

# ContactPoint

Lessons Learned from the  
Early Adopter Phase

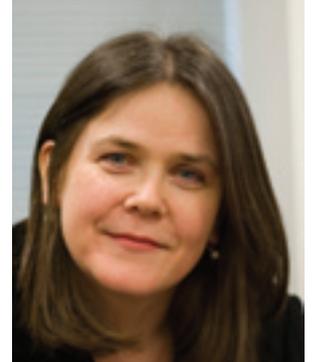


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# 1. Ministerial Foreword



Our aim is to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. The Children's Plan set out how we will achieve this goal. It contains a range of measures to ensure that all children enjoy a happy, healthy and safe childhood and achieve their full potential.

A crucial element of the Plan is ensuring services work together to intervene early to prevent problems turning into crises. There are approximately 11 million children in England and, at any one time, around three to four million need support from specialist services. Practitioners tell us that they want to work more collaboratively, with improved support and joined-up services shaped around the needs of children and their families.

Organisations involved in providing services to children – from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups – are accordingly teaming up in new ways and sharing information effectively. More integrated working by children's services means children and young people should be safeguarded from harm; have better opportunities to develop and reach their full potential; get effective support earlier if they experience difficulties; and access targeted services faster and with less stigma as a result of closer links between targeted and universal services.

In order to do these things effectively, practitioners need to find out who else is working with the same child as early as possible. ContactPoint has been created to address this need.

ContactPoint was developed in response to a key recommendation of Lord Laming's inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, which among other things highlighted the need to improve information exchange between different agencies working with children. ContactPoint is an online directory that provides a quick way for authorised practitioners to find out who else is working with the same child. It is a critical tool to help improve the wellbeing of all children, keep them safe, and to ensure that no child slips through the net of support services, by enabling practitioners to work together and provide faster, more coordinated support to meet a child's needs. Security is of course an important priority and ContactPoint has a significant set of security measures and controls in place. These are continually reviewed by DCSF and its expert advisors.

The case for ContactPoint is clear. A survey of 6,000 practitioners<sup>1</sup> this summer told us the following:

- More than three-fifths say that information about other practitioners involved with a child is not usually readily available, and more than one-fifth never manage to find this information despite their best efforts.

1. Improving Information Sharing and Management Practitioner Benefits Survey (DCSF: 2009)

- Around three-quarters say information isn't usually readily available about whether a child or young person has an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or who holds the CAF. One-fifth say they are never able to find this out.
- Two-thirds say it is not easy to find information about whether a child is registered with a universal service, such as a school or GP.

ContactPoint is a modern 21st Century tool designed to help practitioners working with children across different agencies. I hope it will revolutionise the way practitioners work, and most importantly deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families. In various ways a wide range of practitioners working with children already use the type of information that is on ContactPoint; for example contact details for school or GP. But too often they have to spend considerable time trying to find out which other practitioners, if any, are also working with a child. ContactPoint will make it easier and quicker for authorised practitioners to find this out and will speed up communications between different people working with the same child. Overall, we estimate that ContactPoint will save at least five million practitioner hours a year, freeing up more time for frontline services.

We have deliberately taken a steady and staged approach to delivery of ContactPoint. The Early Adopter phase, working closely with 18 local authorities and two National Partners, has been an important element. It enabled us to look at how ContactPoint worked in practice before it was implemented across the rest of the country. This report explains what we learned during that phase.

In the last few months the Early Adopters have trained 800 practitioners who have already started to use ContactPoint. Early feedback has been very encouraging.

The successful implementation of ContactPoint so far has been due to all local authorities, national and local partners and the DCSF, working together. I am very grateful for the support ContactPoint has received from a wide range of organisations, with particular thanks for the commitment of our National Partners: Action for Children, Barnardo's, CAF/CASS, CEOP, Kids, NSPCC and The Children's Society.

The particular contribution from the Early Adopter organisations has been nothing short of outstanding and I am very grateful to them for their hard work, commitment and expertise.

I strongly support ContactPoint and, building on the early positive feedback, I am convinced it is going to help improve outcomes for our children and young people.



Baroness Delyth Morgan

## 2. Executive Summary

*“From my experience, ContactPoint is already proving to be an important tool to help ensure that children and young people get the support they need in a timely, joined-up way. In each case where I have used it, I have been able to quickly get in touch with the right people. More importantly, the children received the support they required.”*

*Carol, Education Welfare Officer*

- 2.1** This report outlines the experience of ContactPoint Early Adopter management teams and practitioners, who have led the way in implementing ContactPoint. Lessons learned have paved the way for wider roll out of ContactPoint and underpinned improvements being made as the project moves forward.
- 2.2** ContactPoint was developed in response to a key recommendation of Lord Laming’s inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, which among other things highlighted the need to improve information exchange between different agencies working with children. ContactPoint is an online directory that provides a quick way for authorised practitioners to find out who else is working with the same child. It is a critical tool to help improve the wellbeing of all children, keep them safe, and to ensure

that no child slips through the net of support services.

- 2.3** ContactPoint contains only basic identifying information for each child<sup>2</sup> in England up to their 18th birthday, and contact details for their parents or carers, and practitioners and services working with a child. It does not and will not hold any case information (for example, case notes, assessments, medical data or exam results).

### The Early Adopter phase

- 2.4** Between January and March 2009, ContactPoint management teams were trained and established in 20 Early Adopter organisations – 18 local authorities in the North West of England, and two National Partners: Barnardo’s and Kids.
- 2.5** The purpose of this Early Adopter phase was to focus in particular on how ContactPoint, and the policies and processes which underpin it, worked in practice – before rolling it out across the rest of England. The key focus of this phase took place from January to October 2009.

2. For ease of reading, the term ‘child’ is used throughout this report to mean any child or young person up to the age of 18

**2.6** The headline outcomes of use by Early Adopters included:

- Early feedback from practitioners using ContactPoint was positive. Over 75 per cent of practitioners said they believed that ContactPoint would be helpful in their future work. There is a growing body of case study evidence on the benefits the system is providing.
- Early Adopter suggestions have been incorporated into existing guidance, and new or interim guidance issued where necessary. DCSF will continue to work with partners to refine and improve supporting documentation.
- Based on their experience, Early Adopters recommended an incremental approach to local implementation, bringing on a priority group of practitioners first and building up in a managed way. Other local authorities have built this approach into their roll out plans.
- All Early Adopters have successfully granted organisation accreditation<sup>3</sup> to either their children's services or a partner agency. Seventeen local authorities achieved organisation accreditation of their children's services (three have accredited the entire local authority), and 17 partner organisations have achieved organisation accreditation.
- All 18 Early Adopter authorities and Barnardo's have trained practitioners to access ContactPoint.
- Between May and October 2009, 800 practitioners were trained. 550 were trained by local authorities, with 250 trained by Barnardo's, working in a range of sectors.

**2.7** A variety of feedback methods and tools were used to gather information from the Early Adopters, including focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. The findings have a strong practical bias, driven by the real working needs of ContactPoint teams and practitioners. They have been shared throughout to ensure that ContactPoint management teams across England received the information they needed, when they needed it.

**2.8** The learning has been grouped into the following six themes: practitioner feedback; preparing for operation; working with partners; data quality and connection of systems; training delivery; and, helpdesks and support for users. The aim is to present the information in a form of most use to other local authorities, National Partners and local partners as they implement ContactPoint.

## Moving forward

**2.9** The Early Adopter phase has provided important learning that is assisting other local authorities and national and local partners as they implement ContactPoint further. Positive feedback about the usefulness of the system underpinned the decision to extend its use across England. Practitioners said in the light of experience that they wanted and expected to use this tool in their work with children. The training worked and prepared staff effectively for their role; the approach to delivery was broadly well received and benefited from local 'tailoring'.

3. Accreditation is one of the means to provide assurance that ContactPoint is under management control and is being used appropriately. See section c – Working with Partners for further detail.

- 2.10** Ahead of wider roll out, this phase of delivery enabled improvements to be made, for example to improve the content and structure of the tools and guidance available. Local authorities will benefit from the kind of incremental managed user roll out that the Early Adopters undertook and we strongly recommend that approach.
- 2.11** DCSF is working with all local authorities and National Partners to continue to look in detail at key areas of activity and to provide support and guidance to help local teams to do their job effectively, recognising the increased importance of local accountability and ownership of ContactPoint. DCSF will continue to facilitate the sharing of good practice, case studies and examples of practitioner feedback.
- 2.12** Feedback from the Early Adopters showed that practitioners were keen to start using ContactPoint and were already seeing benefits of its use. Growing practitioner use offers the opportunity to fully realise the benefits of ContactPoint over time.

***“I’m spending far less time finding other practitioners working with the same child. ContactPoint is helping to make everything smoother, quicker and more efficient. The assessment can be made and phone calls made within a short period of time.”***

*Anita, Staff Nurse, A&E Department*

## 3. Introduction

*“The new ContactPoint system will have particular advantages in reducing the possibility of children for whom there are concerns going unnoticed.”*

*Lord Laming<sup>4</sup>*

### Key facts about ContactPoint

- 3.1** *The Children Act 2004 and The Children Act 2004 Information Databases (England) Regulations 2007* provide the legal basis for ContactPoint. The Regulations place duties on all local authorities in England in relation to the operation of ContactPoint and specify what information can be held; who must or can provide data; how long information can be retained; who can be granted access; and how accuracy will be maintained.
- 3.2** Seven ContactPoint National Partners are named in the Regulations: Action for Children, Barnardo’s, CAFCASS, CEOP, Kids, NSPCC and The Children’s Society. National Partners are able to: undertake all system and organisation accreditation activities for their organisation; feed data to ContactPoint from their own systems; and manage all matters related to determining eligibility and

granting access to ContactPoint for all those in their employment, accounting directly to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). All other organisations need to have ContactPoint users authorised by a local authority.

**3.3** ContactPoint holds the following information:

- Name, address, gender, date of birth and an identifying number for all children in England (up to their 18th birthday).
- Name and contact details for:
  - i. parents or carers
  - ii. educational setting (e.g. school)
  - iii. primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice)
  - iv. other services<sup>5</sup>, for example health visitor, social worker or lead professional, and an indicator for whether a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) exists.

4. Extract from Lord Laming, *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report* Crown Copyright 2009

5. During the Early Adopter phase, ContactPoint held basic data from four national sources: the General Register Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Children, Schools and Families schools census and the NHS Personal Demographics Service, which has provided GP practice information. Over time, local authorities and National Partners will provide basic data from other sources, to best ensure that ContactPoint can provide all relevant contact information for each child in England.

- 3.4** Explicit consent is required to record contact details for sensitive services (defined as sexual health, mental health and substance abuse). There is a facility for the records of some young adults to stay on ContactPoint until they are 25, but only for very limited reasons and only with explicit consent. ContactPoint does not and will not contain any case information (such as case notes, assessments, medical data or exam results).
- 3.5** Security is of course an important priority and ContactPoint has a significant set of security measures and controls in place. These are continually assessed by DCSF and its expert advisors. ContactPoint has undergone many levels of testing and design review. It meets Government and international standards for information assurance.
- 3.6** Local authorities and ContactPoint National Partners receive grant funding from the DCSF to support implementation in their areas. Statutory guidance has been provided to local authorities and National Partners, along with a set of 'Best Practice Processes' and a range of other advice and supporting materials. Regional implementation coordinators provide one-to-one support to each local authority and National Partner.
- 3.7** Awareness raising activity with organisations and the public has taken place across England for some time and will continue. DCSF, local authorities and partner organisations have made information about ContactPoint available to practitioners, to young people and to parents and carers. A range of methods is used, including direct mailing to households, leaflet distribution, publications on websites and through the media.

## The delivery approach

- 3.6** ContactPoint was developed, and is being implemented, in a steady and incremental way. Since 2004, the DCSF has been developing ContactPoint, and has worked closely with local authorities and National Partners across England to ensure they are ready to implement the system. The DCSF has also drawn extensively on the experience of a number of trailblazers who successfully piloted a range of local directories holding basic information on children in their local area. There has been significant consultation and engagement with a wide range of organisations and practitioners across the children's workforce, with parents and carers and with children and young people.

***“ContactPoint has helped our Personal Advisers to make the right links before starting to work with pupils, thus ensuring we set appropriate priorities and put the right level of support in place. It will definitely improve joint working practice and therefore ensure better outcomes for our clients.”***

*Pam, Operations Manager, Connexions*

- 3.9** From late January 2009, Early Adopter organisations were able to train their management teams in order to prepare for practitioner use of ContactPoint, which began from May. The ContactPoint Early Adopters are 20 organisations: 18 local authorities<sup>6</sup> in the North West, and two National Partners: Barnardo's and Kids. They were selected in 2006, following an options

6. The 18 Early Adopter local authorities are: Blackburn, Blackpool, Bolton, Bury, Cheshire East, Cheshire West with Chester, Cumbria, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Sefton, St Helens, Stockport, Warrington, Wigan.

evaluation. The critical factors in deciding on Early Adopters were:

- Having at least one National Partner.
- A group of local authorities that were representative of all types of authorities across England – for example, rural, urban, large, small, and variations in levels of deprivation.
- Local authorities that shared borders with each other.

**3.10** Ahead of practitioner use in Early Adopters, ContactPoint was made available from late January in all local authorities to two trained, qualified people. This was to enable authorities, as an additional precaution in a limited number of cases, to shield records for a small proportion of children on ContactPoint, and to ensure they established processes to deal with new shielding requests<sup>7</sup>.

**3.11** As the Early Adopters began testing practitioner use, ContactPoint management teams in the remaining 134 local authorities in England, and the five remaining ContactPoint National Partners, were trained between June and August 2009. From the end of October 2009 they were able to begin practitioner training. From that date, a growing number of practitioners will have access to ContactPoint, according to local implementation plans.

**3.12** ContactPoint is already delivering benefits to the Early Adopters. These benefits will increase over time, as the number of practitioner users of ContactPoint increases, and the quality of child records improves with the introduction of data from local and partner systems.

*“Just a quick note to tell you how useful ContactPoint has been. We have located eight students who had been designated as missing education for over a year. They have been located outside the borough but within our national borders. We’ve been able to get in touch with the relevant local authorities to alert them, so they can make contact with the families involved and establish what support is required for those young people.”*

*Phil, Deputy Principal, School Attendance Service*

7. Shielding prevents an individual’s location being visible on the system and is for those whose circumstances may mean that they are at increased risk of significant harm, such as victims of domestic violence. A shielded record shows only the child’s name, date of birth, gender and unique ID number. Shielding requests for ContactPoint must be assessed on a case-by-case basis, based on statutory guidance.

## 4. The Early Adopter Phase

### Objectives

- 4.1** The purpose of the Early Adopter phase was to focus in particular on how ContactPoint, and the policies and processes which underpin it, work in practice – before rolling it out across the rest of England. The key learning phase took place from the end of January to October 2009.
- 4.2** The objectives of the Early Adopter phase were to:
- identify and collect key findings, drawing on the practical knowledge and experience gained by Early Adopters on implementation and use of ContactPoint
  - refine and improve processes and supporting tools (such as guidance and training) based on practical experience
  - identify any issues early in order to share learning so that wider implementation of ContactPoint is as efficient and effective as possible.

### Methods and tools

*“As a networking opportunity the workshops have been great. They have also been an opportunity to contribute to policy and a chance to influence!”*

*Chris, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

- 4.3** A variety of methods were used to gather information from the Early Adopters, including focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. Two regional implementation coordinators provided dedicated support to the Early Adopter local authorities, and one implementation coordinator provided dedicated support the National Partners.
- 4.4** The findings have a strong practical bias, driven by the real working needs of ContactPoint teams and practitioners. They have been shared throughout to ensure that ContactPoint management teams across England received the information they needed when they needed it, in order to incorporate these lessons and advice into their local planning and ongoing activity. Information was shared in a number of ways including through: fortnightly bulletins; production of ‘Hints and Tips’ and ‘Case Studies’; feedback from implementation coordinators in one-to-one discussions and in regular user group meetings; and through updates to existing guidance and new or interim guidance.

***“We have found the case studies very useful and they have helped improve local partnership working.”***

*Alison, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

**4.5** Findings were also shared with DCSF, who worked closely with the Early Adopters throughout the period, in order to begin to address any identified issues at the earliest opportunity and provide appropriate advice and guidance.

**4.6** Feedback from Early Adopters is that the Department’s approach to project management, implementation support and funding arrangements for ContactPoint has been well received.

***“The peer support has been invaluable and we need this to continue for some time to come.”***

*Bernadette, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

# 5. Headline Achievements and Key Findings

**5.1** Early Adopter ContactPoint management teams were required to undertake a number of activities which included data and user administration, accreditation and training of practitioners.

**5.2** The Early Adopter phase has provided important learning that is assisting other local authorities and national and local partners as they implement ContactPoint. Early Adopter suggestions have also been incorporated into existing guidance, and new or interim guidance issued where necessary. DCSF will continue to work further with partners to refine and improve supporting documentation.

*“Every single practitioner I’ve met has said ‘ContactPoint is something we need’.”*

*Anne, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

**5.3** The learning has been grouped into six themes:

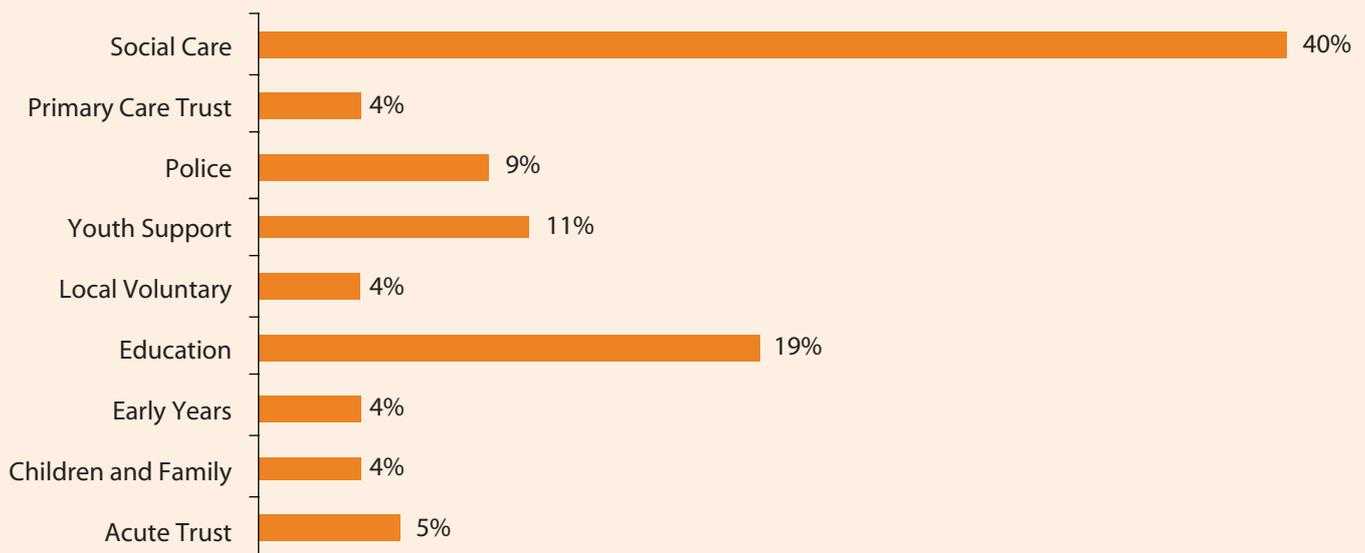
- a. Practitioner feedback
- b. Preparing for operation
- c. Working with partners
- d. Data quality and connection of systems
- e. Training delivery
- f. Helpdesks and support for users

## a. Practitioner feedback

5.4 The Early Adopter experience strengthened confidence that national roll out could proceed. Practitioners said that in the light of experience, they wanted and expected to use this tool in their work with children. Feedback was positive and very encouraging, suggesting that even at a very early stage of delivery ContactPoint was making a difference.

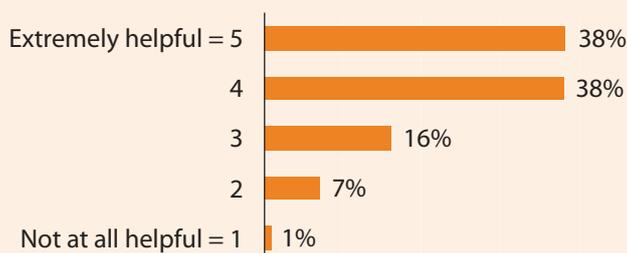
5.5 800 practitioners were trained between May and October 2009. 550 (69 per cent) of these were trained by local authorities, the remaining 250 (31 per cent) by Barnardo’s. The graph below provides a sector breakdown of the 550 users trained by local authorities.

### Early Adopter practitioners trained by local authorities – sector breakdown



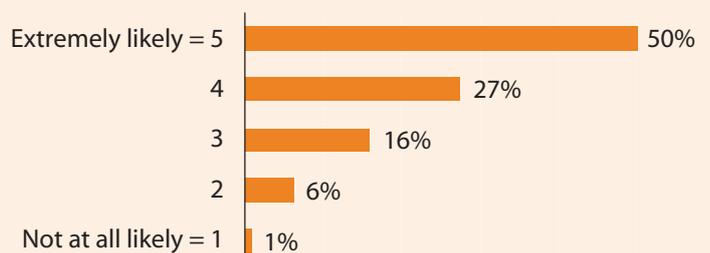
5.6 The graphs below are results from questionnaires with practitioners who have received ContactPoint training and are now authorised to use ContactPoint in their work. They were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1–5.

#### How helpful you expect ContactPoint will be in your future work



Responses received = 112

#### How likely you are to make use of ContactPoint in your future work



Responses received = 113

**5.7** The vast majority of those surveyed believed that ContactPoint would be helpful in their future work.

### Using ContactPoint in their daily work

**5.8** At the time that Early Adopter practitioners were using ContactPoint it held information from existing national data sets. This meant that each child record held the name, address, date of birth, educational setting (if registered at a maintained school) and their GP practice. The practitioners using it reported that they already found it useful, even with only this basic data available.

### Saving practitioners' time and supporting more joined up service delivery

**5.9** Practitioners working with a child need to know about each other and talk to each other, so that they can arrange the most appropriate support quickly, before problems get more serious. Practitioners can waste days trying to find out who else is working with the same child or unknowingly duplicate work that is already being carried out by another service. Early Adopter practitioners across a range of sectors found that ContactPoint helped to address this.

*“ContactPoint is a very easy tool to use. It allowed me to rapidly access relevant information about a child in whom there was suspected non-accidental injury. This information was invaluable in guiding further management and the whole process took less than five minutes whereas previously a lot of time would have been spent making phone calls and trying to track people down for information.”*

*Ravi, Consultant Paediatrician,  
NHS Foundation Trust Hospital*

*“A child came into A&E recently. He lied about his address and phone number as he had run away from home. I went onto ContactPoint and was able to find his correct contact details, enabling us to quickly contact his social worker and let them know he was safe.”*

*Anita, Staff Nurse, A&E Department*

### Helping to identify children missing education

**5.10** Local authorities have a duty to identify where children are not receiving education. Without ContactPoint, two-thirds of practitioners surveyed<sup>8</sup> said it was not easy to find information about whether a child was registered with a universal service, such as a school or GP. Therefore they need better information to ensure these children get the support they need and are entitled to. One of the aims of ContactPoint is to support local authorities in meeting this duty and early feedback demonstrated that it was already providing this benefit.

*“I've used ContactPoint for a range of different queries and in each case I have been able to quickly get in touch with the right people. More importantly, the children received the support they required. For example, one young person referred to me was missing education. He had left his school, and the family had moved out of the borough, and left no forwarding address. I learned from ContactPoint that the family was living under an alias name and the child was not attending any school. I would never have obtained this information without ContactPoint.”*

*Carol, Education Welfare Officer*

8. Improving Information Sharing and Management Practitioner Benefits Survey (DCSF: 2009)

*“A member of the public contacted us to say that a child had moved into her street several months ago, was clearly of school age and clearly didn’t attend school. She knew the surname of the child.*

*“The referral was passed straight to a manager in our inclusion service, who is a trained ContactPoint user. She searched ContactPoint and found the child, along with the name of the school where the child previously attended, which was outside of our local authority area. A telephone call was made to the school, confirmation of the date the child left was ascertained, along with other relevant information.*

*“An Education Welfare Officer was able to pick this up and visit the family, supported with background information that she could not possibly have found without ContactPoint.”*

*Jean, Inclusion Service Manager*

### **Ensuring children and young people do not slip through the net of support services**

**5.11** Another aim of ContactPoint is to help ensure that there is continuity of support for children and young people who access services in different local authority areas or move between areas. The examples above demonstrate how the data helped to improve working across local authority boundaries and ensure children did not slip through the net. A further example is set out below.

*“I had a case where a mum had been going to different agencies and authorities using different names for her child. Another area had three separate chronologies and identities for one child and we had two. This meant sufficient concerns had not been raised about what was going on in this child’s life. When I searched ContactPoint, it had grouped most of the aliases together. This helped me come to the conclusion that it is just one child, and working with my team we are now able to act appropriately to support this child.”*

*Christopher, Contact Centre Supervisor,  
Information and Referral Team*

### **Next steps**

**5.12** Over time, with the addition of national and local partner data, ContactPoint will be even more useful, particularly where children have additional needs and use services from several agencies. Against that background, the early feedback is particularly encouraging. DCSF and delivery partners will continue to gather and share feedback from practitioners about their experience of using the system.

**5.13** Additionally, practitioner benefits surveys will be conducted by the DCSF on an annual basis. The first survey was conducted over the spring and summer of 2009 and provides a baseline from which to measure benefits over time. The annual surveys will measure the key quantifiable benefits being delivered by ContactPoint.

## b. Preparing for operation

**5.14** Local authorities and National Partners have a number of responsibilities and duties as part of the ongoing operation of ContactPoint. ContactPoint management teams in local authorities are made up of the following four primary roles – ContactPoint Manager, User Manager, Data Administrator and ContactPoint Trainer. This core team is responsible for a range of activities, which includes managing the data on the system, dealing with shielding requests, setting up and administering users on the system, and engaging with and accrediting partner organisations. Similar management teams exist for the seven ContactPoint National Partners<sup>9</sup>.

**5.15** All Early Adopter management teams have been established and operating since March 2009.

### Key findings

**5.16** Early Adopters recommended a flexible approach to team structures in order to accommodate the difference in size and structure across organisations. Some adopted a centralised core ContactPoint team, whilst others took a broader approach and incorporated it into other existing teams. Each of the models adopted were found to be effective. These various team models have been outlined in case studies, which other delivery partners have found useful.

**5.17** Early Adopters found that the time spent in user management and user administration was proportionate to the number of users

on the system and therefore felt that planning resource levels was a relatively straightforward matter.

**5.18** Data administration was found to be resource intensive but Early Adopters reported that this was not unexpected. It was recognised that data quality was crucial, both in ContactPoint and other systems which provide data to it. This is best addressed as part of a wider data improvement agenda within local authorities. (*Data quality is covered more fully in Section d. Data Quality and Connection of Systems*).

**5.19** Early Adopters found that the Best Practice Processes (BPP) documents provided by DCSF were a good reference tool. However, the documents were quite large and Early Adopters made suggestions for ways to make the documents easier to navigate. This feedback has been fully taken on board by the DCSF in its planned refresh of the BPP documentation. This covers content changes that have occurred in the policy, technical, security and service management areas since the BPPs were first published. It also covers usability changes to improve the structure, format, navigation and clarity of the documents.

**5.20** Additional guidance was provided on shielding, for example in relation to reviewing shielded records, to ensure that processes are practical and manageable for steady state operations. The input of local authorities and partner organisations was crucial in developing this guidance. Early Adopters also produced hints and tips and case studies.

9. National Partners are not data controllers for purposes of ContactPoint and therefore do not have ContactPoint Data Administrators.

**5.21** Additional guidance and support has been provided by the DCSF on data administration, planning guidance (to help teams prioritise their activities), and accreditation and user and system management planning (*covered in more detail in Section c. Working With Partners*).

### Next steps

**5.22** The DCSF will continue to work closely with local authorities and National Partners to better understand steady-state resource requirements. This will include a focus on data administration activities which are key to the ongoing successful operation of ContactPoint.

**5.23** The enhanced BPPs are being tested with a working group that includes representatives from local authorities. The revised documentation is scheduled for release in January 2010, along with an updated version of the ContactPoint statutory guidance.

**5.24** DCSF will also continue to work with local authorities, national and local partners to simplify, consolidate and update the supplementary guidance that has been provided throughout the Early Adopter phase.

## c. Working with partners

**5.25** Understanding and commitment from those partner organisations that provide services to children and young people is a crucial part of implementation of ContactPoint. Engagement with these organisations has therefore been an important activity that has been underway, both nationally and locally, for some years.

**5.26** Before organisations can grant users access or feed data to ContactPoint, they need to meet the ContactPoint accreditation criteria. Accreditation is one of the means to provide assurance that ContactPoint is under management control and is being used appropriately, including compliance with security and data quality requirements.

**5.27** The purpose of organisation accreditation is to ensure that all users and partner organisations have a set of policies and processes, meeting national standards, which govern how they make use of ContactPoint in their day-to-day work. This has therefore been a key activity for all local authorities working with partner organisations.

**5.28** Good progress has been made. Within Early Adopter areas, up to the end of October 2009:

- All Early Adopters successfully granted organisation accreditation to either their children’s services or partner agency.
- Seventeen local authorities achieved organisation accreditation of their children’s services (three of these accredited the entire local authority)<sup>10</sup>.
- Seventeen partner organisations achieved organisation accreditation across a range of sectors<sup>11</sup>.
- Local authority audit teams were engaged and supporting the local ContactPoint Management Teams.

**Key findings**

**5.29** Early Adopters found that the accreditation process works but supporting organisations through the process is time intensive. Their experience indicates that early engagement with organisations is essential to ensure that they understand and are committed to ContactPoint prior to beginning the accreditation process. Where these organisations have good HR support, the accreditation process is likely to take an average of eight weeks from start to finish for each partner organisation, although over time, and with more experience of the process, accreditation should be achieved more quickly.

**5.30** Early Adopters also report wider benefits as partners look at their own policies and processes as part of this work.

*“Gaining organisation accreditation is helping us get all of our paperwork and practices in order. That will be a big help for inspections.”*

*Angela, Headteacher,  
Independent School*

*“The support we have had with the accreditation has been excellent and we have been able to hit the mark for this and are clear on why the rigour needs to be in place.”*

*Vicki, Operations Manager,  
Voluntary Organisation*

**5.31** Early Adopters confirmed that there was often no substitute for face-to-face engagement with partner organisations. The time invested helped to reap longer term benefits. For ContactPoint to be successful, partners need to understand that the task is not just to implement an IT system; but to provide a tool designed to support more effective practice and better outcomes for children.

**5.32** Early Adopters found it beneficial to tailor accreditation guidance to suit local needs and adopted models which they have improved over time and with feedback from local partners. DCSF has worked with Early Adopters to develop additional guidance relating to school and GP accreditation, and workstation and infrastructure security.

**5.33** Another key activity with partners was to plan the schedule for training users, and ensure that management and accountability structures were in place between organisations and local authorities. This has been termed User and System Management

10. This includes: social care, education, youth support, youth offending and early years.

11. This includes: 3 acute health trusts, 1 mental health trust, 3 primary care trusts, 3 connexions services, 3 maintained schools, 2 local voluntary organisations, 1 police authority, and 1 housing organisation.

(USM) planning. The Early Adopter feedback has been influential in the development of good practice guidance.

- 5.34** Case studies and hints and tips were produced on accreditation, USM planning and the engagement process more generally.

### Next steps

- 5.35** Local accountability and ownership of ContactPoint becomes more important as ContactPoint is rolled out more widely. DCSF is working with a group of local authorities and National Partners, including audit colleagues, to produce an Accountability Framework, which summarises who is responsible for what in relation to ContactPoint operations. The Framework does not introduce any new responsibilities but draws on the existing ContactPoint guidance documents to present a simplified picture of accountabilities, with signposts to the appropriate guidance for more detail.
- 5.36** DCSF will continue to work with local authorities and partners to consolidate and streamline guidance on accreditation and USM planning, tailoring this where necessary for specific sectors.
- 5.37** Partner engagement and sharing of good practice at a national and local level will continue.
- ## d. Data quality and connection of systems
- 5.38** The information needed for ContactPoint is provided by existing systems, national and local. Four national data sources have created a basic record for each child in England. These national sources are: the General Register Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Children, Schools and Families schools census, and the NHS, which has provided GP practice information.
- 5.39** ContactPoint only holds the basic information specified in Regulations, which specifically prohibit the inclusion of any case information. For example, the schools census only provides to ContactPoint the name and contact details for the child and their parents, and the contact details for the school. Any other data collected in the schools census is not provided to ContactPoint. The information held on ContactPoint is not sent to or shared with any other systems.
- 5.40** Contact details for additional services working with a child will be provided over time by local authorities from their relevant local systems and those of their partners. Data will also be provided from National Partner systems. Data from these local and partner systems are important to ensure that ContactPoint holds the most useful and appropriate practitioner involvements (such as health visitor, social worker, youth worker). The Regulations specify who is required and who is permitted to supply information to ContactPoint.

### Data assurance activities

- 5.41** Issues relating to data were raised during the early months of implementation, particularly during the period when the first data updates were made to the ContactPoint. DCSF suspended updating of national data in ContactPoint, and loading of local data, pending thorough investigation.
- 5.42** The key issues were that in some cases a child's pre- and post-adoption identities were linked in ContactPoint, and a small number of duplicate records were created where data coming into ContactPoint did not match as desired. Intensive work took place over the summer to ensure these issues were addressed.
- 5.43** Action taken included: refining the way ContactPoint matches data; addressing issues that arose from data sources; improving the way child records are assigned to a ContactPoint accountable body (local authority) to help reduce the number of randomly allocated records; and improving the performance of the tools that local authority data administrators use to manage the data.
- 5.44** Re-loading of updated national data started at the end of October 2009, with loading of local and National Partner data beginning shortly after.
- 5.46** There is a two-stage process to ContactPoint system accreditation. The first stage is **type accreditation**, to verify that a software product will work correctly with ContactPoint. The second stage is **instance accreditation**, where an organisation demonstrates that their local data can be sent effectively, correctly and securely to ContactPoint.
- 5.47** Good progress has been made: by the end of October 2009, 25 systems had been successfully type accredited, and four local authorities had completed instance accreditation and were ready to feed data to ContactPoint.
- 5.48** The model and approach for type accreditation has been well received by both local authorities and the system vendors. The approach to identifying learning and transferring this into guidance has also worked well.
- 5.49** All local authorities and National Partners were provided with a Local Data Quality Tool (LDQT) to help them assess the quality of data in systems that were expected to provide data to ContactPoint in the future. Local authorities and National Partners reported that the LDQT has been a useful tool. ContactPoint, and the tools associated with it, have had wider benefits by helping to focus attention on data quality more generally.

### Connecting additional data sources

- 5.45** Good data quality and secure supply of data are vital. Any system which supplies data to ContactPoint must therefore be accredited to ensure it meets a set of required ContactPoint conditions.

*"The accreditation process helped us get our internal processes and paperwork in order. LDQT was a useful tool and we and our delivery partners are now in a much better position as a result."*

*Chris, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

### Usability of the system

**5.50** During development and early use of ContactPoint, users made suggestions for improvements from their hands-on experience. These enhancements were prioritised and delivered in October 2009, in parallel with the data assurance work outlined above.

### Next steps

**5.51** The updated national data is being loaded into ContactPoint at a controlled pace starting with a small number of records and gradually increasing the rate. This will help ensure that DCSF is able to monitor the process closely and respond to any issues identified.

**5.52** Local and National Partner data will also be added in a controlled fashion. This allows DCSF to collect important information and benchmarks, such as typical match rates and workload implications. These will help local authorities and National Partners plan how they bring on data from their systems.

**5.53** ContactPoint Data Administrators have a vital role to play in this process. They were provided with interim guidance throughout the Early Adopter phase while the data assurance work took place. The guidance has recently been updated to outline what local authorities and National Partners need to do now, and in the future as steady state data update feeds are established.

**5.54** Suggestions from users of the system will continue to be captured and DCSF will work with user groups to prioritise future enhancements for ContactPoint. This remains key in ensuring that system functionality continues to meet users' needs.

## e. Training delivery

**5.55** ContactPoint training has a two-level approach:

- **Level 1 training** is for those within the local authority, National Partner and local partners who are required to run and manage ContactPoint (ContactPoint Manager, User Manager, Data Administrator and ContactPoint Trainer); and
- **Level 2 training** is for end users of ContactPoint, such as practitioners and the secondary roles required to run and manage ContactPoint (for example helpdesk support).

**5.56** DCSF provided the initial set of training to ensure that every local authority and National Partner had individuals trained in the four primary Level 1 roles. This training also includes the core modules which all Level 2 users must complete.

**5.57** Local authorities and National Partners are responsible for the management and delivery of ongoing Level 1 training and are responsible for delivering all Level 2 training. Responsibilities include ensuring all training is carried out in accordance with statutory guidance, using the agreed materials, and ensuring that security procedures and processes are followed (such as confirming a user's ID and that they have a current eCRB disclosure).

### Key findings

- 5.58** The training delivered to Early Adopters has been monitored and evaluated in order to consider improvements and enhancements before wider roll out. Feedback from training was gathered through post-course evaluation forms and questionnaires.
- 5.59** Training has been delivered successfully and the feedback has been positive, with high levels of satisfaction. The design and content of training was well received. The training format has been tested in a real training environment, both for management teams and practitioners, and has been proven to work well. Early Adopters' suggestions have been incorporated with enhancements made to the course, the training system and materials.
- 5.60** In response to questions and feedback, the DCSF has provided a consolidated training requirements document, which lays out local authority and National Partner responsibilities and signposts supporting materials.
- 5.61** Some Early Adopters have adapted the national model to suit local needs, for example creating a 'workbook' format for practitioners. These tailored models have been shared with other local authorities as examples of good practice and other Early Adopters have found these case studies particularly helpful in informing their own training delivery model.

### Level 1 Training – management teams and trainers

- 5.62** DCSF carried out Level 1 training for all Early Adopter local authority and National Partner management teams (including trainers) between February and March 2009. Early

Adopters rated an average of 3.5 (out of 4) for satisfaction with the training they received and level at which the courses were pitched.

- 5.63** The training was well received and has proven effective in preparing staff for their roles. Early Adopters scored their confidence levels as high (4.1 out of a maximum of 5). They indicated satisfaction (3.4 out of 5) with the training manual and materials and were happy with the content.
- 5.64** Training for all non-Early Adopter local authority and National Partner ContactPoint management teams took place between June and August 2009. Teams are now in place, with more than 850 'Level 1' users. More than 90 per cent of the participants indicated that they found the courses to be pitched correctly. Training for non-Early Adopter ContactPoint trainers started in October 2009 and is on schedule for completion in mid-November 2009.

### Level 2 Training – practitioners

- 5.65** Eight hundred practitioners were trained as part of the Early Adopter phase (550 local authority and 250 National Partner). The design and content of the Level 2 training was well received.
- 5.66** Practitioners reported a significant increase in confidence directly attributed to the training, with no significant fall-off in confidence levels since training. This provided a strong endorsement of the training materials and a positive sign of their long-term value.

**Next steps**

- 5.67 Supplementary guidance has been provided throughout the Early Adopter phase where necessary, for example guidance relating to running reports and data administration, and the planning and delivery of ContactPoint training now and in steady state.
- 5.68 DCSF will continue to maintain the training materials and update when necessary in the light of policy, technical or system changes.
- 5.69 Beyond the Early Adopter areas, other local authorities and National Partners were able to start practitioner training from the end of October 2009. The speed at which practitioner use builds up over time will be agreed jointly with local authorities and National Partners in the light of local needs.
- 5.70 Early Adopters undertook and have strongly recommended an incremental managed user roll out. Other local authorities are developing their roll out plans, bringing on priority users first. This has been informed by the Early Adopter experience.

**f. Helpdesks and support for users**

- 5.71 The ContactPoint Central Service Management (CSM) team is based at DCSF and their role includes running a helpdesk for local authority and National Partner ContactPoint management teams to deal with technical and other operational queries. Queries from the public are managed through existing DCSF channels.
- 5.72 Local authorities and National Partners are required to ensure helpdesk support is in place for their users and to deal with enquiries from the public.

**Key findings**

- 5.73 Queries to the CSM helpdesk have been logged and analysed to identify significant trends in the type of query raised. Additional guidance and support was provided where trends in the queries have indicated the need for this, and also to address operational issues as and when they arose.
- 5.74 The amount of support provided to each Early Adopter team was variable and dependent upon numerous factors, including size of local authority or National Partner and the types of issues encountered. The CSM team visited Early Adopter organisations throughout the summer to improve understanding of how different teams operated and how the level of support could be improved.
- 5.75 Input from Early Adopters has been integral to shaping the processes employed by the CSM team, and to the guidance and support provided by the team. As a direct result of Early Adopter interaction and feedback, the

CSM team developed a regular newsletter and range of guidance documents to reflect the need of Early Adopters and other local authority and National Partners. These have been well received.

*“Many thanks for keeping us updated. I think the newsletter is a very good idea and it’s already been very useful.”*

*Javier, non-Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

**5.76** The DCSF public helpdesk is briefed to deal with a variety of queries about ContactPoint. Where more specialist detail is required, the query is redirected to the relevant area of the ContactPoint national team. This approach has been successful in ensuring that enquiries are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

**5.77** Early Adopters set up a variety of helpdesk models to provide assistance to their users and to deal with enquiries from the public. They have strongly recommended using existing helpdesk resources as far as possible, with no need for a separate ContactPoint helpdesk. Some took a ‘clearing house’ approach, where one main helpdesk fielded all calls from ContactPoint users and the general public. They were briefed to deal with enquiries at a general level with more detailed enquiries redirected to the appropriate teams. Each of the models that Early Adopters developed has been successful, and they have been shared with other local authorities and National Partners via hints and tips and case studies.

**5.78** Early Adopter findings to date were that call volumes were quite light. In terms of practitioner queries, they found that users did not need much helpdesk support. Where this was needed, the majority of requests were very straightforward. A small number of more complex requests can however take a long time to resolve.

#### **Next steps**

**5.79** Close working with Early Adopters has been integral in helping the CSM team to identify what support and guidance is needed to assist non-Early Adopter local authorities in the set up of their local support desks and more generally on the implementation of ContactPoint. The team has a crucial role to play in this next phase of delivery and will continue to provide support and updated guidance as and when necessary.

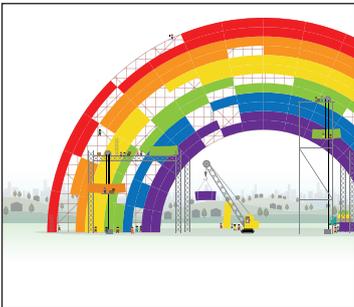
**5.80** Call volumes are, of course, hard to predict and are likely to increase as more users come on board. Local authorities will need to monitor activity to help identify requirements needed for steady state operations.

## 6. Moving Forward

*“A lot of children move into the area from other local authorities, and there is no way of knowing whether the family has had previous involvement with social workers. As ContactPoint is enriched with local information, it will become a much more powerful tool because you will be able to see who else is working with that child.”*

*Lorraine, Early Adopter ContactPoint Manager*

- 6.1 The Early Adopter phase has provided important learning that is assisting other local authorities, national and local partners as they implement ContactPoint.
- 6.2 Access to ContactPoint is strictly limited to those who need it as part of their work, and who have had security checks and have been trained. Our latest analysis suggests that the number of users will, in time, be around 390,000. However, the pace of building up practitioner use will rightly be determined in the light of local need and working patterns. Early Adopters undertook and have strongly recommended an incremental managed user roll out. Decisions about capacity and resources will need to be determined by local authorities and National Partners, in the light of regulations and guidance.
- 6.3 Moving forward with implementing ContactPoint nationally enables DCSF to work with delivery partners across England in improving delivery. Areas are likely to include: local data loading, ongoing engagement with key sectors to facilitate their participation (for example, health, education, youth justice and early years), and continuing to revise and update guidance and tools, looking to simplify and consolidate wherever possible.
- 6.4 The DCSF will continue to provide support and guidance to help local authority and National Partner teams to do their job effectively, recognising the greater importance from now on of local accountability and ownership of ContactPoint. The DCSF will continue to facilitate the sharing of good practice, case studies and examples of practitioner feedback. This learning will come from local authorities and National Partners across England, who now all have management teams in place, and will build on the important foundations laid by the Early Adopters.
- 6.5 Feedback from the Early Adopters showed that practitioners were keen to start using ContactPoint and were already seeing benefits of its use. Growing practitioner use offers the opportunity to reap the full benefits of ContactPoint over time.



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