

Single-Agency and Multi-Agency Child's Chronology

This guidance aims to support practitioners to understand and recognise the important key requirements in the formulation of a Single and Multi-Agency chronology for children.

1. Introduction

1.1 This guidance aims to provide practitioners with an overview of Single and Multi-Agency chronologies and their use in the safeguarding of children and young people.

1.2 Children and young people are most effectively safeguarded when professionals work together and share information. Findings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have concluded that a chronology could have supported professionals to better understand and analyse accumulating risk.

2. What is a Chronology

2.1 A chronology is a tool that all practitioners can use to help them understand what is happening in the life of a child, adult or family. It is a list, in date order, of all the major changes and significant events in a child's, adult's or family's life. It provides a brief and summarised account of events to give an immediate overview of the child's timeline.

2.2 Chronology's can be compiled by single agency or be multi-agency/integrated, pulling together the knowledge and information held by agencies involved with the child, adult and family.

2.3 A chronology makes the links between the past and the present; helping to understand the importance of historic information upon what is happening in a child or adult's life now.

2.4 The chronology is also a tool that can, and should, be used to promote engagement with service users and their families. A well-constructed and skilfully employed chronology has the potential to help service users and families better understand their circumstances and promote their engagement in effecting change.

2.4 The chronology is an important tool in everyday practice and for the supervision process. Managers will be expected to monitor the use of chronologies through the use of identified Case File Audit Tools and routine supervisory arrangements.

These arrangements should consider:

- the context of any key events in a child or young person's life and asking the 'so what' question
- examining patterns and considering the impact both immediate and cumulative
- identifying actual or potential risks
- planning responses and reflecting on the effectiveness of interventions and support
- highlighting 'drift' and delay

2.5 By keeping track of what has and what is happening for a child or young person the chronology can be integral to promoting understanding of how their unique circumstances impact on their wellbeing.

2.6 It is essential that the worker ensures that all significant information shared with them is contained within their single agency chronology. Such information is vital in the assessment of children where there are emerging concerns. The named worker must ensure that chronologies are shared in a proportionate and appropriate manner with other professionals involved with the family, in line with agreed data sharing principles.

2.7 Close communication is vital between the worker and other professionals to ensure chronologies contain the most pertinent information on children, young people and their family circumstance. It's important that the journey of the child is clear!

3. What Should A Chronology Contain:

3.1 A child's chronology is the gathering together of events, incidents, milestones and circumstances in a child's life considered to be significant or to have possible significance by individual practitioners from a range of services and also possibly from the child and family.

In all cases the child's chronology will start with their birth, however in some cases, it will be relevant to start the chronology pre-birth. This will indicate emerging patterns of risk before the baby is born.

3.2 It is acknowledged that there are cases in which the family history is relevant to understanding the child's circumstances and there is a need to capture this within the child's chronology. The family history is most often communicated as part of the initial referral to Social Work and, ordinarily, this is how it should be detailed in the chronology.

3.3 A key event can be anything that has, or may have, a significantly positive or negative impact on the child. It does not have to happen to the child, but could result in a change of their circumstances, which has positive or negative consequences for them. It is important to note that what may be a key event in one child's life may not be relevant for another child. Chronologies for all children must be individual and for siblings should not simply be replication. The choice of events to include in an individual chronology requires the use of professional judgement. *The task for the practitioner is to use their professional judgement in identifying those which are having, have had, or likely to have a key impact on the wellbeing of the child/young person.*

3.4 A chronology must be:

- Accurate and evidence-based
- Succinctly recorded and child-focussed
- A record of facts, events, action taken, decisions made and the accountability of these decisions, or a note that no action was taken and if known the outcome (e.g. Support services provided). Responses from key professionals, parents/carers and the child
- Succinct – a very brief note of an event e.g. fell down stairs, came to school with a bruise, attended A&E, change in child's presentation /behaviour
- Evidence the voice of the child/young person
- Completed on an agreed template
- Concise, avoiding acronyms or professional
- Consider any events that are relevant in the context of why you feel the chronology is required

3.5 A chronology is not:

- a list of every single contact with a child or young
- a replacement for individual professional judgement or risk

- a replacement for direct discussion and routine information sharing between Practitioners, both intra and inter-agency.
- a replacement for early identification, intervention and
- a substitute for single agency
- an end in itself

3.6 Each service and/or agency must ensure that they have in place a mechanism to identify and collate accurately all known events considered **significant** in a child or young person's life over time - the single agency chronology.

3.7 Best practice indicates that contributing to the chronology will increase the participation and encourage the involvement of children and their families.

4. Involving the Child and the Family

4.1 Chronologies are part of recording and as such should be available to the person they are about. Involving the family in the chronology provides opportunity to check and ensure accuracy of information. It also promotes and strengthens working together with children, adults and their families, as it helps to obtain family members perspectives on events and develops an understanding of their impact on individuals in the family. Sharing the chronology with the family can support them to reflect on the content and help develop their understanding of the child/adult/family as well as identify progress or lack of progress. If there are concerns that sharing a chronology with a family would have an impact on the child seek advice from your designated lead.

5. Multi-agency Child's Chronology (MACC): Why and When?

5.1 The MACC is simply the integration of the single agency chronologies for the child and family. Practice and research has shown that integrated chronologies can be extremely important in identifying critical events in the lives of children and can assist professionals in decision making when working together with vulnerable children and families. The MACC can assist with assessment and analysis of risk, need and patterns within families, e.g. child repeatedly not brought for appointments or patterns of non-attendance at school. A single incident, no matter how significant or insignificant it may appear in itself, often takes on a far greater importance in the life of a child when placed in the context of a fully considered, time-lined integrated chronology.

5.2 A decision to collate a MACC may be an agreed outcome from a child's wellbeing meeting or from other planning meetings such as an initial child protection case conference, Looked After Review or Public Law Outline Procedures (PLO). The following are examples of circumstances where a MACC may be of particular value in assisting the assessment and planning process.

- Action has been taken to respond to immediate risk and a MACC is required to support further assessment and planning
- A pattern of events is beginning to emerge which suggests that the child's needs are not being met and/or is being put at
- Action taken to support the child/address concerns has not been successful and the child's circumstances have not
- There are concerns that the family is unwilling to engage with services/accept support to meet the child's

- Where fabricated or induced illness is suspected
- A case is complex and professionals are 'stuck'

5.3 The main purpose of compiling a MACC is to enable early intervention where patterns of concerns are beginning to emerge about a child and to inform the development of a multi-agency plan, where one is required, to meet the child's needs and address risks.

6. Multi-agency Child Chronology: Who is responsible for developing?

6.1 When a child's planning meeting determines the need for multi-agency child chronology a Lead Professional will be identified. This will be determined by an assessment of the child's needs and which agency is judged as being the most appropriate to undertake the role. Where there are concerns in respect of fabricated and or induced illness the responsibility for collating the health chronology will be a Lead Paediatrician. The responsibility of collating all single agency chronologies into a MACC will be Children's Services.

6.2 Responsibilities of the **Lead Professional** in relation to the MACC include:

- Agencies providing a succinct single agency chronology to the chair of the planning meeting which can then be merged to create a MACC.
- Lead the review and analysis process.
- Editing and cross checking information in MACC to avoid duplication. This includes situations where multiple notifications of the same event take place over a period of time.
- Where the family are challenging the accuracy, the lead professional will seek clarity from the author of the original single agency chronology to ensure there is evidence to support its inclusion in the MACC.
- Attend any meetings where the chronology may be critical to decision making.

Useful Tools:

- [Single/Multi-Agency Child's Chronology Template \(example\)](#)