**Fact sheet**

# Inclusive language

This fact sheet explains what inclusive language is and includes tips for using it in your work and community life to improve the way you interact with people with disability.

## Understanding inclusive language

Inclusive language, or respectful language, is empowering. It is strengths-based and recognises that people with disability have unique abilities and potential.

Inclusive language also acknowledges that people with disability have individual preferences for how they like to be referred to, including through person-first language and identity-first language.

More details about strengths-based language, as well as person-first language and identity-first language, are outlined below.

### Strengths-based language

Some examples of strengths-based language includes using:

- 'autistic' or 'has autism' instead of 'suffers from autism'
- 'wheelchair user' instead of 'wheelchair-bound'
- 'lives with a mental health condition' instead of 'mentally ill'
- 'uses augmented or alternative communication' instead of 'non-verbal'.

### Person-first and identity-first languages

Two ways in which people with disability may identify include identity-first language and person-first language. It is important to ask the person which they prefer as follows:

- **identity-first language:** some people embrace disability as a core part of identity (e.g. 'neurodivergent person' or Deaf person). Many individuals who use identity-first language see their disability as an integral and positive part of their identity.
- **person-first language:** emphasises the importance of recognising the individual before their disability (e.g. 'person with cerebral palsy' or 'person with disability'). This language seeks to emphasise that a disability is just one characteristic of a person, not their defining feature.

## Five inclusive language tips

1. **Language matters:** recognise the impact of language on identity and dignity. Use respectful language when speaking to or about people with disability.
2. **Ask for preferences:** ask people what language they would like you to use.
3. **Stay informed and connected:** keep up to date with changes in language and terminology. Engage with disability communities to understand their preferences and perspectives.
4. **Avoid euphemisms:** Use clear, direct language that accurately reflects strengths-based language. Do not use vague or euphemistic terms (e.g. 'differently abled').
5. **Provide information in different formats:** People access information in many ways – offer alternative formats so more people can be included.

## Further resources

This resource is part of a suite of training resources related to inclusive and accessible language and communication. To find out more, visit the Queensland Disability Plan website at www.qld.gov.au/qld-disability-plan

Queensland Government