

**SEXUAL AND/OR CRIMINAL
EXPLOITATION
LANGUAGE GUIDANCE FOR
PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH ADULTS**

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Introduction

This guidance can be used by professionals when discussing or recording information about the exploitation of adults at risk, including when escalating intelligence and delivering training.

It is imperative that appropriate terminology is used when discussing adults who have been exploited, or are at risk of exploitation. Language implying that the adult 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.

Definitions

- Adult at Risk - is defined as someone who is:
 - Aged 18 or over and;
 - Has needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met); and
 - Is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect; and
 - As a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it (Care Act, 2014)

Reporting a concern taking place in Newcastle

If you are concerned about an adult at risk please report your concerns via existing safeguarding reporting pathways

- **Community Health and Social Care Direct (8am - 5pm) - 0191 278 8377**
- **Outside of these hours call - 0191 278 7878**
- **In an emergency always dial 999**

Guidance for using appropriate language

The following table outlines terms that should not be used when discussing or recording issues of the exploitation and abuse of adults and includes a list of suggested appropriate alternative phrases.

Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Putting themselves at risk”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “involved in risk taking behaviours”</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location...”</p> <p><i>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</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult may have been groomed” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “A perpetrator may exploit the adult’s increased vulnerability” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is not in a protective environment” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The situation could reduce the adult’s safety” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The location is dangerous to adults” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The location/situation could increase a perpetrator’s opportunity to abuse them” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “It is unclear whether the adult is under duress” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult may be being sexually abused and/or exploited” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that there is a power imbalance influencing the adult to act in this way” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns regarding other influences on the adult” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns regarding the adults capacity to make relevant decisions regarding contact”
Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “sexual activity with...”</p> <p><i>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</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has been sexually abused” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has been raped” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are reports of sexual abuse” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that they may have been groomed and/or coerced” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “ There are concerns the adult may have been unable to consent (consider MCA assessment)

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<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Sexually active since... “</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has reported that they have been raped” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has been/may have been sexually abused” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Concerns exist that the adult may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused”
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Has been contacting/seeking relationships with people of concern via social media/online”</p> <p><i>This implies that the adult is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context. Need to consider MCA assessment re use of social media.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “People of concern may have been contacting/targeting the adult” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult may have been groomed/targeted via social media” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult is facilitating communication with the adult” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is vulnerable to online perpetrators” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that others may be using online technology to access or abuse the adult”
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Survival Sex work”</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually exploited” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult has been raped” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Perpetrators are sexually abusing the adult” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually abused” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult’s vulnerability regarding drug and or alcohol use is being used by others to abuse them” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The perpetrators have a hold over the adult by the fact that they have a drug dependency”

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<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “In a relationship with...”</p> <p><i>This implies that the adult is in a positive, consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “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”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult has been/is being groomed, exploited and/or controlled and coerced”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Promiscuous”</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is vulnerable to being sexually exploited”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult is being sexually exploited”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Prostituting themselves or selling themselves”</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is vulnerable to being sexually exploited”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult is being sexually exploited”</p>

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<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Drug running – He/she is drug running or is recruiting others to deal drugs”</p> <p><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><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Criminal exploitation (CE)”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being criminally exploited”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult is being trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “He/she is choosing this lifestyle or is making a lifestyle choice”</p> <p><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><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being criminally exploited”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually exploited”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Spending time/associating with individuals of concern”</p> <p><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><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “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 of-fending”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult has been groomed, exploited and/or coerced and controlled”</p>

Guidance for using Appropriate Language

The following table outlines terms that should not be used when discussing or recording issues of adult sexual exploitation, and includes a list of suggested appropriate alternative phrases.

<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Offering him/her drugs seemingly in exchange for sex</p> <p><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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually/criminally exploited” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being criminally exploited through drug debt” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that the adult has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Perpetrators are sexually abusing the adult” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually abused” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult’s vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The perpetrators have a hold over the adult by the fact that the adult has a drug dependency”
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Would not cooperate with...”</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “tells lies, Would not cooperate with...”</p> <p>Fabricates, exaggerates</p> <p>Has a history of making false allegations</p> <p>Not compliant or not engaging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult did not feel safe enough to disclose” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult may fear negative repercussions for disclosure” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being criminally/sexually exploited and/or groomed and feels unable to disclose and or engage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed
<p style="text-align: center;">Inappropriate Term</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Suggested Alternatives</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Missing”</p> <p>Where there are concerns that an adult is not where they normally expected to be and there are concerns they may be at risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult does not feel able to stay at their current location” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being groomed/coerced to leave” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult may consider leaving to be the safest option in this circumstance” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Someone else has control over the adult’s behaviour”

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Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Gang Involved or Affiliated”</p> <p>Allows people to use their property for criminal activity</p> <p><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 or powerful</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “The adult is being sexually/criminally exploited” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Violence and crime affected adult, family or household” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns that there is a power imbalance and powerful grooming forcing or compelling the adult to act in this way” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “There are concerns regarding other influences on the adult” <p>Cukooing</p>
Inappropriate Term	Suggested Alternatives
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> “Would not cooperate with...”</p> <p>“Did / Would not engage with services”</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The person did not feel safe enough to disclose. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The person fears negative repercussions for disclosure/ engagement. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The person is being criminally / sexually exploited and / or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose/ engage. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The person considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed in the context of exploitation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services were unable to engage with the individual. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services are located in an area the person does not feel safe visiting

THIS GUIDANCE HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY NWG AND LAWRENCE JORDAN, SOCIAL WORKER, MILTON KEYNES—"APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE: CHILD SEXUAL AND/OR CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION" IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY, VICTIM SUPPORT AND THE NATIONAL POLICE CHIEFS' COUNCIL