



**Vital  
Signs for  
Children**  
Safe, Well and Successful

# Genograms & Chronologies - an Overview

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**Genograms are a key part to the process of assessment.**

**They are not just another administrative task.**

**Professional Judgement is needed to understand what to include and how to interpret it, is part of your analysis.**



Genograms **must** be completed with families at the start of your work, ideally during first visits.

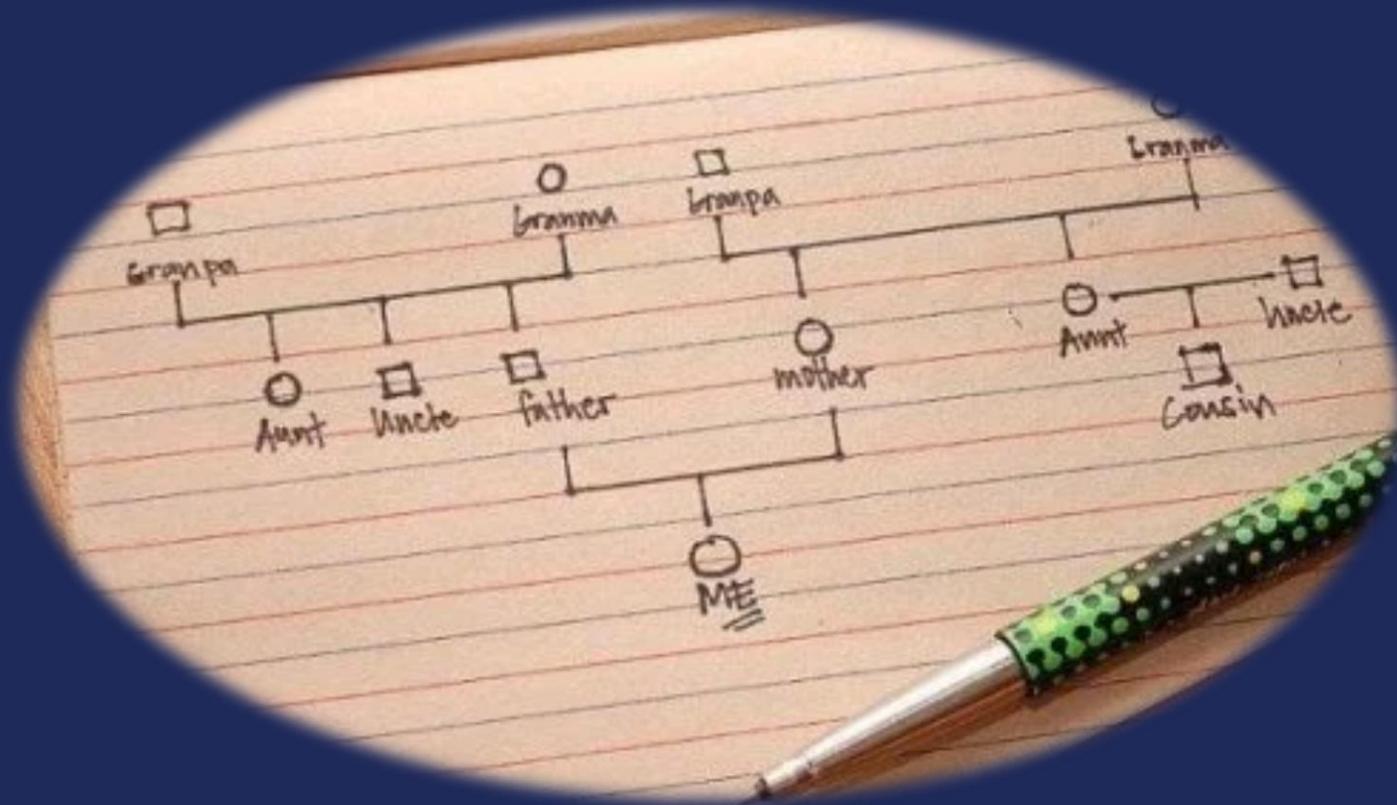


## The Genogram is an important assessment tool in:

- ❖ Demonstrating previous indicators of harm
- ❖ Helping families to understand patterns of behaviour or belief systems that impact on family life
- ❖ Crucial to understand and build the family network
- ❖ Used in supervision to reflect on practice and challenge fixed views and stereotypes.



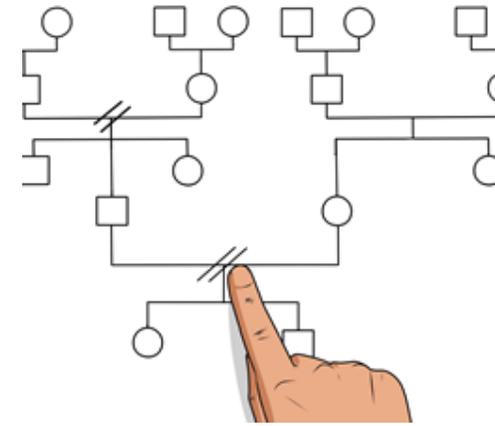
# What does a 'good' Genogram look like?



- ❖ The Genogram needs to be **accurate, inclusive** and a **good representation** of people's lives and familial links.
- ❖ It should be **concise** and **unambiguous** so that different people such as the network members or practitioners from different professional backgrounds can easily read it and understand it.
- ❖ The Genogram should trace back at least **three generations** , at least to the child's grandparents.

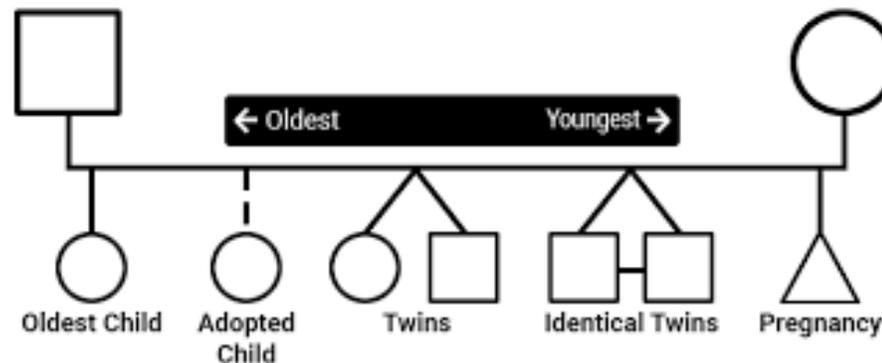


- ❖ Names and ages of all family members
- ❖ Dates of birth, marriage, separation, divorce, death and other significant life events
- ❖ Notation with dates about transitions, serious illness and other life changes
- ❖ Other significant relationships and/or connections with the community (church, mosques, school etc.)
- ❖ Details of cultural background
- ❖ Pets !



# Building the Genogram

1. Agree a key at the start of the process enabling you and the child to have a shared understanding of the symbols, colours and what they mean. Start in the middle of the page, giving you space to spread out.
2. Start with the child
3. The next step is, adding the other family members and their relationships, e.g. marriage is a solid line, divorce has two strokes through it. A transient relationship is a dotted line
4. If you need to record a death, talk to the child about how they would like it to be represented. Suggest using a more positive image such as a flower or a favourite colour.
5. The family members who are part of the same household are indicated by dotted line or coloured circle which is placed around the household members:



**Starting the Genogram on your initial visit provides a helpful framework and a starting point for discussing family history and relationships.**

**Be creative, use flipchart paper and coloured pens.**



# Genogram- an intervention

Always start with the child(ren) in the center and work outwards.

Look out for patterns and connections across the generations.

Once you have all the key information recorded; move into the detail asking curious questions and using the genogram as a visual prompt.

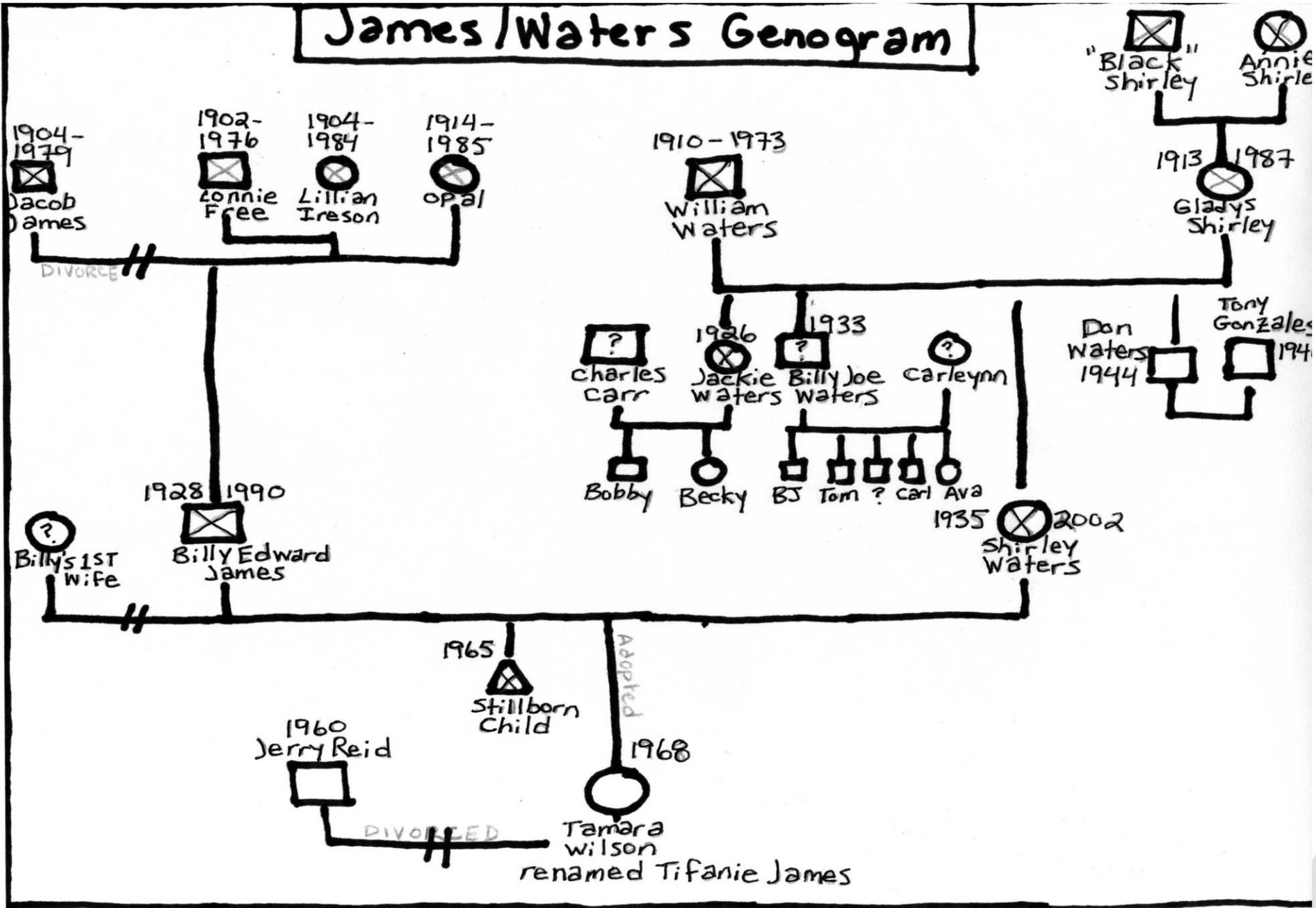
Revisit it with the family to check for accuracy and share it with them.

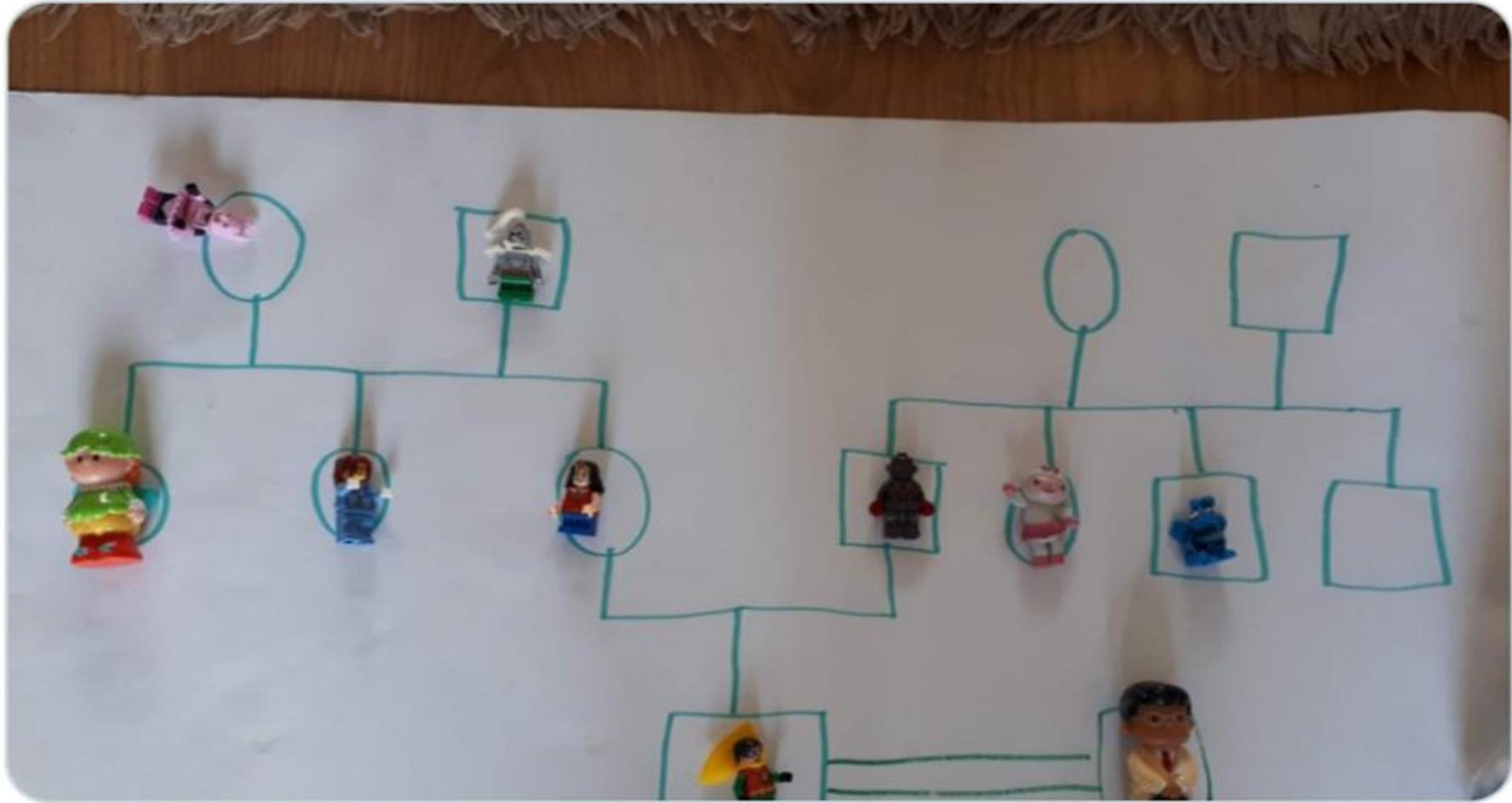
Make it engaging and even fun!

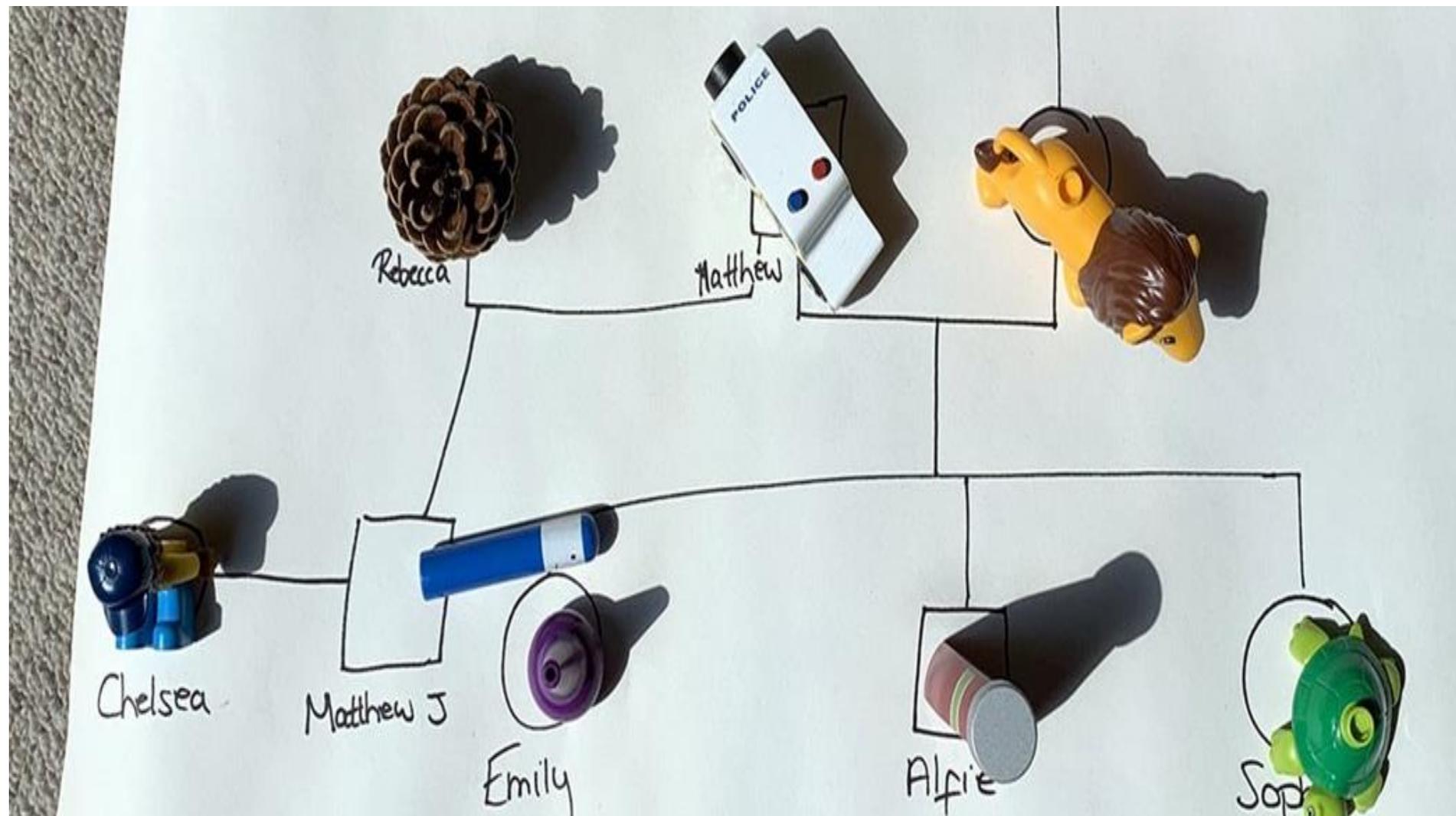
# Social GRRRAACCEESSS.

Gender identity	Culture
Geography	Caste
Race	Education
Religion	Ethnicity
Age	Economics
Ability	Spirituality
Appearance	Sexuality
Class	Sexual orientation

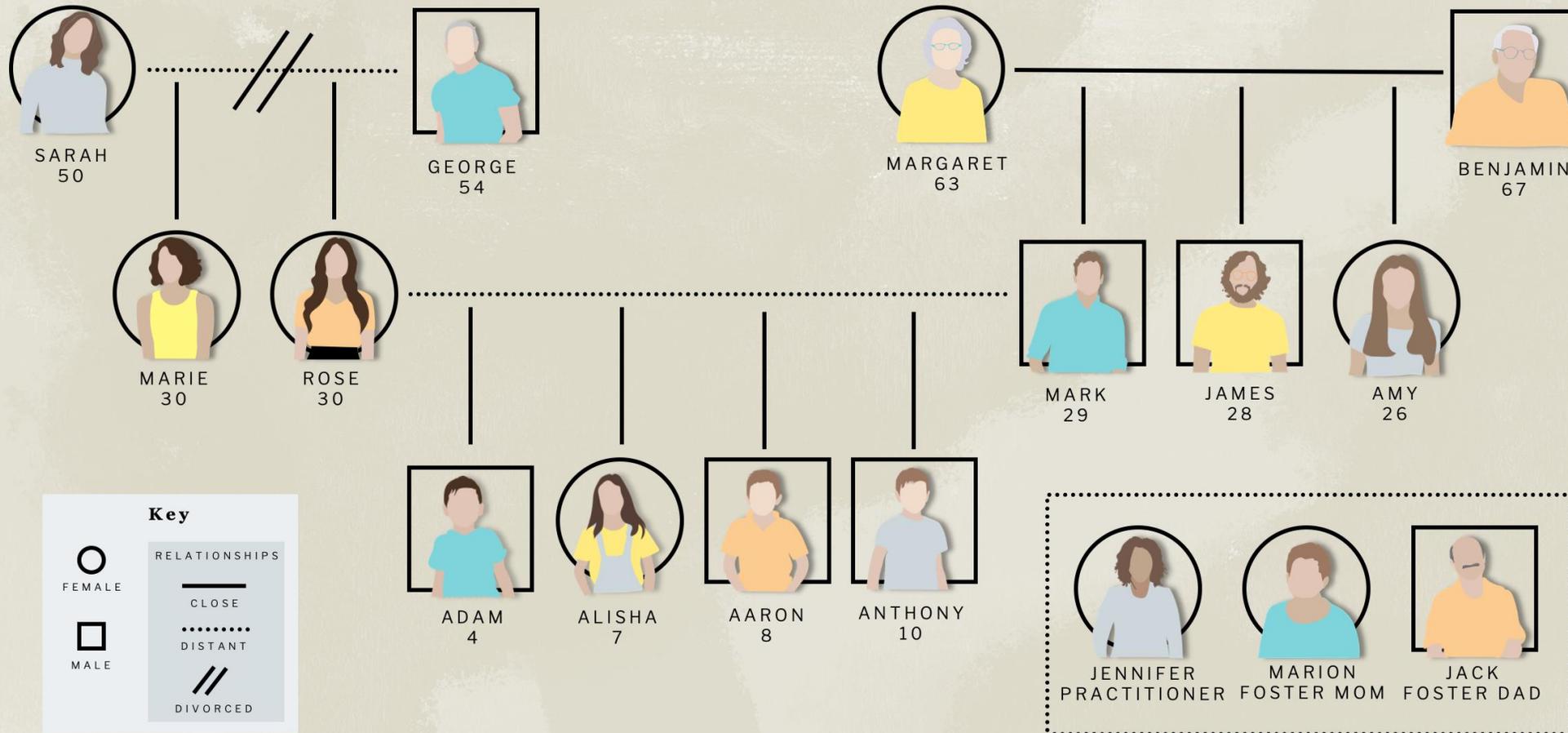
# James/Waters Genogram



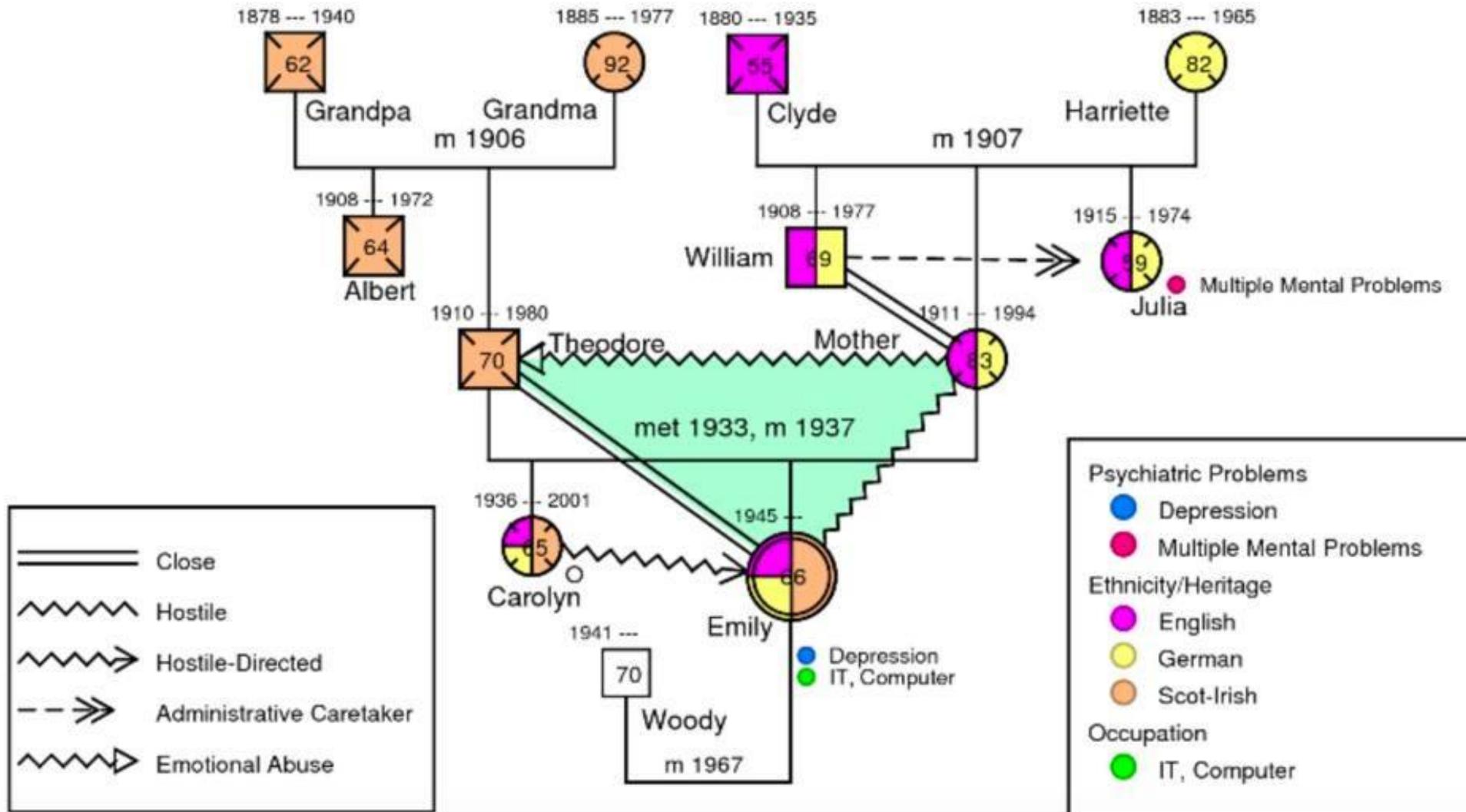




# Rose's Genogram



# Emily



# What is a chronology?



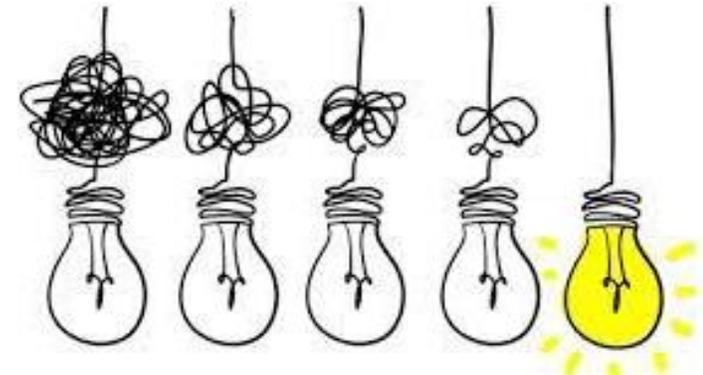
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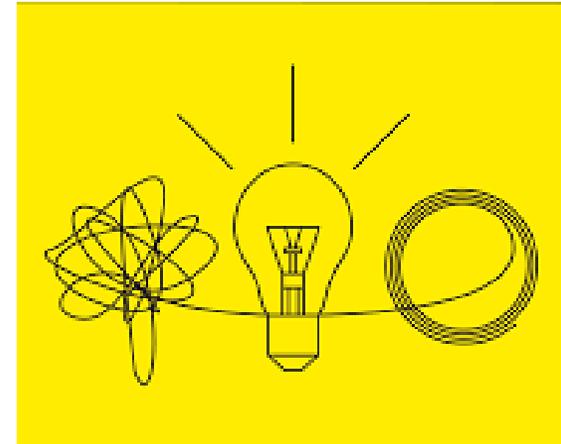
# Why are chronologies important ?

- ❖ enables a practitioner to understand the child's lived experience in the context of factual historical events.
- ❖ allows practitioners to step back from individual incidents to reflect on how and why they may have occurred and the growing impact on the child
- ❖ Details previous history. \*this is one of the strongest indicators of future harm.
- ❖ Can be used to help parents/carers understand a practitioner's analysis or worries
- ❖ Used as a tool, to reflect on practice or challenge fixed views about risk.
- ❖ Provide a sound basis for permanence planning and life story work.
- ❖ A good social care chronology is crucial to safe practice.



# How can a Chronology support your Practice?

- ❖ Organising information
- ❖ Inform planning
- ❖ Provide an accurate picture of the family/child/young person's trajectory
- ❖ Highlights gaps that may need further assessment
- ❖ Early indication of emerging patterns or concerns
- ❖ Direct work with parent or carer to understand the impact of events on the family
- ❖ At the start of an assessment a chronology helps organise historical information gathered to assist in predicting future behaviours, areas of potential risk, risk heightening factors, protective factors and parental capacity for change.
- ❖ Neglect by definition occurs over extended periods of time. The compilation of a chronology of events which may individually not give cause for concern may lead to an earlier identification of possible abuse or neglect
- ❖ Life story work – this should not be completed without a clear understanding of a child's history



# Missed opportunities

One approach to understanding cumulative risk and exercising anticipation is a more effective use of case chronologies, in particular reaching a more comprehensive picture of life for a child through combined or cross-agency chronologies.

Example: Cross-agency chronologies ‘The use of a chronology identifying missed appointments and untruths should have formed part of the historical information available to professionals working with the family so they could triangulate such information and at least catalogue the extent and nature of the “non-compliance”. While this historical information should not determine current thinking it should have significant impact on decision making ... There was a tendency to focus on “the concern of the moment” rather than seeing the whole picture. There was an inadequate use of chronologies which, had they been used, may have aided ... earlier identification of problems in this case.’

# A good chronology shows:

- ❖ Significant events and changes
- ❖ Factual information - not interpretations / professional judgement
- ❖ Concise detail
- ❖ Key information at a glance
- ❖ Written in the third person
- ❖ Accuracy of information must be checked and 'source' of information provided
- ❖ Someone who is unfamiliar with a case can easily read and understand it; see any patterns of behaviours that impact on the child's welfare.
- ❖ Jargon free, accessible language.
- ❖ Always shared with a child and their family alongside your assessment
- ❖ Translated into the first language of the child and their family





**What sorts of things need to be included in a chronology?**

# Types of events to be included in a chronology

- ❖ Dates of births/deaths within the family or significant others
- ❖ Dates the child and significant others move in and out of the family home
- ❖ House moves/placement changes/change of carers
- ❖ Life events such as marriages, separations and divorce
- ❖ Key incidents in a child's life such as notification of domestic violence, hospitalisation of parents, parents being arrested or incarcerated etc.
- ❖ When Local Authority (LA) involvement started and why
- ❖ Action taken by LA including assessments undertaken (i.e. pre-birth) or important meetings (including child protection/Child in Need meetings) with the outcome where relevant (i.e. Unanimous decision for ... to have Child Protection Plan for Neglect)

# Types of events to be included in a chronology cont..

- ❖ Changes of schools
- ❖ Health information, including any significant injury or illness, hospital admission and attendance at A&E
- ❖ Service provision start and end dates, including frequency of service (daily, weekly, fortnightly)
- ❖ Facts e.g. Court orders, change of legal status
- ❖ Change of allocated workers
- ❖ Significant information from partner agencies e.g C39ds (summarised where appropriate)
- ❖ Information from home visits only to be included where particularly significant -DO NOT include every visit.  
Summarise missed appointments if significant
- ❖ Education, training and employment history of young people
- ❖ Case transfers and closure
- ❖ Historical information of parents should be included where it is relevant to their current parenting needs. (E.g. abuse suffered and any social care involvement)

# Chronologies – how and when?

01

At a Child Protection Conference

02

At review

03

At a Child in Need meeting

04

At a Family Support Plan meeting

05

At the completion of the Case Summary

06

At Case Transfer

07

At Case Closure



# Sharing Chronologies and Quality Assurance



The newest version of a chronology must hold all the chronological information to date – Why?

## Chronology

This information is gathered to provide concise details of family history that are likely to have an impact on current family functioning. It should outline, in date order, significant family events and changes as well as relevant professional interventions.

**This chronology relates to the following children, young people and family members:**

Forename	Surname	Relationship	DoB	LL number



Date	Event	Source

# Updating chronologies

- ❖ Because chronologies are Word Documents, they will always need to be amended and updated outside of the electronic recording system (i.e. saved in documents in order to amend)
- ❖ **The newest version must hold all the chronological information to date** not just the events that have taken place while a case was recently active.
- ❖ The updated chronology must be attached in Liquid Logic at least every time the case transfers or is closed.
- ❖ Chronologies should be shared with the network at all children's meetings and checked for accuracy.
- ❖ This is compliant with recommendations from Serious Case Review as well as being part of good practice.

**‘The best predictor of future behaviour is past  
behaviour’**

**Eileen Munro 2008 - Effective Child Protection**

[Chronologies quick guide \(November 2021\)](#)

[Genograms quick guide \(November 2021\)](#)