**Professional Curiosity**

**What is professional curiosity?**

Professional curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening with an individual or family. It is about enquiring deeper and using proactive questioning and challenge. It is about understanding one’s own responsibility and knowing when to act, rather than making assumptions or taking things at face value.

**Developing skills in professional curiosity**

* Be flexible and open-minded, not taking everything at face value. Check your own emotional state and attitudes. Prepare yourself for managing risk and uncertainty and processing the impact it has on you and how this may impact on your decision making.

* **Think the unthinkable; believe the unbelievable. Consider how you can articulate ‘intuition’ into an evidenced, professional view.**
* Use your communication skills: review records, record accurately, check facts and feedback to the people you are working with and for. Never assume and be wary of assumptions already made.
* Use case history and explore information from the person themselves, the family, as well as other professionals (triangulation).
* Pay as much attention to how people look and behave as to what they say.
* Actively seek full engagement. If you need more support to engage the person or their family, think about who in the network can help you. Consider calling a multiagency meeting to bring in support from colleagues in other agencies.
* Take responsibility for the safeguarding role you play, however large or small, in the life of the person in front of you.

*Never be concerned about asking the obvious question, and share concerns with colleagues and managers. A ‘fresh pair of eyes’ looking at a case can help practitioners and organisations to maintain a clear focus on good practice and risk assessment, and develop a critical mindset*.

**How managers can support professionally curious practice**

Managers can maximise opportunities for professionally curious practice to flourish by:

* Playing ‘devil’s advocate’ – asking ‘what if?’ questions to challenge and support practitioners to think more widely around cases. Question whether outcomes have improved for the person and evidence for this.

* Present alternative hypotheses about what could be happening.
* Provide opportunities for group supervision which can help stimulate debate and curious questioning, and allow practitioners to learn from one another’s experiences. The issues considered in one case may be reflected in other cases for other team members.
* Present cases from the perspective of other family members or professionals.
* Ask practitioners what led them to arrive at their conclusion and support them to think through the evidence.

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