



Global  
Disability  
Innovation  
Hub

# DISABILITY INNOVATION STRATEGY

2018 - 2021

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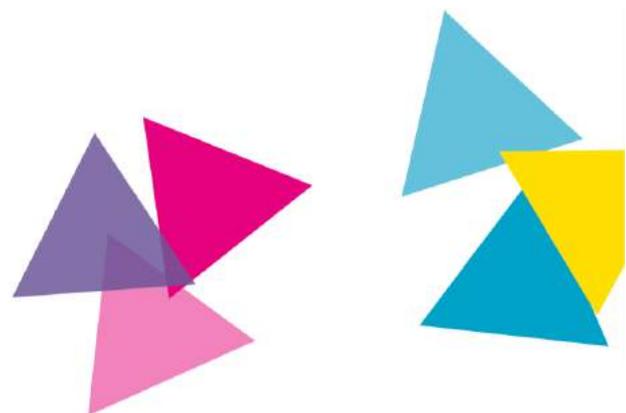
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# Global Disability Innovation Hub



## Introduction

### WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document is the GDI Hub three-year Strategy covering the period April 2018 – March 2021. It sets out what we will do through our UCL-led Academic Research Centre (ARC); our non-profit Community Interest Company (CIC); and our associated partnerships.

Initiatives pursued under the GDI Hub banner by all partners over the next three years will help deliver the vision and objectives in this document. The Strategy also sets out the approach that we will take to our work; how we will govern and manage our activities; and how we will seek to fund them. Any Strategy is naturally high level, and therefore each partner will produce a delivery plan to show how these commitments are being operationalised.

This Strategy has been prepared with oversight of our GDI Hub Advisory Board made up of our partner members and disabled people from three continents and is chaired by Lord Holmes of Richmond. We are grateful for their support and scrutiny.

Together, we will build a movement to accelerate disability innovation for a fairer world.

## The Vision

**GDI HUB IS BUILDING A  
MOVEMENT TO ACCELERATE  
DISABILITY INNOVATION FOR A  
FAIRER WORLD**

# WHY IS DISABILITY INNOVATION NECESSARY?

Disability is now understood as both a cause and consequence of poverty with approximately 80% of the world's one billion disabled people [1] living in the Global South. However, despite disabled people making up 15% of the global population (one in four households), increasingly there is evidence of a disability and development gap [1]. This indicates a concerning pattern; when countries start to move out of the lowest income bracket, disabled women and men do worse than other poor people, largely because of exclusion from the opportunities afforded to non-disabled people. The way we are currently doing things hasn't been working. Disability innovation is therefore a pressing need.

Technology can help to enable and empower disabled people, their families and communities. However, AT, which is increasingly seen as essential for countries to realise their commitments to the UNCRPD and SDGs, is often lacking. Only 10% of the world's 1 billion disabled people have access to the assistive technology they need. By 2050 2 billion people will require ATs [2].

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Assistive technology (AT) is the application of organized knowledge and skills related to assistive products, including systems and services. Assistive technology is a subset of health technology. Assistive products (APs) are any external product (including devices, equipment, instruments or software), especially produced or generally available, the primary purpose of which is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, and thereby promote their well-being. Assistive products are also used to prevent impairments and secondary health conditions.

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Inclusive urban environments can also help enable and empower disabled people, their families and communities. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London is often cited as a great example of an inclusive new piece of city. Building on the inclusive design work done to create, 'the most accessible Games ever' in 2012, developments on the Park must adhere to Inclusive Design Standards that are enforced through local planning policy. The end result is a place that works better, feels more welcoming and is more intuitive to use for all users, not just disabled people.

Without AT, and an inclusive urban environment and a policy framework that enables, disabled people will continue to be excluded from education, employment and social opportunities. Poor, disabled women face additional barriers related to their gender and are often the most at risk of exclusion because we know that the relationship between poverty, disability and gender affects an individual's capability and prevents them from full participation in society[3]. A core part of changing this imbalance is to make disability visible, to change perceptions of society and to measure the value of interventions.

## DISABILITY INNOVATION

### A way of thinking

Disability innovation is more than a product, a service or a policy; it is a way of thinking. Through a process of disability innovation, the daily issues faced by disabled people are dismantled and solutions reconstructed through co-creation and co-development. Disability Innovation is about listening to the people who know best. It's about creating disruptive partnerships, finding new solutions, a positive attitude and imaginative, non-binary answers to intractable problems.

Disability Innovation is not an activity on the sidelines; it is harnessing the creativity and dynamism of community-led solutions to shape mainstream programming, bringing the power of global actors and agents behind it.

Disability Innovation is primarily about better outcomes for disabled people. But done well it is also about the freedom to unleash visionary solutions, that work better for everyone.



## Background & Partnership – Who are we and what have we done?



GDI Hub brings together the academic and cultural institutions moving to the Cultural and Educational District (CED) on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP), east London, with major other partners who are significant in delivering a disability legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; still the most successful Paralympic and most accessible Olympic Games ever.

The founding members of GDI Hub are University College London (UCL); the Mayor of London (through the London Legacy Development Corporation, LLDC); London College of Fashion, UAL (LCF); Loughborough University London (LUL); the V&A Museum; Sadler's Wells Theatre; Leonard Cheshire Disability Research Centre (LCD); the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (HHCD) at the Royal College of Art and the local communities and businesses who helped to make 2012 a success by creating new models of disability innovation.

### LAUNCH

GDI Hub was launched by Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, on the 5 September 2016 at National Paralympic Day on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) and was initially led by LLDC as the final part of the 2012 Paralympic Legacy programme.

During the LLDC lead, the following key milestones were achieved:

1. Staff team recruited (January 2016)
2. GDI Hub Advisory Board recruited, including Chair Lord Chris Holmes (June 2016)
3. Brand, website and partnership established (September 2016)
4. Held the first (sold out) Global Disability Innovation Summit (July 2017)
5. Initial projects, including Street Rehab in India, completed (April 2018)



LLDC handed the lead for GDI Hub over to UCL and a newly formed GDI Hub Community Interest Company on the 2 October 2017. Between October and March 2018, the following milestones were achieved:

1. GDI Hub has moved into its new home in UCL Here East Campus
2. Centre staff recruitment has commenced
3. MSc in Disability, Design and Innovation (developed by founding partners; UCL, Loughborough University London and London College of Fashion) launched with three scholarships available for disabled students thanks to the Snowden Trust. First intake due 2019.
4. Five more research projects begun
5. PhD studentships started in Sept/Oct 2017
6. GDI Hub CIC incorporated on 28th December 2018

## Our Mission & Vision

Our mission is to build a movement to accelerate disability innovation for a fairer world. This recognises that we are a part of a bigger drive for disability inclusion and social justice, that must disrupt current practice to create change and can only be won in collaboration with others.

Our vision is to build momentum, expertise, and partnerships that will enable people and communities to lead new thinking about disability; especially where exclusion is compounded by the destructive impacts of poverty. Our unique contribution is made through:

- Our unique partnership
- The collaborations we convene through cross-disciplinary and multi-agency working
- The focus we have on harnessing technology for social development
- Our complete commitment to co-design with communities
- The living lab in which we are based on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London that enables us to build on the foundations of 2012 success

## OUR MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

We will disrupt thinking about disability

We will amplify the talent of brilliant disabled people

We will create a Hub in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park that attracts the very best ideas and makes them happen

We will reach out globally recognising that the best ideas are often generated out of diversity or adversity

We will teach and learn from the next generation of brilliant thinkers, exposing them to each other's ideas, and our own

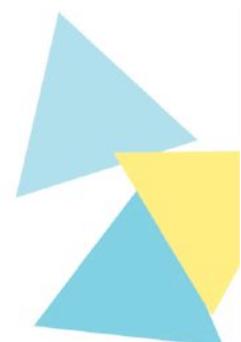
We will believe in the power of collectivism and community action

We will provide an online platform for collaboration as well as an accessible maker space in east London, open to everyone

We will attract investment to our research themes and drive change in these areas

We will remain not-profit and open to all

We will make a positive difference to the lives of disabled people through co-design, collaboration and innovation



# Futurecasting: GDI Hub in 2021

By April 2021, GDI Hub is operating a combined annual turnover (both ARC and CIC) of approximately £2m - £5m, with 10-20 staff and many more associate researchers and practitioners. We have built an emerging ecosystem of inclusive enterprise around assistive technology that is starting to change the lives of disabled people for the better. Our work has demonstrable impact on global policy and programme delivery. Everything we do amplifies the collective voice of disabled people, especially those living in poverty.

Our alumnae of over 50 students continue to influence our work and deliver our programmes; promoting and shaping our methodology globally. Our cutting edge academic research is always grounded in grass-roots practice and is starting to generate a new discourse of thinking and writing around 'disability innovation'.

More and more people with a lived experience of disability from different backgrounds in the Global North and South are leading our work and joining our teams. Our Advisory Board remains led by talented disabled people with global perspectives.

We have projects and partners in every continent; all of whom continue to build thinking and practice around disability innovation and help shape our methodology. Locally, our co-founders continue to create a strong ecosystem around disability innovation and we remain very proudly 'made in east London'.

We continue to focus on social justice outcomes using technology as a tool. In addition to our founding partnership, we now have a membership of hundreds, with each organisation signed up to help deliver our mission in tangible ways. Events, publications and social media spread our message.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

We will achieve our mission through three strands of work (see Table 1):

- Deliver exceptional, inter-disciplinary research, teaching and practice;
- Stimulate open-source innovation and inclusive entrepreneurship;
- Shape policy and programmes through co-creation, participation and community leadership.

## OUR CROSS CUTTING THEMES

There are five cross-cutting themes that run through all our work:

- Inclusive Design, beyond the build environment
- Assistive technology for social development
- Participation, partnerships and active citizenship
- Human computer interaction for community wellbeing
- Disability arts, sports and inclusive culture

We are seeking to develop a new discourse and new methodology about Disability Innovation. These will be the key elements of exploration.



Research & Teaching	Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Policy & Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow the GDI Hub research center (and satellites) expanding the number and scope of research projects to a significant scale</li> <li>• Delivery an award winning new masters programme in Design, Disability and Innovation, with exceptional teaching and diverse students</li> <li>• Generate a new multidisciplinary discourse and community of practice around Disability Innovation</li> <li>• Trial bold ideas in the 'live lab' at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, with global impact, connecting to global satellites</li> <li>• Develop and test our Global Disability Innovation meta Methodology through our work, based on our learning from the 2012 Games.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to address the failure in markets, distribution, access and use of Assistive Technology.</li> <li>• Trial bold initiatives that disrupt the status quo - lead global thinking and partnerships.</li> <li>• Create mechanisms for Disability Innovation exchange - perhaps through an Innovation Portal - to promote and share ideas globally.</li> <li>• Build a disability innovation ecosystem in east London, with virtual global reach and local impact.</li> <li>• Create the most accessible Maker Space in the world at the Hub, open to all.</li> <li>• Generate new models of inclusive innovation and social enterprise.</li> <li>• Continue to lead thinking on Inclusive Design, building on the 2012 approach, testing and trialling in low resource settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the charge to create a Global Mission for Disability Innovation. Developing of strategic partnerships with others including DPOs; INGOs; committed private sector partners; multi and bi-lateral agencies; and Governments.</li> <li>• Build the movement through summits, events, communications, social media and hacks and a demonstrable impact on policy and practice.</li> <li>• Develop new methods of engagement and participation through 'tech for active citizenship'.</li> <li>• Always lead by example through who we recruit and how we work.</li> <li>• Maintain our deep roots in east London, with a global perspective, recognising we have as much to learn as we have to teach.</li> </ul>

Table 1: The GDI Hub Objectives organised by activity area

## THE 'GDI TEST'

All GDI Hub projects must have **Global impact and application**; specifically relate to **Disability**; demonstrate genuine **Innovation**; and build an accessible knowledge and practice **Hub** through open collaboration.

With our partners and members, we build cross-disciplinary international collaborations to maximise, reach and deliver **scalable impact**. We always reinvest our income in these goals and our assets are **legally locked for this purpose**.

# Approach to Research and Practice

## ROBUST AND PRACTICAL RESEARCH

We approach all research from an academically robust, multi-disciplinary and yet practical perspective; building on the expertise and knowledge of our partners. In our extensive experience, multi-disciplinary teams containing both academics and practitioners are exceptionally affective in generating genuine innovative approaches.

Our research is grounded in Social Development and Social Justice. We harness the opportunities that new technology affords to generate more positive outcomes for disabled people and their communities; and we use disability to push the boundaries of what technology can do.

## PARTICIPATION AND CO-DESIGN

Disabled people are involved at every level of GDI Hub and its work because we know that projects, policies and programmes are better when they are co-designed by people with a lived experience of that situation or issue. We also believe that it will be impossible to overcome discrimination and create a more equal world without re-shaping power relations.

We are building a team of associate researchers and always work with local partners. We are always keen to talk to talented disabled researchers, practitioners or early career academics to support their work and career progression in any way we can.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Through our work we will seek to build the cultural capacity for aspiration and community leadership by disabled people, families and communities. Often solutions are well understood by disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and we see it as our job as researchers and practitioners to learn to ask the right questions, listen well to the answers and build the capacity of the people we work with to collectively claim their rights.

## DISRUPTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND RADICAL SUSTAINABILITY

GDI Hub is a partnership of communities, practitioners, academics, cultural, community, public and private organisations. We believe that through innovative collaborations interesting and creative ideas are developed. Doing things differently is necessary for change and this partnership can help disrupt business as usual to change things for the better. Our commitment to radical sustainability means that a core aim of our work is to work closely with the organisations who have the ability to 'mainstream' ideas generated through our research. We try to ensure that these organisations are part of our team and are as committed to listening to disabled people, their families and communities as we are. We do this by asking our collaborating partners to sign up to our mission and values.

## OPEN SOURCE IDEAS

Ideas to build our movement are not owned by anyone and are rarely the produce of a single person or organisation's project or thinking. We advocate open source solutions both for products, services and policy proposals. Learning is a two-way process and only by sharing will we generate change. Ours is a movement for change not a company seeking to protect its secrets. We work with people who are prepared to share their successes and their failures, respecting appropriate confidentiality.

## SOCIAL VALUE

Building on the open source ideology we aim to become leaders in social entrepreneurship; where success is measured by social value and impact on people's lives. Profits are simply necessary to ensure we maximise social impact.

The GDI Hub Advisory Board, and our Chair, have set out that every research project we undertake must map to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CPRD). Our approach is to apply methods that promote participation, genuinely create opportunities for co-design and that gather new evidence and practice in the emerging discourse on disability innovation.

## GDI Research Framework

Research funding in the Global North has become an increasingly competitive space where demonstrable real-world impact is paramount for any research proposal to have a realistic chance of being funded. As a multi-sector, multi-partner, inter-disciplinary research centre with a global focus, GDI Hub is well placed to influence the mission of research funders and to access a diverse and cross-disciplinary funding pool in order to further our mission.

GDI Hub benefits from commitment from its partners this has already resulted in the formation of new research collaborations. There will be a continued growth in engagement from members over the next three years in addition to projects emanating directly from within the GDI Hub core team. We are increasingly blending this with approaches from external institutions (both academic and non-academic) with offers to collaborate on research projects. This growth will continue in line with the current expansion of the Hub's work and reach.

The Hub is developing at pace to become the world's leading research centre on disability innovation. We have therefore adopted four research principles that any potential activities must encompass, that are in line with our overall vision, mission, and objectives. GDI Hub research projects must:

1. Have disabled people at the centre of the research project lifecycle, from design to delivery
2. Be ambitious and innovative in scope
3. Be created with interdisciplinary teams, utilising expertise from across GDI Hub partner institutions (as well as external organisations where appropriate)
4. Leverage international partnerships to maximise global reach

One direct result of our growth in the disability research and innovation space will be through the creation and subsequent fostering of a vibrant research culture and environment within the GDI Hub, as evidenced through an increasing number of doctoral students and early career researchers. This is an essential piece of capacity building that will ensure the next generation of researchers in this field will come through, all the while being supervised and mentored by the existing world-class senior academics that GDI Hub has at its disposal.



## DISABILITY INNOVATION METHODOLOGY

The Disability Innovation methodology developed with the Partners and the GDI Hub Advisory Board begins with the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Disabled Persons (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is well established that technologies, programmes, policies and services that are not co-developed are more likely to fail. Therefore, the central pillar of the emerging GDI Hub approach is co-design with communities in the countries where the project is taking place – providing an opportunity for (often poor) disabled people to have a collective voice.

The ultimate aim of our projects is for disabled people to be able to fully participate in all aspects of life. To achieve this aim it is essential that the evidence gathered and used to inform thinking and initiatives is truly reflective of the life experience of disabled people, their families and the communities they live in. The GDI approach therefore focuses on Participation, Co-Design and Evidence. Through these initial themes (see Figure 1) we will develop project specific outcomes, building our methodology of ‘what works’ as we go.

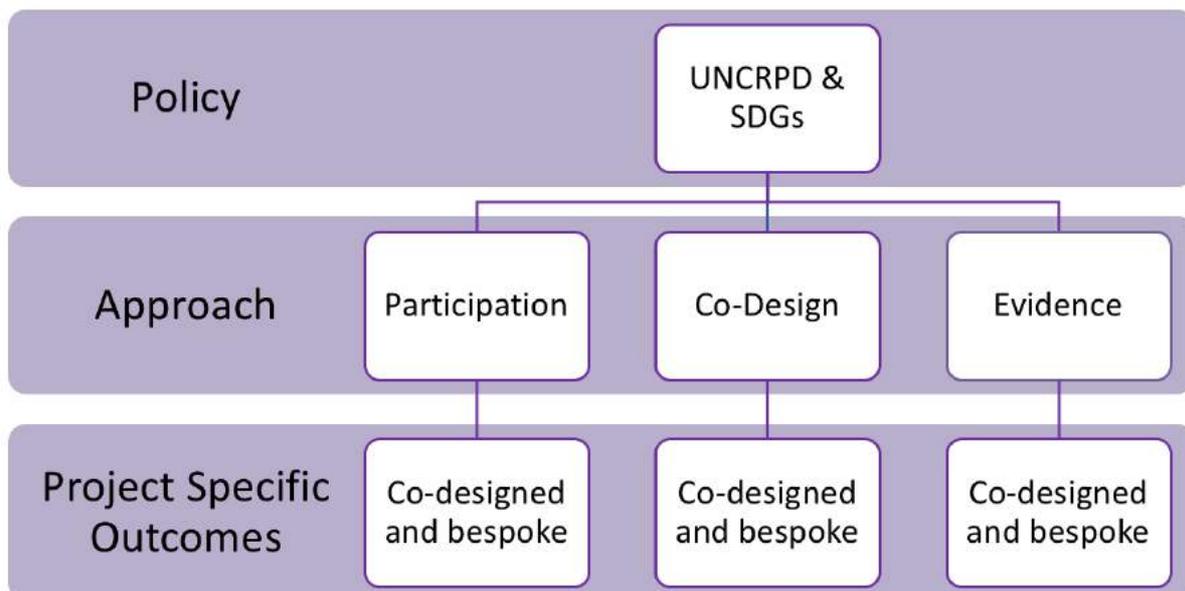


Figure 1: Disability Innovation Research Methodology

# Organisation and Governance

GDI Hub has two main components (see Figure 2), the Academic Research Centre (ARC) and the Community Interest Company (CIC).

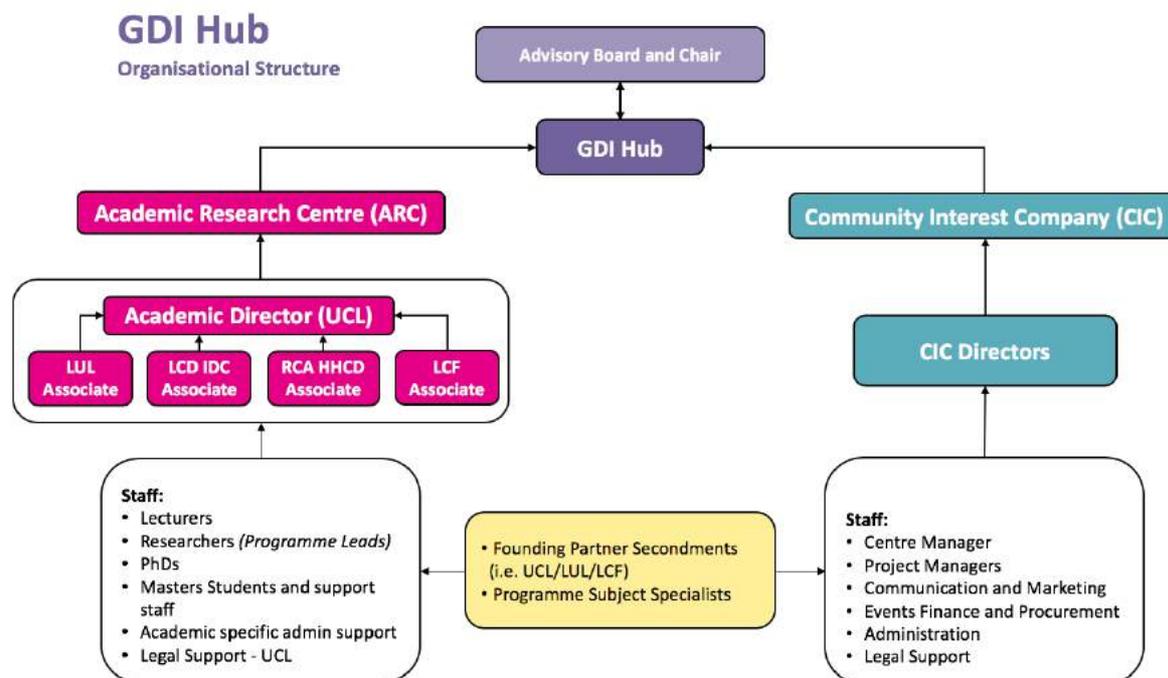


Figure 2: GDI Hub Organisational Structure

## GDI HUB ACADEMIC RESEARCH CENTRE (ARC)

GDI Hub's Academic Research Centre is led by our Academic Director at University College London (UCL). GDI Hub has office and lab space within the Here East Campus on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and it is expected to move into its permanent home, the first building to open on the new UCL East Campus, before the end of this Strategic Plan period.

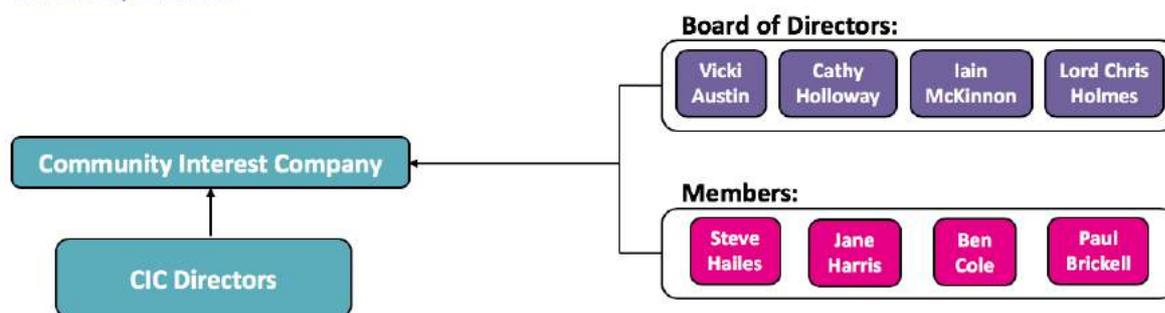
UCL is also the host of the MSc programme, though it is jointly delivered by London College of Fashion UAL and Loughborough University London. The teaching activity for the MSc Disability, Design & Innovation is covered by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and more general research and engagement activity by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

## GDI HUB COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY (CIC)

GDI Hub also operates through a Community Interest Company. A CIC is a UK based non-profit that can trade but has locked assets to its social purpose. The CIC was co-founded by Directors; Cathy Holloway, Iain McKinnon, Vicki Austin and Lord Chris Holmes with additional members being; Paul Brickell (LLDC), Jane Harris (LCF), Steve Hailes (UCL) and Ben Cole (LUL).

## GDI Hub C.I.C.

### Leadership Structure



#### Board of Directors:

- **Vicki Austin** – CIC Company Director, CIC Board of Directors, Honorary Researcher at UCL
- **Cathy Holloway** – Academic Director at UCL and CIC Board of Directors
- **Iain McKinnon** – CIC Director of Operations, CIC Board of Directors and Honorary Lecturer at UCL
- **Lord Chris Holmes** – GDI Hub Advisory Board Chair and CIC Board of Directors

Figure 3: GDI Hub CIC Structure

The GDI Hub CIC is Limited by Guarantee and its assets are locked towards pursuit of its social purpose. The Articles of Association of the CIC are available to view at Companies House (company number: 11126312) and set out the Governance arrangements. Members meet regularly to oversee activity. The CIC owns the logo and brand of GDI Hub and will licence its use to members free of charge, in return for delivering a programme of work towards the delivery of this three-year Strategy.

## GDI HUB ADVISORY BOARD

The GDI Hub Advisory Board is led by an independent Chair and will always be made up of a majority of disabled people with global perspectives. The Advisory Board has no legal status it provides guidance and advice for all organisations operating activities under the GDI Hub banner.

The GDI Hub Advisory Board will meet not fewer than four times per year under the guidance of the Chair. The co-chair will be the UCL Board member, in the initial phase - Professor Steve Hailes.



# Financial Targets

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH CENTRE

The GDI Hub Academic Research Centre aims to have an operational turnover of £2m - £5m per year by 2021. This will be funded from a range of sources including; core contributions, research income, teaching income and philanthropic grants.

Targets for research and philanthropic income are shown in Table 1.

Income area	2021 Target (annual)	Responsibility
Research and Teaching	£1.5m – £2.5m	Academic Director
Philanthropic	£1m - £1.5m	

Table 2: Financial targets for the Academic Research Centre

## COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

The GDI Hub Community Interest Company aims to have an operational turnover of £0.5m - £1.5m per year by 2021. This will be funded primarily from programme and project commissions. Targets for these are shown in Table 2.

Income area	2021 Target (annual)	Responsibility
CIC commissions	£0.5m - £1.5m	CIC Directors

Table 3: Financial targets for the Academic Research Centre

# Membership Model

As GDI Hub grows, institutions will be able to join the GDI Hub by signing up to the values and objectives of the Hub, and setting out a delivery plan for how they will help to grow the disability innovation movement. Institutions can also be affiliated to the GDI Hub Academic Research Centre through project-specific Consortium Agreements for research projects or through additional Memoranda of Agreement which will cover future teaching-related activities.



# Delivery

GDI Hub will ensure that all outputs across both the Academic Research Centre and the Community Interest Company are measured and reported on. This is vital and the only way we can ensure we are meeting our objectives.

We will monitor delivery by:

- Producing an annual report that will chart general progress made against the Strategy and give updates against the operational plans of all GDI Hub members and co-founders
- Ensuring that at a programme and project level, all initiatives with GDI Hub leadership will monitor delivery against the initial objectives in the brief in an efficient, effective and transparent way. Influence all programmes and projects we are involved with to do the same
- Reporting to GDI Hub Advisory board bi-annually on progress across the ARC and CIC with a summary of delivery and impact in all areas
- Keeping our website updated including on programme and project delivery and impact

We will track all risks and issues by:

- Creating and managing a core business and programme specific risk register that tracks all GDI Hub activity across both the ARC and CIC
- Producing monthly risk register reports for consideration at Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings
- Ensuring that where there has been any significant change to the programme risk register it is fed back and presented to the Advisory Board at the earliest opportunity
- Providing an annual risk and issues update as part of the annual report

## References

[1] Nora Groce and Maria Kett, "The Disability and Development Gap." 2013.

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