

The principles of  
inclusive design.  
(They include you.)





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Written by by Howard Fletcher.

Graphic design by Alexander Boxill.

Photography by Michele Turriani.

Many thanks to the models who gave up their time to be photographed for this project.

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CABE is the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. As a public body, we encourage policymakers to create places that work for people. We help local planners apply national design policy and offer expert advice to developers and architects. We show public sector clients how to commission buildings that meet the needs of their users. And we seek to inspire the public to demand more from their buildings and spaces. Advising, influencing and inspiring, we work to create well-designed, welcoming places.

CABE 1 Kemble Street London WC2B 4AN

T 020 7070 6700 F 020 7070 6777

E [enquiries@cabe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cabe.org.uk) [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)



## **Inclusive design is about making places everyone can use.**

The way places are designed affects our ability to move, see, hear and communicate effectively.

Inclusive design aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. It enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities.

An inclusive approach to design offers new insights into the way we interact with the built environment. It creates new opportunities to deploy creative and problem-solving skills.

## Inclusive design is everyone's responsibility.

An inclusive environment is created by surveyors, architects, planners, building control surveyors, engineers, access consultants and facilities managers. Ultimately, though, creating an inclusive place is in the hands of developers, landlords and service providers. It is their responsibility to ensure that their property is designed, built and operated in line with inclusive principles.

Meeting access needs should be an integral part of what we do every day. We should use our creativity and lateral thinking to find innovative and individual solutions, designing for real people in all their variability.

This aim is not limited to the urban environment. It also applies to any designed and developed areas of the countryside open to the public.



Open door: inclusive design is about far more than catering for the needs of disabled people

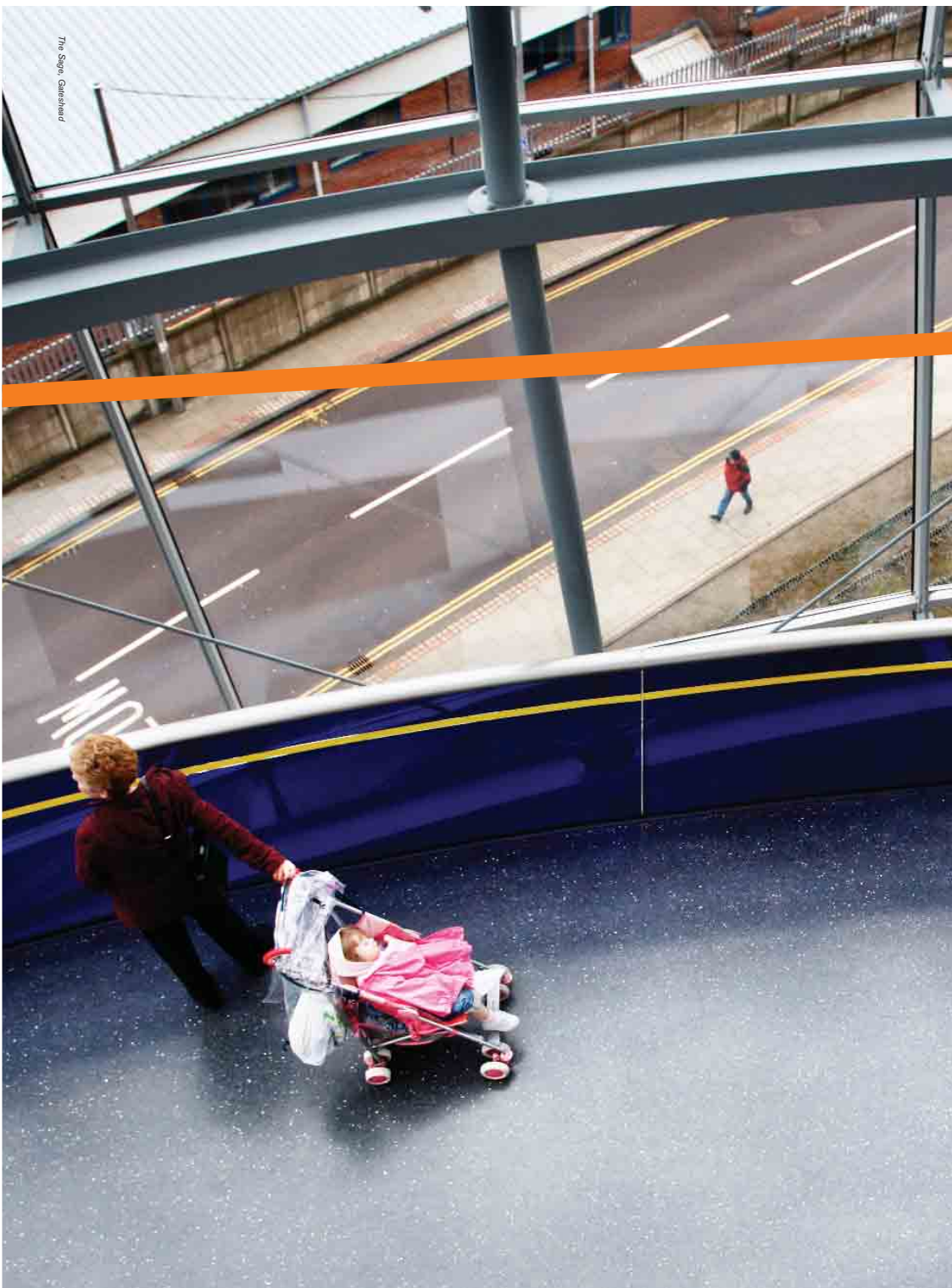
The background image is a composite of two textures. The top half shows a red metal surface with circular rivets. The bottom half shows a concrete surface with a 'SUBWAY' logo. The logo is a stylized, rounded shape with the word 'SUBWAY' written inside. The 'S' is black, 'U' is black, 'B' is black, 'R' is black, 'A' is red, and 'Y' is black. The logo is set within a dark, rounded border. The concrete is light-colored and shows some wear and tear. The red metal surface is also visible in the bottom right corner.

## Good design is inclusive design.

Design should always be judged by whether or not it achieves an inclusive environment. Design which does not do this is not good enough. Good design should reflect the diversity of people who use it and not impose barriers of any kind.

By designing and managing the built environment inclusively, the frustration and hardship experienced by many – including disabled people, older people and families with small children – can be overcome. We all benefit from an environment designed in line with inclusive principles.

The following pages set out the five key principles at the heart of inclusive design. If you follow them as a guide, you should end up with a place fit for use by everyone.





## 1 Inclusive design places people at the heart of the design process.

Design and development should create spaces and buildings 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.

As an obvious first step, avoid steps. Replace them with a gentle incline between floors and add low window-sills for a better view





**Wheelchair access should be the base level, not an optional extra. The same goes for pushchair access.**



## 2 Inclusive design acknowledges diversity and difference.

Good design can be achieved only if the environment created meets as many people's needs as possible. Everyone at some point will probably experience limited mobility – as a tourist laden with bulky luggage, a parent with young children, an older person or an individual with injuries. It is important to identify barriers to inclusion as early as possible within the design process so that good design can overcome them.

Inclusive design celebrates the diversity of people and should not impose disabling barriers. While the needs of wheelchair users and mobility impaired people are important it is also necessary to understand the barriers experienced by people with learning difficulties, mental ill health, visual impairments and hearing impairments.

Almeida Theatre, London





Theatre and Arts Centre, Runyon and Sage Centre, Galtland

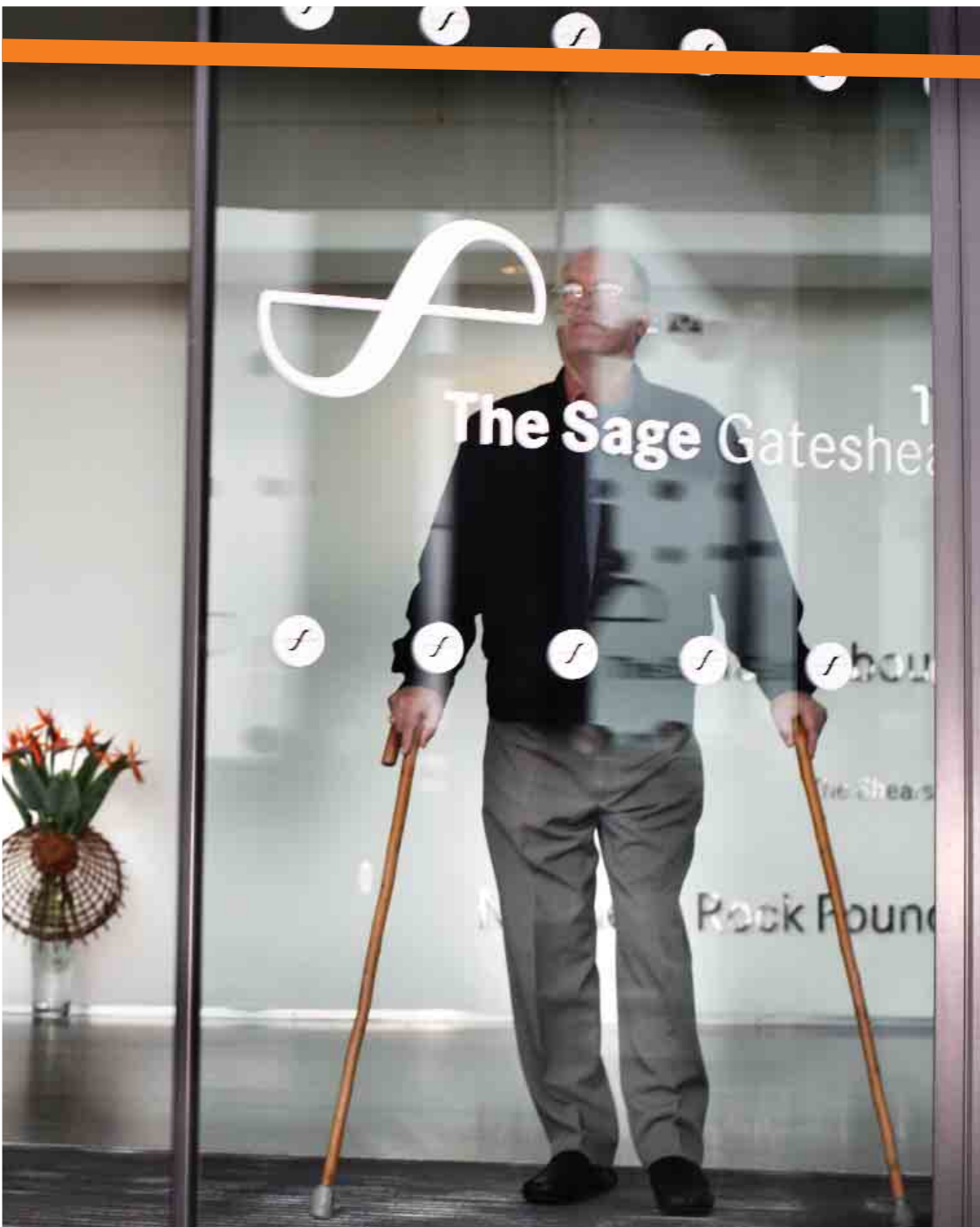
See that doors are highly visible. Lay non-slip mats and make automatic doors the automatic choice.

### 3 Inclusive design offers choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users.

An inclusive environment does not attempt to meet every need. By considering people's diversity, however, it can break down barriers and exclusion and will often achieve superior solutions that benefit everyone. Disabled people are not homogenous, of course, but considering their needs within the design process will secure benefits for everyone.

By applying the same high design standards to meet the access requirements of all users, a design embraces everyone on equal terms. An environment should exceed minimum technical specifications and inspire users.





4

## Inclusive design provides for flexibility in use.

Meeting the principles of inclusive design requires an understanding of how the building or space will be used and who will use it. Places need to be designed so that they can adapt to changing uses and demands.

Make space for everyone, including toddlers and wheelchair users. For your information, screens shouldn't be out of sight.





*Spinal Injuries Association, Milton Keynes*



*The Sage, Gateshead*



A principle of inclusive design is a level playing field – and entrance – for everybody

## 5 Inclusive design provides buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone.

Making environments easy to use for everyone means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials. Access to buildings isn't simply a question of their physical layout. It also requires people having sufficient information, often before they leave their house, that makes them feel confident enough to access a building or space. Ensuring this 'intellectual' and 'emotional' access means considering signage, lighting, visual contrast and materials.

At the beginning of the design process it is important to analyse the transport patterns to and within a development. Roads, parking, walkways, building entrances and other routes should be considered. People's opportunity to use all elements within the site, including the inside of buildings, is crucial.



Amelia Theatre, London

## The payback from inclusive design.

The adoption of these inclusive design principles will help people use developments safely, with dignity, comfort, convenience and confidence. People will be able to make effective, independent choices about how they use a development without experiencing undue effort or separation. They will be able to participate equally in the activities that the development offers.

If you follow the five principles set out in this report, you should end up with a development that is:

**Inclusive** so everyone can use them safely, easily and with dignity.

**Responsive** taking account of what people say they need and want.

**Flexible** so different people can use them in different ways.

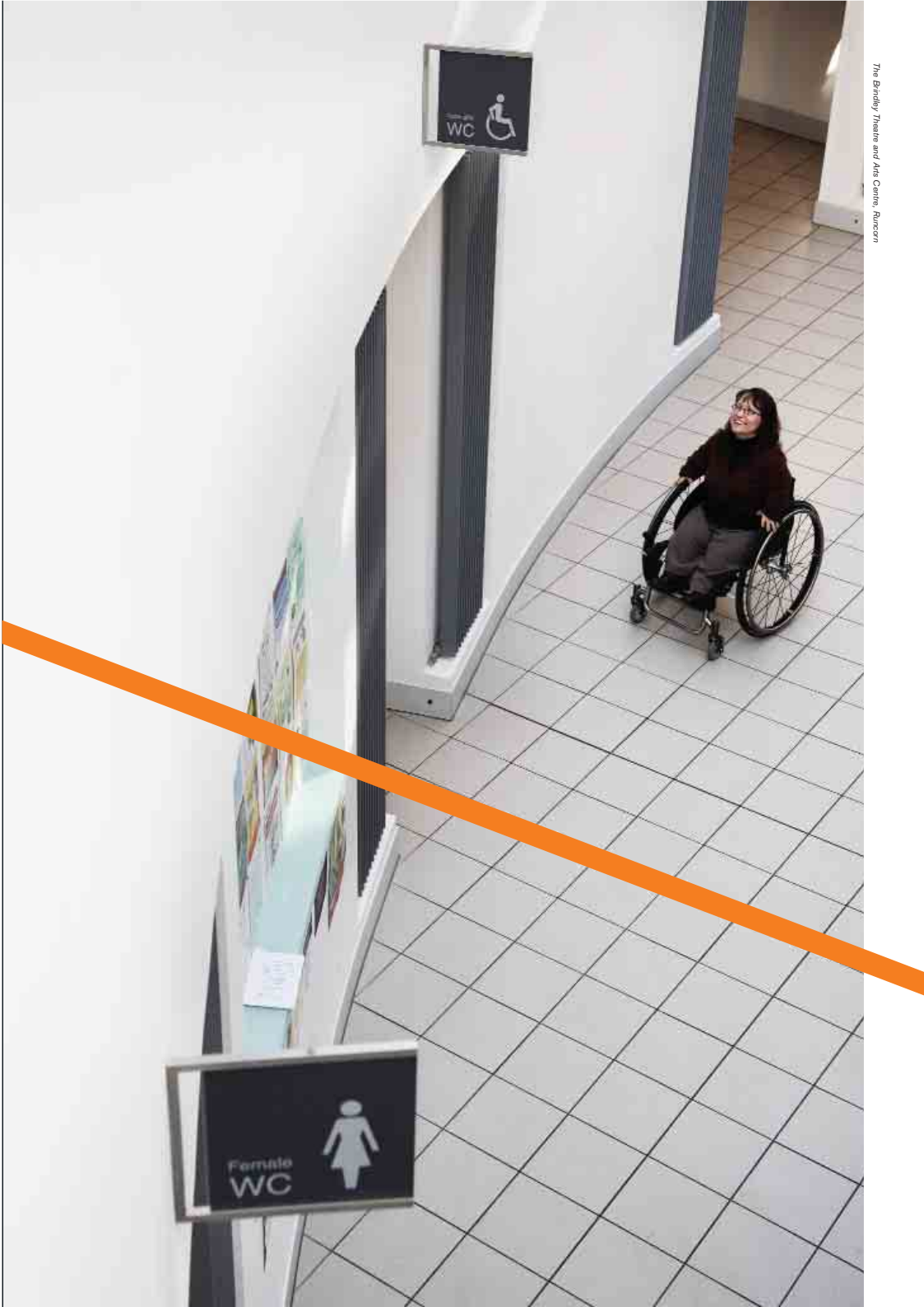
**Convenient** so everyone can use them without too much effort or separation.

**Accommodating** for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances.


**Welcoming** with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people.

**Realistic** offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.









## Inclusive design starts now

Inclusive design must be considered at the outset of the design process, and remain integral throughout. This will help deliver an environment in which everyone can access and benefit.

The principles relate as much to the design process as to the final product and equally to management, operation and information. Users and other potential consumers should be involved during all parts of the process from the planning phase, through detailed design and on to construction, occupation, management and operation.

This guide to the principles of inclusive design marks the extension of CABE's role in this important area. As we take responsibility for support of the government's advisory body on the built environment needs of disabled people, we are determined to champion design that creates places that everyone can use. As the demographic shift towards an ageing population intensifies, we'll continue to argue that inclusive design is not a choice but a basic essential. The way buildings and spaces are designed should reflect the principles outlined in this guide. They'll also help users to get from A to B more easily.

1 Kemble Street  
London WC2B 4AN  
T 020 7070 6700  
F 020 7070 6777  
E [enquiries@cabe.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cabe.org.uk)  
[www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)

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