THE LANGUAGE OF CITY HALL: OUR EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

Introduction

At City Hall we want to engage *all* Londoners through our written communications. That means:

- writing clearly in plain English
- adapting our tone of voice to suit our audience while staying true to our brand
- writing for and about Londoners in a way that is inclusive, non-judgemental and respectful.

Language is a powerful tool. We must take care not to exclude certain groups, based on – for example - age, race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

This guide outlines how to create content that resonates with Londoners and earns their trust.

Contents include:

- [Writing in plain English](#)
- [Brand values and tone of voice](#)
- [Inclusive language](#)
- [An A to Z style guide](#)

Writing in plain English

Our public-facing work is for all Londoners. We publish many of our technical and governance documents too. As such, we must choose our words carefully so that everyone can understand what we're saying. Find out more on the plain English website: http://plainenglish.co.uk/

Below are some general writing rules to help keep your writing clear and concise:

Use short sentences
Long sentences make text hard to read. Most experts agree that clear writing should use sentences of around 15 to 20 words.

Keep paragraphs on point
Long paragraphs are hard to follow and often lack focus.

Junk the jargon
'Govspeak' can confuse the public. Don't use it unless there is no alternative. And when you do, explain it in terms a lay audience can understand.

Use active verbs
Write 'we will do it' rather than 'it will be done by us'.

Beware of nominalisations
Nominalisations are verbs that have been made into nouns by putting 'tion' at the end. For example, 'an evaluation of the standards needs to be done'. Instead, say, 'we need to evaluate the standards.'

Be clear and concise
Prefer short words to long, so 'use' rather than 'utilise', and cut out the waffle. Don't cram too many ideas into a sentence or paragraph.

Be personal, friendly and human
Imagine you're having a conversation with your reader. Relate to them as a human being, not a consumer of information. This makes it much easier for the reader to understand what we are saying.

Be straightforward
Avoid similes, metaphors and other figures of speech.

Avoid hyperbole
Be honest, don't exaggerate.

Use storytelling
Plan your writing with a start, middle and end. Think about your 'story' before you begin.

Never assume prior knowledge
Just because you're familiar with something, doesn't mean your reader is (unless you know otherwise).

Use contractions
Make your writing easier to read by using 'you're/we're' rather than 'you are/we are'.

Read your writing back
Sense-check every sentence and paragraph before sharing it widely. If it's hard to understand, or sounds awkward, try to improve it.

Verify facts, check spelling and grammar
Don't rely on spellcheck to do it for you. Confirm any facts you include are correct and from reliable, up to date sources.

Edit and edit again
Always revisit what you've written. Often, less is more.

Brand values and tone of voice

An organisation's brand personality is built on a set of values that stay the same. Its tone of voice, however, can adapt according to both the purpose of the communication, and the audience. For example, a piece of content for young Londoners on Snapchat would use a different tone of voice to a leaflet on Pension Credit.

You can find our brand guidelines at: https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/our-brand-guidelines

Our tone of voice principles can be summarised as CASE:

CLEAR AND CONFIDENT - We get straight to the point and use simple language
AUTHENTIC - We talk in a conversational, human and friendly way
SINCERE - We believe in what we say
ENGAGING - Our comms make sense to the audience, so they want to get involved.

As a rule, 'we' is preferred to 'Greater London Authority' across our comms. In our reports (such as the Mayor's Housing Strategy), we can use 'the Mayor's housing team' instead.

Inclusive language

We must use inclusive language when talking about (and to) Londoners. Here's advice on how - and how not – write about ethnicity and race, LGBTQ+ communities, disability, gender and age.

RACE
Race is a protected characteristic in law (Equality Act 2010).

It can relate to colour or nationality (including your citizenship), ethnic or national origins, and ethnic and racial groups.

A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example Black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

Use race when talking about our 'anti-racism' work or where it is in the context of a protected characteristic, otherwise use ethnicity.

ETHNICITY
If using ethnicity, please note it is not (usually) the same as nationality. For example, someone could describe themselves as British Asian or Black British.

However, the following ethnic groups are also nationalities:

- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Indian
- Pakistani

See the full list of ethnic groups at:
www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups

BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic)
The term BAME is used to frame policy or as a data monitoring category and should not be used to refer to individuals.

If using the term BAME please write it out in full 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'.

Generally, it's better to be specific about which ethnic groups you are talking about.

For example, never use BAME when discussing issues such as #BlackLivesMatter.

Avoid using the term 'people of colour' (POC) or BME (Black and minority ethnic).

East and South East Asian
Use the term 'East and South East Asian Londoners' to refer to people who are in the census categories "Chinese" or "Asian – Any other". This includes
who identify themselves with heritage from an East or South East Asian country.

(Southeast Asia includes Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. East Asia is comprised of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan).

It also encompasses UK born or mixed-heritage people from East or South East Asia.

Minority ethnic groups
This term includes White minorities, such as Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups.

Capitalisation
We follow the GOV.UK style guide and capitalise all ethnic groups, when referring to official ethnic groups. For example, Asian, Black, Mixed, White, Gypsy, Irish Traveller, and Other.
See: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity

Migrants
Use 'people seeking asylum' if possible, instead of asylum seekers.

Use 'undocumented' or 'with insecure immigration status' - never use 'illegal' immigrant/migrant.

European Londoners
When talking about Brexit and the changes in rights certain nationalities face, use 'European Londoners and their families'.

Be aware that 'EU nationals' only refers to the EU27 member states. Changes resulting from Brexit will also affect people from Switzerland and the three additional European countries that are members of the European Economic Area (EEA).

When talking about European Londoners applying to stay here after Brexit, use 'applying under the EU Settlement Scheme'. Avoid 'applying for settled status'.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES
LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans +) The plus is for how people self-identify.

There is no one London-wide LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ people are as diverse as other Londoners. As such, their experiences may differ depending on other aspects of their identity (for example, their ethnicity, faith, family situation etc).

You can use identifying terms such as gay men or lesbian women if referring to those specific groups within the community.

Trans – someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were born.

Cisgender - a term used to describe people whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary – is used to describe genders that don't fall into these two categories

Sexual orientation – is preferred to sexuality.

Avoid transgender/transsexual, queer, homosexual, openly gay, sexual preference or lifestyle, sexuality.

GENDER
Use gender-neutral language in all external comms, such as 'everyone', 'people' or 'Londoners' and 'they' 'them' 'theirs'. Don't refer to 'men and women'/'he or she' unless necessary.

Avoid using men and women as catch-all terms because this excludes non-binary people. This applies to jobs too, so 'firefighter' not 'fireman' etc.

Avoid referring to a person's gender where gender isn't relevant, so 'scientist' rather than 'female scientist'.

Generally, refer to someone's gender, not their sex.

However, there may be instances where it is relevant to refer to someone's sex, or their sex assigned at birth, in a medical context. See the NHS guidance for more info: https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/inclusive-language#sex-gender-sexuality

AGE
Older people
Use 'older people' rather than 'the old', 'the elderly' or 'pensioners' unless there is a specific reason to do so in the case of the latter.

'People aged 70 and over' is preferred to 'the over 70s' etc.

Don't talk about older people just in terms of life expectancy and end of life.

Do make statements that reinforce that older people are an asset to society and the economy (as employees, carers, volunteers...)

Remember for employees, people can experience age-based discrimination aged 50 and over.

Children and younger people
Use 'young Londoners' rather than 'kids' or 'young adults'

Children vs young people – which term you use will depend on age

Students vs pupils – use 'pupil' for primary schoolchildren, and 'students' for young people aged 11 plus.

DISABILITY
Use 'Deaf and disabled people' in most circumstances.

Deaf (with capital 'D') refers to people who use British Sign language (BSL) to communicate.

Use 'deaf' (with lower case 'd') if talking about deaf people who don't use BSL.

Use 'blind and partially sighted people'.

Avoid referring to people as 'impaired' (for example 'visually impaired' / 'hearing impaired').

Use 'non-disabled' if making comparisons with those not Deaf or disabled.

Use 'non-visible' disabilities rather than 'hidden' or 'invisible'.

Avoid phrases like 'suffers from' which suggest discomfort, pain and a sense of hopelessness.

Wheelchair users may not view themselves as 'confined to' a wheelchair – try thinking of it as a mobility aid instead.

Never describe Deaf and disabled people as a generic 'vulnerable' or 'disadvantaged' group. Indeed, the term 'vulnerable' should not be used to describe any group.

Don't use 'the disabled'.

Don't use 'able-bodied' when describing a non-disabled person.

Don't use 'wheelchair bound'. Instead say 'wheelchair user'.

Never use the term 'handicapped'.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health problems can affect anyone and so we shouldn't distance ourselves from people with mental health problems.

Don't refer to someone as 'mentally ill'.

Avoid phrases such as 'people with mental health problems', rather use 'those of us with mental health problems', 'anyone with mental health problems' or 'everyone with mental health problems.'

POVERTY AND LOW INCOME

Avoid stigmatising terms like 'poor', 'destitute', 'struggling', 'disadvantaged', 'less fortunate' or 'in need'. Instead use terms like 'low income', 'financial support' and 'welfare rights'.

Use 'low income' rather than 'low paid', as this recognises the benefit system's impact.

Avoid describing people as 'workers' (although we acknowledge 'key workers' is now a household term).

Use human-centred language like 'people in paid work'.

SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Use 'domestic abuse' rather than 'domestic violence' as it includes non-physical abuse such as coercive control.

Use 'sexual violence' as an umbrella term for 'rape/sexual assault' and unwanted harassment (including online).

Use 'harmful practices' as an umbrella term for crimes like Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage. Never use 'cultural practices.'

Avoid describing individuals who have suffered sexual and domestic abuse as 'victims' (unless that is their wish). Some prefer the word 'survivor'.

VAWG – Violence Against Women and Girls

For more detailed information, see the excellent Inclusive Language Guide produced by the Communities & Social Policy team on the intranet.

A-Z style guide

This checklist provides guidance on points of house style.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS
Explain in full on first mention, unless well known, like UK, EU, VAT, MP etc. Don't use an acronym if you're not going to use it again later in the text. No full stops in abbreviations. Avoid i.e. and e.g. – use 'that is' and 'for example' instead.

AMERICANISMS
Don't use unless referring to a specific name (like the World Health Organization), or directly lifting a quote from US English. Check your document language is set to 'UK English' too.

AMPERSAND
Always use 'and' instead of '&' unless it's in a name, for example, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

APOSTROPHES
We use apostrophes for three main reasons:

- To show that a letter is missing (I'm / you're / can't etc)
- To show possession, singular and plural (the officer's / the officers' but never its')
- For some expressions of time (one week's notice / two years' notice).

Misusing apostrophe's (as here) is unprofessional. Remember too that normal plurals don't need an apostrophe. Watch out for 'spell check/autocorrect' features as they can insert them where not needed.

BOLD
Can be used to emphasise an important word or phrase in text. This is generally best avoided as it can distract from section headings and the flow of the document.

BULLET POINTS
Bullets can make text easier to read. In a list that is a continuous sentence, make sure the text introducing the list of bullets ends with a colon:

- the bullets run on from this first line
- you use lower case at the start of the bullet
- there is no punctuation between bullets
- you keep bullet text short as it will have more impact
- there is a stop after the last bullet point to end the sentence.

To note also:

- you can use full stops within individual bullets
- you don't put 'or', 'and' after the bullets
- if you add links they appear within the text and not as the whole bullet.

A list in which each point is a sentence should read as follows:

- This is the first bullet.
- This is the second bullet.
- This is the third bullet.

Ensure that the positioning, design and spacing around bullet points is consistent.

Having said all that, don't overuse bullet points.

CAPITALISATION

Always use lower case, even in page titles and section headings. Unnecessary capitalisation is very distracting. DO NOT USE BLOCK CAPITALS FOR LARGE AMOUNTS OF TEXT AS IT'S QUITE HARD TO READ.

The exceptions to this are proper nouns, which should be capitalised, including:

- titles like Mr, Mrs, Dr, the Duke of Cambridge (the duke at second mention); Pope Francis, but the pope
- Rt Hon (no full stops)
- specific job titles – Mayor of London, Assembly Member
- departments (specific government departments - see below)
- the Civil Service, with lower case for 'the'
- buildings, place names, faculties, departments, institutes and schools
- names of groups, directorates and organisations: Knowledge and Innovation Group
- Parliament, the House
- titles of specific acts or bills: Housing Reform Bill (but use 'the act' or 'the bill' after the first time you use the full act or bill title)
- names of specific, named schemes known to people outside government/GLA: Right to Buy, Queen's Awards for Enterprise
- specific select committees: Public Administration Select Committee
- brand names
- titles of books (and within single quotes), for example, 'The Study Skills Handbook'
- header cells in tables: Annual profits
- World War 1 and World War 2 (note caps and numbers)

Do not capitalise:

- government - see 'government' in this document
- minister, never Minister, unless part of a specific job title, like Minister for the Cabinet Office, Prime Minister
- department or ministry - never Department or Ministry, unless referring to a specific one: Ministry of Justice, for example
- white paper, green paper, command paper, House of Commons paper
- budget, autumn statement, spring statement, unless referring to and using the full name of a specific statement - for example, "2019-20 GLA Budget"
- sections or schedules within specific named acts, regulations or orders
- director general (no hyphen), deputy director, director, assistant director, head of service, unless in a specific job title such as Assistant Director, External Relations
- departmental board, executive board, the board
- policy themes like sustainable communities, promoting economic growth, local enterprise zones
- general mention of select committees (but do cap specific ones - see above)
- the military

CLIMATE CHANGE
Avoid when talking about the current situation. Use 'climate emergency' or 'climate crisis' instead as it better conveys the urgency of the problem.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS
When writing about a group such as a committee, family, government, team etc use a singular verb or pronoun when they act as one. For example, the committee gave its approval.

When writing about the same group acting as a collection of individuals, use a plural verb or pronoun. For example, the committee enjoyed cakes with their coffee.

COLONS
Use a colon to introduce a quotation, or before a quote that can stand on its own as a sentence.

COMMAS
Use commas to separate clauses within a sentence or when starting a sentence with a time or date. For example, 'On 15 June 2020, the Mayor launched his Annual Report'.

DATES, NUMBERS AND TIMES
Write time as 7:30pm and date as 6 May 2021.

Write one to nine, use digits for 10 up.

If starting a sentence with a number, always write in full.

Add a comma for numbers like 1,000.

Write financial years as 2013-14.

Use 'm' (for millions) and 'bn' (for billions) for money and measurable amounts.

Write out in full for people and nouns that can be counted like cats, countries and buildings.

EXCLAMATION MARKS
Try to avoid them in headlines and copy!

GLA FAMILY
Refers to the GLA and related organisations (functional bodies, LPFA, London & Partners). Don't capitalise 'family' as it is not an official name.

GLA GROUP
Refers to the GLA and its functional bodies only. Capitalise as 'GLA Group' (or 'the group') as we regard it as an official name.

GOVERNMENT
According to GOV.UK it's government, lower case unless it's a full title. For example: 'UK government', but 'Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland'. Also 'Welsh Government', as it's the full title. Make sure it is clear which (if any) government is being referred to.

HYPERBOLE
Avoid red-top hyperbole: "An incredible 3,456 more households in London…" No, it's not. Copying red-top crispness in headlines and intros is fine but avoid puns and jokes. You won't be able to do them as well as a tabloid journalist.

HYPHENATING ADJECTIVES
 A rough rule is that compound adjectives, used before the noun, should be hyphenated. 'London's cost-of-living crisis...' BUT: 'The rise in the cost of living...' (not being used as an adjective). As always, the aim is to be clear.

HYPHENATING NOUNS
New concepts often start life as two words, are then hyphenated before finally becoming one word for example, electronic mail, e-mail, email. One word is usually preferable. If in doubt, use whatever reads the clearest.

'ICONIC'
Please use this word sparingly. If something is iconic, it follows that it is iconic enough not to need to be described as iconic. Never 'iconic Trafalgar Square', just 'Trafalgar Square'.

ITALICS
Avoid. Use 'single quotation marks' if referring to a document, scheme or initiative.

LESS / FEWER
Use less with singular nouns and quantities: less money; less time; less rain. Don't confuse with fewer. This is used for countable nouns which have both singular and plural forms and means smaller in number: fewer buildings; fewer people; fewer women.

LOCAL AUTHORITY / BOROUGH / COUNCIL
Use lower case unless referring to a specific name.

LONDON
Upper case for Greater London; East End and West End; lower case for central / inner / outer London / north / south / east / west London; north east / south west London.

MORE THAN
You should use 'more than' rather than 'over' when referring to a quantity.

NAMES
First mention should always be in full: Alex Bloggs. Try to use the full name in subsequent mentions unless it reads strangely. For the Mayor, alternate between 'the Mayor' and 'Sadiq' (never 'Khan' or 'Mr Khan' in copy) likewise Deputy Mayors. First mention of the Mayor is usually 'the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, ….'

ORGANISATIONS
All organisations are singular. So: 'the GLA is selling off its land' not 'the GLA are…

PERCENTAGES
We use per cent for percentages. We use % in tables and diagrams only, but never online.

PERSON/PEOPLE
Avoid using the terms 'individual' and/or 'individuals'. Use person and/or people instead.

PRACTICE/PRACTISE
Noun: it is standard practice; piano practice. Verb: they sat down to practise the piano.

QUOTATION MARKS
Use double quotation marks as a rule. But use single quotation marks if using a quote within a quote and for short quotes in copy that are not full sentences.

So, the Mayor said: "London is Open." The Mayor declared London 'open' today. In quotes that run over several paragraphs, open quote marks at the start of the quote, and at the start of each paragraph, but only close them at the end of the quote.

QUOTES (for press releases)
Keep them tight. Lengthy quotes mean they are less likely to be used or, if they are, that the 'wrong' bits will be used.

SEMI-COLONS
Try to avoid them completely in 'normal' sentences. They can be used in long lists of names to aid clarity. 'Sadiq was joined by Cressida Dick, the Met Police Commissioner; Andy Byford, the TfL Commissioner; etc'

SPACES
Use only one space after a full stop, not two.

SUPERSCRIPTS
(Above line text) and SUBSCRIPTs (below line text). Use only if necessary – for example 36°C, CO_2.

THAT / WHICH
Generally, 'that' defines while 'which' informs: This is the house that Jack built; This house, which Jack built, is collapsing. Note the use of commas.

Get in touch

Language is constantly evolving. This is a 'living' document and updated regularly. Please check the intranet for the latest version. Send any feedback to ███████████ so we can improve it.

Useful links

TfL's editorial style guide has information on good writing, punctuation and more:
https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/suppliers-and-contractors/digital-design-toolkit/editorial-style-guide

Guardian and Observer style guide an A-Z of common words and queries:
www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide

The Government Digital Service style guide covers style, spelling and grammar:
www.gov.uk/guidance/style-guide

The famous house style guide:
www.thewriter.co.uk/tools/style-guide

The Plain English Campaign website has lots of useful free writing guides:
http://plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html

Digital writing assistants

Count Wordsworth:
https://countwordsworth.com/

Grammarly:
www.grammarly.com

Hemingway App:
www.hemingwayapp.com/

The Writer readability checker:
www.thewriter.co.uk/tools/readability

Inclusive language guide

This guide outlines inclusive and representative language and terms that may be useful to you when speaking to and about London's communities. It also outlines terms to avoid and things to consider when referring to these communities.

These meanings can change and are subjective but agreed by lead policy officers in the Community & Social Policy Unit and the Education & Youth team. The content has been produced following extensive work and consultation with London's communities and GLA staff networks.

It is aimed at all teams across the GLA that communicate with and about communities and can be used when drafting social media posts, newsletters and website copy.

Table of Contents

Race / ethnicity

Policy officer: ████████ Equality & Fairness

Terms / definitions

BAME – Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities

Minority ethnic / minoritised ethnic groups

POC – People of Colour

Avoid:

People have lots of different opinions on these terms. Terms like BAME are to frame policy and should not be used to refer to individuals.

Do not use BAME or POC when talking about issues faced by a specific community e.g., in response to #blacklivesmatter you should talk about racism and about Black Londoners not 'BAME communities. We also use the term 'minoritised/marginalised' groups as this acknowledges the systematic discrimination and oppression that has created this.

Never use terms such as 'coloured' and 'half-caste' which are offensive.

When writing papers and if using the term 'BAME' please use the phrase 'BAME communities' or 'Londoners from BAME communities' as opposed to 'BAME Londoners'. This phrasing avoids giving the impression that there is any single 'BAME community'.

Things to consider:
Ethnicity and nationality are not interchangeable!

For example, someone may describe themselves as British Asian or Black British to provide information on both their nationality / residency and ethnicity. Likewise, in other countries there are a vast array of different ethnicities: for example, in Malaysia the main ethnic groups are Malay, Chinese and Indian – with many sub-categories within each. If someone describes themselves as Malaysian Chinese, they may be describing their nationality, and then their ethnic group.

On a global scale, people of colour can are often reference as the term 'Global Majority'

Use the term "East and Southeast Asian Londoners" (ESEA) to refer to people who are in the census categories "Chinese" or "Asian – Any other" - people who identify themselves with heritage from an ESEA country, including UK born or mixed-heritage ESEA[1].

There are a number of distinct ethnic Traveller groups, with their own languages, traditions and custom, these include Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups. To be inclusive, if you are unsure which Traveller

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[1] Southeast Asia is comprised of Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. East Asia is comprised of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan.

group you are referring to say in full 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' (GRT) groups. There are also Traveller groups which are known as 'cultural' rather than 'ethnic' Travellers including 'new' Travellers, showmen and Barge Travellers.

In understanding ethnic identities, religious identities can also play a role. Religions can be a marker of origin and some (Jewish, Sikh) are recognised as ethnic groups. Therefore, some Sikh people may describe their ethnicity as Sikh, for example. There is cross over too in considering the discrimination communities face based on faith and race. Although Islamophobia relates to discrimination faced by Muslim communities, it is also racialised. Anti-Semitism is racism, as well as targeting a specific faith group.

Think carefully about whether comms are reinforcing narratives that uphold structural racism e.g. 'model minority' or describing societal problems as being located in certain groups (e.g. a 'Asian problem') or use language or notions which essentialise or stereotype ethnic or faith groups.

Some people may self-identify their ethnicity or heritage – this will sometimes be dependent on context. If they have, then stick with their description. This could include: 2nd generation British; mixed heritage; person of dual heritage; British Asian; person of 'xx' descent; person of colour; etc.

In England and Wales, there are 18 ethnic groups (grouped into 5 broad ethnic groups) usually used when collecting data about ethnicity. These can be found here: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups

In data studies (such as the ethnicity projections by the City Hall Intelligence Unit) the term 'BAME' usually does not include any of the categories under 'White': White British, White Irish and White Other.

Migrants/language needs

Policy officers: ██████████ , Migration team and ████████████████████ Coordinators

Terms and definitions:

Use 'people seeking asylum' if possible, instead of asylum seekers.

Use 'undocumented' or 'with insecure immigration status' - never use 'illegal' immigrant/migrant.

The definition of 'migrant' is malleable and it includes people have been born in another country and migrated to the UK, as well as people who have been born in the UK but are still subject to immigration control because of the immigration status of their parents. The 1971 Nationality Act removed birth right citizenship in the UK. People who have lived in the UK long enough to successfully apply for British citizenship can still have fairly recent histories of migration. It is good practice to be mindful of the expansive definition of 'migrant' in communications.

Avoid:

'Non-English speakers'. Positions them as flawed and defective. Use 'Londoners with English Language Needs'. The range of language abilities is wide amongst migrants.

'Illiterate', use 'with (basic) literacy needs'. The first positions the person as lacking, whereas the second denotes a need that impact on their ability to fully participate.

Distinguishing between 'economic migrants' versus 'legitimate migrants'. This is a reactionary way of discussing migrants and dismissing the reasons that people have for migrating. People who migrate for economic reasons are not fundamentally inferior than people who migrate for other reasons.

Things to consider:

Value multilingualism as a unique asset in super diverse London. Be careful with power hierarchy of foreign languages, such as speaking French is a positive asset in life but speaking Lingala, Swahili, etc, or Creole languages often overlooked. Value multilingual households where different languages are spoken at home. Be aware of children or other family member being asked to translate often sensitive content for their parents – where possible independent translators should always be used

Language learning is a right, not a service aimed at migrants. Access to the common language is a precondition of full and equal participation in society. Denying access to learning the common language is a fundamental barrier to participation. If migrants aren't learning English is not because of lack of will but often because of systemic barriers that prevent them from engaging.

Avoid language around contribution of migrants to London (this includes referring to people who migrate to London as 'talent'). Often more importance is given to economic contribution of migrants, i.e. working in London makes them valuable assets. Avoid representing migrants as one-dimensional communities. People who migrate to London have a right to be here irrespective of how much they are able to contribute economically.

Remember, we are all Londoners. Don't make a distinction between 'migrants' and 'Londoners'. Beware of representing migrants only as people that have struggled and overcome big barriers, which is not always accurate and is one-dimensional.

European Londoners

Policy officer: ██████████, Migration team

Things to consider:

When talking about Brexit and the changes in rights certain nationalities will experience, try to use the term 'European Londoners and their families' or 'EEA+ citizens' rather than 'EU nationals' to be as inclusive as possible. EU nationals refers only to the EU27 member states, whereas an additional four nationalities are affected by these changes - Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein (EEA) and Switzerland.

When talking about European Londoners applying to stay in the UK after Brexit, try to say 'applying to/ under the EU Settlement Scheme' rather than 'applying for settled status'. Applicants are granted either pre-settled or settled status so just referring to settled status leaves out about 40% of applicants.

Frame language around **belonging** rather than **welcome.** European Londoners applying to the Scheme are all current residents in the UK and need to be reassured that they already belong in our communities.

When talking about Brexit and the impact on businesses and public services, ensure to also make reference to people.

Ukraine

Policy officer: ███████████ Migration team and ███████████ Migration team

Things to consider:

Kyiv should be pronounced the Ukrainian way (KEE-yiv) [-ee as in street, -y as in yes, -I as in bit], not the Russian Kiev (kee-ev). Ukraine should <u>not</u> be referred to as 'The Ukraine'.

Ukrainians in the UK may have different immigration statuses, often depending on their route of arrival. It should not be assumed that they have the same rights and entitlements as people with refugee status. Some people displaced from Ukraine are not Ukrainian nationals, or they may belong to one of Ukraine's minoritized communities, including Roma. Some non-Ukrainian nationals, and racialized Ukrainians have faced differential and racist treatment. Some narratives that draw distinctions between Ukrainian refugees and other displaced people have been highly problematic and should be avoided.

Hong Kong BN(O)

Policy officer: ██████████ Migration team and ██████████ Migration team

Terms and definitions:

Hong Kong BN(O) - Someone who was a British Overseas Territories citizen by connection with Hong Kong and was able to register as a British national (overseas) before 1 July 1997.

Things to consider:

In understanding ethnic identities, political and historical associations and connotations can also play a role. In its status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong is often considered as a distinct region to Mainland China. Hong Kong has a separate legal, political, and economic system to that of Mainland China, which has been challenged by the imposition of the National Security Law in 2020. Hong Kong citizens have long enjoyed freedoms and liberties not available to other Chinese citizens, such as the right to protest and freedom of the press. Many of these freedoms have been halted by the imposition of the National Security Law, which aims to bring Hong Kong's governance in line with Mainland China's. Historical connections with the British Empire also helped to shape a distinct Hong Kong identity, with English being an official language of the Hong Kong SAR (alongside Chinese), and cultural references (such as the use of buses and trams similar to London's Red double-deckers) still being observed in the city today.

Due to the historical differences between China and Hong Kong, Hong Kong citizens may therefore mainly identify as being a 'Hong Konger' or 'Hongkonger' rather than Chinese, to separate themselves

from political ideologies, such as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Although not all Hong Kongers or Chinese people carry the same political views, therefore one cannot generalize, but it is important to take into consideration these factors when talking about Hong Kongers.

In addition, there is cross over too in considering associations related to languages. Cantonese is typically associated Hong Kong, and Mandarin with China. Traditional Chinese is traditionally associated with Cantonese and simplified Chinese with Mandarin as it originated from Mainland China. Both can carry political connotations with them therefore it is important not to confuse them.

Since the Hong Kong Protests of 2019 and the imposition of the National Security Law, people from Hong Kong increasingly recognise the ideological differences between democracy supporting Hongkongers and CCP-supportive Chinese citizens. This has created new dynamics between both identities, and even led to violent incidents where both identities clash. The Umbrella Movement started in 2014 was the first time the colour yellow was associated with universal suffrage and pro democracy. In retaliation, the colour blue became associated with pro police and anti-protest, and at times, anti-democratic Hong Kong.

Poverty and low income

Policy officers: ███████████████ and ██████████. Equality & Fairness, █████ Social Integration ████████████████████████████

Terms/definitions:

"Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation and discrimination because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society"- Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Destitution is a severe form of poverty which means going without the bare essentials we all need. That's a home, food, lighting, clothing, shoes and basic toiletries. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines destitution specifically as when people have lacked two or more of these essentials over the past month because they couldn't afford them, or if their income is extremely low. Migrants who have the temporary visa condition " no recourse to public funds" and therefore don't have access to welfare benefits are particularly at risk of destitution.

Avoid:

When describing people, avoid using stigmatising terms like "poor", "destitute", "struggling", "disadvantaged", "less fortunate", "in need".

Describing individuals as "poor" has been proven to alienate and disengage people, and turn them away from services. Instead use terms like "Londoners on low incomes", "financial hardship", struggling with money, "financial support" and "welfare rights".

"Low income" is preferable to "low paid" because it acknowledges the impact of the benefit system.

Where possible, try to avoid describing people as "workers" (although we acknowledge that "key workers" is now a household term). It's better to use human-centred language like "people in paid employment".

Things to consider:

"Children on free school meals" is not a proxy for children in poverty – many children in poverty are not eligible for FSM (including children whose families have no recourse to public funds). You may instead want to use the measure from the Survey of Londoners of children in low or very low food security (400,000 children in London).

LGBTQ+ communities

Policy officer: ████████████ Equality & Fairness

Terms/definitions

LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer +) The plus covers and recognises that we respect how people self-identify.

If you are referring to an issue relating to a specific part of the LGBTQ+ community identifying terms such as gay men or lesbian women can be used independently depending on subject context.

Cisgender or cis - a term used to describe people whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans - often used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Avoid:

Queer - unless you are confident about historical and political context

Hard to reach – LGBTQ+ people/community are very easy to reach.

Transgender/trans sexual – the term is trans. 'Trans' is often used as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.

Homosexual – it is a loaded patriarchal term

Openly gay – it's offensive

Sexual preference or lifestyle – it is not a preferred lifestyle or choice

Gay/LGBTQ+ rights – it's about achieving visible and material equality and valuing culture/history

Things to consider:

Pride is not just a celebration. Pride is political anti-discrimination movement started in the 1970's seeking social and legislative justice

Be careful when using the terms 'sexual orientation' and 'sexuality'. Sexual orientation is about **who** you are into. Sexuality is about **what** you are into. In a GLA/ public policy context 'sexual orientation' is usually the right term to use.

Recognize that LGBTQ+ people are diverse, and people may have different experiences based on intersecting aspects of their identity; for example, LGBTQ+ parents in London, Londoners of faith who are LGBTQ+, Black Londoners who are LGBTQ+. There is unlikely to be one 'London-wide LGBTQ+ Community' with shared experiences, needs or networks.

Ensure that gender neutral language is used in all external communications (e.g. - use 'everyone' instead of 'men and women'), use 'they' instead of 'he or she', unless the communications are about individuals in which case their pronouns should be used to describe them. *See section "Gender" for further notes.*

Wherever possible, be specific.

Gender

Policy officer: ███████████ Equality & Fairness

Terms/definitions

See section "LGBTQ+ communities" for notes on describing gender

Avoid:

Avoid using "men and women" - say "people" or "Londoners". Similarly, instead of "ladies and gentlemen" say something that doesn't exclude non-binary people.

Avoid segregating by gender in group activities/referring to people's genders if you don't know them or need to do so.

Never say someone "identifies as" their gender – this implies there is something fake or disingenuous about their identity.

Avoid the use of 'male' or 'female', this is dated and medicalised. Female humans are called 'girls and/or women', male humans are called 'boys and/or men'. It's better to use these.

For jobs, avoid terms that show gender biases in the profession – firefighter, not fireman.

Avoid referring to someone's sex (and preferring assigned-at-birth, only if you are required to speak medically), instead using gender (the person's chosen gender at the time).

Things to consider:

Where talking about periods and pregnancy, wherever possible use language that is inclusive of those who experience a health or medical process. For example, "people affected by period poverty" - not all women have periods, and some trans men and non-binary people have periods, go through menopause and experience pregnancy.

When talking about families, don't assume heterosexuality. Statistics about couples, families, mothers and fathers should clarify that they apply to mixed-gender couples, if this is the case.

Do not assume anyone's pronouns (he, she, they). If in doubt, consider using gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. they, them, theirs) as standard unless you know otherwise. It can be helpful to start meetings by introducing yourself with your name and preferred pronoun so that others may use the same format if they choose.

Sexual and domestic abuse

Policy officer: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ MOPAC

Terms/definitions

"Domestic abuse" is preferable to "domestic violence" as an umbrella term as it includes non-physical harms like coercive control.

For rape/ sexual assault we use the umbrella term of sexual violence that encompasses the range of behaviours such as unwanted online harassment through to the above.

Use "harmful practices" as an umbrella term for crimes like Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage. Don't use "cultural practices".

When describing individuals, people who have suffered sexual and domestic abuse may not wish to be described as a victim, unless they choose the word themselves. Some prefer the word survivor. Victims is often used in a criminal justice context. The Mayor's Tackling VAWG Strategy does refer to 'victims/survivors of VAWG'.

Things to consider:

It's important to resist the narrative that sexual and domestic abuse is a 'women's issue' - it is a human issue. However, women and girls are disproportionately more likely to experience high risk or severe domestic abuse, and these are forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). It's important to put domestic abuse in the wider context of all forms of VAWG, as they can be closely linked.

Older people

Policy officer: ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Equality & Fairness

Terms/Definitions

Use 'older people'

It's better to say "people xx and over" (e.g. "people 70 and over") than to say "the over xxs (e.g. "the over 70s")

Avoid:

Don't use 'the old' or 'the elderly'.

Don't refer to older people as 'bed blockers'. Instead say 'people waiting to be discharged' OR 'people waiting to be discharged or transferred'

Don't make statements that suggest that older people are more likely to be lonely than other age groups – this is a myth not supported by evidence.

Don't make statements about older people and dementia that suggest that only older people experience dementia.

Don't make statements that suggest older people are a drain on society.

Don't talk about older people just in terms of life expectancy and end of life.

Do make statements that reinforce that older people are an asset to society and the economy (as employees, carers, volunteers...)

Things to consider:

We don't have a corporately defined age at which we consider someone to be an older person, as there is no consensus on what age is older age.

For our work on older people we use the age from which there is evidence of discrimination or disadvantage on the basis of older age for the topic under consideration. For example, in employment people experience discrimination or disadvantage aged 50 and over; there are certain decisions made about health conditions based on a patient's age; people are not allowed to become magistrates/JPs if they are 60 and over and have to retire at 70.

Disability

Policy officer: ███████████ Equality & Fairness and ███████████ Equality & Fairness

Terms/definitions

Use 'Deaf and disabled people' in most circumstances (in line with the social model of disability and if there is no reason to exclude Deaf people).

Use 'D/deaf' when talking about deaf people in a general sense.

Use Deaf (with capital 'D') when talking about people who use (British) Sign language to communicate.

Use 'deaf' (with lower case 'd') if talking about deaf people who don't use (British) Sign language to communicate.

Note on sensory disabilities and a shift of language away from 'xxx-impaired'. Blind/visually impaired: sight loss charities and individuals are increasingly re-using the terms 'blind and partially sighted people' rather than visually impaired. Similarly, Deaf people describe themselves as Deaf rather than hearing-impaired.

Always use the term 'non-disabled' if making comparisons (e.g. of data or experience) with those not Deaf or disabled.

The term 'hearing people' is used when making direct comparisons (e.g. of data or experience) of those who are not deaf.

Use the term ' Disabled people's user led organisations (DPULOs)' when talking about user-led organisations run by and for disabled people.

Use the term 'non-visible 'disabilities rather than 'hidden'. Hidden can imply that people should hide their disabilities. Invisible can imply that it is not there, or the impact cannot be seen. Non-visible is a more neutral term that describes a disability that cannot immediately be seen.

When describing mental health conditions, the terms 'mental health problems', 'mental health conditions', 'mental health issues' and 'mental health illnesses' are all generally accepted by mental health organisations and charities. The mental health charity Mind says they use 'mental health problems' as many people who experience them have told them this feels helpful and appropriate for them

Avoid:

Try to avoid describing Deaf and disabled people as a generic 'vulnerable' or 'disadvantaged' group.

Don't use 'the disabled', ''the blind' or 'the deaf'

Don't use the term 'able-bodied' when describing a non-disabled person.

Don't use the term 'wheelchair bound'. Instead say 'wheelchair user'

Never use the term 'handicapped'

Things to consider:

Frame language around a specific issue, vulnerability or barrier e.g. disabled people are vulnerable to hate crime, under-represented in the workforce or can experience difficulties accessing the transport system.

Providing context supports the Mayor's message that disabled people have an equal place in society but may face physical barriers such as inaccessible transport or discrimination. Pitch and frame discussion to reflect on disabled people living equally and as entitled to equal access and provision of services.

Remember that not all disabilities are visible. An non-visible disability is one that isn't easily visible or immediately apparent. Some non-visible disabilities may include neurodiverse conditions as well as long-term mental health conditions.

A mental health condition is considered a disability if it has a long-term effect on your normal day-to-day activity. It is considered 'long-term' if it lasts, or is likely to last, 12 months.

Examples of invisible disabilities include: Autism, Chronic pain, Diabetes, learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and language processing disorder), brain injuries, Depression, ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Crohn's Disease.

Consider using plain English where possible and avoiding using figurative language such as metaphors to make text as easy to understand as possible.

Children and young Londoners

Policy officers: ███████████████████████████████

Terms and definitions:

Young Londoners - the most inclusive phrase

Children vs young people – age dependent

"Children in care" or "Looked after Children" rather than "LAC"

"Unaccompanied minors/ children" or "Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children" rather than "UASC"

Avoid:

Avoid patronising phrases such as 'kids'

Young people are usually sensitive to being called 'disadvantaged' or grouped in ways that might distinguish them negatively from their peer group. Be mindful how you refer to marginalized young people ie. Young people from vulnerable groups should be referred to as vulnerable/at risk or young people with ACE (adverse childhood experiences)

Avoid the term 'young adult'

'Serious youth violence' - suggests that young people only do serious violence, a better term would be violence against others

Things to consider:

Young people who may be associated with 'Serious youth violence' will be involved at different levels, be from different life experiences and backgrounds, which is important to recognise. Make sure to not stereotype as one particular type of young person, particularly as this phrase is often racialised against black young people.

'Hard to reach' is a perspective – hard to reach to who? The problem is that it's often services that are hard to reach. It could be put 'young people needing more specialised support'.

Students vs pupils - The term "pupil" generally applies to a student under the direct supervision of a teacher / tutor. Therefore, older young people usually prefer to have their independence and maturity reflected with the use of 'student'. 'Pupil' more common with young people <11 years.

When referring to children or young people with a disability or special educational needs, they should be referred to as children or young people with SEND