



# **Child and Adolescent/ Young Person Vulnerability- Guidance on the Use of Appropriate Language**

**A Guide for Professionals, Practitioners and  
Partner Agencies supporting Children/ Young  
People and families**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date approved by Exec Board</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
V1		Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board	18/10/2022	18/10/2024



Name of Policy / Procedure / Guidance	Child and Adolescent/ Young Person Vulnerability- Guidance on the Use of Appropriate Language
Consultation Period	20/05/2022 – 17/06/2022
Date of Publication	18/10/2022
Review Date	18/10/2024

### **Dissemination/ Implementation**

Agencies are requested to undertake the following in order to ensure the implementation of this Policy/Procedure/Guidance

MAWWSB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place on MAWWSB website within policy section</li> <li>• Send to Partner Agencies for dissemination</li> <li>• Disseminate to partner agencies training leads for inclusion within training as appropriate</li> <li>• Update relevant training to reflect Policy/procedure/ guidance</li> </ul>
All Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate Policy/Procedure/Guidance to all Service Leads/ Heads of Service/Safeguarding leads/ staff via appropriate communication channels e.g. LOGs</li> <li>• Place within own website and include a link with MAWWSB Website <a href="https://www.cysur.wales/">https://www.cysur.wales/</a></li> <li>• Update in house Policies and Procedures to reflect Policy/Procedure/Guidance as appropriate.</li> <li>• Update in house training to reflect process as appropriate.</li> </ul>

### **Assurance**

Agencies will be requested to undertake the following in order to assure the MAWWSB with regards to dissemination and implementation of this policy:

<b>MAWWSB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek assurance from Partner Agencies that implementation has occurred</li> </ul>
<b>Partner Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide MAWWSB with assurance that the above implementation have been completed</li> </ul>

## Introduction

The Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board seeks to support practitioners, representatives, and partners to confidently and safely identify, assess and respond to children/ young adults and families who experience harm outside of their home environment.

The language we use should always consider, recognise and be responsive to potential trauma children and young people may have experienced, taking into consideration a child's level of maturity, including speech and language and their level of cognitive functioning. Failure of support services to make these considerations may contribute to the continuing victimisation of children and young people and prevent them and those that care for them from accessing help.

This guide has been created to support staff, practitioners, professionals and partner agencies working with children, young adults and families and the community to use appropriate language with specific reference to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).

Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm	
Poorly worded response	Appropriately worded responses
<p><b><i>Putting themselves at risk</i></b></p> <p>This implies that the child / young person is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator and that they are able to make free and informed choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The child/young person may have been groomed</li><li>• The child/ young person is more vulnerable to being abused and/or exploited.</li><li>• A perpetrator may exploit the child's/ young person's increased vulnerability.</li><li>• The child/ young person is not in a protective environment.</li><li>• The situation reduces the child's / young person safety.</li><li>• The location is dangerous to children/ young people.</li><li>• The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse/exploit the child/young person.</li><li>• It is unclear whether the child/ young person is under duress or being coerced.</li><li>• There are concerns that the child/ young person may be being sexually abused/exploited.</li><li>• It is unclear why the child/ young person is getting into vehicles. There are concerns that there is a power imbalance forcing the child/ young person to act in this way.</li></ul>

## Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

### ***Would not cooperate with...***

- The child / young person did not appear to feel safe enough to disclose.
- The child/ young person appears to fear negative repercussions for disclosure.
- The child/ young person is being criminally/ sexually exploited and or groomed and therefore is not able to disclose.
- Child/ young person considers the relationship to be consensual however the relationship has been formed in the context of exploitation

### ***Missing....***

- The child's/ young person safety is context driven.
- The child / young person does not feel able to stay at their current location.
- The child/ young person is being groomed/ coerced to leave.
- The child/ young person may consider leaving to be the safest option in this circumstance.
- Someone else has control over this child's/ young person behaviour.
- The child/ young person has returned to a safe place

### ***Sexual activity with...***

This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. If it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context this term is not appropriate.

- The child/ young person has been sexually abused.
- The child/ young person has been raped.
- There are reports of sexual abuse.
- The child / young person has described sexual activity, however concerns exist that they child / young person may have been groomed and/or coerced.

### ***Sexually active since [age under13]***

A child under 13 cannot consent to sex and is therefore being abused. This should be reflected in the language used.

- The child/young person has been raped.
- The child/ young person has been/may have been sexually abused. Any sexual activity in this age range would be abuse.
- Concerns exist that the child/ young person may have been coerced, exploited, or sexually abused

## Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited.
- There are concerns that the child/ young person has been raped.
- Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child/ young person.
- The child/ young person is being sexually abused.

### ***In a relationship with...***

This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context.

- The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending.
- The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled.

### ***Involved in CSE***

This implies there is a level of choice regarding the child/ young person being abused.

- The child/ young person is vulnerable to being sexually exploited.
- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited.

### ***Promiscuous***

This implies consensual sexual activity has taken place. Promiscuous is a judgemental term which stereotypes and labels people. It isn't appropriate in any context when discussing children and young people, but particularly if it occurs within an abusive or exploitative context.

- The child/ young person is vulnerable to being sexually exploited/ groomed.
- This child/ young person has been/is being coerced into sharing images of themselves online.

### ***Boyfriend/girlfriend***

This implies that the child or young person is in a consensual relationship and does not reflect the abusive or exploitative context. Children / young person have been challenged in court with practitioner's recordings where a practitioner has referred

- The young person says that they are in a relationship with a person and there are concerns about that person's age, the imbalance of power, exploitation and/or offending.
- The young person has been/is being groomed, exploited and controlled

## Responses to Individual Child/ Young Person Harm

to the perpetrator as the child's/ young person boyfriend or girlfriend.

### ***Drug running – He/she is drug running***

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.

- Child criminal exploitation (CCE). The child/young person is being criminally exploited.
- The child/ young person is being trafficked for purpose of criminal exploitation.
- Should we put something about county lines/drug debt/taking advantage of a substance dependency/Power

### ***Recruit/run/work***

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context of the behaviour.

- The child/ young person is being criminally exploited.

### ***He/she is choosing this lifestyle***

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.

- The child/ young person is being criminally exploited.
- The child/ young person is being sexually exploited

## Responses to Group based Child Harm

### Poorly worded response

#### ***Associating or spending time with 'elders'***

This implies that the child or young people are responsible for their exploitation and have the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context.

### Appropriately worded responses

- The young people say that they are friends with a person or group of people and there are concerns about the ages of those people, the imbalance of power, exploitation and or offending.
- The young people have been groomed, exploited, coerced and/or controlled.

**Note: If the 'elder' is also under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using language of vulnerability/ exploitation and also requires a child protection processes/ response.**

#### ***Offering him/her drugs seemingly in return for sex or to run drugs.***

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context relating to substance use.

- The child/ young person is being sexually/criminally exploited.
- The child/ young person is being criminally exploited through drug debt.
- There are concerns that the child/ young person has been raped as they do not have the freedom or capacity to consent.
- Perpetrators are sexually abusing the child/ young person.
- The child/ young person is being sexually abused.
- The child's / young person's vulnerability regarding drug use is being used by others to abuse them.
- The perpetrators have a hold over the child/ young person by the fact that they have a drug dependency.

#### ***Gang Involved or Affiliated***

This implies that the child or young person is responsible for the exploitation and has the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise the abusive or exploitative context or powerful grooming process.

- The child/ young person is being sexually/criminally exploited.
- Violence and crime affected child/ young person, family or household.
- There may be harmful behaviours and or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this peer network.
- It is unclear why the child/ young person is getting into vehicles. There are concerns that there is a power imbalance and powerful grooming forcing or compelling the child to act in this way.
- There are concerns regarding other

influences on the child/ young person.

Note: If other members of the peer network are also under the age of 18 years old, this will need to be considered using language of vulnerability/ exploitation and also requires a child protection processes/ response.

***Gang(s) in the Area/ location***

This implies that the child or young people are responsible for the exploitation and have the capacity to make a free and informed choice. It does not recognise an abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm.

- Area impacted by episodes of serious youth violence.
- Groups of young people congregate to create safety for themselves.
- There may be harmful behaviours and attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this space/ community/ neighbourhood.
- The space/ community or neighbourhood may not be safe for this child/ young person or group of children.
- There appears to be limited safe opportunities for young people or adults to interrupt/ harmful behaviours and attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this community/ neighbourhood.
- This community requires support to address concerns or attitudes that exist towards violence and criminality within this space/ community/ neighbourhood.
- Owing to conflict and tensions between these groups, other areas or locations in the borough may not be safe for this child or group of children.
- The location/ situation could increase the opportunity to abuse vulnerable children/ adults.

***Despite the risk s/he continues to return to the location...***

This implies that the child or young people are responsible for any exploitation they

- The child(ren)/ young persons have an existing family or peer network in this location.
- The child(ren)/ young persons have an ownership or investment in the area.



experience in a location. It does not recognise abusive or exploitative context or their right to be in the location without experiencing harm.

- The child(ren)/ young person's consider themselves to be safe in this space/community/ neighbourhood.
- The child(ren)/ young persons did not consider themselves safe where they were.
- The child(ren) / young people have been groomed or coerced into being in this neighbourhood/location.
- The child(ren) / young people does not feel they have another safe place to go.
- The location/situation could increase the opportunity to abuse child(ren)/ young person's.
- The child(ren)/ young people feel under threat/ coerced to remain in this location.
- The child(ren) / young person's do not feel safe enough to leave this location.