

## ContactPoint Core Messages

### Key points

- ContactPoint will be the quick way for those working with children and young people to find out who else is working with the same child or young person, making it easier to deliver more coordinated support.
- ContactPoint is part of the Every Child Matters programme to improve the lives of children and young people with a strong emphasis on early intervention for those who could benefit from additional services. It aims to help ensure all children get access to the services and support to which they are entitled – as well as safeguarding vulnerable children.
- ContactPoint is designed to make it easier for those working with children and young people to do their jobs: to free up a significant amount of time and reduce duplication of effort, enabling practitioners to spend more time delivering services.
- Access to this basic online directory will be strictly limited to those who need it to do their job. All authorised users will have completed mandatory training, have security clearance (including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance) and have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token to access ContactPoint.
- ContactPoint will contain basic identifying information about all children and young people in England up to their 18th birthday, and contact details for services working with them. ContactPoint will NOT contain any case information (such as case notes, assessments, medical records, exam results or subjective observations).
- ContactPoint will be rolled out to local authorities and national partners across England from 2008, starting in the North West and with two of our national partners.

### In more detail:

#### Context

- The Government is committed to improving the life chances of all children and young people.
- The Every Child Matters programme focuses on improving outcomes so that all children are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. ContactPoint is one of the tools being introduced to help achieve these aims.

## **Purpose of ContactPoint**

- ContactPoint is being developed as part of the Every Child Matters programme to improve outcomes for all children. It will be a vital support for delivering early intervention for children who need additional services and effective safeguarding for children at risk of harm.
- The aims of ContactPoint are to:
  - Help practitioners quickly identify a child with whom they have contact, and whether that child is getting the universal services (education, primary healthcare) to which he or she is entitled;
  - Enable earlier identification of needs and earlier and more effective action to address these needs by providing a tool for practitioners to identify who else is involved with a particular child; and
  - Be an important tool to encourage and support better communication and closer working between different professionals and practitioners.
- Nearly every report that has looked into failures to protect children has highlighted the lack of information sharing as a key concern. ContactPoint will be a tool to facilitate coordination and discussion between children's services, where this is appropriate.
- ContactPoint isn't just about child protection, it is principally about supporting early intervention for the 50% of children who at some point in their lives need additional services to ensure they achieve good outcomes. But it will also aid communication about children identified as being at risk of significant harm.
- Many of the concerns raised against ContactPoint have been based on misunderstanding over the amount and nature of information that will be held on ContactPoint and about its core purpose. ContactPoint will be a crucial tool in providing more effective support for children and young people. The Trailblazer experience and evidence from recent research shows that where the aims of ContactPoint are clearly explained, people understand its purpose and benefits.

## **Confidentiality**

- ContactPoint will not change any rules governing confidentiality or sharing information when practitioners discuss a child's needs. Everyone who works with children and young people should ensure that they follow established guidelines on information sharing and exercise professional judgement.
- 'Information Sharing: Practitioners' guide' was published in April 2006 to provide clear, comprehensive guidance to practitioners across agencies on how to appropriately share information within the existing legal framework.

## **Data content**

ContactPoint will contain only the following basic information:

- name, address, gender and date of birth of child and an identifying number for all children in England up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- name and contact details for:
  - parents or carers;
  - educational setting (e.g. school);
  - primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice); and
  - practitioners providing other relevant services.
- There will be a facility to indicate if a practitioner is a lead professional for a child and/or if they have completed an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (the assessment itself will not be accessible from ContactPoint).
- The Children Act 2004 specifically prohibits the inclusion of any case information. ContactPoint will not record information such as case notes, assessments, medical records or school attainment. There will be no subjective opinions or observations about a child or parent, and no automatic triggers for action or investigation.
- Explicit consent will be required from the child (or where they have insufficient understanding, their parent/carer) to record contact details for sensitive services (defined as sexual/mental health and substance abuse). Where practitioner contact details are recorded, only an indication of an unspecified service would be visible to the majority of users.
- With consent, 18-19 years olds who are receiving Connexions services and 18-25 year olds who are care leavers or have learning difficulties may also remain on ContactPoint, to facilitate the transition to adult services.
- When a child turns 18 (or up to 25 where appropriate) their record will be removed from ContactPoint. It will be held in a secure archive for 6 years and then destroyed. Access to the archive will be strictly limited.
- Records of children whose circumstances may mean that they are at increased risk of harm may have some of their details hidden (or shielded). These decisions will be taken on a case by case basis and will be based on the level of threat posed if their information becomes more widely available. This is not unique to ContactPoint; it is already in place in a number of systems and is entirely consistent with Data Protection legislation.

## **Security and controlled access**

- Security is of paramount importance. ContactPoint will be reviewed by independent security experts during system build and audited during operation.
- Access to ContactPoint will be restricted to those who need it as part of their work and subject to stringent security controls. Before they can access

ContactPoint all users must have security clearance (including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance) and have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token.

- All users will have completed mandatory training which will include the safe and secure use of ContactPoint and the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998. A training programme on information sharing has already been rolled out across local authorities for use across the various children's workforce sectors.
- All use of ContactPoint will be monitored and audited. Every access to a child's record will be detailed in the ContactPoint audit trail. This will be regularly reviewed to ensure that any misuse is detected.

## **Coverage**

- ContactPoint is principally about supporting early intervention children and young people who at some point in their lives need additional services to ensure they achieve good outcomes (estimated to be 3-4 million children at any one time).
- ContactPoint will include all children in England because it is not possible to predict accurately in advance which children will have needs for additional services. Any child or young person could require the support of additional services at any time in their childhood. We want to support early intervention for children as soon as they need additional services to help prevent situations becoming critical.
- All children have a right to the universal services of education and primary health care – ContactPoint will show whether or not they are receiving those services and will help trigger any local action needed to ensure they do receive them.

## **Benefits**

- Helping practitioners to quickly identify and contact one another allows them to coordinate the services which children require and intervene early where needs are identified. This leads to improved outcomes for children and families.
- ContactPoint will reduce the time practitioners waste trying to find out who else is working with a particular child. At present, practitioners can spend anything up to three days trying to find out who else may be working with a child or may unknowingly duplicate work being carried out by another service.
- ContactPoint will help to deliver a number of benefits for children and families:
  - earlier identification of the needs of a child which enables earlier intervention;
  - a reduction in the need to repeat basic information to different services;

- reductions in the number of unnecessary repeat referrals;
  - quicker assessment of whether a child is receiving universal services (education, primary health care); and
  - a better experience of services for families due to more coordinated and appropriate support being delivered
- The experience of our ‘trailblazer’ local authorities, which developed local systems, has confirmed that these benefits can be realised by the introduction of ContactPoint
  - ContactPoint – being a national system across England - will provide benefits that local indexes have not been able to provide.
    - Many children access services in different local authority areas;
    - ContactPoint will enable a practitioner to identify other practitioners working with a child or young person, regardless of local authority boundaries; and
    - When a child or young person moves areas, ContactPoint will help them have their needs for services identified quickly, by enabling practitioners in their new area to see which services were being delivered to the child in his or her old area, and to contact the relevant practitioners as necessary.

### **Legal framework**

- Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 provides the legislative basis for establishing ContactPoint. The primary purpose of ContactPoint is to support those practitioners working in children’s services who are under the duties specified in Section 10 and Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 - the duty to cooperate to improve well-being, and the duty to safeguard and promote welfare of all children in England.
- Following widespread consultation with stakeholders and Parliament, the Regulations – officially known as *The Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) Regulations 2007*- came into force on 1 August 2007.

### **Wider programme**

The electronic Common Assessment Framework (eCAF), ContactPoint and Integrated Children’s System (ICS) are all intended to support improved integrated working in children’s services. These are all separate systems which exist for different, specific purposes. A range of approaches is required to support effectively children with diverse needs. In turn, each of these approaches requires specific, enabling IT solutions.

- ICS is targeted at ‘children in need’. Supported by information technology, it is the core of the electronic social care record for children and provides a tool for managing detailed information securely and efficiently.
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is aimed at children with

additional needs and offers a holistic and co-ordinated approach to assessment from potentially a range of different children's services. The CAF is a voluntary, consent based process. To operate efficiently, CAF requires a secure, national electronic storage and retrieval system (eCAF).

- ContactPoint will provide practitioners with an online directory to find out quickly who else is working with the same child or young person. It will not hold case data.

The intention is that the eCAF system will automatically notify ContactPoint that a common assessment has been carried out, along with contact details for the practitioner who completed or updated it. There will be no access to the assessment itself via ContactPoint.

When a child is referred to social care services and a referral is recorded on an ICS electronic case record system, the existence (although not the case details) of children's social care involvement and the practitioner contact details will be automatically uploaded to ContactPoint.