

Understanding Disability



Disability is not a straight forward thing to understand. There are many different words

associated with it and many ways of describing it. These will mean different things to different people. It covers a variety of issues, and is used to talk about our bodies and minds, the way society discriminates, cultural and political issues and whether or not you are entitled to resources, like welfare benefits or protection under the law.

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disabled person as someone who has an impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The World Health Organisation sees disability as an umbrella term that includes impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions and focuses on the interaction between features of a person's body / mind and those of the society where they live.

Previously, disability was understood solely as a tragic and medical issue. To challenge this activists and campaigners pushed forward alternative ways and models to understand disability.

Disability Equality^{nw}



Need an alternative format? Telephone our helpline 01772 558863



The Medical Model, The Charity Model, The Administration Model

A model is a representation or way of showing what something is like or how it works. There are number of different models of disability and many ways to talk about it.

The Medical Model = disability is your problem because your body and/ or mind is broken and can be only treated by medicine.

The Charity Model = you are a poor little disabled person so we must raise money to improve facilities for you.

The Administrative Model = you are a number in the system, you must apply for help but we will decide what help you get.

LAMED

by your language

CRIPPLED

by your charity

INVALIDATED

by our doctors

VICTIMS

of your systems

HANDICAPPED

by society

(see opposite)

The Social Model

The Social Model = you are disabled by society, your impairment is not the problem, society discriminates against you.

The social model makes a distinction between impairment = the diversity of your body/mind, and disability = discrimination by social barriers.

If the way society was organised was different, more inclusive and better at understanding disabled people's lives we could take part as citizens. It is the attitude, physical, organisational barriers that prevent us from working, learning, having a family and stop us living full lives.

Disability Equality (nw) Ltd and its services are all run using the principles

of the social model, we focus on the individual, on what they can do not what they can't – and we provide the services our members have requested to support them. Constant feedback ensures we continue to provide these high quality services.

Independent Living – What is it?

'Independent Living' is a philosophy and a movement of disabled people who work for self-determination, equal opportunities and self-respect.

Independent Living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves and do not need anybody or that we want to live in isolation.

Independent Living means that we demand the same choices and control in our everyday lives that our non-disabled

brothers and sisters, neighbours and friends for granted. We want to grow up in our families, go to the neighbourhood school, use the same bus as our neighbours, work in jobs that are in line with our education and interests, and start families of our own.

Since we are the best experts on our needs, we need to show the solutions we want, need to be in charge of our lives, think and speak for ourselves – just as everybody else.

To this end we must support and learn from each other, organise ourselves and work for political changes that lead to the legal protection of our human and civil rights.

The picture opposite is from Ju Gosling's **Abnormal** exhibition from the residency at the National Institute of Medical Research.

Disability Equality North West,
103 Church Street, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 3BS

Telephone helpline 01772 558863

From Adolf Ratzka, 2003

As long as we regard our disabilities as tragedies, we will be pitied.

As long as we feel ashamed of who we are, our lives will be regarded as useless.

As long as we remain silent, we will be told by others what to do.

Disability Pride

Disability Pride is about disabled people celebrating their lives and place in the world. Like other equalities and cultural groups disabled people often celebrate pride events in public, showing off their diversity, being proud of who they are. Disability pride is a central part of disabled people's movements and poses a direct challenge to systemic disablism and negative representations of disability.



Since 1992 the United Nations has promoted 3rd December as the International Day of Disabled Persons and often disability pride events will be organised to coincide with it. Typically, a disability pride event would include arts and culture activities, performed by disabled artists, performers and speeches by disabled activists.

Every year, on or around 3rd December, Disability Equality (nw) Ltd – in partnership with Preston Carers Centre, facilitates a 'Disability and Carers Festival'. This event helps us celebrate Disability pride with our members, young disabled people from local schools and members of the public who wish to celebrate with us.

www.disabilityequality.org.uk

Email: hello@disability-equality.org.uk