

# Curiosity is the most powerful thing you own

## 5 Minute Briefing on Professional Curiosity

### BACKGROUND

COVID 19 can make **Professional Curiosity** in safeguarding more challenging due to reduced face-to-face contact between professionals and vulnerable people. **Professional Curiosity** is the capacity and communication skills to explore and understand what is happening within a family or an individual rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. Many safeguarding reviews refer to a lack of **Professional Curiosity** or respectful uncertainty. Nurturing **Professional Curiosity** and challenge are fundamental aspects of working together to keep children, young people and adults safe.

As part of any consultation, carefully go through daily routines and where services are being accessed/can be accessed to assist the vulnerable adult/child. Be curious and alert to signs of neglect or abuse. Have I explored fully what the daily lived experience is for the child or vulnerable adult in an isolating household? Have I considered what new risks and challenges may be present for this family due to COVID 19 or other life changes? (e.g. caring for 3 children under 5 years, moving away from family support, recent bereavement etc). Have I shared and confirmed information and concerns with other agencies?

### WHY IT MATTERS

Children and Adults experiencing abuse and neglect often do not disclose it directly to practitioners and, if they do, it will sometimes be through their behaviour or comments. This makes identifying abuse and neglect difficult for professionals across agencies. We know that it is better to help as early as possible, before issues get worse. That means that all agencies and practitioners need to work together – the first step is to be **professionally curious** to gain clearer insight.



Any Questions - Please contact the safeguarding Team

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### INFORMATION

**Professional Curiosity** is the need for practitioners to practice ‘respectful uncertainty’ – applying critical evaluation to any information they receive and maintaining an open mind. Practitioners will often come into contact with a child, young person or their family when they are in crisis or vulnerable to harm. Responding to these opportunities to safeguard requires the ability to demonstrate a non-discriminatory approach, it allows a person to be more inquisitive to explore the issues and formulate judgments, recognising vulnerabilities and risks of harm.

### WHAT TO DO

Where you have concerns about the welfare, health, development and safe care of a child/adult, do not rely solely on the wishes of the caring adult(s). The principles of making safeguarding personal for adults and respecting the wishes of a child require you to gather and record the vulnerable adult/child’s views and wishes.

Practitioners should maintain an open stance of **Professional Curiosity**, understand one’s own responsibility and know how to take action.

**Professional Curiosity** or respectful uncertainty is needed when working with families who are displaying disguised compliance. This involves parents or carers giving the appearance of co-operating with agencies to avoid raising suspicions and allay concerns. A degree of disguised compliance could be expected in all families; but at its worst, superficial cooperation may be used to conceal abuse. Many case reviews highlight that professionals can sometimes delay taking action due to disguised compliance and/ or lack of **Professional Curiosity**.