

PRESS RELEASE

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DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS FAILING TO MEET CHALLENGE ON ACCESSIBILITY

- **Nearly 60% of leading disability websites fail basic accessibility checks**
- **Results indicate web accessibility is not yet embedded within the sector**
- **A handful of exemplary websites leading the sector**

Surprise findings from a research survey '**Disability 50**' show that the majority of Disability organisations do not address accessibility needs sufficiently in their web and digital communications.

The research carried out by **Ethical Media** reveals the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of disability groups' communications activities and points to an urgent need to address web accessibility, usability and effective digital communications in the disability sector.

The **Disability 50 Accessibility Report** reviewed the standard of accessibility of 50 leading UK disability websites benchmarking these against the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)** developed by global and industry-led standards body W3C.

Significantly, 58% failed to achieve a compliance level, which the WCAG state as 'compulsory'.

Head of Digital Communications at Ethical Media, Keith Patton says:

This shows what many people have suspected for some time: that organisations in or supporting the disability sector do not yet adequately consider web accessibility and usability as a priority in their communications strategies. As a result, significant proportions of users are likely to find it difficult, even impossible, to access information, restricting the flow of communication between any given organisation and its customer base.

Although the majority of disability groups fail to comply with W3C global standards a few organisations are proving to be exemplary in this field including:

AbilityNet (<http://www.abilitynet.org.uk>), Action for Blind People (<http://www.afbp.org>) British Council for Disabled People (www.bcodp.org.uk) and the Disability Rights Commission (<http://www.drc-gb.org>).

Managing Director of Ethical Media, Paul Sternberg says:

Ethical Media's survey highlights the need for disability groups to lead by example and walk their own talk. It also shows the number of conflicting communications pressures that these organisations face. With the right approach and strategy there is no reason why disability groups can't integrate accessibility within their own communications. The risk of not doing this could have far-reaching reputational implications.

End.

To request a copy of the Disability 50 Accessibility Report email **Keith Patton** at keith@ethicalmedia.com or call 0207 833 8825 (Mobile: 07866 734 028)

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Ethical Media is one of the UK's leading socially and environmentally responsible communications agencies.
2. The research was carried out between February and March 2004 amongst 50 leading UK disability organisations and related groups.
3. The WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) explain how to make web content accessible to people with disabilities, they are produced by the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) a global standards body, found at <http://www.w3c.org>.

3. Keynote points:

58% failed to achieve the compulsory compliance level as set forth by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), as stated in the following quote "...one or more groups will find it impossible to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint is a basic requirement for some groups to be able to use Web documents."

86% failed to achieve a compliance level which the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) states is important, "...one or more groups will find it difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will remove significant barriers to accessing Web documents."

92% failed to achieve a compliance level which the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) states is advisable?, "...one or more groups will find it somewhat difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will improve access to Web documents"

84% failed to express and stick to defined web standards for their web pages. As the web standards project states "...Designing and building with these standards simplifies and lowers the cost of production, while delivering sites that are accessible to more people and more types of

Internet devices. Sites developed along these lines will continue to function correctly as traditional desktop browsers evolve, and as new Internet devices come to market.”