

# The Effect of Inclusive Design in Creating a Positive Community

## Abstract

Lockdowns during covid restricted our ability and need to socially interact with others leading to many people feeling lonely and isolated, especially those who were classed as vulnerable (OAP's, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those more vulnerable to infection). People have come to appreciate the importance of social interaction and how living side by side in an inclusive community can be a positive move.

## Methodology

A constructivist worldview perspective has been used for this paper as constructivist individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work... and develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell & Cresswell 2018, p.8). A constructivist worldview perspective works well with a qualitative approach as the questions are designed to gain views of the participants from their own life experiences and expectations. A qualitative approach has been used to gather data via the use of a questionnaire for this paper. This design has been chosen as the participant can provide their views and understanding of social views from a personal aspect. Questions asked are open-ended and focus on individual experiences.

## Challenges of inclusive design

There are many challenges associated with inclusive design. Everyone's needs are different and the challenge to meet all those needs is a complex task. Meeting the needs of one or two groups may consequentially neglect others, for example designing for wheelchair users to the detriment of those that may not handle ramps well. Designing for all can also limit the options for design. As so many groups need to be catered for it can become impossible to accommodate everyone whilst still having a building that looks good and is fit for purpose. By definition, the more minority groups that are catered for the more discriminated against the remainder will feel.

## Can inclusive design create positive health and mental wellbeing?

Everyone questioned believed that inclusive design of buildings and external spaces can promote positive mental wellbeing. Having access to the outside and being close to nature is more likely to bring communities together when out and about. It was agreed that if something is designed to be simple to use for all users, it is possible to alleviate the stress and anxieties of navigating the built environment giving the user opportunity to focus on daily tasks whilst enjoying the environment around them.



**Inclusive Design**  
Inclusive design can reduce barriers to those with disabilities and the elderly. Reducing these barriers creates an environment that can be used by the majority rather than the minority. By designing an environment that is accessible to all, the likelihood is that strong communities will grow with residents feeling a strong sense of belonging.



## Conclusion

This research has shown that inclusive design does have an effect on creating a positive community as it impacts individuals and their ability to contribute to society. By reducing barriers, individuals can access services and facilities with ease, increasing the feeling of self-worth and belonging. Being able to engage with the community brings along prosperity, creates jobs, and promotes a healthy place to live. Creating a mixed-use site shared by a care home, residential units, a school, nursery, café and shops will provide a community with everything they need as long as the design is accessible and inclusive. Encompassing a mix of ages can create multigenerational communities increasing the knowledge and confidence of the younger generation whilst promoting healthy minds of the elderly. The positivity and vibrance of an inclusive development should promote positive well-being which can, in turn, create a positive community.

**Is inclusive design the way forward for communities?**  
Inclusive design engages the community and helps people go about their daily lives carrying out simple tasks such as going to the shops with ease. Most respondents agreed with this and believed all projects should be designed with inclusivity in mind. It is thought however it is only legislation that often pushes this agenda and forces developers to take action, such as the DDA pushing the accessibility agenda, forcing better accessibility. Addressing the needs of those with perceived disabilities isn't enough as those with cultural and religious needs also need to be included reflecting previous comments about inclusion only being thought of for those with physical disabilities.

