Inclusive terminology

The language we use matters. This is because it has power and shapes how people can feel and experience their place in the world.

It is because of this link between language and power that a lot of attention is paid to terminology as it is an area where people can experience significant barriers to the world. The words we use and the way we use them is an important ingredient in working together.

Contents

Terminology to use and don't use

Some terminology is easier than others. There are some terms that are less clear cut. Below is a list of terminology where there is consensus that the following words can be used and not used:

Do use	Do not use
Disability and health	
• Disabled people, Disabled person or people with impairments, people with long term health conditions	• The disabled, handicapped, crippled
• Person or non-disabled person	• Able-bodied person, normal person
• Dwarf, person of short stature, person with a restricted growth condition	• Midget
• Person with a certain condition or impairment	• Sufferer
• Wheelchair or mobility-scooter user	• Wheelchair or mobility-scooter bound or confined to a chair
• Learning disability, a person with an intellectual impairment, a person with a learning difference	• Retarded, backwards, slow, mentally handicapped, challenged, special

• Deaf people/hearing impaired person, Blind people/visually impaired person	• The deaf, the blind
• Brain injury	• Brain damage
• Has or living with [name of condition or impairment]	• Afflicted by, suffers from, victim of [name of condition or impairment]
• Mental health problem/issue	• Mental
Neurodiversity (see further definitions on page 9)	
• Neurotypical / Neurodivergent	• Normal / Abnormal
• Neurodivergent trait	• Disorder
• High support needs / low support needs	• High-functioning / low-functioning
• Person living with autism/ADHD	• Suffering from autism/ADHD
• Person with dyslexia	• A dyslexic
Accessibility	
• Accessible toilets/lifts	• Disabled toilets/lifts
• Welcome everyone	• Welcome ladies and gentlemen
Sex, Gender, and Gender Identity	
• Trans(gender) people/person	• A transgender
• Assigned male/female at birth	• Born female or male
• They, them, theirs	• *Don't assume* she, her, hers and he, him, his
See LGBTQI+ terminology section below.	
Ethnicity	
• BIPOC = Black, Indigenous and people of colour, ESEA = East and South East Asian, People Of Colour, Global Ethnic Majority, Brown, Racialised/marginalised groups	• Ethnic, Non-white, Acronyms, BAME, offensive terms like 'coloured', 'oriental' and 'half caste'

There are a couple of important caveats here.

- There are differing views in the disability community over the importance of language. Some people think that language is key, and others are more relaxed – the best approach is to follow the lead of the person you are talking with.

- It is not just about *what* you say but *how* it is said – with the tone of communication being at least as important as the content.

Examples of good and bad:

Bad example: In our sports club, able-bodied people love seeing the disabled join in around their club.

Good example: In our sports club, disabled and non-disabled people are actively encouraged to join in.

Rather than "the boys/girls in the office" Use "our colleagues in the office"

Rather than "a young and vibrant team/a mature workforce" Use "an experienced team"

We need to take care in the language used – but also not to let fear of saying the wrong thing stop us saying anything at all. In most situations people will appreciate the intent to use positive terminology and will help if you inadvertantly make a mistake.

Tips:

- Don't be scared of using the wrong language – if you are not sure then it is fine to say so – and ask people what their preferred terminology is.
- If you inadvertantly make a mistake then apologise, learn from it and move on – everyone makes mistakes.
- Don't correct a disabled person on the terminology that they use – but be guided by it.
- Be aware that terminology can vary across different conversations depending on who you are talking with.
- Be aware of and avoid using common phrases that may associate impairments with negative things, for example 'deaf to our pleas' or 'blind drunk'.

From	To
Sport and exercise	Physical activity, and movement
Structured, purposeful	Minimise sedentary time
A focus on provision of services and 'stuff'	Focus on individuals and communities
5 x 30 minutes	Every minute counts
Focus on physical benefits	Physical AND Mental Health benefits

✅ 'Moving' feels more accessible and inclusive to those who are least active but may be interpreted as requiring only light intensity activity.

❌ 'Exercise' can be interpreted as moderate or higher intensity activity and can feel daunting and off-putting to the least active groups.

LGBTQI+ Terminology

Below is a list of some of the terms that can be useful to define in training, resources and websites. This is in thematic order rather than alphabetical to assist with learning:

· LGBT – Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

· LGBTI – Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex

· LGBTQI+ – Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning Understanding Sexual Orientation, Intersex, Plus (open to other terms used by someone)

· Sexual orientation – A person's identity based on emotional and/or physical attraction to individuals of a different gender, the same gender, or more than one gender. Sexual orientation can also be seen as a complex mix of an individual's identity, attraction and behaviour. However, identity is the most important aspect as sexual orientation can only be determined by the individual; attraction and/or behaviour alone do not determine someone's sexual orientation.

· Lesbian – Refers to a woman who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to other women.

· Gay – Refers to someone who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of the same gender. Some women prefer to refer to themselves as gay women rather than lesbian, although the word gay is most commonly used in reference to men.

· Bisexual – A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. Historically definitions of bisexual refer to 'an attraction towards

men and women' however many bisexual people recognise that there are more than two genders.

· Heterosexual/Straight – Used to describe people who are emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of the 'opposite' gender.

· Asexual – A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people can experience platonic attraction but may have no sexual desire or need within their relationships.

· Pansexual – A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. Some people use the term pansexual rather than bisexual in order to be more explicitly inclusive of non-binary gender identities.

· Queer – An umbrella term used for diverse sexual orientations or gender identities that are not heterosexual and do not fit within a gender binary. It may be used to challenge the idea of labels and categories such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. It is important to note that it is an in-group term and may be considered offensive to some people.

Other Terms (Sexual Orientation / Sexuality):

· Sexuality – Refers to the sum of various aspects of attraction and behaviour that add up to how a person expresses themselves as a sexual being. This includes the type(s) of partner a person is attracted to, the kinds of sexual activities they prefer and how they organise their relationships for example: monogamy or polyamory. Sexual orientation is an aspect of sexuality and is the more appropriate term when referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual identities.

· Homosexual – A person whose emotional and/ or physical attraction is toward people of the same gender as themselves. Historically this term has been used to medicalise or criminalise lesbian and gay people and many experience it as a stigmatising term. It is now considered best practice to avoid it.

· Demisexual – Characterised by a lack of sexual attraction toward any person unless they become deeply emotionally or romantically connected with a specific person or persons.

· Polyamorous/Polyamory – Polyamory or polyamorous relationships involve more than two intimate partners, with the knowledge and consent of all involved. This relationship structure is not limited to LGBTQI people nor do all LGBTQI people enter into polyamorous relationships.

Sex and Gender Terminology

· Sex – (The noun) refers to physical differences between male and female bodies, including the reproductive system and/or other biological characteristics. Sex is most commonly divided into the categories of male and female however biological sex is much more diverse (see Intersex definition).

· Intersex – A person whose chromosomes, reproductive organs or genitalia vary in some way from what is traditionally considered clearly male or female in terms of biological sex. This may be apparent at birth or become apparent later in life - often at puberty, or in the case of some women, when they conceive or try to conceive. We recognise that this definition uses a medical model however it is important to recognise that some people proudly identify with this term.

· Gender – Refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. The terms girl/woman, boy/man are assigned at birth based on biological

sex and have many socially constructed expectations, standards and norms that can limit and oppress people's gender expression.

· Gender Binary – The traditional western system of regarding gender as having only two options: men (with all the traditional notions of masculinity) and women (with all the traditional notions of femininity).

· Gender Identity – A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth.

· Gender Expression – A person's external gender related appearance including clothing, speech and mannerisms. Usually defined as connected to masculinity or femininity, however we recognise that people express their gender without with these traditional notions.

· Cisgender – Individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies and their personal identity. In other words those who are not, or do not identify as transgender.

Understanding Transgender Identities & the Transgender Umbrella

· Transgender – An umbrella term for those whose gender identity or expression differs in some way from the gender assigned to them at birth and conflicts with the 'norms' expected by the society they live in. Included in the overall transgender umbrella are transsexual people, non-binary gender identities and cross-dressing people.

· Transsexual – When a person's gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth based on their biological sex. Transsexual people may have medical treatment, such as hormone treatment or surgery to bring their physical appearance more into line with their gender.

· Non-Binary Gender – Gender identities that are not exclusively male or female are identities which are outside of the gender binary. People can be both male and female, neither, or their gender may be more fluid (i.e. unfixed and changeable over the course of time). Many view gender as a one-dimensional spectrum with male on one end, female on the other, and non-binary in the middle – but the reality is that gender is often more complex.

· Cross-dressing – The act of wearing items of clothing and other accoutrements commonly associated with the 'opposite' sex/ gender within a particular society. The term cross dressing is preferred to the outdated term 'transvestite'. Although drag performers are referred to as cross-dressing, drag artists (unlike cross dressers) dress with the intention of performance rather than gender expression. What is considered 'cross dressing', as with gender, is culturally defined.

· Trans* – An umbrella term (similar to transgender) that refers to all the identities in the gender identity spectrum. The asterisk makes special note in an effort to include all transgender, transsexual and non-binary identities.

Useful Terms (associated with 'transsexual'):

· Transition - A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transgender people align their anatomy with their gender identity and gender expression.

· FTM – Female to male transsexual person; a trans man.

· MTF – Male to female transsexual person; a trans woman.

· Trans Man – A transgender person who was assigned female at birth but whose gender identity is that of a man. Trans men should be treated as men and male pronouns should be used.

· Trans Woman – A transgender person who was assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is that of a woman. Trans women should be treated as women and female pronouns should be used.

· Passing – Refers to a person's ability to be regarded at a glance to be either a cisgender man or a cisgender woman. Typically, this involves a mixture of physical gender cues (for example, hair style or clothing) as well as certain behavioural attributes that tend to be associated with masculinity and femininity.

· (Hormone/Puberty) Blockers – A group of medications used to inhibit puberty. Puberty blockers stunt the production of hormones; other effects include the suppression of facial hair, deep voices, and adam's apples for boys and the halting of breast growth and menstruation in girls.

· Binding – Refers to the process of flattening one's breast tissue in order to create a male-appearing chest. A binder may be a vest, or athletic support top, or be wrapped bandages.

· GRC (Gender Recognition Certificate) – The Gender Recognition Act (2004) allows transsexual people who have taken decisive steps to live fully and permanently in their true or 'acquired' gender to gain legal recognition of their gender. If a person is successful in their application to the Gender Recognition Panel, they will be issued with a full Gender Recognition Certificate which allows them to update their birth certificate and gives additional legal protections. Please note GRC is not required for individuals to be treated in line with their gender identity. This is only available to people over 18 and it is unlawful to ask to see someone's Gender Recognition Certificate.

Useful Terms (associated with non-binary gender):

· Gender fluid – Having an overlap of, or constantly changeable gender identity and gender expression. This can include having two or more genders, having no gender, or having a fluctuating gender identity.

· Gender-neutral pronoun – A pronoun that is not associated with a particular grammatical or social gender and does not imply male or female. Some English pronouns are gender-neutral, including they which can be singular. Many gender-neutral pronouns have been suggested for the English language, for example 'zhe, zher, zhim' and 'ey, em, eir'. Individuals may prefer to use these pronouns but they are not in regular use and there is limited understanding.

· Gender Queer – A person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.

· Androyne - Is a non-binary gender identity associated with androgyny. Androgyne people have a gender which is simultaneously feminine and masculine, although not necessary in equal amounts.

· Agender – A person who does not have a specific gender identity or recognisable gender expression.

· Neutrois – A person who has a neutral gender or no gender. It has considerable overlap with agender - some people who consider themselves neutrally gendered or genderless may identify as both, while others prefer one term or the other.

· Bigender – A person who has two gender identities or some combination of both.

· Transmasculine – A term used to describe transgender people who were assigned female at birth, but identify with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity. Someone who identifies on the masculine side of the gender spectrum may or may not identify as male.

· Transfeminine – A term used to describe transgender people who were assigned male at birth, but identify with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity. Someone who identifies on the feminine side of the gender spectrum may or may not identify as female.

Useful Terms (associated with cross-dressing):

· Drag – A drag queen is usually a male-bodied person who performs as an exaggeratedly feminine character. A drag king is a counterpart of the drag queen, performing an exaggerated masculine character.

· Transvestite/Transvestism – A person, typically a man, who derives pleasure from dressing in clothes generally associated with the opposite sex. Transvestites can be gay or bisexual but are predominately heterosexual men. This term is considered outdated. Cross dresser is preferred.

Understanding Prejudice & Discrimination

· Prejudice – An unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand without knowledge, fact, or reason.

· Discrimination – The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people. In the UK this usually refers to discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender re-assignment/gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

· Homophobia - The irrational fear, dislike or prejudice against people who are or are perceived to be lesbian and gay people. It can also be used as an all-encompassing term to include the irrational fear, dislike or prejudice against bisexual people and transgender people. Homophobia can manifest itself at different levels and may involve but is not limited to verbal abuse and physical abuse. Institutional homophobia refers to the many ways in which government and other institutions and organisations discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation through legislation, policies and practice.

· Biphobia - The irrational fear, dislike or prejudice against those who are or are perceived to be bisexual. Bisexual people can experience homophobia (particularly when in same-sex relationships) and can experience biphobia from both heterosexual and lesbian and gay people.

· Transphobia – The irrational fear, dislike or prejudice or discrimination against those who are or are perceived to be transgender. Transgender people can also experience homophobia when in same-sex relationships or for not conforming to gender norms.

Useful Terms (associated with prejudice & discrimination):

· Protected Characteristics – The nine personal qualities that are legally covered by the Equality Act 2010; age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

· Hate Crime – When a crime committed has been motivated by 'malice or ill-will towards an identifiable social group'. In Scotland, several pieces of legislation are in place to recognise hate crimes as crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender

identity and disability. The law is clear that the identity of the victim is irrelevant as to whether something is a hate crime or not. Individuals are protected based on identification, perception, and association. The motivation of the perpetrator is the key factor in defining a hate crime.

· Multiple Discrimination – Experiencing discrimination on more than one protected characteristic, either on different occasions or at the same time.

· Intersectionality – Identities, experiences or approaches to equality work that fall into more than one protected characteristic. This approach recognises that patterns of oppression and discrimination are not only interrelated but are bound together, and that certain groups can experience multiple forms of discrimination.

· Heteronormativity – A viewpoint that preferentially treats heterosexuality as a norm from which people deviate if they have any other sexual orientation. Heteronormativity is reinforced by making assumptions that everyone is heterosexual and not considering other sexual orientations in policy and practice.

· Heterosexism – A viewpoint whereby heterosexuality is presumed to be superior to any other sexual orientation and therefore other sexual orientations are deliberately not included in policy and practice.

Neurodiversity terminology

- Neurodiversity – relates to the differences in the ways different human brains work and process information.

- Neurodivergent – an individual who learns and works in ways that are different from societal expectations. It describes the state of being neurodivergent.

- Neurodiverse – a group made up of neurodivergent individuals.

- Neurotypical – an individual whose brain generally functions and processes information in the way society expects.

- Neurominority – a group of people who share a similar form of neurodivergence (eg. A group of people with autism). Useful to be aware that within a neurominority, people's individual experiences, traits, strengths and identities are diverse.

- Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD) - describes an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) - a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.

- Accountability buddy – someone who acts as support for another person to keep them moving towards a goal

- Allistic – someone who is not autistic

- Body doubling – when people work in a shared space together to create a productive enivronment which encourages and motivates others to accomplish tasks

- Co-occurring conditions - Refers to neurotypes or conditions which occur concurrently. Co-occurence is high in the neurodivergent community, as if you are one neurotype/have one condition, you are more likely than the average population to be/have more.

- Dyslexia - a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

- Dyschronometria - A condition characterised by an individual's difficulty in estimating time or having an awareness of time passed.

- Dysgraphia - A condition characterised by an individual's difficulty in writing by hand and translating what they want to say into written words. It may also be characterised by reduced spatial awareness. It does not affect reading comprehension.

- Dyspraxia - impacts muscle and hand eye co-ordination – can also affect vision and hearing

- Dyscalculia - a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics

- Echolalia - trait or symptom whereby the person repeats sounds and phrases from others

- Hyperacusis - A condition characterised by a sensitivity to noise which can cause discomfort and pain

- Hyposensitivity - A decreased awareness of sensory, physical or emotional inputs

- Masking - When a neurodivergent person 'masks' their true feelings, personality, mood or opinions in order to be accepted socially and to 'fly under the radar' to not be outed/seen as neurodivergent. It is a coping mechanism, generally as a result of Neurodivergent trauma from non-acceptance in society

- OCD - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, a condition characterised by obsessive thoughts and repetitive or compulsive behaviours. (Check out our OCD resource for a better understanding)

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- Rejection-sensitive dysphoria (RSD) - When a person experiences severe emotional pain or distress as a result of perceived rejection

- Self-stimulation/stimming - Activities carried out by neurodivergent people to soothe or calm themselves to regulate and stabilise their emotions and nervous system. These activities can involve flapping, dancing, making noises, humming, movement and sound of any kind

- Sensory Overload/Burnout - Many people who are neurodivergent have sensory issues or sensory processing disorders, which can make life overwhelming. This can be anything visually, physically, auditorily and so on

- Sensory processing disorder - A condition characterised by a sensitivity to sensory stimuli and a difference in processing sensory stimuli

- Spectrum - The Spectrum refers to the wide ranging traits and characteristics of autism and highlights how no one autistic person has the same experiences

- Synesthesia - A condition characterised by an individual's experience of one sensory or cognitive pathway being stimulated and another, unrelated sense, being activated at the same time. E.g. people who can taste colours or see sounds

- Tourette syndrome (TS) - a neurological disorder that may cause sudden unwanted and uncontrolled rapid and repeated movements or vocal sounds called tics.

- Triad of impairments - An outdated framework that suggests that 'classic Autism' is characterised by three 'impairments' – social communication, social interaction and social imagination. This is a poor representation of the Autistic experience and ableist as it suggests that there is something wrong with the Autistic person, rather than with society

Sources:

Activity Alliance factsheet on disability language in sport

Activity Alliance, Access for all: inclusive communications guide

Sport Wales, Inclusive Language Guide

LEAP Sports (Active Partnership) LGBTI Terminology leapsports.org

Further resources:

Disability Etiquette and terminology - Remploy

Disability Language and terminology - Disability Sheffield

Inclusive Language, terminology and imagery - Disability Wales