



Inclusive Minds

Inclusion Ambassadors

The network of Young Ambassadors for Inclusion has been developed by Inclusive Minds to support real inclusivity in children's books and to give young people from a diverse range of backgrounds an important voice.

This (Q&A-format) guidance material explains the programme, the benefits to different parties and how you can be a part of it.

What is the network?

The Ambassador network has been developed with the aim of making connections between children's book creators wanting to ensure authentic inclusivity and young people with valuable relevant experience.

The team of Ambassadors comprises young people aged 8-30, each of whom has first-hand experience of a particular facet of diversity. The idea is that young people can share their ideas and experiences with authors, illustrators and publishers to ensure that characters representing people like them are portrayed authentically. The Ambassador network particularly aims to represent young people from marginalised, under-represented or misrepresented groups and backgrounds.

What do we mean by 'diversity'?

Inclusive Minds believes that ALL children should be represented in books. We consider 'diversity' to include disability, gender equality, ethnicity, race, culture, gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic background, religion and family structure. Inclusive Minds believes all books can be 'inclusive' and all children should be represented in the children's book landscape.

Who can join the network?

Any young person with an interest in seeing better representation of diversity in books can join the network. Most Ambassadors are aged between 8 and 30 (but the network also includes some parents, carers, entire families and youth workers). All of them have important first-hand knowledge of particular facets of diversity and a

genuine interest in sharing their expertise and experience to help enhance children's books.

Who can access the network?

Anyone involved in creating a children's book can contact Inclusive Minds to find out more about using the network. Most of the users are authors, illustrators and publishers. Due to the high demand for help, priority is given to books that are already commissioned or highly likely to be published and to signatories of the Everybody In charter.

What is a typical Ambassador 'project'?

A book creator (such as an author) contacts us seeking input or advice on a new book. They supply some basic information about the book and the aspect on which they particularly want help. The work usually involves ensuring the authentic depiction of a particular character. Sometimes they may have specific questions about this, while in other cases they may just want someone to read an early draft of a manuscript or look at some initial sketches. Inclusive Minds sends a summary of the request out to the team of Ambassadors. Any Ambassador who wishes to be involved (i.e. who feels that they have relevant experience which means that they may be able to help) replies to Inclusive Minds. Inclusive Minds discusses the request with the Ambassador and then connects the two parties to discuss the possible involvement (or 'project').

What makes an Ambassador 'project' work?

The key to the success of the Ambassador network is mutual value – both sides should reap the benefits. Good communication and mutual respect are paramount in achieving this. We also recommend that authors contact the network at as early a stage as possible, as our experience of the network to date shows that early input can prove transformational, whilst it can sometimes be difficult to effect real change in the later stages.

What are the benefits to Ambassadors?

Participation in the network can offer an Ambassador a unique chance to be involved in working on a children's book. This can be an empowering experience, as well as allowing them to gain insight/experience of the book industry. Ambassadors are also often credited for their input, for example with an acknowledgement in the finished book. They may also receive signed books, invitations to launches and other perks.

What does the network offer book creators?

For book creators, consulting an Ambassador can usefully complement other forms of research they will be undertaking to ensure authenticity. Initial ideas can be explored, early versions/sections of a manuscript read, feedback supplied, case studies developed, rough artwork checked, possible book covers or blurbs discussed.

How can I become an Ambassador?

Inclusive Minds is keen to hear from any young people (or families, parents, carers or youth workers) with a willingness to share their knowledge by becoming an Ambassador. Joining is very simple. Email Inclusive Minds co-founder Alexandra Strick at alex@strick.co.uk. We will just need you to fill out a short form so that we can add you to our database, following which you will be invited to join our Facebook Group (which is closed to the public) through which we will share any relevant requests we receive from authors, illustrators or publishers for you to consider.

As a book creator, how can I use the network?

To access the network, just use [the simple form on our website](#) (or email us at info@inclusiveminds.com) and we will share your enquiry across our network to see whether anyone can help you.

Will book creators always receive input?

Since the network is still in its early stages of evolution, we cannot guarantee that we have an Ambassador who can help with every specific request. However, we are now slowly developing the network with the aim of covering as many areas as possible. Priority access will guarantee a speedy response to enquiries about the network, and means that if we don't currently have an Ambassador with the relevant experience or background, we will do our best to try to recruit one.

How much does it cost to access the network?

Those using the network are encouraged to give back to inclusion ambassadors in any way they can, and let us know how they plan to do this (see some suggestions above).

- For an initial conversation or anything that takes no more than an hour or two, we'd suggest that along with some of the benefits mentioned above, a book token or similar gesture of goodwill would be welcomed.
- Expenses should be covered for face-to-face meetings.

- For anything beyond this, the network user (be that publisher, author or illustrator) would be expected to introduce and agree fees with the inclusion ambassador.*
This might be an hourly rate or a flat fee and can be discussed with Inclusive Minds and the ambassador once they have expressed interest in involvement in a particular project.
- Inclusive Minds ran a crowdfunding campaign to fund the development and management of the network. Although the campaign has now ended, you can still support the ongoing need for the funding of this by making a donation.
- A copy of the final book should be sent to any Inclusion Ambassadors worked with, and two copies should be sent to Inclusive Minds.

*If for any reasons this would be financially challenging, please let us know on the enquiry form and we will see if an ambassador is happy to work with you on an altruistic basis. This, however, should be the exception rather than the norm.

How can creators make the experience as beneficial as possible to Ambassadors?

We do ask all creators to look for any appropriate ways to thank and credit the Ambassador/s they work with. In many cases it is possible to acknowledge the input they receive through an acknowledgment or credit in a book. Please always check this (and the wording) with the Ambassador before including their full name. We would also ask that at least one complimentary (ideally signed) copy of the book be sent to the Ambassador. Invitations to book launches might also represent a good way of recognising the young person's involvement.

Can the Ambassador role involve public speaking?

Yes, many of our Ambassadors are also willing to represent Inclusive Minds by taking part in public speaking and media opportunities. They can often also provide quotes. Ambassadors have already appeared on national television (such as *Newsround*), on the radio (including Radio 4), taken part in literary festivals and been interviewed by national press (including the *Guardian*). Again, please contact us if you are interested in inviting one of our Ambassadors to take part in an event and please ensure that Inclusive Minds are appropriately acknowledged in all literature/presentations.

How do Ambassadors and creators communicate?

Inclusive Minds will introduce the two parties via email. The two parties are asked to continue to keep Inclusive Minds informed as the dialogue progresses. Sometimes input/consultation may then take place through telephone calls, and in some cases both parties may agree to meet and discuss a project in person.

What if an Ambassador is under 18?

Please note that all contact with Ambassadors under the age of 18 must always take place via a parent or carer. To this effect, Inclusive Minds will only share the parent/carer's details with the creator and asks that creators under no circumstances communicate directly with the young person or meet him/her without the parent/carer present. Please note: It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure this, once Inclusive Minds has made the initial introduction.

How is the process monitored?

As above, both parties are asked to keep Inclusive Minds informed as the discussions progress. Inclusive Minds will send a follow-up email to request an update on the progress of the project, generally within 4-6 weeks of putting the two parties in contact. Once any/all consultation has taken place, Inclusive Minds will also ask for a subsequent brief comment (from both parties) on the success of the project. Comments and quotes may be used in reports and publicity material.

How did the network come about?

Inclusive Minds has developed and successfully piloted the Ambassador programme, following consultation with the children's book publishing world. A 2017 crowdfunding campaign has enabled us to start to develop it. We are working to actively grow the team of Ambassadors and increase the breadth of experience and expertise the network can offer.

How is the scheme promoted?

The scheme has been widely publicized and was announced in The Bookseller. We are always looking for new ways to promote the opportunity, particularly to marginalized groups / families, and word of mouth / personal recommendation is vital, so please do help us spread the word.

What commitments are involved in being an Ambassador?

As an Ambassador, we ask you to:

- Look at any requests we send out to you.

- If there are any which are directly relevant to your experience and on which you think you could help, contact us to discuss.
- Notify us if there are any changes in your contact details or ability to participate in the project.
- Provide feedback on the experience of being an Ambassador and notify us of any problems or concerns.
- Keep us informed as the project develops.
- Look out for any other young people who might wish to join the network.

What are the book creator's responsibilities?

As someone who accesses the network, we ask you to:

- Remember that the network is not a substitute for other forms of research, but rather aims to complement them.
- Respect the Ambassador/s and their knowledge and experience.
- Remember that each individual's experience of a particular facet of diversity is valid.
- Remember that one individual's story is not representative of everyone else with experience of the same facet of diversity. Books need to reflect many different experiences and avoid the dangers of the ['single story'](#).
- Look for as many ways as possible to acknowledge the help you receive.
- Ensure you communicate via the parent/carer if the young person is under 18.
- Look for ways to support Inclusive Minds and promote our work.

What happens if I no longer wish to be an Ambassador?

You can notify us at any time if for any reason you would like to be removed from the network, either temporarily or permanently.

Please contact us if you have any suggestions for further information to be added to this guidance material.