



# THE POWER OF WORDS...

## A-Z ON HOW WE CHANGE THE LANGUAGE WE USE

As Staffordshire County Council and its employees start to move towards a restorative approach to working with young people and families, The Voice Project has facilitated a Working Group made up of young people, foster carers and Staffordshire County Council staff members. The Group's main focus is to influence the implementation and changes that are being made in terms of restorative practice.

In this document the Working Group have outlined that the language that is used with young people and families is maybe not always person centred and young person friendly and that it can be very clinical. In this document you will find ideas on different words that can be used instead so that the language that is being used is more update and restorative . Whilst these ideas have come directly from our Working Group, there is no right or wrong answer, language used should be led by the young person and families that you are working with.

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH A.

### **ABSCOND** – A TERM HISTORICALLY USED FOR ESCAPED PRISONERS.

We would normally use this term to describe a young person who has gone missing from care.

#### **Alternatives:**

- Run Away
- Left without permission
- Whereabouts unknown
- Missing

### **ASYLUM SEEKER** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO HAS COME FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY TO FIND SAFETY.

We would use this term in the same way as the description, sometimes using the abbreviation UASC for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

#### **Alternatives:**

- Safety seeker
- Seeking safety
- Seeking Refuge

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH B.

**BIRTH/BIOLOGICAL PARENT** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A PARENT WHO CONCEIVED OR SIREN, WHOSE GENES ARE THEREFORE TRANSMITTED TO THE CHILD.

We would use this term in the same way as the description, to differentiate between the parents and the people who are currently looking after the child.

### Alternatives:

- Parent
- Natural Parent
- Mother/Father

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH C.

**CARE LEAVER** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO IS LEAVING THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Care Experienced
- Moving on
- Moving to independent living

**CARE PLAN** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A PLAN THAT OUTLINES THE CARE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

We would use this term in the same way as the description but also to describe any future planning for the young person we are working with.

### Alternatives:

- Young person's plan
- My/your plan
- Independence plan
- Future plans

**CASE** – AN INSTANCE OF A PARTICULAR SITUATION; AN EXAMPLE OF SOMETHING OCCURRING.

We would use this term when discussing families and young people we work with.

### Alternatives:

- Family
- Child
- Young Person

**CASE STUDY** – A PROCESS OF RECORD AND RESEARCH INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARTICULAR PERSON, GROUP OR SITUATION OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Example of Practice
- Child Study
- Family Study

**CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO IS EXHIBITING BEHAVIOUR THAT IS DIFFICULT FOR OTHERS.

We would use this term in the same way as the description, however it is a very wide category in what is deemed as challenging behaviour, and this can vary depending on the person dealing with that behaviour.

**Alternatives:**

- Emotional behaviour
- Complex behaviours
- Saying what behaviour they have exhibited

**CONSISTENT GUIDE** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN A CONSTANT IN AN INDIVIDUALS LIFE.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Constant Support
- Consistent
- Close Friend
- Family Friend
- Relative

**CONTACT** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE.

We would use this term to describe a looked after young person going to see their family.

**Alternatives:**

- Family time
- Family visit
- Visit

**CONTACT CENTRE** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A BUILDING WHERE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE IS FACILITATED.

We would use this term in the same way as the description, however this would be to facilitate a young person visiting their birth family.

**Alternatives:**

- Family Centre
- Visiting Centre

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH D.

**DESIGNATED TEACHER** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A SPECIFIED TEACHER WHO A YOUNG PERSON COULD GO TO FOR SUPPORT.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Teacher
- My tutor
- Teaching support

**DIFFICULT TO PLACE** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE A DIFFICULTY IN FINDING SOMEWHERE FOR A YOUNG PERSON TO LIVE.

We would use this term in the same way as the description, however this may not be through fault of the young person and may just be a difficulty in finding a good match.

### Alternatives:

- No matches
- Considerable support needed
- Looking for the right home/environment
- Extra support needed

**DROP OUT** – TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO HAS STOPPED ENGAGING IN EDUCATION.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Early school leaver
- Withdrew from education
- Change in pathway/direction
- Left school early

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH F.

**FOSTER CARERS** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAVE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

We use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Foster parents
- Foster mum/dad

- Ask the child what they want to call them
- Call them by their name

**FULL POTENTIAL** – COULD BE DESCRIBED AS FULL CAPACITY/WHEN SOMEONE REACHES THEIR FULL CAPACITY.

We use this term to describe a young person's goals and what they can possibly achieve.

**Alternatives:**

- Very best
- Excel yourself
- Reaching targets

**FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE** – A MEETING WHERE FAMILY MEMBERS GET TOGETHER TO FIND OUT HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT THE CHILD.

We use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Family meeting
- Family group chat
- Family support meeting
- A meeting

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH H.**

**HIGH EXPECTATIONS** – WHEN SOMEONES EXPECTS AN INDIVIDUAL TO DO VERY WELL IN A CERTAIN AREA.

We use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- High hopes
- Expected high achievements
- Reference to dreams/achievements

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH I.**

**IN CARE** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A CHILD WHO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Under local authority
- Cared for
- Living in a safe environment

**ISOLATION** – A TERM HISTORICALLY USED TO DESCRIBE A PUNISHMENT BY SEGREGATION.

We would sometimes use this term in the same way as the description but also to describe someone who is on their own.

**Alternatives:**

- Cut off/Alone
- Separated
- Time out
- Spending time alone
- Unable to access...

**INTERVENTION** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE ACTION OR PROCESS OF INTERVENING.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Guidance/help
- Involvement
- Support

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH L.**

**LAC (LOOKED AFTER CHILD)** – A TERM WHICH IS USED TO DESCRIBE A CHILD WHO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Do not use the abbreviation “LAC”
- CIC (Child in care)
- Foster Child
- Supported child
- Not living with family
- Our Children

**LAC REVIEW** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A PROGRESS REVIEW FOR A CHILD THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Do not use the abbreviation “LAC”
- CIC (Child in care) Review
- My review/your review
- Supported child review
- Meeting

**LAC VISIT** – A VISIT THAT IS MADE BY A SOCIAL WORKER TO A CHILD THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HAS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Do not use the abbreviation “LAC”
- CIC (Child in care) visit
- Social Worker visit
- Supported child visit
- Visit

**LEAVING CARE** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE THAT IS LEAVING THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Moving to independence
- Moving on/Moving out  
Becoming a young adult

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH M.**

**MOVING PLACEMENT** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE WHEN A YOUNG PERSON MOVES FROM ONE FAMILY/HOME TO ANOTHER.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Relocating
- Moving home
- Moving Families

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH N.**

**NAUGHTY** – TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO IS EXHIBITING UNSAVOURY BEHAVIOURS.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- This word should not be used in any situation
- Emotional behaviour
- Unsettled
- Misbehaving
- Say what the behaviour is

**NEET (NOT IN EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT)** – A TERM USED FOR SOMEONE WHO ISN'T ENGAGING IN EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Do not abbreviate
- Not in school or work
- Not in education
- Between jobs

**NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR THAT IS UNSAVOURY.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Emotional behaviour
- Adverse behaviour
- Say what the behaviour is

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH O.**

**OFFENDER** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO HAS COMMITTED A CRIME OR HAS COMMITTED AN OFFENSE AGAINST SOMEONE ELSE.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Someone who has committed an offense.

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH P.**

**PERMANENCE** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SOMETHING THAT IS LONG TERM OR PERMANENT.

We would use this to describe when a foster carer looks after a child long term.

**Alternatives:**

- Long term
- Settled

**PLACEMENT** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE ACTION OF PLACING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING SOMEWHERE.

We would use this term so describe finding a child a place to live.



### Alternatives:

- Family
- Home
- Where you live/your home

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH R.

**RESPIRE** – A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A SHORT PERIOD OF RELIEF FROM SOMETHING DIFFICULT OR UNPLEASANT.

We would use this term to describe parents, foster carers or children having a break from their normal home.

### Alternatives:

- Short break
- Time away
- Breathing space
- Holiday
- Their own time

**REUNIFICATION** – RESTORATION OF UNITY TO A PLACE OR GROUP WHICH IS DIVIDED.

We would use this term to describe a young person returning to the care of their birth parents.

### Alternatives:

- Returning home
- Going back to family
- Reuniting

**REHABILITATION** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE THE ACTION OF RESTORING SOMEONE TO HEALTH OR NORMAL LIFE THROUGH THERAPY OR TRAINING.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Recovery
- Recovering
- Developing identity

## WORDS BEGINNING WITH S.

**SPECIAL NEEDS** – PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS RESULTING FROM LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, PHYSICAL DISABILITY OR EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

### Alternatives:

- Additional needs
- Additional support

**STATUTORY VISIT** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE A VISIT THAT NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED.

We would use this term to describe a visit that has to be made by a social worker as a statutory requirement.

**Alternatives:**

- Visit
- Social Worker visit
- Home visit

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH T.**

**TARGETS** – THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE AN OBJECTIVE OR RESULT TOWARDS WHICH EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Goals
- Targets (stay the same)
- Achievements

**TARGETED SERVICES** – THIS IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE SERVICES THAT TARGET A SPECIFIC AREA.

We would use this term in the same way as the description or to describe services under the local authority.

**Alternatives:**

- Essential services
- Services
- Services available

**WORDS BEGINNING WITH V.**

**VICTIM** – THIS IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN HARMED, KILLED OR INJURED DUE TO A CRIME BEING COMMITTED.

We would use this term in the same way as the description.

**Alternatives:**

- Survivor
- Harmed party
- Person harmed

## CONCLUSION

Prior to COVID-19 the Restorative Practice Working Group got together for 2 sessions, working on the language used by SCC and it's staff members, unfortunately due to COVID-19 they had to stop meeting up face to face, however The Voice Project continued the work virtually as we felt that the language used is extremely important and should be discussed in a timely manner. The members of the group gave fantastic insight into how the words made them feel and were passionate about the very real changes that Staffordshire are pushing to make.

The top five words that the group felt most strongly about were:

- Abscond
- Case
- LAC (Looked after child)
- Placement
- Respite

We are in the process of looking at what the next steps will be for this group and how this group can influence the restorative approach on a wider scale.

Please find a link below of a video created by young people from The Voice Project, on how the word "Case" makes them feel:

### [Young People Video](#)

The Voice Project would like to thank the Restorative Practice Working Group for their dedicated and support creating this A-Z of Language.

