Birmingham City Council

7-Minute Learning

Professional Curiosity

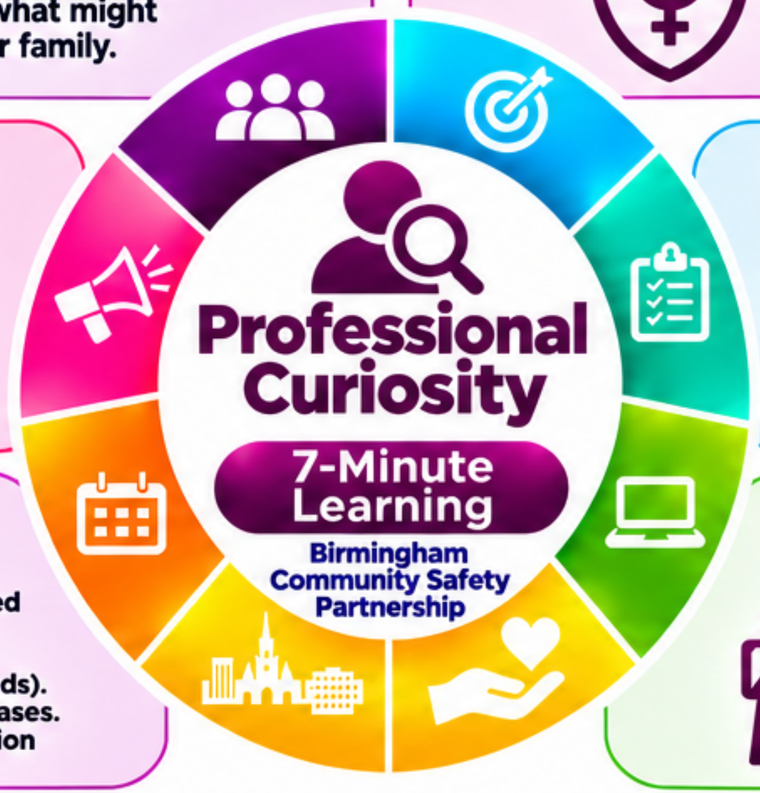
BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

1 What is professional curiosity?

A proactive, open and questioning approach that involves looking beyond the obvious, exploring the wider context, and seeking to understand what might be happening for a person or family.

2 Why is it important for VAWG?

- Helps identify hidden risk, harm and patterns of abuse (e.g. coercive control, stalking or exploitation).
- Supports earlier intervention and prevention.
- Ensures a more holistic understanding of a person's circumstances, including intersectional factors.
- Can help to keep women and girls safer.



3 What might it look like?

- Asking respectful, open questions.
- Noticing changes in behaviour, mood or circumstances.
- Exploring inconsistencies or gaps in information.
- Considering what you don't know, not just what you do.

4 Barriers to curiosity

- High caseloads and time pressure.
- Assumptions or confirmation bias.
- Fear of 'overstepping' or causing offence.
- Lack of confidence or knowledge.
- Organisational or information-sharing barriers.

5 Practice questions to support curiosity

- Is there more to this situation than is initially being presented?
- What might be happening for this person or family that I haven't considered?
- Have there been any changes or patterns over time?
- Are there wider factors (e.g. housing, finances, mental health, immigration status, care responsibilities) that could increase risk?
- Do I need to speak with other agencies to build a fuller picture?
- What action do I need to take to keep the person (especially women or girls) safe?

6 What this means for professionals

- Maintain a whole-person, trauma-informed and culturally competent approach.
- Be alert to risk factors and patterns (e.g. repeat incidents, escalation, multiple needs).
- Reflect on your own assumptions and biases.
- Work collaboratively and share information lawfully and appropriately.

7 Key takeaways

- Be curious, not judgemental.
- Look at the whole picture.
- Ask, explore and clarify.
- Share and discuss concerns with relevant partners.
- Record your rationale and actions.

Working together to safeguard people and end violence against women and girls in Birmingham.