



# 7-minute briefings: Professional Curiosity

## Background

Professional curiosity is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on information received and accepting it at face value. It means testing out your professional assumptions about different types of families. Recently however, Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) have highlighted a need for professional curiosity in safeguarding adults with care and support needs.



### Why it matters

A lack of professional curiosity can lead to: missed opportunities to identify less obvious indicators of vulnerability or significant harm; assumptions made in assessments of needs and risk which are incorrect and lead to wrong intervention for individuals and families.



### What's really happening?

Professional curiosity means: testing out your professional hypothesis and not making assumptions; triangulating information from different sources to gain a better understanding of individuals and family functioning; getting an understanding of individuals' and families' past history which in turn, may help you to think about what may happen in the future.



### Gathering information to make a decision

Obtaining multiple sources of information and not accepting a single set of details you are given at face value; having an awareness of your own personal bias and how that affects how you see those you are working with; being respectfully nosy.



### What do your senses tell you?

#### Look:

Is there anything about what you see when you meet with this adult/family which prompts questions/makes you feel uneasy?  
Are you observing any behaviour which is indicative of abuse or neglect?  
Does what you see support or contradict what you're being told?

#### Listen:

Are you being told anything which needs further clarification?  
Are you concerned about what you hear family members say to each other?  
Is someone in this family trying to tell you something but is finding it difficult to express themselves?

### What to do

#### Ask:

Are there direct questions you could ask when you meet this adult/family which will provide more information about the vulnerability of individual family members. Here are some examples:  
How do you spend a typical day?  
Who do you live with?  
When were you last happy?  
What do you look forward to?  
How did you get that injury?  
Who is this with you?  
When do you feel safe?

#### Check out:

Are other professionals involved?  
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 by whom?

### Questions to consider

Am I informed?  
[Ripfa NSAB procedures](#).  
Do your procedures support you to work with professional curiosity?  
Does your organisation promote an open culture which encourages professional curiosity by enabling challenge to existing norms and developing innovative practice.  
Do you have access to training in professional curiosity?

