

Lancashire Guidance on Chronologies – June 2016

1. What is a Chronology?

A chronology is a record of all *significant* events and changes in the life of a child, including child care concerns or allegations and incidents of abuse or neglect. A chronology should *not* contain all contacts and events.

The purpose is to help to structure information and analyse the impact of both immediate and cumulative events and changes on the child or young person.

A chronology is used to inform the social work assessment regarding risks, concerns, patterns, themes, strengths, weaknesses and the caregivers' ability and motivation to change. It helps social workers understand what is happening in the life of a child or young person, highlights gaps and missing detail that requires further assessment and identification.

A good chronology should give a clear picture of the child's journey and experiences and assist professionals in decision making.

2. When do we do a Chronology?

Every child or young person who has a Child and Family Assessment should have an up to date chronology. This includes children subject to a Child In Need Plan, Child Protection Plan, Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Children with Disability should be included in Child In Need Plans. It would be good practice to include children and young people who are subject to an Early Help (or CAF) Plan.

Chronologies are required as part of Legal Proceedings. The Public Law Outline became effective from April 2014 and as part of the Pre Proceedings and then the Court Proceedings, a chronology of significant events is required. In Care Proceedings, a chronology must primarily focus on the past two years, unless there is a significant event which has current relevance.

3. Who writes the Chronology?

The allocated social worker is the person responsible for single agency chronologies (those contained on LCS and those chronologies written for Legal Proceedings).

The chronology should be started by the social worker completing the *Referral* and continued by the social worker completing the *Child and Family Assessment*. At the point of transfer of any case, the responsibility for completing the chronology falls on the new allocated social worker – there should be no gaps in completing the chronology due to transfer of cases or change of social worker. If there is relevant information from partner agencies, for example from the Police or Health, the social worker is responsible for ensuring this is part of the chronology.

Where there is an integrated (multi-agency) chronology, then the nominated worker will collate the information from the relevant agencies.

4. Commencement of the Chronology

New Case: Where a new referral is received and the family is not known to CSC, the chronology should commence at the point of the new referral. As part of the Child and Family Assessment, the social worker will work with the family and other agencies to gather information on significant historical events relating to the child, their family members and other relevant individuals known to the child. Relevant historical events should form part of the chronology. For example, if the mother was Looked After or there was an allegation of abuse against an older sibling these events should be included in the chronology. Other significant historical events may include a parent being in prison, a grandparent who has convictions of sexual abuse against children, deaths of siblings or if there are frequent house moves which may cause concern.

Case already known to CSC: Where the child and family have been known to CSC in the past, the chronology should contain previous social care activity, to include any periods on child protection, CIN or CAF plans, contacts/referrals and case closures. If there is not an existing chronology on LCS, then the chronology should be completed as part of the Referral and Child and Family Assessment. Whilst it is recognised that this may take some time, it is crucial that this is done at the start of the social work involvement to assist in the assessment and understanding the dynamics of the child or young person within the family context.

Chron. Date	Event Date	Category Type	Details	Outcome and Impact	Doc Ref
14.6.16	Feb 2013 – Feb 2014	CIN	Child on CIN Plan due to poor home conditions, no boundaries, domestic abuse and poor parenting.	CIN Plan - Completed Parenting and Freedom Programme. Home conditions improved. Impact: Children's behaviour improved and happy at home.	
14.6.16	Feb 2014 – Oct 2014	CAF	Children on CAF/Early Help Plans. Continued work on parenting and behaviour management. Good engagement and progress made. Case closed.	CAF Plan – Multi-agency input, improved parenting resulting in case closed Oct 2014. Impact: Children happy and doing well in school.	
14.6.16	Nov 2014	Referral	Domestic Abuse Incident. Parents arguing and children not present.	NFA.	

5. Who do we share the Chronology with?

Chronologies are part of recording, and should be available to the person they are about, unless there are justifiable legal reasons for withholding this information. The chronology should be shown to and discussed with the person it is about, or their parent. Sharing chronologies with young people and their parents is not solely to check accuracy, but can be part of working together. The process of gathering information about significant events and changes can in itself assist a parent or carer in recognising patterns and cycles in family life which have caused the family problems or difficulties, and in recognising their own capacity and motivation to change.

Chronologies are shared with parties involved in Court Proceedings. Chronologies are also shared as part of the Child and Family Assessment and in various reviews and planning meetings. They should be used in supervision of staff and will be used by management to review and audit cases and will form part of the Ofsted Inspection.

Chronologies will be shared with Local Safeguarding Children Board Partners, where there are multi-agency audits or serious case reviews or management reviews.

6. What should be included in the Chronology?

A chronology is used to record **significant** events to help professionals from a range of disciplines understand what is happening in the life of a child or young person. Chronologies should not be a record of all case notes or all events.

It is important to note that what might be a key event in one child's life, such as a period of absence from school or health issues, may not be relevant to another child.

A professional judgement is required to decide on the relevance of information for a particular child/family events. There cannot be exact guidance; each case will need slightly different emphasis. The chronology needs to be tailored to the individual child and family. A useful perspective to use when deciding what to include in the chronology is that of the child! Therefore the framework for chronologies is "is this event significant to the child". If so include, if not exclude.

The chronology should record positive events and impact on the child, and can help identify strengths and constructive periods in a child and family's development.

There should be evidence to support what is written. Accuracy is vital, if mistakes in dates or information are added to the chronology, this can be replicated over and over in assessments.

Remember the child may access the file in the future – Write the chronology as if the child or family are going to read this.

Significant Events

A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child's safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. There is a long list of events which are categorised as being significant. Making a decision regarding a significant event will involve a *professional decision and/or judgement* based upon the child and family's individual circumstances. This decision will differ from case to case.

Examples of Significant Events:

- Previous social care activity, to include any periods on child protection and CIN or CAF and also any changes of social work involvement
- Allegations or incidents of abuse or neglect
- Strategy discussions/meetings
- Section 47 investigations
- Child and Family Assessments
- Child subject to CIN or CP Plan
- Changes in the child or young person's legal status (including CLA and discharge from care)
- Change in placement
- Statement of PLO – expectations and written agreements
- Significant case management decisions/supervision notes
- Significant observation during home visit
- Evidence of engagement or lack of engagement
- The child's significant/relevant health history, including attendance/admittance to hospital
- Significant/relevant education, training and employment history
- House moves

- Referrals to other agencies / teams
- Concerns from other professionals
- Child missing from home or care
- Child involved in child sexual exploitation
- Criminal proceedings
- Change in GP (e.g. this could be particularly significant in cases of Fabricated and Induced Illness)
- Death in the family
- Parent/Carer has new partner
- Another person moves into the family home
- Birth of new baby
- Person moves out of the family home
- Attempted suicide or overdose
- Police logs detailing pertinent info (domestic abuse, criminal activity, alcohol or drug misuse)

7. How to write a Chronology

- When writing chronologies, you should always consider the following:
 - Objective: (Why you are writing it?):
 - To give a clear picture of significant events and the impact they have had, or could have, on the child or young person
 - Outcome: (What do you want to happen?):
 - Inform assessments and plans to ensure the child's safety and well-being
 - Target Audience: (Who are you writing it for?):
 - Children, young people, families, carers, social workers, managers, auditors, other professionals and Inspectors
- Write the chronology to inform not impress.
- Use plain English and keep it simple, factual and brief.
- Ensure the chronology is in date order.
- Do not use unspecific language i.e. issues, incident, concerns – without giving detail.
- Do not use names without making it clear what relationship they have to the child.
- Do not use jargon (particularly that used in LCS) or abbreviations.
- Chronologies should be succinct – the chronology will lose value if every issue, contact or event is recorded.
- Information contained in the chronology must be relevant so that important events are not lost in insignificant and irrelevant detail.
- Do not cut and paste all case notes – summarise the information to ensure that chronologies only contain significant events and then ensure that they convey the important and key facts and outcomes of that event.

Visit: Child seen with bruise on face. Child alleged that mother hits him regularly. Mother admitted hitting child. Medical completed and substantiated that injury consistent with slap to face. Outcome: Strategy Discussion and S47 to go to ICPC.

- Only include CP or CLA statutory visits if something significant has happened.

- Multiple events can be groups together if relevant i.e. “between February and March 2015 there were 6 Missing from Home reports. Young person staying with friend and plan is to work with family on positive activities and boundaries”.
- Ensure that there is an outcome, or response to the significant event. If there is a Police investigation, what is the outcome? If there is a strategy discussion, what is the outcome?
- Write case notes or events as if the first sentences will be included in the chronology. This will save time editing when transferring information on LCS.
- The chronology is part of the child’s records, events of disputes between agencies should not be recorded.
- The chronology should not be used to justify the work undertaken.
- Write with the child or young person in mind – ensure they will understand.
- Ensure that you include strengths and positive events.

8. Creating a Chronology on LCS

(To include Outcome column)