Resource:

Digital: website accessibility

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - **WCAG 2.1**

This resource has been created by our Digital Engagement Officer, Rachel Cartwright, as an overview of website accessibility: context, regulations and practical considerations for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG).

We look at initial steps to begin this process and provide further links for more in depth guidance.


Context

1 in 5 people have a long term illness, impairment or disability, and many more have a temporary or situational disability. It is important to remember that impairments are not always permanent.

There are people who **temporarily** do not have use of their senses due to illness or injury - such as having an ear infection or cold.

And we should consider people who do not have full use of their senses because of the **situation** they are in - such as being in a noisy environment that prevents you being able to hear as clearly.

User needs should be considered whether an impairment or disability **is permanent, temporary or situational**.

Deaf — Permanent

Injury or infection

Background noise — Situational
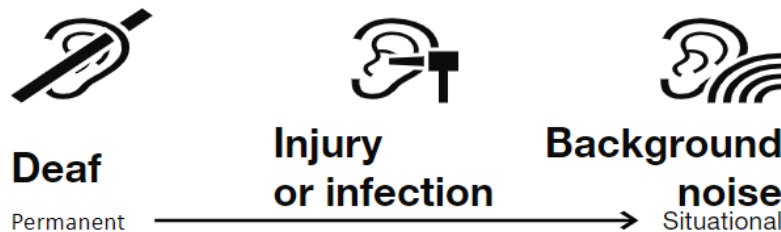
Graphic and information in this block: courtesy of Government Digital Service

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Accessibility and the law:

Equality Act 2010 - we have a legal obligation to provide equal access to people with disabilities

Public Sector Equality Duty - we have a duty to be proactive in making things accessible

The Equality Duty applies across Great Britain to the public bodies listed in Schedule 19*, and to any other organisation when it is carrying out a public function. (gov.uk)*

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 to find out who is considered a public body see this page on legislation on the UK Gov website

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Public service websites must be compliant by **23rd September 2020:**

- Meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) to level AA
- Make websites and apps perceivable, operable, understandable and robust
- Publish an accessibility statement

In the next page we look at considerations to help you to achieve this and provide links for further information

Checking the accessibility of your website

There are many aspects of your website to consider for accessibility – below are some of the main elements:

-   **Accessible copy** – use plain language, keep sentences short and provide clear instructions. Hemmingway app is a great way to practice keeping your language simple and clear.
-   **Headings** - Use these to structure the text for screen readers. Each page should have one main heading (H1). Subheadings provide you with a structure (H2 and H3). You can set your headings when editing your website page. This W3C pages provides more information on headings
-   **Use alt-text on images** – this describes the image – keep it specific and use fewer than 125 characters in the description. Web Aim have published detailed guidance on alt-text
-   **Colour and contrast** – there needs to be sufficient contrast between text colour and its background. The ratio should be 4.5:1. Check the ratio with this tool. You can find your colour codes using this site.
-   **Links** – internal or external – the link text should tell users where they are going, avoid 'click here' or 'read more' (examples are in this document)
-   **Provide alternative formats** – what documents do you upload? Word? PDF? Are these accessible? See Arts Council's Let's Create pages for accessible version examples

Publish an accessibility statement. Include:

-   An outline of key guidelines and standards the website follows (e.g WCAG 2.1 Level AA)
-   Any known exceptions to the intended level of web accessibility (you could use Nomensa's Accessibility Statement Generator as a way to 'audit' and see where your website does not currently comply and then add this information into your statement –it is recommended to not just use this whole statement though and instead write your own)
-   Contact information for how your users can obtain accessible alternatives
-   Make sure you update regularly (at least once a year)

This is important for all websites – not just for public bodies.

It makes good business sense to have an accessible website: an organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it carries out its core mission more efficiently.
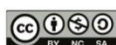
When making these decisions, think about:

-   your organisation's size and resources
-   how much making things accessible would cost and the impact that would have on your organisation
-   how much disabled users would benefit from you making things accessible