[TITLE]

Title	Chronology Procedure May 2020
Purpose/scope	To understand Chronologies
Subject key words	Chronology
Council Priority	
Lead author & contact details	Stella Pugh
Date Established	May 2020
Date of Next Review	May 2021
Service Improvement & Efficiency Validation	
Legal Sign Off	
Finance Sign Off	
Approver and date	

Chronology Procedure

Revised June 2020

When reading this document please also refer to the [Genograms Process May 20 v1.0 SP](#)

1. Introduction:

This document provides an overview of what a chronology is, what it should include, and how this process is completed on the Children's Case Management System (LCS). It will also provide advice and guidance for completing a chronology and give examples to illustrate expectations.

The expectation and our practice standard set out that every child who is open to Children's Social Care should have a chronology on their file, that clearly captures significant events in their lives. This should start at the first point of contact and continue to be updated throughout their journey with our service.

Important events should be explored and understood with the family, to ensure they are captured, even if services were not involved with the family during that time of an event. The child should be included in discussions about what is significant to them, this might be about adults moving into their home, having a new pet or changing school.

2. What is a Chronology:

A chronology is a series of significant events and changes that occur in a family/child life. These events could be a significant incident for example a bereavement, a divorce, a house move. The event could also be an incident that may not seem significant to the child, but potentially is something that could be considered by the social worker as a risk for example a domestic abuse incident, being left home alone, or not being taken to medical appointments.

A chronology is not: a detailed account of an event, it is a brief summary. Ideally it might cross reference to a more detailed account of an incident, but the chronology, does not contain details, analysis or supporting information in relation to that event.

A chronology is **not**: a list of social work processes such as 'Assessment' 'Referral' or 'Child Protection Conference'.

3 Why a Chronology is Important:

One key purpose of a chronology is to provide an overview of a child's journey so that social workers can quickly be able to gain insight into risks and vulnerability factors as well as gain a deeper understanding of the child's life journey.

A chronology built up over time and contains historical information too, so can help to identify patterns of incidents, pervasiveness and frequency of adverse childhood experiences. This contributes to building a picture of likely significant harm, and the current risks that the child may face and support analysis and professional judgement. To this end, historical information contributes to the assessment and management of risk.

A chronology can help children, young people and as they become adults, understand and make sense of their own history and why decisions were made regarding their care, and to keep them safe. It is therefore essential that a chronology captures significant happy times that children have enjoyed and what is important to them. The chronology does of course need to be factual about risk but balanced with significant positive life experiences.

A chronology is essential, and our policy requires that every child open to Children's Social Care has an up to date, relevant chronology on file. The completion of this is central to social work practice and enables us to understand the lived experience of the child and of their family.   As social workers we are trained to understand the impact of incidents on children and should draw on research and evidence to inform us about the impact of significant events. When we are thinking about the impact of events on children we need to consider their reaction and the importance of seeing this in the context of their experiences in a trauma informed way. For example: we can often mistake a coping strategy for what appears to be resilience. In this way history and patterns also allows us to see how children change their reactions and develop coping strategies to adversity.

4 **When should a Chronology be undertaken:**

A chronology should begin from the moment a significant event occurs and Children's Social Care are advised of this through procedures such as referral or expression of concern.
(*Notes for teams on who is responsible)

Once a chronology has begun, the task is to update it. A new chronology does not start, each time a child is referred to the Service. Significant events that have occurred while there was no involvement, should be added to build on the picture we have through maintaining the chronology.

The information that is entered onto the chronology should start from the first relevant significant event that is known at that time. As part of an assessment, more historical information will be gleaned as we work with families to understand their story. Creating a chronology of events with a family is an intervention in itself, and part of an assessment process. An example of a relevant significant event prior to any Social Care involvement might be the birth of the child or siblings (other examples below illustrate significant events).

5 **What is a "significant event"?** Deciding what constitutes a significant event can be a matter of professional judgement. It can be very clear if an event is so significant that it results in social workers acting to safeguard. However, there are events that may be more significant for some children than others, and judgement comes into the decision. An example of a grey area could be a missed medical appointment. If this is in the context of medical neglect, it will be more significant for a child, than a one off missed appointment for a child in good health.

Positive experiences that are significant to the family should also be balanced with what we are concerned about.

The following is a guideline but is not exhaustive:

a. Anything that is important to a child: A holiday, a pet, a new addition to the family home, birthday parties.

b. Events that have resulted in referral being raised highlighting concern of harm or for the welfare of a child (and their siblings)

c. An event that is significant to trigger a child protection conference, or that results in a child becoming looked after, or becoming subject to any other social care episode (CIN or EH).

d. Non-accidental injuries / suspicious injuries / significant injury / visible injury

e. School achievements

f. Child left home (missing criteria) or was left home alone for an inappropriate amount of time (age / stage dependent)

g. Attendance at A&E / minor injuries walk in centers / hospital admissions or non-attendance of health service and / or cancellation of essential medical appointments

h. Significant ill health of parent or child

i. Births and deaths of significant adults and children

j. House move / placement move / homelessness;

k. People moving in or out of the home and any significant separation from a primary carer

l. Change in family composition such as new partners, separations, or unknown adults in the house;

m. Criminal proceedings and outcomes / civil proceedings involving family / court proceedings / changes in legal status / family proceedings;

n. Prison sentences of any key adults or young people;

o. Reported incident of domestic violence / substance misuse / periods of mental health;

p. Child absconding from school or missing from home;

q. Incidents of possible exploitation

r. Attempted suicide / self-harming / overdoses of child or family member;

s. Any event in a child's life deemed to have a significant impact upon them

t. Disclosure from child or any other party detailing harm or abuse - physical harm / sexual harm / emotional harm.

6 **Is a Chronology for Court any different?** You will need to present the chronology at a legal planning meeting. Your line manager and legal representative will advise on the significant events that would need to be included as part of the evidence you present to Court. This should be extracted from the child's chronology and be imported into the SWET (Social Work Evidence Template).

Refer to LCS User Guide – Creating a Court Chronology & Importing Chronologies to Court Reports.

(And later to Child Protection Conference Reports and Looked After Children Reviews. The guidance will be revised to incorporate fully once further changes are activated to Liquid Logic 1/7/2020)

How to record a Chronology:

A chronology should be recorded within the child's Demographics screen under the category of **Chronology**.

Although there may be older chronologies on file, from the previous database, all current and new chronologies must be recorded in the Chronology section of the system.
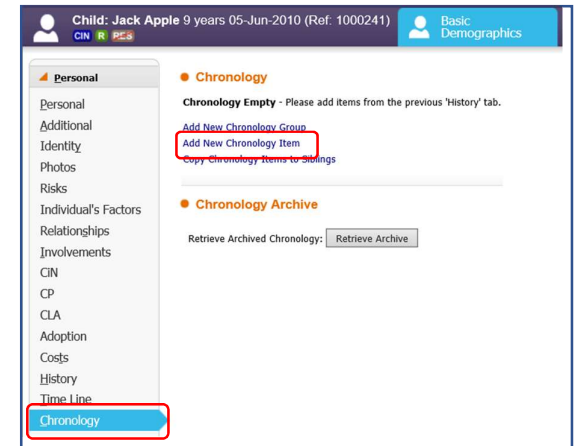
The first entry of this chronology can refer to the archived version (in documents) rather than repeating or starting the chronology again, when there is already a chronology that is relevant and appropriate on file. It is essential in these circumstances that the cross reference to the archived chronology is clear and specific so that other people can easily identify which chronology in documents is the one being referred to.
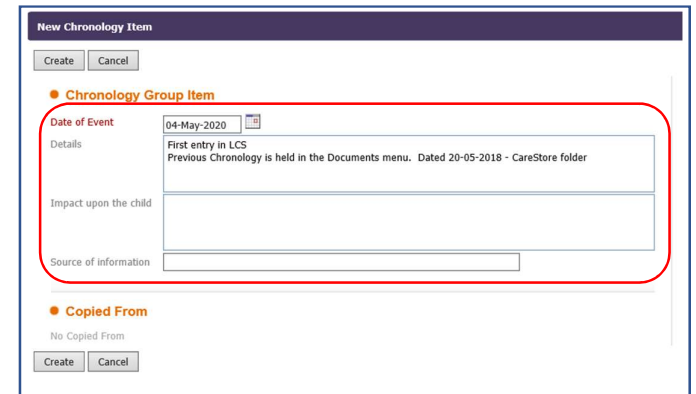
The quality assurance guidance below, gives tips and advice to consider when entering significant chronological events to the chronology:

a. **Accuracy** – record the date of the event not the date it was entered into the chronology or the date that you found out about it.

b. **Chronologically** - Record events in the order in which they happen, so that the dates run consecutively, even though you may receive information out of sequence.

c. **Source of Information** - this section allows you to record where the information came from e.g. Health Visitor / Family Member / Anonymous. You can also cross reference to a document if this is available in the child's file e.g. Conference Report from Health Visitor dated xxxx

d. **Factually and succinctly** – record events that are factual. The record should succinctly summarise the facts only, and not include opinion or analysis.

e. **Professionally** - Recording should always detail the impact the event had on the child where there is a direct cause and effect evident. A direct impact may also be recorded that results from a management decision about that incident e.g a child falling out of a window could result in an injury (direct impact) and also could result in a decision such as 'significant harm threshold met' or 'investigation to take place'.

f. **In Compliance** - Use the agreed format. Each sibling must have their own chronology, although it is recognised that significant events are likely to be significant to all of the children in a sibling group and therefore can be consolidated (grouped together).

*Notes for teams – who is responsible

Compass

Where the information received by Compass staff results in a Strategy Discussion, on a previously unknown child, the coordinator will need to start the chronology detailing the current concern. This needs to be a brief summary of the reason for referral, using the incident date being reported. They can add the outcome (in the impact / outcome section too) which will be Strategy Meeting

If the child / family are already known to Children's Services but there is no chronology under the chronology section in Liquid Logic, Compass staff will look for historical information to inform the Strategy Discussion. If at this point an archived chronology is found in documents, this should be noted as a first entry on the new chronology as detailed above. They will then add the current concern that is resulting in the strategy meeting.

Assessment

The assessment social worker will continue the chronology following the Strategy Meeting, including the collecting any other significant events that may have occurred historically, as part of their current assessment.

Where information received by Compass staff results in a Social Work Assessment under s17, the Social Worker from Assessment Team will need to identify the most relevant previous chronology where there is one and continue from that point on Liquid Logic as detailed above.

Transfer Procedure (ALL)

In line with transfer protocols it is essential that the Team Manager transferring the file carries out a QA audit before agreeing the transfer date. Checking that the chronologies are complete is part of that audit. Managers should ensure that there is a chronology on Liquid Logic that minimally covers any referrals from 2018 to the current date (since the LL system has been in place) and that where an older / archived chronology exists in documents that this is correctly referenced at the start of the new chronology, and therefore easily identifiable.