How to make a service inclusive

Guidance to help the public sector design inclusive services by avoiding a digital only approach.

First published: 20 February 2024

Last updated: 20 February 2024

Contents

Are you responsible for a citizen facing service?

The **National Survey for Wales** (2022 to 2023) shows that only 7% of people (170,000) aged 16 and over living in Wales do not personally use the internet. You need to consider this as part of service design. You should avoid a digital-only approach and ensure it is designed based on the needs of the citizens.

- It is estimated that for every £1 invested in digital inclusion, there is a £9.47 return. (**Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2022**).
- Those likely to be digitally excluded can be older people, disabled people and social housing residents. The barriers to using digital are varied, but the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on all ages. Those vulnerable in society and those with low literacy, digital skills and confidence are at increased risk.
- Designing an inclusive service will help create a more equal Wales, contributing to the **7 wellbeing goals of Wales**.
- We must take into account the needs of all our citizens. This will support the values and behaviours that are central to achieving a One Welsh Public Service.

Digital service standards

The Centre for Digital Public Services created the **Digital Service Standards for Wales**. It sets out expectations for new or redesigned services.

Core to the standards is ensuring that services are digitally inclusive and do not exclude citizens:

- A digital only service can exclude those citizens who often have no choice in using the service. You need to understand the barriers users might face.

User research will help identify these barriers, for example, many may have low digital skills or limited/no access to the internet.

- Language may be a barrier. There is need to ensure the service is available bilingually and that it is not designed from an English first perspective. There is a need to ensure Welsh language is embedded into design and testing from the start.
- Accessibility of the service is a **legal requirement**. For many users, if the service hasn't been designed to meet accessibility standards, their experience will be poor or mean they are unable to engage. Accessibility testing with users is vital. By following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) you will ensure your service is compliant to level AA of WCAG 2.2 as a minimum.

The Standard encourages you to test services with users. This needs to be done from an accessibility, Welsh language and digital exclusion perspective. Design, testing and iterating a service will help evolve the service to meet user needs.

This guidance was produced with the help of the **Centre for Digital Public Services** (CDPS) and **Welsh Local Government Association** (WLGA).