

WDC website accessibility policy

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Introduction

Why make our website accessible to disabled people?

- The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) makes it a legal requirement to provide an accessible website.
- The Department for Work and Pensions found that there are almost 10 million disabled people in the UK. In addition there are millions of other individuals who are affected by sensory, physical and/or cognitive impairments, including those resulting from the ageing process (2005).
- Research undertaken by the Disability Rights Commission (2004) has confirmed that people without disabilities are also able to use websites more effectively and more successfully when they are optimised for accessibility.
- Content developed upholding World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines and specifications can be more easily transferred to other media, such as interactive TV, mobile phones and handheld computers.
- Accessible content, for example where a text equivalent is provided for graphical elements, is highly visible to search engines, often leading to higher rankings.
- Ensuring accessibility can be a source of good publicity.

The aims and use of this policy

- This accessibility policy outlines the accessibility targets that will be set and any measures that will be taken to broaden access to the Warwick District Council (WDC) website.
- The accessibility policy should be referenced in tender and contract documents. It contains requirements for contractors undertaking the development and maintenance of the website. All contractors should be asked specifically to commit to helping WDC meet its accessibility policy and this should be reflected in all contracts. A summary of the policy is available on the website.
- Service Level Agreements are in place between Customer Services and all other service areas (including IT) to ensure that this policy is referenced prior to any development. The web manager will work with individual service areas and IT to ensure that relevant questions are asked of suppliers (see section 5).

1. Accessibility statement

The website contains a declaration of accessibility and this should always be maintained and updated as necessary.

<http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/WDC/Footer+Postings/Accessibility.htm>

The declaration should be written in plain English and reference the standards the website aims for in terms of the W3C guidelines.

Any logos awarded to the site (e.g. Shaw Trust, RNIB) should only be displayed for the duration of the accreditation awarded.

2. Users

The following user groups should be consulted during any major development of the website (e.g. complete website redevelopment, new content management system), or when significant new features are to be added (e.g. new online payments system):

2.1. Vision impairment

- Users with vision medium to severe impairment, e.g. users of screen reader software or users of magnification software.
- Users with mild vision impairment, e.g. users who might enlarge text in the browser.

2.2. Mobility

- Users with severe motor difficulties, e.g. users with Motor Neurone disease who might use switch access and an on-screen keyboard to interact with a computer.
- Users with severe motor difficulties, e.g. users who might use voice recognition software.
- Users with mild to medium motor difficulties or upper limb disorder, e.g. users who might only use a keyboard (a mouse being too difficult to use) or users who might use a mouse but have fine control difficulties.

2.3. Cognitive and learning

- Users with medium dyslexia, e.g. users who might change site colours and text formatting, and who in many cases might supplement this with text to speech software for reading sections of text.
- Users with mild to medium learning or cognitive disabilities, e.g. users who might use a symbol browser to convert web pages to symbols or users who have no special access tools and rely on someone else assisting them.

2.4. Deaf and hard of hearing

- British Sign Language (BSL) users and or/deaf or hard of hearing users should be consulted if there is multimedia content on the site.

2.5. Elderly

- 20% of our users are over 60, so users in this age group should user test any significant new features. These users have, on average, half the task success rate of younger users, so task completion and success rate should be measured.

2.6. Low literacy

- An estimated 30% of web users have low literacy. There may be difficulties in recruiting people in this bracket so the WDC style guide recommendations should be consulted when adding new features or carrying out redevelopment.

The Shaw Trust or RNIB are organisations who can help arrange user testing with many of these user groups. There is an associated cost and this should be included in any budget for major redevelopment of the website.

3. Core tasks performed on the site

The following core tasks should be tested to ensure that disabled users can perform them successfully and efficiently on the website. These should be tested after any major redevelopment and during any accessibility/usability audits.

3.1. Common website tasks

- a) Find out how to contact WDC via email, phone or letter.
- b) Find out what services are available on the site (e.g. use the sitemap or A-Z).
- c) Find out information relating to their property e.g. local councillor, bin collection dates (for local residents).
- d) Find out about council job vacancies.
- e) Find out opening times for a leisure centre.

Depending on the nature of any new feature, the main function should be usable to disabled users (e.g. making a booking, making a payment etc.)

3.2. Criteria for determining success

Criteria for determining success should include:

Effectiveness:

- How often can disabled users complete each task (task completion rate)?
- How well can they complete each task (degree of completion, error rates)?

Efficiency:

- How much effort does it take to complete each task (number of keystrokes/clicks, time taken)?

Satisfaction:

- What is the user feedback on each task?

4. Maintaining accessibility standards

In order to maintain accessibility standards and to improve them further the following steps will be taken:

- We will identify user needs. Website feedback will always be available on the website. A feedback link needs to be kept on the accessibility page.
- Accessibility and usability audits should be carried out on a regular basis by expert external companies. These should take place every two years or during and after any major development.
- Automated checks should be carried out as part of business as usual to ensure the validity of code, and website functionality and availability.

5. Questions for suppliers

The following questions should be used as **a guide** when considering suppliers for the website. Use a selection of these questions as appropriate.

General

- Does your solution meet the accessibility target of level AA from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)? Provide supporting evidence.

Requirements and design process

- Do you gather requirements from users and disabled users?
- Do you validate early designs with users, including disabled users?
- Do you use feedback from these users to take your design process forward? Provide supporting evidence.

Packaged applications

- If your solution includes a packaged application that generates web pages, does the package ensure generated web pages meet the accessibility target of WCAG level AA?
- Are there any scenarios where the package application will not generate compliant WCAG level AA web pages? What will be done to correct this non-compliance?
- Has the packaged application been tested for accessibility? Provide supporting evidence.

Development

- What technologies will be used to build the website? Do these technologies support our accessibility targets of meeting WCAG double AA compliance? Provide supporting evidence.
- If non-W3C technologies (e.g. Flash) are used, provide a justification for using these technologies and how equivalent accessible functionality will be provided.

Content creation

- Will rich-media formats be used? If yes, describe how these formats will be made accessible.
- If rich-media formats will be used that are not accessible, provide a justification for why these formats will be used and describe how equivalent accessible content will be provided.

Testing

- Is accessibility testing included as part of the overall test plan? Provide supporting evidence.
- Are accessibility test tools (e.g. screen readers) used as part of the accessibility testing?
- Is usability testing included as part of the overall test plan? Provide supporting evidence.
- Do you correct designs and code as a result of accessibility/usability testing?

Maintenance

- Do you test changes and upgrades for compliance with WCAG level AA?

6. Accessibility levels

The WDC website aims to reach conformance to W3C WAI WCAG 1.0 Level AA.

7. Exceptions

If an area or element of the website (e.g. GIS mapping) is unlikely to be accessible to people with particular impairments, an explanation should be provided on the website of:

- any repairs to be made to improve accessibility,
- how disabled people can access this information or these services via alternative means.

If neither of the above is possible, an explanation should be provided saying why it is considered reasonable for the area to remain inaccessible. The explanation should also be referenced on the accessibility page.

8. Contact details

Use the following contact details for more information about this accessibility policy, or for providing comments and suggestions.

Website Manager
Warwick District Council
Riverside House
Milverton Hill
Royal Leamington Spa
CV32 5HZ

Email: webadmin@warwickdc.gov.uk
Phone: 01926 450000

9. Reference material

Websites

- Abilitynet - <http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/>
- Disability Rights Commission - <http://www.drc-gb.org/>
- The Web: Access and inclusion for disabled people - http://www.drc-gb.org/library/formal_investigation_report_w.aspx
- How people with disabilities use the web - <http://www.w3.org/WAI/EO/drafts/PWD-Use-Web/>
- Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) - <http://www.rnib.org.uk/>
- Website Usability - <http://www.useit.com/>
- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C WAI) - <http://www.w3.org/wai/>
- Web Standards Project (WaSP) - <http://webstandards.org/>
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) - <http://www.w3.org/>
- Business case for an accessible website - <http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/benefits.html>
- Lower literacy users - <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20050314.html>
- The Shaw Trust - <http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/>

Publications

- Am I making myself clear — Mencap's guide to accessible writing, 2002. London, UK, Mencap [http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/making_myself_clear.pdf].
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995. London: The Stationery Office.
- Family Resources Survey 2003/04. London: Analytical Services Division, Department for Work and Pensions 2005.
- Paciello, M.G. (2000) Web accessibility for people with disabilities. Lawrence, Kansas, USA: CMP Books.
- Krug, S. (2000) Don't make me think! A common sense approach to web usability. Indianapolis, Indiana, USA: New Riders.
- Nielsen, J. and Tahir, M. (2001) Homepage usability: 50 websites deconstructed. Indianapolis, Indiana, USA: New Riders.
- Nielsen, J. (2000) Designing web usability. Indianapolis, Indiana, USA: New Riders.
- Spool, J., Scanlon, T., Schroeder, W., Snyder, C. and DeAngelo, T. (1999) Web site usability: a developer's guide. San Francisco, California, USA: Morgan Kaufmann.

10. Implementing this policy

The web manager will work with the relevant service area to ensure this policy is implemented during the development of any website feature. Service level agreements between Customer Services and all service areas will ensure that all website developments involve the web manager from the outset.

11. Reviewing this policy

This policy should be reviewed every 2 years from the date of first approval. The following minor changes can be made without approval being sought from the Corporate Management Team:

- Any reference to new legislation can be added where appropriate.
- Additional common website tasks can be included.
- Additional methods of maintaining accessibility can be included.
- Reference material can be updated.