

1

Use of appropriate language

When reading about safeguarding or discussing with colleagues there are lots of terms which can seem confused or overlapping. Safeguarding terminology has evolved over time. Some safeguarding language is outdated but still used by some people. Other language is used for slightly different things in different settings. You will want to move to the most up to date language but also know what other people mean when they use older terms, or terms that are specific to their context.



Use of appropriate safeguarding language (Adults)



2

Why does it matter?

We all need to get language right for a number of reasons. We want to make it clear that safeguarding encompasses all individuals and step away from old beliefs that it only covers children. We want to make sure that when we are having a discussion we're all considering the same thing. We want to make sure we never use victim-blaming language which implies that a child, young person or adult at risk of abuse or neglect may be at fault. We need to use professional terms for legal reasons.

7

What do I need to do?

Consult the [online glossary of safeguarding terms](#).

Look at up to date Safeguarding policy and procedures as these are updated accordingly and language used in them is correct

For children's safeguarding, check the NSPCC "[Why language matters](#)" blog

For further information on children's or adult safeguarding visit www.rochdalesafeguarding.com

3

Example – "Toxic Trio"

Although the term was originally used to describe three factors commonly present in case reviews, the grouping together of these specific factors means that 'toxic trio' consequently leads to being misunderstood as if any of these factors are present, an adult will experience abuse, whereas if none of them are present, the adult is safe. However, by focusing on the 'toxic trio' in isolation, it risks overlooking other factors present in a family's life such as:

- availability of appropriate support and services
- parental adverse childhood experiences
- cultural or language barriers
- disability or poverty.

6

Example – "Does not engage with services"

A person's previous experience of engaging with services may impact their perceptions of the support they are going to receive from a service. People may be expected to speak to lots of professionals, and impacts of funding, capacity, staff transitions can mean that an adult feels they won't be supported. It is important to recognise the factors creating difficulty for services to engage the person.

5

Example – "VAWG"

Violence against women and girls covers a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes. These include rape and other sexual offences, stalking, domestic abuse, 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage and 'honour killings'), 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting', as well as many others. Not only does the term VAWG dilute the abuse, it is also not in common useage and therefore not understood by everyone.

4

Example – "Domestic Violence"

The phrase "domestic violence" implies that we are talking solely about physical violence. Although physical domestic violence is a serious form of abuse, it is crucial that we acknowledge the many other types that are sometimes overlooked. These include coercive control and emotional abuse, online or digital abuse, and economic and financial abuse. Using the phrase "domestic abuse" in place of "domestic violence" can help prompt professionals to think about different types of abuse beyond direct physical violence and provide support for families accordingly.