Factsheet 3: **Digital communications**

Disabled people are twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people. There is a long way to go to address this imbalance, and accessible and inclusive communications play an important role in this. That's why it's crucial that sports and activity providers make reasonable adjustments to ensure their communications are accessible and inclusive for disabled people - it's also a requirement of The Equality Act 2010.

This includes digital communications, which are now more popular than ever. According to OFCOM's Communications Market 2017 Report the UK's digital audience was 50.4 million people in March 2017, and they spent an average of 83 hours online per person. That's why you should think strategically and make your digital communications accessible from the start. It will save you time and money.

Planning: Create an inclusive communications policy

The best way to improve your digital communications to be more accessible is to develop an inclusive communications policy that clearly sets out your commitment to inclusion. You should think about:

- Who do you want to reach?
- What digital channels do they use?
- What are their access requirements?
- Anticipate the needs of different audiences

Audit current digital communications and plan for future needs

Conducting an audit of your existing digital communications is a good starting point. It assesses where you are in terms of accessibility and inclusion and what you need to plan for future communications.

Digital communication barriers

Where possible your digital communications should be accessible and inclusive to all, but sometimes the type of communication means that it will not be accessible to certain groups. The list of impairment groups below illustrates potential barriers that can be identified, adapted and/or removed.

Blind/visual impairment - inaccessible websites, use of images, PowerPoint presentations, PDF documents, colour contrast, videos without audio commentary.

Deaf/hearing impairment - videos without captioning or British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation, musical accompaniment (events, ceremonies on videos).

Learning disability - complex use of language, data visualisation, layout of websites and documents, colour contrast, use of images, lengthy communications.

Mobility/physical impairment - website layout and accessibility (e.g. too many clicks).

Mental health condition - layout, use of colour, tone and style of language.

Social media

Most social media channels have settings you can use to make them more accessible. You should also follow best practice tips to improve your profiles and the content. For more information about inclusive social media see our factsheet on how to reach more disabled people through accessible social media.

Websites and mobile apps

You need to ensure your website and mobile apps are accessible. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) have been produced by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C, the web's governing body).

WCAG is essentially a set of checkpoints that help ensure that websites are accessible to the widest possible audience. To meet the needs of different groups and different situations there are three levels of compliance to the standards: A (lowest), AA, and AAA (highest). Web designers and design agencies with experience of developing accessible websites will be able to help you understand and implement the guidelines.

W3C provides an 'easy check' overview which allows you to assess whether your current website is accessible or not. See our **Inclusive Communications Guide** on our website for more information about the W3C web accessibility guidelines and how to make sure your website and apps are accessible.

You can also add relatively inexpensive web accessibility software to your website to make it more accessible. Examples include:

Claro Software www.clarosoftware.com

Recite Me www.reciteme.com

Texthelp www.texthelp.com

Infographics

Infographics can engage your audience, explain the complexities of the sport you are in and help you to tell your story visually. The designs are often highly sophisticated and complex, conveying large amounts of data visually but an infographic can be accessible if it is designed correctly. You should always provide a text alternative for the infographic and use HTML to create your infographic rather than using an image file.
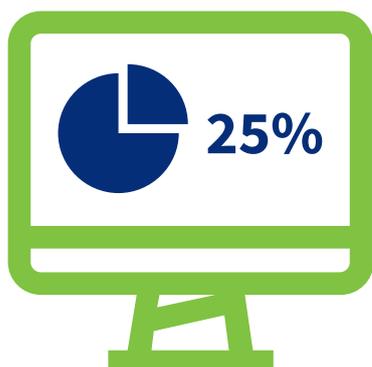
Alt tags for images

In digital communications using alternative text labels (also known as alt text or alt tags) for images is vital for accessibility. All images and graphics need to be tagged with alt text labels. This is so if a disabled person is using a screen reader they can access a description of what the image is, even if they cannot see it.

Alt text description

"Boy in powerchair throwing a ball."

25%

Key points

- Create an inclusive communications policy
- Audit your current digital communications and plan for future needs
- Consider communications barriers
- Improve your digital communications' accessibility

Resources and further information

Web accessibility guidance and testing

AbilityNet – leading UK charity that provides extensive guidance, support and services on web and Information Technology accessibility. They offer a full range from web user testing to 'icomply' a comprehensive accessibility management framework: www.abilitynet.org.uk

Labscape – web accessibility testing, user-testing, training and accessibility services like producing accessible PDFs: www.labscape.co.uk

Shaw Trust – offer accessibility testing, reviews, training and consultancy: www.shaw-trust.org.uk

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative – provides a comprehensive list of web-based accessibility testing tools: www.w3.org/WAI/

RNIB – offers a wide range of web accessibility consultancy and training services: www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/website-and-apps

User Vision – usability and web accessibility testing: www.uservision.co.uk

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