

## Language - Guidance

**(This document may be shared at the beginning of multi-agency meetings, professional meetings, strategy meetings or whenever there are meetings and discussions about children who are being exploited.)**

In Achieving for Children we want to promote the value of children and not diminish their experiences or place blame on them by using language that places negative connotations on them and their experiences.

When we describe children and young people's experiences, any language that implies that a child, young person or group of young people are complicit or responsible for the exploitation they may suffer, or crimes they may be victim to, must always be challenged.

We will not use the following language, choosing instead to use alternatives that reflect the presence of coercion and lack of control children and young people have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact on children.

- Promiscuous
- Manipulative
- Streetwise
- Risky choices
- Risky behaviour
- Placing themselves at risk
- Lifestyle choices
- Absconder
- Sexually aware or experienced
- Aggressive
- Liar
- Boys being boys
- Glamour
- Will not engage

**Some examples of inappropriate terms and suggested alternatives:**

Inappropriate term	Suggested alternatives
<p><b>Putting themselves at risk Is a risk taker</b></p> <p>This implies that the child is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child may have been groomed.</li> <li>● The child is at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited.</li> <li>● A perpetrator may exploit the child’s increased vulnerability.</li> <li>● The child is not in a protective environment.</li> <li>● The situation could reduce the child’s safety.</li> <li>● The location is dangerous to children.</li> <li>● The location/situation could increase a perpetrator’s opportunity to abuse them.</li> <li>● It is unclear whether the child is under duress to go missing.</li> <li>● There are concerns that the child may be being sexually abused.</li> <li>● It is unclear why the child is getting into cars.</li> <li>● There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way.</li> <li>● There are concerns regarding other influences on the child.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual activity with...</b></p> <p>This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child has been sexually abused.</li> <li>● The child has been raped.</li> <li>● There are reports of sexual abuse.</li> <li>● The child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that the child may have been groomed and/or coerced.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexually active since [age under 13]</b></p> <p>A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child has been raped.</li> <li>● The child has been/may have been sexually abused.</li> <li>● Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Has been contacting adult males/females via phone or internet</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adult males/females may have been contacting the child.</li> <li>● The child may have been groomed.</li> <li>● There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with a child.</li> <li>● The child is vulnerable to online perpetrators.</li> </ul>

<p>not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the child.</li> <li>● Adults appear to be using a range of methods to communicate with the child.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is being sexually exploited.</li> <li>● There are concerns that the child has been raped.</li> <li>● Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child.</li> <li>● The child is being sexually abused.</li> <li>● The child’s vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.</li> <li>● The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency</li> </ul>
<p><b>In a relationship with...</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person’s age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending.</li> <li>● The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Involved in CSE</b></p> <p>This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused. A five year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.</li> <li>● The child is being sexually exploited.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promiscuous</b></p> <p>This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. Promiscuous is a judgemental term which stereotypes and labels people. It isn’t appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, but particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.</li> <li>● The child is being sexually exploited.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Prostituting themselves</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the abuse and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p> <p>Changes in legislation have meant that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.</li> <li>● The child is being sexually exploited.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Boyfriend/girlfriend</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.</p> <p>Children have been challenged in court with practitioners recordings where a practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's boyfriend or girlfriend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending.</li> <li>● The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Drug running – He/she is drug running</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Child criminal exploitation (CCE).</li> <li>● The child is being criminally exploited.</li> <li>● The child is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recruit/run/work</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is being criminally exploited.</li> </ul>
<p><b>He/she is choosing this lifestyle</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is being criminally exploited.</li> </ul>

<p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is being sexually exploited.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spending time/associating with 'elders'</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The young person says that they are friends with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation, offending.</li> <li>● The young person has been groomed, exploited, controlled.</li> </ul> <p>Note: If the elder is under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using child protection processes.</p>
<p><b>Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child is being sexually/criminally exploited.</li> <li>● The child is being criminally exploited through drug debt.</li> <li>● There are concerns that the child has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent.</li> <li>● Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child.</li> <li>● The child is being sexually abused.</li> <li>● The child's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.</li> <li>● The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Will not engage</b></p> <p>This implies that the child or young person has consciously decided not to work with an agency and that they are purposefully making this impossible. It does not place any responsibility with the professional to utilise alternative methods to engage and work with the child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The child does not feel safe enough to work with professionals</li> <li>● The child is fearful of telling their experiences.</li> <li>● The professional has not yet found the right way to be trusted by the child</li> </ul>

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