Tayside Practitioner's Guidance:

Chronologies

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Table of Contents

Introduction

This *Tayside Practitioner's Guidance: Chronologies* has been developed to provide all practitioners working and / or involved with adults, their families and carers across Tayside, with clear practice guidance on the effective use of Chronologies.

This guidance is for *all* practitioners and managers working across the public, private and third sectors across Tayside and provides minimum standards aimed at ensuring a consistent practice approach to Chronologies. This guidance should complement, not replace, any existing service / agency Chronology guidance.

This guidance is based on the Tayside Practitioner's Guidance: Chronologies that was developed under the auspices of the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative Priority Group 5 (Safeguarding and Child Protection) and in partnership with:

- Angus Child Protection Committee
- Dundee City Child Protection Committee
- Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee

Legislative and Policy Context

This guidance reflects the national adult protection legislation and policy context, findings from Inspection and in particular the following *key* publications:

- The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Adults With Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Practice Guide to Chronologies (Care Inspectorate: 2017)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Standards and Guidelines under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003
- Why a chronology should be the first thing you do in an assessment Community Care 2018

Definition and Purpose

Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding needs and risks; including the need for protection from harm. Setting out key events in sequential date order, chronologies give a summary timeline of an individual's circumstances, patterns of behaviour and trends in lifestyle, that may greatly assist any **assessment**, **analysis** and **planning**. 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.

Chronologies can and should also be used to promote engagement with the service / agency users. The content of chronologies is however determined by **professional judgement** as to what is in fact **significant** in an individual's life. They should not replicate, or attempt to substitute for case recording, but should provide a clear outline of the most important elements of individual or family circumstances.

Chronologies can be **single-agency** or **multi-agency** and can be used for a variety of purposes. A good chronology is a critical tool in helping make sense of the complexity of a individual's life and circumstances. It also establishes a sound foundation for future understandings and analysis where professional staff change, or new staff / services / agencies come on board.

Chronologies are, however, not an end in themselves; they constitute one key element of the suite of tools that we use to inform the analysis of needs and risks in assessments and interventions. Chronologies also inform planning. As dynamic tools, chronologies should be accurate, informative and up-to-date.

Chronologies can be initiated at different times depending on individual service / agency guidelines.

Information Sharing

Practitioners must understand **when** to share information; **what** information to share; **how much** information to share; **who** to share the information with and **the way in which** the information should be shared. Practitioners must also understand the possible adverse consequences **of not** sharing information.

Practitioners must understand the legislation underpinning information sharing which includes [The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)](#); [The Data Protection Act 2018](#); [The Human Rights Act 1998](#) and the [European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)](#). **Legislation *supports* lawful information sharing and should not be seen as a barrier.**

[GDPR](#) is a legal framework that sets out guidelines for the collection and processing (sharing) of personal data (information) and special category data (information) of individuals within the European Union (EU).

[GDPR](#) describes the principles which must underpin information sharing practice and the basis (formerly known as conditions) upon which information can be shared. All practitioners must understand the **principles** and **basis** for sharing information.

Practitioners should always refer to and comply with their own service / agency information sharing guidance.

Practitioners should always consider whether or not there is a legal requirement to seek Consent to share information.

Significant Events

Professional judgement is key for determining what is (or is not) a *significant event* for an individual. Any events, which are considered to have a *significant impact* on person, whether the event is positive or negative, or a strength or a weakness, should be considered for inclusion in a Chronology.

A *significant event* could include *changes* in a person's:

- protection status, including concern reports, vulnerabilities, needs, risks, protective factors and resilience

- care or Risk Assessment Plan

- referrals and legal status

- family circumstances including separation, divorce, bereavement, changes in the immediate family structure and / or the presence of any significant individual (s)

- domestic living arrangements and / or environment / frequent changes of address

- physical, mental, emotional or sexual health, including chronic health, acute admissions, failed and / or missed and / or did not attend (DNAs) appointments

- physical and / or mental health, employment status

- incidents of domestic abuse, substance misuse, learning difficulties

- service supports, including changes of workers, gradual or sudden withdrawal from service support

- behaviour that is seen as difficult, hostile, evasive, non- engaging, threatening, non-compliant and / or uncooperative including any criminality

Single-Agency Chronology

A *single-agency chronology* should be produced and maintained by all practitioners, services / agencies that have a role with the person. A *single-agency chronology* provides a brief description and summarised account of *significant 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.

Every person, who has a Care Plan should have in place an up-to- date *single-agency chronology* and a *multi-agency chronology*.

Multi-Agency Chronology

A *multi-agency chronology* should be produced at the earliest opportunity, where two or more services / agencies have an involvement with a person and support is being provided through Adult Support and Protection procedures.

A *multi-agency chronology* may be produced as part of a specific multi-agency intervention and will include only information extracted from *single-agency chronologies* that is considered to be *relevant.*

A *multi-agency chronology* should only include information that is *relevant, necessary, legitimate, appropriate* and *proportionate* for sharing with other practitioners, services / agencies to support a specific intervention.

To be useful, a *multi-agency chronology* must be kept up-to-date through the contributions of all relevant practitioners, services / agencies and there *is an expectation that it is the responsibility of each practitioner, service / agency to contribute towards the maintenance of a multi-agency chronology.*

Care Inspectorate's: Summary Characteristics of a Chronology[1]

In summary, the Care Inspectorate's Guidance says a Chronology is:

- *a useful tool in assessment and practice*

- *not an assessment, but part of assessment*

- *not an end in itself, rather a working tool which promotes engagement with people who use services*

- *accurate and relies on good, up-to-date case recording*

- *detailed enough but does not substitute for recording in the file*

- *flexible so that detail collected may be increased if risk increases*

- *reviewed and analysed – a chronology which is not reviewed regularly is of limited relevance*

- *constructed differently according to different applications, for example current work and examining historical events*

- *recognising that single-agency and multi-agency chronologies set different demands and expectations*

- *recording what was done at the time (many chronologies list events, dates and so on but do not have a column setting out the action taken at the time - this column should also include a note when there was no action)*

Tayside Practice Guidance

A Chronology is:

- a dynamic tool for understanding needs, identifying risks and emerging patterns

- an essential tool in assessment, analysis, report writing, decision making and to inform planning

- an effective aid to multi-agency partnership working, intervention and support

- a useful tool for direct discussion with individuals, their families and carers

- helpful in supporting workers to maintain a focus on the individual

- helpful in supporting professional judgement, skills and knowledge

- always factual, kept current, accurate and evidence-based

- logical, informative, methodical and simple in format

- kept in a neutral language, suitable for practitioners, managers, individuals, their families and carers to read and understand

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[1] Source: Practice Guide to Chronologies (Care Inspectorate: 2017).

- presented in time and date order, starting with the earliest available information and the source of the information
- simple and concise and only contain events which are considered to be *significant* – if every concern, event, milestone, circumstance or transition is recorded then the chronology loses its value and impact

A Chronology is not:

- a replacement for individual practitioner professional judgment; common sense or gut feeling
- a list of all contacts, visits, meetings or events
- an administrative task – it is a professional responsibility
- a substitute for recording or detailed record keeping
- an end in itself – it is a dynamic working tool

A Chronology can:

- be critical in the legal process and must therefore be factually correct
- be extremely important in identifying critical events in the lives of individuals and can assist practitioners in their decision making
- provide a clear timeline in terms of practitioner, service / agency involvement and demonstrates the effectiveness, or otherwise, of previous interventions, involvements and support
- provide practitioners with a valuable tool for considering the immediate / cumulative impact of events on a person, both in the short and longer term
- support new workers to understand the complexities of a case and avoid 'start again' syndrome
- promote multi-agency working and a shared professional understanding of concerns, particularly at key meetings
- provide a clear account of all events in a person's life to date, drawing upon the knowledge and information held by each practitioner, service / agency involved with that person
- identify protective factors, resilience, strengths or weaknesses in a person's life
- provide an early indication of an emerging pattern of concerns,

A Chronology can also be required for:

- organisational reviews – to identify improvement, outcomes or otherwise
- practice reviews to identify good practice
- Initial Case Reviews and Significant Case Reviews
- evidencing recommendations and decision making for individuals
- Subject Access Requests by individuals in order to understand past events in their childhood / life

Assessing Impact

It is important that each *significant event,* whether single or recurring, whether positive or negative, are considered in terms of the impact on an individual. What may be *significant* for one person may have more or less significance for another. *Professional judgement* should be adopted when determining impact.

Practitioners may also find it helpful to seek peer and / or Line Management support when trying to identify impact and may also wish to ask themselves the *"so what?"* question.

Professional supervision is an additional essential tool in this process. If the impact of a *significant event* on a person is not immediately evident, the worker can consider:

- asking the individual or a family member/carer what they think the impact is
- ascertain the person's view
- using advocacy support to gauge the impact on the person
- updating this information at a later date if impact becomes more evident over time (always avoid viewing impact *in the moment) – think longer term*

Recording a Chronology

It is important that chronology information is recorded and reviewed regularly. Whilst service / agency systems may invariably be different, it is vitally important that the following *key information* is recorded and can be produced as and when required:

- the date the *significant event* took place / was discovered
- the source / name of the person providing the *significant event* information
- the date of entry of the *significant event*
- a brief description of the *significant event*
- brief description of the action taken / outcome of the *significant event,*

all of which informs assessment, decision making and planning.