

## ContactPoint Q and A

### What is ContactPoint?

ContactPoint will be the quick way to find out who else is working with the same child or young person, making it easier to deliver more coordinated support.

This basic online directory will be available to authorised practitioners who need it to do their jobs. It is a key part of the Every Child Matters programme to improve outcomes for children.

ContactPoint was previously known by the working title of the 'Information Sharing Index'.

### What information will be held on ContactPoint?

ContactPoint will only contain the following basic 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:
  - o parents or carers;
  - o educational setting (e.g. school);
  - o primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice); and
  - o other services.

There will also be the 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.

Explicit consent is required to record contact details for sensitive services (defined as sexual/mental health and substance abuse). Access to this information will be restricted.

Consent will also be required for care leavers or those with learning difficulties to remain on ContactPoint up to age 25, to facilitate the transition to adult services.

ContactPoint will NOT contain any case information (such as case notes, assessments, medical data or exam results).

### Will ContactPoint have medical histories, exam results etc. on it?

No, ContactPoint will have no case information on it or subjective observations about a child or their family. It will not contain any information such as case notes or details of any assessments, medical data or exam results. Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 specifically prohibits the inclusion of any case information on ContactPoint, and the Regulations made under Section 12 will

### **Why do we need ContactPoint?**

ContactPoint is part of wider reforms within children's services which are intended to put children at the centre of their services, and ensure that where needs are identified they can be acted upon in a prompt, professional and joined-up manner.

ContactPoint will allow an authorised practitioner to see who else is working with the same child. Currently they can spend days trying to find out this basic information or they may unknowingly duplicate work that is already being carried out by another service. ContactPoint has been designed to support the processes followed by people working with children follow and responds to

### **How has the concept been developed?**

Nine local authority 'Trailblazer' areas have been piloting a range of local approaches (known as indexes). They demonstrated that this type of tool does provide effective support to practitioners and managers and contribute to improved outcomes. Local indexes all had the common element of holding basic information on every child in at least part of their local area.

Drawing substantially on the lessons and experience of the Trailblazers, the concept for ContactPoint was developed further through extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. This process informed the initial design stage, the development of the business requirements and endorsed the outline design solution. One of the key requirements identified was that a national approach is essential as many children access services in different local authority areas or move between areas.

The views of children, young people and families played a key role in shaping the Government's decision to establish ContactPoint.

### **What will the benefits of ContactPoint be?**

Through work with the Trailblazers some key benefits have been identified:

- improved service experience for children, young people and families through more effective service delivery, more timely response to their needs and reduced number of 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;
- efficiency benefits through 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 5 million practitioner hours a year. This means that practitioners can spend more time focusing on service delivery rather than on administration activities.
- as ContactPoint will be national, it will also benefit children and young people who access services in different local authority areas or move between areas.

### **Why do we need a national system?**

As a national system ContactPoint will provide benefits that local indexes cannot. One of the key requirements identified from the initial discussions and consultations on the tool now known as ContactPoint, and through Trailblazer experiences, 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 them have their needs for services quickly identified, 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.

### **Will you continue to consult with stakeholders?**

Yes. The system has and will continue to be developed through extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders. Regular advice and input will continue to be gathered from a number of reference and focus groups as the project develops, which includes:

- children and young people;
- parents and carers;
- local authorities (including the original Trailblazers);
- practitioners and managers;
- voluntary and statutory bodies from a range of practitioner organisations and organisations representing children, young people and families.

We are also in regular contact with other Government departments, the Office of the Children's Commission and the Information Commissioner's Office.

### **Who will have access to ContactPoint?**

Access to ContactPoint will be restricted to authorised staff who need it as part of their work. The draft regulations set out the categories of practitioners expected to have access, which includes those working in education, health, social care, youth offending and some voluntary organisations.

All users will be trained in the safe and secure use of the tool, including the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act and will have undergone training in information sharing.

All users will have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance. The intention is that all ContactPoint users will also be included under the new 'Vetting and Barring Scheme', which, from 2008, will be implemented under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act.

All users will be authenticated to ContactPoint using strong authentication techniques in line with the e-Government Unit (eGU) guidance. Every access will be monitored and audited.

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

The aim is that the system should not impose burdens on frontline practitioners and that it should fit conveniently into their daily work. An authorised ContactPoint user (ie. one who has been through the necessary security checks and training) would be able to access ContactPoint either:

- through some existing case management systems;
- through a secure web link; or
- if they do not have appropriate IT, they will be able to access it through another authorised user (mediated access). The person with direct access to ContactPoint will only release information once they are satisfied that the person seeking information is authorised to receive it and has made a genuine reason for accessing that information.

A minimum of 2-factor authentication will be used to access ContactPoint. Users will need a security token and a password.

It will not be possible for an authorised user to access the case management system or case data held by another agency from ContactPoint.

### **Will all services be recorded on ContactPoint?**

Consent will be required to record contact details for sensitive services (defined as sexual health, mental health and substance abuse). Where consent is given, only the fact that an unspecified service is being provided will be available. Access to that information will be tightly controlled.

Lack of consent to place practitioner details on ContactPoint may be over-ridden in carefully specified circumstances, such as where there are genuine child protection concerns.

### **How will you ensure ContactPoint is accurate and up to date?**

Wherever possible, ContactPoint will be automatically updated from existing systems so that practitioners will not need to enter the same information twice. The aim is that the system should not impose burdens on frontline practitioners and that it should fit conveniently into their daily work. All data supplied will be in accordance with and constrained by Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 and the supporting Regulations, which specifically prohibit the inclusion of any case information.

The frequency of updates will depend on the source organisation and may be near real-time, monthly or termly, depending on how frequently the data in the source systems changes and the capabilities of the systems involved.

### **How will existing systems be linked to ContactPoint?**

ContactPoint will be able to receive only basic demographic data about a child and contact details for practitioners working with a child directly from practitioners' existing systems. There will be a double control over how information is provided:

- i) Existing systems will control how much data is supplied to ContactPoint; and
- ii) ContactPoint will not have the facility to extract additional information from existing systems, nor will there be any automatic feed of information back to those systems.

ContactPoint will not link separate case management systems to each other, and it will not be possible for an authorised user to access, through ContactPoint, the case management system or case data held by another agency.

### **How will you be certain that ContactPoint will be secure? How will you ensure it is not misused?**

Security is of paramount importance in the development of ContactPoint. A number of measures will be in place to ensure security.

- Access will be restricted to those who need it as part of their work.
- Everyone with access, including operators or administrators, will be subject to stringent security checks, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance.
- A minimum of 2-factor authentication will be used to access ContactPoint. Users will need a token and a password.
- All users will be trained in the importance of security and the importance of good security practice.
- ContactPoint will require a reason before a record can be accessed.
- Mechanisms will be in place to prevent trawling.
- Every access to a child's record will be detailed in the audit trail. This will be regularly reviewed to ensure that any misuse will be detected.
- Any misuse will lead to appropriate sanctions. These sanctions can include, if appropriate, fines or imprisonment under the provisions of the Data Protection Act and Computer Misuse Act.

The design and implementation of ContactPoint will continue to be reviewed by independent security experts during system build and before it is deployed. Security will of course be audited during operation.

These issues will be reflected in the guidance and staff training that will govern the operation of ContactPoint.

### **How will ContactPoint impact on existing rules about confidentiality and information sharing?**

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. All users will be required to have undergone information sharing training. Training for ContactPoint users will include the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act and Human Rights Act.

### **Is ContactPoint all about child protection?**

No, ContactPoint is principally about supporting early intervention for the 30-50% 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.

### **Why is it necessary for all children to be on ContactPoint? Wouldn't it be better to only list children at risk?**

It is important and appropriate to cover every child in England because any child or young person could require the support of additional services at any time. It is not possible to predict accurately in advance which children will have additional needs - estimates show that 3-4 million children and young people will need additional targeted and specialist services at any one point in time.

It is proportionate to hold a small amount of information on all children rather than continually making thresholds decisions about which children to put on the directory and which to take off. An advantage of ContactPoint is that it will facilitate communication as soon as a first sign of need is noticed.

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.

Including all children avoids the potential stigma that a targeted directory would have.

### **How can an IT system help?**

Technology is a part of everyday life and it is vital that we harness the benefits that it can offer in order to support and facilitate more effective practice. ContactPoint is not a solution on its own, it is one tool in a much broader effort to improve communication among professionals and help services work together more effectively on the frontline to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

ContactPoint will be a practical tool that frees up the time currently spent by staff trying to find out who else is working with a child they are involved with, and help remove duplication of service delivery and replicated referrals.

### **Will parents, carers and young people be able to see their data?**

Yes. Children, and parents when acting on a child's behalf, have rights under the Data Protection Act to see the data that is held about them and to request that incorrect data is corrected or removed. Local authorities will be required to publicise the mechanisms for making a request and these will be managed locally. Further advice will be available in the ContactPoint Guidance.

### **Which legislation enables the creation of ContactPoint?**

Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 provides the legislative basis for establishing the system. All data held on ContactPoint will be strictly limited according to the constraints of Section 12 of the Children Act 2004. That section also provides for Regulations and Guidance to be made which will govern the operation of ContactPoint.

The Government's response to the public consultation on the draft Regulations will be published in Summer 2007. The draft Guidance is available for public consultation until 27 July 2007 ([www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations)); the final Guidance will be published later in the year.

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

ContactPoint is being designed and built centrally. ContactPoint will be operational in all local authority areas by the end of 2008.

The national team will provide guidance and support to all local authorities throughout implementation.