

# Professional curiosity

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## Introduction

Professional curiosity is exercising the ability to enquire, probe and explore what is happening beyond the presenting concern.

Professional curiosity relates to the exploration and understanding of what is happening in a person's situation, context, or family.

## What professional curiosity means in practice

This means going beyond initial responses, and not taking matters at face value. Asking 'why' questions can help uncover greater clarity regarding a person's situation. 'Why' questions probe and challenge – in a respectful but more forensic way. These are often the more difficult questions that need to be held, that can feel awkward, but are essential in promoting safety and wellbeing.



Curious professionals engage with individuals and their families through visits, conversations, observations and asking relevant questions to gather historical and current information.

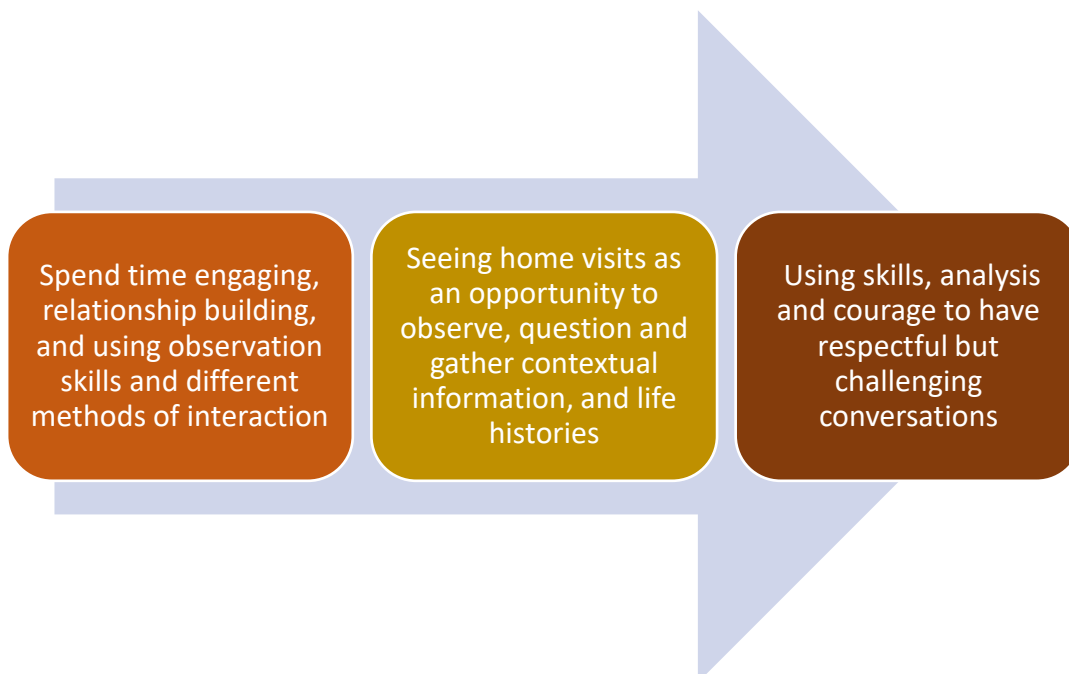
Curious professionals will spend time engaging with the individual and families on visits, using their skills to observe and interact.

For example: self-neglect scenarios often require a high degree of professional curiosity, probing carefully beyond initial blocks and refusals.

*A lack of professional curiosity can lead to:*

- missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of risk, vulnerability, or harm
- assumptions made in assessments of needs and risk which are incorrect and lead to wrong interventions for individuals and families, or failures to recognise unmet needs
- presenting issues being dealt with in isolation and disconnected from wider risk factors

***Professional curiosity as a direction.***



### Top tips for professional curiosity

- Recognise your own feelings (e.g., tiredness, feeling rushed) and how this might impact on your view of a person's situation.
- Watch out for over optimism.
- 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 being told.
- Recognise when individuals/adults repeatedly do not do what they said they would – and ask why not.
- Understand the cumulative impact of multiple or combined risk factors, e.g., domestic abuse, drug/alcohol misuse, mental health
- Make good use of supervision to explore your own feelings, barriers, and opportunities for professional growth.

Professionals need to apply a degree of caution in their judgements and **triangulate information** by using at least 3 different ways of comparing and contrasting information, to cross verify and validate any conclusions drawn.

Nurturing professional curiosity is a fundamental aspect of keeping people safe.

This means seeking independent confirmation of people's accounts and weighing up details from a range of sources or practitioners, particularly when there appear to be discrepancies.

Professionals need to be aware of their own values without letting them influence their decision making and practice in a way that is non-judgemental, proportionate, and anti-discriminatory. Remember to **think family when considering the wider aspect of a person's life or context.**

All safeguarding concerns and matters should be considered alongside the person's broader context: such as their relationship with any alleged perpetrator of abuse, their household make-up, their health and wellbeing, mental health, impact of any disability, their capacity, their ability to self-protect, the potential for coercive control, and their circle of support from people they can trust – and beyond.

Look, listen, ask, check-out.



**LOOK!**

- Is there anything about what you see – which prompts questions or makes you feel uneasy?
- Are you observing signs or indicators of abuse or neglect?
- Is what you're seeing in contradiction of what you're being told?

**LISTEN!**

- Are you being told anything that requires further clarification?
- Are you concerned about what is being said, or how family members or others interact?
- What is not being said – is someone trying to communicate but finding it difficult?

**ASK!**

- Direct, open questions showing genuine interest in the person and their context.
- Tell me about questions... e.g. Tell me about your typical day.... Tell me who looks after X when Y goes out to work/socialise.. tell me what you're looking forward to doing this weekend/next week etc.

**CHECK OUT!**

- Check out with other professional involved, have they seen or heard the things you have, or is there something different, or more to know?
- Do others have concerns?
- Do case histories compare?

See guidance: LINK: [\*\*GUIDANCE: Professional Curiosity and Critical Evaluation\*\*](#)

Click [here](#) to watch a YouTube video about Professional Curiosity in Adult Safeguarding.

Click [here](#) to access Research in Practice for Adults (RiPfa): Professional curiosity in safeguarding adults. (To access RiPfa you will need an account).

### Professional Challenge

Nurturing professional curiosity and challenge are a fundamental aspect of working together to keep children, young people, and adults safe.

Professional challenge can be a positive activity and a sign of good professional practice, a healthy organisation and effective multiagency working. Being professionally challenged should not be seen as a criticism of the person's professional capabilities.



Professional challenge is a fundamental professional responsibility. Professionals are expected to comply with any Code of Conduct and/or registration requirements of their role and our overarching safeguarding policy and procedures will work alongside these. In the context of safeguarding adults (and children) courteous and respectful challenge is

welcomed, especially in relation to decisions, practices or actions which could jeopardise the safety or wellbeing of the people we are endeavouring to safeguard/support.

**In Jersey we endeavour to foster a safeguarding culture of high support and high challenge.**

Click [here](#) to read our Multiagency Resolving Professional Differences /Escalation policy.