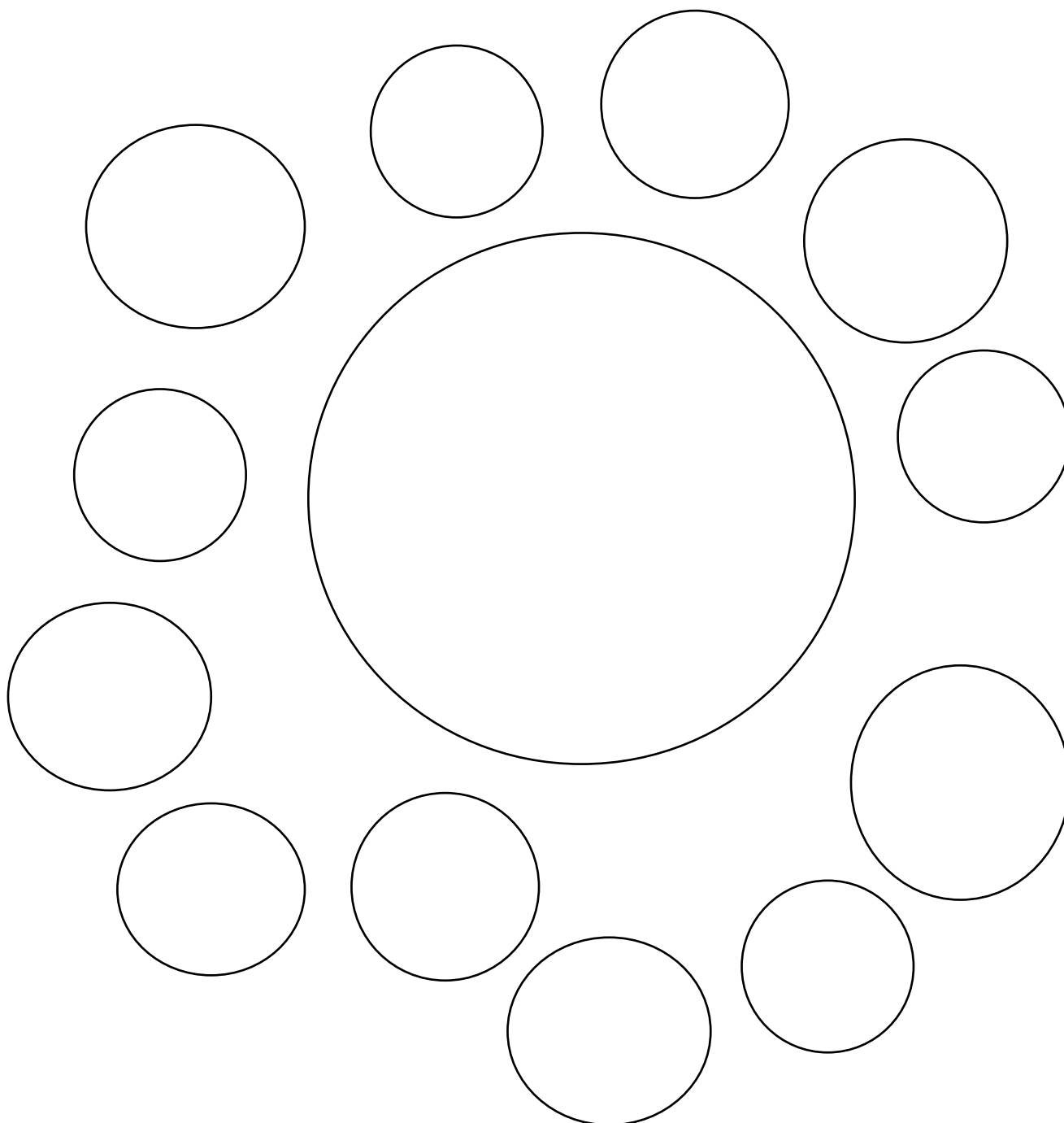
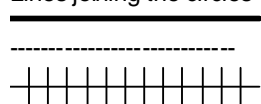


Date:

- 1 Each member can be represented by a colour that they have chosen.
- 2 Activities that the family do together can be depicted by another colour that will extend from the centre of the circle to the activity outside the circle.



Lines joining the circles show connections:



- = strong connection
- = weak connection
- = stressful connection

Arrows along lines show direction of flow of energy

## What is an Ecomap?

The ecomap gives a picture of the family in their own environment, ie. their lifestyle as it is at the present time. It provides information such as a description of all household members, their relationships, interests and activities.

The ecomap looks at resources outside the household that are available for family members and explores potential areas of stress which may put pressure on the household, such as unemployment or worrying financial commitments (the type of social support available to a family and the degree of involvement in the community have been cited as important contributors to successful school age fostercare).

Community involvement provides support as well as important checks and opportunities for monitoring of parenting techniques, which is considered a valuable deterrent for child abuse.

While the household members are participating in drawing up their family map, valuable information may be obtained by observing household dynamics, ie. how the partners relate and how they interact with their own children and other people.

The ecomap, therefore, is useful in assessing a family's adaptability and its vulnerability to crisis. It also indicates how a child or young person is likely to fit into a particular household.

**The ecomap is also useful in giving you a feel for how important 'family' is to the applicants - and whether they are adult or child focussed.**

## Ecomap instructions

### What is it?

The ecomap is a pencil and paper representation of the family in relation to the environment. The different aspects of the social environment are shown by circles and the nature of the relationship to each is indicated by the type of line joining the family to it. Included are all significant involvements that family members have - work, school, extended family, recreation, social groups, friends, church, health treatment etc.

### Why use it?

The ecomap is a very useful tool that is interactive and involves all household members. For this reason it may be used in the first meeting with applicants as a way of joining with all household members and reinforcing the notion that fostering involves all household members.

### Procedure

1. Start by drawing the family constellation inside the central circle. Squares are used to indicate males, and circles for females. The person's name and age should be noted.
2. The various environmental systems are then identified by discussion with the family and lines drawn to indicate:
  - a) Those family members involved; and
  - b) The nature of the relationship.

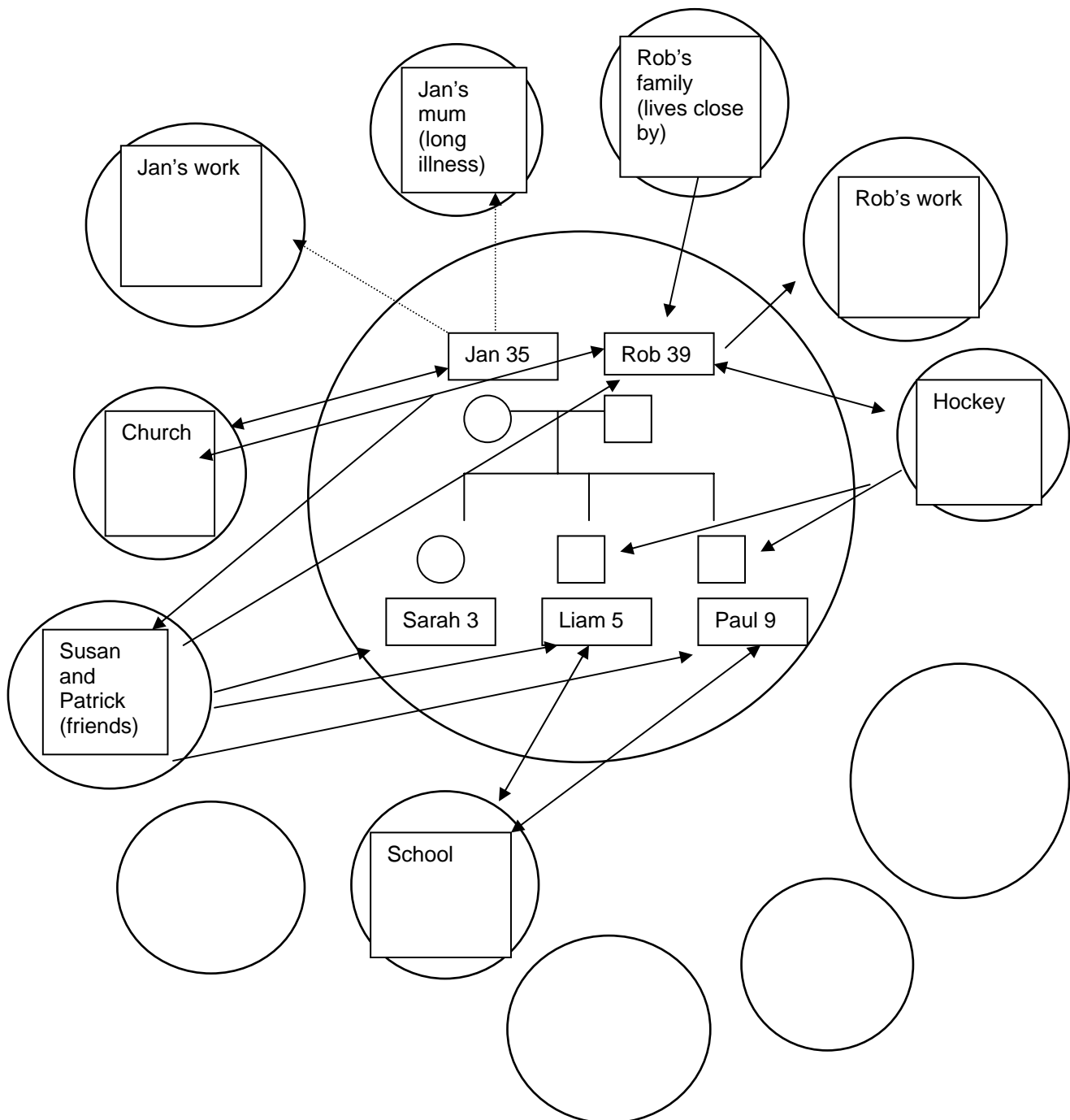
A thick line indicates a strong connection, a broken line indicates a tenuous or weak one. Hatching on the line shows stress or conflict in the relationship. The flow of energy or involvement can be indicated by arrows either going towards or away from family members, or in both directions.

It may be useful to start with the one of the adults and ask them in what activity they spend the largest amount of time/energy eg work. Then draw in the other individual activities - clubs, sport, friends, training, church etc - leaving the 'whole of the family' activities till last.



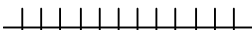
3. Continue until all significant systems have been mapped. For each individual family or household member, use a new colour - so they can be clearly recognised. It is also helpful to include or make note of who transports each child to school/extra curricular activities.
4. Use a new colour to depict "whole of the family" activities that are done together. Eg picnics, sport, BBQs, TV viewing, visiting relatives and friends.

## Example Ecomap

- 1 Each member can be represented by a colour that they have chosen.
- 2 Activities that the family do together can be depicted by another colour that will extend from the centre of the circle to the activity outside the circle.



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