

Inclusive Communications

Guidance



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People understand different things when we use the term inclusive communications.

These include;

- Talking about inclusion and diversity
- Ensuring our marketing and communication collateral is inclusive
- Doing our best to communicate each day with colleagues, customers and communities in an inclusive way
- It's about accessibility
- How to develop a communications plan for your inclusion and diversity plan
- How to brief your agencies and communications teams

This guidance package has been designed to help with some of the above. If you require specific support, please contact the Inclusive Employers team, or our partner creative design agency, Strudel.

Inclusive Employers
020 7803 0689

Strudel
020 7401 8193



Section One

Inclusive communications - Frequently Asked Questions



Section One

Inclusive communications - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do we mean by ‘inclusive communications’?

- By inclusive communication we mean sharing information in ways that everyone can understand

2. What does inclusive communication cover?

- Inclusive communication covers all forms of communications, including;
 - Verbal communications
 - Non-verbal communications
 - Written communications
 - Signage and information

3. What is the point of inclusive communications?

- If we consider how inclusive our communications are, it will help us ensure that more people can access and understand our products and services

4. What is the difference between accessible information and inclusive communications?

- Accessible information is a mechanism to help us to be more inclusive in our communications. For example, if we are thinking inclusively about how we communicate with our stakeholders, we would consider any particular accessibility requirements. We would then ensure that these accessibility requirements are addressed (for example the use of subtitles on video content for those with hearing impairment).

5. Is inclusive communication just for communication with people who have disabilities?

- No. Many of the resources on line about inclusive communications will focus on ensuring information is accessible to people with disabilities. This is a vital element of our approach to inclusive communications; however, it is about our opportunity to communicate clearly with everyone.



Section One

Inclusive communications - Frequently Asked Questions

6. What are the key barriers that stop communications being inclusive?

- In terms of language (verbal and written);
 - Jargon
 - Acronyms
 - Technical terminology
- In terms of language (verbal and written);
 - WRITING EVERYTHING IN UPPER CASE RATHER THAN sentence case
 - Over use of punctuation!!!!
 - Fonts used and size of fonts
 - Colours of fonts
- In terms of written (hand written) text
 - Very few of us communicate with hand written text in our daily working lives, however, if we are presenting, we may handwrite on a flip chart or Touch Screen. The same principles apply here as for typed text above.

- In terms of tone of voice (verbal)
 - Volume
 - Emotion
 - Use of inappropriate language (e.g. Swearing)
- In terms of tone of voice (written)
 - Brevity
 - Emotion
 - Use of inappropriate language (e.g. Swearing)

7. What is the business case for inclusive communications?

- Quite simply, all communications should have a clear objective. If you have any hope of achieving that objective, your greatest way to do so is by making your communications inclusive. By focusing on inclusive communications, you will be ensuring accessibility, enabling action in relation to your objective and enhancing engagement. If you are producing communications that are not inclusive, you are probably wasting time, money and resources.



Section Two

A model for developing inclusive communications



Section Two

A model for developing inclusive communications

Our inclusive communications CHARTER

C	Clarity – Be clear on your objectives/ goals – what you are trying to achieve through your communication.
H	Human – Most people respond to communications that are not overly corporate or rigid. Ensure that your voice is warm, respectful and has integrity.
A	Audience – Do you really know who you are trying to communicate with? Have you considered how they like to receive information? Have you considered your audiences? (You can use your staff networks and colleagues to check that you have considered the needs of your audiences). Have you thought about all the differences within your audience?
R	Receive – We often fall into the trap of thinking that communication is a one-way process. It is vital that when developing our inclusive communications, we are considering how we transmit our information/message and how we will encourage and receive responses to it.
T	Track – Inclusive communication is a constant state, it is a lens on how you communicate. It means recognising that you may need to do things differently as people change and messages change. You need to track what is working, for who, and what you could do differently to engage with a wider audience.
E	Everyone – If you are focused on inclusive communications you are thinking about ensuring your communications will not exclude anyone.
R	Reality Check – Most of us set out to be inclusive but sometimes we make mistakes or get things wrong. Remember that you have good intentions and don't take feedback personally or defensively. Stay true to the fact that you are trying to be as inclusive as possible.



Section Three

A guide to developing your own inclusive communication style – for leaders, for managers, for all of us.



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Lots of people ask us about how they can be more inclusive in their communications. We all know that there are times (when we are really busy, feeling tired or stressed) when our communication style can be excluding. Most of us know that we have fallen into these pitfalls. Most of us also know that although we don't mean to exclude people, sometimes the impact we have is not in line with our intention.

The following guide is a simple reminder about how we can all get better at ensuring our everyday communications with colleagues, customers and communities are inclusive.

1. Be real

We are all really good at sensing when we think people are being 'fake' or 'spinning us a line'. We know that we all have unconscious bias (for more information on resources for unconscious bias (infographics, blogs, training materials) **contact us**) and that our biases impact on how we include or exclude the people around us. The art of being an inclusive communicator is about being true to yourself and making sure that people around you know that you are being true to them.



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A simple exercise that you can do on your own or in teams:

Anchor statement

Take some time to think about who you are and what you are about – write it down. Asking yourself these questions can be difficult. One technique is to start by thinking about how you would like others to define you and then map whether that definition is really true to you.

How I'd like others to see me	Evidence – when have I shown that to be true and when have I not?	What else can I do to make this really true about me everyday?
Clear	I know I try to be clear and open but sometimes, I am in such a rush that I don't think I am as clear as I could be.	I could do more to check that people have understood, such as asking them to playback to me what they think I have suggested.
Open	I tell people all about me and my world but there are some people that I don't want to be open with in that way.	I could try a bit harder to find out about the people that I don't engage with so easily, to see if that helps me feel more comfortable to be open with them.
Reliable	I'd like people to see me as reliable but I know that sometimes I let people down.	I could be more honest about what is possible in my work plan, take the pressure off me and give reasonable timelines so I don't let people down.
Characteristic	Fill in evidence	Consider what you can do to make this a reality

Once you have pinned down who you are, this may well tell you what really matters to you. Write it down, focus on it every day and this will become what you are known for. People will feel how real it is.



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People are experts in reading body language and we all tell each other a huge amount without using any words at all.

Look at this guy – circle the words that describe the message you are getting from him.



Open

Happy

Shy

Welcoming

Nervous

Image: a happy man smiles and laughs with his head tilted back.



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Image: a man looks into the camera. He is frowning, hanging his head and his shoulders are slumped. His hand is in his pocket.

Apologetic

Embarrassed

Nervous

Cautious

Fed up



Image: a man looks into the camera. He is smiling and his shoulders and head are held back. His hands are by his side.

Straight forward

Open

Calm

Trustworthy

Reliable

Positive

We are all geniuses at reading body language – this is part of our sense of feeling included or excluded. Have a think about your own body language and how you can be more inclusive.



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2. Fess up when you mess up

Ok, so let's drill this back to inclusive communications – what do we mean by this? What we mean is that when you make a mistake, or get something wrong, don't try and hide it. People are likely to respond to you in a supportive and empathetic way if you just come clean.

The same goes for saying when you don't know something.

How often have you not been brave enough to say 'Sorry I don't understand that – can you tell me what that means?'

Many of us work in environments where we feel like we are expected to know everything about everything. When it comes to diversity and inclusion, this is all the more pressing.

If I don't know about a particular faith or religion, that is what I don't know and that is fine. I do though have an opportunity to find out by asking questions. If I pretend I know everything, I risk never learning anything new.

Read the blog about unconscious bias [here](#).

3. Know your triggers

Do some people set you off? Make you angry? Annoy you? Frustrate you?

Well, congratulations, that means that you are human. Most of us get riled and when we are riled we often behave differently. If we know and have thought about what sets us off then we have an opportunity to be prepared for these situations.

4. Listen to yourself

We all have those moments when we think to ourselves – 'that didn't come out quite right' when we say or do something that isn't received as we meant it to be received. Well, in those moments, don't just ignore that voice in our head. Do something to set the record straight or to make amends.



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5. Flex your style

Some of us communicate with stories, others with facts and evidence. Consider how you will achieve your objective by flexing your communication style to suit the need of your audience. For example, you may know people who work best when they are given very clear and direct instruction – people that don't work well with vague concepts. In those situations, consider how you can help them to be the best they can be by deploying deeper clarity.

6. Be open to others

If we all understood that we are all doing our best then we can consider how we can be more open to different communication styles. As long as we understand the communication objective or desired outcome, we can give people space to communicate in a way that may not be spot on for us – but know that their intention is good.

7. Press pause

Most of us operate in our fast thinking brains most of the time. Deploying cognitive strain, or pressing pause, will allow us to check that we are being inclusive in our communication style. Press pause and consider your intention and monitor your impact. Yes, we are all busy, but we are not so busy that we can exclude or miss people out through habits or thoughtless communication.



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

Your tone of voice and editorial style should reflect the values of your organisation and must be used consistently.

Many member organisations will have an expert communications team. Communications teams can be the greatest ally to inclusion and diversity, or, if they have not been introduced to the opportunities that inclusion and diversity will give them, they can be a barrier.

- 1. For the Inclusion and Diversity professional, it is essential that you offer communications teams the support and clarity on what you are hoping to achieve**
- 2. Communications teams may be worried about what they can and can't say**

Diversity wording and best practice terminology

If you are hoping for a definitive guide on words you can and can't say, then we're afraid that we can't give you that. We can though offer you some ideas on what we consider to be inclusive. We also caveat this with a respectful understanding that some people will recommend other phrases and terminology and we're always keen to listen those recommendations.

Note from Author: If I define my sexual orientation, I describe myself as gay. If I were to define my sexual orientation and my gender, I would define myself as a gay man. I choose not to define myself as 'Queer', though I understand the reasons that some people may (regardless of very binary concepts of straight or gay or bisexual). This is my choice. If we respect the choice of individuals and groups then we should all be going in a good direction.



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

What is Diversity?

Diversity is all of us, all our differences and all our similarities. It includes but is not limited to the 9 Protected Characteristics of the Equality Act 2010

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is our opportunity to create environments where all of us feel valued and can add value, where all our differences are cherished and we are able to feel safe and feel that we can share our ideas and they will be heard.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

LGBT is the most commonly used acronym that is used as a definition within the workplace. Very few organisations would still use the phrase 'homosexual'.

Some organisations will include IQAA at the end of LGBT – these additional letters stand for Intersex, Queer (or in some cases, the Q refers to questioning), Asexual and androgynous

Our recommendation is to make a decision about what is appropriate in your

organisation and stick to it. At Inclusive Employers, we generally use the acronym LGBT. Some people choose to add a +/- plus after LGBT.

Gender Identity – some organisations and the Equality Act 2010 refer to gender reassignment. This is a narrow term and we would recommend talking about gender identity. This term encompasses a range of genders including trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming. Please avoid using binary terms on gender or making assumptions about other people's gender identity.

For more information please refer to the Recruiting and Retaining Transgender colleagues guide in the member's area of our website.



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

Gender

Although the Equality Act 2010 refers to Sex as a protected characteristic most organisations use the term gender. Sex and Gender are actually different – sex refers to biological differences (chromosomes, hormones and organs), whereas most people define gender as a socially or culturally determined role expressed in terms of femininity and masculinity.

For best practice we would recommend that you encourage a less binary focus on gender and avoid using unnecessary gender language. (E.g Hey guys...)

Please remember that everyone has a gender identity. Gender discussions are often focused on women, reflecting the barriers that they face. We think it is really important to also involve men in the dialogue about gender. **Contact us** to discuss our Male Champions for Change programme.

Race and Ethnicity

Organisations don't often talk widely about race or ethnicity. All of us have a racial

background and we can have multiple ethnic affiliations (I could be white (my race) and Irish and English (my ethnicities). Organisations will talk about minority ethnic populations and often use the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). Some organisations will use the term Black, Minority Ethnic (BME) and some won't use any.

Some of these phrases are so 'catch all' that they can be misleading. Referring to a person as having Asian origin does not really tell us a great deal about the person's heritage. Asia is an enormous continent that covers India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Japan, Korea and a huge array of other nations.

Again, our perspective on this is about respecting an individual's personal or a group's collective choice of definition.

You can access the guide The BAME toolkit which offers support and ideas on attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing BAME colleagues in the member's area of our website.



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

Age

Many people will talk about five generations in the workplace. If you have to define them (let's face it there are lots of assumptions made and stigma around many of these definitions) they are recognised as:

Generation Z	Born after 1996
Generation Y	Born 1977 to 1995
Generation X	Born 1965 to 1976
Baby Boomers	Born 1946 to 1964
Traditionalists	Born 1945 and before

People often use the term 'millennial', usually to describe someone born after 1980. Some people do not like this term. At Inclusive Employers we recommend treating everyone as an individual and a human first and foremost.

Disability

There are some recommended best practice guidelines that we would recommend. Using language which centres the person, not their disability, is a good rule. If we don't actually state some of this then we won't be helping those who don't know when they could be more inclusive in their communication style. If we have to use any terminology:

Clunky	Positive
They suffer from...	They have x condition/impairment/disability
Mentally handicapped/ retarded	A person with a learning disability
The blind woman	The woman who is blind
Health problem	Health issue

Organisations often ask staff to 'disclose' or 'declare' disability. Please handle these communications with care as these words can suggest that either disclosing is because something should be kept quiet, or declaring, could be because there is an issue and we need to shout about it.



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

What to do when you get it wrong...

As humans we make mistakes and sometimes get things wrong. If you use the wrong language and someone raises it with you:

- Press pause and listen carefully to what they say
- Accept responsibility and don't be defensive
- Ask them if they could explain what you should say in future, or where you can find more information

Below is a model to help you with your inclusive communications planning.



If you'd like help to develop your inclusive communications please get in touch at info@inclusiveemployers.co.uk



Section Four

Inclusive communications - Guidelines

Reading Style Guide

- Type size – 12/14 suits most
- Line spaces - 1.5 to double
- Font – Needs to be clear – Arial, Helvetica, Cambria, Century Gothic
- Avoid underlining and *italics* as these appear to make the text run together, use **Bold** instead
- Lists such as “do’s” and “don’ts” are helpful
- Glossaries and contents pages help
- Design – simple and uncluttered
- Bullet points break up the text and are short and easy to read
- Illustrations, photographs and charts can be a great way to explain information
- Background colour – cream or soft pastel can be useful. Matte paper is better than gloss
- CAPITAL LETTERS – are harder to read
- Too much text on a page/PowerPoint / online is overwhelming – it’s better to have smaller chunks of text broken up for ease of reading
- Justifying text is a deterrent to quick reading
- Sentence length - more than twenty-two words in a section loses many readers. Shorten sentences rather than over-simplifying
- Choice of words – try not to over use jargon, acronyms or complex vocabulary



Section Five

Starting the conversation



Section Five

Starting the conversation



Cartoon image: two men are standing at a water cooler, an older white man and an Asian man wearing a turban. The speech bubble for the first man reads, 'Ahh afternoon Nardip erm ... What do you and your family have planned over the erm... non-religious-specific day off in spring?'. Nardip's speech bubble reads, 'Are you talking about Easter Bob?'

It is often our fear of saying the 'wrong' thing that stops us from starting conversations. Many of us may have over the years built up barriers in our heads about what you can and cannot say. Of course, there are some words, phrases and actions that are absolutely unacceptable in the workplace.

We all make mistakes. If we work from a point of view that most people do not intend to offend or upset, then we are more able to enter into conversations with them to help them understand the potential impact of their words or deeds.

The image above is a moment when a colleague is keen to connect with another colleague, but is nervous about saying the wrong thing or doing something that they think may offend. The character Nardip (above) helps Bob (above) by being clear, authentic and respectful.

This image is a useful tool to use in team meetings to break the ice when discussing how we can be more courageous in the way we communicate inclusively.

Contact us to arrange workshops on 'Starting the conversation' or 'Courageous conversations'.



Section Six

How to get people thinking about inclusive communications



Section Six

How to get people thinking about inclusive communications

How to get people thinking about how inclusive the communications they produce are:

- Not all of us are lucky enough to have access to data and best practice on diversity and inclusion.
- The following quiz may help those who are putting together communications in your organisations to understand audiences and to help them consider achieving desired outcomes of the communication.

Inclusive Communications Quiz – our audiences

1. What percentage of the UK population is female?

2. How many people in the UK identify as having a disability?

3. What is the average reading age of a UK resident?

4. What % of the UK population has dyslexia?

5. How many million people in the UK are deaf or have a hearing impairment?

6. What are the top five languages spoken in the UK?

7. How many million people in the UK are blind or have a visual impairment?

8. What percentage of UK society does not have access to the internet?

9. How many hours a day do UK adults spend consuming social media?

10. One in twenty adults in the UK are functionally illiterate – True or False?



Section Six

How to get people thinking about inclusive communications

Quiz Answers:

1. 51% (UK Census 2011)

2. There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK. (Scope), Family Resources Survey 2016/7

3. 9 years old, according to See a Voice

4. 10% (British Dyslexia Association)

5. 11 million people, 1 in 6 (Action on Hearing Loss)

6. English, Polish, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali (with Sylheti and Chittagong) (2011 Census)

7. Over 2 million (RNIB)

8. 10% of UK Households do not have access to the internet (Office of National Statistics, 2017)

9. 1 hour 20 minutes per day, Global Web Index report 2015

10. True - <https://fullfact.org/news/are-one-five-british-adults-illiterate/>



Section Six

How to get people thinking about inclusive communications

Social Media – Guidelines for Inclusion

When it comes to social media, many of us post information quickly and without a great deal of care.

There are a few basics that we mustn't forget if we want to ensure our social media activity is inclusive.

1. Use language that isn't gendered (how often I have in haste written – "Hey guys" – it is simple enough to write "Hi everyone")
2. Consider the stock imagery that you use on platforms like LinkedIn - (see examples of getting it wrong opposite)
3. Really take into consideration how binary you are in your definitions and open these out
4. If you use emoji's – remember not everyone really knows what they mean
5. Social media is about dialogue – make sure you communicate with a desire to receive as well as transmit

The sort of stock images used on LinkedIn that tell your audience that you might not really get it:



Image: Group of people from range of ethnicities putting their hands together in the middle



Image: Group of smiling people in suits including two white women, a black man and a white man using a wheelchair



Thank you

The authors and designers

About Strudel

For over 17 years, we have been designing with a strategic mind and social heart.

We believe that excellent design can create a better world for all of us.

As experts in inclusive design, we can assist with any internal or external communication for your brand or project.

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