



Wider Children's Workforce and other Professionals Guidance on Completing a Basic Chronology

This guidance has been developed for all professionals and managers that have ongoing engagement with a child.

Local and national research, guidance and learning from Serious Case Reviews shows the importance of understanding a family's history, in order to form an analysis of a child's needs. Only by understanding history can we predict future needs and recognise families' resilience.

What is a chronology?

A chronology is a record of all significant events and changes in the life of a child, that is known to your setting.

The purpose of a chronology is to help to structure information and aide analysis of the impact of events and changes, for a child or young person.

A chronology is used to inform a professional analysis and helps to show patterns, themes, strengths, weaknesses and the ability to maintain change.

A good chronology should give a clear picture of the child's journey and experiences and assist professionals in decision making. However, a chronology is not a list of everything that is known about the child.

Why are they needed?

We need a chronology:

- To keep the 'child in mind', at the 'front & centre' of our thinking;
- To help identify risk, emerging / established themes and repeating patterns in a child's life.
- To better understand what is significant to a child or young person and why?

And:

- To enable sharing of concise summaries of concerns with the child, family and other agencies.

Measuring change is particularly important where a professional may have concerns about neglect. Research has shown that it is very difficult for professionals, working in busy settings, to maintain a clear view of the progress of children and their families. Very often improvements can be inconsistent, and it is easy to become de-sensitised to deteriorating conditions, when working with families over long periods of time.

When should a chronology be started?

A chronology should be started when any professional that has ongoing involvement with a child or family, becomes **curious** about a child's circumstances.

A number of scenarios when a chronology may helpfully be commenced include:

- Where a child's behaviour changes suddenly in school
- When a child comes to nursery and has a number of minor injuries
- Where a child is missing school or persistently arriving late
- A child has had multiple attendances to A&E
- A child is not brought to important health checks
- You start to work with a child where other agencies have been had worries about neglect previously
- A parent has restarted a substance misuse treatment programme and has missed a number of appointments
- A child's emotional wellbeing and mental health appear to be declining

Good practice in using chronologies

It is good practice to share a completed chronology with a parent or parents and where possible a young person or child. This is a good way to check accuracy, test out any worries you may have and also enable a parent to understand your perspective.

Chronologies should be used to regularly review the lived experience of a child and how a family is managing.

Natural points of review include:

- A meeting with a manager
- Preparation for a professional meeting with another agency
- When a child's circumstances appear to be "stuck"
- At a point of transition e.g. between schools, nursery or other services such as midwifery to health visiting or health visiting services to schools.
- The worker and manager want to test the impact of support offered before ceasing involvement E.g. at the end of a CAMHS intervention.