



Magenta's Inclusive Communications Guide 2025



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Corporation



Proudly
employee
owned.

Words have
power. We
want to
use ours
responsibly.



At Magenta, we understand that communication – in all its forms – is only effective when it’s inclusive. But genuinely inclusive communications must be about more than celebrating diversity. It reflects the world we live in.

Society is diverse, so the way we speak and share ideas must be as well. When we recognise and value different perspectives, everyone benefits. At the same time, we cannot ignore that many groups still face barriers and exclusion. Championing inclusive communication is one way to begin addressing those inequalities while also strengthening our collective voice.

Still, attempts at inclusivity can sometimes come across

as vague or tokenistic. We believe this helps explain why many people view diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives with scepticism.

Magenta is an employee-owned business that aims to always use communications as a force for good, driving social and environmental progress. We work with organisations that share our values and are committed to positive change. For us, inclusive communications isn’t a box to tick. It shapes how

we think, speak and act. We approach this work with intent and with a willingness to learn, while encouraging others to explore what inclusion might mean within their own organisations.

This report is one step in that process. We know we will make mistakes, but we are committed to growing with openness and accountability, and to showing that inclusive communication can be a genuine force for good.

The aim of this guide is to offer practical, experience-based insights into inclusive communication, rooted in our day-to-day work and informed by ongoing reflection, learning, and collaboration. It's not designed to serve as sociopolitical commentary. Instead, it's a hands-on resource focused on helping businesses navigate inclusive communication with confidence, creativity and care.

It's important to note, however, that we developed this guide in the broader context of a highly charged and evolving public conversation. While researching, we explored a range of complex and sensitive issues that are deeply connected to the topic of inclusivity. We have a duty to acknowledge what has shaped our thinking – to remain transparent about our process and to show the respect we have for the wider discourse.

Here are some of the areas we explored more deeply behind the scenes:

1 SOCIOPOLITICAL FRAMING

Our original brief identified the need to examine sentiments such as “I don’t do woke” within the broader context of 21st-century political polarisation. We looked at the origins and weaponisation of the term “woke”, as well as the emotional and ideological divides it often reflects. These conversations are highly relevant, especially for brands operating in today’s charged media environment, but addressing them comprehensively would require a level of academic and political analysis that sits beyond the scope of this guide.

2 GUIDING PHILOSOPHIES AND PERSONAL STORIES

The quote “Hate generalises, love specifies” (Robin Morgan) was identified as a potential guiding principle for this work, a powerful phrase that resonated with our team and informed our thinking. While it is not explicitly included in the guide, its spirit underpins our approach: attentive to detail, human nuance, and the power of specificity in building inclusive narratives.

3 THE EMOTIONAL STAKES OF INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE

Our brief acknowledged the profound emotional risks people often face when speaking about race, gender, disability or sexuality. Although the guide recognises the polarisation of public discourse, it stops short of delving into the lived emotional toll these discussions can carry. This was a conscious decision to maintain the guide's practicality and accessibility, while respecting the fact that some of these conversations deserve more space, time, and care than a guide format allows.

4 CRITIQUING THE "DEBATE" FRAMING

We explored the problematic nature of framing issues like race and trans rights as "debates", which can often question people's right to exist rather than invite genuine dialogue. This critique, along with examples such as *The Times*' disproportionate coverage of trans issues without trans bylines, were considered but ultimately set aside to avoid over-extending the document into sociological territory. Our focus remained on practical communication principles, not on adjudicating contested identity politics.

5 DE&I PROGRESS AND PITFALLS

We researched critiques of the DE&I industry, including concerns about tokenistic practices such as training sessions that have been widely criticised as superficial. While the guide addresses "tokenism" in a general sense, it does not dive into an analysis of DE&I methodologies because our professional expertise lies in communication, not organisational change management.

6 OUR OWN LEARNING JOURNEY

In producing this guide, we collaborated with Dr Jack Doyle, a gay, trans historian and educator, whose lived experience and deep expertise helped sharpen our lens and challenge our assumptions. Although we do not share the details of this collaboration in the guide, it was instrumental in shaping our thinking and reflects our long-term commitment to learning and growth in this space.

This guide is one piece of a bigger picture.

We believe inclusive communication must be responsive to context, accountable to those it represents, and open to evolution. We will continue to listen, learn and adapt. And we invite readers to do the same. We encourage organisations to engage with the deeper socio-political questions surrounding DE&I, and

to partner with experts from different lived and academic perspectives as part of that journey.

Organisations that invest in inclusive communications build stronger relationships, mitigate risk, and create more meaningful impact with the audiences they serve. This report provides practical insights and

strategic recommendations for organisations looking to improve how they communicate internally and externally. Drawing on case studies, lived experiences, and best practice frameworks, it offers guidance on fostering clarity, connection and confidence in communications across sectors.



WHY INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Inclusive communication means more than using the right terminology. At its core, it's about creating environments where everyone feels respected, understood and represented. It is a tool for fostering belonging, reducing misunderstandings, and ensuring messages resonate with the broadest possible audience.

Inclusive communication matters because:



It reflects changing demographics.

Audiences are increasingly diverse in terms of race, gender, ability, sexuality, age, and more.



It supports organisational values.

Transparent, respectful communication signals a commitment to equity and fairness.



It strengthens trust and loyalty.

Inclusive messaging builds deeper relationships with staff, stakeholders, and the public.



It reduces reputational and legal risks.

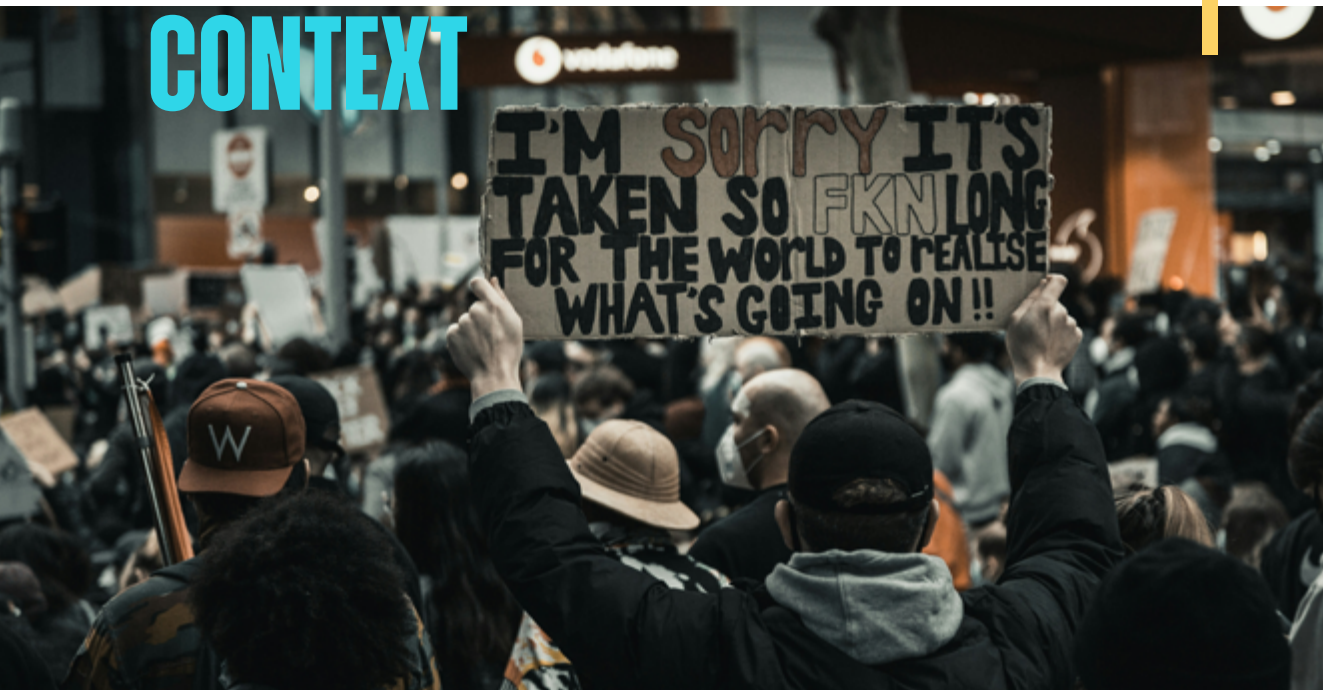
Careful communication helps prevent exclusionary or harmful language that may have broader implications.

2025 is a time of profound change and uncertainty. While many organisations remain committed to diversity and inclusion, public discourse has grown increasingly polarised, with inclusion efforts often caught in the crossfire of broader ideological and political battles.

The Trump administration's sweeping bans on DE&I initiatives in the US exemplify this shift, transforming inclusion from a shared aspiration into a contested terrain. Closer to home, the British media's treatment of trans lives has fed into moral panics: *The Times*, for example, published nearly one article per day about trans people in 2020, yet not a single piece was written by a trans journalist. These patterns reveal how public conversations about identity are too often shaped without the involvement of those directly affected.

This polarisation is perhaps most visible in the weaponisation of the word "woke".

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT CONTEXT



Originally a call to stay alert to racial injustice within early 20th-century Black American communities, the term was revived by the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, only to be rapidly co-opted and turned into a dismissive shorthand for progressive causes. When individuals now proclaim, “I don’t do woke,” it often signals resistance to a wider set of values associated with inclusion, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and anti-racism – values many brands and communicators seek to uphold.

Against this backdrop, inclusive communication becomes more essential but also more complicated. Speaking about race, gender, disability or sexuality now carries not just social risk, but emotional weight and political consequence. By reframing these charged “debates” as opportunities for deeper listening and understanding, as Dr Doyle urges, communicators can shift from polarisation

to productive dialogue, creating environments where difference is respected rather than rejected.

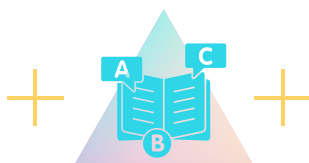
For communications professionals, the onus to communicate thoughtfully about topics related to identity, fairness and representation presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in navigating complex issues with care and clarity. The opportunity lies in leading with empathy, building trust, and creating messages that connect across diverse audiences.

One significant trend is the shift from broad diversity messaging to more precise, community-specific engagement.

Successful communications in this era are those that:



Are grounded in listening and real-world experiences.



Use plain, accessible language.



Recognise the value of lived experience and expertise.



Demonstrate accountability and transparency.

PRINCIPLES FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Based on extensive sector insight and expert input, the following principles form the foundation of inclusive communications:

- 1 CLARITY:** Use straightforward, jargon-free language. Be specific about who is being addressed or referenced. Avoid euphemisms that obscure meaning or minimise experiences.
- 2 REPRESENTATION:** Ensure the voices and images featured in communications reflect the diversity of the communities served. Work with contributors who have lived experience where appropriate.
- 3 RESPECT:** Treat all people with dignity in communications. Avoid stereotypes or assumptions. Acknowledge different experiences and perspectives.
- 4 ACCESSIBILITY:** Consider the formats and channels used to communicate. Make information available in ways that are inclusive of people with different needs, including those related to disability or language.
- 5 ADAPTABILITY:** Recognise that language and societal expectations evolve. Remain open to feedback and committed to continuous learning.



EVOLVING COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE

One illustrative example is the recent shift in terminology and approach seen across public and private sector organisations in the UK.

For example, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations has adopted “Global Majority” to describe individuals from Black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic backgrounds, moving away from terms like BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) and “ethnic minorities”. This change aims to reframe conversations from a deficit perspective to one that recognises the global majority status of these groups.

Similarly, the University of the West of England has embraced the term “Global Majority” in response to feedback from students and staff, highlighting the empowering nature of the term and its role in bringing diverse perspectives to the forefront.^[1]

Organisations are also embedding gender- and sexuality-focused inclusive language into their policies and communications. The NHS, for example, promotes the use of terms like “trans and non-binary”, “gender identity”, and “sexual orientation” in its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Improvement Plan, aiming to foster a culture of belonging and trust.^[2]

1. <https://blogs.uwe.ac.uk/student/2025/03/13/uwe-bristol-adopts-the-term-global-majority>
2. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/nhs-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-improvement-plan>

THEY



PARTNER

The Co-op has implemented a Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy that encourages the use of gender-neutral language, such as using “they” instead of gender-specific pronouns and terms like ‘partner’ instead of ‘husband’ or ‘wife’, to avoid discrimination and promote inclusivity.^[3]

Additionally, Transport for London revised its public announcements to be more gender-inclusive, replacing phrases like “ladies and gentlemen” with “everyone” to ensure all passengers feel welcomed and respected.^[4]

These examples demonstrate a broader commitment across sectors to adopt language that reflects and respects the diversity of the communities they serve.

However, these changes are not always easy. Some stakeholders may express discomfort or concern about evolving language or new messaging frameworks. The most effective responses focus on transparency and consistency. When organisations explain why changes are being made, and how they reflect a commitment to respectful engagement, they tend to see stronger buy-in.

EVERYONE



3. <https://colleagues.coop.co.uk/transgender-and-non-binary-inclusion-policy>

4. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/london-underground-intercom-announcements-gender-inclusiveTHEY>

USING THE 'FEELINGS-FACTS-FEELINGS' SANDWICH

One practical tool for sensitive conversations is the 'Feelings-Facts-Feelings' sandwich. By opening and closing with empathy, and placing the fact in the middle, communicators can deliver important information in a way that feels human and constructive.

Example: Workplace discrimination

FEELINGS:

"We all want to feel respected at work, and most of us know how painful it is to feel excluded."

FACT:

"Yet recent UK survey data shows Black employees are still twice as likely to report discrimination as their white colleagues." ^[5]

FEELINGS:

"That's why it matters that we create workplaces where everyone feels they belong and can thrive."

5. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/workplace-discrimination-black-asia-lgbtq-b2389952.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com



COMMON CHALLENGES – AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Based on sector-wide feedback, several common barriers include:

FEAR OF GETTING IT WRONG

Many professionals hesitate to address issues related to identity due to fear of causing offence. The solution lies in developing internal guidance, offering training, and creating safe spaces for reflection and learning.

UNCERTAINTY AROUND TERMINOLOGY

Language changes quickly. What was acceptable five years ago may no longer resonate. Using in-community style guides, and consulting directly with affected groups, can provide helpful direction.

TOKENISM

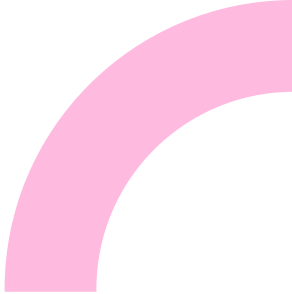
Inclusion should not be limited to annual events or awareness days. Instead, inclusive communication should be an ongoing commitment, reflected across all campaigns, content, and materials.

OVER-RELIANCE ON US FRAMEWORK

Much inclusive communication guidance originates in the US and may not translate directly to UK contexts. Tailoring language and references to local audiences helps make communications more relevant and effective.



PRACTICAL STRATEGIES



To build more inclusive communication practices, organisations can take the following actions:

1. Start with internal reflection. Audit current communications for gaps in representation, accessibility and clarity. Invite feedback from staff and stakeholders. Create a safe space for honest discussion.

2. Define your framework. Choose a clear, relevant set of values to guide your communication – for example, “inclusive, equitable and respectful”. Define what each term means within your organisational context.

3. Build confidence with language. Offer ongoing training on inclusive terminology. Emphasise that language evolves, and it’s okay to learn. Encourage asking respectful questions and owning mistakes with humility.

4. Diversify content and contributors. Review who is featured in your communications. Actively commission content from people with lived experience and collaborate with trusted community partners.

5. Embed inclusion into every brief. Ensure that communications planning always considers the diversity of the audience. Ask who is this message for, and who might be missing?

6. Engage with feedback. Create clear mechanisms for audiences and staff to share concerns about communications. Take feedback seriously, respond transparently and adapt where necessary.

7. Collaborate across teams. Inclusive communication shouldn’t sit solely with the comms team. Work cross-functionally with HR, leadership and service teams to embed consistent, inclusive messaging.

A COMMUNICATIONS LENS ON KEY TOPICS

TOPICS

Increasingly, communicators today are expected to engage with complex societal issues. Here's how inclusive communication principles can be applied to some common scenarios:



Race and ethnicity: Use language that reflects the specific communities you are addressing. Avoid broad or outdated terms. Recognise that race is experienced differently in the UK than in other countries.

- The GOV.UK Ethnicity Style Guide recommends specificity (e.g. "Black Caribbean," "Pakistani") over broad labels and explains when and how ethnicity data should be used.
- The Home Office Inclusive Language Guidance urges communicators to avoid outdated terminology and prioritise respectful, specific references.



Gender and sexuality: Be thoughtful about pronouns and inclusive language. Ensure that communications don't reinforce gender stereotypes. If in doubt, consult current style guides or community advisors.

- The NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement Plan offers guidance on inclusive terminology to support belonging and safety in healthcare and beyond.
- The Civil Service guidance on gender-neutral legal writing illustrates how official documents now avoid defaulting to "he" or gendered nouns to uphold equality.

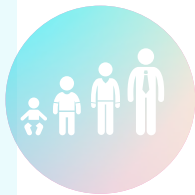
A COMMUNICATIONS LENS ON KEY TOPICS

TOPICS



Disability and accessibility: Use people-first or identity-first language depending on the audience preference. Ensure that materials are available in accessible formats (e.g., alt text, captions and plain text versions).

- The GOV.UK Inclusive Language Guidelines outline respectful, accurate ways to talk about disability.
- For ensuring information is accessible, the government's guide to Accessible Communication Formats covers large print, Braille, plain English, audio and digital best practice.
- The Government Communication Service provides tools, including guidance on British Sign Language usage following the 2022 BSL Act.



Age and generational diversity: Avoid age-based assumptions in tone or content. Represent a range of life stages and experiences across campaigns.

- The Home Office Inclusive Language Guidance recommends using age ranges (e.g. "aged 16–24") rather than descriptors like "young" or "elderly," which may carry unintended connotations.
- The UK Civil Service Diversity Strategy highlights generational diversity as an essential element of workplace inclusion, encouraging efforts to support workers across age groups.



THE FUTURE OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The pace of social and technological change will continue to reshape the communications landscape. Future-ready organisations will need to:

- Stay alert to emerging trends and shifts in public discourse.
- Invest in continuous learning and development for their teams.
- Foster a culture where inclusive practice is embedded, not added on.
- Partner with experts and affected communities to co-create meaningful content.

Inclusive communication isn't about perfection. It's about intention, care and commitment. By listening, learning and acting with integrity, organisations can create communications that truly connect, building stronger relationships, more resilient reputations and a more equitable future.



CONCLUSION

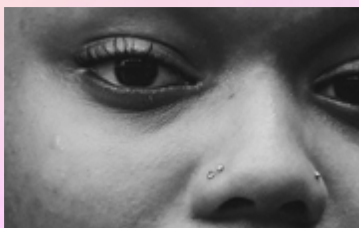
Inclusive communication is a long-term investment in people, relationships and reputation. In 2025, it's an essential part of doing good business. Whether communicating with customers, communities or colleagues, a combination of clarity, care, and curiosity remains the best way forward.

But we recognise that inclusive communication isn't static. It's responsive to context, accountable to those it represents, and open to evolution. That's why this guide is just one step – the beginning of a longer, multi-layered journey. Our aim has been to offer practical, experience-based insights rooted in our day-to-day work at Magenta.

This guide doesn't attempt to resolve the cultural and political tensions surrounding DE&I. But it does offer tools and an invitation to continue listening. To reflect critically. To speak with greater precision and empathy. To build bridges, not battlegrounds.

We encourage you to explore the trusted UK resources we've signposted throughout, partner with experts with lived and academic experience, and continue expanding your own understanding.

Organisations that approach communication with empathy and purpose don't just keep pace with the world. They help shape it.





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RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Review and update internal comms and style guides to reflect current inclusive language guidance.
- Commission and co-create content with contributors from under-represented groups and trusted community partners.
- Develop a clear process for making and receiving feedback on inclusive messaging, including how to make meaningful apologies.
- Embed inclusion into every brief – ask who this message is for, and who might be missing.
- Audit communications for clarity (avoid euphemisms), accessibility (formats, readability), and representation.
- Use legal frameworks such as the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and government style guides as benchmarks for good practice.
- Stay alert to polarisation and shifting public discourse (e.g. terms like “woke” being weaponised, dog-whistle language such as “gender ideology”), and respond with clarity and transparency.
- Ground present-day challenges in historical context to counter narratives that inclusion is a “new” or “inevitable” trend.
- Collaborate across functions (HR, leadership, service delivery) to embed consistent, inclusive messaging.
- Partner with external experts and organisations with lived experience to strengthen your approach.

RESOURCES

Inclusive language guidance:

- Trans Media Watch
- GOV.UK Ethnicity Style Guide
- Home Office Inclusive Language Guidance
- Civil Service guidance on gender-neutral legal writing
- NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement Plan
- Together Scotland Inclusive Language Guidance

Accessibility standards

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- UK Government Accessible Communication Formats guide
- Government Communication Service BSL guidance (post-BSL Act 2022)

Sector examples:

- National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Global Majority terminology)
- University of the West of England (Global Majority adoption)
- The Co-op (Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy)
- Transport for London (gender-inclusive announcements)

Legal and regulatory frameworks:

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty (England, Wales, Scotland)
- Recent UK Supreme Court ruling on trans inclusion policies

Further reading / expert input:

- Dr Jack Doyle (historian and educator on gender/sexuality)
- Kit Heyam (historian on trans history and narratives)
- Amnesty and Black-led comms style guide collaboration
- Brand By Me (anti-racist communications reflections)

Sector reports / research:

- Stonewall research on LGBT+ healthcare experiences
- UK hate crime statistics (Islamophobia and transphobia trends)



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