



Single & Multi-Agency Child Chronology

Good Practice Guidance
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getting
it right
for every child



Fife Partnership Creating a Fairer Fife

This guidance aims to support practitioners to understand and recognise the important key requirements in the formulation of a single and multi-agency chronology for children.

Improving outcomes for children and young people is a priority for all services in Fife. Chronologies can be important in identifying significant or critical events and patterns in the lives of children and young people and are a tool that supports ongoing assessment of needs and risks.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2021) advocates the use of multi-agency frameworks where children and families are particularly vulnerable and/or have complex needs. The guidance helpfully considers and explores the benefits of integrating single agency chronologies to consider the 'whole world' of the child.

This guidance is informed and underpinned by the following:

- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2021).
- The National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People (The Scottish Government, 2012).
- Practice Guide: Chronologies (Care Inspectorate, 2017).

A chronology sets out details of key events in a child's/young person's life in sequential date order using a specified format and is used to inform assessment, analysis, decision making and planning.

Chronology: Purpose

Producing a chronology is not an end in itself. The value of the chronology lies in its use as a critical tool for the collation and management of key information relating to a child or young person's wellbeing. The chronology should not replace existing case notes or records which will include much more detailed and sensitive information on a child/young person and their family/carer, and a clear distinction must be made between the two. The chronology should be succinctly recorded and be of significance to the child.

Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding of the child's/young person's situation and the challenges/needs that exist for them. The process of compiling, updating, and reviewing a summary timeline of a child's/young person's circumstances supports assessment and analysis. By using a chronology format to systematically organise information this helps identify gaps, areas for further exploration, distinguish patterns of behaviour, and demonstrate the impact of interventions. The chronology also establishes a sound foundation for future understanding and analysis where professional staff change or new staff or services engage with the child/young person/family/carer.

A well-constructed and considered chronology is therefore a valuable and dynamic working tool which aids assessment and analysis, informs decision making and intervention. The chronology is also a tool that can be used to promote engagement with children/young people and their families/carers. Although the content of the chronology will be determined by professional judgement, children/young people and their families/carers will have views on the content and the inferences drawn. It also has the potential to help children/young people and families/carers better understand their circumstances and work alongside support services effectively.

Applied as an assessment tool, consideration of a chronology can be an integral part of formal supervision or other support mechanisms (depending on the service you work within) as well as an area that should be considered in quality assurance mechanisms. This is an opportunity to:

- consider key events in a child or young person's life and asking the 'so what' question.
- examine patterns and consider the impact both immediate and cumulative.
- identify actual or potential risks.
- plan responses and reflect on the effectiveness of interventions and support strengths.
- highlight 'drift' and delay.

Simply producing a chronology is not the objective. The chronology is not intended to be a document that is created, filed, and forgotten only to be brought out and updated when asked for, or when a report is due. By keeping track of what has and what is happening for a child or young person the chronology can be integral to promoting understanding of how their unique circumstances could impact on their wellbeing.

Chronology: Content

A chronology is the gathering together of events, incidents, milestones, and circumstances in a child's/young person's life considered to be **significant or to have possible significance** by individual practitioners from a range of services and possibly from the child/young person and their family/carers. In all cases the chronology will start with their birth, however in some cases, it will be relevant to start the chronology pre-birth.

A key event can be anything that has, or may have, a significantly positive or negative impact on the child/young person. It does not have to happen to the child/young person, but could result in a change of their circumstances, which has positive or negative consequences for them. It is important to note that what may be a key event in one child's/young person's life may not be relevant for another child/young person. Chronologies for all children/young people must be individual and for siblings should not simply be replication. The choice of events to include in an individual chronology requires the use of professional judgement. The task for the practitioner is to use their professional judgement in identifying those which are having, have had, or likely to have a key impact on the wellbeing of the child/young person, the 'so what' question.

A chronology must be:

- accurate and evidence based.
- a record of facts, events, action taken or a note that no action was taken and if known the outcome (e.g., support services provided).
- succinct – a very brief note of an event e.g., came to school with a bruise, attended A&E, change in child's presentation/behaviour.
- completed on the agreed template.
- concise, avoiding acronyms or professional jargon.
- maintained, e.g., a series of events may have been relevant at the time they were recorded, but several years later they would be unnecessarily detailed.

A chronology is not:

- a list of every single contact with a child or young person.
- a replacement for individual professional judgement or risk assessment.
- a replacement for direct discussion and routine information sharing between practitioners, both intra and inter-agency.
- a replacement for early identification, intervention, and support.
- a substitute for single agency recording.
- an end in itself.

Each service and/or agency must ensure that they have in place a mechanism/system to collate accurately all known events considered **significant** in a child or young person's life over time - the single agency chronology.

Best practice indicates that contributing to the chronology will increase the participation and involvement of children and their families as part of a Team Around the Child approach and other multi agency meetings.

Chronology: Types of Key Events

The type of events or incidents to be considered for inclusion in a chronology will reflect an aspect of the child/young person's circumstances that is significant because:

**It would be a notable occurrence in any child or young person's life; or
It is a notable occurrence in this particular child's/young person's life.**

Appendix B provides illustrations of significant events which could be considered and included – although comprehensive, it is not an exhaustive list and does not replace professional judgement. Not all the examples will need to be used in chronologies.

Multi-Agency Child's Chronology (MACC): Why and when?

A **MACC** is the integration of single agency chronologies for the child/young person. Practice and research have shown that integrated chronologies can be extremely important in identifying critical events or cumulative concerns across agencies in the lives of children/young people and can assist professionals in decision making when working together with vulnerable children/young people and their families/carers. A single incident, no matter how significant or insignificant it may appear in itself, often takes on a far greater importance in the life of a child/young person when placed in the context of a fully considered, time-lined integrated chronology.

National child protection guidance promotes the development of a MACC to support assessment. **For Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) including initial CPPM's**, all agencies should ensure a concise single agency chronology is submitted with reports. Guidance confirms, '*The lead professional will consolidate a multi-agency chronology for each Child Protection Planning Meeting. Contribution to the chronology is a collective responsibility. Forming a chronology should assist a shared understanding with and between those involved in developing a Child Protection Plan about strengths, needs and concerns over time, for the purpose of reducing risk of significant harm to a child.*'

For a Team Around the Child (TAC) Meeting, a decision to create a MACC may be an agreed outcome. Professional discussion will be required to determine if a MACC is a key action from a TAC meeting. The following are examples of circumstances where a MACC may be of value in assisting the assessment, planning process and decision to agree a MACC:

- Action has been taken to respond to immediate risk and a MACC is required to support further assessment and planning.
- A pattern of events is beginning to emerge which suggests that the child's/young person's needs are not being met and/or is being put at risk.
- Action taken to support the child/young person and address concerns has not been successful and the child's/young person's circumstances have not improved.
- There are concerns that the family is unwilling to engage with services/accept support to meet the child's/young person's needs.

The main purpose of compiling a MACC is to enable further analysis of where patterns of concerns are beginning to emerge about a child/young person. This will facilitate the development of a multi-agency plan, where one is required, to meet the child's/young person's needs and address risks.

MACC: Who is responsible for developing the MACC?

As noted above the lead professional is responsible for creating a MACC for Child Protection Planning Meetings. When a TAC meeting or other type of planning meeting, determines the need for a child's plan a **lead professional** will be identified. This will be determined by an assessment of the child's/young person's needs and which agency is agreed as being the most appropriate to undertake the role.

Responsibilities of the **lead professional** in relation to the MACC include:

- Merging single agency chronologies into a MACC (**single agencies are responsible for ensuring their own chronologies are succinct, shared with the family/child and follow the agreed template as well as being relevant to the purpose of the meeting at that moment in time**).
- Leading the review and analysis process.
- Cross-checking information in the MACC to avoid duplication. This includes situations where multiple notifications of the same event take place over a period of time. **This will be reliant on single agencies ensuring the content submitted is concise and accurate.**
- Where the family/other professionals are challenging the accuracy, the lead professional will seek clarity from the information source of the original single agency chronology to ensure there is evidence to support its inclusion in the MACC.

Appendix A

Single/Multi-Agency Child's Chronology

Name		LCS No.		
Date of Birth		CHI No.		
		SCN No.		
Information in the MACC has been collated by the lead professional, but responsibility for accuracy remains with single agencies				
Date of Event dd/mm/yy	Significant Event	Action Taken: Agency & Outcome if Known	Information source (MACC only)	Age of child at time of incident (years & months)
<i>Date of the actual event, not when a report of the event was received.</i>	<i>Anything that may have a significant positive or negative impact on the wellbeing or future development of this person.</i>	<i>The outcome should reflect what happened to the person and the impact, not just the agency response. E.g., in the event of an incident of physical abuse, the outcome may be that person remained at home or the alleged perpetrator was asked to leave.</i>		

Appendix B – Examples of significant events

Changes to family structure (to be considered by all agencies)

- Subject's birth, birth/death of siblings, death of mother/father/significant other
- Parental separation or divorce
- Custodial sentence of any family member
- Prolonged absence of a family member
- Mother's/father's partner joins/leaves the family
- Presence or absence of a child living in the house, i.e., other children or siblings joining or leaving the household
- Pregnancy - subject's or that of a significant other
- An established pattern of missed appointments without acceptable reasons

Housing

- Homelessness
- Positive or negative changes in family and housing e.g. relocation, eviction, transfer to private tenancy
- Positive or negative changes in neighbour relations or anti-social issues
- Evidence of, or referrals for suspected drug dealing, drug taking or excessive alcohol use
- Reports of anti-social behaviour on the child or parents
- Any concerns about the safety or welfare of children or young people noted directly by housing staff or passed to them by others in the
- Referrals to social work and or supporting agencies
- Dates of key meetings

Education

- Start/finish of pre-school education
- Start/finish of a course of education
- Positive or negative changes in performance, attainment or achievement
- Additional support needs identified such as Pupil Support Services, Educational Psychology
- Change in educational provision/school attended
- Significant periods of nonattendance/absence/exclusion
- Any threats or actual incidents of violence to staff by parents or child
- Positive or negative changes in parental presence, engagement or support with child's learning



- Referrals to social work and or supporting agencies

Social Work

- All referrals to social work.
- Referral to other social work service for example; Emergency Support Team, Multi-Systemic Therapy Team, Family Support Service, or commissioned services
- Significant home visits and significant changes in child demeanor/presentation
- Association with others involved in criminal activity, etc.
- Incidences/periods of lack of engagement with social work services
- Child protection investigations / legal measures taken
- Date of referral to reporter and grounds of referral
- Beginning or ending of a period of being accommodated as well as change of placements
- Outcomes of children's hearings and significant meetings such as Looked After Reviews/Child Protection Planning Meetings/incidences/periods of subject being missing
- Pattern of contact/refusal of entry to the home/missed appointments
- Declined social work service where need/risk has been identified
- Threats or intimidation to/from the subject or family member/significant other
- Police reports, Vulnerable Person's Database (VPD)
- Completion of working agreements, interim safety plans, risk assessments, etc.
- Case closure and reason for this

Health

- Positive or negative changes in physical/mental health of child or other household member
- New born children - foetal alcohol, neo natal abstinence withdrawal, birth trauma, congenital abnormalities
- Disability- diagnosis/changes for child or other household member
- Formal health assessments - Griffiths Assessments, CAMHS, Springfield or Looked After Child/Permanence Medical
- Indications of serious substance abuse- subject's or other household member
- Attendance at A&E or use of NHS 24
- Repeated unplanned admissions to hospital - subject's or other household member
- Significant engagement or disengagement with a health service
- Unexplained injury
- Repeated injury however caused including self-harm
- Referrals to social work and or supporting agencies
- Dates and outcomes of child wellbeing meetings
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Justice Services

- Criminal activity - subjects or other household members
- Periods of custody - date, length and post release requirements
- Breaches of orders – Drug Treatment and Testing Order, Community Payback Order or contact with specific groups of children
- Incidents of subject being a victim or witness to a crime
- Sex offenders registration - date and period of registration
- Domestic abuse and new relationships
- Completion of a Children and Adult Risk Assessment (CARA)

***It is worth noting that examples can be used across agencies and professions**