A Bristol Bite Size Briefing:

# What is it?

Genograms

# Who is this briefing for?

Social Workers, Family Support Workers and Key workers

# Principles

**Purpose**

A family tree or genogram helps to provide a readily accessible picture of current family relationships over three or more generations. It provides information about key family members and shows how the child/ children sit within the complex dynamics of their families. It is a tool that supports rapport building and assessment and should be done with all families that we work with. It can help social workers

* know who is in the family
* explore family dynamics and relationships
* understand who is important in the family
* know what has happened to the family
* illuminate the way in which past and present separations, losses, transitions and traumas have been part of family members’ life experiences
* see intergenerational patterns of: parenting, substance misuse, mental health or domestic abuse
* understand where the family turns for support
* Understand how the family ‘fit’ in relation to larger society – neighbours, other organisations, their community

**Principles**

* Do it with the family and at their pace
* Plan your approach well, think about using different tools to capture the information and the types of questions you will use.
* Discuss with the family who will have copies and what you will be doing with your copy
* Try doing your own family first, that way you will understand how it works and what it can feel like

**Methods and approaches**

* Use large sheets of paper- flip chart paper is best
* Take a range of colour pens
* Decide who to start with- an individual or the whole family
* Consider different approaches to gather the information, such as different types of pictures, modelling clay, dolls houses etc depending on the age of the child and how the family best communicate.
* Consider the impact of putting on paper, painful information about deaths and separations and structure your visit appropriately