

## Tool 13: Wonnacott's Discrepancy Matrix



This tool encourages practitioners to reflect on what is known about a case and what is unknown or not yet known – a vital aspect of working with uncertainty. It supports the practitioner to tease out the information they hold into four types: evidence, ambiguous, assumption, and missing.

### Aim

To help the practitioner think critically about the information upon which they're basing their decision-making.

### Application

Can be used as a standalone activity or in combination with, for example, the Systemic Reflective Space group supervision model (Tool 7) or other critical thinking and analysis tools, such as De Bono's Six Hats (the white hat) (Tool 14), which ask participants to critique the information they hold about a case.

### Instructions

Follow the steps below and record key evidence of reflection and the outcomes of the discussion either in the matrix itself or by using one of the recording templates in this Resource Pack.

#### Step One: Telling the story

The case-holding practitioner tells their story briefly. 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: Sorting information

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). Evidence also includes knowledge about legal frameworks and roles and responsibilities 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 more than one meaning dependant on 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 prejudices to see how this 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, it needs to be explored.

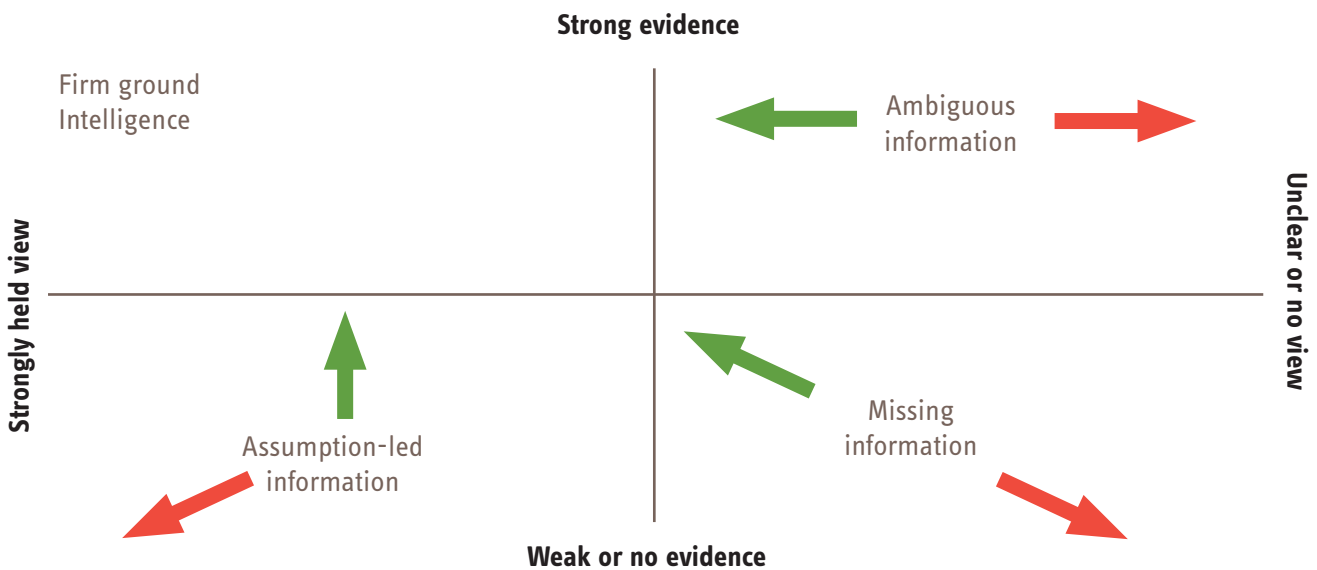
**Step Three: Reflections**

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?

**Discrepancy matrix**

		<b>Strong evidence</b>		
<b>Strongly held view</b>	What do I know (evidence)?	What is ambiguous?		<b>Unclear or no view</b>
	What I think I know (assumption)	What is missing (what action is needed)?		
		<b>Weak or no evidence</b>		



Source: Based on Morrison and Wonnacott (2009) in Wonnacott (2014)