

Introduction

At Digital Unite we are committed to working towards bringing an end to the digital divide. We understand that some of the most digitally excluded are those that are most marginalised in society. We are dedicated to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our organisation and in our interactions with others. We believe that being an inclusive organisation benefits everyone, enhances innovation, and strengthens our societies. This policy outlines our commitment to EDI and provides guidelines for ensuring that all individuals we interact with are treated fairly and with respect.

This policy aims to:

- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation.
- Ensure fair treatment and respect for all employees, volunteers, clients, and contractors.
- Comply with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

Defining diversity and inclusion

In this policy we define the terms used as follows:

Equality means ensuring that no individual or group is treated less favourably based on characteristics such as age, disability, gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Diversity is the differences between individuals and the variety of perspectives they bring. We actively seek to create a diverse workforce and community.

Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and supported. We encourage the participation of all individuals in our activities and decision-making processes.

Our commitment

We're committed to a culture and working practices which recognises and values diversity and inclusion in the delivery of our business goals. Digital Unite employees and contractors of Digital Unite, are expected to:

- Treat everyone with fairness and respect and encourage inclusive environments where individual differences and contributions are valued.
- Prevent direct or indirect discrimination based on characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment/identity, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, colour, nationality, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, caring responsibilities or socio-economic factors.
- Use positive and non-discriminative language in all communications- refer to our preferred terminology list (Appendix 1)
- Provide services or content that meet the highest accessibility standards possible.



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

- Challenge discrimination wherever it occurs and report any perceived infringement of this policy to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- Where appropriate, seek out opportunities to encourage under-represented groups and individuals to participate in the development of our services and ensure the promotion of opportunities to them.

Dealing with discrimination and harassment

Any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. We will have a zero-tolerance approach to unfair discrimination at every level.

Any complaints regarding discrimination should be made to the CEO (Emma Weston emma.weston@digitalunite.com) in the first instance.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Any changes will be communicated to all staff and stakeholders.

Last review date: February 2025

Appendix 1

Inclusive language guidance

At Digital Unite we value diversity, and we want to communicate in a way that is inclusive, but that also reflects/empowers change in the social norms that reinforce inequalities. This guidance has been designed for anyone writing communications or content for us, whether for an internal or external audience.

This guidance will be reviewed regularly and will follow guidance from the Government's guidelines on inclusive communication (<https://design.homeoffice.gov.uk/accessibility/inclusive-language>).

Language evolves rapidly, so instead of using this guide as a single reference staff should enhance their own awareness and constantly consider the principles of writing inclusively in their work.

We would also recommend Oxfam's guide on Inclusive Language (<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/inclusive-language-guide-621487/>).

This is not an exhaustive list. We recognise the complex issues around intersectionality (the way a person's various identities overlap, creating different systems of discrimination or privilege). However, for ease of use, we have grouped the content into sections.

Preferred Terminology general guidance

- ✓ Ask yourself if your language is reinforcing stereotypes or includes derogatory terms that will exclude certain groups of people. Don't unnecessarily group together people within a certain characteristics, e.g. the disabled, single mothers.
- ✓ Individuals will have their own preferred way of talking about themselves, so if unsure ask.
- ✓ If in doubt use people first language e.g. people with a disability, person seeking asylum, people experiencing poverty.

If you make mistakes, learn from them! For some of us communicating in a more inclusive way is about changing deeply embedded habits. It is okay to make mistakes, apologise, correct what you have said, learn from it.

Use diverse photos, a list of Diverse and inclusive photos can be found here: <https://digitalnns.org.uk/resources/diverse-and-inclusive-stock-photos/>

Guidance on language for specific characteristics

Age

- Only refer to someone's age if it is of relevance to what you are writing about.
- Use "older people" instead of "elderly" or "pensioners", "OAP" or "senior citizen".
- Specify age ranges when relevant, rather than using terms like "young" or "old".
- Write in a positive way about older people, avoid phrases that make assumptions about what older people can or cannot do.

- The NHS generally defines age groups as follows (note that the definition of children is different to that in the Children Act, referenced above):
 - Children: 4 to 12 years
 - Teenagers: 13 to 19 years
 - Young people: 16 to 24 years
 - Adults: 19 years and older
 - Older people: use 'over-65s', 'over-75s'.

Age positive image library <https://www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library>

Disability

- Use people-first language, so "people with a disability" rather than "the disabled", or "people with visual impairment". Do not use terms like "handicapped" or "the disabled".
- Avoid medical labels like "suffers from" or "affected by". Focus on the individual, not the condition.
- Avoid using language that implies conditions or disability being a barrier - instead focus on removing barriers that they might face in society.
- Use the term 'non-disabled' rather than 'able-bodied' if you need to describe people without disabilities.
- Use the terminology "mental health conditions" rather than "mental health problems" or "mental illnesses".
- Generally, do not capitalise the first letter of names of disabilities. However, when talking about the D/deaf community, it is preferable to use the more inclusive 'D/deaf'.

Disability friendly photo libraries <https://affecttheverb.com/collection/>,
<https://disabilityisbeautiful.com/>

The gov.uk website has a list of terms to use and avoid when writing about disability
www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability

Gender and sexual orientation

- Consider whether it is necessary to refer to someone's gender or sex, if not then you could use the gender neutral, they/them.
- Avoid unnecessary gendered language, for example use "team" or "everyone" instead of "ladies". To avoid making assumptions consider using terms like "partner" or "spouse" instead of "husband" or "wife".
- Avoid gender-biased expressions that reinforce stereotypes. Some examples are "man up", and "stop acting like a girl".
- It is not usually necessary to refer to someone's sexual orientation when writing about them.
- Use the acronym 'LGBTQ+' to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. The 'plus' is inclusive of other groups. Do not refer to an individual as "an LGBTQ+ person". "Member of the LGBTQ+ community" can be used instead. See Stonewalls list of LGBTQ+ terms for guidance and definitions on terminology
<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/list-lgbtq-terms#.t>.

- In support of LGBTQ+ consider making a declaration of your pronouns as part of standard practice in your email signature, when introducing yourself in person or in digital communications. This avoids others making assumptions and removes the need to ask.

Trans and non-binary photo libraries <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mapbox/with/49532829932>, <https://genderspectrum.vice.com/>.

Race and Ethnicity

- Only refer to people's race or ethnicity if it is relevant to the context. It is important to recognise the negative impacts of using broad terminology to homogenise diverse communities. but bear in mind that race and ethnicity are important characteristics to some people.
- Use specific terms like "Black", "Asian", or "Mixed" rather than broad terms like "minority". But do not use racial or ethnic terms as nouns, such as "Blacks" or "Asians". Use adjectives instead: "Black people", "people from Asian backgrounds" or "people who identify as Black"
- Capitalize racial and ethnic identifiers (e.g., "Black", "White"). Use 'White' rather than 'Caucasian'.
- There is not a universally supported term for referring to minority ethnic groups. Don't use acronyms like 'BAME' or 'BME' - use precise terminology to describe the specific ethnicity of a person or group. If it is absolutely necessary to use a broad term, use 'minority ethnic group' (not 'minority group' or 'ethnic minority group').
- Use 'people of mixed heritage' or 'people of mixed background' rather than 'mixed race people'.

Diverse groups photo library <https://nappy.co/>.

Religion

- Always consider the various religious practices and beliefs that people have - and recognise the diverse needs of people from different faiths in your writing.
- Do not use language that may inherently exclude those of different faiths - for example, referring to certain religious celebrations but not others.

Migration and refugees

- Use terms like "asylum seekers", "person seeking asylum", "displaced person", not "illegal immigrant".

Socio-economic status

- Only refer to socio-economic status when it is necessary and relevant.
- Instead of words like "poor" or "disadvantaged" use "groups that have been economically marginalised" or "people on low income", "people experiencing poverty".

We won't always get it right and welcome input from those we interact with (du@digitalunite.com). Let us know how you prefer to be referred to. Help us learn together!