



State of the eNation web accessibility reports

Price Comparison Websites

April 2012

Customers can't compare

AbilityNet's State of the eNation Reports are bi-monthly accessibility and usability reviews of a number of websites in a particular sector.

In this difficult financial climate price comparison sites play a significant role in making sure consumers get the possible deal. This is especially important for people with disabilities who often have less disposable income than others.

Our review found that **most of the websites are either difficult or impossible for disabled people to use** – which means they can't access that all-important price comparison information.

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Adapting Technology □ Changing Lives

State of the eNation web accessibility reports

Price Comparison Websites, March 2012

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1 Summary of results

AbilityNet helps people with disabilities to use computers and the internet to improve their lives, whether at work, at home or in education. Our team of web accessibility experts conducted a series of tests on five popular price comparison websites in March 2012. The websites reviewed were:

www.comparethemarket.com	*	Very poor/not legal
www.gocompare.com	*	Very poor/not legal
www.mysupermarket.co.uk	*	Very poor/not legal
www.kelkoo.co.uk	**	Satisfies some legal requirements
www.confused.com	*	Very poor/not legal

A 5 star scale was used

*****	Excellent. Site is highly accessible and exceeds minimum legal requirements for accessibility
***	Base level. Site satisfies minimum legal requirements for accessibility.
*	Very poor. Site is not accessible and does not meet minimum legal requirements for accessibility.

Two or four stars are given when a site meets some of the criteria for the level above. For full details information on how we decide a website's ranking please see Appendix B.

All the companies were contacted well in advance of the review to be given the opportunity to make a statement for inclusion in the report. All sites were contacted on the 12th of March and as of 30th of March none of the five companies contacted had provided a commitment to, or more general statement on, either their approach to accessibility or their legal requirement to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

2 Why is it important for price comparison websites to be accessible?

It's good for business

In the UK there are 11.8 million people with a registered disability. There are estimated to be 1.6 million who are registered blind, 1.5 million with cognitive difficulties, a further 3.4 million people who are otherwise IT disabled and 6 million that have dyslexia. The total spending power of these groups is now estimated at £120 billion a year.

Saving money is more important than ever and people with disabilities often have less cash and less opportunity to shop around the physical high street. Being able to identify the best bargains helps them overcome physical barriers and at the same time stay within budget means that price comparison websites play an absolutely crucial role.

Good business sense suggests that the significant disabled UK customer base should be a key market for any website, yet our research shows that their needs are being ignored.

It's the law

Today many services are either only available on, or offered at a discounted rate on, the Internet. Other websites provide vital information or functionality. If a website doesn't meet a base level of accessibility then it will be impossible for a large number of disabled visitors to use. Many others with some sort of limiting condition will also have great difficulty.

It is illegal to bar disabled visitors from on-line services and information offered to the general public. No organisation would purposefully do this but many are either not aware of the problem, or don't know what to do to address it.

3 Customer comments

*“Since its update **www.mysupermarket.co.uk** is completely unusable for me as a keyboard-only user. I can't even get past the useless front page (is it Flash?) It's immediately apparent that anyone with accessibility issues have been ignored, absolutely no allowances have been made. I need to save money as much as the next person, why is this site so incredibly bad?”*

- Nicola Kearey (Motor impaired keyboard only user)

*“I was confused with **www.mysupermarket.co.uk**. I understood what I wanted to do but quite honestly I think I'd starve rather than use this website since I found it too much of a muddle.”*

- Hazel Dudley (Blind screen reader user)

*“I used **www.comparethemarket.com** to look at credit cards. I found the site difficult to use with my magnification software as the text varies in size throughout the page. This meant that I had to keep changing the level of magnification depending on which section I wanted to read.*

“I also found it difficult to use because there was no accessibility settings I could find where you could change the colour of the text and background, as I personally find white text on a blue or green background very difficult to read. This put me off using the site as I would have needed to get someone to read to me.”

- Teresa Chambers (Visually impaired magnification user)

"www.gocompare.com: I attempted to get a quote with this site but had to give up. I needed to read the help text for a particular question on the quote form. I paused on the ? symbol to read the help text but, because I use ZoomText screen magnification software, I had to scroll to the right to read the end of the text. As a result I kept losing the help text every time I moved the mouse off the? symbol. You could almost do with two mouse pointers for this exercise - one to stay on the ? and one to scroll so you can see all the text!"

- Neana Lawson (Visually impaired magnification user)

4 How we carry out the Accessibility Reviews

All websites were audited in March 2012 for accessibility and usability using a wide range of in-depth manual checks. The testing process was also assisted by HiSoftware's enterprise accessibility testing tool 'Compliance Sheriff'.

Our team conducted a series of tests using Compliance Sheriff, a market-leading tool that can quickly conduct a series of technical checks on a high volume of webpages.

Compliance Sheriff scans a Web site for over 172 accessibility checks including images, forms, and dynamic content. The results are then available in a report which includes the exact locations of code issues, as well as alerts to elements that require manual inspection. This test produces a series of charts which is summarised in an overall health rating, which are included in each site report.

Our AbilityNet accessibility consultants then use the results of this scan to undertake an accessibility audit. They report on specific issues and indicate where and why failures have occurred in the automated testing.

This two-pronged approach produces a detailed report that reflects the full picture of the compliance level of each site.

Finally we ask people with a range of disabilities to test the site, using our networks and users in our testing labs. We also asked a range of people with different disabilities to carry out a series of tasks on each site and tell us what they found. These provide a view from the coalface and relevant quotes are included within this report.

5 www.comparethemarket.com

Compliance sheriff health: 43%

Star rating: * Very inaccessible

Main issues found:

5.1 Images without alt text

There are many images which have no alt text at all, for example on the Home Insurance page, there is a logo panel which contains the logos of some of the insurance providers they work with but which does not contain any alt text to allow text-only browser and blind screen reader users to understand the images or know who the home insurance providers are.



Figure 1 - Logos of home insurance providers without alt text - comparethemarket.com

5.2 Repeated image and text links

Many images are given links which are exactly the same as the adjacent text which means that links are repeated unnecessarily by screen readers. These images are given alt text which again duplicates the adjacent text; they should have null alt text. An example of this is on the Life Insurance page where linked text 'Health insurance', 'Life legacy plan' and 'Income protection' are all accompanied by images which have the same link and alt text which is the same as the linked text. These images should be associated within the same link as the text rather than repeated and given null alt text.



Figure 2 - Repeated image and text links – Comparethemarket.com

5.3 Images of text

There are some images of text which do not have alt text. These are mainly promotional content panels advertising a product or the Compare Anything app.



Figure 3 - Image of text without alt text on the homepage - comparethemarket.com

5.4 Colour contrast

The main colour scheme is blue and green, frequently used as the background for white text. While the blue background is fine, white text on the green background does not meet the minimum contrast requirements. This is used for lots of key navigation items such as highlighting the current page in the main navigation, as the background colour for the drop-down navigation and as the background colour for buttons.

The screenshot shows a website interface with a green navigation bar at the top. A red box highlights a green button labeled "GET A CAR QUOTE". To the right, another red box highlights a green button labeled "COMPARE CARDS". A screenshot of the "Colour Contrast Analyser" tool is shown, indicating a contrast ratio of 3.7:1 and failing AA and AAA accessibility tests.

Figure 4 - White text on a green background – comparethemarket.com

The same shade of green is also used for some (but not all) links on a white and light green background. Again, it does not have sufficient contrast.

The screenshot shows a website interface with a light green background. A red box highlights a green link text "Retrieve your quote". A screenshot of the "Colour Contrast Analyser" tool is shown, indicating a contrast ratio of 3.6:1 and failing AA and AAA accessibility tests.

Figure 5 - Green link text on a white/light green background – Comparethemarket.com

5.5 Inconsistent navigation

The order of the items in the main navigation changes depending on what page you are on which can be highly confusing for every user of the site (but particularly those with a vision or cognitive impairment), especially as the homepage link moves which may hinder users trying to find their way back to the homepage. On the homepage, the navigation order reads:

Car insurance > Home insurance > Life insurance > Insurance > Money > Utilities > Business > All products



Figure 6 - Navigation order on the homepage

On the home insurance page, the navigation order reads:

Homepage > Car insurance > Home insurance > Insurance > Money > Utilities > Business > All products



Figure 7 - Navigation order on the home insurance page

The order and appearance are completely different on the Money page. The navigation order reads:

Motor insurance > Home insurance > Life insurance > Utilities > Money > Travel Insurance > Pet insurance

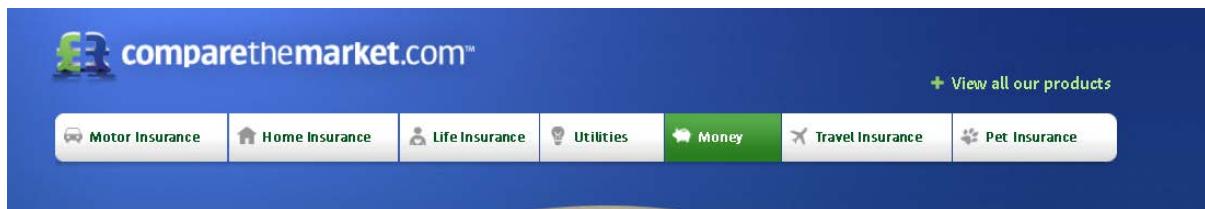


Figure 8 - Navigation on the Money page

5.6 Keyboard trap

The home page features a flash panel which advertises the buying car insurance or getting a credit card through the website to get a free meerkat toy. This panel creates a keyboard trap for keyboard-only and blind screen reader users. When tabbing through the page using only the keyboard, once the focus has landed on the flash panel, it cannot be tabbed off to continue through the rest of the content.

5.7 Pause, stop, play

The flash panel also has text which changes but cannot be paused or stopped by the user, creating a potential distraction for users who find it difficult to focus such as those with dyslexia and other learning difficulties.

6 www.gocompare.com

Compliance sheriff health – 40%

Star rating - * Very inaccessible

The main issues found are reported below.

6.1 Images without alt text

All those pages reviewed featured a content panel with the logos of partners that www.gocompare.com work with; none of the company logos have alt text.



Figure 9 - Partner logos without alt text

6.2 Resize text

www.gocompare.com uses pixels rather than scalable units to set the text size, which means that the text remains the same size regardless of a user's individual settings.

6.3 Contrast

Each of the pages feature a hero panel with white text on a green background which has insufficient contrast and could therefore be difficult for users with vision impairments to read.

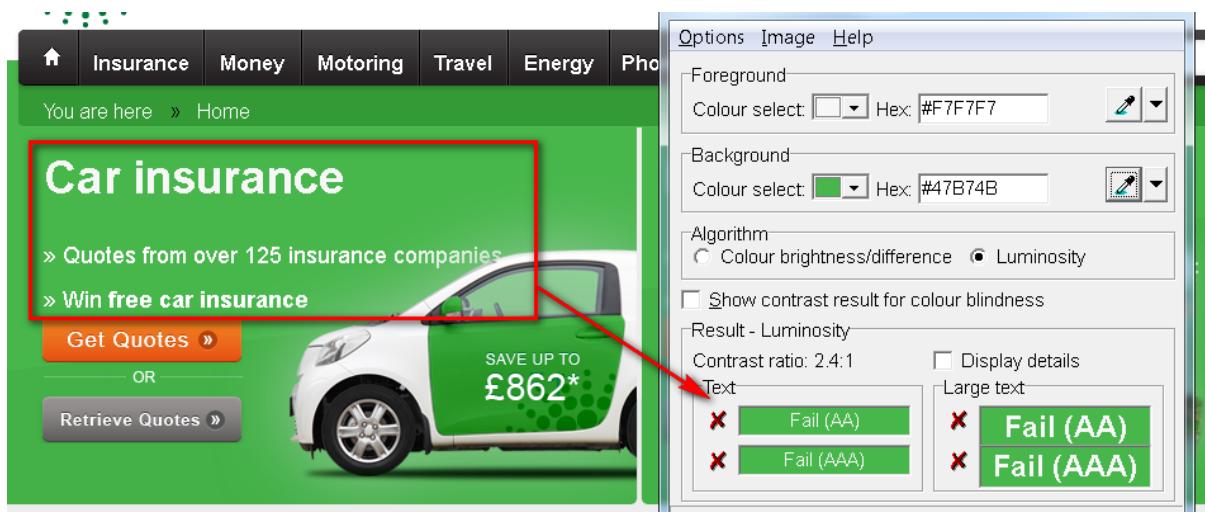


Figure 10 - White text on a green background has insufficient contrast

Conversely, green text on a white background is used for section headings across the website. This also has insufficient contrast.

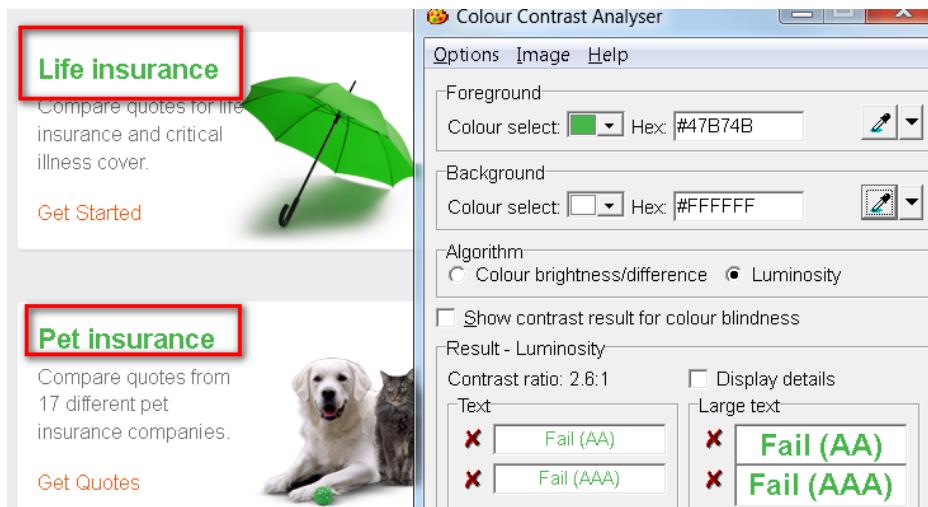


Figure 11 - Green text on a white background has insufficient contrast

The white text on an orange background used for buttons does not have sufficient contrast.

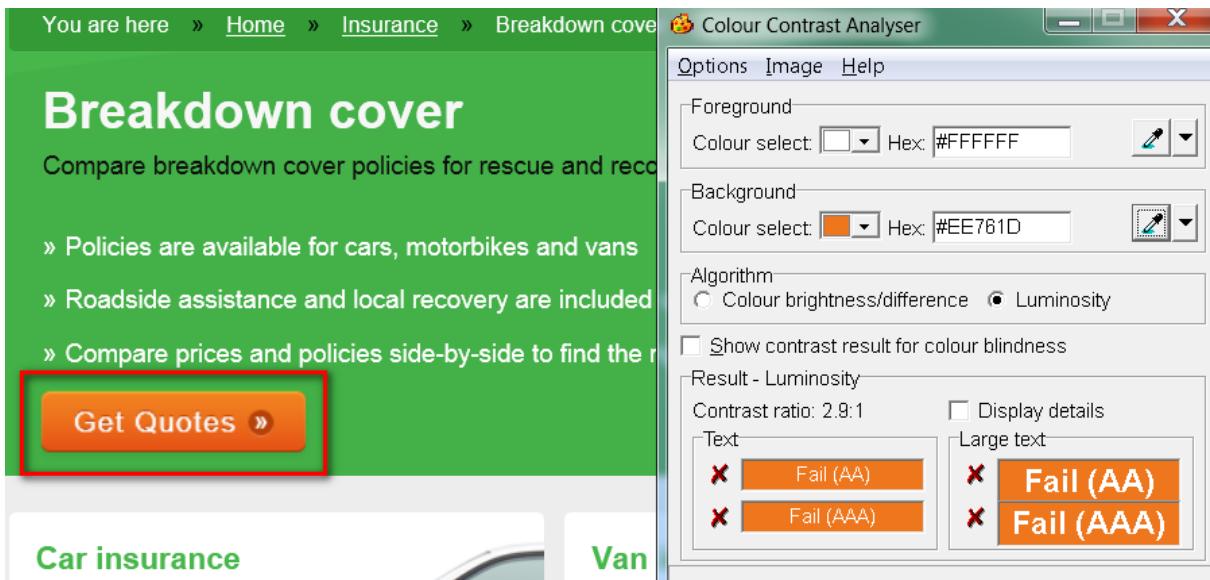


Figure 12 - A button with white text on an orange background

Conversely, orange text on a white background used for links does not have sufficient contrast. As colour is the sole means to indicate a link, no underline is used other than when hovering over the links, this would make it difficult for users with some vision impairments to differentiate the links from the main body of the text.

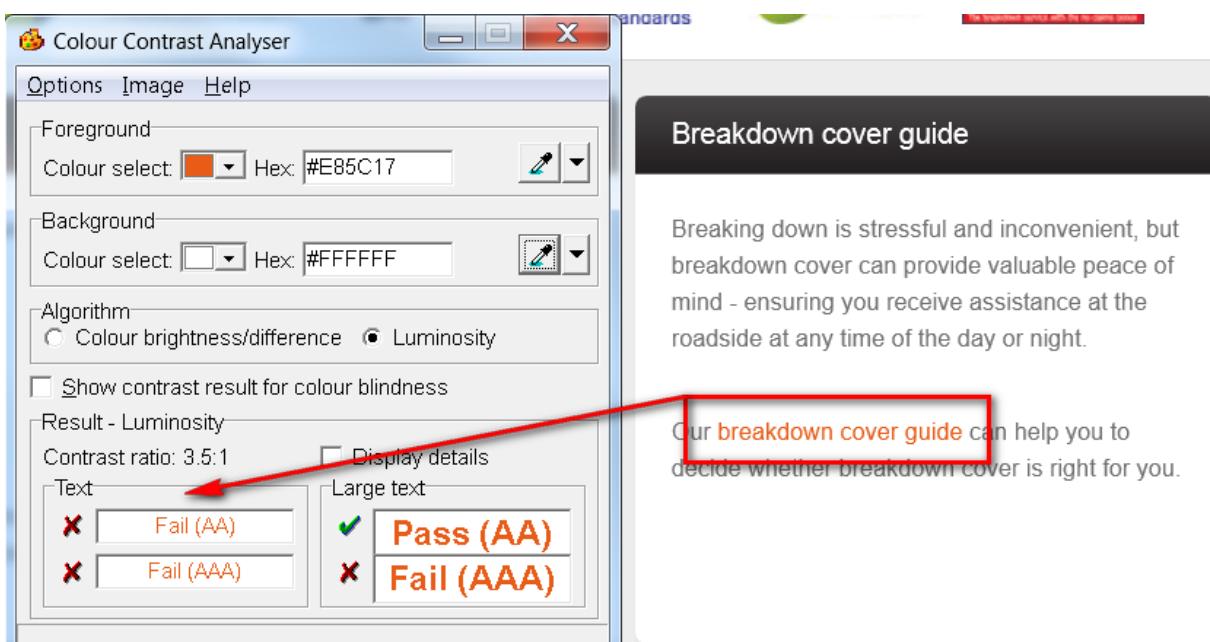


Figure 13 - Orange link text on a white background

6.4 Information and relationships – unlabelled forms

None of the form fields reviewed were correctly labelled to allow a blind screen reader user to determine what is required in the form fields. This includes the site-wide search, log in form and new quote registration.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Start a new quote". It contains the following fields:

- Name: First name Surname
- Email ?
- Confirm email
- Date of birth / /

At the bottom is a green "continue" button and a blue link "Why do we need these details?".

Figure 14 - Start a new quote registration

6.5 Content opens in a new window

Clicking on a 'Get quotes' button causes a new window to open. Users are not made aware of this prior to clicking on the button so it is likely to confuse some users and cause difficulties in returning to the main website as many users will attempt to get back to the main site using the back button. This could cause them to abandon the site completely.

6.6 Keyboard access

The drop-down menus in the main navigation do not appear when tabbing through the navigation using the keyboard. This means that a keyboard-only user has to tab through more content to reach content that is easily accessible to mouse users who can activate the drop-down menus.

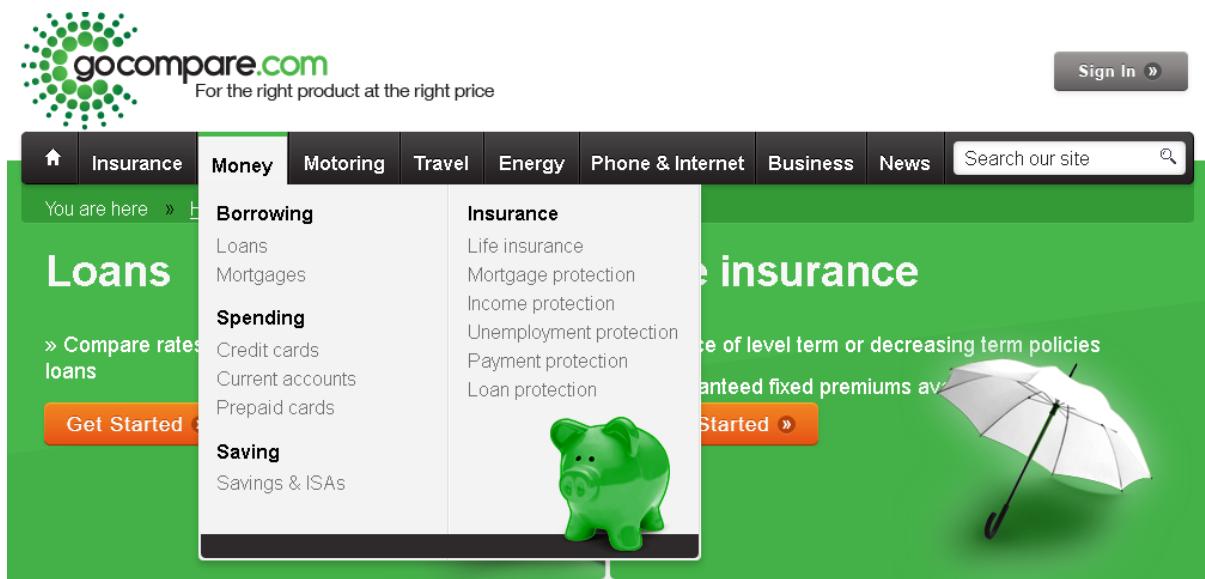


Figure 15 - Drop down menu

6.7 No skip links

There are no skip links to allow users to bypass repeated content, thus adding significant difficulties in navigation for keyboard only users.

7 www.mysupermarket.co.uk

Compliance sheriff health – 36%

Star rating: * Very inaccessible

The main issues found are reported below.

7.1 Keyboard access

There are a significant number of issues for keyboard-only users on the www.mysupermarket.co.uk website.

When selecting one of the options on the homepage – Groceries, Health & Beauty, or Wines – you are taken to a page featuring relevant products but before you can access the page, a window appears which is not keyboard accessible (with the exception of the close icon) whilst the rest of the content to allow users to subscribe for information about their chosen product category is not accessible. Moreover, an inaccessible window which appears when clicking register means that keyboard only users cannot register to use the site to buy products.

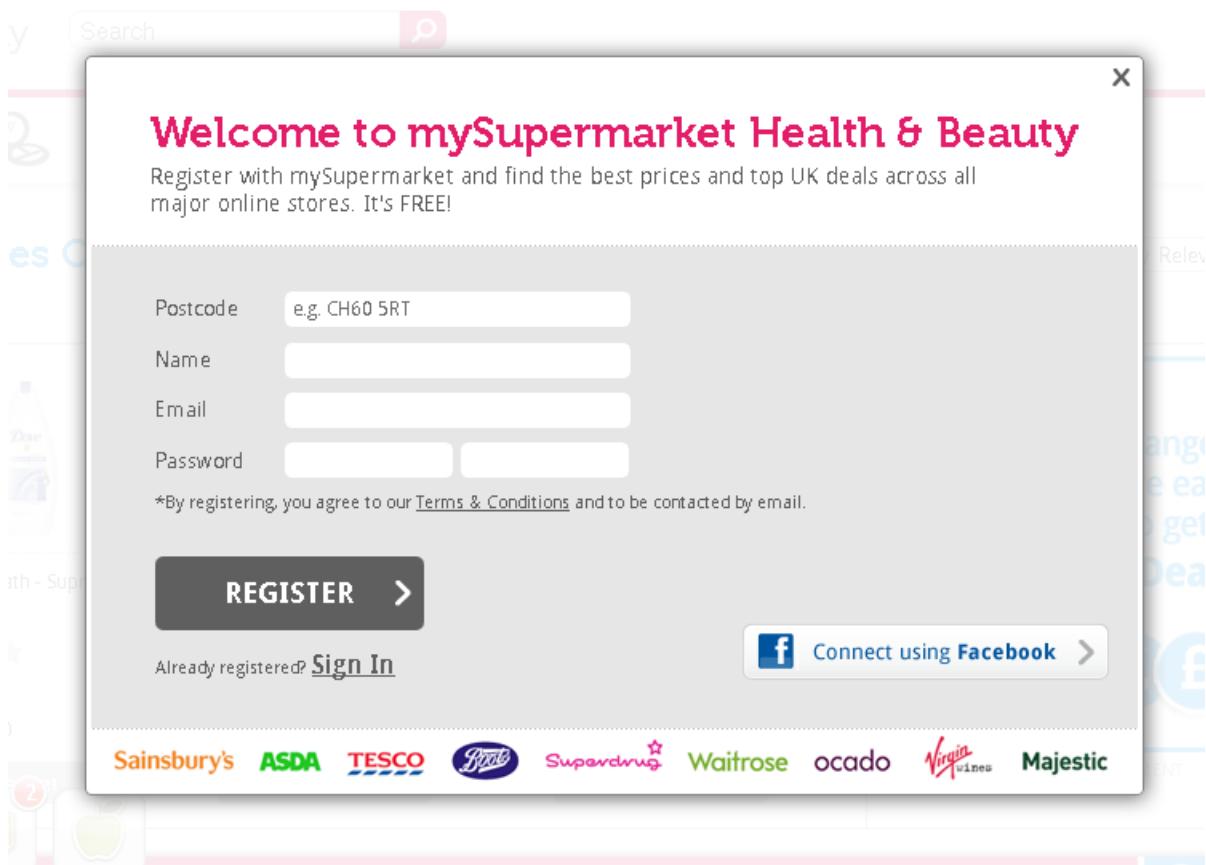


Figure 16 - Health & Beauty modal overlay

7.2 Keyboard Focus

There is no visible keyboard focus on the site which makes it impossible for a keyboard-only user to navigate the site as they cannot see where they are in the page when tabbing through. This means that they are highly likely to abandon the site at the homepage and go no further.

7.3 Non-text content

There are two issues with images used on the website.

1. Images without alt text

The greyed out icon which is used for products which do not have an image has no alt text at all and is used repeatedly on the product pages which is likely to be annoying and frustrating for blind screen reader users



2. Images with incorrect alt text

The product images all have alt text which is the same as the adjacent linked text which is the product description which means it will be frustratingly announced twice to screen reader users.

7.4 Information and relationships – headings

The pages use headings sparingly and there are many section headings which stand out visually but which are not coded as headings. Good use of headings greatly facilitates navigation by blind screen reader users.

The screenshot shows the ASDA website's search interface. It includes a sidebar with navigation links like 'Contact us', 'Change Store', and a 'Search' bar. Below these are three main filter sections:

- Any Shelf:** Includes categories like Bread (29), Rolls & Bagels (40), Speciality & Ethnic Breads (22), Cakes (14), Fresh Desserts (11), and Dine & Taste (1). Icons for star, price, and filter are shown.
- Any Brand:** Includes Kingsmill (13), Warburtons (3), Soreen (5), Allinson (3), ASDA (2), and Roberts Bakery (3).
- Any Lifestyle:** Includes Dietary (4).

Figure 17 - Section headings not coded as headings

7.5 Colour contrast

The website uses lots of pastel and light-shade colours on a white background, or white text on a light coloured background which does not offer a sufficient contrast, for example:

- Light grey text on a white background used for product descriptions and links to the product pages.

The screenshot shows a product listing for bread on the Sainsbury's website. Three items are displayed:

Product	Description	Price	Action
Sainsbury's Organic White Bread (400g)		89p (22.3p/100g)	ADD to basket
Sainsbury's Organic White Bread (800g)		£1.15 (14.4p/100g)	ADD to basket
Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Artisan Inspired Stonebaked		£1.65 (41.3p/100g)	ADD to basket

To the right of the products is a color contrast checker tool. It shows the foreground and background colors, the algorithm used (Luminosity), and the contrast ratio (4.3:1). It also includes a 'Large text' checkbox and a 'Pass (AA)' result.

Figure 18 - Light grey text

- White text on a grey background used for the 'ADD to basket buttons'

Sainsbury's website showing bread products:

Sainsbury's Organic White Bread (400g)	Sainsbury's Organic White Bread (800g)	Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Artisan Inspired Stonebaked
89p (22.3p/100g)	£1.15 (14.4p/100g)	£1.65 (41.3p/100g)
ADD to basket	ADD to basket	ADD to basket

Color contrast checker results for white text on a grey background:

- Foreground: Colour select #FFFFFF, Hex #FFFFFF
- Background: Colour select #BEBEBE, Hex #BEBEBE
- Algorithm: Colour brightness/difference (radio button), Luminosity (radio button selected)
- Show contrast result for colour blindness:
- Result - Luminosity: Contrast ratio: 1.9:1
- Text: Fail (AA) (red X), Fail (AAA) (red X)
- Display details: Large text
- Large text: Fail (AA) (red X), Fail (AAA) (red X)

Figure 19 - White text on a grey background

- Green text on a white background used for main headings and left-hand navigation section headings

Sainsbury's website navigation menu:

- Any Shelf
- Bread (20)** (highlighted in green)
- ROLLS & Bagels (9)
- Speciality & Ethnic Bread (16)
- Cakes (17)
- Fresh Desserts (17)
- Pies & Tarts (12)
- Small Cakes & Cookies

Color contrast checker results for green text on a white background:

- Foreground: Colour select #74C900, Hex #74C900
- Background: Colour select #FFFFFF, Hex #FFFFFF
- Algorithm: Colour brightness/difference (radio button), Luminosity (radio button selected)
- Show contrast result for colour blindness:
- Result - Luminosity: Contrast ratio: 2.1:1
- Text: Fail (AA) (red X), Fail (AAA) (red X)
- Display details: Large text
- Large text: Fail (AA) (green checkmark), Fail (AAA) (green checkmark)

Figure 20 - Green text on a white background

- Light blue text on white background used for special offer prices

Sainsbury's website showing bread products with offers:

Allinson Sliced Sourdough Brown Batch Loaf (750g)	Allinson Wholemeal Batch Loaf - Sliced (800g)	Hovis Wholemeal Bread - Medium Sliced (800g)
£1.39 £1.10 (18.5p/14.7p/100g)	£1.39 £1.10 (17.4p/13.8p/100g)	£1.25 any 2 FOR £2.00 (15.6p/12.5p/100g)
ADD to basket	ADD to basket	ADD to basket

Color contrast checker results for light blue text on a white background:

- Foreground: Colour select #009BEB, Hex #009BEB
- Background: Colour select #FFFFFF, Hex #FFFFFF
- Algorithm: Colour brightness/difference (radio button), Luminosity (radio button selected)
- Show contrast result for colour blindness:
- Result - Luminosity: Contrast ratio: 3.0:1
- Text: Fail (AA) (red X), Fail (AAA) (red X)
- Display details: Large text
- Large text: Pass (AA) (green checkmark), Fail (AAA) (red X)

Figure 21 - Blue text on a white background

7.6 Language

None of the pages have any language set which means that screen readers would not know in which language to speak the contents of the page.

7.7 No skip links

There are no skip links to allow users to bypass repeated content.

8 www.kelkoo.co.uk

Compliance sheriff health – 41%

Star rating: ** Satisfies some of the tests required for a base level of accessibility

The main issues found are reported below.

8.1 Pause, stop, hide

The homepage features a hero panel which has revolving content that changes automatically and has no controls to allow users to pause or stop the movement. This may be distracting and confusing for users with a cognitive impairment. It also features a Flash advert panel for Direct Line insurance which also automatically changes but provides no controls for users.

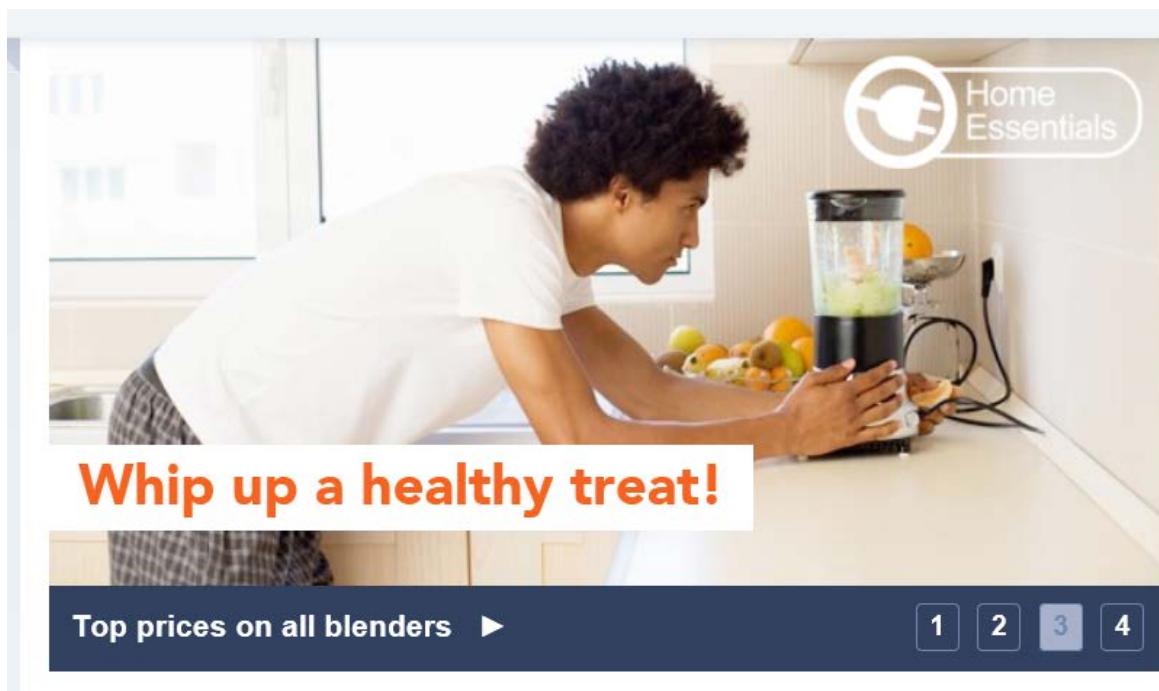


Figure 22 - Kelkoo homepage hero panel

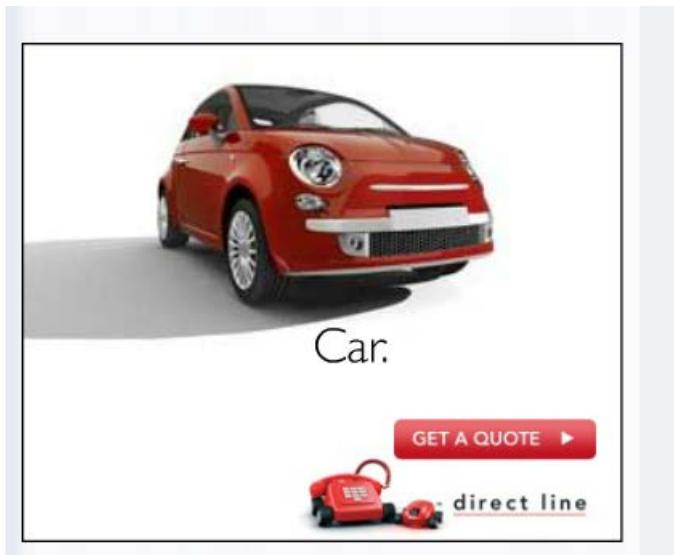


Figure 23 - Direct line advert

8.2 Non-text content and images of text

www.kelkoo.co.uk has a significant number of images either without alt text or with incorrect alt text. Some of the images without alt text contain text and are prominent content items, such as the homepage hero panel image. There are also lots of decorative images which have no alt text at all but which should have null alt text.

8.3 Colour contrast

The orange colour used for links does not have sufficient contrast on either the white or the light grey background.

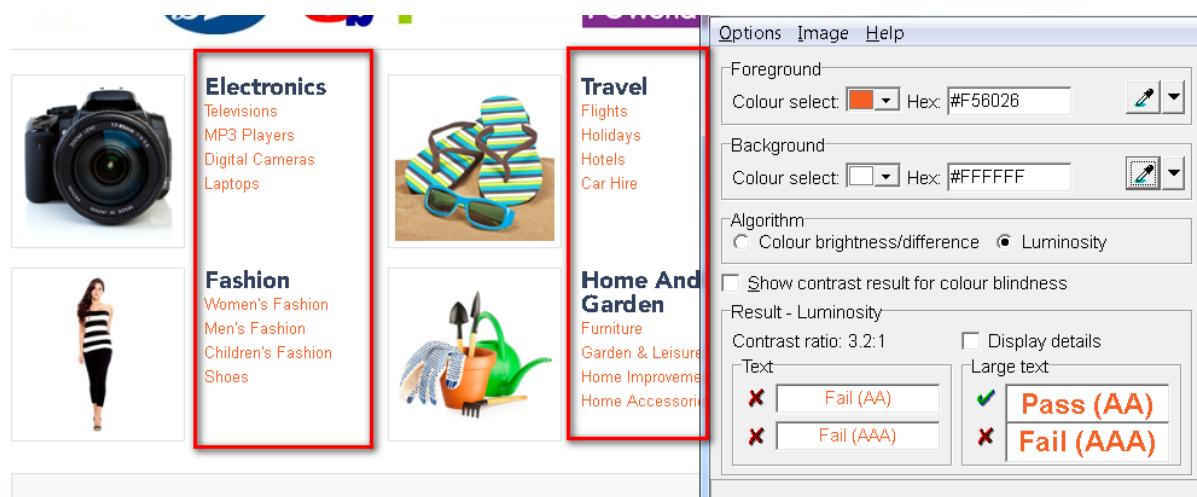


Figure 24 - Orange link text on a white background

Figure 25 - Orange link text on a grey background

The shade of blue used for links in the 'Get browsing' tabbed content section does not have sufficient contrast against the white background.

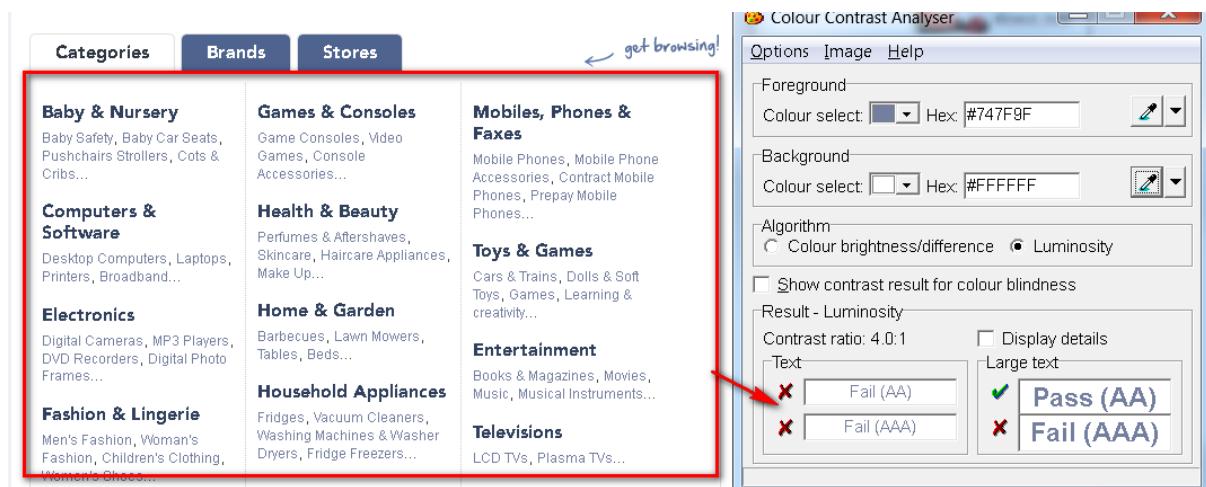


Figure 26 - Blue link text on a white background

8.4 Increasing text size

The text size is controlled using pixels rather than scalable units which means that it remains the same regardless of the user's preferred text size setting in the browser. There are also some issues when using browser zoom to increase the content size with the top search bar panel becoming distorted and the search bar disappearing completely when using text-only zooming.

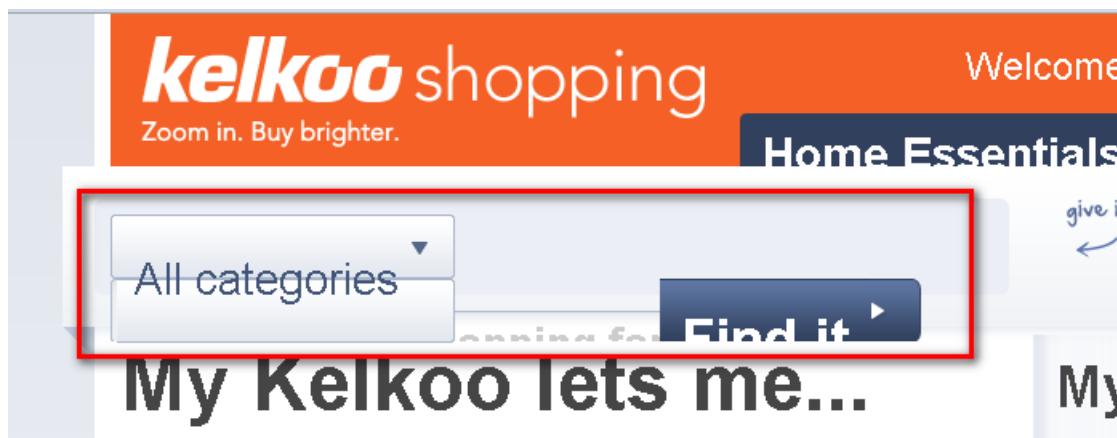


Figure 27 - Text panel disappears when zooming

8.5 Keyboard access

The 'All categories' button is not able to be accessed using the keyboard which means that keyboard-only users cannot use the drop-down menu and subsequent pop-out menus that appear when a mouse user hovers over the 'All categories' button.

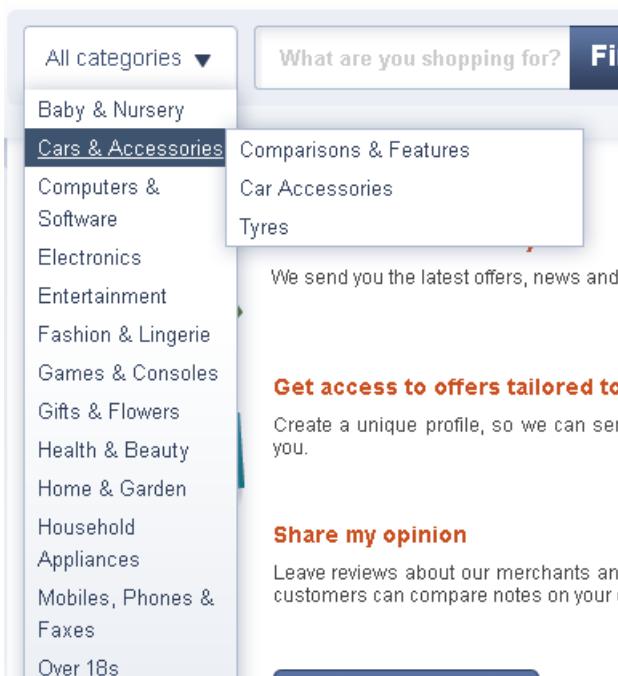


Figure 28 - Drop-down menu

8.6 No skip links

There are no skip links to allow users to bypass repeated content

9 www.confused.com

Compliance Sheriff health: not available

Star rating: * Very inaccessible

The Main issues found are reported below

9.1 Images with incorrect alt text

On the homepage, there is a panel of motor insurance logos – Admiral, More Than, Churchill, Love Privilege, Switchcover, and Tesco - which are all combined within one image and has the alt text “car insurance provider logos”. This alt text does not accurately describe the different company logos contained within the image.

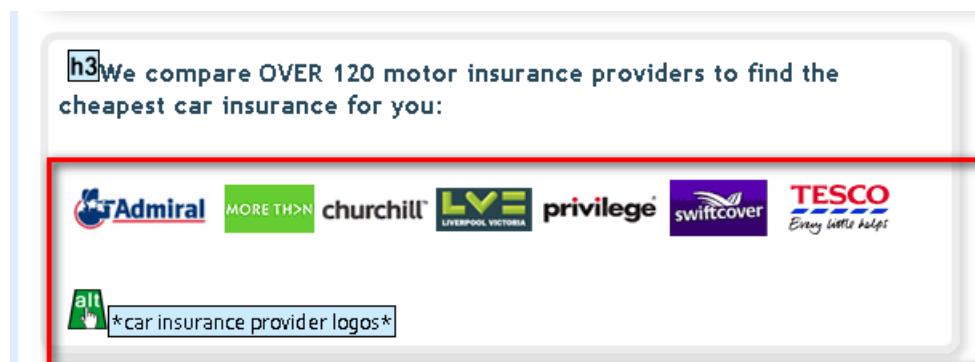


Figure 29 - Car insurance provider logos and alt text

Many of the pages have linked social media icons at the top of the page which do not have any alt text.

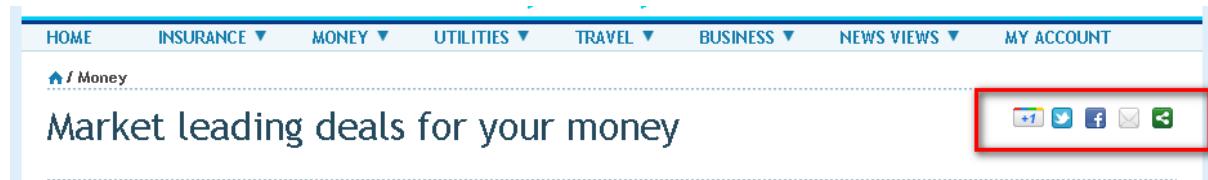


Figure 30 - Social media icons

On other pages, for example the Money page, the images have alt text but it is not used correctly. For example, an image of a bag of money has the alt text “Cara in her blue car”. These images should have null alt text as they are purely decorative. They are also coded as separate links to the adjacent related link text causing the same link to be duplicated.

Savings & ISAs



alt="Bag of money"

Compare the best interest rates for Savings accounts, ISAs and Bonds

Loans



alt="Cara in her blue car"

Compare low interest personal loans with rates from 6.2% APR representative

Figure 31 - Images with incorrect alt text

9.2 Keyboard access

The drop down menus under the main navigation do not appear when they receive keyboard focus and can only be activated by hovering the mouse over the main navigation item. This is likely to be particularly frustrating for a keyboard-only user as the navigation items have an arrow visually indicating that there are further options beneath the navigation items that they cannot access.

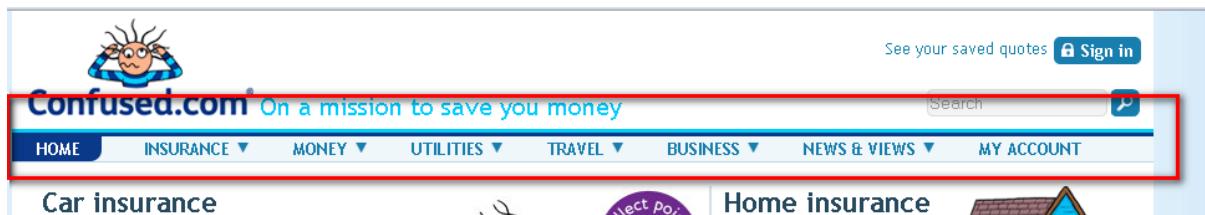


Figure 32 - Confused.com main navigation with arrows to indicate drop-down menu

9.3 Keyboard focus

There is no visible keyboard focus when tabbing through the content using only the keyboard making the website highly difficult for keyboard-only users to navigate through the content.

9.4 Colour contrast

The website has a significant number of instances where the colours used failed to offer sufficient contrast, causing difficulties for users with sight impairments. The main navigation uses dark blue text on a light blue background which has insufficient contrast and is difficult to read.

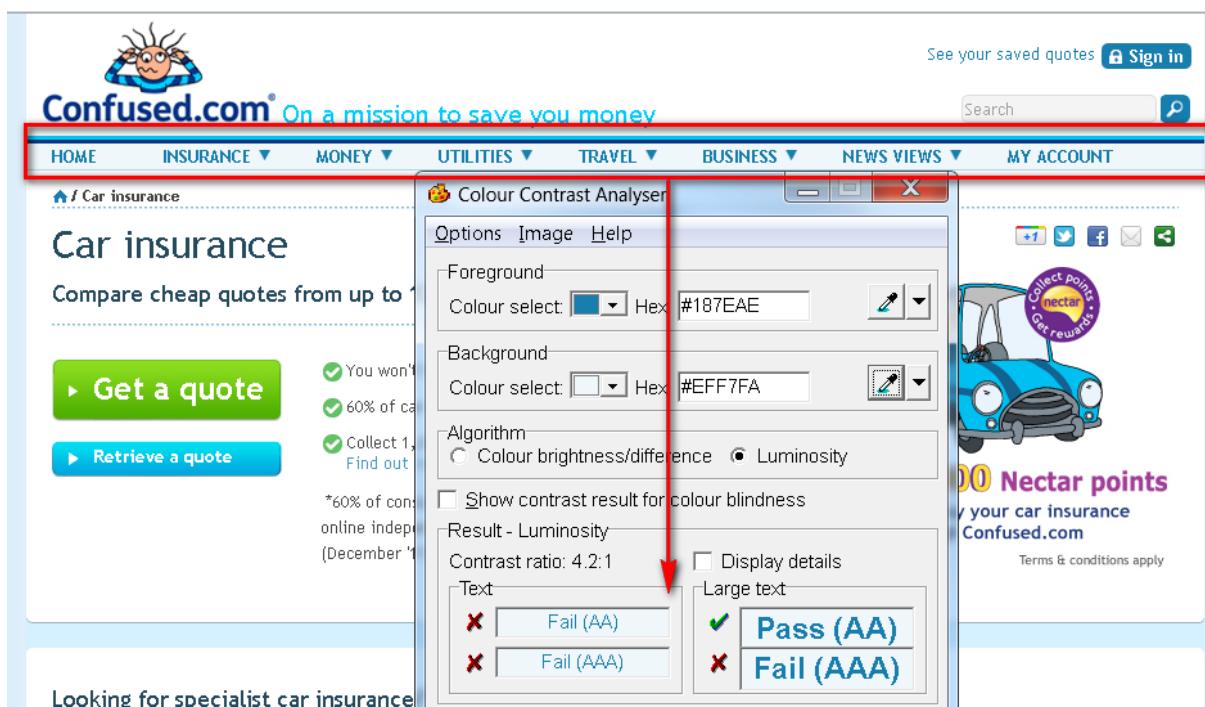
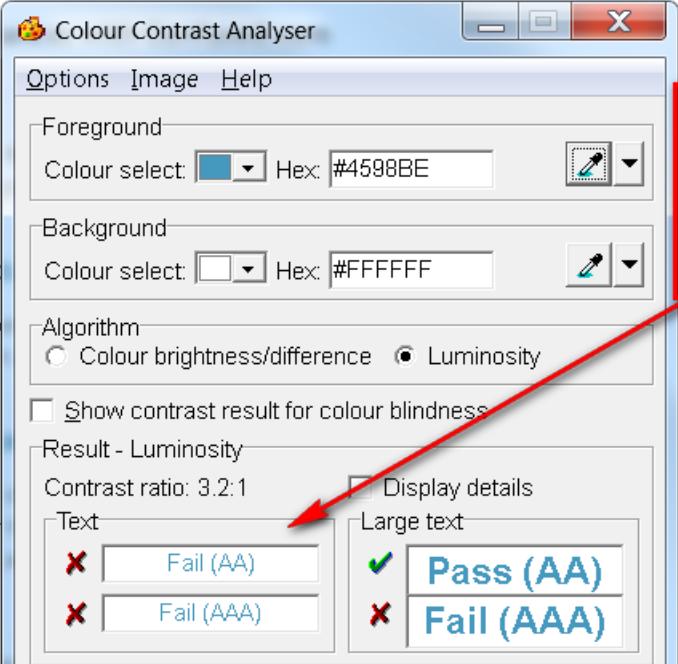


Figure 33 - The navigation has insufficient contrast

The site uses light blue text on a white background for links; this colour choice does not offer sufficient contrast making it difficult to read the text.



The screenshot shows the Colour Contrast Analyser tool interface. On the left, there are settings for foreground color (#4598BE) and background color (#FFFFFF). The algorithm selected is Luminosity. Under 'Result - Luminosity', the contrast ratio is 3.2:1. For 'Text', it shows two rows: 'Fail (AA)' and 'Fail (AAA)', each marked with a red 'X'. For 'Large text', it shows one row: 'Pass (AA)' marked with a green checkmark.

Compare more money products

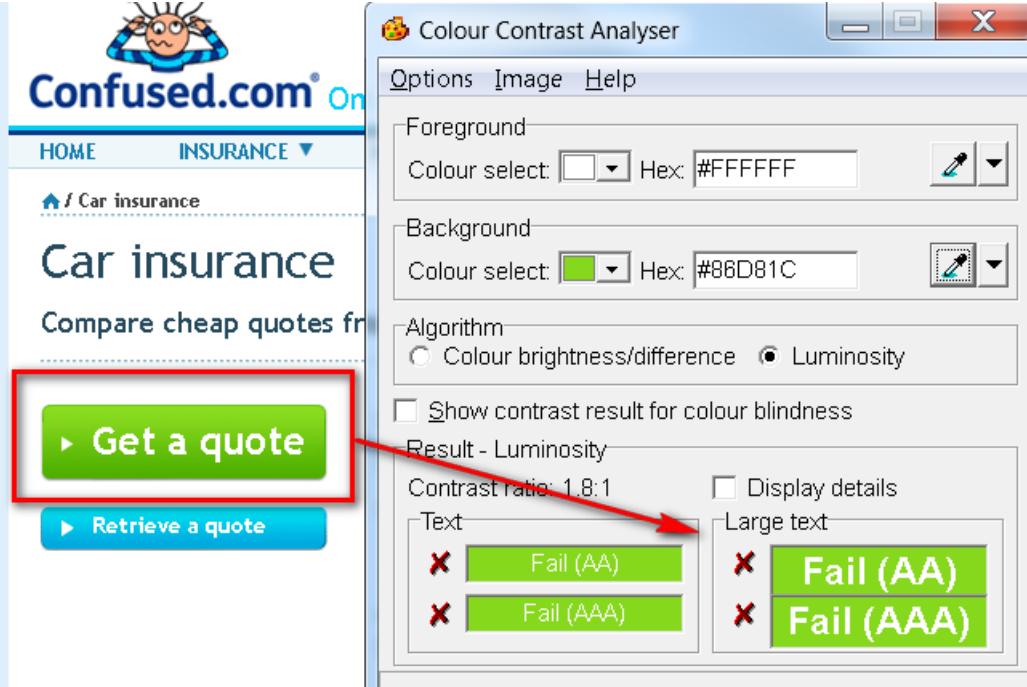
- ▶ Mortgage life insurance
- ▶ Car depreciation insurance
- ▶ Car leasing

Credit Card Matcher Tool
Check your chances of being accepted before you apply



Figure 34 - Light blue text on a white background

'Get a quote' buttons have a green background with white text which also has insufficient contrast.



The screenshot shows the Colour Contrast Analyser tool interface. On the left, the foreground color is set to white (#FFFFFF) and the background color is set to green (#86D81C). The algorithm selected is Luminosity. Under 'Result - Luminosity', the contrast ratio is 1.8:1. For 'Text', it shows two rows: 'Fail (AA)' and 'Fail (AAA)', each marked with a red 'X'. For 'Large text', it shows two rows: 'Fail (AA)' and 'Fail (AAA)', each marked with a red 'X'.

Figure 35 - A green button with white text

Similarly, 'Retrieve a quote' buttons feature a blue background with white text and also have insufficient contrast.

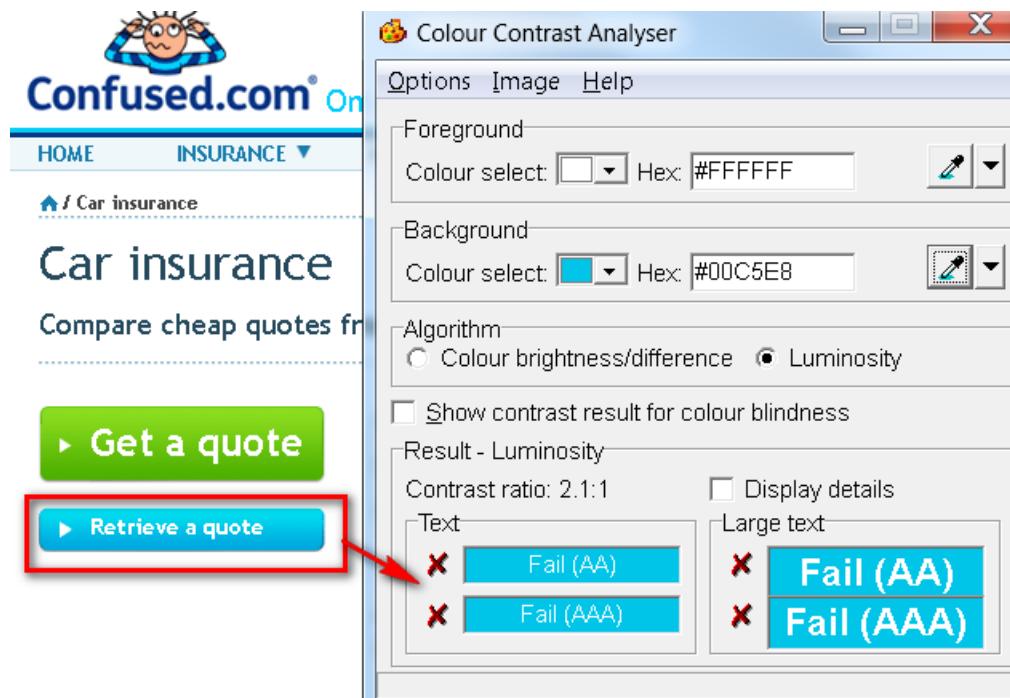


Figure 36 - Blue button with white text

9.5 No skip links

There are no skip links to allow users to bypass repeated content.

9.6 Preventing user errors

When filling in the quote application form, there is no initial indication as to which fields are required until after you have moved away from one field on to the next when an error message appears. These error messages are not announced to blind screen reader users. The whole process is highly frustrating when attempting to fill in the form with a screen reader. After entering a postcode and selecting the address, the focus jumps back to the beginning of the form. After submitting the form, a number of errors were present in the form and an error message appears visually but this information was not announced by the screen reader, the user is simply sent back to the same page with the focus in the email form field mid-way down the form (the visual error messages indicated that there were errors before this point.)

End Report

Appendix A - Further Sources of Advice and Support

AbilityNet

- www.abilitynet.org.uk

AbilityNet is able to offer information, advice and a range of services to help make a website accessible and usable for everyone – including accessibility audits, disabled end user testing, training, support and accessible web design.

For further details please email accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk

Other sources of help and information include:

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

- www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the body at the forefront of the development of standards in good design on the World Wide Web (including accessibility). The W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) form the basis of all other standards.

Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines 1.0

- www.w3.org/TR/WAI-AUTOOLS/

The W3C publish standards for tools which allow users to publish content. Vendors of content management systems (CMS) and applications which allow the user to create content should adhere to the Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG).

Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite (WAI-ARIA)

- www.w3.org/WAI/intro/aria

Many websites and web applications heavily rely on scripting languages such as JavaScript and AJAX to allow complex interactions with the user. The Accessible Rich Applications (ARIA) suite is a series of documents which are working towards making AJAX and related technologies accessible.

Illustrated handbook for web management teams

- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-government/resources/handbook/introduction.asp

The UK E-government Unit has guidelines on web accessibility (based upon the W3C guidelines). These can be viewed on-line or downloaded as an illustrated Word document.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

(Please note since October 2007 the Disability Rights Commission became part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission)

Organisations are legally obliged to provide websites that are accessible to disabled people. This website includes information on the Equality Act (2010), its accompanying code of practice and their report outlining the findings of research into the accessibility and usability of websites.

Appendix B – How We Decide the Ranking

The world standards in web accessibility (W3C WCAG) have prioritised their checkpoints into 3 priority levels. Compliance of your websites with these levels are phrased as - level 1 (highest) = “must”, level 2 = “should” and level 3 = “ought”.

The Equality Act (and before that the Disability Discrimination Act) has meant that it has been law in the UK to have an accessible website since 1999. Arguably a website can only meet its legal requirement if it is, at the very least, compliant with all level 1 checkpoints.

As it is only level 2 compliance which does not hinder some groups’ access (as defined by the W3C) it is our opinion that the true legal requirement lies somewhere between levels 1 and 2 compliance.

This said, it has been our experience that many websites that meet level 1 and even level 2 priority checkpoints can nevertheless still present significant difficulties for disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to a number of reasons. For example, over-reliance on purely visual clues to guide the user (leaving blind users without vital clues about where the designer intends the user’s ‘eye’ to be drawn), small or closely clustered links or buttons (causing those with fine motor control difficulties to miss what they intended to click on - or click on the wrong thing), lack of proper separation of page objects (meaning that users with vision or cognitive difficulties can miss important items which are not sufficiently separated from neighbouring content), the sheer bulk and complexity of links and sections on a page (making those who’s access technology or methodology is slow become frustrated or give up) and a host of other reasons.

Similarly a website that falls short of priority 1 or 2 compliance in a number of respects can nevertheless be very accessible and usable by the vast majority of disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to the fact that particular checkpoints are only contravened very rarely (still denying the website level 1 compliance but having very little impact on a disabled users overall experience of the website), or because checkpoints that are contravened more widely only impact upon a very small number of users.

Thus we have tried to reflect the overall user experience of a website when deciding its ranking.

A 5 star scale is used

- | | |
|-------|--|
| ***** | Excellent. Site is highly accessible and exceeds minimum legal requirements for accessibility |
| *** | Base level. Site satisfies minimum legal requirements for accessibility. |
| * | Very poor. Site is not accessible and does not meet minimum legal requirements for accessibility. |

*** Meets minimum legal requirements

We have chosen our *** ("Site satisfies minimum legal requirements for accessibility") ranking as compliance (or near compliance where the shortfall has little evident impact on users) with priority level 1 checkpoints.

Further than that we look for significant (in our opinion based upon broad experience of working with disabled users) priority level 2 issues - such as the scalability of text, the avoidance of frames and any positive steps a website has taken to benefit visitors with an impairment (such as accessibility info or offering a choice of colour/text size schemes).

Note

It is our opinion that the addition of a Text only parallel website to the exclusion of addressing the accessibility/usability issues of the main website is neither necessary or in the spirit of inclusion or the W3C WCAG standards.

*** and ** rankings are below legal minimum requirements**

We award * and ** to a website dependant upon how much it falls short of our definition of *** ranking.

****** and ***** rankings exceed minimum legal requirements**

We award **** and ***** to a website dependant upon how much it exceeds our definition of *** ranking.

For any further clarification please contact accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk