

Inclusive Language Guide

**Recommended terms for different
protected characteristics.**

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Why is inclusive language important?

Inclusive language promotes equality, respect and understanding between individuals from diverse backgrounds. It is a way of using language that avoids biases, stereotypes and discrimination, making sure that everyone feels valued and included in all verbal and written communications.

Inclusive language is a powerful tool for fostering inclusivity, respect and understanding. By consciously choosing our words and being mindful of the impact they have on others, we contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society. It is important to remember that the way we say something can be equally as offensive as the words that are used. If we use a word or phrase and are told that the recipient finds it offensive, then we should not use it again and discuss it at the earliest opportunity.

Throughout this guide, we have taken recommendations from multiple sources including Sport England, Sporting Equals, Activity Alliance, the British Council, charities, universities, Women in Sport, Gov.UK and National

Governing Bodies of Sport, amongst others. Below are the suggested terms that it is best practice to use in the first instance, we have grouped these under the protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010.

This document is designed to be used as an initial point of guidance; we recognise the importance of adapting language to individual preferences.

Remember, it is always respectful to ask and accommodate an individual's language preferences to foster effective and inclusive communication.

Why is inclusive language important? (cont.)

Respect for diversity

Inclusive language acknowledges and respects the diversity of identities, backgrounds, and experiences among people. It recognises that individuals may identify in various ways, including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and more. By using inclusive language, you show that you value and respect these differences.

Avoiding harm

Language that is exclusive, offensive, or insensitive can cause emotional harm and perpetuate stereotypes, biases, and discrimination. Inclusive language helps prevent inadvertently offending or marginalising others due to the words we choose.

Communication

Clear communication is crucial for effective interaction. Inclusive language ensures that your message is conveyed accurately without any potential misunderstanding, confusion, or discomfort.

Building relationships

Inclusive language fosters positive relationships by showing that you are considerate and understanding of others' experiences and identities. This helps create a sense of trust and camaraderie.

Representation and visibility

Using inclusive language helps promote visibility and recognition of groups that might have been historically marginalised or underrepresented. It acknowledges their existence and contributions.

Legal and ethical considerations

In some cases, using exclusive language can have legal implications, especially when it pertains to discrimination and harassment. Employers, institutions, and organisations are often required to use inclusive language to ensure a fair and equitable environment.

Social progress

By adopting inclusive language, you contribute to social progress and equality. Language shapes perceptions and attitudes, so using inclusive language can help shift societal norms toward more inclusive and accepting perspectives.

Personal growth

Engaging with inclusive language can lead to personal growth by broadening your understanding of different identities and experiences. It encourages empathy and a willingness to learn about others' perspectives.

Professional impact

In professional settings, using inclusive language can enhance team dynamics, improve collaboration, and create a more inclusive workplace culture. It also shows clients, customers, and partners that your organisation values diversity.

Leading by example

Using inclusive language sets a positive example for others to follow. When people see you using inclusive language, they may be inspired to do the same, creating a ripple effect of change.

Championing inclusive language

The fear of saying something 'incorrect' frequently hinders us from initiating conversations. Over time, many individuals have constructed mental barriers regarding what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable to express. Naturally, certain words, phrases, and actions are unacceptable.

Mistakes are a part of being human. We can approach situations with the understanding that most people don't have the intention to cause offense and are open to learning. We should help them understand the potential negative impact and advise on the alternative.

What if I get it wrong?

How to handle mistakes: As humans, errors are inevitable, and occasionally, we may miss the mark. If someone points out that you have used inappropriate language: pause and attentively listen to their feedback. Take responsibility and avoid being defensive. Ask if they can explain the preferred language for the future or suggest sources for additional information.

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Age

- › Adults / Children at risk
- › Older people, older adults, older population, persons 65 years and older
- › Older person / people, over 50's, over 60's
- › Older workers, older employees, finished paid work, left the paid workforce
- › People born between 1946 and 1964
- › Young people, youth, children, or babies
- › Young person / people

Sources

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The ABC of EDI

Home Office

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Disability

- › A person with a disability or a person living with a disability
- › Person or non-disabled person
- › Impairment types: Dexterity, hearing, learning, mental health, memory, mobility, social / behavioural, stamina / breathing / fatigue, vision and other
- › Intellectual, physical, psychosocial and sensory impairment
- › Blind person, visually impaired or sight loss
- › Deaf, user of British sign language (BSL)
- › Deaf people, hearing impaired or hearing loss
- › Dwarf, person of short stature or person of restricted growth
- › Learning disability or person with a cognitive impairment
- › Person / someone who has / with a... [cognitive, learning, mental health, physical or sensory] condition / disability / impairment
- › Person / someone living with... [COPD, dementia, epilepsy, health issues, ill health, neurodiversity]
- › Person / someone who has... [ADHD, autism, depression, diabetes, Downs Syndrome, dyslexia, neurodiverse conditions, paraplegia, seizures]
- › Person / someone who is on the... [anxiety, autism, developmental disorders, obsessions & compulsions, schizophrenia] spectrum
- › Wheelchair / mobility-scooter user

Note

Some people with a disability reject the term 'able-bodied' because it implies people with a disability lack able bodies. People with a disability who use identity-first language, however, tend to use 'abled' to describe people without disability, and 'able-bodied' to describe people without physical or mobility-related disability for the purposes of consistency. Not all disabilities are physical and seen.

Sources

Activity Alliance

Inclusive Communications Guide

Disability Sheffield

Disability Language and Behaviour

Disability Wales

Inclusive Language and Imagery

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Inclusive Language Guide

Gov.UK

Words to use and avoid when writing about disability

Gov.UK

Impairment Types

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Gender reassignment

- › Cis / cisgender
- › Cross-dresser
- › Gender identity, gender expression
- › Gender-affirming surgery, gender confirmation or gender reassignment surgery
- › Intersex
- › They / Them / Theirs
- › Trans / Trans gender, Trans man, Trans woman, Transgender man or Transgender woman
- › Transition

Marriage and civil partnership

- › Love, commitment, responsibility, taking care of the one you love
- › Marriage, exclusion from marriage, denial of marriage
- › Partner / spouse

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Race

- › African communities, South Asian communities, Chinese, Jamaican, Nigerian, Indian, Caribbean, Somali, Grenadian, Indian, Vietnamese, Romany Heritage, Irish Traveller, Arab community, Polish, Portuguese etc.
- › BIPOC = Black, Indigenous and people of colour
- › Black, Brown, White
- › British Black African heritage, British Indian heritage, Chinese heritage, Somali heritage, British Pakistani heritage etc.
- › Dual heritage / bi-racial
- › Ethnically diverse communities
- › People / communities who face barriers to participation / engagement, 'underrepresented communities', seldom heard
- › People who experience racism' or 'communities who have been impacted by racism' (do not assume)

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Sporting Equals

Terminology Resource

Religion and belief

- › A person who practices... e.g.,
'a person who practises Sikhism'
- › All religions and beliefs,
non-religious
- › Interfaith and belief
- › majority country e.g.,
a Muslim-majority country
- › Religions and worldviews /
religious and non-religious /
religions and beliefs

Pregnancy and maternity

- › Adoption
- › Chest feeding / People
who breastfeed
- › Guardians
- › Menstruation / People
who menstruate
- › Parental leave, parental time off
- › Period products
- › Pregnant people
- › Your child / dependant or the
person you are supporting

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Sex

- › Attending, staffing, or stationed at
- › Biological sex
- › Different sex
- › Esteemed guests, friends and colleagues, students, siblings, everyone, the participant
- › Everyone, people, team, colleagues, folks
- › Hi all / everyone
- › Humankind, humanity
- › Men and boys
- › Women and girls

Sexual orientation

- › Allyship
- › Being gay
- › Bi / Bisexual
- › Gay / Lesbian
- › LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Queer / Questioning, + encapsulates all other members of the community)
- › Orientation, sexual orientation
- › Queer communities
- › Sexual orientation

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Stonewall

LGBTQ+ Terms



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This guide has been produced by
Active Lincolnshire and is supported
and endorsed by:



Further guidance for all the protected characteristics

AKD Solutions

(Via the Diversity Inclusion Action Plan support portal).

Inclusive Employers

Maximus UK

We want to make sure our content is relevant and helpful to all our users, and we review this document at regular intervals.

This document was last updated on 23/09/2025.
The information provided was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of review.

Please send any feedback to
Communications@ActiveLincolnshire.com



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