

Social Model of Disability



Our voices ■ Our choices

The original text can be found here:

<https://inclusionScotland.org/socialmodelofdisability/index.html>



At Inclusion Scotland we use the **social model of disability**. This document explains what that means.



What you do about disability depends on what you think causes disability.



If a wheelchair user can't get on a train you might think this is because of their **impairment**.



Impairment:

A difference, illness or health condition which means you cannot do some things that other people can.



You might think the answer is to cure or treat the person's impairment.



Or you might think it is because the train is not designed so wheelchair users can get on it.



If so, the answer is to redesign the train so they can.



The first response is 'fix the person'.



The second and better response is to 'fix the train!'



The social model was developed by disabled people. It is supported by organisations led by disabled people.



It says barriers in society (including trains!) cause disability.



It says society is not designed for people who have impairments.



We are stopped from being included in society and taking part in an equal way.



If society removes these barriers, a person may still have an impairment but would not experience disability.



What are these barriers? They include:



Attitudinal Barriers:
The ways people think about disability and disabled people.



We are disabled by the way other people think and feel about us. This could be fear, ignorance or even hatred.



We are disabled when people have low expectations of us or think that they know best what we want and need.



Environmental barriers:
The barriers in the physical world around us.



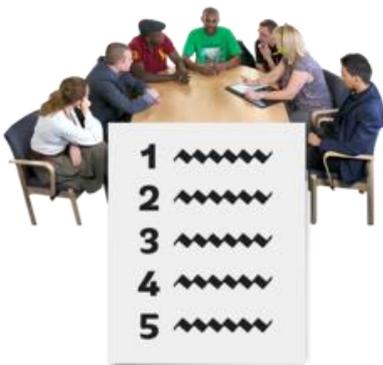
We are disabled when we cannot get into buildings because of how they are designed. They may not have ramps, lifts or accessible toilets.



This includes shops, public buildings, workplaces, museums, restaurants and other buildings.



Outside, pavement kerbs may not be dropped. There might be no textured pavement at crossings, or no noise to let people with visual impairments know when to cross.



Organisational barriers:
We can be excluded by the way things are organised, like meetings, events, or services.



This could include not enough time being allowed for appointments, or to get meeting papers translated into Braille.



The event might start too early for people who need support to get up in the morning and have to arrange accessible transport to be able to arrive in time.

Stop
Hello
Eat
Words
Person
Day
Open



Communication barriers:
These could include:



Printed writing that is too small.



Materials are not produced in plain English or Easy Read.



There are no sign language interpreters.



Images of disabled people show us as tragic victims and heroic survivors, rather than just as normal people.



None of these barriers have to exist, so we should not have to face them.



The Medical Model says disability is caused by impairments that need to be treated, managed or cured.



With the Medical Model, disabled people become just people who use services. Medical professionals like doctors take control over our lives.



This does not mean people who have impairments never need healthcare services.



But if barriers are not removed we will continue to be disabled.



Made with photosymbols.