

HACKED OFF

A JOURNALIST'S GUIDE TO DISABILITY

Want to avoid making 10 million people Hacked Off with your reporting, but unsure of the correct language to use when it comes to disability? Disability Now (DN) newspaper and the National Union of Journalists have joined forces to end the confusion. Written in consultation with leading disabled people's groups, this leaflet forms part of DN's campaign for better representation of disabled people and their increased employment at every level of the industry.



'This leaflet is an essential tool for journalists – a vital part of the campaign to tackle the discrimination faced by millions of people and a wake up call for the industry'

Jeremy Dear, NUJ General Secretary

www.disabilitynow.org.uk
www.nuj.org.uk

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The way disabled people are represented by the media has a big impact on how they are regarded.

The disabled people's movement has fought hard for disability to be recognised as a human rights issue rather than a medical one.

Under this “social model” of disability, people are disabled by barriers within society, rather than being victims of their impairments or conditions. For example, a wheelchair user is disabled if the counter in a bank is too high for them to use.

Disabled people's organisations campaign for equal opportunities and for services to allow them to live independently, not for charity.

The terms opposite are those disabled people's organisations prefer and are empowering rather than passive. If in doubt, ask people themselves how they want to be described.

Ditch the super-crip stories – they are patronising and set disabled people impossible standards. Report disability sports as you would any other sport.

Disabled people aren't all sweet and innocent – and they do have sex lives.

Life isn't a “trial over adversity” – most disabled people don't see it that way.

Don't call disabled people brave or amazing for doing normal things – would this be a story if the person was not disabled?

The “tragic victim” is an offensive stereotype – focus on barriers to disabled people empowering themselves instead: inaccessible housing and transport, lack of personal care services and barriers to education and jobs.

Is it cos I am disabled? Is the person's impairment really relevant to the story?

Disability issues can be newsy – why not cover institutional “disablism”, abuse and violence towards disabled people, assisted dying or genetic screening?

Talk to disabled people about disabled people – not their mums/dads/carers/charities. Don't forget many impairments are “hidden” e.g. epilepsy, dyslexia and mental health problems.

And, finally, relax when interviewing disabled people; nobody is going to criticise you for telling a person with a visual impairment that you might “see” them later. And, if in doubt, do not be afraid to ask.

✓	Disabled	X	Crippled, handicapped, an invalid
✓	Disabled people	X	The disabled (disabled people are not a generic group – would you say “the blacks”?)
✓	Has...(an impairment)	X	Suffers from, victim of, is...(epileptic/dyslexic etc)
✓	Non-disabled	X	Able bodied, healthy, normal
✓	Has learning difficulties	X	Mentally handicapped retarded, backward, has a learning disability
✓	Wheelchair user	X	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair, in a wheelchair
✓	Deaf/hard of hearing people	X	The deaf
✓	Deaf sign language (or British Sign Language) user	X	Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute
✓	Blind or partially sighted people, visually impaired people	X	The blind
✓	Has mental health problems/mental ill health (Psychotic is only to be used in relation to particular symptoms of psychosis, not as a general description)	X	Mentally ill, insane, mad, crazy, nutter, psycho, psychopathic, schizo, split personality
✓	Has cerebral palsy	X	Spastic
✓	Has restricted growth, short stature	X	Dwarf, midget
✓	Has autism or Asperger syndrome	X	Antisocial, out of control, retarded, has behavioural problems

WHAT DESCRIPTION DO I USE?

The British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) – Umbrella body representing over one hundred local disabled people's groups. Tel: **01332 295 551**; Textphone: 01332 295581 (local groups contact details at www.bcodp.org.uk/membership)

RADAR – Pan-disability campaigning organisation. Tel: **0207 2503222**, Textphone: 0207 2504119.

Disability Awareness in Action – Specialises in international and human rights issues. Tel: **020 7834 0477**; Email: info@daa.org.uk

The National Centre for Independent Living – Organisation of disabled people promoting independent living and direct payments. Tel: **020 7587 1663**; Textphone: 020 7587 1177

Greater London Action on Disability
Tel: **020 7346 5800**; Textphone: 020 7326 4554

The National Council of Disabled People and Carers from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Tel: **0208 527 3211**;
Email: juliej.charles@equalitiesnational.org.uk

People First – Campaigning organisation run by people with learning difficulties. Give time for responses to queries. Tel: **020 7485 6660**; Email: general@peoplefirstltd.com

Values into Action – Campaigns with and for people with learning difficulties. Tel: **020 7729 5436**;
Email: general@viauk.org

The British Deaf Association
Tel: **020 7614 3135**; Textphone: 0800 652 2965

Action for Blind People
Tel: **020 7635 4921**; Email: paul_w@afbp.org

Restricted Growth Association
Tel: **01308 898445**; Email: office@restrictedgrowth.co.uk

Disability Equality in Education – Supports the inclusion of disabled people into mainstream education. Tel: **0207 359 2855**; Email: info@diseed.org.uk

REGARD – The national organisation of disabled lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people.
www.regard.org.uk

Mental Health Media – Promotes the voice of mental health service users. Tel: **020 7700 8171**;
Email: katie.brudenell@mhmedia.com

National Disability Arts Forum
Tel: **0191 261 1628**; Textphone: 0191 261 2237