

SiD, a resource for designers and clients **Helping to 'design in' safety from start to finish**

Liz Bennett, founder of SiD (Safety in Design), explains the importance of professional pride in design and how SiD is helping the design community to integrate regulatory requirements into creative excellence.

Background

The UK construction industry is rich in diversity, in creativity and in outstanding delivery of projects all over the world. It has an energy and flexibility that allow it to supply solutions to complicated situations under pressure. It deserves to be celebrated.

In 1994 new regulations were introduced, the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994, known as CDM, to assist in a process of reduction of accidents and ill health problems in construction by spreading responsibility more broadly across all members of the delivery team, including clients and designers. New roles were created and responsibilities set down. In particular designers, very widely defined, were required to take on new statutory duties.

Institutions representing designers collaborated, through SiD and under the leadership of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), in the preparation of practical guidance material.

The CDM Regulations were subsequently reviewed and revised in 2007. The amended Regulations, usually referred to as CDM 2007, were more specific about client responsibility and added the responsibility of design for 'safety in use' to designers' duties.

Over the years SiD has developed its offering and now provides information and training for professionals directly or with partner organisations.

Who is a designer?

It might seem strange to need to ask this question but the CDM regulations define construction very broadly to include, in addition to those areas that you would normally count as construction, such activities as painting and decorating, rewiring etc and also any invasive site investigation or invasive survey such as an archaeological dig. The regulations define design to include *drawings, design details, specification and bills of quantities (including specification of articles or substances) relating to a structure*. They go on to define a designer to mean *any person (including client, contractor or other person...) who....prepares or modifies a design; or arranges for or instructs any person under his control to do so.....*

The implications of the breadth of both definitions is that, in HSE words, the Designer is the default professional position in the team. It may be easier to consider the designer to be someone who makes decisions about what is to be built. This means many of the team are included. Value engineering which takes the decision to delete an element that has been designed in to a structure eg edge protection at height replaced by fall arrest systems on the grounds of cost have "modified a design" and thus have engaged in the design process and are designers. Clients who demand a particular look eg glazed panels are constraining design choices and begin to encroach on design responsibility.

Designers and contractors are also required to be sure that Clients understand their statutory duties. This is a sensible route towards the education of clients who do not routinely

commission construction projects but also means that designers and contractors need to understand the client role as well as their own in the project team.

With the large variety of construction types and contract arrangements it is clear that designers will be scattered throughout the supply chain and their ability to engage effectively with other members of the team will depend on project arrangements and sensible communication, both client responsibilities.

The SiD Design Guides

The SiD Design Guides were begun in response to industry needs. HSE specialist inspectors found that design practices had little idea how to interpret the duties placed on them by the CDM regulations and wanted simple, technical help with how to integrate health and safety considerations into design activities. HSE invited the Presidents of the main design institutions to send nominees to form a group to develop simple two page Guides on a range of topics. Industry specialists were invited to draft content and these were peer reviewed before being subject to final editorial checks and legal review. The Design Guides continue to be free to download at www.safetyindesign.org and topic specialists are now working on the production of new and updated Guides to meet the needs of the design community.

Many young designers do not have the experience to think of the range of implications of their designs and so the Guidance notes are a useful reminder for them. The production method for the Guidance notes allows industry experts to share their years of knowledge and experience with others with less specialist competence and to do so easily and flexibly.

The Future

SiD is currently working through a rebranding and development exercise. It is engaged with partners who have energy and vision. It aims to provide a forum for experts to cooperate to provide new, updated direction for designing in safety from start to finish.

SiD is grateful to Louise Crossman Architects for agreeing to provide active feedback so that developing content is clear and helpful. It is important that the basic messages SiD provides support professional excellence and project practice. Working with and within the design community SiD can help to educate enforcers into the value the designer brings and the vibrant richness of choice that can never avoid all risk but can learn to manage it creatively.