

DOTCOM: The Disability Online Tool of the Commission

United Kingdom

C. Accessibility

C3. ICT and Web accessibility

In England, Scotland and Wales, the Equality Act 2010's reasonable adjustment duties require providers of services and public functions to make adjustments to practices (including website design) which place disabled people at a substantial disadvantage. The Equality Act does not refer to ICTs nor specify any standard for web accessibility. Legal action can be brought against the provider of an inaccessible service but there is an absence of case law to establish any standard in practice – several such cases have been settled before reaching court.

In line with the E-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC), Schedule 25 of the Equality Act exempts the providers of technologies on which a service is hosted, transmitted or cached from responsibility for that service but does require them to remove unacceptable content when they become aware of it. Public Sector providers are further required to have 'due regard' to advancing equality of opportunity in all their functions under the Public Sector Equality Duty (e.g. which may lead to innovation of voluntary accessibility standards, such as the BBC's Future Media Standards and Guidelines).

In 2010, the UK government Department for Business Innovation and Skills launched an eAccessibility Action Plan (to be updated quarterly) and ten core principles of inclusive web design (adopted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, DCMS). In 2011 the DCMS set up an eAccessibility Forum, made up of experts from government, industry and voluntary organisations. This aims to ensure that more inclusive services are developed. The Forum is responsible for implementing the 'eAccessibility Plan'.

In November 2010, BSI (the UK National Standards Body) published a new national standard for web accessibility (BS 8878), which offers a voluntary Code of Practice for all products and services delivered by Internet Protocol.

Links

BIS eAccessibility Action Plan – January 2011

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7798.aspx>

Ten principles of inclusive web design (DCMS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inclusive-web-design-principles-published>

Schedule 25 of the Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/25>

British Standard BS 8878: 2010

<http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030180388>

BBC Future Media Standards and Guidelines, v1.9

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/accessibility/>

Equality and Human Rights Commissions Codes of Practice and Technical Guidance

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/legislation/equality-act-2010/equality-act-guidance-codes-practice-and-technical-guidance>