

Complaints Investigators as Critical Friend

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**Complaint
investigators need
multiple skills to carry
out their role
effectively**



Complaints Investigators As Boundary Spanners

“A life of tension and ambiguity”

- Opposing forces of self-interest and collaboration
- Often managing without power
- Personal and professional interests
- Multiple accountabilities
- Complexity



WILLIAMS, P., 2011. The life and times of the boundary spanner. *Journal of Integrated Care*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp.26-33.



Complaints Investigators As Critical Friends

- Complaints investigators who work within an organisation also act as **critical friend** to their own organisation – this is similar to the work of internal auditors.
- This can be a difficult balance for complaints investigators to achieve.



Critical?

...I WAITED AGES FOR
A BED...THE FOOD'S
LOUSY...I HAVEN'T
SEEN A DOCTOR...



" HE'S IN A CRITICAL CONDITION "



What is a Critical Friend?

“A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work.”

COSTA, A. L. and KALLICK, B. 1993. Through the Lens of a Critical Friend. *Educational Leadership*. vol. 51(2), pp. 49-51

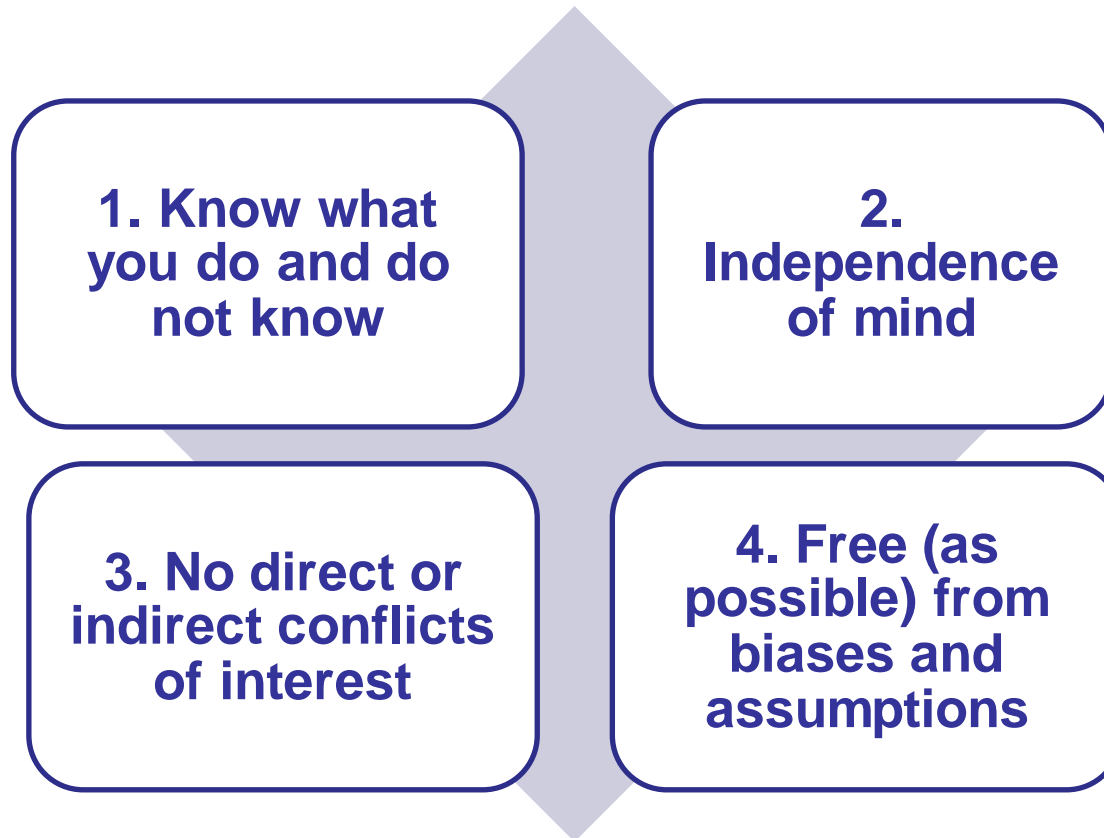


Critical Friends Do Not

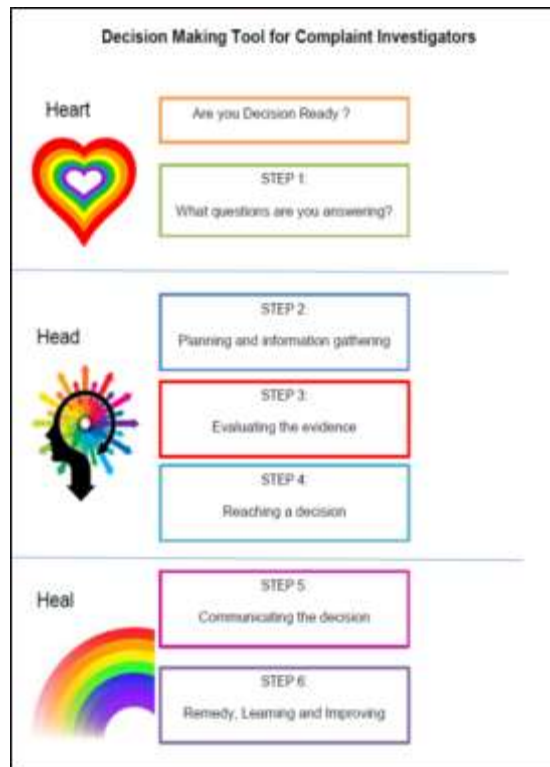
- Assume a directive role
- Offer solutions to problems or 'quick fixes'
- Rush to judge
- Say they know the better than others
- Impose agendas of their own
- Undermine the authority of others



So what do you need to be a critical friend?



SPSO draft Decision Making Tool for Investigators



1. Knowledge

Know yourself

Know what you don't know

Understand your 'circle of competence'

Accept your limitations

Seek advice from others where needed

Learn how to think



2. Independence of Mind

The state of mind that permits the provision of an opinion without being affected by influences that compromise professional judgment, allowing an individual to act with integrity, and exercise objectivity and professional scepticism.

- Often you will need to make tough decisions about issues involving people you know.
- Need to question whether you are being swayed or influenced by something or someone else?



Encourage Independence of Mind

Avoid Groupthink – group consensus

- Explore alternatives/test assumptions
- Be a ‘devils advocate’
- Make up your own mind before sharing your view

Reduce Noise – variability in judgement

- Use checklists or ‘reasoned rules’
- Seek feedback on your decisions

Give yourself time to think



3. Conflicts of Interest

A set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest

- A **direct** conflict of interest exists when you have, or appear to have, a personal interest in something
- An **indirect** conflict of interest might arise from a perceived or assumed interest



Manage Conflicts of Interest

- Have a clear statement of what conflict of interest means in relation to complaints handling
- Consider individual complaint situations
- Make any conflicts known immediately
- Disqualify yourself if needs be
- Don't investigate yourself
- Think about how it might look to others



4. Bias and Assumption

Everyone has Biases

Bias is an inclination to present or hold a partial perspective, often accompanied by a refusal to consider the possible merits of alternative points of view.

Implicit Bias

When you discriminate for or against a person in some way
- hidden stereotypes and prejudices often based on social categories

Cognitive Bias

Affects the way we think –
are common errors or habits of thought which arise from the use of shortcuts (heuristics)



Cognitive Bias Examples

Confirmation Bias	The tendency to search for, interpret, focus on and remember information and facts in a way that confirms one's preconceptions
Correlation Fallacy	Inaccurately perceiving a relationship between two unrelated events
Fundamental Attribution Error	The tendency for to over-emphasize personality-based explanations for behaviours observed in others, while under-emphasizing the role and power of situational influences on the same behaviour

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases



Reduce Bias and Assumption

1. Understand and accept your biases

- Test yourself: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
- Train and Learn (become more aware)

2. Use strategies that deny biases the chance to operate

- Recruitment (Test for RQ)
- Use planning tools to encourage rational thinking



In Summary

To be an effective and valued Critical Friend

**Question your
Knowledge**

**Encourage
Independence
of Mind**

**Manage
Conflicts of
Interest**

**Reduce Bias
and
Assumption**



And Finally

Complaints Investigators - A Profession?

Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors

To carry out their duties effectively, offering independent and objective judgement and advice, internal audit teams must be appropriately qualified, experienced, trained, and properly resourced and work to the IIA Global International Professional Practice Framework (IPPF). They must have unrestricted access to all parts of the organisation and operate free from interference or obstruction.

<https://www.iaa.org.uk/policy/publications/independence-and-objectivity/>



Complaints Investigators

A Profession – Why Not?

A profession has:

- Shared body of distinct knowledge
- Knowledge is the basis for practical techniques
- Shared sense of professional identity
- Codes and Standards
- Appropriate training and regulation
- Enforcement of ethical and competent practice



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