

ContactPoint – Questions and Answers

Q What is ContactPoint?

A ContactPoint is part of a big plan called 'Every Child Matters'. The plan involves everyone who works with children, and is all about making sure children and young people can have a good life.

It aims to make sure all children get the services and support they need as early as possible. This involves making it easier for people from different services to work together to help a child.

ContactPoint will help professionals who work with children and young people to quickly find out who else is supporting the same child. This will help professionals contact each other if they need to, and make sure that child is getting all the support they need.

ContactPoint will be like a computer-based phone book. It will only hold basic information such as name and contact details.

Everyone in England will be on ContactPoint until their 18th birthday.

Q Why do we need ContactPoint?

A Many children and young people need extra help or support. They may need this help from more than one person and at different times in their life.

If the people who are helping a child can talk to each other, it can make it easier to find the right support for the child early on, before problems become bigger.

At the moment, it can take a long time for a professional (like a doctor or a social worker) to know who else is working with the same child.

Q What information will be on there?

A ContactPoint will be like a computer-based phone book. It will only hold simple information such as:

- Name, address, and date of birth of everyone in England up to their 18th birthday;
- Name and address for each child's:
 - Parents or carers;
 - School and doctor;
 - Other services; (e.g. health visitor).

ContactPoint will also show if a worker is a 'lead professional' and/or if they have worked with a child (and their family) to do a Common Assessment Framework.

Go to www.ecm.gov.uk to find out more about the Common Assessment Framework and the lead professional.

If a sexual health, drug, alcohol or mental health worker is working with a child or young person, their contact details will only go on ContactPoint if that young person (and/or their parent/carer) agrees. Even then, ContactPoint will not show the name or contact details for that service - it will just say that one or more sensitive services are involved.

Q How will professionals get in touch with a 'sensitive service'?

A If other professionals working with that child or young person want to get in touch with the 'sensitive service', they will have to ask a local ContactPoint manager to do this for them. It will then be up to the young person and the 'sensitive service' professional to decide whether they should talk to the other worker.

Q Will ContactPoint hold lots of personal information and notes about things children do?

A No. By law ContactPoint cannot hold any detailed information at all. This means it will NOT hold information such as doctors' notes, school records or assessments. It will NOT hold notes about what a child (or anyone in their family) has been doing or what anyone has said about them.


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For more information go to www.ecm.gov.uk/contactpoint



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Q Why do professionals need to talk to each other?

A If the people who are helping a child talk to each other they can:

- make sure that a child is getting the support they need;
- find the right support early, before problems become bigger; and,
- work together, which means that a child (or family) does not have to explain the same things lots of times to different people.

Q What will a professional do after they have looked at ContactPoint?

A ContactPoint will show the contact details of professionals working with the same child. They may decide they want to contact and talk to each other to make sure that child is getting all the support they need.

There are rules for all people who work with children and young people about talking to other professionals. EVERYONE who works with children and young people must follow these rules.

Q What are the rules about talking to other professionals?

A As a rule, workers should not talk about a child or young person without asking their permission first (known as 'consent').

In very few cases, a professional might not be able to ask a child or young person for their permission. For example, they might have to talk to another professional urgently if they think a child is in danger or seriously ill.

Some young people may not understand what giving consent means or what they are giving consent to (e.g. if they are very young). In these cases the child or young person's mum, dad or carer will be asked to give consent on their behalf.

If you want to know more about these rules go to www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing

People who work with children must always act in a child's best interests. And remember, ContactPoint will only hold simple information like name and contact details.

Q Who will use ContactPoint?

A ContactPoint will only be used by:

- People whose job it is to help children and people. This could be a doctor, a school nurse or a youth worker. We think that only a few people in each organisation will have access to ContactPoint. For example, in a school, ContactPoint will only be available to some workers whose job it is to help children and who need to talk to other professionals.
- People whose job it is to look after ContactPoint. This is a very small number of people who need to make sure it is working properly and that the information is correct. Most of these people will work in local councils.

Q How will you make sure people use it properly?

A Before ANYONE is allowed to use ContactPoint they MUST have training to make sure they know how to use it properly. They must have passed strict security checks before they can use it, and will have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token to get into it.

The rule will be that anyone who wants to look at a child's record will have to give a reason why they need to see it. There will be checks to make sure people are using ContactPoint properly. If someone doesn't use it properly they will be punished.


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Q How will ContactPoint be kept safe and secure?

A Making sure that ContactPoint is kept safe is extremely important. ContactPoint will meet tough security standards. The following rules and checks will be put in place to make sure it is only used by the right people in the right way.

- ContactPoint can only be used by people who need it to do their job.
- Before they can use it, each worker will have to pass strict security checks and must have training to learn how to use ContactPoint securely.
- Each user must have their own user name, password, PIN and a security token (this is higher security than in most banks today). They will not be able to get into ContactPoint without these.
- Security experts will keep testing ContactPoint to make sure only the right people can get into it.
- Workers will have to give a reason before they can look at a child's record on ContactPoint.
- A record will be kept every time a worker looks at ContactPoint. This record will be looked at regularly to make sure ContactPoint is being used in the right way.
- If someone tries to use ContactPoint for the wrong reasons they could face a big fine or even prison.

Q How will you make sure people who aren't supposed to use ContactPoint are kept out of it?

A ContactPoint will meet tough security standards. Each user must have their own user name, password, PIN and a security token. They will not be able to get into ContactPoint without these.

Security experts will keep testing it to make sure people who should not have access do not find a way to get in.

Q What will happen if a person tries to use ContactPoint for the wrong reasons?

A We will keep checking to make sure that ContactPoint is being used properly. If someone tries to use ContactPoint for the wrong reasons they will be punished. If it is something very serious they could face a big fine or even prison.

Q Why do all children and young people in England have to be on ContactPoint?

A Between 3-4 million children and young people will need extra support. But no-one knows exactly which children are going to need this support or when they will need it. That is why it is important to have a basic record for every child and young person.

The aim of ContactPoint is to help make sure all children and young people can get extra support if and when they need it. We want to make sure that they can get that support as early as possible and stop problems getting bigger or more serious.

ContactPoint can also help to make sure that every child is being educated and is registered with a doctor (or has access to medical help).

Q Can children, young people and parents look at their information on ContactPoint?

A Yes. The Data Protection Act gives people the right to find out what personal information is held about them. This means that children, young people, and parents have a legal right to see information held about them on ContactPoint. A parent can only see their child's record if the child agrees, unless they are acting on the child's behalf (for example when the child is very young or not able to understand).

Remember that ContactPoint will only hold simple information like name and contact details.

Q Can children, young people and parents ask for their information on ContactPoint to be put right if they think it is wrong?

A Yes, children, young people and parents can ask for their information on ContactPoint to be put right if they believe their record is wrong.


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Q How are you going to keep the information on ContactPoint up-to-date and accurate?

A The information on ContactPoint already exists in the computer systems that different professionals use every day.

This means that when a professional updates their own system - for example a doctor changes an address because a child has moved – that child's record will automatically be updated on ContactPoint. The information held on ContactPoint won't get sent to any other computer systems.

Because the information will come from lots of different systems that professionals use, it means ContactPoint will be as up-to-date and accurate as possible.

It is the law that the people who put the information on there have to make sure it is right. The people in local councils whose job it is to look after ContactPoint will check to make sure it is right and up-to-date.

And remember, it is only the simple information like name and contact details that will get sent to ContactPoint. No information like doctor's notes or school reports will be on ContactPoint.

Q Will the contact details of all services stay on ContactPoint until a person reaches 18?

A In most cases the contact details of a professional or their service (e.g. the name of a school) will only stay on a child's record for one year after that service has stopped working with that child.

So for example, if a health visitor stops working with a child when the child is 8, the health visitor's details would be taken off ContactPoint when the child is 9. The contact details will then be locked away in something called an archive for 6 years and then deleted.

The maximum time professionals can keep their contact details on ContactPoint after they stop working with a child is 5 years.

Q What happens to the information after a person's 18th birthday?

A When a person turns 18 their record will be taken off ContactPoint.

Some young adults who need extra help or support can stay on past their 18th birthday but only with permission and only for the following reasons:

- if they are receiving Connexions services they can stay on ContactPoint up to their 19th birthday;
- if they are in care/are leaving care, or have learning disabilities they can stay on up to their 25th birthday.

When a record is taken off ContactPoint it will be locked away in the archive for 6 years and then deleted. It is the law that the archive can only be looked at for very limited, special reasons.