

A chronology is a simple way of capturing a family's history by noting the significant events that have occurred during the family's journey through life. It is a working progress document that should be completed for every child in the family. It is to be updated by the child's social worker and include key incidents so as to be a 'sequential story' of significant events in a family history. This allows the practitioner to understand current events in the context of historical information, e.g. patterns within families. A chronology also provides an understanding of the immediate and cumulative impact of events and changes upon individuals within a family and therefore informs decision making.

A significant event is an incident that impacts upon a child's safety, welfare, circumstances or home environment.

### Why is it important?

The purpose of a chronology is to bring together factual information in a concise and complete way. It must not include opinion or judgement.

- It is to gain an overview of events and changes in a child's, young person's or adult's life
- To help practitioners understand the impact, immediate and cumulative, of events and changes in the child's or adult's progress
- To provide accumulative evidence of emerging needs and risks, and flag when a multi-agency response may be required
- To support the early identification of patterns and issues. This can support and is part of assessing and managing risk and is particularly useful in cases where there may be no single incident, i.e. in cases of neglect
- To support assessments in considering past events and their relevance to the child's, adult's or family's current situation
- To assist in the process of assessment, analysis, planning and review when working with a child, young person and family
- To promote and strengthen working with children and their families and can help a child and family make sense of their life

### How do we do it?

It is helpful to ask the family members to each draw a timeline and talk through their story - noting significant events. Practitioners should have a list of all reported concerns that can be shared with the family and woven in to the 'story' so as to create a chronology. Some of the concerns may be disputed by the family. This will inform useful discussion if the practitioner is following restorative principles - working with, not doing to, or for.

To be of value a chronology should be:

- Succinct
- Simple in format
- Informative

### You should include:

- Family history, including; births, marriages and deaths, and changes in the make-up of the household
- Child's change of address or school
- Child protection (CP) investigations
- Dates of CP conferences and outcomes
- Key planning meetings and outcomes
- Relevant health examinations
- Incidents giving rise to concerns (e.g. PPNs, referrals from other agencies, child's injuries/illnesses, etc.)

- Significant interventions and/or services provided
- Significant changes (positive as well as negative)
- Child being accommodated and who with (name only)
- Court applications, hearings and orders
- It may be appropriate to summarise repeat events, e.g. supervised contact summary - X contacts offered, Ms X attended 60% was late for 10% of these - no concerns
- Ensure that if you are introducing a new name - you include relevant information about who they are and where they have come from

**Example chronology:**

DATE	SIGNIFICANT EVENT/ PATTERN / SEQUENCE	ACTION TAKEN
01/03/2019	Harry and Sally moved to Portsmouth with their mother, Sarah, after fleeing domestic abuse by Sally's father	No action required
15/04/2019	T/C from health visitor - Harry (10 month old) has a bruise underneath his eye	S47 investigation Allocated for a Single Assessment CIN
20/05/2019	OOH - mother was intoxicated with her new partner - Harry and Sally accommodated with PCC carers	S47 Investigation, Harry and Sally were accommodated for one night