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Background

Covid-19 can make Professional Curiosity in safeguarding more challenging due to reduced face-to-face contact between professionals and vulnerable people. Professional Curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family or for an individual rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. Many safeguarding reviews refer to a lack of professional curiosity or respectful uncertainty. Nurturing professional curiosity and challenge are fundamental aspects of working together to keep children, young people and adults safe.

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Why it matters

Children and Adults experiencing abuse and neglect often do not disclose it directly to practitioners and, if they do, it will sometimes be through their behaviour or comments. This makes identifying abuse and neglect difficult for professionals across agencies. We know that it is better to help as early as possible, before issues get worse. That means that all agencies and practitioners need to work together – the first step is to be professionally curious to gain clearer insight.

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Information

Professional Curiosity is the need for practitioners to practice 'respectful uncertainty' – applying critical evaluation to any information they receive and maintaining an open mind. Practitioners will often come into contact with a child, young person, adult or their family when they are in crisis or vulnerable to harm. Responding to these opportunities to safeguard requires the ability to demonstrate a non-discriminatory approach, be

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more inquisitive to explore the issues to formulate judgments, and recognise vulnerabilities, strengths and potential or actual risks of harm. Practitioners should maintain an open stance of Professional Curiosity, understand one's own responsibility and know how to take action. Professional Curiosity or respectful uncertainty is needed when working with

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Questions to consider

As part of visits, calls, video calls carefully go through daily routines and where services are being accessed/can be accessed to assist the vulnerable adult/child. Be curious and alert to signs of neglect or abuse; **have I explored fully what the daily lived experience is for the child or vulnerable adult in an isolating household? Have I considered what new risks and challenges may be present for this family due to COVID 19? Have I shared and confirmed information and concerns with other agencies?**

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What to do

Where you have concerns about the welfare, health, development and safe care of a child/adult, do not rely solely on the wishes of the caring adult(s). The principles of making safeguarding personal for adults and respecting the wishes of a child require you to gather and record the vulnerable adult/child's views and wishes.

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...families who are displaying disguised compliance. This involves parents or carers giving the appearance of co-operating with agencies to avoid raising suspicions and allay concerns. A degree of disguised compliance could be expected in all families; but at its worst superficial cooperation may be to conceal abuse. Many case reviews highlight that professionals can sometimes delay taking action due to disguised compliance and/ or lack of Professional Curiosity.

