

## Ecomaps

Ecomaps are a way of helping children and young people of most ages and abilities to visually map themselves in relation to their environment, community and relationships. You can help children show this using distance and different colours and shapes to show how near/ distant, special/unimportant others seem in relation to them.

1. Begin by getting the child to write their name in the middle of a large sheet of paper and draw a circle round it.
2. Get them to identify important people or organisations and place their names in circles which they have drawn on the page. They should place the nearest to their circle those to whom they feel closest or those who are most important to them.
3. The child should then draw lines between the circle containing their name and those circles where connections exist.
4. They should use different types of lines to indicate the nature of the link or relationship. So a thick line with a circle close to them would indicate someone to whom they feel very close or someone who is important to them. Wavy or dotted lines could indicate some difficulty in the relationship.
6. Different relationships can also be shown by the child using different colours and shapes to show how near/ distant, special/unimportant others seem in relation to them. Another option is to do this with a collage using types of coloured paper or materials, or by getting children to place cut-out images from magazines or postcards, buttons or figurines to represent their perspective. Aim here to have lots of variety of images to choose from so that this does not unnecessarily lead the child.

### Tips:

- Distance from the centre might represent emotional distance.
- Colours could be chosen to convey positive or negative feelings.
- Pictures, images or photos could be used as symbols.
- Some people might prefer using 3-D imagery instead of pens and paper, e.g. figures in a sandtray, or buttons of different size, shape and colour.

### Key:

- = strong relationship
- = weak relationship
- ..... = stressful relationship