

## Mind your language Practice Guidance

### “Mind Your Language”

#### Practice Guidance in Collaboration with Rights and Participation

##### Introduction:

The words children and young people hear and the words you use are important.

Children and Young people have some very important messages that needs to inform our thinking and the way we work with them and their families.

Using the language, the child feels comfortable with can make them feel respected, listened to and that they are being treated as an individual’.

##### Young People Told Us:

##### There is a ‘Language’ of Care:

The language you use is very personal and very specific to them as individuals. Young people have asked that professionals take the time to discuss the words they would like you to use with them.

Sometimes young people can say things like they “don’t care” when they probably do but do not understand what you mean.

Please always ask again and check that the words you use are okay to use with them.

##### Words to Consider with Your Child or Young Person:

The words and phrases we use every day are constantly changing. We are currently seeing a national move away from using terms such as “contact”, “placement”, “respite” and “siblings”.

West Sussex County Council has adopted the term “child looked after” instead of “LAC” or “CiC”. Our young people have been very clear that they are not acronyms but rather children and young people that just happen to be in care or care experienced.

They have told us they are definitely not LAC – as are not lacking in anything!

**Contact** – “Family time” or “seeing mum/dad/nan/grandad” is preferable to the term contact.

**Respite** – This literally means “relief from” and usually refers to when carers have time away from their foster children/young people.

Other terms young people have expressed a dislike for are word such as “breakaway” or “short break” - using an individual’s actual name is preferred e.g. “so you’re off to Susan’s?”

**Siblings** – Sometimes we use more formal words when there is nothing wrong with saying brother or sister.

The above is not an exhaustive list but hopefully will get you thinking about your language.

Nationally, information about children and young people's preferred words are being updated all the time.

We recognise that this is an ongoing discussion we need to have with our children and young people.

We do not want to say words are wrong or must be changed but rather that we need to be thoughtful about the word we choose to use.

Here are some tips you can use in your day to day work:

- Have ongoing and regular discussions with your children and young people and ask which terms they prefer
- Make a note of them and regularly revisit and update them. Challenge other professionals to use these words
- Support and enable your children and young people to influence and shape the words you and other professionals use.

Further reading is available in the publication [Language that Cares – Changing the Way that We Talk to Children in Care](#)

**See also:**

- Child and Family Assessment guidance
- Voice of the Child guidance
- S20 Guidance
- Permanency Guidance
- CFA flow process
- MOMO guidance

<b>Review / Contacts / References</b>	
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