

7-Minute Briefing: Professional curiosity

1. Professional curiosity

Professional curiosity is a golden thread through all Safeguarding Partnership learning reviews and audits and is an essential part of safeguarding. Nurturing professional curiosity is a fundamental aspect of working together to keep children, young people and adults safe.

This briefing aims to raise awareness of the need for professional curiosity and advises where and how to access help and support.

2. What is professional curiosity?

Professional curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value.

Professional curiosity can require practitioners to think 'outside the box', beyond their usual professional role, and consider families' circumstances holistically.

Curious professionals engage with individuals and families through visits, conversations, observations and asking relevant questions to gather historical and current information.

3. Think family

A Think Family approach to our safeguarding work with children and adults and their families is essential.

When completing an assessment we need to take opportunities to see, feel and recognise risk and enquire deeper. Being open minded and curious will help to make an informed decision about the child's, adult's or families' lived experiences.

4. Having difficult conversations

Professionals need to enquire about the significant people in families' lives that influence them. This may be someone who provides care, or supports the family or individual – for example, another family member, a friend, someone from the community or father of any children and so on. Professionals need to be brave and have what are often difficult or awkward conversations about the issues affecting families.

These could be domestic abuse, inadequate housing, self-neglect, social isolation, mental health, drugs and alcohol, or issues between a person and carer.

5. Be self-aware in your practice

Professionals need to have a degree of caution in their judgements and triangulate information. This means seeking independent confirmation of individuals' accounts and weighing up details from a range of sources or practitioners, particularly when there appear to be discrepancies. Professionals need to be aware of their own values without letting them influence their decision making and practice in a way that is non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory.

7. Things to remember

Professional curiosity is key to safeguarding children and adults – be interested in the individuals you are working with and fully explore rather than making assumptions. Be aware of your own values affecting judgements.

Triangulate information you receive. Seek independent confirmation of individuals' accounts and weigh up details from a range of sources and/or practitioners

Focus on the need, voice and "lived experience" of the person or family. Ask relevant questions and be 'brave'. Be prepared to have difficult conversations.

6. Training & support

Reflective practice and regular supervision are ways to support professional curiosity and support professionals to implement this non-judgemental and holistic approach.

More information about our training can be accessed on the safeguarding website: [Booking a Training Event | Bexley Safeguarding Partnership](#)

