

Spotlight
on
practice

Rights and Voice



Kent
County
Council



KENT: Changing Language July 2021

Kent's Children in Care Councils for young people aged 7 to 25, The Super Council, OCYPC, YAC identified changes in language they would like to see

Why?

Children and young people have spoken about the words that should be changed when professionals talk about children in care and care leavers. Language is a powerful tool for communication but sometimes the way that it is used in social care creates stigma and barriers for understanding.

What?

The Children in Care Councils, The Super Council, OCYPC and YAC identified the words that they wanted to change and explained how the words make them feel.

Young people identified that some words used in the care system can be really complicated at times leaving children and young people confused. Also some of the words leave children and young people feeling “like an object”, or “it sounds like you’re stupid or missing something.”

They then identified alternative words that they would like to see used instead when professionals are talking or writing about care.

The Children in Care Councils feel that it’s important to find alternative words that everyone can understand and use. They want to challenge everyone to think about the language they are using and encourage asking children and young people what words work best for them.

The list has been shared at all levels across Kent to ensure that professionals use these alternative words when talking to children and young people and writing them in documents.

What difference is it making?

- Professionals are more mindful about the words that they use when talking about children in care and when writing about them
- Kent has changed the way it writes about young people in all of their policies and procedures.
- Children and young people feel listened to.
- This work was also included in ANV’s national report ‘What children and young people wanted to say to the Care Review’
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/What-children-and-young-people-want-to-tell-the-care-review-report.pdf>

Spotlight on language

Kent’s Children in Care Councils, Super Council, OCYPC & YAC identified changes in language they would like.



Contact

“Contact is an awkward word.”
“It is cold and detached.”
“Younger children don’t use this word...it has multiple meanings.”

Use:
Family Time,
Seeing Family,
Family Visit,
Seeing mum / dad
/ sisters / brothers
(not siblings!)

Respite

“It sounds like carers don’t like you; you’ve worn them out and they can’t cope.”
“It’s something wanted or needed but doesn’t sound positive.”
“(it’s like) the foster carers need a break from you.”

Use:
Holiday,
Break, Short
Break,
Mini Get Away

Placement

“It makes me feel like an object being put somewhere.”
“It doesn’t make me feel like I’m going to be part of the family...it’s cold and not loving.”

Use:
Where I live,
Home,
My House

Care Leaver / Leaving Care

“It makes it sound like no one cares about you any more.”
“(it seems like they’re saying) our work here is done.”

Use:
Care Experienced
Adult,
Next Steps,
Continuing Care /
Support,
Moving On

L.A.C.

“L.A.C makes it seem like you are lacking knowledge or need to be looked after.”
“It makes it sound like you’re stupid or missing something.”

Use:
Child in Care,
Young Person

Peers

“I’ve never heard that word.”
“It sounds too professional.”

Use:
Friends,
Mates,
Friendship
Group