

<b>Report to:</b>	SMT
<b>Report by:</b>	Erin Gray, Head of Policy and Information
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	16 December 2021
<b>Subject/ Title:</b> (and VC no)	Website accessibility statements - ad hoc key document reviews (VC161710)
<b>Attached Papers</b> (title and VC no)	C2 Accessibility Statement – Commissioner’s website v02 (VC154379) C2 Accessibility Statement – Statistics Portal (VC154381)

## Purpose of report

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1. To seek Senior Management Team (SMT) approval of an ad hoc review to the accessibility statements for the Scottish Information Commissioner’s website and statistics portal.

## Recommendation and actions

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2. I recommend that the SMT:
  - (i) approve the update to the attached C2 Accessibility Statement – Commissioner’s website key document following this ad hoc review
  - (ii) agree that C2 Accessibility Statement – Statistics Portal will be removed as a key document from 5 January 2022 as it is no longer required
  - (iii) agree the recommendations set out in the publication section of this report.

## Executive summary

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3. In accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (‘the Regulations’), since 23 September 2020 all public sector bodies have been required to ensure any websites they operate are accessible – defined as ‘perceivable, operable, understandable and robust’.
4. In order to meet this legal requirement, any website, intranet or mobile app run by a public body must:
  - (i) meet the international [WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard](#) (although there may be valid legal reasons for not meeting accessibility standards); and
  - (ii) publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible the website or mobile app is.
5. The Regulations build on existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010, which state that all UK service providers must consider ‘reasonable adjustments’ for disabled people. Making a website accessible means making sure it can be used by as many people as possible. This includes those with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities and deafness or impaired hearing.
6. Public bodies are responsible for ensuring their websites meet the relevant accessibility requirements, even if they have outsourced support or maintenance to a supplier.

## How the Regulations are enforced

7. GDS monitors public sector bodies' compliance on behalf of the Minister for the Cabinet Office. GDS does this by examining a sample of public sector websites every year. GDS can ask for information and request access to intranets, extranets or any public sector website.
8. Public sector bodies must publish an accessibility statement and review it regularly. If GDS decides that a public sector body has failed to publish an accessibility statement or that the accessibility statement is incorrect, it will publish the name of the body and a copy of the decision.
9. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) enforce the requirement to make public sector websites and mobile apps accessible (making them perceivable, operable, understandable and robust). Organisations that do not meet the accessibility requirement, or fail to provide a satisfactory response to a request to produce information in an accessible format, will be failing to make reasonable adjustments. This means they will be in breach of the Equality Act 2010. The EHRC can therefore use their legal powers against offending organisations, including investigations, unlawful act notices and court action.

## Accessibility statements and changes proposed

10. The Accessibility Statement bodies publish should reference any issues or content which does not meet the required standard, and any alternative means of accessing the information. The statement should also include:
  - (i) whether the website is 'fully', 'partially' or 'not' compliant with accessibility standards (the website should be described as fully compliant if it meets accessibility standards in full, partially compliant if it meets most requirements, and not compliant if it does not meet most of the requirements)
  - (ii) if it is not fully compliant, which parts do not currently meet accessibility standards and why (for example, because they are exempt or it would be a disproportionate burden to address)
  - (iii) how people can get alternatives to content that is not accessible to them
  - (iv) how to contact the organisation to report accessibility problems - and a link to the website that they can use if they are unhappy with the response they receive
  - (v) Information on how the organisation evaluated the website's accessibility and plans to fix any accessibility problems (this is optional)
11. The Commissioner published one accessibility statement for the main part of the website [www.itspublicknowledge.info](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info) and one for the statistics portal in September 2020.
12. The statements for the Commissioner's website have been reviewed, following the commencement of the project to develop a new Phase 1 website.
13. The changes proposed to C2 Accessibility Statement – Commissioner's website (VC 154379) as part of this ad hoc review are as follows:
  - (i) References to new website development have been updated to reflect that work is now underway (rather than expected, subject to funding and decision-making procedures etc) and that a new website is expected to be launched by April 2022

- (ii) Reference to the date work to update the cookie notice is expected to be complete by has been changed to 1 April 2022.
- 14. It is proposed that C2 Accessibility Statement – Statistics Portal (VC 154381) is no longer required as the portal will not be in use after 5 January 2022. Authorities will now submit statistics via a survey circulated each quarter, using the Commissioner’s existing survey tool, rather than replacing the website with a new website or mobile app.
- 15. As ‘approver’ for these documents the SMT is invited to approve these revisions so up to date and accurate statements can be made available on our website, in line with requirements of the Regulations.

## Risk impact

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- 16. The Commissioner is the regulator of FOI in Scotland and has functions and duties to fulfil; the Commissioner’s website is a key tool in delivery of these functions and duties.
- 17. As a public body the Commissioner is required to comply with the Regulations and failure to do so may result in enforcement action, as set out in paragraphs 9 – 10 above.
- 18. The review and update of this accessibility statement will mitigate the potential risk of non-compliance with the statutory/regulatory requirements.

## Equalities impact

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- 19. The Regulations are designed to address website accessibility issues impacting on people with a range of disabilities. In addition to complying with the Regulations, the Commissioner is also required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act). Section 20 of the Act requires the Commissioner to make reasonable adjustments if a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability compared with non-disabled people. This clearly includes making reasonable adjustments to the website to prevent a disabled person being placed at substantial disadvantage.
- 20. Regulation 11 of the Regulations states that a failure by a public sector body to comply with the accessibility requirement is to be treated as a failure to make a reasonable adjustment. However, there is no obligation to comply with the accessibility requirement if doing so would impose a disproportionate burden (regulation 7(1)). Full detail relating to decision making and the Commissioner’s considerations regarding disproportionate burden were included when the accessibility statements were approved in September 2020.
- 21. It is noted that not all people in Scotland can or wish to use the internet, and as a result the Commissioner provides information in alternative formats including via the enquiries service, wherever possible.

## Privacy impact

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- 22. There is no direct privacy impact arising from this committee report or from the documents submitted for approval.

## Resources impact

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- 23. There is no additional resource impact arising from this committee report or from the documents submitted for approval.

## Operational/ strategic plan impact

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24. Work conducted in 2020 to address compliance with the Regulations, and 'discovery' preparatory work for a potential future website replacement was included within operational plans for 2020-21. Ongoing work regarding these and development of a new website is also set out in the operational plan for 2021-22. Both areas of work are required for delivery of aims set out in the Commissioner's Strategic Plan.

## Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

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25. The documents concerned are key documents and will be updated on the Register of Key Documents, as soon as possible.
26. I am the responsible manager for the documents, and SMT is 'approver'.
27. The updated statement for the Commissioner's website will be published on the accessibility page of the Commissioner's website when relevant key document actions have been completed, and the statement for the statistics portal will be removed.

## Consultation and Communication

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28. The attached papers have been prepared in consultation with the relevant member of the Policy and Information Team on website accessibility.
29. If approved the new versions of the accessibility statements and this paper will be published on the website.

## Publication

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30. I recommend that this committee report is published in full.
31. I recommend that the attached papers are withheld in full on the basis that they are exempt from disclosure under section 27(1) of FOISA (Information intended for future publication): the papers will be published once the necessary key document actions have taken place and once the document is in final form (tracked changes accepted and document control sheet updated).