

Gweithio'n Gytân Ar Gyfer Plant



Working Together For Children

South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board

Multi Agency Chronology Guidance

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Developed by:

Protocols and Procedures
Sub-Group

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Introduction

This guidance has been developed in response to the Serious Case Review Children E published in 2010 by Caerphilly Safeguarding Children Board. The review concluded that professionals would have had a better understanding/overview of the case if they had access to an up to date chronology, either single or multi agency.

What is a chronology and why use them?

In very basic terms, a chronology lists, in date order, all the major changes and events in a child or young person's life. The term chronology in this sense does not just refer to a list of events produced by a database such as ICS. Chronologies, when used as a tool to inform decision making and planning, require the professional to identify the **significant events/circumstances** from all of their information that are of **key importance** in understanding the case.

Chronologies should be started when there are child protection concerns and the case is opened to your agency. This should be updated and maintained on an ongoing basis. For example, following a child protection referral, a core group, a child in need planning meeting or a change in family circumstances.

The Safeguarding Children Board promotes the use of chronologies as it is a clear requirement within the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

Your agency may have a format for a chronology that is currently in use, however, attached to this document is a suggested format that can be used across all agencies, statutory or voluntary.

Children's Services should complete a single agency chronology as part of the recommendations from the Victoria Climbié Enquiry, however any agency can develop one if they think it will aid their understanding and inform decision making with a case. For example, this may aid agency decision making as to whether or not the case should be referred to Children's Services.

However it is important to remember that a single agency chronology does not provide a complete picture of the family's life and circumstances, only combined multi agency chronologies can do this.

The format explained (Appendix 1)

Column 1: Date (and time if relevant)

Column 2: Source of Information – where has this information come from e.g. Education, next door neighbour etc

Column 3: Incident/observations/circumstances – clearly explain what has taken place e.g. child protection medical has taken place at the hospital and Paediatrician has concluded it was accidental/non accidental; or someone has

moved into or out of the home address; or, you have observed the father being highly critical of the child; or, concerns about neglect have accumulated over the past month and a further visit to the home today has evidenced that there has been no improvement. Make sure you include who was there, who saw what / said what etc.

Column 4: Actions and outcomes – clearly explain what action was taken in response to the circumstances in column 3 and what the outcomes were. For example, a strategy meeting was held in response to the concerns about neglect and a decision was made to undertake a joint visit with Police on the same day. Include how parents/carers and children and young people responded/what they said or did.

When to complete a Multi Agency Chronology?

Lessons from Serious Case Reviews have taught us that if all the pieces of information held by separate professionals about a child's life are shared appropriately, and in a timely manner, the outcome for the child concerned may be very different. Further learning from Child Practice Reviews has highlighted that all agencies should take family relationships and historical information into account when undertaking/contributing to child protection assessments. It is for this reason that a multi agency chronology may be completed for all children about whom there are child protection concerns, where there is a consensus from all agencies that a multi-agency chronology would be beneficial.

Multi Agency chronologies can be useful for child protection cases at various stages. However, at the point of initial child protection registration, a standardised multi-agency chronology template can be completed, updated at every core group meeting and promptly circulated to all agencies, to support fully-informed assessment of risk and sound decision making. Alternatively, they could form part of the recommendations of a strategy discussion/meeting, or be included within a child protection plan at a conference or core group.

When completing multi agency chronologies it is essential all professionals and agencies understand they have a joint responsibility in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. Consequently when the completion of a multi-agency chronology is agreed (this can be at any stage in the case), all professionals are to ensure that information describing key incidents/events/information is passed on to the key worker in the agreed format (see appendix 1). This can be done by email, or on paper. The information held by agencies not part of the multi agency planning team may also need to be accessed and consideration will need to be given as to how this will be done.

Children's Services will be responsible for collating the information each agency individually provides into one combined multi-agency chronology. Therefore, Children's Services will hold the "master copy", however all professionals involved remain responsible for ensuring this chronology

remains up to date, by passing on updates within an agreed format (this could be your own agency's chronology template or the template attached at appendix 1), to the social worker within Children's Services. The social worker will compile this information into the format contained within appendix 1. Any updates to the chronology can be presented to each core group meeting/child in need planning meeting.

It is acknowledged that in some agencies (e.g. health) substantial information is held on hand written records and that some health staff do not have access to a computer to type up a chronology. If it is not practicable to ensure that hand held records are inserted in the chronology due to the time this will take, then the agency should still bring their records or a summary of the significant events/circumstances to the meeting at which the multi agency chronology will be discussed. Again consideration will need to be given about how to involve agencies that are not usually part of the multi agency planning group.

When Children's Services are collating information from agencies into one multi agency chronology, they will need to ensure there are not multiple entries concerning one event. If several agencies' chronologies refer to the same incident (e.g. a strategy meeting or a child presenting with a bruise), there only needs to be one entry regarding this within the chronology. However, it is important to be clear about where the information has come from e.g. Education. There may be more than one source of the same information. You will still be able to record from which agency records this information has been taken, who was involved, and all other information, under the relevant columns of the chronology template (appendix 1).

It should be acknowledged that some families have long and complicated histories hence the compiling of a chronology can be an onerous task that cannot be completed within a short period of time. However it is recommended that as much work as is practicable, is completed within the early stages of the child protection process, and that continued commitment and time be given to the completion of a full chronology, as involvement continues. A family having a long and complicated history is not a reason to avoid dedicating time to completing a chronology, rather this indicates the validity that a good chronology can offer, as this can help to identify any clear patterns or trends within the families' history, and can help workers to determine the reasons behind the families' current presenting issues. Consideration needs to be given as to how far back the chronology will go or whether some historical concerns can be summarised in a social history which should then be included at the beginning of the chronology.

The chronology can also be shared with families as a means to help their understanding, why agencies have particular concerns. Although consideration will need to be given as to whether or not full or partial information will be shared due to confidentiality issues e.g. information from a psychiatrist about one parent being shared with the other. There are some exceptions to the sharing of the chronology – see below.

Professionals need to consider what records can be used to inform their completion of the chronology. For example, this could include information from previous Child Protection Conference Minutes or assessments, GP records and hospital records, Local Authority Education records and school records, Guardian print outs (for the Police). However, this list is not exhaustive, and each agency will have a variety of sources of information from which to contribute to the chronology.

It should also be noted that when safeguarding children where illness is believed to be fabricated or induced, the importance of compiling a multi agency chronology becomes increasingly apparent. Consequently the All Wales Protocol when dealing with this states:

“Factual accuracy is essential. A chronology, focusing particularly on the child’s medical history, should be compiled in collaboration with the responsible consultant paediatrician involved and the health history of siblings should also be considered. The social worker’s report and the chronology **will not routinely be shared** with parents before the conference following allegations of fabricated or induced illness. The social worker and other professionals should discuss this course of action at the child protection strategy meeting and with the independent child protection conference chair before the conference” (Pg. 415, All Wales CPP).

How to compile/the format of a multi agency chronology?

In order to assist the compiling of different agencies information, the attached template (Appendix 1) has been suggested as a method for each agency to record their own chronologies. This will enable the key worker to easily combine this information into one working multi agency chronology that can be shared between professionals and families (as appropriate) and reviewed at core groups and conference.

All agencies should ensure the template and guidance document is readily available for workers to access.

Children’s Services staff should note that the multi agency chronology template can easily be adapted to replicate the court acceptable chronology template.

What to record in a multi agency chronology?

A chronology provides a sequential story of significant events in a family’s history whilst interweaving information about emotional and/or relationship difficulties. It contributes to an emerging picture, based on fact and interactions of a case – current information can then be understood in the context of previous information, thus informing professional assessment.

A significant event is an incident that impacts on the child’s safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment. This will inevitably involve a professional decision and/or judgment based upon the child and family’s

individual circumstances. It is important that a chronology **is not** a repeat of the records you hold for this child/family, it should include **significant events/circumstances only**.

There are a number of core incidents/circumstances, which should be recorded. Dependant upon the nature of the harm, these may differ from case to case. This is not an exhaustive list however here are several examples of

Core Incidents that could be included:

- Contacts or referrals about the child and/or family.
- Assessments e.g. family support
- Strategy discussions/meetings
- Attendance/admittance to hospital
- Section 47 investigations
- Referrals to other agencies/teams
- House moves
- School exclusions
- Criminal proceedings
- Enquires to the Child Protection Register
- Child absconded/missing
- Death in the family
- Parent/Carer has new partner
- Another person moves into the family home
- Birth of a new baby
- Person moves out of the family home
- Attempted suicide or overdose
- School attendance
- Major incidents e.g. exclusions, serious aggression, racism
- Child becomes looked after/child is discharged from LA care
- Change in school placement or behaviour
- Change in GP (e.g. this could be particularly significant in cases of Fabricated and Induced Illness).
- Concerns about a Vulnerable Adult in the family
- Non-engagement or missed visits (particularly an emerging pattern)
- Missed health appointments
- Police logs detailing pertinent info re family members/family home e.g. reported incident of domestic violence; drunken behaviour of carers etc.
- Any incidents of cruelty or mistreatment of animals.

There are also a number of other incidents/circumstances, which may be significant to the child and family, depending on their circumstances.

Examples include:

A significant observation during home visits e.g. the frequent presence of unknown adults, evidence of damage to the property, negative interactions between parent and child, poor home conditions found on visit etc.

If chronologies are to accurately reflect family circumstances, positive factors should also be recorded (e.g. families' engagement with professionals, child's presentation in school significantly improves etc).

The above provide a small number of examples and it is essential that practitioners use their professional judgment in identifying pertinent information. There is a risk that a mechanical approach to completing a chronology that automatically records predetermined 'key facts' could weaken the focus and role of professional judgment which are vital to effective practice. A chronology must never become an end in itself.

Acknowledgements

In completing this guidance and the accompanying template, the following were used as reference materials:

1. All Wales Child Protection Procedures, 2008
2. "Safeguarding Children Procedures, Multi Agency Chronologies" – Blackpool Local Safeguarding Children Board, 2008
3. "Durham LSCB Child Protection Procedures – Managing Individual Cases" - Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board, 2010
4. "Practice Guide: Chronologies" Social Work Inspection Agency, Scotland, 2010

