

Accessibility Toolkit

# Commit to providing accessible services

State your commitment to providing accessible services. Do this in a document such as a:

* Customer Action Plan
* Customer Charter
* Equality Policy
* Equal Status Policy for Customers.

Your commitment should cover customer services, buildings, and information. Make sure that senior managers endorse your commitment and name the staff members who are responsible for putting that commitment into practice. Put that document in your building where your customers will see it. Put it on your website too.

**Make sure that your Customer Charter or service statement tells your customers**:

* What level of customer service they can expect
* How to tell you if they don’t get that level of customer service.

**Make sure that you have a procedure for:**

* Collecting customer feedback (maybe through comment cards, customer surveys, or a log of customer feedback)
* Including customer feedback in management meeting agendas

**Specifying:**

* What to do about each problem that your customers report
* Who will be responsible for solving it?

## Tips for committing to providing accessible services

* State your commitment to providing accessible services.
* Tell your customers what level of customer service to expect.
* Collect feedback from your customers.

# Resources for services for customers with disabilities

## General

[Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](https://www.ihrec.ie/accessibility/)

[Accessible Services - Office of the Ombudsman](https://www.ombudsman.ie/accessibility/)

[Assist Ireland](http://www.assistireland.ie/)

## Health

[Health services for people with disabilities - Citizens Information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health_services/health_services_for_people_with_disabilities/)

[Disability Services - HSE (Health Service Executive)](http://www.hse.ie/portal/eng/services/list/4/Disability/)

## Transport

[Transport and disability - Citizens Information](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel_and_recreation/transport_and_disability/)

[Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI)](http://www.ddai.ie/)

## Environment

[Local Authorities](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/942f74-local-authorities/)

[Irish Council for Social Housing](http://www.icsh.ie/)

## Employment and income

[Employment and disability - Citizens Information](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_and_disability/)

[Work Supports for People with a Disability - Department of Social Protection](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f6d74-get-work-supports-if-you-have-a-disability/)

[Workplace Relations Commission](https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/)

## Tourism

[Discover Ireland (Official site of Fáilte Ireland, the Irish Tourist Board)](https://www.discoveringireland.com/discoverIreland/)

[Discover Northern Ireland (Official site of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board)](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/)

## Education

[National Council for Special Education](http://www.ncse.ie/)

The NDA is not responsible for the content of other websites.

# Provide disability equality training to staff

Staff who have attended disability equality training will be able to interact more confidently and more effectively with people who have disabilities. Remember that staff will need an ongoing programme of disability equality training. Disability equality training courses should be backed up by the development of written policies setting out the organisation’s commitment to providing accessible services. All staff should be able to access those policies, and the organisation should monitor those policies to assess their impact.

The training can be delivered:

* Through elearning (electronically supported learning such as computer-based training), such as the NDA’s [elearning centre](https://nda.ie/resources/elearning/)
* By an experienced trainer
* Or through a mixture of those.
* Look for a trainer who developed their training course after consulting people with disabilities.

# Suggested curriculum for disability equality training

## Definition of disability

* What do we mean by disability?
* How is it defined?
* What is the prevalence and range of disability in Ireland?
* What are the practical accommodations/considerations to meet the needs of customers with disabilities?

## Disability and society

* How do we view disability in society?
* How does the social model differ from the medical model?
* How does society restrict people with disabilities?
* How can we create a more inclusive society?

## Equality and Disability

* What is reasonable accommodation?
* What are the legal duties and responsibilities of public bodies?
* What legislation covers disabled people’s rights to equal status and employment opportunities? This should include:
* The [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html)
* The National Disability Authority’s “[Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information Provided by Public Bodies](http://nda.ie/Good-practice/Codes-of-Practice/Code-of-Practice-on-Accessibility-of-Public-Services-and-Information-Provided-by-Public-Bodies-/)”
* [The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)
* The [Employment Equality Acts 1998–2008](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/21/enacted/en/html)
* The [Equal Status Acts 2000–2008](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html).
* How some people with disabilities can face discrimination in other dimensions, such as racism?

## Disability and communication

* What language should I use when interacting with, or talking about, people with disabilities?
* How does my organisation interact with people with disabilities?
* What myths and misconceptions exist about people with disabilities?
* How does media imagery portray people with disabilities?

## A proactive approach

* What are my organisation’s equal opportunities policies and procedures?
* What is accessibility?
* How could my organisation be more accessible?
* How can i improve my own practices to be more inclusive of people with disabilities?

## Tips for providing disability equality training to staff

* Create an ongoing programme of disability equality training.
* Use the NDA’s [eLearning module](https://nda.ie/resources/elearning/).
* Find an experienced trainer.

We moved our accessibility toolkit from http://accessibility.ie to here. The NDA is not responsible for the content of other websites.

# Consult customers with disabilities

Your organisation should consult customers with disabilities about projects that will affect them.

Here are 10 essential elements for effectively consulting people with disabilities:

* Plan all consultations to include people with disabilities.
* Decide the who, what, and why of your consultation process.
* Choose the most appropriate method for consulting with particular groups.
* Train staff and facilitators in disability equality training.
* Identify the groups you want to consult.
* Ask people with disabilities what their needs are.
* Check that all elements of the consultation process are accessible.
* Give people enough time to fully consider the issues that you are consulting them about.
* Ask for feedback, so that you can improve future consultations.
* Contact representative organisations for advice and assistance if needed.

The NDA’s “[Ask Me’ Guidelines for Effective Consultation](http://nda.ie/Policy-and-research/Research/Research-Publications/-Ask-Me-Guidelines-for-Effective-Consultation-with-People-with-Disabilities.html)” publication has straightforward advice for consulting people with disabilities, including:

## Planning a consultation: thinking it through from start to finish

* Why are we consulting?
* Getting started
* Thinking it through
* Choosing which methods to use
* Agreeing the ground rules

## Including people with disabilities

* Understanding disability
* Getting people with disabilities into the picture
* Making contact
* Supporting people with disabilities to participate

## The practicalities: getting it right on the day

* Facilitating the consultation meeting
* Choosing a facilitator
* Recording and documenting the consultation process
* Follow up
* Evaluation
* Useful contacts
* Disability etiquette checklist
* Access checklist
* Checklist for facilitators

## Structure each meeting properly:

* Send all participants the agenda before the meeting
* Send the minutes to all participants after the meeting.
* After the consultation, tell the participants what your organisation decided and how that decision will affect the project.

## Tips for consulting customers with disabilities

* Ask people with disabilities what their needs are.
* Check that all elements of the consultation process are accessible.
* Allow time for those consulted to consider the issues fully.
* Set an agenda before each meeting and send out minutes after each meeting.

# Develop an Equal Status Policy

The [Guidelines for Equal Status Policies in Enterprises](https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/guidelines_for_equal_status_policies_in_enterprises.pdf) from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission defines an Equal Status Policy as a statement of organisational commitment to Equality, diversity and non discrimination for customers or service users from across the nine grounds covered by the Equality legislation.  
  
Develop your Equal Status Policy to make sure that all of your customers and staff know their legal rights to equal treatment. Consult customers, including those with disabilities, to get their views on an Equal Status Policy before you start working on it.  
  
In your Equal Status Policy, state:

* Your organisation’s commitment to non-discrimination
* That your organisation accommodates customers across all grounds covered by the Equality laws
* How your organisation promotes positive action for people with disabilities
* How you promote and plan for reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities
* Your organisation’s policy on sexual harassment and harassment of customers with disabilities
* Who is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and implementing the policy
* Objectives, targets, and timescales.
* Display the Equal Status Policy to your customers in your public buildings and on your websites.

## Promote Equality

* Provide Equality training for staff who work in customer service
* Appoint an Equality Officer
* Make sure you that your customers know how to complain to your organisation if they feel that your staff have discriminated against them
* Make sure that you have a procedure for logging, tracking, and dealing with those complaints
* Keep track of which customers are using your services and how they use your services, if that’s practical. For example:
* What sort of computers and browsers do they use to look at your websites?
* What percentage of your customers prefer to visit your building instead of using your websites?
* Which of your services are most important for customers with disabilities?
* You could integrate questions like those into existing surveys and questionnaires.

## Provide reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities

The [Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2011](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0008/index.Html) say that service providers should do whatever is reasonable to accommodate a person with a disability whose disability prevents them from accessing that service. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission have a [Guide to the Equal Status Acts 2000–2008.](https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/guide_to_the_equal_status_acts_2000_2008.pdf) Make sure that your staff:

* Are familiar with the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2011
* Are available to help customers who need help
* Know how to arrange expert services, such as Irish Sign Language interpreters, when customers request them
* Know how to provide information in accessible formats, when customers request that.

**Let customers know that your organisation can and will accommodate them, by:**

* Using images and language that include people with disabilities, in information such as brochures, annual reports, and webpages
* Advertising services to customers with disabilities, in media that is targeted at people with disabilities
* Consulting customers with disabilities and disability groups.

## Tips for developing an Equal Status Policy

* Consult customers before developing your Equal Status Policy.
* State your organisation’s commitment to non-discrimination
* Promote your Equal Status Policy in your buildings and on your websites.
* Provide reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities.

# Consider accessibility when procuring

Section 27 of the [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2005/en/act/pub/0014/index.Html) requires the head of a public body to ensure that services provided and goods supplied to the public body are accessible to people with disabilities, unless that would not be practicable, would be too expensive, or would cause an unreasonable delay. Here is the text of Section 27:

“Where a service is provided to a public body, the head of the body shall ensure that the service is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Subsection (1) shall not apply if the provision of access by persons with disabilities to any services provided to the body—

Would not be practicable,

Would not be justified having regard to the cost of doing so, or

Would cause unreasonable delay in making the goods or services available to other persons.

In this section references to the provision of services include references to the supply of goods.

This section shall come into operation on 31 December 2005.”

**Here are some steps to help you to conform to Section 27 of the Disability Act 2005:**

* Make sure that you always consider accessibility when procuring services and goods
* Identify the needs of customers with disabilities
* State accessibility as a requirement in your requests for tenders. Identify the accessibility standards and guidelines that apply to the product or service that you’re procuring. If you don’t know what those standards or guidelines are, you can find out by asking:
* Experts in your organisation, if possible
* Disability groups
* Experts outside your organisation
* Make sure that your suppliers conform to the accessibility standards and guidelines that you specified.
* Verify the references that the tenderers give you.
* Make sure that any maintenance work on the product or service will not make it inaccessible.
* At regular intervals, check the products and services that you procure, to make sure that customers with disabilities can access them. Improve their accessibility where necessary. Review your procurement process regularly, to see how to improve it.

The NDA’s [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](http://universaldesign.ie/) has an [IT Procurement Toolkit](https://universaldesign.ie/technology-ict/web-and-mobile-app-accessibility/it-procurement-toolkit/) for organisations who wish to buy accessible hardware or software.

## Tips for considering accessibility when procuring

* Make sure that all staff who procure are aware of Section 27 of the [Disability Act 2005.](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html)
* State accessibility as a requirement in your requests for tenders.
* Identify the accessibility standards and guidelines that apply to the product or service that you’re procuring.
* Make sure that your suppliers conform to the accessibility standards and guidelines that you specified.

# Include accessibility in a Customer Charter

The Department of the Taoiseach defines a [Customer Charter](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/179e67-quality-customer-service/) as a short statement describing the level of service a customer is entitled to expect when dealing with a Public Service organisation.  
  
Base your Customer Charter on the Principles of Quality Customer Service from the Department of the Taoiseach. Your Customer Charter should state:

* Your organisation’s commitment to accessibility
* How accessible your buildings, services, and information are
* How long it will take for your organisation to:
* Acknowledge complaints
* Respond to complaints
* Your Complaints Officer’s name.

Make sure that your staff record, monitor, and review complaints. .Consult customers with disabilities and disability groups, to make sure that the Customer Charter addresses their needs.  
  
To make sure that no customers are prevented from contacting your organisation, provide a number of different methods of communication such as:

* Phone
* Text message
* Letter
* Email
* Through your website
* Through social networks
* In person.

Where practical, your services should not cost a customer with a disability more than they cost a customer without a disability.  
  
Make sure your staff understand how the Customer Charter affects their work.  
  
Promote your Customer Charter on your website and in your brochures, buildings, staff communications, and policy documents.

## Tips for including accessibility in a Customer Charter

* Consult customers with disabilities and disability groups.
* State your organisation’s commitment to accessibility, level of accessibility, complaints procedure, and Complaints Officer’s name.
* Promote the different ways that customers can contact your organisation.
* Make sure your staff understand how the Customer Charter affects their work.

# Appoint an Access Officer and Access Team

## Access Officers

Section 26 of the [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2005/en/act/pub/0014/index.Html) says:

“Each head of a public body […] shall authorise at least one of his or her officers (referred to in this act as “access officers”) to provide or arrange for and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities in accessing its services.”

Some public bodies appoint one access officer to help customers with disabilities to access their services, buildings, and information. Some public bodies appoint one access officer to help customers with disabilities to access their services, another access officer to help customers with disabilities to access their buildings, and another access officer to help customers with disabilities to access their information. Choose the model that best suits your customers’ needs and your staff’s expertise.

Section 26 (2) of the National Disability Authority’s [Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information Provided by Public Bodies](http://nda.ie/Good-practice/Codes-of-Practice/Code-of-Practice-on-Accessibility-of-Public-Services-and-Information-Provided-by-Public-Bodies-/) says:

“Each public body is required to have at least one officer authorised to act in the capacity of “access officer”. That officer is responsible, where appropriate, for providing or arranging for and coordinating assistance and guidance to persons with disabilities accessing the services provided by that body.”

A public body can achieve this by:

* Considering the skills necessary for the role of access officer;
* Considering how many officers are required in relation to the services provided by the body (the act requires at least one officer);
* Authorising at least one officer to fulfil the role of access officer as defined in the act;
* Ensuring that this officer is adequately trained and appraised of duties and responsibilities (it is important that training adequately equips the access officer to both:
* (a) deal with integration and access in the particular setting for which he or she is appointed and
* (b) devise and drive or support the implementation of strategies to address these matters where practicable and appropriate);
* Ensuring that this officer can be made readily available to persons with disabilities wishing to access services provided by the public body and to staff requiring their advice and support;
* Ensuring that this officer has regular contact with senior management and that he or she is adequately resourced and supported in his or her role;
* Promoting the appointment and availability of access officer(s) and how they may be contacted, so that the general public is made aware of them and knows how to avail of their assistance.

## Training

Access officers may need training to make sure that they know how to help customers with disabilities to access services, buildings, or information. Very few companies offer specific “access officer training” in Ireland. You should search the web for providers. The National Disability Authority do not recommend any private companies.

## Access teams

An access team can help an organisation to improve the accessibility of its services, buildings, and information, by:

* Consulting customers with disabilities
* Identifying and prioritising the work that needs to be done to improve accessibility
* Sharing what they learn about accessibility among themselves and with other staff

An effective access team will:

* Include at least 1 member of staff from many sections of your organisation on the team
* Include at least 1 member of staff who works with
* Services
* Buildings
* Information
* Include at least one senior manager or director
* Have regular meetings that follow an agenda and end with everybody knowing what they have to do and when they have to do it
* Regularly consult customers with disabilities and disability groups, to make sure that their work is having maximum impact.

## Tips for appointing an Access Officer and Access Team

* Provide training for your Access Officer.
* Include members of staff from a number of departments, functions, and levels of seniority on your Access Team.
* Arrange regular meetings for your Access Team so they can share their knowledge.
* Invite customers with disabilities and disability groups to meet your Access Team.

# Make your services more accessible

To provide a good service to customers with disabilities, just ask them what they need and how you can help.

Consider how you can change your services to make them more accessible to everybody. Also, consider the types of assistance that you will need to arrange on request.

## Be polite to customers with disabilities

* **Treat a person with a disability as considerately as you would like to be treated.**
* **Never patronise a person with a disability**. Treat them as you treat other adults and address them as you address other adults.
* **If a person with a disability is accompanied by another person, look at and speak directly to the person with the disability**.
* **Find out—as early as possible—how the person prefers to communicate**. If necessary, ask the person’s family member, carer, or support person to explain how the person prefers to communicate, and to explain the person’s communication aids or devices. Let relevant colleagues know how the person communicates, so that the person does not have to repeatedly explain it.
* **Do not assume that a person with a disability needs help**. Ask the person whether they would like help, and then ask how you could help. Do not be offended if your help is not accepted: many people do not need any help.
* Do not assume that a person with a disability is more fragile than others. **Ask the questions that you need to ask.**

## Help customers who have difficulty remembering

* Provide information that is simple and easy-to-follow.
* Provide written information that the customer can keep. Consider emails, letters, text messages, webpages, and so on.
* Provide reminders.

## Help customers with intellectual disabilities

* Do not make assumptions about ability and disability.
* Provide information in an “[Easy to Read](https://www.universaldesign.ie/Products-Services/Customer-Communications-Toolkit-for-the-Public-Service-A-Universal-Design-Approach/)” format.
* Use simple directions and signs with pictures.
* Consult customers with intellectual disabilities directly about problems.

Allow extra time for the customer to reply, comment, and formulate their questions or answers. Pay attention to any visual cues that they use, such as objects, pictures or diagrams, and to their and facial expression and body language.

## Help customers with physical disabilities

* Provide automatic doors.
* Make sure that your toilets are accessible. For example, make sure that customers can operate taps with their elbows.
* Make sure that a member of staff can help a person with a physical disability, if appropriate.
* Locate information leaflets, intercom buzzers, door bells, lift buttons, and similar objects where everybody can use them.
* Make sure that your building is accessible. Follow the advice in publications such as [Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach](http://www.universaldesign.ie/BuildingForEveryone) and [Technical Guidance Document Part M — Access and Use (2010).](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/78e67-technical-guidance-document-m-access-and-use/)
* If necessary, arrange to provide your service in another, accessible building.
* Be aware of personal space and safety: don’t touch, move, or lean on anybody’s mobility aid, such as a wheelchair, walker, or cane.
* When speaking with a customer who uses wheelchairs or crutches, place yourself at eye-level in front of the customer so that they do not need to strain their neck to speak to you.
* If the customer needs to sign a document, offer a clipboard to hold the document. Be ready to hold the document where the customer can easily sign it.
* If the customer cannot turn the pages of an important information booklet, offer to help.
* Ask the customer if they would like help to complete forms. If the customer wants their companion to help them to complete forms or take notes, accommodate that.
* When meeting a customer who uses a wheelchair, meet in a room with enough space for the customer to get in and move around.

## Help customers with pain

* Provide chairs and comfortable waiting areas.
* Minimise waiting times by using an appointment system or by prioritising customers with pain.
* Arrange to take breaks as necessary.

## Help customers with hearing difficulties

* Provide queuing systems that do not rely on customers’ ability to hear.
* To help people who lip-read, make sure there is no shadow on your face while you speak.
* Provide induction loop systems—and test them regularly.
* Make captions available for videos, and make transcriptions available for audio information.
* Provide written versions of any audio notices and communications.
* Allow customers to use text messages and e-mail to make appointments.
* Provide ISL (Irish Sign Language) interpretation to customers who request it.
* Make sure that only one person speaks at a time.
* When working with an interpreter:
* Talk directly to the Deaf person, and not the interpreter
* Do not ask the interpreter’s opinion
* Make sure that the interpreter sits next to you and that the Deaf person can see both of you clearly.

The [Irish Deaf Society](http://www.irishdeafsociety.ie/) have **10 Commandments for Communicating with Deaf Person** for situations where a person cannot use ISL or where an interpreter is not present. They are:

1. Always ask the Deaf person how they want to communicate; never assume.
2. Make good eye contact. Look directly at the Deaf person. Don’t look away, cover your face, chew gum, or have a pen in your mouth while communicating with a Deaf person.
3. Ensure the Deaf person is looking at you before you attempt to communicate.
4. Don’t stand with a light or a window behind you. The light needs to be on your face — if not sure regarding the location, ask the Deaf person.
5. Be responsive: nod rather than saying “hmmm”. Use gestures, body language and facial expressions to communicate the emotion of a message where appropriate (hint: avoid being overdramatic).
6. If this Deaf person wants to communicate by speech, you speak clearly and at a slightly slower pace, but don’t shout or over-enunciate mouth movements as this will distort your lip patterns. Keep your head fairly still.
7. If this person wants to communicate by note-writing, relax and be patient. You are obliged to respect his/her wish [and] respond by writing.
8. Be prepared to repeat and rephrase information, if necessary (only for basic information); if information is more complicated, book an ISL interpreter.
9. Refer to visual information (drawing, diagrams or photographs) during conversations; if the subject is getting complex, book an ISL interpreter.
10. Best of all: learn some ISL!

## Help customers who have low vision, sight loss or who are blind

* Face the person when you speak to them. Make sure that it is bright enough for them to see you.
* Provide queuing systems that do not rely on customers’ ability to see.
* Be prepared to provide information in large print, electronic format, or Braille, as necessary.
* Present information clearly.
* Allow customers to request information in a format that suits them.

The NCBI(National Council for the Blind of Ireland)haveSimple dos and don’ts*,* including these hints and tips on ways you can assist a person with vision impairment:

* Greet a person by saying your name, as he or she may not recognise your voice. Do not ask or expect them to guess who you are, even if they know you.
* Talk directly to the person rather than through a third party. It’s easier if you know the person with sight loss by name — say their name when you are speaking to them. If you don’t know their name don’t be afraid to ask, as well as giving your own name.
* Do try to speak clearly, facing the person with sight loss while you do so.
* In a group situation, introduce the other people present. Address the person with sight loss by name when directing conversation to them in a group situation.
* If someone joins or leaves the group, tell the person with sight loss that this has happened.
* Don’t be afraid to use terms like “see you later”. People with sight loss use these expressions too.
* Before giving assistance, always ask the person first if they would like help, and if they do, ask what assistance is needed. Do not assume what help they need.
* If a person with sight loss says that they would like to be guided, offer your elbow. Keep your arm by your side and the person with sight loss can walk a little behind you, holding your arm just above the elbow.
* When assisting, it is helpful to give commentary on what is around the person, for example, “the chair is to your right”.
* If you are giving directions, don’t point. Give clear verbal directions, for example “the door is to your left”.
* Don’t assume that because a person can see one thing that they can see everything. If necessary, ask the person if they can see a particular landmark or object.
* Similarly, don’t assume that a person using a white cane or guide dog is totally blind. Many people with some remaining vision use these.
* Never distract a guide dog when in harness.
* Always let a person with sight loss know when you are approaching. A sudden voice at close range when they didn’t hear anyone approach can be very startling. Speak first from a little distance away, and again as you draw closer.
* If you’ve been talking to a person with sight loss, tell them when you are leaving, so that they are not left talking to themselves.
* If you have been guiding a blind person and have to leave them, bring them to some reference point that they can feel, like a wall, table or chair. To be left in open space can be disorientating for a person with no vision.
* Be punctual. Unpunctuality can cause a person with sight loss unnecessary stress. Remember too that the person may not be able to see whether you have arrived.
* Indoors: To avoid the possibility of someone banging their head, close all doors and cupboards.
* Outdoors: if you see head-height obstacles ahead of a person using a white cane or guide dog, warn them. A cane cannot locate head-height obstacles and a guide dog might not always be able to do so.
* If you need to move something in the home of a person with vision impairment, tell the person. If possible, replace the item where it was so that they can find it when you are gone. Remove any hazardous items.

## Help customers who are Deafblind

Know that:

* the deafblind alphabet is a system to fingerspell words onto a deafblind person’s hand
* The deafblind peer advocate is a person whose touch and communication style is known to the deafblind person and who can relay information
* A deafblind person needs a specialised interpreter who works with the deafblind peer advocate to make sure that the person is understood and understands what is being said
* The deafblind cane has a red band around the stick
* Guiding a deafblind person is different from guiding a blind person.
* Communicate in a way that suits the person’s level of independence and/or need for support.

**When guiding a deafblind person:**

* Approach the deafblind person from the front
* Speak slowly and clearly; if they do not respond to this, gently place your hand on their shoulder or hand and leave it there giving the person time to respond
* Keep the person in close to your body, so that they can detect changes in direction
* When approaching steps, pause slightly before you start to climb
* Raise or lower your arm slightly to indicate a step in the relevant direction
* When guiding through a narrow space, pass your guiding arm behind your back and the person will fall in single file behind you
* When guiding to a chair, place their hand on the back of the chair; some may then locate the chair for themselves while others might like you to guide them further

## Help customers with breathing difficulties

* Provide drop-off points and accessible car parking spaces close to the entrance to your building.
* Pay attention to air quality.
* Consider safe evacuation for people who may be overcome early by smoke.

## Help customers with speech difficulties

* Ask the person to help you to communicate with her or him. If the person uses a communication device such as a manual or electronic communication board, ask the person how best to use it.
* Allow extra time as necessary.
* Listen attentively. **Do not speak for the person**. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, such as a nod or a shake of the head.
* Ask the customer to repeat what they have said, if necessary.
* Do not pretend to understand. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will guide your understanding.
* Provide alternative ways of communicating with customers, such as text messages, email, and letter.

## Help customers who are anxious or depressed

* Allow extra time for customers who need it.
* Allow for customers to bring an advocate, or a friend or family member, to appointments.
* Show empathy with the customer.
* Arrange to take breaks as necessary.

## Help customers with autism

* Provide quiet zones or quiet periods for people who may have sensory overload
* Be clear and easy to understand. Some people with autism may get confused by humour, sarcasm or figures of speech

## Tips for making your information more accessible

* Consult customers with disabilities to find out what information they need and what formats they want.
* Use clear, user-focused language.
* Make sure that relevant staff know how to get alternative formats of information, including Irish Sign Language.
* Develop and publicise an Accessible Information Policy.

# Make your buildings more accessible

## Audit your building

Get an accessibility expert to **audit your building’s accessibility every 3 years**, or more regularly if necessary. You could ask a colleague who is very familiar with one of these documents to audit your building's accessibility, or you could find an expert outside your organisation:

* [Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach](http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment)
* [Technical Guidance Document Part M — Access and Use (2010](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/78e67-technical-guidance-document-m-access-and-use/))
* That will give you prioritised advice about accessibility problems in your building and practical advice on how to solve those problems. A good accessibility expert will often be able to suggest affordable solutions. The National Disability Authority’s [Guidelines for Access Auditing of the Built Environment](https://nda.ie/Publications/Environment-Housing/Environment-Publications/Guidelines-for-Access-Auditing-of-the-Built-Environment.html) describes the structure of an access audit report that is comprehensive and useful. You can ask an accessibility expert to use that structure for your report. As soon as possible after the audit, develop an implementation plan for addressing each issue that the report identifies, according to the issues’ priorities.

## Develop an Access Handbook

The National Disability Authority’s [Access Handbook Template](http://nda.ie/Publications/Environment-Housing/Environment-Publications/Access-Handbook-Template.html) defines an Access Handbook as an internal document for the use of management, maintenance personnel and new staff; and which all staff should be aware of. It says the purpose of an Access Handbook is to provide a simple way of listing and explaining the features and facilities of a building, which must be maintained and/or improved in order to ensure access for everyone. Develop and Access Handbook that includes:

* Background information on accessibility
* How to get to the building, including information about local public transport and its accessibility
* Information about accessible facilities, such as:
* Lifts
* Accessible toilets
* Accessible parking spaces
* Guidelines for accessible signage
* Management responsibilities
* A maintenance audit template
* Evacuation plan for emergencies.

Staff who work in the relevant areas should refer to—and update—your Access Handbook while working.

# Maintaining accessibility in buildings

## Outside the building

Make sure that parking spaces for people with disabilities are accessible. Check:

* That parking spaces and drop-off points are kept clear for people who need them
* The surface and lighting around the building and on the paths that customers use to get to the building.
* That the main entrance door is correctly designed, and that at least one entrance is accessible if the main entrance is not accessible.

## Ramps and steps

If any public service areas have slopes that are steeper than 1:20, make sure that both steps and ramps are available, and that they are correctly designed.

## Steps and lifts

### Steps

Avoid putting steps within a floor in a building, where possible. Where steps are necessary, provide a ramp or platform lift as appropriate.

### Lifts

Provide accessible lifts in all new buildings that have more than one floor.  
Make sure that the lifts are designed to best practice guidelines.  
Check the lifts’ operation regularly.  
Keep the lifts clear.

## Corridors and doors

Check that:

* Corridors and routes are not obstructed by deliveries, machinery, or anything else
* Doors are kept open where possible
* Doors that are closed are easy for customers to open

## Doors are wide enough for all customers.

## Signs

Public buildings should have signs to let your customers understand where they need to go. The signs should:

* Be designed according to best practice guidelines
* Have Braille or raised lettering wherever possible
* Have writing that is large enough for your customers to read
* Use appropriate symbols
* Not be ”homemade“
* Be placed where your customers will:
* Be able to see them easily
* Not walk into them.

## Reception areas and waiting rooms

Public service reception areas and waiting rooms should be designed, and maintained, to best practice guidance.

Provide correctly designed seats. A mixture of types and sizes of seats is best. Some customers may need to use arm-rests, and some may find arm-rests awkward.

Provide an induction loop system in at least one accessible meeting room.

## Intercoms, queuing systems, ticket offices, information desks

Consider how you will inform customers that they are next in line. Remember that some customers might not be able to:

* Read visual information
* Hear audio information or intercoms
* Reach tickets or intercoms that are very high, very low, or awkward to reach
* Understand complicated language or jargon.

Plan the location, output, and language of your intercoms, queuing systems, ticket offices, or information desks carefully. Avoid background music or unnecessary loud noises.  
  
If your intercom, queuing system, ticket office, or information desk is inaccessible to some of your customers, your staff can help by speaking—or giving written information—to customers.  
Consider providing quiet times or quiet spaces for people with autism who may experience sensory overload.

## Toilets

If you provide toilets for the public, provide toilets that customers with disabilities can use. Follow best practice guidance carefully.  
  
Provide an alarm system in your accessible toilets, and test it regularly to make sure that a member of staff will help somebody in an emergency.  
  
Make sure that accessible toilets are not used for storing cleaning equipment, deliveries, or anything else.  
  
Provide sanitary bins in accessible toilets, and put them where they will not obstruct wheelchair users.

## Interior design

### Light

The light in your public buildings should be distributed evenly. There should be no large variations in lighting levels and the light should not be too bright or too dark. Avoid glossy, shiny and polished surface finishes and keep reflections, shadows, and glare to a minimum.

Avoid dramatic changes in light levels or direction.

### Visual contrast

Use differences in colour and colour intensity to create visual contrast. That will help customers with vision impairments to:

* Distinguish between walls and floors
* Distinguish between door backgrounds and fittings
* Avoid hazards
* Find their way around the building.

BS 8300:2009+A1:2010 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Code of practice has information about visual contrast.

## Tips for making your buildings accessible

* Audit your building’s accessibility every 3 years.
* After each audit, develop an implementation plan for addressing each issue that the report identifies
* Create an Access Handbook, based on the NDA’s template.

# Plan safe evacuation for all customers and staff

Plan to get everybody, including customers with disabilities and staff with disabilities, to safety if there is an emergency. Review and improve the following procedures:

* Emergency procedures
* Emergency equipment
* Visual and auditory alarms
* Safety zones
* Signage.

## Emergency procedures

Regularly review your evacuation procedures and safety statement.

Make fire procedure instructions available to all staff and visitors. Make sure that those instruction are in formats and a language that each person can understand. Those instructions should include:

* Fire escape signs
* Location of signs
* Fire point identification
* Statutory fire and first aid signs
* Signs indicating escape routes for people with disabilities.

Make sure you have an emergency evacuation plan recorded in your Safety Statement.

## Personal Emergency Egress Plans

Provide Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEP) for staff and regular visitors as necessary. Use the PEEP template from the National Disability Authority’s [Safe Evacuation for All](http://nda.ie/Publications/Environment-Housing/Environment-Publications/Safe-Evacuation-for-All.html) publication. Review the PEEPs every 6 months and whenever there is a relevant change in the building, service, or evacuation plan.

## Drills

Carry out evacuation drills at least twice a year, and include everybody in the drills. Identify any potential problems, prioritise them, and plan to solve them.

Make sure that all ground floor exit routes are accessible and that the area outside the exit is accessible too. Some people will be very sensitive to loud noises or flashing lights.

## Equipment

Provide both visual and auditory alarms in the building.

Provide and maintain emergency equipment as necessary.

Place emergency equipment no more than 1200mm above floor level. This includes:

* Fire blankets
* Break-glass alarm points
* Communication equipment
* Fire extinguishers (heavier types should have their base no more than 650mm above the floor).

Inspect all emergency equipment regularly.

Make sure that all fire signs are maintained and comply with international standards

## Lifts, evacuation chairs, and safety zones

For each lift in your building, clearly indicate whether people can use it in emergency situations. Don’t assume that using a lift in an emergency is not an option; get an expert to help you to assess all of the options that would be available to people with disabilities in an emergency, including using lifts.

Provide evacuation chairs and appropriate training for staff. Remember that some people with disabilities cannot use evacuation chairs and will need another option.

If there are refuge areas in your building, clearly indicate them. Get an expert to help you to assess which areas, if any, can be used as refuge areas. Make sure that each safety zone has:

* A two-way communication system that people with different disabilities can use, to talk to a management control point
* Very clear identification, so that somebody who is in the refuge area can tell others exactly where they are.

## Training

Train:

* Relevant staff on how to safely transport people with mobility difficulties
* The Health and Safety officer, as appropriate
* A number of staff in Occupational First Aid.

## Top tips for planning safe evacuation for all customers and staff

* Provide Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEP) for staff and regular visitors as necessary.
* Carry out evacuation drills at least twice a year.
* For each lift in your building, clearly indicate whether people can use it in emergency situations.
* Remember that some people with disabilities cannot use evacuation chairs and will need another option.

# Make your information more accessible

Consult customers with disabilities to find out:

* What information they need from your organisation
* What formats they need that information in.

**Use clear, user-focused language.** When you’re writing information for customers, try to use words that you would use if you were talking to a customer face-to-face. Don’t assume that your customers will understand the words that you use to describe your services; try to use your customers’ words instead. Train your staff on using clear language.

**Publicise the alternative formats** that you can provide information in. For example, customers who would like Easy-to-Read versions of your publications might not know that you can provide them.

Make sure that relevant staff know how to get alternative formats of information. For example, you probably don’t need to print Braille versions of your publications just in case your customers ask for them. However, you do need to know how to arrange a Braille version for a customer who asks for one. Use this [“Alternative formats for public information” template](http://nda.ie/Resources/Accessibility-toolkit/Make-your-information-more-accessible/Alternative-formats-for-public-information.Doc)  to record contact details, costs, timeframes, and other information that your staff will need so that they can provide your organisation’s information in alternative formats when your customers ask for them. That will allow your staff to give informed and accurate information for customers, such as

“We don’t have any Braille versions of that publication now, but we can get one for you by the end of next week”,

or

“We can produce large print versions of that report ourselves, so we’ll have one for you by the end of this week.”

Publicise a way that your customers can give you feedback about how your organisation communicates.

# Develop an Accessible Information Policy

Develop and publicise an Accessible Information Policy that says that your organisation:

* Is committed to communicating effectively with all customers
* Will train all staff on how to use clear language and structure documents correctly
* Will provide information in alternative formats when customers request it, when practicable
* Will evaluate your Accessible Information Policy regularly.

Your Accessible Information Policy should also have:

* Details of how your customers can give feedback about your information
* Contact details for your Access Officer and Inquiry Officer.

The [Public Appointments Service](http://www.publicjobs.ie/publicjobs/) have a good example of an [Accessible Information Policy.](https://publicjobs.ie/documents/AccessibleInformationPolicy2018.pdf)

The [Citizens Information Board](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/) produced [“Accessible information for all”](https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/accessibility/Accessible_Information_For_All.pdf) guidelines in 2009.

# Write clearly

## Use:

* Personal pronouns, such as “we”, “our”, “you”, and “your”
* Phrases with active verbs, such as “We will decide…” and “Please provide…”
* Images that support the text
* One sentence for each point, and one paragraph for each idea.

## Avoid:

* Unnecessary words
* Jargon that the customer might not know
* Abbreviations that the customer might not know
* Non-English expressions (in English)
* Long sentences
* Metaphors, exaggeration or ambiguous language
* Inconsistency.

# Present information clearly

## Use:

* Clear fonts, set at 12 points or bigger
* Clear backgrounds that give good colour contrast
* Left-alignment (except for languages that read from right to left)
* Proper punctuation
* Bold text for emphasis
* Clear line-spacing, clear paragraph-spacing, and clear column-spacing
* Text to explain images and charts.

## Avoid:

* Italicisation
* Underlining
* Hyphenation and justification
* Writing words in upper case letters
* Vertical text
* Outlined text
* Stretched or squashed text
* Glossy paper.

# Irish Sign Language

When you publicise a public event, say that you will provide Irish Sign Language interpreters or real-time captioning if customers ask for them. Remember that some customers who need Irish Sign Language interpreters might not know that you will provide them.

Say how much notice you will need to arrange an interpreter. For example, you could say, “If you have accessibility requirements, please tell us at least 3 weeks before the conference. We need 3 weeks to arrange services such as sign language interpreters.”

You should have a policy that sets out procedures for your staff and Sign Language Interpreters, including the need for the interpreters to use an appropriate confidentiality policy when necessary.

# “Easy-to-Read”

“Easy-to-Read” is different to plain English. “Easy-to-Read” documents are designed for people with intellectual disabilities, people who can’t read well, and people whose first language is not English.

The Accessible Information Working Group, made up of Speech and Language Therapists who work with adults with intellectual disabilities in Ireland, published [Make it Easy: A guide to preparing Easy to Read Information](http://www.walk.ie/userfiles/file/Make%20It%20Easy%20-%20A%20guide%20to%20preparing%20Easy%20to%20Read%20Information.pdf) to describe how to create an “Easy-to-Read” document or leaflet.

The National Disability Authority’s [Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies — Easy to read edition](http://nda.ie/ndasitefiles/COPEasy2read.Pdf) is a good example of an “Easy-to-Read” document.

If you need to create an “Easy-to-Read” document but have never created one, consider asking an expert to help you. Also, consider asking people from your target audience to test your document before you publish it.

# Public computers and kiosks

Some organisations, such as libraries and universities, provide computers for their customers to use. For example, customers can read websites in public libraries.

Some organisations, such as transport providers, provide kiosks that their customers can use. For example, customers can get tickets for trains, buses, and trams from kiosks.

Some customers with vision impairments or motor impairments might not be able to use a mouse or trackball. Some customers with vision impairments might not be able to read information from a screen, and some customers with hearing impairments might not be able to perceive audio output from a computer. To make public computers and kiosks accessible to customers with disabilities, make sure that:

* The hardware and software does not prevent customers with disabilities from using it
* The area around the computer or kiosk is accessible and stable
* Your staff can answer basic questions about the accessibility of the computer or kiosk, such as “Does it have a trackball?” and “Can people with prosthetic hands use it?”

If your organisation provide public computers, make sure that they conform to the priority 1 guidelines from the [NDA’s Guidelines for Public Access Terminals Accessibility](https://www.universaldesign.ie/technology-ict/web-and-mobile-app-accessibility/it-procurement-toolkit/accessibility-targets/public-access-terminals/#:~:text=NDA%20IT%20accessibility%20guidelines%20for%20public%20access%20terminals,interface.%20All%20pats%20should%20conform%20to%20these%20guidelines.). Audit your public computers’ and kiosks’ conformance to the NDA’s Guidelines for Public Access Terminals Accessibility. There are a lot of factors involved in making sure that a public computer or kiosk is accessible, so get an expert to help if necessary. After the audit, write a plan for improving the accessibility of the public computers and kiosks.

If you can’t make your public computers or kiosks more accessible, make sure that customers can very easily find an alternative way to access the service that the public computers or kiosks provide. For example, make sure that a member of staff is available to provide tickets if your ticket kiosks have accessibility limitations. Consider alternative solutions, such text messages or emails.

## Tips for making your information more accessible

* Consult customers with disabilities to find out what information they need and what formats they want.
* Use clear, user-focused language.
* Make sure that relevant staff know how to get alternative formats of information, including Irish Sign Language.
* Develop and publicise an Accessible Information Policy.

# Make your websites more accessible

Make sure that any information and services that you provide through your websites are accessible to customers with disabilities.

## Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0

The best way to make sure that your website is accessible to your customers is to make sure that everything on it has Level AA conformance with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/). That includes:

* HTML pages
* PDF documents
* Word documents
* Audio
* Videos
* Games
* Maps.

Make sure your content writers, web designers, and web developers are very familiar with the WCAG 2.0. The WCAG 2.0 have advice and simple techniques to help you answer these questions:

* Have you provided a suitable **text equivalent for everything that’s not text**?
* Can customers get all the important information from your **videos and audio**, even if they can’t see them? Can customers get all the important information from your **videos and audio**, even if they can’t hear them?
* Did you **structure your information**, so that your customer’s technology can understand its structure?
* Is there enough **colour contrast** between the website’s written information and its background? Is there enough **volume contrast** between your website’s spoken information and its background noises?
* Can you provide visual alternatives to textual material?
* Can your customers use your website with **only a keyboard**?
* Does your website give your customers **enough time** to read and use your website?
* Have you made sure that **nothing flashes** quickly?
* Can your customers get around your website easily? Can your customers **find what they’re looking for** on your website?
* Can your customers **read your information easily, and can they understand it?**
* Does your website **work as your customers would expect** it to work?
* Does your website help **prevent your customers making mistakes?** **Does your website explain your customers’ mistakes clearly**?
* Have you **constructed your website properly**, so that it will work on as many modern computers, phones, and browsers as possible?

Even if the company who design, develop, or host your website tell you that your website will be accessible, ask an expert (who’s not affiliated with the company) to check the website’s accessibility before signing off on it.

The National Disability Authority’s Centre for Excellence in Universal Design has [web accessibility techniques](https://www.universaldesign.ie/technology-ict/web-accessibility-techniques1/)for developers, designers, and content providers and editors.

# Writing accessible content

Members of staff who write content for your website need to know how to use their word processing software, such as Microsoft Word, properly, to create properly structured, accessible information. Assistive technology helps people with disabilities to navigate and understand information. For example, “screen reader” software can read a document aloud to a person with a vision impairment. If that document contains properly structured headings, the screen reader can announce those too. That makes the document easier to understand. Your organisation’s webmaster cannot make everything accessible without help from other staff. Members of staff who write content for your website and want your webmaster to publish it to the web should:

Write the document (or at least a summary of the document) in clear English

Use the menus and toolbars in their word processing software, such as Microsoft Word, to specify:

* Headings
* Lists
* Tables
* Language changes
* Alternative text for anything that is not text, such as:
* Images
* Charts
* Videos
* Audio
* Presentations.

It’s important that the staff who write the content make it accessible, because other members of staff, such as the webmaster, probably won’t be familiar enough with the subject to know how to make sure it’s accessible. For example, a webmaster probably won’t know what alternative text to give to a chart in a document about water quality. Also, if the person who wrote the document make some text look like a heading by making it bigger or colouring it differently, the webmaster probably won’t know whether that text should be a main heading or some level of sub-heading.

# Learn how to use word-processing software properly

Download these Word documents:

* [Good document.doc](http://nda.ie/Resources/Accessibility-toolkit/Make-your-websites-more-accessible/Good-Document.doc)
* [Bad document.doc](http://nda.ie/Resources/Accessibility-toolkit/Make-your-websites-more-accessible/Bad-Document.doc)

## In a Good document.Doc:

* Insert a table of contents (see “Create a table of contents automatically” if you haven’t done that before)
* Add a new item to the middle of each list
* Add a new row to the middle of the table.
* Those steps are all quite easy, because the author of that document used the menus and toolbars to specify the headings, lists, and table. The word-processing software can identify each heading, list, table, and can treat them as such. For example, it can create a table of contents based on its understanding of the headings in the document. That document is accessible to customers with disabilities, because assistive technology software, such as a screen reader, will also be able to describe each item’s function to the customer.

## In a Bad document.Doc, try to:

* Insert a table of contents
* Add a new item to the middle of each list
* Add a new row to the middle of the table.

Those steps are all quite time-consuming, because the author of that document didn’t use the menus and toolbars to specify the headings, lists, and table, and just used formatting to make text look like headings, lists and a table. The word-processing software cannot identify the “fake” headings, lists, and table, and cannot treat them as such. For example, it cannot create a table of contents based on the “fake” headings in the document. That document is not accessible to customers with disabilities, because assistive technology software, such as a screen reader, will not be able to describe each item’s function to the customer.

Notice that the bad document has no alternative text for its images and (depending on the software that you open it in) has squiggly red lines under its French phrase.

# Making audio and video information accessible

WCAG 2.0’s guideline 1.2, [Time-based Media](http://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/media-equiv.Html), explains how to make audio and video information accessible to customers with disabilities. Here’s a quick summary of that guideline:

## Recorded video (or slides) with audio

Recorded video (or slides) with audio needs:

* Captions
* Audio description in the video, or a transcription that details the visual information and the audio information

Recorded video (or slides) with audio should have:

* audio description

Recorded video (or slides) with audio would, ideally, have:

* Irish Sign Language
* A version that has extra pauses in the video with extra audio description (if necessary)
* Effective text descriptions

## Recorded video (or slides) without audio

Recorded video (or slides) without audio needs:

* effective text descriptions or effective audio descriptions

Recorded video (or slides) without audio would, ideally, have:

* Effective text descriptions

## Recorded audio without video

Recorded audio (no video) needs:

* Effective text descriptions

## Live video

Live video should have:

* captions

## Live audio

Live audio would, ideally, have:

* real time captioning (or the script if it is followed)

## Note

When you provide either an Irish Sign Language version or a spoken version of some text purely to help customers who have trouble reading the text, you don’t need to provide audio description, captions, or text descriptions for those versions.

## Related guidelines

Make sure that:

* There is little or no background noise or music during speech
* Customers don’t have to use a mouse
* Customers can pause, stop, or hide anything non-essential that starts automatically, is presented with other information, and moves or blinks
* Customers can pause, stop, hide, or change the speed of anything non-essential that updates itself, starts automatically, and is presented with other information
* Nothing flashes more than 3 times per second

## Project planning

When you plan a project that will involve information being put on your website, allow enough time in the project for somebody to:

* Check the information’s accessibility
* Improve the information’s accessibility, if necessary.

Any electronic newsletters that you send should also have Level AA conformance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Even if the company who supply the service or templates say that the newsletters will be accessible, ask an expert who is not affiliated with that company to check that the newsletters are accessible before you sign off on them.

## Usability testing

Ask users—including users with different disabilities—from your target audience to carry our tasks on your website, so that you can learn how usable your website it. You may need to change your website if users cannot use it easily. Your project’s budget and timeframe should allow for usability testing and subsequent changes.

# Accessibility audits

Audit all of your websites regularly, to see whether they have Level AA conformance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. There are a lot of factors involved in making a website accessible, so ask somebody—either a colleague or an external expert—who is familiar with WCAG 2.0 to audit your websites for you. The National Disability Authority have useful, detailed guidance about [web accessibility auditing](https://universaldesign.ie/technology-ict/web-accessibility-techniques1/). After the audit, write a plan for improving the accessibility of your websites, including:

* Priorities
* Tasks
* Milestones
* Timeframes
* The name of the member of staff who is responsible for improving the accessibility of the websites.

You might not have enough resources to make every webpage on your website accessible. Prioritise **your most popular webpages** and **webpages that are particularly relevant to customers with disabilities**, and make them accessible. Then **set a deadline**, after which you will only publish information that is accessible.

If your website offers a service but you cannot make the relevant webpages accessible, make sure that customers can easily find an alternative way to access that service. For example, provide a phone number, email address and location, so that customers can avail of your service without using your website.

# Web accessibility statements

Create a web accessibility statement for each website. You can use the National Disability Authority’s [web accessibility statement template](http://nda.ie/Resources/Accessibility-toolkit/Accessibility-Statement-Template/Accessibility-Statement-Template.html). Your web accessibility statement should state:

* Your commitment and approach to maintaining an accessible website
* The website’s conformance with official accessibility guidelines
* Areas for improvement and time-lines
* How customers can give you feedback about the website’s accessibility
* Accessibility features of the website.

# Content management

You should have a system for making sure that new content on your websites will be accessible. This could be:

* A piece of software, called a Content Management System, that allows staff to insert, update, or delete content on a website, or
* A staff procedure for checking the accessibility of each piece of content before they publish it, or
* Both.

## Content Management System software

Some Content Management System software is imperfect and prevents staff from producing fully accessible webpages. For example, some Content Management System software prevents users from adding extra structure or information that would make a webpage properly accessible. Other Content Management System software automatically adds extra structure or styling that decreases a webpage’s accessibility. If you are buying or developing a Content Management System, investigate how accessible the webpages that it produces will be, before you pay for it. Your Content Management System software should have Level AA conformance to the [Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG) 2.0](http://www.w3.org/TR/ATAG20/).

# Staff training and style guides

Staff who produce content should have training in:

* How to write for the web
* How to use clear English.

That applies to staff who:

* Write the information
* Approve the information
* Put the information on the website.

Make a style guide available to all relevant staff, so that they can refer to it when they write.

You could designate an expert in web accessibility to check each piece of information before staff publish it to the web, if necessary.

## Top tips for making your websites accessible

* Get familiar with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.
* Train staff on writing accessible content and using word-processing software properly.
* Audit your websites.
* Create a web accessibility statement, based on the National Disability Authority’s web accessibility statement template, for each website.
* Review the suitability of your content management system.

# Accessibility Statement Template

## Accessibility Statement

## Our commitment and approach to maintaining an accessible website

[Your organisation’s name] is committed to:

* **Maintaining an accessible website**. We state our commitment to this in [a document name, such as a Customer Charter].
* Ensuring that this website achieves “Level AA” conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, to comply with the National Disability Authority’s Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information Provided by Public Bodies. (The National Disability Authority’s Centre for Excellence in Universal Design has an introduction to policy and legislation relevant to Universal Design in Ireland.)
* Ensuring that all new information on the website will achieve “Level AA” conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.
* **Including accessibility when we procure 3rd-party systems or upgrades to** existing systems.

## This website’s conformance with official accessibility guidelines

The website currently has [the conformance rating given in the last web accessibility audit] conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Our most recent web accessibility audit for this website was on [date of the last web accessibility audit].

## Areas for improvement and time-lines

We are aware of some areas on the website where we could improve accessibility. We are currently working to achieve this. We hope that this website will achieve “Level AA” conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 by [deadline for conformance]. We would appreciate if you could let us know regarding any sections of the websites that are inaccessible o any sections of the website that you are having problems using by fi fill out the following short form:

Accessibility Issues with the website

| Name the section(s) of the website that is not accessible |
| --- |
|  |
| **Provide details of the accessibility issue(s)** |
|  |

If you are having issues accessing any section of the website you can also contact (**insert the name of the relevant person**) at this number (**insert the person’s phone number)** or email them at (**insert the person’s email address**)