

## Factsheet 6 – Language

### Introduction

Language can be a very powerful tool and should reflect that everyone in society is equally valued and belongs.

Disabled people are still sometimes referred to as having 'special needs'. But 'needs' are only special if they are unmet. Much better to ask someone if they have access requirements or reasonable adjustments.

### Language

Here are some phrases that can be offensive to disabled people and the reasons why:

- The term 'the disabled' implies that disabled people are a homogenous group separate from the rest of society.
- The term 'people with disabilities' should not be used as people with impairments are disabled by environments, stereotypes and attitudes within society.
- 'Invalid' should not be used because it implies that disabled people are 'not valid'.
- 'Wheelchair bound' implies that someone is tied permanently to a wheelchair.
- The terms 'disabled toilet', 'disabled ramp', imply that they are not working and assume that they are only for use by disabled people. A toilet is either accessible or inaccessible to people.

### Preferred terminology

Language that values	Language that devalues / misleads
Disabled people	The disabled People with disabilities Handicapped Afflicted / invalids
Non-disabled people	Normal Able-bodied
Living with	Suffering from victims of
Living with a mental health problem	Mental illness Schizo
People with learning difficulties	Mentally handicapped / slow
Deaf/hard of hearing Hearing impaired	The deaf Deaf and dumb
Access requirements	Special needs
Accessible WC	Disabled WC
Wheelchair user	Wheelchair bound Confined to a wheelchair