



Bitesize video guide: Professional curiosity

Hello, my name is Ruth and I am a Senior Nurse in Waltham Forest.

In Waltham Forest we take a Think Family approach to our safeguarding work with children and adults and their families. When completing assessments, we need to take opportunities to see, feel and recognise risk and enquire deeper. Being open minded and curious will help to make an informed decision about the child's, adult's or families' lived experiences.

Professional curiosity – or respectful nosiness - often called 'healthy scepticism' is about having an interest in individuals and their lives rather than making assumptions.

Curious professionals engage with individuals and families through visits, conversations, observations and asking relevant questions to gather historical and current information.

Professionals need to enquire about the significant people in families' lives that influence them. This may be someone who provides care, or supports the family or individual – for example, another family member, a friend, someone from the community or father of any children and so on.

As professionals we need to be brave and have what are often difficult or awkward conversations about the issues affecting families. These could be domestic abuse, housing, self-neglect, social isolation, mental health, drugs and alcohol, or issues between a person and carer.

Professionals need to have a degree of caution in their judgments triangulating information. This means seeking independent confirmation of individuals' accounts and weighing up details from a range of sources or practitioners, particularly when there appear to be discrepancies. It's also important to ensure that practice is non-judgemental and anti-discriminatory. Professionals need to be aware of their own values without letting them influence decision making.

Reflective practice and regular supervision are ways to support professional curiosity and support professionals to implement this non-judgemental and holistic approach.

In Waltham Forest we have at the heart of our practice a focus on building close relationships with individuals and families of the kind where we hear their voices, understand their lived experiences and are able to respond accordingly.

So, your key messages to take away are:

- Professional curiosity - respectful nosiness, is key to safeguarding children and adults – be interested in the individuals you are working with and fully explore rather than making assumptions. Be aware of your own values affecting judgements.
- Triangulate information you receive. Seek independent confirmation of individuals' accounts and weigh up details from a range of sources and/or practitioners
- Focus on the need, voice and “lived experience” of the person or family. Ask relevant questions and be ‘brave’. Be prepared to have difficult conversations.

And that's it. Thank you for watching. Goodbye.