**Video accessibility guidelines**

Version 1.0a

# Revision history

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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# Introduction

Your customers, clients and employees have a wide range of capability in respect of their eyesight, hearing, mobility and cognition.

You have a responsibility to make sure people using your services (including your website) are not treated differently or unfairly because of the [nine protected characteristics.](https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights) Of these, age and disability are most pertinent to your website and web content, including video.

Making sure your website and its content can be used effectively by people with disabilities or impairments is known as accessibility, or inclusive design.

The steps you must take to ensure your video content is accessible are outlined within this document.

# Quick reference

## Minimum accessibility requirements for video

Transcript – required for all video  
A transcript is a written description of a video which includes dialogue, sound effects and visually conveyed information. It is helpful for visually impaired users as well as those who simply prefer text content to video.

[Learn more about transcripts](#_Transcripts)

### Subtitles – required for most video

Subtitles are a written overlay of dialogue required for all video with subjects speaking. They are essential for hearing impaired users and helpful to users watching on mute or in loud environments.

[Learn more about subtitles](#_Captions_and_subtitles)

### Captions– required for some video

Captions are a written description of key sounds overlain on the video. They are essential for hearing impaired users to know when music is playing, a sound effect has been used or subjects have reacted to natural sound. They are also helpful for users watching on mute or in loud environments.

Captions would not be required for some videos such as ‘talking head’ interviews or narrated animated content.

[Learn more about captions](#_Captions_and_subtitles)

### Audio description – required for few videos

Audio description is an alternative audio track in which visual elements are described to the listener. For example:

* Graphs or graphics from a filmed slide presentation
* Locations being shown but not described by subjects
* Subjects performing gestures or actions such as pointing, exercising or pointing at things

If your video contains such visual information, audio description is essential for visually impaired users.

[Learn more about audio description](#_Audio_description)

# Background

## Goal of video accessibility

To ensure that your videos are accessible to all, including people with disabilities who cannot hear audio or see video, and to ensure that you are meeting the statutory obligations as a public sector organisation.

## Legislation

As a public sector organisation, you are bound by [The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/852/contents/made).

The regulations mandate that we meet the World Wide Web Consortium’s (W3) [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/) at level AA. The scope of the regulations include video embedded on your websites: It does not apply to content you link to, nor does it apply to social media content. Although thought should still be given to inclusive design when creating video for social media.

## Accessibility means a better experience for everyone

In addition to meeting your legal responsibilities, accessible design also provides a better experience for all of your users.

There are many reasons why a user may struggle to view or understand video content and it may not relate to an impairment. We need to also be aware of ‘situational’ impairment.

For example, a viewer may struggle to understand a video because they are deaf or Deaf[[1]](#footnote-1), but also when:

* in a noisy environment such as bus
* watching on mute[[2]](#footnote-2)
* watching on a device with poor sound quality

Visual impairment could be a challenge for someone who is blind but also those who are:

* watching on a small screen
* distracted
* recovering from cataract surgery

# Responsibility

The creator and/or commissioner of video content is ultimately responsible for making sure their video meets accessibility requirements.

## Working with 3rd parties

When commissioning, the agency/partner should be made aware of the accessibility regulations, your duty as a public sector organisation and instructed that meeting WCAG 2.1 guidelines form part of their contractual obligations.

You should ensure your procurement contract framework includes something like:

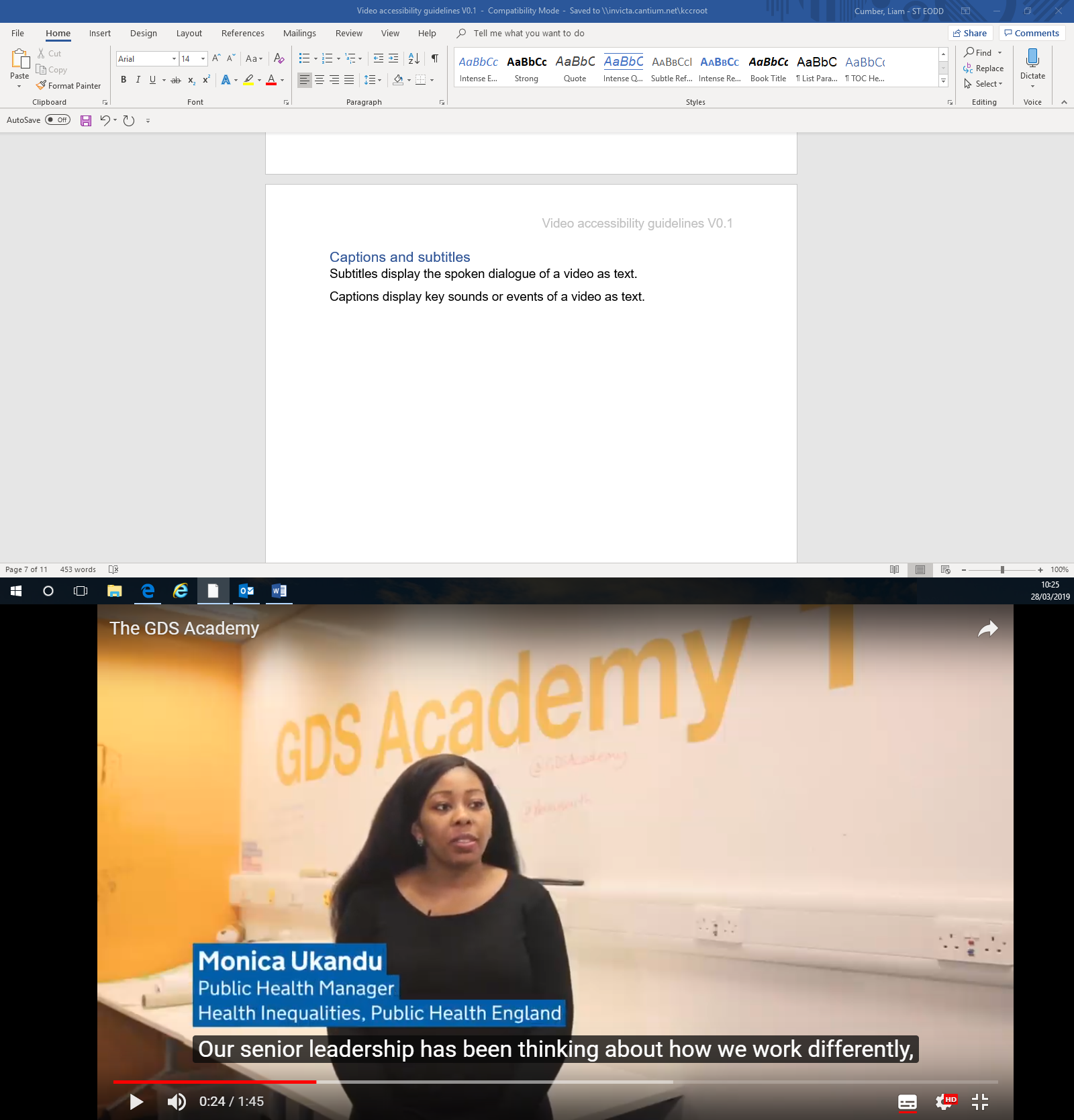
Services procured, commissioned or designed by the Supplier shall comply with:

(a) The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Conformance Level AA;

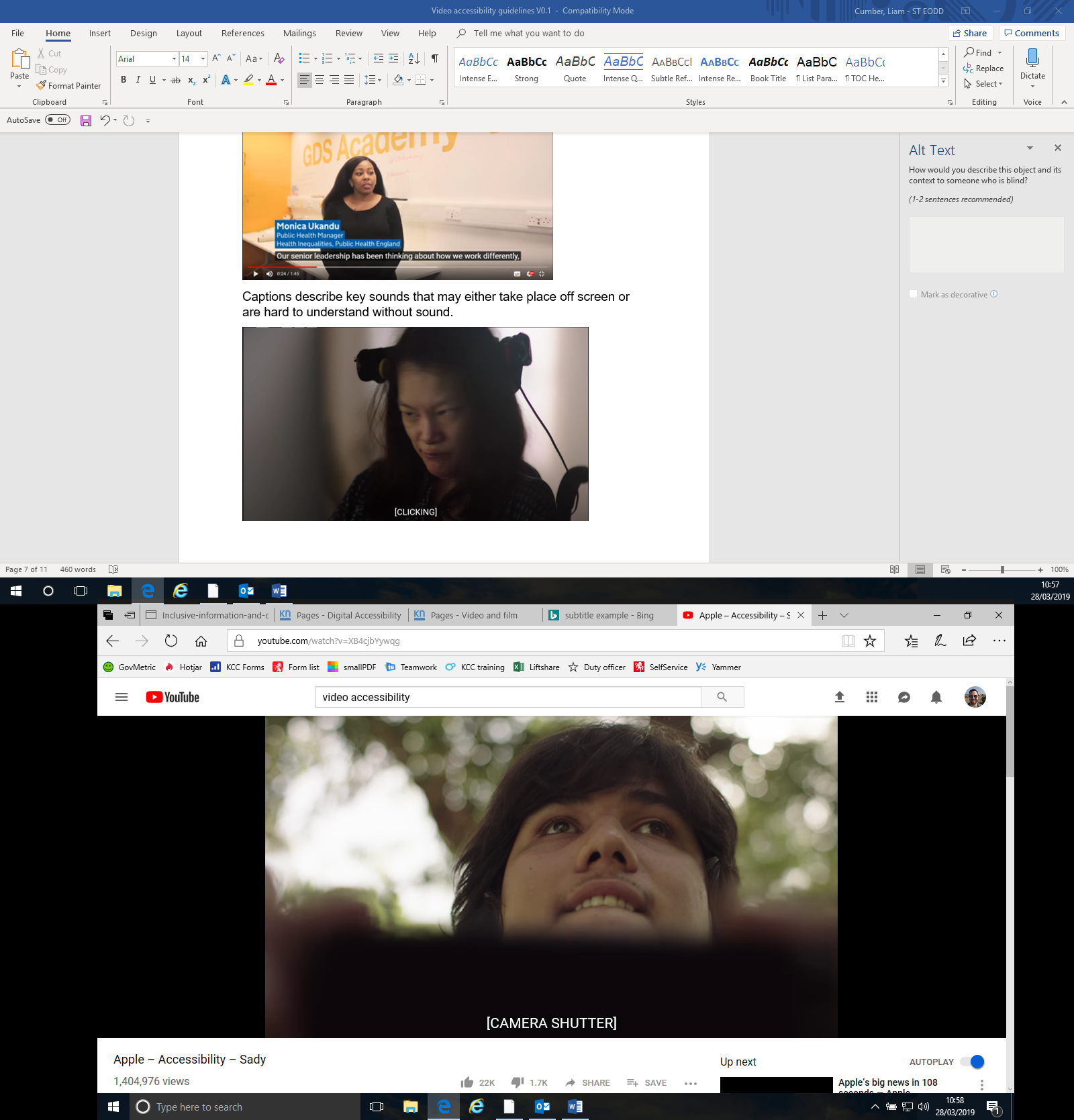
# Practical guide to accessibility requirements

## Captions and subtitles

Subtitles display the spoken dialogue of a video as text.



Captions describe sound or music required to understand the context of a video



### When are subtitles and captions required?

Subtitles are required for any pre-recorded video with spoken dialogue.

Captions are required for any pre-recorded video where sound provides contextual meaning.

For example:

* if a song is played, a caption should identify what song is playing.
* if a character/interviewee reacts to a noise. For example, ‘a van door slams’ ‘a knock at the door’, ‘wind howling’.
* if emotion or action is inferred by noise other than dialogue. For example, crying, laughing or sighing.
* any inserted sound effects. For example, scary music, klaxons, chimes.

### How to create captions and subtitles

An easy way to create subtitles and captions is to use YouTube.

By uploading your video to YouTube, your video will be automatically subtitled by Google’s machine-learning algorithms – You can then edit time-stamps, dialogue and add captions using their simple interface.

Once completed, you can then download a .srt file containing all subtitles, captions and time-stamps to upload into other video platforms such as Vimeo or Facebook.

Read [YouTube’s guide to adding subtitles and captions](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796?hl=en-GB).

**Do not rely on YouTube’s auto captioning alone. Always manually refine the subtitles:** The auto-generation frequently mis-captions sentences, omits captions and are hard to read.

### **Subtitles and captions: Best practice**

* Always identify who is speaking each time the speaker changes.
* Wrap captions in squared brackets [like this] so it is clearly not dialogue.
* If characters are speaking from off-screen, ensure you caption it as such. For example: Jim: [over the phone] Hello, how are you?
* If nothing is happening on-screen which requires subtitles or captions, say so. Otherwise people may think they accidently turned them off. For example: [No sound], [Silence].
* Ensure that subtitles stay on screen long enough for users to read them.

For a positive example of captions and subtitles, [watch Kent County Council’s ‘Stop the signs of financial abuse’ video on YouTube.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnsKM2eOzgs#action=share)

## Transcripts

A transcript is a written explanation of video content.

It details the visuals of the video, including spoken dialogue and any sound which adds context to the video

For an example, read Kent County Council’s [‘Spot the signs of financial abuse – Video transcript’.](https://www.kent.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/consumer-protection/Spot-the-signs-of-financial-abuse/spot-the-signs-of-financial-abuse-video-transcript)

### When is a transcript required?

Transcripts are required for all video content.

Depending on the type of video content, the transcript would need to include different details:

#### Video without sound

The transcript should detail the visuals of the video and any text featured.

#### Sound without video

The transcript should detail any sound or dialogue.

#### Video with sound (prerecorded)

The transcript should detail:

* dialogue (including identifying the speaker)
* sound effects required to understand the video
* explanation of key visuals

#### Video with sound (Live)

The transcript should include pre-written material such as:

* speeches
* narration
* order papers.

## Audio description

Audio description explains what is happening in the video for users who are visually impaired.

For an example of audio description, [watch ‘Apple accessibility – Sady (with audio description)’ on YouTube.](https://youtu.be/SL7YSqlEd8k)

### When is audio description required?

Audio description is required for all prerecorded video except where all of the information is already provided in existing audio.

For example; if the video was just narration or a ‘talking-head’ interview audio description would not be required.

Audio description requires the creation of a second version of the video as YouTube and Vimeo do not currently allow a separate audio track to be selected by the user.

1. Deaf with a capital ‘D’ refers to people who have been deaf since birth and to whom written English may be considered a second language.  
   <https://www.signhealth.org.uk/about-deafness/deaf-or-deaf/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 85% of Facebook video views in 2018 were muted.   
   <https://digiday.com/media/silent-world-facebook-video/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)