

The  
Access  
Association

Inclusive Design  
Awards Judging Guidance

January 2017

This guidance aims to assist organisations when judging schemes nominated for awards, in terms of their success in creating an inclusive environment which provides suitable solutions for as many people as possible.

It has been produced by the Access Association, a national network of individuals who are passionate about access and inclusive design.

One of the aims of the Association is to improve access and facilities for disabled people, and consequently all people who would benefit from an accessible and inclusive environment.

The Association prides itself on providing peer support, sharing knowledge and influencing change.

Further information about the Access Association and Inclusive Design can be found at: [www.accssassociation.co.uk](http://www.accssassociation.co.uk)

The guidance sets out the general principals of inclusive design which schemes should be expected to satisfy. It is applicable whether judging a separate Inclusive Design award category, or other awards categories, to ensure that inclusive design is successfully integrated into all schemes which are nominated for or recipients of awards.

This guidance provides general background guidance as well as key guidance points under the following headings:

- 1) Inclusive Design - Background
- 2) Specific Inclusive Design Categories
- 3) Who?
- 4) Expectations From Awards Submissions
- 5) Useful Prompts When Considering Inclusive Design
- 6) Further information

## 1) Inclusive Design - Background

Inclusive design recognises that people are all different and designs and plans for this diversity, by creating solutions that provide choice as to how people access and use buildings or spaces, and enable everyone to use the development safely, easily and with dignity by all, regardless of disability or impairment. Developments should be welcoming flexible and convenient, providing choice and where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users- a number of suitable solutions are provided which avoid unnecessary effort, separation or segregation.

Many people, including older people, parents with push chairs, children and people who do not consider themselves to be disabled, often benefit from improved accessibility.

An inclusive design approach should ensure developments which are future proofed and which enable independent access, are created which work with minimal management intervention.

It is very possible for a scheme to be 'designed to satisfy' minimum design standards, for example Approved Document M of the Building Regulations, and not adopt an inclusive design approach, segregating people out and failing to provide suitable independent access.

For this reason, schemes should demonstrate that they not only satisfy minimum design standards, but they should explain, in their submission, how they go beyond minimum and include category specific design standards to ensure the highest standards in terms of inclusive design are achieved.

[Design Council CABE](#) provides the following statement on inclusion and inclusive design:

**An inclusive society is one that leaves no one behind**

Inclusive environments are places that work better for everybody - whether that place is a school, office, park, street, care home, bus route or train station. An inclusive approach to planning, design and management is an opportunity to use creativity and lateral thinking to make places that reflect the diversity of people who want to use them. Inclusive environments are:

- Welcoming to everyone
- Responsive to people's needs
- Intuitive to use
- Flexible
- Offer choice when a single design solution cannot meet all user needs
- Convenient so they can be used without undue effort or special separation and so that they maximise independence

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

Inclusive design principles should apply to and be satisfied by all buildings and the built environment.

**Key guidance point 1: Inclusive design**

Nominated schemes are expected to demonstrate in their submission how they have incorporated an inclusive design approach in terms of access for disabled people into their proposals, specifically illustrating that the scheme has successfully planned for the diversity of population, creating solutions that provide choice as to how people access and use buildings or spaces, and enable everyone to use the development safely, easily and with dignity avoiding unnecessary effort, separation or segregation.

## 2) Specific Inclusive Design Categories

When compiling awards categories, 'Inclusive Design' should be incorporated into all categories as a minimum requirement to be satisfied on all schemes.

However it could also be beneficial to incorporate a specific 'Inclusive Design' category, which recognises and rewards schemes which are exemplars in this field, and go above and beyond in terms of approach and solutions for the diverse population represented by the population. A specific category would also help to ensure that 'Inclusive Design' is not overlooked, missed or diluted, and is specifically highlighted in terms of its importance.

If judging a specific 'Inclusive Design' awards category - it is important that the schemes being assessed include general mainstream buildings, not just 'specialist provision' which has to be inclusive due to its client group for example hospitals or specialist school provision for disabled children.

Inclusive Design should be applied to the built environment in its widest sense, and awards nominations should reflect this.

### **Key Guidance Point 2: Type of submission**

Nominees for specific 'Inclusive Design' awards categories should be predominantly mainstream buildings, as opposed to 'specialist' provision designed for a minority client base, for example disabled people.

This is important to mainstream and open out inclusive design - as a criteria which should be achieved throughout the built environment, to ensure it includes as many people as possible.

### 3) Who?

When considering access for disabled people, it is important not to just think about 'wheelchair users', but to adopt a 'pan disability' or 'pan impairment' approach, and for the purposes of this document the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability may prove useful which states:

“A person has a disability for the purposes of the Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

( [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6) )

It is important to remember that inclusive design is not limited to disabled people, many people, including older people, parents with push chairs and children, will benefit from improved accessibility and an inclusive design approach.

#### **Key Guidance Point 3: Who?**

When considering access for disabled people, adopt a pan-disability, or pan-impairment approach taking into account (but not limited to):

- Sensory impairments: people who are blind or partially sighted, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing,
- Physical impairments: ambulant people with mobility difficulties, wheelchair users, people who use other mobility aids for example sticks, crutches or walking frames,
- People with complex needs / multiple impairments
- People with learning disabilities
- People with neuro-diverse conditions
- People with mental health issues

It is important to remember that inclusive design is not limited to disabled people, however many people, including older people, parents with push chairs, children and people who do not consider themselves to be disabled, will benefit from improved accessibility and an inclusive design approach.

## 4) Expectations From Awards Submissions

Awards entries / submissions should as an absolute minimum, clearly explain and demonstrate how the principles of inclusive design, including the needs of disabled people, have been planned for, and integrated into the scheme, as well as how inclusion is maintained and managed in reality.

It should explain the design thinking behind the scheme, and illustrate that it has been carefully considered given its context, it has integrated inclusive design successfully, going beyond minimum design standards, to ensure a diverse population can use the places, spaces and buildings created with ease, dignity, development has been carefully thought about given its context, that it has integrated considerations of inclusive design, including the specific needs of disabled people, to ensure they will be able to use the places, spaces and buildings created.

The submission should cite / highlight design standards applied, and also give details of any engagement and consultation that has been conducted with local access groups, disabled people and any access professionals who have been involved in the scheme, for examples Access Officers or Access Consultants. It should highlight when any engagement / consultation took place in the development process, who it was with, including details of the nature of the disability of the people, any specialisms which were represented within these groups / people - as well as what elements of the development were discussed, and how this informed the final solution.

The submission should also highlight any challenges / barriers faced / overcome (for example topographical or geological issues, existing building limitations, conservation considerations etc.), and how these were overcome / worked with to enable everyone to use the development safely, easily and with dignity. The submission gives the opportunity for entrants to explain the constraints of the scheme and what solutions were been introduced to overcome any issues / barriers, as well as citing what guidance or research has been applied to ensure a satisfactory and inclusive outcome.

## **Key Guidance Point 4: Minimum submission expectations**

Awards entries / submissions should as an absolute minimum:

- Clearly explain and demonstrate the approach and design thinking behind the scheme and how the principles of inclusive design were planned for and integrated.
- Cite / highlight design standards applied,
- Provide details of any engagement and consultation with user or community groups which was undertaken
- Highlight any professional specialist involvement for example from Access Officers or Access Consultants
- Provide details of challenges / barriers faced in terms of inclusion, and how these were overcome
- Highlight how the scheme goes above and beyond minimum design standards to create an exemplary outcome in terms of Inclusive



## 5) Useful Prompts When Considering Inclusive Design

The following prompts may be of use when assessing a scheme in terms of inclusion. This should not be considered to be an exhaustive list, and should be considered in conjunction with the above principles, however may prove useful for judges.

### Approaches

Links to wider environment / neighbourhood:

- Is a network of suitably designed dropped kerbs and tactile paving provided nearby and within the site to ensure level access to and within the development can be achieved?
- Do the entrance points provide the most convenient routes into the site  
and are they logical and identifiable for a range of users?

Parking facilities:

- Is the correct level of suitably designed and positioned disabled persons parking bays provided?
- Are disabled persons parking bays a suitable size and design - symbols  
and adequate side and rear transference zones?

Pedestrian routes:

- Convenient for everyone to use?
- Suitable slopes / gradients if level access is not achievable?
- Suitable widths?
- Suitable resting places / passing places?

Lighting:

- Are approaches consistently well lit?

Inclusion:

- Are all approaches suitable for all users, avoiding segregation?

### Entrances

Identifiable and clear:

- Will visitors recognise / easily identify the entrance without signage or additional directions?
- Is flat and level access provided for everyone to use?
- If a ramped approach is proposed - is this unavoidable: for example if the internal finished floor level is dependent on flood levels, and are steps provided in addition to the ramp?

- Can all users enter via the same door e.g. a revolving door/ side pass door arrangement does not provide an inclusive solution; acting to segregate people who cannot use a revolving door?
- Suitable clear opening width of entrance doors?

## **Internal environment and layout**

### Reception facilities

- Can everyone access the reception facilities / counters?

### Internal vertical circulation

### Lighting

- Is it well lit?

### Glazing

- Does glazing incorporate appropriate manifestations?

### Reflective or patterned surfaces

- Are highly patterned surfaces used which could cause confusion or give the impression of a change in level or object where one does not exist?
- Are reflective or mirrored surfaces used in a manner which could confuse or distort the environment?

### Colour contrast

- Are suitable levels of colour contrast provided to allow users to use and read the environment, for example between wall and floor surfaces, door and door opening furniture?

### Signage and information

- Is signage clear to read in terms of contrast, font and layout?
- Is signage consistent throughout the building?

### Facilities provided: toilets

- Disabled persons toilet, or if more than one- is a choice or left and right handed transfer provided? Are travelling distances to that toilet appropriate?
- Are ambulant disabled persons and enlarged cubicles provided within separate sex toilets?
- Are separate accessible baby change facilities provided (not within disabled person's toilets)?
- Do toilets provided cater for a range of users, would a Changing Places toilet be appropriate in the development/ is one provided?

### Communication aids

- What type of hearing loop is provided?
- Does the building design provide a suitable environment for someone to lip read?

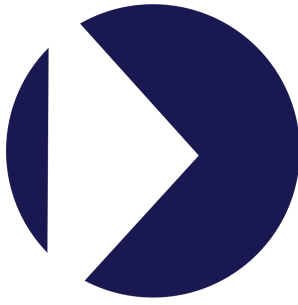
## **Inclusivity of the development overall**

### Avoiding segregation

- As far as possible, is the segregation of different user groups avoided (whilst still ensuring suitable choice in terms of provision)?
- Does the design of the scheme facilitate independent access / use for as many people as possible?
- Are built solutions provided over solutions which rely on management intervention/ people 'operating' them?

### Equality in terms of choice and prominence of facilities

- Are all facilities (including accessible facilities) equally visible easy to find and use in the environment?
- Can all facilities be accessed by all users safely, easily with dignity and without undue separation or special treatment?
  
- Are lifts and stair options given equal prominence / equally easy to find and use?
- Are changes of level kept to a minimum?
- Are lifts a suitable size for the intended use of the building?



# The Access Association

We are on the Web

[www.accessassociation.co.uk](http://www.accessassociation.co.uk)

We are on Twitter



@AccessAssoc

We are on LinkedIn



We are a limited company  
registered in England and Wales  
(No. 04225719)