

Professional Curiosity

Self-Reported Information- Clarify, Verify and Reflect: Professional Curiosity

1 Background

Learning from national and local case reviews tells us that sometimes children may have been safeguarded and protected from harm if practitioners working with the family **clarify, reflect, and verify** upon the information shared with them during assessments. Within a recent multi agency audit the DSCP noted that if practitioners had asked questions to further **clarify** situations that were presented to them, they may have been able to **reflect** this back and **verify** what it was really like for the child living in those circumstances. If these three steps are taken it makes a better assessment of risks and need and therefore supporting the correct support and intervention to be offered.

Why does this matter?

When working with families, much of the information and insight into the family comes from them directly and is 'self-reported'. Professionals need to ensure that they triangulate what parents are saying by establishing the facts, gathering evidence, and communicating well with all involved. There is a need for all professionals to have a conscious and healthy inquisitiveness, not taking information at face value but **clarify, reflect** back what they are being told and **verify** information. It is important to make it clear in recording the origin of a piece of information and if it self-reported, this avoids the risk of it becoming assumed as fact through the passage of time. Wherever possible, check out details of self-reported information by asking who, where when and confirm/validate the information.

2 Clarify

- Who is reporting the information, is this first-hand information?
 - Have I understood this information correctly, can I understand this further, who can I discuss this with?
 - What is the context of the information? How can I gather more details. Where, when, who, why, what, how.
- Top Tips:** Coordinate a multi-agency supervision to discuss identified concerns or factors. Prepare for any difficult conversations, be ready to respond with respect and empathy.

3 Reflect

- How does this new information impact upon my understanding of strengths, vulnerabilities, and risks?
 - What is the impact of this information on the child?
 - Do I need to change my approach to working with the family in light of this information?
- Top Tips:** Make time and space in your working day to pause and reflect on what you have seen and heard. What do you know for sure? What assumptions have you made?

4 Verify

- Who can confirm accuracy of the information?
 - Has consent been sought to share information with others or gather further information in order to confirm?
 - Triangulate the information you have received.
 - Establish the facts.
 - Gather further information.
- Top Tips:** Discuss any concerns with colleagues, with partner organisations and within your supervision any details that are no clear.

5 Learning

- Self-reported information can be assumed as fact, this is then shared through the passage of time and the wrong assessment could be made.
- Professionals should have a conscious and healthy scepticism of information shared.
- It helps to avoid over optimism and making assumptions bases upon set reported information.
- Professionals should ensure the origin of information is reports clearly in children's files and records.
- Reflect upon the self-reported information and what this means in the context of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Consider whether there is a need to change the plan or the approach to working with the family in light of this information.
- Find out more information to better understand the information you are being told.

6 Complicating Factors

- Individual factors such as your own experiences and values could get in the way, e.g, a fear of saying something wrong, or lacking in knowledge around a subject therefore there could be avoidance of uncovering information you don't feel able to deal with for whatever reason.
 - You also may be used to seeing certain behaviours or situations; therefore, you don't really notice them anymore or you just accept this is a part of the family dynamic.
 - External Factors such as a lack of support for practitioners or managers and not enough time and space to reflect can be a barrier.
- Top Tips:** Take notice of any feelings of uneasiness or uncertainty when discussing information. Act on what you find out.

7 Useful links (details about resources and training is available on DSCP website)

Graded care Profile 2 <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/practice-guidance/>
 Child Exploitation risk assessment Tool <https://durham-scp.org.uk/download/child-exploitation-risk-assessment-information-form/>
 NSPCC recognising and responding to abuse May 2023: [Recognising and responding to child abuse and neglect | NSPCC Learning](#)
 Signs of Safety mapping tool: [Signs of Safety for Professionals \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](#)
 The developing world of the child: Seeing the Child: [Seeing the Child \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](#)

Learning
Briefing