

Mental Health Charter for Sport and Recreation

Language and terminology factsheet

October 2017

Language and terminology

It is important that your language is as inclusive as possible. People have different ways of describing their own mental health and it is important that where possible you follow their lead, especially when communicating 1:1.

Mind asked members about their communication preferences and as a result Mind uses the term 'mental health problems' although we do recognise that some people and organisations prefer to use the terms 'mental health conditions' or 'mental illness'.

Certain language¹ can cause offence and may be inaccurate when used in news stories, in publications, posters and fliers, documents or in everyday discussions. Here are the most common, as well as some alternative suggestions.

| Avoid using | Instead try |
|---|---|
| 'a psycho' or 'a schizo' | 'a person who has experienced psychosis' or 'a person who has schizophrenia' |
| 'a schizophrenic' or 'a depressive' | someone who 'has a diagnosis of' is 'currently experiencing' or 'is being treated for...' |
| 'lunatic' 'nutter' 'unhinged' 'maniac' 'mad' | 'a person with a mental health problem' |
| 'the mentally ill', 'a person suffering from' 'a sufferer', a 'victim' or 'the afflicted' | 'mental health patients' or 'people with mental health problems' |
| 'prisoners' or 'inmates' (in a psychiatric hospital) | 'patients', 'service users' or 'clients' |
| 'released' (from a hospital) | 'discharged' |
| 'happy pills' | 'antidepressants', 'medication' or 'prescription drugs' |

Other common mistakes

- 'schizophrenic' or 'bipolar' should not be used to mean 'two minds' or a 'split personality'
- somebody who is angry is not 'psychotic'
- a person who is down or unhappy is not the same as someone experiencing clinical depression

¹ Source: Time to Change, Mind Your Language!



