



Victim Blaming Language in Child Exploitation

What is the Background?

Victim blaming language is terminology that implies the child is complicit or responsible for their abuse. Appropriate language must always be used to ensure that the child is referred to in a way which does not place blame on them for the crimes that have happened to them.

Victim blaming language is still used in Warwickshire and needs to be addressed

Where is There More Information?

- [Appropriate Language: Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation](#)
- [Barnardo's: Language Matters](#)

REMEMBER: Exploitation is NEVER the victims choice or fault; view it as abuse

What is the Impact?

When victim blaming language is used amongst professionals there's a risk of normalising and minimising the child's experience resulting in a lack of appropriate response. Additionally, in criminal proceedings police have a duty to disclose any material that might assist the defence. Victim blaming language could therefore undermine a police investigation

What Should Managers Do?

- Regularly review language used in recordings and where victim blaming has been used historically ensure that this is not duplicated
- Discuss victim blaming language in supervision and team meetings
- Always challenge where victim blaming language is evident

What are Some Examples?

- "Putting themselves at risk"
- "Promiscuous"
- "Having contact with adults via the internet"
- "Drug running"
- "Involved in CSE"
- "She's 15 and has a 30-year-old boyfriend"

What Should Practitioners Do?

- Ensure the voice of the child is evident in all recordings
- Remember, the child is the victim and may not realise they are being exploited
- Avoid language that suggests the child is complicit or responsible for the crimes that have happened to them
- Always challenge where victim blaming language is evident

What Should be Considered?

- A child is not responsible for being at risk
- A child is being sexually exploited
- An adult is facilitating this contact
- This child is being exploited for purpose of criminal gain
- A child cannot choose to be sexually exploited
- An adult is behaving inappropriately with a child