

# Safeguarding

## Disguised Compliance



### Definition:

'**Disguised compliance**' involves a parent or carer giving the appearance of co-operating with child welfare agencies to avoid raising suspicions, to allay professional concerns and ultimately to diffuse professional intervention.

Many serious case reviews have highlighted the significant impact of disguised compliance and how if unnoticed, can have fatal consequences.

Following the death of Victoria Climbié, Lord Laming advised within his report that professionals should operate with a level of 'respectful uncertainty' to mitigate the danger of disguised compliance.

But how does this work in reality?

We speak in early years of the importance of developing strong relationships with parents and carers, recognising them as the child's primary carer and first educator. It would be easy to become invested in our families and to feel we 'know' them.

How do we maintain a healthy level of scepticism and professional curiosity when concerns are identified?

## Task 1

### Scenario

Mehmet's attendance has been erratic this term. He is notably tired during his time at nursery and he is arriving unkempt, which is unusual. You have spoken with mum in recent weeks and she has explained that she has been working long hours and routine has 'slipped' at home. She becomes upset when talking about home life and how she is struggling financially. Mum often will mention how hard she is working to support the family and that she struggles with stress and anxiety.

What thoughts run through your mind reading this scenario?

How does your 'respectful uncertainty' and 'professional curiosity' influence your thinking?

How will you remain focused on Mehmet's needs and wellbeing?

Are you concerned about Mum's wellbeing?

How will you move forward with your concerns?

It can be challenging prioritising your concerns and processing your thinking when tackling difficult situations. [www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk](http://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk) offers the following top tips for professional's consideration:

- Question your own assumptions about how families function and guard against over optimism
- Recognise how your own feelings (for example tiredness, feeling rushed or illness) might impact on your view of a child or family on a given day
- Demonstrate a willingness to have less than 'comfortable' interactions with families when this is necessary
- Address any professional anxiety about how hostile or resistant families might react to being asked direct or difficult questions
- Remain open minded and expect the unexpected
- Appreciate that respectful scepticism and challenge are healthy – it is ok to question what you are told
- Ensure you can recognise disguised compliance
- Understand the impact of coercive control on the behaviour and responses of family members
- Understand the cumulative impact on children of multiple or combined risk factors, e.g., domestic abuse, parental drug/alcohol misuse, parental mental health (previously referred to as 'toxic mix')
- Ensure that your practice is reflective and that you have access to good quality supervision

## Task 2

Use these reflective questions to support you to reflect on staff's current knowledge and practice.

- Do staff understand disguised compliance?
- What training or information has been made available to practitioners to enable them to further develop their knowledge of the subject?
- What opportunities have staff been provided with to apply this knowledge to their practice?
- How confident do staff feel in challenging/managing disguised compliance?
- Are there any procedures in place to provide staff with guidance when managing disguised compliance?
- What agencies do you have contact with that could provide further support with this issue should it arise?
- Do staff have an awareness of serious case reviews, the learning we take from them and how this should inform changes to practice? If so, what process is in place to ensure there is an impact on practice? What evidence is maintained to show this progress? If not, how could you take learning from SCR and impact positively on practice?

### **Task 3**

Use this link to explore further about disguise compliance.

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/learning-from-case-reviews/disguised-compliance/>