We are still committed to the concept of having a replacement for EDI and a better solution for all our customers. However, we believe that the challenges of development/integration with legacy systems in AOs and MIS suppliers have been underestimated. Whilst the 2015/16 pilot has been successful to date, it has highlighted a number of challenges. AOs that are further along the path towards replacing their IT estate have found themselves more able to engage and others have increasingly found it is disproportionately complex and expensive to develop in a legacy environment.

Capita SIMS’s recent announcement that they wish to terminate the 2015/16 pilots and focus resource on developing their legacy system has made us pause for thought and bring our own strategic IT development into focus. Our high level plan is to have refreshed core processing systems available for use from late 2018, therefore we have to question the costs and benefits of continuing with a pilot against our legacy system for potentially one/two year’s small scale use. 2017 is a particularly busy year for AOs with product reform and all the new requirements that brings – including grading and non-examined assessment, which we feel it is important to focus on as an industry. Taking all these factors into consideration, we have therefore decided to start live pilots from late 2018.

We recognise the significant effort – investment, time and commitment of resource all the AOs and suppliers have already contributed to this development. We also recognise the importance of effective working relationships with MIS suppliers and want to work within the programme and with major suppliers to achieve the best for our customers.

We will continue to engage with the A2C programme, particularly in reviewing and re-planning the programme to come up with a workable solution, having considered all the available options. We advocate an approach that gives the flexibility for AOs to pilot when ready, not necessarily all at the same time.