

# HILLINGDON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

## 7-MINUTE BRIEFING

### Critical Thinking

#### 1. Introduction

Critical thinking skills are central to effective safeguarding practice.

Critical thinking requires professionals to actively think about their role, considering what has contributed to success and identifying where changes may be needed.

It includes being reflective and curious about the factors, circumstances and dynamics that impact the families we work with.

#### 2. Third Party Information

One recommendation in the Child X review is that practitioners should always fully consider the meaning of information labelled as "third party".

"Third party information" includes that shared by: family, friends, neighbours or similar.

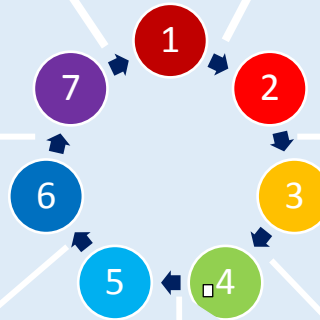
Practitioners need to be skilled in listening, recording, further exploring and weighing of *all* information, to develop a holistic understanding of a child's needs.

#### 7. In Practice

Keep an open mind by being prepared to accept information that does not fit with previous views or assessments - particularly when new information does emerge.

Think objectively about presented evidence and consider key research and knowledge re. adult difficulties and their impact on parenting capacity.

Ensure you fully consider the meaning of self reported and third party information, and how this contributes to a child's or young persons lived experience.



#### 3. Information Gathering

Be proactive in finding out what information is held by other professionals working with a family. Ensure that this is recorded accurately, and understood in the context of the whole. Ensure that you also share information appropriately and accurately.

This helps to identify any discrepancies and to gain fuller understanding of circumstances.

#### 5. Tools for Reflection

There are various methods and tools to aid reflection. Visual mapping techniques (e.g. ecomaps) can be helpful to visualise family relationships and to think about impact of difficulties faced by family members on others.

#### 4. Think Family

Be curious and think about the meaning of what you know for all members of the family you are working with.

Always consider the impact of adult issues on children, particularly if there are any concerns about mental health issues, substance misuse or domestic abuse.

The needs of children & young people are intimately linked with the needs of adults in their lives. This also applies to adults with care and support needs. Making safeguarding personal requires us to consider each person in the context of their family, and wider networks.

#### 6. Respectful Uncertainty

Reviews of safeguarding practice have highlighted that practitioners can rely too heavily on self-reported information by parents or carers. This risk is increased when there is reliance on pre-conceived ideas. For example where parents are also professionals. Using an approach of respectful uncertainty and seeking to triangulate information provided will reduce this risk.

Professional supervision is an opportunity for reflection, case discussion, consideration of known history and the views of other involved professionals. It is important to guard against perception bias and to acknowledge that your assessment could be wrong!

Some practitioners find it useful to keep a reflective learning log for further thoughts and future reference.