The CVC Circuit Riders project provides friendly and informal workshops
on a range of information and communication technologies.
The aim of the **123-communcate** programme, one of the Circuit Rider activities, is to assist voluntary groups and community organisations to communicate more effectively.

What is web accessibility?

Web accessibility is about making your website accessible to everyone regardless of the way the internet is used or accessed.

Why should I make my website accessible?

There is now a legal requirement to make your website as accessible as possible. The Disability Discrimination Act became law in October 2004.
It recommends that reasonable adjustments should be made to your website so that all users can use it with as few problems as possible. By taking some basic steps it means that your website will be ready for the future, as basic accessibility will allow your website to be accessed by desktop computers, and mobile technology such as mobile phones and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs).
An accessible website can also bring you other benefits. For example, search engines can access all of the information available if the web site is accessible resulting in a higher ranking in the search engine returns.

What is Assistive Technology?

The internet is a resource for everyone, and it is accessed in very many different ways/ It is important to understand some of the different tools that people use. Most users use a mouse and keyboard to move from page to page. However, some use tools to help in getting from page to page.
For example, for those with sight problems, screen readers allow users to 'hear' what is displayed on the screen. When using images on a website, always make sure that each image has an associated 'alt-tag'. These are short messages about what the image is trying to convey.
Not everyone with sight problems uses screen readers. Therefore it is important to avoid large blocks of text in a web page. By maintaining a clear format and layout everyone will be able to access your website more easily. As most users scan text on a website this helpful for all website visitors.
The way you design your website will help those using assistive technologies to get to the information they want… but more than that, it will then allow everyone to get to the information they want more easily.

If you wish to benefit from the programme please contact
the Circuit Rider team on 01437 771197
or email us on contact@walescvccircuitriders.org.uk

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What does the law say?

The Disability Discrimination Act says that all websites are provided as a service by an organisation. In this sense, then an organisation is a 'service provider'.
Under section 4.7 of the DDA's code of practice:
"A Service provider has to take reasonable steps to change a practice which makes it unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of its services"
Subsequent sections also refer to the provision of accessible website for those with hearing loss, or sight problems.

How do I know if my site is accessible?

The World Wide Web consortium (also known as W3C) have compiled a list of priorities which web authors can use to check against accessibility. Called the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), there are three levels of accessibility.
Priority 1 is the basic entry level of accessibility, and it is this level of accessibility that most of us should be concentrating on. It's not too difficult to ensure that your website meets this priority or level. By including alt-tags on images, using a legible font and maintaining a high level of contrast between font colour and background colour will assist most in accessing your website.

How will the DDA affect my organisation?

To date there have been no cases of legal action against web owners for a site which falls foul of the law. However, the RNIB has taken a pro-active stance on researching websites that are not accessible. They have considered taking legal action, which more than likely would be taken against larger companies.

Where can I get more information?

AbilityNet "Championing IT for People With Disabilities" - http://www.abilitynet.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission – http://www.drc-gb.org

Royal National Institute for the Blind – http://www.rnib.org.uk

World Wide Web Consortium – http://www.w3.org

WebXACT is a free online service that lets you test single pages of web content for **quality**, **accessibility**, and **privacy** issues. http://www.cast.org/bobby

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