Practice Matters

Chronologies

# What is a Chronology?

A chronology is a concise, factual, visual list, in date order, of all the major changes and significant events in a person’s life. A chronology seeks to provide a clear account of all significant events in a child’s life to illustrate what life has been like for the child, to date, drawing upon the knowledge and information held by the family and agencies. A chronology is not an end in itself. It is a tool which practitioners and managers should use to assist the process of assessment and planning and can be used to great effect in supervision.

# Why do Chronologies?

Chronologies help us to analyse a child / family’s history in a way that makes it easily accessible so key information is not missed when decisions are being made. They help us to notice emerging patterns of concern or progress and make connections, which can help us explore trends and make predictions about the future. They help us to keep the child at the front & centre of our thinking and understand the impact of current issues in light of the whole of their lives. They are key to identifying neglect and emotional abuse which, by definition require us to evidence the persistent and ongoing nature of concerns.

# How to produce a good Chronology and use it effectively

* Every child should have a chronology which remains open on their file whilst the case is open. That chronology should be updated to reflect case progress. Mosaic allows for changes made in one child’s chronology to be updated on to those opened on other children in the family (unless that’s not appropriate).
* As a minimum Chronologies should be updated every 3 months (ideally every 6 weeks) with any new and relevant information. Whenever new information is added it should be considered whether the analysis has changed and how that impacts on the child’s lived experience. Use the analysis box to evidence when and how this has changed (and why) over the time a case is open.
* The development and maintenance of the chronology remains the responsibility of the lead practitioner involved. They should oversee and agree any information inputted from others.
* Chronologies should be balanced and include positive as well as negative changes / events.
* Chronologies should be kept concise and readable/helpful. If printed out a chronology should only be 3-4 pages of A4 at the most. Use the update function within the episode when it gets too long to edit the content as this will also save the version with all the detail on the system too.
* Where there is a long history over many years group events / themes and summarise periods of time from the past so it doesn’t become too long. This will enable more detailed information to be included around recent events (past year). If a case remains open for a lengthy time; or is reopened recorded information should be regularly refined to keep it relevant and reader friendly.
* Chronologies are NOT a cut and paste of large chunks of text from case notes or documents – be succinct with your recording around major change and/or significant events.
* There should be a clear link between your chronology / assessment and plans – it being obvious how your chronology has informed your decisions and actions.
* Relevant information will include any significant events for the child (e.g. loss, birth, and parental separation), periods of our involvement, reasons for referral and outcomes and any legal decisions. Information not likely to be helpful include lists of routine visits or calls.