

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – 11TH SEPTEMBER 2009

ContactPoint – Update on Progress

Introduction

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

The aims of ContactPoint are to:

- Help practitioners quickly identify a child with whom they have contact, and whether that child is getting the universal services (education, primary healthcare) to which he or she is entitled;
- Enable earlier identification of needs and earlier and more effective action to address these needs by providing a tool for practitioners to identify who else is involved with a particular child; and
- Be an important tool to encourage and support better communication and closer working between different professionals and practitioners.

ContactPoint and Information Sharing

Many of the national reports that have looked into failures to protect children have highlighted the lack of information sharing as a key concern. ContactPoint will be a tool to facilitate coordination and discussion between children's services, where this is appropriate.

ContactPoint isn't just about child protection, it is principally about supporting early intervention for the 50% of children who at some point in their lives need additional services to ensure they achieve good outcomes.

ContactPoint does not change any rules governing confidentiality or sharing information when practitioners discuss a child's needs. Everyone who works with children and young people must still ensure that they follow established guidelines on information sharing and exercise professional judgement.

ContactPoint will contain only the following basic information:

- name, address, gender and date of birth of child and an identifying number for all children in England up to their 18th birthday;
- name and contact details for:
 - parents or carers;
 - educational setting (e.g. school);
 - primary medical practitioner (e.g. GP practice); and
 - practitioners providing other relevant services.

- There will be a facility to indicate if a practitioner is a lead professional for a child and/or if they have completed an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (the assessment itself will not be accessible from ContactPoint).
- The Children Act 2004 specifically prohibits the inclusion of any case information. ContactPoint will not record information such as case notes, assessments, medical records or school attainment. There will be no subjective opinions or observations about a child or parent, and no automatic triggers for action or investigation.
- Explicit consent will be required from the child (or where they have insufficient understanding, their parent/carer) to record contact details for sensitive services (defined as sexual/mental health and substance abuse). Where practitioner contact details are recorded, only an indication of an unspecified service would be visible to the majority of users.
- With consent, 18-19 years olds who are receiving Connexions services and 18-25 year olds who are care leavers or have learning difficulties may also remain on ContactPoint, to facilitate the transition to adult services.
- When a child turns 18 (or up to 25 where appropriate) their record will be removed from ContactPoint. It will be held in a secure archive for 6 years and then destroyed. Access to the archive will be strictly limited.
- Records of children whose circumstances may mean that they are at increased risk of harm may have some of their details hidden (or shielded). 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 not unique to ContactPoint; it is already in place in a number of systems and is entirely consistent with Data Protection legislation.

The Legal Framework

Section 12 of the Children Act 2004 provides the legislative basis for establishing ContactPoint. 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 cooperate to improve well-being, and the duty to safeguard and promote welfare of all children in England. The Regulations – officially known as *The Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) Regulations 2007*- came into force on 1 August 2007.

Access to ContactPoint

The Wirral ContactPoint team is now in place and has been accredited by the DCSF. The team are currently accessing ContactPoint and performing data cleansing tasks in preparation to rolling out the system to practitioners in early 2010.

Before practitioners can be trained, they must meet ECRB / Independent Safeguarding Authority requirements and their employing organisation must be 'organisationally accredited'. The Children and Young People's Department is on track to be the first 'internal' partner accredited, this is due to be completed by late September / early October. Work is well underway with health colleagues and one of the main health organisations should become the first 'external' partner to be accredited shortly after this.

The next stage will see the accreditation process extending to schools, GP Practices, the third sector, as well as cross border agencies.

It is anticipated that training could take up to two years to complete.

Data Supply to ContactPoint

ContactPoint currently holds data from the national data suppliers, General Records Office, NHS, DWP and DCSF for example. However local data from case management systems based in each local authority will also begin to supply data to the system during 2010. Wirral is currently commissioning a 'ContactPoint Adapter' that will be able to accept information from any system and transform it to match ContactPoint's requirements, before submitting it to the national system. This work is in the early stages and progress reports will be supplied as the work progresses.

In addition to the 'adapter' the main case management systems will also be directly connected to ContactPoint. This work is also progressing, although at this stage work is being undertaken by the system suppliers and DCSF.

Summary

Organisational accreditation is currently the main focus of activity for all partners, running concurrently with this activity is the identification of the practitioners that will require access and the priority order for training. Local data supply will become a critically important feature of work in late 2009 early 2010.

In summary ContactPoint is currently on track for practitioner access to begin in 2010.

RECOMMENATIONS:

That Wirral Children's Trust Board note the report.

Report Author: Mark Ellis

Contact: 666 6567