



Language Matters Paper

Contents

Language Matters.....	2
Substance use.....	3
Suicide Prevention.....	5
Violence Against Women	7
Learning Disability.....	9
Mental Health and Wellbeing	11
Children, Families (Care experience).....	13
Justice.....	14
Further Developments	15

Language Matters

Words have power. When certain language is used in our daily conversations, reports, social media posts etc. there is the risk of causing offense, sensationalise issues, reinforce stigma, and perpetuate disadvantage.

Good practice requires awareness of the language used, its potential impact and measures required to minimise any negative aspects.

In each area of interest there is a range of information but for the purposes of this shared Protecting People Angus report the key language points have been collated.

It is only one part of a process to change culture, custom and practice across Angus regarding language and making a positive difference for everyone.

Being trauma informed means understanding the impact of worker and system involvement. The words can support healing and reduce stigma and risks if demonstrating empathy and meaningful choices in the language.

However, it is important to emphasise that the most important thing anyone can do is start a conversation. Do not let the fear of saying something wrong impact from saying anything at all.

Protecting People Angus promotes a learning culture where good practice is developed and perpetuated. Let's make language learning and word wisdom a core concept in Angus.

- **N.B Sometimes there will not be a comment in the "language to avoid" section but the language to use term is important for you to know.**

Substance use

It is recommended that “**substance use**” be used to describe all substances, including alcohol and other drugs.

Information has been taken from.

[Language Matters – Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies](#)

[Words Matter - National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)

[Scottish Drugs Forum – Moving Beyond People-First Language](#)

Language to use	Language to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a substance use problem • Person who uses drugs • Person with a dependence on... • Person who uses/injects drugs • Person with an alcohol problem • Person experiencing alcohol dependence • Person in recovery or long-term recovery • Person with lived experience of drug dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addict • User • Substance or drug abuser • Junkie/Druggie • Alcoholic • Drunk • Former or ex-addict • Reformed addict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem substance use • Non-dependent use • Non-problematic use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habit • Drug addiction • Recreational Use
<p>For illicit drugs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <p>For prescription medications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used other than prescribed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse • Misuse • Non-compliant
<p>For toxicology screen results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive/Negative <p>For non-toxicology purposes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean/Dirty

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in remission or recovery • Abstinent from illegal drugs • Not drinking or taking drugs • Not currently or actively using drugs <p><u>Relating to Injecting Equipment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterile injecting equipment • Unsterile or non-sterile injecting equipment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby born to mother who used drugs while pregnant • Baby with signs of withdrawal from prenatal drug exposure • Baby with neonatal opioid withdrawal/neonatal abstinence syndrome • New-born exposed to substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addicted baby
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opiate Substitution Treatment (OST) • Opiate Replacement Treatment (ORT) • Opiate Agonist Treatment (OAT) • Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) • Pharmacotherapy 	

Suicide Prevention

The vision in the 2018 national Suicide Prevention Action plan, [Every Life Matters](#) and the 2022 strategy [Creating Hope Together](#) is:

“We envisage a Scotland where suicide is preventable; where help and support is available to anyone contemplating suicide and to those who have lost a loved one to suicide. Suicide prevention is everyone’s business”.

Talking about suicide can be difficult for many. To support conversations and reduce stigma it is important that the best language possible is considered.

The examples used below in language to avoid are taken from lived experience of what people have said /been asked.

Language to use	Language to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts of suicide • Suicidal thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulative • Emotionally vulnerable • Cry for help • Suicidal gesture • They are just attention seeking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you thinking about suicide? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You’re not thinking about doing something silly? • You’re not having dark thoughts? • Have you had thoughts of hurting yourself? –not helpful as not explicit enough, need to follow up with we mean thoughts of suicide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted suicide • Non-fatal suicide attempt • Suicidal behaviour • Death by misadventure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near miss • Failed suicide attempt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed suicide • Death/Died by suicide • Probable suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed suicide • Successful suicide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locations of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide Hot Spots

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am working with/alongside people/patients who experience thoughts of suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am dealing with suicidal patients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has kept you going despite having suicidal thoughts? (Reasons for living) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why haven't you killed yourself? • You cannot take your life think about your family! – (emotional blackmail, will make person feel worse)

Violence Against Women

Gender based violence is a working definition applied as an umbrella concept that describes any form of abuse used to establish, enforce, or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place unequal gender power relationships.

PPA (Protecting People Angus) supports the view that gender- based violence can be experienced by any woman at any time throughout her life, regardless of her age, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexual orientation, gender history / identity or economic status. There is no typical perpetrator or typical women who experiences violence / abuse although there are factors that can increase risk.

Language to use	Language to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse • Coercive Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence • Battered women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battered women's refuge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women involved in prostitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic trio
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex attack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrator that chose to ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man, that could not control himself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrator of abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beast • Paedo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim • Survivor • Person /woman/ man who has experienced abuse 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender based violence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Marriage 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female Genital Mutilation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honour based violence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmful traditional practices 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial sexual exploitation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human trafficking 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Abuse * <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual touching of a child's body (clothed or unclothed) or a child forced to touch another person's body • Creating, distributing, or viewing child abuse images • Showing or forcing a child to watch or hear pornography/sexual acts • Forcing or persuading a child to perform sexual acts online • Flashing and grooming • Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) • Sexual harassment • Stalking 	

*Information collated from [Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre \(WRASAC\) Dundee and Angus Information Sheets](#)

Learning Disability

Guidance from the UK Government regarding [Inclusive language: words to use and avoid when writing about disability.](#)

Language to use	Language to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf person / person who is deaf/ person with a hearing impairment or disability / person with hearing loss / deaf blind person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing impaired / deaf and dumb / deaf and mute
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind person/ person who is blind/ person with visual disability/ person with visual impairment/ person with low vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially sighted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a physical disability • Person with a physical impairment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invalid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses a wheelchair • Person with a mobility impairment • Person using a mobility device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair bound • Confined to a wheelchair • Wheelchair user • Walks with sticks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with a brain injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain damage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who uses a communication device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible parking • Accessible bathroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled parking • Disabled facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates at a level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning difficulties, retard, spastic • Has a mental age of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviours that challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging behaviour

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate at a level • Behaviours that challenge Supported person • Person who uses a wheelchair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning difficulties, retard, spastic • Has a mental age of... • Challenging behaviour • Service user • Wheelchair user, disabled, non-able bodied.

Mental health community setting Self-management Peer support	
Early intervention Prevention	
Recovery – evidence shows recovery from mental illness is both possible and likely. Exploring, reflecting, and creating solutions that are best for people’s wellbeing.	Cured End point Linear process Fix the problem
Lived experience Expert by experience	

Children, Families (Care experience)

The Independent Care Review in Scotland highlighted how stigmatising and excluding our language can be. From this came Scotland's Promise to all children "Scotland must change the language of care. Language must be easily understood, be positive and must not create or compound stigma. Scotland must stop using professionalised language to describe meetings and experiences."

These suggestions below have come from our Participation Assistants and from our new Promise Group (for all Looked After Children).

Language to use	Language to avoid
Brother and sister	Siblings
Ask me who people are to me - nanny, pappa, gran etc	Do not assume grandmother and grandfather
Going to see Meeting with Spending time with	Contact
Having trouble coping, distressed feelings, difficult thoughts	Challenging behaviour, Triggers
We discussed or had a conversation	Addressed
You went out	Accessed
Said or told	Expressed
Brief explanation, example (trouble with police)	Section xyz
Breakfast, lunch, tea,	Mealtimes

Justice

Language to use	Language to avoid
a person primarily or exclusively attracted to prepubescent children	Paedophile
Person who has committed an offence	Criminal / Offender
Person who lives/ has lived in a prison	(ex) inmate/ prisoner
Person who has committed a sexual offence/ offence of a sexual nature	Sex offender
Person who does not have resident documentation	Illegal immigrant
person who undertakes sex work	Prostitute (other slang words that may be associated with prostitute are slag, slut, prozzie)
person who has committed the offence of murder	Murderer
someone who has committed a domestic offence/offence of domestic nature	Domestic Abuser
Survivor Person who survived XXXX experiences	Victim – this still is used in terms of court but in general situations people tend to prefer survivor or person first language such as person who survived x experience
person who has committed sexual offences against children	Beast, Pedo
person who has a significant history of offending behaviour	Prolific offender
person who has committed an offence	Perpetrator
person who uses substances	Junkie, Alcoholic
gender confirmation (in ref to medicines/surgery etc for trans people)	Gender reassignment

Further Developments

Language to use	Language to avoid
LGBT+	