LBTH Guidance Notes - Chronology

1. What is a Chronology?

A Chronology is an important part of social work practice and forms the basis for understanding the social history and patterns of individuals and families, which in isolation might appear insignificant, but cumulatively could raise serious concerns.

Chronologies provide a sequential list of significant events in a child's life. They draw upon significant information from social work case files, the child, his or her family and carers, as well as from knowledge and information held by other professionals and key agencies. A chronology should enable social workers and other professionals to understand patterns of behaviour that have a significant bearing on the child's or their carer's journey and will highlight any gaps, concerns, or risks that have impacted or are likely to impact on the child's development and well-being, and on the carers' ability to meet the needs of the child. (In this context, a 'carer' is defined as someone who is looking after a child, or is being considered to look after a child, including Foster/Adoptive Carers, Private Foster Carers, Stranger Carers, and Family and Connected Persons).

The details contained in the chronology must be factual, evidence based, and in date order. It should contain clear, precise, accurate, and concise information about the child's history and significant events. The chronology should assist the social worker with reflection, analysis, decision-making, and in planning the next stages of intervention.

In Tower Hamlets it is the expectation that Social Workers complete chronologies on ALL social work case files. This applies to children subject to CIN, CP and CLA Plans, and at the start of an LBTH assessment.
A chronology will also commence at the start of 'Family and Connected Persons' assessments and as part of the recruitment and assessment process of foster and adoptive parents.

2. Structure and Format:

The format should consist of three main headings: Date, Significant Event, and Source.

Table 1: The Format and Structure on Framework-i:

Date	Brief Summary of Significant Events	Source (e.g. SW's court statement or case notes)

Date: This is to be entered in sequential order in accordance with the child's history

Brief Summary of Significant Events: A 'significant event' is something that has happened in the life of the child, or the child's family/carer (foster carer adoptive carer or stranger carer), that holds a long term importance for the child/carer

A 'significant event' is not something that is a day to day event, or concerned with the management of the case. It should not be a simple list of visits and contacts such as standard social work visits, letters, phone calls, conferences or reviews that are considered regular and where nothing 'significant' happens or is decided. A chronology should **not** include *detailed advice* of Legal Planning Meetings (as this is deemed to be confidential advice between legal and CSC and is regarded as 'legally privileged' information).

The temptation to include everything may be attributable to the fact that it is often only with hindsight that one can see which events in a child's/carer's life has been significant for them. However, this temptation should be avoided, in order to make the chronology a workable and useful document for the workers and the child, carer and family. As important as the events themselves are, it is the actions that were taken that helps pinpoint what has been effective or ineffective in the past. Ultimately, what goes into a chronology is a matter of professional social work judgement.

Source: The source of the information should clearly state from where the information is derived (i.e. the origin of the information) and its current location on the electronic file (e.g. social work statement).

3. When should you start a chronology?
A chronology will begin at the start of an LBTH assessment, or any other assessment process and be updated routinely through the progression of the case.

4. A good chronology will consist of the following information:

- Dates of birth, including births of members of the family and significant others. This would include the country or place of birth.
- Child's/ carer's health and immunisations - including any hospital admissions
- Record of any deaths in the family
- Marriages/partnerships: start and end date
- Moves/change of placements and/or placement breakdowns
- Diagnosis of a disability or ill health e.g. mental illness
- Criminal records/incidents/reports from police
- Allegations made: by whom and actions taken
- Thematic patterns of neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Significant concerns raised by another professional
- The first referral or enquiry: by whom, why, and actions taken

- Educational history, including academic achievements, or training undertaken and completed
- Change of Social Worker and the "threshold points" when moving from a Child in Need Plan to Child Protection Plan or to Child Looked After.
- Transfer into another Team/Service and reasons for transfer (including transfer to another Local Authority).
- Any significant planning meeting including Family Group Conference(s) (FGC) with dates and key decisions made
- Dates of Panels and decisions made
- Strategy meeting(s) and dates of Child Protection Plans (especially the date of the initial plan) and Core Group meetings
- Subsequent outcomes of assessments (key points)
- Dates when changes made to Child In Need Plans or Child Protection Plan, or change in Carers' status
- Significant life story work
- Legal Planning Meetings and key outcomes including when applying for a court order as part of Care Proceedings, or, as the case progresses from initial court hearings (CMC, IRH, etc.) to final court hearing
- Actions taken in relation to the Public Law Outline (e.g. when a letter is sent out to parents).

5. Implementation:

A new Chronology episode will be available on Frameworki with a locally constructed template for recording.

- The episode will be started through the client's front page in the 'people / new episode' tab.

- The chronology form will pre-populate with the basic 'personal details' and if a family chronology is desired there is a table available in the form to input other family member details.

- The chronology episode should remain open until the case is closed. The episode will sit in the uncompleted work folder on Fwi where a social worker can amend the episode to update the chronology when needed. If the allocated Social Worker changes the manager will need to reassign the open episode.

- If a chronology episode needs to be copied across to a sibling this can be done in the people / new episode' tab.

- The current chronology tab on a client's front page will be to view old chronologies started in the old system only.

References

1. Hollows, A and Wallbridge, S (2012) "Guide to Understanding the Importance of Writing a Chronology for the Purpose of Safeguarding Children and Young People". Community Care Inform, 2012
2. Chronologies: Practice Guide. http://www.swia.gov.uk
3. Munro E 2011 The Munro Review of Child Protection – Final Report –A Child Centred System. Department of Health

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