

## University of Sussex principles on effective communication in relation to disability

The following principles add to our current understanding from the Equality Act, a bottom-line legal requirement, framing the university's commitment to the representation and inclusion of disabled people in the workplace. This is in contrast to the ableist assumptions that the 'broken' body/mind should be separated from the persona, pitied, medicalised or cured.

### Key terms

- *Disabled people* – a group of people who are disabled by society because of their impairment.
- *Disability* – the discourse on the disabling experience as observed by people with impairments.
- *Impairment* – the condition that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical or sensory, or a combination of factors that might arise from birth or during a person's lifetime.

### Key principles

1. *Disability* is not synonymous with *impairment* (see point 3).
2. Ableism is a discrimination and social prejudice against people with impairments and includes the belief that typical abilities are the norm and superior.
3. Disabled people are disabled by society, or more specifically by how workplaces are designed and how people perform within them.
4. The emphasis of equality should not be *equality of opportunity* but *equality of outcome*. It should be expected that some individuals will receive more support than others, so we can all function equally, because the outcome is more important than the division of resources.
5. Equality, in the workplace, is defined in the Equality Act 2010, but it should not be limited to this. 'Reasonable adjustment' is a mechanism to aid a decision-making process as required by law but the university could explore additional opportunities to facilitate an inclusive environment as needs and resources permit.
6. Revealing one's *needs* is not the same as revealing one's *impairments*.
7. Each disabled person has their own self-representation of their labels and needs.
8. Disabled people are also a collective group with a shared narrative and a shared identity.
9. The disabled self is not a separate entity; the persona is informed, shaped and empowered by their lived-experiences.
10. Disabled people are intersectional and may present many identities to varying levels of emphasis and with blurred lines.