Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society and not be their impairment. Barriers can be both physical (inaccessible buildings or no accessible toilets) and also caused by people's attitudes to difference, for example assuming disabled people can't do certain things. The model proposes that it is the attitudes and structures of society that makes people disabled, not their medical condition.

We can use the model to recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Once these barriers are removed we can create equality and offer disabled people more independence, control and choice. If life was set up in a way that was accessible then people with impairments would not be excluded or restricted. Therefore it is society that disables impaired people.

The idea is that everything (access, information, technology, etc) should be available for the whole of society without any barriers. An illustration of this would be a stepped entrance to a store with a heavy swing door. By making this barrier accessible you not only remove the barrier that excludes disabled people you also benefit other users, such as the woman with the pushchair, a delivery man pushing a trolly, a shopper with bags of heavy shopping. Thus the change benefits the whole of society and removes the concept of 'special provision'.

The Medical Model of Disability

This model states that people are disabled by their impairments or differences and that the nature of this will determine what they can and can't do. It looks at what is 'wrong' with the person and not what the person needs to participate in society.

The Medical Model of Disability Vs. The Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability gives disabled people equality, power, inclusion, access, civil rights and independence. Where as medicinal model of disability provides exclusion, discrimination, charity, and segregation.

Historically social policy makers have favoured the medical model approach. Despite much progression in public perception there is still some stigma about what disabled people can and can't do. Using the social model of disability means there should be no set limits on what disabled people can achieve once we find the support that they need to enable them to achieve these things.

Resources
https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/a-to-z/s/social-model-disability