



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Using a social model of child protection in supervision

Introduction

This learning tool supports practice supervisors to explore the social and economic determinants of harm when discussing practice with children and families in supervision. It is divided into two parts. Section 1 contains a series of prompt questions which will help you guide practitioners to think about the economic and social contexts for the child and the family when addressing requests for help and concerns about harm. In Section 2 you will find a number of quotations from practitioners reflecting on the experience of working with families who experience social or economic inequality, which can be used to prompt wider discussion about how social workers can work effectively with families experiencing poverty or economic hardship. These quotes are from the Child Welfare Inequalities research project (CWIP) that focused on the relationship between socioeconomic circumstances and care and protection interventions.

Section 1 – prompt questions which help you explore the impact of social and economic inequality when talking about children and families in supervision

The questions below draw on evidence that identifies poverty as a contributory factor in child abuse and neglect, and the research by CWIP that shows children in the poorest localities are twelve times more likely to be the subject of care and protection interventions than children in the most affluent areas. The prompts consider aspects of everyday life and think about what knowledge is necessary for plans to be developed that respond to the relationship between need, harm and socioeconomic circumstances.

Income

 How does income inform your assessment & planning?			
Precisely what is the family's income?	How is the money spent and what limits arise as a result?	When did the family last have an independent check from an income maximisation service?	How can you best support an income review?
Is the family's income linked to immigration status? Do they require legal advice / advocacy to address their immigration status?	How do you think the family's material circumstances affect different family members' physical and mental health?	What do you think the impact of the family's income is on their lives, including parental problems, the parental relationship and children's development?	
How do you think the family's material circumstances affect different family members' emotional wellbeing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Who worries most about it? > Who bears the brunt of it? > How might it impact on relationships between adults and between adults and children? 			

Employment



How does the family's employment situation inform your assessment & planning?

Do adult family members work? How secure is the job / income?	How do they routinely manage practically and financially with child care?	What are the implications of school holidays for child care and how are these managed?
How flexible are employer(s) if parents need to attend meetings or visit children living away from home?	Do parents get paid if they do not work? What are the implications if they do not get paid?	

Community



How does the family's community context inform your assessment & planning?

What is it like living in this community for this family?	Who are their friends and where do they live?	How safe, welcome and accepted do you think family members (adults and children) feel in their community?
What are the resources available in the community that family members are accessing?	Who can they talk to about their troubles?	Who can they talk to about their successes?
What is the public transport like? Have they got a car?	How easy or difficult is it to get themselves and their children to schools and services?	What are resources that family members could benefit from but are not able to? What are the reasons for this?

Housing



How does the family's housing provision inform your assessment & planning?

What is the nature of the family's housing?	Do family members (adults and children) feel their housing meets their needs?	If unsuitable, in what ways does this impact on family members?
How affordable and secure is their housing?	Do they need any support / advocacy to address any housing difficulties?	

Family experiences and contributions



How do the family's strengths and their feedback inform your assessment & planning?

What do you think the family's main concerns are?	What strengths do you think this family has?	What do you value most about them?
What troubles you about them? Why do you think this is?	What do you think family members think about your views on what needs to change?	What do you think the family thinks must change?
What do you think family members think needs to change in your relationship with them?	What about other professionals' views of the family's difficulties and values / assumptions underpinning these views?	How do you hear about the family's evaluation of your work and service?

Section 2 – exploring how social workers can work effectively with the impact of social and economic inequality when working with children and families.

Below are some quotes from practitioners from CWIP, which may be useful as ‘springboards’ for discussion in supervision (group or individual) about attitudes and values. They identify some of the different attitudes evident in social workers’ responses to social and economic factors. They can be used to provoke discussions about how they resonate or conflict with your staff, team or agency’s views, and to help identify areas for challenge and change:

‘We also do a lot of signposting families to foodbanks, or we can issue foodbank vouchers. But we tend, if we can, we are more than fully committed doing what we would consider our core business, which is doing parenting skills, parenting capacity change type of things. And this other stuff, whilst in a perfect world we should be doing it, and doing it with family, the reality is that the work load people would say ‘you need to be doing other things, getting other people to do that sort of thing for them, you can’t, you haven’t got the capacity and if you do it, you run the risk of drowning.’

‘... when you are looking at issues of poverty and deprivation a lot of them are interlinked like high unemployment, poor health, poor diet, poor nutrition, whether you are smoking, whether you are breastfeeding. All of these are interlinked and the only way to change any one of them is to work on them closely, to work on all of them.’

‘We do find that most of the people who are employed around here are on zero hour contracts and income is not always regular, so they are technically employed but actually there is no income coming in. We don’t really allow that to affect our decision-making process, we always try to support all families as best as we can and refer to other agencies to support them regardless of their employment status.’

‘Is she following through on her parenting tasks regardless of whether she has money or not? She isn’t. She isn’t getting the kids to school, that doesn’t cost you anything. She’s not engaging the service, that doesn’t cost you anything. She’s spending money she is receiving on heroin.’

‘..we have a number of families where they have very little in terms of wider family support in the UK, they have come here to seek employment, and they are employed and they work very hard to ensure that they have a level of financial stability and housing for their child. But, because that has to be prioritised, it raises big issues in terms of who looks after their children and the arrangements that they can reasonably make and access... So you will often find that we will become involved because a child is left at home or left with an inappropriate carer of some kind. We come in and say “you need to be responsible for your child, the expectation is that you identify a suitable childminder, preferably a registered childminder.” ’

Other ways you can use this tool

The prompt questions featured in section 1 can also be downloaded and used as a resource by social workers to inform their assessment practice when working directly with children and families. The quotes can be used to support group supervision or discussions about practice with children and families.



We want to hear more about your experiences of using PSDP resources and tools. Connect via Twitter using #PSDP to share your ideas and hear how other practice supervisors use the resources.

Further reading

Child Welfare Inequalities Project (CWIP)
www.nuffieldfoundation.org/inequalities-child-welfare-intervention-rates

Featherstone B, Gupta A, Morris K and White S (2018) *Protecting Children: A Social Model*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Bywaters P, Bunting L, Davidson G, Hanratty J, Mason W, McCartan C and Steils N *The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available online:
www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review

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