



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Framing the dilemma

Framing the dilemma

Many tools that help support decision-making and critical thinking require the supervisee to identify and clearly articulate a key issue. By refining your thinking prior to a reflective supervision session, you will gain more clarity and rigour from the process of exploring the issue.

Aims

To support the supervisee to:

define the key issue faced by the child, instead of bringing an overwhelming and complex problem to supervision

gain clarity in supervision as to whether or not this is the crucial issue, and whether or not the supervisee can gain any traction on it to produce change in the child's lived life.

Application

Supervisees can use this tool on their own, with their supervisor or their peers ahead of, and then in, supervision.

Instructions

Follow steps 1-4 ahead of supervision. You'll need Post-it notes and a piece of paper to produce a mind map / spider diagram. Complete steps 5 and 6 in supervision.

Step 1: Map the story

With the child at the centre of the piece of paper, use the Post-it notes to begin a mind map or spider diagram of all the issues that are surrounding the child.

Step 2: Sort the issues into themes

Take all of the threads of the story that feel similar and place them together under the following headings (it's likely they will have clusters of similar sub-themes):

child's own
experience / action

parents' experience
/ action

environmental
and wider family
impactors

other issues.

Step 3: Ask yourself the following questions

1. Which one of these themes worries me the most? (Choose only one)

2. Which one of these things harms the child the most? (Choose only one)

3. Which of these things is the lever for change for the child (i.e., if we could do something here, the child's safety and lived experience would improve)? (Choose only one)

Step 4: Frame the dilemma

Take the theme that has the most impact on the child and write (in one sentence) what the issue is from the child's point of view. For example:

Where should Jamie live?

Is Kerry's mother able to protect her from violence?

Can Paul's mum manage her drug addiction well enough to give Paul the care he needs?

Does Sarah's father understand her disability and how best to help her?

This is the dilemma that you should bring to your supervision session.

Step 5: Present the dilemma in supervision

Present your statement first before any other information is offered. You can then build on the original statement in a number of ways. You can:

Offer a two-minute case description of what is working well and what you are worried about, and then let your supervisor / the group examine this.

Provide a genogram and a chronology of significant events to look for patterns.

Answer the question ('I think that Kerry's mother can protect her') and then ask your supervisor / the group to test it out for you by looking for exceptions, bias and errors in thinking or any outlying factors not considered.

Step 6: Return to your themes

Once you have worked on the dilemma for 15 minutes, go back to your themes.

Is this still the one that stands out?

Ask the questions again. If you get the same answers, it's likely you've framed the dilemma in a way that will have a helpful impact on the child if you can work out a way forward.

Source: Developed by the authors

Practice Supervisor Development Programme
The Granary Dartington Hall
Totnes Devon TQ9 6EE

tel 01803 867692
email ask@rip.org.uk
 [@researchIP](https://twitter.com/researchIP) #PSDP

www.practice-supervisors.rip.org.uk

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Registered Office:
The Elmhirst Centre, Dartington Hall,
Totnes TQ9 6EL