

Professional Curiosity: Information for Middlesbrough Adult Social Care

**WE CARE
YOU CARE.**

Resources and signposting for South Tees carers and professionals working alongside them. ➔



 **SCAN ME**

What is it?

Professional curiosity is the ability and willingness to explore and question situations, behaviours, and information rather than taking them at face value.

What it means in practice:

- Testing out professional assumptions about different types of families;
- Considering information from different sources to gain a better understanding of family functioning which, in turn, helps to make predictions about what is likely to happen in the future;
- Seeing past the obvious; and
- Questioning what is observed. It is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on ALL of the information received.

Applying it in practice:

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?

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?

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 members of your family deal with conflict? How do others in the household respond to stress? What is a typical day like for you? Do you feel safe? Are you in fear of the consequences of doing something, or not doing something?

Check

- 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?

Remember to...

- Question your own assumptions about how individuals/families function and watch out for over optimism.
- Recognise your own feelings (e.g. 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.
- 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.
- It is good practice and ok to question what you are told.
- 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.

Holding Difficult Conversations

Identifying issues and raising concerns can lead to the need to hold difficult conversations.

Here are some tips that can support you to do this:

- 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 tone, body language and content of speech are consistent.
- Focus on the needs of the Adult at risk.
- Be non-confrontational and non-blaming.
- Consider the Adult's needs for advocacy support.

It is always helpful to utilise support in these instances, speak with a colleague or manager for guidance if you are worried about raising an issue.

Barriers

There are many barriers to implementing professional curiosity including:

- Workload pressures/ poor support and supervision
- Normalisation
- Professional deference
- Disguised compliance
- The 'rule' of optimism
- Accumulating risk

Raising Concerns and Further Guidance

When to Report Abuse: The adult has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect.

How to Report Abuse and Neglect: You can report very serious abuse and neglect to Cleveland Police by calling 101 or 999 in an emergency. You can report suspected abuse and neglect using a [Concern Form \(docx\)](#). If you would like some help on how to complete a Concern Form, please see the TSAB [EXAMPLE Concern Forms](#).

The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board provide lots of useful short animations to give you an overview of other useful topics.

Visit: <https://www.tsab.org.uk/key-information/safeguarding-explained-videos/>