

Language Guidance

Equality, diversity and inclusion

As DSC strives to be a welcoming environment, the Wellbeing and EEDI working group would like to 'formalise' our existing attitude towards EEDI by adapting Publications' *Editorial Manual*, which does a great job at advising on how to use language to be respectful. The charity sector has a duty to use its language carefully, especially as it works with and for beneficiaries that are often seen as the most vulnerable in society.

At DSC, we aim for all our publications, resources and services to reflect the diverse communities which make up the UK. We have created a list of some pointers, but the approach and terms chosen will depend on context. It is important to look at other resources (we have included a list of some helpful ones) and do your own research if you are ever in doubt!

General advice

It is difficult to give general guidance on inclusive language as most times it depends on context. There is no single solution to every situation. However, there are some examples and suggestions that we have listed throughout this document. These should help to make clearer the types of language that can be either exclusionary or inclusive.

It is important to remember that language evolves over time. The key thing is to be open to learning, unlearning and continual improvement.

Remember that labels such as 'Black people', 'women', 'older people' do not represent the vast array of experiences and lives of the individuals that identify themselves as such. It is always better to be as specific as possible when referring to individuals and/or groups rather than using umbrella terms.

It is also okay to ask people who you are interacting with how they wish to be referred to. For example, at the start of a meeting/training course you may wish to ask people to introduce themselves and their pronouns if they feel comfortable doing so.

Try to minimise implying 'us' vs. 'them' divides. 'We' and 'us' are much more inclusive subjects so try use these where possible/relevant. And be cautious of these common tropes:

- **Exceptionalism** (elevating a member of a group to a superior position because they 'defy' a negative stereotype associated with said group)
 - (Talking to a female colleague who has had children) 'You show that it is *possible* for women to do both!'
 - (Talking to a Black colleague) 'You are so *well educated/articulate*.'
- **Paternalism** (stripping away the group's agency and acting on their behalf without their input; assuming that the group is incapable and ignorant).
 - 'We will *educate* these prisoners.'
 - 'People with disabilities *are cared for*.'

Category	Avoid	Instead use	Notes/Explanation	Examples
Age	<p>‘Seniors’/ ‘the elderly’/‘old people’/‘the aged’/ ‘the third age’</p> <p>‘Youths’,</p> <p>‘Boomers’/ ‘generation X’/ ‘millennials’</p>	<p>‘Older people’/ ‘older adults’</p> <p>‘Younger people’</p> <p>‘People aged between x and x’</p>	<p>Specify the age group or birth years where possible.</p> <p>Please note that some cultures/societies will have different understandings and definitions of age. For instance, Native American communities refer to members as ‘Elders’ if they are seen as a source of spiritual and traditional wisdom.</p>	<p>This trust makes grants to individuals who are aged over 70.</p> <p>This charity supports younger people that were born between 2005 and 2007.</p>
Disability/ illness	<p>‘To suffer (with)’</p> <p>‘Special needs’,</p> <p>‘The disabled’,</p> <p>‘Able-bodied’/ ‘normal’,</p> <p>‘Invalid’/‘crippled’/‘handicapped’</p>	<p>‘To experience a condition/impairment’</p> <p>‘People who require accommodations’</p> <p>‘People with a condition/impairment’</p> <p>‘Disabled people’ --> however, it is best to be as specific as possible</p>	<p>At DSC, we used to prefer ‘people with disabilities’ whilst other organisations opted for ‘disabled people’; the latter relates to the social model of disability. After some discussion, we have followed suit, and we promote the social model. ‘Disabled people’ implies that people with impairments experience disability due to the inaccessibility of society.</p> <p>Please note that there are culturally distinct groups of disabled people. For instance, ‘deaf’/ ‘deafness’ refers to the physical hearing impairment but ‘Deaf’ (capital ‘d’) is used when referring to a specific community of people who are deaf.</p> <p>Avoid comparative terms that imply people with disabilities are not the ‘norm’.</p>	<p>The charity awards grants to people living in Wales who experience seizures.</p> <p>One of our trustees is part of the Deaf community.</p> <p>The charity also helps family members who do not have impairments.</p> <p>At our charity, we advocate for the rights of disabled people.</p>

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Gender	<p>Avoid using descriptors like '<u>female</u> CEO' if you are not applying 'male' to the same positions.</p> <p>'Victim/survivor of sexual harassment'</p>	<p>'People/men/women who have experienced sexual harassment'.</p>	<p>Gender neutral language may help to reject the idea that the male/masculine is superior and the default.</p> <p>Please note that if talking about sex work, please use 'sex worker' instead of 'prostitute'.</p> <p>If you do not know someone's gender identity, use 'they', 'them', 'themselves', 'their'.</p>	<p>I would like to apply for the role as chair(person).</p> <p>She is CEO of our organisation.</p> <p>The applicant should submit their application form by the end of the year.</p>
International development	<p>'First/second/third world countries', 'illegal immigrant'</p>	<p>'High/middle/low-income countries', 'Global South/North', 'Global Majority countries', 'people who are undocumented/non-registered', 'people seeking asylum', 'people fleeing from war/violence'</p>	<p>Please note that 'Global South/Global North' are geopolitical terms (i.e., Australia is part of the Global North but is geographically in the Southern Hemisphere).</p> <p>Continents such as Africa and Asia are large and diverse so, where possible, please be more specific. Internationally operating charities may have specific programmes for specific regions/countries.</p> <p>Try to avoid implying that Global Majority people are helpless and vulnerable.</p>	<p>The charity works with partners in low-income countries.</p>

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<p>Race and ethnicity</p>	<p>‘Coloured people’</p> <p>‘black community’</p> <p>‘south Asian women’</p> <p>‘BAME’ / ‘ethnically diverse’ / ‘ethnic minorities’</p> <p>Using race and ethnicity as interchangeable terms.</p>	<p>‘The Black community’</p> <p>‘South Asian women’</p> <p>‘The Global Majority’</p>	<p>We recommend capitalising terms denoting race in the same way that you would for ‘Deaf community’.</p> <p>Note that the term ‘BAME’ is starting to be rejected and there is no accepted consensus, but the term ‘people of the Global Majority’ is becoming more popular. ‘Ethnic minorities’ is only used when referring to people of the Global Majority; however, we all have ethnicity (not just people of colour)!</p> <p>Race and ethnicity are distinct, race refers more to physical traits and ethnicity to a shared cultural identity. It is worth noting that some sociologists see racial classifications as political categories that have been used to justify discrimination and power imbalances.</p> <p>Where possible, we recommend being specific in your language use as using collective terms obscures unique experiences that different racialised groups will have.</p>	<p>The charity awards grants to Black and South Asian Women residing in Camden.</p> <p>We offer a fast-track scheme for people of the Global Majority.</p>

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Religion	<p>‘Muslim country’/ ‘Christian country’</p> <p>Blanket terms like ‘Christian’ when referring to specific denominations.</p> <p>Using ‘faith’/ ‘religion’/‘belief’ interchangeably.</p>	<p>‘Muslim-majority country’/ ‘Christian-majority country’</p> <p>Use denomination names if they are known.</p> <p>Capitalise religion names, names of holy texts or religious holidays.</p>	<p>Religion can overlap with ethnicity, but assumptions about religion should not be made based on ethnicity and vice versa. For example, not all people who identify as ethnically Jewish practise the religion of Judaism.</p> <p>The same can be said for nationality, not all people from Muslim-majority countries will practise Islam.</p> <p>Remember that each religion has various sects, denominations or groups that practise their religion differently. For example, if an organisation is a Methodist or Catholic charity, it is better to be specific rather than to use the term ‘Christian’.</p> <p>The terms ‘faith’, ‘religion’ and ‘belief’ often have personal meanings for different people and are not interchangeable. Many people hold beliefs without belonging to an organised religion.</p> <p>If you are unsure when writing about religious organisations, it is best to follow the example of the organisation and use the language that it uses.</p>	<p>Applications are open to Methodist organisations in Merseyside.</p> <p>Our education projects are based in Muslim-majority countries.</p>

Category	Avoid	Instead use	Notes/Explanation	Examples
Sexuality	<p>'Sexual preference'</p> <p>'Bisexuals, gays'</p> <p>'LGBTQ+ person'</p>	<p>'Sexual orientation'</p> <p>'Bisexual people, gay people'</p> <p>'A member of the LGBTQ+ community'</p>	<p>Using terms related to sexual orientation as adjectives rather than nouns. For example, 'bisexual people' rather than 'bisexuals' is preferred.</p> <p>Some terms may hold different weight for different members of the LGBTQ+ community. The term 'queer' or 'queer communities' for example may be seen by some as an acceptable term, but for others it may still hold the older sense of the word as a slur.</p> <p>Variations of the acronym used to describe non-heterosexual groups exist. DSC uses 'LGBTQ+' because this recognises that there are many forms sexual orientation that are not covered by 'LGBTQ'. Many organisations will use 'LGBT+', 'LGBTQ', 'LGBT' or in some cases 'LGBTQIA'. Avoid using this acronym if you are only talking about gender identity.</p>	<p>The charity provides support and information for members of the LGBTQ+ community.</p> <p>Sexual orientation is a spectrum.</p>

Category	Avoid	Instead use	Notes/Explanation	Examples
Social and economic circumstances	<p>'In need'</p> <p>'Vulnerable'</p> <p>'On benefits'</p> <p>'Homeless people'</p> <p>'Ex-offender/ Ex-criminal/ Ex-convict'</p>	<p>'People with a low income'</p> <p>'Low-income communities'</p> <p>'People receiving statutory support/ welfare'</p> <p>'People experiencing homelessness'</p> <p>'People who have been incarcerated/ people with a criminal conviction'</p>	<p>This is an area where we may fall into using condescending or dehumanising language. It is important to highlight that these kinds of circumstances are an experience rather than an identity. It is also important to highlight that circumstances may be a result of external factors.</p>	<p>The organisation provides support for people experiencing homelessness in low-income communities.</p> <p>Our platform promotes the voices of women who have been incarcerated, often due to committing petty offences arising from experiencing absolute poverty.</p>

Mistakes


In circumstances where someone makes you or another colleague aware that you/they have said/written something that is exclusive and/or disrespectful, we need to approach it using the growth mindset. We make EEDI progress through making mistakes.

The Centre for Equity, Gender and Leadership suggests the following steps in its guide titled [*Understanding Inclusive Language: A Framework*](#):

Acknowledge the mistake you made and the harm or offense it caused. Let the person who was harmed know that it was not acceptable.

- **Explain what happened without excusing it.** Let the other person know that you've identified what went wrong and the negative impact it had.
- **Express your remorse**
- **Offer to make amends**

Remember, the only way we can progress in our EEDI journey is through constructive conversations and by making genuine mistakes. DSC will likely review this language guidance [regularly](#) .



Further reading and resources:

Here are some of the resources and further readings that may be of interest to anyone who wants to learn more about inclusive language guidance or is unsure about certain terminology. If you have any questions or suggestions regarding language guidance, feel free to contact a member of the Wellbeing/EEDI Working Group.

[Edge Hill University LGBTQ Inclusive Language Guide](#)

[University of Bristol Inclusive Writing Guide](#)

[Level Playing Field Disability Words and Language](#)

[Greater Manchester Equality Alliance Inclusive Language - Age](#)

[“Illegal Immigration” - Migrants' Rights Network \(migrantsrights.org.uk\)](#)

[MK-College-Inclusive-Language-Guide.pdf \(mkcollege.ac.uk\)](#)

[Oxfam Inclusive Language Guide](#)

