

4. Genogram

It is always important to highlight that in exploring family and experiences, some sensitive and painful memories might emerge. A genogram can highlight unresolved issues that could impact on someone's ability to care for a child, and whilst it is critical to explore this in detail, it might not be appropriate to do so in a virtual session. Professional judgement is essential in each case

Suggestion for construction:

- Visual representation of 3 – 4 generations
- It is sometimes a good idea to do one on your own family before doing one with someone else.
- If appropriate, complete with applicants jointly, bringing in children if appropriate at later stage
- Use large piece of paper and use the genogram as a continuous tool throughout the assessment process – as applicants to send you a photo of this after first session and you and they can add to individual copies.
- Record as much as possible in notes on genogram
- Make notes for yourself about any information, patterns, gaps that need to be followed up.
- Make sure to ask for clarification and ask “difficult” questions – this might have to be face to face.
- Often the reflective process / journey is as valuable for the applicant and assessing social worker as the task

Areas that could be explored using genogram:

- Family and Secondary systems
- Interpersonal/ generational relationships
- Family scripts
- Addictions and recovery
- Resilience
- Anger and strong emotions
- Healthy boundaries
- Trauma

Selection of possible questions (this is not a definitive list)

- Where do family members live?
- How do they think about each other?
- Who is named for who? Do you know about your family heritage?
- Family rituals/ myths/ stories/ spoken or unspoken rules
- Roles with family / stereotypes
- Are there any family “secrets” and how are they maintained? Impact on family relationships?
- How do family members react to stress or change? How are feelings expressed about this / illness / death etc
- What beliefs do the family have to help in times of loss?

- What kind of relationship did your parents have with parents / siblings / grandparents / friends. Are any estranged – if so, what are the issues?
- Family attitudes to leisure
- How are children viewed in the family? Boys differently to girls?
- What language is used in your family regarding disability?
- Is there LGBTQ in your family and what is your family attitude and beliefs about sexual orientation?
- How is affection shown? Who would you go to for warmth?
- How is discipline shown?
- Can you share happiest/ less happy memory
- What have you internalised / rejected from your family?

Beesley. Making Good Assessments 2010