

Executive fact sheet

# **The United Kingdom's Digital Accessibility Laws**



# Introduction

Two primary regulations govern digital accessibility in the United Kingdom (U.K.): the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018, and the Equality Act 2010. Together, these laws promote equal access to digital services provided by public and private organizations.

The U.K.'s transposition of the EU Web Accessibility Directive (WAD), the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 set clear digital accessibility requirements for public-sector entities. (A transposition refers to the integration of an EU directive into a country's national laws.) Meanwhile, both public organizations and certain private businesses must prioritize accessibility under the Equality Act 2010, an anti-discrimination law.

Because the U.K. is not an EU Member State, the nation no longer transposes EU directives. As such, it has not enacted a transposition of the European Accessibility Act (EAA).

Navigating the intricacies of the U.K.'s digital accessibility regulations can be complex. This resource is designed to help senior executives understand the essence of these laws and what is required for compliance.



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# Overview of the U.K.'s digital accessibility laws

Law	Description	Sectors impacted	Compliance standard
<b>Equality Act 2010</b>	A law prohibiting discrimination based on several protected characteristics, including disability	Both private businesses and public organizations	No specific technical standard provided
<b>The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018</b>	The U.K.'s transposition of the EU Web Accessibility Directive (WAD)	Public organizations (directly covered), private businesses that sell to the public sector (indirectly impacted)	WCAG 2.2 Level AA

## **Unpacking digital accessibility laws in the U.K.**

The following sections of this resource provide more information about the specific digital accessibility laws impacting organizations operating in the U.K., including the entities they apply to, the requirements for compliance, and how they're enforced.

## Laws impacting both public- and private-sector organizations

### Equality Act 2010

#### Summary:

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates and strengthens anti-discrimination laws in the U.K., protecting individuals from unfair treatment based on characteristics like age, disability, race, gender, and religion. It applies to public-sector organizations in the U.K., as well as private businesses that perform public functions (such as running correctional facilities or providing healthcare services). While the Act does not explicitly mandate digital accessibility or specify a technical compliance standard, covered organizations must provide people with disabilities with equal access to goods, services, and information.

#### Requirements:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that public service providers make reasonable adjustments to grant equal access to people with disabilities. Regarding digital accessibility, organizations should aim to conform with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA, the standard officially adopted by the government, as a best practice for compliance. At a high level, conforming with WCAG means ensuring digital content is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust (POUR) for all users.

#### Enforcement:

The Equality Act is a general act with several provisions, involving different tribunals and sections (employment, civil, criminal, etc.). Depending on the type of discrimination experienced, individuals can file claims in civil court or employment tribunals. The law prioritizes corrective measures, such as civil remedies, and compensation over punitive fines. However, non-compliance with certain provisions may lead to fines or criminal sanctions.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has powers to enforce the act by:

- Investigating non-compliance.
- Issuing unlawful act notices requiring corrective action.
- Applying for court injunctions to prevent further breaches.
- Initiating judicial review to address systemic issues.

## Laws impacting public-sector and business-to-government (B2G) organizations

### The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (S.I. 2018/852)

#### Summary:

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 are U.K. legislation aimed at improving digital accessibility in the public sector. These regulations integrate the WAD into the U.K.'s legal framework, establishing accessibility requirements for the websites and mobile applications of public-sector organizations in the U.K.

#### Requirements:

To comply with this law, organizations in the U.K.'s public sector must ensure their websites and mobile applications are accessible to people with disabilities. As of October 2024, the standard for compliance is WCAG 2.2 AA.

Organizations must also:

- Make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Provide an accessibility statement (a detailed, comprehensive, and clear declaration of compliance with the law) on their websites and applications.

This statement must describe any elements of the website or application that do not meet WCAG 2.2 AA standards.

#### Enforcement:

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 are primarily enforced by the U.K.'s Government Digital Service (GDS), which operates under the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO). GDS monitors the accessibility of public-sector organizations' websites and mobile apps, as well as the publication and accuracy of accessibility statements.

If an organization fails to maintain an accurate accessibility statement, the CDDO can publicly name the organization. Additionally, the EHRC and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) can take further enforcement actions, including conducting investigations, issuing unlawful act notices, and pursuing court cases against non-compliant organizations.

# Start your journey to compliance

To comply with current U.K. laws, we recommend that your organization take the following actions:

- ✓ Audit your digital assets for conformance with EN 301 549.
- ⚠ Swiftly address existing accessibility issues in your digital assets.
- ✓ Publish a detailed accessibility statement, and regularly update this document.

Third-party digital accessibility solution providers, like Level Access, can help you understand your legal obligations and equip you with advanced technology, expert support services, and training to ensure all assets in your portfolio are accessible and compliant.

- Summary
- Findings
- Testing history**
- Monitoring
- Remediation
- ACR
- Digital asset settings

Total findings	Unresolved
<b>300</b>	<b>10</b>



## Let's get started

[Engage our team](#) to make accessibility a priority now. An investment in digital accessibility today is an investment in the sustainability and success of your company tomorrow.

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