The house style guide

This guide is designed to help you write for Mind, for both external and internal audiences.

Everything we produce as an organisation should be accurate, clear, concise, consistent and engaging. All documents should use the Mind tone of voice and correct use of English is essential.

This guide gives an overview of how you should write as Mind, as well as the terminology you should use. It clarifies our written style rules and gives you our key messages.

You should apply these guidelines to reports, newsletters, promotional materials, emails, websites, presentations and anything else you produce as a representative of Mind.

The information here is a supplement to our brand book *This is Real Life,* available on both the intranet and S Drive. Please read this. It explains our brand values and why they matter.

Contents

Writing as Mind

This guide and the brand guidelines are not about stifling individuality or creativity.

However, to make sure that Mind is credible and makes the best possible impact, we need to have a consistent and distinctive organisational voice. This should represent what we believe as an organisation, and reflect the way we work.

We should also write well. By being clear and making sure spelling and grammar are correct we ensure that what we say is seen as reliable and trustworthy.

Mind's voice is:

Real (never fake or abstract)

Mental health problems happen to real people, in real settings. They are part of everyday life. So we should communicate in a way that reflects this. Using real, everyday language and believable imagery.

Personal (never cold or corporate)

Mental health is rooted in personal experience. So we need to communicate less like an organisation, and more like a group of people who care passionately about our cause and everyone affected by it. As one example, we will refer less to Mind in the third person ("Mind's services") and talk more about ourselves as a team ("our talking therapies").

Compassionate (showing that we care)

When people with mental health problems feel that no one understands, we need to show them that someone does. So while expertise and professionalism are important, we need to balance them with warmth and empathy.

Courageous (never shying away from difficult topics)

We talk openly and freely about issues and topics that are hard to discuss. We're brave when we fight for respect for people with mental health problems. We're fearless when we campaign for change.

This is how we always want to present ourselves in our communications – how we want to look and feel. This will help people understand why the issues we're talking about matter, and will help them engage with what we do.

When you're talking or writing about issues in mental health, always remember the following key principles:

People first

Mind is not a medical charity. Our concern is with people, not illness. While the diagnoses of mental health problems, and possible treatments are important, our primary concern is the impact of these on the people affected. Similarly, our interest in services is built on how it can help individuals recover or live with their condition. Remember: when you're writing as Mind, keep the individual at the heart of your copy.

Us, not them

Mental health problems could affect anyone. We do not set ourselves apart from those with mental health problems. Avoid phrases such as "people with...", use "anyone" or "everyone". Remember that you could be talking about a family member, friend or even yourself.

Respect

Everybody with mental health problems deserves respect. This is a core part of Mind's vision. So it's important that we always speak respectfully about our beneficiaries. We don't patronise them, or portray them as helpless. Mind is there to empower anyone with a mental health problem by supporting them to take control.

Plain English

Avoid jargon and express yourself clearly and simply. Plain English is "language that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they hear it". Find out more at plainenglish.co.uk.

Here are some general tips to help:

- If you are struggling to explain something in writing, think about how you would say it if the person you were speaking to was sitting across the table from you. Then write it like that.
- Remember: less is more. Keep sentences short and get to the point quickly.
- Think about your audience, and which terms will resonate with them. But remember, even specialist audiences will appreciate reading something that is written in a straightforward way.

Fundraising messages

It's important that everything we say and do makes it clear we are a charity.

External communications should always carry a fundraising ask. Like this:

Mind is a charity and we rely on donations to continue our work. Please visit mind.org.uk or call 0300 999 1946 to find out how you can support us.

For example, this should appear on promotional leaflets and the back cover of reports and information booklets. It should be included on all email signatures.

Key things to remember

Talking about Mind

- Treat the organisation's name as a singular – "Mind is campaigning" not "Mind are campaigning". But once you have established Mind as the subject, you can revert to using "we". For example, "Mind is campaigning to see everyone with a mental health problem get the support they need. We believe that where you live shouldn't determine the quality of care you receive".

- Never use capitals when writing out MIND – our name is not an acronym.

- Refer to "local Minds" not Local Mind Associations or LMAs. This term is confusing for those outside the organisation. Collectively, refer to local Minds (no need to capitalise the l) or refer to them individually by name.

- When talking about our shops, simply say: "our Mind shops". Internally or formally, we refer to our Retail operations or Mind Retail (not Minds Matter).

Talking about mental health

The key thing to remember when talking about mental health is the principle of respect. Remember, we talk about people before illnesses and we don't distance ourselves from anybody experiencing a mental health problem.

Mental health problems	This is the term we generally use, particularly for public audiences. Research showed it was the most commonly understood term and resonated with all audiences. It should be Mind's default terminology.
Mental distress	This is a term preferred in some circles (and previously used generally by Mind) as more inclusive than "mental health problems". But the general public don't understand it and it didn't engage them. Avoid using it when you're writing for a general audience.

Mental illness	This is a more specific term than "mental health problems", and tends to be used to refer to more severe and enduring conditions. Some audiences are more familiar with it than "mental health problems". Others prefer it as they want their condition to be recognised as an illness. However, others reject it as part of a 'medical model' of mental health. Some feel it's stigmatising. Consider whether it is appropriate in the context and with the audience.
Mental disorder or psychiatric disorder	This term is only to be used in the context of an official document that uses them, for example the Mental Health Act. Otherwise, they can be offensive.
Service user	Don't use this term to refer to everybody with mental health problems – not all of them are service users. It is jargon. Only use it when it is the correct term and appropriate to the context (for example, if you were writing a tender for a new service).
"People with a diagnosis of …" "Paul has…"	These terms should be used rather than using a diagnosis as a noun: "a schizophrenic" or "a depressive". Remember: people are people not a diagnosis. Don't use "suffering with" or "victim of", this can be seen as negative and patronising.
Survivor or mental health survivor	This term is preferred in some networks of those with direct experience. However, it is not recognised or understood by the general public so we should avoid using it.
Experts through experience	This is our preferred term for anybody with a mental health problem who is involved in our work.

Self-harm	This is the appropriate term. Don't use "self-mutilation" or "self-injury".
Suicide	Generally, we would refer to someone "taking their own life". Be sensitive when writing about suicide, consider the feelings of friends and family as well as the potential to "trigger" others.
	Don't use the phrase "committing suicide" – it's not a crime.
	The Samaritans' media guidelines are a useful guide: samaritans.org/media_centre/media_guidelines

Consider who will be reading your copy. Is there anything in it that could be distressing or upsetting for someone with mental health problems to read? Is there anything that could trigger people to self-harm? If so, think carefully about whether you need to rewrite. If you think it is important and should be published, include a warning so those who are vulnerable can avoid it if they want.

Never use the following words:

Sane, insane, mad, crazy, nutter, loony, maniac, barmy, fruitcake, retard, psycho, schizo.

If someone refers to themselves in this way in a direct quote, think carefully before using it. It's good to be authentic but it could still be offensive to someone else reading it. Or it could help to reinforce stigma and stereotypes. If you decide you will use it, make sure it's clear it's a quote and not Mind's voice.

Writing for different audiences

Our brand guidelines are flexible. This means you can adapt your tone and approach depending on what you're writing, but still be consistent.

Different audiences will have different levels of knowledge and understanding, or will want more detail on certain topics. You might need to say something differently to get a particular group to respond. For example:

- When writing for campaigns, or to encourage people to take action, you would put more emphasis on the 'courageous' element of Mind's voice.

- When writing to someone who has contacted us for support, you would emphasise the 'compassionate' side of Mind's brand.

- Professionals in mental health will require a more formal tone, and will have a higher tolerance for jargon. But you should still aim to meet the Plain English principle – will they be able to understand what you've written the first time they read it?

It's important that you stick to the general principles on pages X and X. After all, whoever we're talking to we need to speak as Mind.

The Communications Unit can support you with adapting your tone for different audiences.

Writing for digital channels (web, email, mobile)

People behave differently when reading online.

In terms of style, you should still follow the rules in this guide. Keep it short and to the point, and make sure all the important information in given in the first few lines.

Please refer to our Digital Style Guide for more detailed information.

Charity and company numbers

Mind's registered charity number is 219830. It's a legal requirement to include this number on all advertising or fundraising material.

Mind is also a registered company in England and Wales. Our number is 424348. This must be included on all materials which give any information about our retail or trading activities.

Data protection

If you're collecting data from individuals (name, phone number, email or any information about them) you **must** include a data protection statement. This should make it clear how you're going to use that information and enable them to opt out of receiving certain types of information or communications via certain channels.

When sending out communications, either hard copies or digital, individuals must be able to unsubscribe at any time.

For more information, see Mind's data protection policy.

Partnership / affiliation logos

- **Time to Change** is a campaign Mind runs in partnership with Rethink Mental Illness. It aims to challenge stigma and discrimination around mental health. The logo should be included where appropriate.

- When referring to Time to Change use this standard copy: "Time to Change, run by the charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness, is England's biggest mental health anti-stigma campaign."

- **Fundraising Standards Board (FSB) accreditation** shows that Mind adheres to good practice in our fundraising. The FSB logo should be included on all printed materials going to supporters.

Style guide

Mind is a professional organisation. It is therefore crucial that spelling, punctuation and grammar are checked and re-checked before anything is sent out.

General points to remember

- Use the active rather than the passive voice (see page 49 of *This is Real Life* for clarification).
- Avoid overuse of conjunctions (and, but, or and so on). Could you write two, shorter sentences instead?
- Don't use Americanised versions of words (for example color or organization)
- Always get someone else to proof read your text if it's going externally. It's hard to spot errors in something you've written yourself.
- If in doubt, we use the *Guardian* style guide for grammar. The Communications unit has a copy or you can refer to it online at guardian.co.uk/styleguide

A-Z of common queries

1 in 4

- The correct statistic is: 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.

- The reference is: Goldberg, D. & Huxley, P, 1992, *Common mental disorders – a bio-social model*, Routledge.

Acronyms

- These should always be spelt out in full when they are first used, with the acronym in brackets. For example "the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)".

- This isn't necessary for household acronyms such as NHS and BBC, as long as you're certain that the audience will understand first time.

Addresses

- In addresses, there are no commas at the end of each line of the address and the postcode sits with the town or county. For example:

> Mind
> 15-19 Broadway
> Stratford

London E15 4BQ
020 8519 2122
contact@mind.org.uk

Alignment

- Align text to the left, including headings. This is easier to read.

- Do not centralise headings or use full justification for text.

And and &

- Write out "and" rather than using the "&" symbol.

Apostrophes

- Remember: apostrophes are used to denote possession, not plurals.

- The exception to this rule is, of course, its (belonging to it) and it's (a contraction of it is).

- It's fine to use contractions (isn't, couldn't, won't etc) in less formal documents.

Bold

- Bold should be used for headings and subheadings.
- Use sparingly in text, for emphasis only.
- For printed materials, use Street Corner Bold rather than simply highlighting and using the bold button in Word.

Bullet points

- Use a simple, round bullet point only (like those used in this guide). Avoid using numbered lists unless essential for clarity.
- Bullet points that are full sentences should start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop (like this).
- Where bullet points are used for lists that flow from an introductory statement, they:
  - should be introduced with a colon
  - should not have semicolons at the end of each line
  - should begin with a lower case letter and only end with a full stop at the end of the list (like this).

Campaign names

- Use title case to identify the name of a campaign. For example "Our Taking Care of Business campaign has been successful in improving employment practices".

Capitals

- Never use capitals for emphasis. It looks like you're SHOUTING.
- When referring to ethnicity, use a capital B for Black.
- Generally, when describing areas by compass point these should be lower case: north(ern), south(ern) and so on. However, if you are referring to a particular region then you should use initial capitals, for example the North East or the South West.
- Days and festivals should be given capital letters, for example New Year's Day or Valentine's Day.
- Use capitals for geographical references, for example the Peak District and River Trent.
- Use title case when referring to a campaign or project, for example Mind's Taking Care of Business campaign or for titles of publications and so on.

Clip Art

- **Never** use clip art.
- Clip art is a very basic graphic and has no place in communications from a professional organisation. If you need an image, speak to your communications partner to identify an appropriate line drawing or photograph from the brand toolkit.

Dashes

- Dashes can be used in text for:

  - parenthesis: to introduce a more detailed explanation or paraphrase within a sentence. For example "our annual report – which is available online – provides an overview of Mind's work". A dash is used in the same way as brackets or a comma would be.

  - to introduce a surprise ending to a sentence, for example, "excellent crisis care for mental health problems is available in England and Wales – but not everywhere."

- Do not use dashes to replace the word "to", for example when giving opening hours. Say "9am to 6pm".

Dates

- Write dates in this format: Monday 1 January 2012 (you can shorten to 1 January).
- Don't use the suffix "-th" or "-nd" after the date.
- Avoid shortening the date if possible, for clarity, but if you have to use full stops rather than slashes and do not use additional zeros: 1.1.12.

Departments

- Capitalise the names of teams and departments. For example: Fundraising Department, Membership Team or Legal Unit.

- This doesn't apply when you're not referring to a specific team. For example: "every charity has a fundraising team".

Emphasis

- Don't use capital letters for emphasis (it looks like you're SHOUTING).
- Don't use italics or underlining (they make the text look cluttered and difficult to read)
- Where necessary, use **bold** for emphasis within text. Use sparingly to avoid losing impact.

Exclamation marks

- Avoid using exclamation marks: they look over-excitable!
- **Never** use more than one exclamation mark!!

Font size

- Text should never be less than 11 point. This is to make sure it is easy for everyone to read.

Footnotes and references

- Footnotes should be in 11 point Street Corner (or Tahoma if internal).

- References should follow the Harvard style and use a minimum of 11pt.

Focused

- One "s" in focused.

For example

- Write "for example" out in full, don't use "eg"

Full stops

- Don't use a full stop after initials (HG Wells, DH Lawrence), abbreviated titles (Mr, Mrs, Dr), corporate suffixes (Co, Ltd) or St (as in St Ives).

- Don't use full stops in abbreviations such as etc.

Government and parliament

- Use a capital G when referring to the current (or a specific past) administration, for example: "the Government introduced a new bill".
- Use a lower case g if you're referring to government in general, for example "successive governments", or as an adjective, for example "government policy".
- The same rules apply to parliament, although the Houses of Parliament themselves are capitalised.

Headings

- Use bold for headings, not italics or underlining.
- Headings should be left justified.
- For a breakdown of different heading types available, see page 25 of *This is Mind*

Hyphens
- See chart on page X

ie

- Avoid using "ie" – use "that is", "so that" or "therefore"

Internal documents

- Documents for internal circulation should be in Tahoma and no less than 11pt.

- Please use the required formats for committee reports and planning forms (speak to the Planning and Governance Unit if you are unsure).

Italics

- Italics should only be used for the title of a publication, article, film, play or event.

Job titles

- Use initial capitals for job titles, for example "Managing Director" or "Marketing Manager".
- Use lower case if you are not referring to a specific person, for example, "we need a director to sign this".
- A local Mind has a Chief Executive, but we would invite a group of chief executives to a consultation.

Local Minds

- When talking about the network, use the term "local Minds".
- Do not capitalise the "l".
- Don't refer to "Local Mind Associations" or "LMAs". Research has told us these terms are confusing for people outside Mind

Measurements

- Use metric measurements and weights: metres, kilometres, grams and kilograms.

- Abbreviate the measurement, use singular form and don't put a space between the measurement and the number. For example "300cm" or "3kg"

Money

- Use the symbol £ only when using figures: £1, £100, £1million

- If it's in text write it out: "early intervention could save millions of pounds a year"

Numbers

- Write out numbers one to nine as words.
- From 10 onwards, use numerals.
- If you are writing a sentence then use either words or figures for consistency. For example, write 1 to 12 or one to twelve.
- If a number has four figures or more, use a comma to separate the thousand, for example 5,000 or 50,000.
- Avoid starting a sentence with a number. If you have to, write it out in words.

Percentages

- Write out 'per cent' rather than use %.

"That" and "Which"

- "That" defines and "which" gives extra information. For example: "This is the house that Jack built; but this house, which John built, is falling down"

Times

- Use the 12 hour clock with am or pm. For example, 9am, 3.30pm or 12 noon.

Titles

- For the title of a publication, publication, article, film, play or event use italics and title case (a capital letter at the start of each word)

Quotation marks

- In text, use double quotation marks to denote speech, an example or a direct quote.
- For a quote within a quote, use single quotation marks.
- Use single quotation marks for unfamiliar expressions, nicknames (for example James 'Jim' Smith) and for allegations (He claims to be an 'expert').
- If you are using a quote in Alabama, there is no need to use quotation marks (as Alabama is only ever used for direct quotes).

"S" and "Z"

- Use British spelling. Words such as "organise", "emphasise" and "recognise" should always be spelt with a "s".

Web and email addresses

- Do not use www when giving a web address, it isn't necessary. For example, "you can find out more at mind.org.uk".
- Don't put a full stop, comma or any other punctuation mark at the end of a web or email address as people may think it's part of the address.
- Don't underline web or email addresses: it makes them difficult to read in a printed document. If it is automatically underlined as a hyperlink, remove this by highlighting and using the Word toolbar.

One word or two?

One word	Two words	Hyphen
antidepressant	long term and short term (when used as a noun)	African-Caribbean
antipsychotic	no one	long-term or short-term (when used as an adjective)
bipolar	risk assessment	user-focused
coordinate	risk management	self-harm
cooperate	service user	self-help
email		
wellbeing		

Frequently asked questions

There are some queries that come up again and again. Consistent responses are important for credibility – and could save you some time drafting a response.

How does Mind help people?

We help people by providing immediate support through our information services, helplines and network of local services across England and Wales.

We raise public awareness and promote understanding, so that anyone who experiences a mental health problem doesn't have to deal with prejudice and discrimination, too.

And we make sure that long-term solutions are in place, by campaigning and influencing for real change at all levels.

How many people does Mind help?

In 2011 we provided direct support to 285,000 people through our network of local Minds. In addition 37,000 people contacted our Infoline and Legal Advice Line.

In addition, hundreds of thousands of individuals each month visit our website or contact us via social media to find information, seek support or participate in discussions. We provide the tools they need to take control of their lives.

There are millions more that will have benefited from our campaigning and policy work.

What are local Minds? Are they part of Mind?

We operate a federated structure where each local Mind is a separate, independent charity run by local people, for local people.

Mind and local Minds share a set of values. The network gives us a strong voice and insight into what's happening at both national and local level.

Each local Mind is responsible for its own funding and the services it provides, but all are affiliated to Mind. Local Minds are regularly reviewed to ensure they reach rigorous quality standards. This ensures that everyone who walks though the doors of any local Mind across the country receives a consistent standard of service and experience.

What makes Mind different from other mental health charities?

As a national charity with a federated network of local Minds, Mind can provide direct support locally and fight your corner nationally.

We can draw on 65 years of experience to campaign effectively for real and lasting change. We speak out fearlessly on behalf of everyone with mental health problems.

How do I know that my donation will make a difference?

Mind helps thousands of people each year by providing high quality support and information while vigorously campaigning for change. We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both the support they need and the respect they deserve. Without your generosity we would not be able to provide people with the vital information and support that can change their lives for the better.

Mind has been instrumental in ground breaking campaigns including closing the long-stay asylums, securing a £170 million pledge from the government to increase access to talking therapies and changing public attitudes through Time to Change.

Why don't you work on … ?

Unfortunately, we can't do everything. Mind's priorities are based on our resources, where we think we can really make a difference and what our members and beneficiaries have said is important to them.

In developing our 2012-2016 strategy we consulted widely. As part of this we put out a survey to ask stakeholders what they thought were the most important areas for us to focus on – we had over 2400 responses and this drove our planning for the coming years.

How can I help?

There are many ways you can make a difference, from donating and fundraising to becoming a media volunteer or joining our campaigns. Please visit mind.org.uk/get_involved to find out how you can help.