

Managers' Briefing

Support on making information accessible



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Background

In September 2018 legislation came into force that requires all downloadable documents and forms published on public sector websites and intranets to be made accessible.

A [Manager's Briefing was issued in September 2020](#) with advice on how to create accessible documents for the web as we are subject to a fine and reputational damage if we fail to comply.

As content creators it is best practice for us to **create all information in an accessible format** as it can be widely shared amongst diverse audiences and could also be published at some point in the future. Everything we create from emails to spreadsheets should be able to be read and understood by as wide an audience as possible including, for example, people with visual impairments or dyslexia. Our documents should also work well with screen reading software.

We have recently published [accessibility guidance](#) to help you create accessible content.

Your Role

Please share the information and key messages in this briefing with your staff by **24 May 2022**. It is important that you encourage them to familiarise themselves with the guidance on how to make information accessible to make sure that everything we produce can be easily understood and, if published online, complies with the legislation.

1. What is accessibility?

Accessibility is about making what you are creating clearer and easier for everyone to understand. It is a set of standards which are in place to help make material accessible to people with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairment, deafness or with hearing impairments.

When we talk about making documents accessible it means considering things such as:

- Using **Plain English** to keep language clear and simple.
- Using heading to **structure** your document to help people navigate around it.
- Thinking carefully about **colour and contrast** in terms of text versus the background or colours in a table.
- When including **links** it is important to embed the link itself rather than pasting in an entire URL, and always remember to use screentips to describe the information.
- When using an **image** always use 'alt text' to explain what the image shows.
- Keep **tables** as simple as possible, try to avoid split or merged cells.
- Use **captions** to subtitle videos and don't rely on the auto generated subtitles on platforms like YouTube for example.

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2. Why do I need to make documents accessible?

Legislation which came into force in 2018 means all downloadable documents and forms published on both our website, and on Connect must be accessible - this includes all PDFs, forms, word documents and webpages. We must adhere to these regulations or we could be subject to a fine and also damage to our reputation.

They say: "Accessibility means more than putting things online. It means making your content and design clear and simple enough so that most people can use it without needing to adapt it, while supporting those who do need to adapt things."

Therefore, it is important to get into the habit of creating accessible information- even if it's not going to be published online. We should all get in the routine of creating accessible content so that most people can use it without the need to adapt it.

3. What type of documents do I need to make accessible?

Accessibility standards should be applied to everything you produce from emails to presentations.

Visit our [accessibility guidance](#) section on our staff webpages for guidance on how to make your information accessible. The section is broken down into the following key topics to help you quickly find the right support you need:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outlook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Powerpoint
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PDF's	

4. How do I make documents accessible?

Visit our [accessibility guidance](#) section on our staff webpages to learn more about:

- tips for creating accessible content
- running an accessibility checker
- helpful accessibility tools – to support people with disabilities or anyone who wants to make the learning experience on their device easier.

In addition there is information on some support features than can help you access more accessible content.