

Safeguarding week | TUESDAY | Focus on the power of language

Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board News



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The focus for Tuesday is:

The power of language

Language is vital in creating a positive culture and fostering inclusivity. Complex terminology and jargon can disempower individuals and result in people feeling excluded. In more extreme examples it can lead to 'victim blaming' that enables perpetrators of abuse/exploitation to go unchallenged. In contrast, using respectful language can promote people's participation in services, organisations and communities. Today, we want to encourage individuals and organisations to consider the language they use in their practice and how this relates to the people they work with. Is the language used in your setting actively inclusive? Are you avoiding language that could inadvertently lead to victims being blamed for their exploitation/abuse?

The Power of Language in Safeguarding Practice

[Ann Craft Trust](#) describes how language is crucial from a safeguarding perspective and can exacerbate existing inequalities. Explore how to use appropriate language in their [The Power of Language](#) seminar (free online session) on Friday, 19 Nov from 10am - 11am.

Attitudes towards disabled people

[Scope](#) have an excellent campaign called 'End the Awkward' which is light-hearted but addresses a serious issue around attitudes towards disabled people.



Appropriate language when discussing child exploitation

[The Children's Society and Victim Support](#) have produced a document for professionals when discussing the exploitation of children and young people, including when escalating intelligence and delivering training. The guidance states:

It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing children and young people who have been exploited or are at risk of exploitation. 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 the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person.

Victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child or young 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 child's experience, resulting in a lack of appropriate response.

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