Useful glossary of therapeutic writing terms

In your role, you will be called upon to write many different types of reports. It can therefore be helpful to have some words or phrases which suitably describe the children and young people you support in a way that is not detrimental, derogatory, or labelling towards the young person. Remember, your reports are also records of history for that young person to later make sense of their life while living or attending school with you. Here are a few suggestions that may be useful – especially in reports that require more reflective thinking from you.

What is going on?	How could we record it? Staff Reflection
Not managing behaviour	• Child appeared to be upset/getting angry (describe actual behaviour) or • Child was presenting as upset/getting upset (describe actual behaviour) • Child was dysregulated. He was…(be specific – he had his fists clenched, was shouting and pacing…) • Child was struggling to manage…… • Child was not able to self-regulate his/her behaviour… (this could also lead to staff adding – this has resulted in staff having to physically contain Child (PI)) OR • Child was not able to self-manage his/her behaviour… • Child was unable to cope with (eg; disappointment/transition/instruction/change of routine) and seemed to be overwhelmed with his/her feelings. This presented as……. • Child does not yet have effective strategies to get their needs met and are currently reverting to……..
Staff's interpretation of underlying reasons for behaviour (not fact)	• Child appeared to be/ seemed ……… • It is likely that Child was feeling…….. • It is possible that Child was ………… • Child presented as being….(angry, upset) (then describe what that looked like) • Based on my observation of……..in my opinion, the Child seemed triggered by…..
CHILD jealous of other Child	Child may be feeling threatened by………

Describing behaviours
  1. 'Attention seeking'
 	
  2. Regular behaviours
	Child could be
	  1. Attachment seeking to secure safe adult presence
	
	  2. CHILD is currently displaying behaviours such as…….(be specific)

3. Doing it again and again	3. CHILD currently lacks cause and effect thinking and cannot learn from previous incidents… 3a) CHILD keeps reverting to default responses of…..
4. 'Controlling' or 'manipulative'	4. CHILD appeared to be attempting to make his environment predictable by….
Other useful phrases	Child demonstrates….. Child struggles to consistently manage Child cannot yet
Useful Positive statements	Child is starting to be able to…. Child is able to accept….. Child is engaging with staff……
"We need to address the behaviour"	"We need to consider what the child is responding to, so that we can respond to them in a helpful way"

This is not an exhaustive list and we will continue to add to this list.

When we think about writing information about the children we support, we must write in a style and language that accurately demonstrates an ongoing positive regard for the child and our ongoing duty of genuine care towards the child.