

Children's Social Care Briefing in a Minute Chronologies

March 2017

What is a chronology and why are they important?

A chronology is a sequential story of **significant events** in a child and in their family history. It is a list, in date order, of all the significant events and changes in a child or young person's life, drawing upon the knowledge and information held by agencies, involved with the child and family, recorded as brief headlines to provide an immediate visual overview.

It is an important part of the case record about a child. A chronology is **not** the detailed case recording. However it contributes significantly, so that current events are understood, in the context of historical information. It helps assist with the understanding of the immediate and cumulative impact of events and changes upon the child and / or individual within a family or in their placement.

Why are they important?

Lord Laming noted the importance of a chronology in both the enquiries into the deaths of Victoria Climbié (2004) and Peter Connolly (2008) and stated in recommendation 58, that *"all Directors of social services had to ensure that every child's case record had a 'properly maintained chronology'"*.

A chronology therefore is a requirement on every open case.

It enables practitioners to gain a more accurate view of the whole case to inform the assessment and/ or care plan. Chronologies are a working tool, not an end in themselves. The needs of the assessment will influence the type of chronology required. The detail collected in a chronology may be increased if the risk increases.

A well compiled and up to date chronology provides for the following:

- A succinct history of the child to be immediately available
- It helps place the child at the centre of everything we do
- An "at a glance" full picture of the family and the level (and pattern) of any previous history of risk, concerns and issues
- A tool to use with family member(s) to gain insight into particular family members perspective regarding key events.
- It helps us to make links between the past and the present, helping us to understand the importance of historic information, upon what is happening in a child's life now
- Good chronologies enable new workers to become familiar with the child's journey
- Importantly a good case chronology can at a later stage help children, young people and families make sense of their past
- Using chronologies in practice can promote better engagement from children and families
- Accurate chronologies can assist in the process of assessment, care planning and review and good quality life story
- It helps us to make links between the past and the present and assists us to understand the important of historic information upon what is happening in a child's life now

What is a significant event and needs to be included in a chronology?

A number of core issues should always be considered, but may not be relevant for every case. Therefore professional judgement is required. Each child is different, so there will need to be other events or incidents that are included at times. Below is a list of events that need to be included:

- Family history – including births, deaths, marriages/civil partnerships, changes in household etc.
- Childs changes of address / school/ GP/ Social worker etc.
- Contacts and referrals to current (or another authority)
- S 47 enquiries / investigations
- Child Protection Case Conferences / being made subject to a plan
- Accommodation (including requests and consideration of accommodation)
- LAC Reviews
- Key Strategy /Planning/Professionals meetings and assessments
- Family Group Conferences / Family Meetings
- Incidents of child going missing or missing education, or other behaviour which is of concern eg CSE; gang affiliation; offending etc.
- Attendance at A and E
- Relevant medical examinations (including non attendance) or diagnosis
- Episodes of self harm
- Critical incidents including Police Notifications
- Critical incidents that may only involve parents / carers eg DV, substance misuse, mental health crisis
- Take up / non take up of services
- Significant referrals from other agencies
- Significant referrals to other agencies
- Criminal proceedings

Other issues that are significant to a particular family may also be recorded e.g. observations during a home visit. Positive factors should also be recorded e.g.

- Evidence of positive family engagement
- Parents self-referring for support
- Childs presentation / appearance/ weight improves
- Childs attendance improves e.g. school, Health setting etc

When should a chronology be started and updated?

- A chronology needs to be started on receipt of referral and is part of the ongoing assessment and social work involvement
- It should be updated whenever there is a significant event and prior to case transfer/ before a CP Conference / LAC review etc.

How do you create and update a Life Event Chronology

You can record life events in either Totalview or Carefirst. Totalview allows you to duplicate life events across multiple clients so is often a better choice to use than Carefirst. A description of the process for recording in Totalview is set out below.

Open relevant person - In Totalview open the relevant person

Main menu side bar - Click on the Life Events link on the side menu

Drop down boxes - This will bring up a series of dropdown boxes.

Event type and category - Click on the relevant *Event Type* and then the relevant *Event Category* (e.g. Event Type “*Assessment*” and Event Type “*Child and Family Assessment*”)

Event date and date notified – this is the date the piece of information relates to, it could be today if the event happened today or could be a date in the past if the information is historic.

You can add the date manually if historical info is being added, or double click if the information relates to today's date.

Date Notified is usually the date you are adding the information

Details - This should be BRIEF, there is limited text here, and should be a factual headline as to what happened in the event, e.g. “*Placement break down*”

Text - Use this to give a summary of the event, slightly more text is allowed here than details. This should be a factual account of what happened in the event, e.g. “*Following attempts to mediate by Children's Social Care and the Fostering Agency both the foster carer and young person stated that they did not wish for the placement to continue*”

End date - There is no need to use this as everything in the chronology will always remain significant.

Impact - Specify the impact on the child and family (A lot of text is allowed here). However information should be concise and Social Work judgment will be required. Specific outcomes, for example: No further action, proceed to Initial child protection conference etc. should be recorded, however what is required in this section is to capture what affect the event has had on the child/ren whether this be positive or negative.

Significant in chronology - Ignore this, do not tick the box, it is automatically generated by the system.

Duplicate to more than one client – Once all the above information has been added, to duplicate to additional clients select the small white 'select additional client' box on the top right hand side of the screen. Or if they don't appear in the list click 'Find' (bottom right of search box) and search as usual.

NB Life Events added in Care First will update immediately, however those in Total View will take a little while to update.

Add life event - Once all clients you wish to record the life event for have been selected, press “*Add Life Event*”. Now repeat steps for anymore events.

How to create a Chronology document from Life Events

You can view a readable and printable word version of the Life Events Chronology in Totalview. The chronology can be viewed on screen, or converted to a word document and edited for different purposes. Follow the instructions below to do this:

Open relevant person - In Totalview open the relevant person

Main menu side bar - Click on the Life Events Reports link on the side menu – this will display a overview version of the chronology

Creating a word version of your life events chronology to print – at the bottom right hand side of the screen you will see a *Print* button, press print and this will open a word version of the chronology which can be saved/ e-mailed/ edited etc. if necessary

Edit and save – the stand alone document can be edited as required and can be re-saved to Total View if required

We are always looking to improve practice and therefore we are currently considering feedback from practitioners to consider how the process for Life Events Chronologies may be improved.

For further information:

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