

Children's Safeguarding and Early Help Services

Chronologies Practice Guidance

Chronologies Practice Guidance for Children's Safeguarding and Early Help Services Policy Governance

Title	Name of Policy
Purpose/scope	The chronology is a meaningful way of gaining an overview of significant events in a child or a young person's life. A chronology is not: the detailed case recording; a diary/list of dates; an assessment; an end in itself
Subject key words	Chronology; risks; patterns; understanding; assessment; engagement; care planning
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Lead author & contact details	Marie Hatton, Service Delivery Manager, Child Protection and Family Support
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1. Introduction and Background

The Chronology is a meaningful way of gaining an overview of significant events in a child or a young person's life. A chronology is not: the detailed case recording; a diary/list of dates; an assessment; an end in itself.

- Done effectively it helps to place children at the centre of everything we do.
- An effective chronology can help identify risks, patterns, issues in a child's life
- It can help in getting a better understanding of the immediate or cumulative impact of events
- It helps to make links between the past and the present, helping to understand the importance of historic information upon what is happening in a child's life now.
- Good chronologies enable new workers to become familiar with the case.
- Importantly a good case chronology can, at a later stage, help children, young people and families make sense of their past.
- A good chronology can draw attention to seemingly unrelated events or information.
- Using chronologies in practice can promote better engagement from children and families.
- Accurate chronologies can assist the process of assessment, care planning and review.
- When carried out consistently across agencies good chronologies can improve the sharing and understanding of the impact of information about a child's life.

The chronology must be used by practitioners as an analytical tool to help them to understand the impact, both immediate and cumulative, of events and changes on the child or young person's developmental progress.

Each child's file must hold a working chronology that is updated frequently and with events edited accurately from the history no later than seven days after the event occurred.

A chronology lists in date order all the major changes and events in a child or young person's life.

Professional judgement is required to decide whether particular circumstances or events are significant for a particular child and family.

2. Guide of What to include

Below is a guide to the type of things to include in a child's chronology; this is not an exhaustive list and practitioners should consider each child's circumstances individually:

- A significant event is anything that has a positive or negative impact on the child. It does not have to happen directly to the child but can be any change in circumstances or events that have, or may have, consequences for the child;
- All referrals about the child;
- Previous history of involvement/receipt of services from an agency;
- Incidence where a child is considered to have suffered harm/or is at risk of harm;
- Non accidental injury and significant injury or neglect events;
- Significant home visits;
- Dates and reasons for a child being accommodated;
- Child absconded/gone missing;
- Any episodes of self-harm;
- Any significant parental factors (domestic abuse; substance misuse ; mental ill health) that may have an impact on the child;
- Significant child health issues;
- Changes of professional working directly with the child (social worker, GP, HV);
- Non-attendance at appointments, non-availability at home visits;
- Attendances at A&E/out of hour's services/excessive use of health services etc;
- Education training and employment history (including changes in school/absences/exclusions etc);
- Any changes in a child's legal status;
- Changes in where a child lives, including placement history of children in care;
- Changes in family structure, people living in child's home, separation, bereavement, excessive visitors;
- Any history of offences/custodial sentences;
- Events showing good engagement with professionals;
- Lack of engagement;
- Threats or incidents against staff;
- Periods of calm may be viewed as significant (e.g. young person has not self-harmed for 3 months);

- Dates of meetings or professional activities (e.g conclusions of assessments, receipt of referrals) where important decisions are made about a child’s life;
- Any other events and changes in the circumstance of the child and family deemed to be significant, or potentially significant, for the child;

3. When to start a Chronology

A chronology must be started as soon as Children’s Social care become involved and be updated by the allocated case worker during the period of involvement with the child or young person. Some practitioners in studies have commented that “chronologies” had become repeats of the file, they were arduous to compile and once completed, were so detailed workers could not see “the wood for the trees” (2010). To avoid this perception:

- Commence chronologies at the start of involvement in a case;
- Enter relevant information as it occurs;
- Enter information throughout involvement in the case, an out of date chronology cannot provide full information for further analysis and planning;
- Be brief in chronologies, normally one line;
- Reference where in the case records more detailed information can be found;
- Consider the dimensions within the domains of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in need and Their Families (2000), to help judge whether there is significant information or events relating to these dimensions;
- Chronologies can be created for different purposes, i.e. CLA, CP, CIN, etc; Each one can be created and archived. They can then be added to or updated as time goes on. In relation to a LAC chronology; it would be good practice to archive the LAC chronology on a year by year basis;

The chronology reflects the best knowledge the department has about a child’s history at a point of time. It may need to be amended in the light of new information received and efforts should be made to seek out and confirm information from a variety of sources, the child and family, agency records, and information held by other agencies.

4. Court Chronologies

With the introduction of the PLO 2 there continues to be an expectation that a Chronology is submitted with the initial application for Care Proceedings and which may require updating during the proceedings.

Even if there has been Local Authority involvement with a family extending over many years, the Court is only expecting a Chronology of three to four pages which should be cross-referenced with the initial statement to avoid unnecessary repetition. The Chronology should focus on key significant historical events and concerns, avoiding all unnecessary detail. E.g. rather than listing 10 separate missed appointment with dates, a summary which states that between (date a) and (date b) parent did not attend 10 appointments would suffice.

5. Examples Format for Recording a Chronology of Significant Events

Taken from **Care Application Under Revised PLO** document

Date	Event/Incident/Sequence	Significance
1960-Current	Inter-generational poor parenting of both mother and father and of their parents in turn. (Reported by Carol Smith and Bill Treadwell)	Inter-generational parenting is hard to overcome.
July 2005	Carol Smith's first child is removed from her care under an EPO following allegations of sexual abuse by her partner at the time. Allegations confirmed and her partner was prosecuted and convicted. Child (b) then subject to a care Order and Placement Order (date) and placed for adoption.	In the first set of proceedings Carol Smith was judged as unable to protect her son.
2009	Pre-birth assessment concludes Alice should be subject to a child protection plan but could be cared for safely by her parents at home.	Baseline assessment of parenting flagged problems with drug misuse with both parents as well as past social and personal problems individually.
2009-2013	Intermittent referrals with concerns about Alice expressed by professionals and neighbours. In looked after, following domestic violence (from Alice's father to mother (admitted)). Alice went home after 5 days. In November 2012, Alice was twice received into police protection. She told police on one occasion she had run away. In February 2013, CAMHS found Alice was experiencing significant developmental delay as a result of neglect at home.	The chronology shows that the neglect of Alice by one or both parents was continuous in its impact, even if care was better during some periods than others.