

# Supporting Child Welfare

*A high-level overview of the Oracle Social Welfare Strategy for Child Welfare.*



# Introduction

For governments across the globe, Child Welfare and Child Well-being remain an urgent and high-profile priority. However, despite the fact that most have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets forth a wide range of provisions encompassing the civil rights, freedoms, education, health and welfare of a child, recent press coverage alone serves to highlight the continuing problem of the mistreatment of children.

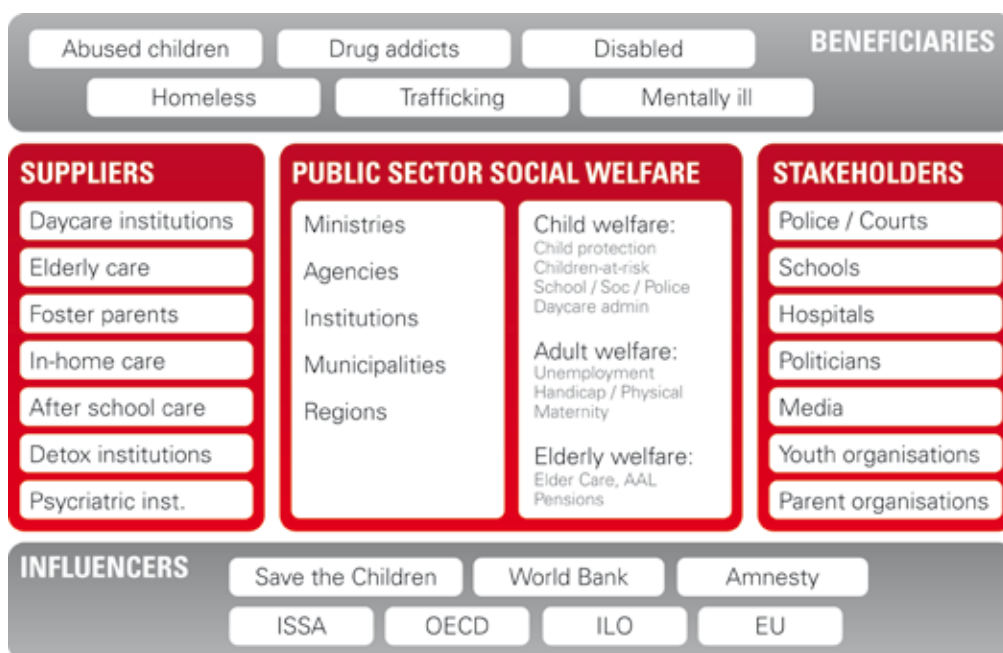
In response, there is a concerted effort by governmental authorities and international organisations to try to combat any threats to the human rights of a child – whether it is child labour, child abduction, child misuse or ‘just’ parental neglect.

In support of these initiatives, ICT plays an increasingly critical role, although it is important to state that there is no general belief that the proliferation of technology alone will create a safe environment for children. There is consensus, however, that by digitalising and integrating data from disparate and seemingly unconnected Social Welfare sources, a combined view will be available to help identify

relationships that remained previously hidden and help highlight patterns and risks for evaluation. It is through increased visibility and analytical capability that technology delivers the enabling foundation for public-sector organisations to greatly enhance their ability to protect the individual child.

Oracle sees digitalisation of the Social Welfare Ecosystem as one of this decade’s biggest challenges for the international public sector. This is a significant challenge, but, through the effective utilisation of new technologies and processes, government agencies can adopt a far stronger position to ensuring the well-being of their most vulnerable citizens.

The Social Welfare Ecosystem, of which Child Welfare is an integral part, is centred on abilities and tasks that the public sector has traditionally exercised overall responsibility for. The objective of activities initiated by a public-sector organisation, at least in respect to Social Welfare, is to work with and help the weakest sections of society who are not themselves able to sustain the challenges of life. The prime clients of public-sector Social Welfare are therefore also the beneficiaries,

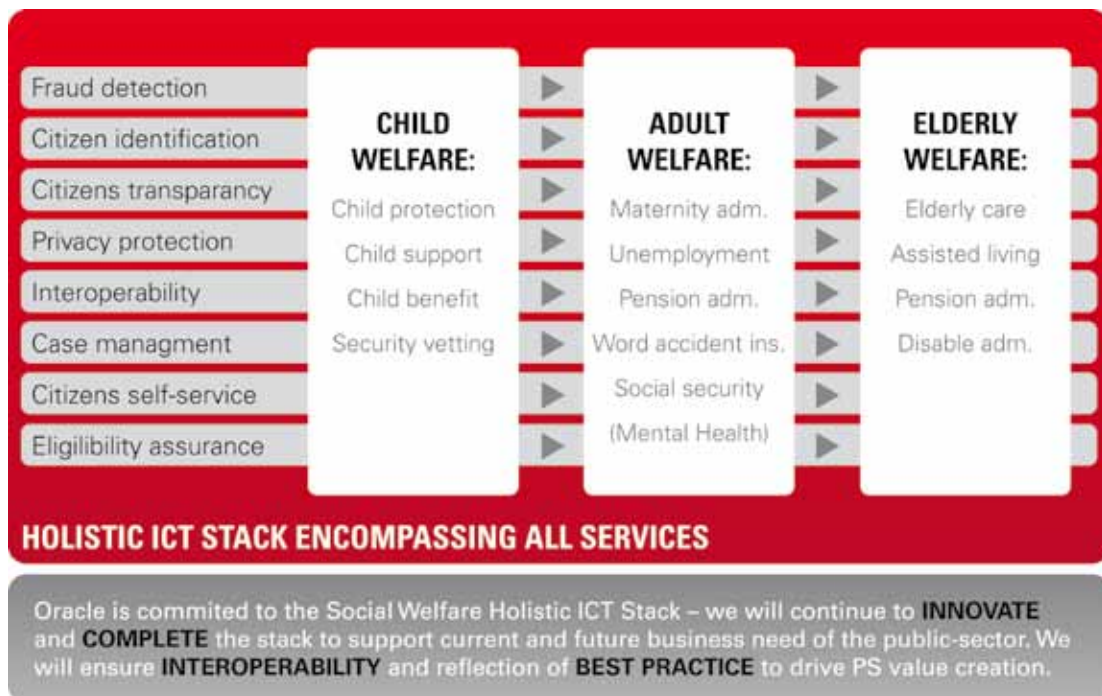


and understanding their needs to ensure the right service is provided to the right person at the right time is an essential requirement.

In addition to these ‘primary stakeholders’ are other organisations who come together to form the overall ecosystem. Organisations like ISSA, OECD, WAPES, Save the Children etc., who assist public-sector authorities in developing new and innovative approaches to securing the well-being of the weakest. These ‘secondary stakeholders’ are essential to the functioning of the system – for example, in order to identify suitable foster parents for a child taken into care, the Government needs to ensure that the chosen parents are fully vetted, in addition to managing contracts, feedback, payments etc., and documenting every proof-point of the child’s well-being in the case management system. It is to ensure this complexity does not become an obstacle, and that all progress is achieved in an holistic fashion, that the adoption of interoperable ICT capabilities is essential to supporting the entire process.

Even though Oracle provide state-of-the-art solutions that deliver the foundation of effective policy administration based on interoperable and open standards, we must never forget why the public sector invests in digitalisation. The end clients of every solution are the beneficiaries, the weak, neglected and lost, who without protection would endure even more suffering than otherwise. As Mahatma Gandhi asked: “Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of use to him?”. This universal truth is especially apt for children.

In our holistic strategy for Social Welfare, we have embedded a number of named functionalities – focused around providing ICT solutions that assist public-sector authorities throughout the full lifecycle of their citizens. These Social Welfare offerings provide support to the requirements and business processes underlying the Welfare Services delivered to children, adults and the elderly, as visualised below.



## Child Welfare

**Hardly a day seems to go by without a new story of child neglect, abuse, ill-treatment or even mortal injury by the very people responsible for delivering front-line care. In response, welfare societies try to identify and prosecute wrong-doers and secure for their young citizens the best possible conditions for a safe childhood – but organisational, infrastructural and operational issues hamper their ability to act efficiently and secure policy effectiveness. Collectively, we need to take steps that will ensure better protection of the weakest. Unfortunately, the Child Welfare Ecosystem remains complex, encompassing many agencies, organisations and other interested parties.**

There are a number of challenges, including recent international megatrends, which are strongly influencing the choice of strategies for digitising Child Welfare. Among these are the need to demonstrate best-practice knowledge reuse and effective solution implementation based on leading COTS technology. With regard to best practices, governments around the world are increasingly relying on the sharing and reuse of experiences obtained from other public-sector institutions to optimise the way they utilise resources. The second point plays along the same lines, as purchasing organisations appreciate the time, money and effort that can be saved by selecting proven solutions and embedding standard functionality and processes across any given sector.

At Oracle, we have also identified a number of ‘megatrends’ that we see influencing the way that Child Welfare will develop during the decade.

These include:

### **Holistic interoperability**

A clear challenge for most public-sector institutions working in child protection is the fact that, even though the information exists to highlight a case of abuse, it might not be the right people who can access it or can only find parts of the jigsaw puzzle and thus lack the high-level view where behaviours can be correctly analysed and interpreted.

An illustration of this is the Baby P case in the UK. Baby P – or Peter Connelly – was continually neglected by his mother and stepfather throughout his 17-months of life. This is a tragic case, but far from unique – cases of various degree of neglect are seen all over Europe. The question therefore is: if cases of cruelty against children generate significant media attention, why is there a general perception that the Social Welfare agencies of Europe are not working effectively?

The inclusion of ICT in Social Welfare – digitising Social Welfare – delivers additional security and powerful toolsets for the provision of insight and support into the hands of the individual case worker. Employed effectively, it ensures that decisions are based upon complete and accurate visibility, and that information from a variety of diverse sources is available for immediate consideration.

Oracle has already demonstrated the potential of ICT in this area by supporting an initiative in New South Wales, Australia, where the Government has decided to enforce a child well-being methodology, entitled 'Keep Them Safe'. Under the programme, they have developed a mandatory assessment guide for professionals to use when examining children.


What is especially interesting about the Mandatory Reporting Guide is that it reflects the specific policy rules of the NSW Government. These rules can be dynamically altered by social-care staff themselves, thus empowering them to develop a framework where they can respond swiftly to any perceived change. Furthermore the system is integrated with the back-end case management system, so that Child at Risk information is immediately brought to the attention of the relevant case worker. This is vital for enabling a comprehensive 360-degree view of reports and incidents surrounding specific children, a critical capability for helping case workers determine the right protective actions to be taken at any given time. The solution deployed is based on Oracle Siebel Public Sector and Oracle Policy Automation.

The second example is the Dutch Raad voor de Kinderbescherming, which is the Child Protection Council under the Ministry of Justice in the Netherlands. They have the responsibility for child well-being as well as all child protection cases. In order to become more efficient, they chose to utilise the CO'S case management system from Oracle as it fulfilled more than 90% of their functional and business process requirements out of the box. This meant that they were able to quickly deploy the system (in under six months from tender conclusion to go live) with only minimal changes needed to the standard system, which in turn delivered huge savings on costs, time and effort.

## **Social Welfare Case Management**

With the release of the Oracle Social Service Offering (Siebel 8.2), we can offer organisations the first dedicated product that embeds specific Child Welfare capabilities, including specific workflows and terminology, and reflects the core business processes of Child Welfare administration. Oracle is committed to consistently innovating and developing the next generation of products for Social Welfare. To this end, our future strategy is clear: to maintain the digitising of information access to support efficient policy administration.

Ubiquitous data access is the key to providing actionable insight into childhood relationships and from this visibility the profiling of a Child-at-Risk becomes a real-time possibility, bringing with it a new perspective into cases of reported abuse. One of the strengths of using Oracle applications is that a case-worker can quickly interrogate multiple data sources to gain a comprehensive 360-degree view of the individual child, parents, step-parents, siblings etc. Furthermore, advanced risk-profiling can take place to identify those children most at risk and alert the local Social Service. Care-workers can then instantly escalate the situation with actions such as unannounced home visits or interviews with relevant stakeholders in the child's social sphere like a school teacher, to fully assess the nature and immediacy of the threat.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling warmly as she feeds a baby. The baby is sitting in a white high chair, wearing a pink dress with a white bib, and has its mouth open, ready to eat. The woman is holding a green-handled spoon with white food on it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow wall.

**In conclusion, the effective implementation and integration of ICT across the Social Welfare Ecosystem provides those children most at risk with a 24/7 ‘virtual friend’ who can support their well-being and development, while constantly monitoring a wide range of information on their current condition. The detailed visibility this provides is essential for identifying any risks to the individual, and supports an immediate and comprehensive response from the Social Care system.**

View the digitised solution for the Mandatory Reporting Guides, and get more information on the ‘Keep Them Safe’ programme here:

[http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting\\_children\\_at\\_risk](http://www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au/reporting_children_at_risk)

For more information on the Oracle Social Welfare Strategy for Child Welfare, call + 44 (0)208 846 2211.

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