

PAN BEDFORDSHIRE MULTI-AGENCY CHRONOLOGY PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The purpose of this practice guidance is to provide practitioners with an outline of what a **Multi-Agency Chronology** is, how and when they can be used and their impact on safeguarding children particular in cases of long term neglect. This guidance should be read in conjunction with [Guidance for Practitioners Completing Chronologies and Genograms](#). Findings from numerous Statutory Case Reviews including recent local reviews on neglect have concluded that a **Multi-Agency Chronology** could have supported the earlier identification of risks to the child(ren).

What is a Multi-Agency Chronology?

A tool that all practitioners can use to help them understand what is happening in the life of a child, adult or family, the positives as well as the negatives. Simplistically it is a list, in date order of all the major changes and significant events in a child's, adult's or family's life that all agencies working with a family have on their records. It should provide a brief and summarised account of events to give an immediate overview from a multi-agency perspective. Chronologies in themselves are not an assessment however they are a useful part of an assessment. Good practice would be that all cases contain a **Multi-Agency Chronology** that is kept up to date. This would help any practitioner looking at the case to have an up to date overview of the concerns raised about the child, adult and family and how agencies responded. Chronologies may vary significantly according to the family history, the purpose behind preparing the chronology, and the level and legal status of the agencies involvement. Practitioners however, must use their professional judgment about how detailed a chronology should be and what events to include. A **Multi-Agency Chronology** brings together chronologies created by different agencies and presents them coherently. It is particularly important that **Multi-Agency Chronologies** include the source and date of the information, with a record of the justification for why information was shared. **Multi-Agency Chronologies** can give a more rounded picture, for example a single incident may take on a far greater importance in the life of a child or adult when placed in the context of a proper, time lined **Multi-Agency Chronology**.

Multi-Agency Chronologies for Child Neglect Cases

What is notable throughout neglect cases is the complexity of family circumstances and **cumulative nature of harm/impact on development** through neglect. It is well understood that neglectful parenting is almost inevitably a sign of complex and longstanding problems, such as poor childhood parenting experiences, learning difficulties/disabilities, parental mental health and domestic abuse as examples. In response to a number of local safeguarding reviews the Safeguarding Children Boards would like to promote as good practice the development of **Multi-Agency Chronologies** for all child neglect cases.

At the first observations/reports of neglect it would be good practice that agencies start a chronology which should be kept under review and shared with other practitioners who are also working with the family.

If identified neglect concerns have continued for more than 3 months with no or limited progress, with little engagement or change by the parents then a **Multi-Agency Chronology** should be collated. This gives a deeper understanding of the child(ren)'s lived experiences, the impact of key events and frequency of professional contact, e.g. a single incident may take on a far greater importance in the life of a child or family when placed in the context of a clear, time lined **Multi-Agency Chronology**

Multi-Agency Chronologies are particularly important when working with neglect where there may be fewer critical incidents but where a child(ren) live in families where they are exposed to long term harm, they can help identify these patterns of harm.

The **Multi-Agency Chronology** should be regularly reviewed, analysed and updated. If a **Multi-Agency Chronology** is to be compiled it is good practice to obtain consent from family members before contacting agencies for information. The **Multi-Agency Chronology** should be shared/discussed with the child (as appropriate), parents/carers and those practitioners working with the child/family.

For guidance on information sharing please refer to your agency's information sharing policy, the [Pan Bedfordshire Child Protection Procedures](#) and the [7 Golden Rules for Information Sharing](#).

The **Multi-Agency Chronology** assists with assessment and analysis of risk, need and patterns within families, e.g. child repeatedly not brought for appointments, patterns of non-attendance at school, neighbourhood disputes. It will for example enable the CiN meeting or Core Group to identify key issues and develop effective plans and interventions. It can also highlight family strengths, successful interventions and the impact of positive change. Also consider alongside the chronology any GCP2 profiles completed as they would provide additional evidence

When to complete a Multi-Agency Chronology?

Lessons from Statutory Case Reviews have taught us that if all the pieces of information held by separate practitioners about a child's life were shared appropriately, and in a timely manner, the outcome for the child concerned may have been very different. It is for this reason that a **Multi-Agency Chronology** should be started as soon as there is multi-agency involvement i.e. EHA, EHCP, TAF, Strategy Discussion, CIN, CP etc. The Lead Practitioner should hold the chronology. The Lead Practitioner should be identified as soon as there is more than one agency working with the child and their family and there should be clear agreement of how and when the Lead Practitioner role will be handed over when an agency ceases their involvement.

The **Multi-Agency Chronology** should commence as soon as there is multi-agency involvement. Some families have very long and complicated histories and the compiling of a chronology will be a more onerous task and cannot be completed within a short period of time. It is essential that as much work as is practicable is completed in the early stages and continued commitment and time be given to the completion of a **Multi-Agency Chronology** through the course of working with a child(ren)/family. In cases where there are child protection concerns, all attempts should be made to create a **Multi-Agency Chronology** as part of the information shared at the Initial Child Protection Conference. At the Initial Child Protection Conference, when a child(ren) is made the subject of a child protection plan, the continued requirement of a **Multi-Agency Chronology** will form part of the child protection plan – the chair of the conference will task the Core Group with adding detail to the outline plan and to develop and keep up to date a **Multi-Agency Chronology**. Depending on the case, the Core Group will decide on the most appropriate practitioner to have oversight of the **Multi-Agency Chronology** which is kept up to date and reviewed at each Core Group meeting.

Responsibility for Maintaining the Chronology

All practitioners working with a child(ren) are responsible for ensuring that their agency's chronology on the child's files is maintained and kept up to date. Managers are responsible for monitoring the chronology through supervision to ensure it continues to be up to date and fit for purpose. If chronologies are not kept up to date, then this should be escalated for immediate attention within the agency.

As part of any plan for the child(ren) where there are continuing concerns there must be agreement as to who will be responsible for pulling together individual agency chronologies into a **Multi-Agency Chronology** which is maintained and kept updated and shared with all the practitioners working with the family. This can be someone other than the lead professional. This should be a shared responsibility between the practitioners for gathering, recording and passing information onto the person who has agreed to collate the chronology and can be completed at meetings and reviews. Compiling a **Multi-Agency Chronology** needs careful co-ordination and close working between the agencies involved, and requires individuals to note all matters which may constitute a significant event.