



The Scottish Borders Reframing Our Language Guide

Introduction

The Promise highlights the things that must change in Scotland's Care System:

“Scotland must understand that ‘language creates realities.’ Those with care experience must hold and own the narrative of their stories and lives; simple, caring language must be used in the writing of care files.” (The Promise, Page 69)

One of the areas we are seeking to change is the language which professionals use during discussions and in written reports and case records.

Children, young people and families across Scotland told the Independent Care Review of how much of the language professionals use feels stigmatising and institutional and adds to a sense of being different. It often lacks love, warmth and compassion. As professionals we routinely use language to talk to, about and with children and their families that we would never use with our own. As professionals we have rightly been challenged for this and asked to stop and to ensure we use the terms, names and words that the child or young person prefers when describing things that relate to their lives and experiences.

Since the Promise was published, Champions Boards around Scotland, and colleagues in the Children’s Reviewing Team at Edinburgh City Council and Includem have been capturing the voice of children and young people around language that they would like to stop, as well as the language they would like this replaced with.

Using North Lanarkshire’s Language guide, the Includem ‘Getting Our Language Right’ guide, Edinburgh City Council’s ‘Reframing Our Language’ list and discussions with Scottish Borders Council’s Service Development Group for foster carers, we have pulled together a suggested list. This will hopefully support colleagues begin - or continue - to reframe the language that we all too easily slip into using, yet which is quite evidently doing more harm than we ever intended it to. We would invite you to consider the words and phrases in the list below and look at your reports and case notes, change the language and please try your best not to use the terms during meetings.

Where it is not clear, we should ask children and young people what language they would like us to use before they come to meetings or we write reports about them e.g. with regards to names for their carers, or how they prefer their birth parents to be referred to. We should also ensure we pass this information on to other professionals so that they are aware, and children and young people do not have to repeat themselves.

Changing words and terminology is not a new approach, and with it comes the challenge that unless there is some element of personalisation – asking what works for the children, young people, parents and carers themselves – we are simply swapping old labels for new. So, please see and use this list as an opportunity to become more mindful of what words and

phrases work for children and young people, and which do not. We are all unique and no list would ever be universal in its appeal or application.

In addition, we recognise that language is constantly evolving, and therefore the language used within this report is based on the current recommendations at this time.

Please help us Keep the Promise in Scottish Borders, and make 2023 the year we change the way we talk about and with children, young people and their families.

| We will try not to use.... | We will try to use |
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| Abscond | Run away, go missing, not coming home on time, walked out |
| Addressing behaviour | We have 'discussed your behaviour' |
| Birth or Biological Parents / Natural Parents | First family, First mummy or daddy, Parents, family, mum & dad, tummy mummy |
| Care Leaver | Care experienced adult |
| Case/Case Support/Case allocation | Children, young people and families, I support [x] young people, I am lead worker for [x] |
| Challenging behaviour | In distress, reacting to a situation, unmet need, upset, having trouble coping |
| Chaotic | There are risks to... There are a lack of protective factors |
| Child's Plan | Your plan, Next Steps, My plan |
| Contact | Family time, your plans to see or keeping in touch with family, seeing or meeting up with my/ your Dad/Mum/Grandma/Sister/ Brother etc. |
| Continuing Care | Stay put, remain, plan for after you are 18 |
| Defiant | Strong-willed, confident in their choices/opinions |
| Difficult to place | Can't find a home good enough for them; failed by the system |
| Drop out | Early school leaver |
| Drug running/involved in a gang | the child/young person is being criminally exploited to distribute drugs; part of a friend group who have been doing illegal things such as... |
| Dysregulated | Describing context, behaviours and emotions, e.g. Distressed response to [context] |
| Education | School or college |
| Foster Carers | We will ask you what you call them – might be; my family, Foster Mum, Foster Dad, |

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| | People who care about me, my new family, or just their names |
| Hard to reach | Not approached enough |
| Holistic health | Overall health, health in general |
| Incident | Describe the context and behaviours |
| Intervention | Support, elements of a better life |
| Issue | Challenges, barriers, things you're not happy about, difficult situation, something they want to change, goals they want to set |
| Kinship Carers | We will ask you what they should be called – might be; my family, gran, granddad, auntie etc. or use their names |
| LAC/LAAC | Young people, care experienced young people, use their name, LA should say 'our children' |
| LAC Review / LAAC Review | Your meeting, your planning meeting, your review, a looked after child review, (Child or young person's name) review |
| LAC Visit / Statutory Visit | Home Visit, Visit to see you, social work visit |
| Leaving Care | Moving on, moving house, becoming independent |
| Making choices (drug/alcohol related) | unhelpful coping mechanisms, risky coping mechanisms, seeking something, in survival mode |
| Minutes | Notes, written notes of what was said today, what we agreed today, what was decided today |
| Moving Placements | Moving to a new house, a new chapter or fresh start |
| Non-compliant/non-engaging/Hard to reach | We have not been able to engage yet; 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 the time; We need to find a way to build trust; they are not in a place just now to seek support Not ready- <i>look at organisation and family approach here</i> |
| Offenders, young offenders | Young people in conflict with the law- <i>this term reorients our thinking, to consider the young person's relationship to organisations like the police, and how this may have been damaged.</i> |
| Pathway Plan | Your future planning; moving on plan; your plans for the future |
| Peers | Your friends, people your age |

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| Placement | Your home/ your house / where you live |
| Placement Breakdown / Placement Breakdown Meeting | Things didn't work out with your previous carers, things became a bit difficult and you had to move |
| Placing themselves at risk | Seeking reassurance elsewhere |
| Promiscuous | Seeking reassurance/comfort elsewhere |
| Putting themselves in danger | Seeking reassurance elsewhere |
| Residents | young people |
| Respite | Short breaks, short stay, sleepover |
| Rehab / rehabilitation | Going back to live with your family; Going back home, back to mums/dads/ gran's etc. |
| Reviewing Officer / Chair | Person who meets with everyone occasionally to make sure you have everything you need to be well cared for |
| Sanctions | consequences |
| Siblings | Your brothers or sisters (but sibling may be a good non-gender word), or use their names, important people in your life |
| Unit | house |
| Verbally aggressive | They react to [some situations] by shouting and using swear words. They used personal insults including 'xyz' e.g. <i>Lewis started to shout close to my face and clenched his fists. I was unsure why he reacted in this way, his keyworker will explore different ways that we can approach this.</i> |
| Views | What's important to you, how are you feeling, how do you see things, what you think, what would you like to see happening? |
| Vulnerable | Unsafe at points With vulnerabilities- <i>this term acknowledges risk but allows that the person is more than the vulnerabilities that they may have.</i> |

List of Useful Language Resources

If you would like to find out more about the impact of the Language of Care and review other areas of practice where language and terminology has recently been changed, please access the following resources:

- Beacon House '*What We Say*' Comic (*A Language Shift Resource*). Available at: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/What-We-Say-Comic-1.pdf> (Accessed: 1st February 2023).

- Edinburgh City Council (2022) *Reframing Our Language*. Available at: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/children-families/edinburghs-promise#:~:text=Reframing%20our%20language&text=Language%20is%20a%20key%20part,are%20speaking%20and%20communicating%20about>. (Accessed: 1st February 2023)
- Includem (2023) *Getting Our Language Right Guide*. Glasgow: Includem. Available at: [includem Language Guide by includem2000 - Issuu](#) (Accessed: 7th February 2023)
- Independent Care Review (2020) *The Promise*. Glasgow: Independent Care Review. Available at: <https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Promise.pdf> (Accessed: 1st February 2023)
- Jacob, C. (2021) *Changing the Language of Care*: Available at: <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/changing-language-care>. (Accessed: 1st February 2023).
- Mental Health Coordinating Council (2018) *Recovery Oriented Language Guide*. Rozelle, NSW: Mental Health Coordinating Council.
- North Lanarkshire Council (2021) *North Lanarkshire Language Guide*. Available at: <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/promise-team/language-guide>. (Accessed: 1st February 2023)
- Scottish Drugs Forum (2020) *Moving Beyond "People-First" Language- A glossary of contested terms in substance abuse* Glasgow: Scottish Drugs Forum.
- TACT Fostering and Adoption (2019) *Language that Cares*. London: TACT Fostering and Adoption.
- The Promise Scotland (2021) *The Plan 21-24*. Edinburgh: The Promise Scotland. Available at: [plan-21-24.pdf \(thepromise.scot\)](#) (Accessed: 2nd February 2023)

Framing

The Each and Every Child initiative aims to support people at all levels in the community to shift how they communicate when speaking about care experience, and to change how they think, feel and act. By doing this, the initiative will create the scale that is needed to influence public opinion, build support for the progressive vision of The Promise and make a positive difference to the lives of all of Scotland's children and young people.

We would recommend finding out more about Framing, and the Each and Every Child Framing Toolkit here: <https://eachandeverychild.co.uk/the-toolkit/>

Each and Every Child run regular events to help professionals understand what framing is, explore the evidence-based framing recommendations and try practical exercises to support professionals to use framing in their own lives. To find out more, please see: <https://eachandeverychild.co.uk/events/>

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