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What is Disguised Compliance?

'Disguised Compliance' is a term that originates in Children and Families work but is also relevant to work with adults; it is used to describe when a person (either a person with care and support needs, or their carer) is superficially appearing to co-operate with professionals to alleviate concerns and stop professional engagement.

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Why is it important to recognise disguised compliance?

If disguised compliance is not recognised, professionals may mistakenly perceive risk to be at a low level and fail to make timely safeguarding interventions.

A Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) ([SAR Mathew](#)) in Salford identified the need for agencies to have a better understanding of disguised compliance so that they can work together more effectively in a person-centred way.

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Potential indicators of disguised compliance:

Inconsistent progress - progressing in one area but neglecting or resisting efforts in another area.

Over-eagerness to please – be cautious of rapid agreement without reflection or challenge.

Vague or inconsistent versions of events – may hide deeper issues.

Reliance on short-term fixes – avoiding addressing root causes of problems.

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Further information:

[SAR Mathew](#)

[Professional Curiosity](#)

[Trauma Responsive | Salford Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

[Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Learning from Reviews.](#)

[How to Spot Disguised Compliance: The top 5 Giveaways](#)



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Why do people respond this way?

Sometimes people who have experienced trauma may be unable or find it difficult to engage with professionals.

People might tell professionals what they might want to hear, especially when not complying with requests.

Sometimes, people say they will comply with requests, but they lack the capacity or skills to carry out the task.

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How Should Professionals Respond?

Person-centred approach – consider and adapt to individual needs and experiences.

Strengths-based approach – identify existing abilities and resources for positive change.

Professional Curiosity – uncover hidden issues, engage in difficult conversations

Multi-agency working – work with other agencies to verify information and detect disguised compliance.

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A Trauma-Informed Approach

To reduce the risk of disguised compliance and to facilitate meaningful engagement with people who have experienced trauma, professional relationships should be established based trauma-informed principles:

Safety; Trust; Choice; Collaboration; empowerment; and cultural collaboration.