

Understanding Disability

The Social Model of Disability and Human Rights



Why can't the man get into the building?

ncodp

norfolk coalition of disabled people

For further information please visit www.ncodp.org.uk

Tel: 01508 491210

Email: info@ncodp.org.uk

The traditional, medical model, understanding of disability is that essentially a person is disabled by their medical condition.

Seeing the world through the lens of the medical model, the man in the picture can't get into the building because he's in a wheelchair.

The disabled person is seen as the problem.



In a medical-model world, where you are defined by what is 'wrong' with you, you will be seen by others and may even see yourself as:

- Not a 'normal' person** ■
- A medical problem** ■
- Dependent on others** ■
- Unable to make decisions** ■
- Less equal** ■

In a medical-model world you are disabled by your impairment. So...

- **Jane can't read her appointment note from the hospital because she's blind.**
- **Tom can't teach at school because he is profoundly deaf and can't communicate.**
- **John and his friends aren't welcomed in the pub because they have learning difficulties and will upset the other customers.**

The social model understanding of disability accepts impairment as a normal part of being human.

What disables people are the restrictions imposed on them by social, cultural, economic and environmental barriers, as well as negative attitudes – attitudes of both non-disabled people and of disabled people themselves.

Seeing the world through the lens of the social model, the man in the picture can't get into the building because of the stairs. The stairs are the problem.



In a social-model world, where you are defined simply as a person with equal rights, you should be seen by others and see yourself as:

- Normal**
- Someone who, like everyone else, needs medical care**
- Independent**
- Able to make decisions**
- A person entitled to equal treatment**

In a social-model world you are disabled by being socially excluded. So...

- Jane can't read her appointment note from the hospital because it's not provided in Braille.**
- Tom can't teach because a sign language interpreter hasn't been provided.**
- John and his friends can't go to the pub because of the landlord's discriminatory attitude.**

Disability – a Human Rights Issue

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Article 1 UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Disability describes the barriers to achieving equality and justice, barriers that are faced by people with impairments routinely in their everyday life. As disabled people are human beings too, this makes disability at its heart a human rights issue. This has been claimed for years by the disability movement and has finally been recognised by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), signed by the UK government.

The UN Convention says: Everyone should have equal access to health care

In the UK people with learning difficulties and/or mental health problems continue to face discrimination, abuse and neglect in the NHS.

The UN Convention says: Everyone should have equal access to education and employment

In the UK disabled people aged 16-18 are twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training and half as likely to go to university.

In the UK 50% of disabled people who want work are unemployed.

The UN Convention says: Everyone should have equal access to independent living

In the UK although Government says it supports the principles of the independent living, an increasing number of disabled and elderly people are being denied necessary support.

The UN Convention says: Everyone should have equal access to transport

In the UK public transport doesn't have to be accessible until 2017 and lack of accessible transport is still the major frustration for disabled people in Norfolk

The UN Convention says: Everyone should have the right to a family life

In the UK around 75% of children involved in court care proceedings have a disabled parent.

The Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People is founded on the social model understanding of disability. All our work is based on ensuring that our human rights are fully respected and extended in practical ways into our daily lives. In this process we, as disabled people, must take a leading role in the decisions that affect our lives.

There must be Nothing About Us Without Us.