Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Practice Principles for Chronologies of Significant Events

Contents:

Learning from Case Reviews

Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) is resolute in its commitment to fostering a culture of reflective practice, learning and continuous improvement, in accordance with the guidance set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children. A local learning event held by HSCP's Learning and Inquiry Group highlighted the importance of sharing information in a timely manner with multi-agency partners, to allow for a complete chronology to be built and an analysis of risk to be undertaken and shared. It is acknowledged that confidentiality can be ingrained within professional culture but Working Together to Safeguard Children gives clear guidance for sharing information for the purpose of safeguarding children. Where it is indicated that children may be at risk of harm, professionals should avoid making assumptions regarding the involvement of other agencies and act on their duty to share information. This is important as this may be new or additional information as well as allowing for the information to be validated.

Purpose of Practice Principles for Chronologies of Significant Events

The purpose of these practice principles is to support practitioners across partner agencies by outlining the purpose of a chronology of significant events and best practice for completion. These practice principles do not replace any existing guidance that is held within partner agencies but are intended to complement existing guidance and create a collective understanding and shared practice across the partnership.

What is a chronology of significant events?

A chronology of significant events is a record in date order of all of the significant events and changes in a child or young person's life. The chronology may be completed by a single agency; however,

there are times when it can be helpful for a combined multi agency chronology to be created to capture the full picture of all agencies involvement with a child and their family during a period of time. A chronology is a live tool, continually being updated to reflect events and changes in the child or young person's life.

Why are chronologies of significant events used?

Chronologies are a tool that support practitioners in a range of ways with their safeguarding practice. When used effectively, a chronology helps children to remain at the centre of professional practice and a safeguarding response. The way in which practitioners use and refer to chronologies in their professional practice can make a significant difference to improving outcomes for children.

- A chronology can support a professional in understanding the life events that have been particularly significant for a child and their family. A chronology allows a professional to view incidents holistically in context and not as isolated events. Through the use of a chronology, a professional increases their understanding of the immediate and cumulative impact of events and changes on a child or young person. This understanding is essential to inform any kind of child-centred assessment and to assist with professional decision-making and intervention.
- A chronology can be a tool to support a professional in identifying and making sense of any patterns of events or behaviour in the life of a child and their family, as well as any recurrence of incidents. Through making links between the past and the present, attention can be drawn to seemingly unrelated events or information and practitioners are able to understand the importance of past events upon what is happening in a child's life now. A chronology of significant events can, at a later stage, help children, young people and families make sense of their past.
- Chronologies provide rich contextual information about a child's experience which forms part of their personal record and may be shared with the child unless there is a concern about the harm/risk that sharing this information could cause. By sharing chronologies with children and families it can support accuracy of information recording, in particular in relation to dates of significant family events. It can also help foster a sense of all working together and strengthen a sense of achievement and progress.
- A chronology can support new practitioners to become familiar with a child's experience, the family history and any identified risks to the child.
- A chronology can support a professional or multi-agency group to reflect upon and analyse their individual or collective professional practice in a case, including the effectiveness of interventions.
- When carried out consistently across agencies, chronologies can improve the sharing of information about a child's life and support practitioners to understand impact of significant events.

What should be included in a chronology of significant events?

Professional judgement is required to decide whether particular circumstances or events are significant for a particular child and family. Some examples are provided below but it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list and practitioners should consider each child's circumstances individually.

- Details of the child, family members and other connected individuals - including name, date of birth and relationship to the child.
- Significant events within a child's life. These will include events that create a concern or a change in the plan for the professional involvement with a child/family. Significant events also include changes to the child's circumstances, particularly where this may lead to a new concern. Examples include:
    o Children becoming subject to or removed from a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan.
    o A change in family and household composition (including changes in relationships; movements in and out of the child's home; the child moving between households etc.)
    o A change in significant events in the child's life and their family (including births, loss and bereavement).
    o A change in education, training and employment (including pre-school, school, and further education establishment; significant periods of non-school attendance) as well as educational achievements.
    o A change in a child or young person's legal status (including Public and where known Private law outcomes; Criminal law disposals).
    o Arrests and court appearances for the subject and their family/ relatives (e.g., parents)
    o A child becoming a Looked After Child (LAC) or a change in the child's placement as a LAC.
    o Periods of hospitalisation or other significant medical treatment or a change in health status.
    o Domestic abuse notifications and multi-agency arrangements such as MAPPA.

Overarching Principles

Accurate

- Chronology entries should be a factual account of an event, with professional analysis of the impact on the child (positive or negative) captured alongside. Actions taken or not taken should be captured with the event, with rationale if action has not been taken.

Regular Review

- Chronologies should be reviewed regularly, to assist in planning intervention or support for a child and their family and evaluating progress. A chronology that is not reviewed regularly is of limited relevance.
- When information is added to a chronology, professionals should consider its relationship and relevance to previous information.

Detail

- A chronology of significant events should be presented in a format that allows for a swift and accessible overview of a child's life and the involvement and intervention of professionals and agencies.

- Chronology entries should be written in a way that can be understood by professionals across partner agencies. This means that abbreviations and acronyms/ jargon should not be used.
- It can be helpful to group significant events together, for example between September and November 2023 there were fifteen incidents of absconding which increased in frequency and duration each week, rather than listing all fifteen separate incidents.
- A chronology should contain sufficient detail but is not a substitute for recording in the case file.
- A chronology should be flexible; the level of detail collected may be increased if risk increases.

Involving The Child and Family

- Children and families should be involved in the development of a chronology, to promote and strengthen family participation and develop a professional understanding of the family's perspective on events and their impact on individuals. This involvement also helps to identify progress or a lack of progress. As outlined above, the exception to this is cases where there are justifiable reasons to withhold the information because sharing it would increase risks for the child or another person.

When should a multi-agency chronology be used?

- It is important to note that single-agency and multi-agency chronologies have different demands and expectations. A multi-agency chronology (sometimes referred to as a combined chronology or integrated chronology) brings together chronologies created by different agencies and presents them coherently, giving a clear account of significant events. The purpose is for a fuller picture to be built, capturing information held across agencies and significant agency involvement. This gives a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the child(ren) and family, antecedents and impact of key events and frequency of professional contact. For example, a single incident may take on far greater importance in the life of a child when placed in the context of a clear, time lined multi-agency chronology.
- A multi-agency chronology can be of particular use in complex cases or cases with involvement from a range of agencies. It may be produced to support child protection planning and the work of the core group and should include only information extracted from single-agency chronologies that is relevant and proportionate to support the practitioners in their analysis and decision-making. This may be completed at a multi-agency meeting. A multi-agency chronology should also highlight family strengths, successful interventions and the impact of positive change.
- A multi-agency chronology may be particularly useful where a child is subject to a child protection plan more than once, or where there have been a number of referrals and assessments by social care practitioners over a period of time due to similar or evolving issues. It is important to note any practitioner involved in working with the child can request a multi-agency chronology is considered.
- It should be made clear who has the responsibility for gathering together single-agency chronologies, combining them into a multi-agency chronology and keeping this updated regularly. This is the role of the lead professional.

For cases of suspected fabricated and induced illness in children and young people by carers, it should be noted that the **HIPS Multi-Agency Guidance** provides specific information on:

- o when a chronology should be used in these cases,
- o who should compile the chronology,
- o the information that should be included.

The Guidance includes an agreed multi-agency chronology format which should be used for this purpose (see Appendix 1 within the HIPS Multi-Agency Guidance).

Chronology Template

Child's Details					
Child's First Name		Child's Last Name		Any Known Aliases	
D.O.B.		Ethnicity		Gender	

Family Details		
Name	**Date of Birth**	**Relation to the child**
Parents/ Carers		
Siblings		
Other Adults with Significant Involvement with the Child(ren)		

Date of Event	Description of Event *(Including name and source of information)*	Outcome *(What action was taken and what was the impact)*	Entered By and Agreed By