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What to do

Practitioners need to be aware of their own values without letting them influence their decision making and practice in a way that is non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory.

Triangulate the information received.

Focus on the need, voice and “lived experience” of the individual or family. Ask relevant questions and be ‘brave’.

Be prepared to have [difficult or uncomfortable conversations](#).

6

What to do

Clarify • Are other professionals involved? What information do they have? • 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 is there anything else that could or should be done by you or someone else?.

5

What to do

Ask - Research indicates those who experience abuse, including coercion and control want practitioners to ask direct questions and that it is easier to respond to a direct question than offer information independently. Do you feel frightened of anyone? / Do you feel safe living here? • Who makes decisions about what you can and cannot do? Some of the things you have said concern me. Is somebody hurting you or are you afraid someone might hurt you in the future?

4

What to do

Look – When you meet with the individual / family are you seeing anything that makes you feel uneasy or prompts questions? Are you observing any behaviours indicative of abuse or neglect, including coercion and control? Does what you see contradict or support what you are being told?

Listen - Are you being told anything that needs further clarification? • Is someone trying to tell you something, but finding it difficult to express themselves or speak openly?

1

Background

Being professionally curious is an essential part of safeguarding. It is a process of always questioning and seeking verification for the information provided rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It involves looking, listening, asking direct questions and being able to engage in difficult conversations. Professional curiosity and challenge are fundamental aspects of working together to keep adults and children safe from harm.

2

Why it matters

The absence of professional curiosity within practice is a recurring theme within safeguarding reviews. 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.

3

Disguised Compliance

Disguised compliance is when an individual or family appears to be co-operating to avoid raising suspicions and allay concerns. Practitioners should verify and corroborate information with others. [Munro \(2005b\)](#) comments that repeated inquiry reports show the extraordinary lengths to which some abusive parents can go in their efforts to deceive practitioners through disguised compliance and the [Daniel Pelka review](#) emphasised the need for professionals to be able to ‘think the unthinkable’ rather than accept parental versions of what is happening at home.

Bury Safeguarding Partnership

7 Minute Briefing: Professional Curiosity



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