

Gloriously Ordinary Language

Real. Inclusive. Human.

Social Care Future



25 September 2025

Plan

- Share what we've learnt through the Gloriously Ordinary Language programme over the last year about why language matters
- Hear from each other about why language matters
- Agree three key messages for the Casey Commission about why language matters



Rewriting social care

Blog Why language matters Words that make me go hmmm...
The missing words About Work with me

Words that make me go hmmm...



Words that make me go
hmmm: Signposting

"Signposting: 'the act of telling someone which organization they need to go to to find the help they need.'" Cambridge Dictionary [1]
"Signposting' indicates that the client will not be..."

7th June 2025

Predicting and managing **demand** in adult budgets and pressures' £8bn needed to keep pace with **demand** social care in England over next decade
identifying **Demand** continues to pi breadth of health and ca
types of
Council 'managing **demand**' for Fund social ca
social care amid growing bed **demand** s
erly population Managing **demand** through the fro
facing social care crisis amid rising de

Words that make me go
hmmm: Demand

While many words make me go hmmm, there are some that make me squirm the most, either due to what they reflect about the way we think about people (like...

17th May 2025

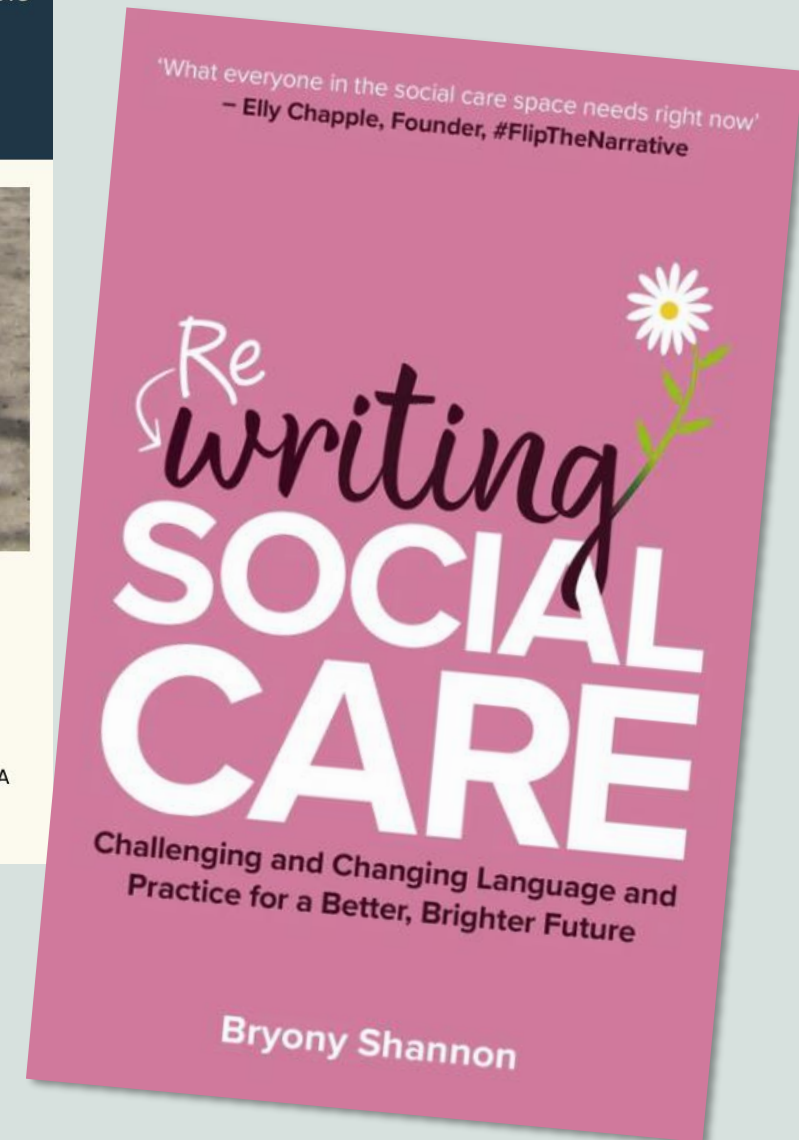


Words that make me go
hmmm: Pathway

"Pathways: Not sure. But modelled on Hampton Court Maze." Mark Neary [1] In everyday life, pathways meander through parks or fields or forests, offering direction. A route towards a destination....

19th April 2025

Blog: <http://rewritingsocialcare.blog>



TEST ONE

1

Would I want or accept that for **ME** or for someone I **LOVE**?



TEST TWO

2

Would I use that **LANGUAGE** in my kitchen with my **FAMILY**, or at the café or pub with my **MATES**?



TEST THREE

3

Would it make a **GREAT PHOTO**? What would the photo tell us?



TEST FOUR

4

Would it strengthen and support the person's **CONNECTIONS** and **RELATIONSHIPS**?



TEST FIVE

5

Would it give the person a **REASON TO GET OUT OF BED** in the morning?



MUNDANE

+

HEART SING

=

Gloriously Ordinary Lives

GLORIOUSLY
ORDINARY
LIVES

TEST ² TWO

Would I use that
LANGUAGE in my
kitchen with my
FAMILY, or at the
café or pub with
my **MATES**?



TEST TWO

People working in health, social care and education have a strange desire to create and use a language of a parallel universe. Some is just plain silly... 'activities of daily living'? 'Accessing the community?' 'Mobilising?' Some is downright dehumanising... People described as 'complex cases', someone being offered a 'placement', or being described as 'non-compliant'. Using this language means people are viewed, and treated, as 'other' than us or less than human. And history teaches us how dangerous this distance and division can be. Think about the words you use to describe people, where people live, the way people communicate, and the things people do. If those words aren't words you'd use with family and friends, they are probably words that get in the way of people living Gloriously Ordinary Lives.

'professionals'

case

person -
centred.

service

Together

FREEDOM

Personal care

Respite

love

'Difficult'

Client

Family

Didn't
Engage.

Accessing
the Community

pat

CHOICE

challenging
behaviour

Service user

BURDEN

Home

Refused

People

Vulnerable

Care

Elderly

Joy

complex

front line

non compliant

Hard to reach

Relationship

Transformation

equal

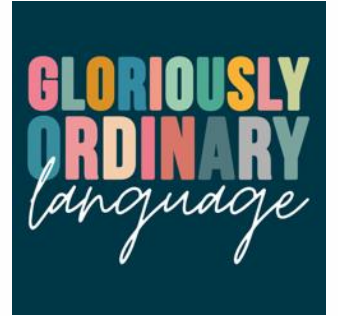
Would you use this language around your kitchen table?

WORDS THAT MAKE US GO Hmmm...

BLAMING WORDS	SILLY WORDS	SORTING OFFICE WORDS	DECEPTIVE WORDS	THEM & US WORDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMPLEX • VULNERABLE • HARD TO REACH • NON-COMPLIANT • CHALLENGING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCESSING THE COMMUNITY • PERSONAL CARE • ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING • TOILETING • MOBILISING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIGNPOSTING • PATHWAY • PLACEMENT • ASSESSMENT • TRANSITION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INDEPENDENT • PREVENTION • SAFE • COMMUNITY • CARE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLIENT • SERVICE USER • PROFESSIONAL • CASE • CUSTOMER



Our Gloriously Ordinary Language programme explores language in three themes – Purpose, People and Practice



Purpose

Lives not services

For example:

- Strategy
- Annual report
- Local account
- Web pages
- Information leaflet
- Video script

People

Us not them and us

For example:

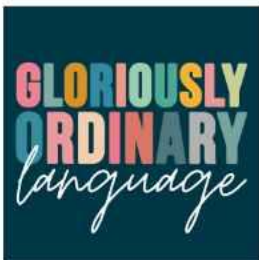
- Recording conversations
- Support plans
- Standard letters

Practice

Relationships not transactions

For example:

- Job advert
- Job description
- Policy document
- Practice guidance
- E-learning module



Purpose: lives not services



Care Act 2014

1.1 The core purpose of adult care and support is to help people to achieve the outcomes **that matter to them in their life.**

Social care in England is doomed
Social care is the nightmare that
won't go away

Mounting costs leave
councils facing a £6.2bn black hole

Soaring social care costs
squeeze councils, threatening
vital services for vulnerable
residents



DECEPTIVE WORDS

- INDEPENDENT
- PREVENTION
- SAFE
- COMMUNITY
- CARE

Adult social care aims to help people stay independent, safe and well so they can live the lives they want to.

we do everything we can to help those with complex needs to lead independent, fulfilling and happy lives

Our aim is to always support people to be as independent as possible

**Helping you to be independent
over the longer term**



What do we mean by independent?

Purpose: A life not a service

Don't we all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing what matters to us?



That's the **#socialcarefuture** we want to see.
Share if you agree › www.socialcarefuture.org.uk

Vision

When organised well, social care helps to weave the web of relationships and support in our local communities that we can draw on to live our lives in the way that we want to, whatever our age or stage in life.



That's the **#socialcarefuture** we want to see.
Share if you agree › www.socialcarefuture.org.uk

Purpose

What we've learnt about purpose

- It's not about simple language – it's about ordinary, human language
- It's a huge shift! And it requires senior leadership buy-in
- It's critical – because it changes how we think and how we act



People: us not them and us

Labels stick.

What are the words that people have said or written about you that have stuck?



People: us not them and us



THEM & US WORDS

- CLIENT
- SERVICE USER
- PROFESSIONAL
- CASE
- CUSTOMER

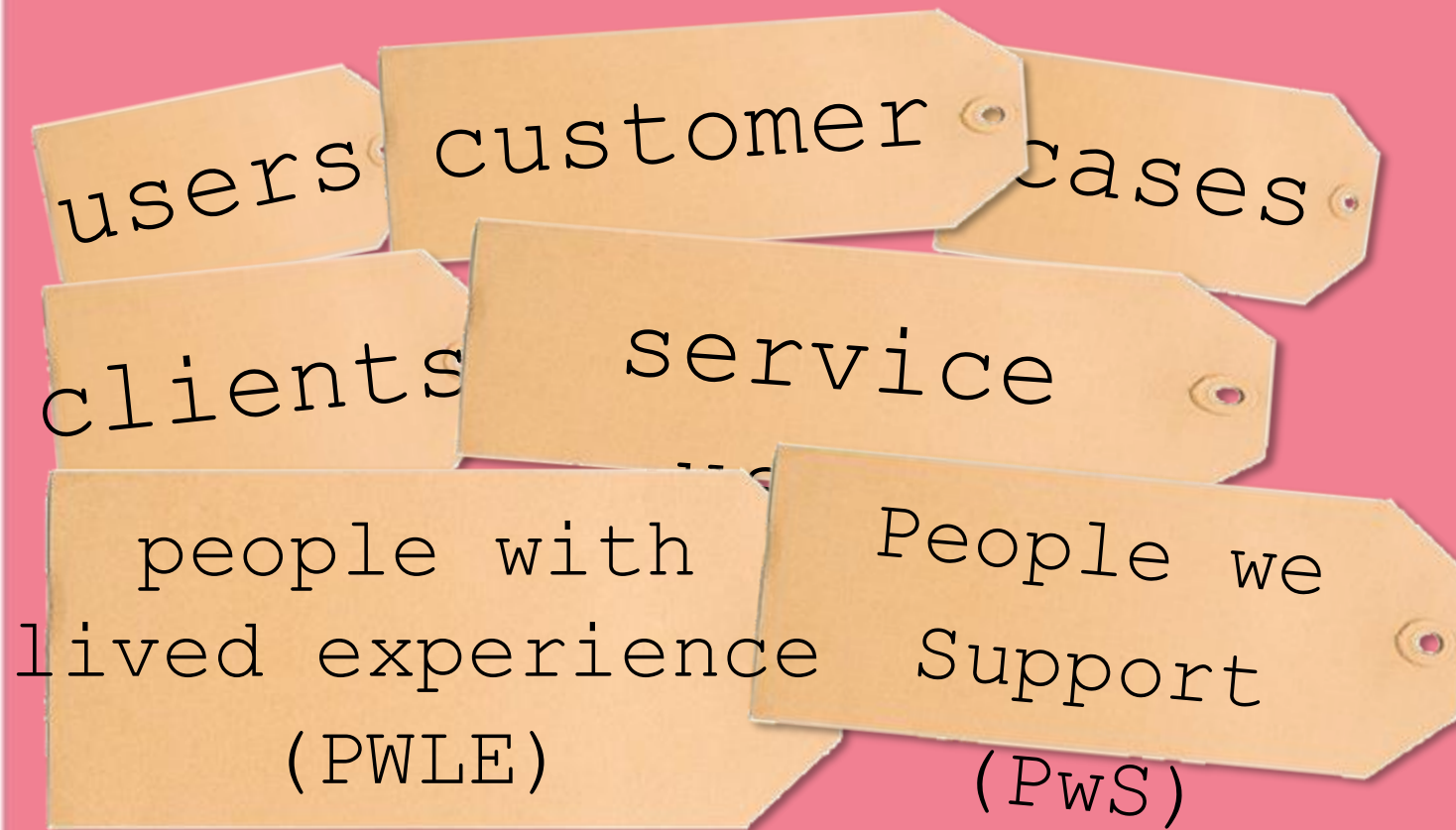
SILLY WORDS

- ACCESSING THE COMMUNITY
- PERSONAL CARE
- ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING
- TOILETING
- MOBILISING

BLAMING WORDS

- COMPLEX
- VULNERABLE
- HARD TO REACH
- NON-COMPLIANT
- CHALLENGING

What we've learnt about the current way we communicate with and about each other



Source: Elly Chappell
[@elly_chapple](https://twitter.com/elly_chapple)

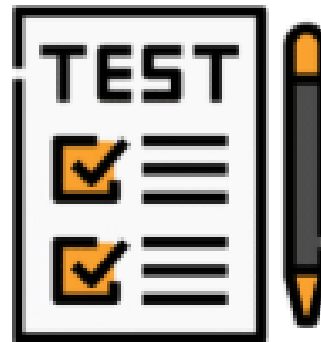
WHAT DO WE CALL **THEM?**

Practice: Relationships not transactions



SORTING OFFICE WORDS

- SIGNPOSTING
- PATHWAY
- PLACEMENT
- ASSESSMENT
- TRANSITION



Social worker

- “screening and risk assessing cases”
- “assessing service users”
- “reviewing placements”
- “managing complex cases”



Care worker

- “dressing and undressing of clients”.
- “aiding with toileting during the day”
- “administering medication to service users”



Workforce



Heroes

What we've learnt about the current way we communicate about how we work together (or not)

Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)



practice

/ˈpraktɪs/

Doing the right thing

1. The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it.
2. The customary, habitual, or expected procedure or way of doing of something.

Doing things right



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