

Important notice - please read

Dear Parent,

5th May 2009

Child database

Legislation has been passed requiring Local Authorities to set up and run a nationwide database which will contain basic details about every child and young person under the age of 18 who is ordinarily resident in England. This database is to be known as ContactPoint. Alongside the child's demographic information, it will contain the name and contact details of professionals working with them, creating in effect each child's personal "telephone directory". **It will not contain any case information or free text.** The purpose of the database is said to be to enable practitioners working with children to find out quickly who is working with the same child. This is with a view to saving many wasted hours of practitioner time which can then be better spent in service delivery.

The Independent Schools Council is opposed to the introduction of ContactPoint. It has lobbied vigorously against it since the inception of the idea on the basis that

- it is an unjustified interference in the privacy of the majority of children and their carers
- it will put some children at risk through data theft or loss
- it will be a register of poor quality data which may create a misleading or unhelpful impression of the child
- it is unlikely to facilitate early intervention.

Nevertheless Micklefield will shortly be required, along with every other school in England, to provide pupil data to our Local Authority for the database.

Stage One – Building the database

The basic database (consisting only of **names, addresses, dates of birth and contact details for parents, G.P.s and state schools**) has already been drawn together from national databases under government control, for example, the national register of births, national health service, child benefit and maintained school rolls.

In due course, Micklefield will be required to give the Local Authority similar data about all our pupils who are ordinarily resident in England, including the contact details of each of their parents

(addresses and mobile phone numbers) and adding this school as their educational setting. We will be required to provide the data at times to be specified by the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families. It is not yet clear how often this will be but it is likely to be at least annually and could be termly or more often.

When the first date for disclosure is specified we will write to you again to alert you of the date and to send you a copy of the data we intend to disclose about your child for you to check. We will assume that pupils are ordinarily resident at their parents' address. Where we hold addresses for both parents in England, we will assume that the child is ordinarily resident in England. Where we have an address outside of England for at least one parent, we will ask you to indicate the residency status of your child and be guided by your response.

Stage Two - Shielding

Before the database goes "live", local authorities are now "shielding" the details of children and adults who could otherwise be put at risk. Data which is "shielded" will still be held on the system but will only be accessible in an emergency. "Shielding" is undertaken on a case by case basis by the local authority implementation team. **If you wish to apply for your details to be shielded, you should apply now to Mr. Jon Stevens – jon.stevens@surreycc.gov.uk – 0208 541 9755 – Local Implementation Officer for South East Surrey.**

Stage three – "Go live"

When the database goes "live" for practitioner use, in around October 2009, it is estimated by the Department for Children Schools and Families that it will be accessible by in the region of 390,000 professionals who work with children. (Others have estimated that it will be accessed by many more.) These could include, for example, social workers, hospital doctors, police, youth offending teams, family support workers and specified employees in schools. All those who access the database will require enhanced CRB checks at three-yearly intervals and will have to undergo training and accreditation for security purposes.

In this school it is planned that the database will be accessed only by three members of the senior management team who will all receive security training and accreditation.

Stage four – Noting professional involvement

After ContactPoint goes live, professionals who provide additional services to children and young people will be required to log their involvement by noting their contact details against the name of the child on the database. Generally this will not require the consent of the pupil or their parent(s). The exception to this will be where the involvement relates to a "sensitive service".

A sensitive service is a service relating to sexual health, mental health or substance abuse. In the case of these services, professionals will need the express, informed consent of the child or young person to log the service unless they consider that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child

is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. There is no provision for parents to be able to consent on behalf of pupils to the logging of sensitive services.

Schools will likewise be required to log the contact details of professionals who provide school-based “specialist or targeted services” to children. These are defined widely to mean “any service which is not normally provided to all persons of a particular age group”. There is no limit on what this might include. Attending an independent school falls within the definition. Additionally, as you know, Micklefield provides many additional services relating to sports, music, recreational activities. No guidance has been provided, and there is no provision in the law, for schools to be able to use their discretion as to which services it is appropriate to log. The services which the Department for Children Schools and Families have asked us to log are learning support where the involvement of these services is more than trivial.

It is vital in the case of each of the services that children and young people should be able to continue to access them without fearing that a record will be made on a national database. There is also the concern that as thresholds for accessing support are lower in Micklefield than in many others, to log individual involvements could create a false impression about pupils. After consulting with a representative group of experienced Heads and practitioners from a range of professions working in independent schools, the Independent Schools Council has recommended that for **every** pupil we log the following statement:

For information about additional school-based services, if any, please contact Mrs.Lyn Rose.

Next steps

We anticipate that parents will wish to know more about ContactPoint and some may wish to express concern. More information is available on the [Every Child Matters website](#) which is managed by the Department for Children , Schools and Families, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

You can also contact our local implementation officer on **0208 541 9755**

To comment on ContactPoint, you can also contact the press or your local M.P. through [Write to them.com](#) . You may wish to copy your comments to the Independent Schools Council to follow up on your behalf: legal@isc.co.uk

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Rose

Micklefield School