

Equalities Participation Network – 29 June 2023

Present: Myshele Haywood (GREC), Shola Ajide (Fountain of Love), Ru Carroll (Four Pillars), Roslynn Fowler (Aberdeen Action on Disability), Linzi Harrow (ACC Equalities), Baldeep McGarry (ACC Equalities), Ells McHaffie (Guide Dogs), Maria Jose Pavez (GREC), Mary Rasmussen (Guide Dogs), Bertha Yakuba (African Women's Group).

Apologies: Carol Hannaford, Zuzana Jatelova, Fay Morrison.

Speaker: Duncan Dallas, ACC Customer Experience Officer

Duncan shared the features of the ACC website's new accessibility toolbar, called Recite-Me, which was released on 26 April. A video of the session is available online: youtu.be/6h_MzqkwkEg

Some key points:

- The toolbar can be found by clicking 'accessibility tools' at the top of the page.
- Using icons on the toolbar, text can be translated into 100+ languages (including Igbo and Yoruba), and it can be read out loud in 33 languages. Translations that have been checked by native speakers have been good – not perfect, but no significant errors.
- There are options to change the colour scheme, text size, font, spacing, etc, and tools to help people focus on the text.
- There is also a dictionary function, so people can see the definition of any word on the website by clicking on it.
- Once a person sets up the tool in their browser, the settings are saved for the next time they visit (as long as they don't delete cookies).
- There are currently no BSL or Easy Read versions, but these can be requested for any page.
- In the month of May 2023, the tool was used on 4,000 web pages by 1,500 unique users. Of these, 55% used the screen reader function, and 30% translated the text into other languages. ACC will continue to monitor use of the tool to identify trends in languages, etc.
- The toolbar will work on all pages of the ACC website, including forms. It will not work on pages provided by third party organisations or vendors, and it is not available on external websites linked from the ACC site.
- *Note: in a bit of testing after the meeting, the toolbar is not available in all sections of the ACC website, and not available for documents in PDF or DOCX format on the website. This feedback has been sent to Duncan.*

Q&A / Discussion

- Several people had concerns about the use of icons, as the meanings of the pictures are not necessarily obvious. Duncan explained that when people hover over the icons, there is text to explain what each one does. He was not sure what would happen with a screen reader, but Baldeep noted that the tool is being tested by members of the Disability Equity Partnership (DEP) who are visually impaired, and they will flag up any issues.
- People can also report any toolbar issues to Duncan: dudallas@aberdeencity.gov.uk

- There was a query about live captions on video content. While these are not provided by the Recite-Me tool, there is an option in Microsoft Teams to generate live captions in meetings (with varying accuracy, depending on people's accents and sound quality).
 - One person commented that the ACC website has been useful for people in their community, especially for paying Council Tax online. Another person appreciated the efforts being made towards accessibility, and emphasised the need for more outreach to ensure people who might need the tool are aware of it.
 - Duncan noted that he is available to visit community groups to show them how the tool works, and he plans to create a YouTube video to go over the features in more depth. ACC are also putting together guidance notes, in addition to the user guide already provided.
 - Everyone agreed it would also be useful to create a printed guide to distribute around different communities, and around sites where people use public computers like libraries, community centres and the JobCentre.
 - One person asked whether anything has been done about the functionality of the website itself, following many complaints that people struggle to find the information they need. Duncan noted there is another team working on improving navigation and content, but this is a long process with such a big website.
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ACC Consultation

Baldeep reported that ACC are looking to do more consultation events with community members, potentially in person during July. Anyone interested in taking part can contact her directly – dsasdasd – and she will send details to Myshele to forward around the mailing list.

Four people said they would be interested, depending on the topic – if ACC are consulting about something meaningful to their community, they would be happy to give their views. All would be happy with in-person events. Roslynn volunteered that events could Aberdeen Action on Disability's offices in Bridge of Don – they have a lot of space to accommodate up to 50 people.

Some people felt that events in communities would be useful, though everyone agreed that the city centre can be more accessible.

'Ghost Children' follow-up from Zuzana

As discussed in May, Zuzana sent the following:

Regarding our previous meeting discussion about 'Ghost children' at Banff Academy, I spoke with the Youth Team members to inquire if they are aware of this issue. It was noted that non-attendance is a rapidly growing problem across the Shire and that the Youth team continues to provide support through one-on-one and group sessions within the schools. However, to my knowledge, no specific measures have been implemented to address the 'Ghost children' issue yet. I will keep an eye on the situation and keep you informed if any updates become available. I also came across this article:

[The 'ghost children' crisis explained: No single reason for surge in school absences but it has serious consequences | Politics News | Sky News](#)

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 31 August, 4:00-5:00pm
(please note new time – and no meeting in July!)**

Topic: TBC