

## Demolishing barriers

This will be my final column. I have enjoyed the discipline of compressing my thoughts and the issues of the moment into a weekly article. I hope you have enjoyed reading them.

You will be able to catch my blog on [www.wndis.org.uk](http://www.wndis.org.uk) and there are rumours of a WNDiS Facebook page eventually so goodness knows what will appear there.

These articles over the past two years have covered a range of topics. Some local, some national. They have all had one thing in common though. The thinking behind them has been based on the Social Model of Disability. As explained in the very first column, this is what defines the way WNDiS runs and it has fed into all the legislation to do with the Disability Discrimination Act and the follow up Equality Act.

What is the Social Model? Put simply – it's the barriers that are put in our way that disable us. Take away the barriers and life becomes a lot more straightforward. These barriers come in all shapes and sizes. The physical ones are the easiest to spot and the easiest to sort out. You know the sort of thing...steps, awkward doors, loos you can't move around in. The harder barriers to identify – and to demolish – are the ones to do with people's attitudes.

We had a demo last week at Lynn railway station on this very theme – in this case attempting to remove an unnecessary physical barrier. Years ago they put a very useful ramp up to the front entrance to the station but neglected to do anything about the doors. Two people can't get through at once and you certainly struggle in a wheelchair. We've been on at them about it ever since. Letters, visits, meetings. Nothing happened.

Push came to shove and we decided on a public demonstration of our feelings. Unfortunately I chose the wrong time of year so hardly anyone turned up. There were as many members of the press as demonstrators. As it turned out though it was one of our more effective protests.

After fifteen minutes of our small gathering standing outside getting cold and declaiming to the occasional passer by, two chaps from the railway company came out to speak to us. Oh dear. Were they going to tell us to be quiet and go away? No. It was to let us know that the contractors will be visiting soon to install automatic openers. Apologies for the delay. It will be done by the Spring. Hurray! Smiles all round and a warming cup of coffee together in the station café. Now that's what I call demolishing barriers.

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