

## Technology and Case Management

### What is case management?

Case management can be used in multiple contexts when dealing with children, for example in registering UASCs and providing tailored services, family reunification, and providing care and attention to identified victims of abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Case management is essentially a system of organising and tracking individuals who are considered for a particular service, coordinating services in a way that meets their needs and eliminates any inefficiencies in communication and resource allocation. Or as Case Management Society UK (2018) puts it, a “collaborative process which: assesses, plans, implements, co-ordinates, monitors and evaluates the options and services required to meet an individuals health, social care, educational and employment needs, using communication and available resources to promote quality cost effective outcomes.” A good system follows up on cases on time, provides all relevant information to the case worker, and ensures no child falls through the cracks.

### What is the current method of case management?

Especially in humanitarian situations, social workers typically use paper-based systems and simple spreadsheets. Child protection services may have more sophisticated case management systems, although the common practice is to use printed forms. Certain agencies with larger reach and resources may have internal databases, usually accessed from a computer. One example of a common database is the EURODAC, which captures and shares the fingerprints of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants with EU member states.

There are some weaknesses in current procedures: the long time taken for paperwork to be completed and for information to be transferred to electronic systems, missing data due to a lack of coordination between case workers working on the same case, and the possibility for cases to become neglected amid a large number of cases which child protection staff are too understaffed to handle.

### How can technology improve case management?

We believe that child protection organisations can unlock major operational improvements if they transitioned to an electronic database and efficient case management platform. Technology in case management comes dominantly in the form of management software as well as local or cloud databases. This is often a cloud database in which information is stored and extracted, which allows for information to be up to date and accessible. Here are other benefits that modern upgrades provide:

- Databases store information centrally, allowing more types of data to be available to case workers on top of ease of seeking case-specific information;
- Cloud-based systems offer greater accessibility as case workers are able to access information while in the field or on the move with the help of a simple internet connection;
- Social workers enjoy greater mobility as they only require a compatible electronic device and an internet connection to access and input information on their case;
- Management softwares facilitate teamwork and coordination by clearly assigning tasks - simultaneously adding a layer of accountability in the organisation;
- Workstreams are streamlined by eliminating paperwork and piling all information into a central cyber location, shaving off information management;
- Progress and tracking capabilities come with modern systems, which automatically track cases and provide timely reminders to follow-up on a case;
- Lastly, good case management systems integrate a number of services. When a social worker from Child Protection Services has determined that Child X requires some sort of medical or psychological attention - health services and mental health professionals may be immediately notified and kept in the loop. This benefit is available only if the inter-agency/ inter-service systems were integrated.

### Who is ready for these upgrades?

There exists great potential for implementation within agencies or intranationally, or among agencies with shared goals. Overall, these should reduce inefficiencies that currently exist (think information failure and a ‘market failure’ of case responsibility). Such adoptions already exist in certain places, such as in the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) promoted by UNICEF, IRC and Save the Children, already in use in refugee camps in Kenya. The US Department of Child Services uses an internal system called the MaGIK Casebook.

The potential benefits of implementing this on an intergovernmental level is even greater, given states’ capacities to mobilise resources and implement systemic enhancements. However, this would depend on the political will of political leaders as well as their political goals. In a simplified illustration, one may observe that it is not in the interest of states to share responsibilities with their neighbour states which are currently facing a massive inflow of migrants.

### What may impede adoption?

There are some barriers to adopting these capabilities. The cost of implementation is a concern, followed by the need to develop staff competencies and standard operating procedures for the new system. Building inter-organisational integrations may also be a front-loaded painstaking process. Users and prospective users must also keep in mind that because these cases involve harnessing information of a personal and sensitive nature, data protection rules and confidentiality must continue to be adhered to on new systems.

If you would like to learn more and share information, please visit [childhub.org](http://childhub.org) where you can find other material relating to child protection.

The following sources were consulted and referred to in the writing of this summary. Readers may find these sources insightful, in particular the article titled ‘Introducing Technology in Child Welfare Referrals: A Case Study’, which is a study of the implementation of an internet-based social referral system in Los Angeles. It illustrates strengths and weakness, and readers may takeaway good practices when implementing their own case management systems. The two reports from Accenture illustrate applications and the potential of the type of case management systems described in this article.

Written by Ser Jay Tan in 2018.

### References

- Accenture (2015). *The Accenture Family Case Management System: A Modern Vision for Child Welfare Case Worker Support* [online]. Available at: [https://www.accenture.com/t20170307T000414Z\\_w\\_us-en\\_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub\\_20/Accenture-Child-Welfare-Solution-Sheet.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20170307T000414Z_w_us-en_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_20/Accenture-Child-Welfare-Solution-Sheet.pdf). Accessed 8 August 2018.
- Accenture (2015). *Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families: Forging a New Model for a Mobile-Enabled Workforce* [online]. Available at: [https://www.accenture.com/t20170224T022904Z\\_w\\_us-en\\_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub\\_20/Accenture-MA-DCF-Credential-Final.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20170224T022904Z_w_us-en_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_20/Accenture-MA-DCF-Credential-Final.pdf). Accessed 14 August 2018.
- Case Management Society UK (2018). *What is Case Management?* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cmsuk.org/case-management/what-is-case-management>. Accessed 21 August 2018.
- CPIMS+ (2018). *The Next Generation* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpims.org/>. Accessed 10 August 2018.
- Dellor, E., Lovato-Hermann, K., Wolf, J.P., Curry, S.R. and Freisthler, B. (2015). Introducing Technology in Child Welfare Referrals: A Case Study, *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 33(4), pp. 330–344. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2015.1107520>. Accessed 10 August 2018.



Kaonga, N.N., Batavia, H., Philbrick, W.C. and Mechael, P.N. (2016). Information and Communication Technology for Child Protection Case Management in Emergencies: An Overview of the Existing Evidence Base, *Procedia Engineering*, 159, pp. 112-117. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2016.08.133>. Accessed 17 August 2018.