



Shropshire Safeguarding  
Community Partnership

# Single & Multi-agency Chronology Practice Guidance

To be used when writing a report on behalf of your agency

This guidance applies to all agencies working with children and/or adults  
and their families.

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## Introduction

A chronology is a series of [significant events](#) and changes that occur in a person or household's life. It should provide a summarised account of significant events based upon your agency's contacts with the person or family. The impact it has had on the child and/or adult, any action taken and comments on the appropriateness or not of the actions that were taken at that time should also be included. A chronology should be a summary that gives an "at a glance" overview and should not replace case notes or records which should include more detailed information.

## Purpose

The reasons why practitioners should use chronologies in their practice include the following:

- When a statutory case review Domestic Homicide Review, Child Practice Safeguarding Review, Safeguarding Adult Review or Anti-Social Behaviour Case Review is being undertaken.
- To place the person and/or household at the centre of the practitioner's thinking.
- To help identify risks and patterns.
- It can help develop a better understanding of the immediate or cumulative impact of harm and/or events.
- To help make links between the past and the present, helping to understand the importance of historic information for the worker and the family.
- It is a useful reflective tool, which can be used within supervision for critically reflective practice and to identify next steps.
- A good chronology can draw attention to seemingly unrelated events or information, enabling the significance of issues to be better understood.
- To evidence where there is persistent and chronic neglect or self-neglect.
- To enable a new worker to become familiar with the circumstances including reducing the risk of starting again.
- Strengthen working with the adult and/or child and their family to understand and make sense of their own past and current situation.
- To capture learning in a timely way and identify who is responsible for taking what action.

- To evidence progress to empower the family or individual to sustain changes made and help them to be more resilient to understand what interventions have been tried, if they have been successful in that past, and identifying what works and what doesn't for the, person and/or family.

A chronology is an, effective way to see what's happening in the life of a child or adult and the impacts on them and their family. It helps identify patterns and issues, positive change, is invaluable in assessing risk and when analysing the likely impact of events, especially where there may be no single 'incident', e.g. in respect of identifying neglect or self-neglect.

A chronology is an essential tool in analysis and planning at all stages, and especially when cases are transferred. It's also an essential tool in life story work and for adults with care and support needs, children, young people and families.

### **When to start/use a chronology**

This document explains what the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership considers good practice regarding the completion of chronologies. For different agencies, a chronology will be started for different reasons. Some chronologies are automatically generated from electronic record systems so this template may not always need to be used.

In the case of statutory case reviews, Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership's Business Unit, will always expect this template to be used. This is because these reviews are required by law and before we can start the work of identifying any learning, all agencies and the Partnership need to be clear about who was involved, when, for what reasons and how this affected things.

Some chronologies will need to be produced for a specific reason for example, when a new relationship is started, during multi-agency meetings, from the start of a significant event, or from the start of the date parameters set by a statutory case review. The chronology should then continue throughout the intervention, or for as long as is required.

### **How to record a chronology**

- **Accurately** – record the date of the event and/or when the chronology was updated not the date it was entered into the chronology.
- **Chronologically** - record events /issues as they happen and in order.
- **In context** – record the information given, how it was received and who the information was from e.g. "telephone call from substance misuse worker stating that.....", "report provided by Police to review conference confirmed....."

- **Factually and succinctly** – record factual information in a succinct way to assist with decision-making e.g. completed parenting intervention, decluttered home environment, started to engage with substance misuse appointments after a period of disengagement, "family changed GP to [name] GP practice", "alleged assault on [name] by [name]". Deciding on the level of detail to be included is a matter of professional judgement but chronologies should add value and not replicate the case management records.
- **In compliance** - use the agreed format in the Excel sscp Chronology Template as this allows for information to be simple to read and easy to merge.
- **Kept up to date** – chronologies should be maintained, regularly reviewed and analysed in order to be a relevant and useful tool, unless the chronology is being used as part of a statutory review.
- **Individualised** – In the case of a family of children or adults with care and support needs each person undergoing an assessment/receiving support must have their own chronology. For some teams for example Targeted Early Help, it may be one chronology per family that is completed. Internal policies may dictate this.

### What is a “significant event”?

Significant can be defined as “important, leading to a different result or important change”. Professional judgment will need to be used to determine events that are significant in the chronology. The following is guidance only and not an exhaustive list:

- Contact referrals about the child and/adult or other family members.
- Assessments with start and finish dates and outcome decisions.
- Details of being open to services/interventions/plans and decisions made.
- Multiple changes in address or eviction.
- Suspicious or significant injuries, including non-accidental injuries or reports of suspected abuse.
- When anti-social behaviour started, what happened and who was responsible (if known)
- A person left home alone when they are too young or have care and support needs.
- Some attendances at Accident & Emergency or other hospital admissions, non-attendance at health service appointments, cancellation of care packages or multiple changes of General Practitioner.

- Physical, emotional, and mental illness, substance abuse or dependencies on medication etc. in an adult with care and support needs, child **or** in a care-giver or household member. This might be an acute illness but with ongoing consequences (e.g. Meningitis or Stroke) or a chronic, degenerative or life-limiting condition (e.g. Epilepsy, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis).
- Changes in pre-existing or acquired disabilities (through accident or illness).
- Absence of a significant care giver through incarceration, divorce/separation etc.
- Births and deaths of significant people.
- Home or placement move, homelessness.
- Change in family composition, new partners, separations, unexpected visitors, unknown adults in the house.
- Criminal or civil proceedings and outcomes, changes in legal status.
- Incidents of domestic abuse, substance misuse, periods of mental ill health.
- Missing episodes.
- This can be a summary of lateness, absence or attendance patterns, not each date/time, with the impact summarised.
- Attempted suicide, self-harming, overmedication of a child or adult with care and support needs.
- Disclosure of any form of harm or abuse.
- Reports received from third parties sharing concerns which may or may not have included requests for further action.

### **Multi-agency chronologies**

Research, practice and learning from case reviews has shown the importance of multi-agency chronologies in assisting professionals in their work with children, adults and families.

A multi-agency chronology merges together chronologies created by different agencies and presents a complete view of what is happening in the person's life. This may highlight events, which on their own may appear to be insignificant, but in the context of other events, or information held by another agency, builds a more informed picture of the impact upon the child and/or adult and their family.

The identification of significant events and their impact on the person can assist in understanding historic, present and future risk and support the multi-agency decision-making process.

## **Consent**

If a multi-agency chronology is to be compiled it is good practice to obtain consent from the person the chronology is written about and/or their family members before contacting other agencies for information. For support and guidance on information sharing refer to your agency's information sharing policy and also:

In respect of children the West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures - [1.1 Information Sharing](#) & [2.10 Information Sharing & Confidentiality](#)

In respect of adults with care and support needs, the Keeping Adult's Safe in Shropshire [Information Sharing Protocol and Practice Guidance](#)

## **When to create a multi-agency chronology?**

It is considered good practice to create a multi-agency chronology for complex cases, especially if there is significant risk. One example of when agencies may need to consider a multi-agency chronology is when there are concerns about Fabricated or Induced Illness, especially in a child or an adult with care and support needs.

It is likely that the lead professional will take on the responsibility for creating the multi-agency chronology following discussion with the relevant partners.

The effectiveness of the multi-agency chronology relies on agencies completing their individual chronologies using the agreed format (see Appendix 1 SSCP Chronology Template) to enable the chronologies to be easily collated.

The process of creating a multi-agency chronology will work best when agencies are working closely together and there is a shared sense of responsibility amongst all for gathering, recording and passing the information to the lead professional. To assist with this, the requirement for the development of a multi-agency chronology should be recorded as part of the child, adult's or family's plan and timescales agreed.

The multi-agency chronology should be regularly reviewed and used to inform decision-making in all child/adult safeguarding planning meetings.

Multi-agency chronologies will always be created when statutory case reviews are being undertaken.

## Appendix 1

### SSCP Chronology Template



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