

7 Minute Briefing – Professional Curiosity – July 2025- Plain Text Version

1. What is Professional Curiosity?

Professional curiosity is the thoughtful and respectful drive to explore beyond the surface. It means asking insightful questions, seeking clarity, and recognising when something doesn't feel right—especially to identify risks and safeguard those who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Professional curiosity involves:

- Noticing when something feels off, even subtly.
- Asking deeper questions to uncover hidden issues.
- Respectfully challenging assumptions.
- Staying open-minded and reflective.
- Persistently following up concerns, even if it's uncomfortable.

2. Why is it important?

Many adults are unable, or feel unable, to talk about what is really going on, so by professionals being respectfully curious, important information about a person or situation can be discovered to enable appropriate support.

When used effectively, professional curiosity:

- **Reveals hidden risks** like abuse, neglect, or coercion.
- **Amplifies the adult's voice**, especially when they struggle to speak up.
- **Improves decision-making** and safeguarding outcomes.
- **Fosters vigilance and accountability** by encouraging deeper exploration.
- **Builds trust** through active listening and thoughtful engagement.

3. Salford SARs

Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) in Salford have highlighted the critical importance of professional curiosity in identifying and responding to risk.

A lack of curiosity—particularly across agencies—has been shown to contribute to missed opportunities for timely intervention and support.

SAR Harry: Missed signs of risk due to limited multi-agency insight.

SAR Francis: Delays in recognising self-neglect and exploitation.

Joint Review: Missed “Think Family” opportunities and cultural context.

4. Good Practice Tips

- ▶ **Ask open questions** to explore deeper issues.
- ▶ **Don't avoid difficult conversations**—they can reveal key concerns.

- ▶ **Observe behaviour and environment**, not just words.
- ▶ **Escalate concerns when needed**, even if evidence is limited.
- ▶ **Reflect in supervision** to challenge assumptions and biases.
- ▶ **Trust your instincts**—if something feels wrong, explore further.

5. Ask Yourself...

Use these quick questions to guide your thinking when something doesn't feel quite right:

- ▶ **Does anything make you feel uneasy?** Trust your instincts.
- ▶ **What is body language telling you?** Is something being held back?
- ▶ **Do words match what you see?** Look for inconsistencies.
- ▶ **Is more explanation needed?** Don't be afraid to ask.
- ▶ **Can the person speak freely?** Try to speak with them alone if possible.

6. S.C.O.P.E. it out!

A practical framework for applying professional curiosity in action:

- ▶ **S – Scan the situation:** Ask questions to clarify what you've seen or heard.
- ▶ **C – Communicate accessibly:** Ensure your language is clear and inclusive.
- ▶ **O – Observe and cross-check:** Take what's said seriously, but look for supporting or conflicting evidence.
- ▶ **P – Pull in perspectives:** Speak with other professionals to build a fuller picture.
- ▶ **E – Evaluate and escalate:** Consider whether [a safeguarding concern should be raised](#).

Useful Resources

[SSAB Policy and Procedure – Professional Curiosity](#)

[Research in Practice Strategic Briefing on Professional Curiosity in Safeguarding Adults.](#)

[Professional Curiosity | Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership \(leedsscp.org.uk\)](#)

[SSAB's guidance and 7-minute briefings.](#)

[Professional curiosity animation \(19 mins\).](#)

[The Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership's & Minute Briefing on professional curiosity.](#)

Contact details:

- [Salford Safeguarding Adults Board: SSAB@Salford.gov.uk](mailto:SSAB@Salford.gov.uk)

[Worried about an adult?](#) Report concerns via [the Adults' online portal](#) or call 0161 206 0604.

- [Worried about a child?](#) Report concerns [via the Children's online portal](#) or call the Bridge 0161 603 4500