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DISABILITY EQUALITY

Do you think disability equality is about geographical access? Do you think it is only about managing the physical environment to remove the physical barriers put in the way of disabled people? Disability equality is more than this – it is about working towards removing all barriers created by society, these are:

- **Geographical**
- **Attitudinal**
- **Linguistic**
- **Institutional**

Sometimes the last three are more difficult to understand and learn to remove.

Attitudinal barriers are about the way people perceive disabled people – perhaps always thinking of them as dependent and needing care rather than being like other citizens and able to contribute to society and be full citizens. It makes people think in stereotypes and make assumptions about all disabled people having the same needs. Disability equality training delivered by disabled people who are disability equality trainers is the most usual way of addressing this barrier. It is also helpful for those whose attitudes create barriers to have

more to do with disabled people so that they can understand the fact that they are all individuals.

Linguistic barriers are often treated as being about political correctness for its own sake. However, language is important – it is a living thing and evolves and is about using language with which disabled people feel comfortable and which reflect the principles of disability equality. Of course, there you will never get everyone to agree on the use of language but there is a recognised correctness at this time reflecting that used by disability equality trainers etc. This language is based on the principles of the social model that society disables people who have impairments whether physical, sensory, learning difficulties or using mental health services or have mobility problems through ageing. There are other common usage words linked with this issue which disability equality trainers or disabled people's organisations can give advice on.

Institutional barriers are sometimes the most difficult to identify and change and are important ones to address for public bodies. The need for these to form a Disability Equality Policy by December 4th 2006 is a move towards eradicating this barrier just like institutional racism was recognised after Stephen Lawrence's death, disablism also needs to be recognised as an institutional barrier and needs addressing by attention to looking at systems and attitudes of the organisation.

Further guidance about disability equality and access to disability equality trainers can be gained through Wiltshire CIL at the address above.