

7 Point Briefing - Professional Curiosity



The Hull Safeguarding Children Partnership and Adult Safeguarding Board have co-produced this 7 point briefing to share key information on professional curiosity. The briefings are intended to be simple so that the reader can absorb the information easily and teams can use them within meetings as a team-based learning exercise.



1

What is professional curiosity and why is it important?

Professional curiosity is the capacity and skills of communication to explore and understand what is happening for a person rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It requires skills of looking, listening, asking direct questions and being able to hold difficult conversations. Nurturing professional curiosity and challenge are a fundamental aspect of working together to keep children and 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. Disguised compliance is the appearance of co-operating to allay professional concerns and ultimately to diffuse professional intervention.

2

Developing skills in professional curiosity

LOOK

- Is there anything about what you see when you meet with the child/ adult or their family that makes you feel uneasy or prompts questions?
- Do you see behaviours which indicate abuse or neglect, including 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?

LISTEN

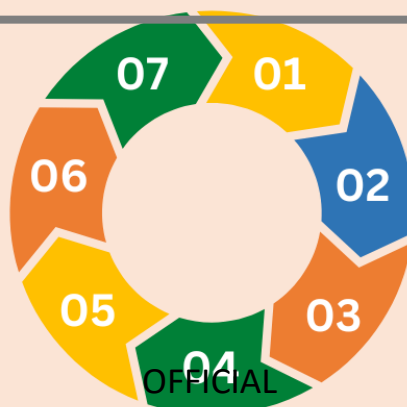
- Are you being told anything that needs further clarification?
- Is someone trying to tell you something?
- Are you concerned about what you hear family members say to each other?
- Is someone in the family trying to tell you something, but finding it difficult to express themselves or speak openly?
- Make time and space to have a private conversation with an adult who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or subject to coercion and control.

ASK

- Do you feel frightened of anyone?
- Do you feel safe living here?
- Who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do?
- Some of the things you have told me today concern me. Is somebody hurting you or are you afraid someone might hurt you in the future?
- Are there people who regularly visit your home apart from those who do not live there?
- What's important to you?
- what does your support network look like? Who are they? What does that support look like?

CLARIFY

- 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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3

Holding difficult conversations

Tackling disagreements or hostility, raising concerns and giving information that may not be well received are incredibly challenging and difficult things to do. The following tips can support practitioners in holding difficult conversations:

- Plan in advance to ensure there will be time to cover essential elements of the conversation.
- Keep the agenda focused on the topics you need to discuss.
- Be clear and unambiguous.
- Have courage and focus on the needs of the child/adult at risk.
- Be non-confrontational and non-blaming.
- Stick to the facts and have evidence to back up what you say.
- Ensure decision making is justifiable and transparent.
- Show empathy, consideration and compassion.
- Demonstrate congruence i.e. make sure tone, body language and content of speech are consistent.
- Consider whether there is a need for advocacy support.

4

How can I be professionally curious in my role?

Culture of Openness – Contribute to the culture of the organisation by being open/transparent with everyone.

Policy and Procedure – Read and keep updated on policies and procedures, use these to support practice. Professional standards direct us to be professionally curious.

Supervision and Support Structure – Make sure you have regular reflective supervision, use to discuss things that don't sit right – have you got the time and connections to be professionally curious?

Learning and Development – Identify gaps in knowledge and access training and support (see point 6 for further details on training)

5

Whether you work with children or adults- professional curiosity is a skill that is needed within all aspects of your work and organisation. Professional curiosity continues to be a learning theme identified in both children and adult safeguarding practice reviews. Reviews have highlighted significant learning around the importance of professional curiosity in supporting an effective safeguarding response.

Additional briefings on national and local safeguarding practice reviews can be accessed here: [Learning reviews – Hull Collaborative Partnership](#)

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A range of safeguarding courses are available for all practitioners across the partnership and can be accessed here: [Training Courses – Learning and Development](#)

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For further information on the Hull Safeguarding Children Partnership or Hull Adult Safeguarding Board please visit our website: [The Collaborative Partnership – Hull Collaborative Partnership](#)

