

# Participation of people with intellectual disabilities in creating an accessible website

Location

Worldwide

Project type

Accessible technology

## Background

In 2021 a first draft of the [Listen Include Respect guidelines](#) was shared with our reference group, 10 international [self-advocacy organisations](#) and 10 other experts through an inclusive consultation process.

We heard that the guidelines were too long, not accessible and hard to use. We heard that a website would be the most useful way of sharing the guidelines information.

Our international reference group of people with intellectual disabilities gave us lots of feedback on what an inclusive website would look like.

This gave us a good idea of where to start, but we knew that to be really inclusive the detailed work on the website should be led by a group of people with intellectual disabilities.



## Recruitment of website design group

In 2022 we brought together a group of self-advocate consultants with intellectual disabilities into a working group to lead the work and make decisions on designing the website.

To recruit the group of people with intellectual disabilities we wrote and shared a plain language description of the work that we shared with our Inclusion international and Down Syndrome International networks.

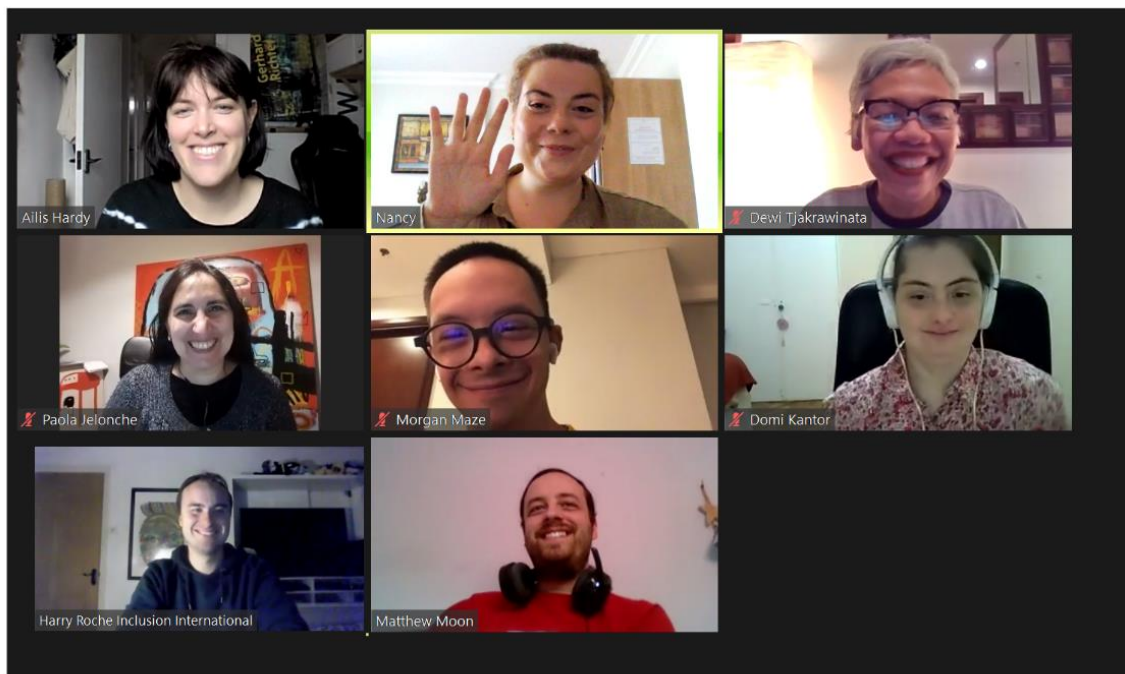
The description included a schedule of meetings with dates, the payment offered to self-advocates and support people, and the expectations for self-advocates and supporters.

We offered to meet with anyone who was interested so that they could find out more about the work.

We invited self-advocates to send in a short video explaining why they were suitable for the group.

The project team, which included a staff person with an intellectual disability, reviewed the videos and selected a small group.

- Domi and Paola from [Fundacion Visibilia](#), Argentina
- Morgan and Dewi from [YAPESDI](#), Indonesia
- Matthew from [Sunderland People First](#), UK



Picture 1: Meeting of the website design group.

We shared a short plain language consultancy contract which had information about responsibilities and how people would be paid.

## **Planning the website design meetings**

Harry, Inclusion International's staff person with an intellectual disability, coordinated the group and their work.

To start the work we planned a schedule of online meetings

- Meeting 1 –Background information and discussion on accessibility
- Meeting 2 – Structure and menus
- Meeting 3 – Content and using the website
- Meeting 4 – Design of the website including images
- Meeting 5 – Final check

At least one extra meeting was allowed and budgeted for in case there was a need for more discussion or an extra review session.

## **Running inclusive meetings**

[We followed the Listen Include Respect guidance on running online meetings,](#)

In the first meeting we decided on consistent times and days that worked for everyone. We talked about a regular structure for the meetings that everyone agreed with.

We shared the agenda and meeting information at least 1 week in advance to give people time to prepare.

We shared clear activities to do in advance, for example menu sorting. We shared feedback questions with the agenda which helped people write their feedback.

We sent reminder emails with meeting links and all information the day before.

Each meeting was chaired by a staff member with an intellectual disability with support from other team members.

We remembered to speak in easy, clear language and not use any difficult jargon. We allowed time for translation as we had a Spanish speaker in the group.

Each meeting started with an informal, fun icebreaker so people felt relaxed and comfortable.

We kept agendas short and allowed enough time for discussion (1hr -2hrs) but we made sure to respect timings and meetings did not run over.

The chairperson made sure everyone had a chance to share their ideas and give their feedback. We offered follow up or separate meetings in case people needed extra time to reflect or wanted to speak in a smaller group.

## **Outcomes**

Every person in the group attended all the meetings, was prepared and offered detailed and useful feedback.

Although sometimes people's point of view was different, for example around the design of the images, through discussion we were able to reach decisions which everyone was happy with.

Before the final sign off of the group, we sent the website to 8 international self-advocacy organisations for consultation to get wider feedback. The feedback was generally positive and supportive of the website.

The website was designed at every stage with the participation of people with intellectual disabilities. Their input and feedback made sure that the final website is useful to Inclusion International and Down Syndrome International members as well other organisations.

Our work on this also helped us to create a section on the [Listen Include Respect website about creating accessible websites](#).

We hope that the website role models inclusive design to organisations that may not be aware of what an accessible website looks like.

[Video on how to use the Listen Include Respect website. Accessibility suggestions from the group. \(Video opens on YouTube\)](#)

There have been limitations due to budget constraints. For example we have heard that videos and a reading aloud feature would be very helpful. This is something we intend on updating when funding allows.

However we feel that spending money on paying people with intellectual disabilities for their expert feedback from the start has made sure that people with intellectual disabilities have participated throughout the process.

## **Conclusion**

In June 2022 as part of the UN Conference of State Parties on the [CRPD we launched the website through a side event online](#). Domi from the website group spoke alongside 6 other self-advocates who have been part of the process of creating the guidelines.

The response to the launch has been positive, particularly amongst the members and self-advocates who have been part of creating the guidelines.

We know that participation from the start for people with intellectual disabilities will not only lead to a better, more accessible, more useful final product but will also lead to better ‘buy-in’ and use of the guidelines.

## **Background on Listen Include Respect**

Listen Include Respect is a set of guidelines created by the networks of Inclusion International and Down Syndrome International.

Inclusion International and Down Syndrome International are international networks of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, with member organisations around the world.

The Listen Include Respect guidelines are about inclusive participation of people with intellectual disabilities. They give organisations practical information on how to be more inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities so that everyone can take part in an organisation’s activities and decision making.

At the moment people with intellectual disabilities are among the most excluded groups of people in the community. Their right to participate is often not respected.

To make sure our Listen Include Respect guidelines were useful and really addressed the barriers people with intellectual disabilities face we tried to make sure that every stage of creating the guidelines has been inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities.

This included:

- Being led by an international reference group of experts with intellectual disabilities.
- Collecting information through accessible surveys and inclusive consultations
- Working closely with paid consultants with intellectual disabilities

For this case study we will focus on one part of creating the guidelines, which is designing the website.

## More information

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*This case study is part of the [Inclusive Participation Toolbox](#) by CBM.*