

Accessibility Guide



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Introduction

Welcome!

Scottish Union Learning has teamed up with Trade Union Equality Reps and disabled workers around Scotland to produce an employer-focussed guide around accessibility.

Accessible information is about providing information in a way that as many people as possible can access and understand. It is not always possible to make information completely accessible, but there are a number of steps organisations and employers can take to increase accessibility for workers in Scotland. Through focussing on accessibility, organisations will better meet the needs of disabled workers in Scotland, ensuring greater social inclusion.

This five-part guide focuses on areas where organisations and individuals can make changes to ensure maximum accessibility.

- **Part one** of the guide signposts current legal advice around accessibility, allowing individuals and organisations to explore guidelines that are currently in place to ensure accessibility.
- **Part two** of the guide offers information around ensuring accessibility when creating documents, covering MS Office, PDF, and Pages.
- **Part three** of the guide offers information on ensuring accessibility when creating and editing webpages, and when managing social

media accounts, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

- **Part four** includes information on e-learning and video conferencing software.
- **Part five**, the final part of the guide, signposts further resources around accessibility.

Part One: Accessibility and the Law

Disclaimer: Scottish Union Learning has made every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided in this section. However, it should be noted that Scottish Union Learning does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, completeness, or reliability for the information provided. The information provided here is not intended to be a substitute for legal advice around accessibility, and it is advised that you seek the correct legal advice around issues discussed in this document.

Guidance for Accessibility – UK

In September 2018, the UK government issued new regulations around accessibility of website and mobile applications – The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. You can follow the in-text hyperlink to [access the guidelines in full](#).

How to ensure compliance with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

The UK government provides information on how to ensure compliance with the new laws surrounding accessibility. The UK government states:

“Your website or app will meet the newer legal requirements if you:

- meet the international [WCAG 2.1 AA](#) accessibility standard - although there are [valid legal reasons](#) for not meeting accessibility standards
- publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible your website or app is.”

The new regulations incorporate much of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), and public sector organisations should ensure they are adhering to, at a minimum WCAG 2.1 level AA, if they are to comply with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The next section will explore how organisations can adhere to a WCAG 2.1 level AA.

What is the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1)?

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - or WCAG 2.1 - is an internationally recognised [set of guidelines](#) that provides information around accessibility:

“Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 defines how to make Web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility involves a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities. Although these guidelines cover a wide range of issues, they are not able to address the needs of people with all types, degrees, and combinations of disability. These guidelines also make Web content more usable by older individuals with changing abilities due to aging and often improve usability for users in general.”

Ensuring WCAG 2.1 compliance

The WCAG 2.1 references four principles that act as the foundation for individuals accessing and using web content. The four principles provide a broad overview of what web content should adhere to. Anyone who wants to use the web must have content that is:

- Perceivable – “users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it can’t be invisible to all their senses).”
- Operable – “users must be able to operate the interface”

- Understandable – “users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding).”
- Robust – “users must be able to access the content as technologies advance”; in other words, the website should remain accessible.

The WCAG 2.1 offers thirteen guidelines that act as the minimum standard for authors to adhere to when creating content. Below is a summary of the thirteen guidelines:

1. Text Alternatives – Authors must provide text alternatives to any non-text content.
2. Time-based Media – Authors must provide alternatives for time-based media.
3. Adaptable – Authors must be prepared to offer content in different ways without losing information or structure.
4. Distinguishable – Authors must make it easier for users to view and listen to content, for example through use of colour or adjusting audio control.
5. Keyboard Accessible – Authors must make all functionality of the site possible from a keyboard.
6. Enough time – Authors must provide users with enough time to access, read and use content.
7. Seizures and Physical Reactions – Authors must ensure content does not cause seizures or physical reactions.
8. Navigable – Authors must ensure they provide information to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are.
9. Input Modalities – Authors must ensure users can easily operate functionality through various inputs beyond the keyboard.

10. Readable – Authors must ensure that text content is readable and understandable.
11. Predictable – Authors should make web pages operate and appear in predictable ways.
12. Input Assistance – Authors must help users avoid and correct mistakes.
13. Compatible – Authors should always try to maximise compatibility with current and future user agents.

The new regulations apply to public sector bodies only. The [UK government's website](#) states:

“All public sector bodies have to meet the 2018 requirements, unless they are exempt. Some organisations might not have to fully meet the requirements if doing so would be a ‘disproportionate burden’. Depending on their resources, these organisations may take some steps towards meeting the requirements now and make further improvements later on.

“The following organisations are exempt from the 2018 regulations:

- non-government organisations like charities - unless they are mostly financed by public funding, provide services that are essential to the public or aimed at people with a disability.
- schools or nurseries - except for the content people need in order to use their services, for example a form that lets you outline school meal preferences.
- public sector broadcasters and their subsidiaries

“Some organisations may be also be exempt from these regulations if they can provide evidence that adhering to the regulations would be a disproportionate burden. This means that ensuring accessibility would “lead to a burden or cost that is too much for your organisation to reasonably bear.” If you want to declare that making information accessible is a disproportionate burden, you’re legally required to carry out an assessment. In your assessment you weigh up, roughly speaking:

- the burden that making those things accessible places on your organisation
- the benefits of making those things accessible

“When making your assessment, you need to think about:

- your organisation’s size and resources
- the nature of your organisation (for example, do you have services aimed at people who are likely to have a disability?)
- how much making things accessible would cost and the impact that would have on your organisation
- how much users with a disability would benefit from you making things accessible.”

The above quoted sections are all published on the UK Government’s website for [understanding accessibility requirements for Public Sector bodies](#). It should be noted that under circumstances where employers are exempt or have the disproportionate burden argument, they still must make reasonable adjustments for their disabled employees, such as providing the material in another format.

Deadlines

The UK government has set deadlines for public sector websites and apps to be accessible by:

- 23 September 2019 – All public sector websites published on or after the 23rd of September 2018 must be compliant with government accessibility standards.
- 23 September 2020 – All public sector websites published before the 23rd of September 2018 must be compliant.
- 23 June 2021 – All Apps must be compliant.

For public sector bodies, adjustments to ensure online accessibility must be met by the dates detailed above. Although some organisations are exempt from making these changes, it is a requirement of The Equality Act 2010 (Section 20) that information, from all organisations, is provided in accessible formats to suit the needs of disabled people.

For more information:

Success Criteria – The WCAG 2.1 offers [guidelines](#) for all success criteria and all techniques.

Levels of Conformance – The WCAG 2.1 also offers more information on [understanding levels of conformance](#).

Sufficient and Advisory Techniques – The WCAG 2.1 offers advice on [understanding techniques to progress with the guidelines](#).

The UK Government website provides advice on accessibility requirements for [public sector websites and apps](#).

Part Two: Making documents accessible

It is important that accessibility is the starting point when creating a document. It will save time later if someone points out that they cannot access it and it needs to be changed. There are some standard dos and don'ts for creating accessible documents and webpages. Here are some things to think about when creating a document:

- Use sans serif fonts
- Use font size between 14 and 18pt
- Align text to the left
- Use styles for headings and bullet lists
- Use plain English if possible
- Be prepared to provide an [Easy Read](#) version if requested
- Ensure there is good contrast between the text and the background

In addition, there are [specialist fonts available](#) for people with dyslexia and learning disabilities.

The Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAiF) has a number of guides on Electronic accessibility in different formats. These can be downloaded from their [website](#).

The SAiF run training courses in creating accessible information. We would encourage anyone who creates information for their staff or union members to consider attending one of these. They also have [free online e-learning modules](#).

Colour

Choosing the right colours when making a document is important in terms of accessibility. There are certain colour combinations which make it harder for people with dyslexia and learning disabilities to access. Adopting best practice is important in order to ensure maximum accessibility. [The British Dyslexia Association](#) offer the following advice:

- “Use single colour backgrounds. Avoid background patterns or pictures and distracting surrounds.
- Use sufficient contrast levels between background and text.
- Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.
- Avoid green and red/pink, as these colours are difficult for those who have colour vision deficiencies (colour blindness).
- Consider alternatives to white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids such as whiteboards. White can appear too dazzling. Use cream or a soft pastel colour, although some dyslexic people will have their own colour preference.
- When printing, use matt paper rather than gloss. Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.”

On the next page is a comparison table showing different colours and their visibility.

How well can you read this writing?

Image of text on different coloured backgrounds.

Plain English

The use of Plain English will help make a document more accessible.

[The Plain English campaign](#) has been running since 1979. Their guides are free and downloadable. They are all in PDF format. They are copyrighted, so please make sure to follow their advice on getting permission to use them.

Hyperlinks

When using hyperlinks in documents (or webpages) make their content clear, concise and descriptive. Where possible, aim to have the link on one line and not spread over two.

[Avoid using “click here”, “click for details” or “learn more”:](#)

“The problem with using “**here**” in a **link** is that it conceals what the user is **clicking**. You may have text around the **link** that explains what they're **clicking**, but when users read the **link** itself they won't have a clue. This means that users have to read the text all around the **link** to understand the context of the **link**.”

Microsoft Office

From 2010 users have had the ability to use Microsoft Office's built-in “Check Accessibility” feature. In Office 365 this can be found under the “Review” tab in apps such as Word and PowerPoint. There is a “Read Aloud” option that can also be used to listen to your document. This is

useful for checking if a screen reader is able to read the document before saving it in another format.

(Note: not only do screen readers translate into speech, but can also [translate to Braille displays](#)).

PDF

Portable document format or, as it's more commonly known, PDF is often used to fix a document in an intended format. Fixing a format in this way may mean that some people are not then able to access it. Even people who have assisted technology may not be able to access it unless it has been designed to be accessible. To avoid this happening, it is good practice to provide a Word, HTML or Easy Read format in addition to the PDF.

Another option would be to create the document in another application, such as Word 365 and use the built-in accessibility checker noted in the previous section. Then when you save the Word document as a PDF it will be accessible.

Apple Pages and other file formats

For apple device users, it is important to be aware of accessibility when using Pages, Keynote, and Numbers for iOS and Mac. Apple has recently updated these apps to ensure greater accessibility. While accessibility guidance varies for each app, Apple users can make use of VoiceOver, a built-in screen reader that reads aloud content on the screen. Accessibility-specific information from the App Store includes:

- [iWork Suite improvements for VoiceOver users](#)

- [Create accessible documents, spreadsheet, or presentations](#) with Pages, Numbers, or Keynote
- [Accessibility - Mac UK](#)

PowerPoint

Like Microsoft Word, PowerPoint has a built-in accessibility checker. Screen readers read things in PowerPoint in the order that they were added to the slide, which may not be the way in which they are intended to be read, so it's important when adding to slides that you do so in the order in which you wish them to be viewed or read.

As with other documents, carefully consider any colours you are using, use an accessible font, font size, adequate contrast and make sure any hyperlinks are clear, concise and underlined. Where possible use single colour backgrounds.

Part Three: Webpages and Social Media

Webpages

As mentioned in part one of this guide, there is a standard on what is needed to make webpages accessible. This standard is known as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 and has been put together by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

This standard should be used as a starting point when designing a website. The standard has levels – Level A, Level AA and Level AAA. Level AAA is the best option for making your website accessible, but at a minimum it should be no less than Level AA.

Level AAA includes captioning, audio description and sign language of pre-recorded video. As with documents, choose an accessible font, add descriptive text to picture and ensure good contrast between text and the background. There are online contrast checkers and links for these are included in the resource section of this document.

Social Media

Twitter

Twitter has accessibility options under the Settings and Privacy tab.

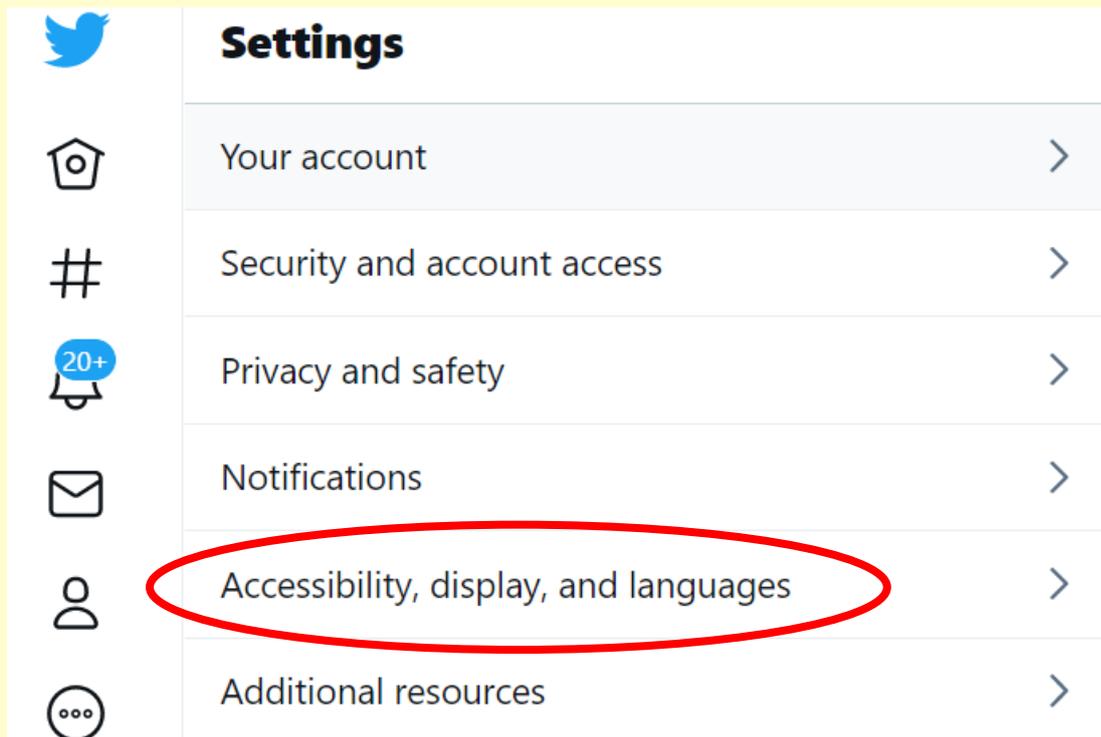


Image of web browser detailing Twitter's Accessibility functions.

This allows users to make their personal twitter feed more accessible for others and to add image descriptions to any pictures or GIFs that are uploaded. You can create accessible hashtags by setting twitter to pronounce the '#' as 'hashtag' and ensuring each word starts with a capital letter e.g. #ScottishUnionLearning. Twitter uses site specific shortcut keys.

Facebook

Facebook users can first check the contrast of any image before they upload and then add information about the images when they then upload them. There is also [automatic text which can be edited](#). It adds automatic captions to videos, which can be read or listened to.

Facebook uses site specific shortcut keys.

Instagram

Instagram allows captions to be added to picture before uploading them. Although here is no option for setting to pronounce # as hashtag, you can use capitals at the beginning of each word e.g.

#ScottishUnionLearning.

Additionally, Instagram also has automatic and custom alternative text.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is mostly accessible and you can use quick access keys. It should be noted that information added to the site by users may not be accessible. LinkedIn also has an [Accessibility Answer Desk](#), where users can feedback on accessibility issues.

YouTube / Audio and Video

It is good practice to upload videos on YouTube to make use of the automatic captioning service. Although the automatic captioning is produced by an algorithm, it is reasonably accurate, and it can be edited

afterwards. Captions are a simple and effective method of ensuring greater accessibility for viewers.

Image Descriptions

When creating webpages and social media content, it is important to include image descriptions. This means that people who are blind or partially sighted are able to build up a picture of the image being Presented. An image description does not need to be long or too detailed. It can be something as simple as “Small dog with bone in its mouth”.

Most social media platforms now allow users to include image descriptions when posting. The [RNIB offer the following instructions](#) for each social media platform:

Facebook - for Facebook, you upload your photo, then click "edit photo" and write your description in the "Alternative text" box. Then just click save and you're ready to publish.

Instagram - for feed posts, upload your photo, click next, then "advanced settings" and then click "write alt text". Then simply add your description and then click done before sharing as normal. Unfortunately, Instagram Stories don't currently have the option to add image descriptions, so you can just write a description in your post.

Twitter - you can add a separate image description to an image on Twitter, saving you crucial time and characters. You need to activate the "Image Descriptions" feature, which you can find in "Twitter

Settings", under the "Accessibility" tab. After that, just attach your image as normal and then click "Alt" to add your description, and post as normal."

Part Four: E-learning & Video

Conferencing Software

As more employers move more towards online training and e-learning, it is important that this is accessible. Poorly designed, inaccessible workplace training material puts disabled and neurodivergent employees, who may have different learning styles, at a disadvantage. When it is not inclusive and accessible to all it may be discriminatory. WCAG 2.1 guidelines can help with this.

Alternative reasonable adjustments should also be made available, such as face to face training, printed versions or having someone to help.

“Accessibility recommendations aren't just about making sure text can be read by text-to-speech software and making sure people can navigate between buttons with a tab key...just because you've got the techy stuff covered [doesn't mean your course is accessible](#) to everyone.”

The technology will only work if the course is accessible in the first instance.

For online training to be as accessible as possible, it is necessary for the questions to be clear and concise and written in plain English, as well as the answers to the questions. There should be no ambiguity or confusion, otherwise it may put some disabled and neurodivergent employees at a disadvantage.

It is worth noting that even if the technology meets accessibility requirements, some disabled people may require longer to complete online training.

Ensuring accessible virtual meetings and events

The following guidance has been provided by UNISON and can be used for all virtual meetings and events.

Before your meeting or event

- Although there is sometimes more flexibility to organise virtual meetings with less notice than face to face meetings where travel is required, ensure you allow enough notice to arrange any reasonable adjustments required, such as BSL interpreters.
- Virtual meetings and events can be more tiring, particularly for some disabled people, so consider carefully how long your meeting or event needs to last.
- If the meeting needs to continue for more than an hour, then regular breaks should be included or consider holding the meeting over different days.
- All attendees should be asked what adjustments they need in the joining instructions for the meeting. Do not assume members don't need adjustments - they may have non-apparent impairments.
- Circulate any papers and slides in good time prior to the meeting so that members with different impairments have time to read and process the contents.

- Send clear instructions in advance regarding how to access the virtual platform and make clear how the meeting will be run and what functions of the software you will be using.
- If your meeting includes facilitating interventions or questions from attendees, consider how you can do this in an accessible way and let members know in advance. It may be helpful to allow members a choice of ways of requesting to speak, such as “hand up” and chat functions or text message.
- Test any accessibility options and adjustments you will be using in advance to ensure they work and consider setting up a test session with the individual members requesting adjustments.

Presenters and Speakers

Presenters and speakers should be advised of the following in advance of the meeting:

- Make sure your face is well-lit and can be seen clearly so that members with visual impairments or who lip read can see you. Position your webcam roughly in line with your eyes and back it up a little so that there is space around your face and upper body.
- Be aware that light coming from behind you can shadow your face and can be painful for people with a visual impairment. Do not sit in front of a window – if you must then close the blinds or curtains.
- Use a headset or earphones where possible to improve audio quality.
- Choose the option “blur background” in Teams to reduce distraction and allow a clearer image so that neurodiverse

members and those with hearing impairments can focus on what you are saying.

- Provide any slides or papers you will be using in good time in advance so that members with different impairments have time to read and process the contents.
- Slow down your speaking style and create pauses between sections so members who are taking notes, using captions or sign language interpreters can catch up.
- If you are using the shared screen function in Teams remember that not everyone can see what you're referring to. Describe what is on the screen

During the meeting

- Consider appointing an “accessibility moderator” to deal with any access issues during the meeting.
- Use the function “mute all” or ask attendees to mute themselves when not speaking to avoid feedback and distracting background noise that can affect members with hearing impairments.
- Ask people speaking to say their name every time they speak so all attendees know who is talking.
- If you are using the chat function be aware that some members may face barriers in using their keyboard or mouse, might have dyslexia or their first language might be BSL rather than English. Don't over-rely on chat functions and allow other ways for members to take part in any discussions.
- Ensure the meeting finishes on time so that members who need to eat or take medication are not adversely affected.

Captioning

- If a member has requested speech to text, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype include the option of live captioning.
- You should advise any members requiring captioning or speech to text that they can switch on this option by clicking the three dots on the control dashboard and selecting 'turn on live captions'.

British Sign Language

- If a member has requested British Sign Language interpretation we recommend you use a BSL interpreter from Interpreting Matters (office@interpretingmatters.co.uk)
- If using Teams you should advise the member to "pin" the interpreter to their screen so they can see them at all times.
- The BSL interpreter will also need to "pin" the Deaf member to their screen.
- The interpreter will need to join the meeting in advance of the start time to set up.
- BSL interpreters should be registered with a national body such as NRCPD (www.nrcpd.org.uk) or RBSLI (www.rbsli.org).
- It is not appropriate to use trainee interpreters, family members or work colleagues who can use BSL but are not qualified interpreters.
- Sometimes more than one interpreter is needed depending on the length and complexity of a meeting – interpreters need breaks too!

Video Conferencing Platform – Comparison Table

Programme	Capacity	Audio Support	Video Support	Chat Support	Secure Access	Recording capabilities
Adobe Connect	1500	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cisco Webex	3000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crowdcast		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Google Meet	250	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MS Teams	10,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skype	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zoom	500*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* 10,000 for webinar

We spoke to Craig Steele who runs Digital Skills Scotland. He said:

“In terms of **security** - my recommendation is Zoom. It's got a lot of built-in security features that help protect the hosts and attendees (for example setting passwords to meetings, controlling who can enter, the ability to easily turn on and off cameras and microphones). However, as with all tools - it's only safe if used in a safe way. My advice would be:

- Make sure all hosts and attendees are using the latest version of the app (to make sure it's up to date with security fixes)
- Hosts and attendees should practice using the tool before attempting to host or join a session, at the very least making sure they know how to turn on and off their camera and microphone.”

(Please note that this does not reflect the views or opinions of Scottish Union Learning directly.)

Part Five: Resources

Below you will find links to some of the sources we have found, which we hope will be of use when creating accessible information.

You can find out information for the Scottish Accessible Information Forum guides and courses from their website:

[SAIF home page](#)

[SAIF Information and advice on electronic accessibility](#)

The guides to help write plain English are very useful:

[Plain English Campaign free guides to download](#)

[Plain English Campaign free drive defence software](#)

For more information on Microsoft Office's accessibility features:

[Microsoft information on an inclusive office 365](#)

[Microsoft support to create accessible PDFs](#)

[Microsoft accessibility features](#)

[Making accessible PowerPoints](#)

For Hyperlinks:

[Hyperlinks best practice](#)

[Accessible hyperlinks](#)

Royal National Institute of Blind People's website is a good source of information:

[RNIB Web accessibility statement](#)

[RNIB business website and app accessibility](#)

Other sources include companies such as Ability Net who (for a fee) will check a website complies with WCAG 2.1:

[Ability Net Digital Accessibility Resources](#)

[Ability Net free resources for webinars](#)

EqualWeb has a free accessibility widget to check the accessibility of some features:

[EqualWeb a digital accessibility company](#)

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) provides a list of free resources for checking web accessibility. Please read their disclaimer:

[Free web accessibility evaluation tools](#)

Other useful tools for checking accessibility:

[Web Aim Contrast Checker](#)

[Contrast Checker](#)

On fonts for dyslexia, we have looked at guidance from the British Dyslexia Association. We added a helpful guide from Daniel Britton. The Recite Me guide has information on dyslexic fonts and Fs Me font for those with learning disabilities:

[Dyslexia friendly style guide](#)

[Typefaces for dyslexia](#)

[Daniel Britton's dyslexic guide](#)

[Recite Me a guide to accessible fonts](#)

In looking at social media and accessibility we found helpful tips from AbilityNet, as well as some information elsewhere:

[5 tips to create accessible Facebook posts](#)

[5 ways make your tweets accessible](#)

[Information on Instagram accessibility](#)

[Information on LinkedIn accessibility](#)

[Blog on how to make videos accessible](#)

Other sources of information that may be of use:

[Home Office Accessibility Posters](#)

[Recite Me a guide to accessible fonts](#)

[Guidance on understanding WCAG 2.1](#)

[News article on suing Dominos for inaccessible website](#)

[Information on making your service accessible](#)

[WCAG 2.1 standards](#)

[Accessibility Cheat Sheet](#)

E-Learning:

[Accessibility in E-Learning – busting some myths](#)

<https://info.webusability.co.uk/blog/what-is-the-law-on-accessibility>