**CHRONOLOGY GUIDANCE**

1. **Background**

A chronology provides a sequential story of significant events in a family’s history whilst interweaving information about emotional and/or relationship difficulties. It contributes to an emerging picture, based on fact and interactions of a case – current information is understood in the context of previous information, informing professional assessment. Chronologies should highlight how significant events have impacted on the child.

A chronology provides a skeleton of key incidents and events that inform the assessment of children and young people who are considered at risk or in need. A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child’s safety and welfare circumstances or home environment. This will inevitably involve a professional decision and/or judgement based upon the child and family’s individual circumstances.

The chronology should also include a genogram in order to clarify complex relationships, to indicate gaps in knowledge and to make visible intergenerational and life cycle issues. For more detailed information please refer to the genogram guidance.

**An up to date chronology is crucial in safeguarding because it:**

* Gives relevant information about previous history which may be an important indicator of risk
* Provides continuity so we can see immediately what has happened
* Presents clear accurate information
* Helps focus on key events so we can understand what is happening in the life of a child or young person
* Allows professionals to put the pieces of a jigsaw together
* Highlights risks & vulnerabilities, but also strengths and resilience.
* Patterns in social history and behaviour can be detected, events can appear insignificant in isolation but together can be identified as warning signs.
* Highlights people in the child’s life already known by agencies, the nature of current relationships between families and their wider social networks. This gives important information about who in the family/network may be protective and which family members may pose a risk to the child/young person
* Highlights gaps, missing details and inconsistencies that require further assessment and identification
* Lists what interventions have been tried/what has worked and what hasn’t which avoids duplicating and repeating work and gives information about capacity to change
* Used as a reflective tool-for multi-agency working together-in supervision and for key decision making

1. **Definition**

A chronology is:

* An ordered, dated record of significant events in the child's life. It can identify patterns of events, concerns, positives, strengths and unmet needs.
* A clear account of all significant events in a child’s life to date, based on knowledge and information held by the agencies involved with the child and family.
* Reflects the best knowledge we have about a child’s history at a point in time.

1. **Purpose**

A chronology should:

* Inform case discussion and key decision making by making it evidence based e.g. current decision making by managers may prioritise verbal presentation of information that could have gaps
* **Not** be an assessment – but be part of assessment e.g can reveal patterns so that events aren’t seen as isolated incidents
* **Not** be an end in itself – it is a working tool which promotes engagement with people who use services and promotes multi-agency involvement
* A chronology should be accurate, relying on good, up-to-date case recording. It should contain sufficient detail but not substitute for recording in the file. It will record what was done at the time.
* Chronologies should list events, dates etc. but also record any action/decisions which were taken at the time as well as recording the decision making when there was no action taken.
* The chronology should be regularly reviewed and analysed

To compile a chronology the practitioner must:

* Identify the key events to be recorded.
* Identify the sources of information to be used.

**4. What should be included in a chronology?**

The lists below describes the events which will need to be included in a chronology, they are not exhaustive. There will be other significant events which will also need to be included. The decision about what other events need to be included will be based on professional judgement and managerial guidance.

* Date of birth of child
* Family history e.g. parents‟ childhood, their significant life events
* Start/end dates of SW involvement
* Changes of Social worker
* Strategy meetings and S47 investigations
* Assessments
* Child‟s words, views, feelings and behaviour. Changes in the child’s wellbeing- health and development.
* Significant other incidents e.g significant observation during home visits
* Concerns about specific behaviours in the family including sexual behaviour, substance misuse, domestic abuse not reported to the police, housing issues, CP plans / deplanning
* Changes in GP/Health professionals
* Medical history including accidents/incidents requiring treatment
* Serious illness/diagnosis of specific condition
* Hospital admissions
* Change in legal status
* Change of name
* Change in birth family household/relationships/address
* Significant family events e.g. pregnancy, miscarriage, deaths
* Change in school/college
* School exclusions/incidents
* Absence from school
* Educational assessments including additional needs/support plans
* Educational performance & results
* Employment
* Police logs about family/household
* Criminal proceedings & offences Transition Plan
* Dates of and episodes of being looked after
* Changes in placement
* Change in legal status
* Pathway Plan/Care Plan date completed
* IRO Review recommendation/ summary of either Pathway Review or C.L.A
* Incidents of missing from care, inclusive of details and actions and missing from care meeting
* Personal Education Plan(PEP) –date completed
* Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire(SDQ) note the score and any action taken ie CAMHS referral
* Statutory visit
* Date Placement with Parents Regulations were approved and summary of the report
* Any Legal Planning meeting includes brief summary of context and decisions
* Any legal proceedings. e.g. Date I.C.O made
* Contact visits.

**5. Useful agency decision making information that should be in a chronology:**

* Name and date of allocation of Social Workers
* Referrals dates- reason for referral e.g. child protection enquiry, domestic violence incidents.
* Date statutory assessment commenced and concluded
* Date PLO commenced
* Court proceedings (including dates)
* Court Orders (Including dates)
* Dates of meetings (including child protection case conferences, core groups, strategy and professional, children in need, adoption ,fostering ,CLA review).
* Discussions with the team manager about a service user, whether within or outside of supervision, and any decisions made as a result of this conversation must be recorded.
* Records of key management or Agency decisions
* Significant events including birth of siblings, death of close family members, change of address, new partners,medical treatment change of school.
* All visits, recording whether the child has been seen or not and whether seen on their own.

**Make sure what is recorded is accurate and in date order.**

**Consider the significance of the events and impact on the child and family in question**

**The Chronology should be updated regularly. An up to date chronology is considered to be one in which the recording is completed within one retrospective month.**