

The Use of Technology in Children and Family Services

Departmental Review August 2018

Context

- **In recent years Children's services has become much more focused on statutory duties in relation to education , children's social care and also preventing demand in children's social care services**
- **The vast majority of spend in relation to education is in a ring fenced Dedicated Schools Grant and whilst prudent and efficient use of resources is very important it has limited impact on Council revenue**
- **Children's services has a broad statutory base and significant regulatory and inspection frameworks, mainly from Ofsted. This places limitations on flexibility and innovation in the delivery of services.**

Context

- **Increasingly in the care side of children's services the clients can be termed as "involuntary" meaning that they are not seeking services, are reluctant to engage or may be highly resistant to the changes that they are required to make. Therefore, the skills of practitioners forming human relationships where individuals can be motivated to change is a core of the business that cannot be replaced by technology.**
- **Much of the work is also necessarily reactive and spontaneous or is driven by very specific timeframes. This workstyle makes some advantages present in other areas of the council (scheduling to make more efficient use of staff time and reductions in mileage) difficult to implement.**
- **The population and demand for children's services is growing year on year.**

Context

- **Over recent years business support capacity (in its widest sense) has reduced significantly and it is anticipated that it will reduce further over coming years. Much of the prior, current and future planned use of technology is to automate to allow self-service for practitioners and managers, previously undertaken as a part of businesses support**
- **There is evidence of increased productivity and this needs to be set against increased service demands and, in some areas, reduced staffing**
- **Regulation and inspection standards also limit the ability to reduce staffing numbers based on technology use. A social workers case load will be judged as “overly high” by Ofsted above a certain level regardless of technology and this will impact on the authority’s overall rating.**

Worker Mobilisation

- **Front line workers adopted mobile working devices a number of years ago with the benefit of the ability to work flexibly allowing for more “real time” recording of assessment, plan and records and reducing mileage and time spend returning to base to undertake such activities**
- **To date this has increased productivity to a degree but the routine under performance of both hardware and software has meant that the full potential has not been realised and the philosophy has become somewhat tarnished due to the ongoing issues. Roll out of improved hardware is underway and this should resolve many of the issues.**
- **There is only one Total Mobile form operating in Children’s despite very significant investment by the department. Options for maximising the benefits from this technology is being actively evaluated.**

Channel Shift

- There has been a significant shift in the provision of information and advice to the public onto digital platforms.
- The “Nottinghamshire Help Yourself” website hosts the Local Offer for children with disabilities, information on youth service provision and
- An “app” is being proposed to host the new Care Leavers Offer
- Work is underway for non-urgent referrals to the MASH and Early Help Unit to be moved to an online form
- The new self-assessment system and resource allocation for short breaks is being developed and should be online by the year end
- Information and early help advice for young people is increasingly inline including online counselling and health advice
- Applications for school places, early years funding and free school meals can now be made online. This has good connectivity with schools and early years providers negating the need for manual processes.
- SLA Online provides a website for the East Midlands Education Support Service to market, administer and sell training courses and support services for schools available for purchase through an easy to use online tool <http://www.em-edsupport.org.uk/>.

Convergence of Case Recording

- **Significant work has been undertaken to reduce the number of case management systems operating in children's services. There remains a goal for a single system but at present the total functionality is not available from a single supplier.**
- **There are now two core systems**
 - **MOSAIC (shared with adults) holding core records for social care, early help and disability services**
 - **CAPITA – holding education and youth justice information**

Digital Recording of Meetings

- **Successful pilots have been completed on statutory meetings (such as Child Protection Conferences) moving from having minute takers taking verbatim minutes to digital recordings and short written summaries produced by meeting chairs**
- **This is being rolled out further with suitable advice from legal colleagues on evidential standards for Court procedures**
- **Further benefits in terms of increased engagement of external agencies in such meetings are being looked into through the use of video conferencing**

Automated Reporting

- **Children's services has the most developed suite of reports derived from electronic case recording in the Council. Managers have a "self-service" approach to this through the BI Hub but previously used a different solution. Such reports are used to assist day-to-day management as well as performance analysis and reporting.**
- **Capita currently has separate dashboard reporting (One Analytics) but this is currently being moved into the BI Hub.**
- **Children's service has also significantly develop the developed use of "big data" to target demand reduction activity as part of the Troubled Families programme. Data inputs from across the Council, police, schools, probation service and health agencies are used to target activity to reduce demand on statutory services.**

Co-Production and Consultation

- **Technology is increasingly being used to streamline co-production of assessment and plans in appropriate cases. This autumn IDOX will be introduced which will allow collaborations between the council's Integrated Disability Team, parents, children, school, social care and health setting to build EHC Plans.**
- **Online tools such as surveymonkey are also in regular use to undertake internal and external consultations with inbuilt analysis tools allowing creation of more timely results.**
- **Similar methods are underway to manage the audit activity across the department so that automated outcomes of quarterly exercises can be produced cutting down the time taken to produce analyses and improvement plans**

Use of Electronic Communication

- **In some areas of the department there has been a significant increase in the use of text messaging and emails to communicate with service users.**
- **This is in line with service user wishes given the general younger and more tech savvy demographic**
- **A system called “MOMO” (Mind of My Own) is being proposed to increase the flow of secure communication between children and their social workers**
- **There are two notable obstacles to the further adoption**
 - **There is a legal need for the security and “assumption of delivery” required with traditional mail for Court and similar processes**
 - **The centralisation of mail budgets means that the cost of text messaging falls to the department but it would accrue none of the savings. This is difficult given the departmental budget position.**

Lone Worker Safety

- **Field workers have for some time been using mobile alert system so that they can call for help if they are in a difficult or dangerous position whilst working in the community or in service users homes.**
- **Thinking on how technology can be used for these purposes is developing with the adoption of an application on a workers smart phone, as opposed to a stand alone device as at present, planned for implementation later in the year.**
- **This technology saves worker and management time alongside the adoption of electronic diaries so that location is known. It also improves health and safety at work.**

Business Information and Process

- **Children's services has fully embraced BMS and allied systems such as purchase to pay**
- **The department so working closely with corporate business analysts so that there are technological methods to monitor and predict future trends and demands. Using technology is limiting the amount of rework required.**
- **The department is using online procurement systems such as DueNorth and is developing electronic Dynamic Purchasing Systems to support framework contracts.**

Technology Supported Practice

- Technology is supporting some innovative practice for frontline professionals
- Routine drug and alcohol testing of service users is now available at a reasonable cost due to advances.
- Increasing online interventions can be used to deliver, support or reinforce interventions with children, young people or parents. The strength of the evidence base for how effective this is compared to face-to-face intervention is not strong at this stage.

Other Developments

- **Child Protection – Information Sharing (CP-IS) Project (by end July 2018)**
- CP-IS is the integration of Mosaic with health systems at unscheduled NHS care settings through the use of the NHS number as a unique identifier for looked after children or those on a child protection plan. This national project will enhance existing safeguarding processes as well as providing additional benefits supporting work through increased data sharing and collaboration. The normalisation of NHS capture is an enabler for further integration with NHS partners.
- **Smarter working (Summer 2018)**
- Smart phones and Yoga deployment for frontline workers
- **Launch of open Objects EHC Hub (Autumn 2018)**
- The EHC Hub is a citizen and provider portal providing a secure shared touchpoint for families, SEN coordinators and practitioners involved in the 20 week EHC process to make their contribution, see the contributions of others and all work towards a positive outcome, improving engagement and streamlining the process. The EHC Hub offers secure information sharing and workflows that keep the process on track and everyone fully informed at every stage. In the longer term, this application will be integrated with Mosaic to streamline the process further.



Other Developments

- **Mind of my Own procurement (January 2018)**
- Mind of my Own is a mobile app that helps children and young people express their views carefully phrased prompts and questions make conversations easier and enables workers to provide better evidence by capturing their views in a special document and sending them to the practitioner by email.
- **Regional Adoption Agency (Autumn/Winter 2018)**
- Implementation of a shared service for adoption across the D2N2 region hosted by
- **Online Applications through Firmstep (Autumn 2018)**
- Looking to establish online application processes for short breaks and potential adopters through the RAA
- **Commissioning in Mosaic (end 2019)**
- Work is underway to provide increased consistency to departmental through the enhancement of existing Mosaic configuration to include the associated payment processing as ASCH do. The key advantages for the department will be the increased data and reporting capabilities, enabling CFS us to model and project future demand and costs to inform strategy in relation to commissioning. Additionally this would support cost analysis and budget reconciliation at child level and contract level, and improve contract management arrangements

Other Developments

- **Capita One B2B Attendance**
- Pilot of the electronic collection of school attendance information from schools using Capita's SIMS system. Efficiency and improved ability to monitor vulnerable groups of children and young people.
- **Capita One B2B Exclusions (March 2019)**
- Electronic collection of school exclusion information from schools using Capita SIMS. Efficiency and improved ability to monitor vulnerable groups of children and young people.
- **CML/CMJ File Exchange**
- Move to the electronic collection of school Starters and Leavers through the collection and import of the new nationally standardised starter and leaver forms.
- **Capita One Provider Portal (BetterStart) (March 2019)**
- Collection of Early Years attainment data electronically from Early Years providers to monitor the impact of additional funding on vulnerable groups of children and young people.
- **Capita One Provider Portal**
- Collection of Early Years place and vacancy information electronically from Early Years providers to monitor the numbers of places available in the county and help identify any gaps in provision.