



# Workplace Digital Accessibility Guide

Supporting disabled staff and  
creating inclusive digital workplaces

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# The purpose of this workplace digital accessibility guide

**Digital accessibility means** making sure workplace digital tools and content can be used by everyone — including disabled staff and people using assistive technology.

This guide gives practical steps for creating accessible communication, documents, meetings, and training.

It brings together learning from our Digital Access Reviews, including lived experience testing of eLearning and digital induction modules, and findings from our Employers' Digital Use Research. This was delivered in partnership with the SUSE Experience Network and members of the Digital Access Workstream, including Cole AD, Passion 4 Social CIC and Alliance for Inclusion.

# 1

## What is digital accessibility?

**Digital accessibility means** digital systems and information can be accessed, understood, and used by all staff, including people who may:

- use screen readers.
- use speech-to-text tools.
- navigate by keyboard only.
- require captions or transcripts.
- use screen magnification.
- need simplified layouts and clear structure (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD, autism).
- experience fatigue, pain, or cognitive overload.



Accessibility supports independence, efficiency and dignity at work, which are key elements of Fair Work.

# 2

## Why digital accessibility matters

**Inaccessible tools** can lead to:

- reduced productivity.
- stress and fatigue.
- exclusion from meetings and training.
- barriers to promotion and development.
- increased reliance on colleagues for support.



Accessible tools improve clarity, efficiency, and inclusion for everyone.

### 3 Accessibility vs Reasonable adjustments

- **Accessibility** (proactive)  
Making digital tools and content usable by default.
- **Reasonable adjustments** (individual)  
Additional support for a specific person (e.g., software, alternative formats, flexible working).



Both are important — but accessibility reduces the need for repeated adjustments.



Early use of assistive technology during onboarding of new staff can help with learning new digital systems.



**Find out how to Start Positive Workplace Conversations:**

[See our Further Guidance and Resources at the end of this guide.](#)

### 4 Everyday accessibility principles

Use these principles in all workplace tools:

- **Be clear** - Use plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon.
- **Be structured** - Headings, bullet points, and consistent layouts help everyone.
- **Don't rely on colour alone** - Use labels or symbols as well.
- **Make content keyboard-friendly** - Some staff cannot use a mouse.
- **Make content readable** - Avoid clutter, overly dense text, and confusing navigation.
- **Provide alternatives** - Captions, transcripts, alt text, and accessible formats ensure information is available in more than one way.



# Putting digital accessibility into practice in the workplace

**The following pages** will guide you through some of the best practice that you can implement straight away to make your workplace inclusive.

# 1

## Email accessibility checklist

### When writing emails:

- Use clear, meaningful subject lines.
- Keep paragraphs short.
- Use bullet points for lists.
- Avoid excessive formatting and decorative fonts.
- Avoid “click here” links.
- Use: “Read the absence policy here”.
- Not: “Click here”.
- Do not use colour as the only way to communicate urgency or meaning.
- Do not send key information only as an image.



Attachments should also be accessible.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

[See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.](#)

## 2

# Accessible Word documents

### When creating documents:

- Use built-in Headings (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.).
- Use built-in bullet lists (not manual dashes).
- Use readable fonts (Calibri, Arial, Verdana).
- Use at least 12pt font (14pt is often better).
- Keep text left-aligned.
- Use good spacing and avoid dense blocks of text.

### Images and graphics

- Add alt text to explain what the image is for.
- Avoid using images to replace text.

### Tables

- Keep tables simple.
- Use clear column headings.
- Avoid merged cells.



Alt text is a short, descriptive text added to images so screen reader users can understand their purpose. It should clearly convey the image's essential information or function in a concise, meaningful way without unnecessary detail.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.

### 3

## PDF accessibility

PDFs are often inaccessible if not created properly. [See our resources at the end of this guide on how best to create your PDF.](#)

### Avoid:

- Scanned PDFs that are just images of text.
- PDFs with no headings or structure.
- PDFs that screen readers cannot navigate.

### Key requirements:

- **Use Proper Conversion:** Use the “Save as PDF” feature, ensuring structure tags are enabled.
- **Avoid “Print to PDF”:** This method creates a “flat” image of the slides that screen readers cannot navigate.
- **Check Accessibility Tags:** Ensure the final PDF has tags, which are necessary for screen readers to interpret content structure.

### Good practice:

- Share Word versions where possible.
- If PDF is required, ensure it is properly tagged and readable.
- Use OCR (text recognition) for scanned documents and check accuracy.



It's a good idea to include the Accessible Word Document guidelines on page 8.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

[See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.](#)

## 4

# Accessible PowerPoint presentations

### When creating slides:

- Use built-in slide layouts.
- Use large fonts (ideally 24pt or more).
- Use strong colour contrast.
- Keep slides simple: avoid clutter.
- Use unique slide titles.
- Add alt text to images and diagrams.

### When presenting slides:

- Describe visuals aloud.
- Do not rely on “as you can see”.
- Share slides in advance where possible.

### If saving slides as PDF handouts:

- **Verify Reading Order:** Confirm the reading order panel in PowerPoint is correct before exporting, as this determines how the PDF is read.
- Use the “Save as PDF” feature.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

[See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.](#)

## 5

# Accessible online meetings (Teams/Zoom/Google Meet)

### Before the meeting

- Send an agenda in advance –remember to build in comfort breaks.
- Share documents early in accessible formats.
- Provide clear joining details. Provide the option to dial-in by phone.
- Ask attendees for their communication requirements.

### During the meeting

- Use live captions where available (not auto-generated captions).
- Speak clearly and at a steady pace.
- Avoid interrupting or talking over others.
- Ask speakers to introduce themselves when talking.
- Avoid rapid screen switching when sharing content.
- Read out key points written in chat.
- Give people the option to ask questions in different ways.

### After the meeting

- Share notes, minutes, and action points.
- If recorded, ensure captions are enabled.

Our Employers Digital Use research found...

**Online meetings used by  
88% of employers**

## 6

## Screen sharing best practice

### When screen sharing:

- Zoom in so text is readable.
- Increase font size.
- Avoid scrolling quickly.
- Explain what you are showing.

## 7

## Accessible Intranets and Portals

### Good intranet design includes:

- clear menus and consistent navigation.
- descriptive links.
- simple layouts.
- clear headings.
- keyboard accessibility.
- no auto-playing videos.



Staff should be able to access policies, HR systems, and key resources independently.



Many intranet providers have an accessibility plug-in allowing users to adjust how they engage with the site.

## 8

# Accessible eLearning and online training

### Minimum good practice:

- captions on all videos.
- transcripts for audio content.
- keyboard navigable controls.
- screen reader compatibility.  
(e.g. correct labels, option to skip etc).
- no mouse-only activities  
(e.g., drag-and-drop without alternatives).
- flexible timing (avoid strict time limits where possible).
- short modules with clear progress markers.



eLearning must be accessible because it is often mandatory.

Our Employers Digital Use research found...

**97% of employers use eLearning and online training.**



### Further Guidance and Resources:

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.

## Accessible AI use

**AI can support fairness if designed well**, but it can also amplify biases or create new forms of discrimination. The main risks arise when AI systems assume:

- a “typical” body, voice, or cognitive pattern.
- uniform career histories.
- standard modes of interaction.

Disabled applicants and employees may therefore face barriers at the application, assessment, training and career development stages unless accessibility and reasonable adjustments are built into AI design from the start.

Many organisations now rely on AI based training modules that adapt content dynamically.

### Potential barriers:

- Auto generated learning materials may lack captions, audio descriptions, or accessible layouts.
- Systems may penalise employees for slower module completion times.
- “Interactive” tasks may not work with screen readers or speech to text.
- AI driven assessments may not accept non-standard formats (e.g., speech based answers, alternative input methods).

**Accesssible AI use** continues on the next page >

## Accessible AI use Continued

### Top Tips:

- AI should support, not make the final decision (always maintain human oversight).
- Tell employees when and how AI is used.
- Allow employees to request a non-AI alternative.
- Consider accessibility in your learning modules (captions, transcripts, screen-reader-friendly formats).
- Use structured, job related criteria rather than behavioural/ gestural signals (e.g. reliance on facial expressions, reaction speed, or eye contact).
- Review your AI tools for bias and accessibility (use Equality Impact Assessments to make sure your systems don't create barriers).
- Test tools with disabled people or seek feedback from Disabled People's Organisations and SUSE.
- Remove a tool if it creates barriers.
- Follow Scotland's AI standard for fairness, transparency and accountability as part of Fair Work values.



**Caution:** Some AI tools intended to “fix” accessibility automatically can actually cause barriers. They may claim compliance while still leaving essential functions inaccessible.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.

## 10

## Shared drives and file storage (SharePoint/OneDrive/Google Drive)

Good file management improves accessibility.

### Good practice:

- use consistent file naming.
- avoid multiple confusing versions e.g. (“final\_final\_v3”).
- keep folder structures logical.
- avoid overly deep folder nesting.
- ensure key documents are not stored only as scanned images.



A well-organised drive reduces cognitive overload and saves time.

## 11

## Accessible forms and surveys

Forms must be accessible because staff may need them for HR, expenses, training, and compliance.

### Good forms include:

- labelled fields.
- keyboard navigation.
- clear error messages.
- no inaccessible CAPTCHA barriers (a security measure designed to confirm users are human, not automated bots).
- ability to save progress.
- no sudden timeouts.



### Further Guidance and Resources:

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.



## 12 Quick accessibility habits for everyone

Use these daily habits:

- Use headings in documents.
- Keep writing clear and structured.
- Use meaningful links.
- Add alt text to images.
- Caption meetings and videos.
- Avoid scanned PDFs.
- Check contrast and font size.
- Ask: “Can this be used without a mouse?”



### **Further Guidance and Resources:**

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.

## 13 Employer responsibilities

Employers should ensure accessibility is built into systems and culture.

### **Key organisational actions:**

- Include accessibility requirements in procurement contracts.
- Train staff on accessible documents and communication.
- Provide templates for documents and presentations.
- Test systems with disabled users. Include people with a range of identities and backgrounds, recognising that experience of disability differs across communities.
- Maintain clear processes for requesting adjustments.
- Assign accountability for accessibility improvements and set simple measures to track progress. Consider establishing an accessibility steering group.
- Include accessibility requirements in internal policies and review every 12-24 months.

## 14 What disabled staff should be able to expect

Disabled staff should be able to expect:

- accessible systems and tools as standard.
- timely alternative formats.
- accessible training and eLearning.
- inclusive meetings and communication.
- reasonable adjustments without delay.
- supportive managers and clear reporting routes.

# Accessibility is not extra work — it is part of good and fair work.

**Accessible digital tools** reduce barriers, improve productivity, and support inclusive workplaces.

So before you share anything; sending a document, slide deck, form, or training resource, ask:

-  Is the structure clear (headings, lists, layout)?
-  Can it be understood without colour or images?
-  Are links meaningful?
-  Is the font readable and large enough?
-  If there are images, is alt text included?
-  Would this work with keyboard-only navigation?
-  Would a screen reader be able to read this in a logical order?
-  Is there a transcript or captioning if audio/video is included?



If the answer is “no” to any of these, improve it before sharing.



**Did you know?** Supported Employment services offer free ongoing support, including assistance with training.



## **Further Guidance and Resources:**

See our comprehensive list at the end of this guide.



## Further Guidance and Resources

These resources provide further guidance on digital accessibility standards, assistive technology, and inclusive workplace practices.

### 1 Core accessibility standards

The main international accessibility standards for digital content.

- **World Wide Web Consortium** – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)  
<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- **Web Accessibility Initiative** – Practical accessibility guidance and resources  
<https://www.w3.org/WAI/>



WCAG is the global standard used by governments and organisations when assessing whether websites and digital tools are accessible.

## 2

## Accessibility and disability guidance

- **UK Government Digital Service** – Accessibility guidance for digital services  
<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service>
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission** – Workplace disability rights and reasonable adjustments  
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com>
- **ACAS** – Disability discrimination and workplace guidance  
<https://www.acas.org.uk/disability-discrimination>



These resources explain the legal and workplace responsibilities around accessibility and adjustments.

## 3

## Documents and Content accessibility guidance

- **Google Accessibility** – A comprehensive guide to Google’s accessibility features and products.  
<https://www.google.com/accessibility/products-features/>
- **Microsoft Accessibility** – Creating accessible documents, presentations, and emails  
<https://support.microsoft.com/accessibility>
- **Microsoft PowerPoint** – Export your presentation as a PDF.  
<https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/save-powerpoint-presentations-as-pdf-files>
- **WebAIM** – Practical accessibility guides and tools  
<https://webaim.org>



WebAIM is especially helpful for plain-language explanations of accessibility best practice.

## 4

## Assistive technology resources

- **NV Access** – NVDA screen reader information  
<https://www.nvaccess.org>
- **Royal National Institute of Blind People** – Digital accessibility guidance and assistive technology advice  
<https://www.rnib.org.uk>
- **Apple** – Must-know vision, hearing, speech, mobility and cognitive features.  
<https://www.apple.com/uk/accessibility/>



These resources help employers understand how assistive technology interacts with workplace systems.

## 5

## Accessibility for eLearning and Training

- **The Learning Guild** – Accessibility in digital learning resources  
<https://www.learningguild.com>
- **CAST** – Universal Design for Learning (UDL)  
<https://www.cast.org>



Universal Design for Learning is widely used when designing inclusive training and education content.

## 6

## AI accessibility barriers

SUSE (Scottish Union for Supported Employment) has compiled a selection of additional AI resources that you can access from their website.

- **AI Policy Template** - Example policy and AI use statement to help you develop your own approach to using AI in recruitment and training.  
<https://www.suse.org.uk/employers/good-practice-guide/accessible-ai-use/>
- **AI Scotland** – Helps businesses adopt AI responsibly, providing support with skills, resources, and guidance on funding and policy.  
<https://www.aiscotland.scot/>

## 7

## To promote inclusion in the workplace, SUSE provides training on:

- **Digital Accessibility in the Workplace**
- **Website Accessibility**
- **Accessible Communication: Communication For All**  
<https://www.suse.org.uk/what-we-do/inclusive-workplace-training/>

## 8

## Apt Making It Work - Employer Guides:

- Employer's Guide to **Positive Workplace Conversations**.
- Employer's Guide to **Equitable Workplace Induction and In-Work Support**.
- Employer's Guide to **Improving Workplace Consultations**.

All available at: <https://apt.suse.org.uk/resources/>

## 9

## General Resources

- **Fair Work** - The Scottish Government's Fair Work policy aims to improve the working lives of people in Scotland and boost economic growth. It outlines what employers can do to build fairer working practices into their organisations.  
<https://www.mygov.scot/browse/business/fair-work>
- **Good Practice Guides** – Top Tips for employers on topics such as writing inclusive job adverts, hosting accessible online events, and making digital recruitment fair.  
<https://apt.suse.org.uk/resources>
- **Local Employability Partnerships** - a network of partners who deliver services for unemployed people and employers.  
<https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/local-employability-services>



You can access further support from SUSE by going to their website <https://www.suse.org.uk>



## Digital Access Review

If you need support please contact SUSE for assistance.

[www.suse.org.uk](https://www.suse.org.uk)

