



PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

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What is professional curiosity and why is it important?

Professional curiosity is about exploring and understanding what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or taking a single source of information at face value. It is about looking, listening, asking questions and reflecting on information. It also requires us to be able to have difficult conversations. Developing our professional curiosity and challenge are a fundamental aspect of working together to keep adults safe from harm. This approach is important in helping to identify abuse and neglect which is less obvious and can ensure that the right information is gathered to assess needs and risks. Being professionally curious is necessary to fully understand a situation and the risks an individual may face which are not always immediately obvious.

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Developing skills with professional curiosity

<p>Look</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything about what you see when you meet with the adult / their family that makes you want to ask questions? • Do you see behaviours which indicate possible abuse, neglect, or coercion and control? • Does what you see contradict or support what you are being told? • How are family members interacting with each other and with you? 	<p>Ask</p> <p>Research tells us that people who experience abuse and neglect may respond better to direct questions. Try thinking about some of these prompts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've noticed you have this injury, is there anything which may have caused this? • Do you feel frightened of anyone? • Do you feel safe living here? • Who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do? • I'm concerned about some of the things I've seen and heard.
<p>Listen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you being told anything that needs clarification? • Is someone trying to tell you something? • Are you concerned about what you hear family members say to each other? • Is someone in the family trying to tell you something but finding it difficult? • Make time and space to have a private conversation with an adult who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, including coercion and control. 	<p>Clarify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are other professionals involved? What information do they have? • Have other professionals seen the same as you? • Are professionals being told the same or different things? • Are others concerned? • If so, what action has been taken and is there anything else which should or could be done by you or someone else?

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Having difficult conversations

Tackling disagreements or hostility, raising concerns and giving information that may not be well received can be challenging and difficult to do. Try thinking about the following tips when having difficult conversations:

- Plan in advance what you need to cover so you have enough time for all points
- Keep the agenda focussed on the topics you need to discuss
- Be clear and unambiguous
- Have courage and focus on the needs of the adult at risk
- Be non-confrontational and non-blaming
- Stick to the facts and have evidence to back up your points
- Show empathy, consideration and compassion
- Consider the adult's needs for advocacy support
- Be aware of your body language, tone of voice, and use of language

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Applying professional curiosity

- Question your own assumptions about the adult and their family
- Ensure you can recognise disguised compliance
- Understand the impact of coercive control
- Understand the cumulative impact of multiple risk factors
- Make sure you discuss any concerns in reflective supervision
- If you are meeting with the adult virtually, be aware of what you can't see or hear – is there anything not shown on camera or heard on the phone?

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Addressing any barriers to professional curiosity

These can include over optimism, making assumptions, lacking in confidence to ask sensitive questions, or any unconscious bias. It may help to explain why you are asking some difficult or sensitive questions or seeking clarification, so the adult and their family understand your concerns.

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What we know about professional curiosity already

The idea of professional curiosity is not new and has been found in some of our Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews. To find out more about these reviews visit www.safeguardingadultsinstockport.org.uk

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Improving your professional curiosity

A number of resources and safeguarding training courses are available through the Safeguarding Adults Partnership. For more information, email lsb@stockport.gov.uk. To read more, visit [Professional Curiosity](#)