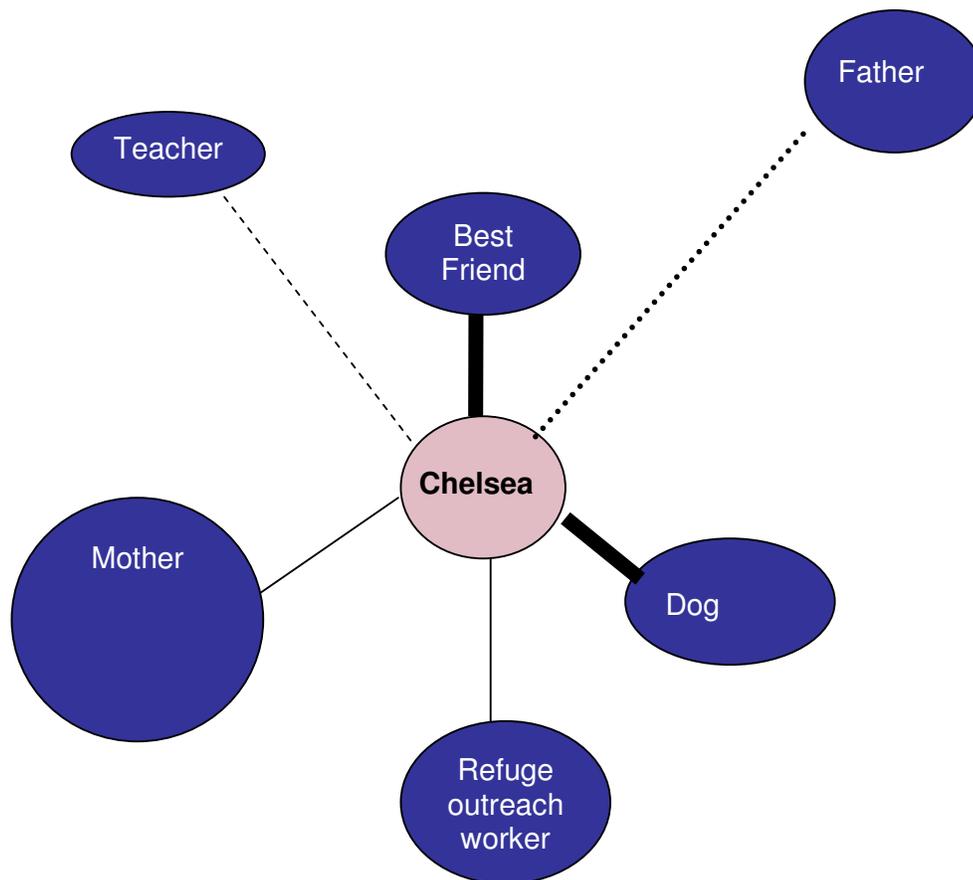


Case Example of using an Ecomap

Chris is a worker in a children's centre. She is carrying out a Common Assessment with 7 year old Chelsea and her mother. Chelsea's mother is able to verbally give Chris a lot of information about the family background and her struggles with managing Chelsea's difficult behaviour since they fled domestic violence from Chelsea's father. Chris knows how important it is to involve Chelsea in the assessment, to hear about her worries and feelings too. She decides to use an ecomap to learn about Chelsea's feelings and perceptions of her family relationships and social supports.

Chris begins by drawing a circle with Chelsea's name in the middle. She then helps Chelsea identify significant people and relationships. She encourages Chelsea to position circles as close to her or far away depending on how important that person was in her life. Chelsea could then use different kinds of line to indicate how close she felt to that person. Chris was able to check out with Chelsea whether or not she was understanding Chelsea's symbols correctly.



This way Chris learned that she was correct in thinking that the dog and her best friend were both very important in Chelsea's life and she felt close to them. Chris also correctly understood that Chelsea felt her father was no longer important in their life now they had escaped from him and that she saw that relationship as having been very stressful. The representation of the relationship with her mother was more complicated. The thinness of the line joining Chelsea to her mother's circle, compared to that of the best friend and dog, showed that she did not feel very close to her mother right now. Her mother's circle was also further away. Through checking out with Chelsea, Chris clarified that the comparative largeness of her mother's circle indicated how influential she was in Chelsea's life; this meant something slightly different than being 'important' to Chelsea.

It felt to Chris that Chelsea had been very engaged in this exercise. Chelsea had found it easy to make sense of the different symbols and it had been possible to learn much more about her life and relationships visually than by just asking questions.