



# Professional curiosity learning briefing

## What is professional curiosity?

The term professional curiosity, sometimes called respectful nosiness, is used to describe an in-depth interest in the Adults you are working with by exploring and understanding what is happening or, may be happening, rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It requires skills 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.

## Why is professional curiosity important?

We have had a number of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) which identify professional curiosity as an area of practice which requires development and improvement.

The skills required to be professionally curious are vital in helping to identify abuse and neglect in cases where this may be less obvious.

Examples of these are in a care home where abuse practices may be hidden from visiting professionals or, where an Adult is not able to tell you about the abuse they are experiencing, such as in a relationship where there is domestic abuse or when a person is being coerced or controlled.

Practicing professional curiosity to a high standard could prevent abuse and neglect from happening or worsening. Therefore it is important to know the skills you will need.



## How to develop skills in professional curiosity

This will require you to look, listen, ask, and clarify.

**Look:** Consider if there is anything about what you see when you meet with the Adult, their family and/or carers, including their environment, that makes you feel uneasy or prompts any questions.

You should also look for any behaviours which may indicate abuse or neglect. This includes coercion and control and would involve noticing how the Adult, their family and/or carers, interact with each other and you. You will need to consider if what you are able to see has contradicted or supported what you are being told.

It is good practice to be respectfully nosey. For example, this could mean asking to look in other areas of a care home when visiting an Adult, considering factors such as appearance, the cleanliness of the environment or what food and drinks are available.

**Listen:** This means being actively interested and fully engaged in what you are being told and also, considering if you feel that the adult, their family and/or their carers are trying to tell you something but finding it difficult to express themselves or speak openly. You could have concerns about how the Adult, their family and/or carers speak with each other or to you. It is also important that you make time and space to have a private conversation with the Adult who may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or subject to coercion and control.

**Ask:** This means asking direct questions where you have concerns. Research suggests that those who experience abuse, including coercion and control find it is easier to respond to a direct question rather than them offering information independently.

This could mean asking questions such as:

- I've noticed you have this injury, is there anything going on for you which may have caused this?
- Who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do?
- Some of the things you have told me today concern me, is somebody hurting you or are you afraid someone might hurt you in the future?

**Clarify:** This means considering and checking out the information you have. This could require consulting with other professionals on what information they have, to find out if they have seen/feel the same as you or, have the same or different concerns. You will also need to consider if other professionals are being told the same or different things to you and what action has been taken or may need to be taken by you or someone else.

## Holding difficult conversations

Identifying issues and raising concerns can lead to the need to hold difficult conversations. Managing disagreements, raising concerns, and giving information that may not be well received can be challenging.

Here are some tips that can support you to do this:

- Plan to ensure time to cover essential points or concerns and to remain focused on the topics you need to discuss.
- Stick to the facts and have evidence to back up what you say, ensuring decision making is justifiable and transparent.
- Show empathy, consideration, and compassion.
- Make sure tone, body language and content of speech are consistent.
- Focus on the needs of the Adult at risk.
- Be non-confrontational and non-blaming.
- Consider the Adult's needs for advocacy support.

## What to do if you have concerns

If you have a concern about abuse or neglect of an Adult, please check the [safeguarding thresholds guidance](#) and report to the Local Authority via the [online form](#).

For concerns about quality, in the first instance this should be reported directly to the provider of the service e.g., care home, hospital etc. If the quality concern does not improve, is of a significant level, indicates abuse or neglect, or has a potential future impact to the Adult or others, this also needs to be reported to the agency responsible for commissioning or regulating the service. Further details on reporting quality concerns can be found in our [difference between quality and safeguarding learning briefing](#).



## Learning resources

To extend your learning, please do refer to the following [learning resources](#):

- Safeguarding early warning signs
- What is Safeguarding
- Safeguarding policy and procedure
- Person-centred approaches
- Risk Assessment

To support your Continual Professional Development (CPD) we have created a [CPD Reflective Log](#) for your use. Please feel free to use this to track, and reflect on, the professional development that you complete using our resources.