7. Remember

❑ Notice the language you use about the people you are working with
❑ Avoid language that places the problem on the person
❑ Remind yourself of the influential role you have in shaping the support and experiences of people who may be at risk of exploitation

1. What are we talking about?

❑ This guide has been adapted from a range of sources including the NWG Network 'Making Words Matter' and Children's Society guidance 'Appropriate Language – child sexual and/or criminal exploitation' to raise awareness of the need for practitioners to consider the words, phrases, discourses and jargon used when speaking to and speaking about victims of exploitation.
❑ Language refers to that used verbally and that which is written in files, referrals, assessments and reports

6. Further Information/Guidance

❑ Children's Society Guidance: Child Exploitation Appropriate Language Guide 2022.pdf (childrenssociety.org.uk)
❑ NWG Network: Making words Matter A Practice & Knowledge Briefing
❑ NICE Guidance - Talking About People: Talking about people | NICE style guide | Guidance | NICE

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2. Why does it matter?

❑ Victim blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt.
❑ This in turn may prevent the person from disclosing their abuse.
❑ The person may feel fear of being blamed by professionals.

5. Multi-agency responsibility

❑ Research evidence from academics, practitioners and Experts by Experience recognise that attending to language requires a whole system approach across all agencies.
❑ It further recognises the pivotal role that practitioners and services play in shaping the identity of many younger victims

4. How can we do it?

❑ Use strengths-based language (follow links in section 6 for examples)
❑ Be adversity aware/trauma informed
❑ Be confident to question victim blaming language
❑ Reflective Practice and regular supervision can support us to keep the conversation about language 'alive'
❑ Consider your own values and attitude

3. What should we do?

❑ When referring to people who have been, or are at risk of being exploited, the language we use should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control people have in abusive or exploitative situations.
❑ We must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the person.