



OneVision - Cambridgeshire Children's Services

"Our vision is to have a single record for every child within Cambridgeshire so we can access the information we need quickly and use it effectively. Our teams need to have relevant background information to hand so they can use their time to move a child's position forward not to recap on ground already visited by a colleague," says Roger Green, Head of Service, Information Sharing and OneVision at Cambridgeshire County Council.

The initiative to provide a single, complete record for every child within Cambridgeshire County Council has been driven by the Children's Services team's commitment both to the Children's Act and Every Child Matters.

The reality of delivering this vision however, is rather complex in technical and professional terms, but as Lord Laming stated in his report of March 2009, "The complexity of managing performance across partner services should not be allowed to be a barrier to improving the safety of children and young people in England," says Roger Green.

The Requirement

Prior to developing the one-child, one-record vision (or OneVision as it is called internally), Cambridgeshire had been using a number of administrative-based databases into which information was added after an episode, or contact, with a child.

This method increased the risk of errors being made as the information was added at a later date and was usually entered by an administrator rather than the professional directly involved. It was also difficult to see a full picture on any child due to the complex nature in which information was held.

Green describes the situation, "We had five different databases across education and social care with various spreadsheets and different paper methods to record data. This made cross-agency sharing of information very difficult.

"It was essential to adopt an IT solution that would provide a single integrated picture of a child. We did not want a solution that merely employed interfaces between existing databases

as this would make the situation even more complex. Capita Children's Services were the only company to offer us a system that reflected the standards we wanted to achieve in terms of caring for the 130,000 children in our area."

"By working collaboratively and sharing information we can ensure that no vulnerable child falls through the net. Our aim is that every child will have a safe and healthy upbringing and have the opportunity to achieve their potential."

Roger Green, Head of Service, Information Sharing and OneVision, Cambridgeshire County Council

The Solution

Cambridgeshire County Council has adopted Capita's **One** management information system. The software manages virtually every aspect of contact with a child by the local authority. The same core data is used by a school, a social worker, or an individual arranging transport for a child.

So, for example, an education welfare officer with the right permissions, investigating why a child is not attending school could see if there was a social worker also working with the child. They can then deduce that this is not a straightforward case of non-attendance and respond accordingly, involving the social worker along the way. This means children get a far more appropriate response to their needs.

The council was also one of the first to implement Capita's **One** Integrated Children's System, which brings together a local authority's massive repository of information on children from schools with data from social care services. **One** ICS is designed to help social workers as it ensures they have all the information they need to make good decisions regarding the children they are working with. They can examine a child's academic achievements or details of special needs assessments to help understand how best to respond to a child's needs without having to wait for information from various different agencies. Previously, this would have been a long drawn out paper-based exercise.

The Benefits

Using **One** has meant that there is no re-keying of data that already exists in the system and it has put an end to hand-written records. In the past, for example, when a child was excluded, their school would make a record of this on their own management information system and then so too would the local authority school admissions and student support teams. Now all departments access the same information that the school inputs, saving time and ensuring information is up-to-date across the council.

Whilst efficiency was never a key driver in the whole process the reduction in the amount of data entry required is no doubt helping. As the information is now contained in **One** it has meant five sets of people who were employed for data cleansing tasks across the old databases are now able to contribute in different ways.

One has most importantly helped Cambridgeshire develop its multi-agency approach to child welfare.

Meetings with families are much more fruitful as there is no need to recap on previously gathered information. "Our director of children's services recently joined a social worker on a visit to the family of a disabled boy. The director was surprised at how productive the meeting could be as the complete case history was already

known. The family too were less frustrated at not having to cover old ground. It is helping us move forward more quickly with the right support for children," comments Green.

The information sharing is helping all of the council teams. The school transport team, for example, are now able to see the special educational needs of children so they can easily identify and provide transport that is relevant to their needs.

"Rather than having a disjointed view with different agencies having separate details about a child's situation, we now have a rounded picture. The child is placed firmly in the centre of the circle and all those on the outside can see the same picture."

Roger Green, Head of Service, Information Sharing and OneVision, Cambridgeshire County Council

The Challenges

There have been some challenges during the move, as there are with any major overhaul of working practices. Many professionals such as social workers were being asked to use computers for the first time and take responsibility for entering data on children themselves. For many this involved learning previously unnecessary skills, however, it meant more accurate data in the long run. Others were being given access to much more information on children than they had before

and it was important that we explained carefully the responsibility of this as well as the benefits.

The Future

The future will see the authority continue to develop its vision of having all children's records in one place. "The data currently starts when a child is born, as we bring across Health Authority records of new births, and ends when a child leaves school. Going forward we want to have Connexions data included in the system so there is a full record for every individual from the ages of 0 to 19," says Roger Green.

At present the authority are also considering introducing Capita's PRIME Business Intelligence software. This provides directors with a personalised summary of their day-to-day performance against key indicators. It collates the data held within **One** and presents it as simple graphs or alerts based on what is important to the senior management, so for example, it could show truancy levels or the summary GCSE results for children in care.

As Lord Laming commented, "One of the main challenges is to ensure that leaders of local services effectively translate policy, legislation and guidance into day-to-day practice on the frontline of every service." To meet these demands it is essential for leaders to have easy access to indicators of performance which can then be used to help direct their decision making.

"Cooperation from Capita throughout the implementation of **One** has been good and we have worked as true partners on this project. Capita has responded quickly and supported us both at a technological and consultative level to ensure that we achieve the objectives of our vision of one record for every child," concludes Roger Green.