

AFKA Cymru Think Kinship Tool

This tool helps to map a child's kinship network by exploring their relationships and sources of support. It can be adapted for direct work with children and the adults who care for them or in supervision to reflect on how well a child's kinship network is understood.

Be curious, listen carefully, and consider both formal and informal connections. Wherever possible a child's views, wishes, and feelings should be central, gathered through direct engagement, observations, and tailored communication—rather than relying solely on adults' interpretations.

Eco-mapping, mobility mapping, family finding and family engagement tools are often used to make a visual representation of a child's kinship network and examples of these can be found via online search engines. There are also several apps that can be used to map these connections in a fun and interactive way with families.

Practitioners should apply critical thinking and carefully evaluate all information to ensure a clear, evidence-based understanding.

1. Immediate Household

- Who lives with the child?
- Who spends time in the home regularly?
- Who provides day-to-day care and support?
- Does the child have more than one home? How many and who are the responsible adults in these homes?

2. Biological and Extended Family

- Who are the child's parents, step-parents, siblings, half-siblings grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins? Note their age and where they live.
- Are there any significant family members not living nearby but still involved?
- Where were the parents born and where were the grandparents born? Is it possible that there are family members or significant adults living in other UK nations or overseas?
- Are there family members or family friends the child talks about positively or frequently?

3. Trusted Adults and Supportive Figures

- Who does the child turn to for comfort, advice, or help?
- Who notices when the child is upset or struggling?
- Who cares for the child when parents need a break or are unable to care for them? e.g. illness etc.
- Who would the child say they would like to stay with if parents couldn't care for them for few days e.g. illness etc?
- Who does the child feel safe with?
- Who helps with practical needs (e.g., school runs, meals, homework)?
- Who is important to the child?



4. Emotional, Relational and Identity Bonds

- Who would miss this child if they weren't around?
- Who celebrates the child's achievements and milestones?
- Who makes the child feel valued?
- Who gives this child a sense of belonging?
- Who connects this child to their history and culture?
- Do any pets and/or treasured possessions provide the child with a sense of safety and comfort?

5. Peer and Social Connections

- Who are the child's close friends? Do they visit or stay over-night at their friend's homes? Do friends visit or stay overnight at their home?
- Who does the child visit after school or on weekends?
- Who does the child enjoy spending time with?

6. Community and Cultural Connections

- What community groups or activities is the child involved in?
- Are there religious, cultural, or social groups that provide support or belonging?
- Are there neighbours or local figures the child trusts?

7. Missing Connections and Gaps

- Are there important people in the child's life that we haven't identified?
- Are there gaps in the child's support network?
- Why might these gaps exist (e.g., estrangement, past conflict, geographical distance)?
- Are there family members or significant adults who have been excluded or overlooked?
- Has either gender been missed? Where only the females or males in a household or relationship have been noted why is this?
- Could any missing connections be safely re-established to strengthen the child's support system?

8. Recognising Challenges and Risks

- Are there individuals or groups in the child's network who may create instability or pose a risk?
- Inconsistent involvement – Are there individuals who are unreliable or whose presence is unpredictable, leading to confusion or distress for the child?

9. Cross-Connections

- How are these people connected to each other?
- Are there supportive connections between key figures that lend stability to the child?
- Is there any tension or unresolved conflict between key figures that may affect the child's stability?
- Competing loyalties – Does the child feel torn between any identified people or groups?
- Could any connections be strengthened to support the child more effectively?