

Practice
Tool

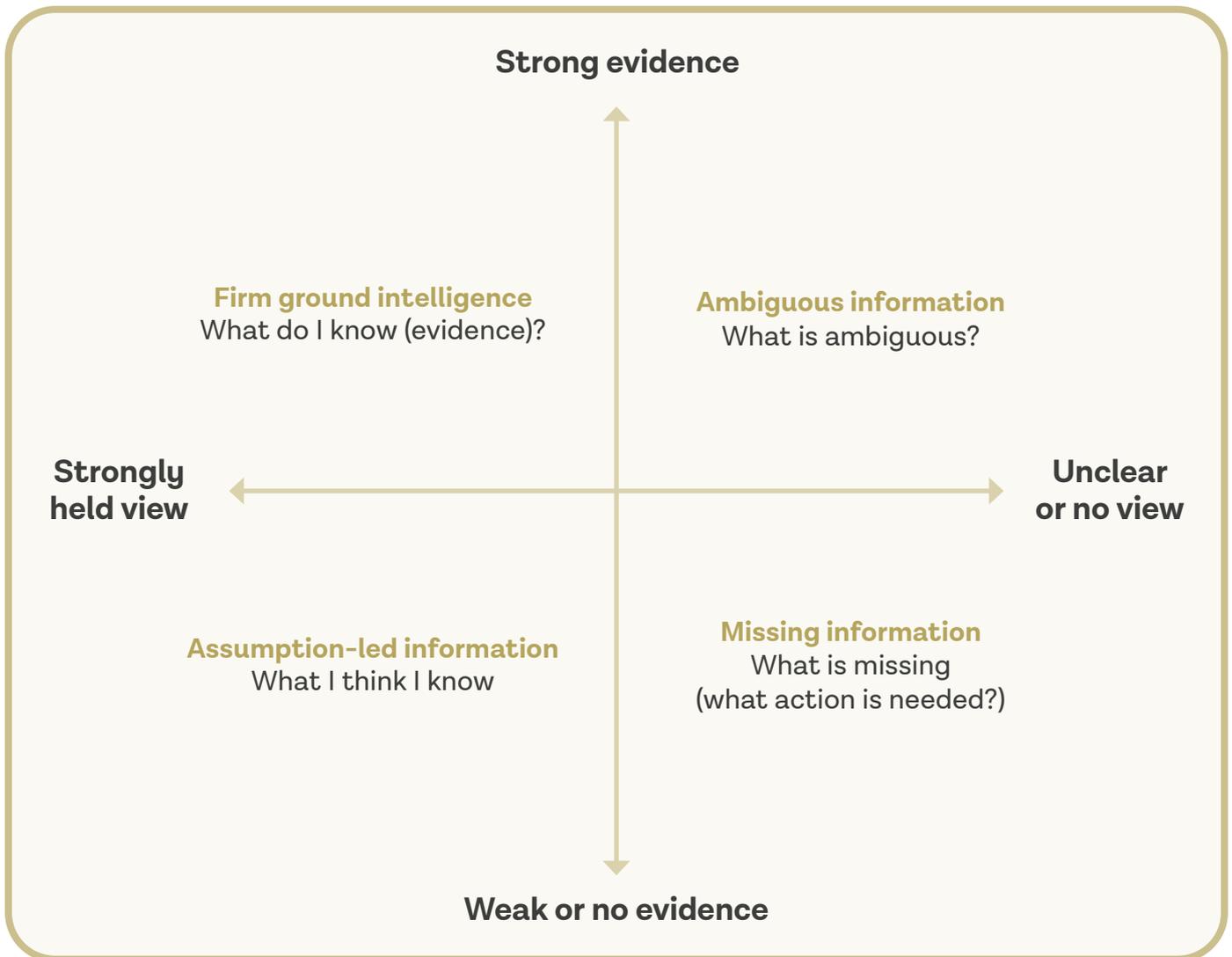
Wonnacott's discrepancy matrix

Wonnacott's discrepancy matrix helps practitioners think critically about the different kinds of information they draw on when making decisions about their work with people who draw on care and support.

The task when using the discrepancy matrix is to categorise information into four quadrants:

- > **firm ground intelligence**
- > **ambiguous information**
- > **assumption-led information**
- > **missing information.**

It is a valuable tool to use in supervision to help practitioners develop greater understanding about how reliable their information is and where the gaps are.



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

Firm ground intelligence – What do I know (evidence)?

This category provides the strongest factual evidence for analysis and decision-making.

- > For something to go into the 'evidence' category, it needs to be proven and verified. For example: information that comes from more than one source or is a known fact.
- > Guidance and responsibilities set out in legislation and knowledge from research would be included here.'

Ambiguous information – What is ambiguous?

This relates to information that:

- > is not properly understood
- > is only hearsay
- > has more than one meaning dependant on context
- > is hinted at by others but not clarified or owned.

Assumption-led information – What do I think I know?

This is information that comes to light when practitioners reflect on:

- > practice wisdom
- > emotions
- > values
- > gut instinct
- > hunches etc.

Care needs to be taken to explore whether any prejudices or areas of bias are influencing information in this quadrant.

Missing information – What action is needed?

This relates to gaps in what is known. This includes identifying:

- > what information is missing
- > the impact of this on decision-making
- > how gaps might be addressed.

Working through the four quadrants in the discrepancy matrix helps practitioners to:

- > Understand if there are any flaws in their thinking or in the information that they have gathered.
- > Consider how ambiguous, assumption-led, or missing information might move into the strong evidence quadrant.

The aim is to move towards developing firm ground intelligence to inform decision-making.

Using the discrepancy matrix in supervision

- 1. Invite the practitioner to briefly talk about the issues or challenges they are facing. Don't interrupt - just let them talk for five minutes or so at this stage.**

Make notes of any questions you may have so that you can return to these later.

- 2. Then spend time talking in more depth about the different kinds of information that the practitioner is drawing on to understand where:**

- > There is strong evidence.
- > Assumptions are being made.
- > Information is contested or missing.

Briefly jot down all the different kinds of information that you discuss.

- 3. Then, using the list you have just developed, jointly decide where on the discrepancy matrix each piece of information should be placed.**

- 4. When you have finished, ask the practitioner to reflect on:**

- > What they have learnt from doing this structured reflection.
- > What they still need to know.
- > What they think they should do next.

References

Wonnacott, J. (2014). *Developing and Supporting Effective Staff Supervision*. Pavilion.

Author: Adapted from Earle, Fox, Webb, and Bowyer (2017).
Reflective supervision resource pack: Research in Practice