

Quality Standards and Practice Guidance for writing a chronology.

Quality Standards (see separate section for chronologies for the Family Court)

1. Every child's record should have an up to date chronology.
2. This should be updated every time there is a significant event which impacts on the child. It should also be reviewed and updated at key points in working with a family eg. Calling a Child Protection Conference or when a child comes into Care.
3. The chronology should be shared with parents/carers, and child/young person where appropriate, at the time of writing and when it is reviewed.
4. The chronology should always begin at the time of the pregnancy of the parent's first child.
5. If, during the writing of a Single Assessment, or when working with the family after an assessment, it becomes apparent that the parent/s' own experience of childhood has particular relevance to the parenting of their own child/ren, the social worker may choose to start the chronology earlier to incorporate significant events in the parent/s' childhood.
6. Chronologies should be reviewed in supervision, particularly in complex cases or cases where the social worker feels stuck.
7. Entries in chronologies should be brief, factual and accurate.

Practice Guidance (this addresses each column of the chronology template)

1. Date of event:

Chronologies should be in date order, earliest first. Where a number of similar events occur in a short time period, these can be summarised.eg. 'February 2013. A pattern of missed appointments emerging', rather than recording each occasion. NB. See section at the end on practice and recording issues

2. Age of child:

It is important that this is completed, as seeing the age of the child/young person at the time that an event occurred can have much more of an impact than the date of the event.

3. Source:

This is where the information for this entry in the chronology came from.eg.

Observation records, referral from school, notification from Police.

4. Significant event:

Deciding what is a significant event is a matter of professional judgement. The chronology needs to tell the story of a child's life, and significant events need to be identified in that context. What impact did that event have on this child? Eg domestic violent incidents when a child was present are more important to record than incidents that occurred before the child was born or when the child wasn't there.

5. Action taken:

This needs to record what action was taken in response to the significant event, by professionals working with the family. Was a key decision taken? Eg. strategy meeting leading to S47 enquiries, accommodation of child under a S.20 agreement, referral to another service.

Chronologies for the Family Court

- Headings for chronologies to be presented in Court are as follows;
 - Date
 - Event
 - Witness or document reference (source)
- The chronology template therefore needs to be edited, before printing.

Delete the columns headed; age, and action taken

- Add the serial number next to the child's name on the first page of the chronology.
- The chronology should be no more than three-four pages in length
- The chronology should go back no more than two years prior to the start of Proceedings
- Use the Social Work Statement to cross-reference Children's services involvement to the chronology

This will allow more flexibility for incorporating relevant historical information and more detail about a significant event or action taken, than the court chronology allows. Eg.

Date	Event	Source
7th July 2011	Child A was found wandering in the street by a neighbour. When taken home, mother was intoxicated and unable to care safely for child.	Referral by neighbour. CSC records

Cross-referenced in Statement;

' This was the sixth occasion in the previous eighteen months when mother had left her child unsupervised and was incapacitated due to drugs/alcohol. On each occasion, the child was placed temporarily in the care of maternal aunt until mother was able to resume parenting.'

Other practice and recording issues

- The chronology should not be seen as a bureaucratic exercise but as a vital practice tool to assist in reflection, analysis, planning, intervention and review of work with a family.
- The chronology should not be a repetition of case records, but brief points.
- Every child's record should have a chronology. The chronology can be copied and pasted onto siblings records and edited where necessary.
- There is now not a chronology section in the Single Assessment record. A chronology should be opened up as a stand alone record when an assessment is started.
- It should be filed and edited in documentum, under assessments. It should remain open, even when the case is closed. This means that in the event of a new referral, when the case is opened again, the chronology will be open, ready to be updated.
- When presenting a S47/Single Assessment report for an Initial Child Protection Conference, a stand alone chronology should accompany the report.

September 2013

