

Chronology Guidance

Children's Social Care and Partner Agencies

"Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Sir Winston Churchill

What is a Chronology?

A chronology is a record of all significant events, referrals and observations concerning the child, their family, or the service they are receiving. A single agency chronology provides a brief description and summarised account of events in date order. It should be used as an analytical tool to assist in the understanding of the impact of life events and to inform decision making.

Why do a Chronology?

The chronology is a quick, effective way to see what is happening in the life of a child or young person. It helps identify patterns and issues – invaluable in assessing risk and when analysing the likely impact of events. It is particularly useful when a child experiences a series of incidents that individually would be of low concern but as a pattern could cause high concern about their welfare e.g. neglect. It is therefore an essential tool in analysis and planning at all stages and especially when cases are transferred. It can also help a young person make sense of their own life.

The purpose of a chronology is to promote good quality decision making on the most up to date and comprehensive information, in an easily accessible format. It is intended to enable risk assessment by making sure that key information is readily available.

The chronology may be used as an **analytical tool** to enable professionals to understand the impact of changes in the life of a young person. A chronology is not expected to be a repetition of the narrative contained in process or case recordings, but bullet points indicating incidents, events or issues within a family or which significantly affect a child's life. It therefore requires familiarity with the case information, and analysis to identify the critical moments in a child / family's life experience. It must be relevant and succinct so that important events are not lost in insignificant and irrelevant details. The child or young person and their family should also be involved in the process of completing the chronology. The involvement of the child and family members provides an opportunity to check the accuracy of information and it can assist the social worker in obtaining family member's perspectives on particular events.

Entries to the chronology therefore should be

- Accurate and evidence-based.
- Avoid the use of acronyms or professional jargon when possible and/or explain terms.
- Factual – A record of facts, events, action taken **or** a note that no action was taken and if known the outcome (e.g. Support services provided).
- Concise – a very brief note of an event e.g. came to school with a bruise, attended A&E, a change in child's presentation /behaviour.
- Completed on the agreed template (Appendix A).
- Timely – completed as soon as possible after the event

The prompts below indicate the types of events which might feature in any chronology:

Significant Information about the Child

- Referrals about the child / family and concerning information from agencies or individuals, substantiated or otherwise.
- Changes of workers/services and transfer / closure of the case with dates.
- Child's change of address / school, school attendance and exclusions.
- Change of carer including the immediate family structure and/or the presence of any significant adults.
- Changes in GP.
- Child Protection Conference, child becoming subject of a child protection plan with dates.
- Core groups/planning meetings
- Relevant medical examinations and attendance and admission to hospital for the child and siblings.
- Critical incidents giving rise to concern including injury and neglect events for child and siblings.
- Accommodations, including requests for and consideration of accommodation.
- Changes in the child's developmental growth and/or normal pattern of behaviour.
- Positive information about improving outcomes in the child's life.

Significant Information about Parents and Family

- Family history, including marriages, births, deaths, serious illness and changes in the make up of the household including new partners and separations. The chronology may start with events that occurred prior to the child's birth, where significant.
- Serious stress factors, unemployment, bereavement, accidents, prison and deaths.
- Parental history and diagnoses especially care history, mental health, crime, substance misuse, domestic violence and history of relapse.
- Police logs detailing relevant incidents at the family home or in relation to family members, such as reported incidents of domestic violence, drunken behaviour of carers.
- House moves with dates and addresses in full.
- Immigration/Emigration details as appropriate.
- Criminal and civil proceedings and outcomes.
- Take up / non take up of services and support offered to family.
- Recorded positive events or strengths showing family capacity to work in partnership and engage with professionals i.e. CIN CP processes
- Specialist assessments and their outcomes.
- There are also a number of other incidents, which may be significant to the child and family, depending on their circumstances. Examples include:
 - A significant observation during home visits e.g. the frequent presence of unknown adults, evidence of damage to the property.
 - Any other changes that indicate a change in the child's safeguarding status, including protective factors and risk factors.

- Positive examples which include: Evidence of the family's engagement with professionals. Parent's self-referral for help/guidance support with relevant agencies. The child's presentation in school significantly improves.
- Events showing capacity of family to work in partnership and engage with professionals
- Lack of engagement
- An established pattern of missed appointments without acceptable reasons, including refusal of entry
- Dates PLO initiated and outcome of reviews
- Any threats or actual incidents of violence to staff including verbal threats
- Date when summary statements, working agreements, risk assessments are completed
- Significant home visits

Significant Information Held by Health Professionals

- Positive or negative changes in health related problems in relation to the child or their parents/carers, such as disability, substance related issues, mental health issues etc
- Changes in family care structure e.g. through separation, divorce, bereavement, custodial sentence
- Changes to child's physical or emotional wellbeing
- Any event in the child's life deemed to have a significant effect on them, such as separation from main carer leading to poor attachment
- Changes in family circumstances e.g. housing, birth of a sibling, emotional well-being
- Referrals to Paediatric Services, Therapy Services, Other Agencies
- Attendance at Accident and Emergency
- Incidences of hospital admissions
- Childhood illnesses
- Changes in disability
- Dates of immunisations and screening
- Kept or missed appointments for ante-natal, post-natal appointments, immunisations, child health surveillance, hospital appointments
- Formal health assessments e.g. developmental, LAC
- Change to the Health Visitor, School Nurse or other key staff member working with the family
- Missed appointments without acceptable reasons, including refusal of entry or variation to routine appointment schedule
- Attempted suicide or overdose of child / young person or family member
- Threats or actual incidents of violence to staff
- Any other relevant concerns or positive improvements
- Significant home visits
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing of child, parents/carers
- Change of GP

Significant Information Held by Education Professionals

- Positive or negative changes in performance, attainment or achievement
- Identification of Additional Support Needs within staged intervention process (including requests for support services involvement e.g. psychological service, intensive support team, care and learning)
- If the child has an Individual EHC Plan or other Support Plan
- Positive or negative changes in attendance
- Positive or negative changes in parental presence, engagement or support with child's learning
- Episodes of exclusion or re-integration
- Significant periods of absence e.g. illness, pregnancy, truancy
- Social inclusion within the school setting including evidence of bullying or positive support networks
- Decision to initiate an Educational Psychological Assessment
- Outcomes of EP assessment
- Change of teacher or other key member of staff from the child's school
- Change of school
- Any threats or actual incidents of violence to staff by parents or child
- Any other relevant concerns or positive improvements

Significant Information Held by Housing Professionals

- Positive or negative changes in family care structure e.g. separation, divorce, bereavement, custodial sentence
- Positive or negative changes in family and housing e.g. relocation, eviction, transfer to private tenancy
- Positive or negative changes in maintenance of tenancy agreements
- Positive or negative changes in neighbour relations or anti-social issues. Where this has led to further action being taken, for example ASBO, then this should be recorded
- Evidence of, or referrals for suspected drug dealing, drug taking or excessive alcohol use
- Reports of anti-social behaviour on the child or parents
- Reports from Elected Members, members of the public or Anti-Social Behaviour Staff regarding anti-social behaviour
- Any concerns about the safety or welfare of children or young people noted directly by housing staff or passed to them by others in the community
- Any other significant issues in relation to Housing, i.e. factors that could impact on welfare of the child such as excessive repairs required, significant rent arrears, neighbour nuisance, legal action etc

Significant Information Held by the Police

- Incidents of domestic abuse - parents/carers
- Incidents of domestic abuse - children/young people
- Child/young person reported missing from home/absconded
- Incidents relating to substance misuse - drugs and alcohol
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Allegations/Incidents of Sexual Abuse

In summary, entries in a chronology must be:

- Brief
- Dated
- Factual
- Jargon, abbreviation and or speculation free
- Accurate
- Up to date
- Provide clear evidence of decisions and or of action taken
- Include the full name of the source of the information

- Allegations/Incidents of Physical Abuse
- Criminal activity that may pose a risk to the child (violence, guns/gangs, drug dealing etc)
- Police involvement in Strategy Discussions, S.47Child and Protection Planning

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each agency to ensure that there is a mechanism to share information about significant events in the child's life. It will also serve to inform decision-making at any given point during interventions. However, it is essential that all professionals and agencies understand that they have a joint responsibility in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people and should be active participants in the process. All professionals are to ensure that information describing key incidents/events/information is passed on to the Social Worker if the case is open to Children's Social Care.

Marie Francis
QA Officer
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Example Chronology of Significant Events

Day	Date	Time	Incident or sequence of incidents relevant to the child	Significance Action Taken/Outcome	Source of Information	Name Title Agency
The date and time the event happened must be recorded			A brief description of the event should be recorded here. Children, young people and families will see this information and may also be asked for their informed consent to share it where this is in their best interests to do so. Language must be plain English, non judgemental, clear and concise, so that the chronology improves understanding and supports good decision-making.	This section should record what action has been taken by the agency that has been made aware of the significant event. This might be observe, monitor record or it could be an action that was taken such as informing someone or contacting or a change in approach.	Information in the chronology should be factual and from a reliable source. Record the source of the information.	It is essential that everyone is clear about the name, title, and agency of the practitioner providing the information about the significant event. Initials are insufficient.