

ContactPoint Shielding

Guidance and frequently asked questions

What is ContactPoint shielding?

ContactPoint can only be seen by professionals who are authorised to use it. They will need to have passed strict security checks and be using ContactPoint through a secure network.

In some circumstances a child's contact details on ContactPoint can be **shielded**, or partially hidden, so that only their name, date of birth, gender and unique identifying number will be visible to most users.

Shielding is assessed on a case-by-case basis and is applied when there are strong reasons to believe that not shielding a child's record would be likely to:

- place a child at increased risk of significant harm
- place an adult at risk of significant harm
- prejudice the prevention or detection of a serious crime
- put a child's adoption placement at risk.

Increased risk of significant harm means that someone is likely to cause significant harm to the child, and/or their parent/carer, unless they are protected at a location that is not known to the people posing the threat.

Government Guidance

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. A single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, for example violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is a compilation of events, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development.

Such cases could arise for example where:

- a child/young person is adopted where there is little or no contact with birth parent(s) or wider family members;
- a child/young person and/or their parent/carer are fleeing abuse or domestic violence; and/or
- a child/young person and/or their parent/carer or family member are subject to police protection.

In the case of adoption, once adopted, a child will be given a new record on ContactPoint and their previous record will be archived to ensure no link can be made between their pre and post adoption identities.

How do I apply to be shielded?

Most shielding requests will be made by professionals working with children but parent/carers and young people can also request shielding.

Speak to the professional who is working with your family, such as a post-adoption social worker, and ask if they have applied for your child's record to be shielded. Many shielding requests are made by professionals working with families.

To apply on your own behalf, call MyDevon's Children and Families on 0845 155 1013 and ask for a shielding pack. This will provide full details including an application form for you to return with proof of your identity, address and evidence of your relationship with the child.

Why do I have to send my personal information and documents?

Shielding a record on ContactPoint will make it harder for professionals to know about each other when they are working with your child. We must make sure that any decision to shield your child's record is based on legitimate concerns, so we need to check your identity and the identity of the child to make sure we are acting professionally.

How will my application be assessed?

A panel of safeguarding professionals will meet to review and assess your application. Their assessment will be based on the evidence you give us against the national ContactPoint Guidance.

The information you provide in your application may also be passed on to a children's safeguarding professional to see if you need any other services.

What happens if I don't want my child's details on ContactPoint because I don't agree with it?

Objecting to the idea of ContactPoint is not considered a sufficient reason. Any request made using this reason will be rejected.

How long will the shield be in place?

Shielded records will be reviewed every six months. Devon County Council will contact you to see if your circumstances have changed.