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- [Standard text](#)
- [Medium text](#)
- [Large text](#)
- [Black on White](#)
- [White on black](#)
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The Social Model of Disability

Breakthrough UK Ltd uses the social model of disability in its policies and practice. The social model of disability has come about as disabled people and their own organisations have challenged the traditional view that they are disabled by their individual conditions of mind, body or senses (impairments).

People who have impairments are a part of the normal diversity of the population and as such should be taken into account in all areas of life. It is because society does not recognise people with impairments as a normal part of the population that they are excluded and discriminated against - that is, they are disabled by this situation.

If society were to fully take account of people with impairments there would be no need for 'special' and segregated facilities in employment, education, transport, housing or any other area. In using the social model of disability Breakthrough UK Ltd does not use any form of segregated provision and promotes an approach that removes disabling barriers to mainstream life.

The social model of disability can be summed up in a definition of disability and impairment: -

Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments, and thus excludes them from mainstream activity.

Impairment is certain individual appearance or certain functional limitations of the mind, body or senses.

(Credit: Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation 1976: this wording copyright Breakthrough UK Ltd)

Further information on theories of disability can be found on:

- [The Disability Archive UK](#)

Opens the Disability Archive UK in a new window.

- [The Disability Research Discussion List](#)

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