

# Dialogue of Inclusion

This piece was written for the National Inclusion Week 2021.

Sticks and Stones – By Natasha Hooper: Lead Service Development Manager



We’ve probably all heard the phrase, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”.

Well, I’m not sure that’s entirely true.

As Desmond Tutu (a theologian, known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist) said, “Language is very powerful. Language does not describe reality; language creates the reality it describes”.

How we use language can have a huge impact – it can empower us, or it can constrain us.

This is why there has been a move towards using more **inclusive language** in day-to-day life. An example would be avoiding gender specific words or phrases such as “mankind” the use of which might be considered to exclude women.

**Person-first language** is a slightly more contested concept but for many people it’s preferred. An example of person-first language would be to say, “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”. This implies that they are a person first and just happen to be disabled. It puts emphasis on the person and implies that their disability is only one part of who they are and should not be the focus.

**Below are some different areas of inclusive language for us to consider:**

AGE	
USE	AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older people</li> <li>• Young people, learners, teenagers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The elderly, OAPs, pensioners</li> <li>• Kids, youngsters, guys</li> </ul>

DISABILITY	
USE	AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a disability</li> <li>• Wheelchair user</li> <li>• People with visual impairments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The disabled / handicapped people</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with hearing impairments</li> <li>• Accessible car park / accessible toilet</li> <li>• A person with Down's Syndrome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair bound / confined to a wheelchair</li> <li>• The blind</li> <li>• The deaf</li> <li>• Disabled car park / disabled toilet</li> <li>• Down's person</li> </ul>
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<b>NEURODIVERSITY</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neurodiverse person</li> <li>• Person with autism</li> <li>• Person with dyslexia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autistic</li> <li>• Autistic Spectrum disorder (referring to the autistic spectrum is fine but 'disorder' is offensive to some autistic people)</li> <li>• Dyslexic person</li> </ul>

<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health conditions, mental health problems</li> <li>• People with anxiety</li> <li>• A person with depression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental disorder, mental illness</li> <li>• Suffers with anxiety</li> <li>• Struggles with depression</li> </ul>

<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic people</li> <li>• Asian people, Black people, White people Minority Ethnic groups</li> <li>• Minority Ethnic groups</li> <li>• People of White and Black Caribbean heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BAME people (instead, spell out the acronym) Non-white people, people of colour, coloured people</li> <li>• (The) Asians, Blacks, Whites</li> <li>• Ethnic minorities</li> <li>• Mixed, mixed heritage, mixed race</li> </ul>

<b>RELIGION</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First name, given name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christian name</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion, belief</li> <li>• Christian people, Hindu people, Jewish people, Muslim people etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith</li> <li>• Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims etc</li> </ul>
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<b>SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone, friends, and colleagues</li> <li>• The person's name</li> <li>• They, them, theirs [if other pronouns haven't been specified; if however pronouns (e.g. she, her, hers) have been specified, then use those instead]</li> <li>• Partner, spouse</li> <li>• Trans people</li> <li>• Men, women and people who identify as non-binary</li> <li>• People, humankind</li> <li>• Chair or Chair-person</li> <li>• Quality of work</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• A police officer, a fire officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ladies and gentlemen, guys</li> <li>• Girl, son, mate, love</li> <li>• She, her, hers; he, him, his [unless these have been specified]</li> <li>• Girlfriend, boyfriend, wife, husband, other/better half</li> <li>• Transgender</li> <li>• Men and women, male and female (i.e. a binary choice)</li> <li>• Mankind</li> <li>• Chairman</li> <li>• Workmanship</li> <li>• Manpower</li> <li>• A policeman, a fireman</li> </ul>

<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesbian people, gay people, bisexual people Note: 'Queer' can be used as an adjective to describe individuals who don't identify as straight, but historically it has also had negative connotations so, if used, should be used with care.</li> <li>• Heterosexual people, straight people</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> <li>• Only use 'LGBTQ+' when referring to both sexual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesbians, gays, bisexual</li> <li>• Heterosexuals</li> <li>• Sexual preference</li> <li>• Don't use 'LGBTQ+' if you are only talking about gender or gender identity</li> <li>• Don't use 'straight' as the opposite of LGBTQ+' (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including 'straight')</li> </ul>

orientation and gender identity-based communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Straight, CIS gendered, ally</li> </ul>	
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<b>SOCIOECONOMIC LANGUAGE</b>	
<b>USE</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under-resourced / Low opportunity</li> <li>• Communities with high-poverty rates / Communities with access to fewer opportunities</li> <li>• experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disadvantaged</li> <li>• Hard-to-reach People</li> <li>• (The) homeless</li> <li>• Recipients</li> </ul>

**But what if I get it wrong?** – for me there’s no real right or wrong way to use inclusive language. Simply thinking about the everyday words, we use and how they can affect people is enough.

As Maya Angelou (poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist) said, *“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”*.