Genogram (Family Tree) - Adult and Young Person

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

What is a genogram?
A genogram is a simple tool that can be used to see how a family is made up. It helps you identify who is living in the home with the child and who is in the wider family network. It is a more formal term for a family tree.

When would you use it?
A genogram can be used when working with children and families. This tool can assist practitioners to help provide information about family members and practitioners to see patterns that maybe contributing to neglect.

Family structures can change over time, and therefore a genogram should be updated accordingly.

How would you use it?
On a piece of paper, with family members, work together to develop a drawing of their family tree (this is a genogram). You and the family can use which symbols or names are relevant to them, there is not right or wrong way, however there is a recognised format which you can use as detailed below.

Recognised genogram symbols

A genogram uses a number of different symbols to represent gender and family relationships:

- A square represents a male
- A circle represents a female
- A triangle represents an unknown gender.
- A horizontal line is used to connect family members - If a biological father has not been linked with the child, a square shape is used, although this will have a broken line, and rather than stating the name, it will say ‘unknown’
- An X through a symbol indicates that the person is deceased.
- A diagonal line through a horizontal “connecting” line indicates that the relationship has ended.
**Rules to build Genograms**

The four rules to build a genogram are:

1. The male is always at the left of the family and the female is always at the right of the family.
2. In the case of ambiguity, assume a male-female relationship, rather than male-male or female-female relationship.
3. A spouse must always be closer to his/her first partner, then the second partner (if any), third partner, and so on...
4. The oldest child is always at the left of his/her family, the youngest child is always at the right of the family.

**Example Genogram**

[Diagram of a genogram showing relationships between John, Ann, Paul, Susan, Patrick, Claire, Leah, and Tracey.]
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](http://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.