

Essential Principles



for Built Environment Professionals

Essential principles for achieving an accessible and inclusive environment

The Construction Industry Council has adopted the six principles suggested by the Office for Disability Issues in the Built Environment Professional Education Project Report of Progress¹ published in March 2016. This report recommends that all built environment professionals, institutions and related bodies adopt and subscribe to these essential principles for achieving an inclusive environment.

If you are an architect, architectural technologist, landscape architect, planner, surveyor, engineer, facilities manager or any of the many other professionals that contribute to the design, construction and management of our buildings, places and spaces, your work has a huge impact on the accessibility and inclusivity of our built environment.

You will have made, as part of subscribing to your ethical and professional code of conduct, personal and professional commitments to enhance the wellbeing of society and to carry out your work in a way that contributes to achieving an accessible and inclusive environment.

Essential principles for achieving an inclusive environment

1	Contribute to building an inclusive society now and in the future
2	Apply professional and responsible judgement and take a leadership role
3	Apply and integrate the principles of inclusive design from the outset of a project
4	Do more than just comply with legislation and codes
5	Seek multiple views to solve accessibility and inclusivity challenges
6	Acquire the skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence to make inclusion the norm not the exception

An inclusive environment

An inclusive environment recognises and accommodates differences in the way people use the built environment. It facilitates dignified, equal and intuitive use by everyone. It does not physically or socially separate, discriminate or isolate. It readily accommodates and welcomes diverse user needs — from childhood to adulthood through to old age, across all abilities and disabilities and embracing every background, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture.

An inclusive environment:

- creates buildings, places and spaces that can be used easily, safely and with dignity, by all of us, regardless of age, disability or gender
- provides choice, is convenient and avoids unnecessary effort, separation or segregation
- goes beyond meeting minimum standards or legislative requirements
- recognises that we all benefit from improved accessibility, including disabled people, older people and families with children, carers and those of us who do not consider ourselves to be disabled.

The role of built environment professionals in delivering an inclusive environment

How we consider and accommodate the diverse needs of the whole community impacts on the accessibility and inclusivity of both new and existing buildings, places and spaces and needs to be considered at the outset of any project.

All built environment professionals have a significant role to play in helping to achieve an accessible and inclusive environment. Whether you are an architect, architectural technologist, town planner, landscape architect, civil, structural or building services engineer, surveyor, interior designer or facilities manager — you have a personal obligation to maintain and enhance your knowledge, skills and competence in your area of practice.

Essential principles to guide built environment professionals

These 6 essential principles will guide, support and motivate you when making decisions for clients, employers and society which affect the achievement of an inclusive environment. They will help you meet your professional obligations to seek to achieve inclusion and ensure that this goal is integrated into all your professional activity.

1. Contribute to building an inclusive society now and in the future

You have a responsibility to maximise the value of your activity towards building an accessible and inclusive world. This requires an understanding of what makes a building, place or space accessible, what users expect, and what is achievable, while recognising that expectations are changing over time. You should:

- gain as much knowledge of best practice technical access standards and legislation as is relevant to your area of practice
- acquire the skills and ability to apply the principles of inclusive design to your projects
- gain an understanding of how disabled people, older people and families with small children experience and use all aspects of the built environment, including people who are different to your own background, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture
- have the confidence to challenge poor accessibility and possible difficulties in use, and recognise good inclusive design.

2. Apply professional and responsible judgement and take a leadership role

The built environment profession has a strong ethical dimension, and all built environment professionals have an important role in providing solutions that achieve an inclusive environment. In making sound judgment, you should:

- look to the broad picture
- ensure your knowledge about how to achieve an inclusive environment is current and up to date
- recognise that all built environment professionals – individually and collectively – have a responsibility to address inclusion in their practice – achieving an inclusive environment is not just a design issue, it can only be achieved if addressed throughout all aspects of the construction process from pre-design to in-use occupation and management
- be prepared to influence the decision maker/client of a project
- ensure that solutions and options are offered that will contribute to the achievement of an inclusive environment
- identify all the issues and options to the decision-maker/client of a project so that decisions are soundly based
- be aware that there are inherently conflicting aspects in how an inclusive environment can be achieved, while having the confidence and knowledge to recognise and challenge poor accessibility and support good inclusive design solutions.

3. Apply and integrate the principles of inclusive design from the outset of a project

Inclusive design is the responsibility of everyone who works in the built environment from those who commission new buildings and places; planners, designers, engineers, and surveyors; to the property owners, interior designers and facilities managers responsible for the building in use.

An inclusive environment:

- facilitates dignified, equal and intuitive use by all users of the built environment and
- is the result of a process which places people and their needs at its heart.

Integrating the principles of inclusive design into the complete design, development and management process from the initial vision/brief of a project is critical to its achievement. An inclusive environment can only be successfully achieved if inclusive design is embedded into:

- the strategic vision
- the initial concept brief
- initial budget estimates
- the masterplan and outline designs
- planning and building control
- the detailed design
- the construction phase, when attention to detail is critical, particularly when budgets are revised
- appraisal at project completion
- fit out and post occupancy evaluation
- in-use management policies, practices and procedures.

Crucial to this is consultation with user groups/stakeholders, putting people who represent a diversity of age, ability, gender and community at the heart of the design process.

4. Do more than just comply with legislation and codes

In seeking inclusive solutions complying with current legislation, regulations, and codes of practice may not be sufficient and built environment professionals should:

- strive to go beyond the minimum wherever possible, anticipating future legislation, codes and technical standards which may be higher
- by your example, help others improve their performance
- drive future legislation, codes and technical standards
- alert the relevant authorities if there are deficiencies in legislation and standards and if inclusive solutions and outcomes could be endangered by regulatory change
- use your technical expertise to influence the development of new legislation and codes.

5. Seek multiple views to solve accessibility and inclusivity challenges

Increasing expectations, particularly from disabled people (driven by for example the success of the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Paralympic Games) and the increasing numbers of active older people who wish to retain their independence, means that working alone cannot solve all the challenges faced. It is important for you to be inclusive and:

- engage with stakeholders, listening and recognising the value of the perspective of others including a diverse range of non specialists, such as local access groups or organisations of disabled people
- avoid working in isolation, involving other professionals such as specialist access consultants at all stages of a project
- utilise cross-disciplinary knowledge and diverse skills – achieving an inclusive environment is the responsibility of all built environment professionals
- promote the important leadership role of the built environment professional in finding solutions to inclusivity challenges for the benefit of all in society
- seek a balanced approach.

6. Acquire the skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence to make inclusion the norm not the exception

All built environment professionals can apply their understanding, knowledge, experience, skills and know-how to create social and economic value and can have a direct and substantial influence on the accessibility and inclusivity of the built environment.

By improving your inclusive design knowledge and skills you can help achieve a truly accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.

- Students should learn the skills that make inclusive design second nature
- Educators should inspire their students to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to make inclusion the norm not the exception
- Professionals should integrate the principles of inclusive design and the processes that help achieve an inclusive environment into all their projects.

Further Information

Construction Industry Council

The Construction Industry Council (CIC) has been supporting the government's aim of ensuring that the principles of inclusive design are fully integrated into construction industry practice – key to making our environment more inclusive and accessible for all.

Built Environment Professional Education Project

CIC is supporting the Built Environment Professional Education Project (BEPE)¹ in its transition from a government driven project to an industry owned and led initiative. The BEPE Project is working to embed inclusive design knowledge and skills into the initial and ongoing training and education of built environment professionals.

Inclusive Environment Action Plan

CIC has also been partnering and helping to develop the Inclusive Environment Built Environment Industry Action Plan² launched in 2015. Industry partners who developed the Action Plan made specific commitments to promote the planning, design, construction, development and management of inclusive environments by:

- reviewing competencies including vocational courses, to ensure inclusive environments are properly supported
- collaborating on industry wide and sectorial Continuing Professional Development
- rewarding excellence and celebrating success
- championing inclusive design through leadership and promoting awareness
- collaborating on research, innovation and continual improvement across industry
- communicating best practice to members and encouraging knowledge sharing between professional institutions via the Inclusive Environment Hub.

CIC has committed to extending the principles of the Action Plan to its entire membership to ensure its widest possible impact amongst built environment professionals.

Design Council

Design Council is working to raise awareness about the importance of designing places that meet the needs of the diversity of people who want to use them. Design Council believes that designing and managing the built environment in an inclusive way is essential if we are to create a fair society and a sustainable future.

Design Council has partnered with various organisations to build a hub of inclusive design best practice guidance for built environment professionals³. It is a collection of resources, that cover buildings and outdoor spaces, in all phases of development including planning, design and construction, right through to the management of those buildings and places. Design Council is now developing a free online training programme with the aim of becoming the central place for people to learn and be inspired about inclusive design in the built environment.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

The QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and embed consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout:

'Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and responsibility for, promoting equality.'

The SBSs for Architectural Technology; Town Planning; Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying; and Landscape Architecture have all incorporated the need for undergraduates to acquire inclusive design knowledge and skills. The threshold standard for the SBS for Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying⁴ states that undergraduates need to:

‘Acquire a basic knowledge and demonstrate an understanding of the principles and processes that deliver an inclusive environment, recognising the diversity of user needs and the requirement to put people (of all ages and abilities) at the heart of the process.’

The SBS for Engineering states that:

- Engineering drives technological, economic and social progress. It deals with the delivery of practical solutions to problems, which includes addressing some of the greatest challenges and opportunities of our rapidly evolving world. Engineers apply their understanding, knowledge, experience, skills and know-how to create social and economic value.
- Engineering graduates will seek to achieve sustainable solutions to problems and have strategies for being creative, innovative and overcoming difficulties by employing their skills, knowledge and understanding in a flexible manner.

The need for undergraduate students to acquire inclusive design knowledge and skills and to learn how to put the needs of people of all ages and abilities at the heart of the construction process will help our future built environment professionals achieve a more accessible and inclusive environment.

British Standards Institution (BSI)

BSI’s code of practice BS 8300⁵ provides good practice guidance for the design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. It explains how the built environment can be designed to anticipate and overcome restrictions that prevent disabled people making full use of premises and their surroundings.

BS 8300 can be used in the design of new buildings and when assessing the accessibility and usability of existing buildings as a basis for their improvement. The standard is currently being revised and updated and will when published in 2017 be accompanied by a new Part 2 giving recommendations for the design of accessible and inclusive external environments.

British Standard BS 7000-6:2005 'Guide to managing inclusive design' provides a comprehensive framework to help all private enterprises, public sector and not-for-profit organizations ensure that disabled people's needs are considered throughout the life cycle of a product or service. BS 7000 Part 6 is a part of the BS 7000 series on Design Management Systems and provides guidance on managing inclusive design at both organization and project levels, though the inclusive approach ultimately encompasses the whole of business and management.

Global Disability Innovation Hub

Launched on National Paralympic Day in September 2016 by the Mayor of London, the Global Disability Innovation (GDI) Hub⁶ is a dedicated research, teaching and practice centre on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, born out of the legacy of the London 2012 Paralympic Games and the world-leading disability expertise of the institutions connected to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The aim of the GDI Hub is to provide a platform for the talents of disabled people and the expertise of practitioners, academics and local communities to change the world for the better. Over the next ten years it will become a leading hub to exchange learning, practice and ideas about how to do things differently, and make positive changes in the lives of the one billion disabled people across the world.

Acknowledgements

Gardiner & Theobald

As part of its social impact programme, independent construction and property consultancy Gardiner & Theobald is sponsoring the publication of CIC's Essential Principles for Achieving an Accessible and Inclusive Environment for Built Environment Professionals. The firm believes that the principles have the potential to positively influence the built environment for many years to come and supports CIC in motivating industry professionals to be catalysts for positive change www.gardiner.com.

Engineering Council

Thanks also go to the Engineering Council for the inspiration for this guidance note – the Engineering Council Guidance Notes on Risk and Sustainability and statement on Ethical Principles for the Engineering Profession have been used as a template.

Notes

- (1) Built Environment Professional Education Project Report of Progress

Office for Disability Issues March 2016

www.gov.uk/government/publications/built-environment-professional-education-project-progress-report

- (2) Built Environment Industry Action Plan

Design Council 2015

www.designcouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/inclusive-environments

- (3) Inclusive Design Hub

Design Council

www.designcouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/inclusive-environments

- (4) Subject Benchmark Statements

Quality Assurance Agency

www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Land-Construction-Real-Estate-and-Surveying-16.pdf

- (5) BS 8300:2009+A1 2010 The design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people

British Standards Institution 2010

<http://shop.bsigroup.com/Browse-by-Sector/Building--Construction/Disability-access/>

- (6) Global Disability Innovation Hub

www.disabilityinnovation.com

Supporters

The following professional institutions endorse the principles and are promoting their use amongst their members.





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**BUILT ENVIRONMENT
PROFESSIONS TOGETHER**

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