Photography is a versatile and accessible form of creative expression, and offers opportunities for truly meaningful inclusion that few art forms can. In particular, photography enables anyone to share their perspective or experience in a way that is instantly engaging and accessible to someone presented with the resulting photos, since it uses the real world as its raw material. The combination of the real, which provides the link with a viewer’s own experiences, and the choices made in taking a photo, allowing the unique perspective of the photographer to shine through, allow photographs to create a space for communication and discussion regardless of the extent to which someone engages on a technical level. This means that photography is particularly well suited as a tool to allow disabled people to explore and capture their perspective in their own time and in their own way – including but not restricted to the aspects of it that are uniquely related to their disability – while also providing a powerful way to share that perspective when conventional communication may be more difficult.

This resource is intended to provide practical and ethical guidelines for anyone wishing to ensure that their photography workshops are inclusive, whether they are working exclusively with disabled students or with mixed ability groups. The advice and case studies presented here are collected from over 10 years of projects run by PhotoVoice with a range of specialist partner organisations and experienced freelance consultants. We have endeavoured to draw down core principles that can be applied in all projects, and separately demonstrate through specific examples how these may work in practice. In any photography project there are many variables that can be anticipated but not predicted, and when working with groups who have complex requirements for inclusion it is especially important to be flexible – working from a set of guidelines and options rather than a rigid script.

Throughout this guide we use the term ‘disabled’ according to the social model of disability as defined below. This definition is taken from the Nothing Special book, produced as the final output of our 2008 project in partnership with Kids and members of their Young Persons Inclusion Network (YPIN).

### The Social Model of Disability

Barriers and prejudice and exclusion are the ultimate factors defining who is Disabled and who is not in a particular society. While people may have physical, intellectual, or psychological impairments, these do not have to lead to Disability unless society fails to accommodate and include them. For example, many people may be prevented by their impairment from climbing steps. However, it is through society’s failure to provide alternatives that these same people are often prevented from getting on a bus or going to a café. Society’s attitude is the problem. This is in contrast to the Medical Model of Disability, which says that disability is intrinsic to an individual or condition, so the emphasis is on treatment and cure. In the medical model the individual is seen as the problem.

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