

Making word documents accessible – guidance and tips

Under the Equality Act 2010 and the more recent accessibility regulations (Public Sector Bodies Websites and Mobile Applications No. 2) which came in to force on 23rd September 2018, require public sector websites to be accessible. The [‘what all NHS services need to do about accessibility’](#) explains this further. Under these regulations, the SWL IMO website is required to be assessable. Documents produced to be published on the website will need to be accessible. When local documents are produced it is assumed that there is a local need for the information as it is not available elsewhere i.e., it adds value to NHS SWL. Local documents should not duplicate what is already available nationally.

Aim

The aim of this guidance and tips is to support the SWL medicines optimisation team to produce accessible word documents /guidelines. Please take time to read this before starting your guideline or document. If you are producing documents in another format – please check before proceeding*.

General points to note

- Ensure you have the ‘check accessibility’ function in word (found under the review tab in the ribbon), this will aid making the document accessible.
- Refer to the organisation as NHS South West London
- Do not change the size of the NHS logo in the template header.
- Do not change the margins or spacing.

Headings

- The template has been set up so that ‘headings’ form the structure.
- The headings in the template are set as follows:

Heading 1 – Arial 16 BOLD (this is for page title)

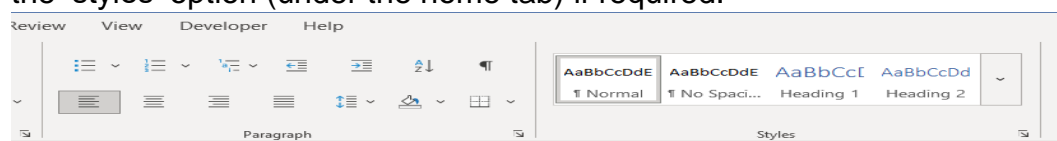
Heading 2 – Arial 14 BOLD (Heading 2)

Heading 3 – Arial 12 BOLD (heading 3)

Normal text – Arial 12 (black)

DO NOT change the spacing or heading settings.

- The headings are set as above in the template. If they need to be reset use the ‘styles’ option (under the home tab) if required.



- Each main section should start with an H2 and each subsection of H2 with H3 etc.

- With each heading, ask yourself if it's a sub-section of the previous heading. If not, it should be at the same level as (or higher than) the previous section.
- Make sure that headings follow the correct "nesting" order and don't skip levels. The structure of the page is the key thing, not the size and style of the text.

Avoid blank lines

- One common error in a Word document is to use blank lines to create space between paragraphs instead of using paragraph spacing.
- This may create the visual desired visual effect but unless the blank line is tagged as an artifact it will be read by the screen reader as "blank line".
- The paragraph spacing has been set in the template.

Content

- The language used should be appropriate for the target audience.
- For patient-facing documents - Use plain English. Keep it simple. Write short sentences and avoid jargon.
- Explain all abbreviations and acronyms.
- Avoid symbols e.g. for > say in words 'more than' etc

Lists

- Use the bullet library to select the bullet point.
 - If you require bullet points within bullet points list use this one.
 - Ensure these are indented correctly, like this example.
- Remember to use full stops at end of sentences in lists.
- Keep each bullet point up to 2 or 3 sentences.
- If your list denotes various options by using or, ensure this is in bold i.e. **or**
For example:
- If you go to the shops please buy an:
 - apple **or**
 - banana **or**
 - orange.

Hyperlinks

- Use descriptive links so users know where a hyperlink will take them.
- Where you can, use the same words as the title of the page you're linking to. That way, the user will know what to expect.
- Do not use the terminology 'click here' or 'link via here' etc.

Colour

- Do not change the colour of the headings in the template. These are set to ensure correct colour contrast for accessibility.
- Do not use colour to denote different options. i.e., red font for hospital only or green for formulary.
- If you need to add colour – please discuss with SWL MO document governance team*

Tables

- Tables should be reserved for actual data (i.e., numbers) only.
- A summary table may be included if all the information in the table is described in text only in the document as well. Contact SWL MO document governance team*

Flow charts

- If a flow chart is required, this can be included as a summary **ONLY** if all the flows from the chart are described in the guideline in text only as well.

Images

- Only use images if it adds value.
- If an image is used – alternative text must be provided to describe the image. Think of how you would describe the image to someone who is unable to see the image e.g. on the end of a phone call.

References / resources

- List these at the end of the document. No need to cite the numbers within the document. However, if making reference to them in any sentence then hyperlink e.g. NHS England document on [items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#) has been updated.....
- Hyperlink references / resources where possible.

Document History

- The document's history replaces the footer details.
- Complete the 'author' and 'approval date'.
- If adding an acknowledgment, - add this below the 'Author' line.
- Once the document is approved by IMOC, it may be called V 1.0.
- If any minor amendments are required once it is published, contact SWL MO document governance team*

Other

- Further information on web accessibility can be found on the [SWL intranet](#).
- Any queries on accessible word documents please check with the SWL MO document governance team via contactmedicines@swlondon.nhs.uk

Templates

The following word templates are available on request*:

- for guidelines
- for information sheets

and additional ones on request:

- for position statement
- for patient information (previously known as self-care briefings)
- for the clinician (previously known as self-care briefings for clinicians)

The template for guidelines is available on the next page.

* Contact details for SWL MO document governance team
contactmedicines@swlondon.nhs.uk

Title is always heading one

Tip: The title should start with the name of the drug/condition. For example

For example: Infant formula and Infant feeding prescribing guidelines

Target audience

Optional - In this section state who the target audience this document is aimed for.

Introduction

- Remember to refer to the organisation as NHS South West London

Recommendations / or another subheading as required

- Each main section should start with Heading 2 and each subsection of Heading 2 with Heading 3 etc.
- With each heading, ask yourself if it's a sub-section of the previous heading. If not, it should be at the same level as (or higher than) the previous section.
- Make sure that headings follow the correct "nesting" order and don't skip levels. The structure of the page is the key thing, not the size and style of the text.
- See 'making word documents accessible guidance and tips'

References/resources

- See 'making word documents accessible guidance and tips'

Document History

Version: V 1.0

Author: **Insert the name of the network OR working group**

Approved by: Integrated medicines committee (IMOC)

Approval date: **Insert date of approval**

Review Date: 2 years from approval date or sooner where appropriate.

Complete the 'author' and 'approval date' below. If adding an acknowledgment, - add this below the 'Author' line.