



Introduction

The Social Discipline Window supports practitioners to think about communication and behaviour commonly used in restorative practice. This tool can be used to critically reflect on a practitioner's work with children and families in a one-to-one or group supervision. It can also be used to create a plan for working more collaboratively with families.

This tool has been adapted from the PSDP Resources & Tools: Social Discipline Window, which can be found at:

<https://practice-supervisors.rip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Social-discipline-window.pdf>

The Social Discipline Window

Restorative practice sees a collaborative approach which:

- Values the intrinsic worth of an individual
- Provides individuals opportunities to talk about and hear how problem incidents and behaviours affect people, to strengthen and repair families and communities.

When working restoratively with others, the goal is to achieve high challenge and high support. Wachtel (2013) describes this approach as 'characterized by doing things with people, rather than to them or for them'.

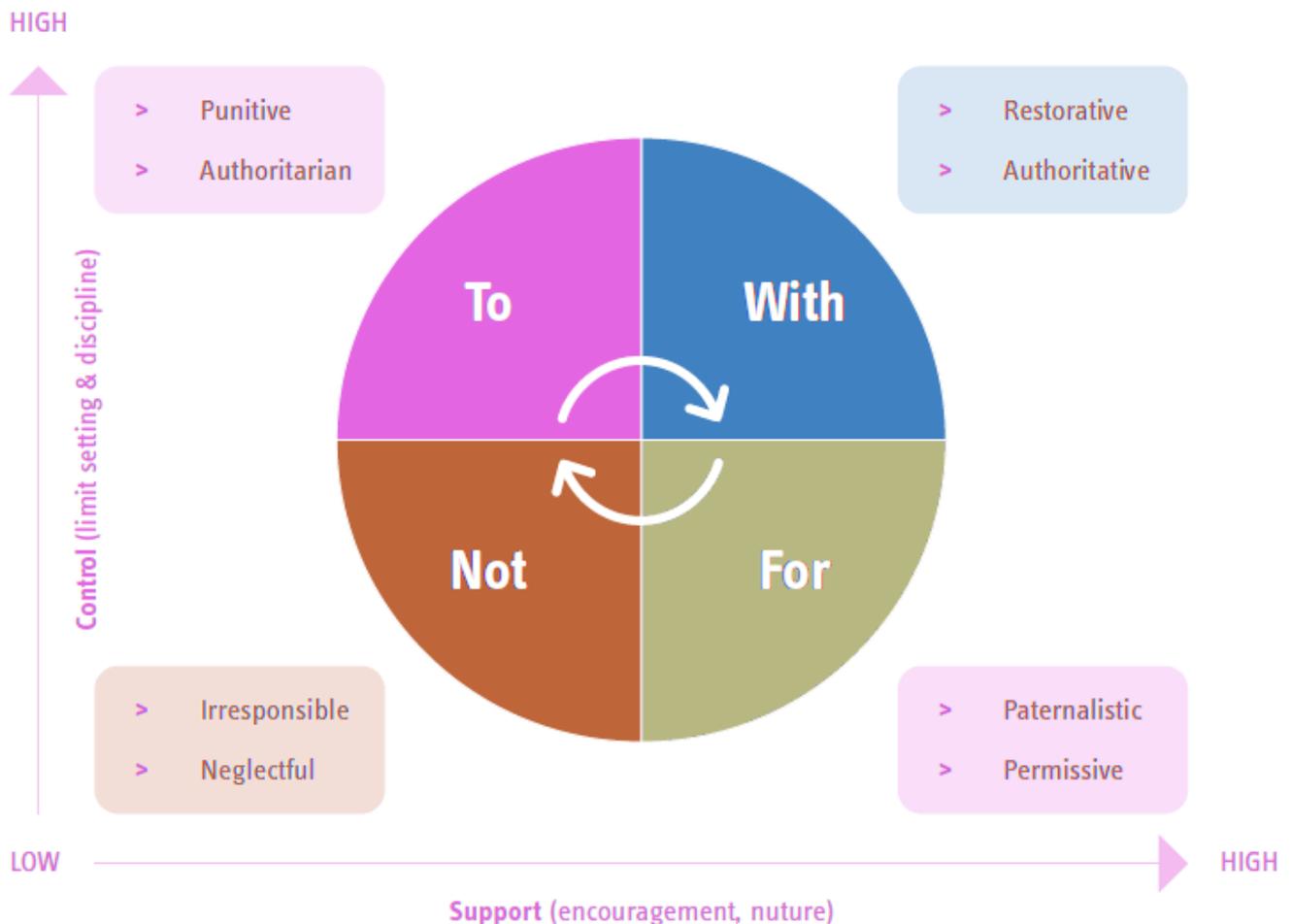


Working as One Council in
the historic capital of the Black Country



Children first and at the heart of all we do

The social discipline window helps us reflect upon how social workers communicate with families and how these families communicate with the staff we supervise.



The social discipline window provides a way of exploring how we communicate with others. In image 1, the window is divided into 4 quadrants. The axis on the outside of the image indicates where communication styles sit in each quadrant, regarding offering more or less support and control when communicating with others.

WITH

Restorative practice is characterised by practitioners working **with** children and families. The professional is highly supportive and responsive to children and families.

E.g. a family where there is domestic abuse between parents, resulting in the police being called, the social worker arranges a meeting for family and friends to come together and share perspectives on the impact arguing has on the children, and to create a plan of what happens next.

TO

Professionals who do **to** are responsive but may not be as skilled at working transparently and collaboratively with the family, resulting in families experiencing a communication style as punitive.

E.g. using the scenario above, the social worker may decide the children are unsafe at home, advising parents to ask a friend to look after them until the issues are resolved.

Workers who use power and communicate in a noncollaborative and authoritarian way, are less likely to consider diversity and individual difference.

FOR

Professionals who do things **for** families are highly supportive and responsive however they make fewer demands on families to make and maintain changes themselves.

Professionals may find it more challenging to highlight issues or concerns and without meaning to, they avoid this type of communication.

E.g. a mother struggling to get her children to school on time contacts the social worker to say the children have gone without their coats but she can't go out as she's waiting for the health visitor to arrive. The social worker collects the coats and takes them to school.

NOT

If a professional is working in the **not** quadrant, they are neither demanding nor supportive of the family.

E.g. parents tell the social worker they are unsure where their teenage son has been for the past two nights. The social worker records this but doesn't ask why they didn't report him missing to the police or what steps they took to find him. When the social worker visits the young person, they don't raise this issue with them in a meaningful way.

Spend some time thinking about the social discipline window and the different communication styles.

Do any of the approaches resonate with you?

Are there particular styles that you can see your supervisees use to engage with children and families?

Using the Tool for Discussion in Supervision



An effective way to use the tool in supervision is to ask the supervisee to identify a family where there has been some kind of conflict between themselves and the worker, or where the practitioner feels 'stuck'. The tool would also work well in situations where there is an unhelpful or confusing dynamic or power struggle between family members or wider professional networks.

The activity outlined below, uses the social discipline window to help a practitioner identify areas of practice where they have inhabited different areas of the quadrant with a child and family. Before beginning, establish clear ground rules about confidentiality – reflecting on communication styles may lead onto discussions about personal experiences the worker may have had which now influence how they communicate. You can then ask the worker to reflect on how other family members and professionals behave and speak in relation to the four quadrants, and the impact this has on their own responses. Finally, focus the discussion on what the supervisee has learnt about how they communicate with other professionals and families they work with. You can also construct an action plan which provides both high challenge and high support.

- 1 Share the social discipline window with the supervisee and explain what it is. Invite the supervisee to reflect on whether they can identify examples of communication or practice that fits with each quadrant of the window.
- 2 Ask the supervisee to summarise a dilemma they've faced when working with a family and gain sufficient information to draw a genogram or ecomap of their network. Using a visual tool can help to provide a focus for discussion and consider any connections or patterns that emerge.
- 3 Explore with the supervisee how different people in the network communicate with each other about the changes the family are trying to make. The supervisee should also reflect upon how they communicate with the family and what happens as a result of this.
- 4 Finally, invite the supervisee to explore how they can move their own practice, and that of other professionals working with the family, towards a with approach. Below you will find some questions to help shape this discussion and some that will support the worker to reflect on their own experiences of power within families.

WITH Quadrant Prompt Questions



- Reflect where you see yourself on the social discipline window when visiting a particular child and family?
- Is there a difference in how you communicate with the family in writing or over the telephone? Is there a difference between seeing the family at home or seeing them in a meeting or at court?
- What aspects of family life do you feel you avoid or neglect talking about?
- When are you tempted to make decisions or do things for the family instead of asking them to find solutions? What factors affect this?
- What aspects of the social discipline window are you enacting when you challenge professionals or family members?
- How do [other family members / other professionals] speak to [mother / father / child] when [things are going well / problems arise]?
- Are you more (or less) motivated to offer support to anyone? How do you manage this? How does it make you feel?
- If the [child / parent / family / professional] was asked which area of the window your practice with the family sits, what would be their response? Which areas would they want you to work **with** them more? Are there times they would prefer you to work in the **for**, **to** or **not** quadrant?
- Are there family members you find it harder or easier to challenge? Why do you think that is? How does this impact upon your intervention?
- Do you ever switch between two or more intervention styles? Why, and is this done deliberately or without realising?
- Where in the social discipline window do other family members and professionals sit when communicating changes to safeguard a child's wellbeing?
- Which quadrants do you feel most comfortable working within? Reflect on how a parent feels when you practice in this way - what are the pros and cons?
- Where on the quadrant would you place yourself in aspects of your own life e.g. within your team, within your own family dynamics? Are there connections between your personal and professional communication styles?
- Are there aspects of individual differences in relation to the social GRRRAACCEESSS (gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, education, ethnicity, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality – Burnham, 2013) that impact on how you work (**with**, **to**, **for** or **not**) in different contexts? How is that received by families?
- Where in the window would you place the adults who raised you? How did that make you feel? What affect does that have on your sense of self or the decisions you made as a child and now as an adult / practitioner?

Planning to Work More Restoratively with Families and Other Professionals

If you have identified aspects of practice within the **to**, **for** and **not** domains, decide together which to prioritise for discussion and identify what should be included in a plan. Focus on how to move interventions and communications towards with.

Prompt Questions



- If you could move one area of practice from to, for or not into with, which would it be? Would you achieve this straight away or over time? What would be the barriers and enablers?
- If you made this change, what would the next family meeting sound like? What would [the child] see when the adults talk to each other?
- Who in the network would support this / help to make it happen?
- When you are tempted / asked to do things for the child and family, what strategies could you employ for returning control back to them? Are there conversations which need to take place with other family members or professionals to enable the shift?
- How will you keep motivated to start working in areas you feel you've avoided or neglected? What are the consequences of not starting this work? Are there barriers which affect other areas of your work? What support do you need to achieve this?

Conclusion

Agree any actions that will be taken as a result of this discussion.

End the session by asking the supervisee if they found the exercise helpful or enlightening? Was there anything it brought up which they'd like extra support with?

