

01 Respectful Uncertainty

Lord Laming in his investigation into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2003 says,

“the concept of “respectful uncertainty” should lie at the heart of the relationship between the social worker and the family. It does not require social workers constantly to interrogate their clients, but it does involve the critical evaluation of information that they are given.”

Disguised Compliance

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Disguised Compliance is a feature in many Serious Case Reviews into the death of a child. It is used to describe those parents who appear to be co-operating with professionals in order to avoid questions being asked or to ensure that professionals do not get too close to understanding the issues and risks for the child.

07 Healthy Scepticism

Professionals should maintain a “healthy scepticism, an open mind and, where necessary, an investigative approach” to child protection work. This should lead professionals to asking effective questions and looking beyond the obvious (Lord Laming 2003)

Professional Curiosity 03

Professional curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value.



Authoritative Practice

- Allowing professionals to exercise their professional judgement in light of the circumstances of particular cases
- Encouraging a stance of professional curiosity and challenge from a supportive base
- Each professional taking responsibility for their role in the safeguarding process, while respecting and valuing the roles of others
- Developing and maintaining relationships of trust with young people and parents
- Ensuring that procedures are relevant and achievable, and that they are appropriately disseminated and accessible

Professional Optimism

Professionals focus on adults’ strengths, rationalise evidence to the contrary and interpret data in the light of this optimistic view. They confuse participation by parents with co-operation. (Ofsted 2009-2010)

Start again syndrome

One common way of dealing with the overwhelming information and the feelings of helplessness generated in workers by the families, was to put aside knowledge of the past and focus on the present, adopting what we refer to as the ‘start again syndrome’. The ‘start again syndrome’ prevents practitioners and managers having a clear and systematic understanding of a case informed by past history.

(Brandon et al 2008)

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