

Signs of Safety how to guide: Building a Genogram

Genograms are essential Signs of Safety tools and a lovely piece of work to complete *with* families – they are more than a family tree because they tell us who the family members are and how they are connected emotionally and physically to the children. Draw the genogram by hand with the family, including the children - **the process supports shared understanding and planning.**

Getting started



Start with a basic family tree diagram and talk about each person as they are added – this additional information is what makes it a genogram. The initial aim is to identify all the important people involved with the family. This means it can include members for instance, who do not live locally but are in regular contact with the family or, they may not be related at all but provide some support such as a neighbour or a teacher.

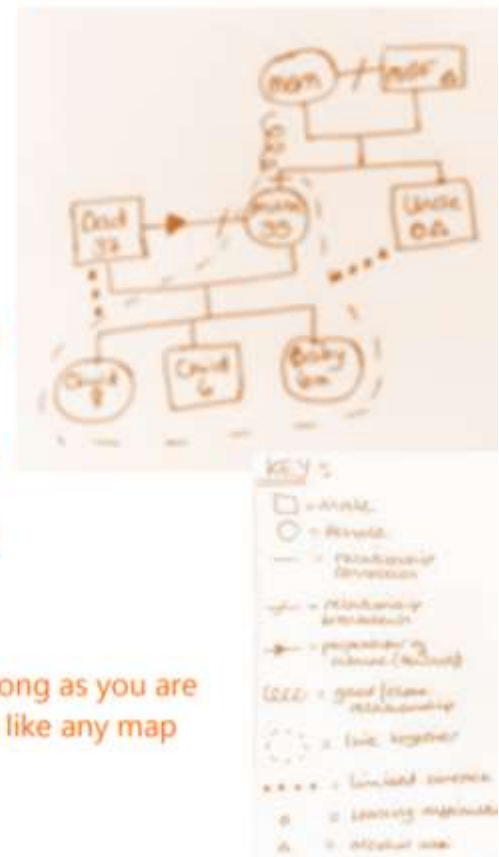
Asking about where connected people live, about their experiences and how they are involved with the family helps you to get a good understanding of the family culture and how the child is being supported within their community.

TIP: Just use first names and ages, don't include identifying information like surnames, full addresses and DOBs.

Don't be worried about the symbols!

It is usual that a square shape represents a male and a circle is female however with all else, be creative! Choose easy shapes and symbols that represent individual characteristics e.g. a spot and a triangle put by someone's name may show they have a learning difficulty and they also use alcohol; a dotted line between that person and the child may mean they have limited contact – **the important thing is to be consistent** (e.g. *all* people identified as alcohol users should have a triangle placed by their name) and, **use a key** to show what the symbols mean so that others can then interpret the code you have chosen.

TIP: You don't need to worry about using the 'right' symbol as long as you are clear what the symbol means and you put this in your key – just like any map



What to do with it?

The genogram should always be attached to the assessment as a document.

Genograms are open tools that should be added to over time as you get to know the family and you are identifying more members who can support planning – it is important to add the **date** the genogram was done to know how old the information is; it is also important to **ask parents to sign the genogram** to show you have created it together and they agree to the content.

Storage in LiquidLogic: Put a clear, dated message in the case summary section (above case notes) on the child's file to direct the reader to the genogram which you will have already stored by scanning and uploading it to 'documents' in Liquid Logic.

TIP: When you update the genogram, update the case summary message.

Please share your practice examples with SignsofSafety@northumberland.gov.uk