

CTF Import Issue with Pre-Admission Contacts

An issue was introduced into the SIMS software in the Autumn 2017 Release, made available to schools at the end of the Autumn term, in which importing a Common Transfer File (CTF) into a Pre-Admission Group could result in existing Contact records in the system being updated with another person's details and being associated to the Applicant record in error.

We have included in this document details that will provide schools with the information they need to ascertain if they may have potential data corruption and how to identify and correct such records. This is based on the information available to HfL from Capita as at 19th July 2018 and replaces any previous advice issued to date.

Which Schools could be affected

This issue will only affect schools that have imported a CTF into a Pre-Admission Group, **after** the SIMS Autumn 2017 upgrade had been installed, but **before** either Patch 23971 or the SIMS Summer 2018 upgrade was applied. If you haven't imported such CTFs you will not have any data to check and correct, however, it is highly recommended that you do not import CTFs into Pre-Admission groups until after you have applied the SIMS Summer 2018 upgrade.

Which Contact records could be affected

If a Contact in the CTF has the same **Forename** and **Surname** combination as a Contact already in the SIMS database (i.e. on an On Roll or former Student), the import will have replaced the details on the existing Contact record with the information in the CTF and then linked that Contact record to the Applicant record.

Potential Impact

If the CTF Contact is a different person to the existing Contact, albeit they share a name, the contact information that displays in the Family/Home panel on the existing Student record(s) will be incorrect. This may also apply to any Data Collection Sheets/reports that the school have generated following the CTF import, as well as any communication software the school may employ to text/email parents/guardians.

If the CTF Contact was a parent then a 'Sibling Link' will have been made between the Applicant and any existing Student(s) associated with the original Contact, for whom they were also a parent, which may be incorrect.

This could potentially result in the incorrect person receiving communications from the school regarding a Student, which could result in a data breach under GDPR.

Current advice from Capita / HfL

Capita have made Patch 24157 available to add Check 99 into the Database Diagnostics routine in SIMS. HfL have released this patch to all schools we support via SOLUS³ and have emailed school admin accounts and known network staff.

This check will identify potential data corruption to Contact records as a result of imported CTFs. Capita have also provided a PowerPoint presentation that will guide school users through running this routine and creating a spreadsheet with the results, facilitating the data checking process. We included this PowerPoint in the email to schools regarding the Patch, but a copy will also be made available on the HGfL.

Schools that may have followed our previous advice, including the running of a bespoke SIMS report we created in consultation with schools, are advised to also run this routine, as it checks areas of SIMS that the reporting engine doesn't have access to and therefore may identify records that the previous report did not.

Actions for Schools to take

Check before sending out information

If your school could be affected by this issue (see above) then it is highly recommended that you do not send out any information/communication to parents or other contacts unless you are sure their details are correct and they are associated with the correct students.

SIMS Summer 2018 Upgrade

Ensure that this upgrade is applied to your SIMS system, as this will prevent any potential data corruption, as detailed above. You can check if this has applied by clicking on **Help > About** in SIMS - if the version number is 7.182, you are on the Summer 2018 release.

Patch 24157

Ensure that Patch 24157 is applied to your SIMS database. If your school receives Network Support internally or from someone other than the HfL ICT Services team (this is for PC/Network support and not SIMS support) then please speak to them to check whether this Patch has been installed; HfL Network Supported schools will have this check performed on your behalf by us, so no need to contact the ICT Service Desk. Please note however that the Patch may not install until the morning of Wednesday 25th July, depending on the Auto-Deployment Schedule set up in your SOLUS³ system. The patch can however be manually scheduled in SOLUS³, so that it happens sooner.

Database Diagnostics

Follow the instructions in the PowerPoint provided by Capita. This will guide you through creating a spreadsheet that details the possible data errors, which you can then use to keep track of any corrections you make (see below).

Correct data errors

The above spreadsheet will list the possible data errors and the PowerPoint explains how you can ensure you open the correct Contact record for editing, via the Quick Search on the SIMS homepage. Once in the Contact record:

1. Navigate to panel **4 Associated Students** and check that the details are correct.

2. If there is an Applicant listed in this list, for which the Contact should not be associated, click to highlight the Applicant entry and then click on **Delete**. **DO NOT** delete any existing or previous students from this list, as they should still be associated with the Contact.
3. Correct the other details in the Contact record (address, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.); any previous address should be detailed on the spreadsheet above, however the other details will not be available from within SIMS any longer. If you have previous Data Collection sheets to refer back to that would help you in this task, otherwise you may need to ask the Contact to provide their correct details again and then make the changes.

Note: Once you have made these corrections, re-running Database Diagnostics may very well provide the same information as was shown before making the corrections. Capita have commented that “*we can only draw attention to the strong possibility of a data error and we can't always determine if the school has already resolved the issue to their satisfaction*”.

Add missing Contacts to Applicants

If you do need to delete Applicants from a Contact record it will mean that you are left with missing Contacts on the Applicant records affected. You can either add the Contacts manually via the **Focus > Admission > Application** menu route, or you can re-import the original CTF(s). **YOU MUST** ensure that you are on the SIMS Summer 2018 release before importing the CTF(s) again (see above).

History of this issue and advice given

Mid-May 2018 – Capita were made aware of data issues in SIMS as a result of the SIMS Autumn 2017 upgrade.

17th May 2018 – HfL emailed all schools to advise them to run 2 patches (23971 and 23974) in relation to fixing issues in the CTF Import routine in SIMS.

21st May 2018 – Following further information provided by Capita, HfL emailed all schools with an explanation of the issue and included a custom SIMS report to assist schools in identifying Contact records that could contain potential data corruption. Also included were instructions on how to correct any errors found.

24th May 2018 – Following further investigations and discussions with Capita and schools, HfL emailed all schools to provide additional clarification on the issue and a new custom SIMS report to better assist schools in the data corruption identification process, as well as updated guidance on correcting the data records.

Throughout May & June - HfL were in discussions with Capita and SIMS Support Units around the country, collating information and providing Capita with feedback on the possible solutions they were looking to make available to schools in relation to this issue. As no reliable solution was made available, it was decided not to further confuse schools by providing updates on an ever-changing review process and to wait until pertinent information was available.

27th June 2018 – Capita made available a script for SIMS Support Units to test that could identify any potentially corrupted records and provide a possible correction, whilst also developing a Patch that would apply those possible corrections to the Contact records automatically.

10th July 2018 – Capita made Patch 24040 available to automatically apply the suggested corrections the previously mentioned script detailed. This required extensive testing before it could be made available to schools, given that the patch would be changing data.

11th July 2018 – Capita withdrew Patch 24040 as they received reports that the correction made could not be 100% relied upon for accuracy and as such they decided that they would instead provide a patch to make the identification report available through Database Diagnostics rather than an external script, making it more accessible to school users.

11th July 2018 – SIMS Summer 2018 upgrade was released by HfL to the schools we support. The email notifications regarding this upgrade included a reminder of our previous advice on how to identify and fix potential data corruptions.

16th July 2018 – Capita released Patch 24157 (see above) to add Check 99 into Database Diagnostics, along with a PowerPoint presentation, to better facilitate schools with the data corruption identification. These materials required testing and some adaptations/corrections made to the PowerPoint in order to streamline the process as much as possible for schools.