

CASE MANAGEMENT AND TRIM CONTEXT 6

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Introduction

Modern governments deal directly with citizens in myriad circumstances. The ability to preserve, manage and discover organisational memory of interactions with individual citizens is a necessary function of the welfare state. Case management not only helps to promote quick, efficient, and relatively hassle-free relations between the government and its citizens — it is often instrumental in protecting the vulnerable, preventing abuse and even saving lives. Child welfare is a paradigm case of where case management is absolutely critical. TRIM Context 6 provides the functionality and flexibility to allow the development of case management systems which allow good case management and help to facilitate effective government–citizen relations.

The necessity of effective case management

Case management — the management of the relationship between individuals and the government — has become a ubiquitous feature under modern welfare states. This ubiquity means that case management will always be an important field. Yet the importance of good case management goes far beyond everyday managerial goals of organisational efficiency and sensible information management. In areas such as child welfare it takes on a life-and-death importance. Without good information management and sharing, vulnerable people such as abused children can slip through the gaps. This has been vividly illustrated in the tragic cases of young people such as Rikki Neave and Victoria Climbié in the UK, in which the information which was needed to understand their plight was never shared, denying case workers the information they needed to act decisively. Therefore best practice case management is both an opportunity, and a responsibility. It is an opportunity because when well-implemented it can provide substantial organisational efficiencies and promote worker confidence in their ability to understand the manifold cases under their control. It is a responsibility, because there are occasionally tragic consequences when the system fails.

Facilitating case management

Case management focuses on the governmental knowledge of and intervention in the lives of individuals. Technology solutions intended to facilitate case management must therefore adopt a number of major focuses. Firstly, they must focus on people-based classifications. Secondly, since case information is rarely contained in only one system, they must be capable of integrating easily with disparate systems and platforms. Thirdly, they must provide workflow tools to ensure that community and client expectations of timeliness and good process are followed. Finally, given the importance of communication as an interface between the client and the case worker, they must provide strong tools for tracking and ensuring the accessibility of information on communications.



Person-based classifications

Case management, by definition, is focussed on information concerning a particular individual. Therefore it is imperative for sane classification and for the convenience of the individual case worker that information relating to that particular person be filed in one place. This allows the case worker to be able to see all of the information related to that person in a single unified view, and also facilitates easy search in that information. TRIM Context 6 provides the ability to use a Location (i.e., a person) as a classification into which all of the information relating to a person can be filed. Records can also be contained within multiple classifications, so records relevant to more than one person can be contained in classifications for each.

Integration

In many fields of government, effective management of a client's case involves sharing of information amongst government departments. This can, however, present some substantial difficulties for government information managers. For example, amongst child welfare agencies in the United Kingdom, there are many agencies dealing with information relevant to a given child's case, and

Each of these agencies in turn has multiple electronic and manual systems, many bespoke, and few adhering to interoperability standards for recording information about children and young people 'at risk'.¹

Therefore, effective case management requires technology implementations at each department to be interoperable by design. Single-source solutions are simply not a realistic or feasible option in such a multi-organisation set up. TRIM Context 6 provides organisations with real options for integration of systems. Information can be shared between organisations through TRIM Context 6's export tools, through a Windows-based SDK, and through the new Connectivity Toolkit. The Connectivity Toolkit is perhaps the most exciting recent development in TRIM Context 6 for the field of case management. It allows all information in the system to be shared in a standards-based fashion over ordinary HTTP. This means that systems integrators can integrate TRIM Context 6 fully on the platform of their choice. Thus, TRIM Context 6 provides the functionality which is required to help bridge the gap between organisations.

Processes and Alerts

Good processes for working with case information are also important for effective case management. The public has high expectations with respect to timeliness and good process. TRIM Context 6 can help to enable effective case management processes through its workflow and action-tracking tools, and through its alerts system. Workflow and action-tracking attach tasks, or series of tasks, to a document or worker within the system. When used effectively, this can ensure that critical events lead to best-practice processes being put into place. For example, an event such as the creation of a new entry on a hospital record for a vulnerable child may lead to an incident review workflow being assigned to a case worker, who may review the information to ascertain whether further action needs to be taken into the matter, and document their actions at every step. Alerts can also ensure that case workers are sent e-mail reminders and alerts when certain events happen, or when actions such as the review of a particular client's case are overdue. Thus, process management and alerts ensure that case management occurs in a timely, efficient,

1 Mike Davis, *Search for a system to save young lives*, (Butler Group: March 2004).

and well-documented fashion, helping to make sure that no client slips through cracks in the system.

Correspondence Tracking

Finally, effective case management requires the case worker to know exactly what communications have been made with the client prior to re-establishing contact. Not having this information readily accessible can lead to potentially embarrassing and inefficient interactions. TRIM Context 6 provides the tools to record every detail of communications with a particular client through the forthcoming² Mail Communications module. This will allow the recording of information related to communications (such as medium for the communication, date, sender, and receiver), and search on this communications metadata. Case workers will be able to search, for example, for every communication sent to a particular client over a particular period, to get a sense for the state of the relationship.

Conclusion

Case management requires information systems which are people and process focused, and which can share their information in a platform agnostic fashion. Without a focus on people in the classification systems, case workers may face difficulties gaining a rapid and accurate impression of the information related to that person, having to perform complex searches and workarounds. Without information sharing, vulnerable clients can very easily slip through the gaps, sometimes with tragic results. Process management can help to ensure that clients are not simply forgotten, and that critical events lead to timely evaluation of the client's position. Finally, correspondence management, combined with people-centred classification, helps ensure that case workers feel confident that they fully understand the client's situation before they initiate contact with them, or react to new situations which have arisen. In all of these areas, TRIM Context 6 provides strong tools to allow business to approach case management in a more efficient, interoperable, and ultimately just better fashion.

Further Reading

Mike Davis, *Search for a system to save young lives*, (Butler Group: March 2004).

About TOWER Software

TOWER Software delivers Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) Solutions, empowering organisations to take control of their corporate information assets. TOWER Software's award-winning TRIM Context® solution is a single, integrated platform that manages business information throughout its complete lifecycle. By relying on its proven domain expertise, strong strategic partnerships, and powerful solutions, TOWER Software enables organisations to maintain accuracy, maximize efficiency, and achieve and maintain standards compliance across industries, resulting in sustained competitive advantage. TOWER Software is a privately held company with operations in North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific. For more information, visit www.towersoft.com



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