

**What is Professional Curiosity?**

Professional Curiosity is the capacity and skills to explore and understand what is happening for a person, rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. Professional curiosity is important to understand the full picture, identify when individuals may be avoidant or misleading, and do our best to safeguarding adults and children who might be at risk.

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**Listen**

* Make time and find a safe space to have a private conversation. For adults and children who experience coercion and control, this can support open conversations.
* Is the adult, child or someone else in the family/household trying to tell you something verbally or by their non-verbal cues?
* Children in particular, rarely disclose abuse and neglect directly to practitioners and, if they do, it will often be through unusual behaviour or comments.

**Ask**

Ask open and direct questions, such as:

* How do you spend a typical day?
* Who do you live with?
* When were you last happy?
* What do you look forward to?
* How did you get that injury?
* Who is this with you?

**Ask the second question** – what do you need to understand more? Have you made any assumptions that you should clarify? Can you ask a question in a different way?

**Reflection and Supervision**

**“What is life like”** for this child, young person or adult? Reflective supervision and creating safe spaces to think about judgements and observations, promotes curiosity. It also allows teams to learn from one another’s experiences. Managers can support their teams by creating safe spaces for reflective practice.

**Look**

* What can you observe? Is there anything that prompts questions or makes you feel uneasy?
* Does what you see support or contradict what you’re being told?
* Are you observing any behaviour which is indicative of abuse or neglect, including self-neglect?
* How do individuals interact with each other, and you?

**Clarify**

* Ask the second question – look for evidence.
* What other sources of information are there?
* What information do other practitioners have? What are they being told?
* Are there any gaps in your information?

**Practice Tips**

* Work with empathy and hear the voice of the person.
* Seek to understand the makeup of the household and their daily experiences.
* Be courageous and ask difficult questions
* Think the unthinkable; believe the unbelievable.
* Know the factors that are barriers to professional curiosity and take steps to reduce them – for e.g. identify if individuals are being avoidant or misleading.
* Consider your sources of information and share information with other professionals.
* Consider how you can articulate ‘intuition’ into an evidenced, professional view.
* Explore assumptions that you might have made.
* Listen without judgement – don’t come to a conclusion without all the information.

***Be curious. Ask questions. Ask the Second Question.***

***Look, Listen, Observe. Clarify.***

***Reflect, Share Information and Act on your professional judgement.***

**Further Reading & Resources**

[Curiosity | College of Policing](https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/vulnerability-related-risks/curiosity)

[Disguised compliance, coercive control and families who are hostile or resistant to change | West Midlands Safeguarding Children Group](https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/pkplx/regional-safeguarding-guidance/disguised-compliance-coercive-control-and-families-who-are-hostile-or-resistant-to-change)

[A Quick Guide to....Professional Curiosity (govdelivery.com)](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCCC/bulletins/327479a) (Cumbria County Council)

[The importance of professional curiosity in safeguarding adults | Research in Practice](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/adults/news-views/2020/december/the-importance-of-professional-curiosity-in-safeguarding-adults/)

