

Professional Curiosity

Part A: Trainer Notes

1 Exploring the voice of the person at risk

- George: being left alone, in nappies, bruising, tired – late nights, but not spoken to (asleep).
- Beth: absent, reluctant to return home, self-harm noted – but not contacted directly.
- Kate’s narrative (“bullied at school”, “rebellious teen”) overshadowed children’s experiences.
- Toys/clean home misled professional judgment.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What was lost when George wasn’t spoken to?
- How do we ensure children’s voices aren’t drowned out by parents?

Activity

Role-play: explain to a resistant parent why children must be seen/spoken to.

2 Impact on the person at risk

- George remains at risk of neglect: nappies at school age, unexplored bruises.
- Beth’s self-harm and avoidance risk escalation if not addressed.
- Not speaking to them reinforces invisibility and powerlessness.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What happens when a child’s voice is not heard?
- How could Beth’s avoidance escalate?
- How could this affect their trust in adults and future help-seeking?

Activity

Risk matrix: categorise risks (physical, emotional, neglect) for George and Beth.

3 Safeguarding and duty of care

- Social workers must always see and speak to children.
- Parental excuses/distractions (nails, cappuccino chat) diverted Rachel from safeguarding.
- George should have been woken; Beth should have been contacted directly.
- Professional curiosity means challenging explanations, not accepting at face value.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What procedures ensure children are always seen and spoken to?
- How do you balance sensitivity with firmness when a parent resists engagement?
- How can workers focus when there are distractions?

Activity

Scenario: parent insists child is asleep – practise insisting gently but firmly.

4 Professional reflections

- Rachel felt discomfort but deferred action – a missed opportunity.
- Notes alone are insufficient without timely safeguarding action.
- Reflection: discomfort often signals risk and should trigger immediate curiosity.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What did Rachel miss?
- How should supervision support staff in these moments?

Activity

List all “red flags” Rachel observed → sort into acted on vs missed.

5 Ethical and emotional dilemmas

- Pressure to maintain rapport with parent vs duty to safeguard.
- Emotional difficulty challenging plausible excuses.
- Fear of being intrusive if waking child or probing further.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What emotions might stop a worker acting?
- How do we balance respect for parents with prioritising children?

Activity

Debate: “It is better to risk upsetting a parent than to miss seeing a child.”

6 Practical learning

- Children must always be seen and spoken to.
- Do not be reassured by surface positives.
- Parental distractions may be deliberate.
- Discomfort = red flag → act now, not later.
- Supervision/reflection builds confidence in curiosity.

Trainer prompts / discussion

- What practical steps would have improved Rachel’s visit?
- How can professional curiosity be embedded in daily practice.

Activity / role-play

Redo Rachel’s visit with professionally curious alternatives (wake George, contact Beth).

Wales: Key Law & Policy

- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – duty to report children at risk.
- Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) – requirement to see children; guidance for home visits.
- Children Act 1989 (applies in Wales) – s.47 enquiries where children are suspected at risk.
- Learning from Child Practice Reviews (Wales) – recurrent theme: children not seen or spoken to directly.

Professional Curiosity

Part B: Handout

Aim

Embed professional curiosity; never let parental narratives replace children's voices.

Exploring the voice of the person at risk

- George unseen; Beth avoided; voices lost.
- Always speak to children directly.

Professional reflections

- Discomfort is data – act on it.
- Notes must be paired with immediate safeguarding action.

Impact on the person at risk

- Risks: unable to establish the needs of either child or to prioritise their needs in a timely way.
- Not being heard, feeling invisible and powerless.
- Loss of trust in professionals; risk of escalation or withdrawal.

Ethical and emotional dilemmas

- Rapport vs safeguarding duty.
- Better to risk upsetting parent than miss harm.

Safeguarding and duty of care

- Always see and speak to both children directly.
- Consider the potential for significant harm – neglect, emotional or physical.
- Identify and record protective factors.
- Be clear about parental responsibility (parents of both children, including father(s)).
- Professional curiosity: challenge explanations and ensure children's safety takes priority.

Practical learning

1. Always see/speak to every child.
2. Don't be reassured by appearances.
3. Challenge parental narratives.
4. Act on professional discomfort.
5. Seek reflective supervision promptly.

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