STRONGER together

Leicestershire County Council

Language that cares

Simple language toolkit

Support for practitioners to have **important conversations** with children and young people

Why is language important?

Leicestershire's Children In Care Council has worked together with practitioners to gather the voice of children and young people in care.

In Spring 2023 a structured conversation was used to talk to children and young people about language. We learned that:

- Language matters to our children
- It is important to use simple and plain language to help our children understand what is happening around them when they are in care – **KEEP IT SIMPLE!**
- Jargon and abbreviations must be avoided – this can leave children confused.
- Language needs to be adapted based on a child's age and length of time in care.
- Every child will have a different view of what language works for them – ONE size does not fit all children.
- Children do not want to keep repeating important messages to new practitioners – we need to capture their views in ways that it is central to their plan.

Many children under the age of 18 years prefer to be called a young person. Whilst respecting their views, it is important we do not 'adultify' children unnecessarily. For the purpose of this document, the word child should be taken to include young people.

> **The most important message from our children and young people is that they must be treated as an individual.**

How can this toolkit help practitioners?

- This toolkit will help to support practitioners to have important conversations with children and young people. It will give ideas about some of the important words that you may take for granted – but which may confuse or upset children.
- It will help form the basis of regular conversations to get updates about the words that are important to describe each child's journey when they are looked after.
- It will help you to keep records in a way that the child will understand and help them to make sense of the important processes that are in place to make sure that being looked after is a positive experience for them.
- It will provide alternatives for some of the key words that are used in looked after system – but this is not exhaustive – it should prompt your conversation - not restrict it.
- Children must be able to explore and inform the language we use to capture their story.
- The highlighted words in the glossary are the words that young people locally and nationally have told us matter to them most.

How do we make language count for all our children and young people?

Every child has a plan that sets out what is important for them – the Care Plan. The plan will include some key words that matter to the child.

The child's review meeting will ensure that language has been explored with the child and the plan captures their up-to-date views.

We will always include what has been agreed with the child to record:

- What they call the place they are living.
- What they call their carers.
- What they call the time they spend with their family.
- Any other important language or words the child/young people would prefer us to use.

A worker will always talk to the child in preparation for their review meeting. The care plan section 'This is who I am' will include the child's chosen words and this will be confirmed as part of the review process.

A worker will need to be familiar with a young person's form of communication if they do not use speech given their disability needs. Their voice will need to be captured and shared using alternative forms of communication such as Makaton, British Sign Language, Picture Exchange Communication System, communication board, speech generated devices or communication apps. Children and young people's behaviour and social presentation is also a non-verbal form of communication can also indicate preferences, likes and dislikes, pain or trauma.

This will be for all children over 10 but for some younger child this could be included based on the initial conversation.

The 3-month update can be used to confirm the child's chosen words so that these are visible easily on the file.

Some bottom lines from our children

- Don't use acronyms or abbreviations that we may not understand.
- We will always have agreed the language and wording that our workers use when they are supporting and working directly with us.
- Workers will always check our understanding of language and words, particularly when supporting us in meetings with other services and professionals.
- Our preferred language and words will be recorded and shared with all workers who support us.
- Sometimes our circumstances and feelings may change. Our choice of language and words will be reviewed and changed as needed.
- We will not have to keep reminding workers about our preferred language and words.
- We should not have to explain our choice of language and words.

*Words identified from Leicestershire's Children in Care Language Survey

Keeping It Simple: Simple Alternatives for everyday Language for Children and young people in Care

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Abscond

Professionals use this word to describe a young person who has gone missing from where they live in care

Children have told us these alternatives:

Run away   **Left without permission**

Whereabouts unknown   **Missing**

Annual Leave

Professionals use this term when they are on holiday and not in work

Alternatives:

Holiday   **Time off work**   **Taking a break**

Birth or Biological Parent

Professionals use this term sometimes when talking about your mum and dad

Alternatives:

Parent   **Natural Parent**   **Mum/ Dad**

Care Leaver / Leaving Care

A term to describe someone who has left care

Alternatives:

Young person leaving care   **Care experienced young person**

Moving on   **Moving on to independent living**

Moving to independence   **Moving On / Moving Out**

Becoming a Young Adult

Care Plan

All children who are looked after in the care of the Local Authority have a Care Plan which sets out what the child needs to keep them safe and provide support with someone identified to carry out tasks and dates when they will be finished

Alternatives:

Young Person's Plan   **My/Your Plan**

Independence Plan   **Future Plan**

Case / Caseload

Professionals are given responsibility for working with named children and take the lead for making sure their plans are completed

Alternatives:

Family   **Child**   **Young Person**   **Child's name**

Case Study / POD Discussion

A piece of work including a discussion which uses examples to help improve how things are done, improve the plan and learn from others

Alternatives:

Example of Practice **Child Study** **Family Study**

Challenging Behaviour

Professionals use this term to include lots of different behaviour that might cause difficulties for people to understand, or manage

Alternatives:

Emotional Behaviour **Complex Behaviour**

Describing the behaviour in more detail by saying/ identifying **Upset**

Naughty should NOT be used in any situation **Unsettled**

Contact

Professionals use this term to describe a child having time to keep in touch with their family or friends – that could be face to face, in writing or by phones call/virtually

Alternatives:

Family Time* **Family Visit*** **Visit***

Keeping in Touch **Meeting up with family***

Catching up with family* **Meet up visit*** **See your family**

Contact Centre

Professionals use this term to describe a place where children have time to see their family

Alternatives:

Family Centre   **Visiting Centre**   **Family hub**

Designated Teacher
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Professionals use this term to describe a teacher who has a specific role for working with children who are in care or have a social worker to help them

Alternatives:

Teacher   **My Tutor**   **Teaching Support**

Pastoral Support

Difficult To Place

Professionals use this term when it is difficult to find the right place for a child who is looked after to live

Alternatives:

No Matches   **Considerable Support Needed**

Looking at the Right Home/ Environment

Extra Support Needed

Emergency Placement

A meeting used to describe when a child has had to move quickly without a plan or somewhere new and this is usually temporary

Alternatives:

Short term placement/home*

Temporary alternative placement /home

Family Network Meeting
Family Group Conference (FGC)

A meeting where family members and friends get together to find out how they can help the child

A family group conference has a person to chair with special training

Alternatives:

Family Meeting

Family Group Chat

Family Support Meeting

A Meeting

Network meeting

Foster Carers

A foster carer is someone who has been trained and approved to look after children who are looked after by the Local Authority

Alternatives:

Use their First Names*

Foster Parents

All children and young people will choose something different so it's important to ask the Young Person what they prefer

Some children want to call their foster carer mum and dad if they have lived with them a long time*

Full Potential / High Expectations

Making sure a child has the chance to achieve everything that they can with clear goals written down

Alternatives:

Very Best   **Excel Yourself**   **Reaching Targets**

High hopes   **Wanting the best for you**   **Aspirational**

Initial Health Assessment (IHA) Review Health Assessment (RHA)

Term used to describe an appointment to review your health needs

Alternatives:

Medical or Health appointment   **Do not use abbreviations**

Home

Where a child currently lives – this can be confusing as a child might call their home the place where their parents live

Alternatives:

This Country   **New home**   **Current home**

Where I live now   **Means home country (UASC)***

Where they lived with their family before they came into care*

Ask the Young Person what they wish to call 'home'

Residential home   **Safe place to call home**

It is essential for a young person to decide what they want to call the place they live in Care

In Care
Child In Care (CIC)

This is a way to describe the arrangement for a child to be looked after by a local authority sometimes with a court order and sometimes by agreement with parents

Alternatives:

Under Local Authority care

Cared For

Living in a Safe Environment

Looked after

Intervention

Different ways to provide support to families and children

Alternatives: -

Guidance

Help

Involvement

Support

Kinship Care
Kinship Arrangement

An arrangement for a member of a child's family or their friends are looking after them either short or long term

Alternatives:

Grandma and Grandad

First names

Aunty and uncle

My family

Looked After Child / Young Person (LAC) Child Looked After (CLA)

This is a way to describe the arrangement for a child to be looked after by a local authority sometimes with a court order and sometimes by agreement with parents

Alternatives:

We should never use abbreviations to describe a child

Young person's name* **Supported young person**

Young Person* **Child**

Looked After Children's Nurse

Term used to describe a nurse who works with children and young people who are in care

Alternatives:
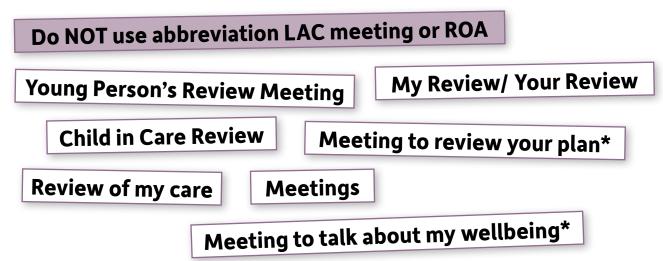
A Nurse **Healthcare professional**

Looked After Review
Review of Arrangements (ROA)

A formal name for a meeting that has to take place regularly to review the care plan for any child in care

Alternatives:

Do NOT use abbreviation LAC meeting or ROA

Young Person's Review Meeting

My Review/ Your Review

Child in Care Review

Meeting to review your plan*

Review of my care

Meetings

Meeting to talk about my wellbeing*

Looked After Child Visit
Child in Care Visit
Statutory visit

A regular meeting that must be completed by a social worker to see a child in care including seeing their home and bedroom, so we know it safe

Alternatives:

Do NOT use LAC, CIC or CLA abbreviations

Young Person's Visit

Social Worker Visit

Visit to (Insert name)*

Visit to talk about my wellbeing*

Negative Behaviour

A type of behaviour that is not viewed positively

Alternatives:

Adverse Behaviour

Be specific - Identify the behaviour

Not in Education or Employment – (NEET)

Someone who has left care and is not in some type of education or training

Alternatives:

Do NOT abbreviate

Not in School or Work

Not in Education

Between Jobs

Unemployed

Offender

Someone who has been convicted of crime

Alternatives:

A child or young person who has been convicted of an offence

Permanence

A plan for a child in care to find out where they will live in the long term

Alternatives:

Long Term placement

Long term plan

Being Settled

Having a sense of belonging

Personal Education Plan Meeting

A meeting each term to make sure there are plans for education support for each child in care

Alternatives:

Education Progress Meeting

Meeting about my education

School meeting*

Do not use the abbreviation

Placement
Moving Placement

Placement is be used to describe where a looked after child lives

Alternatives:

Home*

Where you live

Accommodation

Feels like home - So live with family*

Moving home

Moving Families

Relocating to a new home

Respite

A short-term plan for a child to live somewhere temporarily — having a break from their usual arrangements

Alternatives:

Vacation placement*

Short break

Holiday

Time away

Breathing space

Home stay Sleepover

Own time

Reunification
(sometimes called rehabilitation/rehab home)

Professionals use this term to describe a child or Young Person returning to live in the care of their birth parents

Alternatives:

Returning Home   **Going Back to Family**   **Reuniting**

Siblings

Brothers and sisters who have the same mum and dad

Alternatives:

Brothers and/or sisters*

Names of my brothers and/or sisters*

Special Needs

Term to describe specific support services that a child needs when they have some form of additional needs particularly additional help in School

Alternatives:

Additional Needs   **Additional Support Needs**

Targets

A plan or aim that has been set to achieve - specific to a child/young person

Alternatives:

Goals **Achievements** **Results to move forward**

Young person's Targets

Victims

Term used to describe a person who has been harmed, killed or injures due to crime being committed

Alternatives:

Survivor **Harmed Party** **Person Harmed**

Unaccompanied Asylum - Seeking Children

Professionals use this term for a child who has come to the UK to seek asylum
When someone seeks asylum, they are fleeing danger in their home country
USAC is used as a short cut.

Alternatives:

Child seeking safety **Child seeking refuge** **Refugee**

Unaccompanied child seeking asylum