



Languaging Child and Adolescent/ Young Person Vulnerability

A Guide for Professionals, Practitioners and Partner Agencies supporting children/ young person and families in community settings.

Introduction

As North Wales Safeguarding Children/ Adults Board agencies continue to find new ways to use new approaches to safeguarding, we need employees, representatives, and partners to confidently and safely identify, assess and respond to children/ young adults and families who experience harm outside of their home environment.

A key feature of the support we offer to residents and families is to think about the way we talk and describe the difficulties they may be facing. This includes how we can contribute to and get the best partnership response to help and assist them.

When we describe children and young people's experiences, any language that implies that a child, young person, or group of young people are complicit or responsible for the exploitation they may suffer or crimes that may be victim of, should always be challenged.

Our language should always consider a lack of agency or ability to control situations and should recognise and be responsive to trauma resulting from the harm they have experienced. Failure of support services to make these considerations may contribute to the continuing victimisation of children and young people and prevent young people and those that care for them from accessing help.

This guide has been created to support staff, practitioners, professionals and partner agencies working with children, young adults and families and the community to language child / young adult vulnerability with specific reference to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm	
Poorly worded response	Appropriately worded responses
<p><i>Putting themselves at risk</i></p> <p>This implies that the child / young person is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child/young person may have been groomed• The child/ young person is at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited.• A perpetrator may exploit the child's/ young person's increased vulnerability.• The child/ young person is not in a protective environment.• The situation reduces the child's / young person safety.• The location is dangerous to children/ young people.• The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse them.• It is unclear whether the child/ young person is under duress to go missing.• There are concerns that the child/ young person may be being sexually

Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

abused/exploited.

- It is unclear why the child/ young person is getting into cars. There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child/ young person to act in this way.
- There are concerns regarding other influences on the child/ young person

Would not cooperate with...

- The child / young person did not feel safe enough to disclose.
- The child/ young person appears to fear negative repercussions for disclosure.
- The child/ young person is being criminally/ sexually exploited and or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose.
- The child/ young person is being criminally/ sexually exploited and or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose.
- Child/ young person considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed in the context of exploitation

Missing....

- The child's/ young person safety is context driven.
- The child / young person does not feel able to stay at their current location.
- The child/ young person is being groomed/ coerced to leave.
- The child/ young person may consider leaving to be the safest option in this circumstance.
- Someone else has control over this child's/ young person behaviour.
- The child/ young person has returned to a safe place

Sexual activity with...

This implies consensual sexual activity has

- The child/ young person has been sexually abused.
- The child/ young person has been raped.
- There are reports of sexual abuse.

Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate.

- The child / young person has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that they child / young person may have been groomed and/or coerced.

Sexually active since [age under13]

A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.

Has been contacting adult males/females via phone or internet

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the communication and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.

- The child/young person has been raped.
- The child/ young person has been/may have been sexually abused.
- Concerns exist that the child/ young person may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused
- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited.
- There are concerns that the child/ young person has been raped.
- Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child/ young person.
- The child/ young person is being sexually abused.
- The child's/ young person's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.
- The perpetrators have a hold over the child/young person by the fact that they have a drug dependency.

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.

- 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.

Involved in CSE/ Adult exploitation

This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child/ young person being abused. A five-year-old would never be referred to as being involved in sexual abuse for the same reasons.

- The child/ young person is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.
- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited.

Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

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 when discussing children and young people, but particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.

- The child/ young person is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.
- The child / young person is being sexually exploited.
- This child/ young person has been/is being coerced into sharing images of themselves online.

Boyfriend/girlfriend

This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context. Children / young person have been challenged in court with practitioner's recordings where a practitioner has referred to the perpetrator as the child's/ young person boyfriend or girlfriend.

- 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

Drug running – He/she is drug running

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.

- Child criminal exploitation (CCE). The child/young person is being criminally exploited.
- The child/ young person is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.

Recruit/run/work

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 of the behaviour.

- The child/ young person is being criminally exploited.

He/she is choosing this lifestyle

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.

- The child/ young person is being criminally exploited.
- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited

Responses to Group based Child Harm

Poorly worded response	Appropriately worded responses
<p><i>Associating or spending time with 'elders'</i></p> <p>This implies that the child or young people are responsible for their exploitation and have the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The young people say that they are friends with a person or group of people and there are concerns about the ages of those people, the imbalance of power, exploitation and or offending. The young people have been groomed, exploited, coerced and/or controlled. <p>Note: If the 'elder' is also under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using language of vulnerability/ exploitation and also requires a child protection processes/ response.</p>
<p><i>Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs.</i></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 relating to substance use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child/ young person is being sexually/criminally exploited. The child/ young person is being criminally exploited through drug debt. There are concerns that the child/ young person has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent. Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child/ young person. The child/ young person is being sexually abused. The child's / young person's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them. The perpetrators have a hold over the child/ young person by the fact that they have a drug dependency.
<p><i>Gang Involved or Affiliated</i></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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child/ young person is being sexually/criminally exploited. Violence and crime affected child/ young person, 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/ young person 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are concerns regarding other influences on the child/ young person. <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 vulnerability/ exploitation and also requires a child protection processes/ response.</p>
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<p><i>Gang(s) in the Area/ location</i></p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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/ young person 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/adults.
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<p><i>Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location...</i></p> <p>This implies that the child or young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child(ren)/ young persons have an existing peer network in this location. • The child(ren)/ young persons have an ownership or investment in the area.
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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.

- The child(ren)/ young persons consider themselves to be safe in this space/community/ neighbourhood.
- The child(ren)/ young persons did not consider themselves safe where they were.
- The child(ren) / young people have been groomed or coerced into being in this neighbourhood/location.
- The child(ren) / young people does not feel they have another safe place to go.
- The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren)/ young person's.
- The child(ren)/ young people feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location.
- The child(ren) / young person's do not feel safe enough to leave this location.