

Professional Curiosity Scenarios Reveal

Scenario 1

A family has been known to services for concerns about home conditions and inconsistent school attendance. Recently, improvements have been noted during arranged visits — the home appears clean, food is available, and the children are well-presented. Parents are friendly, agreeable, and attend meetings, often offering explanations and reassurance that things are now better. However, there are ongoing reports from school that the children sometimes arrive dirty, tired, and without lunch, and progress on agreed actions seems short-lived between visits. What information do you need?

What information do you need?

- Are improvements sustained over time, or only seen before/after professional visits?
- Are visits announced or unannounced, and does this affect what is observed?
- What do the children say about their home life on a day-to-day basis?
- Are there patterns between professional involvement and temporary improvements?
- What specific actions were agreed in plans, and have they genuinely been completed?
- How do home conditions vary across different times or days?
- Are the children consistently having their basic needs met (food, hygiene, supervision)?
- Is there a difference between what parents report and what is observed by other professionals?
- Are there underlying issues (e.g. neglect, mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse) affecting sustained change?
- Is the focus on pleasing professionals rather than improving outcomes for the children?
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Who else may hold information?

- School staff (teachers, safeguarding leads, attendance officers)
- School nurse
- Health visitors / health services
- Social care (past and present involvement)
- Housing providers or environmental health
- Early Help practitioners
- Police (if any history of incidents)
- Professionals working with extended family or siblings
- Voluntary sector organisations supporting the family

What assumptions might you be making?

- That cooperation and friendliness from parents equates to reduced risk
- That visible short-term improvements reflect real, sustained change
- That attendance at meetings means full engagement with support
- That tasks being “completed” means the child’s lived experience has improved
- That non-compliance would be obvious, rather than subtle and strategic
- That professionals’ observations during visits reflect everyday reality
- That another agency is monitoring ongoing risk closely