

ContactPoint Explained

A new online directory, set to go live across England from the end of 2008, aims to assist and support the kind of cross-sector working that's at the heart of Every Child Matters. But how will it work?

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The vision for children's services places families at the centre of integrated services that put their needs first. Translating this into structural and cultural change is no small challenge. New tools and processes are being introduced to support those working on the frontline and also at a strategic level to help ensure that resources can be targeted even more effectively.

Appropriate sharing of information is vital to ensure that children and young people get the services they need and deserve. However, simply trying to find out if anyone else is working with a child and how to reach them can be hugely time-consuming.

This is where ContactPoint will help. Currently in development, ContactPoint will provide a quick way to find out who else is working with the same child or young person.

Why we need ContactPoint

ContactPoint will:

- enable practitioners to find out quickly if a child is receiving support from other agencies.
- help to reduce duplication of work and repeat assessments and referrals, which can be distressing for a child and their family.
- help to ensure continuity of service delivery and ensure that children do not get 'lost' when they move between local authority areas.
- provide management information to aid service planning and help local authorities meet their duty to identify and support children missing education.

A wide range of people, including children and young people and those who work with them, have been and continue to be involved in all aspects of ContactPoint's development to ensure that it is a practical, effective tool.

The expected benefits have been demonstrated by local authority 'Trailblazer' areas who piloted local systems (known as indexes).

"Our index has been a huge benefit. It has reduced the levels of duplication taking place and allows us to see who else we need to be liaising with, from social workers to health professionals. There's been a huge improvement in the time it takes to arrange multi-agency meetings and as a result, the time in which a plan of action is established to help the child and their family is drastically reduced. Our index has changed working practices beyond belief. Practitioners are working together a lot more and as a result they understand what information and how much time others need in order to support the child and their family."

Carolyn Ross, Neighbourhood Schools Officer, East Sussex (Trailblazer area)

Security is vital

Assessments and rigorous testing of ContactPoint have been and will continue to be undertaken by independent security experts throughout development. ContactPoint will not go live until it has passed these tests.

Access to ContactPoint will be restricted to those who need it as part of their work. This will include those working with children and young people across education, health, social care, justice and the voluntary and community sector. Before being given access, each and every user MUST:

- have security clearance (including enhanced CRB)
- have completed mandatory training; and
- have a user name, a password, a PIN and a security token.

What happens next?

The development of ContactPoint is being led by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The system is being built now and will be rolled-out from late 2008, starting in the north west and two national children's charities.

Every local authority in England is legally required to implement ContactPoint, which includes managing the data of children resident in their area, and setting up and training users. Local authorities are contacting organisations to identify who needs to have access.

ContactPoint will hold the following information:

- Name, address, gender, date of birth and an identifying number for every child or young person in England up to their 18th birthday.
- Name and contact details for each child's:
 - Parents / carers;
 - Education setting (e.g. school) and health provider (e.g. GP);
 - Other services (e.g. social worker, youth worker); and
 - Lead professional (where appointed).
- Indicator that a CAF has been undertaken, and contact details for the CAF 'holder'.

✘ **ContactPoint will NOT hold any case information about a child or young person (such as police records, school records or medical notes).**

✓ **Every child in England will be on ContactPoint to ensure they receive support as early as possible, if and when they need it.**

Want more information?

Visit the Every Child Matters website www.everychildmatters.gov.uk for further information on: **ContactPoint, Information Sharing, Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and lead professional.** Also visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/projects/integratedworking.htm

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk



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