

ContactPoint – because every child matters

What is ContactPoint?

ContactPoint is a contacts list for professionals who work with children and young people. It will provide them with a quick way to find out who else is working with the same child, making it easier for them to work as a team and deliver more coordinated support.

It is part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Every Child Matters plan, which all councils follow. It will come into use across England across from the start of 2009.

How will ContactPoint benefit children?

ContactPoint will help professionals to contact you, and each other, quickly if you or your child needs support. If professionals working with a child know about each other they can:

- make sure that every child is getting the support they need
- find the right support quickly, before problems get more serious
- work together, which means that a child or a family doesn't have to explain the same things lots of different times, which can be distressing
- make sure they are not duplicating work already being done by others

It will also help children and young people who access services in different local authority areas or move between areas.

Children, young people and families should always be at the centre of what is happening, and have a say in the services and support they receive.

What information will be on ContactPoint?

ContactPoint will only hold the following information:

- name, address, date of birth and gender of every child in England up to their 18th birthday
- name and contact details for each child's parents or carers; their school and their doctor's surgery
- contact details for other services (e.g. health visitor) that are working with a child and, if there is one, a lead professional

It will also show if a child has or has had an assessment made under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the contact details for the professional who has it. But it will not show the CAF itself.

Some young adults who need extra help or support can stay on ContactPoint past their 18th birthday, but only with their permission and only for specific reasons.

When information is taken off ContactPoint it will be locked away in the archive for six years and then deleted.

Sensitive services

If a sexual health, drug, alcohol or mental health worker is working with a child or young person, their contact details will only be passed to ContactPoint if that young person (and/or their parent/carer) agrees that it can. But ContactPoint will not show the name or contact details for that service – it will just say that one or more 'sensitive services' are involved.

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.

Shielding

Some people may have some of their details hidden on ContactPoint to prevent their location being identified – this is called shielding. This is for people who are at risk of significant harm, such as victims of domestic violence. The shielding concept is used by lots of systems, not just ContactPoint.

In most cases practitioners will ask for a shield to be applied for a child or parent. The Department for Children Schools and Families and local authorities are working with local agencies and services to shield necessary records before ContactPoint is used by practitioners. This work started in January 2009.

If anyone is concerned, and has reason to believe a child should be shielded on ContactPoint they will be able to contact their local authority. Local authorities need to apply the criteria set out in statutory guidance to determine whether they should shield the record on ContactPoint.

Can I see the information held about me on ContactPoint?

Yes. The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to see personal information that is held about you. This is called a Subject Access Request. You may have to pay a small charge. You have to make a Subject Access Request in writing. To make a subject access request contact your local authority ContactPoint Team.

You can also ask for your information on ContactPoint to be put right if you think something on there is wrong.

To find out more about the Data Protection Act go to www.ico.gov.uk

Who will use ContactPoint?

ContactPoint will only be used by:

- People whose job it is to help children and young people – such as 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 the ContactPoint system itself. 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.

After someone has looked at ContactPoint, and wants to contact someone, what happens then?

ContactPoint will show the contact details of professionals/services working with a child. A professional may feel they need to contact and talk to another professional to make sure that child is getting all the support they need. People working with you should always talk to you about what they are doing and ask your permission (known as 'consent') before they talk to anyone else. Everyone working with you must respect your confidentiality and privacy.

In very few cases, they might not be able to ask permission. For example, they might have to talk to another professional urgently if they think a child is in danger or seriously ill. Everyone who works with children and young people must follow these rules. If you want to know more about these rules go to www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing

Will it be secure? How will access be controlled?

Making sure that ContactPoint is kept safe is extremely important. ContactPoint will use the latest technology and security measures. These measures make sure that information is stored safely, and that it can only be used by the people who need to.

The following rules apply to anyone who will have access to ContactPoint.

- It can only be used by people who need it to do their job
- They must have passed security checks and been trained
- They must have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token
- They must give a reason to look at a record
- They will automatically have their details recorded – who they are and what they looked at. This is called an audit trail.
- The audit trail will be looked at regularly to make sure ContactPoint is being used in the right way
- People can be prosecuted if they have been found to misuse ContactPoint

Where will the information come from? How will it be kept up-to-date?

The information on ContactPoint comes from the computer systems that different services use (national and local). This includes systems in health, education, youth justice and voluntary organisations. ContactPoint will usually be updated automatically from existing systems (national and local) so that information only has to be entered once. So for example, if a doctor updates an address in their system because a child has moved, that information will be updated on ContactPoint. ContactPoint will not hold any detailed information such as doctors' notes, school records or assessments.

Services that hold information about you have to keep your information safe and up-to-date by law.

If you would like to see a list of the local computer systems that provide information to ContactPoint, please go to:

<http://www.barnet.gov.uk/chypf/chypf-multi-agency-working/children-contactpoint.htm>.

Why do all children in England have to be on ContactPoint?

Between 3 and 4 million children and young people in England need extra support at any one time, but no-one knows exactly which children are going to need this support or when they will need it. The purpose of ContactPoint is to help make sure all children and young people can get extra support if and when they need it. ContactPoint can also help to make sure that every child is being educated (whether at school or home) and is registered with a doctor (or has access to medical help).

The Department for Children Schools and Families and local authorities

The Department for Children, Schools and Families and local authorities are responsible for ContactPoint. It will be one system with lots of sections. Each local authority looks after the information of children living in their area. Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 provides the legal basis for ContactPoint.

For further information

For further information and examples of how ContactPoint will help improve services go to:

<http://www.barnet.gov.uk/chypf/chypf-multi-agency-working/children-contactpoint.htm>

or contact:

London Borough of Barnet ContactPoint team,
Building 4,
North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South,
New Southgate,
London. N11 1NP

Tel: 0208 359 4889

or contact:

The Department for Children, Schools and Families,
Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
London,
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Tel: 0870 000 2288

email: info@dcsf.gov.uk

or visit:

www.ecm.gov.uk/contactpoint