

Accessibility Framework Guide for Editorial Staff

Introduction

This guide provides essential accessibility guidelines for all editorial staff at our news outlet. As a UK-based publication with international readership, we must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Additionally, our content should align with international best practices, specifically the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and 2.2 at Level AA. Accessibility ensures that our content can be accessed and understood by everyone, including people with disabilities. This is not only a legal requirement but also a moral imperative and good business practice that expands our potential audience.

Legal Requirements

UK Legislation:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Requires reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not substantially disadvantaged when accessing services.
- **Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018:** Mandates compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards for websites and mobile applications.

International Standards:

- **WCAG 2.1 & 2.2:** International standards developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) that provide guidelines for making web content more accessible.
- These standards are recognized in the EU, North America, and many other jurisdictions where our content is consumed.

WCAG Core Principles (POUR)

WCAG is built on four foundational principles, often referred to as POUR: **Perceivable:** Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive.

Operable: User interface components and navigation must be operable.

Understandable: Information and the operation of user interface must be understandable.

Robust: Content must be robust enough to be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Practical Guidelines for Editorial Staff

Text Content

- Use clear, simple language appropriate for your audience
- Structure content with proper headings (H1, H2, H3, etc.) - never skip heading levels
- Use descriptive link text (avoid "click here" or "read more")
- Ensure sufficient color contrast (minimum 4.5:1 for normal text)
- Avoid using color alone to convey information
- Use plain language and avoid jargon when possible

Images and Graphics

- Provide meaningful alternative text (alt text) for all informative images
- Decorative images should have empty alt text (alt="")
- For complex images (charts, graphs), provide detailed descriptions in the caption or nearby text
- Ensure images don't flash more than 3 times per second (seizure risk)
- Use SVG format for logos and simple graphics when possible (scalable and smaller file size)

Video and Audio Content

- Provide captions for all video content
- Include transcripts for audio-only content (podcasts, interviews)
- Provide audio descriptions for important visual information in videos
- Ensure media players are keyboard accessible
- Avoid auto-playing media with sound

Tables

- Use tables only for tabular data, never for layout
- Always include table headers (elements)
- Provide table captions or summaries for complex tables
- Ensure tables are readable when linearized (read row by row)

CMS and Technical Limitations

Please note that some accessibility improvements require changes to our Content Management System (CMS) and publishing tools. Any requests that involve changes beyond creating text, processing and embedding images/graphics/videos, adding basic semantic page formatting, links, and alt text are currently being addressed by our development team. These changes are in hand and will be actioned soon. For now, focus on the content you can control directly through the existing CMS interface.

Support and Training

If you have any questions about accessibility requirements or need clarification on any aspect of this guide, please contact your section editor directly. Additional training sessions will be available soon, with dates to be announced in the Slack editorial advice channel. Remember: Accessibility is an ongoing process, not a one-time fix. By following these guidelines consistently, we ensure our publication remains inclusive, compliant, and accessible to all our readers.

Bibliography - Further Reading

- **GOV.UK Accessibility Requirements:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>
- **W3C WCAG 2.1 Guidelines:** <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>
- **W3C WCAG 2.2 Guidelines:** <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/>
- **WebAIM Contrast Checker:** <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- **W3C Alt Text Decision Tree:** <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/decision-tree/>