

Safeguarding

Professional Curiosity



What is Professional Curiosity?

Professional Curiosity is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received. The use of professional curiosity as well as knowing the signs to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect. This will allow staff to identify children and young people who may be in need of help, protection, or additional support.

When using your Professional Curiosity, it is important that you:

- Maintain an open mind. Avoid making assumptions, taking information at face value, and jumping to conclusions. Take account of changing information and different perspectives.
- Never disregard information because it does not fit with your understanding – be open to the unexpected and willing to change your opinion.
- Do not make presumptions about what is happening in a family home.
- Ask questions in an open and relaxed manner – explaining that the intention is not to interrogate but to understand - challenge what you believe to be untrue.
- Be aware of inconsistent explanations, vague or retracted disclosures.
- Do not discount concerns because they are unproven – concerns may be both valid and impossible to substantiate.

- Notice if you or someone else starts to doubt that someone is a victim – consider the reasons for these doubts. Are they fair?
- Trust your instinct and raise concerns if something about someone’s behaviour or situation does not feel right.
- Think vulnerability and exploitation – be actively aware of how anyone you come across who may be vulnerable and could be experiencing exploitation.
- Explanations and discussions with the family need to be recorded and collated.

Task 1

Reflect and discuss -

- Are you professionally curious?
- How do you demonstrate professional curiosity in your practice?

Task 2

Read the below scenario:

Dina aged 4 and lives at home with Mum, Uncle and two older brothers aged 10 and 15. Home is a three-bedroom flat. Dina sleeps in Mum’s room, her brothers share and uncle sleeps in the box room. This was previously Dina’s room. Dina’s father left the family home about a year ago and was physically abusive to Mum and Dina’s brothers. Dina often witnessed this. Dina was very close to her dad and has expressed that she misses him. Mum works long hours so as to financially support the family. Mum has a good support network and her brother (Uncle) moved in

about 6 months ago. He needed somewhere to live after his relationship broke down and he was able to help Mum with childcare while Mum is working. Dina's two brother were previously helping with this. During play time recently, Dina was found touching another girl's genital area and staff overheard her making sexual references.

During a group/individual discussion with your team, consider the questions below in how best to support Dina:

- 1) Why do you think Dina could be behaving in this certain way? What could these behaviours potentially indicate?
- 2) How could you find out more information about Dina's circumstances?
- 3) Consider the motives of anyone who is in Dina's life, even if they appear kind and supportive, could this be a way of hiding their role in harming Dina? Why are they there? What is their relationship to the Dina? Do they appear controlling? Do they dislike leaving Dina alone?
- 4) What indicators would someone in Dina's life demonstrate if they are reluctant to provide a full or accurate account of events or is pretending to cooperate to avoid raising suspicions?
- 5) In light of what you know about Dina and her situation. How would you assess her behaviour and support accordingly?

Task 3

Click on the link to access the 'Professional Curiosity' resource pack which aims to address Professional Curiosity so that practitioners can fully understand what it is and how to develop their skills and knowledge in safeguarding children and their families in your care:

<https://lrsb.org.uk/uploads/bcp-professional-curiosity-march-2022.pdf>

Consider using it during team meetings, as part of a group/individual supervision and for your own development.