

Accessibility

Making online public services accessible

New regulations mean that public sector organisations have a legal duty to make their websites and mobile apps accessible by making them perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 became UK law in September 2018 and aim to make online public services accessible for everyone, including those with disabilities.

There are three key compliance dates for the regulations:
23 September **2019**: 'new' websites (published on or after 23 September 2018) must be compliant;
23 September **2020**: any other website of a public sector body must be compliant; and
23 June **2021**: mobile applications of public sector bodies must be compliant


The first deadline to meet the regulations was 23 September 2019 and impacts 'new' websites. This means public sector organisations should have checked the accessibility of websites published on or after 23 September 2018 and published an up-to-date accessibility statement.

Public sector organisations must also make sure all new websites launched in the future meet accessibility requirements and have an accessibility statement.

Public sector organisations have until 23 September 2020 to make websites published before 23 September 2018 accessible and publish an accessibility statement. Mobile apps must meet accessibility requirements by 23 June 2021. Any intranets, extranets or employee-facing websites that are published or undergo significant change on or after 23 September 2019 must meet the requirements too.

What organisations must do:

There are four steps public sector organisations must take to ensure they are compliant with the regulations:

- 1 Understand how the regulations will impact them
 - 2 Check the accessibility of their websites
 - 3 Make a plan to fix any problems they find
 - 4 Publish an accessibility statement
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How this will impact schools, higher education and further education

Nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form colleges

There is a partial exemption for schools and nurseries*. However, they must make sure that the content of their websites or apps relating to essential online administrative functions is made accessible. 'Essential online content' has not been legally defined, but could include content that the public (i.e. pupils and parents) need to use to access school/nursery services.

Higher and further education

Most higher and further education providers are considered to be in scope for the regulations, due to their dependence on government funding. However, funding arrangements in this sector differ, therefore organisations should seek legal advice if they are unsure of their position.

How you can help

Government Digital Service (GDS) has published guidance to support public sector organisations in meeting their legal obligations, which is available at [GOV.UK/accessibility-regulations](https://www.gov.uk/accessibility-regulations). We would appreciate your help in ensuring your audiences are aware of their responsibilities and where they can find guidance, by sharing campaign materials and signposting to the campaign website.

Use the hashtag [#AccessibilityRegulations](https://twitter.com/AccessibilityRegulations) in your social media posts so we can track the reach of messaging.

**Download campaign assets at
[GOV.UK/accessibility-regulations](https://www.gov.uk/accessibility-regulations)**

*<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/952/regulation/4/made>

More information and guidance at [GOV.UK/accessibility-regulations](https://www.gov.uk/accessibility-regulations)

More support

Although GDS will continue to provide guidance for public sector bodies, organisations must interpret the regulations and guidance themselves, seeking legal advice where required.

There are also a number of accessibility community groups for knowledge-sharing:
www.gov.uk/service-manual/communities/accessibility-community.

Organisations and individuals interested in taking part in user testing can register their interest by emailing:
accessibility-user-research@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk.

The full regulations can be found at
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/952/contents/made.