Audience  Groups 1-8 (Working Together 2010)

Methods  Individual work; small or large group discussion

Preparation  You may want to tailor the statements within the exercise to reflect local practice and circumstances.

Useful additional handouts include:

- H3 Guarding against bias
- H5 Structural factors affecting children and families

Links to Common Core
Common Core 5  Multi-agency working (skills: assertiveness). Present facts and judgements objectively.

Learning Outcomes  
To overcome factors that impede assessment, analysis and planning.

Process  
This exercise aims to encourage participants to explore how they can become inured to the impact of poverty and to help develop a set of skills and knowledge to guard against common errors of reasoning (Munro 1996).

Saying to oneself “I must not be biased” might not be enough. Being aware of a tendency towards bias can help avoid it; it has been shown that overconfidence in decision-making can be reduced if decision makers can consider why their judgements might be wrong. However, ‘confirmatory bias’ – which is coming to a view and then looking for evidence to support it - is such a strong tendency that it needs attention at all levels.

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Time  
Total: 30 minutes
It may be helpful to place the participants into smaller groups to undertake the discussion. Ask participants to consider each statement and try to identify possible underlying assumptions. Encourage them to come up with similar statements that they are aware of, or that give words to often unvoiced assumptions:

- This child is not developing because all the children in this family have been late developers.
- This parent’s drinking is a response to domestic violence.
- The school are not providing all the facts because they don’t trust social workers.
- The marks on the child’s arm are due to ringworm.
- Poor financial decisions in this family are a consequence of the parents’ learning disabilities.
- I’ve seen worse in an area like this.
- That’s okay in that culture and we have to respect this family’s culture.
- She’s (mother) trying her best.
- It’s all about poverty.