**Understanding new accessibility requirements for public sector**

H M Government Guidance (extract)

**Meeting accessibility requirements**

New regulations came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018. They say you must make your website or mobile app more accessible by making it ‘perceivable, operable, understandable and robust’. The full name of the regulations is the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The 2018 regulations build on existing obligations to people who have a disability under the Equality Act 2010. These say that all UK service providers must consider ‘reasonable adjustments’ for disabled people.

The deadline for meeting the new requirements and the steps you need to take depend on whether you have:

* a new website (published on or after 23 September 2018)
* an existing website
* a mobile app

**Who has to meet the 2018 regulations**

All public sector bodies have to meet the 2018 requirements, unless they are exempt.

Some organisations might not have to fully meet the requirements if doing so would be a ‘disproportionate burden’. Depending on their resources, these organisations may take some steps towards meeting the requirements now and make further improvements later on.

Public sector bodies include:

* central government and local government organisations
* some charities and other non-government organisations

**New websites**

If you create a new public sector website on or after 23 September 2018, you need to meet accessibility standards and publish an accessibility statement by 23 September 2019. You will then need to review and update your statement regularly.

As well as helping everyone to use your website, thinking about accessibility upfront saves you money and time in the long run. It’s cheaper and quicker than fixing problems once something is built.

When you’re building a new site, you can choose software and use processes that build accessibility into what you do.

**Existing websites**

Most existing websites that were published before 23 September 2018 need to comply with the 2018 regulations by 23 September 2020.

You may not have to meet the requirements for your whole website or app if doing so would be a disproportionate burden - for example, if it’s very expensive to make even simple changes and those changes would bring very limited benefits to people with a disability.

If you’re not sure what would be disproportionate in your situation, talk to your legal adviser.

In some circumstances, you might need to do things earlier than 2020. If you make substantial changes to the code, for example to create new features, or if you create a subdomain with its own distinct codebase, it’s likely that these will need to be fully accessible from 23 September 2019 (the same deadline as for new websites).

**You’re legally responsible for your website meeting accessibility requirements, even if you’ve outsourced your website to a supplier.**

**Outsourced websites**

If you’ve outsourced some or all of your website to a supplier, you’ll need to work together to make sure your website meets the 2018 regulations.