

CONCEPT
EXPLAINER

WHAT IS

The social model of disability

swipe



The social model

of disability, developed by disabled activists and scholars, distinguishes between impairment and disability, arguing that people are disabled by societal barriers rather than their bodies. It reframes disability as an issue of rights, inclusion and social justice rather than individual deficit.



From this perspective

disability arises from inaccessible environments, systems and attitudes that restrict participation in everyday life. These barriers are often embedded in the design of services and spaces that are not always visible to non-disabled people.



Disabled people

frequently encounter obstacles in accessing health and care, including physical, communication and attitudinal barriers. These challenges are often insufficiently understood by those who design and deliver services, contributing to unequal experiences and outcomes.



For public services

and public health, this creates a responsibility to identify and remove barriers, ensuring equitable access and participation. Doing so upholds disabled people's rights to dignity, health and full inclusion in society.



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Thanks for reading

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