

Chronology of the Child's Significant Events

A Quick Reference Guide to Creating and Using a Multi-Agency

Reason for Guidance

1. Every child who has a social worker or an early help lead practitioner should have a working multi-agency chronology of their significant events. Ideally, children, who have a lead practitioner from a different agency should also have a multi-agency chronology of significant events. For non-statutory cases, these need to be completed with the family's agreement and in partnership, and of course ideally, this would be the same for statutory cases too.
2. Chronologies are an essential analytical and reflective tool that should be used in assessing, planning, working with families, understanding, and responding to cumulative harm (trauma informed, healing and repair) and in evidence-based decision making. The chronology of the child's significant events should also be a reliable 'go to place' for practitioners and managers who need to get a quick and accurate understanding of the child's experiences, the harm they have or may have suffered, what has worked well in the past and to gain an up-to-date position of the case.
3. This guidance provides a short summary of the thinking and process that should be followed in order to develop a meaningful multi-agency chronology of the child's significant events. Other types of chronologies maybe required within your work and you will need to refer to your own agencies policies and guidance for these. This guidance specifically supports you in creating, using, and updating a multi-agency Chronology of the Child's Significant Events. It is the child's lead practitioner's responsibility to hold the 'master' multi-agency chronology on their record/file.

What is a Chronology

4. Chronologies are a record of key events, in sequential order. Events that are significant for the child could be positive or negative. Chronologies are fundamental to good practice as they improve understanding and insight into individual cases including the child's lived experiences and cumulative harm. They also help to identify existing safety that can be used now

and in the future, to keep the child safe. Although not always accurate and other factors have to be considered, past behaviors are the best predictor for future behavior unless change is achieved. This includes both harmful and protective actions and behavior. Chronologies can be used in many beneficial ways for the practitioner, child, and family. **It is the responsibility of the lead practitioner to create the chronology and the responsibility of partner agencies to contribute relevant and succinct information directly and regularly to be included.**

5. Some reasons why we need to do a Chronology of the Child's Significant Events

- a. Shows the child's lived experiences and family history
- b. It shares information that might otherwise not be known by other agencies who are involved with the child and/or family
- c. It helps identify gaps and prompts the use of best questions with children and the family network to fill these gaps
- d. Helps to prevent known significant information becoming 'lost' within records over time
- e. Chronologies are a key element in every kind of assessment, though is not a substitute for an assessment
- f. Helps you to focus on all relevant issues, not just those presenting right now
- g. Makes you the practitioner better prepared, gives you a better understanding and makes you better able to challenge (but not pre-judge) and to be curious
- h. Supports the practitioner and family to identify and make sense of what we are worried about, patterns, themes, cycles, increases or decreases in events or behavior in the life of a child and their family
- i. Helps to identify existing safety that could help protect the child now and, in the future
- j. Makes it easier to identify the build-up of harm/cumulative harm and plan support and services that will help heal and repair harm and are trauma informed
- k. Helps the practitioner and family to understand the frequency, severity, first, worst, and most recent harm, and the potential cumulative harm or difficulties and its impact on the child. Parental and family members responses to

significant events may add or reduce the impact of harm on the child (also helps you to complete the in the harm matrix which supports best practice)

- l. Helps empathy, reflection, and analysis on the part of the practitioner and others during work with the child and family, and sometimes after a serious incident within the family
- m. Is useful in supervision and can act as a summary of events to facilitate review, reflection and to work out what might be going on and why
- n. Informs and supports evidence-based decision making, planning and intervention
- o. Helps Emergency Duty practitioners and new practitioners to get an understanding of the child's experiences and harm quickly
- p. They are the starting point for internal and external auditing
- q. Chronologies are a legal requirement for some cases

6. What makes a Good Chronology?

- a. It lists events in the order they happened, not in the order they came to professional attention
- b. They tell the story of the child and family, not of the agencies working with them
- c. They show the impact on the child, positive or negative
- d. Identifies existing safety (when someone steps in to prevent or lessen harm to the child) as well as worrying events
- e. They are up to date, accurate, use straightforward language that is non-blaming and succinct
- f. They are multi-agency so increase everyone's knowledge of the child's live experiences

- g. They save time for practitioners by front-loading their exploration of the child and family's history and any relevant themes and gaps in their knowledge
- h. When professional judgement is used: chronologies cannot be automated or treated as an administrative task or something that is done at case closure
- i. When they are succinct and are fundamentally different from case notes, or an 'audit' chronology
- j. When they can be used as an 'index' and allow you to find more details in the agencies case record
- k. When they are written in plain language with no abbreviations, or these are explained in the first instance they are used in each event entry
- l. They provide evidence of change (or lack of change) over time

7. Top Tips

- a. Starting a chronology of the child's significant events should be one of the first actions for both emergency and non-emergency cases
- b. Talk with children, parents and the family network about what they think is significant and get consent from those who hold parental responsibility for sharing your 'child's significant events' information to create a multi-agency chronology. Remember, a chronology of the child's significant events is a required for statutory cases and needed for non-statutory case
- c. Start the Chronology as soon as the child/family is allocated to you and work backwards by adding in historical events as you learn about them throughout your involvement, and forwards by adding new events as they happen
- d. A chronology doesn't give you all the answers for your analysis, but gets you asking some of the right questions
- e. Have 'updating child's chronology' as an agenda item for Core Groups, Team Around the Family meetings and Care Team Meetings. Ask other professionals, the child and family if they know something significant to add to the chronology. Appendix 1 shows an example of a template that could be used by agencies to update the lead practitioner of significant events.

- f. Enter event as the date they happen on (and put when and how they were first reported/first known about in brackets)
- g. If the actual date of the significant is unknown, use the 1st of the month and explain in the details, why you can't identify a specific date
- h. Focus on the person not the agency, this is not a chronology of your agencies work
- i. Don't clutter the chronology of the child's significant events with processes, routine information and insignificant events that detract and hide what is important to know

8. What is and what is not a Significant Event?

- 9. Deciding on what is a significant event will often require professional judgement. Some events will be universal and others specific to an individual child/family and their circumstances. Remember to include significant events that have a clear positive impact not just the negative ones as this may help with safety planning and understanding what works for this family which can then be built upon in the safety plan.
- 10. A chronology of the child's significant events will include some but not all processes such as Strategy Meetings, Team Around the Family meetings, Public Law Outline Panel (PLO) Family Group Conference etc. Remember to include the 'person centred' part, which could be the reason the meeting was needed, the decisions made, following actions and the impact on the child.
- 11. When using your professional judgement and practice wisdom in deciding what events are significant, ask yourself, "Does this decision, event, occurrence, or omission hold significance for the child, why and what is the impact or potential impact on them, positive or negative, and how do we know this?"
- 12. Suggestions for significant events can be found below, this is not an exhaustive list, it doesn't and can't include events that might only be specific for an individual child (remember to be specific and include positive and negative events):

Significant Events

Some suggestions of what significant events might be

Think - Does this decision, event, occurrence, or omission hold significance for the child, why and what is the impact or potential impact on them, and how do we know this?

- Births, including parents and child
- Bereavement/deaths
- Safeguarding referral
- Physical or mental ill health in the family (including disability) drug/alcohol misuse/ overdose/self-harm/ depression, serious injury including accidental
- Child becoming a young carer or their responsibilities changing
- Change of address, GP, School etc
- Change of marital or other significant relationships
- Domestic abuse incident
- Positive or worrying weight loss or gain
- When a child tells you or someone else something that is a safeguarding concern
- Any type of harm or risk of harm
- Parent/carer not attending family time/contact
- When someone stepped in and protected the child from harm (existing strength) or mitigated the harm in some way
- Missing from home and return to home

- Unexplained school absence
- Child protection/Child in need referrals
- Start of Public Law Outline (PLO) protocol
- Key decision such as change in legal status, living arrangements or who and how the child spends family time, level of need, care plan or level of involvement etc
- Achievements, awards, exam results
- Child subject to a child protection plan – beginning and end
- Parent, important adult, or an abuser starts or ends a custodial sentence
- Missed immunisations and other 'was not brought' medical appointments
- Child Protection Strategy Meetings/Child protection conferences/ Core groups/Team Around the Family Meetings, Care Team Meetings, Family Group Conference etc.
- Parental or young person overdose and other forms of self-harm
- Treatment/programme for substance problematic substance misuse – start and finish
- Change in medication script
- Pandemic lock downs or similar events/disasters that impact on the child/family
- Changes in the child's legal status/ becoming or ceasing to be accommodated/looked after by the local authority.
- Urgent Care attendance / hospital admissions and discharge
- Chronic or significant acute parental/carer/child illness
- Referral to services LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)
- Was not brought to medical/health/therapeutic appointments
- All observations which may be related to sign of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and neglect including sexual or criminal exploitation
- A new adult, child or young person moving in or out of the household
- Committing of offences by the child or significant adults

- Fixed term or permanent exclusions from school
- Court proceedings, hearings, and their outcome.
- Significant incident e.g., house fire

13. Examples of what is **not** a Significant Event for the Child **unless** something significant (positive or negative) occurred within them are shown below:

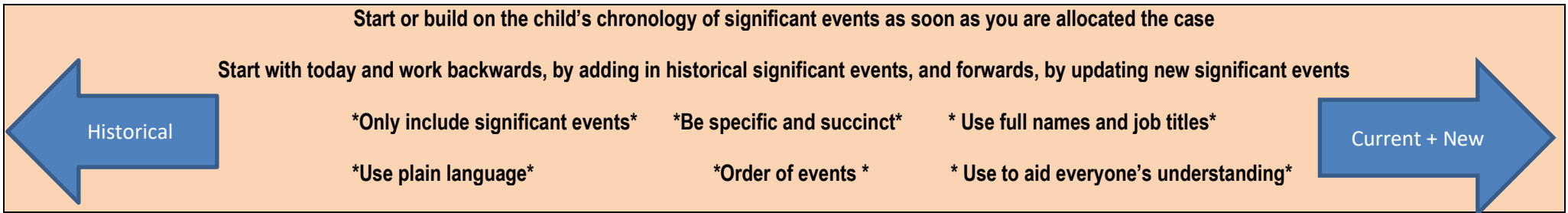
Some examples of events that are **not** significant events for the child **unless** something significant (positive or negative) occurred within them

- X** Routine recording/case notes
- X** Report written
- X** Attendance at appointments
- X** Statutory visits
- X** Letters
- X** Emails
- X** Attended school
- X** Routine visits
- X** Telephone calls
- X** Legal advice
- X** PNC checks (but do enter offences in on the date they happened)

14. The table below is an example of how a multi-agency might look and with suggested column headings and an explanation of where different types of information should be entered (taken from Durham’s Children’s Social Care - LiquidLogic Children’s System)

Child’s Chronology of Significant Events – What goes where					
Date of Event	Category	Type	Event Details	Impact /Child’s Views	Decision /Actions
<p>Record the actual date that the significant event took place, not when you first heard about it.</p> <p>This is the child’s chronology not a chronology of our work though some of our actions will also be significant events for the child.</p> <p>Recording when the event happened helps you to identify what was going on at that time for the child and family and any patterns, triggers etc.</p>	<p>Record the ‘primary source’ here. Who told you about the significant event, how do we know about it?</p> <p>For examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Education • Social Care Records • Parents • The child 	<p>Record the ‘headline’</p> <p>What is the significant event?</p> <p>For examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral made by Maternal Grandmother who is worried about how much alcohol mum drinks and that the children aren’t being cared for; • Birth of brother or sister; • Mother starts a new relationship; 	<p>Describe the basic and important details of the significant event. What happened, who was there etc.</p> <p>Be specific and succinct. Don’t copy the whole referral/information as more detail can be found in case recording.</p> <p>What was it about the event that is significant or important? This might be a worry, actual harm or something was that was significantly good for the child?</p> <p>Include parental and any member of the families</p>	<p>Note the impact on the child or the likely impact if not known.</p> <p>Record the age of the child at the time of the event as this helps to understand the impact better.</p> <p>For example; <i>Lucy was 6 years old and Peter was 4 years old when this happened. Mrs Hubbard said that Lucy kept asking, “is Mummy alright” and needed a lot of reassurance before she could sleep that night. Peter showed no obvious distress. It is likely that</i></p>	<p>What did we do next in response to the event?</p> <p>Record significant decisions made.</p> <p>Think about:</p> <p>What did we decide or decide against:</p> <p>Who did we speak to, visit, and or inform;</p> <p>Was there a Strategy Discussion or another type of meeting?</p> <p>What decisions did we make (taking no action is still a decision);</p> <p>Did we alter any arrangements/decisions already in place?</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse incident where Mother is punched in the face by Father; • Court hearing where Father is given permission to spend more supervised family time with Lucy 	<p>network's behaviours or responses.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p><i>Mrs Hubbard, Maternal Grandmother, took Lucy and Peter to her home as mother was drunk, slurring her words and falling over and was unable to care for them. Mother said "I wasn't that drunk, I only had a glass of cider"</i></p> <p>You will be recording the event on the day it happened. You should add in here, in brackets, when you first learnt of the event. This directs the reader to where more details can be found.</p> <p>For example: <i>(First informed of this on 8/07/19 by Mrs Hubbard, Maternal Grandmother, who telephoned Mary Poppins, Social Worker) (Monday morning)</i></p>	<p><i>this would have been frightening and upsetting for both children.</i></p>	<p>Management oversight, was this discussed with a manager, in supervision or a reflective discussion etc.</p>
<p>Remember: It is the child's chronology of significant events</p>					



Appendix 1

This template can be downloaded and **could** be use when passing on information about significant events for the child to the Lead Practitioner

Child's Chronology of Significant Events –					
Date of Event	Category	Type	Event Details	Impact /Child's Views	Decision & Actions
(Date when event took place rather than the date you learnt about it)	(Primary source – put the name of the agency and practitioner who first knew about this event i.e., GP, Police, School name etc)	(What is the significant event i.e., birth, was not brought to an appointment, tested positive for substance, moved to a new house etc. Short and succinct)	(Describe the basic and important details of the significant event. What happened, who was there etc)	(Be clear about what you know and how you know it and what you think might be the impact)	(What did you or others do next in response to the event?)
