**Transcript for Accessibility Insights webinar – CDDO July 2021**

ANNIE: Hello everyone, and welcome to today's webinar.

It's just gone one, so I'm going to give everyone a chance to join.

Feel free to drop into the Q&A box and say hi.

Just to let you know we have disabled the chat feature as we have discovered it can cause problems for some people

using screen.

readers.

Glad you can make it and to see the numbers going up.

I can see lots more of you joining now.

I think we will make a start.

Hello again, welcome to the 13th session in our Accessibility Insights series.

AbilityNet's Head of Digital Inclusion, Robin Christopherson hosts a monthly on-line chat with individual

who is are each working to improve digital accessibility and digital inclusion.

This month he's chatting to Richard Morton, Head of Accessibility at the UK Government's Central Digital and

Data Office, which is CDDO.

They monitor and enforces UK legislation on web and app accessibility.

I'm Annie Mannion, I'm Digital Communications Manager at AbilityNet.

I will be running through today's session.

Just to go through a few bits of housekeeping.

We have live captions provided by MyClearText.

You can turn on the captions using the CC option on the control panel.

We have additional captions available via the URL.

Slides are available at slideshare.

net/abilitynet.

Also on our website.

If you have any technical issues and you need to leave early, don't worry, you will receive an email in a couple

of days' time with the recording, the transcript and the slides.

Depending on how you joined the webinar, you will find a Q&A window.

If you would like to ask Richard or Robin any questions, do drop those into the Q&A area for them to address

and they will do that after today's session in a follow-up blog on our website.

We also have a feedback survey that you will be directed to at the end.

That asks you to tell us about any future topics you would like us to cover in our webinars.

That's all from me for now.

Over to Robin and Richard.

ROBIN: Fabulous, thank you Annie.

Richard, welcome.

RICHARD: Thanks, great introduction, thank you.

ROBIN: Thanks for being willing to be grilled for the next half an hour.

First question we ask to everyone, cheesy question, but you know, gets the ball rolling.

What's your drink of choice to get us through this next half an hour?

RICHARD: Sure, I should probably say something interesting like soy chai

latte, but my usual drink is coffee, good or bad, it doesn't have to be that good.

For this sort of thing I just drink water.

Really boring answer.

ROBIN: Not at all.

RICHARD: Coffee is my hot drink of choice.

ROBIN: I suggest up switch today water for the same reason I have camomile

tea rather than normal tea or coffee, because you don't want to need a comfort break, even though it's only

half an hour.

Great, brilliant.

Thank you so much indeed.

First question, these questions are very similar, regular listeners will be familiar but the content changes

each time but the responses are different and always interesting.

For you, first question, what do you think in your opinion has changed most in the area of accessibility or

Digital Inclusion in the last ten years or feel free to focus on more recent times as well.

Over the last decade a lot has changed in this area.

RICHARD: It certainly has, I have been in this industry for 15 years or so.

I have been in IT for longer, but in accessibility for that length of time.

I have seen a definite shift.

I think there is still a long way to go, but there has been a shift in understanding towards designing

things, making things user-centered around user needs, rather than the needs of the organisation.

Particularly in Government with large organisations, like banks, retailers, they have done a lot of work in this

area.

It's still quite patchy.

There is still a long way to go.

I think things like GOV.

UK made a big difference with that, but there is a long way to go with internal systems and things like that.

The landscape has shifted but I think there is a lot more still to be done.

It's going to keep me busy until I retire anyway.

Same for you I'm sure.

ROBIN: I've been in this area for 25 years, I was thinking the other day,

at least 15 to go, that is quite daunting prospect!

Much as I love it.

WCAG you mentioned there that is the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

They are moving on all the time to embrace new technologies and having a focus on end user testing more on the

technical compliance.

They are moving in the right direction, absolutely.

How do you think then, you have touched upon some of this, the major advancements that we have seen in the

last ten years around the mainstreaming of inclusion and the recognition that it's important.

How do you think the shift has been achieved, by all means talk about Government policies or the impact of

Government.

By all means talk about before.

RICHARD: Touching on the web accessibility guidelines, they have

made a big difference, version one was 1999, version two, 2018.

It became a more technology-neutral set of guidelines, it was very specific to web and web technologies

specifically.

It is very neutral.

In practise it is only applied in the sense of web technologies, it has become more neutralised.

That has improved things and helped people think more about the needs rather than the technical stuff.

Although the guidelines are still difficult to understand and difficult to use.

They need a lot of explanation.

Other things that have made a big difference, things like the Equality Act, slightly more than ten years' old.

Making people more aware of protected characteristics, including disability.

It wasn't new in the sense that the Disability Discrimination Act which preceded it came another 15 years

prior to that, about the time you started Robin, about 25-years-old now.

And it was embedded but I think it helped raise awareness amongst people that all these protected

characteristics are important.

You know, I think, again, there is still a long way to go, and sometimes people talk more about some aspects

than others, it has raised awareness.

And I do think it's fair to say a creation of the Government Digital Service and shortly afterwards GovUK

started to make people think that accessible digital services are essential, not just possible, but

essential.

There is no good reason why most barriers to access exist.

Before the creation of GovUK there was things to make things more accessible in Government, local and

central, it was sporadic, not embedded in the whole ethos, if you like, it was brought into that.

That has spread around, of course.

It is a simplification, of course, but there is still a lot of legacy code and designs still around.

Still there is little understanding of how to build and design accessible information in services.

I think those sorts of things have been big factors in that there is a growing movement of equality and

equity in design.

That's really helping to move things on in this area.

ROBIN: Gov.

uk is pretty amazing in its sub sections, you can be pretty confident when you go there to do what you need

to do or find out what you need to find out you will have a good experience.

As you hinted there, it coincided with the Government being more vocal and out there when it comes to talking

about accessibility.

Obviously they have always championed it with legislation, et cetera, but I think that both the Gov.

uk team, and different sectors as a whole have come to the realisation that it's not necessarily about a

goal, it's about a journey.

And you never get there on an app or a website of any side.

It's just really, really hard to have squeaky clean compliance across every page or corner of it.

It's about real-time life accessibility and making sure people can have good experience, particularly

around high priority user journeys, particularly in digital Government that people need to do, particularly

with the focus on digital that we are seeing these days.

RICHARD: I think that is an interesting one, it's a massive

system, it's hundreds of thousands of pages, mainly service, but the services are autonomous in a sense, if

you go to renew your passport, you go through a Gov.

uk page, but then on to a service owned and managed by the Home Office.

They have their own digital teams dealing with these sorts of things.

It is a complex environment if you like.

It is not just one organisation, it's lots of organisations, and part of my role is working across Government to

try to help these organisations work together, learn together, but without dictating, you must do this in this

exact way.

There is not that level, there is a level of autonomy amongst the organisations and departments.

So it's quite an interesting set up, if you like.

As I said there is still a lot of legacy services around.

Things don't always change very quickly.

We're always trying to improve things, yeah.

ROBIN: You are doing a good job!

In trying to bring all that together.

RICHARD: Not just me!

ROBIN: Quite a job.

Cool, let's bring it a bit closer to recent times then.

Obviously Covid, let's talk about that.

You are homeworking at the moment, talking about hybrid working within your teams, going forwarded.

How has Covid, homeworking, reshaped your life, your working life, your teams and also Government thinking and

strategy and how is that going to impact us going forwarded.

Is that going to be a long lasting legacy?

With this laser focus on digital?

RICHARD: There is a lot of interesting things coming out of this.

One thing I have learned or we have learned, is given enough motivation, many things are possible that just

weren't thought possible or thought about before.

In terms of remote working.

That has created some controversy, people have said why isn't it being done before, why suddenly we can fix

this now.

But that is sometimes how things happen.

With it being lockdown this year and much of last year it has meant people have been able to do that.

It is interesting, we have adapted ways of working, managed well as a team, we have had to do lots of

different things.

We had to have more meetings than usual in a sense, early on, just to make sure people were kept in touch

and weren't feeling neglected and that.

But different patterns of working come about, what is interesting for me, I have worked with people I have

never met face-to-face.

Some people have moved on to other teams and that feels weird.

Once I start going back in the office, I will start to see people and think did I know them before, or did I

actually meet them before?

Are they new?

It's this whole new etiquette to be navigated in that sense.

Certainly we have learned ways of working that can be adapted and modern infrastructure makes a lot of these

things possible.

You couldn't have done a lot of this ten years ago.

Video conferencing was around ten years ago, audio over internet, telephone over internet was available

ten years ago, but there just wasn't the capacity and the ability to do it at scale.

So it's certainly led to a lot of learning on things like that.

But there have been some negatives as well, that people can suffer, mental health, if people are alone a lot,

there is meeting fatigue.

One of my pet peeves is meeting that don't start and stop on time.

You don't have to be in the right place for the meeting, you can be where you are, your front room or

where you are working from.

There is challenge as well as benefits to it.

I think we will learn a lot from it.

You mentioned about hybrid working, there will be a lot of people going back to the office but probably not as

much as they did before.

Some people want to be back in the office full-time.

Many people don't.

Most people will want something in-between, I think.

But there are other challenges as well.

Things like noisy rooms.

We had problems with rooms with only three walls, which was part of the open plan office environment.

That can be difficult when you've got a room with say half-a-dozen people and one person working remotely.

It's quite difficult.

So I'm hoping we will try to move towards a more remote-friendly approach.

Where people talk about one person being remote, then everyone's remote.

That may have difficulties, but it means everyone is using a head set or everyone is using a laptop.

There's going to be challenges with that.

You might lose some that have face-to-face stuff.

But I think it's important.

It helps inclusion, particularly not just the round the fact that people are working away, separately.

But the fact that some people are introverts and extroverts, it can be difficult to involve everyone in a

conversation.

There is a lot to be learned.

And it's going to be really interesting, because the teams I work with, for example, are a bit

distributed.

They are not just working from home, they are based in different offices as well.

So it's not going to make a lot of sense for everyone to go into the office on different days, it's more

important if they are going in some of the week, they probably need to go in the same days, or whatever.

Maybe switch locations occasionally, meet up occasionally.

That sort of thing.

It's fascinating stuff.

Where only just starting to think about how people return to the office now, plans will be put in place.

They have already made plans, but I don't know how that will pan out in the next few weeks now that

announcements have been made.

ROBIN: Do you think remote working as members of the technical teams within

Government, you know that's always been seen as a viable technological solution, but other departments, other

less techy teams now get it, basically.

And for it, whereas before, it takes a long time to do things within any organisation, but within Government in

particular.

If anything, if we have learned anything over the last 18 months or so, can you do things, like you said

at the beginning, if you have enough focus and incentive, then you can concertina those timelines right down

and really get things moving and changing for the better.

Really interesting.

RICHARD: I think there are still other challenges like interoperability,

where people are using different tools, we are using Zoom today, sometimes we use Google tools, sometimes we use

Microsoft Teams, it can be difficult switching between the tools and remembering where the mute button is,

for example.

It's never going to be the case that everyone uses one tool.

These are all things we have to tackle long-term, yeah.

ROBIN: Some consistency and hot key consistency for me.

That is command+ shift+ A+ V in Zoom, but M and O in teams, don't ask!

Brilliant.

Let's talk about Government strategy then and how you see it impacting let's say mobile, because obviously

the deadline, the last deadline associated with the Public Sector regulations has just Zoomed by to do

with mobile applications.

You mentioned there are fewer of those than websites, but still.

Public Sector regulations has really focused minds and also future platforms, what's the Government

strategy in a future-facing way about the proliferation of digital going forwarded.

RICHARD: I talked before we started about mobile apps and I will say it

again, there are not many central mobile Government native apps.

There is a lot of mobile usage, but making mobile apps can be more challenging they are built in

different ways.

The difference between the platforms is significant.

But there are teams doing great work in making their apps accessible.

I think the bigger factor, one of the bigger factors is mobile usage generally.

The majority of digital interactions with the Public Sector are now through mobile devices.

I know I had quotes that it was 60% plus in local authorities.

I imagine that figure has gone up in the last year or so as well.

It just continues to rise, as more and more people have predominantly mobile devices.

Many people didn't have a laptop or desktop machine.

I know I was shocked to find out that most millennials don't have a printer.

And I think how can you live without a printer, and many people do.

ROBIN: I'm not big on paper, just saying.

RICHARD: I'm not, but there are occasions when I need.

To I would love to get away from it.

I think the mobile-first approach, people talk about designing for mobile first, that is starting to be really

important.

If you design services in a responsive way that work well on both mobile and devices that really works

well there is a blurred distinction between things like tablets and laptops, even though they work in

different ways.

A laptop is a mobile device but not treated as a mobile device.

There will be other challenges around other platforms obviously people are looking at things like artificial

intelligence, and virtual reality situations and things like that.

I haven't been involved in much of that there is always work going on in those areas.

To be honest I think there is still a lot of work to be done to deal with the current platforms.

Mobile being the biggest one in terms of not just native apps but responsive apps.

There is a lot of work to be done in that area.

ROBIN: Do you think there is still some central Government and local

authority websites that are not mobile responsive?

RICHARD: I don't know about how many are responsive and how many are

not responsive.

Some of the legacy websites aren't.

I think most new ones are but there is going to be a lot of organisation who is are still using very desktop

orientated designs and things like that.

You have to go on-line to find some of these things occasionally.

It's not always the end of the world, but it makes things a lot easier to use and to make more accessible there

are ways around these things, but yeah.

ROBIN: We could have a whole conversations on that, apologies for

the barking, he's trained as a guide dog but more of a guard dog whenever the doorbell goes.

We mentioned at the front, Annie said you are in the department which is responsible for reviewing monitoring

and potentially reporting and enforcing the legislation about compliance.

Across Public Sector organisations and potentially broader afield so what's the levels of activity, can you

tell us anything, give us any insights about how many websites, mobile apps you are reviewing a month or whatever,

and the sort of future activity would look like from an external point of view.

would we get to hear about your activities and which organisations have been audited et cetera.

A RICHARD: A bit of context, it moved to CDDO in April, when the organisation

was created.

It's still a problem explaining people, because many people haven't heard of CDDO and don't know what it

means.

I keep getting congratulations messages in LinkedIn, even though I haven't changed really, it has just

changed the name.

CDDO does run the monitoring of the Public Sector bodies' accessibility regulations.

We have assessed over 360 websites to date.

Sampling is done at random across a range of domain names on Public Sector top level names, NHS UK et cetera, it

is not just what you might think of as Government, it is the whole of the Public Sector.

It includes things like academia, and the NHS and transport, public transport services, things like that.

But we are prioritising larger public websites, Public Sector websites, so central Government sites that aren't

on GOV.

UK, we have done a lot of work on there but looking at ones that aren't hosts on there.

So councils, local authorities, central NHS websites, higher education and further education.

Those are focused areas, if you like.

They have gone through, you know, there's a lot of tests already been done, that will continue and then it's

a mix of simplified tests and detailed tests.

We plan to report publicly on these by the end of this year, on what the situation is.

So sites that have received a report but haven't responded or haven't fixed things properly, that will get

publicised.

And it's going well.

You know, it's certainly raising awareness of the need to do this stuff.

One of the slight frustrations we get, if we get asked what do we need to do?

What's the minimum we need to do?

What's compliance.

I'm always trying to encourage people to go beyond compliance, but it can be quite difficult.

People have budgets, people have tight timescales, particularly when it came to the major deadlines of 2019 in

September and 2020 September for new and existing websites.

Now I'm trying to get people to understand this is not a requirement it is something we do.

It is a requirement under the Equality Act to not discriminate.

Also a requirement under the Public Sector equality duty for Public Sector bodies to make sure they are not just

doing this stuff but doing it proactively in a sense that they can't just rely on someone complaining

saying I can't access your information.

They do have to supply that facility but can't work on that basis.

They have to provide reasonable adjustments and alternative formats and all those sorts of things.

The work continues.

The legislation will change slightly just to remove our links with the European Union, which was part of it.

It came out of European legislation, other than that it's going to continue in the same way for the

foreseeable future.

Obviously things can change.

ROBIN: Do you know if there is any plans to broaden out the legislation

to adopt the European Accessibility Act, which applies this new level of energy and focus on enforcement to the

other sectors as well.

Unfortunately it missed the Brexit guillotine?

RICHARD: At the moment there is no plans to do that.

So I don't have any other detail on that.

ROBIN: Crystal ball.

Fantastic.

Brilliant.

So we will just wrap up then, we are rapidly running out of time.

Thank you so much, at the end we always talk about a comment that has come from last month's guests, last

month it was Larry Goldberg, Head of Accessibility at Verizon Media.

He wanted to pass on his support, he thinks it's brilliant what you are doing.

His comments were around how often, particularly in the US, organisations and people aren't keen on hands-on

approach by Government.

But he said in this particular instance it's really important and it's definitely bearing fruit.

It's brilliant what you are doing and it's necessary, it seems, to make organisations really sit up and take

notice.

Have you anything to add to Larry's comment or in response to that?

RICHARD: Yeah, I think one of the things I really want to do is to be

able to reach out more to the private sector, the charity sector.

People who aren't directly obligated by the Public Sector bodies accessibility regulation but are

linked in.

And trying to help them understand the ways they need to make things accessible.

I mentioned at the beginning, part of the problem we have is internal systems and tools are quite

inaccessible, so there is a lot that the private need to do to meet the needs of Government.

They may not have a legal responsibility to do anything particular to meet a particular

standard, but they do have a responsibility to ensure their services are accessible.

If they want to stay in the market they have to respond to these needs and challenges.

People don't like Government leading in a sense, but we are trying to lead in a positive way by example, by

creating a culture and, you know, we have communities around accessibility and other organisations like BBC have

done a lot around accessibility champions.

There's lots of good work going on.

We want to spread the good news about that.

ROBIN: Brilliant, we should add those other sectors, corporate and charity,

if they want to have any dealings with Europe they need to really consider accessibility as well.

Obviously it's a legal requirement, and it's the right thing to do already here in the UK.

Still additional incentive there.

Thank you so much.

So next month it's 95% confirmed, I'm not going to say who it is just in case.

So talking about the charity sector, it's going to be a leading accessibility person in the charity

sector.

So in light of that, is there anything you want to pass on to this mystery person.

RICHARD: Just following on from what I just said, I would like to ask a

question about how they are going about building a culture of accessibility in their organisation.

Do they have any practical tips or lessons learnt from that.

ROBIN: Nice, brilliant.

Thank you so much Richard, I really appreciate it.

Keep up the good work and I'm really looking forward with interest to any reporting that comes out later in the

year, like you say, about which organisations, the level of compliance across Public Sector organisations,

that will be interesting.

Thank you very much.

ROBIN: I pass it back to Annie.

ANNIE: Just thank you so much Richard and Robin.

We have had loads of questions that we hope to answer on-line in the next few days.

So you will receive an email with the link to access them.

So just finally, just a bit more information that might be of interest to you.

We have a range of training sessions on accessibility which you can find out more about on our website.

You can use a 10% off discount code available to registrants of our webinars, by is AbilityNetWebinar10, some of

the training courses we have for various roles include coming up this Thursday, how to begin your own

accessibility testing and then on the 14th of July, PDF accessibility, the 15th of July is in design

accessibility.

And on the 21 and 28th of July we have workplace-focused workshops, called tech powered inclusive

recruitment and on-boarding.

You can also sign up to the e-newsletter for the latest announcements about digital

accessibility.

You can visit our YouTube channel and also download our podcast and then we have a suite of accessibility services

to suit all types of organisations and finally just don't forget about our next webinars, so as Robin mentioned

our next accessibility insight session is own Tuesday 10th of August, and before that we have the business case

for accessibility which is on Tuesday 20th of July.

So thanks again Richard and Robin and everyone who has joined us and please do complete the feedback form that you

will be directed to at the end and we will be in touch with you soon.

Goodbye everyone.