

Professional Curiosity

This is a golden thread through all Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) and Safeguarding Children Partnerships (SCPs), learning reviews and audits and is an essential part of safeguarding.

Nurturing professional curiosity is a fundamental aspect of working together to keep adults at risk and children and young people safe. This briefing aims to raise awareness of the need for professional curiosity and advises where and how to access help and support.

What is Professional Curiosity?

It 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. It's sometimes called 'respectful inquisitiveness' or 'concerned curiosity'. Professional curiosity means sometimes acting on gut instinct, being willing and able to ask difficult questions, even if you are not comfortable doing so, being able to deal with the answers and make sense of what is happening.

Think Family

A 'think family' approach to our safeguarding work with adults and children is essential.

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

Skills Required

Look: It is good practice to be respectfully nosy. Look for any behaviours which may indicate abuse or neglect. This includes coercion and control and would involve noticing how the individual, their family and/or carers, interact with each other and you. You will need to consider if what you are able to see has contradicted or supported what you are being told.

Listen: Being actively interested and fully engaged. It is also important that you make time and space to have a private conversation with the adult or child who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or subject to coercion and control.

Act: ask direct, but not leading questions where you have concerns.

Clarify: This means considering and checking out the information you have. This could require consulting with other professionals on what information they have, to find out if they have seen/feel the same as you or, have the same or different concerns.

Things to Remember

1. Triangulate information you receive. Seek independent confirmation of individuals' accounts and weigh up details from a range of sources and/or practitioners.
2. Focus on the need, voice and 'lived experience' of the person. Ask relevant questions and be 'brave'. Be prepared to have difficult conversations.
3. People with histories of trauma, drug dependency, previous suicide attempts and homelessness are all at greater risk of death by suicide. Although suicide is very difficult to predict, professional curiosity in risk assessment can identify life experiences, trigger events and health issues that are known to increase the risk as well as understanding protective factors, support networks and coping strategies. Building trust begins with the creation of psychological safety. ([SAR Caleb, May 2024](#) (RSAB))



Having a difficult conversation

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 ask difficult questions.

Top Tips

- Plan to ensure time to cover essential points or concerns and to remain focused on the topics you need to discuss.
- Stick to the facts and have evidence to back up what you say, ensuring decision making is justifiable and transparent.
- Show empathy, consideration, and compassion. Make sure your tone, body language and content of speech are consistent.
- Focus on the needs of the adult at risk or child at risk of significant harm and consider the adult's needs for advocacy support.

V1 March 2025



Redbridge Safeguarding Adults



Redbridge Safeguarding Children Partnership