

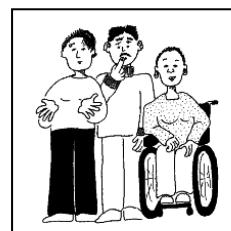
The Social Model of Disability

This model (classified by the disability movement in 1981) has at its core, that all disabled children and adults have the right to belong to and be valued in the local community.

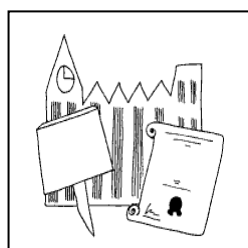
The social model defines impairment and disability as two very different things, which challenge the way we view people and the way we view society. They are:

- ❖ **Impairment** – Is the loss or limitation of physical, mental and or sensory functions.
- ❖ **Disability** - The loss or limitation of opportunities that prevents people who have impairments from taking part in the mainstream life of the community on an equal level with others due to negative attitudes, physical and social barriers.

This defines disabled people as people who are discriminated against, disadvantaged, and treated differently from other people.



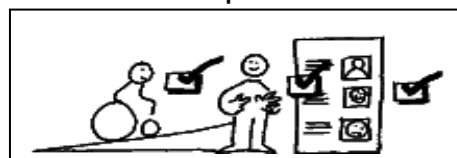
The term 'able-bodied' does not exist under the social model as it refers to bodily function. The appropriate term is non-disabled person/people. Likewise, people do not have disabilities, but have impairments.



The social model says that we live in a society that has failed to ensure that the different and wide ranging needs of people are fully included in all aspects of its development. This is evident in buildings with steps and not ramps, special schools, which segregate instead of include and laws, which do not give each and everyone, equal rights as citizens.

This does not mean that people's impairments should be treated any less importantly or that medical treatment, specialist equipment and adaptations are not essential, but that individual limitations or differences, of whatever kind, should **not** be the causes of disadvantage or discrimination.

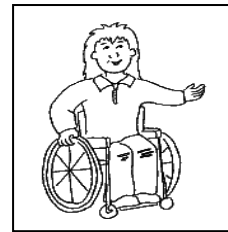
All statutory and voluntary organisations should now be working within the social model if they want to be inclusive, accessible and meet their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.



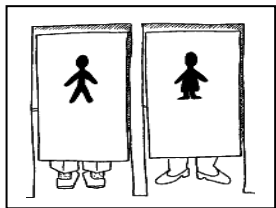
Overcoming common barriers

The barriers faced by disabled people of all ages and which prevent us from playing a full part in society are generally grouped into four areas – attitude, the environment, the way society is organised and language.

Attitude. This is the way disabled people are viewed or treated by other people. This can come from prejudice, ignorance, and a lack of education, fear, and lack of confidence. The failure to see a disabled person as an individual results in assumptions and 'labelling' about abilities and attributes.



For example, Susan has a learning difficulty which means she cannot work or live in her own flat. However under the social model, Susan has the right to work and live with support in her own home.



The environment. The physical world is designed and created without thinking about the needs of different people. Physical access to shops, sport and leisure activities, employment and transport can immediately exclude and disadvantage disabled people i.e. counters which are too high.

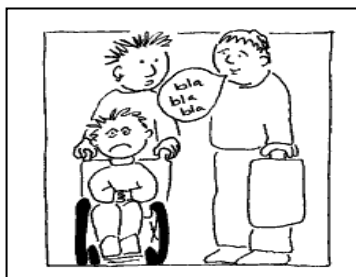
For example, Maggie, a full-time wheelchair user, cannot sit with her partner at the theatre as the wheelchair places are segregated. This segregation wouldn't exist under the social model as the theatre would be designed to take into account the different needs of people.

The way society is organised. The creation of laws, policies and decision making by organisations and people that ignore, exclude or make money out of disabled people. Such things including companies charging more money for accessible holiday accommodation, not teaching sign language in schools, the negative portrayal of disabled people in the media and on TV.



For example, Imran, who uses sign language, is not offered an interpreter at his mental health tribunal hearing. Yet under the social model, Imran's civil rights would ensure he automatically has access to signers.

Language: The use of language can create a very powerful barrier especially when joined together with ignorance, disrespect and power. The words we use can stereotype, dismiss, perpetuate myths and label people.



For example: Tom can't help doing that, he isn't normal. Under the social model Tom is doing what he is able to do in his own way.

We can all remove barriers – it's everyone's responsibility.

The local disability movement and its supporters in Barking & Dagenham signed up to this social model definition of disability on 19th February 2004.