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Welcome to our May 2025 Newsletter

In this newsletter, we bring together information which we hope you will find useful and we highlight how the Partnership continues to communicate and keep in touch with all our agencies and provide guidance to support you in your role working with children and adults. In this edition, we bring you information in the spotlight about professional curiosity, updates and also information about Partnership work, important safeguarding updates and new training dates.

Me Learning

Don't forget to log in to your Me Learning account and see our new e-learning courses on a range of safeguarding topics



In the Spotlight.....

Professional Curiosity



Learning from Local and National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews consistently identify that children, young people and adults may have been safeguarded and protected from harm if practitioners working with them had been more 'professionally curious', and which was reflected in recent Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (Family H & Child J) and Discretionary Safeguarding Adult Review (Philip & Loraine) in Darlington.

What is professional curiosity and why is it important?

Professional Curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening with an individual or within a family, rather than making assumptions or taking a single source of information and accepting it at face value. It is about enquiring deeper and using proactive questioning and challenge and understanding one's own responsibility and knowing when to act.

It is a combination of looking, listening, asking direct questions, checking out and reflecting on ALL of the information received. It is important that when a lack of professional curiosity is cited as a factor in a tragic incident, this does not mean that blame should be apportioned. It is widely recognised that there are many barriers to being professionally curious.

What are the potential barriers to professional curiosity?

Being professionally curious is not always easy, there may be many barriers to this, including from practitioners themselves, such as focusing on one particular issue or having over optimism, making assumptions, lacking the confidence or assertiveness to ask sensitive questions and unconscious bias.

Poor supervision, complexity and pressures of work, changes of case worker leading to repeatedly 'starting again', closing cases too quickly and fixed thinking can also barriers to a professionally curious approach.

Children in particular, and some adults, rarely disclose abuse and neglect directly to practitioners and if they do it will often be through unusual behaviour or comments, this makes identifying abuse and neglect difficult for practitioners. Therefore other barriers may be presented by the individuals and families we work with, such as not wishing to answer questions, questioning a practitioner's intentions and disguised compliance.

How can Practitioners be more professionally curious, what should you consider?

- 'Seeing the whole picture' - as Practitioners, you should not presume to know what is happening in the family home and should always ask questions and seek clarity if you are not certain, consider all members of a household and those in the wider circle involved in the life of the child or adult.
- 'Having confidence' —don't be afraid to ask questions, do so in an open way so they know you are asking to ensure that children or themselves are safe, not to judge or criticise.
- 'Making assumptions' —be open to the unexpected and incorporate information that does not support your initial professional assumptions into any assessments you make of what life is like for an individual.
- 'Information gathering' - Consider information from different sources to gain a better understanding of family functioning - Seek clarity from family or other professionals.
- 'Challenge' - having your own assumptions, views and interpretations challenged and be open to challenging others.
- 'Knowing but not knowing' —consider what you see as well as what you're told—are there any visual clues as to what life is like, or which don't correlate with the information you already hold?
- 'Supervision' - use supervision as an opportunity to explore cases and exercise professional curiosity, for example, by playing 'devil's advocate'; presenting alternative hypotheses; presenting cases from the child, young person, adult or another family member's perspective.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

DfE has published a new children and young people's illustrated guide to the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children. This brilliant guide is accompanied by a short animation for children and young people which explains how people who help, support and protect them work together and what they can expect when they need help.

Government has worked in collaboration with children and young people when designing these materials, including the DfE's Social Care Advisory Board, facilitated by the National Children's Bureau. We know that children and young people find clear effective communication really important and that they want information to be shared openly with them, so they can understand what services they should receive and how they can access help and support.

The [guide and animation](#) can be used by children and young people independently, or with the support of an adult.

A toolkit is available for practitioners to promote the guide and help everyone understand how they can use this guide to support children and young people. This toolkit can be requested by emailing: workingtogether.statutoryguidance@education.gov.uk

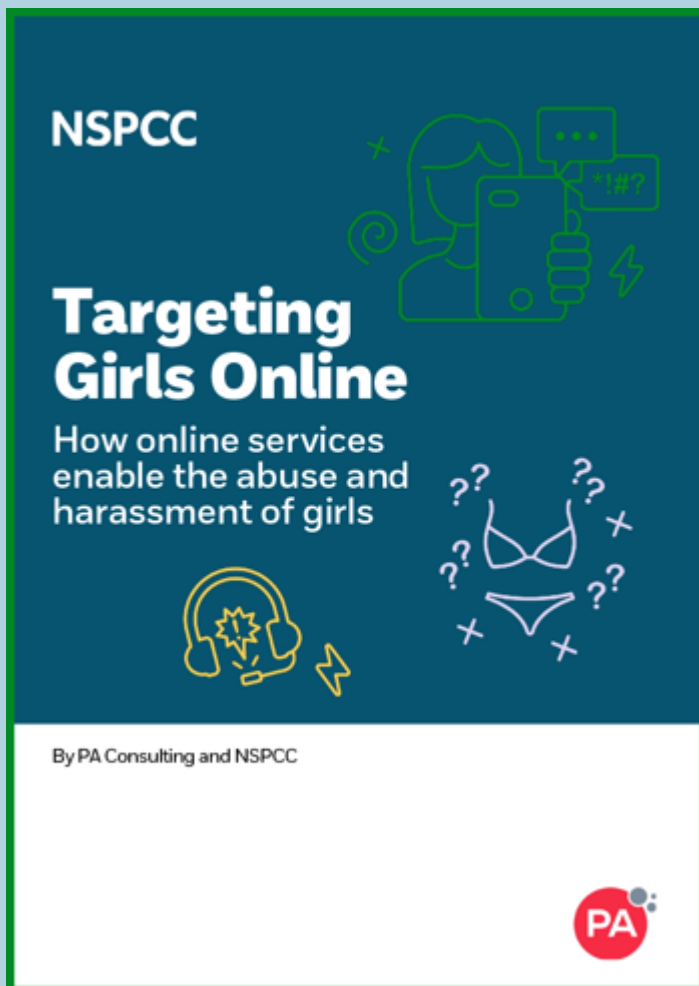


Online Abuse and Girls

NSPCC Learning has published new research examining the design features of online platforms that can facilitate or promote abusive communications with young female users. The research explored the design of ten video-sharing, social media, gaming and messaging platforms, using fake accounts for a fictitious 14-year-old girl; interviews with experts; and user journey mapping. Findings show: online service design can be exploited to identify, target and abuse girls; risky design features are built into the entire user journey; and platforms place the onus on girls to protect themselves online. The report proposes solutions and urges the Government and technology companies to put measures in place to mitigate unsafe design features and protect girls on digital platforms.

Read the news story [here](#)

Read the report [here](#)



OUR PLEDGE

To have open, honest, bold conversations with each other as multi-agency partners in order to do the very best we can for adults and children in Darlington.

For many families across Darlington, multi-agency working is vital to maintain a focus on children and adults while also keeping them at the heart of all decisions.

Our Pledge is an opportunity to:

- Seek out professional conversations with each other at the earliest opportunity
- Have a shared understanding of the strengths and risks within a family
- Actively listen to each other and share important information
- Respect each other's expertise
- Be open and empathetic to the professional views of others
- Be professionally curious and evidence what we say
- Use common language that everyone understands



Concerned about a child?

Contact the Children's Initial
Advice Team
Professionals on **01325 406252**
Public on **01325 406222**

**Concerned about an
adult?**

Contact the Adult
Contact Team
on **01325 406111**



PARTNER SHIPS

Statutory Safeguarding Partners

James Stroyan, Executive Director of People

Nicola Lawrence, Detective Chief Superintendent

Hilary Lloyd, Chief Nurse