

ContactPoint Explained

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

Every Child Matters

Effective communication and appropriate sharing of information is crucial to ensure children and young people get the best services possible. These principles are at the heart of the Children's Plan, which builds on the aims set out in Every Child Matters, to improve the lives of all children and young people. However, simply trying to find out if anyone else is involved and how to reach them can be hugely time-consuming.

This is where ContactPoint will help. Currently in development, this online directory 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 help save time and prevent duplication of work, so that practitioners can respond quickly and appropriately to a child's needs.
- It will help to reduce the number of repeat assessments and referrals, which can be distressing for a child and their family.
- As a national system, ContactPoint will help to ensure continuity of service delivery for children and young people who access services in, or move between, different local authority areas.
- It will also help to identify children missing education.
- The expected benefits have been demonstrated by local authority 'Trailblazer' areas who piloted local systems (known as indexes).

I've seen our pilot index become a really integrated part of what we do on a day-to-day basis. There's no doubt that my team has found it very useful. In the past, when they got a case they would be ringing round lots of people trying to find out who is the allocated social worker, who was involved from the family support service etc. and now they can just log on to the system. This means they can organise multi-agency meetings quickly and coordinate their work with other agencies.

It's saving time for everyone and it's allowing practitioners to concentrate on their case work rather than chasing round to find out very basic information."

Dave Cohen, Restorative Justice Manager, Sheffield (Trailblazer area)

What does it mean for youth justice?

Youth justice services are an important part of the support provided to children and young people. In order to carry out this role as effectively as possible it's essential that, if a child comes to the attention of the police or others working in youth justice, they can find out quickly if that child is receiving or has recently received either support or services from other agencies. Likewise their involvement can be made known to other professionals working with the child.

Having a fuller picture of a child's needs and circumstances will help to inform the most appropriate way to support that child, help to protect them from risk and ensure that work isn't being overlooked or duplicated.

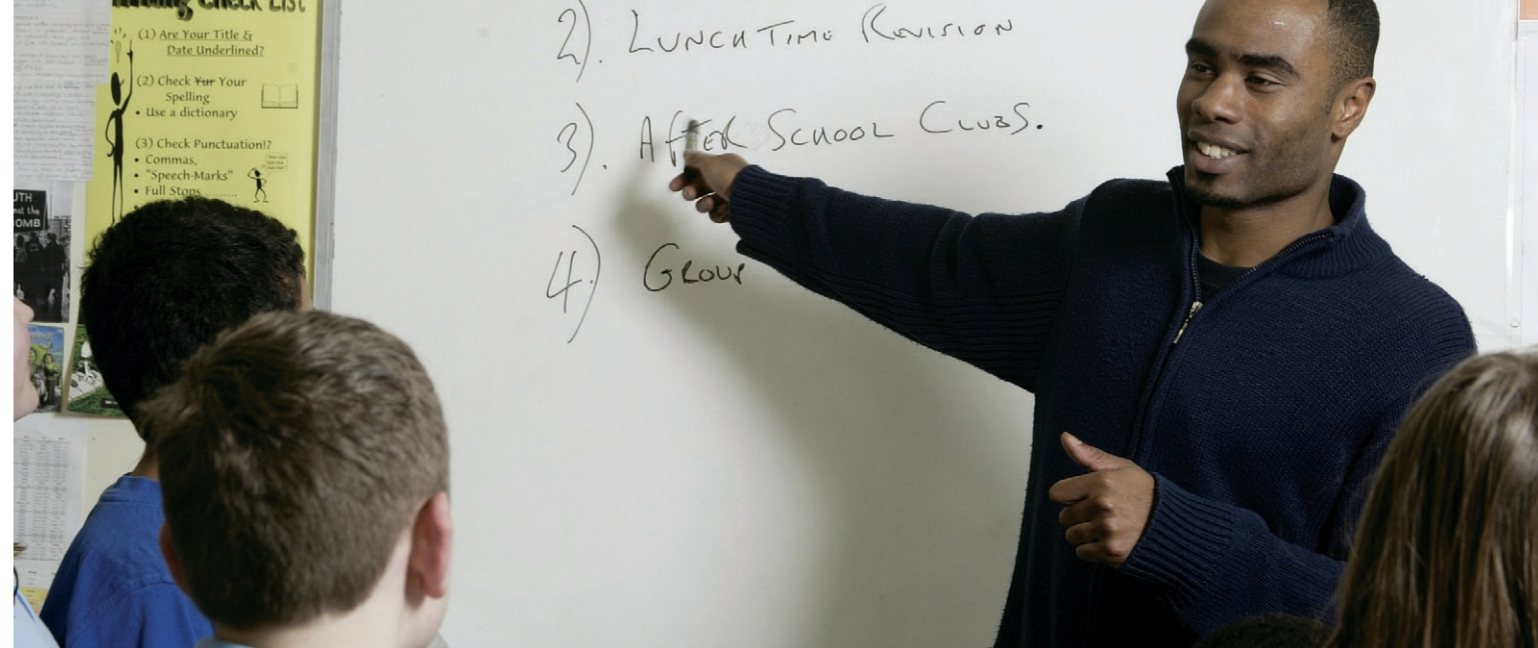
Practitioners working with children and young people across education, health, social care, justice and the voluntary and community sector will need access to ContactPoint. This will include those regularly working with young people in areas such as schools and other community settings, victim units, domestic violence, safeguarding, child abuse investigation, and youth offending teams.

ContactPoint will only hold the following information:

- Name, contact details, 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.**



Security is vital

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

Before being given access, each and every user MUST:

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

So how will it work?

- ContactPoint has been designed to fit conveniently into a practitioner's daily work and not impose additional burdens.
- It will support other measures being introduced across children's services (such as the Common Assessment Framework and the lead professional role).
- Where possible it will be updated automatically from existing systems (national and local) so that information only has to be entered once.
- Authorised users will be able to access ContactPoint through their existing case management system, a secure weblink, or another authorised user (e.g. if they do not have access to a computer).
- A wide range of organisations, practitioners and children, young people and families have been and continue to be involved in all aspects of ContactPoint's development, to ensure that it is a practical, effective tool.

What happens next?

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 will be contacting your organisation to identify the practitioners who need to have access to ContactPoint.

"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. I try to use it whenever I can as it makes my day-to-day job easier. Once children and families understand what it is and what it's for, they're generally really happy for it to be used."

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

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 the Children's Workforce Development Council website at: www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk