

ContactPoint Core messages

The Government is committed to giving every child the best start in life, to narrow the gap in achievement and improve the life chances of all children. The Every Child Matters programme focuses on improving outcomes so that all children are healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.

ContactPoint is being developed as part of the Every Child Matters programme to improve outcomes for all children. It will be a vital part of delivering early intervention for children who need additional services and effective safeguarding for children at risk of harm.

ContactPoint will be a simple tool, allowing practitioners to see who else is involved with a particular child and provide contact details so that they can, where appropriate, share relevant information about children who need services or about whose welfare they are concerned.

ContactPoint will cover all children in England because:

- it is estimated that at any one time 3-4 million children and young people have needs for additional targeted and specialist services. It is not possible to predict accurately in advance which children will have such needs, or which children will never have them
- any child or young person could require the support of additional services at any time in their childhood. It would not help to have to establish a ContactPoint record for the child after deciding they might need additional help. The advantage of ContactPoint is being able to facilitate discussion 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 and will help trigger local action to make sure they do receive them.

ContactPoint will not record information on children's diet or school attainment. *The Children Act 2004* specifically prohibits the inclusion of any case information. There will be no subjective opinions or observations about a child or parent, and no automatic triggers for action or investigation.

ContactPoint will reduce the time wasted on unnecessary referrals, or trying to find out who else is working with a particular child. At present, practitioners can spend anything up to three days trying to find out who else may be working with a child.

ContactPoint will free up a significant amount of time, enabling practitioners to spend more time delivering services. In financial terms, the benefit of reducing this unproductive time is estimated as an equivalent of more than £88m. (A conservative assessment has been made of the financial value of time saved by workers across seven practitioner groups following introduction of a local index system.)

Security is of paramount importance. The design and implementation of ContactPoint will be reviewed by independent security experts during system build and audited during operation.

Access to the information held about children will be restricted to those who need it as part of their work and subject to stringent security controls. Users will have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance and be trained in the safe and secure use of ContactPoint, including the importance of compliance with *The Data Protection Act 1998* and *The Human Rights Act 1998*.

All use of ContactPoint will be monitored and audited. Every access to a child's record will be detailed in the ContactPoint audit trail. This will be regularly reviewed to make sure that any misuse is detected.

Records of children whose circumstances may mean that they are at increased risk of harm may be subject to shielding. These decisions will be taken on a case by case basis and will be based on the level of threat posed if their information becomes more widely available. This is in line with the practice on existing case management systems.

ContactPoint will be established under section 12 of *The Children Act 2004* to maintain a record of every child in England. The primary purpose of ContactPoint is to support those practitioners working in children's services who are under the duties specified in section 10 and section 11 of *The Children Act 2004* - the duty to co-operate to improve wellbeing, and the duty to safeguard and promote welfare of all children in England.

ContactPoint will provide benefits that local indexes cannot. Trailblazer experience shows that many children access services in different local authority areas; ContactPoint 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 identified quickly, by enabling practitioners in their new area to see which services were being delivered to the child in his or her old area, and to contact the relevant practitioners as necessary.

ContactPoint will contain only this basic information:

- name, address, gender and date of birth of child and contact details for parents or carers
- educational setting, for example school
- primary medical practitioner, for example GP practice
- practitioners providing other services
- a lead professional for that child - if appointed.

Practitioners will also be able to indicate that they have information to share or have undertaken an assessment. No assessment or case information will be included on ContactPoint.