**Practice Note for all SCT Practitioners, Managers and Staff;**

**Impact Chronologies**

**What is an Impact chronology?**

An impact chronology lists, in date order significant events and changes in a child or young person's life within the context of their family and wider network. Using brief headlines, an impact chronology combines two elements:

* **a factual and succinct** list in date order of ***key* significant events and major changes** for a child, their siblings, parent/carers and their family **and**
* **it reflects the physical, emotional, psychological, and social impact** of these individual significant events **upon the child’s wellbeing and development**.

Developing and updating impact chronologies help practitioners to continuously identify patterns, risks, issues and strengths to understand what is happening in the life of a child, young person or young adult. Understanding the impact of the events upon the child or young person informs effective assessments by strengthening the analysis leading to robust plans and interventions such as direct work.

These are different to standard chronologies as they do not include every single significant event, just those that are key, and evidence impact on the child or young person. They also need to be balanced and should not only reflect events leading to harm but also strengths within or around the family which have resulted in the child being kept safe from harm, and the impact on them of this positive behaviour. An impact chronology is not a set of detailed case notes, a diary, a simple list of dates, or a separate tool, it strengthens your analysis, decision making and planning. Therefore, when creating a good impact chronology applying professional judgement to consider what information needs to be included or excluded is important.

Regularly creating impact chronologies will develop your skills on selecting what information needs to be included in such a way that it provides an immediate, visual overview of the child’s life history. This Practice Note outlines why impact chronologies are important by detailing how they can be used in different ways, how it links to our trauma informed approach which is part of our Practice Model and Framework and when they should be completed. Examples of what a good impact chronology looks like following recent changes to the structure on LCS, how they can be used as a direct work tool and other good practice points are also outlined.

**Why is an Impact Chronology important?**

The child’s impact chronology is an important multi-purpose tool which can be used in several ways.

* It places the child at the centre of everything we do and is the basis of any effective assessment. This should be one of the first things that is created when becoming involved with the child and their family whilst undertaking an assessment.
* A well-developed chronology supports our identification of actual or potential risk or harm as it provides an understanding of the immediate and cumulative impact of events rather than viewing events in isolation or as an ‘one off’. Therefore, it can be used to evidence the impact on a child over time.
* An impact chronology also enables us to develop an emerging picture of the child’s experience within the context of their family and network. In doing so, it provides evidence and support for robust assessment, analysis, decision making, current and future planning for children and their families.
* It also can be used as part of direct work when undertaking assessments and creating and developing plans with families and professionals. Life story work needs to be completed with a clear understanding of the child’s history.
* Finally, as it also evidences strengths particularly safety over time for the child within their family, network and it can be used to inform key decisions. These include changes to the plan and decisions about when a case should be stepped down or closed. Therefore, using an impact chronology as part of our work effectively supports both the processes we follow and our interventions with families and partner agencies.

**Who uses impact chronologies?**

Practitioners across all areas of the service create and develop impact chronologies using the LCS template. Team Managers also ensure that all children allocated in their teams have up to date and good quality impact chronologies on file.

Impact Chronologies are also reviewed by Child Protection Conference Chairs, Independent Reviewing Officers as part of Child Protection and Looked After processes. As part of undertaking learning reviews, Quality Assurance Auditors and Team Managers also look at the quality of the child’s impact chronology.

**Why Impact Chronologies are part of our Practice Framework and Model?**

A good quality impact chronology helps us to consider and reflect with the family the significant events they have experienced and what this has meant for their child/ren. In doing so, supports a better understanding of the needs and risks that exist for them children, young people and young adults and for future understanding and analysis of their experiences and what it might mean for intervention required.

Completing an impact chronology forms part of our trauma informed approach within our Practice Framework and Model. Used with the family, impact chronologies can be used to develop a shared understanding of these patterns, behaviours and the impact on their children’s wellbeing and development whilst considering any trauma they experienced.

This can support a better understanding of the reason for professional concern, strengths, engagement and what changes would need to happen for these to reduce whilst strengthening the quality of our relationships.

Talking about significant events and major changes can often be difficult for some families as these might be linked to difficult points in their life. Using a trauma informed approach means that we recognise that this work needs to be carefully planned with the family. We need to consider when, what, and how this is discussed to reduce any possible impact on their emotional health and well-being which will be informed by their individual needs and identity. Planning this work with the family by considering their support needs are ways in which we can reduce the impact on their emotional health and wellbeing.

The chronology is also a tool that should, be used to promote engagement with service users and their families. Although the content of the chronology will be determined by professional judgement, service users and their families will have views on the content and the inferences drawn. A well-constructed and skilfully employed chronology has the potential to help service users and families better understand their circumstances and thus promote their engagement in effecting change.

**When should an impact chronology be completed?**

An impact chronology should be started at the beginning of our involvement when working with children, parents and families and for effective information sharing. Good practice means that chronologies generally start when a child is born. However, in a few circumstances some significant events may have taken place prior to their birth.

They should continue to be updated when a child’s case is open which is a mandatory requirement. It should be updated at a minimum frequency of every twenty-eight days until the child’s case is closed.

**What should be included in an impact chronology?**

Deciding on what are significant events or major changes that impact on the child requires professional judgement. Choosing from numerous events can sometimes be difficult to determine what needs to be included. Sometimes it might feel as if not including information in the chronology is not recognising the significance for the child. However, events can be significant but not impact on the child’s physical, emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing.This information should be included in the assessment rather than the chronology.

Impact chronologies only need to include **key significant events** which also **evidence the impact upon the child**. This should help when selecting what information needs to be included. A child’s experience of their parenting or the impact of a significant events will vary from child to child and over time. Factors such as their resilience, their culture, identity, other parenting factors, frequency of events, other significant people in the child’s life, and other mitigating factors or vulnerabilities need to be considered. For this reason, each child’s impact chronology needs to be considered individually when part of a sibling group.

An impact chronology may include information that does not solely focus on a specific date but across a period a time. For example, if a young person has gone missing 6 times over a two-month period. It might include information from the following sources, however this list of events is exhaustive.

* Issues for the child or Young Person: the child’s views, disclosures, physical or mental health, incidents of abuse, losses, developmental issues, educational issues including out of school episodes, personal achievements, incidents of running away/going missing, incidents re bullying, gender or culture, offending or police involvement, safeguarding concerns (including CSE risk).
* Family issues: changes in family composition, bereavement and separation, incidents of domestic abuse, financial or housing problems, physical or mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, imprisonment, victimization; and anti-social behaviour, missed appointments, employment, unemployment, transition and life changes.
* Following every new referral and period of key professional interventions which may include Section 47 Enquiries, significant decisions, Legal Planning Meetings, PLO Meetings, Court Hearings, Review (CIN review, Child Protection Reviews, Looked After Reviews and Core Groups, TAF). Care proceedings, assessments such as EHCP, interventions (domestic abuse, parenting programme) referrals to other agencies and the outcome/ending such as Family Group meetings, reviews, prison sentences, information from previous LA’s professionals and involvement of specialist services e.g. CAHMS.
* Key life events such as births, moves including changes in family circumstances, new partners, household members, carer, education, address, house moves to different local authorities,
* **For Looked After Children**: Admissions into care, legal status, changes of Placement missing episodes and discharges from the care of the Local Authority. Signs of Stability Meetings, Health Assessments and contact sessions. Permanency Planning Stages, Transition into adolescence/adulthood with evidence of the changes to their Care/Support Plan and updates to the Single Assessment and or Pathway Plan.

**How do we create a good ‘impact’ chronology on LCS?**

The ‘LCS chronology’ on the child’s file can be created from the child’s records in the sections below. There have been some recent changes to the format of chronologies on LCS with the inclusion of a new impact column on the document. This has been added to make it easier to see and analyse the impact upon the child. Embedded below is a word quick reference guide for guidance about how to do this.



When devising an impact chronology, in the **event details**, information relating to the key significant event is captured. In the new section entitled the ‘**Impact on the Child** is captured.

Embedded below is an example of an impact chronology.

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**Court Chronologies**

Chronologies prepared for care proceedings whilst largely following the guidance above are drafted in a different format and are much shorter in length. Practice Direction 12A to the Public Law Outline 2014 states that a court chronology should contain the following:

*‘a succinct summary of the significant dates and events in the child's life in chronological order - a running record up to the issue of proceedings’.*

The court chronology should not be older than two years before the date of issue of proceedings unless the dates and events are significant, and reliance is placed on them in the local authority's evidence. Where possible, court chronologies should be limited in the number of pages. If you are unclear about how to draft a court chronology, please speak to your team manager, the Court Advisor or seek legal advice.

Using an impact chronology as part of our interventions with families supports us to achieve a better balance between the processes we follow and our interventions when working with families. Through the eyes of a child, an impact chronology provides a 'sequential story' of significant events in their life within the context of their family's history and outlines how these events shaped their lives. Therefore, a well-maintained impact chronology supports our understanding of the child’s life history enabling us to achieve provide the right help and support to achieve the best outcomes possible.

**Good Practice Points**

* Creating an Impact Chronology at the beginning of your involvement is one of the first things that you should do as it helps to strengthen your analysis, assessment, decision making and planning.
* Use the impact chronology alongside the child’s journey to reflect with    In doing so, it gives you a good picture of the child’s timescales for change to achieve permanency.

**How can I evidence this work on the child/young person/young adults file?**

* Ensure that your LCS generated impact chronology is up to date and provides a good overview of the child’s journey in the context of their family. In your assessment provide an analysis of the themes and patterns and what it means for the child.
* Undertaking some direct work with children, young people and parents to explore what they feel are significant events in their life might provide some context to the impact chronology on LCS and strengthen their assessment.

**Further information and reading (bullet points need to be added)**

Practice notes relating to Trauma Informed Practice and our Practice Framework and Model are available on the Learning and Development page.

The Practice Framework and Model Booklet provides a detailed overview of the different parts of the model and includes reflective questions.

Below is the link to a Community Care article identifying the importance of chronologies being one of the first things you complete as part of an assessment.

[*https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/08/15/chronology-first-thing-assessment*](https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/08/15/chronology-first-thing-assessment%0d)

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