

Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative

# EPPI toolkit

## Critical Thinking and Analysis

## What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking goes hand-in-hand with the use of evidence which is important both in informing social work practice, and influencing and enhancing the selection of interventions and programmes appropriate to service users. It allows social workers to consider the evidence available to them, analyse this in the context of multiple factors and influences, and form decisions and plans based on this. Though it is an overarching aspect of social work practice, it's application is particularly necessary in the processes that lead to significant decisions being made for the child; Child Protection Case Conferences, Parenting Capacity Assessments and court reports.

Critical thinking is an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning as a guide to belief and action (e.g. decision making)<sup>1</sup>. In social work, Gambrill proposed that 'critical thinking is a unique kind of purposeful thinking in which we use standards such as clarity and fairness to evaluate evidence related to claims about what is true and what is not. It involves the careful examination and evaluation of claims and arguments and related actions to arrive at well-reasoned ones'.<sup>2</sup>

Gambrill and Gibbs work (2009)<sup>3</sup> identifies the following examples of critical thinking skills:

- *Analysing* arguments, interpretations, beliefs, or theories.
- *Clarifying* problems, issues, conclusions or beliefs, the meaning of words or phrases, values and standards.
- *Comparing* analogous situations; transfer insights to new contexts. Compare and contrast ideals with actual practice. Distinguish relevant from irrelevant questions, data, claims, or reasons.
- *Evaluating* the accuracy of different sources of information, or your own reasoning process, Evaluate perspectives, interpretations, or theories. Analyse and evaluate actions or policies. Using sound criteria for evaluation. Discover and accurately evaluate the implications and consequences of a proposed action
- *Identifying* significant similarities and differences, unstated assumptions.
- *Making* well-reasoned inferences and predictions. Making interdisciplinary connections.

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<sup>1</sup> [Foundation for Critical Thinking](#)

<sup>2</sup> Gambrill E (2013) Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

<sup>3</sup> Gambrill E and Gibbs L (2009) Critical Thinking for Helping Professionals: A skills-based workbook (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

- *Raising and pursuing* significant questions.
- *Recognising* contradictions and inconsistencies. Detecting bias.
- *Refining* generalisations and avoid oversimplifications.

Research also refers to the term 'critical analysis' which is described below. Both terms are used interchangeably within this module, as they appear in the research.

### **Characteristics of Critical Thinking**

Gambrills work also identifies the following eight characteristics of critical thinking. These are:

1. It is purposeful.
2. It is responsive to and guided by *intellectual standards* (relevance, clarity, depth and breadth).
3. It supports the development of *traits* of intellectual humility, integrity, perseverance, empathy, and self-discipline.
4. The thinker can identify *the elements of thought* present in thinking about a problem, such that logical connections are made between the elements and the problem.
5. It is *self-assessing* (self-critical) and *self-improving* (self-corrective). The thinker assesses her thinking, using appropriate standards. If you are not assessing your thinking, you are not thinking critically.
6. *There is an integrity to the whole system.* The thinker is able to critically examine her thought as a whole and to take it apart (consider its parts as well). The thinker is committed to be intellectually humble, persevering, courageous, fair, and just. The critical thinker is aware of the variety of ways in which thinking can become distorted, misleading, prejudiced, superficial, unfair, or otherwise defective.
7. *It yields a well-reasoned answer.* If we know how to check our thinking and are committed to doing so, and we get extensive practice, then we can depend on the results of our thinking being productive.
8. It is responsive to the social and moral imperative to argue from opposing points of view and *to seek and identify weakness and limitations in one's own position.* Critical thinkers are aware

that there are many legitimate points of view, each of which (when thought through) may yield some level of insight.<sup>4</sup>

Read the nine questions which critical thinkers ask regularly (Appendix 1).

To read more about critical thinking visit the [Foundation of Critical Thinking](#).

### What is critical analysis?

The work of Wilkins and Boahen (2013)<sup>5</sup> describes *critical analysis* as an evolution of the three-step process of *critical thinking*:

- *Critical thinking* involves examining the elements of something; gaining a better understanding of it; and then selecting a course of action.
- *Critical analysis* highlights the need 'to think about and weigh up different elements of information rather than accepting everything at face value....social workers need to think critically about why they are being given certain information and what it might mean.'

They also propose that social workers should develop an '*analytical mindset*' which pervades all their practice, rather than just being something that occurs at the end of a process. They argue that '*By thinking analytically from the outset, you will be in a better position to 'know' which information to collect, which information is likely to be more or less significant and to be clearer about what questions you are seeking to answer*'.

They argue that critical analysis is a skill which must be practised. Five key skills which contribute to critical analysis are:

- Time management
- Abductive reasoning
- Research-mindedness
- Communication
- Reflection.

For more aids on MindTools visit [click here](#).

<sup>4</sup> In Gambrell E (2013) *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

Source Paul R (1993) *Critical Thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world* (rev 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (pp22-23) Foundation for Critical thinking

<sup>5</sup> Wilkins D and Boahen G (2013) *Critical Analysis Skills for Social Workers* Berkshire: Open University Press

Critical analysis involves careful consideration and interrogation of

- Social workers' own beliefs and views
- Alternative views and perspectives
- Experience
- Reading, literature and research
- Other people's comments.

### **The link between critical thinking and using evidence**

Two important concepts associated with critical analysis in social work practice are:

- *Evidence-informed* - based on the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research.' 'It is an approach that helps people and organisations make well-informed decisions by putting the best available evidence at the heart of practice development and service delivery'.
- *Evidence-based* is a programme, service or intervention that has consistently been shown to produce positive results by independent research studies that have been conducted to a particular degree of scientific quality'.

Munro (2011)<sup>6</sup> emphasises the view that skills in forming relationships, using intuitive reasoning and emotions, and integrating knowledge of theories and empirical research, are all equally important components of effective social work.

## **Why is Critical Thinking and Analysis important in Social Work?**

Ultimately critical thinking and analysis plays an important role in improving outcomes for the children and families that social workers work with.

Critical thinking can assist social workers in surfacing tacit knowledge, identifying areas in which they are well-informed, and clarifying areas where they need to increase their knowledge.

### **Benefits to service users**

Making finely balanced judgements and taking complex decisions in difficult circumstances is inherent to the social work role. Many decisions social workers make have life-changing and life-long consequences for children and families. Critical thinking and analysis underpin and enhance sound judgement- and well-reasoned decision-making by helping social workers and service users 'make

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<sup>6</sup> [Munro, E. \(2011\)](#)

informed decisions to select options that, compared to others, are likely to help them attain outcomes they value.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to service users that the professionals who work with them ‘are not only caring (though this of course is essential), but also that they are well-informed, discriminating and thoughtful in their work’.<sup>8</sup>

### **Benefits to social work practice**

According to Gambrill and Gibbs (2009), thinking critically about claims, beliefs and arguments can help professionals arrive at beliefs and actions that are well-reasoned.

Adopting a critical and analytical approach to social work helps to:

- Focus information gathering, identify goals and purposes, and formulate questions clearly and precisely.
- Inform practice and the choice of interventions to attain outcomes.
- Integrate theory to practice and draw on evidence about ‘what works’.
- Appraise claims and arguments, and consider alternatives fairly.
- Assist well-reasoned and informed decision-making processes and finely balanced judgements.
- Enhance reports and assessments by moving beyond ‘the descriptive’.
- Facilitate the explanation and the provision of reasonable grounds of assessments and decisions to service users, colleagues, in court reports, and to other stakeholders.
- Surface one’s own values, beliefs, prejudices and their impact on practice.
- Support a change of mind in light of the consideration of evidence.

### **Risks to not using critical thinking and analysis**

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<sup>7</sup> Gambrill E and Gibbs L (2009) Critical Thinking for Helping Professionals: A skills-based workbook (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

<sup>8</sup> [Woolliams, M., Williams, K., Butcher, D. and Pye, J. \(2009\)](#)

The report of the Independent Child Death Review Group highlighted a lack of clear planning and decision making in cases where children are at risk. They advise that assessments must be a clear roadmap for the care of the child/young person's care.

## When should social workers use Critical Thinking?

Wilkins and Boahen (2013) and others argue that critical analysis is an essential skill for social workers, and, in addition, that an *analytical mind-set* is needed to pervade all social work practice. Croisdale-Appleby (2014)<sup>9</sup> discusses the complex nature of social work '*where practitioners are continuously collecting and analysing 'partial and contradictory fragments of information' within a dynamic, challenging and multifaceted environment*'. An analytical mind-set can assist in making sense of this information, and planning purposeful social work interventions.

Thinking critically is particularly important to social work:

- In the context of social workers' own self-awareness and how their assumptions, values, beliefs, intuition impact their practice.
- Using and assessing evidence in relation to the choice of differing approaches, interventions and programmes
- In decision-making processes, and in communicating and explaining these to others. For parents who have had difficult childhood experiences themselves they may not fully comprehend the impact of their behaviours on their children. Social Workers can use this approach to clarify what parents are being asked to do differently, and why it is important.
- In informing assessments and reports which are clear and well-reasoned, and which outline the thinking behind conclusions reached. The courts require a level of professional expertise, and without sufficient evidence of critical thinking and analysis social workers cannot evidence the threshold criteria required for the various orders applied for.

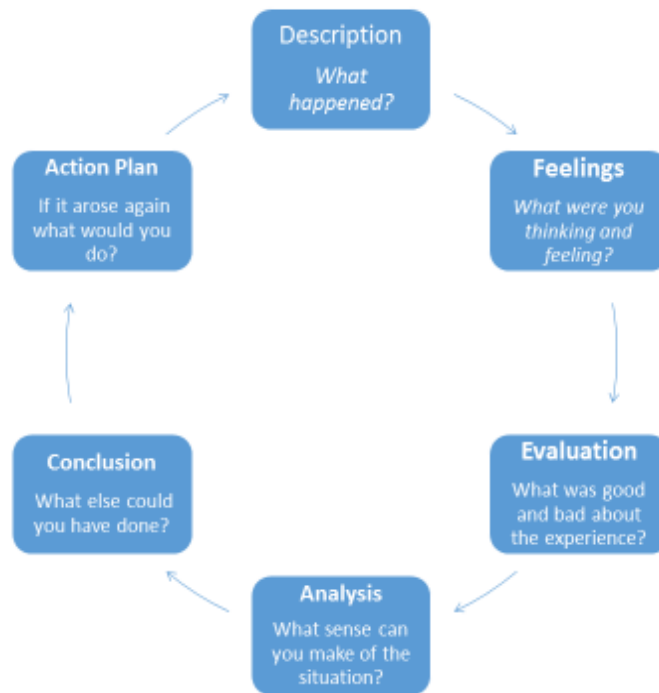
**Hon Judge Rosemary Horgan presentation - Read the President of the District Court Judge Rosemary Horgan's presentation at the Evidence Informed Practitioner Programme (EIP) conference in May 2016. Judge Horgan provides detailed information on what the judiciary expects from social workers presenting evidence in court during child care proceedings. (Appendix 2).**

**Gibbs Reflective Cycle**, is a framework which helps social workers to reflect systematically about the phases of an experience or activity. It is often recommended as a helpful framework for health and social care practitioners to use to reflect on their experiences as a practitioner.

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<sup>9</sup> Croisdale-Appleby D (2014) *Re-visioning social work education : An Independent Review*

Different phases within the cycle are described in the diagram below.



*Gibbs Reflective Cycle*<sup>10</sup>

## How does a social worker build their Critical Thinking skills?

Wilkins and Boahen argue that building critical analysis (thinking) skills and an analytical mind-set takes practice, but ultimately saves time because social workers become more planned and focused in their interventions with service users. This is of benefit to social workers themselves and to their service users.

### Developing self-awareness

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<sup>10</sup> Gibbs (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic in Woolliams, M., Williams, K., Butcher, D. and Pye, J. (2009) *Be more critical: A practical guide for Health and Social Care students.* Oxford: Oxford Brookes University  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/documents/oxfordbookesuni-bemorecritical2.pdf>



Social work practice, interventions and decisions are underpinned by different forms of knowledge, some of which are, or become, 'tacit' over time. (Tacit knowledge refers to knowledge that comes from personal experience, rather than research or study). It is therefore important to ask:

- How do we know what we know?
- How do we know what we don't know?
- How much are we relying on intuition?
- How much are our own beliefs and prejudices affecting our practice?

Self-awareness is a core element in the development of critical thinking skills and can be surfaced through supervision, coaching and mentoring, reflective writing, discussion, and training etc. Features of self-awareness include:

- knowledge of one's personal beliefs, biases, prejudices and assumptions and how these impact practice
- use of intuition and tacit knowledge in practice
- ethics
- strengths and weaknesses; and
- personal motivations.

The following tools may be helpful in enhancing self-awareness:

**Ten Criteria to help social workers make decisions in social work practice**  
These criteria can help you to reflect on how you make practice decisions. (Appendix 3)

**Cultural Review Grid - this tool can be useful in your work with families from different cultures. (Appendix 4)**

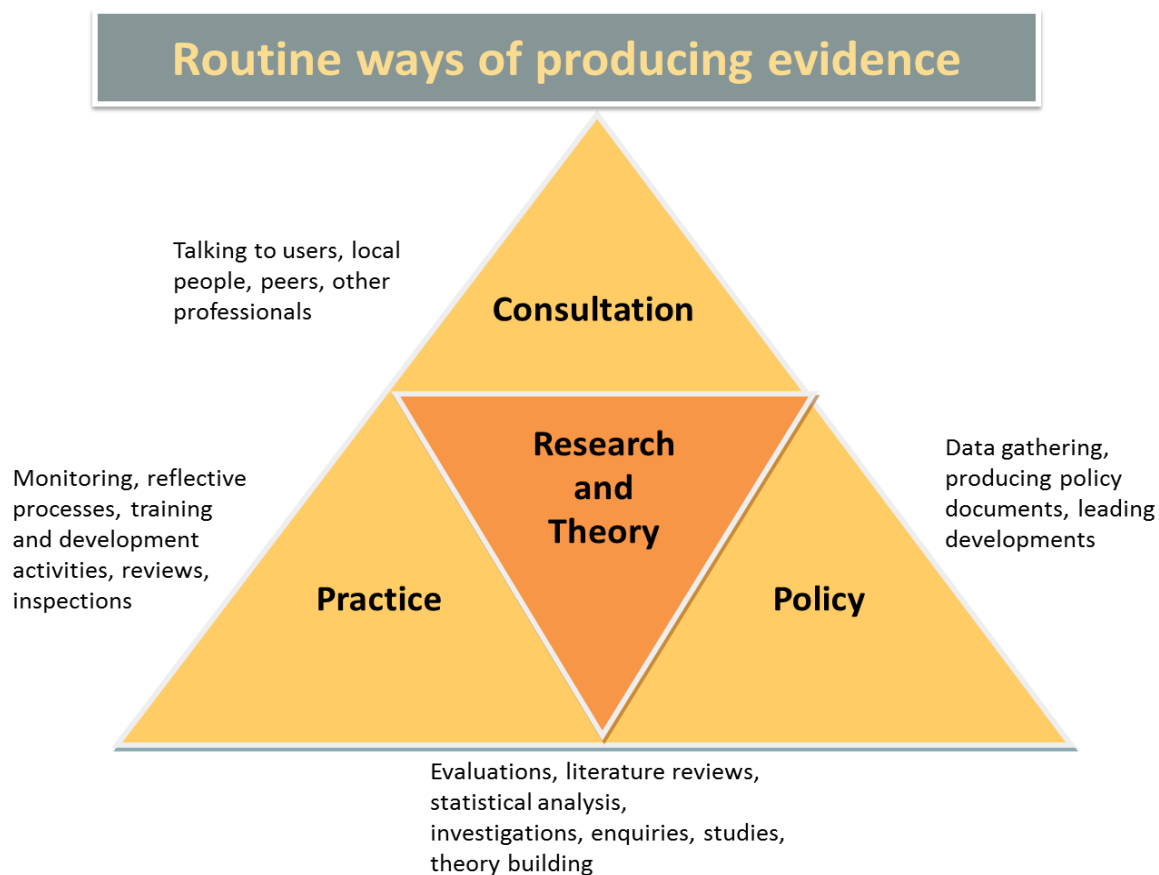
### **Using and assessing evidence to inform interventions**

One of the purposes of critical thinking and critical analysis is to inform, improve and lead to well-reasoned decisions, based on the careful consideration of alternatives. It assists in making informed choices about interventions, having considered a range of options.

**The following questions can help you in making ethical decisions and critically appraising options. (Appendix 5)**

When using different approaches and interventions in practice, it is important for social workers to employ interventions that are evidence-informed, known, and proven to work. It is also important to understand what works, where, why and for whom, but equally important to know what does not

work! There are a number of different ways to source such evidence – websites, libraries, journals, evaluations and research reports.



There is an abundance of freely available literature of varying quality and it is important to ensure that it has been subject to rigorous scrutiny.

The following tool can help you in making assessments about evidence:

**Six Strategic Questions which can help you to assess the quality of what you read and hear. (Appendix 6)**

### **Enhanced decision-making**

Social workers frequently make important and life-changing decisions in complex circumstances that involve weighing up alternatives, evaluating information, deciding on the most appropriate interventions, identifying courses of action etc. Many of the decisions are difficult, and some of the following tools may assist in clarifying the decision-making process.

**Creating a Decision tree**

A decision tree framework may be useful in clarifying decision-making processes, and outlining the reasons for arriving at certain decisions. The following questions form part of the decision framework:

1. What decision is to be made?
2. What options are there?
3. What information is needed to help make the choice?
4. What are the likely/possible consequences of each option?
5. How probable is each consequence?
6. What are the pros and cons (desirability) of each consequence?
7. The final decision.

For further reading on the use of decision trees, see the work of Dalzell and Sawyer (2016) Hammond (1996 in Munro 2002), Wilkins and Boahen and the [Mindtools website](#).

**Needs Analysis Framework**

The aim of this framework is to prompt practitioners to think more clearly about outcomes and to link these to specific needs. (Appendix 7)

**Argument Mapping**

Argument maps are box-and-line diagrams that lay out visually reasoning and evidence for and against a statement or claim. For more information about argument mapping, [click here](#).

**Preparation of assessments and court reports**

Some of the criticisms made about social work court reports are that they can be too descriptive in style and lacking analysis. Wilkins and Boahen (2013) suggest that in forums such as courts and case reviews the examination will tend to focus as much on the process by which a decision was made, as the decision itself. It is therefore important that assessment and court reports go beyond the 'descriptive'; that they outline well-reasoned arguments, options, and alternatives; and they reflect critical thinking and analysis.

The following tool may be of assistance in this process:

This template can help you to use critical analysis in writing a report. (Appendix 8).

## References and further reading

If you are interested in reading further about Critical Thinking and for a full list of references cited in this Toolkit, see Appendix 9.

**Appendix 1. Questions for Critical Thinkers**

<b>Nine questions Critical Thinkers should routinely ask themselves:</b>
<b>1. What is the purpose of my thinking (goal/objective)?</b>
<b>2. What precise question (problem) am I trying to answer?</b>
<b>3. Within what point of view (perspective) am I thinking?</b>
<b>4. What concepts or ideas are central to my thinking?</b>
<b>5. What am I taking for granted, what assumptions am I making?</b>
<b>6. What information am I using (data, facts, observations)?</b>
<b>7. How am I interpreting that information?</b>
<b>8. What conclusions am I coming to?</b>
<b>9. If I accept the conclusions, what are the implications? What would the consequence be if I put my thoughts into action?</b>

In Gambrell E (2013) *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide*. (3rd Edition) New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Source R. Paul (1993) *Critical thinking. What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world* (Rev 3rd ed.) (pp22-23). Foundation for Critical thinking <http://www.criticalthinking.org>

## Appendix 2. Judge Rosemary Horgan Presentation at the Evidence Informed Practitioner Conference (May, 2016)

### Evidence Informed Practice Conference

HHJ Rosemary Horgan



### Social Workers

- Professional expertise and competence
- Court demeanour
- Reports: fairness
- Reports: pagination and paragraphs
- Language: linguistic relativity/determinism
- Practice Direction



### Fundamental Principles

- Allegations which are denied or not proven are not 'facts'
- Facts must be accurate and drawn from evidence- no suspicion or speculation
- Distinguish fact from opinion
- Rigor of analysis of factual underpinning of case essential



## Social Work Reports



- Fairness & balance
- Identify Model of Assessment used:  
Are all fields used or only some? Why?
- High, medium and low levels of future risk of harm?
- Analysis of risk
- Linkage to threshold criteria of legislation
- Avoid 'cut and paste' in follow up reports

## Fundamental Principles



- Link facts to threshold:  
Why do facts provide significant harm or risk of harm?
- Be alert for 'confirmatory bias'
- Reasons for decisions carefully documented
- Opinions supported with facts and irrelevant opinion omitted
- Avoid repetition of material in other/earlier documents

## Assessments



- Which framework?
- High, medium and low levels of risk?
- "Framework for the Assessment of Vulnerable Children & their Families" (Buckely et al, 2006)
- The UK Framework: **Assessment of Children in Need and their Families** (Dept. of Health, 2000)
- Signs of Safety Model
- Professional Judgement & Complexity

## Child Protection Processes



- Conference (CPC)
- Child Protection Review Conference (CPRC)
- Strategy meetings, Child Protection Plans (CPP) and review of Child protection plans through the review conference
- Child Protection Notification Management Team (CPNMT)
- Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)

## Fair Procedures



- Right to know reasons for social work decisions and actions;
  1. *The State (D & D) v Groarke [1990]*
  2. *MF v Superintendent of Ballymun Garda Station [1991]*
  3. *M.Q. v. Gleeson, [1998] 4 IR 85 (Barr J) MI v HSE [2010] IEHC 159 (Heddigan J) P v A Secondary School [2010] IEHC 189 (O'Neill J).*
  4. S.I. No. 143 of 2015 –set out specific facts and grounds- anodyne or inadequate affidavits are insufficient

## Threshold & Evidence



- S. 12 & 13 Emergency Care Order
- S.17 Interim Care Order
- S.18 Care Order
- S.19 Supervision Order
- Voluntary Care
- Proportionality- age and maturity





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## Planning



- Case planning – service planning/ Continuing Services monitoring progress

## Voluntary Care



- S. 4 RIC
- Capacity/ independent advice
- Current figures: 42% of children in care were there under a voluntary care agreement

## Proof of facts at heart of system



- Evidence: not speculation, assumptions, worries or concerns
- Burden of proof of fact rests on person who asserts it
- Standard of Proof: Balance of Probabilities
- Process depends on skill and experience of a range of professionals
- Judges can only decide the cases that are put before them

## Appendix 3. Ten Criteria for making decisions in social work practice

Think back to a client with whom you have worked. Which of the following 10 criteria did you use to make practice decisions?

1. Your intuition ( <b>gut feeling</b> ) about what will be effective?	
2. What you have heard from other professionals in <b>informal exchanges</b> ?	
3. Your <b>experience</b> with a few cases?	
4. Your demonstrated <b>track record of success</b> based on data you have gathered systematically and regularly?	
5. What fits <b>your personal style</b> ?	
6. What is <b>usually offered</b> at your agency?	
7. <b>Self-reports</b> of other clients about what is helpful?	
8. Results of <b>controlled experimental studies</b> (data that show that a method is helpful)?	
9. What you are <b>most familiar</b> with?	
10. What you know by critically reading the <b>professional literature</b> ?	

Taken from: *Gambrill & Gibbs (2009) Critical thinking for helping professionals: A skills based workbook (3<sup>rd</sup> ed) New York, NY: Oxford University Press*

**Appendix 4. Cultural Review Grid**

Questions	Response from social worker
What do I know about individuals and families with this particular cultural background of life experience?	
Where does my knowledge come from?	
What prejudices may I hold (positive or negative)?	
What do I know/expect about children of this (these) age(s), their lives and needs?	
What might surprise me about this family and why would it be a surprise?	
How might this family/the parents/child/siblings/community perceive me?	
How might the intervention/assessment and my Agency be perceived?	
What impact might the intervention/assessment have on the family's life and on their perception of their lives?	
What Agency norms and practices do I take with me in contact with individuals/families (for example, awareness of risk, thresholds of 'good enough parenting', resource restrictions)?	
What else might influence my attitude to this child, parent, family?	

## Appendix 5. Making Ethical Decisions and Critically Appraising Options

What is the issue?	<u>What resources are involved? Freedom? Money?</u>						
Who is involved and in what ways?							
What are alternative options?	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>	<u>Option 3</u>				
What are the likely consequences of each option for those that might be affected?							
What may be the unintended consequences of each option?							
What research findings (if any) provide a helpful guide?	<u>E.g. findings about the accuracy of claims and practice frameworks</u>						
What grounds would best serve as a guide?	<u>E.g. equity in resource distribution, reduction of avoidable misery</u>						
What changes could (and should) be made at what levels to honour ethical principles?	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Service system</u>	<u>Policy</u>	<u>Legislation</u>

## Appendix 6. Six 'Strategic questions'<sup>11</sup>

'Here are six 'strategic questions' to help you assess the quality of anything you read or hear, whether from a

- Book or article
- Website, newspaper, magazine, TV or radio programme
- Comment from a colleague

What...?	How...?
Who...?	When...?
Why...?	Where...?

<p><b>What...exactly is being said?</b></p> <p>You need to make sure you understand any arguments being made before you start forming your own views and judgments.</p>	<p><b>How...did they come to their conclusions?</b></p> <p>What method did they use for their research? Could someone else follow their process step-by-step? Are these methods likely to produce reliable results? Could the research be influenced more by opinion than evidence?</p>
<p><b>Who...has written (or said) this?</b></p> <p>What organisation or individual? Are they an expert in their topic? What is their authority in this field? How can you tell?</p>	<p><b>When...was this said/written?</b></p> <p>Some work done a long time ago is still valid. But its validity may be lessened, or cancelled, by more recent research or perspectives.</p>
<p><b>Why... have the authors written this?</b></p> <p>What are they aiming to achieve? Could they have their own agenda? How can you tell? Is there any obvious bias?</p>	<p><b>Where...does/do the material or the views come from?</b></p> <p>Is the source trustworthy, and is it relevant to your focus?</p>

Asking these 'strategic questions' will help you develop a more critical approach....., and to evaluate (or 'appraise') reports, articles, and other materials in a thoughtful and balanced way. You can adapt the question to suit and the topic you are investigating.

At the end of the paper: So What? How can you use this research in your work? What are the implications for this research? Have any recommendations for practice been made? Are these justified by the evidence?

<sup>11</sup> Taken from Woolliams, M., Williams, K., Butcher D, and Pye, J. (2009) *Be more critical: A practical guide for Health and Social Care students*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University

## Appendix 7. Needs Analysis Framework

This framework, designed for children, lists domains of need, relating these to the service user and the outcomes being sought... In this example there are two responses for each row – ‘the top example (highlighted in orange)... is an example of a ‘too general’ response with the lower example (highlighted in green) being more specific and hence more useful. The aim of the framework is to prompt practitioners to think more clearly about outcomes and to link these to specific needs.... The framework does not include services. This is deliberate... namely the tendency to identify service before being clear what outcomes you are aiming for.’ (p77) Wilkins and Boahen (2013).

	Needs	Outcomes
<b>Health</b>	John needs to be healthy	For John to be healthy
	John needs to keep his teeth clean and healthy	For John to brush his teeth twice a day
<b>Education</b>	John needs to be in school	For John to attend school
	John has poor school attendance and needs to be in school sufficiently for him to keep up ...	For John to achieve 90 per cent attendance between now and the next school holiday
<b>Emotional and Behavioural development</b>	John needs to build his self-esteem	For John to feel good about himself
	John has said he is being bullied at school and this makes him feel bad about himself	For John to feel safe at school – school staff to investigate any bullying and stop it
<b>Identity</b>	John needs to have his own identity	For John to understand who he is and his culture
	John needs to develop his own sense of identity by doing things apart from the rest of his family that give him confidence and which he enjoys	For John to be asked which activities or things he knows he is good at – for John to be given at least one chance a week to do something he is good at
<b>Family and social relationships</b>	John needs positive relationships	For John to get on with his parents and with his friends
	John needs to develop friendships with other children	For John to be able to name two friends at school and for John to have a birthday party at home and invite his friends to play
<b>Social presentation</b>	John needs to present well	For John to present well
	For John to have some control over what he wears when he goes out	For John to go shopping with his mother or father and buy some clothes that he chooses, with guidance from his parents

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<b>Self-care skills</b>	John needs to learn to take care of himself	John to develop age appropriate self-care skills
	John needs to learn to brush his teeth on his own	For John to go shopping with his mother or father, buy a new toothbrush and toothpaste and be shown how to brush his teeth twice a day

## Appendix 8. Writing Effective Reports

### Prior to writing a report:

- Know the relevant theory/research
- Identify assumptions you bring into the situations
- Hypothesise prior to gathering information
- Gather information from a wide variety of sources

### When drafting the report:

- Sort information into appropriate categories/dimensions
- Acknowledge sources of information (including theory and research) and use research evidence appropriately
- Summarise each category
- Use summaries to test/form hypothesis
- Identify any gaps in information
- Use diagrams to sketch relationships between factors within and across the domains and dimensions of the assessment framework
- Use the idea of identifying processes that are linear or circular
- Use the idea of identifying processes that lead to patterns of impairment/difficulty or strengths/benefits
- Use the following considerations as a checklist: intrusiveness, pervasiveness, modifiability, frequency, duration, unusualness

### When writing the report:

- Write the analysis so that it is a clear explanation of the situation with reasons (ie showing your reasoning)
- Justify/substantiate your professional judgements
- Identify any gaps in knowledge/understanding and further action required
- Show that you have been reasonable and fair
- Ensure use of persuasive language does not undermine the views of parents, carers and children
- Reach a conclusion – compare and discriminate between the different choices that could be made
- Put your conclusions into action by writing a plan

Adapted from Barratt, M. and Hodson, R. (2006) *Firm Foundations: A Practical Guide to Organisational Support for the Use of Research Evidence* Dartington: Research in Practice In Dalzell, R. and Sawyer, E. (2016) 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition *Putting Analysis into Child and Family Assessment*. London: Jessica Kingsley p173



## Appendix 12. References and Further Reading

Croisdale-Appleby, D. (2014) *Re-visioning social work education: An Independent Review*

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