

Ecomaps

For use with: parent/carers, children aged 5-15, young people aged 16-18

What is an Ecomap?

An Ecomap shows the network of people around the child or family through a diagram. The child is placed at the centre of the diagram; each person and organisation that forms a part of the child or young person's network is named and placed within a circle.

When would you use it?

Ecomaps can help you gain valuable information about the child and their interactions with the people around them. Some families or children may prefer this to the more formal structure of a genogram. It takes a relatively short period of time to complete with the child or family.

Ecomaps are not a static record as family relationships change, therefore they should be undertaken on a number of occasions to map the changes during your work with the child or young person.

How would you use it?

1. The child is placed at the centre of the diagram. Draw a large circle (or other shape as chosen by the child) in the middle to represent the child
2. Smaller circles around the child are then drawn to represent different people in the child's life. This shouldn't be restricted to family members but all people significant to the child or young people. It is important to establish who is part of the child's life, this may involve asking about family members, pets, friends and workers.
3. Where there is a connection between the child or young person and an individual and/or organisation, the nature of the relationship is illustrated by a line drawn between them. Each person and organisation that forms a part of the child or young person's network is named and placed within a circle. Different lines can be used to indicate the nature of the link or relationship. For example:

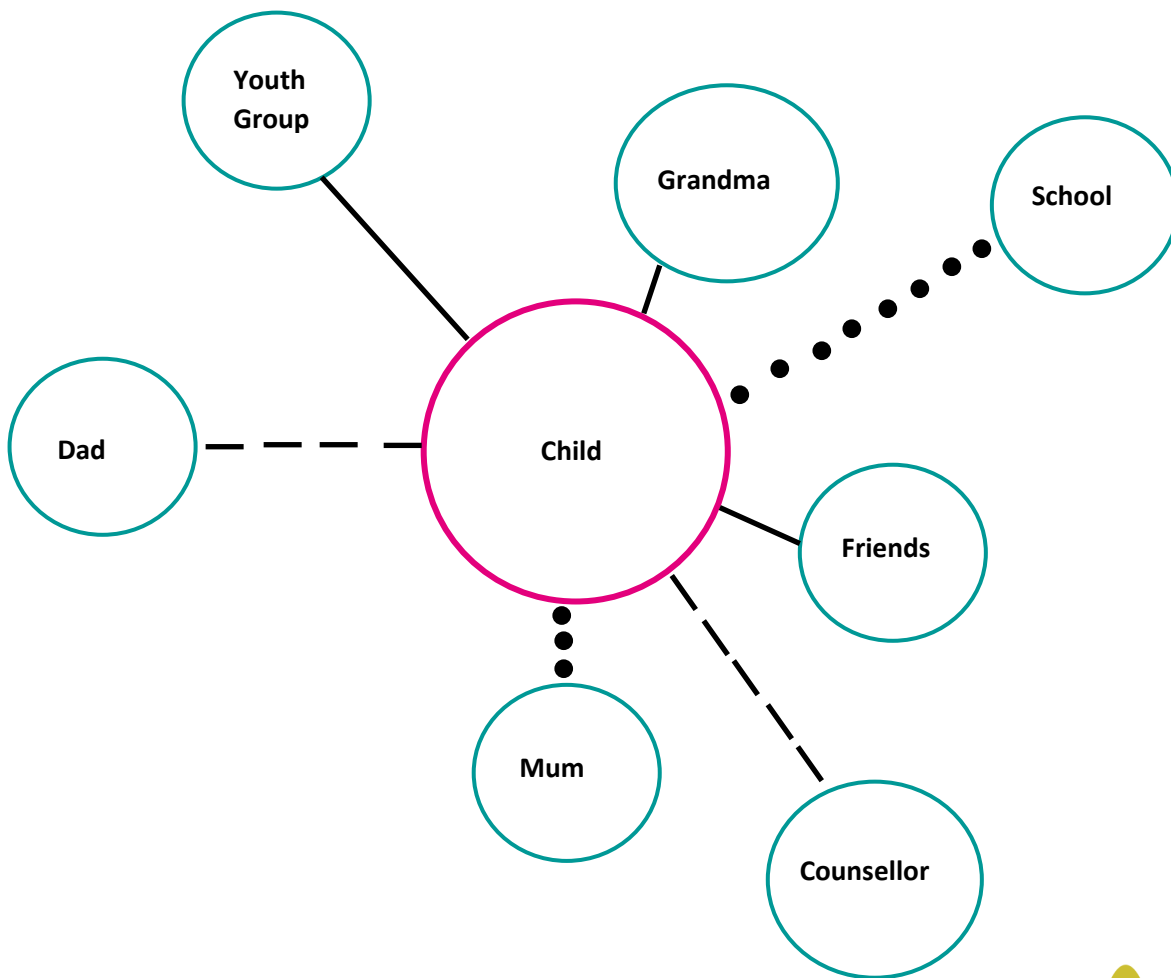
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| ————— | Strong |
| — — — — — | Weak |
| | Stressful |

4. When working with children it is preferable to use moveable objects to represent their ecomap. The child can then move them around to indicate what their feelings are and how they may change. This is similar to sculpting exercises.

Depending upon the age of the child it may take two sessions to complete the Ecomap. At the end of the exercise make sure the child or young person is able to have a copy of their Ecomap.

This can change over time therefore you may wish to repeat the process during your time with the child or young person.

Example Ecomap



Things to think about

1. **Venue and space** – you do not need a lot of space however the children or family that you are working with need to feel comfortable and have a sense of privacy
2. **Time** – you need to allow enough time to complete the exercise and to deal with any issues that may emerge. A child may complete the exercise very quickly and may not seem to want to discuss anything in detail. Let their parent/carer or teacher know that they have completed the exercise in case issues arise at a later point
3. **Resources** - make sure that you have a pack of resources available including paper, pens, copies of worksheets, arts and craft materials and small toys etc.
4. **Comfort** - think about drink, food, toilets and anything else a person might need to keep them feeling relaxed and safe. Interruptions such as telephones or people coming in and out, or loud noises that make it hard to concentrate should be avoided.
5. **Clear brief** - ensure that all people participating in the activity understand the process, what they will be expected to think and communicate about, and for what purpose the information will be used.
6. **Confidentiality** - It is important that the participant is aware of any issues of confidentiality. Things to consider include; what happens to any information that is shared in the course of the exercise? Is it discussed outside the room? If so by whom and for what reason? It is important that the participant is made aware of this.
7. **Ownership** – It is important to talk about what will happen with the sheets/paper at the end of the activity. Are you going to make copies or use the information for assessment purposes? The person you are working with needs to know this so that they can make a choice about what to share.

Purpose of the Practitioner's Tool Kit

The Practitioner's Tool Kit is a resource of Tools which can be used by practitioners working with children and families. The Tools support practitioners in their day to day work and can be used to support work already being done by them to identify and understand what is going on within a family.

It should be noted:

- This is not an exhaustive list of Tools
- Not all Tools are appropriate for all families, individuals or situations.
- Practitioners should use the Tools which best support them and the family in appropriately identifying, assessing and responding to their needs.
- Practitioners can and should be creative about how they use or adapt these Tools to make them appropriate to the individual, circumstance or situation.

If whilst working with children, young people and families practitioners are concerned about a child or young person being at serious risk of harm they should, following their own agency procedures:

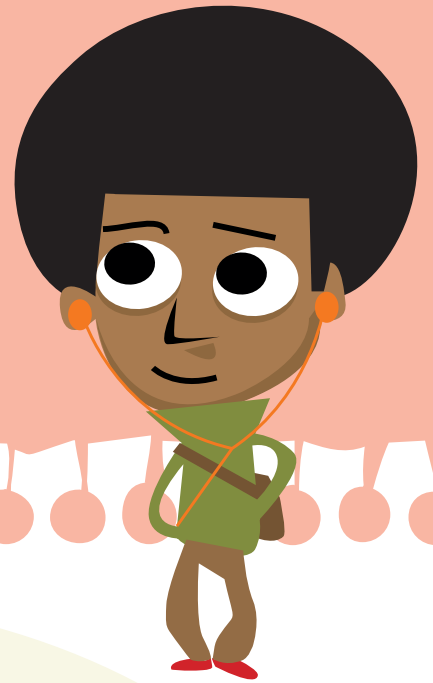
- Discuss their concerns in the first instance with their Safeguarding Lead or line manager if they are unsure if they are suffering significant harm
- Inform the parents and / or gain their consent to make this contact unless doing so would put the child at risk
- Gather initial information using the [Contact Form](#) as guidance which is available from the LSCP website www.leedsscp.org.uk/Concerned-about-a-child
- Call the Duty & Advice Team
- If you believe a child is in immediate danger and at risk of harm call the police on 999

If the child or young person is not at risk of being significantly harmed practitioners should consider an [Early Help](#) response



Who are the important people in your life?

Think of all the relationships that you have. Put the names of those closest to you in the inner circle, the names of the next closest people in the next circle, and so on until you have put down everyone that you want to.



Who is closest to you?



me

name

What are their names?

Would you like us to talk to any of these people?