

Fairness, inclusion and respect – Acceptable language

Reason	Everyone needs to be aware of what language is acceptable when working on site. Workplaces are more productive and healthy when workers, staff and visitors feel safe and not threatened.
Outline	This talk covers inappropriate language and why it is disrespectful, and it raises awareness of issues that can affect good working relationships.

What has this got to do with fairness, inclusion and respect?

1. The underpinning foundation of fairness, inclusion and respect is that everyone is treated with respect and consideration and is not threatened or intimidated by the words or actions of others.
2. Every sector of the community has members who will feel threatened or intimidated when hearing inappropriate language.
3. People are protected by law from this type of harassment and, in particular, any language used to put down and disrespect them (or others) because of, for example, age, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.
4. Managers and supervisors are instructed to challenge the use of bad language by workers and make sure that all staff know that using inappropriate language could result in disciplinary action.



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What is inappropriate and disrespectful language?

1. Workers using bad and/or abusive language, particularly in places where they can be heard by people nearby, is unacceptable. You need to consider those around you.
2. Language evolves and individuals may consider their use of expletives (swear words) to be an acceptable part of everyday conversation. In some cases, between two like-minded people, it could be viewed as acceptable – but it isn't.
3. Banter is a type of communication on many sites and good banter can make a hard job enjoyable. However, when banter is aimed at a particular person's protected characteristic, it can lead to them feeling excluded from the group. Comments made by one individual once a day can be repeated by many individuals over the course of the day and that banter then turns from a fun exchange of comments to a negative aspect of work for some people or one individual.

Why do you use this type of language?

1. To appear more adult and streetwise and so gain respect from other workers?
2. You always use it and think it has nothing to do with anyone else?
3. You cannot express yourself without using such language?
4. It is a habit you have got into?
5. You use it at home and so can't see why you shouldn't use it elsewhere?

What effect will it have on others?

1. It may make them less likely to want to return to work.
2. You could intimidate the person who hears it or make them feel uncomfortable.
3. A person who was considering working on site may change their mind.
4. It will have a negative effect on young or impressionable people (such as if you are working in a community or at a school).

What effect will it have on your employer?

1. Your organisation will look unprofessional as a result.
2. It might put people off from employing your company in the future.
3. Clients or partner companies you are working with may be offended and see their association with you as having a negative impact on their own public image, which could affect current or repeat business.



What examples can you give of inappropriate language that you have seen or experienced?

What should you do if you are being harassed?

Why do you think it is important to challenge bullying and harassing behaviour?

What do you think it may feel like to be on the receiving end of inappropriate banter?

What do you think it may feel like to be on the receiving end of bullying and/or harassing behaviour?

How would you feel if someone walked off site as a result of your abusive language?