Accessibility Top Tips document

This document draws together top tips for writing in Explore Education Statistics (EES) to improve accessibility and is included within our best practice content design guidance. Signposts to further information and resources around accessibility can be found in the Annex.

Background

Historically, around a third of disabled people in the UK experience difficulties in accessing public, commercial and leisure goods and services. Accessibility legislation was brought in to help ensure online public services are accessible to all users, including people with disabilities.  Therefore, from September 2019 all public sector websites (extranet and intranet pages) launched on or after 23 September 2018 must meet accessibility standards. This includes publishing accessibility statements and explaining how accessible their websites are (DfE’s [internal accessibility statement](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/dfe-home/SitePages/accessibility-statement.aspx) and [external accessibility statement](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/accessible-documents-policy) ).

The deadline for public sector organisations to make all existing websites accessible was 23 September 2020 and for mobile applications this was 23 June 2021. Government Digital Service (GDS) have the responsibility to monitor compliance across the public sector.

For historic statistical publications on Gov.UK we have an exemption – so these do not have to be re-visited. The EES platform design enables much greater accessibility through it’s HTML format and the way it has been designed and continually improved.

Top Tips

The way teams put together their publication remains crucial in ensuring good accessibility for all. You will see that user engagement/insights, the content design guidance checklist and analytics provide key helpful insights to improve your products and their accessibility. Below we share some top tips:-

Preparation:

* Can users find your publication Is the title intuitive – have you checked what a few people unfamiliar with your publication think it will contain? Does this resonate with users?). Have you revamped your summary text in line with best practice guidance – using search terms (EES analytics) maximising the 181 characters, front loading key words and including geography eg England etc to maximise search engine optimisation.
* Format: How we put together information may not match what users want/need. [Analytics search terms and user engagement can help here]
* Are key messages upfront and clear: Are these the messages users are looking for?
* Can users find information easily: Look at analytics, user feedback etc and the section ordering, naming and content as well as signposting used and positioning.

Writing

Good writing helps every reader and improves accessibility. Specific tips are:

* Avoid jargon, abbreviations or subject language/prior knowledge assumption. Use or add to the key definition feature in EES where appropriate.
* Use clear and concise “plain English” sentences and paragraphs – pasting text to into <http://www.hemingwayapp.com/> to explore improvements can be helpful (but only use as a guide rather than prescriptively). There is also some functionality within Microsoft products to check accessibility (see Annex) but Heather Brown is seeking feedback on whether people do feel this offers additional value.
* Avoid parentheses, bold, italics and use of ‘left’ or ‘right’ as these don’t work well with screen readers.
* To help accessibility regarding screen readers, links should be descriptive, unique on the page and specific eg ‘Explore Education Statistics’, rather than ‘click here’ etc. Please avoid a one word link as users with reduced motor skills can find a one word link more difficult to select.
* Are titles and data files concise and clear (consider active titles for charts/graphs). Check how user friendly the table builder is for your information.
* Follow the new [GSS guidance on colour use for graphs and charts](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/data-visualisation-colours-in-charts/) to help good accessibility eg for those with colour blindness and accessing through screen readers, contact the Statistics Development Team if you have any questions around this. Be clear on what any visual elements are adding and what their purpose is – what message(s) are you conveying (try to use active titling).
* HIstoric Gov.UK files are likely to be in formats that are not accessible (eg PDF, Excel) and therefore if your new publication holds the duplicate information, then consider whether any old publications could be deleted with a link through to EES. [Accessibility guidance on PDF, Excel and PowerBI, as well as dashboard guidance for RShiny is linked to from the content design guidance checklist and is in the Annex]
* Double-check how the publication looks through different devices and ease of navigation – do raise with the EES team if you spot any potential improvements.

Ahead of publishing

* Within pre release rules get someone less familiar with your publication to check over the content using the good practice guidance?

Annex – Further Information and Resources

Statistics

1. You may wish to view our exciting new podcast on accessibility with the overall departmental lead Jane Dickinson and Statistics lead Heather Brown [podcast on accessibility](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/%3Av%3A/r/sites/sarpi/g/WorkplaceDocuments/Accessibility%20podcast.mp4?csf=1&web=1&e=XiKfK0)*)*. If you do have questions around accessibility and statistics then do contact Heather Brown or HOP office.
2. For wider advice around writing statistical publications including the content design guidance checklist see the [EES writing and visualising guidance page](https://rsconnect/rsc/stats-production-guidance/cd.html). This includes examples of benefits realised through developing your content through a DfE scrum, if you are interested in finding out more about the scrums contact Heather Brown.
3. If you have information you wish to make available that is either RShiny, Excel, PDF or PowerBI you may wish to refer to these checklists and advice for statistics producers ([R Shiny dashboard guidance](https://rsconnect/rsc/stats-production-guidance/dashboards.html#how-to-publish-an-r-shiny-dashboard), [Accessibility and Excel](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/file/FB7C7F72-90E9-496C-A4CB-318C53190BAC?tenantId=fad277c9-c60a-4da1-b5f3-b3b8b34a82f9&fileType=docx&objectUrl=https%3A%2F%2Feducationgovuk.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FDAN%2FShared%20Documents%2FGSS%2FAccessibility%20requirements%20for%20Excel%20workbooksstatistics.docx&baseUrl=https%3A%2F%2Feducationgovuk.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FDAN&serviceName=teams&threadId=19:3b1d045f4f2d4f8db7038a4c98acb299@thread.skype&groupId=6572094f-43a3-4537-bcf0-fc27dc6557ed), [Accessibility and PDFs](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/file/519DB0B7-3961-4389-B0DE-56D0678EB51F?tenantId=fad277c9-c60a-4da1-b5f3-b3b8b34a82f9&fileType=docx&objectUrl=https%3A%2F%2Feducationgovuk.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FDAN%2FShared%20Documents%2FGSS%2FAccessibility%20requirements%20for%20PDF%20statistics.docx&baseUrl=https%3A%2F%2Feducationgovuk.sharepoint.com%2Fsites%2FDAN&serviceName=teams&threadId=19:3b1d045f4f2d4f8db7038a4c98acb299@thread.skype&groupId=6572094f-43a3-4537-bcf0-fc27dc6557ed)) and ‘Accessibility help document for PowerBI dashboards’ held as a single document in the [Analytical Community Workplaces area](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/sarpi/g/WorkplaceDocuments/Forms/AllItems.aspx). Do also have a look at [Accessibility Regulations and FAQs](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/DAN/Shared%20Documents/GSS/Accessibility%20regulations%20and%20statistics%20FAQs.docx?d=w929a2a89a1ec4ac4a11c9df1d722197b&csf=1&web=1&e=hA1oju)
4. The GSS have guidance on [writing about statistics](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/writing-about-statistics-2/) which from the outset was integrated within the DfE content design guidance checker, along with tips from wider ONS scrums.

Accessibility

1. DfE guidance is available: [creating accessible content](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/lvewp00043/SitePages/Creating-Accessible-Documents.aspx?OR=Teams-HL&CT=1652877503457&params=eyJBcHBOYW1lIjoiVGVhbXMtRGVza3RvcCIsIkFwcFZlcnNpb24iOiIyNy8yMjA0MDExMTQxMyJ9); [make your content accessible](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/how-do-i/SitePages/communications-make-your-content-accessible.aspx#how-you-can-make-your-content-accessible).
2. All Microsoft packages have an ‘accessibility checker’, which can be found under the ‘Review’ drop down menu.  In addition, this link shows how to get statistics helping indicate readability which is helpful [get your document's readability and level statistics](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us)
3. DfE have created an [Accessibility Hub](https://educationgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/lvewp00043/SitePages/Digital-Accessibility-Hub-Home.aspx) which holds useful information around improving accessibility.