The Inclusive Design Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work

5 December 2025

Part 1

Pareisse Wilson, Inclusive Design Overlay – Project Lead

Agenda

1. **Overview RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay (IDO)**
2. **Key IDO activities**
3. **Case studies**

Introduction

What

A cross-industry developed **framework** created to **guide teams** in the **implementation** of **inclusive design** throughout each project work stage.

Who

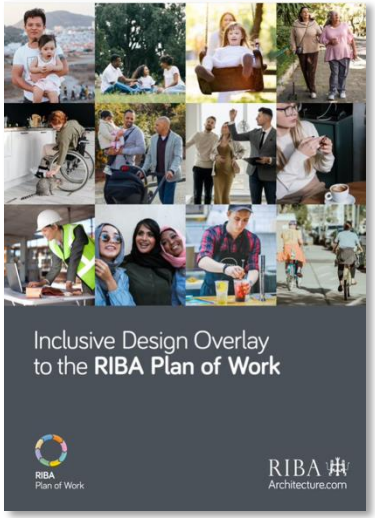
Applicable to **everyone involved** in the **procurement**, **design**, **management**, **maintenance** and **use** of the built environment.

How

Activities guide **five project roles** towards **implementing best-practice inclusive design decisions**, **actions**, and **standards throughout** each **project** Work Stage.

Roles

- **Client**
- **Project Management Team**
- **Design Team**
- **Construction Team**
- **Asset Management Team**



The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Inclusive Design Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work (2023)

Benefits



Integrate inclusive design at **every stage** of the Plan of Work



Enablers support the effective implementation of inclusive design



When to **work together**



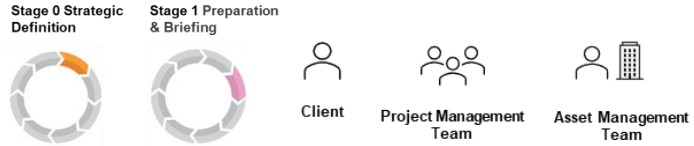
Measure inclusion, equity, and accessibility design **outcomes**



When and **why** to engage with an Inclusive Design Lead (Consultant or Champion)

Key Activities

Define and embed inclusive design



Project Brief, Budget and Monitoring Progress

- Define the inclusive design **vision** and **objectives** in the **Project Brief**
- Integrate inclusive design **scoring targets** into the **procurement** process.
- Assign a dedicated **budget.**
- Create an **inclusive design review** and **feedback process.** Inclusive Design Stage Outcome Review (End of Stage Report)
- Develop a **user** and **communication strategy.**



Appoint an inclusive design lead (a)



Inclusive Design Consultant

- Appointed at the **earliest stage** of the project.
- Input into the **Inclusive Design Strategy**.
- **Consultancy Skills**, e.g., facilitate lived-experience workshops, balance user requirements.
- **Technical Skills,** e.g., ability to conduct building audits, read technical drawings and specifications against design standards, regulations, and legislation.
- Embedded within the **Client** and **Design Team**.



Appoint an inclusive design champion (b)

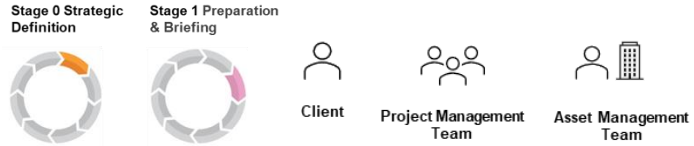


Inclusive Design Champion

- Within the **Client** project team.
- Appointed on smaller sized projects.
- Understanding of **diversity, equity, and inclusion** topics.
- **Raise awareness** on equality, access, and inclusion.



Define the vision and strategy



Inclusive Design Strategy

- The **vision** for achieving an inclusive environment.
- Desired project **outcomes** and how they will be measured.
- The **principles** of inclusive design and how these will be implemented.
- Inclusive design and accessibility **regulations**, **standards**, **guidance**, national and local **plans** etc.,
- **Approaches** to **user consultation** and **engagement**.
- Commit to delivering the **Inclusive Design Strategy**



Understand friction points and barriers (a)



Impact Assessments and Audits

- Undertake an **equality impact assessment** and **inclusive design audit**
- **I**dentify **who** and **how** people are impacted.
- Understand **current access** and **inclusion provisions** and identify any barriers and **opportunities for improvement**.



Understand friction points and barriers (b)



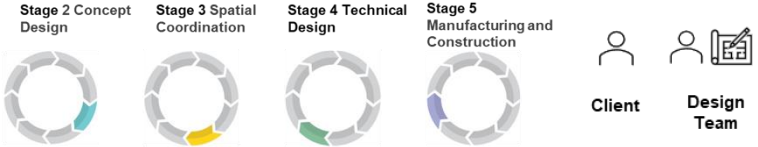
Inclusive Design Reviews

- **Identify inclusion** and **access barriers** and **opportunities for improvement.** E.g., floor plans, building management systems, storage requirements, materials, finishes etc.,

- **Assessed** against **best-practice standards** as set out in the **Inclusive Design Strategy**.

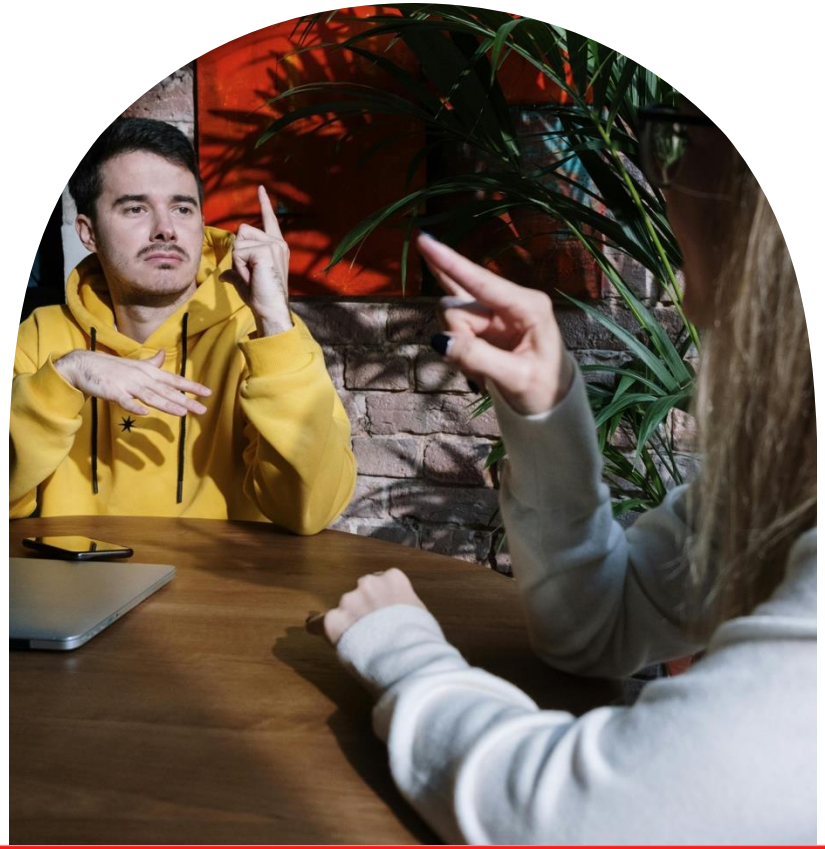


Test-designs with lived experience users



Mobilise and engage users

- **Understand** the needs and **experiences** of **users** through **regular consultation** and **engagement.**
- Establish **regular engagement sessions** with the User Group at each Work Stage (2-5)
- **Appropriate** and **diverse representation** of people with **lived experience** of protected characteristics and beyond.
- **Ensure all users are represented** from local community groups, employee networks, charity organisations etc.
- **Integrate lived-experience feedback** into **design requirements**.



Create an accessible construction site for all

Stage 5
Manufacturing and Construction

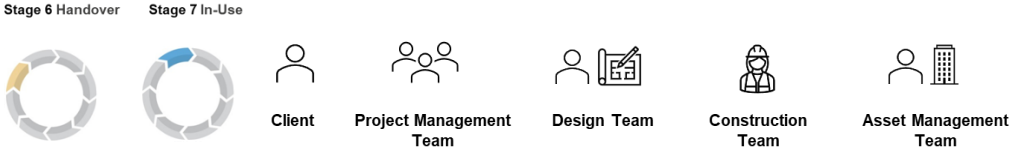
Construction Team

Accessible and inclusive construction site

- Ensure **site-welfare for all users**, including staff and the public
- Consider **diversity and inclusion** in access to and use of the construction site.
- Review the **Construction Phase Plan** as the site progresses, to ensure diversity and inclusion commitments are maintained as the project progresses.



Transfer knowledge and raise awareness



Training

- Deliver **inclusive design training** on the **operations** and **maintenance** of a building.
- Develop **building manual** and **building user guides**, including accessibility and inclusion arrangements.
- Ensure all **handover elements** are communicated inclusively and accessibly.



Measure impact and continue improvement

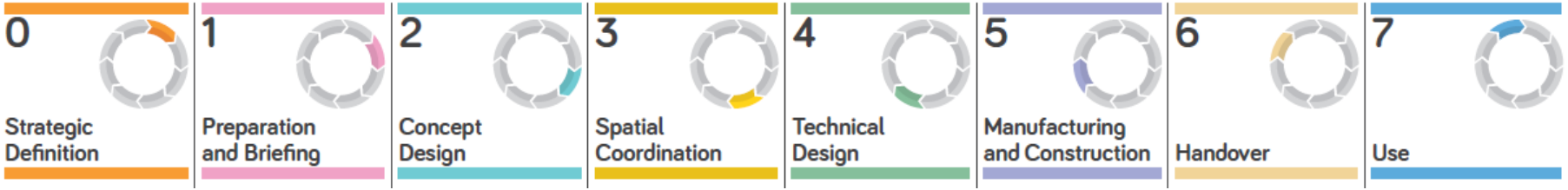


User-feedback and measure impact

- Establish a **user-feedback** process
- Deliver **post-occupancy evaluation** (POE) surveys.
- Capture and **measure impact** and **outcomes**.
- Undertake **lessons learnt reviews**.



Inclusive Design Lead Activities



- Inclusive Design Vision, Objectives and Strategy
- Inclusive Design Project Team Training
- Set Inclusive Design scoring targets for the contractor procurement process.
- Deliver training on access and inclusive design features to A/FM's
- Develop a Post Occupancy Evaluation Survey.

  Measure Impact and Outcomes against objectives in the Strategy.
- Inclusive Design Audit (Refurb)
- Inclusive Design Reviews (Drawings, spatial layouts, storage etc.,)
- Inclusive design audit mid-build and pre-completion
- Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA's)
- User & Communication Strategy
- Mobilise User Group
- Facilitate User Group engagement and consultation sessions
- Establish a User Feedback process
- Input Inclusive Design requirements into Design Guide Standards or O&M Manual etc.,
- Input Inclusive Design requirements into Construction Phase Plan
- Input into Building Manual
- Develop Building User Guide
- Inclusive Design Stage Outcome Review (End of RIBA Stage Report)

Part 2

Emily Jeffers, RIBA Diversity & Inclusion Lead

Inclusive Design Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work

Key highlights from RIBA

2023: Developed to provide guidance on implementing inclusive design through each RIBA Plan of Work stage

2025: Inclusive Design Overlay Conference (July)

2026: Case study open call campaign continues



Inclusive Design Overlay Conference

- Panel discussions on the implementation and impact of the IDO across the built environment
- Roundtable workshop on better engaging with inclusive design principles

Panel 1 speakers:

Chair - Pareisse Wilson (IDO Project Lead), Kat Aedy (UCL), Jenny McLaughlin (Heathrow), Anthony Peter (Related Argent), Sarah Teichler (TfL), and Jenny Offord (Enfield Council)

Panel 2 speakers:

Chair – Alex Tait (RIBA), Jane Simpson (JSA), Ed Warner (Motionspot), Wynne Leung (Grimshaw), Jean Hewitt (Buro Happold), and Georgina Taylor (East West Rail)







Inclusive Design Overlay case studies

To mark two years since its launch, we are gathering case studies from built environment professionals who have used the Inclusive Design Overlay on architectural or design-and-build projects

The purpose of attaining case studies is to:

- provide insights to built environment professionals seeking to use the overlay on projects
- enhance learning from each other, providing live examples and increasing the use on projects
- demonstrating successful implementation and the benefits of its use
- develop a research and case study data pool to understand further the need for guidance on EDI in architecture and its scope of influence

IDO case study: UCL Estates Project Procedures

- **Project type:** mixed building types and use – education (university)

IDO activities delivered for Stages 0 to 7:

- Inclusive Design Strategy
- Inclusive Design Building Audits
- Inclusive Design Reviews
- User Group Mobilisation, Consultation and/or Engagement
- Communication Strategy
- Building Manual
- Plan for Use Strategy



IDO case study: East West Rail transport system



- **Project type:** transport, railway system
- **Inclusive Design Strategy:** producing a Basis of Design document setting out the vision
- **Inclusive Design Reviews:** documented reviews where outstanding identified issues were logged such that they can be tracked and closed as design progresses
- **User Group Mobilisation and/or Engagement:** designs are being progressively reviewed with the EWR Co.'s Accessibility Advisory Panel (AAP) and Network Rail's Built Environment Accessibility Panel (BEAP)

IDO case study: London Cancer Hub

- **Project type: m**ixed-use estate - healthcare and life-sciences
- **Inclusive Design Strategy:** defined to embed inclusive design into multistage delivery
- **Inclusive Design Audits:** evaluation of the existing site, wider public realm, and connectivity links to identify the current inclusive design challenges
- **Inclusive Design Reviews**
- **User Group Mobilisation and/or Engagement:** Mobilising an LCH Accessibility User Group for regular consultation and engagement throughout the project



Case study open call

Case studies should:

- Provide case study evidence of the successful application of the overlay on a project
- Highlight how each of the Project Roles (Client, Project Management, Design Team, Construction/Contractors Team and Asset Management) delivered the recommended inclusive design activities outlined in the overlay
- Areas may include direct design and build plans, procedures, transport systems, etc.



Thank you to our Steering Group Authors and the many individuals who generously contributed their time, experience and expertise to develop a guide that is representative of the views, needs and wishes of many parts of the UK design, architecture, construction and engineering sector.