

Professional Curiosity - 7 Minute Briefing

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Background

Professional curiosity is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received rather than just accepting information at face value. It means testing out your professional assumptions about different types of situations. A recurring theme within Derbyshire Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) is a need for professional curiosity to be applied when safeguarding adults with care and support needs.

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Why it matters

A lack of professional curiosity can lead to:

- missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of risk or significant harm;
- inaccurate assumptions being made during assessments of need and risk, leading to incorrect decision making and/or intervention for individuals and families.

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What's really happening?

Professional curiosity has been described as:

- testing out your professional hypothesis
- not making assumptions
- triangulating information from different sources to gain a better understanding of adults needs and family functioning
- getting an understanding of individuals' and families' past history which in turn, may help you to think about what may happen in the future.

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Gathering information to make a decision

- Obtaining multiple sources of information and not accepting a single set of details you are given at face value will help to ensure that an informed decision is being made.
- Having an awareness of your own personal bias and how that affects the way you view the world and see those you are working with will help to ensure that unconscious bias does not cloud your judgement.
- Being respectfully inquisitive about people's circumstances and seeing past the obvious will help you to gather additional information that may be vital in your professional decision making.

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What do your senses tell you?

Look: Is there anything about what you see which prompts questions/ makes you feel uneasy? Are you observing any behaviour which is indicative of abuse or neglect? Does what you see support or contradict what you're being told?

Listen: Are you being told anything which needs further clarification? Are you concerned about what you hear family and friends say to each other? Is someone in this situation finding it difficult to express themselves?



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What to do

Are there direct questions you could ask when you meet the person which will provide more information about their circumstances?

Here are some examples:

- How do you spend a typical day?
- Who do you live with?
- When were you last happy?
- What do you look forward to?
- Tell me about the people who are important to you?
- When do you feel safe?

Other things to Check:

- Are other professionals involved?
- Have other professionals had the same concerns as you?
- Are professionals being told the same or different things?
- What action has been taken previously and by whom?

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Questions to consider

- Are you confident and competent in this area?
- Can your line manager or colleagues help you to develop my skills in being professionally curious?
- Do you have access to training in professional curiosity?