

Equal Opportunities Policy

Language Use

(Extracted for prominent display)

eQAS Training recognises that language is important in shaping and portraying perceptions and attitudes and that language is not 'neutral' or 'value free'. All members of the 'eQAS Training Community' are therefore encouraged to use language which demonstrates respect and inclusion of everyone, irrespective of gender, race, age, colour, disability, ethnic or socioeconomic background, family circumstances, religion, sexual orientation, or any other irrelevant distinction.

Choosing appropriate words and language is not simply a matter of 'political correctness'. It is about communication which does not exclude others or deliberately/carelessly cause offence. Not everyone shares the same cultural or life experiences and this difference is expressed in the language we use. Whilst it is important to be sensitive to possible interpretations of what we say, it is equally important not to avoid certain subjects because of uncertainty over which words to use. Discussion and debate enhances understanding and learning.

The following points capture the eQAS Training approach to language use:

- We recognise the significance and power of language and images in training and publicity materials and we aim to ensure that we fully represent the diversity of our broadest community.
- We expect staff, learners and 'partners' to be aware of the impact that their use of language can and does have on others. We expect everyone to avoid terms which can cause offence.
- Whilst we recognise that every individual is personally responsible for the language they use, we expect line managers to actively manage the implementation of this policy. The eQAS Training policy on Bullying and Harassment is available for use when language is used in a deliberately negative way to bully, taunt, offend or harass.

We recognise that the language used to describe particular groups of people or to promote equality is often problematic. Below are some basic points that should guide good practice.

- Avoid the use of stereotypes – eg do not make assumptions about the roles and/or characteristics of men and women; do not assume that everyone is heterosexual; do not make assumptions that disability automatically means difficulty with access to buildings; where possible, use gender neutral language (partner, s/he etc), do not infer that younger is more energetic or wet behind the ears or that older is full of experience or over the hill.
- Avoid using words which refer to only part of the group – eg blokes, guys, gals.
- Use terminology which does not make implications about the status of the groups in society eg we all belong to ethnic groupings so the term 'ethnics' is not only incorrect, it is potentially offensive.
- Try to describe people in the terms they use about themselves – eg many Asian people do not consider themselves to be black, whilst others do. You will need to ask!
- Never define someone by their impairment or medical condition. Recognise the person is far more than the condition they have and may not feel or be 'disabled' in real terms.
- Recognise that language is dynamic and ever-changing and do your best to keep up –to-date.