**Position Statement**

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**Language**

All Wales People First agrees with and supports the Social Model of Disability.

The Social Model of Disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society.

Disability is the way you experience being disabled by others – it is not how your ‘impairment’ or ‘condition’ affects you.

The Social Model of Disability can also be seen in the way words are used.

The Social Model of Disability believes that the way we use language is important to show that society causes the problems we face in society.

Based on the way Social Model language works, the term ‘learning disability’ would be classed as Medical Model language, not Social Model language.

Some people think we should use ‘learning difficulty’ or instead of ‘learning disability’. They say that would be Social Model language.

Learning difficulty is not a good fit though. It does not describe us well. A ‘learning difficulty’ is not the same as a ‘learning disability’. They mean different things.

We agree with the Social Model of disability but we think it is important to be able to choose for ourselves what labels people use for us.

Having choice over the language we use to describe our impairment is a part of the spirit of what the Social Model of Disability is about.

We understand the Social Model of Disability and we review the language we use regularly.

Our preferred language is ‘learning disability’ or ‘people with learning disabilities’. This is for lots of reasons:

* We think that it is important to be seen as a person first. There are still too many times we are not thought about or ignored.
* It is a label that we and everyone recognises.
* It makes it possible to identify our needs when asking for health or social care services.
* Learning disability is easy to say. Some words like learning impairment or cognitive impairment are too difficult.
* We don’t believe that changing the language we use makes a difference to the way people treat us.

*“I don’t care about language; it’s how you treat me that counts”*

*“People judge us no matter what label we use” “We need to be valued.”*

*“I think changing from learning disability would confuse everyone”*

*“Language is hard when people make assumptions”*

*“Sometimes we have to pick labels which most people are happy with”*

**Calls to action**

We call on Welsh Government to ensure that all of their staff, representatives, policies, legislation and documents use ‘learning disability’ when a label is needed for us.

We call on the public, service providers and other organisations to use ‘learning disability’ when a label is needed for us.

We urge everyone in Wales to use the language that people with learning disabilities themselves choose to use. Even if you do not agree with it.

Only people with learning disabilities have the right to change the language that describes their impairment. We ask that everyone in Wales respects this.

‘Nothing about us without us!’

Tracy Austin, Chair of the National Council

In consultation with the All Wales People National Council and members.

All Wales People First

