

Guidance for using appropriate language for those subject to or at risk of exploitation.

Making Words Matter

20/10/21: Developed by SSP BSU in consultation with Jeannette Chipping, Child Exploitation and Missing Children Manager.

13/1/22: Updated to include reference to Group and Location Based Harm (Source: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings. Simone Nyarko (2018) Hackney Contextual Safeguarding Project. [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk)

25/2/22 – updated to reflect revisions [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://childrenssociety.org.uk)

Use of this document

- This document can be used by professionals when discussing or recording information about the exploitation of children and adults.
- It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing children and/or adults who have been exploited, or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the individual is complicit or responsible for the abuse or exploitation that has happened or may happen to them, must be avoided.
- Language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control people have in abusive or exploitative situations, and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the person.
- Victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the person from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals.
- When victim-blaming language is used amongst professionals, there is a risk of normalising and minimising the person's experience, resulting in a lack of appropriate response.
- Professionals must also be aware that any recording will be subject to Third Party Disclosure should there be any criminal court case. Inappropriate use of language can have serious consequences within a criminal court context, and may impact upon convictions.
- The following slides outlines terms that should not be used when discussing or recording issues of exploitation, and includes suggestions of appropriate alternative phrases.

Additional content to include Risk Outside The Home

- ✓ There have been some revisions to this document since the initial publication. Language is always changing and developing and terms that were common and accepted in the recent past may no longer be.
- ✓ The content of some slides have been revised in line with the updated [The Children's Society Exploitation Language Guide](#). The source of the information is indicated on the relevant slides.

There are also some additional slides added regarding:

- ✓ [Responses To Individual Child Harm](#) – this section has been updated and extended⁽¹⁾.
- ✓ **Key new features** pertaining to the use of vulnerability language to describe contexts including:
 - ✓ [Responses to Group Based Child Harm](#) and
 - ✓ [Responses to Location Based Child Harm](#) ⁽²⁾.

(1) Source: : 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](#) adapted from The Children's Society's guidance: [Appropriate Language Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation Guidance for Professionals \(2018\)](#).

(2) Source: : 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

The following slides outlines terms that should not be used when discussing or recording Child Exploitation and offers some alternative, appropriately worded phrases and narratives.

The guidance in the slides has been gratefully produced with support and materials developed by NWG and Lawrence Jordan, Social Worker Milton Keynes. Also "Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation in collaboration with The Children's Society, Victim Support and the National Police Chiefs' Council.

Updated with information from: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk/practice-guides)

Updated with information from: [The Children's Society Exploitation Language Guide](#)

Responses to Individual Child Harm

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Putting themselves at risk.

This implies that the child is responsible for the risk presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices without recognition of the child's age, circumstances and lived experience or the realities of grooming, coercion and control.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#) (2022)

Updated from: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings
Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child may have been groomed.
- There are a lack of protective factors surrounding the child.
- The situation could reduce the child's safety.
- The location is dangerous to children
- It is unclear whether the child is under duress to go missing.
- There are concerns that the child may be being sexually abused/exploited.
- It is unclear why the child is getting into [x] vehicle or visiting [x] location.
- There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child to act in this way.
- There are concerns regarding other influences on the child.
- The child is not in a protective environment.
- The location/situation could increase a perpetrator's opportunity to abuse them.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
Would not cooperate with...	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child did not feel safe enough to disclose.➤ The child appears to fear negative repercussions for disclosure.➤ The child is being criminally/sexually exploited and or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose.➤ Child considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed in the context of exploitation.
Missing...	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child's safety is context driven.➤ The child does not feel able to stay at their current location.➤ The child is being groomed/coerced to leave.➤ The child may consider leaving to be the safest option in this circumstance.➤ Someone else has control over this child's behaviour.➤ The child has returned to a place safe.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Sexual activity with...</p> <p>This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate and should not be used.</p> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The perpetrator has raped the child➤ The child has been/may have been sexually abused.➤ Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited, raped or sexually abused.➤ The child has been raped.➤ The child has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that the child may have been groomed and/or coerced.
<p>Sexually active since [age under 13]*</p> <p>A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.</p> <p>*For further information see the SSP Underage sexual activity guidance and Underage sexual activity briefing</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child has been raped.➤ The child has been/may have been sexually abused.➤ Concerns exist that the child may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Has been contacting adults (males & females) via phone or internet.</p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.</p> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Adult males/females may have been contacting the child.➤ The child may have been groomed.➤ There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with a child.➤ There are 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.
<p>Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs.</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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child is being sexually/criminally exploited and is a victim of human trafficking.➤ The child is being sexually/criminally exploited through drug debt.➤ The perpetrator is using debt bondage to continue to control and exploit the child.➤ There are concerns that the child has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent.➤ Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child.➤ The child is being sexually abused.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

In a relationship with...

This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context including the use of coercion and control by the perpetrator.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/child-exploitation-language-guide) (2022)

Involved in CSE/CCE...

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.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/child-exploitation-language-guide) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- 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.
- The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.
- The perpetrator has manipulated the child/young person to believe they are in a relationship.

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child is a victim of sexual exploitation
- The child is being criminally exploited for example to distribute drugs/hold weapons/store money etc. The child is being exploited.
- The child is a victim of human trafficking and/or modern slavery (where there exploitation involves being recruited, moved or held by a perpetrator)
- The child is being sexually exploited.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Promiscuous.

This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. The word 'promiscuous' is a judgmental term based assumptions and includes a significant gender bias as it is rarely applied to boys and men.

It isn't appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, and particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](#) (2022)

Prostituting themselves.

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.

The term child prostitution has been removed from legislation which makes clear it is no longer an acceptable term and should never be used.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](#) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child is a victim of sexual abuse and/or exploitation.
- The child is a victim of human trafficking and/or modern slavery (where their exploitation involves being recruited, moved or held by a perpetrator).
- The perpetrator has used coercion and control to exploit the child.

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child is a victim of sexual abuse and/or exploitation.
- The child is a victim of human trafficking and/or modern slavery (where their exploitation involves being recruited, moved or held by a perpetrator which is highly likely in this context).
- The perpetrator has raped or facilitated the child being raped.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Boyfriend/Girlfriend.</p> <p>This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context including imbalance of power or coercion and control. 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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person however, there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending.➤ The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.➤ This person is not a healthy or safe relationship for the child.
<p>Drug Running - He/She/They are drug running.</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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being criminally exploited to distribute drugs.➤ The child is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.➤ Child criminal exploitation (CCE).➤ The child is being criminally exploited.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Recruit/Run/Work.</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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child has been targeted by perpetrators and is being groomed to distribute drugs.➤ The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being criminally exploited.➤ The child is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation.➤ The child is being criminally exploited.
<p>They/He/she are choosing this lifestyle.</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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child is a victim of human trafficking and is being exploited.➤ The child is being trafficked for the purpose of exploitation.➤ A child can never consent to their own exploitation.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

They need to take responsibility for their behaviour.

It may feel as though a young person is making choices and poor decisions, but no young person is responsible for their own exploitation. Exploiters use manipulation and grooming to coerce young people into criminal or sexual activity. The only person responsible is the exploiter.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide / The Children's Society](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/child-exploitation-language-guide/) ([childrensociety.org.uk](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/)) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- They need support to understand the complex nature of exploitation.
- They need support to understand what exploitation is, and how they have been groomed.
- They need support to understand that only the exploiter is responsible for what happened to them and they are not to blame.
- They need help and support to understand how the exploiter is harming them and does not have their best interests in mind.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Dehumanising terms such as:

Cuckooing/Juvenile/Nominal

Terms such as these can be useful in identifying the situation a young person is in, though they could be seen as dehumanising terms which minimise the seriousness of the situation the young person is in.

Though these terms are recognised by professionals, they can remove the perception that they are a child under the age of 18 who may be being exploited and abused, who needs to be safeguarded from harm.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide / The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- They may be being trafficked for the purposes of sexual or criminal exploitation.
- They may be being sexually exploited within the county lines context.
- They are being considered a perpetrator through the offences they committed were as a result of them being a victim of modern slavery.
- Their house/accommodation has been invaded by organised crime groups.
- The child has been coerced to conceal drugs inside their body.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

They will not engage with services.

A young person's previous experience of engaging with services may impact their perceptions of the support they are going to receive from a service. Young people may be expected to speak to lots of professionals, and impacts of funding, capacity, staff transitions can mean that a young person feels they won't be supported. It is important to recognise the factors creating difficulty for services to engage the young person.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- Due to the trauma they have experienced because of their exploitation, the child finds it difficult to trust unknown adults.
- Services have not yet found the best way to build relationships with them.
- Support was offered that did not meet the needs of the young person at that time.
- It is recommended that the services try an alternative approach to engaging the child.

Responses To Individual Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Young person is vulnerable.

There are some specific terms that can help identify heightened vulnerability to exploitation, however it is the situation surrounding the young person rather than the young person themselves that is the cause of this vulnerability. Being specific about these environmental factors and vulnerabilities can be helpful to not only take any responsibility away from the young person but also to help design the multi-agency interventions – for example, the young person and their family is living in acute poverty and this creates a vulnerable situation to exploitation.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)) (2022)

See also next slide.

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The young person could be in a vulnerable situation
- Their environment or situation could put them at risk of exploitation.
- The young person could be impacted by the situation surrounding them.
- The contexts or environments the young person is in could make them vulnerable to exploitation.

Interconnected conditions for CSE. Can be applicable to other forms of exploitation



Children/Young people are only vulnerable if there is an abuser in their vicinity targeting and wanting to abuse them.

Beckett 2011, 2016;
text adapted to
'source of harm' in
2019)

- ✓ A danger of agencies responses to assign blame to the child and think that by giving child tools/advice this will safeguard them from abuse/exploitation - leaves the child/ren to reduce their own risk/vulnerability.
- ✓ Toolkits can be too prescriptive and bypass professional judgement - they should only ever be used as a guidance for professional judgement.
- ✓ Indicators need to be validated, or at least, not discriminated against boys, younger children and children from Black, Minority Ethnic & Refugee (BMER) communities.
- ✓ Using CSE/CCE acronyms deters people from talking about what has actually happened - rape, assault, etc.

Consider also the use of the following terms and the impact this may have.

Adultification

Adultification happens when preconceptions held about children, lead to them being treated and perceived as being more 'adult-like' (Goff et al, 2014, Davis, J. and Marsh, N. (2020).

Where children are 'seen' as more adult-like, further assumptions may be made about a child, including the perception that they have more agency, autonomy, and choice, than they actually do. It is likely that these perceptions of children will transfer into the language used to describe them, affecting the ways in which they are supported and safeguarded by professionals.

Adultification disproportionately affects black boys as evidenced in a number of serious case reviews in recent years. It stems from bias and prejudice which perpetuates negative stereotypes and racism and can lead to significant safeguarding failures.

This is reflective of other forms of discrimination and it is therefore important for professionals to be aware of all biases and areas of systemic oppression which impact children's lives. These can be present in any work force and we therefore recommend that all organisations ensure an intersectional and anti-oppressive approach is taken when working with and safeguarding children.

Adultification is discussed in the context of safeguarding black boys from exploitation in this [article](#) by Jahnine Davis and Nick Marsh and in the VKPP Spotlight Briefing: [Child Criminal Exploitation | Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(vkpp.org.uk\)](#). 25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#) (2022)

Adultification bias was one of the findings highlighted in the City of London & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review published in March 2022. In 2020, Child Q, a Black female child of secondary school age, was stripped and searched by female police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service. [Click here to access the report](#)

Reframing the term 'plugging' to recognise the practice as sexual abuse

Reframing the term 'plugging' to 'children being forced or coerced to carry drugs internally' and recognising the practice as sexual abuse.	<p>Criminally exploited children may be forced to carry drugs internally to avoid detection. This practice involves packages of drugs being inserted into a child's body, commonly the rectum or vagina alongside oral ingestion.</p> <p>Organised Crime Groups involved in county lines operations use this as a method to move drugs from one place to another, concealing the drugs in children they are trafficking. This is often referred to as 'plugging', 'bottling', or 'banking' by a range of agencies.</p>
Why is it a problem?	<p>These are slang terms which do not reflect the reality of what is happening to a child and when used, minimises the abuse that a child has experienced. By using slang terms that perpetrators of this abuse may also use, professionals' risk negatively reinforcing the narrative of choice and blame.</p> <p>The Children's Society sees the practice of children being forced or coerced to carry drugs rectally or vaginally as sexual abuse and feel it should be named as such. Current legislation does not support prosecuting the practice as sexual abuse as the Sexual Offences Act 2003 requires evidence of a 'sexual motive' or of 'sexual gratification'.</p>
The reality:	<p>The child is being penetrated (this penetration is either carried out directly by adults or other children or under their direction and control), with substances that pose a significant physical health risk should the package rupture, including the risk of death.</p> <p>This penetration involves the violation of a child's sexual organs and is an inherently traumatic experience for the child. It is a physical violation that has a strong likelihood of long-lasting negative impact on a child's emotional and mental health and can leave the child feeling significant shame and humiliation.</p>
What should be done?	<p>Using appropriate language can help professionals to reframe the issue from one of choice, to one of exploitation and abuse. By clearly describing the act of children being forced or coerced to carry drugs internally and labelling it as a sexual abuse issue, victims are more likely to receive appropriate safeguarding and health interventions which lead to improved support and outcomes for children.</p>

Reframing the term 'money mules' to Child Financial Exploitation

Reframing the term 'money mules' to Child Financial Exploitation	<p>Children and young people can be financially exploited in a range of ways (See CYP and Modern Slavery guide). The emergence of internet banking, online gaming and social media has created further spaces and opportunities for perpetrators to target and exploit children for financial gain.</p> <p>Where young people's bank accounts have been used for fraudulent and illegal activity, agencies are often referring to these young people as 'money mules'.</p>
Why is it a problem?	<p>The term 'money mules' is problematic because it is essentially describing these children as animals, namely mules or donkeys. Dehumanising language is never advisable and risks reinforcing negative narratives and stereotypes of child victims as offenders. It also risks creating negative self-image amongst young people.</p> <p>The term 'money mule' is also unhelpful because it focuses the conversation entirely on the person's actions – in this case fraudulent bank activity – and ignores the complexity of the situation and the child's exploitation while implying consent and agency. In the same way that describing a criminal exploited young person groomed into county lines as a 'drug dealer' is unhelpful, so is the use of the term 'money mules' in this context.</p>
The reality	<p>Describing children whose bank accounts are used for criminal activity as 'money mules', ignores the full reality of their experiences and minimises the control, coercion and abuse they may have experienced.</p> <p>The recruitment of these victims follows a familiar pattern to other forms of child exploitation. They are targeted by perpetrators and then groomed, often through promises of payment or gifts (such as online gaming credits or skins), they may be tested through small transactions and are eventually trapped in debt bondage and potential poverty through funds being confiscated and accounts shut down. Exploiters will then capitalise on this and use the situation to coerce the child into other forms of exploitation.</p>
What should be done?	<p>Using appropriate language can help professionals to reframe the issue from one of fraud, criminality, and choice, to one of exploitation and abuse. This shift encourages appropriate safeguarding interventions which lead to improved support and outcomes for children.</p>

Use of the term modern slavery set out in Modern Slavery Act 2015

The term modern slavery (Modern Slavery Act 2015) describes organised criminal activity including sexual and criminal exploitation, forced labour and domestic servitude.

Useful in a range of contexts to describe and take appropriate action against serious organised crime it is important to consider the wider context and history of the term 'slavery' and the connotations it may have for different people including young people themselves.

For many the term 'slavery' refers to the transatlantic slave trade and the British Empire's key role in the 400-year period of mass scale systemic oppression, torture, and murder of millions of Africans. Therefore some concerns that the term modern slavery may trivialise or relativise such historic slavery. Also important to recognise that the practice of slavery did not begin or end with the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and continued to take place in a range of contexts around the world up to and including the present day.

Modern perpetrators including Organised Crime Groups also use tactics of control and coercion that echo those used historically including violence, abuse, holding people in captivity, and the targeting of marginalised groups with false promises of material and social gain.

Consider:

- ✓ the use of this term in conversations with young people, consider how it might feel to be described as a 'slave', what it might mean for them, and consider alternatives.
- ✓ Where it is likely that a child may hear or read the term being used to describe them, we recommend making space to explore the term with them, and why professionals may use it.
- ✓ Ensure there is time and space for the young person to talk about how the term impacts them if they want to and come to an agreement on the language that is used between you.
- ✓ Where relevant, then advocate for a change in language from other professionals who may use the term in conversation with the young person.

Responses to Group Based Harm

Responses To Group Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Spending time/associating with ‘elders’.</p> <p>When this is used in an exploitative context, this implies that the child or young people is choosing to be in contact with person grooming or exploiting them. When in reality a child who is being coerced, controlled, or manipulated does not have the capacity to make a free and informed choice.</p> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The young person says that they are friends with a person however, there are concerns about that person’s age, the imbalance of power, exploitation, offending.➤ The young person has been groomed, exploited, and/or controlled. <p>Note: If the ‘elder’ is under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using language of exploitation and also requires adherence to child protection processes/response.</p>
<p>Offered him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs.</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> <p>25/2/22 from Child Exploitation Language Guide The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) (2022)</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child is being sexually/criminally exploited and is a victim of human trafficking.➤ The child is being sexually/ criminally exploited through drug debt.➤ The perpetrator is using debt bondage to continue to control and exploit the child.➤ There are concerns that the child has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent.➤ Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child.

Responses To Group Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term	Appropriately worded response
<p>Gang Involved or Affiliated</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 or powerful grooming process.</p>	<p>Suggested alternatives may be...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The child is being sexually/criminally exploited.➤ Violence and crime affected child, family or household.➤ There may be harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this peer network.➤ It is unclear why the child is getting into cars. There are concerns that there is a power imbalance and powerful grooming forcing or compelling the child to act in this way.➤ There are concerns regarding other influences on the child. <p>Note: If other members of the peer network are also under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using language of exploitation and also requires adherence to child protection processes/response.</p>

Responses To Group Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

They are involved in a gang/they are involved in criminality.

These phrases imply that the young person is choosing to do this. The use of the term 'gangs' minimises the violence caused to young people in the context of organised crime and youth violence. It also inherently implies choice.

There are also potential racist connotations associated with society's negative image of a gang and who gang members are which can further stigmatise non-white individuals and communities.

25/2/22 from [Child Exploitation Language Guide | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)) (2022)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- They are being criminally exploited, likely by Organised Crime Groups.
- They are being groomed or at risk of being exploited by perpetrators /Organised Crime Groups.
- They are a victim of human trafficking and/or modern slavery and are being exploited to commit criminal offences.

Responses To Group Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

They are being used as a “gift girl”/”uck girl”/”sendout” for an OCG.

These are slang terms used to describe Organised Crime Groups grooming young women and girls with alcohol and drugs and trafficking them to a trap house for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

When phrases such as “gift girl” or others are repeated, it minimises violence against women and girls within the county lines context. Minimising the violence by using terms like this is an established control measure of perpetrators of violence against women and girls. This phrase also reinforces the dehumanising idea that humans can be bought, sold or given as gifts. It is therefore vital that as professionals we use the correct terms to describe the abuse that a child is subjected to.

As professionals we need to make sure we continue to challenge any further derogatory terms that may arise.

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- They are being trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation.
- They are being sexually exploited in a county lines context.
- They have been kidnapped, trafficked, raped, exploited, and abused.

Responses to Location Based Harm

Responses To Location Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Running County Lines.

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.

Source: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child(ren) in this location may be being trafficked and sexually/criminally exploited.
- There may be harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this area.
- This environment may not be safe for these children.
- The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren).
- The child(ren) feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location and/ or the grooming process is so powerful that the child believes this to be their choice.
- The child(ren) do not feel safe enough to leave this location.

Note: County Lines? Is s/he exploited through County Lines? This should always be framed as question where there is not an established link between County border locations or phone/social media 'lines' for the purpose of dealing/supply.

There is a danger that broad use of the term 'County Lines' may distract practitioners from identifying and responding to children groomed, trafficked and exploited for the purpose of local drug dealing or supply.

Responses To Location Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Gang(s) in the Area/ location

This implies that the child or young people are responsible for the exploitation and have the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise an abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm.

Source: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- Area impacted by episodes of serious youth violence.
- Groups of young people congregate to create safety for themselves.
- There may be harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this space/ community/neighbourhood.
- The space/ community or neighbourhood may not be safe for this child or group of children.
- There appears to be limited safe opportunities for young people or adults to interrupt/ harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this community/neighbourhood.
- This community requires support to address concerns or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this space/ community/neighbourhood.
- Owing to conflict and tensions between these groups, other areas or locations in the borough may not be safe for this child or group of children.
- The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse vulnerable children.

Responses To Location Based Child Harm

Poorly worded response/inappropriate term

Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location...

This implies that the child or young people are responsible for any exploitation they experience in a location.

It does not recognise abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm.

Source: 'Languaging Child and Adolescent Vulnerability': A Guide For Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children and families in community settings Simone Nyarko (2018) [Practice guides \(csnetwork.org.uk\)](https://csnetwork.org.uk/practice-guides)

Appropriately worded response

Suggested alternatives may be...

- The child(ren) have an existing peer network in this location.
- The child(ren) have an ownership or investment in the area.
- The child(ren) considers themselves to be safe in this space/community/ neighbourhood.
- The child(ren) did not consider themselves safe where they were.
- The child(ren) have been groomed or coerced into being in this neighbourhood/location.
- The child(ren) does not feel they have another safe place to go.
- The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren).
- The child(ren) feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location.
- The child(ren) do not feel safe enough to leave this location.

Suggested terms which can be used for adults subject to or at risk of exploitation.

The information in the next slides have been adapted from materials developed by Newcastle City Council: [Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation Language for Professionals working with adults](#). This guidance has been gratefully produced with support and materials developed by NWG and Lawrence Jordan, Social Worker Milton Keynes. Also "Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation in collaboration with The Children's Society, Victim Support and the National Police Chief's Council.

No changes to this section.

Inappropriate terms:

Putting themselves at risk Involved in risk taking behaviours.

This implies that the adult is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator(s) and that they are able to make free and informed choices.

Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location..."

This implies that the adult is responsible for any exploitation they experience in a location. It does not recognise abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm

Suggested alternatives

"The adult may have been groomed"

"The adult is at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited"

"A perpetrator may exploit the adult's increased vulnerability"

"The adult is not in a protective environment"

"The situation could reduce the adult's safety"

"The location is dangerous to adults"

"The location/situation could increase a perpetrator's opportunity to abuse them"

"It is unclear whether the adult is under duress"

"There are concerns that the adult may be being sexually abused and/or exploited"

There are concerns that there is a power imbalance influencing the adult to act in this way"

"There are concerns regarding other influences on the adult"

"There are concerns regarding the adults capacity to make relevant decisions regarding contact"

Inappropriate term

“sexual activity with...”

This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate. Adults may have temporarily been unable to consent due to intoxication and/or may lack capacity to consent to sex due to some other reason.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult has been sexually abused”

“The adult has been raped”

“There are reports of sexual abuse”

“The adult has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that they may have been groomed and/or coerced”

“ There are concerns the adult may have been unable to consent”(consider MCA assessment)

Inappropriate term

“Sexually active since...”

When referring to the adult as a child in the context of non-recent reports of abuse, a child cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult has reported that they have been raped”

“The adult has been/may have been sexually abused”

“Concerns exist that the adult may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused”

Inappropriate term

“Has been contacting/seeking relationships with people of concern via social media/online”

This implies that the adult is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context. May need to consider MCA assessment re use of social media.

Suggested alternatives

“People of concern may have been contacting/ targeting the adult”

“The adult may have been groomed/targeted via social media”

“There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with the adult”

“The adult is vulnerable to online perpetrators”

“There are concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the adult”

Inappropriate terms

“Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex”

“Survival Sex work”

This implies that the adult 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.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult is being sexually exploited”

“There are concerns that the adult has been raped”

“Perpetrators are sexually abusing the adult”

“The adult is being sexually abused”

“The adult’s vulnerability regarding drug and or alcohol use is being used by others to abuse them”

“The perpetrators have a hold over the adult by the fact that they have a drug dependency”

Inappropriate terms

“In a relationship with...”

This implies that the adult is in a positive, consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult 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”

“The adult has been/is being groomed, exploited and/or controlled and coerced”

Inappropriate terms**“Promiscuous”**

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.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult is vulnerable to being sexually exploited”

“There are concerns that the adult is being sexually exploited”

Inappropriate terms**Prostituting themselves or selling themselves”**

This implies that the adult 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.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult is vulnerable to being sexually exploited”

“There are concerns that the adult is being sexually exploited”

<p>Inappropriate term Drug running – He/she is drug running or is recruiting others to deal drugs” <i>This implies that the adult 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.</i></p>	<p>Suggested alternatives “Criminal exploitation (CE)” “The adult is being criminally exploited” “There are concerns that the adult is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation”</p>
<p>Inappropriate term He/she is choosing this lifestyle or is making a lifestyle choice” <i>This implies that the adult 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.</i></p>	<p>Suggested alternatives “The adult is being criminally exploited” “The adult is being sexually exploited”</p>
<p>Inappropriate term Spending time/associating with individuals of concern <i>This implies that the adult 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.</i></p>	<p>Suggested alternatives “The adult says that they are friends with a person and there are concerns about that person’s age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending” “There are concerns that the adult has been groomed, exploited and/or coerced and controlled”</p>

Inappropriate term

“Offering him/her drugs seemingly in exchange for sex”

This implies that the adult 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.

Suggested alternatives

“The adult is being sexually/criminally exploited”

“The adult is being criminally exploited through drug debt”

“There are concerns that the adult has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent”

“Perpetrators are sexually abusing the adult”

“The adult is being sexually abused”

“The adult’s vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them”

“The perpetrators have a hold over the adult by the fact that the adult has a drug dependency”

Inappropriate terms

“Would not cooperate with...”

“tells lies, Would not cooperate with...”

Fabricates, exaggerates.

Has a history of making false allegations

Not compliant or not engaging

Suggested alternatives

“The adult did not feel safe enough to disclose”

“The adult may fear negative repercussions for disclosure”

“The adult is being criminally/sexually exploited and/or groomed and feels unable to disclose and or engage

“The adult considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed”

Inappropriate term

“Missing”

Where there are concerns that an adult is not where they normally expected to be and there are concerns they may be at risk

Suggested alternatives

“The adult does not feel able to stay at their current location”

“ The adult is being groomed/coerced to leave”

“ The adult may consider leaving to be the safest option in this circumstance”

“Someone else has control over the adult’s behaviour”

Inappropriate term

“Gang Involved or Affiliated”

“Allows people to use their property for criminal activity”

This implies that the adult 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 or powerful

Suggested alternatives

“The adult is being sexually/criminally exploited”

“Violence and crime affected adult, family or household”

“There are concerns that there is a power imbalance and powerful grooming forcing or compelling the adult to act in this way”

“There are concerns regarding other influences on the adult”

“Cuckooing”

Inappropriate term

“Would not cooperate with...”

“Did / Would not engage with services”

This places all the emphasis on the person. We need to think about some of the factors that might make it difficult for a person to engage with services. Including the coercive or controlling behaviour of others, fear, previous negative experiences of services or the inaccessibility of services.

Suggested alternatives

“The person did not feel safe enough to disclose”

“The person fears negative repercussions for disclosure/ engagement”

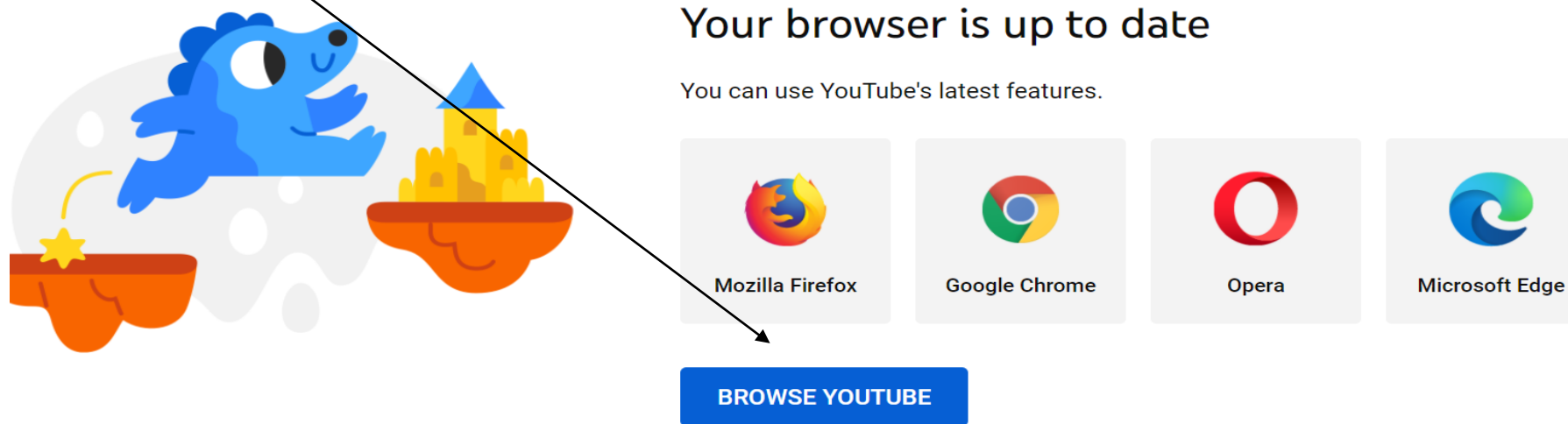
“The person is being criminally / sexually exploited and / or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose/ engage”

“The person considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed in the context of exploitation”

“Services were unable to engage with the individual”

“Services are located in an area the person does not feel safe visiting”

If you click on the hyperlink to view a video clip and you see the following slide. Please click the blue box 'Browse YouTube' and it should take you directly to the relevant video clip.



The impact of language



Source: Waltham Forest Council - Victim Blaming Language

Clip lasts 1:46.

Link - [Victim blaming language - YouTube](#)



Language in Social Work but relevant to other professionals.

Source: [YouTube](#).

Clip lasts 4:47.