

Professional Curiosity

What is Professional Curiosity?

Professional Curiosity was described by Lord Laming in the Victoria Climbié inquiry (2003) as 'respectful uncertainty'. It involves:

- Communication skills- exploring and understanding what is happening with an individual and/ or family
- Enquiring deeper- use proactive questioning and challenging
- Understand one's own responsibility
- Know when to act
- Do not make assumptions
- Do not take things at face value
- Be courageous and ask difficult questions
- Think the unthinkable; believe the unbelievable
- Articulate your professional 'intuition' into and evidence professional view
- Be honest about your concerns and fears and discuss these with your manager and other professionals

What are possible barriers to Professional Curiosity?

Disguised Compliance

- Appearance of co-operating to avoid raising suspicions, allay concerns and reduce professional involvement

Rule of Optimism

- Tendency to rationalise away new/ escalating risk

Accumulating Risk

- Responding to each situation or new risk rather than assessing the new information in the context of the whole person. Not looking at the cumulative effect of a series of incidents or information

Normalisation

- Actions/ incidents are seen as 'the norm', 'lifestyle choices' and cease to be questioned and potentially not recognised as risk or assessed as such

Professional Deference

A tendency to seek the opinion of someone with a 'higher status'. Be confident with your own judgement. Challenge opinions of risk

Confirmatory Bias

- Pre-held view and we look for evidence to support that view. Tendency to ignore/ filter out information that refutes that preconceived idea.

Knowing but not knowing

- Having a sense that something is not right but you do not know exactly what

Confidence in managing tension

- Confidence is underlined due to disagreement, disruption, aggression, or violence from the individual/ families. Conversations avoid potential volatile topics you want to explore.

Dealing with uncertainty

- Potentially discount concerns that cannot be proved. Concerns which are impossible to substantiate.

What skills can be developed to help with Professional Curiosity?

- Be flexible, open minded. Do not take everything at face value
- Time- to prepare yourself for managing the risk and uncertainty and process the impact it has on you
- Its ok to think the unthinkable, believe the unbelievable
- Explore information – use case history
- Check how you are feeling, your own emotional state and attitudes
- Have empathy (walk in the shoes) of the person. Consider from their lived experience
- Pay attention to how someone looks and behaves as well as what they say
- Who in the network can help you engages with the adult/family
- Attend good quality training
- Have an analytical and reflective approach
- Develop skills and knowledge to hold difficult conversations- plan in advance and list essential elements of the conversation.
- Focus on the needs of the service user. Have courage
- Be non-confrontational, non-blaming. Stick to the facts and back up what you are saying with evidence
- Consider alternative hypothesis and what may be happening
- Apply professional judgement
- Good management, support, and supervision. Speak to your manage, be open and honest with what you think is happening