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| **Describing the Behaviours of Children at risk of CSE** |

Child Sexual Exploitation is abuse and as such is characterised by a power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse and/or some form of vulnerability on the part of the victim.

The use of inappropriate language to describe the behaviour of children at risk of CSE may:

Appear to judge the child by implying that they could have acted differently; and/or,

Imply that the child is to blame by “putting themselves at risk”, “making lifestyle choices”, or “displaying promiscuous or sexualised behaviour”.

If we talk about a child/young person in these terms, what they (and other professionals) may hear is that they are in some way responsible for what is happening to them and therefore less deserving of our support.

The following table provides some alternative ways of describing behaviours that children at risk of sexual exploitation may exhibit.

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| **Inappropriate terms** | **Suggested alternatives** |
| Putting themselves at risk | Child may have been groomed.  The child is at an increased vulnerability to being abused/exploited.  A Perpetrator may exploit the child’s increased Vulnerability  Situation could reduce the child’s safety  Location/situation could increase a perpetrators opportunity to abuse them.  Child in not in a protective environment  The location is dangerous to children  Not clear if the child is under duress to go missing  Concerns are that the child may be being sexually abused  It is unclear why the child is getting in to cars.  Concern that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way.  Concerns regarding others Influences on the child. |
| Sexual activity with…  Sexually active since… | They have or may have been sexually abused  They have or may have been raped.  Allegation of sexual abuse  Child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that they child may have been groomed/coerced. |
| Have been contacting adult Males/females via phone or internet | Adult males/females have been contacting the child.  Child may have been groomed.  Concerns that the adult is facilitating commination with a child.  Child is vulnerable to online perpetrators.  Concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the child.  Adults appear to be using a range of methods to communicate with the child |
| offering her drugs seemingly in return for sex’ | Child is being sexually exploited  Concerns that the child has been raped  Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child  The child is being sexually abused  The child’s vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.  The perpetrators have a hold over the child by the fact that they have a drug dependency. |
| Involved in CSE | This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child being abused a better term would be the child is vulnerable to being sexually exploited or they are being sexually exploited.  A 5 year old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons. |
| Promiscuous | This puts the blame on the child and implies they know what may be happening and therefore is not seen by practitioners as exploitative or abusive.  Often used to describe females behaviour. |
| Prostituting themselves | This completely misses that the child is being controlled and manipulated.  Changes in legislation mean that child prostitution is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used |
| Boyfriend/girlfriend | Children have been challenged in court with practitioner’s recordings where their practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child’s boyfriend or girlfriend. |

For further information and guidance on working with children at risk of sexual exploitation go to the Local Safeguarding Children Board’s website at [www.swindonlscb.org.uk/wav/Pages/CSE.aspx](http://www.swindonlscb.org.uk/wav/Pages/CSE.aspx)