**Inclusive Language Guidance**

## Introduction

This document has been produced to try and provide some helpful guidance for those who are creating policy documents or other publications. The terms used in this document are by no means exhaustive and when writing about any topic research will still need to be undertaken as terminology in these areas is varied, fluid and constantly shifting as understanding, perceptions and use of language changes and develops. The terms described below therefore may vary in their usage and may become outdated.

This is not intended to be a prescriptive reference but designed to be of assistance to those who may be new to an area of work and to have a consistent terminology by which to reference particular areas.

It is also important to remember that when working with individuals or groups of individuals to be guided by them about the language that they may prefer to use and to self-define themselves.

If you are preparing forms which ask for disclosure of certain characteristics where possible the option of prefer not to say should be included.

## 'The hot topic of inclusive language'

Recently inclusive language seems to be a hot topic and one that many organisations are asking for workshops to be delivered in this area. Particularly for senior leadership teams.  Why is this so important and why does language matter so much?

## Creating a culture of inclusion etiquette

Inclusion etiquette refers to respectful communication and interaction with people who may not have the same characteristics as someone else. The principles of inclusion etiquette rely on common sense to guide your interactions with people and behave in the same courteous and respectful way with individuals you know in the workplace. It sets out professional workplace standards.

Etiquette may or may not feel like the right word to use here. There can be a sense of stiffness to it, associated with how to be part of the upper-class establishment. The flipside to this that etiquette and guidelines may need to be outlined for everyone to understand the terms of engagement in a place of work.

**Defining inclusive language**

Inclusive language is communication that avoids using words, expressions or assumptions that may exclude people. The exclusion may be inadvertent but has a negative impact on people. It is important to only refer to people's protected characteristics if it is relevant to the information we are communicating. Inclusive language includes emails, marketing material, social media, websites, and other forms of communication, such as imagery.

Some examples of inclusive language are:

- Introducing yourself with your pronouns e.g. I am x, the pronouns I use are she/her, him/he or they. To lead with good example, include pronouns in email signatures, introductions, Teams usernames, social media profiles etc.

- Avoiding terms like "guys" for everyone and using gender neutral terms staff members, volunteers, visitors or members.

- Examples like man vs the moon, are adaptable to humankind vs the moon.

- Instead of assumptions about biological parents and assuming that there is a mum and dad to say carer, guardian, parent or caregiver.

- English idioms or phrases like "it's raining cats and dogs" may need to be explained to international staff members/visitors

- We may often say it is "awfully good". Does this mean it is good or bad? This is contradictory and confusing for international audiences and neurodivergent people, such as Autism, Autism Spectrum Condition. Use factual language rather than value-laden words and phrases.

- Try not to erase certain groups with your language, or to lump together all people within a certain group, e.g. The Muslims.

- Ask in advance if you are not sure of something, for example, introducing yourself with pronouns.

**Why inclusive language is important**

For communication to be effective, it needs to speak to all audiences for which it is intended. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people. It is sensitive to differences and promotes equitable opportunities. Language is fluid; therefore, meanings and connotations of words can change rapidly. In effect, it is more important to apply inclusive language principles rather than learning specific appropriate phrases, as these may change in meaning over time.

In 2018, a Deloitte Millennial Survey showed that there is a *"very strong correlation between perceptions of workforce diversity and loyalty".*

- 69% of employees working at organisations they perceive as diverse intended to remain there for at least five years, thus reducing recruitment costs.
- Candidates will often turn down opportunities because of the impression formed by language that is used in interviews. Language used reflects whether workplace adjustments and support will be put in place.
- Candidates stated they can often tell whether an organisation has clear policies just through the tone and phrasing recruitment panels use.

**How inclusive language creates belonging in the workplace**

1. It enables deeper thinking about accessible spaces because staff and teams are not afraid to talk about disability. However, it is important to understand that a safe space is no longer safe, when oppressors have the power to dominate the space and make the space feel unsafe. So, reducing fear means that there is an increased likelihood that disability will not only be spoken about but thought about and integrated into new and existing projects.

2. Seeing everyone as they want to be seen. This is especially important in relation to gender identity. By creating an open environment where staff use pronouns in all communication everyone is likely to do this and there is less stigma.

3. Moving with the times. As mentioned previously, language changes and evolves faster than we may realise. Being aware and open to shifting language means that the whole organisation can evolve in an agile fashion.

4. Using inclusive language challenges both conscious and unconscious biases. Language is powerful, so adjusting words and phrases shifts mindsets too.

5. Inclusive language supports disclosure and declaration by creating a safe space making people feel valued.

6. Positive language facilitates a collective no blame culture as everyone makes mistakes and that it is ok!

7. It lets our customers, clients, service-users and members know that we practise what policies say. Bringing paper-based statements to life, resulting in increased trust with our stakeholders.

**What are the University's expectations in respect of inclusive language?**

- You should take ownership of your learning and how to utilise terminology and language with dignity and respect.

- If a complaint is made, you may be asked to improve your learning and how you implement it

- You will need to apologise to ensure that the University remains an inclusive and welcoming place for students and staff

**What if I get it wrong?**

Language is always evolving and developing. As human beings the opportunity to learn, practice and experience language through 'verbal'- immediate/in person exposure or the 'written word' is key to our ability to be natural and at ease. Repetition and practice builds understanding and confidence to use language appropriately. However, as human beings we are prone to make mistakes, it is important to recognise that what you have said could be extremely hurtful and you need to apologise for this. Also, you should not act upset when apologising as you put the burden of emotional support on the victim.

It is also key to respect people's privacy. Let people share information about themselves if and when they feel comfortable doing so. Individuals are not responsible for educating the public by revealing their intimate lived experiences.

Inclusive language goes beyond the carrot and stick legal approach. It is about human connection and common ground. We are all more than what we chose to declare and have been subject to biases ourselves. It is about listening, hearing and interacting to broaden our horizons and ensure we work together and talk about what will work best for everyone. (*diverseminds.co.uk-7 ways inclusive language creates belonging at work)

**Age**

Inclusive language should be reflective and welcoming to our multigenerational colleagues. It is good practice to avoid terms that may be perceived as a manifestation of ageism. Ageism can be defined as the application of assumed age-based group characteristics to an individual, regardless of that individual's actual personal characteristics.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Avoid general terms as these imply that people of certain age groups or generations are a homogenous group, failing to recognise people's individuality. | The elderly, the old, pensioners<br><br>The young | Mature individual, person/people<br>Young person, young adults.<br>**Preferred:**<br>Child (4-12 years)<br>Teenager (13-19 years)<br>Young people/adults (16-24 years)<br>Adult (19-64 years)<br>Older people/adults<br>Over 65's/75's etc. |
| Avoid using the terms 'girls', 'boys' when referring to colleagues or employees, as these refer to young children | The boys/girls in the office | The people in the office<br>Our colleagues in the office |
| Avoid using language that stereotypes or implies | A young and vibrant team | An effective and vibrant team |

| | A mature workforce | An experienced workforce |
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| that a particular age group is more or less able or has stereotypical characteristics by virtue of chronological age. | | |

## Disability

The phrase disabled students/people should be used on all documentation. Organisations such as Scope, Disability Rights UK and the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP), which is the professional body for disability staff in HE all use this term. Disabled people fits in with the social and affirmative models of disability

The portrayal of people with disabilities has traditionally used language that emphasises the disability rather than the person, resulting in the depersonalisation, stereotyping (often with people with a disability seen as victims or suffering) and the amalgamation of whole spectrums of specific physical and intellectual impairments. In the majority of circumstances, there will be no need to refer to a person's ability or disability. If the need arises, it is best practice to use 'person-centred' rather than focusing on the disability.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Avoid blanket terms. Always put the person before the disability. | The disabled, the handicapped | Disabled person Disabled people |
| Avoid using terms that imply normalcy/being healthy when referring to people without disabilities. | Normal, healthy, able-bodied person | Non-disabled people |
| Use positive language rather than descriptions that emphasise limitations. | Disabled toilets/lifts Toilets/lifts for the disabled | Accessible toilets/lifts |

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| Avoid negative terms that overextend the severity of a disability. | Wheelchair-bound, confined to a chair Cancer or dementia victims | Person who uses a wheelchair People living with cancer or dementia, /usually wheelchair user |
| Avoid phrases like 'suffers from' which suggest discomfort, constant pain and a sense of hopelessness. (Gov.UK, 2021) | Suffers from | |
| Avoid outdated and derogatory terms. | Deaf and dumb Nuts, psycho, mad retarded, slow. Asperger's, Autism Spectrum Disorder | D/deaf person People with a mental illness/condition Person with learning disability. Autism Spectrum Condition |
| Avoid terms which equate the person with the ability or disability. | Schizophrenic Autistic child | A person with a mental health concern, condition or illness A neurodivergent child or with a learning disability |
| Avoid using euphemisms | Challenged, special | Person with learning disability |
| Avoid being effusive about the achievements of people with disability when they are going about their daily life and work. | Courageous, inspiring, heroic | Successful, productive |

**Gender reassignment,** gender, gender identity, **sex**

The following list provides a glossary of common terms associated with sex, gender and gender identity. The definitions are based on those provided by Advance HE (previously Equality Challenge Unit) guidance and Stonewall.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Use gender neutral terms. | Man, Mankind<br>Workmanship<br>Man the desk/phones<br>Man-made | Humans, Humankind<br>Quality of work/skills<br>Attend the phones<br>Artificial, manufactured, synthetic |
| Use gender neutral pronouns and expressions. | Anyone who wants his work evaluated<br>Welcome ladies and gentlemen | Anyone who wants their work evaluated<br>Welcome to friends and colleagues<br>Welcome to everyone |
| Use person-centred language. | The transgender | Trans people |
| Respect the preferences of those people who want to be referred to by gender neutral pronouns. | She, her, hers and he, him, his | They, them, theirs |
| Use terms that include all relationships. | Boyfriend, wife, husband | Partner, spouse |
| Official forms should include a comprehensive list of titles, sorted alphabetically rather than<br>following any perceived hierarchy. | Prof, Dr, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mx, etc | Dr, Miss, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Mx, Prof, etc |
| Avoid titles that imply the usual jobholder | Cleaning ladies<br>Policeman | Cleaners<br>Police officer |

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| being of a particular gender. | | |
| Be mindful of appropriate and respectful in-group versus out-group naming, i.e. avoid using terms that are only used by individuals that self-identify as part of a specific community. | Queer (only use if you identify as queer) Agender (only use if you identify as agender) | Queer communities N/A |
| 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 |
| Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. | Don´t use 'LGBTQ+' if you are only talking about gender or gender identity. Don´t use 'straight' as the opposite of 'LGBTQ+' (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including straight). | Only use LGBTQ+ when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities. Use 'straight' 'cisgender' or 'ally' |

**Marriage and civil partnership**

Since 2005, in the UK same sex couples have been able to form a legally recognised relationship, known as a civil partnership. Couples who form a civil partnership have a new legal status – that of a 'civil partner', where the couple gains rights and responsibilities similar to that of a marriage. It is good practice to use language that reflects this new legal status.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Official forms should include this new legal relationship status. | What is your marital status?<br>• not married<br>• married<br>• divorced<br>• widow/widower | What is your relationship status?<br>What is your marital/civil partnership status?<br>• not married/civil partnership<br>• married/civil partnership<br>• unmarried partners<br>• divorced /dissolved civil partnership<br>•widow/widower/surviving civil partner |

**Race,** ethnicity and nationality

While there are certain differences between race and ethnicity, the two terms are at times conflated due to possible common heritage and expressions. Race, a social construct, refers to a category of people who share certain inherited physical characteristics, such as skin colour, facial features, and stature refers to outside appearances. Ethnicity is the fact/state of belonging to a social group with common national or cultural tradition, such as language, religious belief and dress code. The UK is a racially and culturally diverse place and it is important not to assume that a person's appearance defines their nationality or cultural background. It is recommended to only use a person's race, ethnicity or nationality to identify or describe them if it is directly relevant to the point you are making.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Use adjectives rather than nouns when it is necessary to refer to someone's race. | Asians | Asian people |
| Avoid irrelevant ethnic descriptions. | The Asian doctor | The doctor |

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| Don´t use 'minority group' as it implies inferior social position and is often relative to geographic location. | Minority group | Ethnic Minority Group or Minority Ethnic Group or Underrepresented. Groups or minoritized group |
| Avoid outdated terms. *(Avoid & challenge racial ethnic slurs and any language that infers stereotypes based on racial and ethnic associations).* | Coloured | *Respect an individual's/groups preference. Although many Government departments use: *Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)* OR *Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME).* Many people do not recognise these acronyms, as they are problematic due to: • BAME does not specify the ethnic groups included. It sets apart Black and Asian people from other minority ethnic groups against a white norm. • Some references include all minority ethnic groups including White Gypsy, Roma, Irish |

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| | | Traveller groups, while others include 'White Ethnic Minorities in the 'White Category'<br>• BAME can often infer an assumption that all-non-White people exist as a homogenous group, without appreciating the uniqueness of individual ethnicities. For example, BAME ignores intra-ethnic differences, as ethnic groups have significant differences in nationality, class and gender etc. Also, BAME does not capture inequality within white groups e.g., historically white Irish and more recently white Roma, gypsy traveller.<br><br>Use ethnic minority instead as this also associates with disadvantaged and marginalised White ethnic minorities such as Gypsy, Roma and |

| | | Traveller of Irish Heritage groups. |
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| | | Use capital letters when referring to ethnic minority groups e.g., "in comparison Black staff felt…" |
| Try not to say 'foreigners' | Foreigners. | People from overseas, international students/staff. |
| Try not to say 'half caste', 'exotic'. | Half caste, exotic. | Mixed race/biracial/ multiracial. |
| Try not to say 'blacklisted', whitelist | Blacklisted<br><br>Whitelist | Block list, Deny list.<br>Safe list, Allow list. |

**Religion or belief**

'Religion or belief' is the preferred term in use in equality and human rights legislation, including in the Equality Act 2010.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Avoid using Christian-centric terms, not only on ground of respect but also for practical reasons.<br>The term 'last name' should not be used as it could be confusing to Asian groups who place | Christian name<br>Surname, | First name, given name Family name Preferred name (Where the 'legal name' is needed in things like surveys, add a box for both 'legal' and 'preferred'). |

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| their family name first. Surname is not unacceptable. However, this word may originate from sire-name, or the name derived from one's father. | | |
| Official forms should include both options for religion and belief (in upper case). | What is your religion?<br>• Christian<br>• Muslim<br>• Hindu<br>• Jewish<br>• Sikh<br>• Other | Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?<br>• Yes<br>• No<br>If yes, which one?<br>• Christianity<br>• Islam<br>• Hinduism<br>• Judaism<br>• Sikhism<br>• Other<br>Alternatively: What is your religion or belief? |
| Use legally correct terminology | Faith<br>Religious discrimination | Religion or belief<br>Discrimination on grounds of religion or belief |
| Define groups of individuals from the same religion | | Muslim Community<br>Jewish people |

## Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers a person´s physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another individual. This could be towards people of the same sex, opposite sex or both. Sexual orientations include asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, questioning and straight.

| Try | Instead of | Use this |
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| Avoid terms that suggest a degree of voluntary choice when this is not necessarily the case. | Sexual preference Lifestyle choice | Sexual orientation |
| Use person-centred language. | Lesbians, gays, bisexuals | Lesbian, gay, bisexual people |
| Use language that does not assume heterosexuality as the norm. | Invite your boyfriend/husband Family planning clinic | Invite your spouse/partner. Sexual health clinic or sexual health and wellbeing clinic |
| Recognise diverse family formation. | Mother and father | Parents, caregivers |
| Recognise and respect the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. | Don´t use 'LGBTQ+' if you are only talking about sexual orientation. Don´t use 'straight' as the opposite of 'LGBTQ+' (transgender people can be any sexual orientation, including straight). | Only use LGBTQ+ when referring to both sexual orientation and gender identity-based communities. Use 'straight', 'cisgender' or 'ally'. |

**Guidance example template(s) for collecting demographic data:**

Only use *race* or ethnicity if it is relevant to the information you are communicating.

Broad ethnicity: Asian, Black, White written in upper case

Specific ethnicity: Asian British, Black African, Chinese written in upper case

**Ethnicity demographic categories:**

**What is your ethnic origin?**

| White British | White Irish | Other White background | | | |
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| Black or Black British | Caribbean | African | Other Black background | | |
| Asian or Asian British | Indian | Pakistani | Bangladeshi | Chinese | Other Asian background |
| Mixed | White and Black Caribbean | White and Black African | White and Asian | Other Mixed background | |
| Other | Arab | Gypsy/Traveller | Prefer not to say | | |

**Gender Identities**

**Single Selection Version:**

*The University of Greenwich is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all staff and students across the institution and championing gender diversity and equality. In order to best continue the ongoing development of support and services for people across the gender spectrum, we ask applicants to share with us the gender identity/gender identities that they feel represents them best if known at the time of asking.*

**How would you describe your gender identity/gender identities?** ["free text box"]

⬚

◯ *Female

○ *Female - Cisgender/Cis

○ *Female -Transgender/Trans

○ *Genderfluid

○ *Genderqueer

○ *Intersex

○ *Male

○ *Male - Cisgender/Cis

○ *Male -Transgender/Trans

○ *Non-binary

○ *Queer

○ * Prefer not to say

If you said prefer not to say, is there anything we can support you with?

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[                                                                    ]
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Is your gender Identity as described above the same as it was assigned at birth ('if applicable')?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Prefer not to say


**Multiple Selection Version:**

*The University of Greenwich is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all staff and students across the institution and championing gender diversity and equality. In order to best continue the ongoing development of support and services for people across the gender spectrum, we ask applicants to share with us the gender identity/gender identities that they feel represents them best if known at the time of asking.*

**How would you describe your gender identity/gender identities?** ["free text box"]

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[                        ]
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○ *Cisgender/Cis

◯ *Female

◯ *Genderfluid

◯ *Genderqueer

◯ *Intersex

◯ *Male

◯ *Non-binary

◯ *Transgender/trans

◯ *Queer

◯ * Prefer not to say

If you said prefer not to say, is there anything we can support you with?

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Is your gender Identity as described above the same as it was assigned at birth ('if applicable')?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Prefer not to say

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### Additional Glossary

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| Ace | Ace is an umbrella term used to describe a variation in levels of romantic and/or sexual attraction, including lack of attraction. Ace people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms including but not limited to asexual, aromantic, demis and grey-AS. |
| Cisgender or Cis | Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people. |

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| Deadnaming | Calling someone by their birth name after they have changed their name. This term is often associated with trans people who have changes their name as part of their transition. |
| Gender dysphoria | Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.<br><br>This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who does not feel comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth. |
| Gender expression | How a person chooses to outwardly express their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender may not, however identify as trans. |
| Gender identity | A person innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth. |
| Gender reassignment | The process of transitioning from one gender to another. |
| Gender Recognition | This enables trans people to be legally recognised in their affirmed gender Certificate (GRC) and to be issued with a new birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and you currently must be over 18 to apply. You do not need a GRC to change your gender markers at work of to legally change your gender on other documents such as your passport. |
| Identity | The characteristics and qualities of a person, considered collectively and regarded as essential to that person's self-awareness. |
| Inter sex | A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female.<br><br>Intersex people may identify as male, female or non-binary. |

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| **Neurodiverse | Everybody- this term is often used instead of 'neurodivergent', yet it is potentially problematic (akin, perhaps, to referring to an African-Caribbean person as 'racially diverse)'. A group can be neurodiverse, an individual is likely better described as neurodivergent. |
| **Neurodivergent | Dyslexic and autistic brains- having cognitive functioning different from what is seen as 'typical'-while the term appears to reflect the 'medical model' above, it is a term that most neurodivergent people are comfortable with. Neurodivergence is largely or entirely genetic or innate-such as dyslexia-other forms of neuro divergence can be acquired, such as via an incidence of brain trauma. |
| **Neurotypical | Everybody else- given the biological fact that there is no such thing as a 'typical' brain, neurotypical is best thought of as not 'neurodivergent'-that is, within parameters of neurocognitive style that have not been either medically defined as 'disorders' or culturally defined as 'neurodivergent'. It is important not to draw simple lines in the sand between 'neurotypicals' and neurodivergent people- human diversity is a highly complex spectrum, in which everyone sits. |
| Non-binary | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely. |
| Pan | Refers to a person who's romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by sex or gender. |
| Pronoun | Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation- for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they/their and ze/zir. |

Queer          Queer is a term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic orientation, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It can also be a way of rejecting the perceived norms of the LGBT community (racism, sizeism, ableism etc). Although some LGBT people view the word as a slur, it was reclaimed in the late 80's by the queer community who have embraced it.

References:

*(Stonewall 2020)*

**CIPD Neurodiversity at Work Guide February 2018*

https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/training/inclusive-language/