

# Sustain's diversity style guide

Our guide to writing about, portraying and providing a platform for diversity and racial justice in the food and farming system.



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Our guide to writing about, portraying and providing a platform for equity, diversity, inclusion and racial justice in the food and farming system, updated June 2025

This guide sets out how Sustain writes about and portrays diversity, and promotes racial justice, including words and phrases that we use and avoid, and how we describe people with a range of personal, ethnic and cultural characteristics, and who identify in this way. It also covers the sorts of films and imagery we choose to portray diversity; how we choose, use and credit still and video images; and how we will provide platforms for people from diverse backgrounds to be seen and heard. It forms a part of our commitment to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism across a range of personal characteristics; and also explicitly to tackle racial injustice in the food system.

We recognise that communications play a big role in influencing people's beliefs and attitudes. Our communications should portray and promote diversity as a normal and positive characteristic of the food and farming system. We should help people to feel embraced, welcome and included.

Our aim is to ensure that in our communications, we support, celebrate and promote diversity in food, farming and fishing, and in local and national approaches to building the movement for change. Through our communications approach, especially conscious choices of words and imagery, we will reflect a wide range of people and experiences. We will also employ, work with, portray, promote the work of, and provide a platform for people with diverse characteristics and from diverse backgrounds, with all due respect for dignity, pride, heritage, expertise, achievements, connections and the cultivation of joy.

Deep-rooted structural injustice is embedded in the food and farming system. This means that we will sometimes need to refer to, or portray characteristics of, people from diverse backgrounds in association with difficult themes. When we do so, it must be for the clear purpose of challenging the root causes of injustice. We will treat any such description or portrayal with respect and special care, whilst avoiding labels, tokenism, stigma or stereotypes. We will make special efforts to make it easier for people who have experienced injustices to be heard and support them to do so as respected experts by experience.

In developing this guidance, we have drawn upon our own experience, that of the people we work with, and good practice set out by support and advocacy groups that work directly with diverse communities, whose good practice and expertise we use as benchmarks. Our research also includes mainstream media good practice (e.g. the BBC, Guardian and National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) style guides), and civil service guidance on how people from diverse backgrounds prefer to be described.

Sustain will allocate budget and staff time to enable progress on the matters outlined in this document. We commit to continuous improvement, remaining open to change, alternative ideas and opinions, challenges and constructive criticism. We will monitor and report on our progress; learn by doing; and not be afraid to try things out or get things wrong. We will acknowledge and learn from our mistakes.

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# 1. Sustain's approach to equity, diversity, inclusion and racial justice

All of Sustain's work is guided by values and principles of achieving a healthy, fair, humane and sustainable food system. Our alliance has shared concerns that are highly relevant to the food system, but go beyond just food, farming and fishing. They include tackling climate change, restoring biodiversity, upholding human rights, and promoting economic prosperity and sustainable development that benefit everyone, not just a privileged few – at home and around the world.

Sustain colleagues, alliance members and many others in the food system have a profound commitment to promoting and increasing equity, diversity and inclusion (across a wide range of characteristics) within the food and farming system. We recognise there are entrenched and structural causes of inequity and injustice and want to play a part in tackling these. We also want to be helpful allies to people experiencing discrimination, and people leading the way. In particular, we recognise the extent and depth of racial inequity and racial injustice in the food system and want to do what we can to help address this.

We are committed to reaching a wide and diverse audience, who may not be familiar with diversity issues, nor yet open to challenging thinking. We always apply the principle of accessible 'Plain English' for our communications. This is supported by benchmarking the choices we make against good practice outlined by specialist organisations that work on the relevant issues. We will also endeavour to choose language and ways to portray diversity that challenges structural injustice, whilst also being accessible to people we need to encourage to listen and change their mindsets. Hence, our style guide provides some flexibility, as the audience and context always matter.

Further, we recognise Sustain's role as an alliance and that our Diversity Style Guide can inform the choices of alliance members and other readers. Where we choose to use certain language, we should – if there is an opportunity to do so – explain why and link back to this Diversity Style Guide for further information.

## i) People are people

The first important principle for our style guide is this: We are all people, and we believe that all people are equal and should be treated equally. We also recognise that current culture, power imbalances and structures mean that this is a principle not universally respected within the food and farming system.

Another principle is that the words 'person' or 'people' may be the simplest and best way to describe an individual or group, rather than trying to find more complicated adjectives.

## ii) People define themselves

Language around diversity is often politically charged. Our recommendations are based on general consensus and the benchmarking outlined below, although we are mindful that opinions vary and can change over time.

Person-specific adjectives that recognise their position or achievements may be the most respectful and informative. This is especially important in the context of describing

someone's role in the food and farming system, for example: 'farmer', 'doctor', 'chef', 'community gardener', 'anti-racism educator' or 'father of three'.

When journalists ask Sustain for a quote, they usually ask us, 'How would you like to be described?' We can extend the same respect and courtesy if we are in direct contact with people we describe or portray, or with the community or advocacy groups they work with.

Wherever possible, we should invite people to tell us how they would like to be described – especially in articles, books, reports, blog biographies and introductions at events. We should also use people's titles; respect people's achievements; spell people's names correctly; use accents or other diacritical marks that are part of how someone writes their name; and make a special effort to make note of this in a way that others at Sustain will be able to respect this in future. For example, such information should be checked through sign-off, and could be included in notes for an article or in the file name of a photo.

Where we describe people collectively by, for example, ethnicity, gender, physical capabilities or socio-economic background, then we will:

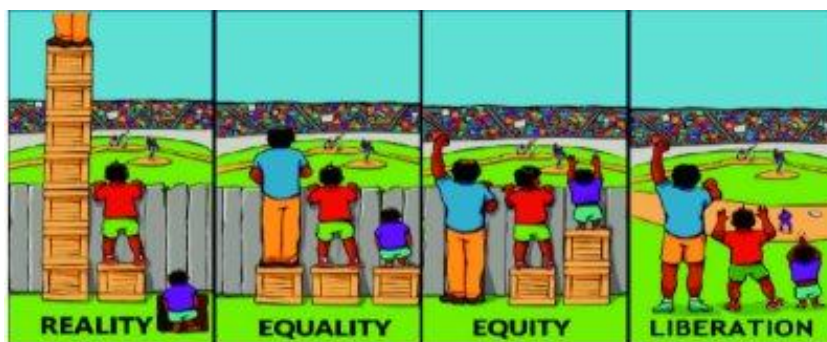
- Benchmark our language against the terms, words and acronyms chosen for use by authoritative third-sector advocacy groups, media and government agencies, recognising that Sustain should defer to the expertise of others (see chart in next section).
- Limit use of technical acronyms (e.g. BAME) to very narrow formal contexts, such as a response to a government consultation; preferring to phase this out altogether over time.
- Generally avoid other acronyms, such as BPOC or BIPOC, unless there is a good contextual reason to use them. Writing out descriptions in full avoids using labels and generalisations for people and groups.
- Respect the personal choice of contributors to Sustain (for example presenters, interviewees or article authors) regarding terms they use to describe themselves and how they identify. If this includes controversial ideas or language, we will make clear that this is in the author's own voice and that there is a good contextual reason for its use. However, where controversial language is used to describe others, we may have a conversation with the contributor about whether this is the best approach.
- Not allow Sustain's communication channels to be used to promote prejudice or racism, whilst enabling and supporting Sustain colleagues to act as allies, with the confidence to challenge prejudice and racism when they see or hear it.

### **iii) People need allies**

Sustain will strive to be allies in the way we employ, work with, portray, promote the work of, and provide a platform for, people from diverse backgrounds; and by actively challenging oppressive behaviour, language and structures. According to the international [Diversity Style Guide](#), an ally is '*A person who makes the commitment and effort to recognise their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.*'

#### iv) Equality, equity and liberation

Equality and equity are both about fairness, but represent different approaches. Equality means treating everyone the same, while equity means providing each person with the support they need to have equal opportunities. Equality is about everyone having the same treatment and support; equity focuses on fairness based on individual needs. Some people will need more or different support than others. Generally, Sustain looks at our work through an equity lens, with diverse responses to differing needs, aiming towards liberation for all, as illustrated below. Read more on Sustain's [Roots to Work](#) website.



The difference between the terms equality, equity, and liberation, illustrated.  
Credit: © Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire

"Equity means fairness and justice and focuses on outcomes that are most appropriate for a given group, recognising different challenges, needs, and histories. It is distinct from diversity, which can simply mean variety (the presence of individuals with various identities). It is also not equality, or 'same treatment,' which doesn't take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account. Systemic equity involves a robust system and dynamic process consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice."

Race Forward [Reporting Guide](#), 2015

#### v) The social model of disability

As the disability charity [Scope](#) explains, "The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by disabled people. The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or condition. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control."

Sustain recognises the social model of disability, which is also reflected in this Diversity Style Guide. Additionally, we recognise that the social model applies across a wide range of personal characteristics. A person with a protected characteristic may be disadvantaged by the world's response to that characteristic, rather than by the characteristic itself. We can all do more to be consciously inclusive and help everyone overcome barriers to participation.

## 2. Benchmarking our language

Another important principle is that when we are describing people's personal characteristics, Sustain will benchmark our language against the terms, words and acronyms chosen for use by authoritative third-sector advocacy groups, media and government agencies. We also use the international [Diversity Style Guide](#) as a source of advice for editorial decisions. In doing this, we recognise that Sustain should defer to the expertise of others. We will publish this document internally and externally as a style guide, and we will remain open to change over time.

Diversity theme (some are protected characteristics)	Benchmark organisation(s)	Words, acronyms and terms they use, which Sustain uses as the benchmark. Note that some other terms can be used, provided there is a good contextual reason for doing so
Action on Diversity	Standard practice by members of our network	<p>We refer to action on diversity as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI, in this order – not DEI) but prefer to expand this in the Sustain context to either Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice or Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism.</p> <p>We may occasionally use REDI – Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – which is the term used by partner <a href="#">Food Matters</a>, for their programme on these issues.</p>
Equity	Emerging practice by members of our network	We prefer to use equity and inequity rather than equalities and inequalities, but context matters and this is not a hard-and-fast rule.
Age	<a href="#">First Steps Nutrition Trust</a>	Babies; infants; young children.
	<a href="#">School Food Matters</a>	Children; school children; students.
	<a href="#">UK Youth; Local Government Association</a>	Young people; care-experienced young people; young people with experience of care.
	<a href="#">Age UK</a>	Older people; people in later life. We avoid using elderly, old or vulnerable.

Disability	<a href="#">Disability Rights UK</a> <a href="#">Civil Service guide to disability</a> <a href="#">British Deaf Association</a> <a href="#">RNIB</a> <a href="#">Mencap</a>	<p>Disabled people; people with learning disabilities; people with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Deaf people; hearing impaired people.</p> <p>Note: British Deaf Association uses a capital D for Deaf; we use lowercase but can use capital D in some contexts if preferred.</p> <p>Blind people; partially sighted people; people affected by sight loss; people with visual impairment.</p> <p>Do not use 'the blind', 'the deaf', 'the disabled'.</p> <p>We avoid saying a person is 'suffering from' a condition; we prefer 'living with' a condition.</p> <p>Where possible, check with the person how they would like to be described.</p> <p>While some may prefer 'xx with a disability', others may prefer 'xx who is disabled'.</p>
Gender	<a href="#">Stonewall</a> <a href="#">NICE guidance</a>	<p>Gender is a person's innate sense of their own gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.</p> <p>When requesting gender information, include male, female, non-binary and other or, ideally, an open text box to allow people to describe their identity for themselves. Include an option to opt out of gender questions in surveys.</p> <p>Non-binary is a term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with man/male, or woman/female. Should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary.</p> <p>We describe a person who identifies as a man as a man; a person who identifies as a woman as a woman; and a person who identifies as non-binary as non-binary.</p>
Gender reassignment	<a href="#">All About Trans</a>	<p>Transgender people; trans people; non-binary people.</p>

		<p>When writing about someone who identifies as trans or non-binary, we should use their preferred pronoun, if we know it: he/him; she/her; they/them.</p> <p>We describe a person who identifies as a man as a man; a person who identifies as a woman as a woman; and a person who identifies as non-binary as non-binary.</p>
Marriage / civil partnership	Citizens Advice Bureau	People who are married; people who are in a civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity	<a href="#">Maternity Action</a>	<p>Pregnant woman; pregnant person/people; pregnant or expectant parent; new mother; new father; new parent; parent; (in informal portrayal: mum; dad or another description if the person prefers). A step-parent may also identify as a parent or carer. Wherever possible, ask the person how they would like to be described.</p> <p>Remember, a transgender or non-binary person can be pregnant. Avoid the assumption that everyone pregnant will automatically identify as female or a woman. <a href="#">This article</a> provides some useful thinking on this subject.</p> <p>An adoptive parent is a mother, father or parent. Reference to adoption is not used unless there is a good contextual reason to do so and with permission where individuals are identified.</p>
<p>Ethnicity</p> <p>(We rarely, if ever, describe people in terms of 'race')</p>	<p><a href="#">Civil Service guide to ethnicity</a></p> <p><a href="#">BBC style guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">International Diversity Style Guide</a></p> <p>Note: 'Ethnicity' is broader than race and refers to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or</p>	<p>For individuals, we check how someone would like to be described.</p> <p>Black people (capital B); Brown people (capital B); people of colour (lower case); White people (capital W).</p> <p>Avoid using 'people of colour' when the usage may include minority ethnic White people such as Gypsy and Roma Traveller communities.</p> <p>We generally avoid acronyms POC, BPOC and BIPOC. These can be used in certain contexts, but must be spelled out</p>

	<p>national origins. Ethnicity can be a more positive identity than one forged from the shared negative experiences of racism.</p>	<p>at least once before reverting to using an acronym.</p> <p>The <a href="#">BBC style guide</a> says many people in Britain of African and Caribbean heritage prefer to be called Black British or Black African.</p> <p>Respectful reference to a person's religious or geographical background that also relates to their ethnicity, for example 'Jewish person' or 'person of Jewish heritage'; 'Chinese person' or 'person of Chinese heritage'.</p> <p>We use 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic' (BAME) only in limited technical circumstances such as a government consultation response; noting that we prefer to phase this out completely over time. Do not use BAME as an adjective for a person or community.</p>
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#### Further notes on writing about ethnicity

- Mainstream communications often refer to Black people and people of colour as being from a minority group. However, we should note that in some places in the UK, people from non-White ethnicities may form a large proportion of the community, or may be in the majority. And in the global south, Black people and people of colour are the majority. Context matters. Where we do use such terms, it should be for a justifiable contextual reason, and:
  - We prefer 'minority ethnic' to 'ethnic minority'.
  - We sometimes use 'minoritised', 'marginalised' or 'racialised' to denote people either disadvantaged or experiencing discrimination due to the prejudices of people and institutions who represent majority groups.
  - Some people refer to 'the global majority'. If we do so in a publication, this must be contextualised and explained – for clarity and educational purposes – either in the text or in a footnote.
- Where we can, we will cultivate an understanding of the difference between 'diaspora' and 'immigrant' people and communities. A diaspora is a community of people who share a common national or regional origin and are dispersed around the world, often maintaining connections to their ancestral homeland. An immigrant is a person who moves to a new country with the intention of settling there permanently. Read more on the website of the [Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies](#) (UK).

Immigration status	<p><a href="#">Refugee Council</a></p> <p>(Note: people with refugee or asylum seeker status, or 'no</p>	<p>Refugee; it may be helpful to say where from and why, for example 'refugee children from war-torn Yemen'.</p>
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	recourse to public funds' have different working and welfare entitlements – see endnotes)	<p>Person seeking asylum or humanitarian protection; person refused asylum (we don't say 'failed asylum seeker').</p> <p>No recourse to public funds (NRPF):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households with no recourse to public funds.</li> <li>Person with no recourse to public funds.</li> <li>Person affected by the NRPF condition.</li> </ul>
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#### Further notes on immigration status

- A refugee is a person seeking asylum who has been granted refugee status. A person granted refugee status usually will be given a minimum of five years' leave to remain in the UK, and this can be renewed. A person granted refugee status can access welfare support and tax credits. A refugee will have to fulfil the required criteria in order to receive contributory benefits.
- A person seeking asylum is a person who is seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection. A person seeking asylum (sometimes referred to by others as 'an asylum seeker') receives asylum support payments and a child will be eligible for free school meals. In the majority of cases, however, they are not allowed to work whilst their asylum claim is being processed.
- 'No recourse to public funds' (NRPF) is an immigration condition for people 'subject to immigration control'. This includes:
  - People with limited leave to remain
  - People with insecure immigration status.

NRPF prevents people from accessing benefits or mainstream housing assistance. Children in low-income households with NRPF may be able to receive some limited public support, such as free school meals.

Religion or belief (referencing <a href="#">top 7 religions or beliefs declared in UK surveys</a> )	Christianity	Christian; Christian person; Christian community.
	No religion	Defined by the person, e.g. atheist; humanist; or (if needed) 'not religious'.
	Islam	Muslim; Muslim person; Muslim community.
	Hinduism	Hindu; Hindu person; Hindu community.
	Sikhism	Sikh; Sikh person; Sikh community.
	Judaism	Jewish; Jewish person; Jewish community.

	Buddhism	Buddhist; Buddhist person; Buddhist community.
Sex	(distinct from gender identity)	<p>Woman; man; girl; boy; female; male; person who identifies as non-binary; intersex.</p> <p>A person's internal sense of being male, female, and/or how they present themselves, may or may not align with their sex assigned at birth.</p>
Sexual orientation	<a href="#">Stonewall</a> Read this guide on <a href="#">gender identity</a>	<p>LGBTQ+ people; lesbian, gay, bi (meaning bisexual), trans, queer, questioning, non-binary, ace (meaning asexual), intersex.</p> <p>LGBTQIA+ can also be used.</p> <p>Heterosexual; straight.</p>
Socio-economic status or background	<a href="#">Independent Food Aid Network</a> <a href="#">Child Poverty Action Group</a>	<p>Person, family or household living on a low income.</p> <p>Low-income community.</p> <p>People living in poverty; people experiencing poverty; people experiencing financial crisis; people unable to afford the food they need.</p> <p>Child poverty.</p>
Neurodivergence and Neurodiversity	<a href="#">Neurodiversity UK</a> <a href="#">National Autistic Society</a>	<p>For individuals, we check how someone would like to be described.</p> <p>We describe this as 'person who is neurodivergent' (singular) or 'neurodivergent people' (plural).</p> <p>We can name specific conditions, but only if there is a good contextual reason to do so, for example, person with autism; person with ADHD.</p> <p>We use 'neurodiversity' to describe diversity in the way all people experience and respond to the world.</p>
Notes on neurodivergence and neurodiversity. As the National Autistic Society explains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Neurodivergence means having a 'neurocognitive' experience (to do with how information is processed by the brain) that 'diverges' from (is different to) what is considered typical. Neurodivergent people experience and react to the world differently to 'neurotypical' people."</li> </ul>		

- “Neurodiversity is a way of saying that human brains are different to each other. This is a biological fact. No two brains (or nervous systems) are the same. Neurodiversity includes every single human being. Like biodiversity describes all life on Earth, neurodiversity describes the diversity of all human brains.”

Read more about Sustain’s approach to neurodiversity issues [here](#).

Household food insecurity	<p>Sustain’s food poverty team use the following style guide:</p> <p><i>Language we <u>should</u> use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People at (greater) risk of household food insecurity or food poverty</li> <li>• People who (may) need support to access a nutritious diet</li> <li>• People experiencing food inequalities or inequity</li> <li>• Individuals / groups that are marginalised.</li> </ul> <p><i>Language we should <u>only</u> use in very limited circumstances, e.g. when specifically referring to government policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medically vulnerable.</li> <li>• Clinically vulnerable.</li> </ul> <p><i>Language we should <u>not</u> use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable people, vulnerable groups or ‘the vulnerable’.</li> </ul>
Health and weight	<p>Reference groups: <a href="#">Obesity Health Alliance</a>, <a href="#">BEAT</a>, <a href="#">Obesity UK</a></p> <p><i>Key external guidance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/framing-child-obesity/">http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/framing-child-obesity/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://easo.org/media-portal/obesity-image-bank/">https://easo.org/media-portal/obesity-image-bank/</a> - recommended collections of photos for use. Free image banks of destigmatising images of people living with obesity.</li> </ul> <p><i>Principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use language that is free from judgement or negative connotation.</li> <li>• We emphasise the food environment as a causal factor in unhealthy diets, rather than individual or personal behaviour.</li> <li>• Do not define a person by their condition.</li> </ul> <p><i>Language we prefer to use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child’s right to grow up healthy (we prioritise use of ‘children’s health’ over ‘child obesity’).</li> <li>• Healthier and less healthy food and drink, rather than ‘junk food’ where possible, and not ‘bad’ food.</li> <li>• Food and drinks high in saturated fat, salt and/or sugar, always spelt out first. We use the HFSS acronym only in policy documents where this has been spelled out and explained.</li> <li>• Sometimes we talk about Ultra Processed Foods (UPF), but this has complex technical connotations, so needs to be checked with Sustain’s Children’s Food Campaign.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person living with overweight or obesity; person affected by overweight or obesity (either to be used only with caution).</li> <li>• People with greater risk of diet-related diseases, be specific where possible (usually for policy purposes, rather than public communications).</li> </ul> <p><i>Language we should <u>not</u> use:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obese / overweight children or people.</li> <li>• Fat children or people.</li> <li>• People needing to lose weight or go on a diet.</li> </ul> <p><i>Imagery we prefer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse images of people being active and enjoying healthy food.</li> <li>• Images of both healthy and less healthy food.</li> <li>• Images of real-life food and drink advertising and marketing examples, that illustrate the food environment and its influence.</li> <li>• Images that normalise a range of body shapes, and do not glamourise people who are underweight.</li> </ul> <p><i>Imagery we avoid:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Images of people's stomachs, or that emphasise size or weight.</li> <li>• Images of people living with obesity in the process of eating or purchasing unhealthy food and drink.</li> </ul>
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### 3. Normalising diversity

When we use adjectives to describe the personal characteristics, ethnic background or any other personal attribute of a person or group of people, there should be a good reason for doing so. This would usually be either explicitly to promote someone who is growing, enjoying, creating or providing good food; to favour and celebrate talent and diversity; and/or to cultivate proactively a more representative balance of a range of people and perspectives.

The same principles applies when we choose a photograph explicitly because it highlights someone who has a visible characteristic, for example being a Black person, a person of colour, or a person with a hearing aid or using a wheelchair (i.e. not just because they are an individual in a wider group),

Wherever possible, we will aim to use a balance of imagery and descriptions that help to portray people from diverse backgrounds in positive and empowered situations (e.g. professional, teaching and leadership positions) and not principally or only as the recipients of food, knowledge or services.

We note that a 'good purpose' for choosing a description or image may also be to reveal discrimination, disadvantage or hardship. This needs to be handled much more carefully to avoid stigma and stereotypes (see below).

## 4. Using stock imagery with care

We sometimes use stock imagery: images provided by a photographic service, sometimes using models or actors, portraying typical themes and actions (e.g. schoolchildren eating a meal together), where we are not seeking to identify an individual or specific setting. Where we use stock imagery, we will prioritise pictures that portray people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characteristics to normalise their portrayal, especially in a central and positive light.

We may need to use stock imagery to reveal discrimination, disadvantage or hardship. This needs to be handled much more carefully to avoid stigma and stereotypes (see below).

## 5. Avoiding stigma and stereotypes

Deep-rooted structural injustice is embedded in the food and farming system, so we will sometimes need to refer to or portray people from diverse backgrounds and/or with certain personal characteristics in association with difficult themes. When we do so, it must be for the clear purpose of challenging the root causes of injustice and we will treat any such description or portrayal with respect and special care, avoiding labels, tokenism, stigma, 'othering' or stereotypes.

Difficult themes that might involve portrayal of people from diverse backgrounds include:

- The disproportionate negative impact of household food insecurity on people from diverse ethnic backgrounds; lone parent households; and older and disabled people and the families, institutions or communities who care for them.
- The injustice inherent in people having no recourse to public funds, an immigration condition that unfairly and disproportionately discriminates against Black people and people of colour.
- The disproportionate negative impact of climate change and biodiversity loss on Black people and people of colour (the global majority) living in the global south.
- The injustices inherent in farming and food processing that rely on cheap labour, which has a disproportionate negative impact on migrants and others from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds; and on Black people and people of colour who are farmers and food processing and supply chain workers in the global south.

Investigative journalists, including Felicity Lawrence of *The Guardian*<sup>1</sup>, and Sustain members such as the Independent Food Aid Network, Child Poverty Action Group and the Fairtrade Foundation, show us that it is helpful to provide specific examples to illustrate articles about difficult themes. This means that we make special efforts to describe and portray the impact of policies and practices on the lives of people individually. Stories and personal testimony of lived experience can help to shift hearts as well as minds, decisions and policies. This needs respectful, journalistically precise and empathetic treatment.

We take care that efforts to portray injustices are not patronising, nor become what some call 'poverty porn', defined on Wikipedia as '*any type of media, be it written, photographed or filmed, that exploits the poor's condition in order to generate the necessary sympathy for selling newspapers, increasing charitable donations, or support for a given cause*'.

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<sup>1</sup> Felicity Lawrence (2004), *The Guardian*: [Migrant workers tell of fear and suffering](#)

We will make special efforts to make it easier for people who have lived (or are still living) through injustices to speak and be heard, and support them to do so as respected experts by experience. We have policies and practices to help overcome barriers to participation, for example support with travel, working arrangements and communication; and the option to pay people for their contribution in sharing their lived experience.

## 6. Improving accessibility

Sustain has a style guide for our print and online communications to help improve accessibility and legibility for people with sensory impairment. This is included in Sustain brand guidelines on the intranet: [www.sustainweb.org/intranet/branding/](http://www.sustainweb.org/intranet/branding/) (password).

Sustain is committed to using Plain English for our communications, avoiding the use of terminology, acronyms or technical language that may exclude people or obscure meaning. Notably, Sustain also campaigns for accessible food education, as well as clear and transparent food information and labelling. We do this with the aim of making it easier for everyone to access and understand food information equitably, in order to have the chance to enjoy choice and to be able to make better-informed and healthier choices.

Where it will improve accessibility, and where we have adequate funding to pay for the necessary services, Sustain will enable subtitles, language translation and/or other methods to overcome barriers to participation, in broadcast materials and at events.

## 7. Learning by doing

To draw up this guidance, we looked at how other organisations are handling these issues, in our movement, and by authoritative third-sector advocacy groups, media and government agencies, recognising that Sustain should defer to the expertise of others on such a wide range of issues. This work was originally instigated by Sustain's Diversity Core Group, in consultation with colleagues. We also shared this with several external advisors and with the Diversity sub-group of Sustain's Council of Trustees, who act as 'critical friends' on matters relating to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism.

Sustain will allocate budget and staff time to enable progress on the matters outlined in this document. We commit to continuous improvement, remaining open to change, new ideas, challenges and constructive criticism. We will publish this guidance. We will monitor and report on our progress; learn by doing; and not be afraid to try things out or get things wrong. We will acknowledge and learn from our mistakes.

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