Digital Workbook Edition

Supervision Tools

STRENGTHENING PRACTICE

Tools that can be useful in supervision

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Tool 1: Competence indicators for supervisors checklist

***Scale = High (10-7) Medium (6-4) Low (3-0)**

Indicator	Scale	Evidence/Action
Understands purpose and key task of supervision (1)		
Understands and can explain the department/ professions supervision policy (1)		
Understands and can explain the boundaries of supervision (as compared to consultation, counselling and appraisal) (1)		
Understands and can explain the task involved in the managerial, educative, supportive and mediating elements of supervision (1)		
Understands and can explain the elements for an effective supervision contract, including which elements are non- negotiable (1)		

Indicator	Scale	Evidence/Action
Can explain the purpose of supervision to supervisees (2)		
Can negotiate a mutually agreed and clear contract (2)		
Can establish and maintain an appropriate agenda, and maintain appropriate boundaries (2)		
Can set a supervision climate that is empathic, genuine and safe (2)		
Can deliver, over a three month period, all four functions of supervision (2)		

Indicator (1-4)	Scale	Evidence/Action
Can record supervision appropriately (2)		
Can ensure that there is clarity about follow up action and delegated responsibilities at the end of a session or case discussion (2)		
Can ensure that the supervision process maintains the needs of service users at the centre of its process (2)		
Can give feedback in a way that is clear, owned specific and balanced (3)		
Can focus on both content and process (3)		
Can appropriately facilitate the expression of feelings (3)		

Indicator (1-4)	Scale	Evidence/Action
Can enable the supervisee to identify and explain evidence, risks, needs strengths, values, attitudes, feelings policies, and professional knowledge underpinning their practice and decision making (3)		
Can identify both for him/herself and the supervisee parallel processes. These refer to how the dynamics occurring between the worker and service users can be mirrored in the supervisory process particularly with reference to the use of power and authority (3)		
Can identify and analyse poor or blocked behaviour and establish a strategy to address the issues (3)		
Can highlight and challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour (3)		
Can enable the supervisee to analyse their own developmental needs, and establish and monitor a personal development plan? (3)		
Can assist a supervisee to explore their supervision history (3)		

Indicator (1-4)	Scale	Evidence/Action
Demonstrates commitment to the role of supervision (4)		
Is fully aware of how his/her own supervision history influences his/her approach to supervision (4)		
Is clear about and comfortable with the authority of the supervisory role (4)		
Can encourage, motivate and carry appropriate optimism for the supervisee (4)		
Is sensitive to individual differences due to age, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, class and religion and demonstrates awareness of the impact of his/her own behaviour on supervisees (4)		
Demonstrates sensitivity to stage of development, personality and previous experiences of supervisee (4)		

Indicator (1-4)	Scale	Evidence/Action
Demonstrates capacity to use own supervision constructively (4)		
Seeks feedback from supervisees, peers and managers and is aware of own supervisory strengths and weaknesses (4)		

[Adapted from Tony Morrison Supervision Training Manual (2001 & 2005).]

The four functions of supervision

Supervision within social care has four functions:

1. **Management and accountability:** Working within social care demands a high degree of accountability, with legal frameworks, ethics and guidance binding the employer and employees. Supervision is used to ensure that professionals are able to comply with all the legislative regulations and requirements. It also ensures the rights of service users are protected and that the service they receive is of high quality. Supervision is also used to support critical analysis and decision making through use of evidence-based tools, challenge, reflection and management oversight.
2. **Development:** Social work is a registered profession currently developing its own post qualifying assessment process through the Knowledge and Skills Statement. There is a requirement and expectation that all people involved in social care, whatever their role, will continue to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career. Supervision is used to identify skill requirements and enable professionals to continue to improve their ability to offer successful intervention and support to service users.
3. **Support:** Working within social care can be demanding and, at times, stressful. Supervision is used to promote resilience within staff to manage the environment and the contexts they work within. This will include creating space to reflect upon the emotional impact of the work, and how to balance work and home life.
4. **Mediation:** Working within social care requires the professional to be able to work effectively with a number of stakeholders including service users, other agencies, the Judiciary, Police, politicians and the public. Social work is governed by a set of ethics that are demanding and not always easy to carry out in the context of competing demands. Supervision is used to support the professional to be congruent with their organisation and profession in terms of values, aims, task and function.

Overall assessment of competency in the key areas

1 Knowledge of supervision task
2 Supervision management skills
3 Supervision intervention skills
4 Supervisor attitudes and qualities

Tool 2: Strategically thinking about open plan work spaces

Below is an example of a tool which can be used by individuals to identify areas that impact on their ability to control information and stimulation in the workplace. This tool can be used in supervision to discuss how best to support the individual to be most effective and contained in the environment.

CONTROL AREA	Outgoing Information	Incoming Stimulation
Social	How much do I want my colleagues to know about my personal interests? Should I connect with colleagues on social media?	How can I limit interruptions by co-workers? How can I avoid constant exposure to the noise and activity of others?
Technological	Can I opt out of giving biometric data used for security purposes? Can I shield my name from feedback to superiors?	Do I want pop up previews of incoming emails? I need to focus: is it ok to turn off instant messaging or the phone?
Spatial	Can people see my computer screen while I am working? What personal photos or artefacts do I want to display?	What space configuration minimises my exposure to flickering fluorescent lights? How can I block out my neighbour's telephone conversations?

Tool 3: Prioritisation and allocation

Not everything can be urgent and not everything can be important, even if it feels as though they are. Otherwise nothing is done well enough to be complete.

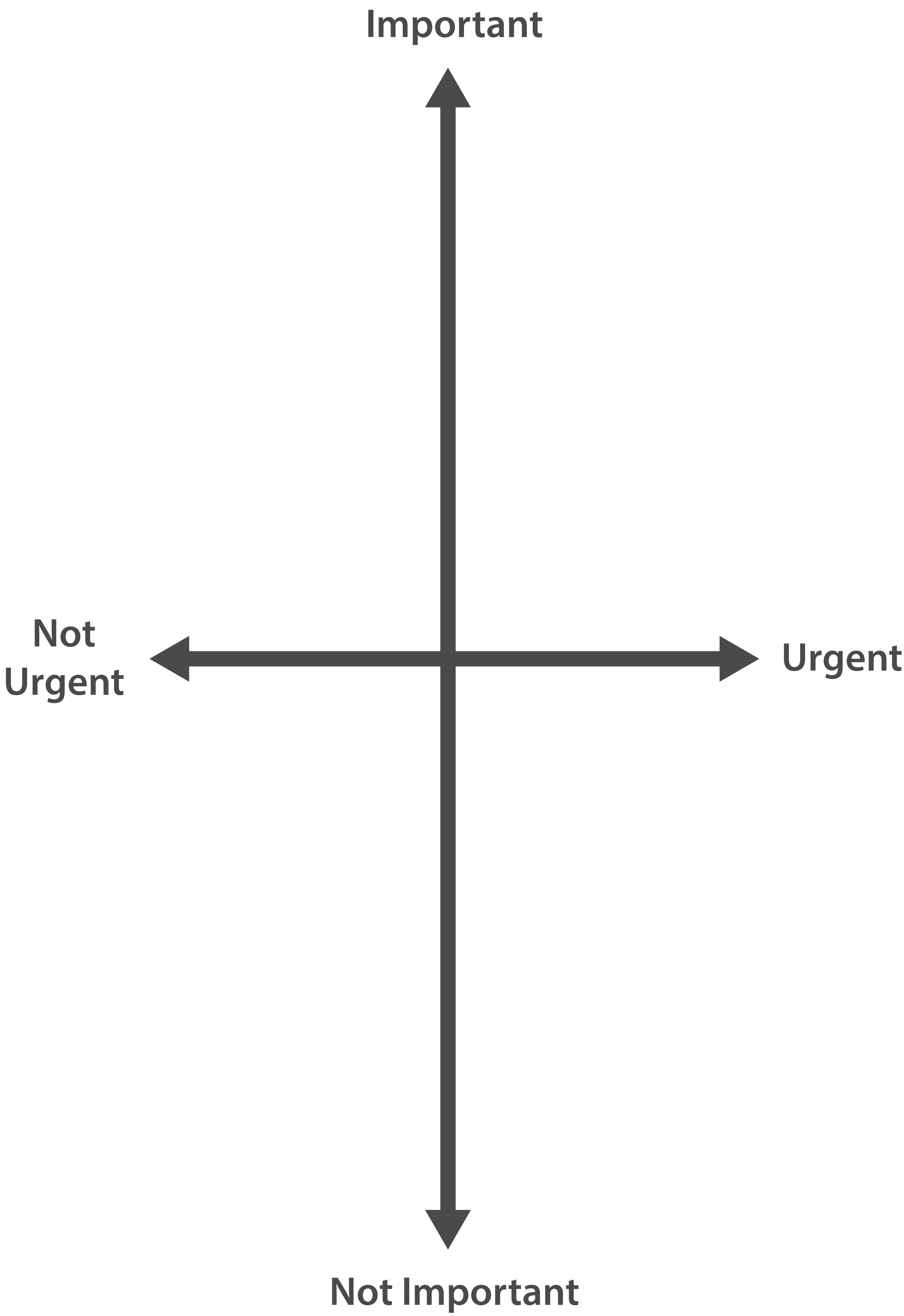
Make a list of the pieces of work you have to do this week:

Ask yourself the following questions about each task:

- Is it important? Will serious problems arise if it is not done? Will it really matter in six months' time? Can it be dropped completely?
- Is it urgent? When is the deadline? Does it need doing in the next few hours, this week or this month?
- What is the growth rate? If left, could importance/urgency increase, stay the same or reduce?
- Do I need to do this? Do I want to do this? Could someone else do it? Should it be delegated?
- Could time be saved by doing it in a different way?

Now put the pieces of work into the matrix depending on how urgent or important they are:

- Importance is based on the impact on your ability to support children, families and adults;
- Urgency is based on the time you have before that impact occurs.


Important
Not
Urgent
Urgent
Not Important

Now circle the tasks that can be effectively delegated:

Think about the work you are delegating. People will be ineffectual if:

- they have too much to do;
- too high a proportion of their work is complex and unpredictable;
- too high a proportion of their work is intricate and demands focus;
- different bits of work conflict with one another;
- they have too many interruptions.

Finally put numbers next to the tasks remaining in order of priority

You need to start with the urgent and important things, then the important things.

Make a new list of what you will do this week.

Tool 4: Personal review of time wasters

TIME WASTERS	Example of causes	IS IT ME?	Possible solutions
Poor meetings	Engaged too much.		Use agendas, agree roles and purpose, set time limits, make decisions, record responsibility, stay focused.
Telephone	Need for social contact, lack of purpose, need to be seen as useful or having the answers, all calls get through, not wishing to be rude.		Have purpose prior to call, be selective about answering the phone, switch off telephone when cannot be disturbed, give time limits at the start of the call.
Engaged too much	Unclear priority rating – everything feels important. I can't say no. I want to be involved or in control of everything.		Say no. Know what is important for you to do. Specify your own goals and tasks. Trust your colleagues.

TIME WASTERS	Example of causes	IS IT ME?	Possible solutions
Lack of communication	Unaware of what my colleagues do or do not need to know. Language difficulties – jargon. Wrong media used. Different values held. One of the party is distracted during the communication.		Discuss what needs to be shared and when. Agree common terminology and avoid jargon. Know when to phone, write, hold a meeting. Use factual phrases that do not touch on values unless explicitly discussing. Time when you give or receive information or make your distraction clear.
Indecision	Lack of faith in grounds for decision. Lack of faith in decision maker, fear of consequences, irrational decision making techniques, hope for the 'right' piece of information, ignorance of consequences of decision.		Have purpose prior to call, be selective about answering the phone, switch off telephone when cannot be disturbed, give time limits at the start of the call.
Too much routine work	Lack of priority, fear of colleagues mistakes, fear of losing influence, you know the job better.		Establish priorities, how your time should be primarily used. Train up your colleagues, or find others who can do the job as well. Know what to pay attention to and deliver.

TIME WASTERS	Example of causes	IS IT ME?	Possible solutions
Too much paperwork	Poor communication, poor administration, poor organisation.		Select the best and most time saving method of communication, revise requirements, avoid double entry, streamline.
Too much time spent on duty reading	Poor reading technique, no system of priority of what I should read and how thoroughly, unclear and poorly edited materials.		Go through duty reading and prioritise, send back poorly edited materials to author for re-presentation.
Rush jobs	Impatience, pressing matters automatically get top priority, doing too much at once, lack of foresight.		Know what is to be ready by when and act accordingly. Use priority ratings, learn to say no, plan for future problems.
Unclear division or responsibility	Inadequate description of the requirements of the job, responsibility but no competence, inconsistent boss, power struggle or mistrust in organisation.		Request clear organisation plan for role, clarify responsibility and agree competency for the task, note key decisions, get goals and project plans approved and signed off within the organisation.

TIME WASTERS	Example of causes	IS IT ME?	Possible solutions
Unable to complete tasks	Lack of time limits, too much demand, environment distracting, no overall view of tasks.		Put a deadline on all tasks, manage interruptions, use project plans, to do lists, personal organiser.
Lack of self-discipline	Lack of performance demands, postpone the unpleasant, neglect to follow up, do not use the available time management techniques, allow myself to be steered by crisis or unplanned work.		Impose standards and expectations on your own work, admit it has to be done – it will not improve with time, make sure things are working as they should (quality control), take one new technique at a time and practice it deliberately. Note the benefits. Say no.
Poor delegation	Uncertainty, fear of mistakes, can't keep out of other people's work, inadequate instruction, delegation of responsibility but not competence, fear subordinate will do a better job, neglect to follow up task completion or quality.		Mistakes help us all learn, develop and build up faith in workers, allow your staff to manage their own work, get staff to submit a plan for work they are doing so you both understand task, quality, deadlines and responsibility and role. Good leaders should be judged by the quality of the people who follow them – be proud, back up staff in word and deed and give critical feedback fairly.

Tool 5: Supervision expectations, hopes and fears

Supervisee

Complete the following statements in relation to your new supervision arrangements, and ask your supervisor to do the same.

I am expecting supervision to be…

I am expecting supervision to provide…

What I fear most about supervision is…

What I value most about supervision is…

I hope that supervision will be…

What interests me about supervision is…

How similar are your responses to those of your supervisor?

What differences are there? Are there any actions you could take, either together or separately to reduce their impact?

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Tool 6: Supervision preparation questionnaire

As part of your preparation routine for each supervision session, take a few moments to answer the following questions to inform your agenda.

Which situations do you feel you dealt with well?

Which situations did not go so well?

Were there any situations in which you didn't know what to do?

Is there any service user relationship or situation which is causing you particular concern?

Is there any staff relationship – in your own team or other professional or agency – which is causing you particular concern?

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Tool 7: Supervisee questionnaire about supervisor

Questions which are phrased as though it's from your supervisor, in order to provide an opportunity for feedback from you as a supervisee.

Am I providing the sort of supervision you need?

Is the supervision relationship productive? Anything we need to discuss?

Is the feedback I give clear, regular, balanced and specific enough?

Is there a good balance of support and challenge in our supervision?

Are there areas that we do not talk about that should be the focus of conversation?

Do our discussions make an impact on your practice?

What seems to you to be the next challenge in your development?

Is there anything you would like me to stop doing? Start doing? Increase? Decrease?

What is the most helpful about our supervision arrangement? What is the least helpful?

Are we being accountable in our supervision? To customers? To the organisation? To the profession?

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Tool 8: Pros and cons of change

All change brings both positive and negative consequences. These consequences impact upon both the person making the change and others who are close to them. By taking time to consider what will be gained and lost, you can plan better for the negative consequences.

POSITIVES

YOU (+ve)

FOR OTHERS (+ve)

YOU (-ve)

FOR OTHERS (-ve)

NEGATIVES

Tool 9: Reflecting on your supervision history

AIM: To help you reflect on the influence of previous experiences of supervision on your current approach to supervision. [Adapted from Tony Morrison – *Supervision Training*, 2001]

TASK:

Using the format provided, write out a list of previous supervisors. These may include significant figures outside social care, previous employers and managers or even school teachers.

1. Beside each one, make a brief note about their impact on you in terms of whether and how they helped or hindered your development. Use the two columns to distinguish between helpful and hindering responses. The same supervisor may have responded in both helpful and unhelpful ways. Focus on those who had greater impact, and consider what it was about their style, focus, understanding, knowledge, skills, values, and use of authority, empathy or any other factors that affected you. Consider whether factors of gender, race, etc. were significant.
2. Now reflect on how you responded to them: what responses did their approach generate in you?
3. Our responses to positive and negative experiences of supervision are different. Where supervision is poor or undermining we may arrive late, be guarded about certain types of information and reluctant to expose ourselves or take risks.
4. Finally, analyse the degree to which your approach as a supervisor now is influenced by any or some of these experiences. What good models are you seeking to apply? What bad models are you seeking to avoid?

My supervision history

Previous supervisor (1)	
What helped?	
What hindered?	
Response at time	
Influence on me now	

Previous supervisor (2)	
What helped?	
What hindered?	
Response at time	
Influence on me now	

Previous supervisor (3)	
What helped?	
What hindered?	
Response at time	
Influence on me now	

Previous supervisor (4)	
What helped?	
What hindered?	
Response at time	
Influence on me now	

Previous supervisor (5)	
What helped?	
What hindered?	
Response at time	
Influence on me now	

Tool 10: Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Questionnaire

There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement put a tick. If you disagree more than you agree put a cross by it. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or cross. When you have completed the questionnaire, continue this task by responding to the points that follow.

☐	1	I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.
☐	2	I often act without considering the possible consequences.
☐	3	I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.
☐	4	I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.
☐	5	I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.
☐	6	I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.
☐	7	I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.
☐	8	I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.
☐	9	What matters most is whether something works in practice.
☐	10	I actively seek out new experiences.
☐	11	When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.
☐	12	I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine etc.
☐	13	I take pride in doing a thorough job.
☐	14	I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, “irrational” people.
☐	15	I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.
☐	16	I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.
☐	17	I’m attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.

- [ ] 18 I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.
- [ ] 19 I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.
- [ ] 20 I like to relate my actions to a general principle.
- [ ] 21 In discussions I like to get straight to the point.
- [ ] 22 I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.
- [ ] 23 I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.
- [ ] 24 I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.
- [ ] 25 I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.
- [ ] 26 I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.
- [ ] 27 I believe in coming to the point immediately.
- [ ] 28 I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.
- [ ] 29 I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible -the more data to mull over the better.
- [ ] 30 Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.
- [ ] 31 I listen to other people's point of view before putting my own forward.
- [ ] 32 I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.
- [ ] 33 In discussions I enjoy watching the maneuverings of the other participants.
- [ ] 34 I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.
- [ ] 35 I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.
- [ ] 36 It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.
- [ ] 37 I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.
- [ ] 38 Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.
- [ ] 39 I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.

- [ ] **40** It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.
- [ ] **41** I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.
- [ ] **42** I tend to be a perfectionist.
- [ ] **43** In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.
- [ ] **44** In meetings I put forward practical realistic ideas.
- [ ] **45** More often than not, rules are there to be broken.
- [ ] **46** I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.
- [ ] **47** I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.
- [ ] **48** On balance I talk more than I listen.
- [ ] **49** I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.
- [ ] **50** I think written reports should be short and to the point.
- [ ] **51** I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.
- [ ] **52** I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.
- [ ] **53** I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.
- [ ] **54** In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.
- [ ] **55** If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.
- [ ] **56** I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.
- [ ] **57** I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.
- [ ] **58** I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.
- [ ] **59** In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.
- [ ] **60** I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.
- [ ] **61** In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.
- [ ] **62** In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a "low profile" than to take the lead and do most of the talking.

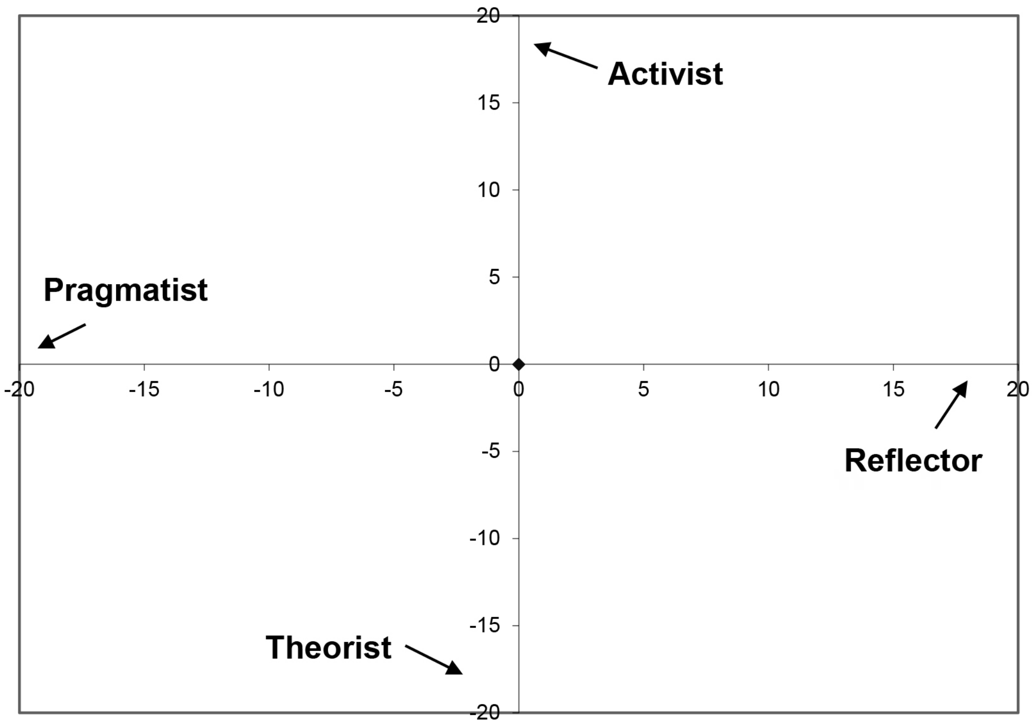
- [ ] **63** I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term bigger picture.
- [ ] **64** When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and "put it down to experience".
- [ ] **65** I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.
- [ ] **66** It's best to think carefully before taking action.
- [ ] **67** On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.
- [ ] **68** I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.
- [ ] **69** Most times I believe the end justifies the means.
- [ ] **70** I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.
- [ ] **71** I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.
- [ ] **72** I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.
- [ ] **73** I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.
- [ ] **74** I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.
- [ ] **75** I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
- [ ] **76** I'm always interested to find out what people think.
- [ ] **77** I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
- [ ] **78** I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.
- [ ] **79** I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.
- [ ] **80** People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

Scoring

You score one point for each item you ticked. There are no points for crossed items. Circle the questions you ticked on the list below:

	2	7	1	5
	4	13	3	9
	6	15	8	11
	10	16	12	19
	17	25	14	21
	23	28	18	27
	24	29	20	35
	32	31	22	37
	34	33	26	44
	38	36	30	49
	40	39	42	50
	43	41	47	53
	45	46	51	54
	48	52	57	56
	58	55	61	59
	64	60	63	65
	71	62	68	69
	72	66	75	70
	74	67	77	73
	79	76	78	80
TOTALS				
	Activist	**Reflector**	**Theorist**	**Pragmatist**

Plot the scores on the arms of the cross below:



Your result may show that you have a particular learning style. It may be useful to bear this in mind as you approach tasks. Was the approach you adopted the best one in the circumstances? Would adopting another learning style have improved your performance?

At this point you may also find it helpful to read through the Characteristics of the Four Learning Styles on pages 55 - 58 of the workbook. This provides more detail and should help you clarify your sense of your own preferred style(s).

Tool 11: Self-assessment: organisational barriers to a learning culture

Instructions

This tool identifies actions to consider when developing and maintaining a learning culture in non-profit environments such as social care. Check off the actions that have been considered or accomplished.

ACTIONS	VERY OFTEN	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEUTRAL	NOT OFTEN	NOT AT ALL	DON'T KNOW
1. Managers question front-line practitioners' requests to attend work related training							
2. Practitioners attend training without any expectations of taking learning back to their team or organisation							
3. Clients are not asked for their opinions because it is believed that their opinions will always be negative							
4. Practitioners tell stories about employees being ridiculed for trying something new							
5. People are teased for reading research							
6. Managers are discouraged from trying a new approach							
7. People are often told that something is outside of their responsibilities							
8. There are invisible but strong barriers between departments							
9. Supervision is private – peers are not included because people might be embarrassed							

[Adapted from the work of Stephen Gill (Gill, S. (2010) Developing a learning culture in non-profit organizations. Oxford, UK: Sage). Reproduced from: Hallberg, R. and Dill, K (2011) Broadening Horizons: Linking Evidence to Child Welfare Supervision. PART Practice and Research Together.]

Tool 12: Adult learning principles

Instructions

Review this set of principles with individual front-line practitioners and/or your team. Generate a discussion on the principles.

Principles

1. No two people learn in exactly the same way. Instruction should be adapted to the way adults learn.
2. Employees can be ordered to do something new but they cannot be forced to learn. Adults will resist being required to learn something, especially if they don't agree with the reason for it.
3. Adults are motivated to learn by significant work and life changes and believing that what they will learn will help them cope with those changes. Adults are driven by meaningful work that makes a difference in the lives of others.
4. For some adults, learning is its own reward. But for most, learning is a means to an end. Some adults won't learn unless they can see how learning will lead to meaningful results.
5. Enhanced self-esteem and pleasure are strong secondary motivators of learning. Adults want to feel better about themselves and enjoy what they are doing.
6. Adults have teachable moments, when the timing of learning is critical to its success and retention. Adults often know their optimal times for learning.
7. Staff want the opportunity to apply newly learned knowledge and skills to relevant problems in the organisation. Adults want to use what they have learned to make a difference.
8. Adults learn best when they can integrate new information with what they already know. Employees and volunteers have considerable experience that provides an important context for their own learning.
9. Fast-paced, complex and unusual learning tasks interfere with adult learning. This might be a 'generational thing,' but adults have trouble adjusting to learning through the use of new technologies.
10. Adults tend to let errors affect their self-esteem, and that causes them to avoid risk by resorting to old ways of doing things. They will stay with what they know rather than expose themselves to possible failure or embarrassment.
11. Adults prefer to have a say about the design and direction of their learning experiences. They want to feel a sense of control over the situation.
12. Adults prefer learning experiences that provide opportunities for interaction with their peers. They want to know how they compare to others, what they can learn from others and how they can stay connected to peers.

[Reproduced from: Hallberg, R. and Dill, K (2011) Broadening Horizons: Linking Evidence to Child Welfare Supervision. PART Practice and Research Together, pp123-4.]

Tool 13: My beliefs about knowledge

Instructions

The following questions probe your beliefs about science and knowledge. They aim to generate discussion about knowledge and using evidence in practice. Read each statement and decide if you agree, disagree, or do not have an opinion regarding the statement.

After completing all of the questions, reflect upon any patterns in your answers. Do you tend to agree or to disagree with the statements? Is there anything you want to know more about? Discuss your thoughts with other members of your team.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
1. Practice wisdom is often more accurate than scientific evidence			
2. Because we do not know anything for sure, we really do not know anything			
3. Because our beliefs influence what we see, we can't gather accurate knowledge			
4. There are things we just cannot know			
5. Scientists and researchers do not know everything			
6. Trying to measure client outcomes dehumanises clients, reducing them to the status of laboratory rats			
7. Scientific reasoning and data are of no value in planning social policy and social action			
8. Science is a way of thinking developed by white, male, Western Europeans. It does not apply to other people or cultures and cannot be used by them			

[Reproduced from: Hallberg, R. and Dill, K (2011) Broadening Horizons: Linking Evidence to Child Welfare Supervision. PART Practice and Research Together, pp123-4.]

Tool 14: Supervisor checklist helping practitioners manage work-related stress

When working with vulnerable people, there are specific, recurrent sources of stress that practitioners experience. Supervisors are critical in helping practitioners identify the sources of work-related stress, and in managing stress and other negative feelings associated with the work. The following are some sources of stress associated with working with adults or children who are at risk of harm.

Sources of stress in practice

The supervisor can use this list in discussion with staff, either individually or in team meetings, about sources of stress they have experienced in social care casework. The first section lists the tasks that may be stressing the practitioner and the second section leaves room for the supervisor and supervisee to note how important the task is to their day to day role, how often the difficulty is occurring and what impact it is having on the practitioner's emotional resilience.

Task	Priority / Frequency / Impact
Insufficient time to do the assigned work.	
Agency priorities that conflict with personal values and motivation.	
Lack of opportunity to reflect or plan proactively.	
Knowledge about the abuse and neglect of children and adults.	
Vulnerable children or adults on open cases who are harmed again by their caregivers.	
Frustration about parents/carers who are unable or unwilling to protect their children or family members who are at risk of harm.	

Task	Priority / Frequency / Impact
Empathy about parents/carers who seem to try to provide safety, permanence and wellbeing for their children or family members, but are not successful.	
Worry that social care services are not adequate to protect a child or preserve a relationship.	
Constant demands from families, carers, managers, and other agencies.	
Policies and procedures that seem not to make sense or that interfere with achieving goals and objectives.	
Organisational barriers that prevent effective practice.	
Lack of cooperation from other partners and agencies.	
Negative media attention on difficult cases.	
Inadequate funding, inability to access or provide essential services.	
Public attitude toward the agency and its work.	
Caseloads are too high, do not allow personal attention needed by individuals, families and communities.	

Task	Priority / Frequency / Impact
Unclear priorities, and continually shifting priorities, preventing anything from ever being completed.	
Each practitioner's personal sensitivities and reactions to stressful situations.	
Competing demands from family, spouses, one's own children, and other personal factors that may increase work related stress.	

Supportive supervisory activities

Supportive activities of the supervisor are directed toward creating a psychological and physical climate that enables staff to feel positive about their job. These proactive strategies can help to insulate practitioners from stress, and create an environment where the practitioner feels assured that s/he can receive help coping with work-related stress. Note in the second section whether it is possible to create these environments. If it is already in place, how useful is it. If it is not possible what is getting in the way?

Strategy	Frequency/Usefulness (HML)/Blockers
Periodically in team meetings, lead a discussion with staff about sources of stress they have experienced in practice. Issues of stress felt by practitioners should be addressed during each case conference and /or team meeting.	
Provide opportunities for the team to access, use and share evidence of good practice to inform their work.	
Provide an empathic, respectful, caring and supportive environment in which practitioners can comfortably discuss their practice issues.	
Support staff to understand the impact of their work on their values and the ethical dilemmas that they face.	

Strategy	Frequency/Usefulness (HML)/Blockers
Encouraging staff to express and constructively resolve their feelings and concerns about abused and neglected children or adults and parents'/carers' actions, agency practices.	
Develop and support a safe learning environment in the team: use mistakes as an opportunity to teach and learn; encourage all members of the team to offer solutions and to learn from each other; acknowledge individual members' contributions to the team learning.	
Support staff's attempts to develop competence, effectiveness, self-directedness, creativity and independence in their work to achieve outcomes for the people they work for.	
Use the Training Needs Analysis to guide practitioners in selecting training needed to develop competence and confidence in their work.	
Use strengths-based strategies to encourage staff to give input about the team's work.	
When giving staff feedback about their work performance and relating to supervisees, do this in a direct but understanding and non-authoritarian manner.	
Help staff think through, prioritise, and develop plans to manage competing demands.	
Be sensitive and responsive to the practitioner's personal needs and in helping staff understand how these impact their work.	
Be sensitive to work stresses and concerned for staff well-being.	
Be available to provide consistent emotional support and understanding.	

Strategy	Frequency/Usefulness (HML)/Blockers
Help staff recognise and honour the incremental progress of individuals, families and community as they move towards providing a safe environment for children and adults.	
Personally recognise individuals' effective and successful work with service users that achieve desired outcomes and that can confirm a practitioner's confidence and sense of self-worth and competence.	
Provide recognition and positive reinforcement for the work of staff.	
Emphasise appreciation of cultural diversity and its benefit for the team.	
Develop and support genuine teamwork.	
Build the capacity of staff in making decisions by using consultative and group decision making strategies, or delegating responsibility for certain decisions to the team.	
Involve staff in planning and decision making.	
Encourage peer support and collaboration, especially when a practitioner has a difficult case.	

Individual supervisory support

The following are supervisory strategies that may be useful when a practitioner is experiencing heightened stress that is affecting their work with people at risk of harm or, if not addressed, will soon affect their work. The supervisor can be proactive in the following strategies. Not all strategies will be possible due to organisational requirements or due to management style. Consider the list, think about what areas you use naturally and often, and which you would struggle with or would need to work differently to be able to use effectively.

Support	Strength / Difficulty
Offer one-on-one emotional support and understanding to decrease feelings of isolation.	
Assist the practitioner in organising the workload, re-prioritising tasks, and delaying deadlines.	
Help staff identify, develop, and link with appropriate in-agency and community resources and supports who can contribute to meeting service user needs and reduce the practitioner's personal workload.	
If decreased confidence in certain areas of the work is contributing to the practitioner's stress, offer training that would address relevant practice issues.	
Engage the team in strategies to relieve a team member's stress level.	
Temporarily reassign job tasks or provide staff support to counter overload from highly stressful or overly active caseload.	
Arrange for flexible work scheduling or job-sharing of high-stress tasks.	
Reduce the stress through job-enrichment activities (giving more meaning to the work), job diversification (increasing the variety of job-related tasks), or job rotation (to alternate services in the agency).	

Support	Strength / Difficulty
Make referrals to counselling and other supportive services to address personal emotional needs or family situations.	
Evaluate flex and vacation time balances, encourage the practitioner to use accrued vacation or flex time as a tension-relieving measure – a day off in the middle of the week, an afternoon off, the opportunity to work at home. (Leave time would depend on office policy).	
Make a temporary assignment from the field to the office with temporarily diminished contact with service users to help the practitioner take time to rest and regroup.	

Personal support

Practitioners have other potential sources of support. Encourage a stressed practitioner to consider these personal resources.

Other Support	Possible Limitations
The practitioner's values and motivation to work with and support people who are at risk of harm.	
Effective and successful work with service users that achieves desired outcomes could confirm a practitioner's confidence and sense of self-worth and competence.	
The practitioner's peer group (both within and outside of the team) can provide understanding and feedback, and can be knowledgeable about the unique sources of stress when working with people at risk of harm.	
The practitioner's social and spiritual support network of family and friends.	
The practitioner's own capacity to adjust, and make adaptations ultimately affects their response to stress.	

[Written by the Institute for Human Services for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program and The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services OCWTP/IHS, June 2010 and adapted by CCP Sept 2013. Some content adapted from Dorman and Shapiro, Preventing Burnout in Your Staff and Yourself (CWLA 20040)]

Tool 15: Management steps to building team resilience

Emotional resilience is sometimes described as 'hardiness' or 'inner strength'. We all know people and colleagues who appear to recover quickly from setbacks and are able to stay committed and increase their efforts when the going gets tough.

It used to be thought that people were born with resilient attributes, but we now know that resilience includes some key behaviours that we can all develop.

The management steps to building team resistance cover a number of line management behaviours that can help build team resilience by:

- **Reviewing and improving the way you manage your teams;**
- **Enhancing your own and your team members' emotional wellbeing;**
- **Building a culture of engagement.**

The checklist shows the management behaviours and some suggested actions that you can take to help you maintain wellbeing.

Read each of the behaviours and potential actions and consider:

- **How you can demonstrate that behaviour to your team.**
- **What additional support you need to demonstrate that behaviour.**

Development modules are free to access from: www.managingemployeewellbeing.com/bitc/

The on line modules show approaches that work just as well with an office based, shift based or remote team and include: exercises, quizzes, scenarios and information, as well as a resources page to help you look at the subject in more detail.

The materials have been produced by Affinity Health at Work (concepts, content and materials) and Blended Solutions (web design) for Business in the Community. The project has been funded by ARAMARK and Places for People.

Behaviour	Potential action	Support or information required
Behave with integrity.	Be respectful and honest with team members.	
Manage your own emotions.	Manage your own emotions. Behave consistently and calmly around your team.	
Take a considerate approach.	Be thoughtful when managing others and delegating.	

Behaviour	Potential action	Support or information required
Manage workloads and think ahead.	Monitor and review existing work, allowing prioritisation and planning.	
Solve problems.	Deal with problems promptly, rationally and responsibly.	
Empower team members to contribute.	Listen to, meet and consult with the team. Provide direction, autonomy and development opportunities for individuals.	
Be accessible.	Be accessible.	
Be sociable.	Be sociable.	
Show empathy and understanding.	Try to understand each individual in the team in terms of their health, satisfaction, motivation, point of view and life outside work.	
Manage conflict	Deal with conflicts decisively, promptly and objectively	

Behaviour	Potential action	Support or information required
Get support when you need it.	Seek advice when necessary from HR and Occupational Health.	
Take responsibility for resolving issues.	Have a supportive and responsible approach to issues and incidents in the team.	

Tool 16: Supervision of supervisors - using the KOLB Cycle

1. Focusing on Experience

Here the emphasis is on facilitating an accurate and detailed recall of events. A partial description of the situation will undermine the rest of the cycle. Supervisees can be assisted to recall more than they think they can recall if the right questions are asked. In these lists 'you' is the supervisee.

1. How are you today - what's your day been like so far?
2. What happened before the 'event' 'issue' 'situation' started?
3. What was your role in this situation?
4. What was your aim? What planning did you do?
5. What did you expect to happen?
6. What happened?
7. What did you say? What did you do?
8. What did the other people involved say, do or display?
9. What reactions did you notice to what you said/ did?
10. What surprised or puzzled you? Who behaved differently?
11. What stuck out for you? What were the key moments?
12. What words, non-verbals, sounds, images struck you?
13. What did you notice about yourself, and the others involved?
14. What do you think others would have noticed about you?
15. If others involved had been describing this event, how similar or different to your account would their description have been?
16. What didn't you notice? What or who was hard to observe?
17. What observations or concerns do other agencies have?
18. What went according to plan? What didn't happen?
19. What changes or choices did you make?
20. What did you say, notice or do immediately after the situation?

2. Focusing on Reflection

Here the emphasis is on eliciting feelings, and patterns. These may bring out further information, or may reveal the supervisee's underlying attitudes. They may also give clues to other personal factors complicating the supervisee's experience. Reflection helps the supervisee make links between the current situation and his/her prior experiences, skills or knowledge.

1. What did you feel at the start of the situation?
2. What feelings did you bring into this situation?
3. Describe the range of feelings you had during the episode?
4. What physical sensations were you experiencing? Heart beat etc.
5. What did the situation/your feelings remind you of?
6. What previous work, processes, skills, knowledge are relevant?
7. What patterns did you see in this situation? Are these familiar?
8. Where have you encountered similar processes?
9. Describe a time when you last experienced that - what happened?
10. Who/what do the other people in this situation remind you of?
11. What did you think the other person(s) was feeling?

12. What feelings might you be carrying on behalf of the user/victim/other workers, e.g. what transference or projection might be occurring?
13. What other factors might influence how you or the other people involved felt or reacted, e.g. gender, race?
14. Where and when did you feel most or least comfortable?
15. Who seemed least or most comfortable - at what points?
16. What thoughts went through your mind during this situation?
17. What ideas came to you during the situation?
18. What are the continuities or discontinuities between this situation and the pattern of what's been happening before this situation began?
19. What did you tell yourself about what was happening, e.g. what was the 'self-talk' inside your head?
20. What feelings were you left with - is this familiar in these sorts of situations
21. What metaphor or analogy would describe your experience of this situation?
22. What was left unfinished?

3. Focusing on Analysis

Here the emphasis is on analysis and explanation, probing the meanings that the supervisee and others involved attribute to the situation. This includes consideration of other possible explanations, the identification of what is not known or understood, and areas for further exploration or assessment.

1. List three assumptions you/others might have brought into the situation?
2. How would you/others explain or understand what happened in that situation? How else could you explain what happened?
3. How would the situation have been seen differently if you had been male/female; black/white; able bodied/disabled etc.
4. Who are the shareholders for this situation?
5. What tasks or responsibilities in this situation were or were not addressed?
6. What other, possibly unexpected outcomes, did the situation produce?
7. What was the nature of the power relations during this situation?
8. Did power relations shift during the situation - if so why?
9. How far did this situation confirm or challenge your previous understanding?
10. What are the current strengths, needs, risks for the different stakeholders in this situation?
11. What new information emerged?
12. What was the critical moment?
13. What went well, and why?
14. What did not go well and why?
15. How else might you have managed the situation?
16. What bits of theory, training, research, policy, values might help you make sense of what was happening in this situation?
17. What is not known?
18. What conclusion are you drawing from this situation so far?
19. How do you define your role in this situation?
20. How do others define your role in this situation: e.g. supervisee, other workers, user or other agency?
21. What would the organisation say your role is in this situation?
22. How clear is the organisation about its expectations in this situation?

4. Focusing on Strategies and Action Plans

The focus here is on translating the analysis into planning, preparation and action. This includes identification of outcomes and success criteria as well as consideration of potential complications and contingency plans.

In the light of the reflection and analysis we've done, what's your overall summary of where things are at, and what needs to be done next?

1. Can you identify what you are and are not responsible for in managing this situation?
2. What training, supervisory, mentoring and support needs have been raised for you?
3. What information needs to be obtained before proceeding?
4. What are your aims in this next phase of work?
5. What is urgent and essential?
6. What would be desirable?
7. What is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in this situation?
8. What would be a successful outcome to the next situation from your perspective?
9. What would be a successful outcome for the next situation from the perspective of the other key shareholders?
10. What do you need to do more of?
11. What do you need to do less of?
12. What do you need to start doing that perhaps you have been putting off?
13. What are the different ways in which you could approach this?
14. What might be your strategy for the next situation?
15. What are the possible best or worst outcomes?
16. How can the other key shareholders be engaged?
17. What contingency plans do you need - what is the bottom line?
18. Who else needs to be involved (other staff, other agency)?
19. What would you like from them?
20. How well equipped do you feel to undertake this?
21. Where do you feel more or less confident?
22. How can you prepare for this - mental rehearsal, flip chart map?
23. What can I do that would be helpful at this stage?
24. What and when does feedback and debriefing need to take place?
25. Are there any safety/ethical issues for you or others?
26. What can be done to minimise any dangers?

Tool 17: The decision tree

Introduction

In her book Effective Child Protection (2002), Eileen Munro explores approaches to decision-making in social work over the last hundred years, commenting that social work has been hampered in building a reliable and consistent evidence base as a result of shifting fashions. Munro explores the potential role of decision theory in social work with children and families.

Munro states that decision theory rationally portrays people as thoughtful decision-makers, considering alternative actions, deliberating about their consequences; and choosing an option that seems most likely to satisfy goals.

Munro identifies, however, that studies that show how people actually reason are striking in the extent to which they show the reluctance of people to make decisions.

In child protection work reluctance to make decisions shows up in a tendency to procrastinate, so that decisions are made in reaction to a crisis rather than a long-term plan. Children in care are particularly vulnerable to failure in active decision-making – and this often results in drift, poor planning and a lack of decisions about contact. According to Munro the same type of drift also shows up in research on child protection, where there is a lack of proactive planning and a tendency to react to crises as they occur. The introduction of timescales is one attempt that has been made towards addressing this problem, which has gone some way towards standardising the practice in the LAC system and in assessment.

However, decision-making is a hard task and is both intellectually and emotionally challenging. It can also be hard because decisions often offer imperfect solutions and this can be demoralising. Sharing power is also complex – decisions require a juggling act to give due weight to a range of opinions.

Different schools of thought

Munro highlights two schools of thought that are particularly relevant to thinking about decision-making in social work.

- **Decision theorists draw on probability theory and logic to prescribe a model for making decisions.**
- **Naturalists aim to describe how people actually make decisions.**

She suggests that we can draw useful lessons from both schools. While interviewing families, a practitioner will continuously be making many intuitive micro decisions; whereas a decision about whether or not to remove a child from their family will require considerable deliberation and need to be justifiable to the family and legal systems.

Formal decision theory offers a framework for organising reasoning and ensuring that details are not overlooked. Decision theory can help in situations where professionals are feeling confused or overwhelmed by all the factors. Decision theory and more specifically decision trees, which is a formal tool emerging from decision theory, break decisions down into component parts. They are useful in major decision-making when the importance of the subject, for example the well-being of the child, infers significant responsibility on the decider to make the best possible decision. Whilst certainty about the efficacy of a particular decision might be nigh on impossible to reach, it is important to be able to be open and clear and able to demonstrate how decisions were reached.

Decision trees set out a framework for considering possible options; considering the consequences and how probable they are; judging how good or bad those outcomes would be; and picking the option that you believe will have the most beneficial consequence. The framework uses a methodology to decide the utility value of decisions made.

Decision trees are an effective way of organising reasoning and analysing the problem. A clear identification of a sequence of events, and the links between them, in itself makes problematic decisions much easier to understand and manage. By making estimates of the probability (likelihood) and desirability of consequences explicit in terms of numbers, it is possible to work out which option has the highest value and show the grounds for the final choice.

Framework for decision trees

- **What decision is to be made?**
- **What options are there?**
- **What information is needed to help make the choice?**
- **What are the likely/possible consequences of each option?**
- **How probable is each consequence?**
- **What are the pros and cons (desirability) of each consequence?**
- **The final decision**

The strength of the decision tree is that it makes you think widely. This can also be a disadvantage in that it can generate too much information. Judgement is needed to decide how much effort to put into the decision and therefore how much information to generate. Experience can help the practitioner to reduce the detail to which they need to apply the framework. Hammond (in Munro 2002) suggests applying one's energies to the stages of the decision framework that are most problematic. Quite often when one scans through the whole process it is possible to identify which points can be decided on easily and which ones are the most crucial or difficult for that particular decision.

It is important not to exaggerate the objectivity of decision theory. Although it uses mathematics it is crucial that the practitioner uses their own judgement in giving utility values to the outcomes and assessing their probability, but using the tree does help to push the decision along the analytic–intuitive continuum towards becoming more analytic. It helps break a complicated decision down into smaller and simpler parts. It assists, but does not replace, the human decision-maker.

The decision framework need not be followed in detail in every situation. Professionals can use it to sketch an overview of the decision they are facing and then concentrate on the problematical elements. It encourages people to make their intuitive reasoning explicit and then think it through more thoroughly. It does not remove subjectivity from the process and two rational people will not necessarily reach the same conclusions. It does help to identify where and why they would disagree however, and also provides a clear and defensible account of how a decision was reached, something which may be especially helpful in the current climate.

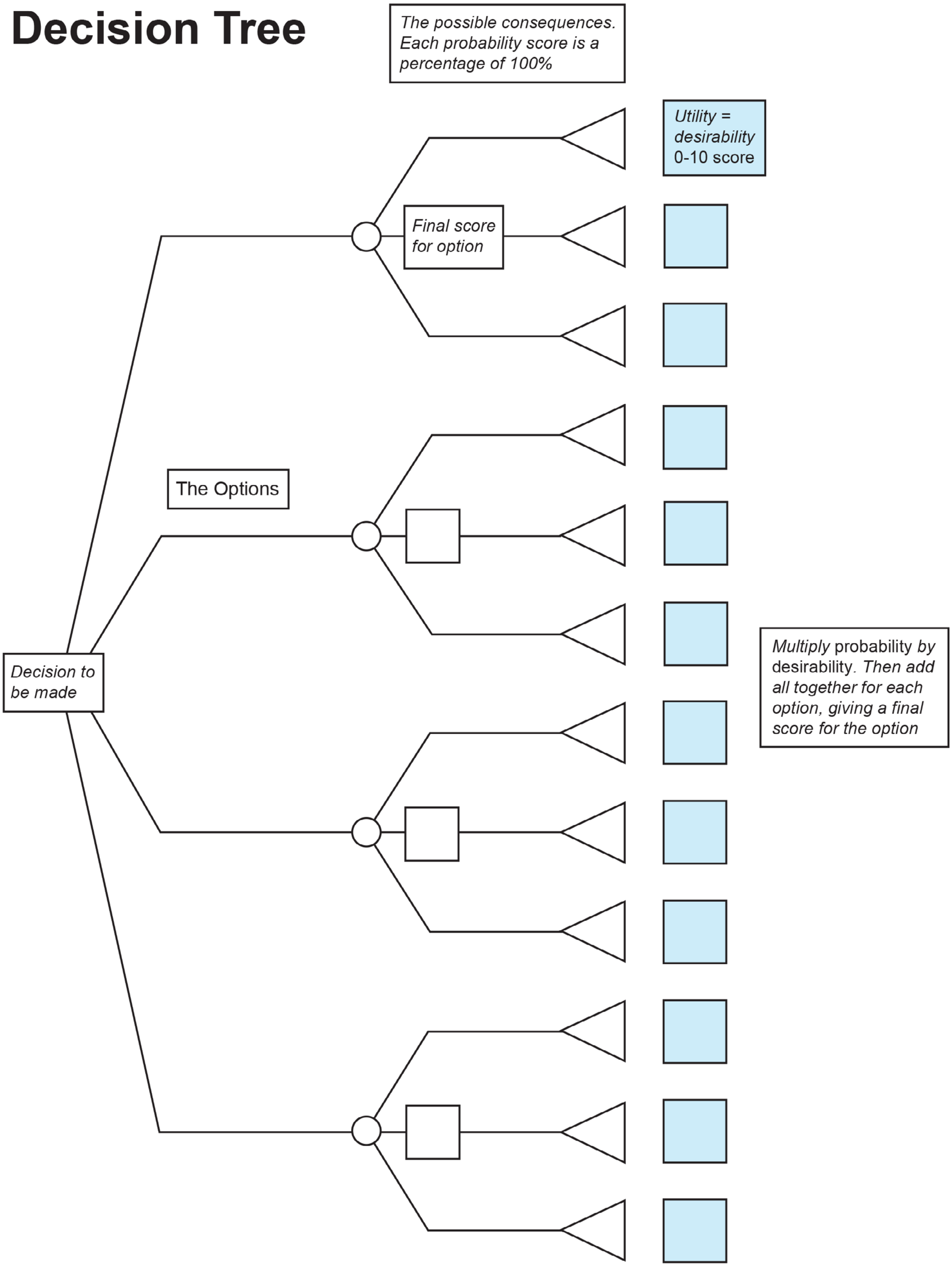
Instructions for completing a decision tree

Read these instructions alongside the decision tree illustration.

1	What is the decision to be made? Enter data into square on left of tree.
2	What are the possible choices (options)? Enter up to four different options. Write these along the radiating lines coming out of the square.
3	What are the possible consequences of the different options? Create the same number of consequences for each option (3 or 4) and write them along the lines radiating from the circles.
4	Try and give a score to the probability (likelihood) of each consequence occurring. Score somewhere between 0% and 100% (0% = certainly not and 100% = certainly will). The total score across the consequences for one option should equal 100%. You will be likely to use research evidence, practice experience, and discussion and debate to help you decide on this. Place the score in the triangle.
5	Try and decide on the desirability of each consequence occurring. Ascribe a score from 0–10 (0 = least desirable, 10 = totally desirable). These do not need to total up to 10. You have to use your judgement to decide on the desirability: by weighing up the impact on the child, their family, the wider society, cost to agency, etc. Place this score in the last box on the right.
6	Multiply each probability score by each desirability score, and then add these together for each option. This gives you a total score for each option. Place this score in the square inside the tree. The option with the highest overall score should be the best option for you to choose as it combines realistic likelihood of success with best desirability.

[From: Dalzell, R. and Sawyer, E. (2006) *Putting Analysis into Assessment*. London: National Children's Bureau, 67-68]

Decision Tree



From Eileen Munro (2002) 'Decision Tree', *Effective Child Protection*, Sage Publications.

Tool 18: Critical decision-making exercise

Instructions

This exercise can be a powerful way of prompting staff to challenge their current practice and the basis of their decision-making. At a meeting or training event, ask front-line practitioners to spend 5 minutes completing the exercise individually. Then, bring the participants together to discuss the issues that the exercise raises.

- **What issues does this exercise throw up about your practice?**
- **What do you need to do more of, less of, or differently?**

Exercise

Think back to a recent client with whom you worked where you made a significant decision about the client's care or support. Check each criterion you used to make this decision:

- [ ] Your intuition (gut feel) about what will work for them.
- [ ] Information you have gained from other professionals in informal exchanges.
- [ ] Your previous experience with similar cases.
- [ ] Data about outcomes from alternative care or support options.
- [ ] The assistance usually offered by your service or organisation.
- [ ] Feedback from similar clients about what is helpful.
- [ ] What you are most familiar or comfortable with.
- [ ] What you know about cases like this from reading research or theory.

Now imagine you have a potentially serious medical problem and you seek help from a doctor to recommend treatment. Check each criterion you would like your doctor to use to make this decision:

- [ ] His/her intuition (gut feel) about what will work for you.
- [ ] Information he/she has gained from other professionals in informal exchanges.
- [ ] His/her previous experience with similar cases.
- [ ] Data about outcomes from alternative treatment options.
- [ ] The treatments usually offered by the surgery, hospital or clinic.
- [ ] Feedback from similar patients about what is helpful.
- [ ] What he/she is most familiar or comfortable with.
- [ ] What he/she knows about cases like this from reading research or theory.

[Adapted from the work of Leonard Gibbs and Eileen Gambrill (Gambrill, E., & Gibbs, L. [1999]. Critical thinking for social workers: Exercises for the helping professions. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press).]

Tool 19: Self-assessment critical thinking skills

Instructions

This self-assessment will help to identify patterns in your use of critical thinking. Read each statement and decide how often the situation described applies to you. Once you have answered all of the questions, review your answers. Identify any patterns that occur.

Are you a person who is most comfortable with pondering a situation from several perspectives? Or are you a person who is aware of how personal beliefs and personal energies can impact decisions? Are you sensitive to what others think?

Statement	Seldom	At times	Always
1. I am aware of the times when I have a vested interest in the outcome			
2. I am naturally curious and want to know what is around the next corner			
3. I can identify emotional blocks that negatively impact my critical thinking			
4. I am tolerant of ambiguity			
5. I know when I am tired and cannot make a clear decision			
6. I appreciate it when someone makes me aware that I am not thinking about all the angles or perspectives of an issue			
7. I am aware when stress or workload pressures are blocking my critical thinking and I take action to address the interference by the pressures before making the decision			
8. I am prepared to evaluate my beliefs and to understand how those beliefs impact on my decisions			
9. I find the unknown intriguing			

Statement	Seldom	At times	Always
10. I am prepared to be challenged by others			
11. I have difficulties expressing myself and putting my thoughts into words			
12. I feel stress when there are delays in a decision because others "need to think about it more"			
13. I am afraid to make a mistake or to be wrong in front of others			
14. I can solve most problems with very little thought			
15. I find that stereotypes are often true and use these to help expedite the process of drawing conclusions			

What does this tell you about your approach to critical thinking?

Tool 20: Socratic questions for supervisors

Instructions

Consider these questions to develop critical thinking. Apply the questions to case consultations.

Conceptual clarification questions

Lead front-line practitioners to think more about what exactly they are asking or talking about. Probe the concepts behind their argument. Ask basic 'tell me more' questions to encourage practitioners to think more deeply.

- Why are you saying that?
- What exactly does this mean?
- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?
- What is the nature of…?
- What do we already know about this?
- Can you give me an example?
- Are you saying…or…?
- Can you rephrase that, please?
- Can you help me understand more clearly?

Probing assumptions

Probing assumptions makes people think about the presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs on which they are founding their arguments. This is shaking the bedrock!

- What else could we assume?
- You seem to be assuming…?
- How did you choose those assumptions?
- Please explain why/how…?
- How can you verify or disprove that assumption?
- What would happen if…?
- Do you agree or disagree with…?

Probing rationale, reasons and evidence

When people give a rationale for their arguments, dig into that reasoning rather than assuming it is a given. People often use poorly thought-through or weakly understood supports for their arguments.

- Why is that happening?
- How do you know this?
- Show me…?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- What do you think causes…?
- What is the nature of this?
- Are these reasons good enough?
- Would it stand up in court?
- How might it be refuted?
- How can I be sure of what you are saying?
- Why is…happening?
- Why? (Keep asking it – you'll never get past a few times.)
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
- On what authority are you basing your argument?

Questioning viewpoints and perspectives

Most arguments are given from a particular position. Attack that position. Show that there are other, equally valid viewpoints.

- Another way of looking at this is…Does this seem reasonable?
- What alternative ways of looking at this are there?
- Why is…necessary?
- Who benefits from this?
- What is the difference between…and…?

- Why is it better than…?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of…?
- How are…and…similar?
- What would…say about it?
- What if you compared…and…?
- How could you look at this another way?

Probing implications and consequences

The arguments that people give may have logical implications that can be forecast. Do these make sense? Are they desirable?

- Then what would happen?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How could…be used to…?
- What are the implications of…?
- How does…affect…?
- How does…fit with what we learned before?
- Why is…important?
- What is the best…? Why?

Questioning the question

- You can also encourage reflection about the whole thing, turning the question in on itself. Use a person's attack against them. Bounce the ball back into their court.
- What was the point of asking that question?
- Why do you think I asked this question?
- What does that mean?

Tool 21: Understanding blocked performance

Instructions

In pairs use the common issues chart to consider a past or current supervision case that you are faced with. Map the impact of the 11 practice areas listed below

Performance area	Impact
Role clarity	
Partnership	
Response to authority	
Planning	
Observation	

Performance area	Impact
Interventions	
Anti-discriminatory practice	
Task completion	
Team/multidisciplinary relationships	
Empathy and self-awareness	
Response to change	

Tool 22: Discrepancy Matrix

How to use this matrix

This matrix can be used in individual and group supervision to clarify the nature of the information being used to inform practitioners' understanding of a case. Analysing information across this matrix supports the supervisor to help the practitioner think critically about the information upon which they are basing their decision making.

The practitioner is supported to tease out the information they hold into four types: evidence, ambiguous, assumption, and missing.

Step One:

The case-holding practitioner tells their story briefly (10 mins). The supervisor or group members then begin to support the practitioner to sort the information they have been told into each of the boxes. Questions such as:

- **How do you know that …?**
- **What other evidence do you have that this is true?**
- **How often have you felt like that even though you have no evidence it is true?**
- **When do you feel that most strongly? Why?**
- **If you had this piece of information what might it make you do differently?**

Step Two:

The information is sorted into the four areas as the practitioner answers the questions.

1. **What do I know?** For something to go into the 'evidence' category, it needs to be proven and verified (in other words, come from more than one source as a fact). It will also include knowledge about legal frameworks and roles and responsibility under the Children Act as well as research. This category provides the strongest factual evidence for analysis and decision making.
2. **What is ambiguous?** This relates to information that is not properly understood, is only hearsay or has a different meaning or context, or is hinted at by others but not clarified or owned.
3. **What I think I know?** This allows the practitioner to explore their own practice wisdom and also their own prejudice to see how it is informing the case. Emotion and values can also be explored in this area and the self-aware practitioner can explore how they are responding and reacting to risk.
4. **What is missing?** These are the requests for information coming from the people listening to the story (supervisors, peers, other agency staff) that prompt the practitioner to acknowledge there are gaps in the information. The gaps then have to be examined to see if the lack of information might have a bearing on the decision making in the case. If so, then it needs to be explored.

Step Three:

Once the exercise is complete the practitioner is then asked:

1. **What has changed about what you know?**
2. **What do you still need to know?**
3. **What does this mean for the child/family?**
4. **What do you want to do next?**

Source: Adapted with permission from Morrison and Wonnacott (2009) in Wonnacott (2014).

Taken from Research in Practice Reflective Supervision Handbook 2017T

Discrepancy Matrix

Strong evidence

Strongly held view

What do I know (evidence)?	**What is ambiguous?**
What I think I know (assumption)	**What is missing** **(what action is needed)**

Unclear or no view

Weak or no evidence

Analysis

Child / Family Name: ______________________________

Worker name: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

What do you think is happening in this case (Analysis)?
What is the impact on the child (Positive or negative)?
What needs to happen next (Actions)?

Tool 23: Systemic Reflective Space: A model of group supervision

Systemic Reflective Space is a model of group supervision that seeks to create 'reflective space'. The question stage takes the presenter around the four stages of Kolb's cycle.

Aims

- To support practitioners to share their skills, competence and abilities, inviting collaborative and reflective practice
- Provide alternative views on aspects of a practitioner's work and offer an opportunity to explore options, facilitate shared learning and develop practice
- Draw on the diverse strengths and skills of participants.

Application

Group size: About six

Time: Takes about one hour

Roles: A presenter, facilitator, time-keeper and recorder should be nominated

Facilitation: The group can be facilitated by a supervisor, external facilitator or peer-group member.

Instructions

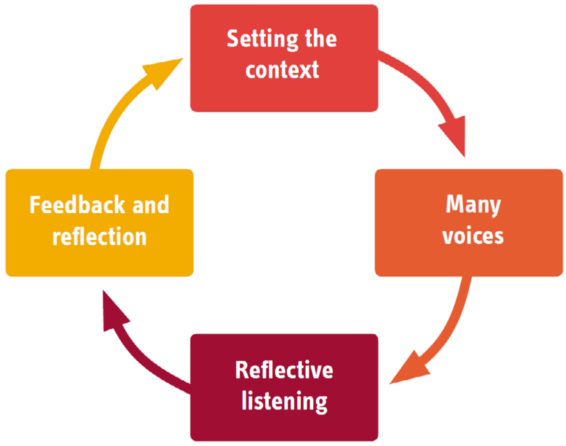
The model is designed to disrupt the habitual ways in which we might approach problems. So group members are encouraged to:

- **Reflect** the presenter's pace and style
- **Connect** comments to material that has been presented
- Be **mindful** of negative feedback
- Talk in a way that **enables the presenter to listen**
- Listen in a way that **enables the presenter to give feedback**
- Present ideas tentatively and **not as solutions.**

The reflecting team conversation should not mirror what the presenter has discussed, but should offer something different to enable difference to emerge.

The model invites participants to offer as many explanations for a situation as possible, inspiring possibilities that will lead to hope and change (Anderson, 1987).

The model: Systematic reflective cycle



Systematic reflective practice graphic adapted from Jude and Regan (2010)

1. Presentation of the dilemma to the group (15 minutes)

The presenter presents a dilemma in story form from the point of view of

- the practitioner
- the service user
- any other key players.

The presenter can use any available resources to tell it – eg stories, pictures, sculpt (moving group members into positions they feel represent the family and their dynamics) and objects.

Others pay attention to how the presenter talks about the issue, with a focus on emotional listening.

Emotional listening requires a willingness to let the other parties dominate the discussion and **attentiveness** to what is being said.

Emotional listeners take care **not to interrupt**, use **open-ended questions**, reflect **sensitivity** to the emotions being expressed, and have the ability to **reflect back** to the other party the substance and feelings being expressed.

2. Group discussion (15 minutes)

The aim of the group discussion is to offer the presenter an opportunity to think about things as widely as possible. The group converses and explores the dilemma using any available resources.

The presenter sits outside the circle. It can enhance listening and group discussion if the presenter has their back turned so their body language and facial expressions do not influence the discussion.

No questions are to be asked or answered at this stage. The facilitator supports the group to:

- Adopt an exploring (not problem-solving) stance – the aim of the exercise is to explore different ways of understanding the presenting dilemma. Questions rather than statements are a helpful way to think about what is presented, eg **'What else could it be?'**
- Consider the 'known' and 'unknown' areas of the presenting dilemma
- Explore why their attention has landed on the story in the way it has
- Test 'practice wisdom' – be alert to whether the group are basing their responses too much on similar experiences of their own, or approaches/ assumptions shared within your organisation. Ask both '**How is this dilemma the same as your past one?'** and, more importantly, **'How is it different?'**
- Be aware that sometimes thinking processes are dominated by a rearranging of existing prejudices and beliefs
- Sit with uncertainty.

Sitting with uncertainty involves a willingness to continually challenge one's own **assumptions** and place knowledge in the context of v**alues, past experiences, feelings** and **relationships.**

3. Generating questions (10 minutes)

The group seeks to generate a list of 'curious' questions, formed to test hypotheses.

The presenter does not respond but remains outside the circle – listening. If the presenter jumps to respond, the facilitator

might ask them why they chose not to include that information in the first 15 minutes as this is likely to be worth reflecting on.

4. Presenter responds to the group's discussion (15 minutes)

The group is to listen in silence as the presenter responds within the structure set out below.

The presenter should complete the following sentences five times:

The first thing I noticed from your discussion was …

It made me feel like …

Now that I am talking about it I realise that …

This is what I would like to do about that …

What this means for the child is …

The second thing I noticed from your discussion was …

Doing this five times means the presenter moves past noticing only things that confirm their own view, and creates differences in thinking.

Reflection in action - As the presenter has been responding to the different discussions, view points and questions

generated, they try to remain curious about what they are attending to and how they felt with each response.

5. Group reflections (5 minutes)

The whole group (including the presenter) reflect on why different perspectives have emerged - or why they have notemerged if there have been no alternative perspectives.

Everyone explores the usefulness of the process.

Tool 24 Reflecting on challenging experiences

NAME ....

DATE ....

This tool consists of a series of five questions to help practitioners consider and learn from a recent work experience which they found challenging, but that ultimately had a successful outcome.

Aims

- **Support practitioners to notice positive emotions and strengths, even in difficult circumstances**
- **Support staff to use both thoughts and feelings as sources of information.**

Application

This tool can be used to:

- Explore a challenging abuse incident
- Explore confident practice with cultural diversity
- Identify key/trigger moments in practice
- Explore how to contain feelings within a team that is becoming preoccupied with a story, perhaps something that has happened to one team member.

This tool should not be used for performance management purposes. If performance issues come to light, you might do some causal analysis in a later one-to-one supervision: ***'Could you have done anything to influence the outcome?'***

Instructions

Ahead of one-to-one supervision, the supervisee should think about the following questions and make some brief notes in the blank box. In supervision, discuss your responses with your supervisor and, where possible, try to make links to other practice examples.

Source: Based on Dwyer and Vivekananda (2002) in Gibbs et al (2014) www.rip.org.uk

In a group setting, practitioners could take it in turns sharing a story with their colleagues, who then offer feedback. It might also be useful to reflect on what the combined stories tell the team about themselves *(Gibbs et al, 2014).*

Brief description of challenging experience	
What was it about the experience that you found difficult?	
In what ways did it challenge you?	
How did you decide whether it was ultimately successful?	
What personal strengths and qualities did you have to draw on during this event?	
On reflection, what does this tell you about yourself in relation to the work you do? Optional further questions: • What does this tell you about you as a practitioner? • If the story had a different ending, would you feel different? • What would the child say about the outcome? • What are you still preoccupied with?	

Source: Based on Dwyer and Vivekananda (2002) in Gibbs et al (2014) www.rip.org.uk