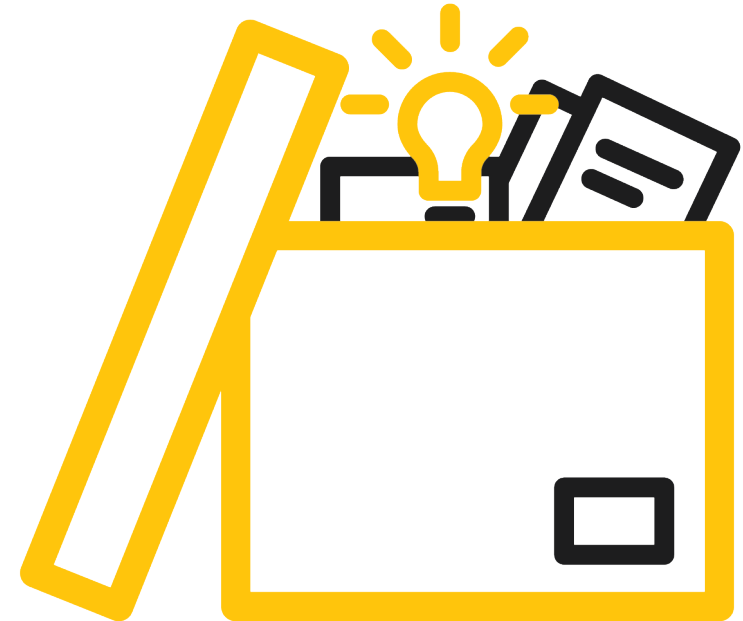


PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

What is it and why it is
important in social work

PROGRAMME

- **Welcome and introductions**
- **Learning outcomes and group learning agreement**
- **Professional curiosity. What is it? — Group work**
- **Professional dangerousness. What is it?**
- **Videoed interaction and discussion activity**
- **Overview of the social work programme at Suffolk**
- **Plenary and evaluation**



NORA DUCKETT

I am a registered Social Worker and a Senior Lecturer at the University of Suffolk

To contact me about any aspect of this session please email n.duckett@uos.ac.uk



LEARNING OUTCOMES

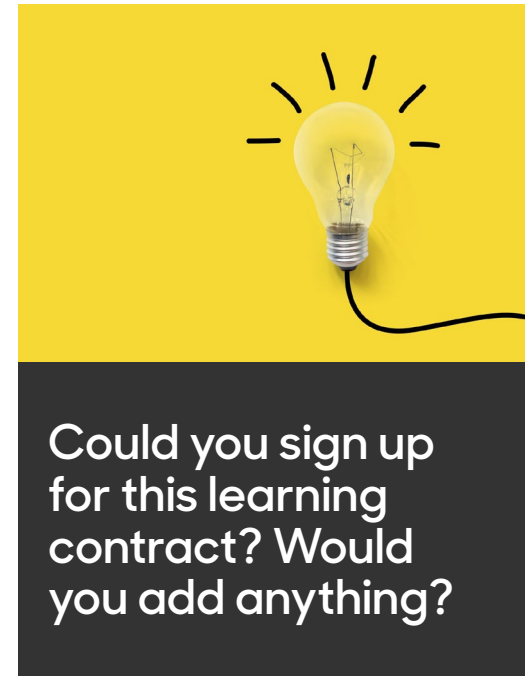
By the end of his lesson you should be able to:

- Understand the concept and purpose of 'professional curiosity' in social work where there are concerns about risk to children and young people and adults.
- Practise determining curiosity-based questions and applying these to simulated practice scenarios.
- Know about biases, heuristics and 'professional dangerousness' and how knowing about these can help overcome barriers to professional curiosity.

A GROUP LEARNING CONTRACT

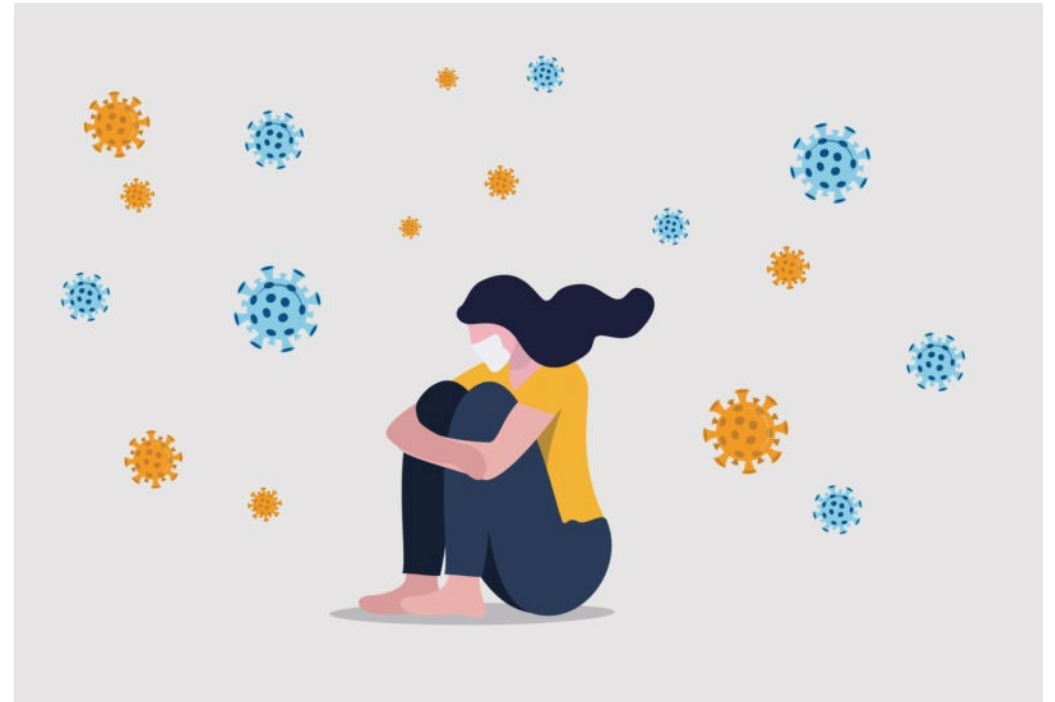
- Acquire opportunities to increase your knowledge and skill
- Be treated with respect for what you share and contribute to group learning
- Confidentiality is the norm unless there is a defensible reason why something has to be shared outside the lesson
- Deconstruct to reconstruct ideas or behaviours that are not positively contributing to individual or group learning
- Expect punctuality and attentiveness, and to be listened to
- Facilitators, colleagues, and friends are expected to be compassionate so that you get the optimum learning from any experience

Adapted from Stephen Brookfield (1995)



REMEMBER TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Social work and thinking about people at risk can be difficult to contemplate
- What we discuss may have touched your life or someone close to you directly or indirectly
- Ensure you look after yourself and look out for others
- If you are worried about anything we talk about or if it reminds you of something upsetting, please tell the teacher or facilitator



SELECTIVE

How knowing about professional curiosity can help reduce risk and dangerous practice.

ATTENTION TEST

Watch the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY

BIASES AND HEURISTICS

Heuristics are ways of shortening the time it takes to make a decision.

Bias is a judgement supporting or opposing a person or thing based on personal opinion.

Being aware of biases when evaluating others' behaviours can help to actively work against them.

Attributional (or attribution) bias

When we perceive we identify with an individual, we tend to over-emphasise external or situational reasons for their behaviour. Perceiving someone as different to us means we are more likely to over-attribute their conduct to their internal character. Both states relate to the likelihood of change.

Confirmatory (or confirmation) bias

The weight we give to particular elements of available information; 'proving ourselves right'. We tend to filter out information that disconfirms our views (prejudices).

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY?

In small groups discuss what you think professional curiosity is (around 5 minutes).

Prepare to feedback on ideas from your group's discussion (around 5 minutes).

SOME FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH LITERATURE

Curiosity is:

- A characteristic, trait or 'basic drive' for information where we perceive a gap in knowledge and understanding (Lowenstein, 1994).
- The predisposition to recognise and search for new knowledge, adaptability, flexibility, enjoyment of complexity and abstraction (Kashdan, et al, 2003).
- Characterised by growth, exploration and development (Berlyne, 1954).
- We are least curious when we are clueless about the topic or area of interest and when we are over-confident (Kang, et al, 2009)
- Rather than trying to define it, it is more helpful to consider the motivations for information-seeking behaviour, which includes the value of the information to the person seeking it (Kidd and Hayden, 2015).

Professional curiosity is:

- Stepping outside of your comfort zone (Burton and Revell, 2018)
- “..employing professional curiosity means seeking evidence to support or refute any concerns experienced” (Thacker et al 2019)
- The state of 'respectful uncertainty' (Laming, 2003) having an open mind and being sceptical of explanations, justifications or excuses people give for situations where there is risk to a child or adult. Not taking things at face value -checking things out
- Complicated relational dynamics (i.e. the emotional dimension of practice, the organisational context and the wider political system) have the potential to distort professional judgement, including curiosity (Burton and Revell, 2018).

CONTEXTS ARE CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTANDING WHERE AND HOW PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY TAKES PLACE AND THE BARRIERS TO IT.

Context:

“the situation within which something happens or exists and helps explain it” Cambridge Dictionary Definition

A person (or organisation) under stress is a barrier to professional curiosity

“The issue of professional stress is fundamental, and as crucial to effective child protection as the absence of delirium tremens is to a successful brain surgeon. Professionals operating from a position of chronic stress are highly susceptible to errors of omission - not taking all possible action to ensure the safety of a child at a crucial moment” (Peter Dale, et al., 1986, p.33).

'PROFESSIONAL DANGEROUSNESS' WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Professional dangerousness

When individuals and groups of professionals act in ways that collude with, maintain or increase risk to children and adults.

“It is important that we understand professional dangerousness as it helps workers from all disciplines to be more aware that our protective intentions and actions can inadvertently be contributing to extending dangerous behaviours in some families”

(Calder, 2008, p 61)

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL DANGEROUSNESS

- Rule of Optimism
 - Children (and carers/parents) Unheard
 - Stockholm Syndrome
 - Separateness /Avoidance
 - Exaggeration of Hierarchy
 - Professional Accommodation Syndrome
 - Concrete Solutions
 - Stereotyping
 - Cultural Justification
 - False or Disguised Compliance
 - Omnipotence
 - Closure
 - Assessment paralysis
 - Role Confusion
 - Priority given to Recent Vivid Information
 - Non-Compliance with Statutory Procedures
- (There are others)

Davies and Duckett, 2016, p7

RULE OF OPTIMISM

- Finding the most positive explanations
- Too readily accepting explanations without exploring other possibilities
- Taking a situation at face value
- Putting off acting until a later date
- Making decisions based on opinion rather than fact
- Over-estimating the level of progress made
- Also how health and social work agencies to filter out the large population of children in need – to those defined as abused and needing legal interventions. Dingwall et al (1983),

CHILD UNHEARD

‘Small comments made by children help identify a problem’ (Listening to Children – Bridge)

Many say they don’t want to go home from school/hospital etc.

Prof. Eileen Munro looked at 45 cases and in only 10 workers sought the child’s views. 7 children said abuse was not happening – this was accepted even though it was happening. 3 children said it was happening and they were not believed.



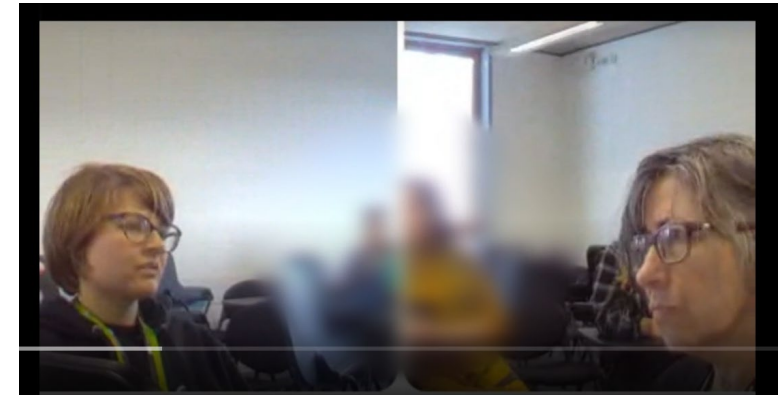
Born: 2 November 1991
Died: 25 February 2000

Victoria Climbié to social worker, Lisa Arthurworrey

‘I’m not lying I must tell you more, it’s true’

CONVERSATION BETWEEN EVERETT AND NORA

- Did you notice any assumptions, heuristics/ stereotypes and biases in the interviewer's questions?
- How could the interviewer have improved what she said and how she said it to show more professional curiosity? Do you have examples of alternative questions that would show curiosity?
- Do you think Everett came away from the conversation thinking it had been positive?
- After noting your ideas. Share what you have written with your group to compare and contrast what you noticed.



Watch the video
[Everett Role Play ONLY edit.mp4](#)

That is the end of the teaching session. We hope you enjoyed it. Remember that if anything that has been discussed today has been unsettling or upsetting for any reason please speak with your teacher.

The next four slides are about becoming a social worker and the social work course at the University of Suffolk.

BECOMING A SOCIAL WORKER

If you are thinking of social work as a career — ask yourself the following questions:

- What really motivates me? What sparks my interest? Am I curious to find out more about myself and the social world around me?
- Am I interested in how individuals and groups of people develop to become who and what they are, and what is the impact of the social contexts in which we all live?
- Do I think I could become a very effective listener and communicator, and can I (or learn to) empathise with others?
- When I see injustice and inequality in the world around me, do I want it to change and think I can be part of that change?
- Could I learn to speak out about injustice and work closely with others to create change?

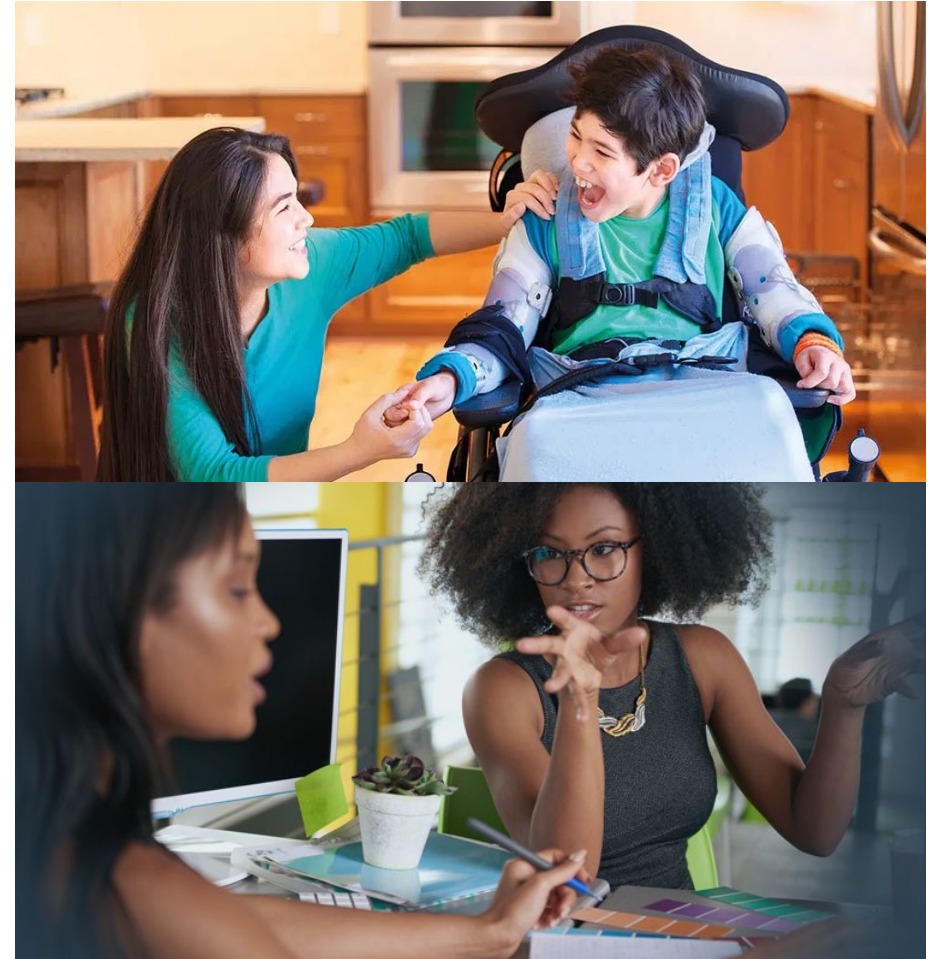
WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THE COURSE?

- Suffolk and Norfolk Teaching Partnership
- Vibrant, enjoyable and stimulating teaching/learning environment 91% satisfaction (2018-2019)
- Excellent record of employment (and wider employability) amongst previous graduates (almost 100% after 6 months)
- Close tutor support throughout, all tutors are registered social workers
- Depth and range of content
- Diverse and creative methods of assessment: Assignments, Essays, Blog, Podcasts, Presentations, Role Play, *No exams*
- Listening to students' feedback and responding ('you said – we did')
- Good staff-student student ratio
- Relatively (perfectly) small

BA (HONS) SOCIAL WORK

Experiencing learning in practice 'placement' — is a fundamental part of the learning experience

- Year 1 — 10 days + community engagement and observation activities
- Year 2 — minimum 3 days in placement for 70 days and 2 days study in university
- Year 3 — 3 days (Sem 1) - 4 days (Sem 2) in placement for 100 days, 1 day university study



GOT ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT JOINING THE UNIVERSITY?

Admission team:

E: admissions@uos.ac.uk

T: +44 (0) 1473 338348

Social Work Admissions Lead:

Rosemary Willers

r.willers@uos.ac.uk

WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM THIS SESSION

Which aspect of the session stands out for you?

Name one thing you are curious to find out more about.

Name one thing that would have improved the lesson for you, if anything.

THANK YOU