

25th November 2008

Dear Headteacher,

ContactPoint

As the Minister responsible for safeguarding children, I am writing to inform you about important developments with ContactPoint and the legal duties on independent schools regarding its implementation and operation. I also wish to explain what support is available to help schools ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties. I am aware that many of you may have some knowledge about ContactPoint (particularly those of you who attended the workshop in Warrington on 3 July) and are already working to support the implementation of the system. I am very grateful for that.

What is ContactPoint?

ContactPoint will be a national online directory which will provide a quick way for those working with children to find out who else is working with the same child. It will hold name and contact details for all children in England (up to their 18th birthday and beyond that date in certain limited circumstances), their parents/carers and practitioners working with a child. This directory is being developed with the aim of improving services for children and young people by facilitating early intervention and prevention.

We plan to make ContactPoint available early in 2009. It will be introduced in phases; the first practitioners to use ContactPoint will be those in “early adopter” areas these represent 17 local authorities in the North West of England, and Barnardo’s and KIDS.

What is required of Independent Schools?

*The Children Act 2004*¹ *Information Database (England) Regulations 2007*² provide for the establishment and operation of ContactPoint. They specify: what information will be held; who must or can provide it; how long it can be retained; who can be granted access; and how accuracy will be maintained.

¹ The Children Act 2004, Section 12 can be found at:
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040031_en_3#pt2-pb1-11g12

² The Regulations can be found at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/uksi_20072182_en_1

In line with a large number of other organisations, including maintained schools, independent schools are required to provide certain data to ContactPoint. Additionally, people working in certain roles in independent schools are identified in Regulations as persons who may be given access to ContactPoint.

Next steps

Local implementation is the responsibility of local authorities across England. They are responsible for engaging with partner organisations in their area, including independent schools. With the support of a regional implementation coordinator, they will work with partner organisations to set up local partnership governance arrangements and to offer support on implementation matters.

Local Implementation Managers will contact each school in their area soon to identify the most appropriate means for the school to provide the required data to ContactPoint.

Independent schools will also be asked to assist their local ContactPoint Implementation Manager in preparing ContactPoint users for implementation. This is likely to be, in the first instance, help with an analysis of the local schools' workforce and their training needs.


I anticipate that the recently announced review of safeguarding arrangements at independent schools, non-maintained special schools and boarding schools to be led by Sir Roger Singleton, will also be interested in the role ContactPoint can play in helping to keep children safe. I look forward to supporting Sir Roger's review in any way possible.

Further information

I have attached a Q&A, which provides further information regarding ContactPoint. It includes a summary of the information it will hold, and how local Implementation Managers would like to support independent schools to help them fulfil their legal obligations.

I hope you will find the attached information helpful, and that it will provide relevant information to key people in your school who need to know about ContactPoint. Please talk with your ContactPoint Local Implementation Manager if you need any specific communications support. For your information, I have also attached contact details for Implementation Coordinators, and for Local Implementation Managers.

Yours sincerely



Baroness Delyth Morgan