

## 7 Further Information

National Multi-Agency Child Neglect Strategic Work Group have produced a Practitioners' Guidance note:

[Child Neglect Be Professionally Curious!](#)

**curious**  
 inquiring  
 interrogative  
 scrutinizing  
 examining  
 questioning  
 wondering  
 seeking  
 exploratory  
 sharp  
 investigatory  
 outward-looking  
 penetrating  
 puzzled  
 inspecting  
 doubtful  
 probing  
 speculative  
 analytical  
 inquisitive  
 fact-finding  
 quizzical  
 studious  
 searching  
 interested

## 1 What is professional curiosity?

**Professional curiosity** is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting service users versions of events or disclosures at face value.

This can be described as the need for practitioners to practice 'respectful uncertainty'.

## 2 Consider Disguised Compliance

Verify and corroborate information with others. Consider: **Disguised Compliance**. (Disguised compliance involves parents or carers giving the appearance of co-operating with agencies to avoid raising suspicions and allay concerns).

## 3 Thinking the Unthinkable

It is natural for a practitioner to want to believe the best of a family, and thinking the unthinkable does not mean assuming the worse. It means keeping an open mind, and being able to think objectively about the evidence presented.

Be prepared to accept information that does not fit with previous assumptions and assessments.

## Professional Curiosity

## 4 Motivational Interviewing

Challenging parents/carers requires expertise, confidence, time and emotional energy.

Follow up with appropriate questions to gather more information. Use motivational interviewing skills.  
*Signs of Safety questions.*

## 6 Tips for practitioners

- Seek advice guidance and second opinions
- Work in partnership with other agencies
- Carry out unplanned visits (where possible)
- Play 'devil's advocate'
- Present alternative hypotheses
- Present cases from the child, young person, adult or another family member's perspective
- Share your concerns and findings with other professionals/agencies

## 5 Assessing Risk & Recording

Be observant when completing key tasks such as home visits and considering all notations within a risk context.

Analyse all available information and record all concerns and considerations.

### Barriers to curiosity:

1. Losing focus on the child through over-identifying with carers
2. Over optimism
3. Making assumptions
4. Being afraid to raise concerns/question families
5. Time constraints
6. Lacking the confidence or assertiveness to ask sensitive questions
7. Unconscious bias