

# Managing inclusive building design for higher education

## Equality briefing and process checklist





# Equality Challenge Unit

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for higher education

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# Introduction

This briefing and checklist have been developed by Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) in partnership with members of the Association of College & University Business Officers (CUBO) and the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE). The aim of the briefing is to promote inclusive practice in building design and refurbishment in higher education, through outlining a process that will ensure equality is taken into consideration at key stages of development.

This document will help those responsible for publicly and privately funded estates and facilities to meet their legal responsibilities and be better informed about current good practice. It shows how inclusive management can easily and cost-effectively create physical environments that go beyond simply meeting basic legal compliance to becoming environments where positive and equal opportunities are experienced both by staff and students, regardless of their age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, gender or gender identity.

The information it contains is relevant to all those connected to commissioning and developing higher education institution (HEI) buildings, including:

- = senior officers in universities
- = estate managers
- = project managers
- = designers and architects
- = purchasing officers
- = equality and diversity specialists
- = private and public sector accommodation managers and providers
- = managers of facilities and services.

There is a strong business argument for ensuring the campus environment addresses equality issues. The physical environment has a major influence on the student experience, on the experience of staff members, and on the reputation of an institution. Institutions are increasingly concerned with attracting a diverse range of students and delivering a working and learning environment that is welcoming, popular and inclusive.

## Introduction

Higher education institutions are also developing an understanding of how their size and activities can have an impact on the local and global environment. Considerations of equality and diversity issues and inclusive design strategies will form part of any comprehensive corporate responsibility analysis.

Considering and addressing equality issues from the outset of any new development will usually prove to be cost-effective by reducing the need for costly alterations or adaptations to accommodate a broader range of needs in the future. The intention is to enhance value in new developments and refurbishments, and to manage out problems before they arise.

The information in this briefing supplements two earlier ECU publications that consider the needs of different equality groups and issues relating to the procurement of student accommodation:

- = *Inclusive Campus: Accommodation and Social Space*  
[www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/inclusive-campus](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/inclusive-campus)
- = *Handbook for Student Accommodation Providers: Support and Guidance for Equality and Diversity* [www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/student-accommodation-providers-handbook.pdf/view](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/student-accommodation-providers-handbook.pdf/view)

Although the process outlined here focuses on larger-scale projects, an inclusive approach to building design is recommended at all levels of a commission, from redecoration to refurbishment and restructure.

Even small interior design details can affect some people significantly and changes can provide opportunities for improvement. For example, the choice of paint colours when repainting a corridor will have either a positive or negative impact on the experience of many partially sighted people. Similarly, the refurbishment of a cafeteria will often provide an opportunity for meeting a broader range of different dietary requirements – which students and staff may have for medical, cultural or religious reasons – and for creating exciting new spaces to encourage students from different backgrounds to mix and socialise.

# 1 Definition of inclusive building design

When considering inclusivity in higher education building design, thought should be given to the various environmental and cultural barriers that can be encountered. Barriers can include inaccessible or inappropriate main campus buildings, circulation areas, accommodation, social spaces and amenities, and poor teaching and learning environments. Inclusive building design aims to remove barriers and enable the environment to be used by everyone without the need for much individual customisation.

Although an inclusive design approach is important for all equality groups, it can be particularly important for disabled staff, students and visitors. Historically, disability was considered almost exclusively a medical problem, but since the 1990s government policies have been reinforcing the message that disability should be regarded as an equal opportunities issue on a par with gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference and age. The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) marked an important stage in emphasising the importance of eliminating physical and attitudinal barriers that were preventing disabled people from accessing mainstream opportunities, including access to higher education. See 'A fuller understanding of inclusive design', Section 3 in *Building and Sustaining a Learning Environment for Inclusive Design* (CEBE, undated).

Inclusive building design addresses the legal responsibility to anticipate the needs of disabled people and eliminate organisational barriers. This approach has also been described by disabled people as adopting the social model of disability, which places the emphasis on making the environment accessible rather than focusing on a person's individual circumstances (referred to as the medical model of disability). In practice, someone using the medical model might describe a situation by saying 'Jeremy is disabled, he uses a wheelchair . . .', whereas when using the social model they would focus on how the physical and social environment renders certain people disabled – for example, 'Jeremy is disabled by this building because it has only steps and no ramp . . .'!

Further information on the social and medical models of disability is available in:

- = the DDA *Code of Practice Post-16* (DRC, 2007: 'Understanding the social dimension of disability', section 2.3)
- = *The Disability Equality Duty: Guidance on Gathering and Analysing Evidence to Inform Action* (DRC, undated: page 9).

## 2 Writing an inclusive design brief

For major architectural/interior design projects, a prerequisite for ensuring the new development reflects inclusive design principles will be to write a design brief (see Appendix A). Many institutions already have equality and diversity as important principles within their vision statement, with endorsement by senior managers. If this is so, the design brief should link to relevant equality and diversity principles stated in the wider HEI business plan. It should also link to inclusive design strategies in the action plans developed from the public sector duties, as well as being influenced by the user/stakeholder involvement strategy outlined in the checklist (section 11).

The responsibility for creating an inclusive environment rests not solely with the designers of the built environment, but with the whole project team. This includes quantity surveyors, contractors and site operatives, service engineers, planners, developers, CDM coordinators and planning supervisors – anyone who makes a decision or acts in a way that creates, alters or influences the nature of the environment. All project managers and architects/designers should be expected to demonstrate their expertise and commitment in this area before they are appointed (see Appendix B for suggested questions to be asked at tender stage).

Everyone involved in a particular project should be asked to endorse the principles of creating an inclusive environment and given opportunities to offer feedback to the project manager if barriers to any of the equality groups are perceived. The project manager will then be expected to design in, and take action on, these observations and those of user groups as the building develops.

To work in accordance with corporate social responsibility commitments to protect the environment and public health, designers, architects and builders should also consider how to achieve an inclusive design, while giving consideration to improving energy efficiency, recycling, eliminating the release of pollutants, and other sustainability issues.

## 3 Legal and regulatory responsibilities

### Complying with current anti-discrimination legislation

Higher education institutions have a legal responsibility to ensure they comply with equality legislation through the general and specific public duties (see section 12 and [www.ecu.ac.uk/law](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/law)).

Responsibilities include undertaking anticipatory adjustments to the estate (ECU, 2008a), equality impact assessments (ECU, 2008b), and involving users and other stakeholders in the decision-making process (see [www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/furthering-the-involvement-of-disabled-students](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/furthering-the-involvement-of-disabled-students)).

When functions are carried out by an external supplier, the institution retains responsibility for ensuring the supplier carries out their work such that the institution remains compliant with the public duties. If all procurement processes build in equality conditions from the start (as outlined in the Appendices), this can help ensure equality issues are addressed appropriately at all stages.

### Building and planning regulations

When issues of inclusive design are discussed, people often refer to the guidance described in Approved Document M (ADM 2004) of the Building Regulations (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004) or the more detailed guidance covered in BS 8300:2009 (BSI, 2009). People may also consider or refer to planning regulations, for example those relating to the minimum number of disabled parking spaces required when a new car park is designed.

Such guidance will be familiar to most project managers and architects, and can be useful in providing minimum specifications for common facilities and features. However, complying with building and planning regulations will not, in itself, ensure that a building is designed to be inclusive or ensure an HEI's compliance with anti-discrimination legislation, for the following reasons.

- The guidance described in ADM 2004 identifies the minimum legal standard of accessibility acceptable for a given project or situation. Some issues that are vital to the accessibility and usability of a space or environment, such as signage, surface finishes and lighting, are not covered in much detail by the regulations.

## Legal and regulatory responsibilities

There is also often a time delay in relation to updating the regulations in line with latest good practice. This can be a problem for HEIs in several situations, for example where providing the current minimum size of a lift as prescribed in building regulations may not meet the access requirements of students using larger and more complex wheelchairs than in the past.

- = Building regulations generally approach issues from a 'minimum dimensions' perspective, rather than an 'inclusive design' perspective. For example, regulations may set out a minimum width for a doorway and corridor, but may not explain how to design that doorway so that it is fully accessible and inclusive. This means it is possible to achieve an appropriate building regulations standard by designing an entrance with a revolving door and a separate entrance for wheelchair users and other disabled people, even though having separate entrances for disabled and non-disabled people does not fit with the principles of inclusive design.
- = Building and planning regulations generally focus on disability access issues rather than other equalities issues. For example, the provision of parent and child parking, baby changing facilities, spaces for prayer and contemplation, a wide selection of food options, and clear and accessible signage are all relevant for HEIs in terms of their compliance with anti-discrimination legislation, but they are not generally covered by regulations.

Building regulations and planning documents are important sources of guidance and regulation when planning a building or renovation project. However, the duties placed on HEIs to promote equality and make reasonable adjustments for disabled people require them to think much more broadly about issues of inclusiveness when managing such projects.

### Examples of the types of issue not covered by building regulations

- = The need for separate facilities for the service of food and for storage and preparation of food in catering outlets and residences for religious observances.
- = The need for accommodation facilities appropriate for students' families and provision for children on campus.
- = The diverse nature of today's students, including growing numbers of mature students and postgraduates who may have different requirements from recreational and social spaces.

Further examples are available from ECU (2008a, 2009).

### Forthcoming legislation

The Equality Bill announced in April 2009 has proposed a general public equality duty on public authorities (clause 143). HEIs, as well as the funding councils, will be subject to this duty. It will replace the three existing duties (relating to race, gender, disability) with a single duty covering the protected characteristics of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

The general public equality duty will require HEIs to have due regard to the need to:

- = eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- = advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- = foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Equality Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in spring 2010. The majority of the bill is expected to come into force in autumn 2010, with the general public duty following in 2011. The bill is expected to contain additional directives for ensuring procurement processes are compliant with the public equality duties.

## 4 Equality impact assessments

Equality impact assessments are currently a required part of the specific public duties. They are intended to ensure all new policies and practices are considered from the perspectives of a diverse range of people. This process involves screening policies and practices for their potential to affect any group of students or staff adversely, and then to take appropriate action to address any issues that arise. Any major rebuild or refurbishment project should be equality impact assessed and the findings should help to inform access statements (section 7).

ECU has produced guidance on undertaking equality impact assessments (ECU, 2008b).

## 5 Involvement of users and stakeholders

It is important that projects develop strategies for user involvement to ensure the information held is up-to-date and relevant to the full diversity of the student and staff population, so that the perspectives of different equality groups are included. User groups and other stakeholders should be involved systematically in the process for agreeing new design and refurbishment proposals, or they are unlikely to become inclusive environments.

Involving staff and students need not be a costly undertaking. For example, inviting a range of potential users to view early plans or ideas and offering a free lunch in exchange for their responses is an option that has been used successfully. However, cost should not be used as an excuse to avoid or demote the process of user involvement to a tokenistic level.

Another possibility is to work with the equality and diversity department to develop user involvement mechanisms. User involvement needs to be managed appropriately to ensure representatives are knowledgeable and educated to a level that will enable them to make informed decisions and provide quality input. Access consultants should be part of the consultation and involvement process to help provide guidance and expertise on the accessible design of the environment.

When surveys of estates buildings identify considerable work needed to make buildings fully accessible to disabled users, it can be difficult to prioritise the work. Involving a group of users to act as access representatives could be useful to help determine the order of work to be done. Access representatives should be students and staff with a strong awareness of, or willingness to learn about, different ways in which the design of buildings can restrict or facilitate access to the HEI's services.

### **Example – University of Salford**

During a recent programme of improvements carried out at the University of Salford, estates worked with the equality and diversity office to create a network of access representatives to cover all the non-residential buildings across the HEI. The access representatives were asked to contribute to one or two network meetings and a site visit. It was intended that each building would be represented by someone who worked or studied regularly in it, and who was familiar with its design, what it is used for, and by whom. This helped to ensure every building had its rightful place in the programme of access improvement undertaken by the estates division.

It may not always be possible to satisfy everyone during the user involvement process, but if the process is transparent and the reasons for final decisions are given, then compromises will usually be understood and accepted. An effective communications strategy is a necessary part of the user involvement process.

User involvement processes are often believed to be lengthy, but any additional time spent needs to be balanced against the likelihood of improved quality and user satisfaction results. The financial benefit of getting it right first time by involving users early in the process should not be underestimated.

## 6 Access consultants

Individual estates departments will need to decide how to access specialist advice on accessible and inclusive design issues that best meets their needs and suits their own context. Many institutions may find they already have some experience of working with these issues – for example, estates services, equality and diversity teams or student disability services may be able to provide some initial advice about inclusive design issues. However, such advice is rarely a substitute for advice from a qualified and specialist access consultant or access auditor.

Many institutions will need to contract in the services of an access consultancy, so that specialist access consultants can be brought in to work on design teams and oversee individual projects. This approach is particularly important for larger or more complex projects or where the equality impact assessment process has identified the need (see section 4).

Access consultants should be sourced via an accredited body such as the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC, [www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk)) or the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Inclusive Environments Consultants Scheme ([www.rics.org/site/scripts/documents\\_info.aspx?categoryID=375&documentID=317](http://www.rics.org/site/scripts/documents_info.aspx?categoryID=375&documentID=317)). It is important to ensure access consultants understand cultural issues as well as the physical aspects of inclusive design. Appendix B provides some sample questions which can be used when selecting an access consultant. Access consultants can provide considerable benefits to projects and should work in partnership with (but should not replace) consultation with user groups (see section 5) to ensure a wide understanding of requirements is facilitated.

HEIs will also need to source specialist advice on accessibility and inclusive design issues for other reasons – for example, to:

- = carry out a full access audit of their existing buildings and grounds and produce a list of recommended adjustments
- = engage a specialist to train estates staff to ensure mainstream estates work takes proper account of accessibility and inclusive design issues.

### Example – University of Leeds

At the University of Leeds, a registered access consultant (NRAC) has been engaged to work with design and project teams to deliver accessible new accommodation at new residential development builds. The consultant's remit is to inform and influence the design and construction of the buildings and their landscapes to deliver outcomes in line with:

- = achieving accreditation in the Visit Britain National Accessible Scheme Quality Standard (*Visit Britain, 2004*)
- = complying with ADM 2004
- = complying with BS 8300:2009
- = meeting other recognised standards, specifications and general access solutions considered applicable (and reasonable) to the project, for example providing décor in suitable colours, lighting, wayfinding and signage.

The involvement of an appropriately experienced and accredited access consultant has enabled the HEI to meet its duties under the DDA and provide an inclusive, accessible environment that can be used by everyone.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the HEI's brief, the consultant has also:

- = made recommendations, incorporated into the early design, which have been cost-neutral
- = helped the HEI design accommodation that will not need expensive adaptation at a later date
- = helped make a case for some derogation from the guidance in ADM 2004 in order to provide a better solution to meeting the requirements of building users
- = helped the HEI to plan equipment installation to meet the needs of building users
- = developed an access guide for use by building users and staff.

Instead of bringing in an external consultancy, some HEIs may prefer to recruit an in-house specialist on accessibility and inclusive design issues to be a member of all design teams, train estates staff, and carry out access audits. In each of these different scenarios, the sample questions in Appendix B can assist with the selection process.

In larger, complex projects, or any project where the equality impact assessment process has identified a need (see section 4), project managers should be required to use the services of an access consultant to approve plans, suggest design amendments, monitor the project during the build process against an agreed access statement and, eventually, develop a practical access guide for management of the building after completion.

## 7 Access statements

A detailed access statement should be developed as an expression of intent at the design brief stage, and be expanded as a project develops to include planning, design, management and maintenance requirements.

An access statement should be regarded as a detailed working document setting out all the specific access standards and requirements that will need to be met within the building. Usually these standards and requirements are set out under headings such as internal circulation, parking and signage, and often the document is amended as each requirement is met. For example, the access statement will explain what kind of lighting and light switches should be used within the building from an accessibility point of view. Once the project team is satisfied that these have been installed, the access statement would normally indicate that this standard has been met.

Access statements should be signed off and monitored by the user group. More information about access statements is provided in CABA (2006) and a number of documents at [www.accessunlimited.org/downloads.html](http://www.accessunlimited.org/downloads.html).

To improve inclusivity in building design, it is important to have a creative approach. This will often mean exceeding minimum standard guidance, as outlined in ADM 2004, to meet the wider scope of guidance contained in BS 8300:2009 and the HEI's broader commitments and obligations in relation to equality and inclusiveness.

ADM 2004 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004) states that adopting the guidance it contains represents only one way of meeting the requirements of the regulations. Importantly for designers and managers of environments and spaces, it also states that there may be other ways of achieving compliance with the regulations – but where proposals deviate from the guidance in the ADM, the reasons why, and evidence that what is proposed is of a standard that is equal to or better than that described in the ADM, should be identified and argued in an access statement.

In that respect, the access statement is the vehicle through which designers who wish to be creative and innovative can demonstrate the inclusiveness and

accessibility of their designs, and that although their proposal may not follow the general or standard design guidance contained in the ADM, it is nonetheless suitable to address the needs of all the people who will use it.

## 8 Access guides

There is no point in having accessible features within buildings if, after its completion, those managing or staffing the building do not know about the existence of these features or how to use them. Therefore the preparation of a bespoke access guide, generally by an access consultant, at the final stage of the building development should be considered – certainly for all major projects. An access guide is a practical document aimed at building managers and those staffing the building (reception staff, customer service staff, etc.), which will help ensure a smooth handover of information from those who have designed and created the building to those who will be working within it.

An access guide will often contain detailed descriptions of the following.

- ⇒ The specific features that exist within the building to make it inclusive. For example, this might include information about the locations of infrared and induction loop systems for people who are hard of hearing, the fire alarm and evacuation facilities within the building for disabled people, the availability of baby-changing and reserved parking facilities, etc.
- ⇒ Practical issues that managers and staff will need to consider when occupying or using the building. For example, the guide may set out important restrictions on the selection and location of loose furniture to ensure clear circulation routes are retained, information about the ongoing use and maintenance of any assistive technology, and design rules to ensure any signage installed in the building is accessible. Also, where later management actions (e.g. locking of particular routes into or within the building at certain times) may restrict access, the guide should set out practical actions required to avoid compromising the accessibility of the building.
- ⇒ Recommended actions for communicating the accessibility of the building to its users. For example, the access guide may set out important recommendations for producing a tactile map or leaflet about the layout of the building in Braille and other alternative formats for visitors and other building users. It may also explain the need to incorporate some information about this specific building into a broader campus accessibility document for staff and students (e.g. information produced by the University of Essex: [www2.essex.ac.uk/stdsup/disab/access.shtm](http://www2.essex.ac.uk/stdsup/disab/access.shtm)).

A well written access guide for a building will be extremely valuable in supporting staff training to maintain inclusive access to facilities and services throughout the building, and particularly to communicate any features that are not always well understood.

## 9 Health, safety and fire legislation, and conservation

In addition to considering the needs of all users, an inclusive design approach can support the needs of those constructing, maintaining and servicing the building. BS 9999:2008 is a new code of practice, applicable from 1 April 2009, which aims to support the health and safety of those involved in the construction, design and management of buildings. BS 9999:2008 is applicable to the design of new buildings, and to alterations, extensions and changes in use of existing buildings on campus. It provides guidance on the ongoing management of fire safety throughout the entire life cycle of a building, including ensuring the overall design of the building assists and enhances the management of fire safety. It can be used as a tool for assessing existing buildings, although fundamental changes in line with the guidelines might well be limited or impractical.

Where there is a conflict of interest between achieving inclusive design and maintaining health and safety, the safety issues should prevail. However, often what appears to be a conflict between these issues can be resolved in a way that satisfies both an HEI's accessibility responsibilities and its health and safety responsibilities. For example, installing a series of corridor fire doors will be vital from a fire safety perspective, but this will also create access barriers for disabled people. In these circumstances, it becomes the responsibility of project managers to strive to come up with a way forward that takes account of both regulatory frameworks. Having all corridor doors on hold-open mechanisms wherever possible, so that they close automatically in the event of a fire, is one way of minimising access barriers while also meeting fire safety requirements. The use of such hold-open devices, and how they will affect the ability of a disabled person to escape from an area once they are deactivated, would then be addressed in an appropriate personal emergency evacuation plan for people using the space.

Building designers may experience opposition to improving access when working on refurbishments to listed/historic buildings. Negotiations with planners and conservationists are likely to be required, but planners and conservationists also have obligations to improve access to public buildings, so solutions should be possible.

## 10 Conclusions

Too often HEIs may overlook the contribution the physical environment makes to shaping a positive student and staff experience. In developing new buildings or refurbishing existing buildings, the end users need to be considered and involved from the outset.

Users of buildings will have diverse needs, so designing in as many features as possible will help ensure the success of the final project. This briefing is intended to support a move away from meeting minimum requirements and following regulations. Instead, the focus should be on people, and on the way in which they interact with the physical environments we create. This move will enable HEIs to minimise the need for the costly retro-fitting of adjustments, and is the only way to create physical environments that contribute to the organisation's broader strategic objectives and deliver buildings and outdoor spaces which are genuinely fit for purpose.

# 11 Management process checklist

Inclusive building design aims to enable the environment to be used by all people without the further need for customisation. The following process will support the implementation of an inclusive building design in higher education, and is intended to be useful to senior managers with responsibility for estate development.

	Process	Responsibility	Done
1	Determine an inclusive building design approach for the project's vision statement and ensure it is prominent within the brief at all stages (Appendix A)	HEI Estates manager Facilities manager	
2	Appoint a project manager with commitment and ability to deliver the inclusive vision (Appendix B)	Estates manager Facilities manager	
3	Form a user/stakeholder group to scope the project and develop a strategy that will ensure involvement of all equality groups and relevant professionals at key stages	Project manager Equality and diversity office (to ensure perspectives of age, disability, gender, trans, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation are represented) User and staff representatives Occupational health Other relevant professional groups	
4	Produce a communication strategy to support the involvement process	Project manager	
5	Carry out equality impact assessment of the final vision and scoping of the project Revise these if necessary to ensure the needs of all are provided for	User group	

	Process	Responsibility	Done
<b>6</b>	Develop access statement based on the impact assessment	Project manager/design team	
<b>7</b>	Appoint design team; include an access consultant to advise on inclusive design, ensure compliance with legal equality requirements, and add value to the project through addressing diverse needs	Project manager	
<b>8</b>	Develop outline design that includes user group input	Design team	
<b>9</b>	Review access statement and supplement with additional equality requirements	User group	
<b>10</b>	If adjustments are made for cost or other reasons, user group to be kept informed and asked to prioritise choices and preferences based on further impact and risk assessments	Project manager	
<b>11</b>	User group consulted on developments in the design until satisfied and design signed off by them	Design team Project manager	
<b>12</b>	Communicate with the public using different methods at key stages of development to ensure wide consultation	Project manager	
<b>13</b>	Produce access guide at final stage of development to ensure staff and users are informed about access features within the building	Access consultant	
<b>14</b>	Once project is delivered, undertake post-occupancy audit and use findings to inform subsequent projects	Estates manager Facilities manager	

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Visit Britain (2004) *National Accessible Scheme – Advice and Benefits of Participation*. Visit Britain, London. [www.enjoyengland.com/Images/NAS%20Benefits%20leaflet\\_tcm21-171221.pdf](http://www.enjoyengland.com/Images/NAS%20Benefits%20leaflet_tcm21-171221.pdf)

## 13 Sources of further information

Access Association	<a href="http://www.access-association.org.uk">www.access-association.org.uk</a>
Accessibuilt	<a href="http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=accessibuilt">www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=accessibuilt</a>
British Design Innovation	<a href="http://www.britishdesigninnovation.org">www.britishdesigninnovation.org</a>
Cambridge Engineering Design Centre	<a href="http://www.eng.cam.ac.uk/inclusivedesign/index.php">www.eng.cam.ac.uk/inclusivedesign/index.php</a>
Centre for Accessible Environments	<a href="http://www.cae.org.uk">www.cae.org.uk</a>
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers	<a href="http://www.cibse.org">www.cibse.org</a>
Code of Practice on Access and Mobility	<a href="http://www.accesscode.info/introduction/1.htm">www.accesscode.info/introduction/1.htm</a>
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment	<a href="http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1#2">www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1#2</a>
Design Council	<a href="http://www.designcouncil.org.uk">www.designcouncil.org.uk</a>
EIDD – Design for All Europe	<a href="http://www.designforalleurope.org">www.designforalleurope.org</a>
Helen Hamlyn Research Centre	<a href="http://www.hhc.rca.ac.uk/archive/hhrc/index.html">www.hhc.rca.ac.uk/archive/hhrc/index.html</a>
Inclusive Design Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/ribavideo">www.youtube.com/user/ribavideo</a> <sup>1</sup>
Institute for Design and Disability	<a href="http://www.idd.ie">www.idd.ie</a>
JMU Access Partnership	<a href="http://www.jmuaccess.org.uk">www.jmuaccess.org.uk</a>
National Register of Access Consultants	<a href="http://www.nrac.org.uk/index.html">www.nrac.org.uk/index.html</a>

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1. This film features talks by disabled people and interesting case studies about how particular architectural practices have involved disabled people in the process of designing new buildings from the start of the process.

## Sources of further information

Research Group for Inclusive Environments

[www.reading.ac.uk/ie](http://www.reading.ac.uk/ie)

RIBA Bookshops

[www.ribabookshops.com/site/home.asp](http://www.ribabookshops.com/site/home.asp)

RICS Inclusive Environments Consultants Scheme

[www.rics.org/site/scripts/documents\\_info.aspx?categoryID=375&documentID=317](http://www.rics.org/site/scripts/documents_info.aspx?categoryID=375&documentID=317)

School of the Built and Natural Environment

[www.bne.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.bne.uwe.ac.uk)

Sign Design Society

[www.signdesignsociety.co.uk/content.php?folder\\_id=27](http://www.signdesignsociety.co.uk/content.php?folder_id=27)

United Kingdom Institute for Inclusive Design

[www.ukiid.org/index.html](http://www.ukiid.org/index.html)

Universal Design Network

[www.ihcdstore.org/universaldesign-net](http://www.ihcdstore.org/universaldesign-net)

Women's Design Service

[www.wds.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.wds.org.uk/index.htm)

## **Appendix A: Drafting a building project brief for a new build project**

Too often, building project briefs will ignore inclusive design issues altogether, perhaps assuming these issues will be taken into account automatically, or they may include a simple statement such as ‘This building must comply with the DDA and building regulations’. However, if an institution wants to ensure a new build project is designed in a way that is genuinely inclusive, significant thought needs to be given to accessibility issues from the outset and a large proportion of the initial brief should be dedicated to these issues.

Below is a fictional example of an ‘Accessibility and inclusive design’ section of an individual project brief. Incorporating a section like this into a brief, while also threading accessibility issues throughout the rest of the brief, is highly recommended. If you are seeking to ensure your building will meet specific standards on accessibility, or be accredited under a particular scheme, you should also make this clear within the brief.

### Accessibility and inclusive design

We are committed to ensuring this building is fully accessible and designed in a way that is inclusive for all students, staff members and visitors. While there is a need to focus on the specific requirements of particular groups – particularly disabled people – we also take a broader approach to the concept of inclusiveness and seek to ensure this building provides a welcoming, usable and inclusive environment for all.

In relation to the equal access requirements of disabled people, we consider that compliance with *Approved Document M of the Building Regulations 2000* is not sufficient, on its own, to ensure an accessible and inclusive building.

Beyond disability equality issues, we seek to create an inclusive environment for a diverse student and staff population which includes people, whatever their age, gender, disability, religious or cultural beliefs, or sexual orientation. The design team is therefore expected to work in line with the following principles.

- ⇒ Focus on user experience and on the way in which the building will be used by people – we expect inclusive design issues to be given the same level of attention that aesthetic design or cost issues conventionally receive.
- ⇒ Deliver, as far as possible, an equal user experience for disabled and non-disabled users of the building – for example, when designing the counter facilities in the main hall, all the reception desk service points should be accessible to everyone, rather than creating a separate service point for wheelchair-users. Similarly, we hope to avoid having designated spaces for wheelchair-users in lecture theatres, as this would provide disabled people with less choice of where to sit.
- ⇒ Minimise the number of access barriers within the building – for example, by ensuring all doors are easy to open and, where possible, on hold-open mechanisms so that they close only in the event of a fire.
- ⇒ Minimise the number of accessibility features that may break down or require maintenance in the future – for example, in most cases installing a permanent ramp will be preferable to a platform lift.
- ⇒ Ensure the building is accessible for staff members as well as students and visitors – for example, reception desks need to be accessible for a disabled receptionist as well as a disabled visitor, and lecture theatres (on the second floor) must be accessible to a disabled lecturer as well as to disabled students.
- ⇒ Seek appropriate input from a diverse range of potential users of the building (via a user group).

These principles mean that inclusive design issues must inform all aspects of design, for example including the following.

- ⇒ External landscaping of the building and related external facilities, with attention given to the gradient of external slopes within the footprint of the building and the need for nearby parking provision for disabled people.
- ⇒ Design of entrances to the building – for example, we wish to avoid the need for separate entrances for wheelchair-users and other people.
- ⇒ Design of internal circulation routes, as far as possible ensuring disabled people do not encounter unnecessary delays compared with non-disabled people when moving around the building. All building users, disabled and non-disabled, must be able to navigate around the building easily and independently – for example, staff-operated platform lifts are not appropriate.
- ⇒ Interior design choices – for example, colour palettes for interior décor should ensure high-contrast provision for people who are partially sighted, floorings must be accessible for wheelchair-users, and acoustics need to be planned to ensure access for people who are hard of hearing.
- ⇒ Selection of appropriate assistive technology – for example, induction loop systems should be built into reception desks, and either induction loop or infrared systems incorporated into the main teaching spaces in the building.
- ⇒ Toilet facilities – where possible, these should be designed to be accessible to both disabled and non-disabled people. The use of unisex accessible facilities may be preferable to separate toilets for disabled and non-disabled people in some parts of the building. All toilet provision must be accessible to ambulant disabled people – for example with lever taps, accessible door locks, etc.
- ⇒ Fire and emergency egress – wherever possible, provision should be made to enable a disabled person to exit the building independently in the case of an emergency or fire. Where necessary, refuge points may be incorporated in the design; however, all refuge points must have an intercom system linked to the security office and must be clearly signposted. Fire and other emergency alarm systems must be both visible and audible. Alarm bells or sirens should not be sited in refuge areas.
- ⇒ Specific facilities for particular groups of people – for example, we must ensure the prayer and contemplation room (currently planned for the second floor) meets the requirements of people of particular religious faiths.

These are indicative examples of important design features, not an exhaustive list.

## Appendix B: Sample questions to use when choosing a project manager or other key members of a design team

When choosing a project manager or other design team members – including architects and access consultants – it is essential to ensure they have experience of inclusive design and accessibility issues. This appendix lists some sample questions for institutions to use when seeking a project manager, architect or access consultant.

Institutions will need to adapt and supplement these to suit their own requirements and procurement procedures. They are drafted with a tendering process in mind, but could be adapted to suit a recruitment exercise if an institution decides to recruit its own internal access specialist.

Question	Issues to consider
<i>Questions relevant to all potential design team members</i>	
<p><b>1</b> Please describe two building projects you have been involved in recently, which you consider to be designed inclusively as a result of your involvement.</p>	<p>You may ask to see detailed plans of the buildings cited as examples and/or seek references from clients of these projects. Also consider seeking information about the specific role of the tenderer in relation to these projects (e.g. ask for examples of adjustments that were made to the designs specifically as a result of their input).</p> <p>An alternative approach might involve giving a set of building plans from a previous building project to the tenderer(s) at interview, allowing them a short time before the interview to examine the plans. Their account of the main accessibility issues relating to that building will provide a clear indication of the approach taken by the tenderer and the quality and usefulness of their advice.</p>

Question	Issues to consider
<p><b>2</b> Given all the different regulations and sets of standards that exist in relation to accessibility – including the DDA, Building Regulations Part M, British Standards, Centre for Accessible Environments (CfAE) guidance, etc. – what baseline standards would you use when planning the accessibility of a building?</p>	<p>You need to be sure the consultant will not simply assess accessibility against the Building Regulations Part M, as this will not necessarily be sufficient to ensure duties imposed by the DDA will be met and will not necessarily deliver fully accessible designs (see section 3).</p> <p>This question should also tell you whether the tenderer is aware of any standards that relate to the specific type of project they would be working on. For example, if you are looking for an access consultant to work on a hall of residence design team, this question might reveal whether the tenderer is aware of the Visit Britain National Accessible Scheme Quality Standard (Visit Britain, 2004).</p>
<p><b>3</b> In your work, which disability issues do you take into account?</p> <p>To what extent do you go beyond considering the access requirements of wheelchair-users and people with mobility impairments?</p> <p>And to what extent do you focus on inclusive design issues beyond disability access issues?</p>	<p>Access consultants should be looking at a wide range of disability issues when carrying out their work. Most consultants will consider the access requirements of people with restricted mobility, people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted (and therefore take into account the need for visual/vibrating fire alarms, induction loops, contrasting paint colours, tactile paving, etc.). You may wish to establish whether they will consider the requirements of a broader range of disabled people – for example, the need for clear signage to assist people with dyslexia.</p> <p>Also consider the extent to which you require advice on other equalities issues (e.g. advice on how to make a building inclusive for people with a family, people from different religious groups, transgender people). In some cases you may need to look beyond an access consultant for such advice.</p>

## Appendix B: Sample questions

Question	Issues to consider
<p><b>4a</b> How would you propose to consult and involve staff and students (particularly disabled staff and students) in the work you carry out under this contract?</p> <p><i>and/or</i></p> <p><b>4b</b> For past projects of similar size/complexity, how have you involved disabled people in your work?</p>	<p>A good access consultant should be able to describe how they intend to take account of the views of disabled people to inform their work, for example by establishing a user group or issuing a call for feedback from building users about particular access barriers that exist.</p> <p>They should also be able to refer to examples of previous projects in which they have involved disabled people or people from other groups who may be using the proposed environment.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Please confirm who will be working to deliver services under this contract and, specifically, what the contribution of each person will be.</p> <p>Also confirm whether you intend to subcontract any of the work delivered under this contract.</p>	<p>You need to be sure that the people you are meeting at interview will be the people who deliver work under the contract.</p> <p>You do not want to appoint a contractor only to find that they pass the work on to another person or organisation lacking the required specialist skills and experience.</p>

Question	Issues to consider
<p><b>6</b> How do you ensure those who will be providing services under this contract have the required specialist skills and experience for this work? Please provide CVs/profiles for all staff who will be providing services under this contract.</p>	<p>You should be looking for evidence that contractor staff have attended specific courses and/or have qualifications on accessibility and inclusive design work. You may also wish to ask how long any training courses lasted, to ensure they were not just short one- or two-day courses.</p>
<p><b>7</b> Of the people involved in delivering work under this contract, how many are NRAC-registered consultants and how many are NRAC-registered auditors?</p>	<p>The National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) is an independent register of accredited access auditors and access consultants who meet professional standards and criteria established by a peer-review system. NRAC auditors are qualified primarily to identify barriers to access, while consultants have greater construction knowledge and can go further in recommending solutions to access barriers. See <a href="http://www.nrac.org.uk">www.nrac.org.uk</a> for more information.</p> <p>Another peer-review accreditation scheme, is the Inclusive Environments Consultants Scheme operated by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – people who have been accepted onto the scheme register are entitled to use the letters IEC after their name. See <a href="http://www.rics.org">www.rics.org</a> for more information.</p> <p>In most cases all accessibility and inclusive design specialists are expected to be NRAC- or IEC-registered, or to demonstrate a similar level of accreditation/ expertise.</p>

## Appendix B: Sample questions

Question	Issues to consider
<i>Question that is particularly relevant when selecting an access consultant</i>	
<b>8</b> Please provide two examples of previous access audit reports/ access statements* that you have produced for other clients/projects.	You need to know that the kind of reports this organisation produces will meet your needs. Are the recommendations or listed actions in these reports clear? How useful would your institution find these reports?
<i>*Delete as appropriate depending on whether you are seeking an organisation to carry out an access audit of existing buildings or to input into a new build design.</i>	









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