

7 Minute Briefing: Professional Curiosity

Date: February 2021

7. TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- Seek advice guidance and second opinions
- Work in partnership with other agencies
- Carry out unplanned visits (where possible)
- Play 'devil's advocate'
- Present alternative hypotheses
- Present cases from the child, young person, adult or another family member's perspective
- Share your concerns and findings with other professionals/agencies

1. WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

Professional curiosity is having a healthy scepticism about what you are being told about a child. It is a communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting service users' versions of events or disclosures at face value. This requires practitioners to practice 'respectful uncertainty'.

2. CONSIDER DISGUISED COMPLIANCE

Disguised compliance involves parents or carers giving the appearance of co-operating with agencies to avoid raising suspicions and allay concerns (e.g. agreeing to attend appointments but not turning up.) Practitioners should verify and corroborate information with others.

6. BARRIERS TO CURIOSITY

- Overidentifying with carers and losing focus on the child they need to make the hard decisions about the case
- Over optimism: **The rule of optimism** is also about professionals who do not
- want to acknowledge that things are not getting better and that they need to make the hard decisions about the case
- Making assumptions
- Being afraid to raise concerns/question families
- Time constraints
- Lacking the confidence to ask sensitive questions
- Unconscious bias

5. ASSESSING RISK & RECORDING

Be observant when completing key tasks such as home visits and considering all notations within a risk context. Analyse all available information and record all concerns and considerations.

4. MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational interviewing means speaking with parents to promote their internal intrinsic motivations for change. (e.g. "I want to be a better parent because...").

Challenging parents/carers requires expertise, confidence, time and emotional energy. Follow up with appropriate questions to gather more information.

3. THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

Thinking the unthinkable does not mean assuming the worse. It means keeping an open mind and being able to think objectively about the what the evidence is telling you.

