

Renfrewshire Council's Language Policy created with Care Experienced young people and Promise Keepers

The Renfrewshire Language Policy has been launched in April and was created through consultation with Care Experienced young people and staff from the Promise Keeper network around words they felt were negative or stigmatising.

The Language Policy is a set of guidelines for how we speak about and describe Care Experience and Care Experienced children and young people. This language will continue to evolve, and services and organisations are encouraged to review their language.

The policy will help us move away from overly professionalised words and phrases to adopt person-centred language, which challenges existing stigma. Staff across all services at Renfrewshire Council have been asked to consider the impact of our language when engaging with children, young people and their families and modify it where possible.

For many of us, acronyms such as LAC/LAAC have been embedded in our everyday language and practices for several years. However, for a child or young person, they may hear this and think they are "lacking" in something. We recognise that "Looked After" is a statutory, legal term, and are encouraging staff to use the term in full – "Looked After Child" or "Looked After and Accommodated Child." We must continue challenging the language used to tackle the stigma associated with Care Experience.

It is also important to rethink how we describe the behaviour of our Care Experienced children and young people, moving away from terminology such as "challenging" and towards "distressed behaviour". This ensures we take a trauma-informed approach and recognise that all behaviour is communication. Staff across all the council are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the policy and work to find ways to embed this in their roles.

Renfrewshire Council staff are being supported in the roll out of the policy by our Promise Ambassador, Sam Macrae. Sam has offered staff who would like to learn more about the Language Policy or arrange a session to discuss it with their team to contact her. We are also working with our communications team at Renfrewshire Council to raise awareness of the policy across the Council. We are also using the opportunity to raise the importance of language with our partners across Renfrewshire.

If you would like to hear more about any aspect on our work on Renfrewshire Council's Language Policy or our work on The Promise in Renfrewshire please contact Sam Macrae, Promise Ambassador samantha.macrae@renfrewshire.gov.uk or Maurice Gilligan, Promise Manager maurice.gilligan@renfrewshire.gov.uk.