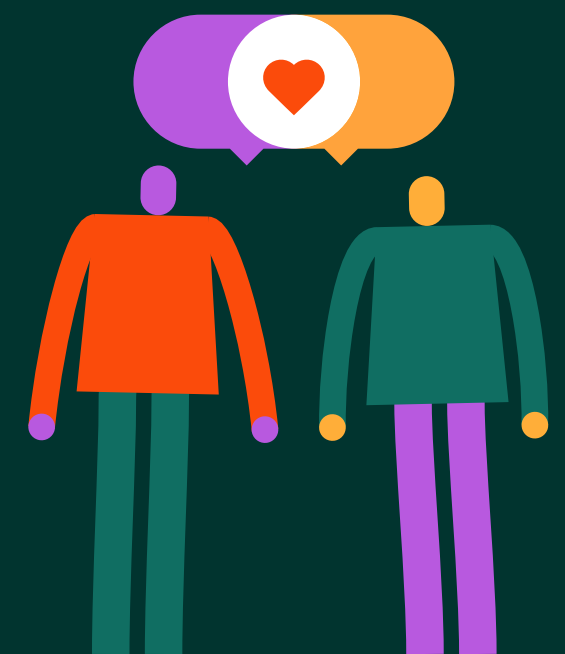




Inclusive language guide



Greenhouse



Our commitment

Greenhouse is committed to being an inclusive employer. As one of our core values, we encourage our teams and wider network to create an environment that values, respects, and appreciates people of all backgrounds.

We know that maintaining an inclusive culture requires ongoing effort, education, and a commitment to creating a positive and welcoming environment for all individuals. Using inclusive language is central to this and as a team, we actively avoid language that is biased, stereotypical, or discriminatory.



Inclusive language to us means:

- 1 Respect and empathy:**
Using inclusive language demonstrates respect for others and acknowledges their identities. It shows that you care about treating people fairly and valuing their experiences.
- 2 Avoiding harm:**
Insensitive language can perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce biases, and cause harm. Learning about inclusive language helps us to avoid inadvertently causing offence or hurt.
- 3 Effective communication:**
Inclusive language can enhance communication by making it more accessible to a wider audience. It helps to ensure that everyone feels included and understood and as we continue to tackle the climate emergency every day, this is crucial to our success.

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to support our team and wider network in helping to create a safe and accessible workplace where people are valued and feel that they belong.

It serves as a starting point and is not intended to be a prescriptive document; rather it is a guide on our use of inclusive language, and we expect it will be updated as language evolves and changes.

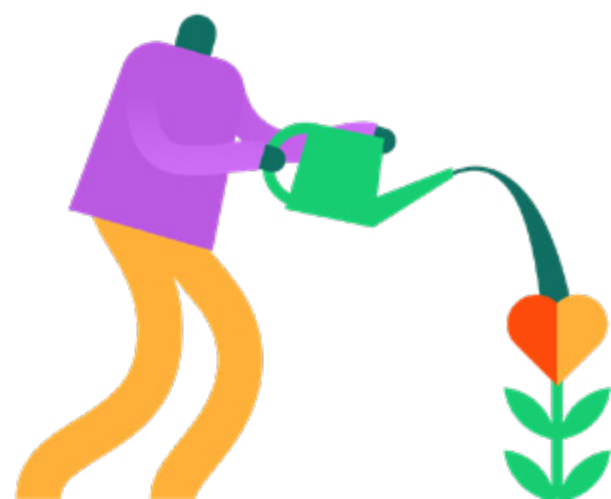
Please share your feedback with our DEI working group on this guide so we can continue to improve it.



Key principles

Here are some things to keep in mind when you read this guide:

1 Language is powerful and it can help to shift attitudes and behaviours. Inclusive language can help to promote and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion. We should practise empathy and consider the impact of the words and phrases we use on the experience of others. Everyone has different individual personal preferences about language and identity. Language is always evolving and changing. This means there are no definitive rules but understanding some key principles will help us adopt an inclusive approach on a day-to-day basis.



2 Communities are diverse and multifaceted. It is crucial to remember that no single person can speak for an entire community. It is important to be aware of the diversity of experiences and perspectives within a community, and to be respectful of everyone's differences. No one person can speak for an entire community, so it is important to listen to the voices of all community members and to work together to find solutions that meet the needs of everyone.

It is therefore essential not to assume that the advice provided in this guide will universally apply to all situations. Instead, consider this as general guidance and always take the time to understand and address the specific needs and preferences of each individual based on their unique identity.

3 Discrimination can be intersectional. People who belong to multiple marginalised groups may experience discrimination that is specific to their intersecting identities. For example, a Black woman may be discriminated against at work because of her race and her gender. She may be paid less than her White male colleagues, she may be passed over for promotions, and she may be subjected to racist and sexist microaggressions.

An individual identifying as Muslim may be discriminated against because of their religion and ethnicity. They may be denied a job or a loan, they may be harassed or attacked, and they may be prevented from practising their religion freely.

Use language that:

- . Acknowledges diversity and conveys respect to all people.
- . Proactively includes welcoming words, phrases, and expressions.
- . Challenges conscious and unconscious biases. For example, avoid masculine pronouns or nouns for mixed-gender groups, or defaulting to 'he/him' when a person's gender is unknown or unclear.
- . Avoids assumptions that may exclude people. For example, use carer, guardian, parent, to avoid assumptions about biological parents.
- . Respects people's privacy to share information about themselves if, and when, they feel comfortable doing so.
- . Recognises the individual lived experiences within groups, especially when referring to generalisations (for example when discussing data), noting there will be exceptions to the rules.

Do not use language that:

- . Reinforces stereotypes or derogatory terms.
- . Patronises or trivialises groups of people.
- . Excludes certain groups of people.
- . Causes discomfort or offence. For example, avoid words such as 'elderly', 'aged', and 'senior' and use more neutral language such as 'older people'.
- . Groups together all people within a certain category. For example, the disabled, the Muslims, the single mothers, BAME Communities.



What if I get it wrong?

For some of us, communicating in a more inclusive way is about changing deeply embedded habits, which can take time. It is okay to make mistakes. Apologise, correct what you have said, learn from the mistake and work to communicate more inclusively next time. Repeated mistakes indicate a lack of respect and can be very distressing.

We are a supportive team, but it is up to every individual to spend the time learning, practising, and improving our understanding of the language we use.

Our [Other Box training](#) also provides a great guide to putting this into practice.

Inclusive language in practice



Age

Age is a term used to describe a period of human life, measured by years. Age is part of our social identity. Fears associated with growing old perpetuate negative images; once embedded, these stereotypes represent how we think about ourselves and others. It affects our interactions with one another and our community.

Discrimination against an individual or group of individuals because of their age is referred to as ‘ageism’. It typically applies to people who are older but can also affect young people.

Ageism is a systemic form of discrimination and oppression.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Avoid negative generalisation of generations	Assuming people of a specific generation all behave in a particular (negative) way	Recognising and celebrating the diversity differing generations bring to the team
“Othering” terms connote a stereotype, avoid using them	Seniors, elderly, the aged, pensioners	Older person, older people, older adults, older patients, older individuals, persons 65 years and older, or the older population
When speaking about ageing, avoid fatalistic attitudes, such as age being an obstacle to overcome or an ageing population being a catastrophe	“An ageing population is going to ruin our economy.” “They are too old to do this.”	“Demographic changes/ageing populations need to be taken into considerations for economic planning.” Regularly reviewing onboarding processes/training to ensure everyone gets the support they need
Try not to portray ageing as something negative or to be afraid of	“I can’t believe you are already XYZ years old.”	“Congratulations on turning XYZ.”
Avoid using someone’s age to justify any doubts on their expertise and skills to execute their role	“They’re too young, they can’t know what they are doing”	Challenging internalised beliefs that young people cannot be experts on specific issues, by using positive and encouraging language

Class/ Socio-economic status

Class, or socio-economic status, is a system of ordering society where people are divided into sets based on perceived social or economic status. This has led to language that groups people together based on this, that can be non-inclusive and sometimes offensive.

Class bias can show up in many ways within the workplace and in language, from hiring people that sound like you based on accents or where / how they grew up, to language that makes assumptions about certain groups of people. Always assess whether it's relevant to mention someone's socio-economic status – if it is, use person-centred language, rather than umbrella terms.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Socio-economic status or use the language people use for themselves	Lower-class, poor, or poverty-stricken	Avoid making assumptions or using umbrella terms
Avoid using broad, pejorative, and generalising terms - use person-centred language instead	The homeless	People experiencing homelessness
Consider whether you're being elitist in the language you're using to describe certain things, and whether this might make people feel excluded	Degree from a top school or university	A university degree
Avoid language that focuses on blaming the individual or on individual deficits; instead, focus on what people have, not what they lack	Achievement gap, lack of degree	Opportunity gap, A-level qualifications

Disability

Historically, language used in relation to Disabled people has emphasized their impairments and differences* rather than their identity as a person. This leads to marginalisation and the categorisation of people based on impairments.

More often than not, it is unnecessary to mention or discuss other people's impairments. However, if this need ever does arise, make sure to use language that acknowledges that living with an impairment is just one aspect of a person's life. And remember: not all impairments are visible, never assume someone's situation based on their outward appearance.

It is best to always check with each individual whether they favour person-first or identity-first language, as this can vary between communities.

*The Social Model of Disability – which was developed by Disabled people – understands that people have impairments, they do not have disabilities. An impairment becomes a disability when society excludes the needs of that impairment, disabling the person. The term 'Disabled people' is used to describe people with impairments who are disabled by societal barriers, with the capital D recognising that Disabled people are an identity group.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Use language in line with the Social Model of Disability.	People with disabilities Person with disabilities	Disabled people Disabled person
If someone favours person-first language...	Mentally challenged Amputee	Person with learning difficulties Person with an amputation
If someone favours identity-first language...	Person who is D/deaf, person who is hard of hearing Person who is blind	D/deaf person, member of the D/deaf community Blind person
Avoid restrictive language that overstates someone's circumstance.	Wheelchair-bound Confined to a chair Paralysis victim	Wheelchair user Person living with paralysis
Avoid outdated, offensive language.	Nuts, crazy, psycho, Deaf, dumb, slow, 'Challenged', 'Special'	Person with a mental health condition Person who is deaf Person with an intellectual disability Disabled person
Use accessibility-first language, rather than language that restricts. The more specific you can be in your descriptions the better – for example some toilets may be wheelchair accessible, but flickering lights or ongoing beeping noises might make it inaccessible for someone with sensory needs.	Disabled toilets Room for the handicapped	Accessible toilets Accessible room/facilities Wheelchair-accessible toilets Changing Places toilets Ambulant toilets
Avoid using terms that equate living without a disability with greater health or status.	Normal, healthy, able-bodied person	Non-disabled person
Avoid terms that suggest helplessness of people with diseases that may come with age.	Suffering from arthritis	Diagnosed with arthritis
Avoid being unnecessarily positive or masking pity as support when discussing the everyday lives of people with disabilities.	Superhero/hero Superstar, miracle, angel Inspiring, brave	Diagnosed with arthritis Living with an impairment

Educational attainment

Educational attainment refers to an individual’s highest degree of education. Educational attainment can be a part of a person’s self-esteem, self-identity, and even social identity. Hence, it is essential to know how to communicate and exchange a conversation with a person when education comes into play.

Discrimination against people based on education has been shown to hamper their self-confidence, it is important to address everyone with equal rights despite their level of education.

Keeping in mind the cultural difference in education is also a major factor. People belong to different cultures and adjusting to a different environment with different educational backgrounds tends to be difficult for some individuals.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Avoid making assumptions or using umbrella terms	Graduates, highly educated	Knowledgeable, well-read in X sector
Avoid making assumptions on cultural appropriation based on education	Using cultural lingo, regional lingo or layman language	Respectful, plain terminology and language
Avoid using dated terms to describe intellectual or passionate people	‘Nerd’, ‘geek’ or ‘overachiever’	Appreciate their interest and knowledge and support them in any way possible. Use the language people use for themselves



Gender Diversity

Gender is defined as the social, psychological, cultural, and behavioural aspects of being a woman, man, or other gender identities. This is different from Sex, which typically refers to the assigned biological traits of a person at birth, be it female, male, or intersex.

In more recent years, there has been growing recognition of people who identify as having a gender that is outside of the binary genders of man and woman. The term gender diversity is an umbrella term used to describe people who identify outside of the gender binary, for example, people who identify as non-binary, two-spirit, or genderqueer.

- 1 It is generally good practice to use gender-neutral terms – such as ‘they’, ‘ze’, ‘hir’, or ‘xe’ - to refer to someone when a person hasn’t clarified their personal pronouns or gender identity, as to avoid misgendering someone. Never assume someone’s pronouns. If you are not sure and can’t ask them directly, use ‘they/them’ until confirmed – and be aware that some people may not want to acknowledge their pronouns because they might not be sure.
- 2 The guidance below gives examples of words or phrases to try but we also encourage you to use the language people use for themselves.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Use gender neutral terms to refer to someone or a group of people, instead of assuming their gender	"Who was that woman you were speaking to before? I didn't recognise her ."	"Who was that person you were speaking to before? I didn't recognise them ."
Referring to binary genders as limited to just cis-gender people or not specifying cisgender when separately referring to cisgender people and transgender people	Women: Adult Human Female Men: Adult Human Male Women and trans women Men and trans man	Women and men OR Cisgender women and transgender women Cisgender men and transgender men
Use terms that centre a person's current gender identity, rather than their past	... was born a female/male ... Assigned female/male at birth (AFAB/AMAB) Trans-identified female/male	Trans-masculine person Trans-feminine person Use the language people use for themselves
Avoid outdated or offensive language	Transsexual, tranny, transvestite	Transgender person, gender diverse person, non-binary person, trans Use the language people use for themselves
Use person-centred language	The transgender "Xander is a they/them ."	Transgender people "Xander identifies as non-binary , they use gender-neutral pronouns."
Avoid terms that refer to being transgender as a life-style choice rather than a gender identity	Cross-dresser Subscribing to 'trans ideology' or 'gender ideology' 'Trans-trender'	Transgender person, gender diverse person, non-binary person
Avoid gender-specific terms when referring to childbearing, etc.	Pregnant woman/women	They are pregnant
Avoid probing into a person's personal experience	Asking questions about a person's body and what intervention they may have, or intend to have	Asking respectful questions, understanding the person is not compelled to answer "How is your transition journey going? "Would you feel comfortable telling me more? I'm respectfully curious?"
Avoid making generalisations about trans lives	Assuming all trans people have the same perspective, lived experience and intervention	Acknowledge the diversity of trans and gender diverse people and see each person as an individual

Gender equality

In English, gender-specific language can reinforce harmful gendered stereotypes and sexist behaviour. Gender-specific language refers to language that is biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Use gender neutral terms	Man Mankind Workmanship Man the desk/phones Man-made	Humans Humankind Quality of work/skills Attend the phones Artificial, manufactured, synthetic
Use gender neutral terms to refer to a person or group of people	Guy(s), bro Ladies and gentlemen	People, folks, everyone Friend and colleagues
Use terms that include all relationships	Boyfriend, girlfriend Wife, husband	Partner, significant other/SO, spouse
Avoid titles that imply the usual jobholder being of a particular gender	Waitress Policeman Fireman	Wait staff/bar staff Police officer Firefighter
Avoid using patronising terms that may cause offence to a particular gender	Girls, ladies, dear, son, love	The person's name, their professional title or, friends and colleagues
Avoid irrelevant gender descriptions	A female scientist A male nurse	A scientist A nurse

Mental health

Mental health refers to a person’s overall psychological and emotional well-being. It encompasses the way individuals think, feel, and behave, as well as their ability to cope with the challenges and stresses of life. Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness; rather, it encompasses a spectrum of experiences, from optimal mental well-being to varying degrees of emotional distress or mental health conditions. It is a dynamic and fluid state influenced by various factors, including genetics, life experiences, social support, and access to resources.

Mental health impacts every aspect of our lives and it is important to foster an environment that promotes understanding, empathy, and destigmatisation of mental health conditions.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Using sensationalised language around mental illness reinforces stigma	Terms such as mental, nut, lunatic	A person living with...
Terminology that suggests a lack of quality of life for people with a mental illness	They’re suffering from mental illness	They’re living with mental illness
Colloquialisms about treatment that undermine people’s willingness to seek help	Using words or phrases such as: happy pills, shrink, mental institution	Medication, psychiatrist, psychologist, mental health hospital
Descriptors of behaviour that imply the existence of mental illness	Words such as crazed, deranged, psychotic	Unusual or erratic

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variations in neurological functioning and cognitive traits among individuals. It emphasises the idea that neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others, are simply natural variations of the human brain rather than deviations or disorders.

Neurodiversity acknowledges that diverse ways of thinking, perceiving, and processing information contribute to the complexity of human society. It promotes the belief that each neurodivergent individual possesses unique strengths, perspectives, and has their own contributions to make. By embracing neurodiversity, we foster inclusivity, acceptance, and equal opportunities for individuals with diverse neurological profiles.

To do so, it is best to always check with each individual whether they favour person-first or identity-first language, as it varies between communities.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
If someone favours person-first language...	ADHDe, hyperactive person	Person with ADHD
If someone favours identity-first language...	Leah is a person with Autism	Leah is autistic
Avoid language that claim conditions you are not diagnosed with that contribute to stigma.	I can be really OCD about this	I really like doing things in a certain way
Labelling the severity of a person’s condition reinforces stigma around neurological conditions.	Low functioning/ high functioning	Different/specific support needs
There’s no such thing as normal, we all have different needs and conditions.	Normal person	Neurotypical

Race and ethnicity

'Race' and 'ethnicity' are commonly used interchangeably. However, as language has evolved in different ways, 'Race' and 'Ethnicity' do not have the same meaning, although there is sometimes an overlap between the two.

Race is a categorisation that is based predominantly on physical traits/ attributes, assigning people to a specific race simply by having similar appearances or skin colour. This categorisation is rooted in white supremacy and it's now widely accepted that race is a social construct. However, having shared common experiences of racism or been racialised, racial identity is important to many and can be a basis for collective support for racially minoritised individuals.

The word 'ethnicity' is often used to describe those who are not white. For example, 'ethnic' is often used as a generic word to describe food, fashion, music, art and many diverse cultures that are not from Western Europe or North America. It's also a word that shows up in the word 'BAME' - the E in the acronym BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic). We recognise that this term centres around whiteness with 'white' being the default.

'Ethnic' is an adjective that describes groups of people who can be classed by common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. With this broad definition, the word 'ethnic' or 'ethnicity' - in theory - could be used to describe anyone in the world, no matter what their culture, background or heritage is.

Instead of using language that reinforces racial or ethnic stereotypes, use language that recognises the diversity and complexity of different racial and ethnic groups. At Greenhouse, we recognise that individuals will have their preferences.

Although acronyms such as POC or BIPIC exist, it's preferable to be specific when referring to one race or ethnicity. Acronyms can be used when referencing multiple ethnicities. If race or ethnicity is not relevant, then there is no requirement to mention it.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
This alludes to the historical process of becoming a minority, rather than it being accepted as an inherent characteristic of someone’s identity	Ethnic minority	Underrepresented, marginalised due to race communities
<p>BAME is most often used by researchers making comparisons of certain groups with the white population. The acronym is problematic for a few reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It centres whiteness and has become a proxy for “non white”• It lumps together groups without acknowledging different experiences of individuals within this group• Black or Asian people are not a one word acronym conglomerate of people• It minimises other groups such as Jewish, Gypsy, Roma and traveller groups	BAME (the acronym for Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic)	<p>“People of the global majority”</p> <p>or “People of Colour” – however recognising that individuals may have preference to this term being used, if in doubt – ask!</p> <p>The term ‘People of Global Majority’ refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, Indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’</p> <p>When describing people of a particular country or colour, you should refer to that e.g. A ‘Black Woman’ and not “Person of Global Majority”</p> <p>When making reference of Black in writing, always capitalise ‘B’</p> <p>Depending on the situation, refer to people by their origin if this is an absolute necessity</p>
Don’t categorise people based on the continent they’re from, be specific about their nationality or region where they come from	Asian person African person	South or North Korean person, South Asian person, Pakistani person, Nigerian person, Etc.
<p>The phrase ‘Indigenous Peoples’ was adopted by the UN in response to demands from Indigenous representatives. The word ‘peoples’ carries important legal significance in human rights law, ensuring the right to self-determination. The word ‘peoples’ also acknowledges that there is more than just one group of Indigenous individuals.</p> <p>Capitalisation of Indigenous Peoples identifies a group of political and historical communities, as opposed to the lower case ‘indigenous’, which merely means originating from or being native to somewhere.</p>	They are indigenous indigenous communities indigenous people	They are Indigenous Indigenous Peoples

Sexuality

Sexual orientation refers to a person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity. An individual can be romantically and/or sexually attracted to 1) a person of their own gender, 2) a person of a gender other than their own, or 3) all/none of the above. For this reason, there are many different terms that people choose to use to describe their sexual orientation.

Common ways to identify, as defined by Stonewall, include:

Asexual/ace

An umbrella term used specifically to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction.

Bisexual

An umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender.

Gay

Refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality - some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Heterosexual/straight

Refers to a man who has romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women or to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men.

Lesbian

Refers to a woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some non-binary people may also identify with this term.

Pansexual/pan

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender.

Questioning

The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexuality

Some people may also choose to identify as 'queer' as more general label. Previously a derogatory term weaponised against the gay community, the word queer has been reclaimed as an umbrella term for sexual orientation and gender identity groups who are not heterosexual or cisgender.

Tips	Instead of...	Try...
Acknowledge non-traditional families	Mother and father	Parents, caregivers, guardians
Use person-centred language	Gays, asexuals	Gay people, asexual people
Avoid terms that suggest that sexuality is a choice	Sexual preference Lifestyle choice	Sexual orientation
Don't treat heterosexuality as the norm	What's your wife's name? Do you have a boyfriend?	What's your spouse's name? Do you have a partner?
Respect the fact that some terms should only be used by individuals that self-identify as part of a specific community	Queer (only use if you identify as queer)	The queer community/ queer communities
Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity	Using 'LGBTQ+' to refer to sexual orientation on its own Using 'straight' as the opposite of 'LGBTQ+'	Using LGBTQ+ when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based identities Use 'straight cisgender' or 'ally'

Other

We are aware that attitudes to language are always evolving and words and phrases that have previously been deemed acceptable may have uncomfortable or problematic connotations. The following list contains words and phrases that we encounter frequently in our professional work – in emails, calls, copy and beyond - that we have chosen not to use as an agency. We will continue re-evaluate this list, making sure we listen to and learn from the marginalised communities affected by the continuing use of these words.

Instead of...	Try...	Why?
Pioneer / pioneering	Trailblazer / trailblazing Game-changer / game-changing	We recognise that the word 'pioneer' has historically referred to groups of people who have colonised certain areas and displaced Indigenous populations. We want to avoid these connotations in our work
Powwow	Check-in, get together, discussion	Using 'powwow' to refer to a discussion amongst colleagues is considered to be appropriation of the Indigenous American term for a sacred ritual
Tribe	Team, group, cohort, crew, friends, circle, community	Use of this word as a positive synonym for 'people' or 'community' (as in 'find your tribe') fails to recognise the oppression that Indigenous American communities have experienced at the hands of colonisers
Africa / African Asia / Asian / Far East	E.g. West/North/central Africa if referring to a region / Kenya, Kenyan, person from Chad, if referring to a specific country or nationality. E.g. South Asia, South East Asia if referring to a region / India, Indian, Malaysia, Malaysian if referring to a specific country or nationality	Generalised descriptions of large areas when referring to specific regions or countries incorrectly implies homogeneity and perpetuates colonial attitudes towards certain countries and regions

Further reading

For further reading on inclusive language in practice, we recommend the [@_language_matters](#) Instagram account.

While learning about inclusive language is important, it's also essential to recognise that language evolves over time and what is considered inclusive today may change in the future. It's a continuous process of learning, adapting, and staying informed. Taking the time to educate ourselves about inclusive language and making a conscious effort to incorporate it into daily communication is a meaningful step towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable culture both in and out of Greenhouse.

We encourage everyone to explore the following resources for further reading and support.



External resources

The following resources include up to date, detailed information about inclusive language and terminology:

[A practical guide to gender-neutral writing \(gov.uk\)](#)

[Equality Act 2020 \(Equality and Human Rights Commission\)](#)

[Language and Pronouns \(gendered intelligence\)](#)

[Religion and Belief \(Advance HE\)](#)

[Social Model of Disability: Language \(Disability Rights UK\)](#)

[The usefulness of gender neutral language \(gendered intelligence\)](#)

[Use of language race and ethnicity \(Advance HE\)](#)

[Words to use and avoid when writing about disability \(Gov.uk\)](#)

[The Other Box: Allyship Training](#)

[The Other Box: Diversity Dictionary Training](#)

[The Other Box: Know your Bias training](#)