

# 7 Minute Briefing

## Professional Curiosity



# 1

### Why is it important?

Professional curiosity is the capacity and skills of communication to explore and understand what is happening for a person rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It requires skill of looking, listening, asking direct questions and being able to hold difficult conversations.

Nurturing professional curiosity and challenge are a fundamental aspect of working together to keep adults safe from harm. This approach is important in helping to identify abuse and neglect which is less obvious and can ensure that the right information is gathered to assess needs and risks. Being professionally curious is necessary to fully understand a situation and the risks an individual may face which are not always immediately obvious.

### Developing skills in professional curiosity?

# 3

#### Look

Is there anything about what you see when you meet with the adult / their family that makes you feel uneasy or prompts questions?

Do you see behaviours which indicate abuse or neglect, including coercion and control? Does what you see contradict or support what you are being told?

How are family members interacting with each other and with you?

#### Listen

Are you being told anything that needs further clarification?

- Is someone trying to tell you something?
- Are you concerned about what you hear family members say to each other?
- Is someone in the family trying to tell you something, but finding it difficult to express themselves or speak openly?

Make time and space to have a private conversation with an adult who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or subject to coercion and control.

#### Ask

Research indicates those who experience abuse, including coercion and control want practitioners to ask direct questions and that it is easier to respond to a direct question than offer information independently.

- I notice you have this injury. Is there anything going on for you which may have caused this?
- Do you feel frightened of anyone? / Do you feel safe living here?
- Who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do?

Some of the things concern me. Is somebody hurting you or are you afraid someone might hurt you in the future?

#### Clarify

- Are other professionals involved? What information do they have?
- 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 and is there anything else which should or could be done by you or someone else?

# 2

### Professional challenge

Differences of opinion, concerns and issues can arise for practitioners at work, and it is important they are resolved as effectively and swiftly as possible.

Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy and well-functioning partnership.

Differences could arise in a number of areas of multi-agency working as well as within single agency working. Differences are most likely to arise in relation to:

- criteria for referrals
- outcomes of assessments
- roles and responsibilities of workers
- service provision
- timeliness of interventions
- information sharing and communication.

professional differences are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and the ability to discuss and share problems in networking forums.

# 4

### Holding difficult conversations

Tackling disagreements or hostility, raising concerns, and giving information that may not be well received are incredibly challenging and difficult things to do.

- Plan - in advance to ensure there will be time to cover essential elements of the conversation.

# 5

If you require further information about this briefing, please contact the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Email: [safeguardingadultsboard@northlincs.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadultsboard@northlincs.gov.uk)

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### Additional resources

Safeguarding Adults Board-

[North-Lincolnshire-MA-PP-FINAL-16.12.2022.pdf \(northlincssab.co.uk\)](#)

Research in Practice – [Coercive control Tools and Resources](#)

Waltham Forest – [Professional curiosity video](#)

# 7

### Sharing resources

With thanks to Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board and Waltham Forest Council for kindly sharing their resources on professional curiosity.