

“Every conversation starts with the child”

## Chronologies.



I think it's fair to say that I read lots of chronologies and for the most part they are a list of significant things which have happened in a child's life – or are they? If I was to sit down with you and ask what the *significant* things were which had impacted on your life would this be the same things which I, if I were your SW might write in your chronology? I found this statement recently and I wondered whether you would agree/or not with the sentiment?

'The purpose of a chronology is to record significant concerns, events or incidents that impact (positively or otherwise) on a child or young person's wellbeing. A single-agency chronology provides a brief description and summarised account of significant events relevant to a child'

If '**every conversation start with the child**' – we need to think about chronologies in a way which means that they are useful in terms of how we understand and work with a child and their family. How do these events impact on the child or on the carer/s in terms of their capacity to parent the child? How might this event impact on the child's/family wider community/family in terms of support or challenge? What role does chronology have in assessment?

The Jay Report (2014) on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham found that there was a chronology in fewer than half the cases looked at (43%) and that most chronologies were out of date, with significant gaps. Professor Jay concluded that:

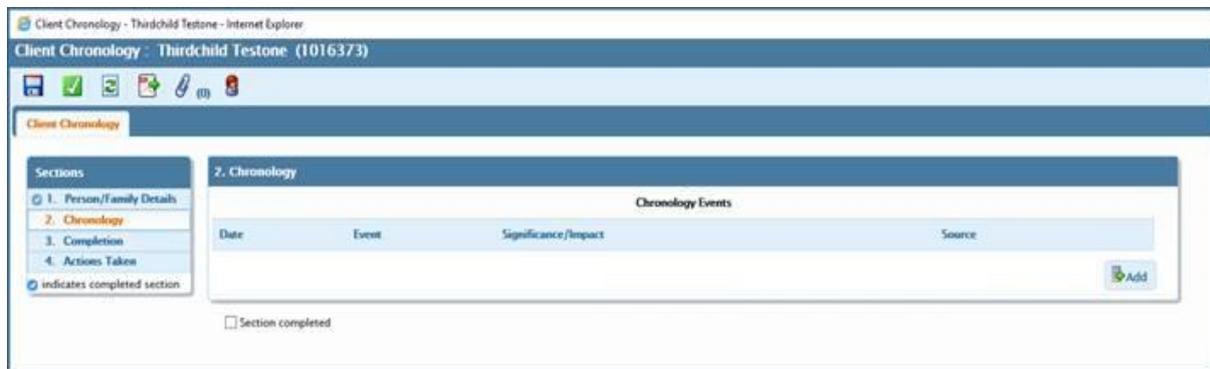
*"...It is likely that the absence of structured chronologies contributed to key information being missed when decisions were made".*

From the 1<sup>st</sup> December there is an expectation that **all chronologies** will be recorded on MOSAIC.



A Client Chronology Form is now available in Mosaic, which can be accessed from the

**new option on the Person Summary screen** and completed within the system. **Note:** If you have used Mosaic in another LA, this is a different process to the Chronologies Function in the side menu of the Person Summary screen, which should not be used. There should only be **one active Chronology** for a case open to CSC. It should be amended as required and will show as current work until the case is closed.

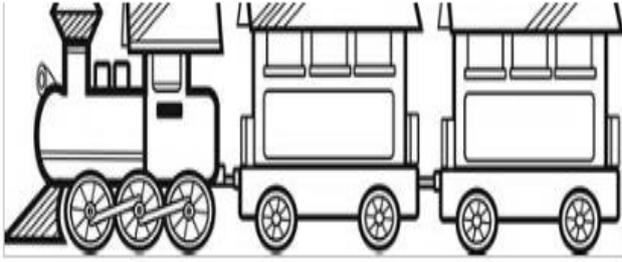


Mosaic guidance is attached in the email accompanying this blog and has been added to Colin. Mylo training will be available in early December and should be used in conjunction with the Chronology Practice Guidance (also attached). There is an expectation that new cases will have chronologies recorded in this section and all chronology entries from this date will be recorded in the new format. **We do not expect you to transfer information from word documents which already exist** simply add as the first entry that a word chronology exists and where this is stored

**However**, changing the way in which we store the chronology document on MOASIC does not mean that this in itself will produce a useful analysis of the events which impact on children's lives and provide an analysis of this – We still have to do this....

A Chronology should represent a child's journey through life, it does not need to be an account of each home visit/ICPC/CYPiC review. These are meetings and probably not significant to the child. So what is a significant event – if in doubt ask the child/family. There is no reason why chronologies cannot form part of the direct work you do with families and with children every day. Would it be too challenging to sit down with a parent/child and ask them to describe the events which have been significant in their lives and the impact this had on them – how did these events change their thinking or their understanding of how they might be perceived by others? How does this feel – be curious.

Could these events be captured visually – included in this train for example? (Other trains are available)!!



Significant events by nature are both **positive** and **negative**. My experience of chronologies is that they rarely record positive events in a child's life, a success at school, a new friendship, a family wedding.

Lord Laming noted the importance of a chronology in both the enquiries into the deaths of Victoria Climbié (2004) and Peter Connolly (2008) and stated in recommendation 58, that

*"All Directors of social services had to ensure that every child's case record had a "properly maintained chronology".*

Our response to this (and I refer to social work and not specifically to York) was to mandate that SW's included a chronology on every child's file. We also check that this is the case, because 'just having a chronology on the case recording is going to have a positive effect on the management of the case and the outcome for the child'.....Or is it?????

Obviously we *need* to include a chronology but what is the point of using your limited time to do this if it does not help you to work with the child/family? As with social genograms chronologies can relatively easily be a part of direct work with a



family and will significantly support your assessment work and more significantly is likely to provide you with a greater insight into how families function, what their 'story' is and how you can best establish meaningful relationships with them, having taken the context of the family currently, into account.

Understanding how 'learned' strategies within family networks impact on their current functioning is an aspect of chronology which sometimes lacks our consideration but features heavily within current thinking.

*'the transmission of family culture in its broadest sense from one generation to the next, encompassing those patterns, styles, customs, ceremonies functions, secrets, myths and dysfunctions which determine the uniqueness of a family'.*

An effective chronology can help identify risks, patterns, issues in a child's life. It can help in getting a better understanding of the immediate or cumulative impact of events. It helps us to make links between the past and the present, helping to understand the importance of historic information upon what is happening in a child's life now. Importantly a good case chronology can, at a later stage, help

children, young people and families make sense of their past. However..... It can't do this if it is simply a list of events.

Chronologies need to be subject to regular review and analysis to understand the cumulative effect of events and to provide the SW's with opportunity to consider this in the context of the case. How can this information better inform your interventions, how can this analysis allow you to develop a hypothesis regarding how the family functions – why are they so reluctant to work with CSC, do they have a history 'story' which means that to engage would be 'dangerous' and may result in CSC 'removing their child?' Could regular analysis of events assist in developing your ongoing case summary?'

This about how you might use your **supervision** to review a chronology, to reflect on how this affects your work with the family and their ability to work with you, what hypothesis have you formed, how does this impact on how you work with them? Think about the impact on a parent whose teenager has just been made subject to a plan when they are doing their very best to prevent them from going out and being in the company of older males, for example.

### Chronologies do need to follow 'some' 'rules'.

They need to be;

- Accurate.
- Up to date
- Proportionate in relation to detail (**this is not a case recording**). We see a significant amount of 'cut and paste' information in chronologies, the entry should refer the reader to other documents/visits as relevant.

### Examples of what could be included in a chronology

(although if you are able to co-produce this a family it should also include events as they see them as being significant).

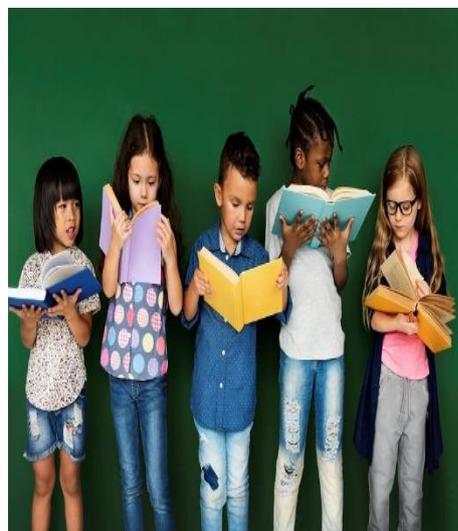
- Significant changes in family composition (birth of a sibling, death of a relative, inclusion of a new carer into the family a wedding or other ceremony)
- Previous history of involvement/ receipt of services from an agency
- Incidence where a child is considered to have suffered harm/ or is at risk of harm
- Patterns of absconding/going missing
- Any episodes of self-harm
- Any significant parental factors (domestic abuse; substance misuse; mental ill health)
- Significant child health issues
- Education training and employment changes and successes
- Any changes in a child's legal status
- Changes in where a child lives, including placement history of children in care
- Any significant offending behaviours

**Issues to consider within a chronology.** When we use a systemic approach to think about chronologies we might consider the following.

- How can we use chronologies with the family to understand the story so far...?
- What are the relationship patterns within this family?
- Have they been maintained through generations?
- Are there any exceptions to this and has the impact of this been positive or negative for the child and family? Will this help us talk about difference with the family?
- Does a pattern of closure and re referral indicate first order change? (some information on first and second order change here [Beat the System with Family Systems Therapy – Sunrise Residential Treatment Center \(sunrisertc.com\)](#)).
- Do we need to think of a 'different' approach and plan? Why do more of the same??

## Good practice for maintaining case chronologies

- Commence chronologies at the start of involvement in a case.
- Enter relevant information as it occurs.
- Enter information throughout involvement in the case, an out of date chronology cannot provide full information for further analysis and planning
- Be brief in chronologies and reference where in the case records more detailed information can be found.
- When adding information to case chronologies consider its relationship and relevance to previous information. (E.g. numbers of missed appointments; A&E appointments; police call outs to a home; numbers of injuries over time etc.)
- Build in **regular reviews** of the chronology to assist in case planning and evaluating progress, for example in preparation for reviews or as part of supervision
- Discuss the information to be included with children, young people and families (it's their information).
- Remember to specify the date of the event/ information received.
- Identify/ evidence the source of the information.



I hope this debate has been a useful one and I look forward to your comments/suggestions @ [principalsocialworker@york.gov.uk](mailto:principalsocialworker@york.gov.uk)

Dallas