

Introducing ContactPoint: Helping to keep children safe and healthy

Local councils and professionals - social workers, doctors, headteachers, police officers - are working better, together, because every child matters.

At any time, around 3-4 million children and young people in England are receiving some sort of extra help or support. This might involve many different organisations or professionals. Children and their families have a better experience if everyone works together to make sure they get the support they need at the time they need it.

Right now, if a headteacher, doctor or social worker believes a child is at risk they may have no quick way of knowing whether someone else is already in touch with them and can spend a long time trying to track them down. To make this quicker and easier, local authorities across England are this year introducing a new online directory - ContactPoint - for people who work with children and young people.



Jane is a health visitor, who

has been piloting a local version of ContactPoint called an index. She said: "Without the index it was difficult working with professionals from other organisations, because you had to spend lots of hours on the telephone ringing round to other community professionals. It could often take days to find the correct professional you needed to speak to. As the system becomes national it will be even better and will address the cross-border issues we have at present when families move out of the area.

Created in response to a recommendation from Lord Laming, following the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, ContactPoint supports quicker and better quality communication between professionals. It will help improve the wellbeing of all children, and it will help to keep them safe. It

is supported by major children's organisations, such as NSPCC, Barnardo's, Action for Children and KIDS.

Martin Narey, Chief Executive of Barnardo's, said "Barnardo's is very supportive of ContactPoint. We believe that the directory will provide a quick way for authorised professionals to find out who else is working with a child, making it easier to deliver more coordinated and better services and helping us better identify children of particular vulnerability."

ContactPoint uses the latest technology to keep it

safe and up-to-date. It can only be used by those who are working to help a child. They have to be trained and get through a series of security checks before they can use it.

ContactPoint is a contacts list for all children in England. At any time a child, parent or carer can ask to see the information it holds about them.

Those who may be at increased risk of significant harm (for example a family who has fled domestic violence) may have some of their details hidden or 'shielded'.

Further information about shielding records is available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/contactpoint.

Parents who have reason to believe their child should be shielded should contact their local council.



How can ContactPoint help a young person?

Leah is 14. Her mum is ill, so Leah looks after her two younger sisters. Leah speaks with a stutter, and is receiving speech therapy. She is struggling to manage - she is starting to miss therapy sessions and she isn't attending school regularly. The school assigned Leah a learning mentor to help her keep up, but Leah is finding it really hard. The social worker supporting Leah and her family recently visited. Although things looked fine on the surface, after talking to Leah it became clear to the social worker that things were not as well as they first appeared. Leah's stutter seems worse since the last visit. But Leah doesn't want to confide too much about her problems and the social worker doesn't push things. Leah's social worker checks ContactPoint and sees contact details for a learning mentor at her school and a speech

therapist. The social worker tells Leah she is worried about her and asks if she can help her. Leah agrees that the social worker can contact the other services so all the professionals can work together to help. The three professionals meet Leah and her mum to talk things through. Together, they get a better understanding of the problems Leah is dealing with and they all work out a plan to help make Leah's home and school life easier. The social worker arranges extra day care for mum. The speech therapist arranges to hold some therapy sessions at Leah's home. The learning mentor works out a new timetable for after school sessions that fit in better with everything else.



ContactPoint:

- is for people who work with children and young people, such as headteachers, doctors and social workers.
- will help professionals providing help and support find out who else is working with the same child or young person.
- holds name and basic details for: all children in England up to their 18th birthday, their parents and carers, professionals and services working with a child.
- does not store any medical or school records, or any other notes about a child or their family.
- can only be used by trained people who need it to do their job, who have passed rigorous security checks.
- does not change existing rules about sharing information.

Want to know more?

ContactPoint is run by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and local councils.

You can find out more about ContactPoint and how it will work:

- **Contact your local council (you can find contact details for your local council at www.direct.gov.uk - click on 'Contacts')**
- **Visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/ecm/contactpoint**
- **Contact the DCSF on info@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk or 0870 000 2288**

