Down syndrome - what to say (and what not to say)

When speaking about issues relating to Down syndrome in a way that is both factually accurate and inoffensive to the general public, including people with Down syndrome and their families, please consider the table below.

We are sure you share our concerns so please take a minute to check that your copy is in line with the following language guidelines and that you are not perpetuating any myths about the condition.

DO NOT SAY	DO SAY
Mongol	Person/baby/child with Down syndrome
Suffers from OR is a victim of Down syndrome	Has Down syndrome
A Downs baby/person/child	A person/baby/child with Down syndrome or who has Down syndrome
Retarded/mentally handicapped/backward	Learning disability
Disease/illness/handicap	Condition OR genetic condition
Downs (as an abbreviation)	DS (as an abbreviation if necessary)

MYTHS	FACTS
People with Down syndrome do not live very long.	Today, people with Down syndrome can look forward to a long life.
Only older mothers have babies with Down syndrome.	Although older mothers have a higher individual chance of having a baby with Down syndrome, more are born to younger mothers, reflecting the higher birth rate in this age group.
People with Down syndrome cannot achieve normal life goals.	With the right support, they can. The vast majority of people with Down syndrome learn to walk and talk, and many are now attending mainstream schools, passing exams and living full, semi-independent adult lives.
People with Down syndrome all look the same.	There are certain physical characteristics that can occur. People with Down syndrome can have all of them or none. A person with Down syndrome will always look more like his or her close family than someone else with the condition.
People with Down syndrome are always happy and affectionate.	We are all individuals and people with Down syndrome are no different to anyone else in their character traits and varying moods.