

3 Minute Chronology Briefing

Why it matters:

- Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding needs/risks, including the need for protection from harm.
- It contributes to an emerging picture and allows the practitioner to understand current events in the context of historical information.
- Setting out key events in sequential date order, they give a summary timeline of circumstances (or those of an individual using adult services), patterns of behaviour and trends in lifestyle that may greatly assist any

Top tips :

Write the chronology before the assessment.

Creating the chronology at the start provides points of reference for your visits and other investigations – the partial chronology from your initial reading highlights gaps in your knowledge, or any apparent contradictions or obvious mistakes in the records (e.g. dates of birth that don't add up).

Check the dates.

Automation usually results in lists of information pulled from social work files, with a clear date for each entry (like a casenote or referral), which means information is ordered by when it came to the notice of the agency, not by when it happened.

Knowledge

A chronology should frame your understanding of a service user and their family and tell the story of their lives. In this respect, they complement a genogram and ecomap nicely – the chronology describes the past while the ecomap describes their present, and the genogram overlaps with both.

Purpose:

An up-to-date chronology should be a requirement for every open case and be the start and heart of every assessment.

Why?

It enables practitioners to gain a more accurate picture of the whole case and is an effective tool for informing the assessment of service users and their families.

Social workers should regularly update chronologies so that they reflect the “here and now”.

A chronology is not an assessment in itself but it is an ongoing, analytical tool which social workers can use to help them understand what is happening in the child and/or family's life. Chronologies should be viewed as a working tool, not a final product

For more information:

Link to Tri-x when Policy is uploaded

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/redcarcleveland/cs/>

<https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/writing-chronologies/>

Chronologies are:

A logical, methodical and systematic means of organising, merging and helping make sense of information.

A significant event is an incident that impacts upon a child's safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. Writing the chronology requires almost as much professional judgement as writing the assessment (on what to include, on the significance of particular information) and, just like an assessment, can't be atomised' into an administrative task removed from professional judgement and skill.

Used to help highlight gaps and omitted details that require further exploration, investigation and assessment, enabling practitioners to gain a more accurate picture of the whole case.

Provides a significant contribution to the practitioner's understanding of the immediate and cumulative impact of events and changes upon individuals within a family and therefore informs decision making.

Examples of significant events:

Not an exclusive list and need to consider the impact on the child/young person and remember to include positive events/impacts!

- Birth/Death of a significant person
- Referrals to Children's Services
- Strategy discussions/S47 enquiries
- Child Protection conferences
- Court hearings
- Admissions and Discharges to Local Authority Care
- Change in legal status of a child.
- House moves/Placement moves
- School moves and schools attended
- School attainment
- Persons moving in and out of the households
- Financial problems/arrears/county court judgements
- Assessment by other agencies e.g. EHCP
- Referrals to other significant agencies
- Changes in education, training and employment
- Criminal proceedings/Imprisonment
- Homelessness
- Accidents
- Significant health issues/Treatment/Appointments
- Missed appointments
- House fire
- MAPPA / MARAC notifications