

# 7 Minute Briefing

## 1 What is it?

Professional curiosity or 'professional nosiness' is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received. This type of 'respectful uncertainty' will help practitioners to understand what is happening for an individual or within a family, rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value

## 2 Why should we be professionally curious ?

Professional curiosity is a central theme in serious case reviews. This is an essential skill for practitioners to use in the protection of children, young people and their families. This briefing aims to raise awareness of the need for professional curiosity across all agencies in order to enhance the quality of assessment and provide needs led support and protection at the earliest opportunity.

# Professional Curiosity



## 7 Aberdeenshire approach

Ensure that you fully explore all concerns and don't make assumptions. Professional curiosity is key to protecting children and adults.

- Be aware of your own values and be non-judgemental
- Triangulate any information you receive
- Consider information received from different sources and weigh this up.
- Be brave and ask relevant questions
- Be 'brave' and have the difficult conversations
- Reflect

## 3 Barriers to Professional Curiosity

It is widely recognised that there are barriers to being professionally curious. They include:

- Fear – When we encounter families who present as hostile, intimidating and confrontational it makes it difficult to ask further questions or to challenge the views and opinions of others. (access training on courageous conversations)
- Disguised compliance - where families give the impression that they are co-operating to avoid suspicion, to allay professional concerns or to reduce professional involvement
- The Rule of Optimism – Strength based practice where practitioners are over optimistic about outcomes for children, young people and families and rationalise any new or escalating risks despite clear evidence to the contrary.
- Knowing but not knowing – The gut feeling that something isn't quite right. This is when further information and/reflection with colleagues or supervisor may be helpful.
- Accumulating/Escalating Risk – Responding to each incident or event without considering the history or cumulating impact of the risk.

## 6 Assess, Analyse, Reflect and review

Utilise the multi-agency tools to make sense of your information. Be sure to communicate with all partner agencies

- [Aberdeenshire Professional Curiosity Information Leaflet](#)
- [The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023](#)
- [The Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Website](#)

## 5 Remember

- Hear the voice of the children and young people and their families
- Offer CHOICE
- Build trusting relationships
- COLLABORATE with your partner agencies
- EMPOWER families

## 4 Courageous conversations

**Having** courageous conversations is key to professional curiosity. Here are some tips on how to manage difficult conversations with children, young people and families

- Plan
- Be trauma informed in your approach
- Stay focussed on the topics
- Focus on the needs of the child/young person
- Be non confrontational and non-blaming
- Have evidence to back up what you are saying
- Refer to the assessment tools and explain
- Use of supervision