

National communications charter language guide – mental health concerns and mental illness

Preferred

✓ A person is 'living with' or 'has a diagnosis of' a mental illness

✓ A person 'being supported for'; 'treated for' or 'someone experiencing mental health concerns'

✓ Their behaviour was 'unusual'

✓ A person 'has a diagnosis of' schizophrenia; being 'treated for' anorexia

✓ Accurate terminology for treatments e.g. 'antidepressants'; 'psychiatrists'; 'psychologists'; 'support services'

✓ Encourage help-seeking and offering of support by providing access to appropriate resources and services

Problematic

✗ 'mental patient'; 'nutter'; 'lunatic'; 'psycho'

✗ 'victim'; 'suffering'; 'afflicted with'

✗ 'crazed'; 'deranged'; 'mad'; 'psychotic'

✗ 'a schizophrenic'; 'an anorexic'

✗ 'happy pills'; 'shrinks'; 'nuthouse'

✗ 'weak'; 'what's wrong with you'; 'snap out of it'

Why?

Outdated and derogatory language can reinforce stigma

Certain words can suggest a lack of quality of life and doesn't reflect a person's experience

Outdated and derogatory language can reinforce stigma and imply the existence of a mental illness

Person-centred language empowers and reflects peoples lived and living experiences

Colloquialisms about mental illness can reduce help-seeking and help-offering behaviour

Terminology out of context can trivialise peoples lived and living experiences