



Department  
for Education



# THE NORTH WEST LANGUAGE CHARTER

Co-produced with over 500  
young people and families

A shared  
commitment to  
clear, kind,  
human  
communication  
across our  
safeguarding  
system.



# WHAT IS THE CHARTER?

Children, young people and families told us that the way professionals speak has a huge impact on how safe, respected and included they feel.

Language can build trust — or fear.  
It can invite families in — or push them away.

The Language Charter has been co-produced with children, parents and carers and aims to give the North West shared language that is:

- Clear
- Warm
- Human
- Respectful
- Easy to understand
- Shared across agencies

It removes any complicated language and makes sure everyone in the system is on the same page.



# OUR SHARED COMMITMENTS



## WE AIM TO ALWAYS...

1

**Explain anything technical in a way that's easy to understand.**

Always give the simple version, and use pictures if needed.

2

**Talk about strengths as well as worries.**

"What's going well" is always part of the conversation.

3

**Be honest and consistent.**

We say what we know, what we don't know, and what happens next.

4

**Check understanding.**

"Does that make sense?"  
"Would you like it explained another way?"  
Always okay to ask again.

## WE AIM TO NEVER...

1

**Use words that blame or shame.**

We won't use labels that make people feel like they've done something wrong.

2

**Use confusing or complicated language.**

If a 10-year-old can't understand it, say it differently.

3

**Refer to people as paperwork or problems.**

People are people — not files or case numbers.

4

**Speak about people without involving them.**

No meetings where families are spoken about but not spoken with.

# WHAT THIS SHOULD FEEL LIKE

## FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

"I know what's happening."

"I'm not scared to ask questions."

"People speak to me like a human, not a problem."

## FOR PARENTS & CARERS

"I feel informed, not judged."

"I understand what's expected."

"The language feels fair and respectful."

## FOR PROFESSIONALS

"We use kind and respectful language, while being clear and honest about any worries."

"How we talk to families builds trust"

"We work with families in a kind, clear way."

# HOW PROFESSIONALS CAN USE THE LANGUAGE CHARTER

## 1. MEETINGS

- Start every meeting with clear names, roles, and purpose.
- Use the Charter as a springboard in multi-agency meetings.
- Replace acronyms and complicated words instantly.
- Summarise actions at the end in a way that's easy to understand

## 2. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- Use people's preferred names (and check what they are if you aren't sure)
- Letters, emails, assessments, and plans must use clear language.
- Remove words such as "case" or "issue" which can push families away.
- Add simple explanations and diagrams.
- Use boxes to easily explain anything complicated.

### 3. TRAINING & INDUCTION

- Every new staff member receives the Charter during their training when they start.
- Managers model the Charter and challenge language that isn't clear or kind.
- Include the Charter in supervision and reflection activities.

### 4. SYSTEMS & DOCUMENTATION

- Use clear language in policies, procedures and practice standards.
- Include Charter checks in audits and reviews.
- Add Charter prompts to systems, such as templates, feedback loops, or software pop-ups.

### 5. LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

- Leaders model the Charter in how they speak and how they write.
- No blaming, shaming, or confusing language.
- Celebrate examples of great human communication.
- Apologise when they get it wrong quickly and learn from their mistakes.

# HOW CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES

## CAN USE THE CHARTER

Children, young people, parents and carers can:

### 1. ASK ANY PROFESSIONAL

- "Can you explain that clearly and simply?"
- "Can you tell me what that means in a different way?"

### 2. HOLD A COPY OF THE CHARTER IN MEETINGS

They can point to any statement and say:

- "We're supposed to use this language."
- "Can we say it in one of these ways?"

### 3. EXPECT PROFESSIONALS TO CORRECT THEMSELVES

Professionals should think:

- "If I slip into confusing or unclear language, you can remind me, and I'll rephrase it."

## 4. USE CHARTER RIGHTS

You have the right to:

- understand
- ask again
- be respected
- not be shamed or blamed
- be involved

## 5. REQUEST A CLEAR, SIMPLE SUMMARY

Every meeting ends with:

- “What we talked about...”
- “What happens next...”
- “Who is doing what...”
- “In a way that’s easy to understand.”

Because language *is* power, this Charter hands some of that power back.

## 6. WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

This means:

- We will explain everything happening in a way you understand
- We will tell you what happens next
- You can ask questions at any time
- You can tell us if something doesn’t feel right



**BUILDING**

**A BRIGHTER  
FAMILY-FIRST**

**FUTURE  
TOGETHER**