



Appropriate Language

Acceptable	Unacceptable	Clarification
Indecent images / child sexual abuse images	Child pornography	The use of the phrase “child pornography” implies that the child is complicit in the sexual abuse. Pornography can only be created by consenting adults. The use of the word “pornography” in this context could be misconstrued to be condoning the sexual abuse of children.
Abuse	Relationship	The use of the word “relationship” to describe inappropriate behaviour between an adult and a child could be misconstrued to be condoning the sexual abuse of children, as it implies a legitimate relationship.
Non-recent abuse	Historical abuse	The word “historical” implies that the sexual abuse happened a long time ago but for many, the effects of the abuse are still with them today. It also implies that this type of abuse no longer happens today, which is not the case. The term “non-recent abuse” reflects that time has passed since the sexual abuse happened but does not diminish the impact of the abuse suffered. We never speak about historical murder or armed robbery, therefore we should not refer to sexual abuse as historical but non-recent or current.
Child sexual abuser / child sexual offender / perpetrator of child sexual abuse	Paedophile	The term “paedophile” refers to a diagnosed disorder often used to inappropriately describe all perpetrators of child sexual abuse. However, this term applies to a person that has a primary or exclusive sexual preference to prepubescent children. Not all paedophiles act on their sexual preference or interest. The terms “child sexual abuser”, “child sexual offender” or “perpetrator of child sexual abuse” more accurately reflect the crimes committed, no matter what the age of the child.
Child sexual abuse	Child sex abuse	“Child sex abuse” implies that “sex” is normal and acceptable, whereas “child sexual abuse” encompasses the meaning of power and control and not just the sexual act. “Child sexual abuse” reflects a range of offences, such as grooming, viewing indecent images, and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation	Child prostitution / child sex worker	“Child prostitution” and “child sex worker” imply that the child is complicit in the abuse. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse, it occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity.
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