

Appropriate Language to use when communicate with a person with a disability

Promote the principle of “people first” eg: a person with a disability

- ❗ Avoid phrases and words that demean people with a disability
- ❗ Refrain from using terms such as ‘the deaf’, ‘the blind’ or ‘the disabled’. These terms are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality or dignity of the person with a disability.
- ❗ The term 'blind' should only be used to describe someone who has no sight at all, otherwise say person with low vision (only a very small percentage of all people with vision impairments are actually blind)
- ❗ It is OK to say “It’s good to see you” or “see you later” to a person with visual impairment or who is blind
- ❗ The term 'deaf' should only be used to describe someone who has no hearing at all. Otherwise, use 'person with a hearing impairment' or 'person who is hard of hearing
- ❗ Try to avoid patronising language that implies people with disability are overly courageous, special, or superhuman just to get through the day with their disability; people with disability are just living their lives.

Here is a reference guide identifying appropriate and inappropriate language.

Appropriate Language

Person with a disability
Person who uses a wheel chair

Learning difficulty
Mental Health condition

Cognitive disability
Accessible toilet

Accessible parking

Inappropriate Language

Disabled Person
Handicapped, Crippled,
Wheelchair bound

Dumb, Special needs, Retarded
Schizo, Emotionally disturbed,
Insane, Lunatic

Retarded, Dumb
Handicapped or disabled toilet

Handicapped or disabled
parking

