

Disability History Month



Campaigning for the Social Model of Disability as the only way towards achieving parity and equality for all disabled workers, valuing their potential and contributions to society.



FIT THE JOB TO THE WORKER

Starting point: The social model

In the past, disabled people were defined in terms of their disability focusing on a person's impairment rather than the barriers that society creates. This view finds the impairment, illness or disease as the problem and tries to provide special facilities to assist the person. This "medical model" not only disempowers disabled people but it segregates and isolates them from society and its activities, and is a form of disability discrimination.

Unite supports a "social model" of disability since it underpins disabled peoples' fight for their place in a fairer and more equal society. This model includes everyone in the activities of society and suggests that it is not a person's impairment or condition which disables them but it is society's reaction to it that limits their lives and opportunities.

Disabled people's right to independent living is underpinned by the social model which means identifying the barriers to participation and addressing them.

It is vital to change the understanding of disability so that we can stop the treatment of disabled people as second class citizens. Unite supports campaigns led by disabled people to challenge discrimination and any attacks by this government.

We need to promote the social model to challenge prejudice and discrimination faced by disabled people in our workplaces and our communities. Disabled people, with support, if and when needed, can participate equally in society.

NOT THE WORKER TO THE JOB

Union reps need to negotiate for the “social model” approach which empowers disabled members and puts the onus back on society and government in general and employers in particular to remove the barriers.

By using the social model approach employers and service providers become accessible to a wider group of potential workers and customers.

All Union reps need to focus on identifying the barriers that need removing rather than dealing with the effect of an individual’s impairment.

Union reps in the public sector must ensure that their employer implements the Equality Duty. This puts a duty on public sector organisations to challenge discrimination, involve disabled people and positively promote inclusion and equality.

Employers have a moral and social responsibility to ensure they provide opportunities for everyone in society. Union reps need to ensure that employers understand the arguments around the social model. Employers should have a proactive approach to removing barriers to benefit current and future disabled workers.



Negotiators Checklist

- Negotiate above the minimum standards outlined in the legislation.
- Actively involve disabled members in establishing the improvements and changes necessary for the inclusion and well-being at work.
- Review all policies and practices to ensure they follow the social model of disability.
- Negotiate for training of all staff including managers to remove stigmatisation of disabled workers.
- Ensure employers address the causes of many conditions such as mental health in their policies and practices and wherever possible remove the causes.
- Make sure employers create an environment where members feel confident to disclose their disability and ask for adjustments without fear of reprisal.



020 7611 2643

www.unitetheunion.org/equalities
equality@unitetheunion.org

 [unitetheunion1](https://www.facebook.com/unitetheunion1)  [@unitetheunion](https://twitter.com/unitetheunion)