

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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Supporting guidance for the Architects Code of Conduct  
and Practice

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This guidance supports architects in meeting their obligations under Standard 6 (Respect) of the Architects Code. It outlines how to foster inclusive working environments and design for diverse communities. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, and to work and live in environments that support their safety, belonging and wellbeing.
- 1.2. Respect is a core professional value. It applies to how architects treat clients, colleagues, collaborators and communities. It also applies to how they design the built environment. Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in professional life helps build trust, improves outcomes and strengthens the culture of the profession.
- 1.3. While compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, it may be taken into account when considering whether an architect has met the standards expected under the Code. Any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having exercised appropriate professional judgement.

## 2. Why EDI matters

- 2.1. Architects shape the world around us. A profession that includes people from all backgrounds is better equipped to design safe, inclusive spaces. Inclusive teams are more creative, effective and resilient. Inclusive workplaces are more likely to retain talent and promote wellbeing. Inclusive projects are more responsive to the needs of the public.
- 2.2. Despite this, evidence shows that many people in architecture still experience discrimination, exclusion or inequality. As an architect, you share a responsibility to change this.
- 2.3. You must also meet your legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. This includes avoiding discrimination based on protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. If you hold a position of responsibility – particularly one with influence over workplace policies or recruitment – you should ensure your organisation’s policies and hiring practices meet these obligations.

## 3. Respect and inclusiveness

- 3.1. Respect is more than politeness. It means treating others with fairness, dignity and care, regardless of role, background or difference.
- 3.2. Demonstrating respect in practice means listening without interrupting, giving others credit for their contributions, and treating everyone with professionalism, regardless of background or role. It also means using inclusive language, avoiding stereotypes, and making sure everyone feels heard and safe to speak.
- 3.3. You should be mindful of how your words and actions affect others – both in the office and on site – and be prepared to challenge disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour when you see it.

## 4. Inclusive workplace culture

- 4.1. An inclusive culture is one where everyone feels safe, supported and able to contribute. Creating this culture is a shared responsibility.
- 4.2. In practice, fostering inclusion means being aware of who is given space to speak, how work is allocated, and whether some voices are being sidelined. Inclusion also

means being open to feedback, recognising different ways of working, and not expecting underrepresented colleagues to shoulder the burden of culture change.

4.3. Rigid long-hours cultures, unclear promotion processes, or informal cliques can all contribute to exclusion. Practices should regularly review whether these dynamics exist – and take action to address them.

## 5. Designing inclusive spaces

5.1. Inclusive design is a core part of an architect's responsibility. It requires consideration of how different people will experience a space – not just in function, but in comfort, dignity and ease of use. This often means engaging with the people who will use or be affected by it.

5.2. Where appropriate, you should engage with building users, local communities, and groups representing access needs, particularly in the early stages of design.

5.3. Examples of inclusive features might include:

- Step-free access and wide doorways
- Clear wayfinding and braille signage
- Sensory-friendly spaces with adjustable lighting and noise
- Gender-neutral toilets or multi-faith rooms

5.4. Inclusive design is not about meeting minimum standards. It is about designing for dignity, usability and equity.

## 6. Leadership responsibilities

6.1. Architects in leadership roles set the tone for the profession. They have a particular responsibility to foster a culture of respect.

If you are in a leadership role you should:

- Allocate work and opportunities fairly
- Encourage flexible working and discourage 'presenteeism'
- Resource projects appropriately to avoid excessive overwork
- Put clear policies in place for raising and addressing concerns
- Support the development of junior staff from all backgrounds

6.2. Leadership also includes recruitment and progression. You should ensure hiring practices are fair, inclusive and designed to attract a wide pool of talent.

Candidates must never be discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristics.

## **7. Further information**

[ACAS – Guidance on inclusive workplaces](#)

[Equality & Human Rights Commission Guidance on sexual harassment at work](#)

[Centre for Accessible Environments](#)

[Design Council: Principles of inclusive design](#)

[Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Factsheet on EDI in the workplace](#)

[Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - GOV.UK](#)

[ARB Guidance: Raising Concerns and Whistleblowing](#)

[ARB Workplace Culture Report](#)

[Register of Architects EDI Data](#)