



Mental health language

It is important that your language is as inclusive as possible. People have different ways of describing their own mental health and it is important that where possible you follow their lead.

Mental health problems, issues or illness

The language around mental health can be confusing, especially as different organisations use different terms.

At Mind, we use the phrase ‘mental health problems’ as many people who experience them have told us this feels helpful and appropriate for them. However, language like ‘mental health conditions’, ‘issues’ and ‘illnesses’ are generally accepted and used by other charities and organisations.

Language and terminology

Certain language can cause offence and may be inaccurate when used in news stories, publications, posters, documents or in everyday discussions. Here are the most common, as well as some alternative suggestions.

Avoid using	Instead try
‘a psycho’ or ‘a schizo’	‘a person who has experienced psychosis’ or ‘a person who has schizophrenia’
‘a schizophrenic’ or ‘a depressive’	someone who ‘has a diagnosis of’ is ‘currently experiencing’ or ‘is being treated for...’
‘lunatic’ ‘nutter’ ‘unhinged’ ‘maniac’ ‘mad’	‘a person experiencing a mental health problem’
‘the mentally ill’, ‘a person suffering from’ ‘a sufferer’, a ‘victim’ or ‘the afflicted’	‘mental health patients’ or ‘people experiencing mental health problems’
‘prisoners’ or ‘inmates’ (in a psychiatric hospital)	‘patients’, ‘service users’ or ‘clients’
‘released’ (from a hospital)	‘discharged’
‘happy pills’	‘antidepressants’, ‘medication’ or ‘prescription drugs’
‘committed suicide’	‘died by suicide’ or ‘ended or took their life’