



## Disability words and language

### Social model of disability

When considering the provision of an accessible and inclusive environment such as a sports stadium it is crucial to consider the social model of disability.

The social model of disability explains that it is social and physical 'barriers' that cause 'disability' not impairments. These barriers may be attitudinal, intellectual, sensory or physical.

It is important to see the person and not the 'disability' and to remove stereotypes.

For example a person who uses a wheelchair becomes disabled when there are steps or steep gradients that cannot be accessed with a wheelchair. A blind or partially sighted person becomes disabled when information is not provided in an accessible format or because access routes are blocked by physical barriers or trip hazards.

The old medical model of disability looked at treating the disabled person as 'unwell or unhealthy' and according to their medical condition. This is disempowering and can be patronising to disabled people who are limited only by environments that do not meet their specific requirements.

Inaccessible spaces, services and poor information often limit other societal groups. Most people will require good access at certain times in their lives. For example, pregnant women and parents with young children; tourists with heavy luggage or who speak a different language; older people and people with a temporary injury.

Without good access, disabled people may be excluded and marginalised in all aspects of their daily lives and their independence and self-expression will be limited.

## Using the correct language

Labelling someone by a medical condition should be avoided; and it is important to refer to people as individuals rather than to categorise them collectively by their disability, so avoid collective nouns such as 'the disabled' or 'the blind' as this implies that they are a separate group of people.

You may find the following terminology and language information useful

Avoid	Use
Person with a disability, cripple, invalid, handicapped	Disabled person
Able-bodied / Normal	Non-disabled person
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound, a wheelchair (when referring to the person who uses it)	A wheelchair user
Afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	Has [name of condition or disability]
Mentally handicapped, Mentally defective, Retarded, Subnormal, simple	learning (or intellectually) disabled person
An Epileptic, Diabetic, Depressive, etc.	A person with epilepsy or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression, etc.
Spastic	A person with cerebral palsy
Mental patient, Insane, Mad	A person with a mental health condition
The deaf, Deaf and dumb; Deaf mute	A person who is Deaf and / or hard of hearing
The blind, visually impaired	A blind person and / or partially sighted person
Midget	A person with restricted growth or short stature
Fits, Spells, Attacks	A person who has seizures
Disabled toilet / entrance / parking	Accessible toilet / entrance / parking

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