

Professional Curiosity Scenarios Reveal

Scenario 3

A 14-year-old young person has irregular school attendance and is frequently late. They often appear tired and disengaged in lessons. Staff are aware they stay up late gaming and using social media. The young person reports that they are “mostly left to themselves” at home and often prepares their own meals. There are concerns they are communicating online with unknown individuals and may be accessing inappropriate content. Parents have said they “trust them to manage themselves” and feel the young person is old enough to be independent.

What information do you need?

- What are the patterns in attendance, lateness, and disengagement?
- How much sleep is the young person actually getting, and what is their overnight routine?
- What do they say about supervision, boundaries, and routines at home?
- How often are they alone, and for how long?
- Are they consistently able to access adequate food and basic care?
- What type of online activity are they engaging in (gaming, social media, chat platforms)?
- Who are they communicating with online — peers, strangers, adults?
- Are there any risks of online exploitation, grooming, or exposure to harmful content?
- What parental controls, monitoring, or guidance are in place regarding internet use?
- How do parents understand and manage online safety?
- Are there wider concerns impacting parenting capacity (e.g. mental health, substance use, workload, absence from home)?
- What is the young person’s emotional wellbeing and support network?

Who else may hold information?

- School staff (teachers, safeguarding leads, attendance teams, pastoral staff)
- School nurse or health services
- Early Help or family support practitioners
- Social care (current or historical involvement)
- Police (especially if online risk, exploitation, or safeguarding concerns arise)
- Online safety or exploitation teams (e.g. local safeguarding partnerships)
- Youth services or community organisations
- CAMHS or other mental health services
- Professionals working with siblings or extended family
- Internet safety organisations or support services (if involved)

What assumptions might you be making?

- That the young person’s age means they can safely self-manage without supervision
- That being “independent” is always a positive and not a potential sign of neglect
- That online activity is harmless or typical for their age without exploring risks

- That parents' trust equates to appropriate oversight and safeguarding
- That tiredness and lateness are simply behavioural issues rather than unmet needs
- That the young person would disclose if something unsafe was happening online
- That risks online are less significant than risks in the physical environment
- That another professional or agency is monitoring online safety