

Webinar Summary: Social Model of Disability

Introduction

The webinar explored the Social Model of Disability, its significance, and how it contrasts with the medical model. The purpose was to raise awareness of barriers faced by disabled people, promote inclusive practices, and highlight the role of language and workplace adjustments in creating equality.

Key Points

- 27.8% of working-age adults in Wales meet the Equality Act definition of disability; the employment gap is 29.2%.
- Equality Act defines disability as a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term negative effect on daily activities.
- Medical Model views disability as an individual problem needing cure; Social Model attributes exclusion to societal barriers.
- Barriers include environmental, institutional, attitudinal, and communication obstacles.
- Language matters: use 'disabled people' not 'people with disabilities'; avoid terms like 'suffers from' or 'wheelchair bound'.
- Employers must provide reasonable adjustments for disabled employees and job applicants, including during recruitment.
- Access to Work can fund additional support, though waiting times are long.
- Neurodivergence terminology: neurodivergent (individual), neurodiverse (group), neurodiversity (concept).

Notable Quotes

"Remove the barriers so that we can empower disabled individuals."

"It's not the wheelchair that's the problem; it's the lack of a ramp."

"Language is a powerful tool – it can empower or exclude."

Actionable Takeaways

- Adopt the social model in policy, practice, and everyday interactions.
- Focus on removing barriers, not 'fixing' individuals.
- Use inclusive language aligned with the social model.
- Ensure reasonable adjustments in recruitment and employment.

- Promote awareness of non-visible disabilities and avoid assumptions.
- Encourage open conversations about barriers rather than impairments.

Next Steps or Closing Remarks

The session concluded by emphasising kindness, consideration, and proactive removal of barriers. Welsh Government resources and e-learning modules on the social model are available, alongside toolkits from Disability Wales. The ultimate goal: create an inclusive society where differences are valued and equality is a reality.