

## Victim Blaming Language in Child Exploitation (CE)



Every Moment Matters

## Seven Minute Safeguarding

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### What is meant by 'victim blaming language' and what is the impact of using this language?

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.

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. [This article](#) from Safeguarding Hub looks at the impact victim blaming language can have on criminal proceedings.

### What are some examples of victim blaming language?

- "Putting themselves at risk"
- "Promiscuous"
- "Having contact with adults via the internet"
- "He knows what he's doing"
- "Choosing to sell drugs"
- "She's 15 and has a 30-year-old boyfriend"
- 'Has made a lifestyle choice'

### What needs to 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

### Want to know more?

The National Police Chiefs Council in conjunction with Victim Support and The Children's Society have produced this [short document](#) to support professionals.

[This document](#) is a presentation made on behalf of Barnardo's and has some interesting insights into not just victim blaming language but the wider context of language used in safeguarding.

REMEMBER:  
Exploitation is  
**NEVER** the  
victims choice or  
fault: view it as  
abuse by an  
adult.

### What do we need to do as practitioners?

- 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
- Notice and correct our own language choices