Why you need to prioritise accessibility

Why you need to prioritise accessibility

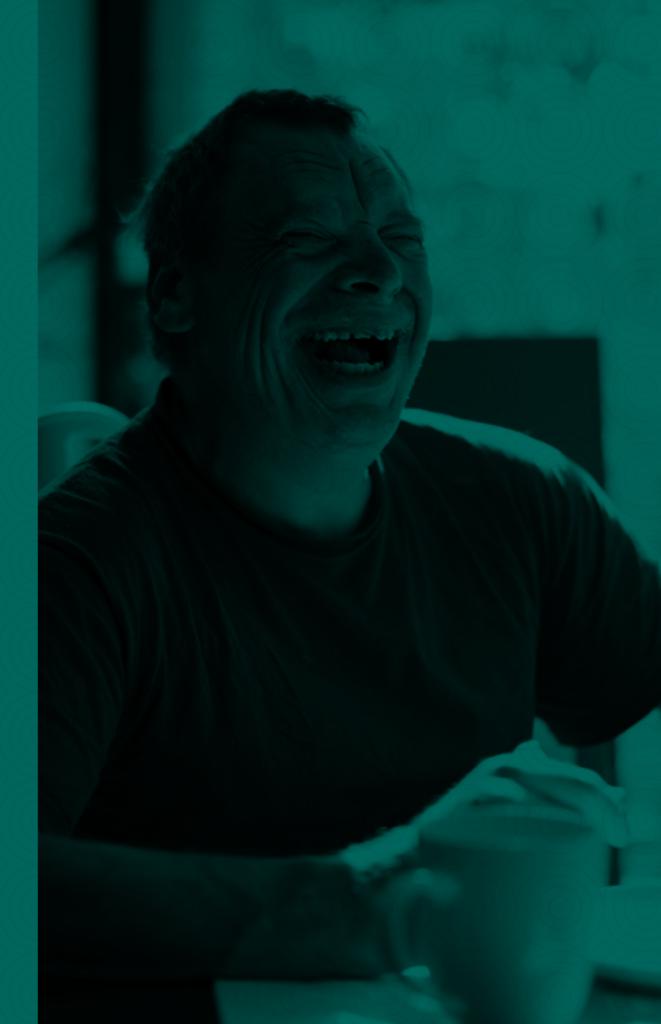# The UK has more than 10 million disabled people and an aging population with increasing accessibility needs.

Source: Office for National Statistics

Case study:

Skills for Care WCAG Accessibility Audit

The problem

Skills for Care required an accessibility evaluation of their Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) digital service. The service needed to meet the Government Service Standard and Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations.

The scope of the accessibility evaluation included a WCAG compliance audit and assistive technology user testing with people with a range of disabilities and accessibility needs.

What we did

Preliminary Review

To understand the service and the users' needs, our in-house accessibility experts undertook a preliminary review. Analysing relevant data and user research we worked with the product owners to understand the functionality, key user journeys and content types.

We identified a representative, structured sample of pages to include in the audit, in accordance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Evaluation Methodology (WCAG-EM). We agreed a priority testing scope that included the key content and user journeys with the highest potential accessibility barriers, as identified in the preliminary review.

This approach ensured the customer received the best value for money while assessing the crucial content for the service users.

WCAG audit

For each page in the audit sample, our accessibility experts thoroughly tested the design, content and code against the applicable WCAG 2.1 AA criteria.

The audit focused on WCAG compliance and adherence to Government Digital Service standards. We used a mixture of automated accessibility testing tools and conducted manual desk-based testing and research.

Our accessibility experts conducted assistive technology testing on the audit sample to evaluate compatibility with common assistive technologies (e.g. mobile and desktop screen readers, voice recognition software, display adaptations and mobile displays) as per the Government Digital Service (GDS) Service Manual.

We applied up-to-date technical research and understanding to evaluate the findings and report the WCAG non-compliances in an actionable audit report.

User Testing

We worked with our SimpleUsability team, a specialist in the recruitment of disabled users, to facilitate natural interaction testing with a broad range of users. We tested with people with a variety of different auditory, cognitive, learning, neurological, physical, speech and visual disabilities.

Sessions were recorded and observed via two-way mirrors. Findings were incorporated into the accessibility audit report to demonstrate the impact of issues on disabled users together with a technical recommendation for effective resolution.

The outcomes

Actionable report

Skills for Care received a meaningful, actionable report for the business that enabled them to secure further funding for broader testing.

The report included an executive summary of key findings, priorities, next steps and recommendations, plus detailed results against WCAG standards.

The report was produced using plain language, so that findings could be understood by both technical and non- technical audiences with clear non- technical explanation and technical solutions where appropriate.

Stakeholder engagement

We led workshops on-site with the customer and their design and development team to present and discuss findings, scope, and next steps.

We provided solution implementation advice for the developers and led an implementation workshop, providing knowledge transfer and technical advice.

We also worked with senior stakeholders to explain and demonstrate the impact of WCAG failures on real users in a collaborative show and tell session. The session helped explain the impact of issues on different disabled users, address questions and concerns, discuss remedial options and prioritise issues based on impact/cost of implementation.
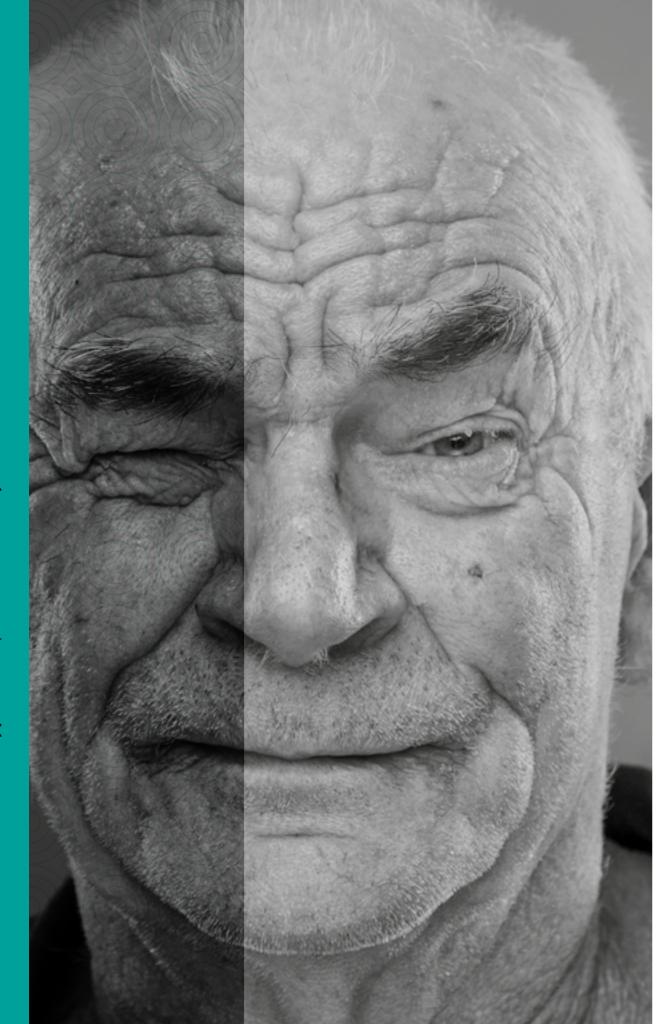
Achieving compliance

Following remedial work by the developer to fix issues raised, we re-tested to confirm resolution and that no new issues had been introduced.

Finally, we drafted an accessibility statement for the ASC-WDS service, meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Accessibility facts and figures

82%* of customers with access needs would spend more if websites were more accessible.
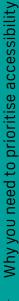
Source: Click-Away Pound

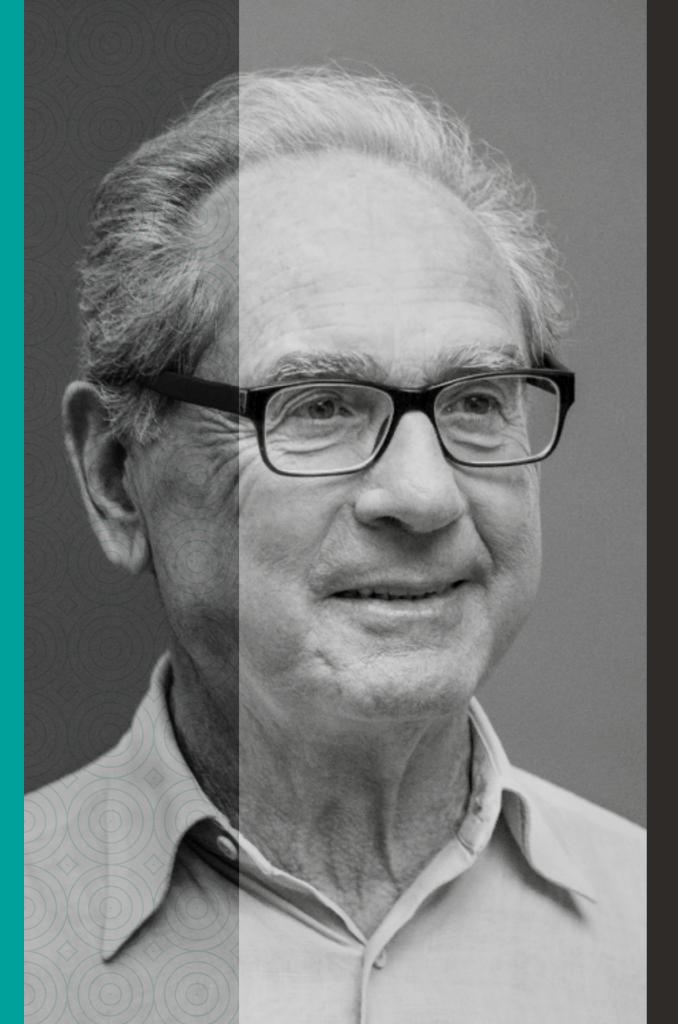# It is not acceptable for accessibility to be an *after-thought*.

Delivering the best-possible accessible experience for all users should be seen as an investment for the future.

It is more important than ever to ensure your *content* and *services* are *accessible*.

During the Covid pandemic & lockdown, we've all had to do more online as we have been restricted in ways never before seen. This has given us all a glimpse of how it feels to be restricted in our day-to-day movements and options. We need to try and cling on to that empathy.
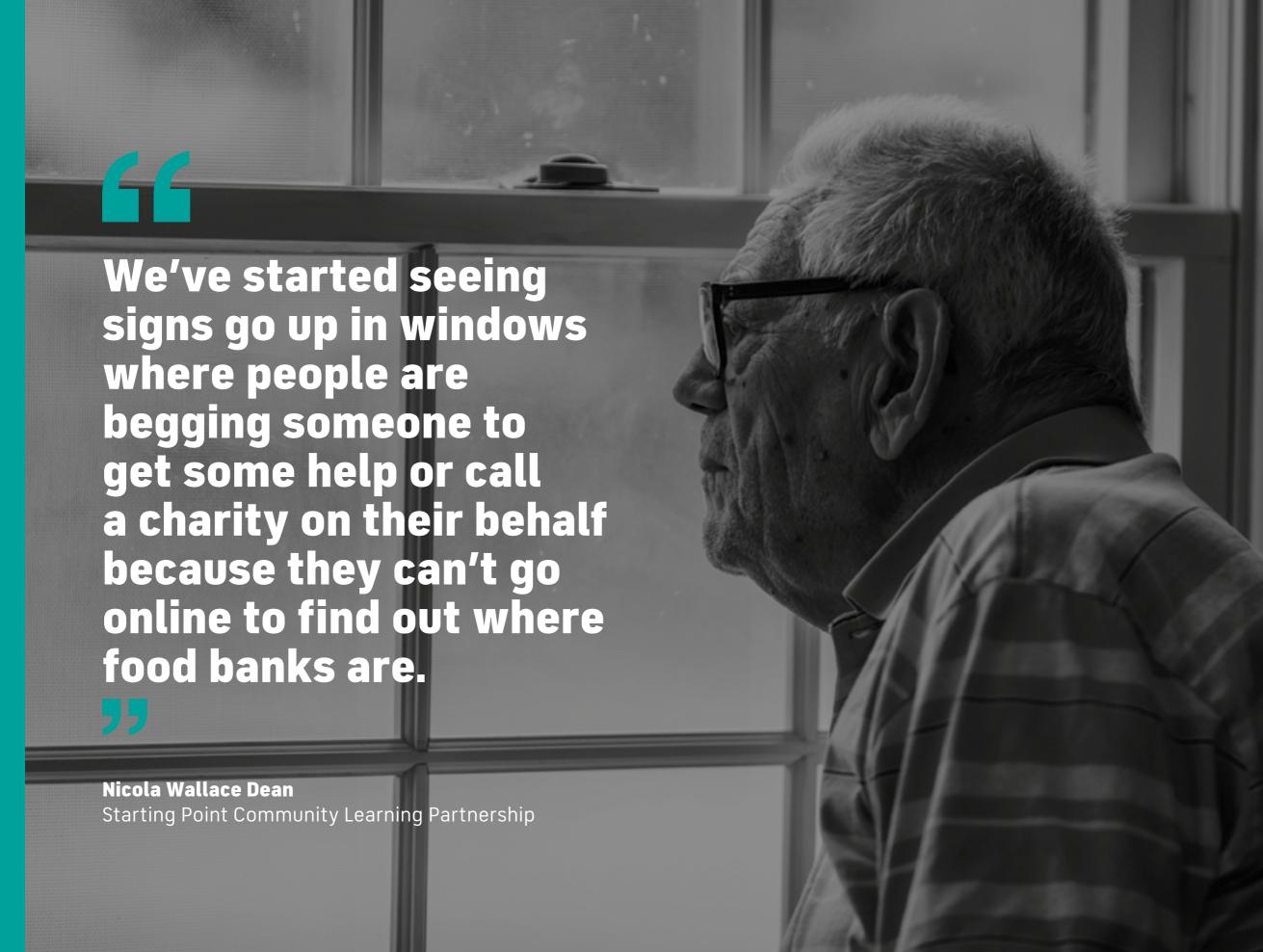
Accessibility facts and figures

There are 1.9 million households with no access to the internet and tens of millions more reliant on pay-as-you-go services.

Source: <u>Office for National Statistics</u>

This isn't a problem that is going away.

In fact, it will become more important over time.

78%* of disabled adults and 83%* of adults aged 65 – 74 are now internet users, so we need to ensure that digital experiences are accessible and available to all. As more and more people come online, we need to create a landscape and experience that works for all users – regardless of their digital skills or needs.

Organisations risk excluding those who need help the most by not ensuring their services are accessible. And this is a problem we see a lot. Organisations are trying to modernise, speed up processes and cut costs by moving things online. Which is great for a lot of people, but we need to be sure that our good intentions don't accidentally hurt or negatively affect those already marginalised.

Source: Office for National Statistics

"

We've started seeing signs go up in windows where people are begging someone to get some help or call a charity on their behalf because they can't go online to find out where food banks are.

"

Nicola Wallace Dean
Starting Point Community Learning Partnership

Accessibility is not a priority for too many organisations.

During the Covid pandemic and lockdowns, we've all had to do more online as we have been restricted in ways never before seen. Imagine your experience over the last few months if you were only able to access fewer than 3% of websites.

In February 2020 an accessibility audit* of the top one million websites discovered 98.1% of homepages failed to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Imagine how frustrating it is to arrive at a website and not being able to navigate properly or find (or even see) the information you need. This just highlights the fact that website accessibility is too often not a priority for many organisations.

*Study conducted by WebAIM

"

We have elderly people who can't get on council shielding lists because you have to register online.

"

Jane Caldwell
Chief executive Age UK East London

Take the vital first step and start your accessibility journey today.

This isn't just about your website. It's about every single customer, employee and stakeholder touchpoint.

It's also not just about users with additional needs. We're not just talking about 'making things accessible' for specific users, who may have additional needs or requirements.

Every organisation has a unique audience, each with its own needs, priorities, challenges and expectations.

We have an in-house team of accessibility experts ready to help you and your organisation.

If you'd like some advice, guidance or help in auditing and bringing your website up to compliance, drop me a line.

Hannah Davies

Business Development Manager, CDS

T: 07596 297 956
E: Hannah.Davies@cds.co.uk
W: www.cds.co.uk