

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 at: www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/ and The Disability-Research Discussion List at: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/DISABILITY-RESEARCH.html

Independent Living

There are seven action points devised by disabled people, which identify the barriers to independent living, and how they can be removed. These were drawn up by the Derbyshire Coalition of Disabled People:

Information

Disabled people require information on what is available to assist with independent living.

Peer Support

Disabled People need the support of other disabled people to discuss how to make best use of the information obtained and for ongoing support.

Housing

Disabled People need accessible housing. This may be in terms of wheelchair access or in terms of support and advice in relation to having one's own accommodation.

Equipment

Many disabled people need particular types of practical equipment to assist them in living independently.

Personal Assistants

This is the one to one support that some disabled people need to live in their own home and be part of the community.

Transport

This may mean improved public transport in terms of physical access, information about the routes, more assistance for passengers who are unsure about using public transport; improved routes to take into account the issues for disabled people. It may mean access to personal transport such as the use of cars or support to use other forms of transport for those who are unsure about using other forms of transport.

Access

The most obvious examples are about physical access such as dropped kerbs, level entrances to building, provision of accessible public toilets. However access goes much further than this because there are barriers created by systems, practices and attitudes which prevent disabled people from participating. For example: excluding people with mental health needs from public meetings.

Further good practice information is available online at
www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk.