Outline for a Brief Genogram Interview:

1. Start with Presenting Problem
- Why are they coming for help/what is their understanding of why they have been referred to social services?
- How long have these difficulties been going on?
- How does each person in the family view it?
- How has each responded?
- What were relations like prior to the problem?
- Has the problem changed? How?
- What will happen if it continues?

2. Move to Questions on Household Context
- Who lives in the household (name, age, gender)?
- How is each related?
- Where do other members live?
- Were there any similar problems in the family before?
- What solutions were tried in the past (Therapy, treatment, hospitalisation, etc)?
- What has been happening recently in the family?
- Have there been any recent changes or stressors?

3. Gather information on parents' birth families
- Number of siblings, names, DOB
- Place in birth order
- Parents' marriage (and separations, divorces, remarriages).
- Siblings' marriages (separations, divorces, remarriages, children)
- Cause of any deaths in the family

4. Inquire about other generations
- Parents' parents
- Causes of death
- Their siblings

5. Informal Kinship Network
- Anyone in the informal network of the family who is an important support?
- Friends, teachers, religious leaders

6. Probe ethnic/cultural variables

- Rituals within culture for handling death
- Impact of ethnic-cultural variables on handling major life events, family relationships and roles, individual functioning?
- Experience racism?
- If the family or previous generations of the family were not born in the UK, how do they think this has impacted on them?
- What were the circumstances in which they came to the UK? Poverty? War? Natural disasters? What have been the impact of these events?
- How would the difficulties they are currently experiencing be dealt with in countries or origin?
- If they have been separated from their family of origin, how has this impacted on them?
- Which ethnic-cultural traditions do they follow within their family?

7. Elicit attitudes about gender
- Impact of gender roles on household situation, on handling major life events, on individual functioning, etc.

8. Ask about major life events
- Marriages
- Births
- Deaths, illnesses, disabilities
- Geographic moves
- Job changes
- Traumatic events such as natural disasters, wars, previous abuse

8. Inquire about Family Relationships
- Cut offs - who doesn't have any contact with who and why?
- Alliances - who gets on with who?
- Marital patterns - number and nature of relationships
- Parent-child patterns, positive relationships? Attitudes to parent-child rels?
- Dominance/submission patterns
- Perpetrators? Contact with them?
- Conflict?

9. Inquire about Family Roles
- Caretakers? 'sick' ones? 'Problem' ones?
- 'Good' ones? 'Bad' ones?
- 'Successful' ones? 'Failures'?
- 'Nice' ones? 'Cold distant' ones?

10. Inquire about Family Strengths
- Behaviours that indicate resilience
- Family members' character strengths: loyalty, courage, hope, humour, intelligence and so forth.
- Family resources: ability to connect with outside resources, money, love, neighbourhood community, religious community, work and so forth.

11. Include questions on individual functioning
- Work (job, changes, unemployment, what would they like in the future)
- School (achievements, problems)
- Medical problems
- Psychiatric history (depression, anxieties, phobias)
- Addictions (alcohol, drugs)
- Medication
- Legal problems (arrests, time in prison, convictions).

Asking Difficult Questions:
- Questions about individual functioning may be painful and must be approached with sensitivity and tact.
- Need to exercise caution about when to ask questions that could put a family member in danger e.g. when violence from man towards woman is suspected, don't ask questions in front of him.
- May take more than one session to gain this information
- Be aware about what may be missing, discrepancies in the information offered, take note of the connections family members make or fail to make about events.