



GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPILING CHRONOLOGIES

1. Introduction

- ★ A chronology is a succinct summary and overview of the significant dates and events in a child's life.
- ★ A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child's safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. This will involve inevitably a professional decision and / or judgement based upon the child and family's individual circumstances.
- ★ A chronology provides a sequential story of significant events in a family's history whilst inter-weaving information about emotional and / or relationship difficulties.
- ★ It contributes to an emerging picture based on fact and interaction of a case, ie current information is understood in the context of previous information and helps inform professional judgement through a consideration of the patterns and relationship of the events and changes in the chronology.
- ★ It should be used as an analytical tool to help understand the impact both immediate and cumulative of events and changes on a child or young person's developmental progress.
- ★ The relevance / significance of an event can change over time. An historical event which appeared insignificant or irrelevant may become highly relevant and significant in the light of further information of more recent origin.

2. Guidelines

- 2.1 Children and young people are most effectively safeguarded if professionals work together and share information. Single factors in themselves are often perceived to be relatively harmless. However, if they multiply and compound one another, the consequences can be serious, and on occasions, devastating.
- 2.2 Professional judgement is required to decide on the relevance for a particular child / family of an event.
- 2.3 Information recorded in a chronology should be relevant and succinct so as not to be lost in a mass of insignificant and irrelevant events.
- 2.4 Chronologies are not only a means of organising and merging information. They enable practitioners to gain a more accurate picture of the whole case and highlight gaps and missing details that require further assessment and identification.
- 2.5 A chronology for a child, young person may start with events that occurred prior to his or her birth if of significance.
- 2.6 Chronologies should accurately reflect family circumstances, recording both positive and negative factors.

3. Multi-Agency Child Protection Chronology

- 3.1 It provides a mechanism through which information can be systematically shared and merged, and enables agencies to identify the history of a family, providing invaluable information about a child's life experience.
- 3.2 It can reveal risks, concerns, patterns and themes, strengths and weaknesses within a family, and can identify previous periods of professional involvement / support and the effectiveness / failure of previous intervention. It informs the overall assessment regarding the care-givers ability and motivation to change.
- 3.3 The chronology is only one means of collating information and will need supplementing by reports that draw out messages from the chronology, ensure facts are agreed and the overall pattern seen.

4. Significant Information / Events

There are a number of key events or incidents which should be recorded and depending upon the nature of the risks and harm, these may vary from case to case. Examples include:-

- ★ Contacts or referrals about the child / family.
- ★ Assessments undertaken.
- ★ Strategy discussions / meetings and Child Protection Conferences.
- ★ Child Protection record enquiries and Section 47 Investigations.
- ★ Non-accidental injury and significant injury or neglect events.
- ★ Attendance / admittance to hospital.
- ★ Births, deaths, serious illness of both adults and children.
- ★ House moves.
- ★ Changes in family composition, including new partners, separations, non-family members moving into family home.
- ★ Criminal proceedings and outcomes.
- ★ Civil proceedings involving family.
- ★ Change in school, school attendance, school exclusions.
- ★ Change in GP.
- ★ Self referrals and any referrals to other agencies / teams.
- ★ Court proceedings and changes in legal status, including periods when child became Looked After by the Local Authority.

- ★ Police logs detailing relevant incidents at family home or in relation to family members, such as reported incidents of domestic violence, drunken behaviour of carers.
- ★ Child abscondences / missing from home.
- ★ Attempted suicide or overdose of child, young person or family member.
- ★ Support offered to family.
- ★ Events showing capacity of family to work in partnership and engage with professionals.
- ★ Frequent presence of unknown adults.
- ★ Any event in the child's life deemed to have a significant affect on them, such as separation from main carer leading to poor attachment.

5. Format for Recording Chronology (Using Template Provided by WSCB)

The format for sharing information will be as follows:-

Date	The date of the episode or event.
Name	The individual(s) involved in the episode or event.
Source	The Agency or individual sharing the information.
Episode/ Event	The significant piece of information.
Outcome	Any action taken in response to the event or episode.

6. Process for Updating the Chronology

- 6.1 The chronology will be started at the Strategy Discussion / meeting when a decision is made whether or not to initiate a child protection investigation. If a child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan following a Child Protection Conference, one of the requirements of the plan will be to keep the chronology up to date.
- 6.2 The chronology will be updated at the start of each core group meeting and recorded in the core group minutes on the agreed format by the key worker (see Template provided by WSCB).
- 6.3 The Operations Manager in the Children's Social Care Team is responsible for ensuring that chronologies are maintained and kept up to date and details added to the child's computerised record as well as included in the social worker's report to the Child Protection Review Conference.