is there a need for any further training and, if so, what; which organisation(s) should have responsibility for delivery of training and why;
- Has respondent been involved in provision of training to colleagues in schools / LA / other organisations; is training ongoing; is there a need for any further training and, if so, what; which organisation(s) should have responsibility for delivery of training and why;

Interconnectivity

- In what ways does ScotXed interconnect with other MIS systems such as social work systems; in what ways, should ScotXed interconnect with other MIS systems; in what ways would / could interconnected systems be used by schools;

Barriers to usage of ScotXed

- What barriers prevent / limit usage of ScotXed in schools / in LA / in other organisations and how can these be overcome in the short, medium and long term;

The Future

- What improvements, if any should be made to ScotXed and why; what impact will the introduction of GLOW have on ScotXed;

- Views on whether ScotXed could / should be widened to offer primary schools access to more information (eg. national results of Scottish Survey of Achievement – SSA – analysed by primary schools of similar backgrounds / characteristics); what other primary school informational requirements could be met by ScotXed
- **Overall**
- How effective has ScotXed been in achieving its mission to promote and implement a system of electronic data exchange amongst education partners, capable of meeting the information needs required to manage, monitor and improve school education services in Scotland;
- How effective are the processes involved in its development;
- How effective is the operation of the Partnership and the outcomes for partner organisations in relation to aims of the Partnership;

At end of interview, ask respondents for examples of good practice case studies in relation to electronic data exchange (focus on ways in which ScotXed has led to changes / improvements in this) and benefits of each and how these can be tailored to meet the needs of other individual local authorities or schools. Also ask for permission to present these as case studies.

5387 ScotXed Evaluation

Final Topic Guide - Schools

The following question areas have been developed to provide a framework for discussion. All topic areas of relevance should be covered at some point in the discussion but should be addressed in an order that facilitates easy and relaxed conversation. Be sure to allow opportunities for respondents to raise new or different issues that they consider significant to the core subjects

**REFER TO COMPLETED TELEPHONE INTERVIEW(S) PRIOR TO DISCUSSION
KEY TOPICS TO BE COVERED ARE COMMUNICATIONS, TRAINING, ADVICE
& GUIDANCE AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE ISSUES
ASK RESPONDENTS TO GO ONLINE IF POSSIBLE TO DEMONSTRATE USAGE
OF SCOTXED**

Background / Warm-Up

- Respondent role in school; extent to which they are involved in using MIS as part of their job;
- Ways in which MIS/IT is used in provision of information to other schools / local authority / SEED; roughly what proportion of data provision uses non MIS/IT systems and why are non MIS/IT systems used;
- Regularity of provision of data to local authority / SEED using any form of electronic data exchange;
- Extent to which use of MIS/IT has increased in recent years; impact of this increase on respondent role within school; usage of any consultants to analyse / work with data on behalf of school and reasons for using consultants;

Usage of ScotXed

- How / when first introduced to ScotXed; Impact of introduction of ScotXed on respondent role / school / provision of information to other third parties;
- What information is provided to ScotXed (regular and ad hoc);
- Extent to which respondent / school accesses information to ScotXed; what type(s) of information is accessed via ScotXed and what is this used for (probing, accessing benchmark / performance data for internal use / to share with others outwith school / to discuss with local authority staff etc); who else within the school uses ScotXed to access information at a school level;
- Does school use STACs itself or do they have a third party / consultant to gather relevant information, for example attainment information? If they have a consultant to come in, do they understand the data source ie attribute this as being part of the process of ScotXed / obtaining information via STACs?

- (If STACs used) what type(s) of information do STACs provide and how useful is this to school; to what extent is information used to access published benchmarks / use to compare with other schools / used for internal discussions / used for external discussions etc; how easy is it to access information via STACs and to find required information; how far afield do respondents compare their schools to others (local / within LA / across LA / STACS comparator schools etc);
- Views on development of STAC programmes; awareness of development of PCA to derive comparator schools (instead of FSM); how useful is this and why / why not;
- How would respondents describe the process of obtaining / providing information (eg efficient, effective, useful etc);

Impact of ScotXed

- What impact has ScotXed had on minimising bureaucratic burdens for teaching staff / admin & support staff in terms of the amount of time spent collating information / ease of providing information via ScotXed / reducing workloads / timing of requests for information / volume of data collected etc;
- How responsive is ScotXed in terms of responding to policy requirements & changes / in generating new types of data; To what extent has ScotXed allowed for a greater breadth of analysis to monitor policies targeting individual groups;
- In what ways has ScotXed brought about an improvement in the quality of information in schools' management information systems;
- How does ScotXed impact on / fit with other initiatives such as A Curriculum for Excellence / AifL / Literacy & Numeracy etc; How well does ScotXed respond to the introduction of new initiatives;
- What impact does ScotXed have on the self-evaluation process in schools and how does it fit with the self-evaluation process in schools;
- To what extent has the ScotXed Partnership improved the quality of available data at school level, at local authority level and nationally; to what extent does STAC (Standard Tables and Charts) allow for improved data to be provided / accessed;

Understanding of the ScotXed Partnership

- Who / what organisations form the ScotXed Partnership; how well do these work together and reasons; what impact does the Partnership have on use of MIS in schools / data exchanges between different organisations / accuracy of data exchange / range & scope of data available via ScotXed etc;
- What is the role of each organisation within the Partnership;
- What type of contact does respondent have with others in the Partnership and what prompts this contact;

- What are the contributions of different elements of the Partnership to ScotXed and how well do these fit together; what is respondent's understanding of their role in ScotXed;

Sources of advice & guidance on ScotXed

- Which sources of advice & guidance have been used;
- How effective is each, together with reasons;
- Preferences for sources of advice & guidance, and why;
- What types of training, if any, have been provided on usage of ScotXed and STACs, how effective has each type of training been; who has provided training; is training ongoing; is there a need for any further training and, if so, what; which organisation(s) should have responsibility for delivery of training and why;

Interconnectivity

- In what ways does ScotXed interconnect with other MIS systems such as social work systems; in what ways, should ScotXed interconnect with other MIS systems; in what ways would / could interconnected systems be used by schools;

Barriers to usage of ScotXed

- What barriers prevent / limit usage of ScotXed and how can these be overcome in the short, medium and long term;

The Future

- What improvements, if any should be made to ScotXed and why; what impact will the introduction of GLOW have on ScotXed;
- Views on whether ScotXed could / should be widened to offer primary schools access to more information (eg. national results of Scottish Survey of Achievement – SSA – analysed by primary schools of similar backgrounds / characteristics); what other primary school informational requirements could be met by ScotXed;

Overall

- How effective has ScotXed been in achieving its mission to promote and implement a system of electronic data exchange amongst education partners, capable of meeting the information needs required to manage, monitor and improve school education services in Scotland;
- How effective are the processes involved in its development;
- How effective is the operation of the Partnership and the outcomes for partner organisations in relation to aims of the Partnership;

At end of interview, ask respondents for examples of good practice case studies in relation to electronic data exchange (focus on ways in which ScotXed has led to changes / improvements in this) and benefits of each and how these can be tailored to meet the needs of other individual local authorities or schools. Also ask for permission to present these as case studies.

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Final Topic Guide – Stakeholders

The following question areas have been developed to provide a framework for discussion. All topic areas of relevance should be covered at some point in the discussion but should be addressed in an order that facilitates easy and relaxed conversation. Be sure to allow opportunities for respondents to raise new or different issues that they consider significant to the core subjects

NB RESPONDENTS MAY HAVE VERY DIFFERENT CONTACT / USAGE WITH SCOTXED – ESTABLISH THIS AT START OF INTERVIEW AND MODERATE TOPIC GUIDE ACCORDINGLY – UTILISE TOPIC AREAS FROM SCHOOLS / LA TOPIC GUIDES WHERE RELEVANT

Background / Warm-Up

- Respondent role in organisation; extent of awareness of role of ScotXed and STACs;

ScotXed

- Extent to which respondent is involved in using ScotXed and for what purposes; does respondent have direct access to ScotXed to retrieve information;
- How would respondent describe role of ScotXed; How / when first introduced to ScotXed; Impact of introduction of ScotXed on respondent role; what has impact of ScotXed been on other educational practitioners / local authority staff etc;
- Ways in which information provided by ScotXed is utilised by respondent / their organisation; do they have direct access to original data or are they working with processed output;
- How well do they feel they ScotXed Partnership has met its objectives? Why / Why not?
- What are respondent views for ScotXed and the future (eg interconnectivity of information (social work data etc), impact of GLOW) etc;

HMIE specifically

- Views on good practice and use of ScotXed by LA quality improvement officers and any views on new areas ScotXed could usefully move into.

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