

Transcript - Changing the Story of Social Care: Let's talk about language video

Jodie: Hello, I'm Jodie and I'm here with Daniel, and between us we have been doing some thinking about the words we use in social care and why they're important and the impact that those words can have. And Daniel's very kindly agreed to have a conversation with me today about his thoughts on language and why he feels it's important. So, thank you Daniel. Daniel, do you want to just share with me a little bit about yourself and why you think language is important?

Daniel: I left college last year and hope to move into my own flat soon. I am an advocate for disability and want to help make my community a more accessible place for everyone. I am an ambassador for a charity for young people with disabilities and I have recently started my own YouTube channel. I am non-speaking and use a speech device as my voice. Communication is important to me to share ideas, build social connections and to express my needs and wants. The language we all use has lasting implications, so it's important to be mindful in our communication. Using language that others don't understand or aren't comfortable with creates barrier in communication and can damage trust.

Jodie: Thank you Daniel, thank you for sharing that. So, can you tell me a little bit more about why you think words matter so much?

Daniel: The words used in social care are important because they show how people are viewed by professionals and care providers. The wrong words can reinforce stereotypes, create barriers and make people feel less important and less in control of their lives.

Using kind, respectful, and clear language helps build better relationships by making people feel valued, and understood. Communication should reflect people's choices, strengths, and individuality, not treat them like a problem or a case.

Jodie: I couldn't agree more, Daniel. So could you give me an example, Daniel, of a time when you felt language didn't feel right?

Daniel: The term 'respite care' always felt wrong. The word respite means a break from something unpleasant and implies the person receiving care is a burden and that their carer was suffering. It also sounded more like an emergency lifeline rather than a regular break that someone should be entitled to. It was right that this was challenged and replaced with 'short break'.

Jodie: And Daniel, we also had a chat about some of the silly social care jargon that we use and the words that maybe feel like more like service speak. So, things like accessing the community and mobilising. What's your thoughts on those words?

Daniel: Jargon can be confusing and make people feel excluded or suspicious. It often overcomplicates things and can feel impersonal. For example, calling someone's home a "placement" makes it sound like a temporary arrangement and like they have no choice in being there. Saying "accessing the community" instead of "going out" makes a normal everyday event sound clinical. Simple, everyday language is better because it keeps communication human and focused on the person.

Jodie: And something else we've been talking about, Daniel, is the labels that sometimes people use about people, so things like non-compliant and challenging and hard to reach. Can you share your thoughts on those words?

Daniel: These labels are judgemental and unfair. They place blame and often ignore the reasons behind someone's reaction. For example, someone might be called "non-compliant" simply for making a choice

someone else didn't agree with, or "challenging" because their needs are not being met and they're frustrated or struggling to communicate. These labels can stick and influence how others see someone before even meeting them.

Jodie: Absolutely. And something else, when we're thinking about our approach, Daniel, we agreed that it's useful to maybe pause and have a think about the words we're using and the meaning behind those words. And it isn't about always getting everything right or getting things perfect. But it is about having that thoughtful approach to the words we're using. Do you think that feels like the right approach to take?

Daniel: Yes I think so. We don't want to discourage open communication - It's just about being aware of how words affect others.

Jodie: Okay, so when we're thinking about changing the words we use, why do you think that this, or how do you think this makes a difference?

Daniel: Using better language helps break down barriers between people responsible for providing care and the people they support. Poor language can make people feel judged, controlled, or excluded from decisions about their lives. Thoughtful language can restore dignity, give people a sense of control, and build stronger relationships. When people feel involved and respected, they are more likely to have a better care experience and live better lives.