



# Genograms

## Quick Guide

### What are we doing?

Genograms are an important requirement for all children's files. They should provide a clear picture of a child or young person's history of family relationships. They sit alongside chronologies and case summaries as an essential window into every child's life.

### What are genograms?

Genograms are an important assessment tool enabling us to understand family relationships by using shapes to convey meaning. They are more than a family tree; used well, they can inform your assessment by depicting relationship patterns and giving understanding on how they impact the family's life.

Genograms are:

- A framework that explains the family's circumstances;
- An assessment tool that helps us and the family to understand patterns of behaviour or belief systems that impact on family life;
- An indication of who the key people and relationships are in the life of the child or young person;
- A demonstration of previous indicators of harm;
- A crucial tool in building the family network.

Because of the pictorial nature of genograms, they can be undertaken as a joint activity with children and family members. They can show in a more comfortable manner the issues and worries that might not be spoken about as freely in a less engaging intervention.

### What does a good genogram look like?

A good genogram should:

- Be accurate, inclusive and a good representation of people's lives;
- Be concise and unambiguous so that everyone, such as the family network members or workers from different professional backgrounds can easily read and understand it;
- Should include at least three generations, going back to the child's grandparents.

## How to get started

- Be creative; try using shapes or objects chosen by the child or young person to depict family members. Take a photo of these to attach to the record;
- Agree a key at the start of the process, so that you and the child understand the symbols, colours and what they mean;
- Start in the middle of the page, giving you space to spread out;
- Start with the child;
- Next, add other family members and their relationships;
- 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, object or a favourite colour;
- Family members who are part of the same household are indicated by placing a dotted line or coloured circle around them;
- It doesn't have to be a perfect work of art, but it does need to accurately represent the family;
- It does need to be attached to the child's record as document type - genogram and updated if further information about the family network comes to light.

## What are cultural genograms?

Similar to a conventional genogram, a cultural genogram is a way of representing family relationships, but this time from a cultural perspective. Cultural genograms can be overlaid onto the genogram to give a more comprehensive picture of the family.

The cultural genogram process promotes cultural awareness and understanding by supporting practitioners in the knowledge of cultural identities, such as how domestic abuse, or other key issues, may have been a factor generationally within a family.

## Why do we need to use cultural genograms?

Cultural genograms provide a framework to help explain the familial or cultural journey to the current circumstances.

Used effectively, they:

- Illustrate the influence that culture has on the family system;
- Encourage candid discussions of culturally-based assumptions and stereotypes;
- Assist us as practitioners to recognise our own culturally-based pre-conceptions;
- Help us to explore how unique cultural identities impact on our views of the world;
- Inform us of the key people within the Family network;
- Are a tool that can also be used in supervision to reflect on practice and challenge fixed views and stereotypes.

## How to get started?

Use the same process as you would with the conventional genogram; they can be completed simultaneously.

If families have difficult histories, it can feel challenging to view the whole history laid out in a picture; always undertake genograms and cultural genograms with sensitivity.

## Further information

- **Training:** Best practice in chronologies, case summaries and genograms training is bookable on [Learning Hub](#).
- **Practice guidance:** Please click on [Genogram and ecomaps practice guidance](#).
- **Recording Genograms:** Please click on [Guidance on recording genograms on Liquidlogic](#).