

Managers' Briefing

Key change in legislation and guide on how to create accessible information



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Background

If you have staff that use a computer at work, and are the author of information that could be published on our website, they should be aware of a change in legislation that requires all information to be presented and published online in an accessible format.

Your role

Please share the key messages in this brief with your teams who create documents **as soon as possible** – it explains:

- what is changing
- what they need to do to support this change
- the steps and processes they need to follow to make their information accessible and meet the change.

It is split into **two sections** – key messages and supporting appendices with links to 'how-to guides'

Key messages

1. Introduction- new legislation

In September 2018 new **legislation** came into force that requires all downloadable **documents** (such as PDFs) and forms published on existing public sector websites (and intranets) to be made **accessible** by 23 September 2020.

2. What does this change mean for the council?

This change, under Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations, means as a council we have to make sure that all downloadable content-published on both our external website and our intranet is produced with accessibility at its core. For example, this includes PDFs, forms, Word documents and webpages.

As a local authority it is best practice for us to create our information in an accessible format - as it can be widely shared amongst diverse audiences and could also be published at some point.

3. What does this change mean for you?

This change in the law means that all staff, as authors of council information, **should follow best practice and some key principles**, as a matter of course, to make sure information is produced in an accessible manner - no matter where it intends to be housed or published.

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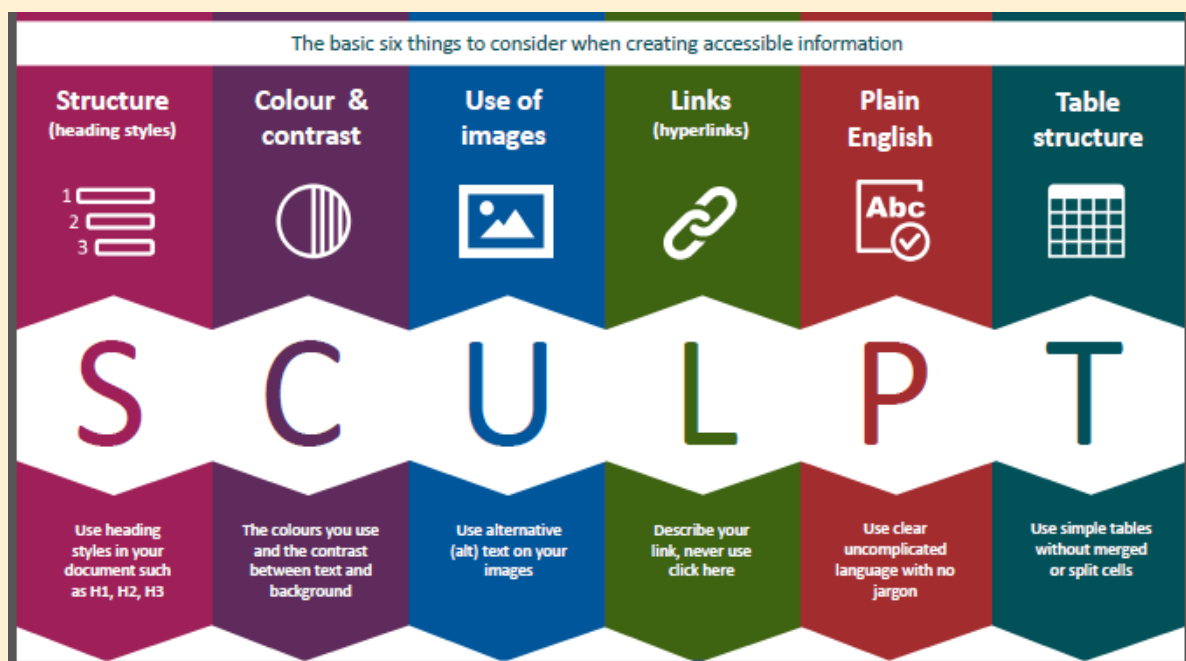
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We should also think about how the information can be uploaded as accessible body copy on a web page, rather than it being published as a downloadable PDF.

Follow key principles

When creating your information you need to follow a set of key principles – known as ‘**SCULPT**’*

Remembering to use the six steps outlined in SCULPT when creating your information will help it to pass an accessibility check – if you have the software installed on your device.



Section five gives an overview of these principles and **appendix one** offers additional guidance and support links on how to apply the ‘SCULPT’ principles to make sure your webpages and documents are accessible.

4. What does accessible mean?

Accessibility is about making sure information can be used by as many people as possible.

An accessible website is one that has been designed and developed with the needs of people with disabilities in mind. It will have been built to avoid creating barriers to people who for example may have impaired vision, motor or learning difficulties.

To summarise - accessibility means making sure that:

- the **design** of your information is **clear and simple**.

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- the **content is simple enough** for most people to use it without the need to take extra steps to adapt it.
- **the format** of your information can easily support those who need to adapt it.

For example: someone with impaired vision may use a screen reader (software) to read out the content from an online document. Whereas someone with motor difficulties might use a special mouse, or speech recognition software to navigate the content.

5. Why is it important to make our information accessible?

As a local authority it is best practice for us to create information in an accessible format as it can be widely shared amongst various audiences, both internally and externally and could be published online at some point.

For our citizens our website may be the only way that they can interact or get in touch with us. So making our website content accessible is not just about complying with a change in legislation, it is vitally important that we make sure that our citizens can find important information easily and that they are able to read it.

Accessible websites are also often faster and easier to use. Our website will feature an Accessibility Statement that shows and explains how we are complying with this legislation and making our pages and downloadable content accessible to all.

If we fail to comply with this new law there is a reputational risk to the organisation that we are failing to meet the needs of our wide, diverse audience. We could also be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which could result in legal action being taken against us.

6. How do I create accessible information?

When creating a document or a web page remember to use the six basic **'SCULPT'*** principles to help make it accessible:

- **S**tructure
- **C**olour and contrast
- **U**se of Images
- **L**inks
- **P**lain English
- **T**able Structure

An overview is given in this section on what they mean and Appendix one gives guidance and support on how to apply them.

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Structure

What?	This refers to the way the content is organised, we need to apply built in headings and styles.
Why?	<p>This is very important, especially if it is a long document, we don't read start to finish word for word, we start by looking at content such as main section headings and sub headings to find where we want to go to.</p> <p>People who use screen readers or are unable to use a mouse equally want to navigate a keyboard in the same way. This type of navigation can be done using keyboard shortcuts or tabbing through a menu on a screen reader.</p> <p>Structure in a document can provide this navigation so all users can quickly get to the content they need without scrolling or having to read word for word. However this can only work if the document is set up with a structure correctly.</p>

Colours and contrast

What?	If your document has a high level of contrast between text and background, more people can see and use the content.
Why?	<p>This is an important issue not just for those who have vision issues but because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• colours can sometimes seem less vibrant in the sunshine and may not be readable if there is too little contrast between the background and foreground• colours, contrast, resolution and size can vary between screen and projectors• tired eyes have to work harder when colour contrast is poor, this can lead to eye strain and headaches• the amount of light that reaches the back of the eye reduces as a natural part of ageing.

Use of images and visual content

What?	<p>This includes pictures, SmartArt graphics, shapes, groups, charts, embedded objects, ink and videos. There are four things to consider when using images:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use images that support text• never use an image instead of text• use correct image sizes (on web its best to have images around 150kb)• use 'alt text' to describe images.
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Why?	<p>'Alt text' is used to provide an alternative description of the image for those people who are unable to view it. This may include people with visual impairments who use screen readers as well as people using text only browsers. It is also useful if the image fails to load properly.</p> <p>Avoid using text in images as the sole method of conveying important information. If you must use an image with text in it, repeat that text in the document.</p>
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Links (hyperlinks)

What?	Links help users navigate through content on a website, in a document or to signpost your readers to additional relevant sources of information.
Why?	They need to be descriptive as people who use screen readers sometimes might read the content of the page and then bring up a menu of the links separately to tab through and visit afterwards. This menu would only show the list of link titles and they would be out of context away from the full text they were originally part of.

Plain English

What?	Plain English is writing clearly and with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice, that is clear and concise. Plain English means avoiding using acronyms and long words.
Why?	Complex language can be very difficult for some people, especially where English is not their first language or for those with learning difficulties or reduced cognitive abilities. Also for anyone using a translator, it often translates much better when the original content is clearly worded in English.

Table Structure

What?	Tables should be structured simply using column headers, making sure they don't contain split cells, merged cells or nested tables. You should also scan to make sure they don't have any blank rows or columns.
Why?	<p>Poorly created tables can cause difficulties for screen readers or those tabbing through information on a web page or document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if a table is nested (built within another table) or if a cell is merged or split, the screen reader can't provide helpful information.• blank cells in a table could also mislead a screen reader into thinking that there is nothing more in the table.

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	Screen readers use column header information to identify rows and columns
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***SCULPT** by [Helen Wilson](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). Based on work at [Worcestershire County Council](#).

7. Supporting information

- **Appendix 1** - provides more detailed guidance on how to follow these SCULPT principles to help create accessible content – features interactive links.
- **Appendix 2** – provides guidance on how to create an accessible PDF from a Word document.

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Appendix 1

Additional guidance and support on how to apply the 'SCULPT' principles to make sure your document is accessible.

Applying and following these principles will help it pass an accessibility check once you have finalised it so that it can be published online. You may need to use your own device to view the videos if you do not currently have permissions to access to YouTube on your council device.

➤ Structure

- Break up your Word document to make it more readable. Use bullet points, numbered steps and meaningful subheadings.
- Use styles to create a hierarchy of headings: 'heading 1', 'heading 2' and so on. Also use styles for things like tables and bullet lists. That way, a screen reader will recognise the formatting and read out the content correctly. Guidance on using styles and headings can be found at support.office.com.
- This short video explains how to add headings to your document:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fyd78-R6T2E>
- How to change or modify your document depending on your needs:
[Microsoft Support - Modify a heading style manually \(opens in a new window\)](#)
[Video: How to do edit and delete styles in Microsoft Word \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Give the Word document a meaningful title.
- A document title is metadata. It will display at the top of the document's application or in the tab of a web browser. If someone's using a screen reader, the title will be the first thing the screen reader recognises. A good clear and descriptive title will help people understand what the document is about.

➤ Colours and Contrast

- Do not use things like colour or shape alone to get across meaning. This is because instructions like 'click the big green button' rely on the user's ability to see the page
- [Use accessible text colour \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- [Use accessible text format \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Tools for checking colour and contrast:
[Google Chrome NoCoffee Vision Simulator \(opens in a new window\)](#)
[Colour Contrast Analyser \(opens in a new window\)](#)

➤ Use of Images and Photos

- If you are using images or charts, think about how you will make the content accessible to people with a visual impairment. Two options are:
 1. make the same point in the text of the document (so people with visual

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impairments get the information they need - the image or chart is there as an extra for people who are able to see it) or

2. give the person converting or uploading the document for you [alt text](#) ('alternative text') for the image or chart, which is a description – links on how to do this with examples are below.

 - it is also best to avoid images containing text, as it is not possible to resize the text in the image, and screen readers cannot read text within images and
 - avoid footnotes where possible. Provide explanations inline instead.

Include **alternative text (alt text)** with all visual.

- [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 365 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 2019 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- [How to add alt text to visuals in Office 2016 \(opens in a new window\)](#)

To add alt text in Word or Power Point you simply right click on the image, and select 'Edit Alt Text' from the drop down menu and then add your description in the box provided.

For example:

Image	Alt-Text
GCC Logo	Glasgow City Council Logo
Signature	Signature of...
Map	Map of...
Photographs of Individual Staff	Name only not "Image or Photograph of..."
Infographics	Infographic of...
Photographs of Teams	Name of team, not individual names
Stock Image	Mark as decorative

➤ **Links (hyperlinks)**

- Do not repeatedly link titles such as 'click here' or 'find out more', links need to be given a full accurate title so it is easily identified what the link is about and where it is going to.
- Do not use the full web address, long links being read out on a screen reader are very unhelpful.
- Make sure any hyperlink text clearly describes where the link will go. It should also be understandable on its own, even if you read it out of context. This is important because some screen reader users scan through the links on a page one-by-one to find what they need.

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- Guidance on using hyperlink text and screen tips can be found at support.office.com
- Here are useful instructions on how to create [accessible hyperlinks in Microsoft Word \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Here is an instructional video of how to [create accessible links in Word](#)

➤ Plain English

- Write in language that is as clear and concise as possible.
- Where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them.
- The [Plain English Campaign \(opens in a new window\)](#) have free guides, services and resources to help with writing in plain English.

➤ Tables

- Only use tables for data.
- Keep tables simple; avoid splitting or merging cells. Guidance on creating accessible tables can be found at support.office.com
- Here is an instructional video on [how to create accessible tables in Word.](#)
- Here are some instructions to be able to [use column headers in tables \(opens in a new window\).](#)

Checking your document

Remember once your document is completed you can run the Microsoft [accessibility checker](#) to make sure it is compliant.

Note: the Accessibility Checker is accessed in different ways depending on which version of Microsoft Office you are using. Instructions for different versions can be found on the Microsoft Website under [Accessibility Checker](#).

Quick tip to add: If you do not already have this pre-installed you can follow these quick steps to add it to your ribbon toolbar in Microsoft Word:

1. **Right click** on the ribbon toolbar in Word
2. Choose '**Customize the ribbon**'
3. In right hand list select '**Review**' and click '**New Group**'
4. In left hand list, from the '**Choose command from:**' drop-down menu, select '**All Commands**'.
5. Scroll down and select '**Accessibility Checker**'.
6. Select the '**Add>>**' button between the boxes, which will **add** the '**Accessibility Checker**' icon to your New Group on your toolbar.

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Appendix 2 - Guide to Creating Accessible PDFs from Word Documents – for staff with access to Adobe Pro.

This guidance covers the main things that you can do to create an accessible PDF document converted from a Word document.

How to prepare your source file or edit an existing PDF

When creating a new Word document, you should make sure it is accessible before turning it into a PDF.

To make an existing PDF accessible you will either need to edit:

- the PDF if you have access to the appropriate software (find out more at [WebAIM: PDF Accessibility](#)) or
- the original document (for example, Word) then republish it as a new PDF.

How to Save an Accessible PDF in Microsoft Office

Adding accessibility tags to PDF files makes it easier for screen readers and other assistive technologies to read and navigate a document, with table of contents, hyperlinks, bookmarks, alt text and so on. Accessibility tags also make it possible to read the information on different devices, such as large type displays, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and mobile phones. In Windows, Office for Mac, and Office for web, you can add tags automatically when you save a file as PDF format.

When you have created your document in Microsoft Word, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure the document is ready to convert to PDF and that there are no accessibility issues. If there are, fix these issues before converting to PDF. Follow the steps below to convert your Word document to PDF.

Note: the Accessibility Checker is accessed in different ways depending on which version of Microsoft Office you are using. Instructions for different versions can be found on the Microsoft Website under [Accessibility Checker](#).

Once you have converted your file to PDF run the [Accessibility Checker](#) in Acrobat Pro and fix any issues that are found. This feature is only available in Acrobat Pro and not in Acrobat Reader.

Office 2013

- Before generating your PDF, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to access and edit. Instructions for Office 2013 can be found in the 'Don't see Accessibility Checker?' section.
- If there are any accessibility issues fix them before saving your document.

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- Click the **File** tab, and then click **Save As**.
- Under **Choose a Location**, choose where you want the file to be saved.
- Under **Choose a Folder**, choose a folder that you have already used or click **Browse for Additional Folders** to choose a different folder.
- In the **Save As** dialog box, click the arrow in the **Save as type** list, and then click **PDF**.
- Click **Options**.
- Make sure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility** check box is selected, and then click **OK**.
- Click **Save**.

Office 365, Office 2019 and Office 2016

- Before generating your PDF, run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to access and edit.
- If there are any accessibility issues fix them before saving your document.
- Click **File** > **Save As** and choose where you want the file to be saved.
- In the **Save As** dialog box, choose **PDF** in the **Save as type** list.
- Click **Options**, make sure the '**Document structure tags for accessibility**' check box is selected, and then click **OK**.

Further Guidance

Further information and guidance on creating accessible documents can be found at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs> and
- <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Make-your-Word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities>