

"You are / X is placing yourself/ themselves at risk"

"You are involved in drug dealing/ X is actively involved in drug dealing and running"

"You are prostituting yourself" / "Your son / daughter is prostituting him/herself"

"You cannot protect your child"

"X cannot control their child"

"You know the type...hanging around like a little chav, obviously dealing from his bike"

"Little shit, X is a wannabe gangsta, dresses like a chav with his chain and man bag"

"You are drugs running" / "Your son/daughter is drugs running"

"X is choosing to leave the home"

"X spends time with (older exploitative adult) and is choosing to do so"

"We need to criminalise these parents for failing to protect"

Language Matters - A video for professionals working to prevent child sexual and criminal exploitation

## Change the narrative – Make words matter!

OUR CHILD, OUR FAMILY, OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO RECOGNISE ABUSE AS ABUSE

As professionals, it is vital that we lead the way in representing and advocating for our children and their families. The tones/content and words we use will have an impact and will lead the child/family to decide how they would wish to engage with you, as a professional. Poor language affects the ability to engage.

Victim blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt, which in turn may lead to a child not disclosing harm they have suffered.

Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, **must be avoided**.

Language should reflect the presence of coercion and lack of control young people have in an abusive/exploitative situation and **MUST** recognise the severity of the impact to the child/young person.

Sometimes, language used brings the significant risk of ‘normalising’ and minimising the child’s experiences and harm suffered;

- a child is not responsible for being raped because he or she met with the perpetrator abusing them, they did not willingly do this
- a child is not responsible for being stabbed in the back of the knee because he or she met with a member of an organised crime group, they did not willingly do this
- a parent cannot control their child because they have limited capacity, they are struggling to understand the risks faced by their child and the coercion exploiters have over them

It is our responsibility to understand the context within which “choices” are made and our responsibility to recognise abuse: if we do not recognise the constrained circumstances within which victims make “choices”, we will see them as being in control and not recognise their need for intervention and support. Intensive language risks damaging trust and reinforces the victim’s own sense of self blame.

The following table details words/phrases which should not be used and offers some alternative descriptors. This information has been taken from [Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation](#) document produced in collaboration with The Children’s Society, Victim Support and the National Police Chiefs’ Council:

DO NOT USE... <b>X</b>	TRY ... <b>✓</b>
Putting themselves at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is facing risks of exploitation</li> <li>- Concerns that he/she is being groomed</li> <li>- The location is dangerous to the child</li> <li>- Concerns that he/she is coercing the child</li> </ul>
Sexual activity with ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The child has been raped</li> <li>- The child has been sexually abused</li> </ul>
He/she is drugs running.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The child is being criminally exploited</li> <li>- The child is being trafficked</li> </ul>

The child is 'going to work' The child is 'recruiting'	- The child is being criminally exploited
He/she is choosing this lifestyle He/she is making a choice to go meet ....	- He/she is being coerced / threatened to meet with risky adults. - There are concerns about age/imbalance of power / coercion and control
He/she has been offered drugs in return for sex or to run drugs	- The child is facing risks of sexual / criminal exploitation - The child is being exploited - The child is being raped - The child is being trafficked - The child's vulnerability regarding substance misuse is being used by exploiters to abuse them
He/she is choosing to spend time with ... (person of concern)	- He/she is being coerced / threatened to meet with risky adults. - There are concerns about age/imbalance of power / coercion and control
Boyfriend/girlfriend	- The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about the person's age, imbalance of power, exploitation and / or offending. - The young person has been/is being groomed / exploited / coerced.
Prostituting themselves	- The child is being exploited - The child is being raped - The child is being sexually harmed
Promiscuous	- The child is facing risks of exploitation
Involved in CSE / Involved in CCE	- The child is being criminally / sexually exploited - The child is facing risks of exploitation - The child has been sexually/physically/emotionally harmed
He/she has been contacting males/females over the internet	- The child is facing risks of exploitation - The child is being groomed online - Perpetrators are using varied methods to contact victims

For further information see, [Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation produced in collaboration with The Children's Society, Victim Support and the National Police Chiefs' Council](#)

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