



Inclusive Service Design

Creating services that work for *everyone* — a best practices guide.

FOUNDATION

What is Inclusive Service Design?

Inclusive Service Design is the practice of creating services that are **accessible, usable, and beneficial** to the widest possible range of people — accounting for variations in abilities, cultures, languages, ages, genders, and socioeconomic statuses.

The goal is to ensure **equal access, equal opportunity, and full participation** for every individual, not just the majority.



Why Inclusive Design Matters

Legal Obligations

UK public services must not exclude protected groups under the **Equality Act 2010**.

Expanding Reach

Taps into previously underserved markets and builds lasting **customer loyalty**.

Humanity First

Prevents discrimination and ensures services work for **real people**, not an imaginary "average" user.

Beyond Accessibility

It goes further than compliance — it's about **equitable, easy-to-use** experiences for all.



THE PROBLEM

Who Gets Excluded?

Exclusion often happens unintentionally — designers unconsciously build services around their own abilities and biases, overlooking the true diversity of human experience.

📄 **1 billion people** worldwide with disabilities have limited access to products designed for them. That's 15% of the global population.

→ **Assuming a "Normal" User**

Basing design on our own abilities and lived experience.

→ **Narrow Demographic Thinking**

Designing for a specific gender, age, language, or tech literacy level.

→ **Ignoring Lived Experience**

Overlooking the full spectrum of human needs in research and testing.

Key Principles of Inclusive Design



Recognise Diversity and Uniqueness

Individuals stray from the average in many facets. A single mass solution rarely serves everyone well. Design must acknowledge and embrace that variation.



Inclusive Process and Tools

Diverse design teams — including people with lived experience — are essential. *"Nothing about us without us"* is the guiding principle.



Broader Beneficial Impact

Strive for designs that deliver positive outcomes beyond the immediate user — benefiting families, communities, and society as a whole.

Designing Inclusively: What to Do

Design from the Start

Integrate inclusive thinking into user research and service planning from day one — not as an afterthought.

Identify Exclusion Points

Map and address the specific friction points users experience, which vary widely depending on service type and audience.

Use Diverse Research Methods

Employ a range of techniques to reach all users — especially hard-to-reach and underrepresented groups.

Test with Diverse Users

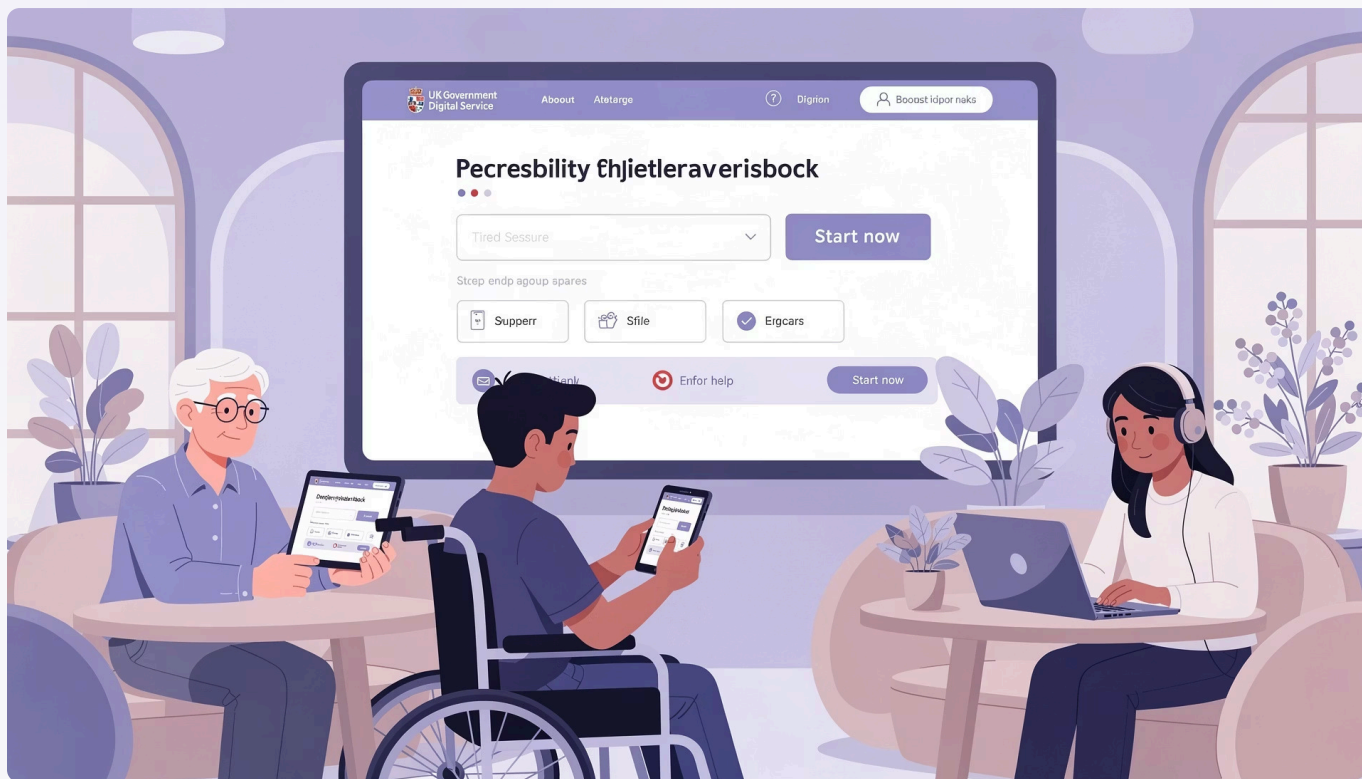
Recruit participants who represent the full spectrum of people who will use your service.

Offer Multiple Channels

Provide a thoughtful mix of digital, phone, and in-person options — and make it easy to move between them.

Avoid Inflexible Deadlines

Recognise that users' circumstances — financial, physical, situational — affect their ability to respond quickly.



REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Beyond Compliance

Inclusive design isn't just a policy checkbox — it shapes real outcomes across sectors.

Government Services (UK)

Must work for everyone from the outset, meeting legal duties and serving a genuinely diverse public.

Digital Products

Prevents discrimination from being embedded in systems — including algorithmic bias in facial recognition technologies.

Microsoft's Approach

Acknowledges that designers who use their own abilities as a baseline will consistently create exclusionary products.

Overcoming Barriers: Actionable Steps



Lead with Empathy

Step into the shoes of users with different abilities, languages, and life circumstances.



Focus on What's Needed

Streamline questions and processes to gather only the essential information — reduce friction.



Commit to Continuous Learning

Inclusive design is an evolving practice. Embrace feedback and iterate constantly.



The Transformative Impact



Usability

Services become easier for *everyone* to navigate and use effectively.



Market Reach

Access to new and previously underserved customer segments.



Satisfaction

Users feel genuinely valued, understood, and respected by the service.



Risk

Minimises unintended discrimination and negative consequences.



Belonging

Creates a diversity of ways for everyone to participate fully.

Building a More Inclusive Future

Inclusive design is not a feel-good exercise — it is a **strategic imperative**. By embracing diversity as a resource, we create better products, services, and experiences for everyone.

Design with Empathy

Understand and centre the lived experience of all users.

Embrace Diversity

Treat difference not as a challenge, but as a creative resource.

Commit to Everyone

Make the dedication to serving all people a core design value.

