

A guide for journalists on use of language

As we are a disabled-led theatre company, many articles or interviews are likely to refer to disability in some way, shape or form. There are two basic things that we believe are good to bear in mind: is the reference relevant to the article? Is the language appropriate?

Under the **social model of disability**, people are disabled by barriers within society, rather than being 'victims' of their impairments or conditions.

You can help increase public awareness by using the correct language, and approaching your story from the social model perspective.

Basic language guide

✓	✗
disabled	handicapped, cripple, invalid
disabled people	the disabled, people with disabilities
has ... (an impairment)	suffers from..., victim of ...
non-disabled	able bodied, normal, healthy
learning disabled	mentally disabled, retarded, backward
wheelchair user	wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair, in a wheelchair
Deaf	the deaf
Deaf sign language user, BSL user	deaf and dumb, deaf mute
blind or partially sighted people, visually impaired people (VIP)	the blind
mental health service user / survivor	mentally ill, insane, mad, crazy
has cerebral palsy	spastic
person of short stature	dwarf, midget

For further information see The NUJ and Disability Now guide, *Hacked Off*: www.sycil.org/Portals/0/Documents/hackedoff.pdf

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