

# **South Lanarkshire**

## **Adult Protection Committee**

### **& Child Protection Committees**



## **Joint Multi-Agency Guidance on**

### **A Chronology of Significant Events**

Completed date October 2017

Review date October 2018

## Contents

Chronologies – Definition & Purpose	4
Importance of Chronologies for Practitioners & Managers	6
Chronologies – Nine Key Points to Consider	8
Appendix 1 – South Lanarkshire Multi-Agency Chronology Template (Example)	17
Appendix 2 – Information to be included in a chronology	19
Appendix 3 – Multi-Agency chronology template	20
Appendix 4 – ASP/CP Concern flow chart	21
Appendix 5 - References	22

## Introduction

Since April 2011, the Care Inspectorate has been responsible for inspecting standards of care in Scotland. Part of this role includes joint inspections of services for children, adults and older people. They report on the difference services are making to the lives of individuals within a local authority area. In doing so, the wide variation in the quality of chronologies has continued to be a feature and the need for improvement in this important area of practice persists.

In response to the Care Inspectorate publication [A Practice Guide to Chronologies \(2017\)](#) the South Lanarkshire Adult and Child Protection Committees are pleased to offer **Joint Multi-Agency Chronologies Guidance** for those working with adults and children at risk of, or who have suffered harm or abuse in South Lanarkshire and where sharing of information is essential and considered one of the tools used in the protection agenda.

The aim of the South Lanarkshire multi agency guidance is to support those practitioners and managers across the multi-agency workforce who have responsibility in child and adult protection processes and where reporting into multi-agency meetings is a key part of their role.

This new Care Inspectorate Chronologies Guidance replaces the original version published in 2010. It sits alongside any single agency guidance within your own organisation. This guidance is an additional tool to support the use of chronologies across the multi-agency workforce.

The South Lanarkshire Adult and Child Protection Committees recognise it is the joint responsibility of all those working across adult and child protection to regularly record chronological information and ensure it is readily available to help reduce the risk of harm to children and adults alike.

We welcome the recent Care Inspectorate publication and thank the multi-agency workforce for ensuring its local implementation to improve outcomes for children and adults at risk in South Lanarkshire.

Safaa Baxter

Chair of South Lanarkshire Adult & Child Protection Committees

September 2017

## **Chronologies: Definition and Purpose**

A chronology is a clear account of significant events in a person's life which includes all major changes and events which are based on the information held by agencies involved and should be used to identify early indicators of emerging patterns of concern.

A chronology provides a brief description and summarised account of significant events in date order and should be used as an analytical tool to assist in the understanding of the impact of life events on the person and to inform decision making.

A chronology does not replace existing case notes or records which will include much more detailed and sensitive information which is owned by the adult, child and/or family and a clear distinction must be made between the two.

Chronologies are part of a skilled and focused approach to our work and an important tool in caring for and protecting children and adults by:

- a) Bringing together issues identified by different agencies and presenting them coherently.
- b) Contributing precise data which can help practitioners to identify patterns of behaviour which will contribute to an assessment of need and risk.
- c) Recognising that a chronology is relevant in all adult/child protection work for assessing and managing people who are at risk of harm, constitute a high risk to themselves or to others.
- d) Using findings as an integral part of supervision and peer review.
- e) Strengthening the partnership and transparency between practitioners and people who use services.

### **A chronology not a timeline:**

A chronology is not the same as a timeline. A timeline is a graphical representation of a sequence of events (past or future) whilst a chronology determines the order in which the events occurred.

### **Making key information accessible:**

A chronology (single or multi-agency) should make key information easily accessible and as part of a professionally skilled approach be an essential part of a continuing assessment and care management by:

- Appropriately recording and presenting a range of issues coherently (identified either on a single agency or a multi-agency basis) between or across agencies.
- Providing an overview of key factual information which can assist practitioners to identify patterns of behaviour or concern.
- Enabling the significance of individual issues to be better understood and links made between the past and the present.
- Being used on a routine basis by the practitioner for regular review and analysis of the adult or child's situation.

- Using the information as an integral part of case discussions within formal staff supervision or formal agency support mechanisms.
- Strengthening partnership working with individuals through the sharing and regular review of information within the chronology.

The definition of chronologies contained in the [National Framework to Assess Risk for Children and Young People \(2012\)](#) is recognised by the Care Inspectorate as a comprehensive and helpful tool for both child and adult services. The framework states:

*“Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding needs/risks, including the need for protection from harm. Setting out key events in sequential date order, they give a summary timeline of child and family circumstances (or those of an individual using adult services), patterns of behaviour and trends in lifestyle that may greatly assist any assessment and analysis. They are a logical, methodical and systematic means of organising, merging and helping make sense of information. They also help to highlight gaps and omitted details that require further exploration, investigation and assessment.*

Within this definition, chronologies may be compiled and used on a single or multi-agency basis and be developed to assist in current and continuing assessment and risk management, or as an aid to review past events. Despite being applied to a range of situations with different focus and purpose, the basic approach is essentially the same.

**A Multi Agency Chronology is produced as part of a specific multi agency intervention or support and will include only information extracted from single agency chronologies that is relevant and proportionate to support that intervention or support.**

Each agency is responsible for collating their own single agency chronological information and submitting this to the Lead Professional/Council Officer using the Multi Agency Chronology Template (Appendix 3) at the case conference/case discussion or core group meetings. The Lead Officer/Council Officer will then create a multi agency chronology from the information provided which will then be shared with partners.

In the event that an agency is unable to attend the core group or case conference case discussion, they must submit their single agency chronology and, any additional reports to the Lead Professional/Council Officer prior to the meeting. It is important that the chronologies are available at the meetings rather than setting a timeframe for submission which may not be necessary and may detract from providing the most up to date information.

In this multi-agency guidance, we will explore **nine** key characteristics of a chronology and consider it in the following context:

- 1) As a useful tool in assessment and practice
- 2) Noting it is not an assessment, but **part** of assessment
- 3) A working tool which promotes engagement with people who use services
- 4) Accurate and relies on good up-to-date case recording
- 5) A detailed recording that does not substitute for recording the file

- 6) Flexible so that detailed collected may be increased if risk increases
- 7) Noting the importance of reviewing and analysing – a chronology which is not reviewed regularly is of limited relevance
- 8) Acknowledging it is constructed differently according to different applications, for example current work and examining historical events
- 9) Recognising that single agency and multi-agency chronologies set different demands and expectations.

### Why are chronologies useful to practitioners and managers?

In working to improve practice that protects and enhances the lives of vulnerable children, young people and adults in South Lanarkshire, one of the main issues for professionals is the concept of risk. The guide does not explore the wider aspects of risk assessment in any detail, but it does focus on chronologies – a single important aspect of that process.

A chronology is not an assessment or an end in itself. It is a tool that professionals in a range of disciplines can use to help them understand what is happening in the life of a child or adult.

**Chronologies in services for children and young people** – [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#) provides the core to policy and practice affecting children, young people and their families in Scotland. Central to the GIRFEC approach is the National Practice Model, which “*provides a foundation for identifying concerns, assessing needs and initial risk and making plans for children in all situations*”. The comprehensive practice framework introduced as part of the National Practice Model defines risk and emphasises the need for all agencies to collaborate in assessing and analysing family circumstances together. The Model stipulates that “*each agency involved with a child and their family should collate key information into a single agency chronology of significant events and where working with partner agencies actively work to combine and consolidate this into a multi-agency chronology*”.

**Chronologies in services for adults and older people** – Chronologies are of central importance to adult and older peoples services. The introduction of the [Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013](#) sets out how those assessing risk and need “*should take full account of how the person’s needs and risks might change over time*”. Professionals can only fully achieve this if they identify and understand the significant patterns and trends in circumstances that an effectively prepared chronology will reveal. The reason for not using a chronology should be noted in the contact record. However, in the adult protection process, a multi-agency chronology is essential to protect the individual from harm and develop a protection plan to reduce the risk to the individual concerned. It is therefore expected that a multi agency chronology is recorded within **all** adult protection cases within South Lanarkshire.

**Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)** – For front line criminal justice practitioners, the importance of a chronology in working with people who have committed offences is highlighted in practice standards and guidelines developed by the Risk Management Authority. This sets out how an assessment underpinning a risk management

plan will include evidence from a range of sources. Chronologies have also been a helpful feature in the review of serious incidents. Guidance relating to Care Inspectorate serious incident reviews and MAPPA significant case reviews highlights the value of a well constructed chronology in helping to understand past events and derive learning from them.

### **Examples of inquiries which have promoted the importance of chronologies**

For the most part, inquiries into the circumstances surrounding serious child abuse have drawn attention to the importance of chronologies.

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%), where it would have been appropriate to have one. **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”*.

Lord Laming, in his report into the death of Victoria Climbié (2004) was unequivocal in stating: *“I regard the inclusion in any case file of a clear, comprehensive and up-to-date chronology as absolutely essential”*.

In a youth justice context, the follow-up inspection into the management of Colyn Evans (2009) concluded that: *“SWIA did not find comprehensive and up-to-date chronologies in any of the files in the sample. Good risk assessment requires detailed and accurate information. For example, the young person referred to in the previous paragraph had assaulted staff in a residential unit on several occasions and had a long history of abusive behaviour which could have been identified by an accurate chronology”*.

The report into the case of Miss X (2004) looked at the case of a woman with a learning disability who, along with other adults at risk, was seriously abused over a period of years. It recommended that any reviews of social work case records of people with learning disabilities should answer a critical question: *“Is there a chronology of significant events and are the implications of these events understood”*.

### **Starting and maintaining a Chronology**

In all adult and child protection cases, a single agency chronology should be started when an initial contact has been made with the service (N.B. – always check your own agency guidance for when to commence a chronology) and should be maintained throughout the agency involvement. If there is no existing chronology when a case is re-opened or transferred one should be created as a priority.

As part of the assessment process previous significant events in an individual’s life may be identified and these should be included within the chronology.

It is recommended that relevant information is entered into the chronology as it occurs to prevent the task becoming unmanageable and to ensure that up to date information is available for further analysis and planning.

The lead professional/council officer responsible for the management of the case is responsible for maintaining the multi-agency chronology (although the information may come from other sources) and managers will be expected to monitor the use of chronologies through the use of identified tools and routine supervisory/support arrangements. A regular review of chronologies is expected.



## The Chronology: Nine Things to Consider

### 1. The chronology as a tool in assessment and practice

Many practitioners ask: “do we need chronologies for every person we are working with?”

The answer is **“yes” a multi agency chronology is required in all child and adult protection cases.**

There are five key elements to compiling all chronologies.

#### Compiling a chronology

- Identifying the key events to be recorded
- Making sure what is recorded is accurate and in date order
- Recording facts, significant events in the person’s life
- Placing the child or adult at the centre to understand the significance of events for them.

Entries on a chronology should be jargon free i.e. suitable for professionals and the individual themselves to read and should contain factual information with sources clearly identified.

The information recorded should be clear and concise while being sufficiently detailed to be used as part of the assessment to identify risks and patterns in the individual’s life. The entries should be in date order (most recent first) and indicate what action was taken at the time (with no action recorded if this was the case) and the outcome.

The focus of the chronology should be the individual and there should be a separate chronology for each individual receiving a service.

A chronology is not a substitute for detailed case recording but is dependent on good quality recording within the case file and any computerised system. The chronology should be used as an analytical tool in the management of the case and practitioners should understand what should be recorded as a significant event.

There are always questions surrounding **what to include** in a chronology. An exemplar of a chronology can be viewed in Appendix 1.

The five core elements are set out here:

### **The five core elements of a chronology**

- Key dates such as dates of birth, life events, house moves
- Facts, such as a child's name placed on the child protection register, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meeting, adult who is subject to adult protection procedures
- Transitions, life changes, change in family dynamics
- Key professional interventions such as reviews, hearings, tribunals, court disposals.
- A very brief note of an event, for example a fall down stairs, an unexplained injury, coming to school with a bruise, a registered sex offender whose car keeps 'breaking down' outside a primary school.

Further information on what should be included in a chronology can be viewed in Appendix 2.

Chronologies have a wider application than risk assessment and management. A chronology can be a valuable tool for planning and supervision. When practitioners and managers are very busy juggling many different demands, progress in working with a person may drift. Several months can pass without any action and such unacceptable delay is now always easy to identify from a record. A chronology of dates can help to flag up delay and drift.

### **Best Practice Example 1 – ADULT**

Michael is aged 18 and has a learning disability and restricted mobility. He left a specialist residential placement when he was 16 years old and has been at home ever since. An assessment was undertaken identifying his needs and risks but competing demands have meant significant delay in progressing plans for an alternative placement. In the meantime the only contact has been through duty social workers. Michael's mother had health issues which meant that she was unable to care adequately for him. This exposed Michael to inappropriate risks as he was not able to safeguard his wellbeing. When the social worker completed a chronology it became clear that Michael required a multi-agency protection plan to ensure the risks were reduced and his needs met. It also provided a clear picture of the delay and drift in providing Michael with the appropriate support and protection.

### **GOOD PRACTICE NOTE:**

The writer needs to provide enough information for the chronological entry to make sense. Statements like "*(the individual) behaved inappropriately...*" do not have sufficient detail.

Many chronologies list events and dates but do not have a column which enables the action taken to be recorded or, if no action was taken, to explain why. The strength of the chronology lies in their reporting of the facts, times, dates and so forth. A completed chronologies sample template can be viewed in Appendix 1 and a blank chronologies template is available for your use in Appendix 3.

## 2. A chronology is not an assessment – but part of assessment

A chronology is not an assessment, it is informed by, and is part of, an assessment

*“Gathering together large amounts of information is not an assessment. Sharing it does not constitute a child or adult protection plan. Professionals must take the next step to state why they attach significance to some issues and not to others”.*

Chronologies are a key part of assessing and managing risk. Keeping chronologies up to date ensures risks are identified at an early stage in the process.

### Best Practice Example 2 – CHILD

James is seven years old and attends school regularly. Until recently he has been a happy child who enjoys reading and football. A children’s hearing has made James subject to a supervision order and his school keeps in regular contact with his social worker. His mother is on a methadone programme and she has been making good progress. She has started work two afternoons a week in the local supermarket and James is collected by his maternal grandfather on these days.

James has good health but recently has been sick after lunch. His mother told her social worker that she was surprised when James screamed and refused to go for a check-up at the dentist as this has never been a problem in the past. He has wet his bed on some nights.

James’s social worker wonders if James is unsettled by his mother working as he worried about her before when she was using heroin. At a meeting at the school the social worker asks James’s teacher to keep notes of his behaviour and when he is being sick. She asks James’ mother to keep a note of which days he wets the bed. She asks his grandfather if he has seen any changes in James’ behaviour. He is quite dismissive of her enquiries and blames his daughter for giving James too many sweets.

After a month the social worker puts all the data into a chronology and discusses it with her senior in supervision. They notice that James is only sick on the days when he is collected by his grandfather and wets his bed usually on the same night. They do not jump to conclusions but decide to review the previous case files on James’ mother. Here they find a record of an allegation made when she was 15 years old that her father was sexually abusing her. She was not believed at the time and there was no supporting evidence.

**Using a chronology in this way has enabled the social worker to revise her assessment of what might be distressing James** and a plan can now be developed to engage with the family, seeking more information and ensuring that James is safe.

## 3. A chronology is not an end in itself but a working tool which promotes engagement with people who use services

In the example above if the social worker had simply gathered the information and not analysed it, the chronology would have had no purpose and James might have remained unprotected. Some practitioners told us that they felt compiling a chronology was an

exercise that took up considerable time but did not lead anywhere – largely because the chronology had not been analysed.

Chronologies are a part of recording and should be available to the person they are about, unless there are justifiable reasons to withhold the information because sharing it would increase risks for the person. The chronology should normally be shown to, and discussed with, the person it is about or their parent/guardian.

**Sharing chronologies and consulting people who use services is important in ensuring accuracy.** Mistakes, particularly concerning dates of significant family events (such as dates of birth, dates when families moved home) where small but significant errors in a chronology can then be replicated over and over again in reports. Sharing chronologies can also help in working together and strengthening a sense of achievement and progress. Reviewing a chronology alongside a person who uses services can help to identify where they have succeeded, for example in reducing their drug dependency or improving the school attendance of their child.

Whilst your agency may have a specific way of storing the information, what is most important is that a chronological record is kept in a format that can be accessed and shared as appropriate. Practitioners and managers attending any multi-agency meetings **MUST** submit chronological information at the time of the meeting using the Multi Agency Chronology Template which can be found in Appendix 3, and include it in all future work. It is expected that where a professional cannot attend a meeting the chronological update is sent electronically to the Lead Professional/Council Officer using the Multi Agency Chronology Template. The content must be regularly reviewed and analysed with services and the people we aim to support.

#### **4. A chronology must be based on up to date, accurate case recording**

The importance of accurate recording has been a key theme in child protection inquiries since the mid-1970s. One of the first major child protection inquiries into the death of Maria Colwell noted that “*Inaccuracies and deficiencies in the recording of visits and telephone messages played a part in the tragedy... the importance of recording actual dates and distinguishing between fact and impression*”. Other inquiries found that allegations by neighbours were sometimes not recorded fully, were ignored or deemed malicious. Poor recording was noted in Lord Laming’s inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (2004) and continues to be reflected as a concern in many significant case reviews across the UK.

#### **Best Practice Examples:**

*“A chronology records what was done at the time, events, dates, etc. A best practice chronology is succinct and records what happened at the time of the incident too”.*

#### **Best Practice Example 3 – ADULT**

Mrs Anderson is 82. She has arthritis and a heart condition which sometimes makes her feel dizzy. She lives alone and her daughter visits occasionally. Her daughter is known to the criminal justice team and is on probation for theft.

Mrs Anderson has a homecare worker twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays. She tells her worker that she seems to be losing her electricity money, which she keeps in a china dog on the mantelpiece. The homecare worker tells her manager, who asks her to keep a note of these events and also checks with Mrs Anderson's GP. He is surprised as he does not think that she would necessarily be forgetful about money.

At Mrs Anderson's next care management review, a question was raised to consider financial harm under adult support and protection; the very detailed notes made by the homecare worker are considered and **redrafted as a chronology**. She has noted not only the dates when Mrs Anderson misplaces her money but also the days of the week. Mrs Anderson invariably loses money on or soon after Sunday evenings on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. A phone call to the criminal justice worker adds further information to the chronology, to the effect that Mrs Anderson's daughter stays with her on these weekends. Adult protection procedures are implemented. The presence of an accurate chronology supported the decision to proceed under adult protection legislation.

## **5. A chronology should contain sufficient detail but not substitute for recording in the file**

Providing a well considered chronology is a complex area to understand, for some the challenge is ensuring that chronologies do not become repeats of the case recording.

In practice examples 1 and 3 above, had the workers recorded excessive details it would have been more difficult for them to pinpoint what might have been important issues. For example, in a situation where staff are worried about a child or adult who may be at risk, the temptation is to record everything in the chronology as well as the case record. This needs to be resisted.

## **6. A chronology should be flexible – detail collected may be increased if risk increases**

Chronologies are working tools, not an end in themselves. The needs and risk identified in the assessment will influence the type of chronology required.

A chronology should set out a series of significant events. The amount of detail in a chronology should depend largely on how a significant event is defined.

It is difficult to provide a detailed account of what events might be considered significant, and in what circumstances. However there are some pointers which may help practitioners exercise professional judgement in arriving at such decisions.

### **Significant Events**

The following events may be classed as significant in most chronologies, depending on the age of the person:

*Births; deaths; marriages; house moves; serious illnesses; changes in household composition; changes in legal status; arrests and court appearances; educational achievement; employment status; child or adult protection case conferences.*

As the needs of the individual become more complex, vulnerability increases and everyday events may helpfully be regarded as carrying more significance. Here are two examples.

1. A child who rarely misses school and who is occasionally absent – this is unlikely to be regarded as significant. On the other hand for a child whose name is on the child protection register for neglect, any absence is likely to be regarded as significant.
2. Where there is a high risk for a child living at home, the chronology may not just include school attendance but also specific details. This could include whether the child was dressed appropriately, whether the child was collected from school on time and by whom.

#### **Best Practice Example 4 – ADULT**

Robbie, aged 29, has been released from prison on parole licence. He has an extensive history of violent offences, including domestic abuse and targeted violence towards women involved in prostitution. He has conditions attached to his licence including the need to be at his named address by 8pm, to have no contact with his ex-partner and to attend addiction counselling as instructed by his supervising officer. He is living in supported accommodation. He has mental health issues that require medication and has struggled with alcohol misuse over many years. Robbie has been assessed as high risk and need with high risk of harm and has a risk management plan in place.

Over the past three months he has resettled well but staff in the accommodation has noted a change in his behaviour over the past couple of weeks. They reviewed his case record, pulled together the examples of the changes in his behaviour and looked at what else was happening in his routine and life at those times. They contacted the supervising social worker and a meeting was called including forensic health and addictions staff. He has come in late on a couple of occasions and been vague about his whereabouts. He was struggling to make eye contact and communicate and was increasingly agitated. One member of the accommodation staff suspected he had been drinking but when they asked him he denied this. The group decided to look back over his previous pattern of offending behaviour and what was taking place in the lead up to the offences. They were able to identify that he had come off his medication, had increased his use of alcohol, was having relationship problems with his then partner and was frequenting areas known for prostitution. The social worker contacted the police who were able to confirm he had been sighted over the past week in an area known for prostitution.

The social worker and forensic mental health nurse arranged a follow-up meeting with Robbie, who confirmed he had stopped taking his medication and was struggling to manage his agitation and feelings. He also advised that in complying with his licence conditions not to contact his ex-partner he was lonely and finding it difficult to cope on his own. He also admitted to using alcohol. These were all identified as significant risk factors and an immediate review of the risk management plan was undertaken to increase supervision and monitoring as well as providing additional help and support for his mental health.

#### **7. The importance of review and analysis - a chronology that is not reviewed regularly is of limited relevance!**

In order to carry out an effective assessment it is essential to review and analyse the chronology. A chronology which is not reviewed and analysed serves little, if any, purpose.

There is a range of opportunities to review a chronology. The case examples above have illustrated the role of supervision in reviewing a chronology. Peer review can also play an important part and can assist in identifying patterns, timescales and risks.

## **8. Different types of chronology are needed for different reasons**

So far we have discussed chronologies that are part of current work with children and adults. However case reviews and inquiries have all compiled chronologies to help them to make sense of what has happened in the past. These will rely on retrospective information and may mean the records of several agencies need to be brought together in a single chronology. The choice of data may change as a tentative hypothesis is developed and explored.

### **Best Practice Example 5**

Operation Dash (2013-15) was a large scale multi-agency investigation into child sexual exploitation in the West of Scotland, led by Police Scotland and Glasgow City Council.

Taking lessons learned from an earlier investigation, investigators initially generated a list of potential victims and perpetrators, using various sources of intelligence. Over the course of the investigation 139 potential victims were identified.

In order to clarify the risks faced by individual children and young people investigators designed a chronology format, with a specific purpose of identifying potential victims of child sexual exploitation. The chronology focused on the indicator of CSE and vulnerability supported by an accompanying CSE matrix used previously to support research in Glasgow. As well as identifying vulnerabilities and risk indicators, the chronology provided a pen picture of when young people went missing, who they were associating with and who they went missing with.

The investigation was multi-agency from the outset and agencies involved included police, social work, education, health, Glasgow young women's service and Barnardo's. Each agency compiled their own single agency chronology for each of the children and young people from case records, using the newly designed format. These were then brought together into an integrated, multi-agency chronology. This enabled police officers and social workers to identify patterns, trends and incidents of potential or actual concern. As well as the value added in assessing and managing the risks faced by children and young people, the information gleaned from the integrated chronologies also helped aspects of the criminal investigation. As was the case for the children, individuals of concern and their associations were identified. This approach helped with planning engagement with children and young people, interview plans and joint interviews and in the subsequent criminal investigation and interviews of suspected perpetrators.

The outcome of Operation Dash was to enhance the safety of significant numbers of children and young people, as well as leading to a number of prosecutions. In addition Operation Dash had a lasting impact on multi-disciplinary practice in Glasgow – this approach to investigating child sexual exploitation having been carried forward into subsequent large scale investigation as well as being reflected in a review of the council's vulnerable young people procedures.



## 9. Single agency and multi agency chronologies set different demands and expectations

Scottish Government guidance on Getting it Right for Every Child contains definitions of single agency and integrated chronologies which can apply equally to practice in adult and community justice. They helpfully set out the different demands and expectations.

*“A single agency chronology provides a brief description and summarised account of events in date order. It should be used as an analytical tool to assist in the understanding of the impact of life events and to inform decision making. Integration of single agency chronologies can establish a wider context from the agencies involved with a child or young person”.*

*“An integrated chronology is produced as part of a specific multi-agency intervention and will include only information extracted from single agency chronologies that is relevant and proportionate to support that intervention”.*

An integrated chronology should therefore be started when there is concern about a person’s wellbeing, to support a multi-agency response.

Complications can arise between professionals if it is not clear exactly who has responsibility for gathering together single agency chronologies, combining them into one chronology and updating it regularly. Multi-agency chronologies must also be regularly reviewed, analysed and updated by the lead professional.

*“The lead professional/council officer is responsible for collating the integrated chronology and all agencies contributing to the integrated assessment are expected to contribute to it. The process will work best when there is a shared sense of responsibility by all to contribute’.*

### Emerging Patterns of Concern

A chronology of significant events/life events can be used as an early indication of an emerging pattern of concern. This may be evident by gradual and persistent withdrawal from protective factors such as non-attendance at work, college, nursery/school, health appointments, alongside frequent attendance at A&E or GP out of ours service. Domestic abuse referrals, Adult Support and Protection referrals, referrals to the Children’s Reporter and other referrals of concern to agencies should always be recorded.

- Each professional or agency is responsible for recording any such event as and when they become aware of them
- Single agency chronological history of events should be completed for every child and adult protection case by the worker using the Multi Agency Chronology template
- The Lead Professional/Council Officer will collate this information into a multi-agency chronology and share with partners.
- Each agency is responsible for updating their chronologies contemporaneously on the chronology page specifically for the child/adult.
- It should include any event that may potentially impact negatively on the welfare of the child/adult though not necessarily involving them (e.g. domestic abuse incidents).



It is critical that practitioners record their observations of a child/adult when they feel this *could be* significant to their wellbeing. The same applies to any other information, an event or concern they have witnessed or have been told about.

When an observation, event or concern is established as potentially important in the practitioner's or the child/adult's mind, this should be recorded. It could be appropriate that the observation, event and or concern is shared with others and information requested from other agencies to assist in any decision making. Always consider information sharing in relation to the family too. **ANY** change in circumstances or status should always be recorded and form part of a chronology. In the event of suspicion of child/adult protection and MAPPA incidents, agencies are permitted to share information with each other and produce a multi-agency chronology to support management of risk and decision making.

A chronology flow chart is included for your information in Appendix 4.

Appendix 5 includes References for your information.

## **Conclusion**

Joint inspections of children's services and services for adults and older people across Scotland have demonstrated that partnerships have to work together to ensure that not only are there chronologies in place but that they are fit for purpose. A recent local multi-agency case file audit found less than half of the chronologies read were of a standard that could help staff to accurately identify patterns of significant events, or help the person, parents, relatives or carers to understand the impact of these events on the individual's wellbeing.

**Chronologies are essential in identifying patterns of significant events or experiences. We want practitioners and managers in South Lanarkshire to use their single agency chronologies guides alongside the South Lanarkshire Adult and Child Protection Committees guidance in achieving best practice.**

Remember to take the chronological information you have relating to significant life events with you every time you attend a meeting about the child / adult you are supporting.

If you cannot attend the meeting, ensure that the chronological information you have is sent to be included in the key decision making processes.

## Appendix 1: South Lanarkshire Multi-Agency Chronology Template (EXAMPLE)

The purpose of a chronology is to record significant concerns, events or incidents that have had, or continue to have, a significant impact (positive or otherwise) on an adult, child or young person's wellbeing.

Date or period of event	Significant event	Source	Impact (either positive or negative)	Action taken to mitigate adverse impact on child	Entered by (name and agency)	Date of entry
The date or period each significant concern, event or incident occurred should be recorded here	<p>A brief description of the significant concern, event or incident should be recorded here. The adult, children, young people and their families will see this information. Language should be in plain English and non-judgmental. Information should be clear; factual; accurate; current; evidence based; succinct and concise to support good decision-making.</p> <p>A significant event may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Significant changes in the adult, child or young person's wellbeing (SHANARRI)</li> <li>2. Significant changes in the parent or carer's wellbeing, which impacts on the adult, child or young person</li> <li>3. Significant changes in the</li> <li>4. Adult or family structure e.g.</li> </ol>	The source of the significant concern, event or incident should be recorded here i.e. who and what practitioner, service or agency Where known, the impact on the adult, child or young person should be recorded here. Record whether the significant concern, event or incident had a positive or negative impact on the adult, child or young person. If unknown, say so	The impact on the adult, child or young person may become clearer over time and may also change	Professional action or response taken to mitigate any adverse impact on the adult, child from each significant concern, event or incident should be recorded here This should include single practitioner, service / agency response and multi-agency responses If no action taken, specify why not	The name of the practitioner and their service / agency making the entry should be recorded here	The date on which the entry is made should be recorded here as soon as possible after the significant concern; event or incident has been identified. Also acknowledge any retrospective reporting.

	<p>housing; unemployment; separation; divorce; bereavement; birth of a sibling; new partner; presence of a significant adult</p> <p>5. Significant changes in the adult, child or young person's adult/child protection status or legal status or referral to SCRA</p> <p>6. Events including e.g. missed appointments; absences from work, school; exclusion from school; involvement in offending; bad associations; running away/missing</p> <p>7. Frequency of adult/child concern reports; referrals; inquiries, investigations; case conferences; registrations</p> <p>8. Frequent changes in professional staff or services/ agencies accessed by the adult, child, young person or family</p>					
--	---	--	--	--	--	--

## Appendix 2

### Information to be included in a Chronology

Any significant event / life event which has an impact on the individual should be included and the selection of information must be based on professional judgement.

The following list, although not exhaustive, provides examples for all service users within your service but should only be recorded where in the judgement of the practitioner it constitutes a key event for the individual:

- Positive or negative changes in family situation/dynamics e.g. through separation, divorce, marriage, birth of a sibling, bereavement, custodial sentence, changes to intervention etc.
- Positive or negative changes relating to the health of parents or family carers that significantly impact on the individual e.g. hospital admission
- Positive or negative changes in accommodation/living arrangements e.g. homelessness, move to permanent housing, care home.
- Positive or negative changes in personal relationships
- Positive or negative changes in health related problems such as disability, substance related issues, mental health issues, etc
- Offence related issues e.g. charged with an offence, victim of an offence
- Positive or negative changes in employment, education or training
- Breakdown of placement/support e.g. with foster carers, residential, family, carers, etc
- Admission to looked after accommodation (planned or emergency) including dates and reason
- Referrals from the Out-of-Hours services (ESWS / NHS 24)
- Lack of engagement/failure to attend formal meeting and reviews
- Established pattern of missed appointments without acceptable reasons (including refusal of entry)
- Any change of worker from service providers
- Any changes to legal status for adult, child, parent, carer
- Any changes of address including placements and temporary accommodation
- Any threats or actual incidents of violence to staff including verbal threats
- Complaints made against the service by the individual or made against the individual by the service or service provider
- Significant risk has been identified and risk assessment completed
- Details of child/adult protection concern / referrals and the outcomes of inquiries, investigations etc
- Dates of child/adult protection meetings e.g. case discussions, case conferences etc
- Details of and changes to protection plans/care plans
- Referrals to the Children's Hearing and the grounds for referral
- Dates of Children's Hearings and outcomes
- Dates of planning meetings and/or review dates for Looked After and Accommodated Children

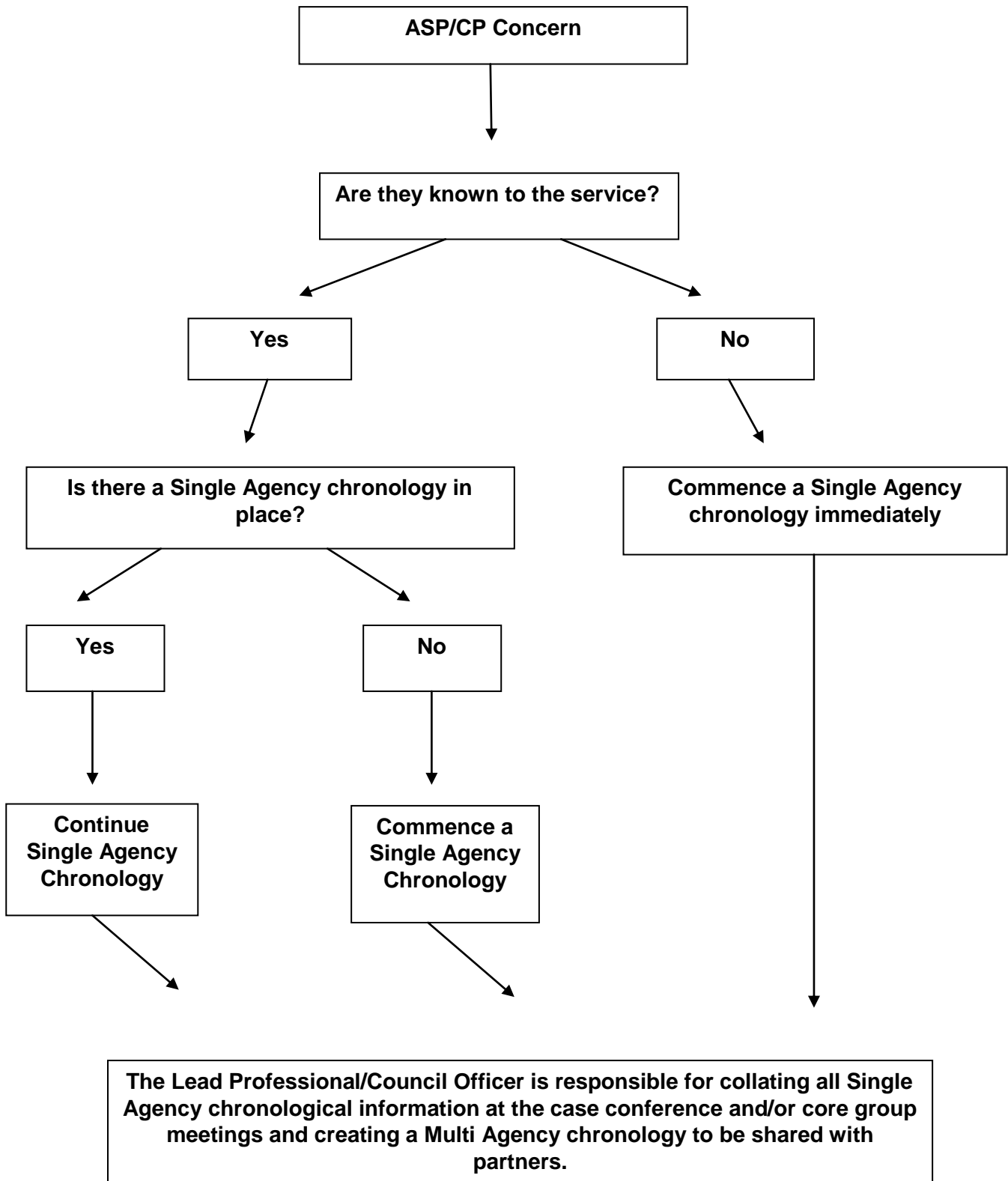
### Appendix 3: South Lanarkshire Multi-Agency Chronology Template

The purpose of a chronology is to record significant concerns, events or incidents that have had, or continue to have, a significant impact (positive or otherwise) on an adult, child or young person's wellbeing.

Date or period of event	Significant event	Source	Impact (either positive or negative)	Action taken to mitigate adverse impact on child/adult	Entered by (name and agency)	Date of entry

Review: \_\_\_\_\_ Initials: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 4



## Appendix 5:

### References

Calder, C, McKinnon, M and Sneddon, R (2012) National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People, Scottish Government

Care Inspectorate (2014) How well are improving the lives of children and young people? A guide to evaluating services using quality indicators

Carson, D and Bain, A (2008) Professional Risk and Working with People, Jessica Kingsley

Care Inspectorate (2015) Inspecting and Improving Social Care and Social Work in Scotland: Findings from the Care Inspectorate 2011-2014

Field-Fisher, TG (Chair) (1974) Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the care and supervision provided by local authorities and other agencies in relation to Maria Colwell and the co-ordination between them.

Jay, A (2014) Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, 1997-2013

Laming, H (2003) The Victoria Climbié Inquiry, London: Cmnd 5730 HMSO

Laming, H (2009) The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report, London: The Stationery Office

National Practice Model (undated), Scottish Government

O'Brien, S (2003) Report of the Caleb Ness Inquiry

Report of the Inspection of Scottish Borders Council Social Work Services for People affected by

Learning Disabilities (2004) Scottish Executive

Scottish Government, GIRFEC Briefings for practitioners, 8 of 8: Single agency and integrated Chronologies

Social Work Inspection Agency (2005) An inspection into the care and protection of children in Eilean Siar, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Social Work Inspection Agency and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (2009) Follow up to the review of the Management Arrangements of Colyn Evans

Standards and Guidelines for Risk Management (2013) Risk Management Authority

Statutory Guidance to Accompany the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act (2013) Scottish Government.