Website Accessibility Policy

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Introduction

BBSRC is committed to ensuring that its websites are accessible to everyone. People access the web in many different ways and BBSRC promotes inclusion for all, regardless of disability, capability or technology.

Background

As a publicly funded body, BBSRC has a duty to ensure its websites are accessible and usable by all, and that they comply with relevant legislation. The public sector Equality Duty section of the Equality Act 2010 requires:

"public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities." (Home Office, http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act/equality-duty/)

Policy intent

The intention of this policy is to provide clear accessibility principles that all BBSRC websites are required to follow. Through our websites BBSRC provides our users with access to information and our services. It is our responsibility to:

- make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities

- actively look at ways of ensuring that people with disabilities are treated appropriately (In line with guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission).

In addition, we need to take account of user needs, including disabled users, in our future design process.

"*Delivering inclusive citizen-centred services means analysing user needs; taking steps to meet those needs; and measuring success. This process, as defined in the Publicly Available Specification - PAS 78:2006.*" (Source: Central Office of Information)

Policy principles

The principles of this policy form a set of requirements that BBSRC websites are expected to follow.

1. Websites should conform to the accessibility targets laid out in Delivering Inclusive Websites from the Central Office of Information

2. In doing so, websites should conform to level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/)

3. If the guidance from the Central Office of Information should be revised, Principle 1 of this policy updates automatically and Principle 2 will be updated accordingly.

Online content format

The majority of BBSRC web pages are published as HyperText Markup Language (HTML) files that use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to define their presentation. It is to this type of content that the WCAG guidelines apply directly.

BBSRC websites also provide online content that is not provided in HTML. Where non-HTML formats are used:

- files will be created in accordance with the accessible authoring techniques available for these formats

- all reasonable efforts will be taken to provide alternative accessible versions

- contact details will be provided for the supply of alternative non-web formats

Situations where online content may be provided in non-HTML formats include:

Content with technical restrictions or legal requirements

Periodically, BBSRC is required to publish content on its website to meet legislative requirements. Often the source material for this content is only available in hardcopy or must be presented in a format that retains the layout or formatting integrity of the original documents.

Rich media formats

BBSRC may occasionally publish content in non-HTML rich-media formats, such as embedded YouTube videos. Where such content cannot be made accessible, every reasonable effort will be made to provide an accessible alternative version.

Time-critical content

BBSRC is often required to publish content on its website at a particular time or date. As a temporary measure, an inaccessible version of time-critical content may be published to meet deadlines. BBSRC will then publish an accessible version of the same content as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so.

Online versions of hardcopy publications

Online versions of hardcopy publications are published on BBSRC's websites as HTML or Portable Document Format (PDF) files. Where required by specific publications (due to, for instance, a requirement for the document to be completed electronically – e.g. an application form), a particular alternative file format, such as Microsoft Word, may be used; however, this is kept to a minimum wherever possible.

Every reasonable effort is taken to make PDF files accessible. Guidance on creating accessible PDF documents, in accordance with Adobe accessible authoring techniques, has been drawn up and circulated to web publishers.

Some PDF files may still not be fully accessible, such as: scanned and older PDF files and those containing complex statistical and data tables.

Every reasonable effort is taken to ensure that file sizes are as small as possible. Large documents may need to be published in several smaller sections.

Conformance with web and online accessibility standards

Online content on BBSRC's websites will conform to best practice web and accessibility standards and guidelines published by the:

- Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
- United Kingdom Government Central Office of Information (COI)
- creators of proprietary software (e.g. Adobe)

In particular, BBSRC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its online content complies with:

- success criteria conformance levels A and AA of WCAG 2.0 (subject to the adoption of WCAG 2.0 as the minimum standard for public sector websites by the COI) - http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/
- United Kingdom Government web standards and guidelines

  o COI guidance TG102 delivering inclusive websites

  o COI guidance TG109 minimum technical standards

  o COI guidance TG110 making PDF files usable and accessible

- XHTML 1.0, the eXtensible HyperText Markup Language (second edition) specification - www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1 - and HTML 5 - www.w3.org/TR/html5

- Cascading Style Sheets (CSS 2.1 and CSS 3.0) specification - www.w3.org/TR/CSS

- accessible authoring techniques available for all proprietary software, including:

    o Adobe PDF - www.adobe.com/accessibility

    o Microsoft Office - http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/office2003

Checking conformance with web and online accessibility standards

Conformance checking against W3C/WAI and COI guidelines and specifications will be carried out regularly by BBSRC or third-party accessibility specialists, using appropriate combinations of the following techniques and tools:

- automated testing and validation (WCAG, HTML/XHTML, CSS)

- manual checks

- assistive technology tool testing

- user testing with people from a range of disabilities, preferences and ages

- expert reviews and conformance inspections of representative samples of web pages

Contacts

For further information on the BBSRC accessibility policy, please contact:

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