

## **CONTACTPOINT Q&A**

### **THE PURPOSE OF CONTACTPOINT**

#### **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 or young person, making it easier for them to work as a team and deliver more coordinated support.

This basic online tool will be available to authorised practitioners who need it to do their jobs. It is a key part of the Every Child Matters programme and the Children's Plan, to improve the health, well-being and safety of all children.

#### **Why do we need it?**

Currently practitioners can waste days trying to find out who else is working with the same child or unknowingly duplicate work that is already being carried out by another service. Practitioners working with a child need to know about each other and talk to each other, so that they can find the right support quickly, before problems get more serious. ContactPoint is something that practitioners have told us that they want and need in order to do their jobs more effectively.

The practitioners who were involved in local pilot systems demonstrated that this type of tool does provide effective support to them and their managers, and contributed to improved outcomes for children and young people.

#### **What are the benefits?**

Providing a quick way for practitioners to find out who else is working with the same child will provide key benefits such as:

- Improved service experience for children, young people and families through more coordinated service delivery, more timely response to their needs and reduced number of unnecessary repeat assessments and referrals.
- Faster and more effective intervention before problems become serious because practitioners can build a fuller picture of children and young people's needs and identify what help and support is needed.
- Less unproductive time spent by practitioners trying to find out which other services are involved with a child and then trying to contact the right person. This is conservatively estimated to be worth five million practitioner hours a year. This means that practitioners can spend more time working directly with children and young people.
- Because it is a national system, children and young people who access services in different local authority areas or move between areas won't slip through the net.

These benefits have been drawn from the experiences of the 'trailblazer' local

authorities who piloted local systems similar in nature to ContactPoint, and through consultations with frontline practitioners and children, young people and families.

### **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 it is impossible to predict which children need, or 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 quickly, if and when they need it, as soon as a first sign of need is noticed, rather than waiting for problems to get more serious.

It is sensible to hold a very limited amount of information on all children rather than having to continually make decisions about which children to put on ContactPoint and which to take off.

All children have a right to education and primary health care. ContactPoint will show whether or not they are receiving those services.

## **INFORMATION HELD ON CONTACTPOINT**

### **What information is held on ContactPoint?**

ContactPoint holds the following information:

- Name, address, gender, date of birth and an identifying number of all children in England (up to their 18th birthday).
- Name and contact details for:
  - parents or carers
  - educational setting (e.g. school)
  - primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice)
  - other services, for example health visitor or a social worker (these contact details will be added to ContactPoint over time).

There will also be the facility to indicate if a practitioner is a lead professional for a child and/or if he/she has completed an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (the assessment itself will not be held on ContactPoint).

ContactPoint does not and will not hold any case information (such as case notes or details of any assessments, medical data or exam results).

### **What are 'sensitive services'?**

Sensitive services have been defined as services relating to sexual health, mental health and substance abuse. Explicit, informed consent of the child or young person (or parent/carer if acting on their behalf) will be required to record contact details for a sensitive service. Where they are recorded, only an indication of an unspecified sensitive service would be visible to the

majority of users. ContactPoint management teams will broker contact.

Lack of consent to place sensitive service practitioner details on ContactPoint may be over-riden in circumstances where there are genuine child protection concerns.

### **Where has this data come from?**

The information needed for ContactPoint comes from existing systems. There are a number of national sources which have provided this core information. These include the General Register Office, the Department for Children, Schools and Families' schools census, the Department of Work and Pensions' child benefit database and the NHS Personal Demographics Service, which has provided GP practice information.

### **What other data will be on there and where will that come from?**

Contact details for other services (such as health visitor, social worker, youth worker) will be added over time. The Department and local authorities continue to work with a number of organisations across the children's workforce about the supply of data. These organisations will be approved and accredited. Additional data sources are important to ensure that the system holds the most useful and appropriate practitioner involvements, so that practitioners are able to work together and deliver better outcomes for children.

Regulations approved by Parliament specify who is required and who is permitted to supply information to ContactPoint.

### **How will you ensure ContactPoint is accurate and up-to-date? What happens when a child moves?**

Wherever possible, ContactPoint will be automatically updated from existing systems (e.g. practitioners' case management systems) so that practitioners will not need to enter the same information twice. When information has been updated in these systems it will be sent automatically to ContactPoint as an update. So for example, when a child moves and their new address is updated by their GP practice, that information will be sent as an automatic update to ContactPoint. The information held on ContactPoint will not be sent to or shared with any other systems.

ContactPoint will only be able to receive the basic information as set out in Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 and the supporting Regulations, which specifically prohibit the inclusion of any case information.

Those required or permitted to supply information to ContactPoint must take reasonable steps to ensure the information is accurate; they already have obligations for data accuracy under the Data Protection Act 1998.

If a local authority considers that there are inaccuracies or omitted information in a record for which it is responsible, the authority must take reasonable steps to correct the inaccuracy or to complete the record.

### **Will people be able to see the information held about them?**

Yes. Children and young people, and parents when acting on a child's behalf, have rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 to ask to see the information that is held about them. This is known as a Subject Access Request. Local authorities are required to manage requests locally.

### **What will happen to the record when a young person turns 18?**

In most cases, a record will be archived a person turns 18. There is a facility for the records of some young adults to stay on ContactPoint until they are 25, but only for very limited reasons and only with explicit consent.

A record will be held in the secure archive for six years and then destroyed. The archive can only be accessed for the limited reasons which are set out in Regulations.

## **CONTACTPOINT USERS**

### **Who will use ContactPoint?**

Access to ContactPoint will be strictly limited to those who need it as part of their work. Authorised users will include those working in health, education, youth justice, social care and voluntary organisations to help ensure more coordinated service provision for children and young people. The ultimate number of users will be determined by local authorities and national partners. Those decisions will be governed by regulations and guidance.

Before being granted access, all users must have completed identity checks, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure (renewable every three years) and mandatory training. To access ContactPoint all users must have a user name, password, security token and PIN.

All users will be made aware that use of ContactPoint will be monitored and that misuse will result in disciplinary action or criminal procedures.

### **How will users access ContactPoint?**

The aim is that ContactPoint should not impose additional burdens on frontline practitioners and that its use should fit conveniently into their daily work. Authorised users will be able to access ContactPoint through their case management system (CMS) or through a secure web link. Access will only be possible through secure government networks or through accredited organisations.

Authorised users will also be able to access ContactPoint through another authorised user (mediated access).

It will not be possible to access any case management system or case data held by another agency from ContactPoint.

### **What assurances can you provide about security?**

Security is a top priority. ContactPoint has undergone numerous levels of testing and review and meets recognised assurance levels for security. We have an ongoing commitment to security and regular testing will be carried out.

### **How does ContactPoint affect existing rules about confidentiality and information sharing?**

It doesn't. ContactPoint only provides name and contact details to enable practitioners to contact each other. When contact is made between practitioners, they will need to use their professional judgement on what information should be shared based on the facts of the case, obtaining consent as and when appropriate. The considerations that have to be applied to information sharing decisions are exactly the same with or without ContactPoint.

Cross-government guidance on information sharing was updated in October 2008 to provide clear, comprehensive guidance to practitioners and managers across agencies on how to appropriately share information within the existing legal framework. This is available from [www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing](http://www.ecm.gov.uk/informationsharing).

Training for ContactPoint users will include the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998 and the appropriate use of the system. ContactPoint users should also undertake additional relevant training such as information sharing more generally.

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

### **How has ContactPoint been developed?**

ContactPoint is part of the Every Child Matters programme and the Children's Plan. It has been developed in response to a recommendation of the Laming Inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié.

We have taken a very steady, staged approach to this work, drawing in the appropriate expertise. From the outset we have been consulting and working with a wide range of stakeholder groups, including frontline practitioners and children and young people, to get their valuable input into the development of ContactPoint.

We have drawn substantially on the lessons and experience of the 'trailblazers' – nine local authority areas who piloted local systems (known as 'indexes'). They demonstrated that this type of tool does provide effective support to practitioners and managers and contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people.

## **Why do we need a national system? Why can't you just use local systems?**

As a national system, ContactPoint will provide benefits that local ones could not. One of the key requirements identified from the initial discussions and through the work of the trailblazer local authorities was that a national approach is essential as many children access services in different local authority areas or move between local authority areas.

A national system will enable a practitioner to identify other practitioners working with a child or young person, regardless of local authority boundaries. Additionally, when a child or young person moves areas, ContactPoint will help to ensure his/her needs for services are identified quickly, by enabling practitioners in their new areas to see which services were being delivered to the child in his or her old area and to contact the relevant practitioners as necessary.

## **Who is responsible for ContactPoint?**

The Department for Children, Schools and Families and local authorities are responsible for ContactPoint. It is one system, but local authorities look after the information of children resident in their area. Section 12 of the Children Act 2004, and the Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) Regulations 2007, provide the legal basis for ContactPoint.

## **When will ContactPoint be available?**

ContactPoint moved into its first phase of delivery on 26 January 2009. This allows local authorities to start to shield the small proportion of records on ContactPoint for which this measure is appropriate. In addition, it will enable the Early Adopter organisations – 17 local authorities in the North West of England and two national partners, Barnardo's and KIDS – to train their ContactPoint management teams.

## **What is shielding and why is it needed?**

Some people may need to have some of their details hidden on ContactPoint to prevent their location being identified. This is called shielding. It 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's record. DCSF and local authorities have been working with local agencies and services to shield necessary records before ContactPoint is used by practitioners. This work started at the end of January.

If anyone is concerned and has reason to believe a child should be shielded on ContactPoint they can contact their local authority.

### **When will other local authorities and national partners get access to ContactPoint?**

Training for management teams in the remaining LAs and national partners (ie those that aren't Early Adopters) will take place later this year. Early learning from EA evaluation will inform this training. A further update will be provided in the Spring of this year.

### **How much does ContactPoint cost?**

Set up costs for ContactPoint are £224m. Operating costs are estimated to be £41m per year. We have conservatively estimated that ContactPoint will save at least £88m per year.