

Inclusive Design

Introduction

The Northern Housing Consortium is embarking on a major, cross disciplinary and multi stranded project with a central theme of “design”. The strands will include design of, homes, neighbourhoods and services and the issue of ageing will be key to the delivery of the project. The ultimate aim of the project we will be to build a picture of what an “Age Friendly Community in the North” would look like.

This paper considers the concept of *Inclusive Design* and is the first of a series of discussion and findings papers to be published as part of the development work for the design project. The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of inclusive design amongst Northern Housing Consortium members and wider housing community, and the role that inclusive design can play in responding to, and capitalising upon, the north’s changing markets.

The paper also seeks feedback and input from members and the wider housing community into the project and ensures that the full breadth of issues you are facing will be tackled through the project.

What is inclusive design?

Definition:

Inclusive Design is neither a new genre of design, nor a separate specialism. It is a process driven by designers and industry to ensure that products and services address the needs of the *widest possible audience*, regardless of age or ability. Two major trends have driven the growth of inclusive design - population ageing and the growing movement to integrate disabled people into mainstream society¹.

Inclusive design is also known as *design for all, universal design, human centred design, ergonomics, usability studies, design for disability, rehabilitation design, gerontechnology and transgenerational design*².

Inclusive Design - an increasingly high profile agenda

Baroness Andrews OBE, Parliamentary under Secretary of State began to speak about the notion of ‘inclusive communities’³ and ‘inclusive design’⁴ during a series of

¹ Inclusive Design Education Resource, Helen Hamlyn Research Centre
<http://www.designcouncil.info/inclusivedesignresource/>

² The Design Council has a very useful glossary of inclusive design related terminology
<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/en/About-Design/Design-Techniques/Inclusive-design/Glossary/>

³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/planning-institute;>
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/cambridgeshire-horizons>

speeches in 2006 and 2007. In a speech to the Fabian Society, June 2007 Baroness Andrews said: “We want to see inclusive design in the mainstream..... Inclusivity is the key - keeping people well and happy in the community will be successful only if we design our homes and our neighbourhoods for the changes of a lifetime”.



Here in the UK there has been surprisingly little industry awareness of inclusive design and its benefits despite the fact that the UK population is ageing rapidly. However since the publication of the national strategy for housing in an ageing society [Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods](#)⁵ published on 25th February 2008 the concept of inclusive design has shot up the policy agenda. This cross government strategy sets out a comprehensive national response to the ageing challenges we face and has set a number of targets for the housing sector to deliver in partnership. The strategy urges us to think and plan differently and to focus housing policy on aspiration and lifestyle.

The strategy promotes the concept of lifetime homes and lifetime neighbourhoods, of services to support older people to live independently in a home that they choose and housing services leading the preventative agenda integrated with health and care. One of the key themes running throughout the strategy is the **inclusive design** of homes, neighbourhoods and services. In the national strategy the government sets clear timescales to update the lifetime home standards and make the standard mandatory for all new homes built with public funding from 2011, and to publish guidance on the development of lifetime neighbourhoods. Lifetime homes are already being developed by a number of housing providers, and are seen as an example of good design although they have been largely built to cater for older and vulnerable people. Inclusive design is a much broader approach; it is very much seen as the next stage and one which the housing sector must get to grips with urgently both in terms of responding to the demographic challenges but also the economic opportunity of greater inclusion.

“We hope that Lifetime Homes will lead the way for an inclusive design revolution for every aspect of our homes and interiors.....Inclusive design must become the mainstream....A lifetime neighbourhood is not just good for older people. It is a neighbourhood that works better for everyone because it is underpinned by the principles of inclusive design....Good design works well for people of all ages, but for those with mobility problems or with sensory or cognitive impairments it can make the difference between social exclusion and independent living.....Once business realises the massive and expanding market for inclusive design, then it will become the standard that everyone demands”.

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods (CLG 2008)

Evolving policy context

The evolution toward inclusive design began in the 1950s. In Europe, Japan, and the United States, barrier-free design first developed to remove obstacles in the built

⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/housing-provision>;
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/housingageingsociety>

⁵ CLG (2008) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/lifetimehomesneighbourhoods>

environment for people with physical disabilities. It followed the companion social policy of moving people with disabilities from institutional settings to the community. However at that time barrier-free design was segregated and specialised, applicable to people with mobility impairments. In the United States, the disability rights movement and veteran campaigns of the 1970's stimulated the barrier free design movement. Valuable laws governing accessible design were introduced, but had the unintended consequence of diminishing attention to the creative potential of design to enhance everyone's experience through design that anticipated human diversity and integrated solutions seamlessly. In 1977 American architect, Michael Bednar, introduced the idea that everyone's functional capacity is enhanced when environmental barriers are removed. He suggested that a new concept beyond accessibility was needed that would be broader and more 'universal'⁶.

By the 1980's parts of Europe and the United States were beginning to move beyond the emphasis on specialised solutions tailored to individuals and toward the idea of integration, with the housing sector being a primary focus for inclusive design advocacy, research and implementation.

In 1999 the Helen Hamlyn Centre was set in the UK up to explore the design implications of social and demographic change. Its programmes look at how a people-centred and socially inclusive approach to design can support independent living and working for ageing and diverse populations, improved standards of healthcare and patient safety, and a flow of innovative ideas for business. The government's Foresight programme focussed on inclusive design through its Healthcare and Ageing Population Panel during 1999-2000. Inclusivity was seen as integral to achieving the broad strategic vision of 'ensuring that an ageing population remains one that is bound together, economically, socially and culturally'.

More recently government policy has focussed on the principles of choice and control, dignity and human rights, empowerment, social inclusion and freedom from discrimination. The leading piece of legislation being the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, but other policy examples include:-

- [Improving the Life Chances of Disabled people](#), PMSU, 2005
- [A Sure Start to Later Life: ending inequalities for older people](#), ODPM, 2006
- [Our Health, Our Care, Our Say](#), DH, 2006
- [Independence and Opportunity: Our Strategy for Supporting People](#), CLG 2007
- [Independent Living Strategy](#), CLG, DH, 2008

In terms of housing, provision has for some time been regulated by a rapidly changing agenda and recent years have seen a number of legislative and policy developments including:-

- [Building Regulations Part M](#) (Disabled Access To And Use Of Buildings) covers accessibility to all new homes.
- Housing Corporation [Design and Quality standards](#) set out the standards that developments funded through the National Affordable Housing Programme need to meet. The standards place a strong focus on better design and incentives to providers.

⁶ <http://www.adaptiveenvironments.org/index.php?Itemid=26&option=Content>

- English Partnerships [Quality and Space](#) standards include the need for projects funded by the government agency to include lifetime standards and inclusive design.
- [Building for Life](#) is the national benchmark for well-designed housing and neighbourhoods in England. The 20 criteria and the policy guidance is used by developers as a basis for writing development briefs, and by local authorities to demand high standards of design and assess design quality.
- Planning Policy Statements (PPS) - [PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development](#) places good design at its heart and [PPS 3: Housing](#) requires regions and local planning bodies to assess and plan for the housing needs of the whole community including older people.
- [The Future for the Code for Sustainable Homes](#) – the new code for sustainable homes will make lifetime homes standards mandatory as well as putting in place a range of energy efficiency targets

UK legislation and regulation has to a large extent narrowly focussed on ‘barrier free’ design and accessibility with the intention of eliminating certain physical barriers to access. Government directives set only minimum standards and tend to focus on the needs of people with mobility limitations, especially wheelchair users. Legal requirements miss the potential of design to facilitate independence, participation or well-being by a broader spectrum of people, and therefore fall short of making the home and the built environment easily accessible for all our existing and changing needs. So, despite a wide number of government directives the design of the built environment still creates barriers to access for wide sections of the population.

The built environment is generally designed for the ‘healthy’ and able bodied, and the onus is too often placed on older and disabled people to adapt themselves to an environment which suits mainstream society. Segregation by physical access has created an urban environment that has been defined by some authors as ‘enclosed’, ‘barriered’, and a ‘space of exclusion’ for many in the population⁷. In terms of housing, the vast majority of existing and new build housing does not currently meet the needs of those with functional limitations and will certainly not meet the challenges of an ageing society. In the case of new housing developments, a 2005 audit⁸ of schemes in the north found that 94 per cent over the previous three years failed to measure up on design quality with 24 % of new schemes judged as ‘poor’ and a further 70% simply ‘average’. The schemes were scored against the Building for Life criteria and the main weaknesses were the quality of streets and public spaces, poor signage and confusing layouts of housing developments and failure to create places with a sense of identity and character. At the same time there is evidence that a high proportion of basic equipment designed to aid independence such as walking and bathing aids remain largely unused due to inappropriate selection e.g. failing to account for a person’s height, weight or other more detailed information.

The emphasis in design is often one of fitting the person to the environment. A familiar example in housing would be the provision of ‘specialist’ housing. This is driven by the medical model of disability which assumes that disability is caused by impairment, causing the individual to become becomes the focus of change. The

⁷ Gleeson (2001), Imrie (2001)

⁸ Housing audit: Assessing the design quality of new homes in the North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humber, CABE 2005 <http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=325>

segregation of specialist from mainstream can be seen to have contributed to isolation and exclusion. Some would argue that it is society's unwillingness to accept responsibility and devote resources to ensure that everyone can live a fulfilling life, which is the root cause of social exclusion. The more dynamic social model of disability argues that disability is socially produced by attitudes and by environments that create unnecessary barriers. Inclusive design represents a shift of emphasis away from fitting the person to the environment towards one which fits the environment to the person. This approach fits with the social model of disability and requires a fundamental rethinking of buildings, products, services and information and an understanding of the range of capabilities across the whole population, and the way these change during a lifetime.

A number of organisations have developed principles of inclusive design, these can be summarised as:-

The principles of Inclusive Design⁹:

1. **Inclusive design places people at the heart of the design process** – design and development should create places that people can use to form strong vibrant and sustainable communities. To achieve this you should ensure that you involve as many people as possible on the design. This will help to promote personal well-being, social cohesion and enjoyment for all.
2. **Inclusive design acknowledges diversity and difference** – everyone at some point will probably experience limited mobility. It is important to identify barriers as early as possible in the design process so that good design can overcome them. Inclusive design celebrates the diversity of people and should not impose disabling barriers.
3. **Inclusive design offers choice** – an inclusive environment does not attempt to meet every need. But by considering diversity it can achieve superior solutions that benefit everyone. An environment should exceed minimum technical specifications and inspire users.
4. **Inclusive design provides for flexibility in use** – meeting the requirements of inclusive design requires an understanding of how the space will be used and who will use it. Places need to be designed so that they can adapt to changing uses and demands.
5. **Inclusive design provides places which are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone** – access to buildings isn't simply about their physical layout. Ensuring this 'intellectual' or 'emotional' access means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials.

Examples of inclusive design in the market place

OXO/Good Grips potato peelers¹⁰ - an example of mainstream market success achieved by focussing on high quality products designed to avoid exclusion.

OXO International was founded in 1989 by Sam Farber, a retired CEO of a cookware company. His wife had arthritis in her hands and found using many kitchen utensils difficult and sometimes painful. When he investigated further he grew increasingly

⁹ The Principles of Inclusive Design (They include you) CABE 2006
<http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1499>

¹⁰ The University of Cambridge, Department of Engineering

frustrated with the design of the utensils including the handle design and overall quality of components such as blades that tended to blunt and rust easily. Farber believed that these issues were of interest to everyone, not just those who had identified their own difficulties in using the existing utensils.



The key to the company's approach is the view that it is the design of experiences that matter rather than the product functionality alone. The design team began by trying to understand the consumer needs that had to be addressed. To appeal to the broadest possible market, it was necessary to identify the different market sectors and interview representative users from each sector. These included domestic consumers, professional chefs and special interest groups, such as

consumers with arthritis or declining strength through ageing.

The company builds its brand values around award winning designs as and as result OXO has grown by more than 30% each year since it was founded in the early 1990's.

The Ford Focus¹¹ - designed for easier access for older drivers and passengers, but appealing to young and old alike.

Unlike any car built by Ford before, the designers of the Focus were encouraged to design for the needs of older drivers as well as the usual younger target market. Ford even went so far as to develop a novel method of simulating the effects of old age using what became known as the 'Third Age Suit'¹².

The suit was designed to add the equivalent of 30 years of ageing to the wearer. This ageing effect is achieved by using joint stiffeners in the neck, back, stomach and knees to simulate the reduced flexion from conditions such as arthritis. The suit mimics both the change in body shape and the difficulty in getting into and out of cars



often associated with ageing. Visual impairments, such as cataracts, are also simulated through the use of spectacles with different lenses.

Designers were encouraged to wear the suit to increase their empathy for older users by letting them experience some of the difficulties faced by such drivers. As a result of their use of the suit, the Ford Focus offers many innovative features. For example, it has the most headroom of any cars in its

class. The front door is wider and higher than that of the Escort and the seats are higher. This combination of door size and seat height makes it significantly easier to

¹¹ The University of Cambridge, Department of Engineering

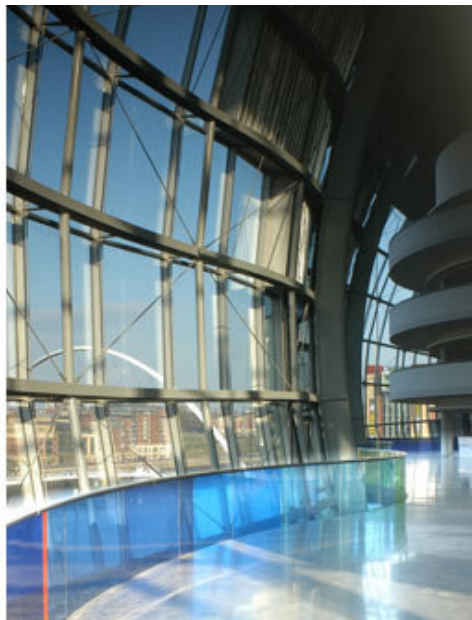
¹² Steinfeld and Steinfeld (2001)

get in and out of the Focus. The dashboard controls are larger than those of its predecessor and have been designed to be easier to locate, grab and operate.

All of the features developed to make the car easier to operate and drive for older adults have not adversely affected the enjoyment of the Focus for younger drivers. Indeed, many of the features introduced are of benefit to all drivers. For example, the easier access to the car is good for parents with small children. Larger, easy to use controls are good for everyone. The new, more inclusive Focus has continued the sales success of its predecessors and is regularly the top-selling car in the UK.

The Sage Gateshead¹³ – a public building that is fully inclusive and accessible for all. Winner of the 2005 RIBA Inclusive Design Award for Inclusive Building of the Year. The award celebrates inclusivity in building design, and demonstrates that good design results in environments that are safe, convenient and enjoyable to use by people, regardless of disability, age or gender.

Access was key to the design approach, and from the outset, Gateshead Council demonstrated a genuine commitment to inclusion. The council appointed as access consultant David Burdus, who worked on the project from inception to completion, and The Sage Gateshead Access Panel was established in 2000 to ensure disabled people's input into the design process. Examples of inclusive design include at the Sage include:-



to both sides of glass panels

- Very large passenger lifts that can be used for evacuation of disabled people
- 'Intelligent lifts' that can communicate with Possum systems
- Large unisex toilet cubicles with shower, bench change and hoists to cater for people who have personal assistants and use large powered wheelchairs
- Low level sinks, toilets and handrails for smaller people and children
- Way finding features including tactile symbols on stair and passenger lift handrails
- Powered stair climber to supplement means of escape from the basement
- Two tone manifestation to glass

- A second low level alarm buttons in lift cars at 150 mm above floor level
- Use of stainless steel and black finish as visual definition to step nosing, counter edges, ironmongery
- Use of lighting elements in concourse for way finding

¹³ <http://www.ignite-ne.com>

The Sage continues to look at ways to maximise access to the building and its activities such as addressing the limited tonal and colour contrast for those people with a visual impairment, the development of a venue access guide, and wheelchairs to link the Sage with the nearby Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art.

Why is inclusive design important for the North?

"We should try to imagine ourselves in the presence of all our future selves"

Historian and demographer Peter Laslett¹⁴, 1996

The north's population is changing fundamentally and irrevocably. Alongside unprecedented growth amongst older and disabled groups, the inevitability that we will work longer will fuel radical changes in expectations. This will ultimately challenge common assumptions about how products and services are designed. As we live longer evidence suggests that we will be much more likely to live in ill health in later life¹⁵. Such changes will have a significant impact on independence as we spend more time in our homes and the mismatch between the designed world and our capabilities becomes greater.

The relatively poor health and well-being of northern communities coupled with the ageing profile will have profound effects for business and for government in terms of housing, health and care provision, and the pension and welfare systems. Hence, there is an urgent need for design methods, based on a better understanding of age and ability related factors, to support equality of opportunity, independence and quality of life,. This fits with the social model of disability, discussed earlier, and is an important **driver** for the north to embrace the principles of inclusive design.

Clearly there are many demographic trends in the north fuelling the need for inclusive design. There are also a number of levers. Whilst many products are designed to appeal to the younger generation or the average consumer, large sections of the population are being excluded including those affected by changing technology, economically vulnerable groups as well as the more lucrative older market sector. The social implications coupled with the contribution older people are known to make to the UK economy demonstrate some very important **levers** for the north to embrace the principles of inclusive design, levers such as cohesive, diverse, strong and prosperous communities.

"Design for the young and you exclude the old; design for the old and you exclude the young".

The late Bernard Isaacs, Founding Director of the Birmingham Centre for Applied Gerontology

¹⁴ Laslett, P (1996)

¹⁵ ONS (2004)

Inclusive design: key drivers and levers

- Legal and regulatory – the requirements will increase in future
- Social model of disability – the desire to fulfil the needs of everyone, based on the principles of equal opportunities and human rights
- Self interest – we all want to have the opportunity to live a full and independent life, and at some point in our lives we will all be disabled by our environment
- Employment – work places which are more accessible and inclusive are good for productivity
- Financial incentives – older people alone represent large, relatively under-served markets of people with significant disposable income
- Good design – is inclusive design

Anticipating and capitalising on the opportunities are a major challenge for business. Everyone has a role to play, including planners, policy makers, senior managers, designers, marketing, sales and customer service personnel. Progress is beginning to be made as the significant business opportunities to support older people in an enjoyable and independent life begin to drive a more inclusive approach. However there are many myths and misunderstandings which need to be addressed before this agenda can move forward into the mainstream.

Inclusive Design Myths

Myth #1: There are only a small number of people who can benefit from inclusive design; thus we should not let their needs dictate.

One in five adults and one in twenty children in the UK are estimated to have a disability and two thirds of disabled people are aged over 60¹⁶. Currently in the UK 55% of people aged 60+ are deaf or hard of hearing, 28% of people aged 65+ have difficulties with their eyesight, and in terms of long term limiting illness 38% of people aged 65-74 and 50% of those aged 75+ are affected¹⁷. The north has some of the poorest indicators on health e.g. all three regions have higher than average levels of long term limiting illnesses and the North West has the highest number of disability living allowance claimants in the country. By 2020, 50% of the UK population will be aged 50 or over and by 2036 the population aged 65+ years is expected to increase by 76% and the population aged 85+ by 184%¹⁸. The north's population is ageing and it is rural areas such as Northumberland, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Cheshire, County Durham and Lancashire which will experience more rapid population growth than the UK average. These figures suggest that a large proportion of the population currently face both obvious and unseen barriers. The existing levels of disability coupled with the demographics of the older population demonstrate that inclusive design will benefit more than just a small number of people in the north. Importantly, if we do not begin to address these issues now, the problem will only increase in the future.

¹⁶ Cabinet Office (2005)

¹⁷ ONS (2004)

¹⁸ CLG (2008), ONS (2004)

Myth #2: *Inclusive design only helps people with disabilities and older people.*

Inclusive design extends the benefits of good functional design to many groups of people by helping us all overcome obstacles encountered in daily life and by providing environments which are convenient and enjoyable to use. Poorly designed buildings can disable larger or taller people, frail people, pregnant women, children, left-side dominant individuals etc. In addition, consider those carrying packages, parents with pushchairs or young children, those who are ill and those with orientation difficulties. Evidence shows that we typically reach our physical and sensory peak in our early 20's. From our mid 20's many of our capabilities begin to decline¹⁹, and throughout our lives, we all experience variations in our abilities. One design manual suggests that as many as 90% of us are disabled by the built environment in some way at some point in their life²⁰. If we take this whole life perspective, inclusive design eventually benefits all of us.

Myth #3: *Disability rights laws have created equality, so there is no need to do any more.*

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 aims to end discrimination for disabled people and promote equal access to public places, employment, education, goods and services. But the Act gives only general guidance about what is required and duties are intended to evolve as cases are determined in the civil courts. The legislative approach will not be enough to create equality. In our increasingly diverse society a more proactive, and holistic approach is required e.g. understanding signs, finding one's way, learning how to operate products and understanding alarms and warnings depends as much on the way our minds work as they do on how our bodies work. The inclusive design approach focuses on mental as well as physical function, and gives consideration to differences in the way people think and interpret things.

Myth #4: *Improved medical technology is reducing the incidence of functional limitations, thus the need for inclusive design is short lived.*

Advances in medical technology have undoubtedly contributed to increasing life expectancy. However if the health of the older population follows current trends that will mean people spend more of their lives in ill health. According to government healthy life expectancy tables published in 2006, the amount of time women can expect to live in poor health increased by 15% to 11.6 years from 1981 to 2001. For men, the length of poor health rose even more - 34% - to 8.7 years. The northern regions have some of the lowest levels of life expectancy in the country; the North East has the lowest. Men in the North East and North West live over 2.5 years less than those in the South East and South West²¹. This coupled with the relationship between age and certain abilities is a major reason why inclusive design should be of interest to everyone.

Myth #5²²: *Universal design cannot sustain itself in the marketplace because people who need it most cannot afford it.*

The older population alone has the resource to support an inclusive design industry. Although there are significant differences across groups, overall, older households have substantially more assets than younger households. Over 50's account for 40%

¹⁹ Inclusive Design: Design for the whole population (2003)

²⁰ Wylde et al (1994)

²¹ ONS (2004)

²² Myths 5 & 6 are adapted from extracts in Universal Design New York (2001) a universal design guide for the city of New York

of consumer spending, 60% of total savings and 80% of UK wealth and households of people aged 60+ owned £932 billion of equity in their homes in 2004²³. More baby boomers own their own home than any other generation²⁴ and research shows that two in three adults with the means to make a bequest said they "plan to enjoy life and not worry too much about leaving a legacy"²⁵. The combination of higher incomes, large numbers and higher consumption patterns means that this age group will have a big impact in driving the consumer economy and, consequently, increasing the demand for inclusive design. However we must not forget that there are two marketplaces for inclusive design, the free market and the public sector. Despite the rosy forecasts about the increasing affluence of this group, there are many people today with low annual incomes depending on public services and not-for-profit organisations to meet their housing, health care, security and recreation needs. In the north pensioner incomes are well below average, even amongst those with significant housing assets. Moreover, levels of equity in private housing in the north are lower than in all other regions of the country. So, while we can expect ageing baby boomers to have a big impact in the free market economy, the lower income population will play an important role in driving the direction of government services and those of not-for-profit organisations. The more support this group has in getting access to services, the more independent they can be in daily life and the lower the burden of service delivery (and consequent liability) will be.

Myth #6: *Inclusive design costs even more than accessible design.*

Some claim that inclusively designed products or services are more expensive to deliver and buy and that customers who do not need accessible features would opt for a cheaper alternative²⁶. Although the long-term savings in reducing the cost of dependency may make inclusive design a cost-effective investment for society, this argument does not wash with organisations that have to pay the development costs. Understandably there are many organisations who will only consider inclusive design if it gives them a competitive edge or tangible return²⁷. Accessibility legislation and regulation is not static and at the same time new technology and knowledge about the barriers that people with functional limitations encounter in buildings and facilities generate new initiatives over time. Unlike accessibility code compliance, inclusive design is flexible; there are no legal mandates. Evidence from the USA shows that incorporating principles of inclusive design into new construction projects, typically requires less than 1% of total construction costs²⁸. For the most part the cost of adding inclusive features can be negligible and can even save money by lowering the cost of adjustment or renovation, or bringing in more revenue by making the product appealing to a wider market. For example, designing a main entry with level access and no change in level inside the vestibule eliminates stairs and a ramp. Selecting door handles that are easier to use does not require any additional expense. An inclusively designed signage system does not have to cost any more. These features provide excellent value. Other features may have marginal additional costs but they also may have a value that exceeds their expense. For example, an automated door in a building can increase the comfort and satisfaction of guests and also reduce damage to door frames, staff effort, the potential for work related injuries and congestion at the entry during bad weather. In such applications, inclusive design makes good economic sense. By using customers to inform the design process we

²³ CLG (2008)

²⁴ Halifax Financial Services (2006) Baby boomers are defined as those men and women born between 1946 and 1964.

²⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2005)

²⁶ Grayson John, Universal design products serve all regardless of age, Aging Network News

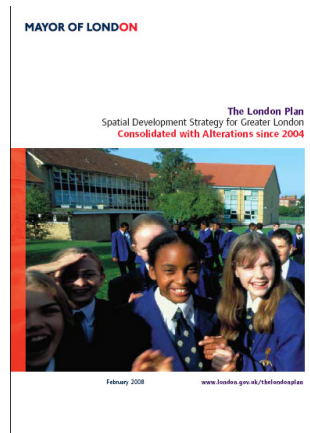
²⁷ <http://www.ricability.org.uk/reports/report-design/inclusive%20design/misunderstandings.htm#expensive>

²⁸ Universal Design New York (2001)

could save much of the cost and stigmatisation as possible. We would also be better able to define what products we need to develop, with the advantage of making those products that customers wish to access.

So, where can the principles of inclusive design be seen in the public sector?

Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment



The London Plan is the spatial development strategy for London and sets out the strategy framework to meet the capital's population and economic growth. Following publication of the [London Plan](#) in February 2004 a number of [Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) (SPG) documents are being drafted which provide more detailed advice and guidance on the policies in the London Plan. Accessible London is the first of these SPGs to be published. On 27 April 2004 the Mayor of London launched the first of these - [Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment](#) which embeds the principles of inclusive design into planning of the built environment in London in the period up to 2025/26.

In doing so, the London Plan requires all development in London to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusivity; this includes the development of *all new homes to 'Lifetime Homes' standard, and 10% of new homes to be wheelchair accessible.*

Policy 4B.5 Creating an inclusive environment

The Mayor will require all future development to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. DPD policies should integrate and adopt the principles of inclusive design so that developments:

- can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all regardless of disability, age, gender, ethnicity or financial circumstances
- are convenient and welcoming with no disabling barriers, so everyone can use them independently without undue effort, separation or special treatment
- are flexible and responsive taking account of what different people say they need and want, so people can use them in different ways
- are realistic, offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs, recognising that one solution may not work for all.

The principles of inclusive design should be used in assessing planning applications and in drawing up masterplans and area planning frameworks. Design and access statements should be submitted with development proposals explaining how the principles of inclusive design, including the specific needs of disabled people, have been integrated into the proposed development and how inclusion will be maintained and managed.

The principles of inclusive design and the requirements of Policy 3A.17 should be adopted by all responsible for changing or managing the built environment.

Habinteg Housing - Lifetime Homes

Habinteg is a general needs housing association founded in 1970, and with a stock holding of over 2000 rental homes across the UK. All homes are accessible and a quarter of them are designed specifically for wheelchair users. Since 1994 all general needs properties have been built to Lifetime Homes Standard²⁹. The Lifetime Homes are intended to benefit older and disabled people as well as a number of other groups who struggle with poor design in the home. The majority of Habinteg tenants are not disabled.

Habinteg believes that building a percentage of homes to lifetime standard, will always result in them being labelled as specialist provision. By moving away from a split between the provision of mainstream and specialist housing, Habinteg is able to market its homes to the widest possible market demonstrating how 'inclusively' designed mainstream products can be carefully combined to make homes fully accessible without compromising style. The lifetime standards are designed in such a way as to be invisible or ordinary, and are seen by Habinteg as essential in the drive towards inclusive design.

Habinteg challenged interior design Alison Wright to design the interiors of a wheelchair house and a multi-generational Lifetime Home, on their Westwood Park development in Bradford.

Alison commented: "So much design for disabled or older people ends up looking ugly because functionality overshadows the design. The results can end up being stigmatising to the user by highlighting their lack of ability. It's a difficult balance. I disguise some of the functionality by using mainstream products, which work well on more than one level. In this way you can design-in different layers of support, which are invisible until they are needed. Using mainstream products can also work out cheaper than some disability products, making the design more affordable".

In effect Alison demonstrates the 'art of the possible' - how to make a home functional without compromising its good looks.

Chief Executive of Habinteg, Mike Donnelly said: *"With the increase in interest in shared ownership we appreciate that more and more people want homes that are stylish and will maintain their resale value in the future. For us, Westwood Park is a demonstration of how high quality design can be brought to wheelchair accessible and Lifetime Homes"*³⁰.

Where next?

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: the national strategy for housing in an ageing society clearly establishes the policy framework the sector will be working towards over the next five years and beyond. The aim is for housing, neighbourhoods and communities to be more inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population.

²⁹ To achieve Lifetime Homes Standard homes must meet 16 criteria. For further information see <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

³⁰ <http://easylivinghome.co.uk/bradf.htm>

In terms of future developments, key milestones to be aware of include:-

2008/09	Public Service Agreement 17: The new local performance framework introduces targets focussed specifically on improving quality of later life, and driving forward the necessary cultural and behavioural changes. These targets will be included in the new local area agreements currently being negotiated by local authorities and government offices.
	Eco-towns and the Olympic Village will be used to promote exemplary inclusive design and provide practical guidance
	CLG to include a Beacon theme in inclusive planning to recognise councils providing leadership in this area
	CLG to report on Lifetime Neighbourhoods – implementation and partnership working
	CABE and the Academy for Sustainable Communities to provide tools and resources to support the development of skills in inclusive design
	A new Inclusive Housing category will be established in the National Housing Awards
2010	The Sub National Economic Review will lead to a major overhaul of planning policy, and the integration of planning with housing, transport and economic development. This represents a key opportunity to get inclusive design on the regional agenda
2011	Lifetime Homes Standards to become mandatory for all public sector housing
	CLG to consult and provide guidance on a British Standard for Development on Accessible Design and Lifetime Homes
2013	Potential for regulation to be in place to ensure that all new housing is built to Lifetime Standards

Inclusive Design: where are you now, and what practical steps do you need to take to get there?

The British Standard BS7000-6: Guide to Managing Inclusive Design³¹ provides practical guidance on managing inclusive design from an organisational level right down to project level. Although not mandatory, the standard provides a useful tool for organisations to determine where they are now and how their practices and consumer offers are deficient. Organisations can then take prompt steps to rectify deficiencies and plan ahead to take advantage of the many opportunities to innovate within changing market conditions over the long term. The standard sets out a comprehensive framework for introducing a professional approach to inclusive design into organisations. Preparatory groundwork requires more than adjustments to processes and guidelines: changes in organisational culture and infrastructure may have far-reaching effects extending beyond design to other mainstream disciplines.

³¹ <http://www.creativenet.org.uk/en/About-Design/Design-Techniques/Inclusive-design/Where-to-start/>

The Design Council also provides top tips³² for organisations wishing to take forward an inclusive approach.

1. **Take a hard look at your consumer offer**, or better still bring in someone to help you do that. Is your consumer offer age and ability friendly? If not, why not? Be self critical and ask difficult questions.
2. **Develop a strategy** for responding to the 'age shift' highlighted by the DTI Foresight report. Familiarise yourself with the strategic potential of inclusive design when focused on business objectives as set out in the Design Council policy paper on ageing populations³³.
3. **Embrace the need** for cultural change within your company. Set up an internal change team to audit your company's current offerings and practices. Brief the team to generate opportunities to enhance performance and introduce an effective transformation in attitudes. It should also identify examples of best practice within your organisation and elsewhere, then report back on how competitors are performing. Ensure that the change team reports directly to the board.
4. **Try to get a better understanding** of the range of people who will use the product or service you are working on. Don't rely on assumptions: check the demographics, especially at overlaps between different age groups, to identify market opportunities and the potential to create competitive advantage. For example, there is a considerable growth in single-person and two-person households - predominantly among young and older people, and increasingly disabled people.
5. **Establish a group** of demanding (perhaps 'extreme') users. It need not be large, but should include people who can test your products and services, and challenge the perceptions of your designers and the assumptions that underlie their work. Work closely together, by staging focus groups and 'walk-throughs' to test products and environments.
6. **Create a small team** of consumer champions drawn from different sections and levels of the company who report to you. Encourage them to take a proactive role in gathering information, making contacts, identifying problems and proposing solutions. Give them a specific amount of time each week for this activity and ensure that their input is valued by the company and acted on.

³² <http://www.creativenet.org.uk/en/About-Design/Design-Techniques/Inclusive-design/Top-tips/>

³³ Coleman, R. (2001) Living Longer: the new context for design

It is undeniable that adopting inclusive design to produce products and service that are accessible and usable for a wide market represents good business practice. The first companies with truly competitive, inclusive products in their market sector will find themselves in a market-leading position. The formulation of a business case for adopting an inclusive approach that is tied closely with an organisation's core objectives, strategies and plans is an essential starting point.

To understand the reasons for this advantage the Department of Engineering at the University of Cambridge asks organisations to consider the following questions:

Can we expand our market? Yes.

Inclusive design practices will make your products and services more accessible. If your products and services are accessible for older or disabled people, they will be accessible for the widest possible audience, and the number of people you can attract will increase. Ultimately your market will expand. A good example is the Sage Gateshead.

Can we hold on to our market share? Yes

Your purchasers and service users are getting older and with the passing of time, they will become less functionally able. If you do not make your products accessible for your customers, they will go elsewhere.

If you do make your products accessible, you can keep your existing market-share. This logic is highlighted by the commercial success of the Ford Focus.

Can we gain a marketing edge? Yes

If you gain a reputation for designing products and services that are easy to use, you can exploit that as a marketing edge and develop brand recognition for good design. Both Habinteg and the Good Grips brand have achieved this.

Conclusion

Inclusive design can be used to design homes, neighbourhoods and services which are user centred, population aware and business focussed.

'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' is warmly welcomed but it is only part of the picture. There will always be a role for legislation and regulation to drive forward change, particularly for those who will always wait, only do the minimum, and look to make short term gains.

Whilst inclusive design is high on the policy agenda for housing and neighbourhoods, it is essentially the market which will drive inclusive design up the business agenda as well as the policy agenda. For this reason it is essential that as social investors, the housing sector in the north begins to make inclusive design part of a mainstream approach to creating "all age" friendly communities. We urge Members to take a long term view of the business opportunities, in terms of your organisation and its services being flexible enough to adapt to, and capitalise upon, the north's changing markets.

Inclusive design is an important agenda for the north, not simply because our population is rapidly ageing, or that our population suffers from some the poorest life chances in the country. It is important because we want the north to offer the best for our communities in terms of choice, control, inclusion and empowerment. This is about linking inclusive design to our long term strategic objectives and using it as a practical tool to help make our communities and our economies cohesive, diverse, strong and prosperous – a critical agenda for the north.

If we wait it will be too late!!

Questions:

What further guidance is required?

How does inclusive design fit with other evolving standards?

What are the views of your Local Strategic Partnership? Will they help drive this agenda forward?

What are the key barriers and strategic challenges?

What needs to happen to make this work in practice?

What approaches have been taken, and are there any examples of good practice?

We would like to hear from Members and others about their experiences in the inclusive design agenda. The issues and questions raised in this paper are intended to kick start the debate. We would like to invite members to respond, provide information or examples where relevant, as well as raising any other issues they feel are important to the overall design project.

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