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One Minute Guide: Chronologies

What is a chronology?

- 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.
- An important part of the whole case record about a child. A chronology is **not** the detailed case recording, a diary/list of dates, an assessment or an end in itself.

Why are we doing it?

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

- A succinct history of the child to be immediately available.
- An "at a glance" full picture of the family and the level (and pattern) of any previous history of risk, concerns, and issues.
- A good chronology can draw attention to seemingly unrelated events or information.
- It helps to place children at the centre of everything we do.
- It helps us to make links between the past and the present, helping 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 case.
- 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 the process of assessment, care planning and review.

In 2002, Lord Laming, following his enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié stated that within 6 months of the publication of his report Directors of social services had to ensure that every child's case record had a "properly maintained chronology".

In the Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children, in October 2012, it was noted that “the use of chronologies has become well embedded within recent months and they are now used effectively by social workers as a working tool”.

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

As with other recording on PROTOCOL, a chronology should be factual, and where opinion is stated this must be made clear that this is the case.

DO NOT copy and paste case notes for the details of any significant event, just state what happened being brief and succinct.

Below is a list of events that need to be included in any chronology, but professional judgement is also required. Each child is different, so there will need to be other events or incidents that are included at times.

- Family History - including marriages/civil partnerships, births, deaths, changes in the household, and emigration details as appropriate
- Child's changes of address/school/GP/social worker etc.
- Child Protection Case Conferences/being made subject of a CP Plan
- LAC Reviews
- Key Strategy/Planning/Professionals Meetings and Assessments
- Child goes missing
- Attendance at A & E
- Relevant Medical Examinations (including non-attendance) or diagnosis
- Episodes of self-harm
- Critical Incidents, including Police Notifications (Form 78s) and section 47 Child Protection investigations
- Critical incidents that may only involve the parent/carer/s – i.e. Domestic Violence, abuse of drugs/alcohol, mental health crises etc.
- Any offences committed by either child or parent/s or carer/s
- Take up/non take up of services
- Case open/closed and to whom allocated or referred to other agencies - including summarised reason(s) for decision(s)
- Accommodations (including requests for and consideration of accommodation)
- Any behaviour of the child(ren) that is of concern e.g. a child going missing or absconding
- All referrals to the Children’s Trust, identifying who referred, what action was/not taken and the reason why
- Concerning information/contacts from agencies/individuals e.g. allegations (substantiated or otherwise)
- Recorded positive events or strengths
- History of Court Applications, Hearings and Orders

When should a chronology be started and updated?

- A chronology needs to be started on receipt of a referral/if an Initial/Core Assessment is started/on allocation to a worker.
- It should be updated whenever there is a significant event/before a CP Conference/LAC Review/after a CP Conference/LAC Review/every 6 months

How is a chronology created on PROTOCOL?

For more information contact the ICS Helpdesk on icshelpdesk@redbridge.gov.uk