



getting
it right
for every child

Single & Multi-Agency Child Chronology

Good Practice Guidance

Introduction

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. Inquiries into the deaths of Victoria Climbié (2004) and baby Peter (2008) by Lord Laming and our local Child Protection Committee improvement plan have highlighted the importance of compiling chronologies in protecting children through the identification of accumulating risk.

Child chronologies can be important in identifying significant or critical events and patterns in the lives of children and young people and can assist when working with vulnerable children and families.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government 2014) 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, 2014)
- The National Risk Framework To Support the Assessment of Children and Young People (The Scottish Government, 2012)
- Practice Guide: Chronologies (Care Inspectorate, 2017)
- GIRFEC Briefings for Practitioners 8: Single Agency and Integrated Chronologies (Scottish Government, 2012)

A chronology sets out details of key events in a child'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 the child and family and a clear distinction must be made between the two. The chronology should be succinctly recorded and child-focussed.

Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding of the child's situation and the risks/needs that exist for them. The process of compiling, updating and reviewing a summary timeline of the service user's circumstances supports assessment and analysis i.e. using the chronology format to systematically organise information 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 family.

The chronology is also a tool that can, and should, be used to promote engagement with service users and their families. Although the content of the chronology will be determined by professional judgement, service users and their families will have views on the content and the inferences drawn. A well-constructed and skilfully employed chronology has the potential to help service users and families better understand their circumstances and thus promote their engagement in effecting change.

The chronology is thus an important tool in everyday practice and for the supervision process. Managers will be expected to monitor the use of chronologies through the use of identified Case File Audit Tools and routine supervisory arrangements. Formal supervision or peer reviews should be seen as opportunities for:

- considering in context any key events in a child or young person's life and asking the 'so what' question
- examining patterns and considering the impact both immediate and cumulative
- identifying actual or potential risks
- planning responses and reflecting on the effectiveness of interventions and support
- highlighting '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 impact on their wellbeing.

Simply amassing information does not amount to an assessment; practitioners are required to be clear as to the significance of the information collected. A well-constructed and considered chronology is therefore a valuable and dynamic working tool which aids assessment and analysis, informs decision making and intervention, and promotes engagement with service users.

It is essential that the named person ensures that all significant information shared with them is contained within their single agency chronology. Such information is vital in the assessment of children where there are emerging concerns. The named person must ensure that chronologies are transferred in a proportionate and appropriate manner between named person, such as health visitor to school and when the named person is changing from one local authority to another, in line with agreed data sharing principles.

Close communication is vital between the named person and lead professional to ensure chronologies contain the most pertinent information on children, young people and their family circumstance.

Chronology: Content

A child's chronology is the gathering together of events, incidents, milestones and circumstances in a child's life considered to be **significant or to have possible significance** by individual practitioners from a range of services and also possibly from the child and family. In all cases the child's chronology will start with their birth, however in some cases, it will be relevant to start the chronology pre-birth. This will indicate emerging patterns of risk before the baby is born (Appendix A).

It is acknowledged that there are cases in which the family history is relevant to understanding the child's circumstances and there is a need to capture this within the child's chronology. The family history is most often communicated as part of the initial referral to Social Work and, ordinarily, this is how it should be detailed in the chronology.

A key event can be anything that has, or may have, a significantly positive or negative impact on the child. It does not have to happen to the child, 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 life may not be relevant for another child. Chronologies for all children 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. fell down stairs, 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.

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 to identify and 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 encourage the involvement of children and their families.

Chronology: Types of Key Events

The sorts 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:

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

Below is a list of examples of events that would be considered for inclusion in a chronology for a child or young person known to services. Although comprehensive, the following is not an exhaustive list and does not replace professional judgement and not all of the examples will need to be used in chronologies.

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, including refusal of entry

Housing

- Homelessness
- Positive or negative changes in family and housing e.g. relocation, eviction, transfer to private tenancy
- Positive or negative changes in maintenance of tenancy agreements
- Positive or negative changes in neighbour relations or anti-social issues. Where this has led to further action being taken, for example ASBO, then this should be recorded
- 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 community e.g. children left unattended, poor standards of household cleanliness, children wandering the streets or being out in poor weather without adequate clothing
- Any threats or actual incidents of violence to staff
- Any other relevant concerns, positive events
- Referrals to social work and or supporting agencies
- Dates and outcomes of child wellbeing 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 PSS, Ed 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
- Dates and outcomes of child wellbeing meetings

Social Work

- All referrals to social work.
- Referral to other SW service for example; EST, Parenting Support Service, Includem, MST
- Significant home visits and significant changes in child demeanour/presentation
- Association with others involved in criminal activity, etc.
- Incidences/periods of lack of engagement with SW services
- Child protection investigations or 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 LAC Reviews/ CPCC that agree a significant change - child to become accommodated away from home, permanence or termination and restriction of contact
- Incidences/periods of subject being missing - where large numbers summarise the volume and themes
- Refusal of entry to the home and patterns of missed appointments
- Declined SW service where need/risk has been identified
- Threats or intimidation to/from the subject or family member/significant other
- Police VPDS - where large numbers summarise the volume and themes
- Completion of working agreements, 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 LAC/ 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

Criminal Justice

- Criminal activity - subjects or other household members
- Periods of custody - date, length and post release requirements
- Breaches of orders - DTTO 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 CARA

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

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

The MACC is simply the integration of the single agency chronologies for the child and family. Practice and research has shown that integrated chronologies can be extremely important in identifying critical events in the lives of children and can assist professionals in decision making when working together with vulnerable children and families. 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 when placed in the context of a fully considered, time-lined integrated chronology.

A decision to collate a MACC may be an agreed outcome from a child's wellbeing meeting or from other planning meetings such as an initial child protection case conference or looked after review. Where a child's plan is agreed this should ordinarily be supported by a MACC. The following are examples of circumstances where a MACC may be of particular value in assisting the assessment and planning process.

- 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 needs are not being met and/or is being put at risk.
- Action taken to support the child/address concerns has not been successful and the child's circumstances have not improved.
- There are concerns that the family is unwilling to engage with services/accept support to meet the child's needs.

The main purpose of compiling a MACC is to enable early intervention where patterns of concerns are beginning to emerge about a child and to inform the development of a multi-agency plan, where one is required, to meet the child's needs and address risks.

Multi-Agency Child Chronology: Who is responsible for developing?

When a child wellbeing 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 needs and which agency is judged as being the most appropriate to undertake the role.

Responsibilities of the **Lead Professional** in relation to the MACC include:

- Agencies providing a succinct single agency chronology along with SHANARRI assessment to the chair of the child wellbeing meeting which can then be merged to create a MACC.
- Lead the review and analysis process.
- Editing and cross checking information in MACC to avoid duplication. This includes situations where multiple notifications of the same event take place over a period of time.
- Where the family are challenging the accuracy, the lead professional will seek clarity from the author 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		SWIFT No.	
Date of Birth		CHI No.	
		SCN No.	
Date of Event dd/mm/yy	Significant Event	Action Taken: Agency & Outcome if Known	Age of child at time of incident (years & months)

