

New portal and e-forms set to revolutionise child services at Bradford Council

Ebase Technology is working with Bradford Metropolitan District Council to develop an innovative web-based portal, together with hundreds of electronic forms, which will provide care and social workers in the area with a single point of entry into a number of different databases and systems. Due to go live in April 2006, the new portal will, according to Ian Sampson, e-Care Manager for Bradford Social Services "represent a powerful and revolutionary approach to the delivery of information to hundreds of front line care workers and thus assist them in the efficient management of their cases."

Establishing the building blocks

Ian Sampson joined the Council in 2003 at the same time as the Oracle-based Swift social care

system, developed by Anite, was being installed. He immediately initiated a major investment in new PC's, laptops and tablet pc's, changing the ratio of one machine for every fourteen care workers to a situation where everyone had their own computer. He then selected CareStore to provide a powerful document management system.

According to Ian Sampson, the third and final stage was to find a means of inputting and outputting information to and from both Swift and CareStore to front line social care workers, and other relevant agencies. We recognised that we needed an electronic forms system to capture and deliver information.

The Council turned to Anite to provide such a system. Anite had recently formed a strategic partnership with Ebase Technology and adopted the company's Ebase product as the standard front-end for their Swift product.

More than just e-forms

Ebase was installed at Bradford in 2005 with the plan to start developing a series of electronic forms. However, according to Ian Sampson, his team quickly saw that the product offered far more than just the ability to develop e-forms.

Shifting its view of what Ebase could be used for, Mr. Sampson's team is now working hard on the development of a portal which will provide social and care workers with browser-based access to records and reports, core applications and favourite network links. Access levels and authentication will be handled by Swift with the Ebase solution providing a front end to all the information which is appropriate for the individual user. Several standard reports are being developed to help the workers

carry out their everyday duties, with considerable emphasis being placed on clarity of navigation, automatic population of the basic information (drawn directly from Swift) and the use of design techniques, such as radio buttons, to improve efficiency and avoid errors.

Social care workers will be able to access their cases, based on the existing policies and access rights set up in Swift. They will be able to see a list of current cases, what is new in the document management system, when assessments are due and receive messages. Ian Sampson: "Without the use of Ebase, workers have to access the Swift system itself and run various reports in order to get the requisite information. This can be a long and complex process. Having social care workers spending time finding their way through the technology is not the best use of their skills: with the new portal, Ebase will do all this time-consuming work for them, and present the information as a single report, regardless of

whether the core data has come from Swift, CareStore or other relevant systems."

Developing electronic forms

In addition to providing the social services portal, Ebase will also be used to develop electronic forms, the purpose for which it was originally bought. The first form under development is referred to as e-case notes and, as the name suggests, it will provide workers with the ability to view and add notes to their cases. Ian Sampson: "The new e-form will provide a list of different note types, show significant events and modifications as well as allowing notes to be backdated. All the information will be integrated with the core data in Swift"

"The delivery of a form such as this will have a major impact. At the present time all notes relating to cases are held in a Word document and are presented

as a continuing list of activities. There is no easy way of searching for specific details or of sorting by various criteria. The new form, however, will change all this. Workers will be able to sort, search and extract specific information. Multiple people will be able to input data into the notes simultaneously, with everyone being able to see the same up to the minute information. The new Case Notes e-form will enable workers to build the chronology of a case, a vital aspect of any child protection activity. This development epitomises how we are able to use the power of Swift functionality - and enhance it with Ebase."

