Equality Commission
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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Global Access Awareness Day 2020

Thursday 21 May 2020 is the ninth Global Access Awareness Day. The purpose of the day is to get more people talking, thinking and learning about digital access and inclusion for people with different disabilities.

The coronavirus pandemic has had, and will continue to have, wide reaching consequences for businesses big and small. In the period of a few weeks, organisations have had to adapt quickly to different ways of manufacturing, distributing, retailing and providing goods and services.

There has been a huge increase in online shopping, which is likely to continue for some time. Businesses must ensure that their websites and apps are robust, easy to navigate and are accessible for disabled people and the elderly.

Unfortunately, that is not the norm. Research by the disabled charity Purple revealed that three quarters (75%) of disabled people had to leave a website because they were unable to complete a purchase due to their disability.

A 2020 survey by WebAIM of one million homepages found that 98% of them had at least one failure in accessibility or usability and that 61 was the average number of errors per homepage.

The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) outline a number of success criteria which are at three levels.

A – the minimum level of access has been met

AA – an acceptable level of access has been met

AAA – a completely accessible website

Our [Every Customer Counts](#) initiative is there to help you make your business accessible to people with disabilities and comply with the law. You can carry out a basic accessibility checklist to see how people with disabilities experience your website or app.

A basic access check should look at the following areas of your website:

Keyboard accessibility

Can you tab around the screen? For those who do not use a mouse it is important to be able to access each area of the site. Visually impaired users cannot see a cursor so may have to rely on text-to-speech software to tell them where the focus is on the page. Similarly, those with mobility issues need visual clues as to where they are. Can pop-up windows be closed without using a mouse?

Colour contrast

For people with visual impairments or reading disability e.g. dyslexia being able to adjust the colours on a screen can be important. Contrast ratios between text and background need to meet minimum standards as set out in WCAG 2

Headings

Headings are one of the most important means of adding structure to a page. As well as providing visual evidence they can be read by a screen reader to aid navigation and understanding of the topic. Pages should be styled by headings and run in an appropriate hierarchical order.

Alternative text

Pictures on a website are important as they not only enhance the aesthetics of a page but often also depict important information. A text alternative 'alt text' allows anyone who cannot see the picture to understand what the picture represents. Automated checkers will search a website to check for alt text on images but cannot tell whether the alt text is appropriate to the context or not, only a human check can do that.

Forms

Using a screen reader, can you navigate, understand and input data without being able to see the page. If not you should!

Downloadable materials

Is the information that you offer for download accessible? Can your PDFs be navigated and read by those using assistive technology? Do they have sufficient colour contrast and allow the reader to customise the colour scheme?

Further advice about content accessibility can be found at www.w3.org

Other advice about wider accessibility issues (including digital) for businesses can also be found at www.equalityni.org/everycustomercounts

To find out more about Global Access Awareness Day 2020 and how you and your organisation can get involved go to https://globalaccessibilityawarenessday.org