

# PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

## WHAT is professional curiosity?

Professional curiosity is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received. It means:

- testing out your professional hypothesis and not making assumptions
- triangulating information from different sources to gain a better understanding of individuals and family functioning
- getting an understanding of individuals' and families' past history which in turn, may help you think about what may happen in the future
- obtaining multiple sources of information and not accepting a single set of details you are given at face value
- having an awareness of your own personal bias and how that affects how you see those you are working with
- being respectfully nosy

## Why is it important?

A lack of professional curiosity can lead to:

- missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of vulnerability or significant harm,
- assumptions made in assessments of needs and risk which are incorrect and lead to wrong intervention for individuals and families

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## TOP TIPS



TOP TIPS - Remember to...

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## TOP TIPS

### LOOK

- Is there anything about what you see when you meet with this child/adult/family which prompts questions or 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?



## TOP TIPS

### LISTEN

- Are you being told anything which needs further clarification?
- Are you concerned about what you hear family members say to each other?
- Is someone in this family trying to tell you something but is finding it difficult to express themselves? If so, how can you help them to do so?



## TOP TIPS



### ASK

- Are there direct questions you could ask when you meet this child/adult/family which will provide more information about the vulnerability of individual family members?
- 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?
  - How did you get that injury?
  - Who is this with you?
  - When do you feel safe?
  - Why are you not at school?



## TOP TIPS



### CHECK OUT

- Are other professionals involved?
- 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 so far and is there anything else which should or could be done by you or anyone else?



## TOP TIPS - Remember to:



- Question your own assumptions about how individuals/families function and watch out for over optimism
- Recognise your own feelings (for example tiredness, feeling rushed or illness) and how this might impact on your view of a child/adult/family on a given day
- Think about why someone may not be telling you the whole truth
- Demonstrate a willingness to have challenging conversations
- Address any professional anxiety about how hostile or resistant individual/families might react to being asked direct or difficult questions
- Remain open minded and expect the unexpected
- Appreciate that respectful scepticism/nosiness and challenge are healthy. It is good practice and ok to question what you are told
- Recognise when individuals/adult repeatedly do not do what they said they would and named this and discuss with them
- Understand the cumulative impact of multiple or combined risk factors, e.g. domestic abuse, drug/alcohol misuse, mental health)
- Ensure that your practice is reflective and that you have access to good quality supervision



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