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| Using Correct Terminology |  |



The language that we use when addressing or describing disabled children, young people and adults has an impact on the way they are perceived. It is therefore very important that what we say presents a positive image, not a negative one, and that it does not cause offence. It is important that throughout the organisation, we are all aware of what words are acceptable, so that these are the only ones that we all use.

Some people may think that being careful about the words you use is unnecessary, but a lot of the older terminology has old attitudes and assumptions attached to them. We cannot change attitudes to disability and promote equality when words are frequently used that convey out dated and discriminatory attitudes. For example, the word ‘handicapped’ comes from the image of a person begging for money – ‘cap in hand’, the word ‘respite’ means ‘laying down a burden’; ‘invalid’ means ‘not valid’.

The language that we use should always reflect the Social Model of Disability which acknowledges that it not a person’s impairment which is disabling – it is society’s negative attitudes, organisational structures and an unaccommodating environment, such as inaccessible transport and buildings.

Therefore, we should always refer to **disabled children and young people or adults/ or people with lived experience of disability and long-term conditions.** If we think of people as ‘having impairments’ but being ‘disabled’ by external factors, However, we should never use the term ‘the disabled’ as this clumps people together in a group separate from the rest of society.

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| WORDS TO AVOID | WORDS TO USE |
| Wheelchair bound/confined to a wheelchair | Wheelchair user |
| Handicapped or invalid | Disabled |
| Mentally handicapped/retarded | Learning disability |
| Normal people/children or Able-bodied people/children | Non-disabled people/children |
| Respite | Short Break |
| Integration | Inclusion |
| Spastic | Has cerebral palsy |
| Mentally Handicapped; mentally ill; (nutter/looney) | Mental Health Service/System User or Mental Health Survivor |
| Retarded | Learning Difficulties |
| Is a ‘victim of’ | Has ....... (name the condition) |
| What is wrong with you/him/her? | Do not use or ask |
| The Deaf | d/Deaf person/deafened/hard of hearing |
| The Blind | Visually impaired person |

Note: if someone isn’t sure about a terminology, they should do their own research by looking at what language user led groups use.

WORDS THAT DISABLED PEOPLE FIND MOST ACCEPTABLE

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| Person with lived experience of disability and long-term conditions / Disabled person | Acknowledgement of the way society disables people but recognises that people identify in different ways. |
| Wheelchair user, blind person, deaf person | Accurate terms which give information about the impairment but not the individual |
| Accessible toilet/transport/housing | What is a disabled toilet? |
| Non disabled people | Acknowledges that not everyone is discriminated against on the grounds of impairment alone |
| People with a learning disability | Term chosen by People First |
| Person with an impairment | Used by the medical profession and others when talking about the individual |

When describing children and young people it is important to remember that they are not a condition. So, to refer to a child, for example, as a quadriplegic, is dehumanising and should never be used. Neither should they be described as ‘suffering from’ or ‘afflicted’ or ‘crippled’ by an impairment.

The term impairment should be used to describe the subsequent effects of an illness, accident or medical condition on the way that a child or young person functions. For example:

**Physical Impairment** – to describe difficulty in moving or using all or part of the body. A child or young person with a mobility impairment may not necessarily use a wheelchair but may find walking difficult.

**Sensory Impairment** – to indicate a loss of hearing or sight.

**Learning Disability** – to indicate that a person has difficulty in the commonly used and accepted way or at the same pace as their peers.

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| **Signed** (Staff member): |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| **Date:** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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