# LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Language Guide

*Language is a powerful tool.  How you speak to and about others, influences how willing and able they may be to bring their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives.*

**Use LGBTQIA+ inclusive language**

LGBTQIA+ inclusive language acknowledges and respects the diversity of people in the workplace – whether speaking to colleagues, clients or customers. It is rare that a person would choose to use offensive language, yet there can be instances where, unintentionally, we may make people feel uncomfortable or excluded.

Using LGBTQIA+ inclusive language ensures that colleagues, customers, and patients feel respected and included in communications, conversations, and discussions, creating a positive environment for all.

**Do not assume**

Avoid using language such as wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, or husband unless you know the gender of the person’s partner. Imagine if someone assumed the gender of your partner incorrectly – things might get a little awkward. If you are unsure, use the term partner and the pronouns they/them until the person shares the gender identity of their partner.

This does not mean you cannot use the terms wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, or husband. It simply means that you should not make assumptions.

**Normalise introducing yourself with your pronouns**

Pronouns are one of the ways that people refer to themselves or others when not using their name. Women, including trans women, might use “she.” Men, including trans men, might use the pronoun “he.” Non-binary people may also follow the use of these pronouns, or they may not. Some people may instead use gender-neutral pronouns like “they” and “them” and some might use a combination like “she/they.”

Unfortunately, trans and gender diverse people often experience “misgendering.” Misgendering is when someone assumes a person’s gender accidently or actively chooses not to respect their gender/ pronouns.

An easy way to avoid misgendering is by making it a habit to introduce yourself with your pronouns. For example: “Hi, my name is Kym, and I use she/her pronouns.”

Online, you can add your pronouns to your name on Zoom and Teams and to your email signature.

**Remember sexuality and gender identity are not a preference or a choice**

The terms “sexual preference” or “lifestyle choice” are no longer used now we have a better understanding that LGBTQIA+ people do not choose their identity. Take a moment to think how you would feel if your sexual orientation were described as a choice. Can you remember the day you chose to be straight, gay, or bi?

Instead, use “sexual orientation,” “sexuality” or “gender identity.” We all have a sexual orientation and a gender identity.

**Reflect the language others use to describe themselves.**

The most inclusive action we can take is to listen to the language a person uses to describe themselves and reflect it back to them. For example, if a person says they are part of the “queer community,” they are comfortable with that language. If a trans woman describes herself as a woman with a trans history, you can assume that is safe terminology to use. If you are unsure – you can politely ask.

**Remember that the LGBTQIA+ community is diverse**

People may fit more than one part of the LGBTQIA+ community.  For example, there are straight trans and intersex people, bisexual trans people, queer gender pansexual people... and the list goes on.

LGBTQIA+ people will often work together, for example to run events or advocate for changes to laws and policies, yet each person will have their own distinct experiences and priorities. Some communities face greater barriers in the workplace and as customers or patients than others.

**Quick guide to inclusive language**

| **What to avoid** | **What to do/say instead** |
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| Assuming someone is straight or heterosexual | Ask do you have a partner? Or is there anyone special in your life? |
| Assuming a colleague’s gender or pronouns | Ask what pronouns a person uses and introduce yourself using your pronouns |
| Using outdated terminology like Transgendered, transgenderism, tranny, transexual, transvestite, cross-dresser | Use inclusive language like trans and gender diverse, transgender or person with a trans history |
| Using outdated terminology like hermaphrodite | Use the term intersex instead |
| Using offensive terms such as dyke, fag, homo etc… | Listen to and reflect the language people use to describe themselves |
| Saying ladies, gentlemen, guys and girls, sir, or madam | Use inclusive terms such as colleagues, team, people, distinguished guests |
| Saying maternity and paternity leave | Say parental leave |
| Asking, what are your preferred pronouns? | Ask, what are your pronouns? Pronouns are not a preference |
| Making assumptions about a person’s salutations (Ms, Mr, or Mrs) | Ask what salutation a person uses, or stick to using their first name |
| Using gender specific terms like chairman, and manning the booth | Use gender neutral language like chairperson and looking after the booth |
| Using the terms sexual preference or lifestyle choice | Remember that sexuality and gender identity are not a choice, use terms like sexual orientation or sexuality |
| Asking “Have you had surgery?” (Regarding someone’s gender affirmation) | Avoid asking personal questions of colleagues |
| Saying, the men’s/women’s bathroom is that way | “The bathrooms are that way” |